

SECOND EDITION

PATHFINDER®



Blood Lords

ADVENTURE PATH

GRAVECLAW

By Jason Tondro

• Pagked

• Yled

Geb

50 MILES

Ydrion River

• Graydirge

Axan Wood

• Iron Tavia's Cottage

Sallowshore •

Axanir River

Jaadja River

★ Mechitar

Field of Maidens

PATHFINDER

AUTHOR

Jason Tondro

DEVELOPER

Ron Lundeen

DESIGN LEAD

Logan Bonner

EDITING LEAD

K. Tessa Newton

EDITORS

Janica Carter, Avi Kool, K. Tessa Newton, and Shay Snow

COVER ARTIST

Natasha Nanook

INTERIOR ARTISTS

Tuan Duong Chu, Rael Dionisio, Wilmar Ballespi Escarp, Xabi Gazte, Dariusz Kieliszek, Robert Lazzaretti, Lucas Villalva Machado, and Luis Salas Lastra

ART DIRECTION

Sonja Morris and Sarah E. Robinson

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Sonja Morris

PUBLISHER

Erik Mona



Paizo Inc.
7120 185th Ave NE Ste 120
Redmond, WA 98052-0577

paizo.com



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ADVENTURE PATH

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Graveclaw

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Content Warning

While *Pathfinder Adventure Path #182: Graveclaw* contains typical Pathfinder action and adventure, it also includes content related to child abuse, neglect, and death—as well as drug use and other events that are appropriate for more mature audiences. Before you run this adventure, understand that consent from everyone at the table, including the players and the Game Master, is vital to a safe and fun play experience. You should talk with your players before beginning the adventure and modify descriptions or events as appropriate.



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Chapter 1: Into the Woods 4

The characters are tasked with investigating Iron Taviah, a hag who dwells in a cottage deep in Axan Wood. Strange allies roam the gloomy wood, and the characters need all the aid they can find to defeat the hag in her shadow-haunted cottage.

Chapter 2: Thicker Than Water 20

Iron Taviah is only one of a coven of hags spread across Geb working to manufacture a dangerous poison. Sahni the sea hag dominates the half-sunken town of Sallowshore, where many residents have signed one of her cursed contracts. The characters must face Sahni in a submerged temple she uses for her own wicked purposes.

Chapter 3: Showdown in Slagtown 38

The third member of the Graveclaw coven runs Pagked, a broken-down industrial town. Only undead and clockwork constructs remain in this dismal place. To find Decrosia, the rust hag, the characters must employ cunning and skill rather than brute force.

Chapter 4: Biology Lessons 52

The final member of the Graveclaw, Nathnelma the grave hag, teaches necromancy at the Twilight Castrum, a school on the outskirts of Geb's largest city. To learn about the toxin and earn the favor of Geb's ruling Blood Lords, the characters must track down and defeat the grave hag in her lair.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

Chancellor Kemnebi has a plan. The head of the Blood Lords plans to create a toxin to poison Geb's neighbors and make the victims susceptible to necromantic revivification. A coven of hags called the Graveclaw is working to manufacture this toxin on his behalf. In this adventure, the characters track down each member of the coven and unravel the plot—although they won't have enough evidence to confront Kemnebi until later in the Adventure Path.

Structurally, "Graveclaw" is a travel narrative. In each chapter, the characters travel to a new part of Geb. As they investigate the toxin the hags are brewing, they learn about Geb, its people, and the factions that run it behind the scenes.

All of Geb's major factions are represented here, and the characters can earn Reputation Points with many of them. By the time the characters shatter the coven, they should have a good feel for these factions and Geb itself, which will help when they have the chance to become Blood Lords themselves later in the Adventure Path.

ADVANCEMENT TRACK

"Graveclaw" is designed for four characters.

- 4** The characters begin the adventure at 4th level.
- 5** The characters should reach 5th level after defeating Iron Taviah in her cottage.
- 6** The characters should advance to 6th level when they're done at Sallowshore.
- 7** The characters should advance to 7th level once they infiltrate Pagked and defeat Decrosia.

The characters should advance to 8th level by the end of the adventure.

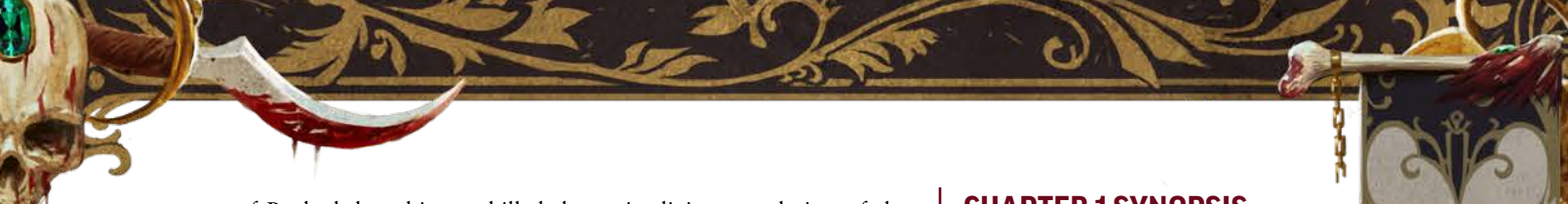


Chapter 1: Into the Woods

In the first adventure of the Blood Lords Adventure Path, “Zombie Feast,” the characters met the Blood Lord **Berline Haldoli** (LE female halfling necromancer 6). Berline tasked them with investigating a failing farm outside Graydirge and the characters’ investigations revealed a coven of hags called the Graveclaw was behind the sabotage. The Graveclaw was creating an undetectable poison that combines two specific ingredients: braingrit and tremor paste. The farm outside Graydirge was only a test site, and Berline wants to know what the Graveclaw is scheming.

The Graveclaw consists of four hags spread across Geb to keep their activities and membership

a secret; many people assume a hag coven consists of only three members, and the Graveclaw uses this misunderstanding to conceal its efforts. Like most hags, the members of the Graveclaw coven work to dominate their surroundings. In addition to their personal undertakings, they’re working together to make poison at the behest of Chancellor Kemnebi (although none of the hags know this highly visible and political figure is their secret patron). An annis hag named Iron Taviah is responsible for producing braingrit, while a sea hag named Sahni Bride-of-the-Sea produces tremor paste. The rust hag Decrosia deployed the poison resulting from the combined mixture in the



town of Pagked, but this test killed the entire living population of that town; she's working to automate the ingredient creation process to create it on a greater scale. The poison by itself is merely lethal; a grave hag named Nathnelma labors to procure a magical third ingredient that makes those killed by the poison easier to animate and control. Although Nathnelma might be considered the leader of Graveclaw, as she's the most powerful, the hags are fractious and independent—something the characters can use to break the coven as they investigate.

The Necromancer at Dinner

When this adventure begins, supper is already underway at Qhallaqh Manor, the estate Berline Haldoli gave to the characters in the prior adventure. Berline invited herself to the estate as a dinner guest and the characters are in no position to refuse. She brought two servants with her: a fresh, petite skeleton named Glorinsa and an old, lanky skeleton named Reacher. Glorinsa attends Berline at supper by pouring tea and carrying plates from the kitchen. Reacher is exactly what his name implies: his primary job is to fetch things too high for Berline or Glorinsa to reach. He also serves as a bodyguard and carries parcels.

Begin the adventure by reading or paraphrasing the following.

Berline Haldoli arrived for supper about two hours ago, but dinner wasn't served until she had a long chat, catching up with all the local Graydirge gossip: who was marrying who, who had the best recipe for pig head pie, qualities of the estate's landscaping, "Which is done so excellently—my compliments!"

Once supper was underway, Berline was served by her skeletal maid, Glorinsa, while a second skeleton named Reacher remained in the foyer with a hand on his sword. With every dish set before her, Berline rubbed a ring on her finger that twinkled with a green light. "Oh, it's just a poison detector," she explained with a happy smile. "Of course, I don't suspect *you* of anything. It's just a good habit to keep. We Blood Lords can never really be too careful!"

"Speaking of poison," she says as the last dishes are whisked away. "I've done some discreet nosing around concerning that Kepgeda person you all faced down the other day. She was a naughty young woman, no mistake." Berline leans in as if spilling some confidential secret. "Sure enough, a coven of hags called the Graveclaw made the toxin you discovered. The Graveclaw includes an annis hag named Iron Taviah, and Kepgeda was her daughter!"

Leaning back in her chair as Glorinsa pours a cup of after-dinner coffee, Berline continues. "Graveclaw has quite the reputation. Quite. Iron Taviah lives in Axan Wood; they say she fled there after Magaambya representatives drove her out of the Mwangi Expanse decades ago. But the rest of the coven... they're all scattered! No one knows where they are. That's not usual for a coven of hags, no it isn't. Not at all.

"Frankly, I'm quite curious about this coven. Making an undetectable poison and testing it on innocent farmers? Whatever for? And who dares even attempt such a thing in Geb, where punishment is so, well, let's be honest, so severe.

"I know it's a lot to ask, since you all have this lovely new home here and are no doubt as comfortable as ticks in a bottle of blood. But would you mind too terribly visiting Iron Taviah in Axan Wood? I don't think she'll be very happy to see you, since you eliminated her daughter, but I really think we ought to find out what this poison business is all about, don't you?

"Once you've figured it out, well, I need you to clean it all up. Murder, I think, is the best fate for everyone involved. After all, Iron Taviah and anyone she's in

CHAPTER 1 SYNOPSIS

The characters are recruited by their Blood Lord patron, Berline Haldoli, to investigate Kepgeda's mother, an annis hag named Iron Taviah. To find her, they must enter the haunted forest in Geb's heartland, Axan Wood. There the characters battle Taviah's minions and meet Drusilla, a fey with reasons of her own for seeing Taviah destroyed.

The characters trek through the forest to Taviah's cottage, which lies half within the Shadow Plane. The cottage is warded by magic and home to many guards; the characters are unlikely to reach Taviah undetected and she's eager to avenge her daughter.

CHAPTER 1 TREASURE

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

- *+1 striking battle axe*
- *barkskin potion*
- *fear gem*
- *Hunter's Hagbook* (page 77)
- *lucky kitchen witch* (page 77)
- *minor sturdy wooden shield*
- *oil of mending*
- *sneaky key*
- *stuffed fox wondrous figurine* (page 77)

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league with—I'd guess her coven, frankly—sought to inflict death on a massive scale. That mustn't go unpunished. No, it mustn't. I'm responsible to enact some justice, and I'm doing so through you."

Encourage the characters to roleplay as much of supper as they wish. Berline is tirelessly cheerful and genuinely interested in food, gardening, and gossip (particularly about the politics of Graydirge and of the wider Geb political scene). Although she phrases her request like a plea, it should be quite clear to the characters that it's more akin to a demand delivered with Berline's pleasant veneer. Berline can answer questions the characters have about the Graveclaw or Iron Taviah. Likely questions and Berline's responses are as follows.

What else do you know about Graveclaw? "Not a great deal. They're very secretive, but I suppose that's only to be expected with hags. They've been operating in Geb for several decades. I'm told their services are available for those willing to pay their price, but I'm a humble Blood Lord of modest means, so I've never inquired. The only member I know about is Iron Taviah, and that's only because she's rather infamous."

What makes Iron Taviah so special? "Well, no one knows how old she is. She lived in the Mwangi Expanse for a long time, but they say she's never truly recovered from the wounds the Magaambyans dealt her. Eventually, she settled in Axan Wood. She raised Kepgeda herself, which is most unusual. Why would she do that? She taught her daughter necromancy and ritual magic. Annis hags are big, strong, brutal creatures, but Taviah appears to also be a scholar, and that makes her as dangerous as she is unusual."

What can you tell us about the Axan Wood? "Oh, it's a fairy forest! Dark, gloomy, and haunted, so of course it's absolutely delightful! I wish I were going myself; I'm really rather envious. But duty calls, you understand, and I'm off to Yled soon. Keep your wits about you when in a fairy forest. You know the rules."

What are the rules? Berline ticks the rules off on her fingers. "Don't leave the path. Don't anger the fair folk. Keep your cold iron handy. Now you know."

Axan Wood is huge. Where do we start? Berline snaps for Reacher to give her a map from a satchel he wears and shows it to the characters. Her sources indicate Iron Taviah lives in a cottage in the westernmost portion of the forest—an area about 50 miles square. "Iron Taviah lives somewhere there. I don't know where, but someone must. You want my advice? Get into that forest and start looking around! Ask questions! I'm sure there are pleasant and courteous folk in there who will be happy to talk to you."

A Final Gift

As the conversation winds down, Berline makes the living characters in the party an offer. If all of the characters have negative healing, skip over her offer.

Berline squints and wrinkles her nose, as though deciding whether to reveal something else. "Look, here it is. You're acting on behalf of the Blood Lords now and that gives me a modicum of responsibility for your actions. I know you'll likely stumble into, shall I say, frailties of the flesh that might be best served with healing magic. But most healing magic is, as I'm sure I don't have to tell you, illegal. And having my agents running around with healing wands and potions just bursting with positive energy doesn't make me look good. No, not good at all. So, I want to offer you something—a special ritual passed down to me—one that overcomes some of those frailties and puts you on better footing with our undead compatriots."

The ritual Berline describes provides a living character with the negative healing ability undead (and some living creatures, such as dhampirs) possess (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 2 305). This ritual happens off-screen, at Berline's estate just before sunrise, and skill checks for the ritual aren't necessary. Living creatures who willingly undertake the ritual gain negative healing for 1 year. Berline doesn't teach the ritual to the characters, but she's willing to cast it any time they'd like in the future (such as if a year passes, or if new living characters join the party). Berline hopes this gift eases their reliance on positive magic that's illegal in Geb; if they characters resorted to such magic in the prior adventure, Berline doesn't speak of it and considers it a mere dalliance of the past that's best forgotten.

Whether or not any characters choose to undertake her ritual, Berline expects the party to leave for Axan Wood within the next day or two. Berline badgers local merchants to offer the characters low-grade cold iron weapons at a 10 percent discount. When the characters are ready, they can depart for Axan Wood.

A Fey Forest

Axan Wood is no ordinary forest. Long ago, magic swept through this place, twisting the trees and altering many of the animals, beasts, and plants that dwell here. The characters have only a vague idea of where Iron Taviah lives in the western forest; Berline provided only an approximate place to start, suggesting they ask locals for guidance. The characters should therefore be watching for help in the wood.

Soon after entering Axan Wood, the characters come to the attention of the local guardian of the forest, a huldra named Drusilla. Drusilla has ranged

throughout this forest for more than 20 years, ever since her mortal lover Neboah was abducted and slain by Iron Taviah (for more on Taviah's story, see page 88). Drusilla doesn't think herself strong enough to assault the hag in her cottage, so she has quietly laid a magical siege to the surrounding forest, making things as difficult as possible for Taviah while hoping for a way to finally enact her revenge. The characters may be her best opportunity for that revenge.

When the characters enter the forest, read or paraphrase the following.

A narrow path leads between twisted trees covered in black mold. Branches hang from their sides like broken limbs. Dark leaves form a thick canopy that blocks almost all sunlight, leaving the forest floor cloaked in deep shadow. A thick and moist mat of fallen leaves covers the ground, and although this forest layer muffles footfalls, every step upon it sends centipedes, beetles, and other vermin scurrying from underfoot. A wind gusts from far ahead, blowing hanging moss, and a hollow moaning follows.

The forest contains several narrow paths that wind unexpectedly and end suddenly, making swift travel difficult. Movement off the path is difficult terrain, or even greater difficult terrain in places. The thick leaves and overall gloom grant a +2 circumstance bonus to Stealth checks to Hide or Sneak. The leaves also make footprints hard to hide; Survival checks to Track gain a +2 circumstance bonus as well.

HEADHUNTERS MODERATE 4

A character who is Tracking as an exploration activity (or who is Scouting or Searching, and is trained or better in Survival) spots heavy boot prints belonging to two creatures traveling together. If the tracks are found, a character who succeeds at a DC 20 Nature check identifies the prints as the hobnailed boots of redcaps. If the characters Track the redcaps they can approach the fey unobserved.

Use the Axan Path map on page 8 for this encounter.

Creatures: The two redcaps, Marco and Rolno, work for Iron Taviah, collecting the heads of intelligent creatures so Taviah can render the brains into braingrit. Characters who can approach the redcaps unobserved overhear the following conversation.

Two small old men converse on the path. Each wears a long red cap and they lean on scythes. "Marco," says one in a plaintive voice, "How much longer we gots to be out 'ere?"

"Now, Rolno," says the other, one hand on his hip, "You 'member what the lady told us. 'I don't want to see you again,' she said, 'till you've got six 'eads each!' Now, 'ow many 'eads ye got?"

Rolno bends to his waist and counts the severed heads dangling from his belt. "Tree. But ye got five! How'd ye get five when I's only got tree?"

"Well, Rolno, I'm smarter than ye are, see? While yer keepin' 'em busy, I come up behind an' off wif der 'ead!"

Rolno kicks the ground with an iron toe. "But Marco, that don't seem right. You'll 'elp me git tree more, wontcha?"

Marco claps Rolno's shoulder. "Course I will! Ain't we mates? Ye can 'ave der 'eads, and I git what's in der pockets."

"Oh Marco, ye gots a true heart, ye do."



Marco and Rolno

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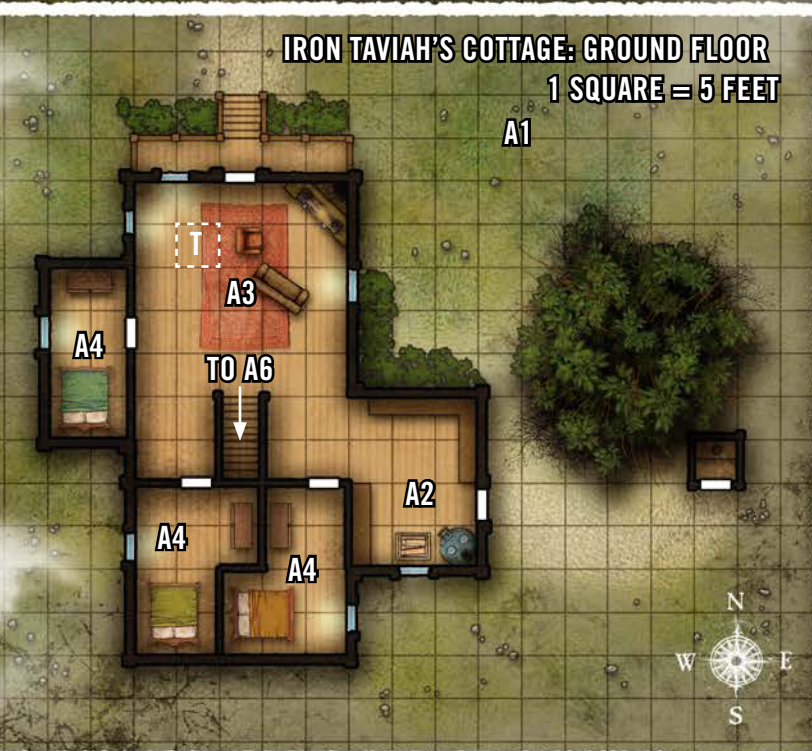
AXAN PATH
1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



FOREST CAIRN
1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



IRON TAVIAH'S COTTAGE: GROUND FLOOR
1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



IRON TAVIAH'S COTTAGE: BASEMENT
1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



IRON TAVIAH'S COTTAGE: ATTIC
1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



The redcaps return to their headhunting, moving in the direction of the characters. Characters who know they're coming can prepare an ambush, or hide and let them pass. If the redcaps stumble on the characters (or if the characters don't spot the tracks and stumble upon the redcaps) the fey are ecstatic to find intelligent creatures whose heads they can harvest, and they cackle with glee as they attack. They can't be negotiated with, but if one of the redcaps is defeated, the other attempts to flee.

MARCO AND ROLNO

CREATURE 4

Weak redcaps (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 6, 278)

Initiative Perception +10

What the Redcaps Know: A captured redcap doesn't give in to interrogation unless a character succeeds at a DC 18 Intimidation check to Coerce him. Alternatively, the characters may try to deceive Marco and Rolno with a DC 18 Deception check to trick them into revealing what they know.

The redcaps are working for Iron Tavia. They admit the hag wants the heads of intelligent creatures "for their brains, so she can sprinkle fairy dust on 'em." The redcaps have instructions not to damage the brains of creatures they kill, and unintelligent creatures such as animals won't suffice. They don't know why Tavia wants brains or why she's adding fairy dust, but a player might recall braingrit was one of the ingredients of the toxin the Three-Fingered Hand was testing in Graydirge.

Watcher from the Woods: When the characters are questioning the redcaps or examining their bodies after the fight, secretly roll DC 25 Perception checks; characters who succeed feel they're being watched from within the forest. This watcher is the huldra Drusilla, who hopes the characters might be of use to her soon. She doesn't approach the characters yet and uses her Axan walk ability to evade pursuit.

Treasure: One of Rolno's heads has a *sneaky key* under its tongue.

THE FOREST GUARDIAN

SEVERE 4

For the rest of the day, forest animals doing Drusilla's bidding observe the characters, but Drusilla doesn't approach until the characters stop for the night.

Creatures: While the characters prepare a campsite but before they've gone to sleep, Drusilla approaches them to test their hospitality.

A few faint slivers of moonlight shine between the leaves as a woman appears on the edge of the camp. She's dressed as a simple peasant, with long draping sleeves and unbound

auburn hair, and she carries a basket laden with small red apples over one arm.

"Hail," she says, looking around the camp. "I am Drusilla, a woman of this forest, and I have lost my way. May I take shelter in your camp for the night?"

Characters with knowledge of hags may be suspicious of this woman; after all, annis hags can change shape to appear as human women, and the characters already know Iron Tavia lurks nearby.

Drusilla does her best to keep up her guise as a simple peasant woman who resides in the forest. She introduces herself with a polite curtsy. She claims her husband is Neboah, a woodsman, and their home is nearby. She went out gathering apples, but, she says, "the paths in these woods don't want to be followed." Characters who succeed at a DC 25 Perception check to Sense Motive can tell some elements of her story aren't true—her husband was Neboah, and their home was nearby, but he's been dead for decades, and she's certainly not lost. Those who critically succeed spot a careless swish of Drusilla's bovine tail or a glimpse of her hollow wooden back and realize she isn't human. With a successful DC 25 Nature check to Recall Knowledge, this character can identify her as a huldra, a forest fey who insists on respectful treatment.

DRUSILLA

CREATURE 7

UNIQUE CN MEDIUM FEY

Female variant huldra (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 138)

Perception +17; darkvision, scent (imprecise) 60 feet

Languages Aklo, Common, Sylvan

Skills Athletics +17, Deception +15 (+19 to Impersonate a human version of herself), Diplomacy +15, Intimidation +15, Nature +17, Stealth +15

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

AC 25; **Fort** +12, **Ref** +15, **Will** +17

HP 115, regeneration 10 (deactivated by acid or fire);

Weaknesses cold iron 10, fire 10

Speed 30 feet

Melee ✎ fist +18, **Damage** 2d8+10 bludgeoning

Melee ✎ tail +18 (agile, backswing), **Damage** 2d4+10 bludgeoning plus befuddling lash

Primal Innate Spells DC 25, attack +17; **4th** *searing light*, *summon animal*, *wall of fire*; **2nd** *speaking with animals* (at will); **Cantrips** (4th) *electric arc*, *read aura*, *tanglefoot*

Axan Walk Drusilla ignores non-magical difficult and greater difficult terrain within Axan Wood.

Befuddling Lash (curse, enchantment, mental) When Drusilla damages a creature with her tail, a wave of befuddlement clouds the target's thoughts. The creature must succeed at a DC 23 Will save or become stupefied 1 (stupefied 2 on a critical failure) for 1 minute.

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Manipulate Luck ♦ (curse, primal) Drusilla touches another creature to manipulate the creature's luck. The creature must attempt a DC 25 Will save. On a failure, Drusilla chooses good luck or bad luck. If she chooses good luck, the affected creature can roll twice on one d20 roll within the next day and use the higher result; this is a fortune effect. If Drusilla chooses bad luck, the creature must roll twice and use the lower result on its next d20 roll; this is a misfortune effect. Once Drusilla has affected a target with Manipulate Luck, that target is temporarily immune to Manipulate Luck from any huldra for 1 day.



Drusilla

Drusilla's Riddles: As long as the characters are polite, Drusilla is a pleasant and courteous guest, inquiring about the characters' business in the forest. She shares her apples, which are small and tart but delicious and safe to eat. If the characters are obviously suspicious of her apples, Drusilla isn't insulted and commends them for their wisdom. "There's much that is poisonous in this forest," she admits. "And much of that poison comes from a single source." For now, she speaks no further on Iron Taviah, even if the characters mention her by name.

As everyone sits round the camp, Drusilla initiates a riddle game. She asks three riddles. If the players are unable to solve a riddle, their characters can attempt a DC 25 check to deduce each answer, using Bardic Lore or any other skill you think might be appropriate.

- "Before I'm born, I live in the earth. But to be shaped, I bathe in flames. When I die, I'm red or green. What am I?" The answer is iron.
- "Every day, you find I've grown, so you bite me, clip me, or paint me. I am neither flesh nor bone, but I'll be on you when you're dead. What am I?" The answer is fingernails.
- "I am a family of sisters three—one in the forest, one by the sea. The third's in a mine, hidden from sky, but among all of us, we've only one eye. What am I?" The answer is a coven of hags.

Sufficient Answers: If the characters successfully answer at least two of Drusilla's riddles, and they treat her with respect, she decides they might be clever enough to defeat Iron Taviah. She confesses her true identity; read or paraphrase the following.

"I have lived alone in these woods for more than twenty years, ever since Iron Taviah took my beloved Neboah to her cottage, where he died giving her a daughter. I've hated her ever since, but her defenses are too strong. Creatures of shadow are her allies, and she commands magic beyond my ken. If you promise to hunt her, and kill her if you can, I will ensure your path leads to her cottage, and give you a weapon that will make your task easier."

If the characters agree to kill Iron Taviah, Drusilla waves over a wolf waiting in the shadows. The wolf carefully holds the *Hunter's Hagbook* (page 77) in its teeth. The wolf drops it at Drusilla's feet before bounding away. Drusilla picks it up, fastidiously wipes it off, and hands the grimoire to the characters. "The rest of Iron Taviah's coven dwells far beyond my sight—nevertheless, she wields potent magical curses. This book may protect you and the spells within may thwart her designs."

Drusilla also offers to give each character a bit of luck. She explains that doing so requires she touch them, and she doesn't touch any character who doesn't wish it. To those willing to accept her touch, she uses her Manipulate Luck ability to grant good luck.

"Beyond that tree is another path. Stay upon it." Drusilla says at last, before departing the camp. "It will take you to the hag's cottage by sunset tomorrow. But be wary! These woods are filled with many creatures that don't heed me. Some serve Taviah, as the redcaps did, but others are more ancient and more wicked."

Insufficient Responses: Characters who fail to answer at least two of Drusilla's riddles disappoint her. With a sigh, she stands, thanks the party for their hospitality, and departs into the forest.

If the characters disrespect Drusilla—especially by calling out her non-human nature or accusing her of deception—she grows angry, rises, and demands an apology. She can still be mollified by characters who succeed at a DC 20 Diplomacy, Nature, or other relevant skill check; otherwise, she departs in a huff. Drusilla doesn't fight unless attacked, but if violence erupts, she uses all her powers to slay the characters, fleeing only if reduced below 30 Hit Points.

XP Award: If the characters are polite to Drusilla and either answer her riddles or learn her secret, award them 120 XP, as though they'd defeated her in combat.

DEAD WOOD

MODERATE 4

As the characters travel along the path the next day, they pass among twisted trees, dead and leafless. Axan Wood is home to many undead, many trees, and even some undead trees. You can use the Axan Path map on page 8 for this encounter, or use any other forest map of your choosing.

Creatures: Three of these trees are the corpses of arboreals, a kind of undead known as an arboreal snag (page 80). These arboreal snags have been cleaning the forest in their own gruesome way: after the redcaps decapitate their victims, the arboreal snags snatch up the remaining flesh in their hungry roots.

The arboreal snags remain still, hoping to lure the characters within their reach, but the characters can spot them before getting close with a successful DC 22 Perception check. As these arboreal snags hunch over torn human and elf bodies, they have the Blood Roots ability (page 80) rather than Putrid Sap. They have virtually no impulse toward self-preservation and fight until destroyed.

ARBOREAL SNAGS (3)

CREATURE 3

Page 80

Initiative Stealth +12

AXAN WOOD ENCOUNTERS

The Dead Wood and Forest Cairn encounters reinforce the mood of the haunted Axan Wood, but they're not strictly necessary to the plot. You can replace them with encounters of your own design or skip them. If you skip them, consider providing XP opportunities later in this chapter so the characters advance in level at the end of Chapter 1.

FOREST CAIRN

SEVERE 4

Later on the same day the characters encounter the arboreal snags, the path they're following leads to a clearing. In the center of the clearing is a step pyramid more than 30 feet high. Stairs lead to its flat summit. The pyramid's entrance is at its base—a narrow gap between massive stones. The trail circles around the pyramid and continues past the other side of the clearing. Use the map on page 8 for this encounter.

Creatures: Three forest protectors were buried within this pyramid millennia ago. The malevolent energies of Axan Wood animated them as cairn wights. They have no desire to protect the woods any longer, only to watch over their pyramid and the clearing around it. When the characters arrive, they stand at different levels of the step pyramid, moaning somber songs in an undead chorus. Their dirge of death and loss echoes through the forest, so the characters are likely to hear them as soon as they see the trail opening into the clearing. Characters who want to move around the clearing to the path on the other side, avoiding the cairn wights, can do so.

The cairn wights aren't Iron Taviah's allies, but they aren't inclined to speak peacefully with the characters, either. Their first instinct is to violently punish the characters for intruding into their clearing, shifting their song to a Funeral Dirge as they draw their swords and attack. Characters who withstand the wights' efforts to frighten intruders away can earn a pause in their attacks while they question why the characters have come. They know Iron Taviah lives in a cottage nearby, and that she has several servants who seem perpetually cloaked in shadow. She once tried to recruit the wights to her cause, but they wanted nothing to do with her. Although the wights remember they were once guardians of Axan Wood, none of them remember their names or deeds in life.

In a fight, these cairn wights focus their efforts on characters who seem most likely to enter the pyramid. They don't pursue foes who retreat beyond the clearing. If the characters snipe at them from the beyond the clearing's edge, the cairn wights hide inside their pyramid. The wights fight until destroyed.

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CAIRN WIGHTS (3)

Pathfinder Bestiary 2 292

Initiative Perception +11

Treasure: If the wights are defeated, the characters can safely explore inside the pyramid. Within, three stone beds stand around a central column. Gold and silver treasures litter the floor—these arm rings, finger rings, and torcs are worth a total of 100 gp. Mounted on the column is a *minor sturdy shield* with antlers painted on its surface and a +1 *striking battle axe* inscribed with the words “Troll Shaver.”

Iron Taviah's Cottage

The path through Axan Wood leads to a meadow containing a creek lined with willow trees and a large stone cottage at its center. The entire meadow is surrounded by an old, low stone wall with a front and side gate. If the characters moved quickly along the path, they reach this meadow just before sundown on the day after they met Drusilla; a party that moves more slowly (or that rests after the forest encounters) might arrive at a different time of day.

The cottage's exterior and interior doors are made of wood (Hardness 10, 40 HP, BT 20). The exterior doors are usually unlocked, but they're locked at night and the inhabitants can lock them if they suspect trouble (each requires three successful DC 20 Thievery checks to Pick a Lock). All the windows on the ground floor are simple wooden shutters (Hardness 5, 20 HP, BT 10); there are no glass panes. The attic window is glass; see area A5. Climbing through an open window requires a successful DC 10 Athletics check.

The cottage's inhabitants don't need much light. The ground floor and basement are dimly lit, while the attic and the basement stairs are dark.

Taviah built her cottage where the boundary with the Shadow Plane is especially thin. The basement stairs mark the transition spot between the mundane world and the Shadow Plane, and the basement is entirely within a pocket of the Shadow Plane. The only access to the basement is through the basement stairs. Throughout the cottage, the radius of all light sources from light spells and areas of light spells are halved; the more extreme effects in the basement are described in areas A6 and A7.

A1. COTTAGE EXTERIOR

TRIVIAL 4

The stone cottage has a window beneath its masonry roof that likely leads to a small attic, a front door under a covered porch, and a side door. Gardens line the side of the cottage and the front porch. Underneath a large willow

CREATURE 4

stands an outhouse. Wagon ruts lead to the cottage and away again, into the forest. A ceramic figurine of a sad-faced fetchling gnome rests in the front garden amid flowers and herbs.

Elemental Sentinel: The gnome figurine is a security measure. Iron Taviah used the *elemental sentinel* ritual (*Secrets of Magic* 150) to bind an earth elemental wisp (*Bestiary* 3 90) inside it. The wisp has a Perception modifier of +3 and normal vision, hearing, and touch. It has a clear view of the front of the cottage, including the front door. If the wisp detects anyone approaching the cottage who isn't a fetchling or Iron Taviah, it telepathically alerts Taviah to intruders—its connection to the hag means it can alert her even when she's in the basement. The figurine radiates conjuration magic, should any of the characters use *detect magic* or a similar effect; if the figurine is broken, the wisp flees into the earth.

Creatures: Two fetchling caretakers are visible from the edge of the forest, working outdoors. Tumulo, the gardener, weeds the garden alongside the kitchen (area A2) while his assistant, Bardano, conducts repairs on the outhouse.

If Tumulo or Bardano spot intruders, they shout loudly for help, alerting the fetchlings in area A2; in addition, any conflict visible through the kitchen windows in A2 draws the attention of the fetchlings there. Tumulo and Bardano don't take the adventurers on by themselves, instead retreating into the house to hide in shadows and use Shadow Stride.

If the characters approach the two fetchlings peacefully, Tumulo and Bardano exchange a look and put on pleasant demeanors, attempting to lure the characters into the house with offers of food and drink; seeing through this deception requires a successful Perception check against their Deception DC of 17.

The fetchlings are loyal but not ready to give their lives. A caretaker reduced to fewer than 10 Hit Points flees the meadow and doesn't return.

COTTAGE CARETAKERS (2)

CREATURE 2

Elite fetchling scouts (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 2 6, 117)

Initiative Perception +7

A2. KITCHEN AND PANTRY

TRIVIAL 4

Iron Taviah's cottage includes two kitchens—the mundane one on the ground floor and a “hag's kitchen” in the basement where Taviah performs rituals. This mundane kitchen has a black iron stove, two large washbasins, and storage shelves and cupboards filled with eating utensils and cooking tools. A small wooden doll dressed as a witch rides a broom hanging from

the ceiling (see **Treasure**). To the south, the pantry is lined with shelves packed with food stores and kitchen supplies. A door leads from the cottage to the east, and an open archway connects the kitchen to the common room (area **A3**).

Creatures: Two fetchlings—Anatalla the cook and Gessamon the housekeeper—labor in the kitchen, making meals for Iron Taviah and her fetchling staff.

From where they work in the kitchen, Anatalla has a clear view of the garden and meadow where Tumulo and Bardano work, and Gessamon can see the front door of the cottage in the common room. If either of them identifies trespassers, they rush to aid their fellow fetchlings but try to fall back into the cottage, where they can more easily use shadow blending and their Shadow Stride ability.

Gessamon is more loyal than Anatalla; she fights to the death. Anatalla flees the area if reduced to fewer than 5 Hit Points.

COTTAGE CARETAKERS (2) CREATURE 2

Elite fetchling scouts (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 2 6, 117)

Initiative Perception +7

Conspiracy Clues: Gessamon records all the shipments of braingrit Iron Taviah creates. Periodically, the fetchlings load the braingrit onto a wagon provided by the Carters Consortium. A character who searches Gessamon finds a small notebook filled with pickup dates and quantities of braingrit; notes in the margin of the book name Sahni Bride-of-the-Sea with the words “tremor paste” and “Sallowshore” beneath them. A second note names Decrosia and the town of Pagked with the words “insufficient quantity!” These two notes provide leads for the characters; once they’ve defeated Iron Taviah, they can pursue Sahni and Decrosia, two other members of Taviah’s coven. The notebook is also of particular interest to Gishkar the Fishmonger in Sallowshore; he provides a mission to characters who show it to him.

Faction Reputation: Gessamon’s notebook plainly indicates that Carters Consortium members arranged the shipments and names an agent, Mauldor Gavvik, in Yled. Even though the carriers likely didn’t know what they were hauling, the connection to a dangerous poison

could nevertheless embarrass them. Characters who provide the notebook to the Carters Consortium gain 1 Reputation Point with that faction. The characters can do so at any time, as the faction has agents across Geb, but their most direct opportunity is to seek out Mauldor in Chapter 4.

Treasure: The crude doll hanging from the ceiling is a *lucky kitchen witch* (page 77). A *barkskin potion* and an *oil of mending* sit on the counter in neatly labeled jars.

A3. COMMON ROOM

MODERATE 4

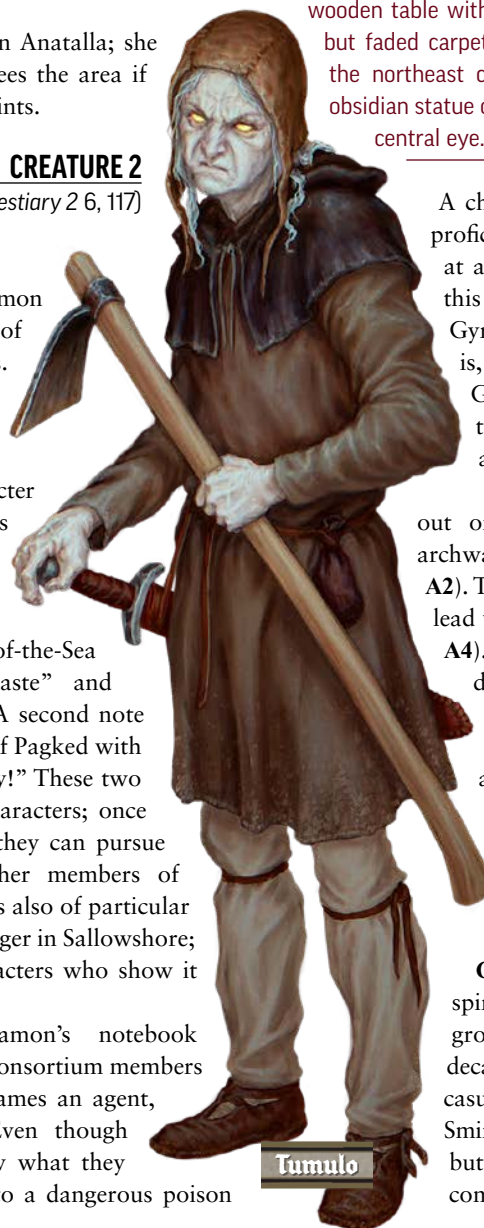
The cottage’s common room is large but cluttered, with several mismatched and rickety chairs, a rectangular wooden table with a single long bench, and a colorful but faded carpet. An impressive stone fireplace fills the northeast corner and atop the fireplace is an obsidian statue of a cat with a large gem as its single, central eye.

A character who has expert or better proficiency in Religion, or who succeeds at a DC 19 Religion check, identifies this statue as an icon to the goddess Gyronna, the Angry Hag. Iron Taviah is, at best, a casual follower of Gyronna, but she considers an icon to ward away the deity’s spiteful attention to be wise.

The cottage’s front door leads out of the common room; an open archway leads east to the kitchen (area **A2**). Three other doors, all usually open, lead west and south to bedrooms (area **A4**). A stairway with a wooden railing descends into darkness (area **A6**).

A trapdoor in the ceiling leads to the attic (area **A5**), marked with a “T” on the map. While not exactly hidden, the trapdoor hasn’t been used in over a decade and is concealed by dust and soot; a successful DC 19 Perception check is required to spot it.

Creatures: Smirtlbin is a house spirit in Iron Taviah’s cottage. He’s grown less benevolent after many decades of the hag’s influence and casual mistreatment by the fetchlings. Smirtlbin is unfriendly to trespassers, but he doesn’t immediately initiate combat with them. He spends his time



Tumulo

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NIGHT APPROACH

The characters might wait to approach the cottage under cover of darkness. Until about midnight, smoke rises from the cottage's chimney in the common room, and dim light can be seen through the ground front windows. Four fetchlings on the ground floor socialize in the common room with occasional visits to the kitchen. After midnight, they put out the fire—leaving the entire cottage in darkness—and go to sleep in their bedrooms.

invisible within the common room, lurking near the fireplace. This hearth, too, is a security measure—the animated fireplace obeys Smirtlbin's commands.

When he sees intruders, Smirtlbin stands invisible in front of the fireplace and shouts “Whooh are YOU?!” in his biggest voice while the animated fireplace mimics speaking with its open hearth; he then scampers from the fireplace in case the characters decide to attack it. A character who succeeds at a DC 19 Perception check can hear Smirtlbin scamper off, revealing that someone else was in the area and the fireplace did not, in fact, speak. A character who succeeds at a DC 21 Nature check identifies the invisible voice as likely belonging to a house spirit; this DC is only 16 for characters who can see Smirtlbin despite his *invisibility*.

Smirtlbin accuses the characters of trespassing and demands they leave, “lest I rouse my mistress, who will turn you all into toads!” He genuinely wants the characters to leave, but his goal is peace, and



he'd prefer not to resort to violence. Characters can attempt to improve Smirtlbin's attitude by Making an Impression or similar actions (his Will DC is 21). Anyone who speaks Sylvan with him gains a +2 circumstance bonus, as does anyone who compliments the house. If Smirtlbin becomes hostile, he orders the animated fireplace to attack and backs it up with his own powers. A natural coward, he retreats elsewhere in the house if he's injured, letting the fireplace do the fighting on his behalf and nursing his wound while he's safely invisible.

SMIRTLBIN

CREATURE 2

UNIQUE CN TINY FEY

Male domovoi (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 136)

Initiative Perception +11

ANIMATED FIREPLACE

CREATURE 5

UNIQUE N LARGE CONSTRUCT MINDLESS

Variant animated furnace (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 18)

Perception +9; darkvision

Skills Athletics +15

Str +6, Dex -2, Con +5, Int -5, Wis +0, Cha -5

AC 24 (20 when broken); construct armor; Fort +15, Ref +6, Will +8

HP 65; Hardness 7; Immunities death effects, disease, doomed, drained, fatigued, healing, mental, necromancy, nonlethal attacks, paralyzed, poison, sickened, unconscious

Construct Armor Like normal objects, the animated fireplace has Hardness. This Hardness reduces any damage the fireplace takes by 7. Once the animated fireplace is reduced to fewer than half its Hit Points, or immediately upon being damaged by a critical hit, its construct armor breaks, removing the Hardness and reducing its Armor Class to 20.

Speed 15 feet

Melee ♦ hearth +15 (magical), **Damage** 2d8+6 bludgeoning plus 1d6 fire and Grab

Bellow Soot ♦♦ The animated fireplace coughs out a cloud of soot, filling a 20-foot emanation; creatures within the soot are concealed, and creatures outside the cloud are concealed to creatures within it. Creatures that begin their turn within the cloud must succeed at a DC 19 Fortitude save or be sickened 1 (sickened 2 on a critical failure); creatures immune to inhaled effects automatically succeed at this save. The fireplace can't Bellow Soot again for 1d4 rounds.

Fan the Flames ♦♦♦ The animated fireplace releases a gout of flame in a 30-foot cone that deals 3d6 fire damage (DC 22 basic Reflex save).

Swallow Whole ♦ (attack) Medium, 2d6+5 fire, Rupture 5

House Fight: If the characters fight the fetchlings inside the house, Smirtlbin stays out of it. He doesn't like the fetchlings, for although they clean and mend the house, they delight in being cruel to him. Once the fighting is over, he tries to get the characters to leave, as described above.

Treasure: The one-eyed obsidian statue is worth 50 gp and its removable eye is a *fear gem*. Smirtlbin's attitude to the characters worsens by one step if he catches anyone trying to take it.

Questioning Smirtlbin

If the characters make Smirtlbin friendly, or if they capture and interrogate him, the domovoi knows a lot about Iron Taviah's home. He knows about the *elemental sentinel* out front, and if the characters came in that way, he tells them Taviah almost certainly knows they're here. Smirtlbin is afraid of Taviah and drops his voice to a whisper whenever he speaks about her.

Smirtlbin won't fight on the character's behalf. If, after making him friendly or helpful, the characters suggest they're going to fight Taviah or even kill her, Smirtlbin retreats into the fireplace, plugs his ears, and sings loudly in Sylvan, desperately wanting them to just go away.

What's down the staircase? "The stairway leads to Shadow! It's beyond my reach. Taviah seldom emerges from there now, ever since her daughter Kepgeda departed for Gravedirge. Honoria, one of the fetchlings, serves her down there, and feeds Taviah's pet, a big lizard they call Midnight. I have never seen it; it never leaves the basement."

What's Taviah doing? "She cooks braingrit in her kitchen. I think it's a deadly poison!" By now the characters probably know braingrit is not, by itself, poisonous, but becomes a poison when combined with tremor paste.

Does Taviah have a covenant? "Oh yes! I have met them. But Taviah doesn't trust them and won't let them stay here. One is called Sahni Bride-of-the-Sea. She lives in Sallowshore, and is *also* making a deadly poison, called tremor paste. The other, Decrosia, dwells in Pagked. I don't know what she's doing, but it's probably not good, no, not at all." Smirtlbin can provide physical descriptions of the three hags in the covenant he's seen (he doesn't know about Nathnelma, the covenant's fourth and most powerful member).

What's the story with Kepgeda? "The poor girl. She and her twin brother, Nebumi, dwelled here for a time, and those

were good years. The house was more of a home. Taviah doted on Kepgeda, in her way, teaching her magic. In time, she left, but Taviah didn't let her go easily—she lopped off one of her daughter's fingers, and keeps it to this day! Now Taviah is worse than ever." Smirtlbin wrings his hands in anxiety. "This house is again a place of darkness, but it's still my home, and I can't leave."

Kepgeda had a brother? "Nebumi. His tale is the saddest of all. While Taviah lavished attention on her daughter, she shunned her son—he looked too much like his woodsman father, Neboah. Nebumi's presence was painful to her, and he died years ago, in the attic." Smirtlbin gestures to the attic door and adds, "His spirit dwells there still." If Smirtlbin points out the attic entry, the characters don't need to make Perception checks to find it.

XP Award: If the players negotiate with Smirtlbin and avoid a fight, award them 80 XP as if they had defeated both him and the animated fireplace in combat.

A4. BEDROOMS

Each of these three rooms includes two narrow beds, wooden bed stands with candle holders, and a pair of armoires filled with dark clothing and other personal belongings. Taviah's fetchling caretakers sleep here



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when they're not attending her or working around the house. Characters who look carefully note that four of the six beds see regular use, but one looks like it's used only rarely (this rarely used bed belongs to Honoria, who spends nearly all her time in the cottage basement with Taviah).

A5. ATTIC

MODERATE 4

The only ways into the attic are through the trapdoor in the common room (area A3) or the attic window at the front of the house. The attic is totally dark.

Heavy drapes cover a large rectangular window at one end of this long attic. Trunks, boxes, and assorted odds and ends line the east and west walls, and everything is covered by a thick layer of dust. Many of the objects cluttering the floor are children's toys, though they're all a bit macabre—the smile on a doll's ceramic head is marked with vampire fangs, a skeleton toy is made of real bones, a small stuffed fox has blood-red buttons for eyes, and a set of children's blocks are all painted in pale green to resemble gelatinous cubes.

From the darkness, a voice asks, "Can you play?"

Creatures: The attic is home to Nebumi, Iron Taviah's son and Kepgeda's brother, who died long ago of neglect and loneliness and has since risen as an attic whisperer. Nebumi is accompanied by a single playmate, an inhabitant of the Shadow Plane who entered from the cottage basement a while ago. Nebumi—a skeletal child clad in rags—is visible to anyone who has darkvision or brings a light source into the attic; the shadow lurks in the darkness that gathers in the attic's corners.

Sadness and a desire for company overwhelms Nebumi, and he can't help but channel those feelings into violence. Nevertheless, a character who speaks to him and succeeds at a DC 22 Diplomacy check to Make an Impression can keep Nebumi talking for a few moments.

If the characters calm Nebumi, the attic whisperer says his playmate, whom he calls "Shadow," isn't very good at games. "But maybe you'll be better? C'mon, I'll show you the rules..." When he gets within 10 feet of the characters, Nebumi uses Aura of Sobs and attacks. Shadow tries to Steal Shadow to create a Shadow Spawn.

Both undead fight until destroyed, but neither leaves the attic.

NEBUMI

CREATURE 4

Attic whisperer (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 2 28)

Initiative Perception +10

SHADOW

CREATURE 4

Pathfinder Bestiary 289

Initiative Stealth +14

Investigating the Attic: Once Nebumi and his playmate are defeated, the characters can investigate the attic, where they find many mementos of Nebumi and Kepgeda's childhood: homemade toys, children's books, and unusual rocks. Stick-figure art depicts "Geda" (Kepgeda), "Numi" (Nebumi), and "Tavia" (their mother). Many other drawings depict "Daddy," but all of them are different except that he's carrying an axe in each hand. The children never knew their father and had no idea what he looked like, only that he was a woodsman. Diaries written in simplistic Common describe the days of Nebumi's childhood and illuminate his story as he understood it; they present the same information about Neboah and Nebumi that the characters might have heard from Drusilla, although from a child's perspective. While Taviah doted on Kepgeda, teaching her necromancy and rituals, she shunned Nebumi, who eventually died alone in the attic.

Treasure: The children's toys and other odds and ends that fill the attic are old and well used, with no monetary value. However, the toy fox with blood-red buttons for eyes is a *stuffed fox wondrous figurine* (page 77).

A6. BASEMENT STAIRS

MODERATE 4

The staircase that descends beneath Iron Taviah's cottage links it with the basement tucked into a quasi-real pocket that overlaps with the Shadow Plane. Non-magical light doesn't illuminate the staircase; characters attempting to light their way with candles or torches find the darkness impenetrable.

The stairs reach far longer than an ordinary staircase should and the rickety, treacherous steps are difficult terrain. Both the top and bottom of the staircase end at simple wooden doors.

Creatures: The stairs are guarded by two shadows, creatures Taviah bullied into servitude. They don't attack any of the cottage's usual residents, but they attack all other intruders, with one of the shadows moving through the wall to attack the party from behind so they can catch intruders between them. Both shadows fight until destroyed, pursuing foes who flee into the cottage, but they don't venture from the cottage if it's daytime.

SHADOWS (2)

CREATURE 4

Pathfinder Bestiary 289

Initiative Stealth +14

A7. BASEMENT

SEVERE 4

Like the basement stairs, the basement can't be illuminated with non-magical light. In addition, anyone Casting a Spell with the darkness or shadow traits gain a +1 circumstance bonus to the spell DC and spell attack rolls with the spell. Anyone who Casts a Spell or Activates an Item with the light trait must succeed at a DC 6 flat check or lose the spell or activation.

This large open space is shrouded in darkness. The ground looks soft, like moist earth. Towering piles of books, clothing, knickknacks, cooking and ritual ingredients, and decades of refuse lie piled on the floor and furniture in enormous mounds. A winding path meanders through the hoarded belongings. A faint light flickers in the northwest, illuminating a large and bubbling black cauldron.

When the characters enter the basement, Taviah is working in her private kitchen, which takes up the northwestern corner. Besides the cauldron, which the characters can dimly see due to the magical flames that burn beneath it, the kitchen includes a stone countertop for preparing food and spell ingredients, and cupboards stuffed full of kitchen tools and commonly used items. A row of ritual books with blood-red bindings are neatly lined up on the countertop. Taviah's kitchen is a ghastly sight; characters who get close enough to investigate it see the countertop is covered in blood and raw body parts.

The path that winds around the basement between Taviah's piles of hoarded possessions isn't difficult terrain, but anyone who Strides at more than half their speed while on the path must attempt a DC 15 Reflex save. On a failure, they knock over everything in one randomly determined adjacent square; these items fall into a randomly determined square adjacent to the pile's square of origin, creating difficult terrain. On a critical failure, the character is also knocked prone.

Taviah's sleeping area is in the southeast; it includes a pile of bearskin and other furs suitable for a Large humanoid, as well as a chamber pot and some half-melted candles perched on skulls that rest on the floor. Midnight, Taviah's pet shadow drake, sleeps slightly north of this area, along the eastern wall.

Creatures: Iron Taviah works over her cauldron, where she's attended by Honoria, the most loyal of her fetchling caretakers and the one who sees herself poised to earn Taviah's favor now that Kepgeda is gone. Midnight is usually curled up nearby, waiting for kitchen scraps.

Taviah probably knows the characters are coming. She may have been alerted by the *elemental sentinel* in front of the house, the fetchlings, or simply the sounds

of battle on the basement stairs. Even so, she doesn't leave the basement, as she's content to let her minions wear down or kill intruders before they reach her.

Taviah glances over her shoulder at the characters as they enter.

"Come in, come in," the old hag beckons, almost laughing as she stands at her cauldron. "Who are you, and why have you come all this way, into my kitchen? Perhaps you're guests, here to see if Iron Taviah's hospitality is all it's rumored to be? Pity my sisters aren't here to welcome you. They so love guests."

Taviah is supremely confident in her ability to defeat any intruder. She fully intends to murder and eat the characters, but she's also curious who they are and why they've come. After all, most inhabitants in Axan Wood know better than to bother her. If the characters talk to her, Honoria and Midnight prowl around the basement to get into better positions to attack once the inevitable violence begins.

Because Taviah expects to eat the characters, she doesn't mind revealing her activities to them. She confirms she's making braingrit as a component of a deadly poison. "But it's not quite potent enough," she confides, "so I've had to spice it up with powder from the ground up bones of the fey. Now it'll do!" With this, she lets out a long, drawn-out cackle straight from a storybook. If the players characters mention Sahni Bride-of-the-Sea or Decrosia, Taviah confirms they are her sisters in the coven, but she hates them and considers them inferior, jealous of her powers and wisdom. She laughs at Sahni and Decrosia for hiding in Sallowshore and Pagked, too afraid to live with Taviah at the source of her power. She doesn't mention the fourth hag in her coven, Nathnelma, at all—mostly because Taviah's jealous of her power and knows Nathnelma is the only one who knows about the coven's mysterious patron. If the characters admit they killed Kepgeda, Taviah flies into a rage and attacks at once.

In any case, Taviah attacks once her curiosity is satisfied or if it's clear the characters mean her harm.

Taviah prefers to use her coven spells in a fight, starting with *harm* and *acid arrow*. After that, she casts *haste* on herself before entering melee. She tries to keep troublesome opponents at a distance with her Bonds of Iron.

Iron Taviah used the *unseen custodians* ritual (*Advanced Player's Guide* 245) in this area. The unseen servants conjured by this ritual can't attack, but Taviah can otherwise use them to hinder the characters. For example, if she has a spare action in

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the middle of combat, she might command one of her unseen servants to topple over one of the hoard piles, creating difficult terrain.

Honoraria and Midnight help Taviah as they're able, sticking to the shadows as much as they can to improve their defenses.

Taviah fights to the death, but Honoraria and Midnight try to flee if reduced below 10 HP or if Taviah is clearly losing.

As soon as Taviah is defeated, immediately proceed to "The Cottage Claims Taviah" below.

IRON TAVIAH

CREATURE 6

Page 88

Initiative Perception +14

HONORARIA

CREATURE 2

Female elite fetchling scout (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 2 6, 117)

Initiative Stealth +9

MIDNIGHT

CREATURE 2

Shadow drake (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 2 100)

Initiative Stealth +8

Treasure: Each of the six books on the kitchen counter details one of Taviah's rituals: *create undead* (zombie), *elemental sentinel* (*Secrets of Magic* 150), *heartbond* (*Advanced Player's Guide* 242), *inveigle*, *mystic carriage* (*Secrets of Magic* 152), and *unseen custodians* (*Advanced Player's Guide* 245). If the characters don't claim these books now, make note of them; the characters can find them when they return to the cottage in the next adventure, *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #183: *Field of Maidens*.

THE COTTAGE CLAIMS TAVIAH

MODERATE 4

When Iron Taviah is reduced to 0 Hit Points (or otherwise defeated), the floor beneath her makes a curious squishing sound. The soft floor of the basement begins to absorb Taviah's body. Characters who try to recover the body should attempt a DC 19 Athletics check; on a success, they grab the pouch around Taviah's waist, but that's all—the cord breaks and

Taviah's body is swallowed by the cottage's basement. Within the pouch is Kepgeda's severed finger.

Any of Taviah's surviving followers (Honoraria or Midnight) attempt to flee up the stairs, but Iron Taviah has one final curse: the entire cottage comes to life and tries to eat everyone inside it, ally and enemy alike.

HUNGRY COTTAGE


HAZARD 6

UNIQUE COMPLEX ENVIRONMENTAL

Stealth +15 (expert)

Description Iron Taviah's cottage comes to life and tries to eat everyone in it. The hazard is divided into three areas: the basement becomes the cottage's stomach; the stairs act as the cottage's throat, becoming a steep, slippery incline that is greater difficult terrain; and the ground floor is the inside of the cottage's mouth. Creatures within the cottage can move around within it but can't exit without pulling the mouth open or slipping out while its teeth gnash. Characters who successfully escape the cottage are safe from the hazard.

Disable The hungry cottage can't be damaged or disabled, but the danger in each area can be temporarily mitigated. *In the stomach:* DC 17 Athletics (trained) to Climb atop the hoarded belongings and avoid contact with the acidic walls or floor for 1 round, or DC 25 Crafting (expert) as a 2-action activity to concoct an alchemical antacid that neutralizes acid damage dealt by the stomach for 1d4 rounds. *In the throat:* DC 23 Athletics (trained) to hold the throat open for one round, allowing all characters in the stairs to use a Reflex save result one degree of success greater than their roll to avoid being pushed into the stomach, or DC 23 Nature or Survival as a 2-action activity to ease the throat's contractions and provide the same effect for 1d4 rounds. *In the mouth:* DC 22 Athletics to Force Open a window or a door and forcibly expel one creature that's within 10 feet of an exit from the cottage, or DC 25 Athletics (expert) as a 2-action activity to jam furniture in place that prevents the teeth from gnashing for 1d4 rounds and allows anyone in the cottage to move from it during that time.

The Cottage Hungers  **Trigger** Iron Taviah is defeated in the cottage basement; **Effect** The basement floor absorbs Iron Taviah, and the cottage transforms into a hungry, semi-animate creature. The cottage rolls initiative.



Routine (3 actions) The cursed cottage uses 3 actions: Acidic Assault in the stomach, Swallowing Staircase in the throat, and Gnashing Portal in the mouth (in that order). Checks to disable the areas might prevent these actions for a brief time.

Acidic Assault ♦ (acid) The walls and floor of the stomach steam with digestive juices; all creatures in contact with these surfaces take 2d8+4 acid damage (DC 24 basic Fortitude save).

Gnashing Portal ♦ Creatures on the cottage's main floor are ground down as massive teeth appear from the floor and ceiling, gnash, and recede into the architecture, dealing 2d8+4 bludgeoning damage. Creatures in this area must attempt a DC 24 Reflex save.

Critical Success The creature takes no damage and, if within 10 feet of an exit on the ground floor, can choose to exit the cottage.

Success The creature takes half damage and, if within 10 feet of an exit on the ground floor, can attempt to escape the cottage as the teeth retract by attempting a DC 24 Reflex save. On a success, the creature exits the cottage; on a critical failure, the creature falls prone.

Failure The creature takes full damage and is knocked prone.

Critical Failure The creature takes double damage, is knocked prone, and is stunned 1.

Swallowing Staircase ♦ Muscular swallowing contractions force creatures down the stairs and into the stomach. Creatures on the stairs must attempt a DC 24 Reflex save or be pushed 15 feet down the stairs (and across the basement floor with any excess forced movement if they're pushed to the bottom of the stairs). Creatures who critically fail this Reflex save fall prone at the end of this forced movement.

Reset Once no creatures remain in the cottage, the hazard resets and returns to a normal cottage. The stairs and the basement are gone, however, as is Iron Tavia's body.

Smirtlbin's Fate: Once the characters escape the cottage, Smirtlbin pops his head up from the grass (so long as the characters didn't previously dispatch him).

"Well, I never!" The house spirit is a curious mixture of insulted, humiliated, and relieved. "A domovoi, kicked out of his own house! I'm not sure if I should keep this a secret or be glad to be separated from that cruel witch." Tapping his chin, he decides, "Perhaps both. Both? Yes, both."

Smirtlbin is released from his obligation to protect the house. He thanks the characters, even if they

previously fought, and volunteers everything he knows about Sahni and Decrosia, urging the characters to track down the other members of Iron Tavia's coven, "lest their wicked poison plot bring sorrow and ruin to more homes and families."

XP Award: Award the characters 80 XP for escaping the cottage.

On the Road

The characters should know that Sallowshore and Pagked are their next destinations. Sallowshore is closer, so the characters are likely to confront Sahni before Decrosia, but the order of their investigations is up to them. They can head to either one of these towns immediately, or they can return to Graydirge to make further preparations. They can't meet with Berline; she's gone to Yled, as she hinted when she first met with the characters (they have an opportunity to meet up with her in Chapter 4). Characters who recovered Tavia's ritual books and have expert or greater proficiency in Arcana or Occultism may wish to learn the *mystic carriage* ritual, making their travel across Geb easier.

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Hungry Cottage



Chapter 2: Thicker than Water

The characters should have emerged from Iron Taviah's cottage with two leads: that a coven member named Sahni Bride-of-the-Sea resides in Sallowshore, and that another coven member named Decrosia inhabits the industrial town of Pagked. They're all part of the same poison plot the characters uncovered in the prior adventure, so they should be interested in pursuing both hags. Of these two locations, Sallowshore is closer. Your characters might decide to investigate Pagked first; information on Pagked and Decrosia is found in Chapter 3. If they do, they'll find Pagked to be quite dangerous and, if they survive, adventure in Sallowshore will seem a bit easier.

There's no time pressure on the characters—Berline isn't looking over their shoulder, so if they'd like to pursue some downtime activities, they can. When the characters come within sight of Sallowshore for the first time, read or paraphrase the following.

The bright light of a full moon illuminates the port town of Sallowshore, a curious old settlement that looks partially slid into the sea. Half the town consists of sunken buildings with a few floors poking from the water and connected by rickety wooden bridges. A wooden boardwalk leads from the water to a bustling fish market. Humans, lizardfolk, and long-eared ghouls go about their business in the town, the

ghouls and lizardfolk slipping easily in and out of the water. About a hundred yards from the tide rises a short but steep cliff lined with humble homes and a few handsome estates. This, it appears, is where Sallowshore's air-breathing population lives, while others inhabit the sunken town below.

Sallowshore is an old community bound by tradition. The population consists primarily of humans, but the town was built at a site long inhabited by lizardfolk traders, and many descendants of these original inhabitants remain in town. A number of the town's residents have become lacedons, an aquatic variety of ghouls (*Book of the Dead* page 104 has more information on lacedons). Fishing is the primary industry, but many townsfolk work as dock hands, loading and unloading cargo from merchant vessels that make Sallowshore a regular stop. Services that cater to these merchant vessels and their crew are also plentiful. There's no real leader or government in town; the last mayor died a generation ago, and no one in town has bothered to muster the influence to replace her.

A half-dozen wealthy individuals and their families mostly do as they wish in Sallowshore. Three of these individuals with ties to Geb's Great Factions are **Gishkar** (N male lizardfolk merchant 6), **Tobias Highridge** (LE male vampire aristocrat 7), and **Stana Keystone** (LN female human architect 5).

Sahni Bride-of-the-Sea (NE sea hag lawyer 7) is the town's most noteworthy resident without ties to any faction. She's perceived to be wholly independent of any interests, as her membership in the Graveclaw isn't common knowledge. This arrangement of influential, yet self-interested, individuals isn't common in Geb, where many dignitaries have political aspirations, but it works for Sallowshore. As long as the town pays its taxes to Geb's royal coffers, it's left to its own devices. See the Sallowshore sidebar on page 22 for other details.

There are several inns and hotels in Sallowshore, some of which cater exclusively to patrons who can breathe underwater or don't need to breathe at all. Eel House is one such inn, whose infamous manager, **Lougash the Eel** (NE male ghoulish lizardfolk innkeeper 4), lures guests in with low prices and promises of air-filled rooms, but then betrays them with many hidden fees when they try to leave. The Fishmonger is a more egalitarian place to stay; this old brick building situated on the water's edge has many dry rooms and a few submerged basement rooms for aquatic guests. The Fishmonger is run by **Old Maeve** (N female human innkeeper 5), who stays out of her guest's business and directs her staff of grandchildren with a forceful voice and swiftly swung broomstick. The characters can find rooms at either location or somewhere else of your creation.

Welcome to Sallowshore

Once the characters are ready to begin investigating Sahni Bride-of-the-Sea, the obvious place to begin is Rola's Fish Market, the town's social center. Lougash the Eel, Old Maeve, or any of their staff can direct the characters to the market, but anyone who walks through town notices the bustling market along the waterfront. Stalls face both the water and dry land, with many customers swimming up to a stall to transact their business. The fish market is loosely managed by **Rola BeTide** (LN female dhampir dwarf



Lougash the Eel

CHAPTER 2 SYNOPSIS

The characters found two leads in Iron Taviah's cottage. The nearest lead points the characters to the crumbling seaside town of Sallowshore, where Sahni Bride-of-the-Sea, a sea hag in the Graveclaw coven, is creating a large store of tremor paste.

The characters learn of Sahni's location at Rola's Fish Market, a social hub in town, but they also learn of three faction representatives who have grudges against Sahni. If they wish, the characters can meet with these faction leaders, gathering resources and allies.

Eventually, the characters must descend into the ruined temple of Urgathoa where Sahni lairs. There, they must elude or defeat her guardians and destroy the hag.

CHAPTER 2 TREASURE

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

- +1 striking gaff (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 2 125)
- extraction cauldron (page 75)
- invisibility potion
- lesser elixir of life
- lesser potion of annulment (page 77)
- lesser winter wolf elixir
- moderate antidote
- necklace of fireballs type I
- potion of water breathing
- ring of cold resistance
- salve of antiparalysis
- shark tooth charm
- stony hag eye (page 76)
- traveler's any-tool

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SALLOWSHORE

SETTLEMENT 5

N TOWN

Half-submerged port town

Government None (loose leadership by tradition and local dignitaries)

Population 1,260 (45% humans, 35% ghouls, 10% lizardfolk, 5% dhampirs, 5% other undead)

Languages Common, Iruxi, Necril

Religions Abadar, Dagon, Green Faith, Urgathoa

Threats Dagon cultists, ocean predators, Sahni Bride-of-the-Sea

Amphibious Any item of 5th level or less that provides a swim Speed or allows a character to breathe underwater (or not breathe at all) costs 10% less in Sallowshore. Formulas for such items are discounted by 50%.

Flooded Much of Sallowshore is flooded, and individuals confined to the shore find themselves excluded from town business. Characters with a swim Speed or who can survive underwater gain a +1 circumstance bonus on checks to Earn Income or Subsist, and on Diplomacy checks to Gather Information, Make an Impression, or Request.

Gishkar the Fishmonger (N male lizardfolk merchant 6) Export Guild representative and customs officer

Sahni Bride-of-the-Sea (NE sea hag lawyer 7) cruel sea hag who has bound much of the town's population with magical bargains

Stana Keystone (LN female human architect 5) grand master and local representative of the Builders League, caretaker for her dying son

Tobias Highridge (LE male vampire aristocrat 7) lovelorn representative of the Tax Collectors and pillar of the community



Old Maeve

above. These noteworthy figures are openly connected to Geb's Great Factions; the characters are likely interested in currying favor with these people to gain further reputation.

To learn more specific information, the characters must attempt DC 20 Diplomacy checks to Gather Information. Information about the four main figures is provided below; feel free to invent responses to other inquiries that lead back to these individuals. The characters can learn this information from anywhere in town, but asking in Rola's Fish Market gives the characters a +2 circumstance bonus to their checks.

SAHNI BRIDE-OF-THE-SEA

Critical Success Sahni the sea hag, the town's self-appointed lawyer, makes solemn bargains with townsfolk who seek justice or revenge, securing what her clients seek in exchange for whatever they hold most dear. For many years she's lived in a sunken temple to Urgathoa, which she has made into the center for a cult dedicated to Dagon. Some of Sallowshore's lacedons and lizardfolk are in this cult.

Success Sahni the sea hag claims to be the town's lawyer; those who seek justice go to her and bargain for her services. She has taken over a long-submerged temple to Urgathoa, making it into her own lair.

Failure Sahni, the town's lawyer, lives in a long-submerged temple to Urgathoa.

Critical Failure Sahni, the town's highly respected lawyer, lives in a long-submerged temple to Urgathoa. Fair-minded and generous to those in need, she welcomes any who wish to engage her services.

GISHKAR (EXPORT GUILD)

Critical Success Gishkar the Fishmonger is the town's duty-minded iruxi customs officer. He's with the Export Guild, and if anyone is shipping large quantities of alchemical materials (such as tremor paste) from Sallowshore, they should be paying him a large tariff.

Success Gishkar the Fishmonger is the town's duty-minded iruxi customs officer. He's with the Export Guild, and he knows about all valuable commodities that enter or leave town.

Failure Gishkar the Fishmonger is customs officer in town. He's with the Export Guild.

Critical Failure Gishkar is the customs officer in town. He's with the Export Guild and is easily bribed by anyone willing to grease his palm.

TOBIAS HIGHRIDGE (TAX COLLECTORS UNION)

Critical Success Tobias Highridge, tax collector and

merchant 6), but everyone who works at the market knows its rules: theft and assault are punished harshly as determined by the victims, so these crimes are rare. Workers at each stall shout to passersby, hawking their latest catch. Dockhands seek work along the wharf, looking for signs a merchant vessel might need strong backs to load or unload cargo.

Characters at the market can acquire general information about Sallowshore without attempting checks. This includes information about the town's general layout and its notable figures as presented

vampire, mourns the death of his wife, a night hag named Nepenthe. Nepenthe used to belong to a coven called Graveclaw, along with Sahni. Tobias blames Sahni for Nepenthe's death, although the details of this intra-coven rivalry is unclear, and he wants revenge.

Success Tobias Highridge, tax collector and vampire, mourns the death of his wife, a night hag named Nepenthe. He blames Sahni for Nepenthe's death, and he wants revenge.

Failure Tobias Highridge is a pillar of the community, a representative of the Tax Collectors Union, and a vampire. Many visitors to his manor house overlooking Sallowshore don't ever return.

Critical Failure Tobias Highridge is a pillar of the community and a representative of the Tax Collectors Union. He lives on the cliffside in a manor house.

STANA KEYSTONE (BUILDERS LEAGUE)

Critical Success Blavket Keystone made a bargain with Sahni for a prosperous business, but it cost him his health. His mother, Stana, local Grand Master in the Builders League, is trying to recover family medicines that might prevent his death.

Success Blavket Keystone, scion of his family, made a bargain with Sahni and has since fallen ill. His mother, Stana, a Grand Master in the Builders League, tends to him as he dies; she has no love for Sahni.

Failure The Builders League constructed most of Sallowshore's oldest buildings. Few bother with the Lodge anymore; local Grand Master, Stana Keystone, is nursing her son through an extended illness.

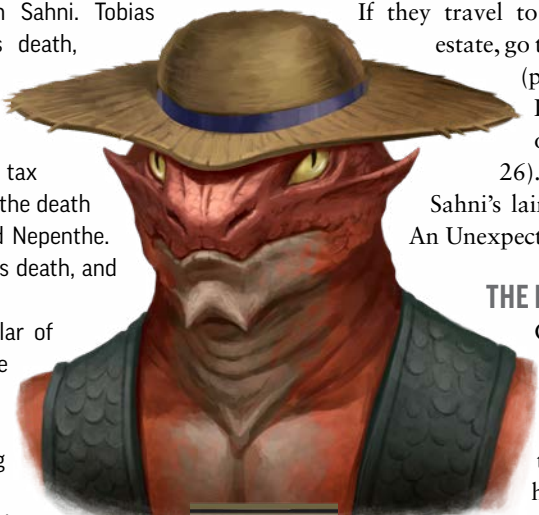
Critical Failure They say these old buildings constructed by the Builders League all have secrets. Their local Grand Master, Stana Keystone, likely knows them all.

Investigation Encounters

All three notable figures have connections to Sahni or her tremor paste shipments, and each has information or resources that could benefit the characters. Although it's to their advantage to visit these faction representatives, the characters may decide to attack Sahni head-on. That's all right! The sea hag's sunken lair is easy to find. The characters might visit the notable figures after they've dealt with the hag, and they still have the opportunity to gain Reputation Points with some of the factions then.

If the characters meet with Gishkar the customs officer, go to the Fishmonger encounter (see below).

If they travel to Tobias Highridge's cliffside estate, go to the Garden Party encounter (page 25). If they visit Stana Keystone, go to the Master of the Lodge encounter (page 26). When they decide to visit Sahni's lair, they should first encounter An Unexpected Obstacle (page 29).



Gishkar

THE FISHMONGER

Gishkar the Fishmonger lives and works in Sallowshore's customs house, a rambling wooden building south of the fish market. The customs house includes both flooded and dry levels, and Gishkar

moves casually and comfortably in and out of the water as he conducts business. As customs officer, Gishkar tracks all trade to and from town, collecting the proper tariffs and sending most of that money—after expenses that include salaries for him and his staff, upkeep for the office, a cut to the Export Guild, and so on—to Geb's royal coffers. When the characters approach the customs office, read or paraphrase the following.

The wooden boardwalk along Sallowshore's rocky beach extends into the water to a long, low building with a flat wooden roof and small upper story. Large open windows on the lower floors allow the sea to flow in and out with the tide. A few longboats are tied to the building's wooden porch or to nearby posts, and a half-dozen merchants loiter around the building, chatting as they wait to process through customs. Aquatic ghouls and a few lizardfolk swim in and out of the building's lower floors, conducting business before returning to the ocean.

Characters willing to wait in line for an appointment with the customs officer reach the front of the line in 1d6 hours. A character who succeeds at a DC 22 Deception check can convince the other people in line they have urgent business and avoid waiting; failing this check prevents further attempts for 1 hour. Alternatively, a successful DC 25 Intimidation check can frighten nearby merchants into allowing the characters to go first. Failing this Intimidation check makes it impossible for the characters to speak with Gishkar for the rest of that day as the merchants simply refuse to advance the line for the blustering characters.

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When the characters finally reach the head of the line, read or paraphrase the following.

The customs office lies half in and half out of the water, with a small dry platform under a low roof and a ladder that leads to the flooded portions of the building. A second ladder leads to a dry records room on the upper level. Soon, the sleek, hairless head appears as an iruxi glides through the water. He reaches the ladder and climbs up, shedding water easily off his scaled skin. "I'm Customs Officer Gishkar," he says, wiping his head with a towel and donning a wide straw hat. "You don't appear to be merchants declaring customs, so how can I help you?"

Gishkar begins with an indifferent attitude toward the characters. His full stats shouldn't be necessary, but he has a Perception DC of 22 and Will DC of 20. Although he's happy in his current profession, Gishkar misses his time among his people. Anyone attempting to improve his attitude gains a +2 circumstance bonus if they speak to him in Aquan, Draconic, or Iruxi, or a +5 circumstance bonus if they're lizardfolk. Gishkar can't be bribed; anyone who attempts to do

so automatically worsens his attitude one step. If made unfriendly, Gishkar dismisses the characters, insisting he can't help them. If made hostile, he summons three Sallowdrudges (page 30) and three lacedons (page 32) and orders the characters to leave. Characters who are dismissed can try to improve Gishkar's attitude on subsequent days, as he doesn't hold grudges.

While indifferent, Gishkar acknowledges all imports and exports in Sallowshore go through him, and Sahni is a frequent client. However, he refuses to discuss what sort of trade she conducts. If made friendly, Gishkar says Sahni regularly ships crates of caviar. "It's not an especially large amount, and the tariff on caviar is low," he explains, "and she's never missed a payment. I have no quarrel with Sahni."

The characters believe Sahni is shipping tremor paste; they may have records from Iron Taviah's cottage that detail these shipments. If they explain this to Gishkar, the customs officer initially dismisses the idea. "That's ridiculous," he insists. "Rare alchemical ingredients like that have a very high tariff. If any was being shipped out of Sallowshore, I would know about it." If shown the records from Taviah's cottage,

or if made friendly, Gishkar begins to realize he's been tricked. His anger is a cold fury, and he makes the characters an offer.

"That clever old sea witch! She's been hiding tremor paste in crates of caviar for months. Right under my snout! And she's cheated me in the process—and the Export Guild, and the royal treasury of Geb—of incredible sums! I need to find out exactly how much gold Sahni's cheated me out of; then I can present everything to the Export Guild to balance the accounts. She's no fool. She must keep records somewhere, probably in that ruin she calls a house, the old temple to Urgathoa. Bring me her financial records and I'll make it worth your while. You'll earn some favor with the Export Guild while you're at it."

Treasure: Gishkar offers 150 gp for Sahni's records. This price is firm, and he pays only on delivery. However, to facilitate their mission, Gishkar gives the group four *potions of water breathing* from some excess stock he commandeered.

Faction Reputation: If the characters bring Gishkar the financial records, they earn 2 Reputation Points with the Export Guild. However, Stana Keystone also expresses an interest in these records if the characters mention them to her; see page 26 for the reward she provides instead.

XP Award: If the characters bring Sahni's financial records from area C6 to Gishkar, award them 30 XP.

GARDEN PARTY

MODERATE 5

The Tax Collectors Union is represented in town by Tobias Highridge, leader of the Highridge family and elder vampire. The Highridge estate is perched on cliffs that overlook Sallowshore's fish market. Anyone in town can point it out.

When the characters approach the estate and knock on the door, they're greeted by Lixl (LE female vampire spawn butler 3), a severe woman in a black coat and trousers embroidered with images of blood drops. Lixl introduces herself and asks the characters who they are and what business they have with her employer, Master Highridge. She confirms Tobias's role as Sallowshore's tax collector and his rank as local representative of the faction, but she's reluctant to say much more about him without learning more about these visitors. Throughout the conversation, Lixl evaluates the characters, quickly deducing they're armed and potentially dangerous. She doesn't consider them a threat to her or her master, but she knows her employer is looking for dangerous people to conduct a deadly errand. She recognizes the characters as potential agents. Once she's taken the measure of the characters, Lixl invites them inside the manor.

"Won't you please come this way?" Lixl asks. "You can wait in the garden while I see if Master Highridge can see you. I'm sure he won't be long." She leads the way through the ground floor of the large house, past grim furnishings like a wall tapestry depicting Zon-Kuthon, a bone chandelier bearing six severed hands, and a carpet made from tiny, interlaced bones. She reaches a stout door of black wood, which she opens to reveal a garden. Open to the sky, the garden blooms with large, flowering plants in black iron pots, providing shade to a sitting bench. Nearby, a small green marble fountain beneath a clay statue of a succubus burbles with blood.

Lixl gives an easy bow and says, "Please wait here," before shutting the door behind her.

The characters can investigate the garden while they wait. The flowering plants are all poisonous; the animal blood in the fountain is treated with an alchemical ingredient to prevent coagulation. Meanwhile, Lixl tells Tobias about the characters, and the tax collector decides to test them.

A map of the garden appears on page 24.

Creatures: The succubus statue is a motionless terra-cotta soldier. An assassin vine lurks in the greenery against the back wall of the garden. Neither of them initiates combat, although both attack if the characters start a fight first.

Once the characters have waited peacefully for several minutes (or immediately after a fight with the statue and the assassin vine, if the characters start one), read or paraphrase the following.

The shutter on an upper story flies open, and from the darkness of the estate interior, a single pale hand grips the window frame. "Now we shall see if you can be of use to me," says a deep voice.

The terra-cotta soldier fights until destroyed; the assassin vine retreats to its corner of the garden if reduced to fewer than 10 Hit Points.

TERRA-COTTA SOLDIER

CREATURE 6

Pathfinder Bestiary 3 263

Initiative Perception +14

Melee ♦ claw +17 (agile, magical), **Damage** 2d8+6 slashing

ASSASSIN VINE

CREATURE 3

Pathfinder Bestiary 2 26

Initiative Perception +10

Successful Audition: Assuming the characters survive the encounter, Tobias beckons them into the house with a gesture and says, "I'm impressed. Enter; we have much

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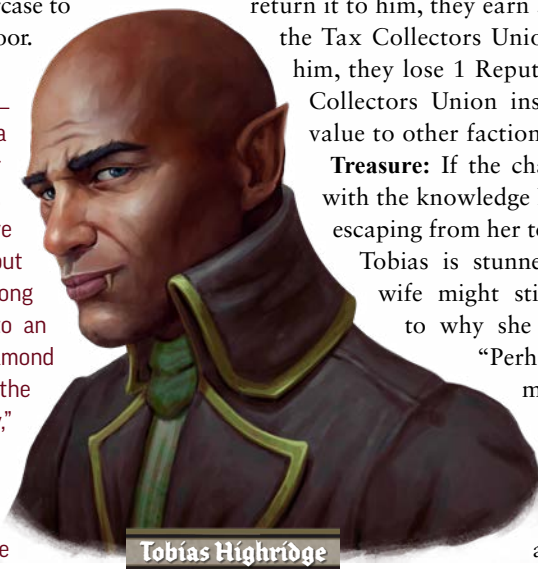
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to discuss.” He retreats from the window and closes the shutter. Lixl opens the door and leads the characters into the house and up a grand staircase to a reception room on the second floor. Tobias waits for them there.

A bald man with pale skin wears a long black gown over a high-collar tunic pinned with a large diamond. He stands near a fireplace. Above him is a large portrait of a hideous but somehow elegant night hag, with long curling horns, black hair woven into an elaborate braid, and a gleaming diamond ring on her bony finger. “I’m not in the habit of wishing visitors a good day,” the man says, “but in your case, I will make an exception. I am, of course, Tobias Highridge. I represent the Tax Collectors Union in Sallowshore. More importantly, I want something. And you, my intrepid guests, are going to deliver that thing to me.”



Tobias Highridge

If the characters don’t already know Tobias is a vampire, they can deduce it with a successful DC 20 Medicine, Perception, or Religion check. Tobias is pleased with the characters and speaks plainly to them. Work the following points into the conversation, whether in answer to the characters’ questions or by Tobias volunteering the information.

What do you want? “Do you see this painting above me? This was my wife, Nepenthe. Gorgeous, was she not? She was a member of a coven, along with Sahni Bride-of-the-Sea. But Sahni betrayed her, years ago, and murdered my wife in her submerged lair. I think of Nepenthe every day as I rest, and I miss her every night as I hunt. I want you to bring me my beloved’s ring, her heartstone, which I gave to her at our wedding. I believe you will find it in Sahni’s underwater lair. Sahni kept my wife’s corpse, though I don’t know why—perhaps a misplaced sense of obligation to her coven.”

You just want the ring? You don’t want revenge? “Revenge is for peasants. Love is eternal. Just bring me the ring.”

What do we get if we bring you this ring? “You will earn the good will and support of the Tax Collectors Union. That should be enough reward.”

And if we refuse? “I shall report your intransigence to my superiors in the faction, of course. But rest assured, I will have what I seek in time.”

Was the fight in your garden some kind of test? “I prefer to think of it as an audition, but yes. You survived—is that a problem?”

Faction Reputation: The ring Tobias seeks is in area C4, in Sahni’s lair. If the player characters return it to him, they earn 3 Reputation Points with the Tax Collectors Union. If they refuse to help him, they lose 1 Reputation Point with the Tax Collectors Union instead. The ring is of no value to other factions.

Treasure: If the characters return to Tobias with the knowledge Nepenthe survived death, escaping from her tomb in the ruined temple,

Tobias is stunned by the possibility his wife might still exist, and curious as to why she hasn’t returned to him.

“Perhaps she has lost her memory,” he muses aloud, “or is so ashamed of her new state that she dares not face me. I must find her! Thank you all. You have served me well. Here, take this.” Tobias

removes a *necklace of fireballs type I*, and gives it to the characters.

XP Award: If the characters return to Tobias with news of Nepenthe’s “survival,” award them 30 XP.

MASTER OF THE LODGE

The Builders League constructed most of Sallowshore’s oldest buildings when the town was founded. Over centuries, the seaward side of town sank, flooding these old buildings, but they were all built of the same sturdy gray blocks. Most remain usable, provided their inhabitants can survive underwater. The sinking of so many of their buildings disgraced the Builders League and undermined their influence in town. Now, the league is supported by only a few old families who dwell on land; most younger faction members left Sallowshore for opportunities elsewhere.

The center of Builders League’s influence is its stately old lodge, which is where Grand Master Stana Keystone resides with her dying son. The building is five stories tall with a small basement, but half is underwater. When the characters approach the building, read or paraphrase the following.

The Builders League lodge is an impressive stone building, square and solid, constructed of flat, gray stone blocks and roofed with black slate tiles. The building must have once towered above others in town, but at least two floors lie fully submerged in the sea. A wooden boardwalk supported by ancient tree trunks sunk into the watery beach leads from the fish market to the lodge’s middle floor, where a balcony was rebuilt into a double door.

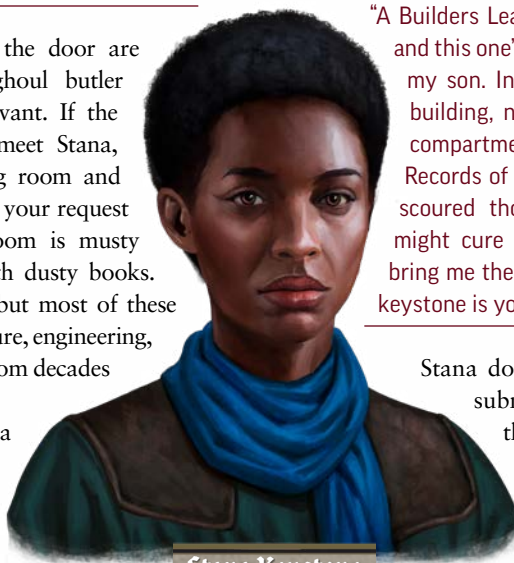
Most of the windows are covered with black curtains, but a lamp burns dimly on the uppermost floor.

Characters who knock on the door are greeted by **Kol** (LN male ghoul butler 2), Stana's sole remaining servant. If the characters say they wish to meet Stana, Kol escorts them to a reading room and asks they wait, "while I deliver your request to the grand master." The room is musty and contains shelves lined with dusty books. Classical literature is present, but most of these books are treatises on architecture, engineering, and design, including records from decades of Builders League meetings.

After a few minutes, Stana arrives in the reading room, bearing a lamp. "I'm told you wish to see me," she says. "Please be quick about it; my son is ill, and I am tending him. I can't long be far from his side." Stana begins with an attitude of indifferent toward the characters, but she's desperate and immediately friendly to anyone who expresses an interest in helping her or her son. At first, Stana has little to say regarding Sahni; she refers to Sahni as the town's lawyer and confirms the sea hag dwells in the town's old temple to Urgathoa, "Constructed by the League, I'll note, as so many of Sallowshore's best and most long-lasting buildings were." She can also confirm the temple is no longer used for its original purpose. "Who knows what foul deeds Sahni is up to down there, probably luring more naive young women and men to their doom."

If the characters offer to help, Stana is more forthcoming. "Will you come with me? Come see what that hag has done to my beautiful boy." Lamp held high, Stana leads the characters to a room on the lodge's fifth floor.

A large four-poster bed is covered in thick black quilting and concealed by a black velvet shroud. Tucked in the bed is a frail, dark-haired man. Portraits of distinguished family members in formal clothing and stiff poses line the walls, and black velvet drapes frame a window that looks over the town. "This is my son, Blavket," Stana says as she hangs the lamp from a black iron fixture in the shape of skeleton. "He longed to escape the family's shadow and have a prosperous business of his own. So he made a bargain with Sahni Bride-of-the-Sea. Oh, his business prospered, but for every new client and customer, he grew sicker. Now his coffers are full and his body is dying!" Stana, overcome with grief, sits wearily at the bedside and takes her son's listless hand.



Stana Keystone

Stana has one last desperate hope. She explains.

"A Builders League lodge contains many secrets, and this one's secrets are known only to me and my son. In the keystone at the base of this building, now deep under water, is a secret compartment where we hid many treasures. Records of this cache have been lost, but I've scoured those that remain. A potion there might cure my Blavket of his illness. If you bring me the potion, everything else within the keystone is yours. None of it matters to me now."

Stana doesn't know what may be in the submerged basement. She knows the basement is blocked by a door, but tells the characters the secret way to press on the door's surface to open it. She also describes the overall layout of the basement and where to

find the keystone. If asked about other dangers in the basement, Stana says, "The deep parts of Sallowshore are haunted by many creatures beyond lacedons, and the manner in which the keystone can be opened has been lost. If this were a trivial task, I would do it myself. It is not."

Killing Sahni: Stana doesn't believe the characters have the strength to kill Sahni, but if they mention the idea, she agrees this would probably lift the curse on her son. She encourages them to try, but wants them to recover the *potion of annulment* from the keystone first, in case they fail.

Business Records: The characters may have met with Gishkar the Fishmonger already. If Stana learns Gishkar asked them to recover Sahni's business records, she offers them greater rewards if they bring the records to her instead. "I could use those records to restore the Builders League, to bring us the esteem and recognition we had before Sallowshore flooded."

Faction Reputation: If the characters deliver the *potion of annulment* from area B2 to Stana, they earn 3 Reputation Points with the Builders League. However, the potion would be useful to any representatives of Geb's factions who wish to unwind a deal; if the characters choose to give the potion to a different faction, they earn 1 Reputation Point with that faction and lose 1 Reputation Point with the Builders League.

If the characters bring Stana the financial records from Sahni's lair (area C6), they gain 1 Reputation Point with the Builders League but lose 1 Reputation Point with the Export Guild, as Gishkar discovers their double-dealing.

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XP Reward: Award the characters 30 XP for saving Stana's son from his wasting disease, whether by delivering the *potion of annulment* or otherwise. If the characters bring Sahni's financial records, found in area C6, to Stana, award them 30 XP.

Lodge Basement Features

The keystone is in the lodge's lowest level, 20 feet underwater and shrouded in darkness. The rules for aquatic combat can be found on page 478 of the *Core Rulebook*. Keep in mind that aquatic and amphibious creatures (including the kapoacincths and the eel lairing in the basement) don't take the usual

–2 circumstance penalty to bludgeoning and slashing unarmed Strikes.

Stana has nothing to offer the characters that allows them to breathe underwater, except for the names of a few merchants in the fish market who can sell them *scrolls of water breathing*, *potions of water breathing*, or sea touch elixirs. Reaching the lodge basement doorway is easy, as the characters can simply swim down the stairs. The basement is blocked by a double door of black stone, but it opens easily on well-made mechanisms when its surface is touched in the manner Stana described. Characters who swim around the lowest levels of the building might spot the collapse in area B2. The lodge basement has been underwater for so long that knots of coral, barnacles, and sea grasses cling to nearly every surface.

The map of the lodge basement appears on page 24.

B1. Meeting Chamber

Moderate 5

The lodge's lowest level is filled with cold, black water. Mounds of coral in green and blue line the walls of this large chamber, and fish glide back and forth. Opposite a set of stairs that ascend to the black stone double door is another double door, but its doors lie fallen to each side, overgrown with barnacles and seaweed.

This large room was once a place where the Builders League members held clandestine meetings.

Creatures: Three bulky kapoacincths—aquatic gargoyles—make their lair in the basement. They wrap their wings around their bodies and appear as mounds of coral when at rest. Make a secret DC 31 Perception check for characters who enter this room; those who succeed see through the kapoacincths' disguises. The kapoacincths roll Stealth for initiative, and they prefer to wait until their prey are well into the room before they attack. Overconfident in their abilities, the kapoacincths don't retreat or surrender.

KAPOACINCTHS (3)

CREATURE 4

CE MEDIUM AQUATIC BEAST EARTH

Variant gargoyle (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 161)

Perception +10; darkvision

Languages Aquan, Common, Terran

Skills Acrobatics +9, Athletics +10, Stealth +11

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

AC 20; **Fort** +13, **Ref** +9, **Will** +10

HP 40; **Resistances** physical 5 (except adamantine)

Attack of Opportunity ☞

Wing Buffet ☞ **Trigger** An adjacent creature attacks the kapoacincth while the kapoacincth is Swimming; **Effect**

The kapoacanth pushes the triggering creature 5 feet away from them, and the kapoacanth moves 10 feet in the opposite direction. If the triggering creature can no longer attack the kapoacanth from its new location, the attack misses.

Speed 25 feet, swim 40 feet

Melee ♦ jaws +13, **Damage** 2d8+6 piercing

Melee ♦ claw +13 (agile), **Damage** 2d6+6 slashing

Coral Reef ♦ (concentrate) Until the next time they act, the kapoacanth appears to be a lump of coral. They have an automatic result of 31 on Deception checks and DCs to pass as coral.

B2. Keystone Chamber

Severe 5

The basement's eastern room contains the keystone: a 10-foot-square stone block in the northeast corner of the room. When pulled, a hidden lever on the side of the keystone slides aside a panel and elevates the metal vault within it to the surface. Anyone Searching the keystone automatically finds this lever.

The pile of coral in the southeast corner of the room hides a collapse in the wall. A gap about 2 feet across gives access to the open ocean beyond the lodge's walls. Any character who examines the pile of coral spots this hole, but it's not obvious on casual inspection of the room.

Hazard: A 5-foot-square metal vault lies concealed within the keystone. The vault's metal surface is covered with several small knobs; manipulating these both disables a trap on the vault and opens the vault. The proper pattern is long forgotten, so the characters must deal with the trap when the vault is exposed. The characters can break the keystone open rather than use the lever, but this also triggers the trap.

KEYSTONE TRAP

HAZARD 7

UNIQUE COMPLEX MECHANICAL TRAP

Stealth +17 (expert)

Description A 5-foot-square metal vault covered with knobs lies concealed within a stone block. A lever on the stone block slides the vault into view. When the vault is exposed—whether it's slid out or whether the stone is smashed open—the trap activates.

Disable DC 24 Thievery (trained) to find and press hidden knobs in a specific order (three successes are required to disable the trap, which also opens it); DC 24 Crafting (expert) to sabotage the vault's mechanisms, reducing its actions by 1 (when the trap's actions are reduced to 0, it is disabled)

AC 25; **Fort** +18, **Ref** +12

Keystone Hardness 15; **Keystone HP** 60 (BT 30); **Vault Hardness** 10; **Vault HP** 50 (BT 25); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Exposed Vault ⇨ **Trigger** The vault is exposed; **Effect** The vault makes a poison dart spray Strike at a random creature within 30 feet. The trap then rolls initiative.

Routine (3 actions) The keystone uses its 3 actions to Electrify, Spin, and then Launch Darts. When the trap loses an action, roll randomly to determine which action it loses.

Electrify ♦ The metal vault crackles with electricity. In air, this would damage only creatures touching it; in water, the trap deals 2d8 electricity damage to all creatures in a 10-foot emanation (DC 25 basic Fortitude save).

Launch Darts ♦ The vault fires a stream of poisoned darts. The trap attacks all creatures in a 30-foot line with its poison dart spray Strike; roll 1d8 to determine the line's direction. These Strikes don't have a multiple attack penalty.

Spin ♦ The vault spins quickly for 1 round. While it Spins, checks to disable the trap have a -2 circumstance penalty, and it Launches Darts at all creatures within 30 feet of it, rather than in a line.

Ranged ♦ poison dart spray +18 (range increment 60 feet); **Damage** 4d4 piercing and 1d8 poison

Creatures: When the vault rises from the keystone, the noise and vibration attract a monstrous eel who hunts nearby. In the second round of initiative with the hazard, the eel slips into the opening by the coral, Hiding and attempting to Ambush unsuspecting prey. It thereafter attacks the smallest characters it can see, attempting to Swallow them Whole. If the eel is reduced to 30 Hit Points or fewer, or if it successfully Swallows a character, it flees into the ocean.

GIANT MORAY EEL

CREATURE 5

Pathfinder Bestiary 142

Initiative Stealth +13

Treasure: The keystone vault contains many items, but most are irreparably damaged by being submerged for so long. The characters can salvage an *invisibility potion*, a *salve of antiparalysis*, a *shark tooth charm*, a *traveler's any-tool*, and the potion Stana is seeking, a *lesser potion of annulment* (page 77) in a crystal bottle with a red ribbon.

AN UNEXPECTED OBSTACLE

LOW 5

The characters may spend several days in Sallowshore, gathering information, meeting with various faction representatives, and securing supplies necessary to explore an underwater ruin. Characters who prefer to Craft items for water breathing rather than buy them could spend considerable time in town. Regardless, the characters are strangers in town. Their activities,

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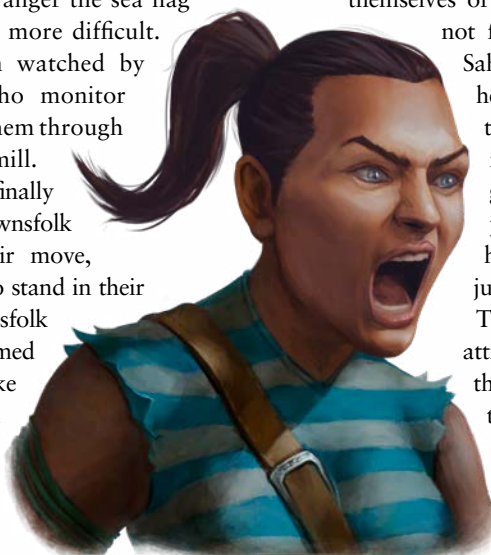
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and their interest in Sahni, haven't gone unnoticed by Sallowshore's regular inhabitants, many of whom are afraid the characters will anger the sea hag and thus make their lives more difficult. The characters are often watched by suspicious townsfolk, who monitor their activities and share them through the town's robust rumor mill.

When the characters finally set out for Sahni's lair, townsfolk in Sallowshore make their move, gathering in a small mob to stand in their way. A few of the townsfolk carry torches; most are armed with improvised weapons like shovels, belying pins, and gaffs (*Bestiary* 2 125). Half a dozen of the largest and strongest Sallowdrudges carry tridents.



Hunsel

A broad-shouldered woman in scale armor steps forward, gesturing angrily with her trident. "We've heard you asking about the sea witch and you don't know the trouble you're causing! Sahni's powers are great. We know. We've lived with her for generations. It's foolish to oppose her. We don't know what grudge you have with her, but go away! Leave her be!" The woman looks to those around her, who nod in agreement. "We know how this will end. You'll go down there, Sahni will eat you alive, and then she'll take out her anger on us. We've suffered enough. Don't make things worse."

The speaker is a Sallowdrudge named Hunsel. If the characters are willing to talk, the townsfolk are eager to describe how they have suffered under Sahni. Each of these people made a bargain with her, securing something they thought they wanted in exchange for Sahni's terrible price.

- **Bulgath** (N male human fisher 2) wears a canvas sack over his head to cover his supernatural ugliness. "I envied another man whose handsome face stole the woman I loved; Sahni punished him, but in exchange she took my face!"
- **Terrin** and **Gulla** (N male and female human ropemakers 3) are married. "We came to Sahni for help finding our missing son. She found him but claimed the life of our daughter in trade!"
- **Hunsel** (see the Sallowdrudge stats below) is also a victim of Sahni's bargains. "My husband was killed in a cart accident, and I asked Sahni to get revenge on the driver. She did. But she took my memory of my husband, so now I don't even remember his name."

There are many more such stories; indeed, it's hard to find someone in Sallowshore who hasn't availed themselves of Sahni's bargains. The characters may not feel much pity for people who know Sahni's reputation but made deals with her anyway, but Geb is a hard land; there's no real system of justice or law in Sallowshore and this is how things get done in town. When someone wants justice, they go to the lawyer and pay her price, or they make do with no justice at all.

The mob follows Hunsel's lead, so her attitude generally applies to the attitude of the mob. If the characters seem reasonable to Hunsel (which might require a DC 19 Deception, Diplomacy, or Intimidation check, or simply good roleplaying), she changes her tactics a bit.

"Look, we've taken a vote on this. We'll pay you to just go away. We don't have much, but even a little gold is better than dying. We're trying to help you."

Hunsel extends a hat into which the townsfolk have collected 30 gp. If the characters agree to leave Sallowshore and leave Sahni alone, she gives the money to them. However, 30 gp is unlikely to be a very persuasive bribe, and Hunsel knows it. She's not surprised if the characters reject it.

If the characters insist on going and can improve Hunsel's attitude, she begins to hope the characters might actually be able to destroy Sahni and lift the many curses in town. "All our bargains will be ended if you destroy Bride-of-the-Sea," she says. "You've no idea what that would mean to Sallowshore. It would change our lives." She gives the characters potions to help them; see *Treasure* on page 31.

Creatures: If the characters attack the mob, or if they otherwise make the mob hostile, the six largest and strongest townsfolk attack, attempting to save Sallowshore further pain by killing the characters before they anger Sahni. These people are willing to die for their town, so they don't surrender or retreat.

SALLOWDRUDGES (6)

CREATURE 1

RARE N MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Human dock worker

Perception +7

Languages Common

Skills Athletics +6, Crafting +6, Sallowshore Lore +4

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

Items net, *potion of water breathing*, scale mail, trident

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

HP 25

Speed 20 feet

Melee ♦ trident +9, **Damage** 1d8+4 piercing

Ranged ♦ trident +9 (range increment 20 feet), **Damage** 1d8+4 piercing

Entangling Net ♦ A Sallowdrudge uses their net to Grapple a Medium or smaller creature within 30 feet. On a success, the target is grabbed until it Escapes (DC 16) or until an adjacent creature Interacts to remove the net. On a critical hit, the target is restrained rather than grabbed. The Sallowdrudge can't use Entangling Net again until they take 1 minute to refold their net.

Spear Fisher (fortune) A Sallowdrudge attacking an immobilized target rolls the attack roll twice and takes the better result.

Treasure: Besides the 30 gp bribe described above, which is offered in good faith, if made friendly Hunsel and the other townsfolk give the characters six *potions of water breathing* to make their mission easier. If violence breaks out, the characters can salvage these potions from the bodies of the Sallowdrudges.

XP Award: If the characters kill Sahni, everyone who made a sea hag bargain with her is freed of that bargain: Hunsel regains the memory of her dead husband, Bulgath's face is restored, and so on. Deeds in the past can't be undone, so Terrin and Gulla's daughter is still dead, for example, but the blight is lifted from Sallowshore. These people make a point of crowding around the characters and thanking them when they ascend from Sahni's lair. Award the characters 60 XP as though they had defeated the Sallowdrudges in combat.

Sahni's Lair

Sahni makes her home in a former temple to Urgathoa on the furthest, deepest edge of Sallowshore's submerged buildings. The temple was once a glorious seaside structure, but it was among the first buildings to slip beneath the waves on the town's slow slide into the ocean. Once everyone abandoned it, Sahni moved in. She repurposed the temple into a shrine to her personal patron, the demon lord Dagon.

When the characters descend into the watery half of Sallowshore to travel to the temple, read or paraphrase the following.

Sallowshore may be half flooded, but this hasn't stopped the town from engaging in trade and industry. Immediately upon entering the watery half of the town, sleek iruxis and spiny lacedons become common sights. They swim through the town's sunken lanes,

and over and through its remaining stone structures. Burly fishers drag nets to catch schools of fish, lacedon merchants sell their wares, and—near the surface—iruxi families raise their children.

The ground sinks in fits and starts, with low cliffs giving way to comparatively flat blocks of homes and businesses before another cliff marks where the ground further collapsed. On the westernmost edge of town, a large temple comes into view. Broadly rectangular in shape, it has a central plaza marked by pillars and a colossal statue of the Pallid Princess, Urgathoa, flanked by braziers burning with supernatural green flame. Dense gardens of sea plants flank the entrance.

FEATURES OF SAHNI'S LAIR

The temple is made of durable marble that's nearly impossible to break, even after so long underwater. The temple is about 80 feet below the surface. Even during the day, the temple receives only dim light; at night, it's entirely dark except for the illumination within (such as the braziers).

The entire temple area is flooded. Aquatic and amphibious creatures (such as the lacedons and ghoulish crocodiles that serve Sahni as guards) don't take the usual -2 circumstance penalty to bludgeoning and slashing unarmed Strikes made underwater, but other creatures in the temple (including Urgathoa's meat guardians and the wights protecting Nepenthe's tomb) have those penalties. Creatures in the temple without a swim Speed are flat-footed.

The temple has a few stone doors that open with difficulty due to the press of water. Opening them requires two Interact actions rather than one.

The map of Sahni's underwater lair appears on the inside back cover of this adventure.

UNDERWATER PATROL

LOW 5

Sahni enticed four lacedons into her cult, primarily to gain their services as guards. These lacedons spread their undead condition to two crocodiles that accompany them like loyal but vicious pets.

Creatures: The guards divide themselves into two patrol groups, each consisting of two lacedons and a single ghoulish crocodile. Both patrol groups circle the temple, remaining on opposite sides and completing a circuit of the temple in about 10 minutes. The characters are likely to come across one of these patrols as they approach.

If a patrol group discovers trespassers, the guards try to hide along the sea floor and observe from stealth, waiting for the second patrol group to catch up to them so the guards can attack in one large group. If invaders seem intent on going to the temple and a patrol doesn't

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have time to wait for reinforcements, they attack immediately. If one lacedon is defeated, the other flees to find help, but the ghouls fight until destroyed.

GHOUL CROCODILE

CREATURE 4

UNCOMMON NE LARGE AMPHIBIOUS GHOUL UNDEAD

Perception +11; corpse scent (imprecise), darkvision

Skills Athletics +12, Stealth +9 (+13 in water)

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

Corpse Scent The ghoulish crocodile can smell humanoid corpses in the water up to 1 mile away.

AC 20; **Fort** +14, **Ref** +11, **Will** +8

HP 60, negative healing; **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, unconscious

Speed 20 feet, swim 25 feet

Melee ♦ jaws +14, **Damage** 2d8+6 piercing plus ghoulish fever and Grab

Melee ♦ tail +14 (agile), **Damage** 2d6+6 bludgeoning and paralysis

Aquatic Ambush ♦ 35 feet

Consume Flesh ♦ (manipulate) **Requirements** The ghoulish crocodile is adjacent to the corpse of a creature that died within the last hour; **Effect** The ghoulish crocodile devours a chunk of the corpse and regains 2d6 Hit Points. It can regain HP from any given corpse only once.

Death Roll ♦ (attack) **Requirements** The ghoulish crocodile must have a creature grabbed; **Effect** The ghoulish crocodile tucks its legs and rolls rapidly, twisting its

victim. It makes a jaws Strike with a +2 circumstance bonus to the attack roll against the grabbed creature. If it hits, it also knocks the creature prone. If it fails, it releases the creature.

Ghoulish Fever (disease) **Saving Throw** DC 19 Fortitude; **Stage 1** carrier with no ill effect (1 day); **Stage 2** 2d6 negative damage and regains half as many Hit Points from all healing (1 day); **Stage 3** as stage 2 (1 day); **Stage 4** 2d6 negative damage and gains no benefit from healing (1 day); **Stage 5** as stage 4 (1 day); **Stage 6** dead, and rises as a ghoulish the next midnight

Paralysis (incapacitation, occult, necromancy) Any living non-elf creature hit by a ghoulish crocodile's tail must succeed at a DC 20 Fortitude save or become paralyzed. It can attempt a new save at the end of each of its turns, and the DC cumulatively decreases by 1 on each such save.

LACEDONS (2)

CREATURE 2

Pathfinder Book of the Dead 104

Initiative Perception +7

Items religious symbol of Dagon

Entering the Temple: The characters can enter the temple in many ways: they might approach the front entrance (area C1); swim directly into the plaza (area C2); or enter through the ruined northeast corner (area C5), side entrances (areas C4 or C6), or the back porch (area C9). Let the players take the lead on how their characters approach the temple.

C1. ENTRANCE AND GARDENS

MODERATE 5

Broad white steps lead up to the temple entrance. To the left and right of the stairs are tall gardens enclosed by low stone walls and thickly overgrown with seaweed that stretches twenty feet above the sea floor. A sunken boat lies prow down in the western garden, its tattered sail swaying in the current. Besides the main entrance leading into the temple courtyard, two smaller entrances lead into chambers along the temple's west and east sides.

The stairs and front entrance lead directly to the courtyard (area C2). The side entrances lead to Sahni's alchemical storage room (area C6) and Nepenthe's tomb (area C4).

The gardens are overgrown with colorful seaweed that reaches toward the surface and surrounds the sunken ship (a vessel with

Ghoulish Crocodile

the name *Pearl of Jalmeray* still carved into its stern). Creatures inside the garden are concealed, and creatures outside the garden are concealed to creatures within it.

Creatures: A zombie chuul lives in the gardens, making its home under the sunken boat. If it detects creatures with its tremorsense, it rushes out to fight. It retreats only if specifically commanded to do so by Sahni Bride-of-the-Sea, so it likely fights the characters until destroyed.

ZOMBIE CHUUL

CREATURE 7

UNIQUE NE LARGE AMPHIBIOUS MINDLESS UNDEAD ZOMBIE

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

Skills Athletics +18, Stealth +11

Str +7, **Dex** +0, **Con** +6, **Int** -5, **Wis** +0, **Cha** -1

Slow The zombie chuul is permanently slowed 1 and can't use reactions.

AC 22; **Fort** +18, **Ref** +10, **Will** +13

HP 200, negative healing; **Immunities** death effects, disease, mental, paralyzed, poison, unconscious;

Weaknesses positive 15, slashing 15

Speed 30 feet, swim 25 feet

Melee ♦ **claw** +18 (reach 10 feet), **Damage** 2d12+12 slashing plus Grab

Constrict ♦ 1d12+7 bludgeoning, DC 25 (grabbed by claw only)

Mandibles ♦ **Requirements** A creature is grabbed and paralyzed by the zombie chuul's tentacles; **Effect** The creature takes 3d6 piercing damage.

Paralytic Venom (incapacitation, poison) **Saving Throw** DC 25 Fortitude; **Maximum Duration** 6 rounds; **Stage 1** paralyzed (1 round)

Tentacle Transfer ♦ **Requirements** The zombie chuul has a creature grabbed; **Effect** The zombie chuul transfers the grabbed creature from its claws to its tentacles, or vice versa. The creature is exposed to the zombie chuul's paralytic venom when transferred into the tentacles and at the start of each of the zombie chuul's turns if it remains grabbed by the tentacles.

Treasure: The sunken boat hasn't been looted because no one has dared to face the aggressive chuul. If the characters search it, they find a skeleton lashed to the boat's wheel. It wears a ruby ring worth 30 gp.

C2. PLAZA

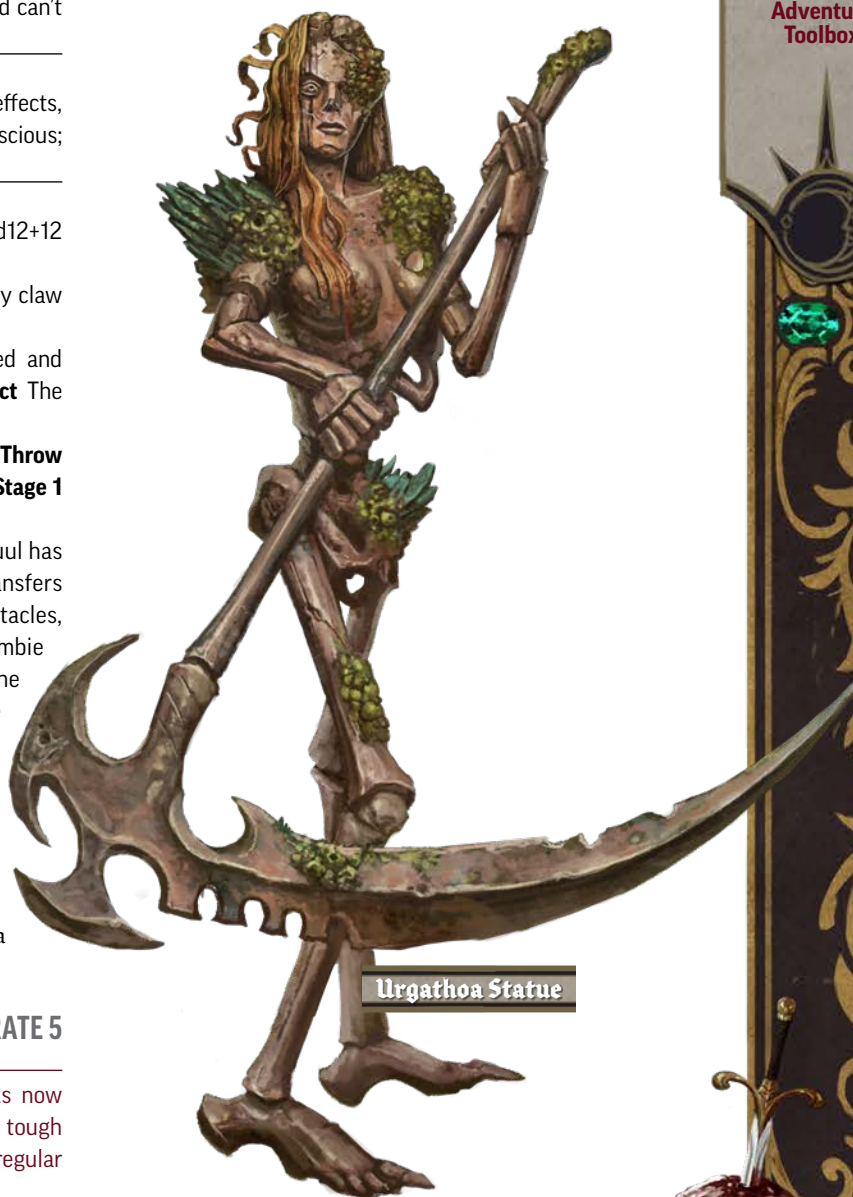
MODERATE 5

The temple plaza is paved with flat marble blocks now covered with sand and slime, between which grow tough clumps of seaweed. Columns rise fifteen feet in regular

rows, but some have toppled and lie in broken fragments. Open arches lead into several adjoining chambers. At the west end of the plaza is a thirty-foot statue of Urgathoa encrusted with barnacles, now home to a flourishing ecosystem of crustaceans, eels, sea plants, and fish. Two large braziers, each roaring with flames despite being submerged, flank the statue.

Sahni and her minions avoid the plaza because it remains a sacred place to Urgathoa, despite all that's happened to the site. The slick slime and tufts of plants make the ground here greater difficult terrain. In addition to the enormous statue flanked by *continual flame* braziers, this chamber is home to two meat guardians, golems devoted to Urgathoa.

Creatures: The meat guardians have been granted a



Urgathoa Statue

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spark of basic sentience and restlessness by Urgathoa's blessing. They're formed from stitched hunks of meat and bone shards to resemble the goddess in form, and their magical nature protects them from the seawater. They move about the plaza from time to time, standing still for days or weeks at a time. A character who succeeds at a DC 20 Religion check recognizes these macabre creations as guardians of the temple and servants of Urgathoa.

As the characters arrive, the meat guardians stand along the west and east walls, with a clear view of the plaza. They move forward to intercept intruders, but are slow and ungainly underwater. They don't attack anyone openly wearing a religious symbol of Urgathoa, instead kneeling before such devotees.

The characters can try to calm the meat guardians if they choose. A character lacking a religious symbol to Urgathoa can attempt a DC 20 Deception, Diplomacy, or Religion check to demonstrate they aren't enemies and get the guardians to stand down. This check automatically fails if the characters have already attacked the meat guardians, or if any of the characters openly wears a religious symbol of Dagon.

Once a fight begins, the meat guardians relentlessly pursue foes and fight until destroyed.

MEAT GUARDIANS (2)

CREATURE 5

UNCOMMON NE MEDIUM CONSTRUCT DIVINE GOLEM MINDLESS

Divine warden carrion golem (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 72, *Pathfinder Bestiary* 2 128)

Perception +7; darkvision

Skills Athletics +15

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

AC 20; **Fort** +14, **Ref** +9, **Will** +11

HP 60; **Immunities** bleed, death effects, disease, doomed, drained, electricity, fatigued, healing, magic (see Golem Antimagic below), mental, necromancy, nonlethal attacks, paralyzed, poison, sickened, unconscious; **Resistances** physical 5 (except adamantite or slashing)

Divine Destruction (divine, necromancy) (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 72) 5d6 negative, DC 20

Faith Bound (abjuration, divine) (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 73)

Golem Antimagic harmed by fire (4d6, 1d8 from areas or persistent damage); healed by electricity (area 1d6 HP); slowed by cold

Vulnerable to Gentle Repose Casting a *gentle repose* spell on a meat guardian causes it to grow stiff. The golem attempts a DC 20 Fortitude save. It's unaffected on a critical success, slowed 1 for 1d4 rounds on a success, and is immobilized and slowed for 1d4 rounds on a failure.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ scythe +15 (deadly d10, magical, trip), **Damage** 2d10+4 slashing

Melee ♦ jaws +15 (magical), **Damage** 2d10+4 piercing plus filth fever

Melee ♦ claw +15 (agile, magical), **Damage** 2d6+4 slashing plus filth fever

Divine Innate Spells DC 20, attack +12; **Cantrips** (3rd) *divine lance*

Divine Domain Spells 1 Focus Point, DC 20; **3rd** *overstuff* (*Pathfinder Core Rulebook* 394), *touch of undeath* (*Pathfinder Core Rulebook* 398)

Faithful Weapon (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 73) scythe, striking rune

Filth Fever (disease) The sickened and unconscious conditions from filth fever can't end or be reduced until the disease is cured; **Saving Throw** DC 20 Fortitude; **Stage 1** carrier with no ill effect (1d4 hours); **Stage 2** sickened 1 (1 day); **Stage 3** sickened 1 and slowed 1 as long as it remains sickened (1 day); **Stage 4** unconscious (1 day); **Stage 5** dead

Instrument of Faith (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 72)

Talking to the Guardians: If the characters convince the meat guardians they're not enemies, the golems charge the characters with a quest.

The two constructs speak in perfect harmony, resting the butts of their bone scythes on the marble stones. "The Bride-of-the-Sea shames the Pallid Princess and uses this temple to worship the Shadow in the Sea." Each construct lifts one arm and points to a dark archway leading north. "Show your love for the Pallid Princess. Find the shrine to Dagon and destroy it."

If the characters refuse this task, the meat guardians attack. If the characters agree, the guardians return to their original positions against the wall to keep watch. If they later spot the characters leaving the temple before the marsh giant in area C9 is slain, the guardians consider their quest broken and pursue the characters to kill them.

XP Award: If the characters receive the quest from the meat guardians and fulfill it by defeating the marsh giant Blaanol and destroying the shrine to Dagon, award them 80 XP as if they'd defeated both of the meat guardians in combat. They don't get this XP if they also fight the meat guardians.

C3. WIGHT LAIR

MODERATE 5

This dark enclosed chamber lies partly in ruins; the western wall has collapsed, leaving a gaping hole to the sea. Four sarcophagi fill the room, though one lies toppled

over, and the lids of all four have been pushed onto the stone floor.

Creatures: Four wights lurk here. They were once human servants of Nepenthe Highridge, a night hag who was once in a coven with Sahni. Sahni killed Nepenthe and her servants, and she stashed their corpses in these old Urgathoan sarcophagi. Lingered necrotic energies animated them, and they pushed their way free. They still wear the sodden, tattered remnants of Highridge servant clothing: black coats and trousers embroidered with images of blood drops, like the butler Lixl wears.

The wights hate Sahni and her minions, but they know they're at a disadvantage when fighting underwater and don't consider themselves strong enough to defeat her. They lurk behind their sarcophagi, wallowing in self-pity that transforms to violent fury if anyone intrudes in their chamber. Unlike Nepenthe in area C4, the wights are unwilling to abandon the temple entirely.

They fight until destroyed but don't leave areas C3, C4 and C5.

WIGHTS (4)

CREATURE 3

Pathfinder Bestiary 332

Initiative Perception +10

Questioning the Wights: If the wights are captured or interrogated, they bemoan their fate and speak of their history.

"Gone, long gone," the wights whisper. One of them goes on. "The Bride-of-the-Sea killed our mistress, but her glorious evil was too great. She rose, as we did, nurtured by the Pallid Princess into unlife. From her crypt she crawled, and so she left, never to return." The wight gestures out the ruined corner of the temple with bony hands.

C4. NEPENTHE'S CRYPT

This dark chamber is dominated by a single feature: a sarcophagus rising about four feet high in a massive basalt column. Its lid lies cracked in half on the floor.

This is where Sahni placed Nepenthe's body. Although Sahni hated her night hag peer, she put her body to rest properly so she wouldn't rise as a witchfire or other undead monstrosity. Sahni's care was insufficient to counteract the necromantic magic lingering within Urgathoa's temple, and Nepenthe arose as an undead monster. She pushed the lid off her tomb and fled north, through the collapse in area C5. The only thing that remains in the sarcophagus

are some scraps of flesh that twitch with remnants of unlife and some accouterments (including the Treasure below). Any character who is an expert or better in Religion, or succeeds at a DC 22 Religion check, can deduce the scraps are the remainder of a human-sized creature that rose as undead.

Wight Observers: Although this room is empty, the wights in area C3 watch it and wait in ambush if intruders enter their chamber.

Treasure: Nepenthe's *heartstone*, now a non-magical diamond set in a golden ring, lies inside the tomb. The ring is worth 50 gp, but the characters might return it to Tobias Highridge.

C5. COLLAPSE

The sea floor beneath this corner of the temple sank several feet. Without a solid foundation, the entire structure collapsed. Marble stones weighing many tons lie tumbled down the slope with columns and roof fragments atop the clutter. The entire area is home to a variety of undersea life and is overgrown with coral, barnacles, and seaweed. Schools of fish swim about, and a modest current flows west.

Wight Observers: Although this room is empty, the wights in area C3 watch it and wait in ambush if intruders enter their chamber.

C6. ALCHEMICAL STORAGE

MODERATE 5

This long chamber lined with shelves serves as storage for Sahni's various alchemical ingredients, which are kept in waterproof jars. This room also includes many underwater plants and large specimen jars, some larger than a human. Anyone looking into this room can see one of these jars contains several tiny, squirming leeches.

Creatures: Some of the plants and creatures Sahni keeps here are quite dangerous and prone to attack intruders. A mandragora lurks in a ceramic pot in one corner, while a large specimen jar containing a swarm of brood leeches stands in another. A stone cabinet contains a gray ooze adapted to underwater life—the door to the cabinet is slightly ajar, allowing the ooze to escape if it senses prey.

These creatures don't react to Sahni's presence, but anyone else entering this room stirs them to attack. The aquatic ooze and the mandragora can rush into a fight right away. The brood leech swarm agitates within its jar, breaking free if it succeeds at a DC 15 Athletics check to Force it Open. The mandragora uses its piercing shriek as soon as it can in the fight; if the brood leech swarm is still encased in its jar, it's unaffected by the shriek.

These creatures fight to the death but don't leave this room, preferring to return to their usual spots if their enemies retreat.

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AQUATIC OOZE

CREATURE 4

UNCOMMON N MEDIUM AQUATIC MINDLESS OOZE

Variant gray ooze (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 2 194)

Initiative Perception +8

Speed 10 feet, climb 10 feet, swim 10 feet

Paralysis (incapacitation) A creature hit by the ooze's pseudopod is paralyzed unless it succeeds at a DC 19 Fortitude save. A victim can attempt a new save to recover at the end of each of its turns.

BROOD LEECH SWARM

CREATURE 4

Pathfinder Bestiary 2 156

Initiative Perception +9

MANDRAGORA

CREATURE 4

Pathfinder Bestiary 2 170

Initiative Stealth +12

Treasure: Characters who loot the supplies here can gather 60 gp of alchemical materials in addition to a lesser winter wolf elixir, a lesser elixir of life, and a moderate antidote.

Sahni's business records are also here, in a book with sealskin pages. The characters can give these records to Gishkar the Fishmonger or Stana Keystone for a reward.

C7. SAHNI'S KITCHEN

MODERATE 5

A round black cauldron rests in the center of this room over a nest of coals that magically glow with heat despite the surrounding water. Stone shelves line the walls, filled with ingredients for alchemical crafting and mundane cooking. A wooden figurine of a witch riding a broom—not unlike that found in Iron Tavia's cottage—is tied to the ceiling by a leather cord and moves slowly in the current.

This is where Sahni Bride-of-the-Sea spends most of her days, manufacturing large quantities of tremor paste. Sometimes she modifies the paste in an effort to make the resulting toxin (when combined with braingrit) more potent. Once she has enough paste to fill a large crate, her lacedons pack it and ship it to Graydirge. To avoid high taxes, she completes customs forms stating the crate is filled with caviar; she includes some cheap caviar on top of the tremor paste to fool casual inspection.

The doll hanging from the ceiling looks like Tavia's *lucky kitchen witch* but isn't magical. A small chest full of tremor paste—identical to that which the characters discovered in "Zombie Feast"—sits in a corner.

Creatures: Sahni is working here when the characters arrive if she didn't come to the aid of her crocodiles in area C8. Sahni likely doesn't know of the

characters' existence. Depending on how much time your characters spent in downtime, Sahni might know Tavia was killed, but she's unlikely to consider the coven's poison manufacturing to be in danger; after all, Tavia earned many enemies in her long life.

If confronted here, Sahni expresses curiosity as to who the characters are and what they want with her. If they defeated Tavia, she chortles with glee. "Good of you to kick that old witch back into the shadows," she cackles. "With her gone, Graveclaw will be all the easier for me to command!"

Sahni realizes she can't let the characters live. They've not only seen her tremor paste creation—something she's sure would bring a great deal of trouble upon the Graveclaw coven if widely known—but they also jeopardize her dominant position in Sallowshore.

Sahni begins combat by using her *stony hag eye* on someone who looks physically frail, and then follows up with spells like *harm* and *vampiric maiden*. She enjoys using her Curse of Futility against spellcasters. Characters who succeed at a DC 20 Occultism check can identify Sahni's coven spells as she casts them, and they might deduce from the fact that she's using them that Graveclaw must have begun with at least four hags (that is, there's at least one hag they don't yet know about). They'll find clues about this fourth hag, Nathnelma, in Chapter 3.

If the characters haven't already dispatched them, Sahni's crocodiles arrive in the second round of combat to aid her. Together, these foes are a Severe encounter.

SAHNI BRIDE-OF-THE-SEA

CREATURE 7

Page 90

Initiative Perception +15

Treasure: Sahni's cauldron is an *extraction cauldron* (page 75). The characters probably have little desire to cart a cauldron around with them on their journeys. However, they can sell it in Sallowshore to grateful townsfolk, who pay them full price for this symbol of victory over Sahni. The cauldron is currently full of heavier-than-water alchemical ingredients that can't be salvaged.

C8. SAHNI'S CHAMBERS

TRIVIAL 5

Sahni's bed is a pile of kelp confined within the ribs of a massive walrus. Ceramic barrels around the room contain her personal belongings, including an ample collection of fashionable gowns. Trophies taken from her clients in town, symbolizing the valued things each individual gave up to secure her "justice," line the room on shelves, propped up on pedestals and locked within glass cases. These include a mask that

reproduces Bulgath's face, a crude doll of Terrin and Gulla's daughter, and a book containing Hunsli's memories of her husband. If Sahni is killed, all these trophies melt away into sea water as the deals they represent are unwound.

Creatures: Sahni keeps two ghoulish crocodiles here as pets. They generally leave her alone while she's busy in the kitchen (area C7), but if she leaves to go somewhere else, they loyally follow along behind her. They lurk in the dark corners of the room and attack any intruders.

If Sahni hears commotion here, she arrives in the second round of combat to fight.

GHOUL CROCODILES (2)

CREATURE 3

Page 32

Initiative Stealth +12

Treasure: A strongbox beneath the bed contains various gems worth 80 gp.

C9. DAGON'S SHRINE

SEVERE 5

A 30-foot-long stone platform extends from the temple's westernmost edge. Half of this area is covered in a 15-foot-by-15-foot stone ceiling held up by four pillars. Beyond the pillars is a 10-foot-high statue with the lower body of an eel, a hideous face, and four octopus-like tentacles instead of arms: the demon lord Dagon. Sahni constructed this shrine and makes her unholy devotions to Dagon at high tide.

The characters might be interested in destroying the statue, either at the request of Urgathoa's meat guardians or otherwise. The statue is ordinary stone, so demolishing it is time consuming but doesn't require any checks. Dagon cares little about this shrine.

Creatures: Whether due to random chance or Sahni's frequent worship here, the shrine has attracted a marsh giant named Blaanolool. A casual follower of Dagon, the giant is listless and lazy, typically resting on the western edge of the shrine and gazing out to sea. Sahni brings him food gathered by her lacedon minions, and he has no need to hunt.

If the characters intrude upon the shrine, Blaanolool looks at them, but he doesn't muster the energy to respond in anything other than grunts. He doesn't attack unless the characters are obviously hostile or attack him first. The giant wears a magical gold ring Sahni gave him, symbolic of her marriage to Dagon,

but he cares nothing for her and doesn't fight to defend either Sahni or her minions.

BLAANLOOL

CREATURE 8

Male marsh giant (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 2 125)

Initiative Perception +16

Items +1 striking gaff, religious symbol of Dagon, ring of cold resistance, sack of 5 rocks

Resistances cold 5

Back on the Road

Once Sahni is defeated, the characters can travel to Pagked, which is detailed in Chapter 3. They can return to Graydirge first if they wish, or rest and conduct downtime activities in Sallowshore. With Sahni destroyed, the characters freed many townsfolk from bargains they made with the sea hag and are heralded as heroes. They also might have unfinished business with faction leaders in town. When they're ready, they can travel to Pagked.



Blaanolool

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Chapter 3: Showdown in Slagtown

The characters learned Decrosia, a member of the Graveclaw, lives in Pagked. Beyond this, their knowledge of Pagked is likely slim—the town is remote and only well-known to those interested in its technological output. Characters can attempt a DC 20 Society check to recall facts about Pagked; this is also the DC to Gather Information about it.

Critical Success Pagked is a dying, polluted industrial town. Over several years, Pagked's mortal population died in a series of mass poisonings. Some of the dead rose again and continue to work there. The only faction with any presence in town is the Carters Consortium, because it ships out the town's technological products.

Success Pagked is a polluted industrial town; its residents get sick and die with startling frequency. It's a source for simple metalware, such as plows. The Carters Consortium keeps a presence there.

Failure Pagked is a polluted industrial town; everyone who lives there gets sick.

Critical Failure Pagked is a long-dead town whose inhabitants are all gone. It's totally abandoned now.

Pagked

Pagked was once a bustling factory town more appropriate to Alkenstar than Geb. Its technologically sophisticated assembly lines churned out metal goods,

from domestic items like kitchenware to armor and swords. Many of the implements of war still used in Yled originally came from Pagked. Now, the town is a rusted-out shell of its former self, exporting only the simplest of wares—plows, silo parts, and pots and pans—through supply lines maintained by the Carters Consortium.

The rust hag Decrosia is the cause of Pagked's decline. For years, Decrosia used the townsfolk as test subjects for her experiments on lethal poisons. She cleverly concealed these experiments, hiding her poisons in industrial waste, the town's water supply, and other resources. She was instrumental in formulating both braingrit and tremor paste, and eagerly deployed them in her town using pre-established channels for poisoning. Unlike the bungled poisoning in Graydirge, the poisoning of Pagked was subtly and skillfully done. However, Decrosia was overeager and poisoned Pagked's entire remaining mortal population.

Many of the fallen rose a few days later as virulaks (page 86). In those intervening days, Decrosia seized control of the town. She made an alliance with the Carters Consortium representative in town—a paranoid man known only as the Shroud who also rose as a virulak—and an undead dwarf foreman.

Decrosia thought success with the poison (and remittance from the covenant's mysterious patron) would result in a large payment she needs to keep Pagked running, but when the Graydirge plan failed she had to improvise. She tried to revitalize Pagked by buying muskets and other guns from nearby Alkenstar and passed them off as the work of her factories. The cost of buying and transporting firearms across the border made them so expensive only rich collectors could afford them, and Decrosia doesn't have those connections. Her plan, like the town, is failing. Her latest scheme is to mass produce both braingrit and tremor paste, insisting Iron Taviah and Sahni work too slowly in their antiquated kitchens, and she's retooled her largest factory to make these ingredients at scale.

When the characters approach Pagked, read or paraphrase the following.

A nest of towering brick smokestacks—most of which emit no smoke at all—rise from this rust-colored factory town. A slow-moving river winds its way through town, its water a rainbow of nauseating, unnatural hues. On one side of the river, several huge factory buildings still stand, weathered by time and age. Beyond them sprawls a cemetery, with its many gravestones standing over empty holes. Low, ramshackle homes crowd the other side of the river, connected to the factory side by three bridges, one of which has collapsed, and another that appears to be patched with iron girders and a lot of luck. Automatons lumber through the streets, pulling wagons and performing other manual labor. The people of Pagked are all undead, largely human in their features but with a greenish tint to their skin.

Infiltration Overview

Pagked poses a unique challenge to the characters. Strangers, especially living strangers, are quick to attract attention, and no one intends to spill any information about Decrosia, known as “the Boss.” The characters can't just walk into town, ask questions, and find the hag they're after.

Instead, this chapter of “Graveclaw” is structured as an infiltration. See pages 160–163 of the *Pathfinder Gamemastery Guide* for infiltration rules. The infiltration of Pagked has four phases.

CHAPTER 3 SYNOPSIS

The characters encounter Decrosia, the rust hag member of the Graveclaw who's desperate to achieve some success in the covenant's plot. She's hiding in the rusted-out factory town of Pagked, and she has nearly the entire town under her control.

This chapter is unlike the others in this adventure, as it's structured like an extended infiltration encounter rather than a standard exploration of a hostile town. The characters can make some preparations outside town and then must complete two obstacles: the first is to find Decrosia's lair, and the second is to reach her within a busy factory. The final phase of the infiltration is to escape Decrosia's angry followers.

The most important thing the characters learn during this investigation is that there is a fourth hag in the Graveclaw: someone named Nathnelma in the city of Yled.

CHAPTER 3 TREASURE

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

- +1 striking double-barreled musket (*Pathfinder Guns & Gears* 152)
- bag of holding type II
- ghoul hide
- giant scorpion venom
- greater comprehension elixir
- greater leaper's elixir
- ring of wizardry type I
- spellguard shield
- tourmaline sphere aeon stone

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Preparations: Characters who pause on the outskirts of town can perform downtime activities to make their infiltration easier.

Objective 1: Locate Decrosia: The characters can stick together or split up to best use their individual talents, exploring the town while trying to avoid notice and learn more about Decrosia. Once the characters overcome three obstacles in this phase, they pinpoint Decrosia's location and complete Objective 1.

Objective 2: Infiltrate the Factory: The characters must get through town to Decrosia's factory office, where they can confront her. They must overcome three obstacles in this phase to reach her, then fight her.

Escape: It's unlikely the characters can avoid attracting attention once they've fought Decrosia, so they must get out of town before the entire population overwhelms them. At this point, the characters' infiltration can't fail—as Decrosia has been defeated—but Awareness Points and Infiltration Points they've gained determine how difficult the escape is.

RUNNING THE INFILTRATION

Throughout the four phases, the characters accumulate Awareness Points, Edge Points, and Infiltration Points as they confront obstacles and discover opportunities. As the characters gain Awareness Points, the infiltration becomes more difficult.

Let the players know Pagked presents a different type of adventuring experience for their characters and explain the basics of the infiltration subsystem. If the characters ride into Pagked and attempt to Gather Information as they did in Sallowshore, they're clearly strangers and not trusted. Emphasize the stares they attract and that everyone in town, without visible exception, is the same kind of undead. No one answers their questions. They immediately gain 1 Awareness Point. Once the players understand they must covertly find Decrosia, they've begun the infiltration, and you should explain how Awareness Points, Edge Points, and Infiltration Points work.

Track Awareness Point thresholds as follows.

5 Awareness Points: Suspicions are raised. Increase the DC for obstacles by 1. The first time the characters reach this tier, a complication occurs. If they haven't yet reached out to the Shroud, he reaches out to them, as described in Opportunities on page 46.

10 Awareness Points: The first time the characters reach this tier, a complication occurs.

15 Awareness Points: The first time the characters reach 15 Awareness Points, Decrosia sends the Zombie Enforcers complication (page 45) to eliminate them.

20 Awareness Points: The infiltration fails. Virtually the entire population of Pagked is alert to the characters,

and Decrosia retreats to a safe location surrounded by dozens of loyal guardians. The characters must retreat and wait at least a week to begin the infiltration again. If they already completed Objective 1: Locate Decrosia, they don't have to complete it again.

Preparations

There's not much the characters can do to find Decrosia without actually entering Pagked, but they have some options to prepare, as presented below. The party can perform a maximum of three preparation activities and can attempt each activity once. Your players may come up with additional ways to prepare for the infiltration of Pagked; improvise other preparation activities based on the options below.

CREATE DISGUISES

DOWNTIME **SECRET**

You plan to disguise all the characters as residents of Pagked. Attempt a DC 24 Deception check. You gain a +1 circumstance bonus on this check for each other character who is trained or better in Deception who helps you (these circumstance bonuses are cumulative, up to +4).

Success You create plausible disguises for the entire group.

Each character gains 1 Edge Point that can be used only to maintain a cover identity.

Failure You're unable to create suitably plausible disguises.

Each character gains 1 Edge Point, as success, but these Edge Points (unknown to you) grant no benefit when used because the disguise slips or fails at a crucial moment. The first time you realize an Edge Point from this failure provides no bonus, remove them from the other characters, too.

Critical Failure As failure, but add 1 AP to the infiltration.

OBSERVE PAGKED

DOWNTIME **SECRET**

You spend time watching Pagked from a safe and concealed distance. Attempt a DC 22 Perception check.

Success You come to recognize some of the town's inhabitants and schedules, gaining 1 Edge Point.

Failure You notice nothing particularly noteworthy.

Critical Failure You misinterpret what you're seeing in town, gaining 1 Edge Point that (unknown to you) results in a critical failure when used, even if you use the Edge Point after rolling a failure.

WATCH THE ROADS

DOWNTIME **SECRET**

Looking for any traffic that might reveal useful information, you see a Carters Consortium wagon pulled by a large mechanical quadruped that resembles a gorilla. The wagon has a single driver: an undead man with greenish, sickly skin.

You can let the wagon go on its way to not cause trouble for the Carters Consortium, or you can confront the driver, attempting a DC 22 Deception, Diplomacy, or Intimidation check to question him.

Success The driver tells you the Carters Consortium's chief agent in Pagked is known as the Shroud. Decrosia is sending this load of mundane alchemical supplies to a Nathnelma in Yled. You gain 1 Edge Point.

Failure As success, but you don't gain the Edge Point.

Critical Failure The driver doesn't reveal any information.

Creatures: If the characters start trouble, the driver and the construct pulling the wagon both fight.

MECHANICAL LABORER

CREATURE 5

UNCOMMON N LARGE CONSTRUCT EARTH MINDLESS

Variant animated statue (*Pathfinder Bestiary 21*)

Perception +11; darkvision

Skills Athletics +14

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

AC 22 (18 when broken), construct armor; **Fort** +15, **Ref** +10, **Will** +8

HP 55; **Hardness** 8; **Immunities** death effects, disease, doomed, drained, fatigued, healing, mental, necromancy, nonlethal attacks, paralyzed, poison, sickened, unconscious

Construct Armor Like normal objects, a mechanical laborer has Hardness. This Hardness reduces any damage it takes by 8. Once a mechanical laborer is reduced to less than half its Hit Points, or immediately upon being damaged by a critical hit, its construct armor breaks. It loses its Hardness, and its Armor Class is reduced to 18.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ fist +15 (magical), **Damage** 2d8+7 bludgeoning plus Grab

VIRULAK VILLAGER

CREATURE 3

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Initiative Perception +8

Searching the Wagon: The ingredients in the wagon are mundane and valueless supplies Nathnelma needs for her lessons, unrelated to the poison plot. If the characters eliminate the driver, they can find information about the shipment's recipient but not any other information from the preparation activity.

Faction Reputation: If the characters let the wagon go on its way, agents of the Carters Consortium later realize the wagon left just before a lot of trouble in Pagked and deduce the characters let it go. They gain 1 Reputation Point with the Carters Consortium. If the characters eliminate the driver, they instead lose 1 Reputation Point with the Carters Consortium.

PAGKED

SETTLEMENT 6

NE TOWN

Run-down industrial town

Government Boss (overlord)

Population 598 (57% virulaks, 25% mindless constructs, 10% forge-spurned, 8% other undead)

Languages Common, Necril

Religions Droskar, Norgorber, Urgathoa

Threats Rogue constructs, self-destructive undead

Impoverished The maximum level to Earn Income in Pagked is 3.

Shun the Living Decrosia poisoned Pagked's living population, which has since risen as undead. Living creatures other than Decrosia are shunned. Living creatures have a -2 circumstance penalty on Diplomacy checks, if townspeople deign to deal with them all.

Decrosia (CE female rust hag 8) known simply as "the Boss," Decrosia rules the town

Supervisor Haka (NE male forge-spurned overseer 5) maintains the town's constructs

The Shroud (NE male virulak necromancer 7) maintains Carters Consortium interests in town, is a visible supporter of Norgorber

XP Award: Award the characters 30 XP for choosing to undertake any preparations. Increase this award to 80 XP if they gain at least 1 Edge Point from a success during the preparation activities.

Objective 1: Locate Decrosia

The characters begin this phase when they enter Pagked to find Decrosia. The characters must overcome three obstacles to pinpoint Decrosia's location in her factory office. They learn one of the following facts with each obstacle they overcome, in this order.

First Completed Obstacle: "The Boss" is Decrosia, a rust hag. Characters can attempt DC 23 Occultism checks to Recall Knowledge about rust hags.

Second Completed Obstacle: Decrosia is working to mass produce two specific alchemical ingredients in one of her factories. A character who succeeds at a DC 17 Crafting check recognizes these ingredients as braingrit and tremor paste.

Third Completed Obstacle: Decrosia has an office on the second floor of the factory. She has been especially paranoid lately and never leaves the factory without overwhelming personal security. The characters might deduce that Decrosia knows the coven is broken.

XP Award: Award the characters 80 XP for each obstacle they overcome in this phase, up to 240 XP.

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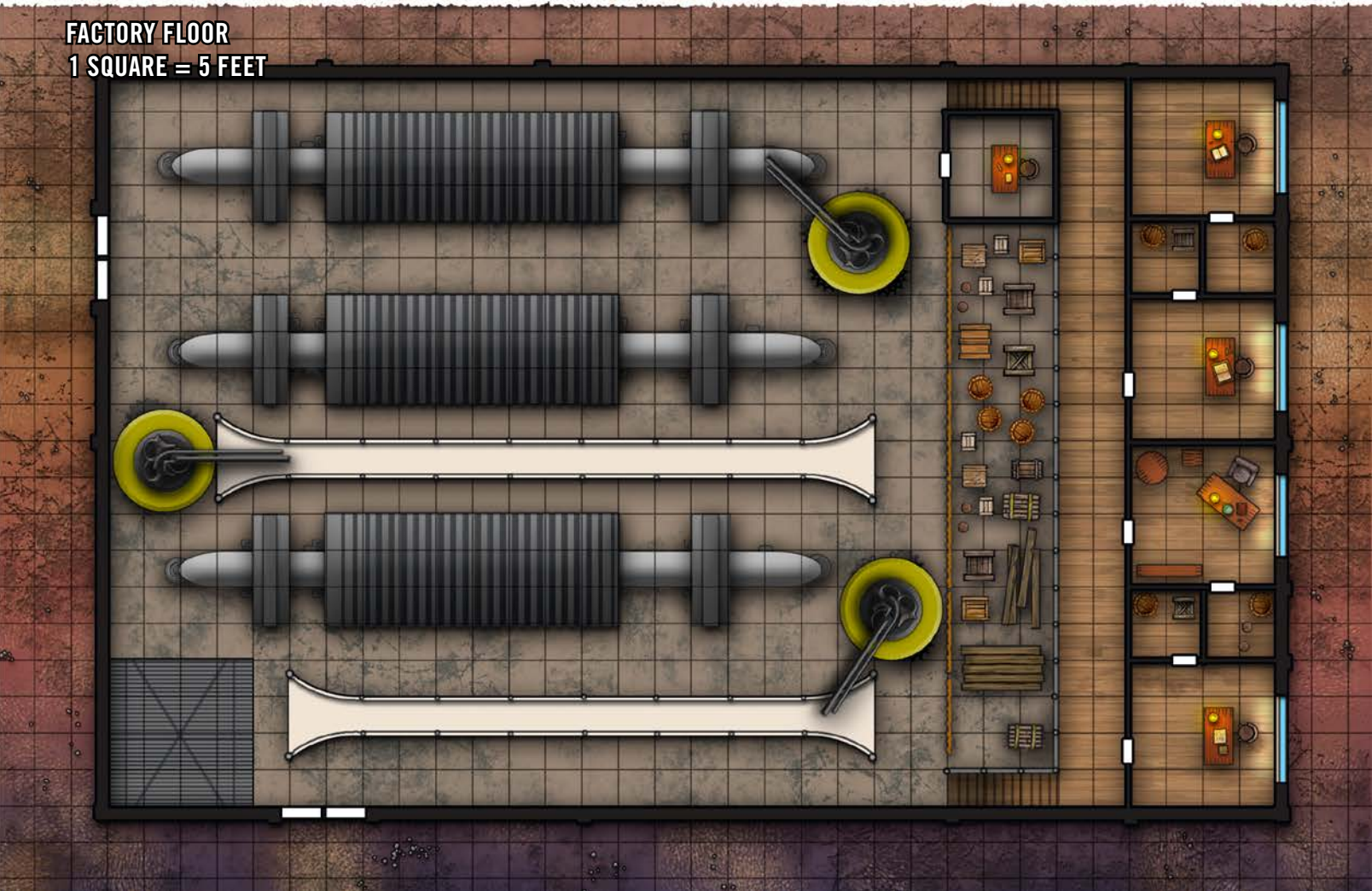
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OBSTACLES

The obstacles for this phase are provided below, along with combat encounters or other challenges associated with each obstacle. The characters don't need to complete all these obstacles, and they can complete them in any order. You should choose obstacles based on tactics they choose; for example, use Apprehensive Townsfolk if they're disguised as undead or Skavelings in the Stacks if they're snooping from rooftops.

Some of these obstacles result in a combat if the characters are unsuccessful. Use the generic Pagked Streets and Pagked Home maps on page 42 or maps of your own design, making minor changes for any subsequent fights using the same map.

APPREHENSIVE TOWNSFOLK OBSTACLE

Infiltration Points 2 (group); **Overcome** DC 22 Deception, Diplomacy, Intimidation, or Society

Use this obstacle when characters want to socialize with townspeople to get information. Townsfolk recognize each other as virulaks and don't talk about Decrosia, so questions about the hag arouse suspicion. A character who soothes their concerns can learn about "the Boss."

Failure In addition to accruing 1 Awareness Point, locals decide to teach the intruders a lesson. The characters are attacked by 1 virulak villager (page 86) per character the first time a character rolls this result.

Critical Failure As failure, but 2 Awareness Points.

CAUGHT SNOOPING OBSTACLE

Infiltration Points 3 (group); **Overcome** DC 22 Perception, Stealth, or Thievery

Use this obstacle for characters who sneak into Pagked buildings to search for clues. They might be spotted during their investigation. The first time a character succeeds against this obstacle, the character also finds a greater comprehension elixir (two elixirs on a critical success).

CLOCKWORK PATROL OBSTACLE

Infiltration Points 2 (group); **Overcome** DC 24 Crafting or DC 20 Stealth

Clockwork soldiers equipped with muskets patrol the town's streets. The characters watch their movements and mechanisms to determine which parts of town they're protecting most efficiently.

Failure In addition to accruing 1 Awareness Point, the party draws attention. Two clockwork riflers (page 44) attack the first time the characters roll this result.

Critical Failure As failure, but 2 Awareness Points.

DIRECT LABORERS OBSTACLE

Infiltration Points 2 (individual); **Overcome** DC 22 Crafting, Deception, or Religion

GUNS IN PAGKED

Decrosia wields guns imported from nearby Alkenstar and Dongun Hold, and she equipped some of her minions with them (notably, the clockwork riflers who patrol the town). The rules for firearms can be found in *Pathfinder Guns & Gears*. Your characters may want to take these firearms from defeated enemies and try them out; let them! Players should keep track of ammunition, because once they're out of bullets, they're unlikely to find or buy any more. Pagked might give your players a taste for guns, but this is only a taste if you don't want guns to have a larger role in your campaign.

Use this obstacle when a character tries to infiltrate the factory workers in Pagked. As much of the labor in town is performed by constructs (undead, clockwork creations, or animated objects) a character can only gather clues and keep suspicions low if they can command these laborers—or even simply appear to do so.

Critical Failure In addition to accruing 2 Awareness Points, the player character inadvertently starts a fight with 1 mechanical laborer (page 41) for every 2 characters who attempted to overcome this obstacle, in addition to a single angry virulak villager (page 86). This combat occurs only the first time a character rolls this result.

INTERROGATION GONE WRONG OBSTACLE

Infiltration Points 3 (group); **Overcome** DC 22 Deception, Diplomacy, or Intimidation

Questioning the people of Pagked not only doesn't elicit any answers but can get the characters called out as intruders and raise suspicions across town. The characters must be careful in this questioning, both to overcome a townspeople's reticence about talking to strangers and get them to stay quiet afterward.

SKAVELINGS IN THE STACKS OBSTACLE

Infiltration Points 2 (individual); **Overcome** DC 24 Athletics or DC 22 Stealth

Pagked's high roofs, many crowded with smokestacks, are an ideal place to hide while looking over the town. However, characters risk being discovered by the smokestacks' undead residents if they do.

Critical Failure In addition to accruing 2 Awareness Points, the characters draw the attention of skavelings who lurk among the town's smokestacks. One skaveling (*Bestiary* 2 241) for every character who attempted to overcome this obstacle attacks the characters the first time a character rolls this result, to a maximum of 4 skavelings.

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COMPLICATIONS

You can use the complications below when the characters cross Awareness Point thresholds, or just to make things more challenging. As with the obstacles, use the Pagked Streets or Pagked Homes maps.

GUNS BLAZING COMPLICATION (MODERATE 6)

Trigger The characters reach an Awareness Point threshold for the first time or are relaxing somewhere in town.

Overcome A pair of clockwork riflers burst onto the scene to eliminate the characters.

CLOCKWORK RIFLERS (2) CREATURE 6

UNCOMMON N MEDIUM CLOCKWORK CONSTRUCT MINDLESS

Variant clockwork soldier (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 49)

Perception +16; darkvision

Skills Athletics +15 (+17 to Disarm, Grapple, or avoid being Disarmed)



Clockwork Rifleman

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

Items +1 striking double-barreled musket with bayonet (10 rounds; *Guns & Gears* 152)

Wind-Up 24 hours, DC 22, standby

AC 24; **Fort** +16, **Ref** +15, **Will** +12

HP 80; **Immunities** death effects, disease, doomed, drained, fatigued, healing, mental, necromancy, nonlethal attacks, paralyzed, poisoned, sickened, unconscious;

Weaknesses electricity 5, orichalcum 5; **Resistances** physical 5 (except adamantite or orichalcum)

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ bayonet +17 (agile, finesse, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 1d4+9 piercing

Ranged ♦ double-barreled musket +18 (concussive, double barrel, fatal d10, range 60 feet, reload 1), **Damage** 2d6+9 piercing

Bayonet Charge ♦♦ The clockwork rifleman Strides twice and Strikes with its bayonet.

HAUNTED BYWAY COMPLICATION (MODERATE 6)

Trigger The characters reach an Awareness Point threshold for the first time or are moving through town on foot.

Overcome The party must defeat or escape a ghostly mob. The townsfolk have learned how to avoid these haunted areas, but the characters don't know which streets to avoid.

GHOSTLY MOB CREATURE 8

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Initiative Perception +16

RUST FLIES COMPLICATION

Trigger The characters reach an Awareness Point threshold for the first time or are near any of Pagked's many rusted-out buildings.

Overcome DC 24 Athletics, Crafting, or Nature

Environmental pollutants in Pagked have drawn swarms of rust-red flies as big as a human thumb. They feed on rusted metal, which means virtually everything in Pagked is potential food. Townsfolk keep the irritating flies away with bellows that project clouds of smoke. The Overcome check determines the result.

Critical Success You scatter the rust flies, resolving the complication for the entire group. You also note where Pagked's residents try hardest to keep the rust flies from settling; you gain 1 Edge Point.

Success You avoid any harm from the rust flies.

Failure Rust flies attempt to eat your possessions. The GM should select a single metal object you wear, such as armor, a shield, or a weapon; you attempt a DC 22 Reflex save. On a failure, the item is broken. On a critical failure, it's destroyed.

Critical Failure As failure, but your reaction to the rust flies draws attention. Gain 1 Awareness Point.

ZOMBIE ENFORCERS COMPLICATION (MODERATE 6)

Trigger The characters reach 15 Awareness Points for the first time.

Overcome Decrosia knows where the characters are hiding and she sends undead minions to destroy them. The characters gain 1 Awareness Point; if they don't destroy both zombie hulks, they gain 2 Awareness Points instead. If the characters have already secured the Shroud's assistance and are living in his warehouse (see Meet the Shroud, page 46) he keeps the incident quiet; the characters don't gain any Awareness Points from this complication.

ZOMBIE HULKS (2)

CREATURE 6

Pathfinder Bestiary 341

Initiative Perception +8

OPPORTUNITIES

The characters can find unexpected allies in Pagked or pave the way for their eventual escape. If the players seem unsure how to proceed in the infiltration, present one of these opportunities to them; the first two offer allies who can provide advice.

INVESTIGATE THE CEMETERY

OPPORTUNITY

Requirements The characters have overcome at least one objective and investigate the town cemetery.

The party can ally with revenants lurking in the cemetery.

Pagked's cemetery is surrounded by rusted metal fencing and a tall gate that has fallen from its hinges. Within, the hard ground is broken by dry grass and brown weeds. There are many graves, but most of them are empty holes. A pair of tall stone monuments stands in the back of the graveyard, depicting a young couple in wedding clothes.

Decrosia plundered the cemetery for body parts, particularly brains for braingrit and flesh to assemble into hulking zombie workers.

Creatures: Birrab and Daiama Maiklin were two of Decrosia's victims. The Maiklins died from the hag's poison on their wedding night, rising as revenants instead of virulaks. They stalk the cemetery but haven't ventured beyond its gates, so Decrosia doesn't know they exist or how much they hate her.

When the characters arrive, the revenants emerge from behind the monuments, to which they bear a close resemblance. If the characters are disguised as virulaks or otherwise attempt to pass themselves off as loyal servants of "the Boss," the revenants are hostile. If the characters succeed at a DC 22 Diplomacy check or reveal they're enemies of Decrosia, the revenants

converse rather than attack. They begin by asking who the characters are and what they're doing in Pagked.

If the characters express a desire to find and confront Decrosia, the Maiklins resolve to do what they can to help, including watching over them while they rest in any of the available open graves.

ELITE REVENANTS (2)

CREATURE 7

Pathfinder Bestiary 2 6, 227

Initiative Perception +16

Treasure: If the characters vow to destroy Decrosia, the revenants give the characters heirlooms they've found in some of the graves: *ghoul hide* and a *spellguard shield*.



Birrab Maiklin

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XP Award: If the characters earn the revenants' aid rather than destroy them, award the characters 120 XP, as though they'd defeated the revenants in combat.

MEET THE SHROUD

Requirements The characters have accumulated at least 5 Awareness Points or they seek out the Shroud.

The characters might earn the favor of the Shroud, a paranoid merchant and agent of the Carters Consortium.

The Shroud was once an influential human merchant who, out of reverence to Norgorber god of

OPPORTUNITY

secrets, killed his name and buried it. When he died in one of Decrosia's poisoning experiments, he rose as a powerful virulak with a talent for necromancy. The Shroud became one of the few truly independent voices in Pagked. He remains an influential agent of the Carters Consortium and manages transportation of goods for Pagked, including Decrosia's firearms imports and alchemical exports. He's the only faction representative in Pagked; the Great Factions have forsaken the dying town.

The Shroud has no love for Decrosia and despairs at Pagked's deteriorating state, but he sees no way to improve the town's situation—or his own. He would take over the town if he could, but Decrosia is formidable. The Shroud lives in a two-story house along the poisoned river that winds through town. Several wagons and carts are parked outside it, as his home is plainly the town's only shipping facility.

Creature: If the characters have at least 5 Awareness Points, the Shroud has learned of them and wants to know who they are and whether they might be useful to him. He's not hostile to the characters unless they attack first, in which case he defends himself and tries to flee rather than fight.

THE SHROUD

Male virulak necromancer (page 87)

Initiative Perception +13

CREATURE 7

The Shroud is inclined to trust characters who have any Reputation Points with the Carters Consortium, are open in their veneration of Norgorber, or reveal their opposition to Decrosia.

He offers them lodging at his warehouse for the duration of their infiltration and proposes a deal: if the characters get rid of Decrosia, they'll have a firm ally in Pagked's leadership. It's always good to have some influence with one of Geb's factions, even one that's fallen on hard times like the Carters Consortium. He offers to pay them a minimum of 250 gp after they depose the hag and meet with him afterward.

Decrosia's Shipments: As a gesture of good faith, the Shroud gives the characters an overview of Decrosia's shipments. She imports firearms from Alkenstar, both to arm her followers and resell as products from her factories—a sure way to financial ruin, the Shroud is certain, and it shows Decrosia's desperation to keep her (and the town's) floundering finances afloat. More strangely, Decrosia also ships large quantities of inert alchemical components to someone in Axan Wood, a lawyer in Sallowshore, and a woman named Nathnelma at the Twilight Castrum, a necromancy



The Shroud

school in Yled. He doesn't know much about these shipments, but he knows Nathnelma pays the bills for all of them. The Shroud therefore assumes she's in charge of the operation.

Faction Reputation: If Decrosia is killed or forced to leave town, and the characters don't interfere with the Shroud's plan to take over Pagked, the characters earn 2 Reputation Points with the Carters Consortium.

Treasure: Once Decrosia is dead, the characters can meet the Shroud outside town; he'll give them the promised 250 gp and he also passes along another treasure: a *ring of wizardry type I* that resembles a skeletal snake eating its tail. He only provides this if the characters promise to never return it to Pagked and never tell anyone who gave it to them.

XP Award: Award the characters 80 XP (rather than the 60 XP for defeating him) if they ally with the Shroud.

SABOTAGE THE BRIDGE

OPPORTUNITY

Requirements The characters investigate Pagked's bridges. Three bridges cross the river in central Pagked. One collapsed decades ago and lies in ruin. The second suffered a partial collapse but has been salvaged by undead dwarves under the leadership of Supervisor Haka (page 49). Characters who investigate this damaged bridge should attempt DC 17 Perception checks; on a success, they spot weaknesses in the bridge that make it easy to sabotage. A character who wants to sabotage the bridge should attempt a secret DC 22 Crafting check.

Critical Success You rig the bridge to collapse, and you can trigger this collapse whenever you are on or adjacent to the bridge. All characters gain 1 Edge Point that can be used only to escape town in a manner that uses the bridge.

Success As critical success, but when you use the Edge Point gained from this opportunity, you take 4d8+18 bludgeoning damage (DC 22 basic Reflex save).

Failure You rig the bridge to collapse, but it fails to activate when triggered.

SMOOTH THE PATH

OPPORTUNITY

Requirements The character successfully completed an individual objective and some other characters have not. Having completed your objective, you help an ally who is still trying to reach that goal. Describe how you're helping. This gives the ally the benefits of Follow the Expert (Core Rulebook 479). In usual cases, you might be able to attempt a relevant skill check to overcome the obstacle on behalf of the other character instead; for example, if another character has drawn attention in the Apprehensive Townsfolk obstacle, you might be able to attempt a Deception check to mislead the townspeople.

Objective 2: Infiltrate the Factory

Once the characters complete the first objective, they know Decrosia is "the Boss" and, more importantly, in which factory she's hiding. At this point, the characters can begin the second objective: infiltrate the factory to reach Decrosia. The factory and its undead dwarf workers operate around the clock, preparing braingrit and tremor paste for shipment to other hags in the Graveclaw—but particularly to Nathnelma in Yled. Decrosia's factory is a hulking, rusted structure made primarily of metal and stone, with several small, thick windows high above the factory floor that are coated with grime and allow feeble light.

The map of the most applicable areas of the factory is presented on page 42.

Too Much Heat: The characters may have accumulated Awareness Points in completing the first objective, making the rest of the infiltration problematic. Decrosia isn't going anywhere; if the characters leave town and wait a week for suspicions to fade their Awareness Points reset to 0. In any case, if the characters successfully complete the first objective but the infiltration fails while they're trying to complete the second objective, they don't have to repeat the first objective. They can retreat from town, wait a week, and try the second objective again.

XP Award: Award the characters 80 XP for each obstacle they overcome in this phase (to a maximum of 240 XP).

OBSTACLES

The obstacles for this phase are provided below. Unlike the obstacles in Objective 1, these obstacles must be overcome in the order presented below.

EXTERIOR GUARDS

OBSTACLE

Infiltration Points 1 (individual); **Overcome** DC 24 Acrobatics, Athletics, or Deception, or DC 20 Society or Stealth

Clockwork riflers watch for trespassers at each corner of the enormous factory building. Anyone who can climb over or through the rusted machinery around the building, or who can blend in with occasional passersby, evades their notice.

Failure In addition to accruing 1 Awareness Point, two clockwork riflers (page 44) attack the party. If the characters defeat both clockwork riflers within 3 rounds, the party doesn't accrue the Awareness Point.

Critical Failure As failure, but the party accrues 2 Awareness Points (or 1 Awareness Point if they defeat the clockwork riflers quickly).

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MAZE OF MACHINERY

OBSTACLE

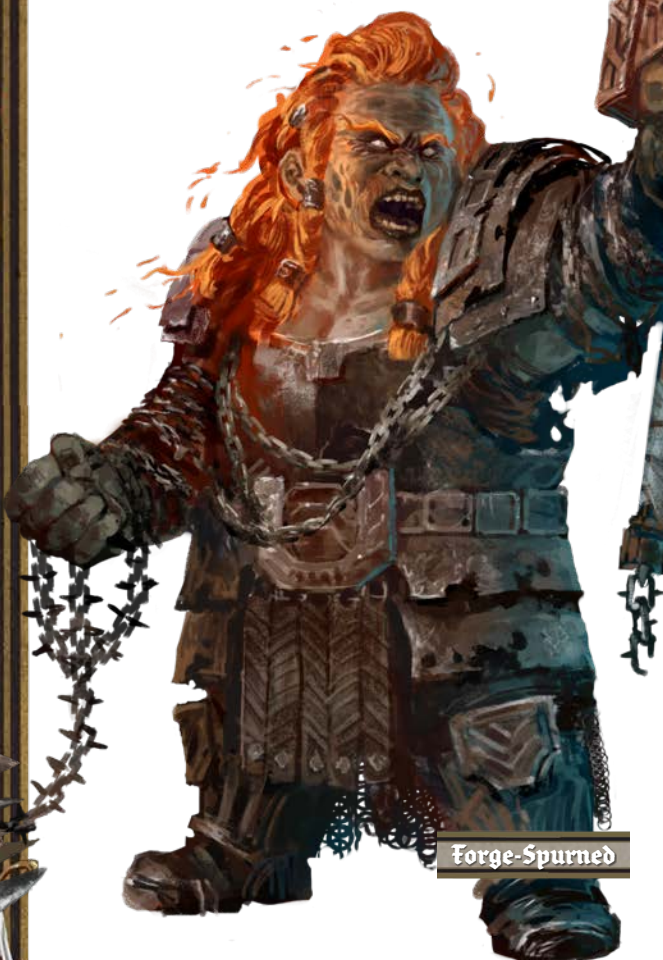
Infiltration Points 1 (individual); **Overcome** DC 22 Acrobatics or Stealth, or DC 20 Athletics, Crafting, or Thievery

The factory is staffed by hard-working undead dwarves known as forge-spurned. Avoiding forge-spurned attention requires moving quickly across or above the factory floor, or engineering timely accidents to distract any observers. Once all the characters have overcome this obstacle, they should attempt DC 20 Perception checks; on a success, they identify the Meet the Supervisor opportunity (page 49).

Critical Success In addition to earning 2 Infiltration Points, the character notices some crates on the factory floor are already labeled for shipment to the Twilight Castrum in Yled.

Success As success, but the character must succeed at a DC 22 Perception check to notice the crates' destination.

Critical Failure In addition to accruing 2 Awareness Points, use the Assembly Line of Death complication.



Forge-Spurned

GUARDED BALCONY

OBSTACLE

Infiltration Points 3 (group); **Overcome** DC 24 Athletics, Deception, Stealth, or Thievery, or DC 20 Religion

The factory's upper balcony is patrolled by an Azmakian effigy, a rare construct that loyally serves Decrosia. Sneaking around the construct is difficult, although those familiar with its fiendish nature can more easily distract it.

Critical Failure In addition to accruing 2 Awareness Points, the Azmakian effigy (page 81) attacks the party the first time a character rolls this result.

COMPLICATIONS

You can use the complications below when the characters cross Awareness Point thresholds during this phase; some are also triggered by a critical failure while attempting obstacles or opportunities. Use the Factory Floor map on page 42 for these encounters.

ASSEMBLY LINE OF DEATH

COMPLICATION

Trigger A character critically fails an attempt to overcome the Maze of Machinery obstacle.

Overcome DC 25 Acrobatics, Athletics, or Thievery

The huge machinery in Decrosia's factory is a maze of industrial presses, quick-moving conveyor belts, and grasping claws, all shrouded by clouds of steam and smoke. When this complication occurs, all characters who have not yet overcome the Factory Floor hazard take 3d8 bludgeoning damage and 3d8 slashing damage, and must attempt one of the skill checks listed in the Overcome entry.

Critical Success The character takes no damage and disables the hazardous assembly line, resolving the complication for all characters.

Success The character navigates the assembly line without harm and takes no damage.

Failure The character takes full damage, and the characters gain 1 Awareness Point.

Critical Failure The character takes double damage, and the characters gain 2 Awareness Points.

FACTORY MUSCLE COMPLICATION (MODERATE 6)

Trigger The characters reach 15 Awareness Points for the first time or draw attention to themselves on the factory floor.

Overcome Forge-spurned factory workers corner the characters in an isolated area of the factory and attack, eager to earn favor with Supervisor Haka by vanquishing trespassers. The characters gain 1 Awareness Point; if they don't destroy all three forge-spurned, they gain 2 Awareness Points instead.

FORGE-SPURNED (3)**CREATURE 5**

UNCOMMON NE MEDIUM FIRE UNDEAD

Pathfinder Adventure Path #148: Fires of the Haunted City 83

Perception +11; darkvision**Languages** Common, Dwarven, Undercommon**Skills** Athletics +14, Crafting +14, Droskar Lore +12**Str** +5, **Dex** +2, **Con** +4, **Int** +1, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +0**Items** *soul chain*, warhammer**AC** 22; **Fort** +15, **Ref** +9, **Will** +11**HP** 75, eternal damnation, negative healing; **Immunities** death effects, disease, fire, paralyzed, poison, unconscious; **Weaknesses** cold 5**Eternal Damnation** (divine, necromancy) As long as their *soul chain* remains intact, a forge-spurned can't be truly destroyed. They rise again fully healed at the next sundown, even if their physical body was destroyed.**Searing Heat** (fire) A creature that touches a forge-spurned (including by Grappling or hitting them with an unarmed attack) takes 2d6 fire damage with a DC 21 basic Reflex save.**Speed** 20 feet**Melee** ♦ *soul chain* +15 (disarm, trip), **Damage** 2d8+5 slashing plus 1d6 fire**Melee** ♦ warhammer +14 (shove), **Damage** 1d8+7 bludgeoning**Forge Breath** ♦♦ (divine, evocation, fire) The forge-spurned breathes a cloud of stinging soot, ash, and glowing embers. This can affect either a 30-foot cone or a 20-foot burst centered on the forge-spurned, and persists for 1d4 rounds. Each creature that moves into or starts their turn in the area takes 6d6 fire damage, with a DC 21 basic Reflex save. A creature that fails its save is also blinded for 1 minute. Creatures within the cloud are concealed, though not from the forge-spurned. The forge-spurned can't use Forge Breath again until they have used Inflate Bellows.**Inflate Bellows** ♦♦ **Requirements** The forge-spurned has used Forge Breath; **Effect** The forge-spurned draws a massive breath to refill their emptied lungs, enabling them to use Forge Breath again.**Soul Chain** (divine, fire, necromancy) A forge-spurned wields a *soul chain*: a cursed +1 striking flaming spiked chain. Any non-forge-spurned creature that has a *soul chain* must succeed at a DC 22 Will save each day at sundown or transform into a forge-spurned permanently. A forge-spurned stops at nothing to retrieve their *soul chain* if it's lost. If a creature is slain by an attack from the *soul chain* and the forge-spurned is able to retain the creature's corpse, they can bind the creature's soul into the *soul chain* (as *bind soul*) with a day of work at a forge and a successful DC 20 Crafting check. An individual whose soul is bound in this way can't be resurrected unless the *soul chain* is destroyed (Hardness 5, HP 20, BT 10).**CURIOUS GUARDS COMPLICATION (MODERATE 6)****Trigger** The characters reach an Awareness Point threshold for the first time or are near an entrance to the factory.**Overcome** A pair of clockwork riflers guarding the building decide to investigate the area where the characters are preparing to infiltrate the factory.**CLOCKWORK RIFLERS (2)****CREATURE 6**

Page 44

Initiative Perception +16**OPPORTUNITIES**

New opportunities present themselves to characters in the factory.

MEET THE SUPERVISOR OPPORTUNITY (TRIVIAL 6)**Requirements** The characters overcome the Maze of Machinery obstacle and at least one character succeeds at a DC 20 Perception check.

You spot the factory supervisor ending a conversation with a harried underling and stomping into a ground-floor office, closing the door behind him.

Creature: Haka is Decrosia's factory supervisor. Characters who want to approach his office can wait for a cloud of smoke or steam to obscure their passage from rank-and-file factory workers. Haka sits at his desk facing the door, so he immediately notices any intruders. Haka begins as unfriendly to intruders, interrogating any trespassers with, "Who in the name of all the Hells under Geb are you?" A character who talks fast and succeeds at a DC 23 Deception, Diplomacy, or Intimidation check makes Haka hesitate long enough to hear the characters out. On a failure, he attacks, confident in his ability to defeat the characters without resorting to help from anyone else.Haka hates the Boss, but fears her too much to resist her demands. If the characters learn through their conversation with Haka that he doesn't like Decrosia, they might ask for his help. If the characters can change Haka's attitude to friendly, he lets them know Decrosia's office is on the balcony above and tells them something about "that rusted-out, puffed-up minotaur" that serves as her guard. This gives the characters 1 Edge Point to use in overcoming the Guarded Balcony obstacle. If the Factory Muscle complication hasn't yet occurred, Haka ensures that it doesn't. If the characters make him helpful, he outright bribes them to kill his boss, offering them the *aeon stone* in his desk.

Haka can also confirm Decrosia is shipping alchemical supplies to Yled. "The boss is shipping

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all that stuff to her sister—Nathnelma, her name is. This Nathnelma is a professor, or someone unnecessarily thinky like that.” This is a clue that Nathnelma is also a hag, the final member of Graveclaw coven, but Haka doesn’t realize Decrosia’s “sister” isn’t a blood relation.

SUPERVISOR HAKA CREATURE 6

Male elite forge-spurned (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 6, page 49)
Initiative Perception +13

Treasure: Haka keeps his *tourmaline sphere aeon stone* in a desk drawer, along with a stash of 50 gp.

XP Award: If the characters get on Haka’s good side, award them 80 XP.



Supervisor Haka

SABOTAGE THE FACTORY

OPPORTUNITY

Requirements The character overcame the Guards Outside obstacle and entered the factory.

The inside of Decrosia’s factory is a mass of fast-moving machinery, smoke, and steam. A person who understands machinery can sabotage the assembly lines to create a distraction. A character who wants to sabotage the machinery should attempt a secret DC 22 Crafting or Thievery check.

Critical Success The machinery is even more distracting than you hoped. All the characters gain 1 Edge Point that can only be used in the factory.

Success As critical success, but when you use the Edge Point gained from this opportunity, a pipe near you bursts unexpectedly and deals 2d8 fire damage.

Failure Your sabotage fails to function.

Critical Failure You’re spotted in your attempt, triggering the Factory Muscle complication.

SMOOTH THE PATH

OPPORTUNITY

Requirements The character successfully completed an individual objective and some other characters have not.

Having completed your objective, you help an ally who is still trying to reach that goal. Describe how you are helping. This gives the ally the benefits of Follow the Expert (*Core Rulebook* 479). In usual cases, you might be able to attempt a relevant skill check to overcome the obstacle on behalf of the other character instead; for example, if another character is struggling with the Maze of Machinery obstacle, you might be able to attempt a Deception check to distract curious forge-spurned.

SHOOTOUT!

MODERATE 6

Once the characters overcome all three obstacles in this objective, they reach Decrosia in her office. The rust hag is cleaning her blunderbuss with her feet up on her desk. The moment the characters come through the door, she leaps back and bursts through her office window, landing in the street 30 feet below.

The characters gain 1 Awareness Point; the infiltration can’t fail at this point, but their final Awareness Point total is important when the characters try to flee town; see Escape below.

Use the Packed Streets map for this encounter.

Creature: Decrosia doesn’t care why the characters have come—she’s determined to keep her position in Packed. She sustained 15 bludgeoning damage from her fall from the window, but

this injury seems to only enrage her. She fights the characters as best she can but avoids getting pinned down or flanked. She’s not opposed to a running fight through the city’s streets, homes, or factories. She prefers to attack with her guns as much as possible, but she relies on her claws if pressed in melee. She neither asks for nor offers quarter and she fights to the death.

If the characters didn’t face the Azmakian effigy that guards the balcony, it lumbers into the street to assist Decrosia, arriving on the third round of combat. It starts by making a Powerful Charge, then uses its Breath Weapon on as many people as it can affect (Decrosia is immune to this rusting, so the Azmakian Effigy doesn’t mind including her).

DECROSIA

CREATURE 8

Female rust hag (page 84)

Initiative Perception +16

Skills Decrosia has Poison Lore +16 in addition to her other skills.

Items arquebus (*Guns & Gears* 152, 10 rounds), *bag of holding type II* (with 230 gp in assorted jewelry stolen from her past victims, two vials of giant scorpion venom, and a greater leaper’s elixir), flintlock pistol (*Guns & Gears* 152, 20 rounds)

Escape

The characters have probably drawn quite a bit of attention during their infiltration and a shoot-out on the streets attracts even more notice. Once Decrosia is

defeated, the people of Pagked congregate to surround them. It's time to get out of town.

If the characters completed the infiltration while accumulating fewer than 5 Awareness Points, they have gone largely undetected. They escape without further incident; proceed to Back on the Road (below). Otherwise, they must succeed at one last obstacle within 1 round (as with all group obstacles, the characters pool their Infiltration Points together to meet the total). Let the characters know this is their final chance to spend Edge Points, including any they earned in preparing to blow up the bridge.

GET OUT OF TOWN

OBSTACLE

Infiltration Points 4 (group); **Overcome** DC 22 Athletics, Deception, Society, or Stealth

The characters flee town! Allow the players to narrate how their characters use their skills to escape, whether ducking through narrow alleys, throwing pursuers off the scent, or otherwise. Be flexible if the players have good justifications for using other skills in this obstacle, or clever use of spells to earn an Infiltration Point without a check.

Creatures: If the characters don't succeed in this final obstacle, they're cornered, and their escape becomes an encounter. Determine their enemies in this encounter based on the number of Awareness Points they accumulated. As soon as they defeat half the enemies present, the others retreat enough to allow the characters to escape.

ESCAPE ENCOUNTER

AP	Encounter
5-9	2 virulak villagers (page 86), 1 mechanical laborer (page 41)
10-14	1 clockwork rifler (page 44), 1 zombie hulk (<i>Bestiary</i> 341)
15-19	1 clockwork rifler (page 44), 1 forge-spurned (page 49), 1 virulak villager (page 86), 1 zombie hulk (<i>Bestiary</i> 341)
20+	1 mechanical laborer (page 41), 1 clockwork rifler (page 44), 1 forge-spurned (page 49), 1 virulak villager (page 86), 1 zombie hulk (<i>Bestiary</i> 341)

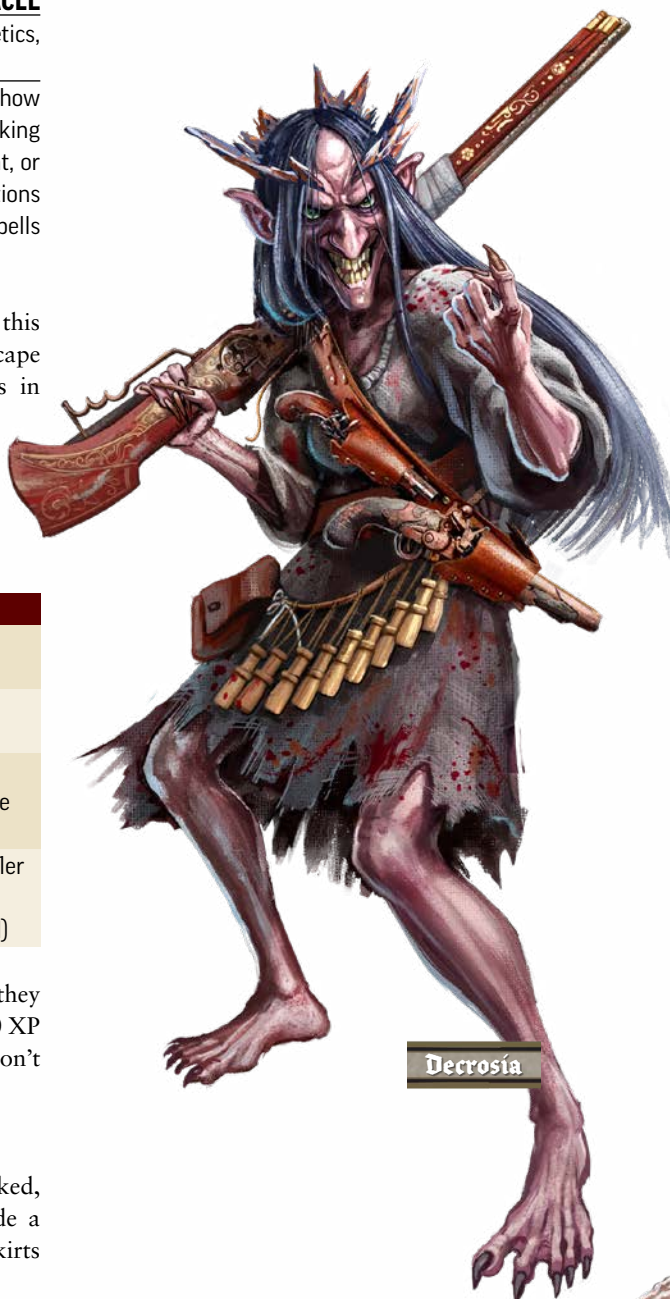
XP Award: Award the characters 120 XP if they succeeded at the Get Out of Town obstacle, and 80 XP if their escape turned into a fight they survived (don't award XP for the combat as usual).

Back on the Road

Once the characters defeat Decrosia and flee Pagked, they're free to go where they wish. If they made a deal with the Shroud, he meets them on the outskirts

of town and delivers the agreed-upon treasure. He's eager to take control of Pagked and use his position to elevate himself and the Carters Consortium. If the characters didn't ally with the Shroud, Haka or another forge-spurned moves into Decrosia's old office and takes charge.

The characters should have gained an important lead while in Pagked: Decrosia was shipping substantial amounts of alchemical ingredients to Nathnelma, a professor at the Twilight Castrum necromancy school in Yled. The characters can return home to Graydirge to rest and perform downtime activities or they can head to Yled immediately.



Decrosia

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Chapter 4: Biology Lessons

This chapter begins when the characters decide to confront Nathnelma, a hag serving as a visiting professor at the Twilight Castrum. The necromancy school is on the outskirts of Yled in a neighborhood known as Three Gates—this name comes from a plaza outside the school surrounded by three cemeteries, each accessed by a single gate. These cemeteries are also bustling commercial and residential zones catering to students; each also contains an upscale hotel.

Although there's plenty to do in Yled, Geb's largest city, the events of this chapter focus on the Three Gates district. If you want to have your characters see more of the city, refer to the entry on Yled in *Pathfinder Lost*

Omens: Impossible Lands or to *Pathfinder Adventure Path #185: A Taste of Ashes* (when the characters return to Yled following other leads).

When the characters arrive, describe Three Gates Plaza and the hotels that provide convenient places for them to stay. It doesn't matter which hotel they choose—they're bound to run into the Blood Lord staying at each one. For the purposes of this chapter, the key locations in Three Gates follow.

Twilight Castrum: This small necromancy academy operates in the shadows of Yled's other, more famous, magical academies, such as the Mortuarium. The Twilight Castrum has never been particularly

prestigious, despite having some hard-working professors, and student enrollment has been declining over the past several decades. The school recently obtained sponsorship from the Celebrants to revitalize the campus and attract more prestigious faculty and students.

Three Gates Plaza: This spacious circular plaza is paved with cobblestones and lined with cafes and quaint shops. Three iron gates lead to large cemeteries, with residences and shops among their gravestones and mausoleums.

Holstali Hostel: A humble but well-maintained inn stands on the eastern edge of Three Gates Plaza. Holstali Hostel is supported by the Reanimators, so skeletons and zombies perform much of the work. Berline Haldoli is staying here while she meets with two other Blood Lords.

The Queen's Loft: This stately hotel north of Three Gates Plaza caters to affluent travelers and merchants, and thus has a long-standing relationship with the Export Guild. A statue of Arazni stands proudly in the center of the lobby. Exchequer **Kyril Vonth** (NE male wight banker 11) of the Export Guild is staying here while he meets with Berline.

Harrowhouse: The Harrowhouse on the plaza's southern side is chic and fashionable in the style of Geb, newly constructed and surrounded by statues of Urgathoa clad in extravagant outfits. Lord **Zthni** (CE male vampire socialite 12)—a Blood Lord with ties to the Celebrants—has been residing at Harrowhouse for months.

The Pallidium: A crumbling old shrine to Urgathoa in the same cemetery as Harrowhouse, the Pallidium is one of many sites in Yled sacred to Lady Despair. This makes it a tempting target to those who would like to see Urgathoa's influence wane.

Downtime in Yled

The first half of this chapter gives the characters substantial leeway on what tasks they attempt and in what order they do them. Nathnelma doesn't fear the characters even if she learns of their presence in the city, so allow characters to perform downtime activities or buy new equipment if they wish. Yled is substantially larger than the Three Gates neighborhood; nearly anything the characters wish to buy is available somewhere in Yled.

If they found Gessamon's notebook in Chapter 1, the characters might want to find **Mauldor Gavvik** (LE male wight merchant 7) at a small office where he arranges deliveries for the Carters Consortium. He insists his faction has done nothing wrong and happily takes the incriminating evidence that Gessamon's notebook provides. He can't provide any reward other than the promise of future favor with the Carters Consortium (as described in the Faction Reputation section in area A2).

Guests for Tea

As the characters move through Three Gates Plaza, they have an unexpected meeting with Berline Haldoli at an outdoor cafe called the Grave's Gasp. This meeting can occur when the characters first arrive or as they start to look around, but it should be one of their first encounters in the city.

Although Yled is primarily a city of the dead, the Three Gates neighborhood is lively. Students carrying books come and go from residential lodgings in the three cemeteries. Shops sell clothing bearing the tower-and-moon logo of Twilight Castrum. Several cafes on the plaza are open, with skeletons pouring coffee, tea, or more rarified drinks for customers.

CHAPTER 4 SYNOPSIS

The characters find the fourth and final member of the Graveclaw coven teaching at the Twilight Castrum, a necromancy school at the edge of Yled. Nathnelma is pursuing the most esoteric ingredient of the poison the hags are brewing: shadow ash. She has been frustrated in this endeavor and is pursuing personal plans, including an active teaching career. Through a surprise meeting with Berline Haldoli, the characters meet new allies who would like to see Nathnelma removed. By confronting her the characters can finish off the Graveclaw coven and earn favor with Geb's Great Factions.

CHAPTER 4 TREASURE

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

- +1 striking dagger
- clear spindle aeon stone
- dust of disappearance
- holy water
- jade serpent wondrous figurine
- moderate cognitive mutagen
- moderate healing potion
- rod of wonder
- scroll of mirror's misfortune (Secrets of Magic 117)
- scroll of replicate (Secrets of Magic 125)
- standard-grade mithral shield

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YLED

SETTLEMENT 18

LE METROPOLIS

Graveyard of legions

Government Dictatorship

Population 119,200 (81% undead, 11% humans, 2% half-elves, 2% half-orcs, 1% fetchlings, 3% other)

Languages Common, Kelish, Necril

Religions Nethys, Urgathoa, Zon-Kuthon

Threats amoral researchers, elemental storms, military brutality, necromantic mishaps, undead

Mortal Morsel While the capital of Mechitar at least presents a veneer of civility to the living, the few living beings in Yled who aren't twilight sages or minions of a powerful undead soon find a quick end. Undead NPCs begin with an attitude two steps worse than usual toward such characters, and while hostile citizens might simply wish you ill in other nations, in Yled they're very likely to try to eat you.

Blood Lord Haeqajet (LE male mummy administrator 18) Overseer of Yled

Necrolord Grihana (LE male dullahan pike-master 16) Leader of Geb's Armies

Pesabnet Zoheri (NE male ghastr cleric 14) Head of the Temple of Urgathoa

"Yoo hoo! Yoo hoo! Yes, over here!" The voice is familiar. Blood Lord Berline Haldoli sits in the deep shadows beneath an awning at a round table with two men. "Fancy seeing you here! I don't spend all my time in Graydirge, of course. Business, you know, it simply never ends. Sit down, sit down, I'll introduce you. Never too early for a little networking, am I right? Of course I'm right."

Berline welcomes the characters, gives them each a sponsorship token allowing them to move freely about Yled, and introduces them to her companions. "Blood Lord Kyril Vonth," she says first, gesturing to a tall and emaciated wight with lanky white hair and eyes of crimson fire. "These are the people you were telling me about, in the report of your agent Gishkar. Yes, at Sallowshore. Well, I told you I knew them and here they are!" Kyril greets the characters with formality, evaluating each of them as Berline gives their names.

Then, Berline gestures to Lord Zthni, a handsome and slender man whose open robes show off his muscular chest. "And, of course, it's an honor to present Blood Lord Zthni. We've all heard much about the Celebrants lately, and Lord Zthni is tied to them. Yes, your star is ascending, my lord." Zthni, in contrast to Kyril, is affable and casual, welcoming the characters and buying whatever drinks the characters

desire. "After all," he says, "you only live once, eh?" Zthni finds all his own jokes enormously funny.

Kyril begins with an indifferent attitude to the characters, but Zthni begins with a friendly attitude. The Blood Lords are happy to chat and the conversation should touch on the subjects below.

Presence in Yled: All three admit to being in the city for business. Berline is trying to build relationships with the other two Blood Lords, each of whom represents factions that don't always see eye-to-eye with the Reanimators. All three Blood Lords are practical enough to realize allies within the other Great Factions are beneficial. Berline, Kyril, and Zthni can also share any general information about Yled or the Twilight Castrum. Zthni, who has been in Yled the longest, has the best information—although he mostly knows where to indulge in a variety of vices.

Lodgings: Berline is staying at Holstali Hostel. "It's quiet," she says. "I like the quiet. And they let me keep Glorinsa and Reacher with me at all times." Berline gives the characters her room number and invites them to visit her any time. She might discreetly add, out of earshot of the other Blood Lords, that the hostel is a good choice for travelers on a budget.

Kyril is staying at the Queen's Loft; if any character succeeds at a DC 23 Diplomacy check to Make an Impression on him during the conversation, he provides them with his room number and suggests they visit him at the Loft, "where we might get to know one another better." While this might sound mysterious or even romantic, Kyril intends to challenge them to a session of *Blood Price*, his favorite board game.

Zthni freely shares that he lives at Harrowhouse, "For now, until it gets boring," and invites the characters to seek him there any time. "I love entertaining. And Yled has such sights to offer! Such stimulation! If you want to swim with the Blood Lords," he adds with a wink, "you have to get used to the sharks."

Nathnelma: Berline has never heard of Nathnelma, but the other two Blood Lords know her well and identify her as a grave hag, a rare type of hag associated with cemeteries. A character who succeeds at a DC 23 Perception check perceives Kyril is suspicious and resentful toward Nathnelma; he tells characters to whom he is friendly that she purchased large quantities of magical ingredients from him through the Export Guild. Since reading Gishkar's reports from Sallowshore, Kyril now suspects Nathnelma was cooperating with Sahni to cheat the Guild—and Geb—for hundreds, perhaps thousands, of gold pieces.

Zthni is much more open about his feelings. "Oh, how I hate that dreadful and vicious old hag!" he bellows before downing a glass of wine-laced blood. "At

my first social outing as a Blood Lord, she waited until I was in front of our king Geb himself before calling me a dagger-toothed dandy and, I quote, a ‘perfumed leech.’ Now, yes, that was centuries ago, but what good is undeath if one can’t hold a grudge for all time? I wish she’d choke on her own eye. Her position as a visiting professor is up for renewal this month and I intend to use all my leverage to ensure she’s cast out on her bony behind.” Zthni elaborates that he’s being hosted by the Twilight Castrum, as he has donated a considerable sum to the school, which is naming a building on campus after him. “Yes, the Zthni Hall for Vampiric Studies. Has a very flattering ring to it, don’t you think?”

If the characters reveal they’re seeking Nathnelma as part of some poisoning plot with another group of hags, the reactions differ. Berline beams with pride, insisting that setting them against Iron Tavia in Axan Wood “was such as brilliant idea, as you’ve admirably unwound the spool of that coven right to here!” Kyril has a hard time seeing why any plot enacted by a coven of hags could be much of a threat. Zthni is already prone to consider Nathnelma up to something sinister, and he eagerly asks for more information that might help get her tenure at the Twilight Castrum severed. Unfortunately, there isn’t enough proof yet. Zthni encourages the characters to keep digging. “After all, it’s what that grave hag deserves!”

Nathnelma holds occasional public lectures and the next is scheduled very soon. Zthni and Kyril suggest the characters attend, as both want to know what Berline’s friends think after seeing the hag in person.

As conversation winds down, the Blood Lords stand and make courteous goodbyes. Berline knows where Kyril and Zthni are staying and can tell the characters if they didn’t learn this information already. She also provides some advice: “It never hurts to check in on a Blood Lord and see how you might be helpful. Sometimes all they want is pleasant company, and what do you have to lose? I mean, besides *that*.” She doesn’t explain what “that” is, giving only a knowing look. The characters can visit each of the Blood Lords; see pages 59 and 60.

XP Award: Award the characters 80 XP for meeting the Blood Lords and learning more about Nathnelma.

The Twilight Castrum

Two locations on the Twilight Castrum campus likely interest the characters: the hall where Nathnelma gives public lectures, and her private office.

When the characters seek Nathnelma on campus, read or paraphrase the following.

The Twilight Castrum is an old stone fortress with multiple towers and an imposing gate house. Students of all

ages mingle in a large central courtyard while staff and occasional faculty stride purposefully through adjacent corridors. A large double door stands open in the courtyard with a chalk sign standing next to it. “Creating Unusual Undead by visiting professor Nathnelma, second floor observation gallery.” Two students, obviously late, hurry up a broad staircase to the second floor.

PUBLIC LECTURE

The best chance for the characters to surreptitiously investigate Nathnelma is to attend one of her public lectures, where they can slip in amid a hall of interested necromancy students. Nathnelma’s public lecture series demonstrates aspects of the *create undead* ritual. The characters can simply observe her, but the lesson gives them a chance to get involved with her demonstration, probing her magical skills but drawing attention to themselves.

Characters who take the stairs find themselves in a curving balcony crowded with several dozen aspiring necromancers, both living and undead. Many take notes as they watch the events in the lecture space below. Nathnelma stands in an oval-shaped lecture space, 20 feet below the observation gallery, dressed in a severe black dress and a matching wool jacket; most of the lecture space is filled with a 15-foot-long table, upon which is lying an enormous two-headed mohrg.

Nathnelma is breaking up the *create undead* ritual’s explanation over several lecture sessions, moving steadily but swiftly through the process and pausing for occasional questions from watching students. She’s well into the lecture series at the characters’ visit.

“Excuse me, professor?” A middle-aged human raises his hand in the gallery and Nathnelma pauses.

“Yes, Mr. ... Dilkir is it?” the grave hag responds.

The man nods. “Yes, ma’am. Uh... your, uh, test subject.”

“Sulvik.”

“Yes, Sulvik. Of course. Sulvik has two heads. Normally the black onyx used in this ritual is placed under the subject’s tongue. So... do we break it in half and put one piece under each tongue? Or do we just... pick one and hope for the best?”

“The onyx is what instills the subject with positive feelings toward its creator. I recommend you place an entire onyx under *each* tongue, Mr. Dilkir, unless you want Sulvik to eat your face. Which, I think we can all agree, would constitute a failing grade.”

There’s some polite laughter before Nathnelma asks, “Does anyone else have a question?”

The characters can ask Nathnelma questions, probing her magical skills or trying to disrupt her class; use Debate Points to measure the party’s

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success at doing so (Debate Points are a type of Victory Points, as detailed on pages 148–150 of the *Pathfinder Gamemastery Guide*). By attending class, the characters start with 1 Debate Point. This participation isn't necessary, but the characters might uncover some useful information if they ask the hag challenging questions.

CLASSROOM DEBATE

CONCENTRATE **EXPLORATION** **LINGUISTIC**

You pose an intentionally challenging question to Nathnelma during her lecture, trying to draw out some information about her. Choose Arcana, Occultism, or Religion—three skills used in the *create undead* ritual—and attempt a DC 23 check with the chosen skill. Alternatively, you can use a relevant Lore skill (anything to do with mohrgs, negative energy, or animating rituals) with a DC of 18. You can perform this activity up to three times before Nathnelma tires of you and doesn't call on you any longer.

Critical Success The question stumps Nathnelma, and she reveals something about herself in her scramble to respond. Gain 2 Debate Points and pose a question that can be answered with only a one- or two-word response from Nathnelma's stat block, such as "what is her highest-level spell?" or "which is her weakest saving throw?"

Success The question is difficult for Nathnelma to answer and shows a weakness in her presentation. Gain 1 Debate Point. Nathnelma asks your name and responds with a pointed question about you. If you choose to give her your name, you can attempt a DC 23 Deception, Diplomacy, or Intimidation check. On a success, you gain an additional Debate Point.

Failure Nathnelma answers the question efficiently and professionally, and then moves on.

Critical Failure The question is very easy to answer, and Nathnelma makes a barbed comment that makes you look foolish. Lose 1 Debate Point. You can't ask Nathnelma any more questions, even if you haven't yet performed this activity 3 times.

If the party drops to 0 Debate Points, the class turns against them. Several stern-faced teaching assistants arrive in the gallery. Nathnelma says, "I don't think you'll find Three Gates a very comfortable place," and uses her *Curse of the Grave* (page 85) on the character who posed the most trouble. Regardless of the result of the character's save, she adds, "My teaching assistants will see you out," with a look that's both disdainful and triumphant. As the teaching assistants escort the characters from the gallery and ensure they don't return, Nathnelma resumes her class.

If the party has 5 Debate Points after any Classroom

Debate attempt, the characters win over the classroom. The students chuckle and grin at them; several close their notebooks and a few look for the exit. Realizing she's lost control of the class, Nathnelma says, "That will be all for today," and storms out, followed by Sulvik and her loyal teaching assistants.

Keep track of any character whose name Nathnelma learns, as this is relevant when they encounter her in her ritual chamber (area D4).

Creatures: Picking a fight in this situation is very unwise. In addition to Nathnelma and Sulvik, Nathnelma's teaching assistants are skilled necromancers. If a fight breaks out, the teaching assistants use *animate dead* to summon skeletal champions (*Bestiary* 298) or zombie brutes (*Bestiary* 341) to fight the characters while the other students flee. Sulvik climbs to the gallery in the first round and engages in melee thereafter. Nathnelma uses her spells from below, fleeing if she's seriously injured. These foes try to chase the characters from the Twilight Castrum. Defeated characters are left unconscious rather than killed, summarily dumped outside the school in Three Gates Plaza.

NATHNELMA

CREATURE 9

Female grave hag (page 85)

Initiative Perception +18

Rituals *create undead* (mohrg, mummy, wraith), *portrait of spite* (*Secrets of Magic* 153)

SULVIK

CREATURE 9

UNIQUE **CE** **LARGE** **UNDEAD**

Variant ettin mohrg (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 156, *Pathfinder Bestiary* 2 172)

Perception +21; darkvision

Languages Common, Necril

Skills Athletics +21, Intimidation +19, Stealth +18

Str +6, **Dex** +3, **Con** +4, **Int** -2, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +4

Independent Brains Each of Sulvik's heads rolls its own initiative and has its own turn. Neither head can Delay. At the start of a head's turn, that head gets 2 actions and 1 reaction. Each brain controls its own tongue and one of Sulvik's arms, but both can move the legs. Any ability that would sever Sulvik's head (such as the *vorp* weapon property) doesn't cause him to die if he has his other head, but does cause him to lose the turns, actions, and reactions of the severed head. Mental effects that target a single creature affect only one of Sulvik's heads.

AC 27; **Fort** +21, **Ref** +16, **Will** +16

HP 190, negative healing; **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, unconscious; **Resistances** piercing 10, slashing 10

Mohrg Spawn (occult, necromancy) When Sulvik kills a

living creature of 8th level or less, that creature rises as a mohrg spawn after 1d4 rounds, on its turn. This mohrg spawn is under Sulvik's command. If Sulvik is destroyed, the mohrg spawn is destroyed as well, immediately collapsing into a pile of decayed flesh and bones.

Attack of Opportunity ☞

Speed 35 feet

Melee ♦ claw +21 (reach 10 feet), **Damage** 2d10+12 slashing plus Grab

Melee ♦ tongue +21 (agile, reach 10 feet), **Effect** paralysis

Paralysis (incapacitation, necromancy, occult) A living creature hit by Sulvik's tongue Strike must succeed at a DC 28 Fortitude save or become paralyzed. The creature can attempt a new save at the end of each of its turns, and the DC cumulatively decreases by 1 on each attempt.

TEACHING ASSISTANTS (4)

CREATURE 5

RARE CE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Human aspiring necromancers

Perception +11

Languages Common, Necril

Skills Arcana +11, Crafting +11, Deception +12, Medicine +9, Occultism +13, Religion +11, Twilight Castrum Lore +11

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

Items moderate cognitive mutagen, padded armor, shortsword

AC 22; **Fort** +9, **Ref** +11, **Will** +13

HP 55; **Immunities** olfactory effects; **Resistances** negative 7

Sacrifice Minion ☞ **Trigger** The teaching assistant is adjacent to a minion ally when they're targeted by an attack or an effect that requires a Reflex saving throw; **Effect** The triggering effect is redirected to target the minion ally.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ shortsword +15 (agile, finesse, versatile S), **Damage** 1d6+4 piercing plus 2d6 negative

Occult Prepared Spells DC 22, attack +14; **3rd** *animate dead* (Advanced Player's Guide 214), *vampiric touch*; **2nd** *death knell*, *false life*, *spirit link*; **1st** *grim tendrils*, *ray of enfeeblement*; **Cantrips** (3rd) *chill touch*, *mage hand*, *shield*, *sigil*

Necromantic Revitalization ♦♦♦ (concentrate, necromancy, negative) **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** The teaching assistant disperses negative energy in a 30-foot emanation. Living creatures in the area take 3d8 negative damage (DC 22 basic Fortitude save); willing undead creatures in the area regain an equal amount of Hit Points.

XP Award: Award the characters 30 XP

if any of them challenge Nathnelma to a Classroom Debate. Increase this award to 80 XP if they acquire 5 or more Debate Points.

NATHNELMA'S OFFICE

SEVERE 7

Nathnelma has an office in one of the smaller buildings on campus, and the characters might want to investigate it. Anyone who asks around or seeks out a campus directory can find the office with 20 minutes of work. Use the map on page 58 for this encounter.

The office is on the ground floor of a stone building. The office door is locked and requires three successful DC 25 Thievery checks to Pick a Lock to open (or

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Sulvik

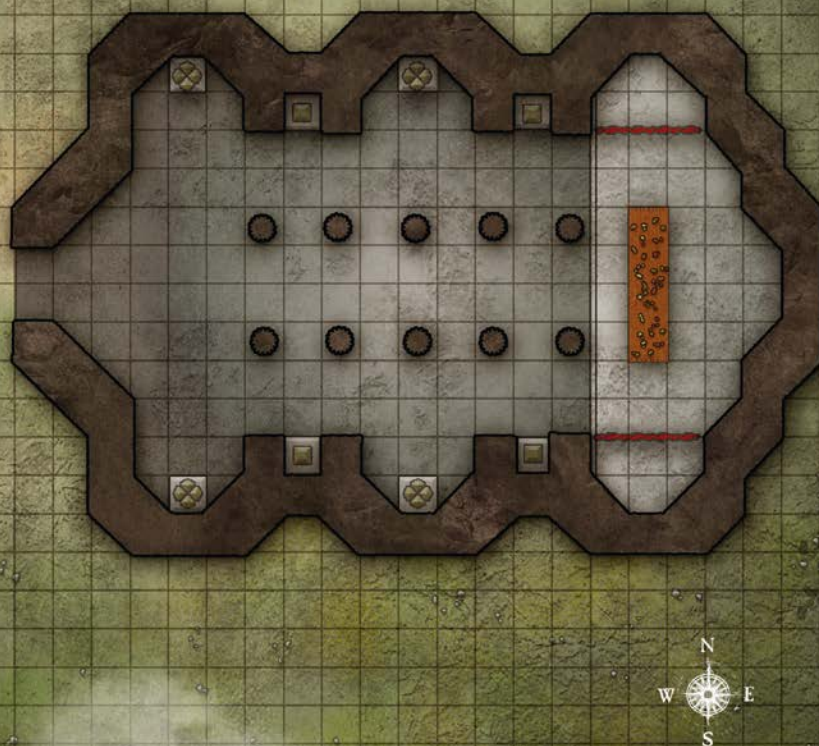
NATHNELMA'S OFFICE

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



THE PALLIDIUM

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



a single successful DC 27 Athletics check to Force it Open). The office's two windows each require three successful DC 21 Thievery checks to Pick a Lock or a successful DC 23 Athletics check to Force Open.

The office is simple, with a desk at one end, bookcases lining the walls, and a couple of chairs for visitors. Trinkets and mementos from across Golarion are displayed on the bookshelves, but some of these are deadly hazards.

Letters atop the desk provide Nathnelma's home address: a townhouse in Three Gates. A letter in the wastebasket is from the Pallidium, a shrine to Urgathoa in Three Gates; a mid-ranking priest responded to Nathnelma's request for shadow ash by reluctantly informing her the shrine's priests are unable to craft it in the quantity she seeks. This is likely the first the characters learn of a third ingredient in the hag's poison; a character who is expert or better in Crafting, or succeeds at a DC 25 Crafting check recalls shadow ash is a rare substance that taints creatures with necromantic power, making them more likely to rise as undead.

Hazards: Nathnelma collected three haunts, bound

to trophies of the past and souvenirs from her travels. They are marked on the map. Item A is a religious symbol of Sarenrae haunted by the ghost of its former owner, item B is the ruined skull of a defeated demilich, and item C is a figurine of a triceratops carved from the dinosaur's bone. The haunts aren't triggered until someone gets within 10 feet, but the small size of the office means that's almost certain to happen.

The office is inhabited by a geist, as described on page 59; its Power of the Haunt and Wrath of the Haunt abilities depend on an active haunt within 100 feet (an active haunt is any haunt that has not been disabled).

ANGUISHED SARENITE

HAZARD 8

HAUNT

Stealth DC 26 (expert)

Description The gold religious symbol of a former priest of Sarenrae is haunted by the priest's tormented soul.

Disable DC 28 Diplomacy to bring the spirit to its senses, or DC 24 Religion (expert) to banish it

Solar Wrath ☞ (divine, fire) **Trigger** A non-good creature approaches within 10 feet of the religious symbol; **Effect** The Sarenite summons a burst of spiritual flame in a

30-foot radius. Creatures in the area take 10d8 good damage (DC 26 basic Will save). Creatures who fail this save are also frightened 1, and creatures who critically fail are frightened 3 and fleeing for 1 round.

Reset 1 day

DEMILICH SKULL

HAZARD 8

HAUNT

Stealth DC 28 (expert)

Description The skull of a defeated demilich is haunted by souls of the demilich's victims.

Disable DC 26 Arcana, Occultism, Nature, or Religion to counteract the skull's Broken Gems

Broken Gems ☞ (arcane) **Trigger** A living creature approaches within 10 feet of the skull; **Effect** The spirits haunting the skull activate one of the skull's ruined gemstones, casting one of the following four spells determined randomly: *cast into time* (*Secrets of Magic* 94), *chain lightning*, *fireball* (6th), *spellwrack*. The saving throw DC for any spell is 26.

Reset 1 day

WRATHFUL DINOSAUR

HAZARD 8

HAUNT

Stealth DC 28 (expert)

Description This figurine of a charging triceratops was crafted from the dinosaur's femur and contains its spirit.

Disable DC 24 Nature (expert) to banish the dinosaur's spirit with a primal incantation, DC 28 Intimidation to scare it off with a frightening display, or DC 26 Survival (expert) to calm the spirit

Triceratops Trample ☞ (necromancy, primal) **Trigger** A living creature approaches within 10 feet of the figurine; **Effect** A spectral triceratops appears around the figurine and charges toward the triggering creature, affecting a line 30 feet long. Creatures in this area take 4d10+22 bludgeoning damage (DC 26 basic Reflex save).

Reset 1 day

Creatures: Nathnelma's office is guarded by a geist, an incorporeal undead drawn to the office by the haunts on display. Nathnelma tricks the geist into remaining passive in her presence, thanks to her Undead Mien ability but the geist attacks if intruders enter without Nathnelma.

GEIST

CREATURE 9

Pathfinder Book of the Dead 96

Initiative Stealth +20

Treasure: One item decorating the shelves is a *jade serpent wondrous figurine*. A desk drawer holds a +1 *striking dagger* and two uses of *dust of disappearance*.

A Night with Lord Zthni

Characters eager to curry favor with the Celebrants, to know Lord Zthni better, or to discover more about what he thinks of Nathnelma can visit him at Harrowhouse. Zthni lives in the hotel's best suite of rooms on the top floor. The vampire sleeps most days and is active at night. His rooms are attended by two servants, **Ritra** (LN female orc valet 4) and **Luthl** (NE male elf housekeeper 5), who inform the characters about their lord's schedule and invite them to return at sundown. If the characters visit then, Ritra gruffly invites them to wait in the sitting room. Once Zthni rises and has been attended by his servants he eagerly meets with the characters.

"I hope you didn't expect us to loiter in this boring place all night, when Yled has so many stimulating distractions to offer! Oh, no no no. We are going to party, my new friends. We are going to revel, we are going to indulge, and we are going to overconsume." Zthni holds out his arms as his valet slides an evening coat over his shoulders. "Do try to keep up. It'll impress the Celebrants."

Keeping up with the Blood Lord isn't easy, but those who do earn his respect. The evening is divided into five ventures, each spanning about 2 hours. For the first venture, Zthni hails a coach large enough for everyone and instructs the driver to travel to a drug den and bar where dancers and flutists entertain patrons. Other ventures include visiting a ghoulish blood vat, a dance hall with spectral performers, and similar indulgences. You can go into as much or little detail on these vices as suits your and your players' comfort level. One of these ventures starts with a visit to a prestigious playhouse called Twined Stories, but the playhouse is closed for the evening, despite Zthni's insistence that it open up; he settles for drinks in a bar nearby.

Zthni is an affable companion, although he reveals little personal information to the characters (he doesn't disclose what region he's the lord of, for example). He wants to learn more about the characters, but he doesn't press them if they're as private as he is.

At each venture, each character can choose to indulge in the venue's vice or abstain, performing one of the two following activities, or they can leave Zthni for the evening.

INDULGE IN ZTHNI'S VENTURE

CONCENTRATE | EXPLORATION

You throw yourself into Zthni's hedonistic company, sipping from suspect chalices, watching gruesome displays of entertainment, and consuming mind-altering substances. Attempt a DC 23 Fortitude saving throw. Increase this DC

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by 2 for each time you've already attempted this activity this evening.

Critical Success You momentarily outshine Zthni in the evening's indulgences. You can ask Zthni one question about another NPC he knows in Yled: Berline, Kyril, or Nathnelma, which the vampire answers truthfully to the best of his ability. You can use this opportunity to provide insights the characters might not suspect, such as Berline is grooming the characters to be potential future Blood Lords, Kyril has a strategic weakness when playing his favorite board gaming (giving you a +1 circumstance bonus on checks when playing *Blood Price* with Kyril in the next encounter), Nathnelma's home address, or that Nathnelma keeps wraiths in her walls to guard against intruders.

Success You impress Zthni with your ability to keep up.

Failure The evening starts to catch up to you. You're drained 1, or increase your current drained value by 1 (to a maximum of drained 4).

Critical Failure As failure, and you're lost somewhere along the way. You can't participate in any more ventures this evening.

ABSTAIN FROM ZTHNI'S VENTURE

CONCENTRATE | EXPLORATION | LINGUISTIC

You accompany Zthni but don't fully join the vampire in his indulgences. He doesn't appreciate the company of anyone who doesn't participate, so you must attempt a DC 21 Deception, Diplomacy, or Intimidation check to convince him to keep you with his evening's excursions.

Critical Success Zthni believes you to be the life of the party. Your next Abstain from Zthni's Venture can't get a result less than success. You can ask Zthni one question about another NPC he knows in Yled, as with a critical success from Indulge in Zthni's Venture.

Success Zthni considers you to be fun company.

Failure Zthni is dubious but willing to keep you with the group for now. Increase the DC of your future Abstain from Zthni's Venture checks by 2 (this increase is cumulative with increases from prior failures).

Critical Failure With a quick bit of subterfuge, such as a signal to a bouncer or a quick step through a hidden doorway, Zthni leaves you behind. You can't participate in any more ventures this evening.

Faction Reputation: Zthni respects characters who keep up with his debauchery. Award the characters

Reputation Points with the Celebrants equal to the highest number of ventures any character completed.

That is, if at least one character made it through all five ventures with him, award them 5 Reputation Points with the Celebrants.

As Zthni wishes them farewell, he offers them further influence with the Celebrants if they bring Nathnelma to him alive. "I have such delicious revenge in mind," the vampire says, waving goodbye.

Treasure: At the end of the evening, Zthni gives a *clear spindle aeon stone* to the character he has the best attitude toward (preferably a living creature, whom he believes can get the best use of it).

XP Award: Award the characters 80 XP at the end of their night with Zthni. Increase this amount to 120 XP if at

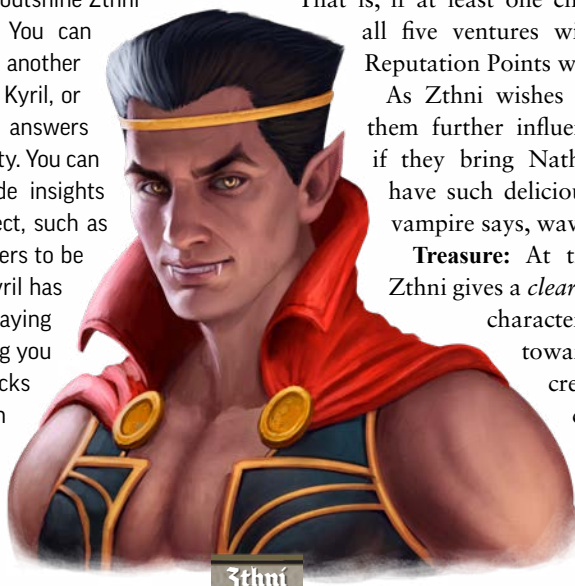
least half of the characters lasted through all five ventures with him.

Gaming with Kyril Vonth

The characters can visit Exchequer Kyril Vonth at the Queen's Loft to seek further information on Nathnelma or more influence with the Export Guild. Kyril lives alone and travels light; the characters find him reading a historical treatise in the hotel lobby, the statue of Arazni looming over him. He replaces his bookmark, stands, and greets them in a somber and thoughtful voice. "I thought we might get to know each other over a game," he says. "Do you know the rules to *Blood Price*?"

Blood Price is an economic strategy board game simulating Geb, its factions, and the machinations of the Blood Lords. Kyril asks the characters to join him in the hotel library, where a copy of the game is available for guests to use. If the characters refuse, he bids them goodnight, judging them to be spineless. If at least one character agrees to play, Kyril smiles and leads interested characters to the library.

Each character who plays the game selects one of Geb's factions; Kyril, of course, plays the Export Guild. During the game, each player begins with a starting position on the board, a special ability, a unique victory condition, and a bank of resources—all decided by their choice of faction. The Great Factions have the most powerful starting positions, but the game is balanced so the lesser factions can be victorious. Players make deals with each other, trading



Zthni

resources and establishing alliances. Any player might win alone, but a joint win—by players who work together—is actually more likely. In any case, the game ends after 6 turns.

Simulate *Blood Price* with each player tracking their own Blood Points over 6 turns of play. Each turn a player attempts a single DC 21 check with Deception (to bluff), Diplomacy (to form or maintain an alliance), Games Lore (to master the rules of play), Society (to apply knowledge of Geb), Intimidation (to make an aggressive play) or Thievery (to cheat, such as by pocketing resource markers or manipulating dice). Each time a player uses a specific skill, increase the DC of future checks with that skill by 1.

Kyril attempts these checks alongside the characters; his relevant skill modifiers are Deception +13, Diplomacy +15, Games Lore +17, Intimidation +15, and Society +15. He never attempts Thievery checks and doesn't cheat.

Success on any check earns that player 1 Blood Point (2 Blood Points on a critical success). There is no penalty for failure unless the player attempted Thievery; in that case, Kyril won't talk to that character during the game any longer.

You and your players might narrate the rounds of the game, using successful and failed checks to paint a picture of each faction's rising and falling fortunes over the course of the evening. Hotel staff keep food and drink coming throughout the game. Kyril isn't chatty by nature, but the game brings out his talkative side. Each round, one player can ask Kyril a question, to which he responds truthfully. He can direct the characters to Nathnelma's office in the Twilight Castrum as well as to her home in Three Gates. He knows two mummies—agents of the Twilight Castrum—serve as her valets and reside in her home. He also knows the hag is securing shadow ash, a rare alchemical ingredient, from the Pallidium, a nearby shrine to Urgathoa.

Winning the game requires 10 Blood Points at the end of a turn, but players can form alliances to reach that total, adding their Blood Points together. Kyril agrees to an alliance for a joint win with one other player, provided the two of them together can reach 10 Blood Points, but he won't offer or join an alliance with more than two other players. If two players (or

alliances) each have 10 or more Blood Points at the end of a round, the one with the most Blood Points wins; in the event of a tie, the game continues another round, but if the tie isn't broken in the following round, nobody wins. Similarly, if no player or alliance has 10 Blood Points at the end of the sixth round, there is no winner.

When the game is over, Kyril rises and congratulates the victors, including his own partner if he formed a winning alliance.

He's an excellent sport and respects all winners (unless they cheated).

Treasure: Recognizing a good game, Kyril gives a *rod of wonder* to the character he believes did the worst in the game.

"This suits you, it seems, as you plainly rely on whimsy rather than strategy."

Faction Reputation: Kyril rewards the characters with 1 Reputation Point with the Export Guild for each *Blood Price* player (other than himself). If he didn't win, the characters earn an additional Reputation Point with the Export Guild.

Before he says farewell to the characters, Kyril tells them he wants to question Nathnelma about the scam she and her fellow hags have been running on the Export Guild. He asks the characters to bring her to him alive once they're done with her.

XP Award: Award the characters 80 XP for playing *Blood Price* with Kyril. Increase this amount to 120 XP if Kyril lost, or if he won due to an alliance with another character.

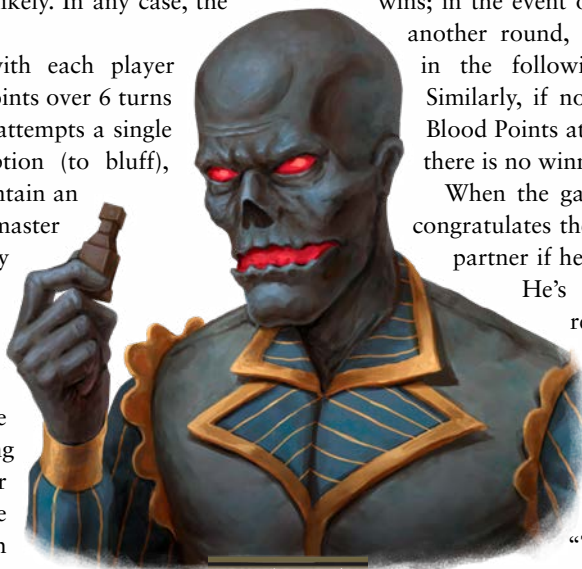
THE PALLIDIUM

During their investigation, the characters might discover Nathnelma is trying to acquire a magical ingredient called shadow ash from the Pallidium, a shrine to Urgathoa in Three Gates.

The Pallidium was once very prestigious, but it has lost revenue and attendance over past centuries. Now a mere shrine, its grandeur has been eclipsed by Yled's larger temples, such as the illustrious Pallid Pinnacle.

The map of the Pallidium appears on page 58.

A tall building adorned with spires in the shape of spinal columns and flying buttresses fashioned from the rib bones of colossal beasts, the Pallidium is a shrine that bears obvious signs of once-greater stature. Several statues are broken. A banquet table draped in a funereal shroud



Kyril Vonth

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stands in place of an altar. Buzzing flies catch the light that penetrates the grimy red-and-green windows high above. Delicious cooking smells—no doubt preparations for one of the Pallid Princess's many ritual feasts—fill the air. About a dozen worshippers mill about. A few priests can be seen among them, all wearing white cloaks over long gray tunics, increasingly tattered as they reach to the floor.

A character who succeeds at a DC 18 Religion or Society check identifies the shrine's highest-ranking priest in attendance: **Vilnithna** (NE female ghoul priest 5). Anyone else here is quick to point her out.

Vilnithna begins with an indifferent attitude toward the characters, but she's friendly to anyone displaying symbols of Urgathoa or who immediately identified her as the leader. She's unfriendly to anyone displaying symbols of a faith other than Urgathoa. If you need statistics for Vilnithna, use those of the Priest of Kabriri (*Book of the Dead* 104) without Ecstatic Ululation. Vilnithna is an agreeable conversationalist, but she's vaguely sinister in her choice of words. She suggests visitors stay for the upcoming feast. "All who are fleshy are welcome," she says, rubbing her hands together and eying the characters as if they were on the menu. If questioned about Nathnelma, Vilnithna acknowledges she knows the grave hag, calling her "a distinguished academic," but she refuses to reveal anything else about her.

Creatures: While the characters speak with Vilnithna, four individuals wearing hooded cloaks enter the Pallidium. Make secret DC 28 Perception checks for the characters to notice the newcomers' religious symbols of Pharasma: amulets in the shape of spiraling blue comets. Pharasma is opposed to Urgathoa and her followers are certainly not here for peaceful purposes.

A zealous woman named Orou the Judge leads this group. Orou is fed up lobbying her fellow Pharasmins to take aggressive action against Urgathoa's faith, so she's decided to strike on her own, hoping to trigger a broader conflict. The four Pharasmins plan to kill as many priests, undead, and followers of Urgathoa as they can and then escape.

If the characters quickly deploy diplomacy, they can avert the impending conflict. If the characters approach Orou, she's cagey, declaring she's only here to "participate in the upcoming feast." Orou is a terrible liar, and anyone who succeeds at a DC 12 Perception check to Sense Motive identifies her lie and sees her hand move toward her hidden religious symbol. The other Pharasmins remain close to Orou and try to cover for her, describing Orou as "a

newcomer to the faith" and "interested in the ways of the Pallid Princess." Persuading Orou to avoid violence requires a successful DC 28 Deception, Diplomacy, or Intimidation check (this DC is only 23 if the character displays a symbol of a faith other than Urgathoa or 18 if the character displays a symbol of Pharasma). On a success, Orou looks to her companions and says, "Perhaps our mission is ill-timed. Let us withdraw, for now." They leave the shrine, keeping a cautious eye on the characters. On a failed Deception or Diplomacy check a different character can try again to persuade her, but on a failed Intimidation check, or a critical failure on either a Deception or Diplomacy check, Orou and her companions attack.

If battle breaks out the Pharasmins cast 3-action *heal* spells as often as possible to eliminate as many undead as they can. Vilnithna tries to get her favored congregants to safety, cowering with them behind the unholy banquet table, but she might aid the characters if they're in a particularly tough situation. Any attacker reduced to fewer than 30 Hit Points tries to flee and evade pursuit in Three Gates, meeting at a prearranged rendezvous to plot more attacks.

PRIESTS OF PHARASMA (4)

CREATURE 6

Pathfinder Gamemastery Guide 213

Initiative Perception +14

Aftermath: If the Pharasmins attack, there are bound to be casualties among the undead congregants. Yet as long as the characters acted in defense of the shrine, Vilnithna's attitude toward them improves by one step. If you think the characters handled the Pharasmins with obvious bravery—including if they avoided combat altogether by persuading Orou to withdraw—Vilnithna's attitude changes to helpful regardless of her initial attitude.

If she's helpful, Vilnithna provides the characters with further information about Nathnelma. The professor has been trying to purchase shadow ash, a rare alchemical ingredient that makes the victim of a poisoning easier to raise as undead and to control once reanimated. Nathnelma wanted the ash in exceptionally large quantities and was willing to pay high prices, provided the entire matter is kept quiet from the Export Guild. Vilnithna told the hag that no one in the shrine could create the ash on the scale she requires (She might confide that no one here can actually create it at all; creating shadow ash takes significantly more divine power than she's able to muster). Vilnithna doesn't know why Nathnelma wants the ash, or who she's trying to poison, "but this

much shadow ash could turn an entire city into the living dead. Wouldn't that be glorious?"

Curious Questions: After the characters leave the shrine, Vilnithna contacts Nathnelma and tells her about the player characters and their questions. If any characters gave Vilnithna their names, she passes the names to Nathnelma. This is important when characters find the hag in her ritual chamber (area D4).

XP Award: If the characters successfully dissuade Orou the Judge from violence, award them 120 XP as if they had defeated the Pharasmins in combat.

Nathnelma's Townhouse

The characters eventually look for Nathnelma at the one place she can reliably be found: her home in Three Gates. Nathnelma has lived for several years in one of the school's town homes for visiting academics. Ask the characters when they will approach the townhouse, as the presence or lack of daylight alters some of the encounters. If the players attack the house and then withdraw, Nathnelma replaces destroyed undead at a rate of 1 undead creature per day.

The map of Nathnelma's townhouse appears on page 64.

INCORPOREAL WATCHERS

MODERATE 7

As characters approach the townhouse, read or paraphrase the following.

The two-story brick townhouse is one of several such homes that fill this quiet neighborhood not far from the Twilight Castrum. Oak trees draped with moss shade the grassy lawn and a few old gravestones. The front door is flanked by large windows and more windows line the second floor. Mysterious green lights flicker from an upper window, behind gray curtains.

The front and rear doors to the townhouse are locked. They each require three successful DC 25 Thievery checks to Pick a Lock to open, or a single successful DC 28 Athletics check to Force it Open. The windows are latched and can be opened with a single successful DC 21 Thievery check or Athletics check. Anyone attempting these checks, or anyone loitering around the townhouse, draws the attention of Nathnelma's external security.

Creatures: Three wraiths bound to Nathnelma's service lurk inside the walls of the townhouse, relying on their lifesense ability to alert them to visitors. If they see anyone try to break in, or if the characters act

suspiciously, the wraiths attack. During the day, they stick to regions shaded by the surrounding trees and don't pursue anyone who retreats into sunlight.

If the characters knock on the front door, the wraiths assume they're ordinary visitors and remain within the walls unless combat elsewhere in the townhouse draws them out.

WRAITHS (3)

Pathfinder Bestiary 335

Initiative Perception +14

CREATURE 6



Orou the Judge

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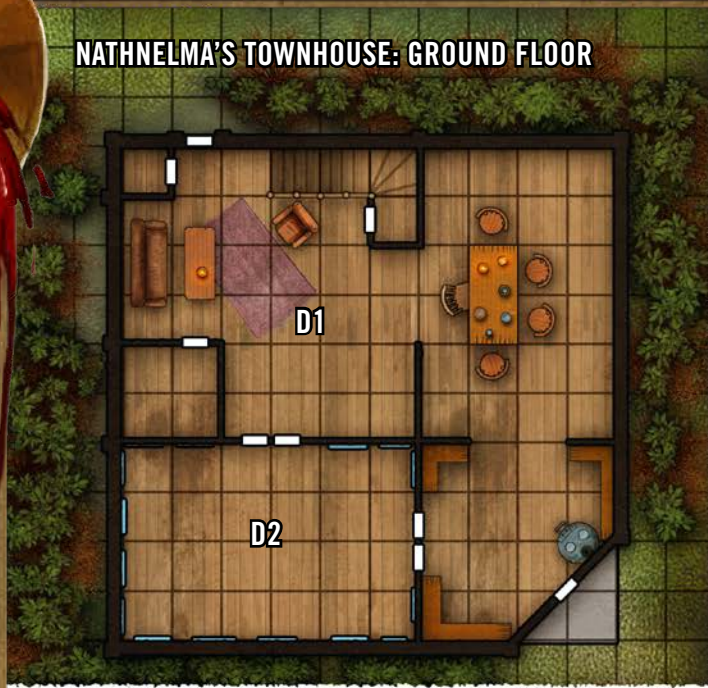
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NATHNELMA'S TOWNHOUSE: GROUND FLOOR



NATHNELMA'S TOWNHOUSE: BASEMENT

NATHNELMA'S TOWNHOUSE: UPPER FLOOR

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



D1. LIVING AREA

MODERATE 7

The townhouse's ground floor includes a living room, dining room, bathroom, and kitchen. Nathnelma avoids doing magical work in her kitchen, preferring to use the superior facilities in the Twilight Castrum. Two double doors lead into Nathnelma's scrying chamber (area D2). A staircase leads to the second floor, while a door under the staircase leads to a narrow set of steps that descend to the basement (area D3).

Noise from Below: Anyone on the ground floor hears occasional bellowing from the basement. Two voices alternate with cries like, "Mother? Is that you? We're hungry!" These voices belong to Sulvik, who lives in the basement when he's not serving Nathnelma as a lecture subject or brute laborer. Sulvik is not very smart and misinterprets any sounds in the house—such as the characters fighting with the mummies here—as Nathnelma being home. Sulvik doesn't come up the stairs unless Nathnelma—or someone successfully impersonating her—calls him up.

Creatures: Nathnelma has two elite mummies who serve as her personal valets. They look virtually identical, appearing as linen-wrapped corpses wearing

livery of the Twilight Castrum (a tower silhouetted by a full moon); each has served many other professors prior to Nathnelma and expects to serve many others after she's gone. They normally keep their despair auras suppressed, so as to not inconvenience Nathnelma or her guests. Although the mummies' primary tasks are to keep the townhouse clean, attend to Nathnelma's basic needs, and surreptitiously report her activities to superiors at Twilight Castrum, these duties don't take long and they spend most of their time out of sight. One stands in the coat closet near the front door and the other stands by the back door.

If the characters knock at one of the townhouse doors, one of these mummy valets answers and tells the characters to depart. It activates its despair aura to make this point clear.

Both mummies attack intruders. A mummy reduced to fewer than 30 Hit Points, or who is critically hit by an attack dealing fire damage, flees.

If the characters didn't trigger a fight with the wraiths, the wraiths might join the mummies. This can make for an extremely difficult fight, although none of these enemies pursue characters who flee the area.

MUMMY VALETS (2)

CREATURE 7

Elite mummy guardians (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 6, 240)

Initiative Perception +18

Subtle Presence ♦ (concentrate) The mummy valet activates or deactivates its despair aura.

D2. SCRYING CHAMBER

LOW 7

This room has no windows and two shut double doors. The mummy valets don't usually enter this room, but they pursue characters who flee this way.

Nathnelma relies on magical mirrors for scrying, and this room is filled with dozens of mirrors of all shapes and sizes. Most are hung on the walls or the back of the doors in a complex puzzle, but some are free-standing or hang from the ceiling on wires.

Hazard: Nathnelma conjured spirits and bound them into the mirrors, forming a complex hazard that triggers when anyone other than Nathnelma is reflected in the mirrors. Vampires and other creatures that don't have a reflection in mirrors can't trigger this hazard or be harmed by it.

HALL OF MIRRORS

HAZARD 8

UNIQUE COMPLEX HAUNT

Stealth +16

Description Among the many mirrored reflections lurk three trapped souls. By attacking reflections, these spirits cause wounds to appear on the bodies of those reflected in the mirror. If a trapped soul kills its victim, the soul escapes the mirror, replaced by its victim's soul.

Disable DC 24 Occultism (expert) to realign a mirror so a trapped soul can't hurt the reflections, DC 28 Religion (expert) to banish a trapped soul, or DC 28 Thievery (expert) to cover a mirror quickly enough to keep the trapped soul inside it; each successful attempt to disable the haunt reduces its number of actions by 1

AC 24; **Fort** +13, **Ref** +19

Hardness 15; **HP** 60 (BT 30); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Ghostly Images ↻ (enchantment, fear, mental, occult)

Trigger Two or more creatures enter the room; **Effect** Three trapped souls appear in mirrors throughout the room, menacing the reflections of the triggering creatures. The triggering creatures must each succeed at a DC 28 Will save or become frightened 1 (frightened 3 on a critical failure). The haunt then rolls initiative.

Routine (3 actions) Each trapped soul makes a reflective rip Strike against the reflection of a creature in the room; each trapped soul must attack a different target.

Melee ♦ reflective rip +20, **Damage** 2d10+11 slashing plus soul shred

Soul Shred A creature damaged by the haunt's reflective rip Strike is enfeebled 1 until 1 minute after it leaves the room.

This enfeebled condition is cumulative, up to enfeebled 4. If the creature dies from reflective rip, its soul is contained within the mirror until the mirror is broken and a specter (*Bestiary* 2 248) emerges.

D3. BASEMENT

MODERATE 7

The townhouse basement is lined with brick and includes some half-collapsed brick walls, behind which Sulvik makes his den. The muddy ground here is difficult terrain. The only entrance is a narrow stair that leads to the living area (area D1). Nathnelma normally stores shipments of alchemical substances she's received from the Graveclaw in the basement, but she's given most of them to her anonymous patron already. A few crates of mass-produced, subpar ingredients from Pagked remain, as Nathnelma knows her patron wouldn't be interested in them.

Creatures: Sulvik, Nathnelma's ettin mohrg, lives here. His relationship with Nathnelma is like that of a stubborn child to its mother. She brings him prey and occasionally takes him out to serve as an example in lectures or perform heavy labor. Sulvik hates all life and attacks any living creature that descends into the basement except Nathnelma.

SULVIK

CREATURE 9

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Initiative Perception +21

D4. RITUAL CHAMBER

EXTREME 7

Before the characters enter this room, select one of them whose name Nathnelma has learned, if any. She may have gotten this name from a character who confronted her during her lecture, or she could have learned it from Vilnithna. Nathnelma and her assistants are working together to cast the *portrait of spite* ritual (*Secrets of Magic* 153), painting a portrait that will be used to curse the chosen character.

This spacious room on the top floor is where Nathnelma performs rituals, often with the assistance of her students. Thick gray drapes cover the windows, but a chandelier shines with magical green flames. Cabinets store food and a large pitcher of water stands surrounded by pewter goblets. A bookcase is filled with well-read tomes. Sleeping mats and throw pillows fill one corner. An elaborate design is engraved on the hardwood floor with silver. Characters who are experts in Arcana, Nature, Occultism, or Religion should attempt a DC 23 check with the relevant skill; on a success, they sense the room is specifically arranged to enhance the casting of ritual spells.

Creatures: Nathnelma is in the center of the room, painting a portrait of one of the characters. It takes

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her 7 days to complete the task; depending on how long the characters have been in Three Gates, she might have barely begun. There are normally three teaching assistants working with Nathnelma as secondary casters. If the characters won the classroom debate against Nathnelma by acquiring 5 or more Debate Points, one of the teaching assistants recently abandoned her and Nathnelma's fuming about being unable to continue the ritual without enough help.

She responds to interruption with immediate violence, abandoning her ritual to put a permanent end to these troublemakers. If it's daytime, her teaching assistants are here; otherwise, they're napping in the adjacent bedroom (area D5) and join a fight on the second round of combat.

Nathnelma first casts *animate dead* to summon a giant crawling hand (*Bestiary* 2 56) to prevent the characters from retreating. She remains near her teaching assistants and their summoned undead to more easily Sacrifice an Ally if necessary. She likes to use Grave Impression on spellcasters and uses her other spells to best effect against those who threaten her the most. If her undead minion is destroyed and she doesn't need to Sustain the Spell any longer, she casts *cloudkill* to deal as much damage to living foes as possible.

Teaching assistants first cast *animate dead* to summon a skeletal champion (*Bestiary* 298) or zombie brutes (*Bestiary* 341), following up with *false life* and *vampiric touch*. They remain adjacent to a minion ally to Sacrifice a Minion if necessary, and they use Necromantic Revitalization without regard for allies.

Nathnelma and her teaching assistants cast *death knell* on any living creature (including allies) who falls to 0 HP.

NATHNELMA

CREATURE 9

Page 56

Initiative Perception +18

TEACHING ASSISTANTS (2 OR 3) CREATURE 5

Page 57

Initiative Perception +11

Questioning Nathnelma: Nathnelma knows more about the poison plot than any other hag in the Graveclaw, but even she doesn't know the identity of their anonymous patron—only that this patron has received tremor paste and braingrit but not any of the shadow ash needed to perfect it. If interrogated, she can relate the information in her journal in area D5.

Faction Reputation: If the characters turn Nathnelma over to Zthni, alive, they gain 3 Reputation Points with the Celebrants but lose 1 with the Export Guild. If they turn Nathnelma over to Kyril, alive, they gain 3 Reputation Points with the Export Guild but lose 1 with the Celebrants.

Regardless of Nathnelma's fate, Berline is very happy with the characters' thorough investigation; they earn 3 Reputation Points with the Reanimators.

Treasure: Ritual books on a shelf contain *create undead* (mohrg, mummy, wraith) and *portrait of spite* (*Secrets of Magic* 153). Another book holds the formula for a *ghastly cauldron* (page 75).

XP Award: If the characters take Nathnelma alive, award them 30 XP in addition to the amount for defeating her.



Nathnelma

D5. BEDCHAMBER

This bedroom is flanked by a bathroom and a large walk-in closet. The bedroom has a massive four-poster bed draped with black velvet and covered in a luxurious velvet spread and black silk sheets. A large ironbound trunk rests at the foot of the bed, and a leather-bound book lies on a bed stand. Three significantly shabbier bedrolls are laid out in this room for Nathnelma's teaching assistants.

The book on the bed stand is Nathnelma's journal. It details her efforts to create a poison that would not only slay its victims but make them easily raised as undead who would obey the poison's creator. Unfortunately, she never acquired shadow ash, the final ingredient needed to bring this plan to fruition. Iron Taviah and Sahni made their ingredients skillfully but far too slowly; Decrosia's mass-produced toxin components weren't usually worth the effort to ship them, but some of these ingredients were passed along regardless. The most recent journal entries include observations that someone is killing fellow members of Graveclaw and her efforts to find those responsible; if the characters haven't been particularly careful, the journal also contains specifics about them that the characters might find unnervingly accurate. Nathnelma put perfecting the reanimating poison on hold long enough to make one of the characters suffer with a *portrait of spite*, as she finds lingering curses the most satisfying revenge.

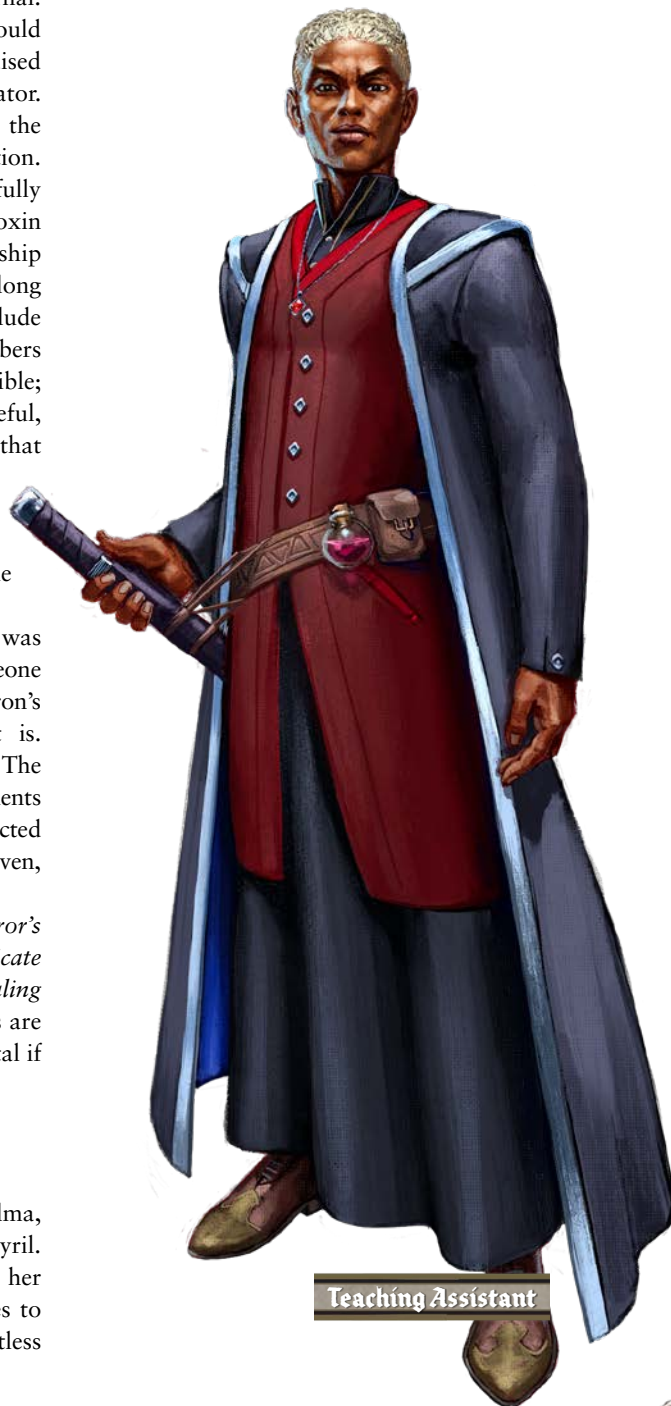
Although the journal states the Graveclaw was making the specialty poison in huge batches at someone else's command, there's no evidence of the patron's identity—even Nathnelma isn't certain who it is. She used drop points to deliver the components. The journal also notes some significant advance payments from this patron. Although Nathnelma was instructed to share this payment with other members of her coven, she instead used it to buy nice things for herself.

Treasure: The trunk contains scrolls of *mirror's misfortune* (*Secrets of Magic* 117) and *replicate* (*Secrets of Magic* 125), as well as two *moderate healing potions* and a pouch with 200 gp. The bedclothes are particularly nice and new; they fetch 600 gp in total if sold, but they weigh 5 Bulk.

Concluding the Adventure

The players might have captured Nathnelma, intending to turn her over to either Zthni or Kyril. She hates the characters for their destruction of her coven as much as for her own defeat. She refuses to answer any questions, and interrogating her is fruitless beyond the information found in her journal.

In any case, the characters have fully thwarted the coven's plan to create an industrial-scale poison that would make its victims ripe for undead reanimation. Chancellor Kemnebi hasn't abandoned his plans—he's only been set back by the Graveclaw's destruction—but the characters have no way of knowing this. They can be satisfied they've completed their task and can return to their manor in Graydirge for some well-deserved rest (and the opportunity to level up).



Teaching Assistant

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Secrets of the Covens

Every hag knows there's strength in numbers—strength, specifically, in the number three. But hags are secretive and have no special way to find each other; a hag might search many years for even a single one of her kind, let alone the two required to form a coven. Moreover, hags are infamously temperamental, jealous, and resentful against those who have wronged them, sometimes over the smallest perceived infraction. Even those able to participate in a coven are torn between a thirst for greater power and a fragile ego that considers her fellow coven members to be rivals... or even enemies. For all these reasons, hag covens are much less common than hags themselves.

The Nature of Covens

The coven ability is detailed on page 342 of the *Pathfinder Bestiary*. Covens are, at their heart, social constructs—a group of three or more creatures that bind their identities into something greater. It's this inherent social and storytelling aspect of covens that makes them an ideal conduit for occult power. (See *Secrets of Magic* 12–13 for more on storytelling aspects of occult magic.) No one knows how covens were first formed; most hags like to take the credit, but other creatures can form covens, and the true answer may be more complicated.

Regardless, a coven grants each member power they'd never attain alone, including spells and rituals coven members can only cast together. Most covens make their members stronger, faster, and tougher than they were before, but others grant different abilities, instead; see Customizing the Coven for more details on this.

Before a hag can join a coven however, she has to find other hags.

Finding the Coven

The first step for any hag who seeks to join or establish a coven is to find other hags—no easy matter when they hide from settlements and lurk in abandoned ruins, fetid swamps, and lonely caves. Often, the first coven any hag encounters is when she responds

to the Call: the supernatural summons that draws a changeling to her mother's coven. Covens can't freely admit new members, however; they must be broken and ceremonially reformed. Most covens don't survive being broken and reformed, as petty egos and simmering rivalries burst out during this time, but the arrival of a changeling is the exception that proves this rule. A former changeling—now a young hag—is weak and easily dominated by her parent. She needs to be taught how to use her powers and survive as a hag in a hostile world. The other hags in the coven, all older and more established, seldom feel threatened by the new arrival. In fact, a changeling can even awaken maternal instincts in her older coven sisters, leading all of them to adopt the new arrival and treat her as something of a favorite child, referring to her as “niece” and insisting the new hag call her “auntie.”

But these changelings are the lucky ones; a young hag typically remains in her first coven until one of three things happen: she's killed, her mother is killed, or she sets her sights on a new coven. Some elder hags consider a new arrival to be a weakness, a chink in the armor of her mother, also a member of the coven. If the changeling's mother has led the coven, her rivals might strike at her through her daughter, threatening murder or vile enchantments to bribe their way into greater authority.

It's important to remember a coven only requires a minimum of three hags; as soon as a changeling joins an established coven, someone else in the coven is expendable. That's a vulnerability few hags can resist leveraging. If the new arrival isn't wooed over by one of her aunties, either she or her mother are likely to be slain, creating a new balance of power in the coven. Many young hags flee their first covens out of the fear—sometimes invented but usually all too real—that the hags of this first coven are plotting to kill them.

A hag who survives this first bloodthirsty elimination round can flourish in her coven for decades. Eventually however, the years simply grow too tiresome to endure. The hags in the coven have told all the same stories to

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THE FIRST COVEN?

A legend tells of three sisters who dwelt in the fabulous First World forest of Simarron. Their names were Caillea, Jurissa, and Neithrope. Caillea was eldest, tall, and broad-shouldered, a heroic woman whose nobility commanded attention. Jurissa was wise in the ways of the forest and beloved by all who dwelt there; even wild animals would attend her. Neithrope sang songs to the sea and made her home in an elegant lighthouse on the forest's edge. All three women were courted by many suitors, but none fancied marriage. Nevertheless, they were courteous to those who sought their hands. As time wore on, however, the patience of the three sisters began to wear thin. How many times did they have to say no to be believed? But every suitor who came thought themselves to be exceptional; each thought that for them, of course, things would be different.

Slowly the sisters grew increasingly frustrated, embittered, and angry at the parade of suitors who came calling. Finally, harried and harassed beyond their limits, they resolved to take matters into their own hands. They knew the suitors valued them not for their courage, kindness, or talents, but for their beauty. And so, they resolved to end their harassment by ending their beauty.

In a terrible ceremony, the three sisters invoked distant powers far beyond the knowledge of mortals. They cursed themselves with new, hideous forms. Caillea transformed herself into the first annis hag, Jurissa became the first green hag, and Neithrope the first sea hag. The unnatural power that so transformed them also blighted the forest, turning it into a twisted fen of fetid water and stinking weeds. But, like all curses, this one could be ended: if a true-hearted suitor were to love them anyway, despite their appearance, all three sisters would resume their original fair form and their cynical appraisal of vanity would be disproved.

Their curse has never been broken.

each other, nursed all the same old resentments, and cooked all the same recipes. Boredom and ennui set in. Elder hags know what to expect from a covenant, but young hags fed up with the monotony sometimes leave to strike out on their own, willing to sacrifice power for a free life.

Finding a new covenant can be very difficult. A hag in search of potential covenant sisters must travel roads and countryside, a life that's both physically demanding and risks exposure to those who hate and fear hags (often with good reason, as hags have little cause to

control their baser impulses when traveling through lands where they don't plan to settle into a secretive life). To avoid confrontation with adventurers or local authorities, hags rely on stealth, often concealing their nature behind illusions and disguise. Others simply travel under cover of darkness and hide during the day. Hags have no special method of finding their own kind; but although they have no secret language, they often speak Jotun, the language of giants. Sometimes a settled hag will paint a Jotun rune (usually one similar to the rune for sisterhood) on a stone or carve it into a tree as a sign to other hags; they know to interpret the sign as something like "if you're looking for a covenant, there's one here, and if you're not, you'd best move on."

When two hags manage to find each other, finding a third to complete the covenant becomes a priority. Both hags put their personal schemes on hold while they split up and search the surrounding regions for a third member to complete their covenant. If a hag's location is known, and she's far away, the two might write to her and invite her to join them. These offers are too tempting for most hags to refuse, but even so the letter is always vague enough to protect the location and identity of the two hags who have written it, in case their prospective sister elects to betray them and hand the missive to hag-hunting adventurers.

Forming the Covenant

Once three or more creatures with the covenant ability have come together in the same place, they can form the covenant. This requires an 8-hour ceremony, during which the three hags recite their lineage and past glories to each other, each boasting of all the horrific deeds they've done and what they bring to the covenant. After each has provided her oral resumé, everyone in the prospective covenant utters occult oaths. The ceremony to create a covenant usually involves candles; bowls of water, wine, blood, or other liquids; scrying mirrors; or similar paraphernalia, but these items aren't strictly required, and every hag brings personal components to the ritual.

During the ceremony, all members of the new covenant must agree upon the covenant's manifestation and commitment (see Customizing Covenants on page 71). When the ceremony is complete, everyone who participated becomes part of the covenant.

While covenants are traditionally made up of three individuals, this is only the minimum size; larger covenants are possible. They are, however, increasingly unlikely, as the politics and power games of a large covenant make it increasingly unstable. Any covenant member beyond the third is superfluous, making these machinations far

more likely and far more deadly. If a coven reaches six members, scheming becomes even more fierce to create two smaller covens who often fight with each other.

The coven's manifestation and commitment give supernatural powers, including knowledge of specialized spells and rituals, but each member of any coven can take the following actions.

- ◆ (concentrate) The coven member contributes to the casting of a coven spell; this is a spellcasting action with the verbal trait. If two members of the coven perform this action, a third member can cast any coven spell with the normal spellcasting actions; this spell must be cast within one round of two coven members taking this action, and the creature Casting the Spell must be within 30 feet of them.
- ◆ (concentrate) The creature selects one other member of their coven; they can sense the location and conditions of that coven member regardless of distance, even if they're on different planes of existence.
- ◆◆ (concentrate) The creature selects one other member of their coven; they can sense what the other member is sensing at that time regardless of distance, even if they're on different planes of existence.

Customizing Covens

Not all covens are the same. The spells and powers shared by a coven are determined by two choices made by the members when it's formed. These decisions are the coven's manifestation and its commitment. A coven's manifestation determines non-spell abilities granted to all participants, while the commitment determines the spells shared by the coven. A coven can be described with the following phrase: "A (manifestation) coven of (commitment)"—for example, a crafting coven of tradition or an all-seeing coven of secrecy. Choice of manifestation and commitment is part of the 8-hour ceremony establishing the coven. Once the decision is made, it can't be changed while the coven persists.

COVEN MANIFESTATION

A coven's manifestation channels the power of the coven into effects other than spells. The most common manifestation is that presented on page 342 of the *Bestiary*: the coven participants each gain elite adjustments (*Bestiary* 6). This is sometimes called a "conventional" or "standard" coven, to differentiate it from the other types, but if a manifestation isn't mentioned that means it's this common type. Covens without the standard manifestation don't grant elite adjustments, gaining the new abilities detailed below instead. Regardless of the manifestation chosen, if the coven falls below three members, the remaining

COVEN CREATURES

Although hags share many similar powers, the one gift they all have in common—the thing, perhaps, that makes them hags—is the ability to join a coven. But other creatures can also possess this ability. Spirit nagas (*Bestiary* 2 179) are the best-known example of a non-hag that can join a coven, but norns (*Bestiary* 2 184) have a similar trait.

Creatures like spirit nagas, that can join hag covens or form covens of their own, can use any of the rules in this article. Their covens are described with a manifestation and commitment. Hags are reluctant to accept such an outsider, but a spirit naga is a powerful spellcaster with much to offer her coven sisters; hags who can overcome their initial reluctance find spirit nagas to be useful allies. Witchfires, incorporeal undead who were hags in life, are accepted more easily because living hags underestimate them as failures and don't consider them a threat.

Norns are something of a special case. A norn can't join a coven with creatures who have the coven ability. Instead, three norns can come together to form a triumvirate. Norn triumvirates don't use the rules for manifestations and commitment—their highly specialized focus on seeing the future replaces these rules.

members keep the abilities granted by their coven's manifestation for 24 hours before losing them.

All-Seeing: A coven made up exclusively of hags and focused around the powers of its shared *hag eye* has the all-seeing manifestation. The members of such a coven can cast coven spells through their *hag eye*, measuring the spell's range from the *hag eye* rather than the caster, and can create up to one *hag eye* for each member in the coven. All-seeing covens smuggle their *hag eyes* into the lairs of their enemies—or have them carried around by loyal cultists—then use their magic to observe their foes and weaken them from within.

Crafting: Crafting covens specialize in alchemy and the construction of magical or cursed items. Many crafting covens are brought together by a non-hag—a local ruler, for example, or an ambitious creature without spellcasting abilities—who wants the hags to make a specific magical item for them. It's rare for these covens to do exactly as they've been instructed, however; usually the coven tricks its patron with a cursed item or simply uses the patron's wealth and workshop to craft items the hags want for themselves. Members of a crafting coven have an enhanced ability to craft alchemical and magical items. Each member of the coven gains the benefits of Alchemical Crafting

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A decorative border runs along the top and sides of the page. It features a dark, ornate background with gold-colored scrollwork. Interspersed within the scrollwork are several human skulls. Some skulls are whole, while others are partially cut away or have blood dripping from them. A large, golden chalice or bowl is visible in the upper left, with a thick stream of red blood pouring from it. In the lower left, a small, dark, fleshy object, possibly a brain or a piece of meat, sits on a golden plate. The overall theme is macabre and horror.

and Magical Crafting and can craft items that are up to 1 level higher than their own level. A coven member gains a +1 circumstance bonus on Crafting checks when working within 30 feet of another coven member. This bonus stacks with additional coven members, to a maximum of +3. The coven must still supply all necessary materials, and at least one member of the coven must know the formula and meet any special requirements for any item they craft, but they ignore any non-good alignment requirements.

Scattered: A scattered coven gives up the lure of increased personal power for more freedom; they don't need to stay close to each other. In some ways, this makes the coven more likely to survive, since the individual members are less likely to grate on each other's nerves day after day. But without nearby allies, the members must be more self-reliant, as each can be outnumbered and more easily slain. A member of a scattered coven can cast any spell granted by the coven's commitment, and which is equal to or less than half the coven member's level (rounded up) once per day by themselves, without requiring other members of the coven to contribute to the spellcasting. For example, a typical 6th-level annis hag in a scattered coven could cast coven spells of up to 3rd level.

Recusant: Recusant covens include one creature who doesn't have the coven ability. That creature gains the coven's commitment and can cast its spells, but they contribute no spells to the coven. Recusant covens are often led by a single, very powerful non-hag who brought the hags together. In other cases, this individual discovered a coven, killed its leader, and forced the surviving hags to serve them as a new coven. This is an excellent way to unite all the hags in a coven against the non-hag; recusant covens tend to devolve into backstabbing and treachery with remarkable rapidity. Sometimes, however, a recusant coven might form around a non-hag for a specific reason—perhaps the prospective coven member has an unusual supernatural ability or a personal way to help the coven achieve an otherwise impossible goal.

COVEN COMMITMENT

A coven's commitment determines its coven spells. Members of a coven can only cast coven spells using the action described in Forming the Coven above. When a member uses a coven spell of 5th level or lower, they can heighten it up to 5th (or up to half the creature's level, for scattered covens). Furthermore, covens can cast their coven spells an unlimited number of times per day. Coven spells can include one or more rituals—when a coven casts one of these rituals, the primary and secondary checks for the

ritual are DC 23 instead of the standard DC, and the ritual is 8th level.

Unique covens might have different coven spells that suit the theme of their commitment but should always preserve the same levels and number of spells, swapping out a spell common to their commitment for each new one acquired.

Destiny: A coven of destiny is less concerned with violence and cruelty and instead dedicates itself to seeing the future and untangling the conflicting threads of fate. In the Age of Lost Omens, covens of destiny have become increasingly rare as their oracular powers have waned. Non-evil hags are rare, but those few that join covens together often dedicate themselves to destiny. The coven spells of a coven of destiny are: **8th** *unrelenting observation*; **5th** *augury*, *breadcrumbs* (*Secrets of Magic* 92), *dream message*, *guiding star* (*Secrets of Magic* 109), *ill omen*, *nudge the odds* (*Secrets of Magic* 118), *read omens*, *remove curse*, *spirit sense* (*Advanced Player's Guide* 225). In addition, a coven of destiny can cast the *legend lore* ritual.

Domination: A coven of domination seeks to control powerful individuals and, through them, whole settlements or regions. They wield magic that controls and enchants others. The coven spells for a coven of domination are: **8th** *dominate*; **5th** *calm emotions*, *charm*, *enthrall*, *replicate* (*Secrets of Magic* 125), *shift blame* (*Secrets of Magic* 129), *subconscious suggestion*, *suggestion*, *touch of idiocy*, *zone of truth*. A coven of domination can also cast the *planar binding* ritual.

Secrecy: Covens dedicated to secrecy protect their identities and true nature with spells of concealment and stealth; they work from the shadows and above all seek to avoid detection. The coven spells for a coven of secrecy are: **8th** *screaming*; **5th** *animal messenger*, *detect screaming*, *hallucinatory terrain*, *invisibility*, *non-detection*, *secret chest* (*Advanced Player's Guide* 225), *silence*, *sleep*, *veil*. In addition, a coven of secrecy can cast the *ward domain* (8th) ritual (*Advanced Player's Guide* 245).

Tradition: By far the most common commitment, a coven of tradition has resolved to do things the way they have always been done. A coven whose commitment isn't indicated has this one. A coven of tradition tends to be relatively stable. Although the members might resent or even hate one another, they're reluctant to take any action that might cause the coven to break apart. The spells granted to a coven of tradition are those listed in the coven ability (*Bestiary* 342): **8th** *baleful polymorph*; **5th** *augury*, *charm*, *clairaudience*, *clairvoyance*, *dream message*, *illusory disguise*, *illusory scene*, *prying eye*, *talking corpse*. A coven of tradition can also cast the *control weather* ritual.

Terror: Covens of terror believe fear is the best way to accomplish their goals—their magic is horrifying, gruesome, or just overwhelmingly deadly. The coven spells of a coven of terror are: **8th feblemind**; **5th black tentacles**, *bloodspray curse* (*Secrets of Magic* 92), *false vision*, *fear*, *ghoulish cravings*, *hallucination*, *paralyze*, *synesthesia*, *wall of flesh* (*Advanced Player's Guide* 227). A coven of terror can also cast the *bathe in blood* ritual (*Secrets of Magic* 148). This ritual requires large quantities of blood from the same ancestry as the caster; when a hag casts this spell as part of a coven she can substitute changeling blood for hag blood.

Vengeance: A coven of vengeance forms to kill the coven's enemies—often a single individual or family whom the coven blames for all their misfortune. Their spells include several curses as the coven is unlikely to be satisfied with a quick death. The coven spells of a coven of vengeance are: **8th earthquake**; **5th Abyssal plague**, *blindness*, *bloodspray curse* (*Secrets of Magic* 92), *curse of lost time* (*Advanced Player's Guide* 217), *fear*, *glyph of warding*, *hallucination*, *mariner's curse*, *outcast's curse*. In addition, the coven can cast the *imprisonment* ritual.

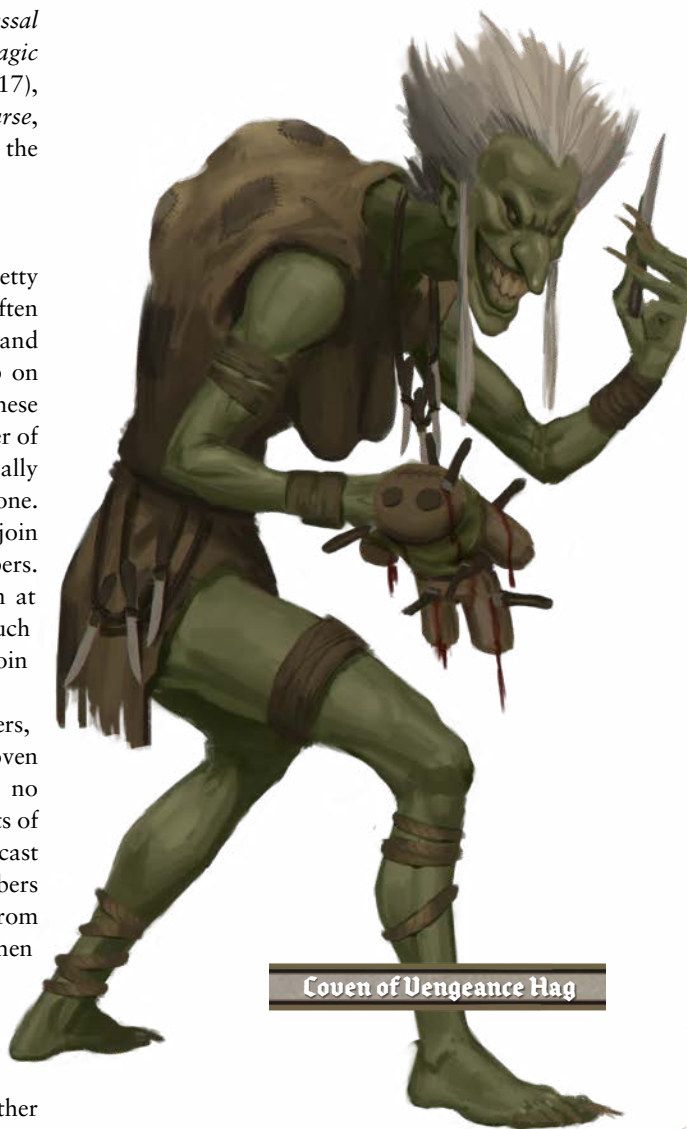
Breaking the Coven

Covens are notorious for their jealousy and petty rivalries; in addition, the members of a coven often have competing priorities that cause quarrels and debates. Two members of a coven often gang up on the third, further feeding resentment. For all these reasons and more, it's not uncommon for a member of a coven to simply leave. A coven member can verbally renounce their membership at any time, even if alone. This is irrevocable, though the individual could join another coven, even one with the same members. Coven members who are killed leave their coven at the moment of death—though undead creatures, such as a witchfires (*Bestiary* 2 293), might be able to join new covens after death.

If a coven is ever brought below three members, it's automatically broken. Every creature in the coven when it's broken immediately knows the coven no longer exists. The coven members retain the benefits of the coven's manifestation for 24 hours but can't cast coven spells. Even scattered covens, whose members can typically use coven spells without help from others, lose the ability to cast their coven spells when the coven falls below three members.

Sometimes all members of a coven break their bond intentionally, members all renouncing their membership at the same time in a simple ritual. This normally happens for two reasons: either

the coven wishes to change its manifestation or its commitment, or the members intend to reform the coven around different members. Yet most covens that are broken never reform, despite the intentions of the members; when a covenant breaks, long-simmering antagonisms within the coven burst out into the open. The decisions of manifestation and commitment prompt vicious argument and debate, even when these issues have been agreed upon beforehand. New members threaten to upset whatever political balance the coven has struck, depriving dominant members of their authority and lifting up previously marginalized members. Although coven members might have agreed upon an immediate reformation of the coven, it's often the case that each member secretly intends a quick murder or maiming to ensure they emerge at the top of the new coven.



Coven of Vengeance Hag

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The following rules supplement the player characters' adventures in "Graveclaw." All of these new items, spells, and vehicles are themed around hags and their wicked pursuits.

Magic Items

The characters can find several of the following magic items in their adventures across Geb as they track down the Graveclaw coven.

EXTRACTION CAULDRON

Sahni Bride-of-the-Sea keeps this magical cauldron in her lair beneath the waves.

EXTRACTION CAULDRON

ITEM 4

UNCOMMON INVESTED MAGICAL TRANSMUTATION

Price 85 gp

Bulk 6

This large magical stew pot can boil objects down to their valuable components, greatly assisting anyone who wants to harvest raw materials without visiting a settlement. The cauldron is roughly 3 feet in diameter.

Activate >>> Interact; **Requirements** The cauldron must be filled with boiling water for at least 1 hour; **Effect** As you stir the cauldron, one object that has been in it for at least an hour transforms into raw materials with a value of one half the object's Price; art objects are instead transformed into raw materials with a value equal to their Price. The cauldron produces raw materials associated with the object but unaffected by immersion in boiling water. For example, a magical broom might be rendered into a block of dense, valuable wood, while a gilt-edged portrait might be transformed into a lump of gold. Objects removed from the cauldron before an hour passes can't be transformed and they might be damaged or ruined by water and heat.

GHASTLY CAULDRON

Although the characters don't find one of these powerful magical cauldrons in this adventure, they might discover the formula to create one in Nathnelma's townhouse.

GHASTLY CAULDRON

ITEM 10

UNCOMMON INVESTED MAGICAL NECROMANCY NEGATIVE

Price 900 gp

Bulk 5

This black cooking pot can produce a feast fit for undead.

Activate >>> Interact; **Frequency** once per day; **Requirements** The cauldron must be filled with water, herbs, bones, and raw meat, and kept at a boil for 1 hour; **Effect** As you stir the cauldron, its contents transform into 10 meals suitable for undead consumption. Each meal must be ladled from the cauldron individually as a 3-action activity and must be eaten within 1 hour of removal. An undead creature that consumes a meal from the cauldron regains 5d8 Hit Points and gains the benefits of 4th-level *restoration* that you choose; living creatures who consume a meal from the cauldron take 5d8 negative damage (DC 27 basic Fortitude save) instead. Any meals remaining in the cauldron 24 hours after activation become inedible slurry.

GINGERBREAD HOUSE

This item is thematic for hags and witches of any kind, but it doesn't appear in "Graveclaw" unless you decide to include it as treasure for the characters to find.

GINGERBREAD HOUSE

ITEM 6

UNCOMMON CONJURATION MAGICAL STRUCTURE

Price 240 gp

Bulk L (when not activated)

A gingerbread house is made of magical gingerbread sweetened with honey and spices, and further decorated with candies and icing. Its roof tiles are made of sugar. It can be held safely in one hand but is very delicate; it's often stored within a wooden box of 1 Bulk.

Activate 1 minute (command, envision, Interact); **Effect** The gingerbread house expands into a spacious and comfortable two-story cottage with a fenced yard. Although fully furnished with beds, chairs, tables, and so on, it and all its contents are made of magical gingerbread and candy. It includes a hearth that keeps the entire house warm but doesn't damage its composition. The house's cupboards are supplied

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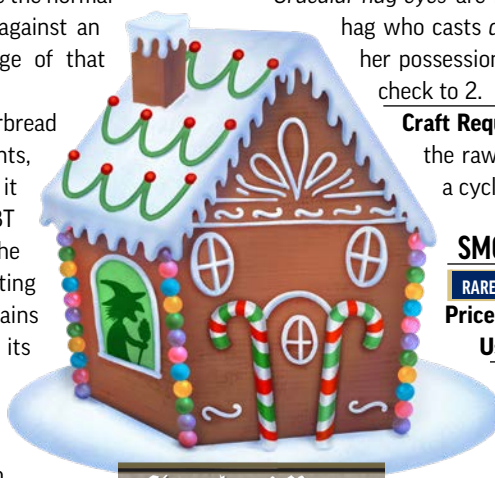
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with candy and cocoa sufficient to sustain 10 Medium creatures that eat roughly as much as a human for as long as the house remains activated. Creatures who spend an entire day and night resting in a gingerbread house recover Hit Points at twice the normal rate; if they successfully save against an affliction, they reduce the stage of that affliction by an additional step.

When not activated the gingerbread house has Hardness 0, 2 Hit Points, and a BT of 1. Once activated, it has Hardness 0, 40 HP, and a BT of 20. Any damage done to the activated house—including eating any part of its structure—remains when the house returns to its un-activated size.

Craft Requirements You can attempt Cooking Lore checks instead of Crafting checks to Craft a gingerbread house.



Gingerbread House

HAG EYES

The most common form of *hag eye* (*Bestiary* 3 128) enables hags to scry on their enemies, but an eye plucked from a supernatural creature can produce a more powerful variant. All the *hag eyes* described here have the powers of a normal *hag eye* in addition to the powers below.

FRIGHTFUL HAG EYE

ITEM 4

RARE DIVINATION INVESTED OCCULT SCRYING

Price 85 gp

Usage worn; Bulk –

A *frightful hag eye* is made with the eye of a creature whose gaze inflicts fear, such as some velstracs.

Activate ♦ (emotion, enchantment, fear, mental, visual) **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** You target a creature within 30 feet that must be able to see the *frightful hag eye*; the target must attempt a DC 19 Will save. Once a creature attempts this save, it's temporarily immune for 24 hours.

Critical Success The target is unaffected.

Success The target is frightened 1.

Failure The target is frightened 2.

Critical Failure The target is frightened 3 and fleeing for 1 round.

Craft Requirements You must be a hag, and the raw materials must include the eye of a creature whose gaze causes fear.

ORACULAR HAG EYE

ITEM 4

RARE DIVINATION INVESTED OCCULT SCRYING

Price 75 gp

Usage worn; Bulk L

Oracular hag eyes are made with the eye of a cyclops. A hag who casts *augury* with an *oracular hag eye* in her possession reduces the DC of the secret flat check to 2.

Craft Requirements You must be a hag, and the raw materials must include the eye of a cyclops.

SMOKY HAG EYE

ITEM 8

RARE DIVINATION INVESTED OCCULT SCRYING

Price 450 gp

Usage worn; Bulk –

A *smoky hag eye* is named after the black vapor that constantly emanates from it, like the smoke that continually seeps from a bodak's eye.

Activation ♦♦ (death, necromancy, visual) You target a creature within 30 feet that must be able to see the *smoky hag eye*. The target must attempt a DC 24 Fortitude save. Once a creature attempts this save, it's temporarily immune for 24 hours.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature is drained 1.

Failure The creature is doomed 1 and drained 2.

Critical Failure The creature is doomed 1 and drained 3.

Craft Requirements You must be a hag, and the raw materials must include the eye of a bodak.



Smoky Hag Eye

STONY HAG EYE

ITEM 6

RARE DIVINATION INVESTED OCCULT SCRYING

Price 250 gp

Usage worn; Bulk –

A *stony hag eye* is fashioned from the eye of a creature, such as a basilisk or medusa, with a petrifying gaze.

Activate ♦♦ (incapacitation, transmutation, visual) **Frequency** once per round; **Effect** You target a creature within 30 feet that can see the *stony hag eye*. The target must attempt a DC 22 Fortitude save. On a failure, it's slowed 1 for 1 minute; on a critical failure, if the creature is already slowed, it's permanently petrified. Touching the *stony hag eye* to the petrified creature (a single action with the manipulate trait) removes the petrified condition.

Craft Requirements You must be a hag, and the raw materials must include the eye of a creature whose gaze turns creatures to stone.

HUNTER'S HAGBOOK

The huldra Drusilla who roams Axan Wood might present the characters with this valuable grimoire if they gain her favor.

HUNTER'S HAGBOOK

ITEM 9

UNIQUE FORTUNE GRIMOIRE MAGICAL

Price 700 gp

Bulk L

This magical book has its official title, *The Grimoire of Lady Jayne Cutter*, written on an inside page in illuminated letters. Among occultists and other scholars, it's known by its colloquial name: the *Hunter's Hagbook*. The book is a grimoire (*Secrets of Magic* 162) created and used by a legendary Varisian monster hunter. The *Hunter's Hagbook* can hold 100 spells but the spells beginning on page 78 are always present in the book, can't be removed from it, and count against the total.

When you attempt a saving throw against a coven spell, you can immediately end the duration of a spell affecting you that you prepared from this book. If you do, the result of your saving throw is one degree of success better than your roll (for example, a critical failure becomes a failure).

LUCKY KITCHEN WITCH

Hanging an icon of a witch in the kitchen is common in some cultures but these icons are normally simple, mundane crafts. The following is an example of an enchanted kitchen witch.

LUCKY KITCHEN WITCH

LEVEL 6

UNCOMMON FORTUNE MAGICAL

Price 250 gp

Bulk L

This small doll in the shape of a witch is made from sticks and clad in a simple dress, bonnet, and wooden shoes. It sits astride a miniature straw broom. When hung in a kitchen, the witch brings good luck and protects a cook from malicious spirits. The *lucky kitchen witch* must hang in a kitchen for a week to give any benefit.

When you have a *lucky kitchen witch* hung in your kitchen, you can reroll a Cooking Lore or Crafting check made during downtime to make food, Earn Income, or Craft an alchemical item in your kitchen.

POTION OF ANNULMENT

These rare potions are useful for anyone who wants to break a magically binding deal they've made.

People who regret deals with the sea hag Sahni Bride-of-the-Sea, such as Stana Keystone, particularly prize it.

POTION OF ANNULMENT

LEVEL 10+

RARE ABJURATION CONSUMABLE MAGICAL POTION

Usage held in 1 hand; Bulk L

Activate ♦ Interact

A *potion of annulment* magically breaks a supernatural deal you have made, such as an infernal contract (*Bestiary* 90), a sea hag's bargain (*Bestiary* 200), or the *geas* ritual (*Core Rulebook* 412).

Upon drinking the potion, attempt a counteract check against the highest-level such effect, with a counteract modifier determined by the potion's type. If the check is successful, the deal ends for all parties. You're not penalized for breaking the contract, but you

also enjoy none of its benefits or rewards. Individuals with whom you shared the contract are aware it has been annulled and may seek vengeance. This potion can't rewind time or negate effects that have already occurred; for example, if you have killed someone to fulfill an infernal contract, drinking this potion and canceling the contract doesn't bring the dead individual back to life.

Type lesser; Level 10; Price 200 gp

The counteract modifier is +17.

Type moderate; Level 15; Price 1,300 gp

The counteract modifier is +24.

Type greater; Level 20; Price 13,000 gp

The counteract modifier is +30.

WONDROUS FIGURINE

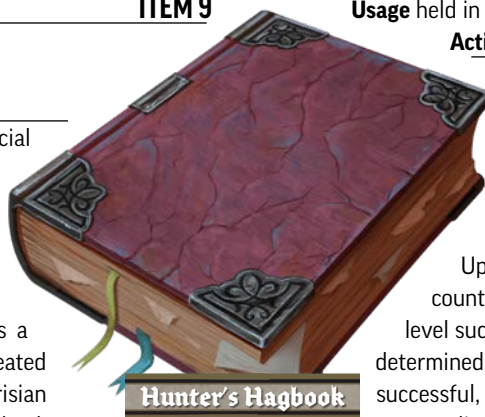
The magical statuettes known as wondrous figurines are described on page 576 of the *Core Rulebook*. The following figurine is a less common variant. The characters might find one in Iron Taviah's cottage.

WONDROUS FIGURINE, STUFFED FOX ITEM 5

UNCOMMON CONJURATION MAGICAL

Price 125 gp

This small toy fox has tufted, fluffy ears and buttons for eyes. When activated, it transforms into a big fox with the statistics of a riding dog (*Bestiary* 102). The *stuffed fox* always allows you to ride it. While you do, you don't take the -2 penalty to Reflex saves while being mounted, and its jaws Strike gains Knockdown (*Bestiary* 343). The *stuffed fox* can be activated once a day and remains in its form for up to 1 hour.



Hunter's Hagbook



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Spells

The following spells appear in the *Hunter's Hagbook* (page 77), but the characters might gain access to them by other means, particularly from NPCs who specialize in hunting hags.

BLIND EYE

SPELL 5

UNCOMMON ILLUSION

Traditions arcane, occult

Cast 1 minute (material, somatic, verbal)

Range touch; **Targets** 1 object

Duration until the next time you make your daily preparations

You enchant a single object, preventing it from being used for magical observation. If you cast this spell on a

non-magical item used to cast scrying spells, such as a spell component pouch or a spell focus, the item can't be used to cast the spell. If you cast *blind eye* on a magical item that can be activated to scry (such as a *crystal ball* or *hag eye*), the item can't be activated for scrying effects. Magical items that are twice *blind eye*'s spell level or more aren't blocked this way.

BLOOD DUPLICATE

SPELL 2

UNCOMMON CONJURATION

Traditions arcane, occult

Cast ♦♦ somatic, verbal

Range touch; **Targets** 1 non-magical object of 1 Bulk or less

Duration 1 hour

This spell deals you 1 piercing damage as you shape a magical duplicate of the target from your blood; you can't cast this spell if you don't have blood. This spell can't duplicate an item made of precious materials, or materials with a rarity of uncommon or higher. If you're ever more than 5 feet from the duplicate, the spell's duration immediately ends. The Perception DC to recognize the duplicate as false using any sense except touch is equal to 10 + your spellcasting ability modifier + your Crafting proficiency bonus. The item feels wet and obviously fake to the touch. When the spell ends, the item collapses into a puddle of blood that quickly evaporates.

CASTER'S IMPOSITION

SPELL 3

UNCOMMON ABJURATION CURSE

Traditions arcane, divine, occult, primal

Cast ♦♦♦ material, somatic, verbal

Targets 1 creature within 60 feet

Saving Throw Will; **Duration** 1 minute

A magical interference prevents the target from contributing to any form of cooperative spellcasting. On a failed save, the target can't participate in any ritual unless they can cast the ritual alone, and they can't access any spells provided by a coven or similar cooperative ability.

Heightened (4th) Increase the duration to 1 hour.

Heightened (5th) Increase the duration to 1 day.

HAG'S FRUIT

SPELL 6

UNCOMMON TRANSMUTATION

Traditions occult, primal

Cast 1 minute (material, somatic, verbal)

Range touch; **Targets** 1 non-magical fruit

Saving Throw Fortitude; **Duration** 1 day

You imbue a single piece of fruit with a curse that leaves its victims in a magical sleep. The first person to eat the fruit within the spell's duration is subject to the Curse of Slumber (page 78), using your spell DC as the saving throw DC of the curse.

Hag's Fruit

Curse of Slumber (curse, incapacitation, necromancy, sleep) **Level 11; Effect** You fall asleep for 1 round (or permanently on a critical failure) and seem to be dead; a creature must succeed at a DC 30 Medicine check to realize you're alive. Noise doesn't awaken you, but taking damage gives you a new saving throw against the curse.

RITUAL OBSTRUCTION

UNCOMMON ABJURATION CURSE

Traditions arcane, divine, occult, primal

Cast 1 minute (material, somatic, verbal)

Area 60-foot burst

Duration 1 day

You establish a zone of magical feedback that makes it impossible to succeed at rituals of this spell's level or lower in the area. *Ritual obstruction* ignores all cover, including walls and ceilings, to the extent of its area. Anyone attempting to cast a ritual within the area knows, when they begin to cast the ritual, the area is cursed to impede rituals. Any ritual cast in the area can't have a final result better than failure.

WEB OF INFLUENCE

UNCOMMON DETECTION DIVINATION

Cast 10 minutes (material, somatic, verbal)

Range touch; **Targets** 1 creature

You learn the location of the nearest creature to whom the target is connected in a magical manner. A creature sustaining a spell on the target is connected to it for the purposes of this spell, as are any creatures who are targets of a spell effect currently affecting the target (such as all the targets of a *veil* spell), members of a coven, and creatures that are magically bonded to the target (such as with the *heartbond* ritual; *Advanced Player's Guide* 242). The GM is the final arbiter of whether a creature is magically connected to the target. If you already know individuals who are magically connected to the target, you can exclude them from the spell.

This spell doesn't tell you anything about the nearest magically connected creature other than its current distance and direction. If the nearest creature is on a different plane the spell indicates this but doesn't reveal which plane.

Vehicle

Witches flying about the countryside at night in their magical cauldrons are often merely legends, but the existence of this magical vehicle shows at least some of the legends are true.

A *cauldron of flying* can carry only one creature, who stands or crouches in the cauldron and steers it with a ladle, broomstick, or similar implement. The specific

SPELL 5



Cauldron of Flying

implement isn't part of the cauldron and doesn't need to have any particular magic; it simply focuses the pilot's desire to have the cauldron soar into the air and direct it where the pilot wants it to go.

When not in use as a vehicle, the cauldron can be used to boil food and prepare alchemical ingredients, just like any mundane cauldron. To activate the cauldron, however, it must be empty.

CAULDRON OF FLYING

VEHICLE 6

RARE MEDIUM MAGICAL

Price 1,100 gp

Space A large cooking pot 4 feet high and 5 feet in diameter, bulging slightly in the middle and flaring at the top.

Crew 1 pilot

Piloting Check Arcana (DC 24), Occultism (DC 20), or Piloting Lore (DC 22)

AC 21; **Fort** +14

Hardness 9; **HP** 72 (BT 36); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Speed fly 30 feet (magical)

Collision 4d8 (DC 22)

Iron Rim ♦ The cauldron provides its pilot with standard cover, although this cover doesn't typically provide any bonus to Stealth checks, as a flying cauldron is both visible and suspicious.

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UNDEAD TREES

Rumors persist of evil primal spellcasters who summon undead arboreals for malevolent purposes. These summoned creatures might be arboreal snags at low levels or arboreal tar trees (*Pathfinder Adventure Path #177: Burning Tundra* 31) at higher levels.

Arboreal Snag

Arboreals can be victims of undeath like any other living creature, but without bones or flesh, their undead take a different form. When an arboreal shivers to life as undead, it often animates as a snag—a leafless, skeletal dead tree that haunts its forest, attacking any living creature it can catch. An arboreal snag is mindless and difficult to control, but some necromancers use them as forest guardians.

While many arboreals are comfortable remaining still for prolonged periods of time, arboreal snags tend to be restless, meandering in a region they consider their domain. This territory is sometimes evident from battered forest animals or trampled undergrowth that litters the ground, but forest creatures soon learn to avoid the area entirely. It doesn't take long for regions haunted by arboreal snags to grow desolate and unhealthy, and locals often dub such regions as haunted or cursed.

VARIANT ARBOREAL SNAGS

Like skeletons and zombies, snags can demonstrate variant abilities. You can remove the arboreal snag's Putrid Sap to give it one of these other abilities instead.

Blood Roots (necromancy, primal) The snag's roots go deep into corpses buried beneath and around it. It has regeneration 5 (deactivated by positive) as long as it remains in an area where corpses are buried.

Death Blossom ♦♦ (manipulate, necromancy, poison, primal) The snag shakes branches covered in sickly flowers, showering all creatures within reach of its branch Strike with poisonous pollen, dealing 3d6 poison damage (DC 20 basic Fortitude save). If the snag is critically hit, it can use Death Blossom as a reaction.

ARBOREAL SNAG

CREATURE 3

UNCOMMON NE LARGE MINDLESS UNDEAD

Perception +8; darkvision

Skills Athletics +10, Intimidation +7, Stealth +7 (+12 in forests)

Str +4, **Dex** +1, **Con** +3, **Int** -5, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +0

AC 19; **Fort** +12, **Ref** +6, **Will** +8

HP 45, negative healing; **Immunities** death effects, disease, mental, paralyzed, poison, unconscious; **Weaknesses** axe vulnerability, fire 5;

Resistances bludgeoning 5, piercing 5

Axe Vulnerability An arboreal snag takes 5 additional damage from axes.

Putrid Sap (disease, necromancy, primal) If the arboreal snag takes damage from a piercing attack, nauseating green pus spurts from the wound. Creatures within 10 feet of the snag must succeed at a DC 20 Fortitude save or be sickened 1 (sickened 2 on a critical failure). Creatures that attempt this save are then temporarily immune for 1 hour.

Attack of Opportunity ⤴

Speed 20 feet

Melee ♦ branch +12 (reach 10 feet), **Damage** 1d10+6 bludgeoning plus Grab

Melee ♦ root +12, **Damage** 1d8+6 bludgeoning plus Knockdown

Ranged ♦ rock +12 (brutal, range increment 30 feet), **Damage** 1d8+6 bludgeoning

Throw Rock ♦

Azmakian Effigy

Xar-Azmak, the demonic Lord of Rust, was destroyed long ago by Dispatar. Some weapons of his infernal legions remain and among the most infamous are Azmakian effigies: fearsome infernal constructs shaped in his image.

Although made of iron, an Azmakian effigy's exterior is thick with rust that flakes off as the construct moves and fights. Effigies charge into battle on massive hooves, impaling enemies on long, curving horns. The effigy's most well-known attack—and the ability that makes even the bravest warrior tremble—is their terrible rusting breath, which can reduce even legendary magical weapons to useless scrap. Wise adventurers attempt to fight an effigy at a distance, but these constructs are surprisingly swift and able to outrun many foes.

The secret to creating Azmakian effigies is thought to be lost, but infernal libraries might still contain the necessary rituals and list of ingredients. Xar-Azmak once commanded ranks of effigies that numbered in the thousands, but most of those who survived his destruction were trapped in Hell, where they were pursued by Dispatar's forces and eventually destroyed. Those few who offered their services to Xar-Azmak's devoted worshippers on Golarion survived this purge. With the death of Xar-Azmak, much of the lore to repair the effigies was lost. When one of these constructs is found, they're often suffering some form of long-term damage.

AZMAKIAN EFFIGY

CREATURE 7

RARE CE LARGE CONSTRUCT FIEND

Perception +15; darkvision

Languages Common, Infernal

Skills Athletics +17, Intimidation +15, Stealth +13

Str +6, **Dex** +4, **Con** +5, **Int** +0, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +2

AC 25; **Fort** +18, **Ref** +12, **Will** +15

HP 110; **Immunities** death effects, disease, doomed, drained, fatigued, healing, necromancy, nonlethal attacks, paralyzed, poison, sickened, unconscious; **Resistances** fire 10, physical 10 (except adamantine)

Speed 30 feet

Melee ♦ horn +18, **Damage** 2d10+10 piercing

Melee ♦ hoof +18 (agile), **Damage** 2d8+10 bludgeoning

Breath Weapon ♦♦ (divine) The Azmakian effigy exhales rusting gas in a 15-foot cone. The gas deals 2d6 damage to the highest-level metal item carried by every creature in the area, ignoring these items' Hardness (DC 22 basic Fortitude save); unattended metal items in the area take this damage automatically. The Azmakian effigy can't use its Breath Weapon again for 1d4 rounds.

Powerful Charge ♦♦ The Azmakian effigy Strides twice and then makes a horn Strike. If it moved at least 20 feet from its starting position, the Strike's damage is increased to 3d10+10.



THE AZMAKIAN FORMULA

Rumor identifies a tome called the *Azmakian Formula* as the most complete directions to create an Azmakian effigy and bind a demon into it. The rare book also contains a hodgepodge of information about the long-vanished Jistka Imperium's fiend-binders and Xar-Azmak's now-depopulated realm of Vlorus. Picking out the directions from the other tangentially related topics poses a challenge.

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NIGHT HAGS

For some reason, night hags never become creeping crones after they die. Although this is probably due to the protection provided by their *heartstones*, it might also be a side effect of long years of soul-trading in the foulest pits of the evil planes.

Some stain lingers on night hags, whisking away their souls upon death so they're unable to rise as undead. Perhaps night hags can't resist making a bargain with their own souls and, upon their deaths, this payment becomes due.

Creeping Crone

Hags are neither immortal nor unaging; if not slain by an enemy, a hag eventually succumbs to old age. A hag who dies in agony or rage can rise again as a witchfire (*Bestiary* 2 293), while those who die of old age might rise again as an undead creature known as a creeping crone. A creeping crone has lost far more than her life; they can't form or join covens, denying them one of a living hag's most distinguishing abilities. This inability, more than their rotting bodies or hunger for flesh, makes creeping crones exiled among their former kin.

CREEPING CRONE

CREATURE 11

RARE NE MEDIUM UNDEAD

Perception +21; darkvision

Languages Aklo, Common, Jotun, Necril

Skills Crafting +22, Deception +21, Intimidation +21, Occultism +22, Stealth +20

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

Items walking stick

AC 30; **Fort** +21, **Ref** +18, **Will** +24

HP 210, negative healing; **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, unconscious

Stick Support If a creeping crone is deprived of her walking stick, her Speed is reduced to 5 feet (though she can use some other Speed she gains, such as from her *fly* spell) until she recovers her walking stick or fashions another.

Speed 20 feet

Melee ♦ *walking stick* +24 (magical, two-hand d8), **Damage** 2d4+12 bludgeoning plus 2d6 evil

Melee ♦ *claw* +22 (agile, magical), **Damage** 2d8+12 slashing

Occult Prepared Spells DC 30, attack +22; **6th** *ice storm* (*Advanced Players Guide* 220), *lightning bolt*, *magic missile*; **5th** *confusion*, *fear*, *see invisibility*, *tongues*; **4th** *fly*, *nightmare*, *read omens*, *talking corpse*; **3rd** *dream message*, *enthrall*, *paralyze*, *wall of wind*; **2nd** *detect alignment*, *invisibility*, *pass without trace*, *tree shape*; **1st** *bane*, *mindlink*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *unseen servant*; **Cantrips** *dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *message*, *ray of frost*

Change Shape ♦ (concentrate, occult, polymorph, transmutation)

The creeping crone can take on the appearance of any Medium humanoid woman, changing her walking stick to suit her new appearance. This doesn't change her Speed or Strikes, but it might change the damage type her Strikes deal (typically to bludgeoning).

Discipline the Righteous ⤵ **Frequency** once per day; **Trigger** The creeping crone critically hits a good creature with her *walking stick* Strike; **Effect** The target takes 2d8 bleed damage.

Walking Stick A creeping crone can spend 1 day enchanting her walking stick with the powers of a +2 *striking greater staff of necromancy*. A crone replaces any material component of an occult spell she casts by using the walking stick as a focus component instead. The walking stick's magic functions only for the crone who created it; for anyone else, it's a mundane stick. If the crone enchants a new walking stick, the previous stick loses all its powers.



Ghostly Mob

When a horrific tragedy results in mass death, the restless spirits of the numerous dead might arise as a ghostly mob. Like other ghosts, ghostly mobs are often unaware they're dead. The spirits trapped within the mob may try to carry out a semblance of their former lives, even though their memories are fragmentary and their forms are insubstantial. When forced to confront their true state, the spirits lash out in pain and violence.

Troop rules are presented on page 306 and 307 of *Bestiary 3*.

GHOSTLY MOB

CREATURE 8

UNCOMMON CE GARGANTUAN GHOST INCORPOREAL TROOP UNDEAD

Perception +16; darkvision

Languages Common, Necril

Skills Acrobatics +16, Local Lore +14, Stealth +16

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

Site Bound A ghostly mob can stray only a moderate distance from where its members were killed or the place it haunts. A typical limit is 240 feet.

AC 25; **Fort** +15, **Ref** +14, **Will** +18

HP 105 (16 squares), negative healing, rejuvenation; **Thresholds** 70 (12 squares), 35 (8 squares); **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, precision, sleep; **Weaknesses** area damage 15, splash damage 10; **Resistances** all damage 10 (except force, *ghost touch*, or positive; double resistance vs. non-magical)

Rejuvenation (divine, necromancy) When a ghostly mob is destroyed, it re-forms after 2d4 days, fully healed. A ghostly mob can be permanently destroyed only if someone determines the reason for its existence and sets right whatever prevents the troop from resting.

Troop Defenses

Speed fly 25 feet, troop movement

Form Up ◆

Clutching Hands ◆ to ◆◆◆ (divine, necromancy) **Frequency** once per round; **Effect** The troop attacks enemies within 5 feet (DC 25 basic Reflex save), with damage depending on the number of actions.

◆ 1d6+3 negative damage

◆◆ 3d6+6 negative damage

◆◆◆ 4d6+9 negative damage

Frightful Chorus ◆◆ (auditory, divine, emotion, enchantment, fear, mental) The ghostly mob howls in anguish, forcing each living creature in a 30-foot emanation to attempt a DC 25 Will save or become frightened 2 (frightened 3 on a critical failure). Regardless of the save result, the creature is then temporarily immune to the troop's Frightful Chorus for 1 minute.

Troop Movement Whenever the ghostly mob Strides, it first Forms Up as a free action to condense into a 20-foot-by-20-foot area (minus any missing squares), and then moves. This works just like a Gargantuan creature moving; for instance, if any of the ghostly mob's squares enter difficult terrain, the extra movement cost applies to the whole group.



ECHOES OF TRAGEDY

The specific tragedy that created a ghostly mob might alter its abilities. For example, a ghostly mob spawned from a fire might have Burning Grasp rather than Clutching Hands, which deals fire damage instead of negative damage. A ghostly mob created in an earthquake might have Earthshaking Chorus rather than Frightful Chorus, which causes living victims to be slowed rather than frightened.

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RUST HAG GUNS

Rust hags use guns presented in *Pathfinder Guns & Gears*. The concussive and kickback weapon traits appear on page 150 of that book. If you don't want to use firearms in your campaign, then a rust hag's guns are so corroded they're valueless.

Hag

Hags are surprisingly diverse, both in abilities and in their terrain.

RUST HAG

Rust hags have a knack for technology. They make their homes in hollowed-out factories, abandoned tenements, and other sites of urban decay.

RUST HAG

CREATURE 8

UNCOMMON CE MEDIUM HAG HUMANOID

Perception +16; darkvision

Languages Aklo, Common, Jotun, Terran

Skills Athletics +18, Crafting +16, Intimidation +16, Occultism +16, Survival +16

Str +6, **Dex** +5, **Con** +4, **Int** +3, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +4

Items arquebus (*Guns & Gears* 152, 10 rounds), flintlock pistol (*Guns & Gears* 153, 20 rounds)

Coven A rust hag adds *curse of lost time* (*Advanced Player's Guide* 217), *rusting grasp* (*Advanced Player's Guide* 223), and *summon construct* to her coven's spells.

AC 26; **Fort** +16, **Ref** +15, **Will** +18; +1 status to all saves vs. magic

HP 135; **Weaknesses** cold iron 10

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ claw +20 (agile, magical), **Damage** 2d6+10 slashing plus rusting touch

Ranged ♦ *ghost touch arquebus* +20 (concussive, fatal d12, kickback, magical, range increment 150 feet, reload 1), **Damage** 2d8+11 piercing plus hagshot

Ranged ♦ *ghost touch flintlock pistol* +20 (concussive, fatal d8, magical, range increment 40 feet, reload 1), **Damage** 2d4+11 piercing plus hagshot

Change Shape ♦ (concentrate, occult, polymorph, transmutation) The rust hag can take on the appearance of any Medium female humanoid. This doesn't change her Speed or her Strikes, but might change the damage type her Strikes deal (typically to bludgeoning).

Hagshot Any firearm wielded by a rust hag gains the benefits of +1 *striking* and *ghost touch* runes, and it functions properly no matter how rusty it gets. In addition, when a rust hag critically hits a target with a firearm, the target must succeed at a DC 26 Fortitude save or be stunned 1.

Rusting Touch A rust hag's touch causes metal to rapidly rust and corrode. If the hag succeeds at a Strike with her claw, she deals 2d6 damage (doubled on a critical hit) to a metal item the target is wearing or holding, ignoring its Hardness. If the hag hits an unattended metal item, the item takes this damage automatically. If a creature uses the Shield Block reaction with a metal shield against the hag's claw attack, the shield is automatically broken, but no other item is rusted on that attack. Objects made of skymetal, such as adamantine and orichalcum, are immune to rusting touch.

GRAVE HAG

Rot-skinned grave hags usually lair in cemeteries, mausoleums, and other burial sites; unlike most hags, they can't alter their appearance into a comely shape, so they hide from most observers. Grave hags consider such a predatory life hiding out in graveyards to be pitiful and squalid—they prefer to dwell in lands where necromancy is common and undeath isn't unusual. These grave hags become adept at necromantic magic and love posing as scholars. Schemers and plotters, they surround themselves with minions whom they send on missions to collect corpses for ghastly rituals.

GRAVE HAG

CREATURE 9

UNCOMMON CE MEDIUM HAG HUMANOID

Perception +18; darkvision

Languages Aklo, Common, Jotun, Necril

Skills Arcana +19, Athletics +19, Crafting +17, Deception +17, Medicine +18, Occultism +19, Society +17, Stealth +18

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

Coven A grave hag adds *harm*, *mimic undead* (*Secrets of Magic* 115), and the *call spirit* ritual (*Core Rulebook* 410) to her coven's spells.

AC 28; **Fort** +19, **Ref** +16, **Will** +18; +1 status to all saves vs. magic

HP 155; **Immunities** negative; **Weaknesses** cold iron 10

Sacrifice Ally ➤ **Trigger** The grave hag is adjacent to an ally when the hag is targeted by an attack or an effect that requires a Reflex saving throw; **Effect** The triggering effect is redirected to target the ally.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ claw +21 (agile, magical), **Damage** 2d8+10 slashing plus Grab

Ranged ♦ grave ray +18 (necromancy, occult, range 60 feet), **Damage** 2d12+10 negative

Occult Innate Spells DC 29, attack +19; **5th** *Abyssal plague*, *animate dead* (*Advanced Player's Guide* 214), *cloudkill*; **3rd** *bind undead* (×3), *vampiric touch*; **2nd** *death knell* (at will)

Curse of the Grave ♦♦♦ (curse, necromancy, occult) The grave hag names a single creature within 30 feet; that creature must succeed at a DC 28 Will save or be afflicted with a grave curse equal to the hag's level (*Gamemastery Guide* 117). The curse lasts until the hag chooses to end it or is slain, rather than by returning items. Regardless of the save result, the target is then temporarily immune to the hag's grave curse for 24 hours.

Grave's Grip Creatures grappled or restrained by the grave hag take a -1 circumstance penalty to saving throws against the grave hag's spells and abilities.

Grave Impressions ♦♦ (incapacitation, necromancy, occult) The hag targets a living creature within 30 feet and overwhelms it with feelings of entombment. The target attempts a DC 28 Fortitude save and is then temporarily immune to the hag's Grave Impressions for 24 hours.

Critical Success The target is unaffected.

Success The target is paralyzed for 1 round.

Failure The target is unconscious.

Critical Failure The target is unconscious and can't awaken for 1 hour.

Undead Mien A grave hag appears as an undead creature to magical effects.



GRAVE HAG ARROGANCE

Grave hags often bear a sense of smug superiority and are quick to enumerate their advantages over other types of hags. They dismiss anything other hags can do but which they can't (such as changing shape) as valueless trickery. Night hags provide a notable exception to this self-importance; many grave hags try to ingratiate themselves with night hags and emulate them when they can.



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THE MOB'S SPOILS

Virulak villagers tear apart those who fall prey to their ruse of an ordinary village at work and consume the remains. They don't generally have much use for their victim's valuables and often stash them somewhere, such as in a root cellar or hayloft. A stealthy and canny infiltrator might discover a pile of blood-soaked valuables and escape without alerting the villagers.

Virulak

When a creature dies from poison, it sometimes rises as a virulak: an undead being infused with lethal venom. Most virulaks are solitary creatures with memories of an excruciating death. Occasionally, a mass poisoning produces numerous simultaneous fatalities, increasing the chance of many virulaks arising at once and working together in a dangerous mob. Entire villages might rise as virulaks when forced to subsist on food so spoiled it has become toxic or from an intentional scheme to poison the settlement.

Virulaks retain the intelligence and memory they had in life, but their agonizing death by poison transforms them into bitter mockeries of their former selves. Poison seeps from their fingertips and solidifies into hard claws. Virulaks are known for a cynical and ironic sense of humor. They delight in poisoning the good spirits and reputations of those around them, dealing psychological blows that mirror the venom in their bodies.

VIRULAK ABILITIES

All virulaks carry lethal poison in their bodies, described by their undead virulence ability. Virulaks usually have one of the following additional abilities (each stat block presented here already has one of these abilities included). You can give a virulak multiple abilities, but you should increase the virulak's level if you do.

Envenomed Weapons A virulak's poison is supernaturally channeled through their weapons. Any target hit by a melee weapon wielded by the virulak is exposed to the virulak's undead virulence.

Fetid Breath ♦♦ (divine, evocation, poison) The virulak exhales a deadly poisonous cloud in a 15-foot cone. The cloud deals 1d6 poison damage plus 1d6 poison damage for each level of the virulak to all creatures in the area, which must attempt a basic Fortitude save (using a high DC for their level, *Gamemastery Guide* 66). The virulak can't use Fetid Breath again for 1d4 rounds.

Intensify Toxin ♦♦ (concentrate, divine, poison, transmutation) The virulak targets a creature within 30 feet that's currently subject to a poison affliction. That affliction becomes virulent until it's cured.

Lingering Ichor ♫ (poison) **Trigger** The virulak takes piercing or slashing damage from a melee Strike; **Effect** The virulak squirts a jet of poisonous ichor from the wound. The creature making the triggering Strike takes persistent poison damage equal to the virulak's level.

Venomous Gaze ♦♦ (concentrate, divine, necromancy, poison, visual) The virulak locks its gaze on a single creature within 30 feet. The target is exposed to the virulak's undead virulence.

VIRULAK VILLAGER

A village of commoners raised to undeath by a mass poisoning might continue to go about the settled routines of life, posing an eerie scene for living creatures who enter their village. Virulak villagers prefer to attack with an advantage of numbers, but even a lone villager can pose a problem for unaware or inexperienced travelers.



VIRULAK VILLAGER

CREATURE 3

UNCOMMON NE MEDIUM UNDEAD

Perception +8; darkvision

Languages Common, Necril

Skills Athletics +9, Crafting +7, Intimidation +8, Stealth +10

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

AC 19; **Fort** +10, **Ref** +10, **Will** +8

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

Mob Mentality As long as the virulak villager and their allies aren't outnumbered by enemies, the virulak villager is immune to fear.

Lingering Ichor ➤ 3 persistent poison damage (page 86).

Speed 25 feet

Melee ➤ claw +12 (agile), **Damage** 1d8+4 slashing plus Grab and undead virulence

Undead Virulence (poison, virulent) **Saving Throw** DC 19 Fortitude; **Maximum Duration** 4 rounds; **Stage 1** 1d10 poison damage (1 round); **Stage 2** 1d12 poison damage (1 round); **Stage 3** 2d10 poison damage (1 round)

VIRULAK NECROMANCER

Virulak necromancers are often intrigued by the interplay between poison and undeath, testing toxins on their dead flesh or, more commonly, on hapless living victims. This virulak necromancer was once a sorcerer but now considers their bloodline irrelevant.

VIRULAK NECROMANCER

CREATURE 7

RARE NE MEDIUM UNDEAD

Perception +13; darkvision

Languages Common, Necril

Skills Arcana +15, Crafting +15, Diplomacy +17, Intimidation +17, Religion +13

Str +4, **Dex** +0, **Con** +4, **Int** +2, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +6

AC 24; **Fort** +15, **Ref** +12, **Will** +18

HP 115, negative healing; **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, unconscious

Speed 25 feet

Melee ➤ claw +18 (agile), **Damage** 2d8+6 slashing plus undead virulence

Arcane Spontaneous Spells DC 25, attack +17; **4th** (3 slots) *enervation* (*Advanced Player's Guide* 218), *vampiric maiden* (*Advanced Player's Guide* 227); **3rd** (4 slots) *bind undead*, *blindness*, *vampiric touch*; **2nd** (4 slots) *false life*, *gentle repose*, *spectral hand*; **1st** (4 slots) *grim tendrils*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *true strike*; **Cantrips** (4th) *chill touch*, *electric arc*, *mage hand*, *read aura*, *shield*

Uncanny Necromancy The virulak necromancer can freely heighten *false life*, *grim tendrils*, and *vampiric touch* to any level they can cast without knowing them at higher levels.

Undead Virulence (poison, virulent) **Saving Throw** DC 25 Fortitude; **Maximum Duration** 6 rounds; **Stage 1** 2d8 poison damage (1 round); **Stage 2** 3d8 poison damage (1 round); **Stage 3** 4d8 poison damage (1 round)

Venomous Gaze ➤➤ (concentrate, divine, necromancy, poison, visual) (page 86)



NECROPOISONS

Many virulak necromancers seek to find or recreate the fabled "necropoisons," or toxins that work on undead despite their immunity to poison. Rumored to be a magical combination of positive energy and venom from magical creatures, necropoisons have eluded even the most talented virulaks—so far.

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Iron Taviah

Shadow-Weaving Annis Hag

Iron Taviah doesn't remember where her story begins. Old even for an annis hag, who can live exceptionally long lives, she wandered south of the Inner Sea for over a century. Ruthazek, the Gorilla King, occasionally bartered for her services, trading her prisoners and rare alchemical ingredients. For decades, she kept a floating hut built on the corpse of a megalodon in the Sodden Lands. Eventually members of the Magaambya had enough of her villainy and drove Taviah from the Mwangi Expanse. Wounded, she fled east through the Mana Wastes. Repelled by the golem guardians of Nex, she turned south to Geb.

In a land where the undead rule and corpses openly walk the streets, an annis hag attracted relatively little attention. Dragging her wounded leg—the scars left by the Magaambyans would never fully heal—Taviah took shelter in Axan Wood and built a cottage. The site of her new home was no accident; she constructed it where she saw the boundary with the Shadow Plane was especially thin. She swiftly dominated the local wildlife and those who dared to share this corner of the gloomy forest with her. When Nathnelma went looking for hags to form a coven called the Graveclaw, Iron Taviah's reputation spoke for itself. Taviah accepted Nathnelma's offer on the condition that their coven should remain scattered. Taviah had grown comfortable in the Axan Wood and didn't trust a new home Nathnelma or her other "sisters" might provide her.

Taviah's life took a tragic turn when she first saw Neboah, a handsome human necromancer, passing time in the woods with his beloved, a fey woman named Drusilla. At once, Taviah thought of nothing but capturing him. When Drusilla left to bathe nearby, Taviah seized Neboah and retreated to her cottage, protected by occult magic and supernatural allies. Neboah, held prisoner, desperately seduced Taviah to lower her guard and the lonely hag fell for his charm. After they conceived twins, Neboah took his chance to escape, but Taviah caught him and killed him in a rage.

Taviah's many other children had been sent abroad, seeded among innocent families as changelings, in the way of hags. But her new children were Taviah's only link to the man she loved, in her cruel and twisted way. She named the daughter Kepgeda and raised her,

teaching her occult rituals and necromancy. Taviah's son Nebumi was too much like his father for the hag to bear; she neglected the boy, who died of loneliness. When Kepgeda was old enough to earn her own reputation, Taviah allowed her to go, but took one of her daughter's fingers as insurance and punishment. Taviah has cried bitter tears ever since, for though she's surrounded by sycophants and minions, the hag is again alone.

Meanwhile, Chancellor Kemnebi hatched his scheme to dominate the entire region with undead armies loyal only to him. To execute this plan, he needs a necromantic toxin that will turn Geb's neighbors into a source of undead soldiers. He turned to the Graveclaw, and now Iron Taviah and her sisters toil in their kitchens to make the Blood Lord's poison.

Campaign Role

Iron Taviah isn't the source of all the problems plaguing the player characters in the Blood Lords Adventure Path—that's Kemnebi—but she's a recurring character, and many plot threads in the first half of the Adventure Path ultimately lead back to her.

First, she's Kepgeda's mother. When the characters investigated Kepgeda in *Pathfinder Adventure Path #181: Zombie Feast*, they learned of her connection to the Graveclaw. The characters learn more about Iron Taviah and the coven from the vengeful Drusilla, and the first member of the coven they face in battle is Taviah herself. But Iron Taviah is a creature of many secrets. After her defeat her body is secreted away on the Shadow Plane, but the characters are destined to see Taviah again, in a fashion, during the events of *Pathfinder Adventure Path #183: Field of Maidens*.

COVEN SPELLS

When the characters meet Iron Taviah in Chapter 1, the Graveclaw is at the height of its power. As a scattered coven (page 72), the Graveclaw grants Taviah the ability to cast the following spells as 3rd-level occult spells, once per day each, without requiring help from her fellow coven members: *acid arrow*, *curse of lost time* (*Advanced Player's Guide* 217), *earthbind*, *harm*, *mimic undead* (*Secrets of Magic* 115), *summon construct*, and *water walk*.

IRON TAVIAH

CREATURE 6

UNIQUE NE LARGE HAG HUMANOID

Female annis hag ritualist (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 201)

Perception +14; darkvision

Languages Aklo, Common, Jotun, Mwangi, Necril

Skills Arcana +11, Athletics +14 (+16 to Grapple), Crafting +13, Deception +11, Intimidation +11, Occultism +14, Religion +11, Stealth +14

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

Items leather bag containing finger bones

Coven Iron Taviah adds *earthbind*, *passwall*, and *spellwrack* to her coven's spells.

AC 24; **Fort** +16, **Ref** +11, **Will** +14; +1 status to all saves vs. magic

HP 85; **Resistances** physical 5 (except bludgeoning);

Weaknesses Magaambya scar

Magaambya Scar Taviah has an old injury that sometimes causes her pain. A physical attack on Taviah that scores a critical hit exacerbates the injury in her wounded leg; in addition to the other effects of the critical hit, Taviah is stunned 1.

Speed 20 feet

Melee ♦ iron claws +16 (agile, cold iron, magical, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 2d8+6 slashing plus Grab

Occult Innate Spells DC 21, attack +13; **3rd** *false life*, *haste*

Rituals DC 21; *create undead* (zombie; *Core Rulebook* 411), *elemental sentinel* (*Secrets of Magic* 150), *heartbond* (*Advanced Player's Guide* 242), *inveigle* (*Core Rulebook* 413), *mystic carriage* (*Secrets of Magic* 152), *unseen custodians* (*Advanced Player's Guide* 245)

Bonds of Iron ♦♦ (attack, conjuration, occult)

Frequency once per day; **Effect** Iron Taviah can cause a cage built of cold iron fingernails to spring from nothingness around a target at a range of up to 30 feet, attempting an Athletics check to Grapple against the target's Fortitude DC; if the target has a weakness to cold iron, Taviah gains a +2 circumstance bonus to this check. Unlike a normal Grapple, Taviah doesn't need to be within reach and can move as she pleases, and a successful attempt lasts until the creature Escapes (DC 24), causing the cage to crumble into rust. Any creature can attempt to destroy the cage by attacking it; the cage has an AC of 19, Hardness 10, and 40 Hit Points.

Change Shape ♦ (concentrate, occult, polymorph, transmutation) Iron Taviah can take on the appearance of any Medium female humanoid. This doesn't change her Speed, or her attack and damage bonuses with her Strikes, but might change the damage type her Strikes deal (typically to bludgeoning).

Rend ♦ claw

Ritual Specialist Iron Taviah has a +2 circumstance bonus to the primary checks to perform a ritual. In addition, she can reduce the number of secondary casters for a ritual by 1. When she does, she must fulfill any requirements for the secondary caster, and she attempts the secondary check normally performed by that secondary caster. She can't replace a secondary caster who is the target of the spell (as in the *atone* ritual).

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Sahni Bride-of-the-Sea

Sea Hag Dealmaker

Sahni grew up in the Iblydos archipelago of far-off Casmaron. She considered herself a perfectly normal human girl in a perfectly normal human family, but she was, in fact, a changeling. She married a humble but handsome carpenter. On the morning after her wedding night, Sahni awoke to her husband's screams—she had taken on her true appearance as a hideous hag. Her husband tried to flee, but she imprisoned him; by the time he died a few days later at Sahni's hands, she felt she had somehow fulfilled her social obligations and fled Iblydos forever. Without any firm destination in mind, she took to the sea.

In her long and aimless journey west, Sahni made use of many sailing vessels, one after the other. She sometimes ruled them in terror and sometimes crept below decks to pick off and devour the crew one at a time. She became enamored of the sea—not for its beauty or its timelessness, but for its cruel and implacable power. How many sailors prayed to gods of the sea for mercy and safe travels, she wondered, only for the uncaring sea to drag them down to watery death? To the sea, people were entirely inconsequential, even the ones who dedicated themselves to mastering the tides or plumbing the ocean's depths. The sea's awesome resilience and its ability to care nothing—even for those who loved it—seduced Sahni. In a wedding ritual of her own making, she wed herself to the sea and its most ancient master: Dagon.

Geb wasn't the first realm of the Inner Sea where Sahni tried to live, but it proved a perfect home for her. In Avistan, hags like Sahni usually hid from sight, and she might have been forced to lair in a wretched coastal ruin or an isolated hovel. Although Sahni hadn't come from a wealthy or influential family, she felt in her heart she deserved better than to live in isolated squalor.

In Geb, Sahni could live a relatively normal life without fear. Thanks to Dagon's patronage, her magical powers increased, and she secured many bargains with hapless inhabitants of the town of Sallowshore. She attained a level of power she had never experienced or even dared to imagine. In dedication to Dagon, she built a shrine in a flooded temple of Urgathoa. She knows Dagon neither knows nor cares about her dedication to him; that's what she loves about him.

Campaign Role

Sahni is the second member of the Graveclaw coven the characters face. Once the player characters reach Sallowshore, they quickly learn Sahni is an active member of the community, well-known as the town's lawyer. This label has an unusual meaning in Sallowshore, however, as there are no courts, no judges, and no real legal system or authorities. Instead, townsfolk who seek justice for some misdeed against them (or even a perceived slight) engage Sahni as a sort of vigilante. The sea hag strikes a bargain with her client, securing them the vengeance they crave in return for something dear to them. Sahni doesn't need the prices she collects for her services; she collects them because she enjoys inflicting suffering and believes her skills have value.

Sahni is producing tremor paste in Sallowshore. This is one of the vital ingredients in Kemnebi's necrotic toxin that not only kills its victims but primes them for revivification as undead. She knows Iron Tavia is enhancing brain grit using fey magic, Nathnelma is trying to acquire a mysterious ingredient called shadow ash, and Decrosia is building an assembly line in Pagked where all the toxin's ingredients can be combined at industrial scale. Like most hags, Sahni harbors a deep, jealous hatred for her coven-mates. She avoids talking to them whenever possible, so she doesn't know how successful her "sisters" have been or what obstacles they might have encountered in the task. If Sahni discovers the player characters killed Iron Tavia, she swears murderous vengeance—not because she cared for Tavia but because the loss of one member makes the entire coven weaker.

As the player characters investigate the town, they meet some of Sahni's former clients, learn the prices she's collected from them, and discover a few of her many enemies. Eventually, they must confront her in her lair, a temple to Urgathoa that Sahni rededicated to her aquatic patron, Dagon. To stop the creation of tremor paste, the player characters must defeat Sahni in battle. If they do so, they simultaneously free all her former clients from the price they paid, making the player characters heroes of Sallowshore, regardless of their alignment, origin, or personal missions.

COVEN SPELLS

When the player characters battle Sahni in Chapter 2, the Graveclaw has been weakened by the loss of Iron Taviah, but it's not yet broken. As a scattered coven (page 72), the Graveclaw grants Sahni the ability to cast the following spells as 3rd-level occult spells, once per day each, without requiring help from her fellow coven members: *acid arrow*, *curse of lost time* (*Advanced Player's Guide* 217), *earthbind*, *harm*, *mimic undead* (*Secrets of Magic* 115), *summon construct*, and *water walk*. If Sahni is the third hag they confront, the coven is broken and she lacks these coven spells.

SAHNI BRIDE-OF-THE-SEA

CREATURE 7

UNIQUE NE MEDIUM AMPHIBIOUS HAG HUMANOID

Female variant sea hag lawyer (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 200)

Perception +15; darkvision

Languages Aklo, Common, Iblydan, Necril

Skills Acrobatics +14, Diplomacy +16, Legal Lore +19, Occultism +14, Stealth +16

Str +3, **Dex** +4, **Con** +4, **Int** +6, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +6

Items *stony hag eye* (page 76)

Coven Sahni adds *acid arrow*, *mariner's curse*, and *water walk* to her coven's spells.

AC 24; **Fort** +13, **Ref** +14, **Will** +18; +1 status to saves vs. magic

HP 120; **Weaknesses** cold iron 10

Speed 25 feet, swim 35 feet

Melee ♦ claw +16 (agile, magical), **Damage** 2d10+4 slashing

Divine Spontaneous Spells DC 25, attack +17; **4th** (2 slots) *bestial curse* (*Advanced Player's Guide* 215), *vampiric maiden* (*Advanced Player's Guide* 227); **3rd** (3 slots) *animal vision*, *crashing wave* (*Advanced Player's Guide* 217), *fear*; **2nd** (3 slots) *animal messenger*, *mending*, *see invisibility*; **1st** (3 slots) *alarm*, *charm*, *command*; **Cantrips** (4th) *divine lance*, *mage hand*, *message*, *prestidigitation*, *sigil*

Bride's Bargain (necromancy, occult) Sahni can make a bargain with a willing creature of sound mind. The creature gives away a special quality—such as its courage, beauty, or voice—or sacrifices a loved one in exchange for a boon or a promise from Sahni. As long as Sahni keeps her end of the bargain, the only way to restore a lost quality is to defeat Sahni or make another bargain for its return. Loved ones sacrificed for Sahni's bargain can't be restored except with *wish*, *miracle*, or similarly powerful magic.

Curse of Futility ♦♦ (curse, emotion, enchantment, fear, mental, occult) Sahni gazes upon a creature, affecting it with an overwhelming sense that every action it takes is futile; that humiliating failure is their only

possible future. The target attempts a DC 25 Will save; the target doesn't need to be able to see Sahni.

Critical Success The target is unaffected and temporarily immune to Sahni's Curse of Futility for 24 hours.

Success The target is stupefied 1 for 1 round and then temporarily immune for 1 hour.

Failure The target is stupefied 2 for 1 minute.

Critical Failure The target is stupefied 2 for 1 hour and is doomed 1 as long as it is stupefied.



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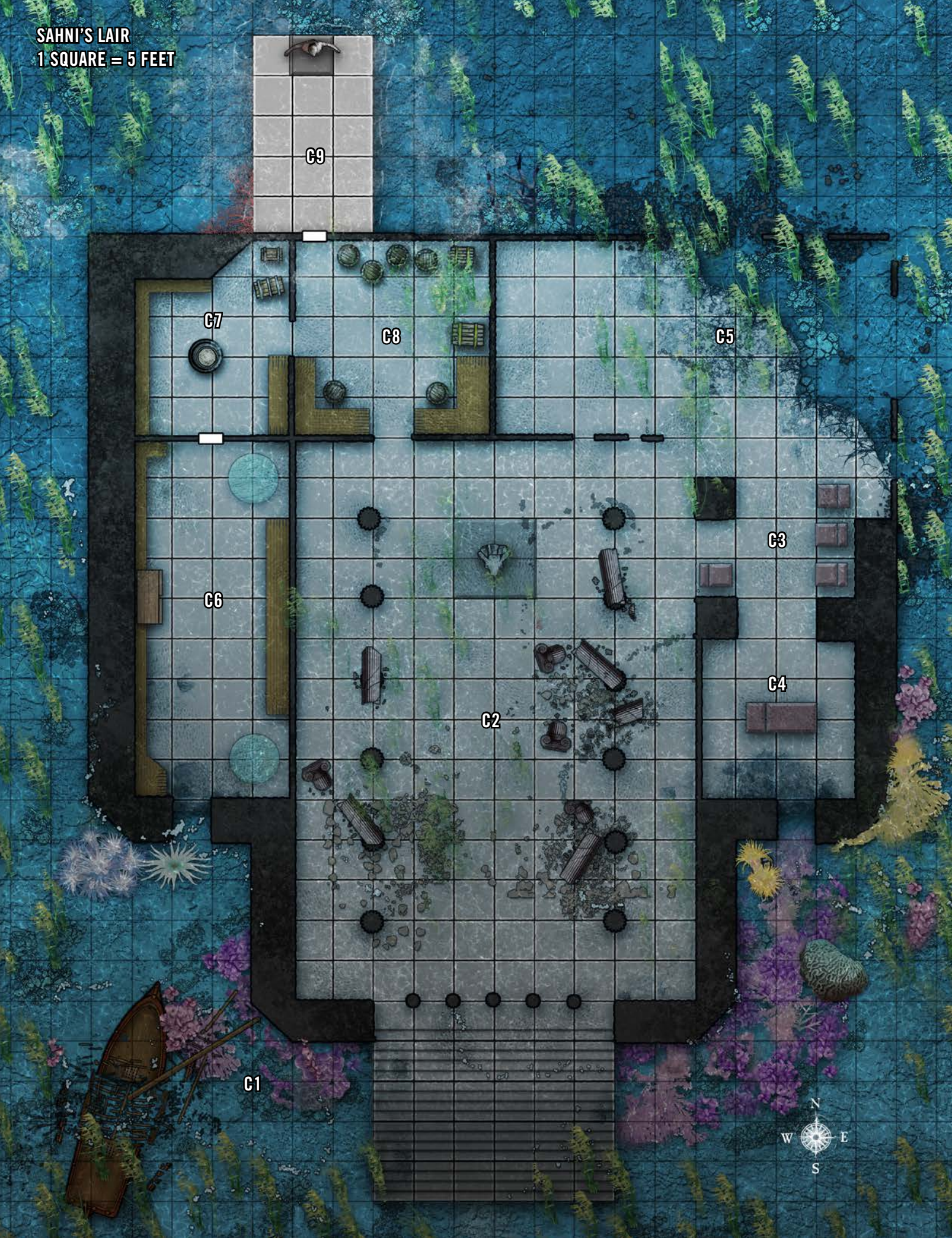


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