

SECOND EDITION

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Blood Lords

ADVENTURE PATH

A TASTE OF ASHES

By Brian Duckwitz



Yled

650 FEET



AUTHOR

Brian Duckwitz

ADDITIONAL WRITING

John Compton

DEVELOPERS

Adam Daigle and Ron Lundeen

DESIGN LEAD

Logan Bonner

EDITING LEAD

K. Tessa Newton

EDITORS

Patrick Hurley, Avi Kool, K. Tessa Newton, Simone D. Sallé, and Solomon St. John

COVER ARTIST

Natasha Nanook

INTERIOR ARTISTS

Wilmar Ballespi Escarp, Tuan Duong Chu, Rael Dionisio, Sammy Khalid, Dariusz Kieliszek, Rob Lazzaretti, Ian Perks, and Riley Spalding

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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DEDICATION

For Dennis, a creative player, brilliant gamemaster, and my closest friend. Your time was too short, but you live on in the hearts of many and in these pages.



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Chapter 1: City of Soldiers4

The huge quantities of *shadow ash* that Chancellor Kemnebi needs for his poison plot come from the militant metropolis of Yled. The characters venture there to find this source, as well as proof that Kemnebi is behind it. They scout for rumors and follow clues in Geb's largest city.

Chapter 2: In the Playhouse28

The characters follow up with a smuggler-turned-diva, Ghiasi the Unraveler, by visiting her playhouse, Twined Stories. The characters join a performance and pursue the fleeing diva into her shadowy hideout. There, they learn about her secret trades with the tomb giants beneath the city.

Chapter 3: The Bound One44

The characters follow up Ghiasi's leads and reach the Agorron, the subterranean warrens where mighty undead creatures are drained to power Yled's defenses. A tomb giant lich, at Chancellor Kemnebi's direction, is diverting the energy to manufacture *shadow ash*. In the Agorron, the characters gain the proof they're seeking that Kemnebi is the traitor to Geb.

YLED'S TONE

This adventure takes place almost entirely with Yled, Geb's largest city. Yled is fully described in *Pathfinder Lost Omens Impossible Lands* on pages 158 to 175. As a GM, it can get easy to lose track of the overall tone and theme in a city as large as Yled. These three key points should show up throughout interactions with citizens to keep a consistent tone for the city.

Impending War: Most gossip in the city involves how the rival nation of Nex is gearing up for war. Yled has always been on a war-time footing, but it feels much more pressing since Geb created the Warmaster Council to prepare to face Nexian armies. People in Yled have faith in their kingdom's strength, but that doesn't mean they have no fear of losing property, friends, or lives in war.

Defenses are Failing: Rumors persist that Yled's imposing Bonewall isn't properly reacting to commands. Its negative energy cannons lack the power to fire, and the inconsistent supply of negative energy that normally wells up from the streets all hint at larger problems. Coupled with the concerns over war, the citizens of Yled feel shaken and uncertain.

Exports Questioned: Many people in Yled have heard about troubles with Geb's food exports. This is concerning because it's the nation's economic lifeblood, and war is expensive. Almost no one knows that it involves poisoned food, and none know about the *shadow ash* component except for the villains involved in that plot.

ADVANCEMENT TRACK

"A Taste of Ashes" is designed for four characters.

- 15** The characters begin this adventure at 15th level.
- 16** The characters should reach 16th level after meeting Pesabnet at the Pallid Pinnacle.
- 17** The characters should reach 17th level before venturing into the Agorron.

The characters should reach 18th level by the time they complete the adventure.



Chapter 1: City of Soldiers

When Chancellor Kemnebi designed his plot to kill and reanimate the people in the nations where Geb sells its food, he ran into a rather vexing problem. The combination of braingrit and tremor paste was a sly solution to murder large numbers of people at once, but they didn't enable mass reanimation. The poison alone would only drive nations to war against Geb; without the legions of new undead at Kemnebi's command, the plan had little upside. The ingredient that would empower mass reanimation when mixed with the poison, *shadow ash*, is rare and available only in small, insufficient quantities. Fortunately for Kemnebi, one of his many servants brought him

the answer. The tomb giant lich Kelganth, whom Kemnebi had years ago set up to study the nature of darvakkas, discovered that *shadow ash* could be refined from the ashes created by the death and subsequent rebirth of the phoenix-like Bound One beneath Yled. Here, at last, was the final piece of the puzzle Kemnebi had been searching for.

After securing exclusive access to the darvakkas bound below Yled from their Mortuarium-backed caretakers, Kemnebi turned his considerable resources toward the production of the *shadow ash* that was critical to his plans. Yet other problems remained. If his plan were to work, he needed to keep his efforts a

secret, and with the extremely tight security in Yled—and the rising influence of the overbearing Warmaster Council ramping up military preparations—smuggling materials into and out of the city would require finesse. He turned to a former smuggler in Yled: a shae named Ghiasi the Unraveler.

Ghiasi was a prolific smuggler in her early career, moving illicit goods via the Shadow Plane. After accumulating considerable wealth, she traded this success into social standing and power by reviving the long-stagnant Twined Stories playhouse and infusing the city with a much-needed burst of high art. Ghiasi relished this popularity and soon left the smuggling operation in the capable, if unimaginative, hands of her beloved brother, Ghiono. Kemnebi, however, only wanted the best person for the job and could tell after a short meeting with Ghiono that he was not that person. Instead, he approached Ghiasi about taking on the task. She rebuffed his offers of an extremely profitable relationship and seemed unfazed by his veiled threats. In response, Kemnebi arrested Ghiono and had him imprisoned. When he then insisted that Ghiasi help him, the shae grudgingly agreed.

With production of the *shadow ash* well underway beneath Yled under the watchful gaze of Kelganth and the distribution taken care of, Kemnebi returned to Mechitar to execute the final stages of his plan. His last instruction to Kelganth before he departed was to increase the production of *shadow ash* by as much as the lich could manage. To meet this demand, Kelganth needed supplies of scrolls and other items that could release bursts of positive energy to reduce the Bound One to ash. The fact that such items are illegal in Geb didn't faze the lich at all. Kelganth demanded that Ghiasi provide the illicit items he needed. Although she was unhappy about the arrangement, she wished to keep her brother safe and so began reaching out to her smuggling contacts who still lived in the city. She finally had some luck with an unlikely source: Pesabnet Zoheri, a ghost and the high priest of Urgathoa at the Pallid Pinnacle in Yled. Pesabnet had his own research interests in divine magic and reanimation. Ghiasi found herself pulled in yet another direction as she began seeking out the *aeon stones* the priest demanded as his price. Left with little choice, Ghiasi has spent weeks caught in a trap she desperately wants to escape. The shae has kept a close eye on events in the city and has been listening for rumors of anyone who might help her escape her situation.

Yled

Nowhere in Geb are the preparations for war with Nex more obvious than in Yled. The possibility of a renewed war has always lingered on Geb's northern border, but now rumors say that Nex is preparing troops and magical siege engines once again. These rumors are, for now, vague. Many in Yled fear that the archmage Nex has returned from his retreat to lead the war in person. In truth, Chancellor Kemnebi is indirectly to blame for this situation. Nex relies on Gebbite crops more than most but remains suspicious of its rival. When rumors of poisoned crops—or worse, poisoned crops laced with some necromantic substance—leak, Nex is the first to respond by marshalling their forces in the event of Gebbite treachery. This has, in turn, prompted the renewed vigilance in Yled. If Kemnebi's plot isn't stopped, all-out war will rage between Nex and Geb.

From the imposing Bonewall that circles the city, its bleached bones ready to spring to action in its defense, to the massive training fields outside where fresh troops drill, the specter of war looms over Yled. At the behest

CHAPTER 1 SYNOPSIS

This chapter begins as the characters head to Yled to find out more about the *shadow ash* and Chancellor Kemnebi's role behind it. Their old ally Seldeg Bhedlis suggests they check out a the high priest of Urgathoa, Pesabnet Zoheri, in the Pallid Pinnacle. Following up on rumors about Pesabnet leads the characters to a shattered faction of vampires and sets them against the Warmaster Council who currently controls Yled. They meet the diva Ghiasi the Unraveler early on. After they overcome Pesabnet's experimental creatures, he tells them that Ghiasi has a larger role to play in the plot than she revealed to the characters.

CHAPTER 1 TREASURE

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

- +3 *greater striking wounding* longspear
- +2 *greater resilient full plate*
- +2 *striking halberd*
- +1 *resilient full plate*
- *ghost dust*
- *greater daredevil boots*
- *major eagle-eye elixir*
- *major ghost charge* (*Pathfinder Advanced Player's Guide* 253)
- *orange prism aeon stone*
- *pale lavender ellipsoid aeon stone*
- *red wyrm dragon's breath potion*
- *scroll of heal* (8th level)
- *scroll of spectral hand*
- *truesight potion*

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of the Celebrants, parades of undead soldiers traverse the city's thoroughfares daily in honor of the ghost king Geb. Each week brings new horrors designed to take the battlefield in the inevitable war against Nex, whether monstrosities stitched together from corpses and lumbering with dread purpose or nightmares made real floating insubstantially through the air, unbothered by material obstructions. Behind all these preparations stand the graveknights of the Warmaster Council who have, at the wishes of Geb himself, turned all their collected experience and knowledge of battle toward planning the final destruction of Nex.

Trade is booming, with shipments of both raw materials for weapons and armor, as well as the finished products themselves, moving endlessly into the city before they're quickly issued to soldiers. Merchants grow rich off the sale of their products, as do the tax collectors who take their fees, and the bureaucrats in charge of setting trade policies. Despite all this money changing hands, however, corruption remains low under the watchful gaze of the city guards who vigorously stamp out any behavior they see as hindering the war effort. While the city guard are few in number, their so-called justice is brutal and immediate.

There is an unease in the air, a tension among those in power who know that while war is good for the economy, Yled's place as a center of military power is not a secret. When war breaks out—not if—Yled itself will be a primary target for destruction, and

the richest merchants and those who have carefully carved economic empires on the back of the war effort stand to lose everything. In response, a small number of carefully guarded and cautious smuggling rings have sprung up to avoid the tight regulations and move goods and wealth out of the city to safer locations. When discovered, these operations meet the same brutal end as other lawbreaking, yet the profits are high enough to be tempting, so they continue to operate in Yled's shadows.

New visitors to the city will likely first notice the Bonewall, its bleached white bones constructed from the bodies of innumerable creatures of all sizes. Massive stone towers soar into the sky behind the wall, their peaks bristling with ballistae and even terrifying cannons that fire pure negative energy against attackers.


Once inside the gates, the city opens into a unique layout. The streets are at odd angles to each other, designed to thwart and confuse any invaders who breach the gates. The main thoroughfares are wide enough for small armies to march through, which they often do. Buildings are spaced evenly and provide easy access to both foot traffic as well as carts, wagons, and teams of pack animals. Vigilant undead soldiers tirelessly patrol the city streets.

LAW AND JUSTICE

Because of Yled's importance to the military defense of Geb, its law enforcement tends to focus on stopping saboteurs, spies, and smugglers. While the quick enjoy the same level of protection under the law as anywhere in Geb, they're viewed with more suspicion here than elsewhere in the nation and must be licensed by a sponsor in the city or risk expulsion—or worse. (The characters received the necessary tokens of sponsorship from Berline Haldoli in *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #182: *Graveclaw*, but getting new ones is a simple matter for Blood Lords.)

Most citizens of Yled have some connection to the military, whether directly or indirectly, and thus have a vested interest in the continued success of both Yled's security and its continued economic success. Most visitors to the city certainly feel as if eyes are always watching them, especially if they're





newcomers, and even if they're Blood Lords. In fact, given the many incorporeal undead moving throughout Yled and the strange creatures lurking in its spires, it's likely newcomers are being watched at all times.

The civic functions of Yled all flow into and out of the Panopticon and the many buildings at its base. The Panopticon is an imposing tower made from ivory and glass panes that is the seat of power for Blood Lord Haeqajet, the ancient ruler of the city who has served Geb for thousands of years. Lately the Warmaster Council has gained more control over the day-to-day operations of Yled, but Haeqajet still remains the city's de facto leader.

USING LAW AND ORDER TO MAINTAIN TENSION

Throughout *A Taste of Ashes*, the characters may run afoul of Gebbite citizens who possess the full rights and protections accorded to them by the Dead Laws, the laws of the nation. As a GM, you should make it clear to the players that while they may find themselves at odds with various foes both quick and undead, simply fighting their way through every problem might carry serious consequences. Geb is a nation of laws, after all, albeit twisted ones. No matter how individually powerful the characters may be, they can't resist the entire justice system of Yled. Unless you and your players are interested in playing out various court cases and examining the city's legal system, here are some guidelines to help keep the adventure from running into unexpected problems.

- **Their opponents follow the rules.** A tense conversation early on will help drive home the idea that when tempers flare, even the most influential citizens of Yled respect and follow its laws. Showing some efforts at restraint from a citizen who is a type of undead creature not normally known for self-control (such as a ghoul around living characters) can make the point clear.
- **Provide an in-character warning.** As rising Blood Lords, the characters have growing influence that means they can avoid some of the troubles that might otherwise arise from their actions. A scene in which a law enforcement official has a discreet discussion with a character who oversteps their authority or breaks a minor law can provide a sense of how their actions are seen without immediately getting them thrown in prison.
- **Newcomers get limited forgiveness.** If the player characters make a misstep that would place them in trouble with the law, they might find themselves able to avoid the normal punishments by professing ignorance of local laws. This isn't something any newcomer could do, but the characters' status as

ETHEREAL PLANE AND THE UNSEEN

As an undead city filled with ghouls, skeletons, zombies, wights, and countless other corporeal undead, it is easy for the average visitor to the city to forget there are nearly as many incorporeal citizens moving about their daily business as well. Spirits in Yled are spectral in appearance and often invisible, and they can lurk behind solid objects or otherwise move about unseen. Those who would cross into the Ethereal Plane as a way to sidestep obstacles or try to avoid detection are likely to encounter even more trouble than they'd planned for. If your players start to use spells like *ethereal jaunt* too frequently, you can easily have them encounter powerful incorporeal undead to show that dangers in Yled can be found everywhere.

Blood Lords gives them unusual latitude. It should be clear to the players, however, that this is a one-time event and that future lawbreaking might bring increased trouble.

- **A Blood Lord ally might give advice.** The supporters the characters have gained in the previous volumes have a personal stake in their continued success, as bad behavior on the characters' part can reflect poorly on their allies. A private meeting in which one of these allies discusses the characters' reckless actions can go a long way to creating pressure on the characters to follow the rules and work within the structure.
- **Reputation Points might reduce.** A warning that the party's reckless actions might decrease their Reputation Points with one or more factions could be a strong motivator to many players. Some of these penalties are expressly noted in various encounters in this adventure.

FACTIONS IN YLED

The Great Factions currently have less direct authority in Yled than other parts of Geb due to the rise of the Warmaster Council. The ghost king's declaration has allowed the group to declare a project or regulation to be "vital to the war effort" and cut through much of the red tape that was required in the past. Nevertheless, those on the Warmaster Council are typically savvy enough to recognize when to request and when to demand. The Great Factions, therefore, retain significant control.

That said, the factions—both Great and Lower—are quite aware they're not invulnerable to the council's wishes. The complete annihilation of the minor Duskdrinkers faction at the hands of the Warmaster

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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, revealing a dark, bloody interior. Pools of red liquid, resembling blood, are shown dripping from the skulls and the scrollwork itself. The overall aesthetic is macabre and horror-themed.

Council's orders only a few years ago made it quite clear to the factions that they need to tread carefully where the war effort is concerned.

Below is a summary of faction involvement in Yled.

Builders League: With their headquarters in Yled and deep connection to the Bonewall and other civic defenses, the Builders League is the most influential of the Great Factions within the city. Despite their close ties to the city's history, however, several members of the Warmaster Council—including its leader, Vorwynd Iceblood—are suspicious of the group. They know the Bonewall is the key to the city's defenses and have long wondered if the Builders League has ways to wrest away control of that wondrous construction.

Carters Consortium: Although a minor faction, the Carters Consortium serves a more significant function in Yled than their status might suggest, as the city requires materials shipped from all over Geb for its forges, factories, and armories.

Celebrants: Daily parades of new troops through the city's streets and frequent celebrations allow the Celebrants to keep themselves in Yled's public eye. The Celebrants also spend a great deal of time and energy taking advantage of Yled's place as a hub of trade. The same networks that bring goods into the city also carry out stories of the wealth, power, and glory of Geb to the wider world. They wholeheartedly support the war effort, and the Warmaster Council views the faction as a key to their continued plans.

Export Guild: Several major trade routes converge in Yled, and the Export Guild helps to supply the growing war effort by providing the forges with raw materials and amassing armies with a steady flow of reanimated corpses. They strictly regulate and track shipments into and out of the city, keeping a watchful eye out for discrepancies that might signal smuggling operations. Rumors persist, however, that only the smuggling operations who refuse to pay protection money to the Export Guild are reported, and smuggling is more common than the city's leaders would like.

Reanimators: Next to the Builders League, the Reanimators are the busiest faction in Yled. They have deep ties to the Mortuary as well as the other colleges of necromancy in the city. With the vast numbers of apprentice necromancers learning how to raise the dead, many guild members serve as adjunct instructors in these colleges. They also work closely with the faculty to learn new techniques as well as share their own insights. Finally, the Reanimators regulate the Deadmarket and maintain the right to claim any corpses there on behalf of the Warmaster Council and the ever-growing armies they command.

Tax Collectors Union: With the amount of money needed to fund a war, it's no surprise that the Tax Collectors Union has a firm grip on Yled and demands increasingly onerous taxes. Nevertheless, the citizens of the city know the money the union collects goes to funding their own defense, so they keep their grumbling to a minimum. The kind of ostentatious clothing and accessories members of the union feel necessary to flout in other parts of Geb, however, are seen as wasted luxury in Yled and can mark that individual as unpatriotic. While faction members still insist on the finest materials in their attire, the clothing they wear in Yled is subdued and nearly always in a military style.

Gathering Evidence

After the events of the previous volume, the characters arrive in Yled in search of answers regarding the source of *shadow ash* and proof that Chancellor Kemnebi is behind it. Fortunately, they have an old ally who reaches out to them: Seldeg Bhedlis, Geb's spymaster. Like the characters, he knows that Kemnebi is behind the plot to poison and animate Geb's trading partners. Also like the characters, he knows that solid proof is required before Geb will take any action against the powerful Kemnebi. Seldeg has worked closely with the characters in the past, but he's mostly powerless in Yled because the Warmaster Council is exceptionally suspicious of the spymaster. Seldeg knows that if anyone is going to be able to get answers in Yled, it has to be the characters.

As the characters begin their journey from Mechitar, they meet a courier who delivers an invitation from Seldeg asking the characters to stop at his residence at Fort Halg on the outskirts of Yled. As the characters approach Fort Halg, read or paraphrase the following.

The road ahead curves to the northeast, following the edge of a sharp cliff that faces south. The terrain here is rough and rugged, with only a few scraggly shrubs and plants tenaciously clinging to what little soil hasn't been blown away by eldritch winds from the Mana Wastes to the north.

To the northwest, the rocky terrain rises to a dramatic plateau, atop which stands a low-walled fortress with a commanding view over the surrounding area. Colorful pennants fly from the walls of the structure, and a well-tended hedge lines the small road leading to it.

This fortress serves as Seldeg's home and base of operations. In addition to a retinue of undead defenders and servants, Seldeg also employs a significant number of the quick. Unlike many of his peers, however, he

treats these living servants quite well, and they return the favor with dedicated service on missions both within and outside Geb.

The buildings and grounds of Fort Halg stand out from most places in Geb because of their vibrant, bright beauty. Seldeg has even employed skilled gardeners to tease life out of the nearly barren landscape. The results are verdant, rich plants that stand out sharply from the surrounding terrain. His rose gardens, in particular, are a point of pride. The spymaster finds the vibrant abundance of his property to be mildly unsettling or distasteful to undead visitors, and he uses that discomfort to his advantage when trying to draw secrets out of them.

Since his last interactions with the player characters, Seldeg has watched their rise with great interest. The risk he took vouching for their services has been repaid tenfold, and he is as proud of them as a heartless spymaster can be.

Seldeg greets the characters calmly, gesturing to his servants to see to their mounts or other needs. He asks what they've learned in Mechitar, and listens patiently despite already being informed of nearly everything through his agents. After this conversation, read or paraphrase the following.

The graveknight nods briefly, and the desiccated skin around his mouth crinkles in a grim smile. "Yes, it sounds like there's a great deal to learn about this mystery in Yled. While I don't have much direct influence on matters in the city, I do have a bit of advice.

"First, Yled is a complex political tapestry. Blood Lords and the factions still have influence as they do elsewhere, but a new group has seized the reins of power in Yled: the Warmaster Council. They're a collection of graveknights and military experts who've been charged by Geb himself to prepare for war with Nex. The Warmaster Council takes their mandate very broadly. Yled is a production center for the war effort, you see, and since the Warmaster Council directs those preparations, they can set rules, regulations, and practices that everyone in Yled must follow, even those who are Blood Lords. It's an easy matter to be branded a traitor by the council, and that's a speedy route to permanent death. Unfortunately, the council sees this old spymaster as a threat rather than an asset, so it's unwise for me to even set foot in Yled these days.

"Second, talk of the imminent war is on everyone's mind in Yled. Rumors are spreading in other nations about the recent spate of poisoned crops, and there's talk—as yet uninformed but ultimately correct—that some kind of sinister necromancy is involved. Nex, in particular, is gearing up for war, having seized upon these rumors as justification to ramp up their own war machine. This preoccupation with

an upcoming war may serve as an easy distraction to use in your investigations, I suppose.

"As for the source of this shadow ash, I've heard reliable rumors that Pesabnet, the high priest of Urgathoa, is involved with smuggling from Nex. While he makes all the right overtures to Yled's Overgovernor and to the Cathedral of Epiphenomena in Mechitar, he's almost certainly involved with illicit activity. If the smuggling rumors are true, Pesabnet is playing a dangerous game, for the Warmaster Council would not ignore such behavior, even from one of the city's spiritual leaders.

"That said, Pesabnet has allies throughout Yled society. Be as subtle as you can until you've amassed concrete rumors of his suspicious actions; with sufficient evidence in your hands, Pesabnet will probably be willing to speak with you to avoid entanglements with the Warmaster Council. Once you have information from Pesabnet, follow those clues to the *shadow ash* and any proof that Kemnebi is behind it. I have faith in your competence."

The characters may have many questions for Seldeg. Below are some likely questions and his responses.

Who is the Overgovernor? "Blood Lord Haeqajet has been the undisputed leader of Yled for thousands of years, although as of late he's been less frequently seen in public. In truth, he has less authority than in the past. Technically, the head of the Warmaster Council is only one member of the Iron Crown, or Yled's ruling council that Haeqajet leads, but true power in the city now lies with the Warmaster Council."

Has Kemnebi visited Yled? "The Chancellor's business takes him to Yled several times each year. His recent visits have been secretive; he's undoubtedly been up to something. He's not in Yled now."

Any enemies we should watch for in Yled? "Yled is full of ambitious, cunning players, all with their own agendas. You know better than I do which factions are fond of you and which aren't. Expect those same factions to know you here."

Should we come back here? Seldeg frowns. "I don't think that's wise. The Warmaster Council considers me a danger at best and an enemy at worst, simply for doing the work my king commands. You had best not be tainted by association with me. Return only when you've concluded your investigations in Yled."

As they leave, Seldeg offers one more suggestion.

"Word will quickly spread that a group of new Blood Lords has entered Yled. Your authority is something you can use to your advantage. I suspect you'll be visited by many who offer help, but be cautious with their offers. No one in Yled is truly selfless." The graveknight gives a raspy chuckle. "No one in the *world* is truly selfless."

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ENTERING THE CITY

When the player characters approach Yled for the first time, read or paraphrase the following.

The ruinous landscape around Yled is scarred by thousands of battles and littered with the shattered remnants of the many forces who've tried, and failed, to destroy the city over thousands of years. The infamous Bonewall that surrounds the city appears as a smooth mass of ivory at a distance but resolves into a conglomerated patchwork of millions of individual bones up close.

The city's massive gates stand open, although there is no hinge or mechanism for these yawning portals. Tall, flat-topped towers rise behind and above the walls, with numerous defenders positioned to keep a close eye on the surroundings in all directions. The top of the wall and towers bristle with numerous large siege engines, some mechanical and others visibly charged with crackling negative energy.

A steady stream of wagons, carts, and travelers wind their way across the shattered, dry earth outside the wall and into the gates, most drawn by tireless undead creatures. Each of these vehicles stops in the long tunnel formed by the openings within the wall where grim guards carefully inspect each shipment before they pass into Yled proper.

The gates to Yled are typically guarded by soldiers and usually overseen by incorporeal sentries. The guards question everyone entering Yled and examine all cargo. As soon as they learn that the characters are Blood Lords, they step aside with obvious deference, offering to provide directions to well-known landmarks or even conscripting a guide for the characters. The nearest guide on hand when the characters arrive is a chatty ghoul named **Narraq** (NE male ghoul guide 4). Narraq is pleasant, although he's wise enough to recognize when his prattle is unwelcome. He knows quite a bit about locations in the city but is intentionally ignorant of people or recent politics: "It's not wise for me to pick sides—other than yours of course—and the less I know about any sides, the better."

GATHERING INFORMATION ON PESABNET

There is quite a bit of information on the high priest publicly available. A character can learn the following just by asking around, with no check to Gather Information required: the high priest is a ghast who spends almost all of his time at the Pallid Pinnacle where he leads weekly services in the worship of Urgathoa. He is seen as an upstanding citizen of the community, and the temple is widely considered to be an important place for gatherings. Few doubt his commitment to Yled and the war effort, although

some people note he has not been seen as much in public lately. Anyone who inquires about setting up a meeting with the high priest soon learns it would be at least a month before something can be arranged.

XP Award: When the characters get this basic information about Pesabnet, award them 30 XP.

Running the Investigation

Learning more than basic information about Pesabnet requires a concerted effort, as set forth in Gathering Rumors on page 16. Either before or during their rumor-seeking, you should run the following set encounters: Old Friends in Yled (below), Ynar Warehouse (page 11), A Wily Visitor (page 12), and Abandoned Tannery (page 14). These set encounters can occur in whatever order makes sense, although some naturally lead into others. Once they've gathered enough information and tackled the set encounters, they can move on to the Pallid Pinnacle.

Old Friends in Yled

As the characters have been to Yled before, they might choose an inn in which they've previously stayed (Holstali Hostel, the Queen's Loft, or Harrowhouse in the Three Gates neighborhood), or any of Yled's many other inns. They might also choose to look up two local Blood Lords they know: **Kyril Vonth** (NE male wight banker 11) or Lord **Zthni** (CE male vampire socialite 12). Both are happy to see the characters again, but their fortunes have diverged since the characters last met them.

Kyril has seen his fortunes and influence rise, as a few risky financial investments have paid off handsomely. He is busier than he'd like with Export Guild business, but he makes time to welcome the characters and play a game of blood price with them. Although he's amiable and well-connected, there's little he can do for the characters right away with respect to their investigations—he knows only the basic information about Pesabnet presented above, and nothing at all about *shadow ash* or the poison plot.

Lord Zthni has fallen upon hard times and is desperate to reclaim his former influence in the city. A few of his associates have been publicly executed as traitors, and he knows he's under suspicion even though he's done nothing wrong. Zthni doesn't venture out to enjoy Yled society much, instead morosely moping around his apartments. If the characters visit him, he is unabashedly eager to entertain them, hoping he might ride their coattails back into prominence.

Faction Reputation: If the characters take the time to visit with Kyril, they earn 1 Reputation Point with the Export Guild. Visiting Zthni doesn't give them

any increase in reputation, as the Celebrants still acknowledge him as a faction member, but only barely.

Treasure: Zthni is eager to prove himself valuable to the characters and gives them some of his remaining treasure to gain their favor: a *red wyrm dragon's breath potion* and three jeweled bracers worth 40 gp each.

Ynar Warehouse

A day or two into their work to find information on Pesabnet, the characters learn of an interesting possible lead. One of their contacts notes the human merchant Bteth Ynar has been acting strangely lately, closing his shop at odd hours during peak times. This same contact notes that Bteth also seemed very skittish. If the characters investigate these rumors further, other sources confirm the merchant is behaving oddly and is rumored to have illicit dealings with Nex.

Unfortunately for the characters, Bteth is merely a victim of a vicious rumor campaign against him by his competitors. Bteth's primary trade is in captured souls and undead workers, both of which are perfectly legal in Geb. As the need for resources has increased competition in the city, Bteth has steadily increased his prices to the point where his rivals felt the best solution was to eliminate him and take over his operation themselves. Through several intermediaries, these rivals contacted a pair of maruts and convinced them that Bteth's dealings were worthy of their personal attention.

If the characters follow up on this lead, they arrive at Bteth's business to find him hurriedly packing because he knows someone is trying to destroy him. Before he can do much more than greet the characters, the maruts arrive. You can run this encounter anywhere in Bteth's building, but as Bteth is in his warehouse, that's where the encounter is mostly likely to occur.

The map of Ynar Warehouse appears on page 12.

A1. SHOWROOM

This neat and tidy room contains rows of carefully labeled glass cylinders filled with cloudy substances. Standing perfectly still along the eastern wall are several human skeletons and zombies.

Bteth uses this area as a showroom for potential clients. The skeletons and zombies are common undead but only react on Bteth's orders. They're far too weak to be a threat to the characters.

Bteth currently has no stock of actual souls; the swirling jars are minor magical trinkets that illustrate what souls Bteth might be able to arrange given enough coin and time (although currently Bteth has neither).

WHY NOT GO STRAIGHT TO PESABNET?

It's perfectly reasonable for players to suggest the best course of action is to arrange a meeting with Pesabnet (or sneak into the Pallid Pinnacle to find him). They can certainly do so, but there are a few problems with this approach. First, the ghost has closed the temple on all days except during the Gluttonous Feasts served every two weeks, and breaking into the temple without solid information is both reckless and obvious. Second, Pesabnet is viewed quite highly by the locals and simply charging in without any justification can damage their reputation. See *Confronting Pesabnet* on page 20 for how this affects their Reputation Points.

A2. OFFICE

A messy desk and several chairs occupy this otherwise unremarkable office.

Bteth keeps his valuables in a locked safe in this room. He has the key, or a character who succeeds at four DC 34 Thievery checks to Pick the Lock opens it.

Treasure: The safe contains *greater daredevil boots* and 1,510 gp that Bteth hasn't bothered to collect.

A3. WAREHOUSE

MODERATE 15

This large room houses an assortment of well-organized and neatly labeled crates.

The smaller crates contain empty glass cylinders and packing straw. The larger crates each contain a single zombie or skeleton, ready to be shipped to whomever purchases it. **Bteth Ynar** (LE human undeath merchant 5; if necessary, use the stats for a necromancer on page 230 of the *Gamemastery Guide*) has sent his regular warehouse workers home for the day since he believes an attack is imminent and doesn't want the additional distraction of protecting them.

Creatures: The maruts believe Bteth's trafficking in souls and undead workers merits annihilation. If the characters don't interfere, they make short work of the merchant then plane shift home to Axis. Should the characters try to engage the maruts in conversation or stop them in any way, they waste no time attacking the characters as troublesome interlopers. Bteth squeezes himself into a crate with a particularly gaunt zombie to stay out of the fight. The maruts find Yled repulsive to the core and have no desire to remain longer than necessary.

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YNAR WAREHOUSE

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



MARUTS (2)

Pathfinder Bestiary 2 10

Initiative Perception +26

Further Information: Bteth doesn't know anything about a smuggling operation involving Pesabnet. He is certain the attack by the maruts came from a rival group of merchants who were priced out of competition by him, although he doesn't know for certain which ones. Although he's thankful the characters rescued him, the marut attack has convinced him it's time to leave Yled behind, and he vacates the city as soon as he can, having shipped most of his valuables ahead of him.

Treasure: If Bteth survives the attack, he retrieves the items from his office safe and gives them to the characters, along with a *scroll of spectral hand* and his thanks.

Faction Reputation: Bteth has some important connections. If the characters save Bteth, award them 1 Reputation Point with the Tax Collectors Union.

A Wily Visitor

With her extensive contacts in the city and numerous socialites always trying to curry favor with her, Ghiasi

catches news and rumors faster than anyone in Yled. No matter how careful and cautious the characters are in their investigations, they are still outsiders—and Blood Lords as well—and word soon reaches the shae that there's a group in town snooping around. What those reports contain depends on what the player characters actually do and say in their investigations, of course, and as GM you should pay close attention to what it is possible for Ghiasi to know. At the very least, however, she is aware that a group of Blood Lords is asking questions about smuggling operations in Yled. This piques her interest enough to investigate the rumors further. Soon enough she decides to take direct action and approaches them to learn more.

Given her cautious nature and precarious position, at first Ghiasi is primarily concerned with keeping her work for Kemnebi a secret. Not only does she worry about her brother, but her reputation and social standing would be ruined should the Warmaster Council or Blood Lords learn of her involvement with the chancellor's schemes. She is certain that if her smuggling network is discovered, Kemnebi would pin the entire operation on her and she would take the fall.

While she's fairly confident in her ability to escape, Ghiasi is equally sure all the work she has done in Yled to build an influential, successful life would be over. With all these worries in mind, she makes a move to learn what she can of the player characters and their motives.

Rather than directly risk contact, Ghiasi's first step is to send a shadow double of herself to see what she can learn. Ghiasi created this double with the *split shadow* ritual (page 80); the double's statistics appear on page 40 if necessary. If the player characters discover the illusory nature of her representative, Ghiasi isn't concerned. She simply points out the necessity for caution in a place like Yled and slyly admits that this meeting served as a test of the player characters' powers of observation.

Ghiasi begins the conversation with pleasant compliments, explaining that she wanted to meet the newcomers to Yled who made such a name for themselves in Mechitar. She attempts to flatter and impress them by sharing what she has heard about their reputations. This is a good chance for you to paint the shae as a knowledgeable and useful contact for the player characters to have in the city. Below are some likely parts of the conversation and possible questions with her responses.

Who are you? "Names are risky, aren't they? I am called Ghiasi, or even Ghiasi the Unraveler. I have been a resident of this city for some time now."

Why did you want to meet? "Everyone is talking about the New Blood Lords in Yled—even those who lack the physical ability to speak. While I do not hold any formal place in the city's hierarchy, I have close relationships with those who do. I simply want to see what all the fuss is about and perhaps find a way we can benefit mutually, of course. I am no altruist, I assure you, but I am a strong believer in the power of friends."

What can you tell us about smuggling operations in Yled? "That is a dangerous topic, isn't it? With so much fervor over the war effort and severe punishments for lawbreaking, anyone undertaking such a profession seems to be asking for trouble. But in a city where the regulations and fees are so...

numerous... it would make sense that there would be those willing to take the risk. Don't you agree?" If the player characters press this topic, Ghiasi cryptically adds, "If you are so dedicated to finding smugglers, I recommend you go to the Daymarket and ask around there."

Treasure: Ghiasi gives the characters a diamond pendant worth 4,500 gp as a "meager token of welcome." The characters might be suspicious of it, but the pendant is entirely mundane.

XP Award: If the player characters meet with Ghiasi's double and interact with her, award them 30 XP.



Bteth Unar

AMBUSH MODERATE 15

It's possible that Ghiasi ended her conversation with the player characters confident they pose little threat to her and her smuggling operation. It's more likely that they could upend her life here in Yled and endanger her brother if Kemnebi learns what they're doing. Upon further thought, however, she soon begins to see the player characters in another way: an opportunity for her to escape Kemnebi's blackmail. After a bit of time learning about these new Blood Lords, she becomes impressed by their rapid upward trajectory. If she can direct that angle, she reasons, she can manage to save herself, her standing, and perhaps even her beloved brother.

To begin this new phase of her plan, Ghiasi uses a series of disguises and subcontractors to send dangerous foes after the characters to test them. Ghiasi has a longstanding relationship with a trio of popobawas who lurk in Yled's pointed rooftops called the Sorrowhaunt Three. The popobawas are positively thrilled by the increase in unrest throughout Yled and eager to cause trouble without much prompting. They

provoke a small group of vrykolakas vampires living in a run-down tannery (these vampires are the only remaining members of the Duskdrinkers, a once-powerful gang of spies and bullies that Pokmit Bloody-Pike of the Warmaster Council all but obliterated a few years ago). The Sorrowhaunt Three filled the sullen and miserable vampires' heads with tales of the glory they can reclaim by eliminating these new up-and-coming Blood Lords, and the vampires took notice. In the end, though, the vampires couldn't



Ghiasi

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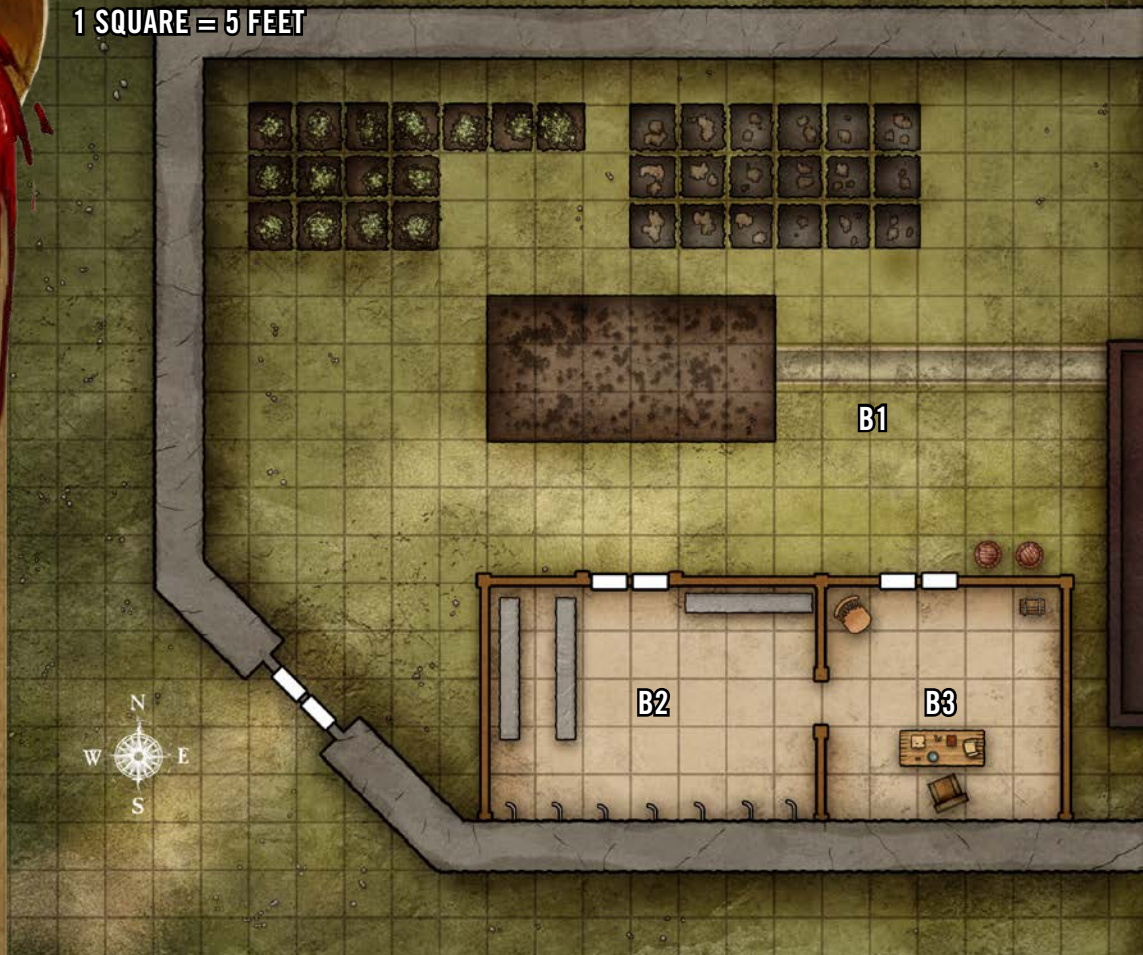
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ABANDONED TANNERY

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



muster the courage to leave their tannery. They instead send most of their afziakas, nearly dead beasts that were once large hyenas, to track the characters.

The following encounter can take place any time at least 1 day after the player characters meet Ghiasi. It can happen anywhere you prefer but works best on a busy street or even in the characters' private quarters.

Creatures: The five afziakas use their Slip Between ability to bypass any obvious barriers or guards to get at the characters. These beasts fight until slain.

AFZIKA STALKERS (5)

CREATURE 12

Page 82

Initiative Stealth +25

Afziaka Origins: The afziakas emit a strange, putrid scent even after they've been slain. A character who succeeds at a DC 30 Crafting or Survival check identifies the smell as coming from a tannery, but with an oddly metallic tang. A successful DC 30 Society or Yled Lore check, or a successful DC 35 Diplomacy check to Gather Information around the city about the smell, pinpoints the source as an abandoned tannery.

Abandoned Tannery

This facility served Yled for several generations until the supply of locally raised animals used for hides ran out. The owners struggled on for a few years, trying to find a niche in the production of hides gathered from mutated creatures killed in the Mana Wastes to the north, but this change was simply not sustainable and produced hides that were just too erratic—some were too thin or too firm, others oddly elastic. The tannery shut down a decade ago, but the processes used to produce these magically enhanced hides in the final years of production tainted the area, and no one has yet been willing to reopen the business.

The abandoned tannery is now the site of the few surviving vrykolakas vampires that were once part of the Duskdrinkers minor faction. The characters might come here by following up on the afziaka stalkers sent to kill them. Alternatively, the Sorrowhaunt Three, through disguises or intermediaries, might try to lure the characters into the clutches of the vampires with promises of useful information or unguarded treasure.

The map of the abandoned tannery appears above.

B1. TANNERY YARD

A partially crumbled stone wall surrounds this facility on three sides, while the fourth is open to the southwest. A mostly intact building stands against the wall to the south, while many shallow square pits fill the yard. The ground is spongy and carries a whiff of a sharp, metallic odor.

The soggy ground makes unpleasant squelching noises, particularly near the pits, but doesn't impede movement.

The shallow pits are only 2 feet deep and were once used to carry out tanning. The northwest pits held lime to loosen hair or fur and clean hides. Hides were tanned in the northeast pits; the earth there is loose and easy to dig, making it a perfect place for vrykolakas to hide.

The large southernmost vat was used to leach the waste products from the hides; the waste drained through a filthy chute into a sewer grate in an adjacent abattoir. Numerous rats and other vermin lurk in this chute. While they don't pose a threat to the characters, the vrykolakas can use these animals to cause distractions and lead threats astray.

Through difficult ceremonies involving the residual magic in the tannery's soil, the Duskdrinkers have established the soil here as their burial sites for the purpose of their burial site bound vulnerability.

B2. CRUMBLING STORAGE ROOM

This stone room is lined with various rusty metal racks and hooks embedded in the walls. The roof overhead is full of holes and is sagging in many places. A gaping hole stands in the wall to the east where a door once stood but now lies discarded on the ground, its hinges rusted and broken.

Two rat swarms make this old storage room their home. They don't trouble intruders and simply squeak loudly and run away if anyone unfamiliar should enter this area. The rats act as an early warning system; if they make noise, the vampires have a +2 circumstance bonus to initiative rolls within the next minute.

A few gnawed bones show that this room once housed the vampires' afziakas.

B3. OFFICE

MODERATE 15

The holes in the walls and ceiling of this room have been sloppily covered with moldy, half-rotted hyena hides. A few smashed and rotten tables and chairs are scattered about, and refuse is piled into the corners. The ground here is loosely packed and sinks slightly underfoot.

The Duskdrinkers have turned this room into a makeshift headquarters. The hide coverings provide some extra protection from sunlight.

Creatures: Desperate to regain even a fragment of her past influence, the vrykolakas named Zivn has been weighing the Sorrowhaunt Three's suggestion to take out the new Blood Lords in Yled. She's worried that her cowardice in sending her afziakas instead of leading the attack personally was a mistake, so she's thrilled if the characters come to the tannery on their own.

Zivn encourages her followers, Vmith and Skig, to join her in a fight; she also counts on her last afziaka stalker to join them. This afziaka appears as a living hyenadon because of its Grave-Bound Guts ability, but it's just as feral and mindless as the afziakas the characters faced in the earlier ambush. It uses Slip Between to reach the yard and fight the characters from behind.

The lesser vrykolakas rely on their melee attacks and fight until destroyed, but Zivn retreats and surrenders if reduced to fewer than 100 Hit Points. She knows little about the player characters except what the Sorrowhaunt Three told her, but she knows more about the popobawas than they realize: Zivn knows that they are one-eyed, flying shapeshifters and that they work for some more important person in Yled who Zivn doesn't know. Zivn knows this information is valuable and might impart it to the characters if they agree to spare her.

ZIVN

CREATURE 14

Female elite vrykolakas ancient (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 2 6, 277)

Initiative Perception +25

VRYKOLAKAS ANCIENTS (2)

CREATURE 13

Pathfinder Bestiary 2 6, 277

Initiative Perception +23

AFZIKA STALKER

CREATURE 12

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Initiative Stealth +25

Faction Reputation: The Duskdrinkers remain a thorn in the side of Yled's most active factions, and they'd like to see the gang of vrykolakas finally eliminated. If the characters destroy all of the Duskdrinkers, they gain 1 Reputation Point with both the Builders League and the Reanimators.

Treasure: A search of the room reveals a wooden chest hidden under a pile of broken boxes and shredded leather. It contains all that's left of the Duskdrinkers' treasure: a sapphire worth 400 gp and a *truesight* potion.

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Gathering Rumors

Aside from basic information on Pesabnet, and in addition to the set encounters described above, you can use the following section to mix and match Yled's colorful characters and interesting locations to dole out clues the characters need to get them to the next section. Use this section as building blocks in a way you find interesting and that best fits your group.

Rather than just providing a rumor when your characters successfully Gather Information, take one rumormonger, one location, and one rumor to build a short information-gathering scene for the players. These scenes can play out quickly if you wish, but keep in mind that Yled is a city getting ready for war with various factions striving for control. NPCs in the city tend to be suspicious, worried, and on the lookout for opportunities for profit. You can use any number of these scenes and even add more if you and your players seem to enjoy them. Optionally, if you'd rather speed the adventure along or sense your players are growing bored of information gathering scenes, you can simply have characters roll Gather Information checks and describe what rumors they learn.

Due to tensions about war and worries about strangers, Gathering Information takes a full day and a secret DC 34 Diplomacy check, although certain feats and abilities might speed this up. Use the following results when Gathering Information in this section.

Critical Success The character learns two rumors provided on page 18.

Success The character learns one rumor from page 18.

Failure The character doesn't learn any noteworthy information.

Critical Failure The character learns a false rumor of your own invention.

RUMORMONGERS

For each rumor the characters gain, set the scene with one of the following NPCs. You can also use these NPCs as inspiration to create your own denizens of Yled to expand the investigation.

Geruta Glimmerbanks (N female halfling ghoulish chef 8) is small and plump, with a perpetual smile on her face. Her love of snacks in life has not left her in undeath, though the treats she prefers now are disturbing to the quick. She works in her shop in the Deadmarket, Glimmerbanks Pies, as a purveyor of a proprietary meat pie. She guards the recipe jealously, but she always presents a welcoming face to those who visit her store. When not at work or in her attached dwelling, she wanders the back alleys of Yled in search of "rare ingredients." Geruta spends a great deal of time chatting with those who come into her shop, curious about their lives and always trying to ingratiate herself with her customers. If she can sell them a meat pie or two, all the better.

Jakob Krish (LE male ghost librarian 13) came to Yled over two centuries ago as a living man serving a high-ranking Celebrant. He was a specialist researcher in Azlanti studies who jealously guarded the books under his charge, as the loss of even one such book could erase priceless knowledge from historical records. Jakob served over a decade in his patron's compound, helping to catalogue and organize their library. When he ignored an alarm in the compound (he needed the only surviving copy of *Aeon Ascendant* to answer a pressing question), he was killed in an explosion that saboteurs had arranged to topple Jakob's patron.

Jakob arose days later as a ghost, perpetually seeking the lost tome he



knew was right near where he'd died but is now almost certainly buried under tons of rubble. Over the intervening years, the land was cleared and new buildings were constructed. Jakob was left mostly alone after the new tenants realized that putting his spirit to rest would require too much work. He still haunts the buildings constructed over his patron's destroyed compound, listening to and learning from its residents.

Jhalder (LN male half-orc masseuse 6) is a lanky half-orc with powerful hands. While working at a book bindery in Absalom, Jhalder was struck by a strange idea for a business: he could apply his bookbinding techniques to the skin of Geb's undead residents, keeping their skin as supple as any rebound book. There was plenty of money to be earned in a such a proposition, he figured, and he highly doubted there was much competition. After spending a few months learning mortuary science from his numerous library contacts and developing lotions, liniments, and oils specifically suited for the needs of undead skin, he apprenticed himself at a massage parlor in the city. Once Jhalder felt sufficiently skilled, he ventured to Yled to open a business.

Jhalder's concept was an instant success, especially among the undead who tried to maintain an appearance close to what they had in life. His shop, Jhalder's Hands, quickly grew beyond his ability to do all the work himself, even after his rates had reached what he thought were exorbitant. For the last few years, the half-orc's business has employed six expert masseuses who each trained under Jhalder. Other competitors have sprung up in an attempt to copy his success, but so far none have managed to unseat Jhalder's Hands as the premier massage parlor catering to the particular needs of corporeal undead.

Larra Espak (CN female bleachling gnome burglar 8) lived a relatively exciting existence as an adventurer in and around Varisia. She set off to find new excitement in Geb after she began to feel the bleaching take hold, assuming that the nation's constant danger would help maintain her vibrancy. Soon, however, she

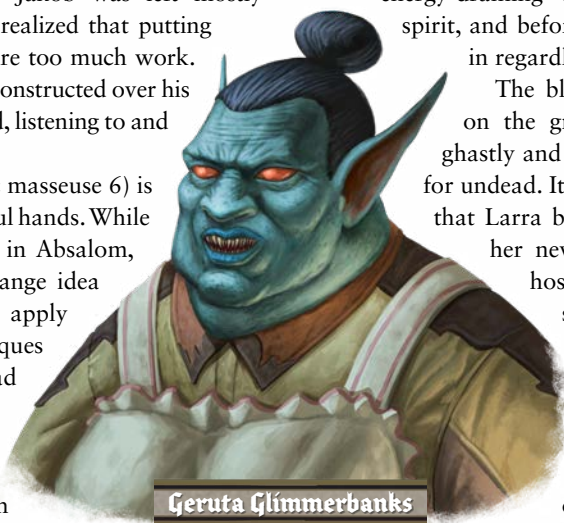
found herself in Yled, barely scraping together a living and treated as a second-class citizen. The oppressive environment of the city and several run-ins with energy-draining undead further sapped her spirit, and before long the bleaching had set in regardless.

The bleaching had a curious effect on the gnome's place in Yled. Now ghastly and pale, she was often mistaken for undead. It was at an undead-only party that Larra began to realize the power of her new appearance as the party's host explained the anti-undead security measures he'd erected around his estate. The gnome realized then that many citizens of Yled assumed the most dangerous threats to their property were from other undead, and that gave her an advantage. Since then,

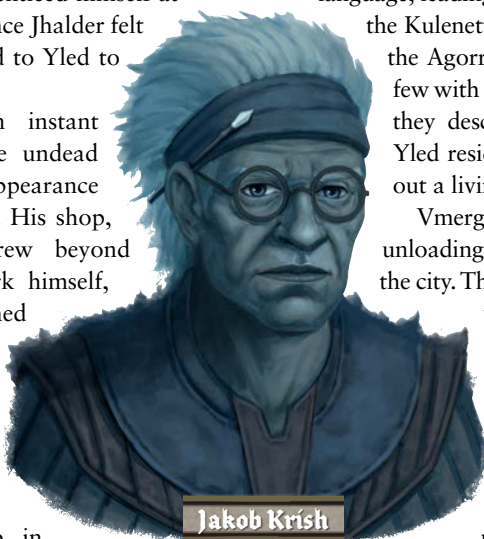
Larra has made a superb living as a burglar and information broker.

Vmerg Rot-Tongue (N nonbinary dwarf foreman 9) is a wiry, tough dwarf with a penchant for foul language, leading to their nickname. While many of the Kulenett dwarves who live in Yled work in the Agorron (page 42), Vmerg is one of the few with no connection to that place. Instead, they descend from a clan of self-sufficient Yled residents who have managed to scrape out a living in the city for millennia.

Vmerg supervises the loading and unloading of grain shipments into and out of the city. This position requires them to interact with both the quick and the dead. Despite their colorful language and vast collection of insults for nearly any situation, Vmerg knows to be respectful of those with real authority. They save their most scathing word choices for mindless undead laborers who lack the ability to understand the meaning.



Geruta Glimmerbanks



Jakob Krish

LOCATIONS

For each rumor the characters gather, use one of these locations in Yled for where they meet the NPC rumormonger. You can also use any other locations in Yled the characters might already know, such as the Three Gates neighborhood from *Graveclaw*. You can also use these locations as inspiration to create your own.

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The Criers' Steps: Like a cleverly constructed clockwork, Yled's government appears simple from the outside, but beneath the surface contains complex pieces that work in harmony to keep the city functioning. At the heart of this operation is the Courthouse, an imposing edifice of smooth obsidian whose surface seems to somehow absorb, rather than reflect, any light that strikes it. Tightly wedged at the base of the Panopticon, the building is open day and night, operated by undead guards, bureaucrats, and others who have no need for sleep. Although the constant operation has the potential to create faster decisions and rulings on matters of law and government, the labyrinthine network of functionaries, sub-adjuncts, and bureaucrats means it usually takes just as long to accomplish anything meaningful as it would in a city run by the living, and some matters that involve untangling centuries-long contracts take much longer.

A variety of heralds, criers, and functionaries loudly announce any major decisions on policy as well as important public announcements on the southern steps of the Courthouse throughout the day and night. This practice creates a sort of hub for information dissemination, and those who wish to learn about the most recent goings-on in the city often gather here or at one of the many cafes that border the area. Although the area is formally known as the Courthouse Grounds, everyone calls it the Criers' Steps.

The Daymarket: Although it operates at all hours, the Daymarket gets its name from the emphasis on the necessities of life rather than undeath. It is a thriving, vibrant place full of brightly colored cloth, aromatic spices, and sturdy, well-crafted goods. Although the buildings still have the same severe, spiky architecture found throughout Yled, here they're painted in bright reds, greens, and yellows. The living residents and visitors of Yled tend to find this section of the city the most pleasant and welcoming; many find the relief they feel here almost palpable, and every nearby apartment is full. The merchants and vendors here have designed

this experience on purpose, as lifting the morbid and imposing atmosphere tends to cause the quick to spend more than they otherwise might.

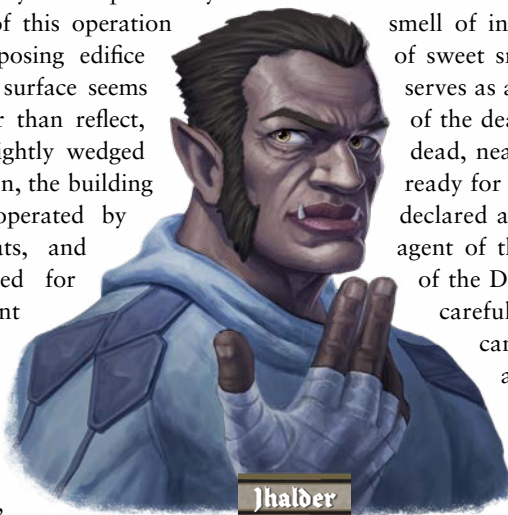
The Deadmarket: Perpetually filled with the smell of incense and clouded in a thin pall of sweet smoke, this large, open-air market serves as a central clearinghouse for the sale of the dead in the city. Stacks of humanoid dead, neatly piled, sorted, and labeled, are ready for purchase. When a corpse is legally declared available for sale by an authorized agent of the Committee on the Disposition of the Dead, it's sent here to be sold, each carefully marked with a metal tag that can only be removed by the purchaser and must be maintained in their records. The Deadmarket is under the effects of a permanent, powerful *gentle repose* spell erected by Geb long ago to help control the spread of disease and

keep pests from eating away the profits of the sellers. The effect also tends to make corporeal undead look a bit more healthy and lifelike, so the Deadmarket is a popular social scene among undead who crave the vital appearance they had in life.

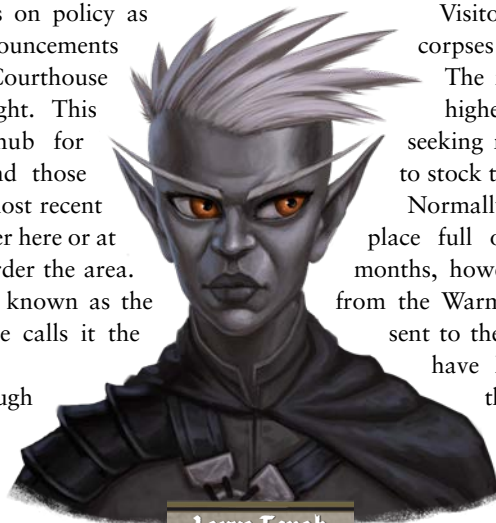
Visitors to the Deadmarket can find corpses for sale sorted by overall quality.

The most complete corpses fetch the highest prices from necromancers seeking raw materials or ghouls looking to stock their larders.

Normally, the Deadmarket is a bustling place full of plentiful supplies. In recent months, however, the high levels of demand from the Warmaster Council for bodies to be sent to the Mortuary for the war effort have led to slim pickings. Although there is tremendous pressure for more supply, the tightly regulated sales have, for now, kept "involuntary harvesting" of the living to a minimum.



Jhalder



Larra Espak

RUMORS

The player characters might come across several rumors in their search. You can either roll 1d12 to randomly determine one of these rumors or choose the rumor you want to present to the players. Adapt the rumor to fit the personality of the NPC delivering it.

1 "I'm sure you know as well as anyone that using positive energy is... frowned upon. Well, I overheard the high priest of Urgathoa, Pesabnet, whispering

to someone that he knows someone who can get scrolls that carry that kind of power for them if they wanted. Can you believe it? You'd think Urgathoa would cast down one of her priests for such an offence, but I suppose the gods work in their own ways."

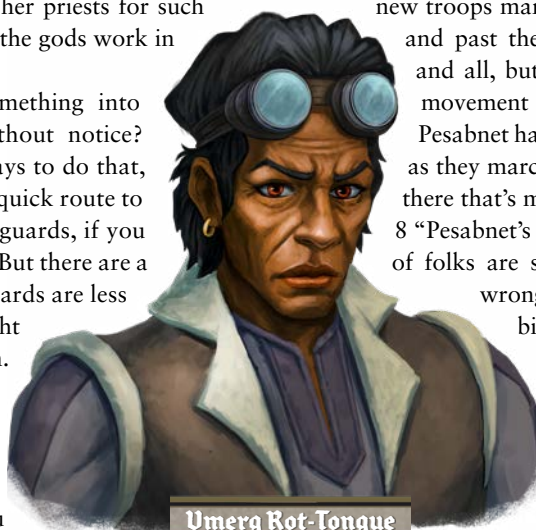
- 2 "You need to move something into and out of the city without notice? There are few enough ways to do that, and such talk might be a quick route to a close meeting with the guards, if you understand my meaning. But there are a some places where the guards are less likely to just charge right in because of the location. The Pallid Pinnacle is sacrosanct, so Pesabnet could get up to pretty much whatever he wanted, I suppose. You won't catch me saying he does, just that he could."

- 3 "Okay, so first you need to know that trade with Nex isn't strictly forbidden. Illicit instead of illegal, you understand. Big difference. So anyway, it's possible I may have helped arrange a delivery of goods to the Pallid Pinnacle from Quantum. I mean, if it's going to the high priest of Urgathoa here in Yled, I just figured it was going to be acceptable. It's not like Pesabnet is going to do something that would harm the war effort, right?"

- 4 "I keep my ears—what's left of them, ha!—to the ground, listening for opportunities to profit. Caught a bit of news a few weeks ago. Someone in a high place was looking for *aeon stones*, lots of them. Those are some expensive rocks! Word has it this was someone in the Pallid Pinnacle."

- 5 "Trying to get hold of magical weapons, armor, and runes has been harder than usual in Yled due to the war effort. No surprises there. What is a bit puzzling, though, is a shortage of those *aeon stones*. You know, little magical gems that float around your head? Someone's been buying them all up. Rumors say it's someone who works in the Pallid Pinnacle."

- 6 "I'd be careful of any smuggling talk here in Yled. The Warmaster Council keeps tightening regulations. More crimes are getting "treason" tacked onto them. Just an excuse to carry out summary judgement rather than going into the courts. Only way to get a fair shake is to be high up and almost immune to that. Like that high priest of Urgathoa, Pesabnet. I've heard he's happy to overlook the "freelance trade" for a fee."



Umerg Rot-Tongue

- 7 "The Celebrants are really making their presence known here in Yled. Not a day goes by that we don't have some kind of military parade, usually new troops marching out from the Moratorium and past the Pallid Pinnacle. It's impressive and all, but it does tend to slow down the movement of goods in the city. At least Pesabnet hasn't been doing his usual blessing as they march by. Wonder what he's doing in there that's more important?"

- 8 "Pesabnet's done some smuggling, plenty of folks are saying it. But you're asking the wrong questions—smuggling isn't a big deal, really. What you should really be worried about is Nex. I've heard there are saboteurs running through the warrens under the city! You know that means they're trying to get to the power source of our defenses, right? No, I don't know

exactly where that is or what, but everyone knows whatever is down there is important!"

- 9 "Have you heard these stories about our grain being poisoned? Makes you wonder what kind of quality control procedures are in place, doesn't it? Even the services at the Pallid Pinnacle have become infrequent. Seems like no one's getting a fair shake on food."

- 10 "The necromancer's college, the Mortuarium over that way, has really increased their production in the last couple of months. Good on them. We're going to need lots of troops, as well as those who know how to command them, when we finally finish off Nex. Strange thing, though. In the past, the high priest of Urgathoa at the Pallid Pinnacle would have a new batch of acolytes training up to help. Pesabnet hasn't been doing that."

- 11 "I've heard stories about Pesabnet being up to something, although I'm not sure it's smuggling. More overlooking, if you catch my meaning. He enjoys the way so many residents and visitors to the city come calling at the Pallid Pinnacle looking to show their faith in Urgathoa. And if a few shady deals happen under his roof, that's just more reason for them to come. Whatever keeps the coffers full, I suppose. Although now that I think of it, he hasn't been as active at services as in the past. His sermons hint at some kind of "great work" he's doing."

- 12 "A few weeks ago one of the services at the Pallid Pinnacle was interrupted by a scream as someone fell from the top of the building and smashed into the ground. I happened to be in the crowd outside and saw it happen. I ran over to look. It was a

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bit of a mess, but I did see the human had some kind of gem embedded in his forehead. I was really surprised; it didn't even pop out when he landed! Pesabnet had some acolytes push the crowd back and try to explain it away. Said it was a sacrifice for Urgathoa and that the human would be a guest at the feast. That got a few cheers and chuckles. Thing was, he never did show up on the menu."

Confronting Pesabnet

There is no required number of true rumors the player characters need to gather before they can move to confront Pesabnet. However, if they try to force a meeting with him before at least learning three rumors specifically about him, the party loses 5 Reputation Points with the Celebrants and learn that the Urgathoans in Yled are putting significant political pressure to block their attempt to access the Pallid Pinnacle—for now.

When they finally gather enough information to confront Pesabnet without consequence, the situation changes so that the Urgathoans throughout the city withdraw their complaints entirely. This isn't just because the characters have learned more about Pesabnet; it's because they've heard that the Warmaster Council is moving against the Pallid Pinnacle for reasons no one fully understands.

In any case, once they've heard three rumors about Pesabnet, the characters learn that opposition to their investigation into the Pallid Pinnacle has evaporated, and they're free to enter the temple. The other news is best communicated by an NPC contact, who approaches when the party is making their way to the temple. This NPC can be anyone the group has worked with before, such as Blood Lord contacts, NPCs from the Gathering Rumors section, or someone else they trust. Vmerg Rot-Tongue makes a good choice if you don't have anyone else in mind. Read or paraphrase the following.

A familiar face hurriedly approaches. "I'm glad I caught you! Listen, I know you've been asking around about Pesabnet so I've been listening for anything new about him. I just overheard one of the Warmaster Council members, Pokmit Bloody-Pike himself, tell a group of soldiers that the Pallid Pinnacle is now off limits to anyone the Warmaster Council didn't specifically allow inside. He told them to set up a perimeter and that the twins—yes, the twins!—would be guarding the doors. I'm not sure what your plan is, but it seemed pretty clear that Pokmit is out to at least capture if not destroy Pesabnet soon. I'd guess if you hurry you might beat him there, but only if you leave soon."

The NPC knows a bit about the reputation of the graveknight twins (see Pokmit's Watchers). Of Pokmit, they only know the graveknight has a reputation as an important member of the Warmaster Council prone to swift, summary justice. The NPC knows little else about the particulars of the situation.

XP Award: Award the characters 30 XP for each true rumor they gather (up to 150 XP).

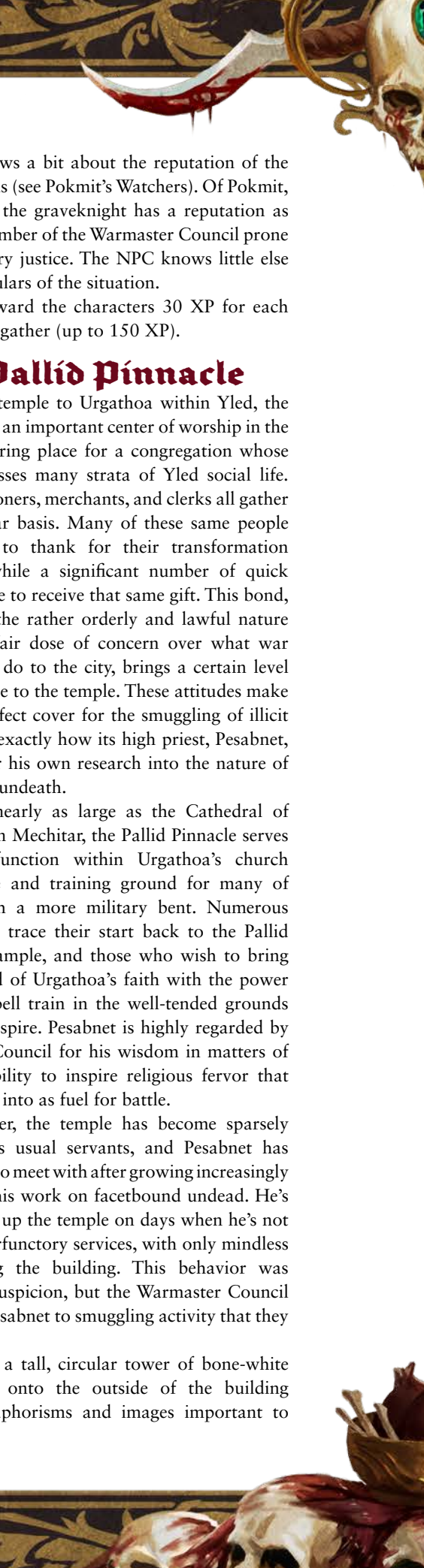
The Pallid Pinnacle

As the primary temple to Urgathoa within Yled, the Pallid Pinnacle is an important center of worship in the city and a gathering place for a congregation whose membership crosses many strata of Yled social life. Generals, commoners, merchants, and clerks all gather here on a regular basis. Many of these same people have Urgathoa to thank for their transformation into undeath, while a significant number of quick congregants hope to receive that same gift. This bond, combined with the rather orderly and lawful nature of Yled and a fair dose of concern over what war with Nex might do to the city, brings a certain level of trust and peace to the temple. These attitudes make the temple a perfect cover for the smuggling of illicit goods, which is exactly how its high priest, Pesabnet, uses it to further his own research into the nature of *aeon stones* and undeath.

Though not nearly as large as the Cathedral of Epiphenomena in Mechitar, the Pallid Pinnacle serves an important function within Urgathoa's church as a home base and training ground for many of the faithful with a more military bent. Numerous antipaladins can trace their start back to the Pallid Pinnacle, for example, and those who wish to bring about the spread of Urgathoa's faith with the power of sword and spell train in the well-tended grounds around the pale spire. Pesabnet is highly regarded by the Warmaster Council for his wisdom in matters of faith and his ability to inspire religious fervor that warriors can tap into as fuel for battle.

Lately, however, the temple has become sparsely populated by its usual servants, and Pesabnet has become difficult to meet with after growing increasingly secretive about his work on facetbound undead. He's taken to locking up the temple on days when he's not providing his perfunctory services, with only mindless undead roaming the building. This behavior was bound to raise suspicion, but the Warmaster Council has connected Pesabnet to smuggling activity that they want to stop.

The temple is a tall, circular tower of bone-white marble. Carved onto the outside of the building are dozens of aphorisms and images important to



Urgathoa's teachings. Inside, the ceilings are 20 feet tall. There are no external windows, and the entire inside is unlit.

The map of the Pallid Pinnacle appears on page 22.

POKMIT'S WATCHERS

LOW 15

The city block containing the Pallid Pinnacle is surrounded by armed soldiers who stand with weapons bared, gesturing away passersby who get too close. In the center of an unusually bountiful garden is a tall, withered-looking bone-white tower. Its surface is covered in carved images of skeletal figures feasting on spoiled food and gorging on chunks of flesh.

By the time the characters arrive, Pokmit has posted two trusted subordinates, the graveknight twins Tbik and Dkur, outside the Pallid Pinnacle. Pokmit wants to ensure that Pesabnet doesn't escape and that no one else enters the building. Pokmit needs only a little more time to gather the forces he needs to raid the temple, so the characters don't have long before he begins his attack.

Pokmit is nothing if not thorough, and he has encircled the city block the Pallid Pinnacle stands on with numerous soldiers and other lookouts. These are mostly hunter wights (*Pathfinder Book of the Dead* 168) who aren't high-enough level to pose a threat to the characters. However, any assault on the wights is likely to bring the twins. Additionally, several murders of undead crows are perched on surrounding buildings. They caw to warn the twins of suspicious activity.

Pushing or Fighting Past: The characters can easily force their way through the cordon; they're too powerful and influential for hunter wights to do anything about it, and the undead crows don't have significant attacks. This action, however, draws the twins, who immediately attack to drive the characters away, per their orders. If a fight breaks out, none of the hunter wights get involved, as Blood Lord politics are above their pay grade.

Stealth: The player characters might choose to sneak into the grounds of the Pallid Pinnacle to make their way inside. The hunter wights have Perception DC 26, the undead crows have Perception DC 32, and the twins have a Perception DC 36. If any group spots movement inside the restricted area, they immediately sound an alarm and the twins move to attack.

Trickery or Diplomacy: The characters might decide to use their considerable influence to talk their way past the guards. Hunter wights call over Tbik and Dkur, who do the negotiating. Their initial

attitude is unfriendly, and they have a Will DC 34 (and are treated, for most skill action purposes, as a single creature). If the characters raise their attitude to friendly or helpful, the characters can attempt to Coerce them or Request admission using the following outcomes.

Critical Success The twins allow the characters to enter the Pallid Pinnacle.

Success The twins allow the characters to enter the Pallid Pinnacle grounds, but not the building itself. To do so, the characters need to sneak in or attempt to gain more permission by interacting with the twins further. Treat a future successful result with them as a critical success.

Failure The twins attack with the goal of subduing the characters and turning them over to Pokmit.

Critical Failure The twins assume the characters are attempting to directly contradict Pokmit's orders. They immediately attack with the goal of killing the characters.

Creatures: Tbik and Dkur are graveknight warmasters. They consider service to their superior, Pokmit Blood-Pike, as the most important element in their existence. When Pokmit learned of Pesabnet's crimes, he knew he needed loyal guards to capture the priest. The twins have been told to watch the doors of the temple and to let no one enter or exit unless directly ordered by Pokmit. The twins stand next to each other, war flails in hand, as they watch the area for any signs of trouble.

GRAVEKNIGHT WARMASTERS (2) CREATURE 14

Pathfinder Book of the Dead 110

Initiative Perception +26

C1. FEAST HALL

The walls of this rounded room are an austere ivory. Several large feasting tables are arranged haphazardly in the area, their wooden slats deeply stained by blood. Streaks of dried filth and gore crisscross the tile floor while stripes of clean sections stand in sharp contrast. The smell of decay fills the room.

The Urgathoans use this room for the many gluttonous feasts held in honor of the Pallid Princess. These messy affairs always involve overconsumption of rotten food. The room is normally cleaned between feasts, but with fewer zombies at hand, the chamber is far fouler than normal. Two zombies are working here. They ignore everyone but Pesabnet, as they "clean" the room with mops crusty with dried blood.

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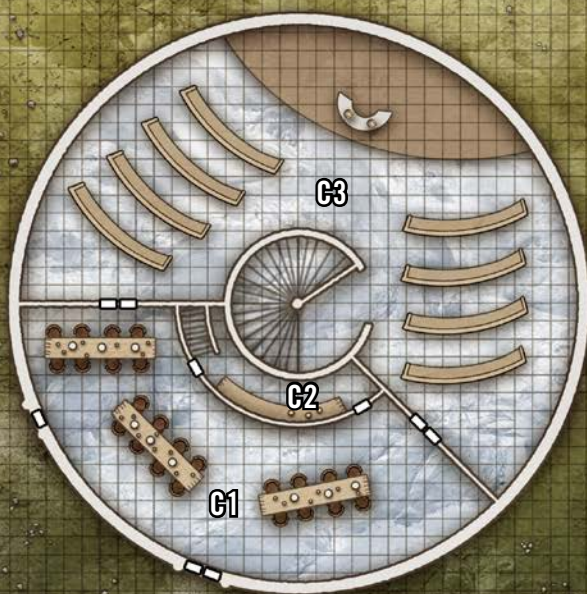
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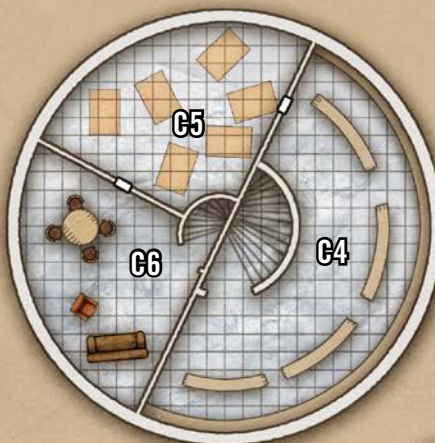
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THE PALLID PINNACLE: GROUND FLOOR

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



THE PALLID PINNACLE: 2ND FLOOR



THE PALLID PINNACLE: 3RD FLOOR

C2. KITCHEN

The odor of ancient decay and rot permeates this semi-circular kitchen. Piles of half-prepared corpses of humanoid creatures are stacked along the northern walls alongside heaps of decomposing vegetables. Cleavers and knives, their blades rusted and chipped, are strewn about the various counters and cutting boards.

The temple staff prepares their foul feasts here. Since Pesabnet has released most of the regular cooks, this room is usually empty except during feast days.

A short set of stairs in the west end of the kitchen leads down to an underground room filled with Urgathoan feast ingredients. The meats and vegetables are in surprisingly good shape, since ritually spoiling them is part of the preparation. The cellar is mundane and thus not depicted on the map of the Pallid Pinnacle.

C3. SANCTUARY

MODERATE 15

The soaring circular ceiling of this room is covered in a detailed mural, in the center of which is the depiction of a

woman whose body is skeletal from the torso to her feet. She holds a scythe in her hands, raised threateningly as if ready to strike down those in the room below her. All around the figure kneel, a crowd of both living and undead, their heads bowed in supplication.

The largest and most important room for visitors to the Pallid Pinnacle, the sanctuary is where the unholy services to Urgathoa are held. Pesabnet used to lead these services, but those he hasn't outright cancelled he leaves to junior priests. The entire room is under the effects of a heightened *consecrate* ritual (*Core Rulebook* 410).

Creatures: Two powerful undead creatures called facetbound nullifiers are in this room. They are the result of Pesabnet's first completely successful process to create undead with *aeon stones* embedded in them. One used to be a human temple guard; she still wears a tabard of Urgathoa over her armor. The other is a longtime foe that Pesabnet captured and transformed, an ifrit champion named Khalahm Faidar.

Pesabnet ordered the facetbound nullifiers to protect the sanctuary and keep intruders away from the stairs.

They demand that intruders leave, and Khalahm escorts intruders back to the feast hall and out of the temple while the other stays here, alert for trickery. If combat begins, both fight until destroyed.

FACETBOUND NULLIFIERS (2)

CREATURE 15

Page 84

Initiative Perception +25

Activating the Defenses

Like many of the important buildings in Yled that were built under the threat of war with Nex, the Pallid Pinnacle has a number of defenses designed to protect it from large-scale assault. Unfortunately for Pesabnet, he isn't aware of the impending attack by the Warmaster Council because he's distracted by his research into facetbound undead. The characters, however, have a chance to activate these defenses if they choose. As the characters approach the sanctuary's altar, read or paraphrase the following.

A curved stone altar stands atop a dais, its once-white marble surface stained a rusty red. Atop the altar, lying on a red and green cloth, are an assortment of religious accoutrements: a large tome, several candles, a miniature scythe, and a medallion in the shape of a fanged skull. Behind the altar are tall, tattered banners depicting a fly painstakingly embroidered in gold thread.

The medallion is the only magical item among those religious items on the altar. It depicts a fanged skull with a hole where its mouth is. The hole is crusted with dried blood. A character who examines the medallion and succeeds at a DC 34 Religion or Urgathoa Lore check, or who succeeds at a DC 36 Arcana or Occultism check, realizes that the medallion serves as a trigger for a larger magical effect, but this trigger must be performed here in the sanctuary—outside the sanctuary, the medallion has no power.

A character who succeeds at a DC 30 Religion check recognizes the medallion as a depiction of Mother Maw, Urgathoa's herald. This being is often called upon by worshippers to protect them from threats to their faith. The character realizes they're activating a defense of some kind and will need to proceed with caution as they don't know the specifics.

Activating the defenses is as simple as sticking a finger into the medallion's opening, twisting it to draw blood (this works even if the creature is undead, so long as it is corporeal), and calling out to Urgathoa or Mother Maw for protection.

If the players don't hit on this method, a successful DC 34 Religion check provides the necessary steps. Once activated, a hum echoes throughout the ground floor of the Pallid Pinnacle, enacting the cleansing fire trap in area C5 and other defenses that might impede Pokmit's charge through the temple (described in area C8).

Treasure: The holy items and offerings on the altar are worth 800 gp.

XP Award: If the characters successfully activate the Pallid Pinnacle's defenses with the medallion, award them 30 XP.



Tbik

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C4. LIBRARY

LOW 15

Rows of scrolls and leatherbound tomes rest on finely carved shelves along the curve of the tower's wall here.

This library contains a sizable and rather valuable collection of religious texts and books about animating the dead. Out of place on these shelves are several tomes that outline theories regarding *aeon stones* and the ancient Azlanti Empire. A few of these are quite recent printings from New Thassilon about ancient Azlanti history.

Pesabnet has dismissed (or destroyed and eaten) the temple scholars who used to work here. He now

treats this library as his personal research room, which is why he's placed all his materials about the topic of *aeon stones* here.

Creatures: Pesabnet replaced the normal tower guards here with his most recent facetbound undead, a facetbound cascader who used to be the temple's head librarian. She now hates the library she once oversaw and uses damaging spells liberally without any care for whether the books survive.

FACETBOUND CASCADER

CREATURE 16

Page 85

Initiative Perception +28

Treasure: A rare tome called *Aeon Ascendant* is the most valuable book here. It's worth 500 gp, but the ghost Jakob Krish is seeking it, as this missing book is the reason he's still anchored to Yled. Jakob vanishes with a contented sigh if he can touch the book. If he does, he leaves behind some ectoplasmic residue that functions as a vial of *ghost dust*.

C5. MEDITATION ROOM

MODERATE 15

Several simple straw mats deliberately covered in filth and rotting gore have been laid out in this room.

Decades ago, Pesabnet first began fortifying the Pallid Pinnacle against intrusion. Although he had done a great deal of work to ensure the citizens of Yled view him as indispensable, he is nevertheless quite practical. He knew it was very likely that any attack on his stronghold would come from other undead, so he designed his defenses to be especially effective against them. Even though it meant severe repercussions if his defenses were discovered, as they utilize illegal positive energy, he decided the tradeoff was worth the risk. To build these countermeasures, he reached out to several black-market traders who could wield positive energy. It was in these dealings that the priest first encountered Ghiasi, who brokered an arrangement for Pesabnet to meet purveyors of positive energy items.

When Ghiasi recently found herself on the wrong end of Kemnebi's plots, she asked for Pesabnet's help in reconnecting with suppliers of positive energy items. Although her own contacts had grown cold, she reasoned the high priest still likely knew a few names she could contact. If sellers assumed the items were for Pesabnet, all the better for Ghiasi. The deal worked out well both for the ghastr and the shae, for the high priest was in the market for ever more *aeon*



Khalahm Faidar

stones—the more unusual the better, for the purposes of his experiments—and Ghiasi knew where to acquire them. Ghiasi started trading *aeon stones* to Pesabnet for positive energy items, then providing those items in turn to the tomb giants in the Agorron below the city.

Hazard: If the player characters activated the defenses in area C3, the cleaning holy fire trap is active; otherwise it isn't present. The trap only remains active for 24 hours. If it's not triggered in that time, it deactivates, although it can be reactivated with the medallion as before.

CLEANSING FIRE

HAZARD 17

COMPLEX MAGICAL

Stealth +43 (master)

Description Sheets of fire and positive energy blast through the room in waves that obliterate the undead and scorch the living.

Disable DC 41 Thievery (master) to bleed away the trap's energy, or DC 39 Religion (expert) to recite the appropriate prayers to Urgathoa to stop the trap (Pesabnet knows these prayers and automatically succeeds at checks to recite them). Disabling the trap requires three successful checks, in any combination of Thievery and Religion checks.

Holy Flame Burst ⚡ (divine, fire, positive) **Trigger** A creature tries to open the door to area C6; **Effect** Magical fire and positive energy flood the room with a harmonious roar. All creatures in the room take 3d12 fire damage and 3d12 positive damage and must attempt a DC 39 Reflex save with the results below. The trap then rolls initiative.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature takes half damage.

Failure The creature takes full damage and 1d12 persistent fire damage.

Critical Failure The creature takes double damage, 1d12 persistent fire damage, and 1d12 persistent positive damage.

Routine (1 action) A wall of sacred fire washes back and forth throughout the room, bathing every inch of the space in holy power and dealing 3d12 fire damage and 3d12 positive damage. Each creature in the trap's area must attempt a DC 39 Reflex save.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature takes half damage.

Failure The creature takes double damage.

Critical Failure If the creature has negative healing, it is instantly destroyed. Otherwise, it takes double damage and 1d12 persistent fire damage.

Reset The sacred fire disappears 1 minute after no creatures are in the room, and the trap immediately resets.

C6. LOUNGE

MODERATE 15

This triangular room is decorated with elegant, sumptuous furniture. Fine tapestries depicting Urgathoan worshippers in various states of supplication line the walls and deaden any sounds in the area.

While the characters have been searching the tower for Pesabnet, Pokmit has been trying to breach it. Finding the defenses on the lower levels to be formidable, he ordered three of his new necrohulks to scale the Pallid Pinnacle and smash their way into the middle levels. He rationalizes that even if the assault is ineffective, it shows how necrohulks perform in a siege environment.

As the characters enter this room, the necrohulks break the southwest wall. Read or paraphrase the following.

A dull thud followed by a resounding crash shakes the Pallid Pinnacle. Suddenly, a section of the wall to the southwest crumbles as several hulking creatures force their way in!

Creatures: A necrohulk smasher and two necrohulk flailers breach the room. The necrohulks fight any creatures they come across, but Pokmit told them to capture rather than kill Pesabnet. Since the dull-witted necrohulks can't tell ghouls apart, the necrohulk flailers try to grab ghoul characters rather than kill them. They try to batter all other creatures to death. All three necrohulks fight until destroyed.

NECROHULK SMASHER

CREATURE 15

Page 87

Initiative Perception +25

NECROHULK FLAILERS (2)

CREATURE 13

Page 86

Initiative Perception +23

Treasure: The tapestries are worth 400 gp.

C7. STUDY AND LABORATORY

This circular room is decorated with murals depicting a gruesome feast: several figures in varying states of death and undeath stand around a long, beautifully decorated table. Upon the platters are a variety of breads, vegetables, and meats, all of which are rotten and decaying. Flies as large as a human thumb buzz about, some in the air, while others sit on the food or the standing figures. An ornate circular staircase descends from the room's center.

Pesabnet Zoheri (NE male ghast priest of Urgathoa 13) uses this room as his personal quarters and

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research laboratory. He stands at a worktable to the south, blissfully unaware of the attack on the temple. He is working to affix an *aeon stone* to the head of an unconscious prisoner when the characters arrive.

Pesabnet is surprised to see intruders, but he's canny enough to realize anyone who has fought their way through his facetbound creations is probably too powerful for him to overcome. He instead politely introduces himself and asks what the characters hope to accomplish in this sacred place.

EVENT: POKMIT ARRIVES MODERATE OR SEVERE 15

Only a few moments after the player characters reach Pesabnet, and before they have a chance to introduce themselves or begin to question the surprised ghast, Pokmit assaults the Pallid Pinnacle. He enters the tower from its front doors and works his way upward, checking each room to ensure that Pesabnet doesn't somehow sneak away. Pokmit is a relentless juggernaut in enforcing the Warmaster Council's will, and he doesn't let anything stand in his way. Any player characters in other rooms encounter the graveknight first, although Pokmit is more interested in reaching Pesabnet than talking with anyone in his way. He moves past characters with nothing other than a scowl.

Creatures: Pokmit attacks those with Pesabnet first, assuming them to be defenders. He assumes that making short work of the characters will encourage Pesabnet to surrender with less fuss. Pokmit fights until destroyed.

Pesabnet doesn't fight against the graveknight, as he hopes to claim his innocence to Pokmit's superiors and truthfully say he didn't resist when Pokmit came for him. This doesn't mean he's unwilling to help the characters, however, and he has three 7th-level *harm* spells that he can cast to aid them (from a distance; he doesn't venture close enough during combat to use the 1-action version of the spell).

If the characters activated the facility defenses in C3, Pokmit isn't at his full strength; in this case, apply the weak adjustments (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 6) to his statistics to reflect his injuries.

POKMIT BLOODY-PIKE

CREATURE 18

Page 92

Initiative Perception +31

LEARNING WHAT PESABNET KNOWS

Once the threat presented by Pokmit is over, Pesabnet thanks the characters profusely. If they ask him what he knows about *shadow ash*, he freely and honestly shares what he knows. Read or paraphrase the following.

The ghast straightens his robes as his wide mouth forms a wicked grin. "Thank you, my lords, for the timely rescue. I can barely believe anyone from the Warmaster Council would dare sully the house of the Pallid Princess with



Necrohulk Flailer

such an attack. If they knew the work I was conducting here and how it could be put to use in the war, they would regret that choice. But that isn't why you're here, is it?

"I don't know what this *shadow ash* is or where it comes from. However, in my work I have had to resort to, let us say 'extra-legal' approaches to obtain some necessary components manufactured primarily in Nex. In doing so, I've struck an arrangement with a shae named Ghiasi. She has a long history as a smuggler that she'd probably prefer everyone forget, but she and I have an arrangement. She gets me the components I need for my studies and I, in turn, give her..." Pesabnet falters a bit, "Well, the things I get for her are definitely more on the illegal side. Items that produce positive energy are seriously restricted, as you probably know, and actually using them is outright illegal throughout Geb. But Ghiasi is eager for them, and I believe she has a buyer with deep pockets willing to purchase a shocking amount of such items. I heard her once mention, when she wasn't aware I was listening, how much *shadow ash* she could get from even a few healing scrolls.

"Ghiasi owns and operates Twined Stories playhouse. Finding her shouldn't be too difficult, I suppose, though getting an actual meeting with her might prove to be a challenge. If you have any connections with the upper crust of Yled society, you shouldn't have too much trouble. I seem to recall an upcoming performance several congregants mentioned—perhaps you could obtain tickets and meet her there. She never misses one of her shows."

The "necessary components" that Pesabnet references are *aeon stones* used to create his facetbound undead. Pesabnet is fascinated with collecting and trading the magical stones. If any characters have active *aeon stones*, he offers to purchase them immediately. He tells anyone who shares his interest in the stones that he's acquired several rare types, which he's willing to sell because they've proven to be of limited use to him. He sells such characters any of the new *aeon stones* presented in the Adventure Toolbox on page 77.

The ghost is happy to answer any other questions he can, although he has no knowledge of what exactly the shae is up to. He can also provide a few names of citizens who might be persuaded to sell their tickets to the next performance at Twined Stories. These names can put the characters on the right track to get tickets in the next chapter (or perhaps on one of the wrong tracks indicated there).

If left intact and well, the ghost merely asks the characters to leave him to continue his work. He realizes now that it was probably foolish to keep his facetbound undead a secret from the Warmaster

Council, and he plans to smooth over Pokmit's attack by giving the Warmaster Council his research into this new and powerful type of undead.

Treasure: Pesabnet gives the characters a major eagle eye elixir that he has on his person, along with a bejeweled religious symbol of Urgathoa worth 3,000 gp. If the characters didn't seem too upset about him trading in positive energy items, he also gives them three additional items, all of them illegal in Geb: two 8th-level scrolls of *heal* and a major ghost charge (*Advanced Player's Guide* 253).

XP Award: If the characters learn of Ghiasi's involvement from Pesabnet, award them 120 XP.



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Chapter 2: In the Playhouse

It's almost impossible for the average citizen of Yled to attend a show at Twined Stories. Fortunately for the player characters, their status as Blood Lords gives them an edge on such attempts and provides them an opportunity to gain access to Ghiasi.

Show Tickets

There are a few ways the characters might gain access to Twined Stories. Normally, this access requires special tickets that are both physical (resembling a small papyrus sheet with a unique sigil) and ethereal (a ghostly swirl around the ticket's sigil). These tickets are practically impossible to forge and wail when

handed off from one person to another and thus are very difficult to steal. The characters have a few ways to get them legitimately.

Leveraging Contacts: The characters might already know someone with access to tickets. If the characters have at least 22 Reputation Points with a faction, a faction contact in Yled can procure tickets for each of them at no cost. If the faction is one represented by an Important Patron presented below, you might use them as the party's faction contact—one who also plans to attend the show and would like company.

Purchasing Tickets: Although there are no tickets available for sale at the Twined Stories box office,

some individuals in Yled might be interested in selling their tickets for an exorbitant price. A day of searching and a successful DC 32 Diplomacy or Society check is enough to locate such a person; it also triggers the Popobawa Ambush event below. Once the characters locate a genuine seller, the asking price is 200 gp per ticket. You might decide that the seller is one of the Important Patrons presented below, who's looking for people to accompany them and charges only 100 gp per ticket.

XP Award: Once the characters secure play tickets, award them 80 XP.

EVENT: POPOBAWA AMBUSH

MODERATE 16

Shortly after the characters deal with Pokmit and Pesabnet, the Sorrowhaunt Three lay their ambush. They've been keeping a distant watch on the characters since the Duskdrinkers' afziakas failed to kill them and have grown restless, finally deciding to get more directly involved. When they overhear that the characters are looking for access to Twined Stories, they pose as nobles who have extra tickets to sell. The Sorrowhaunt Three hope to arrange a private meeting with the characters in a vacant plaza or side street and ambush them. If they can't convince the characters to meet, they plan to follow the group and ambush them in any isolated area of the city.

For this encounter, you can use any urban map, such as from *Pathfinder Flip-Mat: City Sites Multi-Pack*.

Creatures: The three popobawas suspect that dominating the characters won't be effective, so they rely on their telekinetic abilities and their melee attacks. Although the Sorrowhaunt Three are aggressive in an ambush, they're fundamentally cowardly. Any popobawa reduced to fewer than 70 Hit Points flees to Yled's rooftops and doesn't bother the characters again.

POPOBAWAS (3)

CREATURE 15

Pathfinder Bestiary 3 206

Initiative Deception +29 or Stealth +26

Treasure: The creatures carry what's left of their payment from Ghiasi: 1,060 gp, a set of diamond earrings worth 650 gp, and a vial of hemlock.

Important Patrons

The player characters are likely to encounter several influential attendees from the upper echelons of Yled society during this chapter. While they are all presented here to make them easier to find during play, you should feel free to introduce these characters however you like throughout this chapter (or even throughout this entire adventure) when it makes sense. The characters might meet them in the Twined Stories lobby, talk to them to gain tickets, or be seated near them during the play.

Blood Lord **Ixai** (LE male dread wraith financier 16) is a high-ranking member of the Tax Collectors Union with connections to every significant merchant in town. Ixai knows that his size and appearance can be unsettling or inconvenient, even in a land of undead, and so tries to avoid dominating others with his presence.

High Exchequer **Kyril Vonth** (NE male wight banker 11) doesn't like the ostentatious trappings of Twined Stories, but he realizes that his ascension through the ranks of the Export Guild requires his participation in Yled's social scene. He is even more taciturn than usual, but not so closemouthed as to be impolite.

CHAPTER 2 SYNOPSIS

With information in hand that Ghiasi knows more about the *shadow ash* smuggling operation, the player characters arrange to meet her at an upcoming performance at her playhouse, Twined Stories. After a series of social encounters and an ambush, the characters attend the play, only to find themselves asked to join the show alongside the shae. As the play progresses, the player characters learn the playhouse is possessed by a dangerous spirit. Before the characters can confront her, Ghiasi escapes into her shadowy lair and the characters follow. Within, they confront a series of guardians and learn more about Ghiasi before cornering Ghiasi herself.

CHAPTER 2 TREASURE

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

- +2 greater striking glaive
- +1 resilient breastplate
- +1 striking spiked chain
- bag of holding (type IV)
- belt of regeneration
- curtain call cloak (page 78)
- greater bottled sunlight (*Pathfinder Book of the Dead* 18)
- greater bravo's brew
- greater disrupting rune
- greater maestro's instrument
- hemlock
- major healing potion
- phantom shroud (page 78)
- scroll of curse of the spirit orchestra (page 79)
- shadow's heart (page 79)
- spectral opera glasses (page 78)

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Speaker **Kneth** (LE nonbinary vampire mediator 13) rarely leaves Yled's Daymarket, not only because they need the blood of mortals to survive but because they genuinely like being around others. They owe allegiance to the Builders League and like to name-drop all the other dignitaries they know—and to perhaps hint that they know occult secrets that these dignitaries are trying to hide.

Majistrix **Lopn** (LE female wight assessor 14) holds authority over pricing controls throughout Yled's Deadmarket. Lopn owes her primary allegiance to the Reanimators. She is cold and calculating, with a keen eye for profits. All of her interactions involve frank appraisals of worth or value.

Blood Lord **Zthni** (CE male vampire socialite 12) hopes that attending this performance might improve his social standing and help rebuild his faltering reputation within the Celebrants. He's attended by two quick companions, **Ritra** (LN female orc valet 4) and **Luthl** (NE male elf housekeeper 5), who Zthni implies are up-and-coming celebrities hanging on the vampire's every word, but whom the characters might remember are merely his servants.

Faction Reputation: If the characters establish friendly relations with any of these patrons, they earn 3 Reputation Points with the relevant faction. The party might interact with multiple patrons (or even all of them), earning Reputation Points with multiple factions. It's up to you to decide what "friendly relations" mean; if roleplayed, good relations might not even require a skill check. If you decide that a skill check is appropriate based on the characters' interaction, a DC 35 Diplomacy check is a good benchmark to use.

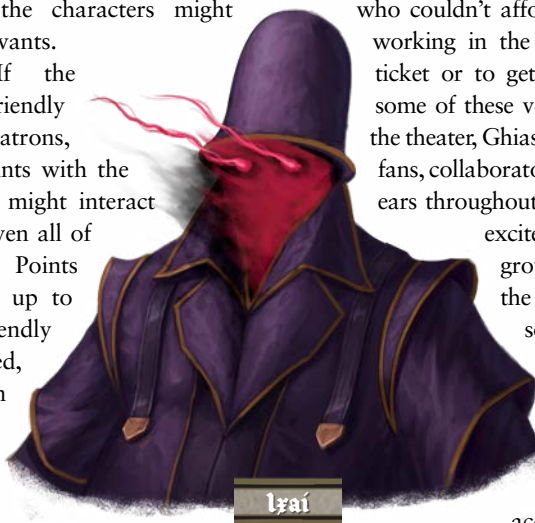
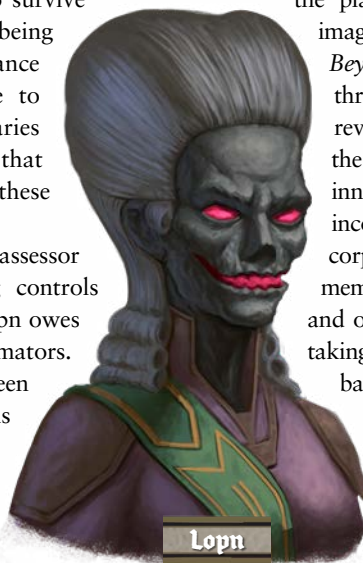
Twined Stories

Twined Stories has been a fixture in Yled for nearly 100 years, but its reputation as a stodgy, conventional theater with old-fashioned, predictable productions made it popular among the older residents and something of a joke among visitors to the city and those who sought novelty rather than predictability.

This reputation began to change abruptly 5 years ago when the energetic and alluring shae Ghiasi purchased the place and began rehabilitating the theater's image. The first production she staged, *Lovers Beyond Time*, sent shockwaves of excitement throughout the city with its story of love and revenge of a ghost and her attempt to recapture the heart of her still-living lover. Ghiasi's innovative dual-natured production in which incorporeal stories took place alongside the corporeal actors was a smash hit. Few audience members could perceive both plotlines at once, and once it was discovered there were two plays taking place simultaneously, audiences flocked back for another viewing, aided by the *spectral opera glasses* sold or rented in the lobby.

As the writer, director, and occasional actor in the productions, Ghiasi's reputation as a brilliant artist quickly blossomed into fame. Residents from all social circles wanted to get in to see the shows and meet the genius behind these productions. Before long, only the wealthiest could afford tickets and even fewer had the opportunity to come face-to-face with Ghiasi. Sensing another opportunity, Ghiasi began a "community volunteer" program in which those who couldn't afford tickets could spend their time working in the theater to earn credit toward a ticket or to get a behind-the-scenes view. While some of these volunteers did perform services for the theater, Ghiasi used the most fervently dedicated fans, collaborators, and hangers-on as her eyes and ears throughout the city. Within this collection of excited servants, an even more rabid group formed who came to worship the shae as a quasi-divine muse, something she found intoxicating.

It was around this time that Ghiasi began to notice the playhouse itself seemed to be acting strangely. The spotlights on her seemed brighter, the acoustics when she orated were clearer, and the few audience members who were dissatisfied with the shows had strange accidents that left them maimed, dead, or destroyed. At first, the shae believed all this was due to a haunt or perhaps some of her more overexuberant followers, but eventually the playhouse spoke to her via her dressing room mirror. Ghiasi learned that it was an uncommon type of spectral undead called a theater phantasm. Delighted to have such a powerful ally on her side, Ghiasi wrote productions that took full advantage of



the playhouse's abilities, and the reputation of Twined Stories skyrocketed.

Twined Stories is currently the most popular playhouse in Yled, especially among the movers and shakers in the city. Even those individuals who don't care for the performances know this is a place to be if they want to be part of the social scene in the city. With the looming threat of war with Nex occupying more and more of the residents' minds, Twined Stories is also one of the best places to catch snippets of news from those who are an active part of war preparations.

PRE-SHOW

Once the player characters enter Twined Stories, read or paraphrase the following.

The atrium of Twined Stories is abuzz with excitement. Dozens of well-dressed members of the city's elite mill about, talking excitedly to each other in small groups.

Allow the players some time to mingle with the other attendees. The characters can encounter any familiar Blood Lord contacts from the city, other dignitaries outlined at the start of this chapter (see Important Patrons), and perhaps even members of the Warmaster Council, as described on pages 70 to 75. Since no one has yet seen tonight's performance of *The Winnowing of Gachanta* (Ghiasi only just finished writing it, after all), most of the guests are busy speculating about the plot and the actors, two facts Ghiasi has kept secret. In addition, the attendees are eager to discuss the preparations for war and what the inevitable conflict might mean for the city and its citizens.

Assigning the Key NPC: You should ask the characters to identify the NPC with whom they're spending the most time or whom they most want to impress; the ones indicated in Important Patrons on page 29 make the best choices. This NPC's faction is important in the first part of this chapter. This person is called the "Key NPC" when the person's identity matters.

Ghiasi's Fans: This is also a good time to show how respected and loved Ghiasi is in Yled. More than one attendee goes off into a long-winded explanation of how artistic and innovative her work is. It should be clear how enthusiastic her fans are and that any direct attack against her (or even treating her rudely) is likely to cause a major loss of reputation for the player characters.

Strange Occurrences: Any characters who spends time Investigating Twin Stories during the pre-show and succeeds at a DC 35 Perception check notices something out of the ordinary about the atmosphere of the building: lighting that dims or brightens itself,

KEEPING GHIASI IN THE BACKGROUND

One of the challenges in this section of the adventure is keeping Ghiasi out of sight of the player characters until she makes her dramatic entrance during the Casting Call below. The shae is aware the characters likely want to ask her questions and perhaps are even willing to use physical violence against her to achieve their ends. To protect herself, she remains in the House of Inspiring Shadows up until the moment she needs to arrive, and she keeps the portal to her lair sealed until she needs it.

Ghiasi enters Twined Stories from her lair surrounded by a gaggle of 20 or more hangers-on, cast members, and a few notable members of Yled's social elite. She is fairly confident the player characters want to avoid embarrassment, and a direct attack on her or a series of pointed questions certainly draws unwanted attention to the newly minted Blood Lords. Trying to interrogate the shae in front of a group or publicly accusing her of a crime means the loss of 1d4 Reputation Points from the Key NPC's faction (see Pre-Show below). A direct attack means the loss of 1d4 Reputation Points with each faction and causes the theater phantasm to reveal itself and attack, likely joined by a number of Ghiasi's more ardent supporters.

velvet ropes that twist to keep attendees from backstage areas, and so on. These details are minor but hint at the presence of some spirit who inhabits the place.

XP Award: If the characters spend some time visiting with the important movers and shakers or if they witness some of the strange occurrences, award them 30 XP.

CASTING CALL

After the player characters have had some time to meet with some important fellow attendees, read or paraphrase the following.

The crowd begins muttering excitedly as they turn their heads toward the top of the stairway leading to the grand doors from the atrium into the theater. Ghiasi stands there, surveying the crowd. Her mask is bone white and decorated with slightly smiling feminine features. She makes a soothing gesture and the assembled theatergoers fall silent, their rapt attention on the shae.

"My friends, I am sorry to report that several cast members have fallen ill and will be unable to perform tonight. I am afraid I will have to cancel the show." The crowd reacts with clear disappointment at this news.

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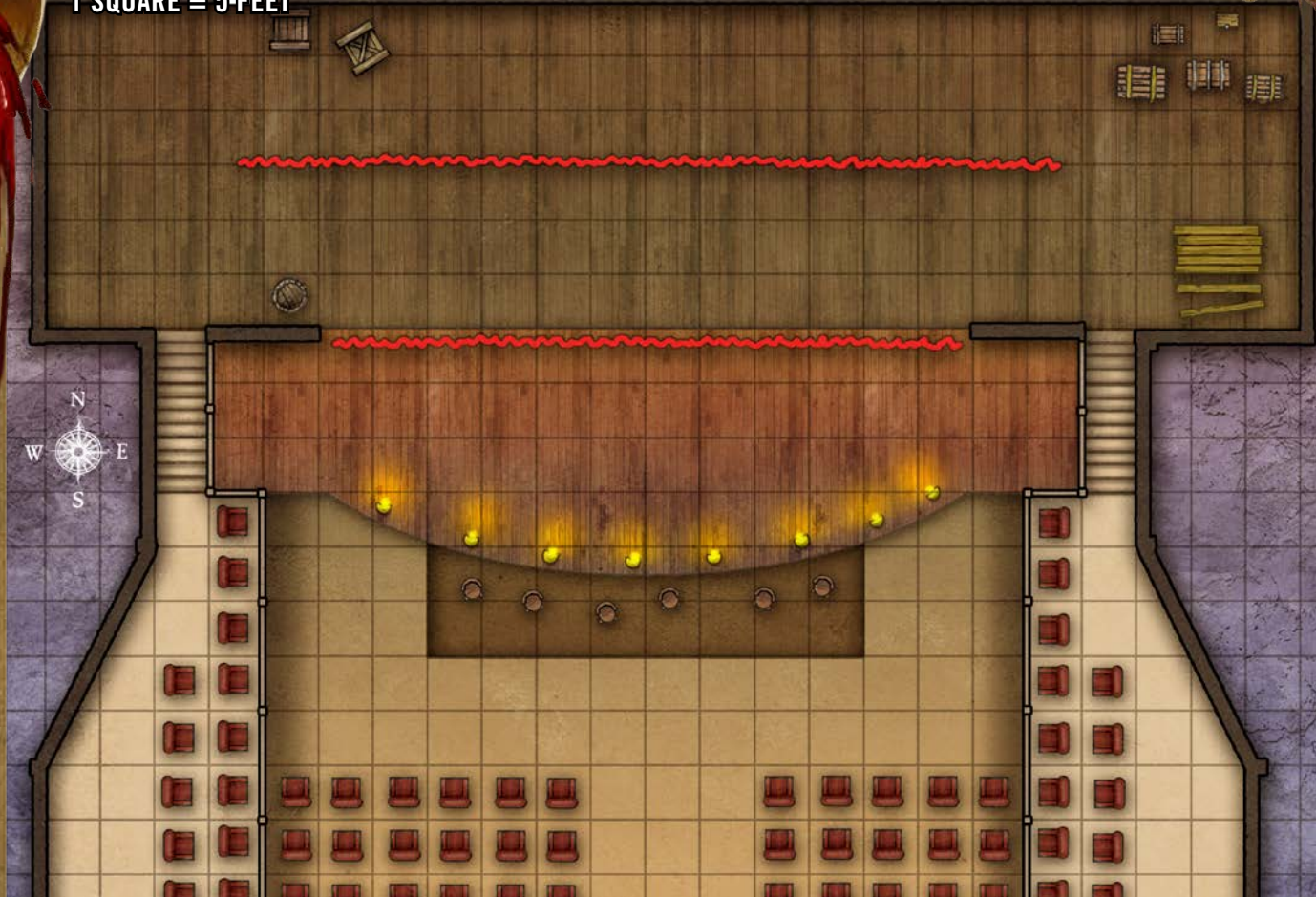
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1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



"I know," she continues, "the parts they were cast in don't have many lines, but they do require experience with stage combat. Alas, they are central to the story."

There are a few seconds of muttering and then a voice shouts out, "What about volunteers? Surely someone here could handle a bit of mock battle?"

The voice belongs to the Key NPC. If the characters don't volunteer, continue with the following.

"Yes, I suppose that could work," the shae replies. "Is there anyone here who would be able to do such a thing? You would be working right beside me in supporting roles." The crowd begins muttering, but no one raises a hand.

If none of the characters volunteer, then the same person who suggested the idea of volunteers points out the party and loudly suggests that the nation's newest Blood Lords have shown themselves capable in combat and that this would be a great chance for everyone to see them in action. The crowd is overwhelmingly excited about this. Make it clear to the characters that this would be an excellent opportunity to both gain a

great deal of reputation and get close enough to Ghiasi to ask her some questions.

Assuming the characters volunteer, the crowd breaks into excited applause. Ghiasi quickly moves into the backstage area and works to prepare while dodging any attempts by the player characters to talk to her. Her ever-present hangers-on surround her.

The assistant director, a gruff male dwarf named **Humbrin** (LN male dwarf director 9), prods any player characters who agreed to participate backstage to wardrobe where they are given simple costumes that fit over their current equipment. A harried stagehand instructs them to "just follow Ghiasi's lead."

If no characters agree to join the performance, Ghiasi sadly cancels the show. Whether fairly or not, the characters are blamed for the cancellation. Ghiasi remains in the theater for about an hour under the assumption the characters will try to break in and find her. If they reenter Twined Stories, or after the hour passes, she retreats into the House of Inspiring Shadows, leaving a portal open for them to follow. In that case, skip ahead to House of Inspiring Shadows on page 36.

Faction Reputation: If at least one character agrees to participate in the performance, all faction representatives present take notice. The characters gain 1 Reputation Point with each faction other than the Carter's Consortium. If no characters volunteer, the group loses 1d4 Reputation Points from the Key NPC's faction as that person feels the sting of rejection most keenly.

RUNNING THE PLAY

During the performance of the play, characters are assigned roles. They can trade parts amongst themselves if they wish, but they are all assigned parts of mercenaries who don't even have names, just numbers to distinguish their lines. The characters can either choose roles or you can simply assign them. They are only given a few minutes to study and learn their parts before the show begins. The players, of course, can use their scripts throughout.

Since the purpose of the play is not only to entertain the crowd but to provide Ghiasi a chance to test the characters' mettle, the outcomes of each section are not guaranteed. If a character dies during the play, stagehands rush out to pull the body into the backstage area at the end of the act. They otherwise leave the body alone and make sure no one comes to harm it. If this happens, the character appears as a member of the ethereal cast in the next act until they are returned to life.

Let the players know that the checks during the show measure their acting at the start and the end of each of the three acts. Each participating character thus attempts the Perform in *The Winnowing* activity six times throughout the play.

PERFORM IN THE WINNOWING

CONCENTRATE | EXPLORATION | LINGUISTIC

You play your role in *The Winnowing of Gachanta* as directed. You Perform in *The Winnowing* at the start and at the end of each act in the play. Attempt a DC 35 Acrobatics, Athletics, or Society check, or a DC 33 Performance or Theater Lore check.

Critical Success The audience gasps and cheers as you command the stage. Your group gains 2 Performance Points.

Success Your stage presence is strong. Your group gains 1 Performance Point.

Failure Your acting is uninspired.

Critical Failure Your boorish buffoonery brings shame upon the stage. Your group loses 1 Performance Point.

Treasure: The wardrobe department gives the party two *spectral opera glasses* (page 78), a *curtain call cloak* (page 78), and a *phantom shroud* (page 78) to help them keep track of—and participate in—the ethereal components of the play.

RECALCITRANT PERFORMERS

It's possible one or more characters flatly refuse to participate in the show. Such characters still have assigned seats from the tickets they procured (within the front few rows in the middle section) or can take standing-room spots at the back so they can watch their companions, but each time these offstage characters interfere with the show—such as to engage in combat—the party loses 3 Performance Points.

XP Award: Award the party 30 XP for each character who participates in the play, to a maximum of 120 XP.

The Winnowing of Gachanta

As Ghiasi watched the player characters' progress from afar, she has been dreaming up an exciting new show as usual, but also a play that helps her send messages to the characters as well as her audience. She is angry at being manipulated by Chancellor Kemnebi and sees herself as the beleaguered hero in the production that is her life. By tapping into those feelings, she has created a play titled *The Winnowing of Gachanta* that she hopes will tell her story without getting her in trouble with the vampire. She knows she can't outright accuse Kemnebi of treason, but she can use artistic license to hint at what he's doing. She understands this is risky but is confident that even if the characters don't get the hint, at least some of her audience will, which may present an opportunity for her to escape her predicament.

Any combats that occur on stage can use the map of the Twined Stories stage on page 32.

ACT I

Read or paraphrase the following to begin the play.

The darkened stage is illuminated by a spotlight on a single figure: Ghiasi in her lead role as Gachanta. She stands quietly, surrounded by darkness, moving about in the various parts of her day: directing employees in their tasks, negotiating with vendors, and filling out paperwork. The music lends a sense of danger as half-hidden shapes begin moving in the shadows, reaching out toward Gachanta but never quite reaching her.

The first act tells the story of Gachanta: an intelligent, driven merchant determined to succeed despite ever-increasing odds. The story follows her rise from a simple fruit vendor to leader of a trade network that soon dominates the markets in an unnamed country.

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Selected Script for Act I

[Enter Gachanta (the hero), and her hapless mercenary servants]

Gachanta: Who is behind all these attacks on my shipments? Someone seems determined to ruin me!

Mercenary 1: Maybe we can help you find out.

[the mercenaries all agree]

Gachanta [doubtfully at Mercenary 1]: You? You couldn't find your own belt this morning!

Mercenary 2: I found it for them! But then I thought it was mine... and put it on.

Mercenary 1: Hey! I've been looking for that!

Mercenary 3 [proudly]: I have a belt! It has a new buckle. It's so shiny.

Gachanta [tiredly]: Yes, you've been saying so all morning.

Mercenary 4: I'm wearing shoes!

Gachanta [exasperated]: Why do I even keep you around? It's a good thing your muscles are bigger than your brains.

HANDOUT #1

Along the way, she overcomes attacks on her life and business, aided by a group of mercenary servants and lackeys who, despite their bumbling efforts, manage to always be in the right place at the right time.

Throughout the act, ethereal figures are increasingly arrayed against Gachanta. Armed and armored figures on the Ethereal Plane reach and grasp toward her, moving about in a sea that slowly rotates around her. All their actions are clearly coordinated by a single figure, the mastermind behind this plot, who spreads a cape expansively, turns to a bat, and flies away.

Hand the players a copy of the script selection. The players then get a chance to read their lines from Act I, provided on **Handout #1**. Feel free to award players who read their parts enthusiastically a bonus to Perform in *The Winnowing* checks at the end of this act.

Phantasm Problems: Concerned that too much attention might be going to the player characters and not Ghiasi, the theater phantasm begins manipulating the stage to cause harmless, if embarrassing, accidents. Floorboards pop up, pieces of the set fall on heads, and costumes slip off. Each character must attempt a DC 35 Reflex save. If the characters already discovered evidence of a haunt, reduce this DC to 33.

Critical Success The character spots the problem ahead of time and works it into their performance, gaining a +2 circumstance bonus on their check to Perform in *The Winnowing* at the end of Act I.

Success The character avoids being embarrassed.

Failure The character experiences an embarrassing moment, but there is no consequence.

Critical Failure Something embarrassing happens to the character, and the character has a -2 penalty on their check to Perform in *The Winnowing* at the end of Act I. In the fight during Act III, the theater phantasm targets this character in preference to others (or multiple characters, if more than one critically fail).

ACT II

MODERATE 16

The lights return on a scene of Gachanta with her accountant. Stacks of coins surround them as they carefully record business dealings.

While Gachanta conducts business, the villainous vampire mastermind on the Ethereal Plane boasts about his plans to a meeting of shadowy creatures. They discuss their plans to deal with this upstart, Gachanta, who has disrupted their own stranglehold on trade. The vampire soon grows tired of this talk and breaks away from the others. He gathers a few servants and travels to the physical world where they begin enacting a magical summoning. Some of the characters' dialogue is presented on **Handout #2**.

To add some realism and to continue to test the player characters, Ghiasi arranged to have a nasty creature summoned into the playhouse. Have the players once again read their parts, after which the creature enters stage left. Gachanta is on stage right, and the player characters are in the center of the stage. Ghiasi acts as if nothing special is going on during the battle.

Creatures: At great expense, Ghiasi has summoned a siktempora from the Plane of Time. She thought if anyone recognized the creature they would be impressed by its rarity. For its part, the siktempora only cares about its orders to kill the characters. It fights until destroyed or until it defeats all the characters (in which case it vanishes, its job finished).

The hatred siktempora vanishes after five rounds. If the characters have defeated it before then, the audience considers them very brave, and they each gain a +2 circumstance bonus to their checks to Perform in *The Winnowing* at the end of Act II.

HATRED SIKTEMPORA

CREATURE 18

Pathfinder Bestiary 3 235

Initiative Perception +33

Script for Act II, Final Scene

[Gachanta talks to a city official while the mercenaries stand nearby]

Mercenary 4: I like this job. Easy money. Bust a few heads once in a while is all.

Mercenary 3: Yeah, little risk, high reward.

Mercenary 2: Not a care in the world. None at all.

Mercenary 1 [leaning lazily against a wall]: It's the best. Nothing could possibly go wrong.

[the sound of crashing comes from stage left]

Strange Voice [from offstage]: Your time is up, mercenaries!

Mercenary 3: Wait. What?

[Enter Mysterious Assassin]

[they fight]

HANDOUT #2

ACT III

MODERATE 16

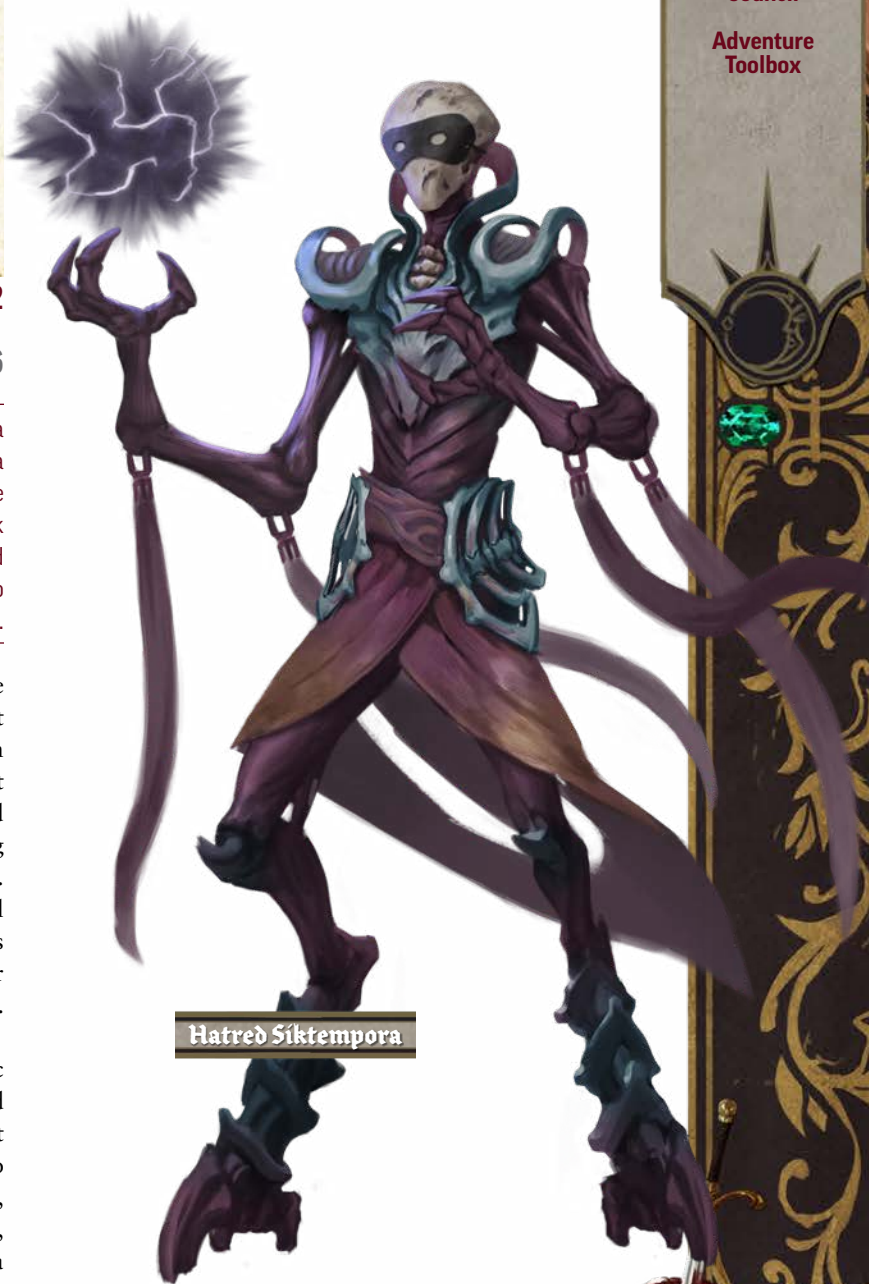
The darkness of the stage gives way to a dull red light, and a steady drumbeat softly plays an insistent rhythm. Gachanta stands before a crowd of troops gathered for war. She delivers a dramatic speech calling upon them to fight back against the forces arrayed against them. With cheers and cries to battle, the crowd disperses, some disappearing into the Ethereal Plane to fight there, while others remain behind.

As the act progresses, Gachanta's tactics seem to be working as her forces defend against the attacks sent by the mysterious vampire, named Count Imneki. Soon they are set to strike a dramatic two-pronged assault on both his headquarters in the Ethereal Plane and the physical world, led by the Gachanta's bumbling mercenaries who have grown into powerful heroes. Two of them (Mercenaries 1 and 2) are in the Material Plane, while the others are in the Ethereal Plane in this scene. The attack is carried out by numerous other actors, but the player characters take the lead for it. Some of the characters' lines are on **Handout #3**.

This final battle brings the play to a climatic conclusion. While the player characters might find the story a bit disappointing because the protagonist Gachanta doesn't defend herself, a character who succeeds at a DC 34 Society check recalls that, in Geb, prestige isn't necessarily about physical prowess; rather, it's about influence and control. Gachanta created a

strong organization and shaped her followers into dedicated servants. The movers and shakers in Yled certainly see something admirable in Gachanta that speaks to their deeper desires for influence.

Creatures: The theater phantasm that inhabits Twined Stories was weak and attenuated until Ghiasi took over and infused the place with new energy and excitement. The spirit was similarly energized and grew fully aware of its own existence. It soon learned that Ghiasi was the source of all the wonderful changes and latched onto her with an adoration that bordered on worship. Today, the phantasm is a jealous protector of the shae.



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Selected Script for Act III

[scene: a war council in the material world and the start of an assault on Count Imneki in the Ethereal Plane]

Gachanta: My friends, you have proven your skill time and again. Right now, your companions are about to confront Count Imneki and end his unlawful attacks on us.

[enter a messenger]

Messenger: Lady Gachanta, I bear a letter from Count Imneki.

Mercenary 1: Do you think he might surrender?

Mercenary 2: That doesn't really sound like him. Let me open that.

[Ethereal Plane, atop a tower]

Mercenary 3: Yes, he's in the room right below us. Didn't even notice me.

Mercenary 4: Is he alone? What's he doing?

Mercenary 3: He was looking into a basin of water, like he was watching something.

[evil laughter from below]

Mercenary 4: That doesn't sound good. Let's move!

[Material Plane]

[Mercenary 2 tears open the envelope and an inky shadow emerges, forming the shape of a hooded skeletal figure bearing a scythe]

Reaper: Death comes for you, courtesy of Count Imneki!

Mercenary 1: Gachanta, flee! We'll protect you!

[Gachanta exits]

HANDOUT #3

In this production, Ghiasi gave the phantasm a role as the villainous Count Imneki. It especially relishes the melodrama of the part and gleefully fights the characters as Ghiasi commands in the script. The theater phantasm looks like a comical, exaggerated version of Chancellor Kemnebi, and it fights until it's destroyed.

The lesser death appears in the middle of the scene to join the fight, whether or not the character portraying Mercenary 2 opens the trapped envelope (see Handout #3). Like the theater phantasm, the lesser death fights until destroyed.

COUNT IMNEKI

CREATURE 16

Theater phantasm (page 89)

Initiative Performance +35

LESSER DEATH

CREATURE 16

Pathfinder Bestiary 197

Initiative Perception +32

Curtain Call

Once the play is over, all the cast comes out to take a bow to thunderous applause. Ghiasi, however, is absent. Characters who take a peek into the wings see a swirling portal where none existed before; this is Ghiasi's portal to the House of Inspiring Shadows. The audience's applause builds with the expectation that the diva will emerge, but it eventually falters as Ghiasi fails to appear. The director Humbrin hisses for the characters to find Ghiasi, pointing them to the portal.

Faction Reputation: The characters are hailed for their performance and earn Reputation Points based on how many Performance Points they earned throughout the play's three acts, as follows.

Total PP	Effect
30+	The characters gain 8 Reputation Points with the Key NPC's faction, 6 Reputation Points with any other faction of their choice, and 4 Reputation Points with a third faction of their choice.
20-29	The characters gain 8 Reputation Points with the Key NPC's faction, 4 Reputation Points with any other faction of their choice, and 2 Reputation Points with a third faction of their choice.
20-24	The characters gain 6 Reputation Points with the Key NPC's faction, 4 Reputation Points with any other faction of their choice, and 2 Reputation Points with a third faction of their choice.
10-19	The characters gain 4 Reputation Points with the Key NPC's faction and 2 Reputation Points with any other faction of their choice.
Up to 9	The characters gain 2 Reputation Points with the Key NPC's faction.

XP Award: If the party earns at least 10 Performance Points, award them 80 XP. Increase this award to 120 XP if they earn at least 20 Performance Points.

House of Inspiring Shadows

During Ghiasi's frequent explorations of Yled's Shadow Plane reflection, she occasionally found herself unable to travel between planes of existence.

Her curiosity piqued, the shae began testing and probing the area, until she found the source of this disruption: an ancient radiant warden in Shadow Yled. She suspects that one of Geb's powerful minions (or perhaps Geb himself) placed it there long ago to deter extraplanar incursions into Yled.

Using the diplomacy and guile she had honed well over the years, Ghiasi convinced the ancient construct that she had Geb's permission to travel between Golarion and the Shadow Plane. With the radiant warden on her side, she built a more permanent lair for herself by cobbling together the various Shadow Yled locations she'd discovered.

After Ghiasi retired from her smuggling operation and took over Twined Stories, she expanded her lair to house shadow giants and other allies she'd made in Shadow Yled. Some of these followers began calling her base of operations the House of Inspiring Shadows, and the name stuck.

The characters venture into the House of Inspiring Shadows through the portal Ghiasi left behind in Twined Stories. The portal closes once the characters have gone through, and it doesn't reopen until Ghiasi wills it or she is defeated.

FEATURES OF THE HOUSE OF INSPIRING SHADOWS

The House of Inspiring Shadows is a collection of chambers connected by twisting, shadowy corridors that resemble stone halls peeling away into shadow. The halls are merely liminal spaces and are empty.

The ceilings in the House of Inspiring Shadows are 20 feet tall unless otherwise noted. The walls, floors, and ceiling are composed of shadowy stone that feels cool and slightly spongy to the touch.

Unless noted otherwise, the House of Inspiring Shadows is lit by dim light that emanates from no particular source to throw long shadows. The nature of the place also actively works to counteract any lights within; non-magical light sources such as torches and lanterns can't raise the light beyond dim. The house attempts to counteract (with a +33 counteract modifier) any spells or effects with the light trait that produce light brighter than dim light. If this counteract attempt fails, the house tries again every hour.

The map of the House of Inspiring Shadows appears on page 38.

D1. FOYER

MODERATE 16

This broad, shadowy room seems to absorb sounds, making it feel smaller and closed in. Simple large sleeping pallets and a cook fire have been set in the eastern end.

The band of shadow giants allied with Ghiasi live in this area, serving as guardians of the portal to Twined Stories. Roughly half of them are often out in other parts of the Shadow Plane at any time, hunting or scouting. They come and go through the same portal



Count Imneki

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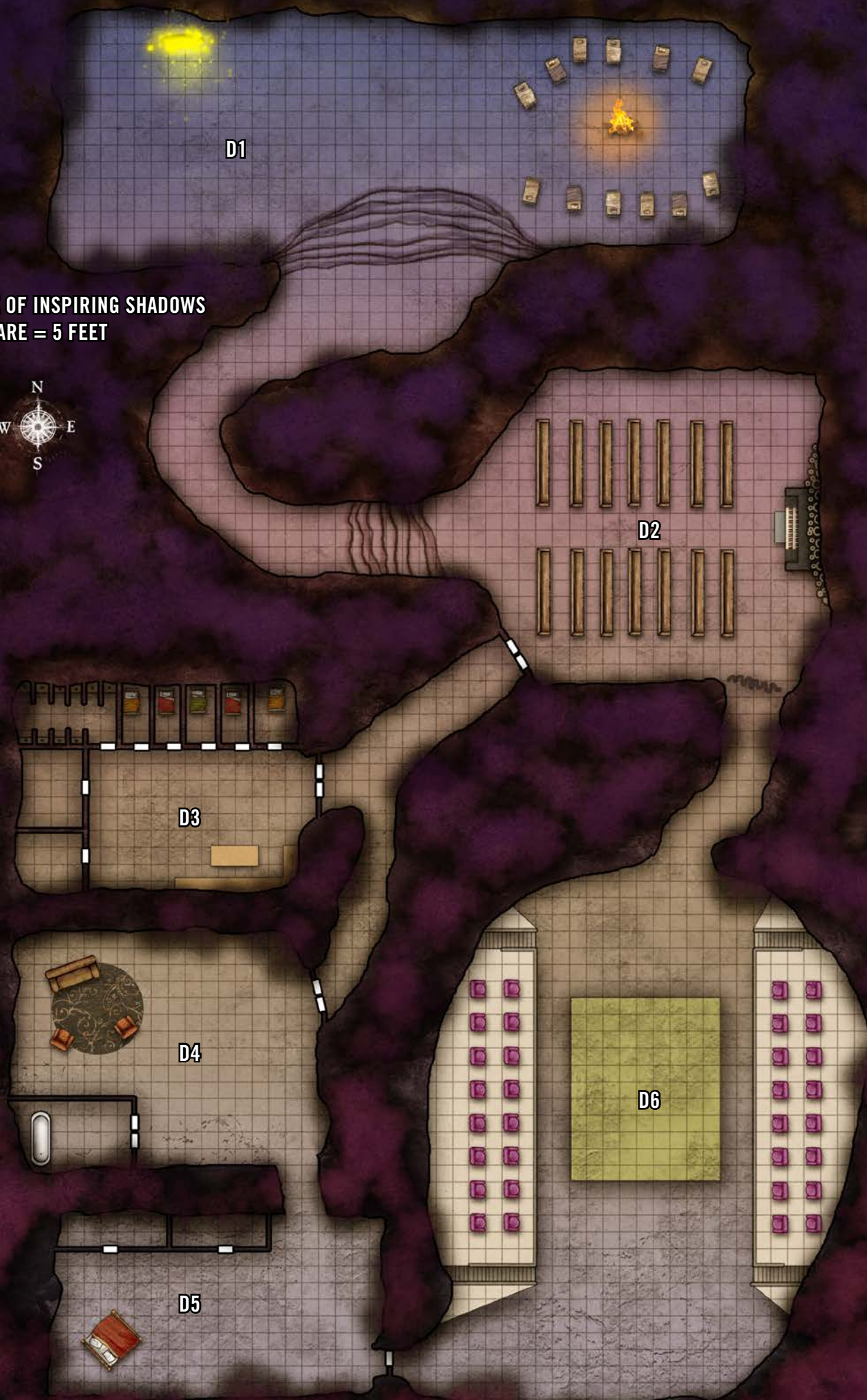
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HOUSE OF INSPIRING SHADOWS
1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



D1

D2

D3

D4

D5

D6

the characters use to enter, but their nature allows them to slip into other parts of Shadow Yled when they do.

Ghiasi encountered this band years ago. Although they were suspicious of her at first, she soon won them over with promises to help give them a stable life among Shadow Yled's dangers. The giants shared with the shae that they were being hunted by a velstrac precentor named Vexeg, who had already taken several of their group. Ghiasi struck a bargain with them. If they served as her guardians for one year, she would keep the velstrac from troubling them. After the year had expired, they all agreed to remain and keep working for Ghiasi.

Creatures: Five shadow giants are present when the characters arrive. Two stand near the portal through which the characters enter, while the others are gathered around their campfire. They all leap to attack strangers right away. Ghiasi has ordered them to avoid killing intruders, in case an intruder might prove useful, so the shadow giants don't attack any character who's knocked unconscious and might even attempt to staunch their wounds just to keep them alive. A shadow giant reduced to fewer than 50 Hit Points surrenders, and once four are defeated, the last one surrenders no matter how many Hit Points they still have.

SHADOW GIANTS (5)

CREATURE 13

Pathfinder Bestiary 2 127

Initiative Perception +20

Questioning the Giants: If questioned about Ghiasi, the shadow giants tell what they know about her: that she's a powerful shae whom they serve because she's kept them safe from a fearsome fiend for well over a year now. They can also explain that their leader, Imiriven, spends a lot of time with Ghiasi as a pupil or disciple, and that they haven't seen a lot of Imiriven recently. The giants might also divulge that Ghiasi doesn't want any intruders killed, in case they prove useful to her later. She's often found deeper in the House of Inspiring Shadows, where the shadow giants don't go—they find the eerie music coming from within to be too creepy.

Treasure: The shadow giants have a total of 985 gp and two greater bravo's brews in their camp.

D2. CHAPEL OF CHIMES

MODERATE 16

A wistful song reverberates throughout this high room, and a cool wind flows through the area from east to west. A shadowy organ stands against the eastern wall. Instead of metal pipes, a series of narrow, fluted crystals rise from the instrument, the tallest of which stand just short of the ceiling.

As she carved her own realm out of the Shadow Plane mirror of this Yled neighborhood, Ghiasi found a location filled with echoing chimes of supernatural beauty. As she listened to them, she became inspired with new storylines and plots of performances that would appeal to the particular tastes of Yled society. She later realized that the chamber was the home of an elemental collection of crystalline chimes called a consonite choir. She didn't know how the consonite choir had arrived there; even the choir itself had forgotten.

When Ghiasi heard the troubles the shadow giants were having with a precentor velstrac named Vexeg, her first plan was to simply find and kill her. But when she realized that the velstrac had an eerie affinity with music and might serve as a source of inspiration, she began planning a way to convince Vexeg to serve as her collaborator—and as the music director for Twined Stories.

Ghiasi made Vexeg an offer: if the velstrac would leave the shadow giants alone, she could provide a facility filled with elemental chimes for musical inspiration. Ghiasi also implied that she'd send Vexeg her fans and hangers-on to serve whatever vile purposes Vexeg wanted. The velstrac agreed.

Velstracs seek to turn everything to pain, and it wasn't long before Vexeg managed to subvert and corrupt the consonite choir to produce wails of pain and suffering. The consonite choir now looks at Vexeg as a friend to be protected and flies to her defense. Vexeg turned the stony chamber into a chapel to evil, complete with an organ she could use to "play" the consonite choir, and the choir now spends its time at rest serving as the fluted pipes of the organ.

Ghiasi found Vexeg's music to be undeniably disturbing but absolutely brilliant. The two became collaborators on several works. Vexeg now composes the music for all the performances in Twined Stories here on her consonite choir-fueled organ. Although the instruments used by the playhouse's performers can't match the power of the consonite choir, they are nevertheless emotionally charged and carry the faint shadow of pain and suffering.

Creatures: When the characters arrive, the consonite choir is in its place in the organ, and Vexeg is composing a new tune filled with shrieks and wails. If the characters didn't dispatch it earlier, Ghiasi's double is also here.

All these inhabitants know that intruders aren't welcome and are quick to fight. Only the consonite choir has enough caution and self-preservation to surrender or retreat; it flees if reduced to fewer than 50 Hit Points. The other denizens in this room fight to the death.

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VEXEG

CREATURE 16

UNIQUE LE MEDIUM FIEND VELSTRAC

Female velstrac precentor (*Pathfinder Adventure Path #147: Tomorrow Must Burn* 85)

Perception +32; greater darkvision, painsight, true seeing
Languages Common, Infernal, Shadowtongue

Skills Acrobatics +27, Athletics +28, Deception +32, Diplomacy +34, Intimidation +32, Performance +34, Religion +30, Stealth +29, Torture Lore +26

Str +6, **Dex** +7, **Con** +3, **Int** +6, **Wis** +6, **Cha** +8

Painsight (divination, divine) Vexeg automatically knows whether a creature she sees has any of the doomed, dying, and wounded conditions, as well as the value of those conditions.

AC 39; **Fort** +25, **Ref** +29, **Will** +30; +1 status to all saves vs. magic

HP 295, regeneration 25 (deactivated by good or silver);

Immunities cold; **Weaknesses** good 20, silver 20

Unnerving Gaze (aura, divine, enchantment, mental, visual) 30 feet. When a creature ends its turn in the aura, it must succeed at a DC 38 Will save or become doomed 1.

Speed 30 feet, fly 30 feet; fly

Melee ♦ claw +31 (agile, finesse, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 4d10+6 slashing plus 1d6 persistent bleed

Divine Innate Spells DC 38; **9th** *wail of the banshee*; **8th** *harm*, *plane shift* (at will, self only, to the Material or Shadow Plane only); **5th** *sound burst* (at will), *synesthesia* (at will); **Cantrips (8th)** *daze*, *detect magic*, *sigil*; **Constant (8th)** *mind blank*; **(6th)** *fly*, *true seeing*

Assemble Choir ♦♦ Vexeg adds a creature that is affected by her *Tormenting Touch* and is within 100 feet to her choir of screams. Vexeg can have any number of creatures in her choir, although a creature no longer affected by *Tormenting Touch* leaves the choir immediately. Creatures in Vexeg's choir of screams are fascinated by each other and Vexeg, and they can't use hostile actions toward each other or Vexeg. When Vexeg casts a divine innate spell, she can cause the effect to originate from any member of her choir instead of herself, using her saving throw DC and attack bonus.

Focus Gaze ♦ (concentrate, divine, enchantment, mental, visual) Vexeg stares at a creature she can see within 30 feet. The target must immediately attempt a Will save against

Vexeg's unnerving gaze. In addition, if the creature was already doomed, on a failed save, it sees the skin of its own body peel back, making it confused for as long as it remains doomed. After attempting this save, the creature is then temporarily immune until the start of Vexeg's next turn.

Tormenting Touch ♦ (divine, emotion, enchantment, mental) Vexeg touches a creature within 10 feet, causing it to constantly scream in agony. The target must attempt a DC 38 Will save. While the target is stupefied by this effect, its continual screams cause it to automatically fail Stealth checks.

Critical Success The target is unaffected.

Success The target is stupefied 1. The target can attempt a new Will save at the start of each of its turns, reducing the stupefied condition by 1 on each successful save. If the target reduces its stupefied condition to 0 in this way, the target is no longer affected.

Failure As success, but the target is stupefied 3.

Critical Failure As success, but the target is stupefied 4.

ELITE CONSONITE CHOIR CREATURE 14

Pathfinder Bestiary 3 6, 53

Initiative Perception +25

GHIASI'S DOUBLE

CREATURE 14

UNIQUE N MEDIUM SHADOW

Female shae shadow double (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 230)

Perception +30; darkvision

Languages Aklo, Common, Necril, Shae, Undercommon

Skills Acrobatics +25, Deception +29, Diplomacy +27, Occultism +25, Performance +29, Shadow Plane Lore +25, Society +27, Stealth +25

Str +4, **Dex** +8, **Con** +1, **Int** +6, **Wis** +5, **Cha** +8

Items dagger (5)

Shadow Shift Being made partially of shadow, shae are concealed in dim light or darkness even to creatures that can see clearly in those light levels.

AC 36; **Fort** +21, **Ref** +30, **Will** +25; +1 status to all saves vs. divination

HP 230; **Immunities** precision; **Resistances** cold 15, negative 15

Multiple Reactions Ghiasi's double gains an additional reaction each turn that she can only use to Slip.

Counterattack ⤴ **Trigger** Ghiasi's double is targeted by an attack from an adjacent creature that misses due to her being concealed; **Requirements** Ghiasi's



Vexeg

double is aware of the attack; **Effect** Ghiasi's double makes a Strike against the attacker.

Slip ➤ Trigger A creature moves adjacent to Ghiasi's double; **Effect** Ghiasi's double teleports to a clear space adjacent to another creature she can see within 30 feet.

Speed 25 feet, fly 35 feet; swift steps, tenebral form

Ranged ♦ dagger +29 (agile, thrown 10 feet, versatile S), **Damage** 1d4+15 piercing and 2d6 cold

Occult Innate Spells DC 34, attack +26; **7th** *shadow blast* (×3); **5th** *prying eye*; **4th** *gaseous form* (at will), *glibness*; **Cantrips (7th)** *chill touch*, *daze*, *detect magic*

Swift Steps Ghiasi's double's movement doesn't trigger reactions.

Tenebral Form Ghiasi's double can Fly at full Speed in *gaseous form*.

D3. FOLLOWERS' SUITE

This suite of rooms is suitable to house several people, with small bedrooms, a large eating space, and a few larger private rooms. Tables, chairs, and couches have been haphazardly arranged, but everything is clean.

Ghiasi's less-than-aristocratic guests, like up-and-coming actors or adoring fans, reside in these quarters when they visit, but there isn't anyone here now. Since she has no guests, Ghiasi also doesn't bother to house the servants who wait on them, either.

Treasure: The westernmost bedroom contains a *belt of regeneration* left behind by a previous guest who got too familiar with Vexeg and thus isn't coming back for it.

D4. PROTÉGÉ'S QUARTERS

LOW 16

A large sofa, a few chairs, and a washroom occupy this spacious, sparse room.

This room has always been reserved for Ghiasi's top protégé, and she encourages them to decorate it as they see fit. As the current occupant doesn't require much by way of finery, it looks sparse for its size.

Creatures: A skin-stealing ecorche named Dolx took over the shadow giant leader, Imiriven, because she was a big fan of Ghiasi's performances. To get closer to Ghiasi and to prevent her deception from being uncovered, she told the shadow giants she'd been accepted as Ghiasi's latest protégé and would be living closer to her (a ruse that Dolx hoped would become true). Dolx has established a good rapport with Ghiasi. She enjoys the delightful stories the shae tells her of the many plots and manipulations she's undertaken, but Dolx worries that her friendship with

Ghiasi might end if the shae learns of her true nature as an undead fan, not a mundane giant. Imiriven is jealous of Ghiasi's close relationship with Vexeg and would like to see the precentor eliminated.

Dolx is relaxing here, as Imiriven, when the characters arrive, though if they've made a lot of noise in nearby areas she's alert and ready for trouble. She knows that she's likely to earn Ghiasi's favor by dealing with intruders quickly, so she imperiously demands that the characters leave or die. She fights to the death.

If the characters have already dealt peaceably with Ghiasi, Dolx might not be hostile to them; after all, Ghiasi's friends are her friends, too. In this case, Dolx is standoffish but doesn't attack.

DOLX

CREATURE 17

Female elite ecorche (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 6, *Pathfinder Book of the Dead* 90)

Initiative Perception +29

Treasure: In a wide strongbox beneath the couch, Dolx has 600 gp, a *scroll of curse of the spirit orchestra* (page 79), and an antique theorbo with platinum strings worth 3,200 gp.

D5. GHIASI'S SUITE

This opulent room's walls are lined with framed posters of the many productions held in Twined Stories. A large four-poster bed stands in the west, and a messy writing desk has been placed along the south wall.

This is where Ghiasi does most of her writing and where she entertains her most doting minions.

Treasure: Ghiasi's lyre, which is a *greater maestro's instrument*, rests on her bed. A *major healing potion* stands on a bedside table, bearing a stopper in the shape of Urgathoa's religious symbol (this is a gift that Pesabnet thought she might find personally useful). Ghiasi's poster collection is worth 1,200 gp to the right buyer. She also has a gold statue of herself made by an adoring fan that's worth 2,000 gp, bearing a diadem worth 1,500 gp.

D6. BLACK BOX THEATER

SEVERE 16

This large dome-shaped room is dominated by a stage that's standing fifteen feet above the floor in the center of the room and is supported by an ancient mechanical device.

This theater in the round acts as a testing place for Ghiasi's productions and inspiration for many of

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her works. With nowhere else to flee, Ghiasi makes a dramatic, desperate attempt to both test the player characters and earn new champions. The ancient device is the radiant warden she has won over to her service; it normally serves as a device to raise and lower the stage during test productions. Although she would love to incorporate the creature into Twined Stories, she has been unable to convince it to leave the room.

Creatures: Vain and arrogant, Ghiasi is also brilliant and knows how to seize an opportunity when it presents itself. Once the player characters enter her room, she is all but certain they're powerful enough to challenge Kemnebi, free her brother, and exact her revenge on the chancellor. She looks at this combat as a final test of her theory. She fights alongside the ancient radiant warden; the construct is cold and logical, but it's grown to see Ghiasi as an ally, even going so far as to allow the theater stage to be built upon its body. In combat, the radiant warden focuses its actions on anyone attacking Ghiasi. It fights until destroyed or ordered to stop by the shae.

Ghiasi begins the encounter flying above the center of the raised stage. As the characters enter the room, she calls out dramatically, "Welcome to your final audition! Hopefully it won't become your curtain call!"

During combat, Ghiasi tries to keep the radiant warden between herself and melee-focused characters while she focuses on handling spellcasters. She fights with dramatic flair and panache, complimenting her opponents on their successes. She does want them to take her side, after all.

GHIASI THE UNRAVELER

CREATURE 17

Page 90

Initiative Perception +34

RADIANT WARDEN

CREATURE 17

Pathfinder Bestiary 2 220

Initiative Perception +30

Ghiasi's Surrender: If Ghiasi is reduced below 150 Hit Points or it otherwise becomes clear she's about to be defeated, she surrenders and commands the radiant warden (if it's still fighting) to stand down. Read or paraphrase the following.

The shae raises her hands in surrender. "Yes," she says, "you are exactly as powerful as I had hoped. You'll have to forgive this diva's theatricality. I have no wish to die today, and I believe I know what you are here for. Please, let us talk about my little operation, the source of the shadow ash, and my knowledge of the blood lord behind its production."

Evidence of Shadow Ash

If the characters are willing to talk with Ghiasi, read or paraphrase the following.

Although her bone-white mask hides any facial expression, the shae's shoulders visibly relax as she adopts a cautious yet comfortable posture. "Thank you for your mercy. The full story is a long one, which I'm happy to tell, but I expect you'd rather I just get to the point. It is this: I was approached recently by Chancellor Kemnebi, who offered me a fortune to use my former network of business associates to transfer a great deal of some substance—shadow ash, he called it—without being noticed. Given the new life I've built for myself here, however, I declined. Rather predictably, he moved to threats, but he must have realized I was too insulated by my social contacts. So he did the next best thing and kidnapped my younger brother Ghiono. Although my brother isn't the sharpest, he's still dear to me, and I acquiesced. I have been meeting with a tomb giant courier at various places throughout the city on a regular basis to pick up this ash and have it transported where I'm told. In exchange, I give him illegal positive-energy items that I acquire from my contacts who would prefer to remain nameless.

"So there, you see, is my rather ordinary story. It's not how I'd write it were I creating a play, but I suppose we can't all be inspired to create something new when the old is so popular." The shae pauses for a moment before continuing. "I don't suppose you'd be interested in meeting with this tomb giant and learning where the shadow ash is coming from, would you? I'm sure I can make a deal of some kind."

At this point, Ghiasi negotiates for her own life and her reputation. She's willing to give the characters the next meeting time and place with Graelar if they let her live and keep quiet about what she's been forced to do. The cleanup of any destruction in the House of Inspiring Shadows is a simple enough matter for her; she's mostly concerned that the characters might try to use their growing influence to harm her reputation even if they let her live. She knows the only bargaining chip she really has is the information about the courier, so she is sure to build protections into any deal she makes.

The characters might have additional questions about Ghiasi's story. Below are some likely questions.

What is Kemnebi up to? "That's something I don't know. The Chancellor seems to have some larger scheme in mind, but he certainly has not taken me into his confidence. The *shadow ash* is apparently a key part of it; he's been desperate to find it for some time. Now that he can get it in large quantities, he can proceed with whatever his ultimate plan is."



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Where do you send the *shadow ash*? “I split it up and send it with couriers to Mechitar, from Carter Consortium haulers to Export Guild traders, each willing to carry a crate or two for a good rate, no questions asked. Where they go in Mechitar, I’m not sure—Kemnebi’s agents meet them, I presume.”

Who is your contact for positive energy items? Ghiasi confirms what the characters already know: that it’s Pesabnet, high priest of the Pallid Pinnacle. “That smelly fool overpays quite dramatically for aeon stones, and aeon stones are easier for me to acquire than positive energy items.”

Who is the contact you meet to get *shadow ash*? “He is a tomb giant named Graelar. He’s quite cautious and impressively sneaky, for a giant. He reminds me of myself in my younger years. I’ve heard his name whispered about Yled, often in relation to various competing factions. I think he has found a way to avoid getting tangled up in their conflicts, although I imagine if he’s working for Kemnebi he might have finally overstepped.”

Where is your brother being held? “Mechitar, I imagine. Probably close to Kemnebi and his various

lackeys and supporters. I receive letters from him once in a while as proof of life. The handwriting and references are his, so I believe he’s still alive.”

Notes and Correspondence: Among the various letters and notes here are a series of exchanges between Ghiasi and Ghiono that provide enough information for the characters to learn that he has been imprisoned and Ghiasi is being blackmailed by Kemnebi. There’s nothing specific in the notes about *shadow ash*, but there are several missives that set out meeting times and places with Graelar, with the next one scheduled for the following evening. It’s clear that some kind of illicit exchange takes place at these meetings.

Treasure: If the characters agree to rescue her brother, Ghiasi gives them her *shadow’s heart* to keep in hopes her brother will recognize it. She also gives them a *bag of holding* (type IV) that she uses to exchange for the bag from Graelar at each meeting. The bag contains two *runestones* with *greater disrupting* runes on them and four vials of greater bottled sunlight (*Pathfinder Book of the Dead* 18).

XP Award: If the characters learn about Graelar and Ghiasi’s blackmail, award them 120 XP.



Chapter 3: The Bound One

The next meeting between Graelar and Ghiasi is scheduled to take place in two days. Ghiasi knows she'll receive the location in a message delivered by a zombie courier roughly two hours before the meeting. With thousands of zombies moving through the city at any given time, intercepting or backtracking the courier is impossible. The courier itself, being a zombie, is mindless and has no information beyond the directions it's following.

The Handoff

When the appointed time arrives, the zombie courier shuffles up to Twined Stories and delivers the

message: a folded piece of paper in its mouth. The paper is a crude map showing an alleyway behind one of the many grain warehouses on the southern side of the city. Graelar arrives an hour before the scheduled time to keep an eye out for suspicious activity. If he catches sight of Ghiasi working with someone else, he tries to escape back to the Agorron using a circuitous route in an attempt to lose anyone tailing him.

This encounter with Graelar might not result in a fight; if it does, you can use any urban map showing a wide alley, such as *Pathfinder Flip-Mat: City Sites Multi-Pack*.

MEETING GRAELAR

LOW 17

The alleys here are muddy and slippery. A steady drizzle falls from the sky, and the wind howls around buildings. Stone granaries tower over the neighborhood.

These streets are usually busy, but residents keep to themselves and ignore anything—even outright combat—nearby. As the granaries store food for the living, who are deemed merely useful within Yled, there isn't any guard presence in this area. This is part of the reason Graelar chose it.

Creatures: Graelar the Whisper has made a long career working for various power groups in Yled while managing to avoid becoming beholden to any particular one. He has stolen high value items from more than one group, traded in secrets with several more, and even assassinated troubling foes for others. His well-earned reputation means he can charge a high fee for his services and be picky about what jobs he accepts. Unlike most other tomb giants, Graelar plans to remain alive for a very long time, as he enjoys fine wine and luxurious foods. Someday he imagines he'll join the ranks of the undead, but he's in no rush for that inevitable transformation.

Recently, however, Graelar has had some bad luck. He made the mistake of taking a job that involved stealing some papers from Chancellor Kemnebi. When the vampire caught him, he was impressed by the rogue's skill. Rather than drain his mind on the spot, Kemnebi offered him a job as courier between Kelganth and Ghiasi. Graelar doesn't like serving as a mere go-between, but he's unwilling to test the reach and patience of Geb's most powerful vampire.

Graelar meets with Ghiasi once per week at a different location each time. He brings a *bag of holding* containing refined *shadow ash* from the Agorron, which he exchanges with Ghiasi's bag full of positive-energy scrolls and items. Ever cautious, Graelar does his best to scout an exchange site an hour before each meeting. He's acutely aware of the unpleasant fate in store for him should he fail Kemnebi.

The characters might come up with some kind of trick, such as posing as Ghiasi or insisting they're making a trade on her behalf. Ultimately, the characters need to not just make an exchange but uncover that the source of the *shadow ash* lies in the Agorron, so merely speaking with Graelar isn't enough. They need to get information out of him, and he fights to avoid giving away his contacts there.

Graelar isn't willing to throw his life away. If cornered or reduced below 200 Hit Points, the giant surrenders and tells the characters anything they want to know. He knows Kemnebi will never forgive his betrayal, but he figures it's better to avoid death right now and deal with the vampire later than to throw his life away.

GRAELAR THE WHISPER

CREATURE 18

UNIQUE NE LARGE GIANT HUMANOID

Male tomb giant assassin (*Bestiary* 3 110)

Perception +33; darkvision, lifesense (imprecise) 60 feet

Languages Common, Jotun, Necril

Skills Acrobatics +33, Athletics +31, Deception +36, Diplomacy +31, Medicine +35, Religion +31, Stealth +35

Str +9, **Dex** +7, **Con** +8, **Int** +5, **Wis** +7, **Cha** +5

Items +2 greater resilient leather armor, +2 greater striking war razor (*Pathfinder Lost Omens Gods & Magic* 121), black onyx gems worth 300 gp

CHAPTER 3 SYNOPSIS

The player characters either meet with Ghiasi's tomb giant contact, Graelar, or proceed directly to the Agorron beneath Yled. Inside, they make their way through the upper facility guarded by a group of tomb giants who have been charged with protecting the *shadow ash* production. After solving a puzzle, the characters descend into the lower levels and encounter a powerful undead dragon before making contact with the dwarven workers who operate the *shadow ash* refining process. Despite the willingness of some dwarves to speak diplomatically, a group of traditionalists attack. The player characters then confront the tomb giant lich who supervises the *shadow ash* operation. Inside the final chamber, the player characters come face to face with the unbound darvakka fueling the city's defenses and get a chance to gain irrefutable evidence of Kemnebi's plot.

CHAPTER 3 TREASURE

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

- +2 greater resilient leather armor
- +2 greater striking scythe
- +2 greater striking war razor (*Pathfinder Lost Omens Gods & Magic* 121)
- +2 striking guisarme
- diadem of intellect
- flame navette
- greater flame tongue
- greater winter wolf elixir
- major bottled sunlight (*Pathfinder Book of the Dead* 18)
- potion of undetectability
- scroll of time stop
- shadow ash (*Pathfinder Adventure Path #184: The Ghouls Hunger* 81)
- staff of power
- umbraex eye (page 79)
- vorpall rune

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AC 41; **Fort** +27, **Ref** +33, **Will** +30

HP 405, negative healing; **Immunities** death effects

Catch Rock ➤

Speed 40 feet

Melee ➤ *war razor* +36 (agile, backstabber, deadly 2d8, finesse, magical), **Damage** 3d4+13 slashing

Melee ➤ *claw* +36 (agile, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 3d6+13 slashing plus dooming touch

Ranged ➤ *rock* +34 (brutal, range increment 120 feet), **Damage** 3d8+13 bludgeoning

Divine Innate Spells DC 40; **8th** *bind undead* (×3), *harm* (×3)

Rituals DC 40 *create undead*

Dooming Touch (divine, necromancy) A creature hit by the tomb giant's claw Strike becomes doomed 1.

Font of Death ➤➤➤ (divine, necromancy, negative) The tomb giant turns the spiritual tide on a creature that has just died, temporarily transforming it into a volatile vessel of negative energy. The tomb giant touches

a creature that died in the past 24 hours, infusing its flesh and bone with negative energy. Once during the next hour, the tomb giant can spend a single action (from any distance) to release this negative energy from the corpse in an explosion that deals 10d12 negative damage in a 15-foot burst (DC 40 basic Fortitude save); if not released before the end of the hour, the energy dissipates harmlessly. The tomb giant can't use Font of Death while a previous corpse remains infused.

Slippery Fighter ➤➤ Graelar moves up to his Speed, attempts to Feint a creature within his reach, then makes a melee Strike against that creature.

Sneak Attack Graelar's Strikes deal an extra 4d6 precision damage to flat-footed creatures

Throw Rock ➤

LOCATION OF THE AGORRON ENTRANCE

If the player characters convince Graelar to surrender, he offers the location of the Agorron entrance in exchange for his life. If the characters change his attitude to friendly or helpful, he even describes the general layout and some of the residents on the upper level.

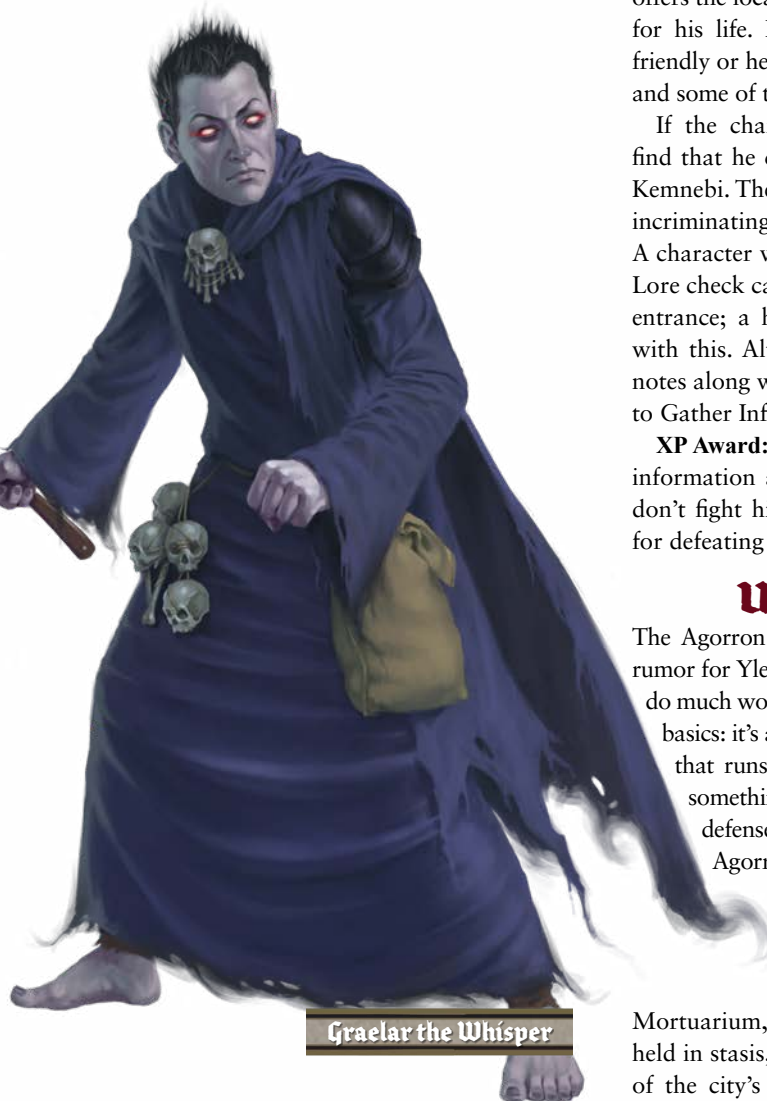
If the characters kill Graelar, the characters can find that he carries assorted letters with orders from Kemnebi. The orders aren't, on their own, particularly incriminating, as they only detail courier obligations. A character who succeeds at a DC 30 Society or Yled Lore check can puzzle out the location of the Agorron entrance; a helpful NPC like Ghiasi can also assist with this. Alternatively, the characters can use these notes along with a successful DC 34 Diplomacy check to Gather Information and find the entrance.

XP Award: Award the characters 60 XP for getting information about the Agorron from Graelar if they don't fight him (replacing the award they would get for defeating him in combat).

Upper Agorron

The Agorron has long been a source of mystery and rumor for Yled's citizens, although few have bothered to do much work to learn about it. Most in Yled know the basics: it's a maze-like series of interconnected tunnels that runs beneath the city's sewer system and has something to do with powering Yled's significant defenses. Most residents assume the details of the Agorron are a military secret, and it's unwise to poke into Yled's military secrets.

Those who know more about the Agorron understand it connects to a drained aquifer miles below the Mortuarium, where several powerful creatures are held in stasis, their energies used to fuel the operation of the city's magical Bonewall as well as the city's



Graelar the Whisper

negative energy cannons and other, lesser-known defenses. Up until recently, this was mostly the truth.

When Kemnebi finally discovered he could collect *shadow ash* by repeatedly destroying the Bound One beneath Yled, he realized he had another problem: he didn't have unfettered access to the darvokka. The darvakkas and their dwarf caretakers were commanded by the necromantic masters of the Mortuarium. Although these denizens of the Agorron would serve a Blood Lord who instructed them to act, word would certainly get out that something was being done to the Bound One, and it would only be a matter of time until other Blood Lords, and likely Geb himself, learned of Kemnebi's scheme. The chancellor's first task, then, was to wrest away direct control without alerting anyone to his efforts.

The rising prestige of the Warmaster Council proved to be the perfect opportunity. When Kemnebi presented the new orders from Geb that the council was to begin ramping up their efforts for offensive production, he made sure they saw the Mortuarium as a primary source for new shock troops. He encouraged orders that drew heavily upon the resources of the necromancers, and when they predictably approached him about their lack of funding and inability to do everything being asked, he calmly reviewed all their duties. In what he presented as a grand gesture, Kemnebi offered to have some of his trusted agents personally oversee the care and protection of the darvakkas beneath the city. Glad to be rid of that rather mundane task and excited to produce new and terrible undead creations for the upcoming war, the leaders of the Mortuarium handed full control over to Kemnebi, who then handed control to the lich Kelganth with explicit orders to begin refining *shadow ash* immediately.

Even though the Bound One is restored to its existence each time after it collapses into a pile of ash, its frequent restorations weaken it. This has, in turn, disrupted the magic fueling Yled's defenses—a significant impediment to Geb's national security and Yled's safety on the frontier of the Mana Wastes. Kemnebi and Kelganth have been doing their best to hide these weakening forces; Kemnebi by blaming the Warmaster Council and Kelganth by keeping any visitors out of the Agorron. The situation is increasingly precarious, but Kemnebi must push ever harder for the vast quantities of *shadow ash* he needs.

FEATURES OF THE UPPER AGORRON

Passages in the upper Agorron are 20 feet tall and completely dark. They're also suffused with an uncomfortable cold that no amount of heat can fully dispel. Doors throughout the upper Agorron are made

of steel and are several inches thick. Although they're very durable, they effectively block noise, so the characters aren't likely to be overheard by denizens on the other side of the door unless they're being very loud.

The Agorron is insulated from teleportation effects due to the strange extraplanar intersections inherent in its construction. The Agorron is impossible to enter or exit with any spell or ability that has the teleportation trait, although teleportation effects can function within the bounds of the Agorron normally.

The map of the upper Agorron appears on page 48.

E1. GATE GUARDS

MODERATE 17

After Kemnebi wrested away control of the Agorron from the necromancers of the Mortuarium, he also had the route the former caretakers used blocked off to "increase efficiency" and not disrupt the school. He then had the dwarves construct a new entrance that better fit his needs to produce *shadow ash* beneath the city. This new entrance is in the Government District, several blocks from the Panopticon in a relatively empty area. Visitors travel down a long, twisting set of stairs for 200 feet before arriving at a large steel door, which typically remains unlocked, although it can be barred from the inside.

This large room has steel doors to the east and west. The design is both recent and utilitarian, though it's clear whoever constructed it took their work seriously. To the east an iron portcullis protects a steel door. Huge weapon racks stand against the eastern wall, including well-oiled scythes and an assortment of other weapons.

Two levers, one in the north wall and one in the south, operate the portcullis that blocks the steel door to the east. They both must be pulled at the same time to raise or lower the portcullis; when the characters first arrive, the portcullis is down.

Canny characters are likely to note that this portcullis-and-lever configuration doesn't enhance security of the area, as the levers are on the exterior side. This is a failsafe in the event the darvakkas in the lower Agorron ever break free. The thought was that defenders could close the portcullis and buy a little time to contain any rogue undead. As of yet, the portcullis hasn't ever needed to be used.

Careful inspection shows that this room used to have an exit to the north (leading, ultimately, to the Mortuarium), but it's been blocked with stone. There's now a newer entrance made to the west. A dwarven character or a character who succeeds at a DC 25 Society check identifies the construction as dwarf-made and somewhat recent.

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UPPER AGORRON
1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



Creatures: Four tomb giants defend this room and spar with the weapons stored here. There hasn't been much they've needed to do other than turn away the occasional unwelcome visitor. Nevertheless, the guards are vigilant in their duties and take the facility's protection seriously. When the characters arrive, they attack if the PCs are hostile or firmly turn them away if they try to bluff their way past. The guards are easy to goad into a fight and pursue foes who flee. The Agorron guards are dutiful warriors, but if three are defeated, the fourth surrenders or flees.

AGORRON GUARDS (4)

CREATURE 15

UNCOMMON LE LARGE GIANT HUMANOID

Tomb giant defender (*Bestiary* 3 110)

Perception +29; darkvision, lifesense (imprecise) 60 feet

Languages Common, Jotun, Necril

Skills Athletics +30, Intimidation +28, Medicine +30, Religion +30

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

Items +2 greater striking scythe, rock (3)

AC 36; **Fort** +29, **Ref** +23, **Will** +26

HP 340, negative healing; **Immunities** death effects

Attack of Opportunity ↻

Catch Rock ↻

Speed 30 feet

Melee ♦ scythe +31 (deadly 2d10, magical, reach 10 feet, trip), **Damage** 3d10+18 slashing

Melee ♦ claw +30 (agile, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 3d6+18 slashing plus dooming touch

Ranged ♦ rock +28 (brutal, range increment 120 feet), **Damage** 3d8+18 bludgeoning

Divine Innate Spells DC 36; **7th** *bind undead* (×3), *harm* (×3)

Rituals DC 36; *create undead*

Dooming Touch (divine, necromancy) The Agorron guard's claws carry the accursed power of their foul gods. A creature hit by the guard's claw Strike becomes doomed 1.

Font of Death ♦♦♦ (divine, necromancy, negative) As Graelar (page 46), but 10d10 negative damage (DC 36 basic Fortitude save).

Throw Rock ♦

Wicked Blow ♦♦ The Agorron guard makes a Strike with their scythe. A creature damaged by this attack takes 3d6 persistent bleed damage and is doomed 1.

E2. UPPER HALLWAY

MODERATE 17

This wide hallway is plain and unadorned. The walls show signs of being recently smoothed and widened. When Kemnebi repurposed this area for his own guards, he ordered the Kulennet dwarves working in the facility to expand the existing passage to more comfortably fit his tomb giant servants.

When visions of a mighty, shadowy bird continued to trouble her for weeks on end, the tomb giant seer Sorvinaesen followed the clues in her dreams until she found herself in Yled, just as Kemnebi had fully taken control of the Agorron beneath the city. During their first exchange, both Graelar and Ghiasi were surprised to see the seer walk right up to them and introduce herself. While naturally suspicious at first, Graelar was smitten by the charismatic oracle and agreed to take her to meet the tomb giants in the Agorron. Sorvinaesen spoke with such fervor and certainty that even the analytical Kelganth was convinced of her loyalty. Over the last several months she has proven herself time and again to be dedicated to what she sees as a holy mission involving the creation of more and more *shadow ash*. She feels a strong reverence for the Bound One, though more as a source of the powerful ash than as a sentient being.

Sorvinaesen is adored and feared by the other tomb giants in the Agorron and has become the leader of the facility's upper defenses. She occasionally makes her way to the lower levels to listen to the whispers in the Ashes of Despair in area F9. Rarely, she asks Kelganth for permission to be present as the Bound One is killed and reduced to ash, which she considers fulfillment of a higher purpose. All life, she reasons, is reduced to ash and dust; it's the purest expression of existence. The dwarves fear her, though because the work they do is so closely connected to the *shadow ash*, the seer views them as fellow servants.

Creatures: Sorvinaesen is generally in this hall, telling two Agorron guards about her latest visions. They attack unexpected intruders right away. In combat, Sorvinaesen tries to keep behind her guards while casting offensive spells.

If the characters attack and then retreat from combat with Sorvinaesen, she's quick to assemble the Agorron guards and whip them into a righteous fervor (casting *zealous conviction* on them if she believes another attack is imminent). She might reposition the guards around the upper level, although she doesn't place them in groups of more than four—she believes that organizing in overlarge groups limits their fighting effectiveness in close quarters and could allow intruders to overcome them too quickly.

SORVINAESEN

CREATURE 17

UNIQUE LE LARGE GIANT HUMANOID

Female tomb giant seer (*Bestiary* 3 110)

Perception +32; darkvision, lifesense (imprecise) 60 feet

Languages Common, Jotun, Necril

Skills Athletics +30, Diplomacy +33, Intimidation +31, Religion +33, Stealth +28

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Str +6, **Dex** +3, **Con** +6, **Int** +3, **Wis** +7, **Cha** +9
Items +2 striking guisarme, pouch with sixteen small bags of ash marked with names, each containing a black onyx gem worth 50 gp
AC 39; **Fort** +29, **Ref** +26, **Will** +32
HP 390, negative healing; **Immunities** death effects
Catch Rock ➤



Sorvinaesen

Speed 30 feet
Melee ♦ **guisarme** +31 (magical, reach 15 feet, trip), **Damage** 2d10+12 slashing
Melee ♦ **claw** +30 (agile, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 3d6+12 slashing plus impart doom
Ranged ♦ **rock** +28 (brutal, range increment 120 feet), **Damage** 3d8+12 bludgeoning
Divine Spontaneous Spells DC 38, attack +30; **9th** (2 slots) *overwhelming presence*, *zealous conviction*; **8th** (3 slots) *blade barrier*, *divine aura*, *spiritual epidemic*; **7th** (3 slots) *divine vessel*, *eclipse burst*, *finger of death*; **6th** (3 slots) *heroism*, *spirit blast*, *vampiric exsanguination*; **5th** (3 slots) *abyssal plague*, *shadow blast*, *tongues*; **4th** (3 slots) *freedom of movement*, *read omens*, *remove curse*; **3rd** (3 slots) *blindness*, *heroism*, *vampiric touch*; **2nd** (3 slots) *remove paralysis*, *restore senses*, *see invisibility*; **1st** (3 slots) *bane*, *create water*, *fear*; **Cantrips** (9th) *chill touch*, *detect magic*, *divine lance*, *read aura*, *shield*
Divine Innate Spells DC 38; **9th** *bind undead* (×3), *harm* (×3)
Rituals DC 36; *create undead*
Font of Death ♦♦♦ (divine, necromancy, negative) As Graelar (page 46), but 10d12 negative damage (DC 36 basic Fortitude save).
Impart Doom (divine, necromancy) A creature hit by Sorvinaesen's claw Strike, or one who critically fails a save from one of Sorvinaesen's spells, becomes doomed 1.
Throw Rock ♦
Visions of Death Sorvinaesen's Strikes deal an additional 2d10 mental damage to doomed creatures as visions of their impending deaths fill their minds.

AGORRON GUARDS (2)

CREATURE 15

Page 49

Initiative Perception +29

E3. STORAGE ROOMS

Large boxes and crates are stacked along the walls here.

The tomb giants store assorted equipment that they don't immediately need in these two rooms.

Treasure: There are several crates of expensive Taldan brandy and wines in the north storage room. In total, the bottles are 6 Bulk and worth 2,200 gp.

E4. READY ROOM

A weapons rack stands between two large stone chairs.

This room serves as a place for the guards to gear up for their shifts. Sorvinaesen posts extra guards here when she feels there's a need for additional security.

E5. DINING HALL

MODERATE 17

This huge dining hall is filled with giant-sized furniture. A massive stone table dominates the northern side two-thirds, its rough surface covered with the messy remnants of a recent meal. It's surrounded by six stone slabs that serve as chairs. To the south is a smaller, round table and three more comfortable-looking chairs.

The guards take turns doing the cooking and cleanup here. They aren't particularly careful in their duties, and they have a high preference for rare meat and thick gravies, so the place is usually a mess of stains and sickly odors.

Creatures: The guard who just did the most recent cooking is sitting at the table eating her meal while she sullenly looks at all the cleanup awaiting her. Three more tomb giants lounge in the comfortable chairs to the south. All four giants' weapons wait nearby, but none are expecting a fight unless the characters have been particularly noisy, so each guard has a -2 circumstance penalty to their initiative rolls and must spend an action to retrieve their weapons once battle begins. They fight to the death to protect the Agorron from intruders.

AGORRON GUARDS (4)

CREATURE 15

Page 49

Initiative Perception +29

E6. PRIVIES

These two privies are kept somewhat clean. There's nothing of interest in them.

E7. KITCHEN

A gigantic stove stands along the eastern wall in this wide kitchen, set between equally huge counters. To the south is a larder filled with bags of grain, hanging meat, and crates of potatoes.

Treasure: The pantry holds a hidden pouch containing three doses of *shadow ash* (*The Ghouls Hunger* 81). It's well hidden, so a character searching the larder must succeed at a DC 35 Perception check to find it. Kelganth occasionally mixes *shadow ash* into the stores of food here; the tomb giants who live in the facility have unknowingly been consuming trace amounts of *shadow ash* for the last few weeks. Kelganth has no immediate plans to kill them, but he's dosed their food as a contingency plan should things truly go awry.

E8. QUARTERS

Large niches line the outer walls of this room, each containing a simple sleeping pallet. A central wall partially divides the room into a north and south section, its surface decorated with carvings that depict a tall female figure. The lower half of the woman's figure is skeletal, as if her skin and flesh had been eaten away. She carries a scythe in her right hand. The figure appears in several different scenes: overseeing a feast, watching as a mass grave is filled with corpses, and witnessing an execution.



Agorron Guard

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The tomb giant of the Agorron sleep here, resting in shifts and sharing personal space with each other. Although most of them don't follow Urgathoa, the goddess depicted in the room divider, they nevertheless enjoy the gruesome imagery.

If the player characters did not encounter Graelar previously, or if they let him go, he's resting here. Whether or not he fights here depends on how the characters previously treated him.

Treasure: Each giant has a personal chest containing clothes as well as valuables. There are 1,000 gp in furs and silks as well as coins totaling 1,150 gp. Sorvinaesen's pallet contains a charred booklet called *Truth in Drifting Ash*. This rambling treatise on fire and destruction is worth 900 gp, but it also provides the reader access to the ashes mystery (page 80).

E9. ELEVATOR

MODERATE 17

The walls of this wide chamber are worked, although they aren't perfectly smooth. To the south, a 20-foot-square hole leads into darkness below. A series of cables, metal girders, and wooden braces support a wooden platform over the center of the hole.

Kelganth was charged not only with running the facility but seeing to its defenses. While he assigned the particulars of guard duty to Sorvinaesen, he stationed some particularly powerful defenders at this entrance to the lower Agorron.

The elevator is at the bottom of the shaft, 2,000 feet below, and the mechanism to call it is at the bottom of the shaft. The DC to Climb down the shaft is 30, but high-level heroes certainly have other ways to reach the bottom.

The tomb giants who dwell here view Kelganth as the epitome of their desires for undead immortality. When he began asking for volunteers to undergo a new form of transformation into undead, a number of giants immediately answered the call. Even though not all survived this process, the tomb giants were undeterred—they knew only a select few ever get such a chance. Kelganth stationed his first two (and, to date, only two) successes here, both as guardians against intruders and reminders to his kin of the undead might they can achieve with loyal service.

Creatures: The two tenebric giants here keep out anyone that Kelganth hasn't specifically permitted to pass (they let Sorvinaesen pass, but not other tomb giants). They move to attack any intruders immediately and fight until destroyed. If they're facing a foe at the edge of the elevator shaft who can't obviously fly, a giant tries to Shove them into it.

TENEBRIC GIANTS (2)

CREATURE 17

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Initiative Perception +31

Lower Agorron

The elevator shaft descends for 2,000 feet before reaching the series of winding, confused tunnels from which the area derives its name. These mazelike passages twist and turn for miles beneath the city, many of them containing dangers that no one in the city is even aware exists. The most important feature, however, is the facility built by the Kulenett dwarves long ago to contain and focus the power of the darvakkas Geb placed there. The descendants of the builders of the facility still dwell here, bound to Geb's service by both tradition and ancient magic.

FEATURES OF LOWER AGORRON

The natural passageways vary in height from 10 to 15 feet, while the worked passageways are 15 feet tall and rooms are 25 feet tall. The worked passages and chambers are lit by *continual flame* torches in sconces near the ceilings. As in the upper Agorron, the lower Agorron is shielded from outside teleportation.

The map of the lower Agorron appears on the inner back cover of this adventure.

F1. URBULINEX'S LAIR

MODERATE 17

An odor of burned hair and flesh lingers in this cavern, mixed with the scent of ancient dust and mildew. The walls are rough and unworked, although deep gouges and singe marks are plainly visible. A series of winding passages intersect in the chamber at various heights. The widest of these passages exits to the south. A massive metal and stone structure stands to the northwest, connected by a series of cables to a gigantic flywheel. A huge pile of gleaming gold coins and gems lie to the east in a low hill.

The operation of the flywheel is a simple matter of selecting "up" or "down" with a handle then throwing a lever. The dwarves designed the device to be operated even by mindless undead. The passage to the south has been widened by the dwarves under Kelganth's orders to better enable transport of the refined *shadow ash* to the elevator and the upper levels. A character who succeeds at a DC 35 Survival check to Track quickly realizes the only passageways to see any significant travel in recent months is the wide passage to the south, where tomb giant, dwarf, and wheeled tracks can all be found.

If the characters decide to explore other passageways, they should eventually realize that the winding warrens

go on and on but get them no closer to their goal. A successful DC 25 Survival check reduces this time to 1 hour (or 30 minutes on a critical success).

Creatures: Though few creatures can accidentally find their way into the Agorron, as it's heavily guarded and warded against teleportation, the umbral dragon Urbulindex is pleased to consider herself an exception. The dragon first started exploring this lofty intersection years ago, though she was smart enough to let the workers and guards here pass by on their business. Eventually relocated her hoard here and claimed the cavern as her home. The denizens of the Agorron realized that simply by placating the dragon (or even ignoring her), they had recruited a capable guard.

Urbulindex shared her long lifetime of knowledge with Kelganth as the lich delved deeper into his work to unravel the nature of the darvakkas. In exchange, she asked Kelganth to help her evade dying of old age by helping her become a ravener. Kelganth was happy to aid the dragon he considered a kindred spirit in research and knowledge.

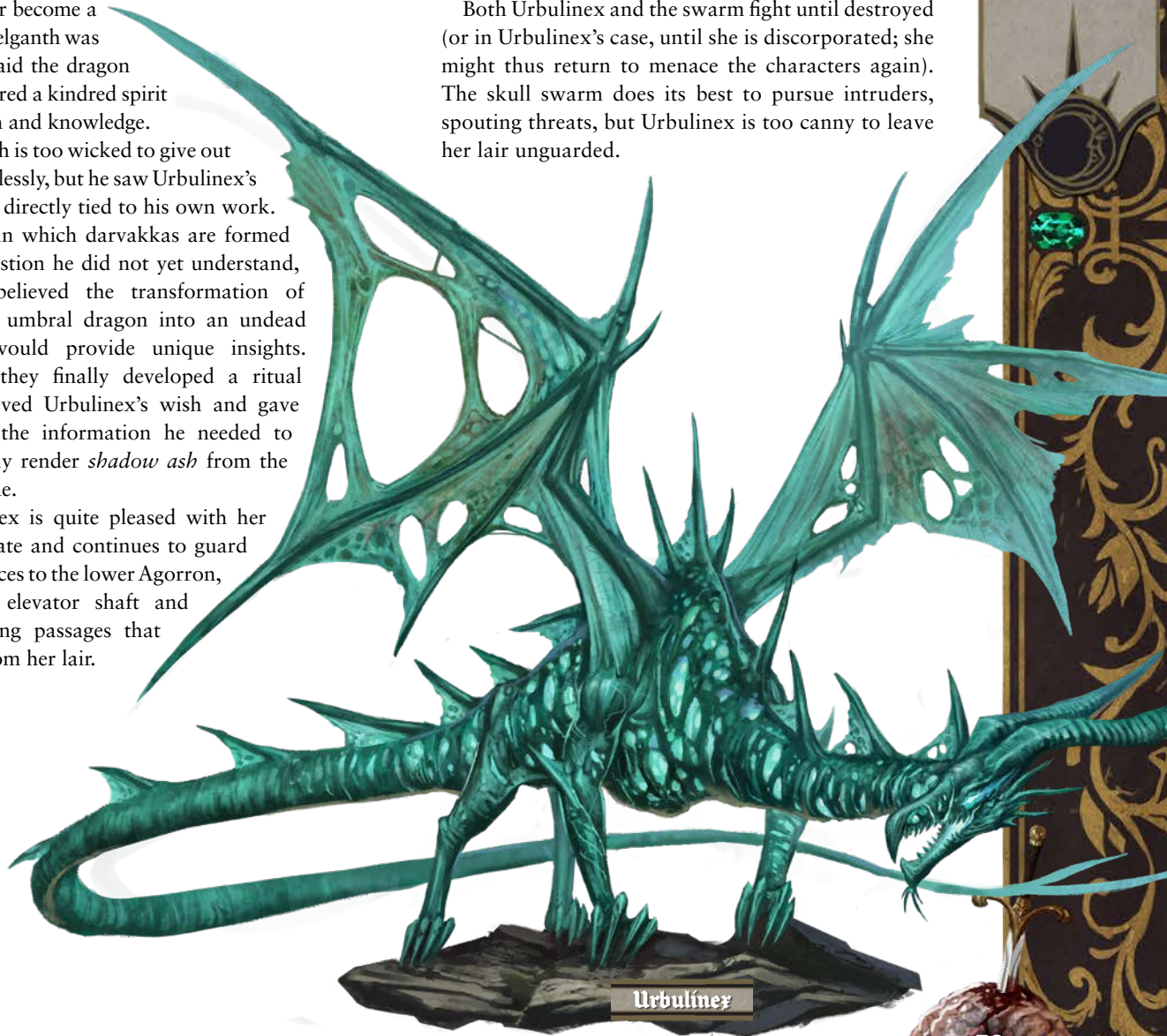
Kelganth is too wicked to give out his aid selflessly, but he saw Urbulindex's request as directly tied to his own work. The way in which darvakkas are formed was a question he did not yet understand, and he believed the transformation of the living umbral dragon into an undead ravener would provide unique insights. Together they finally developed a ritual that achieved Urbulindex's wish and gave Kelganth the information he needed to successfully render *shadow ash* from the Bound One.

Urbulindex is quite pleased with her current state and continues to guard the entrances to the lower Agorron, both the elevator shaft and the winding passages that branch from her lair.

Recently, Kelganth has insisted on adding one of his experiments as an additional guardian. This sorcerous skull swarm is just chatty enough to be irritating, but Urbulindex isn't yet willing to risk angering her lich ally by destroying the loud collection of skulls. She has instead convinced the swarm to spend time patrolling the nearby passages. Unfortunately for her, the skull swarm doesn't like to venture more than a few hundred feet away from this room.

Urbulindex knows she's obligated to kill any intruders, but she can't resist preening a bit about her obvious power and intimidating appearance. So long as the characters engage her with flattery, they can forestall her attack and perhaps gain some information. She attacks immediately if they try to leave, however, and after a few rounds the skull swarm returns. Its grating chattering reminds Urbulindex of her job and, unwilling to have the tattling skull swarm see her shirking, attacks at once.

Both Urbulindex and the swarm fight until destroyed (or in Urbulindex's case, until she is disincorporated; she might thus return to menace the characters again). The skull swarm does its best to pursue intruders, spouting threats, but Urbulindex is too canny to leave her lair unguarded.



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URBULINEX

CREATURE 18

UNIQUE NE HUGE DRAGON SHADOW UNDEAD

Female adult umbral dragon ravener (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 2 96, 224)

Perception +33; greater darkvision, scent (imprecise) 60 feet, soulsense 60 feet

Languages Common, Draconic, Necril, Shadowtongue

Skills Acrobatics +28, Athletics +35, Deception +31, Intimidation +31, Nature +28, Religion +31, Stealth +30

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

Soulsense A ravener senses the spiritual essence of living and undead creatures within 60 feet. Creatures whose bodies are one unit with their souls, like celestials and fiends, appear brighter to this sense.

AC 41; **Fort** +31, **Ref** +29, **Will** +31; +1 status to all saves vs. magic

HP 345, negative healing; **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, sleep, unconscious; **Weaknesses** good 15

Cowering Fear (aura, emotion, fear, mental) 90 feet, DC 37

Soul Ward 150 HP. As ravener (*Bestiary* 2 224).

Attack of Opportunity ⤴ Jaws only.

Discorporate ⬠ (divine, necromancy) As ravener.

Speed 50 feet, fly 180 feet

Melee ⬠ jaws +34 (magical, reach 15 feet), **Damage** 3d10+15 piercing plus 5d6 negative

Melee ⬠ claw +34 (agile, magical, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 3d10+15 slashing plus 2d6 negative

Melee ⬠ tail +32 (magical, reach 20 feet), **Damage** 3d12+15 slashing plus 2d6 negative

Melee ⬠ wing +32 (agile, magical, reach 15 feet), **Damage** 2d10+15 slashing plus 2d6 negative

Primal Innate Spells DC 39; **8th** darkness (at will), shadow walk, vampiric exsanguination; **Cantrips (8th)** detect magic

Consume Soul ⬠ (death, divine, necromancy) DC 44. As ravener.

Draconic Frenzy ⬠⬠ The ravener makes two claw Strikes and one wing Strike in any order.

Draconic Momentum The ravener recharges their Breath Weapon whenever they score a critical hit with a Strike.

Ghost Bane The ravener's Strikes affect incorporeal creatures with the effects of a *ghost touch* property rune, and the ravener's jaws deal an additional 6d6 force damage to undead.

Ravenous Breath Weapon ⬠⬠ The ravener breathes in one of two ways. With either option, a creature that fails its save is also drained 1 (or drained 2 on a critical failure). If at least one creature is drained by the ravener's Ravenous Breath Weapon, the ravener's soul ward gains 5 HP. The ravener can't use Breath Weapon again for 1d4 rounds.

- **Negative** (necromancy, negative, primal) The ravener breathes a blast of darkness in a 40-foot cone that

deals 17d6 negative damage plus 4d6 persistent negative damage (DC 39 basic Reflex save). Undead creatures take 22d6 force damage instead of the negative damage.

- **Shadows** (necromancy, primal, shadow) The ravener breathes a blast of shadows in a 40-foot cone. Each creature within the cone must attempt a DC 39 Fortitude save.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature is enfeebled 2 for 1 round.

Failure The creature is enfeebled 2 for 1 minute.

Critical Failure The creature is enfeebled 2 for 1 minute and blinded for 1 round.

Vicious Criticals The ravener treats an attack roll as a critical hit on a roll of 19 or 20, as long as the attack roll was a success. Additionally, whenever the ravener makes a critical hit with one of their Strikes, the target must succeed at a Fortitude save or gain the drained 1 condition. If the target already has a drained value of greater than 0, their drained value instead increases by 1, to a maximum of drained 4. Whenever the ravener applies drain to a creature in this way, their soul ward gains 5 Hit Points.

ELITE SORCEROUS SKULL SWARM

CREATURE 15

Pathfinder Bestiary 3 6, 245

Initiative Perception +26

Treasure: Urbulinx's hoard contains 105 pp, 2,241 gp, 10,250 sp, 50,400 cp, four 500 gp rubies, a *flame navette*, a *greater flame tongue*, a greater winter wolf elixir, and a *vorpal* rune on a *runestone* that looks like a misshapen skull.

52. DWARVEN DINING HALL

This enormous dining room is large enough to seat dozens of humanoid creatures. The wooden tables and chairs are all cracked and pitted as though from great age, but they seem to have been frequently repaired.

A discreet washroom can be found behind a door in the northeast corner of this room.

The Kulenett dwarves have served in this place for so long that even they have only the barest hints of their origins before they were brought here to live and serve Geb. They have been so suffused with necrotic energy over generations that all have become undeath-infused dwarves called mortics. Their history began centuries ago when Geb called upon dwarves to construct a containment chamber for the darvakkas. When he was done with them, however, he saw use in keeping them where they could carry out any repairs or future projects.

He saw to it that they had a comfortable life, or at least a pleasant one in an otherwise undead kingdom, and deep beneath the ground they were relatively unaware of and unaffected by the maltreatment many of the quick experience elsewhere in the nation.

The safety and security provided for them meant most dwarves in the group saw Geb as a kind benefactor of their people. They spend the intervening centuries working on projects sent their way, expanding their small underground home into a comfortable domain, and training the newest generations in their craft.

When Chancellor Kemnebi took direct control of the hold and instructed its population to follow the orders of the tomb giant lich Kelganth, there was little grumbling. Such changes had happened several times over the centuries at the command of Geb or the Blood Lords, so the dwarves saw little difference in the lich running things rather than necromancers of the Mortuarium. When they realized what the lich was up to in his repeated destruction of the Bound One, however, some dwarven leaders grew troubled. They saw the phoenix-like darvakka as vital to their cultural heritage, and viewed the lich's actions as cruel at best and reckless at worst. A group of them left to confront the lich and were not seen again.

Production of *shadow ash* slowed, and when Kelganth explained to Kemnebi what he had done, the chancellor set about finding entertainment to soothe their workers' anger and resentment. The elven bard he brought in to appease them was an immediate help, but when she met a nasty end, the lich decided fear was a better motivator. Since then, a split of sorts has formed in the clan, with a large traditionalist sect who support whatever orders are sent to them (which they assume come from Geb himself), and a smaller group who believe Chancellor Kemnebi's project goes against Geb's wishes.

There are currently 22 dwarves living in the Agorron; each is an elite relictner eroder mortic (*Bestiary* 6, *Book of the Dead* 127). These artisans and laborers tend to the Agorron, ironically spending much of their time repairing the damage inflicted by their own Weathering Auras. Although their Lair Sense alerts them when the characters arrive, and they're initially unfriendly to intruders, few are interested in fighting. Intruders who can make it this far are likely too powerful for the dwarves to defeat, and fighting intruders isn't their job in any case. For the most part, they stay out of the characters' way and sullenly refuse to answer questions. If the characters improve the attitude of any of these inhabitants to friendly or helpful (they each have a Will DC of 33), the dwarves share their history as well as their recent concerns.

The dwarves spend their time in areas **F2** to **F7**. They move around between these areas throughout

their days, but rarely go anywhere else except on specific orders to build or repair something. As a rule of thumb, you can decide that there are 1d4 dwarves in each of these areas when the characters arrive (2d4 dwarves in area **F4**), but keep in mind there are only 22 in total.

At some time during the characters' exploration of the dwarves' living areas, a group of zealous traditionalist dwarves decide they've had enough of interlopers changing their old ways, and form a gang to attack. See the **Traditionalists Attack** event below for this encounter.

XP Award: If the characters learn some of the history of the Agorron and Kelganth's recent leadership from the dwarves, award them 60 XP.

EVENT: TRADITIONALISTS ATTACK LOW 17

Not long after the player characters arrive and begin interacting with the dwarves, some of the latter decide that the characters' presence is the last straw in several recent years of upheavals to their ancestors' ways. They form a gang to fight the characters anywhere in areas **F2** to **F7**; any dwarves in the area who aren't part of the gang find someplace else to be as quickly as they can. The pugnacious traditionalists demand that the characters leave the Agorron entirely, stating that they've been through too many changes recently. Characters who wish to engage them can attempt a very hard Deception, Diplomacy, or Intimidation check (DC 38) to convince the dwarves to stand down for a time, but the dwarves attack on a failed check. Even on a success, they get their nerve back to confront the party again after only one day.

If the characters are prepared for a challenge, you might combine this fight with the banshee in area **F6** for a Severe encounter.

Creatures: The six dwarves don't mind using their abilities that collapse the terrain on the characters; they know they can fix everything once the intruders have died or fled. The dwarves pursue characters throughout their territory, but don't venture outside it if they can help it. If the characters defeat four dwarves, the other two retreat in a sulk and don't bother the characters again.

KULENETT SERVITORS (6) CREATURE 13

Elite relictner eroder mortic (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 6, *Book of the Dead* 127)

Initiative Perception +25

XP Award: If the characters talk the traditionalists down, award them 60 XP as though they'd defeated them in combat. In this case, don't award them XP for fighting later or getting them to stand down again.

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F3. KITCHEN

This kitchen has wide counters on all sides. Battered dishes are stacked near an oven to the south.

The oven is lit nearly all the time, making this one of the few rooms where the Agorron's pervasive chill is kept at bay. This is a common area for the dwarves to meet and chat—or, more recently, complain about their changing lot and the frequent deaths to which Kelganth is subjecting the Bound One.

F4. PROCESSING ROOM

A low-pitched hum just on the edge of hearing fills this room, emanating from assorted machines that run throughout the chamber. Hissing pipes, spinning flywheels, and chugging pumps create an atmosphere of barely restrained energy. A light coating of fine, powdery ash covers nearly every surface and clouds the air.

This is the heart of the facility, and where Kelganth has directed the dwarves to refine *shadow ash*. Dwarves bustle about this noisy area at all times, working on machinery, pushing around wheeled carts, and pouring jugs of foul-smelling chemicals into a series of pipes.

A character who succeeds at a DC 36 Perception check while Searching this room locates the secret door connecting the lab of the supervisor to the processing area. If the Kulenett dwarves are helpful, they volunteer the location of the door as the “back way” to Kelganth’s laboratory.

Treasure: A few supplies set aside for repair include six cold iron ingots worth 100 gp each and two mithral chunks worth 500 gp each. The dwarves grumble if they see the characters take these valuables but don’t attack—unless you decide that it makes a good time for the Traditionalists Attack event.

F5. BUNKS

The threadbare mattresses on these bunks are held up with heavily patched iron frames.

The dwarves work around the clock, and each rotates through sharing a bunk with two (or three) other dwarves. The dwarves therefore don’t keep much by way of personal mementos in this room, so there’s nothing of interest here.

F6. ENTERTAINMENT HALL

LOW 17

This wide, empty room has tattered tapestries hanging from the walls. Most are in such poor condition that it’s difficult to tell what they once depicted, but a few bear hints of dark giants and enormous bird-like shadows.

The dwarves have little need for amusement, so they haven’t used this large room much until recently. The tapestries on the walls depict the darvakkas that have occupied the Agorron for as long as the dwarves.

Creature: Vyntha Seabreeze was an idealistic elven bard who was kidnapped only a few months ago by servants of Kemnebi. Through a bureaucratic mix-up, she was sent here. Kemnebi discovered the error but realized it might be a blessing: he might use the bard to calm the discontented dwarves so vital to his *shadow ash* refining operation. Vyntha was assigned to live and entertain in this room, and the dutiful dwarves were instructed to attend her daily performances, see to her needs, but not let her leave. Vyntha spent weeks planning an escape, but the night before she planned to make her move, a dwarf she considered a friend betrayed her trust and reported her. In the resulting chase throughout the lower Agorron, Vyntha slipped into one of the



Kulenett Servitor

machines in the processing room (area F4) and was instantly killed.

Kelganth snared her spirit and offered her the opportunity for vengeance against the dwarf who had betrayed her. Rather than move on to her final reward, Vyntha chose revenge, sealing her fate as a banshee. Kelganth, who had anticipated her decision, bound her back here to perform forever.

A minor cult has sprung up around Vyntha, as the dwarves remember her legendary performances and are impressed by her new undead state; many still come to hear her sing. Some of the dwarves see her transformation into a banshee as a divine ascension of sorts. A few of the more musically inclined dwarves have even composed songs that seem to soothe the banshee's anger, and on rare occasions she even joins them in a terrible, forlorn dirge that echoes throughout the Agorron.

Creatures: The characters might hear Vyntha's eerie songs echoing from this room, or allied dwarves might recommend visiting the entertainment hall for a performance. In any event, Vyntha is enraged by strangers who can come and go from the Agorron with more ease than she ever could in life; even the sight of the characters is enough to drive her into a murderous rage. Vyntha Wails to begin combat, which might prove an unpleasant surprise for nearby dwarves who considered her unnerving but harmless. She fights until destroyed.

VYNTHA SEABREEZE

CREATURE 18

Female elite banshee (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 6, 34)

Initiative Perception +34

F7. MUSHROOM FARM

This natural chamber has several pools of water and an earthy, loamy smell. Mushrooms of many shapes and sizes grow throughout along carefully tended walkways.

The dwarves bring in some food from outside, but this mushroom farm provides most of their sustenance.

F8. LABORATORY

MODERATE 17

A stone walkway crosses above a crowded laboratory. The western half of the lab holds tables and benches covered with scientific and alchemical equipment. To the east is an impressive library.

This room was originally built for the caretakers of the darvakkas so they didn't have to travel all the way up to the Mortuarium between shifts. When Kemnebi

claimed stewardship of the darvakkas, he instructed his overseer Kelganth to take it. This allows Kelganth to perform his important research while keeping a close eye on anyone coming or going from the darvakkas' room (area F10).

The walkway is 10 feet above the lower floor of the room. The eastern portion of the lower room serves as Kelganth's private study and quarters, while the western portion is a laboratory where the lich tests samples brought to him from the dwarves via the secret passageway in the southwest corner (as described in area F4; a successful DC 36 Perception check is required to spot this secret door).

Creatures: Kelganth is proud of his work and endlessly curious about the nature of the *shadow ash*, so he divides his time here between carrying out tests and recording his results. Only when a serious problem arises does he trouble himself to leave.

In life, Kelganth was always interested in the transition of a living creature into an undead one. That moment, he felt, was less understood than it could be. While his peers busied themselves with the practice of learning how to create undead to do their bidding, Kelganth was far more concerned with the transitory process itself and the nature of undeath. He spent countless hours animating zombies and studying their muscles, ligaments, and tendons, recording his observations in exacting detail. He observed these tissues before, during, and after the transitions to undeath in an attempt to better understand what so many others took for granted.

This search for answers led to a mastery of undead creation few other necromancers could match and brought him to the attention of the Blood Lords and Chancellor Kemnebi. At this point Kelganth was still a living tomb giant, although he had already developed most of the processes he would later use to transform into a lich. Kemnebi knew this talented tomb giant would be a powerful ally in his own plans and set Kelganth on a research topic he hadn't yet studied: the nature of darvakkas.

Kelganth took to this fascinating new subject with all the glee of a dedicated researcher—here was a type of creature that seemed at once familiar yet alien. The darvacka's shadowy, negative-energy-infused essence was a puzzle that needed to be studied and understood. He spent years on his research, taking the step of becoming a lich to dispense with distractions like food and sleep. When Kemnebi finally let Kelganth in on his own quest to develop a reagent that could be used in a poison to animate the dead, the lich tackled the project with his characteristic fervor. Within months, Kelganth discovered that the most important

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ingredient was right under their noses in Yled: the umbraex darvakka called the Bound One.

Kemnebi used his political leverage to take control of the Agorron, but the specifics of those machinations didn't interest Kelganth. Kelganth instead worked on a refining process to produce *shadow ash* at the enormous scale Kemnebi required. The fastest method, unsurprisingly, required rapidly and repeatedly destroying the Bound One. Kelganth cares little about

the increasing drain on Yled's defenses; he still works tirelessly to develop improved methods for refining the ash's magical properties and maintains careful quality control over the process.

If confronted with intruders, Kelganth fights ruthlessly and efficiently to dispatch them so he can continue his work. He boasts of his close working relationship with Kemnebi and how the chancellor is pleased with the *shadow ash* operation Kelganth is overseeing here in the Agorron.

With his soul cage stored in a secure vault in Yled, Kelganth has little fear of permanent destruction and fights until destroyed. Occasional mishaps in destroying the Bound One have resulted in Kelganth's own destruction before, so he returns here as soon as he rejuvenates. If the characters are gone by then, he might seek revenge.

KELGANTH

CREATURE 19

UNIQUE LE LARGE UNDEAD

Male tomb giant lich (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 220, *Bestiary 3* 110)

Perception +35; darkvision, lifesense (imprecise) 60 feet

Languages Abyssal, Aklo, Common, Draconic, Infernal, Jotun, Necril, Undercommon

Skills Arcana +37, Athletics +33, Crafting +37, Diplomacy +33, Intimidation +33, Medicine +33, Occultism +37, Religion +37, Stealth +31

Str +8, **Dex** +5, **Con** +8, **Int** +10,

Wis +8, **Cha** +6

Items diadem of intellect, staff of power

AC 42; **Fort** +33, **Ref** +29, **Will** +35; +1 status to all saves vs. positive

HP 330, negative healing, rejuvenation;

Immunities death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, unconscious; **Resistances** cold 15, physical 15 (except magic bludgeoning)

Frightful Presence (aura, emotion, fear, mental) 60 feet, DC 43

Catch Rock ↻

Counterspell ↻ **Trigger** A creature casts a spell Kelganth has prepared; **Effect** Kelganth expends a prepared spell to counter the triggering creature's casting of that same spell. Kelganth loses his spell slot as if he had cast the triggering spell.

Speed 30 feet

Melee ✦ hand +34 (magical), **Damage** 6d8 negative plus paralyzing doom

Melee ✦ staff +34 (magical, two hand d8), **Damage** 3d4+16 bludgeoning

Ranged ✦ rock +34 (brutal, range increment 120 feet), **Damage** 3d8+16 bludgeoning

Kelganth

Arcane Prepared Spells DC 43, attack +35; **10th** *time stop*; **9th** *implosion*, *massacre*, *power word kill*; **8th** *horrid wilting*, *polar ray*, *power word stun*; **7th** *dispel magic*, *eclipse burst*, *project image*; **6th** *chain lightning*, *disintegrate*, *true seeing*; **5th** *cloudkill*, *cone of cold*, *sending*; **4th** *dimension door*, *fly*, *private sanctum*; **3rd** *levitate*, *lightning bolt*, *vampiric touch*; **2nd** *blur*, *gentle repose*, *invisibility*; **1st** *fleet step*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *true strike*; **Cantrips (10th)** *chill touch*, *detect magic*, *electric arc*, *ray of frost*, *shield*

Divine Innate Spells DC 41; **9th** *bind undead* (×3), *harm* (×3)
Rituals DC 41; *create undead*

Drain Soul Cage ♦ **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** Kelganth taps into his soul cage's power to cast any arcane spell up to 9th level, even if the spell being cast is not one of his prepared spells. Kelganth's soul cage doesn't need to be present for him to use this ability.

Font of Death ♦♦♦ (divine, necromancy, negative) As Graelar (page 46), but 11d12 negative damage (DC 41 basic Fortitude save).

Paralyzing Doom (arcane, curse, incapacitation, necromancy) A creature damaged by Kelganth's hand Strike is doomed 1 and must succeed at a DC 41 Fortitude save. The creature becomes paralyzed for 1 round on a failure. On a critical failure, the creature is paralyzed permanently, falls prone, and seems dead. A DC 25 Medicine check reveals that the victim is alive.

Quickened Casting ♦ **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** If Kelganth's next action is to cast an cantrip or spell that is 8th level or less, reduce the number of actions to cast it by 1 (minimum 1 action).

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

Throw Rock ♦

Treasure: In addition to his personal gear, Kelganth's lab contains specialized equipment worth 1,000 gp and books worth another 1,100 gp, one of which has a *scroll of time stop* as a bookmark. A *potion of undetectability* rests in one of his desk drawers.

F9. ANTECHAMBER OF ASHES

LOW 17

This chamber once served as a guard post where tomb giants watched over the darvakkas. When Kelganth took over operation of the facility, he moved the guards up to the upper Agorron to avoid outside interference, and so he could conduct his experiments more easily. After the minor rebellion of discontented Kulennett dwarves a few months ago and Kelganth's decision to carry out the repeated destruction of the Bound One himself, the chamber has seen little use by anyone except Kelganth.

Double doors to the northeast are decorated with narrow, geometric lines that suggest vaguely humanoid shapes as well as something larger and more birdlike. A fine layer of dark ash coats the floor of the chamber, stirring at the slightest movement of air.

Hazard: The tremendous amounts of energy released over and over by Kelganth's repeated destruction of the Bound One has created a terrifying haunt. Each time a shipment of *shadow ash* moves from the inner chamber through this room, a little of the unrefined material spills out. While a small amount of the ash is relatively harmless, the traumatic way in which it is harvested has charged the material with an echo of a memory from the Bound One's repeated destruction.

ASHES OF DESPAIR

HAZARD 18

COMPLEX HAUNT

Stealth +39 (master)

Description Swirling ashes fill the room and form into the semblance of a massive predatory bird that swoops upon those in the chamber, draining their life force away.

Disable DC 44 Occultism (master) to disrupt and counteract the shadow magic animating the ashes, or DC 42 Religion (master) to exorcise the animating spirit. Disabling the trap requires three successful checks, in any combination of Occultism and Religion checks.

Shriek of Despair ↻ **Trigger** Two or more creatures enter area **F9**; **Effect** A terrifying shriek of pain and suffering deals 3d12+40 mental damage to each creature within area **F9**, and each creature must attempt a DC 42 Will save. The haunt then rolls initiative.

Critical Success The creature takes no damage and is frightened 1.

Success The creature takes half damage and is frightened 1.

Failure The creature takes full damage and is frightened 2.

Critical Failure The creature takes double damage, is frightened 2, and doomed 1.

Routine (1 action) The shadowy shape sends streams of scouring ash toward the mouth, eyes, and nose of each creature in the room, dealing 3d12+20 slashing damage and requiring a DC 42 Fortitude save. Creatures that don't need breathe can't be sickened by the haunt and creatures that don't see can't be blinded by it.

Critical Success The creature takes no damage and is blinded for 1 round.

Success The creature takes half damage, is blinded for 1 round, and is sickened 1.

Failure The creature takes full damage, is blinded for 1 minute, and is sickened 2.

Critical Failure The creature takes full damage, is blinded for 1 minute, is sickened 2, and is unable to use any spells or abilities with the verbal trait while it is sickened.

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Reset The haunt resets immediately when there are no creatures in area **F9**. Any previous successes from attempts to Disable the haunt persist when it's later triggered. After three successes, the haunt doesn't reset.

Treasure: Kelganth keeps a small satchel here with some tools he plans to use the next time he destroys the Bound One: three vials of major bottled sunlight (*Book of the Dead* 18).

F10. BINDING CHAMBER

SEVERE 17

The interior of this room has been shaped into what looks like a hollowed-out pyramid with truncated corners. The ceiling sections ascend at steep angles hundreds of feet to a sharp point. Lines of dim green light emanate from every corner and converge at the interior peak. Other glowing lines form into sigils on each of the walls. The room is filled with an indescribable weight, a heavy atmosphere of absence and malice.

A large platform stands in each corner of the room except the southwest. In the center of the room is a massive dais formed from polished black stone. Its shape matches the room's interior, except its top is flat. Huge metal chains lead from each corner of this pyramid to a tangled pile in the center, where they disappear into a massive mound of fine gray ash.

The weight in this room is the vacuous environment of the Negative Energy Plane mixed with influences of the Shadow Plane. The room is always dimly illuminated with shifting shadows leaking from the Shadow Plane. The negative energy present here deals 7d6 cold damage to all living creatures in the room (DC 40 basic Fortitude save). A creature that fails is enfeebled 1 for 1 minute and pulled 10 feet closer to the central pyramid. This environmental effect replaces the Entropy's Shadow auras of darvakkas in the room (that is, creatures don't take damage from both and aren't pulled in different directions).

Early in the creation of his nation, Geb ordered the construction of a large, mostly hollow underground pyramid built to exacting specifications far beneath Yled. When the first attempt did not meet his requirements, Geb demonstrated his displeasure by casually annihilating all the human workers and engineers responsible for its construction and raising them as mindless zombies. He then scoured his lands for those he felt could meet the nearly impossible standards he expected and eventually settled upon the Kulenett dwarves living beneath his nation. Geb lured them here and put them to work.

The dwarves planned and executed Geb's instructions perfectly and built this chamber to the undead wizard's exacting specifications. Geb designed this prison for three sykever darvakkas, along with a rare umbraex darvakka. What deals he made or threats he promised to gain the service of such independent and powerful undead beings is known only to Geb, but the darvakkas have served as an endless magical battery for the defenses of Yled ever since.

When Kemnebi took over control of the chamber from the necromancers of the Mortuary, he had no interest in maintaining the facility's original purpose of providing magical energy for Yled's defense. Nevertheless, he needed to also maintain the containment of the creatures so Kelganth could harvest the *shadow ash* his plans required. He spoke to the leaders of the dwarves and explained Geb had personally requested their service in this matter. Honored at the idea that their king had once again called upon them to serve, the Kulenett leaders decided to follow Kemnebi's lead. The first time they watched the death of the umbraex, however, even the staunchest believer in the mission Kemnebi had given them began to have doubts.

Creatures: When the player characters reach this room, the final remaining fragments of energy holding the three sykevers in place run out, freeing them from their bonds. Eager to wreak as much destruction as they can, especially upon the living, the sykevers immediately move to attack the characters. In combat, the sykevers target living creatures first, especially any creatures that show the ability to use or wield positive energy. They fight until they're destroyed.

Unlike the sykevers, the Bound One can't move from the central pyramid; chains of sickly green energy hold it in place. The Bound One remains trapped by the ancient pact it struck with Geb, which can only be undone by the ghost king's will. Disrupting the magical bonds that hold it in place are beyond the characters' ability. Furthermore, the repeated draining has weakened it. The Bound One nevertheless joins the sykevers in the fight as best it can, such as by using its icy blast.

SYKEVERS (3)

CREATURE 15

Pathfinder Book of the Dead 83

Initiative Perception +29

THE BOUND ONE

CREATURE 21

Umbraex (page 83)

Initiative Perception +36

Depleted The Bound One's frequent destruction and revivification at Kelganth's hands have weakened it. Until it's left alone to recover for several weeks, it's permanently affected by its Sunlight Powerlessness, making it stunned 2 and clumsy 2.

Speaking with the Bound One

If the characters successfully defeat the three sykevers, read or paraphrase the following.

The ashes scattered throughout the room flow toward the central pyramid as a pitch-black tornado around the massive bird held in place by the glowing green chains. The bird-like monster struggles for a moment, trying to beat its wings as if to fly from the pyramid, but it's inexorably drawn to the top of the structure by its bindings. With a deep sigh, the being settles its body and stares at you, its eyes little more than orbs of reflective blackness.

The creature opens its mouth and shrieks. While there are no words in the sound, it's full of powerful emotion. Its foremost right eye sparkles with an inner light as it studies the room and those gathered before it. The creature lowers its head toward its right leg, and a massive talon stretches up to its own eye. With a sharp, sudden slash, the creature plucks out the eye, which hits the floor with a sound like crashing stone. The creature nods toward the eye and settles back on its pyramid.

Anyone who examines the eye sees images swimming around within it, which then project into the room. Read or paraphrase the following.

The image projected from the creature's gemlike eye resolves into a figure dressed in elegant finery standing next a skeletal giant in robes. The smaller figure is Chancellor Kemnebi, leader of the Blood Lords. He speaks to the giant in carefully measured tones that carry more than a hint of a threat.

"So, Kelganth, the only way to gain this reagent by destroying the Bound One with positive energy?" The giant nods in reply. The chancellor continues, "And when the creature is reborn, the process can be repeated indefinitely?"

The lich replies, his voice dry and deep. "Yes, chancellor. But there's a problem. Each time the darvakka is destroyed and reborn a bit of the creature's energy is siphoned away." The giant pauses a moment. When the chancellor doesn't reply, the giant speaks again. "That means less and less power going to the defenses of Yled, my lord."

"Yes, I'm aware," says the vampire. A fire lights his eyes as he looks up at the lich, who takes an involuntary step back at the intensity of the chancellor. "And I do

not care whatsoever about this city. The *shadow ash* is the key to my plans. With it we can raise an army of the dead from the very nations Geb feeds. It shall be an army—my army—with a size never before seen anywhere in Golarion. If this city's defenses need to be sacrificed, so be it. That is a small price to pay for victory."

This scene can be replayed at any time and provides the evidence the player characters need to prove Chancellor Kemnebi's guilt. They can present this item to Geb in the next volume of the adventure; the characters should realize that because Geb knows the powers and abilities of the *umbraex* he bound, he will know this proof to be genuine.

Treasure: The orb the darvakka gives the player characters is an *umbraex eye* (page 79).

XP Award: If the characters learn of Kemnebi's plans from the Bound One, award them 120 XP.

Concluding the Adventure

After Kelganth's destruction, the Bound One's cycle of destruction to produce *shadow ash* is at an end. While it takes some time, the creature's strength slowly returns and its energies begin to recharge the defenses of Yled in fulfillment of its ancient contract with Geb. The Bonewall soon begins responding appropriately to commands. New sykevers must be bound in the Agorron, but the presence of the Bound One is sufficient for the foreseeable future. Word soon spreads among the citizens of Yled that their city is at least safer against direct assault, and whispers insist that the player characters are to thank for this improvement—even if no one quite knows the details of how.

If she survived the adventure, Ghiasi temporarily closes *Twined Stories* and goes into hiding on the Shadow Plane for a while, certain that Kemnebi will seek to punish her. While she cares deeply for her brother, her practical nature and self-interest means she does little to become more involved than she already is. If any of the characters displayed exceptional skill at Performance and interest in the playhouse, Ghiasi might let them run it in her absence; it's then up to the character to be as involved with *Twined Stories* as they choose.

With evidence in hand of Chancellor Kemnebi's crimes, including the *umbraex eye* that Geb knows can't be faked, the characters are free to present the ghost king himself with their proof in the next installment of this adventure path, *Pathfinder #186: Ghost King's Rage*. They can spend some time in Yled enjoying their reputation, but they have little time to stop the chancellor's plot.

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Whether stocking up for an adventure or selling treasure hauled out of a dungeon, commerce doesn't just enable an adventurer's career; it also shapes the very world they explore. The Inner Sea region has myriad trade routes and mercantile enterprises. Some date back millennia while others have developed only recently in response to a new lucrative opportunity. Understanding the trade of a given region not only allows characters to sell their treasures for the best prices, it also helps you create believable NPCs, present flavorful encounters, and better understand how various nations interact. This article presents common aspects of trade and explores the Inner Sea region's major trading routes.

Life of a Trader: The romanticized merchant's life involves epic voyages spanning hundreds of miles over many months. Without a doubt, many lead this life, trekking the entire Obari Crossing, Varisian Run, or other paths. Yet the epic traveler archetype applies to a mythologized minority. Most choose to operate along a portion of a major route where they know the communities, terrain, and likely dangers.

Perils of the Road: Trade usually flows along familiar corridors like rivers and roads, making these easy targets for bandits. Even on the most secure paths, though, foul weather can ruin a caravan within an hour. The Obari Ocean's storms sink countless ships, flash floods wash out highways, and avalanches sweep down mountain passes.

Trade Organizations: While any peddler or ship captain might turn a profit, the greatest economic powers operate large organizations that diversify their goods and spread their risk across numerous expeditions. In most cases, these operations maintain a tight, regional focus, enabling them to concentrate their influence and dominate a few markets. Yet a few groups have expanded dramatically, establishing widespread outposts, complex support networks, and even international political influence. The most infamous of these, the Aspis Consortium, intimidates, undersells, and occasionally even robs its competitors. From its headquarters in Cheliah, its anonymous Patrons oversee dozens of operations across the Inner Sea.

Also of special note, though, are the Kalistocrat operations and Keleshite patronage networks. Revering profit with religious fervor, the Prophets of Kalistrade radiate from Druma to establish businesses the world over. Merchants of Kelesh (including its satrapy, Qadira) maintain a patronage system, socially gatekeeping who can do business with whom unless formally introduced by a patron. The tradition follows elaborate unwritten rules, and while the network isn't formally an organization, its hierarchy and operations nonetheless function similarly.

North Tack

The Inner Sea experiences seasonal winds that fuel eastward and westward traffic in turn. In the summer and winter, air typically blows north and south over the warming and cooling land, enabling most sailing ships to move steadily along the coast. In early spring, though, the Porthmos winds gust from Taldor, almost halting eastbound traffic while speeding westward voyages; in early autumn, the winds reverse, driving the return trip. As a result, long-range merchants maintain apartments in Corentyn and Absalom, living in each place a few months until the winds shift.

The North Tack, the route along the Inner Sea's northern coast that ship captains use to overcome these seasonal winds, begins in the city of Corentyn in Cheliah. Although it boasts few goods of its own, the city controls access to the Arcadian Ocean and acts as a depot for goods from all along the Varisian Run. Eastbound ships load up on these furs, ivory, spices, rare woods, and more, all inspected by customs agents who aren't always as loyal as House Thrune assumes. Some, like **Calpernia Ratarion** (N female human inspector), know that Cheliah's stranglehold on certain goods will only choke its own prosperity, so she's willing to justify the occasional bribe.

A ship typically stops at Westcrown to sell off expensive cargo bound for Cheliah's capital, Egorian, as well as to buy Iseri iron ore, Chelaxian books, finished leather goods, premium wines, and more. Westcrown also deals in Cheliah's high-quality arms

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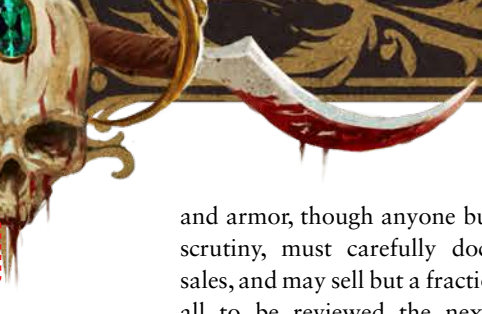
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and armor, though anyone buying in bulk earns extra scrutiny, must carefully document the armaments' sales, and may sell but a fraction in Andoren markets—all to be reviewed the next time that ship enters Chelaxian waters. Afterward, eastbound merchants only occasionally stop in Ostenso, Cheliox's naval stronghold, where they might obtain affordable repair services. Ostenso rankles at the similar services provided by nearby Augustana, so not only does repair work here earn the ship temporary privileges in Chelaxian ports, but Andoren agents also sabotage ships leaving here sometimes to undermine Ostenso's reputation and drive repair traffic to Augustana.

Like Ostenso's mirror image, Augustana provides dry goods, repairs, and sundry supplies, serving as a natural stopping point for eastbound ships to restock and offering a brief shore leave before jumping east to the capital of Andoran, Almas. That bustling port channels all of Andoran's inland goods to waiting ships: honey, mead, lumber, reading lenses, Oregent glassware, Carpenden olives, Sauerton's dubious wines, and more. Shipments of Cullerton wool from the Sellen River often arrive just as Carpenden's moonmelon harvest concludes, and merchants compete fiercely to buy up enough wool to cushion the valuable fruit so that it survives to reach other ports. Chelaxian goods rarely sell well here, though eastbound merchants can earn extra coin by selling Chelaxian news to Andoren spies. Of course, the spies don't operate openly, though it's well known that the gregarious **Enteriwin Bower** (NG nonbinary halfling informant) feeds intelligence to Andoran's Twilight Talons and stray scraps of gossip with anyone willing to share their own.

Most ships sail along the coast to Cassomir, off-loading luxury goods to an eager Taldan audience in exchange for more timber and a wealth of Sellen River products. To Taldor's chagrin, these merchants rarely sail beyond Cassomir to the capital Oppara, instead veering south to Absalom or Katheer.

By early spring, North Tack voyages retrace their route with holds full of tea, silk, Osirian linen, Vudran spices, magic items, books, and delicate pottery. Cassomir happily buys some of these to ship north and east, selling Taldan cheeses and furniture and various Sellen goods, especially whiskeys and wool. However, Cassomir and Almas often offer similar goods, and Andoren wares often sell poorly in Cheliox, so the westbound voyages sometimes skip Almas and Augustana altogether. Even when they do visit, Chelaxian agents periodically sabotage ships to force stops in Ostenso for repairs. Finally, any remaining goods reach Corentyn, where merchants traveling the Varisian Run haul them to even more distant lands.

Obari Crossing

The Obari Crossing purportedly began with the magnificent Maharaja Khiben-Sald's voyage west from Vudra in 563 AR, when the ruler's 101 ships showered gifts upon Nex and Absalom while setting up colonies in Jalmeray. Absalom so adored the maharaja that local demand for Vudran spices and art exploded, fueling millennia of trade ever since. However, the exact route has expanded over time, aided by the pen strokes of regional economists who pride themselves on it remaining the longest trade route to touch the Inner Sea. As a result, the Obari Crossing not only stretches from Sedeq in southern Qadira to Vudra's Betul Sea, it's also subsumed the so-called Arcane Crescent along Garund's northeast coast, becoming a truly massive network.

This Arcane Crescent arcs from Katapesh south to Quantum, down to Mechitar, and then loops north to Niswan and finally Sedeq, earning its title both from the massive quantity of magical reagents and eldritch goods in cargoes, and also from the enchantments applied to ships' cargo holds to preserve perishable goods over the long journey. Goods from across the Inner Sea accumulate in Katapesh's vibrant markets, with wine, salt, linen, fine clothing, esoteric spell components, and liquors being added to the iron, hides, and pesh harvested from Katapesh's interior. Nexian spellcasters hungrily snap up anything to aid their arcane projects, in turn selling traders a host of eldritch goods, from self-cleaning pots to wondrous flying carpets. Yet a huge portion of the trade involves alchemical goods; over millennia, many industries have innovated new techniques for tanning hides, smelting ores, and dying cloth that rely on Nex's specialty chemicals. Adding to this is a brisk trade of non-magical goods like Alkenstar gearworks, books, spicy seerpeppers, and unpredictably tasty Zalbir honey produced by the Mana Wastes' bees.

Despite longtime animosity, Geb's residents happily buy Nexian products (and Osirian embalming goods), but their own wares rarely travel beyond the Arcane Crescent. With a wealth of zombie labor and warm fields, Geb cultivates massive amounts of food like maize, rice, squash, tomatoes, cocoa, beans, and blood melons, without which its neighbors would starve. Undead agents take care in maintaining food purity, guaranteeing a measurement of fewer than 3 undead parts per million in any grain. In Mechitar, this measurement is overseen by Export Guild agent **Thieving Yill** (LE male poltergeist assessor). Yill has haunted the docks for centuries; he was falsely accused of cheating customers, had his hand lopped off, and was drowned in the harbor. He now takes his role

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quite seriously, assisted by his reanimated limb **Righty** (NE crawling hand) who deals with paperwork.

A few ships traveling the Obari Crossing diverge south to Holomog and Droon (along a route called the Antarkos Sweep), yet most veer north to Jalmeray, buying up an abundance of wood, coffee, cumin, and nutmeg that fetch handsome prices in Sedeq. It's there in southern Qadira where the Obari Crossing truly earns its name, with ships launching east toward Vudra in a race to reach distant ports first and command the best prices. For all the Obari Ocean's fickle weather—with doldrums stranding ships for weeks only for a tropical storm to strike an hour later—its westerly summer winds reliably drive traffic east along the desolate coasts where the squalls lose strength. Were that not enough, sea devils prowl the deeper waters, emerging to raid ships. Yet even here, a few merchants have developed weighted ropes that drag colorful streamers hundreds of feet below the surface, signaling their intention to trade. Those who bow to the sea devils and bring bronze goods and terrestrial meats can often fill their hulls with these raiders' ill-gotten gold. Sea devils often scratch sigils into trustworthy ships' hulls, marking them as friendly, though the same symbols often infuriate the merfolk who share their waters.

Few might survive the route's rigors were it not for Ibydan aid. City-states in the bustling archipelago of Ibydos compete to attract weary ships, with ports like Aelysos catering to eastbound vessels and its bitter rival Hoimpeia attracting those headed west. In service to Pharimia, the islands' hero-god of ports and lighthouses, captains like **Myrrise** (NG female human sailor) patrol the nearby waters in search of distressed travelers, shepherding them to the nearest harbors for repairs. No matter their condition, travelers do well to restock their food in Ibydos. The islands also offer valuable products of their own, such as mercenaries, copperwares, and oil from Pol-Sylica; marbles, wines, and jadeite from Pol-Ptirmeios; as well as pearls, mekaine honey treats, fruit pickles, and the fermented fish known as chirzos from Pol-Liachora.

Yet the real prize lies beyond, where the Paraparat and Johan Mountains shelter the Betul Sea and colorful cities offer Vudra's goods for export. Steady winds fuel the hillside furnaces of Saman, which forge steel used for cutlery and weapons alike. Chennipon's ships maintain the beautiful standards of Khiben-Sald's treasure fleet of ages past, and its bazaar sells silks, fine cotton, spices, rare woods, and dyes from the continent's lush interior. While teas comprise Sihadrimon's greatest export by bulk, it's also the distribution center for Vudra's magical and

mechanical goods, with the Mythspinner Market specializing in occult items that tap into local legends to fuel their effects. At least five of the shops are owned and operated by **Kacherivata** (LE genderfluid vulture-headed raja rakshasa merchant), who maintains a dozen guises to monitor worldwide trade and track down dangerous artifacts. No matter the port, Vudra is a land of a thousand gods. Countless talismans, scrolls, and potions encapsulate a sliver of these deities' blessings for use abroad.

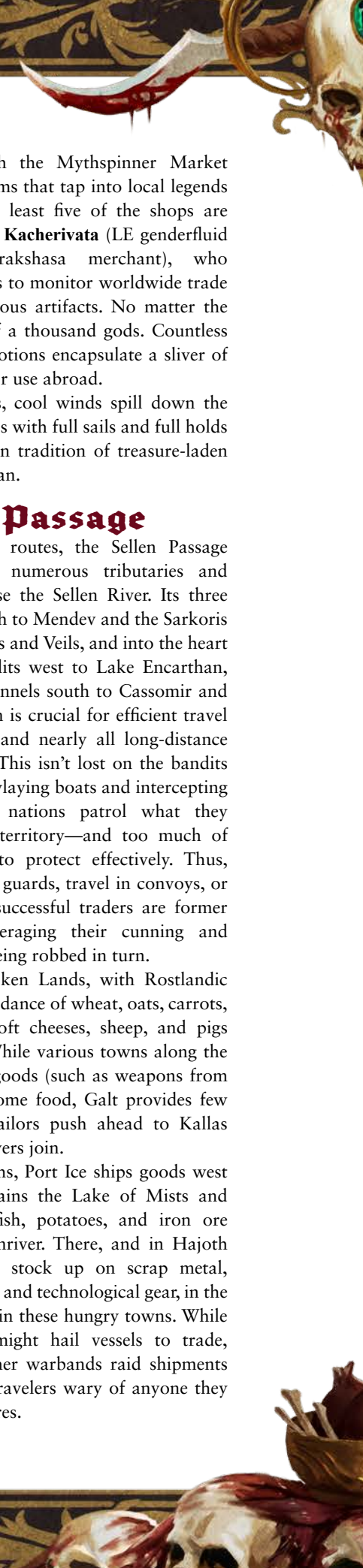
As winter approaches, cool winds spill down the mountains, carrying ships with full sails and full holds west, reliving the Vudran tradition of treasure-laden vessels traveling to Avistan.

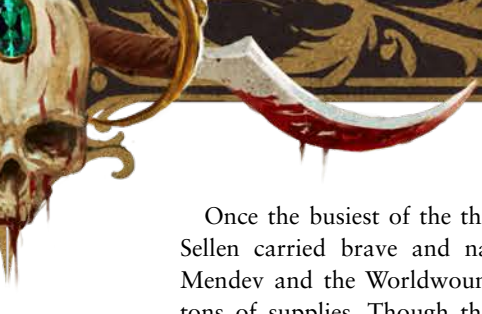
Sellen Passage

Unlike linear maritime routes, the Sellen Passage spiderwebs across the numerous tributaries and waterways that comprise the Sellen River. Its three northern branches stretch to Mendev and the Sarkoris Scar, to the Lake of Mists and Veils, and into the heart of Brevo. A branch splits west to Lake Encarthan, and ultimately, traffic funnels south to Cassomir and the Inner Sea. The Sellen is crucial for efficient travel across eastern Avistan, and nearly all long-distance trade there relies on it. This isn't lost on the bandits who stalk the rivers, waylaying boats and intercepting cargos. While various nations patrol what they can, there's too much territory—and too much of it considered lawless—to protect effectively. Thus, merchants typically hire guards, travel in convoys, or both. Often, the most successful traders are former pirates themselves, leveraging their cunning and combat skills to avoid being robbed in turn.

Brevo feeds the Broken Lands, with Rostlandic farms exporting an abundance of wheat, oats, carrots, onions, potatoes, semisoft cheeses, sheep, and pigs down the East Sellen. While various towns along the river supply their own goods (such as weapons from Mivon) and purchase some food, Galt provides few reliable berths. Most sailors push ahead to Kallas Lake, where the three rivers join.

During warmer months, Port Ice ships goods west to where the Sellen drains the Lake of Mists and Veils, stocking salted fish, potatoes, and iron ore in Chesed to ship downriver. There, and in Hajoth Hakados, some traders stock up on scrap metal, hides, and even skymetal and technological gear, in the process offloading food in these hungry towns. While semi-nomadic Kellids might hail vessels to trade, the Blood Gars and other warbands raid shipments often enough to make travelers wary of anyone they encounter along the shores.





Once the busiest of the three waterways, the West Sellen carried brave and naïve crusaders north to Mendev and the Worldwound, along with countless tons of supplies. Though the Sarkoris Scar remains dangerous, northbound donations and travelers have slowed to a trickle, plunging the West Sellen into a serious recession. Many outposts and guard stations have been wholly abandoned. If anything, the West Sellen exports mercenaries: both would-be crusaders looking for new fights and the gladiators of Tymon's famous arenas. Southbound boats also load up on Lambreth's wool, alchemical goods (including poisons) from Daggermark, and a variety of regional liquors like the infamous Oldlaw whiskey. Whether they want to or not, merchants usually make a stop at Razmiran to buy wood, cloth, and food. The goods fetch fair prices elsewhere, but more importantly, Razmiran's masked peacekeepers tend to cause trouble for anyone trying to sneak past their shores without doing business.

Although the Sellen travels straight to the Inner Sea, it's common for merchants to detour west to Lake Encarthan. Kyonin's woodwork, instruments, and fine clothing mingle with Molthuni beer, Nirmathan hardwoods, Oprak gems, and Belkzen ingots of all varieties. Yet with the Eye of Dread threatening wayward ships, most merchants elect to handle their Encarthan commerce by visiting Druma, which functions as a clearinghouse for regional goods. Its enterprising kalistocrats, like the ever-richer **Temel Passad** (LN male human Prophet of Kalistrade), eagerly buy luxury goods while selling dwarven metalcraft, fruit, deluxe wool clothing, and jewelry.

Fueled by three immense tributaries, the Sellen River flows steadily south, sometimes swelling to a mile wide. With travel so easy and the forests so dense, there's little reason to stop between Lake Kallas and the Inner Sea, which has stymied the riverside villages' efforts to grow into anything more influential. Instead, boats sail straight to Cassomir, whose traders happily buy up northern wares for distribution across the sea. Because of its demonic history and the recent exoduses from the West Sellen, the former Pyre Hellknight **Kadias Perull** (LN female half-elf collector) takes a particular interest in any blasphemous artwork, cursed items, and unholy relics, for which she pays a fair price.

While Cassomir's larger shipbuilding industry struggles to match that of Augustana and Ostenso, it's developed a lucrative niche in building premium riverboats. It's common for a trader to arrive on a barge, sell their cargo, and return home in a fine vessel laden with the books, art, wine, silks, spices, and magic items of the Inner Sea.

South Tack

Paralleling the North Tack, the South Tack hugs the Inner Sea's south coast and connects many of the world's greatest metropolises, moving equally lucrative cargoes. As with the North Tack, travel depends on the seasonal winds: early spring propels ships west, autumn winds blow east, and the seasons between vary enough to allow slower movement in any direction.

Azir marks the westernmost point, where ships fill their hulls with Rahadoumi books, tin, semiprecious stones, citrus fruit, and ornate basketry, plus a host of goods procured along the Varisian Run route. However, because Cheliox controls access to the Inner Sea and often delays ships to examine cargoes, many merchants instead skip Azir and begin either in Corentyn or Manaket—it's easier and minimizes the odds some overzealous Chelaxian agent decides to seize a ship's "contraband."

Even Absalom's worldly citizens often dismiss Thuvia as selling nothing but the sun orchid elixir, yet the five great city-states boast myriad goods. Alchemical wares of all kinds circulate Merab's markets, with a special emphasis on preservatives, such as an expensive lacquer that absorbs heat, making it popular for ships hauling perishable cargo. Few know these materials better than **Veaan Tuvanik** (LG female half-orc transmuter), a salt mogul whose enchanted wares guarantee five times the preservation of mundane grains. Merab and Aspenthar specialize in rare plants, ranging from various tree sap incenses and tamarinds to lavender and cumin. Perhaps Thuvia's greatest advantage is its products' compactness, ensuring no merchant sails past for lack of space.

Almost nothing but sand lies between Aspenthar and Sothis. Impetuous crews speed ahead at their peril; with its jagged, hidden shoals, the Coast of Graves' name is well earned. Yet Sothis is worth the trip. In the shadow of Ulunat's shell, the River Sphinx carries Osirion's inland treasures (and many from an overland route into the Mwangi Expanse) to its capital, where wholesalers export not only gold, lapis lazuli, and magical items, but also tons of fine linen, wheat, dates, and the nigella seeds essential to many regional recipes. The Inner Sea nations' appetite for Osirian grain is only overshadowed by its thirst for Garundi beers; Osirion's breweries create vast quantities of weak yet delicious beer whose reputation for "chewiness" is an acquired taste. Few traders sail inland, instead relying on pilots like **Ptokuhet** (CG male dwarf river pilot), an Ouat guide and skipper who seems to know every nook and cranny of the rivers Crook and Asp.

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A short journey north lies the trade nexus of Absalom. Tradition disagrees as to whether the South Tack moves first to Sothis and then Absalom or the other way around. In practice, merchants can make a profit either way, especially because Absalom's ancient connections to Osirion makes it a steady market for the desert's goods.

No matter the path, the South Tack terminates in Katapesh, its markets brimming with nearly every ware. Wonderful as that is for customers, it drives home a crucial conflict along the South Tack: saturation. Absalom boasts infinite variety, Katapesh brags about selling everything, nearby Katheer channels the Padishah Empire's riches, and Osirion is a gateway to the Mwangi Expanse. These metropolises compete vigorously for buyers, and which cities a merchant visits along the South Tack (and in which order) can earn them acclaim and animosity in equal measure.

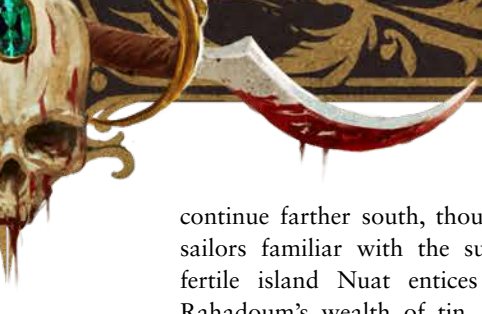
Varisian Run

Named for its northern terminuses, the Varisian Run traces much of Avistan's and northern Garund's western coast, connecting its largest ports over a 2,000-mile span. Unlike the consistency of east-west routes, this longitudinal trek crosses temperate, sub-tropical, and even some tropical climes, presenting varied challenges that few captains, crews, and ships can navigate confidently. Instead, most traders favor either the northern or southern half, selling off their cargo in Corentyn, loading up on goods from the Inner Sea, and reversing course.

Yet even the Varisian Run is one leg of a world-spanning journey; the Path of Aganhei crosses the Crown of the World from Tian Xia, bringing silk, jewelry, books, spices, and other valuable cargoes to Kalsgard. To the south, Magnimar marks the Varisian Run's official starting point, buying up much of the Tian goods as well as Ulfen ivory, mead, sealskin, cheese, weapons, and amber. Add to this Magnimar's own bounty of apples, beer, walnuts, magic items, woodworking, and pickles, and merchants set sail with heavy holds, indeed! In Magnimar's Bazaar of Sails, **Sabriyya Kalmeralm** (LN female human lord mayor) keeps the peace as its informal trade lord and information broker, meting out justice with her loyal hirelings.

By tradition, the route hugs the coast to Korvosa and Nisroch. However, a longtime rivalry between Korvosa and Magnimar encourages some merchants to sail straight for Kintargo instead, and Nisroch's relative self-sufficiency (and grim atmosphere) entices few. Those who do make these stops find a wealth of steel ingots and gems from nearby Janderhoff, as well as magical goods, preserved cherries, canned oysters, and elaborate textiles from Korvosa. Nidalese consumers happily buy premium foodstuffs and alcohol, in turn exporting silverware, glasswork, art, and other luxuries. The always-smiling **Steelbrow Sefah** (LE female dwarf broker) seems able to track buyers and suppliers for nearly any good, no matter how grisly. She adds a unique piercing for each reliable contact she makes, with a veritable beard of rings framing her face.

Kintargo buys its share of northern wares, selling silver and wood in return. Few buyers reside along the Hellmouth Gulf, so merchants usually dock in Corentyn, where they pay Chelaxian taxes and offload their cargos to head home. A few



continue farther south, though most traffic involves sailors familiar with the subtropical seaways. The fertile island Nuat entices some merchants with Rahadom's wealth of tin, books, citrus fruit, and more. From there, ships veer west around Mediogalti Island, rarely risking a visit to Ilizmagorti's pirate-filled streets. The same logic should apply to avoiding the Shackles, yet the Free Captains seem friendlier (and less predatory) to traders who do business at Port Peril. What's more, corsairs flush with treasure spend freely, with cargos sometimes earning huge profits thanks to lucky timing.

Thanks to the turf war between the Free Captains and the Aspis Consortium, Bloodcove is more dangerous than ever, and southbound ships often bypass it altogether. Though plagued by pirates of its own, Senghor's a far friendlier port that stocks nearly all of the Mwangi Expanse's riches: herbs, medicines, ivory, bark cloth, rare woods, diamonds, artwork, a wealth of fruit, and more, in addition to Senghor's expertly designed ships. Content with this array, most ship captains don't travel farther south. Yet many pay a visit to the soothsayer **Nekaken** (N male lizardfolk cleric of Gozreh) to learn whether it's a fortuitous time to return north. Those who receive ill wind readings often voyage to Anthusis, where much of the inland Expanse's goods, ferried along the Diamond Webway, accumulate for export. Landlubbers might laugh at a lizardfolk's horoscopes, but weather's a serious issue. The Eye of Abendego's counterclockwise rotation fills southbound sails yet pummels northbound ships. On the trek north, merchants often shelter in Port Peril or Bloodcove for days before finding a good opening.

When they do, they carry the Mwangi Expanse's riches, which fetch a princely price north of the Eye. Traders in Nuat eagerly buy up choice goods to resell in Azir. Ships bound for the northern ports often fill any available space with Nuat's sugarcane and rice, for which Varisians have developed a boundless appetite. As with the trip south, however, most merchants off-load their cargos at Corentyn to disseminate east to countless Inner Sea destinations. They depart north, carrying preserved fruits, wine, spices, fine cloth, magical trinkets, and more, purchasing silver and salt from Kintargo along the way, plus artwork from Nisroch. Some ships barely make it past Korvosa, where those of Chelaxian descent crave anything that's even remotely connected to their old homeland, and less scrupulous merchants exploit this by spreading rumors of the latest trends and lying about goods' origins to attract gullible customers. Then at last, a merchant can retire to their home in Magnimar or even Kalsgard, relaxing for a season before repeating the process.

Though it represents a tiny fraction of the Varisian Run's cargo, ivory connects the distant ports of Anthusis and Kalsgard, over time having forged a bond between these "Ivory Sisters."

Other Routes

While the above represent the busiest routes, hundreds of smaller (yet no less compelling) paths crisscross the continents. Like capillaries carrying blood from arteries, these smaller roads distribute the major routes' riches to more remote settlements, in turn carrying those towns' goods back to the main routes for distribution. The following represent a tiny fraction of these trade lanes.

Diamond Webway: The fertile rivers of the Mwangi Expanse host fleets of trading vessels that crowd the rivers during dry seasons. Traders from Kibwe tend to dominate this network, trading the city's diamonds, gold, and salt.

The Flood Road: Slashing across Belkzen to connect to Lake Encarthan, the Flood Road is serviceable about 10 months every year before seasonal rains inundate the area. In wet times, orcs honor the Flood Truce and avoid raiding, making the route relatively safe for shallow boats—at least until the river washes into the Gravelands.

Glimmeroad: While the Sellen River can move cargo more cheaply, some Drumish merchants prefer an overland route to the Inner Sea. This road begins in Kerse, using the ancient dwarven Ralka Haltorn highway that leads to Taggoret in the Five Kings Mountains. From there, wide mountainside paths wind toward Falcon's Hollow, from which Andoran's rivers can carry cargo toward the sea.

Path of Aganhei: Blazed by Tien explorers millennia ago and only recently rediscovered, this route across the frigid Crown of the World connects Avistan and Tian Xia. While traders can earn a fortune by transporting silk, spices, books, and more, the perilous weather, limited supplies, and hungry beasts along the trail often exact a terrible price.

Stranger's Lattice: The city of Kaer Maga is the anchor for this inland network of trade routes across Varisia. Unique relics of long-vanished Thassilon flow out of Xin-Shalast, crossing with orc-fashioned goods from Urgir.

Umbral Path: Thanks to its Shadow Plane connection, this valley connecting Molthune to Nidal absorbs ambient light, creating a permanently gloomy pass through the Mindspin Mountains. Despite shadow giants, wandering portals, and hungry ghosts, vast merchant caravans with hundreds of guards periodically risk the journey.

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The Warmaster Council

While political maneuvering and scheming are typical for most of Geb's political elite, the Warmaster Council is one of the few places where such things are pushed to the side. Instead concerning themselves with internecine power struggles, the graveknights who lead this focused military organization are in lockstep with one common goal: the preparation of their nation for a final, decisive battle with the nation of Nex. The ghost king Geb's newfound belief in the inevitability of his ancient enemy's return prompted him to form a group of his most skilled undead generals. He called the group his Warmaster Council and granted them largely unfettered access to requisition resources and troops at their discretion. He even commanded that the leader of the Warmaster Council be granted a seat among the Dread Commanders, the ruling council of the military metropolis of Yled. The Warmaster Council now functions as an elite, focused military branch parallel to Geb's massive, established armies.

The Warmaster Council is made up of 24 of the most militant, war-hungry, and brilliant graveknight generals found in Geb. Each member has participated in countless battles, both as living beings and later as undead. They understand the ruthlessness needed to defeat a foe as powerful as Nex and are open to any available means to achieve their ends. Led by **Vorwynd Iceblood** (LE male graveknight general 16), these leaders work tirelessly to plan Nex's destruction as soon as the first Nexian attack is launched. Numerous hand-picked specialists, advisors, and other functionaries serve the Warmaster Council. Vorwynd relies heavily upon the powers Geb has vested in him, and he's been quietly and systematically plundering Yled's military assets to build up his own council's intelligence and resources. When Vorwynd

can surreptitiously poach an adjutant or advisor from Geb's broader armies, he does so with a minimum of fuss; he doesn't like to create hard feelings by pulling rank on other military leaders, but he doesn't let others' wounded pride prevent him from building up the Warmaster Council as he sees fit.

Blood Lord **Haeqajet** (LE male mummy administrator 18), Yled's iron-fisted Overgovernor and one of the most powerful individuals in Geb, has a cordial relationship with the Warmaster Council. He listens carefully to the council's representative among the Dread Commanders, and he often prioritizes their advice over the guidance of others—even those with longer-serving military authority. Haeqajet is canny enough to realize that the ghost king's hand-picked council can't be ignored. Additionally, Haeqajet has been friends with Vorwynd

for centuries; he finds the graveknight's energy and determination exciting. Haeqajet is secretly greatly relieved to trust his friend to the military preparations with Nex, as he's lately noticed the holes in his own memory are beginning to widen. Despite his desire to do everything he can to aid his nation and his king, Haeqajet knows that he can best help now by focusing on Yled's administration and doing what he can to ensure the Warmaster Council has what it needs to be successful—even if this causes some concern among longstanding military leaders.

The Warmaster Council typically meets every two weeks as a full group to discuss plans, intelligence, and larger strategic considerations in the war effort. Between these full meetings are gatherings of committees, subcommittees, commissions, and panels, few of which have more than a handful of actual council members in attendance. Very rarely are these



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meetings open to the public or even other members of the military; they are high-security affairs designed to hinder the efforts of Nexian spies and saboteurs. Compared to the glacial pace of the bureaucratic machinery found elsewhere in Geb—and even among Geb’s enormous armies—these small, tightly focused meetings emphasize expeditious results.

The council’s official offices occupy an entire floor in the Panopticon, the enormous civil administration building in the center of Yled. The Warmaster Council bolstered the Panopticon’s defenses, including installing additional protections against magical and mundane spying. This earned the public gratitude but private suspicion of Yled’s secret police, the Unseen. Diplomatically maneuvered into a corner, the Unseen had no choice but to defer to the council’s presence. Fortunately, Vorwynd hasn’t yet seen the need to coopt any of the Unseen’s vast network for the council’s purposes, or even to delve too deeply into the network’s membership, so relations between the two groups remain amicable. It’s notoriously difficult to gain access to the Warmaster Council’s floor without a written invitation or being physically accompanied by one of the 24 council members.

Although each member of the council is individually very powerful and difficult to destroy permanently, an elite unit of soldiers sees to each graveknight’s personal security. Dubbed the War Guard, these bodyguards also serve as personal advisors. Unlike the Warmaster Council, which is composed almost exclusively of graveknights, the War Guard’s members are a diverse collection of corporeal and incorporeal undead. Each council member chooses their own War Guard members; most opt for individuals with abilities and skills that shore up for their own weaknesses. A council member who has a grating personality might choose a smooth-talking War Guard who can advise them on tact and diplomacy, for example. Each councilor is generally assumed to have at least one incorporeal War Guard member to interact with the sizeable number of spirits in the city.

FORCES AND PREPARATIONS

The Warmaster Council doesn’t have direct authority over the charnel pits that produce the bulk of Geb’s armies, as those forces are maintained and trained by efficient and long-standing military administrators with their own reporting structure, but this hasn’t stopped the Warmaster Council from acquiring a few legions of zombies and skeletons for their own use. It’s up to the Warmaster Council to equip these troops and devise the best ways to deploy them, and they’ve created a few novel ways to do so.

The traditional method used by would-be conquerors and necromancers across Golarion for millennia has been throwing wave after wave of these creatures at an opposing army in order to wear down morale and numbers. While this approach can work in sufficient numbers against other infantry, enemies capable of powerful area-effect spells (such as Nex’s many arcane spellcasters) can easily obliterate undead masses from a distance. The Warmaster Council trains its mindless undead not as a single horde, but in squad-level groups, with a single necromancer and a bodyguard to coordinate movements. Dividing an undead horde this way requires significant communication between the controlling necromancers. Older strategists within Geb’s military scoff that such tactics are unnecessarily complex and doomed to failure, but the Warmaster Council believes that a flexible fighting force is the best way to deal with Nexians.

The Warmaster Council is pursuing other tactical innovations in the use of mutants from the Mana Wastes. In conjunction with necromancers from the Mortuary and specially trained alchemists, the council funded expeditions into the Spellscar Desert to lure its desperate, mutated residents back to Yled, where they were experimented on, killed, and reanimated into horrifyingly powerful engines of destruction called necrohulks (page 88). These necrohulks are the core of the powerful shock troop squads at the council’s command. As the processes for creating these creatures has become streamlined and efficient, entire units of the creatures have been deployed on training maneuvers in the Spellscar Desert, often against the very same communities from which they were taken.

Vorwynd has been careful to avoid making enemies, but he’s relentlessly quashed individuals and groups who stood in the way of his goals. Shortly after the Warmaster Council was formed, Vorwynd made an example of the Duskdrinkers, a gang of vrykolakas vampires who had spent centuries as spies and informants for the government. The Duskdrinkers based their operations in Yled and worked directly for Geb’s former queen, Arazni. Unable to operate outside of Geb due to their bestial nature, the Duskdrinkers concentrated on terrorizing Gebbites to expose foreign agents or smuggling rings. The Duskdrinkers enforced Arazni’s will with a campaign of terror, torturing and questioning those they accused of insufficient loyalty or who violated their especially hardline interpretation of the nation’s Dead Laws. The Duskdrinkers leveraged the secrets their cruelties exposed to gain ever greater influence in Yled and beyond. While the Duskdrinkers never rose to the power of a full faction,

they commanded undeniable fear and respect in Yled and charged high prices for the secrets they hoarded.

The Duskdrinkers made the critical mistake, however, of assuming that the graveknights of the newly formed Warmaster Council would defer to their terror and pay high prices for their secrets. The swaggering vrykolakas had the audacity to try and bargain with Vorwynd for the information he wanted. The graveknight cleanly removed their leader's head from his shoulders and announced that the council would destroy the Duskdrinkers. The zealous **Pokmit Bloody-Pike** (LE male graveknight military captain 18; page 92) led the massacre and slaughtered nearly all the vampires in less than a month. Vorwynd decided to spare the last few Duskdrinkers as a reminder to others that the Warmaster Council would not be denied.

LEADERSHIP AND STRUCTURE

The Warmaster Council is new, but like most of Gebbite society, it has a hierarchy steeped in millennia of tradition. A combination of ranks and titles earned in life and during undeath, length of tenure, relationships with Haeqajet and other Blood Lords, and degrees of separation to Geb himself all combine in ways that build authority and standing. Someone with the rank of overcaptain, for instance, sets orders followed by a minister-general. All this complexity is further compounded by the individual flourishes those on the council add to their titles, some of which are bureaucratic rather than military. A soldier might encounter a minister who is also a "high major," or a vice-consul who is merely an "underlieutenant" but has tremendous authority. The net result is that few outside the Warmaster Council dare to question the authority of any member of the group, since they can rarely be sure exactly where that person stands in the hierarchy. Better to be careful and incorrect, they figure, than to make a mistake and risk the wrath of the entire council.

The lack of transparency in given titles and ranks, however, doesn't mean the Warmaster Council is disorganized. Those in the group have a keen understanding of who is in charge during any particular meeting or conversation. This shared purpose, combined with a strong respect for order, creates a military organization that has begun to realize the true possibilities of what they can achieve when sufficiently dedicated to decisive planning and clear goals.

STRATEGIES AND PLANS

Traditionalists in Geb's conventional armies are often mired in outdated and unwieldy ways of thinking about war. Many of these generals have spent several centuries documenting elaborate plans for highly specific scenarios that are unlikely to ever occur. In effect, they had begun thinking only in terms of military theory instead of military reality. Yet the Warmaster Council's members focus on concise, direct strategies



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for immediate and short-term success against Nexian aggression, however it occurs. Some of the council's oldest members inwardly worry that their ghost king's recent stirring is merely a temporary phase before he once again settles back into introspection and ennui, but they intend to seize the authority they can while their mandate is clear.

The first step the council has taken in the war effort is to simply gather information on its enemy to the north. While reports on Nex had previously been delivered regularly, they contained little of use; Geb's agents had long ago stopped believing war would ever be a reality. The Warmaster Council has secured new funds and threatened severe punishments for those derelict in their reports. In response, countless spies, scouts, and diviners have sprung into action in the Mana Wastes and points farther north. Information now flows steadily back to the council. The archmage Nex's impending return remains frustratingly cloaked in rumor and mystery but, like the ghost king himself, the Warmaster Council believes that the signs of Nex's return will soon become evident.

The next step is to engage in training and maneuvers in the Mana Wastes, north of Yled. For the most part, these maneuvers are performed in secret, without the pomp or pageantry of other Gebbite military initiatives. Vorwynd has prohibited the Celebrants from lionizing the council's maneuvers as propaganda, and he keeps picket lines to prevent casual onlookers from watching the troops. While it's clear that the council is making preparations for war outside the city, the scope and tactics of its soldiers are merely rumors within the city's walls.

Since the bulk of their active army is undead, the Warmaster Council doesn't have to make the same kinds of logistic considerations about supply lines as many other armies do. There are certainly quick necromancers and mercenaries among their troops, but they comprise such a small percentage of the overall force that their needs are negligible and easily handled. Even so, an army composed primarily of undead has other concerns that the

living needn't consider, such as the sun. Most undead can march north freely without rest, but the Warmaster Council has several sun-sensitive undead like vampires and wraiths in their War Guard. Whispers on the streets of Yled suggest that many of these creatures are already on their way to the north to strategically hidden redoubts, moving only by night.

PERSONALITIES

The following are the primary figures on the Warmaster Council, other than Pokmit Bloody-Pike (page 92).

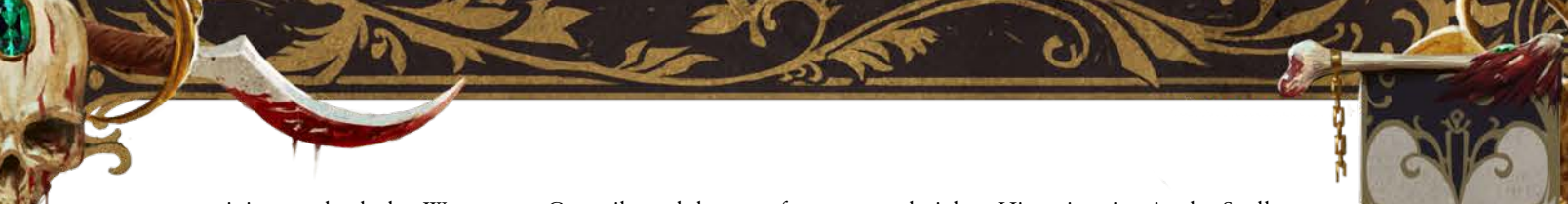
Vorwynd Iceblood (LE male graveknight general 16): The oldest member of the council and by far the most feared, Vorwynd has dutifully served Yled for over seven centuries and has commanded

troops in battle for most of that time. Patient, cunning, and possessing an ice-cold desire for Geb to defeat and dominate Nex, the former elf Vorwynd is a brilliant tactician who understands both the need for discipline and room for creative thinking in war. He welcomes a variety of opinions before making an informed judgement on his own and acting upon it.

When Geb recently began issuing direct orders once more, Vorwynd responded quickly to the change. Although most of his time previously had been spent developing long-term goals in the war effort, the need for battle ignited his icy heart. Vorwynd knew he had several potential rivals to lead Geb's new organization, and the benefits of his longstanding service, keen mind, and friendship with Blood Lord Haeqajet weren't unique. He quickly moved against his rivals, subtly empowering their old enemies to make a move and even revealing some of the secret methods of permanently destroying graveknights to keep them out of the running. Soon, Vorwynd was the only practical choice



Quinnelle Quilltongue



remaining to lead the Warmaster Council, and he accepted the leadership position with mock humility.

Vorwynd's current goal is to place the operation of Yled's magical Bonewall under Warmaster Council control. The venerable fortification is key to the metropolis's defense and intricately tied to scrying and protective enchantments controlled from the Panopticon. Vorwynd is doing his best to learn about this tangle of ancient magic—something that isn't in his area of expertise, but is also a tool he understands he must learn.

Eklira Ironminded (NE female lich advisor 15): The only non-graveknight on the Warmaster Council, the lich Eklira is the council's liaison to the Mortuarium. Meticulous and mathematical, Eklira employs razor-sharp logic that cuts away all sentimentality. At first, many on the Warmaster Council took her disregard for tradition as disrespectful to their ruler and nation. After she conclusively proved one of the main strategies for moving ground troops across the Mana Wastes was flawed and would lead to a 22% attrition rate, however, they realized the value of her analyses. Now most of the council—Vorwynd in particular—have become convinced that her careful, analytical examination of the war effort is just what they need.

In the depths of what remains of her desiccated heart, the truth is that Eklira cares very little for the furthering of Geb and the nation. Instead, she sees the war effort as a test of her mind and skills, a game she can use to prepare her own future plans of domination in Golarion. She secretly believes Geb is a fool who has squandered his incredible resources for far too long. If he didn't waste so much time thinking about Nex, she reasons, northern Garund at the very least would be completely his. The king's old vendetta and obsession with Nex—an enemy who might not even have returned to Golarion—is the height of inefficiency and absurdity. But she certainly doesn't share these thoughts with anyone and instead bides her time. For now, serving Geb and working within an existing power structure provides her with training she desires and connections she might one day need.

Tkith Bonerazor (LE male graveknight recruiter 15): A renowned antipaladin dedicated to Urgathoa in life, Tkith became infamous for his regular forays into the Spellscar Desert, where he razed any villages he found under the flimsy excuse of "Gebbite security." Upon his death at the hands of a group of adventurers during one of those attacks, Tkith's flesh was scoured from his body by the desert winds and sands. He returned as a graveknight weeks later, although his sand-scoured appearance is far more skeletal than that

of most graveknights. His animation in the Spellscar Desert gave him unusual magical powers over sand and wind, including divinatory abilities, and his first task upon reawakening was to locate and destroy the group who had slain him. Once found, the adventurers believed Tkith to be a mere mindless skeleton, and he used this mistaken assumption to trap and slaughter them all.

Tkith spends much of his time inspecting the troops produced by the Mortuarium, working closely with the necromancers there to develop forces that fit with Vorwynd's wishes. Given his own experience of being underestimated by the living, he often pushes for new types of undead troops that harbor a hidden and unexpected power useful on the battlefield. His recent focus is on creatures that can operate individually but also combine into a larger, more powerful form like that of a warsworn. The necromancers of the Mortuarium are receptive to this idea and have begun work on such a creature.

Quinelle Quilltongue (NE female graveknight quartermaster 13): The Warmaster Council's Master of Supply, Quinelle is by far the most approachable member of the group, though her outward demeanor masks a cruel, heartless nature that those on the council respect and admire. As her title suggests, Quinelle focuses on procurement of supplies and resources needed for the preparations for war. She has arrangements with all of the major mercantile organizations in Yled and especially close contacts with the Carters Consortium and the Export Guild, though she primarily operates through intermediaries to keep her true goals (and the true extent of the council's supplies) a secret. Quinelle recently learned a major supplier of iron was shipping lower-quality material to the city's foundries and diverting the higher-quality offerings to private buyers. The graveknight made an unexpected visit to the merchant's office. The building was consumed in flames by the time she left, and the merchant's remains were never found.

Quinelle has become indispensable to the Warmaster Council, as her ability to find and distribute supplies makes their planning for the inevitable conflict with Nex much easier. One of the keys to this success is the leveraging of many merchants who formerly supplied illicit markets. Quinelle reasons that rather than imprisoning or executing those who excel at this profession, it makes much more sense to provide them with gainful employment in service of the city. Her willingness to work with criminals, or even to ignore the law when it suits her, sits poorly with the Warmaster Council's more traditionalist members, but Quinelle's results are undeniable.

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Yled is a massive city holding many secrets. The characters might discover several of the following items and gain access to some of these new rules in the city.

Aeon Stones

Pesabnet's gruesome experiments with *aeon stones* aren't limited to the better-known types presented in the *Pathfinder Core Rulebook*. The characters might discover the following unusual aeon stones in the Pallid Pinnacle, all of which have effects related to life and undead.

AEON STONE

ITEM 9+

RARE INVESTED MAGICAL TRANSMUTATION

Usage worn; Bulk –

These precisely shaped crystals follow the rules for *aeon stones* presented on pages 604 to 605 of the *Pathfinder Core Rulebook*.

Type amber sphere; Level 16;

Price 9,800 gp

If you are undead, your body regains much of the appearance it had in life, and you gain a +2 item bonus to Deception to Impersonate yourself as a living creature. If you're alive, your appearance is the healthiest version of yourself, and you gain a +2 item bonus to Make an Impression or Request that involves your strength or vigor.

The resonant power of the *amber sphere* grants you a special activation to improve your salubrious appearance to a lurid extreme.

Activate ♦♦ envision; **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** The stone casts a 7th-level *mask of terror* on you (DC 34 Will), causing your appearance to burst with a profusion of shocking vigor: your mouth fills with large and bright teeth, your hair animates in grasping tresses, your face flushes with bright blood that seeps from your skin, or similar. The image is unique to each observer, but you remain recognizably yourself regardless of the illusion's form.

Type black disc; Level 17; Price 15,000 gp

This *aeon stone* slowly infuses negative energy into

your body. The stone deals 1 persistent negative damage to you (10 negative damage per minute) so long as it's invested, and you can't recover from persistent negative damage while you have the stone invested.

The resonant power grants you resistance 10 to good damage and to positive damage.

Type mottled ellipsoid; Level 15; Price 6,100 gp

This *aeon stone* alters your life force. You gain negative healing, which means you are damaged by positive energy and not healed by positive healing effects. You don't take negative damage, and you are healed by negative effects that heal undead.

The resonant power allows you to cast 7th-level *false life* once per day.

Type rainbow prism; Level 13; Price 2,200 gp

While this *aeon stone* orbits your head, the flat part of its base tumbles to briefly face creatures you can see within 30 feet, as though the stone is watching them. You can activate this stone in two ways.

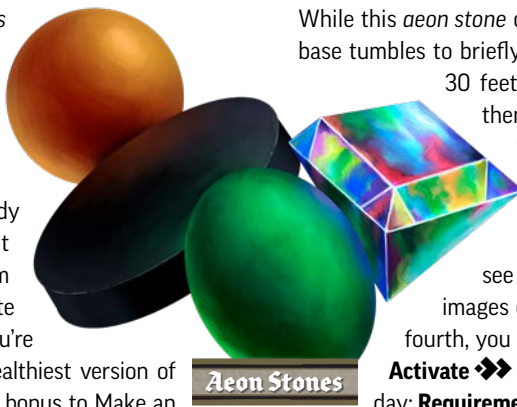
Activate ♦♦ envision; **Effect** The *aeon stone* captures the image of a creature of your size that you can see within 30 feet. It can have up to 3 images captured at a time; if you capture a fourth, you decide which image it replaces.

Activate ♦♦ envision; **Frequency** three times per day; **Requirements** The prism is storing at least one image of a creature of your size; **Effect** The *aeon stone* casts a 3rd-level *illusory disguise* on you, which must be of one of the creatures it has currently captured. While you are under the effects of this spell, the *aeon stone* is invisible.

The resonant power allows the stone to capture up to 5 images. If removed from the *wayfinder*, you must decide which images to lose.

Theater Items

Ghiasi's theater, Twined Stories, is one of Yled's most exclusive playhouses. The following magic items are themed around life—and death—on stage, and the peculiar ghostly nature of Twined Stories.



CURTAIN CALL CLOAK

ITEM 12

UNCOMMON EVOCATION INVESTED MAGICAL

Price 1,900 gp

Usage worn cloak; Bulk L

This blue velvet cloak is cut from the remains of a curtain from a destroyed theater. When worn, you gain a +2 item bonus to Performance checks while acting, orating, or singing, as the cloak makes minor motions to accentuate your performance.

Activate ♦♦ Interact; **Frequency** once per day; **Effect**

You take a bow, spread your arms, and the cloak casts 4th-level *darkness* centered on a corner of your space. This darkness doesn't impede your vision. While the darkness persists, it emits noise like the applauding of a moderately sized crowd.

PHANTOM SHROUD

ITEM 17

UNCOMMON CONJURATION INVESTED MAGICAL

Price 15,000 gp

Usage worn cloak; Bulk L

This pale blue cloak is wispy, thin, and cold to the touch. When worn, the cloak turns your hands pale and translucent, imbuing you with the dangerous touch of a ghost. This effect doesn't impede the normal use of your hands. You also gain an unarmed attack that deals 3d6 negative damage with the agile, finesse, and magical traits. You gain the benefits of a +2 *weapon potency* rune with these unarmed attacks (granting a +2 item bonus to your attack rolls).

Activate ♦♦ Interact; **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** You fold the cloak around yourself, and it casts *ethereal jaunt* on you. You can Sustain the activation for up to 10 minutes. When the activation ends, you return to material form.



Curtain Call Cloak



Spectral Opera Glasses

SPECTRAL OPERA GLASSES

ITEM 11

UNCOMMON DIVINATION MAGICAL

Price 1,400 gp

Usage held in 1 hand; Bulk L

These bulky opera glasses are attached to a rod for ease of use. When held up to the eyes, which requires a free hand, you can see up to four times further than normal, and the glasses provide you a +2 item bonus to Perception checks.

Activate ♦ Interact, envision; **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** For 1 hour, anyone who looks through the glasses can see invisible creatures and objects, and sees creatures with the spirit trait as solid and substantial (rather than ghostly).

SPLENDID FLOODLIGHT

ITEM 12

UNCOMMON ILLUSION MAGICAL

Price 1,600 gp

Usage held in 2 hands or mounted; Bulk 3

This drum-shaped metal floodlight has a metal handle on each side and a housing at its base to be slotted into a stand or pedestal. A *splendid floodlight* has a primary function as well as several secondary functions available by rotating through a series of translucent sheets called gels. A *splendid floodlight* comes with the four gels described below, but other gels exist with different abilities.

Activate ♦ Interact; **Frequency** once per hour; **Requirements** The *splendid floodlight*'s light is off; **Effect** You flip a switch and the *splendid floodlight* emits bright magical light in a 120-foot cone that hangs in the air and remains in place even if you move the floodlight. If the cone passes through an area of magical darkness or targets a creature affected by magical darkness, the *splendid floodlight* attempts to counteract the darkness. Creatures in the cone who are frightened reduce the value of their frightened condition by 1 at the beginning of each turn they start in the area of the cone. The light remains in place until you Interact to flip the switch again to extinguish the floodlight. If you haven't done so after an hour, the switch flips on its own and the floodlight turns off.

Activate ♦♦ Interact; **Requirements** The *splendid floodlight*'s light is on; **Effect** You rotate one of the following gels into position in the floodlight or rotate a gel out. You can do this even if the *splendid floodlight* has been moved from its position when the light was created. You can have up to two gels in place at once; if you rotate in a third, another of your choice rotates out.

Red Gel The light lends an air of gravitas to all creatures illuminated by it. Creatures in the light gain a +2 item bonus to Charisma-based skill checks.

Yellow Gel Invisible creatures and objects are visible while in the light, and creatures with the spirit trait appear substantial rather than ghostly.

Green Gel All creatures illuminated by the light appear to be wearing exceptionally stylish clothing with elegantly coiffed hair styles.

Blue Gel Undead creatures in the light appear as they did when alive, and living creatures in the light appear decayed, like an undead creature.

Shadow Items

The characters explore many shadows in Yled, and the following new magic items are themed around shadows and the dangers that lurk within them.

SHADOW'S HEART

ITEM 18

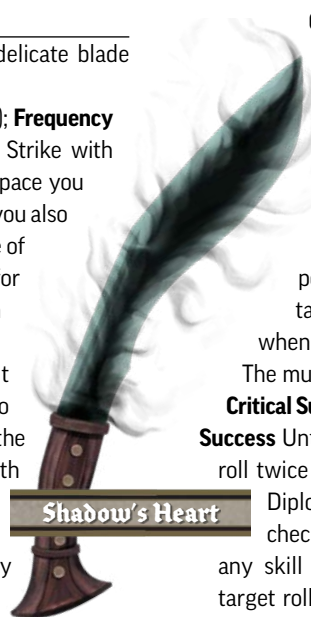
RARE ILLUSION MAGICAL

Price 23,000 gp

Usage held in 1 hand; Bulk L

This +3 *greater striking kukri* has a thin, delicate blade that absorbs light.

Activate ♦♦ Interact (illusion, teleportation); **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** You make a melee Strike with *shadow's heart* and teleport to an open space you can see within 100 feet. If the attack hits, you also leave behind a shadowy, illusory duplicate of yourself that attacks the same target for up to 3 rounds. The illusion has 1 action per round, which it takes on the turn it's created and on your turn each round. It uses this action to move up to 30 feet to a square adjacent to the target and (if the target is adjacent) to attack the target with a +28 attack modifier, dealing 3d6+16 slashing damage. The illusion has an AC of 35 and is immediately destroyed by any attack that deals damage or requires a saving throw.



Shadow's Heart

UMBRAEX EYE

ITEM 19

RARE DIVINATION INVESTED MAGICAL

Price 34,000 gp

Usage held in 2 hands; Bulk 1

Like the rest of its form, the eyes of the legendary *umbraex darvakka* (page 83) collapse into ashes when the creature is destroyed. Rarely, when the *umbraex* wishes to impart information beyond its ashen reconstitution, it ejects one of its eyes at the moment of destruction. This large orb hardens into an obsidian-like substance that swirls with captivated motes of darkness deep within. While you hold the *umbraex* eye, you have lifesense (imprecise) 120 feet (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 343).

Activate 1 minute (command, Interact); **Frequency** once per hour; **Effect** Name a person, event, or location and the *umbraex* eye shows 1 minute of relevant memory the *umbraex* witnessed firsthand. The events are displayed as clear images in the eye and accompanied by sound. If the *umbraex* has no relevant memories, the eye merely flickers with shadows.



Umbraex Eye

Rituals and Spells

These rituals and spells appear in this adventure or are thematically appropriate to the people and groups the characters are destined to meet.

CURSE OF THE SPIRIT ORCHESTRA

SPELL 7

UNCOMMON CONJURATION CURSE MISFORTUNE

Traditions occult

Cast ♦♦ somatic, verbal

Range 30 feet; Targets 1 creature

Saving Throw Will; Duration varies

You summon an invisible, insubstantial group of extraplanar musicians who follow the target and play distracting music to hinder its actions. The music the musicians play is as inappropriate to the action as possible (for example, loud drumbeats as the target tries to Sneak or silly children's songs when the target tries to orate in a serious manner).

The musicians can't be reasoned with or harmed.

Critical Success The target is unaffected.

Success Until the start of your next turn, the target must roll twice and use the worse result when it attempts a Diplomacy, Intimidation, Performance, or Stealth check. When the target rolls a critical success on any skill check, it gets a success instead. When the target rolls a failure on any skill check, it gets a critical failure instead.

Failure As success, but the duration is 1 hour.

Critical Failure As success, but the duration is unlimited.

INFECTIOUS COMEDY

SPELL 5

UNCOMMON EMOTION ENCHANTMENT INCAPACITATION MENTAL

Traditions arcane, occult

Cast ♦♦ somatic, verbal

Range 30 feet; Targets 1 creature

Saving Throw Will; Duration sustained up to 1 minute

You tell a magical joke and infect a target with laughter that spreads to those nearby. The first time you Sustain the Spell each round, you can target another creature you can see that is within 30 feet of an affected target. The new target need not be able to see or hear the affected target, as the humor spreads magically.

You can't target the same creature more than once with this spell.

Critical Success The target is unaffected.

Success The target begins giggling and can't use reactions.

Failure The target is slowed 1 and can't use reactions.

Critical Failure The target falls prone and can't use actions or reactions for 1 round. It then suffers the failure effect.

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SPLIT SHADOW

RITUAL 8

RARE ILLUSION SHADOW

Cast 1 day; **Cost** a precious possession or drop of blood from the creature to be duplicated, plus an ornate silver mirror worth 7,000 gp; **Secondary Casters** 4

Primary Check Arcana or Occultism (master, the check has the secret trait); **Secondary Checks** Crafting, Deception, Performance, Society

Targets 1 living creature

You create a shadow double of the target by drawing energy directly from the Shadow Plane into a mirror and shaping it into an exact, quasi-real duplicate. When the mirror is shattered at the end of the ritual, the double steps out and comes into existence. The duplicate is a creature 3 levels lower than the target, with the same abilities as the target but reduced to the appropriate level (see Building Creatures on page 56 in the *Gamemastery Guide*). The shadow double looks identical to the target and has the same general mannerisms and personality. However, it only has a vague sense of the target's memories. It has a Deception modifier to Impersonate the target equal to the modifier of the secondary spellcaster who rolled the Deception or Performance check, with a +4 status bonus.

Critical Success You bring the shadow double to life. It is under your absolute control. You gain a direct mental link with the shadow double and can spend an action to command it via this link, even at a distance.

Success As a critical success, but there is no special link between you and the shadow double. You must spend an action to command it verbally or by some other means.

Failure The ritual fails and has no effect.

Critical Failure When the mirror is broken at the end of the ritual, the double appears but has the statistics of an elite greater shadow with all the knowledge of the target and the same Deception modifier a shadow double would have had if the ritual had succeeded.

Ashes Mystery

You see all things in the world as little more than fleeting and temporary, waiting to be purified into their base essence: the ash left behind after a burning fire. While you understand fire is a necessary part of this process, you see fire mostly as a tool to achieve final purity, not a goal. You have much in common with oracles with the flames

mystery, but you may consider them to be short-sighted, or at best simply lacking in understanding of the truths that their burning fires impart.

You might see ash as the only true representation of the impermanent nature of life and its pointless existence. Alternatively, you may see the benefit ash can have on soils and farmlands as part of a larger cycle of death and rebirth. Perhaps you see the phoenix, with its life cycle of being reduced to ash and reborn, as a sacred creature that has achieved a higher state of being and worthy of imitation (or maybe you see it as a tragic creature that can't ever reach the goal of perfection). If you follow a deity, you might follow gods of fire like Sarenrae, those who burn impurities to ash such as Brigh or Torag, or those who strive to burn all things to ash, such as the archdevil Moloch or the demon lord Flauros.

Mystery Benefit Your flesh flows around physical threats like a cloud of ash. You gain resistance equal to half your level (minimum 1) against all physical damage and you gain a +2 circumstance bonus to saves and DCs against Grapple, Shove, and forced movement.

Trained Skill Occultism

Granted Cantrip *produce flame*

Revelation Spells initial: *ashen wind*; advanced: *incendiary ashes*; greater: *ash form*

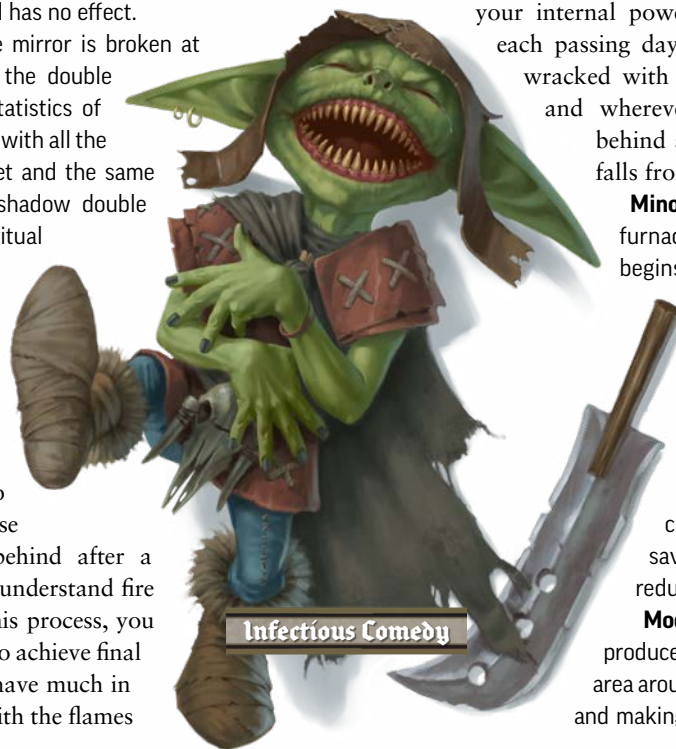
Related Domains destruction, fire

CURSE OF CREEPING ASHES

Your body is slowly being consumed by the fires of your internal power, purifying you with each passing day. You are occasionally wracked with dry, wheezing coughs, and wherever you go you leave behind a fine trace of ash that falls from your body.

Minor Curse The smoldering furnace of power within you begins to feed on your body and generate ash, which you inhale with every breath and leave behind with every step, impeding your footing. You take a -1 penalty on Constitution-based checks, such as Fortitude saves, and your Speed is reduced by 10 feet.

Moderate Curse The ash you produce intensifies and fills the area around you, obscuring details and making the ground challenging



Infectious Comedy

to navigate. You are dazzled. An aura of ash surrounds you in a 10-foot emanation. You and creatures in the aura are concealed. If you do not move for 1 round, heaps of ashes settle in the aura, creating difficult terrain that lasts until you move (when the ashes blow away).

Major Curse (11th) You and nearby creatures collapse into ash with the slightest flame. Within your moderate curse's aura, you and all creatures gain weakness to fire equal to half your level. If a creature other than you in this aura is killed by fire damage, its body collapses into ash. Objects and structures in your aura halve their Hardness, and any parts of the object or structures in your aura that are reduced to 0 Hit Points collapse into ash.

ASH FORM

FOCUS 6

UNCOMMON CURSEBOUND ORACLE TRANSMUTATION

Mystery ashes

Cast ♦♦ somatic, verbal

Duration 1 minute

You take the form of a cloud of minuscule ash particles. You gain fast healing 3, resistance 10 to piercing and slashing damage, and immunity to bleed, falling damage, and precision damage. You can't move through solid objects, but you can stream through tiny gaps as if they were difficult terrain. Any ability with the air trait that involves blowing or shifting wind (such as *gust of wind*) deals you 1d6 bludgeoning damage per level of the spell each round you are in its area, in addition to its normal effects.

Heightened (9th) The resistance increases to 15.

ASHEN WIND

FOCUS 1

UNCOMMON CONJURATION CURSEBOUND ORACLE

Mystery ashes

Cast ♦♦ somatic, verbal

Range 120 feet; **Area** 10-foot burst

Saving Throw Fortitude

You conjure a swirling wind of ashes that blows through the area. Each creature in the area must attempt a Fortitude save or get the cloying ash in its lungs.

Success The creature is unaffected.

Failure The creature is sickened 1.

Critical Failure The creature is sickened 2.

INCENDIARY ASHES

FOCUS 3

UNCOMMON CURSEBOUND EVOCATION FIRE ORACLE

Mystery ashes

Cast ♦♦ somatic, verbal

Range 120 feet; **Area** 20-foot burst

Saving Throw Fortitude

A cloud of magical ashes descends upon creatures in the area. The ashes scour flesh and linger in the wounds, igniting upon the slightest flicker of flame.

Creatures in the area take 4d6 slashing damage and must attempt a Fortitude save.

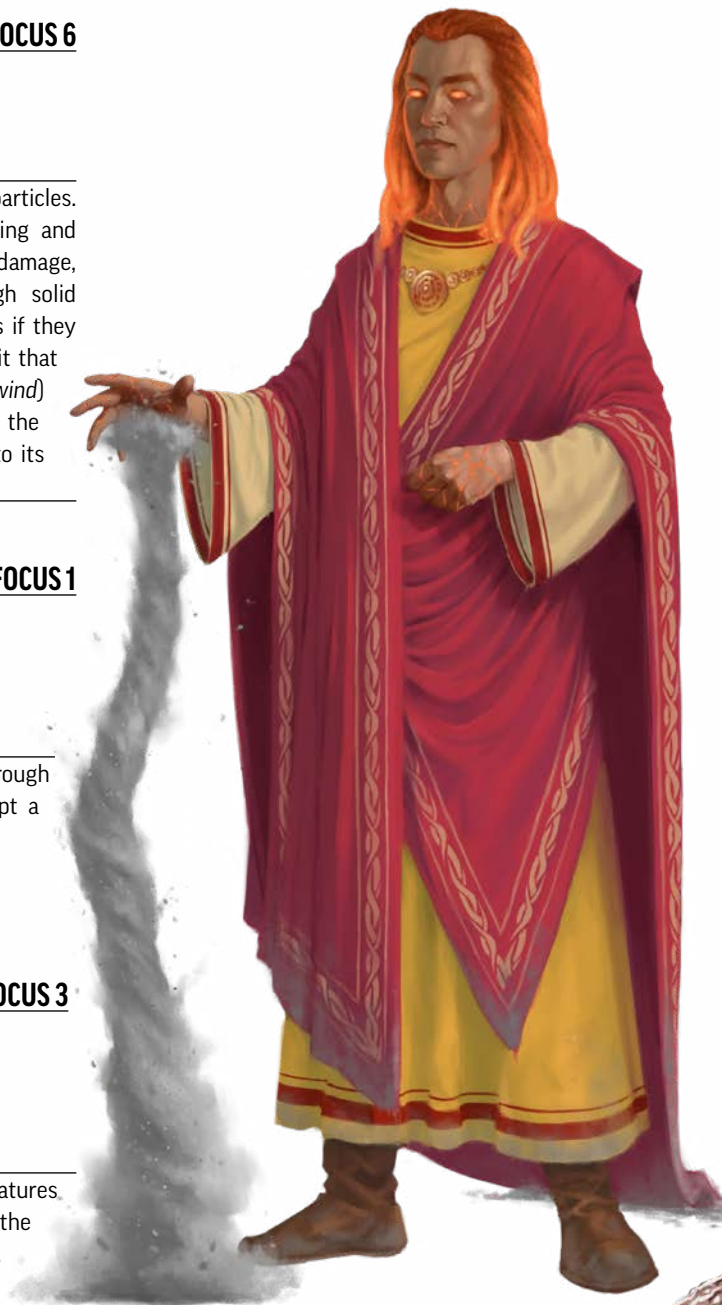
Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature takes half damage and has weakness to fire 3 until the start of its next turn.

Failure The creature takes full damage and has weakness to fire 3 for 1 minute. If the creature is killed by fire during this time it's reduced to ashes, though its gear remains.

Critical Failure As failure, except the creature takes double damage.

Heightened (+1) The slashing damage increases by 2d6 and weakness to fire increases by 1.



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AFZIKA SERVANTS

Most vrykolakas can't afford to be choosy about which animal they possess when their existence is threatened, but experienced vrykolakas prefer larger animals in the hopes of gaining an afziaka out of their forced rebirth. Generally, afziaka brutes only arise from vrykolakas masters, and afziaka stalkers only arise from powerful vrykolakas ancients.

Afziaka

Vrykolakas vampires (*Pathfinder Bestiary 2* 274) use animals as tools to carry their spirits when they would otherwise be slain. The animal usually dies as the vampire is reborn, but some live on in painful starvation.

AFZIKA BRUTE

An afziaka brute arises from a horse, bull, or other large animal.

AFZIKA BRUTE

CREATURE 6

UNCOMMON NE LARGE ANIMAL MINDLESS

Perception +12; darkvision, scent (imprecise) 30 feet

Skills Athletics +16, Survival +14

Str +6, **Dex** +2, **Con** +4, **Int** -5, **Wis** +2, **Cha** -3

Grave-Bound Guts (divine, transmutation) While within 100 feet of its vrykolakas's burial ground, an afziaka appears in the natural shape it had when it was a regular animal and can eat normally. When farther away, it doesn't gain sustenance from eating food and eventually starves to death.

AC 23; **Fort** +16, **Ref** +14, **Will** +12

HP 120; **Immunities** disease, mental

Speed 40 feet

Melee ♦ fangs +17, **Damage** 2d10+9 piercing plus hunger pangs

Melee ♦ hoof +17, **Damage** 2d8+7 bludgeoning

Hunger Pangs (curse, divine, necromancy) A creature damaged by the afziaka's fangs must succeed at a DC 22 Fortitude save or become enfeebled 2 for 1 minute. The creature can remove this condition earlier by consuming at least a handful of raw meat.

Trample ♦♦♦ Medium or smaller, hoof, DC 23

AFZIKA STALKER

Big predatory animals like dire wolves or hyaenodons might survive as an afziaka stalker, magically able to stalk their quarry.

AFZIKA STALKER

CREATURE 12

UNCOMMON NE LARGE ANIMAL MINDLESS

Perception +22; darkvision, scent (imprecise) 30 feet

Skills Athletics +23, Stealth +25, Survival +22

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

Grave-Bound Guts (divine, transmutation) As afziaka brute.

AC 32; **Fort** +22, **Ref** +25, **Will** +18

HP 250; **Immunities** disease, mental

Speed 40 feet

Melee ♦ fangs +26, **Damage** 3d10+13 piercing plus hunger pangs

Melee ♦ claw +26 (agile), **Damage** 3d8+13 slashing

Hunger Pangs (curse, divine, necromancy) As afziaka brute, but DC 30 and the enfeebled condition lasts for 1 hour.

Rend ♦ claw

Slip Between ♦♦ (concentrate, conjuration, divine, teleportation) The stalker teleports into an occupied space it can see within 50 feet and makes a melee Strike.



Afziaka Stalker

Darvakka, Umbraex

An umbraex appears at first glance to be a massive, majestic bird, much like a phoenix. Instead of compassion and warmth, however, it seethes with cold and hate. The umbraex is among the largest of the nihilistic undead called darvakkas (*Pathfinder Book of the Dead* 82).

UMBRAEX

CREATURE 21

RARE CE GARGANTUAN COLD DARVAKKA SHADOW UNDEAD

Perception +36; greater darkvision, lifesense 100 feet

Languages Abyssal, Common, Infernal, Necril (can't speak any language); telepathy 100 feet

Skills Arcana +36, Athletics +38, Intimidation +40, Negative Energy Plane Lore +37, Religion +36, Shadow Plane Lore +39

Str +9, **Dex** +7, **Con** +10, **Int** +8, **Wis** +7, **Cha** +8

AC 45; **Fort** +38, **Ref** +32, **Will** +35

HP 450, ashen rise, negative healing, regeneration 20 (deactivated by fire or good); **Immunities** cold, death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, unconscious;

Weaknesses fire 15, good 15, silver 15

Ashen Rise (divine, necromancy) When an umbraex is destroyed, its body disorporates into fine ash before being restored, fully healed, 1d4 rounds later. An umbraex can't use this ability as long as its remains are within an area consecrated to a good deity or an area of bright light. The umbraex can't use Ashen Rise again for 1 day.

Entropy's Shadow (aura, divine, necromancy, negative) 40 feet. As varyver (*Book of the Dead* 82), but DC 42 and 8d6 damage.

Sunlight Powerlessness An umbraex caught in sunlight is stunned 2 and clumsy 2.

Speed 25 feet, fly 70 feet

Melee ♦ beak +38 (magical, reach 20 feet), **Damage** 2d10+12 piercing plus 2d10 cold and 2d10 persistent negative

Melee ♦ talon +38 (agile, magical, reach 20 feet), **Damage** 2d8+10 piercing plus 2d10 cold and 2d10 persistent negative

Ranged ♦ icy blast +37 (cold, magical, range increment 60 feet), **Damage** 8d6 cold plus 2d10 persistent negative

Divine Innate Spells DC 44; **9th** *eclipse burst*, *harm* (×3); **7th** *plane shift* (to Material Plane, Negative Energy Plane, or Shadow Plane only), *true seeing*; **4th** *darkness* (at will); **Cantrips** (10th) *detect magic*

Life-Siphoning Screech ♦♦♦ (necromancy, occult) The umbraex Flies, shrieking as it passes its enemies. Creatures within 20 feet of the umbraex's flight path take 22d6 mental damage depending on their DC 45 Fortitude save.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature takes half damage and is drained 1.

Failure The creature takes full damage and is drained 2.

Critical Failure The creature takes double damage and is drained 2 and doomed 1.



THE BOUND ONE

The secret of Yled's necromantic defenses is a group of darvakkas. The most powerful of these is a captive umbraex darvakka known only as "the Bound One." Fortunately for life across the world, the Bound One is the only known umbraex on Golarion.

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AZLANTI HERITAGE

The creation of a facetbound is difficult for several reasons, not least of which is the cost of the necessary *aeon stones*. Even so, creators sometimes fail even when they replicate the process exactly. Some researchers posit that the most successful cases are those in which the subjects have at least some Azlanti ancestry.

Facetbound

Inspired by the work of the Azlanti and their obsessions with *aeon stones*, certain necromancers strive to tap into those curious magical items to create undead with powerful abilities. A facetbound is created from a living being with an *aeon stone* surgically attached to their skull who is killed in a specific, secret ritual. Each facetbound must bear a single *aeon stone*, and this stone determines the powers the facetbound wields (in place of the normal powers of the implanted stone).

FACETBOUND NULLIFIER

Designed to serve as devastatingly powerful foot soldiers against enemies with plentiful magic, facetbound nullifiers shear through magical effects as easily as they slice through flesh and bone. The *pale lavender ellipsoid aeon stones* they bear are sunk deep into their heads and surrounded by an ugly bruise.

FACETBOUND NULLIFIER

CREATURE 15

RARE NE MEDIUM UNDEAD

Perception +25; darkvision

Languages Common, Necril

Skills Arcana +27, Athletics +31, Intimidation +27

Str +8, **Dex** +4, **Con** +6, **Int** +4, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +4

Items +2 striking halberd, pale lavender ellipsoid aeon stone, +1 resilient full plate

Implanted Stone A nullifier's *aeon stone* can't be Disarmed or removed until the nullifier is destroyed.

AC 38; **Fort** +26, **Ref** +22, **Will** +24; +2 status to all saves vs. magic

HP 305, negative healing; **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, unconscious

Always Ready The nullifier gains an additional reaction each round that can be used only for Defensive Dispel.

Attack of Opportunity ☞ The nullifier can also make attacks of opportunity against concentrate actions to Cast a Spell, and it disrupts that action on any hit, not just a critical hit.

Defensive Dispel ☞ (abjuration, arcane) **Trigger** The nullifier is the target of a spell; **Effect** The nullifier

attempts to counteract the triggering spell, with a counteract modifier of +27. This can be used only on spells that target the nullifier, not area spells that don't have targets. If it succeeds, it counteracts the spell for all targets, if other creatures were targeted in addition to the nullifier.

Speed 25 feet, fly 25 feet

Melee ♦ halberd +30 (magical, reach 10 feet, versatile S), **Damage** 2d10+16 piercing plus 2d10 force

Melee ♦ fist +30 (agile), **Damage** 2d4+16 bludgeoning plus 2d10 force

Arcane Innate Spells DC 34; 8th *dispel magic* (×3); **Cantrips** (8th) *detect magic*, *read aura*

Field of Force A nullifier's melee Strikes deal an additional 2d10 force damage (already included in the Strikes above).

Sever Spell (abjuration, arcane, attack) ♦ **Frequency** once per round; **Effect** The nullifier makes a melee Strike against a target. If the attack hits, the nullifier attempts to counteract a spell or magical effect on the target (of the nullifier's choice), with a counteract modifier of +27. The target is temporarily immune to Sever Spell for 24 hours.

FACETBOUND CASCADER

Facetbound cascaders must have been arcane spellcasters in life; in undeath, they draw upon the power of embedded *orange prism aeon stones* to defend themselves from magical damage and redirect that energy toward their opponents. Despite their incredible intelligence, facetbound cascaders have few memories of their former lives and typically serve the whims of their creator.

FACETBOUND CASCADER

CREATURE 16

RARE NE MEDIUM UNDEAD

Perception +28; darkvision

Languages Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Necril

Skills Acrobatics +28, Arcana +31, Intimidation +27, Occultism +29, Religion +28, Stealth +28

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

Items *orange prism aeon stone*, staff

Implanted Stone As facetbound nullifier.

AC 38; **Fort** +25, **Ref** +26, **Will** +28; +2 status to all saves vs. magic

HP 280, negative healing; **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, unconscious; **Resistances** cold 15 (see Energy Ward)

Energy Ward ↻ **Trigger** The facetbound cascader would take acid, cold, electricity, fire, or poison damage; **Effect** The cascader gains resistance 15 to the triggering damage, replacing any other resistance gained from this ability. Most facetbound cascaders begin combat with resistance 15 to cold.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ staff +30 (two-hand d8), **Damage** 1d4+9 bludgeoning plus energy charge

Arcane Spontaneous Spells DC 38, attack +30; **8th** (3 slots) *horrid wilting*, *polar ray*, *power word stun*; **7th** (3 slots) *disintegrate*, *power word blind*, *prismatic spray*; **6th** (3 slots) *acid arrow*, *chain lightning*, *spellwrack*; **5th** (3 slots) *cloudkill*, *cone of cold*, *magic missile*; **4th** (3 slots) *fireball*, *fly*, *resilient sphere*; **3rd** (3 slots) *earthbind*, *stinking cloud*, *wall of wind*; **2nd** (3 slots) *blur*, *continual flame*, *see invisibility*; **1st** (3 slots) *color spray*, *gust of wind*, *true strike*; **Cantrips** (8th) *detect magic*, *electric arc*, *produce flame*, *ray of frost*, *shield*

Energy Charge (abjuration, arcane) The cascader's melee Strikes deal an additional 4d10 damage of the type resisted by its Energy Ward.

Energy Shift ♦ (arcane, evocation, metamagic) The cascader can alter its spell damage. If the next action it uses is to Cast a Spell that deals acid, cold, electricity, fire, or poison damage, the cascader can change the damage type to match its Energy Ward instead of the spell's normal damage type (replacing the spell's corresponding trait).



AEON SYNERGIES

The ritual used to create facetbound cascaders imbues them with a close connection to destructive magic; elemental spells are often the most destructive magic at hand.

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EERIE INFILTRATORS

Necrohulk flailers can fit into shockingly small spaces and are often commanded to wriggle up storm drains or through narrow crevices to attack foes. As they don't possess much independent initiative, however, necrohulk flailers can get confused or stuck, posing a danger to anyone who happens to come across them, even months or years later.

Necrohulk

The strange, terrible energies swirling about on the winds and embedded in the earth of the Mana Wastes have led to unexpected changes and mutations in the bodies of those who dwell there. These mutants usually have little chance to escape their hardscrabble existence, as they're ostracized by other societies. People in the kingdom of Nex to the north look on such folk with suspicion, as do the dwarves of Alkenstar to the west. Surprisingly, the undead nation of Geb to the south is often the best hope for a future among people with unusual appearances.

Those who flee to Geb or are convinced to make it their home frequently find their welcome to be a false promise, however. Necromancers who long ago tired of animating the same humanoids find new potential in mutated flesh, and mutants who aren't careful might find themselves led into laboratories or crypts for experimentation.

Enterprising twilight sages of Yled's Mortuary have innovated bizarre combinations of alchemy and necromancy that boost their victims' mutations to persist even after reanimation. Although these necrohulks are virtually mindless and require a constant influx of chemicals to retain their might, they're more than powerful enough to make the extremely difficult process worth the effort. The cartridge containing the alchemical formulation that sustains them is perhaps the trickiest part of necrohulk animation, and it's easiest to simply stitch the cartridge right into the necrohulk's flesh.

Yled's armies contain a growing number of necrohulks. This isn't solely because these juggernauts are frightening effective combatants on the field of battle; leveraging the instinctive revulsion that mutants create carries some strategic advantage. Although the occasional necrohulks do run amok in Yled, addled on the chemical cocktails that sustain them, military necromancers generally keep them under control.

NECROHULK FLAILER

Additional limbs, failing tentacles, and rubbery bodies are common among Mana Wastes mutants, and aspiring necrohulk creators like to combine flesh from more than one of these kinds of mutants to create gangly but powerful warriors.

NECROHULK FLAILER

CREATURE 13

UNCOMMON NE LARGE MUTANT UNDEAD

Perception +23; darkvision

Languages Common, Necril

Skills Acrobatics +27, Athletics +26

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

AC 32; **Fort** +23, **Ref** +26, **Will** +20

HP 295, negative healing, regeneration 15 (deactivated by acid); **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, unconscious; **Weaknesses** slashing 15

Alchemical Cartridge (alchemical) Critical hits rupture the necrohulk's alchemical cartridge. The first time the necrohulk takes a critical hit, it loses its regeneration. The second time it takes a critical hit, it takes 15 persistent acid damage that it can't heal unless the cartridge is stitched back into place.

Speed 30 feet, climb 25 feet

Melee ♦ tentacle +27 (agile, reach 15 feet), **Damage** 3d8+13 bludgeoning plus Grab

Melee ♦ fist +26 (reach 10 feet), **Damage** 3d12+13 bludgeoning

Alchemical Amplification ♦ (alchemical) **Frequency** once per hour; **Effect** The necrohulk draws upon alchemical stores to push its body into overdrive. It becomes quickened for 1d4 rounds. It can use this extra action to Step, Stride, or Strike.

Constrict 6d6 bludgeoning, DC 32

Tentacle Storm ♦♦ The necrohulk flailer makes up to four tentacle Strikes, each against a different target. These attacks count toward its multiple attack penalty, but the penalty doesn't increase until after the necrohulk makes all of these attacks.

NECROHULK SMASHER

Mutants with incredible strength make the most powerful necrohulks. These necrohulk smashers are so swollen with biological and alchemical muscle enhancements that they can simply pound their way through enemies.

NECROHULK SMASHER

CREATURE 15

UNCOMMON NE LARGE MUTANT UNDEAD

Perception +25; darkvision

Skills Athletics +32, Intimidation +27

Str +9, **Dex** +4, **Con** +6, **Int** -4, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +4

AC 36; **Fort** +29, **Ref** +23, **Will** +26

HP 345, negative healing, regeneration 15 (deactivated by acid); **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, unconscious; **Weaknesses** slashing 15

Alchemical Cartridge (alchemical) As necrohulk flailer.

Attack of Opportunity ↻

Speed 30 feet

Melee ♦ fist +30 (reach 10 feet), **Damage** 4d10+15 bludgeoning and Improved Knockback

Ranged ♦ rock +25 (brutal, range increment 120 feet), **Damage** 4d10+15 bludgeoning

Alchemical Amplification ♦ (alchemical) As necrohulk flailer.

Rend ♦ fist

Smashing Blow ♦♦ The necrohulk smasher makes a fist Strike. If it hits, the necrohulk smashes the target into the floor or nearby wall. The target takes an additional 6d10 bludgeoning damage, depending on its DC 33 Fortitude save.

Critical Success The target takes half of the additional damage.

Success The target takes half the additional damage and is stunned 1.

Failure The target takes full additional damage, is stunned 3, and knocked prone.

Critical Failure The target takes double the additional damage, is stunned 3, and knocked prone.

Throw Rock ♦



UNDEAD FLESHWARPS

Muscular fleshwarps (*Pathfinder Lost Omens Ancestry Guide* 88) are the most common ancestry used to make necrohulk smashers. These people have often already experienced lives of rejection or exclusion before the final indignity of unwanted reanimation.



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SHADOWY COUSINS

Shadow giants look upon tenebric giants with disdain and fear. They view these undead creatures not as giants but as a corruption of the true nature of the Shadow Plane, closer to darvakkas than kin. They tend to give tenebric giants a wide berth, unwilling to confront the powerful creatures.

Tenebric Giant

Necromancers reaching for the greatest heights of experimentation know that creating a new terror requires exacting, careful work at every stage of the process. In the case of the tenebric giant, this process begins with a tomb giant who dies after consuming a dose of several poisons combined with the *shadow ash* reagent. This creates the right circumstances for a necromancer to raise them as a tenebric giant. They're particularly obedient to the will of the necromancer who created them and are charged full of energy from the Shadow Plane, which grants them new powers and abilities.

TENEBRIC GIANT

CREATURE 17

RARE NE LARGE SHADOW UNDEAD

Perception +31; darkvision, lifesense 80 feet

Languages Common, Jotun, Necril; telepathy (with its creator only) 100 feet

Skills Athletics +33, Intimidation +30, Religion +30, Stealth +29 (+33 to Hide in dim light or darkness)

Str +9, **Dex** +4, **Con** +9, **Int** +4, **Wis** +7, **Cha** +5

Items +2 greater striking scythe

AC 39; **Fort** +32, **Ref** +27, **Will** +30

HP 360, negative healing; **Immunities** death effects, disease, mental, paralyzed, poison, unconscious; **Weaknesses** positive 15

Attack of Opportunity ↻

Catch Rock ↻

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ scythe +34 (deadly 2d10, magical, reach 15 feet, trip),

Damage 3d10+17 slashing plus cloying shadows

Melee ♦ claw +32 (agile, reach 15 feet), **Damage** 3d6+17 slashing plus cloying shadows

Ranged ♦ rock +32 (brutal, range increment 120 feet), **Damage** 3d6+17 bludgeoning plus cloying shadows

Cloying Shadows (occult, shadow) The tenebric giant's attacks leave behind a residue of energy from the Shadow Plane. A creature hit by the tenebric giant's melee Strike takes an additional 1d8 persistent negative damage and must attempt a DC 36 Reflex save.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature is blinded until its next turn begins.

Failure The creature is blinded for 1 minute.

Critical Failure The creature is permanently blinded.

Tenebric Stride ♦♦ (illusion, occult, shadow) The tenebric giant can move quickly in shadowy conditions. The tenebric giant Strides twice and makes a scythe Strike at any point during this movement against a target that is in darkness or dim light. This movement doesn't provoke reactions.

Throw Rock ♦

Theater Phantasm

Theater phantasms are amalgamations of the spiritual and emotional energy given up by entertainers and audiences of powerful performances.

THEATER PHANTASM

CREATURE 16

UNCOMMON N LARGE INCORPOREAL UNDEAD

Perception +32; all-around vision, lifesense 100 feet, tremorsense 100 feet

Languages Common, Necril, up to four others

Skills Intimidation +30, Performance +35, Society +30, Theater Lore +36

Str -5, **Dex** +4, **Con** +6, **Int** +2, **Wis** +5, **Cha** +9

Bonded Theater A theater phantasm can't travel more than 50 feet from the theater (or similar location) where it was created.

AC 36; **Fort** +28, **Ref** +25, **Will** +30

HP 260, emotional consumption, dramatic return, negative healing; **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, precision, unconscious; **Resistances** all 10 (except force, *ghost touch*, or positive; double resistance vs. non-magical)

Catharsis (emotion, enchantment, mental, occult) When a theater phantasm is destroyed, it emits waves of emotional energy. All creatures within 50 feet take 10d6 mental damage (DC 34 basic Will save) as they experience a crushing barrage of emotions.

Dramatic Return (necromancy, occult) A destroyed theater phantasm slowly reforms to full strength over the course of 1 week. The only way to permanently destroy the phantasm is to reduce it to 0 Hit Points during a performance occurring in its bonded theater.

Emotional Consumption (emotion, necromancy, occult) If a theater phantasm is within 100 feet of an audience of 20 or more intelligent beings witnessing a performance in its bonded theater, it gains fast healing 20.

Speed fly 40 feet

Melee ♦ spectral hand +30 (finesse, magical), **Damage** 3d10+15 negative

Ranged ♦ impromptu props +28 (magical, range increment 30 feet), **Damage** 3d12+18 bludgeoning

Spotlight (emotion, enchantment, light, occult) ♦ **Frequency** once per round;

Effect The theater phantasm draws attention to a creature it admires.

The phantasm designates a target other than itself within 50 feet with a subtle spotlight, giving the target a +2 status bonus to Performance checks and resistance 10 to mental damage for 1 minute. If it uses this ability again on a new target, the former creature loses its spotlight.



COMPETING PHANTASMS

On very rare occasions, more than one theater phantasm takes up residence in the same theater, each trying to outdo the other.

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A decorative border runs along the top and sides of the page. It features a dark background with ornate, golden-brown floral and scrollwork patterns. Interspersed within these patterns are several human skulls. Some skulls are whole, while others are partially broken or have blood smeared on them. A golden spoon is shown dripping red blood, and a curved blade with blood on its tip is also visible. The overall theme is macabre and horror.

Ghiasi the Unraveler

Smuggler Turned Diva

Ghiasi loves secrets. She loves gathering them like treasures, even if she doesn't plan to use them. She enjoys plots within plots and stories of master manipulators overcoming dangerous odds with words and influence instead of muscle. She sees herself as central to social life in Yled and loves the way undead defer to her within the world she has built in her Twined Stories playhouse. She has gathered a small army of informants, spies, rumormongers, and worshippers who serve as her eyes and ears in the city, although she mostly uses these individuals to sow rumors and mysteries around her own identity and motives—not because she has something to hide, but because she wants to be perceived as having something worth hiding. Even her sobriquet, “the Unraveler,” is a title she gave herself. It has no actual meaning to her, but she likes the mystery it evokes.

In a city preoccupied with war and the inevitable danger it poses, Ghiasi treats the fear and worry as an amusing backdrop for the stories she wants to tell. If she can enrich herself in this fertile storytelling ground, so much the better, for she knows even the undead need to escape the thoughts of war once in a while. She doesn't truly care about the war effort against Nex; she only cares that it seems to make the residents more desperate for distraction. Expensive distraction is something she is happy to provide.

Ghiasi doesn't have particularly close ties with other shae, with one exception: her younger brother, Ghiono. Together, they spent the early parts of their lives exploring the region of the Shadow Plane that's a dark mirror of Geb, finding spots where the boundaries between planes were thin and could easily be pierced. She was always a bit quicker, smarter, and more charming than Ghiono, and her younger sibling looked up to her. With his help, the two shae built a trade network that moved products across Golarion via the Shadow Plane. She not only learned how to fight off threats but also how to build alliances, collect favors, and forge relationships that made the siblings incredibly wealthy. Even then, Ghiasi was never truly happy. The feeling she had of being needed by those who used their services was pleasant and carried a bit of the social influence she craved, but it wasn't quite enough.

In boredom, Ghiasi began to attend performances at Twined Stories in Yled and immediately fell in love with the place. She saw the potential the building had. Its long history was impressive, but its performances had become insipid and uninspired. She was certain she could do a better job. Within a few months, she had sold her share of the trading business to her brother and used a piece of that wealth to purchase and refurbish the playhouse.

Owning Twined Stories has proved to be all Ghiasi hoped for and more. She's able to tell the nuanced stories she wants to tell, weaving ethereal and material actors together on stage. She can take whatever role she wants and feels magnanimous when she isn't the lead. She even attached a shadowy realm of her own creation, the House of Inspiring Shadows, to the backstage area so she can come and go with the mystique she believes her new role requires.

Ghiasi's efforts have been a resounding success, and she's almost singlehandedly revitalized Yled's social scene. Performances at Twined Stories are now important social events where the city's aristocracy—and particularly those dignitaries who aren't closely connected with the military—go to be seen.

Campaign Role

Ghiasi's relationship with the characters can be quite complex. At first, she views the new Blood Lords' meddling as a serious problem and danger to her affairs and her brother's safety. However, she knows how much havoc a group of adventurers can cause, so she decides they might be able to accomplish what she can't: her brother's rescue and Kemnebi's destruction. After she first meets the characters, her actions are designed to test them. Once she sees how dogged the characters are in their mission, she turns toward manipulating them in a way that minimizes the danger to her and sets them on a course to aid her. What better way to get what she wants, she figures, than to help these new Blood Lords accomplish goals that line up so perfectly with her own?

Ghiasi has a flair for the dramatic. As someone who has spent the last few years crafting stories and using those stories to build her reputation and influence others, she treats many of her interactions

as if they were scenes in a play where she is the star. Yled is the stage she has chosen, and the characters' entrance marks what she sees as a new act in the story of her life.

While Ghiasi doesn't usually take physical threats seriously, she is wise enough to know that a quick escape is often the best course of action. In combat, she tries to keep her distance while casting spells to subdue enemies. Barring that, she prefers to hit and run in battle.

GHIASI

CREATURE 17

UNIQUE N MEDIUM SHADOW

Female shae spy (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 230)

Perception +34; darkvision

Languages Aklo, Common, Necril, Shae, Undercommon

Skills Acrobatics +30, Deception +34, Diplomacy +32, Occultism +30, Performance +32, Shadow Plane Lore +30, Society +32, Stealth +30

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

Items dagger (5), *shadow's heart* (page 79)

Shadow Shift Being made partially of shadow, shae are concealed in dim light or darkness even to creatures that can see clearly in those light levels.

AC 40; **Fort** +25, **Ref** +34, **Will** +29;

+1 status to all saves vs. divination

HP 285; **Immunities** precision; **Resistances** cold 15, negative 15

Multiple Reactions Ghiasi gains an additional reaction each turn that she can only use to Slip.

Counterattack **Trigger** Ghiasi is targeted by an attack from an adjacent creature that misses due to her being concealed; **Requirements** Ghiasi is aware of the attack; **Effect** Ghiasi makes a Strike against the attacker.

Slip **Trigger** A creature moves adjacent to Ghiasi; **Effect** Ghiasi teleports to a clear space adjacent to another creature she can see within 30 feet.

Speed 25 feet, fly 35 feet; swift steps, tenebral form

Melee **shadow's heart** +33 (agile, finesse, magical, trip),

Damage 3d6+15 slashing and 2d6 cold

Ranged **dagger** +30 (agile, thrown 10 feet, versatile S),

Damage 1d4+15 piercing and 2d6 cold

Occult Innate Spells DC 38, attack +30; **9th** *overwhelming presence*, *weird*; **8th** *uncontrollable dance*, *unrelenting observation*; **7th** *plane shift* (self only; to Shadow Plane or Material Plane only), *shadow blast* (×3); **5th** *prying eye*; **4th** *gaseous form* (at will), *glibness*; **Cantrips (9th)** *chill touch*, *daze*, *detect magic*

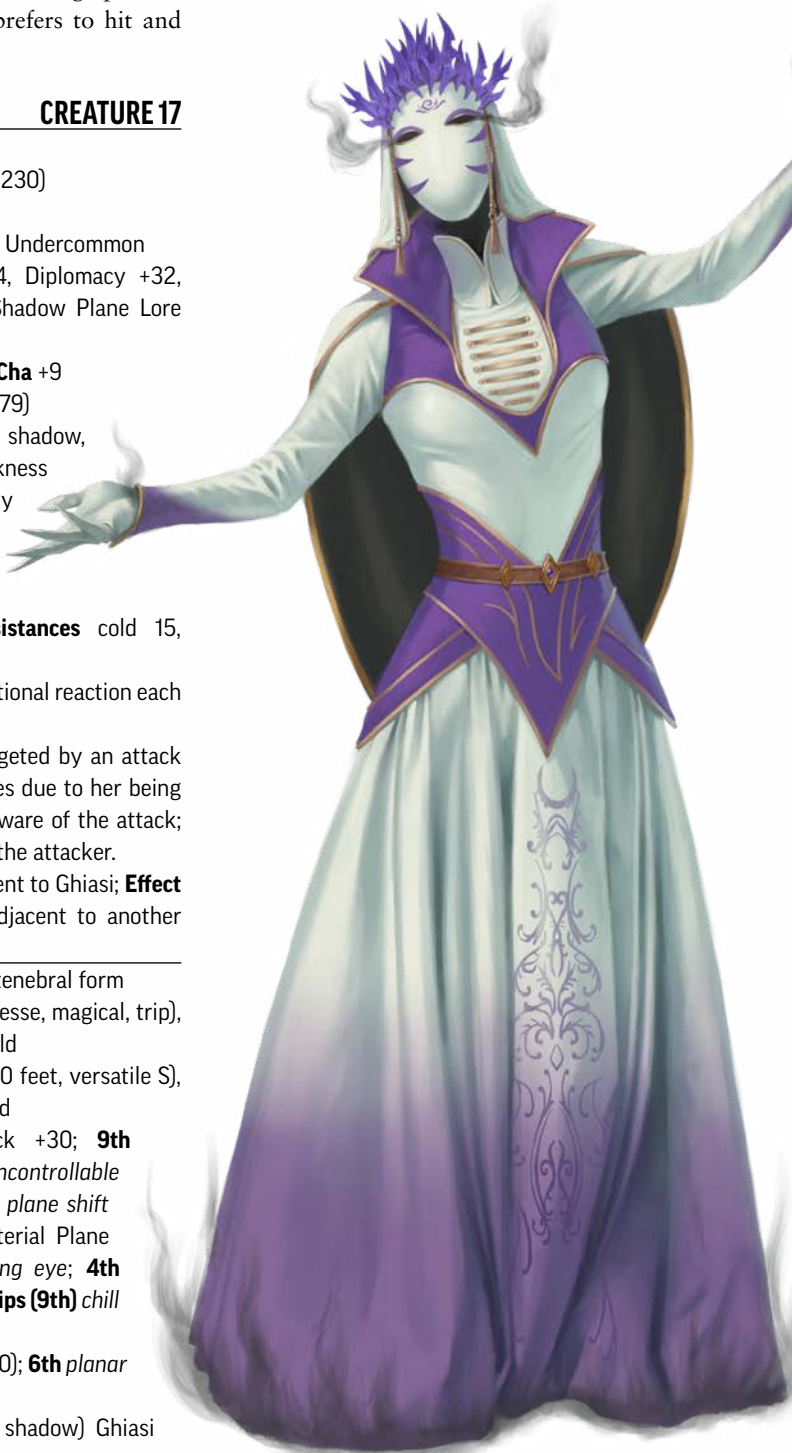
Rituals DC 38; **8th** *split shadow* (page 80); **6th** *planar binding*

Shadow Gate **conjuration, occult, shadow** Ghiasi

opens or closes a gate between Twined Stories and the House of Inspiring Shadows, although the gate must be opened in the same place each time. It remains open until she uses this ability again, but she can't close the gate until at least 10 minutes after she opens it.

Swift Steps Ghiasi's movement doesn't trigger reactions.

Tenebral Form Ghiasi can Fly at full Speed in *gaseous form*.



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Pokmit Bloody-Pike

Unyielding Graveknight of Yled

The graveknight now known as Pokmit Bloody-Pike was born in 4102 AR to a now-extinct minor line of Chelaxian nobility. While they didn't have much wealth, the family did have enough to outfit their young son as a soldier, and enough influence to land him a minor command posting. Pokmit's skill and force of personality made him an excellent leader, and he was a captain by the time the reckless prince Haliad I launched his ill-fated attack upon the city of Absalom. During the battle, he was knocked unconscious and left for dead by the retreating Chelaxians. Angered by this abandonment, he resigned his commission as soon as he recovered and vowed to never aid Chelax again. Pokmit instead began a long career as a mercenary captain, mostly operating within the Mwangi Expanse.

Pokmit built a reputation as capable, competent, and absolutely committed to keeping his word. This final trait made him especially desirable among employers accustomed to mercenaries who didn't always follow through on their obligations. By 4155 AR, Pokmit and his small company—the Bloody Pikes, so named in honor of their leader's favorite weapon—had effectively become a unit of Geb's military and served with distinction in border skirmishes in the west. On one of these raids, Pokmit's company was ambushed and nearly wiped out. In response, the Gebbite military sent a contingent of undead troops who swarmed through the area and avenged the loss of the Bloody Pikes. Pokmit was moved by this commitment. He recovered again and joined Geb's military, rising quickly through the ranks.

Pokmit never had anything like a moral code except in matters of law: a contract with an employer was sacred, and he considered those who broke their word to be the lowest, most despicable beings. Whatever sense of right and wrong Pokmit once held soon eroded away as he followed the orders he was given, no matter how cruel. He personally oversaw the mass execution of refugees from the Spellscar Desert, earning him a permanent posting in Yled.

During his service in the city, Pokmit finally earned his transformation to a graveknight under the supervision of Blood Lord Haeqajet himself. The Overgovernor was impressed by Pokmit's commitment to the Yled's protection and the viciousness in his

execution of those duties, especially when Pokmit led a dangerous raid against a cult of Pharasmin radicals who threatened the city. The Pharasmins repeatedly attacked some of the lesser mindless undead with positive energy, often destroying dozens of the creatures at once before slinking away into the city streets. Pokmit, as one of the quick, was perfectly suited to bypass the cultists' undead-focused wards. He soon brought back the corpses of the priests, who were animated as zombies and paraded through Yled as a warning. Haeqajet rewarded Pokmit with a quick death and reanimation as a graveknight, presenting Pokmit with the ceremonial dagger used to end his life and begin his unlife.

Under Pokmit's watchful eye, Yled has defeated many threats to its existence and continues to serve as a bulwark against creatures of the Spellscar Desert and would-be heroes who have attempted to disrupt the city's militaristic order. In his nearly 600 years of undeath, Pokmit has become a cornerstone of the Warmaster Council, respected and feared throughout Yled. He is also Haeqajet's close confidant. Although Pokmit knows the Overgovernor's mind is not what it once was—or perhaps because he knows that fact—he has remained a staunch supporter of Haeqajet on the Warmaster Council. In Pokmit's mind, no one is more committed to duty than the Overgovernor. Pokmit sees his own service merely as a shadow of his sponsor's.

Campaign Role

Pokmit is the embodiment of the looming threat of the Warmaster Council descending upon the Pallid Pinnacle in Chapter 1 of this adventure. The characters ultimately face Pokmit there, but might weaken him if they've set the temple's defenses before he arrives.

If Pokmit is defeated but not fully destroyed, as is likely because of his rejuvenation ability, he can easily make an appearance later in the adventure and cause all manner of trouble for the characters. Conversely, if the characters convince Pokmit that the work they're doing is for the benefit of Geb and its military, Pokmit might become an ally, convincing other members of the Warmaster Council to stay out of their way while they work to expose illegal operations in Yled.

POKMIT BLOODY-PIKE

CREATURE 18

UNIQUE N MEDIUM UNDEAD

Male graveknight military captain (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 190)

Perception +31; darkvision

Languages Common, Necril

Skills Athletics +35, Intimidation +33, Religion +31, Society +31, Warfare Lore +33

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

Items composite longbow (20 arrows), +2 greater resilient full plate, +3 greater striking wounding longspear, warhammer

AC 42; **Fort** +32, **Ref** +30, **Will** +29

HP 335, negative healing, rejuvenation; **Immunities** cold, death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, unconscious; **Resistances** positive 18

Rejuvenation (divine, necromancy) As graveknight (*Bestiary* 190).

Sacrilegious Aura (abjuration, aura, divine, evil) 30 feet. When a creature in the aura uses a positive spell or ability, Pokmit automatically attempts to counteract it, with a +29 counteract modifier.

Attack of Opportunity

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ *longspear* +36 (cold, magical, reach 10 feet),

Damage 3d8+19 piercing plus 1d6 cold and 1d6 persistent bleed

Melee ♦ *warhammer* +35 (cold, magical, shove), **Damage** 3d8+19 bludgeoning plus 1d6 cold

Melee ♦ *fist* +35 (agile, cold, magical), **Damage** 2d6+19 bludgeoning plus 1d6 cold

Ranged ♦ *composite longbow* +32 (cold, deadly d10, magical, range increment 100 feet, reload 0, volley 30 feet), **Damage** 3d8+17 piercing plus 1d6 cold

Devastating Blast ♦♦ (arcane, cold, evocation) Pokmit unleashes a 30-foot cone of cold. Creatures in the area take 10d12 cold damage (DC 40 basic Reflex save). The graveknight can use this ability once every 1d4 rounds.

Graveknight's Curse This curse affects anyone who wears a graveknight's armor for at least 1 hour. **Saving Throw** DC 44 Will save; **Onset** 1 hour; **Stage 1** doomed 1 and can't remove the armor (1 day); **Stage 2** doomed 2, hampered 10, and can't remove the armor (1 day); **Stage 3** dies and transforms into the armor's graveknight

Pike Master ♦♦♦ Pokmit's longspear reach increases by 5 feet until the start of his next turn, and he makes a single longspear Strike against any number of creatures. These attacks count toward Pokmit's multiple attack penalty, but the penalty doesn't increase until after all the attacks.

Pokmit's Discernment ♦ **Frequency** once per round;

Effect Pokmit sizes up the defenses of a creature within 30 feet; he must know the creature is near, but need not

be able to see it. Until the start of Pokmit's next turn, Pokmit's attacks against the target ignore any flat check required due to the target being concealed or hidden.

Ruinous Weapons Any weapon or unarmed attack Pokmit uses gains the effects of the +1 greater striking and greater frost weapons runes. (These bonuses are included in his statistics above.)

Weapon Master Pokmit has access to the critical specialization effects of any weapons he wields.



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by Jessica Catalan

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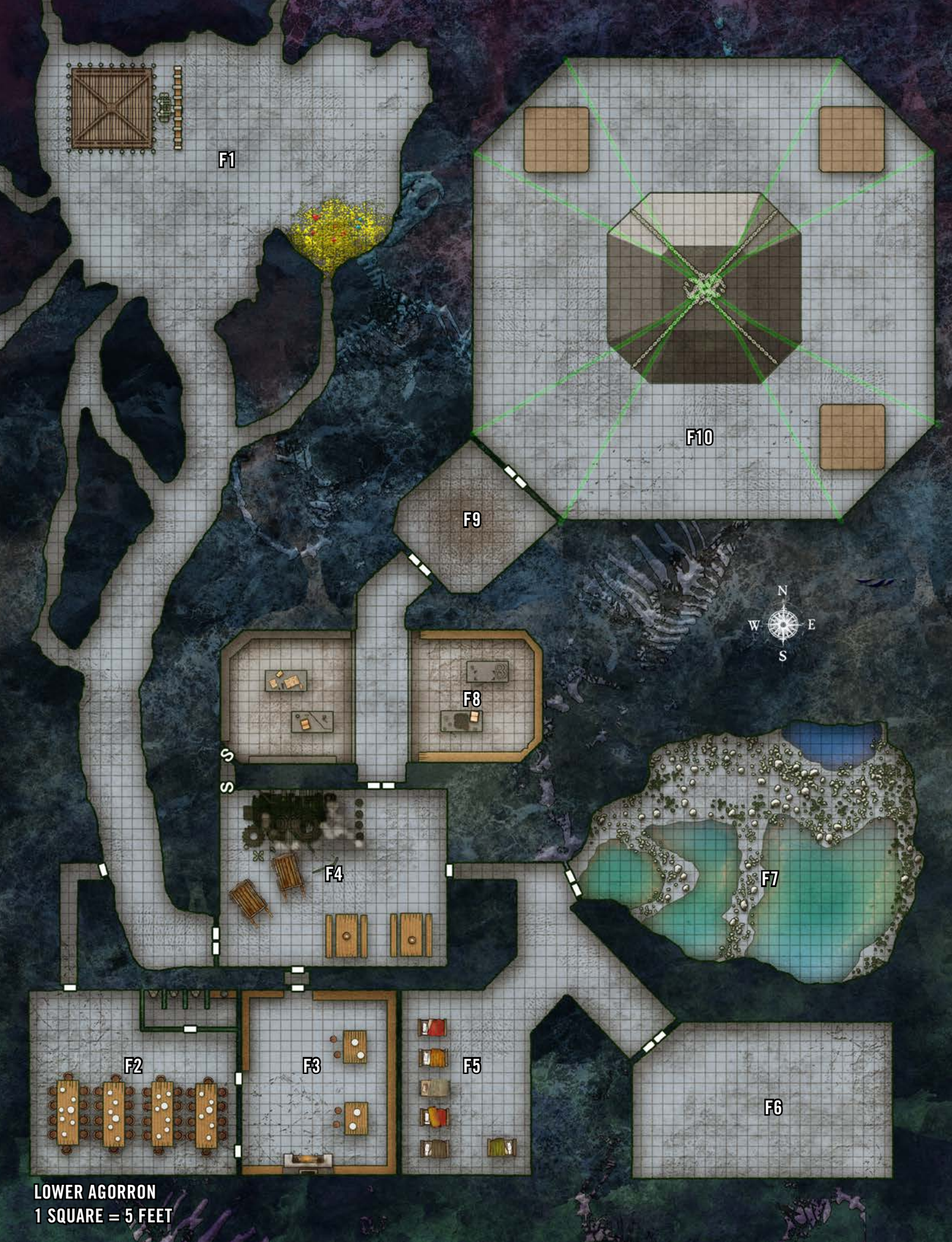
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