

PATHFINDER SOCIETY®

SEASON OF THE TEN



COUNTDOWN TO ROUND MOUNTAIN

By Jerall Toi



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HOW TO PLAY

Pathfinder Society Scenario #10–20: Countdown To Round Mountain is a Pathfinder Society Scenario designed for 7th- through 11th-level characters (Tier 7–11; Subtiers 7–8 and 10–11). This scenario is designed for play in the Pathfinder Society Roleplaying Guild campaign, but can easily be adapted for use with any world. For more information on the Roleplaying Guild, how to read the attached Chronicle sheets, and how to find games in your area, check out the campaign's home page at PathfinderSociety.club.



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GM RESOURCES

Countdown to Round Mountain makes use of *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook*, *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Equipment*, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary*, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2*, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3*, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 4*, and *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 6*. This adventure assumes the GM has access to these sourcebooks. All rules referenced in this adventure are available in the free online Pathfinder Reference Document at pfrd.info, and the relevant rules from the Bestiary volumes are reprinted at the back of the adventure for the GM's convenience.

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By Jerall Toi



ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Diguo-dashu, a subterranean civilization of warring ratfolk, sprawls throughout the Sekamina layer of the Darklands beneath central Tian Xia. In the year 6751 IC (4251 AR), hordes of ratfolk invaded the surface empire of Lung Wa. Unable to seal the entrances to the Darklands faster than ratfolk demolitionists could create new tunnels, and unused to fighting a foe that could swarm on to the surface from almost anywhere, Lung Wa struggled to contain and repel the invasion. The ratfolk seized control of a dozen cities before the Imperial Army managed to halt the invasion and eventually drive the invaders back underground, sealing at least 20 Darklands entrances with powerful earth magic. The legendary sorceress, Hao Jin, the Ruby Phoenix of Goka, orchestrated one of the more dramatic sealings.

As a renowned collector of the world's most wondrous treasures, Hao Jin displayed remarkable talent at capturing entire sites and natural wonders, within her demiplane, accessible through the *Hao Jin Tapestry*. The sorceress turned this talent against the invading ratfolk, transporting and capturing a 30-trillion-ton sphere of the Darklands—tunnels, caves, and occupants—into her tapestry.

The sudden removal of such a large chunk of the Darklands caused much of the upper bedrock and surface access tunnels to collapse into the tremendous cavern left behind. While Lung Wa celebrated, to the surviving ratfolk, the cavern presented both an initial setback and a longer-term opportunity. In the centuries since their failed surface invasion, the ratfolk converted the cavern into an enterprising trade route that cut through and connected all three layers of the Darklands—Nar-Voth, Sekamina, and Orv. The partially flooded cavern floor further proved suitable for a range of subterranean aqua- and agricultural endeavors. In time, the ratfolk founded a small town within the cavern to centralize services, establish a local government and bureaucracy, and support a military presence large enough to dissuade raids from rival underground factions and civilizations. Officially, the ratfolk named the cavern the Old Rat's Stolen Heart, but most ratfolk refer to it more colloquially as the Broken Ticker.

In 7213 IC (4713 AR), the Pathfinder Society won the Ruby Phoenix Tournament and selected the *Hao Jin Tapestry* as

Where on Golarion?

This scenario takes place in the Darklands deep beneath the midwest of Tian Xia. More information about the region and its history appears in *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Dragon Empires Gazetteer*, *Pathfinder Player Companion: Dragon Empires Primer*, and *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Into the Darklands* available in bookstores and game stores everywhere and online at paizo.com.



their prize. In the years since, the Pathfinders have launched many expeditions into Hao Jin's demiplane, even exploring and chronicling the miles-wide sphere of captured Darklands, or Round Mountain, as the tapestry's inhabitants know it. However, all is not well in the tapestry. More recently, the Pathfinder Society discovered that the tapestry had begun to unravel. When Hao Jin's magic eventually fails, the Pathfinder Society believes that the tapestry may tear and violently eject all of its contents into the Astral Plane. A group of Pathfinders has since tracked down Hao Jin herself. Though she could not repair her tapestry, Hao Jin managed to modify the ritual that she used to capture sites, instead allowing one to return such a site to its original home. The Pathfinders intend to use this ritual and Round Mountain as a giant life raft for the tapestry's inhabitants and return the sphere to the immense cave left behind in central Tian Xia.

PATHFINDER SOCIETY SCENARIO

However, Round Mountain's return would crush everything within the Broken Ticker. The Society cannot, in good conscience, return Round Mountain to the Darklands without first inspecting the cavern, documenting any discoveries, and warning any inhabitants of the impending disaster.

SUMMARY

Venture-Captain Amara Li leads dozens of Pathfinders into the Darklands beneath Nagajor in order to explore, document, and evacuate an immense cavern occupied by ratfolk before the massive Round Mountain crashes into the area. She sets up a base camp and sends the PCs and several other small groups down secondary tunnels to find a path into the large cavern Old Rat's Stolen Heart, colloquially referred to as the Broken Ticker. Though the Society knows the general location of the cavern, no Pathfinder has been down this far in many years.

During the briefing, Li informs the PCs of the estimated return of Round Mountain and gives them several items that should enable them to communicate with her and potentially ease negotiations with ratfolk. Li then sends the PCs along a suspected smuggler's road. Li's information turns out to be trustworthy and the road leads to a ratfolk guardhouse built directly into the wall of the Broken Ticker, a mile above the cavern floor. The guards are accustomed to seeing merchants and smugglers from the surface and are not initially hostile. Here, the PCs have the opportunity to negotiate, sneak, or fight their way through the guard post. Once through the guard post, the PCs can make use of their own spells and abilities, a stairway cut directly into the cavern wall, or a wooden elevator system to reach the cavern floor.

There are several sites worth exploring on the cavern floor including the small ratfolk town, the various entrances into the cavern, fungus farms, subterranean fisheries, and a military garrison. The PCs can explore these sites in any order, and they need not visit all of the sites to complete their mission. Rather, specific events occur throughout the remainder of the scenario as time passes and the return of Round Mountain draws near. On the fourth day of the PCs' exploration (or the sixth day if the PCs sent poor instructions or failed to send instructions to Amara Li), another group of Pathfinders arrives. This second group of Pathfinders defers

decision-making and planning to the PCs and do their best to support any plan the PCs put forward. On the eleventh day, the tapestry's collapse accelerates, causing chunks of Round Mountain to materialize seemingly at random throughout the cavern. While the falling debris presents a threat, it also makes it easier to convince the ratfolk inhabitants to evacuate.

To further complicate matters, a construct army comprised of the haunted clockworks of Pan Majang has besieged one of the entrances into the Broken Ticker for weeks, looking for a way to claim the cavern. If left unchecked, the clockwork army may prove to be a deadly threat to the inhabitants of Round Mountain when the sphere returns to the Darklands. Particularly brave or foolhardy PCs may try to weaponize the return of the mountain against the clockwork army by luring them into position to be crushed; on the fourteenth day of the adventure, Round Mountain returns to the Material Plane and crushes everything within the Broken Ticker.

GETTING STARTED

Read or paraphrase the following to get the adventure underway.



Venture-Captain Amara Li

"After the sweltering heat of Nagajor, some might consider the coolness of these tunnels delightful, but we have little time to rest," Venture-Captain Amara

Li begins, addressing a sizeable caravan of Pathfinder agents, laborers, and nagaji guides. "By my calculations, we are now about two thousand feet below the surface, which places us in Nar-Voth. Welcome to the Darklands, Pathfinders. We'll establish a base camp here."

Venture-Captain Amara Li first works to establish a defensible campsite before inviting the Pathfinder agents, PCs included, to attend their mission briefing. Li first asks if any of the gathered agents have previously explored any part of Darklands before. Allow the PCs to introduce themselves to each other and the NPCs. Li pays particular attention to anybody that mentions the *Hao Jin Tapestry* and Round Mountain. After concluding introductions, Li thanks the Pathfinders for their trust before diving into the specifics of the mission at hand. She begins the briefing by recapping the ratfolk invasion of Lung Wa, Hao Jin's involvement in the war, the current state of the *Hao Jin Tapestry*, and the plan to return Round Mountain to the Material Plane.

COUNTDOWN TO ROUND MOUNTAIN

Amara Li is familiar with all the information presented in the introduction for this scenario. Before taking questions, Li resumes the briefing:

“According to our Master of Spells, Sorryna Westyr we have fifteen days before they transport Round Mountain back to the Material Plane. In that time, we must locate the mountain’s original location, explore and document the site, convince anyone who might be residing in the area to evacuate, and evacuate ourselves.

“Unfortunately, we do not know the exact location of the original site. Most of the surface access tunnels that led there collapsed under their own weight once Hao Jin carved out Round Mountain. However, we have managed to piece together folklore from up above—mostly stories to frighten children—and purchased information about various smuggling and trade routes between the surface and the Digu-Dashu. Thus, based on the intelligence available, I am certain that a large cavern known as the Old Rat’s Stolen Heart is the site of Round Mountain’s return. The name is clearly a reference to the goddess Lao Shu Po and the supposed heartbreak the remaining ratfolk experienced after their defeat. According to our informants, though, the cavern has an easier nickname—the Broken Ticker. This is our only opportunity to explore the Broken Ticker before the return of Round Mountain destroys potentially half a millennium of Darklands history.

“We plan to send a small team down each of the secondary and tertiary tunnels that may lead to the large cavern that was once Round Mountain. Remember, this is not a competition. Good cooperation and communication between the teams may be vital to the success of this mission. I shall brief each team individually, but, if there are any questions for the greater group, now is the time to ask.”

If the PCs have any questions, Li does her best to answer them. Li knows the information about Round Mountain and the Old Rat’s Heart that the PCs could learn with a successful DC 15 Knowledge (dungeoneering, geography, history, or religion) check (see page 6). Answers to some of the other most common questions the PCs may have are given below.

Can you tell us more about your informants? “Smugglers, most of them. There is, unsurprisingly, a market for goods that one can only find on the surface—crops, lumber, meat, and other farm goods. Our associate, Trade-Prince Aqir al’Hakam, has suggested that you consider adopting the guise of traders and merchants. He has also kindly donated several samples of his organization’s wares to complement such an approach. I’ll have packages apportioned to you during your individual team briefings, but you are in no way beholden to follow our associate’s suggestions.”

Is the cavern inhabited? “Yes, we believe that the Digu-Dashu maintain at least some presence within the Old Rat’s Stolen Heart. If the rumors prove true, the cavern now links all three layers of the Darklands—Nar-Voth, Sekamina, and Orv. If so, the Old Rat’s Stolen Heart could be

an incredibly valuable location here in the Darklands. I would expect that somebody must have exploited the opportunity in the intervening centuries. Any inhabitants likely speak Undercommon and potentially Tien.”

How would you approach exploring and documenting the site? “I cannot predict what you may find. Thus, we’ve tried to assemble diverse teams for this mission, with skills and knowledge covering a broad range of disciplines and applicable in multiple situations—archaeologists, anthropologists, historians, engineers, botanists, alchemists, translators, and warriors. Each of you has your own approach and I trust in the expertise you all bring to this endeavor.”

What sort of dangers can we expect? “Expect to encounter the ratfolk of Digu-Dashu. Based on our intelligence, they might be used to dealing with individuals from the surface, and you might be able to resolve any encounters with them peacefully. You might also encounter dangerous local flora and fauna, but if the cavern is indeed inhabited by an organized group or society, they likely have measures in place to handle the wildlife. You might also encounter representatives of any of the other civilizations and city-states of the Darklands. Some might be hostile. Finally, there are of course the dangers common to exploring cave networks deep beneath the surface—poor air quality, toxic gases, darkness, sudden drops, and cave-ins. If you haven’t already, I suggest you talk to our quartermaster about outfitting yourselves for underground exploration.”

How do you expect us to communicate with other teams? “Some teams will have access to magical means that can allow them to communicate with me or the other teams. I also have a small supply of various scrolls that can allow a team to communicate directly with our base camp; I can then relay information to the other teams from here. I plan to dole out these supplies during the individual team briefings.”

Development: After the mass briefing, Li begins discussing specific assignments with each of the Pathfinder teams present, four teams in total, including the PCs. When Li gets to the PCs, she explains that she has assigned them to a suspected trade route. The trade route follows a wider secondary tunnel that she believes may have been used to smuggle larger cargoes, potentially livestock, lumber, metal ores, or even caravans of slaves. Li also provides a *wand of animal messenger* (3 charges), a *scroll of whispering wind*, and a small handbook of cryptographic cyphers. She explains that the PCs should encrypt any written communications using the cyphers provided. Decrypting a message with the handbook available requires a DC 5 Linguistics check, or a DC 20 Linguistics check without the handbook. If the PCs cannot make use of the magical communication options, Li notes that she can spare a scout or messenger. The PCs can establish “dead drops” along their tunnel that the scouts can use to relay information back to Li’s base camp, albeit less frequently and reliably than the magical means.

Explore and Report

Diguo-Dashu created five distinct administrative districts within the Old Rat's Stolen Heart: the cavern walls, the fungus farmlands, the underground lake, the small town of Zhotan, and its neighboring military garrison. To complete their primary mission—to explore and document the cavern—the PCs should spend some time exploring each of the districts. This gives the PCs opportunity to converse with the local ratfolk, collect plant and soil samples, and uncover ancient ruins. For each day spent in a particular district, each PC can engage in a district-specific activity and make a skill check appropriate to that particular activity (details are provided throughout the scenario). In Subtier 7–8, the DC for these skill checks is 17. In Subtier 10–11, the DC increases to 19. For each successful skill check, the PCs earn 1 Exploration Point. Unless otherwise noted, the PCs may only earn 1 Exploration Point per activity per district, but can reattempt a failed check on a different day as often as they like. PCs receive a +2 bonus on checks when reattempting a previously failed check. Some districts provide further opportunity to earn Exploration Points through other means.

The cavern floor has a diameter of roughly 8 miles, and moving between districts is relatively easy. GMs do not need to track time precisely as the PCs move from one district to another.

Though the ratfolk do not need light, they still make use of fire to generate heat and lanterns to communicate over long distances. The urban areas of the Big Ticker thus tend to be well lit, whereas most of the farm exist in near permanent darkness.

Li instructs the PCs to immediately contact her should they discover a viable entrance to the Old Rat's Stolen Heart.

With the briefing and specific instructions now fully relayed to the PCs, Li also hands over Trade-Prince Aaqir al'Hakam's donated trade goods, which the PCs can use in negotiations with the ratfolk dwelling in the Old Rat's Stolen Heart. These include a *handy haversack* and *efficient quiver*. The Exchange has stuffed the haversack with 80 pounds of coffee beans, an ornate coffee pot, grinder, cups, and carefully written preparation instructions for each type of bean. These trade goods represent a total value of 2,500 gp. The quiver contains several samples of lumber and woodwork, including 60 masterwork arrows, two masterwork composite longbows, and a masterwork darkwood longpear.

Before the PCs depart, they may also visit the camp's quartermaster to purchase any basic gear and consumable items listed as Always Available in the *Pathfinder Society Roleplaying Guild Guide*.

KNOWLEDGE (DUNGEONEERING, GEOGRAPHY, OR HISTORY)

The PCs may know more about the history of this region of the Darklands and central Tian Xia above it.

15+: Unlike the caverns beneath the Inner Sea region, the Darklands beneath Tian Xia are not inhabited by drow, duergar, or darkfolk, nor was there any dwarven Quest for Sky. Instead, below Tian Xia, one can expect to find ratfolk, oni, and, if truly unfortunate, underworld dragons.

20+: After the sorceress Hao Jin helped put an end to the ratfolk invasion of Lung Wa, Imperial citizens soon discovered that the wells and natural springs in the surrounding areas ran dry. In capturing Round Mountain, Hao Jin had inadvertently disrupted the passage of underground water. This has created localized flooding and “cold walks”—Darklands slang for tunnels that terminate in a river or water-filled cavern.

KNOWLEDGE (RELIGION)

The PCs may know more about Lao Shu Po, the primary goddess of the Diguo-Dashu empire.

15+: The ratfolk of Diguo-Dashu likely worship Lao Shu Po, the goddess of night, thieves, and rats. Her holy symbols typically take the form of a curled and emaciated rat.

20+: Lao Shu Po was not always a goddess. She was once a simple rat until she fed on the corpse of the moon god Tsukiyo and absorbed some of his divine power. When Tsukiyo returned to life and banished his killer—his brother Fumeiyoshi—from heaven, Lao Shu Po stole Fumeiyoshi's portfolio and become the goddess of night.

CAVERN WALLS

Amara Li's intelligence soon proves accurate. After a day's hike, the tunnel assigned to the PCs terminates about a mile up the Big Ticker's western wall. When the PCs arrive, read or paraphrase the following:

The trader's route comes to an abrupt end as it exits some distance up a massive, slightly concave wall overlooking an inky darkness. A guardhouse, partially carved out of the tunnel wall, stands alongside the lip of the tunnel's exit. A massive mechanism of wood, ropes, and pulleys stands just beyond the exit.

Unless the PCs took measures to hide their approach, two ratfolk soldiers exit the guardhouse and greet them. The guards first try to greet the PCs in Undercommon and then Tien, asking them what business they have here in “the Big Ticker.” If the PCs are unable to communicate with the ratfolk, the guards use hand gestures and pantomime (Sense Motive DC 5) to ask the PCs to wait. While the PCs wait, one of the guards uses the wooden structure—an elevator system—to descend to the cavern floor and eventually returns several hours later with an administrative officer that speaks Common. The guards are accustomed to dealing with

uplanders, as the tunnel is indeed frequently used to receive large shipments from the surface, including lumber.

The guards ask the PCs to identify themselves and state the purpose of their visit. The guards accept almost any cover story presented, or even the truth. Before allowing the PCs through, the guards explain that the necessary paperwork and authorizations could take several hours. With a successful DC 10 Sense Motive check, an observant PC quickly infers that the guards would accept a bribe to expedite the paperwork. The guards are willing to expedite the process for 100 gp per PC. A PC that succeeds at a DC 17 Diplomacy check convinces the guards to reduce the price to 50 gp per PC instead. Alternatively, the PCs could attempt to trick, negotiate, or bully their way through, requiring a DC 25 Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate check to expedite the process without the extra processing fee. PCs unwilling to pay the bribe and unable to otherwise convince the guards to let them through can simply wait out the process.

Creatures: There are four ratfolk guards stationed here. Though physical violence is unlikely, the PCs may attempt to bypass the guardhouse using a different approach or may encounter similar guards throughout their exploration of the Big Ticker. In such an event, refer to the following statistics.

ALL SUBTIERS (CR 8)

RATFOLK GUARDS (4)		CR 4
Ratfolk fighter 5 (<i>Pathfinder RPG Bestiary</i> 3 231)		
NE Small humanoid (ratfolk)		
Init +3; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +8		
DEFENSE		
AC 20, touch 14, flat-footed 17 (+6 armor, +3 Dex, +1 size)		
hp 42 (5d10+10)		
Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +2 (+1 vs. fear)		
OFFENSE		
Speed 20 ft.		
Melee mwk short sword +7 (1d4/19–20)		
Ranged mwk light crossbow +9 (1d6+1/19–20)		
Special Attacks swarming, weapon training (crossbows +1)		
TACTICS		
During Combat The guards prefer to attack from range with their crossbows, but are willing to enter melee with their short swords. Where possible, they make use of their swarming ability against a single foe.		
Morale The guards fight ferociously until one of them is knocked unconscious or slain. Any remaining guards surrender or attempt to flee from foes that do not or are incapable of accepting surrender.		
STATISTICS		
Str 10, Dex 16, Con 11, Int 12, Wis 9, Cha 8		
Base Atk +5; CMB +4; CMD 17		
Feats Alertness, Iron Will, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Reload, Toughness		

Cooperate

At the start of the PCs' fourth day in the cavern (or sixth day, if the PCs made use of a dead drop [see page 5] to communicate with Amara Li), a second group of Pathfinders arrives within the cavern. They head directly to Zhotan and, with the aid of the local ratfolk, soon find their way to the PCs. The second group explains that Venture-Captain Amara Li instructed the other two teams to continue exploring their tunnels, with a hope of finding another route to the Big Ticker or other outlying sites of importance. The Pathfinders offer to help and defer decision making to the PCs. These Pathfinders can use their skills to aid the PCs' skill checks used to explore a district, or provide spellcasting services at no additional cost (as described in their entries; PCs must still pay for any expensive material components, as appropriate for the requested spell). Each of these Pathfinders has a +7 bonus to their skills checks. These Pathfinders do not directly assist the PCs in combat.

Riada (N female human cleric of Pharasma 5) leads the second group. She can assist the PCs with Knowledge (religion) checks. Given at least a day's notice, Riada is also willing to prepare one 3rd-level spell from the cleric spell list for the PCs each day. If the PCs express an interest in exploring the underground lake called Old Rat's Eye (see page 13), Riada suggests that she prepare and cast *water breathing* for the PCs. Riada can also channel positive energy up to three times a day (3d6 points of healing).

Torstra (LN female dwarf ranger 5) serves as the group's scout. Torstra can assist the PCs with Knowledge (dungeoneering) and Knowledge (nature) checks.

Soh Jung (N male half-elf rogue 5) is fluent in both Tien and Undercommon and serves as the group's translator. He can assist the PCs with Knowledge (local) and Linguistics checks. Soh Jung is also willing to join the PCs during negotiations with the people of Old Rat's Broken Heart should they require a translator.

Skills Acrobatics +0 (–4 to jump), Climb +1, Intimidate +5, Perception +8, Sense Motive +6, Swim +1; **Racial Modifiers** +2 Perception

Languages Tien, Undercommon

SQ armor training 1, rodent empathy

Combat Gear crossbow bolts (10), *potion of cure light wounds* (2);

Other Gear mwk lamellar (steel) armor^{UE}, mwk light crossbow, mwk short sword

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Swarming (Ex) Up to two ratfolk can share the same square at the same time. If two ratfolk in the same square attack the same foe, they are considered to be flanking that foe as if they were in two opposite squares.

Evacuate

At the start of the PCs' eleventh day in the cavern, the magic of the Hao Jin Tapestry begins to unravel at an even greater pace. At first, dust and finer particles begin to leak through, filling the Big Ticker with a mist-like haze. Soon thereafter, larger particles begin leaking through. These larger particles function as a constant hail (*Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* 438), which imparts a -4 penalty on sound-based Perception checks and ranged weapon attacks. From the PCs' twelfth day in the cavern and onwards, due to the pile-up of hailstones, entering any square not inside a structure protected by a roof costs 2 squares of movement. This hail is never substantial enough to deal damage.

Unused to even regular precipitation, the Digu-Dashu ratfolk understandably begin to panic when rocks begin to fall upon them. Reduce the DC to convince the governor of Zhotan to order the evacuation of the Big Ticker by 5 for each day of hail.

If the PCs do not manage to coordinate an earlier evacuation, the governor calls for an emergency evacuation on the fourteenth day. However, such an evacuation ends up rushed, resulting in many injuries and casualties.

Development: If the PCs both waited for a translator and chose not to expedite the paperwork, the wait delays them by a full day, which reduces the time left to explore the Big Ticker (see the Explore and Report sidebar on page 6). The guards suggest that the PCs head directly to Zhotan, the small town towards the center of the cavern floor, explaining that the governor is responsible for negotiations with uplanders.

The guard post is situated a mile above the cavern floor and is well lit. The PCs can choose to make use of their own spells and abilities, a rough staircase cut into the cavern wall, or the wooden elevators to descend to the lower levels and cavern floor. Dedicated teams of engineers manage and operate the elevators. Passengers communicate with the engineers by tugging on a variety of ropes in different colors. As the elevator platforms move, the various mechanisms clank and thump noisily, which becomes quite pronounced if the engineers engage several elevators at once.

The PCs can also earn Exploration Points (see page 6) by exploring the cavern walls and the complex elevator structures that line them. PCs can talk to and observe the engineers with a successful Diplomacy check, observe the flow of traffic and goods with a successful Appraise or Profession (merchant) check, plot out other exits and entrances into the Big Ticker with a successful Knowledge (dungeoneering or geography) check, or

examine the elevator structures with a successful Craft (carpentry) or Knowledge (engineering) check. PCs that successfully examine the elevator structures also identify several ingenious self-destruct mechanisms which would allow a single guard or engineer to collapse a significant portion of the structure if needed.

ZHOTAN

The Digu-Dashu established the small town of Zhotan at the center of the cavern floor as a place to centralize services and administrative functions for the growing farming population. Recognized as an important mercantile arm of the fractious Digu-Dashu empire, Zhotan enjoys a small measure of autonomy and protection from the machinations and in-fighting common throughout the rest of the empire. As the PCs approach the town for the first time, read or paraphrase the following:

The small town resting in the cavern's central cradle shimmers with the fires of industry, the softer lights of kitchen stoves, and other conveniences. Sign posts dotted around the town welcome visitors and provide directions in Tien, Undercommon, and pictograms indicating points of interest, including bronze-etched placards with directions to the governor's offices.

THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICES

A large, multi-purpose stone building thrusts upwards in the center of town like an oddly rectangular stalagmite. The building functions as the cavern's administrative heart and includes the governor's offices, the town's library and archives, guardhouse and jail, courthouse, and bank. Governor Zho Bai serves as the local chief administrative officer, ensuring that local government supports the smooth running of industry and agriculture within the Big Ticker. Governor Zho Bai, a ratfolk in her middle years, is confident and competent. Her stance on governance considers the well-being of citizens as a positive by-product (though not the primary purpose) of an efficiently run local government. As a result, she can be difficult to convince with pleas to public safety but is keenly aware of potential impacts to Zhotan's economy.

Zho Bai makes a point of personally greeting prominent visitors, including traders from the surface. As soon as she receives word of the PCs' visit, she sends a messenger to summon them to her offices (assuming the PCs themselves do not immediately head to her offices to introduce themselves). If the PCs dawdle and have not met with Zho Bai by day 3, the governor sends six guards to round up the PCs and bring them to her office for a proper introduction.

The Governor receives the PCs in a lavish office with fine furniture and expensive wooden tables. She offers the PCs a hearty mushroom tea before asking them to explain the purpose of their visit. Zho Bai accepts most cover stories,

but pays special attention to any PCs claiming to be arms merchants or mercenaries.

If the PCs identify themselves as Pathfinders, Zho Bai assumes that they are preparing an article on her town and expresses her pleasant surprise that they would consider her small cavern worthy of a Chronicle. Zho Bai promises to make arrangements so that the PCs can explore the Big Ticker, allowing PC merchants to sample wares and observe production quality and capacity, martially-inclined PCs to engage with local military leadership, and scholarly PCs access to the town's library. If the PCs tell Zho Bai of the corrupt guards at the border, she thanks them for the information and promises to see that the guards are swiftly reprimanded.

Zho Bai suggests that the PCs think twice before approaching the eastern segment of the cavern floor, as a sizeable force of clockwork soldiers from Pan Majang have besieged one of the large entrances into the cavern. She reassures the PCs that the Diguo-Dashu military is more than capable of holding the cavern entrance and should soon drive the horrors back.

If the PCs warn the governor about Round Mountain's return, Zho Bai initially waves off tales of an impending cataclysm and suggests that the PCs go speak with the local priests about such matters. At first, Zho Bai refuses to consider evacuating the Big Ticker without some tangible evidence to support the PCs' claims, or at least an extremely well-considered and presented argument. If the PCs manage to defeat or escape the clockwork infiltrators (see Encounter A on page 10), Zho Bai agrees to evacuate non-combatants from the town, though she is still not convinced of the magnitude of the threat. A PC who succeeds at a DC 45 Diplomacy check convinces Zho Bai to evacuate the Big Ticker; the DC of this check is reduced by 2 each day after the 4th. PCs cannot take 20 on this check or attempt it more than once per day. Once the evacuation starts, the PCs cannot earn any further Exploration Points from the ratfolk.

If the PCs have any questions, Zho Bai does her best to answer them. Answers to two of the most common questions the PCs may have are given below.

Why do you refer to this cavern as the Big Ticker?
“Officially, we know this cavern as Old Rat’s Stolen Heart. As time passed, and as we developed the cavern further, it began to at least figuratively resemble an actual heart of sorts. The construction of the elevators coupled with this town’s

founding as a trade post cemented the metaphor. I believe the name refers to the noise of large scale construction projects and the constant up-and-down of our elevators.”

Who or what are the haunted clockworks of Pan Majang?

“Cleverly built but mindless constructs. You have nothing to fear; our soldiers can easily outwit the things. I am certain that our soldiers will soon break the siege along our eastern border.”

KNOWLEDGE (ARCANA OR DUNGEONEERING)

The PCs may know more about the clockwork horrors based on the results of their Knowledge (arcana or dungeoneering) check.

15+: The Clicking Caverns are a well-known Darklands entrance, located at the border between Nagajor and Xa Hoi, thanks to periodic invasions of clockwork automatons that emerge to raid both nations. The estimated location of the Big Ticker places it quite a distance from the Clicking Caverns, but few know how far the clockwork tunnels sprawl outward through Nar-Voth or deeper.

20+: One of the most unusual and storied regions of the Tian Xia’s Darklands is the constantly shifting clockwork necropolis of Pan Majang. The most agreed-upon hypothesis suggests that the clockwork horrors are all that remains of a forgotten underground race that, in a bid for immortality, bound themselves to their clockwork constructs.

25+: In the year 7208 1C, a nagaji hero named Zethivaxus Djeed disappeared after an ill-advised expedition into the Clicking Caverns. He returned nine months later but in the body of a clockwork abomination, at the head of an army of haunted clockworks who waged a bloody campaign across western Xa Hoi.

Development: The PCs can earn Exploration Points by exploring the district surrounding the governor’s offices. The ratfolk are busy and curt, but they tolerate a small intrusion into their daily lives as long as the PCs are polite. The PCs earn an Exploration Point interacting with the ratfolk by succeeding at a Diplomacy check, but the DC to do so here is 5 higher than normal (see the Explore and Report sidebar on page 6).

Further, the PCs can observe the flow of goods or engage in early trade negotiations with a successful Appraise or Profession (merchant) check, discuss religious practices at the town’s small shrine to Lao Shu Po with a successful Knowledge



(religion) check, or indulge in and explore the local tea culture with a successful Craft (alchemy) or Profession (brewer, cook, or herbalist) check.

The PCs can also spend time working through the town's extensive collection of archived government documentation. A PC who succeeds at a Knowledge (geography, history, local, or nobility) check earns 1 Exploration Point. The PCs can earn up to 3 Exploration Points in this manner. If the PCs earn at least 1 Exploration Point by going through the town's records, they discover several town planning documents that suggest that the layout of buildings across the cavern has changed numerous times since the town's founding. Of particular note, the ratfolk have demolished numerous buildings over the years to make way for the construction of irrigation canals and related infrastructure. These centuries-old demolition sites may hold clues to archaeological secrets, which the PCs can pursue when exploring the farmlands (see Encounter A below).

Additionally, if the PCs earn at least 1 Exploration Point by going through the town's records, they also discover the town's census information. Over a 1,000 ratfolk live and work within the Big Ticker. PCs concerned about the welfare of those ratfolk that may be displaced by Round Mountain may wish to take steps to ensure that aid is made ready and available. Alerting Amara Li prompts the venture-captain to take action, but creative PCs may have other means available. The PCs earn an additional Exploration Point by bringing this matter to Li's attention or by assisting with other significant preparations to aid potential ratfolk refugees.

Faction Notes: In the course of exploring Big Ticker, members of the Exchange faction have ample opportunity to purchase goods or tap into smuggling enterprises, potentially fulfilling a Faction Journal Card goal.

A. MUSHROOM FARMLANDS

The Big Ticker supports a profitable fungus farming industry. The local ratfolk diet consists primarily of mushrooms, which they supplement with locally harvested subterranean shellfish, and the occasional imported luxuries from the surface or elsewhere in the Darklands. The lumber trade serves an integral role in Zhotan's fungus farming as the enterprising ratfolk repurpose excess wood and cuttings to support the growth of a larger variety of edible fungi and mosses. When the PCs first explore this district, read or paraphrase the following:

The Digu-Dashu mushroom and moss farmlands stretch across most of the Big Ticker's cavern floor. Some mushrooms stand taller than a human, while numerous structures of partially rotted wood support the growth of smaller fungi. Other than the space set aside for farmhouses, access roads, and irrigation canals, the mushrooms form what could easily be mistaken for a dense subterranean forest.

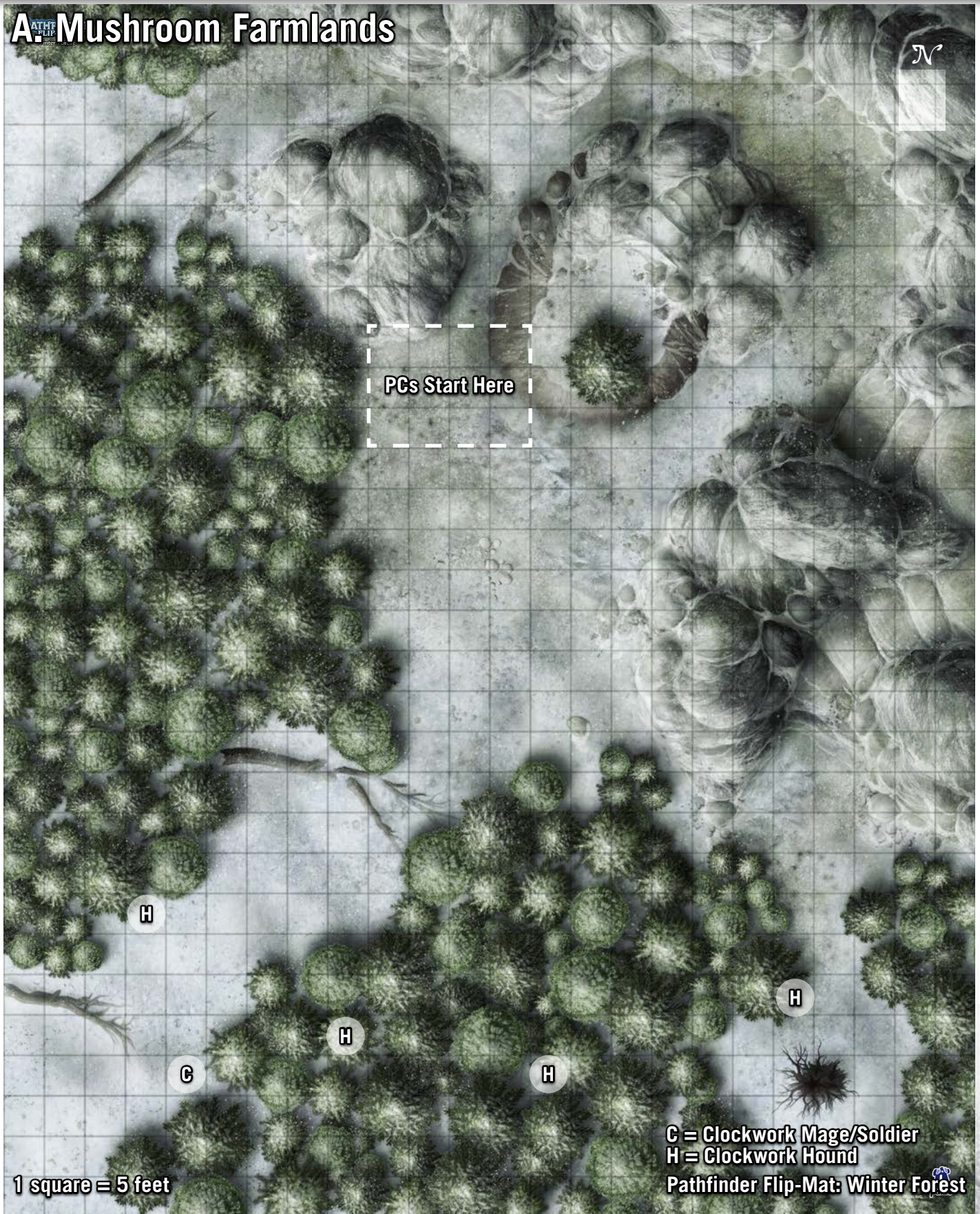
Creatures: To further their invasion strategy, the haunted clockworks pursue a plan to weaken the ratfolk with poison. To this end, the clockwork creatures harvested violet fungi from deeper within their territory and placed smaller samples of the deadly fungi within the chest compartments of several clockwork hounds. The hounds, led by a haunted clockwork handler, have infiltrated the Big Ticker with a plan to spread the violet fungi throughout the ratfolk farms.

To improve their chances of success, the clockworks seek out fresh meat to encourage the growth of the small samples of violet fungi. The clockwork infiltration team attacks the PCs while they explore the farmlands. In Subtier 7–8, the PCs face a pair of hounds and a haunted clockwork soldier. In Subtier 10–11, the PCs face four hounds and a haunted clockwork mage.

SUBTIER 7–8 (CR 9)

HAUNTED CLOCKWORK SOLDIER	CR 7
Variant clockwork soldier (<i>Pathfinder RPG Bestiary</i> 3 57)	
NE Medium construct (clockwork)	
Init +6; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +0	
DEFENSE	
AC 24, touch 16, flat-footed 19 (+2 Dex, +1 deflection, +3 dodge, +6 natural, +2 shield)	
hp 72 (8d10+28)	
Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +2	
Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4; DR 5/adamantine;	
Immune construct traits	
Weaknesses vulnerability to electricity	
OFFENSE	
Speed 30 ft.	
Melee +1 <i>longsword</i> +18/+13 (1d8+9)	
Special Attacks latch	
TACTICS	
Before Combat The haunted clockwork soldier attempts to move along the treeline and sneak up on the PCs (DC 18 Perception check to notice its approach).	
During Combat The haunted clockwork soldier uses Spring Attack to dart in and out of combat with the PCs, attempting to flank with the clockwork hounds.	
Morale The haunted clockwork soldier fights until destroyed.	
STATISTICS	
Str 28, Dex 15, Con —, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 12	
Base Atk +8; CMB +17 (+19 disarm); CMD 31 (33 vs. disarm)	
Feats Dodge, Improved Initiative ^B , Lightning Reflexes ^B , Mobility, Power Attack, Spring Attack	
Skills Climb +15, Stealth +8	
Languages Tien	
SQ swift reactions	
Gear +1 <i>longsword</i> , heavy steel shield	
SPECIAL ABILITIES	
Infused Soul (Su) This construct is infused with a mortal soul.	

A: Mushroom Farmlands



Scaling Encounter A

Make the following adjustments to accommodate a group of four PCs.

Subtier 7–8: Remove one clockwork hound.

Subtier 10–11: Remove two clockwork hounds.

The soul provides the construct a semblance of unlife as a ghostly apparition surrounds it and controls its actions. This allows the construct to apply its Charisma modifier as a bonus on Fortitude saves, and it gains a number of bonus hit points per Hit Die equal to its Charisma bonus. This construct is healed by negative energy and harmed by positive energy as if it were an undead creature. It reacts to magical and supernatural effects, such as *detect undead* and *searing light*, as if it were an undead creature.

Latch (Ex) Clockwork soldiers have specially designed hands that easily grasp and lock onto weapons and objects. A soldier can attempt to disarm or grapple as a standard action without provoking an attack of opportunity, and it receives a +2 bonus on disarm checks. In addition, it receives a +2 bonus to CMD against attempts to disarm it.

Swift Reactions Clockwork constructs react much more swiftly than other constructs. They gain Improved Initiative and Lightning Reflexes as bonus feats, and gain a +2 dodge bonus to AC.

CLOCKWORK HOUNDS (2)

CR 5

hp 43 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 6 62; see page 20)

SPECIAL ABILITIES



Clockwork Hound

Venomous Cargo (Ex) With each successful bite, the hound has a 50% chance to expose its target to the venom it carries.

Violet venom: contact; *save* Fort DC 13; *frequency* 1/minute for 6 minutes; *effect* 1d2 Str and 1d2 Con; *cure* 1 save.

SUBTIER 10–11 (CR 12)

HAUNTED CLOCKWORK MAGE

CR 10

Variant clockwork mage (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 4 32)

NE Medium construct (clockwork)

Init +9; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +2

DEFENSE

AC 27, touch 19, flat-footed 19 (+5 Dex, +1 deflection, +3 dodge, +8 natural)

hp 102 (15d10+20)

Fort +5, **Ref** +12, **Will** +9

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4; **DR** 5/adamantine;

Immune construct traits; **SR** 20

Weaknesses vulnerability to electricity

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee 4 slams +18 (1d4+3)

Special Attacks wand magic

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 15th; concentration +10)

At will—*magic missile*, *shocking grasp* (DC 11)

3/day—*gust of wind* (DC 13), *scorching ray*

1/day—*fireball* (DC 14)

TACTICS

Before Combat The clockwork mage hides (DC 25 Perception check to notice). When the PCs move within 30 feet of it the clockwork mage casts *scorching ray*, targeting the nearest foe.

During Combat The clockwork mage flings its spells at the PCs, attempting to avoid direct combat.

Morale The clockwork mage fights until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 21, **Con** —, **Int** 10, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 13

Base Atk +15; **CMB** +18; **CMD** 35

Feats Combat Casting, Dodge, Improved Initiative^a, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes^a,

Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot

Skills Climb +13, Stealth +15

SQ swift reactions

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Infused Soul (Su) This construct is infused a mortal soul. The soul provides the construct a semblance of unlife as a ghostly apparition surrounds its body and controls its actions. This allows the construct to apply its Charisma modifier as a bonus on Fortitude saves, and it gains a number of bonus hit points per Hit Die equal to its Charisma bonus. This construct is healed by negative energy and harmed by positive energy as if it were an undead creature. It reacts to magical and supernatural effects, such as *detect undead* and *searing light*, as if it were an undead creature.

Swift Reactions Clockwork constructs generally react much more swiftly than other constructs. They gain Improved Initiative and Lightning Reflexes as bonus feats, and gain a +2 dodge bonus to AC.

Wand Magic (Evocation) (Su) A clockwork mage's wand crystal allows it to cast spells as if using a spell trigger magic item (CL 9th). The arcane school of the wand crystal determines the mage's spells. They cast 1st-level spells at will, 2nd-level spells 3 times per day, and 3rd level spells 1 time per day.

ADVANCED CLOCKWORK HOUND (4)

CR 6

hp 55 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 294, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 6 62; see page 20)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Venomous Cargo (Ex) As Subtier 7–8; increase the save DC to 15.

Treasure: The samples of violet fungi are well-secured within each clockwork hound's chest compartment. A PC that succeeds at a DC 10 Craft (alchemy) or Knowledge (dungeoneering) check recalls that there is a market for the deadly fungi. PCs who succeed at this initial check may attempt a DC 25 Craft (alchemy) or Craft (clockwork) check, safely retrieving and packaging the fungi on a successful check. PCs that fail the second check still retrieve the fungi, but are also exposed to a dose of its venom (see the clockwork hound stat block on page 12).

If the PCs successfully explored the sites of potential archaeological significance (see Development below), they uncover several centuries-old treasures, including a *cauldron of brewing*^{UE}, a *ring of arcane signets*^{UE}, and a collection of ancient Digu-Dashu ceramics and currency with a present-day value of 2,500 gp. In Subtier 10–11, the PCs also discover a *grappler's mask*^{UE} stylized to resemble a rat with draconic features, and ancient Digu-Dashu jewelry worth an additional 500 gp.

Development: Governor Zho Bai takes the news of clockwork infiltrators seriously, as it suggests that the horrors are not as mindless as her military advisors believe. She thanks the PCs for their assistance and rewards them with an additional 500 gp in Subtier 7–8 or 3,500 gp in Subtier 10–11. In addition, reduce the DC to convince Zho Bai to order an evacuation by 5 (see page 9).

The PCs can earn up to 5 Exploration Points (see page 6) by exploring this district. The PCs can talk to and observe the ratfolk as they go about their daily routines with a successful Diplomacy check, observe the agricultural practices with a successful Knowledge (dungeoneering or nature) or Profession (farmer) check, or collect fungus and soil samples with a successful Knowledge (dungeoneering or nature) or Profession (farmer) check.

If the PCs identified potential sites of archaeological significance during their examination of records in Zhotan (see page 10), such a PC who succeeds at a Knowledge (geography, history, or local) or Survival check earns an

additional Exploration Point and uncovers the treasures listed in Development above. If the PCs did not access Zhotan's archives, they can still stumble upon the ancient demolition sites; in this case, each day the PCs spend exploring the farmlands grants them a cumulative 20% chance to discover one of the sites (so PCs who spent three days searching would have a 60% chance of discovering the site on the third day).

Finally, when a PC correctly identifies the magical properties of the *ring of arcane signets*, they also recognize that the ring still displays its last owner's mark, an older Digu-Dashu symbol of senior military rank. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Use Magic Device or DC 25 Knowledge (arcana) check before anyone attempts to wear the ring can lock the mark in place, preventing it from changing and preserving the ring's historic value, which nets an additional Exploration Point.

Rewards: If the PCs don't retrieve the violet fungus from the hounds, reduce each PC's gold earned as follows.

Subtier 7–8: Reduce each PC's gold earned by 83 gp.

Out of Subtier: Reduce each PC's gold earned by 125 gp.

Subtier 10–11: Reduce each PC's gold earned by 167 gp.

If the PCs don't find or recover the ancient Digu-Dashu artifacts, reduce each PC's gold earned as follows.

Subtier 7–8: Reduce each PC's gold earned by 1,026 gp.

Out of Subtier: Reduce each PC's gold earned by 1,825 gp.

Subtier 10–11: Reduce each PC's gold earned by 2,624 gp.

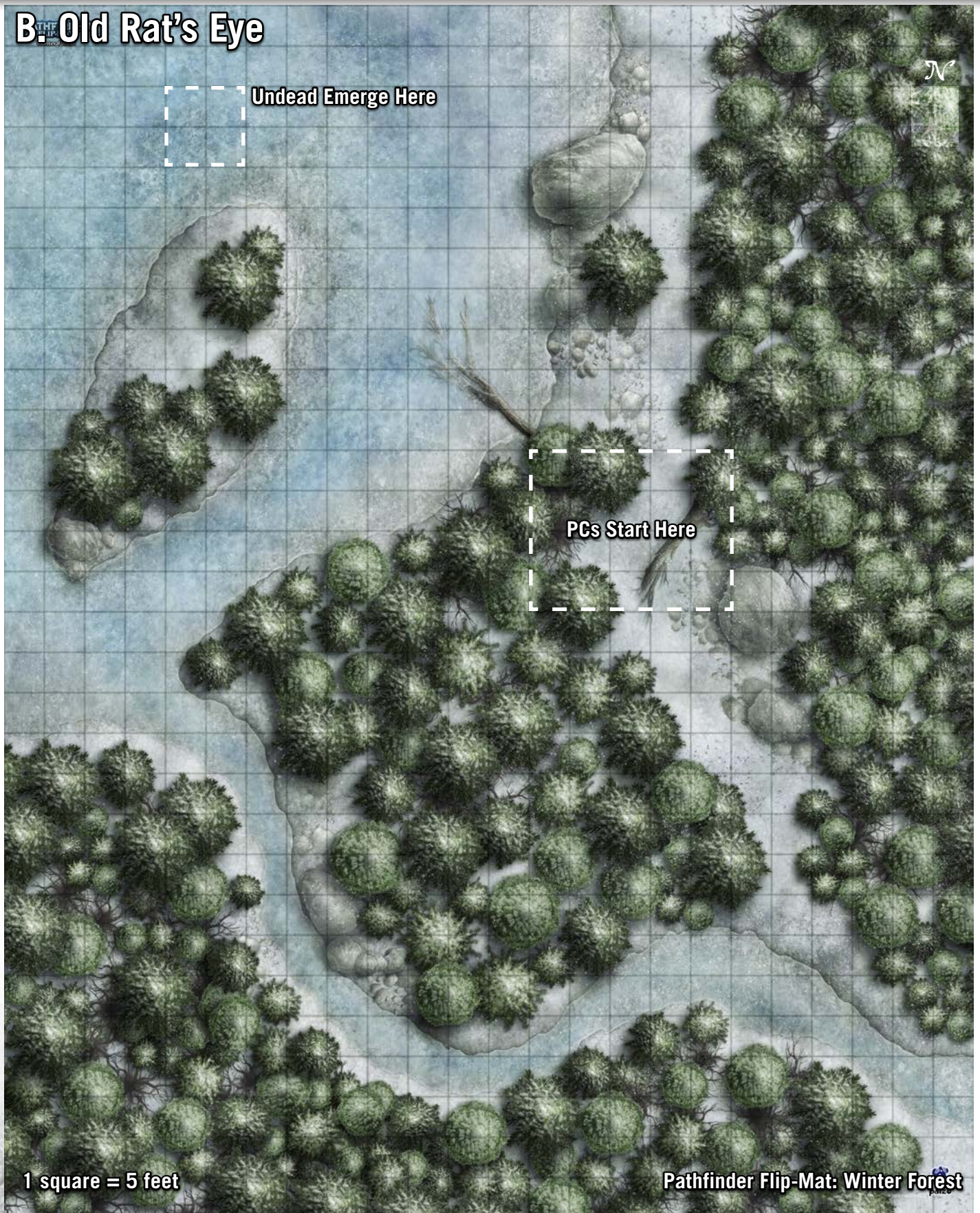
B. OLD RAT'S EYE

When Hao Jin captured Round Mountain within her tapestry, she inadvertently also altered the movement of ground water passing through the surrounding area. At the surface level, several natural springs, wells, and boreholes ran dry. Underground, the rerouted water then pooled along the northern wall of the Big Ticker and eventually formed a sizeable lake. The ratfolk of Digu-Dashu refer to the lake as the Old Rat's Eye, or simply the Eye.

The lake plays an important role within the local economy. Firstly, it serves as a reliable and constant source of fresh water for local consumption and as a trade good. Secondly, it irrigates the Big Ticker's fungus agricultural sector. Finally, the lake also serves as the home to various cave crustaceans, amphibians, and mollusks, which supports a limited aquaculture sector. When the PCs first arrive in this district, read or paraphrase the following:

A large body of water fills the Big Ticker's northern segment. Scores of ratfolk work the lake, carrying a variety of crustacean traps back and forth along the dozens of wooden walkways and platforms that stretch out over the water. On the shore, teams of engineers manage the flow of water along a series of canals cut into the cavern floor, which lead towards Zhotan and the mushroom farms beyond. A bustling fish market sits along the lake's shore. The market's food stalls fill the area with the pleasant aroma of local shellfish specialty dishes.

B. Old Rat's Eye



Creatures: If the PCs' exploration of this district extends beyond the waterworks and aquaculture initiatives, they may stumble upon a den of ravenous undead creatures. As should be expected when employing magic at a geological scale, Hao Jin caused some collateral damage. When the cavern that would later become Big Ticker began to cave in on itself, Lung Wa lost several squadrons of imperial soldiers. One such squadron landed along the cavern's northern arc. While most of the squadron was killed, a trio of soldiers who had sneaked away to hide illicit loot they had stolen from imperial citizens survived the initial fall, thanks to a *ring of feather falling* and a certain amount of dumb luck. Unfortunately for them, the soldiers then found themselves trapped within a small cave and eventually starved to death, only to have their greed, avarice, and regret prevent them from passing on. They returned as undead creatures shortly thereafter. For centuries, the undead have fed on any crustacean that managed to crawl its way into the cave. Recently increased aquacultural activity from the nearby town, combined with centuries of the undead clawing at the walls as they attempt to escape their confinement, weakened the cavern walls enough to allow the undead creatures to escape. The undead attack any living creatures that come near their lair, including the PCs as they explore and document the lake. In Subtier 7–8, the PCs face a trio of gakis. In Subtier 10–11, the soldiers are fused into one massive undead creature that has added the corpses of imperial soldiers killed in the collapse, as well as more recent victims, to their mass. The waters near the attack site only reach to a depth of 5 feet.

SUBTIER 7-8 (CR 10)

GAKIS (3)

CR 7

hp 74 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 4* 118; see page 20)

TACTICS

Before Combat The gakis turn invisible before attacking.

Morale The gakis fight to the death.

SUBTIER 10-11 (CR 13)

GASHADOKURO

CR 13

hp 180 (19d8+95) (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 4* 121; see page 21)

Treasure: After defeating the undead, the PCs can explore the partially flooded cave that held the unfortunate soldiers for centuries. Despite the years, several relics from ancient Lung Wa survived the initial fall and the passage of time. In Subtier 7–8, the PCs discover a samurai's daisho, including a +1 *wakazashi*^{UE} in a *scabbard of honing*^{UE}, a +1 *katana*^{UE} in a *scabbard of stanching*^{UE}, a suit of +1 *o-yoroi*^{UE} armor, a *ring of feather falling*, and a collection of ancient Lung Wa coins with a present-day value of 500 gp. In Subtier 10–11, the PCs instead discover a suit of +2 *o-yoroi*^{UE} armor, the wakizashi sheathed

Scaling Encounter B

Make the following adjustments to accommodate a group of four PCs.

Subtier 7-8: Remove one gaki from the encounter.

Subtier 10-11: The gashadakuro is still in the early stages of its bonding and is staggered.

in a *scabbard of keen edges*, and an additional 500 gp worth of ancient Lung Wa coins.

Development: The PCs can earn up to 7 Exploration Points by exploring this district. The PCs can talk to and observe the ratfolk as they go about their daily routines with a successful Diplomacy check. If the PCs successfully engage the ratfolk in conversation, the ratfolk share some local legends, including a bit about a haunted piece of shore, effectively pointing the PCs towards the undead den.

Further, the PCs can examine the complex irrigation system with a successful Knowledge (engineering) check, observe the aquacultural practices with a successful Knowledge (dungeoneering or nature) or Profession (farmer or fisherman) check, capture individual shellfish for later study with a successful Profession (fisherman) or Survival check, observe the flow of goods or engage in early trade negotiations with a successful Appraise or Profession (merchant) check, or indulge in and explore the local cuisine with a successful Knowledge (local) or Profession (cook) check. PCs can also explore and document the local cave fauna and flora further along the lake's shore with a successful Knowledge (dungeoneering or nature) check. Finally, the PCs can explore and document the lake bed with a successful Knowledge (dungeoneering or nature) check and either a means to breathe underwater or a successful Swim check.

Rewards: If the PCs do not locate the cache of ancient Lung Wa artifacts, reduce each PC's gold earned by the following amount.

Subtier 7-8: Reduce each PC's gold earned by 1,352 gp.

Out of Subtier: Reduce each PC's gold earned by 2,164 gp.

Subtier 10-11: Reduce each PC's gold earned by 2,977 gp.

ZHOTAN GARRISON

The Empire of the Rat maintains a small but well-trained militia. The soldiers support the local town watch when required, patrol the tunnels leading into the cavern, and respond to external threats. When the PCs first arrive in this district, read or paraphrase the following.

A squat stone fort sits atop a small rise a mile east of town. From the top of this rise the signal lamps at each cavern entrance are clearly visible, simulating an artificial starry nightscape. Several soldiers stand stationed along the fort's roof parapets, observing the distant pinpricks of light.

Commander Nor Zhen leads the local military forces. Abrasive at the best of times, the young ratfolk commander has little time to entertain guests as he focuses his attention on the clockwork siege. Instead, he directs any queries to the fort's quartermaster.

Development: The PCs can earn Exploration Points by exploring this district, but their access is severely limited. The PCs can engage the quartermaster in early trade negotiations with a successful Diplomacy or Profession (merchant) check. The PCs can also observe the local military traditions with a successful Knowledge (nobility) or Profession (soldier) check.

C. RETURN OF ROUND MOUNTAIN

Soon after Zho Bai calls for an evacuation, she summons Commander Nor Zhen, the PCs, and their fellow Pathfinders to her offices. To ensure that the citizens have a chance to evacuate, somebody must stay behind to hold the clockwork army at bay. Knowing that those who stay behind may not

survive, Nor Zhen still presents a bold plan. He intends to weaponize the return of Round Mountain, by first luring the clockwork army into the Big Ticker. Once the bulk of the clockwork forces move into the cavern, a group of soldiers will then collapse several elevator towers to block the clockwork invaders' escape. Any soldiers that survive up to this point will then evacuate to emergency bunkers and await rescue. Round Mountain's return could thus crush hundreds of clockwork abominations, which would go a long way towards securing the region. Nor Zhen explains that his soldiers are already busy digging out and stocking several bunkers. In return, Zho Bai authorizes the release of two *immovable rods* from the treasury, in the hopes that they may strengthen the bunker ceilings.

Zho Bai thanks the PCs for their assistance rendered to date. She does not expect the PCs to help with the evacuation, but she still asks if they have any spells or magical items that might help. Riada volunteers to stay behind, believing that her ability to magically tend to wounds and create food and water may be useful. If the PCs encountered the undead at the Old Rat's Eye, Riada also suggests that she can prevent the spontaneous creation of such undead creatures.

At this point, the PCs can choose to evacuate the Big Ticker along with the citizens or stay behind to first delay and then trap the armies of Pan Majang. If the PCs elect to assist the evacuation, Nor Zhen thanks them for their willingness

to assist before continuing the briefing. The ratfolk commander explains that his soldiers have identified what they believe to be the command squadron of the invading force. This particular group of clockwork constructs appears to prefer to lead from the front. Nor Zhen believes that the PCs should engage the clockwork leaders in combat and keep their attention for as long as possible while the ratfolk soldiers prepare to collapse the wooden elevator and nearby bridges. With the cavern already in a state of near collapse, he believes this should cause a significant wave of damage that could destroy the invading constructs and stall their advance long enough for the crushing return of Round Mountain to put an end to any constructs who survive the trap.

After giving the PCs a few hours to prepare, including handing over their reports to Torstra and Soh Jung, Nor Zhen positions the PCs on the fort's easternmost access ramp, which puts the PCs directly in the invading clockwork army's path. The ratfolk then set their fungus fields alight, which fills the cavern with a thick black smoke. Nor Zhen explains that he hopes that the smoke hides Round

Mountain's approach from the Pan Majang army.

The two bridges are suspended between three raised, rocky outcroppings (Climb DC 15 to scale), allowing creatures to move beneath the bridges. The PCs begin on the cavern floor, and ratfolk on the bridges prepare work to destroy the structures.

Creatures: The leaders of the clockwork army form a small vanguard and attack anyone in the clockwork army's path. The PCs must either defeat this lead squadron or hold its attention for at least 8 rounds, which gives the ratfolk soldiers enough time to spring the trap. Should the PCs fail to defeat or occupy the clockwork squadron, the constructs quickly realize that the ratfolk intend to trap them. The constructs call a retreat, which allows most of the clockwork army to escape the Big Ticker before Round Mountain's return.

SUBTIER 7-8 (CR 10)

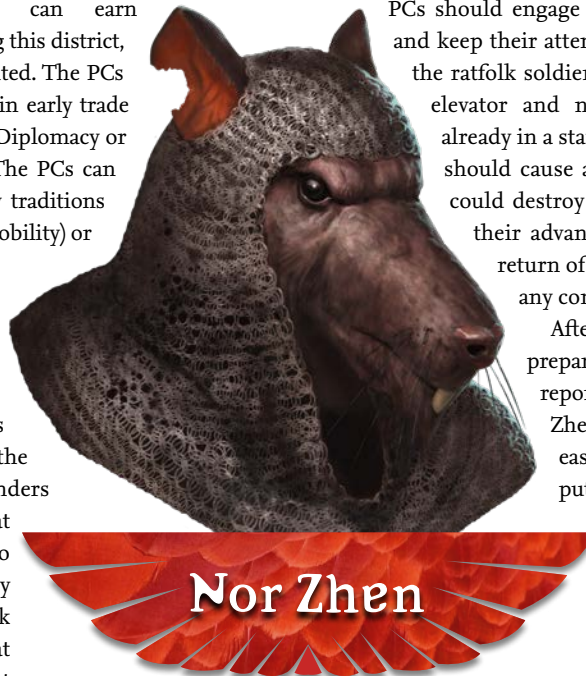
CLOCKWORK HOUNDS (2)

CR 5

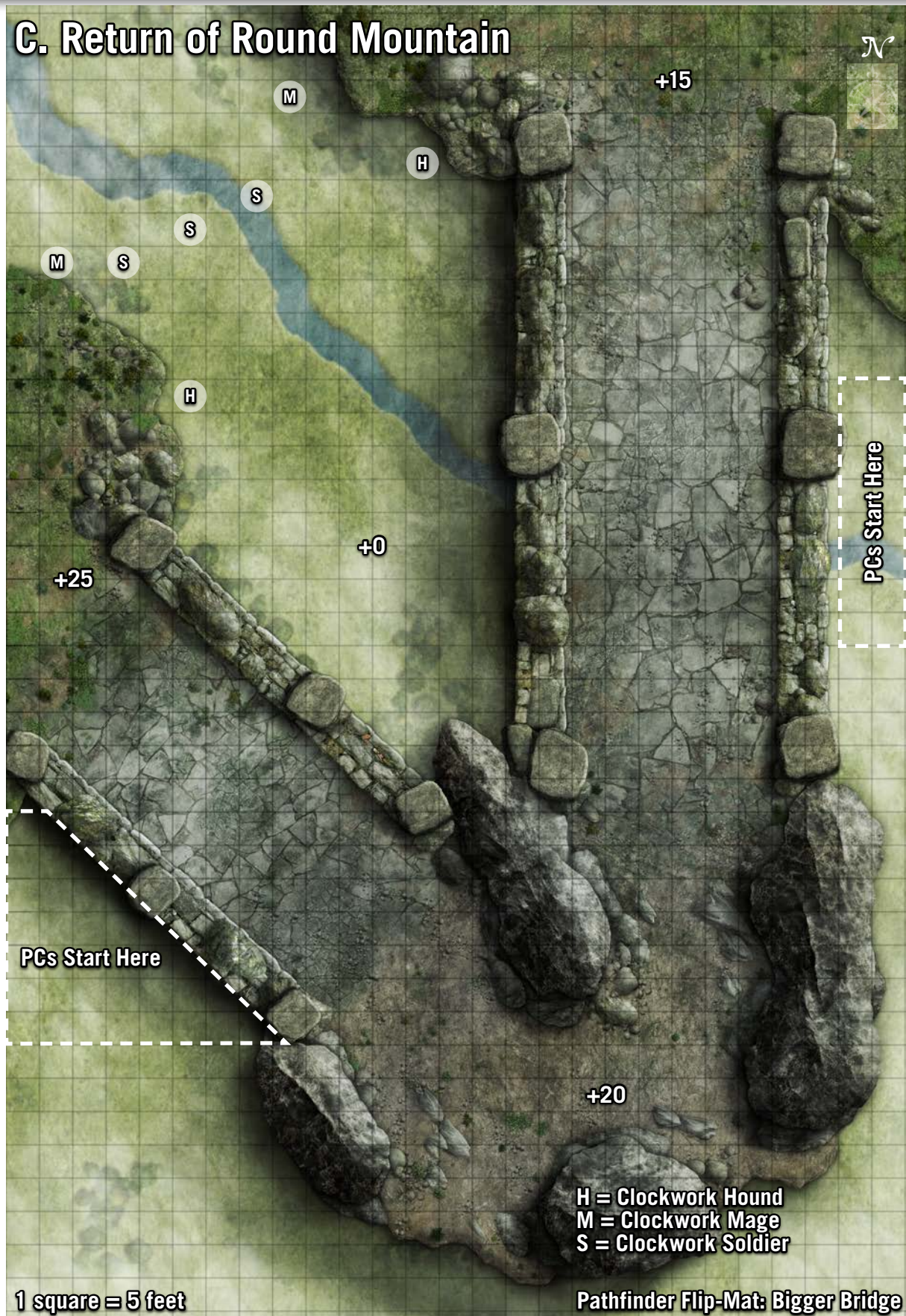
hp 43 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 6 62; see page 10)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Toxic Gas (Ex) The hound releases a cloud of poison upon death, exposing all adjacent creatures to a dose of burnt othur fumes. *Burnt othur fumes:* inhaled; save Fort DC 18; frequency 1/round for 6 rounds; effect 1d3 Con; cure 2 consecutive saves.



C. Return of Round Mountain



Scaling Encounter C

Make the following adjustments to accommodate a group of four PCs.

Subtier 7–8: Remove one clockwork hound.

Subtier 10–11: Remove one clockwork soldier.

HAUNTED CLOCKWORK SOLDIERS (2)

CR 7

hp 72 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 57; see page 20)

SUBTIER 10–11 (CR 13)

HAUNTED CLOCKWORK SOLDIERS (3)

CR 7

hp 72 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 57; see page 10)

HAUNTED CLOCKWORK MAGES (2)

CR 10

hp 102 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 4 32; see page 12)

Development: Once the PCs defeat the clockwork vanguard (or at least hold the vanguard's attention for long enough), they must then find shelter from Round Mountain's impending return. PCs with the access to spells such as *plane shift*, *teleport*, or *wind walk* can use them to escape the Big Ticker easily. PCs without access to such magic must instead seek refuge in one of the emergency bunkers. Thankfully, the bunkers withstand the impact. It does however take several weeks before a rescue team manages to locate and free the PCs and any other NPCs trapped with them.

Rewards: If the PCs choose to evacuate early with the citizens, reduce each PC's gold earned by the following amount.

All Subtiers: Reduce each PC's gold earned by 1,025 gp.

CONCLUSION

Upon their return to the Pathfinder base camp (or upon their eventual rescue from an emergency bunker), Venture-Captain Amara Li congratulates the PCs for a job well done. If the PCs managed to crush the clockwork army beneath Round Mountain, the first few months of recovery are relatively peaceful. The former inhabitants of the *Hao Jin Tapestry* and the former citizens of the Big Ticker are given the time and space needed to begin rebuilding their lives. If the PCs evacuated with the citizens or failed to trap the clockwork army, the forces of Pan Majang soon invade Round Mountain and drag scores of prisoners back to their necropolis. Regardless of PCs successes or failures against the clockwork army, the Digu-Dashu still lose a significant portion of their food and fresh water supply. Surface traders, mostly those with ties to the Exchange, soon fill the gap.

If the PCs helped trap the clockwork army, they earn the Crushing Victory boon.



**Haunted
Clockwork**

COUNTDOWN TO ROUND MOUNTAIN

REPORTING NOTES

If the PCs managed to lure the haunted clockwork army of Pan Majang into Nor Zhen's trap, or defeated the lead squadron outright, check box A. If the PCs failed to lure the clockwork army into the Big Ticker, check box B.

PRIMARY SUCCESS CONDITIONS

The PCs completed their primary goal of documenting the Broken Ticker if they earned at least 14 Exploration Points, earning them each 1 Prestige Point and the Diguo-Dashu Archaeologist boon.

SECONDARY SUCCESS CONDITIONS

If the PCs convinced the ratfolk to evacuate the Big Ticker on or before the twelfth day, they earn 1 additional Prestige Point.

FACTION NOTES

The Exchange: If the party earned at least 3 Exploration Points by engaging in trade negotiations or by observing the flow of goods into, out of, and through the Big Ticker, each PC belonging to the Exchange earns the Diguo-Dashu Trade Agreement boon.

Handout

As the PCs travel through the Broken Ticker, they will have several opportunities to gain Exploration Points, which affect their success conditions. The chart below describes the possible checks and related skills the PCs will use, and the maximum number of points they can accrue by completing that task.

LOCATION	SKILLS	POINTS
Cavern Walls		
	Appraise, Profession (merchant)	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
	Craft (carpentry), Knowledge (engineering)	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
	Diplomacy	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
	Knowledge (dungeoneering or geography)	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
Cavern Walls Total		4
Zhotan		
	Appraise, Profession (merchant)	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
	Craft (alchemy), Profession (brewer, cook, or herbalist)	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
	Diplomacy	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
	Knowledge (religion)	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
	Knowledge (geography, history, local, or nobility)	3 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
	N/A (use census for evacuation measures)	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
Zhotan Total		8
Mushroom Farmlands		
	Diplomacy	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
	Knowledge (arcana)	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
	Knowledge (dungeoneering or nature), Profession (farmer)	2 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
	Knowledge (geography, history, local), Survival	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
Mushroom Farmlands Total		5
Old Rat's Eye		
	Appraise, Profession (merchant)	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
	Diplomacy	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
	Knowledge (dungeoneering or nature), Profession (farmer or fisherman)	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
	Knowledge (dungeoneering or nature) + Swim	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
	Knowledge (engineering)	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
	Knowledge (local), Profession (cook)	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
	Profession (fisherman), Survival	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
Old Rat's Eye Total		7
Zhotan Garrison		
	Diplomacy, Profession (merchant)	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
	Knowledge (nobility), Profession (soldier)	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
Zhotan Garrison Total		2

APPENDIX: STAT BLOCKS

The following stat blocks appear in this adventure.

CLOCKWORK HOUND

Two emerald crystal eyes stare out from this artificial hound's forged body of brass, bronze, and iron.

CLOCKWORK HOUND CR 5

Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 6 62

N Small construct (clockwork)

Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Perception +3

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 17, flat-footed 12 (+4 Dex, +2 dodge, +1 natural, +1 size)

hp 43 (6d10+10)

Fort +2, **Ref** +8, **Will** +5

Immune construct traits

Weaknesses vulnerability to electricity

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft.

Melee 2 bites +13 (1d6+6 plus trip)

Special Attacks swift bite

STATISTICS

Str 22, **Dex** 18, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 1

Base Atk +6; **CMB** +11; **CMD** 27 (31 vs. trip)

Feats Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes

Skills Acrobatics +4 (+12 to jump), Survival +11 (+19 when tracking by scent); **Racial Modifiers** +8 Survival (+16 when tracking by scent)

SQ chest chamber, expert tracker, swift reactions

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Chest Chamber (Su) The chest cavity of a clockwork hound can be opened to expose a 6-inch-cube storage area that can hold up to 10 pounds of items. If a contained item is a magical necklace, ring, or *ioun stone*, then the hound gains the benefits of the item as though it were worn, but the hound can benefit from the effects of only one such item at a time (chosen by the person who placed the items inside). A clockwork hound can open or close its chest cavity as a swift action, depositing any items within onto the ground under it.

Swift Bite (Ex) When a clockwork hound makes a full attack, it can make two bite attacks.

Swift Reactions Clockwork constructs generally react much more swiftly than other constructs. They gain Improved Initiative and Lightning Reflexes as bonus feats and gain a +2 dodge bonus to AC.

ADVANCED CLOCKWORK HOUND CR 5

Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 6 288, 62

N Small construct (clockwork)

Init +10; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Perception +5

DEFENSE

AC 22, touch 19, flat-footed 14 (+6 Dex, +2 dodge, +3 natural, +1 size)

hp 43 (6d10+22)

Fort +2, **Ref** +10, **Will** +7

Immune construct traits

Weaknesses vulnerability to electricity

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft.

Melee 2 bites +15 (1d6+8 plus trip)

Special Attacks swift bite

STATISTICS

Str 26, **Dex** 22, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 20, **Cha** 5

Base Atk +6; **CMB** +13; **CMD** 31 (35 vs. trip)

Feats Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes

Skills Acrobatics +6 (+14 to jump), Survival +13 (+21 when tracking by scent); **Racial Modifiers** +8 Survival (+16 when tracking by scent)

SQ chest chamber, expert tracker, swift reactions

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Robust Frame An advanced clockwork hound's body is specially reinforced, granting it an additional 12 hit points.

GAKI

This skeletal creature's long, thin neck seems to float above the ground. Its elongated jaw is filled with sharp, worn teeth.

GAKI CR 7

Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 4 118

NE Medium undead

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., *detect evil*; Perception +13

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 13, flat-footed 17 (+2 Dex, +1 dodge, +7 natural)

hp 74 (9d8+32)

Fort +5, **Ref** +7, **Will** +9

Immune undead traits

Weaknesses aversion to sun and moon, compulsive hunger, vulnerable to cold and fire

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 30 ft. (average)

Melee 2 claws +9 (2d6+3), bite +9 (2d6+3 plus grab)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (10 ft. with bite)

Special Attacks blood drain (1d2 Constitution), fear cone (30 ft., DC 16)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 7th; concentration +9)

Constant—*detect evil*

At will—*invisibility*

1/day—*disguise self*

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 15, **Con** —, **Int** 9, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 18

Base Atk +6; **CMB** +9 (+13 grapple); **CMD** 22

Feats Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes

COUNTDOWN TO ROUND MOUNTAIN

Skills Intimidate +14, Perception +13, Stealth +14

Languages Common

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Aversion to Sun and Moon (Ex) A gaki takes 1d4 points of fire damage every round it's exposed to the light of a full moon. It takes 1d4 points of cold damage every round it is exposed to direct sunlight.

Compulsive Hunger (Ex) Despite being undead, a gaki is plagued by an insatiable hunger and believes it can gain a normal body or rest in peace if it consumes the right mixture of flesh, food, and drink. A gaki that finds a corpse or is offered food, wine, holy water, or flowers must succeed at a DC 20 Will save or spend one turn trying to grab and consume it. Its narrow neck prevents it from swallowing more than a tiny amount, and it gives up after 1 round of attempting to do so. A gaki that consumes holy water in this way is not harmed by it.

GASHADOKURO

The bones and skulls of countless smaller creatures dribble from the joints and rib cage of this massive skeleton.

GASHADOKURO

CR 13

Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 4 121

NE Huge undead

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +20

Aura starvation (60 ft., DC 25)

DEFENSE

AC 28, touch 8, flat-footed 28 (+20 natural, -2 size)

hp 180 (19d8+95)

Fort +11, **Ref** +6, **Will** +14

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4; **DR** 10/bludgeoning;

Immune undead traits

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee bite +22 (2d8+10 plus grab), 2 claws +23 (2d6+10/19-20)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Special Attacks breath weapon (30-ft. cone, 12d6 bludgeoning damage, Reflex DC 24 half, usable every 1d4 rounds), corpse consumption, swallow whole (6d6 bludgeoning damage, AC 20, 18 hp)

STATISTICS

Str 30, **Dex** 11, **Con** —, **Int** 6, **Wis** 17, **Cha** 21

Base Atk +14; **CMB** +26 (+28 bull rush, +30 grapple); **CMD** 36 (38 vs. bull rush)

Feats Awesome Blow, Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (claw), Improved Initiative, Intimidating Prowess, Power Attack, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (claw)

Skills Climb +23, Intimidate +32, Perception +20

Languages Common (can't speak)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Breath Weapon (Su) A gashadokuro can breathe bone shards as a standard action.

Corpse Consumption (Su) A gashadokuro that kills creature by using its swallow whole special ability automatically consumes its victim's body and regains a number of hit points equal to the victim's Constitution score. Consumed creatures cannot be resurrected by any effect short of a *miracle* or *wish* spell until the gashadokuro is destroyed.

Starvation Aura (Su) A gashadokuro emits a powerful aura that causes all creatures within range to feel the intense pains of starvation. Each creature within 60 feet must succeed at a DC 24 Fortitude save or be fatigued and succumb to the supernatural starvation of the gashadokuro, taking 2d6 points of nonlethal damage at the end of its turn each round it remains in the aura. Even after leaving the area or slaying the gashadokuro, an affected creature continues to starve and cannot heal from the nonlethal damage dealt by this ability until it consumes food.

PATHFINDER SOCIETY SCENARIO

Pathfinder Society Scenario #10-20: Countdown to Round Mountain

Event

Date

GM #

GM Character #

GM Name

GM Prestige Earned

☐ Dark Archive
☐ Scarab Sages
☐ A

☐ Silver Crusade
☐ The Exchange
☐ B

☐ Sovereign Court
☐ Grand Lodge
☐ C

☐ Liberty's Edge
☐ Concordance
☐ D

Character #

Prestige Points

Character Name

☐ Dark Archive
☐ Scarab Sages

☐ The Exchange
☐ Silver Crusade

☐ Grand Lodge
☐ Sovereign Court

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Pathfinder Society Scenario #10-20: Countdown to Round Mountain

Character Chronicle #

☐ Core CampaignSUBTIER ☐ Slow ☐ Normal

7-8 2,167 4,334

SUBTIER ☐ Slow ☐ Normal

Out of Subtier 3,001 6,001

SUBTIER ☐ Slow ☐ Normal

10-11 3,834 7,667

SUBTIER ☐ Slow ☐ NormalSUBTIER ☐ Slow ☐ Normal

MAX GOLD

EXPERIENCE

FAME

GOLD

Starting XP

GM's Initials

XP Gained (GM ONLY)

Final XP Total

Initial Prestige Initial Fame

GM's Initials

Prestige Gained (GM ONLY)

Prestige Spent

Current Prestige Final Fame

Starting GP

GM's Initials

GP Gained (GM ONLY)

GM's Initials

Day Job (GM ONLY)

Gold Spent

Total

A.K.A.

Player Name

Character Name

Organized Play #

Character #

Faction

This Chronicle sheet grants access to the following:

Crushing Victory: You lured the haunted clockwork armies of Pan Majang into a deadly trap, pinning them under rubble before dropping a literal mountain on top of them. You gain a constant +1 competence bonus on Climb and Knowledge (engineering) checks. When attempting such a check, after you roll but before the GM reveals the results of your check, you can cross this boon off of your Chronicle sheet to retroactively apply a +5 competence bonus on that check.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ **Diguo-Dashu Archaeologist:** Your attention to detail in the cavern known as the Big Ticker ensured that not even mountain crashing through the planes could obliterate the history of the Old Rat's Stolen Heart. Before rolling any Knowledge check, you may check a box next to this boon to gain a +2 competence bonus on that check. If the Knowledge check is related to constructs, ratfolk, or the Darklands, you instead gain a +5 competence bonus on that check.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ **Diguo-Dashu Trade Agreement (Exchange Faction):** At the end of each adventure, you can expend your Downtime to check a box that precedes this boon. Any time after all the boxes next to this boon have been checked, you may cross this boon off of your Chronicle sheet as a full-round action to gain either 2,000 gp or a single item worth 3,000 gp or less, delivered by magical messenger as payment from your Diguo-Dashu mercantile connections for services rendered.

Subtier 7-8

Subtier 10-11

+1 katana (2,5350 gp; *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Equipment* 20)
+1 o-yoroi (2,850 gp; *Ultimate Equipment* 13)
+1 wakizashi (2,335 gp; *Ultimate Equipment* 20)
cauldron of brewing (3,000 gp; *Ultimate Equipment* 287)
ring of arcane signet (1,000 gp; *Ultimate Equipment* 167)
scabbard of honing (500 gp; *Ultimate Equipment* 309)
scabbard of stanching (5,000 gp; *Ultimate Equipment* 318)
wand of animal messenger (3 charges; 270 gp, limit 1)

+1 katana (2,5350 gp; *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Equipment* 20)
+1 wakizashi (2,335 gp; *Ultimate Equipment* 20)
+2 o-yoroi (5,850 gp; *Ultimate Equipment* 13)
cauldron of brewing (3,000 gp; *Ultimate Equipment* 287)
grappler's mask (5,000 gp; *Ultimate Equipment* 242)
ring of arcane signet (1,000 gp; *Ultimate Equipment* 167)
scabbard of stanching (5,000 gp; *Ultimate Equipment* 318)
wand of animal messenger (3 charges; 270 gp, limit 1)

For GM Only

EVENT

EVENT CODE

DATE

Game Master's Signature

GM Pathfinder Society #