

SECOND EDITION

PATHFINDER[®]



Agents of Edgewatch

—Adventure Path—

ALL OR NOTHING

By Jason Keeley



AZLANTI KEEP

WISE QUARTER

PETAL DISTRICT

IVY DISTRICT

ASCENDANT COURT

WESTGATE

FOREIGN QUARTER

THE COINS

EASTGATE

THE DOCKS

THE PUDDLES

PRECIPICE QUARTER

FORT TEMPEST

STARWATCH KEEP

ABSALOM

1 MILE

PATHFINDER

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Agents of Edgewatch

Adventure Path

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Chapter 2: The House Always Wins

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GAMES OF THE IRORIUM

by Mike Kimmel

GANGS OF ABSALOM

by Alexander Augunas

ADVENTURE TOOLBOX

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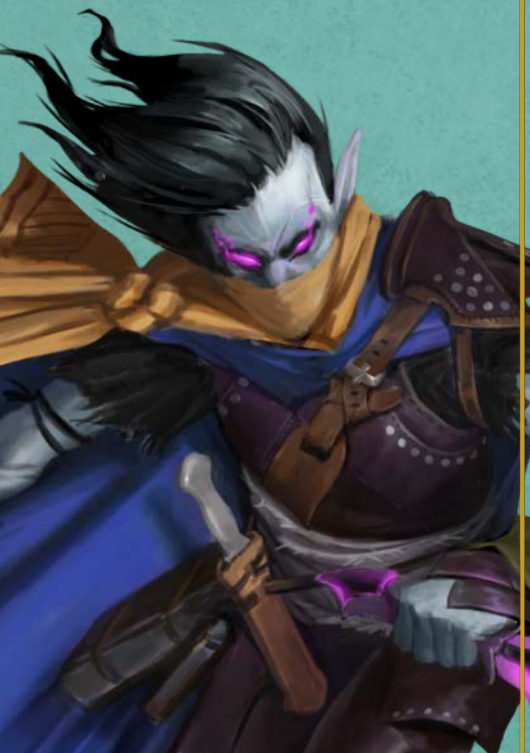
Franca Laurentz

Gage Carlyle

Maurrisa Jonne

CONTENT WARNING

While *All or Nothing* contains typical Pathfinder action and adventure, it also presents scenarios that some players might find uncomfortable. These scenarios include depictions of gang violence, gambling, and bioterrorism (including suicide bombing). Before you begin, understand that consent from everyone at the table, including the players and the Game Master, is vital to a safe and fun play experience. You should talk with your players before beginning the adventure and modify descriptions or scenarios as appropriate.



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CHAPTER 1: STREET JUSTICE 4

After being promoted to the prestigious guard unit known as the Starwatch, the Edgewatch agents go to the Docks district to investigate a gang called the Washboard Dogs. Members of the Dogs have supposedly helped launder money for the Skinner and other members of the Twilight Four. To gain the trust of the gang's leader, the agents must embroil themselves in a bloody turf war and tip the scales in one gang's favor in order to get the info they need.

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The agents learn that the Twilight Four's deadly device is hidden in the vault of a casino called the Lucky Nimbus. Unfortunately, the casino's owner doesn't cooperate openly with law enforcement, so the Edgewatch agents will have to go undercover to perform an ingenious heist. They'll have to dupe the casino's shrewd owner, Gage Carlyle, and sneak, fight, or beguile their way past a cast of interfering characters to reach the vault and open the lockbox—only to discover that they've been out-heisted!

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The heroes track down the thief who broke into the vault and stole the device ahead of them. Their search takes them to the Irorium, where a bomb-smuggling provocateur named Franca Laurentz plans to unleash the device on the massive crowd attending the Blood City Games. To save the lives of thousands—and finally learn the identity of Franca's dastardly patron, the Twilight Four member known as the Infector—the agents must infiltrate the gladiatorial event and stop the bomber!

SETTING THE STAGE FOR THE TWILIGHT FOUR

Until now, the agents have been dealing with a largely unknown force. After the emergence of two high-profile Norgorber worshippers—Hendrid Pratchett and Wrent “the Skinner” Dicaspiron—the agents might suspect that a more insidious plot lurks behind the scenes. But only after arresting the Skinner and gleaning details from her subsequent interrogation can the agents finally identify their nemeses: the Twilight Four.

This is the first adventure in the campaign in which the Edgewatch agents pursue their investigation with a grasp (albeit a hazy one) on the situation and the stakes. Although the Skinner's confessions take place “off camera,” the players should learn in the course of setting the stage for this adventure that Dicaspiron was only one quarter of a much larger threat: a cabal of Norgorber cultists who seek to undermine Absalom's authorities and, ultimately, seize power from the city's uppermost ranks.

During this adventure, the agents follow up on the lead they gathered from Dicaspiron, starting with an interview with the Washboard Dogs, a gang of money launderers in the Docks district. From there, they'll learn that the Twilight Four has obtained a dangerous device that the agents will need to secure in order to protect Absalom's citizens and learn the identity of one more scheming Norgorberite.

ADVANCEMENT TRACK

“All or Nothing” is designed for four characters. Characters should level up between each chapter.

9

The agents begin this adventure at 9th level.

10

The agents should be 10th level before they begin planning the heist of the Lucky Nimbus Casino.

11

The agents should be 11th level before they join the Blood City Games.

12

The agents should be 12th level by the time they complete the adventure.



CHAPTER 1: STREET JUSTICE

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The Twilight Four has a plan. It has plans within plans, and contingency plans for every plan that doesn't go according to plan. After all, when four powerful devotees of the vile god Norgorber get together, there's bound to be treachery and deceit among their number. Apropos of this, in addition to their collective pact to overthrow the rulers of Absalom and take the primarchy for themselves, each member of the Twilight Four has developed their own plots and schemes to see that they alone receive Norgorber's greatest blessing—and that their accomplices fall in the process.

When Wrent “the Skinner” Dicspiron, the lowliest member of the Twilight Four, was taken down by a ragtag band of rookie agents, none of the other Norgorberites were surprised. She had already done her part by sowing murderous mayhem

among the Radiant Festival fairgrounds, and her fellows—Jonis “the Infector” Flakfatter, Reginald “the Rumormonger” Vancaskerkin, and Olansa “the Gray Queen” Terimor—had actually hoped for her demise. With her out of the way, the remaining three, still securely concealed behind their secret identities, could pursue the mission with one less share to pay. After all, splitting the power of the primarchy three ways is much better than splitting it four. Still, each member of the Twilight Four recognizes sharing the crown with just one other—or, best of all, securing it for themselves alone—as the ideal outcome. And so, with their most expendable comrade behind bars, each of the remaining Twilight Four is devising plans to outmaneuver the others while maintaining their commitment to their unholy pact.

Jonis Flakfatter, a well-known high priest of Norgorber's poison-associated Blackfingers aspect,



has felt the most pressure to act in the wake of Dicaspiron's arrest. While the emergence of a group of neophyte law officers is all part of Vancaskerkin and Terimor's joint plan (since these same officers will ultimately fall from grace when Wynsal Starborn is framed for murder), Flakfatter has been left out of the loop, and worries that if he doesn't move soon, he'll lose his chance to sideline the remaining cabalists. And so he has set his secret plan in motion.

THE BLACKFINGER BLIGHT BOMB

As the next stage of their plot, the Twilight Four had planned for Reginald Vancaskerkin to frame Acting Primarch Wynsal Starborn for the murder of a close friend, pitting Absalom's citizens against the city's leaders and creating waves of discord throughout the public. Afterward, Jonis Flakfatter would release a deadly contagion—a specially formulated disease called blackfinger blight—at the Radiant Festival's closing ceremonies with the aid of Vancaskerkin's clockwork bomb technology. Once the city was in a full-blown panic, Olansa Terimor, the beloved grand councilmember who has kept her nose clean all this time, would step in, save the day, and seize the title.

Jonis Flakfatter wants none of this. To his mind, he alone—as the only outspoken clergyman of Norgorber's faith—should be the one to ascend to the throne and fulfill Norgorber's mandate. And so he has plotted to undermine both Terimor and Vancaskerkin by expediting his part of the plan. Vancaskerkin's bomb is already made, and within it Flakfatter has stowed prodigious quantities of blackfinger blight. All that's left is to set off the device. But one problem remains unsolved: the bomb is in storage.

The Twilight Four made sure to put several degrees of separation between themselves and the bomb in case it was prematurely discovered. Their chosen stooge is Maurrisa Jonne, the leader of the Washboard Dogs, a small-time gang based in the Docks district. In one of their last meetings, the Skinner delivered the bomb to the Washboard Dogs and ordered them to keep it safe until the time came for her or an authorized intermediary to retrieve it, threatening that she would undo the gang completely if they failed her. The Dogs complied and Jonne stowed the device—the exact mechanisms of which they were blissfully unaware—inside a lockbox in the Lucky Nimbus casino, where they'd been laundering money earned from their ventures with the Skinner. Aware of the Nimbus's reputation for infallible security, Jonne believes it to be the perfect place to store the deadly device.

Flakfatter doesn't want to wait until the closing ceremonies to use the bomb. Instead, he has enlisted the aid of several unwitting scapegoats. The first of these cronies is Franca Laurentz, a down-on-her-luck ex-revolutionary who worked at the Lucky Nimbus and whose mind he could easily warp to suit his designs. Flakfatter deftly convinced her to steal the bomb from the casino. Thereafter, Laurentz plans to work with a powerful iruxi gladiator named Oggvurm and his most trusted compatriots to detonate the device amid the immense crowd attending the Blood City Games at the city's largest arena, the Irorium.

As a lifelong devotee of Blackfingers, Flakfatter believes that this treacherous show of initiative will make him Norgorber's most favored among the Twilight Four. If everything goes according to plan, it will be he, not Terimor or Vancaskerkin, who ultimately fulfills the final steps of the Four's pact and becomes primarch.

CHAPTER 1 SYNOPSIS

After receiving their promotion to the Starwatch, Absalom's inter-district task force, the agents are tasked with uncovering the connection between the Skinsaw cultists and the street gang known as the Washboard Dogs. Unfortunately, the Washboard Dogs are in the middle of a turf war with another gang, the Diobel Sweepers. While the characters might be reluctant to step into the middle of this conflict, they soon find a point of leverage with one of the gangs: Giord Jonne, the errant brother of the Washboard Dogs' leader, Maurrisa Jonne. Leaning on Giord gets the agents a meeting with Maurrisa, who is amenable to working with law enforcement... for a price. She asks the agents to eliminate her rivals, the Diobel Sweepers, by raiding an abandoned schoolhouse where the Sweepers are manufacturing illicit alchemical wares. Once they've done that, Maurrisa gives them their next lead—and a key to the lockbox holding the Twilight Four's mysterious weapon.

CHAPTER 1 TREASURE

The agents can find the following significant treasure throughout this chapter. Other pieces of treasure can be found as well, though these are likely to be turned in for gp bounties (equal to half the item's Price).

- +1 chain mail
- +1 striking scythe
- elixirs and mutagens, assorted (12)
- greater cheetah elixirs (2)
- greater juggernaut mutagen
- greater smokestick
- moderate bravo's brew
- moderate elixir of life
- moderate tanglefoot bag
- ring of energy resistance (acid)
- ring of lies
- spellstrike bullets (type I, magic missile)

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GETTING STARTED

This adventure begins a few days after the agents' successful foray into the Catacombs during the preceding adventure, "Sixty Feet Under."

By this time, the agents have already given their full report to Lieutenant Lavarsus at Edgewart Headquarters, received ample accolades, and enjoyed some well-deserved downtime. From interrogating Wrent Dicaspiron (assuming they managed to arrest her), the agents have learned the pseudonyms of the other Norgorberites belonging to the secret cabal known as the Twilight Four: besides Wrent (the Skinner), they are known as the Infector, the Rumormonger, and the Gray Queen. They also know the basic aim of the Twilight Four—to remove the primarch and seize the title for themselves. Beyond this, the Skinner has little useful information for the characters. She never met with her fellow cabalists in person and they have ceased communication with her since the Edgewart dismantled her Skinsaw cult.

Before diving into this adventure, explain the above details to your players so they're up to speed on the plot so far. Give the players a week of downtime to heal, retrain, and pursue their own agendas—then, when everyone is ready to continue the story, begin the adventure proper.

A STAR PROMOTION

Lavarsus has grudgingly admitted (likely at the urging of the more astute Sergeant Ollo) that the agents' investigation has taken on new importance in light of the revelations gleaned from Dicaspiron's confession. He has given reports to his own superiors, and word of the agents' doings has reached the upper tiers of Absalom's law-enforcement agencies.

The agents are ordered to Starwatch Keep, the citadel outside the eastern city gates and command center of Absalom's interjurisdictional task force, the Starwatch. There, the agents must talk to Captain Asilia of Gyr, the leader of the Starwatch and a former confidant to Lord Gyr, the missing primarch, before his disappearance.

When the characters arrive at Starwatch Keep, read or paraphrase the following.

Beyond Starwatch Keep—an imposing cliff-top castle overlooking the Bay of Kortos from just beyond the city's

eastern wall—rays of morning sun cast amber light over the city of Absalom below. Even in this stone-lined waiting room, the sounds of gulls and shouting sailors drift up from the docks.

An eager blond gnome in a gray suit approaches from the keep. "You're the Edgewart officers who took down the Skinner? I'm Officer Cadet Tova Frostrun. Can I shake your hands? What you've done for the city can never be repaid, and we all owe a debt of gratitude. You're the talk of the keep." After a few moments of enthusiastic shaking and pats on the back, he continues. "Captain Asilia is waiting for you. Follow me."



Tova Frostrun (LG male gnome officer cadet 7) leads the characters past a few officers training with crossbows in the yard and up inside the keep's main fortifications to a large office on the keep's

second floor. The spotless chamber is appointed with teak furniture that looks scarcely used. Several narrow windows look down onto the city below. A stern-looking human woman with a shock of white hair and an impressive tricorn sits behind a broad, imposing desk. She stands and introduces herself as Captain **Asilia of Gyr** (N female human ranger 12), leader of Starwatch and commander of the warship *Hurricane Wings*, and gestures for the agents to sit down, gesturing to the room's comfortable chairs.

Asilia is serious but friendly. In sharp contrast to Lieutenant Lavarsus's bombastic management style, she speaks quietly and makes few extraneous gestures. She takes pride in the Starwatch's good reputation among Absalomians and prioritizes the safety of her officers second only to the safety of the civilians they're charged with protecting.

Asilia looks each agent up and down with her piercing gaze, then smiles in approval. "Agents, I will keep this brief. Your investigation takes priority over any formal affairs, so I thank you for taking the time to meet me here. You've shown that you can get results, and that is vital in this hectic time. I must admit, this matter with the so-called 'Twilight Four' you've unearthed frightens me. Religious fanatics hardly recognize jurisdictional lines, and if their plot does truly endanger the entirety of Absalom, it's of the utmost importance that you be allowed to follow your investigation with minimal bureaucratic impediment.



To that end, I have been granted permission to offer you honorary positions as special Starwatch agents. This will be on top of your promotions within the Edgewatch—I'm sure that dunderhead Lavarsus 'forgot' to inform you of your promotion to the rank of officer cadet, damn his pride." She scowls.

"From now on," she continues, "you will report to me first and foremost, and you will be given access to any Starwatch resources you need for your investigation. Your stipend will increase to accommodate higher-security living quarters in the city for you and yours, and your first order of business will be to hunt down the remaining members of the Twilight Four and bring them to justice.

"This is all contingent on your acceptance, of course. Granted, I'm not used to taking no for an answer and, honestly, I've already filled out the paperwork." She retrieves four badges from her desk drawer, each with a silver emblem shaped like a flaming star, and places them before you. "What do you say?"

This Adventure Path assumes the players accept their promotions, especially since there are no downsides to the offers. On the off chance that they reject their new positions, the agents can still continue their investigation of the Twilight Four, but they'll have significantly fewer resources at their disposal, as well as less cross-district authority.

Captain Asilia can answer any questions the agents have about Starwatch (the most likely are listed below) before giving them their next mission.

What are our responsibilities as Starwatch agents? "Your first priority is the Twilight Four case, and I expect that nothing will distract you from performing your duties. You will report regularly to me, and I will make myself available to answer any questions you might have as you progress. Use me as a resource to help you help Absalom."

How much autonomy will we have? "I expect my officers to do what needs to be done to catch criminals, as long as doing so doesn't endanger the public. As Starwatch agents, you'll no longer need to acquire permission from other watch factions to pursue your investigation in their districts. Your badges represent your increased authority, and presenting them in the right situations might open all sorts of doors for you."

Can we tell other district watch officers what to do? "You are not above the law, nor are you superior to other officers, per se. Starwatch tries to stay out of the day-to-day business of the district watches and focus on the bigger picture. That said, district officers tend to help out when they can... as long as we ask politely. Keeping that in mind, however, I'll encourage you to pursue your investigation on your own and

not rely overly on the aid of district watches, since I can't promise the efficacy—or even good will—of these factions."

Once the characters finish conversing with Captain Asilia, she reminds them that their investigation in the Catacombs revealed that the Twilight Four are somehow in cahoots with a small street gang based out of the Docks district called the Washboard Dogs. As soon as they are ready to continue their investigation, Asilia urges them to travel to the Docks and use their investigative skills to find the Washboard Dogs and question them. If they need help figuring out their first steps, Asilia suggests they go to the Harbor Guard's headquarters, Crestwatch, and speak with their resident gang expert, Lilea Helweather.

GANGBUSTERS

The Docks, Absalom's bustling waterfront district, is a warren of pubs, tenements, and warehouses. Hundreds of seaborne vessels from all over the world sail into the Docks every day, transporting goods of all kinds that eventually reach the city's markets. The waters of the Bay of Kortos churn with the near-constant activity, while within the Inner Sea, a mass of half-sunken ships called the Flotsam Graveyard protects the city from naval invasion. The air here smells strongly of the sharp scents of saltwater and the sweat of sailors and dockworkers.

GANG WARS

Whether through a chatty barkeep, gossip stevedore, or forthright Harbor Guard officer, the agents learn that the Washboard Dogs are currently at odds with another local gang, the Diobel Sweepers. Reports conflict as to the cause of the hostilities. Some say the Sweepers encroached onto the Dogs' territory, others believe that a Sweeper was caught trying to sell deliberately tainted alchemical items to a Washboard Dog, and a few people suspect that the two gangs came to blows over a game of cards. The last theory is closest to the truth.

One night over a week ago, a small group consisting of both Washboard Dogs and Diobel Sweepers was enjoying a night of drinking and gambling at the Lucky Nimbus casino in the Coins district. As the evening drew on, one member from each gang ended up in a high-stakes game of golem (page 76). Both players went several rounds without beating the golem, and the pot grew to a sizeable amount. Eventually, the player from the Dogs won, drawing accusations of cheating from the Sweepers in attendance. The other Dogs backed up their fellow gang member, voices were raised, and someone flipped the card table. Bouncers

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escorted the two groups out of the casino before things got any worse. Since then, the Lucky Nimbus's owner, Gage Carlyle, has forbidden both gangs from stepping foot inside. Now, each blames the other for what seems to be a lifetime ban. Without their relatively harmless gambling outlet, the two gangs' previously tame squabbles have been escalating to street-level brawls. The fighting hasn't turned lethal just yet, but it's only a matter of time before the conflict reaches a boiling point.

The agents must choose which gang to side with in this conflict in order to secure their next lead. In doing so, they also gain access to new rogue feats (page 75).

GANG TOUGHS

The following stat block is referenced throughout this part of the adventure for rank-and-file toughs from both the Washboard Dogs and the Diobel Sweepers.

GANG TOUGH

CREATURE 7

UNCOMMON	N	MEDIUM	HUMAN	HUMANOID
Perception +17				
Languages Common				
Skills Athletics +17, Gang Lore +13, Intimidation +13				
Str +4, Dex +4, Con +4, Int +0, Wis +2, Cha +0				
Items +1 <i>morningstar</i> , additional items (see below)				
AC 25; Fort +17, Ref +16, Will +13				
HP 125				
Speed 25 feet				
Melee ♦ <i>morningstar</i> +18 (magical, versatile P), Damage 1d6+8 bludgeoning				
Bullyrag Beatdown Whenever the gang tough makes a successful melee Strike against a frightened creature, the Strike deals an extra weapon die of damage.				
Frightening Critical When the gang tough's Strike with a bludgeoning weapon is a critical hit and deals damage, the target becomes frightened 1.				

Washboard Dog Tough: Washboard Dog toughs carry heavy washboards that serve as shields and intimidation tools. They have the basic gang tough stats, with the following additions and modifications.

Dex +3

Additional Items chain shirt, heavy crossbow with 10 bolts, steel shield

Shield Block ☞

Ranged ♦ heavy crossbow +16 (range increment 120 feet, reload 2), **Damage** 1d10 piercing

Melee ♦ shield bash +18, **Damage** 1d4+6 bludgeoning

Scraping Clamor ♦ (auditory, manipulate) The Washboard Dog scrapes their weapon up and down their washboard shield, making such a clatter that it's hard to hear anything over the din. Until the beginning of the

Washboard Dog tough's next turn, all creatures within 30 feet gain a +1 circumstance bonus to any saves to resist auditory spells or abilities.

Diobel Sweeper Tough: Toughs from the Diobel Sweepers are quicker and rely primarily on ranged weapons and alchemical items. They have the basic gang tough stats, with the following additions and modifications.

AC 24; **Ref** +17

Additional Items moderate bottled lightning (2), moderate frost vials (2), sling (with 3 *spellstrike* bullets [type 1, *magic missile*]), moderate tanglefoot bag

Ranged ♦ sling +17 (range increment 50 feet, propulsive, reload 1), **Damage** 1d6+6 plus 3d4+3 force

Ranged ♦ bomb +19 (alchemical, bomb, range increment 30 feet), **Damage** 2d6 cold or electricity plus 2 splash

Quick Bomber ♦ The Diobel Sweeper tough Interacts to draw a bomb, then Strikes with it.

INVESTIGATING THE WASHBOARD DOGS

The agents' first order of business in the Docks district is to figure out a way to garner an audience with the Washboard Dogs' elusive leader, an ex-boxer and expert racketeer named Maurrisa Jonne. Your players might follow any number of avenues of inquiry for their investigation. The following pages present three likely investigatory routes, summarized here.

Crestwatch (page 9): The agents might ask for advice from the Harbor Guard, in which case they learn the basic modus operandi and motives of the Washboard Dogs as well as their notorious rival gang, the Diobel Sweepers.

Alley Skirmish (page 10): By wandering the Docks in their officer uniforms, the agents provoke a scuffling group of gang members to temporarily put aside their differences in favor of putting the authorities in their place.

The Duck's Back (page 11): Finally, if the agents ask around the neighborhood in plain clothes, they're likely to meet with a shopkeeper who has paid the Washboard Dogs protection money for years and knows where the agents can find Maurrisa Jonne's younger brother, Giord.

Of course, your players might think to pursue any number of other means of learning about the Washboard Dogs. In any case, you should still impart the information explained in the paragraphs marked "Lead" on the pages that follow, while filling in any other details as you please.

XP Award: For each lead the agents garner during their investigation, award each agent a 40 XP story award (for a maximum of 120 XP).



CRESTWATCH

As far as Absalom's district guard factions go, the Harbor Guard has one of the more mixed reputations. Its recruits are mostly Docks natives who have an honest wish to make their home a safer place. But for each purely dedicated Harbor Guard, there are at least two officers who secretly belong to a Docks-based gang, plus any number of guards who are on one or more gangs' payrolls.

Crestwatch is a pinewood boathouse that was raised and converted to serve as the Harbor Guard's headquarters several hundred years ago. It's situated on the waterfront between a maze of marinas, overlooking the water from barnacle-crusted pilings. As the district has grown, the building has been augmented with new upper stories for offices and expanded laterally with temporary holding cells and entire warehouses of confiscated evidence. The base of the boathouse has remained largely unchanged: a wide-open storeroom with knotty floorboards and creaking staircases that ascend to the upper halls. Guards, complainants, permit-seekers, and maritime lawyers mill about the massive precinct at all hours of the day.

After showing their badges to a receptionist, the agents are ushered to a small meeting room and asked to wait for a moment while the lead gang investigator is summoned. Based on her graceful movements and immaculate posture, **Lilea Helweather** (N female elf petty officer 5) may seem an odd fit for the scrappy Harbor Guard, but the towering senior officer speaks like a sea-hardened sailor and clearly knows her stuff. She has little respect for officers outside her own district, including the Starwatch, and scoffs at the agents' dearth of nautical experience. "Harbor Guards," she says, indicating herself, "spend their entire careers training to understand the mind of the gangs that beleaguer our district. And then some landlubbing Starwatch come 'round and muck up our investigations. Typical."

Lead: Lilea doesn't have an actionable lead for the agents, but she can tell them useful details about both the Washboard Dogs and their archrivals, the Diobel Sweepers.

Lilea responds well to fellow officers who have done their research and takes kindly to honest compliments, but she sees right through flattery. She indicates that she hasn't had a good drink of rum in many moons (hinting that she is amenable to a bribe) and derisively asks the agents to explain their situation quickly so she can get back to "the real, hard work of us lowly district guards." The agents can learn the following if they roll a successful

Diplomacy check to Make an Impression or a Sailing Lore or Legal Lore check to Recall Knowledge about the Docks district and the specific problems faced by the Harbor Guard (the extent of the intel gathered depends on the result of the check). Alternatively, the characters can give Lilea a bribe worth 10 gp × each DC listed below to learn the corresponding intel (so a bribe of 150 gp would equate to succeeding at a DC 15 check, and 300 gp would be the same as succeeding at a DC 30 check).

At your discretion, the agents might also learn the following details by asking around the Docks district in plain clothes and attempting a successful Diplomacy check to Gather Information.

DC 15: The Washboard Dogs and the Diobel Sweepers wouldn't seem to be rivals on paper. Their turfs don't dramatically intersect, and their operations are discrete—the Dogs run a protection racket and money laundering scheme, whereas the Sweepers deal in illegal alchemical goods. Nevertheless, after members from both gangs started brawling in the Lucky Nimbus casino a few weeks ago over cards and were subsequently expelled from the establishment, the Dogs and the Sweepers have been locked in a heated gang war.

DC 20: The Sweepers recruit from the flunkies and dropouts of Absalom's alchemy guilds. The gang foregoes crafting poisons or drugs in favor of charm serums, steroidal decoctions, and explosive bombs. The Washboard Dogs are easily identified by their namesake decorated washboards, which they use as shields in brawls.

DC 25: Whereas the Washboard Dogs are constantly on the move and have no known centralized base of operations, the Sweepers control a large number of safe houses and hideouts, making it difficult to pinpoint where their leader, Bloody Berleth, might be at any given time. Previous hideouts have burned down due to lab fires that got out of hand. One of their current hideouts, an abandoned schoolhouse, is rumored to be haunted.

DC 30: There's a bit more to the animosity between these gangs than a simple game of cards gone awry. Many years ago, Bloody Berleth and Maurrisa Jonne were close friends. When their first gang hideout was raided and Maurrisa was arrested, she ratted out Berleth in exchange for a reduced sentence. Berleth has never forgiven her, and Jonne hasn't been able to set up a permanent base of operations for fear of an attack from her old rival. This spat over the Lucky Nimbus ban might be the final push necessary for the gang leaders to put an end to the rivalry... permanently.

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ALLEY SKIRMISH

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



ARROWHEAD SLIP

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



A. ALLEY SKIRMISH

MODERATE 9

The Docks' residents don't have particularly good feelings toward law enforcement, and the agents walking around in their uniforms is apt to draw unwanted attention. Run the following encounter, using the map above, to break up the pacing of the investigation or if the players seem at a loss for where to go next.

Creatures: While meandering the tightly packed avenues and alleyways of the Docks, gangsters beset the agents. The agents find themselves flanked on either side by four toughs—one pair (Solly and Hooper) owing allegiance to the Washboard Dogs, the other two (Irwist and Quickle) wearing the red gang colors of the Diobel Sweepers. The gang toughs have all agreed to a temporary truce in order to dole out some proper street justice to the meddlesome Starwatch.

The remaining gangsters flee if two of them go down.

SOLLY AND HOOPER

CREATURE 7

Washboard Dog toughs (page 8)

Initiative Perception +17

IRWIST AND QUICKLE

CREATURE 7

Diobel Sweeper toughs (page 8)

Initiative Perception +17

Lead: If the agents arrest one of the toughs from either gang, they can learn a bit about the Washboard Dogs' typical criminal operations. The tough explains that until recently, the Dogs primarily dealt in extortion and stolen artifacts. However, Maurisa Jonne, their leader, has been acting strangely ever since she started taking meetings with some shadowy masked figures. Since then, the Dogs' operations have shifted mainly to money laundering, which they do by purchasing artifacts from the black market and reselling them or swapping the money for game tokens at any of Absalom's various gambling establishments.

By succeeding at a DC 25 Intimidation check to Coerce, an agent can pry the following additional tidbit from the tough: "Word is Jonne jus' got hold'a some really nice, really *dangerous* kinda thing from her special partners. Thing's supposedly so stinkin' hot she had to put it in a special vault."

The Washboard Dog toughs are too low-ranking to simply set up a meeting between the agents and their leader. Even if charmed with magic, the tough's best advice is for the agents to "find somethin' Jonne really likes, and take that somethin' away from her." This, the gang member assures them, is the only way to secure a meetup with Jonne.

THE DUCK'S BACK

At some point during the agents' investigation—likely after their alley skirmish with the gang toughs—a woman with bright silver hair, almond-shaped eyes, and bronze-painted lips approaches the agents and introduces herself as the owner of the Duck's Back, a small curiosity shop in the Docks. **Rhei Chernaz** (NG female human shopkeeper 1) has heard word of the agents' investigation and explains that she pays the Washboard Dogs protection money, but that hasn't seemed to amount to much since the gang war with the Sweepers started. With the Washboard Dogs preoccupied with Sweeper scuffles, the Duck's Back has been burglarized twice by encroaching minor gangs in just the last two weeks. Rhei hopes for nothing more than the Dogs' and Sweepers' feud to end so that the Dogs can regain control of their territory.

The Duck's Back sells all manner of heirlooms, priceless "artifacts," and exotic souvenirs from seaside ports around the Inner Sea—most mere ornamental trinkets, but some with actual magical power. Rhei has particularly large collections of Qadiran and Nexian goods, including ornate oil lamps, water pitchers, musical instruments, incense holders, and carpets.

Lead: By chatting with Rhei about her travails with the gangs of the Docks, the agents learn that the shopkeeper has frequent dealings with Maurrisa Jonne's younger brother, Giord, who has a reputation for running his mouth and getting into trouble. Specifically, Giord comes in at least once a week to buy some trinket or another, regardless of the item's background. "While he has an eye for quality, I wish he cared a bit more for the story behind the wares I sell," Rhei sighs. She has deduced from Giord's ample supply of play money that his big sister has a real soft spot for him. "If he were to fall into the hands of the law," Rhei says, "Maurrisa would stop at nothing to retrieve him."

If pressed for more details, Rhei hems and haws. "I'm sorry. It's just, the recent burglaries have got

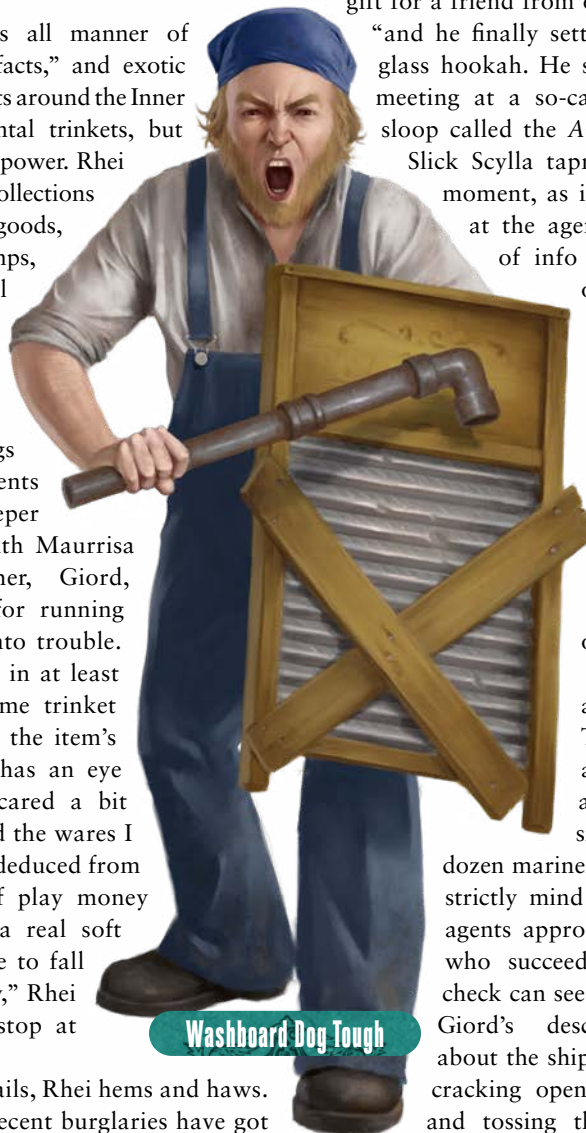
me a bit on edge. So many of my wares are priceless, you know. If I could offload a bit of my inventory, I might be able to think a bit more clearly." The agents can induce her to tell them more about Giord by buying at least 200 gp worth of merchandise from her shop. With your group, come up with a flavorful item for the agents to purchase; if a character succeeds at a DC 22 Arcana, Mercantile Lore, or other relevant Lore skill check, the character is able to pick out an item with magical properties (in which case it is a magic item of your choosing worth no more than 200 gp). Otherwise, the purchased object is simply a mundane but interesting novelty item.

Once they've bought an item (or otherwise convinced Rhei to divulge info), the shopkeeper remembers that she saw Giord just this morning, in fact. "Giord said that he was looking for an unusual gift for a friend from out of town," Rhei explains, "and he finally settled on an unusual but fine glass hookah. He said he and his friend were meeting at a so-called mutual acquaintance's sloop called the *Arrowhead*, not far from the Slick Scylla taproom." She stares off for a moment, as if musing aloud, then winks at the agents. "Not sure if that kind of info would be any use to you officers, though."

ARRESTING GIORD

Once the agents know where Maurrisa Jonne's younger brother Giord is (and that if they arrest him they're sure to meet with Maurrisa), they can go to the marina Rhei indicated to catch Giord in the middle of a criminal act.

It's nearly dusk when the agents arrive at the scene. The *Arrowhead* is docked at an unlit, unpatrolled marina alongside a number of other small vessels. Fewer than a dozen mariners mill about the marina and strictly mind their own business. As the agents approach the *Arrowhead*, anyone who succeeds at a DC 24 Perception check can see three figures—one matching Giord's description—stealthily milling about the ship, bringing up storage crates, cracking open the crates with crowbars, and tossing the extracted goods into a



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heap on the dock. If the agents attempt to approach stealthily, they'll need to succeed at a DC 25 Stealth check to Sneak to avoid alerting Giord to their presence; on a success, Giord begins the subsequent chase at the Slippery Dockside obstacle instead of the Rowdy Revelers obstacle (see Chasing Giord, below). On a critical success, the agents manage to get all the way onto the boat before being noticed, in which case you might forego the entire chase sequence, though they might still fight the meladaemon (see Daemon Overboard, below).

B. DAEMON OVERBOARD MODERATE 9

The *Arrowhead* is moored at a 75-foot-long dock dotted with empty wooden crates from other ships' cargo holds. A gangplank leads up the *Arrowhead's* deck to the west, while to the east a pair of small rowboats bridge the water between this slip and the next one over.

When the agents approach the sloop from the north, they are eventually spotted. In a panic, Giord drops the strange glass hookah, which shatters on the wood, releasing an obscuring cloud of rancid smoke that buzzes with the sound of flies. A breeze dissipates the miasma a few seconds later, but Giord is nowhere to be seen. In his place stands a tall, fiendish monster of rotten flesh topped with a mangy wolf's head: a meladaemon!

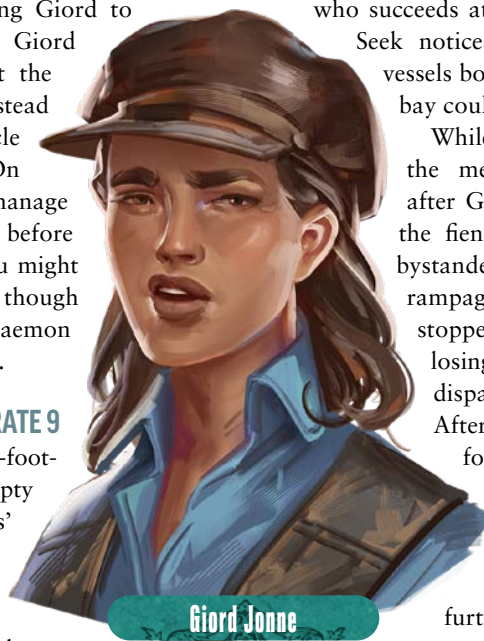
Use the Arrowhead Slip map on page 10 for this encounter.

Creature: The ornamental hookah Giord picked up from the Duck's Back was in fact a fragile arcane container for an evil personification of hunger and thirst known as a meladaemon. The daemon has languished within the bottle for centuries and, when released, assumes that it can fulfill its contract with its original master by killing everyone present. Its consumptive aura essentially incapacitates Giord's accomplices on the sloop and any mariners wandering nearby around the marina. The meladaemon singles out the healthiest-looking agent and attacks them with claws and spells.

Meanwhile, Giord has activated a vanishing coin talisman to render himself temporarily invisible after dropping the bottle. (Even if the agents didn't spot Giord looting the *Arrowhead*, use of invisibility magic in Absalom is grounds enough for arrest.) The young thief makes his escape across the rowboats to

the east, hurriedly moving toward the next dock over and further away from the *Arrowhead*. A character who succeeds at a DC 26 Perception check to Seek notices the unusual way the small vessels bob in the water; the waves of the bay couldn't cause this movement.

While the characters could ignore the meladaemon and simply chase after Giord, it should be obvious that the fiend will rip apart the innocent bystanders and possibly continue to rampage across Absalom if it isn't stopped. However, the agents risk losing Giord entirely if they don't dispatch the meladaemon quickly. After 4 rounds of combat and again for each additional 2 rounds thereafter that the characters continue to fight the meladaemon, Giord begins the chase scene 1 obstacle further ahead.



Giord Jonne

MELADAEMON

Pathfinder Bestiary 2 59

Initiative Perception +21

CREATURE 11

Defeating the Meladaemon: When reduced to 0 HP, the meladaemon vanishes in a puff of the same foul-smelling smoke it appeared in. The only traces it leaves behind are the fragments of the hookah, now devoid of magical energy. The other thieves on the dock slowly begin to recover from their fright, and they might make some motions toward running away, but they stop in their tracks if the agents assert their authority and demand they stay put.

If the agents look for Giord, they spot a figure moving swiftly away from the docks. They must give chase!

CHASING GIORD

While Giord has a bit of a head start on the agents, they might be able to catch up with the thief before he disappears among the darkened city streets.

During this chase encounter, the agents must overcome up to six obstacles in sequential order with the goal of overtaking Giord. Giord begins the chase at the rowdy revelers obstacle, whereas the agents start at the slippery dockside obstacle. Each round, the agents must attempt checks to earn enough Chase Points to overcome their current obstacle. At the end of each round, Giord automatically progresses to the next obstacle.



Each round, each agent can attempt one of the listed checks for the obstacle. Each success earns the party 1 Chase Point, whereas a critical success awards 2 Chase Points. On a critical failure, the party loses 1 Chase Point (the party can never have fewer than 0 Chase Points). The party must collectively accrue the number of Chase Points indicated in the obstacle stat block to overcome the obstacle. For example, for the first obstacle, slippery dockside, once the party accrues a total of 4 Chase Points, they progress to the next obstacle; it might take only two characters to overcome the obstacle (if they both roll critical successes), in which case the remaining characters in the party can proceed to roll checks for the next obstacle. Initiative order doesn't matter; players may take their turns each round in any order they like.

Players can and should come up with creative means of overcoming obstacles that play to their strengths, in which case you should use one of the listed DCs for whatever type of check the player convinces you is appropriate. At your discretion, an especially useful action—such as a character casting their highest-level spell or activating an item's once-a-day ability—allows the party to bypass an obstacle entirely.

On the 6th round of the chase—once Giord overcomes the littered alleyway obstacle—he has successfully evaded the agents and escaped. Otherwise, if the characters overcome an obstacle that Giord hasn't overcome yet, the party has successfully caught the fleeing gangster.

SLIPPERY DOCKSIDE OBSTACLE 9

Chase Points 4; Overcome DC 24 Acrobatics to avoid slipping and falling, DC 26 Perception to notice (and avoid) the wettest portions of the dockside
The *Arrowhead's* slip is slick with sea spray.

ROWDY REVELERS OBSTACLE 9

Chase Points 4; Overcome DC 28 Intimidation to coerce the drunkards to move, DC 25 Religion to exhibit knowledge of the revelers' god and earn their respect
Giord ducks into and rushes through a crowded tavern where a throng of off-duty stevedores and sailors—all devotees of the Drunken God, Cayden Cailean—are drinking heartily.

SUPERSTITIOUS ROUGHNECKS OBSTACLE 9

Chase Points 4; Overcome DC 27 Stealth to sneak past unnoticed, DC 25 Arcana or Cast a Spell to scatter the roughnecks with a potent show of magic
Giord convinces some young and inexperienced hooligans to waylay the agents.

CHASE RULES

This part of the adventure uses the chase subsystem presented on page 156 of the *Pathfinder Gamemastery Guide*, the rules for which are summarized in the adventure text. The full rules for this subsystem can also be found online in the Pathfinder Reference Document at www.paizo.com/prd.

SNEEZING HORSE OBSTACLE 9

Chase Points 4; Overcome DC 24 Crafting to mend the cart's axle, DC 26 Nature or Medicine to calm the horse and get it to pull the cart partially out of the way
A cart-pulling horse in the throes of a sneezing fit stops in its tracks, obstructing the alley and causing the cart's axle to buckle in a pothole.

NIGHTTIME ENTERTAINERS OBSTACLE 9

Chase Points 4; Overcome DC 26 Performance to cut through the performance as though part of the show, DC 24 Society to impress performers with knowledge of their play
Giord tears across the stage of some buskers who don't take kindly to their show being interrupted.

LITTERED ALLEYWAY OBSTACLE 9

Chase Points 4; Overcome AC 25 to Strike the flung garbage out of the way, DC 25 Survival to spot Giord's tracks amid the rubbish
Giord turns over piles of trash in a disgusting alleyway, blocking the path and obliterating his trail so he can escape to his hideout.

Concluding the Chase: If caught, Giord surrenders without a fight. He doesn't attempt to throw around his sister's name for leverage or intimidation, but if asked if he is Maurrisa's sibling, he readily confirms. While a bit craven, he has been arrested a few times in the past and knows that Maurrisa will either hire a good solicitor to help him avoid jail time or cut some deal with the Harbor Guard. His fellow gang members will know almost immediately if Giord is caught, since he will fail to show up at their prescribed safe house, and they will send word up through the ranks until it reaches Maurrisa's ears.

If Giord escapes into the night, the agents aren't completely out of luck. The following afternoon, a young man affiliated with the Washboard Dogs shows up at Crestwatch, looking to speak to the agents. The gang member, **Kris** (LE male human gangster 8), tells the agents that Maurrisa knows their game and will entertain an audience with them if it means they'll stop harassing her family and interfering with her business.

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XP Award: For catching and arresting Giord, award each agent an 80 XP story award.

MEETING WITH MAURRISA

Whether to get her brother out of trouble or to get the agents off her back, Maurrisa proposes a meeting. She insists on setting the time and the place and eventually sends word to the agents to be at an underground drainage ditch in the Docks colloquially called the Groundwater Tunnel late in the evening.

The Groundwater Tunnel is a short passageway that runs under one of the cobblestone streets of the district to a gravelly beach at the southern end of the Docks. If the agents scope out the area before the meeting, it looks like a prime place for an ambush: enemies could easily close in from both sides. An agent who succeeds at a DC 25 Survival check notices a few old stains at the base of one of the tunnel walls that are definitely blood. Maurrisa is aware of the foreboding nature of the tunnel and purposefully chose it to intimidate and test the agents, though she doesn't intend to actually attack them.

When the agents arrive for the meeting, read the following aloud:

The scents of freshly turned earth and salt waft down the Groundwater Tunnel. A steady rain has caused the runoff in the drainage tunnel to flow a bit quicker as the time to meet Maurrisa Jonne approaches. The sound of footsteps is obscured by the patter of rain, covering the approach of the figures at either end of the tunnel. As each group approaches, it becomes clear that the rain isn't the only noise in the tunnel—the gangsters approaching you are rhythmically running pipes, bats, and clubs up and down their washboard shields, building to a cacophonous crescendo that stops as suddenly as it began.

The crowd at the northern end of the tunnel parts to reveal a human woman in her thirties, dressed in denim and leather work clothes and carrying no weapons. A large silver buckle hangs from her belt. She stops ten feet from you, making a show of sizing you up, then smirks and jerks a thumb over her shoulder at the gangsters behind her. "Pretty good, eh? Builds morale. Anyway, let's talk."

The leader of the Washboard Dogs introduces herself and asks the agents their names, though

she already has an idea of who they are. Once any business has been transacted (such as the return of her brother), Maurrisa speaks in a frank, almost friendly manner. She casually tells the agents about her gang's connection to the Skinner (as detailed in the Adventure Background and in Maurrisa's NPC entry on page 86). If the agents tell her exactly what the cultists were up to, she is unfazed. To her, the Washboard Dogs' dealings with the Twilight Four are purely a matter of survival, and she regards the removal of the Skinner as a relief. Maurrisa readily admits that shortly before the Skinner's arrest, the Washboard Dogs were given a "particularly dangerous kind of thing" to hold onto for the Four, though Maurrisa holds up a finger and tisks if pressed for details. "Not so fast, my good officers. One thing at a time."

Maurrisa would like to be out from under the Twilight Four's thumb completely, and to that end she wants to help the agents in their investigation, though first she has a proposition for them. If the agents insist she tell them everything or claim they've already done her a favor for returning her brother, she points out that releasing her brother is the price for this face-to-face meeting and gestures at her gang members crowding the ends of the tunnel to suggest that the agents might not want to try anything violent. She also says that the help she is about to ask for will benefit the city as a whole.

"As you probably know, my Dogs have recently fallen into scuffles with a gaggle of misfits called the Diobel Sweepers. The details of this affair are unimportant and would likely only bore such high-ranking officers. All you need to understand is that I need the Sweepers to stop bothering us—preferably for good.

"The Sweepers aren't quite as... nice... as us. The weapons and chemicals they peddle have caused a lot of destruction across the neighborhood. I've even heard credible rumors that they're brewing up some new concoctions that would give law-enforcement like you no shortage of trouble." Maurrisa pauses and smiles pointedly.

"Fortunately for you, I know exactly where the Sweepers formulate their new products—as well as the date their boss Berleth plans to visit the lab. Now, if my Dogs were to attack their lab, the other gangs in the Docks might consider that a step too far, and then we'd have to deal with the Sweepers' allies as well. But if the 'watch



Maurrisa Jonne



were to raid a particular building on an anonymous tip from a concerned citizen? Well then, no harm done, right? And if the Sweepers were taken care of, I'd be freed up to help you more with your investigation... I might even remember where I put this 'dangerous thing' you should really, REALLY know about."

Maurrisa gives the agents the address of an abandoned schoolhouse in the Docks where they can find this alchemy lab used by the Diobel Sweepers. She says that if the agents are amenable to her deal, they will meet again in this tunnel the night after the lab is destroyed. She even offers to shake hands on it, and any character who does so feels her strong, calloused grip. She and Giord depart the tunnel and, a few moments later, the rest of the Washboard Dogs clear off.

SWEEPERS' SCHOOL

The Diobel Sweepers' hideout and alchemy lab is in an abandoned grammar school called Madam Cathi's School of Common Grammar and Behavior. The school is located in the formerly residential Sweetsand neighborhood, which was subsumed by overambitious industrial ventures nearly 20 years ago and left mostly fallow as businesses went under for one reason or another and entrepreneurs couldn't make rent. Nowadays, gang activity is so prevalent in Sweetsand that even the most desperate squatters don't dare enter any of the myriad derelict buildings for fear of stumbling on a secret drug lab or smuggling operation. Likewise, the Harbor Guard gives Sweetsand a wide berth, preferring to let its murderous inhabitants sort out their bloody feuds for themselves. If the agents request help from the Harbor Guard, they must offer a bribe of at least 200 gp, in which case the guards offer to set up some extra patrols around the perimeter of the Sweepers' turf and catch anyone fleeing the scene during the agents' raid.

Schoolhouse Features: The schoolhouse is one large A-frame, with the ceiling reaching its highest point of 30 feet in the center of the large school room (C5) and sloping gradually to only 8 feet on the east and west ends of the building. The Sweepers rely on natural light seeping through cracks in the ceiling and windows to see by, though they are aided by lamps and candles placed sporadically around their workstations. All of the west- and south-facing windows are boarded up with rotted wooden planks, but the east-facing windows remain unblocked. The floors, walls, and ceilings are all made of formerly top-class building material that has since eroded into rickety, half-rotten timber.

C1. SCHOOLYARD

LOW 9

This large, muddy yard separates the schoolhouse building from its nearest neighbors. A low wooden fence and a squat stone rain shelter are the only notable features of the puddle-strewn lot. A few boarded-up windows on the schoolhouse walls look out on the yard. Two cracked stone porches lead to separate doorways—a set of sturdy double doors toward the north end of the western wall and a rickety wooden door hanging crooked on its hinges south of that. The fence curves around the northwestern corner of the yard, exposing another porch on its other side.

The schoolyard's muddy puddles are treacherously slick; a creature occupying a space in a puddle takes a –2 circumstance penalty to Reflex saves and Athletics checks. The double doors to the hideout's main floor (area C5) are barred from the inside at all times.

Creatures: A pair of Diobel Sweepers named Shim and Dolit mill about the yard, smoking flayleaf away from the volatile alchemical reagents in the schoolhouse and ostensibly keeping an eye out for rival gangs or law enforcement. In addition, the gang has "recruited" a mischievous fey called an avarek, whose strange powers have given the abandoned school the reputation of being haunted. Shim and Dolit feed the creature spoiled cod and pollack and routinely pour buckets of seawater near the shelter to keep it content. The avarek generally dozes in the shed among some straw and torn cloth.

When the toughs spot the agents, one of them gives a sharp whistle that alerts the avarek but isn't loud enough for those inside the warehouse to hear. The avarek comes out of the shed at the end of the first round. Meanwhile, the gang toughs attempt to demoralize the agents in order to take advantage of their abilities. If the avarek and one of the gang toughs are defeated, the other tough attempts to retreat into the hideout to warn the others, locking the side door behind them.

SHIM AND DOLIT

CREATURE 7

Diobel Sweeper toughs (page 8)

Initiative Perception +17

AVAREK

CREATURE 8

Page 80

Initiative Perception +16

C2. MUD ROOM

Wooden shelves line the walls in this cramped room. A small lantern on top of a pitch-stained barrel flickers in

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SWEEPERS' SCHOOL

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

the far corner, throwing ominous shadows. An empty doorway to the north leads further into the building, while a door to the east leads outside.

The Diobel Sweepers store most of the mundane items needed for their lab on the shelves in this room. This includes barrels of rainwater and saltwater, crates of stolen alchemical glassware, mundane reagents such as salt and copper flakes, and rolls of brown butcher paper. The door to area C1 can be latched shut from this side.

Treasure: A character who spends 10 minutes combing through the items on the shelves can find two vials of greater cheetah's elixir and a vial of moderate bravo's brew tucked away in a small box with no label.

C3. TUTORING ROOM

MODERATE 9

A low, overstuffed couch is pushed up against the southern wall, its upholstery ragged at its corners. A rectangular table made of wood planks on sawhorses fills the center of the room, surrounded by rickety stools. On the table, a fine chessboard with yellowed ivory pieces seems out of place in the decrepit room.

This room originally served as a breakout room where select small groups of students could receive special tutelage from one of Madam Cathi's assistant teachers. Now it serves as the Sweepers' lounge room; gang members idle away their time here taking naps or conversing away from the bustle of the main floor.

Creatures: Two of the Diobel Sweepers' chemists, Tonla and Yvelle, are relaxing in this room. The agents might be able to catch them by surprise, though if any of the toughs from outside retreat into the warehouse, these two are the first to be warned. In such a case, the chemists ready their alchemical bombs to fling at the characters as soon as they walk through the door. Each chemist flees to the main floor if reduced to fewer than 20 HP.

Even if a chemist doesn't make it out of the room, the sounds of combat here might also alert the gang members in area C5. At the end of each round, roll a DC 27 Perception check for the toughs and chemists in area C5, adjusting the DC up or down depending on if the agents act stealthily or cause a ruckus. On a successful check, the gang members on the main floor prepare for combat as noted in that room's description.



TONLA AND YVELLE

CREATURE 9

UNCOMMON NE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Female Diobel Sweeper chemists

Perception +21

Languages Common, Gnomish, Halfling

Skills Alchemy Lore +21, Crafting +21, Deception +16, Stealth +19

Str +2, **Dex** +4, **Con** +3, **Int** +4, **Wis** +0, **Cha** +1

Items moderate acid flasks (3), moderate alchemist's fires (3), alchemist's tools, formula book, +1 *striking sickle*, +1 *studded leather*

AC 27; **Fort** +20, **Ref** +21, **Will** +15

HP 155

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ *sickle* +20 (agile, finesse, trip), **Damage** 2d4+8 slashing

Ranged ♦ moderate acid flask +22 (acid, alchemical, bomb, consumable, range increment 20 feet, splash), **Damage** 2d6 persistent acid plus 2 acid splash

Ranged ♦ moderate alchemist's fire +22 (alchemical, bomb, consumable, fire, range increment 20 feet, splash), **Damage** 2d8 fire plus 2 persistent fire and 2 fire splash

Dirty Bomb ♦♦ (manipulate) **Requirements** The chemist has at least one bomb in their possession; **Effect** The chemist adds a hasty mix of noxious substances to the bomb and makes a ranged Strike with it. If it hits and deals damage, the target must attempt a DC 27 Fortitude save or become stupefied 2 for 1d6 rounds; if the result of the save is a critical failure, this increases to stupefied 3. For the next 24 hours, the affected target takes a -2 circumstance penalty (-3 on a critical failure) to additional Fortitude saving throws against the same chemist's Crude Bombs.

Quick Brew ♦ **Requirements** The chemist has their alchemist's tools, formula book, and a free hand; **Effect** The chemist creates a moderate acid flask or alchemist's fire that they must use before the end of their next turn or else it becomes inert.

Treasure: A character who succeeds at a DC 26 Perception check while searching this room finds a *ring of energy resistance (acid)* in the cushions of the couch. The pitted ring has a bluish-green patina, similar to verdigris, formed from the oxidation of copper. The expertly crafted chessboard and pieces, still in remarkable condition despite their obvious age, can be entered into evidence at Starwatch Keep for a bounty of 100 gp.

C4. KITCHEN AND COOK YARD

On the rotted wooden table in the center of this kitchen, a cold, half-eaten pig roast swarms with flies. A steel basin is attached to the southern wall, next to an open barrel of

water with a ladle hanging off the side. The northeastern corner of the room is filled with a wide stone oven. West of that, an empty doorway leads outside to a small stone porch.

Table manners were a big part of Madam Cathi's curriculum, and one of the main attractions of her school was a warm meal for lunch every school day. The oven had doors on both the outside and inside, so one person could tend the fire from outside the building while someone inside the kitchen inserted dough and retrieved bread.

Low-ranking Sweepers are often assigned with getting food for the rest of the gang, the result of which is the half-rotten pig on the table. The chemists also use this room for the basin in the corner, where they can wash off any chemical residue from their experiments.

C5. MAIN FLOOR

SEVERE 9

Squat wooden desks are arranged to serve as makeshift workbenches in this expansive open-air room. Nearly every surface is piled with all manner of alchemical glassware; tools; and reagents in decanters, wooden boxes, or stone cups. The air is warm and full of unusual smells. Double doors exit to the south as well as down a hallway to the east. Adjacent to that hallway, a set of wooden stairs leads up to a windowed room that overlooks the classroom.

The schoolhouse's old classroom is dedicated to the Diobel Sweepers' alchemy lab. The majority of their concoctions are cheap, black-market versions of familiar alchemical substances such as alchemist's fire, tanglefoot bombs, and smokesticks, as well as rarer concoctions like various off-label mutagens and elixirs, all of which they pawn in large quantities to other street gangs in exchange for gold and illegal goods. Recently, however, the Sweepers' chemists have been experimenting with new formulas—most notably something they call “mirror mutagen,” a pungent, silvery decoction that temporarily turns the imbiber invisible for a brief duration but also has a high probability of causing temporary mania. If the chemists can figure out a stable recipe, they stand to make the gang extremely wealthy with a non-magical alternative to the *invisibility potion*.

Creatures: Two chemists—Jinae and Wurts—are hard at work here, preparing a fresh batch of mirror mutagen. They are watched over by two rookie gang toughs—Piola and Rawboy—who stand near the stairs leading up to the gang leader's office. If these gang members are aware of fighting elsewhere in the schoolhouse, the chemists crouch below the desks on

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the far western side of the room and ready their bombs while the toughs notify their boss in area C8 and hide under the staircase so they can possibly ambush and flank the agents.

In the northeast corner of the room, staring impassively, stands an alchemical golem built by the chemists as a side project. The golem's brain and eyes once belonged to a fellow Sweeper chemist named Chalky, who died as the result of a failed mutagen recipe. Though the brain doesn't retain any of the gang member's memories, the others still refer to the golem as "Chalky" when ordering it around. Unlike most alchemical golems, Chalky's alchemical chambers are filled with beneficial substances; thus, in combat, Chalky targets his allies with his needle-tipped fingers instead of foes. Since he has no offensive abilities, Chalky retreats to the corner and cowers if his allies are all defeated.

PIOLA AND RAWBOY CREATURE 6

Female and male weak Diobel Sweeper toughs (page 8, *Bestiary* 6)

Initiative Perception +15

JINAE AND WURTS CREATURE 9

Female and male Diobel Sweeper chemists (page 16)

Initiative Perception +21

CHALKY CREATURE 9

Variant alchemical golem (*Bestiary* 185)

Initiative Perception +15

Alchemical Chambers Chalky's alchemical chambers are filled with helpful potions and elixirs rather than harmful substances. When Chalky targets an ally with its syringe Strike, the ally takes no damage and doesn't need to make a save against the rolled effect. The elixirs and mutagens contained in Chalky's chambers and a summary of their effects are listed below (see pages 546–550 of the *Pathfinder Core Rulebook* for full descriptions of these items). The concoctions are less potent than usual, so each non-instantaneous effect lasts only 1 minute.

- 1 lesser elixir of life (heals 3d6+6 HP, +1 item bonus to saves vs. diseases and poisons)
- 2 lesser bomber's eye elixir (while making alchemical bomb Strikes, targets' circumstance bonus to AC gained from cover is reduced by 1)

3 moderate bravo's brew (+2 item bonus to Will saves, or +3 to Will saves vs. fear)

4 cat's eye elixir (against creatures within 30 feet, reduce flat check to target hidden creatures to DC 5, no flat check necessary to target concealed creatures)

5 moderate cheetah's elixir (+10-foot status bonus to Speed)

6 greater juggernaut mutagen (+3 item bonus vs. Fortitude saves, 30 temporary Hit Points)

Reduced Abilities Chalky lacks the alchemical golem's usual Generate Bomb ability and ranged bomb Strike. When something would cause an alchemical rupture, all creatures within a 5-foot emanation are affected by the elixir in the randomly rolled alchemical chamber, and these creatures may forego their Reflex saves against the effect if they wish.

Treasure: Two full doses of the elixirs and mutagens listed in Chalky's stat block can be retrieved from the subdued alchemical golem. In addition, the various alchemical tools, glassware, reagents, and decoctions can all be turned into either the Harbor Guard or the Starwatch for an evidence bounty of 500 gp.

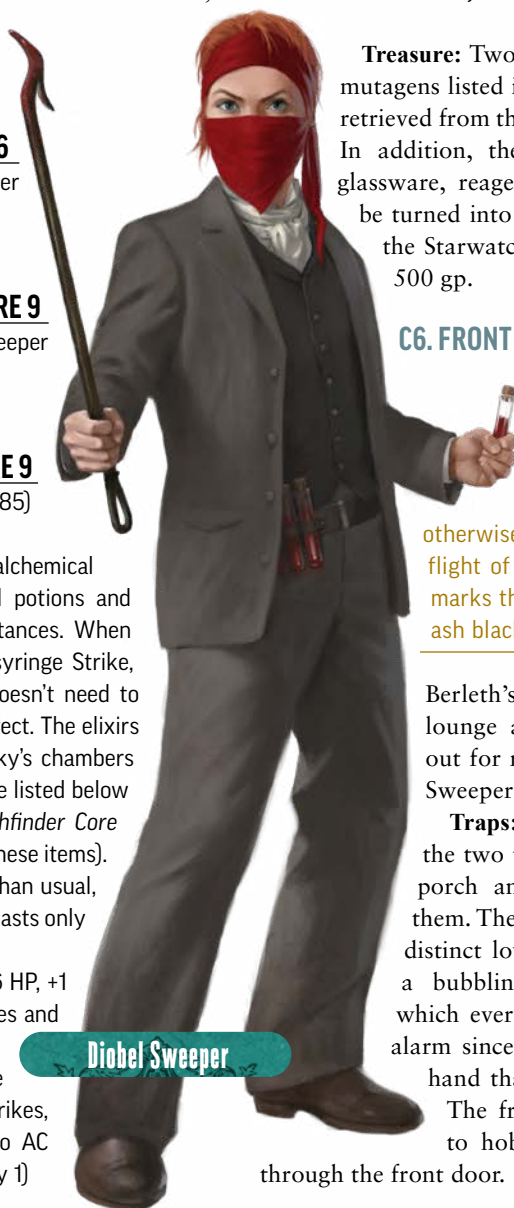
C6. FRONT PORCH

An old low wooden table and matching benches—all sorely in need of new lacquer—furnish this otherwise plain rickety porch. A short flight of stairs leads to a landing that marks the front door, which is painted ash black.

Berleth's gangsters sometimes lounge at the table here and look out for rival gangs ambling through Sweeper territory.

Traps: Every Sweeper knows about the two trip wire snares on the front porch and takes care to step over them. The warning snare (C6a) emits a distinct low-pitched burble not unlike a bubbling cauldron when tripped, which every Sweeper recognizes as the alarm since they have no cauldrons on hand that could make such a noise. The frost bomb snare is intended to hobble intruders who make it

through the front door.



Diobel Sweeper



WARNING SNARE

Pathfinder Core Rulebook 591

Stealth DC 31 (master)

SNARE 4

FROST BOMB SNARE

Pathfinder Core Rulebook 589

Stealth DC 31 (master)

SNARE 4

C7. STAIRS

MODERATE 9

This simple set of wooden stairs leads up to the Madam Cathi's old personal quarters. Half-rotten cubbies fill the space below the staircase, within which are stored a half dozen simple cleaning tools like coal rakes and long wire brushes that have been turned into improvised weapons.

Trap: The schoolhouse's previous occupants—a gang vanquished by Berleth's own cronies—constructed a menacing trap in this staircase, which can be enabled or disabled from the upstairs room (C8). Berleth's chemists added poison to the trap for increased lethality. Berleth activates the trap only if the agents are unwilling to parley with him.

NEEDLING STAIRS

HAZARD 11

COMPLEX MECHANICAL TRAP

Stealth +20 (expert)

Description This staircase has springs in each step, which send poisoned needles shooting up through tiny holes in the wood when stepped on. Each step, 6 in total, takes up one 5-foot square.

Disable DC 33 Thievery (master) on each stair to disable its spring, or deactivate the switch in area C8 to deactivate the whole trap. Cutting the wire on the topmost stair (DC 35 to Disable the Device) that connects the staircase to the control switch prevents the control switch from turning the trap on or off.

AC 28; Fort +22, Ref +19

Hardness 8; **HP** 25 (BT 12) to break the spring under the step and make that step safe to stand on; **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

First Step ➤ **Trigger** A creature ends its movement on one of the stairs; **Effect** The trap makes a poisoned needle Strike against the triggering creature, then rolls initiative.

Routine (1 action) The trap makes a separate poisoned needle Strike against each creature currently on an active step as 1 action. Because it is constantly jabbing needles up through any weight-bearing steps, the trap can also use its Bloody Feet free action (see below) to jab at a creature on one of the steps during that creature's turn.

Melee ➤ poisoned needle +24, **Damage** 2d6+8 piercing plus 1d6 persistent bleed and 4d6 persistent poison; no multiple attack penalty

Bloody Feet ♦ **Trigger** A creature moves onto an active step; **Effect** The trap makes a poisoned needle Strike against the triggering creature.

Reset If deactivated via the switch, the trap can be reactivated with the switch in area C8.

C8. BERLETH'S OFFICE

SEVERE 9

A wide darkwood desk dominates the center of this office, a comfortable high-back leather chair positioned behind it next to a corner liquor cabinet. Opposite the desk sits a small leather couch.

Madam Cathi believed so strongly in her mission of educating Absalom's youth that she lived in the same schoolhouse where she taught. In the years since its abandonment, this room has been converted into an office for various gang leaders—most recently Bloody Berleth. Berleth uses the room during his regular visits to the lab and allows his most favored lieutenants, Mad Margy and Espon Jaribald, to keep an eye on things from here whenever he isn't around. During this latest visit to the old schoolhouse, Berleth has been sampling some of his chemists' latest creations, looking for an edge he can use against the Washboard Dogs and his archrival, Maurrisa Jonne.

A discreet 2-inch-long metal switch along the floorboards near the door activates or deactivates the needling stairs trap in area C7.

Creatures: Bloody Berleth is discussing his gang's business operations with his lieutenants when the Edgewatch agents raid the Sweepers' lab. He responds calmly to the intruders, beckoning them to put down their weapons and discuss matters like civilized people, and orders Margy and Espon to stand down for the moment while they sort things out through diplomacy rather than force.

Berleth—a shockingly tall half-orc man who carries a massive coal shovel and wears grandiose upper-class garments in garish patterns—offers the agents a seat (motioning for his lieutenants to stand in the room's corner) as well as a drink from his liquor cabinet (pouring a rye, neat, for himself in either case), then makes some small talk before delving into his proposition. He commends the officers for their brazen assault on his smallest alchemy lab and lays on no shortage of thinly disguised flattery. Since it's obvious the agents have already been in touch with his rival gang leader Maurrisa Jonne—"Why else would Absalom's finest visit lowly me in this quiet corner of my kingdom?"—he asks them for their honest opinion of her, then cuts to the chase:

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In exchange for backing down from their current attack and providing him the location of Maurrisa Jonne's hideout, he'll give the agents the key to Jonne's lockbox in the Lucky Nimbus casino, which he correctly assumes is what Jonne would give the agents if they complete her assignment. He even shows them his copy of the key. If asked why Berleth has such a thing, the mobster smiles wryly and playfully says, "What? She never told you that we were dear

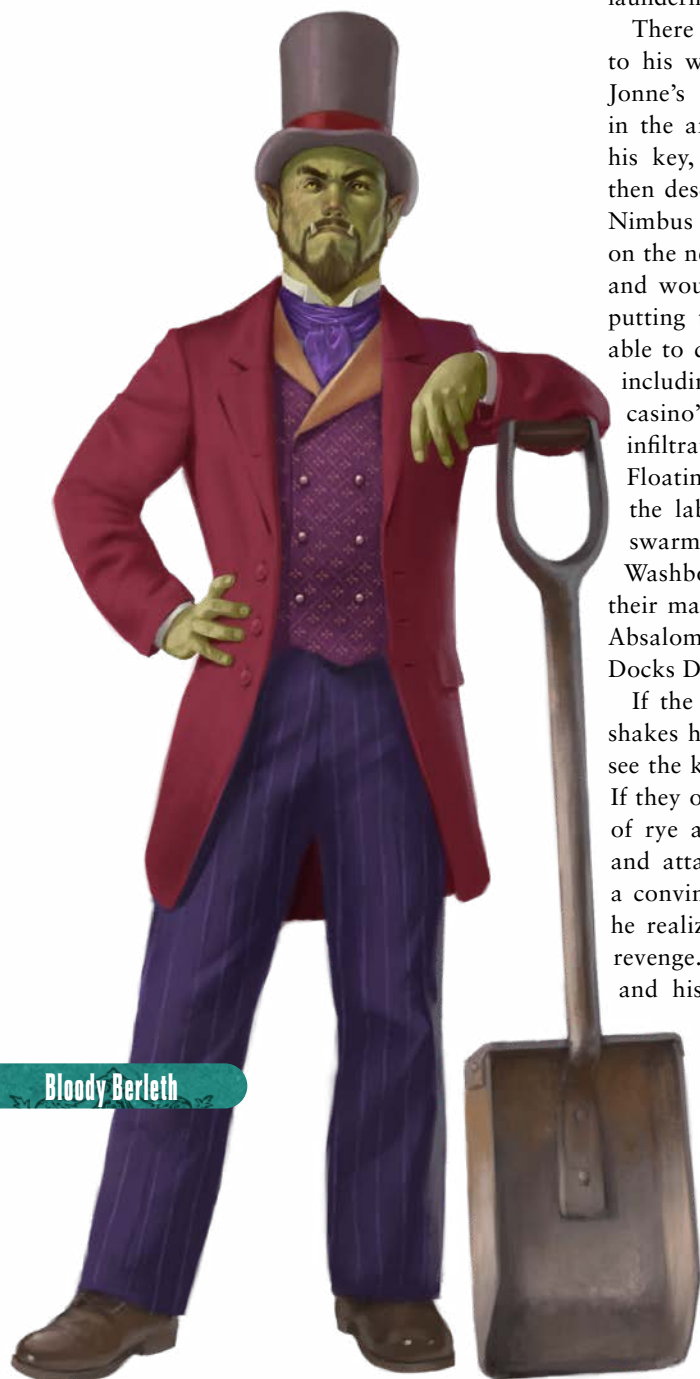
old friends?" Indeed, the key harkens back to Berleth and Jonne's days as allies; Jonne never bothered to change the lockbox key because she wrongly believed that when she ratted out Berleth, his copy of the key was confiscated and lost to the vagaries of Absalom's harsh justice system. In truth, he pocketed and held onto it until the time was right. The time is now right.

"Help me do the right thing," he says. "Put a stop once and for all to the Washboard Dogs' money laundering schemes, and I can help you. Easy as that."

There is no correct choice here; Berleth is true to his word and, if honestly told the location of Jonne's whereabouts (the Groundwater Tunnel in the aftermath of this raid), he gives the agents his key, which he has little use for anyway. He then describes the strange device within the Lucky Nimbus lockbox (see *Reconvening with Maurrisa* on the next page), which he's sure is "no mere toy" and would be of interest to the agents. (To avoid putting the players in a lurch, Berleth should be able to divulge the same information as Maurrisa, including the suggestion that they not alert the casino's owner to their investigation and instead infiltrate the establishment during the upcoming Floating Gala.) Not long after the agents depart the lab, a veritable army of Berleth's gangsters swarm Jonne's hideout, swiftly obliterate the Washboard Dogs, and the Sweepers—devoid of their main rivals—ascend to the upper echelons of Absalom's street gangs, making the streets of the Docks District much more dangerous.

If the agents try to deceive Berleth and fail, he shakes his head sadly and regrets their inability to see the kindness in his offer, then orders an attack. If they outright refuse his offer, he throws his glass of rye at the wall, flies into a bloodthirsty rage, and attacks. Finally, if the agents manage to tell a convincing lie, it's only a matter of time before he realizes their duplicity, in which case he seeks revenge. If this happens, you should have Berleth and his toughs return later in this adventure—preferably at some inopportune time, such as during their heist at the Lucky Nimbus casino in Chapter 2 or amid the turmoil at the Irorium in Chapter 3.

If the agents fight Berleth, all of the gang members in the schoolhouse attack the agents in the hopes of impressing their boss. The gangsters keep fighting until Berleth, Mad Margy, and Espon Jaribald have all fallen, in which case the rest of the gang hastily disbands and flees the scene.



Bloody Berleth

MARGY AND ESPON

CREATURE 8

Elite male and female Diobel Sweeper toughs (page 8, *Bestiary* 6)

Initiative Perception +19

BLOODY BERLETH

CREATURE 11

UNIQUE NE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID ORC

Male half-orc gang leader

Perception +24; low-light vision

Languages Common, Orcish

Skills Athletics +22, Deception +22, Diplomacy +18, Gang Lore +18, Intimidation +22, Stealth +17

Str +5, **Dex** +2, **Con** +4, **Int** +1, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +3

Items +1 chain mail, moderate elixir of life, heavy crossbow (with 4 *spellstrike* arrows [type III, *blindness*; DC 24]), greater juggernaut mutagen, *ring of lies*, +1 *striking shovel* (same stats as a scythe, but with the versatile B trait), greater smokestick, moderate tanglefoot bag

AC 30; **Fort** +23, **Ref** +21, **Will** +20

HP 245

Speed 20 feet

Melee ♦ *shovel* +24 (deadly 1d10, magical, trip, versatile B), **Damage** 2d10+11 slashing

Ranged ♦ heavy crossbow +19 (range increment 120 feet, reload 2), **Damage** 1d10 piercing

Concussive Beatdown ♦ **Requirements** Berleth has just used his shovel to Trip a creature; **Effect** Berleth brutally brings his shovel down on the prone foe, making a shovel Strike. On a hit, the Strike deals damage as normal, plus the target must make a DC 30 Fortitude save.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature is stunned 1.

Failure The creature is stunned 2.

Critical Failure The creature is stunned 2 and clumsy 1 for 1 minute.

Decapitate ♦♦ Berleth plunges his shovel through a creature's neck as though it were peat moss. He makes a shovel Strike against an adjacent unconscious or immobilized creature. On a hit, the creature is wounded 2 (possibly dying).

Final Blow ↻ **Frequency** once per day; **Trigger** Berleth is reduced to 0 HP; **Effect** Berleth makes a final shovel Strike before dying.

Treasure: The liquor cabinet contains a barrel's worth of illegally imported fine wine and rare spirits, and Berleth's desk holds petty cash from the lab's latest earnings next to the latest prototype of the gang's unfinished "mirror mutagen." If the agents turn all of this evidence into Crestwatch, they collect a 400 gp bounty.

XP Award: If the agents work out a deal with Bloody Berleth instead of defeating him in combat, award each character an 80 XP story award in place of the encounter XP.

RECONVENING WITH MAURRISA

After the agents have raided the Diobel Sweepers' alchemy lab and dispatched Bloody Berleth, the Washboard Dogs show up at the Groundwater Tunnel that evening, as promised, with just slightly less dramatics than before, and Maurrisa Jonne tells the agents about her final encounter with the Skinner.

The burly gang leader rubs her hands together in delight. "I knew I could trust you. Now it's time for my end of the bargain." She produces an ornate brass key from her pocket. "In my last meeting with the Skinner, she handed me some kind of glass and metal... contraption. Looked like it had a lot of nozzles on it and something cylindrical could be stuck inside. I don't know, I'm no tinker, but something about it put me on edge. She said, 'Keep this safe until the right time comes. You'll know and it will be glorious.'"

Maurrisa snorts to herself. "Well, as much I hate to admit it, I was in no position to argue with someone that fanatical. So I took the thing and did as ordered, but I stored it as far from myself as I could: in a special lockbox reserved just for me in a little ol' gambling den called the Lucky Nimbus.

"Now I'd happily go and get that device for you, but there's one problem. Me and my Dogs are banned from the Lucky Nimbus. Same with the Sweepers. That little disagreement over some cards what started this whole mess." She considers the key a little forlornly before holding it out to you. "You're free to check it out for yourself, but don't tell the owner, Gage Carlyle, you're looking for our box. He'll probably know you're trying to get our stuff for us, and besides, he's a bit of a shifty guy. No monster, mind you, just... not someone I'd trust with this kind of information."

Maurrisa provides a brief overview of the Lucky Nimbus's security protocol: a client asks to see their lockbox, Gage Carlyle takes them down to the casino's vault, and he and the client each insert their own key into separate locks to access the lockbox. Maurrisa is fairly certain that Gage keeps his key on his person at all times, but doesn't know much else about how the casino operates. The agents will have to discover those details on their own in Chapter 2.

If, on the other hand, the agents decided to work with Bloody Berleth and betray Maurrisa, they skip this scene entirely, since Berleth tells them all the same pertinent details right then and there in the Sweepers' lab and provides them with his own copy of the lockbox key.

XP Award: For receiving the key to the Lucky Nimbus lockbox, whether from Maurrisa Jonne or Bloody Berleth, award each character an 80 XP story award.

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CHAPTER 2: THE HOUSE ALWAYS WINS

By this time, the agents should report back to Captain Asilia at Starwatch Keep. If they've forgotten, they receive a firm but friendly reminder from Agent Tova, who manages to track them down with his own sleuthing skills. When the agents return to the keep, they find Asilia in her office again, though she has come out from behind her desk and is looking out one of the windows.

Captain Asilia listens intently to the agents' accounts of the last few days, though she is likely already aware of most of the details thanks to her connections with senior Harbor Guards. If the agents are concerned that they may have bent or broken the law by making a deal with the Washboard Dogs or the Diobel Sweepers, Asilia lauds them for their mindfulness and reassures them that letting the gangs' feud continue would have endangered more innocent Absalomians—they've done good work.

The news of the Twilight Four's "dangerous thing" instantly worries Asilia, and she speculates that it's likely some kind of doomsday device. If the players haven't already reached the same conclusion, she informs the agents that retrieving this device should be their top priority.

Asilia is already familiar with the Lucky Nimbus, a venue that has hosted many of Absalom's most high-profile criminals over the decades, and she likewise knows a thing or two about Gage Carlyle. "Your gang contact is correct: informing Carlyle of the device in his establishment would be a misstep. If we tip our hand too soon, he could imperil our investigation either purposefully or inadvertently. I suggest, instead, that you go undercover."

To illustrate her assumption, Asilia relates a story about a prior investigation a few years ago in which she herself requested access to the Lucky Nimbus's



lockboxes and came up empty-handed. She suspected foul play, but the next morning, a powerful grand councilmember's adjutant suggested—not so politely—that Asilia drop the matter, which she did. The captain also believes that simply raiding the casino would be inadvisable, as Gage clearly has friends in high places and isn't currently breaking any laws. Securing a proper search warrant is likewise out of the question—doing so would tip their hand to Gage, and besides, it would take far too long for a warrant to get through the bureaucratic pipeline with their flimsy evidence.

"No," Captain Asilia muses aloud, "the best way to ensure the recovery of the Twilight Four's device would be to sneak in somehow, perhaps during some high-profile event during which Carlyle would be amply distracted." Paging through an agenda of upcoming events related to the Radiant Festival, the captain's eyes widen, and she slaps the papers down on her desk. "Here." A bold header on the page announces in large letters: "The Floating Gala at the Lucky Nimbus."

Asilia explains that the agents' best bet is to scout around the Lucky Nimbus to get a lay of the land, secure disguises, and infiltrate the casino during its grand upcoming soiree, the Floating Gala. "Unfortunately, we don't have the luxury of time," she says. "The Floating Gala is likely your only chance to slip in unnoticed; if you go on any regular night Carlyle is sure to suspect something and prevent you from reaching the vault."

This part of the adventure is more free-form than Chapters 1 and 3, and you should make it clear to your players that how they decide to infiltrate the Lucky Nimbus's vault is totally up to them (though their allies and acquaintances might of course offer suggestions if they feel at a loss).

Once the players understand that their next goal is to formulate (and then act on) a plan to get into the Lucky Nimbus's vault and retrieve the Twilight Four's strange device, proceed with the adventure and let the players take the reins. The remainder of this chapter is devoted to details of the Lucky Nimbus, prominent NPCs, and possible methods for adjudicating the different types of schemes your players might concoct.

PREPARING FOR THE HEIST

The agents have 3 full days to prepare for the heist at the Lucky Nimbus casino. During that time, they can perform typical downtime activities, preparation activities (including the new ones listed on page 34), or other activities (such as interviewing allies and information brokers or scouting around the Lucky Nimbus).

Keep track of the time it takes the characters to perform their preparations, but be lenient in the case that your players might be dawdling or wasting time on unnecessary tasks. Since this is the first time the agents have so much freedom to pursue their investigation as they like, there may be some growing pains at first, of which you should be forgiving.

After 3 days of downtime, on the night of the Lucky Nimbus's Floating Gala, proceed to run the agents' heist as detailed under Running the Heist on page 35.

CHAPTER 2 SYNOPSIS

The agents now know that the Skinner gave the Washboard Dogs a dangerous device that Maurrisa Jonne hid in a lockbox in the Lucky Nimbus's vault. They also have the key to this lockbox—so if they can reach it, they can open it. Unfortunately, the Washboard Dogs have been banned from the casino; in addition, the casino's owner, Gage Carlyle, is not known to cooperate with law enforcement. The characters must infiltrate the casino, steal Gage's vault key, and retrieve the device without alerting Gage or his enforcers. The agents' mission is complicated by a shadowy wizard looking to get revenge on the casino owner and other unforeseeable obstacles. When the agents finally open the lockbox, they find it empty! A clue leads them to the apartment of Franca Laurentz, a former casino employee, where it becomes clear that Franca plans to use the device to release a deadly poison on Absalom!

CHAPTER 2 TREASURE

Since the agents will be undercover throughout almost all of this chapter but will still be held to police standards, there is little opportunity for them to requisition equipment for the field or secure evidence that might garner a bounty. At the very least, they may receive a few items from the interlocutor Ekimilixus, and they should be able to recover the items from Scathka once they are defeated (perhaps under the ruse of disarming them). And, of course, the characters might just earn a fortune anyway by gambling some of their earnings at any of the Lucky Nimbus's game tables.

- +1 leather armor
- +1 striking dagger
- barbed vest (page 78)
- ring of wizardry II
- wand of manifold missiles

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THE LUCKY NIMBUS AT A GLANCE

The Lucky Nimbus is an upscale casino in the Coins open 24 hours a day. It is owned by Gage Carlyle, a Coins District native who in his youth parlayed his winnings from a golem tournament into a small fortune and lucrative business enterprise seemingly overnight. More information about Gage's history can be found on page 88.

To call the Lucky Nimbus large would be an understatement. The casino spans an entire city block and has four floors: a main level with a dance hall, kitchen and bar, cashier, and most of the game tables; an opulently furnished upper floor featuring swanky private rooms (typically reserved for high rollers, the famous, and Gage's personal friends); Gage's penthouse, from which he can gaze at his small empire from behind floor-to-ceiling two-way mirrors; and the basement, which houses a security office and the casino's high-security vault. The casino is named for its thematic touches: the decorations, furnishings, and accoutrements are all themed around popular cultural myths of clouds, djinn, and other aspects of genie culture and the Elemental Plane of Air. Many such decorations borrow heavily from Katapeshi culture in particular. Although Gage has no personal ties to Katapesh, he is more than happy to capitalize on its perceived exoticism in Absalom to lend his establishment a touch of mystique.

The following are some general details about the Lucky Nimbus, followed by short descriptions of the individual areas. This should help you present the casino—and especially the Floating Gala—as an active, constantly changing environment, rather than a static locale.

Interior Lighting: The Lucky Nimbus is lit by magical lanterns that line the walls and similarly enchanted chandeliers that hang from the ceiling in the casino's larger spaces. The lanterns can be extinguished like normal fires, but reigniting them requires that their specific command word be spoken. More than a few of Gage's employees are versed in the arcane arts, and they're responsible for seeing that the lights remain on at all times.

Windows: There are no windows along the exterior walls of the Lucky Nimbus, so that the gamblers can't tell what time it is outside. Two-way

mirrors line the walls of Gage's penthouse and the private VIP rooms so that the rich can gaze down upon the riffraff but not expose themselves in the process.

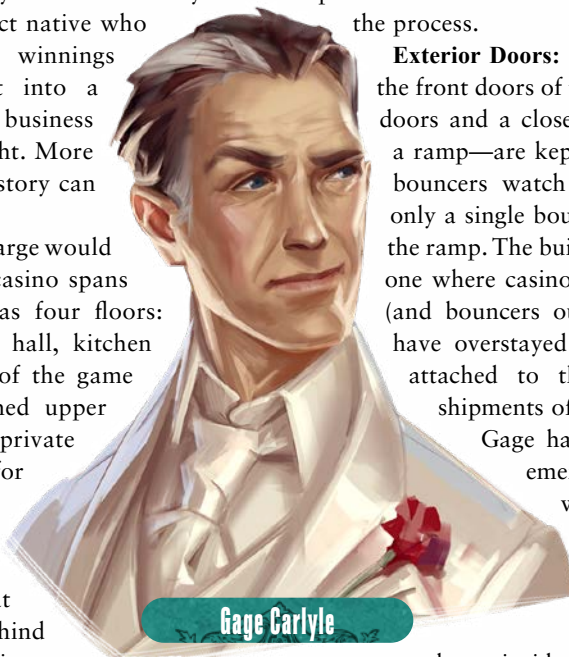
Exterior Doors: During the Floating Gala, the front doors of the casino—a set of double doors and a close-by side door attached to a ramp—are kept propped open. A pair of bouncers watch the double doors, while only a single bouncer guards the door near the ramp. The building has two rear doors—one where casino employees enter and exit (and bouncers oust disruptive guests who have overstayed their welcome), and one attached to the kitchen for receiving shipments of food and alcohol. Finally, Gage had the foresight to put an emergency exit on the western wall of the dance hall. All of these doors are locked from the inside with simple locks.

Interior Doors: The doors inside the casino indicate areas restricted to employees. Most are locked as noted in the area descriptions, with the quality of each lock referring to the description of locks on page 290 of the *Core Rulebook*. The only doors accessible to customers are those that open to the bathrooms.

Casino Employees: Gage employs a wide roster of card dealers, guards, bouncers, cashiers, bartenders, and kitchen staff, plus a range of entertainers he hires for special events. In general, assume that each game table has at least one dealer and that there are a few bouncers patrolling the main casino floor at any given time. There are fewer dealers and bouncers on the upper floor.

All employees work 8-hour shifts, though there are no shift changes scheduled during the Floating Gala. Each employee gets a short break after 4 hours of work. Gage treats his staff well; most of his workers consider themselves lucky and are thus unwilling to risk their jobs to perform major favors for strangers, though a few are willing to accept sizable bribes in exchange for looking the other way or "forgetting" to close a back door.

The following stats can be used for Gage's bouncers or guards in the case of a combat encounter.



Gage Carlyle

CASINO BOUNCER

CREATURE 8

UNCOMMON N MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +20

Languages Common



Skills Athletics +20, Diplomacy +15, Intimidation +19, Society +16

Str +4, **Dex** +2, **Con** +5, **Int** +0, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +1

Items chain shirt, +1 striking sap

AC 27; **Fort** +19, **Ref** +13, **Will** +13

HP 150

Attack of Opportunity ⤴

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ fist +20 (agile, finesse, nonlethal, unarmed),

Damage 2d6+6 bludgeoning plus Grab

Melee ♦ sap +21 (agile, magical, nonlethal), **Damage**

2d6+6 bludgeoning

Escort from the Premises ♦♦ **Requirements** The casino bouncer has Grabbed a Medium or smaller target and is wielding a nonlethal weapon in the other hand; **Effect** The casino bouncer makes a Strike against the grabbed target with the nonlethal weapon. If the Strike hits, it deals damage as usual and the casino bouncer moves the target 5 feet (this is forced movement) and Steps into the space the target had just occupied.

Intimidating Stare ♦ (concentrate, emotion, mental, visual) The casino bouncer attempts to Demoralize a creature with a mere glance. The casino bouncer doesn't take a penalty to their Intimidation check if the target doesn't speak the same language. If the bouncer rolls a critical success, the target can't reduce the value of its frightened condition until 1d4 rounds have passed.

Cleaning Staff: Once a week, Gage Carlyle hires a local group of cleaners to go through the casino with brooms, mops, fabric cleaner, and metal polish. The next cleaning is scheduled for the night before the Floating Gala. The cleaners are allowed access to every part of the casino, including Gage's apartment, but not the vault. The group is always accompanied by one of the bouncers on duty. The cleaners scrub out the washrooms by themselves, however, with the bouncer waiting just outside. When they reach the top floor, Gage unlocks his apartment door and walks them into his apartment with the bouncer. The cleaners don't take long to clean the apartment, as Gage tends to keep the place tidy.

Casino Guests: While the Lucky Nimbus is typically open to the public and thus serves all manner of both aristocrats and commoners (as long as they observe the dress code, that is), the Floating Gala is an

invitation-only event. The casino is busiest in the evenings, with guests at every table and several people mingling at the bar. People start to trickle out at midnight; by the early morning hours, only the most diehard gamblers remain. The casino is fairly quiet during the day, but still does enough business to keep the dealers occupied. Those who gamble on the first floor are citizens and tourists of humble means, while the patrons of the second floor consist of wealthy merchants, minor nobles, and adventurers who have earned a few moments in the public spotlight.

Weapons Policy: Weapons and similar contraband are forbidden in the Lucky Nimbus except by employees, though this doesn't stop guests from sneaking in the occasional dagger or wand under their jackets or dresses. Anyone seen brandishing a weapon is immediately removed from the premises by force, though certain extenuating circumstances (such as if the agents draw weapons to fight off the svartalfar killers; page 38) might inspire the

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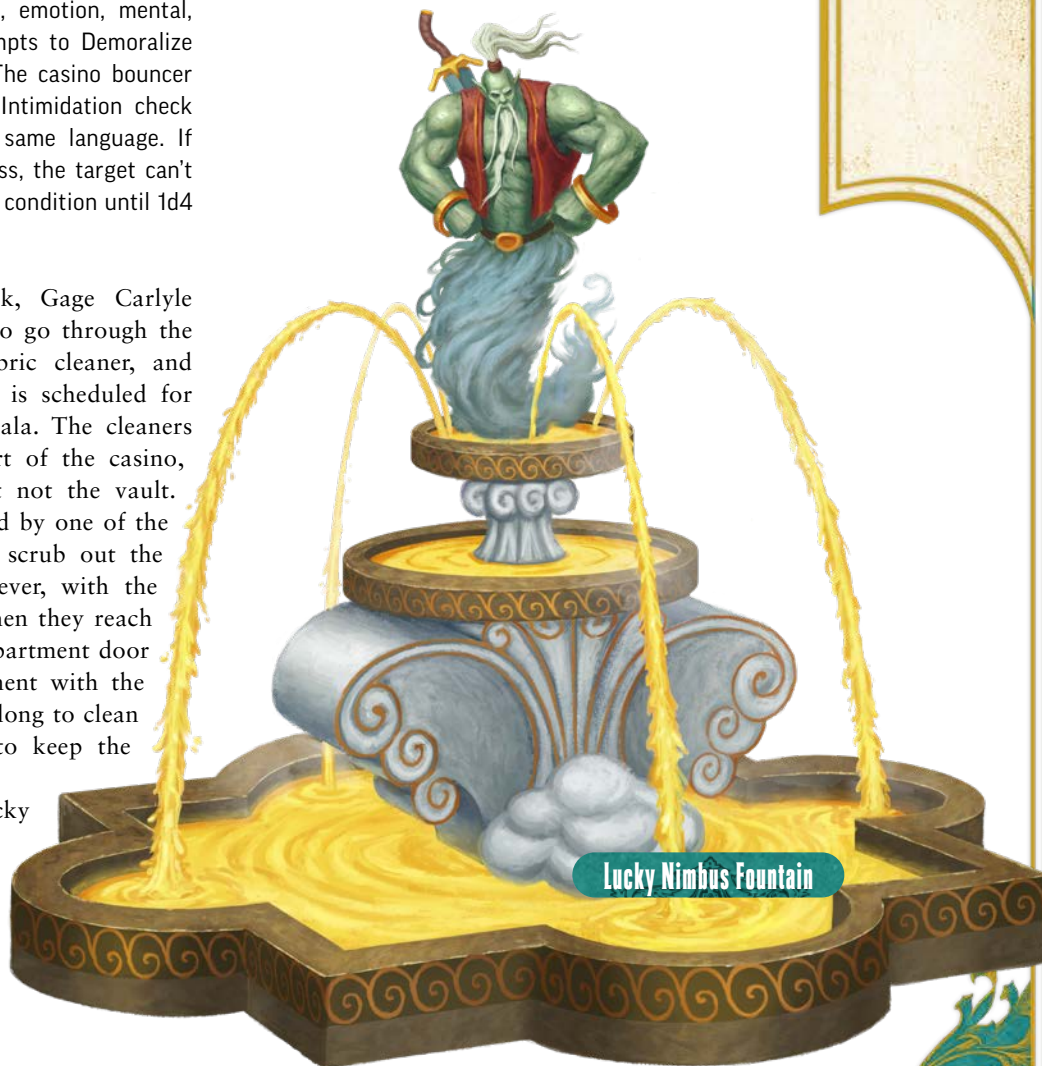
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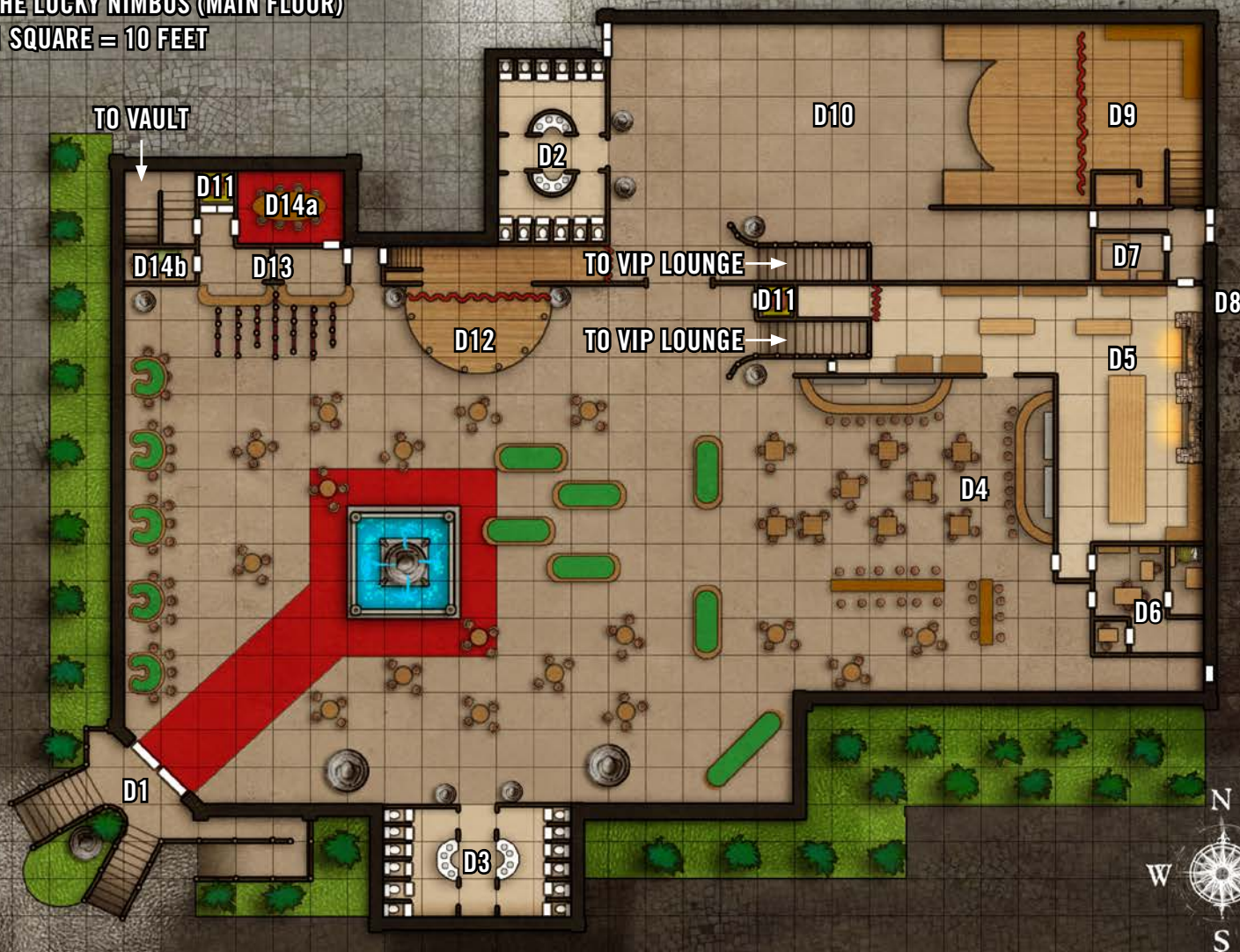
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Lucky Nimbus Fountain

THE LUCKY NIMBUS (MAIN FLOOR)

1 SQUARE = 10 FEET



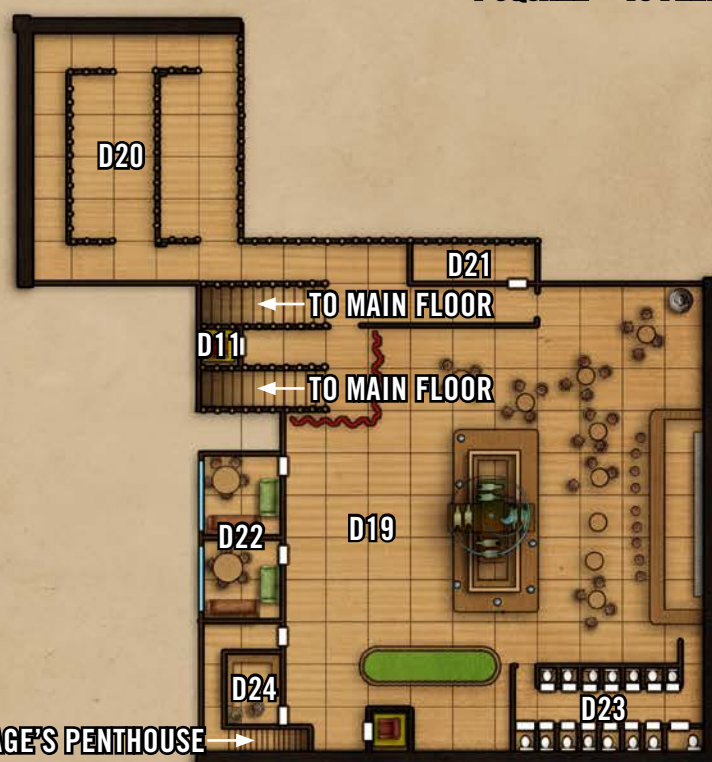
THE LUCKY NIMBUS (GAGE'S PENTHOUSE)

1 SQUARE = 10 FEET



THE LUCKY NIMBUS (VIP LOUNGE)

1 SQUARE = 10 FEET



TO MAIN FLOOR

THE LUCKY NIMBUS (VAULT)

1 SQUARE = 10 FEET



TO GAGE'S PENTHOUSE



bouncers and Gage to look the other way just this once.

THE LUCKY NIMBUS

The Lucky Nimbus can take many forms depending on the occasion. The descriptions below refer specifically to the establishment as it's laid out during the Floating Gala.

D1. Entryway: The casino's main entry is an opulent double door accessible via two staircases. The staircases flank a massive gilded statue of a djinn sitting merrily in lotus pose atop a fluffy cloud. There is no placard or sign to label the establishment. The decorative stone pillars on either side of the doorway are carved to resemble cascading golden coins tumbling from unseen hands. To the east, a smooth stone ramp allows an alternative method of ingress for those who can't use the stairs.

D2. Casino Floor: The largest area in the casino is its massive games floor where patrons can play a variety of games of chance for different buy-ins. The floor is covered in a fine red carpet trimmed with gold, and the gilded fixtures along the walls sparkle luxuriously. The center of the vast hall features an impressively large fountain display that features a djinn statue, decidedly less jovial than the one out front, sitting atop a bloom of conjured silver clouds that sprinkle rain down into the surrounding basin. Depending on the time of day, the Lucky Nimbus's casino floor is either bustling with dozens of patrons having a good time or solemnly quiet with the desperation of a few dedicated gamblers. Regardless, the gaudy fountain is always illuminated with glorious amber light.

In addition to small stand-up tables with stools for familiar games like blackjack and poker, the casino floor sports a number of sit-down tables specifically designed for games of golem and boulder. Each table has a dedicated dealer. In the southeastern corner of the casino floor, a caller is constantly running games of century and calling the drawn numbers from behind a broad table. See pages 76–77 for the description and rules for golem, boulder, and century.

Bouncers patrol the casino floor at all times. They walk a circuit around the massive room and look

out for potential cheats, troublemakers, or dealers in need of aid. Gage Carlyle also occasionally wanders through the casino floor to greet his patrons, check in with bouncers, and generally keep an eye on his business, though he mostly sticks to the VIP area upstairs.

Each table holds a small briefcase containing the tokens the house takes in. It's securely locked with a good lock and has a small slot in which the dealer can insert (but not remove) tokens. Whenever the dealer notices their case is almost full, they flag down a nearby bouncer. The bouncer brings an empty box to the table, swaps the boxes, and takes the full box down to the basement counting room.

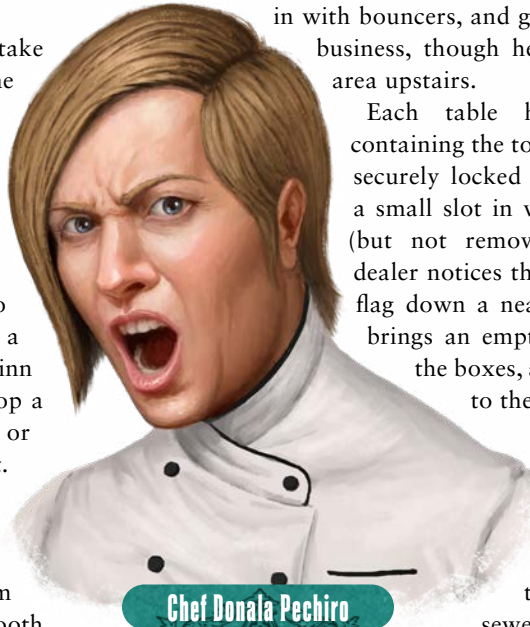
D3. Bathrooms: Each of the areas marked **D3** are identical garderobes. Each garderobe contains six partitioned toilets that lead to Absalom's sewer network. Outside the

garderobes are shallow steel basins with hand-pumps connected to hidden barrels of clean water. A bowl of sweet-smelling potpourri sits on a wooden table in the center of the hall dividing the garderobes to ward off any unpleasant smells.

D4. Bar: Liquor is poured liberally at both of the Lucky Nimbus's broad mahogany bars. Patrons are free to sit on a barstool or take their drinks to the casino floor. The tables throughout the bar area seat diners who have ordered meals from the kitchen. When they get a spare moment, kitchen staff clear the square tables of empty mugs and occasionally sweep the casino floor to pick up stray trash and used drinkware.

The beverages available here include the ones listed in the Basic Services and Consumables table of the *Core Rulebook* at the same prices. Most customers enjoy simple mugs of Kortosian ale or purchase a bottle of wine to share with their friends, but the Lucky Nimbus offers a wide variety of other alcoholic beverages, including Garundi rum, Taldan amaro, and even berry liqueurs from the Galtan border. A mixed drink made with one of these alcohols costs 5 cp.

D5. Kitchen: The atmosphere within the incredibly spacious Lucky Nimbus kitchen is nearly always suffused with a frantic and angry energy. Narrow windows line the top of the eastern wall and vent to the alleyway. The ample counter space along the walls, along with wide countertop islands, is almost



Chef Donala Pechiro

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always covered in an assortment of cutting boards, knives, pots and pans, and other cooking utensils. In the far western corner of the kitchen is the larder, accessible via a curtain and a steep stepladder. The north door leads out to a short hallway that connects to the storage room, ballroom, and alleyway.

Gage's talented private cook and the head chef of the Lucky Nimbus, **Donala Pechiro** (LN female human chef 2), runs a tight kitchen, but her tendency to publicly berate employees at the slightest provocation means that only the most desperate (or simply unwitting) aspiring chefs take a job under her management.

Although the Lucky Nimbus is well known among locals for its delicious "authentic" Katapeshi cuisine, anyone with even a passing familiarity of

Katapeshi food can see the gussied-up pub grub for what it is.

D6. Security Office: Gage's chief security officer, **Edrer Gutsking** (Lucky Nimbus NPCs on page 31), oversees the operations of all the casino's guards and bouncers from this area, which also includes Gutsking's modest living quarters (little more than a bed and wardrobe) and an interrogation chamber (which has seen some grisly things in its day). The rest of the space is jammed with a few cluttered bookshelves, paper-strewn desks, and wooden chairs to seat casino patrons under investigation. The door in the southeastern corner of the security office is near to the rear exit door, making it easy for bouncers to eject unsavory customers into the cold alley.

D7. Storage Room: This cramped space has long shelves that run the room's length, plus a couple of barrels along the western wall. The shelves hold bottles of liquor, extra mugs and dishware, spare kitchen utensils, and cleaning supplies such as buckets and mops. The barrels hold water, which the casino receives a fresh supply of every week.

D8. Back Alley: A local peasant child keeps the wide alleyway behind the Lucky Nimbus clean for a copper a day, though she makes herself scarce whenever one of the bouncers tosses out an unruly customer. The alley is mainly used for the delivery of food and alcohol and for large-scale entertainment troupes who have a lot of gear to transport onto the Nimbus's main stage.

D9. Backstage: Since the Lucky Nimbus is liable to put on just about any type of show as long as it brings in customers, its backstage area is chock full of expensive props, cheap instruments, and a wide variety of miscellany accumulated over years of performances. The stage manager, **Delson Famari** (LN male human bard 8), is a Chelaxian émigré with a no-nonsense approach to hiring talent—except when the talent happens to have ties to the Chelaxian nobility, in which case he is a shameless sycophant.

D10. Ballroom: Gage has invited a number of talented dancers to his soiree, and he hopes that an ample dance floor will encourage many more of his guests



Edrer Gutsking



to participate in high-class debauchery. For the Floating Gala's musical talent, he has hired a troupe called Brumal and the Primarchs, an eight-piece band of trumpeters, trombonists, and drummers playing upbeat, brassy renditions of Absalom's most popular waltzes and suites as well as a few slow Kortosian folk songs from around the island. Between hour-long sets, the night's emcee, Gage's cousin-in-law Jacomir, tells comical stories (to a mostly unamused crowd) and encourages attendees to grab another drink at the bar.

D11. Flying Chair: When Gage's head security officer Edrer lost the use of his legs, the business mogul reoutfitted his establishment with the latest technology so that his closest friend could continue to access the entire building. The "flying chairs" situated around the casino are the most notable result of this effort. Each of these small wooden chambers is rigged to an intricate system of ropes and pulleys. An individual can enter the room and pull a nearby rope to raise or lower the entire room like a giant dumbwaiter.

The only flying chair open to the public is located near the staircases to the VIP lounge. Due to the delicate nature of the flying chair's mechanisms, Gage asks that anyone using the flying chair (excepting Edrer, of course) first seek the assistance of a staff member.

D12. Small Stage: The main stage in the ballroom is reserved for big-name performers, musical groups, and troupes that can draw a crowd. This stage, on the other hand, is reserved for the second-rate entertainment—imitators, comedians, and solo musicians whose job is to fill the gaps of silence on the casino floor and little more. Even Gage doesn't pay much mind to whoever currently commands the small stage. On the night of the Floating Gala, a rotation of minor (but still reputable) Absalom-based bands is scheduled to play on the stage.

D13. Cashier: Up to eight cashiers occupy the two booths here, where casino patrons can exchange their cash for tokens or vice-versa. Changing cash to tokens is free, but changing tokens to cash entails a 1% fee. The Lucky Nimbus's game tokens, which are made of a light-blue cobalt alloy ringed in silver, are notoriously difficult to counterfeit. Two casino bouncers stand in the spaces behind the cashier counters, keeping their eyes on the cashiers as much as the customers.

D14. Cashier Back Rooms: The large employee-only room north of the cashier stations (D14a) features a large round table from which employees count small quantities of the casino's earnings in

gold and silver and also keep detailed logs of the exchange of cash and tokens (larger winnings, losses, and transactions are handled by the employees in the downstairs counting room, area D16). The smaller room, D14b, is likewise restricted to employees; it is used variously for private meetings and as a quiet break room for employees who need a moment off their feet.

D15. Security Office and Holding Area: This broad chamber serves a variety of functions. In the western half, a flying chair allows Edrer to access the casino's basement-level security office, where bouncers and guards can eat and nap out of sight of the clientele and change in and out of their uniforms between shifts. During the Floating Gala, all hands are on deck, so there are only a few bouncers snoozing in this room and one senior guard filling out paperwork.

The long hallway to the east is divided lengthwise with durable floor-to-ceiling iron bars. This is where the most egregious casino offenders are placed while the security staff wait for Token Guard officers to arrive and arrest them properly. The Token Guard makes a tidy sum arresting cheats and debtors taken in by Gage's private guards, and so they're content to ignore the blurry legal line that the Lucky Nimbus walks in detaining its customers.

D16. Counting Room: Two long counters occupy the center of this room. Each counter is topped with scales bought from the local Church of Abadar and intricate clockwork coin- and token-counting devices commissioned from the Clockwork Cathedral. Massive ledgers fill the oak bookshelves that line the walls, and a funnel-shaped metal chute juts from the southern wall, where counted sums are poured down and into a large safe in the vault. A single guard stands near the door of the counting room; only the senior-most guards and those who have proven their loyalty time and again are given this shift.

D17. Vault Door: Two guards are stationed just outside the casino's vault door, ensuring that no unauthorized personnel attempt to enter the vault. The guards aggressively question anyone not personally accompanied by Gage; see the obstacles listed under Objective 2: Open the Lockbox on page 39 for more information on the challenges posed by the vault door.

D18. Vault: This massive, irregularly shaped vault features dozens of lockboxes, both small and large, along the walls of two rectangular sections. An oversized marble countertop takes up the center of the eastern section, whereas the middle of

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INFILTRATION RULES

The full rules for the infiltration subsystem used throughout this chapter are found starting on page 160 of the *Pathfinder Gamemastery Guide* or in the Pathfinder Reference Document at www.paizo.com/prd. The terms "infiltration" and "heist" are used interchangeably throughout this chapter.

the western section is left empty for odd-sized or unusually large items.

This is the Lucky Nimbus's secure vault, where Gage Carlyle keeps the casino's winnings, holds collateral for customers who have taken out a loan from the bank, and stores valuable items for his most prestigious patrons. Each of the lockboxes requires two keys to unlock: the master key held by Gage and a unique key for each receptacle. Each of the two locks requires three successful DC 32 Thievery checks to Disable a Device to open.

If the agents have the Washboard Dogs' key, it's marked with the number "121." The accompanying lockbox is located along the westernmost wall.

D19. VIP Lounge: A black velvet curtain at the top of these stairs demarcates the VIP lounge. A casino bouncer stands by the gap in the curtains, holding a clipboard with a written list of the guests allowed through. She stoically checks people's names as they enter and adamantly doesn't allow in anyone not on the list. For the Floating Gala, Gage has made sure to only give VIP status to the powerful politicians, nobles, and celebrities with whom he wishes to curry favor. Gage might add names to this list throughout the night—especially if he meets particularly wealthy or influential individuals on the bottom floor he deems worthy of finer treatment.

The massive VIP lounge is itself the size of a small casino. The center of the lounge is dominated by an incredible bar that features rare and imported liquors and wines, the cheapest glass of which is a shocking 10 gp. Another bar lines the eastern wall, and servers meander through the lounge to check on guests and refill drinks.

A handful of casino dealers work here, each stationed at a golem table with numerous chips at hand, though most VIPs prefer to throw their money around on the oversized boulder table to the north. A pair of bouncers patrol the room, but they are notably less vigilant than their coworkers on the casino floor since VIP guests don't typically cause much trouble; the bouncers' main priority is to stop people from trying to enter the western hallway to Gage's apartment (area **D25**).

D20. Balcony: During the Floating Gala, the upper level of the ballroom is open to all guests. Fine wooden banisters separate the various levels of the balcony, which gradually rise near the back to ensure everyone in attendance has a view of the stage. Overserved guests have been known to tumble off the balcony on occasion, and Gage has yet to figure out a suitable way of preventing this possibility.

D21. Private Balcony: Gage and his most honored guests view performances from this sparse but pristine booth. The door is locked at all times, though most bouncers have a key to it in case they need to fetch Gage during a performance.

D22. Private Rooms: The walls of these cozy private rooms are draped in black velvet, muffling much of the sound from the rest of the casino and almost absorbing the light given off by the rooms' silver sconces. Each is furnished with a low leather sectional couch, a glass-topped coffee table, and a few fine card tables with matching chairs. The wide one-way mirror to the west offers guests a view of the casino floor while also ensuring their privacy. VIP guests can reserve these rooms for private games or to discuss business matters, though they are expected to purchase numerous expensive bottles of alcohol and choice items from the kitchen while occupying a room for any significant amount of time. A small magical light outside of each room lights up when the space is occupied.

There isn't much of a system as to when these rooms are allowed to be used and who can use them. They seem to operate on a first-come-first-served basis, but Gage isn't shy about asking a party to leave if another VIP guest (whom Gage deems to be more worthwhile) wants to use an occupied room. He is firm but polite about such requests, offering to buy a bottle of alcohol for the displaced party, but also bringing one of his bouncers with him to provide intimidation if necessary.

D23. VIP Bathrooms: Unlike the shared garderobes downstairs, the restrooms for VIP patrons are individual water closets, each with its own toilet, washbasin, and water barrels.

D24. Upstairs Storage: The upstairs storage room is similar to the one downstairs, but the quality of the merchandise held within is of a considerably higher caliber.

D25. Penthouse Entry: The southeastern door from the VIP lounge isn't locked, though a nearby bouncer keeps an eye out for anyone trying to slip in. It leads to a short hallway with oil paintings of the casino hanging on the walls and a broad staircase



up to another door. Gage keeps this door locked with a good lock and guarded by a trusted bouncer at all times.

D26. Gage's Penthouse: Gage Carlyle's private domicile is a combination living room, dining room, and office furnished simply but elegantly in a black, white, and polished chrome color scheme. The northern and western walls consist mainly of glass—a specially crafted two-way mirror from which Gage can gaze out at his private empire. Various leather sofas, comfortable chairs, and opulent marble tables fill the space. A glass-topped desk in the southern alcove serves as Gage's private work space where he keeps exacting ledgers of the casino's largest deals and private side-ventures. Gage never

cooks for himself—instead he has meals run up from the kitchen and delivered to his door.

Gage's wife Winnifry maintains a separate but equally fine apartment elsewhere in the Coins District. She sometimes visits Gage here, but more often Gage uses the penthouse to entertain a variety of wealthy women with whom he engages in illicit affairs. Gage's infidelity is an unspoken but open secret between him and his wife, though if Winnifry were to ever catch him in the act or lose face due to her husband's philandering, she would unleash no shortage of disruptive outrage.

D27. Gage's Bedroom: Unlike the rest of his apartment, Gage Carlyle's bedroom is an ode to comfort rather than practicality. The massive bed's mattress is thick, soft, and covered with fluffy pillows. A tall armoire, practically large enough to step inside, stands against the northern wall, across from which is a walk-in closet brimming with fine suits, wigs, and jewelry.

A painting of a seascape on the wall to the east of the armoire hides a wall safe where Gage stores his master key while he sleeps. An agent can discover the safe with a successful DC 29 Perception check and can Disable the combination lock of the safe with three successful DC 27 Thievery checks.

D28. Gage's Bathroom: The casino owner's private bathroom is among the finest in its class, complete with elegant marble tiles, barrels of specially sourced spring water, and a walk-in sauna

where Gage takes long, contemplative baths after a long day on the casino floor.

LUCKY NIMBUS NPCs

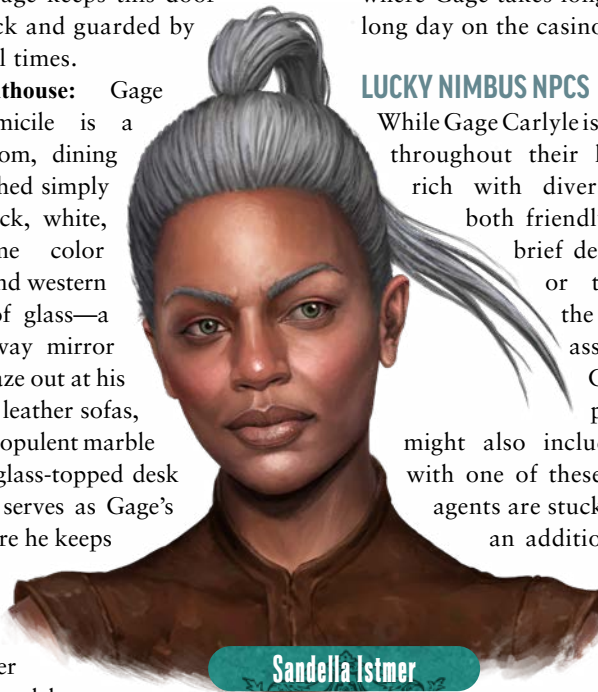
While Gage Carlyle is the agents' primary antagonist throughout their heist, the Lucky Nimbus is rich with diverse clientele and employees both friendly and adversarial. Below are brief descriptions of some secondary or tertiary NPCs with whom the Edgewatch agents might associate (such as by using the Gain Contact or Bribe Contact preparation activities). You might also include a random confrontation with one of these NPCs in the event that the agents are stuck in their preparations or need an additional challenge to increase the dramatic tension.

Gitsi Wondercosm (CN female gnome sous chef 1): Food-loving Gitsi started work in Chef Pechiro's

lightning-paced kitchen just two weeks ago and has hardly caught a wink of sleep since. Since moving to Absalom just before the start of the Radiant Festival, she has tried to turn over a new leaf and put her flighty behaviors behind her in pursuit of steady practice at a trade she enjoys. Unfortunately, Chef Pechiro's unreasonable demands have made Gitsi fear that becoming a sous chef at the Lucky Nimbus was a terrible mistake.

Gurbo Mongsley (N male human gambler 2): No one is exactly sure why Gage allows a man as disheveled and boorish as Gurbo Mongsley into his casino night after night. Mongsley's suits are always stained and wrinkled, his face pocked with aggravated blisters and warts, and his breath reeks of the cheapest whiskey money can buy. And yet, night after night, Mongsley can be found at a boulder table trying his luck with dice. Rumor has it that he's actually related to wealthy nobles, which would explain where he gets his gambling money. At any rate, Gage gives Mongsley a wide berth, leading some to speculate that the churl actually has some significant dirt on the casino owner.

Sandella Istmer (LE female human pit boss 9): Gage hired Sandella as a croupier years ago after hearing her story of her unfortunate upbringing, which bore a remarkable resemblance to his own. Since then, Sandella has worked her way up to the highest role on the casino floor, where she dresses in unassuming tunics and vests to blend in with the



Sandella Istmer

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commonfolk. Gage frequently praises her keen eye and unparalleled ability to catch would-be cheaters in the act. Unfortunately for Gage, his most trusted pit boss has been skimming money off the top for many months and apprehending so many cheats is simply one part of her long con.

Mazar Dresilis (N male human wizard 10): Prior to his undignified (in his view) role as Gage's chief magical security officer, Mazar was a high-ranking archwizard in service to reigning House Surtova in Brevo. Although many Surtovans are happy to rest on their laurels and lord over their disenchanting populace, Mazar sensed rising tensions early and arranged to abscond from his homeland before it broke into an all-out civil war. He eventually settled in Absalom and managed to squander his considerable nest-egg in a matter of years. In desperation, Mazar accepted a position as a lowly security officer for Gage's gambling empire, a role he has held for several years now. Mazar is a serious man of middle years with a gray goatee, sallow

complexion, and light brown eyes. He takes his job very seriously but secretly harbors hopes of someday returning to Brevo after the nation's noble houses have settled their decades-long shadow war.

Edrer Gutsking (LG male dwarf bodyguard 10): Edrer was one of Gage's first hires in the days after he made his fortune, and the Five Kings native has been a staunch ally and confidant to the casino owner ever since. After a would-be assassin's errant spell left Edrer unable to walk, Gage commissioned for him a clockwork wheelchair and retrofitted the Lucky Nimbus to ensure his right-hand man could access the entire facility. For Edrer's part, his injury has done little to slow him down—with his incredibly muscular upper body, Edrer can wield his massive magical warhammer, *Push*, with ease, as any who cross Gage quickly come to know.

Andu Madizi (N male human croupier/bouncer 11): Pulling double shifts for nearly three years without so much as a hint of fatigue, Andu is one of the Lucky Nimbus's best-known employees and yet a total mystery to even the casino's most frequent regulars. All that is known of Andu is that he first showed up at the Lucky Nimbus's doorstep the night after immigrating to Absalom from his war-torn homeland of Vidrian. Since then, he has proven a competent (if enigmatic) attendant to Gage's enterprise, though he never works off the clock and he is obviously pursuant of his own unknowable agenda. Already a tall man, Andu's massive Afro only amplifies his imposing affect; those who have seen his rare and inscrutable wide smile state that the expression shook them to their core.

CASING THE JOINT

As described on page 23, the agents have 3 days to prepare for their infiltration of Gage's casino. Although they might spend their time performing regular downtime activities, the majority of their preparation should be spent on preparation activities, whether those described in the *Gamemastery Guide* or the new ones presented below.

XP Award: Every time an agent succeeds or critically succeeds at a preparation activity, award each character 20 XP, to a maximum of 160 XP for the preparation phase of the infiltration.

Basic Preparation Activities

If the agents perform any of the basic preparation activities from page 163 of the *Gamemastery Guide*, consider using the following ideas to easily tailor these activities to the specifics of this adventure.





Bribe Contact: The most easily bought contacts include rank-and-file employees of the Lucky Nimbus who might “forget” to close the kitchen door or “misread” the guest list in exchange for 75 gp with a successful DC 29 Diplomacy or Deception check. (The agents must still Gain these Contacts, as usual, before Bribing them.) Fellow officers (see below) can’t be bribed, excepting the Edgewatch’s corrupt Corporal Batiste, in which case 50 gp as well as a successful DC 29 Diplomacy or DC 32 Deception check is sufficient to secure her illicit aid.

Forge Documents: An agent can forge invitations and false identities for everyone in the party with a successful DC 29 Society check. Forging a receipt for storing something in the Lucky Nimbus vault is much harder and riskier, since doing so means presenting the fake to Gage himself rather than a bouncer; doing so requires a successful DC 32 Society check to forge the receipt, plus the application of well-masked charm magic to convince Gage that he must have forgotten to keep his own copy of the receipt.

Gain Contact: The Lucky Nimbus employs over two dozen workers, including a handful of kitchen staff, numerous dealers and croupiers, several bouncers and security guards, and two pit bosses. Some possible NPCs for the players to Gain as Contacts are detailed on page 31. Gage is a fair and even generous manager, so winning over any of his employees is no mean feat; doing so requires a successful DC 29 Deception or Gambling Lore check or DC 32 Diplomacy check. In any case, an employee never does anything that would risk their job, and a contact’s aid should not drastically reduce the difficulty or suspense of the heist.

Gossip: Any number of rumors swirl around the Lucky Nimbus and its mysterious owner, making Gossip a fruitful route of inquiry while the party formulates a plan. In addition to basic details about Gage’s personality and personal history (page 88), the following are the best true rumors the agents can acquire with a successful DC 27 Diplomacy check (DC 25 if the player comes up with a fun or creative way to pursue such gossip).

- The management style of the Lucky Nimbus’s notoriously strict chef Donala Pechiro means there’s frequent employee turnover in her kitchen, and the few staff members who stick around longer than a week are overworked to the point of exhaustion.
- Although Gage’s business is entirely legitimate, someone who handles so much money doubtless has his fair share of enemies. Word on the street is that a powerful wizard recently lost a fortune

to the casino—and they’re eager to make the owner pay.

- One of the casino’s pit bosses is actually deeply corrupt and has been skimming off the top.
- A vault guard for the Lucky Nimbus recently quit without a word, though Gage has already hired a replacement.

Scout Location: The agents can, in pieces, map the entire layout of the Lucky Nimbus. Each agent must Secure a Disguise appropriate to the area of the casino they’re trying to scout—such as a fancy gown or suit to check out the VIP lounge (DC 27 Society) or a grocery purveyors’ wagon to investigate the kitchen (DC 29 Society)—before attempting this activity. Scouting the main casino area requires no check, though it still takes 1 day of downtime to get a full lay of the land. On the other hand, scouting the vault is very difficult; no disguise is necessary, but a DC 32 Stealth check is required to reach the vault door without alerting the guards (getting through the vault door is beyond the scope of Scouting the Location and should be reserved for the infiltration proper). Sleuthing around the casino building’s exterior requires no check nor downtime but imparts little information save the casino’s entrances and exits, since the structure’s windowless facade obfuscates any indication of the rooms within except for the kitchen’s brick hearth and chimney.

Secure Disguises: Undercover disguises are all but mandatory for this heist, since Gage has little love for officers of the law; conducting the infiltration in their Edgewatch uniforms is guaranteed to draw the agents ample unwanted attention. It is assumed that each agent already has a basic disguise (likely from their time at the House of the Planes in the first adventure), but Sergeant Ollo at Edgewatch Headquarters is happy to help them dress to the nines for the Floating Gala. Successfully performing this activity bolsters their cover identity with reputable alibis and a believable background story. The easiest way to augment their disguises is to tailor their outfits with high-quality materials (DC 29 Society check, or DC 27 Crafting or Performance if the agent pays 20 gp for the fine linens necessary), though assuming the identity of one of the kitchen staff is also possible (DC 32 Deception or DC 27 Cooking Lore).

Other Contacts: In addition to these and the new preparation activities (see below), the agents can recruit the aid of a fellow city guard whose favor they’ve already curried in previous adventures with 1 day of downtime by succeeding at a check. Captain Asilia, Captain Runewulf, and Captain Shristi Melipdra

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SCATHKA'S VENGEANCE

Recently, a half-elf wizard of the Arcanamirium named Scathka acquired a relic attuned to the Shadow Plane through less-than-ethical means. They believed other mages and scholars would try to steal the relic—a cursed piece of armor called the *barbed vest*—from them, and so they stored it in one of the Lucky Nimbus's lockboxes. Once they felt they were no longer in danger, Scathka planned to reclaim the relic. However, they started playing games of bounder and quickly lost all of their money. Gage gave the wizard a line of credit, declaring the relic as their collateral, but Scathka didn't win their stake back. Now, Gage is refusing to allow Scathka to have the relic until they repay their loan.

Scathka is furious about this turn of events and has enacted a particularly drastic plan to regain their relic. On the same night as the agents' heist, Scathka first sends a cadre of svartalfar assassins to eliminate Gage, then later comes with more svartalfar minions to finish the job themselves. The first attack should take place before the Edgewatch agents obtain Gage's key, and the second attack takes place as the agents are leaving the casino.

GOSSAMER AUCTION

The Floating Gala promises to host some of the richest elites this side of the globe, and because of this there will be no shortage of money bandied about. Rather than allow his guests to flaunt their wealth on mere casino games, however, Gage has also arranged for a silent auction to take place throughout the night, with the final results being publicly announced at the end of the festivities. Not only are all the attendees encouraged to take part—it would be seen as incredibly crude or outright suspicious to *not* participate.

are too well-known and lawful to offer anything but encouragement, but the Muckrucker Ziraya al-Shurati is happy to lend a hand in return for the Edgewatch's help with the smugglers in the last adventure (requiring only a DC 25 or 27 Diplomacy check, depending on how well that raid went). Depending on their previous interactions with fellow Edgewatch officers like Sergeant Ollo or Detective Skinny Bolera, the agents might be able to secure the help of one of their Edgewatch allies with a successful DC 27 Diplomacy or Legal Lore check (DC 29 if the characters haven't made a particularly strong impression on the officer or DC 32 if the officer views them in a negative light). Lieutenant Lavarsus might make for a comical ally, though he agrees to help only with a successful DC 32 Deception check. These officers never work against the agents. Corporal Batiste,

the Edgewatch's resident crooked cop, cannot be gained as a contact in this way; instead, an agent must attempt to bribe her (Bribe Contact on page 31).

New Preparation Activities

The following are other preparation activities the agents can undertake during their downtime in order to prepare for the casino infiltration. Unless specified otherwise, each activity takes one character 1 day of downtime to complete, and the benefits of a specific preparation activity cannot be gained more than once.

ACQUIRE KITCHEN JOB

DOWNTIME

Requirements This activity must be undertaken on the first downtime day while preparing for the heist.

Turnover in the Lucky Nimbus's kitchen is high, and Chef Pechiro is always hiring new bussers, servers, and assistant cooks. You can earn a place in the kitchen with a successful DC 29 Diplomacy or Society check or DC 27 Cooking Lore check. The demands of the job are so burdensome, however, that you cannot perform any other preparation activities if you successfully get the job. Unlike other preparation activities, multiple characters can attempt and benefit from this preparation activity (meaning it is possible for the entire party to earn jobs as kitchen staff).

Success You are offered a job as a busser, server, or assistant chef (your choice) and receive 1d6 gp for your work each day. You gain 1 Edge Point (*Gamemastery Guide* 163).

Failure Your application is rejected, but there are no hard feelings.

Critical Failure As failure, but you make such a poor impression that Chef Pechiro ridicules you in front of her entire staff. You start the infiltration with 1 AP.

Special At the GM's discretion, you might earn a different job at the Lucky Nimbus casino—such as an entertainer on the small stage or a bartender, golem dealer, or bounder croupier on the main floor—by making an appropriate Lore check in place of Cooking Lore. (The vetting process for bouncers is too lengthy to be viable for the heist.)

STORE SOMETHING IN THE VAULT

DOWNTIME SECRET

Requirements You've successfully Secured a Disguise.

You present yourself as a wealthy client who wants to store something valuable in Gage Carlyle's vault. To pull off this ruse, you must convincingly roleplay your interaction, make a successful DC 29 Deception check, and provide an item worth at least 500 gp (or



an item forged to look similarly expensive) as well as a non-refundable fee of 100 gp. At the GM's discretion, this activity might be easier if you have already learned some pertinent information about Gage's personality by using the Gossip preparation activity.

Critical Success Gage is flattered by your patronage. He accepts your request, provides you a receipt for the stored item, and permits you to accompany him into the vault in order to see your item is safely secured. He informs you that you can ask him to personally retrieve the item for you any time before or after the Floating Gala, but during the gala itself he will be too busy to get it for you. You gain 1 Edge Point (*Gamemastery Guide* 163).

Success As success, but Gage does not permit you to accompany him as he stores your item in the vault.

Failure Gage rejects your request, citing lack of space in the vault, though he says he'd be more than happy to work something out with you after the Floating Gala.

Critical Failure Gage rejects your request and finds your behavior suspicious. If you show up at the Floating Gala in the same disguise and Gage spots you, you automatically accrue 1 AP.

RUNNING THE HEIST

When the day of the Floating Gala arrives, it's time for the agents to put their plan into action and perform their heist. By now the players should have formulated some kind of plan for getting the lockbox and escaping unnoticed.

It is impossible to predict the exact means by which the agents will pull off their heist. In general, reward creative solutions—especially ones that are in keeping with a agent's personality and class abilities—and give your players the benefit of the doubt when they use their characters' class abilities, spells, and magic items. You might grant either a circumstance bonus on their check to overcome an obstacle or allow the player to outright skip the obstacle (such as if they use an expensive consumable item to do so). The information presented in this chapter should give you the tools you need to adjudicate any plan your players might come up with, but above all else, your goal is to encourage the players' schemes and roll with the punches—perhaps using the obstacles presented simply as guidelines—to ensure the players feel like they're pulling off a high-stakes heist thanks to their own ingenuity.

The rest of this chapter uses the infiltration rules starting on page 160 of the *Gamemastery Guide* and makes use of the following key terms.

Objectives: The characters must achieve three

objectives in order to successfully perform the heist. First, they must get Gage's master key (or a copy of it). Second, they'll need to enter the vault and retrieve the lockbox or its contents. Finally, they'll need to leave the casino without drawing attention to themselves.

Obstacles: The agents might try any number of strategies to complete their objectives; their most likely tactics are presented under each objective in the form of infiltration obstacles.

The players need not overcome every obstacle listed in order to achieve their objectives; as long as you feel the players have woven a satisfying narrative for completing a particular objective, you can feel free to remove obstacles that might otherwise disrupt the fun pace of the game. Likewise, if the players have completed all the obstacles but it wouldn't make sense for them to continue to the next objective, feel free to throw a few more obstacles or complications in their path to better pace the heist.

Infiltration Points: To complete their objectives, the agents must succeed at checks to earn Infiltration Points (IP) in order to overcome the obstacles in their way. Except as noted in the individual obstacles, the degrees of success for the checks to overcome each obstacle (and thus earn IP) are the same as those presented on page 161 of the *Gamemastery Guide*. As a reminder, a critical success earns 2 IP, a success 1 IP, a failure 1 Awareness Point (AP, explained below), and a critical failure 2 AP.

Awareness Points: The agents can accrue a maximum of 40 Awareness Points before they've failed the infiltration. Keep in mind that in addition to failing obstacles or drawing unwanted attention, the characters accrue 1 AP at the end of each round during the heist. The length of time represented by a round might fluctuate throughout the heist depending on the narrative your group is building, but in general a round is assumed to represent 10 minutes of in-world time.

The following Awareness Point scheme is specifically designed for the Lucky Nimbus heist and should be used in place of the scheme presented in the *Gamemastery Guide*.

The first time the party reaches an increment of 5 AP (so at 5 AP, 10 AP, 15 AP, and so on), Gage checks for his key (Gage on Alert, page 37) and a complication occurs (page 37).

At 10 AP, increase the DCs for obstacles by 1. At 20 AP, increase the DCs for obstacles by 2.

At 40 AP, the jig is up. The heist is a failure, but the agents should still learn about the missing bomb, earn a fraction of the normal experience awarded, and move onto the next chapter.

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Be sure to make these objectives, the Infiltration Points needed, and the penalties for accruing too many Awareness Points clear to your players as they're formulating their plan.

Opportunities: Whenever your players pull off a particular ingenious scheme, really lean into the roleplaying, or simply want to try an interesting tactic for accomplishing their objective, you should allow them to take advantage of an opportunity. Feel free to devise your own opportunities for your players' tactics or use those presented under Opportunities, below.

Complications: As the agents accrue Awareness Points (page 35), they might trigger complications, which you can draw from the list on page 37 or make up on the fly as needed. In addition to when the party reaches certain AP thresholds, you can impose a suitable complication if a player botches a particularly audacious plan—such as rolling a critical failure on a check to palm a card in a game of golem—or insert a complication simply to ratchet up the tension or slow down the pace of the heist.

OPPORTUNITIES

For ease of reference, below is a list of all the infiltration opportunities that the agents might take advantage of throughout the heist. Some opportunities make more sense at different points of the heist than others. If your players devise creative plans not accounted for in this text (and they will), use the opportunities below as baselines to adjudicate the benefits of their plans.

CREATE A DIVERSION

OPPORTUNITY

By creating a sufficiently distracting diversion, an agent can reduce the party's accrued Awareness Points. To Create a Diversion, a character must attempt any suitable DC 27 skill check (decided on by you and the player). Every time the same character attempts to Create a Diversion, the DC of the check (regardless of if it's the same skill) is increased by 2.

Critical Success The party's accrued AP total is reduced by 2.

Success The party's accrued AP total is reduced by 1.

Failure The party accrues 1 AP.

Critical Failure The party accrues 1 AP and Gage's bodyguards keep an eye on the agent, increasing the DC of their checks to overcome obstacles by 1 for the next 1d4 rounds.

DISTRACT GAGE

OPPORTUNITY

Requirements The character successfully completed the Attract Gage's Attention obstacle (page 38) and has already stolen Gage's key.

To prevent Gage from checking for his key after the

characters take it, an agent can attempt to distract the casino owner from thinking about his establishment's security measures.

A character can attempt any type of check (or use an item, spell, or other ability) you deem appropriate or creative enough to Distract Gage and can do so any number of times. The DC of the check to Distract Gage is 27. However, each time the character makes the same type of check (or uses the same item, spell, or other ability) to Distract Gage, the DC of the check increases by 2.

Critical Success The character manages to distract Gage to such a degree that he doesn't even think to check for his key until the party accrues the next increment of 5 Awareness Points.

Success The character successfully distracts Gage, who doesn't check for his key this round.

Failure Gage is not distracted and might check for his key, but the character can reattempt this obstacle.

Critical Failure Gage loses interest in the character, and that character cannot try to Distract Gage again.

IMPERSONATE GAGE

OPPORTUNITY

A character can cause considerable confusion (and thus create an opening for the party) by impersonating Gage through clever use of a disguise, either mundane or magical. A character can attempt this opportunity at any point, though the ruse is risky: Each time the impersonating character interacts with a guard, bodyguard, or bouncer, the party automatically accrues 1 Awareness Point. In exchange, the character can roll a Deception check in place of any of the listed checks to overcome a particular obstacle (as long as doing so would make sense, of course, per GM discretion; the most obvious application of the disguise is bypassing the vault guards obstacle on page 39). However, if at any time Gage himself sees the impersonator, the party has 1 round to respond to the disaster or the heist is a failure.

PLAY A GAME

OPPORTUNITY

At a casino like the Lucky Nimbus, one of the best ways to blend in is to play a game or two. Each player should specify whether or not they are participating and, if so, the amount they are wagering. You can simulate any of the casino games presented in the Adventure Toolbox (pages 76–77) by actually playing them at the table with a deck of cards or dice. Alternatively, you can simplify these games by reducing them to simple skill checks, comparing the results of all the bidders' Deception or Games Lore checks for golem or bouncer (century is all luck-based, so skill checks wouldn't make sense for that game). The minimum bid for any game is 1 gp, but you might have NPC players bid as much as 50 or even 100



gp to drastically raise the stakes. In any case, a player might try to palm a card or pass a secret message to an ally with a DC 27 Thievery check or a DC 25 Deception check.

Critical Success The player wins the hand so grandly that it attracts positive attention from nearby spectators. The player earns 1 IP, which must be used before the end of the round or it is forfeited.

Success The player succeeds at cheating and wins the hand. Multiple subsequent successes might generate Infiltration Points, as above, according to the GM's discretion.

Failure The player fails to cheat.

Critical Failure The player is banned from further games, and the party accrues 2 AP.



Gurbo Mongsley

COMPLICATIONS

The following complications might occur throughout the heist. Unless otherwise stated, the players automatically resolve complications even if they fail the check to overcome it; if they fail their check they accrue 1 Awareness Point, or if they critically fail they accrue 2 Awareness Points.

ALARM SOUNDED

COMPLICATION

Trigger The characters fail to overcome the Vault Alarm obstacle.

Overcome DC 29 Deception or Diplomacy

A silent alarm sounds in the mind of Gage's chief magical security officer, Mazar, who rallies his fellow security guards and conducts a bottom-to-top search of the building, starting at the vault. Until they identify the cause of the tripped alarm, the guards block the exits and don't let anyone enter or exit the casino. Until the agents overcome this complication—such as by bluffing that a mouse or magical anomaly tripped the alarm or by knocking out Mazar and impersonating him—they accrue 2 AP (instead of 1 AP) each round of the infiltration. The characters need not address this complication immediately (that is, they can continue overcoming obstacles while this complication is active), but it behooves the players to take care of it sooner rather than later.

AGGRESSIVE MINGLERS

COMPLICATION

Trigger The agents reach a multiple of 5 Awareness Points for the first time while in the casino.

Overcome DC 27 Performance or DC 29 Diplomacy or Intimidation

The agents have garnered some unwanted attention from overeager blowhards and schmoozers. These gadabouts are all too eager to dominate the agents' time with incessant blathering or questions that might blow their cover.

DRUNKEN GAMBLER COMPLICATION

Trigger The agents reach a multiple of 5 AP for the first time while in the casino.

Overcome DC 32 Intimidation or pay the gambler 200 gp

A badly inebricated guest has decided to make one of the agents their new best friend. This complication persists until it is overcome. The player can continue to conduct their heist without addressing this complication, but as long

as the drunkard clings to the character, the DC of any Deception, Diplomacy, Intimidation, or Performance check to overcome an obstacle is increased to 32. Thankfully, other patrons recognize the sorry situation of the character in question: if the player rolls one of the aforementioned checks and gets a critical failure, they accrue only 1 AP instead of the usual 2.

GAGE ON ALERT

COMPLICATION

Trigger Gage realizes his key is missing (he typically checks for it once for every 5 AP the players accrue).

Overcome DC 29 Diplomacy or Performance or DC 32 Deception

Gage goes downstairs to alert Mazar—his chief magical security officer—of the security breach, causing the Alarm Sounded complication to occur in 2 rounds unless the agents take care of this complication before then. Gage cannot be distracted as long as he knows the key is missing, though he might be tricked into believing that he simply dropped it or forgot it in his private safe.

OBJECTIVE 1: GET GAGE'S KEY

Gage Carlyle carries his master key, which is needed to unlock both the casino's vault and the lockboxes within, on his person while he is awake, in a small pocket on the front of his vest on a thin silver chain attached to one of his vest's buttons. Whenever he retires for bed or disrobes to bathe, Gage places the key in his personal safe (in area D27). The agents must acquire the key before they proceed to the vault's interior.

XP Award: When the agents get Gage's master key, award each character a 160 XP story award.

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Obstacles

The following obstacles are likely to come up as the agents try to steal Gage's keys.

GUEST LIST

OBSTACLE

Infiltration Points 1 (individual); **Overcome** DC 27 Deception or Diplomacy or DC 29 Stealth

To enter the Lucky Nimbus during the Floating Gala, each agent must get past the two bouncers at the front door, one of whom checks each entrant's name against Gage's exclusive guest list.

BIDDING AT THE AUCTION

OBSTACLE

Infiltration Points 1 (individual); **Overcome** DC 27 Games Lore, DC 29 Society, or DC 32 Deception

As a sort of "entry fee," every guest to the Floating Gala must make a reasonable bid at the Gossamer Auction—a fancy name for a silent auction conducted throughout the night in the corner of the casino's ballroom. While some of the money collected will go toward paying for the night's grand function, Gage is not a total narcissist and has a fair sense of optics; the majority of the proceeds from the auction will benefit the Sacred Bulwark Foundation, a charity organized by Absalom's church of Iomedae to benefit the victims and families of the Fiendflesh Siege.

Each agent receives one chance to make a skill check to overcome this obstacle; a success awards the necessary Infiltration Point and indicates that the character was able to bid shrewdly enough that they meet the minimum bid but do not win the prize, and the character doesn't have to spend their gp. On a failure, the character must make a bid of at least 100 gp toward a prize that they will receive at the end of the auction. (A character can choose to voluntarily fail if they want to legitimately make a bid.) The prizes include minor paintings, sculptures, and books donated by attendees from far-off nations such as the Lands of the Linnorm Kings, Jalmeray, and even Minkai in Tian Xia, the exact descriptions of which are left to you to describe as would most entice your players.

Each bidder (thus, each gala guest) must stick around for the results of the silent auction (see the Auction Results obstacle on page 42) in order to avoid arousing suspicion.

ATTRACT GAGE'S ATTENTION

OBSTACLE

Infiltration Points 3 (group); **Overcome** DC 27 Diplomacy, Games Lore, or Society

Gage is too busy to give time to each of his guests. In order to draw his focus, the agents must attract positive attention to themselves, such as by repeatedly winning at a high-stakes casino game in Gage's presence, bidding exorbitant sums at the Gossamer Auction, or buying a round of drinks for the entire house. If all else fails, after the Shadow Strike obstacle (see below), Gage approaches the agents to thank them for successfully defeating or driving off the svartalfars.

GAGE'S BODYGUARDS

OBSTACLE

Infiltration Points 2 (group); **Overcome** DC 29 Thievery or DC 32 Deception or Diplomacy

Except while in his private penthouse, Gage is always accompanied by two bodyguards (use the stats for a casino bouncer from page 24 with the elite adjustment from page 6 of the *Pathfinder Bestiary*). A third guard stands at attention at the entrance to Gage's penthouse at all times. Gage might send one of his bodyguards to investigate some disturbance on the casino floor, but rarely does he allow himself to be without at least one guard if he can help it. An Edgewatch agent might successfully overcome this obstacle—thereby getting close enough to Gage to pickpocket his key—by sufficiently tempting Gage to speak in private, causing a significant enough distraction to attract the bodyguards' attention, secretly poisoning a bodyguard, or other creative means.



SHADOW STRIKE

OBSTACLE

Infiltration Points 4 (group); **Overcome** DC 27 Acrobatics or Athletics, DC 29 Deception or Intimidation, or combat

The wizard Scathka has employed a cadre of svartalfar assassins from the Shadow Plane to help retrieve Scathka's relic, which is stored in the casino's vault (sidebar on page 34). Before the Edgewatch agents acquire Gage's key, four of these enigmatic killers fight their way through the casino's front door and attack Gage in a noisy show of force. Scathka doesn't expect these svartalfar assassins to be able to kill Gage outright, but the wizard does think they will scare the casino owner into returning the magical item.

The svartalfars' plan is to disrupt the night's merriment, fire a few crossbow bolts into Gage, and maybe kill one or two of Gage's bouncers before retreating back into the night. They aren't expecting interference from the agents. Each svartalfar retreats back out the front door if reduced to fewer than 50 Hit Points or after 5 rounds



of combat, whichever comes first, taking parting shots with their spells if possible.

When the fight begins, Gage's bodyguards escort him behind the bar, where the three of them crouch until it's over. The occupants of the second floor remain where they are. More bouncers lead the dealers and the other patrons toward the restrooms, but at your discretion, one or two of the bouncers might attempt to engage the svartalfars in combat. They should be generally ineffective to allow the agents to take the spotlight.

SVARTALFAR KILLERS (4) CREATURE 8

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Initiative Perception +16

If the Edgewatch agents defeat or drive off the svartalfars, award them encounter XP as appropriate. In this case, Gage Carlyle comes out from hiding to thank them profusely. If the agents have already made an impression on Gage, this final push might be enough for them to get close enough to steal his key.

STEAL GAGE'S KEY OBSTACLE

Infiltration Points 3 (individual); **Overcome** DC 32
Acrobatics, Deception, or Thievery

The main objective of this part of the heist is to steal Gage's vault key. You should encourage the players to roleplay their interaction with Gage and ask them to describe in detail how they subtly snatch the key. For particularly creative schemes, consider lowering the DC of the check to overcome this obstacle in addition to the DC reductions below.

Lowering the Obstacle's DC: The DC of the check to overcome this obstacle is reduced by 2 (to a minimum DC of 26) for each of the following obstacles that the agents have already overcome: Attract Gage's Attention, Gage's Bodyguards, and Shadow Strike.

OBJECTIVE 2: OPEN THE LOCKBOX

Once one of them has the key, the agents must find a way down to the Lucky Nimbus vault door, sneak past its guards, and get into the vault. In the vault, they'll need to interact with an otherworldly intruder before finally retrieving the contents of Maurrisa Jonne's lockbox. When they see that the lockbox's contents are missing, the agents need to act fast to find out who took the device and get out of the vault without triggering its alarm.

If at any time Gage notices that his key is missing (generally once for every 5 AP the party accrues; see the Awareness Points as described on page 35), he heightens security near the vault, immediately triggering the Gage on Alert complication (page 37).

While some of the obstacles below are listed as individual obstacles, not every character needs to be present to infiltrate the vault and secure the lockbox; only the characters attempting to get the lockbox need overcome these individual obstacles. Indeed, the heist might be easier for the agents if one or two of them remain on the casino floor to distract Gage while the others attempt to get the lockbox. Make sure that the players understand this option so they can formulate their plan accordingly.

XP Award: For reaching the vault and opening Maurrisa Jonne's lockbox, award each agent a 160 XP story award.

Obstacles

The following obstacles stand in the way of the agents as they attempt to claim the lockbox.

SNEAK DOWNSTAIRS OBSTACLE

Infiltration Points 1 (individual); **Overcome** DC 27
Deception, Diplomacy, or Intimidation or DC 29
Stealth

Getting past the cashiers—whose responsibilities supposedly include watching the hallway to the vault staircase (despite their complete lack of weapons or martial training)—is a relatively simple matter, and can be accomplished with little more than a stern look or well-timed dash through the swinging door to the stairwell.

VAULT GUARDS OBSTACLE

Infiltration Points 2 (group); **Overcome** DC 29 Athletics or
Stealth or combat

The two guards in charge of monitoring the hallway to the vault are some of Gage's most dangerous and highly skilled employees. They can't be bought or tricked, but quickly overpowering them might be possible. Allow each agent present one chance to overcome this obstacle; if they fail to earn the necessary IP, then they must subdue the guards through combat.

VAULT GUARDS (2) CREATURE 9

Elite casino bouncers (page 24, *Pathfinder Bestiary* 6)

Initiative Perception +22

OPEN THE VAULT DOOR OBSTACLE

Infiltration Points 5 (group); **Overcome** DC 27 Crafting or
Engineering Lore or DC 29 Thievery

Gage's key seems simple enough, but the corresponding keyhole in the vault door is no ordinary lock. Rather, the key must be inserted and then turned clockwise or counterclockwise in a certain sequence to unlatch the door and cause it to smoothly swing open (the correct sequence, in this case, is twice counterclockwise,

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then once clockwise). A character versed in crafting or picking locks or otherwise knowledgeable of such unusual mechanisms can deduce the nature of the lock to overcome this obstacle; otherwise, simple trial and error with the key unlocks the door after 2 rounds.

VAULT INTRUDER

OBSTACLE

Infiltration Points 3 (group); **Overcome** DC 25 Shadow Plane Lore, DC 27 Diplomacy, or DC 32 Deception or Intimidation

Scathka's cursed relic from the Shadow Plane, the *barbed vest* (page 78), has been sitting in a lockbox in the casino's vault for a few weeks, hidden away from all light. In the darkness of a lockbox marked with Scathka's name, the *barbed vest's* curse still potently calls to Scathka's mind and forces them to yearn for it. But Scathka is not the only one who has their eyes on the wicked item; the vest's creator, a velstrac interlocutor named Ekimilixus, seeks to reclaim it. Ekimilixus has tracked her creation across the multiverse and has finally pinpointed its location in this vault.

When the Edgewatch agents break into the vault, they find that Ekimilixus has already silently dispatched the vault's guardian—a djinn bound to serve Gage—and is now tentatively examining the reacquired garment. The agents are an unexpected wrinkle in Ekimilixus's plan, but she sees them as opportunities rather than adversaries.

Read the following aloud immediately after the Edgewatch agents enter the vault and shut the door behind them.

A tall monstrosity of blood and steel steps forth from what, seconds ago, was nothing more than a shadowy corner of the vault. The humanoid woman embedded in the center of a bladed metal frame inclines her head in a mockery of politeness. "Fleshlings, I bring you greetings from the Perpetual Gloaming. Might one of you be interested in allowing your bodies to be crafted into unique works of art?"

Ekimilixus doesn't attack at first, especially if the agents seem amenable to dialogue. If asked, she honestly reveals her reasons for coming here, holding the *barbed vest* aloft for the agents to see. She reiterates her offer to "remake" the agents, reassuring them "it will only hurt for a lifetime."

The interlocutor's intentions are inscrutable to most mortals, but a character trained in Shadow Plane Lore or Velstrac Lore can automatically glean Ekimilixus's motives: to inflict as much pain as possible, and through that pain, gain understanding of the cosmos. This obstacle isn't meant to waylay the agents or immediately

devolve into a combat encounter; Ekimilixus is foremost interested in treating the agents to her warped version of hospitality by altering their physical makeup, or failing that, acquiring some of their flesh and gear to augment her own twisted form. If simple persuasion or coercion won't suffice, Ekimilixus might try her Glimpse of Stolen Flesh ability to stun characters and force them to submit, but she doesn't linger on this plane if defeat seems imminent.

If Ekimilixus finds the agents cooperative (or at least not outright hostile), she offers them the *barbed vest* as a parting gift. This item, though cursed, might prove useful to the agents during their final confrontation with Scathka (page 42).

If the agents defeat Ekimilixus in combat, cow her into submission, or make a terrific impression on her, she offers them the *barbed vest* as well as her *ring of wizardry type II*. Additionally, you should award the characters XP for the encounter.

EKIMILIXUS

CREATURE 12

Velstrac interlocutor (*Pathfinder Bestiary 2* 284)

Initiative Perception +24 or Stealth +19

IDENTIFY THE LOOTER

OBSTACLE

Infiltration Points 2 (group); **Overcome** DC 27 Crafting or Survival

The Edgewatch agents' ultimate goal is the contents of Maurrisa Jonne's lockbox. Once they've entered the Lucky Nimbus's vault and dealt with the strange visitor therein, they can finally locate the box, open it, and acquire their target, all of which is trivial compared to the rest of the heist.

Once the agents open the lockbox, they find, much to their surprise, that it's completely empty. There's no trace of the device Maurrisa supposedly stashed within. Their objective has changed, and now the agents must quickly determine where the lockbox's contents wandered off to. If the players don't come to this conclusion by themselves, you should hint as much to them so they don't simply leave the casino without the next lead.

Thankfully, the thief didn't hide her tracks very well. The lockbox still smells faintly of harsh chemicals, and a character who succeeds at a DC 23 Crafting check to Identify Alchemy can surmise that the box previously contained the same toxic substance that afflicted the animals at Knight's Marvelous Menagerie so long ago (*Adventure Path #157: Devil at the Dreaming Palace*). The smell is so distinctive that once detected, it can be followed to the security office down the hall by succeeding at the checks to overcome this obstacle. But before infiltrating the security office, the agents will need to contend with the vault's final security measure.



VAULT ALARM

OBSTACLE

Infiltration Points 2 (group); **Overcome** DC 27 Arcana, Counteract DC 27, DC 29 Thievery, or DC 32 Stealth

One of Gage's security experts, a Brevic émigré named Mazar, casts a 4th-level *alarm* spell on the vault three times each day at 8-hour intervals. The alarm is set to go off if anyone but Gage exits the vault room. If the agents critically fail their check to overcome this obstacle, they trigger the Alarm Sounded complication (page 37) and accrue 2 Awareness Points, but they can otherwise move on from this obstacle without rolling any more checks.

RESEARCH EMPLOYEE RECORDS

OBSTACLE

Infiltration Points 2 (group); **Overcome** DC 27 Deception or Stealth, plus DC 25 Accounting, Legal, Library, or Mercantile Lore or 1d4 rounds of manual searching

Perhaps ironically, security at the downstairs security office is significantly lighter than vault security. The agents might sneak into the security office by impersonating a guard, causing a distraction, or even getting one of their number thrown into the office's holding cells.

At any rate, once they're inside the office, assuming they succeed at the Identify the Looter obstacle, they follow the chemical smell to the security guards' employee lockers. One locker in particular stinks of the same chemicals, though the nameplate has already been removed. All that remains inside the locker is a scrap of parchment with a simple note: "I quit. -F"

The most obvious means of identifying "F" is by looking through the employee records of the vault guards. Gage has instructed his head magic security officer, Mazar, to keep meticulous records of all the Nimbus guards' comings and goings, and these records are kept on one of the shelves in this security office, where employees use punch cards to sign in and out for every shift.

If a character is unable to succeed at any of the Lore skills necessary to overcome this obstacle by quickly sifting through the records (and can't come up with a reasonable explanation for using another skill to do so), they can use a brute-force approach to carefully look through the records, which takes 1d4 rounds. Either way, if they succeed at locating the appropriate documentation, they can ascertain that "F" must refer to Franca Laurentz, a security guard who has worked at the Lucky Nimbus for less than a month. The record shows that she hasn't clocked in for any of her scheduled shifts for a few days now, and Mazar has made a note next to her name: "Disappeared. Employment terminated."

OBJECTIVE 3: ESCAPE UNNOTICED

The agents' final objective is to leave the casino unnoticed; in the process they'll have to replant Gage's key back where they found it.

The agents might simply hightail it out of the casino, alarms and guards be damned, but unless they return Gage's key and have ample Awareness Points to spare, the casino owner is sure to

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figure out their duplicity and trace the heist back to the Edgwatch and Starwatch. The characters' best bet is to make a final appearance at the Floating Gala's closing events as if they were there the entire time, wish Gage a cordial farewell (and slip him his key), then leave the same way they came in.

XP Award: Once they complete the heist's third objective by leaving the Lucky Nimbus without Gage finding them out, award each agent a 160 XP story award.

Obstacles

In addition to the following obstacles, depending on how they got into the vault, the agents might need to

overcome the vault guards obstacle (page 39) again in order to get back to the casino level.

RETURN GAGE'S KEY

OBSTACLE

Infiltration Points 1 (group); **Overcome** DC 29 Deception or Thievery or DC 32 Acrobatics

The agents must surreptitiously place Gage's master key back on his person before completing the heist. This obstacle might occur at any point in the evening after the agents have retrieved the lockbox—even as late as during the party favors obstacle as they are leaving the casino (page 43).

AUCTION RESULTS

OBSTACLE

Infiltration Points none (see below); **Overcome** DC 27 Diplomacy or Society or DC 29 Deception

Everyone at the gala is looking forward to the results of the Gossamer Auction, though not necessarily for philanthropic reasons. Most guests are simply excited to see if they outbid their fellow elites and to savor all the reactions to their shows of exorbitant wealth.

To avoid rousing suspicion, the agents must stay at the Floating Gala until the auction results are announced, which occurs near the end of the night. This obstacle's skill check represents the character's ability to accept their prize (or loss) with grace. The characters need not overcome this obstacle with Infiltration Points, but they must each make one check, and they still earn the corresponding Infiltration Points or Awareness Points depending on their check result. Alternatively, a character can choose to skip the auction in favor of a quick escape, in which case the character doesn't receive their prize (if any) and automatically accrues 2 Awareness Points.

SCATHKA'S LAST RESORT

OBSTACLE

Infiltration Points 4 (group); **Overcome** DC 29 Acrobatics, Athletics, or Stealth; DC 32 Diplomacy; or combat

Immediately after the Auction Results obstacle or whenever seems appropriate after the agents have found the lockbox and left the vault, they must contend with one final violent confrontation: The wizard Scathka, along with a cadre of more



Scathka



svartalfars, has come personally to enact their vengeance on Gage Carlyle and his casino and, ultimately, retrieve their shadowy relic, the *barbed vest*.

This obstacle takes place either in the ballroom during the auction or on the casino floor just as the agents are about to leave the building. Depending on which your players seem more interested in, you might run the obstacle as a straight combat encounter or as an infiltration obstacle. In the latter case, they might help Gage escape out a back door, offer the *barbed vest* to Scathka, or devise some other creative means of subduing the wizard and their cronies.

The ultimate goal of the encounter is to provide an exciting, high-stakes climax to the heist before the final obstacle that wraps up the infiltration (Party Favors, below). This is an excellent opportunity to bring together all the allies that the agents have enlisted to help them in their heist along with the casino characters with whom they've associated throughout the night.

SVARTALFAR KILLERS (2)

CREATURE 8

Page 85

Initiative Perception +16

SCATHKA

CREATURE 12

UNIQUE NE MEDIUM ELF HUMAN HUMANOID

Pangender half-elf occultist

Perception +23

Languages Common, Draconic, Elven, Shadowtongue

Skills Arcana +25, Deception +20, Diplomacy +20, Occultism +25, Society +23, Stealth +22

Str +1, **Dex** +4, **Con** +0, **Int** +5, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +2

Items +1 striking dagger, +1 leather armor, spellbook, wand of manifold missiles (3rd level)

AC 31; **Fort** +16, **Ref** +22, **Will** +24

HP 210

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ dagger +23 (agile, finesse, magical, versatile S), **Damage** 2d4+1 piercing

Ranged ♦ dagger +23 (agile, magical, thrown 10 feet), **Damage** 2d4+1 piercing

Arcane Prepared Spells DC 33, attack +25; **6th** *mislead*, *phantasmal calamity*, *vampiric exsanguination*; **5th** *black tentacles*, *cone of cold*, *shadow siphon*, *shadow walk*; **4th** *blink*, *phantasmal killer*, *spell immunity*, *weapon storm*; **3rd** *blindness*, *ghostly weapon*, *paralyze*, *vampiric touch*; **2nd** *mirror image*, *see invisibility*, *spectral hand* (×2); **1st** *grim tendrils*, *magic missile* (×2), *ray of enfeeblement*; **Cantrips (6th)** *daze*, *ghost sound*, *ray of frost*, *shield*

Drain Wand ♦ **Frequency** once per day; **Requirements** Scathka hasn't acted yet on their turn; **Effect** On their turn, Scathka casts one spell they've prepared and already cast this day without spending a spell slot.

HEIST INSPIRATION

This chapter of "All or Nothing" takes obvious inspiration from heist media such as the *Ocean's Eleven* films and the TV series *Leverage*. In such stories, the heroes must pull off a seemingly impossible caper through the use of guile, sleight of hand, technical expertise, and a bit of luck. Oftentimes, things don't go according to plan... but that was part of the plan all along! If you can help your players replicate a similar effect, it has the possibility of being a gaming moment your group will talk about for years.

Scathka must still Cast the Spell and meet the spell's other requirements.

Throw Shadow Blade ♦♦ (cold, manipulate, occult, shadow) **Requirements** Scathka is wielding a dagger; **Effect** Scathka draws a shadowy glyph on the dagger's blade and flings it at a nearby foe. Scathka makes a ranged Strike with the dagger with the range increment increased to 30 feet. If the Strike hits, it deals 8d6 cold damage (double damage on a critical success) and the target must succeed at a DC 32 Fortitude save or be slowed 1 until the end of its next turn (or 1d4 rounds on a critical failure). The dagger loses its shadowy magic as soon as the attack is resolved.

PARTY FAVORS

OBSTACLE

Infiltration Points 1 (individual); **Overcome** DC 27 Deception, Diplomacy, or Society or DC 32 Intimidation

The final obstacle of the heist requires the Edgewatch agents to personally thank their host, Gage Carlyle. Leaving without a proper goodbye is rude in the extreme and surely arouses the ire and suspicion of the old-fashioned businessman. Thankfully, all that is required from this obstacle is a modicum of cordial pleasantries, though a particularly snide agent (such as one playing up the unpleasantness of the night's events) might get away with a veiled insult or back-handed compliment.

Regardless of how their final interaction with Gage goes, each agent receives a small silken bag from the casino owner as a parting favor. Inside the bag is a small corked bottle of Gage's personally licensed house alcohol, Nimbus Gin; a commemorative cyan casino token inscribed with the date and name of the evening's gala; and a soft plush doll of the Lucky Nimbus's mascot, Jerbo the Genie, in a random color.

CONCLUDING THE HEIST

Even if everything else goes to shambles, by the end of their infiltration of the Lucky Nimbus, the agents should have learned that someone named Franca Laurentz has most likely stolen the doomsday device they're searching for.

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CHAPTER 3: DEADLY GAMES

Jonis Flakfatter's planned betrayal of his associates—the fellow Norgorber cultists of the so-called Twilight Four—has so far gone exactly to plan. Rather than adhere to the Rumormonger's wait-and-see approach for using the clockwork poison bomb, Flakfatter has taken matters into his own hands. By detonating the device at his own discretion, Flakfatter aims to earn the glorious favor of Norgorber for himself and seal his fate as the god's next divine harbinger. To this end, he charmed and adopted the disenfranchised Franca Laurentz to perform his own vile deeds for him—stealing the bomb from the Washboard Dogs' lockbox and hiding it in her Puddles-based apartment. Flakfatter put Franca up in this decrepit, moldering apartment so that he could visit her in disguise and subtly guide her hand toward fulfilling his master plan. After all, Father Infector knows the simple truth behind working with underlings: that when a flunky believes a plan to be their own invention,

they are more likely to execute it with skill—and possibly even die for it.

The Infector tasked Franca with researching where best to place the clockwork poison bomb during the Radiant Festival in order to sow as much panic as possible. Under his guidance, she came to the conclusion that the Blood City Games—a sporting event so highly anticipated that it would attract more hoi polloi and despicable bourgeoisies than even Gage Carlyle's Floating Gala—was the ideal target.

After Franca chose the Irorium as the site of her planned mayhem, Flakfatter laid down the groundwork. He used his connections to eliminate one of the Irorium's beast caretakers and ensure an opportunity for Franca to secure a job and quarters in the arena's back rooms. In addition, he earned the favor of the Blood City Games' last champion, an iruxi warrior from the swamps of Varisia named Oggvurm the Merciless. Oggvurm had



already planned to participate in this year's Blood City Games to defend his title, and Flakfatter's mind-altering tinctures (cleverly disguised as steroidal potions to improve Oggvurm's performance) were all it took to win over the gladiator to his cause. Along with a cadre of allies from his home of Shikwashim, Oggvurm arrived in the Foreign Quarter ready to aid Franca with her vile mission.

On the eve of the Blood City Games, Franca absconded into the forgotten buried halls of the ancient Irorium along with Oggvurm and his kin. Knowing that Oggvurm's fast healing would help him withstand the poison, Franca strapped the Twilight Four's clockwork poison bomb—loaded with Flakfatter's blackfinger blight poison—onto the ravenile's back. This ensures that not only will the bomb would be difficult to destroy, but it should impart a stunning visual impact on the spectators who would inhale its deadly poison.

The day of the Blood City Games draws near, and the Edgewatch agents must perform their investigation quickly if they're to discover the bomb's whereabouts in time to stop Franca from activating it and endangering hundreds of lives!

DEBRIEFING CAPTAIN ASILIA

Once they have completed their heist of the Lucky Nimbus, the agents' next move is to identify and track down whoever stole the Twilight Four's doomsday device from the Washboard Dogs' lockbox. Thankfully, they have a name, and when they go back to Starwatch Keep to debrief Captain Asilia on the heist, she can use her contacts to locate this "Franca Laurentz" and get the agents a street address to check out.

When the agents explain to Asilia their suspicions that a Lucky Nimbus employee named Franca Laurentz might have something to do with the disappearance of the doomsday device, Asilia scratches her chin thoughtfully. Absalom is a big city, but Asilia has a lot of friends in high places. "I might be able to call in a few favors to find out more about this Franca character," she tells them. For now, she suggests the agents take the rest of the day off to recover from their infiltration. "Until we know where the device is, we can't determine how immediate a threat it is." Per Captain Asilia's orders, the agents can use the rest of the day for downtime; they'll report for duty and begin their investigation into Franca Laurentz tomorrow morning.

If the agents didn't track the missing device to Franca Laurentz's employee locker, then not all is lost. In this case, Captain Asilia deduced based on the characters' debrief that a Lucky Nimbus vault guard must have looted the lockbox, and she easily secures a warrant to examine the casino's employee records. Based on the names listed therein and a quick review of other potential guards' alibis, it was a simple matter for the captain to determine that the recently terminated employee named Franca Laurentz was their primary suspect.

FINDING FRANCA

When the agents report to Captain Asilia the next morning, she informs them that her sources have confirmed that a rough apartment in the Puddles was most recently rented to Franca Laurentz. This is where the agents should begin their investigation, she says. "Time is now of the essence," Asilia explains. "My sources tell me that neighbors haven't seen anyone enter or exit the apartment in at least a week, so your path should be clear, but there's no telling what you might find in there." The captain hands the agents their warrant, then ushers them to the door and wishes them all due haste.

CHAPTER 3 SYNOPSIS

It seems that someone named Franca Laurentz has stolen the doomsday device supposedly connected to the Twilight Four. The agents learn that Franca has been working directly with one of the Four, someone she knows only as Father Infector, and she now plans to release a poison called blackfinger blight in the Irorium during the height of the upcoming Blood City Games! To stop her, the agents must compete in the event and sleuth around the gladiatorial pit, where they learn that Franca was recently hired to help care for the games' more monstrous challengers. The agents then track Franca to a disused bathhouse under the Irorium where she reveals that the bomb is already in place! The heroes rush back to the arena to find the device embedded in a giant iruxi ravenile who won't give it up without a fight!

CHAPTER 3 TREASURE

The following notable pieces of treasure appear throughout this chapter.

- +1 leather armor
- +1 striking crossbow (with 3 shining bolts and 2 explosive bolts)
- +1 striking scimitars (8)
- +1 striking shortsword
- +1 studded leather armors (8)
- +2 greater striking handwraps of mighty blows
- blackfinger blight (2 doses) (page 78)
- bomb snares (2)
- greater acid flasks (4)
- greater antidote
- greater antiplague
- greater darkvision elixir
- greater demon mask
- lucky rabbit's feet (2)
- major staff of fire
- moderate darkvision elixirs (8)
- moderate elixir of life
- ring of swimming
- scroll of drop dead
- scroll of spell immunity (6th)

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MORE ABOUT FRANCA

A detailed history of Franca's life and personality appears on page 86. This also includes a physical description of Franca, which the agents should learn at some point during their investigation, whether from her Puddles neighbors or from Captain Asilia. The agents will be able to use this physical description later in Chapter 3 when they ask the gladiators at the Irorium if they have seen her.

DANGEROUS EVIDENCE

The agents' journey to the waterlogged district known as the Puddles is short and uneventful. Franca's apartment is on the third floor of a ramshackle boarding house on Coldlight Street called the Brown Manor. If the agents talk to Franca's downstairs neighbors, they say that Franca has been a faultless neighbor, though they point out that she has financial troubles and seems to have great difficulty holding down a job for very long. These neighbors also note they haven't seen Franca in several days; the last time they did see her, she was leaving in the company of a tall, gaunt man wearing a cloak. They didn't get any better look at the man.

The door to Franca's apartment is locked with an average lock, requiring four successful DC 25 Thievery checks to open or a DC 28 Athletics check to Force Open the door. A character who succeeds at a DC 30 Perception check while examining the door for traps can tell that there is some kind of mechanism attached to the door but is unable to disable it from this side; a character who succeeds at this check receives a +2 circumstance bonus to later locate the wall containing the tank of poison gas. Unfortunately, the dreary apartment has no windows, so the door is the only way in.

When the agents open the door, they trigger an elaborate hazard that doesn't take effect for a couple of rounds, so keep track of each character's actions (but try not to tip your hand). Read or paraphrase the following as they enter.

The walls of this simple one-room apartment are plastered with broadsheets, flyers, and printed posters heralding events occurring across the city during the Radiant Festival, from plays and operas to sporting matches and exhibitions. Each clipping is accompanied by a detailed charcoal sketch on brittle parchment of a building or street corner map marked with handwritten scribbles. Bits of string tacked to the papers lead from one wall to the next in a colorful spiderweb of inscrutable connections. A wooden table sits in the middle of all this, its surface covered with a mess of glass containers and metal tools. The air smells strongly of stale sweat, with a hint of acrid chemicals.

MODERATE 11

Since beginning her association with Jonis Flakfatter, known only to Franca as "Father Infector," Franca has turned her apartment into a staging ground for the next phase of her master's murderous plan. While there's plenty of evidence for the agents to collect here, they'll have to deal with the immediate threat of the room's trap before they can make sense of Franca's mad designs.

Hazard: The agents have only 2 rounds after entering the room until its trap activates. The trap—devised and installed by Flakfatter after Franca relocated to the Irorium—fills the apartment with an acidic cloud of poison that could destroy most of the evidence. Flakfatter hoped his trap would not only remove the evidence in this room, but also kill the pesky Edgewatch agents hot on his minion's tail.

Each round that the hazard is active, more of the papers on the walls are destroyed; all of the posters and furniture in the room are destroyed in 5 rounds. In order to disable or destroy the tank, the agents must discover the wall in which it is hidden, requiring a successful DC 28 Perception check to Seek. This recently plastered section of wall has a Hardness of 10 and 20 Hit Points. That section of wall must be destroyed to reveal the tank.

ACIDIC POISON CLOUD TRAP

HAZARD 13

ALCHEMICAL COMPLEX MECHANICAL TRAP

Stealth +30 (master)

Description Five nozzles hidden across the apartment's ceiling spew thick clouds of acidic poison from a reinforced tank behind the wall.

Disable DC 35 Thievery (expert) to block one of the nozzles or DC 40 Thievery (master) to shut off the tank. The trap deactivates after 5 rounds, once the tank is empty.

AC 34; Fort +28, Ref +20

Nozzle Hardness 15; Nozzle HP 40 (BT 20) to destroy a nozzle; **Tank Hardness 20; Tank HP 100 (BT 50)** to damage the tank enough to stop it from spewing gas; **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Spew Cloud ➤ **Trigger** Twelve seconds have passed since the door to the apartment was opened; **Effect** The trap rolls initiative.

Routine (1 action) When it's triggered, the trap has five active nozzles, but at the end of its turn each round, one random nozzle deactivates. On the trap's turn, the active nozzles emit a cloud of acidic poison gas that expands to fill the apartment. The cloud deals 1d6 acid damage and 1d6 poison damage per active nozzle to each creature and object in the room (DC 33 basic Fortitude save). Unattended objects automatically fail saves to avoid the damage.

Evidence: Unless it is completely disabled before it fully activates, the trap leaves Franca's apartment a disaster zone consisting of sizzling paper remains,



half-melted furniture, and nauseating fumes. If the agents were skilled enough to find and disable the trap, however, they have a trove of evidence to sort through. If they disabled the trap within 3 rounds, the characters recover enough evidence that they gain an extra day of downtime before the Blood City Games.

Even if the characters flee the room and the trap spews acid for its entire duration, they still retrieve enough evidence to deduce (either by themselves or with Captain Asilia's assistance) that the intended target of some "clockwork poison bomb" is the Irorium, likely during a big event called the Blood City Games.

Treasure: An agent who searches in the crack between the bed's headboard and the wall from which it folds out can attempt a DC 27 Perception check. On a success, the character finds a *greater skeleton key* given to (and subsequently lost by) Franca from Jonis Flakfatter. In addition, depending on how many rounds the trap was active before the agents disabled it, they can recover the following useful items from the trapped room.

Five Rounds: A greater antiplague and a greater antidote.

Four Rounds: The above, plus a *scroll of drop dead* and a *scroll of spell immunity* (6th level).

Two Rounds: The above, plus two greater acid flasks and a *greater demon mask* stylized like a piscodaemon (a tentacle-mouthed fiend that personifies death by poison).

TROUBLE AT THE IRIORIUM

Once Captain Asilia knows that Franca Laurentz plans to detonate the blackfinger blight bomb at the Irorium during the Blood City Games, she calls the Edgewatch agents into her office to formulate a plan.

Asilia believes that if the Starwatch cancels the Blood City Games, Franca will go back underground with her bomb and choose another target. The investigation would have to begin all over again, and Franca might be able to strike before the agents find her. Instead, Asilia orders the agents to catch Franca in the act. An obvious police presence at the stadium will also likely scare off Franca, so the agents will have to operate with discretion.

The Irorium's current master of blades owes Asilia a favor, so she has been able to secure the agents a spot in the Blood City Games as late entrants. The master of blades, Lord Ganfen of House Kethlin, is the only Irorium

employee who knows of the agents' mission, and he has agreed to keep the matter private unless he has reason to suspect imminent danger. Finally, Asilia says that she will position Starwatch officers near the Irorium as the agents head in; if things go poorly, the Starwatch will move in to evacuate the attendees. Asilia hopes that it won't come to this, as she has the utmost faith in the agents.

Lord Ganfen could simply let the agents into the arena's back rooms, but if they go this route they'll have a tough time getting information from the coliseum's other contestants.

Rather, the best course of action would be for the agents to participate in one of the earlier fights (which Asilia assures them will be well within their capacity—"even while keeping things nonlethal," she sternly

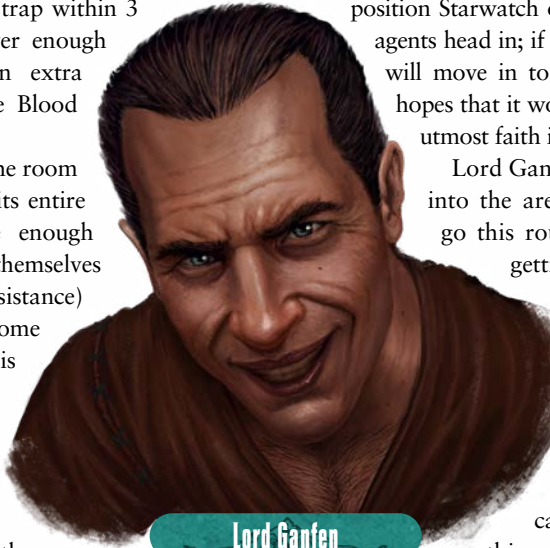
reminds them). Afterward, they'll have full access to the "backstage" areas of the arena, where they can thoroughly investigate, hopefully without drawing too much attention to themselves. If the agents seem worried about having to participate in gladiatorial combat, Asilia assures them that she'll ask the master of blades to "go easy" on them and points out that they'll be able to use more of their flashy and dangerous spells and abilities without having to worry about endangering bystanders.

Once the plan has been agreed upon, Asilia dismisses the agents, telling them to report to the Irorium early the next morning dressed in their most effective armor and wielding their most impressive-looking weapons.

Gathering Information: Any character from Absalom knows of the Blood City Games, and an agent who succeeds at a DC 22 Society check knows the competition's basic structure. On a critical success, the character also knows a little about the major players who run things behind the scenes (see the Irorium NPCs sidebar on page 48) and about the incredible showing of Oggvurm the Merciless at the last Games.

BLOOD CITY GAMES

The Blood City Games are a widely popular gladiatorial event held every two years at the Irorium, the massive coliseum in Absalom's Foreign Quarter. While mock battles are staged at the Irorium daily, the Blood City Games are a special all-day event where the most celebrated winners of previous fights are invited back to pit their might against strange and deadly beasts from around the world—and sometimes each other! The



Lord Ganfen

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IRORIUM NPCS

In addition to this chapter's primary villains, Franca Laurentz and Oggvurm the Merciless, who are described throughout, the Edgewatch agents might meet the following colorful characters at the Irorium.

Alistar with Arms (NG male human gladiator 7): A hometown hero among Foreign Quarter attendees, the Jalmeri native who goes strictly by Alistar with Arms (*never* just Alistar) is a hyperbolic dramatist with a propensity for making long-winded but entertaining speeches in the middle of his bouts.

Cressita Oneidus (NG female human beast tamer 10): The Irorium's resident beastmaster is a former hunter with incredible knowledge of the Inner Sea region's animals and beasts. Her solidly gray hair belies her youth—she is hardly over 30 years old. She cares little about the day-to-day affairs of the Irorium (or even her own staff), as long as she can dedicate time to caring for her animals.

Lord Ganfen of House Kethlin (N male human administrator 12): The master of blades is in charge of arranging the Irorium's daily performances and has his hands in just about every matter related to the coliseum's daily operations. He is a man of small stature, with thinning hair and large ears.

Noble Legorna of House Vastille (N bigender human socialite 5): The incredibly wealthy aristocrat Legorna Vastille has spectated at nearly every bout at the Irorium for the past five years, vicariously taking part in the games by wagering huge sums on the outcomes. Legorna wears crimson eyeshadow and rotates outfits from a massive wardrobe of magnificent tailor-made gowns that show off the aristocrat's amply muscled physique.

Vez (LG female human gladiator 6): A lanky Taldan gladiator with cropped auburn hair and a perpetually broken nose, Vez is a silver sword pin-wearing contender who has spent, cumulatively, years of her life training with the other regular competitors. She lost a lot of friends to Oggvurm's unnecessarily brutal fighting during the last Blood City Games and is eager to even the score.

Oggvurm is an iruxi ravenile—a lizardfolk imbued from birth with fearsome regenerative qualities—who hails from the town of Shikwashim in southern Varisia. Oggvurm swept the Blood City Games two years ago, dominating (and in most cases killing) every contender sent his way. Audiences adored Oggvurm's brutal fighting style and how he played to the crowd. He left the fighting scene several months ago, declaring that he wished to teach his iruxi kin the ways of combat in the swamplands where he grew up. Oggvurm has recently returned to Absalom to compete once more in the Blood City Games, this time bringing a small band of his brethren to compete alongside him against even fiercer opponents. Though he claims that he wishes to educate the world about the might of his people, Oggvurm and his fellows actually have ulterior motives: the fighters have, under the powerful sway of Jonis Flakfatter's mind-altering poisons, agreed to help Franca Laurentz detonate the blackfinger blight bomb in the middle of the Irorium.

ENTERING THE GAMES

When the agents arrive at the Irorium, it is still early enough that the summer sun has barely risen above the horizon, but spectators are already lined up to enter the coliseum. The agents are greeted just inside the competitors' entrance by Lord Ganfen of House Kethlin, the Irorium's master of blades. For someone with the title of master of blades, Ganfen doesn't appear to be a fighter, a fact that he readily admits if asked. He considers the realm of deals and commerce to be his battlefield, and though the Irorium is a for-profit business, Ganfen is a staunch ally of the gladiators who fight here. While the battles can sometimes be quite dangerous, Ganfen tries to ensure that the combatants (those who survive, at least) are well taken care of afterward.

The master of blades might make a sly inference to the real reason they are here, but otherwise he has no intention of announcing the agents' secret mission. Instead, Ganfen chats with them idly as he ushers them into the Irorium's side chambers—colloquially known as “the pit”—where other gladiators are performing warm-up stretches, polishing their blades, and oiling their armor. The atmosphere in the pit is jolly and convivial, with fighters from around Golarion chatting like old friends and good-naturedly ribbing one another about past matches. Ganfen introduces the agents to some of the others (using whatever names the agents have opted to use for the event), mentioning that they will be the first fight of the morning. Some of the gladiators—including regulars like Alistar with Arms and Vez (see the Irorium NPCs sidebar above)—look grateful for the extra time to prepare, while a

spectacle always draws an immense crowd, and this is especially true during the Radiant Festival.

Promoted in conjunction with the Radiant Festival, this year's Blood City Games boasts a wide array of combatants, both humanoid and non-humanoid. Creatures such as a two-headed rukh from Osirion, a miniature barometz raised by druids in Kyonin, and a particularly ornery peluda from the River Kingdoms are featured on the bill. However, most fans are abuzz about the return of the iruxi champion, Oggvurm the Merciless.



few (including Oggvurm the Merciless) squint at the newcomers with suspicion.

The agents don't have time to explore the Irorium before their fight, but they do have a moment to ask Lord Ganfen some questions in private, the most likely of which are listed below, along with his responses.

See any suspicious characters? "Suspicious" describes just about anyone who sets foot in the Irorium. Everyone has their own reasons to fight—and most aren't doing it just for the money and the fame."

See anyone matching Franca's physical description? "I couldn't possibly keep tabs on every fighter, servant, or customer here. In fact, you should be glad I was able to meet you at all. It's a good thing for you that I owed Asilia a favor."

Any chance a fighter could sneak something into the arena? "Not likely. We check for magic auras and search each contestant before they go through the gate to make sure they don't have any unsanctioned weapons on them."

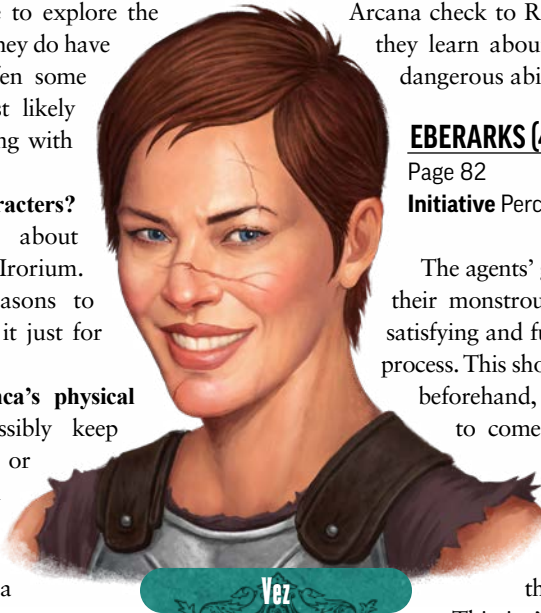
FIGHTING IN THE SPOTLIGHT

SEVERE 11

Before they know it, it's the agents' turn to fight in their corner of the big arena.

The murmurs of thousands of spectators crescendo into roars of excitement. Dust floats up from the cracked dirt of the blood-soaked arena floor and swirls around the various obstacles set up for the exhibition. A large portcullis raises on the far side of the arena to reveal a dark tunnel. Immediately, four massive eight-legged beasts, flaming spittle flying from their mouths, emerge from the open gate, stampeding forward in a mad rush. The fight is on!

The agents are set to battle a quartet of eberarks. The eberarks fought under Tar-Baphon's command during the Fiendflesh Siege before Absalom captured them as prisoners of war. Rather than serve out their life sentences in one of Absalom's wretched prisons, the eberarks agreed to fight gladiators in the Irorium in exchange for slightly better accommodations in the sprawling dungeons beneath the Irorium. The agents are under strict advisement to not kill the eberarks, but otherwise Lord Ganfen simply gives them a wry smile and says, "Make it a good show. And above all, have fun!"



Vez

Creatures: As they enter the ring and catch sight of their competition, the agents can attempt a DC 28 Arcana check to Recall Knowledge; on a success, they learn about a few of the eberarks' more dangerous abilities.

EBERARKS (4)

CREATURE 10

Page 82

Initiative Perception +19

The agents' goal here is not simply to defeat their monstrous rivals but also to put on a satisfying and fun show for the audience in the process. This should be made clear to the players beforehand, and they should be encouraged to come up with creative descriptions of their attacks and parries or even forego their usually sound tactics in favor of showy attacks or flourishes that would please an audience.

This isn't intended to be a particularly challenging fight, and it should be over well before the agents have expended all of their best resources (since they still have to delve into the Irorium's under-level to find and defeat Franca). On the off chance that more than half of the agents are reduced to 0 Hit Points during the course of this encounter, handlers rush onto the field to call off the fight, wrangle the eberarks, and pull the contestants to safety for healing.

Terrain: The Irorium is massive: it consists of literal acres of dirt that span as far as the eye can see. Because of this, most coliseum events, including the Blood City Games, take place in only a small fraction of the arena or are scheduled so that multiple bouts take place simultaneously. The agents' fight takes place on a scrap of dusty land that has been outfitted with a few unusual structures to spice up the fight. A map of the Irorium appears on page 62, but the scale of the arena is such that for the purposes of this fight, you are encouraged to draw a simple map of a wide-open space dotted with a few stone pillars, ramps, and arches. You might consider using the *Flip Mat Classic: Arena* or a similar pre-drawn map to start with.

Pleasing the Crowd: The stadium is surrounded on all sides by thousands of tiered seats separated from the arena by a 15-foot-tall stone wall. The match takes place close enough to the audience that it's possible the fight might bleed into the stands, which are packed with spectators who cheer when the agents step into the ring. The audience doesn't seem to care too much who the contestants are, but they respond eagerly to shows of strength—even just a flexed arm or showy low-level spell.

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Concluding the Fight: Depending on how the agents fare in the match, the crowd is either wildly enthusiastic or bitterly disappointed. Cheers (or boos) follow the characters as they leave the arena floor and reenter the pit. Ganfen congratulates the characters in either case, though if they lost the battle there is a clear hint of disappointment in his voice.

If the agents lost more than half their Hit Points during the fight, they are tended to by the Irorium's medics, regaining 2d8+10 HP as if they had been the recipient of a successful DC 20 Medicine check to Treat Wounds. The characters are also free to apply their own bandages or spells after the fight.

If the agents defeated the eberarks, one of their new friends in the gladiator pits offers to teach them some new skills perfect for future bouts in the fighting arena (see the provocator archetype on page 79).

Treasure: For fighting in the Blood City Games and winning a round, the agents earn a small cash award of 400 gp, plus a bonus of up to 200 gp if they put on a particularly good show. They get no gold if they lose.

XP Award: If the agents put on a good show and win their fight against the eberarks, award each character an 80 XP story award in addition to the XP for completing the encounter.

BACKSTAGE AT THE BIG SHOW

After their big fight, the agents have full access to the tunnels and chambers under and around the arena. They should use this time to ask questions of their fellow gladiators and the people who run the Irorium, look around for clues of Franca's whereabouts, and generally pursue any leads to locate their target.

While this section of the adventure is much more linear than the previous chapter, you should find a way to play to the characters' investigation if they veer off course. As long as the agents find Franca in the abandoned bathhouse and have a final confrontation with Oggvurm the Merciless in the arena or stands, it largely doesn't matter how the players go about their search.

The Irorium at a Glance

The Irorium was once a training ground for monks who worshipped the deity Irori. As the monks practiced—often with showy displays of physical prowess—they began to draw crowds and soon stands were built for these spectators. A series of arenas were built, demolished, and rebuilt around the original training grounds, resulting in a maze of labyrinthine underground chambers and a diverse blend of architectural styles throughout the entire coliseum. Eventually the followers of Irori left the upper levels of the structure to those with more commercial interests,

though many of these faithful still practice their arts in the coliseum's lower levels.

The vaulted chambers under the arena display typical Iroran architecture, with simple, flowing lines and clean angles. The areas where the gladiators warm up and store their equipment show the most signs of wear, obvious from scuffed benches and stains on the floor. Several rooms are devoted to an infirmary, where fighters can receive medical treatment after particularly brutal bouts. Lord Ganfen maintains a few offices and meeting rooms under the north end of the arena where he enacts most of the business of running the Irorium. Finally, at the opposite end of the stadium are the tallest chambers and widest hallways, where larger competitors and imported beasts can feel more comfortable.

Because it is so massive, doing a bottom-to-top search of the Irorium would take far too long. Instead, the players should think strategically about how they want to go about their investigation. The gladiators in the Irorium probably know its layout well, so asking around the pit is an obvious first step.

If the agents put on a good show while fighting the eberarks, they gain a +2 circumstance bonus on Diplomacy, Intimidation, and Society checks while interacting with Irorium competitors and employees during their investigation.

Questioning the Gladiators

An agent can attempt a DC 28 Diplomacy check to Gather Information among the gladiators and ask them about Franca (perhaps using her description as a point of reference). On a success, the characters learn that one of the gladiators, Vez, saw a woman fitting Franca's description tending to the beasts earlier in the day. Vez mentions that the woman seemed quite chummy with the iruxi brought here by Oggvurm the Merciless.

Meeting the Beastmaster

If the agents head to the beast pens, they can freely wander among the large cages there, which hold all manner of strange creatures from around the world. The few animal handlers working around the pens point the characters to the Irorium's beastmaster, a woman named Cressita Oneidus.

Cressita is a practical woman with the soberness of a big game hunter but the gentle touch of a veterinarian. She ensures that the creatures forced to fight in the Irorium are cared for and, for sapient creatures, willing to participate. She supervises a cadre of pen cleaners, animal feeders, and healers who specialize in unusual anatomy, but she cares little about her employees as long as they do their jobs and respect the animals in their collective charge. Cressita takes long sabbaticals



in order to travel Golarion and learn more about the creatures for which she cares so dearly.

When the agents approach Cressita, she is standing ankle deep in dung, picking through it with heavy leather gloves and muttering to herself. If asked, she states that this particular animal—a triceratops found in the Mwangi Expanse—ate something that didn't agree with him and that she's trying to determine what that is. She doesn't look up from her unenviable project as the agents chat with her.

If an agent killed any of eberarks in the arena, Cressita's starting attitude toward the party is unfriendly. The characters will need to Make an Impression on Cressita (DC 28) or otherwise improve her attitude toward them in order to learn anything useful from her. A character can gain a circumstance bonus on such checks by helping Cressita search through the triceratops dung or otherwise attempt to diagnose the animal (perhaps with a Medicine, Nature, or Dinosaur Lore check or a relevant spell). If the agents change Cressita's attitude to friendly, she takes the time to search her memory for anyone matching Franca's description, then remembers aloud that yes, she did hire such a person only a few days earlier to replace one of her usual workers who had suddenly fallen ill. Cressita points the agents toward one of the rear chambers where a pair of troll hounds are being kept. "I put her—Felina, I think she said her name was—in charge of feeding the troll hounds this morning, but I think she's been shirking her duties to hang out with her friends, that big iruxi fella and his crew."

Secret Passage to the Balneary

There's no sign of any caretakers around the troll hound pen when the Edgewatch agents make their way to that corner of the Irorium's menagerie. Two troll hounds growl at the characters as they walk by, but the monsters are safely locked in sturdy iron cages.

A partially boarded-up doorway in the back of the room catches the agents' eyes, and a quick examination reveals that a few of the boards have been recently moved. Fresh tracks in the dirt floor likewise indicate that someone came through here recently. If the characters ask around, any Irorium staff can tell them that the door leads to one of the older, unused portions of the former monastery, all of which are off-limits.

It is a simple matter to pry off the boards and squeeze into the crumbling abandoned corridor. The hall spans for several hundred feet, dipping here and there and winding around collapsed ceilings or diverting through auxiliary halls when the path becomes truly obstructed. Finally, the characters reach a loose stone door set into a sandstone arch. A character who examines the door notices a small symbol drawn in charcoal near the bottom of the door:

a one-eyed mask, the holy symbol of Norgorber. The doorway leads to an abandoned bathhouse (also called a balneary), where Franca and her saboteur allies have holed up.

XP Award: For discovering the disused balneary, grant each character an 80 XP story award.

DISUSED BALNEARY

In addition to its role as a sports stadium, the massive Irorium facility has also housed many public and private bathhouses over the centuries. The particular balneary where the agents find themselves is a relic from the Iroran monks could cleanse the body as well as soothe the spirit. Hot steam from a boiler was pumped through pipes in the walls into certain rooms in these baths; the monks would sit in the steam rooms for extended periods to relax stiff muscles and promote circulation.

Franca and her new iruxi allies have retreated to this abandoned corner of the Irorium in anticipation of the blackfinger blight bomb's detonation. They assume they will be safe from the poison this far underground and expect that their benefactor, the duplicitous Infector, will come to retrieve them in due time. In truth, "Father Infector" plans to simply abandon his pawns, leaving them to be caught by the authorities, emerge to a still-poisonous Irorium, or turn against one another.

Terrain Features: Except where noted, the walls of the disused balneary are solid stone, the ceilings of the chambers and hallways are 10 feet tall, and the area is shrouded in total darkness.

E1. EXTERIOR TUNNEL

The ancient tunnel here leads to a large columned chamber to the north and stretches off into darkness to the south. A set of rusted iron rings embedded in the lintel indicate that a curtain or something similar once hung in the passageway.

The agents arrive at the balneary from the narrow tunnel to the west. The tunnel to the south eventually leads back to occupied portions of the Irorium. On a low brick in the eastern wall, someone has marked a very faint symbol of Norgorber, which the agents can find with a successful DC 26 Perception check.

E2. BALNEARY ENTRANCE

Most of the western portion of this broad hall has caved in; huge chunks of stone and mounds of dirt block that side of the room. Eastward, light-gray columns in remarkably good condition hold up the ceiling. Identical reinforced wooden doors, mostly rotted, mark the entrance to rooms to the

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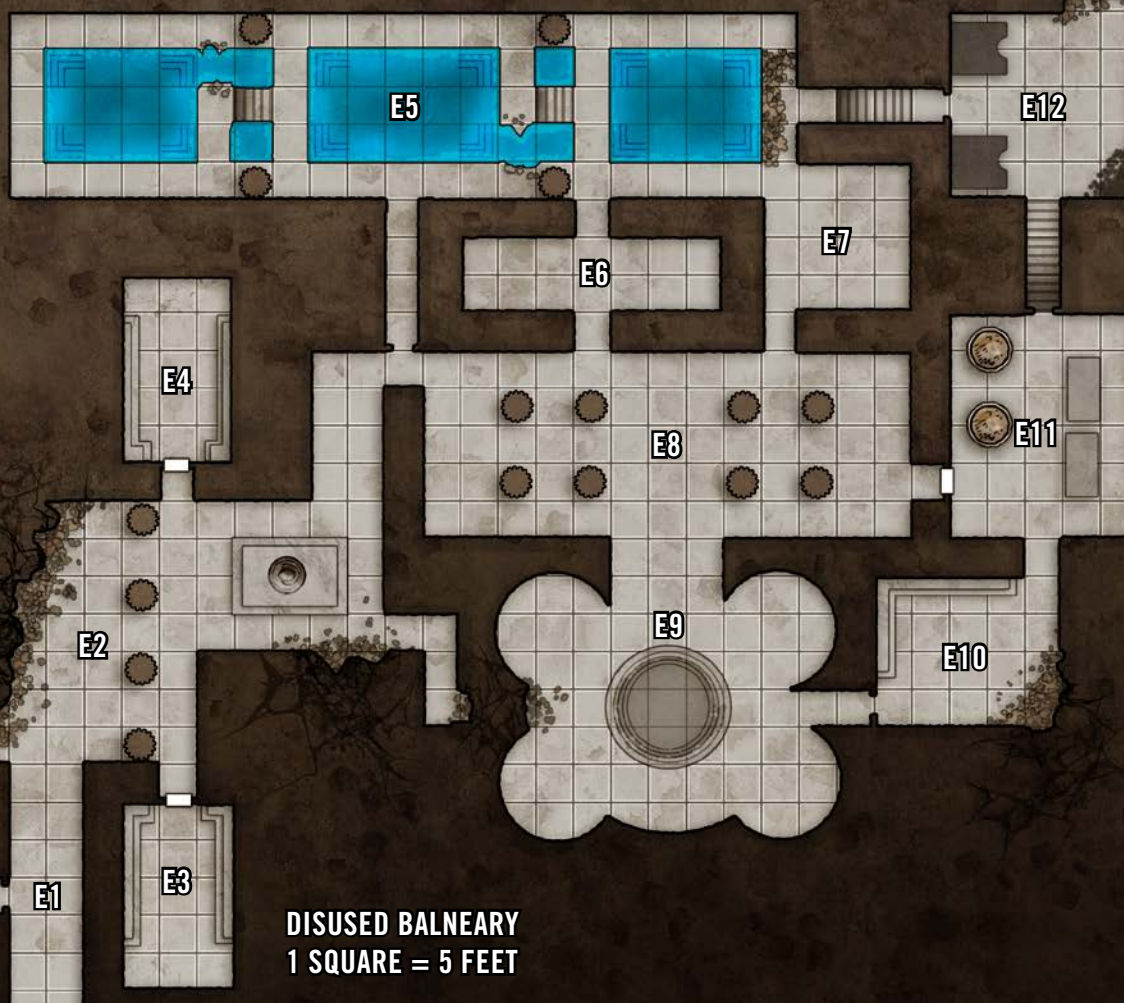
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DISUSED BALNEARY
1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

north and south. Further east, a faint circular impression on top of a large rectangular dais made of fine stone shows where a statue must have once stood. All around, the walls are adorned with flaking frescoes of tranquil lakes and bubbling streams.

This once-enormous hall served as a meeting ground and communal area. The monks who used this balneary would stop here to contemplate the now nearly indistinguishable murals on the walls, preparing their minds and souls for the cleansing baths within.

E3. SOUTHERN CHANGING ROOM MODERATE 11

Stuck Door: The door to this changing room is stuck fast, having been knocked off its hinges during a minor earthquake just a few short weeks before the balneary was completely abandoned and built over. To open the door, a character must succeed at a DC 20 Athletics check to Force it Open.

A pair of L-shaped stone benches line the walls of this rectangular chamber, both covered in dirt and debris from the crumbling ceiling. To the south, a set of tall stone shelves—segmented like a grid of cubbies—is dotted here and there with dusty detritus long rotted from years of neglect.

This area, one of the balneary's two changing rooms, was designed as a place where the monks could store their clothes and change into clean linen bathrobes (which have long since disintegrated).

Creatures: The Irorans who tended the balneary in its final days didn't realize that two of their fellow monks were trapped in this changing room. The two eventually died from asphyxiation, and no one ever discovered their bodies. A strand of negative energy found the dead and suffused them with necrotic power, but the monks have remained dormant until just recently; when Franca and her accomplices passed through the balneary area, the undead sensed their presence and began to stir. So many decades buried in an Iroran training ground—and so much blood spilled on the coliseum grounds above—suffused the corpses with newfound power, and they have become much more dangerous than they ever were in life. As soon as the Edgewatch agents open the door, the monks spring forth to attack.

IRORAN SKELETON (2)

CREATURE 11

UNCOMMON NE MEDIUM MINDLESS SKELETON UNDEAD

Undead monks of Irori

Perception +18



Skills Acrobatics +24, Athletics +21, Intimidation +20

Str +6, **Dex** +7, **Con** +5, **Int** -5, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +3

AC 31; **Fort** +18, **Ref** +24, **Will** +17

HP 210, negative healing; **Immunities** death effects, disease, mental, paralyzed, poison, unconscious; **Resistances** cold 10, electricity 10, fire 10, piercing 10, slashing 10

Collapse ➤ **Trigger** The Iroran skeleton is critically hit; **Effect** The Iroran skeleton collapses into a pile of bones and the attack deals damage for a hit, rather than a critical hit. The skeleton can reform in a standing position as an action, but until it does, it is immobilized and flat-footed.

Speed 45 feet

Melee ➤ claw +24 (agile, finesse), **Damage** 4d6+12 slashing

Flurry of Claws ➤ (flourish) As the monk's Flurry of Blows class feature. The Iroran skeleton makes two claw Strikes. If both hit the same creature, the damage is combined for the purpose of resistances and weaknesses. The multiple attack penalty applies to the Strikes as normal.

Wall Run As the monk feat. The Iroran skeleton can Stride along vertical surfaces, such as walls, as long as it begins and ends its movement on a horizontal surface.

Water Step As the monk feat. The Iroran skeleton can Stride across liquid surfaces. If it ends its movement on a liquid surface, it falls in as normal.

Whirlwind Kick ➤➤ The Iroran skeleton makes a single Strike and compares the result to the AC of all creatures within its reach, dealing damage to each creature hit.

E4. NORTHERN CHANGING ROOM

This changing room is identical to area E3 but reversed, and without the jammed door and undead monks.

Treasure: Within the top-right stone cubby on the northern side of the room, someone left a set of +2 *greater striking handwraps of mighty blows* many decades ago; the item's strong magic has prevented it from moldering like the other linens. A thick layer of dust covers the unassuming garments, so a character must succeed at a DC 27 Perception check while Searching the shelves to notice the handwraps for what they are.

E5. COMMUNAL BATHS

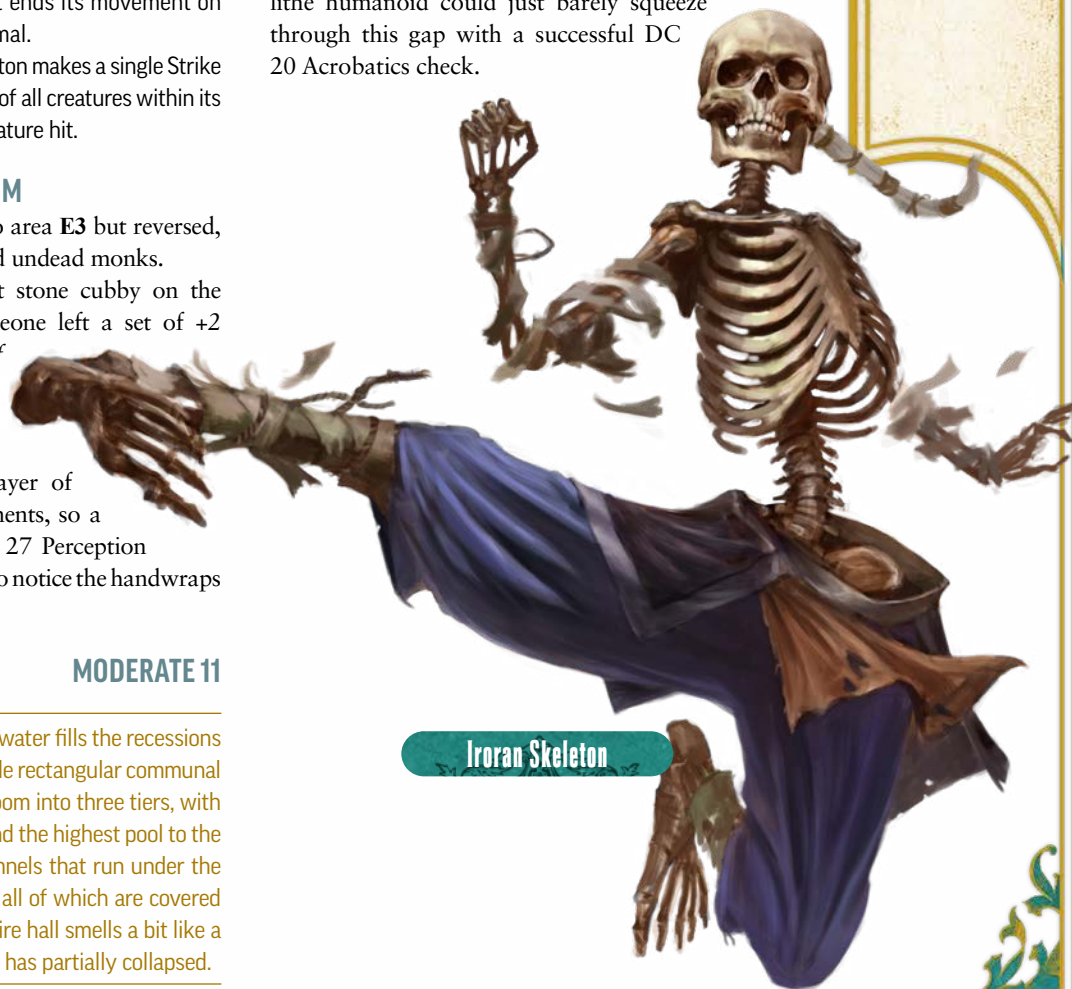
MODERATE 11

A massive pool of scummy, stagnant water fills the recessions between the tile walkways of this wide rectangular communal bath. Shallow staircases divide the room into three tiers, with the lowest pool at the western end and the highest pool to the east. Each pool is connected by channels that run under the tile walkways and around the stairs, all of which are covered in a thick film of shiny slime. The entire hall smells a bit like a swamp. The eastern wall of the room has partially collapsed.

Once a place of cleanliness and relaxation, these communal baths have stood neglected for many, many years. The monks who tended the pools didn't bother to empty them before their departure; only the creatures inhabiting this area (page 54) have ensured that the water didn't completely evaporate, though they could do nothing to prevent sludgy blooms of algae from settling on the pools' surfaces.

Each pool is only 3 feet deep, with a few small steps at most corners to allow bathers to easily step into the water. Ledges along the insides of the pools provide places to sit while relaxing. At the balneary's height, the baths were steaming hot (warmed by the boiler in area E12), gradually cooling as they flowed westward to allow for different levels of heat. The vaulted ceilings here are 20 feet high.

Obstructed Hallway: The collapsed corridor to the east used to be a service entrance connecting to the boiler room, but a minor ceiling collapse has mostly obstructed the way. The path seems totally obstructed at first glance, but with a successful DC 25 Perception check, a character can discover a 20-inch gap. A lithe humanoid could just barely squeeze through this gap with a successful DC 20 Acrobatics check.



Iroran Skeleton

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Hazardous Terrain: The tiles around the pools here are coated in a thin layer of slime, making them difficult terrain. A creature can optionally move at full Speed along the tiles by succeeding at a DC 20 Acrobatics check to Balance; a failed check results in the creature falling prone, while a critical failure results in falling prone into an adjacent space in the pool. The shallow pool, sludgy with algae, is greater difficult terrain.

Creatures: While the balneary was functioning, the attending monks bound water elementals to maintain the baths and provide gentle waves to soothe and relax those within the water. When the monks abandoned the area, the elementals fell into a state of hibernation, absorbing the brackish water of the pools for decades until Franca reactivated the boiler in area **E12**. With the temperature of the water slowly rising, the elemental tsunamis have woken from their torpor. Corrupted by the same strand

of negative energy that reanimated the monks in area **E3**, the elementals now jealously guard their lair.

WEAK ELEMENTAL TSUNAMIS (3) CREATURE 10

Pathfinder Bestiary 6, 153

Initiative Stealth +21

E6. DRYING CHAMBER

Strategically placed gaps in the ceiling vented steam and allowed in sunlight during most of the day, making it an ideal area for bathers to towel off and relax after their baths. The ceiling was sealed over when newer layers of the Irorium were built over the balneary.

E7. COMMUNAL ANTECHAMBER

This anteroom once served a variety of functions, but it was mostly used as a semi-discreet hall where visitors could chat with one another away from the larger baths.

E8. TEPIDARIUM

This wide hall was the first stop for most visitors of the balneary. It was a warm, humid room where they could use smooth metal tools and stones to scrape away the surface layers of dirt on their bodies before going into the pools to the north or south. Remnants of some of these scraping tools remain leaning against the pillars here, many rusted.

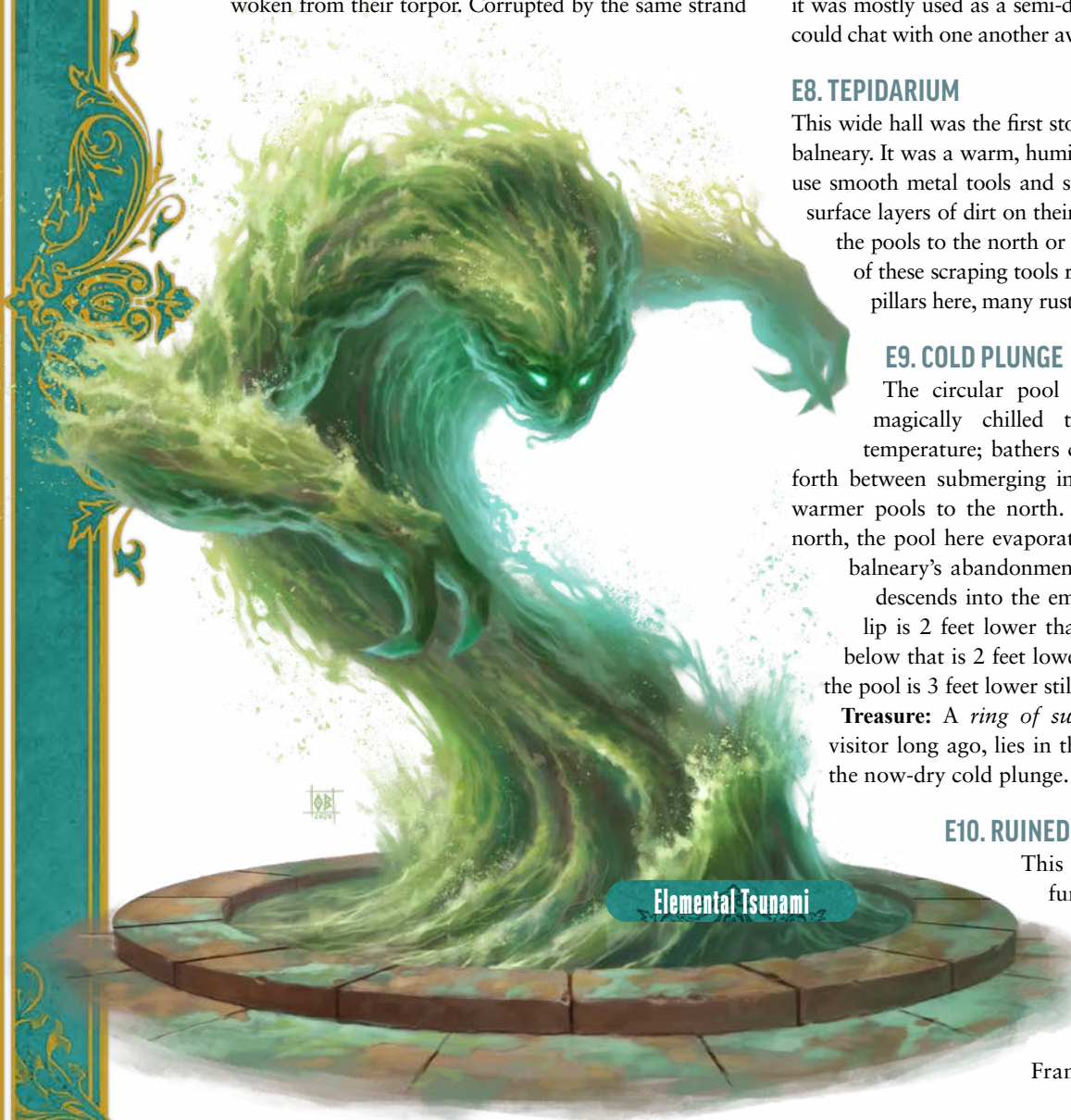
E9. COLD PLUNGE

The circular pool in this room was kept magically chilled to just above freezing temperature; bathers could alternate back and forth between submerging in this cold pool and the warmer pools to the north. Unlike the baths to the north, the pool here evaporated in the years since the balneary's abandonment. A narrow set of stairs descends into the empty pool; the pool's first lip is 2 feet lower than the floor level, the lip below that is 2 feet lower, and the deep center of the pool is 3 feet lower still.

Treasure: A *ring of swimming*, lost by a rich visitor long ago, lies in the dust at the bottom of the now-dry cold plunge.

E10. RUINED HALL MODERATE 11

This hall used to lead to further balneary rooms, but a ceiling collapse has made the path east impassable. Now, it is merely a watch post for Franca's mercenaries.



Elemental Tsunami

Creatures: Four of the Shikwashim mercenaries allied to Franca and Oggvurm search idly through the rubble here. They are ostensibly posted as lookouts in case the gang has company, but they extinguish their lanterns and prepare to mount a surprise attack only if they hear anyone coming from the north or west (their Perception modifiers are +18) or if they hear one of the traps to the north detonate. Otherwise, two of the mercenaries (Kisi and Shalor) sift through the rubble while the other two (Ekseps and Klattik) hold up lanterns to provide light. All of the iruxi are growing irritable at being confined to this hall; they would much rather lounge in the filthy wash tubs in the laundry room.

The mercenaries don't fight to the death; rather, if they believe defeat is imminent, half of them flee to the west and the other half run north to warn their allies.

SHIKWASHIM MERCENARIES (4) CREATURE 9

UNCOMMON NE MEDIUM HUMANOID LIZARDFOLK

Lizardfolk rangers-for-hire

Perception +18

Languages Common, Draconic, Iruxi

Skills Acrobatics +19, Athletics +19, Stealth +19, Survival +17

Str +4, **Dex** +4, **Con** +3, **Int** +1, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +0

Items moderate darkvision elixir, javelins (3), +1 striking scimitar, +1 studded leather, wooden shield (Hardness 3, HP 12, BT 6), 32 gp

Deep Breath A Shikwashim mercenary can hold their breath for 20 minutes.

AC 27 (29 with shield raised); **Fort** +20, **Ref** +19, **Will** +15
HP 155

Attack of Opportunity ➤

Shield Block ➤

Speed 25 feet, swim 15 feet

Melee ➤ scimitar +20 (forceful, magical, sweep), **Damage** 2d6+10 slashing

Melee ➤ jaws +19, **Damage** 1d6+10 piercing

Melee ➤ tail +19 (agile), **Damage** 1d4+10 bludgeoning

Ranged ➤ javelin +19 (thrown 30 feet), **Damage** 1d6+10 piercing

Coordinated Distraction ➤ (auditory or visual, concentrate) With a sharp whistle or wave of their hand, the mercenary distracts an opponent so one of the mercenary's allies can land a clean blow. The mercenary chooses a target and an ally, both of whom must be within 30 feet of the mercenary. The target is flat-footed against the first Strike the mercenary's ally makes on its next turn; if the ally doesn't Strike that target, the effect is lost. Depending on how the mercenary distracts their foe, this action gains either the auditory or visual trait.

Human Hunter A Shikwashim mercenary's multiple attack penalty for attacks against humans is -3 (-2 with an

agile weapon) on their second attack per turn or -6 (-4 with an agile weapon) on their third or subsequent attack per turn.

Powerful Swipe ➤➤ The Shikwashim mercenary makes a melee Strike. If it hits, it deals an extra die of damage. This counts as two attacks for the mercenary's multiple attack penalty.

Terrain Advantage Non-lizardfolk creatures in difficult terrain and non-lizardfolk creatures that are in water and lack a Swim speed are flat-footed to a Shikwashim mercenary.

Questioning the Mercenaries: If the agents apprehend one of the mercenaries and get them to talk (either via magic, persuasion, or coercion), the ranger reveals that Franca and another four mercenaries are hiding in the boiler room to the north. If magically coerced, the mercenary admits that the "poisonous bomb" isn't here, but is with Oggvurm, in the arena.

Treasure: A character who succeeds at a DC 28 Perception check finds a pair of *lucky rabbit's foot* talismans in the northwestern corner of the room, up on the raised seating platform.

E11. LAUNDRY ROOM

Locked Door: The door to the west of this room is locked, requiring either three successful DC 25 Thievery checks to unlock or a successful DC 30 check to Force it Open. (There was once a door to the south as well, but it succumbed long ago to the ravages of time and rotted away to near nothingness.)

A faint odor of lye and other cleansing agents permeates the stone walls and floor of this chamber. Two long, tin tubs, each covered in rust but filled with boiling water, occupy the northwest corner of the room. Faucets above each tub connect to pipes that emerge from the western wall. The eastern section of the room bears two low, square tables of fine stone, their polished surfaces impeccably smooth except for a distinct smear of fresh blood on the northern table.

As the monks used the balneary to clean themselves, the towels and bathrobes they wore would inevitably get dirty. Young initiates at the Irorium would take on the honorable task of cleaning and folding the linens to be used by all other members of the order. They would dunk linens from baskets into the tin tubs, which were filled with scalding hot water from the boiler room. After the wet clothes were hung and dried, the monks folded them on the stone tables.

Franca and her companions used the northern table in this room to make final adjustments to the clockwork poison bomb and adjust its shoulder straps for Oggvurm the Merciless's broad frame. With a successful DC 20

Crafting check, a character can discern that the leftover screws, grease, and poison residue on the table have been here no more than a few hours.

Hazard: After she reactivated the boiler in the adjacent room, Franca set up a dangerous trap here to waylay any unwanted guests who had tracked her and her allies to the balneary. She refilled each tub here halfway with what fetid water remained in the connected pipes, then heated the water by stoking the boiler. (Franca's iruxi companions, heedless of the rotten water, occasionally take dips in the tubs when the water gets cool, a habit Franca finds infuriating,

so she makes sure to keep the water as hot as possible to deter them from doing so.) She connected fine trip wires to small explosive snares at the bottoms of the tubs, tying the other end of each wire to a stone table leg. She and her allies know the location of the trip wires and take care to step around them.

BOILING TUB TRAPS (2)

HAZARD 13

MECHANICAL TRAP

Stealth DC 37 (master)

Description A snapped trip wire causes an alchemical bomb to detonate and blow up part of the tin tub, spilling boiling water all over the trap's victim.

Disable DC 32 Thievery (master) to safely remove the trip wire from the bomb

Overflowing Boiling Water **Trigger** The trip wire is pulled or severed; **Effect** An acid flask detonates, spraying acid at nearby creatures and causing the tub of boiling water to burst in the same direction. All creatures in a 5-foot cone east of the triggered boiling tub trap take 3d6 persistent acid damage, 3 acid splash damage, and 8d6+20 fire damage (DC 31 basic Reflex save).

Treasure: If the traps here are disarmed, a character can salvage two bomb snares connected to two greater acid flasks from them.

E12. BOILER ROOM

SEVERE 11

Two broad iron furnaces squat against the western wall of this room, each radiating an intense heat. Several pipes emerge from the furnaces and extend across the ceiling, disappearing into both the western and southern walls. A massive pile of dusty coal fills the chamber's southwest corner, spilling slightly in the walkway. Where a corridor once spanned northward, huge pieces of stone rubble blocks the way.

When lit and stoked with ample fuel, the twin boilers here provide heat to the balneary's baths and laundry tubs, making it possible to have steaming hot water all year. The boilers lay fallow for decades until Franca and her mercenaries lit them again just recently. They've kept the fire within the boilers burning with the nearby pile of coal. The boiler provides dim light in a 10-foot radius, but coal must be shoveled into it every 6 hours to keep it going.

The northern passageway has collapsed. Like the other ruined corridors in the balneary, it would take far too much time and labor to clear out the passage to make such an excavation worthwhile.

Creatures: Franca Laurentz and two of her mercenaries are holed up here in the laundry.



Shikwashim Mercenary



Franca chose this place after discovering the narrow passage through the rubble to the west, believing this area to be the most defensible location in case they should be caught before her plan was realized. She is aware that she has backed herself into a corner but is fairly confident that no one will come looking for her down here after the bomb goes off, except for her patron Jonis Flakfatter once the coast is clear. She has no idea that the Infector has essentially abandoned her by this point.

Franca and her allies keep a close watch on the passage to the south, but don't pay much mind to the western hall. If they see the Edgewatch agents coming, the three shutter their hooded lanterns and take up strategic positions to ambush the pesky officers (Coal Slide below). The mercenaries—Tulta and Zysha—fight as long as Franca is alive and hasn't surrendered. Franca is a true believer in the Infector's cause and fights to the death. The characters will have to knock her unconscious or otherwise forcibly subdue her in order to take her into custody alive.

SHIKWASHIM MERCENARIES (2) CREATURE 9

Page 55

Initiative Perception +18 or Stealth +19

FRANCA LAURENTZ CREATURE 13

Page 86

Initiative Perception +26 or Stealth +28

Coal Slide: If Franca or her allies know a confrontation is imminent, one of the mercenaries, Zysha, climbs atop the pile of coal and wedges herself between the rocks and the wall. As soon as possible, she spends 2 actions to push against the coal and cause the pile to collapse onto the spaces just west. This deals 4d8 bludgeoning damage to creatures in the area (DC 25 basic Reflex save) and turns the spaces and the staircase just south into difficult terrain. In this case, the *major staff of fire* (see Treasure, below) tumbles out and is revealed to both the agents and Franca's party. If she thinks any of the agents might make use of the staff, Franca tries to kick it out of reach.

Questioning Franca: A quick search of Franca's person reveals that she has no device that even resembles a bomb. If characters manage to question Franca, read the following aloud to the players.

Franca chuckles weakly. "Bomb? You fools. You are nothing more than stooges of the wealthy and powerful, protecting their precious status quo. It isn't a bomb. It's a shock to the system that will jolt all the mindless sheep in Absalom to realize that no one has their best interests in mind. They need to rise up and take what they're owed." She coughs, a bubble of blood coating her lips, then sighs. "Anyway, officers, the device isn't here, as you can see. My accomplice Oggvurm has already taken it to the front rows of the stadium so the privileged can get a nice, close look." She laughs once more.

Alternate Ending: Depending on their previous interactions with Oggvurm, the Edgewatch agents may have already discovered the blackfinger blight bomb and taken care of the ravenile. In this case, the adventure concludes after the agents have arrested Franca's party, and you should plan accordingly for this encounter to be the exciting climax.

Treasure: If the coal pile wasn't knocked over earlier, a character who succeeds at a DC 30 Perception check while examining the pile of coal finds a *major staff of fire* buried within. When a wealthy patron gifted the powerful magic item to the monks long ago, the ascetics were unsure what to do with such a lavish gift, so they kept it in this room to light the boiler when it went out.

In addition, characters can find two doses of mnemonic acid (see page 78) among the mercenaries' gear.

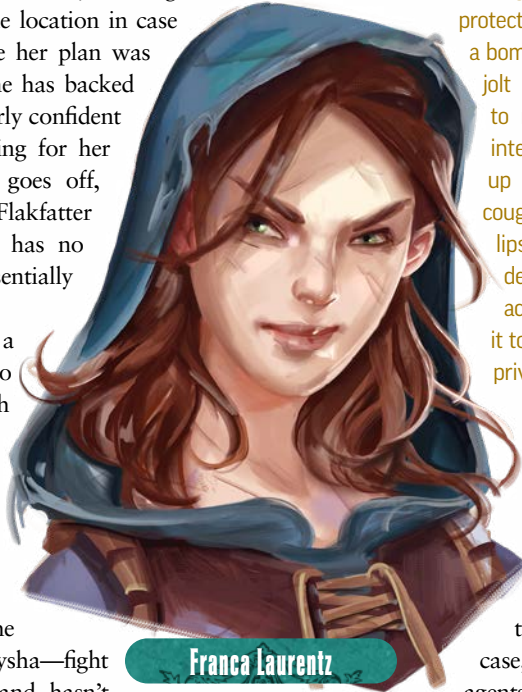
XP Award: For defeating and apprehending Franca and her accomplices, grant each agent an 80 XP story award.

BOMB SQUAD

EXTREME 11

By the time the Edgewatch agents rush back out to the Irorium arena, it's too late to stop Oggvurm from activating the bomb. The Irorium announcer is already introducing Oggvurm the Merciless and his two iruxi handlers by the time the agents emerge from the balneary. Read the following aloud to your players to set the scene.

The crowd roars in anticipation as Oggvurm the Merciless and two iruxi companions step into the center of the arena. Oggvurm drags a massive battle axe behind him and has donned a crimson cloak over his thick rags. With



Franca Laurentz

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a single swipe, he tears off his cloak and reveals a terrible contraption of tubes, gears, and a large glass cylinder filled with a churning purple liquid strapped to his back. The monstrous warrior addresses the shocked crowd, roaring, "People of Absalom! Your time of reckoning is at hand! Die in agony!" With that, a thick plume of celadon smoke pours from the device, enshrouding the ravenile and billowing toward the onlookers in the stands.

For this final battle, use the same map as the one you used for the agents' fight with the eberarks; feel free to rotate or move the scenery and terrain (since Irorium workers typically change up the composition of the arena floor between bouts).

Creatures: In addition to Oggvurm and his Shikwashim fellows Sellok and Nishaku, another contender joins the fray on the first round of combat. Bewildered by the sudden turn of events and hoping to help draw Oggvurm away from the crowd, the Irorium announcer has given the signal to open the gates for Oggvurm's opponent, a strong (but sorely outmatched) hill giant outcast who goes by the stage name Brave Buckshuck. The challenger is just as confused as everyone else by Oggvurm's actions, but thinking it all part of the show, Buckshuck remains true to his name and bravely joins the fray, alternately attacking Oggvurm's party and the agents.

For his part, Oggvurm, ever the showboat, revels in the uproar evoked by his dramatic performance. Unless a character has drawn his ire (for all his brawn, Oggvurm has a tender ego), he charges toward the stands and attempts to enshroud as many fleeing spectators as possible in his toxic cloud. Having been made a true believer of Father Infector's cause, Oggvurm fights to the death.

Brave Buckshuck **CREATURE 7**

Hill giant (*Bestiary* 170)
Initiative Perception +13

Shikwashim Mercenaries (2) **CREATURE 9**

Page 55
Initiative Perception +18

Oggvurm the Merciless **CREATURE 14**

Ravenile rager (page 84)
Initiative Perception +25



Clockwork Poison Bomb

Hazard: The device strapped to Oggvurm's back is the bomb linked to the Twilight Four that the agents have spent most of this adventure searching for. The so-called Rumormonger crafted the clockwork device and filled it with the deadly poison concocted by Jonis Flakfatter, also known as the Infector. The bomb is designed to disperse its poison payload in a billowing cloud that will eventually overtake the entire quadrant of the Irorium and harm everyone within range.

CLOCKWORK POISON BOMB **HAZARD 11**

ALCHEMICAL COMPLEX MECHANICAL TRAP

Stealth The bomb uses Oggvurm's initiative roll as its Stealth roll

Description A clockwork bomb releases gouts of poisonous smoke. The smoke issues forth from a single nozzle attached to two tanks of pressurized poison.

Disable three DC 31 Thievery (expert) checks to Disable a Device to disable the latches that lock the nozzle in place, then one DC 35 Thievery (master) check to Disable a Device to turn off the nozzle; DCs decrease by 2 if Oggvurm is immobilized, paralyzed, unconscious, or dead

AC 32; **Fort** +24, **Ref** +26, -2 to AC and saves if Oggvurm is immobilized, paralyzed, unconscious, or dead

Nozzle Hardness 5; **Nozzle HP** 20 (BT 10) to ruin the nozzle (making it impossible to disable, in which case the only way to disarm the bomb is to destroy both its tanks); **Tank Hardness** 15; **Tank HP** 80 (BT 40) to destroy one of the tanks (both tanks must be destroyed to disarm the bomb); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Poisonous Cloud ☞ (alchemical, poison); **Trigger** The bomb is Activated, which requires 3 actions; **Effect** The bomb releases a smoky cloud of blackfinger blight in a 20-foot radius. Creatures within the smoke are concealed from other creatures. Any creature that starts its turn in the smoke must roll a saving throw to avoid being afflicted by blackfinger blight poison (see page 78). The cloud remains for 1 minute or until dispersed by strong winds.

Routine (1 action) On its turn, the bomb spews forth a smoky gout of airborne blackfinger blight poison. The cloud fills a 20-foot radius, or a 10-foot radius if only one tank remains intact. If the bomb is already in the center of a blackfinger blight cloud, the radius of that cloud increases by 20 feet (or 10 feet, if only one tank remains intact) instead.

Reset The trap issues smoke for 3 minutes before its tanks run dry. The tanks must be replaced before the bomb can be reactivated.

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The full rules for the blackfinger blight poison are detailed on page 78.

Treasure: After they've disabled the clockwork poison bomb and defeated Oggvurm, the bomb and its poison-filled tanks are confiscated for evidence and held in Starwatch Keep, where the agents can examine them at their leisure. While Captain Asilia forbids the agents from reverse-engineering the bomb or keeping any of the poison, they can requisition Oggvurm and the mercenaries' gear.

Lord Ganfen publicly bestows upon the agents a symbolic prize for their feats of bravery: Each character receives a silver sword pin, a highly coveted badge of honor normally reserved for those who have tested their mettle many times in the Irorium.

XP Award: For overcoming Oggvurm, disarming the blackfinger blight bomb, and saving the day, award each agent a 160 XP story award.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Depending on how long it took the agents to disarm the bomb, up to several dozen onlookers or fellow gladiators might have been afflicted with the poison. Additionally, some people in the stands might have been injured or crushed in the mad rush to flee the stadium. At any rate, because additional Starwatch forces were on the scene, most of the potential victims were evacuated before they were exposed to the poison. The prevailing atmosphere at the Irorium is one of relief—after all, if not for the agents, things would have gone much worse!

There is much fanfare and celebration for the heroes of the Irorium. Additionally, the agents' old friend, the newspaper publisher Reginald Vancaskerkin (and, unbeknownst to the agents, the Twilight Four's Rumormonger), is sure to make their story the front page of the next edition of *Eyes on Absalom*.

With Franca Laurentz's plot foiled and the terrorist behind bars, there is a moment of calm. Senior Starwatch officials will take care of interrogating Franca, though you may roleplay this encounter if the players seem keen on doing the interview themselves. Unfortunately, Franca doesn't know enough about her employer—whom she knows only as "Father Infector"—for the Starwatch to identify a suspect with any certainty, so for now the case has gone cold.

Thankfully, the Starwatch has someone on the inside—a deep-cover agent named Thraskul Poisonbreath who has been posing as a member of the cult of Norgorber for years—who can pinpoint the mastermind behind the Irorium attack: a high priest of Norgorber named Jonis Flakfatter. The agents will meet with Thraskul at the start of the next adventure, "Assault on Hunting Lodge Seven," and get a solid lead to continue their investigation. For now, though, you should encourage your players to bask in (or perhaps shy away from, depending on their characters' personalities) their increased fame and the respect they've earned from the citizens of Absalom. Lord Ganfen might host them at a celebratory banquet (perhaps, ironically, renting out the upper floor of a nice casino called the Lucky Nimbus for the occasion), or they might rejoice alongside their old allies back at Edgewatch Headquarters for a spell. Now is a time for triumph; the agents will see plenty more action at the start of the next adventure!



Oggvurm the Merciless



GAMES OF THE IRORIUM

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The largest arena in the known world, the Irorium began as a simple practice ground atop a hill, where worshippers of Irori tested their martial skills against one another. The Irorans long ago gave up management of the Irorium itself, although true worshippers still operate a secret school far beneath the arena, away from the jeers and chants of the crowd above. Exhibitions and contests of skill and strength still take place in the arena, however, and grow larger and more elaborate with every passing year.

Statues of 33 former Irorium champions—each over 150 feet tall—ring the arena’s outer wall, facing out over the city. The 200-foot-tall outer wall towers over the nearby buildings of Absalom’s Foreign Quarter. It encloses a 10-acre central stage, making the Irorium one of the largest and most visually dominant structures in the city. The massive arena has five entrances—a main gate and four side gates—for the public and a sixth gate for workers, gladiators, and other performers.

Before battling in the Irorium, a prospective competitor must demonstrate their prowess to a clerk at the nearby Pugilist’s Hall—a squat, ugly building open at all hours. For a small fee, anyone can enter the hall and attempt to qualify for a writ of combat. Competitors hope to earn one of the Irorium’s coveted sword-shaped pins, which are awarded for repeated victories and command respect throughout the city. More valuable pins command commensurately greater respect. A bronze pin (awarded for victory in five events) might be worth a free drink from an eager fan in a nearby tavern, but the bearers of gold pins (awarded for victory in 25 events) are known and respected throughout the city.

The Irorium hosts a variety of new games each month to keep offerings fresh. Some games are played only once, or for limited runs, while others enter a regular rotation. Three of the most popular Irorium games include chariot chaos, melee mountain, and

whirlpool warriors. General rules for including these games in your campaign are explained below. You can use these games as guidelines and inspiration when designing your own Irorium competitions.

RUNNING AN IRORIUM GAME

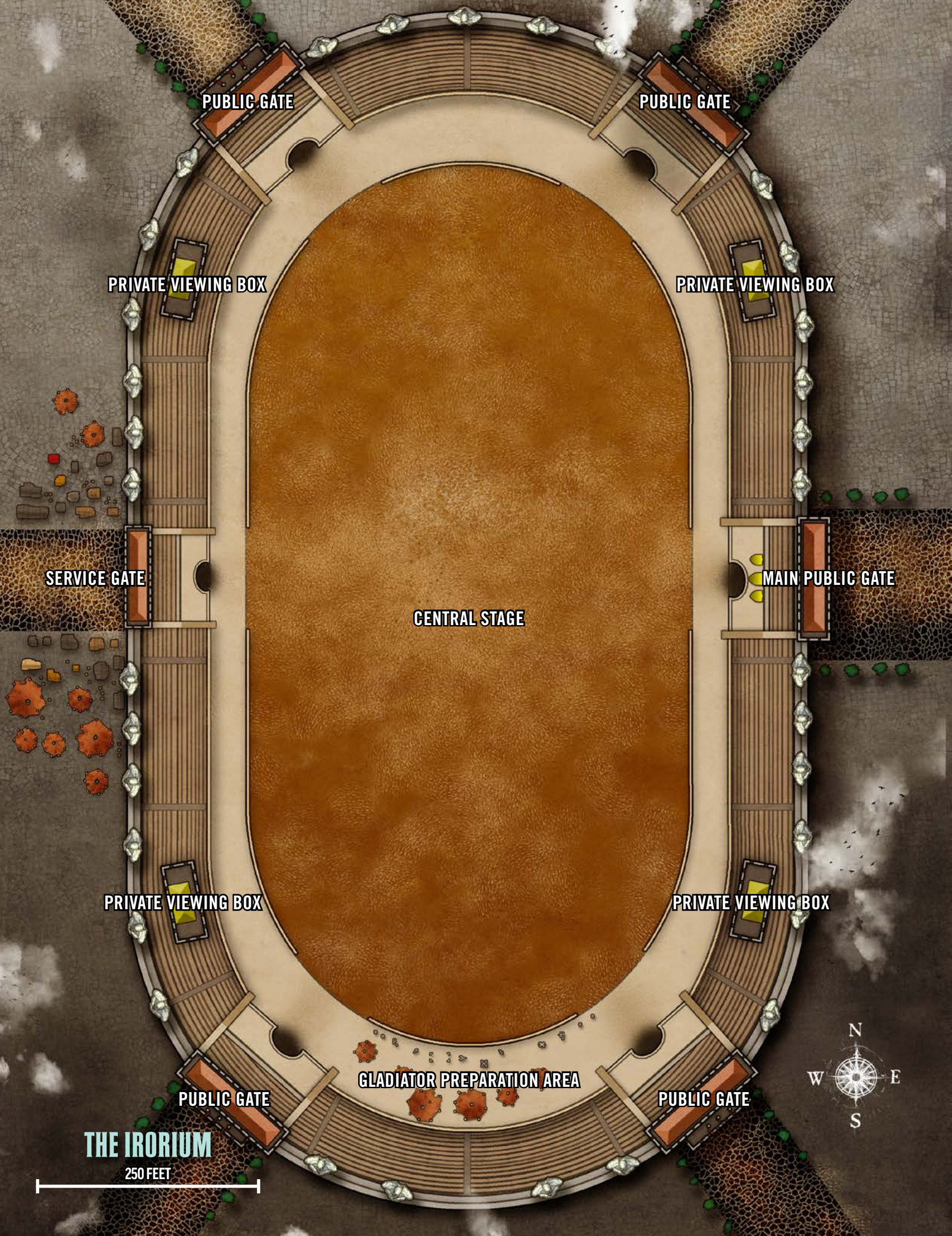
Each of these games is an exploration activity wherein the agents progress through a series of obstacles that represent their progress. Only the agents attempt checks; the other competitors’ progress is abstracted from the agents’ successes and failures. Like encounters, these games take place over multiple rounds (but each round might last mere moments or several minutes. During each round, the agents can act in whatever order they prefer, and each agent takes one turn.

CURRENT CHAMPION

Each game’s entry includes a description of the current individual or team champion or as well as guidelines for modifying the game if the champion competes. If the agents wish to challenge the champion, they must typically win games in the Irorium to earn the right to do so, beating out other low-ranked competitors to earn a place in a highly publicized winners’ bracket.

OBSTACLES

Each game consists of 10 obstacles. You can create a visual representation of each game by transferring the information for each obstacle to a card (or to slips of paper used as “cards”) and laying them out in order to create a track. You can also draw “cards” on a larger surface to create a track. You can place cards face down or cover them to create more suspense, so the players won’t know what obstacles come next. (A good reward for discreet scouting or information gathering prior to a game is for the agents to learn about one or more of these obstacles.) During each game, the agents move through the obstacles sequentially.



PUBLIC GATE

PUBLIC GATE

PRIVATE VIEWING BOX

PRIVATE VIEWING BOX

SERVICE GATE

MAIN PUBLIC GATE

CENTRAL STAGE

PRIVATE VIEWING BOX

PRIVATE VIEWING BOX

GLADIATOR PREPARATION AREA

PUBLIC GATE

PUBLIC GATE

THE IRORIUM

250 FEET





Each obstacle requires a certain number of Arena Points to overcome as indicated in each obstacle's entry. Fractions (such as "3/4 per agent") should be totaled, then rounded down to determine the number of Arena Points required for the entire team. The obstacles offer choices the characters can use to gain Arena Points. On a character's turn, the character picks one of the choices and then attempts the required check. Other characters facing the same obstacles can choose the same check or a different one. The result of the check determines how many Arena Points the character gains for their team.

CONFRONT AN IRORIUM OBSTACLE

CONCENTRATE | EXPLORATION | MOVE

Attempt a check against the current obstacle your team is facing, using the check indicated for your choice of tactic.

Critical Success You succeed, and you help teammates onward or force opponents back. Your team gains 2 Arena Points.

Success Your team gains 1 Arena Point.

Critical Failure You need extra assistance with the obstacle. Your team loses 1 Arena Point.

Once the agents accumulate enough Arena Points to overcome the obstacle, they immediately move to the next obstacle, even in the middle of a round. This means if they have the characters best able to overcome the current obstacle act first in a round, the remaining characters might instead face a new obstacle they're better suited to overcome.

If the agents don't overcome an obstacle after 3 rounds, move on to the next obstacle. You could describe the agents finally overcoming the challenge but falling behind in the game or the referees advancing the agents to keep tension high.

The agents might use some means of gaining an advantage in a game (whether by increasing their speed, hindering opponents, or devising a clever solution to an obstacle). As a reward for creative thinking, consider granting the agents a +1 or +2 circumstance bonus to their checks or allowing a different check at a higher DC. You should inform the players in advance that the agents are participating in a spectacle to thrill a crowd, so they know that using magical effects to bypass the game—such as by teleporting to the finish line—results in disqualification.

These rules assume the agents participate on the same team. If you wish to have the agents compete in these games as part of different teams, split them into groups as desired and track each group's progress separately. Note that groups with fewer agents need fewer Arena Points to advance. You may need to alter

a game's special rules to determine which group is affected by a given mechanic, such as the dragons' actions in chariot chaos.

GAME LEVEL AND DCs

The games described here each have an indicated level that determines the DCs of the checks to Confront an Irorium Obstacle (using Table 10–5: DCs by Level on page 503 of the *Pathfinder Core Rulebook*), often with adjustments based on Table 10–6: DC Adjustments on page 504 of the *Core Rulebook*. A game is most appropriate for agents at or near the indicated level. If a game's level is much higher or lower than the level of the agents, you can adjust the game's DCs using both tables described above.

WINNING THE GAME

Each game ends after the agents overcome the tenth obstacle. To win a game, the agents must complete all 10 obstacles in 9 rounds or less. Their competitors don't complete obstacles, and you can describe narratively how close or far behind the competitors are to the agents to heighten the dramatic tension. If the agents complete all 10 obstacles in fewer than 9 rounds, they have decisively defeated their competitors; otherwise, the game was much closer. You can lower the number of rounds needed to complete the obstacles to 8 (or lower) to reflect highly trained competitors or raise it to 10 (or higher) to represent unskilled contestants. Games with particularly unskilled contestants are often played for laughs, and spectacular failures are expected.

SPECIAL RULES

Chariot chaos and whirlpool warriors each include a unique mechanic, described in the game's entry, that impacts the agents' progress as they attempt to overcome the games' obstacles.

VARYING THE GAMES

Your players may wish to play a game more than once. If they do, consider rearranging or changing some of the obstacles and the associated checks, or altering the special rules element (if any). These changes can keep the game fresh and interesting for the audience each time it's played.

CHARIOT CHAOS (LEVEL 9)

In this chariot race, competitors win by being the first to complete three laps around the arena—a task they must undertake while enduring the whimsical interference of a pair of copper dragons. The two dragons, Endrellixus and Driomyxus, are sisters who revel in the chaotic race and enjoy nearly as much

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fame as the Irorium's champions. The dragons show no favor in the arena. Their seemingly random actions might benefit a specific chariot team in one race and cause that same team a catastrophic loss in the next. Betting on the dragons' antics is as popular as betting on the races themselves.

A single race typically pits three or more teams against each other. Each team consists of one to seven chariots, each driven by a single rider. Bright paint and decorations indicate each chariot's team affiliation for the benefit of both the riders and the crowd.

CURRENT CHAMPION

The Unbreakable Urchins, a family of goblins from the streets of Absalom, have attained sudden wealth and fame due to their success in chariot chaos games.



The fun-loving goblins pile awkwardly into their chariots at the start of each race and leap from one chariot to the other mid-race. They enjoy the adoration of the crowd, primarily because they play up their status as underdogs by acting foolish and clumsy throughout their races.

OBSTACLES

All competitors are assumed to be going as fast as they can throughout the event. The actual speed of the competitors' chariots doesn't matter, and the normal rules for movement aren't used for the race. Instead, use the obstacles below to determine the agents' progress.

1. BEFORE THE RACE

Amaze the Crowd DC 24 Performance

Calm the Animals DC 24 Nature

Arena Points 3/4 per agent

2. STARTING ADVANTAGE

Cause a Distraction DC 26 Deception

Wait for the Signal DC 28 Perception

Arena Points 1 per agent

3. THEY'RE TOO CLOSE!

Run Them into the Wall DC 26 Athletics

Scare Them Off DC 26 Intimidation

Arena Points 1 per agent

4. DRAGONS TAKE FLIGHT

Impress a Dragon DC 28 Diplomacy or DC 28 Performance

Stay Inconspicuous DC 26 Stealth

Arena Points 3/4 per agent

5. PANICKING HORSES

Soothe Their Fears DC 26 Nature

Stay Calm DC 28 Will save

Arena Points 1 per agent

6. COLLISION AHEAD!

Leap Over DC 26 Athletics

Squeeze through the Wreckage DC 26 Acrobatics

Arena Points 1/2 per agent

7. VIE FOR POSITION

Go for Their Blind Spot DC 26 Stealth

Spot the Moment to Accelerate DC 28 Perception

Arena Points 1 per agent

8. SPIKE IN THE WHEEL

Break It Off DC 24 Athletics

Quick Fix DC 26 Crafting

Arena Points 1 per agent



9. SPRAY OF SAND

Cover Your Eyes DC 26 Fortitude save
Duck out of the Way DC 26 Reflex save
Arena Points 1 per agent

10. FINAL STRETCH

Force through a Gap DC 26 Athletics
Spur the Horses DC 26 Nature
Arena Points 1-1/2 per agent

SPECIAL RULES: COPPER DRAGONS

The presence of the copper dragons adds an element of chaos to the race. Starting on the fourth round, before the agents act each round, roll on the table below to determine the action the dragons use to influence the race. Though there are two dragons, only 1 action below is used per round, as the dragons either act in concert or, more often, one spends time showing off while the other interferes in the race.

If the agents participate in this game against the Unbreakable Urchins, during the final 3 rounds, treat any copper dragon actions against the Unbreakable Urchins as a result of “no effect.” The dragons believe the goblins are truly the underdogs they pretend to be, so the dragons don’t target them at the end of the race.

COPPER DRAGON ACTIONS

d10	Effect for the Round
1	No effect.
2	A dragon roars at the agents (each agent who fails a DC 28 Will save must roll twice and take the worse result for their check).
3	A dragon roars at the agents' opponents (each agent can roll twice and take the better result for their check).
4	<i>Hideous laughter</i> targets each agent (each agent must succeed at a DC 28 Will save or they can't perform an activity).
5	<i>Hideous laughter</i> targets the agents' opponents (after each agent attempts a check, that agent can attempt a second check).
6	<i>Grease</i> targets the agents' path (increase the total Arena Points required to overcome the current obstacle by 1).
7	<i>Grease</i> targets the path of the agents' opponents (the agents gain 1 Arena Point toward overcoming the current obstacle).
8	Slowing gas targets the agents (increase all DCs by 2).
9	Slowing gas targets the agents' opponents (decrease all DCs by 2).
10	Roll twice on this table, ignoring results of 1 or 10.

MELEE MOUNTAIN (LEVEL 11)

Melee mountain is a climbing game in which teams of competitors race to the top of a dangerous “mountain” that’s actually a series of climbing walls and mounds of earth built higher than the Irorium’s walls. Magic and mechanical contrivances create strong winds, temblors, and other dramatic events. The teams’ starting locations are spaced evenly around the mountain’s base, but the challengers’ paths inevitably cross as they ascend. Competitors can’t use weapons or spells against one another, only unarmed combat. Aside from that limitation, anything goes when the teams encounter one another, and the game’s brawls are as much a spectacle as the race itself.

Though it was originally designed for solo participants, melee mountain evolved into a game for large teams. Larger groups make the fights more interesting, and group members can shore up each other’s weaknesses to climb at a faster pace.

CURRENT CHAMPION

The current champion of melee mountain is a halfling known only as the Rock Squirrel. She never works with the same team twice and forces her teammates to sign contracts forbidding them from revealing her secret training routine and techniques. If the agents compete against the Rock Squirrel, all of the agents’ opponents fight much harder due to the increased pressure of her presence.

OBSTACLES

All competitors are assumed to be ascending as fast as they can, using whatever sort of movement is fastest or most appropriate for a given challenge. Their actual Speed (including any climb Speed) doesn’t matter, and the normal rules for movement aren’t used for the game. Similarly, the sporadic and rough-and-tumble fistfights on the mountain don’t use the rules of encounter mode (unless, of course, facing off against a rival during the arena spectacle is part of the adventure). Instead, use the following obstacles to determine the agents’ progress and relative position over the course of the race.

1. WARMING UP

Proper Stretches DC 23 Medicine
Mental Exercises DC 26 Will save
Arena Points 1/2 per agent

2. INITIAL ASCENT

Fast Climb DC 28 Athletics
Improvised Climbing Equipment DC 28 Crafting
Arena Points 3/4 per agent

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3. NARROW FOOTING

Take the Treacherous Path DC 28 Acrobatics

Find Another Way DC 28 Survival

Arena Points 1 per agent

4. CLOSE-QUARTERS FISTFIGHT

Force Through DC 28 Athletics

Scare Them Off DC 30 Intimidation

Arena Points 1-1/2 per agent (increase the total Arena Points required to overcome this obstacle by 2 if the Rock Squirrel competes in this game)

5. TREMBLING MOUNTAIN

Steady Footing DC 28 Acrobatics

Find Somewhere Safe to Wait Out the Shaking DC 30 Perception

Arena Points 1 per agent



The Rock Squirrel

6. ROCKS FALL

Dodge Boulders DC 30 Reflex save

Look Out! DC 28 Perception

Arena Points 1/2 per agent

7. BLOCKED PATH

Navigate Around DC 28 Survival

Makeshift Ladder DC 28 Crafting

Arena Points 1 per agent

8. SUDDEN GUST

Stand Against the Wind DC 30 Fortitude save

Hold On! DC 30 Reflex save

Arena Points 1/2 per agent

9. SHEER ICE

Proper Approach DC 28 Nature

Undaunted Climber DC 28 Athletics

Arena Points 1 per agent

10. SUMMIT BRAWL

Brute's Tactics DC 30 Athletics

Scoundrel's Tactics DC 28 Stealth or DC 28 Deception

Arena Points 1-1/2 per agent (increase the total Arena Points required to overcome this obstacle by 2 if the Rock Squirrel competes in this game)

WHIRLPOOL WARRIORS (LEVEL 12)

For this nautical game, the Irorium's masters flood the arena and hire engineers and spellcasters to spin the waters into a massive whirlpool. The contestants team up to crew large rowboats, which launch simultaneously from docks around the arena's perimeter. If a boat touches the center of the whirlpool, it's teleported into a chamber beneath the arena and the members of its crew are eliminated from the match. The crews must fight the pull of the swirling water while fending off and outmaneuvering competitors to become the last boat in the arena.

A single game typically features a dozen or more teams, each crewing a single rowboat. The agents all ride in one boat, which has enough oars and poles that all the agents can help steer it. While functionally identical, the rowboats vary in appearance and color so the crowd can easily follow the action.

CURRENT CHAMPION

The crew of the *Crimson Cutlass* is a motley group whose members wear red masks during the game, concealing their identities. They make no effort to interact with the crowd or acknowledge other competitors, but thanks to their ruthless tactics, they have remained whirlpool warriors champions.



OBSTACLES

All competitors are assumed to be in constant motion, vying for position around the whirlpool. The actual speed and position of the competitors' boats don't matter, and the normal rules for movement aren't used for the game. Instead, use the following obstacles to determine the agents' progress and relative position over the course of the event.

1. PRE-LAUNCH PREPARATION

Check the Equipment DC 28 Crafting

Please the Fans DC 28 Performance

Arena Points 1/2 per agent

2. STARTING STRATEGY

Plot a Course DC 30 Survival

On the Lookout DC 32 Perception

Arena Points 1 per agent

3. ROCKS AHEAD!

Dodge the Rocks DC 30 Acrobatics

Watch the Currents DC 30 Nature

Arena Points 1 per agent

4. COLLIDING BOATS

Steal an Oar DC 30 Thievery

Repair the Damage DC 30 Crafting

Arena Points 3/4 per agent

5. WHIRLPOOL ACCELERATION

Sway with the Boat DC 32 Reflex save

Keep Watch Ahead DC 32 Perception

Arena Points 1 per agent

6. CALM STRETCH

Harry the Opposition DC 32 Intimidation

Tend to Bruises DC 30 Medicine

Arena Points 3/4 per agent

7. SOMETHING'S IN THE WATER!

Spot the Tentacles DC 30 Perception

Dodge the Tentacles DC 30 Acrobatics

Arena Points 3/4 per agent

8. MASSIVE WAVE

Ride the Wave DC 30 Nature

Pull Away from the Wave DC 32 Athletics

Arena Points 1 per agent

9. THEY'RE GRAPPLING US!

Dodge the Hook DC 32 Reflex save

Distract Them to Slip Away DC 30 Deception

Arena Points 3/4 per agent

10. THE WHIRLPOOL WIDENS

Push Another Boat In DC 30 Athletics

Outlast the Competition DC 30 Fortitude save

Arena Points 1-1/2 per agent

SPECIAL RULES: THE WHIRLPOOL

Before rolling their checks each round, participating agents must decide whether they are resisting the whirlpool or maintaining course. If they resist, they take a -2 circumstance penalty to their checks for the round. If they maintain course, they take no penalty. At the end of the round, if the game isn't over, the agents roll a single flat check (DC 5 if the agents resisted the whirlpool or DC 10 if they maintain course) to determine whether they are drawn closer to the whirlpool. If the agents fail a total of five flat checks during the event, their rowboat finally reaches the center of the whirlpool and they automatically lose the game.

If the agents participate in this game against the crew of the *Crimson Cutlass*, the red-masked team's expert tactics mean that the agents are drawn into the whirlpool and lose after accumulating four failed checks, rather than five.

OTHER COMPETITIONS AND EVENTS

Blood dungeon, the newest Irorium game popularized by the exploits of the Pathfinder Society, consists of a race to loot a treasure- and hazard-filled maze. In this game, competitors can use any tactic, including knocking out other challengers, to amass the most wealth and reach the maze's center before time runs out. In another popular monthly game, last warrior, a hundred combatants enter the arena—which features a unique layout every time—to participate in nonlethal combat until only one competitor remains conscious. The victor qualifies for a highly anticipated annual battle between the year's top contenders. Daily martial-arts matches round out the Irorium's offerings and draw sizeable crowds, despite being more mundane than the arena's other contest formats.

In addition to games, the Irorium holds special events throughout the year. In one such spectacle, the Passion of the First Siege of Absalom, hundreds of actors reenact that famous, ill-planned assault in a grand performance. The role of Aroden in this event holds great prestige and is earned through a series of competitive performances in the weeks leading up to the event. Another special event is the Procession of Poets, a day-long celebration of the city's vocal artists. Many famous poets credit their initial success to standout performance during this event, which helped them attract the attention of a patron.

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For good or ill, people gravitate toward organizations that make them feel part of something greater than themselves. Such motivation might lead some to pursuits like academia, the military, or the Pathfinder Society; for others, circumstance or temperament cause them to seek out unscrupulous entities, like thieves' guilds or gangs. Gangs in particular provide a home and sense of belonging to those willing to dedicate their loyalty and support to the group. Some of Absalom's most notorious gangs operate in the interest of personal gain or destruction, while others might focus more on survival amid difficult social or economic circumstances. The violent and criminal acts performed by all of these gangs often put them at odds with Absalom's law enforcement.

Gangs differ from large, structured criminal organizations. Some of Absalom's thieves' guilds have hundreds of members working in a multi-layered hierarchy. Thieves' guilds often operate legitimate businesses within the law, complete with contracts, licenses, and even formalized pay rates for their members. Gangs, on the other hand, rarely bother disguising their blatantly illegal actions behind a veneer of legitimacy. Their activities are often spontaneous, desperate, and violent—the result of a group of individuals whose loyalties lie with each other rather than to wider society.

The following pages detail some of the most notorious gangs in the City at the Center of the World. You can use this information to facilitate how the agents might interact with these gangs.

BLOODTIDE

NE SMALL CRIMINAL

Aquatic thieves assaulting Absalom's docks for profit and to stockpile armaments

Gang Sign shark's dorsal fin cresting above bloodied water

Scope and Influence local (the Docks, Flotsam Graveyard, the Puddles; moderate)

Goals amass wealth, weaken Absalom's aquatic defenses

Headquarters decentralized (all underwater)

Key Members Katharas (LE male azarketi organizer 9)

Allies sea devil clans and alghollthu armies (suspected)

Enemies Pilots' Guild, Starwatch, Wave Riders

Assets stockpiles of weapons, underwater communication and transportation, connections with undersea societies

Membership Requirements must be aquatic, must undergo a branding rite

Accepted Alignments NE (CE, LE)

Values acquisition of resources (especially weapons and armor) from landstriders

Anathema assist landstriders in any fashion

Bloodtide's members prowl the Bay of Kortos, menacing land-bound targets, whom they call "landstriders." This gang of aquatic vandals and thieves often clashes with Absalom's Wave Riders. Exactly how and where Bloodtide began isn't well-known; records of its activities date at least a century before the death of Aroden, making it one of Absalom's oldest gangs. Bloodtide consists primarily of azarketi, but a sizable number of undines also count among its numbers. Rumors maintain that Bloodtide's rarely seen leader, Katharas, might be a puppet of the alghollthu.

EYEGOUGERS

CE SMALL CRIMINAL

Non-human toughs who target human victims

Gang Sign Aroden's holy symbol, covered in blood with its eye gouged out

Scope and Influence local (Ascendant Court, the Coins, and the Foreign Quarter; weak)

Goals forcibly redistribute Absalom's wealth and influence to its non-human residents

Headquarters decentralized

Key Members Hempolton Vates (NE male halfling mastermind 5), Irazix Gorethrottle (NE female iruxi thug 4), Rax Sharpclaw (CE female gnoll serial killer 3)



Allies gnoll slavers, minotaurs

Enemies Caydenites, Firebrands, Graycloaks, Iomedaeans

Assets diverse ancestral backgrounds

Membership Requirements must be non-human and perform a visible, violent act against humans or property dedicated to a once-human deity such as Iomedae

Accepted Alignments CE (CN, NE)

Values topple human institutions and regimes

Anathema aid humans or Absalom's law enforcement

Founded in 4519 AR, the Eyegougers act as a coalition for Absalom's non-human citizens, united by shared frustrations with the human-centric culture in the City at the Center of the World. Every member of the Eyegougers has a story, real or imagined, wherein they suffered some great injustice perpetrated by humans. The gang welcomes any and all non-humans willing to take their trauma and sharpen it into a weapon.

Eyegouger dogma teaches that Absalom's government has always put humanity first, citing the city's use of Aroden's religious scripture as the foundation for its government rather than impartial texts. Members routinely commit highly visible acts of arson, vandalism, mayhem, and murder against human targets. Their leader, a former Chelaxian slave named Hempolton Vates, especially despises adherents of human deities, such as Cayden Cailean and Iomedae. Vates often acts upon this hatred while coordinating Eyegouger activities from the shadowed alleys of the Ascendant Court.

FAMILY DOGS

NE SMALL CRIMINAL

Criminals working circumspect protection rackets from a taxidermy shop

Gang Sign taxidermy animal wearing collars or manacles

Scope and Influence local (the Coins; weak)

Goals leech money from the people of the Coins

Headquarters the Kennel

Key Members Dras (CE male fetchling rogue 9), Vyara (NE female human enforcer 6)

Allies the Stitchlip Man

Enemies Sanguine Beasts, Token Guard

Assets terrified local citizens too afraid to quit paying protection money

Membership Requirements sell an overpriced taxidermy animal to a local merchant in exchange for protection provided by the gang

Accepted Alignments NE (CE, LE)

Values secrecy, fear instilled in the people of the Coins

Anathema excuse payments due from protection victims, expose the Stitchlip Man

The Family Dogs began when its inaugural members discovered several poorly stuffed dogs in an abandoned taxidermy workshop in the Coins. The small band of thieves then took over both the site and these grim mascots. Many members have actually learned taxidermy by experimenting in their headquarters, which they call the Kennel, though they don't run a legitimate business. These criminals instead practice their skills on people who witnessed their crimes or refused to pay them protection money. The gang's leader is a fetchling named Dras who escaped Shadow Absalom long ago. Patient and careful, Dras regularly eliminates anyone who could endanger his organization, making him virtually untouchable. The Family Dogs manufactured the grim local legend of the "Stitchlip



Rax Sharpclaw



Man,” a creeping monster who skulks into houses to sew shut the mouths of any who talk to the law. Although they invented the tale, the gang’s members sometimes masquerade as the Stitchlip Man to scare those who fail to pay protection money punctually. The Family Dogs’ biggest rival is the Sanguine Beasts, a much more conspicuous gang with overlapping territory. Many unfortunate business owners in contested neighborhoods have no choice but to pay protection to both groups.

GYLOU SISTERS

NE SMALL CRIMINAL MERCANTILE

Brutal, all-female shipbuilders and toughs

Gang Sign inverted pentagon over an outstretched hand

Scope and Influence local (Docks; moderate)

Goals promote Chelaxian sympathies, antagonize the gang’s or Cheliox’s enemies

Headquarters The Devil’s Own Shipyard

Key Members Gurd (N female half-orc muscle 4), Velacity Tor (LE female human gang leader 8), Zelva (LE female human tough 6)

Allies Lord Archych of House Dureanz, Chelaxian Embassy

Enemies Firebrands, other Docks gangs (particularly the Dockside Dozen)

Assets several lucrative shipbuilding contracts, smuggled Chelaxian goods

Membership Requirements must be female, must swear fealty to Asmodeus and the Gylou Sisters

Accepted Alignments LE (LN, NE, N)

Values Chelaxian prominence, success in shipbuilding

Anathema disparage Asmodeus, impede the Devil’s Own Shipyard operations, release people from contracts

At first glance, the Devil’s Own Shipyard appears no more than an efficient shipbuilding operation owned by Lord Archych of House Dureanz. Most residents of the Docks know it as the headquarters of the Gylou Sisters, an all-female gang with overt loyalties to Asmodeus and to Cheliox. These sympathies vary for each member; for example, the brutal Zelva is a devout worshipper of Asmodeus but feels little loyalty to the ruling House Thrune of Cheliox). However, the gang as a whole has strong ties to Cheliox and the surreptitious support of Absalom’s Chelaxian Embassy. Most gang members also work at the shipyard, allowing Lord Archych frequent communication with them while publicly disavowing their crimes. Many of the shipyard’s war vessels are built under contracts to the Chelaxian government

or its sympathizers, and smuggled goods are masked as innocuous-looking building materials in the shipyard, waiting for shipment on the next vessel to Cheliox. Despite their recent focus on smuggling, the Gylou Sisters are somewhat ill-suited for clandestine enterprises. Brutish and violent, they revel in the rumors that follow their vandalism and muggings. Smuggling just doesn’t strike as much terror.

PUDDLEJUMPERS

NE SMALL CRIMINAL

Halfling gang of killers, kidnappers, and slavers

Gang Sign small bloody footprint

Scope and Influence local (the Coins; weak)

Goals rebuild Pardu Pildapush’s personal and financial successes

Headquarters Pildapush Chattel on Misery Row

Key Members Benkt Slipshod (CE male halfling rogue 7), Pardu Pildapush (NE male human slaver 12), Punstil Everbasher (CE female halfling assassin 9)

Allies slavers in Fall’s End, beneath Absalom

Enemies Absalom government, Firebrands

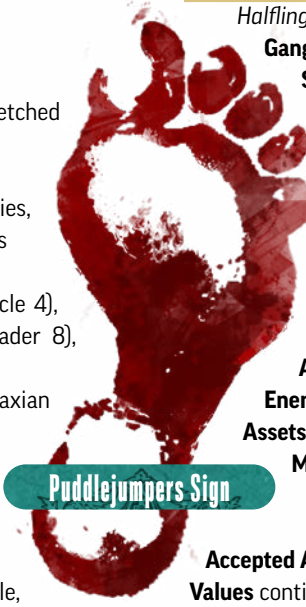
Assets loyalty of gang members

Membership Requirements must be a former halfling slave freed by Pildapush and commit a crime with other Puddlejumpers

Accepted Alignments NE (CE, LE)

Values continuation of Absalom’s slave trade

Anathema defame or disappoint Pildapush, free slaves



Puddlejumpers Sign

Founded in 4701 AR, the Puddlejumpers zealously carry out the will of Pardu Pildapush, a Vudrani slaver who owns Pildapush Chattel. Pildapush’s fortunes took a steep decline when Acting Primarch Wynsal Starborn manumitted all the slaves in Absalom and declared slavery illegal, but the crafty merchant has simply taken his business underground—literally, as he maintains ties with slavers in the Darklands. His business now ostensibly operates to hire paid servants, but he does virtually no legitimate business.

The Puddlejumpers are all halflings that Pildapush personally plucked from the shackles of slavery, granting them unexpected freedom. A freed person’s world can overwhelm former slaves, and that’s where Pildapush’s right-hand halfling, Benkt Slipshod, steps in. Benkt quickly swoops into the lives of each halfling Pildapush frees, convincing them to undertake unscrupulous jobs to aid their liberator. Those who agree to Benkt’s “suggestions” find themselves increasingly pulled into the darker side of Pildapush’s unsavory business.

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SANGUINE BEASTS

NE SMALL CRIMINAL

Violent toughs specializing in extortion

Gang Sign lion's silhouette, painted in blood

Scope and Influence local (the Coins, Foreign Quarter; weak)

Goals force locals to pay the gang for protection

Headquarters decentralized

Key Members Groske (NE male human thief 5), Karthok Daggerborn (LE half-orc gang leader 6), Mezuk (NE male half-orc enforcer 3)



Ammiot the Idle

Allies Gasporian (bookie at the Crimson Coin gambling den), Skinsaw cultists

Enemies Caydenites, Family Dogs, Sleepless Suns

Assets lucrative protection arrangements

Membership Requirements must have the might or guile to act as an enforcer

Accepted Alignments NE (CE, LE, LN)

Values brute strength, Belkzen affiliation

Anathema allow disrespect to go unanswered, refuse a bribe or payoff

The Sanguine Beasts charge merchants in the Coins and the Foreign Quarter for protection from the gang's own destructive vandalism. The half-orc Daggerborn family runs the racketeering group and prefers, though doesn't require, that members have some orc ancestry. Rumors hint that many Sanguine Beasts are also devotees of Norgorber, which the gang doesn't deny. Merchants who refuse to pay protection money find their doors marked with animal blood as a warning. If a shopkeeper still refuses to pay, the Sanguine Beasts descend upon the marked establishment, trashing the business and pummeling anyone they find. While careful to never kill their victims (since the dead can't pay), members of the Sanguine Beasts take special joy in inflicting painful wounds and often maim the faces of those they've attacked. After completing one of their so-called "ravagings," the gang members depart, leaving behind a trail of blood and broken property. They don't steal during a ravaging because they don't want to give the impression that their fury can be bought off. Members claim, "You negotiate with merchants, not with the Sanguine Beasts."

SILKENHAND

NE SMALL CRIMINAL

Drug dealers who exploit sex workers

Gang Sign hand wrapped in gauzy cloth

Scope and Influence local (Ivy District; weak)

Goals hook citizens on vices supplied by the gang

Headquarters decentralized

Key Members Ammiot the Idle (NE male human gang leader 5), Corella Dalithayne (LE female half-elf drug pusher 3)

Allies desperate theater companies and sex workers

Enemies Brotherhood of Abadar vigilance committee, Street Performers and Actors' Guild, Thistleguard

Assets arrangements with several drug dens and brothels

Membership Requirements must provide a roster of additional clients to make purchases from the Silkenhand

Accepted Alignments NE (CE, N)

Values discretion, connections in Absalom's theater scene

Anathema partake of the gang's drug stores, reveal a client's identity



The Silkenhand fronts as an upscale establishment that provides vices to clients who want to maintain anonymity. In truth, this gang of pushers works hard to get people of the Ivy District addicted to shiver and other unsavory drugs. The Silkenhand has made significant inroads in pushing its products to actors and stagehands in the Ivy District as well as to desperate sex workers living in the increasingly expensive housing of that neighborhood.

The gang's leader, a twice-failed actor known as Ammiot the Idle, presents an image of sophistication while staunchly refusing to partake in the products his gang sells. He insists on discretion, not out of a sense of propriety, but to ensure that his repeat customers keep their vices a secret from those who might help them break their addictions.

WARHOUNDERS

CE SMALL ANARCHIC CRIMINAL

Anarchists who seek to cause as much trouble as possible

Gang Sign snarling dog with teeth bared

Scope and Influence local (the Puddles and Shoreline; moderate)

Goals cause mayhem, rob passersby

Headquarters Pyramid of the Dog (ruined siege tower south of Shoreline)

Key Members Nessian (CE human gang leader 5), Marrow Chomper (N dog mascot)

Allies various anarchist groups

Enemies Muckruckers

Assets war dogs, ruined siege castle

Membership Requirements while caged with Marrow Chomper for 1 minute, evade being bitten without harming the Warhounder's mascot

Accepted Alignments CE (CN, NE)

Values discord for its own sake

Anathema aid Absalom's law enforcement

Based just south of Shoreline outside Absalom's walls, the Warhounders rob the people of Shoreline and the Puddles whenever it strikes their fancy. The gang's toughs do whatever they can to remind disenfranchised people that Absalom's government can't (or won't) protect them from danger. Nessian, the gang's leader, deeply believes in this brutal reality, having grown up as a pugnacious street urchin before founding the Warhounders a decade ago. Despite his youth, Nessian has proven himself to be a cunning tactician and a cruel leader, outright thwarting the Absalom guard at every turn. Once, he personally decapitated a Muckrucker named Theirmias in combat and threw the veteran's head into a throng of bystanders before running off to cause more mayhem.

OTHER GANGS

In addition to the gangs detailed previously, Absalom has several lesser-known gangs. Even more sophisticated criminal organizations can be found in *Absalom: City of Lost Omens*.

Bleach Breakers: The Bleach Breakers are gnome vagrants devoted to staving off their members' inevitable Bleaching with increasingly daring and reckless crimes.

Dockside Dozen: Founded by 12 orphans from Andoran looking to start a new life in Absalom, the increasingly misnamed Dockside Dozen now has nearly a hundred members and controls a large portion of the warehouse district in the Docks.

Golden Torcs: Known for their namesake jewelry, the Golden Torcs are primarily pickpockets and muggers active in Westgate. To join, a prospective member must steal enough gold from various marks to forge their own personal torc, which they weld around the neck as a permanent accessory. Recently, the gang has fallen to infighting to determine new leadership after the arrest and imprisonment of their leader, Tyrigrat Tweev.

Hellcats: Founded 2 years ago by a 14-year-old human named Jorne Webberton, the Hellcats have become one of the most notorious new gangs in the Puddles and the Foreign Quarter. Though adolescents and older children run the group's operations, the Hellcats have a reputation for ferocity and cruelty, especially after Jorne personally took the lives of two Muckruckers. Despite it being an open secret that Haigen Topkick has it in for Jorne and his gang, members of the Hellcats proudly wear their gang's orange-and-white bandanas.

Red Rings: A criminal gang based mostly in Eastgate, the Red Rings combine burglary and arson in their endeavors. Having discovered that fire evokes more terror than theft, the gang extorts "fire protection payments" from local homeowners, later robbing those whose security seems lax. Each member openly wears a fire striker across their hand like brass knuckles, and they even paint these combination fire-starting tools and weapons a garish, glossy red.

Ruin Rovers: The Ruin Rovers are a gang of young lizardfolk whose families moved into the Precipice Quarter when the people of Absalom abandoned it after the earthquake of 4698 AR. They work to stop efforts to rebuild the ruined district they call home, fearing such renovation will lead to them being shoved out. With the fairground's restoration mandated for the Radiant Festival, the Ruin Rovers increasingly rely on more violent and desperate acts to stop construction, escalating from vandalism to murder.

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In “All or Nothing,” the agents deal with a war between rival street gangs, steal from a wealthy casino owner, fight in gladiatorial games, and defuse a deadly bomb—all events that provide opportunities to learn new tactics and tricks.

GANG FEATS

Street gangs in Absalom recruit amateur pickpockets, ruffians, and vandals who show promise in their specialties and operate well in tight groups.

Rogue agents can gain access to some of the following rogue feats by successfully helping Maurrisa Jonne or Bloody Berleth eliminate their rival (see Chapter 1). Some of these feats, however, can be gained only by helping a particular side in the gang conflict.

SLICE AND SWIPE ◆◆

FEAT 6

UNCOMMON FLOURISH MANIPULATE ROGUE

Access Help either the Washboard Dogs or the Diobel Sweepers destroy their rival.

Requirements You're wielding a melee weapon that deals slashing damage and you have a free hand.

You attempt a melee Strike with the required weapon. If you hit and deal damage and the result of your attack roll exceeds the target's Perception DC, you Steal a small object from the target (as if you had succeeded at that task using the Thievery skill). Depending on the object, the target might realize that it has been stolen, and onlookers might realize you have stolen the object if the attack roll doesn't exceed their Perception DCs.

AMBUSHING KNOCKDOWN ◆◆

FEAT 8

UNCOMMON ROGUE

Access Side with the Washboard Dogs in the gang conflict.

Prerequisites ruffian racket

Requirements You're wielding a melee weapon that deals bludgeoning damage and you're hidden from or undetected by an enemy.

You emerge from hiding and deliver a blow that can knock

an enemy sprawling to the ground. You Stride up to half your Speed, but you must end your movement next to a foe you're hidden from or undetected by. You then Strike that enemy with the required weapon; if you hit, the target is knocked prone.

SUBTLE SHANK ◆◆

FEAT 8

UNCOMMON FLOURISH ROGUE

Access Help either the Washboard Dogs or the Diobel Sweepers destroy their rival.

Prerequisites Quick Draw

Requirements You have a melee weapon of light bulk Concealed on your person via the Stealth skill, and the target isn't aware of it.

You draw a concealed weapon, attack with it, and then hide it away again in one smooth motion. Interact to draw the weapon, Strike with that weapon, and then Conceal it with a Stealth check. The target is flat-footed for this attack.

DENY SUPPORT

FEAT 10

UNCOMMON ROGUE

Access Help either the Washboard Dogs or the Diobel Sweepers destroy their rival.

When you succeed or critically succeed at a Deception check to Feint an opponent, that target can't flank with their allies until the beginning of your next turn.

COORDINATED DISTRACTION ◆

FEAT 12

UNCOMMON CONCENTRATE ROGUE

Access Help either the Washboard Dogs or the Diobel Sweepers destroy their rival.

With a sharp whistle or wave of your hands, you distract an opponent from the fact that one of your allies is about to attack them. Choose a target and an ally, both of whom must be within 30 feet. The target is flat-footed against the first Strike the ally makes on their next turn; if your ally doesn't Strike that target, the effect is lost. Depending on how you describe your distraction, this action gains either the auditory or visual trait.

CASINO GAMES

The Lucky Nimbus offers the usual assortment of casino games already familiar to real-world players, such as roulette and twenty-one, as well as the following three gambling games unique to the world of Golarion. Use the following rules to play these games at your table if your players are interested in playing through a few games of chance for the opportunity to win big—or lose it all.

Each entry below lists the supplies you need to play each game (all games assume you use coins or other tokens to track bets), an explanation of how to play the game (and in some cases, ways to bet on the game), and how the odds are stacked against the players. At the Lucky Nimbus, a dealer (played by the Game Master) watches over each game, either rolling dice or dealing out cards when appropriate.

GOLEM

Considered a card game for the observant and serious-minded, golem is played all around the Inner Sea and beyond. Regional variants exist, but golem is usually played with three to six players and a dealer.

Supplies: A deck of cards, plus a token to represent an amulet. A golem deck is identical to a real-world poker deck, except the cards go from 1 to 13 (no face cards) in four suits: flesh (hearts), clay (spades), stone (diamonds), and iron (clubs).

How to Play: Golem is a card game similar to five-card draw poker (including the ranking of hands) in which

players try to build the best hand. However, in addition to beating the other players, players must try to beat a “golem hand” to win the pot.

Golem is played in a series of games; one game must be completely resolved before the next begins. The player to the right of the dealer gets the amulet to start the night, and each player must ante by placing an amount (determined by the table, typically ranging anywhere between 2 cp and 5 gp) into the pot.

The dealer deals five cards to each player. Starting at the amulet, each player can take one of four actions:

- Bet (usually an amount at least equal to the ante; some casinos limit how high the original bet can go).
- Match the current bet.
- Raise the current bet (again, usually by an amount at least equal to the ante; sometimes with a limit).
- Fold.

Anyone who folds is out of the game and can't come back in until a new game begins. The betting continues going around until all players have matched the current bet or folded.

Next, each player still in the game can discard up to two cards and receive that many back from the dealer. The discarded cards go face-down on the table's center. Another round of betting occurs, starting at the amulet.

If, at any point, only one player hasn't folded, that player wins the pot with the house taking 5 percent, and the game ends. If at least two players are still in the game after all bets are matched, those players reveal their hands. The dealer then “frees the golem.”

The golem hand—the best five-card hand created from the players' discarded cards—is revealed, and if the player with the best hand beats the golem, they win the pot, and the game is over. But if the player with the best hand doesn't beat the golem hand, that player must add an amount of coins to the pot (usually an amount equal to twice the ante), and all cards are collected so that a new hand can be dealt for the players who were still in the game. This continues until someone wins the pot. The house takes 5 percent of the final pot, the amulet moves one position counterclockwise at the table, and a new game is dealt.

BOUNDER

Bounder is an exciting game of rolling dice where tensions run high and luck is paramount. A bounder table can usually seat around 20 gamblers, and each gets a turn as the shooter—the player who rolls dice against the dealer.

Supplies: Three six-sided dice for the dealer and two 20-sided dice for the shooter.

How to Play: To start, the current shooter bets a stake





(the minimum can be different at each casino, though usually it's 5 cp). The shooter then rolls their first d20, establishing their "point." The shooter can then double their stake if desired. In addition, the other gamblers at the table can also place bets on the shooter's point if they believe the shooter will "bound" the dealer. Some casinos also offer the ability to place bets on the dealer's roll (whether they'll roll all even numbers, all odd numbers, or three of the same number); such bets usually offer higher payouts.

When all the bets have been placed, the dealer rolls their 3d6. If the total matches the shooter's point, the shooter automatically loses their stake, as does anyone who bet on the point. Side bets for the dealer's roll are also resolved now. Generally, a bet on the dealer rolling all even or all odd numbers pays out an amount equal to the stake, and a bet on the dealer rolling three of a kind pays out an amount equal to three times the stake.

The shooter then rolls their second d20; if their two dice results are on either side of the dealer's result—one greater than and one less than the dealer's number—they bound the dealer and win an amount equal to their stake; those who bet on the point also win an amount equal to their bet. Otherwise (including if the second d20 roll equaled the dealer's roll), the shooter and anyone who bet on the point lose their stakes. If a shooter rolls a 1 and a 20 (or a 20 and a 1), they win double their stake, though those who bet on the point win the usual amount.

A new round of betting then begins and the next player clockwise at the table becomes the new shooter.

Odds: A shooter will win about 40% of the time. Those gamblers who bet on the point have the same chance of winning as the shooter.

The chance of the dealer's roll being all even or all odd numbers is less than 13%, and the chance of the dealer's roll being three of a kind is less than 3%.

CENTURY

While this sedate game of predicting numbers doesn't offer the same thrill as many other games of chance, it's a popular way to pass the time with decent odds of winning at least some of your money back.

Supplies: Two distinct 10-sided dice for the dealer (or any other way to randomly generate numbers between 1 and 100) and sheets of paper for players to record their predictions.

How to Play: Each player bets a stake (the minimum can be different at each casino, though usually it's 5 cp) and chooses between two and 10 numbers that fall between one and 100.

Then, the dealer rolls the d10s 20 times to randomly generate 20 different numbers (rolling again if a duplicate is ever rolled). Some casinos determine these numbers by pulling numbered balls out of a wire tumbler, performing this drawing slowly to maximize excitement. Each player's predictions are compared to the generated numbers. A player receives a payout if some of their numbers match, depending on how many numbers the player predicted. Generally, the more numbers the player chooses, the more that need to match to receive any payout.

The Century Payouts table below shows the payout depending on how many numbers a player has predicted and how many generated numbers match these predictions.

Odds: A player's odds of success depend on how many numbers they predict. For instance, there's about a 38% chance of matching one number if the player predicts two, but only a 6% chance of both matching. There's approximately a 14% chance of matching two numbers if the player predicts three, but less than a 2% chance of all three matching. In general, the more numbers the player has to match for a payout, the smaller the chance of it happening.

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CENTURY PAYOUTS

NUMBERS PREDICTED

NUMBERS CORRECT	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	1	x1							
	2	x5	x2	x2					
	3		x30	x5	x2	x2	x1		
	4			x60	x10	x4	x2	x1	
	5				x200	x50	x20	x10	x5
	6					x800	x400	x100	x40
	7						x2000	x1500	x200
	8							x5000	x2000
	9								x5000
	10								x2000

VILE GEAR

The agents can find the following profane items in this adventure, though as officers of the law they'll likely use these contraband to barter or as salvage.

BARBED VEST

This cursed item was made by velstracs to torture mortals. The agents might secure one from Ekimilixus during their casino heist in Chapter 2.

BARBED VEST

ITEM 10

RARE **CURSED** **INVESTED** **MAGICAL** **NECROMANCY**

Usage worn armor; **Bulk** 1

Viciously sharp spiked chains wrap around this studded leather armor that can be used to magically harm the wearer and channel supernatural abilities without somehow tearing at the leather itself.

The *barbed vest* doesn't fuse to you in the usual way (as described on page 90 of the *Pathfinder Gamemastery Guide*). It can be removed and discarded, but 1 day after doing so, you feel driven to recollect the vest at any cost until the curse is removed with a *remove curse* spell.

Anytime you activate the *barbed vest*, its chains tighten around you, dealing 1d6 persistent piercing damage. You can remove this persistent damage as normal, but only after deactivating the item's magic as a single action.

Activate ⬡⬡ (envision); **Frequency** once per hour; **Effect**

The barbed vest casts *spiritual weapon*, summoning a spiked chain to fight for you.



Barbed Vest

turn their lungs into a soft jelly. A victim of blackfinger blight is recognizable by the pores of their fingertips weeping an inky oil that coats their hands and makes it difficult to hold things. Each round, at the beginning of their turn, a creature affected by blackfinger blight must succeed at a flat DC 5 check or drop one random item they're holding.

Saving Throw DC 32 Fortitude; **Onset** 1 round;

Maximum Duration 6 rounds; **Stage 1** 6d6 poison damage (1 round); **Stage 2** 8d6 poison damage (1 round); **Stage 3** 10d6 poison damage and confused (1 round)

MNEMONIC ACID

This potent caustic elixir is heavily associated with dero kidnappers and experimenters, though no one is exactly sure who concocted the first batch of mnemonic acid. Regardless, it remains a favorite tool among unscrupulous or cannibalistic individuals who wish to glean the secrets of the dead.

MNEMONIC ACID

ITEM 8

UNCOMMON **ALCHEMICAL** **CONSUMABLE** **ELIXIR**

Price 75 gp

Usage held in 1 hand; **Bulk** L

Activate ⬡ Interact

This translucent yellow-green liquid has a sharp, tangy odor and an oily sheen. It's mildly acidic and can cause a minor rash after prolonged contact with skin. To unlock its true potential, you must submerge a piece of an intelligent creature's brain matter in the acid and allow the material to completely dissolve. This takes 2d10 minutes, during which time the mnemonic acid bubbles and steams eagerly.

Once the brain matter fully dissolves, you can consume the acid as an Interact action to experience a powerful vision and relive one of the memories of the creature whose brain matter was dissolved. You have no control over which memory you experience, although such visions are almost always of memories that were meaningful to the owner of the dissolved brain matter. The memory might be of a single event or a series of related and interconnected events; the memory lasts no longer than 10 minutes, and you're blind to the world around you for the duration.

Each dose of mnemonic acid requires roughly 10% of the brain matter of the creature whose visions are to be experienced, meaning that up to 10 different memories from the same creature can be experienced, each with a different dose of mnemonic acid, before the brain matter is exhausted.

BLACKFINGER BLIGHT

Jonis Flakfatter spent weeks in his secret laboratory analyzing deadly poisons and offering prayers to Norgorber in order to create this virulent poison. Several doses of blackfinger blight can be recovered from Franca Laurentz as well as from the clockwork poison bomb implanted into Oggvurm (see page 58). If the agents wish, they can analyze a dose to learn the poison's alchemical formula, as described on page 293 of the *Core Rulebook*.

BLACKFINGER BLIGHT

ITEM 12

RARE **ALCHEMICAL** **CONSUMABLE** **CONTACT** **POISON** **VIRULENT**

Price 350 gp

Usage held in 1 hand; **Bulk** L

Activate ⬡⬡ Interact

This oily, dark purple powder gives off the distinct odor of boiled leather. When delivered, the poison acts quickly to constrict the victim's blood flow to their extremities and

PROVOCATOR ARCHETYPE

The agents gain access to the provocator archetype by successfully beating the ebaraks during the Blood City Games in Chapter 3 of this adventure and impressing Vez, Alistar with Arms, or Lord Ganfen with their showmanship. Afterward, one of these NPCs offers to teach the agents the ways of the provocator—a gladiator who mixes brilliant performance with mastery of weapons.

At your discretion, this archetype can easily be adapted to any campaign in which the agents take part in a gladiatorial arena, fighting performance, or otherwise applicable situation.

PROVOCATOR DEDICATION FEAT 10

UNCOMMON ARCHETYPE DEDICATION

Access Successfully defeat the ebaraks in the Irorium.

Prerequisites Strength 14, Charisma 14

For you, fighting is as much about style as skill. You become trained in simple weapons, martial weapons, and one advanced weapon of your choice. When you critically succeed at an attack roll using your chosen advanced weapon, you also apply the critical specialization of that weapon. You become an expert in Performance and your choice of either Acrobatics or Athletics. If you were an expert in all three of these skills, you instead become an expert in a skill of your choice.

Special You can't select another dedication feat until you have gained two other feats from the provocator archetype.

FLOURISHING FINISH FEAT 12

ARCHETYPE CONCENTRATE EMOTION MENTAL

Prerequisites Provocator Dedication

Requirements Your last action was a Strike that dropped an opponent to 0 Hit Points.

Attempt a Performance check, comparing the result to the Will DC of each foe within 30 feet who can see you. Regardless of the result, each target is immune to your Flourishing Finish for 10 minutes.

Critical Success The target is frightened 2.

Success The target is frightened 1.

CARTWHEEL DODGE FEAT 12

ARCHETYPE

Prerequisites Provocator Dedication

Requirements You aren't encumbered or overburdened.

Trigger You succeed or critically succeed at a Reflex saving throw.

You Step up to 10 feet.

MURDERER'S CIRCLE FEAT 14

ARCHETYPE

Prerequisites Provocator Dedication

You Strike a target within reach and then Step to any other open space adjacent to that target. Your target is then flat-footed against your next Strike this turn.

PIN TO THE SPOT FEAT 14

ARCHETYPE

Prerequisites Provocator Dedication

You Strike a target within reach. If you hit and deal damage, the target is also restrained as if you had critically succeeded at an Athletics check to Grapple.

PERFORMANCE WEAPON EXPERT FEAT 16

ARCHETYPE

Prerequisites Provocator Dedication, expert in any kind of weapon or unarmed attack

Your experience has made you better with a wide variety of weapons. Your proficiency ranks for simple weapons and martial weapons increase to expert, as does your proficiency rank for your chosen advanced weapon.



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MOUNTING CHAOS

Avareks sow discord. They begin by stealing food, tools, and mementos, occasionally hiding them in someone else's possessions. They progress to making rigging too slippery, altering sea charts, and producing haunting noises. Once the ship's crew are sufficiently overwhelmed, the avareks shatter navigational aids, tear the sail, and pierce the hull, savoring the sight of the boat finally plunging into the watery depths below.

AVAREK

Avareks delight in tormenting ship's crews and causing shipwrecks off the coasts of Garund and the Inner Sea. Bipedal, aquatic fey covered in long, urchin-like spines, avareks stand 2 feet tall—or 3 feet tall if measured to the tips of their spines—and weigh fewer than 30 pounds.

Avareks rely on subtlety and subterfuge to indulge their destructive whims, using magic to sabotage ships and cloud the minds of crew members and passengers. Patient and cunning, avareks lurk beneath or within a targeted vessel for weeks, building conflict and mistrust. Soon, shipmates accuse one another of theft and treachery; superstitious crew members might believe their ship is haunted. Eventually, the crew becomes too frightened or mistrustful to save their ship from the avareks' sabotage.

Avareks take pride in their sunken trophies, claiming the wrecks of ships they've destroyed as their homes and gorging on the bloated, water-logged corpses of the crew and passengers.

AVAREK

CREATURE 8

UNCOMMON NE SMALL AMPHIBIOUS FEY

Perception +16; darkvision

Languages Aquan, Common, Undercommon; *speaks with animals*

Skills Acrobatics +17, Athletics +14 (+16 to Climb or Swim), Deception +17, Nature +16, Sailing Lore +15, Stealth +19, Survival +16, Thievery +19

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

Items +1 striking dagger

AC 26; **Fort** +16, **Ref** +19, **Will** +16

HP 150; **Weaknesses** cold iron 8

Speed 20 feet, climb 20 feet, swim 50 feet

Melee ♦ *dagger* +20 (agile, finesse, magical, versatile S), **Damage** 2d4+4 piercing

Melee ♦ *spine* +16, **Damage** 2d6+4 piercing plus 1d6 persistent bleed

Ranged ♦ *dagger* +20 (agile, finesse, magical, thrown 10 feet, versatile S), **Damage** 2d4+4 piercing

Primal Innate Spells DC 30, attack +22; **4th** *confusion*, *hydraulic torrent*, *suggestion*; **2nd** *hydraulic push* (at will), *invisibility* (self only), *shatter*, *ventriloquism* (at will); **1st** *grease* (at will), *gust of wind* (at will); **Cantrips** (4th) *prestidigitation*; **Constant** (4th) *speaks with animals*

Prickly Defense ♦ The avarek withdraws beneath its spines, presenting a defensive, spiky exterior. It gains a +2 circumstance bonus to spine Strikes and AC. Any adjacent creature that attempts a melee attack against the avarek takes 1d6 piercing damage per attack, regardless of whether the attack hits. Prickly Defense lasts until the avarek uses a move action or makes a Strike with any weapon other than its spines.

Rolling Assault ♦♦ The avarek curls into a ball and rolls rapidly, impaling enemies with its spines. The avarek Strides twice and makes up to two spine Strikes at any point during its movement, each against a different target within reach. These attacks count toward the avarek's multiple attack penalty, but the penalty doesn't increase until after the avarek makes all the attacks.

Sneak Attack The avarek's Strikes deal an additional 2d6 precision damage to flat-footed creatures.





BREGDI

Bregdis hunt warm-blooded prey, lurking in the waters of most major port cities before using their ray-like bodies and hooked claws to hitch onto the underside of boats pulling into port. From beneath the docks and in the channels of settlements, bregdis wait for the careless or unlucky to fall into the water, where they make quick work of their hapless victims.

Although bregdis have little more intelligence than most animals, a particularly opportunistic bregdi might realize that a fishing line often leads to a tasty meal. A bregdi that spots a fishing lure might grab it gently with its claw to imitate a fish caught on the line. Once a fisherman is “hooked” and starts to reel in, the bregdi plays along, slowly approaching the shore while making sluggish struggling motions. Once near land, the bregdi violently tugs on the lure to yank its unsuspecting prey into the water. Bregdis can survive out of water for short periods of time, but only the most desperate bregdis hunt on land.

BREGDI

CREATURE 9

UNCOMMON N LARGE ANIMAL AQUATIC

Perception +18; low-light vision, scent (imprecise) 30 feet

Skills Acrobatics +17, Athletics +21, Stealth +17, Survival +18 (+20 to Track a creature at half its Hit Points or fewer)

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

Partial Amphibian The bregdi can breathe air for up to 10 minutes, or up to an hour so long as its skin remains wet.

AC 27; **Fort** +20, **Ref** +18, **Will** +17

HP 180; **Weaknesses** fire 10

Speed 20 feet, swim 40 feet

Melee ♦ jaws +21 (reach 10 feet), **Damage** 2d12+8 piercing

Melee ♦ hook claw +21 (agile, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 2d8+8 piercing plus Grab

Aquatic Ambush ♦

Capsize ♦ (attack) The bregdi tries to capsize an adjacent aquatic vessel of its size or smaller. It must succeed at an Athletics check with a DC of 35 (reduced by 5 for each size smaller the vessel is than the bregdi) or the pilot's Sailing Lore DC, whichever is higher.

Swallow Whole ♦ (attack) Medium, 2d8+7 bludgeoning, Rupture 18

Tug ♦ The bregdi pulls a creature it can reach or a creature holding something it can reach (such as a fishing line in the water). The bregdi attempts an Athletics check against the creature's Fortitude DC. On a success, it pulls the creature into an adjacent space. On a critical success, the bregdi can also make a jaws Strike against the creature pulled into an adjacent space.



BREGDI LEVIATHANS

With their wide fins and hooked claws, bregdis attach to the underside of ships. Bregdis that feed well can grow to truly monstrous sizes. Such creatures, known as bregdi leviathans, become large enough to wrap their long fins completely around the hull of a ship, grabbing the gunwales with their hook claws and pulling the entire vessel into the sea.

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ILLENDIOR THE MIGHTY

Equal parts ingenious and foolhardy, Illendior the Mighty is among the most well-known of all eberarks. Twice as large as most eberarks, the arrogant and mercenary Illendior has fought for coin across the Inner Sea. Illendior has heard from other eberarks about Absalom's Irorium, and he plans to visit this venue which will allow him to taunt, battle, and dominate humanoids to his heart's content.

EBERARK

The terrifying apex predators known as eberarks torment their prey, spewing oil from their mouths that they can then set alight. Commonly called flint beasts, eberarks drag their overlarge claws (four on each paw) along the ground as they move, creating showers of sparks with every grating step.

Incredibly vain, eberarks relish displaying their dominance over other intelligent beings. Some eberarks conquer small settlements, demanding tribute from residents and travelers, or lead bands of violent brigands.

EBERARK

CREATURE 10

NE HUGE BEAST FIRE

Perception +19, low-light vision, scent (imprecise) 30 feet

Languages Common, Ignan

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

Str +7, **Dex** +4, **Con** +5, **Int** +2, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +3

AC 30; **Fort** +22, **Ref** +19, **Will** +16

HP 275; **Immunities** fire

Speed 40 feet

Melee ♦ jaws +23 (magical, reach 15 feet), **Damage** 2d10+11 piercing

Melee ♦ claw +23 (agile, fire, magical, reach 15 feet), **Damage** 2d6+11 slashing plus 1d4 fire

Ranged ♦ spit +21 (agile, range increment 30 feet), **Damage** incendiary spit

Arrogant Taunts ♦ (auditory, emotion, fear, mental) The eberark utters crude insults and growls threateningly. Each creature within 30 feet must attempt a DC 27 Will save. The creature is then temporarily immune for 10 minutes.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature is frightened 1.

Failure The creature is frightened 2 and paralyzed for 1 round.

Critical Failure The creature is frightened 4 and paralyzed for 1d4 rounds.

Incendiary Spit A creature hit by the eberark's spit becomes coated in a slippery, flammable oil. The creature must succeed at a DC 27 Reflex save or become clumsy 2 for as long as they are coated in incendiary spit. Creatures affected by incendiary spit that take fire damage catch fire, taking 3d6 persistent fire damage. Once this persistent fire damage ends, the spit has burned away.

The spit also wears off naturally after one hour or can be washed off with soap, water, and one minute of work.

Trail of Flame ♦♦ (fire) The eberark Strides twice, leaving a trail of magical fire behind it as it moves. Squares the eberark moves through catch fire, creating a 5-foot-tall wall of flame that burns for 1 round. The wall of flame conceals creatures and objects on the other side of it. Any creature that enters or starts its turn in the wall of flame takes 6d6 fire damage (DC 27 basic Reflex save).



GHOUL, BARNACLE

Far more powerful and dangerous than most ghouls, barnacle ghouls are the risen corpses of veteran sailors who fell overboard or of bloodthirsty pirates who died from keelhauling. Too rugged and hate-filled to stay dead, these seafarers return with bluish, water-bloated bodies.

Barnacle ghouls have a supernatural command over barnacles; a simple touch from a ghoule causes the crustaceans to adhere, grow, or release. The ghouls cultivate clusters of barnacles on their hands and feet, using the lumpy shells to more easily climb and grab at prey.

Barnacle ghouls keep their lungs filled with brackish seawater, which they exhale onto their victims. Breathing in even a few drops of this tainted seawater can be deadly, as it magically expands in a victim's lungs. A creature that can't expel the seawater eventually drowns and rises as a new barnacle ghoule. Barnacle ghouls have many abilities of standard ghouls (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 168).

BARNACLE GHOUL

CREATURE 9

UNCOMMON NE MEDIUM GHOUL UNDEAD

Perception +17; darkvision

Languages Aquan, Common, Necril

Skills Acrobatics +19, Athletics +19 (+21 to Grapple), Stealth +19, Survival +17

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

AC 28; **Fort** +16, **Ref** +21, **Will** +17

HP 155, negative healing; **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, unconscious

Tear Flesh **Trigger** A creature grabbed by the barnacle ghoule critically fails a skill check to Escape; **Effect** The barnacle ghoule makes a claw Strike against the triggering creature.

Speed 25 feet, climb 10 feet, swim 40 feet

Melee **◆** jaws +21 (finesse), **Damage** 2d10+10 piercing plus fill lungs and paralysis

Melee **◆** claw +21 (agile, finesse), **Damage** 2d6+10 plus Grab and paralysis

Ranged **◆◆** water jet +21 (range increment 10 feet), **Damage** 2d6+10 plus fill lungs

Consume Flesh **◆** (manipulate) See Ghoule Abilities (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 168). The barnacle ghoule regains 5d6 Hit Points.

Fill Lungs (curse, necromancy) **Saving Throw** DC 26 Fortitude; **Stage 1** sickened 1 (1 round); **Stage 2** sickened 2 (1 round); **Stage 3** sickened 3 (1 round); **Stage 4** drowning and cannot reduce below stage 4 until the water is purged; purging the water requires a successful DC 26 Medicine check to Administer First Aid (which stops the creature from drowning and returns the creature to stage 3; stage 2 on a critical success) or a magical effect that removes curses or the sickened condition (which stops the creature from drowning and ends the curse). If the creature dies from drowning, it rises as a barnacle ghoule the next midnight.

Nimble Swim **◆** (move) The barnacle ghoule Swims up to 20 feet. This movement doesn't trigger reactions.

Paralysis (incapacitation, occult, necromancy) See Ghoule Abilities; DC 26.



BARNACLE GHOUL

Barnacle ghouls enjoy collecting keepsakes from their victims, although they rarely carry anything that doesn't fit in a pocket of their tattered and sodden clothing. They use barnacles attached to the underside of ships to keep larger treasures out of sight, so sailors who spy treasures affixed to a ship in drydock should beware.



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IRUXI OUTCASTS

Though very rare in the real world, raveniles commonly appear in iruxi tragedies and cautionary tales.

Tinged with fear and awe, these stories usually paint raveniles as vicious and unstoppable monsters. As such, when a lizardfolk exhibits ravenile traits as they mature, they are often exiled from their community to fend for themselves in the surrounding terrain. Luckily, a ravenile's strength and durability makes it easier to survive in the wilds, though most raveniles become misanthropic loners.

RAVENILE

Raveniles are rare mutant lizardfolk who exhibit monstrous strength and regenerative capabilities. Almost twice as large as typical iruxis, raveniles have a more ferocious set of jaws and deadly claws. A ravenile's tail is much shorter than that of lizardfolk, however, lacking the heft to make it an effective natural weapon. Raveniles are as intelligent as their iruxi cousins, though many assume they are mindless brutes from their bestial appearance.

Raveniles hatch from eggs fertilized not by other iruxis, but by predatory extraplanar scavengers. Many lizardfolk tell stories—some true, some merely myth—of these scavengers to reinforce cultural taboos against leaving eggs undefended. At birth, raveniles look like other iruxi children, though perhaps they exhibit small hints of what they will become: a stubbier tail, wider feet, or a single tusk-like tooth. As raveniles age, they develop an increased appetite and metabolism. During one painful week at the cusp of maturity, raveniles experience an agonizing growth spurt. They shed their skin at least twice a day, their muscle mass increases exponentially, and their bones crack and reset. During this transformation, raveniles experience immense pain and exhibit reflexive violence. When the transformation is complete, the ravenile regains their wits, but by then, they've usually caused irreparable harm. Few lizardfolk communities welcome raveniles after their transformation, and some settlements suffer so much damage that they must be abandoned entirely.



RAVENILE RAGER

CREATURE 14

RARE NE LARGE HUMANOID LIZARDFOLK

Perception +25

Languages Common, Draconic, Iruxi

Skills Acrobatics +25, Athletics +28, Intimidation +28, Nature +23, Survival +23

Str +8, **Dex** +4, **Con** +5, **Int** -1, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +0

Items +1 resilient studded leather

Deep Breath A ravenile can hold their breath for 20 minutes.

AC 24; **Fort** +29, **Ref** +26, **Will** +23

HP 306, regeneration 20 (deactivated by fire or acid); **Weaknesses** fire 10

Attack of Opportunity ⤴

Speed 20 feet, swim 10 feet

Melee ♦ jaws +29 (reach 10 feet), **Damage** 3d10+12 piercing

Melee ♦ claw +29 (agile, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 3d8+8 slashing

Forced Regeneration ♦ (concentrate) **Requirements** The ravenile's regeneration is currently active; **Effect** The ravenile regains 20 HP.

Furious Wallop ♦♦ **Requirements** The ravenile's regeneration is currently deactivated; **Effect** The ravenile makes a melee Strike. This counts as two attacks for the ravenile's multiple attack penalty. If this Strike hits, the ravenile deals an extra die of weapon damage and the target falls prone.

Rend ♦ claw

SVARTALFAR

Long ago in the mists of history, the fey ancestors of the svartalfars were banished from the First World for crimes too heinous to name. These beings made a new home on the Shadow Plane, which warped their minds and essence and turned them into cold, ruthless killers. Their clans are places of safety but not kindness for svartalfars; they feel no amity toward others, and their actions almost exclusively focus on practicalities.

Svartalfars resemble expressionless elves with pale eyes and gray skin. Many have smooth, bald heads, while others keep their hair short and practical. Svartalfars seem untouched by emotions, especially compassion or mercy. When given a contract, a svartalfar clan seeks its target with grim diligence. Money means next to nothing to them, and attempts to appeal for pity go unheard. A svartalfar clan knows that if they don't end the target's life, another clan will do so, which is a blow to the reputation and standing of the clan that failed.

Svartalfar communities on the Shadow Plane are usually very small, featuring slender towers and extensive underground chambers. Built on or near thin spots between the Shadow Plane and the Material Plane, these communities allow svartalfars easy access to Golarion, where many of their targets reside.



PAYING A SVARTALFAR

Svartalfars will perform assassinations for anyone who can contact them on their shadowy home plane, but they don't take money in payment. They prefer secrets, tidbits of occult lore, and other obscure information. Esoteric knowledge of the First World and its fey interests most svartalfars, indicating that they may be attempting to return to their long-lost homeland.

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SVARTALFAR KILLER

CREATURE 8

UNCOMMON LE MEDIUM FEY

Perception +16, darkvision

Languages Aklo, Common, Elven, Sylvan

Skills Acrobatics +18, Arcana +16, Deception +18, Intimidate +18, Occultism +16, Stealth +18, Thievery +14

Str +1, **Dex** +6, **Con** +2, **Int** +4, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +3

Items crossbow with 20 bolts, +1 striking elven curve blade, graveroot (2), leather armor

AC 27; **Fort** +11, **Ref** +19, **Will** +16

HP 135; **Weaknesses** cold iron 10

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ *elven curve blade* +21 (finesse, forceful), **Damage** 2d8+5 slashing

Ranged ♦ crossbow +20 (range increment 120 feet, reload 1), **Damage** 1d8+4 piercing

Arcane Innate Spells DC 26, attack +18; **3rd** *shocking grasp*; **2nd** *invisibility* (×2); **1st** *ray of enfeeblement*, *true strike*; **Cantrips (4th)** *acid splash*, *chill touch*, *electric arc*, *produce flame*

Shadow Step ♦♦ The svartalfar killer fades into shadow, Strides up to twice its Speed, and reforms. This movement doesn't trigger reactions, but the svartalfar killer must begin and end in an area of dim light or darkness.

Sneak Attack A svartalfar killer deals an extra 2d6 precision damage to flat-footed creatures.

Spell-Imbued Blade ♦♦ The svartalfar killer chooses *acid splash*, *produce flame*, *ray of enfeeblement*, or *shocking grasp* and makes a melee Strike. If the svartalfar killer hits, they cast the chosen spell through the weapon at the same target. The spell's attack roll is the same result as the Strike.





FRANCA LAURENTZ



Franca Laurentz grew up an only child, raised by her human mother, a tattoo artist from Galt named Hilrose. Franca never knew her father, and her mother refused to speak of him. The two carved out a meager existence in the Puddles, mere blocks away from the much better-off residents of Westgate. Franca witnessed from an early age the stark divide between the haves and the have-nots in Absalom. The sight of women in fancy dresses stepping into expensive carriages right across the street from her toiling mother's sweat-soaked tattoo parlor left an indelible impression on Franca.

After her mother suddenly fell ill and died, Franca sought work wherever she could to clear her mother's unpaid debt. Every time, though, Franca's resentment boiled to the surface, and she engaged in fierce arguments with her bosses about unfair hours, meager wages, and the general abuse of common employees. Such quarrels inevitably ended poorly for her.

Franca finally found steady work as a guard at the Lucky Nimbus casino. Watching people of all social statuses throw their money away on frivolous games of chance strangely reassured Franca, who saw that even a prince could fall into destitution just as a beggar won a fortune. It was her longest-held job to date, and she even got promoted to the lauded position of vault guard. That all changed, however, when she had a chance encounter with a strange man in a dark cloak at a nearby bar.

The man introduced himself simply as Father Infector, and his demeanor was so intense that even the oft-skeptical Franca didn't dare ask him for further details of his true identity. The combination of his silver tongue, Franca's natural antiauthoritarian tendencies, and a drink he laced with a mild mind-altering toxin allowed the man—in fact Jonis Flakfatter, a high priest of Norgorber at Absalom's largest dedicated temple to Blackfingers—to convince Franca that the greed and malice of the wealthy upper class had caused all of her life's troubles—an idea she already held in part, but one she had trouble putting so succinctly.

Franca swiftly fell under Father Infector's sway and enjoyed the attention he lavished on her. He gifted her with better living quarters, paid off her debt, and stoked her fervent distrust of Absalom's greedy power brokers. She didn't think twice when he asked her to retrieve an item from a certain lockbox in the Lucky Nimbus's vault. While Flakfatter originally thought to simply dispose of Franca after she conducted the task, he recognized in her headstrong nature a willing accomplice to the next part of his plan to betray his fellow members of the Twilight Four: the premature release of his deadly poison, blackfinger blight, onto the populace of Absalom. Franca was thrilled at the opportunity to gain vengeance against her oppressors. Armed with Father Infector's money and resources (namely a group of iruxi mercenaries), Franca acquired a job at the Irorium, where she planned to release her patron's poison with the help of an accomplice named Oggvurm the Merciless.

The day of her plan's completion draws near, though Franca never accounted for the possibility that an upstart squad of agents from the humble Precipice Quarter might put a stop to her machinations.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Franca is the agents' final antagonist for this adventure and their lead to locating the next member of the Twilight Four, Jonis Flakfatter. Thanks to Flakfatter's brainwashing, Franca truly believes that attacking the Irorium will open the people's eyes to social injustice in the city, though if questioned she spews bombastic rhetoric rather than logic. She views the Edgewatch agents as mere tools of the status quo and believes that officers of the law should be the first to go during the transition to her patron's envisioned new world order.

After the events of this adventure, Franca's interrogation (either conducted by the agents or their law enforcement allies) gives the Starwatch enough information to continue the investigation

into the Twilight Four with the help of an informant (see Concluding the Adventure on page 59 and the beginning of the next adventure, “Assault on Hunting Lodge Seven,” for more details).

Franca is highly impressionable, so the agents might help her see the error of her ways by extensive conversations and focused rehabilitation. In time, the agents might turn Franca fully over to their side. Depending on what you think works best for your campaign, she has the potential to become an informant for the Starwatch, an allied agent in future missions, or even a mouthpiece for social change in Absalom.

FRANCA LAURENTZ

CREATURE 13

UNIQUE CN MEDIUM ELF HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +26

Languages Common, Hallit


Skills Absalom Lore +20, Acrobatics +26, Athletics +22, Deception +22, Intimidation +22, Society +20, Stealth +28, Thievery +28

Str +3, **Dex** +5, **Con** +3, **Int** +1, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +3


Items blackfinger blight (2 doses; page 78), +1 striking crossbow (with 3 shining bolts and 2 explosive bolts), crowbar, greater darkvision elixir, moderate elixir of life, grappling hook, infiltrator thieves' tools, +1 leather armor, +1 striking shortsword, sunrods (3), 88 gp


AC 35; **Fort** +22, **Ref** +26, **Will** +19; +2 circumstance bonus to saves vs. poison


HP 195


Deflective Dodge  **Trigger** The attack roll for a Strike targeting Franca fails or critically fails; **Effect** Franca can choose to either Step or redirect the attack to a creature that is adjacent to her and within the reach of the triggering attack. The attacker rerolls the Strike's attack roll against the new target.

Speed 30 feet

Melee  *shortsword* +27 (agile, finesse, magical, versatile S), **Damage** 2d6+9 piercing


Ranged  *crossbow* +27 (magical, range 120 feet, reload 1), **Damage** 2d8 piercing

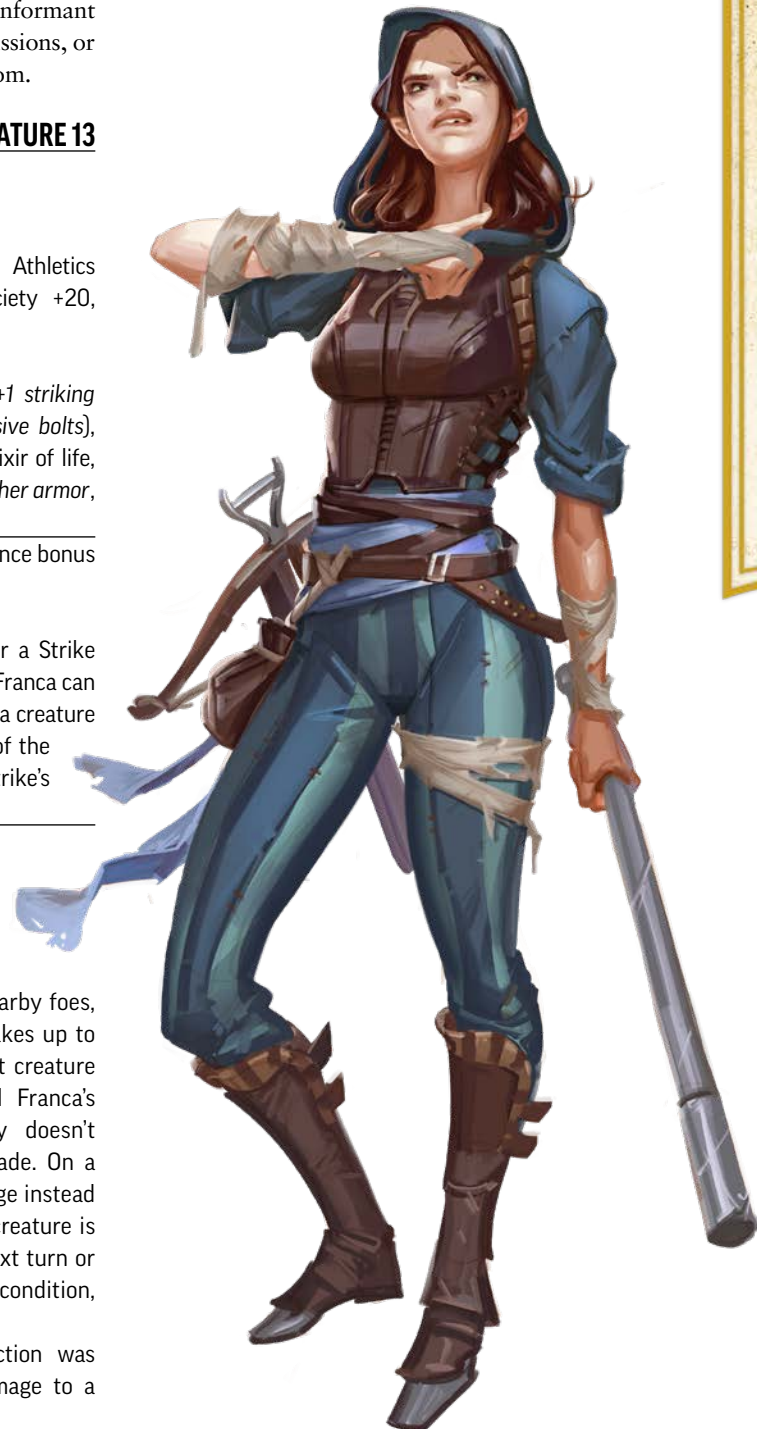
Bloody Rebel  Franca quickly slashes at nearby foes, aiming to maim rather than disable. She makes up to three melee Strikes, each against a different creature within reach. These Strikes count toward Franca's multiple attack penalty, but the penalty doesn't increase until after all three Strikes are made. On a hit, the Strike deals 3 persistent bleed damage instead of its normal damage. On a critical hit, the creature is flat-footed until the beginning of Franca's next turn or until they spend an action to remove the condition, whichever comes first.

Hamstring  **Requirements** Franca's last action was a melee Strike that dealt sneak attack damage to a

flat-footed target; **Effect** Franca deals 6 persistent bleed damage to the target creature, and the target is slowed 1.

Sneak Attack Franca's Strikes deal an additional 3d6 precision damage to flat-footed creatures.

Splash Poison  Franca uncorks and flings a dose of poison at a bleeding foe. She retrieves a poison from her inventory, then splashes it at a creature within 10 feet that is currently taking persistent bleed damage. The creature must succeed at a DC 32 Reflex save or be exposed to the poison.



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GAGE CARLYLE

Those who have met Gage Carlyle variously describe him as handsome and charming or pompous and unctuous. In fact, all four descriptors befit the man who owns the famous Lucky Nimbus, a casino in the Coins.

Born into a lower-middle-class family of Absalomian cobblers, Gage amassed his current fortune from a freak gambling windfall in his youth. Through shrewd business investments and more than a few underhanded dealings, his big win grew into a veritable empire. He changed his last name from Karvakk to the more genteel-sounding Carlyle to ingratiate himself with the upper class. Despite his attempts, nobles and other Absalomians of means haven't been eager to accept Gage into their ranks, seeing him as a slick-talking sycophant who tries a little too hard. Those with something to gain from Gage's friendship, however, loudly laud him as financially brilliant, socially delightful, and fashionably glamorous.

Gage learned to appreciate gambling as a young boy, when his father Archard took him to dog races and gladiatorial bouts, teaching him the fine art of placing bets and quitting while ahead. To Archard, the thrill of the wager made gambling alluring, not necessarily the prospect of winning. While the young Gage didn't quite understand his father's logic at the time, he eventually learned to appreciate the older man's adages as important lessons in human nature.

When he came of age, Gage took up his father's cobbler trade. He and the old man still attended races and card games, but now the son had his own money to lose. Gage discovered his knack for the card game known as golem, as it relied on reading one's opponents as much as luck. His natural charisma served him well during these games, as he won hands graciously and even purchased rounds of drinks for his opponents. The regulars at the local tavern enjoyed playing with Gage even though he almost inevitably walked out the door with their money.

Archard's sudden violent death—the victim of a mugging the Token Guard never looked into—

shattered Gage and sent him into a tempestuous depression that lasted months. The young man squandered his inheritance and gambled away his family's meager savings, peddling every last keepsake to fuel a rampant gambling addiction. Ashamed of what her son had become, his mother absconded with Gage's little sister, never to be seen again. All alone with but a single silver piece to his name, Gage resolved to irrevocably destroy himself by entering a high-stakes golem tournament on credit he couldn't possibly repay.

Then his luck took a turn.

Gage swept the tournament and won the jackpot. Reinvigorated by his victory, he took a hiatus from Absalom's casinos and sought to rebuild his fortune. His father's murder taught him to place no trust in authorities; instead, he fostered connections with as many unsavory elites as would entertain his company. High-yield investments and brokered deals with shady partners—who may have in fact been crime lords, though Gage never asked—made him a rich man. In less than a decade, Gaged opened his own gambling den, the Lucky Nimbus.

Now in his early fifties, Gage's thirst for social power subsumes his interest in gambling, and he no longer makes deals with suspected criminals. Rather, he believes that his money can earn him honest respect among the movers and shakers of the city. He hopes to ingratiate himself with just the right noble or merchant and, from there, work his way into the true upper class. This obvious desperation to rise above his roots ironically holds Gage to his current situation, despite his charms.

Gage is a good-looking man with a chiseled chin and slate eyes. Although he has a wife, he rarely sees much of Izabella Carlyle, and they have no children as of yet. His main passion is his casino, though he occasionally indulges extramarital lusts, an open secret he and Izabella grudgingly maintain. To those he has any reason to believe are rich or powerful,

he unleashes the full force of his charm. Otherwise, Gage treats the everyday people who frequent his business cordially; after all, without them trying to win their own fortune, his wouldn't exist.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Gage Carlyle is a social obstacle for the agents to overcome as they try to infiltrate the high-security vault of the Lucky Nimbus. The agents might learn about the man through guile or rumors. Gage is not destined to reappear in future volumes of the Agents of Edgewatch Adventure Path, though at your discretion his casino might be an excellent venue for future information gathering or a neutral meeting spot. If they leave Gage with a favorable impression, the agents have the option of using their false identities to secure a safe lockbox in his vault or perhaps a high-interest loan of liquid cash.

Gage follows a fairly predictable routine most days. On the casino floor, he hobnobs with the high-rollers and occasionally requests a status report from his senior guards. As Gage also lives in the building, he has his meals delivered to his room. He usually retires for the night around 2:00 A.M. and comes back down before noon. The casino owner rarely leaves the Lucky Nimbus, though several times per week he ventures out to other businesses in the Coins for dinners and meetings, bringing along a large entourage of bodyguards. Although he aspires to become a powerful socialite, he doesn't venture much farther than the Coins District. Gage prefers enticing others to come to him in the mistaken belief that his gaudy establishment will impress the rich and powerful.

Gage's level represents his threat as a social encounter. In combat, he is considered only 7th level for the purpose of calculating encounter XP. His exorbitant wealth

grants Gage access to equipment that far outclasses his actual physical prowess, though he almost never wields his weapons or armor, preferring to let his bodyguards take care of any potential threats.

GAGE CARLYLE

CREATURE 11

UNIQUE N MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +24

Languages Common, Dwarven, Elven, Gnomish, Halfling

Skills Arcana +19, Deception +24, Diplomacy +22, Games Lore +23, Intimidation +20, Occultism +19, Performance +22, Society +23, Thievery +21

Str +0, **Dex** +2, **Con** +1, **Int** +4, **Wis** +5, **Cha** +5

Items apartment key, +2 greater striking dagger, +2 greater striking hand crossbow with 10 bolts, +2 leather armor, vault key

AC 24; **Fort** +18, **Ref** +21, **Will** +24

HP 120

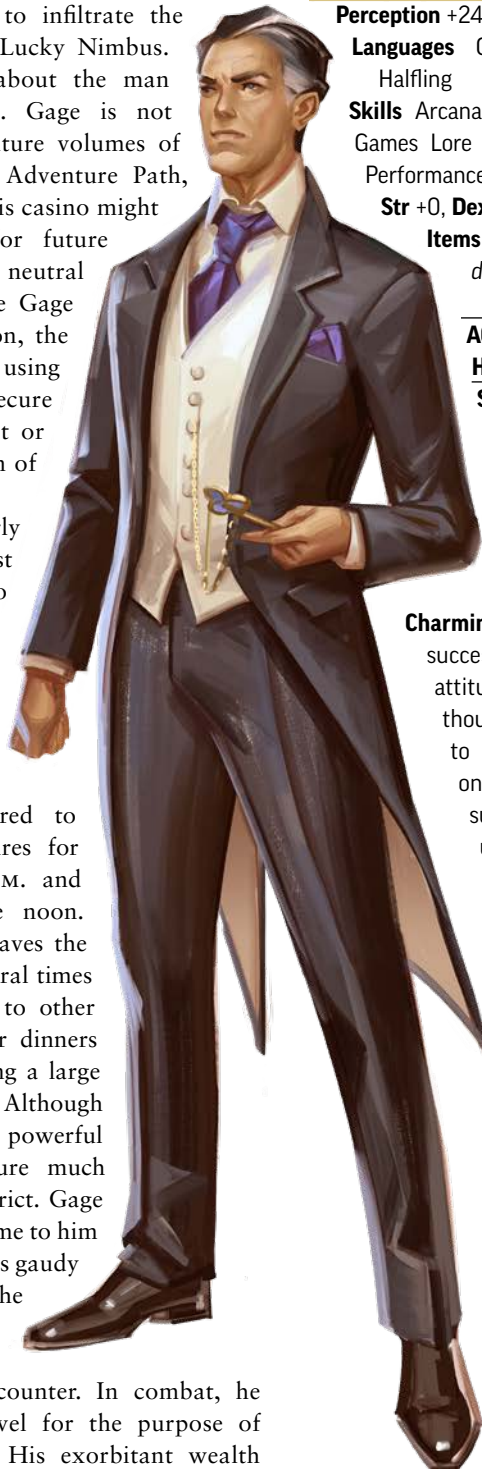
Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ *dagger* +22 (agile, finesse, magical, thrown 10 feet, versatile S), **Damage** 3d4+3 piercing

Ranged ♦ *hand crossbow* +22 (magical, range 60 feet, reload 1), **Damage** 3d6 piercing

Charming Liar When Gage gets a critical success using the Lie action, the target's attitude toward him improves by one step, as though he'd succeeded at using Diplomacy to Make an Impression. This works only once per conversation, and if he critically succeeds against multiple targets using the same result, he chooses one creature's attitude to improve. To use this ability, Gage must be lying to impart seemingly important information, inflate his status, or ingratiate himself, which trivial or irrelevant lies can't achieve.

Smooth Operator When Gage meets a group of up to five people, he can immediately attempt a Diplomacy check to Make an Impression, comparing the result to the Will DC of each target. He takes a -3 penalty on this check, and it is possible to get different degrees of success for each target. If he fails or critically fails, he can engage in 1 minute of conversation and attempt a new check at the end of that time rather than accepting the failure or critical failure result.



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MAURRISA JONNE

Maurrisa spent her early life in the Docks of Absalom, where her parents worked—her mother a stevedore and her father a shipwright. Neither rose to any prominence or owned a business, but they instilled in their two children a strong work ethic and self-reliance. As the eldest child, Maurrisa learned to take care of her brother Giord, a common practice for working-class families. From a young age, she dressed Giord and cooked meals for him while their parents worked. Maurrisa missed most of her childhood, though she forged a bond with her brother that made them inseparable.

During their adolescent years, Giord constantly got into trouble. Hardly a week went by without Maurrisa having to rough up a group of boys picking on her brother or talk down a gang recruiter trying to intimidate him into joining their crew as a lookout or runner. In the interest of protecting Giord, Maurrisa herself joined a gang in the Docks called the Dead Gulls, identifiable by the seagull corpses they tied to broomsticks they carried with them. With this security, Maurrisa's life got a bit easier—for a time.

As a gull-carrier, Maurrisa proved her worth to the gang in fight after fight. She soon earned a reputation as a skilled brawler and wrestler, requiring no weapons beyond her bare fists. During this time, she and a fellow Dead Gull, a priggish half-orc who went by the name Blessed Berleth, became fast friends. The two seemed destined to achieve greatness in Absalom's street gangs. After the mysterious death of the Dead Gulls' leaders, the gang disbanded; however, Maurrisa and Berleth remained allies, even after temporarily parting ways.

Rather than join another gang, Maurrisa made a profession out of her pugilistic skills. During her tenure as a Dead Gulls enforcer, she learned of the Absalom underground boxing circuit and even attended several matches held in dingy warehouses and tenement basements. She quickly obtained a sponsor and trainer and soon became a crowd favorite, winning bouts against such established fighters as "Sweet Tooth"

Barlowe, Dire Deighton, and Evytte the Harpy. Maurrisa never took on a theatrical nickname, but she established a niche following of her own. Several years later, Maurrisa retired from the sport after winning the purse of a championship fight.

Following her departure from boxing, Maurrisa had a chance meeting with Blessed Berleth at a mutually favored pub. She once again fell in with Berleth, this time to start a gang of their own. With the help of Maurrisa's brother and former members of the Dead Gulls, Maurrisa and Berleth jointly carved out a slice of the district, forcing other gangs to dissolve or join their operations. They named their new gang the Washboard Dogs as a sly nod to their specialty in laundering money through a nearby casino, the Lucky Nimbus.

After over a decade of activity, the Harbor Guard burst into the Washboard Dogs' base of operations in an unprecedented raid—led by none other than the Harbor Guards' gang expert, Lilea Helweather. The end seemed near for Maurrisa and Berleth's gang careers, but Lilea offered Maurrisa an out: a reduced sentence in exchange for throwing Berleth under the wheels of the law. In what she later regarded as one of the worst decisions of her life, Maurrisa agreed to the deal. Berleth spent 10 years behind bars in the Brine, Absalom's notorious flooded prison. Maurrisa paid a hefty fine, did six months in the Crestwatch jailhouse, and thereafter continued the Washboard Dogs' operations, albeit at a reduced scale and never again from a centralized location.

Now in her thirties and a little softer around the edges, Maurrisa has found a fierce enemy in Berleth. After his release from the Brine, he reinvented himself as "Bloody Berleth" and managed to amass a sizable gang, which he named the Diobel Sweepers in honor of his hometown. The Dogs and the Sweepers maintained a polite but firm distance from one another. However, one card game gone wrong has sparked a bloody feud between their members. The friends-turned-rivals could do little but take the reins of the gang war and charge forward.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

The agents must parley with Maurrisa Jonne in the early stages of this adventure to learn more about the Washboard Dogs' dealings with Wrent "the Skinner" Dicaspiron, whom they arrested at the end of the last adventure.

If the agents deal honestly with her, Maurrisa might provide information regarding Absalom's small-time criminal underbelly. She would make for a particularly valuable ally during the fifth adventure, "Belly of the Black Whale," when the agents must go rogue and work with the Undercity crime lord Miogimo to free the wrongly imprisoned acting primarch.

As far as villains go, Maurrisa is more palatable than many other criminals the agents will deal with throughout the campaign. If they help her rather than side with Bloody Berleth, you can even portray her as an antihero, appearing just in time to help the agents should they get in over the heads with Absalom's various crime lords. If the agents opted to betray Maurrisa, they receive little love from Berleth, who increases in power as the weeks go by and might even become one of Miogimo's rival crime lords by the time the agents reach that part of the Adventure Path.

MAURRISA JONNE

CREATURE 10

UNIQUE N MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Female human ex-brawler/gang leader

Perception +20

Languages Common

Skills Acrobatics +19, Athletics +22, Deception +18, Diplomacy +18, Gang Lore +16, Intimidation +18, Sports Lore +16

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

Items +1 striking handwraps of mighty blows, +1 studded leather

AC 29; **Fort** +20, **Ref** +19, **Will** +18; +1 status bonus to saves vs. incapacitation effects, +2 status bonus to saves vs. Shove and Trip

HP 230

Attack of Opportunity ⤴

Duck and Weave ⤴ **Trigger** A creature misses two consecutive melee Strikes against Maurrisa; **Effect** Maurrisa takes advantage of a flailing foe's opening. She can either Step 5 feet or make a melee Strike against the triggering creature.

Rabbit Punch ⤴ (incapacitation) **Trigger** Maurrisa can make an Attack of Opportunity; **Effect** Maurrisa chops her opponent on the back of the head or neck, possibly concussing them. The target must attempt a DC 26 Fortitude save. On a failure, the creature takes damage as if hit by Maurrisa's fist Strike, and is stunned 1. On a critical failure, the creature is stunned 3 instead.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ fist +22 (agile, finesse, unarmed), **Damage** 2d6+10 bludgeoning plus Grab



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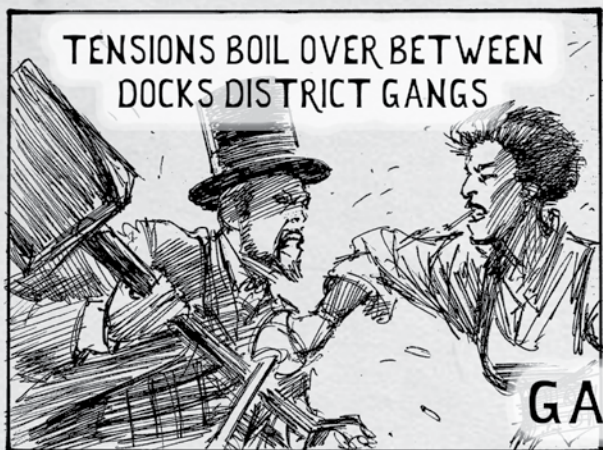
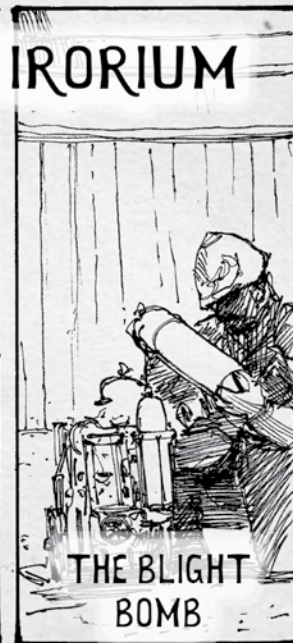
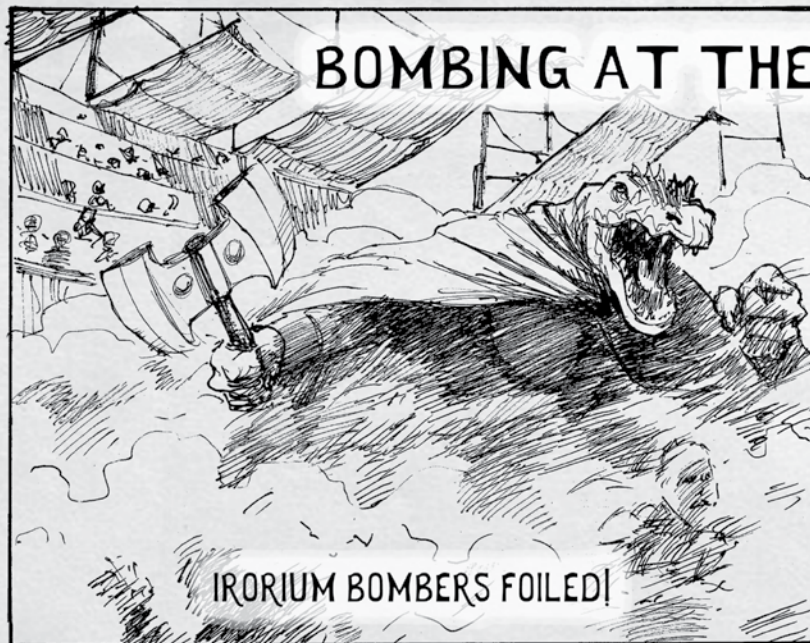
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