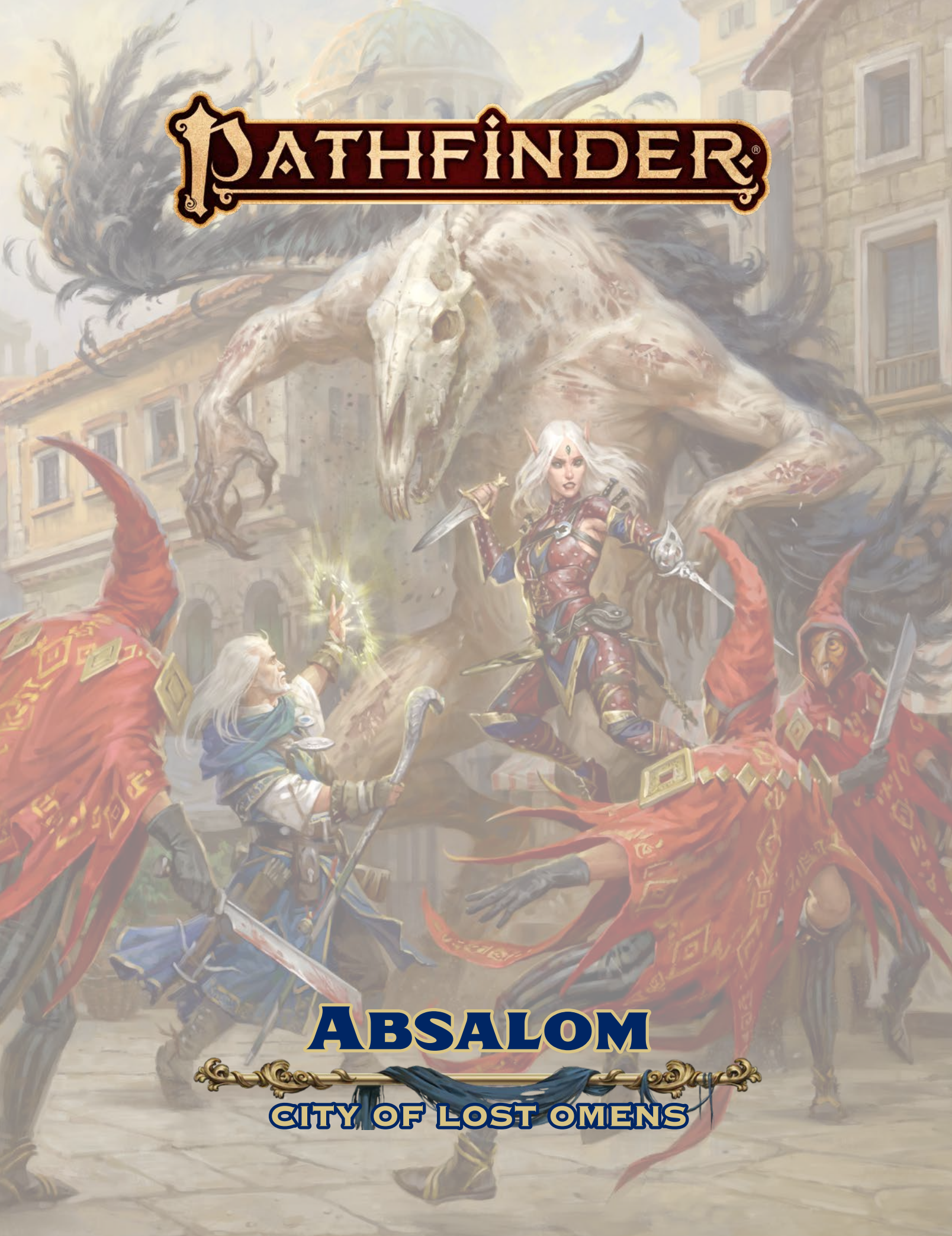
Second Edition

Pathfinder®

Absalom

City of Lost Omens


Pathfinder
Absalom
City of Lost Omens

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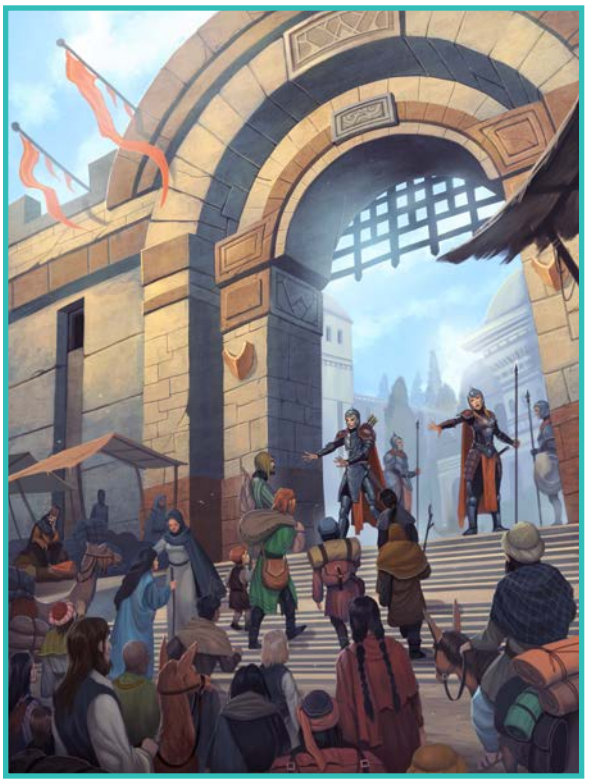


ABSALOM

ABSALOM — SETTLEMENT 20

N METROPOLIS

Government grand council

Population 306,900 (62% human, 11% halfling, 8% half-elf, 7% gnome, 5% dwarf, 2% elf, 1% goblin, 1% half-orc, 3% other ancestries)

Languages Any

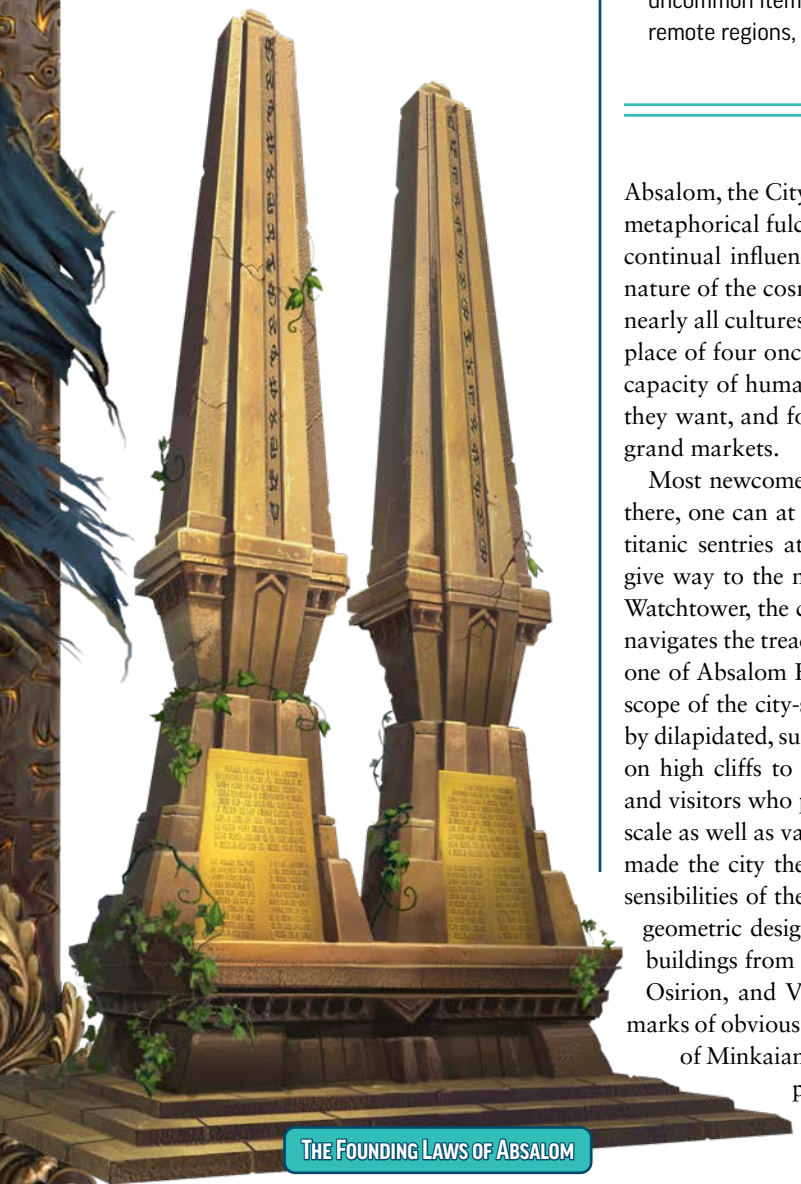
Religions All

Primary Imports books, coffee, cultural artifacts, pack animals, spices, tea

Primary Exports alcohol, armor, art, fashion, literature, lumber, magic items, metal, pearls, precious gems, seafood, ships, skymetal, textiles, weapons, woodcrafts

Threats political unrest over the missing primarch, external sieges, thieves' guilds, gang uprisings, cult plots, noble machinations, clashes between houses of rival nations, Firebrand provocations, monstrous activity in the Undercity

City at the Center of the World Absalom is the largest city in the Inner Sea region and is strategically placed to be an ideal staging point for trade. Imports from all over the world, and even from the bottom of the oceans, can be found in Absalom's many markets and bazaars. Items that would normally be considered uncommon are instead considered common while within the city walls. Some uncommon items, such as those created by specific organizations or hailing from remote regions, might still remain uncommon at the GM's discretion.



The Founding Laws of Absalom

Absalom, the City at the Center of the World, has stood at the geographic and metaphorical fulcrum of Inner Sea intrigue for 5 millennia. Indeed, Absalom's continual influence has shaped not only the face of the planet but the very nature of the cosmos. Its founding is the basis of the calendar system used by nearly all cultures in the hemisphere. More importantly, Absalom is the origin place of four once-mortal gods, and to many, the city is a symbol of the true capacity of humankind. In Absalom, a person can be whatever and whoever they want, and for the right price, it is said, they can procure anything in its grand markets.

Most newcomers travel to Absalom on a ship bound for Kortos Bay. From there, one can at first see only the towering Kortos Mounts, which stand like titanic sentries at the center of the Starstone Isle. The mountains gradually give way to the marvels of the city—the Lighthouse, the Blue Tower and the Watchtower, the countless seaside manors and the colossal keeps—as the ship navigates the treacherous Flotsam Graveyard before finally dropping anchor at one of Absalom Harbor's many docks. Finally safe on land, the true size and scope of the city-state looms large. The glimmering city core appears, flanked by dilapidated, sunken slums along its western wall and shattered, broken ruins on high cliffs to the east. To say nothing of the colorful throngs of citizens and visitors who people its streets, Absalom befuddles the senses with its sheer scale as well as variety, both testament to the many different peoples who have made the city their home over the millennia. The oldest buildings evoke the sensibilities of the Azlanti: flat-roofed stone and metal structures with elegant geometric designs, quartz keystones, and anthropomorphic columns. Other buildings from antiquity feature architectural elements from Qadira, Taldor, Osirion, and Vudra. In the city's younger corners, shops and homes bear marks of obvious Chelaxian-gothic influence or the deceptively simple elegance of Minkaian tilework, and the newest buildings borrow significantly from practical Andoran or luxuriant New Thassilon.

Absalom's ties to the other nations of Golarion aren't limited to immigration and construction. Taldor, Qadira,

and Cheliax in particular have long vied to make Absalom a firm ally, if not a vassal. But Absalom is as shrewd an international partner as it is a sturdy bulwark. So many besiegers have tried and failed to claim the city that even ardent historians can't keep track of the innumerable attempted invasions, the ruins of which have created a secondary economy of treasure hunters from all over seeking to make their fortunes in Absalom's graveyard of would-be conquerors, the Cairnlands.

Yet Absalom is a place not only of death but also of birth—and rebirth. When Aroden raised the *Starstone* from the Inner Sea and became a god nearly 5,000 years ago, he founded a new cradle of humanity as well as a divine meritocracy, and three other mortals—Cayden Cailean, Iomedae, and Norgorber—have since passed the Test of the *Starstone* to become living gods. Through acts both mundane and otherworldly, Absalom has asserted itself as a major player on the global and cosmic stages.

In a city where nobles can disappear into a crowd and commoners can attain literal godhood, the question is not where to look for adventure, but where to start.

CITY DISTRICTS

Over the millennia, Absalom has grown to include 11 proper city districts.

Ascendant Court

Viewed by many as the heart of Absalom, the Ascendant Court is home to the Starstone Cathedral, where any visitor might someday join the other ascended gods. Surrounding the massive temple are a dizzying array of shrines, churches, and other holy places, where faithful from all manner of religions pay tribute. Within this district, one can find adherents or sites dedicated to many rare or persecuted religions, since Absalom is tolerant of all theologies (as long as worshippers respect the laws of Absalom first, of course).

ANCIENT PRESTIGE

Absalom boasts some of the finest–and oldest–buildings and monuments on the Inner Sea. Over the nearly 5 millennia since Aroden founded the city, Absalom has been built, rebuilt, and rebuilt again, resulting in a tapestry of architectural styles as diverse as the countless citizens and visitors who throng its streets and markets. Immigrants from every corner of Golarion can be found within the city's walls, alongside their architecture, artwork, and customs.

SHADOW ABSALOM

A sinister reflection the city exists on the Shadow Plane, known as Shadow Absalom. Unlike most Shadow Plane reflections, Shadow Absalom isn't a crumbling ruin or a haunted settlement. Instead, it's a thriving metropolis of its own—complete with factions that have an interest in Absalom proper. Rather than a reflection of the Starstone Cathedral, at the city's heart lies a shining one-way portal out of the Shadow Plane. Those who use this portal return to the location from where they entered the Shadow Plane, not necessarily to Absalom. The Onyx Alliance (page 69) is just one of several Shadow Absalom organizations whose influence and interests extend to both cities.

The Coins

Those looking to take advantage of Absalom's numerous world-famous markets go to the Coins, a bustling mercantile quarter that hosts an almost-endless array of shops, wares, and independent traders. Within merchant houses, whole caravans can be bought and sold and the fortunes of cities made and lost, all while unscrupulous brokers make high-stakes bets or manipulate prospective outcomes.

The Docks

The Docks, or Dock District, serves as the main avenue onto or off the Isle of Kortos, and it's a hub of both international trade and immigration. Absalom's port of entry is hardly a peaceful haven for newcomers, however. Thirsty sailors work out their tension at the district's numerous tap houses, visitors from nations such as Cheliax and Andoran routinely pick fights to address centuries-long international rivalries, and run-of-the-mill criminals prey on any arrivals who look like easy pickings. While entertainment venues along Besmara's Boardwalk promise a good time, those in the know pursue other, safer forms of recreation. The Docks extends offshore: Pilot Island is best known as the site of the immense Absalom Lighthouse, as well as the Harbormaster's Grange, an infamous administrative hub where Absalom's harbor pilots fraternize and tax collectors set rates or process mounds of paperwork.

Eastgate

Eastgate is a quiet residential district with several iconic landmarks, including the Postern Gate, Blue Tower, and the Watchtower. The Green Ridge neighborhood is known as the main site of druidic activity within Absalom, centered as it is around a massive, ancient fig tree called the Grand Holt.

Foreign Quarter

The opportunities of Absalom draw residents from across the world to the city's Foreign Quarter. The largest district enclaves are home to immigrants from Cheliax, Osirion, Andoran, Taldor, Qadira, and even as far as Vudra. Other Absalomians frequent this district to attend rousing events at the Irorium, to train at one of the many dojos or fighting schools in the area, or to request assistance or information from Pathfinders stationed at the towering Grand Lodge of the Pathfinder Society.

Ivy District

Absalom's old arts district is known for the flowering trees along every road and the countless stunning homes. Many of the Inner Sea region's most influential plays and musical productions make their debut in one of the many theater halls, opera houses, and tea houses within the Ivy District. Performers can learn from the very best at the White Grotto and other notable bardic colleges, while adventurers and nobles visit the Vault of Abadar to store valuables. Anyone in need of a custom magic item can also find numerous options for commission in this quarter, since the Ivy District is home to many of the city's most talented specialty artisans and independent crafters.

Petal District

The grandest homes of Absalom's rich and powerful line the stately streets of the Petal District. Even in death, important guild members and other Absalomian notables reside within this district, albeit entombed in the enormous Spiralcross Cemetery. Nonresidents come to the Petal District to study at the oldest school of magic in Absalom, the College of Mysteries, or to hire mercenaries at one of the district's many hunting lodges turned–adventurers' guilds. Beneath the district's austere guise, nobles and power brokers meet to conduct much of the city's unspoken Shadow War (page 58) in prolonged bouts of spycraft and treachery.

Precipice Quarter

Formerly called Beldrin's Bluff, this ruined quarter was once one of Absalom's most beautiful and vibrant districts. In its prime, it featured ancient magical towers, brightly colored homes, and a resplendent fairground, but all that was turned to rubble two decades ago, when an earthquake nearly destroyed the sector. The quake sheared entire cliffs from the district and cast countless historical monuments into the harbor and the Docks, leaving the Precipice Quarter so ruined that it was abandoned to the undead and strange magic that arose in the disaster's aftermath. Only in recent months have sustained efforts been made to tame the ruins and start rebuilding.

The Puddles

Always Absalom's poorest district due to its propensity for flooding, the Puddles sank deeper during the same earthquake that turned Beldrin's Bluff into the Precipice Quarter. Now, many of the streets in the Puddles are partially submerged most—if not all—of the time. The district's former central green has become a tidal lagoon filled with monstrous fish and parts of washed-up shipwrecks, many still containing sunken treasure. A vast semi-flooded tunnel network called the Siphons serves as the literal criminal underground for the quarter's ne'er-do-wells, many of whom end up in the Brine, Absalom's largest and foulest prison. The Puddles' de facto law enforcers, the so-called Muckruckers, do little to alleviate wrongdoing, and the same might be said of the second-rate officers stationed in nearby Fort Tempest, who don't include the Puddles in their official jurisdiction. Perhaps nowhere else in Absalom are citizens so left to fend for themselves than in this waterlogged district.

Westgate

Westgate is home to many of the best-established non-noble families in Absalom, many of which have occupied the district's baronial townhouses for multiple generations. Westgate also features Absalom's westernmost entry point by land, the Sally Gate, which is also the garrison and mustering point for the city's mounted unit, the Kortos Cavalry. Westgate's many traditionalists and old-money aristocrats strongly dislike the disorder and revolutionary edicts marking recent years in Absalom, and some politically minded Westgate residents are stumping for a return to the old ways. Rumors say many of the district's old neighborhoods hold the secrets of powerful families, and wild speculations circulate about what historic relics might be unearthed during the ongoing construction of Westgate's new second sewer system.

Wise Quarter

The soaring towers of the Arcanamirium and the pyramid of the Forae Logos are but two of Absalom's many repositories of knowledge. These institutions and countless other libraries, schools, and museums give the Wise Quarter its name. The Wise Quarter is also a vital place of governance, since it's the seat of Absalom's Grand Council and home to the Absalom Mint. The district's archives contain some of the most valuable and most dangerous objects in the world. The infamous Blakros Museum, as just one example, has been the site of planar incursions, probes from alien worlds, and a giant ape attack, all in the last few years.

Other Areas of Interest

In addition to Absalom's full-fledged districts, several other regions hold importance to the city's daily life.

The Undercity

Absalom has been occupied, besieged, rebuilt, and built over repeatedly for thousands of years. As a result, many layers of streets and buildings have ended up below what is now the surface city. The tortuous byways of this "undercity"

Absalom Titles

Absalom's storied history and multicultural heritage has resulted in many titles that are unique to the city. Some prominent Absalomian titles include the following.

Ecclesial: A generic title used rather than "priest" in most of Absalom's laws. The title generally engenders respect among the citizenry.

Lord: Members of Absalom's noble houses are known as lords. The city recognizes the noble titles of visitors, but unless the provenance of their claims can be painstakingly proven, foreign nobles don't enjoy the same legal protections enjoyed by ennobled locals.

Nomarch: The head of each district council is known as a nomarch.

Primarch: The chair of Absalom's High Council, who sets the agenda of Absalom's government, is called the primarch.

Scion Lord: The eldest member of each of the city's noble houses is known as a scion lord.

Sword Pin Champion: The bronze, silver, and gold pins given to champions of the city's Irorium arena grant the same social weight and deference as that enjoyed by a minor noble or master crafter.

Trademaster: Because trade is the heart of Absalom's wealth, those who are experts in trade are given the sort of respect other nations often reserve for powerful spellcasters and warriors.

ABSALOM RECKONING

Aroden's lifting of the *Starstone* from the depths of the Inner Sea and subsequent creation of Absalom marked the advent of the Age of Enthronement, a new era typified by the birth of Inner Sea kingdoms founded by human leaders inspired by the Last Azlanti's example. So influential was Aroden in the immediate aftermath of his apotheosis that the modern calendar still in widespread use today is known as the Absalom Reckoning, and begins with the city's founding. The current year is 4720 AR.

Celedo of House Morilla

serve as service tunnels, secret passages, or sewers for the citizens above and ramshackle subterranean villages for the people brave (or desperate) enough to call the region home.

The Undercity's many different areas are variously claimed by azarketi outcasts, monstrous criminals, tribes of kobolds, and people who simply fit nowhere else in Absalom. The deepest layers contain ruins from the time of Absalom's emergence, as well as intentionally hidden sites such as the Labyrinth of Absalom. In this mythical maze, legend has it, Aroden defeated a terrible eons-old creature drawn up from below when the Last Azlanti raised the Isle of Kortos from the ocean floor.

Keeps

Absalom's largest fortress is Azlanti Keep, a marvel of ancient architecture. Although only the military First Guard and its staff live or work here, Absalomian traditionalists perform pilgrimages to Azlanti Keep's soaring Grand Vault to swear oaths before the Tablets of the First Laws, and educated folk come to see the trophies of thousands of military victories. Created by Aroden himself, the Grand Vault is large enough to shelter much of Absalom's populace should a siege breach the walls. Since the Fiendflesh Siege in 4717 AR, Azlanti Keep is also the home of the city-state's acting primarch, Wynsal Starborn.

Absalom's other major keeps are less ambitious but still awe inspiring, constructed as they are in the soaring, many-tiered, flat-roofed style of old Absalomian architecture. Starwatch Keep, perched atop the escarpment of the city's rocky eastern peninsula, overlooks Absalom Harbor and is home to the interdistrict police force called the Starwatch. On the opposite side of the harbor is Fort Tempest, the squalid outpost of Starwatch and First Guard flunkies.

Outskirts

The towns of Copperwood, Dawnfoot, Shoreline, and Westerhold cluster outside Absalom's walls near major gates. Copperwood and Westerhold consist mostly of homes for various support staff and families of workers in nearby parts of Absalom, while many of the guards and administrators stationed in Starwatch Keep call Dawnfoot home. The suburb of Shoreline houses sailors, local fishers, and messy businesses such as tanneries, but it's also a hot spot for smugglers and troublemakers who want to trade with Absalomians while avoiding the hefty fees and taxes imposed by the city's harbormaster. In times of siege or conflict, the residents of Copperwood, Shoreline, and Westerhold withdraw into Absalom's gates, while residents of Dawnfoot evacuate into Starwatch Keep.

South of Absalom, countless intentionally scuttled ships create a reef of debris and obstacles. The so-called Flotsam Graveyard is one-part military buffer against naval invasion and one-part unconventional tax, since it allows the Harbormaster's Grange to make extra money by hiring out experienced pilots capable of navigating the perilous waters. Beyond the Flotsam Graveyard lies Kortos Bay, a massive bight dotted with a few rocky islands.

POWER PLAYERS

A city as large as Absalom boasts hundreds of movers and shakers. Listed here are a few of the most influential. More details on all of these characters and many more can be found in the NPC Glossary starting on page 268.

Adrielle Neprathep of House Fyrlenn: Absalom's current harbormaster took office after her predecessor Hugen Candren's ship mysteriously sank. Lady Adrielle Neprathep has proven a remarkably insightful and popular administrator, and many hope that her meteoric rise—for she is said to have come from humble means—will take her straight to the vacant primarch's seat.

Asilia of Gyr: The fiercely loyal and popular captain of the Starwatch maintains the security of Absalom and its holdings against crime and sabotage. Members of the Grand Council can order more specific priorities, but Lady Asilia decides how to prioritize the Starwatch's many responsibilities. She manages investigations from Starwatch Keep or her warship, the *Hurricane Wings*.

Avid of House Arnsen: Lord Gyr, the missing primarch, created Scion Lord Avid's position as teriarch of Diobel in gratitude for their longtime adventuring partnership. Since then, Avid has made it clear he feels he deserved more. To claim what he truly wants—the now-vacant seat of the primarch—the scheming noble has allied with a number of influential enemies of Lord Gyr.

Celedo of House Morilla: Scion lord of the most powerful Taldan family in Absalom, Lord Celedo also commands a great deal of indirect power as guildmaster of the Guild of Wonders. This secretive coterie of spies, saboteurs, and assassins fulfills contracts anywhere except the city of Absalom itself.

Chun Hye Seung: Chun Hye Seung, former first siege gear and current commander militant, spends much of her time working on refitting the First Guard in the wake of the most recent attacks on the city. She is also the newest—and perhaps most eccentric—member of Absalom's High Council.

Darchana of House Madinani: Lady Darchana is the longest-serving member of the Low Council, and her role as second spell lord also makes her Archdean of the Arcanamirium, though she spends ample time in the privacy of her Petal District estate. She has recently led cutting-edge experiments on teleportation, resulting in her creating a magical channel through which trade can flow outside the city's strict taxation scheme, destabilizing Absalom's coffers just as the city attempts to emerge from crisis. Lady Darchana's ultimate motives remain hidden.

Dyrianna of House Avenstar: Dyrianna is many things: lady of House Avenstar, head hetaera of Calistria, consul of the Courtesans' Guild, and Ascendant Court councilor. She is rarely seen outside the Ascendant Court, but Lady Dyrianna has eyes in many places since she operates one of the best spy networks in all of Absalom. Anyone who can afford the steep prices is free to purchase information gleaned by Dyrianna's agents—and several powerful Chelaxian, Qadiran, and elven houses have done just that—but the lady and her spies are first and foremost loyal to Absalom, and they never take on any mission that would undermine the Grand Council.

Gyr of Gixx: Absalom's primarch rose to power decades ago, after a successful career as an adventuring hero. He packed the government with former companions and relatives, taking a light-handed economic approach and generally allowing the city to run itself. Three years ago, during the chaos of the Fiendflesh Siege, Lord Gyr vanished, and no one knows where he went. Shortly after his disappearance, the Grand Council named Wynsal Starborn acting primarch. The fate of Lord Gyr remains unknown, a subject of great mystery and curiosity in the city he had guided for so long.

Hamaria of House Blakros: Scion Lady Hamaria controls a fleet of trade vessels and a collection of antiquities that would dwarf the museum collections of an entire small nation. Though normally stolid in her interpersonal affairs, Hamaria maintains a fierce animosity toward Sea Lord Lerefys, under whose leadership she believes the Navy has failed to adequately protect her investments.

Iolanthe: The expressionless and disquietingly methodical hamadryad Iolanthe commands an unshakably loyal druid conclave, the Circle of Stones, from the creaking depths of the Grand Holt, her many-chambered, castle-like tree in Eastgate. The druids keep tabs on matters of preservation and environmentalism throughout the Isle of Kortos, and Iolanthe's influence in the region has grown tremendously in just the past decade.

THE SHADOW WAR

With infamous locales and multiple crime rings, Absalom can be a place where danger lurks on the street for the unwary. Yet questions of who lives and who dies are most often a matter of politics, and the hidden struggle between Absalom's major players over political influence—known as the Shadow War—is the deadliest conflict in the city.

Neferpatra of House Ahnkamen

ABSALOM
GUIDE TO THE CITY
ASCENDANT COURT
THE COINS
THE DOCKS
EASTGATE
FOREIGN QUARTER
IVY DISTRICT
PETAL DISTRICT
PRECIPICE QUARTER
THE PUDDLES
WESTGATE
WISE QUARTER
UNDERCITY
WALLS, GATES, AND KEEPS
OUTSKIRTS
NPC GLOSSARY
ADVENTURE TOOLBOX

NOBLE HOUSES

Absalom's oldest noble houses date back to between 1 and 400 AR, and are generally tied to Aroden's cult or the other early institutions of the city. Most of the "old houses" of Absalom's aristocracy actually trace their lineage to between 401 and 1500 AR. During the century-spanning Pirate Siege, the city's founding houses turned to foreign mercenaries and adventurers to protect Absalom from would-be conquerors, granting their saviors land and titles in exchange for their support. The ranks of Absalom's nobility thus swelled.

Kerkis of House Damaq: Lord Kerkis commands authority over the economy of Absalom between being scion lord of the very influential Qadiran House Damaq, his role as exchequer of the Absalom Mint, and his seat on the High Council. He leads one of the wealthiest houses in the city, and uses the family wealth to support Lord Avid's bid to become the city's next primarch.

Neferpatra of House Ahnkamen: As scion lady, grand councilmember, envoy for the dead, and first lady of laws, Neferpatra has a heavy burden of responsibility and little time for fools. She is the highest judicial authority in Absalom, responsible for judging high-profile criminals and settling the most far-reaching matters of law. She also oversees the Crier's Table, a group of low councilors who ensure messengers disseminate Grand Council decrees among Absalom's common folk and that the city's popular press doesn't work against Absalom's political interest.

Nuar Spiritskin: Although he wields the officious title "Minotaur Prince of Absalom"—bestowed to him by Lord Gyr—Nuar has little actual influence among the island's minotaur clans. The minotaur prince is a potential friend and invaluable tutor to anyone seeking an introduction to Absalomian politics.

Sindoi of the Thousand Poems: Lord Sindoi, nomarch of the Ascendant Court's Chamber of Ecclestials, is perhaps the most influential member of the Low Council; the elderly Vudrani man can supposedly sway dozens of votes with a single insightful question or poignant analogy. With his infamously ambiguous philosophical ponderings—he claims to at once worship all gods and none, for example—Sindoi's position as policy maker for a district rooted in theology draws no shortage of ire from the Ascendant Court's most fervent religious leaders.

Ulthun II: The fallen nation of Lastwall's final watcher-lord fled to Absalom after that country's recent destruction. The paladin remains famous and inspiring even in defeat, and his new "embassy" in the Precipice Quarter throngs with mercenaries, holy warriors, and would-be crusaders eager to learn from him and aid in any future quests against the Whispering Tyrant Tar-Baphon.

Wynsal Starborn: A highly respected retired captain of the First Guard, Starborn still lives in Azlanti Keep despite serving as acting primarch of Absalom since the Fiendflesh Siege of 4717 AR. He is an able (if unwilling) leader who, at present, encourages the High Council to move forward with selecting a new primarch in order to calm a city made nervous by prolonged emergency policy—and to end the constant attempts on his life.

Xerashir of House Shamyyid: Scion Lady Xerashir, Bey of Sarenrae and Watcher of the *Starstone*, commands considerable influence in the Ascendant Court's Chamber of Ecclestials. Despite her role as the leader of Absalom's largest church of Sarenrae, the Temple of the Shining Star, Xerashir regards her responsibilities as largely secular. She devotes ample time and resources toward ensuring that citizens of Absalom, regardless of creed, have safe access to healing and spiritual guidance. As watcher of the *Starstone*, she bears witness to any attempts to reach the Starstone Cathedral and draws attention from both Starstone Celebrants and anyone hoping to take the Test of the *Starstone*.

Yamthar of House Ormuz: Although insistent his title of eternal envoy is only symbolic, Scion Lord Yamthar readily implies that he appears younger than his advanced age would suggest due to the effects of the legendary sun orchid elixir. The nobleman seems coyly good-natured, but those who get in the way of his Thuvian business interests have a habit of turning up dead.

THE CURRENT STATE OF ABSALOM

After a brief period of peace coinciding with the first half of Primarch Gyr's reign, Absalom has experienced some of its worst trouble in decades, culminating in two attempted sieges within the same number of years.

Three years ago, in 4717 AR, forces both within the city and without conspired to lay siege to Absalom in an event since known variously as the Black Echelon Uprising or the Fiendflesh Siege. The conflict began when an

army of demons, fiendish constructs, and Baphomet-worshipping minotaurs encircled the city from the Cairnlands. Before they launched their formal attack, though, strange lights shone from the Pathfinder Society's Grand Lodge in the Foreign Quarter, and a horde of undead invaders rose to fulfill a centuries-long pact and wreak havoc within the city's walls. These undead saboteurs—members of Taldor's ancient Black Echelon order—struck at the city and managed to take Fort Tempest. To make matters worse, a long-sunk armada in league with the Black Echelon rose from the depths of Absalom Harbor to join the attack.

In response to the surprise attack from all sides and because Primarch Gyr went missing sometime before or during the fray, the Grand Council named Wynsal Starborn siege lord of Absalom, granting the former military captain broad emergency powers. Starborn granted freedom to any enslaved person who would defend the city, an edict that eventually led to the abolishment of the Flesh Taxes and outlawed slavery. An alliance of the First Guard, freed slaves, and loyal agents of the Pathfinder Society ended the threat. With Lord Gyr of House Gixx still missing, Starborn's rank of siege lord also bestowed upon him the title and responsibilities of acting primarch.

Absalomians savored their victory only briefly. In 4719 AR, the lich king Tar-Baphon launched an unprecedented attack on Absalom using a doomsday device called the *Radiant Fire*. Only the sacrifice of brave heroes whose souls intertwined with the device thwarted the Whispering Tyrant's siege and saved the city from destruction. Shortly thereafter, Watcher-Lord Ulthun II, of the fallen nation of Lastwall, arrived in Absalom with the news that the Tyrant had emerged from his failed surprise attack to gather an enormous undead army centered on the Isle of Terror, and that he would surely come for the *Starstone* once more. Citizens of Absalom view Ulthun and his retinue—including the self-styled "goblin king of Absalom," Zusgut—as either heralds of Absalom's imminent demise or vital sources of insight for its survival.

With so many recent catastrophes, most Absalomians either brim with energy inspired by their survival or harbor increasing dread of future perils. Luckily, the former is the prevailing attitude, and leaders are using the surge of enthusiasm to make good on major projects, including rebuilding the Precipice Quarter and rallying new recruits to fill out the ranks of the depleted military. For many, especially the formerly disenfranchised, there has never been a better time to call Absalom home. Yet for some, such as those who still mourn their dead or who must make room for so many new citizens, it is a trying era. In the same breath, an Absalomian might laud Acting Primarch Starborn's liberal policies while speculating that the former captain's thus-far 3-year term as "temporary" primarch is a step in the direction of a military coup.

In the near future, many civic leaders hope to finally settle the matter of choosing a new primarch and restore a sense of normalcy to the beleaguered city. The most prominent bidders for this position include the politically connected Scion Lord Avid of House Arnsen, the moderate yet visionary Scion Lady Darchana of House Madinani, and the popular and forward-thinking noblewoman Adrielle Neprathep. Traditionalists wish for a return to the old way of doing things and have thrown their weight behind Scion Lord Avid, whom they view as most likely to continue Lord Gyr's lax policies. Then again, many military-minded Absalomians and a not-insignificant number of civilians have been so impressed with Wynsal Starborn's conduct that they are calling for him to be installed as primarch permanently. Only time will tell how the tumultuous political atmosphere in the City at the Center of the World will resolve itself.

RECENT EVENTS

Many of the events that have recently impacted Absalom are described in more detail in the Tyrant's Grasp Adventure Path, a prewritten campaign that offers player characters the chance to be a part of Golarion's ongoing history. *Absalom, City of Lost Omens* assumes that the Whispering Tyrant, a powerful lich, broke free of his prison, but that his siege on the city of Absalom was routed.

Xerashir of House Shamyyid

ABSALOM
GUIDE TO THE CITY
ASCENDANT COURT
THE COINS
THE DOCKS
EASTGATE
FOREIGN QUARTER
IVY DISTRICT
PETAL DISTRICT
PRECIPICE QUARTER
THE PUDDLES
WESTGATE
WISE QUARTER
UNDERCITY
WALLS, GATES, AND KEEPS
OUTSKIRTS
NPC GLOSSARY
ADVENTURE TOOLBOX

Year	Event
1 AR	Aroden raises the *Starstone*, forming the Isle of Kortos and founding Absalom.
23 AR	Voradni Voon besieges Absalom.
166 AR	Nex besieges Absalom.
400 AR	The oldest of Absalom's surviving documents dates to this period. Near this year, Aroden departed Absalom to pursue exploits elsewhere on Golarion and into the Great Beyond.
430 AR	Pirate Siege begins, marking a century-long period of raids.
537 AR	The legendary Vudran maharajah Khiben-Sald visits Absalom.
544 AR	The smell of the "Forty-Four Foul" sewer incident overwhelms Absalom's residents.
546 AR	The First Great Sewer Expansion begins, lasting 8 years.
580 AR	Construction on Absalom's original city walls concludes.
810 AR	City officials and azarketi ambassadors finalize the Silversurf Pact, establishing stronger protections for gillfolk and securing their aid in training the newly founded Wave Riders.
1287 AR	The tradition of living entombment begins.
1298 AR	The Siege of the Prophets occurs.
1308 AR	An immense Tian junk called the *Resplendent Phoenix* visits Absalom.
1464 AR	The "Reborn Rebellion" results in bloody door-to-door fighting.
1532 AR	Kelesh takes control of Osirion, beginning the Keleshite Interregnum. Absalom struggles to accommodate waves of Osirian immigrants.

HISTORY OF ABSALOM

With nearly 5,000 years of prosperity, influence, and continuous activity, Absalom is second to none in shaping the Inner Sea's destiny. Situated between a host of influential nations, Absalom consistently exerted influence by controlling Inner Sea traffic, attracting talent from countless realms, and assimilating disparate beliefs into a vibrant, multifaceted culture that has steered innovation and thought ever since. But the city is not a shining metropolis without flaws. Its buildings stand atop the past's rubble, the wounds of countless sieges scar its walls, and the sins of generations past stain its streets.

Age of Aroden (1–400 AR): The Isle of Kortos owes its existence to Aroden, who raised the *Starstone* and the surrounding sea floor. Aroden took the Test of the *Starstone* and became a god. A primordial version of Absalom emerged from the ground as the Starstone Isle coagulated into its permanent shape, designed to match Aroden's vision of a perfect city. For several centuries afterward, Aroden oversaw Absalom's growth and helped defend its shores, granting the city unmatched influence. Virtually no records from Absalom survive from this time, though the nascent island's neighbors maintain ample documentation of the city's meteoric rise.

Age of Independence (410–1618 AR): Over the ages, Aroden increasingly departed from Absalom to pursue other godly objectives, and by the start of this period, he had visited the city for the last time. Absalom now controlled its own destiny. Increasingly, the island attracted prestigious visitors and avaricious raiders alike, enticing waves of Garundi, Tian, and Vudran immigration and influence. For all the wealth and innovation the booming population brought, the city swelled beyond the infrastructure Aroden envisioned centuries earlier. Thus, during this time, Absalom constructed many of its key structures and walls.

Age of Excess (1619–2925 AR): With centuries of prosperity and cultural dominance, Absalom's populace began to consider itself superior to neighboring states. Sweeping legislation mandated foreign labor take an ever-greater role in maintaining the city, ostensibly to free its enlightened citizens to pursue more high-minded endeavors. These laws instead opened Absalom to foreign agents, encouraged indolence, and slowly drained the treasury. The first two mortals to pass the Test of the *Starstone* and apotheosize after Absalom's establishment truly embody this era through their areas of concern: Norgorber, god of greed, secrets, and murder; and Cayden Cailean, god of alcohol, bravery, and freedom.

Age of Expansion (2926–4605 AR): A series of mainland earthquakes caused many of the controlling foreign powers to withdraw from Absalom. The citizens reclaimed control, overthrowing corrupt leaders and overturning pernicious laws. With newfound energy, Absalom renovated its dilapidated edifices and supported its neighbors in thwarting evil—particularly against Aroden's ancient foe, the Whispering Tyrant. Absalom's pride remained as strong as ever, and its missions abroad imposed the city's values on foreign lands, looted treasures, or even conquered territory. Yet, the rash of retaliatory invasions that followed quashed Absalom's imperial and moralistic ambitions.

Age of Inheritance (4606 AR–present): With the death of Aroden, Absalom staggered onward, demoralized. Increased conflict with Cheliax nearly saw the city overwhelmed in culture and military wars, and many of the tools Aroden left in the city's care gradually lost their power. Although Absalom entered this era weakened by its founder's demise, the catastrophe drove the city to establish its own identity and technologies to defend itself against new threats.

Age of Aroden (0–400 AR)

When the immortal Azlanti hero Aroden raised the *Starstone* from the depths of the Inner Sea, a jagged column of rock scores of miles across came up with it from the sea floor. Aroden grasped the stone and found his consciousness drawn within its irregular facets, where he faced a series of physical and moral challenges designed to test his inner character. Upon successfully completing this Test of the *Starstone*, Aroden emerged as a living god. In a matter of days, the Last Azlanti had reshaped this new island to meet his vision of utopia, complete with the earliest city structures conjured from his newly divine mind. His nascent cult eagerly migrated to settle the city, and nations across Avistan, Garund, and Kelesh took heed of this rising power overseen by a god who walked its streets.

Absalom's creation impacted more than geopolitics. The immense Kortos Mounts towered so high that they intercepted weather patterns and ocean currents that affected Qadira and southern Taldor in unexpected ways. Surviving correspondence shows the Keleshites' displeasure at these repercussions and denotes Taldor's increased exploitation of the Verduran Forest to compensate for unfavorable trade winds. History didn't preserve Aroden's response, yet the island remained. Absalom would budge for no one.

Absalom flourished under Aroden's light hand. Even as its divine patron ensured its advantage in diplomatic affairs, Absalom's growing wealth attracted envious eyes. Legends preserve the minotaur warlord Voradni Voon's siege of Absalom, the first of many over the millennia, during which Aroden personally led the defenders from atop Azlanti Keep. Voon's army of centaurs, harpies, and minotaurs were shattered and scattered across the land. Absalom's adventurers gave chase, in the process exploring Starstone Isle, documenting its countless surprises and uniting into so-called hunting lodges dedicated to these exploits. By the time the archmage Nex besieged the city more than a century later, Absalom boasted dozens of these lodges, and they rushed to repel Nex's phantom army—the start of Absalom's support for and use of local adventurers in peace and war, especially after Aroden left the city for ever longer jaunts into the Great Beyond.

1542 AR	Menedes XVII besieges Absalom in the Sun Scarab Siege.
1619 AR	Kharnas the Angel-Binder launches the Radiant Siege.
1620 AR	The first Radiant Festival is held to honor those who died in the Radiant Siege, establishing a centennial tradition.
1893 AR	Norgorber completes the Test of the *Starstone*.

Voradni Voon

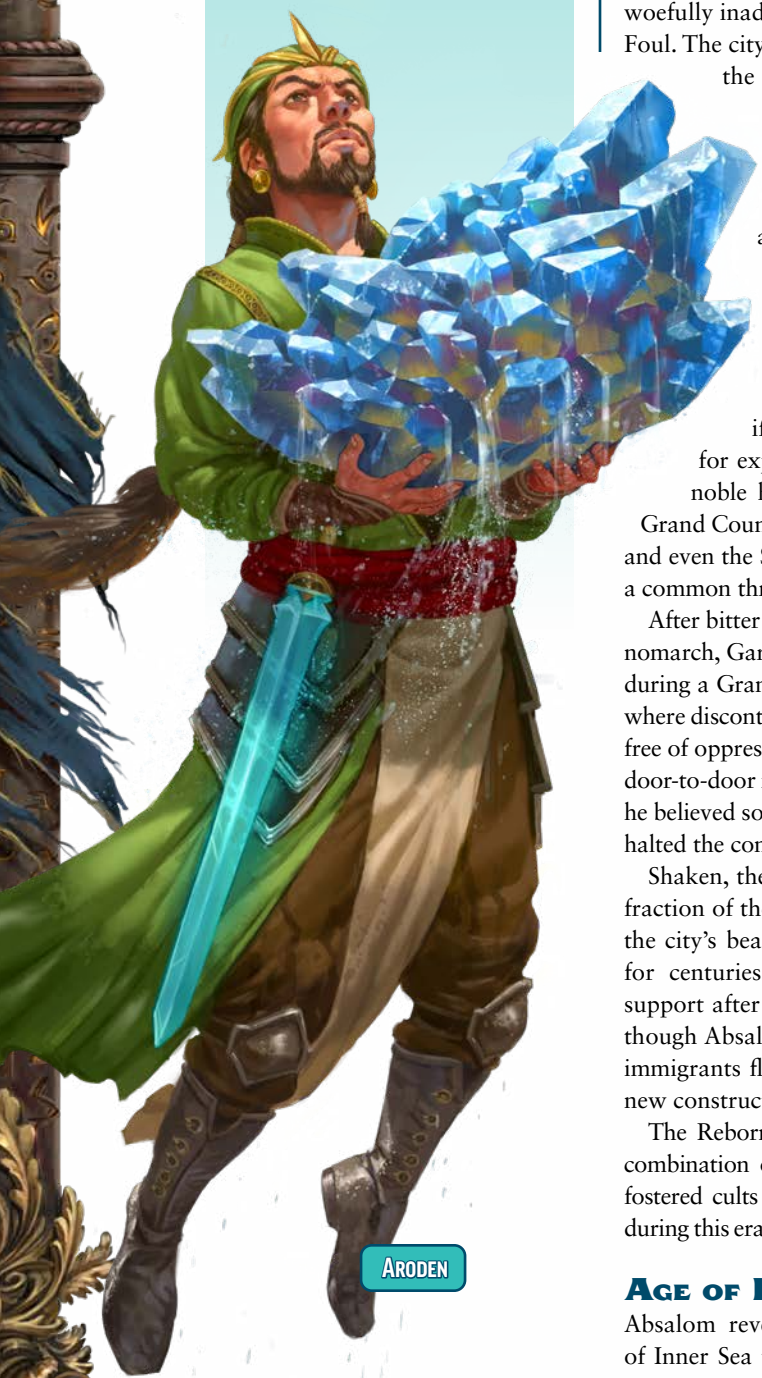
Age of Independence (401–1618 AR)

Beyond the Founding Laws of Absalom, preserved in Azlanti Keep, no documents from the city's first 400 years survive—and this next-oldest document, a warehouse's inventory of maritime supplies, speaks more to Absalom's mounting practical needs rather than to any grand initiatives. Indeed, as Absalom grew, Aroden's departures grew ever longer until at last he seemed gone forever. Left relatively undefended and without an immortal patron to guide its expansion, Absalom suffered generations of indecision, raiding, and infrastructural misfortune before emerging as an independent power.

Most infamous of these misfortunes was the Pirate Siege, more than a century of piracy by independent criminals and state-funded privateers alike. It culminated in an orchestrated blockade in 446 AR with the pirates pressuring Absalom to pay off the raiders. The city instead sent out a call for foreign mercenaries, promising them land and titles for aid. Not only did sellswords answer in droves, but many of

THE ICONOGRAPHY OF ARODEN

The Last Azlanti personally dwelled in the city in its earliest centuries, and Absalom has served as his religion's holiest pilgrimage site for millennia. Even a century after his death, statues of his ascension, often grasping the *Starstone*, are ubiquitous in the city as are his winged eye holy symbol, twelve guises, and other common motifs.



the pirates turned on their neighbors in order to claim Absalom's offer, most famously Eraheim Vastille, founder of one of Absalom's oldest noble houses.

By the time the legendary Vudran maharajah Khiben-Sald visited in 537 AR, these new nobles had devastated the pirates and taken a more direct role in ruling the city. The maharajah delighted in Absalom's old Azlanti architecture, cosmopolitan style, and hospitality, declaring it the "Jewel of the Inner Sea." The citizens delighted in the attention. In Khiben-Sald's wake, he left an ebullient city now enamored with Vudran culture, art, and spices—all of which Vudran merchants happily imported at great cost.

Yet, the visit also highlighted many of Absalom's shortcomings. The maharajah lacked proper accommodation, after which the city erected the Palace of Thirteen Spires to host visiting dignitaries. Lacking terrestrial defenses beyond Azlanti Keep, Absalom sorely needed city walls, which the cash-strapped government completed only thanks to a massive bequest from the heirless Eobold Efroham. Most infamously, Absalom's sewers were woefully inadequate for its growing populace, culminating in the Forty-Four Foul. The city had laughed off a kobold tribe's threats in 543 AR, and during the following summer's blistering heat, the kobolds responded by jamming key outlets, resulting in a paralyzing accumulation of noxious baking waste that flooded the streets. Absalom's First Great Sewer Expansion was its largest public works project to date, extending infrastructure far beyond the city's core to accommodate future growth.

And grow it did. Absalom's population steadily quintupled over the next few centuries as the city leveraged its ideal geography to grow rich on trade. With the arrival of the *Resplendent Phoenix*, an immense Tian junk laden with goods, Absalom reveled in this affirmation of the city's importance, as if hosting Khiben-Sald a second time. However, the new demand for expensive Tian goods highlighted the growing inequality between noble houses and the common citizens. As the latter spoke out, the Grand Council invoked toothless solutions that only fanned the bitter flames, and even the Siege of the Prophets in 1298 AR couldn't unite Absalom against a common threat for long.

After bitter sentiments had fermented for generations, the Ascendant Court's nomarch, Garev Halfhand, rebelled against callous policies he heard discussed during a Grand Council meeting. His oratorical outburst bled into the streets, where discontented eavesdroppers took it as a rallying cry, declaring themselves free of oppressive contracts upon being "reborn in rebellion." Halfhand led the door-to-door fighting that followed, hoping to rid Absalom of the noble houses he believed so toxic to the city's ideals. Ultimately, the primarch's house guards halted the conflict, but not before thousands died.

Shaken, the city's power brokers hastily instituted reforms and sold off a fraction of their accumulated property. Noble scions increasingly donated to the city's beautification, thereafter competing to appear the most generous for centuries. This culture of philanthropy triggered an outpouring of support after Osirion's overthrow by Keleshite forces in 1532 AR, and even though Absalom lacked the housing to accommodate the waves of Garundi immigrants fleeing that foreign regime, the noble houses personally funded new construction in the outskirt towns.

The Reborn Rebellion might have taught Absalom's elite altruism, yet the combination of conservative Osirian values and philanthropic grandstanding fostered cults of personality. Nobles and demagogues became more powerful during this era's closing centuries, and the citizens grew ever hungrier for rhetoric.

Age of Excess (1619–2925 AR)

Absalom reveled in its larger-than-life heroes and unshakable dominion of Inner Sea trade. However, for all their posturing, the city's leaders grew

increasingly territorial and envious, suspecting one another of wooing the masses to forward any number of nefarious schemes. In some cases, they were right; the old Azlanti cult of Ulon—an evil deity of conspiracy, isolation, and manipulation—had taken root in Absalom, driving internecine espionage and political sabotage. In other ways, Absalom's people merely fell prey to their own successes and insecurities, seeing envious enemies at every turn and seeking a powerful leader who could inspire the city as Aroden once had.

Instead of a leader, Absalom encountered a seemingly endless number of additional foes. Among the most dangerous was Kharnas the Angel-Binder, an evil half-angel archmage from the Great Beyond who besieged the city from a towering interdimensional war-spire at the present site of Fort Tempest. He used an ancient Azlanti artifact called the *Radiant Spark*, which had come to Absalom's aid numerous times in the past (most notably when the legendary Sarnax the Great used it to resurrect and heal hundreds of victims of the Yellow Death sickness during the Pirate Siege). While the pyramidal *Radiant Spark* remains a symbol of hope and rebirth in Absalom even now, in Kharnas's hands, it became a terrible weapon. The warlord's bound angels ravaged the city until finally defeated at great cost—the *Radiant Spark* and Kharnas himself banished to the Great Beyond forevermore.

Warfare, growing inequity, demagoguery, and strife had poisoned Absalom. Independent Ulonite cells further confused matters, and the city increasingly relied on its legacy of greatness to obscure its ever-greater vulnerabilities. When Norgorber completed the Test of the *Starstone* in 1893 AR, Absalom rejoiced, thinking this confirmation of its prestige. The Reaper of Reputation swiftly overshadowed Ulon's cults, with the former's followers hunting down and assassinating nearly all of the Ulonites within a decade. Again Absalom celebrated, either not fully aware or not caring that it had traded one cult of secrets for a much more sinister one.

No, Absalom's leaders considered themselves peerless examples for the whole world to study, encouraged by Norgorberites' lies and coddled by the city's enormous treasury. In 1997 AR, the political elite began hiring contractors to handle their governmental business—even voting. Many of these surrogates were barely vetted, and this apathy attracted foreign power brokers who exploited this habit to insinuate their agents into Absalom's government and guilds. From the Taldan Blue Lords to the Keleshite Cult of the Hawk, these groups effectively controlled Absalom within a few generations, kept in check only by their rivals' ambitions. Their agents, acting as surrogate voters for Absalom's politicians, passed the now-infamous Proxy Laws later that year. Under this legislation, all municipal work had to be performed by outside professionals, ostensibly freeing citizens to pursue more high-minded endeavors.

The Proxy Laws provided opportunity for the city's ruling factions to engage in rampant cronyism and ludicrous building projects, most infamously the centuries-long "Mount Absalom" boom in which buildings arose, were knocked down, and then built atop each other again and again in a ceaseless regime of construction contracts. Thanks to the Blue Lords' increasingly lenient zoning codes, most of Absalom's districts rose nearly a foot per decade, creating a network of "undercity" streets that were later incorporated into the renovated sewers. Affected jobs, like street sweeping, tax collection, and wall repairs, ballooned in scope to encompass a wide variety of careers, and the Proxy Laws' precedent gradually expanded to control dock management, the military, and myriad manufacturing interests. The incremental changes slowly suffocated Absalom's domestic industries, pushing local experts out of the market and replacing them with foreign workers who eventually became citizens and were replaced in their own right. Absalom's treasury seemed bottomless, trade remained strong, and little disrupted the luxuries that sustained the city's indolent politicians.

All the while, Absalom's citizenry reveled. Such freedom might have inspired enlightened art, but critics considered the operas, plays, and paintings of the so-called Age of Excess to be maudlin and unrefined. Instead, the period's

1997 AR	Absalom establishes the Proxy Laws, which in turn paves the way for two foreign powers–the Blue Lords and the Cult of the Hawk–to compete for control of the city.
2110 AR	The "Mount Absalom" construction boom begins.
2254 AR	Apparent assassinations tied to the Cult of the Dawnflower leave eight Osirian officials dead before Absalom's own Sarenites intervene to stop their overzealous colleagues.
2502 AR	The Siege of Krakens and Kings pits two foreign-funded mercenary companies against one another in Absalom. The Foreign Quarter suffers extensive damage.
2640 AR	The elves' return to Golarion from Castrovel sparks countless new fashions inspired by Castrovelian art and architecture.
2765 AR	Cayden Cailean passes the Test of the *Starstone*.
2850 AR	Absalom's primarch executes swaths of the Grand Council, replacing them with blindly loyal followers. At last disgusted with Absalom's corruption, Arclords affiliated with the Arcanamirium launch the Conjured Siege, which Absalom repels by relying on unscrupulous allies.
2920 AR	An earthquake devastates Taldor and Qadira, causing the Blue Lords and Cult of the Hawk to withdraw from Absalom.
2921 AR	Absalom overturns the Proxy Laws.
2925 AR	Mass emigration of skilled labor triggers the Witherwheat Crisis.
2972 AR	Absalom legalizes slavery.

3005 AR	Following millennia of the city's growth, Absalom at last renovates, expands, and raises its city walls.
3200 AR	Hunting lodges enjoy a 600-year-long golden age of prominence and popularity.
3637 AR	The "Machine Mage" Karamoss besieges Absalom.
3754 AR	The Shining Crusade begins.
3823 AR	The Whispering Tyrant slays Arazni, inspiring a huge wave of support from Absalom for the Shining Crusade.
3824 AR	The mortal Iomedae defends Absalom from a retributive invasion of sea ghouls.
3827 AR	The Shining Crusade concludes.
3832 AR	Iomedae passes the Test of the *Starstone*.
3908 AR	Local heroes thwart the Silent Tide invasion.
4008 AR	Absalom begins the macabre Charge of the Gorgon tradition.
4092 AR	The powerful dragon Maejerx Steeleye rises to power in the Kortos Mounts.
4137 AR	At the behest of the "Mad King" Haliad I, Cheliax besieges Absalom. A month later, Absalom adopts the Edrentar Doctrine to defend the Inner Sea.
4138 AR	Absalom establishes the port of Escadar.
4142 AR	Absalom outlaws slavery.
4217 AR	The Yellow Death devastates Absalom.
4307 AR	The Pathfinder Society holds its inaugural gathering in Absalom.
4319 AR	The Pathfinder Selmius Foster travels to Vudra and opens up greater trade with the subcontinent.
4320 AR	The Pathfinder Society breaks ground on the Grand Lodge.

greatest accomplishment was the apotheosis of Cayden Cailean, who perfectly encapsulated Absalom's virtues through his drunken stumble into godhood.

Absalom had become the butt of international jests, and its leaders' transparent and ham-fisted edicts alienated more allies with each generation. Disgusted, the Arclords who had founded and operated Absalom's prestigious Arcanamirium school of magic at last rebelled, believing they could right the city's course only by completing Nex's unfinished business: conquering Absalom. Remembered as the Conjured Siege, these wizards struck the city from within with arcane fire and summoned beasts in what began as a targeted strike against the city's corrupt leaders and devolved into a grand melee with the district guards. Desperate, the city called in a motley, macabre host of its own to fight the Arclords, relying on assassins, fiend-summoners, and unscrupulous mercenaries. Although Absalom ultimately prevailed, its defenders' underhanded strategies left many wondering who the real villains were: the Arclords or the city itself?

Blame for Absalom's decline increasingly fell on the Blue Lords and the Cult of the Hawk. When a series of tremendous earthquakes struck Taldor and Qadira, these two organizations took the opportunity to withdraw from Absalom altogether. Overnight, the city's political establishment practically vanished. What remained of the Low Council swiftly overturned the Proxy Laws and paid the city's finances long overdue scrutiny, learning that after centuries of neglect and indulgence, Absalom's legendary riches were virtually gone. As social programs collapsed, the remaining Keleshite and Taldan power brokers exploited the city's desperate and inexperienced workforce. Within a year, old grievances against the Blue Lords and the Cult of the Hawk sparked the Red Wealday Riots that ultimately chased out these remaining landlords and guild masters.

Absalom might have regained control of its own fate, but it was in a sorry state. Sweeping emigration left its remaining workforce depleted and unskilled. In autumn of 2925 AR, a dearth of capable farmhands triggered the Witherwheat Crisis, a near-total failure of domestic grain production. Then-Primarch Guangevir Estrobal press-ganged vast numbers of civilians to harvest the crops, arresting those who dissented and forcing them to work. Although Absalom recovered, the primarch's severe acts created a precedent for forcing labor from political prisoners, ultimately laying the groundwork for slavery decades later.

Age of Expansion (2925–4605 AR)

Absalom recovered gradually, rebuilding its old alliances and trade networks. When the Shining Crusade waged war against the vile Whispering Tyrant, Absalom contributed generously, redeeming it in its neighbors' eyes. When the lich struck down Arazni, herald of Aroden, Absalom rallied in outrage, pouring support into the Crusade and celebrating when the hero Iomedae devastated the undead armies and later passed the Test of the *Starstone*. Having re-entered the world stage, Absalom began founding new settlements—some on its own shores and an increasing number of colonies opportunistically claimed in under-defended realms. Meanwhile, rising fortunes expanded the city's middle class, sparing more time for leisure and encouraging a renaissance of Absalom's hunting lodges. With renewed pride in the city and a sincere belief in its destiny, many citizens began to refer to this period as a "Mithral Age," an idealized perception still carried among certain traditional inhabitants even today.

If Iomedae's apotheosis helped sweep away Absalom's perceived decline and restore its old grandeur, Cheliax's aggression under the leadership of the "Mad King" Haliad I gave the world a new bogeyman. Absalom passed the Edrentar Doctrine in response, justifying preemptive maneuvers to defend the Inner Sea from Cheliax. What began as a defensive initiative slowly transformed into a moral policy as Absalom once again saw itself as a shining example of integrity and sought to intervene where it sensed injustice. Without a doubt, Absalom was admirable in its charity, abolition of slavery,

and legal reform during this time. However, the Edrentar Doctrine eventually spawned Absalom's Virtue Corps, formal aid expeditions sent abroad to promote freedom and justice.

These expeditions were a public relations disaster. Faulty intelligence and cultural misunderstandings led to Virtue Corps trying to end problems that didn't truly exist or antagonizing locals through opportunistic vigilantism. Each expedition increasingly served economic and political interests over ethical ones, and Absalom exploited these initiatives to take control of foreign ports. For the first few decades, the Virtue Corps were popular and fed Absalom's belief that it so overflowed with virtue that the city must export its philosophies. Within a century, the world retaliated. Over two years, Absalom sustained two sieges. First, Rahadoum invaded in the Red Siege, infuriated at Absalom's waves of Arodenite missionaries who undermined Rahadoum's anti-divine codes. As the dust from that conflict settled, Vudran ships assaulted the shores in the Siege of the Ravenous Raja, incited by a large Virtue Corps's misguided attempts to free Vudrani "slaves" following a gross misinterpretation of the region's merit-based caste system.

Its ego bruised, Absalom stepped back from international intervention, leaving the heroics to the countless adventurers who called the city home. The glory days of Absalom's hunting lodges had passed, yet independent heroes and newfound organizations, such as the Pathfinder Society, captured the public's imagination. Most famously, the hero Lady Kayle and her companions vanquished the dragon Maejerx Steeleye in the Kortos Mounts, ending the dragon's raids and thwarting her imminent plan to invade Absalom with a reunited army of minotaurs and harpies.

Age of Inheritance (4606 AR–Present)

Even though Aroden hadn't visited Absalom in millennia, with his death in 4606 AR, Absalom lost its founder, legendary mentor, and sense of timeless immortality. The planet itself seemed to mourn as catastrophic storms struck and extraplanar rifts opened. Absalom had been braced for a new golden age and instead seemed lost amid the chaos, all the more when many of its greatest leaders answered the Mendevian Crusade's call far to the north and never returned. With its trade routes imperiled, the city fell short on supplies and revenue. Primarch Seib of House Slavikes struggled to maintain order. As the economy faltered and crime spiked, he regularly offered concessions to Cheliax to prop up his rule, ranging from property sales to reinstating slavery to taking out devastating loans. Yet, even Primarch Seib's desperate corruption was better than the riots that followed his sudden death in 4659 AR.

A wandering adventurer in Absalom, Lord Gyr of House Gixx knew how to make the most of the opportunity. Within months, he had gained a Grand Council seat, directed mercenaries to quell rioting in the richest neighborhoods, and cut deals with numerous other factions. Within the year, Absalom named him primarch, and by combining hands-off governance and playing his enemies against each other, he ruled for nearly 60 years.

For the first 30 years, Lord Gyr's reign fared smoothly; the nobles praised his earlier intervention, and the common folk considered him a rags-to-riches folk hero. However, by 4690 AR, Lord Gyr's ironclad control began to slip, and the populace increasingly questioned the cronyism that landed his childhood friends so many political appointments. A failed assassination resulted in Lord Gyr making fewer public appearances and establishing the infamous Black Whale prison for his enemies. When the earthquake of 4698 AR devastated Absalom, Lord Gyr made only token appearances and promises to repair the demolished Precipice Quarter and sinking Puddles. Lord Gyr asked little of Absalom, and in turn, the city grew not to expect too much from him, such that when the Black Echelon Uprising of 4717 AR threatened the city, Lord Gyr was nowhere to be found. Instead, the retired guard captain Wynsal Starborn stepped up to act as siege lord of Absalom

4323 AR	The Qadiran general Taliq Asad besieges Absalom.
4414 AR	Absalom dispatches the first of its Virtue Corps to Katapesh.
4499 AR	Rahadoum launches the Red Siege against Absalom in retaliation for waves of unwelcome Virtue Corps.
4500 AR	Also in retaliation for presumptuous Virtue Corps actions abroad, Vudra besieges Absalom in the Siege of the Ravenous Raja.
4503 AR	Absalom recalls the last of its Virtue Corps.
4514 AR	Adventurers defeat the mage Belcorra Haruvex, preventing a devastating siege by her army of aberrations.
4592 AR	Adventurers slay Maejerx Steeleye.
4602 AR	Absalom handily repels the Scourge of the Sea Lions, a naval siege.
4606 AR	Aroden dies, triggering weeks of mourning and panic.
4620 AR	The 30th Radiant Festival is canceled in the wake of Aroden's death.
4630 AR	A conflict between Mendevian crusaders and Absalom leads to the brief Siege of Lost Knights.
4635 AR	Absalom reinstates the Flesh Taxes, legalizing slavery.
4640 AR	House Thrune takes control of Cheliax. Emboldened Chelaxian sympathizers exert increasing influence in Absalom and stoke fears of invasion.
4659 AR	Primarch Seib dies, triggering riots.
4660 AR	Lord Gyr of House Gixx becomes primarch.
4688 AR	A drug known as grit originates in what is now the Puddles.

DEFINING A SIEGE

With nearly 5,000 years of history behind it, Absalom has seen hundreds of attacks that could be classified as sieges. These events range from armies of marauding phantoms to traditional naval assaults to hordes of summoned creatures slamming against the city walls. Not all sieges are so bombastic, and over the years, a few particularly spectacular sieges have involved a single powerful monster or warlord. Sieges come in all shapes and sizes, and another one is always around the corner.

Maejerx Steeleye

and oversee its defense. Starborn takes his temporary appointment seriously, and he has consistently pressured city councilors to nominate a new primarch and lead Absalom into a new era.

FAMOUS EARLY SIEGES OF ABSALOM

Throughout Absalom's long history, more than a hundred would-be tyrants and covetous almost-gods have laid siege to the City at the Center of the World. While Absalom has never been conquered, the constant attacks left scars on its mythology, topography, and psychology that remain to this day. A summary of some of the most impactful sieges of Absalom follows.

First Siege of Absalom (23 AR): Word of Aroden's miraculous lifting of the Isle of Kortos and his passage through the *Starstone* to become a living god spread quickly throughout the Inner Sea and beyond. In distant Iblydos, far to the east of Qadira, tales of Absalom's new godling gained the notice of an ambitious minotaur warlord named Voradni Voon. Voon too craved godhood, considering it the logical conclusion of his heroic story, which cut a bloody slash across the belly of central Casmaron.

Many of the minotaur's victories over older and better-established kingdoms of central Casmaron involved the employment of hundreds of thundering centaurs swirling in vast, interlocking circles, a ritual that unleashed terrible catastrophes under Voon's direction. Old centaur magic had leveled three cities in central Casmaron. Absalom, they assumed, would simply be the next. Instead, when Voon's vast army of minotaurs, harpies, and centaurs unleashed a devastating earthquake upon the city, Aroden's magic reflected the tremors back onto the island's eastern plateau, which swallowed huge numbers of Voon's loyal warriors in great chasms rent into the earth. The cataclysm shattered the Brazen Arch portal that had allowed the warlord to march his army from Iblydos to Kortos, forever severing the remnants of Voon's host from their distant homeland. Voon himself died upon Aroden's sword, the *Azlanti Diamond*, soon thereafter.

Phantom Siege (166 AR): The archmage Nex, tired of warring with his ancient enemy Geb, turned his attention from southeast Garund to the Inner Sea, drawn at least in part by the prospect of claiming the *Starstone* for himself. The archmage also coveted the lore of Absalom's House of Secrets (today known as the College of Mysteries), which amalgamated and attempted to preserve many of the human magical traditions discovered by Aroden in his disguised travels around the world during the last several centuries of the Age of Destiny.

To mount this assault, Nex erected a mile-tall featureless tower—the so-called Spire of Nex—in the Cairnlands north of the city, then wove together a series of abducted demiplanes within it to create a battery of phantom versions of the heroes, villains, and monsters trapped within. Nex sent wave after wave of these magical creatures against the city in an ultimately fruitless bid to penetrate its walls. Dozens of so-called "hunting lodges," independent associations of adventurers and explorers until then based largely in the island's interior, rushed to Absalom's defense, beginning a tradition of adventurers defending the city in its times of need and of the city's populace tolerating and even embracing such heroes.

Pirate Siege (430–536 AR): Three decades after Aroden withdrew from Absalom for adventures in the Great Beyond, the city's enemies could no longer resist temptation. Over a century, a seemingly endless series of opportunistic pirate fleets blockaded the Isle of Kortos and blackmailed it into penury.

Famine wracked the Isle of Kortos as supply lines to and from the city remained blocked for decades at a stretch. Pestilence knows no embargo, however, and even when the city was at its most isolated, disease found its way into Absalom. Several plagues wracked the populace, notably a devastating outbreak of the infamous Yellow Death sickness that claimed hundreds of lives and was only turned back by the great Arodenite patriarch Sarnax using an Ancient Azlanti artifact called the *Radiant Spark*.

The assistance of foreign mercenaries eventually thwarted the pirate menace, sinking its final fleet to make the earliest contribution to the Flotsam Graveyard in the city's harbor. With little gold left, Absalom's Grand Council was forced to promise land and titles to these outlander saviors. Many of the city's oldest noble houses trace their origin to this era, as does the town of Diobel and Absalom's Navy.

Siege of Kin (744 AR): Though the slight that provoked this siege has long been forgotten, the answering wrath of the fey prince Juroveal fell upon the citizens of Absalom in return. Juroveal led comparatively small armies of satyr and minotaur allies but evened the score with powerful magic. When Absalom proved capable of resisting his first assault, the seilenos cast a terrible ritual over the city, binding the unfortunate citizens unprotected by Azlanti Keep to act as puppets under his command. From atop a slave-built tower and palace, Juroveal then animated trees from the nearby Immenwood to act as living siege engines against the city walls.

The fey prince was routed not by Absalom's armies, but by its peerless scholars and lorekeepers—Juroveal was tricked into banishing himself from Golarion. His palace was then built into the city walls, turning his assault into Absalom's strength.

Siege of the Prophets (1298 AR): The Prophet-Kings were five petty tyrants who had carved out kingdoms for themselves in Northern Garund's Scorched Coast, on the eastern edge of modern Rahadoum, where the mighty city-states of the Tekritanin League had controlled much of western Garund in the early days of the Age of Destiny before their ultimate defeat by the Empire of Osirion.

Pushed from their lands by local unrest, they fixated their attention upon the Isle of Kortos, swearing to topple Absalom and claim the *Starstone* as the culmination of the prophecies that had brought them together and into power in the first place. Each Prophet-King brought their own army to the island, striking from a different beachhead. An army of Inlanders and dwarves of Galizhur ground themselves into extinction destroying one of these armies—that of Garial the Thankless—in the deep harbor north of Diobel, which to this day is sometimes called Ungrateful Bay. The Dunmire swallowed the army of Valigar Seven-Sword. Egrizail, Xcaril, and Zerishar made it to Absalom, where the three Prophet-Kings sieged the city for months before famously breaching the Postern Gate. Egrizail and Xcaril survived that disastrous climactic battle but fled across the Scrape with the remnants of their broken armies. When harsh terrain and the native centaurs dwindled the survivors to the point that they no longer posed a threat to Absalom, the city's First Guard called off its pursuit, and a handful of ships filled with shaken, demoralized zealots—two would-be godlings among them—were soon all that remained of the once-glorious army.

These survivors limped their way to the Isle of Erran, then restricted to the clergy of Aroden. Perhaps because of the Last Azlanti's connection to prophecy, the church secretly gave succor to the remnants of the defeated Prophet-Kings, allowing them to settle the northern forests and mountains of the small island where their strange tombs remain to this day.

4693 AR	Lord Gyr establishes Black Whale Prison.
4696 AR	The Sewer Dragons kobold family begins carving out its subterranean empire in Absalom's sewers.
4698 AR	A terrible earthquake strikes Absalom, devastating several districts.
4704 AR	The Linnorm King White Estrid sails to Absalom.
4712 AR	Construction on a secondary sewer system begins in Westgate.
4717 AR	An army of demonflesh constructs and undead marines attacks in the brief Black Echelon Uprising. Primarch Gyr disappears, the siege lord Wynsal Starborn temporarily leads Absalom.
4718 AR	The aging eccentric Captain Tanner wins the Kortos Regatta, shortly afterward disappearing with the pearl-encrusted trophy.
4719 AR	Tar-Baphon attempts to invade Absalom but is defeated when his own destructive magic is reflected back on him. Watcher-Lord Ulthun II of Lastwall arrives in Absalom. Major renovations of the ruined Precipice District begin. Harbormaster Hugen's ship mysteriously sinks near Absalom, with the harbormaster presumed dead.
4720 AR	Current year.

BUILDING A BETTER CITY

Aroden had a specific vision in mind for Absalom when he created the city, but in the millennia since this miraculous act, Absalom's urban expansions have been the responsibility of a diverse and sprawling range of architects, engineers, and politicians. Despite widely varied goals and often clashing passions, the central goal of building a better city has remained at Absalom's heart.

City Planner

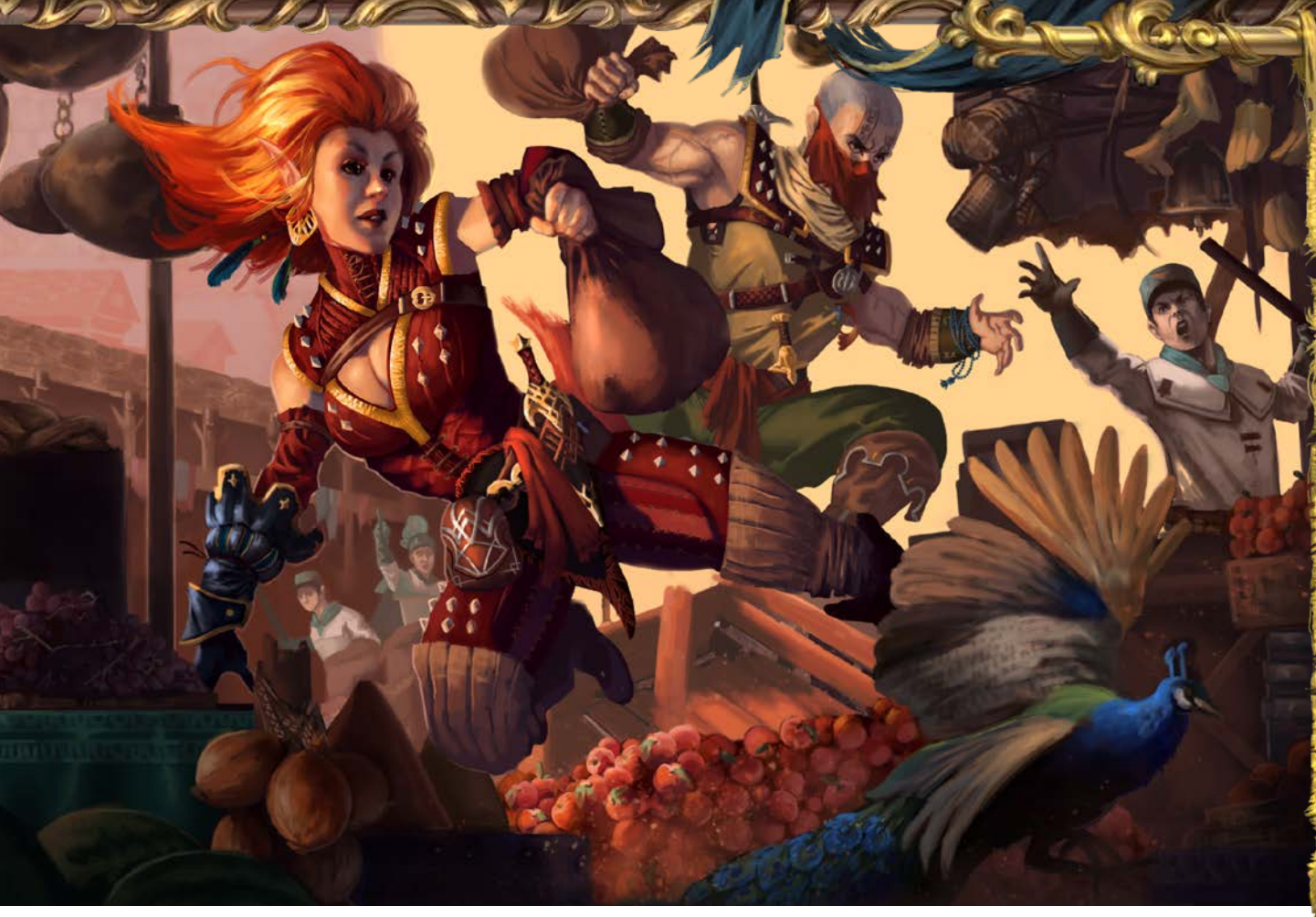
GOVERNMENT, LAW, AND CRIME

When Aroden first created Absalom, he established a set of laws to guide the city and its people. Absalom's long life has afforded its citizens time to mold and shape the nature of its government to meet the city's constantly changing needs. As law changes, so too do the skills and techniques of those that seek to circumvent it, however, and the push and pull of law and crime is a constant in Absalom, even after millennia.

THE FOUNDING LAWS OF ABSALOM

Absalom's Founding Laws, etched upon massive stone tablets by the hand of Aroden himself, establish the basic outline of Absalom's government and the rules governing the behavior of its citizens. The tablets rest in the Grand Vault of Azlanti Keep, where they serve as a symbol of the city's enduring history and of the fundamental values that have provided a solid foundation for nearly five millennia of continuous government. The Founding Laws perform the following functions.

- Establish Absalom's Grand Council, enumerating the powers of its High and Low chambers, as well as those of the primarch.
- Outline an annual convergence called the Starstone Exultation, where members of the city's High Council set the agenda for upcoming Grand Council sessions, administer the city's primary functions (trade, commerce, the harbor, etc.), and orchestrate Absalom's defense in times of siege.
- Consign Absalom to the monarch of Taldor if no member of the High Council is present for the annual Starstone Exultation.
- Grant all adult natives of the city (defined as those born on the Isle of Kortos, children of those born there, and adults who serve the councils or guard units of Absalom for no less than 10 years) protection from unwilling exile or imprisonment except as punishment upon conviction of a crime.
- Broadly outline Absalom's judicial system, implementing a citizen's right to a trial by jury if accused of a crime and establishing a quartet of law lords to oversee the recording of new laws, the administration of the city's courts, and the assurance of judicial integrity and impartiality.
- Charge the city's government with maintaining the Isle of Kortos as a haven for mystics, esoteric philosophers, wizards, magicians, and heretics via the establishment of four spell lords to advise the city's leaders, oversee the city's institutions of magical instruction, harness magic in defense of the city, and root out and destroy those who would use magic to defeat the city or undermine its commerce or defense.
- Prescribe the spell lords to conduct a mysterious, quarterly ancient Azlanti civic ritual known as the Rite of Four Architects and thought to be fundamental to the city's protection.
- Grant the High Council the duty to consolidate many city functions under a designated siege lord during times of great danger to the city.
- Establish a nondenominational Chamber of Ecclesiasticals to see to the matters of the faithful in the Ascendant Court, creating the template for the later establishment of district-wide provincial councils.
- Establish and maintain a library that collects all knowledge on the Isle of Kortos and is accessible to all citizens, and preventing all knowledge within from leaving said library without approval from the Grand Council.
- Enumerate several other surprisingly specific and sometimes seemingly intentionally vague dictates on a variety of subjects that puzzle even



the most learned law lord and the most wizened cypher masters of the College of Mysteries.

Aroden's Founding Laws are considered the most important edicts in Absalom's voluminous civic code, overpowering lesser directives when the two come into conflict. When a particular legal argument works its way through the city's courts for final appeal to the law lords, accordance with the Founding Laws is the fulcrum of the balance upon which the merits of a case must be weighed.

CITY GOVERNMENT

Absalom's Founding Laws establish the structure and duties of the Grand Council and the primarch, but over nearly 5,000 years, a considerable civic bureaucracy has emerged (or, some would say, metastasized) to fill in the gaps that Aroden didn't foresee. The individuals and organizations detailed below play integral roles in the governance of Absalom and its people.

The Primarch: The primarch chairs the High Council, allowing him to set the agenda of the city's government. As Protector of Kortos, the primarch is also the titular ruler of all the people and settlements of the greater Starstone Isle. His ceremonial role is equal to that of any head of state, and when a foreign ruler visits Absalom, they tend to view the primarch as their most worthy equal and functional counterpart. On the rare occasion when Absalom has been ruled by a despot, that despot has always sat in the primarch's throne.

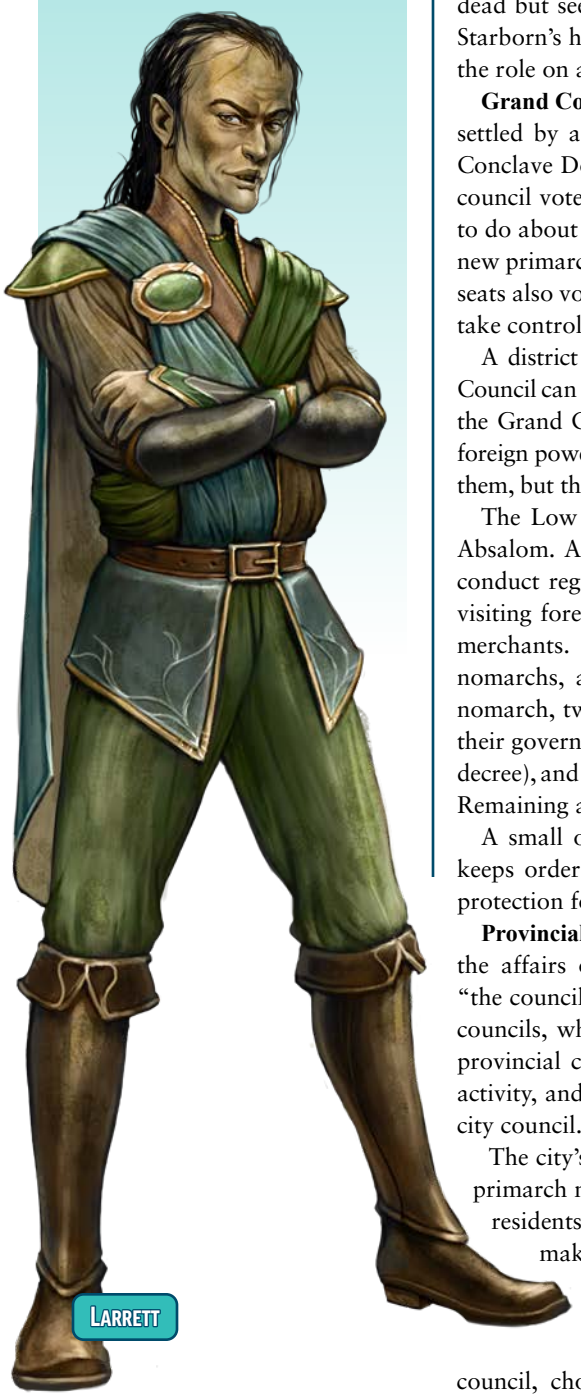
The primarch alone holds the power to convene the months-long sessions of the Grand Council. As a matter of tradition, sessions run regularly throughout the year with breaks for district elections and festivals. The populist demands of the Low Council sometimes run at odds to the practical concerns of the High Council, however, and canny primarchs have been known to delay sessions for months or even years to preserve the status quo or the political upper hand.

SEAT OF POWER

Absalom's civic bureaucracy is among the most widespread and burrowed-in governments in the Inner Sea region. Most of the city's civic institutions are centered in the Wise Quarter, surrounding the massive Conclave Dome of the Grand Council Hall. Lesser dignitaries, scribes, political petitioners, reporters, and councilors throng the streets during the day, mixing with students and intellectuals to give the district its name and reputation as a seat of the high and mighty. The High Council has no formal meeting space, but members occasionally attend full Council sessions under the dome. Local power is centered in district halls, meeting places of Absalom's provincial councils.

CORRUPTION ABOUNDS

While Absalom has never fallen, this feat is certainly not the result of impeccable leadership. Corruption has plagued Absalom from the start, and in many cases, only the heroics of specific individuals or defenders of the people have saved the city from self-inflicted wounds brought on by traitors or worse.



Larrett

The primarch appoints the High Council, which serves as a sort of advisory board in addition to the members' duties overseeing particular departments of the civic government. Primarchs also have the power to veto any political appointment to the Low Council or any of the district-based provincial councils, but doing so brings substantial political risks that range from public condemnation to assassination, so the tactic is rarely used.

Absalom's primarchs are themselves elected by the High Council and hold their position for life. Or, as in the case of Lord Gyr of House Gixx, the elusive current primarch, until they simply vanish and an acting primarch must be installed in their place. The current acting primarch, former First Guard Captain Wynsal Starborn, is eager to hand off the responsibility of rulership (and the stink of politics) to a worthy successor, but he hasn't yet managed to find one he trusts enough to hold the best interests of Absalom's people in mind. The Grand Council hasn't yet formally declared Lord Gyr dead but seems poised to do so in an upcoming session, potentially forcing Starborn's hand to endorse a successor before the people demand that he fill the role on a permanent basis.

Grand Council: By writ of Absalom's Founding Laws, matters of state are settled by a vote of the Grand Council, which meets in session under the Conclave Dome of the Grand Council Hall, in the Wise Quarter. The entire council votes on common matters (such as when to hold festivals and what to do about a poor fishing season), while Matters of Note (such as electing a new primarch) are voted on solely by members of the High Council. The high seats also vote on whether a given issue is a Matter of Note, allowing them to take control of any issue a majority of them wish to rule on.

A district council can be disbanded as a Matter of Note, and the Grand Council can override any rule of a district council by a common vote. Normally, the Grand Council deals with a few citywide matters and any dealings with foreign powers, leaving local matters to the district councils most familiar with them, but that arrangement is a preference, not a legal necessity.

The Low Council is, by and large, the active ruling body of the city of Absalom. Among their other duties, the 49 members of the Low Council conduct regular votes to establish and enact policy, receive addresses from visiting foreign monarchs, and assign the title of trademaster to prominent merchants. Seats on the Low Council are granted to all district council nomarchs, an additional dignitary of each district chosen by the district nomarch, two representatives each from Escadar and Diobel (appointed by their governments), select grand ambassadors from foreign lands (by ancient decree), and representatives of influential guilds and prominent local religions. Remaining at-large members are selected via annual public elections.

A small order of 60 armed security agents known as the Bailiff Guard keeps order in the Grand Council Hall and occasionally serves as private protection for prominent councilors and dignitaries.

Provincial Councils: For all the power that the Grand Council has over the affairs of the whole city, when most Absalom's residents talk about "the council," they usually refer to one of the city's district-based provincial councils, which handle almost all street-level affairs in the city. Absalom's provincial councils see to local needs, collect taxes, oversee district watch activity, and generally act as if each district were its own city with its own city council.

The city's Low Council appoints each district council's nomarch, and the primarch must approve nominations. As written, the law doesn't give local residents any say in who heads their council. In practice, the primarch makes sure anyone they approve is at least popular enough to avoid assassination.

District nomarchs are guaranteed a seat on the Low Council in addition to appointing one other member of the provincial council, chosen from among prominent citizens residing in the district.

Remaining district council seats are filled by annual public elections. Each provincial council has its own name, procedures, and traditions; these councils are more fully detailed in each district's section elsewhere in this book. The Grand Council can overturn any decision made by these local councils, but the day-to-day administration of the city's districts passes below the Grand Council's notice in most cases. District council meetings aren't open to the general public.

Other Government Offices: Absalom's councilors oversee the administration of the city's government, but enforcement and execution of their policies are often carried out by sprawling government agencies, some of which have existed for thousands of years. Packed with career bureaucrats and administrators, these commissions consist of agents that represent the majority of government employees in Absalom. While agency heads are appointed by the Grand Council, it's often more convenient to leave individual functionaries in place, resulting in a certain stagnation and conservatism (to say nothing of sometimes rampant corruption) that breeds resentment among frustrated citizens eager to see old and overly cumbersome traditions thrown down in favor of new and more just reforms.

Among the most influential of these agencies are the Harbormaster's Grange, which governs the import of goods into the city via the harbor; the Office of Prisons, tasked with housing Absalom's criminals; the hated Office of Taxation with its army of evaluators and collectors; the Absalom Mint that features so prominently in many of the city's most scurrilous conspiracy theories; and the city's Sanitation Commission, an organization so legendarily corrupt that cynics speak its name alongside criminal organizations like the Bloody Barbers or the Warhounders.

Larrett, sometimes called Lord Filth, is Absalom's infamous Commissioner of Sewers. With sunken eyes, a wrinkled nose, and long, greasy locks tumbling down from an unkempt and receding hairline, the twitchy administrator would look as if he had just crawled out of a septic puddle if he wasn't always bedecked in the latest and most expensive Ivy District fashions. The smirking villain is perhaps the most caricatured politician in Absalom's broadsheets, his face a veritable symbol of corruption known all across the city. The commission's efficiency, as well as Larrett's alliance with fellow Sanitation Commissioners Venlun Frusk (Streetsweepers) and Pondo Funt (Trashpickers), keep Larrett in power despite the fact that everyone seems to hate him.

Law Lords

Absalom's four law lords oversee administration of the city's sprawling judicial system. Each of the law lords is a judge in their own right, outranking any other magistrate. Unlike Absalom's other judges, the law lords are entitled to make snap judgments on the spot, doling out justice without the otherwise-required trial by jury. In practice, the law lords seldom exercise this power, which is associated with some of the worst political and legal atrocities in the city's history, such as the Reborn Rebellion of 1464 AR or the "judicial" execution of the entire High Council during the infamous Conjured Siege of 2450 AR.

The following are the current law lords.

First Law Lord: Scion Lady Neferpatra of House Ahnkamen rules on cases when local courts deadlock on issues of jurisdiction and oversees training of all magistrates in Absalom. She is the only magistrate with the power to judge foreign monarchs visiting the city, should they engage in criminal activity. She also controls the Crier's Table and trains the spellcasting detectives known as the varlokkur in the letter of the law before handing them off to the third spell lord. Lady Neferpatra is unquestionably one of the most politically powerful figures in city government.

Second Law Lord: Udiska of the Starlit Path is in charge of keeping a tight record of all laws ever passed in the city. Her vast knowledge makes her a living archive of legal history.

The High Council

Members of the High Council control major departments of the civic bureaucracy and possess enormous political power and influence in the city. Their ranks include the following.

Primarch
Lord Gyr of Gixx (missing)

Acting Primarch
Captain Wynsal Starborn

Captain of the Starwatch
Asilia of Gyr

Chancellor of the Exchequer
Scion Lord Kerkis of House Damaq

Chief Sanitation Commissioner
Larrett

Commander Militant
Chun Hye-Seung

Diplomatic Minister
Ferridan Severus

First Lady of Laws
Scion Lady Neferpatra of House Ahnkamen

First Lord of Spells
Lord Gyr of Gixx (missing)

Acting First Lord of Spells
Garethal Brighteyes

Harbormaster
Scion Lady Adrielle Nephrathep of House Fyrlenn

Kortos Viceroy
Jaress Molinarro

Sea Lord
Lerefys of House Kethlin

Trade Minister
Grenduul Fleng

A VAST BUREAUCRACY

With so many ancient civic organizations and a structure that has evolved over thousands of years, it takes a skilled expert to effectively navigate the tangled mess of Absalom's civic government. A seemingly endless array of lesser functionaries, aides, and minor civic authorities assure that almost nothing is easy when it comes to the city's government. Just like how the street guides flock to the gates and Docks, the Wise Quarter throngs with would-be helpers and experts eager to assist citizens in working the system. Many are just as treacherous as the worst Dock District criminals, but all ask a significantly higher price.

Low Council Clerk

Third Law Lord: Diasco Vade's responsibilities include administering the city's courts and legal system. He works in concert with the High Council's Kortos viceroy to oversee the legal affairs of provincial courts in the island's outlying settlements.

Fourth Law Lord: Lord Guirden of House Gixx is charged with ensuring the integrity of Absalom's judiciary.

Spell Lords

The city's Circle of Spell Lords advises the primarch and the High Council on matters of eldritch import and govern the use of magic in the city, including orchestrating Absalom's magical defense, regulating magic academies, and placing limits on experimentation.

In addition to providing a broad definition of the number and duties of the spell lords, Aroden's Founding Laws prescribe that the spell lords conduct a mysterious ritual of ancient Azlanti civic magic known as the Rite of Four Architects at the Spring and Fall Equinoxes and the Summer and Winter Solstices. For the ritual, each spell lord dons a mask and ceremonial attire associated with one of four Ancient Azlanti deities, Aroden (god of the destiny of humanity); Abadar (god of cities, commerce, and law); Amaznen (god of magic); and Acavna (goddess of the moon). The mysterious ritual, among the city's most closely guarded secrets, is said to have been preserved from a lost "secret chapter" of Abadar's *Manual of City Building* from before the fall of Azlant and preserved by the esoteric Knights of the Aeon Star. The spell lords—and the whole of the Grand Council—see to conducting this decree of Aroden with a diligence that suggests that failing the ritual's repetition is at least as dangerous to the city as conducting it is beneficial.

The following are the current spell lords.

First Spell Lord: Garethal Brighteyes serves as personal magician of the Primarch, arcane hand of the High Council, and conclave master of the Circle of Spell Lords.

Second Spell Lord: Lady Darchana of House Madinani is the archdean of the Arcanamirium. As second spell lord, she oversees magical education throughout Absalom.

Third Spell Lord: Utgar of Gyr holds the title of first vigilant of the varlokkur. His primary responsibility as spell lord is to manages the magical defense of the city.

Fourth Spell Lord: Muar Gauthfallow, Keeper of Secrets is in charge of protecting Absalom's magical secrets and eliminating items, enemies, and philosophies that pose serious magical threats to the city.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

As the central hub of international trade across the Inner Sea, Absalom's political interests extend far beyond the shores of the Isle of Kortos. Its strongest historical ties are to Taldor, Qadira, and Osirion; many of the city's oldest noble families trace their heritages to those nations, and several still maintain allegiances toward their ancient homelands (some displayed more publicly than others). Trade and more recent historical developments brought additional contact with Katapesh and Thuvia, and revolutions established new (or newly aligned) markets in Cheliax and Andoran.

The High Council's Diplomatic Minister, Ferridan Severus, controls a cadre of envoys and ambassadors embedded in the capital cities of Absalom's strongest trade and diplomatic partners. The energetic young emissary joined the council following Lord Gyr's departure. He favors a muscular negotiation stance that seeks to build alliances through support of common values as well as the more pragmatic trade-at-all-costs approach taken by the previous administration. These philosophies have resulted in predictable conflicts

with old partners in Cheliax, only partially offset by supportive gestures from Andoran, as well as increased tension with international slavers who previously operated freely in the city's harbor and markets.

Ever since the Whispering Tyrant led a march on the city and destroyed the nation of Lastwall, many of Absalom's most urgent diplomatic efforts have focused on spreading word of the resurgent lich lord's activities on the Isle of Terror, with the goal of building an alliance to prevent the further spread of his undead armies. The Tyrant stood on the threshold of the city in a failed surprise bid for the *Starstone* only a few months ago, and the wisest strategists of Absalom assume he'll return one day soon with an undead army at his back. At present, most potential allies are too worried about defending their own lands to consider a greater alliance, but if the time doesn't come soon, it might be too late, and the diplomatic efforts of Absalom will have been in vain.

LAW AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

The Founding Laws broadly define the rights of Absalom's citizens, outlining a system of trial by jury for those accused of a crime. Under the learned jurisprudence of the four law lords, Absalom's court and criminal justice system touches every district in the city and, in theory, views every citizen as equal, regardless of social status or political influence. Although a fair measure of corruption exists throughout, justice in Absalom is usually righteous on average, even if you can't afford to bribe a juror.

Each district has its own court and legal magistrates, who handle crimes committed within the district (usually investigated by the local district watch). These courts' jurisdiction is obvious when those involved in a crime are from the same district in which the crime took place (or are foreigners, since a foreigner has no right to a home district). However, in cases that involve citizens from multiple districts or a crime that took place in more than one district (such as a running battle, or goods stolen from one district and moved to a storage location in another), the councils of the involved districts must decide which courthouse and magistrates will rule on the case. This decision is normally a minor matter, with preference being to assign victims of crimes their home district courthouse and to give overflow from busier jurisdictions to courthouses with low caseloads, but sometimes politics or personal favors can make the decision more contentious. If a vote of all councilors on all the local councils doesn't give a clear majority, the question is elevated to the first lady of laws, who also oversees the training of all magistrates in Absalom.

On the rare occasion when a crime is deemed to have been committed against all of Absalom, the four law lords meet as both magistrates and jurors, hearing the case in public under the Conclave Dome of the Grand Council Hall. These events take place in the interregnums between active sessions of the Grand Council and often draw more spectators than even the most important legislative sessions. The Council's Bailiff Guard is occasionally hard-pressed to keep hordes of gawkers away, and the highest-profile trials of this nature have the atmosphere of Irorium bloodsport, complete with leering, drunken spectators; crude harangues; and even food vendors working the rowdy crowd.

District courthouse trials are naturally much more sedate affairs. Though nominally open to the public, most cases involve matters of such mundanity that their public seats draw more impoverished people looking for a warm place to sit than genuinely interested observers. Absalom's broadsheet press dutifully dispatches reporters to trawl the courts looking for salacious matters involving sex, scandal, and violence—always topics of great interest to the city's inhabitants. Breathless, lurid reports of these local trials sometimes bring crowds just as raucous as those under the Conclave Dome.

AGENTS OF EDGEWATCH

The Precipice Quarter's Edgewatch is Absalom's newest law enforcement organization. The story of this group's foundation is explored in the Agents of Edgewatch Adventure Path.

City Watch Captain

THE LOW COUNCIL

The Low Council counts in their number some of the most popular citizens of Absalom, including guild masters, members of the nobility, retired performers and gladiators, and other prominent politicians. Two representatives from each of Absalom's districts account for roughly half of the 49 councilors, while several seats dedicated to various guilds and religions and a handful of "at-large" positions fill out the rest. The following is an incomplete list of some of Absalom's most prominent low counselors.

Ascendant Court: Nomarch Sindoi of the Thousand Poems, Vroclaw of Brevoy
Azlanti Keep: Captain Wynsal Starborn (position currently empty)
Coins: Nomarch Lady Myleena of Arnsen, Lady Nymara of House Damaq
Docks: Nomarch Lord Archych of House Dureanz, Darabelle Fairwind
Eastgate: Nomarch Lord Ayunga of House Akkesh, Haimon Hueff of House Mercerene
Foreign Quarter: Nomarch Torman Iates, Lord Omrys of House Ahnkamen
Ivy District: Nomarch Alain Always, Fronsac Shimm
Petal District: Nomarch Lord Urkon of House Ormuz, Brythen Blood
Puddles: Nomarch Haigen Topkick, Lady Seichya of House Tevineg
Westgate: Nomarch Lady Seleenae of House Damaq, Scion Lord Rogren Sphairo of House Menhemes
Wise Quarter: Nomarch Dhauken Tor, Brivit Nae of Irrisen
Diobel: Nomarch Grint Basatrel, Bothuk Thraske
Escadar: Evessian Deris, Captain Chugmuzz the Surly
Guildmasters: Aarnock Xanthiss, Engleton Embrey, Hans the Northman, Jembar Dustyshankle, Parsin Guile
At Large: Lady Darchana of House Madinani, Lady Evigail of House Wycomb

District Watches: Just as each of Absalom's districts has its own courthouse with its particular character and biases, so does each have its independent order of city watch officers tasked with policing the district and protecting its citizens. District watches report to their respective district council, and their jurisdiction is limited to the geographic bounds of their district. This limitation naturally results in frustrating bureaucratic conflicts when a crime tracks from one district to another, a fact exploited by Absalom's canniest criminals.

Each district watch is flavored by the culture and people it's sworn to protect. Each watch has a distinct name, like the Graycloaks of the Ascendant Court or the Petal District's Lotus Guard. Officers often accentuate their common uniforms with local colors or symbols, such as the hip-high wader boots of the Muckruckers in the Puddles or the overseas flourishes common to members of the Foreign Quarter's Sleepless Suns.

Further details regarding each district's watch appear in their respective district sections later in this book.

The Starwatch: The Starwatch claims to be the original city watch of ancient Absalom, before the town had grown large enough to split off into districts. Today, its jurisdiction covers the whole city, focusing on crimes that touch multiple districts or that directly involve the interests of the Grand Council. They also inspect abuses of power by other guards, assist against sieges, and patrol the Flotsam Graveyard and Absalom's outskirts communities of Dawnfoot, Shoreline, Copperwood, and Westerhold.

By an ancient pact with the First Guard, the Starwatch houses itself outside the city walls, at the southeast tip of Absalom's Harbor in Starwatch Keep. Absalom's long history contains several eras during which the Starwatch became dangerously embroiled in internal conflicts. They can't enter the city if the First Guard closes the Postern Gate to them, which means that the Starwatch must keep the city's interest paramount over their own ambition or prepare to siege the city from without, just like its other enemies. For as long as anyone can remember, the Starwatch has been considered in large part worthy of the enormous duty placed upon it by the Founding Laws. An average citizen of Absalom would likely consider a member of the Starwatch more incorruptible and honorable than an officer of their local district watch, a reputation current Starwatch Captain and member of the High Council Asilia of Gyr has worked diligently to improve and maintain.

Agents of the Starwatch wear light armor with a white tabard and blue cape featuring their symbol: a five-pointed star surrounded by a nimbus of brilliant fire.

Varlokkur: The spellcasting judges and ministers known as varlokkur, an ancient Azlanti word roughly meaning "pure of influence," keep magic from getting out of control within the city and hear any case that has a major magical component. These cases can involve a known spellcaster or revolve around a magic item; such cases might also arise when a local court finds reasonable cause to suspect charms or illusions were used during a crime. Varlokkur answer directly to the third spell lord but are trained by the first lady of laws. As a rule, they turn over all cursed items, insidious magical objects, or forbidden lore to the fourth spell lord for deep storage or destruction.

For most of the year, varlokkur act as magical detectives, both to aid in the investigation of crimes with a magic element and to ensure magic isn't used to alter the outcome of high-profile trials. They're sometimes brought in to scour a crime scene with divinations, gathering additional evidence and providing critical leads to district watch or Starwatch investigators. Most of Absalom's law enforcers appreciate what the varlokkur bring to a case, even if they find the spellcasting detectives occasionally off-putting due to their sometimes confoundingly complex rituals and propensity toward holding their secrets close.

Absalom's complex legal code outlaws several spells, and casting them is an illegal act. These include spells that do nothing but make a target harder to detect (including spells like *misdirection* that conceal facts about the true nature of a target, but not spells that conceal thoughts or desires). These spells have been determined to have no legitimate defensive purpose and, in the eye of the law, can only be used to commit crimes. On the other hand, spells which make a target think well of the caster (such as *charm person*) are seen as better defensive options than those that deal damage and are generally treated in the same way as weapons—legal to use in self-defense or for the general good of the city. (There are exceptions to the legality of charm spells, including love-inducing spells, which are treated as criminal acts if used on unwilling targets.) Under Absalom law, all spells are considered legal until specifically outlawed, though a varlokkur might decide a new or variant spell is "essentially identical" to an already outlawed spell. The legality of specific spells is announced at a special public ceremony called the Spell Fete once a year.

CRIME

A glimpse at the lurid cover illustrations on the broadsheets of Scrivener's Square might give the impression that crime in Absalom is worst in its poorest regions—the squalid slums of the Coins in Mudhaven or Misery Row, the oldest and most crowded neighborhoods of the Foreign Quarter, or the largely abandoned Puddles or Precipice Quarter. While those parts of town are indeed highly dangerous (especially after dark), crime abounds everywhere in Absalom, particularly in its wealthier districts where the potential for profit is so much greater.

Absalom's markets offer opportunity for unscrupulous thieves as well as honest merchants. Just as artisans long ago discovered that they were more powerful when bound to a common union, so have the city's criminals learned to band together for common protection and increased profit. The term "thieves' guild" applies broadly to any collection of scofflaws united under a common charter. The city's complex legal code differentiates between thieves' guilds and common gangs by ascribing a more regional character to the latter. A gang often puts territory over business, focusing on a single or a small number of criminal enterprises, such as protection or drug-running. Guilds, in contrast, are unions of several schemes and methods, often built from gangs but usually with a far wider focus and far more ambitious financial goals.

Some of Absalom's most prominent thieves' guilds and gangs include the following.

Bloody Barbers: The city's largest criminal union brings some of Absalom's most wretched thieves, assassins, poisoners, knee-breakers, spies, smugglers, flesh-peddlers, and gamblers together through common cause. The guild operates out of the Coins under the guise of a cover organization called the Band of the Palm, an ostensibly legitimate union of chimney sweeps, coal-carriers, wheelwrights, limners, bathhouse attendants, and a cadre of traveling junk dealers, the latter of whom serve as able fences for stolen merchandise. Nearly every barber in the city pays a fee to the Bloody Barbers. Barbershops owned outright by the guild serve as safe houses, lending houses, and contact points for those attempting to connect with the guild. Members can order illegal items from these shops, for the right price. The Barbers never undertake criminal activity in the Ascendant Court, but their operations touch nearly every other corner of Absalom.

Dr. Bensi Skule, the guild's leader since Chelaxian diabolist and former leader Anken the Cutter retired, keeps a hidden laboratory below the Band of the Palm's headquarters, where he sometimes holds small meetings for the Barbers' leadership. The Barbers will take on almost any job if it pays enough, but those who cross the organization are liable to end up with a slit throat—the Barber's signature "crimson shave."

JURISDICTION

Absalom's law enforcers generally have a reputation for competence and civic service, but rivalries between the various branches often result in delayed justice or even no justice at all. A smart criminal knows to lead pursuers across district borders, through the harbor, along the walls, and so on.

Starwatch Officer

GANG RIVALRIES

Gang rivalries in Absalom are complex and constantly evolving. To make things even more complicated, some gangs foster deliberate misinformation to confuse their true enemies, to gain advantages, or to lure foes into a false sense of security. Of course, there are many examples of two members of supposedly clashing groups forming friendships or even romances, in blatant mockery of tradition. Keeping track of who's at war with whom is a key part of staying up to date and avoiding potentially fatal gaffes. A character who attempts to Gather Information from rival gangs might find themselves needing to use Deception as well to obscure the fact that they spent time with an enemy of their current underworld contact.

The Brattlebunch: Founded four years ago by the charismatic flower leshy Tumult Flower Flourish, the Brattlebunch is a chaotic gang of leshy troublemakers and pranksters that has swiftly developed a reputation among Absalomians as one of the most amusing or annoying additions to the city's criminal landscape, depending on one's sense of humor.

The Brattlebunch focuses most of its attention on disrupting the business and activities of those whose trades and actions place them in opposition to the natural world. Greedy slaughterhouse owners, cruel stable masters, and especially the employees of the Absalom Menagerie zoo are frequent targets of the gang's ire. These actions often see the Brattlebunch backed up by members of Eastgate's Circle of Stones cult. At the cult's direction, Tumult Flower Flourish uses the gang as the eyes, ears, and hands of the powerful dryad queen Iolanthe, who lives at the heart of the enormous immortal tree known as the Grand Holt. Leshys visiting Absalom often receive an invitation to join their brothers and sisters in the gang—an appealing prospect to nature spirits who find themselves surrounded by alien urbanity.

Crowsworn: Absalom's thriving Ivy District provides some of the city's richest marks, as nobles leave the protection of their manor homes (and often the safety of armed guards) to take in a show, engage in a surreptitious assignation, or sample some of the most decadent food, drink, and entertainment available in the Inner Sea region. Foremost among the Ivy District criminal guilds, the Crowsworn specializes in smuggling and information, particularly that of a scandalous nature. The Crowsworn makes its lair in a series of ancient tunnels below a glassblowing shop called Crystal Creations. These tunnels run under the city wall to exits hidden in several buildings in the outskirts village of Westerhold, where most members of the guild live, largely outside the attention of the thinly spread Starwatch. Some of the Crowsworn's most lucrative business involves smuggling people into or out of the city through these tunnels.

Dockside Dozen: So named for the 12 Andoran orphans who founded the gang some time back, the Dockside Dozen today comprises nearly a hundred eager youths whose shenanigans only rarely crest into minor crimes. For the most part, the gang seems more interested in supporting other orphans and down-on-their-luck folks.

Dod's Filchers: Nearly three dozen destitute children from a wide variety of ancestries make up Dod's Filchers, based in the Crystal Palace in the Coins. Haphazardly managed by the halfling twins Jada and Hamlin Moore, the gang specializes in pickpocketing and confidence schemes.

Family Dogs: A tight-knit group specializing in racketeering, these toughs refer to their ramshackle hangout on the southwestern edge of the Coins as the Kennel. The guild's leader, a lanky fetchling named Dras, has been trying to expand the gang and explore new opportunities in smuggling, kidnapping, and petite larceny.

The Forthright: The term "honor among thieves" means little to the murderous villains of the Bloody Barbers, but not every criminal in Absalom is so cold-hearted. Based in a run-down, half-ruined church in a Coins district slum called the Temple of Lost Coins, the Forthright operate as a legal operation so long as they pay taxes on their profits and never deny their involvement in any crime of trespass or theft. Stolen goods must be returned, and a small fee paid to the victim and Token Guard, and everyone goes on their way. Local constables appreciate the professionalism of the Forthright and give this group's agents gentler treatment than those of other criminal organizations. The Forthright are thus a beacon to those who steal out of a sense of justice or simply for the fun of it, making them something of local folk heroes even as they (honorably) rob their admirers for all they're worth.

Gylou Sisters: This all-woman gang of criminals is based in the Docks at the Devil's Own Shipyard. Their presence there is something of an open secret, as is the fact that the shipyard's proprietor utilizes their varied talents

and brutal expertise for all manner of illicit activities. The fact that this gang adopted the name of a particularly notorious diabolic monster has fueled rumors about their resources, motivation, and leadership.

Nailfists: Originally a ragtag gang of thugs, the Nailfists are now a formidable force based in the Darkgate in the Precipice Quarter. Their headquarters guards an entrance to the Darklands, where they serve a dual purpose of keeping creatures from boiling up from below into the city while also extorting adventurers who seek to use the Darkgate as an access point to the caverns below.

Puddlejumpers: This cruel Coins District gang of halfling knifers owes its allegiance to "retired" slaver Pardu Pildapush, who freed each from slavery in exchange for lifelong loyalty. Known for their cruelty and belligerent bullying of other halflings living in the slums near Misery Row, Pildapush's Puddlejumpers are still very much engaged in the slavery business, despite their reclusive master's protestation that he threw in the towel after Wynsal Starborn recently abolished the trade. Pildapush funnels captured enemies and uncooperative local halflings through undercity channels to Diobel or the depths of the Darklands, enjoying a tidy profit while proclaiming that the government's intervention in his "peaceful" trade has consigned him to a life of penury.

Sanguine Beasts: This group of violent extortionists mostly prey on the smaller shopkeepers of the Coins and aren't above breaking a kneecap or throwing a reluctant business owner through a wall. The Sanguine Beasts go through frequent changes in leadership as guild members stab or poison their way into positions of power. The volatile gang lacks a permanent headquarters, but members frequent the dive bars on the western side of the district.

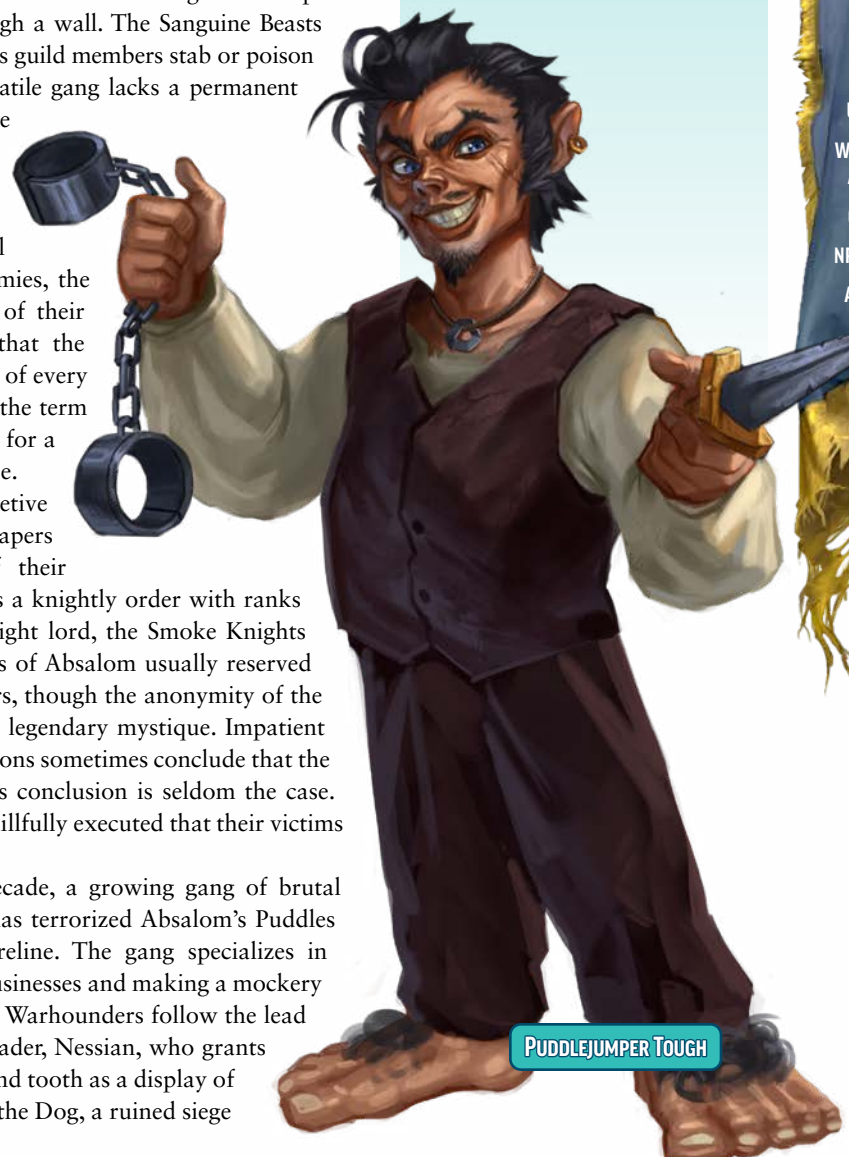
The Silkenhand: This Ivy District gang specializes in narcotics and sex work, promising absolute discretion in all of their dealings (in contrast to their enemies, the Crowsworn, who clearly sell the secrets of their clients to the highest bidder). It's said that the Silkenhand places an agent in the audience of every Ivy District theatrical production, making the term "Silkenhand Show" ubiquitous actor slang for a performance before a near-empty playhouse.

Smoke Knights: Absalom's most secretive thieves guild deals only in high-stakes capers and specializes in leaving no trace of their audacious criminal activities. Organized as a knightly order with ranks like knight-errant, knight captain, and knight lord, the Smoke Knights inhabit a space in the public consciousness of Absalom usually reserved for scion lords, famous actors, or gladiators, though the anonymity of the Smoke Knights grants them an even more legendary mystique. Impatient constables frustrated by fruitless investigations sometimes conclude that the Smoke Knights must be to blame, but this conclusion is seldom the case. Most of the Smoke Knights' heists are so skillfully executed that their victims never suspect any wrongdoing occurred.

Warhounders: For much of the last decade, a growing gang of brutal tattooed toughs called the Warhounders has terrorized Absalom's Puddles district and the outskirts village of Shoreline. The gang specializes in running protection rackets on struggling businesses and making a mockery of the local Muckrucker constabulary. The Warhounders follow the lead of their young but ruthless and cunning leader, Nessian, who grants his most effective brutes a magical hell hound tooth as a display of their loyalty. They dwell in the Pyramid of the Dog, a ruined siege castle just outside the city walls.

THIEVES' GUILD MEMBERSHIP

There are many illegal groups for criminals to join in Absalom, some of which might have goals and plans that can coincide with those of an adventuring party. Likewise, it isn't unheard of for members of a guild to moonlight as an adventurer. Typically, it's only a matter of time before the needs of the guild put such members at odds with the needs of their group, but until then, as long as a PC guild member keeps the proper secrets, pays the correct dues, and stays on the right side of the right people, things should be fine... until they aren't.



Puddlejumper Tough

GUIDES AND TOUTS

Visitors can engage the services of a guide (to aid in navigating the city at 5 sp a day) or a tout (if the visitor is looking for work for a per-recommendation payment of 1 sp). A guide can be asked to Recall Knowledge about Absalom's geography, while a tout can direct a PC to an opportunity to Earn Income by attempting a Gather Information check. Both have a +6 bonus on their respective skill checks, with the DC set by the GM.

Donnica Mycelene La-Tep

CULTURE AND CUSTOMS

As one of the world's major crossroads and oldest continuously inhabited cities, Absalom is a nexus of culture—a fact its citizens rarely let visitors forget. Yet for all its inhabitants' braggadocio, Absalom truly is a product of countless cultures and their historical idiosyncrasies. Its four-millennia-old adaptations of Vudran customs intersect with barely-familiar evolutions of three-millennia-old Osirian greeting rituals, mixed with two-millennia-old elven recipes and millennium-old superstitions from the Shining Crusade. Yet from all its borrowed elements, Absalom has cobbled together a culture all its own, at once uncannily familiar and utterly unique.

THE ABSALOM MINDSET

Absalom thrives on ideas—new ideas, foreign ideas, and lucrative ideas alike. With strange cultural intersections woven deep into its history and a cathedral capable of transforming anyone (and their ideas) into the divine, Absalomians often believe that dedication and devotion to any ideal, no matter how abhorrent, has intrinsic value. As a result, even beliefs and cultures strictly banned elsewhere can find an open-minded audience and, with proper passion, the most pious philanthropists and heinous demagogues can gather a curious audience within minutes. As patient as Absalomians seem with strange notions, however, they're vocal in their disapproval after having given a bad idea due consideration. Thus, the notion that citizens condone prejudice and tolerate violence largely stems from observers who never stuck around long enough to watch a sympathetic crowd turn on a bigoted loudmouth.

Residents crave new experiences, which most can satiate by sampling unfamiliar foods or learning any of the city's myriad languages. Some even seek out unpleasant experiences, reveling in the novelty of the discomfort and the knowledge that they'll have an exciting story to share about the affair afterward. This mindset provides fertile ground for fads of all types—clothing, food, cults, impractical dueling styles, political ideologies, and more—most of which flare up and die out within a few weeks of ravenous consumption, preserved only in the cultural memory as snide jokes and worthless collections. On the other hand, those cultural movements and styles with true staying power can survive for years, leading many Absalomians to insist they're the best crucible for innovations. Fortunately, Absalom's laws and citizens are fairly forgiving of strange customs and actions, sustaining the city's role as a testing ground.

No matter how inventive the craftspeople, trade sustains the city. The merchants know it, and anyone from wholesalers to street peddlers consider themselves superior to crafters (who occupy the social ladder's middle) and laborers (who rank near its base). Money and political power influence these assessments, yet it's not uncommon to see a fearless fruit vendor dress down an aristocrat. This soft power turns merchants into minor powerbrokers, serving as social patrons to their regular customers to make connections throughout the city.

For all their cosmopolitanism, Absalomians exhibit a short-sightedness regarding other nations' traditions and relative importance. After all, as longtime citizens often posit, Absalom is the City at the Center

of the World, where all other cultures vie for a place. Particularly after its disastrous Virtue Corps in centuries past, Absalom prefers to let the rest of the world come to it.

A DAY IN THE LIFE

For some, daily life begins early in Absalom, with fishers, bakers, farmers, and dock workers rising well before the sky brightens. Dawn is a quiet time—at least until the sun's half up, when a joyous horn from Sarenrae's Temple of the Shining Star inevitably sounds, accompanied by moans from the city's late-night revelers. Until then, laborers keep their conversations soft on their way to work. Fishing boats set out before first light, ships begin formally unloading at dawn, and field hands have already broken earth and begun caring for animals before any neighbors stir.

Restaurants rarely open this early; instead, enterprising vendors set up charcoal braziers along the streets, grilling traditional staples like flatbread, barbecued smelt, spiced finger potatoes, and sausages. These foods rarely last an hour past dawn, after which the street vendors pack up to begin other jobs throughout the city. By that point most other citizens have awoken and seek lighter fare like tea, rice porridge, buns, sour pancakes with lentil stew, beer, or fresh fruit. Much of this is prepared in homes, though by this hour many restaurants have opened for business as well.

Once the city's workforce is in full swing—usually within an hour after dawn, contrary to its unfair reputation for indolence—Absalom bustles with activity, with crowded streets, news criers, jostling markets, noisy smithies, and the calls of myriad draft animals. Formally, trade commences in the Coins at dawn, though produce merchants are the most punctual, with other traders trickling in throughout the early morning. Those plying the Avenue of the Hopeful are more aggressive, setting up shop before dawn to catch the first pilgrims.

Several hours before noon, street performers emerge in force. The Street Performers and Actors' Guild spreads accredited entertainers throughout the city, limiting the degree to which any guild members interfere with each

FAMOUS FESTIVALS

Absalom's diverse population and long history generate a bewildering cadence of public fairs, parades, religious festivals, and similar cultural events that temporarily transform huge sections of the city, sometimes occurring on the very same day. Naturally, adventurers often find themselves in the middle of such affairs, whether mingling with a dangerous cult, draping themselves in ceremonial attire as part of a disguise, or letting loose and partying with the city's other celebrants. A colorful parade is a great way to break up an otherwise ordinary chase scene, and a popular festival is sure to bring thousands of visitors to Absalom on a regular basis–potential friends and foes among them!

SMELLS OF THE CITY

The sheer size of Absalom is impossible to ignore when it comes to sight and sound, but the myriad scents awaiting discovery in the city can be equally overwhelming. Indeed, there are those who've lived long in Absalom who can identify their location in the city by scent alone. The general melange of odors varies widely between districts, be it the delicate crisp floral scents that abound in the Petals, the brine and filth stink of the Puddles, the scent of fish and sea-soaked wood of the Docks, or the medley of aromas rising from hundreds of competing recipes of street food in any of the city's sprawling markets. There are even so-called "scent peddlers" who claim to have bottled specific aromas for sale to those who wish to "carry a bit of Absalom in a pocket," but these are mostly con-artists and swindlers.

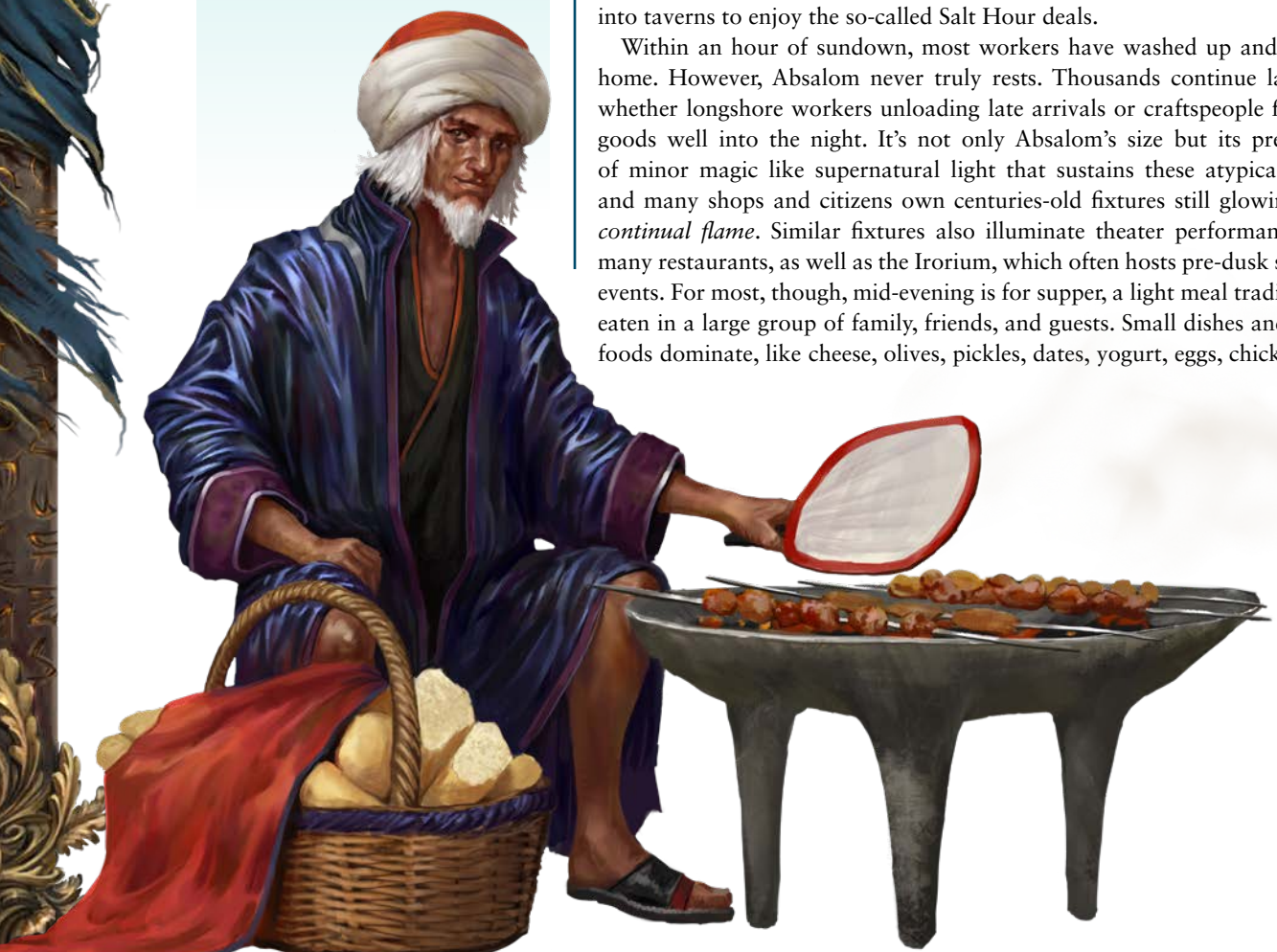
other's acts while also dispatching enforcers to chase unlicensed musicians from the guild's turf. This provides the performers the perfect vantages to coax coins from passersby, in particular the tourists who regularly assemble for guided walks through historic neighborhoods, tours of the museums, and site-seeing expeditions bound for anywhere from the Starstone Cathedral to the Cairnlands' most distant siege castles. Tourists who miss these expeditions often filter into the open-air plays operating throughout the city in the late morning, which offer admission for mere coppers.

Noon is an especially raucous hour. By then, public debates both philosophical and thaumaturgical have reached their zenith on sunny days. These compete with the numerous faiths that sound instruments, parade sacred relics, or light celebratory blazes at midday, in turn vying for attention from the sundry parades that crisscross the city throughout the year.

Come mid-afternoon, the city visibly settles, with citizens seeking out both shelter and the region's traditional late lunch. This meal is the largest for most, consisting of heavy, calorie-rich foods such as roasted goat, leavened bread with honey, hard cheese, barley stews, casseroles, pastas, and savory pies. Absalom especially prides itself on seasonal seafood feasts, with restaurants serving wide plates loaded with calamari, whole squid stuffed with lemons, scallops, fish cakes, and stibbins (fried meatballs made of minced cockles, leeks, and breadcrumbs).

Those engaged in physical labor customarily spend the better half of an hour resting in the post-lunch shade, and most other Absalomians enjoy similar respites out of opportunistic solidarity. Once again, entertainers spring into action, competing for lucrative posts in the packed restaurants or setting up in parks to serenade dozing audiences. Barbers and bathhouses see their heaviest traffic then as well, with the afternoon siesta being an ideal time for workers to convene and socialize while cleaning up. For the predawn workers, this period often signals the end of their workday, and fishers pile into taverns to enjoy the so-called Salt Hour deals.

Within an hour of sundown, most workers have washed up and headed home. However, Absalom never truly rests. Thousands continue laboring, whether longshore workers unloading late arrivals or craftspeople finishing goods well into the night. It's not only Absalom's size but its prevalence of minor magic like supernatural light that sustains these atypical hours, and many shops and citizens own centuries-old fixtures still glowing from *continual flame*. Similar fixtures also illuminate theater performances and many restaurants, as well as the Irorium, which often hosts pre-dusk sporting events. For most, though, mid-evening is for supper, a light meal traditionally eaten in a large group of family, friends, and guests. Small dishes and spiced foods dominate, like cheese, olives, pickles, dates, yogurt, eggs, chicken with



chilis, honey, and hummus, though supper's also a favorite meal to intersperse seasonal favorites like fresh fruit, green salads, and shore candy (a fish salad served in a clam shell). During the summer, restaurants commonly set up large canopied extensions into the streets during supper hours, creating breezy outdoor spaces, and hire performers to draw in crowds.

Once the sky is dark, the nightlife has already begun. Year-round, people pack the theaters, wandering up to the Ivy District for the best shows. Whereas quieter pubs cultivate regular patrons, wilder establishments compete with one another with group discounts, drink packages, and even risqué performances. During the winter, these beer halls are packed with patrons escaping the chill, and during the summer, nobles and city officials regularly cordon off whole plazas to host dance events and concerts, laying down thick mats where cobblestones would make too uneven a surface for revelers. In the lead-up to winter and Cayden Cailean's Ascendance Day, though, pub crawls become increasingly common—and larger as the air cools. Carousing worshippers huddle together for warmth, and the later sunrises enable longer reveling.

Yet even as the inebriated and overworked stagger home, Absalom is alive with activity. Thieves' guilds like the Bloody Barbers busily smuggle goods and watch for opportune victims to mug, all the while evading the city's watch. Numerous faiths also emerge, ranging from Norgorber's acolytes plotting whispered schemes, to Urgathoa's priests carting off spoiled food for their rituals, to the Groetan procession of Midnight Pilgrims who convene near the Starstone Cathedral's moat to gaze within and contemplate doom. These groups languidly retreat as the first sun's rays appear, heralding a new day.

A YEAR IN THE LIFE

Thanks to its moderate coastal climate, Absalom enjoys fairly mild winters, with ambient temperatures rarely reaching freezing levels. However, high pressure zones over the massive Kortos Mounts spawn the Gozfrost katabatic winds that ravage Absalom unpredictably between Kuthona and Calistril, sending lightly garbed inhabitants scurrying for shelter. Even these winds don't stop farmers from sowing winter crops like carrots, lettuce, scallions, and fava beans, and the garlic harvest festival on 28 Calistril informally marks the beginning of spring with pungent street food and folk divinations performed with still-green stalks. Convoys of revelers make their way to Diobel to the west mere weeks later for its Kortos Spring Fair. There, not only do youths compete in pearl-diving displays, but the fresh sea breezes provide Kortos a reprieve from the two waves of spring pollen: the first from alpine conifers, carried by deflected winds and showered over Absalom to create sickly golden stains, and days later the coastal hatchgrass pollen, which inflicts citywide sneezing fits.

Yet relief arrives within weeks. The warming Kortos Mounts draw in the Gozhome winds, pulling moisture from the Inner Sea and showering the Starstone Isle almost daily for the better part of two months. Residents work through or around these storms, either donning oilcloth capes to shed the warm water, ducking under cover, or just suffering the damp clothes. The rain facilitates yet more festivals, with the heaviest downpour often coinciding with—and providing cover for—Norgorberites' celebration of their patron's Ascendance Day on 2 Desnus. The Ivy District hosts Eminence, its annual presentation of at least a hundred plays performed across sheltered venues small and large. The Vudran festival of colors, Yolarati, begins early in the morning in Absalom, with the afternoon rains washing the myriad street chalk, body paint, and scattered pigments into rivers of color that flow into the petal-strewn harbor. The strong winds even fuel the kite enthusiasts' latest creations, with the legendary Gala of Sails kite battles exploiting these gusts on 27 Gozran. Seasonal crops like peas, apricots, eggplants, and broccoli appear in many dishes, and the Vudran merchants and their spices arrive in force before departing to exploit the Obari Crossing's westerly summer gales on their return voyage.

HOTSPURS

While mercenaries and adventurers play a key role in Absalom's defense when they're hired to help out, some of those who think of themselves as defenders of Absalom cause more problems than they solve. Of particular note here are those who self-identify as "hotspurs." In many ways, these swashbuckling troublemakers are akin to an inversion of the Firebrands (particularly in their self-centered outlooks, lack of compassion, and awful fashion choices). They claim to stand for the people against the oppression of the government, but in fact are much closer to true anarchists than anything approaching a freedom fighter. Certainly, the lack of any centralized leadership makes each individual hotspur gang a different potential problem for the city's defenders, but with the right type of coaxing, subtle manipulation, and monetary encouragement, hotspur gangs can be used for the greater good—at least, in the short term.

AROden on Stage

Aroden is traditionally seen as an exceptionally beautiful figure. Originally, women were chosen to depict the deity on stage due to the belief that only a woman could properly portray Aroden's divine grace and fine features. Over the centuries, this belief became a deep-rooted tradition, with most productions believing it bad luck to have anyone but a woman play Aroden.

By early Sarenith, the storms abate, driven back by the dry, northwesterly Porthmos Winds that propel the Southern Tack trade route. Absalom becomes a clear-skied paradise that experiences little precipitation, and the beautiful weather draws out more than just its residents. Tourists from throughout the Inner Sea and northerly climes voyage to revel in the city's summers. Citizens take this opportunity to clean out their homes and, because Absalom reserves most market stalls on the second Sunday of Sarenith so that citizens can sell their own possessions without license, many of the Kortos paraphernalia visitors buy in the early travel season are in fact unwanted (though sometimes unexpectedly valuable) heirlooms. No matter the occasion, the incoming groundnut harvest makes its way to street vendors citywide, each selling roasted peanuts in cones made from rolled leaves.

It's no coincidence that most of Absalom's biggest festivals occur in summer. The ostentatious Passion of the First Siege on 1 Arodus sees huge parades with revelers either bedecked in the regalia of Absalom's original guards or costumed as fearsome minotaurs, harpies, and centaurs with masks, wings, and hairy legs crafted from papier-mâché or brightly dyed sisal. The processions converge on the Irorium, where actors playing Aroden and Voradni Voon lead their mock armies against each other in a light-hearted re-creation. Not to be outdone, the Pathfinder Society has for centuries chosen mid-Arodus as the time for its Grand Convocation, a massive convention attended by Pathfinders the world over where the traveling scholars can show off their latest finds, boast about their exploits, display magical wonders, and compete in exhibitions of strength and skill. Yet perhaps the greatest celebration is the Radiant Festival, a once-per-century jubilee that commemorates Absalom's victory over Kharnas the Angel-Binder during the 17th century's Radiant Siege. The city spares no expense, inviting nations worldwide to send representatives and exhibits of their latest innovations and

cultural accomplishments to show off. Even between celebrations, the warm nights and late sunsets encourage residents to socialize long into the evenings, making the most of the weather.

Amid the bustle, Absalom's political scene spins up with would-be nomarchs and members of the Low Council hosting their own parties and sponsoring district-wide picnics as a chance to gather goodwill. Nearly every spell lord, law lord, and member of the Grand Council serves some ceremonial role during the festivities, and the primarch presides over the largest events. Meanwhile, the High Council secretly convenes in its annual meeting—the Exaltation of the *Starstone*—to discuss ongoing city policies.

As the Porthmos Winds subside in late Rova, the eastward Southern Tack accelerates, bringing with it not only a wealth of Rahadoumi traders, but also cold, nutrient-rich waters rushing in from the Arcadian Ocean. Sardine runs follow within weeks—just in time for the Kraken Carnival on 15 Lamashan, during which kite battlers compete in the westerly breeze. Absalom's fishers set out that night in lantern-strewn skiffs to perform their traditional shark hunt, harpooning the largest that come to investigate the light and serving them the following day. The chillier weather also attracts Iomedaean pilgrims to observe their patron's Ascendance Day on 6 Lamashan. However, Absalom's clam-digging tradition long preceded the Inheritor, and many residents instead (somewhat sacrilegiously) spend the holiday recreating Iomedae's "Eleven Acts," which is to say, unearthing and eating eleven sawscale clams to kick off the shellfish season. The same week typically sees the city's hardy medroberry trees' fruits ripen. Although some farms cultivate the berry-like fruit to create seasonal brandy, Absalom law prohibits the commercial harvesting of the city's medroberries, leaving them for the populace to pick and eat over the short two-week season.

By the end of the year, the Gozfrost again whips down the Kortos Mounts. Residents spend much of their days indoors when possible, emerging long enough to reach a tavern on 12 Kuthona and toast Cayden Cailean's Ascendance Day with church-subsidized spirits. However, on the first day of the new year, nearly everyone emerges for the bonfires, camaraderie, and spiced cider that mark Absalom's Foundation Day: a celebration of Aroden's raising the *Starstone* as the city begins a new year.

COAT OF ARMS, COLORS, AND THE MOTHER-SPHINX

Absalom's coat of arms features the unblinking Eye of Aroden on a field of ocean teal (or sometimes green). Each of the crest's three corners features an identical golden crown, representing the wellsprings of human culture that combined to form Absalom. The top two crowns symbolize the human kingdoms of Avistan and Garund, with the bottom crown representing the Ancient Azlanti origins of Aroden and his following. The small golden circle above the eye represents the *aeon orbs* raised from the Darklands by Aroden to give life to the flora of Kortos. Three rays of light—knowledge conveyed to humanity from Aroden—radiate out from the god's eye.

Absalom's colors are golden yellow (to represent the *Starstone*) and rich teal (for the sea) or green (for the verdant plains of the Swardlands or the industrious forests of the Immenwood).

Among the oldest symbols associated with the city is the mother-sphinx, a winged, quasi-divine civic icon with a lion's body and the head and torso of a human woman. Her hands grasp a scale and scepter, signs of rulership and justice. She's sometimes shown pregnant, holding a scroll, or sitting atop a wave. Brought to the city by Osirian settlers in Absalom's earliest days, the mother-sphinx represents the hybrid nature of Absalom, drawn from many traditions into one wise, powerful whole. She is also popular as a symbol of knowledge and arcane power, and features prominently in the iconography of some of the city's most venerable secret societies.

PILGRIMS, TOURISTS, AND INLANDERS

The sheer number of visitors who travel to Absalom on a daily basis is dizzying, but the vast majority of these folk can be organized into one of three categories—all three of which can certainly include adventurers as well.

Pilgrims: These visitors come to Absalom for religious reasons, be it to pay homage to a famous (or infamous) temple or shrine, to seek advice from some of the Inner Sea's wisest clerics, or as the result of another would-be deity hoping to ascend via the Test of the *Starstone*. Some of these pilgrims may even fancy themselves as Golarion's newest deity-to-be!

Tourists: Absalom attracts curiosity from across the Inner Sea and beyond, and those who come to marvel at its history, its skyline, or its legacy are legion. Many locals have a love-hate relationship with tourists, whose influx of money is well-appreciated, but whose ignorance of local customs and traditions can cause unwanted strife.

Inlanders: Beyond Absalom's walls and outlying towns, many folk of Starstone Isle dwell in crude settlements nestled in the island's hills, mountains, and forests. These isolated communities nonetheless are a part of the island's economic sphere, and most Inlanders inevitably visit the "big city" at least once in their lives, occasionally resulting in cultural conflicts. Absalomians tend to look down upon these Inlanders, arrogantly considering them uncivilized.

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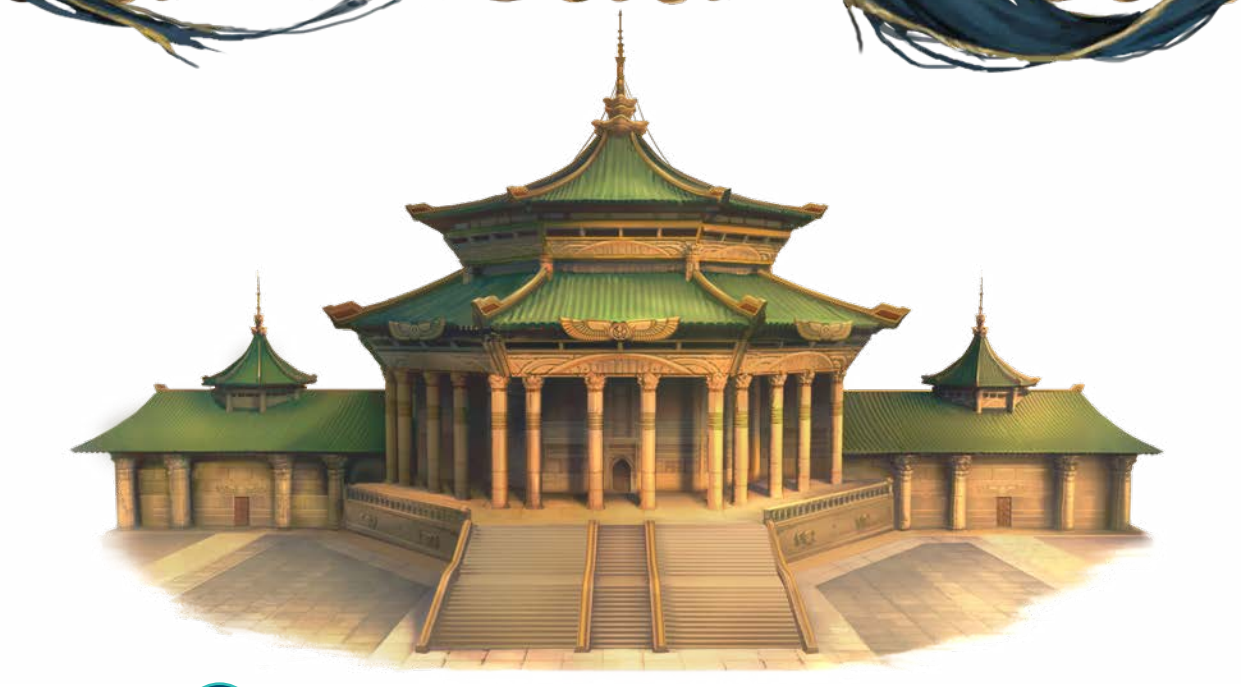

ABSALOM'S TALLEST BUILDINGS

While the towering spectacle of the Spire of Nex out in the Cairnlands is, without contest, the tallest structure on Kortos (and quite possibly the whole of Golarion), Absalom proper features numerous spires whose heights are rivaled only rarely in other ports of call. Absalom's tallest structures are:

1. Absalom Lighthouse (655 ft., Dock District)
2. The Watchtower (520 ft., Eastgate)
3. Blue Tower (360 ft., Eastgate)
4. Tower of Twin Truths (250 ft., Ascendant Court)
5. The Irorium (200 ft., Foreign Quarter)
6. Starstone Cathedral (200 ft., Ascendant Court)
7. Tallavont School (170 ft., Eastgate)
8. The Broken Bastion (130 ft., Eastgate)
9. Crestwatch (100 ft., Dock District)
10. The Arcanamirium (80 ft., Petal District)

ARCHITECTURE

Whereas many figuratively declare that their own accomplishments to be built upon their predecessor's deeds, in Absalom, it's literally true. Untold generations of habitation, construction, demolition, and renovation have gradually elevated Absalom's average street level by dozens of feet. The city may appear a hodgepodge of styles, yet many of these structures are centuries or even millennia old, capturing the architectural predilections of their respective eras and the preferences of their neighborhoods. The following chronicles Absalom's major architectural trends.

Azlanti (0–420 AR): Aroden shaped Absalom to match the Azlanti model of perfection he knew. The abundance of green, gold, and divinely generated marble facades housed Absalom's migrants for their first several decades. Afterward, the citizens replicated their patron's style by incorporating broad domes, vast amounts of glass, and toweringly thin spires into their buildings—features that survive in Azlanti Keep, the Starstone Cathedral, and a handful of other sites. Likewise, the original city included significant quantities of throneglass, a green glass as hard as steel and not replicated since Ancient Azlant. Ultimately, this style of construction was too pricey to maintain after Aroden's departure. When domes collapsed centuries later, citizens incorporated the fallen glass into circular mosaics in the renovated buildings.

Taldan (140–2920, 3760–4137 AR): Aroden's faith spread swiftly in Taldor, and Taldan migrants to Absalom brought their straight-walled architecture with them. Much of the city's early expansion involved these painted brick designs, bilateral symmetry, ornate entryways, and superficial exterior columns. The evolving style reached its zenith during the 2000s, though it fell out of favor swiftly following the Blue Lords' departure in 2920 and the accompanying backlash against Taldan culture.

Osirian (200–576, 1532–2255, 2920–3250 AR): Although Osirian migrants designed numerous low pyramids around newly-formed plazas, their architectural sensibilities manifested more in subtle ways, such as the division of sacred and mortal spaces within homes. The earliest pyramid platforms were gradually decommissioned and transformed into small acropolises, particularly in what are now the Wise Quarter and Westgate.

Kortos Preclassical (400–750 AR): With Aroden's departure, Absalom struggled to maintain the elegant Azlanti style, so its inhabitants explored their newfound independence through innovation. The Kortos Preclassical phase was outwardly blocky; however, building interiors boasted inlaid, polished timber from the Immenwood, and exteriors were brightly painted, in contrast to the stark Azlanti stonework.

Vudran (537–1325, 4340–4500, 4612 AR–present): Maharajah Khiben-Sald's visit inspired an obsession with Vudran culture. New construction incorporated thin interior colonettes and geometric mosaics, with great arches and crested entrance towers decorated to convey a sense of the owner's wealth and influence. Onion domes were especially prevalent around 560 AR, though competition to create the largest domes triggered catastrophic collapses that discouraged the feature for decades.

Nexian (580–1312, 2920–3760 AR): The sprawling, palatial designs of Nex only grew in popularity after the archmage Nex's disappearance—before which Nex's attempted invasion of Absalom had made his styles uncouth. Nexian construction emphasized impossible elements made manifest with arcane aid, ranging from woven stone walls to hovering annexes. Its elegance swiftly overshadowed contemporary Osirian structures.

Kortos Classical (700–1530 AR): Begun as a counterpoint to Vudran and Nexian designs, the Kortos Classical style reveled in the use of massive, interlocking stone blocks for monumental architecture. Pricier buildings often featured four-sided pyramidal glass peaks, and homes often incorporated rounded towers budding from one corner.

Tian (1308–1630, 2920–3060, 4315–4645 AR): When the Tian junk the *Resplendent Phoenix* arrived in Absalom, the citizens ravenously replicated the architecture found in the ships' many woodcut illustrations. Swooping, multi-tiered roofs began shading the streets as neighbors competed to boast the broadest eaves; derelict buildings were cleared away to make room for elaborate gardens; and interior designers adopted the Tian emphasis on creating private spaces.

Kortos Post-classical (1465–1730 AR): Garev Halfhand's rebellion drove Absalom's aristocrats to invest in public works and spaces, driving the Kortos Post-classical's broad plazas, ramps, and columned pavilions. Homes increasingly featured upper-floor verandas and decks, and vast, multi-story apartments proliferated in this period.

Kortos Conservative (1620–2110 AR): As fears of Ulon and Norgorber grew following Kharnas's invasion, Absalom dramatically scaled back its use of columns, swooping eaves, and defensive features in buildings, all of which sheltered spies and thieves. Instead, wood construction with smooth exteriors were common, and whitewashing surfaces became standard to better pick out intruders at night.

Kortos Vulgar (1993–2790 AR): The Age of Excess suffered from inferior construction materials. Most infamous was salt brick, a mud brick mixed with the abundant seawater rather than fresh water. The result was a brick

ABSALOM'S OLDEST BUILDINGS

Most of Absalom's oldest buildings center around the Ascendant Court, where Aroden's early cult established a number of enduring monuments in the city's earliest days. The oldest of these—including the Starstone Cathedral at the heart of the district—were created via Aroden's earliest act as a god, formulated from the island's rock by sheer divine will. These structures remain sturdy nearly 5000 years later, though some have begun to fail in the century since Aroden's death. Azlanti Keep was built to Aroden's design (if not by his sheer force of will). City lore holds that Aroden rested beneath the boughs of the Grand Holt after raising the Isle of Kortos. While this seems improbable, there is little doubt that the enormous tress has thrived for nearly as long as Absalom itself.

DUNGEON DELVING

One noteworthy result of Absalom's sprawling history and wide range of architectural advancements is that no one person comes close to having a full picture of what lies below the city. Layer upon layer of structures and buildings vie with tangled warrens of existing caverns and brand new underground domains built in secret by cults, criminals, and creatures alike. Be it a small complex of a few rooms or a sprawling network of interconnected labyrinths, the number of "dungeons" within and below Absalom is truly unknown. Even today, after thousands of years of urban life and day-to-day living, explorers and adventurers regularly discover heretofore unknown chambers and locations secreted away in Absalom's foundations. Many of these are presented on the Undercity chapter of this book (page 240), but many more doubtless await discovery by your player characters!

that degraded rapidly. The decaying buildings resulted in near-continuous construction, narrow profile structures, interlacing split-level apartments, and an ever-growing accumulation of material later dubbed "Mount Absalom."

Keleshite (1920–2920 AR): Qadira's broad windows, breezy courtyards, and bright domes spread across Absalom with the Cult of the Hawk's growing influence. Its spacious, sheltered porches and awnings still appear throughout the city's markets.

Castrovelian (2638–2910 AR): When elves returned to Golarion, Absalom paid handsomely for the alien architects to create interplanetary constructions. Those delicate structures that remain preserve a snapshot of Castrovel's styles at the time, complete with curving walls, upper-story bridges between homes, and *aiudara* portal-style doorways.

Kortos Revival (2920–3730, 3824–4055 AR): After expelling countless foreign agents, Absalom rebuked Keleshite and Taldan designs with a revival and adaptation of old styles that emphasized exterior columns, heavily carved eaves, stucco traced with swirling patterns, and a preponderance of flat roofs where citizens increasingly slept.

Azlanti Revival (3235–3835 AR): The resurgence of hunting lodges brought with them a romantic notion of old Azlanti ideals, reflected in these new lodges. Heavy use of glass, domes, and radial symmetry strove to recreate Aroden's original vision for the city. This was particularly popular with the nobles, many of whom maintain estates of this style.

Chelaxian Independent (4090–4660 AR): Following its independence, Cheliax developed its own styles that gradually migrated to Absalom. This period's steeply stepped exteriors supported towering edifices with sharp, square facades. Despite the severe appearances, these buildings boasted large, high-ceilinged interiors to overwhelm visitors. Many of these buildings have been renovated in the last century to avoid negative connections to Cheliax.

Kortos Neoclassical (4138 AR–present): Modern architecture favors a pristine beauty with painted white stone walls, red tile roofs, and vast arrays of small arched windows.

SUBCULTURES AND COUNTERCULTURES

In Absalom, there's no one right way to survive, and millennia of improvisation and adaptation have spawned hundreds of subcultures, many of which still thrive to this day. Whereas some of these movements bring nothing but energy and joy to the city, others actively work to destabilize one or more of Absalom's institutions in subtle ways. The city tries to discourage the more negative movements where it can, yet these countercultures are tenaciously resilient even when not widespread.

Free Union: Several times, Absalom has instituted and abolished slavery, most recently just a few years ago when Siege Lord Wynsal Starborn offered freedom to any slaves who would aid Absalom during the Fiendflesh Siege. The outpouring of support effectively ended the city's slave trade, and most of the freed people have remained in Absalom to make a new life for themselves. They are united by the recent siege and the knowledge that they fought for their freedom once and can do it again—a stance many have directed toward politics. Known as the Free Union, these advocates boldly push back against commercial and governmental practices they consider unjust. Their members organize strikes, protest Lord Gyr's secret prisons, and increasingly seek seats on the Low Council to shape Absalom's politics. However, the Free Union poses a threat to numerous noble houses, ancestral businesses, and other institutions, and some of these have begun hiring more guards to protect their holdings and propagandists to present the Union in a negative light.

Halfhanders: Growing economic disparity sparked Garev Halfhand's "Reborn Rebellion" millennia ago, and the unchecked power Lord Gyr enjoyed in recent decades fomented similar discontent. Dissidents calling

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themselves Halfhanders have gathered in increasingly heated meetings, debating how best to dismantle Absalom's unconscionably rich noble houses as a continuation of their eponymous saint's unfinished quest for economic equity. Lord Gyr's guards shut down several of these gatherings to the Halfhanders' fury. The primarch's recent disappearance has emboldened the movement in their fight for sweeping government reform. Several noble families have begun shifting their wealth out of Absalom in anticipation of violent conflict, and others have begun hiring their own spies to infiltrate the movement and dismantle it from within.

Starstone Celebrants: There's no greater feat than attaining godhood, and the Starstone Celebrants would brag they have front-row seats. These enthusiasts frequent the Ascendant Court's taverns, ever vigilant for those ready to take the Test of the *Starstone*. In the days leading up to an attempt, the Celebrants wine and dine the candidate while also coordinating elaborate betting pools on how far the candidate might make it before perishing; the group takes a cut of the proceeds, using it to pay the candidate's tab and make generous donations to the Shrine of the Failed. Should a candidate succeed, the Celebrants stand ready to be the first to toast the new demigod's health.

Between tests, most Celebrants find other entertainment and then return to the Ascendant Court when the next challenger appears. Other enthusiasts are even more diehard, gathering irregularly to debate past trials or identify new potential candidates whom they might encourage with avid letter-writing campaigns. The Celebrants lack any formal leader, though a rotating cast of coordinators help manage the parties and treasury.

Sword and String League: Absalom's steady sea breezes do more than cool the city; they sustain an avid kite-flying community. Whereas flying kites is a pleasant pastime for many citizens, the Sword and String League's members endeavor to outdo each other in good-natured competitions, ranging from who can fly the heaviest kite to conducting

THE STARSTONE

Touching the *Starstone* and passing its test grants a mortal godhood, a feat that ascended Aroden to divinity and has only been replicated by 3 others since: Iomedae, Cayden Cailean, and Norgorber. The Starstone Celebrants claim to trace their roots all the way back to Cayden Cailean's drunken companions, who witnessed the swordsman enter and successfully leave Starstone Cathedral. Most others are skeptical of this grand history, as gawking at failure is a far older mortal tradition.

GAMING CULTURE IN ABSALOM

Absalom's citizens thrive on novelty, and few of the city's industries are as innovative and generally popular as games. From Ivy District showrooms offering finely crafted game boards and beautiful artisanal drouge tablets to common laborers tossing dice on Dock District corners, games are everywhere in the City at the Center of the World. Casinos and gaming parlors like the Second Labyrinth draw players from across the sea, while manufacturer's like Fenworth Gameporium innovate new diversions and export them to distant ports. Many of Absalom's broadsheets and journals feature puzzles, like the popular "Wings of Zohls" series in the *Sennight Star*.

pitched duels against one another with razor-edged kites designed to shred their airborne rivals. The fighting circuit is especially fierce, with small groups of kite warriors convening to test their latest designs several times a month. The championship bouts must wait until the Gala of Sails and Kraken Carnival in Gozran and Lamashan respectively, and especially intense rivalries can build such a popular following that the Irorium itself hosts a grudge match. For all the smiles and camaraderie, the kite builders spare no expense in outdoing each other, and their demand for ever lighter, stronger, and more esoteric materials employs more than a few adventurers.

Tri-Stripe Society: Local legends claim an early primarch so adored badgers that he granted them the city's full protection. Whatever the law's true origin, it is illegal to kill or harass badgers in Absalom, and their exportation is carefully managed to avoid exploitation. Millennia of selective breeding has created relatively agreeable lineages with regal names like the argental, queen'o'shadows, and grizzleduke, and badgers are quite popular as pets, guard animals, and pest control. Numerous businesses cater to badger enthusiasts, selling treats and installing badger habitats to attract the creatures, much as one might lure sparrows with a birdhouse.

Whereas most appreciate badgers, the Tri-Stripe Society adores them. These fanciers not only promote badger ownership and advocate for their continued protection, but they also maintain hundred-generations-long genealogies of the most famous breeds, hold an annual competition for badgers, and sustain a cottage industry of badger accessories like embroidered caparisons and ceremonial barding. When feral badgers take over cellars, the Tri-Stripe Society is often first to the scene to ensure the badgers are kindly relocated or adopted rather than harmed—no matter how much property damage results from the new residents' claws.

PASTIMES

With thousands of years of immigration and innovation, Absalom has adopted and adapted a host of pastimes. Likewise, its central location attracts new performances and famous artists from across the Inner Sea region. The following are some of the locally famous forms of entertainment.

Children's Games: Absalom's melting pot culture circulates dozens of different games around the schoolyards, including less rigorous versions of the sports below. Many children's games find inspiration from the four Ascended gods, such as the jumping game Eleven Acts, the blindfolded tag game Which Way Cayden, and the sing-song combination skiprope/tag contest called No-No Norgorber.

Drouge: When Selmius Foster reinvigorated the Vudran spice trade, he also introduced Absalom to draj, a cutthroat game played with slender plaques bearing symbols representing various beasts. Local house rules have since evolved the game—now known as drouge, a Taldan bastardization of the original name—which has an especially strong following in Diobel. Cheap game sets made of painted wood make this fairly accessible, though gambling dens more often use the traditional ivory and obsidian game pieces carved with such creatures as the elephant, the crocodile, the wyvern, and the infamously unpredictable chimera. Drouge has become so intertwined with the Absalom gambling scene that playing a low-stakes game "just for fun" is considered a joke. Whereas polite society often looks down on anyone carrying drouge tiles, owning a fine set is a sign of esteem in gambling communities.

Music and Theater: Absalom hosts thousands of public performances each year across dozens of venues, many in the Ivy District, which is famous for its entertainment scene. Routines vary wildly: Chelaxian opera, Jalmeri traditional dances, Nexian illusion displays, and even avant-garde gnome aerobatics are regular occurrences. Theaters compete to fill seats, driving the demand for new content. The result is a cycle in which performances become increasingly experimental, risqué, or rushed before the theaters default to more traditional fare after exhausting their audiences' appetite for gimmicks and oddities.

Immense venues such as the Grand Dance Hall of Kortos (page 113) help bring the arts to the masses, often setting aside considerable space for free, standing admission. Other residents prefer the open-air music provided by the Street Performers and Actors' Guild. As the city's premier bardic school, the White Grotto (page 176) plays a massive role in shaping each upcoming decade's artists and trends. However, it is the Ivy Playhouse (page 170) that shapes the next fads, for it is there that artists witness each other's newest works, inspiring new styles that quickly sweep across the city.

Rickets: Whereas drouge involves skill and finesse, rickets is a high-energy, "press your luck" dice game that's popular with desperate and gutsy gamblers alike. Gameplay alternates between die rolls and bidding, with braver players staying in the game longer in order to bet on increasingly unlikely rolls. However, the game is legendary for the lucrative odds, and a truly lucky gambler can walk away with a lifetime's earnings in one night.

Rumples: Played with a deck of 48 numbered cards, rumples tests its players' memories, bluffing, and mastery of ciphers. During the first phase, the dealer deals the cards equally to each player, plus one pile for the house. Players can fold, notch, or mark their own cards in any way that doesn't utterly mutilate the card, and all of the players can mark the house's cards. Afterward, the cards are flattened, shuffled together, and dealt in small face-down hands to each player. Play continues with players trying to assemble valuable card combinations, relying entirely on their recollection of their own marks to identify which cards they and their opponents have been dealt—and bluffing the rest of the time. After several rounds of dealing

NO-NO NORGORBER

This skiprope rhyme encourages you to jump higher and faster with each rope revolution. If you reach "Bogeyman!" without touching the rope, a game of tag begins with you attempting to catch the other players to select the next jumper.

Reaper?
Master?
Skinsaw Man?
Where is the poison?
What is the plan?
No-No Norgorber!
Folks take care!
How many dark masks does he wear?
One Reaper!
Two Master!
Skinsaw Man!
Quick leaper!
Jump faster!
Bogeyman!

PEERLESS PRINT CULTURE

Other cities and cultures across Golarion certainly have access to printing presses, but few locales even come close to Absalom's embracing of the medium of print. The citizenry's ravenous appetite for one sheets, chapbooks, newspapers, and fliers constantly pushes the city's publishers, be they guilds or individuals, to continue feeding the public's hunger for information. Innovations in print happen infrequently as a result, for publishers barely have enough time as-is to keep up with their beloved customers' demands for much, much more!

additional cards and bidding, the highest-scoring hand wins. Traditionally, a group plays five sets before destroying the deck and starting over.

Rumples is not a game for the inexperienced or intoxicated. Eight different card-marking conventions have evolved, and players regularly experiment with other "vocabularies" that their opponents might not recognize. Although an adept gambler can grow rich off of newer players, the real winner is the Fenworth Gameporium, whose printing press has produced hundreds of rumples decks daily without fail for the past 50 years.

Sports: Absalom borrows a wide range of physical sports from immigrant populations, many of them played by semi-professional teams in the Irorium. Katapesh's ruk, a game in which 10-person teams attempt to knock a sand-filled ball through rings, has an especially strong showing, and several national teams compete in annual grudge matches—often with mercantile leaders betting on the outcome to determine elements of upcoming trade deals. Gladiatorial games are also quite popular, and the Irorium hosts numerous bouts per day.

However, Absalom takes greater pride in deskata, an urban obstacle race involving three-person relay teams. Adapted from a Taldan Army of Exploration training drill during the Age of Excess, deskata has evolved into a homegrown sport that requires intense athleticism, street smarts, and willingness to dodge through crowds to gain an edge. Monthly competitions trace unique routes through the city, often adding in additional objectives like tagging the tops of key buildings. Somewhat typically, these routes avoid the Puddles, where the working-class residents claim to house the most talented amateur deskata runners.

With its ample coastline, Absalom embraces aquatic sports. More privileged athletes enjoy boating and even hippocampus racing, whereas even the most destitute can afford to swim. However, the harbor's cleanliness is suspect, and those of means travel outside the city in search of clearer waters.

Towers: Whereas many fortunetellers consider the harrow deck a sacred divination tool, much of Absalom nonetheless delights in the sacrilegious gambling game of towers. After laying out the six neutral-aligned harrow cards on a surface, players compete to play their own cards atop these "foundation cards," in a variety of suit combinations and card arrangements. Those who can't legally lay down more cards of their own each round have to pay coins to the other players. Due to its combination of strategy and luck, towers is especially popular throughout the city.

INFORMATION EXCHANGE

Just as commerce flows from the city's harbor to its markets and traffic flows through its streets, information, propaganda, and news winds its way from person to person, spreading knowledge or lies in a complex ebb and flow. Those who come to understand this system gain enormous insight into the constantly shifting affairs of Absalom, granting them greater power over their rivals and a better chance at survival against the city's many intrigues. The citizen who knows what is happening today is better prepared for what's to come tomorrow, and the manipulators who can influence what the citizens think they know are the best prepared of all.

A special committee of the Grand Council known as the Crier's Table is the nexus for all official communications from the city's government to its inhabitants, and oversees Absalom's thriving publishing industry. Composed of a half-dozen members of the Low Council and reporting directly to First Lady of Laws Neferpatra of House Ahnkamen, the body drafts public declarations of new laws and other governmental decrees. It administers a corps of official town criers to relay this information at designated "crier's corners" positioned throughout Absalom. By the diligent dedication of the

Crier's Table and their agents, decrees of the Grand Council can reach ears across the city within hours of their proclamation under the Conclave Dome.

The citizens of Absalom's neighborhoods often develop a special rapport with their local criers, the most beloved of whom enjoy celebrity status in their assigned areas. Most criers supplement their usually staid official pronouncements with current events and even gossip about the city's nobles and public figures, bringing a personal touch that can often draw citizens out of their way to hear the latest from their favorite mouthpiece. Popular criers often serve their assigned areas for decades, so long as they maintain the good will of the local populace. The Crier's Table swiftly replaces unpopular criers, which leads to a bias toward positive news that breeds cynicism among the wiser folk of Absalom, but which plenty of citizens slop up eagerly—or more likely pay half an ear whilst walking past on the way to work.

Absalom's thriving print culture of newspapers, broadsheets, and pamphlets developed with the advent of the printing press centuries ago, but the key ingredient of the primordial soup from which it emerged was the sense that the sanctioned criers of the Grand Council did not always tell the whole truth, and that the public would be better informed if left to discover the truth for themselves, rather than wait for their leaders to frame the conversation for them. Most of the city's publishers and nearly all of its large-scale printmaking operations are centered around Scrivener's Square, not far from the Grand Council Hall in the Wise Quarter. Originally named for the scriptoriums that once transcribed the words of official criers into hand-written decrees for distribution to the courts and prominent citizens, the bustling neighborhood is today home to the broadsheet publishers and pamphleteers who replaced the scribes after the arrival of printing presses and movable type. A civic fountain that locals call the Inkwell stands at the center of the square, swarmed by barking newsboys and frequented by off-duty clerks, young journalists, and servants collecting newly printed broadsheets for their wealthy patrons. When a particularly popular story, like a murder spree or the preparations for an upcoming festival sweeps the city, the crowds here swell in the early morning, as citizens hope to be the first to read of the latest happenings.

Absalom's citizens have countless options among the printed material offered every morning in Scrivener's Square and on busy corners all across the city. Partisan publishers distribute propaganda for every ideology under the sun, while independent pamphleteers produce material ranging from the mundane to the pornographic. In theory, all printed matter produced in the city must be reviewed and stamped with approval by the Crier's Table and deposited in the Forae Logos before it can be distributed, but in practice this applies mostly to the larger concerns that benefit from government cooperation. This publication schedule accommodates a careful review by the much feared and respected Gressil Kluun, the Table's so-called "Red Redactrix," under whose careful scrutiny all printed matter must pass. Most publishers skip both of these steps in the interest of timeliness, risking censorial ire after the fact. As a formal committee of the Grand Council, the Crier's Table has the authority to shut down presses and even imprison publishers guilty (or even suspected) of sedition, but such action has led to riots within the living memory of the city's elves, dwarves, and gnomes, thus the Table is reticent to use its full powers of suppression unless they feel it absolutely necessary to protect the city's vital interests.

Absalom's most popular and longest-running broadsheet is the *Sennight Star*, a double-sided fold-over four-page weekly focused on local affairs, government news, reports of the Irorium's pageants and battles, and tame gossip regarding prominent citizens. The *Star's* famous embellished masthead incorporates the formal seal of the Crier's

SCANDAL SELLS SHEETS

While the printing of legitimate information is often regarded as a mark of professional pride, not all who have access to a printing press are trustworthy. Those eager to line their coffers or hoping to push personal agendas sometimes fan the flames of scandal in order to increase profits. These publishers print completely false accounts or fanciful creations–fiction disguised as fact–that can end up shaping history rather than simply reporting on it.

SHOONIES

Small humanoids that resemble squat, bipedal flat-faced dogs, shoonies are found almost exclusively on the Isle of Kortos and have been in sharp decline ever since the god Aroden died. Though shoony society has a heavy bias toward farming and gardening, a stable enclave exists in the city of Absalom, lured by the shoony-preferential employment benefits offered by Eastgate's *Greenlift Post* newsletter. As a result, most shoonies encountered in Absalom are newspaper deliverers. For more information on shoonies, see *Pathfinder Adventure Path #153: Life's Long Shadows* 70.

Table, its coverage being so safe and straightforwardly partisan in favor of Absalom's interests that the approval of censors is a foregone conclusion.

Far more subject to government scrutiny is *Eyes on Absalom*, a relatively young illustrated broadsheet that focuses almost exclusively on the criminal, the lurid, and the sadistic—and which is growing in popularity with each new issue. Edited with an almost diabolical focus on titillating tales by the cantankerous Layton Bryne and published by the ruthless Reginald Vancaskerkin, *Eyes* has spawned a spate of imitator crime rags that are just as popular, triggering a lot of fretting about the degradation of Scrivener's Square, with uptight critics damning the entire print business for the sensational extravagances of relative newcomers. The prudish scolds of Absalom's cultured society demand that the Crier's Table take action against the paper, but the lavishly illustrated editions usually sell out long before they can be seized or recalled.

A monthly journal called *Anon & Afar* brings news from beyond the Isle of Kortos, usually reprinted from foreign broadsheets brought to the city on ships from distant ports and assembled by the publisher's dedicated, multilingual staff. While general weeklies like the *Sennight Star*, *Mother's Message*, and *Ear to the Inner Sea* often contain more timely shorter news items communicated through divination or other mystic messaging, *Anon & Afar* presents articles of far greater depth and far wider scope, with editors endeavoring (but seldom succeeding) to include in every issue at least one item from each of the nations of Avistan and northern Garund.

Those seeking news closer to home but still outside the city walls consult the *Kortos Quorum*, a biweekly paper focused on the latest news of Starstone Isle itself, Absalom excepted. Heavily supported by the Kortos Consortium, the *Quorum* contains a great deal of political material in opposition to Absalom's trade guilds, as well as vicious criticism of Lord Avid of House Arnsen, the Consortium's most hated foe. While the paper purports to cover the whole of the Starstone Isle, in function most articles concern the affairs of Diobel, Meravon, and the Swardlands, rarely reporting on events of the Dunmire, Kortos Mounts, or the Scrape. Amusingly, the *Quorum* claims to have a correspondent stationed in the distant ruined town of High Harbor, publishing amusing and imaginatively written reports of impossible goings on there to the delight of Absalom's most whimsical readers. The folk of Kortos themselves appreciate the journal's coverage of farming, fishing, and forestry, as well as its detailed almanacs that often incorporate elements of folk magic.

When not churning out the latest reports, many of the presses in Scrivener's Square and elsewhere are put to use printing handbills, poems, and other single-sheet items of ephemeral interest to news consumers. These range from weekly indexes of the ever-changing stalls of the Grand Bazaar, to betting tipsheets for beast races and bloodsport, to advertisements of employment opportunities for laborers, performers, and even adventurers. This last category is especially popular with fraudulent publishers, who churn out mass-produced treasure maps and shopworn riddles to exploit credulous thrill seekers. The least harmful of these contain nonsense codes and directions to nothing, while the truly dangerous lure the gullible into undercity traps and muggings. Explorers in search of more trustworthy paths to unclaimed treasures are encouraged to consult back volumes of the *Pathfinder Chronicles*, which almost always fetch impressive prices in the city's secondary markets.

While there's no denying that Absalom's broadsheets, books, and pamphlets influence the attitude of its citizens and even the culture of the Inner Sea region itself, the majority of Absalom's inhabitants spend very little, if any, time reading. To stay abreast of current affairs—if

they bother to do so at all—these folk most often turn to a local phenomenon known as event-plays. So long as a public performance is out of doors and refrains from "artistic embellishment," its participants are technically exempt from the stringent membership requirements of the Street Performers and Actors' Guild. Young actors aspiring to greater things and washed-up entertainers out of favor with the guild often stage impromptu reenactments of current affairs on the street, paying themselves on meager tips from their often-illiterate audiences. Due to the guild decree, event-play performances are seldom truly entertaining, which somewhat limits their appeal. A loophole in guild bylaws—included in the interest of Absalom's children—exempts acts involving puppets from the artistic embellishment clause, resulting in a rash of increasingly popular and emotionally riveting puppet performances that are beginning to draw aggressive and resentful guild monitors. The prospect that more citizens now get their news from puppets than from the printed word is starting to fill some publishers of Scrivener's Square with the first twinges of outright panic.

Not all of the information exchanged in Absalom is fit to print. The Shadow War between the city's many factions all but ensures that someone is always watching and listening, and that valuable information—especially valuable *secret* information—seldom goes to waste. Several information brokers of international renown (and international reach) can be found in Absalom. Lady Dyrianna of House Avenstar, the head hetaera of Calistria and consul of the Courtesans' Guild, controls perhaps the most knowledgeable and valuable information network in the city. Guild courtesans and her temple's sacred companions ensure that her network's most prized and pricey secrets are of a salacious nature, and while the influential and alluring noblewoman has an army of admirers, so too does she leave a broken collection of enemies behind her, their secrets exposed to foes wealthy enough to procure them. Dyrianna's agents never work against the Grand Council, but she has extensive contracts with many of the city's houses, and is behind many of the public humiliations endured by their enemies.

MEDIA BIAS

While the goals of Absalom's publishers and media moguls change with each generation (or often multiple times in a single generation), media bias remains an inexorable element of the city's printed culture. An informed reader should make sure to not only keep an open mind, but to do their research on the source of the words they read and to foster skills at reading between the literal lines if the truth is what is desired.

MANURE MANAGEMENT

Cleaning up after Absalom's many animals is one of the largest concerns of the city, if one never addressed in polite company. The richest districts usually handle the issue via hired wizards, who are often all too happy to help, though the government also employs a legion of well-paid street cleaners under the auspices of the city's famously corrupt Sanitation Commission. Less wealthy districts vary in their approach; Eastgate has had success using manure in gardening, while the Docks often just shove the mess into the Puddles and forgets about it.

TRANSPORTATION

Absalom's many cultural influences and waves of immigration have created a vast array of mechanical and animal-powered conveyances that fill nearly every niche. Any larger animal requires feed and stabling—a hefty maintenance fee that means privately owning a steed or beast of burden in the city carries with it some prestige. Fortunately, there are ample long-bench wagons, swifter carts, and person-powered rickshaws that cater to the masses and visitors alike. The following are draft animals, mounts, and vehicles commonly encountered in Absalom.

Camels: Generations of Keleshite and Garundi influence have popularized camels, which see use as mounts, beasts of burden, and even as farm animals. The preponderance of camels means that camel tack, barding, and accessories are as common as their equivalent for horses.

Caravans: Convoys and wagons enter through Absalom's many gates, carrying a variety of lumber, produce, ore, and other goods from the island's interior and nearby settlements. This cargo is subject to the same inspection as shipborne goods, causing logjams during harvest season and major market days. For those willing to travel overland, though, there are countless caravans ready to escort travelers to nearly any settlement on Starstone Isle.

Dogs: The humble canines' omnivorous natures and relatively compact frames give them an advantage in dodging through crowds and navigating narrower streets. Dog-drawn travois are the tool of choice for many halfling porters, and the familiar scraping of these frames echoed through Absalom for centuries as the operators delivered their goods. However, the once-common travois is rarer following the Beautification Act of 4711 AR, which included a provision to restrict travois use (ostensibly to limit damage to the city's streets). Some halflings defiantly continue their traditional craft and continue to fight the legislation in courts, though most have transitioned to dog carts.

Elephants: Even with Absalom's productive farms and great wealth, maintaining an animal the size of an elephant in the city is tremendously expensive. Nonetheless, about 20 elephants reside in the city at any given time, typically used for prestige tasks such as ferrying important dignitaries, providing menagerie displays, and leading parades—particularly in Eastgate. The First Guard maintains six battle-trained elephants as part of an ancient cavalry unit that survives largely for ceremonial purposes, though the beasts served with distinction during the "Machine Mage" Karamoss's siege.

The somewhat smaller elephants from southern Casmaron have long been Absalom's favorite variety, both due to the elephants' purported descent from those Khiben-Sald brought with him millennia ago, and because handlers consider elephants from eastern Garund too aggressive for urban use. Despite their cost, elephants are a sure way to turn heads, though elephantine transport within the Ascendant Court and Coins is allowed only with special city permits.

Hippocampi: These aquatic equines serve primarily as steeds for Absalom's Wave Riders cavalry, and while the local azarketi are willing to rent out hippocampi to small groups, most of the steeds see use in a strictly military capacity.

Horses: Horses are just as popular in Absalom as they are anywhere else across the Inner Sea region. Several breeders in the Swardlands fill the need for domestic stock, while new varieties from all over the world arrive regularly via Absalom's harbor.

Marine Monitor: Among Absalom's more ancient and unique mounts are the marine monitors, largely herbivorous lizards that inhabit the island's rockier coastlines. Generations of selective breeding have diminished their dorsal spines and increased their size, such that they're large enough to carry several human-

sized passengers. However, the monitors' lashing gait makes most queasy, their swinging tails mean they're barred from most markets, and the lizards stubbornly refuse to work unless properly warmed by mid-morning. To their credit, though, the amphibious lizards are adept swimmers, and riders who don't mind getting a little wet sometimes hire them to move goods about the Puddles.

Ships: Nearly all traffic to the Isle of Kortos occurs by ship, and most international vessels enter Absalom directly through the Flotsam Graveyard with close guidance from the Pilots' Guild (for a modest fee). Vessels carrying less than 500 pounds of cargo or fewer than seven people are exempt from this service, and it's the rare larger ship that snubs the guild's expertise and doesn't end up wrecked on Absalom's artificial reef. Fortunately, most ships handle this fee as part of their fare when ferrying passengers to and from distant ports, with cities such as Almas, Cassomir, Katheer, Niswan, Oppara, Ostenso, and Sothis as the most popular destinations. Traffic from Katapesh is fairly light, thanks to a longstanding tariff Absalom placed on its perceived competitor's goods, though the Low Council has recently eased that tax noticeably on most products. Travelers wishing to skim the island's coast can board the ferries that set out daily from the Docks, with a few boats even setting off from Shoreline and other nearby settlements.

Riding (Terror) Birds: Introduced to the Isle of Kortos early on, riding birds (known as terror birds in other regions) make for fearsome mounts and even chariot draft animals. However, the birds' carnivory makes them difficult to maintain and keep under control. The city watch maintains a set of guidelines for commands a terror bird must be able to recognize and follow in order to be allowed through the gates without wearing a muzzle, loose fetters, or both, whereas state approved birds are provided a prominently-displayed blue tassel to affirm their relative safety. Outside the city, terror birds are quite popular for travelers and merchants, who value the birds' fearsome demeanors and self-sufficiency in a fight.

Ugvashi: These large, razor-plated pangolins have their origins in distant Casmaron. While they are too small for the typical citizens of Absalom to use as a beast of burden, many of the smaller peoples of the city use them as pack animals, with halflings in particular known for their love of ugvashis. Their dangerous plating can cause a lot of damage to the inattentive. As a result, most ugvashis are flanked by their owners on either side, both for the safety of others and also as a way to fend off any bystanders looking to pet the ugvashi.

TRANSPORTATION COSTS

Visitors can readily hire transportation or rent animals, with the following being typical prices. Rented animals include basic saddles, tack, and related gear. Animals from the *Core Rulebook* are available to rent.

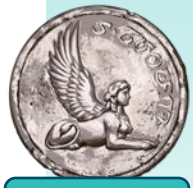
TABLE 1-01: RENTAL FEES

Transportation	Rental Price* (per day)
Camel	8 cp
Dog cart	3 cp (per trip)
Elephant	10 gp
Hippocampus	3 gp
Marine monitor	3 sp
Terror bird	8 sp

* Might require a deposit of 10 times this value or more for use beyond the city.

MEASURE FOR MEASURE

Absalom is extremely strict about the weight and content of precious metal in its coins, in contrast to other nations who have been known to adulterate their currency with other metals (either to ensure higher quality minting or to cover shortfalls in the treasury). As a result, Absalomian coins are the favored currency for prominent businesses—and, somewhat ironically, for criminals and warlords far across the Inner Sea Region.


Platinum Sphinx

Gold Measure

Gold Measure

Silver Weight

Copper Penny

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

COINAGE

Absalom accepts most currencies at face value, though some carry only a fraction of their value due to a smaller size or devalued material, as posted prominently in the markets. Absalom's minted currency in copper, silver, gold, and platinum is among the most consistently accepted worldwide.

Absalom only occasionally mints its copper pennies, with most copper coinage in circulation originating from other countries. The silver coin, known as a weight, sees the most everyday use with even large purchases often performed using these ubiquitous coins (most stamped with an image of a rampant badger). The typical gold measure bears the eye of Aroden on one side and a prominent Absalomian landmark on the other. Finally, the platinum sphinx or "lion-coin" depicts the Mother-Sphinx and Azlanti Keep, and it rarely sees use except in major exchanges between merchant houses.

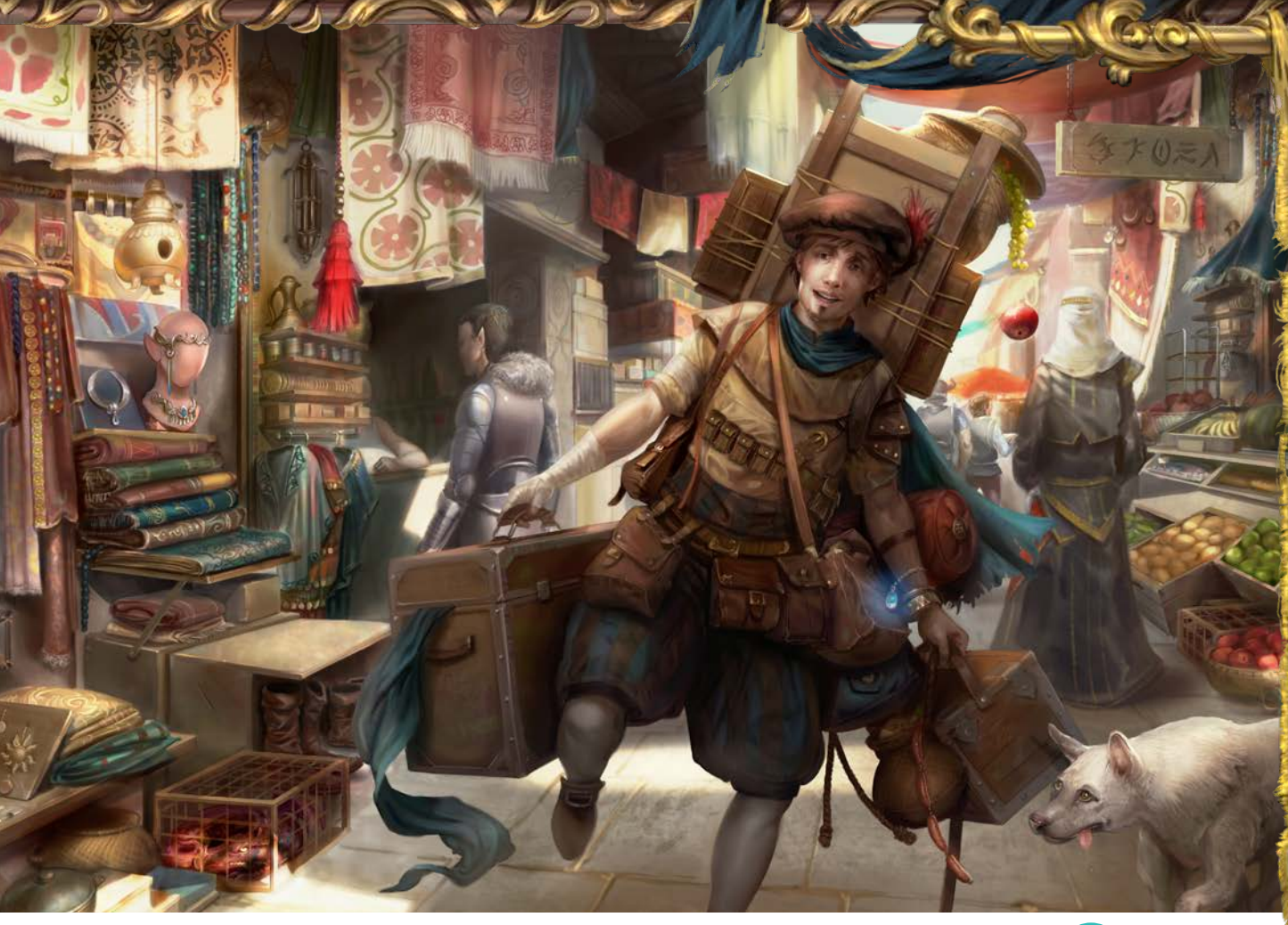
Commemorative Coins: Absalom regularly mints new versions of its coins to commemorate important events, such as depicting local heroes' achievements on copper pennies. Important anniversaries like centennial celebrations, military victories, and the appointment of a new primarch more often manifest on silver weights and gold measures, whereas tremendous and rare events, like the ascension of a new god, might temporarily replace the platinum sphinx's traditional design.

Famously Rare Coins: Numismatists relish collecting Absalom's coinage, especially the scores of discontinued denominations. Famous and valuable examples include the "platinum ascendant," a platinum coin that tastelessly tried to reassure citizens in the wake of Aroden's death; the "silver gate," depicting an *aiudara* portal commemorating the return of elves to Golarion in 2632 AR; the "blond badger," a silver coin design accidentally used to stamp about 500 gold coins that made their way into circulation; and the silverhawk measure, the city's bimillenary coin styled in honor of the Cult of the Hawk, heavily exported to pay off Absalom's growing debts and ultimately melted down centuries later.

TRADEMASTERS

Trade is at the heart of Absalom's wealth, power, and independence. Through trade, Absalom extends its influence into all corners of Golarion and even into planes beyond. Citizens of other nations might revere noble knights, warrior champions, or grand spellcasters, but citizens of Absalom admire the spirit of trade and entrepreneurship that lies at the heart of their city's success. In Absalom, people aspire to attain the title of trademaster. Trade is the force that flows everywhere and touches everyone, and it can be mastered by anyone clever enough to do so. Those who can master trade can ultimately master the politics, armies, and navies of the world.

To attain the official title of trademaster within Absalom, one must prove able to run a trade or financial organization with a budget at least as large as that of a full-sized manor and do so legally and profitably for no fewer than five years. Only the Grand Council can grant the rank of trademaster, though they usually do so as a formality to acknowledge a request made by an existing trademaster or one of the district councils. The Council lacks a formal process for proving the claims of an applicant for trademaster. No existing trademaster or council has so far risked losing the ear of the Grand Council by knowingly nominating someone unworthy of the honor, however. The only political entity that can work outside of the Grand Council's jurisdiction and grant the title is the primarch. Lord Gyr only used



this power a handful of times during his reign. The Grand Council typically grants the Writ of Acknowledgment to a handful of prospects every year; some years see only a single new trademaster, while other years feature dozens receiving the title at once. Sometimes a year will go by without a new trademaster entirely, though this occurrence is particularly rare.

Trademasters have no official badge or designation, and the writ itself merely serves as a notification of the addition of the trademaster's name to the city's tax tolls. Over the centuries, however, trademasters have taken to wearing a beret or a sleeve-ribbon in the city's colors. Many trademasters also add a gold and teal merchant's scale to their coat of arms along with the motto "Ex Prothex," which is interpreted to mean "first among equals," to represent Absalom's prominent role in the world economy (and, perhaps arrogantly, the trademaster's rank relative to her peers). Absalom's prime economic philosophy is that trade is a force influencing and influenced by everyone.

Beyond the prestige of the title, trademasters within Absalom enjoy tangible benefits. Trademasters receive a modest reduction in duties, tariffs, and other trade-related taxes. They might also appeal any trade dispute within Absalom directly to the Grand Council. In addition, the title of trademaster communicates to potential clients and business partners that the individual can successfully conduct a profitable business.

Although price fixing isn't unheard of, it's also strictly forbidden; the council and other trademasters diligently watch for such schemes. Any trademaster caught breaking these rules is severely fined and immediately stripped of their title. The former trademaster often finds difficulty in acquiring new wealth, as they become a disgraced pariah among the trademasters' network. In a city known for its relatively laissez-faire attitude toward trade regulation, the strict adherence to these rules is intended to ensure free, open, and profitable trade.

OVERSIZED INFLUENCE

Though it claims only three cities, the nation of Absalom exerts powerful pressure on all the countries of the Inner Sea. In addition to being the largest port for ships sailing the Inner Sea, it controls a small fleet of warships, an impressive collection of treaties and mutual support pacts, and lore about dangers of the region that no captain willingly forgoes. While Absalom can't physically impose embargoes on other cities, the threat of refusing harbor to ships of any nation that aids Absalom's enemies carries tremendous weight with every country of the Inner Sea that relies on trade.

THE POWER OF COIN

Within Absalom, trade is considered the most civilized and respectable business with crafting second and labor last. A common shopkeep often holds himself higher than a master swordsmith, who in turn looks down on a world-famous performer. As with all such social judgments, money and power often compensate for cultural biases.

GUILDS AND UNIONS

The strength and power of Absalom is its economy, and that economy stands on three pillars: the crafters who manufacture goods, the laborers who provide services, and the merchants who buy and sell goods. Absalom is home to many powerful guilds and unions that ensure quality of work, fair treatment of their members, and protection of their industry from the predatory practices of other organizations. Although guilds and unions primarily consist of common citizens, their collective influence and power can rival that of any prince. For example, wealthy merchants who deal unfairly with members of the Pilot's Union might find their exports held up in the Flotsam Graveyard. Influential nobles who mistreat members of the Courtesan's Guild could soon find themselves blacklisted from social events and gatherings. Guilds can prove immensely helpful if bargained with fairly, or they can deliver financial calamity to those who abuse their members.

Bakers' Union: The union encompasses all crafters of prepared food within the city and guarantees the ingredients of foods, if not the quality. The union is adamant that bread never be taxed and that other foods are only lightly taxed.

Band of the Palm: A loosely organized trade organization catering to chimney sweeps, limners, wheelwrights, coal-carriers, bathhouse attendants, and traveling junk dealers, the Band of the Palm is in fact a front organization for the Bloody Barbers thieves' guild.

Barristers' Guild: Trade is at the heart of Absalom, and contracts are at the heart of trade. The Barristers' Guild regulates those who practice law in Absalom. They keep meticulous records in their vaults of all contracts written or reviewed by the guild.

Coalition of Artisans: Absalom's expert craftworkers align in the Coalition of Artisans, administered by the argumentative Jembar Dustyshankle.

Courtesans' Guild: Many view the Courtesans' Guild as just another entertainers' guild; however, they're also a significant broker of information and power within Absalom. Who else can intimately whisper into the ears of everyone from the lord of the city to the lowest merchants and, in return, hear their whispered secrets? The Courtesans' Guild vigorously looks after the health, social rights, and protection of its members.

Dockworkers' Union: Formed surprisingly recently, this union coalesced out of a general dockworker strike that shut down the city's harbor. They deal strictly with the loading, unloading, and warehousing of goods in and around the docks and ensure health services for their members due to the dangerous work.

Farmers' Union: While the city imports much of its food from other nations, many of Absalom's staples grow on farms just outside the city. This union guarantees Absalom has a stable, locally grown food supply, which contributes to the city's independence. Its members know the land immediately outside Absalom better than any others.

Lifter's Mooring: This group of dock workers have banded together to support each other, particularly when it comes to pushing back against powerful employers who take their skills for granted or force workers to toil in unsafe conditions.

Locksmiths' Guild: Absalom is a city of merchants; merchants need excellent locks to secure their wares. The Locksmiths' Guild regulates all its members carefully since they literally hold the keys to the city. This guild designs and maintains locks and security of all types, both mundane and magical.

Navigators' Guild: For a nation that relies on trade and shipping, finding one's way is vital. This guild trains and certifies competent ocean navigators. Merchants and trademasters rarely invest in a ship or map not certified by the Navigators' Guild.

Paper Makers' Guild: Absalom's demand for the printed word results in one of the Inner Sea region's strongest reliances on paper supplies, yet the Paper Makers' Guild has traditionally not sought to abuse its potential position of power to make demands–perhaps because of an astute observation that should they frustrate the city's printers and bookmakers, they'd only be ostracizing their best customers.

Perfumers' Conglomerate: Several of Absalom's perfume-makers and cosmetics-creating alchemists gather under the auspices of the Perfumers' Conglomerate, managed by the wily Aarnock Xanthiss, an unparalleled genius respected by every member of his guild. Their headquarters is based in the Ivy District, where most members do their best business.

Porters' Union: Once goods arrive in Absalom, they must be transported throughout the city, which requires an army of laborers and beasts. Without the Porters' Union, no goods of significant quantity make it past the docks or warehouses. Terror birds and camels are common means for transporting goods outside the city.

Scriveners' Guild: One of the most powerful commodities in Absalom is knowledge. By law, any new book brought to Absalom must be either copied or taxed by the page. The Scriveners' Guild scours every shipment and parcel for new material. After copying, originals are returned to their owners.

Street Performers and Actors' Guild: The wealth and success of Absalom have made entertainment a profitable industry. The Actors' Guild ensures quality entertainment and protects its members but requires public entertainers to obtain a license. Those who run afoul of the Actors' Guild soon see their reputations in tatters, as the guild sees offenders lampooned and publicly characterized in the most unfavorable light. Those who desire to improve their reputation or besmirch that of a rival might employ the guild; often, members of the guild work for competing sides of publicity campaigns.

Union of Carpenters, Stonemasons, and Metalworkers: Absalom prides itself on the superiority of its ships, architecture, and weapons. This union's strict adherence to training and quality makes Absalom the envy of many nations.

Woodcutters' Guild: Absalom is known worldwide for the quality of its fine woodcrafts. Guildmaster Parsin Guile brings well-honed political acumen to his fellow artisans as a member of Absalom's Low Council.

FOOD AND DRINK

A city the size of Absalom requires significant support when it comes to food and water for its populace. While much of the city's foodstuffs come from farmlands or the sea, a staggering amount is imported as well, if only to keep up with the aristocrats' desire for variety on the dinner table. Water supplies are handled simply by a combination of cisterns, underground reservoirs, and a large number of water towers and rain barrels.

MARKETS

When most foreigners hear of markets in Absalom, they immediately think of the Grand Bazaar or God's Market, but the city boasts dozens of small markets across its many districts. Every neighborhood has its own small market with local bakers, butchers, fishmongers, vegetable stalls, and dairy farmers. Side streets are home to numerous specialty shops, and many neighborhood squares host local grocers. Some markets are impromptu affairs that appear during festivals and holidays. Others occur one day per week or month. A few have become permanent fixtures.

When in this myriad of markets, visitors must observe a few points of etiquette. Before purchasing in Absalom, it's important to introduce oneself to the proprietor of any stall or shop. Those who simply approach a vendor and ask a price are considered rude and will likely find higher prices. As much as Absalom is a city of trade, it's a city of people from distant lands and backgrounds. When dealing with strangers, merchants want to know how they relate to a potential new client.

INTERNATIONAL IMPORTS

There's more to the world of Golarion than what's depicted on the map of the Inner Sea region, and in the city of Absalom, proof of this global civilization is on full display. The diversity apparent in the city's populace, architecture, food and drink, art, and even in the threats that sometimes menace its citizens presents almost a microcosm of the world itself. As a result, Absalom truly is the "City at the Center of the World!"

Visitors to the city should also observe a simple yet easily overlooked rule: with so many competing traditions, when is it appropriate to haggle? If merchandise is clearly priced with a tag or sign, it likely isn't negotiable. If the seller gives you a verbal price, it is likely negotiable. Many Qadiran sellers have a flair for haggling, though they profess to never haggle over art pieces, as it's considered disrespectful to the artist.

The Night Markets: The streets of Absalom can be dark and dangerous at night. To combat such dangers, the Grand Council has begun erecting magically lit metal lampposts throughout the city, and many local squares are now illuminated. The city found that, in addition to reducing crime, the lights facilitate commerce in these locations. Now, some markets operate all day and night—Absalom is a city at the center of the world, and since travelers and goods arrive at all times, trade doesn't have time to sleep. Collectively, these markets are known as the night markets. As a curious side effect, a few of these night markets now host kobold merchants eager to sell their wares to new customers.

The Emporium Impossible: Absalom's fabled Emporium Impossible is located in a small demiplane controlled by the half-elf sorcerer Namira, who limits knowledge of its shifting doorways and entrances to those with ample wealth and influence. Namira creates the doorways to her demiplane—marked by a small, silver triune moon—in empty shops or warehouses. Shadowy forms slip through Absalom to inform notables of the doors' locations, which shift on the night of every new moon.

Masked creatures, veiled in shadow, patrol the demiplane. There, clients and customers can meet, enjoy imported delicacies, and conduct business. The demiplane looks different every month but always contains an arena where visiting conjurers compete by pitting summoned monsters against one another while onlookers place wagers. Namira charges a modest fee for every transaction within her demiplane and dutifully collects taxes paid to Absalom's exchequer. Nearly any item of powerful magic can be sold or purchased here.

Camel Markets: Being consummate traders and merchants, and given their geographic proximity to Absalom, Qadiran merchants have a significant presence within Absalom. These merchants often gain permits to set up temporary markets in neighborhood squares around the city. Many locals call these markets "Camel Markets," due to the signature animals the Qadiran merchants employ within the city to carry their goods. Although the merchants offer many genuine wares from Qadira and beyond, the Porters' Union actually owns the camels. The elaborate spectacle of Qadiran tents in a square serves to draw onlookers and potential customers by the droves. As soon as the traveling merchant has sold all their goods, or their permit expires, the temporary market vanishes, and local daily routines again dominate the square.

BLACK MARKETS

While Absalom typically has a laissez-faire attitude toward trade and commerce, any goods or services deemed too dangerous or too unethical are banned. Most everyday products are lightly taxed to provide the city with necessary income. Other products that might negatively impact Absalom's economy and societal well-being are heavily tariffed or outlawed. Despite these prohibitive costs, there are always those who desire to obtain these illicit goods. For the greedy, ambitious, or those with little respect for law and society, these desires provide prime opportunities for profit.

An example of a potentially dangerous product regulated and heavily tariffed in Absalom is the semiprecious onyx stone. Due to its frequent use in the necromantic arts, Absalom carefully taxes and monitors all significant

quantities of the stone. The stone is frequently smuggled to avoid both taxes and uncomfortable scrutiny from city officials.

Another item regularly smuggled through Absalom is the sphinx tear flower. Osirian nomads use the petals of this rare flower as an antitoxin. However, the root of the plant has become popular as both an ingredient in love potions (highly illegal in Absalom) and as an alchemical aphrodisiac popular among wealthy nobles. Sphinx tear root is banned in Absalom in an effort to preserve the plant; however, as the flower vanishes from Osirian oases, the price of the root increases dramatically. This cycle entices further smuggling of the precious root.

Of course, there are always those who conduct illicit trade in counterfeit products. More than one visitor to Absalom has purchased a faerie dragon egg to later find themselves the parent of a kobold hatchling. Perceptive eyes might note charlatans selling counterfeit powdered unicorn horn, angel feathers, dragon teeth, and Tarrasque scales. Since such items are illegal to trade in Absalom, the buyer often has little recourse for being swindled.

The trade of illicit goods is an industry unto itself. The purveyors of these products and services often organize themselves into gangs. These gangs frequently model themselves after legitimate guilds to protect their secrets, their members, and, most importantly, their profits.

The Shadowbox Network: This loose organization of thieves, smugglers, and fences forms a network of illicit trade spanning the entirety of the Inner Sea region. Their power lies primarily in their apparent lack of organization. Whenever the law catches even a few members, the rest fade away like shadows in the light. In reality, the Shadowbox is a loose-knit network of several disparate gangs who are coerced into cooperation through fear and greed by a handful of powerful spellcasters. The kingpins of the Shadowbox Network never reveal themselves to lower members and don't hesitate to abandon their underlings when convenient to do so. Within Absalom, the Shadowbox Network prides themselves on their ability to deliver any desired good or service, so long as a client can pay. If one wants

QUESTIONABLE GOODS

Though most people associate black markets with drugs and banned merchandise, the most profitable operations often involve smuggling in legal items from nations that heavily tax their export. Endangered plants and animals, Osirian cultural artifacts, and specialty food and drink with high tariff rates are among the most common of these commodities; once the goods have reached Absalom, all proof of their illegal origin can be erased, and they can be sold alongside matching, legally available merchandise for a heavy profit.

THE SCOPE OF SLAVERY

Even though slavery remained legal in Absalom as recently as 3 years ago, most Absalomians abhored the practice since its reinstatement in 4635 AR as a sop to powerful local Chelaxian nobles aligned with the Diabolical House of Thrune. The Grand Council forbade the city government from participating in or benefitting from slavery (beyond heavy taxation), and most nobles considered treating captives as property morally reprehensible. In practice, most of the enslaved people previously traded in Absalom came to the city from elsewhere, bound for foreign ports or local Chelaxian or Qadiran noble houses. Consequently, thousands of forced laborers resided in the city during Wynsal Starborn's manumission, many of whom now align themselves with Milly Tundall's Free Union.

drugs, poisons, assassins, forbidden magic, or even extraplanar creatures, the Shadowbox Network can acquire them. Goods are often delivered in discreet, gray, wooden boxes. All anyone has to do to make contact is begin inquiring through known smuggling rings or gangs of thieves. If the Shadowbox Network deems the individual's business worthy of their time and effort, they'll proceed to contact the individual.

The Sea Market: Conducting illicit trade within Absalom's walls can be a risky venture, so ships often anchor just out of sight of Absalom in the so-called Sea Market to exchange contraband. Doing so often involves inbound ships exchanging illegal goods for goods re-sellable within Absalom. The outbound ships can then carry their illicit merchandise to other, less scrupulous, territories. Absalom's Navy tries to prevent these exchanges, but they usually occur too swiftly, under the cover of darkness.

DRUGS

A wide range of medicinal and recreational drugs can be found among Absalom's bustling trade. Citizens generally go to alchemists, temples, or healers to purchase common medicinal and alchemical substances, such as antitoxins, antivenom, and healing potions. Countless unscrupulous alchemists and herbalists within the city will sell non-medicinal or recreational drugs that can induce temporary mental or physical change. Stories abound of even rarer drugs said to bring about permanent, transformative changes. The drugs described here are among Absalom's most sought-after recreational substances and are fully detailed in the Adventure Toolbox on page 390.

Demon Dust: This highly addictive drug is produced from the crushed bones of demons. Demon dust strengthens the inhaler's body for acts requiring great physical stamina. While the drug is in effect, users typically experience some form of memory loss. Others claim to have experienced hallucinations, flashbacks, and confusion for a few hours after the drug wears off.

Gerig's Liquid Courage: This carbonated brew of distilled liquor and energizing herbs comes in a distinctive single-serving bottle with a gaudy label that makes a number of overstated claims about its efficacy against a variety of natural ills. Sufferers of indolence, lethargy, joint pain, ennui, lack of ambition, and the shivers are invited to sample the beverage's soothing effects with a money-back guarantee promised by the intrepid Gerig the Inspirer, who brews and bottles the stuff in his Ascendant Court workshop. Gerig covets the endorsement of Absalomian celebrities like gladiators and would-be gods, and his advertisements appear everywhere in Absalom, from notices and testimonials in weekly news broadsheets, to lurid posters plastered on conspicuous walls near major city intersections and thoroughfares, and to sandwich-board-wearing youths crowding the periphery of most of Absalom's larger markets.

Grit: First developed in the Puddles about 20 years ago, this stimulant has grown from a diversion of the wretched poor to a habit for well-heeled merchants and nobles. At low doses, grit provides the physical body with increased energy while stimulating the idle mind into effortless flights of creative fancy. Abuse of the drug leads to severe hallucinations, numbing, and uncontrollable rage. Grit is produced by grinding down alchemically-enhanced barbarian chew, which is mixed with toxic plant-based substances, such as bitterbark or redroot. The powder is very expensive and highly addictive.

Qat: While initially used by Qadiran soldiers and warriors going to battle, this stimulant and euphoriant soon became popular among civilian Qadirans from diverse social strata. Some of the latter close up shop for three to four hours after the midday meal to socialize and chew qat leaves. User experiences with qat vary from feeling energetic, euphoric, talkative, and alert

to experiencing depression and hallucination, depending on the quality and type of qat leaves.

Shiver: Shiver is a potent hallucinogen derived from the venom of a dream spider. The ecstatic haunting dreams induced by the drug result in lingering physical convulsion, a side-effect responsible for the drug's name. The substance is particularly popular in the Puddles, where it offers temporary respite from the desperate living conditions of the district. Rules for Shiver appear in the *Gamemastery Guide*.

Succubus Kiss: This rare and highly addictive drug is rumored to be created by wizards working alongside succubi. Taken in the form of lozenges, this drug can heighten the body's pleasure and pain stimuli as well as increase alertness, energy, and euphoria. Serious side effects that can occur include heart attack, stroke, and sudden vision and hearing loss, but these risks do little to deter users.

SLAVERY

Acting Primarch Wynsal Starborn granted manumission to Absalom's slaves during the Fiendflesh Siege in 4717 AR. This event transformed the city's economy and initiated a new class of well-connected tradesfolk known as the Free Union, whose knowledge of the inner gears of Absalom's economy and the secrets of its wealthiest and most powerful citizens grants them a degree of power that belies their lack of wealth or overt social status beyond full citizenship.

Many former slaves still bear the marks of Absalom's flesh trade upon the inside of their left forearms. The first mark a slave bears was placed near the wrist with additional brands trailing up the arm as the individual was traded between various slavers. These imprinted symbols, about the size of a gold coin, depict geometric patterns, simple pictographs, or complex glyphs, each associated with a slave trader or noble house of Absalom. While these marks no longer carry any legal weight, many freed slaves have elected to keep them. Some former slaves bond with others who share some of their marks, while others keep the marks to remind themselves to stay on the lookout for opportunities for revenge. A brisk trade nonetheless exists to magically erase the marks from those who don't want them, and the slave marks of Absalom are expected to completely fade within the next few decades.

Most of Absalom's slave trade formerly took place within and around a wall-like structure at the center of the Coins District known as Misery Row. Here, gawkers surveyed offerings through barred windows while skilled auctioneers plied the crowd for takers. Today, the Row is an abandoned slum, home to criminals and more unsavory elements. A few of the old slavers linger on as common labor mongers, but their fortunes and influence have waned disastrously.

Not all of Absalom's slave traders complied with the government's abolition of the trade, and while it can no longer be said that Absalom has a thriving slave market, it would be a considerable mistake to assume that the vile practice has been stamped out completely. Much of the flesh trade simply moved underground, literally in the case of the tengu crime lord Gewgaw in the undercity settlement of Fall's End about a mile below the city. The most powerful slaver ring still extant in Absalom is the insidious Salt Cartel, a slave export operation controlled by the powerful Chelaxian House Tevineg. The cruel Lady Seichya, Warden of the Puddles prison known as the Brine, smuggles prisoners out of the city to the flesh markets of Okeno and Katapesh, a practice that has become even more profitable as demand has far outpaced supply since the advent of abolition. When the Cartel runs low on criminals, it often resorts to more creative solutions to fill its never-ending need for more victims, including snatching imagined enemies off the street and channeling them, heavily drugged, into the Cartel's international operations.

A CITYWIDE SCOURGE

While there are plenty of legal options to purchase drugs for medicinal or recreational reasons alike, shady dealers are always eager to capitalize upon drugs' addictive nature. The urge for another fix doesn't discriminate between the rich and poor, but in cases where those in positions of power find themselves in the clutches of addiction, their actual power can subtly shift hands into the dangerous clutches of dealers who see the drug trade as less of a method to make money, but more a route to claiming power from others to abuse as they see fit.

SO, YOU WANT TO BE A NOBLE?

There are a few ways for a commoner to join the ranks of Absalom's nobility. The simplest is to marry into or be adopted by an existing house. Second, one might commit an act of great heroism or merit in service of the city, and be awarded one of the highest honors that Absalom can grant–the Order of the Golden Sphinx grants noble status for as long as the recipient lives, and the Order of the *Starstone* permanently ennobles both the recipient and their descendants. Third, one can have the Grand Council pass a private law ennobling an entire family. This is how most noble houses begin, but it requires a great deal of wealth, prestige, and political clout. Finally, one can get ennobled elsewhere and be recognized in Absalom. The city has treaties of mutual recognition with many of the nations of the Inner Sea region, though more distant lands or minor nobility may need to make a show of wealth or power.

THE SHADOW WAR

The Shadow War is a poetic name for the complex and convoluted struggle that defines Absalom's political life. Also called the War of Strings, it is a game of influence and intrigue, of marching soldiers and whispered words, of faith and faithlessness, of wealth and wizardry, and of a thousand more elements besides. The winners in this dance can accrue power, and with that power comes the ability to pull the strings, so to speak, rather than be pulled.

Presently, in 4720 AR, the main nexus of the Shadow War is the question of who will be the next ruler of Absalom. The current primarch, Lord Gyr of Gixx, is still missing, and no one knows who will officially replace him. The noble houses of Absalom resent Acting Primarch Wynsal Starborn's popularity, and jealously fear a military coup despite Starborn's best assurances and intentions. In these unsettled times, reformers and revolutionaries of all stripes see a chance to push their own agendas, leading to two primary topics of debate dominating the salons and coffee shops of Absalom.

The first is the Reform Question. Reformers argue that Aroden is dead and not coming back, and it's long past time for Absalom's Founding Laws to be updated. Though the reformers are still haggling over details, most dislike being ruled by an aristocratic oligarchy and would prefer to have the entire Grand Council derive their seats from popular elections, though just how rapidly this should take place is another point of contention. Their traditionalist foes, meanwhile, argue that the Founding Laws were good enough to ensure Absalom's wealth and independence for thousands of years; if it's not broken, why fix it?

The second issue is the Cult Question. As home of the *Starstone*, Absalom has traditionally had a strong commitment to religious freedom and equality. More importantly, it's one of the few places in Golarion where open Norgorber worship is tolerated. Many question whether it's entirely wise to allow the cult of a god of murder, blackmail, and theft to operate so freely, and want Norgorber's faith outlawed. Their opponents argue against this plan, some out of loyalty to Norgorber, some out of a sense of tradition—he is one of Absalom's home-grown gods after all, and some out of a fear that such a ban might not stop with Norgorber and be used against other deities who are unpopular with the government.

These arguments have coalesced around three major candidates for primarch, turning their supporters into political blocs—not quite parties, but not simply alliances of convenience either.

The Optimates: The traditionalist bloc, who favor placing Lord Avid of Arnsen on the primarch's seat. The old wizard is seen as someone unlikely to disrupt the fragile system that has worked so exceptionally well for Absalom so far. The Optimates draw their support from the aristocracy and the upper class, and can count on the backing of Houses Arnsen, Blakros, Damaq, and Morilla, as well as the Vault of Abadar and (quietly) the Bloody Barbers.

New Absalom: One of the two reformist blocs, New Absalom holds Lady Darchana, the second spell lord, as their favored candidate. Advocates of the New Absalom are the rising middle class, those who've achieved success and feel this should give them a say in their own city. They want to reform Absalom's Founding Laws to include more elections and are generally in favor of banning Norgorber from the city. They also like the idea of increasing taxes on land and reducing tariffs on goods, a direct attack on the nobility in favor of the merchant class. New Absalom is backed by the Arcanamirium, by Houses Foxglove and Tevineg, and by the Aspis and Kortos Consortiums.

ABSALOM
GUIDE TO THE CITY
ASCENDANT COURT
THE COINS
THE DOCKS
EASTGATE
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IVY DISTRICT
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PRECIPICE QUARTER
THE PUDDLES
WESTGATE
WISE QUARTER
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The Citizens' League: The other reformist bloc, the Citizens' League, feel they should've been led by Goodman Hugen of House Candren. But since Hugen's ship sank, their candidate for primarch is his old friend Lady Adrielle Neprathep. The League is the bloc of the poor and dispossessed, of sailors and workers. They want elections and governmental reforms—more sweeping even than those proposed by New Absalom. At the same time, they fear potential overreach on the cult question and support maintaining Absalom's traditional religious freedom. They're backed by Houses Candren and Avenstar, by many Firebrands, and quite awkwardly, by the Cult of Norgorber. Politics has ever made for strange bedfellows.

The methods employed in the War of Strings are as varied as the players. Assassination, to the surprise of many outsiders, is rarely used in the Shadow War. The heads of the noble houses and factions see themselves as too vulnerable themselves to begin a campaign of murder, and so no one is willing to be the first to start such bloodletting. Anyone who does kill the head of a noble house or major faction can expect every hand in Absalom turned against them, as the leaders of the Shadow War would seek to make a sufficiently bloodcurdling example of what is simply "Not Done." Peripheral members of the houses, as well as their many minions and hirelings, enjoy no such protection.

Instead, the preferred method to remove a notable figure from the board is through scandal and disgrace. Uncovering, provoking, or outright faking a scandal is the most common move in the game; protecting one's self against such scandals through investigation, theft, and bribery is almost as popular. The nature of the scandal varies from group to group, and can include accusations of radical politics, bankruptcy, addiction, embarrassing diseases, consorting with the "wrong" people, worshipping the "wrong" gods, romantic affairs, or heinous crimes—the possibilities are endless. The only certainty in the War of Strings is that it's never boring.

MOVERS, SHAKERS, AND YOU

Absalom's history has been guided by the actions of a wide range of NPCs, including many who live to the current day and continue to influence the city. Yet there's one important category of mover and shaker who should not be forgotten: the player characters! In any Absalom-based campaign, it's important to make sure that the PCs not only feel like they're part of a living, breathing city, but as events play out and their accomplishments grow more noteworthy, the PCs themselves should become recognized public figures. As the GM, you can drive this home by having tales of the PCs' exploits see print in the city's press, have town criers embellish rumors with purported PC heroics, or even have powerful NPCs seek the PCs out for advice, aid, or accolades.

Scion Lords and Ladies

Heads of Absalomian noble houses are known as scion lords or ladies. Only one noble from each house—almost always the eldest—can claim the title, and it does not extend to that noble's spouse. Nor is scion a strictly hereditary title. By tradition, most scion lords and ladies designate their successors, but in lieu of this succession relies upon consensus or even election from within the family.

Mother Jackal

Noble Houses

The following noble houses are some of the most prominent participants in the Shadow War.

House Ahnkamen

The ancient and respected House Ahnkamen is best known for its pedigree, which can be traced back to the pharaohs of Osirion, and its connection to Absalom's legal system, with Scion Lady Neferpatra sitting at the head of the judiciary as First Lady of Laws. It's not generally known for forbidden sorcery, necrophagy, and the worship of mind-rending gods.

Which is just the way Mother Jackal likes it. The ancient ghoul sorceress burrowed her way out of Leng and into Absalom centuries ago, and in short order came to rule House Ahnkamen from behind the scenes. That task accomplished, Mother Jackal watched carefully, plucking condemned wizards and alchemists from imprisonment and inducting them into her own private cult, the Eaters of Knowledge. After which, Mother Jackal has done little for the last 300 years.

The truth is, the old ghoul likes living in Absalom. After Leng, the City at the Center of the World is downright relaxing, and House Ahnkamen's influence over the judiciary and their prisons means that it's a trivial task to divert a few dead bodies her way. Besides, Mother Jackal knows that while worshipping her otherworldly patrons (including the likes of Yog-Sothoth and other Outer Gods) is only good sense, overly enthusiastic worship tends to end messily. House Ahnkamen thus putters merrily along its way, largely unaware of the terrifying monstrosity who directs its course, while the Eaters of Knowledge serve as more of an arcane social club than an active cult. A few members of the house, such as Scion Lady Neferpatra, are aware of the truth, but most only know Mother Jackal as Great-Aunt Maut, an old woman with a remarkably dirty sense of humor.

Politically, House Ahnkamen stays studiously neutral in the contest for primarch, reflecting both Neferpatra's belief that the judiciary should stay impartial and Mother Jackal's opinion that any problem that lasts less than a decade is not worth fidgeting over. This is the neutrality, however, of a sleeping serpent. Should Mother Jackal decide that something genuinely threatens Absalom's existence, she may be spurred to act—though all things being equal, she'd prefer someone else do the hard work.

House Arnsen

The story of House Arnsen is the story of Scion Lord Avid. Though an ancient and honorable house, the Arnsens had long been irrelevant when a young Lord Avid, fresh from his arcane studies, joined with an equally juvenile Lord Gyr and several other companions on a series of remarkable adventures. The fortunes from their discoveries filled House Arnsen's coffers, and the fame they earned added new luster to the house's name. While Gyr rarely used his influence to assist other family members, Lord Avid saw his own relatives propelled to high office, and now House Arnsen rides high in the War of Strings.

Currently, Lord Avid has his eyes set on the primarchy that he believes Lord Gyr cheated him out of years ago. He leads the Optimates bloc, trading on his reputation as a contemporary and once-friend of Lord Gyr to position himself as a symbol of continuity, stability, and tradition. Houses Blakros and Damaq's endless coffers fund his ambitions, though the Vault of Abadar has been curiously stingy of late. The Kortos Consortium, meanwhile, is an old foe from Avid's tenure as teriarch of the outlying town of Diobel, with little love lost on either side.

Yet while Lord Avid has been fortunate in politics in recent years, he has been less so in his family life, to House Arnsen's sorrow. His wife Nahla, a sister of Lord Kerkis of House Damaq, has never truly loved him, though

the two are friendly enough to each other. Lord Avid's eldest son, Mareis, was killed while following in his father's arcane footsteps, devoured after a summoning went awry. His second son, Deineis, was the apple of his father's eye, until the handsome young man did something—no one knows what, though the rumors are endless—to earn him a swift exile from both Absalom and his father's regard. His youngest son fled a promising betrothal with House Morilla, took the name of Beirivelle Starshine, and joined the Knights of Lastwall. And Lady Myleena, his eldest daughter and a serious politician in her own right as nomarch of the Coin Council, has proven too headstrong for the old man's tastes, clashing repeatedly with her father over matters personal and public, most famously when she married a common-born merchant against his wishes. Undeterred, Lord Avid soldiers on, though many wonder if he and Lady Myleena can be reconciled, and if not, who will lead House Arnsen after the old man's death.

House Avenstar

An ancient elven noble house with roots in Kyonin, today House Avenstar is but one third of Scion Lady Dyrianna's power base, along with the Courtesans' Guild and Absalom's cult of Calistria. Once enslaved, Lady Dyrianna first achieved a high rank in the cult of the Savored Sting, and then used her position as high hetaera of Calistria to achieve leadership of both the Courtesans' Guild (where she's guildmistress) and House Avenstar.

Over the years, Lady Dyrianna has blended these three groups into a single, harmonious whole—still three distinct organizations, but with a great deal of overlap. Most of the elves in House Avenstar worship Calistria and progress through her mysteries. In turn, many Calistrians practice their goddess's sacred calling under the auspices of the Courtesans' Guild, combining business, pleasure, and worship into one hallowed whole. Many of the Courtesans' Guild's members have likewise found legal and social protection under House Avenstar's outstretched wings, with quite a few being adopted into the house. While members of one of Dyrianna's organizations usually aren't a part of all three, her operation tends to function as an elegant whole, with mystical, political, and economic faces.

It's also the most effective spy network in Absalom. While many outsiders tend to focus on the lustful aspect of Calistria (which *is* important, as many worshippers will note), the goddess is also the patron of guile and deception. Dyrianna receives information from her courtesans, House Avenstar's political contacts, professional spies and investigators who serve the Savored Sting, and the divinations and scryings of Calistria's high clergy, including Dyrianna's old mentor and friend Sarielle Avirzaden.

Typically, the house would then sell or pass along their information to whomever they judged should receive it, carefully staying neutral in Absalom's politics. Recent events have forced Dyrianna to throw her lot in with the Citizens' League, however. Lady Darchana's New Absalom proposes to ban Norgorber's faith in the city, and while Dyrianna has no particular love for the masked god, she fears that Calistria would be next on the list—a goddess of trickery and vengeance tends to make people uncomfortable, and Calistrian companions make easy targets for supposedly "moral" reforms. Still, Dyrianna has kept her support quiet, letting others take the lead while she maintains her connections to other factions.

House Blakros

Originally a Taldan family, House Blakros first made its fortune smuggling along Taldor and Qadira's border 600 years ago. Since then, they've expanded across the globe, relocating to Absalom after being branded outlaws in Taldor. A policy of marriage alliances has seen House Blakros develop blood ties to Qadiran trade princes, Ustalavic counts, Vudrani rajahs, and even the occasional Tian aristocrat or Kellid warlord. The family hasn't limited its

House Ahnkamen

House Arnsen

House Avenstar

House Blakros

LESSER NOBLE HOUSES

Akkesh: One of the city's oldest houses, descended from Garundi followers of Aroden who came to Absalom in its earliest days. Largely centered around Eastgate.

Azari: An ancient house so tied to Aroden's faith that its lone remaining palace is also a storehouse for the discarded religious artifacts of that moribund religion.

Dacilane: A Chelaxian house of middling influence centered in the Ivy District under the affable Lady Miranda. Known for connections to the Pathfinder Society and not being as ruthless as other noble families from Cheliax.

Dureanz: Formerly heavily involved in Absalom's slave trade, the Chelaxian House Dureanz is now on the brink of penury and more dangerous because of it. They are rivals of the much stronger House Candren.

Finch: This Absalomian house rose to prominence 300 years ago but has spent most of the last century mired in scandal.

Madinani: This wealthy Taldan family is strong in arcane magic, and its scions can be found in nearly every magic institution in the city.

Menhemes: An Osirian house that came to Absalom with the Cult of the Hawk and has been influential in Westgate ever since.

Nimz: An old and proud Thuvian house now struggling due to the flagging reputation of Scion Lord Winton, a favorite target of Absalom's press.

alliances to humans, either. For centuries, it was the secret practice to give the oldest daughter from every generation to the Onyx Alliance faction of Shadow Absalom, but that pact was recently ruptured.

Today, House Blakros is best known for its sheer size and reach. The family is famously prolific, and the explicitly matriarchal house ensures that all who marry its children, men and women alike, take the Blakros name. Combined with their far-flung trade connections, their influence spreads across the world.

The family is also famous for its curios and odd relics, a collection started back in the ancient days when they were merely Taldan smugglers and sustained by both their far-reaching trade networks and the dowries given by those who married into the house. The choicest of these relics are displayed at the Blakros Museum, but there are always rumors of treasures secreted away in hidden vaults.

Currently, House Blakros is undergoing a certain amount of reevaluation. For 600 years they were yoked to the Onyx Alliance, to great profit and great personal cost. Now those ties have been shattered, and it's not entirely clear what comes next, and what possible reprisals might follow. To that end, Scion Lady Hamaria has recently been strengthening ties to House Blakros's oldest allies, Houses Damaq and Morilla, as well as her association with the Pathfinder Society. She also supports Lord Avid of House Arnsen for primarch—quite simply, House Blakros has enough problems right now without dealing with major government reforms as well.

House Candren

Not long ago, Scion Lord Hugen—known more popularly as Goodman Hugen for his Andoren sympathies—sat on the Grand Council and held the post of harbormaster, putting him in control of the politically powerful Harbormaster's Grange. House Candren was respected by the workers of the docks and the sailors in the Navy, and it was whispered in certain circles that Goodman Hugen, a disillusioned supporter of Lord Gyr, waited only for the latter's death to launch some sort of popular coup and put a more democratic, Andoran-style government in power. This should have been House Candren's finest moment.

Then Goodman Hugen disappeared (or was disappeared, according several whispered rumors), and when Lord Gyr himself vanished, House Candren simply wasn't ready to act. The new Scion Lady Alidane, sometimes called "Goodmiss Alidane" in her father's honor, had barely gotten her own house's finances together when the Shadow War erupted in full force. Her father's old ally, Lady Adrielle of House Fyrlenn, took up Hugen's old plans and old title, becoming both harbormaster and the Citizens' League candidate for primarch.

All this worries Scion Lady Alidane. House Candren is hardly powerless, with a strong base of support in the Docks and ownership of various trade and shipbuilding concerns, including the prestigious Sea King Shipyards. But Candren has many enemies—the Chelaxian House Tevineg despises them politically, Lady Darchana of the Arcanamirium was a long-time rival of Hugen, Houses Damaq and Blakros see them as rivals in trade, and the Bloody Barbers saw Goodman Hugen's efforts to rally the dockworkers as a direct threat to their interests. While Goodmiss Alidane truly does support Lady Adrielle's efforts with the Citizens' League, she can't help but resent her house's eclipse, and worry over what might happen if the harbormaster's post slips away from House Candren for good.

Right now, House Candren has the distinct feeling of a house under siege. They still have weapons and allies, but time is slipping away, and perhaps, Goodmiss Alidane muses, what's needed is a bold stroke to restore House Candren's fortunes. Something dramatic, something drastic, and perhaps most importantly, something soon.

House Damaq

The single wealthiest noble house in Absalom, House Damaq owes its vaunted status to its near monopoly on Keleshite trade in Absalom, itself a result of Damaq's Qadiran roots. In truth, relatively few of the silks, spices, and fine Qadiran glassware stay in Absalom, instead being shipped further westward. House Damaq maintains trading factors in places as far-flung as Varisia, Senghor, and Minkai, with every Damaq son or daughter spending at least a decade abroad—part education, part supervision.

In addition to helping keep House Damaq fabulously wealthy, its policy of shipping its youth abroad to sow their wild oats gives the house a (not entirely accurate) reputation for reserve, decorum, and sound good sense. House Damaq is often the final judge of standards in Absalom's nobility, the logic being that if staid and sensible House Damaq accepts a new development in the War of Strings, no one can fault the other noble houses for doing the same. Lord Kerkis further polishes this reputation by being conspicuously generous with his house's wealth, funding hospitals, public parks, and churches throughout the city—the House of Healing and Yargos' Mission count House Damaq among their patrons.

Their status as the adjudicators of Absalom's old guard aligns House Damaq quite naturally with the other Optimates, and Lord Kerkis has family alliances with both House Arnsen and House Ormuz through his sister and late wife respectively. The Aspis and Kortos Consortiums, meanwhile, are perpetual thorns in House Damaq's side, business competitors of the worst sort.

Nor are those Kerkis's only problems. Most of the time, sending Damaq's offspring abroad lets them learn and grow. But every so often some young aristocrat, drunk on freedom and a massive expense account, gets into the kind of trouble that can't be easily smoothed over. Lord Kerkis is perpetually on the lookout for agents who are trustworthy, efficient, willing to travel to the ends of the earth, and above all, discreet.

House Foxglove

A wealthy Varisian family originally hailing from Magnimar, the Foxgloves first arrived in Absalom in 4707 AR, when Sendeli Foxglove started buying property in the Ivy District. Other Foxgloves soon followed, finding Varisia an uncomfortable place after some legal trouble involving extant members of the family. One of the exiles was a young Ealan Foxglove, great-grandchild of Vorel Foxglove—Vorel had been a necromancer in Magnimar, and his bleak legacy had troubled the Foxgloves for years. When he was killed, his possessions were distributed to his descendants, and by ill chance, one old book made its way to a teenage Ealan—Vorel's personal spellbook.

When Ealan arrived in Absalom, House Foxglove's fortunes were at a low ebb, and the sensitive Ealan wanted to help somehow. They took to studying their ancestor's book, rejecting a dozen schemes before settling on something safer. Using their own blood, Ealan has called up the ancient spirits of Absalom's greatest trademasters and turned them into spiritual advisors of an altogether new sort. Drawing on their collected cunning and acumen, Ealan has begun giving their mother, Scion Lady Sendeli, uncannily shrewd advice on investments. The first few times Ealan's advice proved good might have been luck or a fluke, but now House Foxglove considers the youth to be a genius in all matters commercial.

Under the guidance of the dead, House Foxglove has risen far and fast, making allies in Absalom's business community. They're part of Lady Darchana's New Absalom bloc, and held up as a symbol of Absalom's possibility and promise. Soon, very soon Ealan hopes, the Foxgloves will be in a position where the youth can simply burn Vorel's spellbook and let the Foxgloves survive on their own merits.

This is in no small part because Ealan is aware the scheme is not sustainable. Other Houses are growing suspicious of House Foxglove's meteoric ascent,

House Candren

House Damaq

House Foxglove

Lord Yamthar's Salons

The private salons held by Lord Yamthar of House Ormuz draw some of Absalom's most brilliant and influential intellectuals, as well as some of its wealthiest patrons. An invitation by any regular attendee is enough to gain entrance, but maintaining Yamthar's interest is required for return engagements–Yamthar expects everyone to contribute to the spirited discussion.

Lord Yamthar

and sooner or later, Ealan is going to lose control of one of their ghosts—already there have been two close calls. Agents of House Ahnkamen and the Pathfinder J Dacilane have been sniffing around, and Samel Maleagant of the Court of Black Paper has smilingly promised friendship to Ealan if ever the youth ever needs it. Something is going to break soon, and it might just be Ealan's nerve.

House Morilla

The most powerful and influential Taldan noble house in Absalom, House Morilla is best known for its enthusiastic approach to settling intrafamily squabbles and questions of succession. Long associated with the Guild of Wonders, a school for assassins, spies, and saboteurs that lies in a corner of Westgate, House Morilla ignores the Guild's strict code of behavior when it comes to blood relatives. While other aristocratic children learn mathematics, history, and rhetoric, House Morilla's progeny learn to check their bedsheets for scorpions, how to expertly use a garrote, and precisely how much it costs to bribe a guardsman to ignore a bloodstain. Though the house is large, fecund, and unusually free in adopting outsiders, the numbers in every generation are substantially pruned as they progress from their teens to their twenties, though by the time House Morilla's children reach their thirties events typically stabilize.

Such is the situation now. Lady Annasendra Varabelle, Lord Donovar, and Lord Juartos are all administrators in the Guild of Wonders (Annasendra teaches stealth and observation, Donovar handles day-to-day administration, and Juartos keeps the books), and all have settled into a tense equilibrium, much to the disappointment of their uncle, the elderly Scion Lord Celedo, who never tires of reminding them that despite being born with six siblings he was an only child by the time he became scion lord. Understandably, most members of House Morilla are intelligent, deadly, and exceedingly traumatized, though a few escape or declare themselves neutral—such as Lady Gloriana Morilla, who associates more with Grand Princess Eutropia of Taldor, or Captain Folant "Ferret" ap Morilla of the Lotus Guard, who does his best to cover up the family's many indiscretions.

Despite their peculiarities, House Morilla is a respected and honorable member of the Optimates bloc, and fully supports Scion Lord Avid of Arnsen for primarch, although relations have been a trifle soured by a recent broken betrothal. Likewise, while the house does not officially worship any particular god, enough past scions have shown favor to Norgorber for the house to be on polite terms with all branches the god's cult. Dr. Bensi Skule of the Bloody Barbers is also an associate of long-standing, though one best kept at arm's length and out of the papers.

House Ormuz

Established not long after the discovery of the sun orchid elixir in Thuvia and the rise of that nation's fortunes, House Ormuz is one of the more relaxed participants in the War of Strings. The family's ties to Thuvia ensure its political clout (the current Scion Lord Yamthar is a cousin of Queen Zamere of Lamasara), and its position astride trade to Garund guarantees its wealth. As a result, House Ormuz is traditionally neutral, and the galas and salons at Palace Ormuz are a popular place for rival factions to meet in peace.

This ease allows Lord Yamthar to indulge what he would be the first to describe as a childish enthusiasm for machines and mechanisms of all sorts. House Ormuz stands as one of the major financial supporters of the Clockwork Cathedral, and a number of Senghor artificers and Alkenstar gunsmiths have been invited to expound on chemistry, physics, and engineering at one of Lord Yamthar's exclusive salons. The scion lord is also a famed collector of all things Jistkan, but particularly anything related to the automatons that appeared near the end of the Imperium. House Ormuz has seen a gradually increasing stream of adventurers, explorers, and inventors approached Lord Yamthar in search of patronage and funding, though the few charlatans who dared to test Lord Yamthar's patience have found that his cheerful nature has some sharp limits.

In truth, there is more to Lord Yamthar's hobby than just a love of things that whirr and click—though that is a heavy factor. Yamthar worries that as great a gift as the sun orchid elixir has been to Thuvia, the country is too dependent on Artokus Kirran's alchemical invention. To that end, Yamthar has been aggressively recruiting alchemists, artificers, and engineers, and giving them impressive stipends to move to Thuvia. His long-term goal is to establish a university of arcane engineering in Lamasara, though that project is still years away. In the meantime, Yamthar's activities have drawn the suspicious eyes of the Aspis Consortium and House Blakros, both of whom sometimes compete with House Ormuz in matters of trade and in the acquisition of Jistkan artifacts.

House Tevineg

The most prominent of the Chelaxian houses in Absalom, House Tevineg is a full-throated supporter of Cheliax's ruling House Thrune and the Asmodean project—Scion Lady Xansippe is styled Beloved of Asmodeus and ranks high within the god's church. In Absalom, House Tevineg has long been considered "the devil we know," an unpleasant and dangerous force, but nevertheless one too useful and powerful to ignore—and one that knows the limits of acceptable behavior. Even the most cynical and amoral of Absalom's aristocrats grows uneasy with the devil-affiliated Tevinegs, but Cheliax is too great a power to disregard. In turn, while House Tevineg may scheme, nudge, and manipulate, Lady Xansippe is canny enough never to push her family beyond the pale.

In 4720 AR, House Tevineg is more powerful than ever and feeling confident in its power. Tevineg's long enemy, Goodman Hugen, is out of the picture, and his successors are weak, unworthy souls. Lady Alidane of House Candren is barely a child in Tevineg's eye, and Adrielle Neprathep is a common-born mercenary without ties to any great houses. Lord Gyr is gone, and Xansippe's ally Darchana of the Arcanamirium is poised to become primarch. Xansippe's long-absent husband, Lord Gulv, has returned to Absalom as Grand Ambassador of Cheliax, heightening the family's influence at home. The Kortos Consortium's proposed Devilmill would both enrich Tevineg's coffers and render the summoning of devils far more socially acceptable. Times, thus, are good for House Tevineg.

Of course, there are certain dangers on the horizon. Adrielle Neprathep is no fool, and it would be wrong to discount Lord Avid of House Arnsen as a candidate for primarch either. For that matter, while Lady Darchana has long been allied to House Tevineg, she has always kept Xansippe at an arm's length (metaphorically speaking, at least) and may prove less pliable should she ascend to the primarch's throne. It is possible that for House Tevineg, pride goes before the fall.

FACTIONS

Noble houses aren't the only players in the War of Strings. The following are some of the other factions that compete in Absalom's battle of influence.

House Morilla

House Ormuz

House Tevineg

Monsters in the Streets!

One sure way to tell a tourist from a local in Absalom is to gauge their reaction when they brush shoulders with a gargoyle in the streets, encounter a carriage drawn by oversized spiders, or notice a naga shopping for jewelery at the market. In other regions, these so-called "monsters" might send people running in hopes that a band of heroes will come to their rescue, but in Absalom, having such creatures as neighbors is just an everyday fact of life. Indeed, many citizens take it as a point of pride to have monstrous neighbors, as they see these fellow citizens as proof of Absalom's popularity, diversity, and overall opportunity.

Dr. Benski Skule

The Arcanamirium

One of the most famous schools of magic in the Inner Sea and certainly the largest in Absalom, the Arcanamirium espouses a practical approach to magic—less esoteric research, more work on concrete applications. Over the years, this has given the Arcanamirium an increasing role in Absalom's politics. Recently, Lady Darchana, the Archdean of the Arcanamirium, has pushed forward her candidacy for primarch at the head of the New Absalom bloc. An eminently pragmatic woman whose skill at political infighting has been honed by wrangling fractious wizards, Lady Darchana has surprisingly idealistic goals. She and her allies seek the greater involvement of common citizens in government affairs, tariff reforms meant to spur investment and stronger international trade, and increased taxation of Absalom's noble houses.

Realizing the vision of New Absalom will require Lady Darchana to defeat two rival candidates for the primarch's seat. Lord Avid of the Optimates is a deadly threat, the embodiment of everything that frustrates Darchana and her supporters about Absalom's current order. She's more kindly disposed toward Lady Adrielle of the Citizens' League, seeing her as a political naïf with noble goals. Naivety is not a flaw Darchana suffers from, and she's made pragmatic agreements with various noble houses and merchant consortiums, agreeing to overlook House Foxglove's odd behavior and humor the Kortos Consortium's Devilmill scheme.

Unfortunately for her, Lady Darchana also must worry about her rear flank. The Arcanamirium has traditionally drawn from across Absalom and beyond, and while the senior faculty supports her, the rest of the university is more split. The school is rife with tiny student cabals and more serious conspiracies among the journeymen mages, with goals ranging from benign to terrifying and methods running the gamut from fuzzy-headed to realistic. So far, Darchana has managed to keep the melting pot that is the Arcanamirium from boiling over, but she only must slip up once for the consequences to get exciting.

Aspis Consortium

A transnational syndicate of corrupt merchants and amoral mercenaries, the Aspis Consortium has always had a strong presence in Absalom. For years, it was a profitable enough operation, though the Consortium never had quite the dominant position in Absalom that it was able to secure in other lands—there was simply too much local competition, both from the homegrown Kortos Consortium and the mercantile operations of noble houses, particularly House Damaq and House Blakros. The fact that Absalom was home to the headquarters of the Pathfinder Society, the Aspis Consortium's hated foe, also didn't help matters.

In 4715 AR the Consortium overreached, and their attack on the Pathfinders' Grand Lodge backfired dramatically. Today, the Consortium's reputation in Absalom is just a hint higher than that of slavers and thieves' guilds, and many of the more respectable institutions in the city refuse to have anything to do with them. Consortium operations are but a shadow of what they used to be. The faction is thus currently engaged in a period of rebuilding and rebranding. Both of the Consortium's executives, the professional and proper A. X. Adrius and the serpent-tongued Jaydis Milon Malddis IV, have been in Absalom in recent months to smooth over any ruffled feathers, with all prior crimes and misbehavior blamed

on rogue agents and misunderstandings. To simply buy some good will, the Aspis Consortium has signed on to Lady Darchana's New Absalom program, and has made overtures of friendship and business cooperation with both the Kortos Consortium and House Foxglove. It's been expensive, but both Adrius and Malddis believe that having friends in Absalom will prove far more profitable down the line. And if one of those new friends should happen to be able to place a spoke in the Pathfinders' wheels, then all the better.

Bloody Barbers

According to their own lore, the Bloody Barbers got their start when a group of barbers in the Puddles banded together to raise their blades against the notoriously corrupt guards in the district. Today, they're the largest and most powerful thieves' guild in Absalom, controlling quite nearly every barbershop in the city, along with a good share of the junk dealers, chimney sweeps, wheelwrights, limners, coal carriers, and bathhouses. They specialize in burglary, fencing, and the distribution of illegal narcotics, ranging from mundane opium to the rare black lotus. Those who get in their way are given a "crimson shave"—a slit throat.

The current leader of the Bloody Barbers is the mysterious alchemist Dr. Bensi Skule, who provides a range of dubious concoctions to aid the Barbers in their work, and who has most of the senior leadership addicted to serums only he can provide. What few know is that the original Dr. Skule died decades ago. Long ago, Skule captured a troll cub and raised him as an experimental subject, torturing the troll to discover the secrets of his regeneration. In time, Skule was killed, and the troll, having no better idea, simply stepped into the role of the doctor. He established a new laboratory in the guild headquarters, and when the Barber's former leader, Anken the Cutter, retired to a life of ease, Skule became guildmaster, even though as a full-grown troll in the middle of Absalom, he hardly ever leaves his hidden laboratory.

Today, Skule has paused his experiments in favor of politics. What Skule wants more than anything else is to openly and freely exist in Absalom. He wants to attend operas at the Ivy Playhouse and read treatises at the Forae Logos, not disguised, but as the troll Dr. Bensi Skule, all nine feet of him. To that end, Skule has made a deal with Lord Celedo of House Morilla. The Bloody Barbers would wade into the political fight on behalf of the Optimates; in exchange, when Lord Avid becomes the primarch, Skule will get a formal, public declaration of citizenship, an unimpeachable writ marking him as a member of Absalom's upper class. Celedo gave his assurances, and since then the Bloody Barbers have been bedeviling the Citizens' League and New Absalom, heckling speakers, sabotaging events, and getting into street brawls with supporters.

Recently though, Skule has become convinced that Celedo is going to cheat him. As such, the doctor has been growing increasingly frantic to get a direct agreement with Lord Avid in writing, something the canny old mage has managed to dodge so far.

Court of Black Paper

Absalom is one of the few places in the Inner Sea where the cult of Norgorber can act openly. Devotees can freely rent or purchase property, priests can work without maintaining time-consuming cover identities, and sects can legally secure loans or build temples. Lady Darchana's plan to have the religion banned has thrown the cult into a panic, and one of Norgorber's high priests, Samel Maleagant, has been pulling every string he can so that someone defeats the Second Spell Lord in the race for primarch. As one of the city's most feared and respected lawyers, and Senior Priest-Advocate of the Court of Black Paper, he has a lot of strings.

The Court of Black Paper is a heterodox branch of the Cult of Norgorber devoted to the god's Reaper of Reputation aspect. Generations ago, one

Arcanamirium

Aspis Consortium

Bloody Barbers

CRIMINALS, LAWYERS AND OTHER SCUM

Whether or not your enemies are criminals or lawyers, neither of these august occupations limit their potential roles in society. Absalom features plenty of corrupt lawyers who are as destructive as any serial killer or arsonist, and many law-breaking criminals who have done more good for the city than most aristocrats ever could.

Samel Maleagant

of the god's priestesses experienced a revelation—spying was difficult and thankless work. But there existed a profession where, not only did people tell you their secrets of their own free will, but the receivers of such secrets were protected by both law and custom. The first priest-advocates came from this realization, lawyers sworn to Norgorber who openly proclaimed their allegiance to the god of secrets, their discretion divinely sanctioned. Today, the Court of Black Paper is both Absalom's most ruthless law school and a powerful legal cartel, with ambassadors, guilds, and noble houses among their clientele.

Other cultists of Norgorber view the Court as just shy of heretical, but they respect the lawyers' ability to harvest secrets in bulk and appreciate their established skill in helping fellow cultists avoid the hangman's noose. That the Court offers its services to Norgorberites for free only bolsters this appreciation. The worshippers of the Gray Master are typically the Court's closest allies. The priests of Blackfingers, including the outspoken high priest Jonis Flakfatter, tend to be more ambivalent, though they still usually go along with the Court and the Gray Master's priests. The problem, for Maleagant, is the Skinsaw Cult.

Even as Maleagant throws the Court's considerable weight behind the Citizens' League (to the acute discomfort of its more idealistic reformers), he has been fending off an internal schism in the Cult of Norgorber. The holy killers of the Skinsaw Man see every problem as one to be solved with murder, and Maleagant is starting to run out of ways of to placate them. A former conman before he found religion, Maleagant has started looking for some deniable catspaw to affect a little housecleaning, and if he has his way, the only sign of the Norgorberite's internal troubles will be a few discreet corpses. If not, Absalomian politics is liable to get considerably messier.

The Firebrands

The Firebrands first arrived in Absalom in 4717 AR, but when they did, they found a number of home-grown radical groups already in place—Absalom's history with slavery meant that there was no shortage of abolitionists, ranging from small gangs of slave-rescuers to genteel political crusaders to affiliates of the Bellflower Network. The end of slavery was a grand victory for these groups, but it also left them temporarily rudderless, uncertain of what to focus on next. The Firebrands proved to have many ideas.

Today, the majority of Absalomian Firebrands are a loose collection of community organizations, political gangs, and activist cells. On the few occasions that they are united toward a single goal, it's through the activities of Purewater Home, a Firebrand cell located in the Puddles and run by Hope, a former street-brawler and criminal turned priestess of the Redeemer Queen. The Absalomian Firebrands are a fractious bunch, but Hope is typically able to keep them all pointed in more-or-less the same direction through sheer energy and creatively profane threats.

The Firebrands are deeply involved in the question of the primarchy and are closely aligned with Adrielle Neprathep's Citizens' League. While Neprathep and House Candren work in the realms of high politics, it's the Firebrands who are in the streets, organizing workers and sailors, arranging demonstrations and protests, and fending off attacks from the Bloody Barbers on League speakers. It's a rough business, and more than one Firebrand has been badly injured in street battles with Skule's ruffians. Thankfully, the anonymity that the Firebrands provide has proved vital in keeping most of its members safe. It becomes particularly difficult to tell Firebrands apart when so many arrive from outside of Absalom to parade in the streets and belt out their latest boasts.

Despite all this activity, most Firebrands are cynical that Neprathep even has a chance at the primarch's seat, or that she'll be allowed to do anything constructive even if she does become primarch—schooled by experiences

with Cheliax, the Firebrands believe that Absalom's aristocracy will never willingly give up any real power. For now, the Firebrands serve as the Citizens' League's militant wing, but Hope is quietly laying the groundwork for when Neprathep fails and more drastic measures become necessary. She'd prefer to be proven wrong, but hope, ironically, is one thing Hope has never had much of.

Kortos Consortium

The Kortos Consortium is a cartel of merchant families and trading concerns based in the town of Diobel, Absalom's largest (and most cantankerous) subject town. The Consortium represents the economic interests of Greater Kortos, controlling most overland trade with Absalom. The scheming lords of the Consortium, many of them brazen supporters of smuggling or even smugglers themselves, are constantly in search of any advantage over the trade guilds of Absalom proper, so their ambitious leaders took notice when a wizard named Verimachius proposed a project known as the Devilmill.

Eons ago, the Runelords of Thassilon developed engines powered by captive diabolic spirits, the most famous example being the dam at Skull Gorge built by Karzoug the Claimer. More recently, Chelaxian wizards have attempted to recreate these infernal engines, with mixed success. Then came the Runelord Alaznist's final defeat and the birth of New Thassilon. One of the many far-reaching consequences of these momentous events was that the ancient time-shifted wizard Verimachius the Architect joined the Kortos Consortium. Before Earthfall, Verimachius had only been a journeyman mage-engineer, but he believes that he can refine the Chelaxian techniques and produce a scaled-down version of Skull Gorge. Specifically, he plans to use bound devils to power a vast foundry, a steel mill where the heat is provided by a single enormous fiend, while lesser imps operate the furnaces. If Verimachius's scheme works, the Kortos Consortium might be able to corner the Absalomian steel market.

This is, of course, easier said than done. Absalom's guilds would never allow such a project in their city, and the city's priests are also likely to object to any plan that involves summoning devils by the platoon. For that matter, while Verimachius is a brilliant mage, he's hardly a runelord, and needs arcane aid to bind all these fiends. To that end, the Kortos Consortium has approached their allies in the New Absalom bloc with the idea. House Tevineg and the Aspis Consortium are both intrigued by the possibilities, and while Lady Darchana is decidedly dubious about the enterprise, she sees little harm in humoring them for the time being.

Onyx Alliance

An ancient conspiracy centered in Absalom's Plane of Shadow reflection, the Alliance has recently had a change of management. For years, in exchange for unparalleled influence and resources, they had taken the firstborn daughters of House Blakros to use as slaves for their own occult schemes—only to find that the latest stolen child, Sarnia Blakros, turned her pain and rage into enough psychic power to overthrow the Onyx Alliance's leadership. Now master of the Alliance, Sarnia Blakros has reoriented it away from the slave and soul trade and instead toward securing various relics and supernatural objects from Absalom, especially from her former family.

While Sarnia's long-term goals remain unclear, in the short term she has been busy securing her control over the Alliance and rebuilding its presence in Absalom. Loyalists to the old leadership find themselves firmly but politely instructed to go very far away, and those who are hard of understanding are persuaded in more forceful fashion. The other extraplanar powers of Shadow Absalom, notably the elder umbral dragon Argrinyxia, the Shifting Lady of Ebon Scales, have been assured that Sarnia's plans are no threat to them. A recruitment drive draws new blood into the faction; mostly

Court of Black Paper

Firebrands

Kortos Consortium

Onyx Alliance

DEEP SHADOWS

Among certain circles, particularly those occupied by adventurers, it can be easy to lose sight of how mysterious and otherworldly the Shadow Plane is. For the bulk of Absalom's citizenry, the idea of the Shadow Plane is closer to myth and superstition than fact, while the existence of Shadow Absalom is a truth that most of this world's citizens haven't even heard, much less pondered.

Sarnia Blakros

fetchlings (known also as kayals), but also even rarer ancestries such as d'ziriaks or wayangs.

Replacing House Blakros as the Alliance's Material Plane agents is more difficult. Any house as strong as Blakros is too powerful to be a safe partner—Sarnia is looking for agents, not rivals, and thinks it might be better to raise up a lesser house, as the Alliance did once before. This, though, would require weakening the great houses of Absalom by having them expend all their resources in the Shadow War. Happily, the Onyx Alliance has a lot of experience in keeping such conflicts bubbling.

Pathfinder Society

The world-famous Pathfinder Society adventurers' guild originated in Absalom more than 400 years ago, an evolution of the original "hunting lodges" from which questing heroes aided the city for most of its history. Absalom has long had a close association with adventurers, due in no small part to the fabulous wealth they attract and the considerable assistance they've provided throughout the years in defending the city from a near-endless parade of conquering tyrants and would-be godlings. Some four centuries on, however, it's become clear that basing the international headquarters of the Pathfinder Society in Absalom's Foreign Quarter has had a reverse impact—many in the city believe that sieges like the Black Echelon Uprising and the latest assault by the Whispering Tyrant wouldn't have occurred if the Pathfinders based their headquarters elsewhere, and the public reputation of the organization has suffered considerably in recent years.

To be sure, the folk of Absalom still love their heroes, but the collateral damage caused by longstanding rivalries with organizations like the Aspis Consortium is getting more difficult to ignore. The Society manages to avoid too much ire thanks in part to a strong partnership with the captain of the Foreign Quarter guard, Shristi Melipdra (whose sister is a Pathfinder agent). They respond to critics by acknowledging that, while they might be responsible for certain problems in the city, far more often they protect it. Still, it's clear the tide is beginning to turn. This is in no small part due to the efforts of Westgate museum curator Sanloria Percota and her Peacebuilder Alliance, a group of influential citizens and political activists who are openly critical of Pathfinder activity. Percota blames the Society for the death of her son, who was killed in 4712 when internal Pathfinder intrigue loosed a trio of black dragons upon the city to devastating effect. The public criticisms from the Peacebuilders were at least in part responsible for the voluntary unmasking of Decemvirate leader Eliza Petrulengo, who now serves as a public liaison and figurehead for the organization's ten leaders. While Absalomians in general appreciate this new, more open approach, the popular press—particularly Percota-penned editorials in the *Mother's Message*—remain openly hostile, focusing more on the nine mysterious leaders who have retained their anonymity rather than the "public puppet" they have placed before the populace.

Still, the Pathfinder Society remains enormously influential, with enduring relationships with guild leaders, scion lords, and an international network of explorers. Ambitious folk inspired by the *Pathfinder Chronicles* still flock to the Society in hopes of not just establishing a treasure-filled nest egg and a degree of personal mythology, but for the important political and cultural contacts made at all levels of the organization.

The Skinsaw Cult

Absalom's Skinsaw Cult claims to be the oldest sect dedicated to Norgorber in the world—cult tradition states that two cutthroats were tossing a body into the Starstone Chasm the night after Norgorber's ascension when they received a divine command to found the cult. The Skinsaw Cult of Vyre in

Cheliax is in fact older (having been established even before Norgorber's ascension to godhood), but the Absalomians, led by the hedonistic Wrent Dicaspiron, treat these claims as heresy.

As a result, the Skinsaw Cult is the most traditionally-minded of Absalom's Norgorberite cultists, and the ones least interested in Absalom's tolerance of Norgorber's worship. After all, while secrets can be perfectly legal, and poison and thievery lesser crimes, the Skinsaw Cult's activities are transgressions of the most heinous sort. The Skinsaw Cult tends to disdain the Court of Black Paper, seeing them as blasphemers and dilettantes perverting their god's doctrine for their own comfort. The two groups usually ignore each other, but as politics heat up in Absalom, this polite truce is starting to fray.

Yet even though the Skinsaw Cult cares little for Absalom's religious freedom, Dicaspiron and many of her followers find Lady Darchana's efforts to have Norgorber worship outlawed an intolerable insult. To disdain Absalom's acceptance is their right, but they will not allow that right to be taken away. In the high councils of the Cult of Norgorber, Dicaspiron has taken to arguing that the cult should take matters into its own knife-bearing hands, failing to see any issue with simply assassinating every ranking member of the New Absalom faction in one blood-soaked night. The cults of Norgorber's other aspects realize that this would inevitably turn Darchana into a martyr and strengthen the calls for the cult's suppression, but few of the Skinsaw Cultists care to tarnish their faith for political gain. When the most sacred tool is a knife, every problem looks like a throat.

For the time being, the Court of Black Paper and their allies among the cults of Blackfingers and the Gray Master have managed to shout down Dicaspiron and her killers, but as tensions continue to rise, the Cult of Norgorber may be in for a brutal bloodletting.

Vault of Abadar

Being a priest of Abadar in Absalom represents the height of success to the faithful. They manage the vaults, both the grand Vault of Abadar in the Ivy District and the lesser temple-banks throughout the city. They give financial advice and enforce contracts, loan money and collect debts, and generally see to it that Absalom grows steadily more prosperous. Even the politics of the Vault are considered dull, as it puts its weight behind Lord Avid of House Arnsen for primarch to ensure continuity and stability.

Right now, Jostlin Ferqyr, Keeper of the Vault of Abadar, only wishes her life were dull. Her problems started when workers knocking down an old building in the Precipice Quarter found a half-mummified corpse immured in the walls. The body, a good four years dead, was identified as Meridayn Velric, Third Keeper and the man in charge of the church's day-to-day operations. This came as something of a shock, since Velric had been working at the Vault when the body was discovered. The Vault's militant arm, the Brotherhood of Abadar, was sent to apprehend "Velric," only to find that he had already vanished. Concern turned to panic when the accounts were double-checked, and it emerged that the Vault of Abadar was short. Short enough money to fund a private army. Short enough money to trigger a run on the god's bank, and crash Absalom's economy.

Since then, tensions inside the Vault of Abadar have grown even worse. The priests suspect everyone and anyone, with the Cult of Norgorber and the Aspis Consortium the most likely suspects. The paladins of the Brotherhood have been desperately searching high and low for Velric's murderer. In the meantime, Keeper Ferqyr needs to find enough money to discreetly shore up the Vault and avoid a panic. She's considering asking House Damaq for help, but the irony of the god of wealth's priesthood asking for charity could cause a schism if it becomes known. Thus, Ferqyr waits, hoping that Velric's killer is found and enough money can be recovered, but the clock is ticking, and the whispers are growing.

Pathfinder Society

Skinsaw Cult

Vault of Abadar

Seal of the First Guard

MILITARY

Unlike the district guards, Absalom's military protects the city as a whole, along with its outlying territories. These duties are broken down between three branches: the First Guard secures Absalom's walls and gates against attacks and spies; the Navy secures the waters; and the Starwatch manages internal security beyond individual districts. The First Guard is deployed in force against foes on land, while the Navy defends Absalom from the sea, occasionally striking nearby pirate ports. The Starwatch pursues criminals, fugitives, and foreign agents in the city or fleeing from it (whether by land or sea).

Absalom's military is large for a city-state, but small for a nation. It has few ranks, although these can be broken down into First, Second, Third, and Fourth within a rank. Ranks are recognized between branches only when jurisdiction overlaps or a formal arrangement is made.

Circumstance determines the shifting boundaries of authority between military branches and the civilian district guards. The First Guard has little power beyond the city walls unless Absalom is besieged or an enemy force discovered, in which case they can deputize all district guards. If the Navy or First Guard overstep their power, it's the Starwatch's duty to discipline them. If the Starwatch fails to keep the city stable (or makes things worse, perhaps under orders from corrupt councilors), the First Guard can bar the Starwatch from the city.

The district guards are often deputized to assist the military during sieges, but they otherwise have no authority beyond their districts and aren't expected to defend the city from outside threats. The Sally Guard and Post Guard are exceptions; since they manage city gates, they're always responsible for city defense and are trained accordingly.

The Eagle Garrison, based out of the Watchtower in Eastgate, is composed of able scouts who provide vital reconnaissance to the First Guard. In addition to surveying the area around Absalom, the Eagles also maintain outposts in the Immenwood, Kortos Mounts, and other strategically important sites around the Isle of Kortos. They aren't supposed to act after locating threats, merely report their findings. If they do intervene, they're rebuked for taking unnecessary risks and potentially sparking intermilitary turf wars. One of the rank and file, Pyl Gillseed, has befriended various centaurs and minotaurs while out in the wild, leading his compatriots to wonder about his intentions. In the meantime, Pyl struggles vainly to convince the First Guard that minotaurs don't have to be driven off every time they come near a settlement.

In times of siege, the varlokkur essentially act as a minor fourth arm of Absalom's military under the third spell lord, tasked with defending the city from magical threats and providing magical support to military actions. Varlokkur are assigned platforms to cast large-scale spells on all wall towers as well as Fort Tempest, the Kin Gate, and the Postern. In peacetime, some varlokkur are assigned provisional positions under high-ranking members of the First Guard, Starwatch, and other divisions.

FIRST GUARD

The First Guard defends Absalom from external military threats. They're the oldest branch of Absalom's military, named for the militia who helped Aroden defend the city during its very first siege. Their priority is always the city's defense, including making sure the walls and people are able to withstand sieges. After that, the First Guard is often sent to fend off raiders, no matter what type of creature they may be. During times of siege, the First Guard is allowed to operate with impunity to ensure Absalom's safety.

The captain of the First Guard is also titled Commander Militant of Absalom. The city's current commander militant, Chun Hye-Seung, is sworn for life under the First Laws of Absalom with defending the city from external threats. The commander militant is under no obligation to abide by the wishes of the primarch or the Grand Council. The only two ways one can be removed is if they're formally found to be incompetent by the Grand Council or if they're executed by the captain of the Starwatch after being found guilty of crimes against the city by the First Lady of Laws.

Most of the First Guard are soldiers tasked with patrolling the walls, guarding the gates, and training to confront threats beyond the city walls. They are typically drilled in the styles of combat that helped drive off the most recent siege, favoring patient defense and carefully-timed counterattacks. Soldiers who serve the logistical needs of the First Guard fall under the command of the quartermaster and have the title rasar.

A smaller contingent of First Guard serve as apprentices in the Craft Vaults, where they learn the basics of a trade while getting paid for their military service. This is one of the few ways in Absalom to pick up a new trade without preexisting connections or money to secure a private apprenticeship, and the turnover for these young crafters is fairly high. However, any crafter who signs up for a second 5-year term of service is immediately seen as a major asset to the First Guard. While these carpenters, smiths, and tanners rarely become officers, they're often treated with more respect than actual officers by the rank and file. Those who specialize in imbuing weapons with magic, building siege weapons, or repairing and maintaining the keep's walls usually gain the officer rank of Forge Gear or Siege Gear, and are among the most valued and protected of all the First Guard.

In a city keenly aware of the necessity of self-defense, the First Guard is very popular and well-respected, especially after their recent successes fending off the Fiendflesh Siege and the Whispering Tyrant's armies. As a result, they have

DOMESTIC ENEMIES

Beyond the threat of foreign invaders, a collection of enemies (or perceived enemies) local to the Isle of Kortos inspire numerous day-to-day engagements with the First Guard. Cavalry patrols keep the roads and Cairnlands relatively safe, but troubles with local centaurs of the Immenwood and minotaurs of the Riven Hills and Kortos Mounts remain constant threats. The Scrape, dominating the island's northeast reaches, is a jagged wasteland, home to opportunistic bandits and terrible monsters, many based in the ruins of the once majestic settlement of High Harbor. Occasionally, trouble brews in even the more settled sectors of Starstone Isle, such as when tensions run hot between the city and the so-called Inlanders, isle inhabitants who consider themselves outside Absalomian jurisdiction.

THREATS FROM ABOVE

Absalom's military has specific roles in defending the land and sea of the region, yet what of airborne dangers? For smaller-scale threats involving a single deadly foe, such as a flying dragon, the services of powerful heroes are often the best option for Absalom's military. Full-scale invasions of flying armies are rare, but not unheard of, and in these rare instances, all three branches of the military set aside their rivalries and rely heavily on the varlokkur for magical assistance.

Symo of Wynsal

been flush with renewed support from the Grand Council at the insistence of the populace. The basic design of the First Guards' gear has not changed in over two centuries, but with increased funding and a resurgence of attacks on the city, the traditionalist forgemasters have acknowledged that innovation might be needed.

With its retired leader Wynsal Starborn now the acting primarch, however, the First Guard has found itself uncomfortably dragged into the middle of political turmoil. Officers who thought themselves outside politics are accused of power plays when merely executing their duties. Already, the acting primarch has selected a new commander militant and harbormaster, and there is talk of at least one additional high office holder retiring soon. Many of Absalom's more politically-engaged citizens suspect the military of unduly influencing these decisions and are deeply uncomfortable with this prolonged state of emergency; these residents have begun to pressure the First Guard to have Wynsal Starborn step down or distance himself from his military connections. Many in the First Guard, however, are extremely impressed with Lord Wynsal's conduct and hope he will be elected new primarch permanently. Commoners who believe Wynsal should be the actual primarch have started using "of Wynsal" after their names to denote their loyalty, rather than "of Gyr," which has sparked some fear of a true military coup brewing.

Undead have been a frequent problem for the First Guard since Tar-Baphon's recent attack in 4719 AR. Even after the Whispering Tyrant's destruction, members of the Whispering Way and roving undead continue to haunt the site of his defeat in the Cairnlands—the Tyrant's Grasp—and occasionally strike into other areas. At least once every few months a pack of ghouls attacks a merchant caravan or devours an Eagle Garrison scout, prompting the First Guard send forth a squad to deal with the problem. To prevent brigands from gaining a permanent foothold, the First Guard has begun hiring adventurers to clear the area at regular intervals.

New First Siege Gear Symo of Wynsal has made a point of researching methods of raining holy water over large areas, using catapults or launching bundles of simple aspergillum balls. He recently assigned Siege Gears to all large-area siege weapons around the clock in case of surprise attacks by undead, which resulted in some passing centaurs being accidentally drenched in holy water after being fired upon by sleep-deprived Siege Gears, nearly causing an all-out battle. Now that Symo wants to hire centaurs to help move the siege weapons, he can't get any of his subordinates to go into the field.

Kortos Cavalry

The Kortos Cavalry is both a military detachment of the First Guard and part of a district watch called the Sally Guard, based in the huge Sally Gate in Westgate. While inside the city, they form the bulk of the Sally Guard. Outside the city, they're the Kortos Calvary, considered knights in the service of Absalom.

The Kortos Cavalry is overseen by the Commander Winton of House Nimz. When administering the Sally Guard's patrol duties within Westgate, he answers to the Westgate's district council; outside the city and in times of siege, the commander of the Kortos Cavalry answers only to the commander militant of the First Guard. During times when Commander Winton is busy managing the Sally Guard in Westgate, Second Commander Zifelez of Gyr organizes mounted patrols outside the city. She spends most of her time riding the roads around Kortos, following up on leads provided by the Eagle Garrison. Lately a number of knights traveling with her have fallen deathly ill following tense stand-offs with centaurs near the Tyrant's Grasp, and she fears that either the centaurs or the blighted land are the cause of it.

The Kortos Cavalry regularly patrols the road to Diobel except when Absalom is under siege. When other areas around Absalom become unsafe, the commander militant of the First Guard directs the Kortos Cavalry to investigate. The cavalry is also charged with harrying enemies approaching the city and dealing with any raiders who attack Absalom's people.

While the Kortos Cavalry operates outside the city, its knightly members have a great deal of leeway in how they fulfill their duties. They're trusted to adapt to changing circumstances and keep the city apprised of emerging threats. Members of the Kortos Cavalry can easily apply for dispensation to travel, which they are expected to do in pursuit of Absalom's enemies overseas, requiring them to defend any Absalomians they encounter while abroad. Knights with travel dispensation commonly explore siege castles in the Cairnlands or other potentially useful ruins alongside the Pathfinder Society. They also earn goodwill by assisting allied nations in military endeavors (provided, of course, these endeavors don't threaten Absalomian interests) and tracking down pirates or spies who have targeted Absalom.

Any member of the Sally Guard or citizen of Absalom can seek entry into the Kortos Cavalry, though priority is given to applicants who can provide and maintain their own horses. This theoretically means their knighthood is open to anyone and makes the Kortos Cavalry Absalom's most egalitarian knightly order. While the Sally Guard and Westgate citizens love to boast of this fact, citizens from poorer districts often point out that the informal requirements to maintain a horse, armor, and weapons isn't exactly egalitarian when so many in the city struggle to pay their bills and support their families.

STARWATCH

The Starwatch enforces Absalom's laws throughout the whole city, formally given directives by the Grand Council. Their primary focus is preventing citywide crimes or those spanning multiple districts, since district watches lack the authority to investigate outside their jurisdiction. They focus their limited numbers on high-profile, large-scale, and high-impact crimes, as well as on neutralizing spies within the city.

The Starwatch is also technically responsible for law enforcement in parts of Absalom that lack paid district guards, including the Precipice Quarter, the Puddles, Azlanti Keep, Pilot Island, the towns around Absalom's walls, and the Flotsam Graveyard. Except during sieges, they have a standard policing rotation in Azlanti Keep, Copperwood, Dawnfoot, Shoreline, Westerhold, and Pilot Island. They mostly leave the Puddles to the Muckruckers and only investigate other minimally populated areas with good cause.

As a part of maintaining Absalom's internal security, the Starwatch investigates alleged abuses of power by the First Guard, Navy, varlokkur, and district watches. This has, perhaps inevitably, led to bad blood between the Starwatch and anyone they investigate. Captain Asilia's reputation for exposing corruption no matter the offender's station (especially in Absalom's notorious Navy) has been vital to maintaining public trust in the city's government.

As such, the Starwatch most often operate undercover. When they wish to be known, they simply display their infamous iron badge, which depicts a five-pointed star surrounded by a nimbus of brilliant fire. If the Starwatch is accused of misconduct, they in turn are investigated by independent agents (often First Guard officers, private investigators, or adventurers) appointed by the fourth lord of laws. The captain of the Starwatch is appointed by the entire Grand Council.

Each councilor on the Grand Council has the authority to issue orders to the Starwatch, although Captain Asilia and her lieutenants have leeway in how to execute them. It's not a perfect system and has in the past been abused, tarnishing the reputation of the entire Starwatch. Councilors have used

BRANCH RIVALRIES

A not-always friendly rivalry exists between the three branches of the military, particularly in areas where jurisdiction clashes, such as along the city's expansive waterfront. While significant threats can convince the three groups to work together, these rivalries remain one of the city's biggest weaknesses, as canny criminals or sinister masterminds can use these conflicts to their own advantage.

Asilia of Gyr

HIGH COUNCIL INFLUENCE

The commander militant of the First Guard, captain of the Starwatch, and the Navy's sea lord each have a seat on the High Council, giving Absalom's military what some consider an outsized voice (when they manage to move past jurisdictional squabbles). This fuels worried speculation that Wynsal Starborn's ascension is a soft military coup.

Sea Lord Lerefys

Starwatch teams as spies and saboteurs in personal vendettas, concealing the true motives behind their orders under the guise of protecting state secrets.

The Starwatch lost numerous low-ranking members to the Silent Tide during the Black Echelon Uprising three years ago. This has forced the organization to spend precious resources recruiting and training new members while already stretched thin. As a result, Absalom is rife with unsolved mysteries and unsolved crimes. Assassins from enemy nations make plans against Wynsal Starborn and other powerful leaders while foreign agents, especially from Cheliax and Qadira, have grown much bolder.

In times of siege, the Starwatch's normal duties are suspended so they can provide military assistance to the First Guard (who commands the Starwatch along Absalom's walls) and Harbormaster's Grange (who takes control of Starwatch Keep).

NAVY

Absalom's Navy is its first line of defense against hostile foreign powers and generally its last chance to catch fleeing foes. Most of the Navy patrols for pirates around the central Inner Sea. Between voyages, Absalom's naval vessels dock at Escadar to avoid further clogging Absalom's constricted port. Only the Wave Riders are retained in force within Absalom itself.

Navy sailors and especially officers have a reputation for self-importance. The people of Absalom traditionally shower members of the Navy with respect, since they're the branch of Absalom's military that consistently faces the most regular danger fending off would-be invaders. This reverence has soured a bit in recent years, as multiple attacks have managed to almost completely bypass the Navy.

Feelings toward the Navy have polarized in Escadar, as Absalom's vassal settlement is heavily dominated by the naval industry. Those who supply the Navy and keep the city running are increasingly frustrated with sailors and officers putting their needs ahead of the rest of the settlement. With the Navy controlling most of Escadar's law enforcement and Navy interests always coming first, crimes without Navy victims are often not prioritized, if not overlooked entirely. The Starwatch occasionally attempts to investigate such cases, but finds the people of Escadar too afraid of the Navy's power to cooperate. Scion Lady Hamaria of House Blakros has all but given up hope that the Starwatch will move forward with her demanded investigation of the Navy. Somehow, pirates have managed to strike several of her ships at exactly the moment it would be hardest for Absalom's naval vessels to interfere, and she suspects someone in the Navy is taking bribes to help the pirates.

Sea Lord Lerefys of House Kethlin oversees Absalom's Navy—the primarch traditionally appoints himself Sea Lord, but Lord Gyr took the title of First Spell Lord instead. Many consider Lerefys to be a compromise appointment, a hard-headed traditionalist chosen to appease the Grand Council in order to get Gyr's friend Asilia appointed captain of the Starwatch. Lerefys usually defers to the wishes of more traditionalist councilors like Diplomatic Minister Ferridan Severus and Chancellor Kerkis, and chooses his subordinates for perceived toughness rather than strategic acumen.

Wave Riders

The Wave Riders are the famous nautical cavalry of Absalom, with each knight trained to ride a battle-hardened war hippocampus. They are led by Captain Sevana Kinhan, who distinguished herself in the Black Echelon Uprising of 4717 AR. The Wave Riders mainly patrol the waters of Absalom Harbor and shores of the Isle of Kortos. However, when necessary they can request leave to pursue Absalom's enemies abroad, most often pirates and slavers. The Wave Riders based in Absalom operate out of Starwatch Keep's docks.

Wave Riders typically use magically-buoyant light armor and light weapons, suitable for harassing ships or defending Absalom's vessels from aquatic monsters. Their missions tend toward scouting, sniping enemy officers, scuttling boats, and sabotaging enemy rigging. In most cases, the Wave Riders are limited to operations within sight of land for the sake of the riders. During longer forays, the Navy deploys ships called wave tenders, which are low circular barges that enable the Wave Riders to emerge in a central pool where a hippocampus can safely sleep while the rider bunks aboard the ship.

VARLOKKUR

The varlokkur belong to no one branch of the military, nor are they technically members of the ranks. Specialists in magic, particularly in the creation of supernatural defenses and the investigation of crimes involving magical elements, the varlokkur consist of spellcasters drawn from all four magical traditions. Though small in number, they have a larger-than-life presence. Arcane casters and priests work alongside occultists and primalists in the varlokkur, and while there are occasional clashes of personalities, methods, or ideologies, each is rigorously vetted for their loyalty to the city. When the need to defend Absalom from a magical threat arises, all varlokkur set aside their petty differences and rise to the occasion. During these times, individual varlokkur command a sort of phantom rank in the army that can shift as needed in order to ensure cooperation of lower-ranking soldiers—it hasn't been unheard of for a varlokkur to take command of an entire army in the past in order to rally the troops against a powerful supernatural foe.

The varlokkur do not have a centralized structure. Each is their own agent, and they do not generally gather in groups or recognize rank beyond the primacy of the third spell lord. This decentralized structure not only helps to prevent schemes designed to take the entire group out at once, but also appeals to the typical varlokkur agent's sense of self-sufficiency. Left to their own methods and given plenty of flexibility to pursue their own interests, the varlokkur remain ready to set aside their own needs to come and Absalom's aid when called.

MERCENARIES

Absalom's military does not maintain an organized militia of common folk, but its leaders keep track of the constantly changing mercenary companies—including adventuring parties—who call the city home. Mercenary companies can (and are encouraged to) apply for mandates with any one of Absalom's three military branches. Once granted, a mandate gives a party limited freedom to operate within Absalom's walls, and in particular affords them the right to "claim salvage" gained in Absalom's defense.

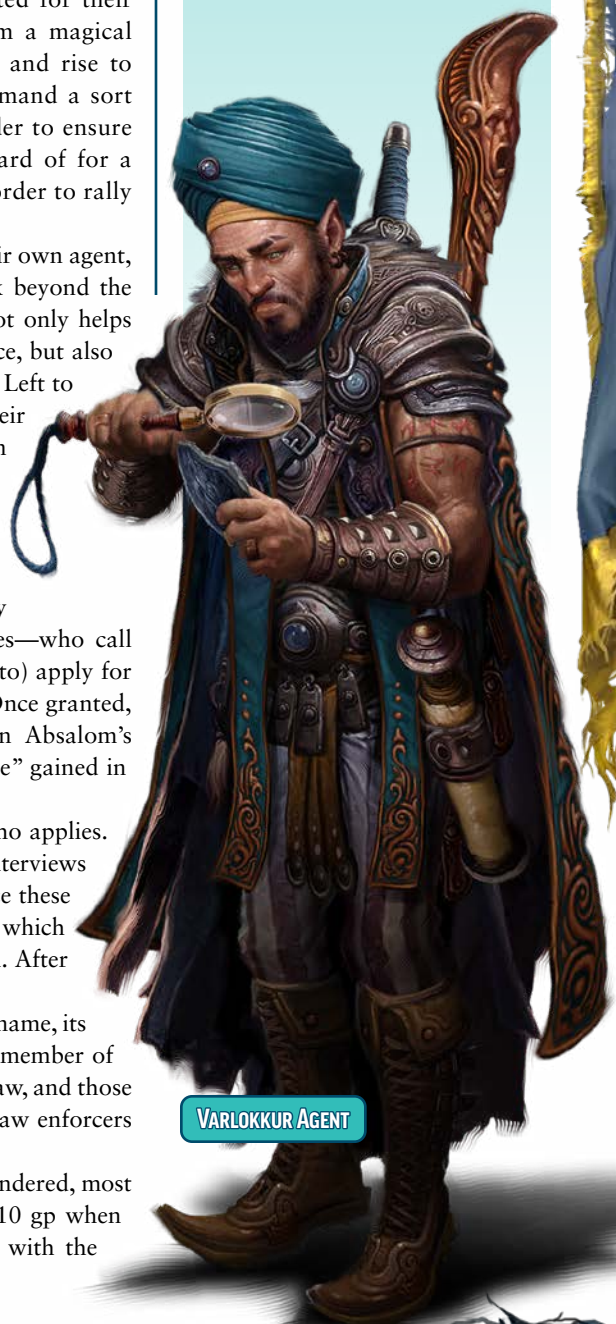
Absalom's military doesn't grant mandates to every group who applies. Typically, the company's leader must submit to three lengthy interviews designed to determine their actual allegiances and motives. Once these are completed, there is a grace period of several months, during which time the group as a whole remains under constant observation. After that, if everything appears to be in order, a mandate is granted.

The mandate itself is a parchment which provides the group's name, its leaders and principals, and the seal and signature of a ranking member of Absalom's military. A mandate doesn't place a group above the law, and those who mistake the slip of paper for permission to play at being law enforcers will likely find themselves in deep trouble.

While the military can issue mandates in return for services rendered, most mercenary companies must pay an application fee of at least 10 gp when they attempt to secure a mandate or arrange for its renewal, with the average mandate being active for two years.

MANDATES

Adventuring parties can function without a mandate in Absalom, but those who have one can use the mandate to avoid trouble with the law. If a group of PCs has a mandate, you should grant them a bit more leeway with the city guards when inevitable clashes occur (such as by granting a +1 or +2 item bonus to a key skill check), but if the PCs come to rely upon the mandate as a free pass, remind them that a mandate can be revoked at any time!



Varlokkur Agent

GUIDE TO THE CITY

The following chapters provide a wide-ranging overview of the city of Absalom, broken down by district. Each section contains a district map and an encounter key describing some of the most important locations in that district. Each location features one or more support traits, classifying it as a specific type of place. These traits serve primarily to help Game Masters get a sense of a location at a glance, but they also provide some quick rules information as outlined below. Note that most location descriptions in the district sections also list NPCs commonly encountered there. These creatures and characters appear alphabetically in the NPC Glossary on page 268.

Location Types and Support Traits

If an adventurer adjusts an NPC's attitude condition to Helpful (which might require completion of an assigned task, but usually requires successful Diplomacy checks to Make an Impression), that NPC's location supports the party in certain exploration and downtime activities. The specific benefits are based on the location's traits and are listed below. This support generally lasts throughout the campaign, although you might decide certain actions lose a location's support. The heroes can be supported by multiple locations in the city, so long as they make enough friends!

Some locations allow certain types of characters to retrain more efficiently once they've made that location's NPC Helpful. In such a location, retraining that would normally require a week takes only 5 days, retraining that would normally require a month takes only 3 weeks, and the retraining itself is generally free.

Academy: A character who Investigates for 1 hour in an academy's libraries can find a scholarly journal on a relevant subject (*Core Rulebook* 291) to bolster their Recall Knowledge attempts on that subject.

Archive: Scholastic-themed characters, as well as arcane and occult spellcasters, can retrain efficiently at an archive. Checks to Create Forgery, Decipher Writing, or Learn a Spell on-site gain a +1 circumstance bonus.

Attraction: A character who uses Performance to Earn Income or attempts to Gather Information gains a +1 circumstance bonus on the check as a result of the large crowds who frequent these locations.

Bank: A character can use their contacts at a bank to Earn Income (the task level is equal to or less than the NPC's level) by making Society checks to make and manage investments, or by making Thievery checks to embezzle or skim funds. Failing a Society check brings no additional repercussions, but failing a Thievery check reduces the associated NPC's attitude down to indifferent (thus making further attempts to Earn Income impossible here). Critically failing a Thievery check here results in legal action and possible imprisonment.

Criminal: Characters who focus on criminal activities can retrain efficiently at this location. A character who uses Underworld Lore to Earn Income gains a +1 circumstance bonus on the check. A character can use Thievery to Earn Income (the task level is equal to or less than the NPC's level), but a critical failure on this check may result in legal action or possible imprisonment.

Dungeon: Dungeon locations are areas of great danger that adventurers can explore, and do not offer additional benefits for making NPCs Helpful. Award the PCs a minor story award (10 XP) after their first delve into the dungeon, and a major award (80 XP) once they complete the dungeon's story (as determined by you).

Employer: The character can Earn Income at this location using an appropriate Lore skill to practice a trade. The task level is equal to or less than the associated NPC's level.

DECODING THE SIDEBARS

Nearly every page of this book contains a sidebar like this that provides additional information about Absalom. Sidebars are marked with one of the following five icons, each of which denotes a particular kind of information.

The manacles icon is used for each neighborhood's Crime Report, which details active gang and thieves' guild activity in the district.

Sidebars marked with the crown icon convey general information about the city and its culture or history.

A triangle with the Eye of Aroden within denotes ready-to-go adventure hooks you can use to liven up the district.

The harp icon is used for sidebars exploring the popular songs of Absalom. Adding such details to encounters is a good way to immerse players in the spirit of the city and preview cultural aspects that may come up later.

Sidebars topped with the Pathfinder "P" convey details connected to other *Pathfinder* products.

ABSALOM
GUIDE TO THE CITY
ASCENDANT COURT
THE COINS
THE DOCKS
EASTGATE
FOREIGN QUARTER
IVY DISTRICT
PETAL DISTRICT
PRECIPICE QUARTER
THE PUDDLES
WESTGATE
WISE QUARTER
UNDERCITY
WALLS, GATES, AND KEEPS
OUTSKIRTS
NPC GLOSSARY
ADVENTURE TOOLBOX

Garrison: Martially inclined characters can retrain efficiently here. Checks to Gather Information or Treat Wounds on-site gain a +1 circumstance bonus.

Housing: The location offers accommodations at a comfortable cost of living for no charge (in the case of a poorhouse or similar location) or at a 10% discount (in the case of a commercial operation).

Lodge: Primal spellcasters can retrain efficiently here. Checks to Identify Magic or Subsist on-site gain a +1 circumstance bonus.

Market: The character can Earn Income at this location using an appropriate Crafting skill to sell goods at the market. The task level is equal to or less than the associated NPC's level.

Merchant: The character can sell goods for 55% of their value, instead of half, to a Helpful NPC merchant.

Monument: Monuments see a large amount of foot traffic. A character who makes an associated NPC Helpful at a monument finds their reputation preceding them, so that passersby are more open and eager to speak—the PC gains a +1 circumstance bonus on attempts to Gather Information.

Municipal: If a character secures the friendship of a Helpful NPC at a municipal site, they've earned the support of one of Absalom's politicians or bureaucrats.

Grand Council Clerk

A character can "cash in" a favor with a Helpful NPC at such a site in order to help with all sorts of other problems, such as avoiding a jail sentence or fine, securing access to a restricted location, or learning a closely guarded secret. The exact nature and magnitude of the favor is left to you to adjudicate, but once the favor is granted, that NPC cannot be called upon for another favor for a period of time (typically one year, but this duration can shift as you see fit to match the scope of the favor).

Neighborhood: A character who makes a local NPC helpful in a neighborhood can rely upon that NPC and the neighborhood as a whole. Attempts to Subsist in this neighborhood gain a +1 circumstance bonus, and at the GM's option, the locals might periodically offer other forms of assistance to the character.

Parlor: Socially inclined and skill-focused characters can retrain more efficiently here. Checks to Gather Information or Earn Income with Performance gain a +1 circumstance bonus.

Precinct: Martially inclined characters who are not criminals can retrain efficiently at a precinct. Checks to Gather Information on-site gain a +1 circumstance bonus.

Residence: The residence of a Helpful NPC provides accommodations for no charge. In most cases, this provides for a comfortable cost of living, but at your option, some residences could offer fine or even extravagant cost of living for no charge.

Restaurant: The allied NPC helps to keep the character fed, granting a +1 circumstance bonus on Society checks made to Subsist. The character also becomes a well-known regular of the restaurant, and gains a +1 circumstance bonus to Gather Information attempts made therein.

Shrine: Faithful characters whose beliefs align with those of the shrine gain a +1 circumstance bonus on checks to Treat Wounds or Treat Disease here.

Tavern: A character who Gathers Information in an allied tavern gains a +1 circumstance bonus.

Temple: Faithful characters whose beliefs align with those of the temple can use a temple to retrain efficiently. Checks to Identify Magic, Treat Wounds, or Treat Disease on-site gain a +1 circumstance bonus.

Venue: Bards and characters who thrive on public performances can use venues to retrain efficiently, and attempts to Earn Income with Performance checks gain a +1 circumstance bonus.

Workshop: Characters can use the location's resources to Craft items associated with its purpose and gain a +1 item bonus to associated Crafting checks.

Location Master List

The following list contains every location detailed in this book. Each location's home district is listed in parentheses. Locations marked with an asterisk are not fully detailed in this book; brief overviews of these locations are provided in Elsewhere sidebars accompanying their home districts.

Absalom Academy of Law* (Wise Quarter), Absalom Chirurgeon Dispatch (Westgate), Absalom Menagerie (Wise Quarter), Absalom Mint (Wise Quarter), Al'Hakam Estate* (Coins), Ahnkamen Estate (Petal District), Alyssia's (Ivy District), Anandari Block (Westgate), Antler Lodge (Eastgate), Arbor Ward (Ivy District), Arboretum Arcanis (Precipice Quarter), The Arcanamirium (Wise Quarter), Archerus Manor* (Ivy District), Avatectura Museum* (Wise Quarter), Avenue of the Hopeful (Ascendant Court), Aysepir's Astounded Abyss (Puddles), Azari Palace (Ascendant Court), Azlanti Keep (Keeps)

Bail House (Coins), Band of the Palm Headquarters (Coins), Bank of Absalom (Ascendant Court), Barque Bazaar (Puddles), Barterfall (Precipice Quarter), Bartie's Barges* (Docks), The Beast (Docks), Beldrin's Tower (Precipice Quarter), Beneath the Docks (Docks), Beragel's Fur and Feathers (Eastgate), Besmara's Boardwalk (Docks), Bloom Cabaret (Ivy District), The Black Mask (Ascendant Court), The Black Whale (Docks), Blackblade's (Foreign Quarter), Blackfinger Temple (Ascendant Court), Blackhill's (Eastgate), Blakros Museum (Wise Quarter), Blue Tower (Eastgate), Boneglutton Pit (Precipice Quarter), The Brine (Puddles), Broadfoot Marshals Station House (Docks), The Broken Bastion (Eastgate)

The Cairnlands (Outskirts), Castle Blakros (Petal District), The Catacombs (Ascendant Court), Catwalk Corridors (Puddles), Cayden's Hall (Ascendant Court), The Chamber Grove* (Ivy District), Chapel of Shadows* (Puddles), Chelaxian Embassy (Ascendant Court), Church of Asmodeus (Ascendant Court), Church of the Muted God* (Puddles), Clockwork Cathedral (Coins), The College of Mysteries (Petal District), Concerned Residents' Union (Eastgate), Concurrent Currency (Docks), Consulate of the Platinum Band (Puddles), Copperwood (Outskirts), Court of Black Paper (Petal District), Crescent Manor* (Petal District), Crestwatch (Docks), The Crimson Coin (Foreign Quarter), Crystal Creations (Ivy District), Crystal Palace (Coins)

Dacilane Manor* (Ivy District), Daltus Academy* (Wise Quarter), Damaq Palace (Petal District), The Darkgate (Precipice Quarter), Dawnfoot (Outskirts), Delirium's Tangle (Undercity), Devil's Garden (Foreign Quarter), The Devil's Own Shipyard (Docks), Diobel (Outskirts), The Drownyard (Precipice Quarter),

Eastgate Hall* (Eastgate), Embassy of New Thassilon (Foreign Quarter), Embrey's Armory (Ivy District), Endiron School (Eastgate), Erastil Club (Petal District), Erastil's Alehouse* (Ascendant Court), Escadar (Outskirts), Estate of Yargos Gill (Eastgate), The Eternal Shackle (Coins), Evergreen Park (Eastgate)

Fall's End (Undercity), The Father's Forge (Westgate), Fenworth Gameporium* (Foreign Quarter), Fiddlemourn Manor (Petal District), The Fierce Stripe (Westgate), Five-Fire Pavilions (Foreign Quarter), Flower Street Market (Ivy District), The Flying Alderman (Foreign Quarter), Forae Logos (Wise Quarter), Fort Tempest (Keeps), Flotsam Graveyard (Outskirts), Foreign Quarter Council Hall* (Foreign Quarter), Free Union Headquarters* (Coins)

Gallery of Innovation (Coins), Gallery Rousa* (Wise Quarter), Gerig's Workshop* (Ascendant Court), Gillman Tunnels (Undercity), Gilltown (Eastgate), The Goblin King's Court (Puddles), God's Market (Ascendant Court), The Golden Serpent (Ivy District), The Gorumarrux (Ascendant Court), The Grand Bazaar (Coins), Grand Council Hall (Wise Quarter), The Grand Dance Hall of Kortos (Coins), The Grand Holt (Eastgate), The Grand Lodge (Foreign Quarter), Green Ridge (Eastgate), Greenstar Market (Foreign Quarter), The Grislyfair (Precipice Quarter), Gulgamodh (Precipice Quarter), The Grog Pit (Docks), The Groggy

Council Dignitary

Froggy (Westgate), The Guiding Hand (Coins), Guild of Wonders (Westgate), The Gutless Griffon (Ivy District)

Hall of Commerce (Coins), The Hall of Holies (Ascendant Court), The Healing Raft (Puddles), Hillview Station* (Petal District), The Hothouse* (Petal District), The House of Guile* (Eastgate), House of Healing (Ivy District), The House of Seven Faces (Westgate), The House of Shade and Grace (Foreign Quarter), Humbolt's Outfitters (Coins), Humbolt's Outfitters* (Eastgate), Humbolt's Outfitters* (Foreign Quarter)

The Irorium (Foreign Quarter), It Sparkles!* (Ivy District), Ivy District Park (Ivy District), Ivy Playhouse (Ivy District)

Javelin Gallery (Coins)

The Kennel (Coins), Kin Gate (Gates), Kortos Watercrafts* (Docks), Kyonin Embassy* (Ivy District)

Labyrinth of Absalom (Undercity), Lair of the Crowsworn (Undercity), Lantern Lodge (Petal District), The Learned Pig (Wise Quarter), Lifter's Mooring (Docks), Lion's Square (Foreign Quarter), Little Inner Sea (Puddles), Little Lirgen (Foreign Quarter), The Lost Sanctum of Aroden (Undercity)

Madinani Manor* (Petal District), Magpie Manor (Petal District), Mama Shrog's Solutions (Eastgate), Margruel's Masts* (Docks), Mellin and Zhen Ships* (Docks), Menhemes Manor* (Westgate), Mercerene Manor* (Eastgate), Metringer Sanitarium (Westgate), Metro-Cathedral* (Puddles), Misery Row (Coins), The Mithril Chef (Docks), Mithril Hall (Westgate), Morilla Palace and Tally Wall (Petal District), Mortecant (Precipice Quarter), Mother Sphinx (Coins), Mudhaven* (Coins)

The Northman's Woodworks Galleria* (Ivy District)

Ogrekin Hall (Docks), Opparan Trade Commission* (Foreign Quarter)

Palace Ormuz (Petal District), Palace of Thirteen Spires (Wise Quarter), Pariol Island (Outskirts), Pasharran's Domain (Undercity), The Pickled Imp (Docks), Pilot Island (Docks), Pitview Pub (Ascendant Court), Pleasure Salon of Calistria (Ascendant Court), Postern Gate (Eastgate), Pride of Azir* (Docks), The Primarch's Residence (Wise Quarter), Princely Shipyard* (Docks), Prophet's Academy (Coins), Protectorate Anthology (Wise Quarter), Purewater Home (Puddles)

Rat-Taker's Palace* (Precipice Quarter), Ravounel Consulate (Ivy District), Razorhall (Puddles), Red Drake Warehouses (Docks), Rhet's Home (Coins), Ropecliffs (Precipice Quarter)

Salhar Residence* (Wise Quarter), Sally Port (Westgate), Saucy Wench (Coins), School of the North Song-Wind (Foreign Quarter), Scriveners' Square (Wise Quarter), Sea King Shipyards (Docks), Seal of Kazutal (Foreign Quarter), The Second Labyrinth (Coins), Seventh Church of Iomedae (Ascendant Court), Sewer Dragon's Realm (Undercity), Shoreline (Outskirts), The Shrine of the Failed (Ascendant Court), Shrine of Shelyn (Ivy District), The Sianovel Agency (Westgate), Silk Castle (Wise Quarter), Silken Court (Petal District), The Siphons (Puddles), Sirola Manor* (Westgate), The Soggy Piper (Puddles), Sphinx Gate (Gates), The Spiral Shrine (Precipice Quarter), Spiralcross Cemetery (Petal District), Starspine Manor (Ivy District), Starstone Cathedral (Ascendant Court), Starstone Chasm (Undercity), Starwatch Keep (Keeps), Statue of Primarch Harvi (Petal District), Statue Street (Westgate), Stilt House (Puddles), Stinger's Scar (Precipice Quarter), Stoneshield House (Ascendant Court), Sundown Street (Ivy District)

Tallavont School (Eastgate), Taurean Embassy (Coins), Tempering Hall (Ascendant Court), Tempest (Ivy District), Temple of Lost Coins (Coins), Temple Row (Docks), Temple of the Shining Star (Ascendant Court), Terrag's Fungi Farm (Undercity), Thistleguard Station (Ivy District), Tiantown (Foreign Quarter), To Eat the World (Westgate), Tomb of the Living (Westgate), Torsen's Maw* (Puddles), Tower of the Twin Truths (Ascendant Court), The Turning Leaf (Eastgate), The Tyrant's Grasp (Outskirts)

Uiry Manor Museum (Petal District), Union of Carpenters, Stonemasons, and Woodworkers* (Coins), The Utterhome (Foreign Quarter)

Vault of Abadar (Ivy District), The Vents (Keeps), Verdurous Torsion (Undercity), Vigil's Hope (Precipice Quarter)

Wachail Estate* (Coins), Walrus Way (Undercity),

Haigen Topkick

The Wandering Monster (Ivy District), The Wounded Wisp (Foreign Quarter), The Watchtower (Eastgate), Watercleft (Eastgate), Westerhold (Outskirts), Westgate Bathhouse* (Westgate), Westgate Heritage Museum (Westgate), White Grotto (Ivy District), The Windarium (Westgate), Wisdom's Refuge (Wise Quarter), Withrun House* (Wise Quarter), The Wondervale (Eastgate), Wracked Rock (Precipice Quarter)

Yargos's Mission (Puddles), Yemhasin (Foreign Quarter)

Location Type Index

The following lists break down Absalom locations by general type. Each location's home district is listed in parentheses. Locations marked with an asterisk are not fully detailed in this book; brief overviews of these locations are provided in the Elsewhere sidebars accompanying their home districts.

Academies and Schools: Absalom Academy of Law* (Wise Quarter), The Arcanamirium (Wise Quarter), Blackblade's (Foreign Quarter), Clockwork Cathedral (Wise Quarter), The College of Mysteries (Petal District), Daltus Academy* (Wise Quarter), Endiron Academy (Eastgate), Javelin Gallery (Coins), Prophet's Academy (Coins), Endiron School (Eastgate), Grand Lodge (Foreign Quarter), Prophet's Academy (Coins), School of the North Song-Wind (Foreign Quarter), Tallavont School (Eastgate), Tempering Hall (Ascendant Court), Tower of Twin Truths (Ascendant Court), White Grotto (Ivy District), Withrun House* (Wise Quarter)

Animals: Absalom Menagerie (Wise Quarter), Beragel's Fur and Feathers (Eastgate), The Fierce Stripe (Westgate), Tempering Hall (Ascendant Court)

Archives: Ahnkamen Estate (Petal District), The Arcanamirium (Wise Quarter), Avatectura Museum* (Wise Quarter), Azari Palace (Ascendant Court), Blackfinger Temple (Ascendant Court), Bloom Cabaret (Ivy District), Cayden's Hall (Ascendant Court), Estate of Yargos Gill (Eastgate), Forae Logos (Wise Quarter), Grand Lodge (Foreign Quarter), Tower of Twin Truths (Ascendant Court)

Art Galleries: Alyssia's (Ivy District), Gallery Rousa* (Wise Quarter), Ivy Playhouse (Ivy District)

Attractions: Absalom Menagerie (Wise Quarter), Avatectura Museum* (Wise Quarter), Aysepir's Astounded Abyss (Puddles), Besmara's Boardwalk (Docks), Blakros Museum (Wise Quarter), Erastil Club (Petal District), Gallery Rousa* (Wise Quarter), Guild of Wonders (Westgate), The Irorium (Foreign Quarter), Silken Court (Petal District), Tempest (Ivy District), Uiry Manor Museum (Petal District), Westgate Bathhouse* (Westgate), Westgate Heritage Museum (Westgate)

Azarketi: Gillmen Tunnels (Undercity), Gilltown (Eastgate), Escadar (Outskirts), Flotsam Graveyard (Outskirts)

Banks: Bank of Absalom (Ascendant Court), Hall of Commerce (Coins), Vault of Abadar (Ivy District)

Cemeteries: The Catacombs (Ascendant Court), Spiralcross Cemetery (Petal District), Tomb of the Living (Westgate)

Chelaxians: Chelaxian Embassy (Ascendant Court), Church of Asmodeus (Ascendant Court), Devil's Garden (Foreign Quarter), The Second Labyrinth (Coins)

Criminal: Band of the Palm Headquarters (Coins), The Black Mask (Ascendant Court), Chapel of Shadows* (Puddles), Crystal Creations (Ivy District), Crystal Palace (Coins), The Darkgate (Precipice Quarter), Fall's End (Undercity), Guild of Wonders (Westgate), The Kennel (Coins), Lair of the Crowsworn (Undercity), Temple of Lost Coins (Coins)

Dungeons: Arboretum Arcanis (Precipice Quarter), Beldrin's Tower (Precipice Quarter), The Black Whale (Docks), Boneglutton Pit (Precipice Quarter), The Catacombs (Ascendant Court), The Darkgate (Precipice Quarter), Delirium's Tangle (Undercity), The Drownyard (Precipice Quarter), The Goblin Walk (Undercity), Labyrinth of Absalom (Undercity), Lair of the Crowsworn (Undercity), The Lost Sanctum of Aroden (Undercity), Pasharran's Domain (Undercity), The Primarch's Residence (Wise Quarter), Sewer Dragon's Realm (Undercity), The Siphons (Puddles), The Starstone Cathedral (Ascendant Court), Stinger's Scar (Precipice Quarter), The Vents (Keeps), Verdurous Torsion (Undercity), Walrus Way (Undercity), Westgate Bathhouse* (Westgate), Wracked Rock (Precipice Quarter)

Economic Interest: Absalom Mint (Wise Quarter), Bank of Absalom (Ascendant Court), Grand Dance Hall of Kortos (Coins), Hall of Commerce (Coins), Mother Sphinx (Coins), Opparan Trade Commission* (Foreign Quarter)

Employers: Absalom Chirurgeon Dispatch (Westgate), Absalom Menagerie (Wise Quarter), Avenue of the Hopeful (Ascendant Court), Aysepir's Astounded Abyss (Puddles), Bank of Absalom (Ascendant Court), Chelaxian Embassy (Ascendant Court), God's Market (Ascendant Court), Grand Lodge (Foreign Quarter), Ivy Playhouse (Ivy District), Pilot Island (Docks), Saucy Wench (Coins), Westgate Heritage Museum (Westgate)

Fashion: The Black Mask (Ascendant Court), Sundown Street (Ivy District)

Fences: Estelle's Last Hope Mercantile (Grand Bazaar, Coins), Lost and Found (Coins), The Pickled Imp (Coins), The Sianovel Agency (Westgate)

Fine Dining: Bloom Cabaret (Ivy District), The Golden Serpent (Ivy District), Sanga Bistro [Arbor Ward] (Ivy District), To Eat the World (Westgate), The Turning Leaf (Eastgate)

Fun Bars: Blackhill's (Eastgate), Cayden's Hall (Ascendant Court), The Crimson Coin (Foreign Quarter), The Groggy Froggy (Westgate), The Gutless Griffon (Ivy District), The Learned Pig (Wise Quarter), The Pitview Pub (Ascendant Court)

Gambling Dens: The Second Labyrinth (Coins), The Pitview Pub (Ascendant Court)

Garrisons: Blackblade's (Foreign Quarter), Grand Lodge (Foreign Quarter), The Irorium (Foreign

Quarter), Javelin Gallery (Coins), Tempering Hall (Ascendant Court)

Housing: Aysepir's Astounded Abyss (Puddles), The Arcanamirium (Wise Quarter), The Black Whale (Docks), The Brine (Puddles), Chelaxian Embassy (Ascendant Court), The College of Mysteries (Petal District), Crystal Palace (Coins), Erastil Club (Petal District), The Flying Alderman (Foreign Quarter), The Goblin King's Court (Puddles), The Grog Pit (Docks), The Guiding Hand (Coins), The Gutless Griffon (Ivy District), The House of Shade and Grace (Foreign Quarter), The Kennel (Coins), Lantern Lodge (Petal District), The Learned Pig (Wise Quarter), Magpie Manor (Petal District), Metringer Sanitarium (Westgate), Morilla Palace and Tally Wall (Petal District), Palace of Thirteen Spires (Wise Quarter), Purewater Home (Puddles), Rhet's Home (Coins), Silken Court (Petal District), White Grotto (Ivy District), Yargos's Mission (Puddles)

Inns: The Flying Alderman (Foreign Quarter), The Grog Pit (Docks), The Gutless Griffon (Ivy District), The Learned Pig (Wise Quarter), Palace of Thirteen Spires (Wise Quarter)

Labor: Free Union Headquarters* (Coins), Lifter's Mooring (Docks), Ogrekin Hall (Docks),

Lodges: Antler Lodge (Eastgate), Grand Holt (Eastgate), Grand Lodge (Foreign Quarter),

Markets: Avenue of the Hopeful (Ascendant Court), Barque Bazaar (Puddles), Besmara's Boardwalk (Docks), Five-Fire Pavilions (Foreign Quarter), Flower Street Market (Ivy District), The Goblin King's Court (Puddles), God's Market (Ascendant Court), Grand Bazaar (Coins), Greenstar Market (Foreign Quarter)

Mercenaries: Javelin Gallery (Coins)

Merchants: Absalom Chirurgeon Dispatch (Westgate), The Arcanamirium (Wise Quarter), Beragel's Fur and Feathers (Eastgate), The Black Mask (Ascendant Court), Blackfinger Temple (Ascendant Court), Blue Tower (Eastgate), Broadfoot Marshals Station House (Docks), Concurrent Currency (Docks), Crystal Creations (Ivy District), Court of Black Paper (Petal District), The Devil's Own Shipyard (Docks), Embrey's Armory (Ivy District), The Fierce Stripe (Westgate), Flower Street Market (Ivy District), Gerig's Workshop* (Ascendant Court), Hall of Commerce (Coins), The House of Guile* (Eastgate), Humbolt's Outfitters (Coins), Humbolt's Outfitters* (Eastgate), Humbolt's Outfitters* (Foreign Quarter), It Sparkles!* (Ivy District), Javelin Gallery (Coins), Mama Shrog's Solutions (Eastgate), Misery Row (Coins), Mother Sphinx (Coins), The Northman's Woodworks Galleria* (Ivy District), Ogrekin Hall (Docks), Open Quartering (Azlanti Keep), The Pickled Imp (Docks), Red Drake Warehouses (Docks), Sea King Shipyards (Docks), The Sianovel Agency (Westgate), Silk Castle (Wise Quarter), Terrag's Fungi Farm (Undercity), The Windarium (Westgate)

Monuments: The Beast (Docks), Blue Tower (Eastgate), The Catacombs (Ascendant Court), The Drownyard (Precipice Quarter), The Eternal Shackle (Coins), Grand Lodge (Foreign Quarter), The Grislyfair (Precipice Quarter), Gulgamodh (Precipice Quarter), Ivy District Park (Ivy District), Misery Row (Coins), The Shrine of the Failed (Ascendant Court), Spiralcross Cemetery (Petal District), Starstone Cathedral (Ascendant Court), Starstone Chasm (Undercity), Statue of Primarch Harvi (Petal District), Wracked Rock (Precipice Quarter), The Wondervale (Eastgate)

Municipal: Absalom Mint (Wise Quarter), Band of the Palm Headquarters (Coins), The Beast (Docks), The Chamber Grove* (Ivy District), Chelaxian Embassy (Ascendant Court), Concerned Residents' Union (Eastgate), Eastgate Hall* (Eastgate), Embassy of New Thassilon (Foreign Quarter), Foreign Quarter Council Hall* (Foreign Quarter), Grand Council Hall (Wise Quarter), The Hall of Holies (Ascendant Court), The Hothouse* (Petal District), Lifter's Mooring (Docks), Mithril Hall (Westgate), Pilot Island (Docks), Rat-Taker's Palace* (Precipice Quarter), Ravounel Consulate (Ivy District), Stilt House (Puddles), Taurean Embassy (Coins), Tomb of the Living (Westgate), Vigil's Hope (Precipice Quarter), The Watchtower (Eastgate), Watercleft (Eastgate), Wisdom's Refuge (Wise Quarter),

Museums: Blakros Museum (Wise Quarter), Guild of Wonders (Westgate), Uiry Manor Museum (Petal District), Westgate Heritage Museum (Westgate)

Neighborhoods: Anandari Block (Westgate), Arbor Ward (Ivy District), Barterfall (Precipice Quarter), Beneath the Docks (Docks), Catwalk Corridors (Puddles), Devil's Garden (Foreign Quarter), Evergreen Park (Eastgate), Fall's End (Undercity), Gillman Tunnels (Undercity), Gilltown (Eastgate), Green Ridge (Eastgate), Lion's Square (Foreign Quarter), Little Inner Sea (Puddles), Little Lirgen (Foreign Quarter), Mortecant (Precipice Quarter), Mudhaven* (Coins), Ropecliffs (Precipice Quarter), Scriveners' Square (Wise Quarter), Statue Street (Westgate), Sundown Street (Ivy District), Temple Row (Docks), Tiantown (Foreign Quarter), Torsen's Maw* (Puddles), Yemhasin (Foreign Quarter)

Parlors: The Black Mask (Ascendant Court), Cayden's Hall (Ascendant Court), Crystal Creations (Ivy District), Crystal Palace (Coins), The Darkgate (Precipice Quarter), The Goblin King's Court (Puddles), Grand Lodge (Foreign Quarter), Guild of Wonders (Westgate), Ivy Playhouse (Ivy District), The Kennel (Coins), Silken Court (Petal District), Temple of Lost Coins (Coins), White Grotto (Ivy District)

Precincts: Bail House (Coins), Crestwatch (Docks), Hillview Station* (Petal District), Postern Gate (Eastgate), Protectorate Anthology (Wise Quarter), Sally Port (Westgate), Stilt House (Puddles), Stoneshield House (Ascendant Court), Thistleguard Station (Ivy District), The Utterhome (Foreign Quarter), Vigil's Hope (Precipice Quarter)

Poverty: The Guiding Hand (Coins), The Healing Raft (Puddles), Purewater Home (Puddles), Rhet's Home (Coins), Saucy Wench (Coins), Yargos's Mission (Puddles)

Prisons: The Black Whale (Docks), The Brine (Puddles), Tomb of the Living (Westgate)

Rabble Rousers: Cayden's Hall (Ascendant Court), The Mithril Chef (Docks)

Residences: Al'Hakam Estate* (Coins), Ahnkamen Estate (Petal District), Archerus Manor* (Ivy District), Azari Palace (Ascendant Court), The Broken Bastion (Eastgate), Castle Blakros (Petal District), Crescent Manor* (Petal District), Dacilane Manor* (Ivy District), Damaq Palace (Petal District), Estate of Yargos Gill (Eastgate), Fiddlemourn Manor (Petal District), Madinani Manor* (Petal District), Menhemes Manor* (Westgate), Mercerene Manor* (Eastgate), Morilla Palace and Tally Wall (Petal District), Palace Ormuz (Petal District), The Primarch's Residence (Wise Quarter), Salhar Residence* (Wise Quarter), Sirola Manor* (Westgate), Starspine Manor (Ivy District), Wachail Estate* (Coins), The Windarium (Westgate)

Restaurants: Alyssia's (Ivy District), Bloom Cabaret (Ivy District), The Golden Serpent (Ivy District), The Grand Dance Hall of Kortos (Coins), The Guiding Hand (Coins), The House of Shade and Grace (Foreign Quarter), The Mithril Chef (Docks), Sanga Bistro (Ivy District), To Eat the World (Westgate), The Turning Leaf (Eastgate), Westgate Heritage Museum (Westgate)

Romantic Liaisons: Besmara's Boardwalk (Docks), Sanga Bistro (Ivy District), Verden Road Street Vendors (Ivy District)

Shipbuilders: Bartie's Barges* (Docks), The Devil's Own Shipyard (Docks), Kortos Watercrafts* (Docks), Margruel's Masts* (Docks), Mellin and Zhen Ships* (Docks), Pride of Azir* (Docks), Princely Shipyard* (Docks)

Shrines: The Black Mask (Ascendant Court), Chelaxian Embassy (Ascendant Court), Erastil Club (Petal District), The Eternal Shackle (Coins), Evergreen Park (Eastgate), The Grog Pit (Docks), The Healing Raft (Puddles), Morilla Palace and Tally Wall (Petal District), Sea King Shipyards (Docks), Shrine of Kazutal (Foreign Quarter), Silken Court (Petal District), Spiralcross Cemetery (Petal District), Vigil's Hope (Precipice Quarter)

Taldans: Blue Tower (Eastgate), Lion's Square (Foreign Quarter)

Taverns: Blackhill's (Eastgate), Cayden's Hall (Ascendant Court), The Crimson Coin (Foreign Quarter), Erastil's Alehouse* (Ascendant Court), The Grog Pit (Docks), The Groggy Froggy (Westgate), The Gutless Griffon (Ivy District), The Learned Pig (Wise Quarter), Pitview Pub (Ascendant Court), The Saucy Wench (Coins), The Second Labyrinth (Coins), The Soggy Piper (Puddles), The Wounded Wisp (Foreign Quarter)

Temples: See Temple Index.

Thuvians: The House of Shade and Grace (Foreign Quarter), Palace Ormuz (Petal District)

Tians: Lantern Lodge (Petal District), Mellin and Zhen Ships* (Docks), Tiantown (Foreign Quarter)

Venues: Aysepir's Astounded Abyss (Puddles), Five-Fire Pavilions (Foreign Quarter), The Goblin King's Court (Puddles), The Gorumarrux (Ascendant Court), Grand Dance Hall of Kortos (Coins), Gutless Griffon (Ivy District), The House of Shade and Grace (Foreign Quarter), The Irorium (Foreign Quarter), Ivy Playhouse (Ivy District), Lantern Lodge (Petal District), Magpie Manor (Petal District), Mithril Hall (Westgate), The Saucy Wench (Coins), Tempest (Ivy District), The Wandering Monster (Ivy District)

Vudrans: Anandari Block (Westgate)

Workshops: The Arcanamirium (Wise Quarter), Blackfinger Temple (Ascendant Court), Embrey's Armory (Ivy District), The Father's Forge (Westgate), Gallery of Innovation (Coins), Gerig's Workshop* (Ascendant Court), God's Market (Ascendant Court), Grand Bazaar (Coins), Grand Lodge (Foreign Quarter), Palace Ormuz (Petal District)

Temple Index

When running an urban game session, it's sometimes important to know where a temple to a given god can be found quickly without having to scan the entire book. In such cases, consult the list below.

Abadar: Metro-Cathedral* (Puddles), Vault of Abadar (Ivy District)

Apsu: Consulate of the Platinum Band (Puddles)

Aroden: Azari Palace (Ascendant Court)

Asmodeus: The Church of Asmodeus (Ascendant Court)

Besmara: Temple Row (Docks)

Brigh: Gallery of Innovation (Coins)

Calistria: The Pleasure Salon of Calistria (Ascendant Court); Silken Court (Petal District)

Cayden Cailean: Cayden's Hall (Ascendant Court)

Desna: The House of Seven Faces (Westgate)

Erastil: Antler Lodge (Eastgate), Erastil Club (Petal District)

Gorum: The Gorumarrux (Ascendant Court)

Gozreh: Evergreen Park (Eastgate), Temple Row (Docks)

Hei-Feng: Temple Row (Docks)

Irori: The Irorium (Foreign Quarter)

Lamashtu: Mama Shrog's Solutions

The Muted God: Church of the Muted God (Puddles)

Nethys: Tower of Twin Truths (Ascendant Court)

Norgorber: The Black Mask (Ascendant Court), Blackfinger Temple (Ascendant Court), Court of Black Paper (Petal District), Razorhall (Puddles)

Pharasma: The Spiral Shrine (Precipice Quarter), Spiralcross Cemetery (Petal District)

Rovagug: Wracked Rock (Precipice Quarter)

Sarenrae: The Healing Raft (Puddles), House of Healing (Ivy District), Temple of the Shining Star (Ascendant Court)

Shelyn: Shrine of Shelyn (Ivy District)

Sivanah: Temple of Sivanah (Wise Quarter)

Torag: The Father's Forge (Westgate)

Urgathoa: Boneglutton Pit (Precipice Quarter)

Zon-Kuthon: Tempest (Ivy District)

Rumors

1. Tunnels built by the dwarves of Westerhold run from the outlying town, under the wall, and underneath the Ivy district. These tunnels have become dens for thieves' guilds and unsavory people and organizations. (True)

2. The awful smell that permeates Shoreline is caused by the excretions of a tremendously large benevolent sea beast the Shoreline residents keep secret. Should any naval attack threaten Absalom the beast will rise up to defend the city. (False)

3. All the various tribes of kobolds living in the Undercity are secretly ruled by a massive black dragon. When the time is right, this dragon will lead his armies of kobolds in razing Absalom, sending all of the residents of the city down into the Undercity to live the way they force the kobolds to live. (False)

4. Before his disappearance, Lord Gyr was tried in the Westgate Courthouse for the numerous secret crimes he committed during his rule. Because of the terrible sentence he received, his ghost not only haunts the courthouse but has become the leader of all the spirits trapped there. Eventually he will lead his ghostly army to reclaim his place as ruler of Absalom. (False)

5. A group of students in the Wise Quarter feel that knowledge should be available to all, and is not a commodity to be bought and sold. They've begun copying information from the lectures they attend and are creating a library of their own, free to all. They hope to attract like-minded teachers who can then offer classes and education to those who otherwise wouldn't be able to afford it. (True)

6. The leshy population of Eastgate has grown dramatically and emerged as a true community. These leshys are hoping to petition the Eastgate Council for a dedicated neighborhood catering to their needs, and representation in the district and city governments. (True)

7. The wizard Beldrin has been spending all this time seeking vengeance on those responsible for the collapse of the Precipice Quarter, working in secret so his enemies believe he is dead. Once he has completed this task, he will return to Absalom and reveal himself. He will then rebuild the Precipice Quarter, making it even more beautiful than it ever was. (False)

8. Business owners have been relocating to the Foreign Quarter to take advantage of the relaxed tax rates. As more of these entrepreneurs move into the district, more residents are pushed out. Additionally, space in the district for immigrants who actually need the district's policies to make a fresh start is shrinking, and the city is allowing fewer newcomers in. (True)

9. The Angel's Arms Orphanage in the Coins has no children and isn't actually an orphanage at all. It's the front for a halfling-run organized crime ring. The group takes advantage of the financial and social benefits of the district. When necessary, members disguise themselves as human, half-elven, and elven children to keep up the ruse. (True)

10. The feuds between the families of The Petal District are just a cover. The wealthy families of the district work together to maintain secret clubs where the very poor and homeless are forced to participate in terrible, and often fatal, games for sport. They are able to do this by using their incredible wealth to buy off leaders of the various district guards throughout the city. In fact, the guards use these games to keep their districts clear of "undesirable denizens" by selling them to these families. (False)

11. A group of powerful people in the Ivy District have formed a secret society and are making plans to rule the world. These people control politicians not just in Absalom, but in nations and cities all over the world. Their goal is to rule Golarion from the shadows and usher it toward some terrible fate known only to them. (False)

12. Sometimes promising candidates looking to take the Test of the *Starstone* are captured and imprisoned by the city. City leaders are concerned that the ascension of a new deity would be too disruptive, not only for Absalom, but society throughout the Inner Sea. When an aspirant appears who seems likely to pass the test, they're taken to a secret prison where they live out the rest of their lives. (True)

13. The Metringer Sanitarium isn't actually home for the mentally unwell, nor is it dedicated only to the study of the mind. In secret labs, terrible experiments on both people and beasts have been, and continue to be, conducted. The depths of the sanitarium hold dozens of cages filled with the mutated or hybrid results of these experiments. As long as these creatures remain there they are a tremendous danger not just to Westgate, but to all of Absalom. (True)

14. A community of full-blooded Azlanti who have kept themselves alive through various magics for thousands of years lives in the Foreign Quarter. These Azlanti have disguised themselves to better blend in with the other ethnic groups in the district. They are slowly building the resources they need to return Azlant to the world, somehow drawing it up from the sea. The creation of New Thassilon is only further proof. (False)

15. The Starwatch were stationed outside Absalom because they have designs on taking over the city. Absalom's leadership knew about their plans from the beginning but hasn't ever been able to present proof despite many years of investigation. The pact keeping the Starwatch outside the city was a ruse to buy time to find proof of their treachery, and to keep the population from accusing government officials of paranoia. (False)

16. Some magic is illegal in the Wise District, and there are people who chafe at this. A secret organization of spellcasters gathers to study and practice illegal magic. This group has secret libraries filled with banned knowledge and spells. They vandalize parts of the district in protest and keep watch for like-minded people they can recruit into their ranks. Political initiatives to have magic prohibitions lifted are often spearheaded by members of this group. (True)

17. Strange beings from beyond Golarion, whose vessels can sometimes be seen in the sky, have met with the wealthiest and most powerful families in the Ivy District. These beings intend to use their sciences to merge their people with the peoples of Golarion, creating a new species with the best traits of every species on Golarion. The families they have contacted are using their wealth and power to help these beings. They believe doing so will bring about a golden age for all the peoples of the planet. (False)

18. There is a dark and evil mirror of Absalom filled with shadow counterparts to everything and everyone in the city. Sometimes fleeting glimpses of this reflection can be seen as it interposes with the Material Plane. When this happens, the denizens of the shadowy Absalom can pass between the realms. (True)

19. Evergreen Park in Eastgate is maintained by imprisoned elementals of all sorts. These elementals keep the conditions and weather of the park just right to allow it to flourish year round. The Children of Spring maintain the spells keeping the elementals trapped in servitude on Golarion. (False)

20. A large aquatic creature lives in the waters below the Flotsam Graveyard. This creature feeds on the detritus in the waters. Sightings are rare, as it spends most of its time deep underwater, but it has been known to surface from time to time. The creature doesn't have much of a taste for the flesh of living creatures but it has sometimes devoured unfortunate sailors who fall into the water. (True)

21. There is a tunnel in the labyrinthine sewers below the Foreign Quarter that connects directly to the docks. The entrance is right next to the Pathfinder's Grand Lodge. But finding the way to the correct tunnel and navigating it is difficult, not only because of the sewer layout, but also because of the sometimes-hostile kobolds who live there. (True)

22. The brawls hosted at the Crimson Coin are staged. Fighters meet days before their fights to choreograph their bouts so they can put on a good show. They are well paid for their participation and their secrecy. (False)

23. The Irorium is planning the biggest fight it has ever hosted. A fully grown dragon will be brought in to fight a party of gladiators. Many people were killed capturing and subduing the beast, which now has a taste for human blood. (False)

24. The clouds of mosquitoes in the Puddles are magically controlled by the Circle of Stones. The circle needs the blood the mosquitoes acquire to feed the carnivorous plants they are breeding. This breeding program is meant to allow nature to reclaim Golarion from the urban peoples destroying it. (False)

25. The damage in the Precipice Quarter is just an illusion. No earthquake occurred, and Beldrin created the illusion of the district's destruction to keep it for himself. This illusion is simply too powerful for anyone to see past. Beyond the illusion, the perfect paradise that the district once was is run by Beldrin, who invites only specially handpicked people, exceptionally gifted in their craft or field of study, to join the Precipice community. (False)

26. A lich dedicated to Urgathoa resides in the Undercity. What the lich is planning is unknown, but it's certainly up to something, and nothing good can come of such a being or its designs. (True)

27. A secret society calling itself the Great and Powerful Order of the Turtle is claiming to have grandiose plans for some great cause or sinister endeavor. In reality, the group is little more than a social club whose members enjoy and encourage the notoriety and speculation that secret societies engender. (True)

28. Lady Chesne of the Fierce Stripe has been urging city leaders to provide more support to Andoran and its causes. She is even advocating that the city take on some of Andoran's more radical political policies. (True)

29. The dwarven street sweeper Galven Rockbottom has a tremendous store of information acquired over years of observing and listening while doing his work. He knows a great deal of secrets about numerous people, organizations, places, and events all over Absalom. (True)

30. The famous underbrew served at Blackhill's in Eastgate is made with the fluids extracted from strange devices found in Numeria. Dege Blackhill hires adventures to scourge Numeria for these devices and draw the fluids from them. The fluids have an addictive quality that make the brew very popular; once a drink is taken, the person needs more. (False)

Absalom Shops

D%	NAME	WARES	NOTES
1–4	A Stone's Throw	Crystals and stones	A Stone's Throw offers the largest array of gems and crystals this side of Osirion. Their luster and variety is unparalleled, and some are even said to contain souls that have been trapped—but those are kept in the back.
5–8	Absalom Chirurgeon Dispatch	Medical house calls	This is the go-to place for those looking for a regular doctor to make home visits, as they did in past generations.
9–12	Absalom Tannery	Leather goods and armor	Absalom Tannery carries light armor, boots, and rucksacks for every kind of adventure that might require mobility. They have every kind of skin, from cow to bear and even dragonhide. It's rumored that Absalom Tannery has a connection to a network of thieves within the city, and they give a steep discount in exchange for a cut of a heist.
13–16	Bits, Bobs, Gizmos, and Knobs	Constructs and mechanical parts	Grindle and Wellert, the co-owners, are renowned for their clockwork robots and mechanical explosives. They even take commissions, though these can get quite pricey.
17–20	Char Bits' Bakery	Loaves of bread, pies, questionable-looking cakes	This street bakery is run by a goblin named Char Bits. The food is tasty, but the hygiene is questionable, and no one can explain why other goblins swarm in and out the back door every day.
21–24	The Crystal Vial	Potions, philters	This establishment is a well-known place to pick up remedies and concoctions for any occasion. These elixirs are difficult to make, and the cost is high. Shelves line every inch of wall, full of plants and oils. The proprietors are always willing to pay for any rare ingredients brought their way.
25–28	Crubbo's Pies	Cakes, pies, and other pastries	Well known for his mastery of flavors, Crubbo is rumored to have a secret ingredient in his pies that makes them so popular... gnome flesh!
29–32	The Daughters of Iron	Rare and imported weaponry	If you fancy a kukri from Casmaron, or perhaps a club plucked from a stone giant, it will most likely be found on the overcrowded weapon racks of The Daughters of Iron. Run by three adventurous sisters, this shop is packed full of every type of weapon a fighter could want.
33–36	Discovered Delights	Assassination services, cookies	This elven-owned cookie store is actually a front for a Calistrian revenge-for-hire business. Well-off clients can order a delivery from the "special menu," marking the recipient as a hit. Ironically, the shop's cookies are incredibly delicious and popular, leading to more than one unintended murder arranged by ignorant customers.
37–40	Drupert's Operating Hall and Barber Shop	Surgeries and haircuts	This is by far the worst place to get medical care in the city, but they don't ask questions and take far less coin than the Absalom Chirurgeon Dispatch. While it might seem gruesome, you have the option to have your hair cut at the same time!
41–44	Effortless Elegance	Finery and luxury clothing, fitted personally by the shop tailor	Effortless Elegance imports many of its fine fabrics from outside of Absalom. Some say that these tailors make fashion for spies, building secret compartments and pockets to hide weapons and drugs for smuggling operations.
45–48	Foresight	Divination wares for bibliomancy, tasseography, haruspicy, lithomancy, osteomancy, scrying, and crystal gazing	The future can be revealed in many ways, and Foresight has just the tools to get the job done. If customers are not ones for the arcane arts, there may be a friendly soothsayer to lend a helping hand.
49–52	Friendly Familiars	Pets, animal companions, and familiars	Friendly Familiars brings the most exotic animals from the farthest reaches of Golarion to the world's biggest city. They are always interested in new creatures, and the staff loves to pair a companionless traveler with their perfect animal comrade.
53–56	Gideon's Catch of the Day	Fish and seafood	The first thing one notices about Gideon's Catch of the Day is the smell, which permeates nearly all of the district's nooks and crannies. Sailors bring in the day's catch, and butchers will slaughter and flay the sea creatures after they are hoisted from ships to the waiting arms of seafarers.
57–60	Goldenlane Nursery	Plants, gardening supplies	This solarium is a veritable paradise and is stocked with plants, both magical and mundane, to start a farm, apothecary, or simply a small garden. They even have kits for growing one's own leshy in a variety of types.

61–64	Groniks' Abattoir	Rare and exotic meats	Staffed by the half-orc Gronik brothers, this business is well stocked with meats of all kinds. They will often pay nicely for any kills brought in; the stranger the beast, the higher the price.
65–68	The House of Gilded Flesh	Tattoos and body modifications	The House of Gilded Flesh is one of the most respected tattoo parlors in Absalom, with its highly trained artists and its spotless interior. The shop's professionals can inlay spells and cantrips into the skin, or pierce any part of the body.
69–72	How Charming	Rings, pendants, and circlets	Gemstones adorn every surface here, and magic pendants and rings decorate the displays. Be sure you know exactly what each item does. Some of their powers have surprising (and often drastic) effects!
73–74	The Ivy Coffeehouse	Coffee, tea, light meals	Many of the local artists and performers of the city congregate here as a meeting point to exchange ideas and display their work. The Ivy Coffeehouse offers a large selection of hearty and earthy coffees, alongside tea and delicate herbs to brew that, while a fine treat, are rather expensive.
75–76	Killik's Corner	Smuggling services	Everyone in Absalom has a secret to hide. The fine folks at Killik's Corner merely transport those secrets from one place to another. Simply speak with one of the employees and pay the agreed price, and they will take messages, objects, and even people where they need to go with a guarantee that they won't be discovered.
77–78	McKaegan's General Store	Adventuring gear, rations, household goods	The finest place to start your journey! The owner, McKaegan, is wise and well-traveled, ready to recommend supplies for any trip. If you're unsure of your path, he's the man to ask.
79–80	Nahmorlion's Treasures	Monster bones, bizarre crystals, ancient pottery, and oddities from faraway places	Nahmorlion is a strange old man obsessed with the weird, the whimsical, and the grotesque. He will purchase monster trophies and other strange objects travelers have picked up along their journeys. The eclectic shop is extremely popular with goblins.
81–82	Ophelia's Fresh Produce	Fruits and vegetables	On sunny days, you can often see Ophelia meandering through the districts, calling out the deals of the day in her melodic voice. Her cart is filled to the brim with fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as nuts and the occasional jar of pickled produce.
83–84	The Painted Petal	Beauty services and cosmetics	Everyone wants to change their aesthetic every now and then, and the Painted Petal is the place. Filled with luxury pigments, salves, kohls, and paints, the Painted Petal has a group of highly trained artists to help apply the products.
85–86	Palace of the Bards	Musical instruments, alcoholic beverages	Beautiful music drifts out of the windows of this shop, day and night. A gathering place for performers and minstrels, the Palace of the Bards is both a public house and a shop where one can purchase musical instruments for pleasure or for their spellcrafting abilities.
87–88	Port of Absalom	Passage on ships and boats	The Port of Absalom is a small business with offices throughout the city. Whether you're looking for a voyage on a galleon or to slip away on a sloop, they'll get you where you're going, no questions asked. Here you can book a trip out of Absalom or enjoy a gentle outing in the bay. You can even take their much-talked-about boat tour of the Puddles!
89–90	The Scholar's Spire	Fiction and non-fiction books, spell tomes	This is the absolute best place to buy books in the city. It's so big, one could easily get very, very lost...
91–92	The Sparkforge	Staves and wands	The Sparkforge stocks a surprisingly large array of magical supplies for casters of all kinds. Many wizards and druids purchase their tools here before venturing out of Absalom. There is even a rumor about a back room filled with incredibly rare magical pieces.
93–94	The Steel Fortress	Swords, shields, maces, and polearms	Warriors, soldiers, and those who appreciate a good weapon make up the majority of the Steel Fortress' customer base. The walls are lined with finely forged armaments, polished to a brilliant shine, just waiting to be bloodied in battle.
95–96	The Surly Sewer Rat	Dubious pub food	The favored hideout for fugitives and thieves, the Surly Sewer Rat is a musty and damp bar packed with disreputable characters. They are perhaps best known for an appetizer called crisplets, said to be the fried wings of pixies.
97–98	Up in Smoke	Explosives and pyrotechnics	From vials of bubbling acid to shoddily constructed bombs, Up in Smoke is the perfect place to find everything you need to commit arson, burglaries, and more, using the latest in alchemical technology.
99–100	The Westgate Hair Cuttery	Salon services	Any well-bred citizen will tell you that this is the place to have your hair cut or styled. One might encounter socialites, artists, and even politicians at this establishment. It may be expensive, but it is of the utmost importance to look one's best.

ASCENDANT COURT

District Council Chamber of Ecclestials
Headquarters Hall of Holies
Nomarch Sindoi of the Thousand Poems
District Watch The Graycloaks
Headquarters Stoneshield House
Captain of the Watch: Runewulf the Unbeliever
Key NPCs Arn-Diowynn (high priest of Nethys); Lord Gulv of House Tevineg (grand ambassador of Cheliax); Jaruke Dalagander (high priest of Gorum); Jonis Flakfatter (high priest of Norgorber); Saphira (high priestess of Cayden Cailean); Tavorae Falsebane (high priest of Iomedae); Lord Toiden of House Azari (high priest of Aroden); Vroclaw of Brevoy (high priest of Abadar); Scion Lady Xansippe of House Tevineg (high priestess of Asmodeus); Scion Lady Xerashir of House Shamyyid (high priest of Sarenrae)
Services Healing and divine spellcasting; lodging (1 to 10 sp per night); restaurants (1 cp to 1 sp per meal); rental stables (5 sp per night); clockwork repairs and mechanisms (2 gp for repairs); all trades and services claimed as holy by the deities of Golarion

Perhaps no part of Absalom encapsulates its nature, contradictions, and complexities quite so thoroughly as the Ascendant Court. Located at the hub of the city's thoroughfares, the Ascendant Court is the geographical and metaphorical heart of Absalom, and from the day of its founding, all the city's life has pulsed through it.

Past and future rub shoulders here. The city's oldest cathedrals and most venerated ruins stand in the Ascendant Court, but its streets are also crowded with new arrivals eager to write their own legends through the Test of the *Starstone*. The architecture of the Ascendant Court is a palimpsest of its history, with ancient temples to long-dead gods scattered among modern additions in a crowded, colorful mosaic that shows the influence of innumerable faiths that rose, evolved, and fell across the centuries. The district's landscape is dominated by the Starstone Cathedral, which is ringed by an enormous pit. Around Starstone Chasm stand the grand but inevitably lesser houses of other deities, arrayed like jewels haloing a central diamond in a matriarch's ring.

Here, in the Ascendant Court, four humans bested the Test of the *Starstone* to become living gods, and no one knows who might be next. Since no one can predict which upstart might prove to be a deity in the making—and, thus, the author of the next chapter in Absalom's ever-unfurling glory—the denizens of the Ascendant Court treat all of them with care. Even hopefuls destined for failure are often wielders of rare power and best treated with caution. At the same time, more cynical and unscrupulous locals are keenly aware that for every true candidate for godhood, there are a thousand self-delusional fools just begging to be gulled with false maps of the Starstone Cathedral's interior and fraudulent prophecies purporting to reveal its riddles. Should a cheated victim come back in outrage, a merchant can always claim that the wisdom of the ancients was simply mistranslated, and then charge all over again for a "more accurate" interpretation. While not all of Absalom's citizens approve of this bustling sideline in fraud, most of them accept that no true candidate for the Test of the *Starstone* would be so easily fooled, and that the grifters who ply the Ascendant Court might even be viewed as the first of its tests.

Others lack the luxury of cynicism. The Avenue of the Hopeful is crowded not only with hucksters and con artists, but with penniless wretches who want nothing more than something true to believe in. These desperate, earnest

DISTRICT SUMMARY

Viewed by many as the heart of Absalom, the Ascendant Court is home to the Starstone Cathedral, where any comer might someday join the other ascended gods. Surrounding the massive temple are a dizzying array of shrines, churches, and other holy places, where faithful from all manner of religions pay tribute or seek divine healing.

ASCENDANT COURT
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souls gather daily along the Ascendant Court's avenues in search of a worthy guide, and every day they are confronted with a cacophony of would-be gods and their nascent cults, each one shouting louder than the next for the crowd's attention.

Most of Absalom's longtime residents ignore these pretenders, but few antagonize them. Even if some claimants are obvious frauds, their cultists believe in them, and it isn't worth the trouble to unmask one false god when a hundred others are waiting to seize the same pillar. Similarly, because Absalom prides itself on recognizing and respecting every deity in Golarion, the Ascendant Court holds not only grand temples to the primary gods of the Inner Sea, but shrines to obscure figures known nowhere else on the continent. The general view, among locals, is that any god who can stake a claim is welcome to it, and the fanatic followers of rival deities can be relied upon to ferret out the liars.

DISTRICT LOCATIONS

The following are some of the Ascendant Court's most notable locations.

1 The Avenue of the Hopeful

EMPLOYER | MARKET

This bustling street is packed with booths, carts, and merchants hawking their wares from blankets or baskets. Unlike ordinary markets, however, everything sold on the Avenue of the Hopeful centers on a single theme: faith. Aspirants hoping to take the Test of the *Starstone* flock to the Avenue of the Hopeful to exchange information, gauge the competition, and perfect their preparations. Some delay for years as they build personality cults, attracting worshippers by promising to reward their early devotees once they pass the Test. Some of these gods-in-waiting are merely con artists who exploit their followers for money and muscle. Others, however, genuinely believe that a quantity of mortal devotion is required to lift them to divinity, and that their attempts at the Test are doomed if they cannot first prove themselves worthy of worship.

Hopefuls vie to stand on the highest perches, hoping to be seen by the largest possible audiences as they perform miracles before awestruck or jeering crowds. The most prized positions are atop the narrow, crooked stone pillars that date back to Aroden's raising of the *Starstone*, perhaps monolithic remnants of some ancient culture wiped out by Earthfall. Some say that these pillars still hold clusters of the deepwater barnacles that clung to them when they rested beneath the Inner Sea. Although it seems impossible that any could have survived the hordes of hopefuls that have climbed up over the millennia, every now and then an aspirant produces a barnacle shell and holds it aloft. This is considered either a sign of great good fortune or a sure mark of a fraud, depending on the observer. The local saying "lucky as a pillar barnacle" is similarly ambiguous and can express either awe at one's good luck or concern that something seemingly fortuitous will prove to be misleadingly worthless.

These gathered gods-in-waiting draw an even larger crowd of potential worshippers. Because aspirants' demonstrations often involve healing, sick and injured paupers flock to the street, putting their infirmities on display in the hopes that an aspirant finds the spectacle worthy of making into a miracle. Others, such as vampires seeking a taste of gods' blood, have more nefarious reasons for visiting.

The Avenue of the Hopeful hosts a flourishing trade in "god goods." Artists sketch religious symbols for future deities, tailors design sacramental garments, and musicians sell ready-made liturgical songs for faiths that don't yet exist. Chroniclers offer to tag along on aspirants' journeys and record their deeds, with heroic embellishments available for a discreet additional fee. And Gerig the Inspirer, when he isn't polishing the memorials of his previous endorsers in the Shrine of the Failed, is always hunting for his next champion.

ALL THE GODS

It's said that nearly every deity with an interest in Golarion has a temple in the Ascendant Court. Some of these deities are merely unfamiliar—in particular, the vast Vudrani pantheon is fully represented in the district, as are many divinities virtually unknown outside distant or isolated realms like the Mwangi Expanse, central Casmaron, Tian Xia, and even more distant realms of the Great Beyond. While the actual list of gods worshipped in Absalom isn't quite comprehensive, it's close enough that a local scholar could make a lifelong study of their variety and never run out of subjects to choose from. If a deity is not mentioned here, it's safe to assume that at least a minor shrine or church to the divinity can be found somewhat off the beaten path. A full index of temples detailed in this book can be found on page 85.

THE SPARK OF SARNAX

An ancient Arodenite hymn called "The Spark of Sarnax" continues to echo through the Ascendant Court, even more than a century after Aroden's death, moving from the cathedrals to the taverns in the last century, where its pleasing melody has made it even more popular. The song recounts the use of a healing artifact called the *Radiant Spark* by the church patriarch Sarnax, who in so doing rescued Absalom from the terrible Yellow Death sickness in the era of the Pirate Siege of Absalom.

NPCs Anchor (pickpocket); Gerig the Inspirer (deity scout); Velasca (vampire on the prowl); Vonthos of the Golden Bridge (hopeful god displaying his fabulous bejeweled man-sized sphere); Xvirac the Smokeborn (self-mutilating hopeful god surrounded by fanatical followers)

2 Azari Palace

ARCHIVE | RESIDENCE

For thousands of years, the church of Aroden was the most powerful political and cultural institution in Absalom. Then, one day, everything changed. Instead of reappearing on Golarion to usher in a new Golden Age ordained by ancient prophecy, Aroden died. Robbed of their divine patron, Aroden's clerics fell to infighting and despair, their flocks scattering to other faiths and temples. But five thousand years of political power does not fade away so easily, and even today a fragment of the old church of Aroden survives, burrowed deep into the city's civic institutions, echoed in architectural details on buildings now used for other purposes, and even managing to sponsor a few remaining temples that almost no one attends anymore.

By far the most important of these residual holy sites of the Last Azlanti is the artifact-stuffed cathedral now known as Azari Palace. The ostentatious old building stands among the most beautiful structures in the Ascendant Court, even if much of its intricately carved facade is slowly crumbling for lack of upkeep and repairs. In time gone by, the edifice was known as St. Solian Temple, serving as the second most prominent Arodenite temple in the district. One noble family, House Azari, refused to let the beautiful temple die, and over the last century their fate has become entwined with this location in particular. The Azari family traces its lineage to one of Aroden's first disciples in the earliest days of Absalom's history, and has been associated with the church of Aroden since the very beginning. Dozens of Azari scions have led the worldwide religion over the centuries, and three of its sons and daughters—including the eponymous Solian—count among the ranks of Aroden's most honored saints.

House Azari's fortunes faded with the decay of Aroden's vast religious bureaucracy, and eventually support of St. Solian bankrupted the family and forced them to sell off their Petal District estate. The entire family, led by the venerable Lord Toiden, moved into the most prestigious of the temple's abandoned priestly chambers, and locals began to refer to St. Solian Temple as Azari Palace. Over the last several decades, as more and more of Aroden's temples close, Azari Palace has become a repository of nearly five millennia of discarded religious artifacts, relics, and other ephemera. Lack of active worshippers and the advanced age and death of most existing Azari nobles makes the temple itself seem almost empty, despite the fact that its many chambers and even some of its hallways are crowded with mothballed altars, jewel-encrusted scepters, and other items of regalia once sacred to Aroden's faith. The collection represents a vast fortune (if anyone other than Scion Lord Toiden could identify half of it), and the fading House Azari is long out of funds to properly maintain and protect it.

NPCs Lord Toiden (master of the house)

3 Bank of Absalom

BANK | EMPLOYER

At this world-influencing center of trade, the blessing of commerce flows out to all. From their elevated thrones in this gilded edifice, the Archbankers of Abadar can control interest rates, approve loans, issue debt-collection orders, and otherwise shape trade for the economies of all the nations that make use of its great vaults.

Vroclaw of Brevoy is the ranking archbanker and makes the final decisions on all major loans and debt collections approved by the Bank of Absalom. His critics accuse him of devaluing indigenous cultures—which he has

harshly described as "chaotic" and "limited by locality"—and of facilitating the exploitation of local peoples and resources to extract a profit. The archbanker seldom deigns to respond to these criticisms.

The Bank takes its religious orders from the Vault of Abadar, in the Ivy District, which serves as the formal seat of Abadar's cult in the city of Absalom. The Bank occasionally offers better rates to the faithful, but claims to serve followers of all other faiths equally.

NPCs Kefilwe (doing his best to file paperwork without making eye contact with Vroclaw); Ptarnex Dexarion (merchant seeking funding for an important endeavor); Lord Toiden (begging for an extension on a very large loan); Vroclaw of Brevoy (ranking archbanker)

4 The Black Mask

CRIMINAL | MERCHANT | PARLOR | SHRINE

This high-end costume shop's placard bears no name, only the sign of an elegant black mask draped over a dark gray glove. It is an open secret in Absalom that the Black Mask is a front for the temple of Norgorber and that his faithful gather in the basement shrine here. Although Norgorber's faith is not forbidden in Absalom, many of the acts committed in his name are still crimes. Accordingly, the Graycloaks keep a close watch on the Black Mask, and visiting Norgorberites take pains to maintain their anonymity.

Every few years, the Black Mask begins selling crude leather costumes with ghoulish, demented faces and ragged rawhide edges. These outfits, called "skinsaws," are sold cheaply for a limited period. Within a few weeks of the sales, a spate of gruesome killings hits some impoverished section of Absalom. No one has ever proven a connection between the costumes sold in the Black Mask and the murders, but slum residents always watch warily for news that the "skinsaws" have reappeared at the Black Mask.

NPCs Marli (chief costumer, proprietor); Runewulf the Unbeliever (keeping watch from across the street); Terrus Von (head cleric); Wrent Dicaspiron (scowling customer)

5 Blackfinger Temple

ARCHIVE | MERCHANT | TEMPLE | WORKSHOP

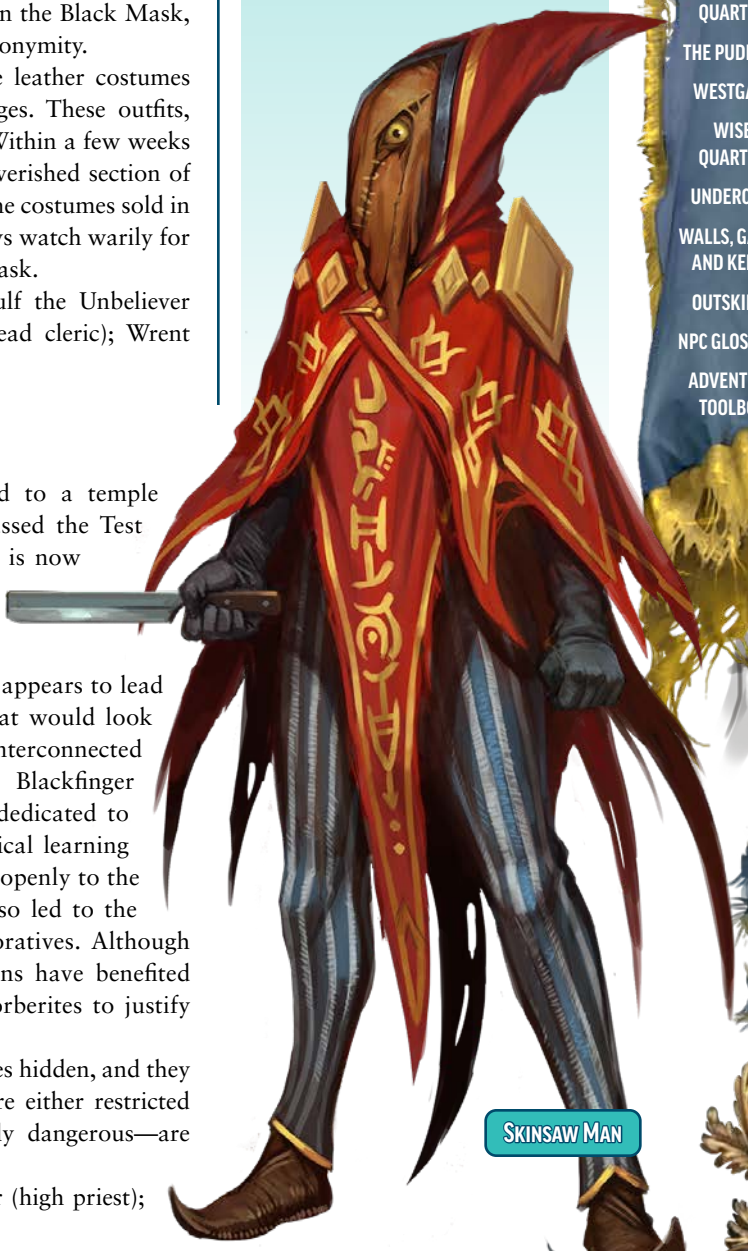
The bridges spanning the Starstone Chasm each lead to a temple corresponding to one of the gods who successfully passed the Test of the *Starstone*. Aroden's broken bridge leads to what is now the Chelaxian Embassy. Cayden's bridge leads to the latest iteration of his holy feast hall, and Iomedae's Seventh Church fronts the bridge corresponding to her victory. The bridge associated with Norgorber, however, appears to lead to nothing but a collection of nondescript buildings that would look more at home in Eastgate or the Coins. The facade of interconnected structures obscures the gray-and-black edifice of Blackfinger Temple, the only legally recognized house of worship dedicated to Norgorber in Absalom. The temple is a hub of alchemical learning and laboratories, and its less lethal concoctions are sold openly to the public. The alchemists' fascination with venoms has also led to the discovery of numerous powerful antivenoms and restoratives. Although rumors of mysterious side effects persist, these creations have benefited Absalom greatly, and they are often invoked by Norgorberites to justify why their temple should be tolerated.

Even here, however, Blackfingers' faithful keep their faces hidden, and they are careful to ensure that any evil or illegal activities are either restricted to the nearby and semi-secret Black Mask, or—if truly dangerous—are conducted somewhere else entirely.

NPCs Gevvid (masked parishioner); Jonis Flakfatter (high priest); Undrul Vosh (masked parishioner)

A Lack of Intelligence

A nervous-looking youth with patchy red hair is trying to climb onto the roof of the Black Mask, so that he can see whether the rumors are true about a new delivery of skinsaw costumes waiting to be sold. The youth, Niervok, barely survived a brush with Father Skinsaw's cultists the last time they went on a killing spree, and he's terrified that the murders might start up again. The roof is steeply angled and deliberately kept slick with moss, and he is very likely to fall.



Skinsaw Man

TRASH THE BLOCK!

A rampaging otyugh tears through the streets outside the Chelaxian Embassy, sending civilians fleeing and the guards running to confront the beast. It fights until dead. Examination of the corpse reveals several hollow glass needles driven into its hide. The syringes bear traces of blue residue. While the otyugh is still fighting, sharp observers might notice three hooded figures slipping into the embassy by way of a briefly unguarded side door.

Chelaxian Embassy

6 The Catacombs

DUNGEON | MONUMENT

During the first age of Absalom, Aroden's cult dug catacombs beneath the streets of the Ascendant Court so that their mortal remains could be laid to rest as close as possible to the Starstone Cathedral. Over the centuries, the catacombs expanded into complex labyrinths. Access was generally through a street-level shrine, from which a staircase descended into a wide main passageway intersected by a grid of narrower corridors. In later centuries, pilgrims made candlelit processions through these passages to pay homage to Aroden's first followers, and received sacramental coins engraved with the early saints' faces to commemorate the pilgrimage. Today, these catacomb coins carry great value as relics of Absalom's history, though few genuine coins survive, and the city's criminal element is known to sell forgeries to wealthy collectors.

NPCs Darius Finch and Dalessa (secret lovers on an assignation); Dhauken Tor (researching an obscure historical theory); Garyth Pammenter (adventurer leading a party on a hunt for catacomb coins on behalf of Lord Oved); Pollunk Gean (fugitive); Runewulf the Unbeliever (leading a watch patrol on a fugitive hunt)

7 Cayden's Hall

ARCHIVE | PARLOR | TAVERN | TEMPLE

This massive, open hall of rough-hewn timbers is famed across the continent as "the world's largest nonstop festival." The festival has in fact stopped at least 16 times in the past, when the place burned down after some especially uninhibited carousing. The current incarnation, its seventeenth, is a faithful re-creation of the original tavern that Cayden Cailean staggered out of before taking the Test of the *Starstone*. After decades in which the temple was prudently located a few blocks away, nearer a public fountain, the latest iteration returns Cayden's Hall to its original location near the chasm bridge Cayden himself used to return to Absalom as a living god.

Here freedom fighters and explorers gather to plot revolutions, plan expeditions, and recruit like-minded fellows for heroic exploits. The High Priestess, Saphira, can often be found watching performances in the temple's oratorium, although day-to-day operations are overseen by a young cleric named Dahar. Anyone willing to hoist a tankard to fighting evil is welcome, and those seeking to put together a group of adventurers for a dangerous exploit often come looking here.

Those who perform exceptional services on behalf of the temple are sometimes granted "Honored Guest" status, meaning that they are no longer expected to offset their carousing with a donation so long as they remain in the good graces of the temple. This benefit also sometimes extends to healing and other spellcasting services, at the discretion of Saphira.

Some say that, years back, another Caydenite built a research laboratory and demonology archive beneath the temple's garden, but the temple's current caretakers generally deflect inquiries about the secret archive by claiming that if this was ever true, its creator got drunk and lost the key, and now no one remembers how to get in.

NPCs Dahar (junior cleric); Eggal Torkelson (holding court at his personal table, drawing a crowd with tales of fighting undead during the fall of Lastwall); Hope (Firebrand agitator); Lemaria Kumari (rabble-rouser); Saphira (high priestess); Thaddeus Barabus (toasting liberty); Vita Aulamaxa (extolling the virtues of Ravounel)

8 Chelaxian Embassy

EMPLOYER | HOUSING | MUNICIPAL | SHRINE

Once, the temple on this site was the center of Aroden's faith, a locus for pilgrims who came from far and wide to walk the same streets that their god had traveled and to marvel at the creations that Aroden had made with his own hands. Arguably civilization's grandest cathedral for many centuries, it fell into steep decline following Aroden's death and the dissolution of his faith. A devastating earthquake in 4698 AR was the final blow to the Arodenites' ability to maintain the site.

Through a complex series of maneuvers, the Chelaxian families in Absalom purchased the bankrupt and damaged ruins. It now serves as the Chelaxian Embassy, and dozens of Chelaxian flags wave black and red within sight of Starstone Cathedral. A trio of devilkin horned warriors known as the Brethren Guard are its most well-known protectors, and most of the Arodenite iconography within the former cathedral has been replaced by Thrune imperial symbols and Asmodean religious motifs. These infernal trappings signal, very clearly, that a new master rules in Aroden's hall.

The embassy's residential wing commands two floors on the north side of the old temple, given over to quarters for the Chelaxian Ambassador, other diplomats, and the embassy's records archive. The wing's north entrance is called "The Spy's Entrance," since it's shielded from the view of the main street, and is thus the best nonmagical means to enter the embassy without being seen.

The recent return of Lord Gulv Tevineg after 20 years at court in Egorian—this time as Cheliax's Grand Ambassador to Absalom—has ignited a fresh series of intrigues from the viper's nest of the Chelaxian Embassy. Lord Gulv conducts his diplomatic efforts from a sumptuously decorated office overlooking the Starstone Chasm, the spire of the Starstone Cathedral serving as fitting motivation to achieve something greater for himself—and for his beloved nation—no matter the cost to Absalom.

NPCs Lady Anilah (sending a coded message to a contact in Egorian); Lord Archych, Lady Miranda, and Lord Navvem (scheming nobles); Lord Gulv (manipulative master ambassador); Lady Seichya (planning a diabolical plot with her father, Lord Gulv); Vanius Cestanian (embassy guard); Lady Xansippe (visiting her husband, Lord Gulv); Zelva (Gylou Sisters thug receiving instructions)

9 Church of Asmodeus

TEMPLE

This looming gothic temple is one of the youngest structures in the district. The city's previous high temple of Asmodeus burned to the ground in 4698 AR during the so-called "Devil's Night" uprising, but no attempt to rebuild on that site was ever made by the faithful. Instead, priests saw to the raising of this impressive structure in a few short years, and opened the temple's doors near the end of 4705 AR, only months before the centenary of Aroden's death.

As a result of House Thrune making the faith of Asmodeus into Cheliax's state religion, worshippers of the Prince of Darkness aren't as reliant upon Absalom's open-arms policy toward acceptance of all religions. Yet for those worshippers of Asmodeus who, for whatever reason, do not or cannot dwell in Cheliax, the Church of Asmodeus in Absalom serves as something of a unique sanctuary. Here, even those who would normally find difficulty operating in Cheliax, such as tieflings, halflings, or even strix, can find a welcoming place

STREET FISHING

Two street urchins are fishing in the street, using a bent nail baited with a chunk of dead rat on a piece of string. They drop this lure into a hole between the cobblestones and pull it back up, sometimes with an odd-looking frog attached. They've already collected a bucket of ghostly pale, cyclopean frogs with pointed, hollow tongues. According to the urchins, the hole they've been fishing from connects to a dark, disused portion of the catacombs.

UNBELIEVABLE VALUE!

Despite the Graycloaks' best efforts, fraud is common in the God's Market, in part because of the large number of trickster deities represented in the district (even the most benign of whom see nothing wrong with cheating someone trying to purchase harmful or illegal goods), and in part because Abadarans and Asmodeans are not above charging higher prices for guaranteed wares, leaving poorer customers with no choice but to gamble on less reliable deities' goods.

to worship without fear of being persecuted by the government—provided, of course, that they are devout Asmodeans.

This open acceptance has often put the Church of Asmodeus in conflict with Cheliax itself, and there are those among the faith on both sides who espouse beliefs that those who worship either here, or at the Thrune-approved shrine of Asmodeus in the Chelaxian Embassy, are heretics of the most awful order and should be persecuted. Those who are truly invested in the diabolic faith understand the differences between loyalty to Cheliax and devotion to Asmodeus—and that a devout worshipper of the Prince of Darkness deserves a place of faith even if Thrune doesn't approve of them. The recent arrival of the long-absent Grand Ambassador Gulv Tevineg, husband of High Priestess Xansippe, Beloved of Asmodeus, has added complexity to their situation, as the returned noble attempts—largely unsuccessfully—to encourage his fiercely independent wife to bring the orthodox temple more in line with the schemes of his Thrune benefactors.

NPCs Lord Archych (parishioner); Durward (lay priest); Lady Miranda (parishioner); Vanius Cestanian (parishioner); Metadame Vannessir (parishioner); Lady Xansippe (high priestess); Zelva (parishioner)

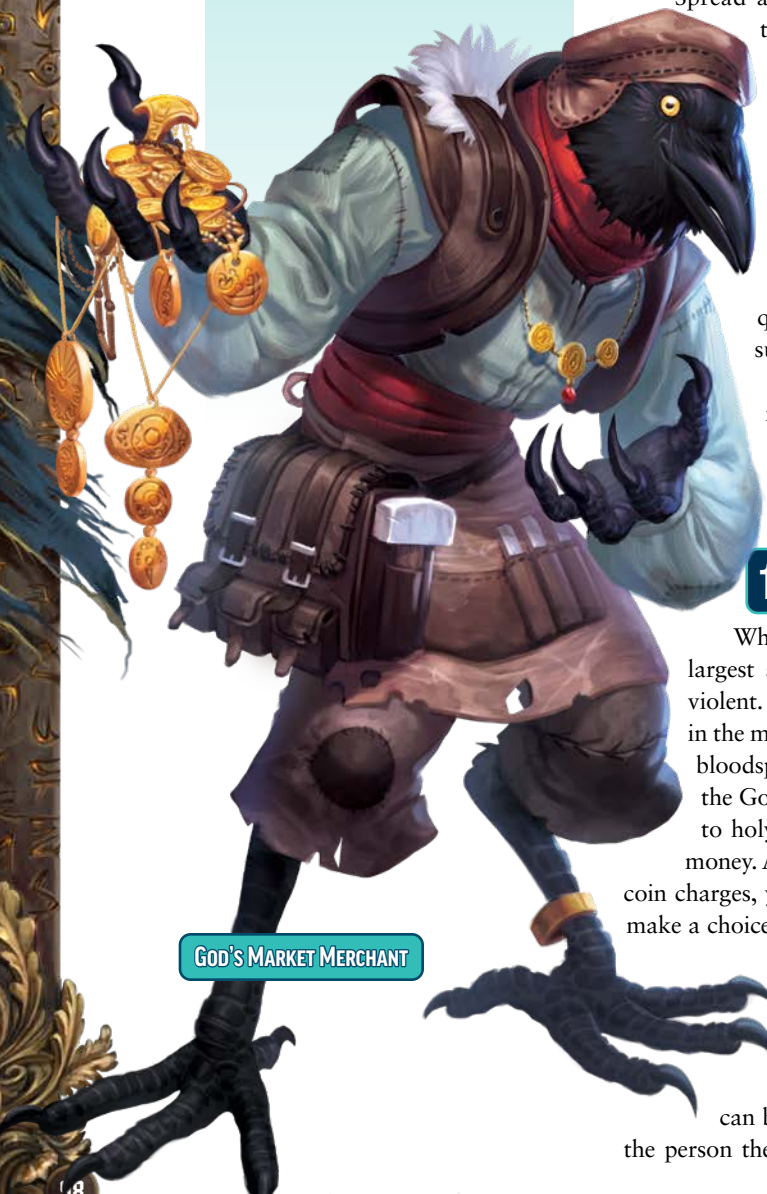
10 God's Market

EMPLOYER MARKET WORKSHOP

Spread across a massive plaza southeast of the Starstone Cathedral, the God's Market is the oldest continually operating market in Absalom, and one of the oldest in the world. "As long as there are gods," a local saying holds, "there will always be the God's Market."

Potions, scrolls, and religious trinkets are commonly sold at the God's Market. Expert artisans, including jewelers and engravers who specialize in both legitimate religious symbols and fraudulent artifacts, ply their trades and display their wares. Customers who make discreet queries may find more questionable, or even illegal, items—but it's just as likely that such a buyer may wind up cheated with no recourse.

NPCs Anchor (pickpocket); Jarid Moltwin (disreputable merchant); Marten (friendly street urchin); Pihma Lamar (peddling salvaged Azlanti artifacts); Runewulf the Unbeliever (monitoring the crowd); Salindra Concilio (desperate panhandler)



God's Market Merchant

11 The Gorumarrux

TEMPLE VENUE

While the stone ring known as the Gorumarrux is far from the largest arena in Absalom, it may be able to claim the title of most violent. Here, worshippers of Gorum gather to honor their Lord in Iron in the most visceral way possible—through ritualized combat and sacred bloodsport. Unlike the typical arena, most of the clashes performed in the Gorumarrux are meant to honor Gorum and serve roles more akin to holy rituals or ceremonies than public events intended to bring in money. Anyone may visit the Gorumarrux to observe the violence free of coin charges, yet payments are still required. Those who wish to watch must make a choice between offering a suit of armor or a weapon as a donation to the Gorumarrux's stores (as the gladiators and contestants in the arena tend to use up the site's supplies quickly), prayers from actual worshippers of Gorum, or the donation of a contestant for an upcoming match to be performed in no fewer than seven days hence from the visit. Such contestants can be of any nature—from a trained beast to a volunteer (including the person themself). The days of offering enslaved people as contestants as

payment for watching a match are technically in the past, but rumors that some of those who fight in the Gorumarrux do so against their will continue to hound the site. Arena Master Jaruke Dalagander is also the local high priest of Gorum, and his increasingly short-tempered and profanity-laced rebuttals to queries about whether or not slaves are still used in matches do no favors to the Gorummarux's reputation, and it may be but a matter of time before the city is forced to launch an official investigation into the matter.

NPCs Jaruke Dalagander (high priest); Ledford (notoriously violent current undefeated arena champion)

12 The Hall of Holies

MUNICIPAL

The Chamber of Ecclestials, the governing body of the Ascendant Court, predates the very concept of district councils or even the Grand Council. Even as the pilgrim lords of early Absalom worked with their living god to interpret and enact the Founding Laws of Absalom into the earliest semblance of a local government, the clerics and religious leaders who gathered near the edge of the Starstone Chasm had started to organize into a common council to see to the immediate needs of their refugee-choked district.

The council includes representatives of 20 different religions. The nomarch of the Chamber is very rarely a member of any local religion, however, and by tradition is usually a Vudrani sage. The current nomarch, Sindoi of the Thousand Poems, has ruled for decades, and is greatly respected by the clergy and common people alike.

The Chamber of Ecclestials spends most of its time arranging for the holidays, weddings, funerals, protests, celebrations, and observances of member churches, some of which list the destruction of their religious neighbors among the tenets of their faith. A study of the Chamber's decisions over centuries published by the Galtan philosopher Darl Jubannich in his infamous *On Government* was part of a broader condemnation of religion and politics that triggered the Red Revolution of Galt in the previous century.

Anyone can apply to the Chamber to be granted the title of ecclestial. Normally having a known ecclestial vouch for the applicant is enough, but occasionally it is required that a working knowledge of the applicant's religion or the ability to create holy or unholy water is also displayed. Being an ecclestial grants no special rights or privileges, but does cause city officials (especially varlokkur) to look upon a divine spellcaster less suspiciously.

Every month, and likewise when called together by crisis, the Chamber of Ecclestials meets in this elegant former temple of Aroden to go over the district's administrative business. Most meetings are fairly routine, but occasionally some controversial issue causes the public to crowd outside the council's closed sessions until the Graycloaks escort them away.

When the Chamber of Ecclestials is not in session, the Hall of Holies is occupied by the clerks and bureaucrats who oversee the district's day-to-day municipal services.

NPCs Arn-Diowynn, Lady Dyrianna, Jaruke Dalagander, Tavorae Falsebane, Vroclaw of Brevoy, Lady Xansippe, Lady Xerashir (council members); Sindoi of the Thousand Poems (nomarch)

13 Pitview Pub

TAVERN

The Pitview Pub is a favorite spot for cynics and gamblers to gather for black-hearted jokes and wagers on Starstone aspirants' chances. It is located along the edge of the Starstone Chasm, with a prime view of any would-be god's first attempt at crossing the gaping pit. Even better, the building contains a cellar with tall, tunneled windows actually cut into the chasm's wall, so that spectators can catch a glimpse of failed hopefuls plummeting past.

EVIL! EVIL EVERYWHERE!

With so many ill-understood (and in fact outright diabolical) religious zealots packing the district, it's easy to see a demon in every shadow, and a villain in every pilgrim bedecked in pentagrams. Absalom outlaws the practice of most evil religions, but restricts malign actions, rather than indecent thoughts. Simply professing to worship an evil entity is not grounds for arrest or even casual bigotry—Absalomians never wish to be seen as small-minded—but murdering, sentient sacrifice, fiend-summoning, and similar crimes gain no leniency for being religiously motivated, and see little tolerance from the public at large.

EXPLOSIVE REVELATION

Late at night, a cloaked figure climbs partway up a pillar on the Avenue of the Hopeful, careful not to disturb the god-in-waiting sleeping at the top. The cloaked visitor opens a satchel and begins painting glue onto the ancient stone, then fixes several large barnacles onto the glue. On close inspection, the barnacles appear to be false shells filled with some kind of explosive.

When no tests are in the offing, the Pitview Pub is moderately popular at best. Its food is notoriously bad, and the drinks are heavily watered (which, wags like to jest, would be less objectionable if the bartenders would just stop using slop water). Rats often overrun the cellar, although most of the pub's regulars assume that the owners encourage the rodents to proliferate to ensure a steady supply of meat for their reliably awful pies. The Pitview Pub does offer a varied gambling operation, however, including opportunities to bet on nearly every significant event in the city.

NPCs Breslin (proprietor); Dahar (at the bar, appreciating the change of scenery); Golinarth (attracting a crowd); Grint Basatrel and Osprey (dining companions); Groske (barfly); Hans the Northman, Udiska of the Starlit Path, Utgar of Gyr, and Runewulf the Unbeliever (dining companions); Vanius Cestanian (diner)

14 Pleasure Salon of Calistria

TEMPLE

Absalom's largest temple of Calistria is a bright, well-kept edifice built in the columned style of classic Azlant. While its architecture clashes against the more graceful facades presented by most other temples of Calistria, it does fit nicely with the general look of other upscale temples in the Ascendant Court, and its priesthood points to the fact that since the elven style was so inspiring to local builders back during the Castrovelian architectural trend a few thousand years back, it's only fair for some of that influence to run the other way.

The temple's name is more complex than most would ever assume. To the priesthood of Calistria, there is pleasure to be found not only in the pursuit of lust, but also in the pursuit of trickery and vengeance. That the lustful aspect draws much of the city's focus suits the faithful well, for it allows them to enjoy trickery and vengeance with greater leniency. Certainly none of those who tend to the salon would argue that it does not serve as a brothel (a fact well-supported by the majority of the stained glass windows and murals and statuary within the temple), and the income provided by this element is appreciated, but it would be far more accurate to think of those who work within the Pleasure Salon as information brokers, muses, political advisors, therapists, or even spies than the somewhat limited notion as sacred companions. Certainly the common, crude rumor that all the half-elves of Absalom were conceived at the Pleasure Salon is false, for elves are not the only acolytes within, nor is all the intercourse that takes place inside of a carnal nature.

Large nests of wasps ranging in size from the commonly small to the uncommonly large can be found in the upper reaches of the Pleasure Salon's chambers. Within the temple's walls, none who have Calistria's favor are ever stung, and the priests have come to rely upon wasp stings as proof of a visitor's ill intent. Priests often serve a mead-like alcoholic drink called metheglin to patrons, jokingly suggesting the delicious drink is made from "wasp honey." This playful lie

Pleasure Salon of Calistria

has taken on a life of its own, and the priests take pride in how this minor trick has been accepted as fact by many in the city—despite the inarguable fact that the temple's wasps do not produce honey.

What isn't as widely spoken of is how the priests of the Pleasure Salon are always listening, always empathizing, and when a favored patron or friend of a friend reveals an injustice, more often than not those wrongs are righted within the week by mysterious events, unexpected revelations, or even fatal accidents, as those who have wronged the faithful find themselves facing divine retribution. While now and then evidence of acts of vengeance performed by the clergy come to light, most such events bear few clues, and the faithful are quick to attribute the development to Calistria's personal intervention.

NPCs Lady Alyssia (parishioner); Lady Dyrianna (high priestess); Sarielle Avirzaden (senior priestess)

15 Seventh Church of Iomedae

TEMPLE

This magnificent cathedral of white marble and gold is built on the site of the Seventh Act of Iomedae, in which the then-mortal champion called upon the Undying Light of the *Starstone* itself to drive back a horde of ravening sea ghouls that threatened to overrun Absalom in 3824 AR. The Iomedannae, a 10-foot-tall statue of the goddess carved from red limestone and banded with sapphires, commemorates this miracle.

Today, the Seventh Church serves both to train new acolytes in Iomedae's service and to welcome the aged, injured, and infirm champions who have already spent their best years serving her faith, and who are now ready to pass their wisdom on to younger swords. Until recently, the high priest of the Seventh Church was one of these: Genedair the Faithful, a nonagenarian veteran of the Mendevian Crusades. Recently, Genedair passed on to his final reward, and leadership of the Seventh Church went to Tavorae Falsebane, a Molthuni paladin who was born into slavery in that land.

Directly across the street from the Seventh Church is the Tempering Hall, a training ground for young paladins. Most Iomedaeans split their time between the hall and the temple, visiting each regularly.

NPCs Aftrin Undrol (parishioner); Tavorae Falsebane (high priest); Yeena Quoros (senior priestess)

16 The Shrine of the Failed

MONUMENT

Centuries ago, the families of failed *Starstone* aspirants built this grim stone monument to honor their late relatives' hopes. Since then, its chain of interconnected rooms has been expanded regularly to accommodate new arrivals.

Each chamber holds several alcoves: some occupy an entire wall; others are smaller, tiered and partitioned by stone dividers. Failed aspirants who had larger cults or more affluent backers occupy the larger spaces and are memorialized with elaborate decorations, while more obscure candidates may have only a few personal possessions arranged in a tiny alcove partitioned to share with three others. All of them, however, are tended equally by the Shrine's masked caregivers, who claim no religious affiliation, but wear black mourning robes and view their task as a deeply dignified duty.

The Shrine is open to the public, but although many come to gawk at the names, numbers, and peculiar credos of the failed, few stay for long. A profound reverence suffuses the chilly, gray chambers, and it can weigh on unprepared visitors with unexpected gravity. Visiting the Shrine serves as a cold reminder that even those who aspire toward divinity cannot escape death, and that oblivion comes for all.

Despite the Shrine's dolorous solemnity, there are always some in Absalom eager to turn even the deaths of divinities to their own ends. Two of the most

The Sanctity of Secrecy

Via her control of Absalom's Guild of Courtesans, Lady Dyrianna controls one of the most influential information networks in the city. Secrets learned by talkative clients have a way of ending up in the hands of wealthy enemies, leading most to suspect that the companions of the Pleasure Salon–which Dyrianna also controls–likewise reveal their secrets for the right price. Dyrianna is nothing if not a devout Calistrian, however, and betraying a parishioner's confidence is considered a grave sin among the faithful. Private visits with the temple's companions often take on a confessional aspect, and betraying that sacred trust is anathema. Certainly agents of the temple use secret information to fuel vengeance against those who deserve retribution, but such matters always remain strictly secret.

SOMETHING LOST

A disheveled woman sits on the street side, weeping as passersby skirt around her display of grief. At first glance she appears to be a pauper, but her ragged clothes bear the insignia of Lastwall, and she weeps over a broken, jeweled dagger in her hands. The woman fled from the Gravelands with a precious relic from her local church of Iomedae. She planned to deliver the relic to the Seventh Church of Iomedae after a long pilgrimage, only to have the blade snap off just this morning. She needs help repairing the weapon before she can bring it to the temple.

notorious, representing polar opposites in their reverence for the fallen, are Gerig the Inspirer and Chaundralor God-Harvester.

Gerig the Inspirer is a wily, charming half-elf entrepreneur whose business is built on Gerig's Liquid Courage, a potent brew of distilled liquor and energizing herbs. His primary method of advertising is convincing *Starstone* aspirants to take the plunge over Starstone Chasm after drinking from a bottle of the gaudily labeled beverage. When they plummet to oblivion (as none of his customers have yet survived), Gerig crows that his Liquid Courage instills such bravery that it convinces mortals that they're gods. While only a few aspirants have succumbed to Gerig's combination of bribes, flattery, and tactical insults, he has nevertheless succeeded in establishing a considerable reputation for his drink, and he memorializes each of his unfortunate endorsers with a gilded plaque prominently displayed by their alcoves in the Shrine of the Failed.

Petite, black-robed, and silver-masked, Chaundralor God-Harvester is a far quieter presence in the Shrine. Little is known about this enigmatic figure who blends in with the Shrine's other masked and robed caregivers. On occasion, however, Chaundralor has been glimpsed lifting the silver mask and inhaling deeply over a failed aspirant's memorial—for Chaundralor, too, is a *Starstone* hopeful. The God-Harvester believes that each of these failed claimants possessed a tiny fragment of divinity, which the Harvester can take from the dead and eventually use to usurp their collective dreams.

NPCs Chaundralor God-Harvester (aspirational aspirant); Gerig the Inspirer (installing another plaque); Hans the Northman (quietly contemplating a big decision)

The Failed

Some of the failed aspirants remembered in the Shrine include the following.

Gobru: A would-be god of fish and the sea's bounty, her bereaved followers still sometimes go down to the waters to listen for their dead deity's voice in the waves.

The Muted God: Also known as the Unspoken One, the Muted God claimed silence and serenity as his domain and amassed thousands of followers. His cult of silent devotees lingered for years after his death, although it shifted from a religious sect to a secret society of criminals.

Oggo of the Sixteen Poses: Oggo's shrine contains an arrangement of sixteen shield-size placards, each depicting the would-be deity in one of his famous poses. Oggo believed that some occult combination of these forms would unlock a person's inner potential and innate divinity, and every day those who still remember him visit the shrine to see if they can unlock the right sequence.

Veelich the Unwanted: The would-be god of failure, Veelich's worshippers insist with some justification that his plunge into Starstone Chasm represented the only true apotheosis permitted by his creed. His alcove in the Shrine of the Failed still draws small, terrible offerings from those hoping to avoid his approval.

Zimpar of the Screaming Fear: Before attempting the Test of the *Starstone*, the befuddled mystic known as Zimpar claimed to have slept for a full year, dreaming a way across the Starstone Chasm that could only be inspired by the brilliance of sleep. He called himself Zimpar of the Dreaming Year until the moment he stepped over the chasm. Observers heard his terrified screams for what seemed like an eternity when he plunged into oblivion, earning him his current sobriquet.

17 Starstone Cathedral

DUNGEON MONUMENT

When Aroden raised the *Starstone* from the depths of the Inner Sea, he drew up the whole of the Isle of Kortos along with it. After grasping the massive glowing crystal in hand, Aroden's spirit ventured within the gemstone, where he endured a series of phantasmagoric scenes drawn from his memories, fears, and ambitions meant to test his inner character. Emerging victorious from this ordeal as a living god, Aroden turned his now divine gaze to the

wave-drenched isle of rock below him. The glowing stone in his hand held his destiny. The soaked stone below would become the foundation of his legacy.

Aroden knew that some of the pilgrims drawn to his new city of Absalom would want to follow in his footsteps, claiming the *Starstone* for themselves. Yet he had spent the five thousand years since the fall of Azlant trying to crack the secret of divinity. He had no interest in letting anyone take it from him easily. To prevent this, Aroden established a magnificent temple to himself known as the Starstone Cathedral as the very first structure in the newfound city of Absalom. Before the arrival of the city's first inhabitants, Aroden himself dwelt within the edifice and used it as a personal home, even as he tirelessly worked to weave magical architecture designed to prevent interlopers from accessing the *Starstone*.

The structure still stands today. Perched atop a perilous pillar of rock at the center of a vast pit in the heart of the Ascendant Court, the Starstone Cathedral is the most famous building in Absalom, its towered silhouette standing in as an internationally recognized symbol for the city itself—an association enhanced by the wide spread of Absalom's gold measure, which features an imprint of the building on one side.

Every year, hundreds of would-be gods seeking divinity or common thrill-seekers hunting a challenge pridefully attempt to delve into the Starstone Cathedral and lay hands on the *Starstone*. Very few survive even a half-dozen chambers of the legendary dungeon, and most who do become hopelessly lost within its constantly shifting labyrinth or are forced to flee the structure altogether. Exceedingly few have ever managed to penetrate the secret chamber of the *Starstone* itself. There, anyone who touches the gemstone artifact finds their spirits drawn within the crystal and challenged by the Test of the *Starstone*, just as Aroden was tested. Those who prove their worthiness return to their bodies as immortal, divine beings. The rest are destroyed by the *Starstone,* their bodies left to rot. Dozens of ancient skeletons line the floor near the glowing stone, some still reaching for its crystalline, faceted surface.

SPECIAL DELIVERY

Six brutish hobgoblins shoulder through the crowd, snarling and threatening all they meet. Two of them carry a rune-carved bone casket locked with black gems, within which bright eyes glint. The hobgoblins say that the casket holds a god waiting to be born, and they demand to know where to take their embryonic deity. Any attempts to get a closer look at the casket or its occupant are met with growls and shoves.

ELSEWHERE IN THE ASCENDANT COURT

22. District Courthouse: Seat of local justice long overseen by a trio of elderly clerics of Abadar. As expected, their rulings are generally high-minded and fair, but ancient bureaucracy in the district insures that the wheels of justice turn slowly here.

23. Erastil's Alehouse: A thriving local brewery and alehouse run by cloistered clerics of Erastil, located near the edge of the Avenue of the Hopeful.

24. Gerig's Workshop: Alchemical laboratory and warehouse of Gerig the Inspirer. All of the promoter's supply of his famous Gerig's Liquid Courage is manufactured at this sprawling facility, regularly patrolled by hired mercenaries from the Guild of Spears.

Three bridges span the expanse between the Cathedral proper and the streets of the Ascendant Court. Each of the bridges corresponds to one of the successful challengers of the Test of the *Starstone*—Norgorber, Iomedae, and Cayden Cailean. These sacred paths abut the frontage of one of their respective grand temples, tracing the footsteps of the ascended gods as they left the Cathedral in triumph. A fourth bridge, corresponding to Aroden and tended to by his aging clergy, collapsed in the earthquake of 4698 AR.

Very little is known about the details of the Test of the *Starstone* itself, but the lore of Absalom holds that to successfully pass the Test, one must cross the Starstone Chasm by some method other than the three bridges that span its gulf. Starstone aspirants thus prefer other methods—complicated rope bridges, flying carpets, being fired from a cannon, and so on. As the lore demands that each crossing must be unique, creativity abounds.

NPCs Chaundralor God-Harvester (staring across the gulf at the Cathedral, his mask cloaking an expression of determination); Garyth Pammenter (adventurer preparing to delve the Cathedral); Marten (friendly street urchin dangling his feet over the edge); Vonthos of the Golden Bridge (would-be god attempting to cross the Starstone Chasm in his fabulous sphere)

18 Stoneshield House

PRECINCT

This watch station was named for Dunarr Stoneshield, a much-revered district captain who has for centuries been the closest thing to a patron saint that the staunchly irreligious Graycloaks will acknowledge, serves as the Graycloaks' headquarters. Although the building is understated, particularly by contrast with the ostentatious ancient temples common in the district, it nevertheless has an imposing, ominous air. The guards of the Ascendant Court, after all, are frequently called upon to deal with strange and powerful threats, and they are as efficient and unflappable as the demands of their position require them to be.

The Graycloaks are composed of righteous citizens who deny the divinity of all gods and thus are no more partial to the influence of any one religion over the other. Because of their lack of faith, the Graycloaks have a reputation as being fair to members of all religions.

NPCs Runewulf the Unbeliever (captain)

19 Tempering Hall

ACADEMY GARRISON

The Tempering Hall, an ancient training ground for paladins, dominates the block immediately across the street from the Seventh Church of Iomedae. The two institutions have shared common cause for centuries, the Hall directly instructing militant members of the Inheritor's church since the earliest decades following her ascension via the Test of the *Starstone*. A 30-foot-tall wall of white stone surrounds several open courtyards for martial training drills overseen by dedicated instructors. Four round towers mark the corners of the Tempering Hall, each with wide-open windows that offer a commanding view of the inner courtyards and the surrounding neighborhood.

The Tempering Hall primarily serves adherents to the faith of Iomedae, but by longstanding tradition it also trains paladins of Abadar, Irori, and Shelyn. The road for these students is always more difficult, as the Hall's instruction is deeply rooted in Iomedaean philosophy, and does little to map lessons to different doctrines. The sounds of barking orders, clashing weapons, and battlefield prayers echo from the walls of the Tempering Hall throughout the day, accompanied by the howls of trained dogs, the gallop of warhorse hooves, and the calls of even more mythical beasts. The Tempering Hall trains animals as well as people, for battle and for use as mounts by graduating students. The Hall's Knight Lord, Evandor Malik,

leads his students and fellow instructors by example, mixing compassion and command to craft a new generation of heroes.

NPCs Knight Lord Evandor Malik (master trainer); Xolarna Dursk (houndmaster)

20 Temple of the Shining Star

TEMPLE

The soaring minarets and shining domes of the glorious Temple of the Shining Star stand near the Starstone Chasm, its facade perfectly placed to catch the first rays of sunrise each morning. As the largest temple of Sarenrae north of Katheer, the Temple of the Shining Star commands a place of respect and note in the Ascendant Court's skyline. Scion Lady Xerashir of House Shamyyid leads the faithful here, and every morning she stands before a sprawling sundial known as the Mark to watch as the first sunbeams of the day cast the first shadow, at which point she gives the call to sound a clarion of joyous horns from each of the temple's towers to announce the arrival of the new day. While many claim the Mark is the largest sundial in the world, Lady Xerashir waves those claims aside, noting that even the smallest sundial can still tell time, and as such, a sundial's size is an irrelevant point of interest.

The church itself constantly strives to promote honesty, redemption, and healing throughout the city, running several small pavilions where younger priests offer guidance and healing arts to all the people of the city without cost. Numerous small bands of clerics and paladins of Sarenrae, groups known as "Dawnstar Angels," start their day as soon as the horns command, beginning their ever-changing circuits through the city in search of those too poor or desperate to seek aid. Dawnstar Angels provide healing free of cost to those they deem need the attention the most, and are often at the forefront of those called upon to fight against outbreaks of disease.

NPCs Eudom Mansarian (parishioner); Lady Xerashir (high priestess)

21 Tower of Twin Truths

ARCHIVE TEMPLE

While small shrines devoted to Nethys can be found throughout the city in magical schools, arcane shops, libraries, academies, and anywhere magical study takes place, the Tower of Twin Truths is a stark monument to the worship of Nethys. At 250 feet in height, the alabaster walls of the tower loom starkly over the surrounding neighborhood, its facade emblazoned with the mask of Nethys and its crown adorned with a bowl of constantly churning mist that glows brightly at night and flickers like black smoke during the day. The tower's ground floor holds a small public shrine to Nethys, while its upper floors are given over to the temple's caretakers—high priest Arn-Diowynn dwells on the uppermost level. The bulk of the tower's holdings lie in its underground chambers, where a large library of various magical theories and studies is kept. The library itself has two wings, each of which holds books that are represented in the other wing by opposing texts, for just as Nethys personifies the constructive and destructive nature of magic, so to do the holdings of the Tower of Twin Truths present both sides of any one topic's nature—positive and negative, good and evil, right and wrong.

NPCs Arn-Diowynn (high priest); Sorinna Westyr (parishioner)

Crime Report

The Graycloaks keep the Ascendant Court free of the most violent crime, but with priceless religious artifacts and ancient magic items for the taking in nearly every house of worship in the district, there's still enough plunder here to draw the attention of ambitious (or religiously motivated) thieves. Criminal groups active in the district include the Forthright and the Smoke Knights.

Runewulf the Unbeliever

THE COINS

District Council The Coin Council
Headquarters Hall of Commerce
Nomarch Lady Myleena of House Arnsen
District Watch The Token Guard
Headquarters Bail House
Captain of the Watch Lady Kythes Finch
Key NPCs Trade Prince Aaqir al'Hakam (merchant lord); Dr. Bensi Skule (master of the Bloody Barbers); Bwutuzu the Panther (overseer of the Grand Bazaar); Flindish Tanwhirl (priestess of Brigh); The Harlequin (guildmaster of the Forthright); Horner Shan (knight marshal of the Smoke Knights); Lord Navvem of House Wachail (disgraced noble, member of the Coin Council); Lady Nymara of House Damaq (member of the Coin Council, district seat on the Low Council); Lord Rajit Punjeer (majordomo of the Grand Dance Hall of Kortos); Lord Riodos of House Morilla (guildmaster of Spears); Tern on the Wind (charity house proprietor)
Services Construct creation, entertainment, hostelry, loans, mercenaries for hire, money changing, scribing, spellcasting services, and a vast array of mercantile services.

The *Starstone* is the heart of Absalom, but commerce is its blood. Nowhere does that blood flow more freely than in the Coins. Carts full of goods, busy vendors, and merchants dressed in their finest clothes crowd the district from daybreak until well after dark, and the sights, sounds, and smells of the Coins can be overwhelming to out-of-town visitors. The Grand Bazaar in the center of the district draws shoppers from throughout the Inner Sea region in search of surprising bargains, one-of-a-kind services, and rare commodities. Much of Absalom's trade and economic policies are discussed over fine meals at the Grand Dance Hall of Kortos or formalized in the tidy offices of the Hall of Commerce. Thousands of eager students learn their trades here, either from the city's talented craftspeople or from academies such as the mysterious Clockwork Cathedral.

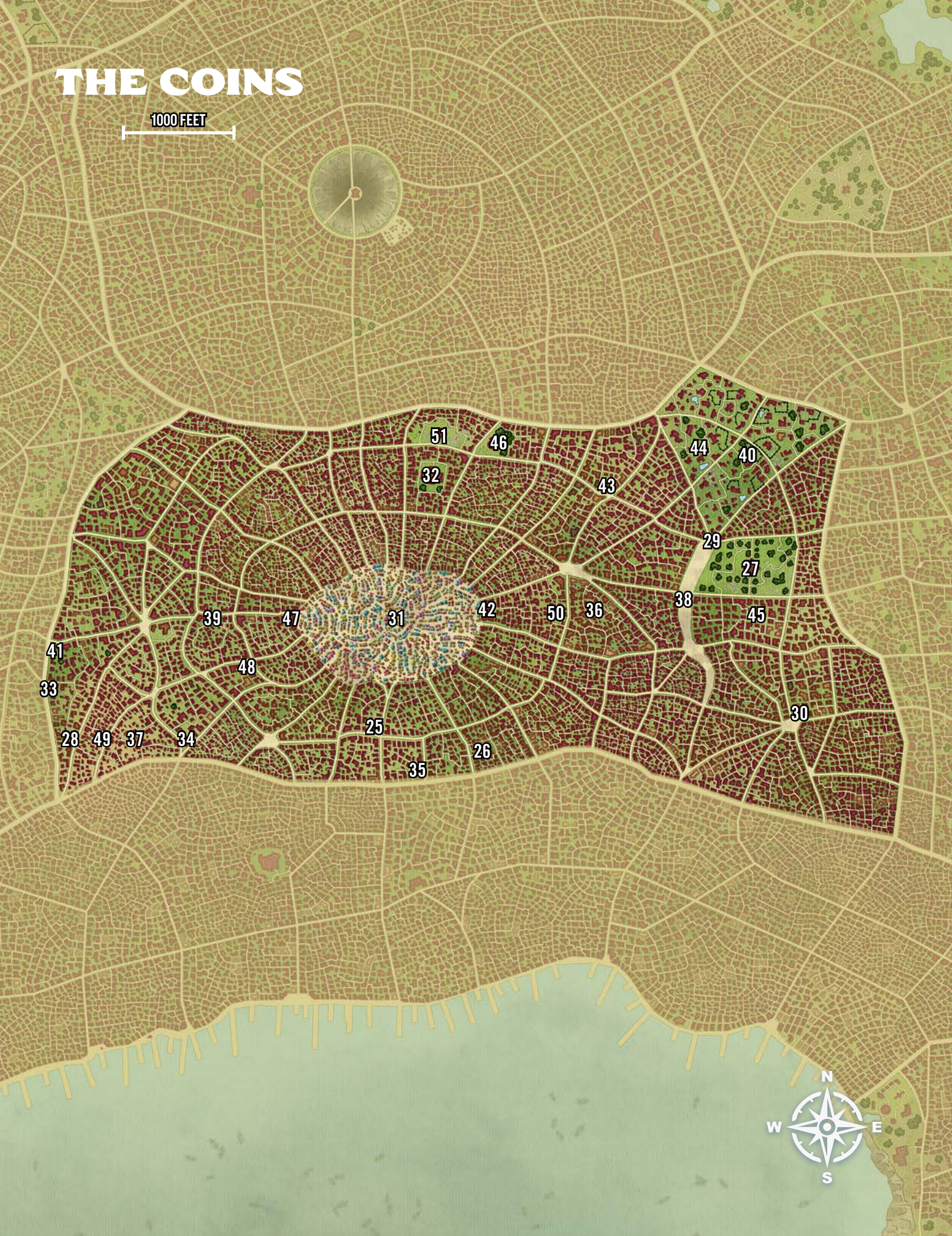
Also notable in the Coins is the huge wealth disparity on display. The most important trading and economic activities in the Inner Sea region—carried out by the wealthiest merchants and lords in the city—take place within blocks of some of Absalom's most squalid slums.

The streets of the Coins are patrolled by a district watch known as the Token Guard. While members of the guard claim that the name refers to the glinting round copper buttons on their uniforms, the moniker's true origin was a derogatory nickname for the inefficient and all-too-often corrupt force. Even today, most of those arrested by the guards can pay a "token" fee at the Bail House to be released. While the Token Guard would argue that they keep peace on the streets and ensure that commerce in the district is safe and fair, the truth is that the clash of upper- and lower-class neighborhoods in the Coins encourages extensive criminal activity. Many of the poorer sections of the district rarely see a guard presence, and even legitimate businesses are more likely to request "assistance" from a contact in one of the district's many criminal gangs than from its official watch.

Much of the crime in the Coins is concentrated in the slums of Mudhaven, in the district's southwest corner. Home to some of the city's most impoverished residents, the neighborhood has a reputation for crime and danger that is not necessarily fair. While life in Mudhaven is hardscrabble, and many criminals do operate out of the neighborhood, the majority of residents live ordinary lives and go about their business in the same way as other citizens. In the mercantile spirit of the Coins, some locals offer walking "misery tours" for

DISTRICT SUMMARY

This bustling mercantile quarter hosts an almost endless array of shops, wares, and independent traders. Within merchant houses, whole caravans can be bought and sold and the fortunes of cities may be made and lost, all while unscrupulous brokers make high-stakes bets or manipulate prospective outcomes. Juxtaposed with the profligacies of the Coins' rich are also some of most dire examples of squalor and poverty in any city—a discrepancy that spurs crimes of desperation or greed in nearly equal number.


THE COINS
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rich people looking to experience the lower-class lifestyle, but these are usually shams filled with staged events and the occasional arranged pickpocketing, as most Mudhaven residents would have harsh words, in the least, for anyone who tried to make a spectacle of their daily lives.

Above all else, the Coins serve as the hub of commerce in Absalom, offering services for all tastes and budgets. Whether a visitor is looking for a lawyer or a loan shark, a pawnbroker or a portrait painter, the Coins has what they seek and more.

DISTRICT LOCATIONS

The following are some of the most notable locations in the Coins.

25 Bail House

PRECINCT

This squat wood-and-mortar building is the headquarters of the Token Guard. The guard has a notoriously lax attitude toward crime, oftentimes just rounding up anyone who happens to be at the scene when a crime is committed and holding them until they post bail—hence the name of their headquarters. The interior of the building is packed with small holding cells, and all prisoners are checked in and out at a central processing desk. While the Token Guard might turn a blind eye toward petty thievery and graft, the Bail House becomes a hive of activity whenever a trademaster is the victim of a crime. Lady Kythes Finch, Captain of the Token Guard, worries that the guard could lose access to their lucrative bail system and frequent bribes if one of the major trading families turns against them.

NPCs Groske (petty criminal offering a deal from inside a barred cell); Lady Kythes (captain); Tall Hannah (street urchin pickpocket awaiting booking)

26 Band of the Palm Headquarters

CRIMINAL MUNICIPAL

The notorious Bloody Barbers may be Absalom's largest criminal union, but their secret headquarters does little to bolster that claim—by design. The criminals operate under the guise of the Band of the Palm, a union of chimney sweeps, coal-carriers, junk peddlers, limners, wheelwrights, and bathhouse attendants. This ramshackle building consists of just over a dozen tenements, warehouses, failed businesses, and even a landfill, all connected together by a tangled series of catwalks and creaking rope bridges that makes it difficult to tell where the actual building begins and ends. Within lie chambers where legitimate members of the Band of the Palm can rest, do business, gather, and carouse, and no fewer than twenty street- or alley-facing storefronts and offices allow for meetings with those who toil within.

But it is those who toil below who comprise the true masters of this site, for in the numerous underground levels that connect to sewer, catacomb and cavern alike lurk the Bloody Barbers. The majority of the chambers within this confounding maze of rooms and tunnels exist solely as defense against invaders. When lower-ranking members of the Bloody Barbers visit, they engage the service of the Ghostguides, a tittering cabal of albino chokers who know the secret routes through the shroud of traps and guardians. The Ghostguides are kept on retainer by the Bloody Barbers for the sole purpose of guiding legitimate visitors to the actual guildhall nestled within the center of the complex, an even more well-defended underground fortress where the guild's leaders and masterminds hold court.

One particularly hidden nook within this tangle of buildings and basements remains unknown even to the Ghostguides—an old underground storeroom repurposed into a laboratory by the insidious Dr. Bensi Skule. It was here that Skule raised a troll prisoner and researched the nature of his regeneration. This troll, now the leader of the Bloody Barbers, replaced Dr. Bensi Skule entirely but has repressed all memories of this hidden laboratory. While the

SCHEMES OF THE BLOODY BARBERS

It's no coincidence that the Bloody Barbers are the largest and most powerful of Absalom's thieves' guilds, for the group maintains a low profile and deliberately avoids the type of crimes and capers favored by other groups. Their schemes focus on pickpocketing, but the Bloody Barbers certainly don't limit themselves to this technique. Scams, con games, opportunistic burglaries, and shakedowns are all daily pursuits, but Barbers avoid aiming too high with crimes that might attract too much attention. Now and then, a member goes against this creed and plots a big heist, takes on an assassination contract, or dabbles in a similar high-risk, high-reward scheme. Those who do so would also do well to hide their exploits, for punishment from their fellow thieves is always harsher and swifter than anything they might need to fear from the city guard itself!

CLOCKWORK PETS

The Clockwork Cathedral is one of Absalom's most famous locations, a site known the world over for its wonders and mysteries. Despite this, few of Absalom's citizens can claim to have been inside it. For most, the only real interaction with clockworks is in the form of so-called "pets" that can be found throughout the city. These minor clockworks, built to resemble and duplicate the presence of kittens, puppies, songbirds, badgers, lizards, and all manner of small animals, are popular among the children of the city's elites, and are viewed as a status symbol. The fact that a clockwork pet only deactivates until its next winding if neglected by a child makes them even more popular distractions for parents who know their children aren't quite up to the task of caring for a living creature.

hidden laboratory has remained lost and forgotten for years, it is far from abandoned, for a strange and slithering ecosystem of fleshwarps grown from the original Skule's experiments into regeneration thrive in these chambers today. With each passing year, the malformed fleshwarps grow ever more bold and curious about the "world beyond the blue door"—the locked portal they have long regarded with a religious fear that "Hell" lies beyond, with only a set of increasingly distorted memories inherited from their trollish source's nightmares to give them any hints as to the nature of the world beyond their domain.

NPCs Dr. Bensi Skule (underchambers resident); Feldus Chuld (pickpocket)

27 Clockwork Cathedral

ACADEMY

This gothic building east of Misery Row is composed of heavy iron plates, interlocking gears, steaming pistons, and sliding walls, giving it the appearance of an enormous mechanical insect with a clock tower on its back. The structure houses one of the premier institutions for the study of clockwork in the Inner Sea—perhaps in all of Golarion. Administered by a never-seen group called the Ruling Escarpment, the Clockwork Cathedral pioneers innovations in the mechanical arts, particularly in the creation of constructs. The building itself serves as an example of the institution's engineering genius, with walls sliding at the pull of a lever, chambers constantly rearranging themselves, and sophisticated constructs serving as the school's maintenance staff. While anyone may apply to attend the Cathedral, decisions about admission and tuition are made, seemingly arbitrarily, by the Ruling Escarpment and are not open to negotiation.

The founding of the Clockwork Cathedral is as mysterious as the lessons taught within its halls. The building stands on the site of a former temple to Asmodeus, which was destroyed by fire less than a century ago. In 4637 AR, an enigmatic figure purchased the ruined temple. The new owner, a gaunt, robed stranger called the Assembler, arrived in Absalom's harbor in an enormous iron ship that they claimed housed no organic beings. After purchasing the land, the Assembler magically transported their ship to the site and, over the course of a month, transformed the ship into the imposing Clockwork Cathedral. The Assembler was never seen again by anyone outside of the school, though some students complain of being followed by pole-thin robed figures within the shadowy corridors of the complex, leading to rumors that the Assembler still controls the Clockwork Cathedral. Others claim that the Assembler is itself a construct, and that the entire Cathedral is a vast, uncaring machine. In his youth, Lord Gyr, like the primarch before him, went to the Cathedral to demand answers. No one knows what he was told, but the High Council has unflinchingly supported the Clockwork Cathedral ever since.

Many students from the Clockwork Cathedral gather in workgroups called cognates to pursue specialized interests. Three to twelve senior students, who cover the basic curriculum of the Cathedral, typically supervise a group of up to 70 novices in a cognate, and they can often be found holding impromptu classes throughout Absalom. The best-established cognates often work with other organizations within the city. For instance, the Downrigger Cognate is currently creating kite golems with Vittar Corusec from the Silk Castle kite shop in

the Wise Quarter, and the Stirgeworks is focusing on developing variant crossbows, many of which are used by the Guild of Spears. A popular cognate known as Alive and Ticking focuses on healing, and serves as a much-needed first aid brigade within the Clockwork Cathedral, where accidents involving tools, gears, and machinery are common.

NPCs Findialory (student); Flindish Tarwheel (offering the holy blessings of Brigh); Renwick Graystone (senior student); Lord Riodos (working with the Stirgeworks); Vittar Corusec (working with the Downrigger Cognate)

28 Crystal Palace

CRIMINAL HOUSING PARLOR

Founded by a young half-elf named Malina Dod, a guild of child thieves called Dod's Filchers operates out of what they call the Crystal Palace, an abandoned house in Mudhaven. The orphans of the Filchers cut purses, pick pockets, and lift small objects of value from the citizens of Absalom in exchange for food and shelter. Several months ago, Malina Dod disappeared without a word to the other Filchers. Eleven-year-old halfling twins Hamlin and Jada Moore have taken over as leaders, but they are finding it increasingly difficult to keep the guild fed and safe without Dod's guidance.

NPCs Corian Blakros (runaway noble child being recruited into a life of crime); Hamlin and Jada Moore (de facto leaders); Tall Hannah (pickpocket)

29 The Eternal Shackle

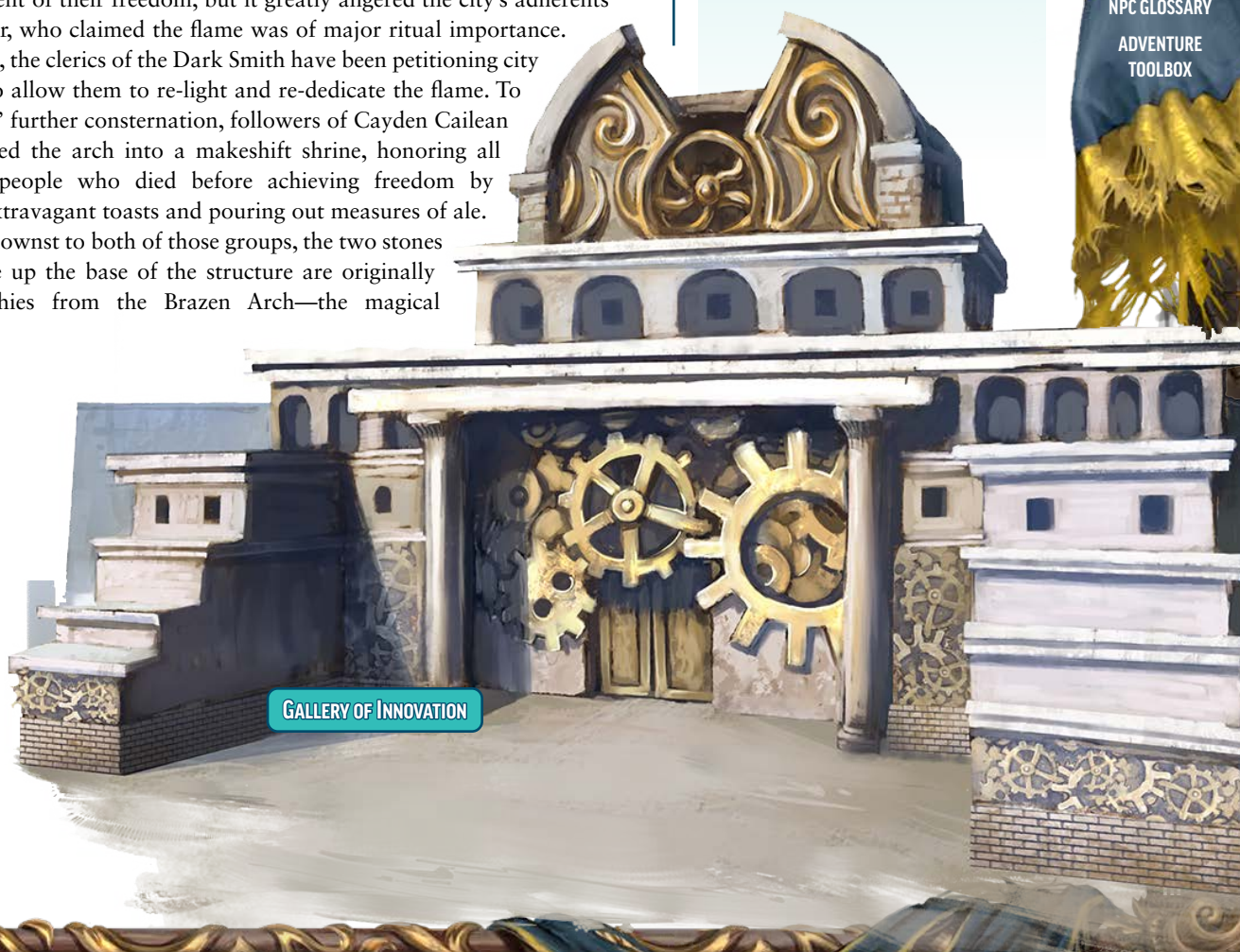
MONUMENT SHRINE

This 20-foot-tall stone arch at the northern end of Misery Row was long known for the flame that had burned under it since 4325 AR, when slavery was legalized in Absalom. Following the Black Echelon Uprising in 4717 AR, when the city officially abolished slavery, the flame guttered out. This prompted celebration among those formerly enslaved, who saw it as a divine endorsement of their freedom, but it greatly angered the city's adherents of Droskar, who claimed the flame was of major ritual importance. Since then, the clerics of the Dark Smith have been petitioning city officials to allow them to re-light and re-dedicate the flame. To the clerics' further consternation, followers of Cayden Cailean have turned the arch into a makeshift shrine, honoring all enslaved people who died before achieving freedom by making extravagant toasts and pouring out measures of ale.

Unbeknownst to both of those groups, the two stones that make up the base of the structure are originally war trophies from the Brazen Arch—the magical

Free Union Activities

Those Absalomian citizens who were formerly enslaved tend to live and gather in working class neighborhoods in the Coins, Docks, and Copperwood, so it's little surprise that the Union is most active in these districts. Milly Tundall, the organization's tireless leader, dispatches agents and public speakers to all of Absalom's marketplaces, and spearheads surveillance on Misery Row in the Coins, careful to ensure that the city's most infamous former slave market never opens again. New alliances with Guyton Greton's Lifter's Mooring seem likely to improve the Union's influence over labor issues in the city and provide new career opportunities for its members. Abolitionist voices within the Union urge greater alliance with the Firebrands faction, and promote direct action against foreign hives of slavery like Okeno and Katapesh.



EXCLUSIVE INVITATION

A courier arrives with a brief note written on heavy parchment—an invitation to the Third Balcony of the Grand Dance Hall of Kortos. The invitation comes from Eudom Mansarian, a Korvosan merchant who acts as an informal ambassador from that city's traders. Mansarian needs couriers to deliver contracts to some trademasters in the city, and he'd prefer to use outsiders to avoid the perception of conflicts of interest. The initial deliveries are inconsequential, but Mansarian has a staff member scry on his couriers to make sure they are trustworthy. A good reputation, and access to the upper floors of the Dance Hall, could open the doors to more work for Absalom's economic elite.

gateway that minotaur warlord Voradni Voon used in his attempted invasion of Absalom in 23 AR. The minotaurs of Hazrak, in the Riven Hills outside the city, are aware of the stones' origin and generations of minotaur leaders have longed to use the stones to open a portal once more, this time into the heart of the city.

NPCs Boils Caralne (drug-addled beggar); Eggal Torkelson (Caydenite reveler toasting lives lost to slavery); Feldus Chuld (charlatan collecting donations for the Free Union); Milly Tundall (Free Union agent handing out pamphlets)

30 Gallery of Innovation

TEMPLE WORKSHOP

This temple of Brigh celebrates the goddess's encouragement of invention. Followers of the Whisper in Bronze flock from all over Golarion to visit this dynamic temple and workshop. Tinkerers, engineers, blacksmiths, and researchers push the boundaries of mortal knowledge in metallurgy, alchemy, and technology in this long, low building covered in a collection of ever-rotating gears and flywheels; students and faculty at the Clockwork Cathedral often work closely with these acolytes of Brigh. In addition to performing their experiments, all who study at the Gallery give routine public lectures to share their findings. The talks of Flindish Tanwhirl, the head cleric at the Gallery, are fantastically well-attended, and often spill out of the Gallery's lecture hall and into the wide plaza in front of the temple. While some of the Gallery's neighbors might complain about strange smells or loud sounds emanating from the building at all hours, most residents of the Coins consider the Gallery a welcome institution.

NPCs Bagara Broadfoot (inventor, guest speaker); Camani Jensen (acolyte); Findialory (parishioner); Flindish Tanwhirl (priestess); Symo and Mirtion (parishioners); Lord Yamthar (enthusiastic lecture attendee)

31 The Grand Bazaar

EMPLOYER MARKET WORKSHOP

This massive plaza at the heart of the Coins is one of the largest open markets in the Inner Sea region. The Grand Bazaar is a microcosm of the economic diversity of the Coins as a whole, with rag vendors' carts parked rows away from pavilions dealing in Minkan silks. More unfamiliar—and even highly illegal—goods can be acquired beyond the veils of the infamous Red Silk Route, a cordoned sub-market near the boisterous tavern called the Saucy Wench at the eastern edge of the plaza. The crowded booths, ramshackle shops, and fragrant stalls of the market are constantly changing, and the following locations are only a small taste of what awaits visitors in the market.

Dracori's Sensory Emporium: Shoppers often feel bewildered by the sights, sounds, and smells assaulting their senses as they enter this ostentatious stall—which is exactly the way owner Fribinella Dracori likes it! Originally, Dracori opened the shop to cater to fellow gnomes who were trying to stave off the Bleaching while living sedentary urban lives. Today, the energetic shopkeeper serves a broad range of clientele in search of vivid experiences. Typical purchases include bottled colors, ointments simulating the chill of jumping into a moonlit forest pool, or handkerchiefs enchanted to smell like a hayfield on a warm day.

Lost and Found: Run by a dwarf named Yggwil, this dusty shop is easily overlooked in the garish surroundings of the Bazaar. Crowded with shelves overstuffed with treasure, knickknacks, and mementos from around Golarion, Lost and Found appears to be little more than a junk shop. Despite its humble appearance, the shop is a favorite haunt of Pathfinders, bargain hunters, and treasure seekers who realize that, while much of the dwarf's hoard has little value, items with wondrous properties and strange providence regularly appear among the wares.

Material Changes: Many wealthy inhabitants of Absalom change their hairstyle or cosmetics based on the whim of fashion, but those looking for a more complete transformation visit Mistress Iltara Clavela at this exclusive boutique. Here, the Irriseni proprietress directs a cadre of skilled staff who combine transmutation and illusion magic to reshape her clients into their preferred appearances. Some customers come for minor treatments to stave off the ravages of age or enhance their natural appearance, but those who opt for Material Change's total makeovers might be unrecognizable to even their closest friends. There are rumors that some of the salon's treatments border on fleshwarping or imitate techniques stolen from the fleshforges of Nex, but Clavela is quick to dismiss such talk as gossip started by jealous competitors.

Monger's Mart: For those interested in culinary delights, the open-air Monger's Mart brings together the finest spices, meats, and cheeses from around Golarion. Whether hosting a booth full of cured megafauna from the Realm of the Mammoth Lords or an elephant-back shipment of seasonings from Vudra, the Mart supplies a constantly rotating variety of delicacies from around the world. The Monger's Mart is often the first stop of the day for chefs from Absalom's high-end restaurants and inns, who let the fresh offerings there dictate the day's menus.

NPCs Anchor (pickpocket); Bwutuzu the Panther (Overseer of the Grand Bazaar); Ezlip Terrag (mushroom monger); Fribinella Dracori (sensory entrepreneur); Iltara Clavela (agent of change); Groske (burly criminal pressuring a merchant for protection money); Lady Kythes (leading a Token Guard patrol); Marten (friendly street urchin); Metzien (browsing cosmetics and clothing stalls); Mother Jackal (balancing a stack of recently purchased secondhand books); Pihma Lamar (azarketi relic merchant); Mezuk (shaking down a merchant for protection money); Torail (browsing delicacies at the Monger's Mart); Yggwil (junk shop merchant)

32 The Grand Dance Hall of Kortos

RESTAURANT | VENUE

This ornate theater features dozens of entrances at ground level (and a few on the roof), allowing access to some of Absalom's most sought-after entertainment. Here, the finest dancers and acrobats perform in Vudrani styles, overseen by Lord Rajit Punjeer, who left his native Radripal years ago to become the chief choreographer and majordomo of the Dance Hall. While the performers here are highly skilled and well paid, the true money is exchanged on the Dance Hall's upper balconies, where the richest merchants and most ambitious nobles of Absalom gather to control the economy of the Inner Sea. Any patron can visit the first two floors of the hall to be entertained, take a meal, or talk small business, but invitation to the upper two levels is strictly controlled by Punjeer, who uses his influence to demand outrageous annual patronage fees from the most powerful figures in Absalom. Patrons receive a limited number of invitations to their respective galleries. Invited nobles and merchants who gather here on a daily basis constantly weave intrigues and financial deals that influence trade throughout the Inner Sea and beyond. Obtaining such an invitation is one of the very few ways that members of the lower classes (albeit well-dressed ones) can mingle freely with the city's high nobility and captains of influence. As such, it is a highly coveted business opportunity.

Delving Deeper

Game Masters looking to fully explore Absalom's Grand Bazaar need look no further than *Pathfinder Lost Omens: The Grand Bazaar*, a hardcover reference guide that contains details on shops, merchants, unique items, adventure hooks, and more. The book is now available at hobby shops or online at **paizo.com**.

Grand Bazaar Merchant

PRESS GANG

Marten the street urchin may be from Mudhaven, but he always tries to keep his nose clean. Yet the elven twilight speaker Tern on the Wind hasn't seen Marten in a few days, and she's worried about him. Last time he stopped in for a free meal at the Guiding Hand, he was complaining that the Family Dogs were pressuring him to join their gang. Tern on the Wind was right to be suspicious—the Family Dogs are actively recruiting young poor children from the Coins, threatening the victims and their families if they don't join up and help the gang. Marten had been warning the other children to stay away from the Family Dogs when Dras caught up with him and dragged him off to the gang's headquarters. Several Mudhaven children saw this abduction. Rescuing Marten would earn the loyalty of a very knowledgeable local guide, but it might anger the local thieves' guilds, who don't care for busybodies interfering in their business.

NPCs Aaqir al'Hakam (trade prince, patron of the fourth balcony); Alinzia Gaatan (striking up silk transactions on the main floor); Durga Den (celebrity drummer keeping excellent time); Ealon Foxglove (economic prodigy); Eudom Mansarian (Kortos trade ambassador); Horner Shan (commodities trader); Lady Idara (patron of the fourth balcony); Lady Gloriana (patron of the third balcony); Grenduul Fleng (trade minister); Lady Hamaria (scheming negotiator); Jeon Raeng-Wou (Tian trade liaison); Lord Kerkis (Chancellor of the Exchequer); Metzien (watching Nuar's back); Nuar Spiritskin (patron of the fourth balcony); Lady Nymara (patron of the third balcony); Lord Rajit (proprietor)

33 The Guiding Hand

HOUSING | RESTAURANT

Many of Absalom's natives habitually overlook evidence of poverty in their city, or at least train themselves to look the other way when passing near one of the city's slums. To one clear-eyed visitor, the Snowcaster elf calling herself Tern on the Wind, the plight of the city's poor is a dagger in the heart of the community. While the elf had traveled to Absalom from the distant Crown of the World as an envoy from her insular people, Tern on the Wind felt called by Findeladlara, the elven goddess of art, architecture, and community, to minister to the city's poor. To that end, she established the Guiding Hand, a combination of a religious mission and soup kitchen deep in the middle of Mudhaven. Incongruously nestled between dilapidated houses, the delicate two-story building features crystalline stained-glass windows, clean rooms for temporary boarders, and a busy dining hall that serves three meals a day—though magical wards go a long way toward keeping the building in such pristine condition. In addition to directly ministering to anyone who begs help, Tern on the Wind contacts businesses around the Coins to arrange apprenticeships for her charges.

NPCs Benkt Slipshod (scouting prey); Corian Blakros (runaway noble child hiding from his family); Feldus Chuld (down-on-his-luck diner); Marten (friendly street urchin); Salindra Concilio (muttering diner); Tern on the Wind (proprietor); Udiska of the Starlit Path (friend of Tern's and benefactor)

34 Hall of Commerce

BANK | MERCHANT

The meeting place for the Coin Council, the Hall of Commerce is a grand building decorated in the latest, and most expensive, style. Official decisions for the district are handed down here, such as setting tax rates and establishing local ordinances, though most important business dealings are handled off premises in private offices or at the Grand Dance Hall of Kortos. The Foreign Coin Exchange takes up several offices on the western side of the Hall's first floor. Often the first stop for merchants from the many nations of Golarion that trade with Absalom, the Exchange provides local currency at rates set by the powerful Lady Seleenae of House Damaq. The Hall also houses a branch of the Bank of Abadar, where reputable businesses or individuals can apply for a divinely backed loan.

NPCs Erdan Sianovel (exchange administrator); Eudom Mansarian (Korvosan merchant envoy); Grenduul Fleng (trade minister); Lady Myleena (nomarch of the Coin Council); Lord Navvem (councilmember); Lady Nymara (councilmember); Lady Seleenae (exchange owner); Valcent Minstros (exchanging bags of foreign coins); Vroclaw of Brevoy (zealously auditing bank operations on a surprise visit)

35 Humbolt's Outfitters

MERCHANT

This two-story stone structure would resemble a fortress if not for the huge open arches along each wall and the tons of crates, barrels, racks, and

shelves laden with products of all descriptions spilling out of the archways and into the street, beckoning passersby to browse an impressive selection of tools, clothing, rations, dry goods, and more. Humbolt's Outfitters, managed by the able and sharp-eyed Gron Humbolt, is the most successful and best-regarded of Absalom's countless general stores. Humbolt prides himself in carrying an item to solve every problem, and at any given moment a visitor might find him outfitting a caravan for a cross-island journey, helping a customer choose the right trail rations for a trip through the Immenwood, and comparing the virtues of three different climbing axes to the head of an expedition to the Kortos Mounts. Nearly any common item is readily available here, and with a bit of time Humbolt can fulfill almost any reasonable special order for harder-to-find goods. He does not carry magic items as a special rule, referring customers looking for such to the Arcanamirium or his friend, Engleton Embrey.

On most days, Humbolt's wife, Lady Myleena, assists him in running the shop. She tends to focus on keeping the books and other behind-the-scenes aspects of the business, but she often appears out of the back room when unusual customers need gear recommendations. She's happy to suggest gear to ensure a greater chance of success for those with ambitious plans to explore the island or more dangerous parts of the city. Myleena's oversight has been instrumental in the store's growth—Humbolt now boasts satellite stores in the Foreign Quarter and Westgate, and the Humbolt name has become a byword for quality products of all varieties.

NPCs Gron Humbolt (proprietor); Lady Myleena (offering business advice to her dutiful husband)

36 Javelin Gallery

GARRISON MERCHANT

This building houses the Guild of Spears, a mercenary guard unit and a huge weapon sales operation that hires out to wealthy merchants and artisans as a sort of "back-up" police force in the Coins. The structure—converted from a second-millennium manor house—holds some of the largest weapons forges in Absalom and features numerous showrooms. As the Guild is composed largely of retired and former guardsmen, the place is always crawling with defenders, incidentally making it one of the most well-protected businesses in the district.

In addition to crafting weapons and filling specialty orders, the Gallery has a long-standing arrangement with both the College of Mysteries and several Clockwork Cathedral cognates to imbue their weapons with whatever mechanical or magical augmentations their clients desire. The Gallery does not deal with the Arcanamirium, which they see as competition.

NPCs Lord Riodos (guildmaster)

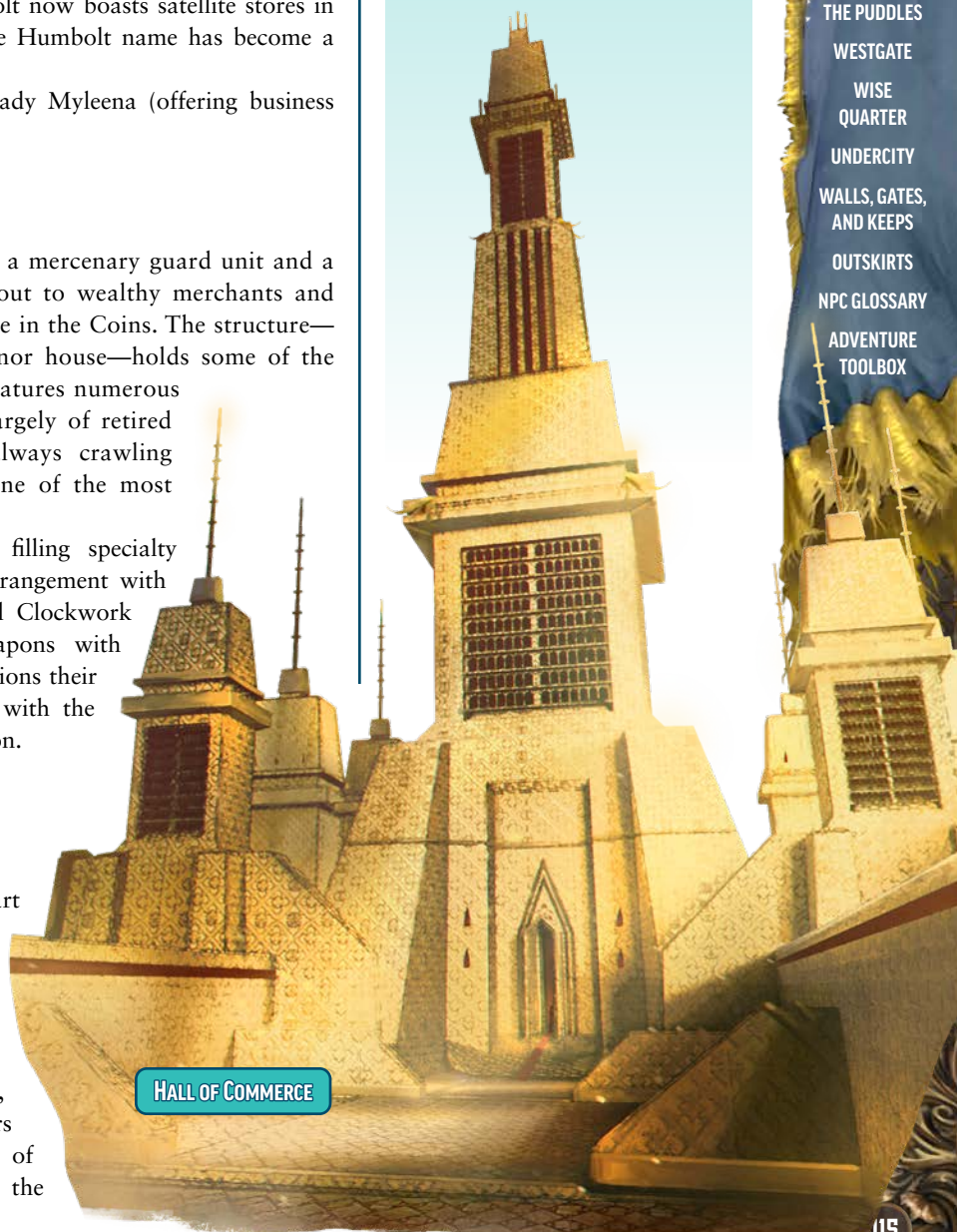
37 The Kennel

CRIMINAL HOUSING PARLOR

Nothing sets this ramshackle building apart from its equally run-down neighbors, and to all accounts the building is something between a struggling pet shop or a taxidermist's workshop—with the grimmest rumors suggesting the establishment is both at once. In truth, the building serves as the headquarters for the Family Dogs, a tight-knit group of criminals who took their name from the

Trial Run

The Guild of Spears wants to hire outside contractors to test some unconventional weapons they have received from the Clockwork Cathedral; none of the Guild's members relish the prospect of using the steam-powered hammers, clockwork glaives, or spring-loaded spears before seeing the weapons in action. The Guild warns that the weapons might be dangerous, but they are willing to pay well for someone to try them out in mock combats or by battling summoned creatures.



RED WEALDAY

This tavern song celebrates a popular uprising against the city.

Remember Red Wealday with
daggers held high,
When fine lords and ladies showed
us they can die.
Their rule of oppression no longer
in session,
Spilled blood in the gutters—a
fitting good-bye.

Red Wealday! Red Wealday!
Let coins pave the streets!
A fine day! A grand day!
To bleed the elites!

numerous taxidermy dogs they discovered in an abandoned workshop in the building's slovenly basement. These unfortunate creatures, ratty and poorly maintained and often posed in positions more akin to those of human criminals than canines, are partially responsible for the building's reputation, with members of the Dogs themselves periodically posing as one of the location's supposed workers. While few sales of taxidermy are ever made here, some of the Family Dogs have taken it upon themselves to learn the trade on the side. As the guild's leader, Dras, seeks new opportunities to expand his guild's influence, some of the more brutish and cruel members have taken it upon themselves to expand into the protection racket scene. They've already made examples of some of those who've failed to pay, using their skills in taxidermy to increasingly grisly effect, and work in concert with Dras on a scheme that may soon explode into Absalom's latest urban legend—the "Stitchlip Man," who creeps into houses at night to stitch shut mouths and steal away voices unless small taxidermy animals stuffed with sacred herbs are placed as wards in windows and above doorways. Of course, these stuffed rats, pigeons, bloodseekers, and the like are actually just poorly-preserved trinkets crafted by the Family Dogs, and the so-called "Stitchlip Man" is played by a rotating cast of mask-wearing guildmembers, including the increasingly obsessed Dras himself.

NPCs Dras (gang leader); Marten (captive urchin); Vyara (ruthless enforcer)

38 Misery Row

MERCHANT MONUMENT

The former home of the notorious Slave Pits of Absalom, today Misery Row struggles to find its place within the Coins. The elevated pathway, which stretches 300 feet wide at some points, is a stark reminder of the dark days of Absalom's slave trade, and many citizens of the city would like to see the former market demolished. Others would like to preserve it as a memorial or as a museum—keeping it as a reminder of the brutal slave laws that enabled the exploitive system to thrive in Absalom. While these groups argue, enterprising businesspeople have already reclaimed some of the Row for shops or retail space. The most notable storefront belongs to a half-orc named Thavin Shuln and promises "dependable labor at reasonable prices." Shuln's business is merely one step above slavery, with employees being offered credit in the merchant's company store rather than wages. On the other hand, the business of Shuln's neighbor, Pardu Pildapush, is in fact slavery, despite the proprietor's protestations to the contrary.

NPCs Benkt Slipshod (criminal); Feldus Chuld (pickpocket); Lemaria Kumari (political agitator); Pardu Pildapush (slaver); Thavin Shuln (labor monger)

39 Mother Sphinx

MERCHANT TEMPLE

Tradesmaster Horner Shan conducts small-scale commodities trading out of this tidy business just blocks from the bustle of the Grand Bazaar. Far more interesting dealings are conducted below the shop, in a sub-basement hidden beneath concealed doors, cunning illusions, and deadly traps. In this subterranean temple, Shan serves as a high priest of Norgorber in the god's aspect of the Gray Master. Rival gangs use the temple below the Sphinx as neutral territory to arbitrate disputes, recruit talent for special heists, and honor their masked god. While few of his business associates suspect Shan's connection to the city's underworld, not even his criminal brethren realize that the trademaster is the head of the Smoke Knights—the city's most secretive thieves' guild.

NPCs Gevvid (parishioner); Groske (masked parishioner); Horner Shan (proprietor and high priest); Mezuk (masked parishioner); Nessian (skeptical visiting gang leader)

40 Prophet's Academy

ACADEMY

The gleaming, polished marble facade of this block-long building makes it stand out even among the lavish manor houses and boutiques that surround it in the northeastern corner of the Coins. The school's founders, a human named Trevlin Crest and a dwarf named Ilrava Drogand, are both devout followers of the Prophecies of Kalistrade. Like most Druman visitors to Absalom, the duo traveled to the city from their native Kerse to tap into the vast wealth gathered here. While many Kalistocrats seek to increase their worldly holdings through trade, Crest and Drogand have found education to be at least as profitable. The Academy instructs its students in the foundations of sound business dealing and the basic principals of Kalistrade's teachings in exchange for hefty tuition payments. While students complain about the ever-increasing cost of this exclusive education, most acknowledge that the school is well-organized and the classes are taught by skilled instructors. The connections that enrollees make here with students from other wealthy families are often the seeds of business dealings or trade cartels after graduation.

NPCs Asher Blakros (zealous devotee); Ilrava Drogand and Trevlin Crest (prophets); Lady Seleenae (guest lecturer)

41 Rhet's Home

HOUSING

At the northern edge of Mudhaven, one building stands out both for the good repair of its simple construction and the sound of many happy children playing in its yard. With a simple sign merely reading "Home" over the door, the orphanage founded by half-orc Rhet Tafmar is exactly that for many of the Coins' destitute orphans. Unlike some workhouses in the slums of Absalom, Rhet's has a good reputation for providing appropriate care for orphans and finding reliable families to take children in. While his neighbors speculate that he must have been an orphan himself, Rhet is a member of a

CLOCKWORK PESTS

Tiny flying constructs are plaguing the Coins. The sparrow-sized pests have been scattering merchandise, frightening customers, and even snatching shiny objects all over the district. Most people blame the Clockwork Cathedral, but faculty at the school deny any knowledge of their origin, and none of the established cognates claim to have made them. The true source of the constructs is a young acolyte at the Temple of Brigh, Camani Jensen, who has been tinkering with them in her spare time. Camani is more interested in the function of her intricate creations than the damage they are doing to the district, but she could be convinced to channel her experiments in a more productive direction, or even encouraged to apply for admission to the Clockwork Cathedral.

CRIME REPORT

The Coins boasts the roughest taverns in the city as well as some of its most dangerous slums, making crime a constant reality in the district. Common illegal activity includes assault, disturbing the peace, fraud, and theft. Criminal groups active in the district include the Bloody Barbers, Dod's Filchers, the Family Dogs, the Forthright, the Puddlejumpers, the Sanguine Beasts, and the Smoke Knights.

Temple of Lost Coins

wealthy family of cloth traders from Katapesh. While disappointed that Rhet did not expand the family business in Absalom, his family still sends him a small allowance every month which he uses to keep the orphanage supplied.

NPCs Dorakotho (seeking portentous orphans); Marten (friendly street urchin); Niervok (resident); Rhet Tafmar (proprietor)

42 Saucy Wench

EMPLOYER TAVERN VENUE

While far from the only disreputable tavern in the Coins, the Saucy Wench is certainly the most infamous—which is part of its appeal. A purple-roofed, sprawling complex that has been expanded, remodeled, and partially burned down dozens of times, the Wench is full of sticky-floored barrooms, smoky private salons, and ramshackle stages for tawdry entertainment. Most of the clientele comes from the slums of the district, who appreciate the fact that its owner, Token Guard Captain Kythes Finch, makes sure that violence is kept to a minimum—not a guarantee at most dives in Mudhaven. The Saucy Wench is one of the few places assiduously patrolled by the Token Guard, which takes violence and destruction of property in its captain's establishment very seriously. The relative stability of the Wench also attracts rich dandies from other parts of the Coins who want to dabble in the "thrilling" lives of the poor. These visitors are prime targets for con artists and pickpockets, but most serious criminals studiously avoid the Wench.

NPCs Lady Eleanir (jaded young noble slumming it); Feldus Chuld (pickpocket); Grint Basatrel and Osprey (dining companions), Lady Kythes (owner); Lord Riodos (enjoying the company of Lady Kythes)

43 The Second Labyrinth

TAVERN

The blackened facade, gothic architecture, and leering gargoyles peering down from the eaves of this striking tavern clearly mark it as Chelaxian. Owned by the powerful House Tevineg, the Second Labyrinth has served as a refuge for loyal Chelaxians to gather in secrecy and luxury for generations, but since the return of Grand Ambassador Gulv Tevineg to Absalom, the establishment is enjoying a renaissance that has significantly increased its already impressive profits while diversifying its clientele.

Gambling has always been the true secret of the Second Labyrinth's success, with a unique card game called maze traditionally claiming the majority of its tables and clientele. With Lord Gulv's influence, the Vudran game of drouge has recently become even more popular, drawing more than just the orthodox culturally Chelaxian crowds of past decades. The establishment was slow to embrace the foreign game at first, but as Lord Gulv dominated all challengers time and time again, the game's popularity continued to grow. Gulv's victories, reported breathlessly by embedded (and often heavily bribed) broadsheet journalists, energized Absalom's Chelaxian community, badly demoralized after a decade of bad news from the homeland.

The Second Labyrinth has a

1-sp entrance fee (waived in the case of "friends of the house"). Within are scrupulously fair gaming tables, extremely expensive food, a bevy of paid companions, and far more political movers and shakers than one would think possible.

NPCs Ayandai (patron); Azoria (proprietor), Lord Damian (on the lookout for visiting Hellknights); Evelessa (courtesan); Faelyn (courtesan); Lord Gulv (patron), Lord Navvem (patron); Pondo Funt (patron); Vanius Cestanian (attempting to catch the eye of an appealing partner); Metadame Vannessir (patron)

44 Taurean Embassy

MUNICIPAL

One of Absalom's most unusual citizens dwells in this remarkably well-maintained building. With a facade evoking architectural styles from distant Iblydos and a small but complex hedge maze filling its spacious back yard, the Taurean Embassy is the home of Nuar Spiritskin, the Minotaur Prince of Absalom. As an albino minotaur who stands barely taller than the average human, Nuar has always felt like an outsider, and so when he came to Absalom after being banished from the Kortos Mounts by his kin, he was not deterred by the fact that so few of those he rubbed shoulders with possessed hooves and horns. Nuar's destiny changed forever when he stepped in to rescue a man who was being roughed up by sailors—a man who, as it happened, was none other than Lord Gyr on a clandestine mission. Gyr was delighted to be "saved" by such an unusual hero, and rather than reveal to Nuar that he'd been baiting the sailors for reasons of his own, instead thanked the minotaur for the timely rescue and saw to it that Absalom would thereafter recognize him as the "Prince of Minotaurs."

Nuar is no fool, and he soon came to realize that the invented position was meant as much as a flight of fancy as anything else on Gyr's part, yet today, he proudly notes that he's outlasted Gyr. It's likewise a testament to Absalom's acceptance of diversity that the minotaur has not only been welcomed into the city, but has prospered. Nuar takes pride in his home, and works to keep his street and those nearby free of crime and in good repair, even as he continues to use his influence with the Grand Council to aid those who aid him. With no obvious aspirations to greater roles of leadership, certain cynics have suggested Nuar has plans for the Coins, but in truth, the minotaur is simply thankful to finally have found a place he can rightfully call home.

NPCs Nuar Spiritskin (ambassador); Metzien (Nuar's bodyguard); Pyl Gillseed (friendly visitor)

45 Temple of Lost Coins

CRIMINAL PARLOR

Once a castle-like church dedicated to the worship of the dwarven deity Trudd, this fortified building was for many decades a center of the dwarven community within the Coins. But with the revelation that the temple's high priest Motchen Stonechins had in fact been stealing from the church's funds to pay for secret gambling debts, the dwarves turned their backs on the temple and moved on to other shrines to Trudd elsewhere in Absalom, other religions, or lost their faith entirely. Locals took to calling the place the Temple of Lost Coins to mock Motchen's crimes against the faith, and Stonechins fled the city in shame, leaving the building to fall into disrepair.

It was nearly a century before the building was reclaimed by a band of honorable thieves known today as the Forthright. While the temple's furnishings and decor had long since crumbled into ruin, the temple remained strong. The Forthright, led by a mysterious figure known as the Harlequin, decorated the building with circus banners and colorful streamers, turning it into a gaudy display that only further obscures its original purpose.

NPCs The Harlequin (gang leader)

Elsewhere in the Coins

46. Al'Hakam Estate: The stately home of Aaqir al'Hakam, Emir Thalzar Gaatan, and their three adopted daughters is one of the finest (and most often targeted for burglary) in the district.

47. District Courthouse: Although numerous corrupt judges have been drummed out in recent years, there are always more waiting in the wings. Defendants with coins to spare often find justice in their favor in the Coins.

48. Free Union Headquarters: The beautiful carved facade of this three-story building reflects the stunning craftsmanship of the Free Union's formerly enslaved membership. The building holds the office of the Union's director, Milly Tundall, who is seldom found at her desk.

49. Mudhaven: The lowest, wettest spot in the Coins is a desperate slum home to many of the district's working poor. The Token Guard never enters in groups smaller than two dozen officers.

50. Union of Carpenters, Stonemasons, and Woodcutters: The sprawling headquarters of this popular and influential guild buzzes with activity throughout the day, and is a good place to contact artisans for special projects.

51. Wachail Estate: The stone manor of Lord Navvem of House Wachail looks more like a fortress than a noble's estate. Since the decline of Absalom's slaving enterprise, House Wachail has fallen to hard times, and its lord now gathers all manner of disreputable characters to his manse to empower his increasingly desperate schemes to recapture a measure of the family's lost glory.

THE DOCKS

District Council The Dock Council
Headquarters Crestwatch
Nomarch Lord Archych of House Dureanz
District Watch Harbor Guard
Headquarters Crestwatch
Captain of the Watch Elmoira "Tackle Queen" Taggart
Key NPCs Scion Lady Adrielle Neprathep of House Fyrlenn (harbormaster); Goodmiss Alidane of House Candren (owner of Sea King Shipyards); Asilia of Gyr (captain of the Starwatch, captain of the *Hurricane Wings)*; Chugmuzz the Surly (captain of the *Black Revenge*, Escadar seat on the Low Council); Darabelle Fairwind (Pilot Union guildmaster, district seat on the Low Council); Lord Guirdon of House Gixx (warden of the Black Whale); Guyton Grerton (labor leader, member of the district council)
Services boat rentals (2 sp per day), carnival games (1 sp), fresh fish (varies), local transportation (1 sp), guided tour (5 cp per person), restaurants (2 cp to 5 sp)

Absalom's docks may seem like any other harbor on Golarion: infused with the briny smell of the ocean, breezes playing about the ships lined up in their slips. But those who linger a moment can smell the spicy Osirian barbecue of local street vendors mingling with the sweet fragrance of elven mead. Those who look may see hundreds of different ships, hailing from ports as distant as Kalsgard or Goka. Those who listen will hear dozens of languages, from melodic Minkaian to staccato Mwangi.

If Absalom is the City at the Center of the World, then the Docks are the gateway where the world comes together. Few locations in Golarion gather as many cultures and viewpoints in one place. The very nature of the Docks is to facilitate travel to every other district in Absalom and to the far reaches of Golarion. A wanderer can find mundane transportation to just about anywhere they want to go, if they have the coin. When a ship comes into the harbor, dozens of porters, carriages, and wagons flock to the slip to greet the new vessel. Only the harbormaster's tax collector is faster on arrival than the myriad vendors looking to hawk their wares.

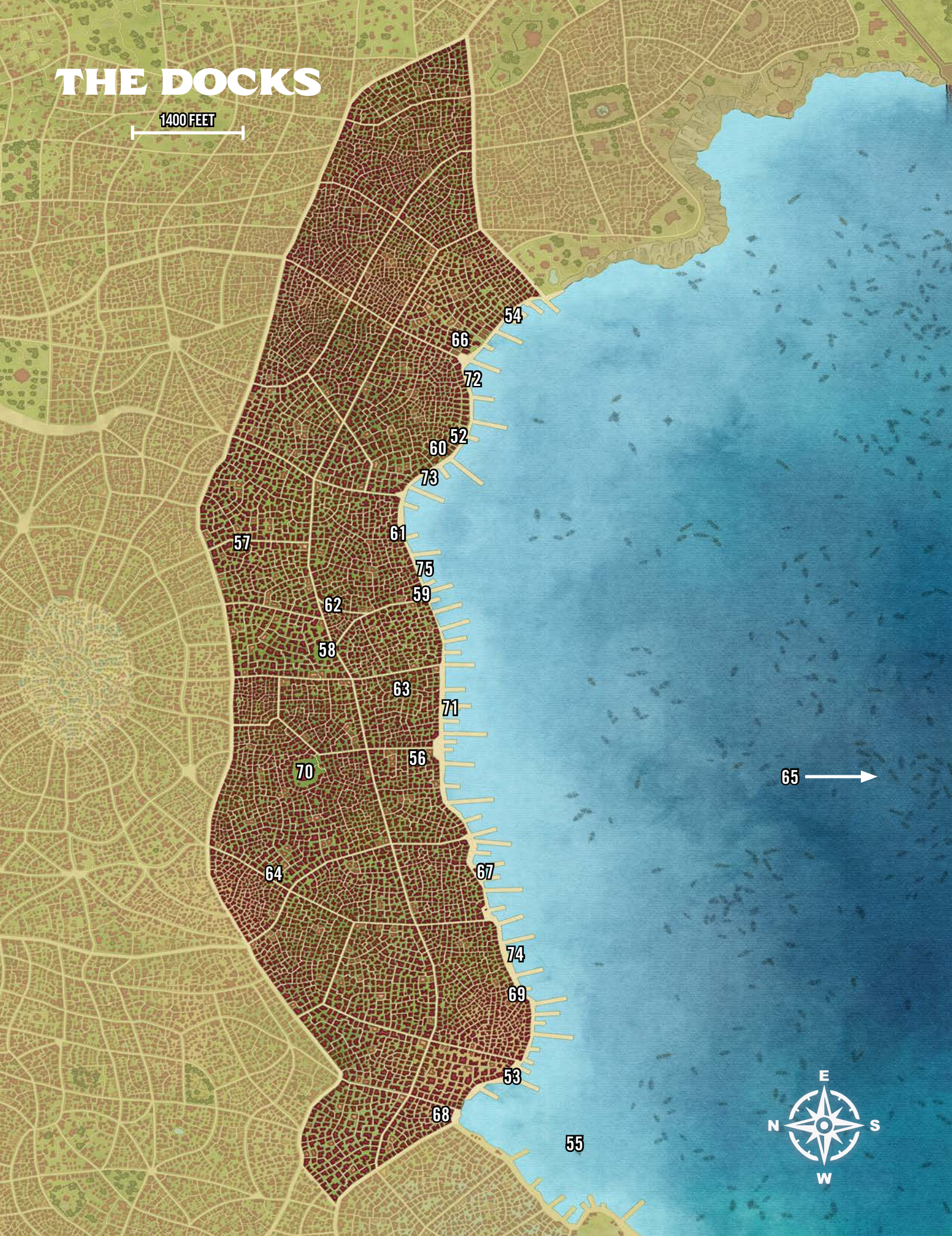
Though the Docks seem welcoming enough to a traveler with coin, the very jingle of their purse makes them a target for every cutthroat and pickpocket along the boardwalk. Weary wanderers know to avoid the dark alleys and lonely streets that wind around the Docks. While the Harbor Guard does a well enough job of patrolling the busier avenues, it pays almost no mind to the forgotten corners in this district; it spends more time looking for illegal shipments and chasing down smugglers than it does investigating another knifing in Backbottom Alley.

Local gangs pay to keep the Harbor Guard off their backs while they work their smuggling operations, protection rackets, or other questionable ventures. The Gylou Sisters, an all-female gang with overt loyalties to Cheliax, spread propaganda and smuggle for the Chelaxian Embassy when they're not harassing other dockside gangs. The Dockside Dozen—originally 12 orphans from Andoran looking to start over—boast nearly a hundred members and control almost half of the warehouse district, with the help of some luck and some influence from political powerhouse Goodmiss Alidane. These gangs mostly harass and come to blows with each other, but bystanders always get caught in the middle.

When things get rough, citizens sometimes turn to the Firebrands for help. A relatively new import to Absalom, these flashy revolutionaries are always looking to help the needy, punish the cruel, free the enslaved, and look

DISTRICT SUMMARY

The Docks serve as the main avenue onto or off the Isle of Kortos, and is a hub of both international trade and immigration. Thirsty sailors work out their aggression at the district's numerous tap houses, visitors from places such as Cheliax and Andoran routinely pick fights to address centuries-long international rivalries, and run-of-the-mill criminals prey on any arrivals who look like they might be easy pickings.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fantastic while doing it. While some call them merely fashionista daredevils, the Firebrands have become very popular among would-be adventurers with kind hearts and young nobles looking to prove themselves. The Dock Council currently debates on whether these do-gooder thrillseekers are having a positive impact on crime or are simply filling the local infirmary with casualties from a Firebrand's latest failed stunt. Goodmiss Alidane of House Candren is an open supporter of the Firebrands, claiming they help abate crime and keep tourists in the Docks longer, spending their coin with local vendors. Her proposals to legitimize the Firebrands are often opposed by Nomarch Lord Archych Dureanz, whose love of Cheliax grants him an equal measure of distrust and fear.

Two rival factions of the Firebrands became prominent in the Docks around the same time: the Bladed Bastards and the Mithral Chef. These two groups engage in friendly rivalry all over the Docks by holding impromptu contests of skill and daring under the watchful eye of the Harbor Guard. Often, these crowd-pleasing displays are nothing but a diversion from another more secretive goal, such as freeing concealed slaves aboard a Sedeq ship, freeing a beggar from debtors' prison, or performing a raid on a criminal safehouse.

THE BUZZ OF INDUSTRY

Absalom is a bustling city, and noise is a fact of life. Yet on the Docks, noise seems to have a life of its own. The constant calls of laborers and sailors orchestrating offloading of ships, the clatter and clang of repairs and construction, and the bustle of crowds consisting of busy locals and gawking new arrivals persistently plays out against the incessant crash of shoreline waves.

DISTRICT LOCATIONS

The following are some of the Dock District's most notable locations.

52 The Beast

MONUMENT | MUNICIPAL

Constructed in 4208 AR, this five-story tower contains the mechanisms for the largest crane in the known world. With a long wooden winch and rope system, the Beast can lift nearly 60 tons up to a height of 55 feet. It maneuvers its massive crane by rotating the entire building and can extend lesser loads by up to 25 feet. When lifting 10 tons or less, it can swing a load up to 100 feet away within a 360-degree arc by extending its main loading arm. The chief engineer of the Beast is a prestigious title; the current engineer, Amaziah Meneha, was promoted to the position when the former chief, Adrielle Neprathep, was promoted to harbormaster. Meneha was able to distinguish herself during the Black Echelon Uprising by directing the Beast's operators into loading the main crane with a 1-ton block of stone and using it as a massive flail to topple hordes of Black Echelon soldiers. This maneuver mirrored the Red Siege in 4499 AR, when engineers performed a similar maneuver to sink enemy vessels in the harbor.

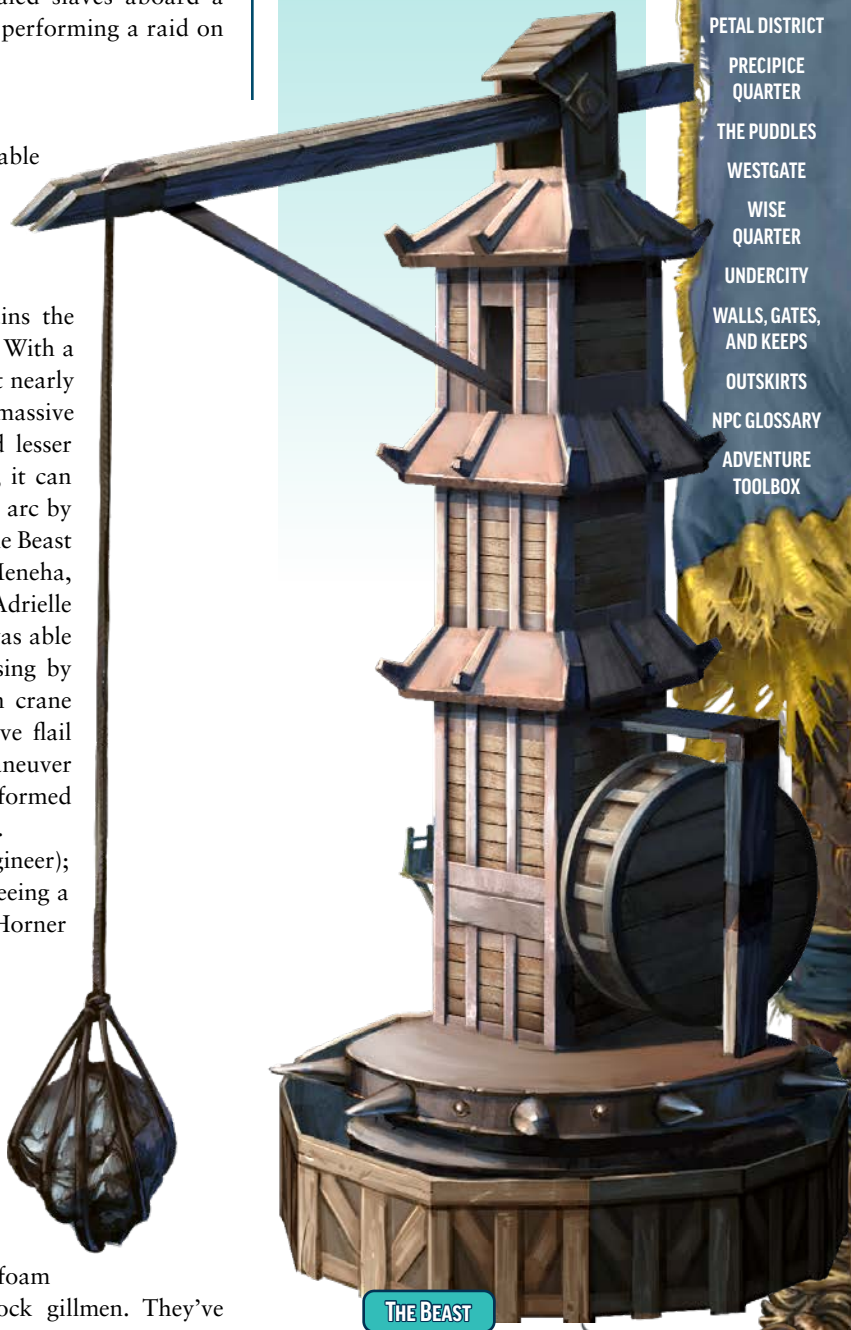
NPCs Adrielle Neprathep (visiting former chief engineer); Amaziah Meneha (chief engineer); Parsin Guile (overseeing a shipment of rare woods from Southern Garund); Horner Shan (criminal casing the scene)

53 Beneath the Docks

NEIGHBORHOOD

Under the noisy crowds and creaky boardwalks lies a part of the Docks most travelers rarely take notice of, or even think about. Even the Dock Council is only vaguely concerned with the creatures that have carved a niche of civilization for themselves under the wooden planks.

The most prominent resident group is the Seafoam Conclave, more colloquially known as the underdock gillmen. They've



The Beast

NOT ALL FUN AND GAMES

Small, barefooted pickpockets attempt to steal coin purses on Besmara's Boardwalk. They return to a group of homeless children hiding in an alleyway. Theft victims and Harbor Guard might want their money back, but the children—members of the Dockside Dozen—will fight for what they can get, even against well-armed adults. Those who aid the children might learn useful advice and gossip about the area—or might simply be scammed by orphans who were forced to lose their innocence and scruples too fast.

established a humble community for themselves, literally carving sea caves into the bedrock of Absalom. These azarketis tend to be much more insular and generally poorer than those who live in Gilltown. Most support themselves by spear fishing or working as crab catchers, while the Dock Council pays others a meager amount to pick up trash in the Docks. Visitors to the Docks are most likely to interact with Jossie Slimfin, an azarketi junk merchant who charms tourists with her clever wit. She keeps any valuable treasures found by other azarketi garbage collectors, sells them as lost trinkets of Golarion, and shares the profits with her fellows. She also doubles as a gossip gatherer, keeping the Seafoam Conclave aware of news from the surface. She has contacts with the merfolk and cecaelia colonies who make their home deep in Absalom's harbor.

Most of the merfolk who live under the docks never breach the surface, but try to live a happy life collecting treasures from the countless wrecks in the Flotsam Graveyard. Those who live here are exiles from larger merfolk communities or those exiles' descendants. An occasional friendly young merfolk swims up to the surface to greet new ships coming into the harbor, but these are usually chased away by Wave Riders who see them as a distraction to the serious business of tending the harbor.

A few small families of cecaelia make a home near the west side of the harbor, forming a small underwater community. Years ago, a contingent of cecaelia arrived from Xidao—an underwater nation between Minkai and greater Tian Xia—in search of Na-Kraka, a fugitive who fled in 4711 AR. After discovering that the Pathfinder Society had already dealt with the fugitive, many decided to stay in the foreign city and make a new life for themselves. They tend to keep to themselves, hunting in the local waters, crafting nets and seaweed baskets for their azarketi allies to sell, and looking after their hatchlings.

NPCs Anchor (scoundrel); Jorry Slimfin (ministering to the faithful of Besmara); Jossie Slimfin (junk merchant); Lemaria Kumari (azarketi ambassador)

54 Besmara's Boardwalk

ATTRACTION MARKET

The eastern end of the Docks swarms with a bewildering array of carnival games, small shops, food carts, and games of skill collectively known as Besmara's Boardwalk. Popular with tourists and young lovers, this spot is sure to entertain and to drain coin purses of any extra weight. Several legitimate businesses operate here, selling inexpensive jewelry, hand pies, and mementos of a visit to Absalom.

Notable among the numerous booths of the boardwalk is Impalement Arts, a dagger-throwing skill test under the sign of a pair of crossed throwing daggers over a bullseye. Knowledgeable kindred spirits easily recognize the sign as a stand-in for that of the Firebrands, and soon come to know the stall's proprietors, Quar and Galamere, as the affable leaders of the Bladed Bastards Firebrands faction.

NPCs Anchor (scoundrel); Benkt Slipshod (hunting prey); Captain Elmoira Taggart (leading patrol); Galamere (skill test operator); Gurd (testing her strength with a hammer and tower buzzer); Jossie Slimfin (junk merchant); Metzien (cosmetics customer); Pimha Lamar (azarketi relic merchant); Quar (skill test operator); Scarin Saloli (fortune teller); Lord Darin

and Lady Kiya (young lovers on a stroll); Zelva (traipsing the beer garden, attempting to draw a victim into a nearby gang ambush)

55 The Black Whale

DUNGEON HOUSING

Six galleons stand lashed together on a rocky reef on the west side of the bay under the watchful eye of Fort Tempest. Their ebon hulls identify them as the Black Whale, a prison for the politically hazardous and those deemed too dangerous for the general population. This squalid prison has the best security gold can buy, despite its disgusting living conditions. If top-quality locks and adamantine chains paired with the razor-sharp rocks beneath the prison aren't enough to discourage escape, the sharks and stingrays patrolling the water should; guards chum the waters with food scraps to keep deadly predators nearby. Rumors circulate that half the interior walls are transformed wood golems, while others believe that bound devils are ready to pluck out the soul of any who try to escape.

Only the missing Lord Gyr and his architects know all of the prison's defenses, for the former primarch controlled access to the prison directly. Gyr's signature was enough to exile prisoners to this soggy penitentiary, to reside there for the rest of their days or until Gyr had need of them. The High Council maintains a list of these criminals, but it keeps the list in the highest of confidence.

Warden Guirdon of House Gixx follows the council's wishes in Gyr's absence but has been noting every change it has requested. The council knows that Guirdon is still loyal to Gyr but has kept him in charge due to his skill. Guirdon is a hard man, able to kill without need for weapons or spells, and has proven he can keep prisoners alive in squalid conditions and stop any challenges by the prisoners before they become uprisings. He also lacks the political savvy to oppose the council—at least, on his own.

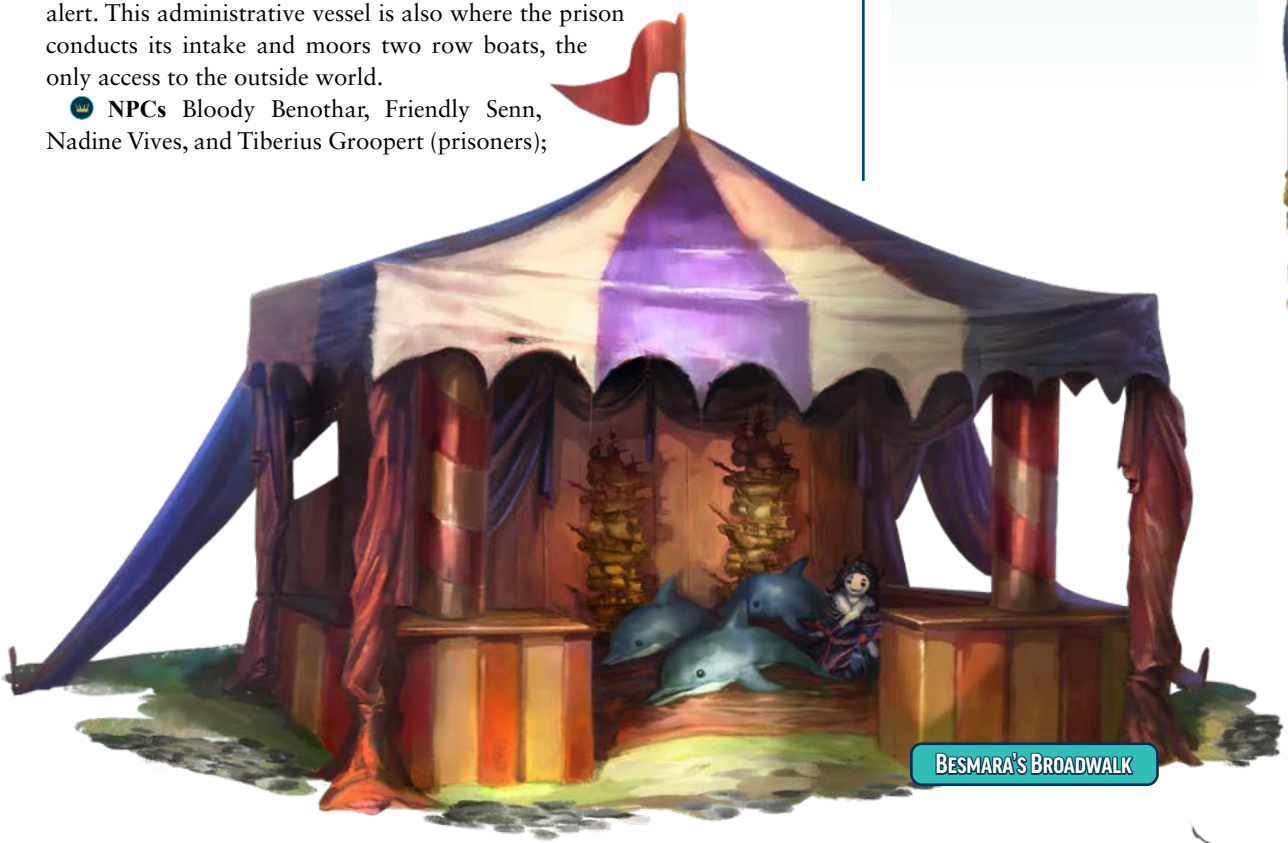
The prison is not an entirely fetid dungeon, as the northern ship houses the warden and the guards while they're on duty. Its barracks and offices stay relatively clean, and the guards change shift weekly to keep them fresh and alert. This administrative vessel is also where the prison conducts its intake and moors two row boats, the only access to the outside world.

NPCs Bloody Benothar, Friendly Senn, Nadine Vives, and Tiberius Groopert (prisoners);

Flotsam Trash

Most waterways have common types of garbage that washes ashore, such as driftwood or bottles. As Absalom sits atop almost 5,000 years of historical buildings and is near several underwater civilizations, its garbage is much more interesting. Jossie Slimfin commonly has a selection of the following items for sale at her booth on Besmara's Boardwalk:

- Worn coral and driftwood tools
- Shards of magical crystals
- Enormous fish bones and fossils
- Ironwood coins from an unknown civilization
- Multi-colored fragments of mysterious shells
- Valuable pearls and corals
- Reagents often used in elemental water magic
- Stone chips intricately carved with Azlanti motifs



Besmara's Broadwalk

SHIPS AND SHIPWRIGHTS

Some prominent shipwrights in Absalom and the types of vessels they're known for are listed below.

Bartie's Barges: Barges

Devil's Own Shipyard: Brigantines and clippers

Kortos Watercrafts: Rowboats and skiffs

Margruel's Masts: Cutters and caravels

Meilin and Zhen Ships: Djongs

Pride of Azir: Dhow

Princely Shipyard: Barques and schooners

Sea King Shipyards: Fluyts and galleons

Lord Guirdon (warden); Muar Gauthfallow (dropping off a lobotomized prisoner); Mulden Foss (prison guard)

56 Broadfoot Marshals Station House

MERCHANT

In every major city, fighting fires is a huge challenge, especially in a harbor district. Ships and buildings are often made entirely of wood, and a single fire can turn devastating in an instant. After a couple of major failures from the Docks' publicly funded fire brigade, several private firefighting companies have risen up to take advantage of the need.

The most prominent firefighters are the Broadfoot Marshals, led by dwarven inventor Bagara Broadfoot. She has a fleet of mechanized carts that each hold a basin full of water attached to long hoses. Her teams are able to pump the water from the basin through dwarven ingenuity, running a bellows-like mechanism with the power of their own legs kicking at pedals connected to a series of gears and chains. For proactive measures, Bagara has installed small aqueducts throughout several buildings, each connected to a roof-mounted water tower. In the event of a fire, the heat melts wax plugs and allows the water to spray from several nearby valves. There have been a few occasions, however, where the wax has prematurely melted during hot summer days.

NPCs Goodmiss Alidane (arranging a contract for Sea Kings Shipyard); Bagara Broadfoot (firefighter); Zelva (sabotaging the hardware)

57 Concurrent Currency

MERCHANT

This money-changing shop is run by the gnome and accidental businessman, Darelli Gammathumalshire. Originally a prominent coin collector, Darelli went into business when his halfling husband, Bagwell Thomkin, urged him to formalize his coin trading into something with which they could earn a living. Darelli works the front of the store, exchanging currency and issuing official scrip from the Church of Abadar. Bagwell manages the business end and brokers deals with foreign nations, such as Druma.

For the last two decades, Darelli has been the primary middleman helping Lord Oved Blakros amass his vast collection of highly valuable, genuine Arodenite catacomb coins, advertising in the papers his claim to pay top price for genuine specimens. Unknown to Oved, Darelli has been skimming the best coins off the top for more than a decade, and the shop's back room is stocked with—by far—the most valuable catacomb coin collection in the city. The building's security is nowhere near up to the challenge of keeping the collection safe (especially should Oved find out about it), and once the secret gets out, a major crime is inevitable.

NPCs Bagwell Thomkin (business manager); Darelli Gammathumalshire (proprietor); Lord Oved (premiere customer, compulsive catacomb coin collector); Valcent Minstros (selling a handful of unusual foreign coins)

58 Crestwatch

PRECINCT

A squat stone building with a 100-foot-high minaret marks the administrative center of the Docks. The Harbor Guard houses its barracks and headquarters on the east side of the building, while the Dock Council contains its meeting chambers and offices on the west side. Originally, this arrangement was meant to better coordinate district safety and business, but tensions have been high as the guard keeps bringing in criminal elements close to the dignitaries, which makes everyone nervous.

Captain Elmoira "Tackle Queen" Taggart, current head of the Harbor Guard, is a halfling who earned her nickname after several successful operations "fishing" for criminals. Her undercover operations and tactics

that border on entrapment have earned her more arrests than any other officer currently on staff. She runs the Harbor Guard efficiently and earns the respect of her guards despite her diminutive stature. However, she's done nothing to curtail the gang violence, muggings, and stabbings that have plagued the Docks for decades. Taggart's political opponents claim she's being bribed to leave them alone, but they've been unable to provide any hard evidence.

NPCs Lord Archych (nomarch); Elmoira Taggart (captain); Guyton Grerton (council member); Sevana Kinhan (Wave Rider captain coordinating efforts); Zelva (local criminal in holding)

59 The Devil's Own Shipyard

MERCHANT

The Devil's Own, near the center of the district, specializes in war galleys used by the city's Navy and sold to markets throughout the Inner Sea. The calculating Lord Archych of House Dureanz, a loyal Chelaxian, skirts the legal line in his operations, openly employing the worst thugs and pushing around his considerable weight at every opportunity.

The shipyard is the not-so-secret hideout of the Gylou Sisters gang, and the disproportionately large number of women among Archych's laborers is a reflection of the degree to which the family's legitimate operation and its criminal enterprises have become intertwined.

NPCs Lord Archych (proprietor); Gurd (dull-witted laborer/gang muscle); Zelva (labor boss/gang leader)

60 The Grog Pit

HOUSING SHRINE TAVERN

The Docks' best-known flophouse and most dangerous place to go drinking sits a mere block from the Beast. It is famous for its open-topped barrel of grog, a mixture of bottle dregs, patrons' leftovers, spilled wine, and rotting hallucinogenic herbs steeped in seawater. The owner, Valcent Minstros, sells a large wooden mug of grog for one coin in any denomination from any country. His strict policy of never throwing anyone out for bad behavior and his cheap booze have made his establishment quite popular with dock workers.

Though merchants and ship captains have often lobbied the Dock Council to close the place down, such activism usually results in shutting down the docks, as crews refuse to work until the Grog Pit has reopened. As a result, the Pit virtually never closes. Thanks to its stone walls, even the occasional fire cannot prevent its drink from flowing freely.

The Pit is also home to many impromptu and unofficial events. Pathfinder Society Venture-Captain Drandle Dreng and the mysterious agent of the Decemvirate known as Osprey sponsor a regular card game in the back room of the Grog Pit. Followers of Kurgess have attempted to hold eating and drinking contests, but they often end in just a brawl or a food fight. Lately, Caydenites have turned the site into an informal shrine to their god, the Drunken Hero. Though not a religious man, Minstros allows the priests to conduct their revelries as long as their coin is good—and when the grog barrel starts to get empty, he often invites followers of Cayden Cailean for a Barrel Filling, as this usually results in a better quality of grog than the Pit normally hosts.

NPCs Anchor (scoundrel); Drandle Dreng and Osprey (back room card sharks); Evessian Deris (drunken patron); Grint Basatrel (patron); Lady Miranda and Captain Folant (hooded conspirators whispering quietly); Mulden Foss (Black Whale prison guard drinking away the stress of the job); Nuar Spiritskin, Metzien, and Pyl Gillseed (patrons); Valcent Minstros (owner/proprietor)

Sinister Sisters

A pack of tough-looking women armed with curved daggers rounds a corner and eyes you greedily. One of them staggers forward, a hand outstretched, asking "Care to make a donation to the Church of Asmodeus?" Those who provide a reasonable amount of wealth are left alone while the Gylou Sisters seek another victim, but the gangsters will fight to steal from the reluctant. Their leader is Zelva, a slim, mischievous killer backed up by a dim-witted brute named Gurd with arms as thick as a ship's mast.

Bagara Broadfoot

PROMINENT SHIPS IN ABSALOM

These ships are common visitors to Absalom's docks, and are recognizable to most local sailors and porters.

Black Revenge: The ship of Captain Chugmuzz the Surly, a haven for "monstrous" outcasts and other misfits.

Grinning Pixie: The ship of Eras the Needle and the famous mobile lodge of the Pathfinder Society.

Hurricane Wings: The ship of Captain Asilia of Gyr, head of Absalom's Starwatch.

Old Heidi: The ship of Captain Coltan Menedrid, which functions as a floating shop.

Lucky Devil: The ship of Captain Thaddeus Barabus, a third mark Firebrand known for his exploits in the Obari Ocean.

Stargazer: The ship of Captain Torius Vin, an active pirate who sails from Katapesh.

Sterling Sapphire: The ship of Captain Trelliun, flagship of House Blakros's fleet of trade vessels.

61 Lifter's Mooring

MUNICIPAL

In 4715 AR, several dock workers refused to continue working at Ogrekin Hall after scaffolding collapsed and crushed the legs of dock worker Guyton Grerton. Ptarnex Dexarion, the owner of Ogrekin Hall and Absalom's unofficial Second Harbormaster, refused to pay any sort of compensation to the worker. He claimed that manual labor was dangerous, and it was a risk Guyton took. Once word of this mistreatment spread, dock workers from every shipping and warehousing business in the Docks also refused to work and pooled their meager savings to purchase magical healing for Guyton. After literally getting back on his feet, Guyton started Lifter's Mooring to organize the dock workers and ensure they were well taken care of.

Lifter's Mooring has unionized almost all of the dock and warehouse workers in the district and is looking to expand into other parts of Absalom. Since forming Lifter's Mooring, incidents of accidents and worker mistreatment have greatly diminished. As a result, Guyton recently obtained a seat on the Dock Council.

NPCs Bevran Blorm (laborer filing a grievance against Ogrekin Hall); Guyton Greton (union boss)

62 The Mithril Chef

PARLOR RESTAURANT

The burnished silver fittings of a dozen windows spaced along a handsome frontage of the Mithril Chef glisten in the sunlight, drawing the eye to one of Absalom's most popular restaurants. Head chef and proprietor Claudette Butterfoot more or less openly leads the Firebrands faction named for her restaurant, with her bevy of cooks forming the upper echelon on the revolutionary cell. The eatery's sign—crossed chef knives over a cookfire—is a clear sign to allies of Butterfoot's loyalties, and like-minded activists often gather here after hours to plan their schemes. The restaurant's reputation for serving unusual dishes gives Claudette leeway to import food that is noxious or even poisonous if not prepared properly—though it always is, of course. If less savory remnants should happen to find their way to the mouths of the faction's enemies, that's just keeping good food from going to waste.

NPCs Claudette Butterfoot (head chef, proprietor); Thaddeus Barabus (diner, coconspirator)

63 Ogrekin Hall

MERCHANT

This stout, simple building is home to the Ogrekin—a portage and hauling business. Owned and operated by the Second Harbormaster, Ptarnex Dexarion, Ogrekin Hall is easy to find; just keep an eye out for the jolly and awful-looking life-sized driftwood carvings of two leering ogrekin flanking the main entrance to a sprawling wooden structure. Employees work closely with the Pilot's House and Harbormaster's Grange. Though none of the workers have any actual giant blood in them, they are uniformly large, broad-shouldered individuals who generally come out on top in dockside brawls. Rumors that actual ogres are kept on staff deep within the hall for heavy-duty lifting and labor have recently proven true, with the brutes being kept in line via a combination of mind-altering magic and illusions. This recent revelation has proven a complication of sorts as many in the surrounding neighborhood fear what might happen if an ogre figures out that it's been manipulated. To date, no "ogre leakage" has occurred, but many (particularly business competitors) sagely observe that it's only a matter of time.

NPCs Bevran Blorm (disgruntled laborer); Feldreth Noor (labormaster, Ptarnex's second-in-command); Gurd (dull-witted laborer); Ptarnex Dexarion (proprietor)

64 The Pickled Imp

MERCHANT

This curio shop buys and sells an eclectic collection of goods from all over Golarion. Though the proprietor, Guaril Karela, is rarely seen in his shop, it continues his tradition of providing a little something for anyone, for a price. These days, the store functions more as a pawn broker, buying and selling virtually anything of value without worrying about pesky trivialities such as provenance papers, bills of lading, or previous ownership. The shop is notoriously discrete about who it does business with, as it keeps no obvious ledgers to record transactions.

When asked about the legitimacy of its wares, staff are quick to point out that the captain of the Harbor Guard herself used to work as a clerk for the store and is still a frequent customer. Indeed, no raids or legal actions have been brought against the establishment since Captain Elmoira Taggart took office.

NPCs Elmoira Taggart (frequent customer); Erdan Sianovel (offering Guaril a box of unusual trinkets); Eudom Mansarian (delivering a message from Varisian Sczarni); Gewgaw (disguised patron); Guaril Karela (proprietor); Skirma Toadlicker (visiting her old friend Guaril); Verimachius (badgering bravo)

65 Pilot Island

EMPLOYER MUNICIPAL

At the mouth of Absalom harbor sits Pilot Island, a small landmass that hosts the famed Absalom Lighthouse. The lighthouse is the tallest building in Absalom, standing 655 feet high and rivaled only by the Watchtower in Eastgate. Aroden himself helped construct the building, magically fortifying it and enchanting the unfailing magical light that sits at its pinnacle.

Ships as far as 33 miles at sea can see the light, leading them toward the City at the Center of the World or aiding in their navigation to other ports in the Inner Sea. This prominent beacon is one of the major reasons Absalom is one of the most relevant trade ports in the Inner Sea.

TROUBLE AT THE TIDEPOOL

Tartushi, a human priestess of Gozreh, is trying to give a talk on conservation of natural habitats but is being heckled by Jorry Slimfin, an azarketi priest of Besmara. Nearby, a tengu cleric of Hei-Feng, Karakah, is escalating the conflict by throwing jibes at both sides and occasionally casting illusion magic. If no one calms down the angry clergy, they might start a magical and stormy battle on the street, harming nearby civilians.

CRIME REPORT

Most crime in the Docks centers around smugglers, fences, kidnappers, and thieves. Guard patrols tend to congregate near the busy traffic of the waterfront, leaving the northern part of the district largely free of patrols and susceptible to significant illegal activity. Slums like Mudhaven, packed with the desperate poor and prone to danger, are almost completely avoided by the Token Guard. Criminal groups active in the district include the Bloody Barbers, the Dockside Dozen, the Family Dogs, the Forthright, the Gylou Sisters, and the Puddlejumpers.

ELMOIRA

Attached to the lighthouse is the Harbormaster's Grange, a small collection of buildings that includes a townhouse for the current harbormaster, apartments for her staff, offices for conducting harbor business, and a barn-like storehouse. The harbormaster, Scion Lady Adrielle Neprathep of House Fyrlenn, often travels between Pilot Island and the Docks to conduct business and attend High Council meetings. She maintains a personal skiff for convenient transport, as she may need to travel at a moment's notice. Adrielle is responsible for the imports and exports through Absalom, managing the harbor inspectors, safe passage of ships through the Flotsam Graveyard, and collection of related taxes.

For faster communication, the harbormaster maintains a magical tome in her office for contacting the Harbor Guard. This enchanted ledger is of ordinary size, but weighs an immense 50 pounds, and so generally stays on Adrielle's office desk. It contains a seemingly endless number of pages, and anything written into the ledger appears instantly on a similar ledger in Crestwatch on Captain Elmoira Taggart's desk.

On the edge of the island is the Pilot House, a three-story building that serves as the home for the Pilots' Union and its offices. These pilots maintain an updated map of the Flotsam Graveyard and rent their services to ships looking to traverse those treacherous waters. Most captains agree to paying their fee, as refusing to do so risks scuttling their ship on one of the wrecks, which forfeits the ship and all of its cargo to the primarch.

The first floor of the Pilot House contains mostly supplies and records, as well as a small slip for low-riding, single-mast vessels and sloops. The second story features an extendable gangplank capable of allowing larger ships, such as galleons, to dock. The top floor is almost entirely windows; it allows the pilots to watch over activity in the Flotsam Graveyard and is where they keep their maps of the ever-shifting wrecks.

NPCs Adrielle Neprathep (harbormaster); Darabelle Fairwind (Pilots' Union guildmaster); Kildress Fung (Scriveners' Guild inspector)

66 Red Drake Warehouses

MERCHANT

Many warehouses can be found throughout the Docks, but those bearing the sign of the Red Drake are the most common. Red Drake Warehouses are owned and operated by Ptarnex Dexarion, the cruel and unscrupulous politician behind Ogrekin Hall. Ptarnex is merciless in his administration of these buildings, offering up storage facilities for any and every potential trade at very competitive prices—with one significant caveat. Even a single missed payment results in the automatic default of stored goods to Ptarnex's possession. It's no secret that Ptarnex makes more money selling confiscated goods than he's ever made simply renting space to traders and merchants, but he's also meticulous in making sure that those who do business with him understand the risks and sign contracts indicating as such. Whispers that Ptarnex's contracts are backed by infernal power compete with those that he often secretly hires criminals to rob his customers so that they can't pay their warehousing fees on time, but the prices he charges to store goods at the Red Drake are so low that, for many, the risk is worth it.

NPCs Feldreth Noor (Ogrekin labormaster); Gurd (loading heavy crates off a laden wagon); Ptarnex Dexarion (proprietor)

67 Sea King Shipyards

MERCHANT

The Sea King Shipyards is a small operation compared to many other ship-construction sites and drydocks in Absalom, but its proprietor and employees take this fact in with pride, noting that they may produce only a single seagoing vessel at a time, but that each and every ship and boat that comes out of their shipyard can be counted among the finest ships on the Inner Sea. With the disappearance and presumed death of Goodman Hugen, his daughter, Goodmiss Alidane, is the business's current manager. Under her watch, the yard's reputation has only grown. Once a ship's construction is finished and its new owner takes it to sea, the Sea King Shipyard does not wash its hands of the project. Exacting records of its ships are maintained, along with histories of their travels and details of each crew, updated each time the ship returns to port at a minimum, or once a year by one of the shipyard's traveling agents who, in cases where a Sea King ship hasn't been back to Absalom in some time, are equipped and capable of tracking down the ship's last known location to secure updates as needed. Some captains consider this micromanagement an affront to their sovereign rule aboardship, but the fact that—should a Sea King ship fail in some way that can be attributed to poor craftsmanship—the shipyard will provide reimbursement and repair free of charge is enough for most owners to eagerly welcome the attention. Recently, though, one particular blemish has risen to fester at the Sea King's reputation: the *Ambrosia*. When this ship returned to Absalom with no crew and no clue as to where they'd vanished, or for that matter any clue as to how the ship managed to return from its long voyage to the southern horn of Garund, Goodmiss Alidane immediately hired investigators to research the mystery and provide an explanation. That the *Ambrosia* itself remained in excellent shape despite the loss of its crew is something that the Sea King's employees view with pride, although this pride is muted by the tragic loss of all hands.

NPCs Goodmiss Alidane (proprietor); Coltan Menedrid (checking on the progress of repairs to his ship)

68 Temple Row

NEIGHBORHOOD TEMPLE

Though the Ascendant Court is the religious center of Absalom, some of the more aquatically oriented deities keep temples and shrines in the Docks to be closer to the water. Most prominent among these are the temples to Gozreh, Besmara, and a newly built temple to Hei-Feng.

The tidal pool on the west side of the Docks serves as a temple to Gozreh. Situated on the edge of the Puddles, the tidal pools sit just below the surface of the water during high tide and reveal themselves during low tide. The druids who maintain the temple try to keep the spaces between naturally elevated pools free of urchins and anemones to allow worshippers to walk around without disturbing any naturally occurring life. The druids also keep prayer flags and wind chimes strung overhead to capture the wind aspect of Gozreh's domain, paying tribute to both aspects of Gozreh's nature.

While many think Besmara's Boardwalk functions as a temple to Besmara, believers find the place an insult to the Pirate Queen's name. The real temple is in the back room of the Thirsty Giant, a pub that specializes in strong liquor from around the world. Its most famous concoction is "Storm's Ire;" priests who work the bar suggest chugging one just before tossing a precious coin into the harbor as tribute to the sea goddess.

A group of tengu recently erected a temple to Hei-Feng on the top floor of one of the tallest warehouses in the Docks. They claim the site to be holy to Hei-Feng after the top floor was struck by lightning twice during a weeklong storm. After offering to rebuild the roof and install a lightning rod, the owner of the warehouse allows the tengu to roost in the building rent-free.

NPCs Jorry Slimfin (priest of Besmara); Karakah (priest of Hei-Feng); Tartushi (priest of Gozreh)

Elsewhere in the Docks

69. Bartie's Barges: Halfling-run shipyard specializing in flat-bottomed watercraft, strongly allied to the Pilot's Union.

70. District Courthouse: Local seat of justice administered by a chaotic and highly unpredictable judicial body.

71. Margruel's Masts: Popular shipyard known for its cutters and caravels.

72. Meilin and Zhen Ships: Shipbuilders from Tian Xia, focusing on djongs and other vessels of the Dragon Empires (always in fashion in Absalom, particularly among the rich). Meilin and Zhen also specialize in repairing such ships when they arrive after long ocean voyages.

73. Pride of Azir: Busy shipyard focused on dhow, and the center of Rahadoumi influence in Absalom.

74. Kortos Watercrafts: Small, elite shipbuilders utilizing the finest Inland woods, and strong allies of the Kortos Consortium.

75. Princely Shipyard: Medium-sized shipyard known for its barques and schooners. Aligned with the local Taldan Madinani family, and thus strong supporters of Lady Darchana.

EASTGATE

District Council Eastgate Council
Headquarters Eastgate Hall
Nomarch Lord Ayunga of House Akkesh
District Watch Post Guard
Headquarters Postern Gate
Captain Lord Ayunga of House Akkesh
Key NPCs Aftrin Undrol (master conveyor of the Winged Sandals); Lady Evigail of House Wycomb (cult leader, at-large seat on the Low Council); Gelda Dellby (president of the Concerned Residents' Union); Lord Haimon Heuff of House Mercerene (member of the district council, district seat on the Low Council); Iolanthe of the Circle of Stones (dryad queen); Loys Zepah (high priestess of Erastil); Mama Shrog (high priestess of Lamashtu); Maur Gauthfallow (fourth spell lord, master of the Broken Bastion); Mircen Kinsgate (commander of the Eagle Garrison); Parsin Guile (guildmaster of the Woodcutter's Guild, guild seat on the Low Council); Tontartigan Dellby (headmaster of the Endiron School); Tolara Alverteen (grand ambassador of Taldor); Madame Vordris (headmistress of the Tallavont School); Yargos Gill (military historian)
Services druidic spellcasting; lodging (1 to 3 sp per night); restaurants (1 cp to 1 sp per meal); rental stables; exotic pets and pet supplies; azarketi underwater guides and salvage services

Soaring towers and stately manors shape Eastgate's skyline, along with the great living monument of the Grand Holt, but most of its homes are modest villas and townhouses. Much of Eastgate is residential, and its people tend to be hardworking, secure but not wealthy, and fiercely proud of their neighborhoods. The streets are clean and safe, the parks quiet and green, the fashions respectable but never flashy. Eastgate is where Absalom's poor and working-class people aspire to live because it represents an ideal of dignity and ease that seems more comfortably familiar, and more attainable, than the alien world of aristocrats and foreign grandees. To someone who grew up hard in the Docks or the Coins, making it to Eastgate means making good.

Most Eastgaters make their livings elsewhere in the city. Rickshaws and carriages whisk a constant flow of commuters away to work, and some employers even hire elephants to carry their employees. It can take hours to navigate the city's streets each day—a highly unusual arrangement in a place where most people reside much closer to their workplaces—but Eastgaters consider the trade-off well worth it, since their district is so much safer and more affordable than living in comparable luxury anywhere else in the city.

A low-key rivalry exists between Eastgate and Westgate, with Westgaters touting their district as "Bestgate" and Eastgate as "Leastgate," but Eastgaters rarely spend much time boasting back in return. Westgate is more affluent, but it is also more selfish and unequal. Eastgaters view their communal prosperity, and their shared enjoyment of rich green spaces that have no counterpart in Westgate, as self-evidently superior. If anything, they are inclined to feel slightly sorry for Westgaters—who, after all, would be quick to move to the Ivy or Petal Districts if they could afford to. In Eastgate, such transparent striving for status is considered pitiably foolish compared to simply enjoying the community already around them.

Eastgaters are well aware of their good fortune and are vigilant in protecting it. The crime rate is very low, and the poisonous intrigues that flourish elsewhere in the city find little root here. This insistence on maintaining the district's safe, upstanding character is not without its less salutary side: Eastgaters are unashamed of pushing less-desirable elements out of their district. The Post Guard has little tolerance for beggars, and the Eagle Garrison frequently

DISTRICT SUMMARY

Eastgate is a quiet residential district with several iconic landmarks, including the Postern Gate, Blue Tower, and the Watchtower. The Green Ridge neighborhood is known as the main site of druidic activity within Absalom, centered as it is around a massive fig tree called the Grand Holt. The largest gillman neighborhood in Absalom, nicknamed Gilltown, is also in Eastgate. Of late, cult activity related to the Children of the Spring and the Circle of Stones is a cause of much consternation in the quarter.

EASTGATE
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makes its surveillance obvious enough to exert pressure on unwanted persons to move out. Even ordinary citizens tell beggars and buskers to take their business out to the Puddles, "where it belongs." Eastgate once hosted charity kitchens and orphanages for the poor, but neighborhood pressure to "keep other districts' problems within their own walls" led to their eventual closing.

A domineering community organization called the Concerned Residents' Union takes care of neighborhood problems too small for the Eastgate Council but (in their eyes, at least) no less important to maintaining the district's good character. Within the last decade, tensions between the Union and some of Eastgate's "undesirables" have grown much worse, thanks to the increasing strength and size of two pagan cults resident in the district, the Children of Spring and the Circle of Stones.

The growth of the Children of Spring, centered in Evergreen Park around the charismatic Gozran cleric Lady Evigail, has consumed many of Eastgate's youth, encouraging them to disconnect from their families and live a life more in tune with the balance of nature. The Circle of Stones, led by the reclusive dryad queen Iolanthe, dwells within the multi-trunked, enormous tree known as the Grand Holt, one of the defining monuments of the district, if not the entire city. About 10 years ago, the tree underwent a staggering growth spurt, thickening its bark and trunks, forming additional internal chambers, and overtaking several nearby buildings. The Concerned Residents' Union looks upon both these developments with wariness and disdain, longing for a simpler time when unorthodox cults politely kept themselves to the city's other districts.

DISTRICT LOCATIONS

The following are some of Eastgate's most notable locations.

76 Antler Lodge

LODGE | TEMPLE

Although Erastil is one of the most commonly worshipped deities in the Inner Sea region, his presence is traditionally more strongly felt in rural areas, of which the city of Absalom has none. Nevertheless, for the faithful of Old Deadeye who are on longer visits to the big city, or perhaps find themselves forced to dwell within the urban landscape for reasons beyond their control, or even to the traveling farmer spending but a few nights before retreating to a ranch in the outskirts, Antler Lodge is a beloved and important retreat from the hustle and bustle of city life. The lodge itself is humble in appearance, only two stories high with eaves adorned with antlers, but its walls are magically treated to deaden the sounds and smells of the city. In place of windows, many of the rooms have cunningly crafted illusory murals or portraits on the walls that mimic views of rural landscapes. A group of hard-working acolytes who have given up frontier lives keep Antler Lodge running as a haven for those seeking a break from the overwhelming press of the city. Antler Lodge's current high priestess is Loys Zepah, a matronly Varisian woman who prefers to be addressed simply as "Grandmother" and who is never seen without easy access to fresh baked goods or chilled juice to pass out to hungry or thirsty visitors. Of late though, some visitors have noticed hints of worry or concern in Loys's countenance. What she's confided in only a few is the fact that strange and disturbing elements have been creeping into some of the lodge's illusory decorations—glimpses of diseased livestock, distant and muted cries of terror seeming to come from unlit cottages, ominous monstrous tracks that flicker at the edge of view, and brief flashes of unfamiliar constellations in night skies have all been reported to her, and she's yet to determine the cause of these strange visions. She worries that some fell influence has begun to haunt the lodge's illusions, perhaps something brought into the temple by a false worshipper, but is at a loss as to where to begin further investigations.

NPCs Joriah (parishioner); Loys Zepah (high priestess); Lord Oved (parishioner); Pyl Gillseed (parishioner); Theodric Alverteen (parishioner)

INFECTED ILLUSIONS

The strange "infections" that have been spreading through Antler Lodge's idyllic illusions haven't been noticed by many yet, and Loys Zepah is loath to bring more attention to them for fear of causing panic. Too wise to make the mistake of assuming these strange alterations to the lodge's scenes will go away on their own, she's been quietly recruiting specialists to study the scenes. Confirmation that others can see them have put her own mind at ease, but at the expense of knowing that whatever is causing the corruptions to occur is very much real and not just in her mind. Her current favorite theory as to the source of the infection lies in the fact that they first began to manifest the same week that the Embassy of New Thassilon opened its doors to the public, yet she is hesitant to make public her suspicion until she has proof to connect the embassy to the strangeness growing within her temple's walls.

A SINISTER INFILTRATION

Beragel's rule to avoid stocking sapient creatures is more than just a good-natured policy. A few months after she took over the shop, she purchased a bright green "singing centipede," a marvel sold to her by what she assumed was a trustworthy adventurer. In fact, said adventurer was a rabble-rouser looking to cause trouble by selling her a shape-changed quasit. It took Beragel months to figure out the culprit behind the "accidents" that kept claiming the lives of her other offerings and leaving embarrassing graffiti on the walls. Since then, she regularly takes steps to ensure that what she offers for sale isn't, say, a demon in disguise.

BERAGEL TINDERTALES

77 Beragel's Fur and Feathers

MERCHANT

Run by fourth-generation proprietor, Beragel Tindertales, this large and lavish shop specializes in breeding and selling pets from all over Golarion. Beragel keeps a wide variety of brightly plumed tropical birds, frilled and horned lizards, color-changing frogs, and other living novelties for her customers' delight. She maintains an extensive network of rare animal dealers and is frequently willing to purchase flashy exotics that visitors to Absalom bring from other lands. She also sells food and controlled habitats for her pets.

As a rule, Beragel tries not to stock endangered species, sapient creatures, or monsters. However, with no magic of her own to rely on and customers clamoring for ever-stranger and unique pets, she finds it impossible to avoid occasional mistakes. Some sapient creatures prefer not to communicate, and some monsters look quite harmless in their larval or hatchling forms. Beragel would never knowingly put either a customer or a pet in danger, but she does sometimes let greed and gnomish novelty-seeking cloud her better judgment, which has led to a few conflicts with Eastgate's druids.

NPCs Beragel Tindertales (proprietor); Finwick Severus (customer); Ta Khomar (customer)

78 Blackhill's

TAVERN

From the street, Blackhill's seems to be nothing more than a large thatch roof sitting a foot or so off the ground. In fact it is a popular meadhouse owned by Dege Blackhill (famous for his underbrew, a special spiced mead particularly favored by those of Numerian blood) that is essentially a covered basement with earthen walls. The main hall features huge smoking pits that run nonstop day and night.

The establishment is popular with members of the Post Guard. The off-duty guards here can sometimes be hired for dangerous missions into the wilds of the island, and occasionally hire experts themselves to assist with missions paid for by higher-class patrons.

Dege himself is one of the tavern's most prolific sources of scuttlebutt and rumors, and his presence ensures that each and every drunken claim gets its due attention—be it for entertainment purposes or to ensure that legitimate concerns have a proper chance to reach the right ears. One rumor that Dege has been reluctant to speak about, though, are the whispers that he was forced to leave his hometown near the headwaters of the Husna River after being involved in some sort of scandal. Dege does his best to wave off these rumors as "people fishing for scandals to distract me from their outstanding tabs," but those who know the man wonder at the nervous hints in his expression whenever a new variant of this persistent rumor comes up.

NPCs Lord Ayunga (buying a round for the house after bringing in a major criminal); Dege Blackhill (proprietor); Durward (on his fifth underbrew); Evelessa (courtesan, keeping company); Janira Gavix (patron); Joriah (Post Guard officer looking for off-duty work)

79 Blue Tower

MERCHANT MONUMENT

Eastgate's Blue Tower is the tallest building within Absalom's walls, and the third-tallest in all of Absalom. Three thousand years ago, it was the disaster-proof bastion of the Blue Lords, a Taldan political faction that essentially controlled the city for an extended period during the infamous Age of Excess. Rivaling the Watchtower and the Absalom Lighthouse, the soaring Blue Tower was perhaps the best example of the limitless "Mount Absalom" construction boom of that era, when every noble house and political faction sought to outdo the other by building larger, taller, and more improbably

elaborate homes and headquarters. The tremendous spiral tower resembles a unicorn's horn fashioned of intricately fitted pieces of pale blue coral, and is capped with a narrow stone lighthouse. Along with the Spire of Nex on the northwest horizon, the Blue Tower is a landmark by which most natives of Absalom can easily gain their bearings as they travel across the city. The tower's lighthouse is so tall that it can focus its beacon past the Flotsam Graveyard to mark a ship beyond Absalom's harbor.

The hubris of the Blue Lords ensured that their ambitions for grandeur extended not just to the heights of the sky above, but to the depths of the earth below as well. An extensive series of sub-basements below the tower leads ultimately to an enormous vault in which the Taldan lords built a secret village for themselves, their families, and their servants, complete with subterranean buildings, streets, and artificial gardens. An ancient illusion upon the chamber's ceiling cycles through day and night in a way that is very nearly convincing. A similar illusion makes the roof and domes of the buildings glisten as if coated in gold plating, as was the style in Taldor's capital in its glory days. Magical lanterns keep the streets dimly illuminated at night. Constructed as a final doomsday refuge capable of hosting the entire Blue Lords faction, the settlement is now mostly abandoned, consisting of the equivalent of eight city blocks, only three of which currently have occupants. Access to the secret village—which its inhabitants call Little Oppara—is strictly controlled by hired guards from the Javelin Gallery in the employ of Grand Ambassador Tolara Alverteen of Taldor. The ambassador keeps a private office and staff in one of the finer manor houses in the village, and from this redoubt she controls both Taldor's official diplomatic efforts in Absalom as well as its considerable clandestine operations in the city. Alverteen is among the most treasured assets of Taldor's Lion Blades espionage agency, and the Blue Tower's basement is a nest of spies who don't necessarily have Absalom's best interests in mind at all times.

The Blue Lords abandoned the Blue Tower along with the rest of their endeavors in Absalom and returned to their homeland following the disastrous Taldor-Qadira earthquakes of 2920 AR. Whatever secrets the Blue Lords might have hidden in the tower's walls and heights were left unrecorded, although occasionally people find cryptic notations on crumbling slips of ancient paper tucked into niches behind bricks and above interior keystones. It remains unknown whether these are a legacy from the Blue Lords or some other past occupant, and the found code slips have been too few, and too brief, for anyone to decipher.

Today, the Blue Tower is home to the Winged Sandals, an order of messengers dedicated to Iomedae. They trace their history to a decree from Aroden commanding them to bear messages anywhere in the world on demand. The Winged Sandals have a wide and centuries-old reputation for courage, determination, and reliability, and are considered one of the best options for conveying urgent, high-stakes missives to remote and perilous places. They also handle the majority of the normal mail services used by citizens of Absalom, employing an army of messengers and package delivery experts that work exclusively within the city in addition to a smaller number of highly traveled (and very expensive) worldwide couriers.

A number of the Winged Sandals' more experienced traveling agents are veterans of the Worldwound and have considerable experience not only in navigating hostile terrain and avoiding wily adversaries, but also with using layered encryption, code-augmenting illusions, and other techniques designed to ensure that no message can be deciphered by unauthorized foes. The Winged Sandals also specialize in communications magic of all varieties and developed innumerable interception methods for purposes of testing interception-avoiding techniques. Naturally, this security is heavily compromised by the Taldan spies living in the tower's basement. Grand

OTHER USES FOR A TOWER

As the third-tallest structure in the city, the Blue Tower serves Absalom as a reference point when traveling the city streets. The tower's shadow also serves some citizens as a sort of sundial, while some cynical shills offer "Blue Doom" payouts, should the tower ever collapse in just the right direction to destroy a specific building.

BRYTHEN'S BUCKET OF BLOOD

One of the most popular tavern songs in Eastgate—and indeed in all of Absalom—is "Brythen's Bucket of Blood," a searing and often-times hilarious retelling of the murder of Lord Gyr of Gixx by his old adventuring companions Brythen Blood, Asilia of Gyr, Rosvierre Ibanc, and Lord Avid of House Arnsen. Each companion receives their own verse extolling the virtues of a particular style of murder, with variations from tavern to tavern as rival bars attempt to one-up each other with the ludicrousness and ingenuity of the schemes. Since all of Gyr's companions are high-placed city officials, the song—and its growing popularity—carries the whiff of scandal, further increasing its popular appeal.

Ambassador Tolara Alverteen's agents read all messages transmitted by the Winged Sandals, and brief her directly on any that concern Taldor or its machinations. Aftrin Undrol, the no-nonsense master conveyor of the order, is aware of Taldor's espionage, but enormous bribes masked as rent paid on Little Oppara keep him silent and complicit in their operations.

NPCs Aftrin Undrol (master conveyor, administrator of the Winged Sandals); Lady Gloriana (meeting with the Grand Ambassador in Little Oppara); Ilarra (messenger); Tolara Alverteen (Grand Ambassador of Taldor, making her way to Little Oppara)

80 The Broken Bastion

RESIDENCE

The edifice known today as the Broken Bastion was once an enormous clock tower tended by a cabal of time-obsessed mystics. Three hundred years ago, the famous clock face and the upper floors of the structure were sheared off during a disastrous attack by the dragon Maejeryx Steeleye, who ravaged the city several times in that era. To this day, weird time effects linger, even though the nexus of the cult's power—a mechanism powered by mysterious energy, was destroyed in the dragon attack. The phenomenon adds to the charm and sense of history about the place, increasing its appeal to resident Muar Gauthfallow, Absalom's fourth spell lord.

The interior contains several vaults Gauthfallow uses to keep safe dangerous magical contraband seized during the course of his duties to protect the city against eldritch threats. The presence of these vaults, original to the building's ancient clock tower design, is what attracted Muar to the property in the first place. Each of the two-dozen holding chambers is hermetically sealed and protected from divination by a complex enchantment incorporated into the ornate mithral combination lock built into its door. When Gauthfallow moved into the Broken Bastion, one of these vaults was already sealed and locked, and neighborhood lore claimed this had been so since Maejeryx Steeleye destroyed the clockmaster cult that once held court here. Disturbingly, each time the fourth spell lord notices a mysterious time anomaly within his home, he also notices that the combination lock on the ancient, long-sealed vault has moved. He is not certain what magical danger might be unleashed when the lock finally opens, but he considers vigilance against that near certainty to be among his most important duties as a spell lord in service of Absalom's safety.

NPCs Lord Ayunga (visiting his friend Muar for counsel regarding a delicate political situation); Muar Gauthfallow (master of the house); Utgar of Gyr (discussing a magical threat to the city newly discovered by the varlokkur)

81 Concerned Residents' Union

MUNICIPAL

The meeting hall of the Concerned Residents' Union, Eastgate's voluntary citizens' association and unofficial second district council, is an unassuming brick building with elegant but sparing masonry touches. Landowners and long-established families of Eastgate plan their social calendars, discuss neighborhood schools, and vote on proposed exceptions to Eastgate's business regulations here. Although the Concerned Residents' Union exercises no official governmental power, Eastgate is a close-knit community, and most of its major stakeholders are members. Therefore, when the Union comes to an agreement, the matter is effectively settled, and legal recognition of its policy becomes a formality.

At times, this can shade close to organized crime. The Concerned Residents' Union has seen many backroom negotiations about which candidate to support for nomarch, which officers to elevate in the Post Guard, and what favors the lucky individuals will be expected to do for local landowners in exchange for their support. Local leaders are more likely to cut through regulatory red tape to approve business proposals that they've grown

to favor—sometimes via their owners' generous "donations" to favored community groups or causes—while requests from those who compete with union members' concerns are discarded. A quiet word from one member to another can begin, or sometimes end, a criminal investigation.

By and large, however, the Concerned Residents' Union is less interested in lining its members' pockets than in preserving Eastgate's pleasant, neighborly character—not that this comes as much consolation to those it shuts out. Of late, the growing presence of two pagan cults—the Children of Spring and the Circle of Stones—has taken up a great deal of their time and attention, particularly since the beloved son of Union President Gelda Dellby, Rance, joined the Children of Spring and became one of its most influential recruiters. Her heart hardened by her son's betrayal of his family, Dellby dominates the agenda with improbable plans to close Evergreen Park or trim the Grand Holt, to a chorus of cheers and boos from her fellow councilors and the crowds that attend their open public meetings. None of Dellby's more egregious proposals have thus far been approved by the council, but as more members begin to lose sons and daughters to paganism, her quorum is getting stronger and stronger.

NPCs Finwick Severus (member); Gelda Dellby (president); Hilenda Guile (member)

82 Endiron School

ACADEMY

Eastgate is justly renowned for its many children's academies, of which the Endiron School is one of the oldest and most famous. Founded by the Endiron noble family, the school's motto uses its name as a play on words: the stated purpose of the school and its endowment was "to foster a world of understanding between peoples and nations, so that the students might put an end to iron as the answer to their disagreements." To facilitate this goal, the Endiron school emphasizes languages—every child is expected to be reasonably fluent in at least two other languages by graduation—and encourages learning

THE PESKY PET

A rampaging owlbear in a pink brass-tagged collar charges down the streets, upending peaceful gardens and leaving sedate citizens sprawling in the rowdy beast's wake. A garishly dressed gnome–Baragel Tindertales–chases after the marauding beast, waving a slab of raw bacon and shouting, "Coco! Coco! Come back, Coco!"

MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE

After a night of heavy rains, during which many of Eastgate's drains and sewers backed up and flooded onto the streets after becoming clogged with debris, a bottle washes up from one such blocked storm drain. Inside is a message, written in an unsteady hand, which reads: "Caught in Gilltown. Rumors true. Caverns filled with stolen spoils. Remains of Dovregaard Expedition here. Imprisoned. Send help. – A." The note is a lure placed by the azarketi criminal Anchor, who ambushes anyone who investigates the clue by exploring the caverns under Gilltown.

from other cultures. Educators often invite speakers to discuss their homelands, share traditions, and bring foods for the children to sample. This background has helped a number of Endiron students become impressive diplomats, merchants, and other agents of cross-cultural understanding.

The school's reputation is such that families from much wealthier districts, and even foreign dignitaries, often try to enroll their children in the Endiron School. The school's headmasters have always reserved most of the spaces for Eastgate's children, who pay nearly nothing, but charge exorbitant tuition to accept outside students. Up to a quarter of each class is comprised of paying pupils who subsidize the education of Eastgaters.

NPCs Lady Chandarin (student); Chani Muraabe (student); Emral Xarcious (instructor); Tikria Gaatan (student); Tontartigan Dellby (headmaster); Ulthun II (guest speaker)

83 Estate of Yargos Gill

ARCHIVE RESIDENCE

In the last decade, the aging scholar Yargos Gill has gone from squalid poverty in the Puddles to the height of prominence in Eastgate after his expertise proved pivotal in defeating the Silent Tide during the Black Echelon Uprising. Before that, he prevented several other catastrophes as an advisor to the Pathfinder Society. Gill's particular expertise is military history, and no one in Absalom knows more than he of ancient conflicts, near-forgotten generals, and obscure treasures lost in important battles. He has an encyclopedic knowledge of all the sieges of Absalom, but the foundation of his learning concerns the military history of Andoran's People's Revolt, about which he has published numerous turgid volumes. The grounds of his splendid estate are populated by dozens of statues of minor and major figures from the conflict that earned Andoran its freedom from Cheliax less than a century ago. Gill often strolls these grounds while consulting with visitors, gesturing toward this or that military hero to provide an historical anecdote relevant to the situation at hand, often from personal experience (for Gill was not just a student of the Revolt, but an active participant).

The manor was previously the home of Andoran's long-lived Grand Ambassador to Absalom, who lived in the city since before the People's Revolt and who was beloved by Andoren sympathizers like House Candren and the Church of Cayden Cailean. The house itself, situated at the center of a series of manicured and statue-laden gardens like a gem inset in a signet ring, is a three-story stone affair with corner towers supported by telamon statues in the form of the avoral Talmandor, the eagle-featured spiritual patron of Andoran. The lower two floors of the interior are given over to Gill's vast collection of historical volumes, tactical scrolls, and campaign maps, while the scholar maintains relatively simple personal quarters in the penthouse, which offers commanding views of the city, from the arbor avenues of Eastgate to the spires of the Starstone Cathedral. Gill happily entertains visitors affiliated with his allies in Andoran or in the Pathfinder Society, but strangers must pay him a modest fee to peruse his private library or a higher amount if they wish him to participate in the research himself.

NPCs Senator Augustyn (on official business for Andoran); Janira Gavix (visitor on a mission for the Pathfinder Society); Yargos Gill (historian, master of the house)

84 Evergreen Park

NEIGHBORHOOD SHRINE

No matter the season, Eastgate's gorgeous Evergreen Park is always locked in eternal spring. Vibrant butterflies and whizzing pixies flutter across secluded paths winding through copses of trees designed to look wild but carefully curated for maximum beauty. Small vending stands, secluded stages, and lush

grassy hills with small stone tables beckon citizens strolling through the park to stay a while and enjoy a rare slice of serenity in one of the largest cities in the world.

The park has long been the haunt of the beguiling noble Evigail of House Wycomb, who seldom goes anywhere else. The zealous missionary priestess of Gozreh advocates a radical primitivism in which adherents abandon their former lives, their material possessions, and even the concept of property to join her in direct adulation of the balance and beauty of nature above all else. Evigail's followers, whom she calls the Children of Spring, emulate their leader by dyeing their hair green and walking barefoot just as she does. With no homes to return to, the Children live in the park itself, gathering in small groups to sing exultations to Gozreh or thronging in huge numbers around the small open-air shrine at the center of the park near its largest pool to hear one of Evigail's aphorism-laden public sermons. Perhaps due to uncertain political times following several recent sieges, the Children of Spring have grown far more numerous than ever before. Most Eastgaters have lost a relative to the cult or know a friend whose son or daughter ran off to join it. The Children maintain the endless growth cycle of the plants within Evergreen Park, and until now that's been enough for the folk of Eastgate to tolerate their presence. With each new convert to Evigail's cause, that patience grows more and more thin.

NPCs Coltan Menedrid (making an offering at the shrine before embarking on an ocean voyage); Lady Evigail (cult leader); Rance Dellby (cult member); Emir Thalzar and Vittar Corusec (flying kites upon a cultist-free clearing)

85 Gilltown

NEIGHBORHOOD

Hidden behind a row of council-subsidized housing for the Post Guard and Eastgate's handful of poorer families is a small neighborhood, away from Absalom's main roads, known as Gilltown. Its motley assemblage of weather-beaten tents, dilapidated wooden shacks, and packed-mud huts slopes down toward the water. At its center is a muddy square, littered with fish scales and discarded oyster shells, where the azarketis—as gillmen call themselves—trade with outsiders.

These crumbling structures are all that most of Absalom ever sees of Gilltown, but they are only a superficial shell over its true heart: a network of mostly submerged caverns carved into the bedrock that lead into the Bay of Kortos. Azarketis live, conduct their private rites of worship, and trade among themselves within these caverns, and to protect their privacy, they conceal the entrances with mats of carefully nurtured seaweed and fiercely guard them against outsiders. Azarketis permit entry to only their most honored guests, and most surface dwellers don't even know that the tunnels exist.

Although the surface portion of Gilltown is kept deliberately unpleasant to deter outsiders from lingering too long, it nevertheless draws a steady trickle of visitors. The wonders that the azarketis pull from the sea include not only pearls, corals, and rare raw materials prized in elemental water magic, but also treasures recovered from millennia of shipwrecks and sunken ruins around Absalom. Ancient maps, curious artifacts, and pieces of Old Azlant—corroded coins, barnacle-encrusted pottery shards, and salt-clouded mirrors and glasses—have all passed through Gilltown's market square. Stranger and more dangerous artifacts occasionally appear as well, presumably obtained from other, more obscure civilizations in the ocean depths.

Other land dwellers come to Gilltown seeking guides for underwater expeditions or information about sea-based threats. Azarketis accept such commissions with care to avoid any that might bring danger back to Gilltown or compromise the secret locations of the wrecks from which they pull their

AT PLAY WITH THE CHILDREN

Three barefoot young people dance through the streets, their arms interlinked. They are dressed in white with garlands of leaves in their green hair, and their steps follow an ancient, solemn pattern. The youths surround anyone who gives them a second glance, complimenting their appearance and offering to show them a relaxing and enlightening time among the Children of Spring in Evergreen Park. A positive response leads to further contact with the cult, and an eventual audience with Lady Evigail herself.

A CURIOUS CRITTER

Round, yellow eyes have been seen peering down from amid the leaves of a nearby tree. Spotting these eyes has become something of a game to the locals of Eastgate, though the Concerned Residents' Union is beginning to grow worried by the sudden rash of sightings. When disturbed, the branch holding the eyes springs and shakes as if something had just leaped off it, leaving only glimpses of a blur jumping from tree to tree toward the Wondervale.

own treasures. Disgruntled clients sometimes accuse azarketis of sabotaging expeditions in order to protect their own interests, which is likely true, but hasn't substantially harmed the azarketis' business given their customers' lack of alternatives. Even the mysterious reappearance of a few ill-fated expeditions' valuables on the market tables of Gilltown hasn't dissuaded those who hope to secure their services.

A thriving illicit market booms in the more remote corners of these underwater caverns, as the connection to the sea affords a perfect venue through which to transport all manner of smuggled goods. The majority of the goods available through Gilltown's underground market consist of treasures harvested from sunken ships throughout the Inner Sea, many of which come with outlandish tales of their legacy. The primary customers of these wares are, of course, Eastgate's elite, and as such there exists between the illicit market and the local aristocracy an unspoken agreement—as long as the wares that move through the caverns aren't strictly illegal or dangerous in nature, the local authorities turn a blind eye to the trade.

NPCs Anchor (scoundrel); Lemaria Kumari (azarketi ambassador); Jorry Slimfin (preaching the word of Besmara); Thaddeus Barabus (captain seeking aquatic intelligence)

86 Grand Holt

LODGE

This enormous, multi-trunked fig tree supposedly predates Absalom's founding. According to myth, when Aroden rested the first day after raising the Isle of Kortos, he took shade and nourishment from the only plant growing on the island: the Grand Holt, which even as a sapling possessed unusual vigor. Blessed by divine gratitude, it swiftly grew to a behemoth with a trunk 20 feet wide, and then grew greater still. As the blessed tree grew taller and broader over the millennia, Absalom's Grand Council exercised eminent domain to demolish homes and move roads that stood in its way.

Today, the Grand Holt has 17 trunks, all intertwined about one another, and the solid, lumpy floor formed by its horizontal surface roots extends across an area the size of a city block. The ancient tree, still hale and vigorous after such an impossible span of years, is a civic treasure in Absalom and represents one of Aroden's last enduring works—and is arguably the most awe-inspiring of them. It has never been pruned, although its branches and trunks have been coaxed into forming a network of rough, rounded rooms and corridors.

The enormous tree is maintained by a small druidic order called the Circle of Stones, which is dedicated to protecting and nurturing the Grand Holt. About two dozen druids and fellow worshippers live within the Holt, but there are always vacant chambers ready to receive visitors who pay proper obeisance to the tree.

The tale of the Grand Holt has spread across Golarion over the centuries, and many pilgrims come to personally witness Aroden's living miracle. The tree is a holy site for Mwangi spirit-talkers and Vudrani wise women alike, and venerable druids teach youngsters about the harmony of nature while sitting on its ever-spreading roots. Its fruit is said to be the most delicious in Golarion and capable of bestowing health and vigor as impressive as the tree's own.

The ancient, magic-imbued tree also shines as a beacon in the eyes of the fey. Few fey intentionally venture into Absalom given the considerable barriers of civilization that the urban landscape presents, but those who find themselves lost or stranded within the city often gravitate to the Grand Holt as a wild oasis within so much tamed stone and brick, and a considerable population of immortal fey have called the Grand Holt home across history. The most powerful to date is the dryad queen Iolanthe, who has dwelled within the Grand Holt since before the elves returned to Golarion, and perhaps much

longer. Although the powerful fey never leaves her sacred tree, she is thought to have designs upon the whole of the Starstone Isle, with druids aligned to the Circle of Stones dwelling in the Immenwood, the Kortos Mounts, and other wild places across the island. Her deep-voiced lieutenant, the mighty Korhül (also known as the Horned Man), leads the cult outside the Grand Holt, and fears no one when acting to protect the tree or the interests of its verdant sovereign. If a visitor manages to fast-talk the common druids guarding the entrances and exits, she must first contend with Korhül before gaining an audience with Iolanthe.

NPCs Boldo Drenk (absent-mindedly carving an abstract design into the Holt's trunk); Lord Encarius (blissful and beguiled after an audience with Iolanthe); Iolanthe (dryad queen); Korhül (public face of the Circle of Stones); Tumult Flower-Flourish (receiving instructions from Korhül and Iolanthe)

87 Green Ridge

NEIGHBORHOOD

The quiet, lightly populated community of Green Ridge is a pocket of rural green transplanted into the heart of Absalom. Small parks, large gardens, and copses of trees outnumber the houses in this neighborhood. Its common compact farms are holdovers from the days when Absalom was frequently under siege and growing food within the city's walls was a sensible use of space. Most of those greenholds now cultivate flowers and rare, expensive delicacies rather than staple crops, but they are still working farms, and their owners could easily shift to more nutritionally efficient production if necessary. Druids are valued by Green Ridge farmers, who have learned to respect their advice on integrating wild trees and flowers with cultivated plants, and druidic charms and prayers are often interwoven with other forms of worship.

Green Ridge tends to be more relaxed and focused on the small pleasures of life than elsewhere in the city. Its people see little point to chasing money or political ambition while ruining happy relationships, corroding the value of life, and leaving even its victors too exhausted to enjoy their spoils. Green Ridgers prefer to live in harmony with their neighbors and surroundings, and though some of Absalom's other citizens use "ridger" as a term of disparagement for lazy and unambitious folks, Green Ridgers welcome it as a badge of pride.

NPCs Boldo Drenk (arguing with Parsin Guile about being kicked out of the Woodcutter's Guild); Joriah (on patrol with a squad of Post Guards); Parsin Guile (woodcraft gallery proprietor); Rance Dellby (recruiting for the Children of Spring)

88 Mama Shrog's Solutions

MERCHANT TEMPLE

For the past several decades, the old Vezneri House has been whispered about by children as the "most haunted house" in Eastgate, but with its recent purchase by a strange old lady named Shrog, the building's reputation has shifted dramatically—although not for the better. Once owned by an eccentric artist named Vezneri who famously murdered his family and servants in the pursuit of "the perfect shade of blood red" to paint his masterpieces (landscapes of a grisly realm called the "Flayed Lands"), Vezneri House's ownership reverted to the city for many years until it was purchased by a woman who, over the course of the past few years, has rebuilt the crumbling manor into something akin to a curio shop. The pale, waifish Mama Shrog herself has no apparent children, yet claims all who visit her shop are "children in search of answers." She claims to keep among the wide

Favored Flowers

Fresh flowers from Green Ridge are popular purchases in Absalom, both for color and to block out less savory smells of the city. Absalom's preferred flowers are heavily influenced by nearby Garund and Qadira, with tulips, irises, poppies, jasmine, lilies, and roses being among the most popular.

A WARY WARNING

An agitated woman steps out of the crowd and grabs you by the shoulders. "That Mama Shrog is not what she seems," she says. Her voice is shaky with tears. "Why won't you help me? There's going to be a killing, a bad one. Maybe worse. Could be a ritual to summon something." The woman, Scarin Saloli, insists that heroes accompany her to the villainous Mama Shrog's door, and her active mind has other conspiracies to share, as well.

range of devices and curiosities and books and elixirs and contraptions and sculptures solutions to any problem a visitor might need a solution for, and is quite talented at talking customers into buying objects that may or may not serve in the role she promises.

Many view Mama Shrog with suspicion, but her charismatic nature and lack of any hard evidence of wrongdoing have, to date, kept her on the right side of the law, but what isn't contested is the fact that she openly worships the goddess Lamashtu. A bust of the three-eyed goddess looms over the front door to the shop—the only addition she made to the old manor's facade—and the northern wing of the building is the only one not open to the public. Here, Mama Shrog maintains the city's only obvious shrine to Lamashtu, and her work to keep the worship here just this side of the law often eclipses the toil she undertakes to keep her curiosity shop stocked. Dozens of paladins, crusaders, and adventurers have met no end of frustration in various attempts to shut the shop down and have Mama Shrog thrown from the city. Less legal attempts to oust her have, so far, resulted in quite public displays of violence involving bound demons or monsters that appear from nowhere to defend Mama Shrog and her shop—visitations that she always just manages to justify as "self-defense" in the face of overly-zealous Firebrands or covetous thieves. Mama Shrog's operation is but the latest in a long string of Lamashtu shrines that have popped up over the years in the city to take advantage of Absalom's religious tolerance, and cynics point out that even if she were to be proven to be acting against a law, it'd just be a matter of time before another "legal demon worship loophole" popped up elsewhere in the city.

NPCs Mama Shrog (high priestess)

89 Postern Gate

PRECINCT

The eastern gate of Absalom, sometimes called simply the Postern, is the city's smallest gate and the only one regularly kept closed and locked. It is 50 feet high and 40 feet wide, but otherwise very similar to Azlanti Keep in style and construction. It is thought to have been based on Aroden's own designs.

The Postern Gate opens primarily to move goods to and from Starwatch Keep. It is also the headquarters of the Post Guard. During the Siege of the Prophets in 1298 AR, forces of the Prophet Kings breached the gate but were unable to fight past its defenders to reach the city. A stone set into the last arch of the Postern Gate commemorates the deepest point that the enemy forces reached, and its engraving "And No Farther" has been the Post Guard's motto ever since.

NPCs Lord Ayunga (captain); Muar Gauthfallow (consulting with Lord Ayunga regarding a newly revealed magical threat to the city)

90 Tallavont School

ACADEMY

The Tallavont School, like the Endiron School, was founded several centuries ago by idealistic philanthropists who hoped to nurture Eastgate's community-oriented spirit into broader forms that could better the world. The school specializes in comparative government by analyzing the benefits and drawbacks of many different forms of societal organization. The Tallavont School's faculty includes several famous opposition intellectuals and thinkers driven from their homelands by hostile regimes, who chose to teach schoolchildren in a quiet part of Absalom rather than deal with backbiting politics and spoiled noble scions who proliferate in universities. These past associations occasionally return to cast a shadow over the teachers' new lives.

Sometimes called "The Fortress," the Tallavont School is situated within an enormous war keep from the city's early days. Along with the significantly taller Watchtower

and Blue Towers and the somewhat shorter Broken Bastion, the Tallavont building helps to define Eastgate's skyline, and is one of its most famous and celebrated structures. Students and faculty appreciate the sweeping views of the city offered by the school's balconies and upper windows. Instructors often gather their classes on these windy decks for the symbolism provided by the view. With a sweep of a hand, a teacher can display the important vantage leadership will offer the students in their adult lives. The alumni of Tallavont appreciate a unique perspective among Absalom's youth academies that serves them well throughout their lives.

Like Eastgate's other preeminent schools, the Tallavont School has fostered some notable successes over the centuries. Several alumni have gone on to lead nations, write wise and enduring laws, and otherwise shape the course of history. Rich and influential families continue to vie to get their children into the Tallavont School, and the school is less successful in restricting their entry—or less inclined to resist them—than its counterparts. Only about a quarter of the school's students live in Eastgate, and the rest hail from wealthier districts or belong to high-placed foreign families.

NPCs Haligander (instructor); Alinzia Gaatan (noble student); Tevis Severus (local family student); Madame Vordris (headmistress)

91 The Turning Leaf

RESTAURANT

The Turning Leaf, which specializes in fresh, seasonal preparations drawing heavily from the city's fish markets and the produce grown nearby in Green Ridge, is one of the most popular and upscale restaurants in Eastgate. In addition to its regular menu, the Turning Leaf presents traveling guest chefs, who prepare specialties from their homelands or unusual delicacies they have encountered while abroad, during monthly two- or three-night engagements.

Tickets to these guest presentations are rare and prized not only for the experience of tasting the food but also as signifiers of social status. For gourmands and social climbers alike, few gifts are as welcome—and few bribes as effective—as tickets to a star chef's presentation dinner at the Turning Leaf.

The proprietor of the Turning Leaf is a ghoran named Qidesca, a pleasant owner who uses their sense of humor to add a dash of levity and amusement to every meal—something of an irony, given the fact that Qidesca doesn't understand the actual complexities of comedy themself. Emotion is no stranger, on the other hand, to the Turning Leaf's current guest chef, an imposing hobgoblin named Kurgatosh who is only too eager to cash in on his ancestry and use his fearsome appearance to impress customers. That the food he prepares is legitimately delicious certainly helps to impress!

NPCs Kurgatosh (guest chef); Nigel Aldain and Lady Dhrami (dining companions); Qidesca (proprietor)

92 The Watchtower

MUNICIPAL

The only tower on the section of city wall lining Green Ridge is the Watchtower, Absalom's tallest defensive tower. It rises higher than the Blue Tower and rivals the Lighthouse of Pilot Island. From its top deck, one can see almost all of Absalom, as well as the Cairnlands and the distant Immenwood.

The Watchtower hosts a vigilant fire watch, which scans the city, day and night, for any sign of smoke within or near Absalom that might herald a serious fire outbreak. It also serves as the headquarters of the Eagle Garrison, Absalom's smallest company of district guards. The Eagle Garrison is the eyes and ears of the First Guard. They monitor unusual activity in the wilderness outside of Absalom, commercial activity on the roads outside the city, and any signs of irregularity that might herald an incoming large-scale threat, such as a siege or plague. They do not generally make arrests or conduct small-scale criminal investigations, although occasionally an Eagle officer will make an exception

Cooking Crisis

Outside the Turning Leaf restaurant, an tall, leafy ghoran in fine but faded clothes sits on the curb looking despondent. "Where am I going to find trufflefish now?" their rose-petal face moans to no one in particular, crushing their hat between their hands. "The gillmen never sell their stocks, and I can't possibly serve the soup without them." Successfully presenting trufflefish to the ghoran, Qidesca, results in an invitation to an exclusive dinner with the Leaf's famous guest chef, attended by other luminaries of Absalom's upper class.

ELSEWHERE IN EASTGATE

95. District Courthouse: The judges of Eastgate have a reputation for compassion that borders of negligent. Over the last decade, unscrupulous lawyers have managed to transfer the cases of some of the city's most insidious (and well-heeled) villains to the Eastgate Bailey. The foremost advocate for such criminals is the influential Samel Maleagant, of the Court of Black Paper.

96. Eastgate Hall: Site of the Eastgate Council's monthly meetings and seat of district government. The ornate stone building was once the headquarters of the Hunting Lodge known as the Raiders of Rovagug's Hall.

97. The House of Guile: Famous woodworking gallery managed by the internationally famous artisan Parsin Guile and his merchant wife, Hilenda. The building's facade incorporates more than 30 varieties of wood sources from the Kortos interior, some of which have been extinct for centuries.

98. Mercerene Manor: Eastgate's largest estate is an imposing edifice of fitted stone and brick with wide covered courtyards, long winding paths, and white marble colonnades. Home of retired Pathfinder Venture-Captain Lord Haimon Heuff, the manor is haven for adventurers the old noble treats to dinner in exchange for tales of exploits that inflame his heart with memories of the good old days.

when circumstances require. For the most part, however, the Eagle Garrison views its mission as stopping threats to the city, not to its individual citizens.

Of note are the persistent rumors that, as towering as the Watchtower is, the underground reaches of the structure extend even further into the ground. Variously purported to be an extensive prison, a sprawling hidden fortress, or even a series of magical laboratories in which all manner of experiments are pursued, the truth of the matter would doubtless disappoint any brave enough to infiltrate the basement. The Eagle Garrison itself is the primary source of these rumors—something started at first many years ago in an attempt to bolster the guards' sense of power, but today something more like an inside joke, as guards seek to spread more and more outlandish rumors about the nature of the supposed "Watchtower Dungeon" in hopes of earning the admiration of their fellow officers. This rumormongering is frowned upon by the commanders of the garrison, and any officer caught spreading these lies is subject to discipline—which of course only makes those who take part in the little game all the more skilled at hiding the source of these rumors.

An unanticipated side effect of these rumors may soon come back to bite the guards, though, for when a group of new recruits to the Eagle Garrison recently used a magical pick in an attempt to dig through a section of the floor in the actual basement to gain access to a supposed "hidden wine cellar," they broke through into a heretofore unknown tunnel that traveled below the tower. The recruits were reprimanded and the hole sealed, but not before a few officers investigated the tunnel to try to determine what it was. Their swift return and whispers of "whistling in the dark" and feelings of being watched from the walls themselves were mostly discounted by the others as additional attempts to escalate the rumor game, but just in case, a guard is always posted in the basement room containing the plugged section of floor. The reticence of the Eagle Garrison to explore the hole further has become a cause for concern among some of the lower-ranking guards, who worry that their commanders may indeed be covering something up deep below the Watchtower's basement. Rumors that the soft sound of scratching or faint whistling can sometimes be heard under the stone plug persist, but as these events never occur when more than one person is present, they have, so far, remained nothing more than rumors themselves.

NPCs Mircen Kinsgate (commander of the Eagle Garrison); Ultara Deepkeg (Eagle Garrison officer)

93 Watercleft

MUNICIPAL TEMPLE

This broad, open garden lies beneath the cliff face upon which the Petal District sits. The area is named for a spout of pure, clear water that bursts from the cliffside and fountains downward into an aqueduct that captures and channels it into a carefully landscaped stream. Anyone can freely carry water from the stream, which draws a sizable daily crowd and makes the Watercleft a hub of social activity within the neighborhood.

From the open stream, the water is carried via stone channels into Evergreen Park, and from there it is diverted into smaller private waterways throughout the district. This gradual private capturing of what began as a public good is seen by some as a telling symbol of their local government. When Green Ridge was its own independent district, its district council—the Shaded—was the only one to hold public meetings, and did so at the Watercleft. Since Green Ridge was absorbed into Eastgate and the Shaded lost their role within city government, those public meetings are no more. To some, that means the public spirit of the Watercleft, just like its fountaining waters, has lost its free nature and been channeled toward private ends.

NPCs Hilenda Guile (attempting to publicly shame young Rance for abandoning his family in favor of a cult); Rance Dellby (singing the praises of the Children of Spring); Tartushi (collecting jugs of water)

94 The Wondervale

MONUMENT

Decades ago, just as Absalom began to recover its footing after the shock of Aroden's death, the city's leading intellectuals, inventors, and merchants organized a Festival of Wonders to showcase mechanical and cosmopolitan delights aimed at imagining a better, brighter future. They hoped that this would revive the civic spirits of a demoralized populace and reassure other nations that Absalom remained strong and vital, notwithstanding the loss of its patron god.

Because Eastgate and Green Ridge were then, as they are now, the most sparsely populated districts with the largest tracts of undeveloped land, the city put its Festival of Wonders there. Officials paid farmers to turn their fields into green lawns for a season, ordered the city's parks to be strung with suspended bridges and shimmering mazes of lights to connect them, and invited Absalom's inventors and engineers to reconfigure a swath of the area into the Wondervale. They erected replicas of Nexian wizard-palaces and Vudrani water gardens, Tian-Dan pagodas and Dehrukani crystal shrines. The Festival ran for months and was a smashing success, attracting crowds from throughout the Inner Sea and beyond. Any doubts about Absalom's vibrancy were assuaged, and the city's wealth and status were assured.

Most of its structures were dismantled after the Festival, and the farms were returned to their owners' use. Part of the fairgrounds was preserved, however, and over time wild greenery grew up around the structures to grant the gilded palaces and crystalline spires a surreal, half-ruined air. Foreign plants broke free from their pots and spread across the grounds. Various pets, escaping from Eastgate's careless owners and animal dealers, colonized the makeshift wilds.

Today the Wondervale is a marvelous, bewildering, slightly frightening jumble of semi-maintained architectural follies from across the world, visions of the future as imagined by thinkers over a century ago, and plants and animals that have developed a unique ecosystem around this peculiar landscape. Young lovers often walk through the Wondervale to enjoy its fanciful scenery, as do tinkers, poets, inventors, Brigh's faithful, and anyone else seeking inspiration through juxtapositions of unexpected elements. Some say that the ghosts of foreigners who died far from home are drawn to familiar designs and structures that are unique within Absalom.

Certainly, some of the abandoned buildings continue to astound, particularly the floating towers meant to evoke the wonder of similar airborne structures found to the south on the isle of Jalmeray. Today these towers have become the home of immense flocks of bats that swarm out at dusk, resulting in the colorful name of the "Vampire Towers" among the locals.

NPCs Bagwell Thomkin and Ilrava Drogand (chatting while flying kites); Camani Jensen (testing a new clockwork); Lord Darin and Lady Kiya (young lovers out on a stroll); Rosvierre Ibanc (working on a new poem); Haligander, Hans the Northman, and Jembar Dustyshankle (meeting in secret, under cover of darkness, muttering to one another in Aklo, each with his eyes rolled back and witless of ever having come here)

CRIME REPORT

The Post Guard keeps a constant if casual patrol in the sleepy district, with many officers priding themselves for their close connection to the community. Vandalism, particularly at the hands of the Brattlebunch, is a growing concern in the Green Ridge neighborhood. Criminal groups active in the district include the Bloody Barbers, the Brattlebunch, and the Forthright.

FOREIGN QUARTER

District Council Foreign Quarter Council
Headquarters Foreign Quarter Council Hall
Nomarch Torman Iates
District Watch Sleepless Suns
Headquarters The Utterhome
Captain of the Watch Shristi Melipdra
Key NPCs Lord Ganfen of House Kethlin (master of blades at the Irorium, member of the district council); Atrandi Goldheart (popular gladiator); Lord Omrys of House Ahnkamen (member of the district council, district seat on the Low Council); Ysia Iron-Palm (high priestess of Irori)
Services foreign restaurants and clothing boutiques; lodging (1 to 5 sp per night); vendors selling exotic foods, spices, and culturally specific paraphernalia for secular rituals commemorating births, weddings, funerals, and coming-of-age ceremonies

Famous as "the only place on Golarion where you can teleport across the world by walking a city block," Absalom's Foreign Quarter is a rich, diverse, and occasionally chaotic patchwork of immigrant communities pushed together by the city's longstanding practice of taxing foreigners exorbitantly to live in any district except this one. Merchants in Absalom are also permitted to demand higher prices from non-citizens for all manner of goods and services. These restrictions are lifted in the Foreign Quarter. As a result, while wealthy individuals may be able to afford houses in Westgate or the Ivy District, communities of people driven from their homelands by instability or persecution have been able to congregate primarily in the Foreign Quarter. Here, they thrive, and have collectively created one of the most vibrant and colorful parts of the city.

The mosaic of the Foreign Quarter encompasses both large and small communities. Entire blocks of the district appear to have been lifted from other lands, with buildings of distinctly Chelaxian or Osirian character filled with expatriates and their descendants. Qadiran bells sing the Dawnflower's praises from high minarets, just as they would in golden, glorious Katheer. Every night, the children of drowned Lirgen gather in their star-marked squares and raise verdigris-ridden long-glasses to the constellations in hopes of finding the secret to unraveling the Eye of Abendego, as they have for over a century without success.

Smaller immigrant groups are less prominent in the city, but no less present. Some, too proud to be ignored even if their numbers are insufficient to claim whole blocks, maintain individual manors or communal halls in the architecture of their birthlands. Others—such as the scattered Razmiran refugees who have fled the Living God's rule over the past few decades—prefer to live unobtrusively in the shadows of other settlements, where they are more likely to escape persecutors from their homelands.

Sometimes these communities become more closely knit as a result of their tight proximity, as with the reclusive Nidalese, who gather in silent recognition of their shared survivors' scars. In other instances, however, the closeness of a small community can have the opposite effect, as with the varied folk of the snowy northlands, who congregate in boisterous mead halls to toast the Linnorm Kings and Mammoth Lords, but find it difficult to break free from age-old blood feuds when one's sworn enemy is always seated just one table away.

Not every power in the Foreign Quarter is tied to a specific land. Gnomes are drawn toward the clattering, colorful chaos, irrespective of where they were born. Goblins tend to flock around the Five-Fire Pavilions, although not all are delighted by what they find there. And, perhaps most famously of all, the Pathfinder Society has maintained its Grand Lodge in Absalom for over four centuries, welcoming all seekers under its roof.

DISTRICT SUMMARY

The opportunities of Absalom draw residents from across the world. The Foreign Quarter's largest enclaves comprise immigrants from Cheliax, Osirion, Andoran, Taldor, Qadira, and even Vudra. Other Absalomians frequent this district to attend rousing events at the Irorium, to train at one of the many dojos or fighting schools in the area, or to request assistance or information from Pathfinders stationed at the towering Grand Lodge of the Pathfinder Society.

FOREIGN QUARTER
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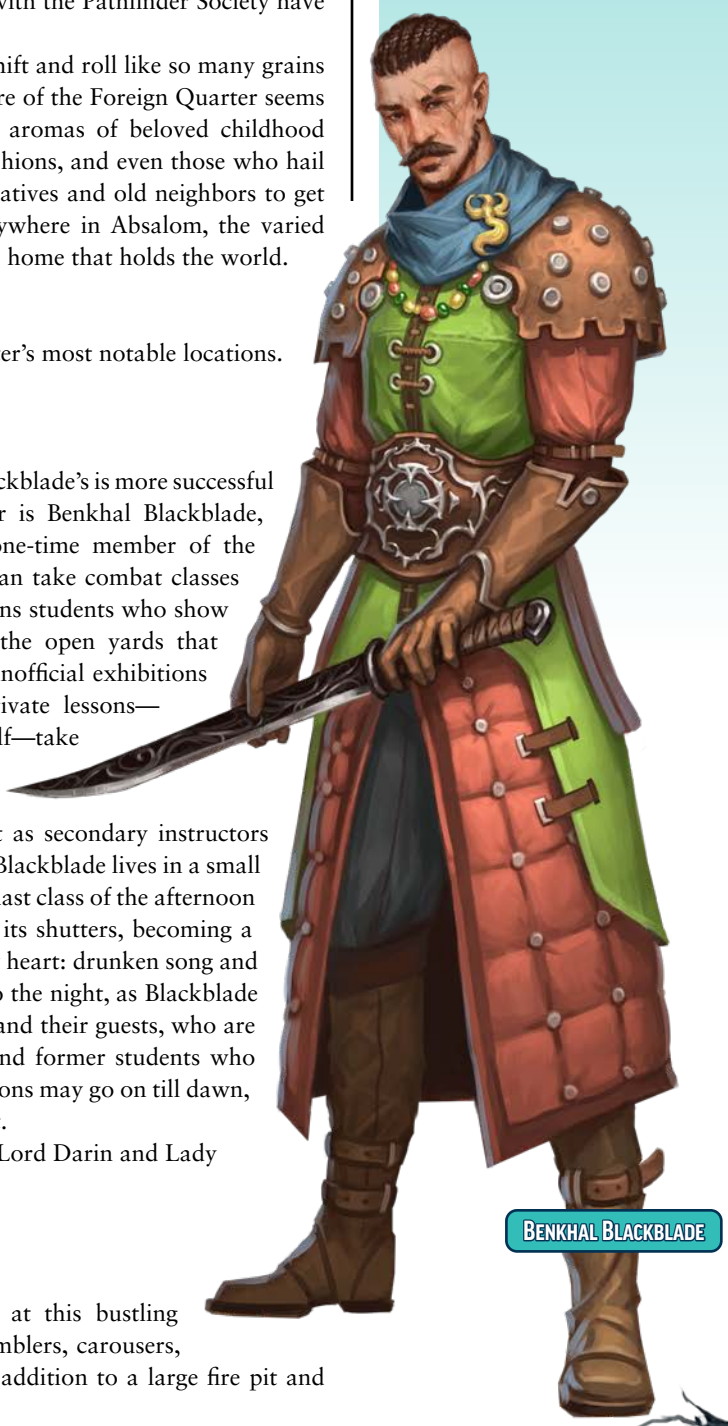
The Grand Lodge's seven stone fortresses, crowned by the great towers of Skyreach, dominate the district's skyline. Pathfinder agents, envoys, and explorers hail from every corner of the map, and Absalom has always been happy to celebrate their deeds as reflective of the city's own glory.

Yet burnished legends are built on bloody realities, and not everyone in Absalom is equally enamored of the Pathfinders. The Peacebuilders' Alliance is a community organization that has risen up in response to the carnage and devastation that the Pathfinders' enemies have visited upon the innocent civilians of Absalom in the past few years. Although rumors of nefarious masterminds manipulating the Peacebuilders persist—some seeded by the Pathfinders themselves—the truth is simpler and crueler: the Pathfinder Society does inflict collateral damage, and enough ordinary people have gotten hurt that they've decided to put a stop to it. What will become of this conflict remains to be seen, but the Peacebuilders have garnered considerable support in a short period, and their clashes with the Pathfinder Society have intensified rapidly in recent days.

Still, though the details of its population shift and roll like so many grains of sand pushed by the tides of time, the nature of the Foreign Quarter seems eternal. Its markets are perfumed with the aromas of beloved childhood foods, the streets are bright with colorful fashions, and even those who hail from small villages can often find distant relatives and old neighbors to get the latest local gossip. Here, more than anywhere in Absalom, the varied peoples of Golarion come together to build a home that holds the world.

ABSALOM IMMIGRANTS

The character of the Foreign Quarter is shaped in large part by its major immigrant populations, which have shifted and developed over time. Absalom's biggest enclaves are those which draw from the most populous nations of the Inner Sea; its next-largest communities are those settled by refugees fleeing disasters that destroyed entire nations.



Benkhal Blackblade

DISTRICT LOCATIONS

The following are some of the Foreign Quarter's most notable locations.

99 Blackblade's

ACADEMY | GARRISON

One of many fighting schools in Absalom, Blackblade's is more successful than most. The owner and head instructor is Benkhal Blackblade, a renowned swordsman, mercenary, and one-time member of the Pathfinder Society. For five silver, students can take combat classes twice a week, and Blackblade personally trains students who show special promise. Most classes are held in the open yards that surround the building, where they serve as unofficial exhibitions and advertisements for the school, but private lessons—including those taught by Blackblade himself—take place inside, away from prying eyes.

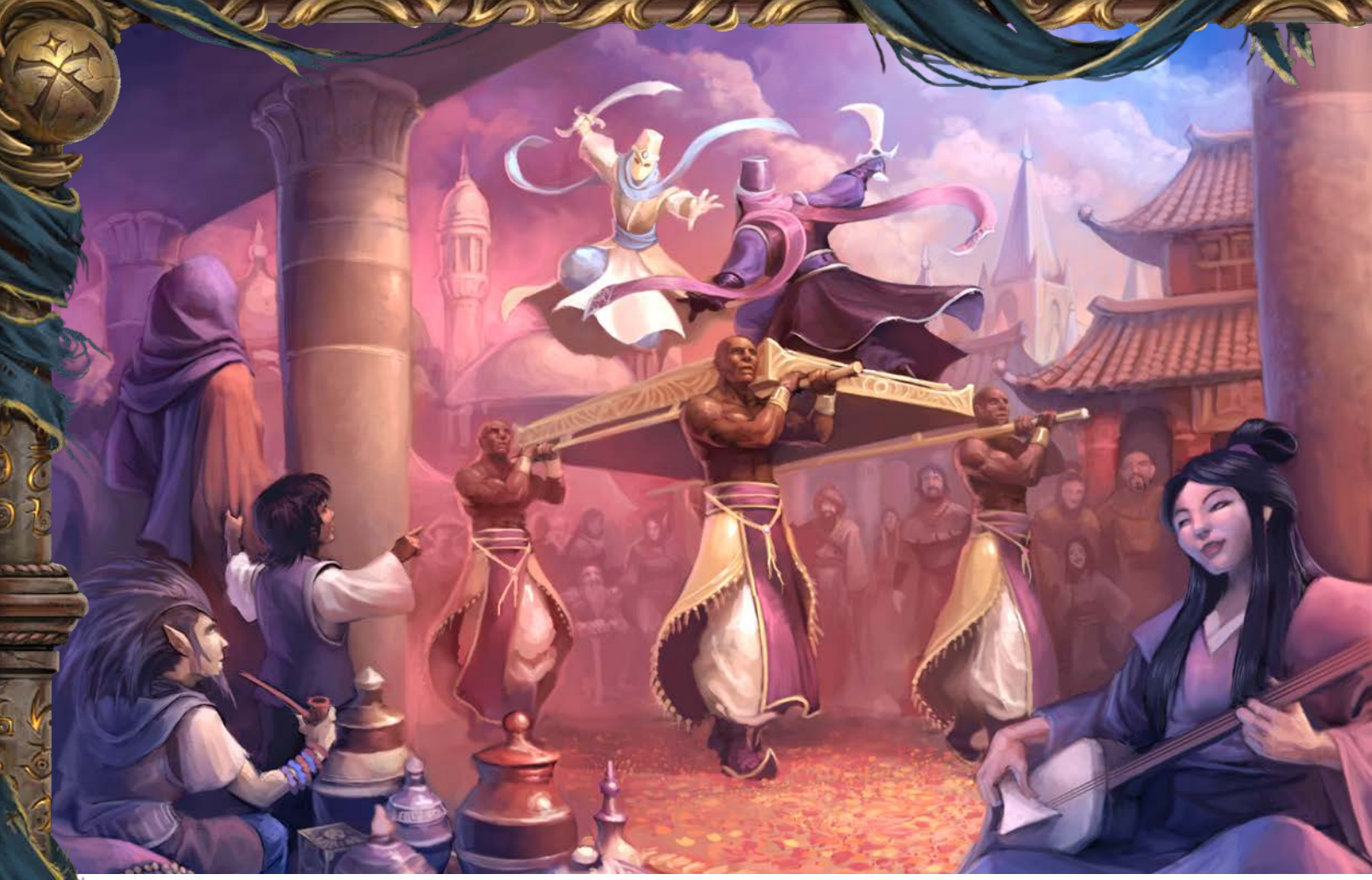
Most students do not live on the premises. However, senior students who act as secondary instructors are given room and board at the school, and Blackblade lives in a small cell on the premises as well. Every day, as the last class of the afternoon ends, the building shuts its doors and locks its shutters, becoming a small fortress. Yet it is a fortress with a merry heart: drunken song and cheerful laughter can often be heard late into the night, as Blackblade and his senior students entertain each other and their guests, who are rumored to include renowned Pathfinders and former students who have gone on to glory. Though these celebrations may go on till dawn, Blackblade never seems to show any ill effect.

NPCs Benkhal Blackblade (instructor); Lord Darin and Lady Kiya (students)

100 The Crimson Coin

TAVERN

Barefisted brawling is the main attraction at this bustling two-story tavern, which is popular with gamblers, carousers, gladiators, and their raucous supporters. In addition to a large fire pit and



STRANGE PARADE

A procession of chanting worshippers in heavy, old-fashioned robes of gold brocade moves through the streets, ringing bells and scattering flower petals to honor the Dawnflower. At the head of the parade is a gilt platform carried by bare-chested devotees. Upon the precariously balanced platform, two scimitar dervishes, one masked as Night and the other as Day, whirl and clash in a ritualized duel that attracts an awed crowd.

long serving bar, the establishment features a deep earthen pit—roped off at the top to prevent drunkards from falling in—where anyone willing to put up a silver coin can try to last 60 seconds against the house champion in a bare-fisted brawl. Young female warriors, especially, come to the Coin to make their names, since the owner, Torman Iates, is always looking for new recruits to add to his all-female gladiatorial teams.

The Crimson Coin is also the only place outside the Irorium where gambling on arena matches is legal. This is due largely to the fact that Torman Iates is not only the Crimson Coin's proprietor, but nomarch of the local district council.

NPCs Gasporian (bookie); Torman Iates (proprietor); Undrul Vosh (house champion)

101 Devils' Garden

NEIGHBORHOOD

This Chelaxian enclave—once known as the Chelish Garden—has long been among the Foreign Quarter's most prominent neighborhoods, and it has only grown during the decades of House Thrune's reign. Exiled nobles and refugees from the Chelaxian Civil War flocked to Absalom to escape persecution, though any significant opposition figures were swiftly and ruthlessly eliminated by Thrune loyalists, who maintained a heavy presence in Absalom due to its importance as a trade center. This spate of assassinations attracted some official condemnation, but Imperial Cheliax's mercantile and military power prevented matters from escalating beyond a few sharply worded messages delivered to their embassy.

Today, House Thrune's influence clearly predominates over the neighborhood, though expatriate nobles still maintain greater wealth and influence in Absalom than they would be permitted in Cheliax. So long as they do not overtly challenge the throne, Thrune agents leave them be. This carefully observed detente permits both loyalists and dissenters to enjoy a

degree of Chelaxian comforts and luxuries in the Foreign Quarter. Here, exiles, and even homesick citizens of quietly loathed Ravounel, can enjoy touring operas, taste the year's finest wines, and buy the ingredients for beloved childhood foods from the imperial homeland they dare not visit.

NPCs Damian Blakros (chatting with a squad of Hellknights); Ilarra (chasing stories of distant Cheliax); Lord Navvem (agitating on a street corner about the corruption of the High Council and its unfair enmity toward industrious Chelaxians); Vanius Cestanian (resident); Vita Aulamaxa (enduring angry stares as she enjoys a favorite home-country street food); Zelva and Gurd (living it up after a successful Gylou Sisters crime)

102 Embassy of New Thassilon

MUNICIPAL SHRINE

The true implications of the rise of New Thassilon along the northern border of Varisia are still playing out, with two very different but very powerful wizards vying for control of the nation. Yet even though Runelord Belimarius and Queen Sorshen are on the brink of a civil war, one of the few things both agreed upon was the importance of maintaining a presence at the so-called City at the Center of the World. Even as the two wizards fought over the shared borders of their respective nations of Edasseril and Eurythnia, their agents worked together with unexpected levels of cooperation to establish this embassy—at least, for the first year, during which their efforts, along with those of several powerful spellcasters and allied stone giant artisans, transformed what was once a ho-hum manor into the resplendent edifice it is today.

The embassy itself consists of three sections. The central dome is known also as the Sihedron Hall for the immense seven-pointed star design inlaid into its central chamber, and is the only part of the structure open to the public. Here, agents of New Thassilon do their best to answer questions without revealing secrets, with the majority of their work focusing on helping to assuage fears of runelord-related mayhem being increasingly sabotaged by growing discord among the staff inhabiting the east and west wings of the embassy. To the west lies the Edasserilian Wing, where agents of Runelord Belimarius constantly toil to adjust the artistry and architecture of the wing to match and then exceed the wonders of many nearby building facades, as directed by ambassador Firandivar, a man who claims to be one of Belimarius's grandchildren. To the east stands the Eurythnian Wing, which is paradoxically more humble and more impressive than its envious counterpart across the Sihedron Hall. Led by none other than a less-powerful simulacrum of Sorshen herself who goes today by the name Ayandai, the agents here maintain a small shrine to the goddess Nocticula, and are more concerned with working to soften New Thassilon's reputation while simultaneously (according to well-documented rumors) helping artists persecuted by Absalom's power-players find shelter, support, or potentially escape to more tolerant homelands. While neither Belimarius nor Sorshen have made public visits to the embassy yet, most believe that hidden portals to those nations lie within the embassy, and worry if these speculative gateways might pose a potential threat of invasion by agents of some of the Inner Sea's most powerful wizards.

NPCs Ayandai (Eurythnian ambassador); Eudom Mansarian (Korvosan trade envoy); Firandivar (Edasserilian ambassador); Guaril Karela (meeting with Ayandai); Verimachius the Architect (meeting with the ambassadors)

103 Five-Fire Pavilions

MARKET VENUE

Smoke and the stench of smoldering metal surround the Five-Fire Pavilions, a ramshackle collection of metal-roofed shacks, rusting and soot-smeared artworks, and fire pits that serves as the Foreign Quarter's closest equivalent to a goblin embassy. The Pavilions' founder, the goblin trader and explorer Skirma Toadlicker, originally hoped that her settlement would both serve as

RUNELORD WORRIES

Recent events in Varisia, including the culmination of those that resulted in the establishment of New Thassilon itself, were the result of the ancient rulers of Thassilon, the Runelords, rising and attempting to reclaim their lands. While one of the two surviving runelords has abandoned both that title and her previous cruelty, the other has not. Many worry that a new danger to Absalom is building within the walls of the Embassy of New Thassilon, despite the work those who dwell within have done to foster good will with the city. Persistent rumors claim that the physical remains of at least one defeated runelord now lie in state within the embassy, or that a new *runewell* has been built below the building to serve as a source of power to aid the runelords in an upcoming attempt to claim Absalom as their own.

SORE LOSER

A heavily muscled man in his early twenties, with close-cropped hair and the slashed armband of a defeated Irorium fighter, sits morosely outside a tavern with a battered bottle in one hand. Drunker and angrier with each swig, he challenges passersby with increasing belligerence, demanding "What are you looking at? Think I'm a loser? She cheated, you just–you try telling me that wasn't cheating. You want a fight? You?" It's obvious that unless someone intercedes, the young man is liable to start throwing punches instead of insults soon.

The disgruntled youth is Bronton Guile, wayward son of a prominent Eastgate family, on his fourth bounce in the direction of rock bottom. His embarrassed parents reach out to anyone who humiliates him in defeat without hurting him too badly, offering to pay them a modest fee to befriend the quarrelsome lout–a task far more arduous than simply defeating him in combat.

a safe refuge for the rapidly increasing goblin kind in Absalom, and that it would demonstrate to the rest of Golarion that goblins were ready to be considered among the world's civilized peoples.

Skirma's hopes have been partially met. The Five-Fire Pavilions are, indeed, popular among goblins, hobgoblins, and others who might not be welcomed at human-run establishments. The Pavilions often host goblin artworks, delicacies, and their less violent and combustible celebrations, which draw a number of curious gawkers. Not all her efforts at broadening cross-cultural understandings have been successful, however. In particular, visiting goblins often fail to understand that Absalom's pet owners are generally just walking their dogs through the area, and are not, in fact, offering raw meat for sale.

Confusion and disagreements often flare up even between the goblins themselves, for although most goblins may look the same to human eyes, vast differences exist between them. More friendly goblins may be horrified at the casual cruelty and screeching chaos of their less reformed kin, while wilder goblins may be baffled by why a fully assimilated Molthuni hobgoblin would choose to "act like a horse-hugger." Tribal enmities add further complications, as do rivalries and misunderstandings between the various types of goblin kind.

Nevertheless, Skirma's vision, however imperfectly realized, continues to stand in all its smoking, clattering, dog-killing glory as a beacon of semi-frightening hope for the future.

NPCs Anceltan Berryhock (First Guard sergeant); Chugmuzz the Surly (visitor); Kurgatosh (preparing Oprakian street food under the watchful eye of armed guards); Skirma Toadlicker (proprietor); Tall Hannah (pickpocket)

104 The Flying Alderman

HOUSING

This modest but comfortable inn just across the border from the Dock District is a semi-secret safehouse for Pathfinder agents who need to lie low for a while, or who are running clandestine operations in the city. The innkeeper, Drock Ovix, a paunchy half-orc with walrus-like features, is a secret agent of the Pathfinder Society, and might flash the Glyph of the Open Road at those he is certain of being fellow members. A magical secret door in the cellar grants access to a series of undercity tunnels the Pathfinders call Walrus's Way. These passages connect to the lowest level of the Grand Lodge, and the Pathfinders keep their existence a closely guarded secret.

Pathfinder agents may stay here up to three nights free of charge. All others must pay 2 sp for dinner, a bed for the night, and breakfast the next day.

NPCs Drock Ovix (innkeeper); Eras the Needle (visiting sea captain eager for an unfamiliar bed)

105 Grand Lodge

ACADEMY | ARCHIVE | EMPLOYER | GARRISON | LODGE | MONUMENT | PARLOR | WORKSHOP

The historical and administrative heart of the Pathfinder Society is the Grand Lodge, a sprawling stronghold that encompasses seven sturdy stone fortresses, the largest of which is the soaring, five-towered white palace of Skyreach. All seven fortresses and their extensive grounds are ringed by a tall stone wall and are accessible only by a single massive gate decorated with the Glyph of the Open Road. This gate almost never closes, as Pathfinder agents stumble and stride through its doors at all hours.

Most Pathfinder Society business is conducted in Skyreach, and its greatest conclaves are held in the Great Hall, where an eclectic assemblage of captain's chairs, divans, cushions, rugs, and hammocks spreads out around the Atlas Tableaux, a 20-foot square table that holds a detailed illusory map of the Inner Sea and its surrounding lands. As new information about regions is sent in by venture-captains, the map is updated to match. Above it, the ceiling is also clad in illusion, showing the sky above Absalom as if it were night, with astrological markers indicating the locations of constellations and celestial

bodies. The Society' Decemvirate leaders can dismiss the illusion with a word, revealing an intricate skylight that admits natural light, but the Great Hall is usually sheathed in false twilight and illumined by enchanted wall sconces and table lamps.

The overall appearance of both Skyreach's Great Hall and the entire Grand Lodge itself is chaotic in the extreme, mirroring the inclinations of the Pathfinders who built it. The Pathfinder Society accepts members of any morality, age, ancestry, or creed, so long as they do not violate the Society's ethos. If an initiate makes it through training and passes the challenge of Confirmation, or a truly exceptional individual warrants the rare honor of a field commission, that person becomes a Pathfinder. Accordingly, venture-captains and their operatives often come into conflict with one another, sometimes as friendly rivals competing for the same prize, but occasionally as real enemies divided by bitterer and more profound conflicts. Not all Pathfinders are heroes, and not all of them want to be.

Not all of them are strong supporters of Absalom, either. While the Pathfinder Society has a venerable history in the city, and its members are widely recognized by their *wayfinders*, Pathfinders do not command the level of admiration that one might expect given the Society's stature in Absalom and the achievements of many of its members. Most people are more likely to look to the district guards for help, or to widely respected faiths such as Abadar's or Iomedae's, before they would think of turning to the Pathfinder Society. This is, in large part, because the Decemvirate and the Grand Lodge's guards try to eschew district politics, which can be perceived by local citizens as apathy or even outright malice, as the Pathfinders tend to get wrapped up in political events despite their best efforts. Worse yet, the Society is powerful enough that few institutions could ever hope to challenge them. This, plus the fact that bad actors have sometimes manipulated the Society to cause harm, has created a public perception that the Pathfinders consider themselves above the law not only abroad, but in Absalom too.

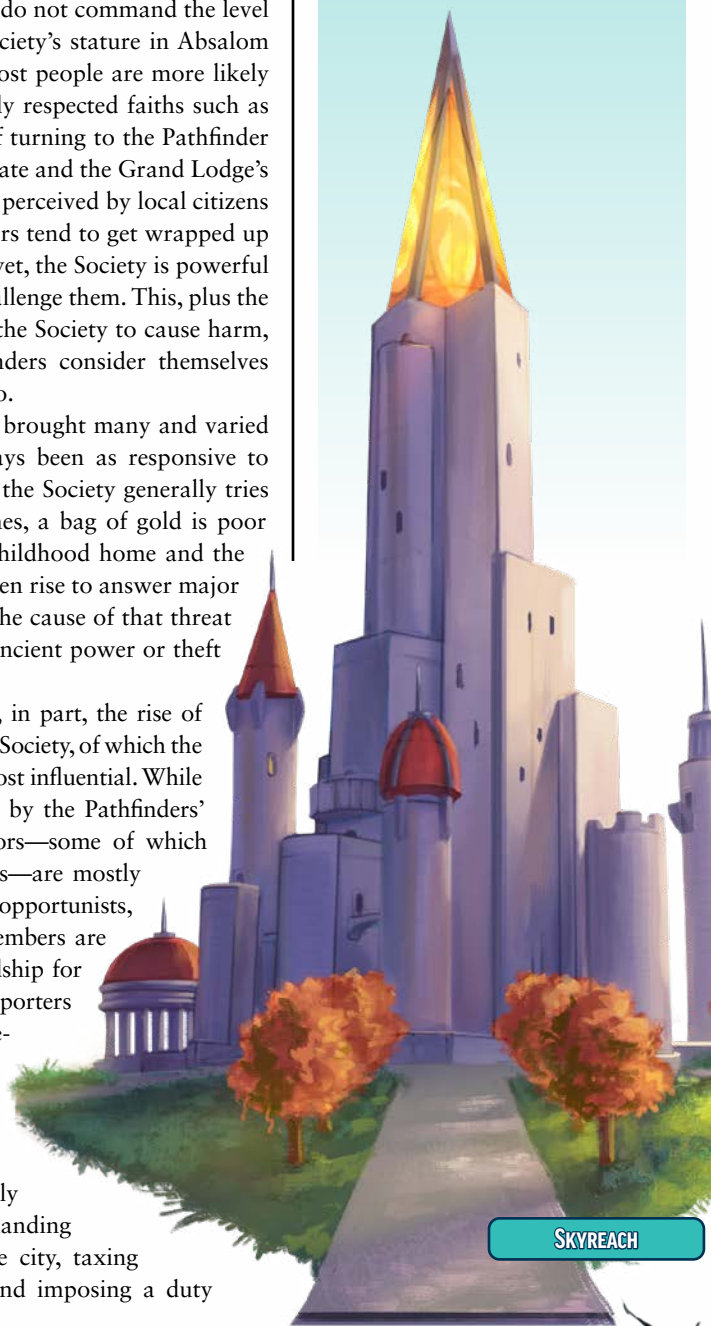
Thus, over the years, the Pathfinder Society has brought many and varied disasters onto their neighbors, and has not always been as responsive to Absalom's needs as its citizens might hope. While the Society generally tries to make amends for the most obvious catastrophes, a bag of gold is poor payment for the loss of a leg, a friend, or one's childhood home and the beloved pets inside. And, while the Society does often rise to answer major threats to the city, this is small consolation when the cause of that threat was some Pathfinder's unwise provocation of an ancient power or theft of an ill-understood artifact.

The result of these unfortunate events has been, in part, the rise of community organizations opposed to the Pathfinder Society, of which the Peacebuilders' Alliance is the fastest-growing and most influential. While rumors persist that the Peacebuilders are financed by the Pathfinders' rivals, such as the Aspis Consortium, these rumors—some of which are propagandized by Pathfinder agents themselves—are mostly untrue. A few of the Peacebuilders are cynical opportunists, and some are indeed paid operatives, but most members are local citizens who have seen or suffered some hardship for which they blame the Pathfinders. Indeed, their supporters reportedly include Lord Omrys Ahnkamen, a one-time defender of the Pathfinder Society who now believes the Society is too much of a trouble magnet to tolerate within Absalom's walls.

For now, the disputes have been controlled. The Peacebuilders, true to their name, have mostly sought to enhance community safety by demanding closer oversight of Pathfinder activity within the city, taxing its endeavors to finance a compensation fund, and imposing a duty

ONE TOO MANY

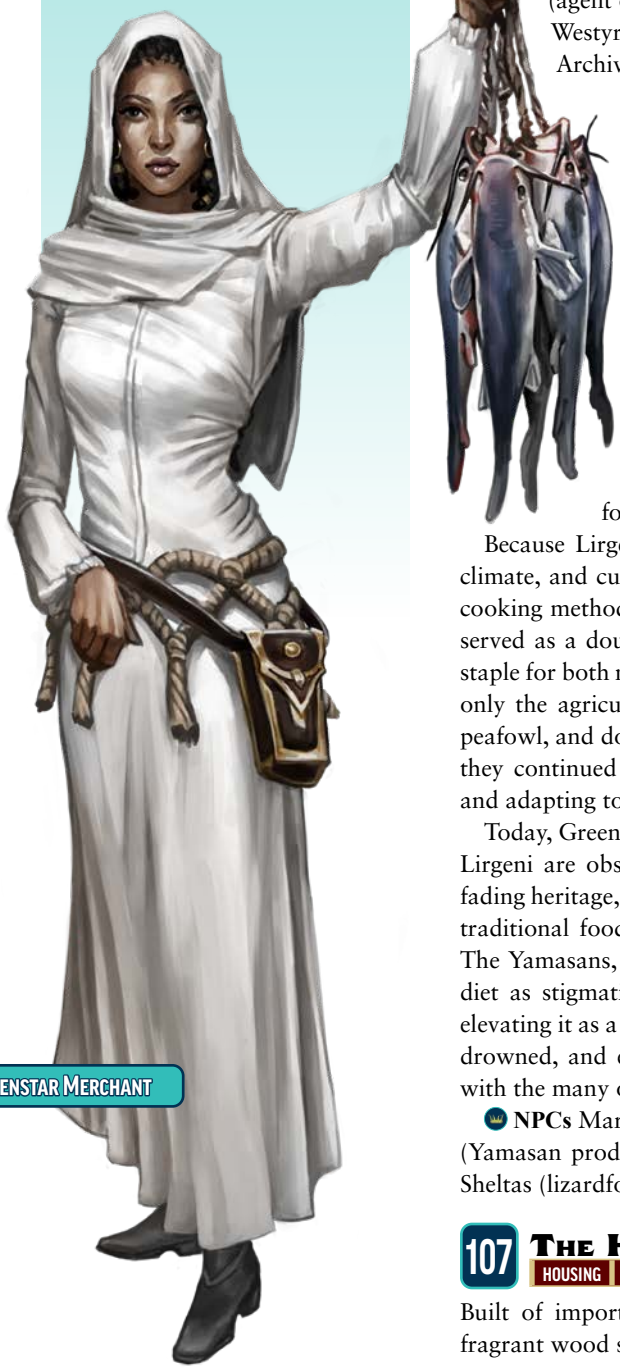
A half-elven woman wearing a cloak embroidered with the silver anchor and raven of a Ravounel merchant house staggers out of a tavern, apparently too drunk to stand. Closer inspection shows that her nostrils are crusted with purplish powder, her breathing is hoarse, and her pupils are shrunken. The woman, Terren Kyne, is staying in the Lion's Square, and anyone who helps her receives an invitation to meet her there for a thank-you breakfast with her close friend, Ambassador Vita Aulamaxa.



Skyreach

THE GRAND CONVOCATION

Every year in the month of Arodus, the Grand Lodge is the site of an enormous event known as the Grand Convocation. Pathfinder agents from all over the world convene on Absalom to exchange tales of their exploits, take part in feats of strength and guile, or be recruited for special missions by the Society's leadership.



Greenstar Merchant

on the Society to disclose, mitigate, and provide restitution for any harms they might bring to Absalom. The Pathfinder Society, however, has resisted these demands. While apologizing for past harms and claiming to respect the citizenry's needs, the Society has also argued that the Peacebuilders' restrictions are unreasonably onerous and might endanger its agents. In light of the Pathfinders' persistent suspicions that the Aspis Consortium and other enemies have infiltrated the Peacebuilders, these arguments may not be unfounded—and may prove impossible to resolve peacefully.

NPCs Ambrus Valsin (steward); Drandle Dreng (venture-captain); Drock Ovix (agent); Eliza Petulengro (member of the Decemvirate); Eras the Needle (captain of the *Grinning Pixie*); Fola Barun (greeting members of the Envoy's Alliance); Lord Haimon (retired agent); Hasjald (observant groundskeeper); J Dacilane (agent); Janira Gavix (head initiate); Kreighton Shaine (Master of Scrolls); Marcos Farabellus (Master of Swords); Nestor Rees (antiquities appraiser); Nigel Aldain (visiting ally); Osprey (agent of the Decemvirate); Shevala Iorae (venture-captain); Sorinna Westyr (Master of Spells); Zarta Dralneen (Mistress of the Dark Archive); Yargos Gill (visiting scholar)

106 Greenstar Market

MARKET

Located near Little Lirgen and Yemhasin is an open-air market specializing in the produce, meats, and heritage foods shared by Lirgen and Yamasa. Lizardfolk also frequent the market, which carries an unparalleled selection of salted and fermented fish from the Sodden Lands, as well as live specimens transported in water barrels.

For decades, most vendors have been Yamasans selling homegrown produce and meals, and most buyers have been Lirgeni who, due to their easier assimilation, have long had more money to spend. Thus, the market has become a mirror for the ambivalent relations between the two groups.

Because Lirgen and Yamasa were neighboring nations with similar soil, climate, and cultivars, their people ate many of the same foods. Spices and cooking methods were similar, and the pounded root starch called mamasu, served as a doughy base for heavily spiced fish and vegetable stews, was a staple for both nations. When their people fled the Eye of Abendego, however, only the agricultural Yamasans thought to bring mamasu plants, speckled peafowl, and domesticated catfish with them. When they settled in Absalom, they continued their farming traditions, while also adding native cultivars and adapting to local conditions.

Today, Greenstar's heritage foods are a complicated link to the past. Many Lirgeni are obsessed with trying to cultivate "authentic" connections to a fading heritage, even though a few short generations ago, they disdained these traditional foods as belonging to the backwater, un-assimilated Yamasans. The Yamasans, meanwhile, are divided between eschewing their traditional diet as stigmatized poverty food that they ate during their refugee years, elevating it as a symbol of true Yamasan identity before their beloved country drowned, and experimenting with modern fusions of their own traditions with the many others in Absalom.

NPCs Market Master Annavi (produce merchant on a restock); Kamata (Yamasan produce grocer); Sammael Rantore (shopping for rare produce); Sheltas (lizardfolk shopper); Urongu (Lirgeni food cart operator)

107 The House of Shade and Grace

HOUSING RESTAURANT VENUE

Built of imported, sunbaked desert brick with ornately carved panels of fragrant wood screening its open windows, this storied inn and performance

hall is the center of the Foreign Quarter's Thuvian community. Here, Thuvian visitors and expatriates can enjoy the familiar comforts of floral, intensely concentrated teas, share sweet-scented tobacco smoked in sinuous pipes, and gather around communal dishes of spiced goat and curried chickpeas served over platters of onion-flecked rice. The occasional clockwork masterpiece sometimes shows up among the inn's decorations, usually due to either the direct or inadvertent actions of Lord Yamthar of House Ormuz.

NPCs Alina and Chani Muraabe (patrons); Ilarra (sampling the international cuisine with gusto); Jossie Slimfin (junk merchant); Lord Urkon (patron); Lord Yamthar (infrequently appearing patron and benefactor); Yeena Quoros (eyeing Lord Yamthar suspiciously)

108 The Irorium

ATTRACTION | GARRISON | TEMPLE | VENUE

This vast arena, the largest in the known world, began as a grass-ringed practice ground on a hilltop where Irori's faithful would test their skills against one another. These matches, which showcased masters of wondrous skills, soon became popular with spectators. Thus, thousands of years ago during the decadent period now known as the Age of Excess, the primarch of Absalom ordered that an arena be built to enclose the site—and to allow the government to collect ticket revenues.

Today, the Irorium is a vast complex of vaulted chambers, training grounds, holding pens for wild beasts and terrible monsters, and rings upon rings of spectators' benches shaded by immense swathes of fabric hung from wooden spars. The central arena encompasses ten acres, all of it surrounded by 200-foot-tall outer walls adorned with 33 enormous statues of famous former champions. Although some of the statues were cracked by the earthquake of 4698 AR, local sentiment has largely embraced these "battle scars." Some fanciful onlookers even claim that the cracks appeared where the historical gladiators had real scars, proving that the champions' spirits still linger within their likenesses.

In vast vaulted chambers below the gladiatorial holding pens, the faithful of the Master of Masters still train, ignoring the far-off roar of crowds cheering some bloody blow in fights staged not for self-improvement, but for coin. The priests of Irori have discovered that if travelers and gawkers believe the barefisted warriors of the public games are the best the faith of Irori have to offer, they no longer seek out the "secret" training grounds where true perfection is sought.

The current Master of Blades, Ganfen of House Kethlin, is careful but relentless about using his position to maximize his personal gain. Ganfen uses the arena's lower levels to hold prisoners for wealthy houses in Absalom, in clear violation of local law. He is widely suspected of skimming off bets, fixing fights, and manipulating schedules and matches to favor loyal gladiators or punish those who offend him. Indeed, would-be informers have a mysterious tendency to die suddenly in the ring—but a gladiator's life is risky. Not all matches are meant to be lethal, but the threat is ever-present. Death lurks constantly above the Irorium, exciting spectators with its shadow, and few can claim to be surprised when it descends into the rings.

Repeatedly victorious champions are awarded sword-shaped pins of rank that confer substantial social status in Absalom. Gladiators who have won five matches receive bronze sword pins, those who win ten bouts receive silver swords, and those who manage to prevail in twenty-five matches—including a difficult gauntlet of solo duels, group melees, and fights against monsters—are awarded the considerable honor of a gold

Gladiators

Arena champions rank among the city's best-respected celebrities, and some ambitious warriors see it as their best route to fame and perhaps even nobility, albeit an extremely deadly one. In addition to the grand Irorium, gladiators in Absalom have countless potential venues at which to seek glory, including the Gorumarrux and fighting rings associated with taverns like the Crimson Coin.

Rubeis

RESPECTABILITY POLITICS

Three goblins sit in a circle, debating the most efficacious method of extinguishing a hypothetical friend who has caught on fire from alchemical pyrotechnics. Suddenly the conversation turns violent, as one goblin shrieks "NO! Sandbags NOT the answer! I sandbag you! In the face!" and leaps upon her neighbor, biting furiously at the other goblin's ear. The third goblin giggles and claps his hands gleefully, then looks around and realizes, with visible dismay, that humans are watching and judging this interaction. Pasting on a deeply concerned face, the uninvolved goblin calls: "Help! Help! Fighting is happening! Fighting is bad! Someone come make them a peace!" Reconciling the argumentative goblins without harming them spreads word of the PCs' compassion throughout Absalom's goblin community, leading to an invitation to the court of Goblin King Zusgut, the Five-Fires Pavilions, or to one of the nightly misfit soirees aboard the *Black Revenge*, the ship of Captain Chugmuzz the Surly.

sword. Such skilled and courageous champions are extremely rare and are renowned throughout the city. A gold sword can expect awed deference from commoners, flattery and favors from merchants, and the full respect of the upper crust.

The names of all pin owners are recorded by the Irorium, and stone busts of those honored by gold swords are displayed around the arena. Accordingly, it is highly unusual for someone to fraudulently claim to own a sword pin of any rank, as such lies are easily exposed and likely to attract the ire of true pin owners, who are by definition a dangerous lot. Nevertheless, calling someone a "platinum sword" is a common insult, since no such rank actually exists, and the implication is that the target is a braggart who falsifies, or at least greatly exaggerates, their accomplishments.

NPCs Atrandi Goldheart, Khoskhadi Ever-Silver, Rubeis, and Lord Yuvin (gladiators); Eivlind and Jacques Albers (tourists enjoying a bit of bloodsport); Lord Ganfen (master of blades); Lord Lerefys (lecturer and host of naval displays); Lord Omrys (box seat patron); Torman Iates (gladiator sponsor); Ysia Iron-Palm (training followers of Irori in the temple understructure)

109 Lions' Square

NEIGHBORHOOD

Oldest and grandest of the Foreign Quarter's enclaves is the Lions' Square, which according to legend was founded by Taldans fleeing the rampages of the Tarrasque and has been renewed by waves of migration during each of Taldor's innumerable famines, religious and ethnic cleansings, and wars. Grand Prince Stavian I's Great Purge of Sarenrae's faith also spurred a wave of migration that left a deep imprint on the Lions' Square, and the recent War for the Crown has seen the arrival of more than a few disgruntled nobles. Although Sarenites are no longer disfavored in Taldor, the legacy of the Great Purge can still be felt in the fervent worship and religious artifacts that moved to Absalom to escape the Grand Prince's oppression. Sarenites living in the Lions' Square tend to be more pious and more inclined toward expansive, old-fashioned charity and grandiose philanthropic gestures than their counterparts in Taldor today.

NPCs Bronton Guile (resident); Eivlind and Jacques Albers (tourists visiting from Taldor); Eligir Kelm (publicly praising Sarenrae); Emral Xarcious (Taldan resident); Ilarra (listening for stories of distant Taldor)

110 Little Lirgen

NEIGHBORHOOD

Elaborate mosaics of white stars on night-blue skies cover the squares of Little Lirgen, founded by the survivors of that drowned nation when the Eye of Abendego destroyed their prophecy-dependent nation in the wake of Aroden's death. Originally, the settlement was envisioned as a temporary sanctuary from which the astrologer-philosophers of Lirgen would be able to foresee the hurricane's dissipation and return home. Year by year, however, as the stars remained meaningless, that hope grew dimmer. Today, the descendants of the original refugees are torn between honoring their ancestors' traditions and assimilating fully into modern Absalom. Although the copper-cased long-glasses that the trueborn Lirgeni used to scry the skies are unrivaled even by the finest masterpieces in the Clockwork Cathedral, the purpose to which they were originally put seems increasingly irrelevant to their grandchildren. The descendants of lost Lirgen believe that prophecy is dead, but the question of how to honor their heritage in its absence is raw and undecided. For now, most Lirgeni are content to observe the pageantry of their ancestors' practices, but few can ignore the gnawing hollowness that has consumed the heart of those rituals.

Little Lirgen is also a center of lizardfolk population in Absalom. Lizardfolk are fully integrated into the community, and several neighborhood inns offer

amenities such as live fish at meals, heated water baths to sleep in instead of human-style beds, and enchanted basking lights to augment inadequate sunlight in winter.

NPCs Kavati Kuro (Lirgeni astronomer); Sheltas (lizardfolk resident); Urongu (Lirgeni food cart operator)

111 School of the North Song-Wind

ACADEMY

Wide-canopied, gray-barked trees serve as the living pillars of this arcane school, a northern outpost of the famed Magaambya academy of Nantambu. The school's walls are made up of vast swaths of brightly colored cloth bound between the trees. Geometric figures inspired by the flora and fauna of the Mwangi Expanse are painted upon the cloth, and are further ornamented with hollow beads that glitter brilliantly as they catch the wind, singing in flutelike rows. Colored glass chimes hang over the entrances, symbolizing Nantambu's gifts of enlightenment.

Here, under the open air, visiting Magaambya masters work to spread Old-Mage Jatembe's teachings. Though their primary focus is on the magical arts, the School of the North Song-Wind also operates as an unofficial embassy, and it draws as many visitors interested in the mundane aspects of Magaambya philosophy and Nantambu's ways of life as it does arcane scholars. Leshys also flock to the school's grounds, which are deeply harmonized to nature magics and thus feel inherently welcoming and soothing to the creatures.

NPCs Chedra Rantore (student); Dorakotho (visiting master); Slithering Snare (relaxing leshy)

112 Seal of Kazutal

SHRINE

Named after the disc-like symbol of Mother Jaguar that graces the stone monument, this recent addition to the Foreign Quarter was built in honor

CRIME REPORT

Packed with indigents and strangers—many of them desperate—the crowded, often frantic Foreign Quarter provides enough muggings, burglaries, and trespasses to keep the local guard, the Sleepless Suns, extremely busy. With the fantastic beasts of the Irorium and the weird entanglements of the Pathfinder Society sometimes spilling out into the streets, members of the Sleepless Suns have the most exciting beat in the city—and perhaps the most dangerous. Criminal groups active in the district include the Bloody Barbers, the Forthright, the Puddlejumpers, and the Smoke Knights.

School of the North Song-Wind

BEASTLY BREW

Two ragged figures with black scarves wrapped around their lower faces crouch in an alley behind the Wounded Wisp, stuffing something into a barrel pressed against the bar's back wall. Alchemical smoke and popping noises hiss from the barrel as the figures finish their furtive movements and hurry away, leaving the barrels to steam by the bar. The criminals–Gylou Sisters thugs from the Devil's Garden, were paid to place the alchemical bomb by a powerful enemy of the Pathfinder Society. The only question is which one. Investigation easily turns up several likely suspects among the Aspis Consortium, Peacebuilders, Cult of Norgorber, Eaters of Knowledge, and so on.

of the Razalanti goddess of community, safety, and liberty. Visitors from Arcadia, drawn to Absalom by contact with Chelaxian colonists near the city of Segada, built this simple shrine before pressing further into the Inner Sea region to explore. While the founders of the shrine are no longer present to tend it, it still receives attention from freed Absalom slaves who see the Seal as a political rallying point—as Kazutal's unyielding anti-slavery stance proved attractive to those recently freed from bondage—and by those who cherish the vibrant communities of the Foreign Quarter and seek to strengthen them.

NPCs Milly Tundall (Free Union agent paying respects)

113 Tiantown

NEIGHBORHOOD

While the continent of Tian Xia has boasted many large and stable empires over 7,000 years of recorded history, this longevity can make political upheaval especially traumatic when it does occur. The neighborhood known as Tiantown was slowly built up by wave after wave of refugees from long dead kingdoms, with the most recent exodus provoked by the collapse of Imperial Lung Wa a century ago. While the name of Tiantown is an overly simplistic description, glossing over the many different ethnicities and cultures resident in the neighborhood, it is also not entirely incorrect—most Tian immigrants seek out the enclave on arrival, willing to trade the presence of hated rival societies in exchange for a shared Tian trade language and a measure of familiarity. The end result is a riotous melting pot of Tian and Absalomian culture, informed by the history of Tiantown and a complex web of often-vitriolic yet somehow cherished intercultural relationships. Tiantown is also known to contain a number of stranger residents, such as serpentine nagas, hobgoblin exiles from Kaoling, and bizarre goblins referred to as dokkaebi. Rumors of disguised imperial dragons also persist, though none have ever been proven.

NPCs Ilarra (soaking up Tian culture); Karakah (preaching the word of Hei-Feng); Nobukazu (enjoying a meal at an open-air walk-up noodle bar); Tia Yi Gan (reciting a poem before a throng of captivated onlookers)

114 The Utterhome

PRECINCT

Located in the lavish yet heavily fortified former manor of an Osirian noble house, the headquarters of the Foreign Quarter district guard are deliberately eclectic in design. Osirian stone reliefs and bronze panels

The Wounded Wisp

overlook Tian mediation pools and Vudrani sand wheels, while magically preserved Jadwiga ice sculptures stand beside the curious glassworks of New Thassilon. Even the name of the Utterhome is meant to signal welcome to all the disparate peoples of the Foreign Quarter. It alludes both to the idea that every people has their own unique word to utter for the universal concept of "home," and to the ideal that this building, above all others, represents the utter ideal of "home" and shared safety for all the diverse populations who live in Absalom. The district's guard have taken the name of the Sleepless Suns, representing the idea that the guard includes people from all over Golarion. The belief is that regardless of where it may be day on Golarion, there are members of the watch from such locations ready to defend the Quarter—though some citizens jokingly call them "the Redeyes," as clashing cultural customs and religious hours keep the guards patrolling throughout the night.

NPCs Shristi Melipdra (captain)

115 The Wounded Wisp

TAVERN

Built from dark and discolored wood, with stained and barred windows that offer only blurred glimpses of the goings-on inside, this establishment is the very picture of a dive bar. It is also one of Absalom's most storied taverns, and is widely reputed to be the location of the Pathfinder Society's founding in 4307 AR. The Wounded Wisp is very nearly the Society's official bar.

From the days of Society founders Durvin Gest and Selmius Foster down to the present, the Wounded Wisp has been where agents meet to brag about successful expeditions, drown the sorrows of failed ones, and plot their next adventures. Chroniclers such as Eando Kline refer to it frequently in the notes and marginalia of their publications in the *Pathfinder Chronicles*, and the Society's prominent leaders can be seen here rubbing elbows with retired agents, current operatives, and promising trainees.

NPCs Aram bin-Kaleel and Benkhal Blackblade (patrons); Fola Barun, Janira Gavix, and Dooley Gavix (patrons); Lord Haimon and Tartushi (dining companions); Heryn Gale (bartender); Osprey (agent of the Decemvirate)

116 Yemhasin

NEIGHBORHOOD

Greenery fills the wood-walled raised beds and hanging planters of Yemhasin, a community descended from the hurricane refugees of drowned Yamasa. As their original society was highly agricultural, strictly caste-regimented, and blindsided by the Eye of Abendego's opening, the Yamasans who made it to Absalom were mostly poor farmers and a smattering of higher-caste elites who initially refused to treat the farmers as equals or work alongside them. The refugees had little wealth to barter and few skills relevant to urban life, and they could not practice traditional agriculture in the city, so the first years of their settlement were miserably destitute and fostered a negative image of Yamasans in Absalom. They were particularly stereotyped by contrast with the Lirgeni, who arrived at the same time under similar circumstances but assimilated much more successfully.

Over time, however, the Yamasans found ways to adapt. They built container gardens into and around their homes, relying on traditional building materials to preserve as much of their original cultural heritage as they could, and planted dense clusters of herbs, flowers, and vegetables that reminded them of lost Yamasa. Traditional dishes of pounded root starch were adapted to use different cocoyam species that grew around Absalom. Caste divisions softened and then vanished as younger generations discarded their forebears' prejudices.

NPCs Kamata (Yamasan produce grocer, resident)

Elsewhere in the Foreign Quarter

117. District Courthouse: Judges here are well versed in the laws of nations throughout the Inner Sea, and with so many crimes involving non-residents of Absalom, a great deal of the maneuvering within this court concerns matters of jurisdiction. The Sleepless Suns keep an especially close watch on the squat stone building, and serve as able bailiffs in the face of trouble at court.

118. Fenworth Gameporium: This card and game manufacturer specializes in the creation of standard and custom decks for the popular game Rumples, but also imports, localizes, and produces diversions from throughout the Inner Sea for the enjoyment of Absalom's inquisitive and clever populace. Their many-sided bright purple dice are a particular trademark popular on tabletops across the city.

119. Foreign Quarter Council Hall: The seat of local government. High Council Diplomatic Minister Ferridan Severus sponsors several offices here inhabited by representatives of foreign governments.

120. Humbolt's Outfitters: Satellite location of the popular Coins general store.

121. Opparan Trade Commission: A handsome guildhall established in 4714 AR with the intent of fomenting alliances and mercantile partnerships that promote fair and equitable trade to the benefit of all (but especially to Taldor). Members of Absalom's Taldan noble houses, especially Morilla, Madinani, and Tsoulet, are especially common here.

IVY DISTRICT

District Council Ivy District Council
Headquarters The Chamber Grove
Nomarch Alain Always
District Watch The Thistleguard
Headquarters Thistleguard Station
Captain Zharep Apul
Key NPCs Aarnock Xanthiss (grand alchemist, member of the district council); Bor Dralfo (leader of the Brotherhood of Abadar); Eleena Woodsong (high priestess of Shelyn); Engleton Embrey (trademaster, co-leader of the Union of Carpenters, Stonemasons, and Metalworkers, member of the district council, guild seat on the Low Council); Fronsac Shimm (proprietor of the Gutless Griffon, member of the district council, district seat on the Low Council); Hans the Northman (trademaster, co-leader of the Union of Carpenters, Stonemasons, and Metalworkers, member of the district council, guild seat on the Low Council); Jembar Dustyshankle (trademaster, president of the Coalition of Artisans, member of the district council); Jostlin Ferqyr (keeper of the Vault of Abadar, member of the district council); Pasharran (lich priest of Urgathoa); Lord Synarr Daidalos (socialite, patron of the arts); Tumult Flower Flourish (leader of the Brattlebunch)
Services *Lodging* hostel bed (1 sp per day for one person), extravagant suite (150 sp per day for six people); *Meals* poor meal (2 cp), fine dining (15 sp); rented carriage (15 sp per day); tour of a noble's manor (5 sp); play at the Ivy Playhouse (5 sp standing room, 25 sp box seat); hire private entertainment (5 sp per hour); commission a portrait (poor 5 cp, fine 1 sp, good 5 sp); private arts lesson (2 sp per session); White Grotto tuition, room and board (1,000 sp per semester); guild dues to Street Performers and Actors' Guild (10 sp annually)

The views in Absalom's Ivy District—the capital of the arts in the Inner Sea region—cannot be rivaled. Despite its meager footprint, the city's smallest district is packed full of more people, parks, attractions, and artwork than most visitors could even imagine fitting into one place. Featuring narrow streets lined with ancient trees and flowering ivy, breathtaking architecture, and the finest theaters, performance halls, and artist colonies Absalom has to offer, the Ivy District is proud of its worldwide reputation for innovation, art, and beauty.

Over the last century, as the district's reputation has blossomed, its demographics have also shifted. Wealthy patrons of the arts and nobles seeking the distinction of living near exquisite galleries and restaurants have been buying land for their expansive manors and private gardens, pushing the district's artists and students out into ever-shrinking spaces designated for them. Small dorms that once comfortably offered private rooms are now overflowing with residents in need of affordable housing. Performers scrape by primarily on the patronage of the district's noble elite, and maintaining their favor is paramount to survival.

The district boasts Absalom's largest population of leshys. Many of the leshys see the whole district as their home, and they assume mundane plant shapes when they sleep in the district's parks, among the trees lining the streets, or hanging from their favorite buildings. Leshys are sometimes hired by nobles as impermanent, mutable landscaping for their garden parties and outdoor galas, creating living environments that perform for guests.

While the White Grotto is the quarter's most famous bardic college, it is hardly the only place in the district for artists to develop their skills. A handful of formal schools scatter the Ivy District, and working artists often offer private lessons out of their homes and studios.

Performers in the district frequently compete against each other on the public stage. These competitions are often staged rivalries meant to generate

DISTRICT SUMMARY

Absalom's arts district is known for the flowering trees along every road and countless stunningly beautiful homes. Many of the Inner Sea region's most influential plays and musical performances make their debut in one of the district's theaters, opera halls, and tea houses. Anyone in need of a custom magic item can also find many options for commission in this quarter, since the Ivy District is home to many of the city's most talented specialty artisans and independent crafters.

IVY DISTRICT
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interest in their work, though sincere enmity sometimes exists. Songs and poems that belittle other artists, mass-produced block prints highlighting past blunders, and plays that satirize fellow playwrights' previous works are all commonplace in these bardic feuds. Many of the district's beloved celebrities rise to fame and prominence during these lighthearted duels.

With so many theaters, galleries, and other famous attractions, the Ivy District is a popular destination for tourists visiting Absalom, and the district council doesn't want to do anything to upset this steady stream of revenue. The district watch, the Thistleguard, often turns a blind eye to minor crimes committed in the district, especially when the offenders are foreigners. Instead, the guard spends its time enforcing harsh regulations passed by the council that prohibit performances in the district by artists who aren't members in the Street Performers and Actors' Guild; it's no coincidence that the guild's leader, Alain Always, is also the council nomarch.

The Brotherhood of Abadar, a sect of champions and clerics from within Abadar's faithful in the district's massive cathedral, is often hired as private security by nobles or performance halls that don't want to rely on the watch to enforce the law. The Brotherhood itself is happy for the work, and members aren't quiet when it comes to their disapproval of the district's ineffective watch.

The Ivy District is also home to a small handful of street gangs, though most are more interested in creating counter-cultural art than they are in any form of criminality. Illusionist performers create temporary graffiti on the homes of the nobility, and though these pieces always disappear by themselves in short order, it's not uncommon for wealthier and less open-minded citizens to purchase *dispel magic* services for an immediate removal. Leshy street gangs, especially the infamous Brattlebunch, are particularly interested in disrupting Alain Always and the Street Performers and Actors' Guild, covering playhouses in moss graffiti and hosting performances by non-members on temporary stages that vanish by the time the watch arrives.

CRIME REPORT

Crime in the Ivy District is often petty, although priceless works of art in local collections and nobles from the Petal District "slumming it" draw ambitious thieves. The Brotherhood of Abadar vigilance committee keeps more ardent watch on the district than the little-respected Thistleguard. Criminal groups active in the district include the Bloody Barbers, the Brattlebunch, the Crowsworn, the Forthright, the Silkenhand, and the Smoke Knights.

DISTRICT LOCATIONS

The following are some of the Ivy District's most notable locations.

122 Alyssia's

RESTAURANT

With its delicate design details, sweeping curved walls, and entrance fashioned to resemble the beautiful arch of an *aiudara* gate, the renowned tea house and art gallery known as Alyssia's is perhaps the finest example of Castrovelian architecture still remnant in Absalom. The establishment's proprietor, the graceful and well-mannered Alyssia of House Avenstar, ensures that the interior is just as steeped in elven traditions as its famed exterior, hiring several elven chefs and tea masters to provide resident and visiting elves and half-elves with a calming retreat replete with the considerable comforts of elven culture.

Although the majority of Alyssia's patrons and staff are elves, Alyssia welcomes all patrons so long as they are tolerant, behave themselves, and can afford the premium prices she charges for goods available cheaper elsewhere in the city (though seldom all under one roof). Alyssia welcomes all of Absalom's elves, but she prefers the rich ones. She tolerates visitors who simply wish to gawk at the gallery's artworks or appreciate its unusual interior design, but quickly ushers away those who cannot afford to purchase food or tea once they have had a sense of the establishment's considerable grandeur. She has little time or patience for troublemakers, and is quick to call the Brotherhood of Abadar at the first sign of a disturbance.

NPCs Lady Alyssia (proprietor); Etrenne Rylwynn (patron); Florian Gale (patron); Namira (accompanied by two witchwyrds and three masked bodyguards); Sandaril (sipping tea and reading behind a wall of awkwardly stacked books); Varvara Amadei (patron); Zifelez of Gyr (patron)

MINOTAUR'S ENVOY

Eagle Garrison scouts traveling through the Kortos Mounts report that several minotaur clans there have been meeting regularly in unexpected diplomatic talks. The most recent gathering was between the Broken Horn, Children of the Labyrinth, and Gorebreather clans at a ritual site atop Shrieking Peak. The clans captured one of the scouts, Pyl Gillseed, during the gathering, but released him unharmed and tasked him with returning to Absalom with an open invitation to the next gathering in a week's time.

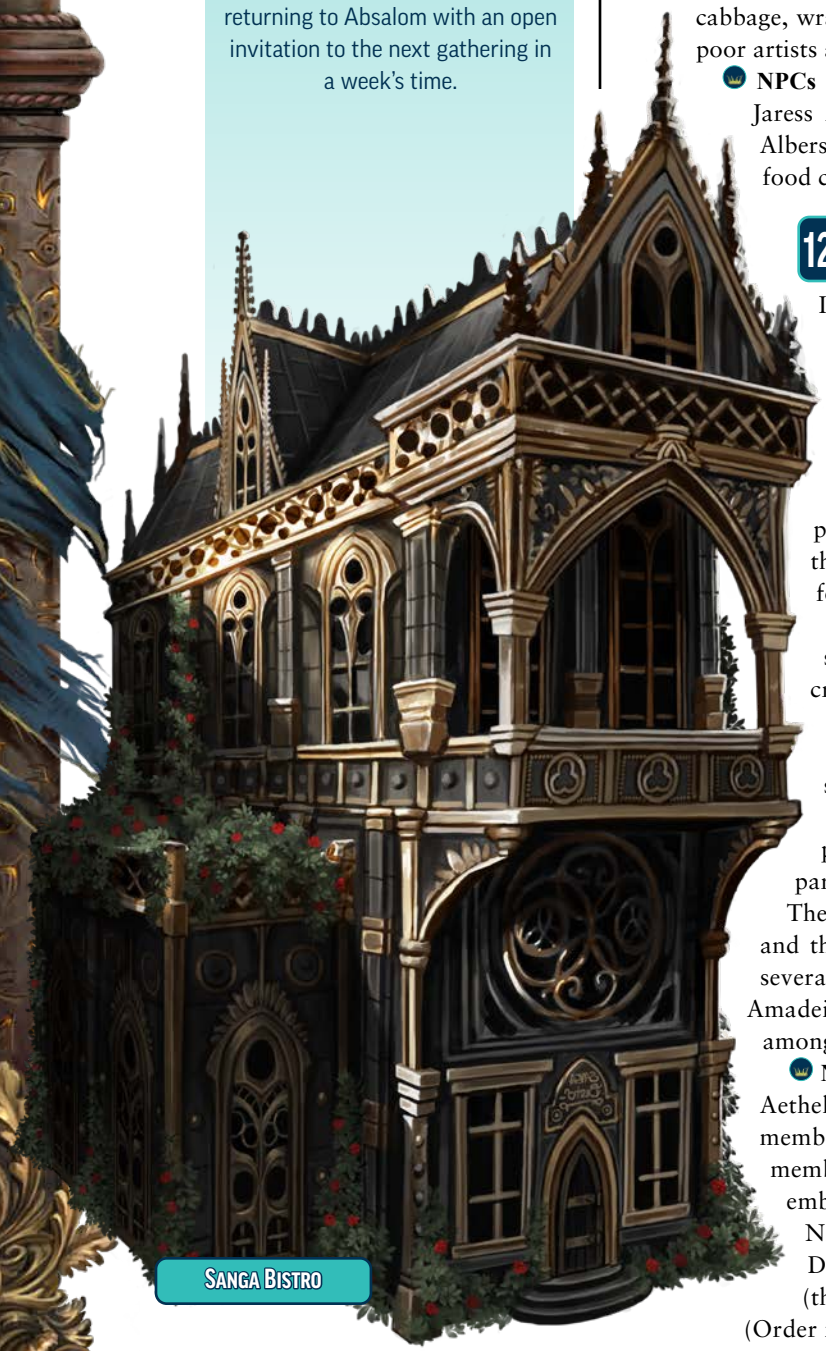
123 Arbor Ward

NEIGHBORHOOD

The Ivy District has a reputation for having the best restaurants in Absalom, and nowhere exemplifies this more than the Arbor Ward. Here, new cuisines and culinary innovations take root, blossoming into traditions the city's visitors carry home with them, spreading across the Inner Sea region. Boats full of exotic seasonings and colorful spices carry these ingredients to chefs eager to experiment, pioneer, and compete.

Within the Arbor Ward, Greenpike Lane is particularly famous for its iconic fine dining. Sanga Bistro is an extravagant, fashionable Chelaxian restaurant that is open only for 3 hours each evening. Tables at Sanga are so coveted that it takes reservations 3 months in advance, with seats limited to one of nine exclusive tables, each themed after a different layer of Hell. Verden Road, by comparison, boasts an incredible selection of street food that many tourists seek out in favor of a sit-down meal. Here, busy vendors sell their dumplings, grilled oysters, savory crepes filled with fish and cabbage, wrap sandwiches, and crisp rice pancakes to the district's poor artists and well-off patrons alike.

NPCs Lord Archych (Sanga Bistro diner); Diasco Vade and Jaress Molinarro (Sanga Bistro diners); Eivlind and Jacques Albers (sampling the foods of Verden Road); Urongu (Lirgeni food cart operator)



Sanga Bistro

124 Bloom Cabaret

ARCHIVE RESTAURANT

In the smoky back room of the Bloom Cabaret, a chic cafe in the Ivy District's fashionable Briarfine Ward, an exclusive club for high-society aristocrats meets every other week. Founded by Dame Theresia Kaur in 4678 AR, the Ordaire of Goode Standing (typically referred to as the Order for the sake of simplicity) is a group of wealthy socialites with an appetite for the strange, the profane, and the occult. It's a matter of wide speculation throughout the district whether the Order is a real club for affluent and well-connected gentlefolk, a parody of such a club, or something far more sinister. The club sponsors a handful of local artists, encouraging them to create satirical and immodest plays, often with a focus on insulting the Brotherhood of Abadar. The Order also makes sizable donations to the Ivy Playhouse, and some speculate that these donations allow the Order to exert some measure of control over when its sponsored productions are performed, which actors play each part, and other such concerns of status and means.

The Order has strong connections to the district council, and though the full membership of the Order is unknown, several council members (including Councilwoman Varvara Amadei and Councilman Ninian Gallego) are rumored to be among their membership.

NPCs Aarnock Xanthiss (cafe patron, Order member); Aethelred Navar (Order member); Ambroz Black (Order member); Endrik Archerus (unscrupulous artist, Order member); J Dacilane (disguised Pathfinder investigator embedded in the Order under the name "Lord Grishan"); Ninian Gallego (Order member); Lord Synarr and Lady Dhrami (cafe patrons, kindred spirits); Verica Strange (the Order's talented musical director); Varvara Amadei (Order member)

125 Crystal Creations

CRIMINAL MERCHANT PARLOR

This small glassblowing shop near the northwestern wall sees a lot of visitors but very little business. Crystal Creations is an important site for the district's thieves and smugglers; its basement connects to a series of infamous tunnels built 2,000 years ago by the dwarves of Westerhold. The tunnels lead under Absalom's wall to hidden exits positioned throughout the outskirts suburb.

These tunnels currently serve as the headquarters of the Crowsworn, a local thieves' guild that was recently taken over by criminal mastermind Guaril Karela. The current grand master of the Crowsworn has a particular fondness for the glass figurines created in the workshop and has recently taken up glassblowing since his takeover.

NPCs Guaril Karela (guildmaster); Jorula Karela (proprietor)

126 Embrey's Armory

MERCHANT WORKSHOP

Located southeast of the Flower Street Market and Ivy District Park, this large open-walled squat stone structure is the workshop and retail operation of Engleton Embrey, one of the best-regarded artisans in all of Absalom. Embrey's name is known across the Inner Sea as a superlative weaponsmith and armorer. When a soldier on a far-flung battlefield brags of wielding "Absalom steel," she's most often boasting about a blade made here in one of Embrey's three constantly-operating forges—or she's lying about it, banking on the dwarf artisan's reputation to strike fear into the hearts of enemies or stoke admiration in the souls of allies. The heavily wrinkled and broom-bearded dwarf feigns humility in the face of well-deserved plaudits, but in his heart, Embrey knows he is one of the very best. He channels his pride into his craft rather than show a shred of arrogance.

Engleton Embrey knows that as good as he may be, he's not going to last forever. While the old artisan has at least several decades of excellent work left in him, he puts an increasing amount of energy into building a foundation for his legacy, training a trio of highly skilled apprentices who do most of the actual work these days, under his expert eye. The shop specializes in metal weapons and armor of all varieties, and is popular with the city's gladiators, mercenaries, and adventurers. Soldiers and watch officers can often get a better deal at Open Quartering in Azlanti Keep, but those who can afford it usually prefer to wield one of Embrey's masterworks as a sign of status.

NPCs Atrandi Goldheart (inspecting a newly repaired fighting hook); Engleton Embrey (proprietor); Evandor Malik (purchasing a replacement part for his complex gleaming plate armor)

127 Flower Street Market

MERCHANT

Flower Street, one of the Ivy District's main thoroughfares, is an impressive sight to behold. Lined with dramatic bowing oaks and flowering willows, the street runs along the west edge of the Ivy District Park to the Wise Quarter, and is wide enough for carts and carriages to pass each other side-by-side.

The centerpiece of Flower Street is the Flower Street Market, a boisterous open market that specializes in fresh fruit, flowers, fine clothing, and a wide variety of artists and artwork. Absalom's most talented woodworkers and blacksmiths come to the market to sell their custom wooden and wrought iron furniture, each piece one of a kind. Portraits painted at the market, featuring the blue and purple flowers of Flower Street's incredible trees in the background, are a status symbol found in the sitting rooms of most of the district's elite. When the weather is fair and the market is particularly busy, local restaurants open food stalls in the market, selling signature and seasonal dishes to promote their business. Fortune tellers, courtesans, legerdemains, acrobats, and contortionists

SILENCE, PLEASE!

Eivlind Albers and her husband, Jacques, are visiting Absalom from nearby Taldor. They've spent their day walking the scenic paths of the district park, seeing a show from enviable Ivy Playhouse box seats, and enjoying an exquisite dinner in the Arbor Ward. They have also become quite intoxicated and are making a minor nuisance of themselves in the streets. Nearby guards have chosen to do nothing about the situation, writing them off as "just another pair of bothersome tourists." Haven Bannister, a member of the Brotherhood of Abadar, is determined to make a citizen's arrest and bring the nobles in to the watch station personally. The loud altercation between Eivlind, Jacques, and the champion of Abadar is beginning to interfere with local performers and patrons at thin-walled playhouses nearby.

FIREBRANDS... LIVE?

A local group of Firebrands calling themselves the Baffle Guild has been leaving a discreet set of clues throughout Absalom over the past weeks. Each clue leads to another, taking would-be detectives on a long scavenger hunt throughout the city. The latest batch of clues culminated in a message that the Baffle Guild is set to perform a show in the Ivy District, and the performance will serve as the final clue to gain entry into the group. The symbol for the Baffle Guild, a blindfolded face beneath two crossed keys, has appeared throughout the district. Locals are wary however, as rumors indicate that the entire event is a hoax intended to draw aristocrats out for a wave of mass thefts from their empty homes.

also work the market, since their crafts don't require licensing by the Street Performers and Actors' Guild. Keen to step in whenever the Guard turns a blind eye, members of the Brotherhood of Abadar patrol the market regularly, checking vendor licenses and watching for thieves.

NPCs Market Master Annavi (produce merchant on a restock); Bor Dralfo and Haven Bannister (nosy vigilantes); Ezlip Terrag (fungus monger); Endrik Archerus (painting a rare public portrait, to the adoration of a gathering crowd); Engleton Embrey (weaponsmith); Evelessa (courtesan); Hans the Northman (woodworker); Jehanna (fortune teller); the Inverted Man (masked contortionist); Metzien (clothing shopper); Lady Miranda (sitting for Archerus's portrait, enjoying the attention); Rance Dellby (Children of Spring recruiter); Lord Synarr (clothing shopper)

128 The Golden Serpent

RESTAURANT

The Golden Serpent, owned by Magnimarian expatriate Sendeli Foxglove, is one of Absalom's most fashionable lounges. Located in a historic building near the southern edge of the district, the Serpent has magnificent high ceilings, dramatic engraved sculptures for pillars, and plush, upholstered walls. In an attempt to stay ahead of the trend, the restaurant's five-course set menu changes daily, according to seasonal availability and head chef Torail's mercurial whims. The offerings frequently highlight whichever unconventional ingredients the restaurant is able to secure, such as owlbear, manticore, kraken, and even dragon. Most believe these exotic dishes explain the lounge's incredible and rapid success in Absalom, a stark change for a location that was widely considered cursed by the locals, a revolving door of ever-changing restaurants until Sendeli purchased it.

How the restaurant obtains some of its ingredients is a matter of much speculation around the district, however, and critics of the Golden Serpent are quick to question the ethical implications of eating sapient creatures. Fortunately for Sendeli and her staff, these questions only add to the restaurant's irresistible draw in the eyes of the district's affluent patrons, who are happy to pay any price for an exclusive experience.

NPCs Lord Archych (diner); Darius Finch (diner with an open seat at his table); Ealan Foxglove (favorite of Lady Sendeli); Lady Sendeli (owner); Lord Synarr and Lady Dhrami (kindred spirits, dining companions)

The Golden Serpent

129 The Gutless Griffon

HOUSING TAVERN VENUE

It's almost impossible to separate the reputation of the Gutless Griffon tavern from that of its beloved proprietor, Fronsac Shimm. For nearly twenty years, the charming bon vivant has tempted revelers and lodgers alike with a jolly atmosphere, delicious food, and well-curated selection of liberally poured beers and spirits. Shimm spends most evenings working the crowd, introducing himself to strangers and his patrons to each other, always ready to slap a back, order a new round, or encourage one of several bawdy songs popular in the district. A few years ago, Shimm parleyed his influence into a seat on the Ivy District Council (and a later appointment to the Grand Council), giving him a "rags to riches/common man in government" patina that only adds to his personal appeal.

Most of the structure's two floors are given over to a large taproom and the balcony overlooking it. The taproom is flanked by a well-stocked bar on

one side and a modest stage on the other. Bards play from this stage almost constantly, and it is a favorite with talented performers who are not necessarily on the right side of the Street Performers and Actors' Guild. Fronsac Shimm and Guildmaster Alain Always are old enemies, though no one knows (or can remember) the circumstances that soured their once-strong friendship. Whatever happened, their disagreement seems to be based in mutual respect, for while the guild refuses to endorse performances at the Gutless Griffon, Always rarely reprimands those who perform there, and uses his influence with the Thistleguard to keep the law away from Shimm's operation. The guildmaster has little power over Bor Dralfo's Brotherhood of Abadar, however, who make the Griffon a regular stop of their scolding patrols.

The taproom's main floor is dominated by several long tables and benches, and seating in the crowded tavern is an opportunistic affair. You're almost forced to sit with strangers at the Gutless Griffon, but the atmosphere is so convivial that no one seems to mind. Smaller tables set into alcoves along the outside wall of the balcony allow for more secluded candle-lit gatherings away from the noise and cheer of the main floor. The balcony also opens into a hallway leading to the Griffon's modest guest accommodations, which are more often rented by revelers too drunk to stumble home or those more interested in brief encounters with one of the numerous courtesans working the crowd than by travelers seeking more long-term accommodation.

The tavern's most famous feature is the huge hearth on the wall opposite the main door, notable from the exterior by a distinctive chimney constructed of several oddly shaped bricks. A clutch of benches are arrayed before the hearth, which usually holds a roaring fire that proves extremely popular on cold nights, particularly in the winter. The hearth of the Gutless Griffon is like sacred ground to the storytellers of Absalom, who compare holding court there to sitting on a throne, reigning as the temporary sovereign of the greatest tale-spinners of the Inner Sea.

NPCs Arkonis Severus, Senator Augustyn, Jehanna, and Larret (crowded around an upstairs table, playing an intense game of towers before a growing crowd awed by a huge ante); Darius Finch (casting awkward glances at Senator Augustyn from across the bar); Fronsac Shimm (proprietor); Ilarra (patron); Lord Jaren (bard); Larkin Waever (storyteller); Llew Gladwyn (patron); Marcos Farabellus (storyteller); Nobukazu (storyteller at the hearth)

130 House of Healing

TEMPLE

A large temple of Sarenrae located in the eastern reaches of the district, the House of Healing is covered in bright, swirling murals painted by some of the finest local artists. Named for its vow to offer succor to anyone who needs it, no questions asked, the building and its clergy are a bastion of mercy to those who can reach it. The policy has drawn criticism from those who claim the Sarenrites only encourage the clashes between the Street Performers and Actors' Guild, unlicensed actors, tourists, and the Brotherhood of Abadar by tending to all of them without distinction. The church's outspoken efforts to uplift former slaves and to redress seemingly abandoned city districts has earned them a few prominent enemies as well. These conflicts have occasionally resulted in vandalism to the church's walls, though the beautiful building is always rapidly restored—most Ivy District citizens are far more concerned with the appearance of the district than matters of politics.

The temple coordinates missionary outreach efforts in the poorer regions of Absalom. Unlike the powerful Temple of the Shining Star, in the Ascendant Court, the House of Healing is influenced by the more activist Taldan Sarenites from the Lion's Square, in the Foreign Quarter.

NPCs Eligir Kelm (lay priest); Haven Bannister (receiving healing); Zharichela (high priestess); Zifelez of Gyr (parishioner)

UNDERCOVER

The Brattlebunch, the most infamous of the Ivy District's leshy gangs, maintain an extensive information network throughout the district by using their affinity for plants to ask the district's ample trees and vines what they see. Unfortunately for the Brattlebunch, plants don't always have the strongest understanding of human activity. A Brattlebuncher named Slithering Snare is trying to track the movements of district nomarch Alain Always, but the trees are having trouble telling humanoids apart. Slithering Snare asks the PCs to go inside the Golden Serpent, a restaurant she's been banned from, and casually inspect the establishment without drawing suspicion. She is willing to trade other information she might possess for an account of everyone currently inside. Of course, the nomarch would likely also be interested in learning of the leshy's plans.

PROHIBITED PERFORMANCE

The Terrifying Thriceteen, a troupe of 13 acrobats, begin an impromptu performance in the street as they walk through the Ivy District. This section of street has a raised stage along its right-hand side to accommodate street performers, and the acrobats draw a large crowd. Unfortunately, the troupe is not registered with the Street Performers and Actors' Guild, and this isn't the first time they've performed without a license. The guards quickly arrive to interrupt the performance and drive the acrobats from the stage. The crowd might assist the guards in the arrest, assist the acrobats in evading the guards, or perhaps even talk the guards out of stopping the performance at all. Should an altercation erupt, a group of leshy vagabonds is quick to arrive on the scene to waylay the guards and allow the performers to escape.

131 Ivy District Park

MONUMENT

Ivy District Park occupies a substantial portion of the district's footprint. The park is filled with beautiful oak groves, weeping willows, cedars, pines, beech trees, and a huge variety of more exotic flora, all of which provide living space for the park's populations of wild squirrels, owls, foxes, and hares. A large pond—filled with ducks, geese, colorful fish, and playful frogs—dominates most of the park, and where the water is narrow, small bridges of wood and stone arc across its peaceful surface. The druids of the Ivy District Perfumer's Conglomerate and the district's leshy population tend to the flora and fauna in the district, including everything that lives in the park. Together, they keep the animals strong and the plant life blooming year-round.

Within the park, fruit trees and flower gardens line the neat, manicured paths that wind their way across its acres. These pathways connect the park's carefully maintained features, including an impressive circle of ancient oaks in the northeastern corner, which serves as a shrine to the goddess Shelyn, and an incredible 9-foot-tall hedge maze at the park's center, which hides the intricate works of the park's famous topiary menagerie inside.

NPCs Aarnock Xanthiss and Pasharran (midnight visitors); Bagwell Thomkin and Ilrava Drogand (chatting while flying kites); Eleena Woodsong (high priestess of Shelyn); J Dacilane (strolling daydreamer)

132 Ivy Playhouse

EMPLOYER PARLOR VENUE

At both the physical and metaphorical heart of the district, the beautiful Ivy Playhouse boasts a distinguished reputation for hosting some of the best productions on Golarion. The theater's current productions change seasonally and no visit to Absalom is complete without seeing one. World famous artists flock to the Ivy Playhouse, lending it an air of international legitimacy and giving weight to its reputation for excellence.

The playhouse serves as the headquarters of Absalom's Street Performers and Actors' Guild, led by master thespian and district council Nomarch Alain Always. The nomarch hosts all the playhouse's productions without exception—he often has small roles written into plays for himself, and audiences eagerly anticipate his cameos.

In addition to the extravagant musicals, dramas, and other theatrical performances that play out on its twin stages, the Ivy also boasts galleries with constantly changing installations of paintings and sculptures by new, fashionable artists. Some speculate on whether Alain has a keen eye for upcoming artists, or if being featured in the Ivy Playhouse's galleries is propelling his picks into stardom.

The playhouse has drawn the attention of the Brotherhood of Abadar for hosting risqué and scandalous productions, pushing the boundaries of what is considered acceptable in Absalom. The members of the Brotherhood, intent on policing the district when the guards won't, have taken it upon themselves to investigate the theater, its patrons, and the members of the Street Performers and Actors' Guild for moral turpitude and illicit activities. As a result, Alain has banned the Brotherhood from the premises, though guests continue to be harassed as they approach the building.

NPCs Adula Tremane (patron); Alain Always (founder and guildmaster); Sealord Amodjun (patron); Anceltan Berryhock and Pogmirk (patrons); Dr. Bensi Skule (disguised patron); Bor Dralfo (protester); Darius Finch (patron); Lady Dyrianna and Lord Kerkis (patrons); Eivlind and Jacques Albers (box seat patrons); Emma Sadik (actor); Etrenne Rylwynn (composer); Nobukazu (patron and performer); Samel Maleagant (patron); Lord Synarr "Diadalos the Magnificent" (performing magician); Umlox Vulm (patron), Yiddlepode (disguised patron)

Risen Stars

Minor celebrities may come and go, but Absalom's biggest stars shine bright even into retirement. Famous actors can be seen performing on the stage, beloved artists' work is displayed in prestigious galleries, and those with means and power can even hire a celebrity performer to entertain at private parties. In the Ivy District, Absalom's stars live and work, and can be found off the stage as well: having dinner at the Golden Serpent, shopping at the Flower Street Market, enjoying nature in the Ivy District Park, or even sitting as a member of the audience at the famous Ivy Playhouse. In the Ivy District, famous faces can appear at any moment.

Absalom's biggest current celebrities are:

Aethelred Navar: A reclusive author, Aethelred lives in a small house on the western edges of the district that is rumored to be haunted.

Alain Always: Alain is master thespian who serves as head of the Street Performers and Actors' Guild, and as nomarch of the Ivy District Council.

Durga Den: The regular public performances of the dwarven Master of Drum at the White Grotto at the Grand Dance Hall of Kortos speak to the souls of Absalomians, even if he himself could not care less.

Emma Sadik: Emma is a prolific theater actress famous for her starring role in *The Violet Acrobat* 10 years ago. Emma is a frequent guest of Tempest's exclusive room and can be found there most nights of the week.

Endrik Archerus: Arguably Absalom's most famous artist, Archerus's paintings are known throughout the entire Inner Sea region.

Etrenne Rylwynn: Composer, Master of Strings at the White Grotto.

Llew Gladwyn: An actor of some acclaim and an evoker of moderate power, Llew is notorious for his impromptu, public performances in the streets. He rose to fame during a public feud with Alain Always.

Verica Strange: Verica is a well-known concert pianist and member of the Absalom Chamber Orchestra.

Making a Name for Yourself

Absalom is the cultural centerpiece of the Inner Sea region, a meeting place for folk from scores of nations and a crossroads of international travel and social exchange. Popular plays that debut in the Ivy District travel across the sea alongside fashions, craftwork, and legends, spreading the influence of Absalom—and its celebrities—to all corners of the globe. The presence of Absalom's broadsheet press provides a media atmosphere in which notoriety (and infamy) can be cultivated and reported upon, so that a good review for a performance at the Lantern Lodge or the details of a bloody victory in the Irorium might find an audience thousands of miles away from the city. Adventurers are common among Absalom's heroes, both historically and in the modern day.

"NEW" ANCIENT FASHION

The return of two of Ancient Thassilon's Runelords has sparked new interest in all things Thassilonian. Runes (or vague facsimiles thereof) are embroidered onto jackets, hats, and scarves, usually with complete and total disregard for their meaning.

Al-Amir Kai

133 Ravounel Consulate

MUNICIPAL

Centrally located on Flower Street near the Ivy District Park, the Ravounel Consulate was opened by Ambassador Vita Aulamaxa in 4717 AR, shortly after Ravounel's secession from Cheliax. The Ravounel Consulate represents the interests of Domina Jilia Bainilus and Ravounel in Absalom, and the ambassador's diplomatic agents work to promote business and trade relations between the two.

Ambassador Aulamaxa is a member of one of Ravounel's most ancient, noble Chelaxian families, and she pays great public homage to both the domina and to her Chelaxian heritage. A close friend of Nomarch Alain Always and a great fan of the theater, the ambassador has been working tirelessly to bring the famous opera singers of her home city of Kintargo to Absalom for what she promises will be among the greatest performances in the Ivy Playhouse's history. The opera singers themselves, including famed diva Shensen (who recently helped save the city of Kintargo from the despotic Barzillai Thrune), have embraced the opportunity to both see Absalom and show it the beauty of traditional Ravounel artistry, while also not-so-silently promising to help support the Firebrands' growing presence in the city once they arrive. Shows scheduled for 4720 AR are already selling out as the Ivy District's nobility clamber over each other for the prestigious opportunity to attend the premiere of a brand new opera called *Ilvanar di Vanlieu Valliar* (which translates roughly to *The Teen Queen's Tantrum*), even as representatives from Cheliax have protested the nature of the promised show as being a scathing insult to House Thrune.

NPCs Eudom Mansarian (Korvosan trade envoy); Ilarra (Winged Sandals messenger delivering a letter); Vita Aulamaxa (ambassador)

134 Shrine of Shelyn

TEMPLE

This magnificently ancient oak grove in the Ivy District Park is a site sacred to Shelyn, goddess of beauty, love, and art, and serves as a temple for her faithful in the district. Rose bushes cleverly pruned in artistic designs surround the oaks, and an immaculate pond filled with crystal-clear water marks the center of the clearing. Regal swans glide along the pond's surface, and above it, a single rose is suspended mid-air through magical means. The rose changes colors with the seasons—white for winter, yellow for spring, fiery orange for summer, and rust red for autumn.

An important site for district residents, the shrine is frequented by artists and performers seeking new inspiration, as well as lovers seeking Shelyn's blessing. Painters and musicians can always be found nearby, creating art inspired by the goddess's captivating beauty.

Shelyn's clergy, led by high priestess Eleena Woodsong, tend to the shrine and listen attentively to anyone seeking their counsel, providing relationship advice to couples and suggestions and encouragement to local artists. They also perform marriage ceremonies inside the grove for those the clerics believe hold the true love of Shelyn within their hearts.

NPCs Eleena Woodsong (high priestess); Erdan Sianovel (parishioner)

135 Starspine Manor

RESIDENCE

An imposing estate of extravagant proportions that would loom over its neighbors if it weren't surrounded by a full acre of immaculately landscaped gardens, Starspine Manor belongs to the fabulous Lord Synarr Daidalos, or Daidalos the Magnificent, an accomplished arcanist who recently settled in the Ivy District. The manor is said to have appeared overnight, inserting itself between two other houses that had been next to each other the day before, but

many dismiss this as nonsense promoted by Daidalos himself to inflate legends of his power.

In the summer following his arrival, Lord Synarr held a grand masquerade ball at his estate, a wildly popular event that drew the district's biggest stars and most prolific socialites. Lord Daidalos has promised not only to make his ball an annual affair, taking place every year on the seventeenth day of Erastus, but also that next year's ball will be even more spectacular than the first.

NPCs Lady Dhrami (friend of Lord Synarr); Lord Synarr (host)

136 Sundown Street

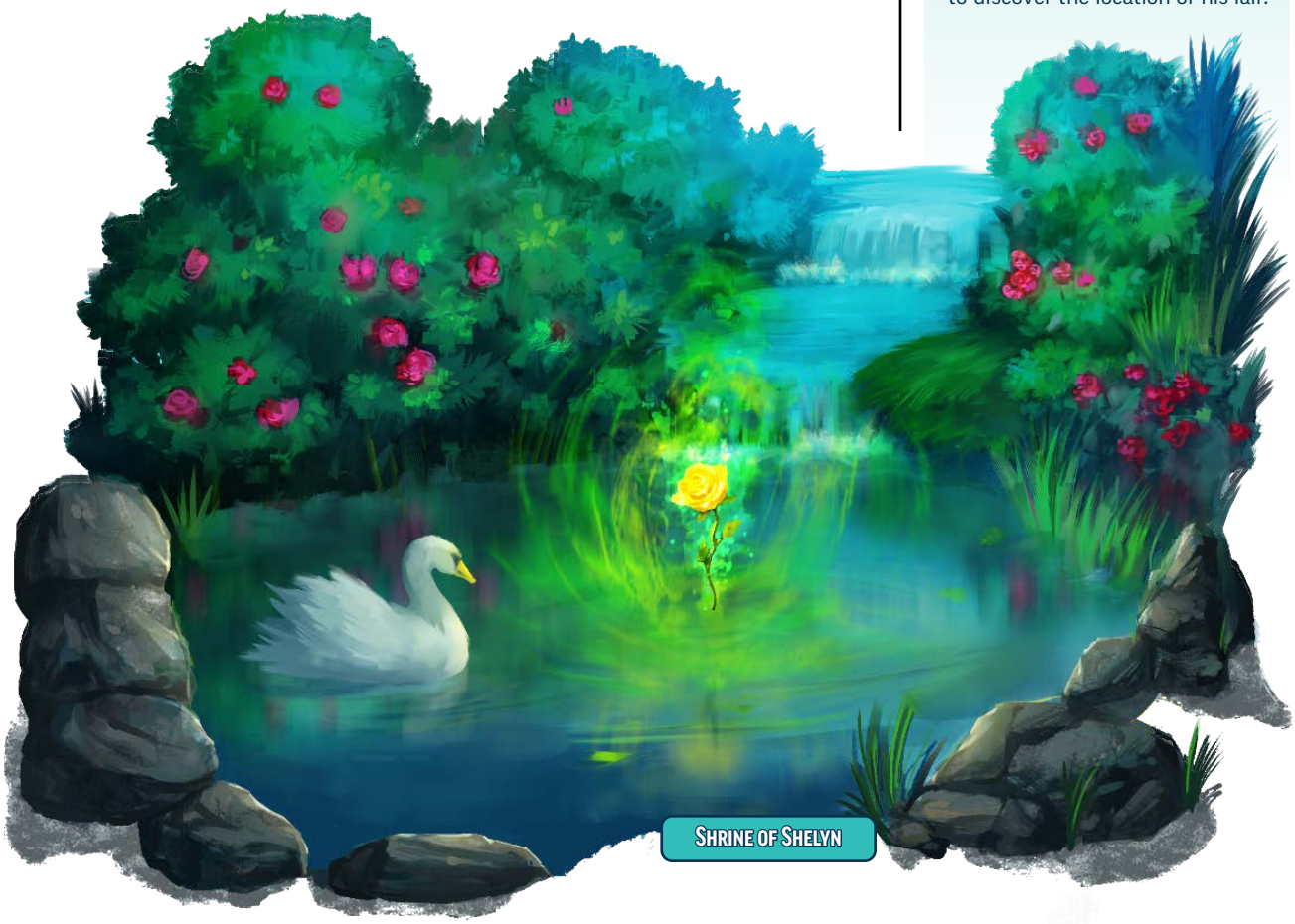
MERCHANT

On the western side of the district, just blocks from the Flower Street Market, Sundown Street is home to the Ivy District's three most prolific tailors: Ambroz Black of Ambrozia's, Al-Amir Kai of the Ready Petal, and Madame Theodora "Tea" Signe. The three tailors each work out of private studios, creating bespoke garments for only a small, exclusive list of clients. The district's most affluent residents fight to employ any of the three, and often mere coin isn't enough; reservations at fashionable restaurants, tickets to see highly anticipated shows, and invitations to private parties are all often used to acquire spots on their wait-lists. Thanks to their proximity to the three tailors, the rest of Sundown Street's shops enjoy a second-hand reputation for fashion and elegance. Sundown Street is the most elite destination for buying garments in the district, even among those who wouldn't even dream of being clothed by the legendary tailors.

NPCs Al-Amir Kai (master tailor); Ambroz Black (master tailor); Arkonis Severus (customer); Larrett (customer); Darius Finch (customer); Lady Miranda (customer); Lady Neferpatra (customer); Lord Synarr (customer); Madame Theodora (master tailor)

Spell Trader

Once a month at the stroke of midnight on a particular day, district councilman and Grand Alchemist Aarnock Xanthiss meets another magician at the center of the Ivy District Park's topiary menagerie to trade magic. He travels to the park under cover of dusk, heavily robed to disguise his identity, picking his way through back streets and alleyways. His meeting is with Pasharran, a lich priest of Urgathoa, who lives in the catacombs beneath the city. Pasharran emerges from the Undercity through tunnel access on Sundown Street and makes his way to the meeting point, likewise under the cover of twilight. Those who spot either of these figures could pursue them to the park, observe their meeting, learn of councilman Xanthiss's association with an Urgathoan priest, or follow Pasharran back through the streets to discover the location of his lair.



Shrine of Shelyn

THE SCHEMES OF ALAIN ALWAYS

Alain Always is the nomarch of the Ivy District Council, commands the quarter's most influential guild, and stands among its most celebrated stars of the stage. Ten years ago, he orchestrated the fall of district watch captain Zharep Apul, and since then he has grown even more ambitious, his eyes increasingly wandering beyond the Ivy District.

Alain Always

137 Tempest

ATTRACTION | VENUE

Situated southeast of the market on Flower Street at the corner of Burgundy Wine Terrace, this posh, exclusive nightclub was constructed in a building that formerly housed a small theater and attached second-story apartment. Tempest's decor is largely illusory, continually shifting throughout the night, and those who pierce the veil and see through the club's glamour see only plain tables and chairs.

The club's strange entertainment would likely be considered unintelligible and inaccessible by the common folk, were they ever able to gain admission. Models pose on stage and throughout the club in elaborate live-art scenes, as if posing for an artist who never paints them. The theater stage is still used intermittently for short plays, as well; esoteric, counter-cultural performances written and performed by niche, aesthetically minded artists push the boundaries of what could reasonably be considered metaphor or symbolism.

The second floor of the club, situated around a series of balconies overlooking Tempest's lounges and performing spaces, is the exclusive domain of the club's most socially prominent members. It was the former studio of a famous Absalomian painter named Heinroque Bain, known for his disturbing and grotesque portraiture. Unique murals wrap around the walls, considered by many club patrons to be charmingly incomplete. Before his death, Heinroque publicly disdained profit and affectation, even destroying symbols of wealth and status in front of those who considered them precious. The club's artists enjoy the irony of charging the district's affluent, ignorant elite for access to his apartments.

Today the balcony level is the permanent residence of Zozzler Vondorun, Absalom's high priest of Zon-Kuthon. With a wave of his hand, Bain's aged murals surge to terrible life, offering a fleshy gateway into the secret temple's inner sanctum.

NPCs Darius Finch and Dalessa (guests of the exclusive room); Emma Sadik (regular guest of the exclusive room); the Inverted Man (exclusive room entertainer); Lady Miranda (balcony doyenne); Versien of Nisroch (seeking new clients); Zozzler Vondorun (painting a disturbing canvas on the private balcony)

138 Thistleguard Station

PRECINCT

Thistleguard Station, found at the northern edge of the Ivy District Park, is the headquarters of the Ivy District watch. The station contains offices, a large holding pen, three detention cells, and a modest storage room.

The Thistleguard patrols the district for violent crimes and anything that might pose a threat to its citizens, but petty crimes are often overlooked in favor of maintaining a smooth relationship with the district's residents. The only exception to this easygoing policy is the watch's tendency to prosecute performers who don't hold membership in the Street Performers and Actors' Guild. The guild is led by Nomarch Alain Always, and residents don't hesitate to draw a connection between the nomarch's influence and the watch's actions. Still, their soft stances on thievery and matters of etiquette bring the watch into constant opposition with the Brotherhood of Abadar, a religious order that would prefer the district and its residents strictly adhere to the letter of the law. The Brotherhood is hired by nervous nobles, merchants, and venues across the district to as private security, and its champions are only too happy to serve.

The holding pen has standing room for 10, and the three cells each contain two uncomfortable beds. Detainees can expect rough but civil treatment from the officers in the station.

NPCs Brenna Robles and Casima Evers (detectives); Faiza Pagani (lieutenant); Zharep Apul (captain)

139 Vault of Abadar

BANK TEMPLE

With huge, polished darkwood doors and the symbol of Abadar engraved prominently across its outer walls, the Vault of Abadar is a marvel of unusual architecture in a district already teeming with incredible sights. The soaring obsidian building has numerous levels, all built slightly off center from each other, giving viewers the illusion of a precarious but eternally balanced structure.

Both a place of worship for Abadar's faithful in Absalom and a private bank with secure, magically protected vaults, the Vault of Abadar is overseen by district councilwoman Jostlin Ferqyr, who also serves as the temple's influential high priestess. The presence of members of the Brotherhood of Abadar, who patrol the Vault at all hours, along with the numerous guardians and magical wards in the temple's innermost chambers make the Vault one of the safest places in all of Absalom to store valuables.

Strife has spread in the Vault recently, however, upon the discovery of the body of Third Keeper Meridayn Velric. More troubling than even his death were the autopsy results that showed he had died nearly 3 years earlier, leading investigators to believe that an impostor had been working in the Vault for some time. The impostor escaped, but not without causing further trouble for the Vault. After the discovery of the body, Keeper Ferqyr reviewed the contents of the bank and realized that enough currency was stolen to crash Absalom's economy if it isn't found or replaced. The Brotherhood is searching tirelessly for the killer, and though anyone and everyone is considered a suspect, the Cult of Norgorber and the Apsis Consortium have been cast with the most suspicion. Ferqyr's distraction with the crisis has allowed Nomarch Alain Always to push much of his own agenda through the council, strengthening his guild's power over who can work where in the district.

NPCs Bor Dralfo (do-gooder); Arkonis and Finwick Severus (priests); Ferridan Severus (parishioner); Haven Bannister (eager vigilante); Jostlin Ferqyr (high priestess); Kefilwe (sacred auditor)

Lending Practices

The Vault of Abadar has consistently funded new and unconventional ventures of Absalom's artists and merchants, pushing a silent agenda of innovation and entrepreneurship. Loans are always structured such that they ensure the Vault's profits to increase, even if the artists or entrepreneurs fail.

When issuing loans for sums more than 1,000 silver pieces, or loans to those without a permanent residence in Absalom, the Vault typically requests collateral in the form of magical items or art pieces. In rare cases, (typically when issuing larger loans to adventurers), the Vault's priests may employ a *geas* ritual to ensure the loan's terms are adhered to.

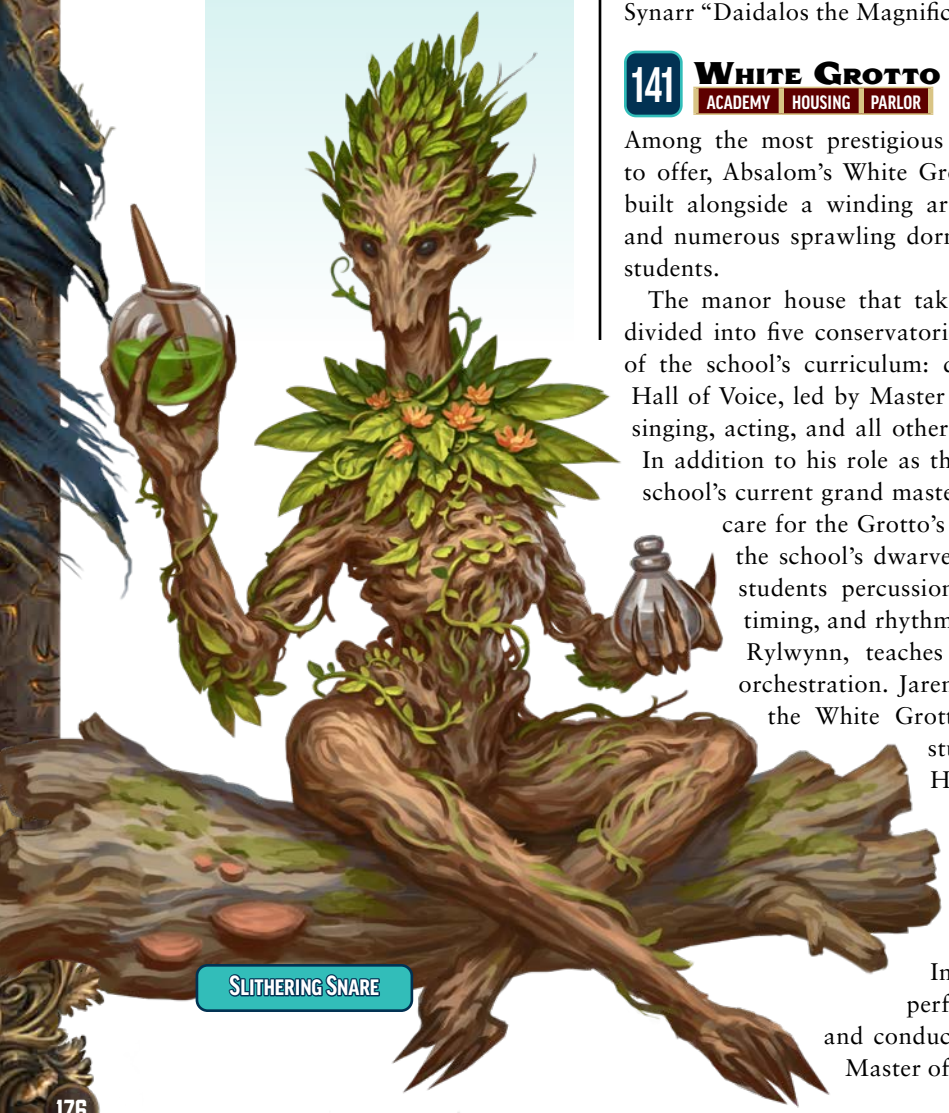
Loans issued to adventurers are typically made to a maximum amount of 10 percent of the wealth appropriate for that adventurer's level, charged at 10-percent interest per week until repayment is made in full. The Vault recognizes that adventurers are often capable of making money very quickly, provided they can outfit themselves with new gear, but is also cognizant of the risk should an adventurer die in pursuit of treasure. The adventurer must return to the Vault of Abadar to make their repayments, and any attempt to escape a large debt could lead the priesthood to call on the aid of powerful servants from the Great Beyond to track down delinquent borrowers.

Shifting Fortunes

Although few suspect the true scope of the economic crisis facing the Church of Abadar and indeed Absalom itself due to the chaos swirling behind the scenes at the Vault of Abadar, numerous power players in the city have begun to suspect something may be terribly amiss. Alain Always suspects a distraction has dimmed Jostlin Ferqyr's fighting spirit, but has no idea how bad it truly is, or precisely what the trouble involves. Lady Alyssia of House Avenstar senses trouble through contacts in the Brotherhood, and outside agents of the Abadarian faith like Kefilwe and Vrowclaw of Brevoy are all too close to discovering the truth.

LESHYS IN THE CITY

While the idea that leshys would exist in significant numbers in an urban sprawl might sound illogical, a single visit to the Ivy District is all that's needed to abolish these misconceptions. All heritages of leshy can be encountered in Absalom, but the most common include leaf leshys, root leshys, and vine leshys. Seaweed leshys are, naturally, more commonly encountered in the Docks or the Puddles, but don't dwell in large numbers there. Overall, cactus leshys are the rarest leshy heritage in Absalom, and those few who do dwell in the city tend to be foul-mouthed, cruel, and criminal-minded, fostering the unfair perception in Absalom that all cactus leshys are crooks.



Slithering Snare

140 The Wandering Monster

VENUE

A small, independent park maintained by the district's leshy population, the Wandering Monster houses a natural amphitheater on an open field of grass surrounded by natural stone and log seating. The park isn't legally regulated as a venue for performances and serves as a loophole in the Ivy District's harsh regulations prohibiting shows performed by anyone lacking membership in the Street Performers and Actors' Guild. The Wandering Monster is popular with traveling performers, shows with bawdy content, and questionable puppet shows, as well as a few local troupes who make regular appearances on set nights of the week.

Thistleguard patrols regularly harassed performers using the stage in the past, hoping to force them into joining Alain Always's guild. But recently, the Brotherhood of Abadar has kept one of their members stationed at the park to keep this from happening. The Brotherhood ensures no one is forced out unless they violate the law. Even so, the names of anyone performing at the Wandering Monster always get back to the nomarch, ensuring their inevitable blacklist from his guild and the district's more formal stages. As such, many of the Wandering Monster's performers have taken to wearing masks or other disguises and to performing under pseudonyms.

NPCs Haven Bannister (scornfully scanning the scene); Larkin Waever (comedian); Llew Gladwyn (working out soliloquies for an upcoming one-man show); Slithering Snare (tending to the plants); Lord Synarr "Daidalos the Magnificent" (performing exciting magical displays)

141 White Grotto

ACADEMY HOUSING PARLOR

Among the most prestigious bardic colleges the Inner Sea region has to offer, Absalom's White Grotto is comprised of a large manor house built alongside a winding artificial creek, an impressive amphitheater, and numerous sprawling dormitories to house the college's overflowing students.

The manor house that takes up the bulk of the school's campus is divided into five conservatories, each dedicated to one of five branches of the school's curriculum: drum, pipe, script, string, and voice. The Hall of Voice, led by Master of Voice Rosvierre Ibanc, teaches students singing, acting, and all other performances involving the spoken word. In addition to his role as the Master of Voice, Rosvierre serves as the school's current grand master, and he is unwavering in his support and care for the Grotto's students and alumni. In the Hall of Drum, the school's dwarven Master of Drum Durga Den teaches his students percussion instruments and the basics of cadence, timing, and rhythm. The Master of String, the half-elf Etrenne Rylwynn, teaches stringed instruments and the basics of orchestration. Jaren of House Wycomb, a dashing fencer and the White Grotto's Master of Pipe, instructs the bardic students in wind instruments. Lastly, in the Hall of Script, the Master of Script Tai Yi Gan teaches composition of music, the written word, and all forms of visual media, from sculpture to painting. Most of the Grotto's instructors, with the exception of Durga Den, take pleasure in grooming the Inner Sea region's next generation of great performers, though they have few personal ties and conduct little business outside of the school. The Master of Drum, a perfectionist more concerned with

improving his own skill than helping his students, attends to them only when they interrupt him from his practice.

While the college operates independent of any guilds, it does pay significant fees to the Ivy District Council and to several of the district's larger businesses and playhouses, allowing students to perform freely without fear of political or legal repercussion. Students are identified throughout the district by their uniforms, simple tunics of green for apprentices, blue for journeymen, or black for masters. Upon their graduation, however, students must decide whether to join one of the district's guilds, and must deal with the normal difficulties of earning a living without the support of the school.

NPCs Avesta Guile (student); Dooley Gavix (student); Durga Den (master of drums); Etrenne Rylwynn (master of strings); Mother Jackal (performance patron); Lord Jaren (master of pipe); Rosvierre Ibanc (master of voice); Tia Yi Gan (master of script)

Performance Traditions

The following are currently the most popular types of performances in Absalom.

Circus Performances: Common in the Ivy District, these range from clowns at the Wandering Monster to high-art acrobatics performed on (or above) the stage.

Event Plays: Citizens often learn the latest news from these intentionally unentertaining presentations of current events.

Harp and Piano Concerts: These string instruments are currently en vogue in Absalom, though the popularity of gittern players is also on the rise.

Kortosi Dance: This partnered dance features frequent lifts and jumps.

Live Art: A new, contemporary art form that has risen to underground popularity in Absalom, live art features artists who use their bodies to create temporary sculptures or scenes.

Theater: Theater is the most popular form of entertainment in Absalom by far, particularly tragedies and dramas written in two or three acts.

ABSALOM'S MUST-SEE SHOWS!

Like everything else in the district, the shows performed on the Ivy District's stages are subject to the turbulent whims of fashion and favor. New plays replace the old in the popular playhouses, while the old move to the smaller, poorer stages. Even the most exclusive shows only stay current for a year at most, before the elites have all attended and the shows are seen as old and uncouth—matters of yesterday that no one of culture cares for any longer.

These five shows, praised as must-sees, are currently the most popular art events in Absalom.

The Fortunate: This tragedy takes place in two parts and shows how quickly luck can change.

Garden of Grace: This high-art circus production is performed by the Strange Bizarre, a troupe of Varisian acrobats known for their elaborate costumes and sets.

Kato Exhibit: An art exhibit in one of the Ivy Playhouse's galleries showcases the works of Ustalavic sculptor Cris Kato. Kato's sculptures depict animals and flowers in varying stages of decay.

The Seat of the Butterfly Lord: Some speculate that this five-act expressionist production rose to popularity largely because no one would admit they didn't understand it.

Trebuchet: Told from the perspective of a poor fisherman and his struggling family, this play tells the story of the recent string of rebellions in Cheliax.

ELSEWHERE IN THE IVY DISTRICT

142. Archerus Manor: The internationally famous painter Endrik Archerus dwells in this looming stone tower—a major element of the district's skyline.

143. The Chamber Grove: Once a beloved theater, this converted structure now serves as the seat of the Ivy District Council.

144. Dacilane Manor: The sprawling four-story estate of Lady Miranda Dacilane is surrounded by a tall, wrought-iron fence and is overly decorated in macabre Asmodean statuary.

145. District Courthouse: The district's tiny courthouse hasn't expanded in centuries. As a result, huge crowds gather in the square in front of it, providing an audience to some of the city's most innovative and distracting street performers.

146. It Sparkles!: Popular workshop and gallery of the unpopular jeweler Jembar Duskyshankle.

147. Kyonin Embassy: Luxurious Castrovelian estate owned by the elven nation of Kyonin. A series of rotating ambassadors serve the diplomatic interests of the Viridian Crown here. Rumors abound that Queen Telandia Edasseril herself will soon visit the city for an audience with Wynsal Starborn!

148. The Northman's Woodworks Galleria: Workshop and gallery of the famed woodworker Hans the Northman.

PETAL DISTRICT

District Council Conclave of Flowers
Headquarters The Hothouse
Satrap (as Nomarch) Urkon of House Ormuz
District Watch Lotus Guard
Headquarters Hillview Station
Captain of the Watch Folant "Ferret" ap Morilla
Key NPCs Brythen Blood (high curator of the College of Mysteries, district seat on the Low Council, retired second spell lord); Scion Lord Celedo of House Morilla (scheming, manipulative patriarch); Lady Dyrianna of House Avenstar (guildmaster of the Courtesans' Guild, high hetaera of Calistria); Scion Lord Kerkis of House Damaq (chancellor of the exchequer); Samel Maleagant (senior priest-advocate of the Court of Black Paper); Mother Jackal (mystagogue of the Eaters of Knowledge); Scion Lady Neferpatra (first lady of laws, member of the High Council); Urkon of House Ormuz (satrap of the Conclave of Flowers); Scion Lord Yamthar of House Ormuz (host of influential intellectual gatherings)
Services hotel suite (200 sp per night); excellent meal (20 sp); rented carriage with matching horses (30 sp per day); tour of a noble's manor (5 sp); standard legal services at the Court of Black Paper (10+ sp per hour); evening at the Silken Court, entertainment included (2,000 sp); entry fee for the Erastil Club (30 sp)

DISTRICT SUMMARY

The grandest homes of Absalom's rich and powerful line the stately streets of the Petal District. Non-residents come to the Petal District to study at the oldest school of magic in Absalom, the College of Mysteries, or to beseech mercenaries at one of the district's many hunting lodges-turned-adventurers' guilds. Lurking just beneath the surface of the Petal District's austere guise, nobles and power brokers meet in certain estates and exclusive parlors to conduct much of the city's unspoken Shadow War in prolonged bouts of spycraft and treachery.

The Petal District is the wealthiest part of one of the richest cities on Golarion. The aristocrats who dwell on Aroden's Hill, in the northeastern corner of Absalom, are as far above your typical well-to-do trademaster or border count as those worthies are above beggars squatting in the street. From their Petal District palaces, Absalom's great and good—or at least its wealthy and powerful—control the fates of thousands. Merchant empires are run from the Petal District, as are ancient noble houses that can count their years back to Aroden's ascension. To be a Petal District noble, it is said, is perhaps as close to a heavenly existence as is possible on this side of Pharasma's court.

A few businesses catering to the impossibly wealthy thrive here, but most of the district consists of noble estates speckled along the sides of Aroden's Hill, typically with courtyards or gardens attached. Broad boulevards connect the estates, paved with sparkling stones and marked with brick-framed medians filled with flower gardens, the source of the district's name. The most prestigious parts of the Petal District are near the top of Aroden's Hill, though those who haven't quite reached those heights often debate whether a manor overlooking the bay is more desirable than one facing the Kortos Mounts. Those who can see both are often unutterably smug about it.

Every palace houses a contest between comfort, display, and security. Comfort comes in many forms, from extravagant meals prepared by the best chefs in the Inner Sea to luxurious parlors with soft cushions and pleasant music. Most of all, comfort comes in the form of the veritable army of servants that staffs each manor. Many of these servants dwell in quarters found in attics or basements in the palaces, while others make their way up and down discreetly obscured tree-lined paths from Eastgate or the town of Copperwood every day. This host of butlers, cleaners, servants, and cooks has its own society and its own code, founded on service and loyalty to their noble masters—and which the wiser aristocrats return. A butler at a well-to-do Petal District palace often lives as well as a prominent merchant in other cities.

Display is perhaps even more important than comfort. Conspicuous consumption is the order of the day, and while the various house scion

PETAL DISTRICT
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ladies and lords tend to have better things to do, their junior relatives vie to outdo each other in flights of fancy. Galas and soirees boost ever more bizarre and awe-inspiring entertainment, while packs of masons and carpenters build wonders out of marble and ivory and gold leaf. The effect is sometimes tawdry, often impressive, and always memorable.

Security is the final consideration, for the sorts of people who live in the Petal District have many enemies and many possessions people might like to steal. The Lotus Guard patrols the district with zeal, and stout walls and sharp fences surround nearly every estate. The wisest lords take more subtle measures, as well: magical defenses, captive beasts, private guards, and sinister traps. Some defenses are publicly displayed and admired for their ingenuity and ruthlessness, but every noble palace has at least one hidden surprise designed specifically for the enterprising intruder.

DISTRICT LOCATIONS

The following are some of the Petal District's most notable locations.

149 Ahnkamen Estate

ARCHIVE RESIDENCE

The beautiful Osirian villa of House Ahnkamen is famous for its gardens and its parties, the latter usually taking place in the former. The estate typically hosts galas and gatherings every two weeks, and while they're not the most exclusive or fashionable parties in Absalom, they are some of the most fun and most frequent. The grounds' extensive gardens, with dozens of Osirian-style fountains and reflecting pools, rank among the city's finest works of art. In the evenings, tiny bats come to flit around the pools, catching insects on the wing and delighting party-goers.

None of the cheerful socialite attendees know that beneath their feet lies the domain of Mother Jackal, an ancient Leng ghoul. Over the centuries, the undead sorceress has turned the Ahnkamen Estate's sub-basements into something quite homey, at least for one such as Mother Jackal. There are temple-caverns dedicated to Yog-Sothoth and other Outer Gods, ritual spaces for the Eaters of Knowledge cult, a library containing extremely rare and obscure tomes, and a massive larder where dead taken from Absalom's prisons are left to ripen to the ghoul's taste. At the very center of the complex is Mother Jackal's sanctum, decorated in a style older even than Ancient Osirion, with a massive pool of something pitch-black at the center. Security is provided by unwitting house guards and young bravos, by Mother Jackal's illusions and abjurations, and should all else fail, by the formless, alien creature that dwells in the black pool.

Only the highest echelon of House Ahnkamen—very much including Scion Lady Neferpatra—is aware of Mother Jackal's role in the family's affairs. The association predates the arrival of the house from Osirion centuries ago, and it's thanks to the old ghoul's magical powers that the first Ahnkamen settlers rose so quickly in matters of death and law in Absalom. Over all those years, the family amassed a substantial collection of legal documents, law codices, and death records available nowhere else in the city. Government officials, historians, adventurers, and other curious folk often entreat Lady Neferpatra (or inevitably one of her less-busy servants or siblings) to peruse the collection for one reason or another. The family allows this only on rare occasions, as the library's lower stacks grant direct access to the manor house's elaborate understructure, and thus into the personal realm of the family's ghoulish benefactor. Ironically, Mother Jackal has dwelled in Absalom longer than any of its current inhabitants, with memories going back to the city's Age of Expansion (and all the way back to Ancient Osirion before that)—her mind possesses

FOUR FASHION TIPS FOR ABSALOM

The people of Absalom sit at the crossroads of a thousand trade routes, filling their pockets with coin and their heads with foreign ideas. Anyone hoping to fit in should know the following fashion facts.

Color is King: Foreign trade makes dyes cheap in Absalom, and even the poorest longshoreman can afford clothing dyed with rose madder or woad, while aristocrats are garbed in saffron and purple.

Diadems are Forever: Azlanti influence is strong in Absalom. Azlanti circlets and diadems are considered the height of aristocratic dignity, especially when set with cabochon-cut gems and in the sweeping Azlanti style.

Foreign is Fashionable: Absalom residents are fascinated with the many disparate traders that visit their shores, and so wearing something from a land you've visited is considered quite attractive. Nobles often get rings in local styles, while poorer traders pick up hats or scarves.

Pants are Politics: In Absalom, pants and breeches are associated with the working class, and have connotations of youth, physical activity, and violence. Robes, meanwhile, are considered aristocratic, genteel, scholarly, dignified, and old-fashioned. Skirts, kilts, and long tunics split the difference and are thus neutral. As a result, Absalom's political blocs are sometimes called the Robes (Optimates), Skirts (New Absalom), and Pantaloons (Citizens' League).

TEMPLE POLITICS

Some of the hotheads in the Skinsaw branch of the Cult of Norgorber have tired of the Court of Black Paper's semi-heretical ways. Six cult assassins waylay Senior Priest-Advocate Samel Maleagant on his way back from meeting a client. One of them, posted as a lookout and dressed as a dandy, tries to draw away anyone who gets too close to the scene, but due to a distraction from an unexpected bystander, Samel makes a break for it. The cultists are left trying to catch their fleeing target and decide to dispose of all witnesses. Later, anyone involved might discover that the charming gentleman involved in that unfortunate assault is one of the senior leaders of Norgorber's cult in Absalom, and their mere proximity at the wrong time has earned them dangerous enemies and even more dangerous friends.

far more valuable secrets than all of the vaunted Ahnkamen librams and scrolls combined.

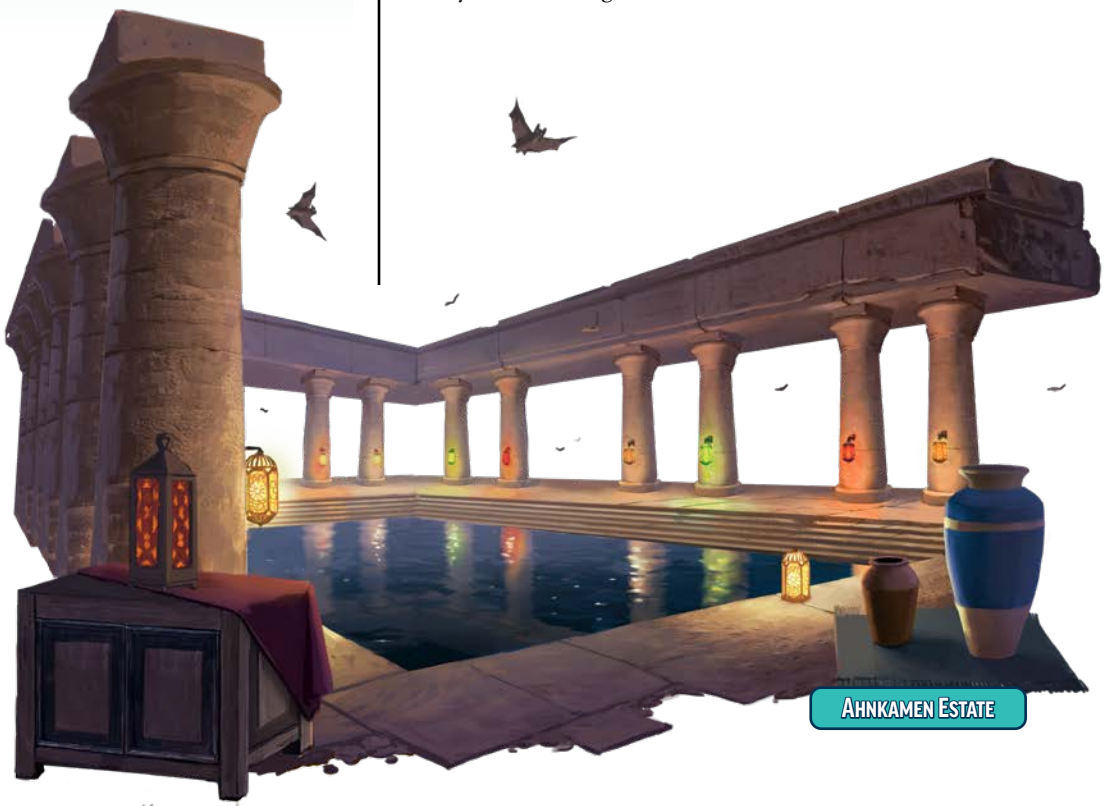
NPCs Lady Anilah (chatting up Lord Rogren at a party); Lord Darin (visiting reveler, in the company of Lady Kiya); Diasco Vade and Jaress Molinarro (reluctant revelers); Dremdhet Salhar (politely arguing with Lord Omrys about the Pathfinder Society beside a resplendent garden fountain); Gressil Kluun (reluctant reveler); Kalavess (out-of-place reveler in an ill-fitting gown); Lady Kiya (resident, in the company of Lord Darin); Mother Jackal/"Lady Maut" (power behind the throne); Lady Miranda (visiting reveler); Scion Lady Neferpatra (preoccupied family matriarch); Lord Omrys (garden party host); Pasharran (visiting the manor understructure in an attempt to bring Mother Jackal into his Urgathoan alliance); Lord Rogren (keeping company with with other Osirian nobles at a garden revel); Sanloria Percota (talking history with Lord Rogren); Lord Synarr and Lady Dhrami (keeping company at a revel); Verica Strange (performing a private concert)

150 Castle Blakros

EMPLOYER | HOUSING | RESIDENCE | VENUE

This looming, black stone edifice at the heart of the Petal District looks more like a military fortress than the palace home of one of Absalom's most powerful noble families. The fortified 20-foot walls, crenelated towers, and imposing drawbridge gate aren't merely for convenience or show. Castle Blakros is not just the residence of the family, but also the repository of the family's vast fortune, much of it in the form of priceless historical artifacts. Blakros Museum, in the Wise Quarter, serves as the public venue for the display of some of the family's most popular relics, but the entire Blakros collection is far too large to fit within the museum, and a significant majority of the family treasures—including several never before put on public display, are available for the appreciation only of members of the family and their honored guests.

Scion Lady Hamaria Blakros carefully manages daily activity at the castle, often engaging adventurers to solve problems her family's nearly countless agents for whatever reason cannot handle. Despite the



Ahnkamen Estate

prominence of the traditional Blakros decor, business at Castle Blakros seldom involves the family's antiquities collection. Rather, the schemes of Lady Hamaria and her ambitious daughter, Lady Michellia, more often involve the family's international mercantile operations or even their local political machinations.

NPCs Scion Lady Hamaria (head of the household); Lady Imrizade (resident); Jeon Raeng-Woo (visiting Tian trade representative); Lady Michellia and Lord Damian (residents); Trelliun (planning fleet deployments)

151 The College of Mysteries

ACADEMY HOUSING

Absalom's oldest school of magic dates back to the earliest pilgrims invited to the Isle of Kortos by Aroden himself. The order—then known as the House of Secrets—was established by advanced practitioners of arcane and occult traditions drawn from the many different cultures flocking to the nascent city. These adepts shared their secrets with one another, pooling their knowledge and expertise to strengthen Absalom and attract more like-minded initiates from the lands of the Inner Sea and beyond.

The organization's ruling board, the Assembly of Enigmas, transformed the school from an esoteric confederacy to a formal educational institution as a reaction to the foundation of the Arcanamirium by the Arclords of Nex in the era following the disastrous Pirate Siege of Absalom. Re-establishing the organization as the College of Mysteries, the Enigmas invited the sons and daughters of Absalom's elite to enroll in formal magical instruction, casting them as the ultimate inheritors of the arcane and occult traditions of the Age of Destiny. To this day, tuition remains torturously high, the domain of only the wealthiest apprentices—or the most promising, who receive free education scholarships at the decree of the Assembly.

Instructors at the College of Mysteries are known as curators, as they see themselves as custodians of hidden knowledge. They are well paid and well regarded in Absalomian society. All must sign loyalty oaths to the Assembly of Enigmas that extend far beyond the end of their tenures. Many are former students, which has led to some criticism that the school has become insular and tradition bound. Although the college boasts a widespread campus, most daily courses take place under a giant dome of arcane-fused gemstones and glass called the Lens.

Each subject taught by the college is referred to as a "course of mystery." Each course is divided into four stages of mastery, designed to take 2 to 3 years to complete. Students are called "riddles" until they complete at least one stage of mystery, at which point they are considered professionals worthy of being employed with their knowledge. Every stage completed grants a new title: "shadow," "charade," and "labyrinth." After completing the fourth stage of study—always conducted one-on-one with a senior curator—the student is considered a grand master, and gains the title of "enigma." The new master thereafter qualifies for admission into the Assembly of Enigmas, though few receive an actual invitation to do so.

Students who achieve the rank of enigma also qualify to don the *irezoko*, a complex pattern of indelible arcane marks worn upon the face. These marks descend from the Varisian tradition, but no longer have the same type of sorcerous power as true Varisian arcane tattoos. A student with a new *irezoko* can be sure to be invited to at least a few major fetes in the Petal District in the following weeks, as curious minor nobles make a game of trying to discern the mark's meaning, and more experienced trademasters and overseers seek to make contact with a powerful potential agent.

NPCs Brythen Blood (high curator); Derica Foss (poor student on scholarship); Jovara Humbolt (enigma instructor); Lord Pendleton (rich student)

TEA AND CORPSES

Eagle-eyed and inquisitive travelers in the Petal District at night spot an empty, black-clad wagon departing Spiralcross Cemetery. Successfully shadowing the wagon tracks it to the Brine prison in the Puddles District. Backtracking, meanwhile, leads to an ancient mausoleum, which contains a secret passage that eventually leads to a decadent subterranean parlor, where the ghoul-sorceress Mother Jackal is just sitting down for a meal of dead men and Vudran tea. The delighted ghoul invites any visitors to stay and chat, and even finds a few stale cakes for less iron-stomached guests. Those who are polite and sharp-witted can learn much of magic and secret history. Violence is met with dire spell-work and a triggered cave-in as Mother Jackal retreats. In either case, attempts to find the underground parlor later are likely to fail, as Mother Jackal collapses and reroutes the tunnels leading to her lair, but those who make a favorable impression may receive new invitations to "dine," and perhaps even entry into the Eaters of Knowledge cult.

A LITTLE DEATH

Sightseers wandering through a park come across Nobukazu, a kitsune courtesan of the Silken Court, who has a small problem. He had been accompanying Lord Perian of House Arnsen, cousin of Lord Avid, when in the middle of some festivities the old lord's heart gave out. Not only does this leave Nobukazu with an extremely inconvenient corpse, but he and Lord Perian are due at the Ivy Playhouse in an hour for a rendezvous with Lord Kerkis of House Damaq. Perhaps someone can help Nobukazu out of his predicament, if not out of pity for the hyperventilating kitsune, then out of consideration for the rewards he, and Dyrianna, can offer.

New Class Feat

Irezoko Tattoo is a special class feat you can take as one of your class feats if you are a member of any class that grants focus spells and meet its other prerequisites.

IREZOKO TATTOO **FEAT 4**

UNCOMMON

Prerequisites Expert in Arcana or Occultism

Access You are a member of the College of Mysteries

Your face bears an intricate magical tattoo known as the *irezoko*, a badge of your understanding of your chosen field of magic and a recognition of your advancement within Absalom's College of Mysteries. Choose a class that you are a member of that grants you access to a focus pool. When you take this feat, it gains the trait that applies to your chosen class. Once per day, you may concentrate upon the pattern of your *irezoko* to recover 1 Focus Point as a three-action activity.

152 Court of Black Paper

MERCHANT TEMPLE

The Court of Black Paper is the premier temple of the Reaper of Reputation in Absalom, and has a fair claim to being one of the largest Norgorberite temples in the Inner Sea region. In a nod to tradition, the temple proper is underground, accessed by way of a grand, spiraling stairwell of ink-black stone, down which congregants must descend in darkness before entering the vast ritual space. Falls, sprained knees, and broken legs are common, and considered a mark of the god's disfavor. In the aggressively ascetic temple, with no icons and no statues, supplicants pray for their secrets to stay safe, and for those of their foes to be uncovered.

The Court of Black Paper never lacks for devotees, as above the temple, and associated with it, is a large and well-respected law school and a vast suite of legal offices. The priest-advocates are invariably trained as lawyers and as ordained priests of Norgorber, who swear themselves to secrecy for each client upon the god's faceless mask. They secure wills, draft contracts, and conduct court cases, all backed by the ominous majesty of their god.

The senior priest-advocates, such as the cult's leader Samel Maleagant, can count noble houses, ambassadors, and crime lords among their clients. It is said that the Court of Black Paper sometimes takes on truly odd cases, such as finding loopholes in diabolic contracts or assuring the continuity of some undead horror's legal estate. So far, no one has managed to breach the temple sanctum to verify these rumors.

NPCs Guaril Karela (seeking representation against the city to disrupt a sewer expansion likely to tunnel into the lair of the Crowsworn); Lord Navvem (long-term client with numerous grievances against the city government and a long list of enemies); Samel Maleagant (high priest-advocate)

153 Damaq Palace

RESIDENCE

Whereas other nobles and aristocrats might refer to their ancestral homes as palaces, for House Damaq, the claim has the advantage of being backed up by enough money to rival the budget of several actual palaces throughout Golarion. While Damaq Palace isn't nearly as large or looming as many of Absalom's more eye-catching structures, none forget their first view of this extravagant display of what vast wealth can accomplish. The Damaqs frequently change up the decor of the building's facade, or even use their deep pocketbooks to rebuild, expand, or fundamentally

transform features of the palace as architectural styles change. Not much has changed in recent decades, with no significant updates or revisions taking place since the advent of the Age of Lost Omens. Some of the city's aristocracy whisper that the last few generations of the family have kept the palace static out of mourning for Aroden's death, while others wonder if this isn't an outward symptom of something more material—perhaps an indication that the Damaq wallets are finally starting to run dry? Scion Lord Kerkis has, of course, heard these rumors and dozens more, but he doesn't let them bother him nor does he validate them by even acknowledging their existence. Yet still, the whispers persist.

NPCs Scion Lord Kerkis (head of the household)

154 Erastil Club

ATTRACTION | HOUSING | SHRINE

Absalom is home to several hunting lodges—social clubs dedicated to the pursuit of various prey—but the Erastil Club is the largest and most prestigious. Founded by a priest of Erastil, the club is a secular organization, though there is a chapel to Erastil on the premises and many club members send a cursory prayer to the god before a hunt.

Anyone can become a member for a modest fee and attend the club's talks on rare animals or its occasional displays of unusual wildlife. Hunters who are confirmed to have killed increasingly dangerous beasts ascend in the club ranks and receive new privileges. The kill of a stag or wolf allows entry to the club lounge, a lion grants access to the wine cellar, and a gorgon or bulette's death allows one to stay indefinitely in the club's living quarters or its outlying hunting lodges. Entry to the highest rank requires the confirmed kill of an adult dragon known to have killed innocents, and comes with a permanent pension, instant entry to any noble salon or gala in Absalom, and a very fancy medal.

The Club's Board is drawn from the cream of Absalom high society, and includes Lord Avid of House Arnsen, Lord Celedo of House Morilla, and Asilia of Gyr. In addition to supervising the hunters and ensuring that all kills are fairly earned, the Board engages in various acts of charity and animal conservation—the Club funds half the temples of Erastil in Absalom, and works to ensure that no animals are overhunted or abused.

NPCs Lord Avid, Lord Celedo, and Asilia of Gyr (board members); Dremdhet Salhar and Lord Urkon (admiring a recent trophy); Pyl Gillseed (thirsty lounge lurker planning a lion hunt); Theodric Alverteen (recounting his travels and great hunts, but struggling to recall precise details)

155 Fiddlemourn Manor

RESIDENCE

The splendid estate of Lord Oved Blakros stands among the district's most picturesque. The gorgeous two-story Azlanti Revival stone manor house at the center of the grounds originally served as a musical conservatory, but closed just over a century ago after its founder died of old age. Lord Oved bought and renovated it in 4693 AR, adding personal touches like the stampede of galloping horses carved into the heavy oak front doors.

The grounds feature a neatly trimmed lawn of green grass punctuated by broad-leafed, shady trees, numerous tropical plants, and immaculately tended flower beds divided by 10-foot-tall flowering tapestry hedges. A 12-foot-high fieldstone wall surrounds the whole. Oved's five beloved wolfhounds prowl the garden paths, nuzzling up to welcome guests or savagely attacking unexpected visitors. Their kennel—finer accommodation than most of the city's population enjoys—is designed in imitation Kortos Classical style, scaled-down "monumental" stonework recreated in painstaking detail.

Oved's horses receive similarly sumptuous accommodation in a series of well-appointed stables beyond the manor house, near the estate's rear wall.

The Fall of the House of Uiry

While the splendid manors and well-dressed nobles of the Petal District are symbols of aspiration for much of Absalom's populace, many residents worry that crime or circumstances could snatch away their fortune and status in a moment. The haunting tavern song known as "The Fall of the House of Uiry" is a particularly popular example of this fear in musical form, and is a frequent inclusion in the song lists of the district's upscale pubs and eateries.

Best take some care
On who you dare
To let into your house.
Not every one
Is here for fun
Or harmless as a mouse.

A stranger's call
Can be your fall
Or something even worse.
So let us learn
As we return
To Uiry House's curse.

An evening knock
At nine o'clock
Might catch you by surprise.
It might be best
To shun your guest
And bolt the door likewise.

Remember well
The grisly hell
That came to one man's hall.
And lock up tight
Against the blight
That caused old Uiry's Fall.

A POINTED DEBATE

Lord Darin of House Morilla and Lady Kiya of House Ahnkamen are teenage lovers and fellow students at Blackblade's fighting school. Their current argument concerns the superiority of Taldan rapiers versus Osirian khopeshes. They invite a suitable passing warrior into their debate, culminating in a one-on-one martial duel with each. Handling the situation with grace and good humor (and not completely crushing the students' egos) may win some aristocratic friends—but needless to say, killing or maiming either teen provokes a swift and brutal reprisal from both families.

Lantern Lodge

Lord Oved is House Blakros's resident horse expert, and the stables here contain—by good measure—the most valuable mounts owned by the family's worldwide trade network.

Lord Oved's business in the Swardlands frequently calls him away for months at a time, leaving Fiddlemourn Manor uninhabited as often as not. Family members take advantage of Oved's absence (with his blessing), using the estate for intimate family gatherings, small dinner parties, and other social functions.

NPCs Lord Oved (master of the house); Lord Pendleton (serving as absent-minded caretaker while Lord Oved is away); Trelliun (enjoying a drink with Lord Oved)

156 Lantern Lodge

HOUSING VENUE

Built in 4711 AR by Venture-Captain Amara Li, this lovely complex of Tien-Shu-styled buildings and courtyards is the Avistani center of the Pathfinder Society's Tian contingent. Originally, they worked to ensure that Tian interests were not forgotten by the Pathfinders. Very quickly, however, the Lodge found itself embroiled in general advocacy of Tian causes in Absalom, such that today only a fraction of the Lodge's staff in Absalom are actually concerned with Pathfinder business, a shift accelerated by Amara Li's return to Tian Xia a few years ago.

Instead, the Lantern Lodge concerns itself with supporting the various Tian communities in Absalom. The Lodge helps new immigrants get settled in Absalom, connects them to legal services, provides small loans, and mediates between city authorities and the Tian enclaves in Tiantown. The Lodge's peaceful landscape gardens and sweeping-roofed halls are also an oasis of Tian culture in the larger city, and expatriates can often be found socializing and relaxing around the Lodge, while Tian groups often use it as a venue for artistic performances such as mask-dancing or Shu Opera. Of course, hosting people from so many Tian nations and ethnic groups occasionally leads to conflict; while many expatriates are willing to leave old grudges behind, not all are so accommodating, and arguments, fistfights, and the occasional duels are not uncommon.

NPCs Lord Haimon (retired Pathfinder recounting tales of his third visit to Tian Xia); Jeon Raeng-Woo (trade liaison); Karakah (spreading the faith of Hei-Feng); Kosanti Hokamagi (artist); Nobukazu (off-duty courtesan); Tia Yi Gan (famous artist)

157 Magpie Manor

HOUSING VENUE

Half social club, half retirement home, this ornate marble-and-tile structure dominates a busy corner near a popular marble fountain. Patrons pay a princely sum for the privilege of attending the various parties, dinners, and impromptu performances organized by the manor's domos. The domos are retired performers, mostly actors or musicians but with the occasional puppeteer or professional wit included, who have grown too old or infirm to continue to live as wandering players or put on stage shows every night, but who have the skill, the fame, or the notoriety to amuse the patrons who visit Magpie Manor. Most do little actual work beyond being charming, although they do take on students or occasionally craft

custom performances to the patrons' tastes. Domos receive a share of the Manor's profits.

NPCs Absol Tullman IV (resident); Iacovius Vatatze (composer and pianist, domo); Jaivati (puppeteer, domo); Theodric Alverteen (resident); Tolara Alverteen (visiting her father); Umlox Vulm (caretaker)

158 Morilla Palace and the Tally Wall

HOUSING | RESIDENCE | SHRINE

In Absalom, it is said that the smart thief is one who can avoid three places: prison, Hell, and Morilla Palace. A beautiful estate with elegant gardens, exquisite paintings, and sumptuous furniture, the ancestral home of House Morilla is a deathtrap to the unwary. Every member of House Morilla is skilled in a dozen ways of killing. The captain of the Lotus Guard is a member of the house and scrupulously keeps the area well-patrolled (more out of concern for the thieves' lives than his family's security). The famed Trapmaster Tok has seeded the palace with scores of lethal devices. Finally, if the patrols and Tok-Traps were not enough, generations of Morillas have set traps to catch their kin, and the most inventive or successful of these devices have been kept around, rather like another family might keep their child's best drawing. Servants in Morilla Palace are invariably highly paid and profoundly paranoid.

The renowned lethality of Morilla Palace has nevertheless drawn reckless rogues from across the Inner Sea region, and their creatively gory deaths have led to the creation of a memorial by the east wall. Initially a graffito tally of dead thieves, the Tally Wall now hosts a small shrine to Pharasma, with crude statues and flowers. A small collection run jointly by House Morilla and the Bloody Barbers pays for a Pharasmin priest to perform ceremonies once a week, a curious bit of cooperation and mutual respect that neither party feels like remarking upon.

NPCs Lady Annasendra, Lord Darin, Lord Donovar, and Lord Juartos (residents); Scion Lord Celedo (patriarch); Captain Folant (associate of Lady Gloriana); Lady Gloriana (cousin visiting from Taldor); Trapmaster Tok (testing one of his many snares protecting the estate)

159 Palace Ormuz

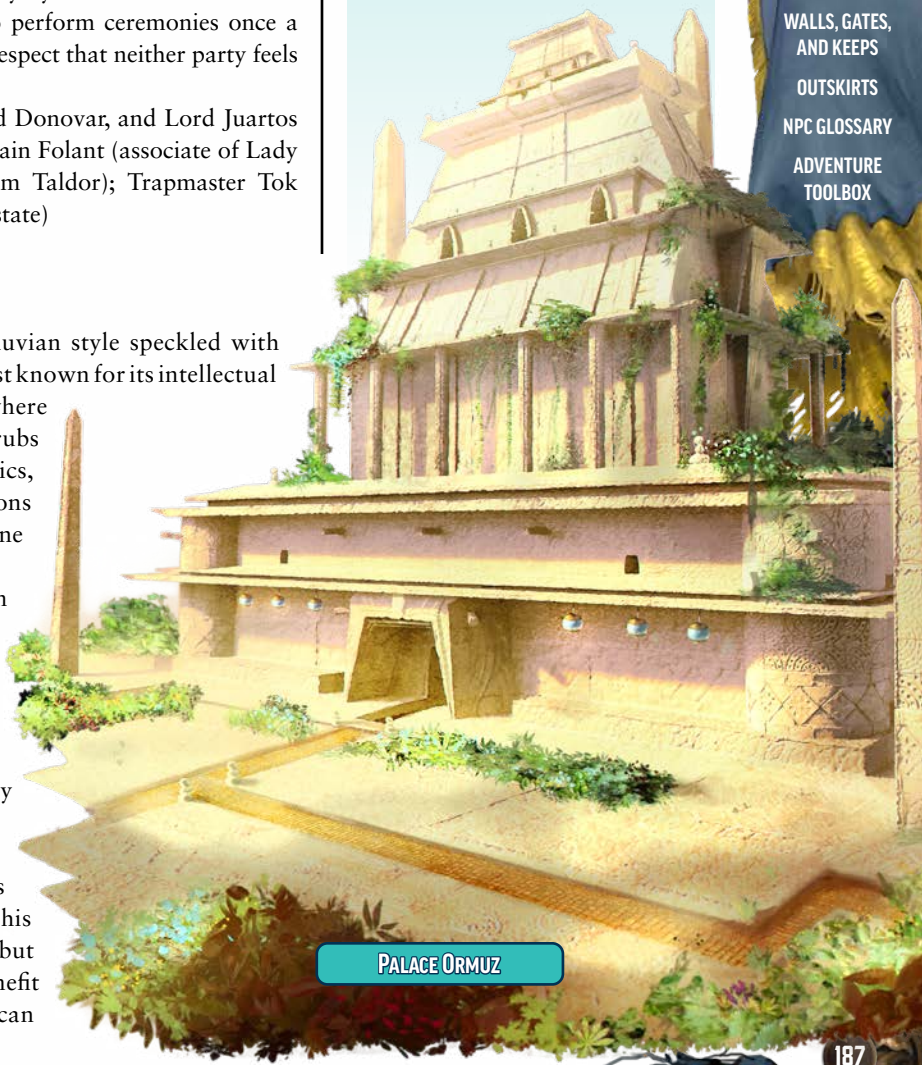
RESIDENCE | WORKSHOP

A sprawling complex in the whitewashed Thuvian style speckled with courtyards and gardens, the Palace Ormuz is best known for its intellectual salons organized by Scion Lord Yamthar, where a select subset of Absalom's aristocracy rubs shoulders with scientists, artificers, academics, and explorers. An invitation to attend the salons is a mark of status, and a request to speak at one is a jewel in any scholar's cap.

The south wing of the palace has been turned over to the pursuit of Lord Yamthar's mechanical hobbies. At any given time, a dozen alchemists and esoteric-engineers maintain laboratories there, living off Lord Yamthar's largesse in exchange for giving House Ormuz first claim at anything they develop. The south wing also houses Yamthar's growing collection of Jistkan artifacts, and a large workshop where the scion lord dabbles in his own artifice—Yamthar is aware that his talents lie in the salon and not in the factory, but he perseveres nevertheless, and he does benefit from having the best tools and tutors money can

Explosive Developments

An enormous blast shatters windows across the Petal District. Investigation swiftly traces its location to the south wing of Palace Ormuz, where a tenacious alchemical fire still rages. The smoke it produces is heinously toxic. Volunteers who help extinguish the blaze or rescue people from the fire will earn the gratitude of Scion Lord Yamthar, who arrives not long afterward. On the other hand, a light-fingered opportunist might take the chance to loot some of Lord Yamthar's collection of Jistkan artifacts, blaming their loss upon the uncanny flames. Either way, stopping the fire is only the beginning—the next question is who or what caused the explosion in the first place.



Palace Ormuz

CRIME REPORT

Although street crime isn't particularly common here, the Petal District is the site of numerous high-profile heists, kidnappings, and even the rare assassination of some prominent inhabitant. Absalom's manor houses are loaded with wealth, and just about everybody knows it. The Lotus Guard enjoys the highest pay of any district watch, and the cozy lifestyles of its officers results in an unearned reputation for corruption. Criminal groups active in the district include the Brattlebunch, the Forthright and the Smoke Knights.

buy. His current project is attempting to reactivate what he believes is an ancient Jistkan war machine, a hook-limbed arcane construct three times the size of the scion lord himself. Lord Yamthar has had no luck yet, but he remains optimistic.

NPCs Alina Muraabe (salon attendee); Bagara Broadfoot (scientific speaker); Chani Muraabe (receiving private instruction from Lord Yamthar); Chun Hye-Seung (salon attendee); Dremdhet Salhar and Lady Anilah (salon attendees); Lord Rogren (guest speaker); Lord Urkon (resident, salon attendee); Scion Lord Yamthar (patriarch, salon host); Yargos Gill (guest speaker)

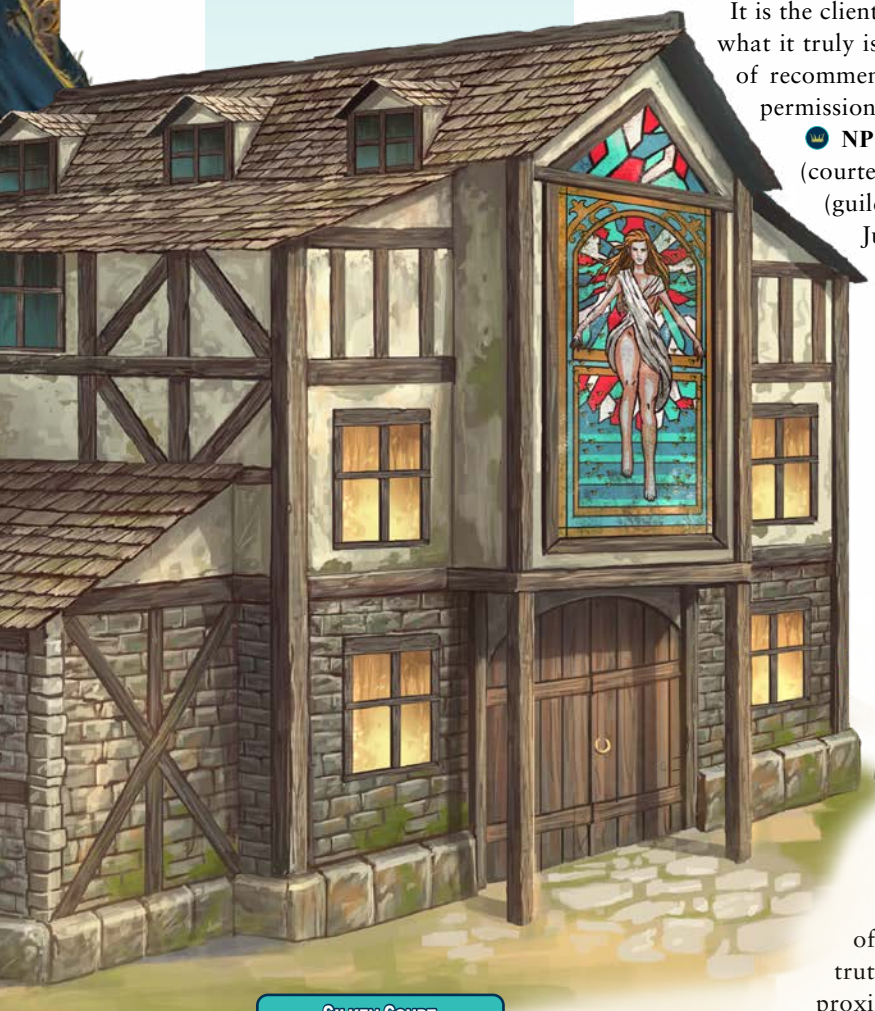
160 Silken Court

ATTRACTION | HOUSING | PARLOR | SHRINE

Under new management since Elissa the Fair's retirement a few years ago, the Silken Court has been renovated from top to bottom by Dyrianna of House Avenstar to create possibly the most famous and luxurious brothel in the Inner Sea. From the outside, the Court is an elegant but unassuming manor in a quiet corner of the Petal District, notable only for the beautiful stained-glass windows depicting Calistria standing in a glittering swarm of wasps—wasps which are said to animate for religious ceremonies or to stop intruders. Inside, the Court is a wonder of decadence and luxury, with damask and mahogany furniture, fine porcelain dinnerware, an art gallery containing nudes by Absalom's most famous artists (including a full-length portrait of Dyrianna as Calistria by Endrik Archerus), and a small chapel to the Unquenchable Fire.

It is the clientele and the employees that make the Silken Court what it truly is, however. Entrance to the Court requires a letter of recommendation from an existing patron or the personal permission of Dyrianna.

NPCs Chesele, Nobuzaku, and Versien of Nisroch (courtesans); Drock Ovix (patron); Lady Dyrianna (guildmistress); Lord Kerkis (patron); Lord Juartos (patron)



Silken Court

161 Spiralcross Cemetery

EMPLOYER | SHRINE

Located adjacent to the Ahnkamen Estate, Spiralcross Cemetery is the most prestigious graveyard in Absalom. Founded in the city's early days, Spiralcross has seen the burial of primarchs, high priests, and an absolute sea of nobles. Most are interred in mausoleums associated with noble houses or institutions, ranging in size from the Arodenites' vast memorial hall to the Scriveners' Guild's modest sepulcher, with ossuaries underground for the inevitable overflow. The cemetery's winding layout and sight-obstructing crypts give it a distinctly labyrinthine feel, and people looking for landmarks such as House Blakros's black marble vault or the sumptuously decorated Pharasmin chapel are advised to bring a map. For this reason, the cemetery is a popular place for discreet meetings and assignations.

Spiralcross Cemetery is the subject of its share of ghost stories and whispers of undead; though in truth, between the efforts of the Pharasmins and the proximity of Mother Jackal, few undead care to linger. This makes Spiralcross's one true mystery all the more

curious, as strange lights appear in the air over the cemetery on most nights, glowing orbs that dance through the darkness. Popular suspicion is that this has something to do with the War of Strings, as spies and agents hidden in the maze-like cemetery use simple spells to write coded messages in the night, or point out which crypts have secret caches or meeting places. Still, no one has admitted to cracking the codes yet, if codes they are. And at least some nights, the glowing lights move with uncommon purpose and, one might say, intelligence.

NPCs Lord Darin and Lady Kiya (young nobles on a romantic rendezvous); Ealan Foxglove (necromancer); Scion Lady Neferpatra (envoy for the dead)

162 Statue of Primarch Harvi

MONUMENT

The equestrian statue of this late Age of Enthronment primarch is one of the most famous and recognizable works of public art in all of Absalom. Sadly, this is primarily because it's one of the ugliest. The valiant primarch and hero of the Red Siege of 4499 AR looks decidedly constipated as he sits upon his mighty charger, the statue's stiff lines suggesting intestinal discomfort more than martial valor.

For years, the Conclave of Flowers has debated tearing down the statue, or at least moving it somewhere where it doesn't offend the eyes of every artistically-sensitive soul in the district. These discussions fall apart on the question of what should replace the statue. The Optimates have advanced the idea of putting up a statue to Lord Gyr and his adventuring comrades—including, of course, Lord Avid of House Arnsen. The Citizens' League prefers a monument commemorating the soldiers of Absalom's many sieges. The New Absalom faction has used the opportunity to attempt to woo the Vault of Abadar to their side, by proposing a statue dedicated to the god of cities. Threats and promises concerning the statue fly like sparrows in the Conclave, as whichever side wins gets a visible sign of its power in the heart of the Petal District.

NPCs Lady Darchanna and Jostlin Ferqyr (speechifying about replacing the statue with one of Abadar); Eivlind and Jacques Albers (tourists unflatteringly comparing the statue to much more beautiful examples in their native Taldor)

163 Uiry Manor Museum

ATTRACTION

Long ago, House Uiry was one of the notable players in the War of Strings. Then, in 4673 AR, a strange visitor arrived and was welcomed by House Uiry's scion lord. A footman was dispatched to a nearby manor to get more wine, and when he returned, every single living thing in the house was dead, from the scion lord down to the youngest daughter of the cook. The stranger was not found. The murders were never solved, and they remain one of Absalom's more popular and gruesome mysteries.

House Uiry never recovered from the blow and sunk gradually into obscurity and a sort of genteel poverty. To combat the latter, at least, the manor was turned into a museum. Visitors can gawk at trophies won in long-ago wars, at the few pieces of artwork and statues not yet pawned off, and of course, at the murder sites. To draw more paying sightseers, wax mannequins have been set up in the wine cellar depicting how the murders were thought to have occurred, while guides offer various popular theories as to the stranger's identity. Scion Lady Veridel, a child at the time of the murders and away at school, quietly refuses to spend so much as a single night at Uiry Manor, though she has also refused more than one offer to sell the building, for reasons she will not explain.

NPCs Eivlind and Jacques Albers (tourists taking in the sights)

Elsewhere in the Petal District

164. Crescent Manor: The opulent villa of the missing information broker Grand Master Torch was once a nexus of intrigue, but has been empty for several years. Recently, lights from upper-story windows have started rumors of Torch's imminent return to the city.

165. Hillview Station: Many of the city's most high-profile trials take place in this sumptuously appointed courthouse, known for the large public galleries looking down upon the proceedings from a series of cascading balconies. In addition to serving as the local district courthouse, the structure is also the headquarters of the Lotus Guard. It features a subterranean jailhouse with some of the most luxurious cells in the city.

166. The Hothouse: The Conclave of Flowers convenes in this glass building that doubles as a greenhouse filled with gorgeous plants imported from across the world. Intended as a metaphor for the transparency of local government, the resulting interior is stuffy, uncomfortable, and cloying, not unlike the monied interests that control the district council.

167. Madinani Manor: A tall wall of polished stone surrounds the estate and three-story mansion of Lady Darchanna of House Madinani, one of Absalom's leading political figures. The grounds boast extensive gardens rife with beautiful plants that also boast potent arcane or alchemical qualities.

PRECIPICE QUARTER

District Council Vigil's Council
Headquarters Vigil's Hope
Nomarch None (functionally Ulthun II)
District Watch None (functionally the knights of Vigil's Hope)
Headquarters None (functionally Vigil's Hope)
Captain of the Guard None
Key NPCs Kalavess (undead hunter); Tergul (leader of the Nailfist gang); Thulraga (high priestess of Urgathoa); Travost Klim (high priest of Pharasma); Ulthun II (Watcher-Lord of Lastwall in exile); Wrasp (high priest of Rovagug)
Services: Corpse disposal, limited smuggling, transport into the Darklands, rare poisons and psychoactive plants. Most city-based activity in the district is aimed at reclaiming key neighborhoods in preparation for Wynsal Starborn's upcoming Radiant Festival; opportunities for monster hunters abound!

In Absalom's early years, the mysterious wizard Beldrin built his tower on the rocky, storm-swept cliffs along the southern shore of the Isle of Kortos. His stronghold was a dazzling masterpiece of architecture, comprising three glorious ivory spires that rose from an impossibly precarious perch on the cliff's edge. Beneath the spires' shadow, the surrounding neighborhood grew wealthy and beautiful. The district's character began with a nucleus of students seeking to learn the secrets of Beldrin's arcane might, but that spirit of curiosity soon broadened to artistic and architectural experiments that transformed Beldrin's Bluff into an ever-changing monument to creativity and innovative expression.

The earthquake of 4698 AR devastated this movement. A neighborhood that had been known for high-end restaurants and glittering dance halls, where artists and aristocrats shared breathtaking views of sunsets over the water, suddenly plunged into screaming chaos. Fissures split off entire blocks, hurling terraced restaurants, celebrated playhouses, and tea gardens off the cliffsides into the ocean. Entire noble houses were wiped out in an instant, their manors cascading into rockfall and ruin. Two of Beldrin's three spires crashed into the sea, tearing away great chunks of the cliffside as they fell.

In less than an hour, Beldrin's Bluff was destroyed. The full extent of the damage was never assessed, and many deaths went uncounted, for hundreds of bodies were lost beneath stone or water and could not be recovered. Yet when the earth finally stilled its last shudder, the shaken survivors discovered that their miseries had only just begun.

It was as if the quake had freed some long-buried spirit of destruction that now rampaged across the ruins. Panic and dark rumors gripped the scattered survivors, who blamed outcasts and foreigners for their sufferings. Violent mobs and murderous cultists ran riot, tearing innocents apart. Many citizens fled. Those who remained found themselves trapped in a nightmare that deepened by the day. Demonic influences and malign magics began to course through the devastated district. Some believed that these originated from some arcane confinement in Beldrin's broken towers; others claimed that they'd arisen in response to the death cults that sprang up after the earthquake—or perhaps these cults had even caused the disaster.

All that was once beautiful in this place has been warped into hideous hunger, and all Absalom's efforts to reclaim the district now called the Precipice Quarter have come to naught. For many years, the Grand Council simply barricaded the Precipice Quarter off entirely. No one was permitted to cross into or out of the district between dusk and dawn, and few tried. Only murderers, thieves, and vagabonds sought sanctuary among the district's haunted, crumbling shells, and most of those came to grisly ends. The ones who returned, wild-eyed and

DISTRICT SUMMARY

In its prime, this district featured ancient magical towers, brightly colored homes, and a resplendent fairground, but all of that turned to rubble after an earthquake shattered the sector two decades ago. The quake sheered entire cliffs from the district and cast countless historical monuments into the harbor and the Docks, leaving the Precipice Quarter so ruined that it was abandoned to the undead and strange magic that arose in the disaster's aftermath.

PRECIPICE QUARTER
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gibbering of bulbous-headed halfling ghouls and marrow-eating vines, often wept for gratitude as they were led to the headsman's block.

Yet finally, after twenty years of haunted failure, a glimmer of hope has dawned. Watcher-Lord Ulthun II, driven out of Lastwall by the Whispering Tyrant's rise, has relocated to the Precipice Quarter with many of the remaining Knights of Lastwall. From their base at Vigil's Hope, they work to purify the quarter of its evil. Augmenting their efforts is the recent enthusiasm of Acting Primarch Wynsal Starborn, whose proclamation that the Precipice Quarter be the next site of Absalom's centennial fair, the Radiant Festival, has spurred industrialist investors to clamor for building rights while at the same time evoking both excitement and skepticism from the public at large. Only time will tell if Absalom's greatest minds can restore peace to a neighborhood that many had heretofore written off as a lost cause and resurrect the sector in time for the festival.

DISTRICT LOCATIONS

The following are some of the Precipice Quarter's most notable locations.

168 Arboretum Arcanis

DUNGEON

Once, this enchanted greenhouse was celebrated as one of Absalom's brightest jewels. Its enormous crystal dome sheltered ever-bearing fruit trees and fragrant flowers. Butterflies and honeybees pollinated the blossoms, while earthworms tilled the soil, and edible fungi disposed of any waste. None of the garden's plants or animals existed anywhere else in the world, yet their unique, magic-imbued ecosystem worked in perfect harmony, creating a source of wonder for wizards, druids, and naturalists alike.

When the earthquake struck, the arboretum's dome cracked, and a large portion of the crystal from its apex crashed to the ground. The magical fields within the greenhouse warped profoundly and inexplicably. The enchanted rainclouds that had nurtured the flowers and fruit trees turned an ugly dark purple, and their rain putrefied into caustic slime. The plants succumbed to agonizing blights or mutated into nightmarish things: black trees with weeping human eyes on the tips of their sickly branches; blood-sap sentinels; shambling fungal molds the size of cattle; and marrow-drinking vines that steal the memories, voices, and bones of those who fall among them. Worst of all are the vines rumored to grow within human corpses, animating them as puppets to walk among the living with the seeds of secret destruction buried between their bones.

Vines have grown through the crack in the great crystal dome, spreading so thickly across the acid-smeared glass that the arboretum's interior is perpetually dim. Silent purple lightning crackles through its poisoned clouds, and a haze of drizzling acid fogs the air, corrupting every living thing it touches. The rain's corruption works slowly, causing no more than a light rash and a feeling of dizziness at first, but it eventually progresses to open sores, oozing skin, and a rough, hacking cough that, after long exposure, produces gobs of partially dissolved lung tissue and throat lining. Soon after that point, victims either die or begin to change in ways that mirror the horrific transformations of the arboretum's other inhabitants. These transformations are as much mental and spiritual as physical, and leave little of the victim's original personality or morals intact.

No one knows what caused such a terrible perversion of the arboretum's once life-giving magic. Rumors of demonic corruption or Urgathoan cult rituals abound, along with stranger theories, but no one has yet produced any conclusive evidence to either prove or disprove any of the tales.

One of the few certainties about the Arboretum Arcanis is that the ruin is ruled by the ghoran druid Khaya, who has been more profoundly altered than any of the garden's other inhabitants by the malign influences that permeate

AGENTS OF EDGEWATCH

Pathfinder's Agents of Edgewatch Adventure Path starts where this book leaves off, featuring the establishment of a new district guard unit called the Edgewatch designed to help keep the district safe during the Radiant Festival. While events from campaign to campaign vary, it's assumed that the Edgewatch organization remains active in the region and continues to clear dangerous sites as Absalom works to reclaim the Precipice Quarter once and for all.

A MERRY HELL

A ghostly procession of capering jugglers, drummers, and stilt-walking ladies parades through the streets, all dancing to a tune that no one can hear. Moment by moment, the parade's illusory normalcy slips off: faces swell and slough away like poorly fitted masks, limbs grow too long or shrink to stumps, eyes become tiny, squinting holes. Yet the revelers are happy, so happy, pirouetting onward even as their shoes begin to smoke and blister, and their feet crack apart like charred nutshells. They dance toward a misty, glowing vision of a carnival in the distance, and viewers are seized with a sudden conviction that total happiness could be theirs, too, in that wonderland.

the place. For some years, it seemed that Khaya was able to withstand the poisons by planting her ghoran seed and shedding her blighted husk-body whenever the toxin load grew too great for the druid to overcome with her healing magic. However, the true dimensions of the tragedy eventually became clear: far from resisting the arboretum's curse, the ghoran was only absorbing more of its evil each time she replanted her seed in the garden's tainted soil. The ghoran druid is now the greatest terror in a place that holds nothing but suffering, walking woe, and death.

Recently, Iolanthe, the dryad queen living at the heart of the Grand Holt in Eastgate, has reached out to Watcher-Lord Ulthun via her agent, Korhül. The powerful fey offered to make common cause with the Knights of Lastwall to reclaim the Arboretum, an offer Ulthun was very pleased to accept. Though he refuses to visit the queen in her lair, he warmly welcomes her agents in the district and looks forward to a time when the haunted greenhouse might be exorcised and added to the acting primarch's plans for reclaiming the quarter.

NPCs Beirivelle Starshine (Lastwall knight reconnoitering the locale for future action); Khaya (corrupted mastermind); Slithering Snare (leshy looking after a beloved friend she fears has been lost to the darkness within)

169 Barterfall

NEIGHBORHOOD

When misery and chaos finally conquered Beldrin's Bluff, the more affluent survivors abandoned the district for safer parts of the city. Those who remained were generally either too poor to escape or had compelling reasons to hide from the law. Now, they and their descendants live in the least damaged part of the Precipice Quarter. Their neighborhood has no formal name, but is colloquially known as "Barterfall" because of its barter economy and physical precariousness. It's a cramped warren of old mansions, now crumbling and subdivided into dismal, stinking tenements, and shoddily built multi-floor shacks that lean against one another for support.

Few residents have formal employment; most subsist on fishing, trapping vermin for food, and growing whatever sparse plants they can nurture in rubble-strewn vacant lots. Violence and disease are ever-present, and basic infrastructure is nonexistent. The Precipice Quarter's other dangers make it impossible for Barterfall's residents to stabilize their difficult lives, so the tenements' condition worsens every year. While most of Barterfall's residents dream of a safer, cleaner life in Absalom proper, they are also suspicious and resentful of "city swanks," whom they accuse of having abandoned them like vermin.

A small Kalistocrat enclave stands near Barterfall, heavily guarded and closed off by high walls. The wealth, pride, and cleanliness of its inhabitants stands in stark contrast to the poverty of the Precipice Quarter other residents. These foreign traders, who came to the district to offer a trickle of money for the inhabitants' scavengings and occasional treasures they unearth from the ruins, are simultaneously envied and hated for all they represent.

NPCs The Ignited Juggler (serial killer on the hunt); Lemaria Kumari (Low Azlanti ambassador); Kalavess (resident); Trevlin Crest (visiting Kalistocrat enclave); Vosana (resident)

170 Beldrin's Tower

DUNGEON

Legend claims that before his death, the archmage Beldrin placed three objects of power in his three towers: a candelabra, horn, and broken shield. Each of the towers was named for the wonder it contained. When the earthquake shattered Beldrin's stronghold, two spires fell into the sea, leaving only the Tower of the Broken Shield clinging precariously to the increasingly eroded cliff.

The Tower of the Candelabra is sunk in a deep rift a few hundred feet off the coast, where it is not visible to surface vessels or human divers.

Azarketis who have ventured near the ruin report that the tower is largely intact, though its exterior is now heavily silted and overgrown with barnacles, making it difficult to discern any damage that might be hidden beneath. Even the entrance is hidden—if, indeed, the entrance is accessible and not buried beneath the tower's silt-sunken bulk. Once or twice a year, a deep percussive boom reverberates through the structure, groaning through the ocean depths like a whale's uneasy song. This strange sound, the gillmen report, fills its listeners with utter dread, such that they and any other sea life nearby flee in blind panic, convinced down to their bones that they are pursued by terrors they cannot name. Though none have ever been able to withstand the terror long enough to look back and see what might emerge from the broken tower, it doesn't appear to be an empty threat, for when the azarketis eventually return, they find the remains of sea creatures that could not flee strewn about the ocean floor. Brittle stars, burrowing crabs, and sea worms all lie white and dead on the silt, the life drained from their husks.

The Tower of the Horn rests in shallower waters. It fell near the cliffside, and its remains are revealed on nights of the full moon at low tide. Because of its relative accessibility, it has been breached and partially mapped, but the hazards deeper within have prevented a full exploration. Perhaps ironically, it's the tower's location in the shallows that make it relatively easy to reach and extraordinarily dangerous. Water rushing through the partially collapsed rooms and hallways creates sucking currents and tidal pressures that can easily drown or crush the unprepared. This constant churn, which carries along floating objects to further batter their surroundings, also damages and continually rearranges the tower's remaining arcane equipment, wards, power sources, and holding cells. The alternating forces of saltwater corrosion and oxidation, from the interior's repeatedly submersion and then exposure to air, have reacted unpredictably with alchemical and magical elements to create rooms of choking gas, chemical lightning, and worse. The result is an extremely hazardous environment, where what was mapped at one time may have completely shifted due to the strong currents when the tides expose the tower next. Unsurprisingly, no one has yet reached the drowned tower's core.

Finally, there is the Tower of the Broken Shield, dangerously tilted but still standing like a needle thrust shallowly into the cliffside. Despite being the only one of the three towers to remain above water, it too has proved incredibly perilous, and dozens of adventurers have met their ends trying to delve into its ruined halls. The lower reaches have been claimed by undead, cultists, and the warped denizens of the Precipice Quarter, while the upper levels are filled with stranger and more powerful entities, some dating back to Beldrin's day.

The lure of Beldrin's towers, however, remains irresistible to many. Although few find anything but misfortune in the wizard's realm, every now and then someone returns with a fragment of wonder that keeps the dangerous dream alive.

171 Boneglutton Pit

DUNGEON TEMPLE

Immediately after the earthquake, when district officials were still hoping to restore order to Beldrin's Bluff, they used a deep but narrow fissure in the plateau as an emergency dumping ground for both corpses and building rubble. Layer upon layer of demolished masonry and dead bodies were dumped into the pit, which soon began to belch an abysmal stench and billowing clouds of flies, filled with the odor of the quicklime that had been tossed in to control the decay.

No one knows whether ghouls were deliberately thrown into the pit as a grisly method of corpse disposal, or whether they arose spontaneously among the dead. In either case, the ravenous undead feasted on the rotting remains they found there, and burrowed tirelessly into the rubble to search for more

CRIME REPORT

The Grand Council and the Knights of Lastwall hope to clean up the district in advance of the upcoming Radiant Festival, but much work remains to be done, as huge sections of the quarter are still in ruin. Criminal groups active in the district include the Nailfists, Brattlebunch, the Forthright, and the Smoke Knights. The establishment of a new district guard–the Edgewatch–is the focus of the Agents of Edgewatch Adventure Path.

UNCANNY WEEDS

Monstrous puffy seeds, like giant bits of dandelion fluff carrying withered, fist-sized larval husks, land softly on the ground. After they land, the dried-looking larvae uncurl and scuttle away in the direction of the Arboretum Arcanis, leaving trails of fine red grains behind.

food. Following their own mysterious designs, the ghouls then built strange and complicated structures from the bloodstained, death-infused materials they found, and their nightmarish domain became known as Boneglutton Pit.

A few years later, an Urgathoan cult sprang up on the lip of Boneglutton Pit. The cultists fling corpses and live captives down to the ghouls as offerings, and sometimes descend on rope ladders into the pit themselves, so that they too can worship at the ghastly shrines that their undead fellows have erected in its depths.

NPCs Thulraga (ghoul high priestess of Urgathoa)

172 The Darkgate

DUNGEON | PARLOR

One of the deepest fissures opened by the quake broke through to the Darklands, as became evident a few years later when subterranean monsters swarmed up through the rift and had to be driven back at great cost. Some of those beasts, now undead, still roam the Precipice Quarter. The passage to the Darklands, however, was soon claimed by a local gang called the Nailfists. By extorting adventurers and traders who wished to pass through the rift, and thus acquiring riches far beyond what most in the Precipice Quarter could dream of, the gang grew from its ragtag beginnings to a genuinely formidable force. Its leader, the ex-gladiator Tergul, hired expert trainers to drill his thugs into something approximating a real army, and purchased quality weapons to arm them. Tergul wanted this force not only to drive off any challenges to his control of the Darkgate, but to fight back any threats that might rise up from the Darklands themselves.

His investment paid off. The Darkgate remains the most reliable access point in the Precipice Quarter into the Darklands, although the Nailfists promise safe passage only to a depth of thirty feet below the surface. After that, their customers are on their own.

NPCs Gevvid (Nailfist guide); Tergul (gang leader)

173 The Drownyard

DUNGEON | MONUMENT

Noble families who sought to live high up on the cliffs and bask in the glorious seaside views built the Tri-Towers Yard so that their children could be educated by Absalom's most honored sages. The Tri-Towers swiftly established a reputation as one of the city's finest schools, and admission was fiercely prized. When the earthquake sundered the ground beneath it, however, putrid sewer water burst up from below and flooded the Tri-Towers. This foul sewage was tainted with the influence of a long-forgotten necropolis buried within the cliffs, and a curse came with its waters. The children of Tri-Towers, playing in the schoolyard or sitting obediently in class, were caught in the curse's grip and transformed instantaneously.

Today, the children still chant nursery rhymes and cavort in flooded halls decorated with moldering flaps of

Boneglutton Pit

once-colorful artwork, but they no longer draw breath. They are swollen, patch-skinned, ghastly things with sharp-toothed grins and gibbous eyes, and their chubby fingers end in mildewed claws.

Nevertheless, people still venture into the Drownyard. The old necropolis is rumored to hold great treasures and powerful relics, and the only known entrance is through the cursed school. The noblewoman Lady Miranda Dacilane, whose child was miraculously found alive in the Drownyard ten years after the disaster, has also bankrolled efforts to reclaim the ruins. So far, no other children have been rescued, but Lady Dacilane's funds have sufficed to purify a small clearing at the edge of the Drownyard, which now stands as a memorial garden to the dead children. It also functions as a spell-warded island of refuge for those fleeing the monsters those children have become.

NPCs J Dacilane (former student muttering to himself, as if in conversation); Lady Miranda (overseeing a cadre of Pathfinders about to delve the lower levels); Vosana (offering the blessings of Pharasma to the souls of departed children)

174 The Grislyfair

MONUMENT

One of the city's early district reclamation efforts was the Wonderfair, envisioned as a bright, enticing amusement park with mirrored funhouses, clockwork carousels, acrobats, and pavilions featuring puppet shows and delectable street foods in the tradition of Eastgate's highly popular Wondervale, which rekindled the city's spirits after the death of Aroden. The Grand Council hoped that this installation would entice citizens back to the Precipice Quarter, providing jobs to its people and pushing back against the district's awful reputation. The Wonderfair's reliance on touring performers, who would have only brief exposures to the district's spiritual blight, and clockwork marvels immune to such corruptions, was calculated to minimize the chances that anyone would succumb to the Precipice Quarter's malevolence.

These precautions proved insufficient. Saboteurs—possibly cultists, possibly smugglers protecting their financial interests—undermined the construction, causing bloody accidents and deadly collapses. The Wonderfair was abandoned, but the Precipice Quarter's cruel spirits swiftly seized the half-finished, bloodstained wreckage as their own.

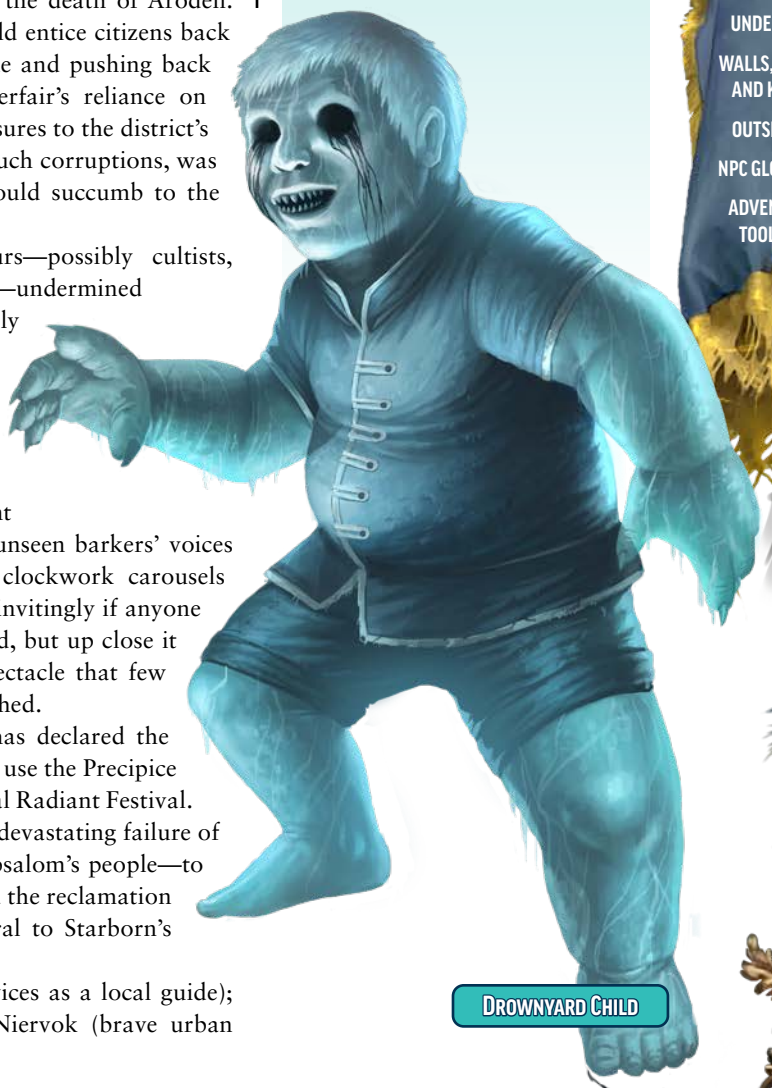
The Grislyfair, as it's now called, stands as a terrible haunted carnival. Ghostly music pipes throughout its grounds, accompanied by the faint scent of roasting nuts and grilled meats. Echoes of unseen barkers' voices cajole onlookers into the tattered tents, and the clockwork carousels creak through slow, riderless revolutions that pause invitingly if anyone nears. From afar, the empty fair is an eerie wasteland, but up close it transforms into an impossibly enticing, colorful spectacle that few can resist—and from which no visitor returns unscathed.

No less a figure than Wynsal Starborn himself has declared the Grislyfair a dangerous threat to the city's proposal to use the Precipice Quarter as the grounds for the long-delayed centennial Radiant Festival. So long as the Grislyfair stands as an example of the devastating failure of a similar project, the acting primarch knows that Absalom's people—to say nothing of its hostile press—will never get behind the reclamation effort necessary to the health of the city and central to Starborn's sense of his own political legacy.

NPCs Fumlin Fruz (cheerfully offering his services as a local guide); The Ignited Juggler (stalking prey); Marten and Niervok (brave urban explorers); Velasca (lurking vampire)

Schoolyard Games

Two small children with damp, blue-tinged skin dance through a game of hopscotch chalked on a desolate street. Instead of numbers, the squares are marked with foul, squirming runes. The children's feet are strangely soundless, but leave wet prints puddled across the markings. At the end of their game, both children turn and grin, showing needle-sharp teeth, and beckon for anyone nearby to join their game.



Drownyard Child

ROTTEN FOUNDATIONS

Weighed down by recent rain, an unstable abandoned building finally collapses with a sodden groan. Its fall reveals a deep crack in the pavement that seems to lead to a subterranean cavern or corridor of some kind. Something moves in the depths, its enormous swollen bulk splotched with rotting sores.

Gulgamodh

175 Gulgamodh

MONUMENT

This 60-foot-tall golem, which resembles a gigantic suit of plate armor with a cannon-like device in place of its left arm, was built by the archmage Beldrin long ago as a defensive weapon for the city. Centuries ago, a sinkhole swallowed most of the slumbering golem, leaving only its right arm exposed. A later architect, unaware of the protruding arm's significance, designed a fountain that incorporated the enormous metallic arm into its design and dubbed it "Titan's Fountain."

During the Black Echelon Uprising of 4717 AR, Pathfinder agents activated Gulgamodh in defense of Absalom. The golem was badly damaged in battle, and while reconstruction is ongoing, its ancient mechanisms have proved difficult to decipher and expensive to repair.

The golem currently rests near the center of an ancient square. The Grand Council has designated reconstruction of the square and rehabilitation of Gulgamodh itself a centerpiece of local reclamation efforts in advance of the upcoming Radiant Festival.

176 Mortecant

NEIGHBORHOOD

The negative energies that course through the Precipice Quarter spawn mortics—living creatures tainted by undeath—with distressing regularity, so much so that Urgathoan cultists flock to the area in hopes of being granted such transformations themselves. All manner of mortics exist in the Precipice Quarter, although the zombie-like gurgists are the most common, and they have gathered into a loose, roving community dubbed Mortecant. This cacophony of bloody-mouthed gurgists, contorted jitterbones, and shrieking, magic-spasming etiolings travels from abandoned house to abandoned house, moving on as previous lairs become too filthy and dilapidated for even mortics to stand. Often, their lairs are mistaken for infestations of true undead, and the knights of Vigil's Hope have destroyed at least two iterations of Mortecant already.

Although most of Mortecant's mortics are unrepentantly evil, not all are. Even those who shudder at their fellows' excesses, however, see little alternative to staying. The living have little tolerance for the disturbing habits and needs of the half-dead, and Mortecant has committed such ghastly atrocities as a community that anyone associated with the settlement is likely to be executed upon capture. The few mortics who might like to escape are trapped by their own grim compulsions and the reputation that now tars them—and with the knights of Vigil's Hope now set implacably against Mortecant, any hope of a different life seems fainter than ever.

177 The Ropecliffs

NEIGHBORHOOD

Soon after the District Council withdrew from the Precipice Quarter, Absalom's smugglers saw an opportunity in the teetering, precarious ruins that overlook the shattered cliff faces. They quickly moved to claim these abandoned buildings, installing skeleton crews to haul rope-trussed cargo up from the water into their cliffside lairs. Because the Precipice Quarter lacks any district guard of its own, and Absalom's other authorities have largely abandoned the district, smugglers can pull almost anything up the Ropecliffs without interference from the law. However, the sea runs treacherous against the cliffs and half-sunken hazards such as the fallen Tower of the Horn present additional complications.

The right cargo, however, can be worth the trouble. The Ropecliffs' crews specialize in high-risk, high-reward propositions. As a final safeguard, most of their lairs are rigged to collapse, destroying any evidence of their operations, along with any double-crossing business partners or excessively dangerous cargo—by hurling the entire building into the sea in a torrent of rock, rubble, and plausible deniability.

178 The Spiral Shrine

TEMPLE

Pharasma's temple was one of the first to be rebuilt after the earthquake, as devastated survivors begged the Lady of Graves to guide their loved ones' souls to the Great Beyond. Since many of the dead were never recovered, the Spiral Shrine holds hundreds of white-candled alcoves that serve as symbolic graves for those whose mortal remains could not be buried. The wealthy bereaved families of Beldrin's Bluff gave the Spiral Shrine a lavish endowment, allowing the temple to hire guards and undead hunters who ensured that Pharasma's holy grounds were kept safe from the malign influences of the Precipice Quarter. Today, the temple is one of the few relatively friendly sources of divine magic available in the blighted district. It therefore commands a devoted following among locals, and also attracts a steady stream of mourners who no longer live in this district but still visit its symbolic graveyard of candles to grieve their dead.

The Spiral Shrine is also the heart of a tiny but highly visible duskwalker community that lives in the fortified, well-tended apartments carved from old mansions nearby. Most of the duskwalkers devote themselves to patrolling the Precipice Quarter and slaying its undead, and their expertise is unparalleled. Until Watcher-Lord Ulthun II and his knights arrived, the duskwalkers were the only major force standing against the district's fouler creatures. Because of this, the duskwalkers are generally feared by local Urgathoans and undead, and are held in awe by the living inhabitants of Barterfall and the Ropecliffs.

NPCs Aram bin-Kaleel (expert in the undead); Kalavess (undead hunter); Lady Neferpatra (senior priestess); Travost Klim (high priest); Verica Strange (parishioner); Vosana (lay priest)

179 Stinger's Scar

DUNGEON

Once known as the Celestial Pleasure Ground, this sprawling park of wondrous attractions delighted Absalom's wealthy elite with its amusements. Shortly after the earthquake hit, however, the park was suddenly and mysteriously swarmed by biting, stinging vermin. Mottled cliff-stingers, blackmead hornets, and scorpion crabs infested the pleasure grounds. Dark clouds of fierce blight flies and eye-stealing synwasps came down in buzzing clouds so thick that they obliterated the park's pavilions and shade trees, and then—somehow, impossibly—the vermin that had engulfed the park began interbreeding with one another, creating new, monstrous variants that incorporated all the worst features of their originators. The park became known as Stinger's Scar, and the swarms never left. No one knows what drew them to the place, what has sustained them there for so long, or how it could be possible for those disparate species to recombine into new forms.

Scholars and theologians debate the possibilities, but so little is known about the phenomenon that it's impossible to reach any concrete answers. Those who've ventured into Stinger's Scar claim to have seen figures roaming within the deluging swarms: tall things with elongated arms ending in spasming stingers instead of fingers; hunchbacked, hopping creatures with hooked mandibles in place of jaws and flabby stomachs that drag against the ground; and most terrifyingly, a faceless husk of a man who is

The Hangman's Noose

The tragic song of Jarbin Mord, a district hangman falsely convicted and sentenced to death immediately before the earthquake that destroyed Beldrin's Bluff, remains popular to this day. Its sad melody is a perfect accompaniment to the dreary, dangerous district the city has not yet managed to reclaim.

Once a week on Nooseday, Jarbin Mord went to work.
Hanging out the criminals until they ceased to jerk.
He kept the city safe by putting killers under loam
Until that fateful night in which he brought his work home.

Broke-Neck Mord, Broke-Neck Mord
Chopped up his family then went and rode the cord.
Broke-Neck Mord, Broke-Neck Mord
Gonna get all the rest, be they laborer or lord.

said to dance in circles, around and around, endlessly at the center of this venomous living storm.

This strange creature, who supposedly cackles his name as the Scorpion Prince, has become a local bogeyman in children's bedtime stories. But those who have seen him swear that he is real, and that their tales are not, in fact, venom-spurred hallucinations.

NPCs Beirivelle Starshine (Knight of Lastwall looking for a colleague who vanished in the Scar 10 days ago); Korhül (Circle of Stones representative solemnly surveying the scene)

180 Vigil's Hope

MUNICPAL | PRECINCT | SHRINE

The exiled Watcher-Lord Ulthun II and his retinue, including many of the surviving Knights of Lastwall, set up their base of Vigil's Hope in a former guard armory and barracks, which they further reinforced with archers' platforms, palisades of scavenged support beams, and other defensive measures. An open-air shrine to Iomedae underscores the martial nature of their camp. Although the knights have done little so far except claim and fortify their stronghold, everything about Vigil's Hope is meant to signify that its knights have thrown down a gauntlet to the malign forces in the Precipice Quarter.

Most of Absalom applauds Ulthun's endeavor, but the residents of the Precipice Quarter are considerably warier in their welcome. The poor dwellers of Barterfall, informed by long, bitter experience, fully expect to be marginalized in the knights' plans and to bear the brunt of any collateral damage as a consequence of their actions; nevertheless, they harbor tentative hopes that Vigil's Hope will, eventually, improve their lot.

Troubling Troubleshooters

Ulthun II and his Knights of Lastwall have also attracted a small horde of goblins, curious about the shiny longshanks willing to vouch for a goblin retinue. Though undisciplined, dubiously moral, and easily frightened, their tendencies toward unmitigated destruction have been somewhat useful in subduing a haunted district where many locales are a lost cause. Ulthun often hosts his friend "King" Zusgut at Vigil's Hope, with huge attending goblin retinues and the pomp and circumstance of international diplomacy between heads of state.

Vigil's Hope

The Ropecliffs' smugglers, torn between wanting to protect their financial interests and wanting protection against the undead, have mostly stayed neutral, although individual smugglers have taken a more direct hand in both aiding or sabotaging the knights.

For the Urgathoans, undead, and other actively malevolent forces in the Precipice Quarter, the knights' presence is an existential threat. Accordingly, before Vigil's Hope was fully fortified, they launched numerous fierce attacks against the stronghold. So far, the skilled Knights of Lastwall have beaten them back, but not without losses. The Precipice Quarter will not be pacified so easily.

NPCs Beirivelle Starshine (knight of Lastwall); Ulthun II (leader); Zusgut (boon companion and welcome guest)

181 Wracked Rock

DUNGEON | MONUMENT | TEMPLE

A strange mass of stone lies at the heart of this run-down and mostly abandoned block of ruined buildings. The few souls who squat in these decaying structures do so not out of desperation or need, but as a result of the strange dreams that have compelled them to cross nations and even continents to live in the shadow of the so-called Wracked Rock. While time has not been kind to this 15-foot tall oblong stone, the faint image of a fanged face can still be seen along its southern side when the light of the setting sun strikes it just right, casting shadows that reveal the ancient visage for a few moments. This stone is all that remains of an immense monster known as a wrackwyrm that was conjured into the city thousands of years ago by a cultist of Rovagug. Heroes managed to defeat the wrackwyrm before it could consume more than a few dozen city blocks by petrifying it and then shattering its stony corpse, but the monster's head had stubbornly persisted and resisted vandalism.

Said to have fed upon the flesh of Rovagug, wrackwyrms have long held special positions in that faith's lore, and this one is no exception. For centuries, the fact that this worm's stony head covered a sinister opening in the ground was forgotten, but in recent years, erosion has finally accomplished what generations of crusaders could not—the partial collapse of the worm's lower jaw. This collapse revealed the edge of the forgotten aperture in the ground, but only a few inches of it can be accessed physically. Explorers who wish to plumb the unknown depths of the complex below must use magic to traverse the narrow opening, but very few return with their minds intact, be they holy crusader or zealous worshipper. Most of those who venerate Rovagug are content to dwell in the surrounding ruins and bask in the awful nightmares that lured them here. Violence is common among the inhabitants, but their awfulness rarely extends beyond this ruined block, so the Knights of Lastwall tend to leave the cruelties of Wracked Rock to tend to their own.

Now and then, a figure of note rises among the denizens of the ruins. The latest is a one-eyed gargoyle named Wrasp, a cleric of Rovagug who has been feverishly working to gather a flock of cultists and organize into something approaching a congregation, much to the consternation of many of the ruins' neighbors. More recently, a wild-eyed adventurer named Pollunk Gean went missing after spending the better part of a year espousing an increasingly complex and difficult-to-believe theory about a conspiracy spanning half a dozen guilds he claimed had been "infested by dreams sent from the Wracked Stone" and were agents of "the cyst that sees/seize" and the "slithering eye/I." The fact that the list of supposedly affected guilds seemed to change each time someone asked for details lent no credence to Pollunk's claims, but now that he's vanished under mysterious circumstances, others have begun to wonder if there was some truth to his ravings.

NPCs Pollunk Gean (missing conspiracy theorist); Wrasp (high priest)

Elsewhere in the Precipice Quarter

182. District Courthouse: City magistrates locked up the doors and nailed shut the windows of this ruined courthouse following the conviction and execution of Jarbin Mord, a miscarriage of justice that took place shortly before the earthquake that devastated Beldrin's Bluff. Mord's ghost is said to still haunt the dilapidated four-story ruin, an edifice of cracked white plaster and chipped marble that looks to be the perfect home of the unquiet, unjustly executed spirit.

183. Rat-Taker's Palace: Absalom's legendarily corrupt Sanitation Commission holds offices in this elaborate, baroque palace at the edge of the quarter. The commissioners only reluctantly abandoned the gaudy edifice after the earthquake and were quick (perhaps too quick) to rush back once the city decided to reclaim the district. While abandoned, the Rat-Taker's Palace suffered a troubling supernatural infestation of its own, and the bribe-laden bureaucrats have not yet managed to eradicate it.

THE PUDDLES

District Council Puddles District Council
Headquarters Stilt House
Nomarch Haigen Topkick (sole member of the council)
District Watch The Muckruckers
Headquarters Stilt House
Captain of the Watch Haigen Topkick
Key NPCs Market Master Annavi (proprietor of the Barque Bazaar); the Fish-Head Queen (carnival proprietor); Lady Seichya of House Tevineg (high warden of the Brine, trademaster of the Salt Cartel); Wrent Discaspiron (high priestess of Norgorber); Zusgut (goblin king of Absalom)
Services flooded inn (5 cp per night), putrid meal (2 cp), Skiffers' Guild ferry (5 cp), salvager's tax (20% of value of material salvaged), brinewater pickles (1 cp), healing at a mission (5 cp)

It's clear just a few squelchy steps into the Puddles that this district is distressed, impoverished, and drowning. Since an earthquake set off the slow sinking of the district below sea level, the Puddles has been abandoned to fester in the brackish water. At high tide, the ocean overwhelms the sunken land, rendering a boat the best means of travel. At low tide, calf-high waters make the district tedious to navigate. As the tide flows out, the salt-crusted, sewer-stained, molding infrastructure infuses the district with an overpowering stench.

Mundane life endures in the Puddles, regardless of sewer water levels. Inns, restaurants, shops, and homes all have their first floors flooded daily with the tides—and not all residents have higher ground to escape to—yet shops open and patrons slog through the waters to go about their business. The desperate residents have begun manufacturing shoddy flood barriers around their properties or frantically shoveling the land into tiny islands for some respite from the rancid water. The local Skiffers' Guild offers passage in agile skiffs that weave through flooded alleys. They're limited on where they can deliver their passengers, however, depending on which local resident or faction has claimed the makeshift islands.

The tragic living conditions and increasing mosquito populations around the Little Inner Sea have introduced a plethora of maladies among the despairing population, including skin conditions, malicious mold, parasites, and viruses. A lack of temples and doctors severely limits the residents' access to treatments for these afflictions. Medicine and medical treatments are offered in inconsistent quantities from local missions: the Ivy District's House of Healing is attempting to contribute soup pots and healing services to the district, and the Consulate of the Platinum Band is compelled to protect their community by reconstructing the damage done to local infrastructure. A floating market also brings in medicine and food from outside the district, although even their meager prices can be too steep for impoverished locals.

The district's nomarch, Haigen Topkick, ruthlessly regulates the Puddles. As the sole member of the district council, Haigen rules as a dictator. His consolidation of power has led him to become the captain of the Muckruckers—the district watch—as well as the guildmaster of the Salvagers' Guild. Haigen hopes to cement his power in coin, and he utilizes these many titles as a vehicle to personally enrich himself. He encourages the Muckruckers to enforce order selectively, squash rebellion, and extort local businesses. He forgives any of their crimes so long as a percentage makes its way into his pocket, effectively creating a thieves' guild of his district watch. Haigen utilizes the Stilt House to trade in drugs and other illegal merchandise, and he harshly taxes the members of the Salvagers' Guild.

DISTRICT SUMMARY

Always Absalom's poorest district due to its propensity for flooding, the Puddles sank a few critical inches deeper during the same earthquake that turned Beldrin's Bluff into the Precipice Quarter. Now, many of the streets and buildings in the Puddles are partially submerged most–if not all–of the time. The district's former central green has become a tidal lagoon filled with monstrous fish and parts of washed-up shipwrecks, many still containing sunken treasure. Perhaps nowhere else in Absalom are citizens so left to fend for themselves than in this waterlogged district.

THE PUDDLES
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Haigen's primary competitor for power used to be Lady Seichya of House Tevineg, who owns a squalid private prison called the Brine—as well as an illegal slavery ring run out of the Brine called the Salt Cartel. Lady Seichya's business in the district does not necessarily conflict with Haigen's efforts to enrich himself, and so the two have a precarious agreement to leave each other's affairs alone. However, Lady Seichya grows less satisfied with this arrangement as the worsening floodwaters threaten to devastate the Brine—and the supply to the Salt Cartel as a result.

Unfortunately for Haigen, his monopoly is now slipping as new players enter the soggy scene and conditions in the Puddles worsen and embolden his oppressed citizens. A self-proclaimed Goblin King of Absalom has established a kingdom in a local playhouse and brazenly proclaims his authority within Haigen's domain. The new goblin citizens drawn into the Puddles by Zusgut's arrival pay little heed to Haigen's carefully constructed regime. Utilizing a freshly built skyway of catwalks, they run over rooftops and teach the youth of the district to rise from the downtrodden waters and trample right over Haigen's head. To add to the district's woes, a local chapter of the Skinsaw Cult has made its presence known through a series of gruesomely displayed bodies across the district. While larceny, extortion, and even murder have not been uncommon under Haigen's rule, this bloodthirsty cult has shaken the district guard. Brazen murders, extending even beyond the district, have caused Haigen considerable trouble as he struggles to assure the Grand Council that he is able to maintain order in the Puddles in Lord Gyr's absence.

The Puddles' desperate pleas are steadily catching the attention of neighboring districts. Young activists hope to convince the Grand Council that the Puddles warrants saving, if not for the sake of its upstanding citizens, then at least to prevent the crime and corruption therein from spreading throughout Absalom.

CIRCUS ANIMALS

Screaming and fleeing Puddles citizens are the first indications locals receive that there is an unwelcome beast in the streets nearby Aysepir's Astounded Abyss. Bravely running the opposite direction of the fleeing crowds reveals a bizarre sight. The Fish-Head Queen stands before a vicious monster, cooing to gently entice it to return to an overturned enclosure cart with its gate open. The creature's anguished cries seem silent, but cause nearby buildings to shake and windows to shatter.

DISTRICT LOCATIONS

The following are some of the Puddles' most notable locations.

184 Aysepir's Astounded Abyss

ATTRACTION | EMPLOYER | HOUSING | VENUE

The Fish-Head Queen proudly presents Aysepir's Astounded Abyss, an exhibition of the shocking, amazing, and terrifying sights of the Abyss brought right to the Puddles. The carnival's striped and patched tents have been bleached by the salty sea air, while mud from the ever-flooded fairgrounds cakes the tents, spectators, and performers. Marketed as a pocket of the Abyss in the mortal world, Aysepir's Astounded Abyss offers a scene of monsters, mutated creatures, and undead, which put on scandalous performances for curious tourists. These performances draw spectators from the various districts of Absalom, although some might be embarrassed to admit that they've indulged in the macabre circus.

The lineup of attractions includes the Living Eye, the Inverted Man, the Self-Consuming Troll—a creature who so enjoys the taste of his regenerating fingers that he poses only a moderate threat to the audience—and the Ignited Juggler, who is as engulfed in flame as her juggling props. Nuar Spiritskin, the Minotaur Prince of Absalom, was once a famous previous performer for the Abyss.

As Aysepir's Astounded Abyss is the largest spectacle show in Absalom, the Fish-Head Queen is at liberty to spoil her performers. A cursed mermaid with the legs and arms of a woman and the head of a fish, she feels kinship with her troupe and regularly dotes on them. She expects the members of her outrageous family to behave and give their spectators a memorable show, but is reluctant to punish any transgressions. As a consequence, the carnival is a watch-at-your-own-risk experience.

Puddles Laborer

THE TIDE'S TREASURES

High tide arrives again in the Puddles and brings with it the usual detritus and flotsam. Once the tide recedes, it reveals an unusual sight: several large clutches of eggs, each clinging to a different structure. All attempts to remove the eggs prove futile and the eggs themselves seem nigh indestructible. Locals begin to grow concerned and soon start avoiding all "nest" buildings. Preliminary investigations into the eggs confirms that some kind of creatures are indeed growing within and require the damp, but not entirely submerged environment of the Puddles to thrive.

NPCs Anchor (patron); Market Master Annavi (supplier); The Fish-Head Queen (proprietor); The Ignited Juggler, Inverted Man, and Self-Consuming Troll (performers); Marten (delighted patron); Metzien (accompanying Nuar with her eyes on the audience, one hand on her dagger and the other ready with a defensive spell); Nuar Spiritskin (patron, performer emeritus)

185 Barque Bazaar

MARKET

The Barque Bazaar is a spectacle of floating commerce. A fluctuating cast of merchants tie their boats to one another to form a cluster of shops drifting across the water. The Market Master—a Minatan woman named Annavi—dreamed of establishing her amalgamation of mobile merchants to sell somewhat dubious foreign goods to easily persuaded customers, but was dismayed at the despairing state of Absalom's sea-adjacent districts. She found her business failing in its original intent as it paddled between the seaside districts of the Puddles, Docks, and Precipice Quarter.

The market does its best business in the Puddles, which the Barque Bazaar drifts into in the evenings to sell aged seafood and produce that would be unwelcome in most other districts. The Barque Bazaar is well received by the Puddles' residents, who eagerly purchase food and goods that have not long festered in the district from a shop willing to drift up to their flooded front steps. In a desperate attempt to expand the market, Annavi agreed to fence for the resident thieves' guild, the Sewer Rats, and took on supplying goods to Aysepir's Astounded Abyss. While their questionable suppliers and dedicated patrons keep the Bazaar afloat, and Annavi's quick tongue has steadily built a network of relationships in the Puddles, it's clear that Annavi may be in over her head as she becomes ever more involved in the darker machinations of the Puddles.

NPCs Market Master Annavi (proprietor); Jossie Slimfin (junk merchant)

186 The Brine

HOUSING

The Brine is a private prison in the southernmost section of the Puddles. The eroded stone structure shows a record of the rising water levels in the district. The briny water from the ocean flows in and out through the same rusted pipes and pours through the low doorways and windows, filling the prison cells with at least a foot of putrid brackish water. The prisoners in the Brine are regularly plagued with a variety of illnesses and health conditions from constantly sitting, standing, and sleeping in the flooded cells. The guards traverse the prison on elevated catwalks to avoid the stagnant, excrement-filled waters.

Lady Seichya of House Tevineg, the high warden of this torturous prison, is also the trademaster of the Salt Cartel—a slavery operation for which the Brine serves as a front. Because the Brine is a privately-owned operation, a bribe or well-placed favor to Lady Seichya can rescue or doom a particular prisoner. Haigen Topkick and Lady Seichya have resolved to keep their businesses separate, so there is no respite for these prisoners from the governing forces of the Puddles. Prisoners of the Brine can only expect to succumb to their ill-kept conditions or be filtered into the Salt Cartel.

NPCs Lady Seichya (warden); Torius Vin (arranging a boatload of slaves); Trakkus Clawfoot (dropping off a prisoner); Urtox (guarding lady Seichya)

187 Catwalk Corridors

NEIGHBORHOOD

Due to the flooded streets that are often impassable without a boat, the more dexterous residents of the Puddles have established a network of rooftop bridges and precarious walkways to navigate the district. Younger residents and the recent goblin population in particular utilize these skyways and can be seen vaulting old chimneys and sliding along collapsed walls in acrobatic

races to their destinations. Out of reach of the sluggish residents trudging through the water below, these rooftop runners tease and taunt the "sloggers" for trying to traverse the flooded streets on foot.

The skill needed to swiftly traverse this uneven terrain quickly became a competitive sport for many young residents, and the fastest were employed to carry messages or small parcels through the district. The most famous of these is a lithe young man named Virgil, who is Haigen Topkick's personal runner and notoriously fast at racing over rooftops in several districts.

The makeshift planks and broken railings are not always a reliable means of transport, and a rooftop scuffle often sends a combatant tumbling to the soggy ground below. Rooftop hostilities have become more common as runners become aligned with competing factions.

NPCs The Ignited Juggler (serial killer on the hunt); Nessian (gang leader shaking down passersby with a handful of Warhounders); Virgil the Swift (runner)

188 Consulate of the Platinum Band

TEMPLE

The Puddles hosts one of the two consulates for the worship of the god of good dragons, Apsu. Like its sibling in the Taldan city of Oppara, the Consulate of the Platinum Band recruits humanoid worshippers of Apsu. They also offer information about the creator deity and dragon culture. These devout and lawful followers are an anomaly in the district. While their faith toward the dragon god may not be wholly understood by other Puddles residents, the aid the priests provide their suffering neighbors is sometimes the only assistance and compassion they receive.

Members of the Puddles chapter of the Consulate of the Platinum Band are few, but can be identified by the golden dragon's foot brooches they wear. True to their values, some members can be found volunteering in the Puddles' missions or helping repair damage to local lodgings caused by the flooding. The consulate prefers to avoid the Muckruckers and other reprehensible groups. The higher members of the consulate typically choose to remain in their headquarters and are seen publicly only to protect another member of the consulate.

NPCs Etrenne Rylwynn (cloaked visitor); Khonsu-Rho (high priest)

189 The Goblin King's Court

HOUSING MARKET PARLOR VENUE

The Goblin King's Court is well integrated into the canopy of rooftops that make up the skyways of the district. Rickety structures made to vaguely resemble a pair of castle towers mark the location of Zusgut's headquarters along the skyline. As the goblins' diminutive statures put them at a disadvantage against the high water levels, most of the occupants prefer to enter from the rooftop entrance between the two wooden towers.

The court's efforts to observe and adapt to the strange and new cultural norms of city life have created a political system that is almost a parody of Absalom's government. Zusgut is the final authority on all decisions for his little kingdom, but his court is filled with an array of goblin advisors from all across Golarion. As Zusgut's fame spreads and the membership of his Soddenhouse Shankers militia grows, the Goblin King's Court

On the Spot!

A large boom is followed by a squeal as a goblin runs, on fire, down the streets. Laughter and cheers erupt from the nearby Goblin King's Court. Anyone who understands Goblin hears, "Next! Next!" Investigating the merriment leads to a stage at the back of the dilapidated playhouse. The audience of excitable goblins and young Puddles residents watch from the rafters as the goblin on stage recites a dramatic story of heroics with questionable realism in the details and accompanying pyrotechnics. When he's done the crowd demands, "Next! Next!"

Consulate of the Platinum Band

COMMON DISEASES

Those who ply the filthy saltwater of the Little Inner Sea risk the following afflictions.

Barnacles Rot: A common ailment on the feet, ankles, and calves of Puddles residents. The sores form hard nodules reminiscent of barnacles that are painful and easily infected.

Delirium Mold: This green and white mold prefers to cling to the crevices of damp bodies. Puddles residents may have this malady in the lines of their face, under their arms, between toes, or creeping all over their bodies. Large mold growth is accompanied by dizziness, forgetfulness, confusion, and in the worst cases, hallucination and bouts of uncontrollable rage.

Filth Fever: The district's putrid water and mosquito populations transmit this potentially fatal condition. The disease causes fever-like symptoms, bloodshot eyes, and extreme lethargy. If untreated, it progresses to its later stages, where excessive vomiting usually precedes death.

Haunt Dust: A floating mold with a powdery phosphorescence, haunt dust can cause salvagers to fall into a rigid slumber, only to drown or be swept out to sea when the tides change.

has exploded with diverse goblin membership. Those with the most incredible tales, powerful spells, or awe-striking armor impress their way into the upper echelon of the court.

The Goblin King's Court even sells a local delicacy of the goblins' creation: Brinewater Pickles, a concoction of secondhand, partially spoiled vegetables introduced to a mixture of vinegar, briny water heaved right out of the Little Inner Sea, and a secret ingredient. While affordable, the taste churns most stomachs. The goblins insist that it takes time, and a lot of eaten pickles, to appreciate the depth of flavor.

The foyer of the Goblin King's Court is subject to the same treatment as the rest of the buildings in the Puddles, and is flooded by the tide daily. The resident goblins use the flooded first floor of their wooden castle and playhouse to set up their pop-up market. The resourceful occupants build their stalls from reclaimed wood that comes in with the daily flooding and sell their goods during low tide, whenever that may occur. While low tide is usually an incredibly unpleasant time for the average Puddles resident, the goblins don't seem to mind the fishy stench, slimy kelp, and brine residue that clings to the architecture. When the tide comes back in, the goblins let the ocean clean up the day's work and rebuild it again the next day—the court operates under the mentality that all destroyed things can be built again. The wooden scaffolding that makes up the floors and half floors of the Goblin King's tottering palace are speedily rebuilt when pyrotechnics from the stage or a tumbling court member destabilizes or outright obliterates part of the structure.

In addition to being Zusgut's castle, the building is indeed a playhouse and boasts a large stage in which Zusgut organizes plays. The wider goblin community hosts cheap, loud, and witty entertainment that draws in young citizens who don't mind climbing the rafters to watch the shows. The stage is always open to new performers, but the goblin clientele is downright ruthless in expressing their outrage at a boring performance.

NPCs Anceltan Berryhock (First Guard sergeant); Pogmirk (envoy of the Bug Squasher tribe); Virgil the Swift (theater patron); Zusgut (goblin king)

190 Healing Raft

SHRINE

The House of Healing, a temple of Sarenrae in the Ivy District, commutes into the Puddles every other day to bring a communal soup pot and novice clerics to provide basic healing services. The sturdy raft has only enough room for the clerics and the soup pot, and Puddles residents must stand in the water to receive food, healing, or blessings. Duty on the Healing Raft is not glamorous, and as the raft is required to enter at low tide when people can more comfortably walk the district, the smell is downright foul. Puddles residents flock to the raft when it arrives, and it's typically out of resources within an hour.

NPCs Eligir Kelm (lay priest)

191 Little Inner Sea

NEIGHBORHOOD

In the center of the Puddles, a cesspool-turned-saltwater lake fills a long-neglected park. The largest trees loom with drooping limbs and withered leaves over the murky water. The turning of the tides deposits fresh fish and debris into the lake daily. Pieces of wreckage and lost valuables from the nearby Flotsam Graveyard are regularly swept into this distilled ocean ecosystem.

Haigen Topkick manages the Salvagers' Guild that gathers daily to search the new wreckage from the Little Inner Sea. Haigen demands that anyone reclaiming wreckage or valuables from the Puddles, especially the Little Inner Sea, pay an appropriate percentage of what they take back to the guild. Despite salvaging being nearly the last bit of honest work left in the Puddles, most crews feel extorted by Haigen's profiteering from their desperate attempts to scrape up what little their drowning district has to offer.

Despite Haigen's attempts to regulate the lake, those willing to tolerate the briny waters for minimal returns are also willing to do so out of sight of Haigen and his Salvagers' Guild. Desperate citizens gather at night to drag out pieces of wreckage the day crews left behind, while fishermen with makeshift poles try to snag sea life out of the saltwater lake.

The work is hard and dangerous. The people who drudge through the flooded banks of the Little Inner Sea are exposed to a variety of hazards. Hardy pets abandoned by Absalom's richest have been dumped into the lake, transforming the ecosystem into an unknown menagerie of species. Some whisper of a mysterious cryptid skulking beneath the murky water. Pests and molds breed along the shores and surface of the putrid water, and any minor mosquito bite could bring with it a variety of diseases. The perpetually sopping conditions of even the shallows of the Little Inner Sea can cause skin maladies and easily infects wounds acquired on the job.

The shops that surround the lake are the busiest in the district—and therefore the most reliable to find in working condition. Despite flooded floors at high tide, these shops are most likely to see the foot traffic of sloggers and salvagers trying to make their best life beside the Little Inner Sea.

NPCs Market Master Annavi (floating merchant); Jossie Slimfin (junk merchant); Murno Bloss (Salvagers' Guild agent); Trakkus Clawfoot (leading a Muckrucker barge patrol)

192 Purewater Home

HOUSING

An orphanage struggling to grant children a good life despite the district's terrible conditions, Purewater Home—or simply Purewater—is run by an aasimar woman named Hope, who herself was effectively an orphan growing up in the Puddles. Her upbringing led her to a life of crime and thence into disaster, leading a penitent Hope to try to prevent others from following in her footsteps. Purewater boasts a reputation of being reasonably safe and reasonably dry, the latter due to some lingering criminal alchemist contacts and the former due to Hope's quick temper and even quicker knife. Purewater also serves as a secret cell for the Firebrands, with the orphanage staff oscillating between attempted political reforms and minor missions to keep delinquent children busy with well-meaning vandalism.

NPCs Dorakotho (seeking portentous orphans); Hope (political agitator, proprietor); Jossie Slimfin (junk merchant); Unavi (resident)

193 Razorhall

TEMPLE

The Skinsaw Cult has transformed the flooded, decrepit district courthouse into their malevolent temple. This place that once hosted fair trials now sees no justice as the cult's victims are given mock trials and subjected to a myriad of execution techniques regardless of the outcome. The judge's bench has been turned sideways into a carving table. The adjacent witness bench is spattered with blood. Behind the bench hangs a grand tapestry displaying a 13-hour clock with a face made of dubiously sourced leather. The gallery's benches are flooded up to their seats, and many have been dislodged from the floor and float around the swirling mix of brine and gore.

Murders in the Puddles had always been more common than in other districts, but the intensity of these crimes has escalated, and the displayed bodies make it clear that the Skinsaw Cult is at work. The Muckruckers fear the cult and are reluctant to take any action to investigate it so long as none of the major power players in the district are targeted.

An Aquatic Advantage

A man with purple eyes peers out of a headscarf on the sodden streets near the Little Inner Sea, waiting for a group to pass by before darting out and gently bumping into one of the passersby. The perceptive, or those familiar with pickpocketing tactics, may recognize that the man—an azarketi scoundrel named Anchor—has just robbed his victim. As soon as anyone indicates they've noticed the crime, the pickpocket flees to the nearest body of water and removes his headscarf before diving in, revealing three gill slits on either side of his neck and a large, colorful parasite attached to the back of his neck.

Healing Raft

CRIME REPORT

Crime is devastatingly common in the Puddles, where the difference between a street gang mugging and an interrogation by the local Muckrucker guard is to distinguish from bruises alone. Thievery, smuggling, and gang violence make up a considerable portion of the district's stable economy. Escapes from the Brine prison add a frisson of excitement to the criminal landscape. Criminal groups active in the district include the Puddlejumpers and the Warhounders, as well as roaming murderers associated with Norgorber's Skinsaw Cult.

None of them have made the connection between the simultaneous appearance of the cult and the addition of the Ignited Juggler to the lineup at Aysepir's Astounded Abyss. As their activities begin to extend into other districts and it becomes clearer that the cult has some connection to the Puddles, Haigen Topkick faces greater pressure to stop or at least contain the problem.

NPCs Fumlin Fruz ("the Defense"); The Ignited Juggler ("the Prosecution"); Marten (terrified "Defendant"); Wrent Discaspiron (meat hook-wielding "Judge," high priestess)

194 The Siphons

DUNGEON

Beneath the flooded streets of the Puddles, a labyrinth of tunnels connects a deep network of forgotten passageways, sewers, smuggler's trade routes, and ancient crypts. The dank tunnels allow users to traverse the district stealthily or avoid capture by losing pursuers among the irregularly connecting tunnels. Due to the unmapped nature of the ever-evolving tunnel system, utilizing the tunnels to reach a particular destination requires familiarity—or at least a partial map.

A thieves' guild called the Sewer Rats commands most of the underground tunnels, using them for nefarious purposes. Their maps of the Siphons are incomplete, but guild members assist each other by etching coded symbols into the stone walls of passageways to indicate exits, danger, or paths to commonly traveled locations. Even so, it's not uncommon for a member to take a wrong turn and become irrecoverably lost.

The dark, flooded corridors create an attractive home for amphibious monsters or terrified pets seeking refuge from the city above. Lost explorers slowly lose their minds as they wander the seemingly never-ending tunnel system, but increased knowledge of the Siphons has caused many to try their luck—and just as many to require rescue.

NPCs Adula Tremane (sewer worker); Anchor (scoundrel); Benkt Slipshod (transferring slaves to Fall's End); the Ignited Juggler (serial killer fleeing the scene of a fresh murder)

195 The Soggy Piper

TAVERN

The Soggy Piper tavern sits near the uprise known as Torsen's Maw, which overlooks the harbor and sometimes sees cult activities, vigilantism, and other crimes. It seems the violent residents of the Puddles can't resist shoving their enemies over the cliff's edge onto the wave-wracked rocks below.

The regulars of the Soggy Piper know better than to look fellow patrons in the face, resulting in a glum atmosphere in which most visitors keep to themselves. The Piper has developed a reputation as a place to get a solid if unimpressive meal and some sturdy drinks without opening oneself to the scrutiny of strangers. Runaways, crooks, revolutionaries, and others in semi-hiding sometimes venture to the Soggy Piper, valuing the place for its discretion and anonymity.

NPCs Boils Caralne (devouring a bowl of slop); Boldo Drenk (muttering to himself with a beer in one hand and knife in the other); Yargos Gill (former regular, revisiting a favorite haunt with old friends); Yelmo (proprietor)

196 Stilt House

MUNICIPAL PRECINCT

The Stilt House, unlike the rest of the surrounding waterlogged wooden architecture of the Puddles, is a solid,

Razorhall

maintained, and generally dry structure. Its long, stilted legs keep the building above high tide, and a floating stairway adjusts to the flooding level. A dock off the side of the building accepts shipments from the boats able to paddle through the district at high tide. An obscured entrance in the back of the roof allows rooftop runners to slip in and out of the building quickly. Serving as headquarters for the District Council, Muckruckers, and the Salvagers' Guild, this city-owned building sees most of the gold passing through the district.

In the aftermath of the earthquake that flooded the Puddles, the Muddied Center Reserve Civilian Corps was formed to address the destruction and stabilize the panicking residents. The district never recovered, and the Muddied Center Reserve Civilian Corps became the Muckruckers—a band of minimally regulated officers dedicated to monitoring the criminal activity in the Puddles in whatever way funnels the most coin back into the Stilt House. This results in the Muckruckers regularly overlooking crimes related to larceny and extorting local businesses for "donations" to the Muckruckers in exchange for protection. The Muckruckers generally prefer the district in some degree of chaos to encourage citizens to tolerate their extortion as a fair price to pay.

Most business in the district, criminal or otherwise, runs through the Stilt House and under Haigen Topkick's watchful eyes. The deterioration of the district has caused any hint of competition to flee; those who remain stay either because they cannot afford to leave the Puddles or because the Puddles' cesspool of crime offers a more than suitable environment to earn a living. Even the Salvagers' Guild, considered one of the more honest jobs in the district, is managed by the same institution that encourages rampant criminal activity.

The district's nomarch, Haigen Topkick, once spared Absalom from the blight of the Puddles by keeping strict tabs on the organizations, crime, and gold in the district. Previously, these efforts had been satisfactory for the Grand Council, who were willing to overlook the specifics of Haigen's precarious order. In Lord Gyr's absence, however, Haigen sees dwindling confidence from the Grand Council. The worsening flood waters, influx of new residents, and uptick in crime unregulated by Haigen has earned the ire of the neighboring districts. If he continues to allow the flood waters to spread—and crime to seep out of the Puddles with it—he may lose his monopoly on the district.

Haigen's waning authority would be a boon in the eyes of many residents of the district. Young activists are becoming increasingly dissatisfied with his negligence and have begun reaching out to other districts in hopes of rallying enough support to encourage the Grand Council to remove Haigen from power. Particularly vocal objectors usually end up with their bodies tossed into the briny waters under the Stilt House.

NPCs Haigen Topkick (nomarch); Murno Bloss (Salvagers' Guild agent); Trakkus Clawfoot (Muckrucker lieutenant); Virgil the Swift (runner)

197 Yargos's Mission

HOUSING

There are a handful of struggling missions set up by Puddles residents willing to share their meager living with those around them, but the largest and most stable is Yargos's Mission. The mission was set up by an assistant of Yargos Gill after the famous elderly scholar mentioned in one of his many ramblings that he regretted the conditions of his old home district. The mission uses a fraction of Yargos's acquired wealth to provide food, shelter, and medications to the neediest of the Puddles' residents. Even still, it's often in need of significant donations to accommodate the overwhelming demand for its services, particularly medication for local illnesses. The mission's daily functions are run by a small commission of charitable individuals from nearby districts, although Yargos's lack of oversight entices local groups who hope to acquire the mission and misuse its resources.

NPCs The Ignited Juggler (serial killer hunting her next victim); Lemaria Kumari (social activist); Yargos Gill (distracted benefactor)

Elsewhere in the Puddles

198. Chapel of Shadow: This run-down chapel of Nethys in a marshy area near an abandoned block is used by agents of the Onyx Alliance to transition between Shadow Absalom and the Material Plane. Locals think it is haunted.

199. Church of the Muted God: Although the mysterious entity that inspired this modest temple apparently died while taking the Test of the *Starstone*, the being's cult continues years later, administering to the district's unfortunate in utter silence. Bereft of near-divine leadership, the seemingly benevolent order is now more fanatical criminal organization than a religious congregation.

200. Metro-Cathedral: The congregation of this old and much-honored temple of Abadar fled following the earthquake of 4698 AR, which did significant damage to the church's foundations, toppling one of its towers in a tragedy that claimed seven lives. The church still sees use each Oathday, when the clergy of Abadar plays a ritual tune upon its immense pipe organ, reminding the folk of Absalom to honor their agreements.

WESTGATE

District Council Western Council
Headquarters Mithril Hall
Nomarch Lady Seleenae of House Damaq
District Watch Sally Guard
Headquarters Sally Port
Captain Lord Winton of House Nimz
Key NPCs Scion Lady Idara of House Anandari (owner and primary patroness of Anandari Block); Scion Lord Celedo of House Morilla (owner of the Guild of Wonders); Drandle Dreng (Pathfinder Society venture-captain); Roglund Tergurast (high priest of Torag); Scion Lord Rogren Sphairo of House Menhemes (historian, district seat on the Low Council); Venla Sirola (politician, retired Pathfinder); Salindra Concilio (well-known panhandler)
Services International cuisine and goods, house-call medical care

Citizens of Absalom often say that Westgate, whose residents affectionately refer to it as "Bestgate," is stuck in the Mithral Age. The people of Westgate won't deny that. The Mithral Age was an age of wonders and boasted some of Absalom's most important heroes, organizations, and policies. The great hero, Lady Kayle of Taldor, defeated the dragon Maejerx Steeleye in the Mithral Age. The Mithral Age was the first time slavery was abolished in the city—never mind that it's also when slavery was first introduced. Iomedae ascended to godhood in the Mithral Age; the Pathfinder Society was formed in the Mithral Age. Being stuck in the Mithral Age is a badge of honor that Westgaters wear with pride. It's why the Sally Guard still wears the uniforms the First Guard of Absalom adopted in 4478 AR. Likewise, hunting lodges litter the district, due to the "Golden Age of Lodges" during the Mithral Age.

Westgate may not be as wealthy as the Petal and Ivy Districts, but despite that, some of Absalom's oldest families dwell here. The traditional and conservative nature of the district has drawn more and more people just coming into their wealth or their twilight years, and Westgate is rapidly growing. District residents say, with not a little bit of pride, that the district has grown so much that a second sewer was installed. The further west and north into the district, the more businesses give way to residential areas that grow in wealth and size as they get closer to the western wall and the Ivy District—and farther from the Foreign Quarter and Puddles District.

The eastern side of Westgate, near the Foreign Quarter, is littered with small businesses and restaurants. Most are a strange mirror to those found in Eastgate—or "Leastgate," as Westgaters often call it. Marketing themselves as the real experience, most businesses strive to outperform their Eastgate counterparts. Vudrani and Keleshite cuisine and goods are extremely common in Westgate, largely due to the district's large populations of both peoples. This has produced an entirely unique subculture that incorporates elements of Absalom traditionalists alongside Vudrani and Keleshite cultures. Likewise, sharing its eastern edge with the poorer Foreign Quarter provides a large variety of goods and foods from around the world, making Westgate one of the most diverse districts in Absalom outside of the Foreign Quarter, despite its conservative nature.

Westgate is largely urban, and the few parks and areas of greenery in the district don't compare to the druid-kept parks of Eastgate, much to the chagrin of Westgaters. As such, Westgate politicians have begun calling for the greening of the district—for environmental reasons, of course. They've also begun putting forth calls for a city-wide ban on druids contributing to the upkeep of city property, complaining that such caretakers are not overseen by the Grand Council or guilds, and protesting the unregulated creation of

DISTRICT SUMMARY

Westgate is home to many of the best-established non-noble families in Absalom, many of whom have lived in Westgate's baronial townhouses for multiple generations. Westgate's many traditionalists and old-money aristocrats strongly dislike the disorder and revolutionary edicts that have marked recent years in Absalom, and some politically minded Westgate residents are stumping for a return to the old ways.

WESTGATE
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leshys within the city's jurisdiction. Westgate politicians have also begun mentoring up-and-coming activists, taking leaders from poorer communities under their wing and promising younger politicians help and advancement of their own initiatives—particularly cleaning up and raising the portions of the Puddles that are slowly claiming the southern reaches of Westgate—in exchange for their support.

The district patrol, named the Sally Guard for the western Sally Port gate into Absalom, is extremely well funded, and can be seen almost everywhere due to their numerous patrols. This has given the Sally Guard a reputation for being the fastest-responding guard in Absalom. Between the patrols, the well-lit streets, and the nature of the residents, Westgate is one of the city's safest districts. When patrolling outside the city walls, the Sally Guard is known as the Kortos Cavalry due to their role as one of Absalom's only mounted units in wartime. Sally Guard commander Lord Winton of House Nimz has petitioned for the right to be called the Kortos Cavalry at all times, as he and much of the guard bristle at being thought of as mere guards. The traditionalist nature of the district and its leaders, ironically, has meant every petition has failed.

DISTRICT LOCATIONS

The following are some of Westgate's most notable locations.

201 Absalom Chirurgeon Dispatch

EMPLOYER MERCHANT

Unique in Absalom, the Chirurgeon Dispatch is the primary source of health care in the district. In lieu of a more standard hospital, the people of Westgate believe in personal doctors more commonly seen in small towns, expecting them to make house calls. The Dispatch serves as headquarters for these physicians; rather than going to see a doctor, the doctor is dispatched to a patient's home. The Sally Guard maintains magical communication with the Dispatch and, in emergencies, can have medical assistance on site fairly rapidly. While the Dispatch is based in Westgate and primarily services the district, the doctors are available for house calls throughout the city, and the Dispatch itself stands ready to respond to medical emergencies throughout all of Absalom. As such, it's always looking to employ competent healers and teachers on contract. The staff is made up primarily of mundane medical doctors and surgeons, but contains several alchemists, herbalists, and magical healers. Physicians with magical abilities are always in demand for major emergencies, and the Dispatch charges quite a bit more for their services. The Dispatch also offers classes taught by its staff dealing with basic medical care and emergency life-saving techniques.

NPCs Gaftrin (nurse); Salindra Concilio (babbling patient with a broken leg); Urmas Sirola (chief physician)

202 Anandari Block

NEIGHBORHOOD

While most of the families in Westgate have been long established in the district or in Absalom in general, the Anandari family stands out as stretching far back into the city's history. Claiming to have come alongside the legendary Vudrani maharajah Khiben-Sald himself, the Anandaris amassed a great deal of wealth in only three generations and now control an entire Westgate neighborhood. The Anandaris established themselves by selling any wares they could produce, in the style of their native Vudra. Adashra Anandari was a skilled mason and made a name for himself building homes and businesses inspired by Vudran architecture; his wife, Bimasla, cooked the best Vudran food on the Isle of Kortos. With the popularity of Vudran wares in Westgate driving up business, they and their descendants used the wealth they earned to purchase back the buildings Adashra had built and expanded them into

THE HOARSE HORSEMAN, ETC.

A recent scandal involving Lord Winton of House Nimz has electrified Absalom's popular culture, from scathing caricatures in weekly broadsheets to a collection of tavern songs featuring hilarious political and personal criticisms with titles like "Winton the Horse-Man" or "Persecution of the Pony-Finder". These ditties lampoon Lord Winton's disruptive, annoying and extremely costly search for his missing prize horse. The songs have seriously begun to erode Lord Winton's status in the district, and he hates them utterly. A fine example is "The Hoarse Horseman," which seems most common in Westgate and Absalom's outlying towns.

Mighty Lord Winton, a hero to kings
Keeper of glory and wondrous things
Making his rounds through the hinterland towns
'Cause he can't keep track of his steed.

Mighty Lord Winton is looking for a stray,
Calling for a pony which bravely ran away.
Kicking open doors and ripping up the floors
His hunting skills are poor indeed!

Mighty Lord Winton, forced to go afoot
Trudging in the dirt and breathing in the soot
Sparing no expense and without a shred of sense
He's quite the sight it's all agreed!

DWARVES IN ABSALOM

The classic—some might say cliched—image of a dwarven society is one sheltered deep underground or within the well-defended walls of a Sky Citadel. In Absalom, one never need look far to see exceptions to this stereotype. Indeed, dwarven architecture is present throughout the city, with the greatest examples of these buildings embracing the simple fact that they need not be built within stone, but instead rise above like the mountains themselves.

other Vudran-inspired businesses and homes for other Vudran immigrants. Today, the Anandari Block is populated by mostly people of Vudran descent, but it has become a popular location for all residents of and visitors to Absalom. Being unique in Absalom in size, age, and historical importance, the neighborhood is a great point of pride for Westgaters.

NPCs Salindra Concilio (panhandler); Scion Lady Idara (traveling via palanquin past an adoring crowd); Lord Rajit (owner of the block's most beautiful manor)

203 The Father's Forge

TEMPLE WORKSHOP

Absalom has a large number of dwarven citizens, many of whom worship Torag, yet Torag's largest church in the city is this relatively humble smithy. Tended by an aged cleric named Roglund Tergurast, the Father's Forge is a quiet institution in Absalom that's continued to produce high quality metalwork for many, many centuries, but its keepers have never pushed to expand its presence. Asked about this by others, the dwarves who tend the Father's Forge patiently reply that every dwarven forge in Absalom is, in one way or another, a shrine to Torag, and every dwarven hearth in every dwarven home a monument to the Father of Creation. Yet despite these humble roots, even a cursory glance at the impressive "Founders' Wall," where lifelike metal busts of each and every smith who has tended the Father's Forge for the past few thousand years stare back from ornamental niches, reveals the deeply entrenched traditions of this establishment.

NPCs Bothuk Thraske (parishioner); Engleton Embrey (parishioner); Galven Rockbottom (parishioner); Hasjald (parishioner); Roglund Tergurast (high priest)

204 The Fierce Stripe

MERCHANT

The gnome Chesne of House Yuriel runs the Fierce Stripe, a tightly packed shop offering all things badger related. As creatures of great importance to Absalom, badgers are extremely popular in Westgate and have almost entirely replaced dogs and cats as pets in the district. Members of the Tri-Stripe Society flock to the shop for monthly meetings and tea to discuss the latest news and badger shows. Westgate even has its own badger breeds, such as the amberbrock, unseen elsewhere in the Inner Sea region. The tunnel brach badger is a particularly popular breed due to their less territorial nature and their ease of domesticity; in addition to making good companions, their tendency to hunt and eat rodents and other vermin helps keep the streets clear and minimize potential health hazards.

Chesne is renowned for her ability to acquire any kind of badger a customer could want. Her staff also offers training

Anandari Block

and grooming services for the animals. The shop specializes in the creation of badger warrens for anywhere from one to as many as fifteen badgers. Additionally, the shop offers a wide range of equipment for badger familiars and animal companions, including barding. New badger owners can even take classes in the rearing and care of their new pets. Adventurers are sometimes hired for various badger-related missions, such as acquiring rare and far away badgers, recovering lost or kidnapped badgers, or just helping out around the shop.

NPCs Lady Chesne (proprietor); Mirtion (badger superfan customer)

205 The Groggy Froggy

TAVERN

In 4714 AR, one of Westgate's most infamous traditions ended in tragedy as the gorgon used in that year's Charge of the Bull (see Statue Street, page 222) petrified a few dozen innocent bystanders in addition to a new batch of criminals. This "wake up call" was enough to tip the scales of public opinion and the tradition ended. Most of those who were accidentally petrified by the gorgon's breath were restored to life, but not all. One such victim, Klard Vunker, remains a statue to this day—not because he was unknown, but because those who knew him unanimously agreed he became a much better person after he was petrified.

For many years, Klard ran the Groggy Froggy tavern, and was notorious for his cruel sense of humor and poor treatment of the tavern staff. Having inherited ownership from his father, Klard had all but run the once-popular establishment into the ground as a result of his unpleasant personality. He became a statue after running an employee out of the tavern for offering a regular customer a drink on the house, only to stumble right into the path of a crazed gorgon. Once he was petrified his thankful employees dragged him back to the Groggy Froggy to put him on display, where his distinctively unflattering pose and position locked him forever as a buffoon. The tavern's employees took over the tavern, and ever since, Klard's gape-mouthed statue has served as a sort of trophy for customers and employees alike. Under its new co-op ownership the Groggy Froggy's fortunes have reversed and the tavern is well on its way to regaining its previous position as one of Westgate's favorite drinking spots.

Today, the eye-catching and original sign above the tavern's door depicting a frog passing out over a tankard of grog has been painstakingly restored, along with much of the building's interior, to match its original look from when it first opened two centuries ago. In addition to its ever-changing and popular types of artisan grog options, weekly contests of "Klarding," where customers are invited to use paints and other decorations to give Klard an ever-changing new look, have proven quite popular. The tavern's current manager, Annara Laskin, uses her magic to clean the paint from the statue weekly so that new decorations can be applied.

A Bullheaded Plan

A group of citizens determined to "Bring Back the Bull" are discussing the possibility of importing their own gorgon and making the run a privately operated event. Members of this organization, dubbed the Friends of the Horn, are looking for someone discreet who can not only track down and capture a gorgon, but can also help import it safely. They've already arranged a group of criminals via allies in the Sally Guard—all they need now is the deadly monster to petrify them in public.

The Fierce Stripe

BRING BACK THE BULL!

The growing sentiment in Westgate toward re-introducing public gorgon runs has spread to the songs popular in area taverns. The most famous such tune, entitled "Bring Back the Bull," features an amusing list of criminals, enumerating their desperate (and vain) attempts to avoid petrification. Each tavern adds its own cast of disreputable characters to the verses, adding variety from venue to venue. Since Wynsal Starborn came to power, political figures have found themselves cast as victims of the Bull with increasing frequency, inclusions that often lead to fistfights between partisans. More than a few local taverns have tried to ban the song, but patrons seem unwilling to comply. Verses can be heard pouring from alehouses onto the streets at night, sometimes thundering from multiple establishments at once.

Of course, recent events have made Klarding impossible, for earlier in the year, the statue of Klard Vunker mysteriously vanished. Most are convinced that any one of dozens of those Klard wronged years ago destroyed the statue after sneaking into the tavern after hours, but some whisper that one of Klard's still-living allies finally managed to arrange for his unpetrification and performed the mercy after breaking into the tavern after hours—these folks fear Klard's inevitable return for vengeance, but others point out how hard it is to believe that a man like Klard ever had friends close enough in his life that would take such a risk for him.

NPCs Annara Laskin (proprietor); Scion Lady Veridel (mourning her family's fate over an empty mug of ale)

206 Guild of Wonders

ATTRACTION CRIMINAL PARLOR

The Guild of Wonders is one of Absalom's biggest open secrets. On the surface, it operates as a tourist attraction featuring "amazing creatures"—truthfully, taxidermy sewn together to form various cryptids and hybrids. Without any advertising or marketing, very few tourists actually visit it—the building is nondescript, looks old and in poor repair, and has no signage, so most people keep their distance. The reality is that the guild is a school for assassins, spies, and saboteurs. Guild members often leave a taxidermy mouse, usually sewn with pieces of other small animals such as hummingbird wings, on the bodies of their victims.

The guild is owned by Scion Lord Celedo of House Morilla, though he doesn't participate in any of its operations. Day-to-day functions and training are overseen by Celedo's nephews Juartos and Donavar, and his niece Annasendra Varabelle. Juartos handles all of the guild's financials, while Donavar takes care of logistics and administration. All noncombat training, such as stealth, infiltration, and poison handling is managed by Annasendra. The trio all teach various combat styles. It's well known to everyone that when Celedo dies, one of the three will inherit the guild, and they jockey for favor as a result.

Membership in the guild is difficult to gain. Typically, existing members observe prospective members who have demonstrated some aptitude in the skills the guild values. The existing members then make a recommendation to the leadership, who investigates the prospect, their background, and whether they can be trusted. From there, if leadership deems the prospect worthy, then it will extend a formal offer of admission.

The guild has strict rules. Members do not operate on Absalom soil, and they do not take contracts on Taldan nobility, children under the age of majority, or priests of Calistria, Abadar, or Asmodeus. Uniquely, the guild offers Death Pacts—these contracts assure the purchaser that should the client be killed, the guild will hunt down and kill the murderer. If, after a decided-upon amount of time, the guild has not completed this contract, they put the money they were paid for the Death Pact up as a bounty on their mark. Death Pacts trump all of the guild's other rules (including the prohibition against acting in Absalom).

Most nations throughout the Inner Sea region revile the guild, but also frequently partake of its services. Absalom itself tolerates the guild mostly because of its rule to never operate on Absalom soil. Most Westgaters are aware of the guild, or have at least heard the rumors, but tend to deny the reality and play along with the guild's tourist-attraction cover. In secret and among themselves, however, they view the guild as a stain on the district, and everyone has their own thoughts on how the guild could be convinced to move to another district—preferably Eastgate.

NPCs Lady Annasendra, Lord Juartos, and Lord Donovar (administrators); Lord Celedo (owner); Eivlind and Jacques Albers (confused tourists irate after being refused a "deluxe tour" of the guild museum)

207 The House of Seven Faces

TEMPLE

Soaring cathedrals and sprawling temples have never been a significant part of Desnan tradition, whose faithful prefer smaller shrines at crossroads or locations of secluded beauty, yet in an urban sprawl like Absalom where worshippers need a place to visit and pray, the presence of a temple is a necessity. The House of Seven Faces serves as Absalom's temple of Desna, a place where those who worship the Song of the Spheres can rest weary feet, enjoy fine companionship and conversation, or simply offer prayer in peace.

Many have wondered at the nature of the seven faces that adorn the temple's facade, decorations that manifested mysteriously when none were watching during the first night after the temple opened to the public many centuries ago. Even from the start, the faces seemed badly weathered and eroded, as if they'd been carved thousands of years before Absalom itself came to be. None have ever been able to definitively identify the ancestries of the seven, although they bear similarities to humans and elves, dwarves and halflings, gnomes and even goblins depending on the angle from which they are viewed. Much has been made of the fact that the faces number seven, prompting philosophers to suggest connections to ancient Thassilon's seven nations (where worship of Desna was known), a symbolic nod to the passage of time in the form of the seven days in a week, or even that the faces represent the seven incarnations of the goddess Sivanha and thus suggest that she and Desna are one and the same (a claim favored by certain crackpots that both the churches of Desna and Sivanha alike regard with bemusement and a bit of annoyance), but the most compelling theory points to the nature of Desna's planar realm—Sevenfold Cynosure. Desnan holy texts claim that she created Sevenfold Cynosure to honor the first seven planets devoured by Rovagug, and thus suggest that the seven faces represent seven cultures who never had the chance to form, allowing the House of Seven Faces to serve a similar role as Sevenfold Cynosure itself—a memorial to an ancient loss.

NPCs Captain Folant (meditating with Lady Seleenae); Hans the Northman (discussing disturbing dreams with the high priestess); Lady Seleenae (high priestess)

208 Metringer Sanitarium

HOUSING

The Metringer Sanitarium was established in 4000 AR and has operated continuously since. The sanitarium serves as living quarters for the mentally ill, as well as a facility practicing traditional medicine, magical healing, and experimental procedures to help its residents. Rumors about horrors committed in the sanitarium abound, and there's some truth to those rumors; the facility itself has often participated in morally and ethically questionable experiments. On more than one occasion, the Sally Guard has "inspected" the sanitarium, but found nothing out of place. Most Westgaters leave the place alone and point to past investigations as proof that it's legitimate, but many suspect there are

Morilla Machinations

Although most Absalomians would concede that House Morilla is among the city's most influential noble families, it's also true that much of that influence is held abroad, both in the courts of regions that employ or suffer from the services of the Guild of Wonders, or back home in Taldor, where Lady Gloriana Morilla has the ear of Grand Princess Eutropia herself. With Scion Lord Celedo nearing the end of his natural life, everyone wonders who will take his place, and how they will use the considerable weapon–for influence is the deadliest weapon of all in Absalom–for or against the city.

Guild of Wonders

CRIME REPORT

Westgate justly prides itself as the safest district in Absalom, thanks in no small part to the frequent patrols of somewhat bored-looking Sally Guards. Entitled residents constantly call for the watch at the slightest provocation, especially when confronted with alleged criminals visiting from other parts of the city. Criminal groups active in the district include the Bloody Barbers and the Crowsworn.

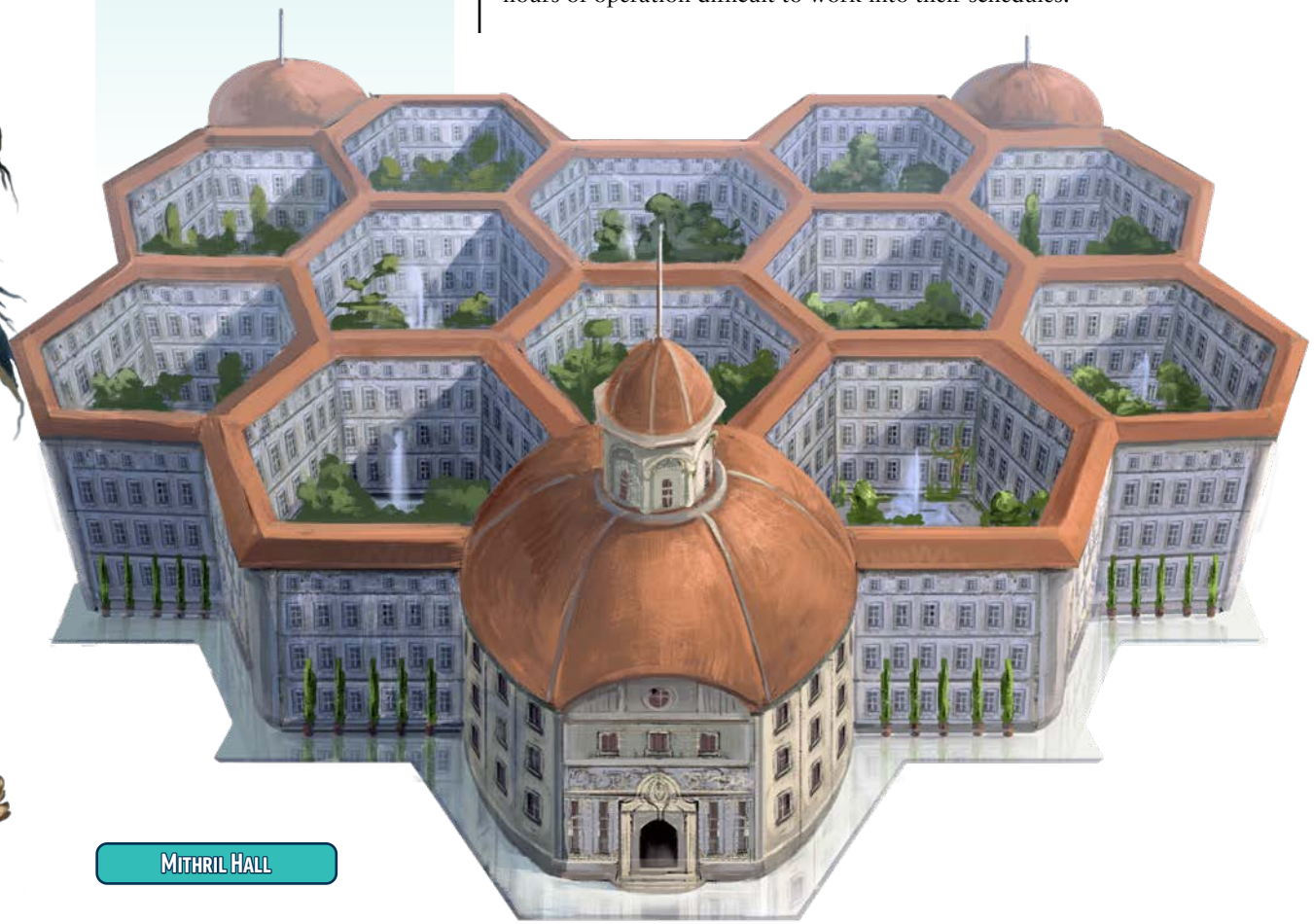
secret underground laboratories and maybe even the horrific results of years of experiments wandering beneath their feet. Salindra Concilio, a panhandler well known in Westgate, claims to have escaped from the sanitarium and tells her story to anyone who listens. While many write her off as delusional, more than a few residents believe her—and at least one secret patron has offered a reward in gold to anyone who can prove her story.

NPCs Flevvid Grummlin (administrator); Marissa Guile (terrified journalist "embedded" for an exposé, now desperate to escape); Shund (orderly); Vernus (guard); Lord Winton (leading a Sally Guard inspection)

209 Mithril Hall

MUNICIPAL VENUE

Lady Seleenae of House Damaq leads the Western Council from this beautifully maintained palace in the courtyard-heavy Kortos Revivial style. Considered conservative by the rest of the city, the Western Council serves as the local government of Westgate. Mithril Hall functions not only as the seat of the Western Council but also as the offices of all of the district's governmental officials, administrative clerks, and bureaucrats. The building has a honeycomb design, with all offices opening into small courtyards with central planters or fountains. Connecting halls run between the courtyards, making the facility something of a labyrinth; frustrated visitors often suggest this is intentional. The Hall also hosts a very large open-air assembly amphitheater where district town hall meetings can be held. For a fee, this area can also be rented for private functions and celebrations. The entrance to the compound is made up of a reception area where visitors can find refreshments as well as directions to the offices they're looking for. The Hall is open during the midday hours five days a week, but opens late and closes early. This is often a source of frustration for the working class, who find the hours of operation difficult to work into their schedules.



Mithril Hall

NPCs Lady Seleenae (nomarch); Venla Sirola (district councilwoman)

210 Sally Port

PRECINCT

The imposing Sally Port connects Absalom to the settlements of southeast Kortos, notably the small community of Otari and the dwarven settlement of Galizhur, as well as to the town of Diobel. Specifically designed to accommodate cavalry charges, the gate serves a fundamental role in Absalom's defense. It is the headquarters of the Sally Guard as well as a hive of tax collectors, Scriveners' Guild inspectors, and military attaches. A steady trail of merchant caravans, travelers, and pilgrims trails through the gate at all hours of the day. An hour after sunset, the enormous gate closes with a sonorous sound you can feel in your bones, opening again each dawn.

The gate itself is protected by a large ditch—four massive drawbridges, each 60 feet wide, can lower over the ditch, allowing the Guard to ride through. The interior of the complex is likewise designed to allow for mounted maneuverability. Stables situated along the interior courtyard open out to large spaces, with ramps ideal for horses to move throughout the walls.

Lady Seleenae keeps a sumptuously decorated office in the Sally Port, where her keen eye for numbers makes her an efficient chief tax collector in charge of a team of government auditors who levy taxes upon all goods coming in and out of the city.

The Sally Port leads out of Absalom toward the towns of Westerhold and Shoreline. Much as the eastern edge of Westgate has developed its own unique international culture, so has the western portion accepted many dwarven traditions into its own day to day life. The dwarves of Westerhold frequently open specialty shops around the Sally Port, both outside and in Westgate itself. Likewise, a significant supply of fish makes its way from Shoreline into Absalom through the massive gate. Westgaters are known to brag that none of the very best seafood makes it far past the Sally Port.

NPCs Lady Seleenae (chief tax collector); Lord Winton (captain); Zifelez of Gyr (second-in-command)

STOLEN STATUES

During the night on Statue Street, the young scions of an up-and-coming noble house are trying to remove the heads of several statues to bring back home. Wrapped up in appearances due to the need to prove themselves, the youths believe taking the heads is both their right and an important tradition for their house to follow–if they don't have one of the famed statues of Statue Street, or at least the head of a statue, their family will never be respected enough among their peers to gain status. Any interference causes the nobles to become aggressive and confrontational, but though they threaten and intimidate with any lies they can come up with, they're not interested in actual violence. If calmed down, they're open to a good-faith debate on putting the statue heads back, though they're hard to convince.

KING'S RANSOM

Lord Gyr disappeared mysteriously, and many district residents have their own theories why. Some say he died quietly in his sleep. Some suggest he was hidden in a secret prison below Absalom to slowly wither away. A popular theory holds that he has defected to Taldor and is using his knowledge to help them plan a final, successful siege of Absalom. There are even rumors that he secretly took the Test of the *Starstone* and ascended to godhood. No one knows the answer for sure, and to the meticulous Erdan Sianovel, such a messy loose end has become too much to bear. Erdan has announced a staggering reward of ten thousand gold pieces to anyone who can prove what happened to the missing primarch—a fee far greater than any official reward offered by the city. Unfortunately, Erdan's vast intellect didn't quite grasp the inevitable flood of charlatans looking to make a quick profit—or thieves and cutthroats attempting the same—but so far none have managed to slip past the detective's thorough and humorless inspections.

211 The Sianovel Agency

MERCHANT

Positioned between a bakery and a woodworker's studio on a busy commercial block, the Sianovel Agency similarly features a broad front window garishly painted so as to attract the eye of the wandering shopper. While his neighbors sell food, clothing, or craft items, Sianovel offers something different: answers.

Unfulfilled by his career managing the Foreign Coin Exchange, Erdan Sianovel opened this cozy detective agency as a hobby business a few years ago, and has surprised even himself by bringing in a steady and lucrative stream of intriguing cases. Sianovel's clients include nobles and knights, gladiators and artisans. Already fabulously wealthy, Sianovel often takes particularly intriguing cases regardless of the client's ability to pay.

Sianovel is particularly adept at analyzing paperwork and organizing clues into a coherent order, so he gravitates toward cases that offer enticing and mysterious paper trails. His most consistent (and richest) client is Lady Seleenae, the owner of the Coin Exchange and one of Sianovel's oldest friends and allies. In addition to applying his investigative acumen to generally further his patron's interest, he also operates a side business acquiring antiquities on her behalf. Sianovel scrupulously avoids trading in stolen or exploited material.

The shop opens into a sitting room bedecked with a comfortable couch and a low table featuring a snack plate and the latest issues of several Absalom broadsheets. A cheerful halfling secretary named Chirrup Turley controls access to Sianovel's private back office. The cozy office was formerly a tobacconist shop, and a pleasant aroma still lingers within.

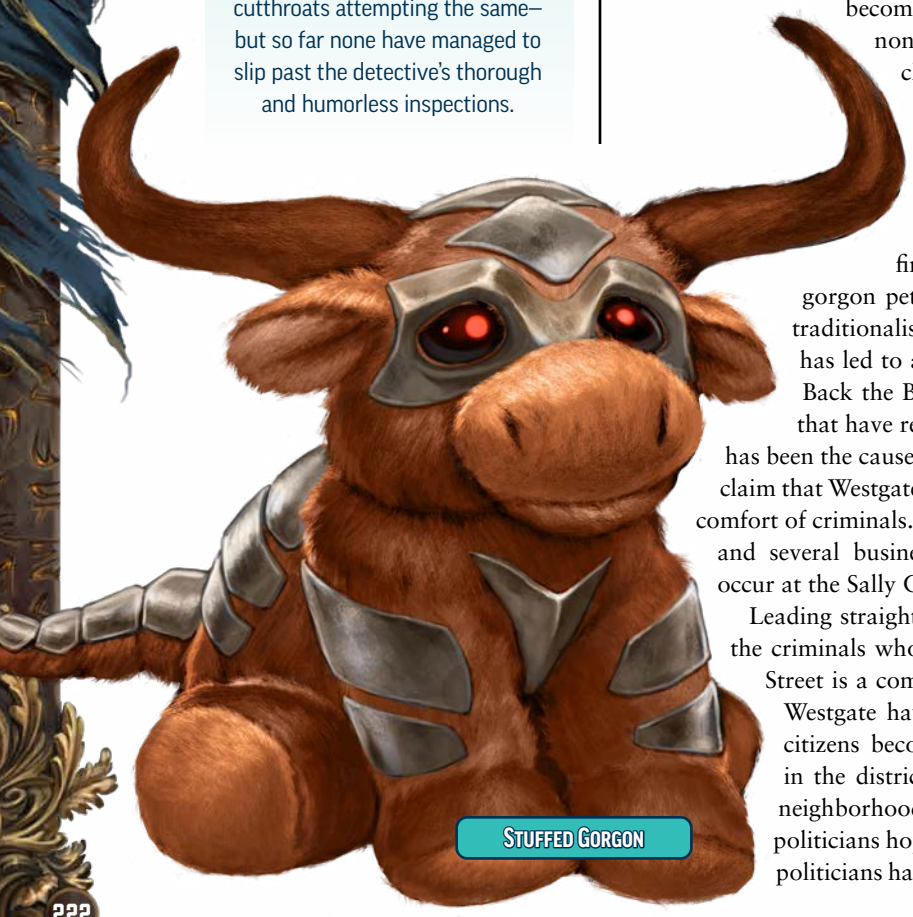
NPCs Chirrup Turley (secretary); Erdan Sianovel (proprietor)

212 Statue Street

NEIGHBORHOOD

In 4008 AR Valtias the Redeemer, while in charge of the Office of Prisons, instituted an event called the Charge of the Gorgon. The prisons were rapidly becoming overcrowded, so to ease the population, nonviolent criminals were to be released into a closed-off street along with a gorgon. Those who survived were set free, and those who didn't became decorations lining what came to be known as Statue Street. Over the course of seven long centuries, Absalom's population increasingly found the event cruel, and it was finally abolished in 4714 AR after a runaway gorgon petrified many dozens of innocent spectators. The traditionalist nature of the denizens of Westgate, however, has led to a very strong movement in the district to "Bring Back the Bull." Petitions and political initiatives to do just that have repeatedly been brought forth and dismissed. This has been the cause of some anger among the district populace, who claim that Westgate traditions are being pushed aside in favor of the comfort of criminals. An organized protest backed by wealthy citizens and several businesses has scheduled regular demonstrations to occur at the Sally Gate and Mithril Hall.

Leading straight into the Puddles district—from which many of the criminals who participated in the Charge came from—Statue Street is a common refuge for the destitute. While residents of Westgate have traditionally enjoyed watching impoverished citizens become statues, they've never enjoyed seeing them in the district for any other reason. As the residents of the neighborhoods closest to the Puddles increasingly spawn young politicians hoping to restore their district, entrenched Westgate politicians have blunted their ambitions with demands that the



Stuffed Gorgon

young activists scare away the undesirable denizens of Statue Street before the local council can even consider greater investment in the neighborhood.

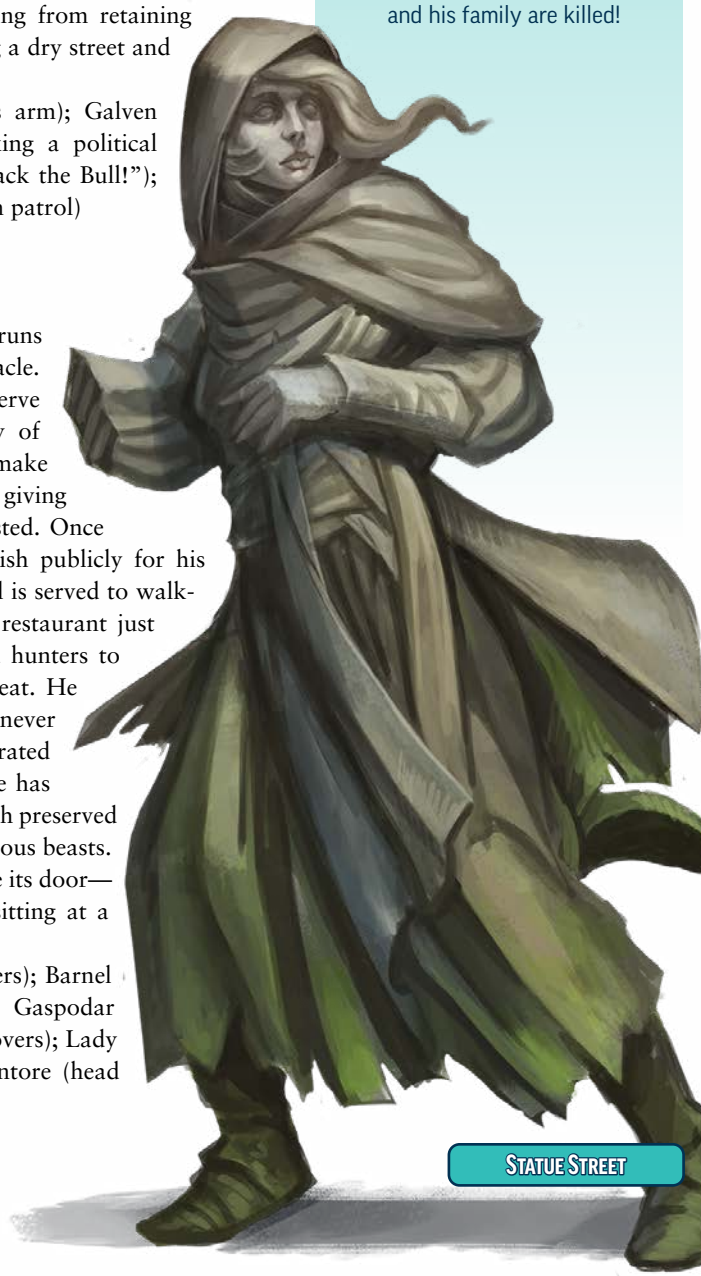
Over centuries of annual Charges of the Gorgon, Statue Street filled up and left no room for new statues. Older statues would thus be removed to make room. It became traditional for Westgaters to bid on the statues and place them as decoration on their estates as a sign of wealth—the more infamous the criminal, the more valuable the statue. Since the spectacle has been canceled, some residents have taken to stealing statues or parts of statues, leaving Statue Street increasingly vandalized. The Sally Guard has increased their nightly patrols along the street, but find themselves spending more time chasing refugees from the Puddles back into their muck than stopping Westgaters from stealing a statue's head. The district residents resent the eyesore the defaced statues represent, but firmly believe it's the right of the citizens to acquire statues, as that has been the tradition since the Charge was instituted.

As the southern portions of Westgate begin to sink and flood—or, as the locals say, become "claimed by the Puddles"—more of Statue Street is drowned. Because of its significance to the residents of Westgate, the people have put great pressure on their leaders to save the statues. Every resident has opinions on how this should be done, ranging from retaining walls blocking off the Puddles entirely to renaming a dry street and transporting all of the statues there.

NPCs Bronton Guile (prying off a statue's arm); Galven Rockbottom (street sweeper); Venla Sirola (making a political speech in front of an audience chanting "Bring Back the Bull!"); Lord Winton (leading a Sally Guard anti-vandalism patrol)

A DISH TO DIE FOR

It's no secret that Sammael Rantore refuses to cook sapient beings, but he confides that recently, messages have been appearing in his restaurant and home requesting an aasimar. The rambling notes propose that a being with celestial blood, when prepared correctly, would grant special powers. The longer the messages go without a response, the more threatening they become, targeting not just him, but his wife and their three children as well. Sam is desperately needs someone's help before he and his family are killed!



Statue Street

213 To Eat the World

RESTAURANT

Sammael Rantore, or just Sam to his regulars, runs a restaurant that specializes in culinary spectacle. Sam prides himself on being able to cook and serve any ingredient from around the world that any of his customers request. Patrons to his restaurant make reservations weeks or even months in advance, giving Sam time to acquire the foodstuffs they've requested. Once the event is properly prepared, Sam cooks the dish publicly for his customers to watch, and the remainder of the meal is served to walk-ins to the restaurant. Many customers go to the restaurant just for the surprise. Sam often hires adventurers and hunters to bring him rare and unique herbs, spices, and meat. He requests that the goods are sourced ethically, but never asks for the specifics. The restaurant itself is decorated with mementos of the strangest demonstrations he has performed, from dried pepper wreaths entwined with preserved shambling mound vines to the stuffed heads of various beasts. The shop doesn't have a normal sign hanging above its door—instead it features a large sculpture of a family sitting at a table, using forks to eat a pie shaped like Golarion.

NPCs Lady Anilah and Lord Dremdhet (diners); Barnel (enjoying a gluttonous meal with Gaspodar); Gaspodar (encouraging Barnel to order a fourth plate of leftovers); Lady Hamaria and Lord Synarr (diners); Sammael Rantore (head chef and proprietor)

214 Tomb of the Living

MUNICIPAL

Deep below Westgate is the Tomb of the Living, a crypt built in the ancient Osirian style and a secret

EYEWITNESS TO HISTORY

Some time after the party's first encounter with the Pathfinder Society, they are contacted by Sanloria Percota, curator of the Westgate Heritage Museum and founder of the anti-Pathfinder Peacebuilders' Alliance. She openly states her intention to destroy the organization, and offers to pay the player characters to join up and act as her agents on the inside. Even if they refuse, she asks only that they record the impact of her efforts from within—she doesn't even care that they share their observations. As an historian, her only concern is that a record is preserved for posterity. Over time, of course, she tests her agents' loyalty, and hopes to one day use them as a direct weapon aimed at the Society's throat.

oubliette. Meant to be directed at the undead, Absalom's laws have special conditions that allow for "those who continue to move when entombed" to be imprisoned without trial—Absalom's leadership has used this loophole to imprison political prisoners, problematic nobility, and enemies of Absalom. The Grand Council maintains all of the legal paperwork, bureaucratic necessities, and rituals to keep the facility labeled a tomb.

The prison is a closely guarded secret, as the people of Absalom—and more than a few other nations—would not take kindly to knowing the true nature of the building. On the surface, the Tomb of the Living is simply a monument used for important officials whose families don't have the means for an appropriate burial. The upper floors of the crypt do indeed hold entombed bodies, and ceremonies are frequent enough to avert suspicion.

Down below is the true facility: a labyrinth of cells guarded by the most elite and trusted members of the Sally Guard, sworn to secrecy against the threat of being held in the tomb themselves. There are no windows, and torchlight is a luxury intended only for those traveling the halls.

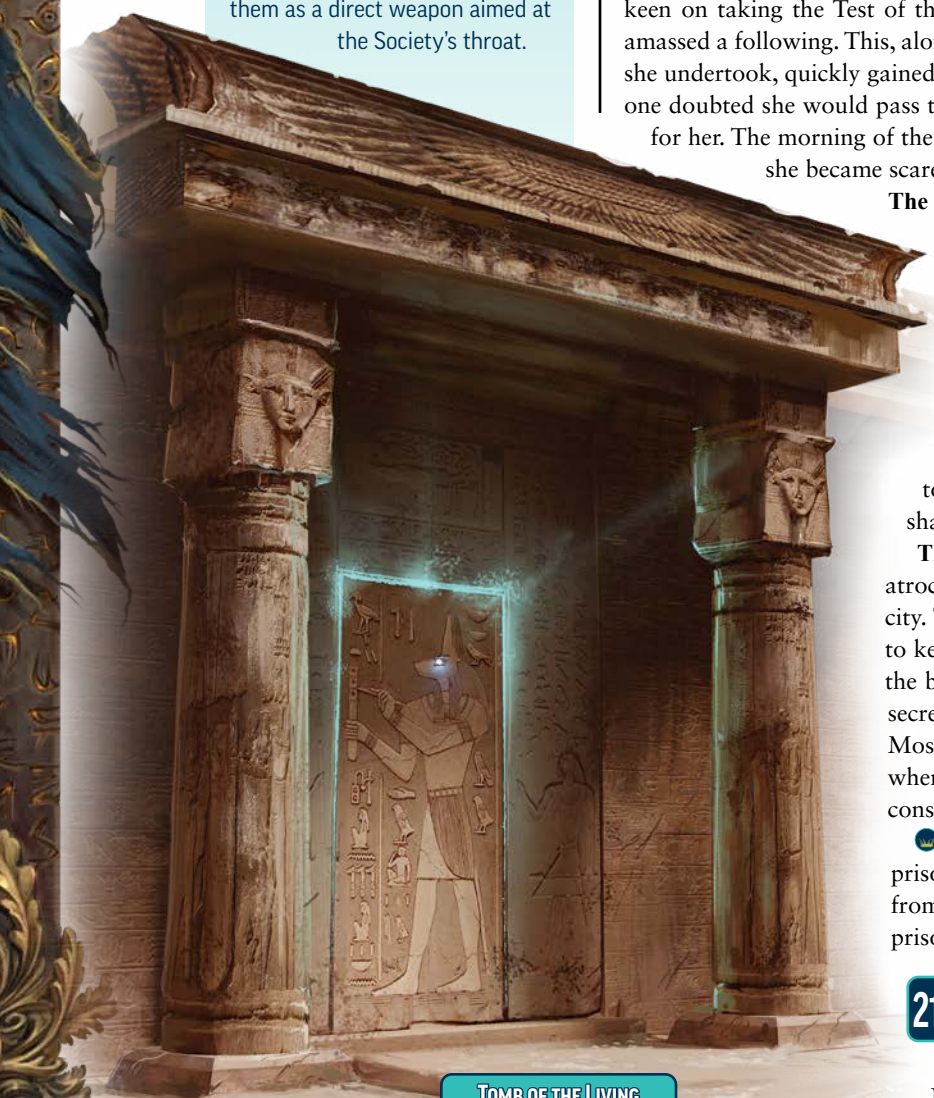
Prisoners in the Tomb of the Living are given just enough food and water that they won't die. The small cells don't leave room for much movement, and the muscles of prisoners slowly atrophy. The isolation in the dark eventually drives most prisoners to insanity. Between their deteriorating mental state and the time they've spent in the tomb, most no longer remember their names or their previous lives. Their numbers include:

The Almost Goddess: Nearly 20 years ago, a woman arrived in Absalom keen on taking the Test of the *Starstone*. Extremely charismatic, she easily amassed a following. This, along with her incredible skill in nearly everything she undertook, quickly gained her a cult. The cult grew larger and larger. No one doubted she would pass the test, and she would have a religion waiting for her. The morning of the test, she never arrived. People wrongly believe she became scared and backed out, never to be seen again.

The Forever Wizard: In the distant past, a wizard both terrified and fascinated by mortality spent years studying life and death. He discovered the secret he had been looking for—experimenting on himself, he successfully defeated death. His body heals any injury, even those that should be fatal, and constantly renews itself, making aging impossible. He planned to take the discovery to his aging and sick parents in Taldor and then share it with the world. But he never arrived.

The Quiet King: Absalom has dark secrets, atrocities ostensibly committed for the good of the city. The few who know of these events also know to keep them secret. But one noble's conscience got the better of him. He began to report these terrible secrets and promised to bring proof. He never did. Most believe he was a conspiracy theorist who fled when put to the test. He lives now in a cell under constant magical silence, his tongue cut out.

NPCs Muar Gauthfallow (depositing a prisoner); Nadine Vives (prisoner being transferred from the Black Whale); Lord Winton (overseeing a prisoner transfer)



TOMB OF THE LIVING

215 Westgate Heritage Museum

ATTRACTION | EMPLOYER | RESTAURANT

Nothing exemplifies Westgate being stuck in

the Mithral Age like Westgate's historical museum. This large complex has rooms devoted to Westgate's history from every era since it was created. Westgate historians employed by the museum offer guided tours throughout the day, though residents of other districts often imply these tours are strongly biased in favor of Westgate. Those who demonstrate a strong knowledge of Westgate's history, as well as a healthy respect for the district itself, may even be offered employment. The museum also has a gift shop that sells era-accurate clothing, "authentically made" goods from various points in the district's history, and novelty trinkets. Profits from this shop are used to fund the district's political initiatives. Recently, due to the ban on the Charge of the Gorgon on Statue Street, soft cloth dolls of a very cute gorgon have become tremendously popular purchases.

An attached museum restaurant also sells period-specific meals made as authentically as possible and is quite popular on its own. Despite its beloved nature among nearby residents, the museum does have a problem with common break-ins and vandalism; stopping these incidents and bringing those responsible to justice is something the museum is willing to pay very well for. Likewise, the museum is always looking for competent agents and brokers to secure important Westgate historical artifacts, which usually boils down to whatever historical artifacts Westgate wishes to claim to increase its prestige.

NPCs Dhauken Tor (criticizing a display); Sanloria Percota (curator)

216 The Windarium

MERCHANT | RESIDENCE

A charming shop located on a street packed with merchants and artisans, the Windarium offers clockwork devices, toys, and curiosities for all occasions, and is best known for its vast selection of gears, screws, fittings, and other precision parts useful to artisans and amateurs alike. A brilliant half-orc graduate of the Clockwork Cathedral named Symo of Gyr founded the shop fifteen years ago, and its organization and mix of products still reflects his particular genius. But genius alone does not dictate success in Absalom's mercurial retail environment, and it wasn't until Symo met Mertion that the Windarium truly came into its own. Mirtion knew almost nothing about clockworks, but his experience running a succession of successful shops made him an able manager just in time to ride a wave of public interest in clockworks. Symo and Mirtion fell in love, and were married in 4710 AR. Five years ago, First Gear Chun Hye-Seung drafted Symo into a prominent role as second gear—her personal advisor—assigning him to apply his expertise to several secret special engineering projects at Azlanti Keep. It was all going so well.

In the military shake-up following the Black Echelon Uprising of 4717, Symo found himself promoted to First Gear and expected to run Azlanti Keep's siege defenses as well as accelerating Chun's important special projects. Symo often works every waking hour, and now spends most of his nights in his private military quarters in the keep rather than in the cozy apartment he shares with Mirtion above the Windarium. Mirtion, now a one-man-show running a store he is starting to view as Symo's passion rather than his own, has taken his careful eye off the business. As the Windarium falters, Mirtion throws himself into his own greatest passion—badgers.

Mirtion keeps five badger pets in the apartment, and since Symo is seldom around to insist that they remain up there, the creatures now have free reign of the entire building. The Windarium is still the best clockworks shop in the district, but many of its regular customers now joke that it is at least as much a pet store, and most are beginning to source their parts elsewhere.

NPCs Bagara Broadfoot (customer); Camani Jensen (seeking Symo's advice repairing a small flying construct); Lady Chesne (delivering a sixth badger pet to Mirtion); Findialory (fleeing the shop with a fresh badger bite); Mirtion (prioprietor); Symo (visiting home on a rare break); Lord Yamthar (customer)

Elsewhere in Westgate

217. District Courthouse: Westgate's large courthouse is a conglomeration of four wings, each with its own trial chambers and offices, surrounding an ancient reflecting pool. By longstanding tradition, defendants are paraded to the water's edge before each trial, that they might contemplate their fate in nature's uncompromising mirror.

218. Menhemes Manor: The huge estate of one of Absalom's most influential Osirian families boasts three small pyramids, an avenue of carved sphinxes, and an on-site repository of the city's history established more than 2000 years ago. Scion Lord Rogren Sphairo manages the museum and the house's politics with the mind of a brilliant (if temperamental) strategist.

219. Sirola Manor: A well-maintained but not extravagantly expensive manor house owned by the retired Pathfinder Society field agent Venla Sirola and her husband, Urmas.

220. Westgate Bathhouse: Though most districts boast a variety of public and private bathhouses, the domed Westgate Bathhouse is perhaps the city's most popular. Open to all, the ancient edifice swarms with visitors from day to night, boasting a small market outside its pillared portico. The dungeon-like interior contains numerous huge soaking pools, massage chambers, heated meditation shrines, and smaller pools available for a higher price. These latter rooms frequently serve as secret meeting places for lovers or negotiating rivals.

WISE QUARTER

District Council Wise Council
Headquarters Wisdom's Refuge
Nomarch First Speaker Dhauken Tor
District Watch Learned Guard
Headquarters Protectorate Anthology
Captain of the Watch Mendhir the Colossus
Key NPCs Brivit Nae of Irrisen (head librarian of the Forae Logos, guildmaster of the Scriveners' Guild); Lady Darchana of House Madinani (archdean of the Arcanamirium, second spell lord); Dremdhet Salhar (grand ambassador of Osirion, at-large member of the Low Council); Ferridan Severus (diplomatic minister, member of the High Council); Metadame Vannessir of House Tevineg (sargeant-at-wands of the Arcanamirium)
Services Forae Logos access pass (1 sp for day pass; 1 gp for monthly pass), guided tour (1 sp per person), library access pass (1 cp for day pass; 1 sp for monthly pass), local transportation (1 sp), lodging (2 sp to 1 gp per room per evening), magical transportation (varies by spell), restaurants (1 sp to 1 gp), tuition (mundane 1 gp per semester; magical 10 gp per semester)

DISTRICT SUMMARY

The soaring towers of the Arcanamirium and the domes of the Forae Logos are but two of Absalom's many repositories of knowledge. These institutions and countless other libraries, schools, and museums give the Wise Quarter its name. The Wise Quarter is also a vital place of governance, since it is the seat of Absalom's Grand Council and home to the Absalom Mint.

The Wise Quarter's streets perpetually buzz with excitement over the most recently published dissertations, academic journal articles, and political back-room dealings. This district, where Absalom's government and dozens of academic institutions took root, is defined by civic intrigue and institutional learning. The Grand Council Hall often teems with scribes, pages, and lobbyists looking to bend the ear of a Grand Councilor. Nearby businesses cater to politicians' needs and often adjust their hours based on when the Council is in session. Even some of the boarding schools and institutions of higher learning near the Hall focus on political structures, strategies, and conventions.

However, most of the academic institutions stay far to the west of the governmental buildings where the streets are generally quieter and less prone to marches and rallies. Several all-night tea houses, bookstores, and libraries operate near the various academies, and nearby residences often include furnished apartments or dormitory-style accommodations. Students commonly share rides to the Ivy District to see a show or attend parties. Transportation services in this area are not cheap, but are generally priced so that multiple passengers can share a fee and provide plenty of roomy accommodation.

The academic jewel of the district is the Arcanamirium, one of Absalom's oldest institutions of arcane learning. Its high towers are a landmark for many travelers on the ground, and its thick outer wall marks the edge of the school and firmly establishes its presence in the district. The school's fees are expensive and scholarships are rare, so many students work while attending classes in order to keep up with tuition payments. This means low-level magical services are plentiful and accessible within the district, and a few "mage-brokers" have established themselves as agents for those who offer magical services.

In fact, a few of these mage-brokers are willing to commission services that go against the varlokkur, Absalom's spellcasting judges and ministers, and their list of forbidden spells and magical devices. The varlokkur, and the third spell lord whom they answer to, offer handsome rewards for leads related to these magical criminals—they must, because the Learned Guard charged with protecting the district prioritize the Forae Logos over anything else, including people in the Wise Quarter, which makes them less effective at policing magical abuses.

The Forae Logos is the largest library in Absalom and has existed for over 4,000 years; its establishment is written into the Founding Laws, and the city

WISE QUARTER
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owns and operates it with the intent of gathering and preserving vast archives of knowledge. In addition to ancient tomes, rumors suggest the Forae Logos also contains priceless magical and historical relics in its well-guarded basement.

In addition to impressive libraries and academic institutions, the Wise Quarter also hosts many museums, most prominently the Avatectura, Blakros Museum, and Gallery Rousa. Numerous smaller museums and galleries speckle the landscape, offering exhibits on countless subjects. Most of the district's academies offer sizable grants and the promise of skilled apprentices to these museums in order to strike agreements granting students free admission.

DISTRICT LOCATIONS

The following are some of the Wise Quarter's most notable locations.

221 Absalom Menagerie

ATTRACTION EMPLOYER

This large park contains multiple magically controlled climates for a variety of captive animals from around Golarion. Each enclosure is sealed with a permanent *wall of force* to ensure guests' safety without obstructing any views. The elaborate front gates are never locked, and citizens can visit the animals at all hours. Founded by famous explorer Rubani Muraabe three generations ago, the Menagerie was bequeathed to the public, but Rubani's family still manages daily operations. Rubani's one stipulation upon gifting the park to Absalom was that no member of the Blakros family must ever be allowed to enter the grounds, though no one in living memory knows why.

Druids are generally offended by the Menagerie's creatures being plucked from their natural homes and forced to live in captivity, though some acquiesce to the benefits of exposing urban society to natural wonders, so that people might come to respect and better understand nature. The Menagerie dedicates sizable time and effort toward conserving endangered creatures, which has sparked debates over the benefits of revitalizing flagging populations against allowing natural selection to drive them to extinction.

NPCs Alina Muraabe (high warden); Eivlind and Jacques Albers (exuberant tourists); Korhül (loudly protesting from across the street); Oldrik Elduthan (warden); Slithering Snare (discreetly attempting to liberate an irate krooth)

222 Absalom Mint

MUNICIPAL

In the shadow of Azlanti Keep sits a nearly windowless stone fortress featuring only two entrances and several chimneys. Inside, the coinage of Absalom is created, tracked, taxed, distributed, and destroyed. Scion Lord Kerkis of House Damaq, lord exchequer of the Absalom Mint and head of the Office of Taxation, oversees this process to ensure the commerce of Absalom—and in his opinion, the entire Inner Sea—continues to function.

The Mint has two entrances and several chimneys that billow with smoke from the metals smelted within. The Office of Taxation, located in the east wing, is where tax collectors and their armed Precious Guard escorts deposit their collections and records. The coins are then evaluated to either be stored in deep underground vaults if in good condition, or sent to the west wing if damaged, defaced, or badly tarnished. The east wing also stores records for registered businesses and their tax histories.

The west wing is dedicated to the smelting, weighing, and pressing of new currency, which often involves the destruction and reuse of old currency. Every copper penny, silver weight, gold measure, and platinum sphinx in circulation was created in this building sometime within the last 3,600 years. The dies used to stamp the coins are kept under multiple layers of security, both magical and mundane.

THE STREETS RUN WILD!

Eastgate's Children of Spring cult has released several creatures from the Absalom Menagerie, but lost control of the animals before they could move the creatures somewhere more habitable. Instead, the creatures are rampaging down the street and causing a general panic. Handlers from the Menagerie are desperate to get the animals back into their enclosures before city officials or civilian hunters decide the beasts are too much of a threat to the public, and hunting down some of the smaller or more agile creatures will likely be a nightmare. Opening the city gates and allowing the animals to flee into the Cairnlands might be the easier, if more costly, solution.

BUYING AND TRADING MAGIC

Magic is one of the more lucrative, trades in Absalom, but the size of the city makes tracking down what's for sale where a tricky issue. If a PC is looking for a specific spell or magic item and you don't have a specific vendor in mind, one easy way to decide if the magic is even for sale in Absalom is to have the PC Gather Information about what they wish to purchase, with a DC equal to that set by the DCs by Level on page 503 of the *Core Rulebook*. Remember to adjust this DC as appropriate to account for Uncommon or Rare purchases!

NPCs Florian Gale (captain of the Precious Guard); Lord Kerkis (administrator); Lady Seleenae (dropping off taxes collected at the Sally Port or arriving for a meeting with her cousin, Lord Kerkis)

223 The Arcanamirium

ACADEMY | ARCHIVE | HOUSING | MERCHANT | WORKSHOP

The Arcanamirium is one of the largest and most prestigious schools in Absalom. The Arclords of Nex built the institution following the disappearance of the Archmage Nex and their subsequent exile from their distant homeland. They designed its imposing high black stone walls, stone gate, and soaring towers to foster a sense of security among its students. The single entrance features an intimidating portcullis and red-robed guards wielding pikes; they are meant to remind visitors that magic is a potent force best kept locked away from ignorant minds.

Today the Arcanamirium stands for practical magic—using spells and magic tools toward a direct and measurable result in the world. To its students and staff, magic is simply a tool to improve the lives of all people. Graduates often become artificers or politicians, or even provide magical services to common citizens.

The school conducts an annual open exam for anyone wishing to study behind its well-guarded doors. The professors, called docents, subject prospective students to a variety of esoteric tests in an attempt to ascertain their magical potential. Those who pass these tests are then ranked as either an apprentice, journeyman, maven, or the honored arcanscenti, a rank desired by senior spellcasters worldwide.

The Arcanamirium

Once per year, each tenured docent can bestow a single student with a full scholarship covering their basic living expenses and secondhand equipment. The cutthroat competition for these scholarships subjects docents to political pressure, bribes, and offers of questionably moral favors in order to win the honor, sometimes successfully.

Nevertheless, the school produces top-quality spellcasters from a variety of backgrounds and with a wide array of talents. Unlike instructors at other magical institutions, Arcanamirium docents oppose specialization for how it limits the range of students' capabilities. Instead, docents believe that a broad spectrum of training unlocks the greatest amount of potential. They practice this philosophy by arranging classes toward measurable goals rather than traditional schools of magic, such as Artifice and Enchantment, Battle Magic, Performance Magic, Fabrication, Magical Theory, Magical Transportation, and Relic Studies.

Graduates are required to complete an apprenticeship with an influential organization, such as the Harbormaster's Grange, Office of Prisons, Pathfinder Society, or Scriveners' Guild. These apprenticeships often lead to permanent positions that further increase the Arcanamirium's influence. The school also sometimes creates and sells magic items for profit, which puts them at odds with the Guild of Spears and the Union of Carpenters, Stonemasons, and Metalworkers.

Lady Darchana of House Madinani, archdean of the Arcanamirium and second spell lord, has an interest in teleportation magic and consistently grants her annual scholarship to mages who show a talent for the art. She's rumored to have created a network of teleportation circles to major cities across Golarion, including Magnimar, Nerosyan, Highhelm, Whitethrone, Sothis, Katapesh, and distant Goka. This network allows Lady Darchana to circumvent the purview of the Harbormaster's Grange and Scriveners' Guild to bring goods into the city without being taxed or documented, drawing suspicion, condemnation, and avarice from several fronts.

NPCs Lady Darchana (archdean); Judae Tarshem (docent); Kralte Grisham (docent); Maren Fuln (investigating lore related to the Dark Tapestry); Mother Jackal (public lecture attendee); Vanissi Gaatan (rich student); Metadame Vannessir (sargeant-at-wands); Venorium Blorm (poor student)

224 Blakros Museum

ATTRACTION

The Blakros Museum is the most famous museum in Absalom, though less for its eclectic collection than for being the site of nearly constant disasters. In the last decade, the museum has been invaded by the Shadow Plane multiple times, taken over by a Mwangi artifact, attacked by strange metallic golems, and haunted by its own exhibits. Though still popular enough to keep the doors open, many residents of Absalom avoid the place for fear of being attacked by one of the displays or otherwise cursed. The Learned Guard fully refuses to intervene in any disturbances at the museum in favor of creating a perimeter to simply contain the chaos.

Nigel Aldain, the museum's beleaguered curator, often relies on his contacts at the Pathfinder Society to help him with the many hardships he's faced over the years, all while insisting he doesn't need their help. As a former Pathfinder agent, Nigel regrets having to rely on the Society for assistance due to some unknown disagreement with its leadership—though a long string of Pathfinder-led rescues has caused Nigel to thaw toward his former associates.

The wealthy and influential Blakros family (with the exception of Lady Dhrami, Nigel's wife) live elsewhere, but the museum nonetheless remains the scene of many of the family's greatest intrigues. The museum's exhibit halls have hosted weddings, fraternal society gatherings, noble galas, and ornate feasts, all to further Blakros power and influence.

Portal Politics

An Arcanamirium student working on calculations for teleportation magic named Venorium Blorm has posted a flier asking for assistance in measuring distance, angles, and incantations. As soon as his research begins to come together, however, a university official demands all of the calculations and threatens to expel the student unless all work on the project ceases. Many students whisper that Lady Darchana is involved with the mysterious prohibition, but the student has a simpler, if no less malicious, theory: a prominent docent intends to steal the research and take credit for it. Not knowing where to turn, Blorm turns to adventurers buying magic items at the Arcanamirium, sharing his suspicions with the strangers and begging them to help.

BLAKROS MACHINATIONS

With their centuries-long pact with the Onyx Alliance behind them, most members of House Blakros today seek stability and normalcy over most other goals. Lost with the shadow alliance are certain protections that kept the Blakros family safe from reprisals from old adversaries dating back to the family's earliest days, many of which show signs of reignition. Already many of the family's foreign holdings have suffered mysterious misfortunes in recent months, and strengthened ties with Lord Avid and houses Morilla and Damaq have done little to quell the troubling trend. Lady Hamaria and her closest advisors anticipate that the troubles will reach Absalom within days.

Blakros Museum

Scholars who study the Blakros Museum's many tragic incidents point back to the building's origins. Ralzeros the Overwatched, an astrologer and wizard, built it as a stronghold and laboratory and allegedly used an artifact called the *shadow obelisk* to carve the squat ugly building out of a single mass of volcanic basalt. He also installed complicated observation equipment to study distant worlds, and some say he gained their attention in return. He disappeared after a duel with his rival, the archmage Beldrin, and the building sat abandoned for centuries before being purchased by the Blakros family.

In 4714 AR, Nigel used the *shadow obelisk* to create a pocket of malleable extradimensional space inside the museum through shadow magic, which he uses to rearrange the museum for each new exhibit and provide a larger interior than the exterior. The result has created a more open and pleasant feel to the museum, which has somewhat increased ticket sales.

NPCs Nigel Aldain (curator); Lady Dhrami (owner, aspiring artist); Lord Encarius (art instructor); Lady Hamira (Blakros matriarch); Mother Jackal (patron); Lord Synarr (friend of Lady Dhrami); Venla Sirola (antiquities expert)

225 Forae Logos

ARCHIVE

The Forae Logos stands in the center of the Wise Quarter as a monument to the acquisition of knowledge. This massive structure bears a flat roof and sharp angles common in Azlanti architecture. The building's front side is supported by a dozen 50-foot-tall telamon columns that depict the 12 guises of Aroden. Thirty-three steps lead to the front entrance, which opens to depictions of the Artist and Scholar guises that flank it. During Tar-Baphon's most recent siege of Absalom, several of the guise columns came to life and defended the library, including the Warrior, who smashed undead and demon-stitched abominations while the library staff sheltered scores of frightened citizens.

For almost as long as Absalom has stood, the Forae Logos has been at its heart collecting and sharing knowledge and enlightenment to its people. Aroden himself ensured that maintenance of the Library of Kortos, as it is sometimes called, was written into the Founding Laws of Absalom. This makes the Forae Logos, and all of the art and knowledge within, property of Absalom itself. This institution is so important to the city that the Founding Laws prohibit even a single page from being removed without the unanimous consent of the Grand Council's high seats.

To collect new books, the original Grand Council also passed the Scholar's Law, which requires every book brought into the city to be considered for inclusion in the Forae Logos's vast collection. Scriveners' Guild examiners stationed at the city gates and on Pilot Island inspect books brought into the city, comparing them against a master list of titles already in the archive. Those tomes not on the list (or those suspected to be intentionally mislabeled or glamered as part of a smuggling effort) are confiscated, catalogued, and copied. Such books are always available to be reclaimed—always in exactly the same condition—a week after their confiscation, at the public desk of the Forae Logos. Personal spellbooks, diaries, and financial ledgers are exempted from the Scholar's Law, but nearly everything else might fall under its broad purview, depending upon the

vicissitudes (or willingness to take a bribe) of the deciding guild inspector. Those who refuse to turn over a desired book incur a steep tax of one silver piece per page, often called "paying silver letters."

The Scriveners' Guild is commissioned with maintaining the Forae Logos in exchange for free use of the building. They manage and protect the Grand Library with help from the Learned Guard, which was originally commissioned as a military unit to guard the Forae Logos. The Learned Guard's duties have since extended to the entire Wise Quarter, though the Grand Library remains their top priority. They manage their affairs from a group of buildings just outside the library referred to as the Protectorate Anthology, which connect to each other and the library itself via a series of tunnels. Access to these passages is restricted to senior members of the Learned Guard and Scriveners' Guild.

The library is a particularly useful resource for adventurers researching odd bits of knowledge or hidden lore that might solve an otherwise impossible puzzle, a boon that has saved Absalom from destruction multiple times. Others find value in the large collection of Azlanti writings and artifacts, and political historians enjoy comparing versions of Chelaxian history to find inaccuracies, though this often leads to debates on to the validity of various editions. Scholars, priests, and magic users also use this space as neutral territory for settling debates.

NPCs Dr. Bensi Skule (disguised researcher); Brivit Nae of Irrisen (head librarian); Dhauken Tor (researcher); Ealan Foxglove (researcher); Kildress Fung (Scriveners' Guild inspector); Mendhir the Colossus (turning over a sackful of confiscated books); Nigel Aldain (researcher); Lord Rogren (researcher); Sandaril (second archivist); Yargos Gill (researcher)

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A locked carriage full of books is on its way to the Forae Logos to be copied in accordance to the Scholar's Law. As the carriage passes through a narrow section of street, it is brazenly assaulted by mercenaries dressed as Pathfinder Society agents. Without intervention, the raid turns into a hash that leaves some books missing and others spilled across the street, damaging their pages. The Learned Guard and Scriveners' Guild immediately pursue the culprits and offer favors to anyone who can help capture the thieves. The Pathfinder Society is likewise very interested in revealing the true culprits and protecting their reputation.

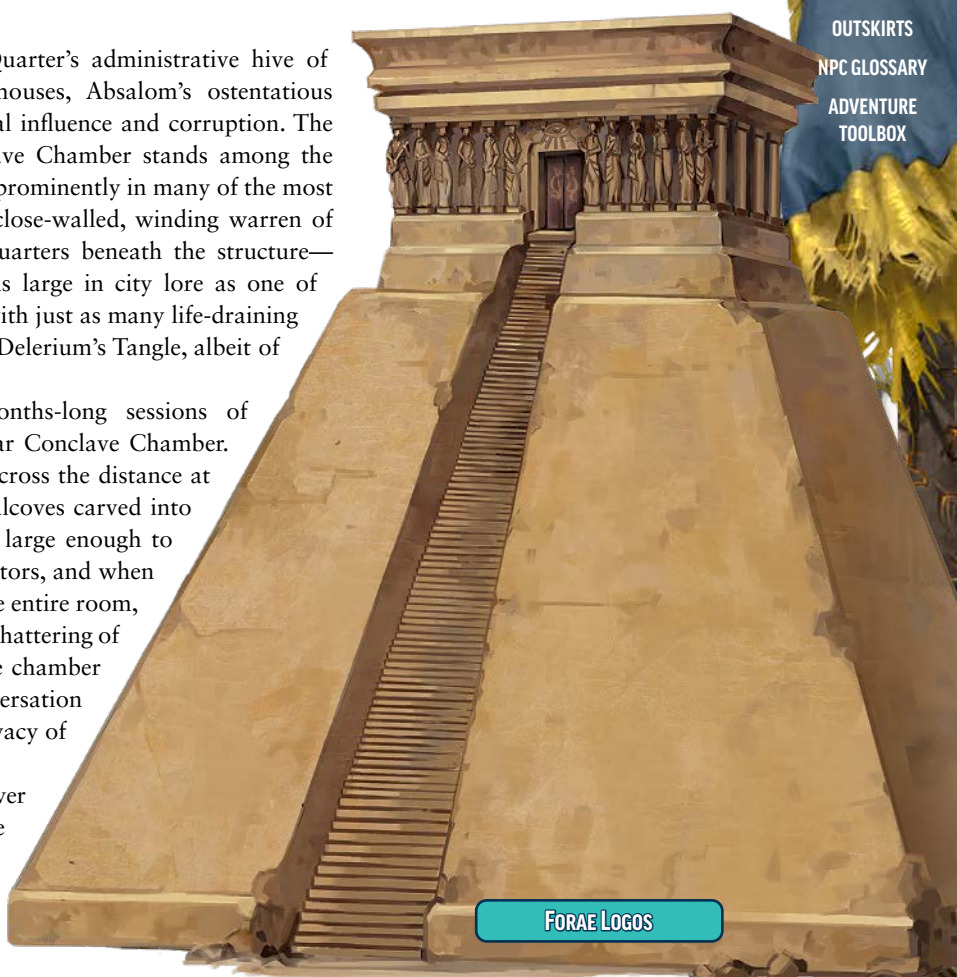
226 Grand Council Hall

MUNICIPAL

Nestled at the dead center of the Wise Quarter's administrative hive of monuments, archives, and political club-houses, Absalom's ostentatious Grand Council Hall is a bullseye of political influence and corruption. The sweeping dome atop the complex's Conclave Chamber stands among the architectural marvels of Absalom, featuring prominently in many of the most famous artistic depictions of the city. The close-walled, winding warren of subterranean councilor offices and clerk quarters beneath the structure—known as the Pigeon Hole—likewise looms large in city lore as one of Absalom's most infamous dungeons, filled with just as many life-draining traps and vile monsters as the Labyrinth or Delerium's Tangle, albeit of a decidedly political stripe.

The city's Low Council meets in months-long sessions of demagoguery and debate in the vast circular Conclave Chamber. Each of the city's 49 low councilors peers across the distance at one another from stone thrones built into alcoves carved into the chamber's outer walls. The alcoves are large enough to accommodate a trio of advisors, aids, or visitors, and when no primary speaker holds the attention of the entire room, the acoustics of the chamber ensure that the chattering of politicians, sycophants, and servitors on the chamber floor creates a cacophony of indistinct conversation that paradoxically seems to improve the privacy of speakers in the alcoves.

Thirteen slightly larger alcoves loom over the others from their perch fifteen feet above the speaker's dais along the north arc of the Conclave Chamber. These, the literal "high seats" of the Primarch's High Council, remain largely empty during the council's



Forae Logos

SMOKE AND MIRRORS

An evangelical street performer from the Temple of Sivanah gathers a crowd for a flashy demonstration of illusion and misdirection. The priest loudly calls for volunteers and challenges onlookers to uncover how many veils of deception are behind any given display. Those who perform especially well or prove to be particularly astute are promised a special tour of the temple, as well as a scroll case that is seemingly sealed shut. Those who pierce the illusion discover an invitation to a private audience with High Priestess Odessara, who evaluates them for potential use as hired agents in service of the temple's schemes.

debates; in most cases high councilors make rare appearances in the chamber when the entire body must vote and otherwise assiduously avoid the place altogether. Most of the High Council's formal business takes place at private meetings in constantly shifting secret locations throughout the city.

In theory, it's possible for citizens of Absalom to attend sessions of the Grand Council, thronging in huge crowds on the floor of the Conclave Chamber before the speaker's dais and below the councilors' alcoves. Each member of the council receives a small number of passes—polished bone tablets emblazoned with the seal of Absalom—meant to be distributed to constituents, heroes of Absalom's military or constabulary, prominent citizens, and so on. In practice, these passes usually fall to lobbyists, agitators, and agents of Absalom's wealthiest noble families and business interests, who know that proximity to power offers opportunity for profit. Most members of the Low Council claim to represent the direct interests of the city and its people, but almost all of them benefit financially from their position, and they sometimes even go so far as accepting direct bribes in full view of councilors and citizens alike.

A wide corridor ringing the Conclave Chamber connects to doors inset into the back wall of each councilor's alcove. Closed to the general public, the curved hallway also offers direct access to the understructure's offices and factory-like scriptoriums that serve as the engines of Absalom's civic bureaucracy. An ostentatiously decorated entryway at the south arc of the Grand Hall allows the general public access to these cramped passages and chambers whenever the council is in session, but not actively meeting. A retinue of three-score uniformed bailiffs guard the facility at all hours of the day, ejecting unruly agitators as necessary.

NPCs Grand Councilors (see sidebars on pages 25 and 28)

Grand Council Hall

227 The Learned Pig

HOUSING TAVERN

The Wise Quarter's thriving student populace fuels scores of neighborhood pubs. Most of these establishments affiliate themselves with a single nearby academy, favoring students and faculty of that institution over those from other schools. Daltus Academy has the Owl & the Ass, the Absalom Academy of Law has the Three Gavels, and the Arcanamirium's campus is ringed by no fewer than a half-dozen noteworthy watering holes like Cups & Wands, the Sky Chariot, and Beldrin's Brews. Even Withrun House, whose Kalistocratic students must abstain from alcohol, has a few such establishments, including the Feast of Druma, which caters to the bizarre dietary prohibitions of the increasingly popular economic cult. By far the most prestigious of the Wise Quarter's taverns, the Learned Pig, remains brazenly neutral in its affiliation, welcoming academics from all the district's colleges and serving as an unaligned space for congregation, competition, debate, and some of the strongest pours in Absalom.

Located roughly between the Arcanamirium and the Forae Logos, the Learned Pig is a squat, sturdy structure in the Kortos Revival style. Numerous pennants and ribbons in the bright colors of Wise Quarter schools are festooned to the structure's eaves and pillars, rippling with the wind and beckoning customers to explore within. The Pig's interior is just as chaotic, with each of its walls stacked with shelves packed tight with academic books deposited by the tavern's customers over the four centuries since it was founded. Tavern talk suggests that the stacks—sometimes packed three volumes deep—contain several tomes not found in the collection of the Forae Logos, as well as old textbooks lined with margin notes said to contain the answers to several important long-running tests at all of the district's schools (including several that no longer exist).

Students from all over the Wise Quarter (and indeed from all parts of Absalom) flock to the Learned Pig to study in cozy camaraderie and to argue with one another in congenial (but no less spirited) weekend debates. Several ancient plaques tacked between bookshelves list the reigning house champions in a variety of subjects, with crowd approval determining winners and losers. Speakers address their eponymous host, the Learned Pig, a fattened swine usually kept in a comfy pen behind the tavern, and the debates are staged as an effort to gain the creature's favor. The staff ushers the enormous beast—bedecked in a ceremonial wig and mortarboard—to a place of honor between two special podiums. When crowd reaction is insufficient to declare a winner, all eyes turn to the Learned Pig for some sign of which speaker it favors most. These debates feature at least a half-dozen subjects at a time, and crowds often spill out into the street. When the Learned Pig grows too fat to sit on its throne, the staff butchers it in a huge celebration of the house's academic champions and an inauguration of a new Learned Pig that likewise draws hundreds of revelers.

The tavern's upper floor features a dozen cozy rooms, most often occupied by visiting academics or the foreign families of district students. Alas, the establishment's thin walls do little to block the common room chatter that often trails into the early morning hours, making a good night's sleep a difficult prospect.

NPCs Clufton Kline (proprietor); Haligander (preparing to make a go at the tavern's Political Theory championship); Korhül (sneaking into the pen with allies to cast *awaken animal* on the Learned Pig)

228 Palace of Thirteen Spires

HOUSING

This small but opulent palace features four wings, each decorated in a unique style: Chelaxian, Taldan, Osirian, and Minkan. For most of the year this stylish manor is available for rent by visiting merchants, nobles,

ALL POLITICS IS LOCAL

In the Wise Quarter, virtually everything can be considered political. The Withrun Wraiths ruk team fielding an imbecilic hill giant "student" imported specifically to dominate the league? Politics. Some offended noble posting shills to purchase every copy of the new *Eyes on Absalom* to prevent the spread of a salacious scandal? Politics. A foreign spy pouring acid in the ear of an at-large member of the Grand Council? Well, some things are politics everywhere. The Wise Quarter draws ideologues and demagogues to argue on intellectual and governmental affairs, infusing a sense of conflict throughout the district. For all the bar brawls of the Docks or scandal obsession of the Ivy District, it's strident partisans of the Wise Quarter who account for most of the formal duels declared in the city.

CRIME REPORT

The Wise Quarter sees relatively less crime than most of the city's other districts, but the residents grumble about it a lot more due to the overwhelming sense (and reality) that the Learned Guard is so focused on their primary mission of protecting the Forae Logos that they sometimes miss crime unrelated to the institution. Trade in illegal manuscripts abounds, as does extortion, drug trafficking, burglary, and blackmail. Criminal groups active in the district include the Bloody Barbers, the Silkenhand, and the Smoke Knights.

and the extremely wealthy—the White Grotto maintains the contract for the building's magical servants and other arcane amenities, something the Arcanamirium still resents. The Wise Council manages and maintains access to the palace and often rents individual towers out for months at a time.

These rental agreements pay for upkeep on the palace and usually turn a small profit for the district, which in turn pays for special scholarships and district improvement programs. When a head of state visits Absalom, however, the palace's residents are immediately evicted to allow the dignitary to stay in lodgings befitting their station. The Grand Council pays a premium to host foreign royalty, which the Wise Council in turn uses to fund special projects throughout the district.

NPCs Senator Augustyn Naran and Dalessa (residents of the Wyvrenspire)

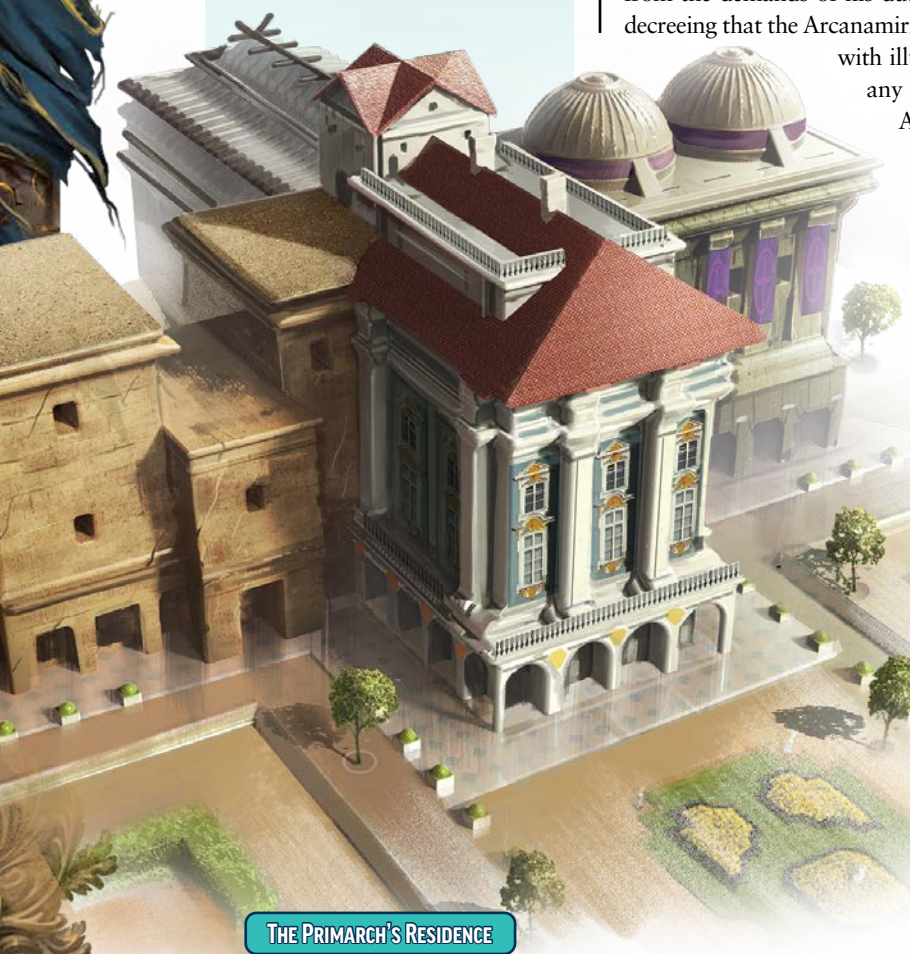
229 The Primarch's Residence

NEIGHBORHOOD

The Primarch's Residence was built nearly two thousand years ago near the end of Absalom's "city of excess" period as a monument to the tyrannical Lord Daynce of House Ryeen, arguably the city's most powerful primarch and undoubtedly its most despotic. The wicked Lord Daynce found himself so busy with affairs of state that he was incapable of leaving Absalom for a vacation or even a moment's respite. As a solution, he razed an inadequate Primarchal Palace and replaced it with a grand edifice that still stands a block west of the Grand Council Hall. To ensure that the residence of Absalom's true ruler be just as impressive as the monument to its people down the street, Lord Daynce conscripted the experts of the Guild of Carpenters, Stonemasons, and Metalworkers, as well as some of the finest artisans of the nearby dwarf enclave of Galizhur. But Lord Daynce saw even the most gorgeous palace as a prison, and sought to remove himself even further from the demands of his duty. To this end, he coerced the Grand Council into decreeing that the Arcanamirium populate the new Primarch's Residence interior with illusory chambers offering a convincing simulacra of any environment their beloved lord might desire. The Arclords begrudgingly weaved their magic to accede to Lord Daynce's demands, purportedly tapping into a powerful demiplane called the Crux of Nex to create no fewer than a dozen such chambers or chamber complexes, each with pre-programmed inhabitants and events designed to provide endless diversion to the weary primarch.

It's said that the Primarch's Residence construction process afforded the Arclords a personal perspective on the cruelty and character of Lord Daynce, in part inspiring the Conjured Siege they would launch against the city's leadership only a few years later, when forces in league with the Arcanamirium overthrew Lord Daynce and dragged his body through the streets. Even so, subsequent primarchs could never quite bring themselves to give up the pleasures of the Primarch's Residence, and though Lord Daynce's treachery and the horrors of the Conjured Siege have faded with the centuries, access to the Primarch's Residence has remained one of the primary perks of taking on the mantle of Absalom's Primarch.

The last confirmed sighting of Lord Gyr of Gixx



THE PRIMARCH'S RESIDENCE

was here, entering the Primarch's Residence after a particularly contentious meeting of the High Council. Since that day the doors of the residence have remained locked, with entry regulated by the Starwatch. Acting Primarch Wynsal Starborn has made no effort to enter the Residence let alone inhabit it, and last year the government failed to suppress news of a joint expedition within sponsored by the Starwatch, the varlokkur, and the Pathfinder Society during which some two dozen investigators disappeared without a trace. Fragmentary and abruptly interrupted divinatory reports received by Third Spell Lord Utgar of Gyr attested that the illusory magic of the otherworldly chambers was somehow in flux due to an erratic malfunction, but beyond that nothing of their fate is known—to the public, anyway. Fueled in no small part by a hostile press, the Primarch's Residence features in many of the most prominent conspiracy theories regarding the fate of Lord Gyr, but no two theories seem to agree as to its role in the mystery.

NPCs Asilia of Gyr, Lord Avid, Brythen Blood, and Rosvierre Ibanc (gathered to personally investigate the fate of their old adventuring companion, Lord Gyr); Chirrup Turley (standing on a nearby crate at midday, shouting to advertise Erdan Sianovel's reward for information leading to the discovery of Lord Gyr); Endrik Archerus (sketching the building's famous exterior for a future painting); Erdan Sianovel (skulking around at night, attempting to observe who comes and goes); Marissa Guile (hoping to break in for an upcoming broadsheet exposé)

230 Protectorate Anthology

PRECINCT

Located at the base of the grand stairway leading into the Forae Logos, this collection of buildings is the headquarters for the Learned Guard. Although all of them share a similar Kortos Preclassical architectural design, each structure boasts subtle ornamental elements suggestive of a different locale from famous works of fiction that predate the establishment of Absalom, such as the Tabsagal from *The Last God-Kings of Ninshabur*, the Emeral Spire from Nhur-Athemon's *Verses of Abundance Everlasting*, or the Pyramid of the Sunken Queen, from Vulan Trenvisti's *Song of Sorshen*. Each building is further identified by a large statue perched on a balcony atop the entrance, also based on a primary character from the inspiring tale.

Each building in the Anthology serves a specific function to the Learned Guard, such as administration, magical security, and intelligence gathering, or contains barracks, holding cells, and evidence vaults. Guard captain Mendhir the Colossus is a towering Ulfen whose nickname comes from his imposing stature and unwaveringly serious demeanor, a fact the comedians in the Ivy Quarter love to exploit. They dare not make jokes to his face, however, as this graduate of Varisia's Twilight Academy is just as likely to respond with a spell as he is with a harsh reprimand. He maintains a single building within the Anthology as his offices and residence.

Operating from these unusual structures, the Learned Guard's original mandate was to protect the Forae Logos at all costs, though the city has since expanded their jurisdiction to the entire Wise Quarter. In times of crisis, however, the Guard still prioritizes the library above all else.

With access to magical resources from the Arcanamirium and College of Mysteries, the Forae Logos deploys extensive magical support in its defense, including sealing underground access tunnels with arcane locks, expanding many of the buildings with extradimensional spaces and secret rooms, and transforming many of the area's statuary into emergency guardian constructs.

NPCs Brivit Nae of Irrisen and Kildress Fung (bringing Captain Mendhir into their confidence regarding Lady Darchana's book smuggling); Mendhir the Colossus (captain)

KITE FIGHT

As a group of children fly kites on the lawn in front of the Silk Castle, several boarding school students from Daltus Academy harass them and steal their kites. The crime horrifies the Silk Castle's employees, who worry that the fight will drive away customers. Unfortunately, while the Daltus students are willing to hurl punches and kicks at anyone who bothers them, returning violence in kind against children will not only look equally bad, it will very likely also earn the ire of both the students' parents and well-connected academics at the boarding school.

ELSEWHERE IN THE WISE QUARTER

235. Absalom Academy of Law. One of Absalom's most internationally famous academies, the AAL draws students from as far as the Dragon Empires to study the laws of the City at the Center of the World.

236. Avatectura Museum. An ancient museum with an archive of historical material from the oldest eras of Absalom, known for its populist perspective. Administered by the able Dhauken Tor.

237. Daltus Academy. The campus of this boarding school dominates a large city block, with lecture halls and dormitories forming a honeycomb maze. Daltus students are considered entitled louts by most Wise Quarter residents, and are responsible for many of the district's brawls.

238. Gallery Rousa. This highly prestigious art gallery boasts a rotating series of exhibitions featuring controversial and scandalous subject matter.

239. Salhar Estate. Home to Grand Ambassador Dremdhet Salhar, this rich estate features a tall, wrought-iron gate and an imposing ring wall patrolled by an armed guard.

240. Withrun House: A relatively new business academy catering to the children of Absalom's wealthiest families, Withrun House's curriculum conforms to the strict principles of the kalistocratic cult of Druma, and all of its instructors subscribe to its unwavering doctrines. The resulting economic prowess is a big draw to parents who mostly do not realize they are handing their progeny into the hands of an all-controlling cult.

231 Scriveners' Square

NEIGHBORHOOD

Most of Absalom's broadsheet publishers and print operations center around Scriveners' Square, a large public square not far from the Grand Council Hall. An enormous public fountain locals call the Inkwell stands at the center of the square, thronged with shouting newspaper touts, barking shoony newsboys, and the arguments of deeply invested political partisans bickering over the freshest bits of news. Off-duty clerks, household servants collecting papers for their masters, and ambitious young journalists throng the square, especially in the early morning and in the late afternoon, when most editions traditionally release.

From the Inkwell, a dedicated newshound can get an almost complete view of Absalom's thriving print industry, simply by turning around in a circle. The ancient buildings ringing the square, once home to legions of hunched-over scribes transcribing the decrees of the Grand Council by hand for distribution throughout the city and beyond, now clatter with the sound of thundering printing presses churning out the latest editions. From here one can see the offices of the *Sennight Star*, *Anon and Afar*, *Mother's Message*, *Ear to the Inner Sea*, and at least a dozen more. It's the best place to quickly collect the latest news, even if the biases of those peddling the tale aren't always immediately clear.

NPCs Gressil Kluun (preparing to inspect a publisher alongside a squad of the Baliff Guard); Marissa Guile (intrepid reporter); Umlox Vulm (gathering papers for Magpie Manor)

232 Silk Castle

MERCHANT

As one of the oldest buildings in the district, the Silk Castle's broad flat roof and short squat construction exemplifies the Azlanti architecture common during Absalom's founding. This historic building is home to one of the most beloved shops in the district, which specializes in silk and paper kites as well as magical paper-craft. Most visitors peruse proprietor Vittar Corusec's many mundane kites of intricate and artistic construction. Others design and build their own kites to compete in the annual Festival of Ribbons, a holiday celebrating beauty and art that includes kite judging, racing, and a battle royale where contestants slice their handmade kites through each other's strings to be the last kite flying. Other than the festival, friendly and impromptu competitions from members of the Sword and String League keep colorful kites often flying in the skies over the quarter.

Some of the shop's more serious customers engage its proprietor's magical talents. Downrigger Cognate of the Clockwork Cathedral recently commissioned several new "kite golems" capable of flying by catching the wind, latching onto the sides of buildings, and taking off again. The Pathfinder Society also collaborated to invent a spell to send enchanted letters by transforming them into origami birds that can fly and locate their recipient—a much more sanitary solution than animal messengers.

NPCs Bagwell Thomkin and Ilrava Drogand (eagerly discussing the latest kite developments with Corusec); Emir Thalzar Gaatan (kite enthusiast); Vittar Corusec (proprietor)

233 Temple of Sivanah

TEMPLE

This small temple to the goddess of mysteries, illusions, and reflection primarily serves Arcanamirium students. The temple's exterior features smooth stone walls and a domed roof, but its interior and exterior colors and patterns subtly change each day; after a week, its appearance has completely transformed. Frequent visitors often attempt to track the changes and anticipate what the new patterns will reveal. Long-time

worshippers and residents of the Wise Quarter also claim that the temple's broader aesthetic and architecture change over time, albeit at a much slower rate.

The Wise Quarter temple is associated with its equivalent near the Petal District's College of Mysteries, and they share the same priests. Students of both academies dream up wild theories for why both temples are located so close to powerful institutions of learning, with the most popular suggesting that magical pathways connect the two as part of a broader ritualistic plot to infiltrate the famous magical colleges' student bodies. Another posits that the two buildings are a magical antithesis to each other in balancing some grand esoteric equation.

NPCs Odessara (high priestess)

234 Wisdom's Refuge

MUNICIPAL

Nomarch Dhauken Tor, First Speaker of the Wise Council, started as an intern for the Avatectura before being elected to the district council. As a strong supporter of the arts and academic learning, he was a natural fit for the job and has dedicated his life to making the Wise Quarter a safe haven for institutional education. Other members of the Wise Council include Judae Tarshem and Kralte Grisham, both tenured docents at the Arcanamirium. Their influence has helped avoid magical tampering in elections and provides an avenue of influence to the magical community. To encourage growth, the Wise Council waives the taxes of any institution dedicated primarily to the preservation or distribution of knowledge—though the Wise Council also charges a small tax on every student in the district. Since schools pass those costs onto their novices, it does little to dissuade them from expansion.

NPCs Dhauken Tor (nomarch); Judae Tarshem (councilmember); Kralte Grisham (councilmember)

HEALING FOR MYSTERIES

Sivanah's faithful point out that everyone in Absalom offers prayers to her whenever they confront a mystery or riddle in their lives. Absalom certainly has more than its fair share of mysteries and riddles, and the faithful of Sivanah are always eager to hear from adventurers who have discovered or solved a new mystery. Often, in exchange for a well-told tale or revelation of a mystery the church hadn't realized existed, clerics of the Temple of Sivanah offer free healing and other spellcasting services in thanks.

UNDERCITY

Key NPCs Adula Tremane (sewer worker); Anchor (skulking azarketi scoundrel, pawn of the veiled masters); Drock Ovix (Pathfinder agent); Ezlip Terrag (fungus merchant); Gevvid (underground guide and leader of the Nailfists criminal gang); Gewgaw (antiques-obsessed tengu slaver and information broker); Guaril Karela (master of the Crowsworn); Jossie Slimfin (junk merchant); Larrett (wererat Commissioner of Sewers); Mother Jackal (undead power behind House Ahnkamen); Pasharran (scheming undead mastermind); Trapmaster Tok (famous kobold trapmaker); Velasca (stalking ancient vampire); Yiddlepode (ruler of the Sewer Dragon kobold tribe)

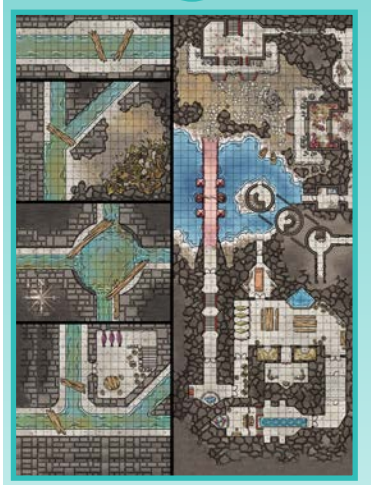
Services Secret passage from one part of the city to another; treasure-hunting; slave smuggling (and rescue!); fencing of illegal items; worship of illegal gods; association with darklands creatures like morlocks and duergar; body disposal; corpse smuggling; narcotics acquisition; historical research of various ancient ruins; poison harvesting; fungus farming; dungeon exploration; disappearing. All prices negotiable.

It's common knowledge that Absalom is a large, sprawling city, full of districts and neighborhoods with distinct cultures and residents. Even the savviest of citizens, however, rarely realizes just how much real estate lies beneath the city. With its near 5000-year history, including Aroden's ascension, natural disasters, and sieges, Absalom has been built, destroyed, and rebuilt on top of itself too many times to count. This has resulted in an unfathomable network of tunnels, chambers, and caverns beneath most of the city, with regions as distinct as the locales that bustle above.

It's no surprise that Absalom has a wide network of sewers, but in 4712 AR the Grand Council authorized the building of a second set of sewers to account for a population boom in Westgate. This sewer system runs below the original sewers and connects to just about anywhere in the city. While undeniably unpleasant to visit, both sewer systems are used regularly by those who would prefer not to travel above ground.

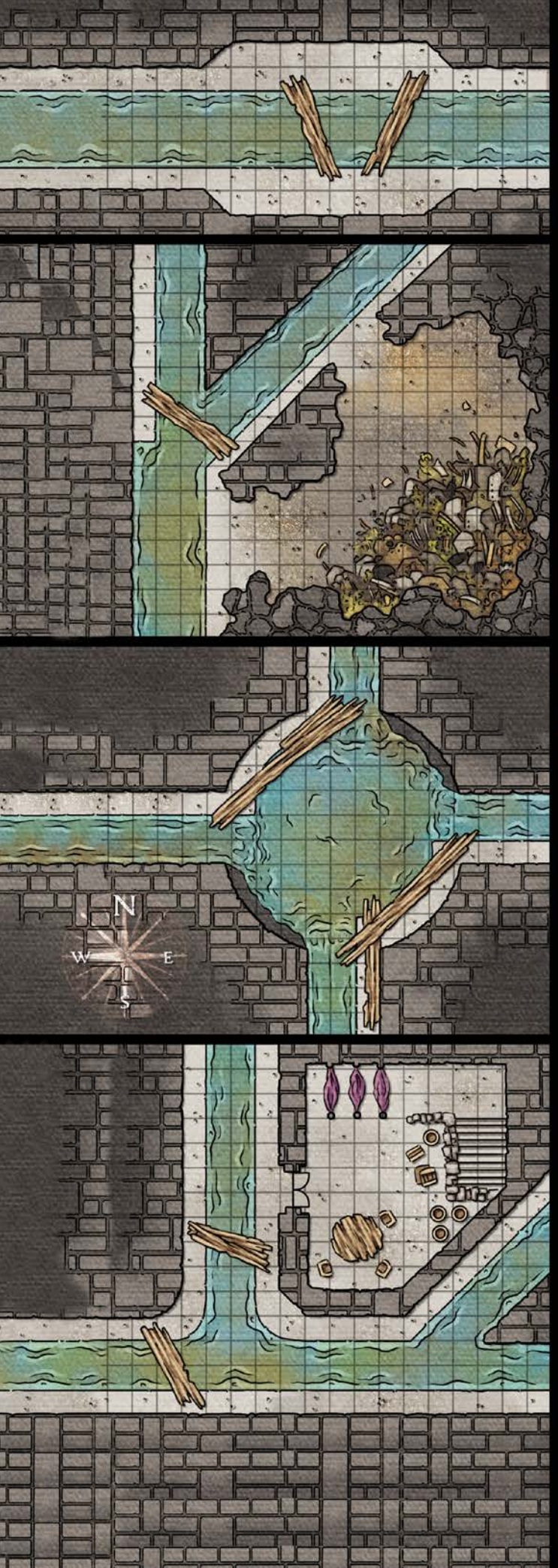
While the sewers traverse the entire city and are technically open to the public, there are many smaller, more secretive underground hideaways and private tunnel networks. For example, the estate of House Ahnkamen is connected to the nearby Spiralcross Cemetery by a secret honeycombed network of passages, created and maintained by the ghoul Mother Jackal. The Scriveners' Guild runs their affairs from a set of buildings that's not far from the Forae Logos, which they oversee, but only senior members of the guild and the Learned Guard are permitted to travel between the two locations via a series of guarded underground tunnels. Beneath the College of Mysteries in the Petal District, a network of underground laboratories provides space for experiments in dangerous or forbidden magical arts. And, of course, there are plenty of secret underground dens for making discreet deals around the outskirts of the Grand Bazaar, especially near to the infamous Red Silk Route.

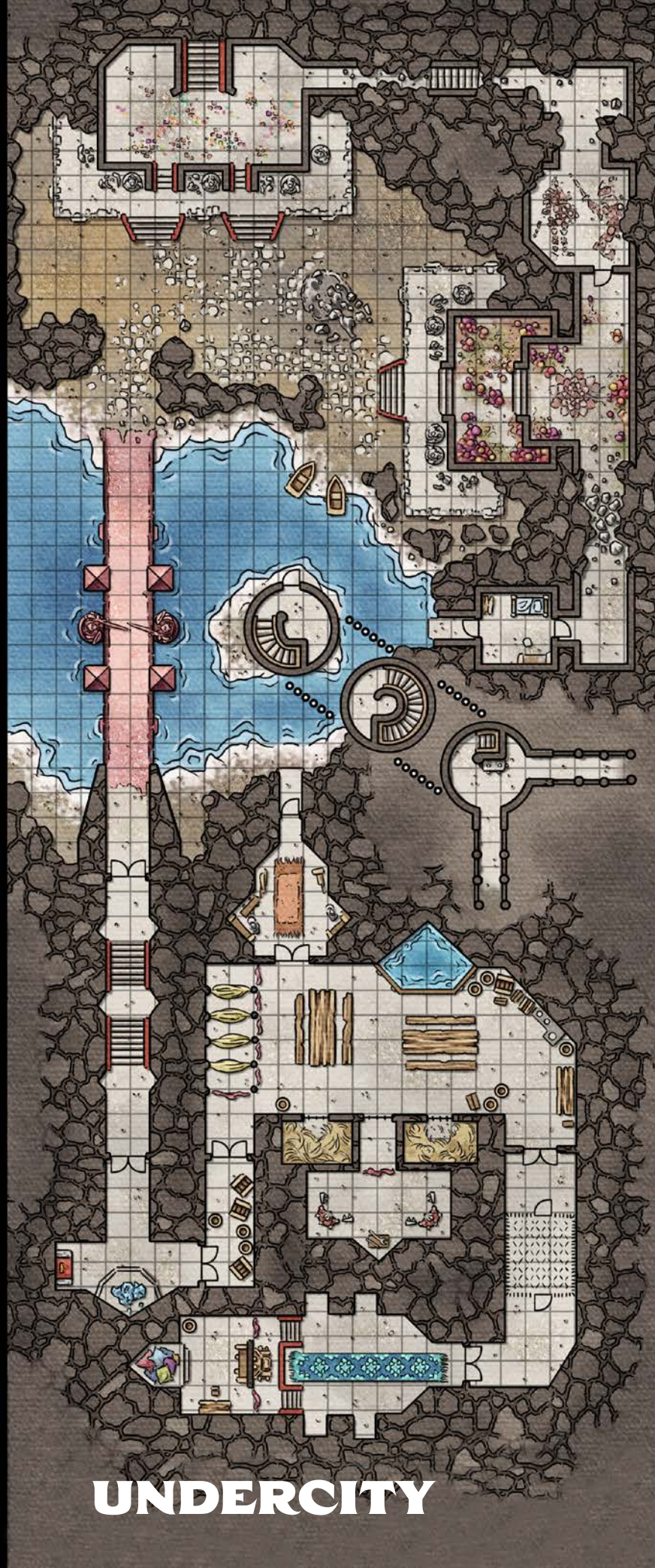
Though many folks only pass through the Undercity or its secret chambers, some call this subterranean maze home. The Sewer Dragon kobolds claim a sunken theater in the Ivy District as their lair, and the Bug Smasher goblins have nestled into a rickety settlement around the large vents deep underneath Azlanti Keep. Some of the city's dwarves—particularly in the area closer to Westerhold—prefer to live in caves rather than on the surface, since they can travel most anywhere in the city from the underground. There is even a subterranean entrance, which is technically for everybody but is mostly used by dwarves, to the Deepkeg Inn. Whether they prefer the privacy of a nice underwater cave or reside in one of the small, mostly hidden houses of



REGION SUMMARY

Absalom's Undercity boasts an incredible variety of environments and potential foes. From giant rats and other mundane menaces clogging ancient sewers to forgotten crypts of past eras packed with hungry undead to marauding packs of morlocks, ghouls, and worse, the Undercity runs more than a mile below the city streets. Those seeking deadly dungeons to test their mettle need not venture into the Cairnlands or travel to foreign ports—the Undercity has no shortage of treasure-packed hidey holes right below your feet! The maps on the following page provide a number of ready-built Undercity locales for quick use when underground exploration leads to combat—an event that occurs with alarming frequency.





UNDERCITY

Gilltown in Eastgate, most azarketi use a network of submerged tunnels to commute to and from the harbor.

More sinister residents dwell below the surface as well. Aside from the typical menaces one might find in any sewer—rats, spiders, mining beetles, oozes—Absalom's Undercity is home to a variety of more deadly creatures. There are monstrous and bloodthirsty plants, which attack with poison, razor-sharp leaves, or even teeth. Brutal morlocks occasionally find their way out of Delirium's Tangle and strike fear into the citizens of the Ivy District above. Also in the deep and abandoned section of catacombs near the Ivy District, a lich named Pasharran bides his time and gathers corpses for his plan to raise an undead army. Undead roam beneath the surface of the Precipice Quarter and near the Cairnlands as well. Perhaps most unnervingly, rumors swirl around the city of a powerful and ancient monster deep within the Labyrinth of Absalom. According to legends, Aroden fought through the bewildering maze to defeat this terrifying creature in ancient days, but the nature of the beast in question changes depending on who is telling the story.

Undercity Locations

The following are some of Absalom's most notable undercity locations.

Delirium's Tangle

DUNGEON

Deep below the Ivy District lies a mind-bending labyrinth of chambers and tunnels known as Delirium's Tangle. These passageways were built by Abysiel Greensummer, one of the first elves to be raised by humans after the elves returned to Golarion in 2632 AR. Having watched generations of his loved ones grow old and wither away, the elf became more and more obsessed with solving the riddle of mortality, until he stumbled upon a mysterious artifact which he thought would aid in his quest. Over the next 2,000 years, Abysiel was compelled to build elaborate intertwining passages by an unknown sinister force who filled his head with nonsensical whispers and complex diagrams.

Created by magic geometry that defies the laws of physics, Delirium's Tangle is now called such because those who spend too much time there lose their grip on reality. A traveler trapped within its depths may retrace their own steps only to end up in a completely different area of the maze. Abysiel himself succumbed to the maze's incomprehensible angles and structures, becoming imprisoned within.

To say that the Tangle lies buried deep under the Ivy District would be a gross understatement. Even the most seasoned traveler of Absalom's underbelly may have trouble finding the entrance, which is at least an hour's travel downward from the city's sewers and maintenance tunnels. The nearest chambers to the entrance are carved out of the natural caves revealed when Aroden lifted the Isle of Kortos out of the sea. They're thoroughly infested with mining beetles and morlocks, among other dangerous creatures. Just past these dangers and through the entrance to Delirium's Tangle, the architecture of the tunnels becomes more artificial, and the geometry begins to weave and sway in ways that shouldn't be possible.

Though the known entrances are a long way down, that doesn't stop the occasional resident of Delirium's Tangle from emerging into the upper tunnels and sewers of the Ivy District. Morlocks have found their way to the surface and wreaked havoc. Oozes have been discovered in cellars. Very rarely, the babbling spirits of adventurers who perished while wandering aimlessly in the maze have appeared to locals. These encounters aren't necessarily frequent, but they happen enough to give the inhabitants of the Ivy District a sense of unease, along with a variety of scary stories to keep unruly children in line.

Famous Visitors

The Prince of Minotaurs, Nuar Spiritskin, fell prey to a strange magical compulsion in 4710 AR, and—somewhat embarrassingly for a minotaur—became lost in the labyrinth of Delirium's Tangle. The details of the minotaur's escape are muddy, but are known to involve the Pathfinder Society, and Nuar retains connections to the organization despite his dislike of mentioning the incident.

Abysiel Greensummer

Tricky Jurisdiction

In the past, Absalom's government has been happy to pretend the Undercity does not exist, leaving its management to the corrupt Sanitation Commission and concerning themselves only when a Darklands monster emerges from the tunnels, when an important person gets lost in the muck, or when toxic chemicals spill out from some hidden laboratory. Wynsal Starborn has steered the High Council toward thinking of underground dwellers as potential allies rather than assumed enemies, resulting in new legal snares–culminating in a kobold tribe demanding the arrest of an underground explorer who killed a kobold guard.

Fall's End

NEIGHBORHOOD

This enclave of refugees, criminals, Norgorber cultists, and lost souls lies nearly a mile beneath the city. It stands at the foot of a thundering underground waterfall and large lake fed by drain-off from the Siphons, the sunken sewer network that runs beneath the Puddles. Notable for its location in the Darklands—the subterranean tunnels and vaults within Golarion's crust—Fall's End boasts every type of desperate wretch and hardened criminal found on the surface of Absalom and then some. It's a grim place. Slaves are drugged with phosphorescent cytillesh mold and sold to wicked deros for experiments, while scavengers and gangs dredge what wealth they can from their surroundings. The drug-addled vampire Velasca welcomes visitors to lodge in the dilapidated Silt Manor, while a bizarre organization of masked scavengers called the Collective scours the Undercity for forgotten treasures. The location is also in close proximity to a sacred site of the faith of Norgorber called Revelation Rock, where Norgorber himself once killed a comrade in the days immediately preceding his ascension. Fall's End thus boasts a temple to Norgorber in his Skinsaw Man incarnation.

NPCs Anchor (scoundrel); Benkt Slipshod (delivering slaves to Gewgaw); Gevvid (leading a group of terrified surface merchants to an important negotiation with the Collective); Gewgaw (crime lord, slaver); Pihma Lamar (offering rare Azlanti artifacts to the Collective); Pondo Funt (offering the choicest sewer-found relics to the Collective); Velasca (vampire master of Silt Manor)

Gillmen Tunnels

NEIGHBORHOOD

From the small, barely-visible village of Gilltown in Eastgate, there runs a series of caverns and tunnels which wind their way to cave outlets around the Bay of Kortos. The system of passages is mostly submerged and therefore much easier for aquatic and water-breathing creatures to pass through. Because of their aquatic nature and the fact that they're not always well received within the city, many from Gilltown choose to use these tunnels to navigate to the docks rather than go overland through town.

NPCs Anchor (scoundrel); Jorry Slimfin (cleric of Besmara); Jossie Slimfin (junk merchant); Lemaria Kumari (azarketi ambassador); Pihma Lamar (merchant)

Labyrinth of Absalom

DUNGEON

According to legend, Aroden once fought his way through an enormous labyrinth below the city to vanquish a terrifying creature who was brought up from the depths along with the Isle of Kortos. Precisely which monster Aroden defeated can change depending on who is telling the tale, but most residents agree that the creature still lurks deep beneath the city in an intertwining system of natural basalt caves and passageways shaped by ancient volcanic activity.

The kobolds of Absalom seem fairly convinced that the center of the Labyrinth could only be the lair of a majestic dragon. Some sailors who've heard rumors of an enormous eel in Absalom Harbor believe that it lives deep within the caves. Perhaps the most pervasive rumor about what waits in the center of the Labyrinth revolves around the ancient creatures known as the alghollthu. These ocean-dwelling masterminds raised up the Azlanti Empire and taught them control of magic in ancient days, but then eventually brought about Earthfall when they were displeased with the arrogance of their subjects. Though the alghollthu are rarely seen on the surface of Golarion, some enclaves are known to dwell in the depths of the oceans. It is whispered that perhaps some of the very monsters who tried to snuff out humanity

may still be slumbering deep underneath Absalom. This theory is particularly popular among the azarketi in the city.

Very little is known about the Labyrinth of Absalom, as only a few have managed to find it, and even fewer have made it back. So far, the only explorers who've successfully braved the Labyrinth have done so almost by accident while searching through a dizzying series of underwater caves, which grow more claustrophobic as they near the center of the island. Despite the fact that the mystery of these caves has attracted ambitious explorers for centuries, the number of credible reports from survivors can be counted on one hand. These few accounts are tales of fascination and horror—breathtaking caverns filled with rich veins of precious metals and covered in glimmering stones; encounters with monstrosities that can only be described as aberrations, thought to be the result of long-ago experiments by alghollthu; herds of wild hippocampi roaming in large undersea caves; and tunnels filled with unexpected foes, including hostile seaweed and color-changing eels that can blend effortlessly into any surface.

Some firmly believe there must be at least one entrance to the Labyrinth of Absalom from the surface, and many speculate that there is a secret archway deep below the Starstone Cathedral itself that leads there. To this end, several clubs have been created with the purpose of finding the entrance. The largest of these is Aroden's Gate, an organization that borders on being a cult dedicated to conspiracy theories surrounding the mythic Labyrinth.

Lair of the Crowsworn

DUNGEON

Upon entering the glassblowing shop known as Crystal Creations on the very edge of the Ivy District, a casual customer can peruse many examples of beautiful glasswork and trinkets for sale. The right kind of folk, however, know exactly which display case gently slides aside to reveal the cramped

SEWER SQUABBLES

Sanitation worker Adula Tremane has been dealing with a headache of kobold-sized proportions for over a week. During a recent patrol, Adula's crew set off a chain of traps laid by the infamous Trapmaster Tok of the Sewer Dragons kobold tribe. Some of Adula's crew were injured and the tunnels were damaged, meaning Adula's job will take even longer. The kobolds insist that these particular tunnels are part of their territory, and not only should they not be held responsible for the damage to people or property, but they are owed recompense from the sewer workers for wasting their traps and trespassing on their land. Commissioner of Sewers Pondo Funt is seeking impartial agents to settle the dispute.

staircase leading downward into darkness, both literal and metaphorical. Beneath the shop itself lies a series of ancient chambers that serve as the headquarters for the thieves' guild known as the Crowsworn.

The deed to Crystal Creations—and control of the tunnels beneath it—currently lies with a criminal known as Guaril Karela, who also runs the Pickled Imp curio shop in the Docks. Because of Crystal Creation's location on the outer edge of the Ivy District just opposite Westerhold, the tunnels below easily connect with an ancient series of passages created by dwarves over 2,000 years ago. These tunnels have been used for nefarious purposes and surreptitious travel beneath the city for millennia, and the Crowsworn tend to keep a tight hold over them in order to protect their guild and its secrets. They also employed Sewer Dragon kobold Trapmaster Tok to aid in trapping the tunnel systems for extra security. Most of the guild's members don't live in the Ivy District and instead choose to live in Westerhold, accessing the city via Crystal Creations when they want to bypass any bothersome taxes or meddling guards.

NPCs Guaril Karela (master of the Crowsworn)

UNEARTHED SECRETS

A minor earthquake opens a small sinkhole in the Foreign Quarter that connects to a network of tunnels beneath the district. Investigations have revealed a series of rooms holding kidnapped locals about to be sold into slavery outside of Absalom. The locals are unable to identify their cloaked and hooded captors, but searching the chambers reveals clues pointing to slavers affiliated with the Fall's End collector, Gewgaw.

PASHARRAN

Lost Sanctum of Aroden

DUNGEON

Early in the city's history, the Church of Aroden established a secret temple far below Absalom's streets, a site of supreme ritual significance that maintained the secrecy of its location for thousands of years—only to be completely forgotten following Aroden's death. Established in a void within the substructure of the Isle of Kortos when Aroden raised the *Starstone*, the Sanctum of Aroden originally featured a small chapel and monastic quarters dedicated to the ancient Azlanti Order of the Aeon Star, an esoteric knighthood that backed the Last Azlanti's claim to the Starfall Doctrine and his eventual destiny as a god, not just of the Azlanti, but of all humanity in its many forms.

It is said that Aroden gifted his own eldritch sword, the *Azlanti Diamond*, as the centerpiece of this chapel. The *Diamond*, the very sword the mortal Aroden had painstakingly crafted for the last emperor of Azlant and then claimed as his own, served as a focus for cult activities in the Sanctum for generations. It even attracted the attention to the early church father Sarnax the Great, hero of the Pirate Siege, whose tomb was said to be built into the Sanctum so that the religion's holiest warrior-knights might pay him honor in their most sacred shrine. Sarnax was also said to have been buried with a fist-sized ruby of unthinkable value known as the *Heart of Sarnax*, another priceless artifact whose legend soon grew to be synonymous with that of the Sanctum.

As the years went on, in particular in the last century after Aroden's death, another treasure of the Sanctum has become even better known. Rumors speak of a chamber of phantasmagoric visions and deadly challenges based off of Aroden's personal experience during the Test of the *Starstone*, granting priceless insight into how those with ambition and power could pass the test and become a living god in Aroden's footsteps. With Aroden's death, the magic portals to the Sanctum were forever sealed, its precise location lost to history and hidden from divination. To date, none of its treasures have been found, and no one has claimed to discover the Lost Sanctum's whereabouts. Several power players in Absalom have narrowed the physical search, and it's only a matter of time before someone unravels the Sanctum's secrets and claims its fabulous treasures at long last.

Pasharran's Domain

DUNGEON

Each month in the Topiary Menagerie of the Ivy District Park, the alchemist Aarnock Xanthiss meets with the same client—a mysterious robed figure—to trade potions and magic. After the transaction is over, the robed patron slinks away until the next meeting. Unbeknownst to Xanthiss, his anonymous client is actually a lich known as Pasharran, who lives in the lower reaches of the ancient catacombs beneath the place where the Ivy District, the Wise Quarter, and the Ascendant Court meet. Pasharran is a priest of Urgathoa, and his caverns reflect this, choking with the scent of decay, surrounded by moldering walls, and littered with rotten food, animals, and corpses of all different kinds.

Pasharran delights in death and decay. From his putrid lair beneath the city, he plans to raise an army of disease-ridden undead and unleash them upon Absalom at his goddess' command. Not only does he use his secret tunnels to attend meetings with Xanthiss, he also creeps around in the crypts and sometimes goes so far as the harbor to collect the soggy bodies of perished sailors to add to his cause. Crystals glisten in the cracks and corners surrounding his lair; while they appear harmless, they actually carry a lethal and contagious disease. His lair proper contains evidence that Pasharran has experimented with cultivating and distributing these crystals for his own nefarious purposes.

NPCs Pasharran (scheming undead mastermind)

Sewer Dragon's Realm

DUNGEON

A sunken theater beneath the Ivy District serves as the home of the kobold tribe known as the Sewer Dragons. Their current chief, Yiddlepode, holds court from her throne in the middle of the dilapidated stage, as her followers watch enraptured from the remaining moldy theater seats. While kobolds can be found in many of the tunnels and chambers below the city, the network closely surrounding this theater is known as the Sewer Dragon's Realm, and it is protected not only by Yiddlepode's guards, but also by a slew of clever traps set by the chief's brother, Trapmaster Tok. Some of these tunnels are just offshoots of the vast sewer system, some are natural caves beneath the city, and some seem to be shortcut tunnels dug by industrious kobolds to move between layers of the city's underbelly. These passageways are almost always damp and moldy, with slick walls and a stuffy, mildew-laden atmosphere.

Those who wish to cross through this region must be particularly careful to avoid being caught unawares by Tok's traps. However, Yiddlepode has brokered a peace with the Pathfinder Society, who are allowed to move through the Sewer Dragons' tunnels freely in exchange for favors such as gifts or protection. She is more tolerant of strangers in her realm than her brother and would prefer to keep her tribe in the good graces of those outsiders who prove useful.

NPCs Trapmaster Tok (tinkerer); Yiddlepode (leader)

Starstone Chasm

MONUMENT

Looking down from the surface, the pit surrounding the Starstone Cathedral appears to be endless and empty. Given the strata created by Absalom's building history, however, a few tunnels and secret passageways bump up against the city's enigmatic chasm. One or two unfortunate dwarves from Westerhold encountered this chasm while spreading their underground network throughout the city, resulting in tunnels that abruptly open to a wide gap with a solid wall of stone on the other side—the smooth pillar upon which the Starstone Cathedral is perched. Those who

Chasm Creepers

A loud scratching has echoed up from the depths of the Starstone Chasm for the past weeks. The scratching seems only to occur during specific hours of the night, and the Graycloaks paid no mind to the local beggars' pleas for investigation. They finally pay attention when a skeleton crawls up from the chasm on a busy Oathday afternoon. The skeleton, clad in the clothing of a failed *Starstone* hopeful, is quickly brought down. The beggars rejoice that someone might finally listen, as the scratching has grown louder in recent nights.

Trapmaster Tok

PIHMA'S PREDICAMENT

The eccentric azarketi merchant known as Pihma has snapped up an odd oceanic artifact, and both the Pathfinder Society and the Blakros Museum want it. Finding the merchant, however, is an obstacle. She doesn't have a particular schedule, but patient relic hunters might be able to locate the exit from the Gillmen Tunnels nearest to the Grand Bazaar and find her en route between the two.

Drock Ovix

have lobbed projectiles at the wall have learned that both mundane and magical items simply bounce off and fall into the oblivion of the pit.

All the sewers and many of the underground passages which traverse this section of the Ascendant Court were simply built to go around the pit. There have been a few instances of particularly enterprising citizens attempting to connect openings which are relatively close to each other, but the walls on the outer side of the pit are eerily sleek and strong, making it incredibly difficult to drive in any stakes or attach ropes. These attempts are usually abandoned, as persisting tends to result in a loss of equipment or even loss of life. The few who have used magic to explore the depths of the chasm report that it continues down far beyond where the Darklands begin and seems to go on forever.

Terrag's Fungi Farm

MERCHANT

In Eastgate, the pleasant neighborhood of Green Ridge is known for the things that grow there—extensive gardens of both local and imported plants, parks dotted by clumps of tall trees, and a variety of small farms left over from the times when sieges were more frequent and growing food inside the city walls was vital. However, not all of Green Ridge's sprouting treasures are above the surface. In the southeast corner of the neighborhood is a secret gem hidden beneath the lush green grass.

Down a narrow stone staircase behind an unassuming barn lies Terrag's Fungi Farm, an underground mushroom farm run by a friendly dwarf named Ezlip Terrag and his family. What initially started several centuries ago as no more than a small dank cellar has grown with each generation of the Terrag family, to the point that the series of dark chambers and tunnels now takes up the equivalent of three city blocks. The expansion of the farm has been sporadic, so the architecture of the caves ranges from rough-hewn hallways crammed with fungi-covered lumps, to wide and symmetrical pillared chambers lined with rows of wooden mushroom beds dotted in shades of white, red, and gray.

The knowledge of caring for mushrooms—and secret Terrag family techniques—have been passed down from parent to child since well beyond living memory, and the Terrags are proud of the bounty that their hard work reaps. In true Green Ridge style, they aren't worried about chasing profit beyond what is needed to get by. Ezlip is just as happy trading mushrooms for fertilizer to a neighboring farm as he is taking his rickety wagon into the Coins to sell by the bushel in the markets.

NPCs Ezlip Terrag (fungus farmer)

Verdurous Torsion

DUNGEON

When a devastating earthquake struck the Precipice Quarter, the Arcane Arboretum built by the wizard Beldrin was irreparably damaged and the plants inside were corrupted. These changes were not restricted to the surface. The earthquake tore great gashes in the ground, and the cursed plants did not hesitate to expand their presence below the earth. Immediately beneath the Arboretum, enormous gnarled roots twist through the dirt and form tangled archways over passageways and small caves where the earth has crumbled away. The roots penetrate down into the remaining sewer tunnels below, where they snake over the walls and across the floor.

These tunnels are home to a wide variety of plants that have morphed into grotesque parodies of their former selves—vines that grow already-rotten fruit, breathing mosses that ooze acidic slime, and colorful roses that release poisonous spores when they sense movement. There are also plenty of living plant monsters who have come

to inhabit this region. Lumpy spheres of yellowish-green fungus roll around and spurt clouds of noxious spores, and squat mushrooms, resembling pudgy humanoids with a mushroom cap for a head, shamble about in the damp tunnels. Perhaps the vilest of these creatures is a hideous, odiferous yellow plant that preys on living things and implants its seeds and pollen into fresh kills, eventually turning them into zombies to create even more of its kind.

Walrus's Way

DUNGEON

It's a moderately well-kept secret in the Foreign Quarter that the Flying Alderman inn is a safehouse for Pathfinders. The paunchy, elaborately bearded half-orc innkeeper Drock Ovix has come to be nicknamed "the Walrus" due to the long tusks protruding through his bushy, gray mustache. He flashes his *wayfinder* to those he suspects to be fellow Pathfinders, and he makes sure his compatriots have a free place to stay in Absalom.

A considerably better-kept secret, however, is the underground connection between this seemingly unremarkable inn and the lowest reaches of the Pathfinder Grand Lodge. This passage is strictly for emergencies, when members of the Pathfinder Society are in enough peril that they are unable to safely travel through the streets. In such cases, Drock discreetly ushers desperate adventurers down to his cellar. Behind the last row of floor-to-ceiling shelves hangs a strange portrait of a slightly cross-eyed goat, staring out from a weathered and peeling frame. The right combination of spells—known only to Drock and a small number of trusted local Society members—directed at the painting reveals a hidden trapdoor leading to a series of tunnels below.

Because these tunnels could be dangerous to the Pathfinder Society if they were exploited by the wrong people, they are heavily warded and trapped by both physical and magical means. There are even a few tunnels which zig-zag their way to dead ends in order to throw off any would-be trespassers.

Menacing Mushrooms

Ezlip Terrag is having some trouble in his cavernous underground mushroom farm. Recently, he and his family have had an increasing number of run-ins with hostile plant life on the southern side of his underground cave network—the side nearest to the Precipice Quarter. Workers have reported seeing noxious mosses, biting vines, and unnatural tentacled mushrooms. When Ezlip's cousin is attacked by what looks to be a tiny, fleshy human with a mushroom head, Ezlip decides it's time to close down that section of the farm until the matter can be resolved by a group of hired adventurers.

WALLS, GATES, AND KEEPS

Key NPCs Anceltan Berryhock (second sergeant of the First Guard); Gurrik Vale (officer of the First Guard), Lord Oirel (commander of Fort Tempest); Salif of Wynsal (second commander of Fort Tempest); Symo of Wynsal (first siege gear of Absalom); Utgar of Gyr (third spell lord, master of the varlokkur); Wynsal Starborn (acting primarch of Absalom); Yuvin Vatir (First Guard quartermaster)

Services Military and Starwatch business including communications (divination, message delivery, etc.), law enforcement (prisoner transfer, interrogation, detective work), strategic engagement, resupply, and city defense; criminal activity such as smuggling, prisoner breaks, and information theft; defensive actions related to the city's walls and gates (or the subversion thereof), etc. Since most services associated with the city's walls, gates, and keeps are affiliated with Absalom's military or are in fact criminal, few carry literal "prices."

Absalom's keeps boast some of the sturdiest architecture in the Inner Sea region. Many of their defenses have never been breached, despite existing for thousands of years and coming under siege hundreds of times. The keeps always stand ready, but now that the city has suffered two recent major attacks, they buzz with activity and nerves.

Absalom's three main keeps are Azlanti Keep to the north, Starwatch Keep on its eastern flank, and Fort Tempest on its west. The city walls connect Azlanti Keep and Fort Tempest, but Starwatch Keep remains apart. In addition, Absalom's walls feature four gates so large as to be keeps unto themselves. With the exception of Starwatch Keep, the Sally Port, and the Postern, all of Absalom's keeps, walls, towers, and gates are secured by members of the First Guard.

More than a dozen towers punctuate Absalom's mighty walls. By far the most prominent is the Watchtower, which soars above Green Ridge in Eastgate, almost as high as the Absalom Lighthouse. In addition to intersecting with the wide causeway atop Absalom's walls, each tower has access to the city streets below, although these portals are normally kept locked.

All of Absalom's keeps, walls, and towers have flat, crenelated roofs meant to allow troops and siege engines to be deployed on top. In times of siege, wall patrols are often withdrawn into the keeps, towers, and gates to avoid being picked off by enemy attacks.

THE GATES

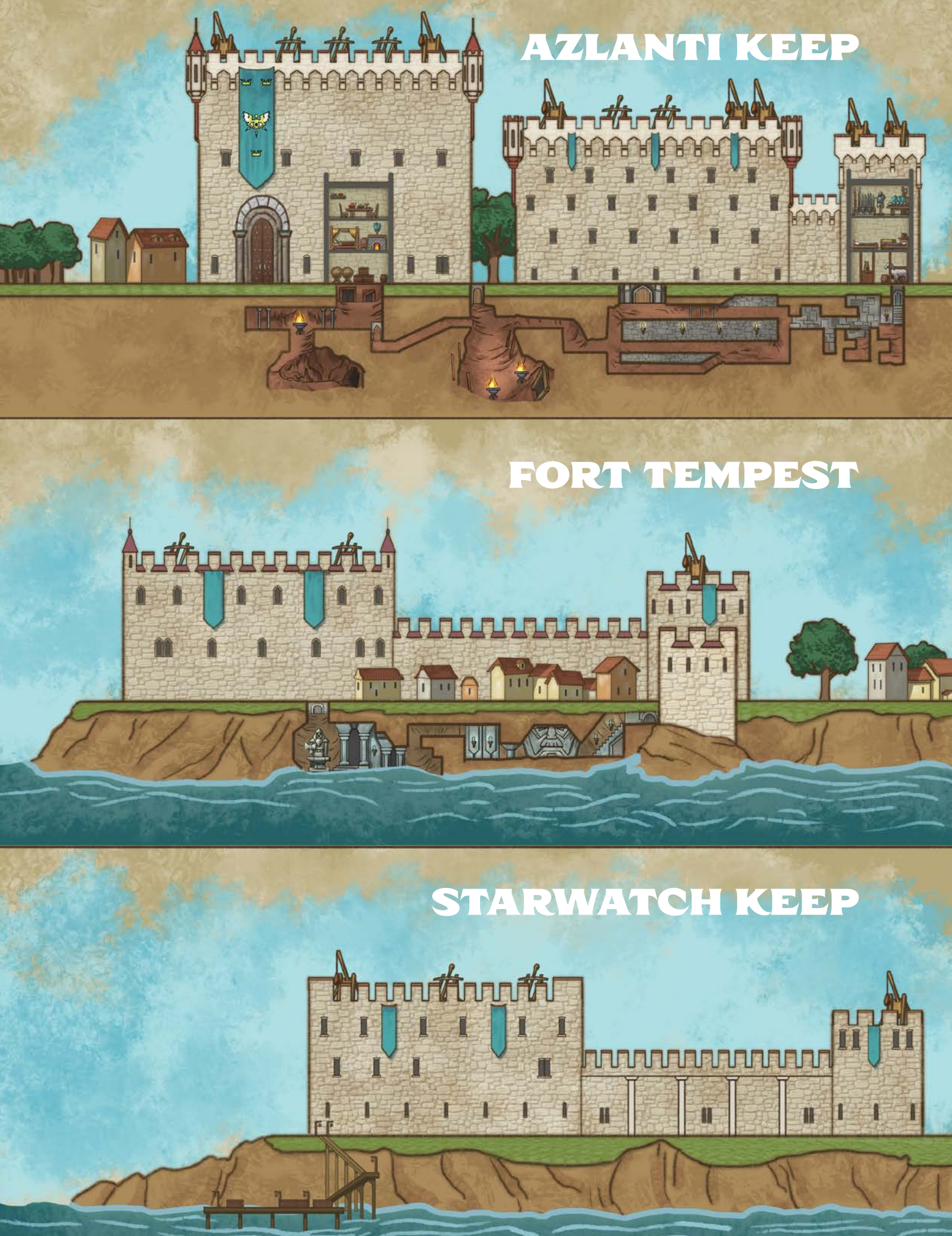
Four imposing gates grant access to Absalom from the Cairnlands. In descending order of size, they are the western Sally Port, the northeastern Kin Gate, the northwestern Sphinx Gate, and the eastern Postern. The Sally Port, Kin Gate, and Sphinx Gate are normally kept open even at night due to steady traffic.

Kin Gate

The Kin Gate was originally built as a siege castle during the Siege of Kin in 744 AR. The vengeful fey prince Juroveal and his satyr and minotaur allies forced enchanted citizens caught outside Azlanti Keep to build him a palace and tower outside the city walls. Atop the palace, Juroveal grew a tree of stone with which to hurl boulders and other debris into the city. After the city's heroes tricked Juroveal into banishing himself from Golarion, they converted his tree into a crane and the palace was incorporated into Absalom's city walls.

LOCATIONS SUMMARY

Absalom's walls, gates, and keeps represent the most obvious protective measures the city has taken against invasion, and all are critical to Absalom's ongoing defense. The near-exclusive domain of city agencies such as the First Guard and Starwatch, these locations are on the constant watch for criminals or those hoping to gain access to the city without alerting the authorities. In times of siege, these locales are the most important in the city, and numerous personages not usually affiliated with them can be found along the ramparts, aiding in the city's defense.


AZLANTI KEEP
FORT TEMPEST
STARWATCH KEEP

Today, the gate connects the Petal District to Copperwood, a town that mostly houses servants and sells farm goods from across the Cairnlands. The gate possesses the converted crane now known as the Stone Tree, which projects from the high roof besides several other siege weapons. After initially being used to move massive stones to build Absalom's walls, the ancient crane now functions as a siege weapon to crush attacking armies or block the gate with stone until danger passes.

The Kin Gate's walls on the Petal District side are inscribed with a list of spells that have been forbidden by the varlokkur, starting with compulsion magics. Denizens sometimes come here hoping that the lingering magic of the Stone Tree—a symbol of Absalom's triumph over evil magic—will break an illegal spell, remove a painful memory, or alleviate gnawing guilt.

Postern Gate

The oldest and smallest gate is the Postern leading into Eastgate, home to the Post Guard. Currently, the gate functions mainly as a supply route to Starwatch Keep. Since the much busier and poorly-covered Sally Port opened, the Postern is rarely attacked.

Sally Port

The Sally Port, on the main road to Diobel, is by far Absalom's largest and busiest gate. It is maintained by Westgate's Sally Guard, known outside the walls as the Kortos Cavalry. The Sally Port is also the most common gate for enemies to besiege. Its broad ramps allow mounted lancers and archers atop the walls to quickly reinforce wherever enemies try to create a gap.

Entry to Absalom via the Sally Port often involves waiting in a long line behind merchant caravans, pilgrim processions, returning farmers and field laborers, and a near countless number of fellow travelers. If the long wait and the eventual brusque interrogation by Sally Guard gatekeepers isn't enough to sour a visitor on Absalom's bureaucracy before they've even entered the city, the prying questions of Scriveners' Guild inspectors looking to confiscate and catalog books for the Forae Logos is sure to do the trick.

Sphinx Gate

The Sphinx Gate opens onto Westerhold and the farms and forests beyond. In Absalom, it straddles the boulevard separating the Ivy District from the Wise Quarter. The First Guard typically uses this gate to access the Cairnlands. Named for the enormous Mother-Sphinx statue overlooking it, the Sphinx Gate was long a site of pilgrimage for Aroden's faithful. Riddles in numerous human tongues appeared on its inner walls during the worst of the Unraveling Siege in 1742 AR, when teleporting proteans threatened the city. The answer to one riddle, provided by a Tian First Guard recruit, proved instrumental in unlocking a ward that prevented the proteans from controlling the air over Absalom. To this day, many riddles remain unanswered. The First Guard does not permit unknown visitors to see these riddles, for fear it might allow an enemy to usurp

Hazing Rituals

Occasionally, a group of soldiers stationed at Azlanti Keep haze new recruits by forcing them to stand within a mysterious glowing platform ringed with stones. This has recently partially activated one of Aroden's forgotten defenses. Now, quasi-real illusory duplicates of soldiers wander the keep, standing in everyone's way and attempting to prevent anyone from leaving or casting spells. The illusions speak repeated phrases in Ancient Azlanti.

Kin Gate

ASSASSINS

Wynsal Starborn is now a prime target for more than one faction hoping to eliminate him and seize power in the chaos. Another enemy has struck at Starborn as he left for a meeting with the High Council, leaving the politician to forge his own narrow escape. His guards are now on edge, and anyone who seems out of place is likely to receive the wrong end of their heightened diligence. The situation is unlikely to calm down until the assassins are traced to their base: a restaurant in the Petal District where they received orders from a disguised client.

control of forgotten magic; however, those who have proven their usefulness to Absalom can get that permission.

The Sphinx Gate is the only one of Absalom's gates that has never had a single one of its doors broken. Some First Guard take pride in this, but most consider the Sphinx Gate simple to defend because it is so near Azlanti Keep. Posting to siege duty at the Sphinx Gate is regarded as nearly a vacation or early retirement.

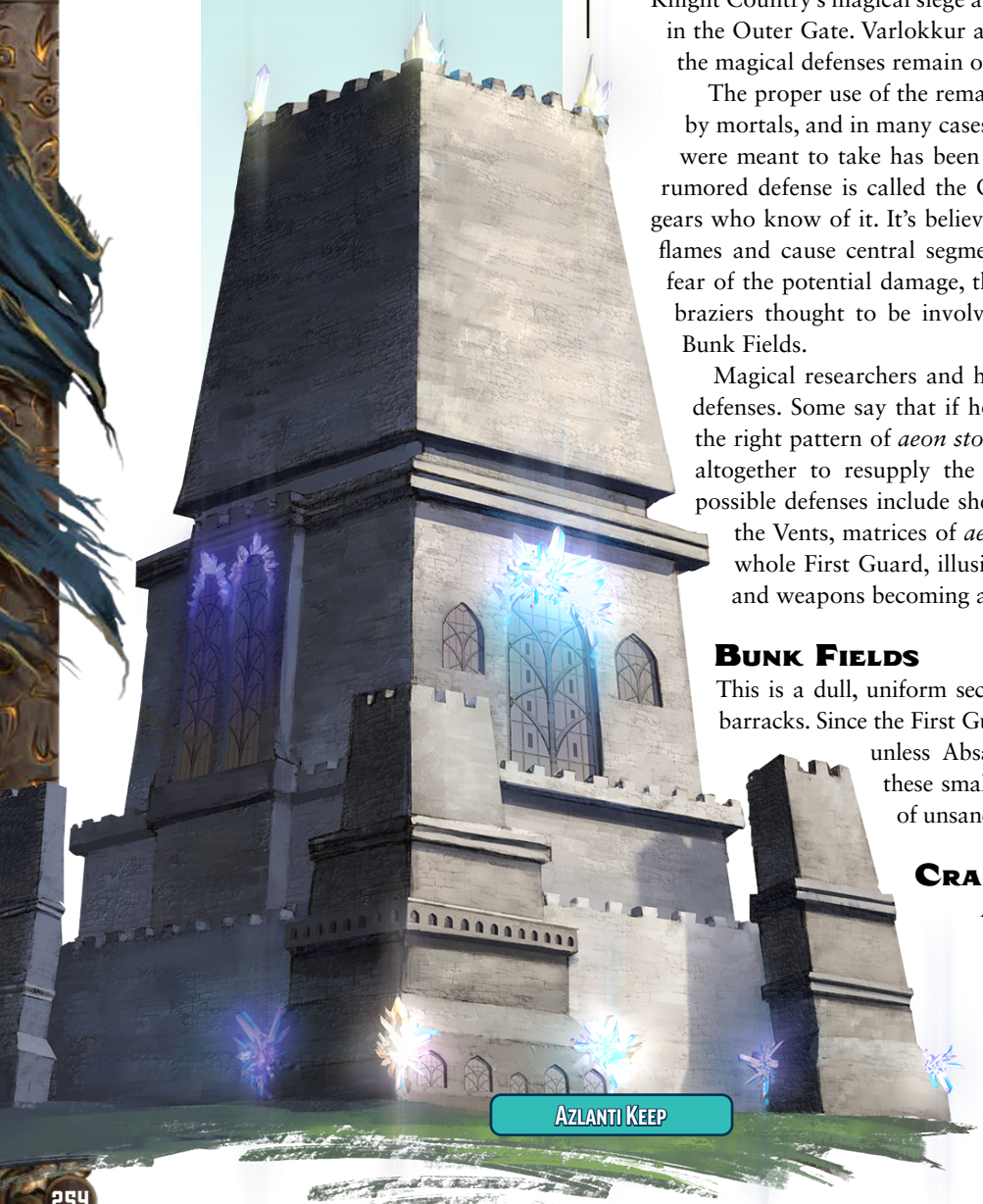
AZLANTI KEEP

Aroden himself created Azlanti Keep to protect his newly founded city and its people. Glowing crystals of a huge variety of colors and shapes are set in every major wall, most often as keystones at the top of arches, shining with inner light. Metalwork in geometric shapes decorates most walls. The only way into Azlanti Keep is through the Outer Gate in the Wise Quarter.

Azlanti Keep is an even more impressive tool of defense than its incredible size and obvious strength would indicate. Legends hold that Aroden imbued Azlanti Keep with twelve magical defenses to turn back any threat that might descend upon the city of Absalom. Three of these defenses remain active and useful during sieges, taught to the First Guard by Aroden before the god stopped visiting Golarion—the Little Roofs' orbiting siege platforms, Knight Country's magical siege augmentations, and the crystal keystones in the Outer Gate. Varlokkur are assigned to these areas to make sure the magical defenses remain operational.

The proper use of the remainder of the defenses was never learned by mortals, and in many cases, the form that these supposed defenses were meant to take has been forgotten as well. The most promising rumored defense is called the Crucible Directive by First Guard siege gears who know of it. It's believed to cloak Absalom's walls in magical flames and cause central segments of the city streets to collapse. For fear of the potential damage, the siege gears have removed the crystal braziers thought to be involved in activating this defense from the Bunk Fields.

Magical researchers and historians have postulated several other defenses. Some say that if holes in the Outer Gate were filled with the right pattern of *aeon stones*, they could open onto other worlds altogether to resupply the city or conjure timeless allies. Other possible defenses include sheets of freezing gas to stop attackers in the Vents, matrices of *aeon stones* that confer protection to the whole First Guard, illusions to displace and disguise defenders, and weapons becoming animated when their wielders fall.



Azlanti Keep

Bunk Fields

This is a dull, uniform section of row after row of simple soldier barracks. Since the First Guard is never at more than 20% capacity unless Absalom is actively under siege, many of these small rooms are empty, and may be the site of unsanctioned games of chance or assignations.

Craft Vaults

A vast, interconnected series of workshops, stables, and armories constantly work to keep the First Guard ready to fight. They are ostensibly under the command of Lord Yuvin Vatir in his role as quartermaster, but in practical terms they fall under the purview of First Siege Gear Symo of Wynsal.

Within the Craft Vaults, forgemasters fashion weapons and armor for the use of the First Guard and Absalom's district watches. A few master smiths are capable of working mithral and adamantine; these talented artisans are given the same respect and benefits as senior officers.

NPCs Symo of Wynsal (inspecting siege weapon development)

Grand Vault

The bulk of Azlanti Keep's ground floor is dominated by the Grand Vault. Large enough to hold thousands of soldiers and citizens at the same time, the enormous chamber is Absalom's last refuge should the city walls fall to enemies. Two immense stone tablets at the center of the Grand Vault hold Aroden's Founding Laws, inscribed in his own hand in the city's earliest days. The First Guard holds all assemblies here, under the banners and pennants of a hundred defeated war companies that failed to penetrate the keep's defenses. Except during assemblies, this area is usually open to the public. Every day, hundreds of citizens come to see the banners and swear oaths before the tablets of the First Laws.

Knight Country

The upper reaches of the keep are reserved for siege crews, specialists, and senior members of the First Guard. Known as Knight Country, this area admits only those with invitations or a badge marking them as either a resident or squire to one. The rooms are large and well-appointed, though none have balconies or window views, as outer rooms are reserved for siege weapons.

Thanks to Azlanti crystals embedded in every window and roof of Azlanti Keep, the siege weapons of the city create their own ammunition. Adjusting the highest crystals atop the keep changes the magical properties imbued within this ammunition, such as making them combust or banish summoned creatures on impact.

Wynsal Starborn, Acting Primarch of Absalom, handles state business from his office in Knight Country as much as possible. Third Spell Lord Utgar of Gyr's quarters and the studies of the varlokkur occupy most of the interior of one of four squat towers surrounding the keep proper. Lord Gyr also possesses a private room within Knight Country, which has been quarantined as a potential crime scene by the Starwatch since his disappearance.

NPCs Garethal Brighteyes (delivering grave news to the acting primarch); Symo of Wynsal (overseeing repairs on a balcony siege weapon); Wynsal Starborn (acting primarch of Absalom); Utgar of Gyr (instructing a band of varlokkur)

Little Roofs

Although every rooftop and balcony of Azlanti Keep is dedicated to siege weapons or archer emplacements, a series of smaller roofs spanning the southern edge of the fortress has been unused for centuries. Off-duty First Guard soldiers often congregate on the so-called "Little Roofs," lounging in the sun and admiring a breathtaking view of the city all the way to the harbor. With a carefully-guarded command word and a First Guard gear badge, two of the keep's towers that comprise a significant portion of the Little Roofs can detach from the keep itself and serve as flying defense platforms. Each tower is set with a matrix of *aeon stones* that allows it to maneuver as far afield as Fort Tempest or Starwatch Keep and prevent those within from needing to eat or drink.

NPCs Anceltan Berryhock (taking in some sun during a rare break); Gurrik Vale (reading the latest Aethlred Navar novel, his feet dangling over the edge)

Open Quartering

The Open Quartering (also just called "the Open") is where surplus goods and material acquired by the quartermaster are sold at reasonable prices. Soldiers working in the supply houses, called rasars, sell everything in the Open as cheaply as necessary to clear up space quickly. This keeps prices low—10% to

RASARS

Not all of the quartermaster's soldiers stationed at the Open are as upstanding as their duty demands. A select few offer to sell their wares outside the Keep at half the market value to save the trouble of lugging their cargo all the way to their stall, even if the purchasers lack permission to buy in the Open, on the condition the buyers tell no one where their goods came from. Of course, the sale of supplies to unvetted customers—even innocuous materials—may prove to have unintended consequences down the line.

Defense Tower

AVID'S BID

Starwatch Captain Asilia knows Scion Lord Avid had a vendetta against Lord Gyr and might well have been responsible for his disappearance, but also remembers when she, Avid, and Gyr were dear friends and adventuring companions. She will soon have to choose whether or not to support her old friend for primarch, leaving her to seek out neutral investigators to find out for certain what Avid intends to do should he be selected for the role. She has been using various pretenses to speak with reputable investigators, especially those passing too close to Starwatch Keep, so she can meet them without arousing immediate suspicion.

THE OUTER GATE

25% lower than the normal market value. Only full or honorary members of the First Guard or the various district watches may shop in the Open Quartering, however, and none may buy more of something than a rasar determines could be used by a household of six (to prevent reselling on the open market).

Even the Starwatch and the Muckruckers are banned from the Open by rulings from Quartermaster Yuvin Vatir: the Muckruckers on account of being unvetted volunteers, and the Starwatch as an extension of the Starwatch's separation from the First Guard. While the Muckruckers had rarely taken advantage of the opportunity beforehand, several of the Starwatch have sought to have Vatir removed for abuse of his position, saying the policy is retribution for their convicting his nephew of gross negligence.

Although rarely done, honorary membership in the First Guard can be granted by any member of the Grand Council. The main practical benefit of such an honor is access to the Open, since it provides no security clearance nor any right to enforce laws.

NPCs Casima Evers (watch officer buying a new sword); Gurrik Vale (rank-and-file First Guard soldier turning in his chain mail for repairs); Lady Kythes (watch captain making a big purchase); Yuvin Vatir (quartermaster)

The Outer Gate

The Outer Gate allows huge crowds to enter Azlanti Keep through the Wise Quarter in case the city walls fall. It stands 100 feet high, half that wide, and 20 feet thick. The gatehouse itself is an even more massive structure, and is cut through with passageways and internal guard positions, including a wide balcony that permits line of fire directly down on anyone approaching the gate. The gate is normally kept open.

Crystal keystones around the gate, when activated by First Guard members in the right pattern, send waves of magic over the city that drive flying creatures to the ground, force recently teleported creatures back where they came from, or prevent creatures from teleporting or summoning allies for a time.

Three Columns Yard

For the past twenty years, this vast courtyard within Azlanti Keep has been the site of regular drills to test new battle tactics and weapon styles. While popular as a spectator event thanks to the work of smiths from Andoran referred to as "Revolutionaries," it has recently taken on new energy and formal endorsement since the sudden and bloody Fiendflesh Siege. Most new techniques are meant to help prevent against being grabbed or knocked prone by foes.

The Vents and the Goblin Walk

The lowest reaches of Azlanti Keep are abandoned halls and narrow corridors that run alongside and bridge over a vast chasm leading deep into the earth. Four narrow footbridges cross wide ravines from which steam bellows and the scent of sulfur drifts. Called the Vents, these gashes in the earth go down deep beyond what the naked eye can see. Absalom residents only recently discovered that these walkways eventually connect to the Darklands when the Bug Squasher tribe of goblins attempted to flee across the bridges to escape a sinister threat from below. Though they were initially told to leave by First Guard sentries, a clever goblin named Pogmirk convinced the guards

to allow the tribe to stay and set up a perimeter to warn the keep soldiers of any incoming threats.

In the few short years since the goblins made it their home, the Vents have also come to be known as the Goblin Walk. After their leader was killed in the flight, Pogmirk became the de facto leader of the Bug Squasher tribe. Pogmirk heads up a rambunctious group of goblins who call themselves the Walk Watch. They make it their duty to patrol the walkways, address any minor threats, and alert the guards to anything suspicious. Since rumors have started spreading about the Goblin King of Absalom, more stray goblins have trickled in from the Darklands, and the Walk Watch helps them either to settle into the Goblin Walk community or to travel into the bigger city above (usually via routes that do not lead directly through Azlanti Keep).

These lower reaches are only connected to the upper sections of the Keep through four small rooms. Each room is easily held by just a few soldiers and kept fully staffed. Records of what purpose these chambers served or threats they held off before the quiet period of the past century have all been lost.

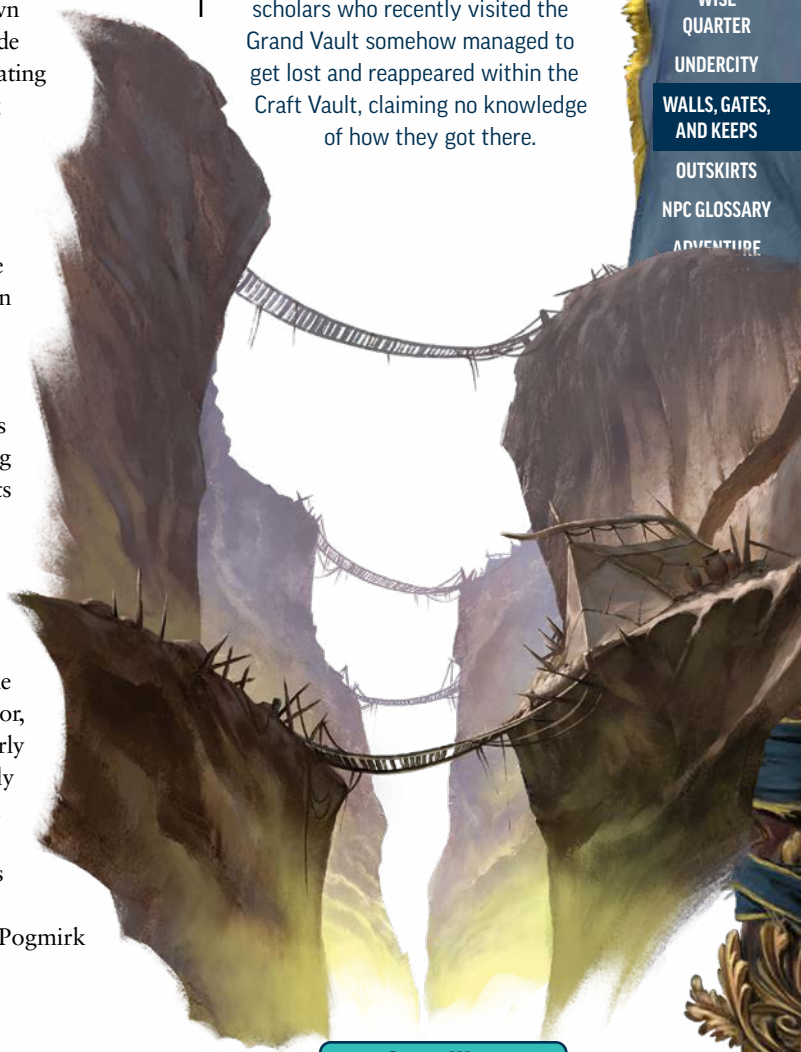
Since goblins have begun seeking entry into the city via the Vents in recent months, Second Sergeant Anceltan Berryhock has been assigned as a sort of makeshift welcoming committee and provisional tax collector.

Unfortunately, goblins are not the only creatures who have clambered up to lurk in close proximity to Azlanti Keep from below. At various times in the past few decades, groups of deros, duergar, morlocks, and ghouls threatened the keep's basements and dungeons. These periodic incursions keep the soldiers stationed in the lower reaches busy, and recently they've grown more and more dependent on the Bug Squashers to provide advance warning of new arrivals, if not actual help in defeating foes. Recently, though, something new has been preying upon the goblins. Whatever it is strikes quickly and silently, leaving behind a pile of empty clothes, armor, and weapons on the ground as if the missing goblin who once wore them simply vanished, leaving their belongings on the floor. Making these mysterious disappearances all the more ominous is the disturbing fact that the goblins don't vanish completely—in every case, every single tooth in the missing goblin's mouth has been found in a heap within the empty clothes. The goblins have taken to calling this mysterious predator the "Toothdropper." Accounts and drawings purporting to identify Toothdropper's nature have varied widely, with some depicting it as a lumbering toothless tooth fairy, others as a shapeless protoplasm that eats flesh and bone but can't digest teeth, and others as a four armed fiend who turns to smoke and consumes goblins from within, and on and on. It's apparent that the Bug Squashers have no idea what sort of new danger is picking them off one by one. Recently, the first non-goblin fell victim to Toothdropper, when a troublemaking First Guard attempted to avoid discipline by retreating into the Goblin Walk. It was weeks before his armor, weapons, and teeth were found in a heap next to a particularly deep Vent, but this time—perhaps because Toothdropper finally snatched someone who wasn't afraid of writing—the victim left a single maddening clue scribbled on the last page of his patrol log book: "...I hear it whistling in the dark...the toothless mouth... I'm sorry..."

NPCs Anceltan Berryhock (First Guard sentry); Pogmirk (reporting from below)

MISSING BALLISTA

In the chaos of the recent sieges and abrupt changes in First Guard leadership, a few experimental military projects have gone missing without notice. One such item was a new ballista design of unparalleled range that could be broken down into a few human-portable pieces for deployment around the city. The First Guard remained blissfully unaware of this fact until the ballista reappeared in full working order, in someone else's hands. An unknown agent used the siege weapons to ignite a Thuvian vessel waiting for a pilot outside the Flotsam Graveyard, and the commander militant wants to know who's responsible and how the theft was accomplished. The only current lead is that a group of scholars who recently visited the Grand Vault somehow managed to get lost and reappeared within the Craft Vault, claiming no knowledge of how they got there.



Goblin Walk

FORT TEMPEST

Fort Tempest is smaller than Azlanti Keep and Starwatch Keep, but still of a considerable size compared to keeps in other cities. It protects Absalom's

BREAKING THE BACKS OF SLAVERS

The recent ban on slavery has driven most former slaver operations out of business, but some continue to operate underground. Second Commander Alasmin Sarulamon suspects there are slavers kidnapping targets throughout the city, but often finds there are few soldiers and resources capable of a discreet investigation. She has been forced to hire outside help to follow up when she can't spare elite agents necessary for such a job.

western flank to prevent enemies from building siege towers there. It was expanded from the conquered siege castle of Kharnas the Angel-Binder after the Radiant Siege of 1619 AR. Evidence of its original purpose remains in the numerous magic circles inscribed upon the fort's walls that prevent outsiders from entering or leaving on their own.

The fort is just as large underground as it is above ground. It features many ramps and few windows. The cliff it sits on is reinforced with dwarven stonework, a feature believed to be the only reason it didn't fall onto the Puddles during the earthquake that began to sink that district. Several chambers run beneath the structure, originally created as barracks and workshops for dwarven engineers from the nearby enclave of Galizhur while they worked on the fort's foundation. A collapsible tunnel allows access to the wilderness beyond Shoreline to flank invaders at the walls.

Fort Tempest is isolated from the rest of the city by the Puddles, which makes getting supplies an inconvenient trek across the walls or through the water. As a result, the few windows low on the tower often bristle with fishing poles, and the tunnel often sees guards go hunting for food.

To avoid personnel shortages, the First Guard long ago opened shifts at Fort Tempest to members of the district guards as well as the Starwatch. Yet until recently, Fort Tempest was a throwaway post, one used as a minor punishment for soldiers and district guards alike. Oirel of House Uiry willingly took command in an effort to turn the city's military laughingstock into a fierce fighting force. He didn't managed to achieve his goal before dying valiantly fighting undead assassins in the Black Echelon Uprising of 4717 AR. A surprise attack managed to trap the survivors deep inside the tower, but Commander Oirel bought enough time for Sergeant Salif Deepkeg to pull down the fort's flag as a signal that the fort had been compromised. After Lord Oirel's sacrifice, Salif commanded the fort briefly until Oirel's resurrection, and today the two work together assiduously to improve Fort Tempest's reputation in the eyes of the First Guard and the general populace of Absalom

Now that its strategic importance has been reaffirmed, Fort Tempest has become a coveted assignment for brave soldiers and district guards eager to play a crucial role in the city's next great defense.

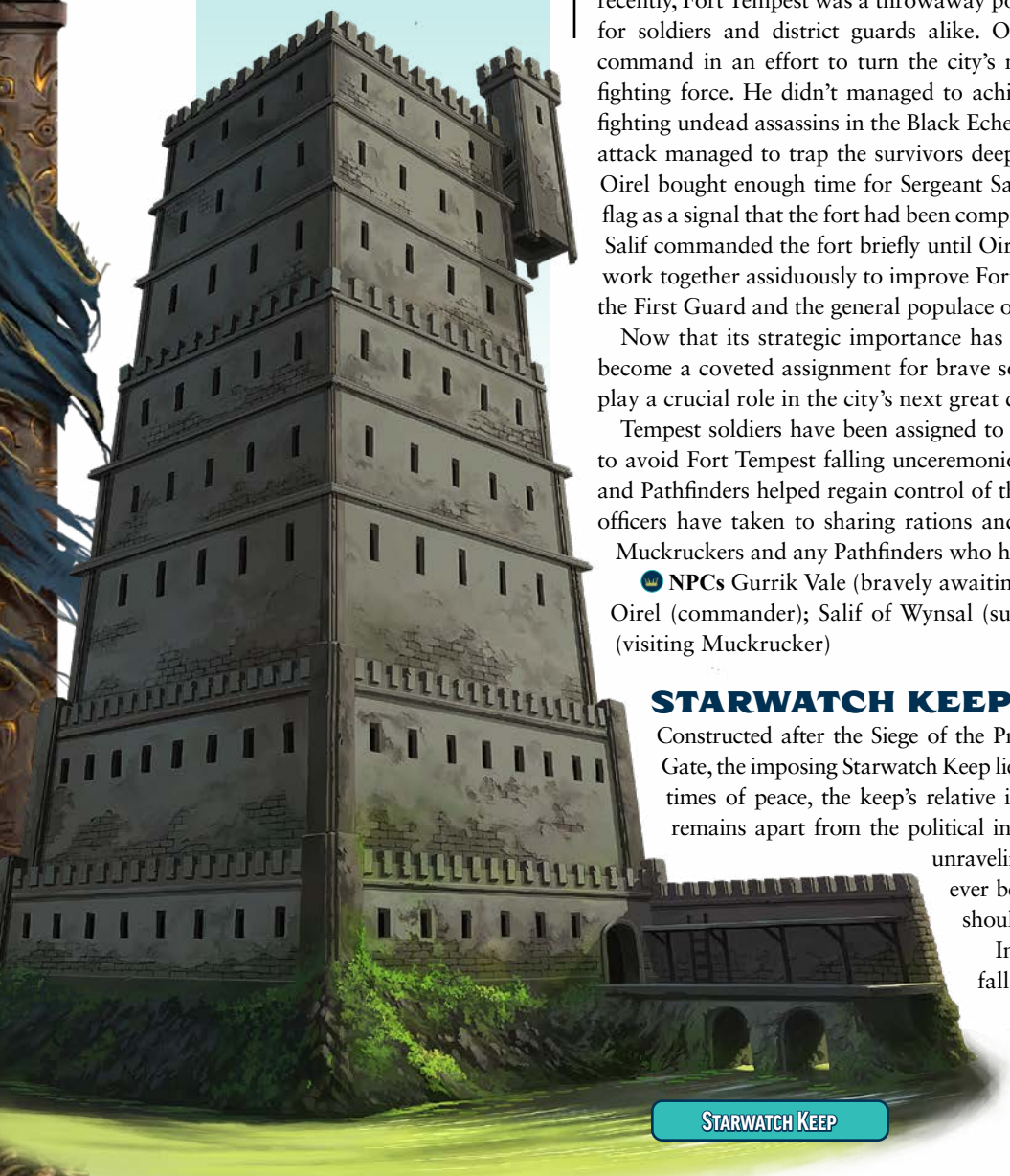
Tempest soldiers have been assigned to secure a route through the Puddles to avoid Fort Tempest falling unceremoniously again. Since the Muckruckers and Pathfinders helped regain control of the fort three years ago, the Tempest officers have taken to sharing rations and newly plentiful supplies with the Muckruckers and any Pathfinders who happen by their corner of the city.

NPCs Gurrik Vale (bravely awaiting his role in military history); Lord Oirel (commander); Salif of Wynsal (sub-commander); Trakkus Clawfoot (visiting Muckrucker)

STARWATCH KEEP

Constructed after the Siege of the Prophets nearly breached the Postern Gate, the imposing Starwatch Keep lies just beyond the city's walls. During times of peace, the keep's relative isolation ensures that the Starwatch remains apart from the political intrigues they often are charged with unraveling, further preventing them from ever becoming a military threat to the city should they somehow become corrupted.

In case of siege, Starwatch Keep falls under the command of the Harbormaster's Grange and serves to flank attacks on both Pilot Island and the Postern Gate. Generally, Starwatch Keep is then charged with sheltering any vulnerable elements of the



Starwatch Keep

Navy and providing a route of retreat should the Flotsam Graveyard be breached and Pilot Island taken. Starwatch Keep has deep stores stretching underground, but if it needs to be resupplied during a siege it relies upon boats rather than trying to move through the Postern.

The height of Starwatch Keep allows its many siege weapons to easily reach the entire Flotsam Graveyard and the Postern. Some high platforms and windows here are kept clear of siege weapons to allow rows of Starwatch snipers to target enemy leaders within the harbor or entering Dawnfoot. If an army moves against the Postern, Starwatch rangers are deployed through the cover of Dawnfoot and the surrounding woods to make hit-and-run attacks.

The inner sections of the keep are a maze of narrow corridors, offices, and small record rooms. Starwatch officers manage investigations out of these secure chambers, while members of the watch conduct witness interviews and store evidence here. The tight corridors are designed to be confusing, the better to slow down intruders and escapees alike.

A walled set of docks provides a home to Wave Riders deployed in the Bay of Kortos. Fortified stalls provide shelter for trained hippocampus mounts. The Starwatch also uses its docks for the several boats and few warships it manages separately from the Navy. Starwatch boats patrol Absalom's harbor to catch criminals as well as ships attempting to sail the Flotsam Graveyard without a guild pilot. Starwatch warships are also dispatched to interdict ships believed to be carrying violators of Absalom's laws fleeing justice and to carry Starwatch investigators to naval vessels, the Isle of Erran, and occasionally Diobel or other settlements under Absalom's jurisdiction.

Since no member of the Starwatch may live within Absalom's walls, Starwatch Keep is supported by the community of Dawnfoot, which houses their families and support personnel just north of the keep itself. Dawnfoot evacuates into Starwatch Keep if Absalom is attacked.

NPCs Alasmin Sarulamon (beleaguered second-in-command); Lady Asilia (frequently absent captain); Sevana Kinhan (Wave Rider captain)

DOWN TIME

Adventuring heroes with military service as part of their backgrounds might still serve in Absalom's First Guard, making the city's keeps a kind of home base of sorts, even if that hero's companions are not otherwise involved with the military. Commanding officers are a great source of adventure hooks, as most enjoy broad authority to dispatch underlings to investigate this or that conundrum. Keeps also provide an excellent source of background NPCs to further add depth and connectivity to the people and plotlines of the city.

OUTSKIRTS

Key NPCs Bothuk Thraske, Grint Basatrel, and Lady Nhala (Diobellian politicians); Bragus Stoutkeep (master of ceremonies at the Dawncastle); Evessian Deris (Escadar seat on the Low Council); Jaress Molinarro (Kortos viceroy, member of the High Council); Lord Oved of House Blakros (Swardlands magnate); Pyl Gillseed (Eagle Garrison scout); Shevala Iorae (Pathfinder Society venture-captain and Cairnlands expert); Lord Winton of House Nimz (commander of the Kortos Cavalry)

Services Trade, caravan protection, exploration, dungeoneering, smuggling, etc.

Four large settlements are situated just outside Absalom's walls: Shoreline and Westerhold to the west, Copperwood to the northeast, and Dawnfoot to the southeast. Each has its own communities and functions, and all grew with and around Absalom in support of the city's needs and those of the people who live there. The laborers who built Absalom's early buildings created Copperwood by necessity of having somewhere to rest after their long day's toil. Travelers arriving via the western road needed to stable their horses and find accommodations, which led to the growth of Westerhold. Military units tasked with fending off foreign conquerors formed their own community in Dawnfoot, and the fishers and trappers of what is now known as Shoreline banded together to make a small town centered around manufacturing and trade.

As a port town, Absalom's harbor is of utmost importance to its citizens and economy. Thankfully, the harbor is protected by a unique barrier known as the Flotsam Graveyard. Made of thousands of sunken ships from millennia of attempted naval attacks on the city—as well as the razor-sharp reef of barnacles, mussels, and other sea creatures that formed around their wooden hulls—the barrier forms a semicircle around the harbor and closes it off against threats. At the mouth of Absalom's harbor is Pilot Island, home to the Absalom Lighthouse as well as the Harbormaster's Grange, where trained pilots wait to be hired to guide visiting ships through the dangerous maze of sunken masts and jagged hulls that litter the harbor floor from Pilot Island to the Docks. A high-security jail known as the Black Whale, comprised of six small ships anchored to the reef, sits near the harbor's western edge. Beyond the isolation of its watery location, the prison is also guarded by hungry sharks and rays.

The Cairnlands lie further inland from the city and are named for the many lives lost over nearly 5,000 years of attempted sieges. These lands are mostly barren apart from the many abandoned siege castles littered across the landscape, all differing in size, form, and condition—and rumored to be full of forgotten treasures waiting for those courageous enough to explore them. Restless undead risen from the Cairnlands' shallow graves and barrows pose a constant threat to careless wanderers.

There are numerous smaller settlements scattered around the Isle of Kortos, and the most important to Absalom's welfare is the city of Diobel on the island's southwestern coast. With a reputation for having a flexible relationship to the law, many goods pass through Diobel on their way to Absalom because they are subject to less—if any—inspection and can travel overland to avoid Absalom's vexing harbor fees. Diobel is also the base of operations for the Kortos Consortium, a powerful inland merchant's guild that is widely known to control illegal smuggling operations across the Starstone Isle. The town also provides many legitimate wares, however, with its long history of oyster farmers, pearl divers, and trappers.

Travelers to Absalom from Diobel must pass through the Diobel Hills and past the Immenwood, which bears the risk of encountering hostile

MAJOR POWERS

The city of Absalom and its residents dominate the Isle of Kortos, but are far from the only people who reside on the island. Centaurs, harpies, and minotaurs are found almost everywhere that humans are not and could be said to be the true rulers of portions of the Starstone Isle. Enclaves of kobolds, lizardfolk, and hags reside in the Dunmire bog, and wyverns, griffons, and drakes populate the island's mountains and hills. The occasional dragon is also known to reside on the Isle of Kortos, though sightings of such almost always cause Absalom to start looking into dragonslayers.

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WESTERHOLD
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harpies, minotaurs, and centaurs. These three threats trace their lineages back to the First Siege of Absalom, wherein the minotaur warlord Voradni Voon attempted to march a vast army comprised of those creatures through a portal to slay Aroden and take his place. When Voon was defeated, his surviving host fled into the surrounding lands, where some still lurk, bearing their ancient grudges.

The city of Escadar sits on the Isle of Erran's southwestern coast, north of Kortos. With over 11,000 residents, Escadar is Absalom's largest vassal city. As the home of the hippocampus-mounted Wave Riders and the seat of Absalom's Navy, Escadar provides essentials such as shipyards and barracks, along with plenty of locales where a bored sailor can get into trouble.

Outskirts Locations

The following are some of the most notable locations on Absalom's outskirts.

The Cairnlands

Past the settlements around the city of Absalom lies a barren wasteland known as the Cairnlands, whose open fields bear the scars of countless failed attempts to invade Absalom across millennia. Hundreds of abandoned siege castles scattered across the horizon range in condition from rotted-out piles of wood and abandoned stone forts to great towers of mysterious formation. Adventurous townsfolk are often lured here by rumors of lost treasure but also risk encountering all sorts of creatures, traps, and undead threats around these ancient battlefields.

The most notable of these failed siege castles is the Spire of Nex, a mile-tall pinnacle of smooth gray stone about 10 miles north of Absalom. The Spire is one of the landmarks, along with the Blue Tower and the Absalom Lighthouse, that city residents use to give directions or gain their bearings. Venture-Captain Shevala Iorae of the Pathfinder Society was the first person to gain access to the tower in over a thousand years, and she has established a presence at the summit of the doorless pinnacle. Recently, the tower has surged back to life, thrumming with unfamiliar sounds and erratic magic, resulting in Wynsal Starborn requesting the Pathfinder Society and First Watch collaborate on investigating the Spire to prepare for a potentially imminent attack.

NPCs Lady Seleenae and Zifelez (close friends on a pleasure ride astride magnificent horses); Shevala Iorae (inquisitive venture-captain); Lord Winton (leading a Kortos Cavalry patrol)

Copperwood

Copperwood started as a ramshackle camp for the laborers tasked with building the city in Absalom's earliest centuries. Some had simple huts while others slept on the bare ground, but after each long day's toil, workers of all stripes returned to this community to rest. Over the centuries, Copperwood's buildings became more permanent and its inhabitants more numerous. The Copperwood of today is a small town in its own right, and it houses a substantial number of the laborers and tradesfolk employed in the city. Many of the domestic servants who work in the abutting Petal District also call Copperwood home. Other self-styled "Copperheads" are eager to rent themselves out as guides or porters to visitors.

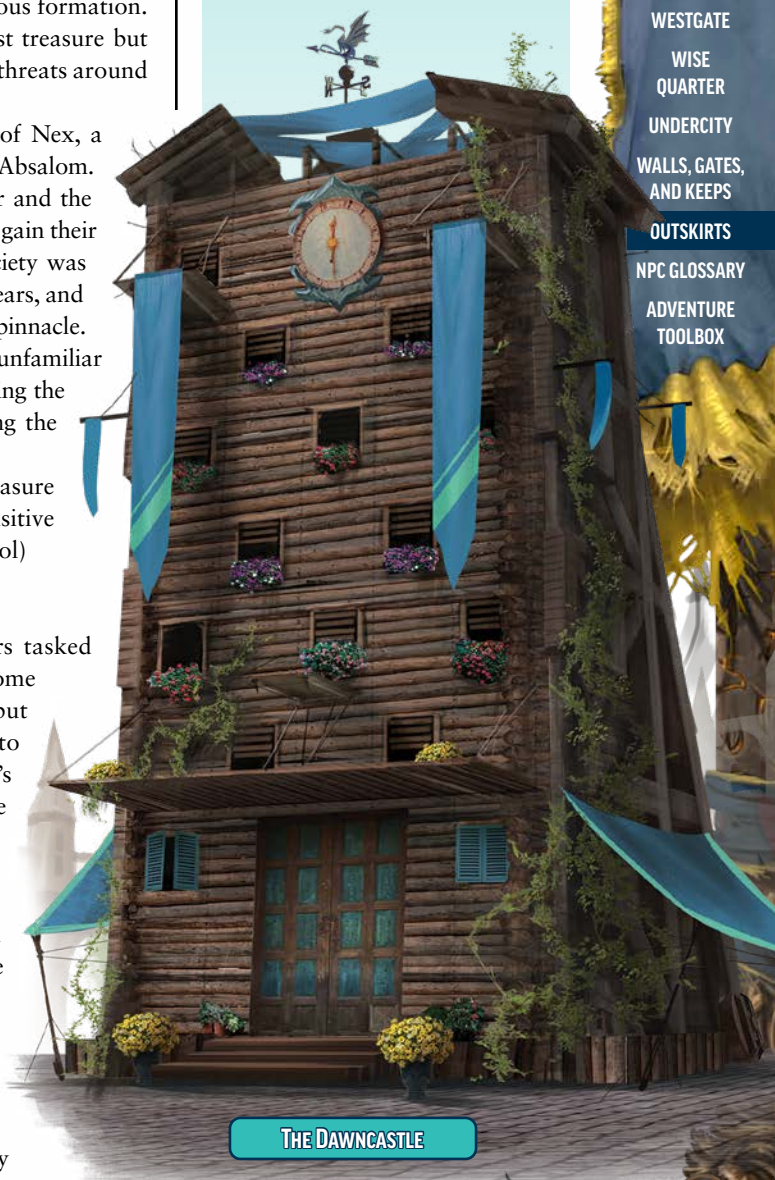
NPCs Adula Tremane and Umlox Vulm (residents)

Dawnfoot

The settlement of Dawnfoot is sandwiched between Starwatch Keep and the Precipice Quarter. This town initially

Exploring Kortos

Numerous Pathfinder products add further detail to the Starstone Isle. The *Pathfinder Beginner Box* and the follow-up adventure collection *Troubles in Otari* add significant character to a small town on the island's southern coast, while the Abomination Vaults Adventure Path delves deep into the dangerous dungeon on the town's outskirts. Further afield, the Extinction Curse Adventure Path takes a wide tour of Kortos and Erran, as the heroes deal with fallout from Aroden's ancient theft of the life-giving *aeon orb* artifacts from Darklands xulgaths, now eager for revenge.



The Dawncastle

LOST IN SIN

Clientele have lately started avoiding the Lonely Owl, one of the more popular dives in Escadar, after rumors began spreading about a trio of mysterious sailors who frequent the bar on Starday nights. The three speak in quiet, raspy tones, regaling those who listen with enthralling tales of distant ocean voyages. They dress in shabby, outdated styles, and never look anyone directly in the eye. Anyone seen leaving the establishment with one of these three is soon reported missing entirely, but local guards have been hesitant to question the trio. Mentioning the three elicits only shudders and vague deflections from the law.

sprung up as a camp for the members of the Starwatch, who live outside of the city as part of a pact with the First Guard. In the years since, Dawnfoot has evolved into a tight-knit community of families from various branches of Absalom's military.

The town hall is a converted siege castle from the Siege of the Prophets in 1298 AR, now simply called Dawncastle. The stout lumber-sided stone keep hosts town meetings and community events, but the townsfolk are most excited to gather there when the youth of Dawnfoot graduate from their military training programs and are officially accepted into service.

NPCs Bragus Stoutkeep (Dawncastle's master of ceremonies)

Diobel

Diobel likes to call itself the "Doorway to Absalom," but it's widely nicknamed as "the Back Door of Absalom"—the cargo that passes through its harbor spans the full spectrum of legality. Anything that anyone could want can be found in the markets of Absalom, and Diobel is the gateway through which many of the stranger goods pass. The townsfolk are generally hardy and earnest, most working as oyster farmers, dockworkers, and shopkeepers.

It's an open secret that the Kortos Consortium—ostensibly a guild of merchants—is additionally an elaborate smuggling operation that controls the passage of virtually all goods that come through the small port. The Consortium is not an overtly menacing presence; each spring, the guild holds a trade fair in Diobel, where it provides free food and drink to all of the hard-working families who supply labor and trade goods. But they also often work with the Barge Gang, a semi-criminal organization run by the Karbie family, who take a cut of all the goods they transport from the town. Anyone who complains to the Kortos Consortium about the Barge Gang may suddenly find that none of their goods can leave Diobel.

Townsfolk turn a blind eye to the illicit trading so long as the smugglers don't make too much trouble. This lax attitude toward the law makes Diobel an ideal place for traders to transfer their goods from the sea to overland transport into Absalom and avoid the city's harbor fees. The waters of Diobel's harbor are shallow and brimming with oyster beds, and pearls are one of the city's most prominent exports. Supplemented by plentiful fur and lumber from further inland, as well as the mysterious cargo handled by the Consortium, Diobel sees its fair share of profit from all sorts of trade in Absalom's vast markets.

NPCs Lord Avid (teriarch of Diobel); Bothuk Thraske (Low Councilor); Grint Basatrel (nomarch); Lady Myleena (visiting her mother at Lord Avid's castle); Lady Nahla (custodian of Eaglereach, Lord Avid's hilltop castle); Osprey (agent of the Decemvirate)

Escadar

To the north of Kortos lies the Isle of Erran, which once served as a private retreat away from mortals for Aroden and his most trusted devotees. A 12-hour boat ride from the north coast village of Pier's End delivers travelers to the city of Escadar, the site of an ancient Arodenite monastery called St. Sarnax. This grand marble building on the island's southern side was once the training academy and esoteric library for the Knights of the Aeon Star, an order of holy sword-mages who swore allegiance to Aroden in the time before his ascension. The monastery still gleams as brightly as it did in Aroden's day, and three elderly Knights of the Aeon Star still tend to the building and its artifacts.

Escadar—named after one of the newly minted lords who helped fight in the Pirate Siege of 430–536 AR—now primarily serves as the base for Absalom's Navy and a unique naval force called the Wave Riders. Also sometimes referred to as the Sea Cavalry, the hippocampus-mounted Wave Riders patrol Starstone Isle and the Bay of Kortos. Absalom's modest armada spends most of its time at sea, but Escadar is home to a legion of naval administrators, as well as the city's ambitious Sea Lord, Lerefys.

To entertain its many visiting sailors, the city is filled with "sin lodges," such as gambling dens, brothels, and drug parlors. Disappearances and crimes are common among the workers of these establishments, but the local authorities generally do not act unless a sailor or soldier is involved.

Escadar is also home to several azarketi immigrants and travelers from the nearby submerged city of Kienek-Li, to the north. The azarketi have their own embassy in the city called the House of the Cresting Wave, where Kienek-Li arranges the details of its surface trading with Escadar via the soft-spoken ambassador, Lemaria Kumari.

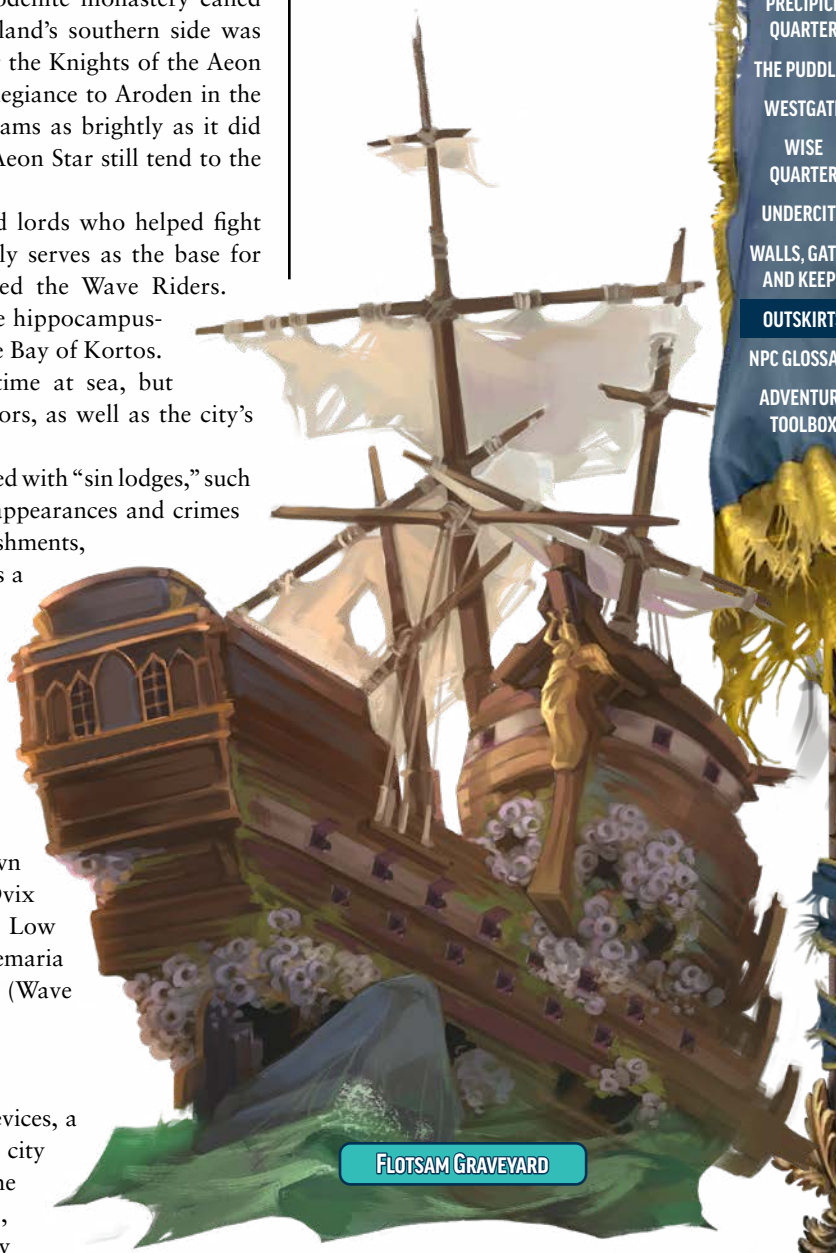
NPCs Sealord Amodjun (slumming in town while employing an elaborate disguise); Drock Ovix (tourist); Evessian Deris (Escadar seat on the Low Council); Lord Lerefys (Sea Lord of Absalom); Lemaria Kumari (azarketi ambassador); Sevana Kinhan (Wave Rider captain)

Flotsam Graveyard

A century after Aroden left Absalom to its own devices, a succession of scoundrels besieged and extorted the city in a 106-year-long conflict that became known as the Pirate Siege. The siege claimed thousands of lives, but the aggressors had no way of knowing that they

MAKING WAVES

Lemaria Kumari is used to getting push back for some of her political activism, but she seems to have made some more serious enemies in Escadar due to her efforts to address worker welfare and safety in the town's pleasure lodges. She initially shrugged off the growing threats as toothless ramblings but has since narrowly escaped an attempted alleyway ambush by several cloaked figures. She reaches out to the PCs to investigate the identity of her unknown adversary.



Flotsam Graveyard

RUN OF THE MILL

Smoke originating from the paper mill on the edge of Shoreline begins to cloud the town's skyline. Ta Kohmar, the enterprising dwarf who runs the mill, desperately attempts to combat the blaze before it spreads. An immediate investigation of the site reveals a number of alchemical tools that suggest intentional sabotage. Kohmar is willing to pay to discover the identity of her enemy.

Westerhold Innkeeper

were laying the groundwork for one of Absalom's most important defenses—the ships sunk in those battles were the first to form what is now called the Flotsam Graveyard, a shifting labyrinth of masts and sails that acts as a barrier protecting Absalom's harbor.

More ships have joined the graveyard over the centuries, and it has become a veritable living reef of shellfish clusters and local sea life. Time, tides, and wood-eating shipworms erode the sunken maze, and the bits that make their way into the city are recovered and taxed by the Salvagers' Guild. To replenish the barrier, derelict craft and unsellable ships confiscated from smugglers and criminals are towed out to the reef and scuttled to add yet more to the barrier. Conversely, when the graveyard becomes too densely packed to navigate, specialized divers patrol the reef and clear passageways for incoming ships.

Since the Graveyard's geography is in constant flux, it's illegal for ships carrying more than six people or 500 pounds of cargo to pass through with their own captain at the helm. Any ship that wrecks trying to navigate the Graveyard is forfeited to the primarch along with its cargo, a risk very few are willing to take. Instead, they must signal for a trained pilot to be rowed out to them from the Harbormaster's Grange on Pilot Island, which is staffed by Pilot Union experts kept up to date on hazards and clearings through the aquatic maze.

A variety of aquatic creatures call the wealth of empty nooks and crannies between shipwrecks in the Flotsam Graveyard home. Several azarketi enclaves live there, including Lemaria Kumari, the official ambassador of the Low Azlanti. Wild hippocampi also live amid the wreckage. More dangerous creatures dwell there as well, including a variety of urchins, sharks, rays, grindylows, and bunyips. Though there have not yet been any confirmed sightings, rumors suggest that an enormous eel or sea serpent lurks beneath the waves within Absalom Harbor itself. How such a large creature would fit through the small gaps in the tangled wreckage unnoticed—or where such a behemoth would reside—remains a mystery.

NPCs Lemaria Kumari (resident)

Pariol Island

The isolated retreat of Pariol Island lies 25 miles southwest of Absalom, about 10 miles off the coast of Starstone Isle. Named for a family that owned it thousands of years ago, the small, scenic island has changed hands so many times that its winding history is difficult to trace. It was once the property of an Andoran noble house from before Andoran became a democracy and was eventually gifted as dowry to the Blakros family, its current owners. The place has been mostly abandoned since the Blakros's island estate burned down, but was later restored for the wedding of Lady Michellia Blakros to the Hellknight officer Damian Kastner 8 years ago. On the tallest bluff of the island, under an open-sided wooden chapel, rows of carved pews from Michellia's wedding still stand. Since the wedding turned out to be a bit more eventful than the family had anticipated, however, the island hasn't seen much recent use. Rumors suggest that it might now be haunted or inhabited by some fearsome monster capable of scaring away one of Absalom's most powerful noble families.

NPCs Bloody Benothar (fugitive); Sevana Kinhan (Wave Rider captain leading a patrol on the hunt for a fugitive)

Shoreline

Shoreline has grown over the years from a small fishing village to a town bustling with hard-working craftsfolk. Many of the businesses

in Shoreline happen to be of the malodorous variety, such as tanneries, fisheries, breweries, and a large water-powered paper mill. Despite living outside the city walls, Shorelinerers consider themselves better off in both situation and smell than the folks in the neighboring Puddles, whose homes are constantly flooded.

Most of Shoreline's residents are honest folk, but some criminal activity creeps into it from the Puddles. A gang known as the Warhounders makes its home in a local ruined siege castle that they have dubbed the Pyramid of the Dog. Perhaps hoping to profit off this criminal activity, Shoreline offers a fair amount of cheaper stabling for horses coming in off of the Western Road, some of which caters to illegal or monstrous mounts.

NPCs Nessian (gang leader); Ta Kohmar (paper mill owner)

The Tyrant's Grasp

The large, barren wasteland now known as the Tyrant's Grasp was created recently when the forces of Absalom halted the march of the Whispering Tyrant toward the *Starstone*. The lich met his demise in an explosive blast of both holy and necromantic energy that razed the plains, forests, and hills in a 15-mile diameter. The Whispering Tyrant was incinerated in the gigantic magical blast save for his skeletal right hand, which was wrenched from his body at the center of the circle and still clutches to the last at the land he intended to conquer.

Rumors of the undead lord's stubborn appendage have started to spread, attracting more frequent pilgrimages to the site by cultists of the Whispering Way. Absalom's military has already cleared out several attempted settlements by these cultists, but they seem to keep returning in greater number. Pathfinder Venture-Captain Shevala Iorae keeps a close eye on the area from her base atop the Spire of Nex, coordinating with the Pathfinder Society and dispatching adventurers to snuff out any hint of cultists who start to gravitate toward the site. Sightings of undead creatures have also noticeably increased in this region, and the creatures seem to be more resilient than those who were already fairly common in the Cairnlands.

Westerhold

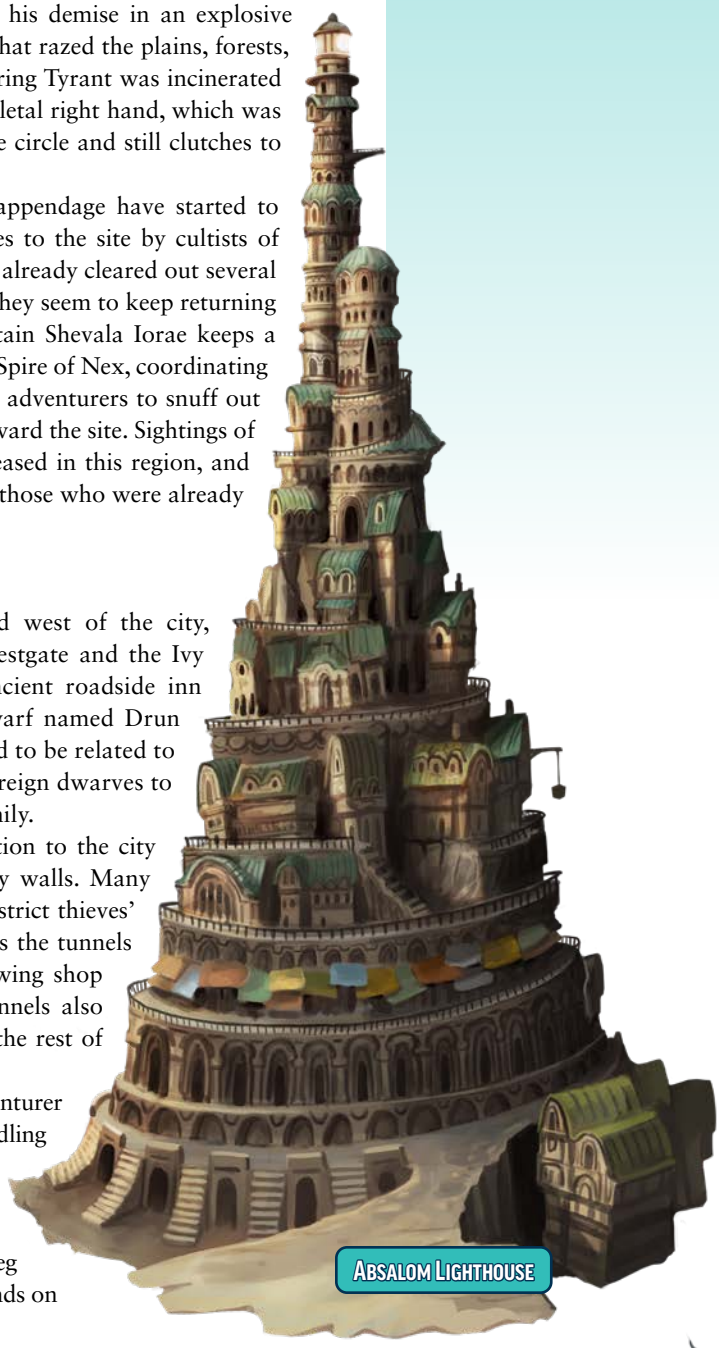
Nestled between the two roads that lead west of the city, Westerhold abuts the wall across from Westgate and the Ivy District. It initially formed around an ancient roadside inn established over 2,000 years ago by a dwarf named Drun Deepkeg. Most dwarven residents are proud to be related to the Deepkeg family and often encourage foreign dwarves to settle in Westerhold and marry into the family.

Another lesser-known dwarven contribution to the city is a series of tunnels leading under the city walls. Many of these tunnels are controlled by an Ivy District thieves' guild known as the Crowsworn, who access the tunnels through their secret entrance in a glassblowing shop called Crystal Creations. Other ancient tunnels also connect to the city's sewers, and thus into the rest of the city.

NPCs Bothuk Thraske (seeking adventurer allies); Ezlip Terrag (mushroom monger trundling a cart across the neighborhood); Parsin Guile (inspecting a caravan delivering raw lumber from the Immenwood); Salif of Wynsal (visiting relatives in the Deepkeg family); Lady Seleenae and Zifelez (close friends on a pleasure ride astride magnificent horses)

What Remains

Bands of undead continue to roam the Tyrant's Grasp, each drawn inexorably to the Whispering Tyrant's severed hand. Undead beings that reach the hand begin fighting among themselves for the chance to stand near it. Larger and more powerful undead creatures have begun arriving from beyond the Isle of Kortos, and locals fear that the draw of the Tyrant's Grasp will attract even greater dangers.



Absalom Lighthouse

NPC GLOSSARY

NPCS, CLASS, AND LEVEL

The NPC descriptions provided here present brief notes on each character's alignment, gender, ancestry, occupation, and level. In many cases, an NPC's listed occupation is identical to a Pathfinder character class. In this case, these designations are provided as a suggestion for your own further development of these characters–the in-game versions of these NPCs need not actually use player character class rules. If altering any detail makes it easier for you to use an NPC in your campaign, change it!

Aarnock Xanthiss

NE | MALE | HUMAN | ALCHEMIST/DRUID | 13

The Grand Alchemist of Absalom's Perfumers' Conglomerate sits on the Ivy District Council and enjoys a reputation as one of the district's most popular and respected merchants. The stylish and innovative master of scents is well past his physical prime but seems just to be cresting toward a new height of genius, and his fragrances have never been more popular. Few know the depth of his true wickedness, nor his slavish devotion to Urgathoa, nor his insidious plan to poison thousands of his fellow citizens via perfumes filtered through the Conglomerate. Even he is unaware of his role as a pawn of an even greater threat to Absalom.

Once a month at midnight, in the Topiary Menagerie of Ivy District Park, Xanthiss trades druidic potions and magic to a mysterious hooded figure whom he knows to be a thrall and agent of Urgathoa. Unbeknownst to him, this creature is Pasharran, a lich priest of Urgathoa who dwells in a hidden lair in the catacombs beneath Absalom, and whose centuries-long plot to swarm the city with an army of undead is on the verge of execution.

Aaqir al'Hakam

N | MALE | HUMAN | DIPLOMAT | 12

Aaqir is a Trade Prince of Qadira and a major player in Absalom's mercantile circles. A cunning economic strategist, Aaqir seems to possess a preternatural foresight into the movements of economic markets, and is one of the city's most influential traders in silk, lumber, and saffron. The handsome merchant prince operates out of one of his second cousin Lady Nymara's sizable estates in the Coins, where he lives with his husband Emir Thalzar Gaatan and their three adopted daughters, Alinzia, Vanissi, and Tikria. In order to focus on his personal business investments, al'Hakam established an alliance with the criminal mastermind Guaril Karela called "The Exchange" about a decade ago. Guaril's constant troubles and self-serving ambitions eventually forced al'Hakam to leave the alliance, though he continues to rely on rumors and intelligence provided by his old ally's network of spies and informants. Together with Guaril, al'Hakam engaged in a great deal of intrigue with the Pathfinder Society, and still serves as one of the organization's primary investment brokers.

Lord Absol Tullman IV

LN | MALE | DWARF | ARTISAN | 12

The ancient and noble Tullman clan was one of the first great dwarven families to inhabit Starstone Isle, and has long had an influence upon the city of Absalom, even if most of its members live outside its walls among their kin in the coastal enclave of Galizhur. One of Absalom's most honored long-time Tullman inhabitants is Lord Absol IV, a venerable old architect and stonemason who is a direct descendant of ancestors who built many of the city's fortifications in ancient days. Now more than a century into retirement, Lord Absol has lived in the city longer than only a small handful of others (most of whom are undead). Next year, he turns 400, a much-anticipated event in Absalom's dwarf community, as the wily old Absol has lived far longer than anyone had ever expected. The Temple of Torag is planning a huge parade, and has already negotiated with the Grand Council to present the aged artisan with a ceremonial key to the city on the grand day. For now, the mostly deaf and increasingly impatient old dwarf lives out the remainder of his days at Magpie Manor, in the Petal District, where he is a minor celebrity. Dwarf admirers and students of architecture and stonework visit him to consult or simply to chat about the old days nearly around the clock. It's said that Lord Absol has committed the plans to most of Absalom's fortifications to memory, but his recall fades with age, and those who have attempted to trick him into revealing some forgotten tunnel or secret door that bypasses the city's security find his inability to concentrate on a single subject for more than a few moments a significant barrier to success.

Lady Adrielle Neprathep of House Fyrlenn

CG | FEMALE | HUMAN | INVENTOR | 16

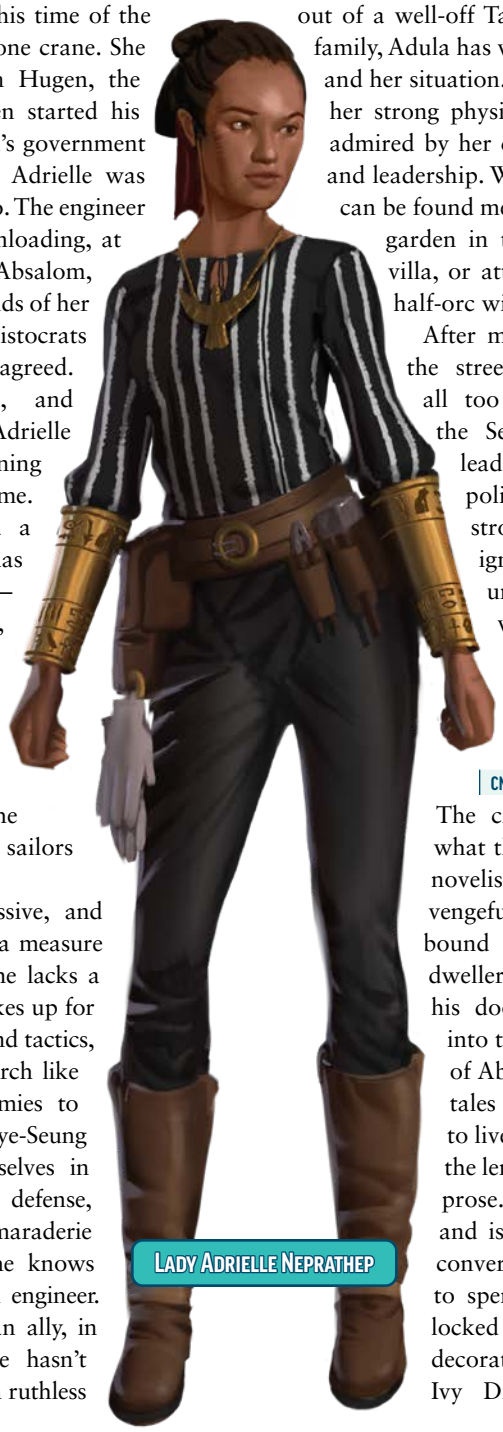
Born in Sothis, Osirion as the daughter of a shipping clerk, Adrielle Neprathep's girlhood was marked with broken noses, scraped knees, and an intense love of math. When she grew up and followed her family to Absalom, the young woman took reasonable stock of her prospects for both employment and romance and opted to join a mercenary company led by the self-styled General Versi instead. She became a combat engineer and a good one, rising through the ranks of the First Guard through skill, luck, and a good instinct for when to duck. By the age of 30, Adrielle was Versi's chief of

engineers and wealthy from careful investment of her loot, but somehow the military business lost its appeal. Even as Adrielle designed ever more lethal devices, she saw that the people who started the wars—the people who caused all the trouble—were almost never the ones who got killed. Most of the people Adrielle's machines slaughtered were just poor young fools caught up conflicts beyond their control.

In 4702 AR, Adrielle resigned her commission and took a job as a senior engineer at Absalom's docks. It was calming work, a balm for her troubled soul. In due time she met and married a petty nobleman, a quiet, retiring man named Encarius of House Fyrlenn, and in so doing became Lady Adrielle. By 4712 AR, Adrielle was once more chief engineer, this time of the Beast, Absalom's vast 5-story stone crane. She worked closely with Goodman Hugen, the Harbormaster, and when Hugen started his secret plan to overturn Absalom's government to something more egalitarian, Adrielle was one of the first people he spoke to. The engineer looked at the goods she was unloading, at the wealth that poured through Absalom, at how little of it stuck to the hands of her workers and how much to the aristocrats never seen at the docks, and she agreed.

Then Hugen's ship sank, and opportunity arose. Now Lady Adrielle Neprathep finds herself running the missing man's entire scheme. Where Hugen had considered a popular revolution, Adrielle has chosen more peaceable means—more than most in Absalom, Adrielle knows what war is like, and will have no part of it. In the race for the position of primarch, Adrielle is the favorite of the Citizens' League, the chosen standard-bearer of the dockworkers and soldiers and sailors who see her as one of them.

By temperament fiery, aggressive, and unyielding, Adrielle has learned a measure of wisdom in her later years. She lacks a politician's natural guile, but makes up for it with a keen grasp of strategy and tactics, treating her campaign for primarch like a military operation, with enemies to crush and allies to woo. Chun Hye-Seung and Adrielle have found themselves in agreement on matters of city defense, and Adrielle feels a sense of camaraderie with one of the few people she knows that appreciates the work of an engineer. She considers House Candren an ally, in Hugen's honor, though Adrielle hasn't quite realized the extent to which ruthless seizure of the harbormaster's title has sparked Lady Alidane's resentment. Lady Dyrianna, High Hetaera of the Temple of Calistria and Guildmistress of Courtesans, makes an even more unlikely ally. Dyrianna hates Lady Darchana and fears that her proposals to ban the faith of Norgorber will soon extend to Calistria; she has placed her widespread information network at Lady Adrielle's disposal in order to push back against this development.



Lady Adrielle Neprathep

Adula Tremane

NG | FEMALE | HUMAN | LABORER | 3

This tough-looking, middle-aged sewer worker, the boss of a small team conducting odd jobs, might be encountered anywhere under the city of Absalom. Kicked out of a well-off Taldan home in her teens by a cruel family, Adula has worked very hard to improve herself and her situation. This shows in her stern expression, her strong physique, and her self-discipline. She is admired by her crew for her hard-working attitude and leadership. When not working in the sewers, she can be found meditating or exercising in the modest garden in the courtyard of her Copperwood villa, or attending a play or concert with her half-orc wife, Umlox Vulm.

After more than a decade working under the streets of Absalom, Tremane became all too familiar with the corruption of the Sewer Commission under Larrett's leadership. Though she harbors no political ambitions of her own, her strong moral compass won't let her ignore the crimes she's seen conducted under the auspices of official sewer work any longer, and she's begun to subtly seek allies who might bring her evidence to a wider audience.

Aethlred Navar

CN | MALE | HUMAN | AUTHOR | 9

The creed that an author must "write what they know" applies well to reclusive novelist Aethlred Navar. His stories of vengeful ghosts, ancestral curses, attic-bound abominations, twisted cellar dwellers, and bleak promises that pursue his doomed characters through one life into the next increasingly captivate many of Absalom's young aristocrats, for these tales allow those of high-society a chance to live lives of danger vicariously through the lens of lyrical—if dour and fatalistic—prose. Aethlred avoids speaking of himself and is notoriously difficult to draw into conversation, and prefers increasingly to spend his time scribbling away while locked into one of the thirteen divergently-decorated writing parlors he keeps in his Ivy District home—a decaying manor

itself rumored to be haunted by the ghosts of a family said to have perished all in the same night from a series of apparently unrelated but increasingly violent and improbable accidents. He only emerges from his home these days sporadically, often soon after completing a story to deliver the manuscript by hand to his publisher before spending the next few evenings alone in the corner of a room at the Bloom Cabaret, the one social outlet he's known to frequent. Other members of the Cabaret know to leave the gloomy, morose author to his thoughts, yet rumors that he's entered into a secret affair with someone in the club have begun to spread.

Aftrin Undrol

N | MALE | DWARF | ADMINISTRATOR | 12

The boastful master conveyor of the Winged Sandals commands the Blue Tower from an office at its apex, seeing through broad windows the distant horizon in every direction and knowing with confidence that he has agents delivering messages everywhere he can see from his lofty perch. Undrol knows his operation has been compromised by the tenant in Little Oppara, but doesn't care on account of the enormous bribes paid to him and his operation in the form of rent paid for the subterranean village in the Blue Tower's basement.

The brown-bearded, bald-headed dwarf desperately wants to team up with Lady Darchana to use the magical gates she's been developing to improve his delivery service, but to date she has rebuffed his overtures and offers of cooperation. Her own spies have revealed to her the degree to which Undrol and his operation are undermined by Taldor, and she has thus far been reluctant to accede to his entreaties.

Undeterred, Aftrin Undrol remains on the lookout to hire new messengers. He keeps several off-duty Sandals positioned in Foreign Quarter and Dock District bars in an effort to learn who is coming and going in Absalom. He isn't above hiring adventurers to deliver messages if he does not have enough traveling agents in the field, or if a message must be delivered to a truly dangerous locale.

Al-Amir Kai

N | MALE | HUMAN | TAILOR | 14

The Qadiran master tailor Al-Amir Kai, proprietor of the Ready Petal on Sundown Street in the Ivy District, is one of the most in-demand clothiers in all of Absalom. The demanding perfectionist learned his trade in the city of Katheer, and his designs favor cuts and cloths popular in his homeland as well as further east. His influences span the whole of the Padishah Empire of Kelesh, and even to far-flung trading partners on the periphery of that vast dominion. Absalom has always had a passion for gaudy design in its high fashion landscape, and Al-Amir Kai is just the artistic genius to provide it. The rail-thin, always impeccably dressed gentleman devotes personal attention to every one of his well-heeled clients, attending to every detail of a customer's measurements, consultations, and final fitting. Much of the actual sewing and garment creation takes place in sweatshop-like conditions by a cadre of hard-working young apprentices. These junior tailors enjoy no notoriety for their labors (indeed, Al-Amir Kai maintains the pretense that he sees to every aspect of each of his garments personally), but suffer willingly for the opportunity to learn the trade from one of the finest artisans practicing today. While the master forbids his students from invoking his name to find themselves placement following their apprenticeship, they leave his tutelage with such superlative skill that employment is thereafter nearly guaranteed wherever they apply themselves in the future. Many well-regarded tailors in neighborhoods throughout the city were once his apprentices, and most still hold him in high regard. In the case of former apprentice Salindra Concilio, however, things have very much not worked out as planned. The homeless, desperate escapee from the Metringer Asylum frequently makes unwelcome unannounced visits to Al-Amir Kai's shop, often interrupting his work with a client to make outlandish claims about terrible crimes conducted in the asylum's lower chambers. The master tailor pities his old apprentice, but doesn't believe her stories, seeing her tales as an unfortunate evolution of the delusions and mental instability that ruined her career at the shop before she was committed to Metringer Asylum in the first place.

Alain Always

CN | MALE | HALF-ELF | BARD | 15

A handsome and magnetic half-elf bard who has entertained in courts and kingdoms all across Golarion, Alain Always is nomarch of the Ivy District Council and guildmaster of the Street Performers and Actors' Guild. He is a busy man with a proclivity for making everything his business and keeps an iron grip on who is allowed to perform within the city.

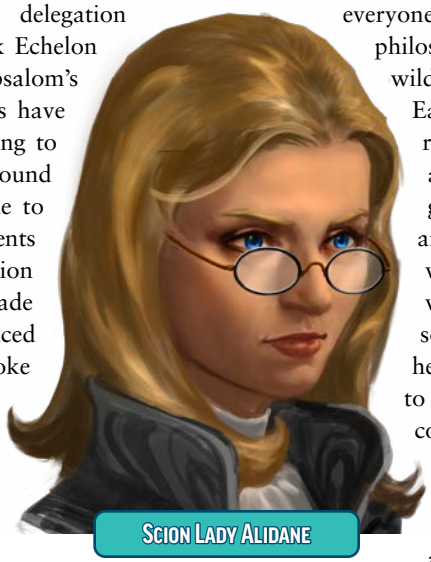
Always founded the Ivy Playhouse 30 years ago, nurturing it over the decades to become the geographic center of his unparalleled political power in the district. He remains especially proud of the theater, performing often on its famous stage and spends much of his days curating and improving its company. He also hosts occasional small private performances for rich and decadent patrons, gatherings that frequently involve morally questionable activities that would prove tremendously embarrassing should they ever become publicly known. Always takes extreme precautions that these specifics are never exposed to the public. He is considerably less guarded when it comes to the procession of male and female lovers that populate his romantic life, and the rumors surrounding his liaisons are often as entertaining and scandalous as his plays.

Alasmin Sarulamon

LN | FEMALE | HUMAN | FIGHTER | 9

Second Commander of the Starwatch under Asilia of Gyr, Alasmin is a hard-pressed administrator expected to constantly solve five problems with the resources for two.

With Asilia spending so much of her time and energy on her ship searching for the missing Lory Gyr of Gixx, Sarulamon is left to run day-to-day Starwatch operations from Starwatch Keep. While the delegation made sense in the chaos of the Black Echelon Uprising and the disappearance of Absalom's primarch, all of Asilia's investigations have so far led to naught, and it's beginning to look like Lord Gyr might never be found (a conclusion Sarulamon herself came to more than a year ago). Asilia's opponents on the Grand Council, notably Scion Lord Kerkis of House Damaq and Trade Minister Grenduul Fleng, have noticed this frustration, and seek to stoke Sarulamon's resentment and use it as a rift to distract Asilia from her hunt so that a formal replacement primarch might finally be named.



Scion Lady Alidane

Scion Lady Alidane of House Candren

LG | FEMALE | HUMAN | ARISTOCRAT | 6

An active, decisive woman in her mid-twenties, Lady Alidane is the daughter of Goodman Hugen and was not expecting to become scion lady for decades to come. Instead, in the aftermath of the disappearance and presumed death at sea of her father, Alidane finds herself leading House Candren through a time of political crisis. Her father's ship took most of the house's wisest advisors with it when it sank, leaving Alidane to lead her family along the same staunchly pro-Andoran populist political vein initiated by her father, only with none of the deliberation and savvy he had developed over decades of service as Absalom's harbormaster and a member of the Grand Council. "Goodmiss" Alidane's zealous support of Dock District labor leader Guyton Greton has alienated many of her father's allies, agitating the workers at Sea King Shipyards and weakening Candren's position in the War of Strings. Though her house supports Lady Adrielle Neprathep of House Fyrlenn as both the new harbormaster and as the best replacement for Lord Gyr, Alidane resents the ruthlessness with which Adrielle claimed her father's old job, as well as her more conciliatory approach that leaves the common people of Absalom waiting for justice due to calculated political compromise.

Alina Muraabe

NG | FEMALE | HUMAN | RANGER | 9

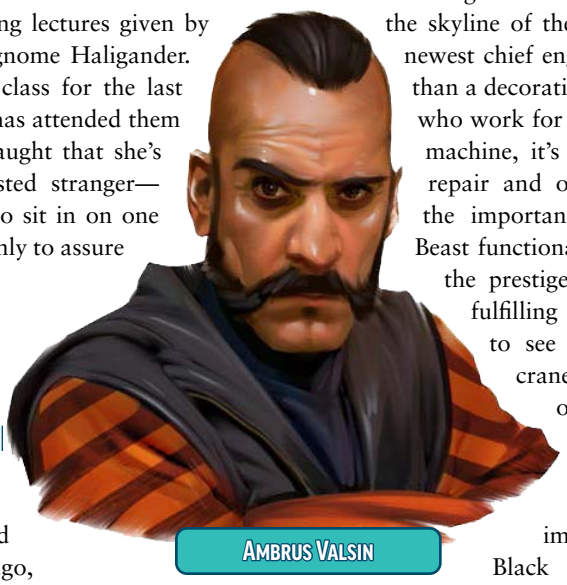
Alina Muraabe, head warden and owner of the Absalom Menagerie, is the fourth in her family to manage the sprawling zoo, as well as being a figure of considerable public interest in the Wise Quarter. Muraabe has a gentle spirit and a true love of animals, and believes that public display of the world's most magnificent creatures is the best way to inspire compassion and love for them in the hearts of a hardened, urban public. While the Menagerie is nearly always crowded with gawkers and the attraction draws more citizens from other parts of Absalom than perhaps any other in the district, not everyone in the city agrees with Muraabe's philosophy. Certain advocates of the wild, particularly the druidic cults of Eastgate and the city's leshy gangs, regularly stage impromptu protests and rescue efforts at the Menagerie's gates, disrupting Muraabe's business and occasionally putting innocent visitors at risk. When she has advance warning of such an action, Muraabe sometimes hires adventurers to protect her park and business. Those she learns to trust often receive more lucrative contracts, such as tracking down freed or escaped animals (some of which, admittedly, might better be characterized as monsters) or even accompanying her on expeditions into the wild to capture new creatures for exhibition. These expeditions keep her out of the city for extended periods, during which she leaves control of the zoo to her considerably less scrupulous assistant warden, Oldrik Elduthan. Alina's specimen-capture journeys often take her back to her ancestral homeland of Thuvia, where her great-grandfather Rubani Muraabe made himself a legend for his explorations into the Mwangi interior and for the unique creatures he put on public display upon his return to Merab. Rubani eventually decamped to Absalom (where he founded the Menagerie), but the Muraabe name still carries currency nearly everywhere in Thuvia, and (along with Alina's honesty and affability) accounts for her regular invitation to the salons of Lord Yamthar of House Ormuz. The scion lord acts as a sort of surrogate father for Alina's son, Chani, when Alina is away (the boy's actual father having been killed in a menagerie animal attack just over a decade ago). Tall and ripcord thin, Alina has harsh, striking features and a scorching glare that leaves little room for ambiguity when she is perturbed.

Alinzia Gaatan

N | FEMALE | HUMAN | EXPERT | 2

The 19-year-old adopted daughter of Aaqir al'Hakam and Emir Thalzar Gaatan is a prize pupil at Eastgate's Tallavont School and a budding mercantile genius. Her fathers enrolled her at the school hoping the experience would craft her considerable personal skills into the tools of a natural-born diplomat, but with graduation in sight Alinzia looks far more likely to follow Aaqir into a life of trade than to follow Thalzar into a life of politics. She has already taken on significant portions of the family's silk-trading business, and between classes she is now a regular visitor to the Grand Dance Hall of Kortos, though she has yet to receive an invitation to any of the upper balconies where the real business is done. In the

past few months, however, she's begun to associate her classes at the Tallavont School with feelings of growing discontent. She has collapsed four times in the last two weeks within hours of leaving lectures given by her favorite instructor, the gnome Haligander. She has no memory of his class for the last three weeks, but knows she has attended them daily. She's become so distraught that she's now looking to pay a trusted stranger—someone close to her age—to sit in on one of her professor's classes, if only to assure her that nothing is wrong.


Ambrus Valsin

Lady Alyssia of House Avenstar

CG | FEMALE | ELF | SORCERER | 9

Lady Alyssia runs Alyssia's, in the Ivy District, a haven for elves in Absalom. Established more than two centuries ago, the teahouse is an island of quiet and class in an often filthy human city, designed specifically with elven tastes in mind. Its menu always features the finest elven chefs preparing the finest elven cuisines from around the world. Every few years, Alyssia leaves Absalom for an extended period to visit the court of Queen Telandia Edasseril of Kyonin, and she always comes back laden with the latest news, fashion, and foods. Her returns are hotly anticipated in the broadsheet press, and crowds always surge following her well-publicized excursions.

Alyssia welcomes all patrons so long as they are tolerant and behave themselves, but both she and her staff display especial grace and deference toward their elven clientele, which some non-elves tend to find grating. Her favorite customers are those capable of paying her establishment's outrageously high prices, and she and her staff quickly usher away those who come simply to gawk at the gorgeous interiors and smell finer food than they can afford. Alyssia's contact with the city's elves gives her a unique and fairly comprehensive perception of the political scene within Absalom at any particular time, and (in part because Guildmaster Alain Always is a frequent and welcome guest) her understanding of affairs in the Ivy District is even more precise. She has little trust or love for Captain Kythes Finch of the Token Guard, rightly knowing corruption when she can smell it. She therefore falls back on the assistance of the Brotherhood of Abadar to keep troublemakers away, paying Bor Dralfo a fat stipend for his protective services. At the nudging of an increasingly desperate Jostlin Ferqyr, Dralfo has recently doubled the usual fee, testing Alyssia's patience. Alyssia is curious to know more about whatever scandal is obviously going on at the heart of the Ivy District's Temple of Abadar, and recently decided to look for a tea house patron who might be ideally suited to get to the bottom of it and explain the whole scheme to her—for a generous fee, of course.

Amaziah Meneha

NG | FEMALE | HUMAN | INVENTOR | 10

The towering crane known as the Beast has dominated the skyline of the Docks for centuries, but to its newest chief engineer the crane is nothing more than a decoration—as she impresses on all those who work for her in maintaining the enormous machine, it's only as amazing as those who repair and operate it. Amaziah understands the importance of her role in keeping the Beast functional, and has so far avoided letting the prestige of her title get in the way of fulfilling that role—it's not uncommon to see her clambering around on the crane's vertiginous heights at any hour of the day or night as she tracks down the source of the latest unknown creaking. Since using the crane to great effect as an immense flail during the recent Black Echelon Uprising, she's grown increasingly worried about the viability of the Beast as an engine of city defense. It served well before, but the strain brought the crane closer to toppling than Amaziah has dared to admit to anyone but her closest confidantes.

Ambroz Black

LN | MALE | HALFLING | TAILOR | 11

One of three hugely in-demand tailors for Absalom's elite, Ambroz Black, proprietor of Ambrozia's in the Ivy District, is also the only one of those three who focuses his design work and craft on clothing the bodies of those other than humans. After growing up in societies where so many of the finest outfits and fashions were made available first to human-sized frames, Ambroz's frustrations at having to wait for what he calls "fashion hand-me-downs" led him to become a tailor himself. Today, his skill at designing fashions for those who don't conform to a human's frame have accomplished his goal, and many humans are willing to pay exceptional prices for tall-sized versions of the outfits he designs first and foremost for those of smaller stature. By ensuring that he's always rolling out new looks faster than he produces human-sized interpretations, he delights in finally being able to turn on its head one of the industry's most frustrating faults—not everyone is six feet tall, nor does everyone want to wear shoes.

Ambrus Valsin

LN | MALE | HUMAN | ROGUE/SORCERER | 10

Ambrus is the steward of the Pathfinder Society who controls all the goings-on inside the Grand Lodge in Absalom at the behest of the Decemvirate, serving as the lodge's chamberlain and majordomo. Detail-oriented and annoyed by inefficiency, Valsin makes a point of supervising all important duties within the Grand Lodge, and keeps a long list of relatively safe but time-consuming jobs on file, ready to assign to novice Pathfinders. Tall

and meticulously groomed, Ambrus doesn't appreciate backtalk and reserves particularly strenuous assignments for those who annoy him. Valsin's distinctive facial hair has granted him the nickname "Old Mutton Chops," though he scowls when agents who have not yet earned his respect refer to him by this moniker.

Sealord Amodjun

NG | NONBINARY | AZARKETI | SORCERER | 13

The current elected ruler of the azarketi city of Kienek-Li, several miles off the north coast of Starstone Isle, Amodjun was once an adventurer, ambitious and rakish to a fault as they charmed their way into and out of trouble. Yet something unknown prompted them to return to Kienek-Li during their travels and give up the explorer's life, seemingly for good. The exact circumstances around this remain unclear; rumors fly about whether it was due to estranged family, or to tend to a former lover on their deathbed. Many suspect that the catalyst was something Amodjun experienced on one of their expeditions, machinations of the dreaded alghollthus, or even worse.

Once home again, Amodjun pivoted into a career in politics with aggressive policies and surprising fervor. With the wealth and reputation earned through their time adventuring, Amodjun's campaign offered what few others in Kienek-Li could: a confident demeanor and elegant smile partnered with an almost single-minded determination to effect lasting change. Fearsome and amiable in turns, Amodjun rapidly drew the faith of the azarketi populace. They would head off any threats to their undersea city, ensuring the gillmen could thrive and expand. What exactly this change would mean for the rest of the region is a question few can answer, and all are interested in.

Once pronounced Sealord, Amodjun confused both Absalom and many of Kienek-Li's own citizens by sending a series of entreaties to cities as far away as Egorian and Kerse, declaring that the city needed diplomatic and economic ties to other nations than the Isle of Kortos. While some nations turned the representatives away at the door with scoffs of pirates and brigands and convoluted plots, those who listened have deeply considered whatever it is that had been offered—and many of those who scoffed are now eager to learn just what was extended, discreetly if possible.

Concerned agents of Absalom are also highly interested in Amodjun's activities, chief among them Nomarch Alain Always and Acting Primarch Wynsal Starborn. While the acting primarch's intention is to balance the affairs of the city, Nomarch Always's vendetta seems personal. Rumor claims that Amodjun would often visit Alain whenever making port in Absalom during their adventuring days. The relationship turned sour and Amodjun disappeared, only to reemerge as Sealord. Whenever Kienek-Li or especially Amodjun in particular is mentioned, Nomarch Always eagerly speaks on the reasons they can never be trusted, though Always never seems to mention any nefarious plots.

Amodjun can frequently be found at the Grindylow's Goblet in Escadar, wearing a dizzying assortment of outfits designed for all genders, though they sometimes venture into Gilltown or Absalom proper while disguised. Though eternally refined, they often seem sleepless, functioning mostly with the aid of copious amounts of dessert coffee and occasionally forgetting what persona they've adopted to conceal themselves. Such lapses are handled with a casual smile and an exquisite laugh as they barrel onward in an exuberant quest to discover the true character of Absalom and its citizens. Almost everything about the way the city treats its azarketi inhabitants tells Amodjun that Absalom is not to be trusted. Their old friend, Ambassador Lemaria Kumari, encourages the Sealord to give Absalom

Sealord Amodjun

more time to provide more examples of kindness before considering it an enemy to the azarketi people, but Amodjun grows increasingly impatient.

Anceltan Berryhock

NG | NONBINARY | DWARF | FIGHTER | 2

Anceltan is the second sergeant of the First Guard in charge of the Vents below Azlanti Keep. Helping set immigrating goblins on their way, stressful and confusing though it has been, has given Anceltan an unexpected sense of really contributing something. They now make regular trips to visit Zusgut's playhouse in the Puddles or the Five-Fire Pavilions in the Foreign Quarter to check on goblins they've helped find their way into the city.

Anchor

CE | MALE | AZARKETI | ROGUE | 5

A scoundrel all his life, Anchor is willing to do just about any kind of work for a few coins, especially thievery. He is well connected among the azarketi communities of Absalom, who think of him fondly, and regularly visits both Gilltown and the Docks. He has dark brown hair, pale skin, and purple eyes in addition to his gills and webbed digits.

A few months ago, Anchor dove very deep into an ink-black rift below Absalom's harbor in search of rumored treasure, only to fall under the influence of algollthu veiled masters dwelling within the darkness. These creatures attached a strange barnacle-like parasite to the back of his neck, which they use to control him like a puppet, seeing what he sees and using the petty criminal for their own treacherous machinations.

Lady Anilah Salhar

LN | FEMALE | HUMAN | ARISTOCRAT | 5

Lady Anilah was born in Westcrown, and while she dresses in Chelaxian fashion and always keeps abreast of the affairs of her homeland, she spent most of her adult life bouncing around the courts of the Inner Sea. As a result, her true political alliances are an oft-speculated-upon mystery. She started her career in Cheliax's diplomatic corps, eventually marrying a Chelaxian ambassador to Osirion. There, while visiting the court of the Ruby Prince Khemet III, Anilah made the company of Dremdhet Salhar, and quickly fell for his charm and wit. The two fled Sothis, were married in Merab, and finally settled in Absalom when Salhar received a commission from the Ruby Prince to serve as Osirion's Grand Ambassador to the city. Anilah genuinely adores her husband (and much prefers Absalom to Sothis), but her social and personal connections to Cheliax remain strong. Tired of hearing rumors about his wife's allegiances, Salhar recently hired the Sianovel Agency to follow Anilah while he was away from the city on extended business. In addition to reporting that Anilah spent several nights a week socializing at the Second Labyrinth in the Coins (where she is a strong player of the house game, maze, and an up-and-coming drouge expert), Sianovel's terse case files also note at least three late-night visits to the Chelaxian Embassy on the edge of the Starstone Chasm that she failed to mention to her husband, though the reasons for these clandestine visits remain unknown even to the great detective himself.

Lady Annasendra Varabelle of House Morilla

NE | FEMALE | ROGUE | 14

The cunning and capable Lady Annasendra Morilla teaches stealth, observation, infiltration, and poison handling at Westgate's Guild of Wonders. Along with her brothers Donovar and Juartos, Annasendra manages the guild's affairs under the watchful eye of their uncle, the aged Lord Celedo, the family's scion lord and the organization's ultimate owner. Wise Lord Celedo must soon abdicate the Guild and the family to one of his nieces or nephews, whom he has been training for the role for decades. Most members of the Guild (and certainly her brothers) consider Annasendra the scion lord's personal favorite, as she's the recipient of what little trust or emotional warmth the old man reluctantly shares. Celedo does little to dissuade his family and their servants of this notion—he well and truly loves and admires his niece—but he knows that her head is not truly in the business of managing the Guild or the family—she's far too selfish for any of that. Annasendra's self-interest makes her such a good thief, and while Celedo admires her skill and derring-do, he knows that she is more interested in pulling off a brazen caper or assassination herself than she is in handing down her techniques to her students and peers. Even her most dedicated apprentices excel out of a fear of letting her down or drawing her ire rather than due to her nurturing instruction. Most in the Guild believe Annasendra to be the most talented thief they have ever known, and perhaps among the greatest in the city. A popular rumor among the Guild's lower ranks suggests that Lady Annasendra is secretly a member of the infamous Smoke Knights.

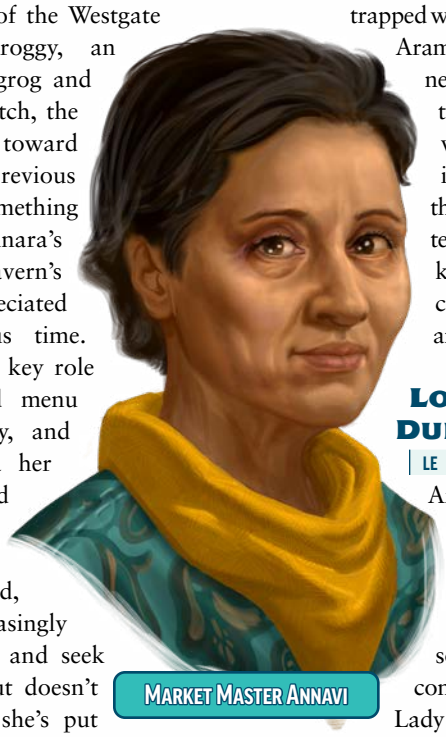
Lady Annasendra's husband, Reffello, died 8 years ago while attempting to liberate a potent relic known as the *Claw of Charridos* from the Temple of Asmodeus in the Ascendant Court, leaving Lady Annasendra (and her family servants) to care for their young daughter, Chandarin. Annasendra boards Chandarin in the Endiron School, and has little interaction with her day-to-day. She's aware of her aunt Gloriana's efforts to steer Chandarin away from the family business of the Guild of Wonders, but trusts her daughter to make her own choice when the time comes.

Annasendra has a cutting wit and a dark sense of humor that matches her monochromatic ebon wardrobe. She began wearing all black after Refello's death and has never stopped. She's not in mourning anymore, and in fact has been spotted in the romantic company of several of Absalom's handsomest and wealthiest suitors. These dalliances never last long, and in all but a few cases her paramours are soon thereafter robbed.

Annara Laskin

CG | FEMALE | TIEFLING | SORCERER | 8

Annara Laskin is the proprietor of the Westgate tavern called the Groggy Froggy, an establishment that specializes in grog and strange bar games. Under her watch, the tavern has made leaps and strides toward recovering from the damage its previous owner did to its reputation, something that's been a personal quest of Annara's as she served as one of the tavern's overworked and underappreciated employees during that previous time. Annara's sorcerous magic plays a key role in the decor, maintenance, and menu offerings of the Groggy Froggy, and she's largely escaped the stigma her fiendish ancestry would have had on her chances for success in her homeland of Mendev. Now that the Worldwound has been closed, Annara has been fostering increasingly compelling urges to travel home and seek out long-lost family members, but doesn't want to abandon all the work she's put into rebuilding the Groggy Froggy until she's sure that whoever takes over the role after her early retirement will treat the establishment with respect.



Market Master Annavi

Market Master Annavi

CN | FEMALE | HUMAN | MERCHANT | 3

A proud Minatan woman with a quick wit, Annavi dreamed Absalom would be the setting of her economic domination. Now realizing she may have been a bit naive, her sharp tongue barely keeps the Barque Bazaar afloat in the cutthroat business of politics in the Puddles. Annavi is never opposed to a bit of mischief and always keeps her good humor, but she has become profoundly aware that in the Puddles she is bargaining with her life.

Aram bin-Kaleel

N | MALE | HUMAN | INQUISITOR | 15

Although Aram's adventuring days are well behind him, he remains a well-known and respected figure, particularly in the Pathfinder Society. Back in the day, he and the other members of his adventuring party (of whom only Bhenkal Blackblade survives) were quite active in Garund in representing the Pathfinders' interests while simultaneously working to respect the traditions of the remote and often dangerous sites they investigated. As an inquisitor of Pharasma, Aram was particularly focused on the issue of tomb-robbing, and rather than raid ancient burial grounds of their lore he created extensive collections of illustrations and flavorful descriptions of these sites and their treasures for cataloging. His diplomatic methods and friendly demeanor caught many off-guard who were expecting a hard-case Pharasmin more interested in leaving ancient tombs unexplored, while to his fellow worshippers he was able to justify his actions by pointing out that those tombs he explored needed exploration to help release undead trapped within back into the River of Souls. Much of Aram's work today is focused on encouraging new generations of adventurers to respect the crypts and catacombs they explore while simultaneously remaining steadfast in removing corruption and danger from these tombs when they find it. While he's technically retired, the Pathfinder Society keeps Aram on retainer to this day for consultation purposes related to Garund and to the undead.

Lord Archych of House Dureanz

LE | MALE | HUMAN | MERCHANT | 12

Archych is the nomarch of the Dock Council and owner of the Devil's Own Shipyard. The calculating lord, a loyal Chelaxian, skirts the legal line in his operations, openly employing the worst sorts of thugs and pushing around his considerable weight at every opportunity. Lady Alidane (and indeed most of the city) suspects the aging Archych as the architect of Goodman Hugen's doom, pointing to more than 50 years of antagonism between Dureanz and Candren triggered when the latter house supported Andoran after the People's Revolt of 4669 AR. Whether or not he played a role in the death of the father, he has set his sights firmly on Lady Alidane, and has sworn to Asmodeus himself that he will see her populist movement utterly crushed.

Like nearly all of Absalom's Chelaxian houses, Dureanz invested heavily in slaving, and their economic fortunes have faded significantly since the abolition of the trade in recent years. This leaves Archych poised at last to strike a killing blow against the hated Candrens but without the resources to fully execute the machinations required to do so. Archych feeds his frustration, frequenting top-end Absalom eateries like the Golden Serpent and Sanga Bistro, where he sometimes overindulges in wine and speaks too loudly of his schemes.

Arkonis Severus

LN | MALE | HUMAN | CLERIC | 6

Well-mannered, wise, and always impeccably dressed, Arkonis Severus is the assistant to the second social secretary of the Ivy District's Vault of Abadar, his father. As Abadar is the god of law, business, and urban civilization, the Vault is a nexus of Absalom's rich and powerful, the site of countless council meetings, private gatherings, weddings, baptisms, and other civic rituals of interest to the city's high and mighty. Temple services at the Vault are highly stratified based on social class and the ability of the parishioner to provide generous contributions to the donation box, and Arkonis and his father (as well as the considerable bureaucratic

apparatus surrounding their operation) are focused on accommodating the upper tiers of these services and their clientele. In particular, Arkonis is responsible for the hospitality of the temple's wealthiest patrons (including merchants and nobles from distant lands), seeing to their sometimes-demanding needs, and ensuring that they want for absolutely nothing while sojourning in the home of the Lord of the First Vault. After nearly a decade on the job, Arkonis has developed a nearly encyclopedic knowledge of the city's shops and market stalls, as well as the quickest route to the location and back to the temple. Arkonis is among the most accomplished clothes horses in all of Absalom, favoring the designs of Al-Amir Kai over all others.

Wishing to thicken his son's remarkably supple skin and deepen his practical experience with the world outside Absalom, Arkonis's father encouraged—in fact demanded—that he become a member of the Pathfinder Society, bankrolling a swift field commission for his son in an attempt to broaden his horizons before promoting him further within the temple's hierarchy. After nearly five years with the Society, Arkonis remains far more interested in fine wines and cheeses than battle, and even though he is now used to travel and adventures, he still grows uneasy when forced to resort to trail rations or when caught without the proper footwear for the job that manages to correctly balance style with functionality. Still, Arkonis has taken to the adventuring life far more strongly than his father expected, and Pathfinder Society business has begun to distract him from his important duties at the temple, putting some stress on his relationship with six of his brothers and sisters, who are deeply embedded in the Vault of Abadar's leadership. Among his siblings, he is closest to his older brother, Ferridan, the only one not affiliated with his religious order.

Asilia of Gyr

Arn-Diowynn

| N | Nonbinary | Human | Cleric | 12 |

Arn-Diowynn is the high priest of Nethys's Tower of Twin Truths, in the Ascendant Court. Soft-spoken and patient, Arn-Diowynn's belief that there are no such thing as dualities has inspired a growing number of people—and not just followers of Nethys. Just as Nethys incorporates the apparent contradictions of destructive and constructive magic into a single concept, Arn-Diowynn notes that as light defines darkness, good defines evil, or youth defines age in presenting what their antonym is not, that these concepts are meaningless on their own. And if they are meaningless on their own, they do not exist without their opposite. Only by accepting that dualities are in fact singularities can a person truly begin to understand the nature and reason of reality.

Lord Asher of House Blakros

| LN | Male | Human | Aristocrat | 4 |

Eldest son of Lady Delveris Blakros and the ill-fated Lord Pieter, Asher received the finest upbringing a young noble of Absalom could hope for. His parents took him to sumptuous Petal District garden parties, brought him to the most beautiful museums, and showed him the most gorgeous works of art in the family's vast collection of antiquities. They hoped all this access to wealth and finery would help young Asher appreciate the considerable benefits of wealth. Instead, he became obsessed.

Asher's parents, wishing only the best for their first-born son, enrolled him in Eastgate's prestigious Tallavont School, hoping that the liberal-minded comparative government professors there might mold Asher into one of the next generation's leaders. Freed from his noble family retainers and overactive parents, Asher never felt more alone.

On a forlorn amble through Eastgate, not far from the Tallavont campus, Lord Asher first heard the Prophecies of Kalistrade spoken through the voice of Ilrava Drogand, co-founder of the Prophet's Academy. Within months, Asher abandoned Tallavont for the Academy, donned the white gloves of a Kalistocrat, and cut off all contact with his family not directly related to matters of business or finance. Via the subtlest of manipulations, Asher has managed to divert a not-insignificant percentage of the family's profits directly to the Prophet's Academy. No one has yet detected the ruse, but the family has definitely started to feel its impact, as Blakros finances are currently tighter than ever.

Asilia of Gyr

| N | Female | Human | Ranger | 12 |

The extremely popular Captain of the Starwatch, Asilia maintains the security of Absalom and its holdings against crime and sabotage. Originally from the Fangwood, she adventured alongside Lord Gyr before he became primarch, and is thought to be one of his most loyal associates. Asilia actually spends more time on her warship, the *Hurricane Wings*, than in Starwatch Keep, attempting to track down clues about Lord Gyr's whereabouts. She coordinates investigations magically from her warship in order to avoid spies and assassins from interfering with her work. Asilia is much respected for her leadership against the Silent Tide during the Black Echelon Uprising.

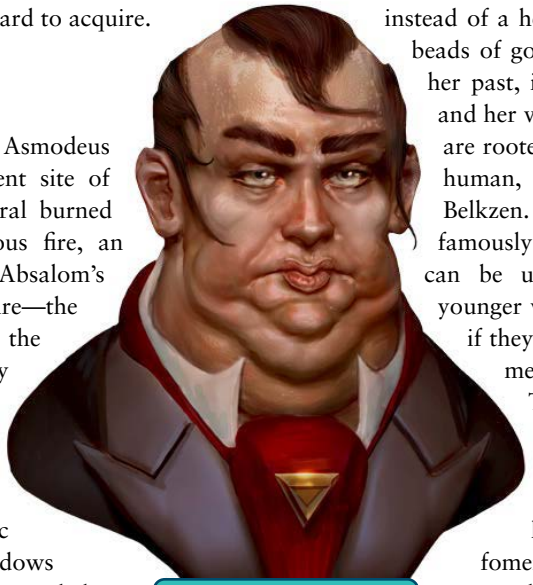
As one of the most influential members of Absalom's High Council, Asilia argues forcefully against her fellows

appointing a new primarch. She and Wynsal Starborn have never really gotten along, but she's happy to support keeping him in place as the city's provisional leader while she works tirelessly to discover Lord Gyr's fate, unwilling to play a part in stripping her old companion of the political power he worked so hard to acquire.

The Assembler

N | AGENDER | CONSTRUCT | 19

In 4637 AR, after the temple of Asmodeus that once stood on the current site of Absalom's Clockwork Cathedral burned to the ground in a mysterious fire, an enormous iron ship arrived in Absalom's harbor. A gaunt, robed figure—the Assembler—emerged from the vessel, apparently its only passenger. The stranger, who spoke with a monotone, mechanical voice and moved with deliberate, controlled gestures, always kept its stoic visage hidden within the shadows of its voluminous hood, but nonetheless commanded respect and attention from the city authorities it immediately sought out. The Assembler purchased the site of the fire-ravaged temple, and over the next month it magically transported the iron dreadnought from the harbor and transformed it into the elaborate, multi-valved edifice known as the Clockwork Cathedral.



Senator Augustyn Naran

Once it had completed construction, the Assembler withdrew into its new palace, never again to emerge into the outside world. But the Assembler did not simply vanish. Instead, it kept the mechanical doors and inner seals of the Cathedral open to those brave or curious enough to explore the chambers within. The most promising of these early explorers became the first students of the Clockwork Cathedral, the pupils of the Assembler and its agents in creating new constructs in its glorious mechanical image. Today, the Assembler dwells within the deepest, most isolated chambers of the Clockwork Cathedral, associating only with the Ruling Escarpment who administer the edifice, as well as a few of the most promising students within the many cognates. Students of the Cathedral—most of whom will never see the Assembler in their entire lives—spread legends of its brilliance and its complicated, decades-long (but always ill-defined) plan for the fate of Absalom. These rumors have brought the Assembler into direct contact with a succession of Absalom's rulers, including Lord Gyr and his predecessor, both of whom met privately with the enigmatic figure. Acting Primarch Wynsal Starborn has yet to visit with the Assembler, as he seeks more information about the creature's true motives before entering its ever-shifting lair or being deployed as a pawn in one of its unknown—but surely highly complex—schemes.

Atrandi Goldheart

CN | FEMALE | HALF-ORC | FIGHTER | 14

The half-orc gladiator Atrandi Goldheart earned her name by relentlessly dispatching any opponent whom it profited her to kill, creating a popular legend that instead of a heart, she has only an abacus with beads of gold. While Atrandi never discusses her past, it seems likely that both her skill and her viciousness with her hooked blades are rooted in the scars of growing up half-human, and uncommonly beautiful, in Belkzen. Perhaps for similar reasons, the famously surly and short-tempered gladiator can be unexpectedly generous in taking younger women under her wing, especially if they are struggling against unwelcome men. Atrandi briefly worked for Torman Iates as one of his personal gladiators and palanquin-bearers, but the employment was short-lived and today she cannot stand him. The feeling is mutual. Iates foments distrust and disdain toward her among his remaining half-orc maidens and to anyone who will listen to him complain about her lack of respect for those who helped her at the beginning of her career now that she is one of the city's most popular and successful gladiators. Unwilling to let the issue go, Iates has squandered a considerable portion of his personal fortune placing fruitless bets against her.

Senator Augustyn Naran

N | MALE | HUMAN | ARISTOCRAT | 12

A prominent minister of the People's Council and a member of one of Andoran's wealthiest banking families, Senator Augustyn Naran is that nation's Grand Ambassador to Absalom, spending months at a time visiting the city when not otherwise engaged with duties of the Council in Almas. Naran served as aide-de-camp to the famous General Eddage during the People's Revolt, which catapulted him into an early life in politics following the war. An obese man in his early 70s, Senator Naran constantly sweats in Absalom's midday heat. This makes him irritable and prone to taking out his frustrations on easy targets. For all his republican blustering about the value and honor of the "common man," Naran is foppish, aristocratic, and condescending to those he considers beneath him. He is married to a beautiful and much younger woman named Dalessa, who sometimes visits Absalom with him and who currently resides in his lavishly appointed suite in the Palace of Thirteen Spires, in the Wise Quarter. Naran always enjoys the atmosphere of the Gutless Griffon tavern, in the Ivy District, and can often be found carousing there, with or without his wife. He makes a point of seeking out any Andoren adventurers who make a name for themselves in Absalom, eventually attempting to enlist those he likes and trusts into increasingly dangerous

missions on behalf of his government. Every so often, his missions are instead secretly at the behest of Naran's true patrons in the Lumber Consortium, a wealthy company of corrupt loggers with a monopoly on Andoran's hardwood and darkwood trade. These missions almost always undermine local logging operations in the Immenwood, and would cause a huge scandal if brought to the attention of the Kortos Consortium, the Union of Carpenters, Stonemasons, and Metalworkers, or the Woodcutter's Guild.

Avesta Guile

CG | FEMALE | HUMAN | BARD | 3

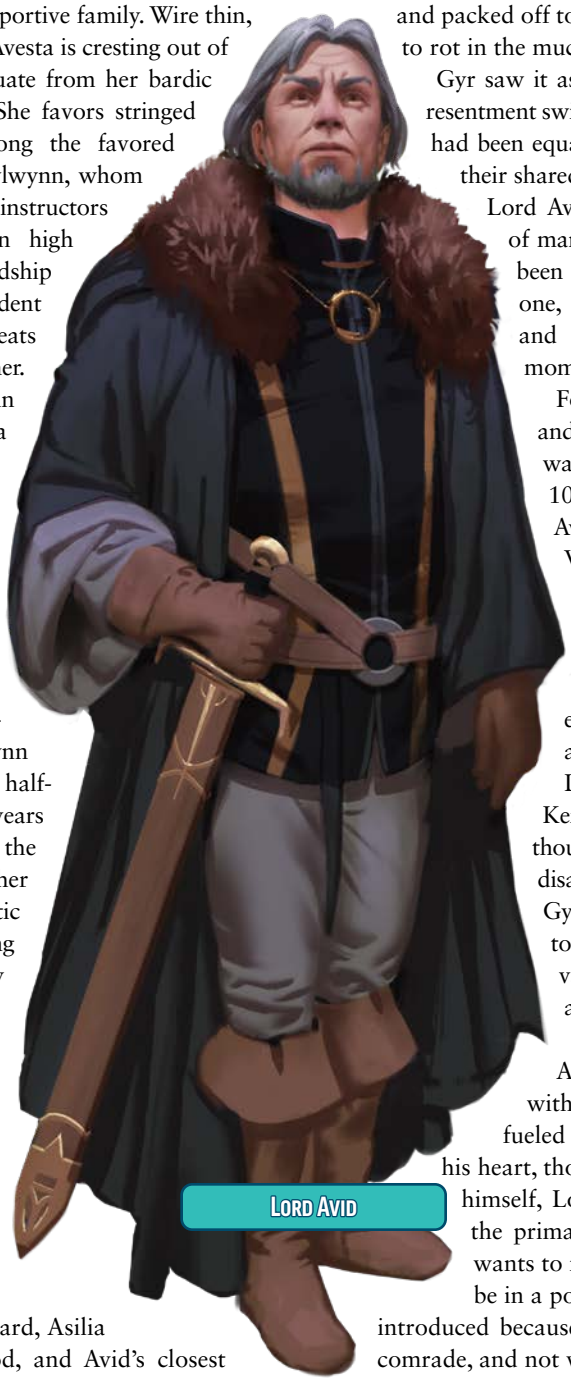
The youngest child of Eastgate artisans Parsin and Hilenda Guile, Avesta developed an early interest in music nurtured by her loving and supportive family. Wire thin, with a mane of curly red hair, Avesta is cresting out of her teens, and will soon graduate from her bardic studies at the White Grotto. She favors stringed instruments, and counts among the favored students of Master Etrenne Rylwynn, whom she idolizes. All of the Grotto's instructors and students hold Avesta in high regard. She has a special friendship with the young halfling student Dooley Gavix, whom she treats as a beloved younger brother. The two are almost always in one another's company. On a recent evening, while strolling the Grotto's beautifully landscaped grounds, the pair spotted an immense winged shadow alighting from the roof of the Hall of String. Dooley is convinced that what they saw was a dragon—confirming the long-held rumor that Master Rylwynn might be more than the simple half-elf he appears to be. After years of association, Avesta knows the rumors to be true, but does her best to keep her enthusiastic young friend from blabbing about their experience to every stranger who visits the Grotto in order to preserve the secret.

Lord Avid of House Arnsen

LN | MALE | HUMAN | WIZARD | 18

They had been a family once, a better family than a young Lord Avid had ever known. The sorcerer Brythen Blood, cunning Rosvierre Ibanc the bard, Asilia from the forests of Fangwood, and Avid's closest friend, his comrade-in-magic, the equally youthful Lord Gyr of House Gixx. They were going to change the world—and they did change the world, saved lives, rescued towns, slew monsters, found wealth and fame. But somehow, it was always Lord Gyr who got the most fame, Lord Gyr, handsome and charming, who got the thanks and the glory, and Avid standing in his shadow, working twice as hard just to be half as noticed.

Their moment of triumph broke them. By skill and luck and power, they took over Absalom when the city was at its lowest, stood in the Ascendant Court and held levers long enough to shift the world. Or rather, Lord Gyr did. Lord Gyr became the primarch, Lord Gyr became the folk hero, the ruler of the greatest city in Golarion. And Lord Avid? He was given a fancy title and packed off to the waterfront town of Diobel to rot in the muck.



Lord Avid

Gyr saw it as a reward. Avid disagreed. His resentment swiftly turned venomous, and what had been equal parts envy and admiration in their shared youth turned to purest hatred. Lord Avid was a stiff, standoffish sort of man. He accepted that. But he had been the reliable one, the careful one, the one who kept them fed and horsed—didn't that deserve a moment in the sun?

For over 50 years, Avid watched and brooded, and being who he was, he also worked—he still works 10 or more hours each day, though Avid is on the far side of 80 now. Where House Gixx languished, Avid built House Arnsen into a force to be reckoned with, made deals, put in the hours, suffered through the tedious effort necessary to make alliances and win friends. He married Lady Nahla, the sister of Lord Kerkis of Damaq, and had children, though by and large they have been disappointments to him. But then Gyr didn't even have the decency to die properly and openly, instead vanishing such that there would always be a question.

Today, Lord Avid of House Arnsen pursues the primarchy with a single-minded obsession fueled by a lifetime of resentment. In his heart, though he cannot admit it even to himself, Lord Avid doesn't even care for the primarch's job or its power. But he wants to finally be appreciated, to finally be in a position where the missing Gyr is introduced because he was Lord Avid's long-ago comrade, and not vice versa.

He has an excellent chance. He still has his faded reputation as Gyr's comrade, and he has the support of Absalom's greatest noble houses, Damaq and Blakros and Morilla. His Optimates faction is among the best-connected in the city's War of Strings. The merchants dislike him as a result of his clashes with the Kortos Consortium, but Avid has been dealing with their disdain for years. He often looks down upon his hated rivals in Diobel from the ancient hilltop fortress of Eaglereach, though these days he spends most of his days in Absalom proper, politicking with his powerful allies or weaving schemes directly on the floor of the Grand Council Hall.

Ayandai

CN | FEMALE | HUMAN | ENCHANTER | 10

Absalom's Eurythnian ambassador is technically less than ten years old, yet she appears as a fully grown woman by nature of her supernatural genesis—she was formed from the heart of an ancient artifact called the *Everdawn Pool*, a simulacrum of none other than Runelord Sorshen whose first role was to contact a group of adventurers and aid them in the recent fight against the return of Runelord Alaznist. During that time, she had no name of her own, as she presented herself to the adventurers as Sorshen herself, but now that Alaznist is no more and her creator now rules the eastern half of New Thassilon, this simulacrum was out of a job. Sorshen rewarded her creation with a new role and a new name—Ayandai—sending her to Absalom to help establish the Embassy of New Thassilon. The name amuses both Sorshen and her simulacrum for its legacy, a shortening of the name "Ayandamahla," who in ancient times was a powerful succubus Sorshen once employed as a sort of ambassador to the other runelords. Of course, back in that day, Ayandamahla also served as a spy, assassin, and executioner for Sorshen as well—roles that Ayandai does not feel the need to pursue in her new position as messenger and representative for New Thassilon. Not everyone in Absalom trusts that Ayandai isn't some sort of sinister infiltrator, of course, and alarmists spread rumors that there's no such thing as Ayandai at all—that she is in fact Sorshen herself slumming it in Absalom. Ayandai lets these rumors persist with a mercurial smile, knowing that these beliefs give her more power and protection than anything else.

Lord Ayunga of House Akkesh

LG | MALE | HUMAN | INVESTIGATOR | 8

House Akkesh has counted one of its sons and daughters as the Captain of the Post Guard since the Siege of the Prophets in 1298 AR, and the principled and efficient Lord Ayunga does honor to his ancestors as the latest to lead the district watch. He brings even higher honor to House Akkesh by also holding the high seat of Eastgate's district council. His command over the Postern Gate puts him in close contact with the Starwatch and its charismatic and popular leader, Asilia of Gyr. The Post Guard likewise has strong relations with the First Guard, and Ayunga counts Acting Primarch Wynsal Starborn among his oldest friends and political allies. He and his best friend Muar Gauthfallow keep an empty chair for Starborn at their regular table at Blackhill's, a popular Eastgate meadhouse, though it's been months since the acting primarch made even a brief appearance at what was once a treasured weekly tradition.

Lady Azoria of House Tevineg

LE | FEMALE | HUMAN | ROGUE | 8

As the proprietor of the popular Chelaxian social club and gaming den known as the Second Labyrinth, Lady Azoria is well-known to Absalom's Chelaxians and gamblers, and is a beloved friend of those who count themselves in both camps. Azoria has an encyclopedic knowledge of the rules of all popular games, and acts as impartial judge to defuse arguments in the establishment. In the Second Labyrinth, her judgment is law and cannot be appealed. Her reputation for impartiality is well earned for the most part, but Azoria is still a Tevineg, and thus there is at least a little corruption when it benefits the house. Lord Gulv demands that she never tip the scales in his favor, but other friends of the family tend to find that Azoria's rulings break in their favor more often than not. The middle child of Lord Gulv and Lady Xansippe, Azoria always found herself sidelined in most of the family's more important machinations until her father's recent return to the city, and while she still feigns disgust at the man when speaking with her mother and older sister, Seichya, Azoria sees in Lord Gulv the opportunity to increase her standing in the family, and is even willing to betray her sister and mother if the right opportunity presents itself. She has had no contact with her younger sister, Irabel, since she left Absalom nearly a decade ago, bound for a convent dedicated to the Night Queen Eiseth. Azoria has short, black hair and dresses in the latest Chelaxian fashions. She is drawn to anyone who impresses her with solid strategy and knowledge of games popular in Absalom and at the Second Labyrinth, particularly maze and drouge.

Bagara Broadfoot

LG | FEMALE | DWARF | INVENTOR | 8

In dwarven cities, where stone and metal are the rule and fire is seen as an invaluable tool that allows the forges to run, flames are not traditionally viewed with fear. To firefighter Bagara Broadfoot, fire is the most beautiful and entrancing of the natural world's wonders. When it destroys a home or ends a life, the event is tragic not because of fire's destructive nature, but because in most situations the event occurred as a result of ignorance or cruelty. Bagara brings dwarven sensibilities and values to the art of firefighting, and not just in the way she approaches and respects the flames in a burning building. Her knack for inventions and mechanical solutions give the station house she leads in the Docks not only a significant advantage over more traditional firefighting techniques, but help to build her organization's unique

look and theme. Be it the popular toys based on her designs or the outfits and costumes inspired by her inventions, Bagara's managed to positively influence society in the Docks even when she's not fighting fires.

Bagwell Thomkin

CG | MALE | HALFLING | EXPERT | 5

Bagwell grew up in Eastgate, the middle son of a middle-class carpet merchant. Life came easy to him, resulting in a laconic, friendly demeanor and an optimistic outlook that sometimes leaves him oblivious to the darker natures of those he encounters. Although he was never interested in inheriting his mother's business, he did spend a great deal of his youth helping her run her shop, and developed a fine mind for accounting and business management before he reached maturity. Today, though, Bagwell's greatest passion is flying kites, particularly the latest models purchased from Vittar Corusec at the Silk Palace in the Wise Quarter. Ever since he was a child, Bagwell's weekends have been filled with pleasant strolls through the city's parks, with a colorful and complex kite sweeping through the air above him. It was on one such excursion a few years back that he met the gnome who would become his husband—Darelli Gammathumalshire. Bagwell swiftly fell for Darelli's charm and wit, encouraging him to turn his own hobby—coin collecting—into a business. Together they opened Concurrent Currency, in the Dock District, shortly after their marriage about 20 years ago. While Darelli runs the counter and deals with customers, Bagwell minds the back office and handles some of the shop's larger transactions, particularly large-scale currency exchanges with wealthy nations like Druma. To this end, he has developed a friendly working relationship with some of Absalom's most influential Kalistocrats, and counts Ilrava Drogand, co-founder of the Prophet's Academy, as a personal friend. Ilrava thinks Thomkin (and, eventually, his apparently less-interested husband) would be a perfect candidate for indoctrination into the cult of Kalistrade, but while Bagwell listens attentively to her proselytization he does so only because he is polite. While Drogand has not yet converted Bagwell to the doctrine of her homeland, Bagwell has managed to convert her to the cult of the kite, and the two now often meet together to chat while flying their own highly specialized and very expensive kites in some of the city's most idyllic open spaces.

Barnel

LE | MALE | HUMAN | EXPERT | 3

After trying (and failing, and barely surviving the aftermath) to join the Bloody Barbers, Barnel set his sights lower than the city's biggest gang. But after he failed to impress the leaders of those numerous gangs as well, a more astute failure than this unwashed, weasel-faced fence would have been forced to admit a painful truth—that no one wanted to associate with him. Of course, such a concept never crossed Barnel's egotistic mind, and instead he came to believe that the city's organized crime guilds were jealous of his potential. His recent decision, to build a reputation as a well-established "freelance" fence across multiple districts, may have gotten off to a rocky start, but none could deny that Barnel isn't trying his hardest. He maintains a presence in numerous venues throughout the city, from the Crimson Coin to the Grog Pit and, most recently, at the Gorumarrux, where he's been taking side-bets on the fights. What Barnel can't admit to himself is that the other guilds have been ignoring him not due to admiration or fear at his success, but because he's a very small fish in a very big pond. His recent allegiance with Gasporian has gone to Barnel's head, and he has grandiose visions of founding a brand new guild with the fellow bookie. And true to his self-deluded character, Barnel has no idea what Gasporian's true plans are for him.

Beirivelle Starshine

CG | FEMALE | HUMAN | CHAMPION | 8

The youngest of Lord Avid of House Arnsen's three sons fled a betrothal to a scion of House Morilla, transitioned to womanhood, changed her name to Beirivelle Starshine, and joined the Knights of Lastwall. It was only this last act that wounded her father, for Beirivelle was the last of his children alive and unestranged. Despite her new affiliation with the Knights, Beirivelle remains on good terms with her father, who still clings to the hope that, when the Knights of Lastwall have finished their work, she'll come back to help carry the Arnsen line forward as one of Absalom's aristocrats. For her own part, Beirivelle regards her father's ways as antiquated and a bit pitiful; she loves him but wants to live her own life, and can't sit idly by playing politics while the threat of the Whispering Tyrant looms so huge in the future.

Beirivelle spends most of her time in the Precipice Quarter with her fellow Knights now, and has made something of a name for herself as a gifted speaker and recruiter to the cause. As a Knight of Lastwall who is also a native of Absalom and who has ties to the city's nobility, Beirivelle often finds herself playing the role of diplomat or envoy when the needs of the Knights requires delicate political maneuvering. For her part, Beirivelle does her best to help out as she can, even though it's precisely this type of bureaucratic entanglement she hoped to escape by joining the Knights in the first place. Lately, she's become particularly concerned with the fact that some of the younger, more brash Knights have gone missing in poorly-planned "mini crusades" against the monsters of Stinger's Scar, and she has been spending much of her time exploring and stealthily observing events in that part of the quarter—the aid of seasoned adventurers could well be quite welcome once she learns more about the missing knights' fates.

Benkhal Blackblade

N | MALE | HUMAN | FIGHTER | 15

For many years, Benkhal Blackblade was a renowned swordsman, mercenary, and one-time member of the

Pathfinder Society, but he is now comfortably retired. The middle-aged Varisian man founded Blackblade's fighting school soon after retiring, but today the classes and training at the school is handled by his staff, freeing him up to spend his time drinking at the Wounded Wisp and reliving the "old days" with Aram bin-Kaleel, the only member of his old adventuring group still alive. Yet lately, each time he meets with Aram, Benkhal finds himself frustrated—while his old friend seems to have adapted to the retired life by serving as an advisor to the Pathfinder Society and other adventuring groups, Benkhal finds himself haunted by unfinished tasks from those days. Dungeons whose deepest levels his group never had the chance to explore, mysterious maps the group discovered but neglected to follow to their source, and mysteries they uncovered in their journeys that have to date remained unexplained. These nagging loose ends recently compelled Benkhal to start cataloging notes in a large journal, and with his own adventuring days far in his past, he's on the look-out for new groups of "able-bodied youngsters" to follow-up on these tantalizing clues. Unfortunately for any adventurers who take him up on these offers, Benkhal's memory isn't what it once was, and following his notes and their faulty assumptions and recollections may well lead to more danger than any supposed treasure left behind is worth.

Benkt Slipshod

CE | MALE | HALFLING | ROGUE | 7

Spared by Pardu Pildapush from an Okeno slave auction that consumed eleven of his brothers and sisters, the humorless Benkt Slipshod served as the slave monger's right-hand-halfling since before he moved his operation to Absalom about 20 years ago. Pildapush's mercy—always conveyed as the slaver's estimation of his protégé's true potential—bought Slipshod's implacable loyalty. Even as increasing pressure from the city has pushed their operation deeper and deeper underground, Slipshod works ever harder to repay his master's trust. When he begins to get a sense of just how much his beloved Pildapush has in fact been an architect of his own worst miseries, Slipshod funnels his inner rage toward his fellow Puddlejumpers or toward the carefully selected victims he and his cohorts kidnap from Absalom's streets under cover of darkness.

Dr. Bensi Skule

NE | MALE | TROLL | ALCHEMIST | 9

This nine-foot-tall troll was originally the test subject of an alchemist named Dr. Bensi Skule. When the alchemist was murdered, the troll took over his name and his occupation, and has proven to be better at it than his predecessor. Today, Dr. Skule is the leader of the Bloody Barbers thieves' guild, but he's almost never seen by any but his closest allies. The doctor provides the Bloody Barbers with alchemical items and disgusting potions that enhance regeneration, while the guild provides him with experimental victims, expensive ingredients, and connections outside the city.

Beragel Tindertales

LN | FEMALE | GNOME | MERCHANT | 9

Beragel's Fur and Feathers has been in the Tindertales family for four generations, its name changing each time a new Tindertale takes charge. Under Beragel's direction, the store has expanded from its original roots as a humble badger shop. Today, the sprawling pet shop offers a wide range of strange pets gathered from around the world. She takes the fact that Beragel's Fur and Feathers has never sold a single badger as a mark of pride, and points to badgers as "pets for those who lack the imagination to be someone special" or "pets for gnomes to bleach to." Of course, her mockery of badger-lovers has resulted in backlash from certain social circles (particularly the vindictive Tri-Stripe Society), but none of this bothers Beragel overmuch, since she isn't interested in attracting "unimaginative customers" in the first place. Increasingly, she's begun to branch into food and habitat sales as well, and as she continues to swap out what sorts of pets she offers for sale to match Absalom's constantly changing appetites for the new, maintaining supplies of her increasingly complex back-catalog of needs for established customers is approaching a level that would threaten to overwhelm a less eager merchant. To help keep things under control, Beragel has increasingly relied upon adventurers to gather not only new and interesting pets, but the hard-to find foods and terrain requirements for established pet owners who depend on her for things like bloodseeker bladder feeders, blindheim soothe-lanterns, slurk tusk files, bunyip blinders, shocker lizard gloves, and the like.

Bevran Blorm

CN | MALE | HUMAN | LABORER | 2

A career laborer at Ogrekin Hall, in the Dock District, Bevran Blorm has assiduously avoided politics and conflict his entire life, preferring to keep his head down and his job prospects secure. All that changed last year when, at the strong "encouragement" of Ogrekin owner Ptarnex Dexarion, Blorm spoke openly against the organizing efforts of Guyton Grerton, whose agitating for workers' rights had threatened Dexarion's business interests and power in the district. Blorm received a generous reward from Dexarion, but after several months his stack of free passes to the Red Silk Route in the Grand Bazaar no longer holds the appeal they once did. Blorm is beginning to realize he made the wrong choice and that he and his fellow workers will be the worse for it. The gloom and guilt has almost completely overtaken him, and he's taken to drowning his emotions in ale. Blorm's sole sense of optimism is his son, Venorium, a scholarship student at the Arcanamirium. Bevran is worried that his troubles at work might threaten his son's scholarship. He has no wife (Venorium's mother died in childbirth), and he cannot afford to support his son on his own.

Bloody Benothar

NE | FEMALE | HUMAN | ASSASSIN | 11

Thirty years ago, "Bloody Benothar" was a crucial element of Lord Gyr's rise to power, and his continued grip upon it. The cruel, calculating Chelaxian killer claimed she could slay a foe with as small a weapon as her little finger. According to widespread rumors, Benothar was not only efficient, but unnecessarily gruesome in the execution of her duty, taking more pleasure out of her job than the public—or even Lord Gyr himself—were comfortable with. Bloody Benothar has been a resident of the Black Whale prison in the Dock District for the past 27 years, allegedly imprisoned there by order of the High Council in a decree signed by Gyr of Gixx, her one-time patron. Benothar has attempted escape four times, each time with a higher body count than the last. The furthest she has ever made it was the inside of Fort Tempest, an opportunistic effort that saw her cling to the bottom of a rowboat as it departed from the Whale, carrying a visiting dignitary whom she killed during the escape attempt.

Boils Caralne

CN | MALE | HALFLING | BEGGAR | 1

Desperate, fidgety, and always pushing for a donation or show of charity from passers by, Boils Caralne haunts Absalom's markets and monuments, and is among the city's best-known panhandlers. A years-long addition to the hallucinogenic drug shiver has ruined his health, and his family and friends have long since abandoned him. A lingering case of filth fever adds to his misery. Boils gladly assists anyone who shows him kindness, gives him a decent meal, helps treat his disease, or offers him the illicit drug he craves. He has stringy hair, dresses in rags, and looks up at his potential benefactors with despondent eyes sunk into sockets darkened by sleep deprivation. A row of slaver marks runs down his left arm all the way to the wrist. For much of the past year, Boils has been a "special project" of Free Union representative Milly Tundall, but even Caralne's clouded mind can tell that she no longer truly believes he can be saved. Recently, when Tundall's attention was turned elsewhere, Caralne stole several folders of paperwork critical to the operation of the Free Union from her office. He knows that the papers could fetch him a pretty penny—maybe even enough to buy his way back into a normal life after one final epic shiver score—but he hasn't yet worked up the courage to offer his intelligence to one of the Free Union's many enemies.

Boldo Drenk

CN | MALE | HALF-ORC | SCULPTOR | 6

Boldo Drenk is a down-on-his-luck artisan who's lost his muse. He's spent the past few weeks wandering the back alleys of the Puddles in an increasingly filthy sculptor's smock, armed with a steadily dwindling supply of wood-carving knives as he chips and cuts away at window frames, pilings, timbers, and bits of driftwood in hopes of finding something, anything, to rekindle his inspiration. A recent encounter with what he thinks is a "haunted talking figurehead" washed ashore from some unknown shipwreck made him worry that he's finally lost his grip on reality, but even in that case he can't deny that the talking figurehead's suggestion that he find a new medium to carve might be just the breakthrough he's looking for. The figurehead's recommendation of "fresh warm bones" as that medium sounds increasingly "right" to Boldo, and each night he comes closer to losing the fight in his mind against the compulsion to carve a brand new masterpiece from an unsuspecting donor.

Bor Dralfo

LG | MALE | HUMAN | PALADIN | 6

Bor Dralfo is the leader of the Brotherhood of Abadar in the Ivy District, a citizen's vigilance committee formed in response to the lax law enforcement standards of the district's Thistleguard Watch. Dralfo has a powerful ally in Jostlin Ferqyr, the head priestess of the local temple of Abadar and a member of the district council. He has a mutual dislike of Alain Always and the Street Performers and Actors' Guild, who oppose the zeal of his operation. Dralfo has short-cropped blond hair, icy blue eyes, and a permanent scowl on his square-jawed face.

Bothuk Thraske

CN | MALE | DWARF | POLITICIAN | 5

Before he vanished, Lord Gyr modified the charter of Diobel's provincial council to ensure that his old ally Lord Avid of House Arnsen could appoint the town's second seat on the Low Council, allowing him to balance the influence of the Kortos Consortium. Since his appointment, the cantankerous dwarf watchmaker Bothuk Thraske has survived three assassination attempts, and spends as much time in seclusion with family in the dwarf enclave of Galizhur as he does in either Absalom or Diobel. He's always on the lookout for potential allies, especially adventuring dwarves.

Bragus Stoutkeep

LG | MALE | HALFLING | FIGHTER | 4

This jovial elderly halfling oversees ceremonies at Dawncastle in Dawnfoot. Generally very kind and caring, Bragus is deeply involved in the Dawnfoot community and loves organizing graduation ceremonies for children that he has seen grow up in his small military town. The years and his experiences show in the wrinkles of his kind face, and in the ashy gray color of his short curly hair. Having served in the military himself, Bragus walks with a limp and a cane due to past injuries. Now retired comfortably in a small chamber in Dawncastle, Bragus makes it his duty to keep the community of Dawnfoot happy.

Brenna Robles

CN | FEMALE | HUMAN | ROGUE | 6

The continued employment of Brenna Robles by Thistleguard Station is often cited by critics of the

organization as living proof of their corruption and apparent lack of interest in capturing and punishing non-violent crimes of thievery. Brenna has never sought to hide her history as a burglar and a cutpurse, and is quite proud of the fact that she's not only managed to secure a position in the Thistleguard as a detective, but that she's really rather good at it. Her intimate knowledge of the mind of a thief has certainly given her an edge in her work as a detective, particularly when so-called soft crimes escalate into violent acts. Many of the Ivy District's murderers have been brought to justice in the past year after Brenna's initial investigations into the ways in which these killers went against established guild tradition, or after being ratted out to her by fellow thieves who felt safe enough to reveal street secrets to a detective without fear that they'd be put in jail for simply cutting a few purse strings.

Breslin

N | MALE | HALF-ORC | BARTENDER | 3

The Pitview Pub is almost as notorious for its high turnover in proprietors as it is for its awful food and watered-down drinks. Just in the past few years, ownership of the pub has transferred no fewer than five times, with its latest owner, the heavily tattooed Breslin, clearly out of his depth. As seems often the case, Breslin won the Pub in a game of chance, and his greatest fear is that he'll lose the establishment to someone else before he can make his mark on the scene. A cannier owner would simply abstain from gambling, but Breslin finds such choices difficult to make in the best of times. And so he's resorted to cheating as a method to augment his luck at games—a tactic that all but ensures a new owner for the pub is just over the horizon.

Brivit Nae of Irrisen

LN | FEMALE | HUMAN | BARD | 14

Brivit Nae is a member of the Grand Council, Head Librarian and Conservator of the Forae Logos, and Guildmaster of the Scriveners' Guild. Brivit spends most of her time personally repairing old, crumbling books on the verge of oblivion. In most cases Nae is reserved and consumed with her own thoughts, having little time for conversation or consideration for others. When confronted with a truly rare or interesting volume, Nae becomes ebullient and deeply engaged, considering anyone who would bring such a tome to her to be a fellow lover of lore and a likely friend (whether or not they deserve her admiration or trust).

She is beginning not to trust her old friend Lady Darchana, archdean of the Arcanamirium and the city's second spell lord. Her librarians have overheard Arcanamirium researchers talking quietly amongst themselves about Darchana's teleportation network. Brivit Nae is oblivious to the potential economic impact, but the smuggling of tomes—particularly volumes of arcane or occult interest—is a brazen abrogation of the Scholar's Law, which she considers to be one of the foundation stones of Absalom's stability. She has quietly shifted her support, and the support of the Scriveners' Guild, in the direction of Lord Avid's Optimates, and away from Darchana's New Absalom movement.

Bronton Guile

CE | MALE | HUMAN | FIGHTER | 3

This no-good son of a prominent Eastgate family is quickly establishing a reputation as a lout and a disappointment to all who know him. With few honest skills and a series of closed doors behind him, Bronton fancies himself a gladiator, much to the chagrin of his father, Parsin, and his mother, Hilenda. In desperate times, Bronton hires himself out as a mercenary, but he is a coward at heart and is prone to fleeing a fight the moment it turns dangerous. Even his brief stints in the Irorium are colored by cowardice—Guile throws most of his matches in a low-return scam involving betting on himself to lose. He has done this so many times now that the crowd (and oddsmakers) now expect him to lose as a matter of course, ruining his odds and significantly reducing payouts.

Bronton was recently invited to the home of Trashpickers Commissioner Pondo Funt, who promised to solve his financial woes if he agrees to betray his journalistic sister, Marissa, the only member of his influential family who still shows him compassion. He didn't immediately agree to the noble's open offer out of loyalty to the kind Marissa, valuing his only remaining connection to his family more than a pouch of platinum, but each month as the rent comes due on his Lion's Square apartment, Bronton's resolve grows weaker and weaker.

Brythen Blood

N | MALE | HUMAN | SORCERER | 17

Brythen Blood is the high curator of the College of Mysteries, master of the Assembly of Enigmas, retired second spell lord, and holder of the Petal District seat on the Grand Council. An outsider to Absalom of no known noble house, Brythen Blood is above social games, though the powerful sorcerer is much sought by the same politicians he holds in disinterest. Blood is known as the Painted Man in recognition of his extensive *irezoko* tattoos, signifying his mastery of the occult arts of the College of Mysteries.

Decades ago, Brythen Blood adventured with Gyr of Gixx, Lord Avid of House Arnsen, Lady Asilia, and Rosvierre Ibanc, and remains loyal to his former companions. A particularly scandalous rumor printed in the Damaq-funded *Mother's Message* newspaper suggests that Blood and his old companions killed the primarch or have stashed Lord Gyr away—possibly in a hidden demiplane created by the city's former second spell lord. A long series of articles last year inspired at least three popular songs about the matter, the most lurid (and naturally most popular) being a catchy little number known as "Brythen's Bucket of Blood."

Bwutuzu the Panther

LG | MALE | HUMAN | WARRIOR-MERCHANT | 12

As a child, Bwutuzu was apprenticed to a wealthy trader in distant Senghor, on the edge of the Mwangi Expanse, but when pirates sank the merchant's fleet (and the merchant himself) to the bottom of the Fever Sea, the boy found himself without a patron or a home. A decade of manual labor trying to survive on Senghor's docks gave Bwutuzu a powerful physique to match his seven-foot height, but failed to provide the life of comfort and splendor that his early association with wealth had encouraged him to expect. He took advantage of his size and ventured into the port city's deadly fighting pits, soon becoming a local champion and making a name for himself as Bwutuzu the Panther, an indomitable brawler whose wits were as fast as his fists. His early victories took him from Senghor to Azir, and from there to Absalom. In the Irorium, Bwutuzu swiftly attained his bronze sword pin, wisely investing all of the earnings he had brought with him in bets made in his own favor, reaping a huge profit on himself before most of Absalom had any idea who he was.

It didn't take long for them to learn. Five years later, after attaining his silver sword pin, Bwutuzu retired from the arena, presumably to settle in for a life of fortune and celebrity. Instead, Bwutuzu remained firmly in the public eye when he took a commission as the personal guard of Revander Gussik, the keeper of the measures at Absalom's Grand Bazaar. Gussik had managed the city's largest market for his entire life, and as he grew older he needed Bwutuzu to back up his proclamations with the possibility of physical intimidation, but both he and his bodyguard always did so with smiles and infectious cheer in a way that resolved most market disputes in a friendly manner. Indeed, the presence of the Panther brought more and more customers to the market, and Bwutuzu increasingly found himself at the center of business affairs in Absalom, even as Revander Gussik grew more and more infirm. When Gussik died 14 years ago, it seemed all of Absalom stood behind the idea of his popular and friendly associate Bwutuzu the Panther taking over as both keeper of the measures and overseer of the Grand Bazaar, and so it has been now for more than a decade.

Bwutuzu can be found strolling through the Grand Bazaar every day, ensuring that merchants offer fair prices and that customers behave themselves. Sellers at the market call upon him constantly to mediate conflicts between merchants, between customers, and between merchants and customers. Minor issues and grievances are generally left to his officers and agents, with only the most significant or troublesome cases coming to Bwutuzu's attention. But still, in a city as busy as Absalom, there is never a shortage of such events requiring the Panther to step in and handle. Bwutuzu himself values his free time (what little of it he can set aside these days), and when he has the chance he likes to escape the bustle and mayhem of the city to relax in the wild, either camping or exploring the wilderness or visiting friends and family back in Senghor. As these trips often need to be cut short, Bwutuzu usually travels with a spellcaster capable of transporting him via teleportation—certainly an extravagance to many, but as overseer of perhaps the largest market on the planet, little more than an occupational necessity.

Camani Jensen

CN | FEMALE | HUMAN | CLERIC | 7

Camani is a relatively new addition to the priesthood of Brigh, but in the few years since her arrival in Absalom, her uncanny ability to tinker with clockworks to make them run more efficiently has certainly caught the eye of the priests of the church of Bronze Lady. Despite her talent, though, Camani's impulsive nature and tendency to speak her mind—particularly when she disagrees with something a potential superior says—has prevented her from being fully accepted into the church's official organized clergy. Camani has learned to appreciate this in recent months, for it not only affords her more personal time but helps to shield her work from prying eyes. For the past several months, she's been tinkering with all manner of small, sparrow-sized flying constructs, and has taken to releasing these pest-like clockworks into the streets of the Coins to observe how they interact with a more complex organic society. Whether she eventually begins to build actually dangerous constructs to trouble the people of Absalom or turns her talents toward more constructive pursuits will likely depend on how her own personal interactions with her neighbors, other members of the faith, and curious adventurers play out.

Casima Evers

LN | FEMALE | HALF-ELF | INVESTIGATOR | 6

As a detective of the Thistleguard, Casima Evers does her best to keep the Ivy District safe but has grown increasingly frustrated with her commanders' lax stance on what's colloquially known as "soft crimes". While maintaining her impeccable record closing investigations against murderers and violent criminals, Casima spends most of her off hours unraveling cases of burglary, thievery, and other non-violent but socially-disruptive crimes. Recently, she's started to wonder if perhaps some of the Station's higher-ranking officers—particularly lieutenant Faiza Pagani—might have nefarious reasons for their stance on soft crimes, but she realizes her growing paranoia may equally be attributable to lack of sleep or exhaustion. Casima is on the lookout for like-minded and trustworthy adventurers she feels can work subtly to investigate her fears of corruption among the Thistleguard—provided they don't damage or destroy the force's effectiveness (such as it is) in the act!

Scion Lord Celedo of House Morilla

LE | MALE | HUMAN | ASSASSIN | 16

An elderly, formally dressed man leaning on a cane, his white hair like a lion's mane around him, Lord Celedo

is an ill-tempered, pugnacious codger, freely giving his opinion on every subject whether it is welcome or not. He has been playing Absalom's Shadow War for so long that he can do it in his sleep, and as a star graduate of the Guild of Wonders he now owns, Lord Celedo still knows eleven ways to kill someone with his cane alone.

With time running out on his life and too few appropriate cold-hearted options among his siblings and cousins, Lord Celedo must turn to his niece and nephews Annasendra, Juartos, and Donovar as he attempts to shape the fate of his family. He intends to name one of his nieces and nephews scion lord in the next few years, pitting them against one another to ensure that the craftiest and most ruthless eventually gains his favor and rulership over Absalom's most powerful Taldan house.

Lady Chandarin of House Morilla

| NG | FEMALE | HUMAN | STUDENT | 1 |

Despite having just turned 13, Lady Chandarin of House Morilla is among the wisest and most popular students at Eastgate's Endiron Academy. Her mother, Lady Annasendra, was too busy with her role as an instructor and star field operative of the Guild of Wonders to put serious effort into raising Chandarin alone after the untimely death of her husband, and instead opted to board the child at the Academy full time some 6 years ago. Lady Annasendra hopes that the school's focus on politics and diplomacy will provide Chandarin with a training in social graces that will gain her access to courts and councils that will prove most useful to the Guild in the coming decades. On the contrary, Chandarin's second-cousin, her mother's aunt Lady Gloriana, has other plans for the child. Gloriana—a fawning, supportive presence throughout Chandarin's life, but especially in the immediate aftermath of her father's death—seeks to steer Chandarin away from the Morilla family's criminal enterprise. Chandarin loves both her mother and Gloriana equally, and seeks to prolong making her choice of which one to emulate for as long as possible, throwing herself zealously into her studies. She is bright and optimistic, and is well-liked by her classmates, especially her best friend, Chani Muraabe.

Chani Muraabe

| N | MALE | HUMAN | RANGER | 3 |

Alina Muraabe, Head Warden of the Absalom Menagerie, loves her son Chani more than any of the creatures she has ever captured and put on display, but together the responsibility of caring for all of her animals sometimes outbalances her responsibility to care for her son, and as a result the boy bounces between several authority figures, all of whom have their own designs for his future. The 11-year-old only child lost his father to an animal attack at the menagerie when Chani was but an infant. Chani himself nearly suffered the same fate as a toddler when he was once accidentally left in the cage of a jungle drake by an inattentive sub-warden, only to be discovered unharmed the next morning, the usually dangerous drake wrapped around him protectively as he slept. The affair became a minor sensation in the broadsheets, and for a short while the child with a preternatural rapport with some of the menagerie's fiercest captive creatures drew larger crowds than the animals themselves ever had. The attention of Absalom is fickle, however, and by the time Chani turned 7 the novelty of his animal-whispering routine had grown stale, both with the public and with Chani himself. The attention—and Chani's unusual powers—brought him to the attention of the Circle of Stones, and no less a personage than the dryad queen Iolanthe herself believes that the boy's connection to animals—even monsters—marks him as a valuable future pawn for the cult. For now, her efforts are limited to communicating with the slumbering boy as he dreams, kindly nurturing him to greater ambitions and comforting him when Alina is away. Chani calls Iolanthe his "tree mother," and trusts the kindly dream-spirit far more than he probably should. Another strong influence on young Chani is his mother's friend, Scion Lord Yamthar of House Ormuz, who cares for him over the months when his mother is away hunting monsters for the menagerie (something that happens quite frequently). During these periods, the wily noble trains young Chani for his own purposes, seeing the child as something of a precocious protégé. Alina naturally wants and expects Chani to take over the Absalom Menagerie when he is old enough, but the boy has no interest in that fate, far preferring Lord Yamthar's encouragement to train himself in the arts of diplomacy and mingle with the most dangerous animal of all—high nobility. Yamthar sponsored the boy's Endiron School education (and bribes his instructors there to pay him special attention), and hopes to one day initiate him as a scion of Ormuz. Unfortunately, this makes Chani a target of Lord Yamthar's many enemies, any one of whom might attempt to kidnap the boy if given the opportunity. Chani's best friend at the academy is Lady Chandarin of House Morilla.

Chaundralor God-Harvester

| LE | MALE | DHAMPIR | SORCERER | 11 |

Chaundralor fled his home town of Vauntil in Ustalav after evidence of his role in a series of grisly mutilations came to light, forcing him to abandon his role there as a landscaper. He came to Absalom and spent years rebuilding and establishing anonymity, largely in a role as apprentice of Aarnock Xanthiss at the Perfumer's Conglomerate. It was here that Chaundralor experienced an epiphany that would define the rest of his life, when Aarnock proclaimed that his next perfume, a scent he claimed to have extracted from a fragment of the cloak Iomedae used to traverse the pit to the Starstone Cathedral, would carry a scent to attract the attention of the very gods. While Chaundralor was forced to admit that his master's latest concoction was indeed memorable, it did not attract any divine attention.

What it did do, though, was set Chaundralor's thoughts moving forward on an unusual path. What if those who attempted—and failed—to pass the Test of the *Starstone* carried a fragment of their divine potential in their remains? Just as a vampire finds power and potency in the taste of blood, why couldn't Chaundralor find power and potency in the scent of those who once aspired to be gods themselves? Today, Chaundralor has long since abandoned his position in the Perfumers' Conglomerate and hides his face behind a silver mask while traveling the halls of the Shrine of the Failed, forever on the search for the elusive scent of divinity.

Chedra Rantore

NG | FEMALE | HALFLING | WIZARD | 3

As the eldest daughter of famed Absalomian chef Sammael Rantore, Chedra was poised to one day inherit the family business. From the day she took her first steps she had some role in the family restaurant, Westgate's To Eat the World. As a toddler, she replaced the patrons' napkins and performed endearing, impromptu dances to pad out her father's dramatic preparation presentations. As a girl she prepared ingredients to her father's exacting specifications, brought food to guests from the kitchen, and entertained the audience of non-dining observers with original mandolin compositions. By her teenage years Chedra could replicate one of her father's recipes from memory after seeing a dish prepared a single time. But her heart was not in the restaurant business. Instead, Chedra wanted to be a wizard. Sammael, disappointed in her preference for spellcraft over culinary mastery, nonetheless loved and supported his daughter, sparing no expense to enroll her in the School of the North Song-Wind. There, Chedra caught the attention of the visiting lecturer Dorakotho, who has taken her on as a sort of personal pupil. The pair's connection extended beyond school grounds recently, however, when the catfolk instructor brought Chedra into her investigations of strange disappearances of certain special children in the city's orphanages. In the last month, Dorakotho has sent Chedra on covert investigations into mysterious goings on at the Guiding Hand and Rhett's Home in the Coins and Purewater Home in the Puddles, usually under the pretense of a magic lesson in which Chedra uses minor illusions to cloak her appearance. Chedra hasn't found anything unusual during any of these investigations so far, but about a week ago she began to notice a trio of short, bent-legged creatures wearing dense cloaks following her from afar as she walks from the school to her family restaurant (where she still pulls nightly shifts). She dares not reveal her suspicions to her father for fear that he might blame the School of the North Song-Wind and pull his support for her education. Instead, she's resolved to find the right time when she notices the creatures tailing her at the same time she is in public near what appear to be adventuring heroes before forcing some kind of conflict, hoping that the heroes step in and help her get to the bottom of the mystery.

Chesele

CG | FEMALE | HUMAN | ROGUE | 12

Chesele, the famed Keleshite beauty of the Silken Court, enjoys huge popularity in the Foreign Quarter and elsewhere throughout the city for her comeliness, kindness, and wit. A favorite of Lady Dyrianna and one of the highest-ranking members of the Courtesans' Guild, Chesele acts as a sort of muse to some of Absalom's most powerful movers and shakers, and her outrageous fees make her one of the guild's least attainable treasures. In addition to her legendary libidinous skills, Chesele is a captivating conversationalist, engaging her clients for hours after the lovemaking has ended as she subtly pries them for information on their jobs, families, and political strategies while junior courtesans hidden the hollow walls of her chambers transcribe every word for potential exploitation by the Courtesans' Guild. Two of her most enraptured (and thus most accidentally informative) clients are Lord Kerkis and Lord Juartos.

Lady Chesne of House Yuriel

LN | FEMALE | GNOME | MERCHANT | 7

Cats and dogs have long been popular pets across the world, but in Absalom, the drive to be different has long compelled locals to make more complicated choices. In the badger, many found their chance to proclaim their allegiance to a different stripe in a moderately safer way than the (literally) short-lived fads that sought to spread wolverines, tatzlwyrms, and trollhounds as pets throughout the city. Lady Chesne's Westgate store, "The Fierce Stripe," is as much a lifestyle support shop as it is a pet shop, as Chesne herself encourages all of those who have badgers to visit daily to gossip and socialize. With her own badger-striped hair and propensity for speaking to badgers as if they were people, Chesne is a beloved icon of the neighborhood. That she's missing a few fingers on each hand (results of her early days as a badger peddler when her methods and techniques weren't quite so refined and elegant) is something the city's badger owners are willing to overlook as a small price to pay for the delight of having such a uniquely Absalomian opportunity to shop for a beloved family member. Asked about her missing fingers, Chesne is quick and proud to proclaim that she'd give up her hands if it meant keeping Absalom's badgers fed and pampered, a comment that never ceases to solicit swoons and gasps of delight from her loyal, devoted customers.

Chirrup Turley

LG | FEMALE | HALFLING | INVESTIGATOR | 2

Absalom's famous consulting detective Erdan Sianovel relies heavily upon his sole employee, cheerful Chirrup Turley, to maintain his sterling reputation as one of the finest independent crime-solvers resident in the city. Turley sees to the affairs of the Sianovel Agency during the day, when Sianovel focuses on his job managing the Foreign Coin Exchange. From a tidy desk near the front door of the Agency's cozy storefront,

Turley takes preliminary reports from would-be clients and runs interference designed to keep patrons from Sianovel's private office—the detective does not appreciate company of any kind when deeply involved in casework. In fact, much of Turley's daily effort is aimed at smoothing over relations with clients upset about a one of Sianovel's brusque and dismissive comments or wishing to register a complaint about some aspect of his unorthodox methodology. She endures this duty with patience and smiles bolstered by an extremely generous salary. For his part, Sianovel recognizes the critical customer relations role Turley plays in the business, and is more than happy to reward her for her significant efforts. Of late, these efforts have included daily circuits around the districts of Absalom in an effort to publicize his reward for information related to the discovery of Lord Gyr's mysterious fate, a path that takes her to most of the city's markets and culminates with a full hour of bell-ringing and pamphlet distribution outside the Lord Mayor's Residence, in the Wise Quarter. Having worked alongside Sianovel for nearly a decade, Chirrup Turley has developed rudimentary detective skills herself, and has increasingly taken on true investigative fieldwork on behalf of the agency.

Captain Chugmuzz the Surly

NG | MALE | HALF-ORC | PRIVATEER | 7

A retired half-orc privateer appointed to the Low Council by Escadar's leaders, Chugmuzz the Surly spends most days sleeping and most evenings entertaining boisterous guests aboard his ship, the *Black Revenge*, which hasn't left Absalom's harbor in months. Chugmuzz extends an open invitation to any of Absalom's half-orcs and goblins to join him nightly aboard the *Revenge* for community and refuge. Rumors abound that the captain counts even stranger and more dangerous creatures like ogres and even demons among the guests aboard his ship, raising local tensions and encouraging the most xenophobic elements of the Dock District to start weaving dangerous plots that are sure to end in bloodshed.

Chun Hye-Seung

CG | FEMALE | HUMAN | INVENTOR | 12

The new commander militant of Absalom's First Guard, Chun Hye-Seung received her current station in the heat of emergency. During the attack of the Whispering Tyrant's forces, Rothos of House Vastille was grievously injured and unable to lead. Hesitant to leave the First Guard leaderless, Wynsal Starborn promoted Hye-Seung from first gear to captain. With a fair amount of popularity among the ranks of the First Guard, she kept the appointed position after the battle, though she is coming to regret the turn of fortune. An inquisitive soul, and not without a wide streak of eccentricity, Hye-Seung nonetheless dutifully executes her duties as the leader of Absalom's defenders.

In her former role as first gear of Absalom, Hye-Seung was responsible for the city's fortifications and siege weaponry. During her tenure, she increased the power of the title considerably and used it to conduct various experiments. Her crowning achievement was a trebuchet capable of firing on ships beyond the edge of Absalom's harbor. The timing of this invention seemed almost fated, as the Whispering Tyrant attacked the city mere weeks after. During the battle, a crossbow bolt meant for one of Hye-Seung's eyes struck the engineering goggles she had been wearing, cracking the lens beyond repair but sparing her life. Now she wears the same pair around her neck as a lucky charm, despite this being against the uniform standards of the First Guard.

Left without a work outlet for her mechanical enthusiasms, Chun Hye-Seung is always eager—possibly too eager—to discuss engineering techniques and emerging technologies with anyone who asks. Prior to her battlefield promotion, she had planned a

Chun Hye-Seung

sabbatical to travel to the Grand Duchy of Alkenstar, hoping to learn more sophisticated siege techniques there. The trip was put on hold by first an army of the dead, then further delayed by the resulting increase in her duties as head of the First Guard; thus, visitors from Alkenstar or those who have traveled to the duchy find they can quickly find an audience with the normally busy captain. In her limited spare time, Chun Hye-Seung can either be found in her old lab in Azlanti Keep or at one of the salons hosted by Scion Lord Yamthar.

Despite being a competent career soldier, Chun Hye-Seung had never really planned to ascend higher than first gear, and so finds her new position somewhat overwhelming. A problem-solver by nature, she is a brilliant strategist and engineer, but struggles to delegate. Hye-Seung never served with Wynsal Starborn before his retirement. As a result, her initial opinion of him bordered on hero worship, though they became quick friends after several months of working alongside each other and the two have since become each other's trusted allies. Between this and her emergency promotion, rumors have begun to circulate that the pair are in a deep plot to stage a military coup in Absalom. Largely ignorant of the politics at play, Hye-Seung has a tendency to publicly misstep without realizing it. She has still managed to make a few other allies. She and Adrielle Neprathep agree strongly when it comes to the city's defense. She admires Adrielle as one of the few members of the Grand Council with the mindset of an engineer capable of seeing how the different factions and issues of Absalom interlock like pieces of a great machine.

Claudette Butterfoot

CG | FEMALE | HALFLING | CHEF | 5

Claudette Butterfoot is the lead chef and owner of the Mithral Chef in the Docks, where she always seems ready and eager to wow her customers with her skills at juggling and flashing all manner of cooking utensils in the preparation of her (inevitably) butter-sautéed entrees. She keeps the tufts of hair on her feet colored a bright yellow, in proud honor of what she claims is a long-standing family name, despite the fact that no records show any lineage of "Butterfoot" in Absalom. While Claudette herself is no adventurer, she still possesses the heart of a hero and her charismatic nature has ensured her position as the leader of a faction of Firebrands who operate under the same name as her establishment. The Mithral Chefs divide their time between hiring out as mercenaries, seeking adventure in the regions surrounding Absalom, and carousing and recounting numerous fact-inspired tales of their own deeds and accomplishments here at Butterfoot's establishment. Claudette herself often wonders what her life would have been like had she taken up a rapier instead of a spatula and pursued an adventurer's life rather than that of a chef's, but these nagging self-doubts swiftly fade in the glory of the "ooohs" and "aaahhs" a delighted crowd gives her when she spins spatulas in both hands while preparing her latest creation for a feast.

Clufton Kline

CN | MALE | HALFLING | BARKEEP | 8

The genial and kind-hearted Clufton Kline is proprietor of the Learned Pig, the most prestigious tavern in the Wise Quarter. Unlike many of his competitors, Kline plays no favorites in the sea of local rivalries that pit students of one school over another, instead welcoming patrons affiliated with all of Absalom's academies. Kline never engaged in formal education himself, but he's been collecting books longer than he's been tending bar, and over the decades donated volumes from local students have swelled the shelves along every wall of the Learned Pig to bursting. Despite the chaotic nature of the collection, Kline maintains a preternatural sense of which volume has been stashed where, and he can always be relied upon to locate a specific tome should a patron want something particular to peruse while patronizing the Pig. Kline has a soft spot for the often-destitute students who make up the bulk of his clientele, and frequently picks up the tab for down-on-their-luck scholars who are willing to entertain other patrons with impromptu lectures. Kline himself pays keen attention to these presentations, considering tales told by visitors and the books they leave behind the only formal education he will ever need. Endlessly curious, Kline frequently becomes obsessed with a piece of trivia gleaned from these presentations, offering free food and drinks to patrons willing to track down specific related books to add to the volumes lining his stacks.

Coltan Menedrid

CN | MALE | HUMAN | PIRATE | 8

Coltan Menedrid is the world-traveling proprietor of Coltan's Floating Emporium, a nautical wares and magical trinkets shop situated on his ship, *Old Heidi*. *Old Heidi* travels the Inner Sea via a steady route for 8 months of the year. In winter, Menedrid sails south to Okeno, Katapesh, Quantium, and points further along the lower coast of Garund, where he gathers wares, spices, and one-of-a-kind relics to sell to Inner Sea merchants come spring. A great lover of his sea-borne life, Menedrid holds a special place in his heart for fellow captains. Those who own or pilot their own ships receive a 10% discount on purchases made at the Emporium.

His crew members whisper that Coltan was once a great pirate who wreaked havoc and plundered vast treasures throughout the Shackles, but the normally friendly captain becomes somber at any mention of his supposedly nefarious past. During clear nights when *Old Heidi* is at port, Captain Menedrid can sometimes be found slumped in the crow's nest of his beloved ship as he gazes at the stars. He and his crew have currently been stationed at Absalom for more than a month, as *Old Heidi* enjoys some much-needed repairs at the Sea King Shipyard and the crew enjoys some well-earned shore leave. These days, Menedrid spends much of his time in the company of Lady Evigail and the Children of Spring, in Evergreen Park. Menedrid first met the alluring cult leader while

visiting the park's shrine to ask Gozreh to bless his ship's repairs, but since then he has returned nearly every day to bask in the affection and relaxing atmosphere provided by the cult. Menedrid appreciates the "free love" aspect of activities in the park; he hasn't bothered to return to the ship for three nights running, preferring instead to spend his evenings in the company of different members of the cult, including Lady Evigail herself.

Menedrid dresses in high black boots, white breeches and shirt, with a long red naval officer's jacket. This latter garment, something of a trademark of his, is rife with minor tears and scuffs—he considers the jacket a lucky talisman and refuses to have it repaired. He has shaggy blond hair and usually wears a tri-corner hat.

Lord Corian of House Blakros

CN | MALE | HUMAN | ROGUE | 2

The youngest son of Delveris and Pieter Blakros, Lord Corian is several years younger than his middle brother, Pendelton, and he's always felt like an afterthought. His mother saved what little attention she spared for her children almost exclusively for his older brothers, who likewise ignored him. Only his father, Lord Pieter, showed him any affection. Lord Pieter had married into the Blakros family from a powerful noble house in Taldor, and always saw his fate in Absalom as a demotion from what should have been his greater destiny in the court of Grand Prince Stavian. In poor, neglected Corian, Pieter saw a kindred spirit, casting himself and his youngest son as outsiders against the mainline Blakros scions.

Pieter's resentment evolved into outright betrayal in 4712, when he aligned himself with the Onyx Alliance following the family's refusal to turn over Lady Michellia on her twenty-first birthday, as prescribed by the ancient Penumbral Accords that had delivered House Blakros its enduring fortune. Pieter and his allies attacked the family and their Pathfinder Society allies at that year's Grand Convocation, during which he was slain. The betrayal tarnished Pieter's branch of the Blakros family, bringing shame to Corian's mother, the beleaguered Lady Delveris. She in turn reflected no small portion of her resentment toward Corian, who happened to look like his hated father in addition to always siding with him in family disputes.

Two years ago, the tension at Castle Blakros grew too much, and young Lord Corian left it all behind. He's been hiding out and living on the streets of the Coins ever since. He's had to duck away from sight of his oldest brother, Asher, from time to time, and while he sometimes writes to his mother to ensure that she doesn't worry that he is dead, he desires no further contact with any member of his family. Running away isn't as fun now as it was a year ago. Although Corian has found shelter and something of a community at the Guiding Hand, in the Coins, he's long past out of money, and has had to resort to desperate measures to survive day to day. He knows he could solve his financial problems by reconciling with his mother, but refuses to do so.

Others, unfortunately, are not so sentimental. On several occasions, Corian has confided in a would-be friend or fellow traveler, and word of his connection to the wealthy House Blakros has spread to Absalom's criminal element. Several kidnapping plots against him are now in operation. The child-gang known as Dod's Filchers are the closest to success. Primarily through the efforts of Jada Moore, the Filchers have already befriended Corian, and soon (they tell him), they will make him a formal member of their gang. Instead, they hope to ransom Corian to his mother, all while the young lad believes he is being trained as an initiate in a real-life thieves' guild.

Dahar

CG | MALE | HUMAN | CLERIC | 3

Frequent visitors to Cayden's Hall, in the Ascendant Court, often come to know and admire Dahar, a friendly cleric of the Accidental God who serves as greeter and taproom caretaker by healing minor wounds, ensuring patrons have a drink in hand at all times, and overseeing booking for the temple's immodest public stage. Now entering middle age but still possessing boyish good looks, Dahar is every bit the jovial and hard-partying paragon of Cayden everyone expects him to be—so long as he's encountered within Cayden's Hall itself. When not on duty, Dahar prefers a quieter retreat, abandoning his temple duties swiftly when he can, seeking familiar liquid comfort in less familiar, more serene settings. He's recently become enamored with the Pitview Pub, and likes to spend time alone at the bar, quietly sketching scenes and portraits into a rugged leather-bound journal. Two years ago, a gorgeous young half-elf named Faelyn ordered a drink at the Pub and complimented him on his art, changing Dahar's life forever.

After a long, fascinating conversation in the nearly abandoned bar, Dahar brought Faelyn back to his modest apartment, and a torrid and fulfilling romantic relationship soon developed between the two. Dahar has no qualms with Faelyn's job in the Courtesans' Guild (and little room for jealousy given his own indifference toward monogamy). He truly loves Faelyn, however, and the reputation of Guildmistress Dyrianna means he can't help but worry for Faelyn's safety, even if he does not morally object to his work. He knows through tales told at Cayden's Hall that information gathered by guild courtesans is often weaponized by Lady Dyrianna's information network. Worse, he understands how easily coin ensures that said information is often employed to serve the very structures of entrenched power and corruption that true servants of Cayden Cailean so often rally against.

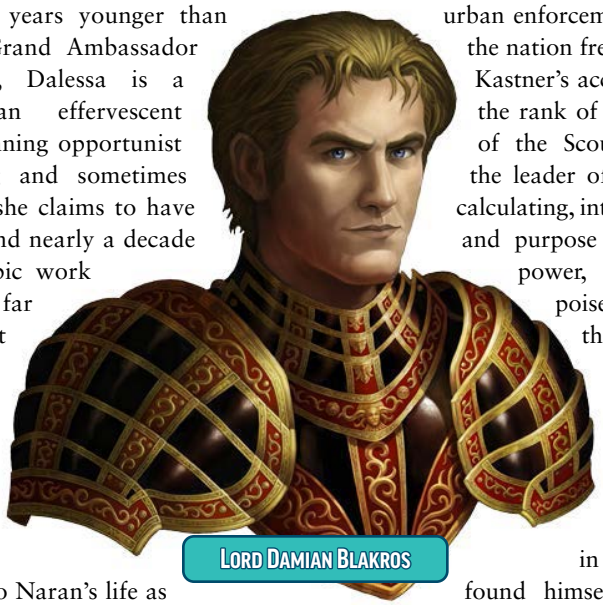
Dahar has tried repeatedly to encourage Faelyn to distance himself from Dyrianna's machinations, but to date his beloved treats his admonishments as adorable and ignorable suggestions rather than the sincere expressions of concern Dahar believes them to be. The resulting stress and worry has led Dahar to drink more than he should, and it doesn't take long for the whole story to come

slurring out of him only a few minutes into a conversation with a stranger who seems willing to listen.

Dalessa

NG | FEMALE | ARISTOCRAT | 2

Beautiful, buxom, and 40 years younger than her husband, Andoran's Grand Ambassador Senator Augustyn Naran, Dalessa is a charming companion, an effervescent conversationalist, and a cunning opportunist with numerous interlacing and sometimes conflicting loyalties. While she claims to have been attracted to her husband nearly a decade ago due to his philanthropic work in Almas, her association is far more political than a result of appreciation for his altruism. Dalessa's father, Gol Ephialtes, sits upon the board of directors of Andoran's corrupt Lumber Consortium, and it was he who first suggested that his daughter inveigle herself into Naran's life as a way to bend him to the Consortium's influence. The plan worked masterfully, and Naran fell in love with the magnetic Dalessa the first time they met. For the first few years, Dalessa even convinced herself that she loved Naran too, but she can now hold up the ruse only when in his direct company, and she relishes any opportunity she has to escape his presence. It isn't that she hates her husband—indeed, she's grown quite fond of him in a patronizing, fraternal sort of way. But she yearns for a fate of her own, outside of the political considerations of her father or husband, whom she has served long enough. Of late she has found her refuge in the arms of Darius Finch, a handsome Ivy District dandy known colloquially as the "Well-Dressed Gentleman." She's heard the rumors that he was drummed out of his noble house due to scandal, and that his image is merely a ruse masking a life of penury, but she doesn't care. She's always wanted a suave, handsome lover who adores her for who she is, rather than what she represents, and for now she's content not to dig any further, enjoying the illicit romance while it lasts. Senator Naran knows nothing about the affair, and would be crushed to discover it. Gol Ephialtes would be even more scandalized, and unlike the good ambassador would have no compunctions about hiring a squad of Red Mantis assassins to eliminate the temptation and encourage his daughter to take her marital vows—and her duty to family—far more seriously.



Lord Damian Blakros

Lord Damian Blakros

LN | MALE | HUMAN | FIGHTER/HELLKNIGHT | 13

Growing up on the streets of Egorian, Damian Kastner led a rough and combative childhood, seeking power over all who would oppress him. He joined the Hellknights as a youth and quickly accumulated accolades and victories in service of Cheliax, tracking down and killing more than two dozen criminals and enemies of Cheliax around the Inner Sea, fighting in important military campaigns in service to the empire, and engaging in urban enforcement in the homeland to keep the nation free from crime and corruption. Kastner's accolades saw him promoted to the rank of field-maralictor of the Order of the Scourge, serving directly under the leader of the order, Toulon Vidoc. A calculating, intelligent man of great presence and purpose positioned at the elbow of power, Damian Kastner seemed poised for a great destiny within the Hellknights. Then one night he met the alluring Zarta Dralneen, Cheliax's Grand Ambassador to Absalom, on one of her frequent visits to Egorian. After an uncharacteristic indiscretion in her private quarters, Kastner found himself exposed and at risk of expulsion from his Hellknight order, until a quickly constructed lie from Dralneen saved him from shame, embarrassment, and ruin. The rescue left him in debt to the ambassador, however, and some years later she called in the favor to use Kastner as a pawn by positioning him as a suitor for Lady Michellia Blakros. With Lictor Vidoc's approval, Damian reluctantly renounced his membership in the Hellknights shortly before marrying Lady Michellia in the summer of 4712. He also renounced his old family name, becoming Lord Damian Blakros, the newest noble in one of Absalom's wealthiest and most influential great houses.

Eight years later, Damian has worked his way into the structure of the Blakros family, and he's even managed to nudge the family toward law by developing a strong relationship with Scion Lady Hamaria, his wife's mother, by relying on the manners instilled in him as a Hellknight and putting his investigatory skills to use tracking down and eliminating the family's enemies, both real and imagined. Hamaria has taken him into her close confidence—rare for a male member of the family—and considers him one of her most trusted advisors and most ruthless and effective agents. At the same time, Lord Damian's relationship with Michellia has grown even more distant as the years go by. The couple has yet to conceive a child, and Michellia is beginning to worry that she may not contribute a daughter to the family's next generation—at least not with her first husband. Even as Lord Damian throws himself deeper into Blakros business, his old ties to the Order of the Scourge refuse to fade away. Lictor Toulon Vidoc, who spoke at his wedding, visits his old pupil at least once a year, always referring to Damian by his old rank, and regaling him with "you should have been there" stories about happenings within the order. Vidoc's latest request,

worded in the tone of one of his orders in the old days, tasked Lord Damian with personally interviewing any Hellknights who visit the city, reporting back to Vidoc on their motivations and activities, and giving them a helping hand when appropriate.

Darabele Fairwind

| NG | FEMALE | HUMAN | SAILOR | 6 |

The Guildmistress of Absalom's Pilot's Union gained an appointment to the Grand Council a few years ago, and she's begun to apply the pragmatic problem-solving and leadership skill that saw her take command of the guild at a young age to the complexities of city politics at large. Wags of the Grand Council Hall predict a long and promising career in city government, with some claiming that the High Council should have appointed her as harbormaster instead of Scion Lady Adrielle Neprathep of House Fyrlenn after the apparent death of Goodman Hugen.

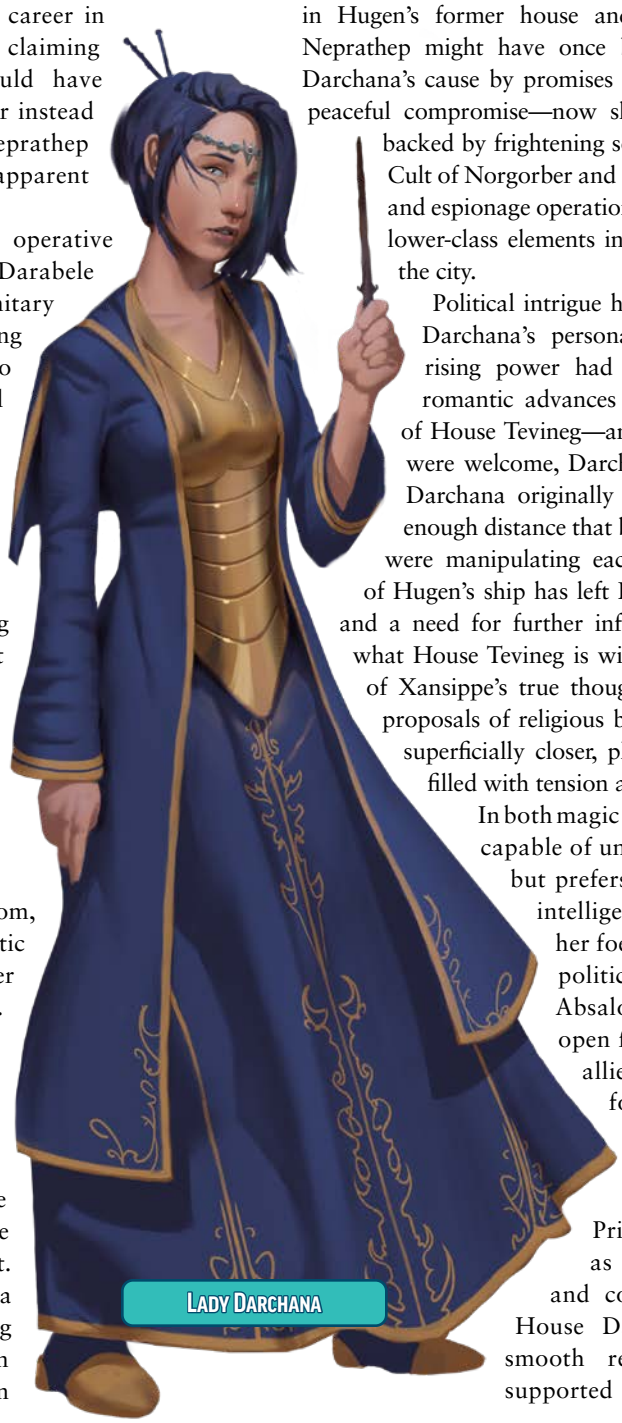
As the highest government operative stationed on Pilot Island, Darabele Fairwind is the first official dignitary visitors to the city captaining their own ships are likely to encounter. She takes careful stock of visiting captains she has not yet met, warning those she thinks look like trouble from lingering long in the city or breaking anything, and welcoming apparent allies with open arms, hoping to give visitors a good first impression. Her own ship, the *Spray Scorpion*, is the fastest vessel in the Pilots' Union.

Lady Darchana of House Madinani

| N | FEMALE | HUMAN | WIZARD | 19 |

The second spell lord of Absalom, Lady Darchana is as enigmatic as the magic she teaches to her students at the Arcanamirium. Politically savvy and a master of balancing feuding sides, Darchana's motives and morals are rarely clear, something that has allowed her to seize victory in the past—yet which now has come to trouble her in the present. Over the last decade, Darchana had been involved in an ongoing feud with Harbormaster Hugen of House Candren to overturn the docks' monopoly on trade. With the help of her students, she ran publicity campaigns to besmirch and taint the harbormaster's honor and worked to develop a network of teleport circles that connected a number of major cities to the Arcanamirium. These circles allow her to funnel trade into Absalom, thus circumventing the harbor fees and giving Darchana unhindered international transport.

Then Harbormaster Hugen's ship sunk, with the man himself presumed dead, and many in Absalom assume Lady Darchana to be at fault. While no legal repercussions are forthcoming due to lack of evidence, the accusation rankles at her, almost as much as not knowing the true culprit. Worse yet, it has earned her devoted enemies in Hugen's former house and friends. Lady Adrielle Neprathep might have once been an ally, swayed to Darchana's cause by promises of moderate reforms and peaceful compromise—now she is an implacable foe, backed by frightening social elements such as the Cult of Norgorber and Lady Dyrianna's influence and espionage operation, and capable of riling up lower-class elements in ways that might disrupt the city.



Lady Darchana

Political intrigue has even seeped into Lady Darchana's personal life. Her status as a rising power had previously attracted the romantic advances of Scion Lady Xansippe of House Tevineg—and though these advances were welcome, Darchana was far from naive. Darchana originally kept Xansippe at a safe enough distance that both of them thought they were manipulating each other, but the sinking of Hugen's ship has left Darchana with suspicions and a need for further information. Knowing fully what House Tevineg is willing to do and uncertain of Xansippe's true thoughts on Lady Darchana's proposals of religious bans, the two have grown superficially closer, playing a dangerous game filled with tension and vacant of trust.

In both magic and intrigue, Darchana is capable of unfathomable destruction, but prefers the art of subtlety and intelligently outmaneuvering her foes. Backed by a reformist political block known as New Absalom, she keeps her eyes open for opportunities to peel allies away from her rivals for primarch, offering House Morilla frequent but empty promises of installing Grand Princess Eutropia of Taldor as the queen of Absalom and courting Lord Kerkis of House Damaq with pledges of smooth reforms. Darchana has supported the Pathfinder Society,

especially the newly unmasked Decemvirate member Eliza Petulengro.

Lady Darchana spends most of her free time at the Arcanamirium, furthering her study of teleportation magic. When venturing out, she often enjoys magical disguises, especially when they can help her avoid her current reputation or allow her to overhear an important conversation. It can be surprisingly easy or nearly impossible to gain her attention and time, depending on her whims; she believes in progress wherever it can be found, and those who bring her new, usable ideas can be sure to earn her favor. However, she has no qualms with manipulating others for her own means, and many would-be friends of Darchana have found themselves discarded when they troubled her morals or her plans.

Darelli Gammathumalshire

CN | MALE | GNOME | EXPERT | 8

Darelli found his calling when he discovered a pouch full of assorted coins on the body of a dead adventurer not far from his family home in Brastlewark, in eastern Cheliax. He quickly became obsessed with the coins, with their strange shapes and unknown faces, and from then on, his purpose was clear. Darelli's knack for collecting coins eventually drove him away from his gnome-centered world. Two decades of travel finally brought him to the 5000-year-old city at the center of the world, where coins from around the whole globe and from all eras of history trade hands every day, and there's always something new to discover. In Absalom he also met the love of his life, friendly, dependable Bagwell Thomkin, who encouraged Darelli to turn his collecting into a business. Darelli agreed on the condition that Bagwell marry him and run the back office, and together they opened Concurrent Currency in the Dock District about 20 years ago. Darelli rarely leaves the shop, and adores his interactions with all the customers who stop by, always eager to hear their stories and (especially) to see what odd coins they have to offer him. Darelli grows completely silent when examining a strange coin, a massive grin plastered across his face as he works out its mysteries. He is otherwise chipper and talkative, genuinely curious and inquisitive. He winks a lot, as if always bringing one in on a private joke, and he never, ever wears shoes. "Can't let Bagwell go around feeling naked all the time," he often jests. Darelli wears a bright gold band on the middle toe of his left foot, which clicks distinctively whenever he takes a step. His best customer is Lord Oved Blakros, Absalom's foremost catacomb coin collector, and the source of a significant—perhaps dangerous—percentage of the shop's income.

Lord Darin of House Morilla

LG | MALE | HUMAN | SWASHBUCKLER | 3

Young Lord Darin spent most of his youth in the company of his world-traveling mother, Lady Gloriana Morilla, one of Absalom's top Taldan diplomats and a major ally of the Pathfinder Society. When political intrigue brought her back to Taldor several years ago, Lady Gloriana permanently left Lord Darin behind at Morilla Palace, concluding that the treachery of her own family in Absalom was preferable to the treachery of the so-called War for the Crown in the homeland, which saw Princess Eutropia take the throne of Taldor. Lady Gloriana, a keen ally to Eutropia, found herself heavily involved in the dangerous affair, taking solace in her son's relative safety so many miles away. Warned since birth against trusting Scion Lord Celedo or involving himself in the family's Guild of Wonders criminal enterprise, Lord Darin nonetheless found himself drawn to Celedo's reputation for weapons mastery. Darin had grown up hearing his mother's breathless tales of her allies in the Pathfinder Society adventurer's guild, and he yearned to one day become a great swordsman like the heroes she so often spoke about. Lord Celedo, now nearing the end of his life and unable to mentor the child directly, instead enrolled Darin in the prestigious sword-school Blackblade's, in the Foreign Quarter (much to Gloriana's chagrin). There, Lord Darin met the charming Lady Kiya of House Ahnkamen, and the two swiftly fell in love. This too sits poorly with Gloriana, who already has a half-dozen potential wives picked out for Darin in Oppara she hopes to introduce him to when he joins her permanently at the Taldan capital this upcoming summer. Lord Darin does not want to go.

Darius Finch

LE | MALE | HUMAN | ROGUE | 6

Darius is a handsome Ivy District rake sometimes known as the "Well-Dressed Gentleman," (or simply "the Gent") for the charcoal and cream-colored noble's outfit and black cloak he wears. He carries a polished ivory walking stick and saunters with a sanguine swagger, a slim rapier confidently strung to his belt. He wears his loosely styled blond hair in a ponytail, and always seems to be smiling. Darius frequents several Ivy District taverns, where he is a welcome fixture. Rumors suggest that he was drummed out of his noble house by his older sister, Lady Kythes Finch, but he uses his silver tongue to talk his way around inquiries about the scandal. He is well-connected, and has friends in every social circle in Absalom. The commoners call him "the wealthiest pauper in Absalom." His expertise in manipulating people and ferreting out the city's secrets are as legendary as his spending binges when he gets a few coins to rub together. He is otherwise homeless, and relies on the beds of several upper class women (most of them married) when he cannot afford to rent a room in an inn. Darius is currently engaged in a dangerous affair with Dalessa, wife of the Andoren Senator Augutsyn Naran, whom he finds more charming than his usual conquests (but who will not hold his attention for long).

Lord Deineis of House Arnsen

CN | MALE | HUMAN | CRIMINAL | 6

The second son of Lord Avid and Lady Nahla of House Arnsen vanished from Absalom 13 years ago, and has not been heard from since. Unlike his morally upstanding

siblings, Deineis grew up spoiled by his family's wealth, learning little respect for hard work or for the welfare of others. Rumors suggest that he fell in with one of Absalom's infamous thieves' guilds—the Sanguine Beasts or the Silkenhand, no one can ever say for sure which one—and in the course of his work for that organization, he found himself in worse trouble than even the famous Arnsen fortune could thwart. Some say he and his fellow thieves unwittingly broke into a government building that housed a secret project of Lord Gyr's, and that Deineis and his allies are currently residents of the Black Whale under order of the primarch himself. Others implicate Deineis in a series of suspicious deaths—almost certainly murders—of three Low Council members in 4707. No one really knows. Lord Avid and Lady Nahla admit only that their son made a series of poor choices that got him into his current predicament, and that he was officially exiled from Absalom by secret order of the High Council. Neither will speak much on the subject beyond these heavily rehearsed basics, and grilling any member of the Arnsen family as to his whereabouts is a fruitless endeavor. Some of Deineis's former allies in Absalom's underworld know considerably more about the mystery, and might be willing to tell what they know in return for a few favors...

Dege Blackhill

CG | MALE | HUMAN | BARBARIAN | 7

Dege is an Inlander, a descendant of early pilgrims and outcasts who came to Kortos in ancient days but who never truly adopted a civilized life. He grew up in the Blackhill clan, whose village lies deep in the Inland Hills along the southwest spur of the Kortos Mounts, near the headwaters of the Husna River. Kortos Consortium traders stationed in the logging town of Meravon were the first to identify Dege's delicious smoked meats as important works of culinary art, and with their financial backing Dege moved to Diobel to open a successful food stall in the bustling Pickapell Market. After three years, Dege (now greatly acclimated to civilized life) bought out his investors and moved the business to Absalom. Now a full-fledged restaurant and meadhouse, Blackhill's, in Eastgate, features a huge taproom situated around enormous smoking pits. The enticing aroma of Dege's famous spice rub permeates the tavern's convivial atmosphere, providing a warm and welcoming refuge from the troubles of the outside world.

Blackhill's is particularly popular with members of the Post Guard, and Dege counts their captain, Lord Ayunga, among his favorite patrons and closest friends. He also greatly admires his frequent customer Janira Gavix, who keeps him up to date on the latest developments in the Pathfinder Society. Dege is an inveterate rumor monger and has a great memory for the drunken stories his patrons tell him. He's a fantastic and enthusiastic source of leads for adventurers and Post Guards looking to hire themselves out as mercenaries. He speaks in a warm, friendly voice, and isn't afraid to fall back on his "humble upbringing" to get himself out of a tough situation. "Don't mind me," he might say with a knowing grin, "I'm just an ignorant Inlander."

Lady Delveris of House Blakros

NE | FEMALE | HUMAN | EXPERT | 9

Being the youngest daughter of her generation, nobody ever expected too much of Lady Delveris as a child. Her greatest value to her mother was as a pawn in the family's centuries-long game of economics and influence, and before she had turned 20 the family had used her as bait to ensnare the cunning and beautiful Lord Pieter Autun, second son of one of the wealthiest spice importers of the Taldan city of Yanmass. Pieter gave her three sons, but never fully embraced his fate as a Blakros groom, bristling at the politicking of Delveris and her sisters and resentful of his elder brother Rudig, who inherited his father's business and a seat on his home city's Mercantile Council. Pieter eventually turned against the Blakros family completely, siding with Delveris's "sacrificed" elder sister Sarnia and her Onyx Alliance allies to attack House Blakros itself and their allies in the Pathfinder Society during that organization's Grand Convocation of 4712 AR.

Pieter was slain in the attack, leaving Delveris to raise their three sons alone. Overwhelmed by her additional duties to the family, she hasn't been doing such a great job. Her eldest son, Asher, has fallen in with the scheming Kalistocratic cult behind the Prophet's Academy, in the Coins, and refuses to speak with her about anything other than money or business. Her second son, Pendleton, is a promising student at the College of Mysteries, but the self-centered child of privilege always has his head in the clouds, and has little time for his mother. Her youngest son, Lord Corian, ran away from home two years ago, and she hasn't seen him since.

Even if it seems to Delveris that her sisters and cousins have never fully trusted her since Pieter's betrayal, the house continues to put a great deal of faith in her control of the family's international antiquities acquisition operation. Delveris controls dozens of field agents across the Inner Sea and beyond, urging them to plunder forgotten tombs and deadly dungeons in search of valuable, often magical artifacts the family can sell or exhibit at the Blakros Museum. Delveris works with the retired Pathfinder agent Venla Sirola, a confidante and friend of several years whom she trusts more than her own kin. Delveris deeply resents her sister, Dhrami, who has been the slowest to forgive her for her husband's actions a decade ago, still sending caustic comments in her direction at every opportunity. Delveris considers Dhrami to be a dilettante at best, more interested in crude paintings and nightlife than in curating the family's public collection as steward of Blakros Museum.

Academically speaking, she has more in common with Dhrami's husband, Nigel Aldain, but resents that he has not taken on the Blakros name. How can a non-Blakros run Blakros Museum, she often wonders? For years, Delveris has been petitioning her elder sister, Scion Lord Hamaria, to allow her to displace Nigel Aldain and take a more active role in managing the affairs of the museum. So far Hamaria refuses to budge and seems more distant than ever before. Ostracized from her family, her husband 8 years in the ground, Delveris today finds comfort only in business and, occasionally, in the arms of the courtesan Versien of Nisroch, in the Silken Court.

Derica Foss

| NG | FEMALE | HUMAN | WIZARD | 8 |

The brilliant Derica Foss is a popular scholarship student at the College of Mysteries, and the beloved apprentice of the arch-transmuter Jovara of the Thousand Forms. Now 17, Derica grew up in the slums of Mudhaven, and she carries the hard lessons of her early life with her to this day, even though her circumstances have improved considerably. Her mother was run over by a runaway wagon when Derica was a young child, and the woman's grisly death is the only true memory Derica retains of her. Her father Mulden, an overly trusting laborer at Ogrekin Hall, was seldom present in Derica's early life due to his crushing work schedule, and didn't attend to his daughter for hours after the fateful event, leaving Derica in the hands of the Harbor Guard. While awaiting her father's arrival, the young girl observed the noble who owned the deadly wagon bribe several members of the district watch to avoid prosecution for the terrible affair. He also financed the disposal of the slain woman and funded her burial. When a distraught Mulden Foss arrived on the scene, the noble handed him a fat sack of coins and arranged for him to find a higher-paying job as a guard at the Black Whale.

Her father's subsequent work at Absalom's floating prison brought him into increasing contact with many of the city's lords and top politicians (if usually at a great distance, without any words being exchanged), and his justifications of their actions and general faith in the government and institutions of rulership in the city has been a constant pattern in her life. Derica took away the lesson that nobles can make problems go away by spending money and influence, so she endeavored to gather both and hopes to become a noble herself some day. Word of her boundless ambition and academic excellence brought Derica to the attention of the Assembly of Enigmas of the College of Mysteries, who offered her a rare scholarship when she was but ten years old. Since then, Derica has managed to rise to the rank of labyrinth, and hopes one day soon to don the *irezoko* face tattoo of a full enigma master, finally joining the esoteric order that plucked her from obscurity nearly a decade ago.

Dhauken Tor

| N | MALE | HUMAN | SCHOLAR | 16 |

The First Speaker of the Wise Council started his career as a low-level functionary at the Avatectura, an ancient museum known for its archive of historical material from the oldest eras of Absalom. These records date back 42 centuries, and the studious Dhauken Tor has at least a passing familiarity with all of them, making him one of the foremost experts of Absalom's history resident in the city.

To this end, Tor is engaged in a surprisingly bitter rivalry with another history expert, Rogren Sphairo, the so-called Keeper of Ancient Absalom Lore. Whereas Sphairo, a scion lord of one of Absalom's most popular houses, is a master of the orthodox history of the city, the Avatectura trained Dhauken Tor in a more populist methodology. The personal stories of Absalom's residents—including those of servants, street-sweepers, and artisans—paint a folk history of Absalom that's often at odds with the official version. Tor sees himself as the custodian of this "true" history of the city, and decries Rogren Sphairo as a puppet of his upper class upbringing, more capable of parroting accepted historical platitudes than delving into the way things really were. This rivalry has spilled into the columns of several of Absalom's news broadsheets, particularly *Mother's Message* and the *Sennight Star*, where the two scholars snipe at one another mercilessly. Their public debates have grown so furious that it's only a matter of time before one of them decides to end the conversation with a stroke of an assassin's blade.

Lady Dhrami of House Blakros

| N | FEMALE | HUMAN | ARISTOCRAT | 8 |

A half-Vudrani scion of House Blakros and wife of Blakros Museum curator Nigel Aldain, Lady Dhrami cheerfully ignores her family's increasingly pointed remarks about her husband's refusal to change his last name and the couple's lack of children. Her husband's long association with the Blakros Museum has caused Dhrami to take up art restoration as a hobby, and art forgery as an offshoot of said hobby; while Lady Dhrami never sells her forgeries, she enjoys the thrill of her skills being able to fool even the keenest of art historians. Lady Dhrami regularly tours Absalom's art museums looking for new pieces to add to her collection and new techniques to add to her repertoire. She swiftly takes new visual artists under her wing and patronage, asking only that her sponsored virtuoso visit her for weekly lessons in the Observatory Chamber of the Blakros Museum.

Within the last year, Lady Dhrami has received something of a patron of her own in the form of the mysterious Lord Synarr Daidalos, who increasingly encourages her artistic ambitions. The two regularly visit area museums together, spurring several "blind" notices in the society columns of Absalom's broadsheets that imply the relationship is built upon a more than purely artistic foundation.

Diasco Vade

| LN | MALE | HUMAN | EXPERT | 15 |

Absalom's third law lord administers the city's courts and legal system. He and Kortos Viceroy Jaress Molinarro work together on the High Council to ensure that the legal standards of the city are applied evenly in the countryside. While Vade believes that the two are of the same mind on the matter, Molinarro is considerably less dedicated to the principle, or indeed any principle at all, being wholly in the pocket of the Kortos Consortium. Vade, overwhelmed with the weight of his duty, is completely ignorant of his best friend's corruption. Vade and Molinarro regularly dine at the Ivy District's Sanga Bistro, where they occasionally discuss vital economic information within earshot of nearby patrons. The restaurant's staff, as well as several of its regulars, keep an open ear to these conversations, passing along what they hear to the likes of the Crowsworn or Lady Dyrianna's information brokerage.

Donnica Mycelene la-Tep

| CG | FEMALE | HUMAN | ROGUE | 9 |

Donnica Mycelene La-Tep grew up on the streets of the Docks, where she witnessed the merciless way that criminals preyed upon visitors and natives alike every single day. While the guile and grace and canny ingenuity she saw these criminals use impressed and delighted her, as she grew older she also became more frustrated and angered that these talents were "wasted" in the pursuit of ruining the lives of others. As a result, Donnica put into motion a long-term plan she called "the con con." Over the course of several years, she adopted different personas, joined different criminal groups, and learned their secrets and methods before staging her own fake death and moving on to the next. Last year, she finally felt ready to put into motion the second stage of the con con: using the criminals' own techniques against them to protect the people of the Docks. By day, Donnica hires out as a guide, specializing in helping newcomers to the Docks avoid falling prey to the neighborhood's lowlifes, while at night she works against those same thieves indirectly, doing what she can to bolster security, undermine plots, and generally make a nuisance of herself without revealing to the criminals that there's actually someone working against them. Donnica would rather a criminal blame bad luck, poor planning, or (best of all) incompetence in their fellow thieves for the failure of their plans. And while her subtle sabotages have worked well so far, she's realized recently that one woman can't stand against an entire city's criminals—much less a single sprawling district's. While she likes the idea of starting a guild of her own, she's also wrestling with the idea that each person she lets into her plans represents one more potential weak link. She's been keeping an eye out for promising recruits but has, to date, found none she doesn't worry might betray her.

Lord Donovar of House Morilla

| NE | MALE | HUMAN | ADMINISTRATOR | 8 |

Canny Lord Donovar, nephew of Scion Lord Celedo, handles the day-to-day operations and administration of the Guild of Wonders, the Morilla family's criminal enterprise centered in Westgate. Like his uncle, Lord Donovar keeps a highly public profile, representing his rich and powerful family at social events, making ostentatious appearances at Ivy District theater openings, and even penning a regular column in the *Mother's Message* newspaper (a scathing—and blazingly ironic and hypocritical—series of criticisms of criminal activity in Absalom). Within the Guild walls, Donovar is the unquestioned chief administrator, overseeing the instructors, evaluating students, and guiding Guild policy overall. In his mind, this makes him the ideal candidate to take over the Guild (and the family itself) following the abdication or death of the aged Lord Celedo. In return, the elder Morilla considers Donovar obsequious to the point of annoyance. Had Donovar put half the time, effort, and attention that he puts into currying Celedo's favor into running the Guild itself, he no doubt would be the scion lord's favorite, but the current situation is somewhat murky, and Celedo seeks a less predictable heir. That neither of his other top choices seem up to the job pains the old man deeply, leading him to scorn Donovar as the regretful, "inevitable" choice. This has darkened the relationship between the two men, greatly offending Donovar, who resents the lack of support after a lifetime of eager loyalty he's shown the family patriarch. Lord Donovar grows impatient with the status quo, and has begun to plot a way to use the guild's assassins to somehow take out Lord Celedo himself, paving the way for Donovar's ascension. Donovar senses his uncle's cooling attitude toward him, and knows that he must move swiftly, while the perception still persists that he is the most likely candidate to assume a leadership role. Lord Donovar dresses in the finest clothes (favoring the creations of tailor Al-Amir Kai) and bears a full black beard.

Dooley Gavix

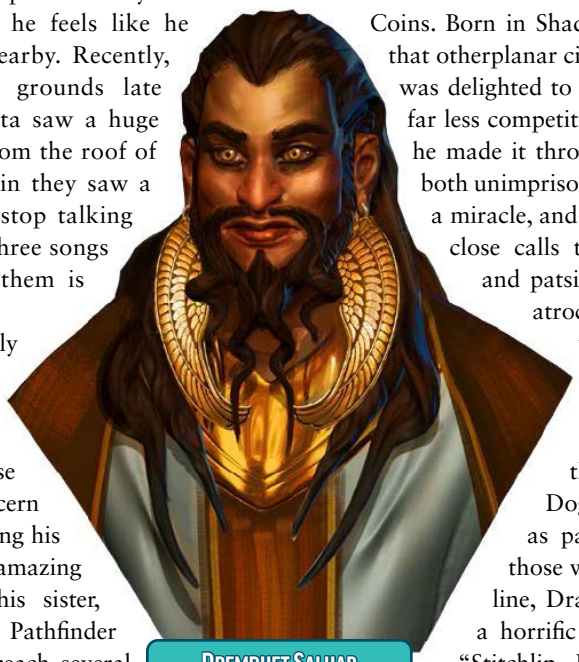
| CG | MALE | HALFLING | BARD | 2 |

Charming young Dooley Gavix spent most of his childhood vying for the attention of six brothers and sisters in a crowded Eastgate villa. Music usually seemed to do the trick, and throughout his early youth Dooley experimented with a dozen instruments, gaining basic proficiency in all of them. The whole family seemed sure that Dooley's gifts would make him famous one day, but his father's meager salary as a dog cart porter and the demands of supporting the huge Gavix family left no funds for proper schooling. The treasure hauls from big sister Janira's first few successful field missions for the Pathfinder Society went entirely to her family, who immediately pooled their collective windfall to buy Dooley a place at the prestigious White Grotto academy, in the Ivy District.

Twelve years old is young for a White Grotto student, but Dooley more than keeps up with his older

classmates. He's developed a close kinship with the human prodigy Avesta Guile, who shares something of his curiosity and adventurous spirit. Dooley misses his big family, and in Avesta he feels like he can have at least one sister nearby. Recently, while wandering the Grotto grounds late one evening, Dooley and Avesta saw a huge winged shadow launch itself from the roof of the Hall of String. He is certain they saw a dragon that night, and won't stop talking about it. He's already written three songs about the event, and one of them is even pretty good.

Dooley is extremely friendly and talkative, but he's also overly trusting and easily manipulated. He is dangerously inquisitive, often poking his nose into mysteries that do not concern him in any way other than tickling his curiosity. He knows he owes his amazing White Grotto experience to his sister, Janira, the head initiate for the Pathfinder Society. He's visited her at Skyreach several times, and even sometimes accompanies her and her Pathfinder friends for a night at the Wounded Wisp tavern. It's a great time, so long as their father never finds out!



Dremdhet Salhar

Dorakotho

| NG | FEMALE | CATFOLK | WIZARD | 13 |

Dorakotho, one of the Magaambya's more popular lecturers and an expert on the mixture of arcane and primal magic, originally came to Absalom on what was supposed to be a quick journey via teleportation to deliver a gift to an associate at the School of the North Song-Wind in the Foreign Quarter, but a series of cascading complications has worked to extend her stay in the city, perhaps indefinitely. First, she received three concurrent invitations to galas and events to honor and welcome her visit to the city. Then she was approached separately in the same day by two unrelated teachers who were eager to have a famous Magaambyan give a guest lecture at their separate institutions. And most recently she's learned that a number of orphans from otherwise unremarkable orphanages have displayed potential sorcerous powers linked to a rumored heritage from Magaambyan spellcasters, and has agreed to investigate the validity of the rumors. Known for her patience and understanding back at the Magaambya, Dorakotho now believes that these events have been engineered to target her specifically in an increasingly obvious ploy to prevent her from returning home. The fact that these events are, on their face, innocuous or even pleasant diversions has only further piqued her curiosity, and she's now nervously awaiting whatever else Absalom can throw at her to keep her within its walls.

Dras

| CE | MALE | FETCHLING | ROGUE | 9 |

Dras is the leader of the Family Dogs gang, in the Coins. Born in Shadow Absalom, Dras escaped that otherplanar city to Absalom as a child and was delighted to find that in this city, he had far less competition for cruelty. The fact that he made it through his youth to adulthood both unimprisoned and alive is something of a miracle, and he's learned from numerous close calls the value of using subtlety and patsies to deflect outrage for his atrocities. He and his criminals use a taxidermy workshop called the Kennel as a front for their hideout, and Dras has taken advantage of that front. While the Family Dogs use the shop and its tools as part of their threats to keep those who pay protection money in line, Dras used them to help create a horrific local legend. The so-called "Stitchlip Man" is Dras's invention, but that doesn't mean that the supposedly supernatural monster's actions of stitching mouths shut to punish those who speak ill of thieves are rumors, for the Family Dogs now use the guise of the Stitchlip Man to perform these very acts on those they have problems with. Increasingly, Dras has spent more and more time in costume as the Stitchlip Man, and the Family Dogs have begun to worry if their leader has finally taken the plot too far and now thinks of himself as the real thing.

Dremdhet Salhar

| N | MALE | HUMAN | DIPLOMAT | 12 |

As both a Grand Ambassador of the foreign nation of Osirion and a member of Absalom's Grand Council, the affable diplomat Dremdhet Salhar holds an almost unique position in the city dating back to the era of the Blue Lords and the Cult of the Hawk, when Osirion, Qadira, and Taldor held outsized influence in Absalom's politics. All three nations have held at-large seats on Absalom's Low Council ever since. As a matter of self-preservation, the holders of these seats abstain from almost all votes, and enjoy strong popularity among the public. In person, Salhar is patronizing, bureaucratic, and assertive, using his popularity with the people of Absalom as a weapon against enemies in the city and back home in Osirion.

Salhar is a strong supporter of the Pathfinder Society, sponsoring several important missions over the past decade and greasing political wheels within Osirion to help Society agents gain access to some of his homeland's most intriguing ancient ruins and historical archives. Prior to coming to Absalom, Salhar served among Osirion's ambassadorial corps in Thuvia, and he retains several important contacts with that nation as a result

(as well as an enduring friendship with Lord Urkon of the Thuvian House Ormuz). Salhar regularly attends the intellectual salons of Lord Yamthar at Palace Ormuz in the Petal District, where he and his Thuvian allies occasionally get bogged down in the details of philosophical minutia impossible to follow by anyone ignorant of the intellectual customs of northern Garund.

A heavy-set man with well-oiled hair and beard, Salhar wears fine gold-embroidered silk robes in the Osirian fashion, as well as a fortune in gold rings, necklaces, and other jewelry. He lives on a rich estate in the Wise Quarter with his Chelaxian wife, Lady Anilah Salhar.

Drandle Dreng

Drandle Dreng

NG | MALE | HUMAN | ROGUE | 8

One of the more infamous venture-captains of the Pathfinder Society, Drandle Dreng is known for idiosyncratic habits such as waking Pathfinder agents for midnight briefings or demanding that they go out and fetch him wine. A pinch-faced Taldan with thick, gray hair and a full, bushy beard, Dreng's milky eyes and shocking age usually offer a bearing of regal decrepitude. He keeps a record of the Society's findings and the location of their storage called the *Prospectus of Artifacts*, a book that has drawn at least one attempt on his life in the past. Dreng keeps an office in the Grand Lodge at Skyreach in the Foreign Quarter, as well as a modest home in Westgate.

Drock Ovix

NG | MALE | HALF-ORC | INNKEEPER | 5

The patrons of the Foreign Quarter's Flying Alderman inn call Drock Ovix "the Walrus" on account of his bald head coupled with the way his large tusks stick out from his bushy mustache. The paunchy half-orc innkeeper may look slow, but Ovix can move with finesse and stealth when he wants to. It's a well-known local secret that Ovix is himself a member of the Pathfinder Society, and that he uses the Alderman as a sort of safe-house for agents hoping to keep a low profile. Ovix makes a public show of disdain for the adventures' guild and all the collateral destruction they have brought to the district over the years, but once he is certain a patron shares his secret allegiance, he is as welcoming a host as a stranger can find in Absalom.

When he is not at the inn or the Grand Lodge, he can sometimes be found betting on hippocampi races or pursuing other vices in Escadar.

Durga Den

LN | MALE | DWARF | BARD | 15

The Ivy District's White Grotto is world-renowned for the mastery of its instructors, whose reputations draw students from all corners of the Inner Sea region. A haven of friendly, charismatic folk swapping tales, performing music and dance, and enjoying a common love of the arts, the Grotto is a place of encouragement and warmth, its patient masters nurturing a new generation of bardic heroes. Except Durga Den. Durga Den doesn't care about any of that. The dour master of drum, undoubtedly among the finest percussionists in the world, isn't at the Grotto to teach, but to constantly hone his own craft. If those who gather around him daily in the Grotto's Hall of Drum learn something by observing his timing and technique, so much the better, but whether they ultimately succeed or fail is unimportant to him.

Durga Den lives an interior life, satisfied only in the thrall of performance, content to shut out the entire world so long as he follows his own personal rhythm. He is not wholly self-absorbed, however, relishing his open invitation to perform at the prestigious Grand Dance Hall of Kortos several times per week. Reserved as ever and uninterested in the type of high-society intrigue that takes place on the balconies overlooking the stage, Durga Den prefers to keep to himself even among dancers and a cheering crowd enthralled by his beats. Flattery from one of the Dance Hall's richest patrons, Scion Lady Idara of House Anandari, eventually cracked his taciturn nature, and he now considers her one of his few close friends. He visits her estate in Westgate's Anandari Block three mornings each week, keeping time for her morning spiritual postures. Afterward, the two friends share a long breakfast in a private chamber atop her tallest tower, recalling their past adventures while gazing over a cityscape still rising from sleep.

Durward

LE | MALE | HUMAN | CLERIC OF ASMODEUS | 4

Durward grew up on the streets of Mudhaven in the Coins, bouncing from gang to gang throughout his youth in a series of disastrous associations that always got him deeper and deeper into trouble. He lost several fingers and toes to gang violence or initiations before finding refuge among Absalom's Asmodean priests. He now serves as a minor cleric servicing several neighborhood churches of the Dark Prince. He views the Asmodeans as his new gang, and he has never been more at home than he is among their dark brotherhood. He enjoys privilege provided by his status in the church, and appreciates the divine powers granted by his faith. Durward believes that the strong (like himself) should always be in a position of power. He talks down to others, often stepping uncomfortably close so he can express his obviously superior thoughts face to face.

Lady Dyrianna of House Avenstar

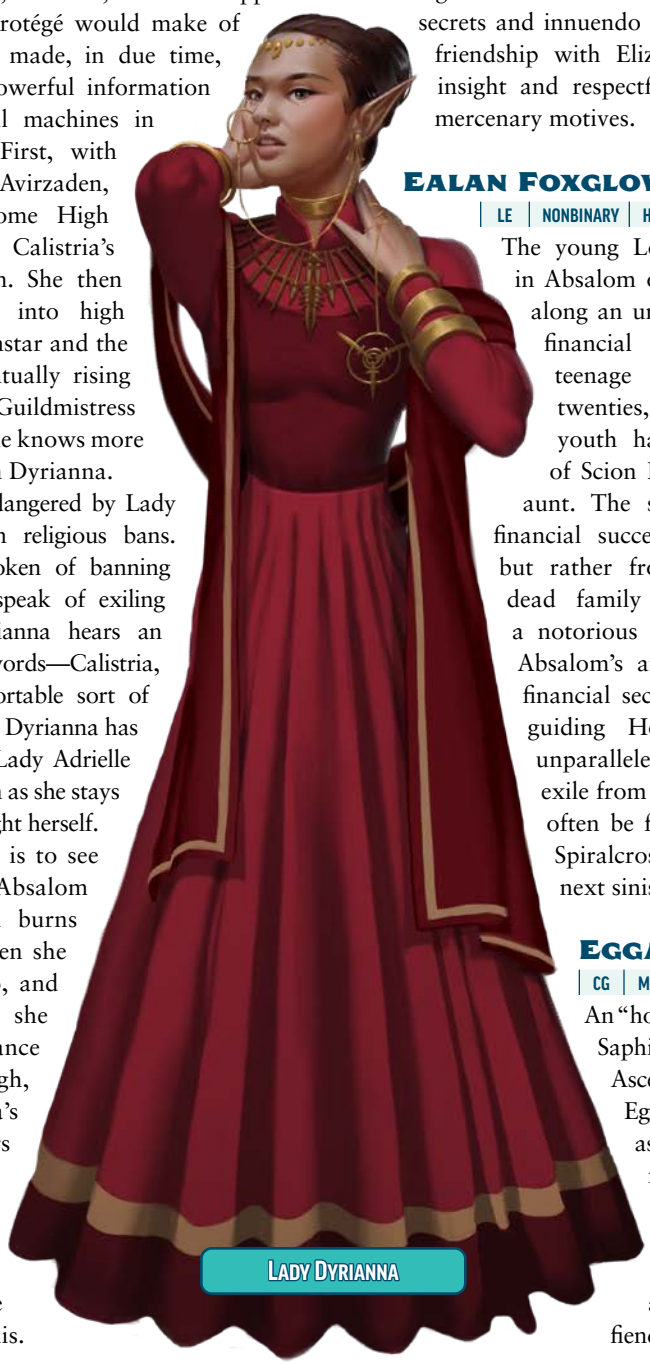
CN | FEMALE | HALF-ELF | CLERIC | 17

When asked how she managed to survive slavery with will and wit intact, Dyrianna smiles and replies with words about love, or faith, or hope, or some variation on that theme. The true answer, though, is unquenched hate. She dreamed at night of paying back every wound, every humiliation, every indignity a thousand times over. When her second child was stolen and sold, that rage bubbled over so hot it burned. She managed to gouge out her owner's eye before three bodyguards finally wrestled her down.

Slated for sale to Cheliax, Dyrianna's vengeful fury caught the eye of a Calistrian priestess named Sarielle Avirzaden. Acting on some divinely-inspired whim, Sarielle bought Dyrianna, freed her, and then stepped aside to see what her protégé would make of herself. What Dyrianna made, in due time, was one of the most powerful information brokerages and political machines in the city of Absalom. First, with minimal assistance from Avirzaden, Dyrianna rose to become High Hetaera and leader of Calistria's worshippers in Absalom. She then parlayed that position into high rank in both House Avenstar and the Courtesans' Guild, eventually rising to Scion Lady and Guildmistress respectively. Today, no one knows more of Absalom's secrets than Dyrianna.

All of that may be endangered by Lady Darchana's proposals on religious bans. Though no one has spoken of banning Calistria the way they speak of exiling Norgorber's clergy, Dyrianna hears an unspoken "yet" in their words—Calistria, after all, is not a comfortable sort of goddess. To ward that off, Dyrianna has put her spy network at Lady Adrielle Neprathep's disposal, even as she stays carefully out of the spotlight herself.

Dyrianna's other goal is to see every former slaver in Absalom ruined. Her anger still burns as brightly as it did when she was freed 30 years ago, and as a devout Calistrian, she believes that vengeance should be brutal, thorough, and vivid. Dyrianna's agents work to see slavers disgraced, bankrupted, disinherited or disowned, maimed and mutilated, and on some rare occasions killed. She feels no qualms about this.



Lady Dyrianna

Though in her private life she prefers a quiet existence with her older daughter (her long-sold second child has yet to be found, though Dyrianna has searched for years), Dyrianna has a role to play as one of the most fashionable and desirable woman in Absalom. And, if she's honest with herself, it's a role that she's come to enjoy over the years, although Dyrianna can still only stand to play it in limited doses. She is often seen in the Ivy District, attending the latest symphony or opera on the arm of one of Absalom's highest worthies, or at some Petal District gala—Dyrianna picks and chooses her favorites to suit herself, but she remains a courtesan and hetaera. Lord Kerkis of House Damaq is her particular favorite for his grave courtesy, despite their political disagreements. She's also been known to favor Samel Maleagant for his humor and sly charm, the two trading secrets and innuendo for hours, and holds an odd friendship with Eliza Petulengro, whose sharp insight and respectful savvy forgives her often mercenary motives.

Ealan Foxglove

LE | NONBINARY | HUMAN | NECROMANCER | 8

The young Lord Ealan Foxglove arrived in Absalom only five years ago, bringing along an unexpected inner wisdom and financial acumen far beyond their teenage years. Now in their mid-twenties, the nervous and twitchy youth has become a swift favorite of Scion Lady Sendeli Foxglove, their aunt. The secret of House Foxglove's financial success comes not from Ealan, but rather from the spellbook of long-dead family patriarch Vorel Foxglove, a notorious necromancer. The spirits of Absalom's ancient trademasters whisper financial secrets into Ealan's eager ears, guiding House Foxglove to heights unparalleled even before the family exile from distant Magnimar. Ealan can often be found at the Forae Logos or Spiralcross Cemetery, researching their next sinister project.

Eggal Torkelson

CG | MALE | HALFLING | CLERIC | 6

An "honored guest" of High Priestess Saphira at Cayden's Hall in the Ascendant Court, dim-witted Eggal Torkelson stands ready to assist those who would take the fight against evil—provided they pay him a bit of coin first. Eggal helped Saphira out of a difficult position a few years back, when fiends managed to infiltrate the

basements beneath the temple. With Saphira's blessing, the halfling cleric of Cayden Cailean now uses Cayden's Hall as a base of operations in the Inner Sea, where he is often sought out by Caydenites who need help with undead threats due to his extensive experience fighting them during the recent fall of the nation of Lastwall. Eggal is not at all shy about sharing tales of his exploits in Lastwall with his drinking companions. Even though the have all heard his stories many times, the tiny changes he adds with each telling keep them endlessly unpredictable.

Eggal is friendly and outgoing, generous with his spirits, money, and affection—but he's not particularly bright. He'd rather help someone than ignore a request for aid, and often expounds at length on the simple joy of assisting others. Simple joys are best when accompanied by gold pieces, so Eggal always insists on an equal share of treasure in exchange for his services as an adventuring mercenary. Once these terms have been reached, Eggal soon proves himself to be a stalwart—if gullible—companion. He avoids killing unless absolutely necessary, even among "monstrous" foes, but hates undead with a passion, going out of his way to destroy them.

Eivlind Albers

N | FEMALE | HUMAN | ARISTOCRAT | 3

The ascension of Grand Princess Eutropia to the Lion Throne of Taldor brought new opportunities throughout the old kingdom. Eivlind Albers and her husband Jacques were among the earliest to benefit from the change of power, when a wealthy Taldan lord bought their charming manor house not far from the palace so his distant relatives could stay somewhere suitable for the coronation. The windfall finally allowed the couple to take the grand tour of the Inner Sea that they had always dreamed about, and Absalom is the latest destination in an extended vacation that has seen them visit Almas ("muddier than we would have preferred"), Ostenso ("small, both literally and figuratively"), Westcrown ("probably nicer in the summer"), Azir ("altogether too dry"), Merab ("smells of alchemy gone bad—very bad"), and Sothis ("filthy, but the statues were nice"). So far, she and her husband think Absalom is the best of the bunch ("though, if I must be honest, Oppara is prettier"). When not criticizing her previous destinations, Eivlind emphatically quizzes strangers on their own travel history, growing more and more excited as she hears of new destinations, even as her husband, mindful of their rapidly dwindling nest egg, attempts to dissuade her by undercutting her interest with presumptions that the suggested locations are probably not all they are cracked up to be. Eivlind takes her husband's dissuasion in stride and good spirit, oblivious to his financial concern. Both tourists dress in the latest Taldan fashions (a bit threadbare here and there due to months of constant travel). This makes them stand out as obvious foreigners, and it's only a matter of time before the pair is targeted for a mugging.

Lady Eleanir of House Blakros

CE | FEMALE | HUMAN | ROGUE | 7

The youngest (by minutes) of Scion Lady Hamaria's beloved twin daughters, Eleanir has walked a step behind her sister, Michellia, for her entire life. While the two have always been close, trusting one another more than even other members of their family, over the years Eleanir's secondary status began to rankle her more and more. When the twins were only nine years old, their older sister Imrizade fled Absalom. Imrizade had been the eldest child of the generation, sworn as a sacrifice to a Shadow Plane enclave known as the Onyx Alliance and the focus of a great deal of the family's affection and regard. When she left, the family's focus turned to Michellia, who received even more special attention than ever before. Finally, in 4712, on the day of Michellia's wedding to the Hellknight Damian Kastner, Eleanir teamed up with a prophecy-obsessed viking warrior named Olaf Kvaran, who believed that it was he who must wed Michellia in order to prevent an ill-defined apocalypse that haunted his troubled dreams. Her jealousy now at its height, Eleanir agreed to take Michellia's place at her wedding to allow Olaf the opportunity to kidnap Michellia and abscond with her for his own purposes. Kvaran was killed during the botched abduction, and the family forgave Eleanir without incident shortly thereafter. Rumors among the household staff suggest that Michellia argued vociferously on her sister's behalf to their skeptical mother, claiming that had she been made aware of the arrangement, she might have participated willingly (even then Michellia had doubts about entering a loveless political marriage to a hard-headed Hellknight). Eleanir has become even more despondent and dangerous in the eight years since, living an increasingly dangerous lifestyle slumming in low-end taverns where nobles—especially famous ones like her—probably don't belong. She is beautiful, impulsive, and scarred by long-held grudges that give her a jaundiced and cynical perspective on virtually everything, especially when it comes to the scheming nobility.

Eleena Woodsong

NG | AGENDER | DOPPELGANGER | CLERIC | 11

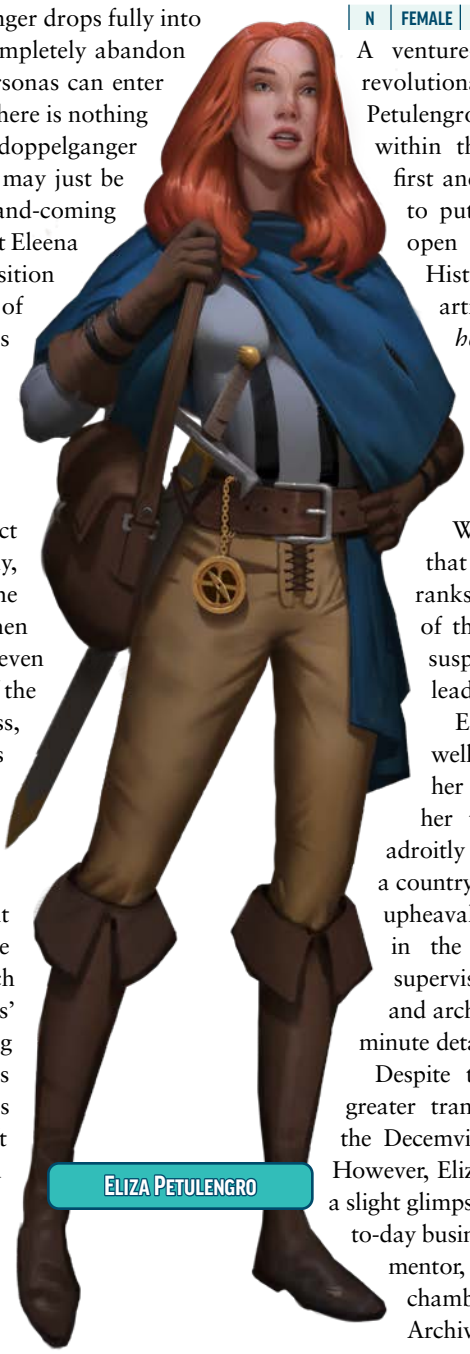
The people of Absalom have enjoyed and delighted in the sermons and artistry of the high priestess of Shelyn, Eleena Woodsong, for far longer than they know. To many of those in Absalom, Eleena is but the latest in a line of clerics to have the honor of serving as the commander of the Shrine of Shelyn. That the shrine has a relatively regular rotation of new priests, with a new cleric taking over as the previous one steps down every few years, is not regarded as strange, for often a worshipper of Shelyn is seized by a muse and seeks to pursue an artistic retreat. And since, for the past 30 years, each of the new priests has equaled or exceeded the previous one's artistic skill, beauty, and knack for public speaking, the parishioners have not questioned their good fortune. What's known to only a select few among the church

is the fact that "Eleena" and the past 15 leaders of the temple have been the same person, a kind-hearted but somewhat mischievous doppelganger who came to the church 40 years ago to offer their services as a muse for temple sculptors and painters. Their ability to shift forms gave the temple clerics an amazing opportunity to paint or sculpt "from life" subjects that were long dead or otherwise unavailable for modeling. The high priest at that time was so taken with the doppelganger's versatile beauty and their growing faith in Shelyn that he named them his successor. The doppelganger agreed, but on one condition, that they could change personas every few years to present a new face of beauty to the people of Absalom. The church accepted this condition, and over time, the doppelganger has become one of the most beloved "secrets" of the temple. Each time they assume a new persona, the doppelganger drops fully into their role, to the extent that they completely abandon any previous name so that these personas can enter the status of "retired inspirations." There is nothing nefarious in this deception, and the doppelganger is truly devout in their faith—but it may just be a matter of time before a jealous up-and-coming priest learns the truth and seeks to out Eleena as a sham in hopes of claiming the position for themselves. That no worshipper of Shelyn over the past three decades has fallen to this sin speaks highly of the faithful indeed.

Eligir Kelm

NG | MALE | HUMAN | CLERIC | 7

Eligir Kelm understands the conflict between faith and patriotism keenly, as he grew up a devout Sarenite in the nation of Taldor during an era when her worship was ostracized and even demonized by a government afraid of the faith's message of peace, forgiveness, and diversity. With those days increasingly behind Taldor, Eligir has had a great weight lifted from his soul, and with each passing day he feels more at ease embracing his faith and his nationality without having to worry that one or the other might clash. He spends much of his time giving sermons at Lions' Square and no longer fears being ridiculed or attacked, and he feels more comfortable in the Puddles working with the Healing Raft without worrying that those in need might not feel safe approaching a Taldan man for aid. Yet despite his increasingly optimistic outlook on society, Eligir recently found himself burdened with a brand new secret: the discovery of an unusual cocoon-like object he found one evening in the Puddles that had floated in with the tide. A strange, humanoid shape was barely visible through the leathery surface, but a sudden and overwhelming urge to hide the cocoon away in his home and tell no one of its discovery has Eligir worried, even though the urges feel almost like a parental sense of protection for a wayward child. When using magic, he can sense no evil emanating from it, but neither can he sense good. He knows the cocoon has affected his mind and decisions, but is powerless to tell anyone about it. And so he keeps quiet, watches, and waits, hoping that the cocoon is a test from Sarenrae and not something altogether more sinister.



Eliza Petulengro

Eliza Petulengro

N | FEMALE | HUMAN | DIVINER | 13

A venture-captain from the blood-soaked revolutionary wasteland of Galt, Eliza Petulengro now holds a unique position within the Pathfinder Society: she is the first and sole member of the Decemvirate to put aside her mask and serve as an open leader of the Pathfinder Society. Historically concealed by magical artifacts known as *Decemvirate helms*, which mask each member's identity and have unique arcane properties, the mysterious ruling council has been the subject of speculation and even concern throughout the Society's history. When a recent scandal revealed that a graveknight had infiltrated their ranks, Eliza stepped forward as the face of the council in an effort to mitigate suspicions and rebuild trust in Society leadership.

Eliza was a talented diviner and well-known Pathfinder even prior to her reveal as one of the Ten. During her tenure at Woodsedge Lodge, she adroitly managed numerous missions within a country beset by continual revolutions and upheavals. The author of over 30 exploits in the *Pathfinder Chronicles*, she also supervised many of the Society's librarians and archivists and is renowned for recalling minute details from reports and conversations. Despite the Society's attempt at fostering greater transparency and goodwill, much of the Decemvirate's business remains a mystery. However, Eliza's public-facing role has provided a slight glimpse behind Skyreach's doors. For day-to-day business, she's often seen with her former mentor, Ambrus Valsin, the Grand Lodge's chamberlain and head of the Overflow Archives where she used to spend much

of her time. It's rumored that the two of them, together with the eccentric Master of Scrolls Kreighton Shaine, are discussing several new candidates to track down absent tomes from the Society's collection that have gone missing over the centuries. The three Pathfinders occasionally stroll the grounds of the Skyreach menagerie for private meetings among the company of the menagerie's bestial inhabitants (who are typically, though not entirely, good at keeping secrets).

Some of these meetings occur with outside allies, occasionally pulling Eliza into city politics despite her best efforts to remain distant. Eliza has often sought out Lady Dyrianna of House Avenstar and her information network, bargaining divined secrets for whispered rumors, and is likewise often called upon by Pathfinder supporter Lady Darchana. Nuar Spiritskin seems determined to be Eliza's ally, due to Pathfinder involvement in rescuing him from becoming lost in the underground maze of Delirium's Tangle, though the Pathfinder remains uncertain of the minotaur prince's loyalties. The mysterious druid Osprey, who has long been known as a direct agent of the Decemvirate, remains one of her strongest allies.

Though not anticipating a public role when she was appointed to the Decemvirate, Eliza is dedicated to proving that the Society can be trusted. She is always attentive to those who cross paths with her—from the greenest Society initiates to the highest officials—and all who encounter her leave feeling heard and respected. Most of her present work centers upon high-level concerns and plans for the Society's path forward, but Eliza still occasionally enjoys checking in on promising fresh recruits, watching for those whose adventures may be worthy of the *Pathfinder Chronicles* and contemplating who may be suited to future leadership.

Elmoira "Tackle Queen" Taggart

N | FEMALE | HALFLING | ROGUE | 7

Elmoira is captain of the Harbor Guard. She used to work as a clerk at the Pickled Imp curio shop, and remains one of its most frequent customers. She knows its proprietor, Guaril Karela, is a criminal in the first degree, but he showed her kindness while she worked in his antiques shop, and she feels indebted to him. She has given his criminal activities a wide berth. Arguably, she and her guards give a lot of criminal enterprises wide berth. Taggart talks a big game about prosecuting smugglers and indeed seems to make several high-profile busts to this effect every year, but countless still pass under the gaze of the Harbor Guard thanks to a steady stream of bribes paid to Crestwatch.

The whole scheme was exposed three years ago in the *Sennight Star* by the investigative journalist Marissa Guile. Taggart survived the scandal, but harbors a deep resentment toward Guile—and the press in general—since the incident. Bribes have naturally grown more frequent and more lucrative thanks to the free publicity.

When necessary, Taggart can pursue criminals directly in her Harbor Guard cutter, the *Windward Warrior*.

Emma Sadik

N | FEMALE | HUMAN | BARD | 9

Emma Sadik has never quite matched the fame she achieved for her starring role in *The Violet Acrobat* a decade ago, but this was certainly not for lack of trying. A prolific actress who some have accused of "coasting" on a lucky break, Emma's ability to ignore the naysayers and critics and stay true to her own goals is heroic in its own way. She can often be found at Tempest in the Ivy District, either performing or observing performances on that venue's exclusive second floor, but the bulk of her work these days takes place within the Ivy Playhouse. She fancies herself a better manager and director than that establishment's current guildmaster, Alain Always, but has kept her plots to unseat him and take his place quiet so far—in no small part due to the fact that she's not sure how to approach replacing him as nomarch without putting her own reputation at risk should she engage in a very public spectacle of potential failure. Emma was there when fellow employee Marli was tossed out of the Ivy Playhouse, and still harbors a suspicion that she was perhaps set up. So far, Emma's found no hard evidence that the flesh-eating grubs that infested the wig Marli fatefully placed atop an unfortunate actress's head were planted by someone working for Alain, but rather than be dissuaded by this lack of proof Emma's only grown more and more obsessed with the possibility of a conspiracy. The notion of becoming the "actress who unmasked the worm-wrangling killer" has taken root in her mind, to the extent that she's been willfully ignoring hints that there might indeed be a counter-conspiracy in play that's using her as its destructive pawn.

Emral Xarcious

N | MALE | HUMAN | EXPERT | 4

Learned in the history and languages of several Inner Sea nations, Emral Xarcious has a well-earned reputation as one of the most eager scholars in Absalom, if one of its least dependable. The Taldan academic has bounced from institution to institution in the city, and currently serves as an instructor at the Endiron School. Emral has many vices, but the one that affects him most deeply is gambling. He is deeply in debt to several criminals (notably to the bookie Gasporian). Ironically, the money troubles and resulting desperation that has seen him fired from most of Absalom's academies has also ensured that he has an extremely wide network of former associates at some of the city's finest institutions. If Emral doesn't know the answer a question, it's only a matter of time before he can find someone in his network who does. In addition to his tenures at formal schools, Emral often takes on private clients. He once tutored the children of Kibizex, leader of the Sewer Dragons, and remains on good terms with both Yiddlepode and Trapmaster Tok to this day, and is a good intermediary when dealing with the Sewer Dragons. He lives in Lion's Square, in the Foreign Quarter.

Lord Encarius of House Fyrlenn

NG | MALE | HUMAN | ARISTOCRAT | 3

Scion of a minor, forgettable noble house, the shy and humble Lord Encarius was drawn in by Adrielle Neprathep's passionate drive and was overjoyed when the ambitious engineer and military veteran married him. He never expected to be dragged into the world of high-level politics brought on by her recent appointment as Absalom's harbormaster. He does his best to support her, though he mostly prefers painting serene watercolors and grafting olive trees. Encarius's artistic pursuits have brought him to the attention of fellow aspiring artist Lady Dhrami Blakros. His botanical interests have also attracted the notice of the dryad queen Iolanthe and her Circle of Stones cult, who wish to bring Lord Encarius into the fold as a means by which to influence his politically powerful wife.

Endrik Archerus

NE | MALE | HUMAN | ARTIST | 17

This middle-aged painter has an enviable reputation as Absalom's most successful and popular artist, and is an international celebrity in his own right. His works are a fixture in Absalom and set the standard for the entire region. Endrik is short and thin, with lank black hair and thinning eyebrows. He sees art in everything, often stopping to sketch odd things wherever he goes. Unknown to the public at large, Endrik has been stealing the ideas of lesser known artists for years. In 4707 AR, Archerus's plagiarism triggered the ire of a murderous arcane artist called Imron Gauthfallow that resulted in the deaths of several Ivy District artists, critics, and patrons in a crime spree the broadsheets identify as the Gallery of Evil Affair. Gauthfallow himself died in the chaos—slain by adventurers attempting to protect Archerus. Imron's elder brother, Muar Gauthfallow, blames Archerus for Imron's death, and still seethes with thoughts of revenge more than a decade later. As Absalom's fourth spell lord, Muar has used his political influence to further humiliate Archerus, having his portraits and landscapes pulled from the walls of Absalom's civic buildings on grounds of plagiarism and frequently libeling him in the press with blistering, unfair reviews of his latest work.

Engleton Embrey

NG | MALE | DWARF | ARTISAN | 16

It's fitting that Absalom's best-known weaponsmith is among its most influential politicians. The city's culture holds its successful trademasters as civic heroes and role models, a part Engleton Embrey plays with aplomb and a complete absence of scandal. The middle-aged dwarf sits on the Ivy District Council, co-leads the Union of Carpenters, Stonemasons, and Metalworkers (with Hans the Northman) in the Coins, holds a guild seat on the Grand Council, and still manages to run Embrey's Armory, in the Ivy District. Swordsmiths across the Inner Sea admire his crafter's mark and aspire to one day create blades equal to his, most without ever even coming close.

Recently, Embrey has been enormously preoccupied with the disappearance of one of his apprentices, a strapping young human lad named Blostin. The young man vanished while on an errand about a week ago, and no one seems to know what happened to him. Embrey always saw the talented Blostin as his eventual successor, and knows that he would not have simply wandered away from the work he loved. The young man's worrisome absence is driving the trademaster to distraction.

Eras the Needle

CG | MALE | HALF-ELF | SWASHBUCKLER | 11

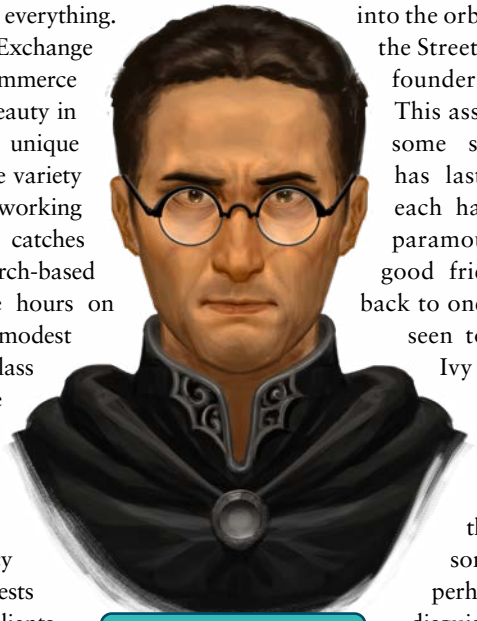
Eras the Needle had a comfortable upbringing in Magnimar, where work at that city's Jeggare Museum instilled a deep curiosity about the past and an intense interest in the artifacts of the civilizations of ancient times. This led him to join the Pathfinder Society, but despite his superlative skill with the blade, he found himself far more interested in cartography, engineering, and ethnography than in dangerous field work in forbidden monster-choked ruins. Nine years ago, Eras vanished for more than a year within the Mordant Spire on the Arcadian Ocean, returning with a personalized wooden mask and a deeper understanding of Ancient Azlant. Last year, he received the commission to captain the *Grinning Pixie*, the famous "Floating Lodge" of the Pathfinder Society. Eras is a calm, just man who rarely speaks in anger and who lavishes praise upon his subordinates. On the rare occasions in which he dons his Mordant Spire mask, however, Eras the Needle's smiles disappear, and he becomes a relentless warrior feared even by his avuncular crew.

The *Grinning Pixie*, also sometimes called the Arcadian Mariner's Lodge, serves as a mobile lodge for the Pathfinder Society, with Eras at its wheel as both captain and venture-captain. When not docked at Absalom on return trips to the Grand Lodge, the ship sails the western coast of Avistan and Garund, making isolated stops along the shore, investigating mysterious islands off the coast, and searching the depths for Azlanti ruins. Eras expects his crew to work and defend the ship, handle maintenance and other chores, and participate on Pathfinder missions under his direction. The ship's interior is well decorated with Azlanti artifacts recovered by the crew over the course of decades—Eras is simply the latest venture-captain to lead the lodge, and another is due to replace him in about a year's time. He knows that the posting is among the highest honor bestowed by the Decemvirate to seagoing Pathfinders, and he's gearing up to make certain that his next expedition to the sunken continent will result in exploits that will be immortalized in the *Pathfinder Chronicles* for generations to come. To this end, he's asked his associate Nester Rees to pass along the names of capable agents with existing interest in Azlanti artifacts, so that he might tempt them to set sail under his banner and aid him in his quest for archaeological immortality.

Erdan Sianovel

LG | MALE | HUMAN | WIZARD | 8

Erdan is an extremely organized wizard who keeps meticulous documentation on nearly everything. By day, he manages the Foreign Coin Exchange on the first floor of the Hall of Commerce in the Coins; he finds tremendous beauty in organization, making him a rather unique follower of Shelyn. Erdan has a wide variety of interests and spends his non-working hours investigating anything that catches his attention as a sort of research-based consulting detective, holding office hours on a frontage a few blocks from his modest home in Westgate. The decorated glass window of the street-level office marks these hours and the name of his moonlighting operation, the Sianovel Agency. While most of his business involves delving the paperwork of Absalom's bureaucracy or vetting suspicious financial manifests at the behest of well-heeled clients, Sianovel surreptitiously encourages clients hoping to broker something other than coins at the Exchange to visit his private business, where he acts as a fence for particularly interesting and unusual objects. His Coin Exchange employer, Lady Seleenae of House Damaq, is also his close friend and private patron, so long as Sianovel shares everything he learns with her and offers her right of first refusal on items related to the faith of Desna—after her friend has learned everything he can about them, of course. At Seleenae's insistence, Sianovel takes the ethics and morality of acquiring these items very seriously, refusing to deal with obvious thieves or charlatans. Fabulously wealthy after many decades of employment at the Coin Exchange and association with House Damaq, Sianovel runs his side business as a hobby, taking only those jobs that intrigue him most, regardless of what his customers can afford to pay.



Erdan Sianovel

As cases go, Sianovel finds none so intriguing as determining the fate of Absalom's missing primarch. What started as idle curiosity has blossomed into outright obsession as the length of Lord Gyr's absence extends. Via notices printed in Absalom's broadsheets, Sianovel recently announced a staggering reward of ten thousand gold pieces for information leading to the discovery of the primarch's fate.

Etrenne Rylwynn

LG | MALE | HALF-ELF | BARD | 16

Rumors constantly swirl around famed composer Etrenne Rylwynn, a fixture of the Ivy District's cultural scene. As Master of Strings at Absalom's famed White Grotto, the charming half-elf instructs bardic students on string instruments and orchestration. As the author of several of Absalom's favorite symphonies, he's well known to theater-goers from all social classes, and he ranks among the city's most popular celebrities, his every move fodder for gossip. A series of successful productions at the Ivy Playhouse brought Rylwynn into the orbit of Alain Always, Guildmaster of the Street Performers and Actor's Guild and founder of the city's most popular theater. This association has led to an enduring—some say romantic—relationship that has lasted more than 30 years. While each has entertained a rotating cast of paramours over the decades, they remain good friends and always seem to come back to one another. The two are most often seen together in Alyssia's, a renowned Ivy District tea house and art gallery in the sphere of House Avenstar, a haven for Absalom's elf and half-elf community.

In recent months, whispers in the Ivy District that Rylwynn is something more than he appears—perhaps even a sliver dragon in disguise—have jumped from dressing rooms and audience halls to the pages of Absalom's press, particularly the salacious *Eyes on Absalom*, leading the normally affable artiste to avoid the spotlight for perhaps the first time in his long life.

Eudom Mansarian

NG | MALE | HUMAN | MERCHANT | 8

Eudom is a well-traveled man from Katheer—an ally of Qadira's trade prince Aaqir al'Hakam, retired jewelry merchant from Korvosa, and one-time caravan master of the now-defunct Mansarian's Marvelous Merchandise of the River Kingdoms—who has settled in Absalom as a sort of informal ambassador for the city's traders. He offers his expertise and wisdom in an advisory capacity to local and traveling merchants alike, and never charges a fee if his aid doesn't noticeably increase the fortunes of his patrons. A devout worshipper of Sarenrae, Eudom doesn't discriminate among those who might hire him, although he never hides his faith and never accepts a job from someone who asks him to do something illegal or cruel. That said, Eudom takes special pride in working with lowlifes, criminals, and thieves, and has had some success in turning such characters from lives of crime once he's shown them more profitable (and safer) methods of making money. His actions have earned him the nickname of "Little Prince Pity" from those who scoff at his redemptive crusade, but Eudom has taken the name as a compliment and often uses it himself when offering introductions.

Evandor Malik

LG | MALE | HUMAN | PALADIN | 11

The knight lord of Absalom's Tempering Hall is by tradition in charge of the martial training of all the champions and clerics of the Seventh Church of Iomedae.

In practice, this means he administers a cadre of trainers and instructors, each with their own specialty and each with a handful of regular students. Knight Lord Evandor Malik still sees to a few particularly gifted or advanced students, but these days he spends more time managing than teaching, finding himself engaged in ecclesiastical politics in the cramped back hallways of the Seventh Church rather than in the open fields of the Tempering Hall. Much to his surprise, Malik finds that he enjoys the "big picture" of guiding the entire faith easily as much as he does criticizing a young cleric's grip on her mace handle. Blond, thick with muscle, gentle of face, and almost always wearing gleaming plate mail, Evandor Malik is easing gently into middle age, and is among the most popular Iomedaens in Absalom—a role model for those who would follow the Lady of Valor into glory.

More consumed now by temple politics than ever, Evandor Malik is getting tired of High Priest Tavorae Falsebane's focus on interior development and neglect of the political and temporal trappings of the church. Indeed, the new patriarch seems to think of these things as affectations—perhaps even sinful—a viewpoint Malik cannot support. Sensing an opportunity, the knight lord has been undermining Falsebane since the earliest weeks of his tenure, once his philosophy and focus became clear for all to see. Malik stokes skepticism among the temple elders, even while he seeks to light the flame of rebellion in his young students at the Tempering Hall, running Falsebane down with snide comments. These activities, which he rationalizes as expressions of his faith, are ironically pushing him further from Iomedae's grace, and on a few recent occasions he has found his divine powers faltering. Malik wrongly believes that these troubles are yet another trial from Iomedae, and they have redoubled his contention that it is he—rather than Falsebane—who should be leading the Inheritor's faith in Absalom.

Evelessa

CN | FEMALE | HALF-ELF | CLERIC | 3

Ruggedly beautiful and always wearing fine gowns only slightly damaged by years selling herself on the street, the courtesan Evelessa once held a far greater station than her current circumstances suggest. Evelessa grew up as a counselor at the Ascendant Court's Pleasure Salon of Calistria. She idolized High Hetaera Dyrianna, and soon worked her way into the high priestess's inner circle by seeking out and sharing the juiciest gossip overheard at the temple, gaining her trust and becoming one of her favorite operatives and protegees. When Dyrianna later assumed the rank of Guildmistress of Absalom's Courtesans' Guild, Evelessa left the church to act as her right-hand operative within the guild. She was fiercely loyal to Dyrianna, and quickly reported every rumor and suspicion to the guildmistress, earning her the nickname "the Wasp," for Evelessa's whispered word was as sharp as a savage sting to those she considered Dyrianna's enemies, many of whom found themselves drummed out of the guild and forced to work the streets without license, guild sanction, or protection. The severity of Evelessa's judgment (and, by extension, that of Dyrianna) earned her many enemies, but until recently the aura of Dyrianna's favoritism protected her from revenge. No longer. Three years ago, in an attempt to drive a wedge between the guildmistress and a new favorite named Faelyn, Evelessa concocted a tale that falsely tied Faelyn (and thus the Courtesans' Guild) to Lord Gyr in a scandal that scorched through the broadsheet press and brought shame and corruption investigators into the heart of the guild's business. To Evelessa's surprise, Dyrianna sided with her rival Faelyn, and turned her back on her old favorite, seemingly forever. She hasn't quite been kicked out of the Courtesans' Guild, but Evelessa is no longer welcome in the city's best festhalls, and has resorted to working the streets and seedy bars of the Coins and Dock District, away from scheming rivals who now wish to harm her on the way down as she harmed them on her climb to the top. Evelessa seeks revenge on Faelyn (who pays her no attention at all), and courts friends among those she believes can aid her in reclaiming Dyrianna's support. She is a good source of information on the middle-class philanderers of Eastgate, who often seek swift, secret companionship in the districts she frequents.

Evessian Deris

CG | FEMALE | HALF-ELF | SAILOR | 8

The most popular half-elf captain of Absalom's Navy retired a few years ago after re-sinking two warships packed with undead invaders during the Silent Tide of 4707 AR, but she couldn't escape appointment to Absalom's Low Council by the leaders of Escadar, who respect her dedication and unflappability. Of late she's attempted to get back in touch with her sailor roots, occasionally taking her ship, the *Cutlass*, on patrols around the Starstone Isles. Unfortunately, association with her rowdy crew has rekindled old bad habits. Casual slumming in Dock District bars started as a diversion, but is becoming something more like a compulsion. Her reliance on drink has started to affect her work on the Council, leading some to fear she might be opening herself up to blackmail or worse.

Lady Evigail of House Wycomb

N | FEMALE | HUMAN | CLERIC | 9

Lady Evigail of House Wycomb seldom leaves her haunt in Evergeen Park, where she leads a cult dedicated to Gozreh called the Children of Spring. The cult maintains a small open-air shrine near the center of the park by its largest pool, and rituals they conduct there keep the park green and healthy year round. The green-haired apparently human woman welcomes any who approach her fane, particularly those who are more used to the wild places of the world than the paved streets of a crowded city.

Lady Evigail frequently misses votes in the Low Council, where she has held an at-large seat for more than a decade, constantly re-elected by her zealously

supportive cult. They don't mind that she almost never attends sessions of the Grand Council, caring only that when she does participate, she does so to further the interests of the Children of Spring.

Ezlip Terrag

NG | MALE | DWARF | FARMER | 4

Ezlip is the owner of Terrag's Fungi Farm underneath Eastgate's Green Ridge neighborhood. The dwarf is most often found in the underground farm, harvesting with help from his wife and members from all far-flung branches of their family. He is generally warm and jovial, and keenly interested in not only cultivating mushrooms, but also experimenting and learning about their various uses. When Ezlip is not picking mushrooms, he is either bringing them to the market to sell, or incorporating them into his second-greatest passion—cooking.

Faelyn

CG | MALE | HALF-ELF | EXPERT | 4

Stylish, seductive, and sly, the handsome young courtesan Faelyn is a popular up-and-coming member of Absalom's Courtesans' Guild, and a personal favorite of its guildmistress, Dyrianna. Faelyn has been seen adorning Dyrianna's arm at a variety of public functions over the last few years, raising his profile and drawing an increasingly wealthy list of clients of all genders. Outside work, Faelyn enjoys an open but passionate romantic partnership with the Caydenite cleric Dahar, who he thinks is starting to grow a little overbearing in his encouragement that Faelyn distance himself from Dyrianna. The Courtesans' Guild's politics and association with Absalom's high and mighty run contrary to Dahar's more freedom-loving creed, resulting in serious relationship friction for the first time. Rather than move away from Dyrianna's schemes, as his lover suggests, Faelyn is eager to involve himself much more deeply.

Faiza Pagani

LN | MALE | HUMAN | FIGHTER | 8

Faiza is the definition of a career guard, a man who's held his post as lieutenant in the Thistleguard for nearly three decades. He's turned down several offers of promotions, having noted that those who move too high in the ranks tend to get bogged down in administrative distractions—as a lieutenant, Faiza feels he can do the most "good" for the Thistleguard. Of course, his by-the-books interpretations of the law do sometimes put into question whether or not his decisions are actually for the good of the community, something his detractors have never relented on over the years. Faiza's allegiance to the church of Abadar certainly helps protect him from blowback generated by citizens frustrated with his choices, many of which put the safety of the city and government above the safety of the individual. Recently, though, there's been more internal friction between Faiza and other guards, particularly those who have been swayed by detective Casima Evers's increasingly public observations that the Thistleguard must be stricter on the district's softer crimes.

Feldreth Noor

LE | MALE | HUMAN | FIGHTER | 6

The laborers at Ogrekin Hall are universally beefy and broad-shouldered, and Feldreth Noor has taken this look as something of a "dress code." Far and above the beefiest and broadest-shouldered of the lot, Feldreth is human but enjoys the rumors and scuttlebutt that he has giant's blood in his ancestry and does little to dissuade the talk. The truth behind his bulk is only partially a result of his hands-on techniques in serving as Ogrekin Hall's labormaster (he's typically already working when the day shift starts, and makes it a point to never leave before the rest of the laborers knock off for the day). He spends much of his free time working on his physique and eschewing alcohol and sweets, but also engages in all manner of theoretical and experimental methods to build mass and retain it. Some of these practices are merely strange. Sleeping inverted above a bed of rare incense, or using acupuncture to "stimulate muscle growth" were two methods of fitness development recommended to him by two different charlatans who paid dearly for their snake-oil peddling once Feldreth realized he'd been had, but his latest technique has proven results. While rubbing doses of black market fleshwarping oils imported at no small cost from Nex into his chest and arms every four nights has seen his physique expand over the past few weeks, Feldreth's coworkers have noted increasing mood swings. They don't know his oil-rubbing schedule, only that every four days the man is unusually pleasant and easy to get along with, but that his attitude grows more and more foul and cruel as the four days move on. Feldreth has taken to wearing shirts all the time now rather than work bare chested, since he's not quite sure how to explain the strange ridges and rudimentary eye-like growths that have started to appear on his chest and biceps, but he's not going to let a few "weird cosmetic side-effects" scare him off of a regimen that obviously works!

Feldus Chuld

CN | MALE | HUMAN | ROGUE | 1

Being one of the only members of the Band of the Palm who doesn't even realize the whole operation is a cover for the Bloody Barbers may say more for Feldus Chuld's inability to understand reality than anything else. The aimless thief had grand aspirations as a youth growing up in the Coins. He hoped to be the master of his own guild by the time he was able to shave, and planned on ruling Absalom behind the scenes as a puppet master before he got his first gray hair. Already twenty years old, Feldus is no more influential in the Coins than he was the day he joined the Band of the Palm. He's got plenty of excuses as to why his plans to run a guild never went anywhere, but the truth is simply that Feldus is the perfect storm of procrastination and lack of talent. Hoping that the next pocket you pick might provide you a *ring of wishes* isn't a great path to power, but despite

having spent more than half his life as a low-tier thief and barely-more-than-amateur cutpurse with nothing to show for it, Feldus isn't likely to change his ways anytime soon. One achievement that Feldus is all but guaranteed to succeed at by the end of the year is the dubious honor of becoming the oldest member of the lowest rank of crooks in the Band of the Palm. Feldus clings to the hope that he'll get his first promotion within the coming days or weeks, and in so doing dodge this shameful fate, but those around him don't expect any surprises.

Ferridan Severus

| LG | MALE | HUMAN | DIPLOMAT | 13 |

The fastidious Diplomatic Minister of Absalom's High Council oversees a network of ambassadors stationed in courts throughout the Inner Sea and beyond. He's also nominally in charge of Absalom's external intelligence operations, receiving regular reports from spies embedded across Absalom's sphere of influence. When not himself visiting foreign nations, Severus spends a great deal of time at the Vault of Abadar, where his father and seven brothers and sisters are deeply embedded in temple leadership. He is particularly fond of his nephew, Tevis, a student at Eastgate's Tallavont Academy. Ferridan visits Tevis at the Tallavont dormitories weekly when he is in town, hoping to mold the boy into his protégé.

Findialory

| NG | MALE | GNOME | INVENTOR | 4 |

As one of the most gifted students of the Clockwork Cathedral's Alive and Ticking cognate, Findialory sees his work developing healing constructs as a natural and joyful extension of his enduring faith in Brigh, the Whisper in Bronze. Findialory, still quite young for a gnome out on his own, possesses boundless enthusiasm for invention and intricacy, marveling at the craftsmanship of elaborate gearworks and encouraging his fellow students to work diligently and carefully—without forgetting to have fun while doing it. A shock of purple hair sprouts from his head, standing up in a barely controlled tuft. Findialory is quick to make friends, especially with adventurers, whom he believes to be natural clients and patrons of his healing-focused cognate. So enthusiastic is he about the marvels contained in the Clockwork Cathedral that it doesn't take much effort to convince him to take friendly non-students in for a surreptitious look around.

Finwick Severus

| LN | MALE | HUMAN | CLERIC | 4 |

Finwick Severus is the youngest of seven Severus siblings associated with the Ivy District's Vault of Abadar, and the lowest-ranking of the lot. He is closest to his older brother, Arkonis, but whereas Arkonis helps to manage the meetings and affairs of the temple's richest patrons and has the ear of the high priestess, Finwick mans the temple's front door, seeing to walk-in parishioners of all (but mostly lower) social classes. His amiable nature makes him a fitting face for the temple, and his warm personal connections to faithful citizens throughout the city does credit to the Wealthy Father. While beloved by his flock for his guidance and natural empathy, Finwick is quick to remind visitors of the temple's extensive list of services (and the costs associated with them). Abadar is best honored by the sound of clinking coins, Finwick is quick to remind his patrons—whom he sometimes struggles to remember not to call customers.

Finwick lives in Eastgate, where he is a member of the district's Concerned Residents' Union. Politically conservative and disdainful of "filthy" members of the Children of Spring and Circle of Stones cults (whom he believes threaten the neighborhood's civilized character), Finwick works closely with President Gelda Dellby to tighten civic restrictions of both of these harmful organizations. Finwick's small estate features a beautiful aviary crowded with a profusion of colorful birds. He spends a great deal of his considerable personal wealth amassing a collection of animals (birds in particular) he keeps on the premises, and counts among Absalom's most prolific menagerists, even if he seldom exhibits his collection to outsiders. His son, Tevis Severus, is a student at Eastgate's Tallavont School.

Firandivar

| LE | MALE | HUMAN | ABJURER | 12 |

True to the nature of his homeland of Edasseril, Firandivar is no stranger to envy. Appointed to the role of ambassador in the Embassy of New Thassilon by his (metaphorical) grandmother Belimarius, Firandivar quickly found himself in the shadow of a woman he sees as less talented, less qualified, and simply less—fellow ambassador Ayandai isn't even truly human, he often argues. He sometimes even argues that she isn't even alive, simply a magical construct crafted for vanity's sake by Sorshen. Firandivar is fond of citing empirical facts, such as his greater mastery over magic (not only can Ayandai not cast a spell as iconic to her studies as *dominate*, but as a simulacrum she's incapable of ever gaining skill enough to accomplish such a task), in trying to convince others of his (and thus Edasseril's) superiority over his fellow ambassador and her leader. Yet try as he might, the perception of all those who visit the embassy is that it's Ayandai who's actually in charge. Firandivar has been mistaken for the building's major domo more times than he cares to admit, and thrice has been addressed as Ayandai's apprentice by three different visitors (two of whom Firandivar has already, and secretly, ensured have met horrific and painful deaths). His envy over her popularity and the perception of her greater skill has increasingly blinded him to his own duties, a fault that's only allowed Ayandai to establish herself more as the "primary diplomat" from New Thassilon. His requests to the homeland for permission to have Ayandai assassinated, to sabotage her work, or to otherwise try to claim dominance have gone unanswered by Runelord Belimarius. Recently, Firandivar discovered that she hasn't even bothered to read his requests, so distracted

is she with her own envious pursuits. It's only a matter of time before Firandivar can't hold back and makes an unsanctioned move against his hated rival. After considering the wisdom of recruiting the aid of a cabal of devils, the Bloody Barbers, or the assassins of the Red Mantis, Firandivar's latest plot is to find a gullible group of adventures, approach them in disguise, and trick them into launching their own assault on the Embassy in a misguided crusade to take down Ayandai before she can complete a (fictional) ritual to become a true duplicate of her mistress, Queen Sorshen.

The Fish-Head Queen

NG	FEMALE	MERFOLK	RINGMASTER	6

A cursed merfolk with her fish and human parts swapped, the Fish-Head Queen is the current owner of Aysepir's Astounded Abyss, a permanent sideshow in the Puddles. Kind and motherly, she treats the monsters at the Astounded Abyss as her family even though she knows many are violent criminals. She is a stalwart defender of the strange and bizarre. The Fish-Head Queen spends most of her time at the Astounded Abyss, but sometimes leaves the Puddles when invited by a trusted friend, such as the Harlequin or Chugmuzz the Surly.

Flevvid Grummlin

LE	MALE	HUMAN	ALCHEMIST	13

For over seven centuries, Metringer Sanitarium has operated on just this side of the law, and its current administrator, Flevvid Grummlin, has no interest in anything approaching reform for the establishment. He and his staff continue to present a facade that everything is (if only barely) on the up-and-up, with the fact that the Sanitarium presents a blunt, quick solution to the complex problem of mental illness aiding its continued operation. Flevvid's current obsession is a conviction that there exists deep in the brain of all living creatures a hidden organ that regulates the desire to sin, yet so far, his operations on living patients have resulted in victims locked away in the building's expansive dungeons. Much of Flevvid's research is keyed off of ancient texts recovered from Thassilon, but to his frustration, the Embassy of New Thassilon has rebuffed all of his attempts to "trade research," forcing him to rely upon shady adventurers and spies to extract what clues he thinks he needs from that nation's ancient and largely-outdated traditions of associating sin with magic. The illegal import of an increasing number of sinspawn into the sanitarium for use as guards in the building's deepest levels is one of Flevvid's latest ill-advised escapades, and with the sinspawn slowly building up their own agenda and organizing behind the scenes, Flevvid may soon find himself with the greatest threat to his hold over Metringer Sanitarium yet—one of his own accidental making, grown within the structure's very walls in the form of a cancerous infestation of ancient fleshwarped monstrosities. Yet for all his self-professed intellect and mastery over the comings and goings of Metringer Sanitarium, Flevvid has yet to realize that one of his own guards, a man named Vernus, is pursuing his own sinister agenda within the building's twisting dungeons.

Flindish Tanwhirl

N	FEMALE	GNOME	CLERIC	10

The current high priestess of Brigh is a stern, no-nonsense gnome named Flindish Tanwhirl. Despite her small stature, she's built a larger-than-life reputation among her followers as being an enigmatic figure whom some claim to be a clockwork clad in flesh. The whirring, grinding, mechanical armor Flindish wears conceals much of her body, hiding the fact that she was well into the bleaching before her faith in Brigh and her fascination with clockworks paused this fate. Today, Flindish relies completely on her faith to hold back the bleaching, and by immersing herself completely in the mysteries of the gear and the wonders of the spring, she finds her imagination and sense of wonder to be stronger than ever. Yet all of this came at a cost—her ability to interact with other living people has become atrophied, and she increasingly leaves the day-to-day duties of her position to a devoted cabal of priests so that she can focus her time in the depths of the Clockwork Cathedral. Sometimes, weeks go by with no sighting of the increasingly mysterious gnome.

Florian Gale

NE	MALE	HALF-ELF	SWASHBUCKLER	14

With his crisp expensive uniform, well-defined jaw, and expressive eyes, Florian Gale easily ranks among the most handsome men in all of Absalom. Beyond his duties as the captain of the Precious Guard and his protection of the Absalom Mint, Florian Gale cares about nothing other than himself. Before being hired by the guard, Gale achieved renown as one of the city's finest fencers, an honor that saw him instruct a generation of Absalom's nobility in the fine art of bladecraft, establishing himself among the richest citizens of Absalom as the paragon of swordplay in the city and making him the perfect candidate to take over Absalom's Precious Guard when the role became vacant. Not everyone in Absalom's upper class appreciates the haughty, self-centered man, for while he was instructing their children, he blissfully had his pick of those wives, husbands, and retainers who captured his mercurial fancy, leaving a trail of shattered relationships in his wake. A provision of his current employment contract requires that he keep his amorous ambitions to himself while leading the Precious Guard, and the scandalous salary afforded to him for the prestige is one of the few things to have ever convinced him to sacrifice one thing he wants in favor of another. Despite his selfishness, Florian is a capable and dedicated servant to his duty, and those who have sought to use his past as a lothario to lure him into a honey trap always discover that Gale loves himself first, money second, and absolutely everyone else a distant third.

Fola Barun

| CG | FEMALE | HALF-ELF | DIPLOMAT | 8 |

Fola leads the Envoy's Alliance faction of the Pathfinder Society, an informal association within the greater organization that emphasizes the welfare of Pathfinder agents and strives to ensure that members as a whole are well treated by the Decemvirate. Barun's years as a liaison between the Society and the Ekujae elves of the Mwangi Expanse convinced the leaders of the Society that she was the perfect candidate to lead the community-focused organization. She assumed leadership and adopted the motto "Strength in community," a fitting credo given the collaborative focus of the Envoy's Alliance. Barun and the Alliance keep a series of interconnected rooms in the Quadrangle buildings on the grounds of the Grand Lodge. Fola counts fellow Envoy's Alliance member and Pathfinder Society Head Initiate Janira Gavix among her closest friends. She welcomes all visitors to the Alliance with an open smile and a warm handshake. Her long raven-black hair frames a pale face adorned with silver tattoos.

Captain Folant "Ferret" ap Morilla

| LG | MALE | HUMAN | WEREWOLF | INVESTIGATOR | 7 |

Folant grew up as an attendant of a powerful Taldan noble family in the city of Oppara, where he met Lady Gloriana Morilla when they were both teenagers. After the noblewoman's family dispatched her to Absalom for a decade, she returned to Oppara, only to find that her old friend had been dismissed for an indiscretion with another household servant. Eventually, Lady Gloriana found Folant homeless and penniless, a victim of not only misfortune but also of the magical disease of lycanthropy. She rescued him, cleaned him up, and appointed him to her household staff back in Absalom. She did not, however, cure his disease, seeing in it an opportunity to cultivate a trusted ally with a unique set of skills.

Always a paragon of self-control, once in Absalom under the tutelage of Sindoi of the Thousand Poems, Folant managed to keep his monthly transformations into a man-wolf under control, to the point of achieving complete lucidity while in bestial form. Lady Gloriana eventually began using her ally as a private investigator, officially adopting him into House Morilla after several of his investigations solved major family problems (or prevented them from becoming public). His investigative work led to employment in the district watch, and eventually control of the Lotus Guard as its well-respected captain.

Captain Folant maneuvers the Petal District watch away from prying too deeply into Morilla family affairs related to the Guild of Wonders. He finds the murderous nature of that wing of his adopted family distasteful at best, and avoids prolonged contact with them.

Fribinella Dracori

| CN | FEMALE | GNOME | ILLUSIONIST | 8 |

Although she's quite skilled at weaving illusions, Fribinella prides herself in the procuring of the real. Her shop, Dracori's Sensory Emporium, proudly proclaims itself to be an "Illusion Free Zone" and that every single one of the outlandish and startling offerings she sells are real. Indeed, she uses her skill at illusions not to enhance her wares or to offer fakes, but to make sure that the items she tracks down and purchases for resale are the real deal. This isn't to say that she never sells magical baubles or enchanted knick-knacks—indeed, Fribinella actively seeks out delights that can only function via magic, yet she always ensures that the magic is "real" and utilizes conjuration or transmutation effects when possible. The gnome employs a small but talented staff of finders, including at least two genies who serve her voluntarily, but she rarely hires those who identify as "adventurers." Fribinella prefers to sell to these folks rather than work with them, since in her experience, adventurers are so much better at spending money than they are at making it in any way that doesn't involve stabbing things and robbing them.

Friendly Senn

| CN | MALE | HUMAN | TROUBLEMAKER | 4 |

Ten years ago, Friendly Senn was one of the most popular street urchins in the Coins, a frequent presence in the Grand Bazaar (both as a guide and a pickpocket) and something of a mascot in Mudhaven. Like many orphans in his circumstances, Senn occasionally turned to petty crime to keep himself fed, but he always made an effort to make good on his indiscretions with generous tips when he could afford to. Most area merchants ignored his crimes, appreciating his amicable spirit and endless optimism. Then, one sunny Starday, Lord Gyr and his personal retinue picked up Friendly Senn from a fruit market in Eastgate and sent him directly to the Whale without trial, where the boy remains to this day. Despite the squalid conditions of his imprisonment, Senn always maintains a wide grin and cheerful attitude, seemingly unconcerned by his predicament. His guards, on the other hand, remain greatly concerned—for the allegedly human Friendly Senn does not appear to have aged a single day in the course of the last decade.

Fronsac Shimm

| NE | MALE | HUMAN | SORCERER | 5 |

The big-hearted, boisterous Fronsac Shimm holds an Ivy District seat on the Low Council, serving his constituents with the same zeal and swagger in the political arena that he employs serving them as the popular proprietor of the Gutless Griffon, one of the busiest and most beloved taverns in the district. There, Shimm made boon companions of all social classes, which helped him gain his new position. While friendly and much beloved, Fronsac Shimm truly cares only for himself, and is willing to betray any of his casual friends for even a sliver of profit.

Fumlin Fruz

| CE | MALE | HALFLING | ROGUE | 6 |

Fumlin fancies himself the "Funnest Foe of Fear" when

pushing his services as a professional guide outside the grounds of the ruined Grislyfair in the Precipice Quarter. Constantly chuckling and overly friendly, Fruz warns that the abandoned park can be dangerous in the day or night, and that besides being great company as a guide, he has lots of engaging and exiting stories about several of the fair's overgrown attractions. Fruz's tours cost a silver piece per head, and are arguably worth the money, provided the customer has a patience for grating characters and a fascination with the macabre. Nearly all of Fruz's anecdotes relate to tragic deaths or disappearances during the height of the fair's popularity. Here a now-forgotten noble scion tumbled from the Tottering Tower to land in a jumble of twisted limbs, there a whole family was crushed when a muzzled catoblepas fell from a faulty tightrope. As Fruz throws himself deeper and deeper into his well-rehearsed narrative, his chuckles give way to disturbing giggling. Fumlin Fruz is a sadist at heart and a highly placed murderer in a Puddles cult dedicated to Norgorber in his Skinsaw Man aspect, but he knows better than to attack his customers while on the job. In fact, the Grislyfair is heavily haunted, and Fruz's tours provide the best protection against its inherent dangers. The tours are the halfling's only reliable source of income, and he enjoys the performance aspect of his presentation, especially when it upsets patrons who have already handed over their coin. For theatricality and pure enjoyment, Fruz much prefers the murderous parodies of criminal court proceedings he and other members of his cult enact at their headquarters at Razorhall, where the fat, wicked halfling acts as half-hearted counsel for the defense.

Lord Ganfen

Gaftrin

LG | MALE | HUMAN | NURSE | 4

As a nurse employed at Westgate's Absalom Chirurgeon Dispatch, Gaftrin has seen his share of house-call strangeness. While Gaftrin knows that the practice of traveling to a sufferer's home to provide them medical aid without forcing them the indignity or awkward pain of traveling out to seek help is noble, he's increasingly found himself at odds with how to handle these responsibilities against what he discovers in those homes he visits to administer aid. It's one thing to overhear someone at a house call admit to a crime when they assume he's not paying attention, or to notice contraband on display in a home while attending a rich patron's complaints about bunions, but on one of his most recent dispatches to a wounded noble who had been "bitten by a pet on the ankle," Gaftrin noticed several curious incongruities—the bites on the man's ankle seemed to be delivered by a human set of jaws; the man insisted on being attended in the front room of his home and had strung thick curtains over the entrances leading further into the house; and near the end of the visit he heard what sounded like pounding on a wall somewhere up above that the noble quickly dismissed as "the help beating the dust out of a rug." Gaftrin did his duty, but curiosity has gotten the better of him. He reported the curiosities to the Sally Guard, but was told there was nothing suspicious to investigate and that the guard wasn't interested in disrupting a noted citizen's home life to investigate the veracity of what was very likely just the sound of servants cleaning a mess. Bound by the rules of the Dispatch and frustrated by the Guard's stance, Gaftrin wouldn't dare sneak back into the noble's home to investigate, but surely asking a group of adventurers to look in on the matter isn't breaking the rules, is it?

Galamere

CG | MALE | HALF-ELF | ROGUE | 7

Galamere is one-half of the leadership of the Bladed Bastards, one of several independent Firebrand organizations that have recently appeared in Absalom. With his brother Quar, Galamere runs Impalement Arts at Besmara's Boardwalk—here, anyone can attempt a number of different challenges designed by Galamere himself to test a player's skill at knife throwing, but also to test their personality and aptitude for potential recruitment into the Firebrands. Once someone throws their knives, the points they earn allow them to choose different types of prizes, ranging from miniature figurines or replica weapons or humorous caricatures of themselves, or to "donate" their prize points to one of several local groups or organizations that work to make the Docks a better place. When enough prize points are donated, Galamere and Quar promise to send payments to that organization, but the true purpose of these various prize offerings is to find out who might have the right combination of kindness, panache, and humor to make them good Firebrand material.

Galven Rockbottom

CN | MALE | DWARF | CUSTODIAN | 1

Eccentric old Galven Rockbottom has been sweeping streets in Absalom for centuries, and he's been paying careful attention to everything that happens around him the whole time. A member in good standing of the city's Trashpickers' Commission and a good friend of Commissioner Pondo Funt, Galven is good at his job and good at keeping his bosses happy. He's also good at selling important information he observes while on the job. "No one pays attention to the garbage man," Rockbottom often says, "and thank Torag for it!" His

knack for observing important events and his acting as a source for some of the most influential information brokers in Absalom has brought him to the attention of no less a figure than Lady Dyrianna herself, who refers to Rockbottom (whom she has never met) as "Our Man with the Broom." He's also a frequent source for scandalous news leaked to the *Sennight Star*, where he is known by the unclever pseudonym "Pebbletop." Rockbottom is a member of the tight-knight congregation at the Father's Forge, in Westgate, and counts many of Absalom's most prominent and important dwarves as his close friends.

Lord Ganfen of House Kethlin

| N | MALE | HUMAN | ADMINISTRATOR | 12 |

The "Master of Blades" of the Irorium, Ganfen manages the staff that controls bets, approves bouts, and generally oversees the running of the arena. Unlike most previous masters, Ganfen has no fighting experience himself, instead relying on a natural knack for business. He also commands the loyalty of scores of gladiators, as he controls the timing of their fights as well as their opponents, and he is easily swayed to conduct favors for those gladiators who help him get what he wants. Lord Ganfen also sits on the Foreign District Council, where he uses his political clout to improve the financial interests of the Irorium. He and Irorium undertemple master Ysia Iron-Palm have a mutual respect for one another that is necessary to keep the Irorium working harmoniously.

Garethal Brighteyes

| NG | MALE | ELF | WIZARD | 17 |

Lord Gyr of Gixx served as both Absalom's primarch and its first spell lord prior to his disappearance. While Wynsal Starborn attempted his first two years of leadership without a first spell lord to assist him, escalating crises culminating in the recent siege of the Whispering Tyrant encouraged him to appoint his old friend, the elf wizard Garethal Brighteyes, to the position on a provisional basis, pending Lord Gyr's return. By far the most powerful elf in city government, Brighteyes does his best to influence domestic policy in favor of his kin, even while he keeps the bulk of his efforts focused on keeping his old friend alert to the very real magical dangers that put the city at regular risk.

Beyond advising the Grand Council on arcane matters, Garethal has little interest in politics. He disdains the elf-centered House Avenstar due to a conflict of principle with Scion Lord Tylvran hundreds of years ago. In return, the elves of Avenstar consider Garethal a political dead-end and a joyless opponent of their machinations.

Garyth Pammenter

| CN | FEMALE | HUMAN | ROGUE | 15 |

The infamous thief Garyth Pammenter is the most reviled of House Blakros's many enemies, and a constant irritant to them that refuses to go away quietly. Pammenter famously broke into the Blakros Museum on three different occasions to steal precious artifacts on display, and she enjoyed a decade-long spree pilfering the ostensibly hidden warehouses the family keeps throughout the city. With the support and encouragement of Guaril Karela, Pammenter attended the Pathfinder Society's Grand Convocation of 4712, where she returned several of the most prominent items she had taken from House Blakros and presented herself as a potential suitor for Michellia Blakros's hand in marriage, mostly to appease Karela's sense of humor. She is certainly in his debt for arranging the affront to her hated enemies, and she looks forward with unease to the time when the Sczarni crime lord decides to call in that particular chit. Persuasive and charismatic, Pammenter is thought by many of Absalom's most knowledgeable criminals as a shoo-in for membership in the equally infamous Smoke Knights, with many assuming that she is in fact in charge of that band of fearless thieves. Underworld lore also suggests that Garyth Pammenter possesses a long list of secret sites and treasure locations across the Inner Sea. She's also long enjoyed the secret support of Osirion, filtered through Grand Ambassador Dremdhet Salhar, in the form of safe harbor and required items for some of her more outlandish heists.

Gasporian

| LE | MALE | GNOME | ROGUE | 7 |

Gasporian is a flamboyant, witty bookie who works at the Crimson Coin. He maintains a garish but easy-to-read board that keeps all of the odds on the Coin's latest brawls, and is responsible for most of the memorable persona names handed out to those who seek to fight in the tavern's ring. Combatants hoping to fare well in the fights understand the value of having Gasporian's support, for when he doesn't take a shine to a potential brawler, comedic names like "Picklebreath", "Lord Snotnose", "Limpblade", or "The Stumbling Toad" tend to be prophetic in predicting losers. Gasporian doesn't make his association with the Sanguine Beasts publicly known, but by kicking back a percentage of his income to the gang, he enjoys more than enough support when it comes to needing protection from desperate gamblers or requiring heavies to go collect on an outstanding debt. Recently, Gasporian has taken a newcomer under his wing—a man named Barnel. While Barnel harbors plots to form a new gang with his new boss, Gasporian has other plans for the deluded fence. One of Gasporian's best-kept secrets is his role as a "menu procurer" for several of Absalom's more sinister palates. One of his patrons is none other than Mother Jackal of House Ahnkamen, and her recent request of a "pudgy but tender Chelaxian" fits poor, ignorant Barnel perfectly. Gasporian hopes to get another dozen pounds stacked onto Barnel before he offers him up to his ghoulish patron, but until then, he appreciates the extra help in handling his day-to-day job.

Gelda Dellby

| LN | FEMALE | HALFLING | POLITICIAN | 5 |

The president of Eastgate's Concerned Residents' Union is both well connected in the cozy community—her husband, Tontartigan, is headmaster of the district's prestigious Endiron School—and embroiled in one of its most challenging controversies. A few years ago, her beloved son Rance became enamored with the Children of Spring cult inhabiting Evergreen Park, dying his hair green in emulation of the charismatic Lady Evigail and largely abandoning his busy-body parents in favor of his new family. To make matters worse, Rance has become one of Evigail's most productive recruiters. So many children of Eastgate's hoi polloi have embraced the Children of Spring in recent years that cult activity in the district has become one of the most pressing concerns before the Union, with Gelda among the most vociferous and strident critics of their influence. Gelda's moving speeches about the terrible loss inflicted upon her by the feckless cult have brought her to the attention of powerful politicians in the district and beyond. While Gelda would love to see Rance return to the fold, she's also keenly aware that her ability to convey a sense of loss in the face of cult activity grants her significant political capital in Eastgate, and with Union elections coming up she's increasingly beginning to wonder if her son's continued absence might be better for her career than a swift return.

Lady Gloriana

Gerig the Inspirer

| CN | MALE | HALF-ELF | ENTREPRENEUR | 6 |

While most seekers crowding the Avenue of the Hopeful seek inspiration from the would-be gods preaching doctrines and gathering cults, one man hopes to inspire the gods themselves. That man is Gerig the Inspirer, a wily, charming half-elf entrepreneur and the alchemical genius behind Gerig's Liquid Courage, a potent brew of distilled liquor and energizing herbs. Everyone in Absalom knows Gerig by sight thanks to the colorful advertising posters pasted to walls throughout the city. Gerig the Inspirer has shining white teeth and a well-curated curl of blond hair at the center of his forehead. He sometimes jerks his neck to wiggle the curl for dramatic effect. Regular advertisements extolling the virtues of Gerig's Liquid Courage adorn the pages of nearly every Absalomian newspaper. Folks from all walks of life—street sweepers, actors, artisans, and nobles—enjoy a nip of Liquid Courage now and again to give them an extra burst of energy to stay awake a little longer or polish off just one more important task. Those wishing to see Gerig in the flesh know to visit the Ascendant Court near the Starstone Chasm, where he is always on the hunt for a new almost-god to endorse his popular product. He does his best to make sure that the hopeful swigs a bottle of Gerig's Liquid Courage as their final act before crossing the chasm, preferably in full view of an adoring and expectant crowd. After the near-deity invariably plunges to their death in the bottomless pit or vanishes into the dangerous Starstone Cathedral, Gerig is sure to install a beautiful decorative plaque in the Shrine of the Failed to celebrate their journey. Lately, Gerig has begun to wonder if he should expand his celebrity endorsement program from doomed godlings to gladiators and adventurers, who usually have the advantage of surviving at least a little bit longer. The next time he happens to meet a charismatic exemplar from either class, he plans to offer up a lucrative contract on the spot.

Gevvid

| NE | MALE | DWARF | RANGER | 7 |

An expert in the tangled twisting paths of the upper reaches of the Darklands below the Isle of Kortos, Gevvid was a natural fit for the Nailfists in the Precipice Quarter. He first learned about the gang when he stumbled upon a group of them in the tunnels below Absalom and rescued them from the clutches of a cabal of deros. Gevvid himself had been living the life of an exile in the Darklands after a series of crimes forced him to flee the city above, and by joining the Nailfists, the dwarf found a way to re-integrate into the city's society. He still keeps his activities aboveground regulated, but as he grows more comfortable with the fact that his crimes seem to have been forgotten (in large part due to the deaths of many of those he wronged as a result of the earthquake that devastated the Precipice Quarter), his interest in returning to the criminal activities that landed him in hot water decades ago has returned as well. For now, Gevvid bides his time and builds his savings by serving as a Darklands guide for the Nailfists, but in his free time, he continues to secretly work to build a new network of contacts so that he might re-establish one of the Precipice Quarter's forgotten cults, the Graymask Guild—a splinter sect of Norgorber worshippers who believe that the god's aspect as the Gray Master and Father Skinsaw are two sides of the same coin, a patron of murderers who kill solely to line their pockets with riches stolen from the still-warm corpses of their victims.

Gewgaw

| NE | MALE | TENGU | ROGUE | 9 |

Gewgaw is a tengu crime lord and slaver who lives in the subterranean community of Fall's End, far below Absalom. Gewgaw is an incorrigible collector, and his agents on the surface brazenly kidnap anyone they think might catch their master's fancy. Gewgaw favors the

unusual in both his antiques and his abductees. His bird-head slaver mark is little known on the surface, where it's sometimes wrongly associated with the Crowsworn thieves' guild.

Lady Gloriana of House Morilla

CN | FEMALE | HUMAN | BARD | 12

A Taldan loyalist, the pragmatic Gloriana Morilla increasingly remains in Taldor to support the new Grand Princess Eutropia, providing distance from her less scrupulous cousins in the Guild of Wonders to make things easier for both sides of the family. Lady Gloriana nonetheless returns to Absalom on a near monthly basis, electrifying the upper floors of the Kortos Dance Hall, where she remains a regular patron, as well as the courts of the Petal District, where she remains a charming and much in-demand social caller. While away, she keeps an eye on the city through her trusted ally Folant "Ferret" ap Morilla, the werewolf captain of the Lotus Guard. Each time she returns, she makes sure to check in on her beloved son, Lord Darin. She wants only the best for him, and is concerned about his budding relationship with Lady Kiya of the rival House Ahnkamen. She has already picked out several potential brides for Lord Darin in Oppara.

Lady Gloriana never goes anywhere without looking her best, and enjoys the social benefits her station grants, if only to hear firsthand the juiciest gossip of her fellow nobles of Absalom. She has long supported the Pathfinder Society, counting more than a dozen highly placed venture-captains of that order among her closest friends.

Golinarth

CN | MALE | HALF-ORC | ORACLE | 8

In his first life, Golinarth was something of a risk taker. His feats of daring balance and agility were a tradition at the Pitview Pub, where he augmented his regular gambling and bets on the fates of those who attempted the Test of the *Starstone* with performing increasingly outlandish and dangerous dares and stunts for money. That no one ever goaded him into attempting the Test himself is something of a shock, although perhaps the general consensus that Golinarth would make the try only to fail kept anyone from making that particular dare—not so much out of concern for his health as for the potential loss of the entertainment his outlandish stunts provided the regulars at the Pub. When he was apparently killed in an attempt to scale the Tower of the Broken Shield blindfolded during a thunderstorm, and his body was swallowed up by the sea below, most folks shrugged and commented that something like that had always been just a matter of time. But Golinarth wasn't done. He returned the next day, alive as ever, but now wearing a wooden skull mask and claiming to have returned from the dead as the god of second chances. He no longer does stunts of his own, but sets up dangerous and impossible challenges for others to attempt. Few have attempted these dares, and most of those who have lost limbs or lives, but those rare successful survivors have always been rewarded well by Golinarth with a handful of small but valuable rubies. Whether or not Golinarth is actually a god, where he gets his rubies, and what apparently random schedule his Pitview Pub appearances follow remain mysteries.

Grenduul Fleng

CN | MALE | GNOME | DIPLOMAT | 11

The High Council's gnomish Trade Minister gained his position thanks to brilliant economic theories and strategies, and seems poised to lose it all because he cannot maintain a friendly working relationship with some of the city's most influential trademasters. He is particularly hated by fellow gnome Jembar Dustyshankle, president of the Coalition of Artisans, and Parsin Guile, the ambitious guildmaster of Woodcutters, who frequently run up against him in political battles between Absalom's High and Low Councils.

Gressil Kluun

LE | FEMALE | HUMAN | BUREAUCRAT | 13

Gressil Kluun, the so-called "Red Redactrix of Absalom," is Chief Examiner of the Crier's Table, a committee of the Grand Council charged with distributing the decrees of Absalom's government and censoring its popular press. Kluun's meticulous attention to detail and staggering memory helps with her difficult daily work monitoring pre-publication drafts of important newspapers, handbills, books, and other media produced in Absalom. Though she longs for the days of her predecessors, who had the power to shut down newspapers and smash the presses of publishers suspected of sedition, she contents herself by gleefully crossing out offending articles in red paint with an elaborate brush she keeps specially for the purpose before approving publications for production. Predictably, publishers hate her for marring their work, and Absalom's merchants, guilds, and nobles hate her for not doing enough to control criticism of their interests in the papers. Kluun is a strong supporter of Lord Avid's Optimates faction; she hates Lady Adrielle Neprathep. She intentionally suppresses positive information about her Citizens' League movement, considering her redactions and cancellations a great service to the city that has empowered her with such a solemn responsibility. So engaged is she in her duties that the Red Redactrix sometimes takes it upon herself to inspect the offices and printing presses of troublesome publishers in person, always accompanied by a small detachment of the Bailiff Guard lent by the Grand Council.

Gressil Kluun is a chubby, middle-aged woman who carries herself with the grace and etiquette of nobility. Even when not at work, Kluun is almost always reading something, squinting through an elegant pair of bifocals perched on the tip of her nose. She wears expensive but not ostentatious gowns. Red paint mars the skin of her hands, the hem of her sleeves, and elsewhere across her costume, but Kluun, always deeply focused on the words in front of her, is largely oblivious to her appearance.

Kluun is something of a personal project for Lady Neferpatra of House Ahnkamen, Kluun's immediate supervisor at the Crier's Table. Absalom's first lady of laws wants to soften her up a bit on a personal level, and maybe even find her a romantic partner. She's been inviting Kluun to her cousin Omrys's parties at the Ahnkamen Estate in the Petal District, hoping to help her mix with Absalom's power brokers on a less adversarial footing. Kluun accepts the invitations only because it would damage her career to refuse them. She has no interest in finding a husband, wife, or anyone else to get between her and her work. At the parties, Kluun stands off to the side, muttering petty criticisms about the food, the service, the guest list, or just about anything else.

Guaril Karela

Grint Basatrel

| N | MALE | HUMAN | POLITICIAN | 6 |

The current nomarch of Diobel's district council replaced the long-running councilor Hadrel Grayrain six years ago upon the death of that worthy, who had served in that capacity for decades. Basatrel's roots in Diobel are hardly so established as Grayrain's were, and some lords scoff at the idea that he could ever be a true representative of the town. He has the support of the Kortos Consortium, as well as several highly-placed friends among the Pathfinder Society. The most notable of these, the enigmatic Osprey, sometimes drinks with Basatrel in some of the least reputable watering holes of both Absalom and Diobel.

Gron Humbolt

| N | MALE | HUMAN | EXPERT | 7 |

Shrewd Gron Humbolt owns and manages the massive and hugely successful Humbolt's Outfitters in the Coins District, perhaps Absalom's most popular general store. Decades ago, he married the noblewoman Lady Myleena of House Arnsen, and over the years his wife's business skills have made the store even more successful, with two smaller branch locations opening in the Foreign Quarter and Eastgate in the last eight years. None of this is good enough for wily old Lord Avid, who feels his daughter wasted a great deal of the family's personal capital by marrying a common merchant. Never one to back down from a fight, Humbolt continues to reject the Arnsen family name, furthering the rift with his influential father-in-law. Humbolt prides himself for taking a direct hand in the daily affairs of his shops, and prefers working the shop floor to managing the books, which he mostly leaves to Myleena these days. He is nervous that his recent expansion will cause his new locations to lose the personal touch that has made his flagship so successful. He tries to work in each of the new locations at least once a week, building a rapport with local clientele and tailoring his stores' offerings to their particular tastes. He has a great memory for customers, and is able to recall the name of a patron he has met once even after many years between visits. His eldest daughter, Jovara, is an enigma at the College of Mysteries.

Groske

| NE | MALE | HUMAN | ROGUE | 5 |

Once a well-liked member of the church of Cayden Cailean, Groske fell out of favor with the church after he was exposed as a member of a group of burglars who specialized in robbing taverns of booze and coin. He escaped a prison sentence through a combination of luck and by betraying his one-time accomplices, and today all he retains of his previous life is his fondness for beer. Today, Groske's faith has shifted to another of Absalom's ascended gods, although his worship of Norgorber is mostly lip service. His experience at thievery has made him one of the Sanguine Beasts's most valuable new recruits, but he can most often be found hanging out at the Pitview Pub where his veiled insults directed at Cayden Cailean never quite get him in deep enough trouble with other patrons, but certainly keep him well-watched by members of the church who ache for the chance to get some payback for his blasphemies against the faith years ago.

Guaril Karela

| CN | MALE | HUMAN | ROGUE | 13 |

A Varisian fence and criminal mastermind with longstanding Sczarni associations, Guaril likes to think of himself as more important on a global scale than perhaps he truly is. Despite his delusions of grandeur, he maintains a low profile working the counter at the Pickled Imp, his curio shop in the Docks. From this strategic location, the ever-smirking charlatan keeps a close eye on what lucrative shipments come into the harbor and what warehouses are left unguarded.

In 4711 AR, Karela's allies in the Pathfinder Society passed him the deed to a glassblowing shop in the Ivy District called Crystal Creations; the shop sits atop the subterranean headquarters of a thieves' guild called the Crowsworn, and Karela now serves as the guild's grand master.

Karela's long association with Varisia has kindled a deep curiosity regarding the recent appearance of New Thassilon. Several of his agents keep a close eye on the new Embassy of New Thassilon in the Foreign Quarter, and his allies in Diobel have made tentative offers of alliance with the ambitious time-shifted wizard Verimachius, who arrogantly seeks to use Guaril Karela as a puppet of his own. Karela's Varisian background also brings him into repeated conflict with House Foxglove. He had several run-ins with the family back in Magnimar, and now that most of them seem to have burrowed themselves into Absalom, old antipathies flare anew.

Lord Guirden of House Gixx

| LE | MALE | HUMAN | FIGHTER | 19 |

Absalom's fourth lord of laws and warden of the Black Whale prison in the Flotsam Graveyard has long benefited from a close association with Lord Gyr of Gixx, having been a boatswain on a ship commanded by Gyr in his youth. A hard man with hard features, Lord Guirden has fattened considerably in the years since he took control of the Black Whale; he remains a formidable fighter who can kill a man with his bare hands. Guirden gains no enjoyment from harming others, but neither does he flinch from doing so when he sees it as his duty. Guirden believes in lashes for minor infractions of prison policy and dunking in the local seas while tied to an anchor for serious troublemakers.

The brutish, simple-minded Guirden was a nepotism appointment to the position of fourth law lord. The man is far more interested in brutalizing the wretched inhabitants of his prison than in enforcing the integrity of Absalom's judiciary, allowing for a resurgence of judicial corruption under his unsteady gaze. Acting primarch Starborn recognizes the problem, but is currently consumed with more pressing matters and does not yet have an immediate solution.

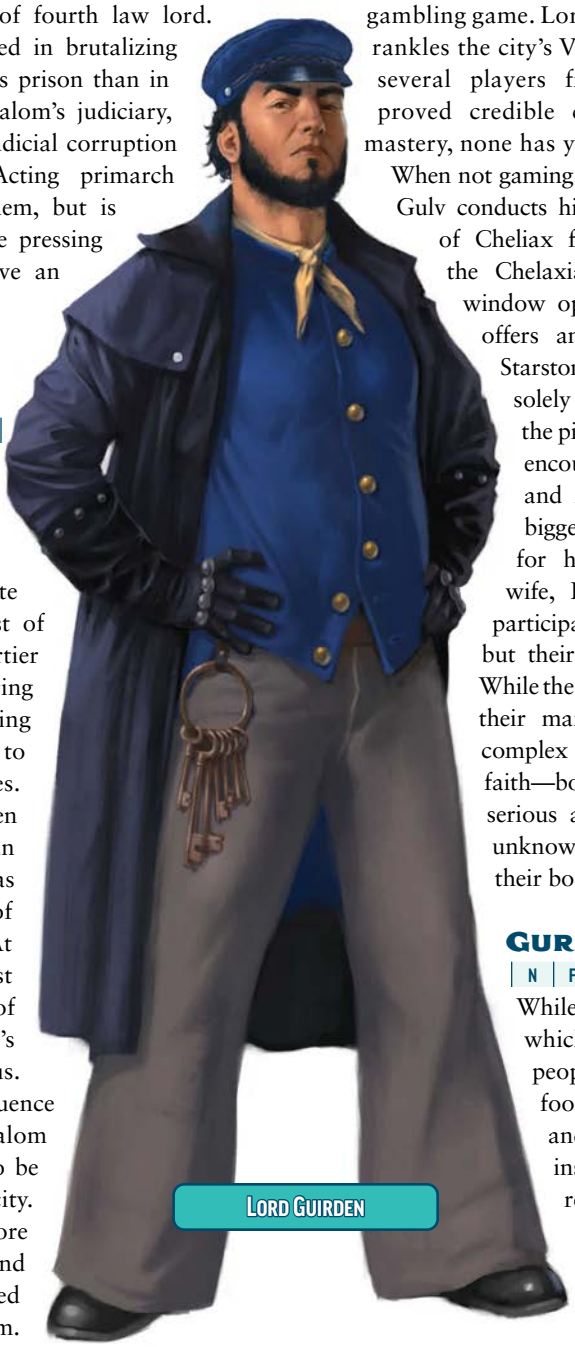
Lord Gulv of House Tevineg

| LE | MALE | HUMAN | ARISTOCRAT | 16 |

Gulv Haverost grew up as the privileged elder scion of one of Egorian's most influential noble houses. Trained in courtly etiquette and diplomacy, he spent most of his early adulthood as a courtier of King Terthule, mastering domestic politics and gathering a mountain of intelligence to use against his fellow nobles. Upon the ascension of Queen Carellia, Haverost became an international agent, serving as ambassador to the courts of Thuvia, Nidal, and Osirion. At the queen's orders, Haverost married Lady Xansippe of House Tevineg, Absalom's high priestess of Asmodeus. Carellia sought greater influence over the often-rebellious Absalom houses, and Lord Gulv was to be her foremost agent in the city. Lord Gulv assumed the more prestigious Tevineg name and settled in for what he expected to be a long tenure in Absalom. Weeks later, Carellia drowned under mysterious circumstances and her heir, Infrexus, recalled him to Egorian on a whim, where he remained until returning to Absalom on the personal order of Majestrix Abrogail II two years ago.

As one of Cheliax's most prominent diplomats, Lord Gulv has traveled all over the Inner Sea and beyond, and he has a greater appreciation for foreign cultures than most of Chelaxian citizens. The cunning schemer is particularly enamored with the game of drouge, which he picked up in Sothis and quickly became obsessed. Upon his return to Absalom, Lord Gulv soon established himself as the city's informal drouge champion, even converting a significant amount of action at House Tevineg's gaming den, the Second Labyrinth, to active play of the increasingly popular gambling game. Lord Gulv's mastery particularly rankles the city's Vudrani population, but while several players from that community have proved credible challengers to Lord Gulv's mastery, none has yet defeated him.

When not gaming at the Second Labyrinth, Lord Gulv conducts his work as grand ambassador of Cheliax from a comfortable office in the Chelaxian Embassy. The panoramic window opposite his heavy oaken desk offers an awe-inspiring view of the Starstone Cathedral once intended solely for Aroden's high priest. Today the pinnacle of the Cathedral's tower encourages his limitless ambition, and reminds him to always think bigger—not just for Cheliax, but for himself as well. Lord Gulv's wife, Lady Xansippe, is an active participant in his social machinations, but their marriage is wholly political. While the pair occasionally consummates their marriage—usually as part of a complex ritual related to Xansippe's faith—both support a small cadre of serious and casual lovers. Jealousy is unknown between them, erased by their boundless ambition.



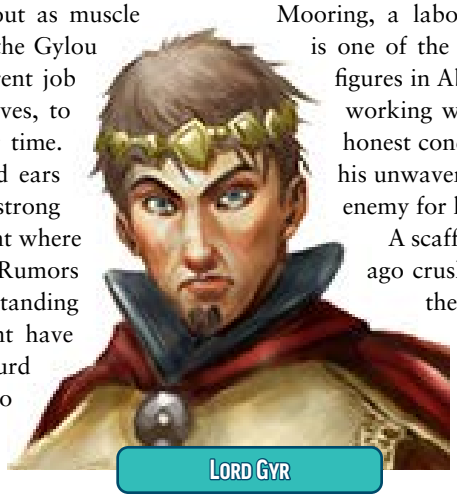
Lord Guirden

Gurd

| N | FEMALE | HALF-ORC | FIGHTER | 4 |

While Absalom is a diverse city in which much opportunity lies for people of any type, Gurd is no fool. Despite an inability to read and a lack of social grace, she instinctively knows that there remain plenty of racists and fearmongers in the city who can't be trusted to understand that she merely wants to get by. And so she presents the

public-facing persona of a dull-witted laborer, keeps her head down, and makes what money she can working at locations such as the Devil's Own Shipyard and Ogrekin Hall. Now and then, she hires out as muscle for less reputable gangs, such as the Gylou Sisters, but regardless of her current job she takes pains to not make waves, to do as she's told, and to bide her time. All along, she keeps her eyes and ears open for any opportunities for a strong half-orc to excel in an environment where prejudice and fear don't rule. Rumors of how the orcs of Belkzen are standing up against the Whispering Tyrant have recently inspired her, and Gurd hopes at some point to be able to contact the Knights of Lastwall to offer herself as an envoy or even ambassador to Belkzen, but with intimidation her only real social knack, she knows she has a lot of work ahead of her before she can trust herself to handle the sensitive interactions a diplomat would require. To aid in her goal, she's recently and secretly taken up reading lessons with Zelva, one of her only true friends in Absalom and a fellow member of the Gylou Sisters gang. Gurd understands that Zelva's own moral compass is suspect, but at the same point values the rogue's companionship and trusts Zelva not to betray her attempts at self-improvement to the ignorant cretins so common in the Docks.



Lord Gyr

Gurrik Vale

| LG | MALE | HUMAN | HALF-ORC | 5 |

Gurrik Vale was recently promoted to the rank of officer in the First Guard, after he distinguished himself by breaking up an attempt by one of Absalom's criminal gangs, the Family Dogs, from recruiting a band of bandits to shake down visitors to Absalom. Gurrik himself wasn't expecting a promotion, and the attention he got as a result of his success left him uncomfortable and frustrated, since the time spent in the limelight, giving speeches, or attending functions is time he can't spend on duty doing his job or off duty enjoying time with a good book. Now that things have started to settle down, he's conflicted between excelling at his job and drawing too much attention—his greatest fear is that he might be promoted out of the actual work of being a First Guard. Gurrik knows his own strengths, and he suspects that a "safe" post behind a desk would result in him growing bitter and burnt-out. Better to work on the city walls and not have to devote personal time to political or bureaucratic functions, after all. Recently, though, he's learned that the member of the Family Dogs who he apprehended, Vyara, has been released from prison on a technicality, and his fear that Vyara might come after him for revenge doesn't worry Gurrik as much as how his career might grow more complicated if he manages to catch and arrest the criminal a second time.

Guyton Grerton

| CG | MALE | HUMAN | POLITICIAN | 7 |

The ruggedly handsome, friendly proprietor of Lifter's Mooring, a labor organization in the Dock District, is one of the most divisive and important political figures in Absalom, but you'd never know it while working with him to secure able laborers under honest conditions. Those who cross him, or cross his unwavering sense of fairness, however, earn an enemy for life.

A scaffolding collapse at Ogrekin Hall 5 years ago crushed Guyton's legs and thrust him into the world of politics and organized labor. Ptarnex Dexarion, master of Ogrekin Hall, refused to pay compensation for Grerton's workplace accident, triggering a strike not just at Ogrekin Hall, but among nearly all of the laborers in the Dock District. Seeing Guyton Grerton's treatment as a symbol of the workplace oppression that controlled most of their lives, the workers pooled their resources and paid for magical healing. Back on his feet, Grerton founded Lifter's Mooring to organize dock workers. He now wants to expand his vision into other parts of the city, and is a major backer of and inspiration to Adrielle Neprathep's Citizens' League political movement. Grerton's support for Absalom's workers, and his opposition to those who he sees as standing in their way, have radicalized him in a very short period of time. His openly disdainful assessment of Absalom's political institutions and ruling class sometimes put his most well-heeled allies, like Goodmiss Alidane of House Candren, in difficult positions with those they hope to woo to their side in the War of Strings. Grerton is a frequent subject of scorn and ridicule in Absalom's broadsheet press (whose editorial offices are often sponsored by Grerton's monied adversaries). Several newspapers openly declare the upstart labor leader a "Halfhander," equating him with the infamous Garev Halfhand, whose rebellious popular uprising during Absalom's Age of Independence resulted in the deaths of thousands of Absalomians.

A middle-aged, well-built man with short, prematurely gray hair and a tight-cropped beard, Guyton can switch from dead serious orator to back-slapping reveler in a moment, and often focuses on the latter while associating with fellow freedom-lovers in Cayden's Hall or among the Firebrands who share his populist philosophy. His influence recently won him a seat on the Dock Council, where he works tirelessly to bring his values into political action.

Lord Gyr of Gixx

| N | MALE | HUMAN | ROGUE/WIZARD | 17 |

Lord of House Gixx, Primarch of Absalom, Protector of Kortos, First Spell Lord Gyr of Gixx is a former adventurer who gained the primarchy and then packed the city's government with his old adventuring

companions. He has been mysteriously missing for years. While divination magic has revealed that Lord Gyr is still alive, no other details are known about his fate.

Haigen Topkick

NE | MALE | HALFLING | ROGUE | 16

Nomarch and sole council member for the Puddles district, captain of the Muckruckers and guildmaster of the Salvagers' Guild, Haigen Topkick is a halfling of many titles, but they can be summed up by saying he rules over the Puddles as a king in all but name. At least, he used to. For years, so long as he never demanded funding to fix the district and was able to provide tax payments, the Grand Council was happy to let Haigen run the sinking district however he saw fit. Working every angle he could think of, and inventing more than a few new ones, Topkick was able to make the poorest district pay a profit for him and the Council, at considerable cost to anyone else living in the Puddles. The years in uncontested control were good to Haigen; no longer a young halfling, Topkick put down roots in his fiefdom, having married and settled into a once impressive manse that was only lightly flooded back when the most recent earthquake hit. Full of his children and other relatives now, the family seat is conveniently located near Stilt House, Haigen's true nexus of power in the district.

But with the disappearance of Lord Gixx, Haigen has lost his best, and possibly only, political ally. The arrival of Zusgut and his goblins has left the ersatz king of the Puddles feeling more nervous than he has in years. Initial attempts at dislodging the goblins have met with little success, as Zusgut (and worse yet, the goblin's ally, Watcher-Lord Ulthun II) has proved a difficult target for Topkick to influence so far. To make matters worse, the Grand Council has cooled considerably to Haigen's presence, despite a campaign of wheedling and bribing meant to solidify his place. With dwindling resources and few influential allies left, the situation is feeling more and more dire for Topkick.

Not to be underestimated, Haigen is a ruthless and quick-witted opportunist with an eye for all angles, and over the years he has placed his fingers in all manner of unsavory business around the seediest sides of Absalom. With markers he has yet to call in from the Bloody Barbers, the Gylou Sisters, and the Hands of the Muted God, Haigen is ready to fight dirty to keep his place on the top of the trash heap. Rumor has it that he has a line on some as yet untapped source of valuable salvage somewhere in his flooded fiefdom, a secret he has been holding in his back pocket for desperate times—perhaps even a rich enough take to secure his place without Gixx. Whether or not there is any truth to these rumors, Haigen and the Salvagers' Guild have stepped up their efforts to recruit more enterprising, discrete, "salvage experts" for some unspecified mission. Few, if any, have returned from wherever it is the Guild has been sending them, and those that have come back have been unwilling or unable to talk about the experience.

Scion Lord Haimon Hueff of House Mercerene

NG | MALE | HUMAN | FIGHTER | 7

Scion Lord Haimon Hueff of House Mercerene sits on the Low Council and dwells in the family's ancestral manor in Eastgate. Formerly a venture-captain with the Pathfinder Society, Hueff traveled extensively in Tian-Xia during this adventuring days, and maintains strong connections with many of Absalom's most prominent Tian citizens. Lord Hueff is long retired from the dangers of adventuring life, but still appreciates lively retellings of thrilling exploits or exciting brushes with danger or death. He often sends invitations to groups who return to Absalom from some dungeon delve or bush war, and wines and dines them in return for stories of their exploits. He has also been known to act as a middleman for adventurers seeking additional or replacement adventuring companions. Lord Hueff does this only as a courtesy, making no promises about the quality of the contacts he can offer, but his long association with adventurers often allows him to put together parties for their mutual profit.

Haligander

N | MALE | GNOME | EXPERT | 10

With his long, pointed beard and balding head, the noted scholar Haligander, expert in the governments of the Inner Sea, looks every bit the part of a wizened instructor of Eastgate's Tallavont School. But for several weeks, now, Haligander has been under the influence of the Wracked Rock, in the Precipice Quarter. He recently blacked out while instructing a class of Absalom's next generation of leaders, awakening to discover a blackboard covered in ancient occult symbols and a class of thirty-three students staring back at him, eyes rolled back, whispering in unison a droning litany in Aklo.

Since then, he has slept only in short, fearful bursts. The strain is beginning to break his mind. He is dedicated enough to continue his lectures, which are paradoxically more popular than ever despite the fact that Haligander's extreme fatigue makes his presentations disjointed and erratic. Sometimes, in the middle of one of his lectures, he nods off for what seems like a few seconds, only to realize that the better part of an hour has gone by. His enraptured students never acknowledge that anything unusual has occurred, and always look back as if hanging on his every word.

Scion Lady Hamaria of House Blakros

N | FEMALE | HUMAN | SORCERER | 17

Matriarch of House Blakros, Lady Hamaria organizes the relic-hunting, information gathering, and business interests her powerful family. The elegantly dressed middle-aged sorcerer has a piercing gaze and calculating nature, signs of an incisive and brilliant mind that has guided her family to newfound heights of power since she assumed leadership decades ago. Those years

have seen Lady Hamaria marry off a procession of daughters (the latest being Lady Michellia, wed to the Hellknight Damian Kastner in 4712 AR), but with her own husband dead now more than 20 years, the most anticipated upcoming Blakros wedding is hers. Never one to let a political opportunity pass her by, Lady Hamaria is currently engaged in an attempt to bolster her family's strongest allegiances, using the prospect of a potential matrimony as a lever to increase Blakros fortunes across the board. Her efforts currently center on Houses Damaq and Morilla, as well as the Pathfinder Society. She is a frequent visitor to Scion Lord Yamthar's intellectual salons at Palace Ormuz in the Petal District not far from her own family's estate, Castle Blakros, and supports what she sees as the stability offered by Lord Avid of House Arnsen assuming the primarchy. Hamaria hates Sea Lord Lerefys for the repeated failures of his Navy to adequately protect her investments.

Scion Lady Hamaria

Hamlin Moore

| LE | MALE | HALFLING | ROGUE | 3 |

Dod's Filchers is a small collection of young thieves who, traditionally, focused their efforts on cutting purses and pickpocketing foolishly rich tourists. But since the guild's previous leader (and founder) Malina Dod vanished, command of the group has fallen to the Moore twins—the two most accomplished thieves in the group. Yet being an accomplished pickpocket doesn't make for skill at leadership, as Hamlin Moore is increasingly realizing. As 11-year-old halflings, he and his sister have relied heavily on their small statures to go unnoticed in crowds, but being little grants no intrinsic advantage to a leadership role, particularly among a band of child thieves who grow increasingly unruly. As his sister focuses more on recruiting a runaway noble child, Hamlin's been left to manage the guild on his own. With resources running low, the halfling has increasingly resorted to threats and violence and bullying in order to keep the group in line, but he knows it's only a matter of time before he pushes the other Filchers too far. His only hope is that his sister will finish recruiting (or at least ransoming) her project, which would give the Filchers a sudden and much-needed source of income, for if there's anything other than threats of violence that Hamlin knows will keep a group of unruly criminals in line, it's money!

Hans the Northman

| NG | MALE | HUMAN | ARTISAN | 14 |

A member of the Ivy District Council, the renowned woodworker Hans the Northman also holds a guild seat on Absalom's Low Council, yet he still manages to run a successful business called The Northman's Woodworks Galleria in the Ivy District. With his friend Engleton Embrey, Hans co-manages the powerful Union of Carpenters, Stonemasons, and Metalworkers from their ornate headquarters in the Coins.

In recent months, Hans has fallen under the influence of the Wracked Rock monolith, in the Precipice District. Ever since spending an afternoon sketching the unusual stone formation in preparation for a carving commissioned by Jembar Duskyshankle, Hans's dreams have been haunted by a terrifying, formless monstrous presence he calls "the Cyst that Sees." Fearing that the madness has started to impact his business and artistry, he turned to the House of Seven Faces and the personal council of high priestess Lady Seleenae. She is very concerned, but has not yet identified the source of the Northman's terrifying nocturnal visions. Her suspicion that Hans has not told her everything is true—he is horrified to have recently discovered intentional design flaws subtly introduced into not only his own work, but also that of other artisans in his powerful guild. Worse yet, Hans was terrified to realize that all of these modifications were introduced by his own hand.

The Harlequin

| CN | NONBINARY | HUMAN | BARD | 11 |

Not all thieves are cutthroats and killers. The Forthright take pride in the fact that their targets "deserve" liberation from their riches, and in the fact that they never leave behind slain victims. Under the leadership of their mysterious commander, an androgynous figure known only as the Harlequin, the Forthright abide by the law in their own way. In this manner, the guild and its leader have increasingly taken on the aspect of folk heroes—avengers who seek to protect the commonfolk and bring justice to those who otherwise couldn't afford it. The Harlequin embraces these opinions and fosters them, even if they don't quite agree, for the Harlequin knows that the capacity to covet and do harm is not tied to one's finances or social status. Criminals exist in all strata of social life, and by preying upon those who break the law, the Forthright ironically avoid much of the legal disadvantages that plague other criminal guilds in the city. The Harlequin has kept their true identity secret even from the Forthright members, a stunt that's only bolstered the group's legacy. Never seen without their trademark motley, dressing like something between a jester and a masked diva, the Harlequin's costume often changes colors and features but they never swap out their signature mask—a porcelain facade showing a grinning visage with stars around the eyes and on the brow where a theoretical "third eye" might reside. Some of those who work for the Harlequin whisper that their leader does possess a third eye under the mask, while

others spread rumors that the Harlequin is no human at all but a manifestation of the city's unconscious need for justice made flesh. The Harlequin enjoys these rumors and does what they can to foster them, for the truth, that they were born a lowly scribe's child in the Coins and spent most of their childhood practicing calligraphy before running away from a perfectly comfortable home life, does not bolster the background required for a folk hero in the making!

Hasjald

| N | MALE | DWARF | CUSTODIAN | 0 |

Hasjald is the aging dwarf groundskeeper of the Pathfinder Society's Grand Lodge. The gray-haired, bent-backed old man is responsible for a small crew of custodians tasked with keeping the Lodge grounds clean, but it sometimes seems to Pathfinder agents that Hasjald himself does most of the work, including the most physically demanding of tasks. He is almost always at work somewhere on the grounds or in its many structures. More than anyone else in the complex, Hasjald has a sense of the mood of the Society on any given day, along with a holistic sense of everything that is going on at the headquarters. His custodial beat includes the secret subterranean Vaults beneath the Dark Archive, in which the Decemvirate keeps its most terrible captured enemies and its most dangerous secrets. Hasjald's bleary eyes attest to long periods of sleep deprivation, inability to forget terrible memories, or both. Hasjald belongs to the tight-knit congregation of Torag at Westgate's Father's Forge, and is friends with many of the city's most influential dwarves.

Haven Bannister

| LN | MALE | HUMAN | CLERIC | 5 |

Bor Dralfo may manage the affairs of the Ivy District's Brotherhood of Abadar vigilance committee, but it is dispassionate, surly Haven Bannister who hands out most of the Brotherhood's punishing beatings. While Dralfo's eloquence sways the crowd with scolding condemnation of indolence, licentiousness, and crime, Bannister backs up his words with intense glares and a greatclub at the ready. The scowling man's penetrating eyes stare out from beneath a wide-brimmed flat-topped hat, an accessory that makes him instantly identifiable in a crowd. Bannister leads regular Brotherhood patrols throughout the district, and while his job is ostensibly to keep the peace, it's not unusual for the man to provoke trouble by nosing his way into affairs that ought not to concern him. When Haven Bannister leads a Brotherhood patrol, the chance of physical violence breaking out goes up considerably.

Heryn Gale

| N | FEMALE | HUMAN | BARTENDER | 3 |

Although Heryn Gale is the bartender at the Wounded Wisp, one of the Pathfinder Society's favorite bars, she's never been on an actual adventure herself. She adores the stories of high adventure her customers bring in, and often daydreams about an alternate life where her father hadn't passed away, where she hadn't inherited the family business, where she would have been free to join the Pathfinder Society and make legends rather than sit on the sidelines, serving drinks to legends. She encourages her customers to share tales of their exploits, and is generally well-thought of by her customers. But now and then, visiting Pathfinders get a bit too drunk or forgetful. Now and then, they accidentally leave things behind. In most cases, Heryn dutifully gathers these belongings and sets them aside in a lost and found box behind the bar, but in the case of *wayfinders*, she's been quietly collecting them, setting up a display in her private quarters and penning private fictions about the adventures she imagines the unknown owners of the devices had. The latest addition to her unusual collection is an ivory and iron *wayfinder* of an archaic design that doesn't seem to fit with the others—a *wayfinder* that has been increasingly haunting her in frightening dreams in which she has become a Pathfinder and the *wayfinder* is hers. The dreams always end the same way—with her death in a fight against a different horrific monster that leaves her ivory and iron *wayfinder* lost and abandoned in some forsaken corner of the world.

Hilenda Guile

| NG | FEMALE | HUMAN | MERCHANT | 8 |

Hilenda runs the House of Guile woodworking gallery in Eastgate with her husband, Parsin. While Parsin's artistic genius is at the heart of the House's success, Hilenda's business acumen has been critical to securing the family a place in the upper echelons of Eastgate society. Parsin relies on his wife's wise counsel and political instinct to guide him in matters related both to the family business and to his role as master of the Woodcutter's Guild. The two are partners in all things, and their love and respect for one another has not wavered over thirty years of marriage. Hilenda holds a seat on the district's Concerned Residents' Union. She rightly considers herself more compassionate and practical than the other members of the generally politically conservative union, proudly serving as a public foil for some of their more enthusiastically discriminatory or overzealous edicts and opposing their most outlandish schemes in council. She recently received an invitation to meet with the reclusive Iolanthe, at the heart of the Grand Holt, presumably because the fey queen sees her as the most approachable of the Concerned Residents' board members. Hilenda—fueled by similar suspicions voiced by her husband—believes there is a small chance that the invitation is a trap, a prelude to revenge for all of the trees felled and mutilated by the House of Guile over the years. Hilenda currently seeks bodyguards willing to accompany her into the heart of the massive tree. She and Parsin have three children, Avesta (a promising student at the White Grotto), Marissa (a daring journalist), and Bronton (a washed-out gladiator and untrustworthy mercenary).

Hope

| CG | FEMALE | AASIMAR | ROGUE/CLERIC | 5 |

An attractive, athletic aasimar woman with short silver hair, Hope was born in Absalom's Puddles district and spent most of her life on the streets, graduating from pickpocketing to burglary and mugging. Always fueled by a deep sense of anger and injustice, a disastrous job at Morilla Palace prompted Hope to rethink her direction in life. Now, she's a priestess of Nocticula the Redeemer Queen and a member of Absalom's Firebrands, though her new interests in morality and redemption haven't changed her hard-edged and cynical nature. Hope runs the orphanage known as Purewater Home, in the Puddles, a front for her increasingly powerful Firebrands cell.

Horner Shan

| NE | MALE | HUMAN | ROGUE/CLERIC | 17 |

Trademaster and knight marshal of the Smoke Knights, Horner Shan is known in some circles as "the Gargoyle" for his ability to remain motionless as a statue for hours. Under Shan's leadership, the Smoke Knights have pulled off some of the greatest robberies in Absalom's history in recent months, but almost no one is aware that they even occurred due to the organization's emphasis on discretion. Fewer still know that Shan's commodities trading business, Mother Sphinx, hides a subterranean temple of Norgorber, a sort of neutral ground for many of Absalom's most despicable criminals. Shan serves as the temple's high priest of Norgorber in his Gray Master aspect. Duties related to this charge are the only regular items on Shan's schedule and never correspond to the dates of Smoke Knight capers, representing perhaps the weakest link in the Smoke Knights' otherwise flawless identity security regimen.

Goodman Hugen of House Candren

| NG | MALE | HUMAN | ARISTOCRAT | 14 |

A steadfast populist more at home with common sailors than nobles, Goodman Hugen was the long-standing scion lord of House Candren, harbormaster and High Councilor until his presumed death. Owner of Sea King Shipyards before he vanished as his ship sank under mysterious circumstances, he left his family in the hands of his daughter, Lady Alidane, and the harbor in the hands of his protégé, Adrielle Neprathep.

Iacovius Vatatze

| CN | MALE | HUMAN | BARD | 10 |

In his youth, Iacovius split his time between creative retreats to remote corners of the continent to work on new compositions and travels on a circuit of venues along the southern coast of Avistan and the eastern coast of Garund, where his concerts were almost as highly anticipated as were his inevitable outbursts of anger (equally as creative and memorable as his music) toward critics. When no critics rose to the challenge, Iacovius inevitably found a target for his post-concert wrath—typically a local politician. Today, his compositions and performances are limited to Absalom, and Magpie Manor in particular. Age has blunted neither his skill at performance nor his indelicate and volcanic temper, but his inability to travel widely has at least moderated the diplomatic damage he used to spread on his trips.

Scion Lady Idara of House Anandari

| LN | FEMALE | HUMAN | PHILANTHROPIST | 15 |

The Anandari family has stood at the heart of Absalomian politics and business affairs since the visit of the legendary Khiben-Sald more than four thousand years ago. In that time, their fortunes have risen and fallen (but mostly risen), and today the Anandari scion lady is one of the wealthiest citizens of Absalom, and among its most beloved philanthropists. Lady Idara traces her lineage back to the retainers of Vudra's legendary traveling maharajah who stayed behind after he departed, and like the Anandari lords and ladies who preceded her, Scion Lady Idara has something of the almost mythical old world in her presence. At more than a century old (but appearing no older than 70), Idara is proving just as long-lived as her ancestors, allegedly an after-effect of rituals bestowed upon Khiben-Sald's retinue by the archmage Nex himself. The years have carved lines in her skin, but Idara is otherwise no worse for her age, and remains physically vivacious and mentally acute.

The Anandari family owns Westgate's Anandari Block, a haven for Vudrani residents and visitors, as it has for millennia. Idara manages the family's vast wealth (a great deal of which is invested overseas), and other nobles of the house see to the neighborhood's administration, controlling its rents and leasing homes and businesses. The Block is a fundamental part of Westgate, and the Anandari family is on good terms with the Western Council. Lady Idara considers Nomarch Seleenae a close friend, and is a minority stakeholder in her Foreign Coin Exchange. Another close friend is Lord Rajit Punjeer, master of the Grand Dance Hall of Kortos (where Idara is a patron of the fourth balcony). Idara has enjoyed the pleasures and discipline of dance her whole life, which is what originally drew her to Lord Rajit. She enjoys the tableaux presentations and internationally inspired dancers who perform at the Hall, but she especially appreciates the semi-regular percussionist, Durga Den, who is so important to the Dance Hall's atmosphere and soundscape. Lord Rajit keeps her steeped in salacious and politically useful gossip over-indulgent dinners, while the dwarf bard Den keeps her grounded in her love of movement and music by setting time to her morning exercises three days a week.

Lady Idara does not hold Lord Winton of House Nimz, captain of the Sally Guard, in particularly high regard, and the feeling is mutual. A few years ago, someone stole Lord Winton's prized horse, and for reasons Idara still does not understand, Lord Winton has always figured she and her family (along with a host of additional well-placed alleged enemies) had something to do with the crime. As

a result, Lord Winton considerably slowed patrols and investigations of crime in Anandari Block, which resulted in a rise of minor crimes and a rash of unsolved mysteries that began to tarnish the neighborhood's reputation. A simple shift of the Anandari fortune in the direction of mercenaries quickly solved that problem, but Lord Winton resents the presence of Guild of Spears patrols on Anandari streets, furthering his dislike of Idara. The scion lady considers the matter solved, for the most part, and still continues to hire mercenaries—often including adventurers—to solve some of her thorniest problems.

The Ignited Juggler

NE | FEMALE | HUMAN | SORCERER | 4

While performing at Aysepir's Astounded Abyss, in the Puddles, the coolheaded Ignited Juggler bursts into flame on stage and performs astounding feats of dexterity while completely immersed in a blaze. Although she has become very fond of her family at the Abyss, especially the Fish-Head Queen, the Ignited Juggler also prowls for victims as part of the Skinsaw Cult. Having an inherently magic bloodline, she is extremely skillful in all forms of fire magic.

Ilarra

LG | FEMALE | HUMAN | SWASHBUCKLER | 2

A teenage agent of the Winged Sandals courier organization based in Eastgate, Ilarra knows her way around Absalom better than most her age, and has a near-perfect memory for street addresses, shortcuts, and secret passageways. She is so swift with her deliveries that she often has free time, and occasionally hires herself out as a guide when she runs across someone who is obviously lost. Short of stature with a plain face and short brown hair, Ilarra looks younger than she is and effortlessly blends into a crowd. She steps and weaves between bustling pedestrians in crowded squares with barely a notice, and always delivers her packages on time. Ilarra worships Iomedae, and does her best to adhere to a strict moral code. She has a hero's heart, and hopes one day to become a traveling agent of the Winged Sandals, delivering letters and packages across the Inner Sea and beyond. To this end, she's endlessly curious about foreign lands. If given the opportunity, she'll pester a world traveler for every little detail about their journeys, nodding appreciatively at each anecdote.

She spends much of her free time exploring the Foreign Quarter, appreciating street chatter in a dozen languages, sampling international cuisine, and finding folks with interesting travel tales to tell. Ilarra's favorite after-hours haunt is the Gutless Griffon, in the Ivy District, which draws a suitably inspirational crowd of revelers with intriguing stories of far-off lands. She was quite shocked recently to overhear a trio of Taldan operatives in the understructure of the Winged Sandals' headquarters openly discussing a secret plan to poison Andoren Senator Augustyn Naran, a regular patron of the Griffon and one of her favorite storytellers. She's currently building up the courage to warn him, but worries that revealing the secrets of the Blue Tower might get her in trouble with Master Conveyor Aftrin Undrol and risk her future chances at promotion and assignment as a traveling agent. Her current plan is to convince one of the other patrons of the Griffon—preferably someone brave like a mercenary or adventurer—to warn him in her stead. She doesn't want any share of the senator's gratitude, and in fact wants to be kept out of the matter entirely.

Ilrava Drogand

LN | FEMALE | DWARF | SCHOLAR | 7

Fastidious, industrious, and particular, Ilrava Drogand co-manages the Prophet's Academy, in the Coins, with boundless zeal inspired by her steadfast devotion to the Prophecies of Kalistrade. She co-founded the Academy with her human friend, Trevlin Crest, after the two came to Absalom from Kerse with dreams of making themselves rich off the commerce of the city. Since arriving, Ilrava has been largely content to milk the nobility and merchant class by charging outrageous tuition fees, but she's beginning to think that Crest's idea of self-enrichment means selling out their school altogether to the rival Withrun House. Trevlin denies it, but spends more time among his new friends there than he does with Ilrava, and she no longer knows who at the Academy she can truly trust. Her enduring friendship with Bagwell Thomkin, business manager for the Concurrent Currency coin shop, in the Dock District, remains a source of comfort to her. While the friendly halfling has yet to swear himself to the creed of Kalistrade, he has managed to introduce Ilrava to his hobby of kite flying, and the two can often be found testing out new kites while chatting in some of the most scenic open spaces in the city.

Iltara Clavela

N | FEMALE | HUMAN | WITCH | 13

Iltara was born a boy imbued with fey magic, the child of Jadwiga winter witches in the northern nation of Irrisen. Gifted from birth with power over frost and storm, Iltara had an innate aptitude for transmutation. But the child was born with a feminine spirit, and over the years sought magic to align her form to her spirit. For a while she traveled with a troupe of Varisian wanderers, performing minor divinations as "Mistress Iltara," all the while concentrating on developing her eldritch abilities. In time, she mastered the art of transformation, adopting an enhanced outer visage that better matched her inner self. In doing so she truly became Iltara, and vowed to never pretend to be anyone else again.

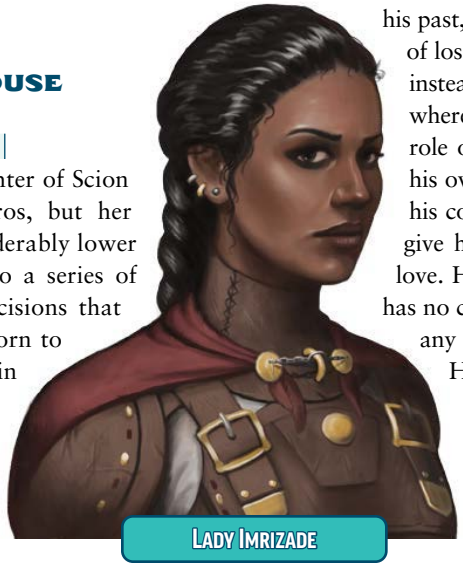
Eventually, Iltara's travels brought her to Absalom. Here, in the most culturally diverse realm she had ever encountered, Iltara realized there were so many others who ached to be what they knew they were in their minds but were not in body. And so she established Material Changes, a shop in the Grand Bazaar that offers customers a chance to live life as another—either temporarily or permanently. News of the change in rule

in Irrisen with the recent defeat of its previous queen has intrigued Iltara and she hopes some day to return there to visit those she left behind, but in her heart she is now a citizen of Absalom, and any visit she makes home will only be that—a visit.

Lady Imrizade of House Blakros

CN | FEMALE | HUMAN | ROGUE/SORCERER | 9

Lady Imrizade is the eldest daughter of Scion Lady Hamaria of House Blakros, but her standing with the family is considerably lower than one might expect thanks to a series of strange occurrences and bad decisions that have haunted her for decades. Born to Hamaria and her first husband in 4683 AR, the half-Osirian child discovered an unusual artifact known as the *Gate of Beyond* while exploring the basement of the Blakros Museum as a child, and was forever changed by the experience. Thereafter haunted by terrifying dreams and the knowledge that she would, on her twenty-first birthday, be handed over to the shadowy Onyx Alliance in accordance with an ancient family pact called the Penumbral Accords, Imrizade fled Absalom altogether when she was 15, abandoning her duty to family and cheating House Blakros of its promised generational sacrifice. After several years of tense deliberation, Scion Lady Hamaria was able to stave off the Alliance with promises of handing over her next-oldest daughter, Lady Michellia, seven years later, in 4710. Although Lady Michellia later escaped her prescribed conscription, she has never truly forgiven her older sister for abandoning her family, and leaving Michellia to pick up the pieces. While away from Absalom, Imrizade followed the family tradition and became a daring and successful adventurer, spending time exploring Osirion. There, in a forgotten tomb, she discovered a canister with strange, ancient hieroglyphs containing the preserved brain and ghostly consciousness of an ancient, aberrant sorcerer named Kubburum Ishme-dagan. This entity subsequently possessed her, and led her back to the Museum in an attempt to open the Gate of Beyond in 4709, an event ultimately thwarted by the Pathfinder Society. Ever since, Lady Imrizade has been troubled by debilitating headaches coupled with bizarre dreams that echo with the unintelligible chattering of alien entities from the Dark Tapestry, the lightless void between the stars.



Lady Imrizade

The Inverted Man

LE | MALE | HUMAN | MONK | 10

The Inverted Man once had a name of his own, but he has lost so much more over the years that the lack of a name no longer concerns him. Likewise, he once had friends, family, and a life of his own, but as with his name, these things are now lost. Yet these losses aren't so visually shocking as is the loss of his flesh's opacity. The Inverted Man knows that he was once an adventurer, but has little interest in dwelling upon his time before he found Zon-Kuthon. He offered so much to the Midnight Lord—his name, his past, his flesh—and now revels in the purity of loss. He has no true home of his own, but instead lives at Aysepir's Astounded Abyss, where his transparent skin affords him the role of star attraction. He has no family of his own, but those who gawk and marvel at his contortionist skills and eerie appearance give him all he needs in place of a family's love. He has no name of his own, but as he has no companions to call friends he needs not any method to discern himself from others. He revels in the sense of all he has lost, and does not ache for its return, for in embracing loss he puts himself closer to his shadowed, divine liege. Now and then, he feels the urge to spread the sense of loss to others, to bring gawkers and potential saviors alike into the fold, leaving them the closest thing to a family he will ever know—fellow amnesiacs who know not what they once were, other than that Zon-Kuthon is pleased with what they have had taken from them. The Inverted Man takes care to keep his "conversions" of this nature secret and hidden, for the false veneer of society would not understand the gifts and glories he grants to the chosen few.

Iolanthe

CN | FEMALE | DRYAD QUEEN | DRUID | 20

It's unclear what came first: the Circle of Stones, Iolanthe, or the Grand Holt. As the city grew around the tree, the influence of the cult and its enigmatic leader grew with it. The dryad queen Iolanthe rules the Circle of Stones with quiet dispassion from her seat within the Grand Holt, the proverbial roots of her tree-throne reaching throughout Absalom. Rather than position and present herself as the sole head of the Circle, she refers to herself only as "we." Some outsider cynics say this is to implicate the entirety of the cult in her machinations; others say it refers to herself and the Holt; still others say it is a mix of the two, dryad and tree that have learned to play the political games of humanoids to their own ends. Iolanthe's calm and almost motherly demeanor brooks little argument, especially from members of the cult. The Circle is as a family, and all may speak and know themselves to be heard, with none truly above the others. Those within the Circle rarely speak ill of their leader; they trust her wholly to lead them in the way that best protects the Holt and their interests. Whether this is because their interests have become reflections of her own is unclear.

When the good of the city or another party within it will also benefit the Grand Holt, the Circle of Stones as a whole, or Iolanthe and her inscrutable,

inhuman ambitions, she backs the action or quietly finances a group of adventurers without hesitation. She understands that balance sometimes means siding with those who were once enemies or rivals and may return to such status again, leaving her with little in the way of long-term alliances. Still, she counts the Horned Man, Korhül, the Speaker of the Circle of Stones, as someone she can always rely upon. Iolanthe rarely leaves the sanctum of her tree, and thus the imposing Korhül serves as the face of the cult seen by most of Absalom's citizens. All know that an ageless fey queen stands behind the Horned Man, and that the sheltering branches and trunks of the ever-growing Grand Holt stand as a testament to the cult's deep roots in Absalom.

J Dacilane

Iolanthe's current interests shed little light on her long-term goals. Her financial support of Green Ridge in Eastgate and the leshy-run Wandering Monster park in the Ivy District holds no surprises for anyone, nor does her casual association with the conservationist elements of the Erastil Club. No one is certain of why she has left discreet gifts and performed unasked favors for House Candren, however, and Goodmiss Alidane views the gestures with mildly alarmed caution. The savviest of Absalom informants, including High Hetaera Dyrianna, also know that the Grand Holt has offered a tentative branch to the Vault of Abadar of all organizations—and one the desperate bankers may just be forced to take.

Those attuned to nature, especially rangers and druids, are always welcomed at the Holt. Disarmed by her soft and measured voice with a hint of birdsong, many have reported afterward their deep feelings of fuzzy contentment and warmth. However, the dryad queen has little patience, and those who have garnered her wrath in the past have met with a completely inhuman presence that immediately drops all pretense to express her displeasure. Her cult has grown more active in the last decade, a period that corresponds to far greater than usual growth of the Grand Holt and a burst of power and ambition in Iolanthe's heart. The Circle of Stones views their leader's recent strength as a sign of their boundless devotion, but Korhül and the cult's inner circle know that the true boon is a life-giving *aeon orb* stolen from a tower outside the distant north coast village of Willowsedge. That community's misfortune has proven to be the greatest opportunity the Circle of Stones has seen in a generation, and Iolanthe has no intention to squander it.

J Dacilane

| CG | MALE | HUMAN | SUMMONER | 4 |

J Dacilane was only 11 years old when the earthquake of 4698 AR collapsed the Tri-Towers Yard academy, trapping him in the basement. A magic ring kept him alive for 10 years, until he was rescued by agents of the Pathfinder Society in 4708 AR. After the collapse, he found himself bonded to the phantom of his classmate Grishan Maldris, who sadly perished in the catastrophe. Out of gratitude to his rescuers, J—now grown from an awkward young lady into a dashing Eagle Knight—has devoted a portion of his family fortune to aiding the Society, most notably in his patronage of the newly renamed Dacilane Academy in Absalom's Foreign Quarter, which educates and looks after the children of Pathfinders who move frequently on assignments.

Jacques Albers

| N | MALE | HUMAN | ARISTOCRAT | 3 |

Along with his beloved wife, Eivlind, Jacques Albers is well into a prolonged vacation in Absalom, the final stop in a grand tour of Inner Sea ports made possible when a wealthy noble purchased their family home in Taldor to house relatives for the coronation of Grand Princess Eutropia. The pair can be found at any number of attractions throughout Absalom, from the Ivy Playhouse to the Irorium to the Blakros Museum. Class conscious, a bit snobby, but otherwise friendly, the Albers are eager conversationalists and often need advice to get from place to place in Absalom, a city they find bewildering to navigate. Jacques tends to let his gregarious wife lead conversations with strangers, only occasionally chiming in to add flavor to one of Eivlind's many questions or (generally negative) opinions on the various places they have visited in the course of their travels. Despite the Albers' critical opinions of their journey so far, neither lets their negativity darken their mood, and they are both eagerly inquisitive and friendly, even as they pass harsh judgment on some of the most brightly shining jewels of human accomplishment in the Age of Lost Omens. One interest Jacques does not share with his wife a desire to travel any further than they already have. Jacques is eager to return to the decadent comforts of Oppara, and he's worried that any additional destinations will so degrade what little funds they have left that they will be forced to inhabit a hovel when they finally return. Still, a hovel in Oppara is far superior to even a palace anywhere else, so if that's what it takes to keep Eivlind happy, he's willing to spend just a little bit more.

Jada Moore

| LE | FEMALE | HALFLING | BARD | 3 |

Along with her twin brother Hamlin, Jada Moore leads the child thieves known as Dod's Filchers from the Crystal Palace in the Coins. While her brother handles the increasingly difficult day-to-day rule over the unruly urchins, Jada turns her sights to grander schemes. Her latest plan is the recruitment of a young aristocrat—the runaway child Lord Corian Blakros. Jada hopes

to fully indoctrinate Corian into the Filchers soon, at which point she'll work with him to rob the Blakros treasury to finance the Filchers. And if Corian proves too headstrong, Jada hasn't written out the possibility of ransoming him back to his family for just as much money as she could have made stealing from them. Either way, the gang will gain the financial stability they need to go forward with confidence after the mysterious vanishing of their founder, Malina Dod. Jada has mixed feelings toward Malina, whom she once regarded as a big sister. On the one hand, she'd always felt she would make a better leader of the group, and with Malina out of the way Jada wasn't faced with the complicated possibility that she might need to assassinate her sister to gain power for herself, but on the other, she misses the freedom she had when the responsibility of helping to run the gang didn't weigh so heavily on her shoulders. One of Jada's strongest recurring nightmares is the sudden return of Malina, for while she's not sure if she'd welcome her with open arms or a knife in the throat, she does fear that, in the long run, whatever she did would end up being the worst choice.

Jarid Moltwin

Jaivati

CG | FEMALE | HUMAN | CLERIC | 9

Jaivati has long found inspiration in Shelyn, seeing the goddess as a benevolent muse. Her beliefs are certainly not heresy, as the faith understands and supports the need for certain artists to work and worship alone, and as such Jaivati has never held any influence over or position within the church's formal ranks. Instead, she spent her youth traveling the world, taking in art from dozens, if not hundreds of cultures, and today she draws upon those experiences at Magpie Manor, where her intricate shadow puppets and one-person mystery play performances have entertained visitors for nearly a decade. Worshippers of Shelyn are among her greatest admirers, yet they respect her beliefs and never try to persuade her to join their organization. Jaivati has never set foot in a temple of her goddess, and views her art as more pure than that created by other priests as she has not been influenced by the work of her fellow believers, yet she does not carry a sense of superiority over those artists. She understands that art is subjective, and her work is meant to please herself and herself alone. That it has brought joy to others is a lovely side effect, but it has never been her primary goal in life.

Janira Gavix

N | FEMALE | HALFLING | BARD | 4

Janira joined the Pathfinder Society a decade ago. As part of her Confirmation to become a Pathfinder field agent, the excitable young halfling discovered the Pilgrim's Cave while surveying the foothills of the Kortos Mounts. The site, with its ties to Aroden and the early members of the Pathfinder Society, became a regular part of all Pathfinder Confirmations for years, gaining Gavix notoriety in the Society. For a short time, she served as an aid to Master of Scrolls Kreighton Shaine, bringing her into the upper circles of Pathfinder leadership.

Janira is a natural raconteur who often becomes so engrossed in telling an accurate and engaging story that she loses track of her surroundings. She has a life-long love of learning, and always strives to inspire others through lectures, speeches, and friendly and encouraging suggestions. Her helpfulness led to a recent promotion to the rank of Head Initiate; Janira is now responsible for overseeing the transition of graduates of the Grand Lodge's three-year Pathfinder training program into fully-fledged field agents. She administers the Confirmation ritual that marks this transition, and most Pathfinders love and appreciate her. She is a member in good standing of the Society's community-oriented Envoy's Alliance faction, and is close friends with its leader, Fola Barun.

Janira is the eldest of seven children. She grew up in a cozy family villa in Eastgate, where her father still works as a porter who employs a dog cart to transport goods from ships and shops to customers. Her younger brother, Dooley, is a student at the White Grotto; the pair sometimes meet up at her favorite bar, the Wounded Wisp. Janira and her family worship Desna, and she attends regular services at the House of Seven Faces, in Westgate.

Jarid Moltwin

NE | MALE | HUMAN | MERCHANT | 2

The scheming curiosities merchant Jarid Moltwin runs a private stall in the God's Market called Estelle's Last Hope Mercantile, which caters to the eclectic interests of Absalom's curio collectors and adventuring class alike. Countless unique objects crowd the cramped stall, each bearing a claim tying it to divinity less credible than the last. Here is a cup bearing three tears of Iomedae, a rock from the face of Groteus, a spike from Gorum's armor, and so on. He purchases nearly as much as he sells, and is a good buyer for some of the more unusual objects brought to the city by adventurers. The outwardly gregarious rotund Qadiran swindler is suspicious of anyone who starts a conversation with a question and gets visibly agitated when too many people enter his stall at once.

Lord Jaren of House Wycomb

CG | MALE | HUMAN | BARD/SWASHBUCKLER | 13

The dashing fencer Lord Jaren is the Master Piper at the White Grotto in the Ivy District, where he delights in

instructing the next generation of bards in both wind instruments and bladecraft. Hearsay suggests that he spent time as a pirate, and that it was while serving aboard these notorious ships that he honed his fencing skills. Jaren is one of the few humans to regularly appear among the gathering of misfits aboard Chugmuzz the Surly's *Black Revenge*, where his swirling melodies fuel dancing and revelry that lasts long into the night.

Jaress Molinarro

| LE | FEMALE | HUMAN | DIPLOMAT | 13 |

Kortos Viceroy Jaress Molinarro works closely with Absalom's Third Law Lord Diasco Vade to oversee the execution of justice according to the laws of Absalom in the greater Isles of Kortos and Erran, where scrupulous adherence to the law of the land is not always so strongly or fairly observed. Molinarro professes her loyalty to her mentor, Vade, but her true allegiance lies with the Kortos Consortium itself.

Jaruke Dalagander

| CE | MALE | DWARF | CLERIC | 12 |

As the high priest of Gorum at the Gorumarrux in the Ascendant Court, Jaruke Dalagander's stubbornness when it comes to clinging to increasingly outdated traditions has become his own worst enemy. He's long managed to hide his sadistic nature and cruel personality behind the monetized violence of the arena, but Absalom's latest reversal on the legality of slavery has pushed the dwarf quietly over the edge. He continues to populate many of his exhibition fights with slaves purchased on the illicit market, "guaranteeing" them freedom if they perform well and promising to hide the fact that he owns them. Jaruke takes pains to ensure none of these captives ever live long enough to realize he never intends to make good on his promises. But increasing suspicion from city officials and, most recently, several paying customers has the other priests of the Gorumarrux worried that their leader might be bringing the temple-arena into peril. Jaruke has only recently begun to suspect that his own underlings might be plotting his downfall, and has been quietly recruiting a hidden cabal of more loyal (and more well-paid) personal (and often quite monstrous) guardians to populate his own private chambers below the arena. It's only a matter of time before a full-fledged schism breaks out in the Gorumarrux, with both sides hoping to time and present the inevitable event in a way that fills the arena's seats so that whoever wins the battle comes out the other side all the richer.

Jehanna

| CG | FEMALE | TIEFLING | HARROWER | 6 |

The fortune teller Jehanna provides mystic council to the people of Absalom. A master of the art and lore of the Varisian Harrow, Jehanna is a regular at the Ivy District's popular Gutless Griffon tavern, offering table-to-table card readings to patrons. During large markets or other public events, Jehanna sets up an incense-filled tent for private consulting sessions. Holy symbols of Desna dangle from the roof of the cramped-but-cozy interior. Jehanna's thick Varisian accent matches her dress and décor, reflecting her homeland. Her sharp iron fingernails and brilliant yellow eyes hint at a distant fiendish heritage that adds to the esoteric atmosphere she cultivates with every aspect of her personal image.

Jehanna's kind-hearted, empathic nature has garnered a great deal of attention and support, bolstered by publicity from her weekly column in the *Sennight Star* newspaper, featuring personal horoscopes based on astrology and Harrow symbology. Jehanna is particularly popular with Absalom's nobles and celebrities; her clients include Alina Muraabe, Mendhir the Colossus, Emma Sadik, Guaril Karela, Benkhal Blackblade, Chesele, and Sendeli Foxglove. She seeks out and quickly befriends adventurers, whom she knows from experience often bear deep emotional wounds as a result of their violent and terrifying lives. Jehanna not infrequently fudges her readings to connect an adventurer client with a celebrity client who has a problem that needs fixing. As Jehanna keeps her customer list strictly confidential, there's little chance of any of her clients realizing the hand she regularly places upon the scales of fate.

Jembar Duskyshankle

| CE | MALE | GNOME | ARTISAN | 11 |

As president of the Coalition of Artisans and a holder of a guild seat on Absalom's Low Council, the cantankerous Jembar Duskyshankle knows he is a role model for his fellow gnomes in the city, but he never quite rises to the challenge of the position. Prone to infighting and double-dealing, Duskyshankle runs a gem shop called It Sparkles! in the Ivy District, where his creations service the demand of Absalom's nouveau rich.

About a year ago, a filthy vagrant stumbled into his shop offering a clearly stolen ruby he claimed to have pried from the eye of the serpent visage of Wracked Rock, in the Precipice Quarter. Jembar tossed a few coins his way, ushered the wretch from his shop, and gazed into the heart of his ill-gotten gem—and his life has never been the same since.

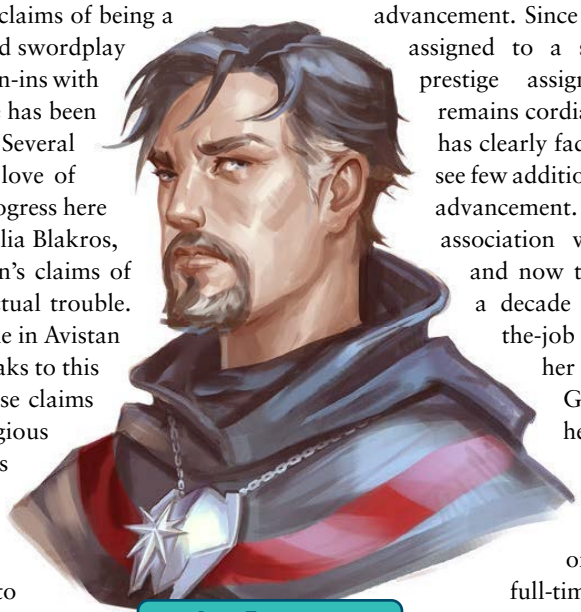
Jembar Duskyshankle saw his own reflected eye staring back from within the stone, but the voice that has haunted his nightly dreams ever since is of a decidedly more monstrous character. At the instruction of this presence, who the gnome has come to call "the Slithering Eye/I," Jembar has changed the iconography of the Coalition of Artisans' seals to incorporate several unusual and almost alien symbols. Spread out over a number of trades, each with its own glyph, the strange icons now appear in nearly every home in the city.

Jeon Raeng-Woo

| CN | MALE | ROGUE | 7 |

A well-dressed and well-traveled man in his early 30s, Jeon Raeng-Woo has served as a trade liaison between his homeland of Hwanggot in Tian-Xia and the Blakros family for most of his life. His unkempt black hair and

slightly dazed smile are side effects of the fact that he's rarely fully sober. A genial drunk, Jeon fancies himself a priest of Shizuru, but is more interested in worship of the bottle than the goddess. His claims of being a cleric of the goddess of honor and swordplay are largely harmless, and in his run-ins with actual worshippers of Shizuru he has been treated with pity but tolerance. Several have tried to wean him off his love of drink, but few have made any progress here save his childhood friend Michellia Blakros, who worries that some day Jeon's claims of being a priest will get him in actual trouble. That Jeon spends most of his time in Avistan and not home, many believe, speaks to this fact, for here in Absalom his false claims are less likely to cause religious outrage. Still, Michellia worries that her friend is one bender away from using up the luck and goodwill he's been banking on, and is looking for someone to help her get Jeon sober for good.



Jonis Flakfatter

Jonis Flakfatter

| NE | MALE | HUMAN | ALCHEMIST/CLERIC | 15 |

A bear of a man who speaks quietly but commands any room he deigns to enter, Jonis Flakfatter is the high priest of Blackfinger Temple, in the Ascendant Court, making him the semi-public face of Norgorber's faith in one of the only cities in the world where it is not forbidden by law. Flakfatter famously keeps his nose clean even as he leads a cult dedicated to the god of poisoning. Despite his reputation—or perhaps because of it—Flakfatter is invited to many of Absalom's highest-class galas and soirees. Though loudly outspoken, Jonis's opinions are stronger than his taste for a fight; for all of his bluster, he cares more about his poisons than politics, and usually capitulates to pressure from priests of Norgorber's Gray Master and Reaper of Reputation aspects.

Joriah

| LN | FEMALE | HUMAN | RANGER | 3 |

Joriah grew up in an isolated hill fort community of Inlanders on the banks of the Husna River, northwest of the Immenwood. Disease wiped out most of her family and scattered the surviving residents of the fort nearly 20 years ago, when Joriah was still a girl. She wandered the wilds of Kortos for a year before eventually finding her way to Absalom. Physically hardy with a tall and muscular frame, Joriah found swift employment in the big city, first as a bouncer at a series of low-class bars and eventually as a paid guard in the employ of the Guild of Spears. Her mercenary work distinguished her enough to gain the attention of the Post Guard, and its Captain Ayunga of House Akkesh in particular. For years Joriah's prestige in the Post Guard grew as she continued to curry Ayunga's favor, but a disagreement over an important case 3 years ago (Joriah urged clemency in the case of a wife accused of murdering her abusive husband) significantly cooled the captain's enthusiasm for Joriah's advancement. Since then, she has found herself assigned to a series of unfulfilling, low-prestige assignments. Captain Ayunga remains cordial to her, but the old support has clearly faded, and Joriah has begun to see few additional opportunities for further advancement. She never fully stopped her association with the Guild of Spears, and now that she has had more than a decade of guard training and on-the-job experience, she knows that her potential rate as a full-time Guild mercenary far exceeds her earning power as a simple patrol guard. For now she is content to indulge in her mercenary activity on her off hours, but Joriah craves full-time excitement, and hopes to one day have the chance to become an independent questing hero, engaging in adventures and exploits for her own enrichment, rather than as a hired hand for someone else. Joriah worships Erastil and still maintains some of the rustic traditions of her Inlander kin. She knows the interior of Starstone Isle better than any of her Post Guard compatriots, and her skill as a wilderness scout has drawn the attention of Lord Riodos of House Morilla, the proprietor of the Guild of Spears. Riodos sees Joriah's potential much as Ayunga previously had, and is already scheming to drive a wedge between her and her guard loyalties to bring her over the mercenary work full time.

Jorry Slimfin

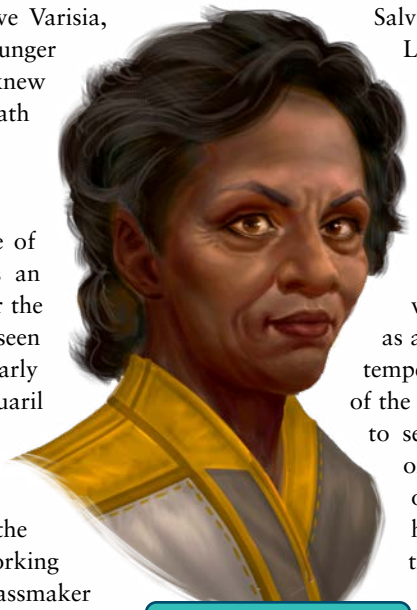
| CE | MALE | AZARKETI | CLERIC | 6 |

To Jorry Slimfin, a day isn't complete if he hasn't driven a priest of another religion speechless with frustration. Whereas many worshippers of the Pirate Queen Besmara seek to venerate her as the goddess of piracy or sea monsters, Jorry has always felt that strife is the purest form of adoration for his goddess. In particular, strife spread through what he views as "competitors to the ears of the ignorant"—worshippers of other deities. By heckling other priests, Jorry seeks to cause confusion and distraction among those who would look to those people for advice and insight into the world. A priest who can't offer aid to an actual worshipper because they're too busy sputtering or ranting about Jorry's caustic, inflammatory, or even blasphemous comments is a triumph to the azarketi. He's particularly skilled at disguising his heckling tirades as impartial or even concerned observations so that passersby tend to miss things his target would pick up on. Jorry's verbal barbs and comments are tailored to solicit apoplectic anger that, to the casual observer, seem completely unwarranted.

Jorula Karela

CG | MALE | HUMAN | MERCHANT | 3

Jorula is no stranger to the complexities of family. He never really wanted to leave Varisia, but when a letter from his younger brother Guaril arrived, Jorula knew he had no choice. Since the death of their parents, Jorula felt responsible for his brother's safety. Yet time and time again, Guaril abused that sense of responsibility to use Jorula as an assistant in one illegal plot after the other. Jorula had thought he'd seen the last of Guaril after a particularly public falling out resulted in Guaril leaving Varisia for Absalom, but when he received that fateful letter, in which Guaril claimed to have turned over the metaphorical leaf and was working to start a new life as a glassmaker despite the fact that he was having a hard time with some of the locals, Jorula felt that old sense of responsibility return. He sold everything for transportation to the big city, and soon thereafter, he found himself in Absalom. He intended to help his brother out, only to learn the "locals" Guaril was having trouble with were the city guard. This was nearly a decade ago, and today Jorula's debt (both to family and to the criminal gang his brother runs) have imprisoned him as the hapless proprietor of Crystal Creations. He may seek aid from charitable adventurers, but only if he can be assured that they won't hurt his brother even as they take down the Crowsworn thieves' guild who hold court below the shop (and whom Guaril not-so-secretly controls as guildmaster).



Jostlin Ferqyr

Jossie Slimfin

CG | FEMALE | AZARKETI | JUNK MERCHANT | 1

Hundreds of azarketi dwell beneath the planks of Besmara's Boardwalk, but perhaps none know its nooks and crannies better than Jossie Slimfin. Jossie and her brother Jorry were raised in the low twilight waters under the boards, exploring every inch of its maze of half-sunken support pylons, sewer system connections, dead ends, sinkholes, and shadows. Along the way, Jossie took note of submerged corners where washed up garbage collected, of the wider slots in the docks above where dropped objects most frequently fell through. Not all this detritus was trash, and when her parents vanished—some say they were abducted from Gilltown one night by a serial killer called the Trawler—she soon discovered out of necessity that some of her collected rubbish had value to others. For the past several years, Jossie Slimfin has made a business out of her collection, selling her found objects at a variety of Absalomian markets on different days of the week, from the top level of Besmara's Boardwalk in the Docks to the Barque Bazaar in the Puddles to Greenstar Market in the Foreign Quarter. Jossie risks the ire of Haigen Topkick and his Salvagers' Guild goons by regularly trawling the Little Inner Sea for washed-up treasure. Two months ago, an altercation with Salvagers' Guild Chief Aggregator Murno Bloss left an ugly scar on Jossie's left cheek, where Bloss's signature whip tore a rift in her face. Jossie refuses to have the scar healed (and cannot afford it anyway), preferring to leave it as a sign of a score with Bloss that has yet to be settled, as well as a reminder to herself to be more careful. Her tempestuous brother, Jorry, is a fanatical devotee of the pirate goddess Besmara, and encourages her to seek revenge not just on Murno Bloss, but on Haigen Topkick's whole corrupt criminal operation. As in all things, Jossie encourages her brother to relax and seek peace rather than vengeance, but in her heart she knows that she will one day make Bloss—as well as his boss—pay dearly.

Jostlin Ferqyr

LN | FEMALE | HALF-ELF | CLERIC | 15

Ivy District Councilwoman Jostlin Ferqyr is the Keeper of the Vault of Abadar and the primary patron of Bor Dralfo's Brotherhood of Abadar. A small, elderly woman, Ferqyr rose through the ranks of Abadar's faith on the basis of diligence, caution, and having a cool head in a crisis. Her prime concern right now is to make certain that the Vault of Abadar weathers its current troubles with as little cost to the bottom line as possible. Ferqyr frequently meets with visiting dignitaries, ambassadors, and prominent pilgrims, who value her insight and keen eye for strategy. Her robust social schedule requires an army of assistants, coordinators, and bureaucrats fitting for a temple dedicated to order and civilization. These briefings, along with the voluminous correspondence at the heart of Abadar's international church, makes her one of the best-informed observers of Inner Sea politics. She is infatuated with Bor Dralfo, who she considers a fellow traveler in their common quest to clean up the Ivy District.

Jovara Humbolt

N | FEMALE | HUMAN | TRANSMUTER | 18

Jovara is the adult daughter of Gron Humbolt and Lady Myleena of House Arnsen. She was conceived out of wedlock (some say she is the reason her parents hastily married a few months before her birth), and her father's refusal to take the Arnsen name effectively locked her out of a life of nobility. This troubles her but little. Ever since donning the *irezoko* face tattoo when she achieved the rank of enigma a few years ago, her only attachment is to the College of Mysteries. She now visits her parents only once every few months, doing so for their benefit

rather than her own. On such occasions she finds her mind occupied with arcane theorems and the mechanics of magic, nodding along with her family's stories as a courtesy that seems less and less compelling with every passing year.

The deeper Jovara ventures into the intrigues and mysteries of the Assembly of Enigmas—the secret society at the heart of the College of Mysteries—the more she begins to believe that she is destined for something greater, a form perhaps even removed from the normal boundaries of human life. Her years mastering the art of transmutation have convinced her that she is meant to herself transform into something greater some day soon, and that ordinary—she hesitates to use the word mortal—concerns like friends and family are perhaps in some way beneath her, or soon will be. Her peers consider Jovara to be the academy's most skillful transmuter despite her occasionally aloof nature, granting her the sobriquet "of the Thousand Forms," which has completely replaced her family name within the confines of the academy. Unusually for an enigma, Jovara is also a curator, instructing advanced students in the inner secrets of her chosen arcane school. Her most meaningful personal relationship is with her young apprentice and prize pupil, the scholarship student Derica Foss. Jovara encourages her protégé to channel her ambitions toward the arcane and away from the political, scorning Derica's idolization of a noble class of Absalom that had never allowed Jovara into their ranks, and whom she counted as one of her earliest enemies.

Lord Juartos of House Morilla

NE | MALE | HUMAN | ACCOUNTANT | 7

Keen-minded Lord Juartos, nephew of Scion Lord Celedo, manages the financial affairs of the family's Guild of Wonders criminal enterprise. The jittery, undeniably brilliant man controls all aspects of the Guild's business, from skimming the proper percentage off the top into the family's accounts to setting the price for an assassination to keeping track of profits tied to the family's extensive network of fences. Lord Juartos keeps several fake business ledgers in his office at the Guild, but a single volume he calls the *Codex Morilla* bears all of the Guild's juiciest financial secrets. Lord Juartos carries this special ledger on his person everywhere he goes, out of fear that it might fall into the wrong hands. He socializes but little outside the Guild, preferring the company of his brother Donovar and uncle Celedo to that of the students, strangers, or his sister Annasendra, whom he holds in especial distrust. Juartos relieves the considerable stress of his position with semi-frequent visits to the Silken Court, in the Petal District, where he counts among the favored clients of the courtesan Chesele. Juartos has grown so comfortable in the company of the Keleshite beauty over the years that he speaks openly to her about the inner squabbles of the Morilla clan, tales that find their way to Lady Dyrianna, the brothel's proprietor and the master of one of Absalom's most influential information gathering operations. Dyrianna is particularly interested in Juartos's special ledger, and plans to stage a theft of the *Codex Morilla* during one of Juartos's upcoming visits to the Silken Court, while Chesele keeps him otherwise occupied. Lord Juartos dresses exclusively in shades of blue, often with a fancy cape. He bears a stylish, curled-up mustache that is perhaps his most famous asset among those who know nothing about his secret business.

Judae Tarshem

N | FEMALE | HUMAN | WIZARD | 13

As a tenured docent at the Arcanamirium and a member of the Wise Council, Judae has little time to call her own. For her, a typical day involves a brisk breakfast, several hours spent lecturing at the Arcanamirium interrupted by a short lunch, and then an evening at Wisdom's Refuge going over the business of the day for the Wise Quarter. Then back home to her sparse apartments for a frugal dinner, followed by a glass of wine laced with a tiny powdering of cytillesh spores to ensure that when she wakes, she doesn't remember her dreams. For Judae has been plagued for nearly a year by nightmares, ever since she bumped into a frightening figure on the way home alone from a night out with several fellow docents from the Arcanamirium. The man was crouched at the entrance of an alley, but when he stood, his height crested ten feet. He wore a gray hooded robe, but the flesh of his arms was blood red and his fingers and the edges of his clothing dripped with ashes. He vanished a moment later, but ever since, when she doesn't prepare beforehand at night, nightmares of Absalom crumbling to ashes while a thundering voice calls out from beyond the smoke, "I shall visit you all!" have plagued her. She's avoided researching the topic further and has told no one of these disturbing visions, for every time she builds up the courage to do either, a brief glimpse out of the corner of her eye of a crouching man in a hooded robe or the lingering taste of ashes on her tongue stills her voice with fear.

Kalavess

LN | FEMALE | DUSKWALKER | UNDEAD HUNTER | 8

Kalavess was reincarnated by the psychopomps of Pharasma's Boneyard, and was reborn with a compulsive drive to rid the world of malevolent undead in what she believes to be a direct application of the will of the Lady of Graves. Since coming to Absalom thirteen years ago, the quiet, trustworthy warrior has affiliated herself with the Spiral Shrine, in the Precipice Quarter, where lingering undead threats make her a welcome presence, both among the Pharasmin clergy and among the folk trying their best to re-inhabit the abandoned district. Despite her association with the church, Kalavess is a loner by nature, and considers herself to have very few true friends. Curiosity regarding an alleged darkness at the heart of Absalom's House Ahnkamen brought her into the orbit of Scion Lady Neferpatra, who has become

Kalavess's most trusted ally in the city, but even that isn't saying much, given the duskwalker's suspicious and cautious nature. Her curiosity regarding the Ahnkamens has extended to accepting Neferpatra's invitations to her family's famous parties at the Ahnkamen Estate, but Kalavess is enormously uncomfortable in finery. With her charcoal skin, ashen gray hair, and ill-fitting gowns, she looks very out of place among high society. Such is her hatred for undead that Kalavess sometimes offers her services as a mercenary for free to those she knows to be actively working to destroy them.

Kamata

NG | FEMALE | HUMAN | MERCHANT | 7

Although she never knew her ancestral homeland before its fall, Kamata has visited the now-flooded region of Yamasa, known today as part of the Sodden Lands, dozens of times. The trips are dangerous, but she values what she learns enough that the risk is more than worth the reward. Be it retrieving rare seeds of plants once common in the fields of Yamasa or simply steeping herself in the lingering aura of the post-apocalyptic landscape, Kamata's trips to the deadly marshes have lent her an indisputable air of authenticity when it comes to providing produce, traditions, and comfort foods to others of the Yemhasin. It's not hyperbole to say that Kamata's efforts are single-handedly keeping dozens of Yamasan traditions and recipes alive today. As she gets on in years, Kamata increasingly looks to the hiring of adventuring parties to make the still-dangerous journeys down to the Sodden Lands once every year when the winds of Abendego are at their least punishing, but she still tries to make it down south at least once every few years to "keep her edge."

Karakah

CN | MALE | TENGU | CLERIC | 6

While the shrine of Hei-Feng is not a sprawling complex or a towering monument, its high priest Karakah does his best not to let that downplay the presence of his faith in the Docks. The shrine itself is a relatively new addition to Temple Row, but the faith has already become one of the most visible and influential in the area, challenging the previous dominance held by more established temples to Gozreh and Besmara. Karakah's penchant for treating the gods like neighbors, referring to them in his sermons almost like people he chatted with a few hours ago in one of several nearby taverns, has simultaneously offended the more traditional worshippers of the other faiths and amused fellow worshippers of the tengu god of sailors and the sea. The fact that Karakah has produced no fewer than two dozen impromptu street fairs and celebrations is probably the primary reason for his faith's rising popularity, for while the church of Hei-Feng never charges money to attend any of these festivals, they certainly do take the chance to preach their faith to the masses. The opportunity to worship a deity who isn't so impartial (such as Gozreh) or so frightening (like Besmara) is rapidly gaining root among many of Absalom's sailors, many of whom react with relief to the idea that a deity of the sea doesn't have to be all about nature's violence or high-seas criminality.

Kavati Kuro

CG | FEMALE | HUMAN | ASTRONOMER | 6

The sodden destruction of the nation of Lirgen at the onset of the Age of Lost Omens scattered survivors across the Inner Sea region. Those who settled in Absalom quickly established "Little Lirgen" in the Foreign Quarter, but today most of the neighborhood's populace view their ancestral legacy more as a curious relic of the past rather than an identity. To the precocious Kavati Kuro this willful ignorance or discarding of cultural legacy is a shame, but her own introverted nature and fear of crowds makes it difficult to spread the word. Instead, she's focused her energies on restoring and repairing the ancient astronomical devices that lie littered across the rooftops and parlors of Little Lirgen, advertising her services to the neighborhood's elite as a quaint form of decoration when in fact her repairs give her access to an ever-increasing array of telescopes, orreries, and devices. In effect, Kavati's turning the entire neighborhood into her own astronomical laboratory. Recently though, Kavati's discovered a significant downside to her methods—no one takes a one-person astronomy lab seriously, even in light of a particularly unnerving discovery. Had she not had access to so many different viewing devices, Kavati would have missed it herself—the fact that one minor star in the sky was visible just barely within the curve of Golarion's moon, Somal, on a cloudless night several months ago. The implication that this so-called "star" is much closer to Golarion isn't as disturbing to Kavati as is the fact that its luminescence must be in some way artificial—and the fact that it's managed to pose for so long as a mere distant point of light in the sky is even more insidious. Kavati is convinced that this tiny pale blue point of light, known to modern Absalomian astronomers as the Azure Egg for its proximity to the constellation known as the Thrush, is in fact evidence of some form of sinister intelligence that has been watching Golarion from above since the dawn of the Age of Lost Omens, for she has yet to secure any proof of the Azure Egg being a part of the nightscape in any of the pre-hurricane records from Lirgen that have survived the flood.

Kefilwe

LN | MALE | HUMAN | CLERIC | 5

The second auditor of Abadar's church in Absalom is responsible for overseeing the records of the religion's lending services, ensuring that everything is in financial order and that loans, interest, and sacred blessings are all conducted within the boundaries of orthodox Abadarian ethical practice. This gives him outsized power over all of the banking temples and churches on the Isle of Kortos, albeit for only a very specific slice

their operations. Of late, however, that specific slice has been a cause of significant personal and religious strife. A month ago, Keeper Jostlin Ferqyr at the Ivy District's Vault of Abadar stopped allowing him access to the temple's financial records, stalling him with a litany of excuses that have grown absurd. Out of respect for Ferqyr, who promoted him out of chapel service at a branch temple in Eastgate years ago, Kefilwe has not yet reported his suspicions to Vrowclaw of Brevoy, Ferqyr's rival at the Bank of Abadar. But in order to be true to his lawful religious faith, it's a secret he can only hold for so long.

Kefilwe's position in the church has made him outrageously wealthy. He wisely invested a large portion of his wealth in the House of Shade and Grace, the Foreign Quarter inn that serves as the center of Absalom's Thuvian social scene. He is the permanent holder of the inn's corner balcony suite, and can be found hobnobbing among the guests several nights a week.

Scion Lord Kerkis of House Damaq

LN | MALE | HUMAN | ARISTOCRAT | 19

As heir apparent of the fabulously wealthy House Damaq, the young Lord Kerkis was sent to a half-dozen cities around the Inner Sea region to learn his house's business. Yet for all the glories of Oppara and Katheer, Magnimar and Alkenstar, it is the Chelaxian port town of Corentyn that is burned into Kerkis's memory. Pirates were raiding local shipping, and the young and hot-blooded scion volunteered to lead one of the ships to put them down. What he saw broke him. The fighting went smoothly, and Kerkis acquitted himself well enough. But the pirates' savaged victims and the Chelaxian navy's brutal punishments shattered the idealistic nobleman's view of the world. The nightmares started the next night. They have yet to stop.

Much older now, the once-fiery Kerkis has become a grim and melancholy man. He is a cynic's cynic, convinced that the base state of mankind is to be violent, ignorant, and greedy, and all his power and all his wealth is not enough to change this. Half the time Kerkis still thinks there might be hope and embarks on some scheme or project—building a hospital, endowing a school, supporting Pathfinders. Yet inevitably, some setback confirms his cynicism, and he withdraws into a miserable gloom for weeks or months, shirking his responsibilities.

Today, Scion Lord Kerkis leads the richest house in Absalom and is considered the cornerstone of Absalom's aristocracy. His reputation for caution and financial sense has made him Absalom's Chancellor of the Exchequer and Master of the Mint. He holds a seat on the Grand Council and is one of the leading voices in the Optimates, supporting Lord Avid of House Arnsen. He backs the Optimates not out of any belief of aristocratic superiority, so much as an idea that the short-sighted stupidity of a few nobles is safer than the volatile stupidity of the masses. At the same time, Kerkis is not fool enough to ignore the growing desire for change and has been in very quiet talks with some of Lady Adrielle's and Lady Darchana's supporters, trying to figure out what package of reforms might satisfy without upending Absalom's governance entirely. When he acts, whether because his talks have been exposed, or because he has some compromise program or even a compromise candidate, it is likely to completely upend the political balance of Absalom.

Scion Lord Kerkis

By virtue of his responsibilities, Lord Kerkis has connections across all of Absalom. He counts Lord Avid of House Arnsen as his brother-in-law, and Lord Yamthar of House Ormuz is his late wife's nephew. These days, when he appears in public it is most often accompanying Lady Dyrianna of House Avenstar. He is also often seen sparring with Lady Hamaria of House Blakros, as the two have been business rivals for so long that they have become almost friends.

Khaya

NE | FEMALE | GHORAN | DRUID | 8

Khaya is a twisted ghoran who rules the ruin of the Precipice Quarter's Arboretum Arcanis and most of the plant creatures within it. Khaya fled Quantium and came to Absalom in 4715 AR, taking up residence in the Arboretum Arcanis. She wished to use the Arboretum to grow a presence of ghorans and leshys within Absalom, but fell victim to the arboretum's corruption instead; any plant creatures she succeeds at growing within the arboretum are likely to share the same fate.

Khonsu-Rho

LG | MALE | HUMAN | CLERIC | 7

Asked about his homeland Minkai in distant Tian-Xia, Khonsu-Rho remains silent other than to admit that the person he was there is very different to the one who runs the Consulate of the Platinum Band in the Puddles today. He won't deny even that his name is a new fabrication, one he took for himself upon arriving in Absalom years ago, but to date has said nothing about his previous name or identity, instead using his way with words to twist the focus of any conversation around to the topic of his god, Apsu, and the belief that dragons were the first form of sapient life to rise to power on Golarion. Khonsu-Rho patiently discounts any myths or legends to the contrary, steadfast in his belief that the true nature of reality and humanity's rightful place in existence can only be divined through the secrets and stories told by Apsu through the ages. Khonsu-Rho is particularly concerned with the aftermath of those who seek to mix draconic and humanoid powers, and he sees draconic-blooded sorcerers or so-called half-dragons as victims of misinformed attempts to understand draconic power while simultaneously hoping to provide a safe place for these few folk to prosper. The Consulate of the Platinum Band predates Khonsu-Rho's arrival in Absalom, but under his watch, the temple of Apsu's star has risen, particularly as he and his acolytes continue to attend to the comforts of the poor and desperate of the surrounding Puddles. Cynics are quick to attribute nefarious motives to the efforts of Khonsu-Rho's faithful in the neighborhood, but the good his worshippers have done for the Puddles cannot be denied.

Khoskhadi Ever-Silver

CG | MALE | HUMAN | BARBARIAN | 8

Khoskhadi has fought in the Irorium for over 20 years with skill, scrupulous fairness, and a flair for drama that made him a crowd favorite since his earliest public battles. For almost that entire time, the Shoanti warrior has worn a silver sword pin; again and again, bad fortune has denied him every chance at gold. Now the tattooed barbarian is graying and slowing, and while cheering crowds greet every one of his increasingly infrequent attempts at winning his gold sword, many fear that the aging gladiator's ambitions may get him killed.

Kildress Fung

NE | MALE | HUMAN | BUREAUCRAT | 8

No one seems to like Kildress Fung, the prying, preening Scriveners' Guild inspector who is often one of the first faces a visitor encounters upon arriving in Absalom. The intrusive bureaucrat wears very small, round glasses that perpetually slide down his long, flat nose. Fung ardently enforces Absalom's Scholar's Law, which demands that books not registered in the Forae Logos be sent there swiftly for copying and eventual return, and that illegal or dangerous books be confiscated altogether. He is very handsy with cargo and personal belongings when conducting an inspection. Fung speaks in an officious, nasal tone, and can be quite rude, running down beloved books as he examines each one carefully. "Much more valuable in an earlier edition, I'm afraid," he might say, or "A shame you've let the binding get so loose. This really could have been worth something." Or, "Have you been using this as a pillow?" and so on. Fung is closely aligned with the Great Library's second archivist, Sandaril, and keeps an especially close eye out for dangerous and evil books to contribute to the elf's secret schemes.

Lady Kiya of House Ahnkamen

LN | FEMALE | HUMAN | SWASHBUCKLER | 3

When Scion Lady Neferpatra enrolled Lady Kiya in Blackblade's fighting school in the Foreign Quarter, the young noble considered it punishment for the curious nature that so often seemed to place her underfoot at family gatherings, religious rituals, or other Ahnkamen affairs. Kiya resented the opportunity at first, but soon changed her mind when she met the dashing Lord Darin of House Morilla, another student at the academy. Over the last year, after-hours training duels developed into a passionate romantic relationship, and the two teens consider each other the closest of confidantes, despite the rivalry between their great houses. Darin and Kiya, both 17 and raised under similar circumstances by parents who spend more time outside Absalom than in it, understand one another on a deeply personal level, and have sworn always to tell each other the truth, no matter what. In that spirit, Lord Darin speaks frequently and openly about his family's involvement in the criminal Guild of Wonders, admitting to his beloved the appeal of the lives lived by his dashing and adventurous aunts and uncles while also conceding his mother's admonitions that the Guild reflects poorly on House Morilla, which has more important matters to attend to now that the family's star is on the rise back in the Taldan homeland. Inspired by Darin's honesty, Lady Kiya has finally resolved to reveal to him her greatest secret, and her dark suspicions regarding an ineffable evil at the heart of House Ahnkamen. Two years ago, she discovered a secret entrance to a series of tunnels beneath her home, the family estate in the Petal District. She explored the tunnels for nearly an hour before coming upon a magnificent, ancient vault with a pitch-black pool at its center. Some otherworldly presence from within the pool seemed to brush against her mind, and then next thing she knew she was safe in the personal quarters of her aunt, Lady Neferpatra, who admonished her to forget what she had seen and never tell anyone about it.

Lady Kiya wears her hair loose and somewhat wild, giving the first impression of someone from a lower social class. She cannot resist the allure of fine, beautiful gowns, however, and even when dueling at Blackblade's she makes sure to look fashionable in expensive designs from some of the most innovative tailors of the Ivy District's Sundown Street. She and Lord Darin love each other deeply in the way that only teenagers can, and often

stroll about Absalom together, their fingers intertwined. They favor Besmara's Boardwalk, the Wondervale, Spiralcross Cemetery, and other visually stunning but uncrowded locales. Lady Gloriana, Lord Darin's mother, does not approve of their budding relationship, and pays no less a personage than the famous detective Erdan Sianovel to keep tabs on them for her.

Korhül

| N | MALE | HUMAN | DRUID | 13 |

Bushy-bearded, bare-chested Korhül is the public face of the Circle of Stones cult, based in the Grand Holt in Eastgate. His elaborate cultic headdress accounts for his popular title, "The Horned Man," by which he is better known to the populace at large. Korhül serves as the majordomo of the Grand Holt and the chief interlocutor between its members and the dryad at the heart of the Holt, Iolanthe. When not attending to Iolanthe's needs, the deep-voiced Speaker of the Circle of Stones offers private sermons to brothers and sisters in the cult or walks barefoot along the cobblestones of Absalom, advocating for a simpler life freed from the shackles of so-called civilization. Korhül reserves his greatest ire for Absalom institutions that subjugate or destroy animal life, and is a particular thorn in the side of Alina Muraabe and the Absalom Menagerie. A few years ago, Korhül forged an alliance with the leshy gang known as the Brattlebunch. He uses his leafy allies to further vex and harass the enemies of the Circle of Stones, both those personally identified by Iolanthe herself and those Korhül simply cannot tolerate any longer.

In recent months, Korhül and Iolanthe have begun to suspect that someone is leeching power from the Grand Holt. The Horned Man believes that the culprit has most likely tunneled under the tree to attack its root system. Korhül recently opened an investigation on the matter upon the dryad queen's orders; he now frequently bankrolls mapping projects of the undercity directly below Eastgate in hopes of discovering the source of the problem.

Kosanti Hokamagi

| CG | MALE | HUMAN | ARTIST | 8 |

A native of the Minkai Empire, Kosanti was a rash son of a large trading house. Eventually, he made the mistake of speaking too freely about his family and several competitors and was forced to cut ties and flee to Absalom in 4712. An adept poet and artist, Kosanti sells paintings of Sarenrae, Cayden Cailean, and Iomedae worked in the Tian style, which became popular shortly after his arrival in the city. While he's settled into life in Absalom well, he misses his homeland and those who have been following his art have noted growing themes of isolation, sadness, and even despair in his paintings, with scenes focusing on parables and myths from his deific inspirations that focus more on aspects critics of the faiths have often cited as evidence of failings. His latest painting of Iomedae was quickly censured and confiscated by the church before it was publicly unveiled, and rumors that he had painted an image predicting Iomedae's death at the hands of the Whispering Tyrant persist. Kosanti hasn't painted anything in months, and has taken to brooding in his Ascendant Court home for days on end. Recently, he's been seen out and about in the company of a mysterious man on what appear to either be meetings or even romantic dates, but never before the hour of midnight, and always at locations where anonymity and privacy are well-protected. Fresh new rumors that the mysterious man is a priest of Nocticula who is attempting to lure him away to New Thassilon are in stiff competition with those who paint the unknown paramour as a vampire from Ustalav seeking to add a talented artist to his nest.

Kralte Grisham

| LE | MALE | HUMAN | WIZARD | 15 |

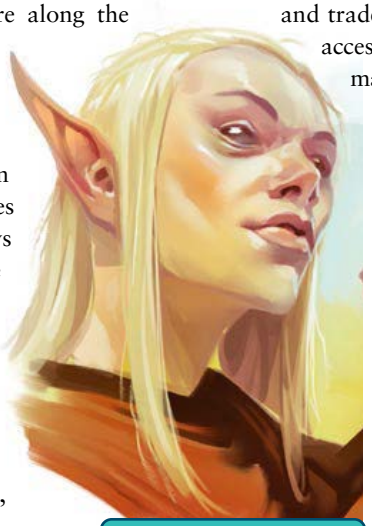
Kralte is one of the Arcanamirium's more well-known and well-liked docents, a man whose ability to instantly remember names and talent for drawing out bashful students into spirited debates helped secure his tenure at the school. That his skill at weaving believable illusions, it is said, surpasses any other illusionist in the Arcanamirium's history is likely hyperbole, but certainly he is quite accomplished with magic. Yet for all of his gifts at involving his students or weaving phantasms, Kralte's greatest feat has been his ability to mask his cruelty and sadistic personality from each and every one of his coworkers and students alike. Certainly none of his fellow politicians on the Wise Council have any inkling that Kralte's true passion lies not in illusion crafting, teaching, or public service, but in the study of fear and paranoia and the manipulation and slow destruction of the human mind. His latest and perhaps his most involved gaslighting has focused on fellow docent and councilor Judae Tarshem, whom he has been plaguing for months with visions of a mythical entity called the Ashen Man, eager to find out just how long it takes a strong, well-ordered mind like Judae's to collapse. Yet in the past weeks, Kralte has begun to have even more horrific and frightening visions of the Ashen Man than any he's surreptitiously afflicted on Judae. He's ceased his manipulations of Tarshem and is turning his attention to his own visions, operating on the theory that someone (perhaps even Judae herself) has discovered his machinations and is turning them back upon him. He hasn't yet admitted to himself what he's started to fear in the darkest part of the night—that the Ashen Man is real and that he has attracted the being's attention by using him as a tool. Soon, Kralte will learn just how right these midnight fears actually are.

Kreighton Shaine

| CG | MALE | ELF | WIZARD | 10 |

Venture-Captain Kreighton Shaine is the absent-minded Master of Scrolls at the Pathfinder Society's Grand Lodge. There the Forlorn elf trains Pathfinder students in the

lore necessary to retrieve and chronicle lost knowledge. Shaine encourages his students to pursue whatever branches of history or study most intrigue them, learning associated languages, arts, and lore along the way. Understanding his lectures is a bit of an adventure in itself, and he is notorious for fascinating but unpredictable digressions that are nearly impossible to comprehend in real time. Long, straight hair tumbles to his shoulders, which are always bedecked in scholarly robes. He wears comfortable soft shoes, and often seems lost in inner thought, wandering around the gardens of the Grand Lodge half-dressed but fully engaged in some internal discussion. He is close friends with the Pathfinder agent Janira Gavix, who was formerly his personal aide.



Kreighton Shaine

Kurgatosh

N | Male | Hobgoblin | Cook | 6

The current guest chef at Eastgate's prestigious Turning Leaf restaurant is Kurgatosh, an imposing hobgoblin cook from the distant nation of Oprak. Kurgatosh gained acclaim as the chief cook of General Azaersi, Oprak's leader and a near-mythical figure to modern hobgoblins. Kurgatosh's association with Azaersi grants him enormous prestige, and while the chef is not as cruel as many of his countrymen, all the admiration and appreciation has made him quite arrogant. Four burly hobgoblin guards accompany him at all times, even while he is cooking at the Turning Leaf. The guards stand post outside his cooking station. As guests arrive for dinner, the warriors brutishly demand that they prove they are unarmed before giving Kurgatosh the high-sign to begin cooking. Qidesca, the Turning Leaf's bewildered ghoran proprietor, doesn't understand why their customers might object to the pushy guards, cheerfully encouraging patrons to acquiesce to the hobgoblins' intrusions, as the food will definitely be worth it. Kurgatosh focuses on stir-fried dishes simmering in a series of huge pans, stirring the ingredients about with loud clatters that sound like the crashing of symbols. The food, admittedly, is delicious.

Lady Kythes Finch

NE | Female | Human | Fighter | 7

Sly Kythes Finch, Captain of the Token Guard and proprietor of one of the sleaziest taverns in the Coins, always knows an opportunity when she sees it. She and her largely corrupt police force offer nominal protection against open muggings and outright burglary in the district, but everyone in Absalom knows that justice comes most swiftly to those who can encourage alacrity with gold. Even criminals keep things moving swiftly by contributing coin to the Bail House coffers, ensuring a speedy release with a stern warning and a receipt proving the crook's payment of their debt to society. Kythes fiercely protects the interests of noble houses and trademasters, worrying that her guard could lose access to their lucrative bail system if one of the major trading families turns against them.

Lady Kythes spends most of her off duty time managing affairs at the Saucy Wench, her tavern off the Grand Bazaar's Red Silk Route. While at the Wench Kythes takes "off duty" seriously, shedding her guard uniform and dispensing with the formalities of rank, often turning an (even more) blind eye to petty crimes occurring immediately in front of her. A charming host, Kythes encourages bawdy performances on the venue's stages and a boisterous atmosphere that comes with it. On-duty patrols of the Token Guard stop by regularly, ensuring that good cheer seldom evolves into chaos. In recent months, the near constant presence at the Wench of Lady Kythes's current lover, Lord Riodos of House Morilla, has ensured even more stability, and those foolish enough to draw a weapon there risk drawing the ire of not just the Token Guard, but the Guild of Spears as well. Concerned with the growth in power of local gangs like the Family Dogs and the Forthright, to say nothing of an inquisitive and accusatory broadsheet press and the increasingly critical protestations of the Free Union, Lady Kythes sees in Lord Riodos an opportunity to put his mercenaries behind her guards, cementing even greater power for herself in the district. If the old noble wishes to take things further, a marriage uniting her minor noble family to House Morilla would make an even more empowering alliance. There are still many, many steps between her current considerable power and influence in Absalom and what Kythes sees as her full potential, and she's willing to do anything—including kill—to ensure that no one gets in her way.

Larkin Waever

CE | Male | Human | Comedian | 4

The Galtan refugee and anarchist comedian Larkin Waever possesses a scathing wit he likes to direct at authority figures like the falling blade of a guillotine. Waever's stage performances at some of the Ivy District's most popular venues command high ticket prices, but even more popular are his completely free improvised heckling sessions from the crowds surrounding some poor public news crier or the befuddled, artless performers of daily event plays. Waever recently perfected a devastating and utterly hilarious impression of Sally Guard Captain Winton of House Nimz, complete with a ragged horse puppet the comedian uses in a scandalously sexual manner—a sure audience pleaser. Waever is likewise popular before the crowded hearth fire at the Gutless Griffon, where he ranks among the city's most celebrated storytellers. Despite his growing

popularity and public acclaim, Larkin Waever isn't much to look at. He has short-cropped light brown hair, light skin, and unremarkable eyes. An ever-present smirk, especially evident during his routine, gives his face a presence that almost begs to be punched. So many have tried and succeeded that Waever now pays down-on-their-luck adventurers to act as bodyguards during some of his more controversial performances.

Lemaria Kumari

Larrett

LE | MALE | WERERAT | ARISTOCRAT | 12

Absalom's commissioner of sewers is also the High Council's chief sanitation commissioner, with oversight over the city's trashpickers, ratcatchers, and sewage. Often called by his nickname, "Lord Filth," the buck-toothed, beady-eyed administrator looks like a verminous poltroon in his fancy dress and expensive jewelry, a picture of corruption so accurate that his newspaper caricature is among the most immediately recognized in Absalom. He spends most of his time on the High Council enacting policies that enrich himself and his friends, leading many of his colleagues on the council to call him "the wererat fat-cat."

Layton Bryne

CE | MALE | HUMAN | EDITOR | 14

The cantankerous editor-in-chief of *Eyes of Absalom*, one of the city's most popular broadsheets, has unusual influence for someone so rarely seen outside his office in the Wise Quarter. Although the brutal, lurid illustrations on the publication's cover account for the near-ubiquitous presence of *Eyes on Absalom* on the city's newsstands, Bryne's infamous editorials are the true draw, accounting for the scandal sheet's rapidly increasing circulation. Despite their author seemingly never leaving his office, Bryne's columns nonetheless routinely spill the sauciest secrets of Absalom's nobles, governors, and merchants, much to the delight of the common citizen. Most of Bryne's victims assume that he is simply a pseudonym for Reginald Vancaskerkin, the publication's politically well-connected publisher. Bryne's stories often stake out positions contrary to those Vancaskerkin is careful to espouse in public company, however, so the mystery deepens with every issue.

Ledford

CN | MALE | HALFLING | BARBARIAN | 12

A former circus strongman and underground fighting champion, the halfling wrestler Ledford makes up for his short stature with his uncontrollable energy and rampaging anger. His wide, haunted eyes are constantly bloodshot, and he never wears a shirt, the better to show off his staggering physique. Ledford formerly worked as muscle for a variety of Absalom's street gangs before finding an appreciative audience and welcoming home at the Gorumarrux, the bloody arena-temple of Gorum in the Ascendant Court. Winnings at the temple are nowhere near as lucrative as in the Irorium or in some of the rings at the seedier taverns in the city's worst districts, but the fights are far more regular, and far more challenging. Ledford has been the undefeated champion of the Gorumarrux's ring for the last two years running, and Absalom's faithful of Our Lord in Iron view the angry little man as something akin to a prophet. Ledford doesn't even worship Gorum or care about religion at all. He simply hopes to one day raise enough money on his winnings to retire to his homeland of Cheliax with a resplendent manor house and an army of his own servants. He has shaggy blond hair and a comical handlebar mustache. Outside the ring he seldom speaks, but once the fight has begun Ledford is an endless source of cutting and insightful insults. Between bouts, Ledford sometimes hires himself out as a (very expensive) mercenary.

Lemaria Kumari

CG | FEMALE | AZARKETI | DIPLOMAT | 9

Lemaria is the official ambassador for the Low Azlanti in Absalom, and spends more time near or on the surface than many of her aquatic colleagues. Her charisma and keen passion for diplomatic relations and social issues shines through in her spirited speeches. Though she does hold an office in the House of the Cresting Wave in Escadar, she can often be seen making her way through the more neglected parts of Absalom, looking out for ways to bring what she considers the more compassionate values of the azarketis to the folk forced to live on the squalid surface. Lemaria Kumari has purple eyes, long dark hair, and elegant haughty features.

Lord Lerefys of House Kethlin

LN | MALE | ELF | ADMIRAL | 16

Absalom's highest-ranking naval officer is also the scion lord of one of its most diverse noble houses. As Sea Lord of Absalom's Navy (a title adapted from that used by the supreme leaders of Low Azlanti enclaves), Lord Lerefys sits upon the city's High Council, where he constantly works to undermine the efforts of Acting Primarch Wynsal Starborn, extending a traditional Navy vs. First Guard conflict to an almost absurd level. Lord Lerefys's naval duties frequently pull him away from the city, somewhat reducing his day-to-day political influence. He is stern and unyielding in putting the Navy's traditions before what he sees as petty personal agendas or change for change's sake, making him a favorite of Lord Avid's Optimates faction. He spends half of his time in Escadar,

using magic to vote in the High Council. In Absalom, he gives speeches in Westgate greens and on Navy ship decks and in the Irorium about Absalom's glorious naval history, its recent victories over slavers on the Inner Sea, and his well-considered endorsement of Lord Avid of House Arnsen as Absalom's next primarch. When leading the armada at sea, Lord Lerefys commands the *Aeon Paragon*, Absalom's naval flagship.

The Living Eye

CE | MALE | UNDEAD | AASIMAR | CLERIC | 20

Aysepir's Astounded Abyss has built its reputation on its eclectic lineup of attractions, some of which are disappointingly mundane or outright hoaxes. Not so in the case of the so-called "Living Eye," a disturbing and unsettling mainstay attraction that has been on display at the carnival for as long as anyone can remember. Appearing as the mummified body of a winged aasimar man, contorted into a twisted pose of unnaturally bent arms and legs, only the right eye of this ancient dry cadaver remains moist, mobile, and loathsomely alive. The desiccated flesh of the figure's exposed skin bears tattoos of the unholy runes of numerous long-dead demon lords and it wears the same threadbare blood-red robes it did the first day it was put on exhibit. The iris of the Living Eye's namesake is the same red hue as its robes, and constantly darts about the room as if observing things only it can see. Now and then, the eye settles upon a single observer, watching intently and filling the one glared upon with an unsettling sensation of foreboding. Traditionally, any patron who bears the Living Eye's unsettling glare wins a "consolation prize" at the end of the show, although what prize is offered varies weekly. Attempts to divine who or what the Living Eye was before it became an immobile undead curiosity have met with frustration, for beyond determining that whoever it was remains an extremely powerful force of chaos and evil associated with the worship of an unknown malevolence, little is known about the truth behind that one, twitching, unnaturally mobile Living Eye.

Llew Gladwyn

CN | MALE | HALFLING | EVOKER | 8

Llew is currently one of Absalom's favorite actors, having risen to acclaim during a public feud with Street Performers and Actors' Guildmaster Alain Always. The trouble began when the two starred opposite one another as the Two Suitors in the *Marriage of Tremior*, vying for the attention of Emma Sadik's Rosalinda. Llew, an evoker of moderate power, wove several spells into his performance without previously warning the company, managing to steal all of his scenes and making Always look like the smaller actor. Trapped in a three-month engagement and not wanting to cancel his run in order to display good showmanship to the members of his guild, Always endured dozens of performances in which he was made to be the laughingstock of the crowd, an indignity he could not and will not overlook. Unwilling to simply kick Gladwyn from the guild so as not to appear to abuse his power, Always instead plans revenge over a far longer term. His eventual reply will end not just Llew Gladwyn's career, but his life as well.

In the meantime, Gladwyn continues to draw sell-out crowds at all of his Ivy District engagements. He's also famous for impromptu street performances that incorporate magic in even more bombastic and surprising ways than his stage show, much to the consternation of the Thistleguard, as these displays occasionally break out into minor riots as onlookers rush about to make sure they do not miss a single moment of Gladwyn's performance. The popular halfling is a regular sight around the hearth fire of the Gutless Griffon tavern, where he frequently participates in (and sometimes wins) the establishment's famous storytelling competitions.

Loys Zepah

LG | FEMALE | HUMAN | CLERIC | 10

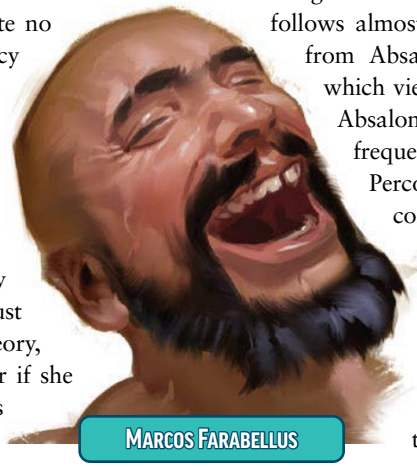
Loys Zepah is the high priestess of Erastil, and tends to Eastgate's Antler Lodge with the charming and delightful veneer as "Eastgate's grandmother." Loys initially balked at the offer to manage the small temple, having spent much of her life in various villages and other rural sites elsewhere on the Isle of Kortos, but ultimately decided to accept the post when Antler Lodge's previous high priest, a venerable man named Hendral Hoskun who was looking to retire to live out his final few years with his family in Andoran, convinced her that she could use her position at Antler Lodge to create a sort of safe haven in the middle of the urban sprawl for those who preferred rural life but found themselves unable for whatever reason to leave the city. In the half decade of her stewardship over the Lodge, she's succeeded beyond her wildest dreams only to be faced with her greatest challenge—combating a creeping fell influence that seems to have risen within the Lodge itself. Be it a haunting, a curse, or the machinations of an unknown enemy, battling the corruption spreading through the illusions and decorations in the lodge meant to provide comfort for those seeking asylum from the bustle of the city is increasingly exhausting the matronly priestess.

Mama Shrog

CE | FEMALE | HUMAN | CLERIC | 11

The eponymous proprietor of Mama Shrog's Solutions in Eastgate doesn't present as a classically motherly figure with her pale complexion and waifish build, nor does she have any children of her own. Her shop offers a wide range of curiosities, and Shrog claims that the answer to any customer's concern can be found somewhere within her establishment. Mama Shrog does not hide her religious views, as the looming, frightening bust of Lamashtu looms in stone over the entrance to her shop, which also doubles as a public shrine to the Mother of Monsters. Mama Shrog is careful to keep visiting worshippers in line, and her own charismatic nature has, to date, kept her safe from the righteous indignation of do-gooders.

Other cultists of Lamashtu have, of late, taken Mama Shrog's Solutions as inspiration and have established their own open shrines elsewhere in the city, much to Shrog's delight. Despite the convictions and worries of the city's paladins and priests, to date no hard evidence of any greater conspiracy by Mama Shrog to do harm to Absalom has been proven. That these frustrations seem to be slowly pushing normally law-abiding folk to extremes is an ironic twist, and some believe this is Mama Shrog's plan—to undermine the authority of righteousness and erode the trust in the populace of those who, in theory, follow religions of law and good, for if she can goad paladins into breaking laws in their pursuit of denying her right to worship in public, she wins. Of course, none of this is to say Mama Shrog doesn't have an actual (if exceptionally well-hidden) nefarious plan for the city!



Marcos Farabellus

Marcos Farabellus

CG | MALE | HUMAN | FIGHTER/ROGUE | 10

Marcos is the boisterous and personable master of swords at the Pathfinder Society's Grand Lodge. The scarred and broad-shouldered venture-captain is responsible for the martial training of young Pathfinders. He sees his job not to turn his students into great warriors, but to provide them with enough know-how and physical training to help them survive long enough to do their true work of exploration and discovery. He teaches combat, trap-setting, endurance training, wilderness survival, breaking and entering, dirty tricks for stopping a fight before it starts, and other physical skills a Pathfinder might need. His classroom lectures focus on military history and are heavy with his own entertaining anecdotes of time spent hiring himself out as a mercenary commander in important conflicts around the Inner Sea, a practice that continues to this day (much to the consternation of the Decemvirate, who fear his personal activities might pull the Society into political quagmires). He frequently invites military historian Yargos Gill to speak with his students, and encourages that they study the history of the great sieges of Absalom that the scholar often writes about in books and articles in the popular press.

Farabellus often finds himself so wrapped up in one of his war stories that instruction moves off campus to a nearby pub. This habit has led to Marcos being the Society's most popular dean by a wide margin, making him well known and beloved to hundreds of Pathfinders trained at the Grand Lodge over recent decades. With a healthy black beard and a booming laugh, Farabellus is adored almost everywhere he goes. Everywhere, that is, except for certain Foreign Quarter enclaves near the Grand Lodge, who blame him personally for a variety of recent neighborhood problems. Farabellus's School of Swords sometimes summons creatures for students to fight, a practice that has a tendency to spill out past the walls of the Grand Lodge. These events rarely result in true tragedy, but a great deal of property damage and inconvenience follows almost all of them, drawing considerable ire from Absalom's growing Peacebuilders Alliance, which views the Pathfinder Society as a threat to Absalom's safety. Marcos Farabellus himself is a frequent target of Peacebuilder patron Sanloria Percota's scornful ire in widely published columns printed in Absalom's newspapers, particularly the *Mother's Message*. The Master of Swords and his students laughed off the over-the-top screeds at first, but the relentlessness of the attacks are starting to take their toll on Farabellus's reputation, and on that of the Pathfinder Society itself.

Maren Fuln

N | MALE | HUMAN | WIZARD | 8

Maren Fuln is a journeyman member of the Arcanamirium who has several contacts with Pathfinder Society agents thanks to a long-running family friendship with Venture-Captain Ambrus Valsin. Fuln keeps an office within the Arcanamirium in which he meets with students and conducts experiments. In recent years, Fuln has become increasingly obsessed with studying the Dark Tapestry and the alien entities who dwell within it. The fidgety scholar has spent much of the past year deep in study on the commission of his Pathfinder Society allies. Local venture-captains from across the Inner Sea confide that more and more of their field agents have reported evidence of a powerful malign entity known as the Ashen Man. Word of this malefactor has come in the form of the utterances of muttering madmen, in rediscovered ancient memoirs, and—most interestingly—in several recently discovered ancient prophecies otherwise invalidated by the death of Aroden. These predictions concern a creature matching the Ashen Man's description, claiming he would usher in a great catastrophe when a dozen champions make a play for the *Starstone* at the same time, with dire consequences for Absalom, for Golarion, and even for the worlds of the Great Beyond. These old prophecies had this dire event happening a decade or more ago, and like so many failed prophecies over the last century, it was soon forgotten after it failed to manifest. Increasingly urgent reports concerning the Ashen Man have brought all the old fears back to the forefront, and Fuln works tirelessly to turn up information that might help the Pathfinder Society put an end to the potential threat to the city.

Marissa Guile

CG | FEMALE | HUMAN | INVESTIGATOR | 4

The middle child of Parsin and Hilenda Guile, Marissa Guile ranks among the best-known journalists in Absalom. She published several high-profile exposés

over the last few years, solidifying her reputation while scandalizing some of the city's most influential (and thus often dangerous) inhabitants. Her pieces most frequently appear in the *Sennight Star* or *Mother's Message* broadsheets, but she remains a free agent unaffiliated with any specific outlet, selling her pieces to the highest bidder. Marissa gets her juiciest scoops while working undercover, a penchant that is responsible for both her greatest successes and her most life-threatening failures. She frequently gets in over her head, requiring a timely rescue from an irate article subject or other serious threat. Over the years, Marissa has amassed numerous highly-placed enemies due to her journalism, with Dock District Watch Captain Elmoira "Tackle Queen" Taggart being among the most dangerous.

Marli

NE | FEMALE | HUMAN | ROGUE | 3

Marli used to work as a costumer at the Ivy Playhouse, but was fired after the suspicious death of an ingenue courtesy of a beautifully prepared costume wig that just happened to be infested with deadly flesh-eating grubs. No one could prove Marli was responsible, but the actress had chastised her savagely for weeks prior to the incident. Because the deceased had also annoyed and alienated everyone else in the production, the theater threw Marli out without troubling to involve the Lotus Guard. Though Marli escaped the judgment of the law, she could not escape the cloud of suspicion that followed her from theater to theater. Effectively blacklisted by the Street Performers and Actors' Guild, Marli was left with nowhere to turn. So she turned to Norgorber.

Her pleas for charity stirred nothing in the heart of Norgorber's high priest, Jonis Flakfatter, but tales of the gruesome, ingenious, and brazenly public nature of her crime encouraged the priest to assign her to the Black Mask as a minor clerk. Seven years ago, cult intrigue resulted in the ritual murder of the shop's proprietor, and Flakfatter saw to it that Marli took his place.

Marli genuinely loves her job at the costume shop, and enjoys outfitting a merchant's wife for an Eastgate fancy dress party as much as she delights in trimming the fringe of a skinsaw suit for some cold-blooded Precipice Quarter stalker. As a decade-long employee, Marli takes a great deal of pride in the curation of the shop's inventory (even if most customers come away thinking that it too heavily favors baroque and lugubrious designs). She has great loyalty for Jonis Flakfatter, believing that she owes him her life. She is less charitable toward Terrus Von, the gruff cleric who tends the downstairs shrine. On Flakfatter's orders, Von must remain silent while posing as the costume shop's mute clerk, a situation Marli exploits by taunting him incessantly in front of unsuspecting customers.

Marten

CG | MALE | HUMAN | ROGUE | 2

Absalom has a population of hundreds of thousands, but even in a city of such sprawling size, there are always those faces whom everyone seems to know. In the Coins, young Marten is one such face. Whether he's racing through the stalls of the Grand Bazaar to deliver a message for a few coins, entertaining those standing in line for soup at the Guiding Hand with his energetic antics, playing games on the street with friends at Rhet's Home, or simply offering his services as a guide to visitors, Marten is as well-known as he is well-liked. But it would seem that not everyone is equally fond of the youth, for rumors are spreading that he may have been in the wrong place at the wrong time and might just have witnessed something he shouldn't have in one of the back alleys of the Coins. Three times in the last month, Marten has seen mysterious masked figures in shaggy garb trailing him in the middle distance.

Captain Mendhir the Colossus

LG | MALE | HUMAN | MAGUS | 12

In addition to guarding the residents of the Wise Quarter, Captain Mendhir's Learned Guard are tasked with protection of the Forae Logos, a duty they take very seriously. The towering Ulfen captain encourages his officers to spend much of their off-duty time taking in the knowledge of the Great Library, arguing that study is the surest way to understand the importance of the precious treasure they are sworn to protect. The Learned Guard works in concert with the Scriveners' Guild to enforce Absalom's Scholar's Law, which allows both agencies to seize dangerous books and ensure that they be returned safely to the Forae Logos. After centuries of dealing with scheming wizards and eldritch opportunists trying to intercept confiscated tomes, the Learned Guard boasts more magic-using members than its counterparts in Absalom's other districts. Mendhir himself is no exception, having trained extensively at Varisia's Twilight Academy. He bears a magical *gloamblade*, one of the legendary lunar swords of the Disciples of Acavna, a magus order associated with the school that claims to trace its arcane bladecraft traditions to Ancient Thassilon. Like his fellow alumni from the Twilight Academy, Mendhir's approach and interest in magic is eclectic and unorthodox, but only those who know the watch captain through his infrequent academic pursuits or rare flashy public displays of his potent eldritch blade would confuse Mendhir's approach to the arcane as a sign of a chaotic nature in general. Mendhir is an active participant in the affairs of the Wise Council, and trusts District Nomarch Dhauken Tor as an honorable representative of the studious, largely law-abiding and trustworthy citizens of the Wise Quarter.

Metzien

NG | FEMALE | HALF-ORC | SORCERER | 7

The bodyguard of Minotaur Prince Nuar Spiritskin, this half-orc is so short and dainty that she attracts jokes that she is half-orc, half-gnome. Despite appearances and a rather bouncy personality, Metzien wields powerful magic and is much stronger than she looks, and she

is generally sensitive about her height. Though almost never seen away from Nuar's side, she can occasionally be found perusing salons or examining makeup and clothing stores in Absalom's many markets.

Mezuk

NE | MALE | HALF-ORC | FIGHTER | 3

Many of those who belong to the violent extortionists known as the Sanguine Beasts are worshippers of Norgorber. While Mezuk is neither the most devout or most powerful of those worshippers, he might just be the luckiest. Mezuk's fortune has become something of a running joke among the Sanguine Beasts, for while his good luck has allowed him to escape being caught, imprisoned, or even killed more than a dozen times to date, that luck exerts a singular price. For each time Mezuk manages to avoid a fate that would end his career as an enforcer in the Sanguine Beasts, one of his fingers or toes rots away to an unsightly stump. So far, Mezuk's been fortunate in that his right hand has only lost a ring finger, which lets him continue to wield his signature hooked truncheon with continued fury. He's had to custom fit his shoes to account for the loss of several toes, and his off hand is looking increasingly sparse. For his part, Mezuk takes his strange fortune in stride, bragging that even if he loses all his fingers he can still clobber people once his truncheon has been nailed to his stump. The idea that once he runs out of fingers and toes his luck might take something more significant than a mere digit has never crossed Mezuk's mind, but if he continues to press his luck with his increasingly brash plans and acts, he'll be faced with that unpleasant development soon enough.

Lady Michellia

Lady Michellia of House Blakros

NG | FEMALE | HUMAN | ARISTOCRAT | 8

Lady Michellia is the daughter of Scion Lady Hamaria, matriarch of the Blakros family. After her older twin sister, Imrizade, fled Absalom before the twenty-first birthday that would have seen her handed over to the Onyx Alliance, Michellia was substituted as the family's generational sacrifice, beating her twin Eleanir as the eldest by a matter of minutes. Michellia turned 21 in 4710, and only the last-minute intervention of agents of the Pathfinder Society prevented her from being sold into slavery on the Shadow Plane, forever breaking the Penumbral Accords that had ensured otherworldly support for House Blakros for generations. In 4712, Michellia set her sights on marriage to the prominent Andoren Pathfinder Colsin Maldris. Maldris refused her advances, putting the family's new alliance with the Pathfinder Society in jeopardy almost as soon as it had been born. In response, the Society made the unusual decision to invite the Blakros family to the Pathfinder Society's Grand Convocation, where a sort of contest for Michellia's affections took place. It was at this event that Pieter Blakros and the long-missing Sarnia Blakros betrayed the family and attacked, backed by fetchlings and velstracs aligned with the Onyx Alliance. Surprisingly, Sarnia—who had last been seen as a young woman when she was given over to the Alliance in 4677—now seemed to lead the umbral order. When all was said and done and the Alliance was forced back to Shadow Absalom, the Hellknight Damian Kastner won Michellia's hand, and the two were married later that year.

Michellia does not love Damian, who is clearly far more interested in Blakros power than Blakros wives. She resents the time he spends at her mother's side, and has begun to channel her frustration into daydreaming about leaving Damian and finding a new, more suitable, suitor. In eight years her husband has failed to give her a Blakros daughter—any Blakros child at all—and not for lack of trying. Perhaps, Michellia wonders, it is time to take matters into her own hands and find someone capable of doing what Lord Damian cannot. In a perfect world, Michellia's second chance would come with her beloved friend Jeon Raeng-Woo, but the merchant envoy of the Dragon Empires has descended even deeper into drunkenness than ever before of late, and he is not the man he once was. Michellia's relationship with her twin sister, Eleanir, is also considerably strained, and has been since Eleanir attempted to have her kidnapped and sent away with a viking on her wedding day, so that Eleanir might live her sister's romantic life with Lord Damian. Now that Michellia knows that romantic life was a lie in the first place, her anger fades every day, and after years of pushing her away Michellia now yearns for a closer relationship with her sister. Unfortunately, Eleanir has been on her own downward trajectory over much of the last decade, and while Michellia no longer holds a grudge against her sister, she probably should.

Milly Tundall

CG | FEMALE | HALFLING | ORGANIZER | 5

Milly heads Absalom's Free Union of former slaves as a political organizer, labor leader, fiery orator, and advisor to trademasters and grand councilors alike. Although she spends most of her time mingling with her members in Absalom's working class neighborhoods in the Coins, Docks, and Copperwood, she is equally at home among the city's powerful elite, having once been a household slave of Scion Lord Navvem of House Wachail, one of the city's most infamous slavers. She does her best to balance the needs of her constituents, but knows that some of them are probably beyond her ability to help. The ubiquitous

halfling beggar Boils Caralne, for example, was once a special project of hers, but his addiction has held him shackled every bit as much as his chains ever did, and Milly knows there is little she can do to improve his lot in life so long as shiver maintains its spell over him. Although she has nearly drained her once boundless pity for the former slave, she's not above using him for her own political purposes, incorporating Caralne into her polemics as a symbol of the worst-off of Absalom's freed slaves, and of the need for additional funds from the city's coffers to recompense for the personal destruction caused by the cruel institution of slavery. Milly Tundall stands a bit shorter than most halflings, and a bit wider, too. She had her slaver marks removed from her left forearm and replaced with a solitary personal sigil. She recommends this practice to all former slaves. She hates Pardu Pildapush and the Puddlejumpers, who prey on the city's halflings and who she knows are still engaged in illicit slave-trading activities.

Lady Miranda Dacilane

| LN | FEMALE | HUMAN | ARISTOCRAT | 12 |

Lady Miranda is a striking Chelaxian woman who lost her son, J, in the earthquake that devastated Beldrin's Bluff in 4968 AR. After agents of the Pathfinder Society miraculously returned her unharmed (and curiously un-aged) son to her in 4708 AR, Lady Miranda underwrote all of the Society's archaeological efforts in the necropolis J discovered in the school's collapsed basement. Lady Miranda has also been at the center of several of Absalom's juiciest rumors. Speculation abounds that she had an affair and child with a disgraced Chelaxian noble, and she is suspected by some of being a Taldan spy.

Mircen Kinsgate

| LG | FEMALE | HUMAN | PALADIN | 11 |

The Eagle Garrison may be the smallest of Absalom's district guards, but just as its headquarters, the Watchtower, looms larger than life over Eastgate's skyline, so does Mircen Kinsgate lord over the company she commands. At just over six and a half feet in height, the towering woman commands attention instantly, an impression that only deepens when she speaks. Her manner of articulation is precise and carries an intonation that brooks no nonsense, all features that help to ensure the Eagle Garrison's loyalty to their beloved commander. Mircen herself has little experience in scouting or tracking, but this doesn't prevent her keen eye from being able to select the perfect recruits for her force, or from knowing just the right specialist to send on a job. These qualities have, of course, earned Mircen a long list of enemies among Absalom's criminal elements, but her greatest foe is no criminal mastermind. Ryni the Jest seems to have made it his life's work to undo and usurp Mircen's authority and dignity, and has proven a capable nemesis to the stoic, by-the-book paladin. Mircen hasn't quite yet been driven to distraction by Ryni, but he's obviously getting under her skin, for her temper has been notoriously short of late.

Mirtion

| LN | MALE | HUMAN | MERCHANT | 6 |

The friendly proprietor of Westgate's Windarium clockworks shop is a fastidious (if somewhat frantic) clerk with a long track record of retail success. Then, his husband Symo was promoted to first gear of Azlanti Keep, and things at the Windarium have become much more difficult, even as the growing popularity of clockwork contraptions brings more and more new customers to his door every day. In the face of this pressure and without the presence or support of his husband (who had always been the mechanical genius behind the shop), Mirtion has withdrawn from active management of the Windarium, instead focusing most of his efforts and attention to his true passion—badgers. Mirtion has no fewer than five pet badgers, and the creatures traipse around the shop and the apartment upstairs with little concern for customers, stacks of clockwork components, or anything other than hunger and curiosity. The whole building smells of badgers, and the situation has begun to put considerable strain on Mirtion and Symo's marriage.

Mirtion holds the rank of Lord High Piebald in the Tri-Stripe Society. He actively encourages badger adoption as a solution to nearly every problem, and even occasionally pushes the creatures to the point of rudeness, advocating that adventurers "upgrade" from their current familiars or animal companions or suggesting that families trade in their beloved family pet for a far-superior badger. Mirtion can supply a pet badger free of charge to those who humor his advocacy (and who he genuinely believes will make good badger parents).

Since Symo's promotion, Mirtion has been forced to hire additional help to maintain the Windarium. He's been having trouble keeping workers employed thanks to badger bites, and the business is on the brink of failure. Recently, a disgruntled badger-bit clerk released several of the shop's most valuable clockwork creatures onto the streets, and they've managed to get themselves into trouble all across Absalom. Mirtion is still hiding the full extent of this catastrophe from Symo, and now looks to hire adventurers to track down the missing clockworks and solve his problem before his husband realizes anything is wrong.

Mother Jackal

| CE | FEMALE | LENG GHOUL | 14 |

By nature laid-back and lazy, this ancient Leng ghoul sorceress has refined her existence to a pinnacle of macabre luxury. She shops at the Grand Bazaar, attends public lectures at the Arcanamirium and White Grotto, visits exhibitions at the Blakros Museum, and plays cards every week with a group of cronies from other noble houses. Most know her only as Lady Maut of House Ahnkamen, a gaunt, grandmotherly woman, though

her true form of Mother Jackal is that of a jackal-faced ghoul the size of a small elephant.

Muar Gauthfallow

| LG | MALE | TIEFLING | WIZARD | 15 |

Absalom's fourth spell lord is tasked with protecting its magical secrets and eliminating eldritch items, enemies, or philosophies that pose significant danger to the city. Gauthfallow lives in Eastgate, where he spends his limited free time advising his longtime friend and patron, Ayunga of House Akkesh. The spell lord favors dark red cloaks with deep hoods, all the better to hide his hellborn facial features. He dwells in an Eastgate landmark known as the Broken Bastion, an imposing tower whose upper reaches were shattered by the dragon Maejerx Steeleye some six hundred years ago.

Despite his fearsome mien and a job that regularly puts him into contact with insidious magic, Gauthfallow is among the most even-tempered of the Circle of Spell Lords, and his friends appreciate his good and kind heart, given the circumstances of his dark work. Nonetheless, Lord Gauthfallow is not above resentment, and he still burns with hatred for the unscrupulous artist Endrik Archerus, who was instrumental in the death of Muar's brother, Imron, during the so-called Gallery of Evil Affair of 4707 AR. He insults the artist regularly, even in conversations that have nothing to do with art, and immediately trusts anyone who likewise smears the known plagiarist. Enemies of Absalom have already identified the spell lord's desire for revenge as a weakness they can use against him. Several associates Gauthfallow considers friends have already suggested using long-buried curses or trapped outsiders against Archerus in a spectacular display of vengeance, each with their own motives for convincing the hellborn spell lord to open Absalom's most dangerous vaults that have nothing whatsoever to do with Muar's unfortunate sibling.

Mulden Foss

| LE | MALE | HUMAN | LABORER | 2 |

Mulden Foss has worked as a prison guard at the Black Whale for more than a decade, and for most of that time he was content to carry out his duties in silence, justifying the terrible conditions at the site as necessary to punish Absalom's enemies. Since most of the prison's inhabitants were placed there on the direct order of Primarch Gyr, Foss justified the brutality as an extension of the will of the city's long-term ruler, who had always said kind (if brief) words to him on his few visits to the facility. But ever since Lord Gyr vanished, Foss isn't sure who exactly is deciding which of Absalom's prisoners are assigned to the Whale, and the degree to which the change in pattern has upset him has surprised even himself. Although he does his best to ignore them, he cannot help but hear the cries and protestations of the prisoners he oversees day after day, and he knows a few things he definitely shouldn't know thanks to their hopeless mutterings. Foss drinks away the stress at the Grog Pit, and he turns increasingly to his previously half-hearted faith in Norgorber to guide him in a time of impending crisis. His only bright spot is his daughter, Derica, a scholarship student at the College of Mysteries.

Murno Bloss

| NE | MALE | HUMAN | FIGHTER | 5 |

Murno Bloss is the Chief Aggregator of Haigen Topkick's Salvagers' Guild, in the Puddles. Since the rapid rise of the floodwaters inundating the district, the Salvagers' Guild's remit has grown in scope. Formerly concerned for the most part with flotsam and jetsam washed into the Little Inner Sea during high tides, the Guild is now charged with the protection and reclamation of all unclaimed property in the district. When rising waters threaten a previously dry manor house or when an old tenement loses its foundation and topples into the water from erosion, agents of the Guild are there to rescue furniture, artwork, notable architecture, or anything else of value for preservation. By charter of the Grand Council, these rescued objects are meant to be sold at auction, with proceeds going to the destitute residents of the Puddles. Alas the process often takes months to work through the immense bureaucracy installed by district nomarch Topkick ("everything must be done to the letter of the law," he often says), and naturally some of the finest treasures disappear along the way. Thanks to the new humanitarian nature of their work, the Salvagers' Guild collectors are considered to have some of the only honorable jobs still left in the district. A pity, then, that the guild's leader is such a cretin.

Murno Bloss has worked directly for Haigen Topkick at the Stilt House for more than 20 years, and it's clear that loyalty was the nomarch's top criteria in installing him as Chief Aggregator. Bloss himself has little interest in collecting or even in salvage, but he does appreciate the sweeping powers he now commands. As far as he is concerned, almost all of the property still in the Puddles is "unclaimed," and the exceptionally cruel man interprets his remit as allowing him to more or less take whatever he wants. Bloss cuts a commanding figure with a huge head of bushy black hair and an unruly beard, usually matted down and damp. His fingers are nicked and rugged, and his unkempt nails are always heavy with dried muck. A stained off-white sleeveless shirt struggles to cover his prodigious beer gut. Murno Bloss never goes anywhere without his trusty whip, which he uses freely and without abandon to warn away non-union scavengers from claiming the rightful property of the Salvagers' Guild.

Lady Myleena of House Arnsen

| N | FEMALE | HUMAN | ARISTOCRAT | 13 |

The headstrong nomarch of the Coin Council, Lady Myleena maintains a rocky relationship with her father, Lord Avid, and it remains uncertain whether she will support him in his bid for primarch. She may choose to put their differences aside in order to oust Acting Primarch Wynsal Starborn, whom Myleena cannot seem to stand.

Some years ago, Lady Myleena married the merchant Gron Humbolt, and has managed to make his business, Humbolt's Outfitters, far more efficient and profitable than ever before. Under the influence of her financial acumen, the Coins general store has doubled in size, and has expanded to open two smaller satellite locations. The similarly headstrong Humbolt refuses to take the Arnsen family name, furthering the ire of her father, who resents her for marrying a common merchant. The rift has driven her further from the other members of her powerful family, creating an isolation that has brought her even closer to her husband, whom she loves dearly.

Their eldest daughter, Jovara Humbolt, is an enigma in the College of Mysteries.

Nadine Vives

CN | FEMALE | HUMAN | SCHOLAR | 12

Five years ago, Grand Council bailiffs under direct orders of Primarch Gyr of Gixx marched into the Forae Logos and dragged away that institution's curator of impossible texts, Nadine Vives. The imbroglio caused a major scandal with the Learned Guard, who challenged the bailiffs' jurisdiction and who were unable to prevent Vives's abduction due to being engaged elsewhere away from the library itself, in abrogation of the unit's longstanding protocol. Vives—who had been acting erratically in the prior weeks after consulting a stack of unusual librams impounded by the Scriveners' Guild from an unknown traveler at one of the city's gates—attempted to resist arrest but was soon subdued. It's said that Nadine Vives screamed as Gyr's guards pulled her from her office all the way to the Black Whale in the Harbor, and that she didn't stop screaming until her fellow prisoner Friendly Senn had a few words with her and calmed her down. Now Nadine never speaks a clear word, but murmurs incomprehensibly almost constantly, and she never sleeps. The stack of unusual books that seemingly pushed her over the edge—and the strange visitor who brought them to Absalom in the first place—have never been found.

Lady Nahla of House Arnsen

LN | FEMALE | HUMAN | POLITICIAN | 12

Nahla Damaq grew up a privileged child of one of Absalom's wealthiest noble houses, the youngest sister of Lord Kerkis and Lady Nymara. It was clear from the start that Nahla would never inherit the scionship of House Damaq, but never before had she felt so helpless to resist the machinations of her powerful family than the day she was forced to wed the much older Lord Avid of House Arnsen in a political alliance meant to cement relationships between the two houses. Nahla dreamed of romance, but instead her father delivered her a lesson in politics, reminding Nahla that her role was to be, at best, a pawn of more powerful family interests. She grudgingly wed Lord Avid, settling in for a lifetime of disappointment.

Instead, in Avid she found a partner who respected her and stoked her ambition. While little physical attraction existed between the newlyweds, Avid's thrilling tales of his life as a questing hero lifted Nahla's spirit and encouraged her to build a path for herself outside the shadow of her powerful brothers and sisters. From the impressive Arnsen stronghold Eaglereach, on a jagged hill overlooking Diobel, Avid and Nahla hatched a series of schemes that planted her on Diobel's provincial council, where she soon become a master at manipulating—and stoking the ire of—the hated Kortos Consortium, who had resisted Avid's local influence since even before his friend Lord Gyr named him teriarch of Diobel. Nahla still sits on the council, but over the last decade Avid has grown even more obsessed with his efforts to seize power in Absalom proper, and today he seldom returns to Eaglereach, leaving Nahla to tend to family affairs there without him. Nahla never really loved Avid as anything more than a business partner, so from her perspective the new arrangement has considerable upside. Her political star is on the rise in Absalom, and she is one of Avid's strongest supporters in government, even if her physical passion for her husband can no longer match the heat of her rhetoric in support of him in council. Although Lady Nahla is unquestionably a political genius, her cold emotional demeanor and ignorance of good grace outside a meeting chamber has cost her a great deal over the years. Nahla remains estranged from her siblings in House Damaq, and various family intrigues have kept her exiled son Deineis and her stubborn daughter Myleena at bay. Her strongest and most loving relationship is with her youngest daughter, Beirivelle Starshine, a Knight of Lastwall stationed at Vigil's Hope, in the Precipice Quarter. Nahla supports Beirivelle with a rich stipend, and (without her husband's knowledge) has dedicated a frankly irresponsible portion of the Arnsen family fortune to supporting the efforts of Ulthun II and his allies in a hope to better her daughter's fortunes.

Namira

LN | FEMALE | HALF-ELF | SORCERER | 18

The half-elf sorceress Namira created and runs the Emporium Impossible, a remote demiplane market accessed via several shifting entrances positioned throughout the city. No illusion fools her true sight; no disguises or thieves pass her notice. Patrons make games of Namira identifying rare magic items with only a glance. She is often accompanied by female witchwyrds and is never without a coterie of masked guards.

Scion Lord Navvem of House Wachail

LE | MALE | HUMAN | ARISTOCRAT | 11

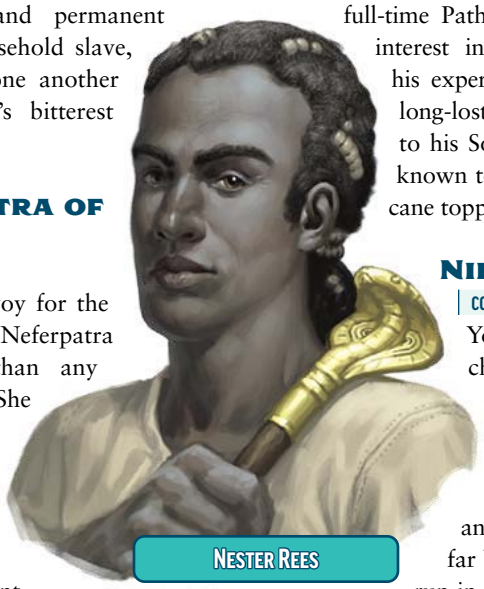
A former slaver and member of the Coin Council, Lord Navvem resisted the city's decree to free all slaves and had his estate forcibly raided by the Starwatch, among other punishments. The affair cost him his council seat, and he is regularly excoriated as a scoundrel in Absalom's broadsheets, his entire Chelaxian family decried as avaricious slavers as vile and horrific as the people-hoarding gnolls of Katapesh. Lord Navvem now

begrudges every copper he must spend on labor and plots the downfall of Acting Primarch Wynsal Starborn, preferably in a humiliating and permanent fashion. He and his former household slave, Milly Tundall, frequently find one another on opposite sides of Absalom's bitterest political struggles.

Scion Lady Neferpatra of House Ahnkamen

| N | FEMALE | HUMAN | CLERIC | 18 |

Scion Lady, High Councilor, Envoy for the Dead, and First Lady of Laws, Neferpatra holds more political power than any single figure in Absalom. She relieves some of the pressure by allowing Mother Jackal to make occasional decisions regarding the administration of House Ahnkamen; while Neferpatra is less than thrilled to allow an ancient ghoul that kind of power, old Ahnkamen pacts with the creature prevent her from taking direct action against her.



Nester Rees

Neferpatra spent most of her youth in service to Pharasma as a priestess at the Spiral Shrine, in Beldrin's Bluff. Despite her crushing responsibilities, she still returns there every week to help them conduct religious services. Although divine power glows more brightly in her heart than it does in those of her brother and sister Pharasmins, she keeps to the middle of the temple's hierarchy. In faith, at least, Neferpatra finds peace in following, rather than leading.

Nessian

| NE | MALE | HUMAN | ROGUE | 5 |

The Chelaxian youth now known as Nessian grew up poor on the flooded streets of the Puddles, relying only on his wits and the good will of strangers to survive. When that good will ran out, the boy learned to fight for and steal what he needed, and he eventually drew a gang of like-minded toughs—the Warhounders—to his hideout in the Pyramid of the Dog, a ramshackle, half-collapsed fortress of four near-toppled towers on the beach south of Shoreline, just southwest of the Puddles where he grew up. Despite his bravado, Nessian remains a cowardly street urchin at heart. He'll gladly abandon the gang he has spent a decade building if doing so means keeping his life, which he values more highly that the most precious of his ill-gotten goods.

Nester Rees

| LE | MALE | HUMAN | EXPERT | 4 |

Although Nester Rees tried a career as a Pathfinder early in life, his weak constitution left him ill-suited for travel. His keen mind was more than suited to the study required of a field agent, however, and in the three decades since he washed out of active enrollment, Rees strove to learn everything there is to know about ancient artifacts and relics, acting as an appraiser and item identifier, if not a full-time Pathfinder agent. Rees has a particular interest in the Ancient Azlanti Empire, and his expertise on the material culture of that long-lost kingdom has been a great boon to his Society allies. "Master Rees," as he is known to his colleagues, walks with a sword cane topped with a golden cobra's head.

Niervok

| CG | MALE | HUMAN | ROGUE | 1 |

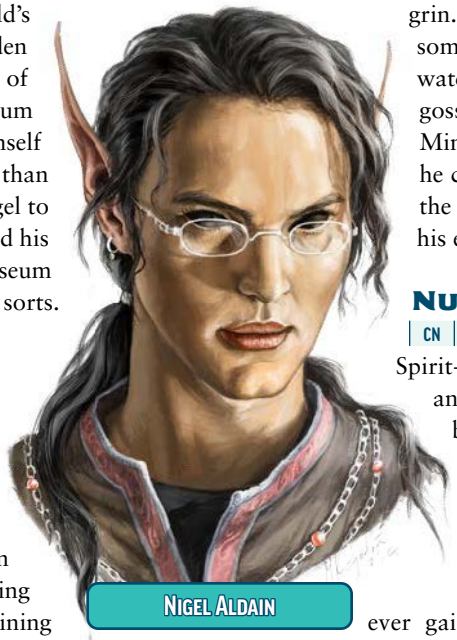
Young Niervok has seen most of his childhood friends turn to theft as a method of providing for themselves, something that has only bolstered his own convictions to treat his neighbors with respect. Well-spoken and possessing a keen grasp of politics far beyond his 13 years, Niervok's recent run-in with the Skinsaw Cult has shaken him more than the sight of childhood friends becoming criminals. He was nearly killed when he came to the aid of a local vagrant who had been attacked by the cult and still has nightmares about the encounter—vivid dreams where the slain vagrant tracks him down to abduct him and offer him up to the cult to repay the fact that Niervok failed to save the man's life when he was forced to flee the encounter by leaping into the churning surf. Each time, Niervok wakens from the dream in a cold sweat, the murdered man's worm-muffled refrain of "Now it's your turn, kid!" repeating over and over on his lips. That his dreams focus on the man whose life he failed to save rather than the more frightening cultists who took it has left Niervok confused, but as best he can reckon the dreams are trying to push him toward a life of protection rather than one of vengeance. As a member of the Dockside Dozen, Niervok is doing what he can to push the fellow orphans to his way of thinking, but his greatest dream is to some day join an adventuring team as a squire or torch-bearer, so that he can learn from tomorrow's heroes. What Niervok hasn't yet realized is that he is indeed being dream-haunted by the angry vagrant's ghost, and that should he find a group of welcoming adventurers to take him under their collective wing, they'll take on more than they bargain for.

Nigel Aldain

| N | MALE | ELF | WIZARD | 7 |

The current curator of the Wise Quarter's Blakros Museum, Nigel Aldain is every bit an academic dandy. A Forlorn elf raised among humans, Nigel abandoned his original elven name and adopted a more Taldan moniker to fit in with the high society he hoped to join. Nigel married Lady Dhrami Blakros fifteen years ago and the two get along well, but have no children. The lack of heirs remains a source of annoyance to House Blakros, as does the fact that he has bucked the longstanding tradition of Blakros husbands taking the family surname.

Decades ago, long before he had ever met Lady Dhrami, Nigel was an agent of the Pathfinder Society. He eventually had a falling out with his superiors in the organization, and for years his resentments complicated the adventurers' guild's relationship with the artifact-laden Blakros Museum. Repeated incidents of Pathfinder Agents helping the museum (for example rescuing Nigel himself from certain death on no fewer than three occasions) have encouraged Nigel to rethink the antagonism he held toward his former associates, and today the museum and the Society have become allies of sorts.



Nigel Aldain

Ninian Gallego

| N | MALE | HUMAN | POLITICIAN | 6 |

Ninian Gallego has served on the Ivy District Council for decades, and if there's one thing he's learned about life as a bureaucrat, it's that government work gets boring. Ten years ago, in hopes of finding something to occupy his time, Ninian began joining various clubs and parlors throughout the Ivy District. It was among the mysterious patrons of the Order that Ninian found the excitement that had been missing from his life. Here, he feels that he can dip his toes into the sinister underworld and take part in the excitement of belonging to a secret society without compromising his position as a councilman, for the Order itself has never asked him to take any action as a bureaucrat that would violate his oaths. Yet over the years, as Ninian has witnessed more and more of the strange gatherings and unusual events that take place in the upper floor of the Bloom Cabaret, he's begun to steep his personality, if subconsciously, in the act of belonging to a secret society. Ninian may not harbor any actual secrets himself, but what he might know about others who belong to the Order certainly runs the gamut of embarrassing to incriminating. Ninian took to keeping notes of his visits in an untitled plain brown journal, but when the journal went missing a month ago, Ninian realized that incriminating evidence he'd recorded in its pages could be easily weaponized. He's been growing increasingly paranoid that the journal was stolen precisely for this use, and has been keeping an ear to the ground for any whispers about those whose unsavory antics he'd mentioned in its pages. Ninian was always careful to never write down names in his journal, but he still fears that it was a fellow Order member who claimed the journal for their own—and that someone would certainly be able to match actual identities to the amusing nicknames he'd given his fellow members in those pages!

Nobukazu

| CG | MALE | KITSUNE | COURTESAN | 5 |

One of the Silken Court's most renowned courtesans, the kitsune Nobukazu is an accomplished shapeshifter and actor who prides himself on being anyone for anybody, the perfect lover. When not working, he most often appears as a red-haired young man with an impish grin. He frequents the Ivy Playhouse, sometimes performing and sometimes watching; the Lantern Lodge, where he gossips with fellow expatriates from Minkai; and the Gutless Griffon, where he can often be found holding court at the fireplace circle, a crowd hanging on his every word.

Nuar Spiritskin

| CN | MALE | MINOTAUR | ORACLE | 11 |

Spirit-talker, deal maker, power-broker, and exile, Nuar Spiritskin intends to be the future King of the Minotaurs. In the City at the Center of the World, Nuar negotiates for the future of his people. Though his treaties are as honorary as the minotaur's crown, should Nuar ever gain real power, he could radically alter the politics of the island.

Born to the Broken Horn clan deep in the mountains three decades ago, Nuar's birth was heralded by auspicious stars. The circumstances of his birth and his uncanny skills in speaking to spirits led many of his tribe to believe that the demon lord Baphomet had placed his favor upon Nuar. As the rumored messenger of Baphomet, Nuar had an easy time accruing influence within his tribe, despite being merely the size and weight of a human. It was this influence that led to the rather weak Nuar challenging the chieftain for leadership of his people, and this influence that saved his life when he failed. An exile in defeat, Nuar made the trek toward the sea, arriving in Absalom's Dock District as a porter. Being a dock worker—and an occasional entertainer in Aysepir's Astounded Abyss—was a far cry from his former station in life, but he soon found that the City of Absalom is a place where anyone can change their fate.

Luckily for Nuar, fate would soon smile upon him once more. Outside of the Grog Pit, Nuar spotted a nobleman being beaten by merchants. After stepping up to defend the man, Nuar found that this was no ordinary human, but Lord Gyr of Gixx himself! In exchange for saving his life, the primarch granted Nuar's true wish: to become the ruler of all minotaurs. Now set up in the Taurean Embassy, the self-styled Prince of the Minotaurs seeks to make his title more than honorary. With the full rights of a visiting monarch, including the right to grant merchant licenses, the right to appear before the Grand Council, and the right to be judged by only the first lady of laws, Nuar has returned to his old position as power broker. Adorned horn to hoof in the spoils of his profits—including the signet ring

of House Tsoulet—Nuar makes deals to increase his influence both within Absalom and without. A monarch is nothing without their subjects, however, and Nuar continually seeks the fealty of his fellow minotaurs. Through gifts, favors, and shows of power, Nuar pressures the scattered tribes to unite once more under his banner. Some, such as a group known as the Ivory Sons of Faer's Labyrinth, have been receptive of Nuar's diplomacy and deal frequently within the Embassy. Other minotaurs continue to rebuff his attempts at leadership, though the minotaur prince is confident they'll eventually come over to his side.

Nuar can be found frequenting the Grand Dance Hall of Kortos, flaunting his power by taking meetings in the upper balconies; he is known to invite Eliza Petulengro into his company and send frequent letters to both Wynsal Starborn and Ulthun II as "fellow heads of state." Less scrupulous clientele may find the monarch adding to the smoky haze within the Grog Pit. No matter where he is in the city, Nuar is rarely seen without his bodyguard Metzien. While some chalk this up to paranoia, others believe that the relationship between Nuar and Metzien is more than just a business arrangement.

Lady Nymara of House Damaq

NG | FEMALE | HUMAN | ARISTOCRAT | 9

Lady Nymara is the oldest living sister of Scion Lord Kerkis. She rules the noble family and serves as Absalom's Chancellor of the Exchequer. The Keleshite noblewoman holds a seat on the Coin Council, the district seat on the Low Council, and is a patron of the exclusive third balcony of the Grand Dance Hall of Kortos, where she sometimes employs adventurers to do family business her influential brother would prefer to keep out of the daily news.

Odessara

N | FEMALE | GNOME | CLERIC | 11

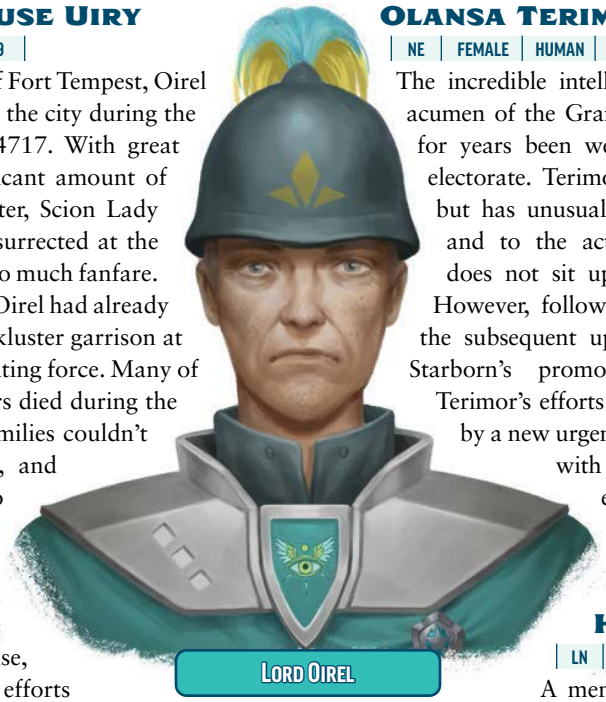
Odessara only found religion after she'd started to succumb to the Bleaching at an unusually young age. It wasn't until her whole body had drained of color, leaving only her vibrant violet eyes, that she was saved from certain death when a mysterious cowled figure found her in a drunken haze in an Absalom alley. The figure brought Odessara back to the Temple of Sivanah and left her atop the altar, where the temple's staff found her the next day. They took the gnome under their wing and, in exploring the mysteries of Sivanah (and the mysteries of her unknown savior), Odessara found a new passion that brought her back from death's door. Over the years, she rose in the ranks and today serves as the high priestess of the church. She wears vibrantly colorful clothing to offset her appearance, and keeps her face veiled save for her eyes. While the others of the church whisper that it was Sivanah herself who delivered Odessara to the church so many years ago, Odessara doesn't believe that at all—it's too obvious an explanation for the mystery, and she knows well that Sivanah would never stoop to such a blatant display of cliched secrecy. While the gnome does want to some day discover the nature of her savior, she fears that solving this core mystery to her rescue would also take the spark from her life—as long as she has at least this one singular conundrum to constantly wonder about, Odessara knows the Bleaching will never take her.

Nuar Spiritskin

Lord Oirel of House Uiry

LG | MALE | HUMAN | CHAMPION | 9

The celebrated commander of Fort Tempest, Oirel died a hero's death defending the city during the Black Echelon Uprising in 4717. With great public support (and a significant amount of charitable donations) his sister, Scion Lady Veridel, paid to have him resurrected at the Seventh Church of Iomedae, to much fanfare. Before his death and rebirth, Oirel had already transformed the formerly lackluster garrison at Fort Tempest into an elite fighting force. Many of his fellow First Guard soldiers died during the uprising as well, but their families couldn't afford to bring them back, and the public never bothered to know their names. Now infused with even more zeal to redouble his efforts to keep Fort Tempest at the forefront of Absalom's defense, Lord Oirel concentrates his efforts on training the new recruits who replaced his fallen allies, as well as keeping his eye open for potential recruits from outside the military. These days, fate seems to be on Lord Oirel's side. He keeps telling his sister that surely his rebirth means that finally the curse upon their family has lifted, and it is time for House Uiry to rise from the depths of tragedy to regain their prior glory. Veridel remains unconvinced.



Lord Oirel

Oldrik Elduthan

NE | MALE | DWARF | RANGER | 6

The cruel Oldrik Elduthan is Alina Muraabe's most trusted sub-warden at the Absalom Menagerie because he is dependable in a crisis, devotes nearly all of his attention to the attraction's affairs, and does whatever she tells him to do—so long as she can see him, anyway. When Alina is away—fairly often, as it happens—Elduthan reveals his true cruelty, keeping animals in line with a flick of the wrist and the lash of a whip. All Elduthan cares about is that the beasts in his charge do exactly what he tells them to, and he's willing to go to just about any lengths to ensure that his orders are always obeyed. Oldrik knows that Muraabe's only son, Chani, has no interest in inheriting the menagerie, so the young dwarf does everything he can to remain in Alina's good graces, hoping that he might end up running the entire operation some day. As it stands, he is content to bide his time, but if the transfer of power takes another 20 years, he may finally resort to arranging an "accident" for the park owner in one of the enclosures. Though no one knows it, Oldrik orchestrated a similar plot that resulted in the death of Chani's father a few years ago after first getting a job at the Menagerie, and he's more than willing to do it again when the time is right—just so long as transference of power remains clear and legally binding.

Olansa Terimor

NE | FEMALE | HUMAN | ROGUE/POLITICIAN | 12

The incredible intellect and formidable business acumen of the Grand Council's city planner has for years been well known among Absalom's electorate. Terimor sits on the Low Council, but has unusual access to the High Council and to the acting primarch for one who does not sit upon the High Council itself. However, following the Fiendflesh Siege and the subsequent upset that resulted in Wynsal Starborn's promotion to acting primarch, Terimor's efforts have seemingly been marked by a new urgency and emphasis on publicity, with some speculating that she may even have her eyes on claiming the primarchy for herself.

Lord Omrys of House Ahnkamen

LN | MALE | HUMAN | ARISTOCRAT | 10

A member of the Foreign Quarter Council, Lord Omrys defended the Pathfinder Society after its Shadow Lodge slashed a vicious wound across the district from the Irorium to the Grand Lodge in 4710 AR, bringing black dragons within the city walls in a terrifying strike on the Society's leadership. After a brazen attack of the Aspis Consortium tore a lesser tower from Skyreach and saw it tossed about the Foreign Quarter in 4715, Lord Omrys grew more and more skeptical about the Society's presence in his district. He has come to think of the Pathfinder Society as a "weirdness magnet" that draws more trouble to the district than benefits.

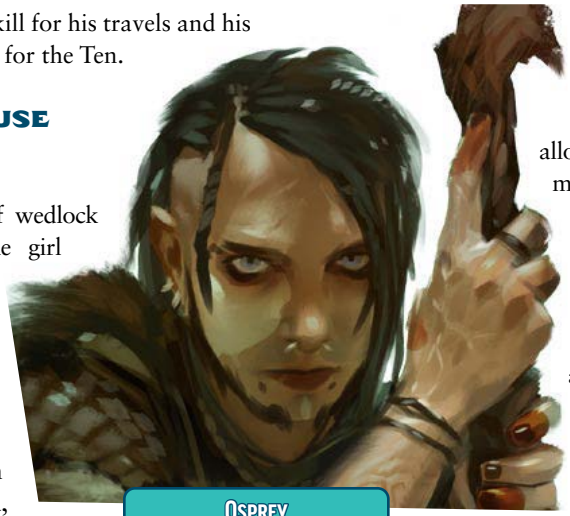
Although his primary personal estate is an old pyramid ringed by obelisks in the Foreign Quarter, Lord Omrys spends a great deal of time hosting parties at the family palace in the Petal District. Of late, prominent members of the Foreign Quarter's Peacebuilders Alliance faction are growing more and more common at these events. While Lord Omrys has not yet shifted his house's loyalty and considerable political power to support the movement, most of his peers and rivals believe it is now only a matter of timing.

Osprey

N | MALE | HUMAN | DRUID | 11

The enigmatic Pathfinder Society field agent known as Osprey is said to have the ear of the Decemvirate, the mysterious group of masked leaders who control the organization. Osprey sponsors a regular card game in the back room of the Grog Pit, a notorious Dock District tavern, where he sometimes invites Pathfinder agents for special assignments of direct interest to the Decemvirate. The lean-figured Chelaxian carries himself with a typically cordial but informal manner. When not in Absalom, Osprey is most often found in Diobel, where he is thought to have grown up (though no one knows this for sure). Osprey has the ability to transform into a

bird of prey, a most helpful skill for his travels and his considerable espionage work for the Ten.



Osprey

Lord Oved of House Blakros

| N | MALE | HUMAN | RANGER | 10 |

Lord Oved was born out of wedlock to Sarnia Blakros when the girl was sixteen, five years before the Blakros family gave her over to the Onyx Alliance in accordance with the Penumbral Accords that had bound the house to the Shadow Plane organization for generations. Lady Hamaria, the oldest of his mother's sisters, adopted Oved into the family as a proper lord shortly thereafter, but he has never truly fit in with the mainline family inhabiting Castle Blakros, preferring instead his smaller (but still very impressive) demesne in Fiddlemourn Manor, just across the district. In part due to the discomfort he often feels when in the direct presence of his relatives, Lord Oved spends a great deal of time outside the city, whether attending to affairs at his villa in Cassomir (where he spends months at a time overseeing various Blakros family interests in Taldor) or on his ranch estate in the Swardlands, where agricultural concerns keep him busy in the summer and early fall. During these periods of absence, Lord Oved lends Fiddlemourn Manor to his family, who use the charming home for small gatherings. He is particularly enamored of his aunt Delveris's middle son Pendleton, who often manages Fiddlemourn Manor in Oved's absence. Technically the oldest member of his generation, Lord Oved is now nearly 50. He wears a full beard and is usually smiling, and frequently smokes fragrant, expensive tobacco from a clay pipe. He loves horses and nature, and is a follower of Erastil. Oved has never had children of his own, but showers paternal affection toward Lord Pendleton, reserving additional love for his five wolfhounds, whom he likes more than he likes most people. His greatest passion is coin collecting, particularly the unusual catacomb coins unique to Absalom. Oved is the city's foremost collector of catacomb coins, and sometimes goes to outlandish—even illegal—lengths to snare a piece he does not yet have in his vast collection. He mostly works with Darelli Gammathumalshire at Concurrent Currency in the Docks (a great source of the coins thanks to adventurers frequently selling them off there), but he's also placed numerous ads hoping to spur sponsored excursions in the Absalom Catacombs designed to put ever more catacomb coins into his pocket.

Pardu Pildapush

| NE | MALE | HUMAN | ROGUE | 12 |

Before Wynsal Starborn became Acting Primarch of Absalom, Pildapush Chattel was among the most lucrative slave trading organizations operating along Misery Row not owned or endorsed by powerful Chelaxian families like Dureanz, Wachail, or Tevineg. Its particular specialty—halflings—allowed Pildapush to dominate a market segment vital to Chelaxian social interest. Fancying himself something of a philanthropist, Pildapush always skimmed the "best" halfling slaves off the top, freeing them from bondage so long as they agreed to serve his interests as members of a Coins District gang called the Puddlejumpers.

The sneering, middle-aged Pildapush manages a much-humbled enterprise these days, now that his preferred method of business is illegal. He still operates his old stall along Misery Row as an agency for low-cost labor and household servants, but much of the old joy is gone, replaced by a deep resentment toward a populace that seemed to turn on him and his reliable trade at the first sign of crisis. Pildapush left a hugely profitable stake in the slave markets of Okeno decades ago to make a name for himself in Absalom, and Wynsal Starborn's reforms have threatened the trajectory of his career and personal mythology.

As a result, instead of simply folding up shop and giving up the dream, Pardu Pildapush moved his operation under cover, relying more than ever before on his fanatically loyal gang of halflings. Under cover of night, the Puddlejumpers capture unsuspecting citizens from Absalom's streets and funnel them through the city's sewers and deeper tunnels to a thriving Darklands slave market in the mile-deep enclave known as Fall's End.

Parsin Guile

| CG | MALE | HUMAN | ARTISAN | 13 |

The outwardly friendly master of Absalom's Woodcutter's Guild lives in the Green Ridge neighborhood of Eastgate, where he runs the House of Guile, a cozy gallery displaying some of his finer works. Guile lives in a well-appointed penthouse above his gallery workshop with his wife, Hilenda. They have a large family with several children. Their eldest son, Bronton, is a great disappointment and a major source of trouble for them over the last decade. His other (much more promising) children include daughters Avesta and Marissa. He holds a guild seat on the Grand Council.

Although the two profess to be allies, Guile not-so-secretly resents his rival, Hans the Northman, who runs the Union of Carpenters, Stoneworkers, and Metalworkers. In order to finally gain the upper hand, Guile has recently placed a death order upon the Northman's head with the Red Mantis assassins' guild. A goodly man at heart, Parsin Guile now regrets his rash decision; he plans to anonymously hire a group of adventuring heroes to protect Hans from the imminent attack.

Pasharran

NE | MALE | LICH | PRIEST | 17

Five centuries ago, the return of a terrible disease of deep antiquity caught Absalom (and much of Avistan) by complete surprise. The contagion, known as the Yellow Death, had last ravaged the city in the era of the Pirate Siege, more than four thousand years ago. Then, ancient heroes saved the city with a life-giving Azlanti artifact known as the *Radiant Spark*, which not only healed hundreds of the plague's victims, but also returned them from the dead at the hand of the near-mythic Saint Sarnax, an early Arodenite patriarch. The *Spark* was lost during Kharnas the Angel-Binder's Radiant Siege of 1619 AR, and when the Yellow Death returned in 4217, there would be no artifact to save the people of Absalom. Tens of thousands died in what is still the deadliest tragedy of the city's long history. The resulting chaos wiped out three noble families, depopulated whole neighborhoods, and nearly toppled the city's government. It also attracted devotees of Urgathoa by the hundreds. From all over the Inner Sea, penitents of the Pallid Princess flocked to revel in the epidemic. By the outbreak's seventh year, many of these figures no longer made even a pretense of hiding their identities, walking in full clerical regalia among streets choked with the suffering and the dead.

The most brazen of these villains was Pasharran, a Gebbite noble lich who traced his origins back to that region's original culture, wiped out by colonists from Ancient Osirion during the Age of Destiny. His undead countrymen in Geb presented a sort of stasis that lacked the decay and destruction of life so critical to Pasharran's faith, and in the moans and desperate pleas of Absalom's whimpering wretches, the proud unliving aristocrat heard the whispered approval of his unfeeling mistress.

The encouragement didn't last long. Just as Pasharran began to get a sense of Lady Despair's greater plan for his undying destiny, the desperate folk of Absalom fought back, deliberately targeting agents of Urgathoa in an effort to win back the city from the grasp of disease. Instead of the true death, Absalom's champions presented Pasharran with eternal incarceration in the Tomb of the Living under Westgate. Pasharran endured captivity until agents of Urgathoa tunneled into his sepulcher from below nearly 50 years ago. For all that time, Urgathoa's whispers grew louder, encouraging Pasharran to once again spread corruption and sickness in the City at the Center of the World. Using a combination of primal, divine, and arcane magic, Pasharran plans to answer Urgathoa's call by raising an army of disease-ridden undead from the soggy bodies of drowned sailors, which he intends to unleash upon the unsuspecting city when the Pallid Princess commands it. He lairs deep in Absalom's Undercity, emerging only rarely under the cover of disguise to do business in the city proper. The time will soon come when he can once again walk Absalom's streets without the need to hide his true face.

Lord Pendleton of House Blakros

N | MALE | HUMAN | WIZARD | 4

Eight years ago, when Pendleton was 11, his father, Pieter, attempted to murder several members of his family and was in turn killed during a disastrous attack on the Pathfinder Society's Grand Convocation. Six years ago, while visiting his aunt Dhrami and uncle Nigel at the family museum, Pendleton fell victim to a sentient ooze from the Silver Mount of Numeria, and was only saved from certain death at the last moment by a party of Pathfinder Society adventurers. Today, at 19, Pendleton wants as little as possible to do with the drama and danger that seems to always follow his family, and he's learned from experience to give Pathfinders a wide berth as well. The timid, good natured young man is now in his second year as a riddle-level student at the College of Mysteries, still working diligently to complete the first stage of his course of mystery. He lives on the college campus, and seldom returns home or fraternizes with his family, holding a stubborn grudge against his mother in particular. His uncle Oved is one notable exception, as the man has always loved Pendleton and shown him affection, especially in the harrowing days following his father's betrayal and death. Oved's long-missing mother, Sarnia, had surprisingly appeared alongside Pieter's Onyx Alliance allies at the Grand Lodge attack, helping Oved to sympathize with young Pendleton. Today Oved trusts Pendleton enough to give the lad run of Fiddlemourn Manor on the many occasions in which he is out of town and the building is not otherwise scheduled for family use. On these occasions Pendleton serves as Fiddlemourn's caretaker, giving Oved a false sense of confidence that his home and his possessions are well looked after. Pendleton has the best of intentions, but he's constantly lost in thought pondering some deep mystery of arcane art, and more than one thieves guild in Absalom is simply waiting for the next time he's on duty before attempting to burglarize the house.

Pihma Lamar

NG | FEMALE | AZARKETI | MERCHANT | 5

While most azarketis merely pass through the submerged network of tunnels that run below Absalom, a select few are more permanent fixtures. One such individual is Pihma Lamar, an elderly azarketi merchant who stakes out various convenient junctions or caverns in the tunnel network to peddle her wares. Pihma keeps herself well-stocked on staple items and impulse buys that her patrons would otherwise have to go out of their way to acquire on the surface. Of course, she makes a margin on her goods, but she also trades for any azarketi rarities that can be sold at a steep markup in the markets on the surface. Friendly and very enthusiastic about her trade, Pihma does not mind the hustle of going back and forth to the markets when needed. She is quick and energetic, and always willing to chat or haggle with prospective customers—sometimes going so far as to follow them down the tunnels to continue an interesting conversation

or close a deal. Her years of experience have taught her where the best-selling spots are, and she tends to rotate between them on a daily basis, tempting commuters with her merchandise.

Pogmirk

| CG | FEMALE | GOBLIN | FIGHTER | 4 |

The leader of both the Bug Squasher tribe and the Walk Watch in the Goblin Walk, diligent Pogmirk is often seen with an old guard's helmet perched crookedly atop her head, despite her large pointy ears. Though she used to be a low-ranked archer, Pogmirk was catapulted in social ranking when she secured her lost and leaderless tribe a home in the Vents. She takes her duties very seriously and is full of energy and enthusiasm for her newly found leadership role. Like most of the Bug Squashers, Pogmirk is a pale gray with red eyes.

Pollunk Gean

| CG | MALE | HALFLING | INVESTIGATOR | 9 |

For many years, Pollunk Gean ranged between public embarrassment and public menace, particularly among Absalom's politicians and protectors. His capacity for "uncovering" (most would say "inventing") outlandish conspiracy theories knew few boundaries, and there were always more than enough believers (most would say "fools") to back up these theories enough to ruin reputations or cause minor panics. Two of Pollunk's more infamous claims, that shapeshifting alghollthu thralls had secretly infiltrated the city's guards or that the beam of light emitted by the Absalom Lighthouse caused sterility, are still believed by certain influencers in Absalom's counterculture despite having long since been proven demonstrably false. Pollunk's latest theory consisted of an increasingly disjointed claim that the Wracked Rock had somehow infected the leadership of several guilds. His refusal to write down any of these theories (a stark reversal of his prior crusades, which often involved him handing out self-published tracts and fliers) has further confused things as those who listened often had trouble determining what words he was using to warn the city. Whether he was talking about a slithering "I" or a slithering "eye," a cyst that "sees" or "seize," or the "axe" or "acts" of a mysterious executioner, the city may never know, for recently, Pollunk Gean vanished without a trace.

Pondo Funt

| NE | MALE | HUMAN | POLITICIAN | 9 |

Absalom's corpulent commissioner of trashpickers manages the collection of garbage in Absalom, a duty that has vastly enriched his fortunes since he assumed the position more than 25 years ago. His rubbish minders are also responsible for collecting and butchering any beasts of burden that die within the city walls, as well as for rendering any uncollected corpses of the city's homeless. All this garbage churns out a surprising number of tarnished treasures and forgotten artifacts. Funt keeps the choicest finds for himself, but filters most of the rest through the Collective in Fall's End, the Pickled Imp curiosity shop in the Dock District, the Lost and Found stall in the Grand Bazaar, and in other antiquities shops throughout the city.

Funt is a frequent visitor to the gaming tables at the Second Labyrinth, in the Coins, where he is perhaps best known by the sneers of his competitors as they notice his filthy hands smearing grime upon playing cards and drogue placards while he leers across the table at them. Almost no one enjoys his presence after he recounts an (admittedly well-told and entertaining) anecdote or two, as his inherent unpleasantness and not-so-subtle pong soon overcomes his boisterous feigned camaraderie.

Ptarnex Dexarion

| LE | MALE | HUMAN | MERCHANT | 10 |

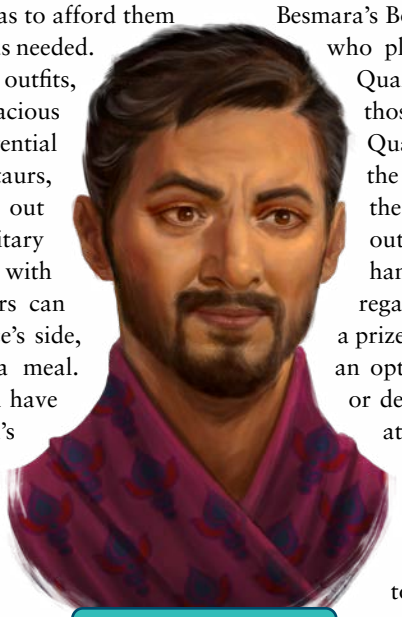
Ptarnex already owns two companies in the Docks—Ogrekin Hall and the Red Drake Warehouses, but he hardly intends to stop there. In time, this ambitious man hopes to buy up as much of the Docks as possible, in order to carve out his own mercantile empire in Absalom's core. He's already been called by many citizens "Second Harbormaster," an informal title at best but one that certainly appeals to the man. His climb to economic power is based in part on shrewd business decisions and a deep knowledge of the nature of how the economy works, but is bolstered by his blatant lack of compassion for those who work for him. Ptarnex keeps wages tight, and hands out raises and bonuses only to those who he deems would help to bolster his own power in the neighborhood or who he understands to be valuable allies in keeping larger numbers of employees in line and compliant. Currently, Ptarnex has eyes on no fewer than three other businesses in the Docks—the Broadfoot Marshals Station House, Concurrent Currency, and the Devil's Own Shipyard. Adding these three businesses to his growing portfolio would bolster Ptarnex's control over the Docks by commanding its defenses against fire, the flow of currency exchange, and the construction of ships (in addition to gaining control over one of the neighborhood's gangs; the Gylou Sisters). To aid in this pursuit he's been seeking a loan from the Bank of Absalom, but hasn't quite been able to secure one with the interest and rates he needs to make his plot happen affordably, nor has he quite yet reached the point where he's going to try to buy out temples, guard stations, or monuments like the Beast, but to Ptarnex all of this is just a matter of time. After all, he's pretty sure that there's nothing money can't secure!

Pyl Gillseed

| CG | MALE | HALFLING | RANGER | 6 |

It's the duty of the soldiers of the Eagle Garrison to survey the Absalom hinterlands while avoiding engagement of potential threats. Whereas most of the soldiers have adopted tactics of stealthy observation, Pyl Gillseed has taken a different route. This flamboyant, talkative ranger has interpreted the Eagle Garrison charter of "non-engagement" to speak only against hostile action,

and when he encounters potential troublemakers while out on patrol, more often than not he openly approaches them and strikes up a conversation. Eagle Garrison scouts have no strict uniform code so as to afford them the flexibility of being able to gear up as needed. This affords Pyl the option of his gaudy outfits, and when combined with his loquacious persona, he's been able to defuse potential complications with bandits, centaurs, and even minotaurs he's encountered out in the wild as efficiently as any military action could have. Pyl is close friends with Nuar Spiritskin, and in his off hours can often be found at the minotaur prince's side, trading stories or simply enjoying a meal. Other members of the Eagle Garrison have increasingly grown frustrated with Pyl's methods, in part out of a perception that he's turning the scouting role into a joke, but perhaps in part out of jealousy at his results.



Lord Rajit Punjeer

Qidesca

NG | AGENDER | GHORAN | MERCHANT | 6

At the Turning Leaf, a visitor can always be assured of a surprising option for a meal. The owner of the restaurant is Qidesca, an enigmatic creature who is as distracting to new customers as are the eclectic dishes on the menu. Qidesca is a ghoran, and the irony that their ancestry was originally created and cultivated as a source of food in Nex does not escape them. While Qidesca does not have a sense of humor as the emotion is understood by most others, an undeniable wit still plays into the decor and theme of the Turning Leaf. A sign above the front door playfully reads, "If you're enjoying your meal, hopefully you won't eat me!" This jokey sign was the idea of one of Qidesca's first customers, and while Qidesca still doesn't quite grasp the appeal of the humor, they do appreciate the fact that visitors to the Turning Leaf appreciate it and, thus, tend to be more open with their coin purses. Qidesca is always seeking new culinary offerings to expose their customers to, but takes care to only offer meals or hire guest chefs who source their ingredients responsibly and humanely, be the meal vegetarian or otherwise. As someone who, in a different life, could have ended up on another's plate, Qidesca always seeks to respect the lives, plant or animal, that are given to enable a memorable meal.

Quar

CG | MALE | HALF-ORC | BARD | 7

Quar is the second half of the leadership of the Bladed Bastards, one of several independent Firebrand organizations that have recently appeared in Absalom. Although his brother Galamere is a half-elf, he and Quar claim to share the same father. Whether or not the claim is true, the two men do share a close brotherly bond as strong as if they were born twins. If Galamere is the "voice" of the Bladed Bastards, Quar is the "eyes." While his brother talks up the competition and coaxes telling reactions out of customers at Impalement Arts, on Besmara's Boardwalk, it is Quar who watches those who play. An impeccable judge of character, Quar has an excellent record at picking out those who would make superb Firebrands. Quar is also responsible for generating the amusing caricatures that are one of the game's potential prizes, sketching out exaggerated drawings of winners by hand on a sheet of paper so quickly that regardless of what the player's choice is for a prize, the custom-crafted caricature is always an option. Those who react with amusement or delight at seeing their features poked fun at on a piece of paper are always noted by Quar as having the right combination of self-confidence and humor, for those who cannot laugh at themselves, the half-orc has found, are often too quick to laugh at others—a quality that does not a successful Firebrand make.

Lord Rajit Punjeer

LN | MALE | HUMAN | BARD | 14

A former dancer and the majordomo of the Grand Dance Hall of Kortos, Lord Rajit is also its chief choreographer, both in terms of the dancers' art and in terms of the ebb and flow of its complex social order. In addition to controlling access to patronage and invitations, Punjeer encourages the most beautiful and popular of his dancers to mingle with the patrons and their guests, ensuring that everyone is having a good time while making a lot of money.

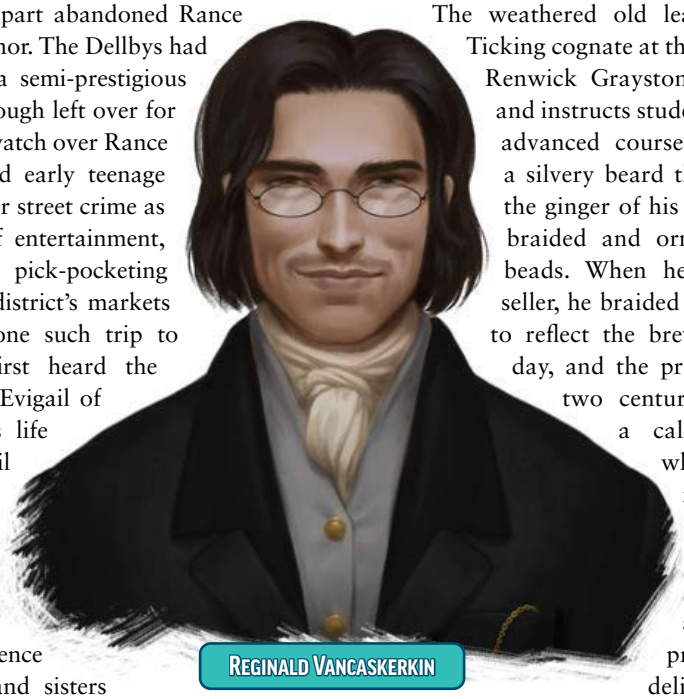
Punjeer owns the most beautiful manor in Westgate's Anandari Block, where he enjoys favored son status due to his influence in Absalom's commerce and his generous patronage of the neighborhood's shops and restaurants. Scion Lady Idara of House Anandari is one of his closest friends and confidantes; she is the only member of his social circle who hears the juiciest rumors—economic or otherwise—that come from his eavesdropping or observations in the upper balconies of the Dance Hall.

Rance Dellby

CG | MALE | HALFLING | CULTIST | 3

The only son of Gelda and Tontartigan Dellby, young Rance spent much of his childhood feeling alienated and alone. His father was so absorbed in managing the prestigious Endiron School that he sometimes failed to come home, staying engaged in his office for days at a time. While his mother remained physically present in his life, her political ambitions saw her spending more time with her high-society cohorts than attending to her son. As a baby, Rance had accompanied her on her social calls, delighting in the coos and attention of a bevy of

minor nobles and wealthy artisans. Once he matured into a rambunctious toddler, the novelty wore off and Gelda for the most part abandoned Rance to the family's modest manor. The Dellbys had enough wealth to score a semi-prestigious address, but never had enough left over for servants or caretakers to watch over Rance throughout his youth and early teenage years. He dabbled in minor street crime as a much-needed source of entertainment, developing impressive pick-pocketing skills while strolling the district's markets and public spaces. On one such trip to the Watercleft, Rance first heard the beguiling words of Lady Evigail of House Wycomb, and his life changed forever. Evigail preached a free-spirited interpretation of Gozreh's doctrine, encouraging the folk of the city to leave behind their "civilized" lives for an idyllic existence among loving brothers and sisters inhabiting Evergreen Park. Evigail's affectionate cult welcomed Rance like his real family never could, and since his first night under the stars in their warm company, the halfling lad has remained willfully beguiled. He still loves his parents as much as he ever did, but he knows that their academic and political pursuits amount to nothing in the eternal, natural world nurtured by Gozreh's grace, and he considers them a distant memory from a previous, much sadder version of his life. He avoids contact with them whenever possible. Instead, the now-teenaged Rance funnels his admiration of Lady Evigail and his newfound interest in the mysteries of the Wind and the Waves into recruitment, focusing his efforts on the indolent youth of Eastgate. Notable for his long, green hair, bare feet, and threadbare, once-fine outfits stained by dirt and grass, Rance makes a regular circuit of markets throughout Absalom, bringing more and more of its citizens to Evergreen Park and the Children of Spring.



Reginald Vancaskerkin

Reginald Vancaskerkin

NE | MALE | HUMAN | INVENTOR/MANIPULATOR | 18

The unscrupulous publisher of the tabloid *Eyes on Absalom* dresses well and reportedly has many powerful friends, but the shocking illustrations, scandalous exposés, and lurid opinion pieces in his sleazy rag have earned him a mixed reputation, at best, among Absalom's aristocratic elite. Vancaskerkin is a consummate gossip and rumormonger, with a wide network of professional contacts as well as familial contacts with relatives spread widely in influential positions throughout the world. The oily, nosy schemer is secretly a staunch worshipper of Norgorber and a graduate of the Clockwork Cathedral.

Renwick Graystone

LN | MALE | DWARF | ALCHEMIST | 6

The weathered old leader of the Alive and Ticking cognate at the Clockwork Cathedral, Renwick Graystone oversees the cognate and instructs students, but also takes more advanced courses of his own. He has a silvery beard that still holds a hint of the ginger of his youth that is intricately braided and ornamented with colored beads. When he was a young potion seller, he braided his beard each morning to reflect the brews he had to sell that day, and the practice continues, nearly two centuries later. Graystone is a calming, warm presence who believes a smile and friendly attitude is often the most important element of magical healing, and while he and his students can program a construct to deliver a burst of positive energy that knits together wounds, he remains concerned that neither he nor they have yet to develop a construct capable of positivity itself.

Rhet Tafmar

NG | MALE | HALF-ORC | ARISTOCRAT | 5

Rhet was inspired to found the orphanage known today as "Rhet's Home," or more commonly, simply as "Home" when he saw how awful living conditions were for orphaned children growing up in the Coins. To his eyes, those conditions were equally bad whether the children lived on the street or in one of the district's other ramshackle orphanages—places that were no better than workhouses at best. It didn't take much to secure ownership of an abandoned tenement, but repairing the building and getting it in order to serve as a proper place to house unfortunates did—Rhet spent the better part of three years working primarily on his own to rebuild and prepare the structure. Today, most of his time is split between tending to the children and maintaining the repair of the building they live in, but his devotion to the orphanage has, as of yet, shown no limits. He hopes some day to secure funding from another source other than his family; so far, the meager allowance sent to him is enough to keep the operation going, but not to expand its size or comforts. His childhood memories of bad actors in the Cult of the Dawnflower have tarnished his opinions of organized religion, and he has a hard time trusting offers of aid from Absalom's churches as a result, but his attempts to appeal to the good consciences of the city's nobility have to date resulted in one disappointment after the other. He continues to turn down approaches from certain investors in the district (most notably agents he suspects work for either

Ptarnex Dexarion or one of the many thieves' guilds), despite their promises of regular deliveries of supplies and support. Currently, his Home is over capacity, and he's noticed unsettling turns of behavior among some of the children, particularly in young Niervok, who he's discovered hasn't been sleeping well lately. Desperation has begun to settle in, and without the timely aid of an unexpected patron, whether he gives in to accept charity from one of the city's faiths or gives in and accepts support from shadier sources, may come down to the flip of a coin.

Lord Riodos of House Morilla

N | MALE | HUMAN | FIGHTER | 14

For decades Lord Riodos of House Morilla was one of the most decorated officers of Absalom's First Guard. He eventually left the army in disgust after becoming disillusioned with the way politics infected command decisions and coming to despise the ways in which bureaucracy sapped the spirit and morale of even the bravest of soldiers. Riodos thereafter founded the Guild of Spears mercenary league out of retired and former First Guard and district watch officers, converting an old Morilla manor house in the Coins into their official headquarters, the Javelin Gallery. Knowing that a warrior is only as good as their gear, Riodos also hired highly skilled weaponsmiths, armorsmiths, and a trio of spellcasters specialized in rune crafting to add a weapons manufacturing aspect to Guild operations, bringing him considerable additional wealth even by Morilla standards, eventually resulting in him being named "trademaster" by the Grand Council.

Recently, Lord Riodos became romantically involved with Lady Kythes Finch, captain of the Token Guard and proprietor of the Saucy Wench tavern, just off the Grand Bazaar. Lord Riodos counts several retired mercenaries formerly under Captain Kythes's command in the Token Guard among his cohorts in the Guild of Spears, bringing the dynamic woman into his orbit. He quickly became infatuated with her. She is twenty years his junior, but he appreciates her ambition. He knows she is corrupt but doesn't really care, even sometimes encouraging her to loosen her morals in a way that could weaken the district watch. By Riodos's measure, the weaker the Token Guard and the less trustworthy its reputation becomes among those with money in the Coins, the more they will turn to the mercenaries of the Guild of Spears to protect their safety and property.

Lord Riodos avoids contact with Lord Celedo and the branch of his family associated with the Guild of Wonders criminal operation. This would, on its surface, make him a natural ally to Lady Gloriana, but Riodos hates politics in general and considers his scheming cousin an annoying presence. He does everything he can to stay busy during her visits to the city, always making sure to send her a beautiful floral arrangement or stylish gown as a way to apologize for his heavy workload.

Roglund Tergurast

LG | MALE | DWARF | CLERIC | 12

Roglund is Absalom's high priest of Torag. Stationed at the Father's Forge in Westgate, he attends to his duties and his parishioners with a combination of respect and humility that has served him well in maintaining his position for more than a few centuries, and he shows no signs of seeking retirement or replacement anytime soon. That Roglund has avoided serious scandals or endured much in the way of competition to his position throughout his time as high priest points to how well-loved he is by the people of Westgate, with even those who might have bones to pick with some of the tenets of Torag's faith finding themselves hard-pressed to find anything disagreeable to latch onto in Roglund's personality. Every few decades, some of his flock push Roglund to enter the city's politics, or even to vie for the role of primarch, but the elderly dwarf has always humbly avoided taking such steps, noting quietly that the pursuit of glory and fame is best left to those who crave it over duty to faith and community.

Scion Lord Rogren Sphairo of House Menhemes

LN | MALE | HUMAN | SCHOLAR | 16

Rogren commands one of the most influential Osirian families north of Garund. For more than two thousand years, House Menhemes has kept a small museum on the grounds of Menhemes Manor in Westgate, a repository of official documents, noble family histories, and legal proceedings dating back to the era of the Pirate Siege of Absalom and running to the modern day. There's no rhyme or reason to what has become a vast and compelling collection of material over the centuries, and navigating the archive requires the assistance of a team of sages and scholars trained by Lord Rogren himself. Lord Rogren holds the Westgate seat on the Grand Council, which he attempts to use to guide Absalom into a future just as glorious as its (many) golden ages of the past.

The scion lord, who calls himself the "Keeper of Ancient Absalom Lore," counts among his most steadfast enemies fellow scholar Dhauken Tor of the Wise Council. Lord Rogren (wrongly) considers his rival an unscrupulous charlatan obsessed with inaccurate historical records transcribed from the mouths of illiterate commoners, dismissing the scholar's entire body of work as a fraud and a sham. Lord Rogren is far less animated and excitable than Tor, but his relative silence is but a mask hiding one of the sharpest wits in Absalom. When Lord Rogren insults you, particularly in print, his words cut with a vorpal edge. He and the similarly gifted (but somewhat more crude) Tor are currently engaged in a public literary fight to the death in the pages of several Absalomian broadsheets. Careful observers are becoming increasingly certain the conflict will lead to the literal death by assassination of one of Absalom's most gifted scholars—but no one can quite agree on which one.

Rosvierre Ibanc

| CG | HUMAN | MALE | BARD | 16 |

Endlessly charming and always at ease, Rosvierre Ibanc is the efficient and effective grand master of the White Grotto in the Ivy District. He has been the school's master of voice even longer, instructing students in singing, acting, and spoken word performance. Tales of Ibanc's beautiful singing voice extend far beyond the Starstone Isle. He is much in demand in Absalom and beyond, but these days he confines most of his performances to the Grotto's Hall of Voice, and he seems closer than ever to the brink of retirement.

During his long tenure at the White Grotto, Ibanc has assembled perhaps the deepest repository of cultural lore regarding Absalom's heroes and history in the city. The lyrics of countless songs and epic poems collected and compiled by Ibanc are bound into hundreds of books shelved along the walls of several chambers in the White Grotto's Hall of Voice, available as inspiration or idle diversion for students. Ibanc keeps the most salacious or politically dangerous material in a sealed cabinet in his private quarters on the White Grotto grounds.

Given that Rosvierre Ibanc adventured with the now-missing Lord Gyr of Gixx, the eyes of Absalom turn to the great bard for clues as to the absent primarch's current whereabouts. He honestly has no idea, but has come away from recent meetings with his old companions Lady Asilia, Brythen Blood, and Lord Avid with suspicions that each knew more than they were willing to admit, and that each of them had something to hide regarding the matter.

Rubeis

| NE | AGENDER | CONSTRUCT | FIGHTER | 7 |

The slim, silent Rubeis is perhaps the most enigmatic figure among the Irorium's mainstays. Rubeis never speaks, always wears a green-and-white enamel mask inlaid with black tears, and has never been seen—or, at least, has never been recognized—outside the Irorium. Some say the gladiator is actually a scimitar-wielding clockwork automaton, or a succession of different fighters wearing the same mask. Every time Rubeis defeats a foe, the masked gladiator draws out a skull-faced rod and presses it to the defeated opponent's neck, whispering soundlessly to the half-skull as its chipped teeth touch the loser's throat.

Runewulf the Unbeliever

| N | MALE | HUMAN | BARBARIAN | 13 |

The burly captain of the Graycloaks has a long public history in Absalom, and counts among its best-known citizens due to nearly two decades of life in the public eye. Runewulf came to Absalom in 4704 AR, in the company of his cousin, the questing hero White Estrid. He fought alongside Estrid and the other members of her crew in the Irorium, swiftly racking up a series of impressive victories and establishing themselves as local celebrities. Within a matter of weeks, nobles who had formerly turned them away at their outer gates now sought their company in the parlor (or bedchamber). White Estrid used her influence in Absalom to build pacts and alliances that later helped her to claim a northern kingdom as a Linnorm Queen. Runewulf cared little for influence, preferring instead piles of gold and the company of a rotating cast of casual paramours. When Estrid and her companions quit the city to seek greater destinies in their homeland, Runewulf stayed behind, finding the glories of the arena all the destiny he'd ever desired.

As a solo combatant, Runewulf established a reputation as an unflinchingly fair fighter capable of brutal, crowd-pleasing victories, incorporating exactly the kind of dismemberments and decapitations desired by the bloodthirsty spectators. He refused to attribute any of his wins to the gods, and after a half-decade of public combat, the people of Absalom knew him as much for his title—the Unbeliever—than for his name. He retired from the arena after a hard-won fight left him on the brink of death himself. He would likely have fallen into obscurity if not for the corruption of Fulldrin Blythe, captain of the Graycloaks, who was exposed as a paid agent of the Church of Asmodeus in 4709. After forcing Blythe out (and into the Black Whale, according to rumors at the time), the Chamber of Ecclestials sought an incorruptible watch captain who would favor no one religion over the others, settling eventually upon the once-popular Runewulf the Unbeliever as a compromise candidate. To the great surprise of a skeptical press and many of the ecclestials themselves, Runewulf proved more than up to the challenge, chasing out Blythe's dirty associates and restoring honor and impartiality among the district watch. Captain Runewulf has a reputation for being harsh but fair in all things, and doesn't believe anything he can't see for himself. As he's aged, the old viking spirit has given way to slow and careful deliberation. He encourages the Graycloaks to set their sights on significant criminal operations and arrange for elaborate stings to catch as many criminals as they can all at once. He is popular with his officers as well as with the populace of the Ascendant Court.

Ryni the Jest

| CN | MALE | DWARF | BARD | 10 |

There is little about Ryni the Jest that the confrontational bard hasn't curated specifically and precisely to offend, be it the fact that he keeps his chin shaved clean, his penchant for knowing when exactly to interrupt even the most dour of situations with a joke or irreverent reference, or lately his one-man crusade to get under the skin of Mircen Kinsgate, commander of the Eagle Garrison. While many (particularly those among Absalom's counterculture or those who stand to gain from seeing one of his targets humiliated) profess public admiration of Ryni's sense of humor, no one counts themselves as actual friends of the caustic-witted dwarf. Ryni isn't bothered by the fact that he has no true friends, or that his family (the

stolid Tullmans of Galizhur) has violently disowned him, or that Mircen has tried (and failed) numerous times to have him imprisoned on counts of disorderly conduct, for his goal is no less lofty than becoming a god of mirth. That his pursuit of "mirth" has become, over the years, cruel-natured and more interested in disrupting society than entertaining it has by and large gone unnoticed by Ryni, for those who confront him with such inconvenient observations merely find themselves the targets of his latest mean-spirited humor.

Salif of Wynsal

CG | FEMALE | DWARF | FIGHTER | 6

The sub-commander of Fort Tempest was once Salif Deepkeg, a dangerously temperamental soldier with few prospects in the First Guard. Quick to complain about difficult orders, Salif found herself reassigned to Fort Tempest after talking back to one superior too many. Among the washouts and misfits of the fort, Salif managed to work her way up the ladder of command in part because so many of her fellows abandoned their posts or were expelled, and in part due to her genuine admiration for Fort Tempest Commander Lord Oirel of House Uiry, who worked valiantly to improve the Fort Tempest garrison and make the posting more than just a laughingstock. When Oirel died defending the fort during the Black Echelon Uprising in 4717 AR., Salif took command of the fortress in the aftermath of the battle. She did her best to follow Lord Oirel's example. When Oirel's sister Veridel paid to have him resurrected, Salif willingly returned command of the fort to her friend and mentor. Such is her renewed dedication to her duty and to the protection of Absalom that she added the title "of Wynsal" to her name, a sign of her loyalty to the city's acting primarch.

Salindra Concilio

CN | FEMALE | HUMAN | PANHANDLER | 6

Salindra's luck seemed to run out the instant she escaped Metringer Sanitarium, and ever since she managed that unlikely stunt she's had trouble regaining her old life as the apprentice of the popular Ivy District tailor Al-Amir Kai. Forced to scramble for survival on Absalom's streets as a panhandler, she splits her time between avoiding the guard, scrounging for sustenance and shelter, and doing her best to spread warnings about the dire experiments going on in the Sanitarium. She can be found in several different haunts that cater to the desperate poor such as the Guiding Hand in the Coins or God's Market in the Ascendant Court. To those who'll listen, her story of distorted horrors and mutated monsters formed from hapless prisoners in the underground dungeons of Metringer Sanitarium sounds as lurid as it does outlandish. Her claims resulted in several investigations of the site by officials, but the Sanitarium's staff and its current administrator, Flevvid Grummlin, defused each one and avoided in-depth explorations each and every time. Since then, Salindra's learned not to trust the guard, rightly fearing that their indifference has only bolstered Flevvid. She's avoided several not-so-disguised attempts by his agents to recapture her, but knows it won't be long before she's caught and returned to the depths below the asylum. She also knows that this time there will be no escape for her, and so she's increasingly desperate to find a band of trustworthy adventurers to step in and prove to the city the true horrors that lie in the depths of Metringer Sanitarium.

Samel Maleagant

NE | MALE | HUMAN | CLERIC | 14

Senior Priest-Advocate at the Court of Black Paper, Maleagant began his life as a conman and swindler in Ustalav before stealing a fortune and retiring to Absalom. Friendly, improbably attractive, and with a wry sense of humor, Maleagant is remarkably high strung and violence-averse for someone with access to a cult's worth of killers and poisoners. As lawyer to half of Absalom's elite, he finds that negotiation and deception are much safer problem-solving techniques.

A handsome Nidalese man just entering middle age, Maleagant is one of Absalom's most eligible bachelors, and is regularly seen entertaining a succession of politically connected beauties like Lady Dyrianna, Metadame Vannessir, and Verica Strange.

Sammael Rantore

CG | MALE | HALFLING | CHEF | 14

A culinary perfectionist with a flair for the dramatic, Sammael Rantore owns and operates To Eat the World, a trendy Westgate bistro that specializes in spectacle. Known for ostentatious preparation and presentation of by-request foodstuffs and catering to the wealthy elite, Rantore—or "Sam" as he insists his patrons call him—enjoys a reputation as one of Absalom's most entertaining performers. His restaurant caters to only a few exclusive diners per seating, but dozens more pay considerably less to simply watch the production from kitchen to table, spreading Sam's legend far beyond those few who can afford to book a seat. The carefree, gregarious air Rantore puts on before his patrons and public grows more authoritarian behind the scenes, where he is more like a demanding circus ringmaster than the affable clown he plays before an audience. He is so protective of his methods that he shares them exclusively with his family—his wife, Cluwenda, his sons Kerrip and Jongelo, and his eldest daughter, Chendra)—the establishment's only employees. Rantore relies heavily upon outside contractors—namely adventurers—to source some of the more unusual menu demands of his wealthy dine-in customers. Such opportunities usually take the form of an invitation to a private mid-afternoon meal prepared especially by the chef himself. As his guests enjoy one of the most delicious meals of their lives in the empty restaurant, Rantore lays out the details and his assignments. Because his guests often attempt to outdo one another with especially challenging or outlandish requests, the items on Rantore's wish list

often prove extremely dangerous to obtain. Most can be found in the inland regions of the Isle of Kortos, but a few have sent hired-hands across the Inner Sea or even—in a few especially lucrative cases—to distant realms in the Great Beyond. Rantore pays handsomely, is good for his word, and shows strong loyalty to those who have proven capable of fulfilling his difficult requests.

Sandaril

NE | MALE | ELF | WIZARD | 13

A friendly and ever-present fixture of the Forae Logos, the aged and bright-natured Sandaril serves as second archivist and manages the affairs of the massive library whenever Head Librarian Brivit Nae is unavailable or in deep research investigating some newly unearthed esoteric tome (which is to say, most of the time). A soft-spoken, bespectacled elf with an uncharacteristically receding hairline and long, thin tresses of flaxen hair, Sandaril's unassuming, agreeable nature masks a deadly ambition. Over long decades, Sandaril has grown tired of Brivit Nae's absent-minded nature, lack of focus, and reflexive delegation of duties to those more suited to accomplish the goals of the Forae Logos. No longer wishing to manage the affairs of the great library of Absalom on his superior's behalf, he now seeks to secretly depose Brivit Nae and take over in name as well as in deed.

His plan is simple. For years now, through his contacts in the Scriveners' Guild, Sandaril and his agents posted at the harbor and each of the city's gatehouses have redoubled their searches for dangerously potent eldritch tomes for confiscation and evaluation by the Forae Logos, knowing that Brivit Nae's boundless curiosity and obsession with esoteric secrets will leave her exposed to some magical trap, bound demon, or creeping soul corruption that would leave Sandaril in the position to take over as head librarian and first archivist, as guildmaster of scriveners, and her seat on Absalom's High Council. Not content to simply wait for fate to take its course, Sandaril has begun to illegally sell some non-dangerous texts "lost" during the evaluation process to the Grand Bazaar oddities dealer Yggwil. Funds raised in this manner travel via Sandaril's Scriveners' Guild ally Kildress Fung to an investment managed by the lawyer Samel Maleagant. Maleagant in turn funnels the money to contacts in the Kortos Consortium (via the diplomat Jaress Molinarro), who in turn pass it to Diobel-based smugglers who travel throughout the Inner Sea region deliberately hunting down dangerous books, some researched by Sandaril himself during slow moments at the library.

No one but Fung knows Sandaril's role in the conspiracy. Sandaril is cautious that his scheme might be unveiled and bring damage and complication to the Forae Logos. He justifies his plot as in the greater service of the library and the city itself, and tells himself he would do nothing to harm either. Indeed, he assures himself, allowing Nae to continue her ineffective leadership will ultimately do more damage than his carefully planned scheme to change the status quo. Despite his efforts, Brivit Nae remains vibrant and uncorrupted. A few years ago, however, a stack of papers smuggled into Absalom by Sandaril's illicit allies resulted in the madness and eventual incarceration of his friend Nadine Vives, the institution's Curator of Impossible Texts. Vives, now imprisoned in the Black Whale, pieced together Sandaril's entire plan, and so long as she lives the entire operation is at risk of discovery. Luckily for Sandaril, the papers that wrecked her mind also destroyed her ability to communicate. Sandaril knows such luck will not hold out forever, and is eager that Brivit Nae face a similar fate (or worse) as soon as inhumanly possible.

Sanloria Percota

LN | FEMALE | HUMAN | HISTORIAN | 4

A decade ago, intrigue between the ruling council of the Pathfinders and members of its rebellious Shadow Lodge brought catastrophe to Absalom. Amidst massive arcane explosions, swarms of monstrous attackers surged forth from the fields of the Irorium and cut a channel toward the Grand Lodge, destroying several buildings in the process. At the height of the battle, a trio of black dragons—foes not seen within the walls of Absalom for thousands of years—breached the city's defenses to attack Skyreach itself. Not content to limit their destruction to the grounds of the Pathfinders' headquarters, the destructive beats unleashed wave after wave of acidic streams from their mouths, melting away ancient statues and terrified onlookers alike. Among the innocent dead that day was Duldorin Percota, the only beloved son of Westgate historian Sanloria Percota. Although they did not know it at the time, Duldorin's death marked an important turning point for the Pathfinders in their relationship with the people of Absalom, for in that moment, the Peacebuilders were born.

Although the Peacebuilder Alliance's concept and name originated with Sanloria Percota, several others play important roles in the administration of the organization and the evangelism of its anti-Pathfinder message. Percota herself authors widely published columns critical of the Society in several local newspapers, singling out Master of Swords Marcos Farabellus for particular scorn. Allies of the Society claim that she is a puppet of the Aspis Consortium, or perhaps even one of their active agents, but the sad truth is that Sanloria Percota's opposition is driven by grief, and has no easy solution.

Due to a congenital disability, Percota travels by wheelchair. A beloved clockwork servant named Mister Chulway pushes her around the city and sees to her other mobility-based needs, occasionally resorting to combat to protect her on the rare occasions in which she faces true danger in Westgate, which she almost never leaves. However much Sanloria Percota hates the Pathfinder Society, she loves Westgate in even greater

measure. Percota manages the Westgate Heritage Museum, dedicated to the quarter's history and glory. She occasionally hires non-Pathfinder adventurers to secure lost artifacts of great cultural importance to Westgate for display in the museum. Percota applies a very liberal standard to what qualifies as cultural importance, but it's safe to assume that any object whose display will increase the prestige of the museum and Westgate itself certainly qualifies. Percota does not get along with rival historian Dhauken Tor, who cannot resist attending her every exhibit opening, if only to criticize her interpretive methodology, right down to correcting spelling errors on the museum's display placards with his own pen. Before opening the museum, Percota was a sponsor of the Clockwork Cathedral, where she was a friend and classmate of Reginald Vancaskerkin. The two have remained friends (and occasional lovers) for decades.

Saphira

CG | FEMALE | HUMAN | CLERIC | 10

The vivacious Saphira is the high priestess of Cayden's Hall, in the Ascendant Court. Known to her congregants as the Lady of Intemperance or simply as "sister," Saphira is a charming, boisterous presence, quick to raise a mug to toast a new friend, eager to drape an arm over their shoulder to goad them into a grand tale or urge them to order another round. In accordance with the tenets of her god, Saphira ensures that Cayden's Hall always remain a safe haven for freedom fighters. An ally of Andoran, Saphira is particularly intrigued by the influx of the Firebrands faction into Absalom in recent years and has exerted significant effort identifying all secret Firebrand cells within the city. She's also a member of the Chamber of Ecclestials, and works diligently to make sure her values impact the governance of the Ascendant Court as much as possible, arguing forcefully against too-harsh restrictions or anything that could be construed as limiting individual freedoms.

She has many ties to Absalom's fey inhabitants, particularly through her long association with a family of brownies she employs to tend to the temple gardens. This has led to at least three private audiences with the dryad queen Iolanthe in the heart of the Grand Holt in Eastgate. Although the convivial Saphira came away from each meeting charmed by Iolanthe's beauty and grace, she also left with a foreboding sense that the dryad queen might not have Absalom's best interests at heart.

The priestess wears the light leather armor of an adventurer, accented with a tabard bearing the holy symbol of Cayden Cailean and a red cotton scarf worn casually around her neck and shoulders. The somewhat vain Varisian woman always makes an effort to look her best, but she's not above employing either tabard or scarf as a makeshift rag to wipe away spills when she has to. She usually wears her long, dark red hair in a braided ponytail that hangs just below her shoulder blades.

Saphira carries an official "Holy Journal" containing sayings of Cayden Cailean, a record of the temple's bar tab, and a list of "honored guests" she allows to eat, drink, or even sleep by the hearth free of charge. She encourages visitors to memorize Cayden's aphorisms, and insists that those she lets become initiates help her by serving drinks, running errands, and cleaning up each morning (Saphira herself usually prefers to sleep in).

Sarielle Avirzaden

CG | FEMALE | ELF | CLERIC | 14

Although the faithful of Calistria are well-known for their mercurial passions, their scathing wits, and their boundless capacity for vengeance both swift and imaginative, not all of her worshippers steep these values in impartiality or cruelty. Sarielle Avirzaden always approached her faith in the Savored Sting with an eye toward compassion, but also with an eye toward never impacting a person's freedom to choose. Her favored method of extracting vengeance on a guilty party is to engineer a situation where they must choose to face their own punishment. Some have criticized this method as her attempt to distance herself from her own sense of cruelty, but she is quick to counter that she always offers opportunity to admit wrongdoing and seek forgiveness. She simply points out the fact that most of those she tracks down and confronts lack the ability to admit their own culpability or wrong-doing and thus force her vengeful justice. Sarielle has been particularly successful at using methods like these when recruiting new members to the church, with Absalom's current high priestess of the faith, Dyrianna, representing one of her crowning achievements. The day her eager protégé outpaced her in the church's rankings was one of Sarielle's proudest moments, and the two clerics remain close friends despite Dyrianna's much more classical and brutal methods of pursuing vengeance.

Lady Sarnia of House Blakros

LE | FEMALE | FETCHLING | PSYCHIC | 13

Lady Sarnia is the eldest daughter of the previous Blakros generation, sister to Hamaria, Dhrami, and Delveris. Knowing her whole life that she was destined to be handed over to the Onyx Alliance as set forth in the Penumbral Accords that had bound her family to the Shadow Plane from the very beginning, Sarnia resolved to live as full a life as possible before she turned 21, when she would be handed over, never to see the lighted world of the Material Plane again. At fifteen, she was already a regular at many of the city's least reputable taverns, and by sixteen she had born a child, Oved, out of wedlock, the result of a dalliance with a half-remembered lothario she'd met in an Ivy District watering hole. For their part, Sarnia's parents and sisters lavished her with love and attention despite her wholehearted embrace of fully living what was sure to be a short life. And then, at the climax of a dark ritual held within the Blakros Museum itself, Lady Sarnia was given over to the Onyx Alliance. She managed to evade the life of abject slavery that had been the fate of so many of her ancestors, instead

positioning herself within the Alliance better than any of her predecessors. She spent almost 15 years cultivating contacts and building her influence in secret before overthrowing the Alliance's leaders in a sudden coup, quietly establishing herself as the leader of a reinvented Onyx Alliance. She has been working diligently for several decades to hatch a catastrophic collapse of the Blakros family that had so easily given her up more than 50 years ago. For years Sarnia's fetchling agents have used portals between the Blakros Museum and Shadow Absalom to rob antiquities from the museum without anyone noticing. Sarnia's campaign reached a crescendo with a direct attack on Blakros family interests during the Pathfinder Society's Grand Convocation of 4712, at which Scion Lady Hamaria and Lady Michellia were honored guests. Delveris's husband, the traitorous Lord Pieter, died in the attack, pleasing Sarnia greatly even if the unstable man had been her most valuable catspaw. Upon re-emerging into public life during this attack, Sarnia saw her only child, Oved, as a grown man almost 50 years of age. Her age distorted by weird time effects on the Shadow Plane, Sarnia still looks youthful and could pass for her son's daughter, if not for the fact that decades of dwelling in shadow have drained her skin of color, transforming her into a a fetchling. She has so far made no overtures to Lord Oved, but her agents inform her he is distant from most of his other relatives and might, like poor, impressionable Lord Pieter, be used as a powerful wedge against them.

Scarin Saloli

CN | FEMALE | HUMAN | WIZARD | 7

Scarin Saloli puts on airs of being a fortune teller from Varisia, and certainly the decor of the traditional Varisian wagon from which she performs her Harrow card readings seems legitimate. Likewise, her colorful attire and complex blue tattoos lend her the airs of being a mysterious Varisian sorcerer who may or may not have been touched by some eldritch power from beyond the ken of mortal minds. In truth, this middle-aged woman was born and raised in Absalom. Her tattoos are real, but her sorcery is not, for her mastery over magic is the result of study, not lineage. Scarin has gone to great lengths to hide the fact that she must study spells from a book to carry on the appearance of a sorcerer, to moderate financial success. Her fortune readings may not be powered by actual visions, but for sheer entertainment value, her shouted curses at those who fail to tip her or the grandiose proclamations of prosperity she unleashes on those who pay well are, at the very least, good for a laugh to those who see through the sham. Scarin's act isn't something she intends to be insulting, but she's had a few run-ins in the past with actual Varisian sorcerers who were either insulted or scandalized by the fact that she was appropriating their traditions for monetary gain. Scarin's response to these situations when they arise has always been the same—loud profanity, and lots of it, until her accusers are either scared off or grow bored.

Scorpion Prince

CE | MALE | WORM THAT WALKS | SORCERER | 11

Among the awful mutations and skittering monsters that haunt the ruins known as Stinger's Scar, none have captured the terrified imaginations of Absalom's youth as surely as the so-called Scorpion Prince. Said to gyre and gambol at the heart of the ruined amusement park, some tales claim the Scorpion Prince to be a faceless man, while others see him as a venomous living storm. Whatever the story, they all share one significant feature—that any scorpion can be the eyes of the Scorpion Prince, and through these eyes he can watch from cracks in the ceiling above your bed. Children who are naughty and whose cries of terror might not work at calling the aid of frustrated parents are said to be the Scorpion Prince's favorite playthings—and the possibility of a torrent of scorpions pouring through those cracks above to form the capering boogeyman at the foot of the bed works wonders at securing a willful child's cooperation. But what most parents don't realize is the fact that the Scorpion Prince is very real, and very much not limited to Stinger's Scar. In truth, the Scorpion Prince is a variant worm that walks, one composed of a swarm of scorpions that once filled a terrarium on display at the Celestial Pleasure Ground before it fell into ruin and became Stinger's Scar. Nandilor Lunis, once the keeper of the terrarium (along with a wide range of other outre methods of torture and torment) was an expatriate from Nidal who ran a popular "terror tour" called "Hometown Horrors," where visitors could marvel at the innovations of dread Nidal. When he fell into his terrarium of scorpions during the earthquake and was stung to death, his consciousness transferred into the swarm and was reborn. As the Scorpion Prince, Nandilor Lunis sees his previous life as a dream and doesn't quite yet realize that the rest of Absalom exists outside of his microcosm of monstrosities in Stinger's Scar, but each time an ignorant parent whispers his tale to a child, the power of the urban legend building around him grows stronger. In time, word of his fame in the haunted minds of Absalom's youths will dawn upon him, and he will indeed scuttle forth to peer through the cracks in the ceiling with a thousand tiny jealous eyes.

Warden Lady Seichya of House Tevineg

LE | FEMALE | HUMAN | CLERIC | 11

All of Absalom knows Lady Seichya as the cruel, calculating high warden of the Brine prison and a major figure in the politics of the Puddles. Relatively few understand her true role as the trademaster of the Salt Cartel, a secretive still-operating slaver operation that culls prisoners from the prison and ships them off to distant ports of call. Seichya is the eldest daughter of Scion Lady Xansippe and Lord Gulv Tevineg, and while she appreciates her father's ambition and political schemes (and particularly her own prominent place in them), her loyalties remain strongly behind her mother.

She's always resented the absence of her father during most of her life, when his diplomatic duties to House Thrune seemed to send him everywhere but the City at the Center of the World. She knows her middle sister, Lady Azoria, is sidling up to their father in an attempt to usurp her as the leader of House Tevineg's future, but Seichya doesn't take her scheming sister seriously, knowing that the family's true fate will flow through their mother's destiny, not that of the arrogant man who abandoned them most of their lives. Seichya has not thought of her youngest sister, Irabel, since she was sent back to the homeland and enrolled in a nunnery dedicated to the Night Queen Eiseth seven years ago. Lady Seichya keeps most of her machinations limited to the Brine and the Salt Cartel, which she rules like a tyrant. She has no rivals within the flooded prison, and very few in the Puddles itself. She has an understanding with Haigen Topkick that keeps a tense détente at play in the district, but even without fear of interference from him, numerous enemies abound. Seichya is never seen without her heavily tattooed Shoanti bodyguard, Urtox, who is in fact a bone devil in disguise. She doesn't trust the Muckruckers or the Starwatch, and sometimes hires adventurers she meets at the Second Labyrinth to hunt down prisoners who have escaped from the Brine, no questions asked.

Lady of Seleenae of House Damaq

| NG | FEMALE | HUMAN | CLERIC | 12 |

Known colloquially as the Crescent Star, Lady Seleenae of House Damaq is one of the three chief priestesses of the House of Seven Faces, Westgate's most prominent temple of Desna. Like her uncle, Scion Lord Kerkis, Lady Seleenae remains focused on matters of family business, and her keen eye for numbers makes her an able chief tax collector of the Sally Gate, where she keeps a sumptuously decorated office and spends most of her days. The middle-aged cleric also owns a controlling interest in the Foreign Coin Exchange, a currency conversion service with stations near all of Absalom's major outer gates and offices on the first floor of the Hall of Commerce, in the Coins.

Lady Seleenae is a great lover of horses, and often takes pleasure rides on her beloved black steed, Nightspear, with her close friend, Zifelez of Gyr. She wears a blue cloak and carries a barbed spear.

Self-Consuming Troll

| CE | MALE | TROLL | UNDEAD | GHOUL | 6 |

Of the attractions on display in Aysepir's Astounded Abyss, the so-called Self-Consuming Troll may be the most grotesque—no small feat for a collection that includes such luminaries as the Living Eye or the Inverted Man! Obsessed with the constant feeding from his own undead flesh, the Self-Consuming Troll remembers nothing of his time before undeath, and unlike most ghouls feels no unnatural hunger for the flesh of anything other than his own body. As such, he is a relatively harmless, if unnerving, display, one presented to tittering audiences with only a bare modicum of barrier in the form of a flimsy silken rope meant more to keep wayward limbs from reaching too close than any real attempt to keep the potentially dangerous creature from breaking out of confinement. The Self-Consuming Troll has often captured the attention of those who rail against the cruelties of displaying such creatures, along with the worry of those who point out that letting a ghoul or a troll—much less a ghoul troll—be unbound in a public place poses a great potential hazard. So far, the additional cost of bribes paid to keep the Self-Consuming Troll on display has not yet eaten into the profits his presence engenders in the Astounded Abyss's coffers, and so the outlandish ouroboros remains one of the show's star attractions to this day.

Sendeli Foxglove

| NG | FEMALE | HUMAN | ARISTOCRAT | 4 |

Sendeli Foxglove made an instant name for herself in the Ivy District just over a decade ago by purchasing and renovating the historic Golden Serpent restaurant. Since moving into the establishment in 4707, she has managed undeniable success, creating one of the neighborhood's most fashionable hangouts almost overnight, thanks in no small part to an innovative menu featuring strange fare (i.e. dead monsters) brought to her by adventurers. Her personal strength is matched by her determination to be the captain of her own destiny. Classically beautiful, the raven-haired Varisian woman takes pains to not rely upon her appearance to eke advantages and staunchly refuses to discuss her life before she arrived in Absalom. Most agree that she must be fleeing from something, but whatever dark secrets may cloud her past, they have so far remained buried. In truth, Sendeli was born in Magnimar—daughter to a wealthy noble family whose regional legacy along Varisia's Lost Coast is now haunted by specters of murder, magic, and suicide. She was raised by her extended family in Korvosa after her parents' untimely deaths, and she moved to Absalom soon after reaching adulthood, eager to put her unpleasant childhood behind her and to start a new life where none knew of the atrocities associated with her name.

Sevana Kinhan

| LG | FEMALE | HUMAN | RANGER | 9 |

The captain of the Wave Riders is usually found in Starwatch Keep or the port at Escadar. She is practical and quick to collaborate in the water, but stiffly tries to act the part of a regal knight on land except in her favorite bars in the Puddles or the flooding section of Westgate. Sevana has overheard drunk sailors mention heavily cloaked figures who move with spastic, jerking steps taking boats to secretly meet with Sea Lord Lerefys off the coast of Escadar, but feels like it would be a betrayal to report this to the Starwatch.

Sheltas

N | MALE | LIZARDFOLK | ORACLE | 8

Sheltas never considered the possibility he'd live with so many humans, much less in one of the largest cities in the world. Despite coming up on the tenth anniversary of his arrival in Absalom, he still marvels at the fact that he's been accepted so openly into the community of Little Lirgen. While the city lights and the haze of so much industry does limit the view of the night sky to a certain extent, Sheltas can still feel the comforting weight of the nocturnal firmament, and has discovered a new cause in this center of urbanity. His skill at crafting beautiful starscape mosaics from shells and gemstone fragments not only keeps him well-employed, but ensures the spread of his own philosophy throughout a growing number of aristocratic households, popular taverns, and many hostels and inns throughout the city. By giving the people of Absalom inspiring starscapes they can view at any time of the day or night, Sheltas knows that the wonders and inspirations that abound in the constellations of the Cosmic Caravan will never be forgotten. Still, he makes a point of going on a month-long summer pilgrimage every year into the wilds of the Isle of Kortos, particularly in the Dunmire, to bask in the unimpeded glory of the night skies. He can often be found in Greenstar Market, either on the hunt for new supplies of colorful shells and stones to add to his collection of tools or seeking new patrons to sell his constellation artwork to. He might approach a capable group of adventurers with a request to keep an eye out for rare gems or shells during their journeys, or might instead present to them a work of art that he asserts one of the characters "must own, for it charts your fate in the Caravan."

Shevala Iorae

Shevala Iorae

N | FEMALE | HUMAN | SORCERER | 8

Shevala is a venture-captain for the Pathfinder Society who works for the Grand Lodge in Absalom. She has dark, deep-set eyes and smooth black hair. Her determination and cunning have gained her renown within the Society, and together with a team of mathematicians, she was the first to gain access to the Spire of Nex in over a thousand years (a tale famously recounted by her in Volume 36 of the *Pathfinder Chronicles*). She now keeps watch over both Absalom and the Tyrant's Grasp from the top of the Spire.

Shevala traces her lineage to the Runelords of Old Thassilon, ancient warlords of her homeland of Varisia. She co-founded the Pathfinder Society's Magnimar Lodge and still coordinates communication between that important outpost and the Grand Lodge, particularly via the efforts of Venture-Captain Sheila Heidmarch and field agent Kellari Deverin, two of her oldest friends.

Shristi Melipdra

LG | MALE | HUMAN | MONK | 7

Before coming to Absalom, Shristi Melipdra and his sister Rashmivati were renowned martial arts champions from the island nation of Jalmeray. Both swiftly rose through the ranks of their respective House of Perfection, Shristi focusing his studies on the disciplines of the Monastery of Untwisting Iron. After years of training, the two siblings finally faced each other in the Challenge of Sky and Heaven tournament, with Shristi emerging as the winner only after a last-second accident stole the victory from his sister. The two traveled throughout Avistan in an adventuring career that spanned two decades. Rashmivati grew to love architecture and exploration, eventually joining the Pathfinder Society, contributing several of the pair's adventures to the *Pathfinder Chronicles*. Affiliation with the Society brought them to Absalom soon enough, specifically to the Foreign Quarter, where Shristi finally felt at home for the first time since leaving Jalmeray. His martial prowess and ardent belief in justice soon led him to join the Sleepless Suns, where he rose in rank swiftly due to his penchant for non-violent resolutions and his aptitude at arresting criminals who won't surrender quietly. A few years later, when Rashmivati announced her intention to return to the Impossible Kingdom to establish a new Pathfinder lodge, Shristi chose, after so many years together, to stay behind.

Now nearly 60 years old, Shristi has fully embraced the life he built for himself among the guards of Absalom. His skill and dedication have earned him a sterling reputation for consistently avoiding serious injury to Absalom's citizens, even when forced to intervene in violent situations. Two years ago, he assumed leadership of the Sleepless Suns after the retirement of his predecessor, Impallon the Salt-Rooted. Shristi is compassionate and empathetic to others seeking to earn a place for themselves within the city, but he has no tolerance for cruelty or predation from either the city folk or his own officers.

Shund

LN | FEMALE | DWARF | FIGHTER | 7

Shund serves as one of the orderlies at Metringer Sanitarium, a job that fell into her lap when a friend of a friend recommended her to the Sanitarium's administrator, Flevvid Grummlin, after the events of a particularly violent patient uprising left the establishment woefully understaffed. Of all the new hires brought into the Sanitarium at that time, only Shund remains, stoic and staunch as ever. Her no-nonsense attitude and ability to retain her composure even during the most unexpected outbursts has lent stability to the orderlies

and, more than once, helped contain more recent potential outbreaks of violence swiftly and efficiently. She knows that Flevvid's engaged in a wide range of secret projects and suspects Vernus is pursuing his own hidden agenda as well, but as long as she's paid regularly she's always minded her own business. Further, in Shund's dispassionate eyes, those who wind up as patients in Metringer can serve science best by providing keener intellects with research materials—or at least, that's been her thinking for the bulk of her time at the Sanitarium. Recently, though, a new addition to the Sanitarium challenged her stance. Marissa Guile was a woman she knew from her time before she worked here, and when the journalist approached Shund with several probing and inflammatory questions about life inside of the Sanitarium, the dwarven orderly was initially frustrated and annoyed, and rebuffed her one-time friend. But then, when she discovered Marissa Guile had become a patient in the Sanitarium, and Flevvid expressly forbade Shund from attending to her in any way, the dwarf could no longer suppress her suspicions. Now, she does her best to remain at her post, but increasingly sees herself in the role as a protector of those who've been placed in the Sanitarium rather than a protector of the Sanitarium itself, a clash of dedication that has caused an increasing amount of mental distress that she's fighting to contain and hide—for fear that she might herself be made Metringer's latest involuntary guest.

Sindoi of the Thousand Poems

LN | MALE | HUMAN | POET | 19

The ancient Sindoi of the Thousand Poems professes to worship all the gods and none of them. Absalom tradition dictates that a non-religious easterner sits atop the Ascendant Court's provincial council, with Sindoi the latest in an uninterrupted line dating back to the visit of the Maharajah Khiben-Sald in the Age of Independence. The Vudrani mystic became nomarch of Absalom's influential Chamber of Ecclestials 22 years after the death of Aroden, as the chaotic first decades of what would come to be known as the Age of Lost Omens threw Absalom's political and religious institutions into tumult. Sindoi returned order and kinship to the district, and the relative harmony of Sindoi's first two decades of leadership strengthened the Ascendant Court, giving the city inspiration to pull itself from treachery and infighting. Sindoi's guidance, patience, and wisdom thus became a template for a generation of Absalom's pontiffs, politicians, and nobles.

Yet the common people love Sindoi not for his politics, but his poems. The old man issues a new poem early once every month, at a rate of not quite a dozen publications a year. A collection of ascetic young scribes follows his every footstep and records his every utterance. These students, usually poets in their own right and not infrequently the children of nobles or influential merchants who follow Sindoi against the wishes of their parents, personally inscribe each of Sindoi's new poems upon folded cards. They then hand deliver copies of these cards to every member of Absalom's Grand Council, to the scion lords of the city's noble houses, and to the high priests or priestesses of every temple or shrine in the city. Sindoi's new poems usually appear the following day in Absalom's broadsheets, with collections periodically showing up in unauthorized pamphlets and chapbooks rapidly ground out of the printing presses of unscrupulous Scriveners' Square publishers and distributed throughout the city and to the far ports of the Inner Sea and beyond.

Sindoi's poems vary in form and style, but usually are no more than a handful of verses focused on a single theme. His favorite motifs are courage, conviction, inner spirit, ambition tempered by the wisdom of experience, the routes to leadership and its unanticipated responsibilities and costs—and the *Starstone*.

Sindoi's poems regarding the latter describe the divinity-granting crystal and the Starstone Cathedral interior with vision and lyrical beauty—to say nothing of consistency over nine decades of output—that seem inspired not just by imagination, but by personal observation and experience. Sindoi makes no definitive statements regarding his vision and his interest in the gemstone artifact, claiming that its prevalence in his work is due only to its importance as a symbol representing Absalom itself. It is thus a symbol of his own dedication and his love for the city and its people.

Sindoi's name has remained a mystery throughout his entire tenure in the Chamber of Ecclestials. Many of his poems (including some of the earliest) are missing, but collectors have assembled more than 900, including the first written in 4628 AR and the most recent, written only three months ago. The entire city awaits his latest creation, and nervously wonders what will happen when Sindoi issues his thousandth poem. The wise old mystic answers all inquiries about it with a wry grin, hinting that he will one day answer their questions with a final poem that will make all of his creative work and the political effort of all these decades make perfect sense. But not today.

Skirma Toadlicker

CN | FEMALE | GOBLIN | EXPLORER | 7

The celebrated goblin trader Skirma Toadlicker first came to Absalom from distant Varisia years ago in the company of the Sczarni merchant Guaril Karela. The two had collaborated on a swath of semi-criminal smuggling schemes in Magnimar and Korvosa, and reasoned that a similar partnership would prove profitable in the City at the Center of the World. Skirma—a native of the Licktoad Tribe of Varisia's Brinestump Marsh—had already traveled widely up and down the northwest coast of Avistan (and once even to the broken isles of Azlant), but the prospect of visiting Absalom captivated Skirma's imagination and ambition. Shortly after arriving, Skirma established the Five-Fire Pavilions in an abandoned block of the

Foreign Quarter heavily damaged by an attack by black dragons on the nearby Pathfinder Society Grand Lodge a decade ago. Hoping to provide a sanctuary for unloved and unappreciated "monsters" living in the city, Skirma repurposed the Five-Fire Pavilions to give her fellow outcasts a more welcoming greeting than she received when first coming to Absalom with Guaril. Managing the establishment now takes up a significant majority of her time, leaving little energy or interest to work with Karela on some of his more legally questionable schemes. Now and then, Skirma visits her old friend at his Pickled Imp pawn shop in the Dock District to reminisce about old times and dream about greater plans they know they are unlikely to ever attempt, but to date her largest involvement in Karela's plans has been allowing his Crowsworn criminal guild to use the Five-Fire Pavilions as a Foreign Quarter safehouse. Friendly, funny, and fiercely loyal to her friends, Skirma Toadlicker makes for an excellent proprietor. She has very light green skin and favors expensive human wigs to accentuate her femininity. She always carries a pouch stuffed with small white toads who seem to croak at the most inopportune times. Toadlicker consumes the creatures like candy, leaving her in a near-constant state of low-key psychedelic euphoria. She offers the critters freely to guests, warning that the effect is "probably" much stronger on those who have not been consuming the toads their whole lives. Several goblins resident in the Foreign Quarter have taken to calling Skirma Absalom's "Goblin Queen" following the recent arrival of "King" Zusgut in the Puddles. Zusgut himself has sent Skirma several formal invitations to dine with him at a banquet consisting of a freshly baked litter of puppies—a time-honored first step in the elaborate mating rituals of goblin aristocracy. Like many of her Foreign Quarter brethren, Skirma Toadlicker considers herself more civilized than the poor wretches of the Goblin King's Court, and she has thus far ignored Zusgut's increasingly desperate entreaties to share a meal.

Slithering Snare

| CG | FEMALE | VINE LESHY | ROGUE | 2 |

Despite her brash, youthful demeanor, the leshy known as Slithering Snare has lived in the Ivy District more than 350 years. Known these days as an active (and somewhat destructive) member of the Brattlebunch leshy gang who frequently gets herself in trouble while attempting to vex the gang's many enemies, the playful and energetic vine leshy has been watching and listening to affairs in Absalom for longer than most of its inhabitants have been alive. She joined the Brattlebunch out of boredom, and can't understand the camaraderie felt by most of the other members. These leshys, almost uniformly newborn or newly arrived, cling to each other out of fear of the loud, cosmopolitan world they find themselves inhabiting. With centuries of city living behind her, Slithering Snare feels no such isolation. She truly loves Absalom, cobblestone boulevards and crumbling tenements included. Sure, her chaotic pranks mess things up every once in a while, but that only serves to keep things interesting.

When not frantically causing trouble, Slithering Snare enjoys relaxing. One of her favorite spots to stretch and soak in the sun is the grounds of the North Song-Wind School, an outpost of Garund's famous Magaambya Academy. The land within the Foreign Quarter school is deeply harmonized with nature, and is especially restorative to nature spirits like leshys. Recently while at the school Slithering Snare made the acquaintance of the instructor Dorakotho, and the two became swift friends.

Sindoi of the Thousand Poems

Brattlebunch founder Tumult Flower-Flourish knows none of this about Slithering Snare, thinking her simply another addle-minded Ivy District dilettante. Tumult appreciates Snare's knack for chaos, and always assigns her to the gang's most important missions. Snare has in turn been peppering Tumult with seemingly innocent questions about the goings on in the inner chambers of the Grand Holt. She masks her questions in amazement and feigned naivete, but they are designed to probe for information about the plans of the Circle of Stones. Slithering Snare believes that Iolanthe has one of Starstone Isle's missing *aeon orbs*, artifacts of vast generative power brought to Kortos in Aroden's era to bring life to the island. The *orb* near the north coast town of Willowsedge vanished mysteriously several years ago, at about the same time the Grand Holt celebrated an unprecedented growth spurt that claimed several city blocks. Tumult's answers to her questions have all but confirmed Snare's suspicions. Now she just needs to find someone—perhaps a group of adventurers—who can help her find a way into the giant tree so she can know for certain.

Sorinna Westyr

| N | FEMALE | OREAD | CLERIC | 10 |

Sorinna recently became the Pathfinder Society's master of spells upon the death of her predecessor, the cantankerous wizard Aram Zey, who sacrificed himself to protect the inhabitants of an unstable demiplane. As leader of the Grand Lodge's School of Spells, Westyr is responsible for teaching young Pathfinders the rudiments of spellcraft (learning, casting, and creating spells) as well as the instruction of magical lore and theory in general, specific tactics and strategies for overcoming magical foes, and the best ways to avoid or recover from magical afflictions. Westyr grew up a human and was trained in the finest magical academies of northern Garund. She disappeared while conducting a magical experiment recently, returning with a new rock-like form as an oread, a geniekin creature of elemental earth. Westyr is fascinated by her transformation, which distracts her from her personal studies into the discovery of new types of *aeon stones* and the development of new magical *wayfinders*. Sorinna has assembled an impressive collection of *aeon stones* in her decades of study, but she is always on the lookout for more. Merchants throughout Absalom know this, and freely admit that she will pay more for the rare items than anyone else in the city. She worships Nethys; she can frequently be found in prayer at the Tower of Twin Truths, in the Ascendant Court.

Symo of Wynsal

| LG | MALE | HALF-ORC | INVENTOR | 11 |

Symo of Wynsal commands the siege emplacements atop Azlanti Keep as first siege gear of the First Guard. He only recently assumed the rank, after the previous first gear, Chun Hye-Seung, was herself promoted to the rank of commander militant. Before being conscripted into the First Guard, Symo was one of the most promising graduates of Absalom's Clockwork Cathedral, an honor that brought him to Chun's attention. Despite the fact that he had already settled down to manage the Windarium clockwork shop in Westgate, the army's first gear saw in Symo an obsession with precision and meticulous crafting skill that would make him an ideal second gear, in charge of several important secret technological military projects she believed to be critical to the city's defense. In particular, Chun Hye-Seung assigned Symo to her most important project, a cadre of twelve "gearwork guards" designed to patrol and protect Absalom without the need to put mortal lives in danger. Symo leapt at the chance to take the idea from concept to execution, and in the last half-decade he has very nearly completed the project.

Then, following the Black Echelon Uprising three years ago, Chun Hye-Seung was made commander militant, and Symo of Gyr became first gear of Azlanti Keep. Today, in addition to keeping up with his superior's endless special projects, Symo is in charge of the entire keep's defenses. He spends his days inspecting siege weapons and battle platforms and his nights perfecting the gearwork guards, which leaves little time for the Windarium or for his husband Mirtion, who has been forced to bear most of the shop's weight himself. Symo and Mirtion's marriage is strong enough to withstand the stresses of the new normal, but the family business might not be so lucky. In recent months, the pair has been forced to hire additional hands to keep things moving. It isn't working, and neither partner is willing to communicate honestly with the other about the increasingly dire situation. Although Symo remains as skilled and brilliant as ever, he's grown increasingly gruff and dour over the course of the last year, as he's begun to blame his military career for his troubles at home. He prefers to talk little and let his work speak for itself.

Recently, while visiting the Clockwork Cathedral at the invitation of a beloved former instructor, Symo found himself alone in the company of the Assembler, the enigmatic construct who built the Cathedral and who is thought to still dwell within it. Symo had met the Assembler years ago as an aspiring student, and was so inspired by the occurrence that it fueled his studies and pushed him to pursue excellence and precision with even greater focus. That such an important figure should take an interest in him signified to young Symo that he must be truly special—a figure of great potential and importance. Once again in the presence of the Assembler as an adult, Symo realized that the first encounter had implanted itself even deeper in his mind than he had remembered, for in the serene face of the Assembler Symo saw his own gearwork guard design, and he realized he had created his secret squad of clockwork soldiers in the Assembler's image.

What happened next Symo has told no one, not even Mirtion. The Assembler provided Symo with thirteen small clockwork spheres the size of a peach, intended as an upgrade to his gearwork guards courtesy of Symo's proud alma mater. Symo later opened the heads of his creations with skepticism, only to discover a hidden

recess within each that he did not remember designing. A recess exactly the size of the Assembler's spheres. Symo's curiosity and pride overcame his usually strong sense of caution, and he placed twelve of the spheres in his clockwork guards, awaiting something spectacular to occur. Instead, nothing appeared to happen. In the meantime, Symo's frustration at the perceived failure grows, and he's become even more surly than usual as he frets about the unknown motivation of the Assembler, and grows increasingly worried about the purpose of the thirteenth sphere. Disturbingly, he's also endured a persistent headache every day since he implanted the other twelve spheres, and he's pinpointed the source of the pain to the exact location in his head that he found the unexpected recesses in the heads of his gearwork guards.

Lord Synarr Daidalos

| LE | MALE | HUMAN | WIZARD | 19 |

A noble and a powerful wizard who keeps his background close to his chest, Lord Synarr appeared in Absalom overnight and made himself a fixture of society almost as quickly. He dwells in the impressive Starspine Manor, in the Ivy District, a towering estate surrounded by an acre of beautiful gardens. Having bought his popularity with a lavish masquerade ball, "Daidalos the Magnificent" keeps Absalom's socialites waiting with bated breath to see how his next extravaganza will top his first.

In addition to conducting public displays of his craft on a variety of Ivy District stages, Lord Synarr often appears at some of Absalom's most noted tailors and haberdasheries, particularly those along Sundown Street where he has a series of open accounts with some of the city's most fashionable designers. His favorite color is gold, and is never seen without the color displayed somewhere prominently in his costume. Of late he has become great friends with Lady Dhrami Blakros, kindling her artistic ambitions and regularly entertaining her at some of the Ivy District and Wise Quarter's most popular and exclusive bistros. Association with the powerful Blakros family has only increased Lord Synarr's political influence, as well as the city's infatuation with him.

Ta Kohmar

| N | FEMALE | DWARF | MERCHANT | 8 |

Ta Kohmar inherited her family's business, Shoreline's Kohmar Paper Mill, upon the death of her father 40 years ago. Since then, she's proven time and time again that she is one of the village's keenest merchants. Her life of hard work shows in her tousled copper braids, her perpetually soot-stained cheeks, and the well-worn creases on her sweaty brow. Though she can be stern when she gets down to business, Ta cares about her mill and her workers as much as anything in the world. When she does take a break from her work, she can be found in her modest cottage with her seven cats, in one of Shoreline's taverns, browsing through stationary in Absalom's markets, or making regular deliveries to the publishers of Scriveners' Square.

Tall Hannah

| NE | FEMALE | HUMAN | ROGUE | 2 |

Tall Hannah is a child pickpocket working for Dod's Filchers, primarily in the Coins and in the Dock District, though occasionally at markets like the Grand Bazaar or the Five-Fire Pavilions, in the Foreign Quarter. She is one of three Hannahs in the gang, and while she is not particularly tall in an objective sense, her relative height is the one feature that most distinguishes her from the others, and the nickname stuck.

Tartushi

| N | FEMALE | HUMAN | CLERIC | 9 |

Nature is present in all places of the world, even in the heart of its greatest cities—a perhaps oft-forgotten truth that Tartushi often (and always patiently) reminds those who profess surprise to find a cleric of Gozreh dwelling within the heart of Absalom's bustling Dock District. Tartushi herself is a bit more open-minded than the stereotypical Gozren priest, as befits her position as high-priestess of Absalom's official temple of Gozreh. She works closely with several druids who toil to keep the tide pools of the temple unpolluted and pristine from the day-to-day bustle of a busy city waterfront, with a large part of her day taken up serving as a sort of go-between for the druids and the dockworkers, sailors, merchants, and travelers. Without her patience and constant presence, conflict would have certainly broken out countless times between these groups, but she carries on a long and proud tradition of Gozren priests in Absalom who are devoted to keeping the city folk aware that without nature, their lives would be impossible. At the same time, she works to remind druids that they are themselves a part of society, and that their insights into the natural world are valuable additions to how the rest of civilization can handle their place in the natural order. Overall, the job is an exhaustive one, but with her wife's constant support, Tartushi is more than up to the challenge of facing her tasks every day. She acknowledges that Lady Evigail and the Children of Spring inhabiting Evergreen Park have the blessing of Gozreh, but she does not trust Evigail's personal ambitions and keeps a wide distance from the cult, politely implying to her parishioners that they should attempt to do likewise.

Tavorae Falsebane

| LG | MALE | HUMAN | CLERIC | 15 |

Following the retirement of Genedair the Faithful, the extremely aged high priest of Iomedae, Absalom's clergy of the Inheritor gathered in council for two weeks as they squabbled to name a successor. With victory over the city's enemies in the Fiendflesh Siege and what seemed like the dawn of a new, much more orderly regime after the ascent of Acting Primarch Wynsal Starborn, the mood of the church lurched toward reform. When the elderly power brokers and senior priests failed to achieve consensus with one of their traditionalist candidates, the synod settled on Tavorae Falsebane as their new high

priest, even if many of them held significant reservations. Falsebane's youth as a slave in Molthune endeared him to those who sought a leader who would show sympathy to Absalom's poor and disadvantaged, while his battle prowess and critical role in the city's defense against the Black Echelon Uprising mollified factions seeking a martially-minded patriarch.

Seeing his election as a true opportunity for reform, Falsebane seeks to strip the church of some of its pretension and connections to power and political influence, which he views as corrosive. He is not particularly active in the Chamber of Ecclestials on which he sits, much to the consternation of some of the church's elder priests. With a few years of his reign behind them, some of those who once supported him question if Falsebane is dedicated enough to the traditions that have maintained the faith for generations, and they fear that their new leader's focus on inner development will rob the church of the significant outer gains it has accomplished since the death of Aroden. Yeena Quoros, beloved by all factions in the church, serves as a sort of polite interlocutor between Falsebane and some of the more skeptical traditionalists he needs on his side to effectively lead the religion in Absalom. In part thanks to her support and counsel, Falsebane puts forth a placid, beatific demeanor, urging his flock to hone their inner souls just as sharply as their blades.

Tergul

| CN | MALE | HUMAN | GLADIATOR | 11 |

Tergul had his taste of fame, and in the end, decided it wasn't for him. For many months, he was one of the Irorium's most beloved or hated (depending on whom you asked) gladiators, a man renowned for his skill with curve-bladed swords of all types. He was on the cusp of earning his first gold sword at the Irorium when he had an epiphany—he'd grown more worried about his public persona as a gladiator and the pursuit of "tokens and baubles" than he had about the fact that each time he entered the ring, he was placing his life or the life of another in danger. He left the Irorium on the night of a very public and very well-advertised fight, forever burning his bridges with a wide range of bookies, publicists, priests, and even more than a few friends. Those accomplices who remained his friends after he gave up the fighting life, Tergul realized, were always his only true friends. After spending a few years laying low, letting his reputation fade, Tergul found a new calling in a much less public manner. He now runs the Nailfists, the Precipice Quarter gang that controls Absalom's most well-known entrance to the Darklands. He still gets the periodic rush of adrenaline in a fight, but now it means something—standing against monsters attempting to invade from the caverns below or defending a well-paying customer on a journey through the tunnels is a much purer form of service, after all. Tergul still keeps the pins he accumulated for his fights in the Irorium, but not out of pride. They serve only as a reminder that public accolades and fame are hollow, and bring with them hollow friendships and hollow victories.

Tern on the Wind

| CG | FEMALE | ELF | CLERIC | 8 |

Tern on the Wind came to Absalom several years ago after making an impressive pilgrimage all the way south from the frozen reaches of the Crown of the World. Following visions granted her by Findeladlara, the elven goddess of art, Tern on the Wind became a "Twilight Speaker"—a snowcaster elf who seeks to both spread her culture and beliefs beyond their ancestral homelands but also to learn from others' societies. In Absalom, Tern on the Wind found the perfect melting pot of cultures to bask in, but was also appalled at the conditions its poor and desperate were forced to endure. While she still seeks to spread word of her peoples' beliefs and to learn all she can from others, her primary goal now is to provide aid, shelter, and food to those who are in need. Her combination shrine and soup kitchen, the Guiding Hand, remains a bastion of art and beauty in a run-down neighborhood, for Tern on the Wind also understands that the homeless and desperate also deserve, or even need, objects of beauty and inspiration in their lives. Over the years, Tern on the Wind has found her greatest challenge is in dealing with those who would take advantage of what she offers—she tries her best to lead by example, but she's been forced to admit to herself in recent months that, perhaps, the more "diseased" parts of Absalom's culture may have infected her, as she has noticed her patience has been thinner than ever when interacting with anyone who abuses generosity or seeks to disrupt the efficiency of her ministrations through bureaucratic meddling. To combat this, she's been keeping an eye out for other worshippers of deities associated with generosity or art, in hopes of recruiting them to deal with these disruptions (be it driving off thieves or handling troublemaking politicians) so she can focus on her mission.

Terrus Von

| NE | MALE | HUMAN | CLERIC | 5 |

Terrus Von is the head cleric of the small shrine of Norgorber in the worship chamber hidden beneath the Black Mask costume shop, in the Ascendant Court. When not orchestrating dark rituals in the dank basement, the burly priest poses as a dim-witted, mute clerk who follows the every order of the shop's proprietor, Marli. Terrus Von is quite good at his clerical duties, but he's a terrible liar. High Priest Jonis Flakfatter, at the Blackfinger Temple, has ordered Von never to speak a word to common customers of the Black Mask. Marli (a Flakfatter favorite) somewhat abuses the situation, playfully berating the gruff priest and mocking him in front of customers. He burns with desire for revenge, and if befriended or plied with the proper alcohol, Von might be easily persuaded to bring a dangerous-seeming stranger into his elaborate plans for deadly revenge upon his hated "boss."

Tevis Severus

NG | MALE | STUDENT | 0

The precocious son of Finwick Severus, young Tevis possesses an intellect surpassing that of most adults despite the fact that he is only 7 years old. Tevis's mother died in the Fiendflesh Siege, cut down in the streets by an undead Black Echelon operative. Consumed with his duties as a lay cleric in the Ivy District's Vault of Abadar and unwilling to leave his beloved son's education to servants, Finwick pulled several political favors and transferred a considerable endowment to get Tevis enrolled early in Eastgate's Tallavont School, certain that he will thrive there like so many had before him, convinced the boy is destined to one day lead a great nation—perhaps even Absalom itself! Tevis himself has no such ambitions, but he loves learning and has taken to his new studies with enthusiasm. While his father seldom visits the Tallavont dormitories, Tevis nonetheless receives a great deal of family attention from his beloved uncle, Ferridan, Absalom's Diplomatic Minister. Ferridan Severus sees in Tevis a reflection of himself. Ferridan has no children of his own (and thinks the boy ill served by his work-obsessed younger brother), and makes a point to visit Tevis at least once a week when his own duties see him in Absalom. Unfortunately, some of the city's enemies have noticed the personal connection, and have begun to target young Tevis for a potential kidnapping to use as a lever to influence Absalom's diplomatic priorities.

Thaddeus Barabus

CG | MALE | HUMAN | SWASHBUCKLER | 7

Thaddeus was born far from Absalom, in the pirate town of Riddleport. As such, the sea has been in his blood his entire life, but seeing the violence and betrayal play out daily on the streets and in the harbor of his notorious hometown, Thaddeus also quickly developed a strong sense of individualism and outrage at how those in power could abuse the laws to simultaneously remain in power while abusing those they should be protecting. After dozens of failed attempts to stand up to the bullies and bruisers of Riddleport, he also came to value the concept of companionship, for Thaddeus was never what one would call a muscular lad. He focused his training on quickness and bravado, figuring that if his enemies couldn't hit him and if he could disarm them with his quick wit and humiliating jabs meant to undermine confidence, he could win fights without risking a beating. In time, he grew tired of Riddleport and left the town on a ship stolen from one of that city's minor pirate lords, accompanied by a loyal crew composed of sailors who'd had enough of overbearing captains. He spent months in hiding in a hidden cove on a remote island off the coast of Ravounel soon after its revolution, during which he and his crew retrofitted the stolen ship and renamed it the *Lucky Devil*. While Thaddeus missed the revolution in Ravounel, he made Kintargo his home port for a year and aided the city in establishing accords with Vyre, Magnimar, and several aquatic elf settlements before heading down to Absalom to aid in spreading the word of the Firebrands—his work at liberating slaves and fighting piracy in the Obari Ocean has already made a name for his crew and his ship. He's called Absalom his home port for the past few years, and has used his knack at diplomacy with aquatic cultures to help bolster the Docks from below as well as from within. Rumors abound that the *Lucky Devil's* figurehead, which depicts a smirking erinys devil holding two starknives crossed over her chest, is in fact an unusual construct that can imbue the crew with luck, but since most of these rumors are spread by members of the ship's crew, surely the veracity is suspect at best.

Emir Thalzar Gaatan

N | MALE | HUMAN | FIGHTER | 13

Now Absalom's foremost Qadiran diplomat, Emir Thalzar Gaatan was once the high commander of the imperial forces of the Padishah Empire of Kelesh, far to the east of the Inner Sea. As the director of the imperial army's intelligence operations, Gaatan developed a great deal of military expertise putting down three significant insurrections in the homeland, including a slave revolt triggered by the now-deceased Pathfinder Society Venture-Captain Adril Hestram. His service to the Emperor resulted in a prestigious appointment as a personal advisor to the Satrap of Qadira, helping to direct the spearhead of Qadira's international intelligence efforts targeting the nations of the Inner Sea region. After half a decade, during which he made the acquaintance of and married Trade Prince Aaqir al'Hakam, Emir Thalzar Gaatan began to realize that since so many of Kelesh's operations ran through Absalom, he was better off running things from there rather than from the relative isolation of Satrap Xerbastes's court. Fifteen years ago, the death of Qadira's Grand Ambassador to Absalom afforded Gaatan the perfect opportunity. At his suggestion, Qadira's satrap assigned him to the vacant post, providing the perfect excuse from him to move his operation there, gaining an honorary seat on the city's Grand Council as an added bonus. Gaatan and al'Hakam swiftly decamped to Absalom, where they soon established themselves among the city's aristocratic elite. In Absalom, Gaatan spends most of his time and energies advancing the political interests of Qadira, and is a significant nexus for that nation's espionage activities not just in Absalom, but throughout the Inner Sea. He makes a show of public friendship toward fellow Grand Ambassadors Augustyn Naran of Andoran, Dremdhet Salhar of Osirion, and Tolara Alverteen of Taldor, but privately loathes all of them. He adores his husband and his adopted daughters Alinzia, Vanissi, and Tikria, putting loyalty to family even higher than loyalty to his beloved empire. Gaatan's greatest personal pleasure is the peace provided by flying kites in seclusion. He can often be found stringing out his latest kite in the breeze of one of Absalom's parks, and is a frequent (if somewhat demanding) customer at Vittar Corusec's Silk Castle kite shop, in the Wise Quarter.

Thavin Shuln

| NE | MALE | HALF-ORC | LABOR MONGER | 4 |

Nearly seven feet tall with arms as thick as greatclubs, looming Thavun Shuln looks every bit like the burly laborers his business, Shuln's Servitors, hires out. Operating out of one of the remaining stalls of the ruined Misery Row, in the Coins, the business offers competitive prices for day laborers, uniquely issuing annual service contracts that border on slavery. Shuln specializes in dim-witted brutes, and shows little concern for his employees, or their fate after a contract is signed. Despite his serious and occasionally threatening facade, Shuln is quite gassy, with a burping problem that often undercuts his tough-guy nature.

Theodora "Tea" Signe

| CN | FEMALE | DHAMPIR | TAILOR | 10 |

While her fellow high-demand tailors Al-Amir and Ambroz focus their efforts to push fashion into new and unexpected realms, Theodora instead looks to the past. Absalom itself is thousands of years old, but even it pales in comparison to the legacies of nations even older. By looking to ancient societies (like Azlant, Jistka, Shory, and Thassilon), or to the storied histories of contemporary societies that have existed even longer than Absalom (such as Nidal, Kelesh, Nex, or Osirion), Theodora seeks what she calls "fashion resurrections." By combining styles from the ancient past with modern sensibilities, her designs manage something that neither of her Sundown Street rivals can offer—a sense of nostalgia and historical weight. Theodora keeps hours opposite those of her competitors, opening her shop at sundown and closing at sunrise, only in part as a nod to her vampiric ancestry. Many of her most devoted customers are those who cannot spare the time to shop during the day, or prefer the cover of night to do their business, and a not-inconsiderable amount of her customers are members of criminal organizations or sinister religions. Theodora only asks that those who visit keep their politics and faith at the door, and for the most part, those customers respect her rules. Those who don't soon learn the truth about Theodora's preference to operate after dark, for it is during these hours that the caligni assassins she employs as hidden guards take action.

Theodric Alverteen

| N | MALE | HUMAN | RANGER | 13 |

A renowned nobleman from the Taldan capital of Oppara, Theodric Alverteen disappeared from the social spotlight roughly around 4702 AR. After his disappearance, the middle-aged noble was spotted in locations across Golarion, from the jungles of the Mwangi Expanse to the frozen tundra of the Lands of the Linnorm Kings. During these adventures, Theodric took up the hobby of hunting massive beasts and exotic monsters from the wilds of the world. A true child of Taldan imperialism, Theodric Alverteen was rarely seen without a large entourage of servants attending to his many eccentric needs. In 4712, Theodric retired to Absalom to show off his stuffed and captured creatures and to bask in the rewards of his fame. What many considered to be his eccentricities were in fact the early signs of dementia, and Theodric now lives in Magpie Manor. His daughter, Tolara, is the Grand Ambassador of Taldor. She worries about him and sometimes visits him at the retirement home. Enemies have rightly identified this as a weakness, but Tolara is blind to the danger presented by her compassion for her aging, ailing father.

Thulraga

| NE | FEMALE | GHOUL | CLERIC | 17 |

Thulraga is the cruel, undead high priestess of Urgathoa in the Precipice Quarter's Boneglutton Pit. While the pit is a relatively recent (as Absalom's history is concerned) addition to the neighborhood, Thulraga herself is among the oldest inhabitants of the city. Even in her life so many thousands of years ago as a human, Thulraga was a devotee of Urgathoa, although in those early years she dwelt in the sewers of Vyre far to the west. In between her transformation into a ghoul in that so-called City of Masks and her arrival in Absalom as a powerful priestess of the goddess of undeath, Thulraga has traveled under cover of storm and night across (and more often than not, below) the lands of the Inner Sea and has recruited a truly eclectic and diverse set of ghoulish worshippers of Urgathoa drawn from a wide range of customs across the continent. Today, this cast of creatures resides with her in Boneglutton Pit, their existence largely unguessed at as of yet by those who dwell above. Thulraga prefers to dwell in the shadow of living societies, unseen and unknown—so that she may dine upon their corpses from below their graves without fear of interruption. She knows that it's but a matter of time before yet another band of adventurers might take offense at her presence, but she's grown fond of her new home in Absalom and has increasingly turned her eyes toward the city's heart, where the *Starstone* and its storied test beckons. In the meantime, she's slowly been making contact with other potent undead denizens of Absalom's darker side, and her burgeoning alliance with the lich Pasharran could soon bloom into a cadaverous threat that expands well beyond the crumbling borders of the Precipice Quarter.

Tia Yi Gan

| CN | FEMALE | HUMAN | BARD | 13 |

Tia Yi Gan is the enigmatic mistress of script at the White Grotto bard school in the Ivy District, where she teaches students music composition, writing, and visual arts of manifold description. Hearsay suggests that Tia Yi cannot return to her home for fear of being killed by her own family. She enthusiastically teaches the next generation of bards, and seldom leaves the White Grotto. For more than 20 years, her sense of self-preservation has kept her safe in Absalom. During

that time, thanks in no small part to the efforts of Amara Li's Lantern Lodge, in the Petal District, more and more Tians have come to Absalom. As the city's Tian population continues to swell, so do the number of denizens familiar with Tia Yi Gan's reputation as one of the greatest poets of the Dragon Empires.

This year, perhaps due to the rekindling of some dormant vanity, Tia Yi Gan finally accepted the persistent invitation to perform recitations of her newest verses in the parlors of the Lantern Lodge. Tired of White Grotto audiences composed of distracted children and ignorant amateurs, she longs once again for the admiration of her compatriots. They, in turn, have returned her desire with thunderous applause and demands for repeat engagements. Tia Yi Gan fully understands the danger of acceding to their pleas, but she is beginning to remember the benefits of fame, and her want for more of it is finally overwhelming her good sense, much to the notice of old enemies from very far away.

Tiberius Groopert

| N | MALE | HUMAN | WIZARD | 15 |

Tiberius Groopert vanished from his office as a docent at the Arcanamirium seven years ago. Groopert had been a popular instructor in the academy's Patterns and Prediction program, where his obsession with numbers, divination, and arcano-occult interrelationships sometimes seemed to border on conspiracy theory. In 4713, the octogenarian scholar's investigations brought an unusual pulsing gemstone called a *countdown clock* into his possession. A series of ever-changing, flickering magic runes within the gem seemed to count down to some inevitable catastrophe. Unwilling to trust anyone with his suspicions, Groopert threw himself into study, eventually connecting the *countdown clock* to a nihilistic cult known as the Night Heralds. These cultists in turn served a cadre of otherworldly entities known as the Dominion of the Black, unfathomably alien explorers from the Dark Tapestry between the stars. As Groopert fell deeper and deeper into studying these entities, he grew more and more convinced that Absalom itself was at risk of imminent destruction. He took his suspicions directly to Lord Gyr, who promptly had him imprisoned as a dangerous lunatic aboard the Black Whale prison. No less an authority than Second Spell Lord Darchana attempted to divine Groopert's fate, but to no avail. Nearly a decade later, the Arcanamirium's leadership has moved on, but the mystery lingers. Every year another student attempts to learn of Groopert's fate, and it's only a matter of time before one of them is successful. While the dangers predicted by the *countdown clock* have recently come to pass, Tiberius has remained largely ignorant of this development in his prison cell.

Tikria Gaatan

| NE | FEMALE | HUMAN | STUDENT | 0 |

Tikria Gaatan is the youngest adopted daughter of Emir Thalzar Gaatan and Aaqir al'Hakam. She turned 12 this year, and is a student in good standing at Eastgate's Endiron School, where she is also the personal student assistant of the school's headmaster, Tontartigan Dellby. While Master Dellby is dull and boring, the visitors he entertains in his ostentatious office are anything but. In her short time as his assistant, she has met a parade of prominent Absalomians like Lord Yamthar of House Ormuz, Lady Annasendra Varabelle of House Morilla, and (her favorite) Alina Muraabe, head warden and owner of the Absalom Menagerie. Young Tikria enthralls her fathers with stories she overhears during these meetings, with the juiciest morsels finding their way into Thalzar's intelligence reports to the Satrap of Qadira or Aaqir's cutthroat business dealings at the Grand Dance Hall of Kortos. Her favorite activities include visiting the Absalom Menagerie with her father, Aaqir, and flying kites with her father, Thalzar. Both men would do anything—or pay any price—to protect her.

Lord Toiden of House Azari

| LN | MALE | HUMAN | ARISTOCRAT | 10 |

Aged Lord Toiden is the scion lord of House Azari, one of the oldest and proudest noble families in all of Absalom—and also its most likely to go extinct. Descended from some of the original pilgrims who came to study at Aroden's feet in the first decades after the Last Azlanti raised the Isle of Kortos from the Inner Sea, House Azari eventually spawned so many senior clerics and world patriarchs of the Arodenite faith that family business and the church itself became intrinsically linked. After Aroden's death, the wealth and political power of the religion and the family collapsed at the same time, and today it's difficult to tell which side props up the other, or if either are propped up at all. Lord Toiden, thick white beard descending from friendly, rosy cheeks, tries to make the best of a dire situation, but doesn't fool anyone. With mountains of debt and no heirs in the waiting, House Azari will soon collapse, taking what little remains of the faith of Absalom's founder along with it at long last.

Yet even though Aroden is more than a century dead, his church maintains significant political influence in Absalom, despite its lack of wealth or worshippers. Five millennia of symbiosis with Absalom's government left many ancient power structures in place in spite of Aroden's death, some of which don't actually require that Aroden exist to grant duties, responsibilities, and political influence to his remaining clerics. As keeper of the books of Aroden, Lord Toiden leads civic parades through the streets of Absalom during religious celebrations throughout the year, officiates mass rituals (these days attended by very few) at the Irorium, and has a seat on the powerful Chamber of Ecclestials. Two fellow Arodenites (both just as elderly as Toiden) sit on the council, a relic written into the Founding Laws of Absalom to commemorate the city's founding priesthood by granting them three times the representation allocated

to the district's other religions. Toiden's political activities manage to generate some funds, but it's not nearly enough to pay for the family or church's debts and other financial obligations. Twenty years ago, Toiden sold off the last Azari manor and moved the family into St. Solian, the second-largest and third-oldest temple of Aroden remaining in the Ascendant Court (the oldest and largest, on the edge of the Starstone Chasm, now serves as the Embassy of Cheliax). St. Solian, now known colloquially as "Azari Palace," is stuffed with relics and mementos from thousands of years of Aroden's faith, entire churches worth of books, altars, and statuary packed into a single building. Some of these treasures—many of which maintain some vestige of their old magic—bring up questions or dangers that Lord Toiden must turn to adventurers to solve. His fellow nobles—what few remain—urge Toiden to reward some of these agents with noble titles to maintain the family, but until now he has been reluctant to do so.

Trapmaster Tok

LE | MALE | KOBOLD | ALCHEMIST | 7

Yippitok's elder sister, Yiddlepode, assumed rulership of the Sewer Dragon kobold tribe after the abdication of their father, Kibizax. The great old hero had kept the Dragons alive for decades, but the time had come for his children to lead them into the future. Known as Trapmaster Tok for the ingenious defenses he had built to guard their lair, Yippitok looked forward to working with his sister to bring the Sewer Dragons into even greater prominence, but he has begun to lose heart. He has always thought of himself as smarter, stronger, and more capable than his sister, and resents that his father chose her to rule instead of him.

Still, he remains loyal to his family and his brethren. While Yiddlepode concentrates on maintaining the tribal grounds in Absalom's Undercity, Tok serves as the public face of the Sewer Dragons. He has proved far more successful than he or his sister ever hoped possible, as he swiftly attained great public renown following his employment to overhaul the defenses of Morilla Palace, and he has subsequently become much in demand by several noble houses and public institutions willing to pay large sums for him to design snares and traps that protect their homes and valuables. Jaded Absalom has a penchant for novelty, but Yippitok's notoriety is in far larger part due to the genius and efficacy of his traps. While many less-talented artisans and snaremakers speculate about his techniques, few suspect the true secret to his success. Trapmaster Tok tests his unorthodox and cruel contraptions in secret, using as many unwilling test subjects as necessary to ensure proper precision and lethality.

Tolara Alverteen

LN | FEMALE | HUMAN | SPY | 14

Taldor's Grand Ambassador to Absalom, Tolara Alverteen, is a mainstay of upper-class social functions and diplomatic events throughout the city. She inhabits Taldor's ancient seat on Absalom's Low Council beside the Grand Ambassadors of Osirion and Qadira, and oversees public celebration of Taldan civic holidays in the Lion's Square, in the city's Foreign Quarter. Tolara keeps a private office and staff in one of the finer manor houses in the secret Little Oppara neighborhood beneath Eastgate's Blue Tower, where she commands a cadre of fellow operatives of Taldor's Lion Blades intelligence service on a widespread espionage operation centered on Absalom. Tolara and the Lion Blades read every piece of correspondence funneled through the Winged Sandals delivery service operating out of the Blue Tower, then pass along the most useful information back home to Taldor. Tolara is ruthless and efficient. She wears her black hair short, and favors simple tailored shirts and trousers made of expensive materials, accented by a series of fine blue capes she trades out on a daily basis. When not turning on the charm as a public figure or diplomat, she exerts a presence of cold calculation that some view as inhuman. Fiercely loyal to Taldor, she would happily sell out Absalom and all of its inhabitants if she felt it would advance the political interests of her homeland. Alverteen is on good terms with all of Absalom's Taldan families, but limits knowledge of the Blue Tower Lion Blade cell to only a few closely trusted personal allies. Her famous father, Theodric, was a prominent world traveler and big game hunter before retiring to Absalom in 4712. He now lives in Magpie Manor, where Tolara often visits him to attend to his growing needs.

Tontartigan Dellby

N | MALE | HALFLING | EDUCATOR | 3

Stoic, studious, and at times stupendously boring, the aged Tontartigan Dellby is Headmaster of Eastgate's prestigious Endiron School and a pillar of his middle-class community. His wife, Gelda, serves as President of Eastgate's Concerned Residents' Union, and together the pair make for one of the district's most influential power couples. Although they are always affectionate toward one another at public events, both are far too focused on their own careers to have much time for one another when not putting up appearances. They have even less time for their only son, Rance, who fell in with the Children of Spring cult inhabiting Evergreen Park years ago and who avoids his parents in turn in favor of his new, much more attentive family. Tontartigan is 25 years Gelda's senior, with a shock of white hair puffing out over his ears, like a half-ring of towering mountains overlooking the valley of his rapidly increasing pattern baldness. Headmaster Dellby spends most of his time in the opulent office he keeps at the Endiron School, partly because his work keeps him so busy and partly because he regularly entertains powerful nobles with interest in his students, such as Lord Yamthar of House Ormuz, Lady Annasendra Varabelle of House Morilla, and Emir Thalzar Gaatan. Dellby got his start at the Endiron School years ago as an instructor of etiquette, decorum, and social customs, and sometimes

serves as a consultant to some of the wealthiest party hosts in all of Absalom. He has, of late, been seen in the frequent company of the enigmatic Lord Synarr Diadalos, generating a great deal of gossip in Eastgate.

Torail

| CG | MALE | GNOME | CHEF | 6 |

Absalom features a staggering array of restaurants to choose from, and as a result some of the city's chefs feel pressured to bring in exotic recipes or invent dishes of their own in order to compete and carve out a niche in the city's crowded culinary scene. When Sendeli Foxglove offered Torail the job as head chef at the Golden Serpent, the strange little man had already made something of a name for himself as a food critic. The chance to show, rather than tell the world how to offer truly unique meals deeply appealed to the man, and he's prided himself on the fact that he's never once duplicated a menu item, even though the offerings at the Golden Serpent change seasonally. That said, he's found that he's increasingly had to rely upon the work of mercenary adventurers—securing the flesh of krakens and dragons isn't something that just anyone can do!

Torius Vin

| CE | MALE | HUMAN | PIRATE | 9 |

The cruel and effective Torius Vin has been operating as a privateer out of Absalom since sinking three Black Echelon undead ships 3 years ago, during the Fiendflesh Siege. His ship, the *Stargazer*, usually sails from Katapesh, making illicit market runs between that mercantile capital and Absalom every few weeks. In between, Vin fills an extradimensional hold belowdecks with slaves from the markets of Okeno, filtering them through allies in Houses Dureanz and Wachail, and sailing back with a hold full of the finest pickings of Lady Seichya's Salt Cartel operation in the Brine prison. Vin has a soft spot for children and never harms or kills them (a mercy he grants almost no one else he attacks). Instead, he captures "enemy" children and brings them back to Absalom, where his compassion (and interest) evaporates the moment their feet hit the docks. He leaves the children to fend for themselves. Those who survive often end up recruited into urchin gangs like the Dockside Dozen or Dod's Filchers, or find themselves consigned to far more dubious fates.

Torman Iates

| NE | MALE | HUMAN | FIGHTER/ROGUE | 7 |

Nomarch of the Foreign Quarter Council and owner of the Crimson Coin, this canny merchant and trademaster is addicted to the gladiatorial games in the Irorium, in which he once took part. The very much retired Iates is now monumentally obese, and often doesn't feel like climbing the steps to his box in the arena. He has a harem of eight brawny half-orc warrior women who carry his litter, act as his personal bodyguard, and fight in the arena as his sponsored gladiators.

Always willing to serve himself before others, Iates abused his powers as district nomarch to grant the Crimson Coin exclusive legal off-site gambling rights to all matches in the Irorium. He's quick to offer any female half-orc known for fighting skill to join his "band of beauties." He doesn't limit his gladiatorial sponsorship to his band of elite warrior women, however, and is equally as likely to offer a contract to anyone he thinks can earn him a profit. Torman Iates bets on his own fighters, and he doesn't like it when they lose. At least not at first. Those gladiators under his employ who raise his ire, question his motives, or in any way begin to annoy him soon find themselves "managed" by Iates (and his half-orc goons) to throw an important match.

Trakkus Clawfoot

| LE | MALE | TIEFLING | ROGUE | 5 |

Rasping, sharp-eyed Trakkus Clawfoot works out of the Stilt House, in the Puddles, as a lieutenant of the Muckruckers and a close confidante of district Nomarch Haigen Topkick. Clawfoot, whose left foot ends in a monstrous three-toed reptilian talon, grew up on the streets of the Ascendant Court after the Chelaxian orphanage that had raised him since infancy burned down during the infamous "Devil's Night" event 22 years ago, when displaced Chelaxian nobles ignited several Thrune-affiliated churches and temples in Absalom. Eventually Clawfoot came to the attention of Runewulf the Unbeliever, captain of the Graycloaks, who began training the canny young tiefling boy to join the district watch. After a short time on the force, Clawfoot's distrusting nature and cruelty alienated his fellow officers, and he soon found himself assigned to the Muckruckers as punishment for poor service. In Haigen Topkick he finally found an ally he could trust, and who valued him without focusing on his faults. Indeed, the cold disposition and mean streak that had exiled him from the Graycloaks came in handy all the time in the much rowdier Puddles, allowing him to quickly rise through the ranks and become one of Haigen Topkick's closest friends and advisors.

A year ago, while delivering prisoners to the Brine prison near the edge of the Puddles, Trakkus for the first time met Urtox, the towering Shoanti warrior bodyguard of High Warden Seichya. A single glance from the northern man instantly conveyed two facts to Trakkus Clawfoot: that despite his human guise Urtox was in fact a powerful devil from the Nine Hells, and that he wasn't just any devil, but the mysterious fiendish sire of Clawfoot's entire cursed tiefling bloodline. Somehow, this connection grants Urtox unwavering power over Trakkus. The tiefling regularly reports Haigen Topkick's activities and plans to the Salt Cartel, giving House Tevineg a political edge in the district. Clawfoot hates his treachery, however, seeing in Haigen a father-figure who keeps him warm and relatively well paid. Wracked with self-loathing, he's finally worked up the nerve to confess his betrayal no matter the cost, for the guilt is far worse

than any punishment he can imagine, including death.

He needn't be so dramatic. Canny Haigen Topkick has known all along; he's been deliberately feeding Trakkus information to put Lady Seichya on the wrong footing. The district nomarch is growing tired of the situation, however, and the next time his Muckrucker cells contain an adventurer capable of the job, Topkick intends to offer them their freedom in exchange for breaking into the Brine and destroying the interfering devil forever.

Travost Klim

| N | MALE | HUMAN | CLERIC | 18 |

The high priest of Pharasma at the Spiral Shrine in the Precipice District is a gaunt, even cadaverous man named Travost Klim. Rumor holds that Travost hasn't spoken a word since his own resurrection in his youth—a restoration from death followed swiftly by his retirement from the adventuring lifestyle and conversion from the worship of Abadar to that of Pharasma. In the decades since, he's risen through the ranks of the church, and today serves as one of the most powerful clerics in the city. Klim's technique of casting spells without voice is no mystery, for many spellcasters have mastered the art of silent spellcasting, but his reasons for his continued silence are known only to himself. He carries a stick of chalk and a slate so that he can converse via writing as needed, but when he is called upon to give sermons or speak at length, he always does so through a proxy. In these cases he always stands, silent as ever, always to the left, and always with head bowed, behind the one he's chosen to speak for him. He never speaks through the same proxy twice, and those whom he chooses (who must accept the offer of their own free will) never remember the words they spoke during the sermon. Yet nevertheless, when Travost Klim gives remote voice to the faithful, his words always carry with them the unmistakable truth of one who has, perhaps, spoken directly to death herself.

Trelliun

| N | MALE | HALF-ELF | WIZARD/SWASHBUCKLER | 10 |

The half-aquatic elf Trelliun is captain of the *Sterling Sapphire*, the flagship of the Blakros fleet. The cautious, thoughtful man is an able navigator and firm leader of his crew, who respect him both for his knowledge of the seaways and its many dangers and for his skill with a saber. Trelliun briefly studied wizardry as a child in Cassomir, and occasionally adds a surprising spell to his martial attacks, befuddling his foes with a flashy display of minor magic. Trelliun is good friends with Lord Oved Blakros and visits him often both at Fiddlemourn Manor in the Petal District and at the lord's even larger estate in Cassomir. Trelliun's association with that city brought him to the attention of Absalom's primarch, Lord Gyr of Gixx, who invited him to dine at his personal residence on numerous occasions during the last 20 years. During these visits, Lord Gyr waxed nostalgically about Roundgarden, his "summer home" in Cassomir, and pestered Trelliun for the latest news and gossip from that city. Gyr had visited Cassomir countless times long ago, he claimed, but once he became rich enough to buy a castle there, he never had time to visit, the dreary back-biting politics of Absalom always being far too demanding on his time to allow him a well-deserved vacation.

Trelliun had reason to recall these occasional meetings after his last return trip to Cassomir from Absalom on the eve of the Fiendflesh Siege. Two nights out of Absalom, one of his paid passengers, a charming retired locksmith who called himself Saruto, joined him on the deck of the *Sapphire* to gaze at the stars and idly chat about their future plans. The old artisan's eyes flashed with anticipation as he described his intention to soon retire to work alone with his plants, unbothered at last by the customers who had dictated his schedule and kept him anchored to Absalom and a job he had grown to resent. Trelliun took the opportunity to reflect on his own duties to House Blakros, to his ship, and to his crew, and how even though he loved them all, he yearned some day to live his own life, on his own terms. "Trelliun, my boy," the old man said, his face awash in the moonlight, "don't wait forever. One day, you'll realize you're almost too old to live the life you want, rather than the life others want you to live for them." And then, Saruto winked in a manner Trelliun had seen dozens of times before, but he didn't quite understand why it had seemed so familiar at the time. Months later, upon reflecting on the evening, Trelliun realized he had been in the presence of Lord Gyr himself. According to his agents in Cassomir, Roundgarden shows signs of habitation after decades of abandonment, though no locals are aware of what's truly happening inside. Curious (and interested in Erdan Sianovel's reward for news as to the fate of Lord Gyr), Trelliun is currently on the look out for adventurers he can trust to travel with him to Cassomir and make an investigation of the events currently unfolding in the missing primarch's summer home.

Trevlin Crest

| LE | MALE | HUMAN | PROPHET | 8 |

Back in Kerse, Trevlin Crest received a vision from Kalistrade himself in a series of phantasmagoric dreams while he was recuperating in a plague sanitarium after a wave of the Yellow Death sickness struck the city just over a decade ago. While recovering, he made the acquaintance of the dwarf Ilrava Drogand, who had already amassed a small fortune thanks to her devotion to the business-minded Kalistocratic principles they both shared. Drogand too sought to build her fortune away from the stultifying atmosphere of Druma's capital. Once healed of the plague, the two ventured to Absalom, where they established the Prophet's Academy in the Coins, spreading the holy word of their prophet among the populace while charging exorbitant tuition to wealthy parents eager to pass on their fortunes to children raised with a truly entrepreneurial education. A decade after

arriving in Absalom, Crest seeks even bigger fortunes, and plans to sell his school to the rival Withrun House in the Wise Quarter, with or without Ilrava's consent. Additionally, Trevlin Crest has amassed a substantial amount of embarrassing information on the families of his students extracted during the extensive and deeply revealing interrogations that serve as an important part of Kalistocratic religious practice. Blackmail is an alluring option, and Crest has begun to make subtle overtures to the city's criminal element—particularly the Sanguine Beasts and the Silkenhand.

Tumult Flower Flourish

N | AGENDER | LEAF LESHY | 4

Four years ago, the druid Korhül, mouthpiece of the Circle of Stones, conducted a potent primal ritual within the vaulted inner chambers of the Grand Holt. Tapping a secret power source only recently brought to the cult under cover of darkness, Korhül and his dryad queen patron Iolanthe beckoned a magical bloom from the inner surface of their enormous tree headquarters. From this colorful bulb emerged Tumult Flower Flourish, a leaf leshy with a critical role to play in the Circle's slowly unfolding schemes. At Korhül's instruction, Tumult Flower Flourish founded a leshy gang called the Brattlebunch. Ostensibly an unaffiliated group of anarchists focused on promoting the natural world and vexing threats to animals like the Absalom Menagerie or any of the city's many slaughterhouses, the Brattlebunch's attacks are always orchestrated from the Grand Holt, whether individual leshy members know it or not. Most members of the Brattlebunch come from the Ivy District, but others hail from Green Ridge, the Immenwood, or arrive from overseas. Tumult Flower Flourish primarily uses the Brattlebunch to spy on key figures identified by the Circle of Stones and to report what they learn to Korhül and Iolanthe. Several leshy spies keep a close look on the Docks, and newly arrived leshys come to Tumult's attention soon after arriving. Shortly thereafter, outlander leshys receive a visit from the Brattlebunch leader and a friendly offer to join up. Since the bustling cosmopolitan streets of Absalom otherwise offer little sense of community or quiet natural spaces to bewildered leshy outlanders, Tumult's offer often receives eager and immediate acceptance.

Udiska of the Starlit Path

LG | FEMALE | HUMAN | WITCH | 11

Absalom's Second Lady of Laws, the mysterious Udiska of the Starlit Path, claims to have been born to a family of hunter-gatherers on the Crown of the World before being captured by the Jadwiga witches of Irrisen and trained into their ancient rites of witchcraft. Udiska abandoned her sisters 30 years ago while on a diplomatic mission to Absalom, and has obsessively memorized most of the city's legal code ever since, finally joining the Law Lords shortly after the ascension of Lord Gyr, whom she has never fully trusted. She looks out for other northerners resident in the city, particularly those rare visitors of Erutaki descent like herself.

Ultara Deepkeg

LG | FEMALE | DWARF | RANGER | 10

Some of the scouts and rangers of the Eagle Garrison spend more time outside Absalom's walls than within them. In Ultara Deepkeg's case, this time was measured in years. A descendant of the original founders of the outskirt settlement of Westerhold, Ultara was the youngest dwarf to be accepted into the Eagle Garrison at the time. Over the decades, she distinguished herself particularly in missions to the Kortos Mounts, but then nine years ago she went missing on a routine scouting mission along one of the passes through the mountains. Extensive searches revealed no trace, and for eight of those years the Eagle Garrison had assumed she was dead. When she appeared in what was once her bunk in the Watchtower with no memory of the past nine years, apparently gearing up for the same patrol on which she went missing, the Eagle Garrison was astounded, delighted, and baffled. Ultara has spent the months since her mysterious return recovering from the shock of her missing time and trying everything from divination magic to hypnosis therapy to more obscure methods to figure out where she'd been in those years. So far, the only clue she has is the strange sense of panic she feels every year on the anniversary of her disappearance, when the overwhelming sense of something watching her from the dark places between the stars above forces her to remain indoors for a week before the fear settles. Ultara's current theory involves the Dominion of the Black, yet beyond her strange annual fear of the Dark Tapestry, she yet lacks any more clues to follow up on. Since her return, in any event, she's avoided the Kortos Mounts entirely, and has focused her time teaching and training new scouts what they need to know to patrol the island's mountainous interior.

Watcher Lord Ulthun II

LG | MALE | HUMAN | PALADIN | 14

Watcher Lord Ulthun II has been many things in his life: the youngest Watcher-Lord of Lastwall, the embodiment of a holy warrior, the most eligible bachelor in all of Avistan, and a symbol of inspiration to countless others. He was born into most of these, a privileged noble gifted beyond the dreams of many and trained since birth to become the man he is. At first, many considered him too young, too naive, and too brash, but Ulthun II surrounded himself with the wisest and most diverse council he could. He proved his leadership, cunning, and openness to others' perspectives. He ruled Lastwall fairly, just as those older Watcher-Lords that came before him did for 400 years.

It did not stop the lich king. The rise of Tar-Baphon, the Whispering Tyrant, saw Lastwall fall and several new identities thrust upon Ulthun II: exile, failure, and

survivor. The last, a title many of the people of Lastwall only wish they had, is a weight he carries around his heart.

Ulthun II and the remains of his shattered retinue fled from the loss of Lastwall, the nation built to stand against the Whispering Tyrant, into the open arms of Absalom. The defeated paladin came to the city with a warning of the threat looming over all of Avistan. Many welcomed them as heroes for standing against the Whispering Tyrant, regardless of their loss, requesting tales of what transpired and his plans for the future. Ulthun quickly requested and was granted a private meeting with Acting Primarch Wynsal Starborn. The two honorable men nearly instantly formed a friendship, as kindred spirits.

Watcher Lord Ulthun II

Others view Ulthun's arrival more like a military occupation, as Lastwall's remaining knights are yet another prominent military force calling Absalom home, in addition to its own First Watch and Starwatch. Despite its losses, savvy politicians know the army could easily change the power dynamic in the city. Ulthun's bizarre aide-de-camp, the self-proclaimed Goblin King Zusgut, has only added to the concern. Ulthun has also unknowingly inherited several enemies from his close friendship with Wynsal Starborn.

After asking Wynsal Starborn which district in the city could best benefit from his presence, the two decided that the haunted Precipice Quarter should be home to Lastwall's embassy. Ulthun chose to have the Knights of Lastwall serve as a beacon in the quarter and ordered it to be constructed in the most dangerous part to continue the work of cleansing the district. The embassy is also home to new recruits, numerous adventurers, fortune seekers, and clerics. One of the paladin's first acts was erect a shrine to Iomedae and offer healing to the poor.

Patrols of knights are frequently encountered in the Precipice Quarter, stepping in at the last minute to save those in need. Ulthun hires adventurers to explore abandoned parts of the quarter to gather intelligence before sending in armed forces to retake them. Those that serve Ulthun well are offered membership into the Knights of Lastwall as part of Ulthun's continued efforts to reinforce the troops actively fighting in the Gravelands. It's slow going, but each block recovered adds to his influence in the city and rising popularity. Though Ulthun suspects most to be political in nature, he has received a number of overtures from important figures in Absalom—perhaps the strangest being a vow of support from the Minotaur Prince Nuar Spiritskin. Ulthun has even been offered a seat on the Low Council, and has yet to decide whether to take it. Accepting would grant him more authority, but also remove him from daily operations in the Precipice Quarter.

Umlox Vulm

CG | FEMALE | HALF-ORC | BARD | 3

Soft-spoken, cheerful Umlox Vulm works as a caretaker at Magpie Manor, caring for elderly performers and artists as they live out their final years. With a life-long love of theater and a natural knack for rhyme and musical composition, Vulm adores the opportunity to mingle with some of Absalom's greatest musicians, actors, and visual artists, even if most of the mingling involves changing bedpans, preparing meals, and providing comfort and company. She's a great listener, and the favorite staff member of nearly all of the manor's many residents. Vulm is warm and caring, without an ounce of antipathy in her heart except for the mountain of it she carries for Lord Winton of House Nimz, the arrogant captain of Westgate's Sally Guard and the Kortos Cavalry. About a year ago, someone stole Lord Winton's beloved horse

Zamere, triggering a city-wide horse-hunt during which the Sally Guard investigated nearly every stable in the city. Lord Winton's men extended their search far beyond Westgate, intruding into the private stable attached to the Copperwood home Vulm shares with her wife, the sewer worker Adula Tremane. Sally Guard investigators stole Vulm's own beloved horse, Jula, and never returned it. Since then, musically inclined Vulm has funneled her rage and frustration at Jula's loss into several popular songs mocking Lord Winton, resulting in considerable damage to his reputation. Vulm's originally brilliant compositions have been significantly bolstered by assistance and criticism from Magpie Manor residents like the genius composer Iacovius Vatatze and the scalding wit of the puppeteer satirist Jaivati. The scandalized Lord Winton suspects a single aggravated genius is behind the songs, but would never suspect Umlox Vulm, who is far outside his jurisdiction and far beneath his notice in general.

Unavi

CG | FEMALE | TIEFLING | SWASHBUCKLER | 1

By all odds, the fact that Unavi made it to her 11th birthday is something of a miracle. She was born in Korvosa at the height of that city's unrest during the ravages of the blood veil plague and the cruel rule of Queen Ileosa. The nameless child's plague-stricken parents left her at the Pantheon of Many in desperation, hours before they succumbed to the disease. Unfortunately, the caretakers of the Pantheon were out on the streets fighting the spread of the plague, and the infant would have gone unnoticed for days had not an escaped criminal by the name of Unavi Kastiven come across the crying child. Unavi took the tiefling baby into her care, hid the child's horns and tail by swaddling her tight, and used her as an impromptu "ticket" to convince a ship captain fleeing the city to allow her to board as a desperate mother. Unavi kept up the facade as best she could, but she brought blood veil with her on board. Bound for Absalom, the plague ship only made it as far as the west coast of Cheliax before it crashed on the shores of a small, deserted isle, its crew ravaged by the illness. Ironically, Unavi survived both blood veil and the shipwreck, and for months she survived on the isle with her impromptu adoption. During this time, she recorded her adventures in a small journal for her adopted daughter to read some day, having grown attached to the child.

Unavi perished from a snakebite only a day before a ship landed on the nameless island to search for treasure, only to find the dead woman, her journal, and the child. The ship's captain, a Besmaran priestess named Briah, raised the baby on the ship, calling her Unavi after the journal's author, teaching her the ways of the sea, and helping her learn to read and write. Unavi picked up where the previous Unavi left off by recording further adventures in the journal. Then one day, Briah's ship was defeated by the privateer Torius Vin. Before the ship sunk, Briah set Unavi adrift in a small rowboat with her journal, and she was picked up by the privateer and brought back to the city only to be left to fend for herself. Only recently, she caught the eye of the aasimar Hope and was taken into relative safety for the first time at Purewater Home, her journal a testament to the amazing fortune that kept her alive all these years. Unavi has already begun to show great talent with wit and rapier alike, and hopes to follow in the footsteps of the astounding and unlikely protectors who kept her alive. She clings to the idea that Briah survived the sinking of her ship, and hopes one day to reunite with the only mother she can remember.

Undrul Vosh

NE | FEMALE | HALF-ORC | CULTIST | 10

One does not typically associate the worship of Norgorber with the brutal traditions of the barbarian, but Undrul Vosh has certainly made a profit adhering to both. Her fighting style mixes the underhanded trickery one associates with dirty-fighting thugs and the overwhelming power of the greatest of orc warlords, but without resorting to a single manufactured weapon. Undrul solves her problems with her fists, and for nearly a year has remained undefeated at the Crimson Coin as the tavern's house champion. A fair amount of the proceeds from any bets placed during her fights, be they for or against her, are paid under the proverbial table to Blackfinger Temple, Undrul's second home beyond the walls of the Crimson Coin. Undrul makes no secret of her faith in Norgorber, but does hide the fact that she finds value and inspiration and succor in all four of his incarnations. While it's his aspect as Blackfingers to whom Undrul publicly pays homage, she spends her personal time split between venerating his other three aspects, typically alternating the "sub-faith" as she calls them every other month. Her strange interpretations of Norgorber's teachings prevent her from achieving any level of personal power in one of the four factions, but Undrul Vosh isn't as interested in climbing the ladder of her church's hierarchy as she is in making sure that she remains a well-rounded troublemaker.

Lord Urkon of House Ormuz

NE | MALE | HUMAN | RANGER | 9

The severe Lord Urkon is the nomarch (or "satrap") of the Council of Flowers in the Petal District. His family has strong ties to the government of Thuvia, and rumors suggest that his older brother, Scion Lord Yamathar, owes his youthful appearance to the life-giving sun orchid elixir. Urkon has clearly not enjoyed a draught, as society wags decry the substantial fall-off in his own good looks over the last decade, which seems to have put a half-century of age on his deep-lined face. Once considered one of the most eligible bachelors in all of Absalom, the still unmarried Lord Urkon has begun to despair that he will always be alone, no matter how wealthy he and his family might be.

As a young man, Lord Urkon delighted in racing horses, winning several important public races in Absalom and

elsewhere. In time, mundane horses no longer gave him the rush he desired, so Urkon learned to ride griffons and hippogriffs, and eventually even stranger creatures like sphinxes and manticores. Over time, Urkon began to favor intelligent monsters as mounts, working with wizards employed by his house to break the spirits of these creatures and force them to serve him in battle. These glories mostly came on distant battlefields in Thuvia, where Lord Urkon developed a reputation as a cruel and efficient master of flying cavalry. He notably scored a major victory defending Absalom while astride a gorgon during the Black Echelon Uprising of 4717. While the deadly mount petrified several dozen attacking undead, many wondered how the powerful noble had managed to secure such a creature, and where he had been keeping it in the city, presumably at great risk to the populace. Always quick to solve a problem with a bit of canny oration, Lord Urkon simply claimed that the creature had been summoned, and the matter was quickly dropped. Of late, however, the Kortos Cavalry officer Zifelez of Gyr—herself one of the city's most notable equestrians—has begun to suspect that certain stables in Shoreline are fronts for the importation of illegal monstrous mounts, and has been routing her regular morning rides to pass through the suburb in an effort to slake her suspicions. Fearing exposure, Lord Urkon has attempted to dissuade the elf's investigation by harassing her father, who lives in Westgate.

Urmas Sirola

LN | MALE | HUMAN | ALCHEMIST | 14

Urmas is the chief physician at Absalom Chirurgeon Dispatch, in Westgate. With no notable hospitals and pretention of noble living, the folk of the district prefer their doctors to come to them. Sirola manages the dozens of doctors, nurses, and orderlies required to service the rapidly growing medical needs of the district, and while there is no question that the Chirurgeon Dispatch is ably handling that challenge at the moment, keeping everything balanced and working efficiently requires an administrative maestro. Sirola just happens to be such a genius, but even so affairs teeter on a delicate balance. Demand for Dispatch services has outstripped supply since several members of the staff died supporting the troops fighting against the Whispering Tyrant's attack last year, and lately Sirola has had to resort to assigning himself to house calls to fill in for the missing doctors. He is a truly gifted surgeon and a brilliant alchemist, but his true passion is in administration. When he is in the field, he cannot be orchestrating the entire operation from the office, and the whole system begins to malfunction. In this case, malfunctions mean people die. The situation has put considerable strain on his marriage to the popular politician Venla Sirola, which is a stress neither he nor his wife can afford. He is desperate to find a solution. Sirola now actively seeks new recruits for the Dispatch, particularly physicians with magical healing abilities (which bring higher fees and profits).

The Chirurgeon Dispatch maintains magical communications with the Sally Guard, and often supports watch activities with healers or other medical assistance. He and Lord Winton have been good friends for years. Sirola thinks that the way his friend has been mistreated by Absalom's popular press is a disgrace, and complaints about the whole affair to his wife have started to work their way into Venla Sirola's bombastic political speeches.

Urongu

LG | MALE | HUMAN | BAKER | 4

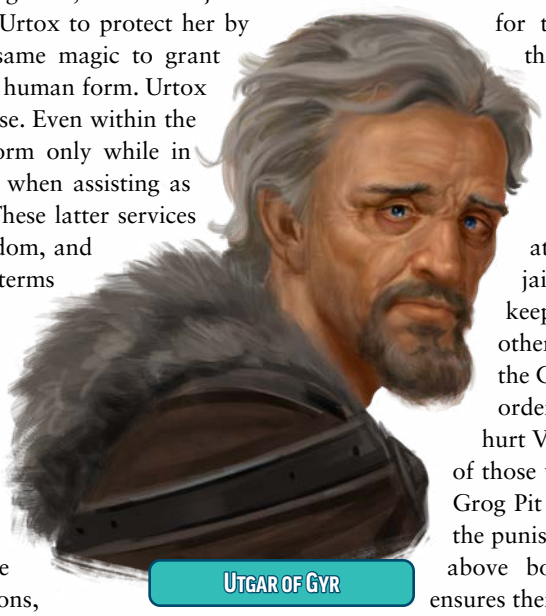
Urongu's wide smile, infectious laugh, and friendly personality have gone a long way to help rescue many of lost Lirgen's delicacies. The flooded nation's cuisine relied heavily upon a pounded root starch called mamasu used to create a doughy base for fish and stews, but a skilled chef could use mamasu dough to create all manner of astoundingly delicious baked goods. Urongu does his best to mix up traditional recipes with new inventions, and each day he makes the rounds of Greenstar Market with his well-stocked food cart and sells out by noon. He never keeps his recipes secret, and is always eager to share his methods with others who profess even a slight interest in learning his techniques, and in so doing he's single-handedly preserved countless delicacies like mooncod cakes, foam biscuits, whisker bread, sculpin fries, and various loaves of salted and spiced breads, keeping these delicious baked goods from falling into obscurity or being forgotten entirely. Urongu himself is a seemingly bottomless font of amusing and comedic stories, both old parables and tales from Lirgen and a bevy of new creations featuring people and places in Absalom. Recently, Urongu has branched out in the services he provides Little Lirgen. Realizing that he's become something of an attraction, he's made it known to his neighborhood that should anyone need aid on matters they can't handle themselves, they need but to let him know. As he peddles his cakes and fries, Urongu keeps a practiced eye out for adventurers who seem trustworthy and promises them healthy payments of coin or baked goods if they help out with the various problems his neighbors have. The fact that most adventurers choose to be paid in food instead of coin is perhaps the best advertisement he could hope for.

Urtox

LE | BONE DEVIL | 9

Lady Seichya of House Tevineg, leader of the Salt Cartel and High Warden of the Brine prison, never appears without her faithful bodyguard Urtox at her side. The towering Shoanti warrior, covered in traditional tattoos and always without a shirt getting in the way of his intimidating physique, stands just behind Lady Seichaya at all times. Since no one has ever seen the pair apart, rumors naturally swirl of an affair between the two. Seichya has never married, and society wags and the city's press fill in the blanks as they will. In truth, the tie

that binds Urtox to Seichya is far more durable than love. Beaming Gulv Tevineg presented his newborn daughter to Queen Carellia Thrune in Egorian, and the majestrix herself bound the bone devil Urtox to protect her by infernal contract, using the same magic to grant the devil the ability to assume human form. Urtox almost never drops this disguise. Even within the Brine, he assumes his true form only while in Seichya's private company or when assisting as the prison's official torturer. These latter services he provides to slake his boredom, and are offered freely outside the terms of his infernal contract.



Utgar of Gyr

Urtox has lived thousands of years, and has always had an interest and affinity for the mortals of Golarion. In all that time, his schemes have resulted in more than a few devilborn progeny. Urtox seldom takes notice of these side-effects of his machinations, but every so often he crosses paths with one. It happened again a year ago with Trakkus Clawfoot, the right-hand-tiefling of Haigen Topkick. Urtox maintains a level of psychic dominance over his spawn, and—with the full knowledge and support of Lady Seichya—he's been using Clawfoot as a spy to help House Tevineg and the Salt Cartel stay one step ahead of the wily halfling operator. Should tensions between the currently stable factions grow dangerous, Urtox has no qualms about ordering Clawfoot to kill Topkick and report to the Brine for his own extermination. It's always interesting to run into an old family by-blow, Urtox reasons, but after they are no longer useful there's really no reason to let them distract you any longer.

Utgar of Gyr

LN | MALE | HUMAN | INVESTIGATOR | 15

Absalom's third spell lord, Utgar of Gyr, is charged with directly overseeing the varlokkur and maintaining the magical defenses of Azlanti Keep. A thin, graying man of Ulfen descent, Utgar has aged visibly in a few short years since Lord Gyr's disappearance during the Fiendflesh Siege, a mystery he has conspicuously failed to solve to date. For fear of failing again, the third spell lord sleeplessly spends his own time, money, and favors to solve cases his varlokkur deem unsolvable.

Valcent Minstros

CN | MALE | HUMAN | BARTENDER | 12

If the most well-known tavern in the Docks is the infamous Grog Pit, then it should come as no surprise that Valcent Minstros is the district's most notorious bartender. Between his policy of accepting coins of any denomination from any country for a tankard of grog or his unwavering tolerance for bad behavior, his popularity among alcohol's more bombastic admirers isn't surprising. But just because Valcent tolerates fistfights and worse in the Grog Pit, one shouldn't assume that there are never repercussions for troublemaking. Valcent may not throw you out for starting a fight, but he could well put you in a pine box for annoying him. Time and time again he's dodged the law when the kin of those he's been forced to kill have attempted to have him thrown in jail, for the guards know that, by keeping potential arsonists or thugs or other violent criminals "distracted" in the Grog Pit, Minstros helps them keep order in the Docks. It certainly doesn't hurt Valcent's position that the majority of those who end up killed in fights in the Grog Pit are well-known to have deserved the punishment, and by keeping everything above board and in the open, Valcent ensures there are always witnesses to support the fact that while he doesn't start fights, he certainly ends them. Now and then, though, someone who meets a well-deserved end in the bar leaves behind vengeance-minded kin, and in these times Valcent never hesitates to recruit aid from his customers. He's hired adventurers many times before, and will doubtless continue to do so, to take a fight that started in his tavern to its logical conclusion in whatever guildhall, warehouse, ruin, or cavern that spawned the instigator to prevent revenge-driven escalations.

Vanissi Gaatan

N | FEMALE | HUMAN | WIZARD | 2

Having just turned 15, Vanissi is the middle daughter of three adopted by Emir Thalzar Gaatan and Trade Prince Aaqir al'Hakam, two dashing and influential members of Absalomian high society. Vanissi is a student in good standing at the Arcanamirium, where she studies Battle Magic under Metadame Vannessir, the institution's sergeant at wands. Vannessir is quite enamored with the child, frequently lending her arcane tomes and second-hand magical trinkets to aid in her education. She's even invited the girl to join her and other dubious characters in a game of maze at the Second Labyrinth in the Ivy District on three occasions, and each time Vanissi's sense of the world outside her family and her school gets larger and larger, and her ambition grows. Inspired by Metadame Vannessir's encouragement, Vanissi has petitioned to become one of the youngest students in the Pathfinder Society's three-year training program, with a graduation date just after her 18th birthday.

Vanius Cestanian

LE | MALE | HUMAN | FIGHTER | 4

Handsome, vain Vanius Cestanian is the trusted guardian of the famous side entrance of the Ascendant Court's

Chelaxian Embassy. The shadowed portal opens to a slim alley between the former Temple of Aroden and the neighboring structure (and old Arodenite nunnery), and is not visible to the street abutting the Starstone Chasm, which usually throngs with passersby at all hours of the day and night. This makes the door ideal for the visits of those who do not wish to be seen doing business with Chelaxians, making Cestanian's station one of the most important security checkpoints in the entire well-defended structure. Vanius is well paid for his duty, but supplements his income with bribes paid by dignitaries with more coins than appointments. He sometimes even accepts bribes from well-heeled thrill-seekers who simply want to get a glimpse at the diabolical transformation the Chelaxians executed upon one of the most famous and formerly beloved buildings in all of Absalom.

Vanius squanders most of his ill-gotten gains at the Second Labyrinth, in the Coins. The gambling parlor caters to Chelaxians, and the corrupt gate-guard is always most comfortable around his own people. The Labyrinth's women patrons know Vanius Cestanian all too well; they appreciate his good looks if not his grating and condescending demeanor. Despite his nationalism, Cestanian continues to carry on a torrid affair with former Grand Ambassador Zarta Dralneen. Cestanian was always one of her favorite playthings during her time at the embassy, and neither of them consider her exile from Cheliax to be any reason to stop an enjoyable arrangement. The relationship naturally gives Dralneen free reign of the embassy by way of the side entrance whenever she wants, a benefit she enjoys far more frequently than she enjoys Vanius's amorous company. Cestanian lives in the Devil's Garden, in the Foreign Quarter. He worships Asmodeus.

Metadame Vannessir of House Tevineg

LE | FEMALE | HUMAN | WIZARD | 13

Vannessir purchased her noble title directly from House Thrune 20 years ago, and as part of the empire's new diabolical aristocracy, she is not connected directly to the intrigues of House Tevineg even though she is nominally a part of their ancient family. Vannessir teaches Battle Magic at the Arcanamirium, where she also serves as the academy's sergeant at wands. This prestigious position puts Vannessir in charge of the magical protection of the establishment, its faculty, and its students, a duty that means much more to her than anything to do with Cheliax. She also commands the Arcanamirium's armory of magical weaponry, and sometimes oversees sales of precious wands, staves, and weapons to wealthy nobles or adventurers. Though her strongest loyalties lie with the Arcanamirium, Vannessir is no less Chelaxian, and no less evil, than her fellow diabolical nobles. She is an ardent worshipper of Asmodeus, and incorporates his beloved red and black into all of her outfits. As far as fashion goes, Vannessir prefers the designs of Theodora "Tea" Signe, in particular favoring her Jistkan Revival gowns, which leave little to the imagination. These days, Vannessir funnels much of her energy and attention into her protégé, Arcanamirium student Vanissi Gaatan, whom she has singled out as worthy of development not just for her arcane skill, but for the influence of her two highly-placed fathers.

Varvara Amadei

N | FEMALE | HALF-ELF | OCCULTIST | 9

Although Varvara serves on the Ivy District Council, her true passion lies in her roots as a half-Varisian. She grew up on the road, and while she doesn't regret her (at the time) impulsive decision to abandon her family's ways to move across Avistan to live in the big city, she's never forgotten the compelling mysteries of ancient Thassilon, the curiosities of the Harrow, or the mystical wonders of the Varisian way of life. For several years, she ran a curio shop in the Ivy District, but after a close call with a cursed sarcophagus, she abandoned that life and looked to a more productive way to support the neighborhood. She found herself to be a natural fit for politics, and treats the complex machinations of bureaucracy as yet another occult mystery to divine and plumb. One might think that treating the workings of a city government in the same way one would research an ancient cipher or philosophize on the nature of the soul wouldn't work, but Varvara has made a successful career of it. She recently joined the Order—a semi-secret society she'd known about for years but had always discounted as being more interested in shock and scandal than actual ancient secrets. Her reason for joining instead lies in the fact that many other key members of the district belong to the group, and by leaning into her heritage as a woman who lives in two worlds—the mysticism of the Varisian and the wonder of the elves—Varvara has found that fellow council members and movers and shakers tend to be far more loose-lipped around her than they would perhaps be otherwise. What she's learned during Order meetings has become one of her most important methods of not only securing her own permanence on the Ivy District Council, but in helping her to ensure that Council decrees and resolutions are handled in a way that synchronizes with her own plans for the district. What those end plans might entail, Varvara keeps to herself.

Velasca

CE | MALE | VAMPIRE | MASTERMIND | 13

The indolent vampire lord Velasca seldom leaves the subterranean enclave of Fall's End, located a mile beneath Absalom's streets. Even there, he mainly sticks to the penthouse suite of Silt Manor, the makeshift tenement flophouse on the northern edge of the settlement. Silt Manor is home to dozens of desperate souls, most of them drug addicts with nowhere else to go. Velasca welcomes and even seeks out such wretches from Absalom's poorer neighborhoods, luring them to share his lair and serve him in exchange for more of their preferred substance to abuse. Velasca is an addict in his own right, as after

feeding on Absalom for generations, "regular" blood no longer quenches his unholy thirst. The vampire feeds upon his addled tenants, finding solace in their highs and lows, breaking the ennui of centuries with each pulse of adulterated blood. Velasca's favorite drink, and the favored drink of the folk of Silt Manor, is an unusual magical substance known as Godsblood, provided by the settlement's small but powerful temple of Norgorber. The stuff is said to produce deep euphoria in those who consume it, as well as terrible addiction. Perhaps stirred by the pleasurable taste, Velasca seeks a more reliable source, and has lately preyed upon prophets along the Avenue of the Hopeful in the Ascendant Court, picking off would-be godlings as they wrap up after days of preaching to adoring crowds. Runewulf the Unbeliever's Graycloaks have noted the disappearances and have begun to suspect a single culprit behind all of them, but their suspicion has not yet fallen to Velasca, who always slips back to Fall's End, his belly full of fresh blood, before anyone can identify or capture him.

Venla Sirola

LN | FEMALE | HUMAN | BARD | 8

Venla Sirola, the Battling Belle of Westgate, came to prominence 20 years ago as one of Absalom's most successful adventurers. The elite agent of the Pathfinder Society published a hugely popular account of her exploits in the *Pathfinder Chronicles*, which was swiftly adapted into two competing musicals that ran in second-tier Ivy District theaters for nearly a decade, cementing her spot as one of the city's favorite celebrities and providing enough steady income that she was able to retire from adventuring in her late 40s, with plenty of life left in her, a splendid manor home, and enough gold to buy herself an appointment to the Low Council.

The lure of discovering history led Sirola to become an adventurer, and while she no longer slings sword or spell in the field against monsters, she's never been able to give up her interest in dusty old artifacts and ancient secret lore. For years she's served as a sort of unofficial antiquities expert for House Blakros, working specifically with Lady Delveris, who manages the family's vast collection of historical artifacts and magical curios. Her work has kept her on good terms with nearly every member of that fractious family, whose members sometimes use her as a go-between to interact with each other. Politically, Sirola is deeply traditionalist, supporting conservative political factions like Lord Avid's Optimates. She is one of the foremost voices in Westgate promising to "Bring Back the Bull" to Statue Street, and seems to easily win her elections each year. She lives with her husband, Urmas Sirola, the Chief Physician at Absalom Chirurgeon Dispatch.

Venlun Frusk

NE | MALE | HUMAN | POLITICIAN | 7

Absalom's opportunistic commissioner of streetsweepers is the much-abused "younger brother" of the city's three sanitation commissioners. Although his commission is just as widespread and important to the city as those of his colleagues, he's somehow managed to avoid making the most of his situation, and lingers far behind his friends in the arts of graft and corruption. His resentment of his friends Larrett and Pondo Funt grows with each season, and Frusk has started leaking tales of their worst frauds and exploitations to Marissa Guile, an eager reporter with the *Sennight Star*, one of Absalom's most popular newspapers.

Venorium Blorm

N | MALE | HUMAN | SORCERER | 2

Young Venorium Blorm grew up in a squalid Mudhaven tenement, and never expected to amount to much. His mother died giving birth to him, and his father, Bevran, exerted nearly all of his strength and energy working 14-hour shifts at Ogrekin Hall as a common laborer, leaving him little enthusiasm for quality child-rearing. The boy was destined to remain a pauper for life if not for the magic in his blood. At first his powers manifested in ways that convinced his father their quarters had become haunted—slamming doors, small fires, weird noises, and other such phenomena often confused with the antics of a poltergeist. Instead, an examination conducted by an unscrupulous necromancer in league with his father's boss, Ptarnex Dexarion, concluded that the strange occurrences at the Blorm household had been due to Venorium's subconscious thoughts, given form by his natural aptitude for magic. Word of the child's strengthening abilities eventually made it to the prestigious Arcanamirium, who offered Venorium a rare scholarship. There, he is hard at work studying to become an arcanist's apprentice. He has yet to find a perfect master that matches his stringent criteria, but remains on the lookout for an ideal spellcaster—one who has slain more than a handful of monsters as part of an active adventuring group. Casters who take on Venorium soon learn that he is unflinchingly loyal and endlessly curious, a font of an unusually large trove of factoids and trivia about nearly everything. Venorium always seems to have a book in hand, and seldom forgets anything he has read.

Verica Strange

CN | FEMALE | SYLPH | BARD | 13

While the Absalom Chamber Orchestra is itself a collection of talented performers, one of its current members stands out from the rest. True to her assumed name, Verica Strange is an enigma, one whose life before her rise in popularity as a concert pianist is shrouded in mystery. Between her unusual appearance (notably, her pale blue flesh decorated with twisting spiral tattoo-like markings or her voluminous head of white hair that seems to drift and move on its own like a cloud) or her staggering talent at the keyboard, she's secured something approaching a cult in the nature of her eager, enamored followers. Verica gives these adoring admirers just enough attention to keep their interest at peak

levels, but is equally talented at dodging the throng and slipping into obscurity—very few would recognize her on the street out of her public persona as Verica Strange. The pianist keeps a small and subtle group of close friends and associates, most of whom are associated with the Bloom Cabaret where she serves as the Order's musical director, with one notable exception. Her trysts with Samel Maleagant have a tendency to become public knowledge and give her admirers unanticipated glimpses into her personal life. Often, these glimpses occur after the on-and-off again relationship hits one of its frequent bumps. Verica has long suspected that Samel sees her as a challenge—an adored public persona whose reputation tempts reaping, but at the same time her own ability to manipulate his emotions and send ripples of chaos through the Court of Black Paper is far too entertaining for the mercurial sylph to completely cut ties with him.

Scion Lady Veridel of House Uiry

LG | FEMALE | HUMAN | ARISTOCRAT | 5

Forty-seven years ago, Lady Veridel was away at boarding school with her little brother Oirel when a strange visitor came to Uiry Manor and murdered every member of her family and household staff in one of Absalom's most gruesome unsolved mysteries. House Uiry, which is to say Veridel and Oirel, did their best to weather the storm and hold the family's business interests together after the stunning tragedy, but this proved impossible.

As soon as he came of age, Oirel enlisted in the First Guard to lower his financial burden on his older sister. Veridel, who refused to ever again step foot in the family's Petal District mansion, nonetheless approved trusted caretakers to open the opulent home as a museum commemorating the grisly crime. In the years since, Veridel has attempted to ride her family's slide into oblivion as gracefully as possible. Unmarried and without children, she sees no future for her family. At her brother's insistence she has not yet submitted to the final indignity of selling off noble titles, but if not for Oirel's flat rejection of the idea Veridel would have resorted to it years ago. As time goes on, and especially after her beloved Oirel died defending Fort Tempest during the Black Echelon Uprising three years ago, Veridel has come to believe that her family is cursed. The unexpected public celebration of Oirel's martyrdom, and the considerable charitable donations that came with it, gave Veridel a sliver of optimism, but she wears it uneasily, like an unfamiliar cloak. Oirel, newly resurrected and back in control at Fort Tempest, assures her that the future will be very bright for House Uiry, but Veridel imagines that the next tragedy must be just around the corner. Lady Veridel is a mainstay at Westgate's Groggy Froggy tavern, not far from her apartments. There, she shares the woes of her family with anyone willing to listen, often prodding them to pick up the tab on account of House Uiry's star-crossed circumstances.

Verimachius the Architect

LE | MALE | HUMAN | WIZARD | 14

A dapper man in rune-scribed robes, Verimachius never expected to be thrown into the far future from his homeland of ancient Thassilon, or to find that his prosaic arcane engineering had become just shy of legendary. A misfit in his own time, Verimachius has embraced this new world, attending parties and operas and, over the course of several years, acclimating as well to the modern era as if he had been born into it. He's a very competent and level-headed wizard, if hardly runelord caliber, and enjoys playing up the image of ancient power. He particularly enjoys mudding the waters of history by claiming to be the true "architect" (hence his appellation) of many magical traditions and inventions from Thassilonian times. For example, without Karzoug around anymore to defend it, Verimachius has spread far and wide the claim that he was the wizard who created the first infernal engine—a device that traps devils and siphons their infernal energy to provide power for magical machinery (such as that present in Varisia's Skull Gorge dam, or more recently, and more disastrously, in the city of Westcrown after modern wizards attempted to duplicate the technique). The rise of New Thassilon has threatened Verimachius's position, though, for now there are an unknown number of his contemporaries who could prove the falsehood of his claims. As such, Verimachius has been spending an increasing amount of time working at damage control and keeping an ear to the ground for any fellow Thassilonians who might possess the wrong kind of knowledge—such as the fact that before an accident with a Thassilonian monument now known as the Cyphergate hurled him thousands of years into the future, he was but a journeyman wizard-engineer. At the same time, he's pushing his own new (and not well tested) inventions upon his allies in the Kortos Consortium, particularly a so-called "Devilmill"—a magically automated steel foundry where heat is provided by a single trapped devil while imps operate its bellows and furnaces.

Vernus

NE | MALE | HUMAN | INVESTIGATOR | 15

While Flevvid Grummlin, the current administrator for Metringer Sanitarium, may see him as little more than a burly, dull-witted guard, this is but a clever facade Vernus employs to hide his actual goals—the discovery and isolation of the source of sorcerous power. While many of the Sanitarium's patients know the truth of Vernus's sadistic intellect, none of the asylum's orderlies or guards have the slightest idea. That Flevvid himself is engaged in clandestine experiments gives Vernus an even more effective smokescreen, with any hints or clues he leaves behind from his own hidden explorations typically interpreted as evidence pointing toward the administrator instead. Vernus is patient and methodical, unhampered by delusions of morality or any interest in adhering to city laws, and pursues his work only

during the few hours he knows Flevvid is either asleep or engaged in complex experiments of his own. His hidden laboratory lies in a sub-basement unguessed at by Flevvid, and is stocked with patients who, according to records, have long since expired and are buried in the Sanitarium boneyard. Vernus also keeps a menagerie of a wide range of creatures of various species, preferring to traffic in smaller, more easily kept creatures like gremlins, imps, quasits, mephits, crawling hands, chokers, pixies, and other minuscule beings whose nature is oft associated with classical sorcerer bloodlines. By extracting samples of these creatures' blood, refining and enhancing the samples, and then injecting them into regular people, Vernus hopes to trigger a spontaneous bloodline manifestation. His dream of inventing an infusion to grant powerful sorcerer magic with a single injection has, to date, been hampered by his subjects' ungrateful habits of perishing to his experiments, but ever-patient, Vernus hopes some day to make a discovery that will secure his fame through the ages.

Versien of Nisroch

| LE | MALE | HUMAN | COURTESAN | 10 |

An exquisitely skilled courtesan of the Silken Court, Versien of Nisroch specializes in domination, contortion, and erotic body manipulation, often employing magical workings and disturbing tools imported from his home in distant Nidal. Although he doesn't talk about it to his clients for fear of alarming them, Versien is an ardent follower of Zon-Kuthon, and a frequent reveler in the Tempest nightclub in the Ivy District that serves as the god's secret temple in Absalom. The pale-skinned Versien has a healthy head of jet black hair that matches the tight-fitting leather costumes he favors, often designed by the dhampir tailor Theodora "Tea" Signe. His good looks and fashion sense make Versien a big hit with his female clientele. One of his most famous frequent clients is Lady Delveris of House Blakros. Versien plays a convincing paramour for the noblewoman, but is in fact scheming against her on behalf of the Onyx Alliance and one of the only women in Absalom he sleeps with for free—Lady Sarnia, Delveris's ageless sister.

Virgil the Swift

| CG | MALE | HUMAN | ROGUE | 2 |

Virgil is a human man still gangly with youth. After joyfully discovering the playhouse at the Goblin King's Court, he began competitively racing rooftops and was hired as a personal message runner by Haigen Topkick. Ultimately fun-loving and optimistic about the world despite his orphaned upbringing in the Puddles, he would be devastated to know the contents of the messages he runs, or the nature of the majority of Haigen's business.

Vita Aulamaxa

| CG | FEMALE | HUMAN | BARD | 8 |

The ambassador of Ravounel and caretaker of the Ravounel Consulate in the Ivy District is Vita Aulamaxa, a member of one of Ravounel's most ancient noble families. Vita can trace her ancestry quite far back into Chelaxian history, but her patriotism lies firmly in Ravounel today. While she does her best in public venues at holding back snide remarks about modern Cheliax, her disdain for House Thrune in particular is well-known. In representing Ravounel, she often calls back to Cheliax's ancient, pre-Thrune days as historical examples of what Cheliax may one day return to, but at the same time takes pains to ensure that the interests of her homeland, Ravounel, are always at the forefront. In such a pursuit, Vita's decided to focus on Ravounel's, and in particular, its capital city Kintargo's artistic and social scene, and is eager to show Absalom that the new nation's arts and contributions to entertainment are steeped in ancient traditions. And if she can do so while taking Abrogail Thrune's reputation down a peg, so much the better!

Vittar Corusec

| N | MALE | HUMAN | WIZARD | 10 |

Vittar Corusec runs the Silk Castle kite shop in the Wise Quarter, where he constantly challenges himself in his designs, seeking one year to create kites that are more beautiful than ever before, or another year working to make his new creations even more aerodynamic, or even another year focusing on the mechanisms by which the kite flyer can control their kite from the ground. While he often uses magic to aid in the creation of prototypes, Vittar believes that the joys of flying a kite should be open to anyone, and has traditionally sought to create kites that require no skill with magic—be it in their flight or their assembly. Recently, he's been working with the Clockwork Cathedral to develop something he's been calling a "kitework" but which is in fact little more than a kite that incorporates lightweight, papercraft clockwork techniques to allow someone flying a "kitework" to use the flight itself to transform the kite's shape. Initial attempts to create this new type of kite have been stymied by the weight of the materials and Vittar's desire to have anyone be able to control the kites, and so he's been looking to adventurers to try them out and help finance things. By building versions of these kites that can be utilized in ways akin to grappling hooks or even potential methods to combat flying foes, Vittar hopes to generate enough field research so that he can craft versions of these devices that anyone can enjoy.

Vonthos of the Golden Bridge

| NE | MALE | HUMAN | WIZARD | 18 |

The resplendent Vonthos of the Golden Bridge is the quintessential *Starstone* aspirant—charismatic, ambitious, and always just on the verge of crossing the Starstone Chasm after several years of making himself a public spectacle in the God's Market. A frequent guest at high-society soirees and fancy bistros across the city, Vonthos is a beloved darling of Absalom's upper class. For several years, he has poured several fortunes into his eponymous "Golden Bridge," a hollow, bejeweled sphere which he

claims will insulate him from the ordeals of the Test of the *Starstone* and protect him all the way to his apotheosis. Every time some hardship arises or the pleasures of the flesh tempt him to linger just a little while longer in the mortal realm, Vonthos chips a jewel off the Golden Bridge to buy a solution to the problem, then begs more wealth from his donors to continue. The common people of Absalom, incapable of providing even a tiny bauble to the underside of Vonthos's magic orb, nonetheless appreciate the spectacle of his gaudy achievement whenever it is displayed. Absalom's broadsheet publishers are considerably less appreciative, often publishing cartoons lampooning despised nobles or trademasters as blithe simpletons floating in outlandish "Golden Bridges" of their own as a symbol of the wasteful, idiotic spending and indulgent obsessions of the idle rich. The genuine Golden Bridge, indulgent as it may be, is nonetheless one of the most valuable objects in Absalom, and Vonthos must frequently rely on his impressive arcane might to deter any who would attempt to pry off a bit for themselves. This he does with great bombast and theatricality, often using crowd-pleasing lethal force to deter would be thieves. While such an overreaction is, strictly speaking, against the city's laws regarding magic, something of the old viking spirit in Runewulf the Unbeliever appreciates how a flash of fantastic violence sometimes makes the most powerful statement, so the Graycloaks seldom make a fuss, considering the problem to have solved itself. Rumors abound that Vonthos makes frequent gifts of orb embellishments to the district watch's patrol officers, which further explains his ability to seemingly flaunt the laws of Absalom. Each time Vonthos strikes down a would-be thief with extreme magic overkill his legend seems to spread. No one but Vonthos knows that at least half of the slain thieves are dupes paid or mind-controlled to make the attempt, providing the charismatic lord of the Golden Bridge an opportunity for another dazzling public display.

Madame Vordris

LE | FEMALE | ELF | ROGUE | 13

As the headmistress of the Tallavont School, Madame Vordris has a well-established reputation for extravagance, stern lectures, and keen insights into political truths. The school's other instructors and students consider her something of an enigma, as she accepts no payment from the school (claiming her family's inheritance is more than enough to keep her in comfort). While common belief is that Madame Vordris was in fact a member of a very successful adventuring group who kept their success away from the spotlight, the truth is something none at Tallavont would even guess at.

In truth, Madame Vordris has always been a hidden devotee of Cheliax, an agent of Thrune who made the ultimate sacrifice. Once human, Vordris accepted a sacrificial death and reincarnation in order to afford herself a peerless disguise. Her return to life as an elf has since become an incredible asset to throw others off her trail, as not only would few assume an elf to be a devotee of Asmodeus, but fewer still would assume an elf is, in fact, a Thrune herself. Vordris (in her previous life known as Corsavah Thrune) is indeed a third cousin of Cheliax's queen, but the nature of her appointment to Absalom has necessitated complete abdication of any ties to her inheritance. Her immediate family was well-compensated, and as long as Abrogail remains on the throne, Madame Vordris shall continue to secretly collect significant payments to finance her extravagant lifestyle while feeding House Thrune a constant flow of information about Absalom's politics and social climate.

Vosana

N | FEMALE | ELF | CLERIC | 7

Death is a fearful promise to all who live, but to Vosana, there is beauty in its surety. Vosana serves at the Spiral Shrine in the Precipice Quarter as a lay priest of Pharasma, where she spends her time composing prayer poems to the goddess and serving duty as midwife or mortician. To the new mother, Vosana seeks to ease pains and help support the significant change to lifestyle, while to the bereaved she does her best to instill hope and pleasant memories in place of the loss, using her own extensive experience as a Forlorn elf to help others deal with a loved one's death. Her counseling and experience particularly helps parents come to terms with the loss of a child, a tragedy that Vosana knows stings like no other, and as such requires greater delicacy in handling. To an extent, the elf sees herself almost as a "grief-eater," and does her best to take on the sorrow of others and to replace it with hope for a brighter future, but even though her talents at counseling are significant, her fellow worshippers increasingly worry that she may be taking on more burden than she should.

Vroclaw of Brevoy

LE | MALE | HUMAN | CLERIC | 17

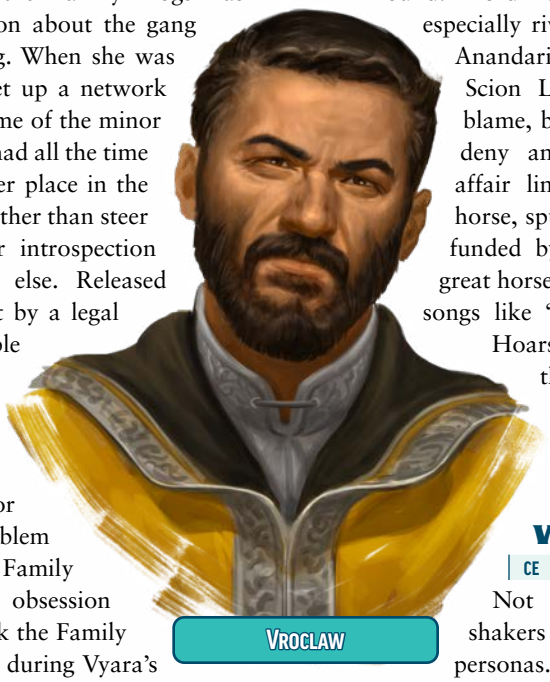
The imperious Vroclaw of Brevoy serves as the high priest of Abadar's faith in Absalom and as a living example of his deity's doctrine as the reigning Archbanker at the Bank of Absalom. He's also one of the longest-serving members of the Chamber of Ecclestials in the Ascendant Court, adding civic authority to his already impressive divine mandate. For decades, Vroclaw served as a personal advisor to the primarch, a tradition only recently interrupted when Wynsal Starborn refused his counsel.

Vroclaw's support of colonialist enterprises and his advocacy for the exploitation of indigenous markets have earned him prominent enemies in the city, and very notably, in his own church. Vroclaw is aware of the recent troubles at the Ivy District's Vault of Abadar, as well as his subordinate Kefilwe's reluctance to report the misdeeds of its high priestess, Jostlin Ferqyr. This has led him to overreact and assume that all of the city's Abadarians are against him, and he grows increasingly more paranoid by the day.

Vyara

| CE | FEMALE | HALF-ORC | ROGUE | 8 |

Vyara has always considered herself more of a cog in the machine rather than the machine itself, but recently, this long-time member of the Family Dogs has had something of a revelation about the gang she's belonged to for so long. When she was arrested for attempting to set up a network of highway robbers along some of the minor roadways into Absalom, she had all the time she needed to think about her place in the gang and the city itself, but rather than steer her toward redemption, her introspection revealed to her something else. Released early from her imprisonment by a legal loophole, the man responsible for her arrest, Gurrik Vale, fears that Vyara might be plotting revenge against him, but if anything, Vyara is thankful for her arrest, for she's realized that the true problem lies with the leader of the Family Dogs, Dras. His growing obsession with the "Stitchlip Man" took the Family Dogs down criminal avenues during Vyara's incarceration that put the group increasingly in the sights of the authorities, and Vyara is desperate to usurp control and push what she now thinks of as "her" gang back into safe waters of minor crimes. Her plan is to use Dras's own weapons against him, and she's been slowly rolling out her plot to convince the leader of the Family Dogs that the "Stitchlip Man" is real and might be coming after him for taking his name in vain. She hasn't ruled out enlisting the help of adventurers capable of keeping their own lips stitched about the truth.



Vroclaw

Captain Winton of House Nimz

| LN | MALE | HUMAN | FIGHTER | 11 |

With resplendent Thuvian flourishes stylishly designed into his elaborate Sally Guard riding armor and several important victories with the Kortos Cavalry during the Fiendflesh Siege and fight against Tar-Baphon's forces in the Cairnlands, Captain Winton of House Nimz ought to be one of Absalom's most celebrated living heroes. Instead he is a source of public ridicule and a symbol of corruption and abuse of power throughout Absalom, a scandal that has become so widespread it has brought a cloud over the Sally Guard and House Nimz itself. And, as with so many other things about Winton's life and career, it all comes down to horses.

A year ago, Winton's prize horse, Zamere, went missing, stolen by unknown culprits. Winton raged at the brazen theft, sending Sally Guard investigators into nearly every stable and animal stall in the city, often far outside his jurisdiction in Westgate. The intrusion enraged Absalom's horse-owners, stable hands, grooms, and appreciators of privacy and personal property. Many horses falsely suspected of being Zamere were confiscated from their owners by well-meaning Sally Guard agents, only to get lost in Absalom's bureaucracy and never returned to their owners. Zamere was never found. Lord Winton suspects everyone, but especially rivals in House Damaq and House Anandari. He is certain an alliance between Scion Ladies Seleenae and Idara is to blame, but both (perhaps unconvincingly) deny any involvement whatsoever. The affair lingers like the stench of a dead horse, spurred on by critical press covertly funded by Lord Oved Blakros, himself a great horse enthusiast. Worst of all are tavern songs like "Lord Winton Unsaddled," "The Hoarse Horseman," or "Persecution of the Ponies," mocking, frustratingly catchy tunes that continue to ensure the scandal will not fade any time soon.

Wrasp

| CE | MALE | GARGOYLE | CLERIC | 18 |

Not all of Absalom's movers and shakers have instantly recognizable public personas. Some are so well-hidden that most of the city's populace don't know of their existence at all. The one-eyed gargoyle priest of Rovagug known only as Wrasp is one of these hidden forces, an enemy who hides in plain sight, crouched atop the eaves of ancient structures as he watches over the city, plotting its inevitable ruin with the slow and methodical patience of a river carving a gash in the world's crust, or the inexorable build of pressure in the heart of a bloating volcano. When not lurking on the city's skyline, Wrasp bides his time in the tangled chambers deep below the Wracked Rock in the Precipice Quarter, where one of his many long-term projects is the revivification of the petrified remains of the wrackworm that makes up the Wracked Rock itself. Wrasp understands the value of anonymity while he plots Absalom's destruction from within, so that when the time finally comes for him to set into motion the city's devastation, none will be prepared for the ruin he is poised to unleash.

Wrent Dicaspiron

| NE | FEMALE | HUMAN | FIGHTER/ROGUE | 10 |

This massive, vicious brute leads the Skinsaw Cult of Absalom. A former butcher, the deaths of her husband and son in the Fiendflesh Siege sent Wrent spiraling into antisocial despair. A ruinous demand from an uncaring bureaucrat was enough to transform Wrent's pain into misanthropy. When she emerged from her isolation, it was as a brutal murderer known as "the Skinner," who slaughtered her victims by driving meat hooks through their heads. She dislikes the other Norgorberite cult leaders of the city, seeing them as too concerned for their own comforts to truly embrace their god.

Acting Primarch Wynsal Starborn

LG | MALE | HUMAN | FIGHTER | 19

Wynsal Starborn is a proud man of Garundi heritage, with long hair pulled into fine braids decorated with gold and blue beads. The retired captain of the First Guard, Wynsal no longer wears his shining plate in his role as acting primarch; he long ago traded his armor for noble clothing, first in his goal to be taken seriously as a politician, and then in an attempt to show the city nobles his leadership is not a military coup. He views his appointment as an unwanted but necessary move to hold the city together until either Lord Gyr is found or a suitable successor can be chosen. His best efforts have done little to calm the tongues of a ruling class eager to replace him, but Starborn considers anything a useful step in navigating the tumultuous political seas.

While he no longer wears armor, his sword is never far from hand, and he's had to use it to kill several would-be assassins. At the request of Captain Chun Hye Seung, the woman he appointed as head of the First Guard and a close friend, he is accompanied by three bodyguards at all times: the first is a varlokkur detective to fend off mystical attacks, the second a priestess of Sarenrae for healing, and the third an elite member of the Starwatch. While Hye Seung additionally insisted on a soldier from the First Guard, Starborn chose to maintain the policy of the First Guard as an external force of Absalom only.

As acting primarch, Starborn has still found that every move or decision, regardless of scale, is met with resistance. His choice of making Captain Hye Seung's position permanent amplifies fears that he will not leave his seat of power even if a new primarch is chosen. Additionally, Starborn outlawed Absalom's slave trade—something he had always detested—offering freedom to any enslaved people that would fight for the city during the Fiendflesh Siege and then declaring general manumission at a significant political cost. The move has earned him as many allies as enemies on the Grand Council, with the Coin Council falling firmly into the latter category. Both Lady Myleena and Lord Navvem of the Coin Council are plotting, and the whispers of their accomplices speak of ousting Starborn for good.

Wynsal Starborn

Wynsal does not have time to concern himself with those plotting his downfall, as the continued operation of the city requires constant attention. He uses his unwanted position to enact what positive change he can, where he can. The Precipice Quarter is one such example; while his predecessor had long abandoned the district to ruin, Starborn used the timely arrival of Watcher-Lord Ulthun II to address the issue. Wynsal sensed potential in the young man and gave him leave to establish a headquarters in the haunted quarter. Wynsal even sees Ulthun as a dark horse candidate for primarch, but he has not yet lost hope in finding the missing Lord Gyr of Gixx.

Until then, Wynsal has turned his eye to the fall of Lastwall and what the return of the Whispering Tyrant means to Avistan. He has ordered Captain Hye-Seung to strengthen the numbers of the First Guard and is ensuring the Starwatch does the same. Dark days are on the horizon, and Wynsal Starborn intends that the lights of Absalom shine brighter than ever before.

Scion Lady Xansippe of House Tevineg

LE | FEMALE | HUMAN | CLERIC | 17

Canny and confident, Lady Xansippe, "Beloved of Asmodeus," has remained a solid advocate for Chelaxian interests in Absalom for more than four decades as the leading high priestess of Asmodeus in the city. Her long-absent husband, Lord Gulv, only recently returned to Absalom after a quarter-century living abroad, on a series of high-profile diplomatic missions on behalf of House Thrune. Lord Gulv currently serves as Cheliax's Grand Ambassador to Absalom, and while he wields considerable political influence and the favor of the empire's young queen, Lady Xansippe's long association with Absalom's levers of power means she has the greater influence in the city. The marriage resulted in several children, with Lady Seichya, Warden of the Brine prison, being Xansippe's favorite and most trusted confidante. Xansippe appreciates what Gulv's return to Absalom has done to bulwark her already significant political power, but whatever romantic spark might once have existed between the two is long gone now.

They maintain their marriage out of convenience and because it gives each greater political clout, but it's an open secret that both keep a bevy of additional lovers on the side. The most prominent of Lady Xansippe's paramours is Lady Darchana, whom she courts both out of genuine romantic interest and because she knows the noblewoman might soon rule all of Absalom as rightful primarch. For years now the two have engaged in an on-again, off-again affair that seems to have picked up steam since the mysterious disappearance of their mutual annoyance, Goodman Hugen of House Candren, causing unsavory rumors to fly about the pair. Xansippe's faith in Asmodeus is absolute, and her grasp on the district's politics via the Chamber of Ecclestials is nearly without equal among her peers.

Scion Lady Xerashir of House Shamyyid

| NG | FEMALE | HUMAN | CLERIC | 19 |

Although she's among the most powerful of Absalom's clerics, Scion Lady Xerashir does not overtly play the part as one of the city's power players. She's served as the high priestess of Sarenrae at the Temple of the Shining Star for nearly two decades, but has only rarely revealed the true extent of her power. Instead, she trusts those who serve her to solve problems before they rise to significance where she's forced to step in, something that has allowed her to stay involved in the politics of the city and to perpetuate several of the more visual traditions of the city, such as her daily walk to the sundial in the Ascendant Court, or to witness any and all attempts at crossing the Starstone Chasm. In many ways, Xerashir is living what amounts to the life of a retiree, when in fact she considers herself to be more akin to "lying in wait" for some upcoming event that might require her to intervene. The schism in Sarenrae's church involving the Cult of the Dawnflower came close to drawing her out, as did the recent events surrounding Tar-Baphon, but in both cases cooler heads or heroic actions stepped in to save the day—just as the scion lady prefers.

Xolarna Dursk

| LG | FEMALE | HALF-ORC | CLERIC/RANGER | 6 |

Xolarna Dursk stepped into the role of houndmaster at the Tempering Hall following the violent death of her predecessor, an elf named Sula Charish, a few years ago. Dursk, now in her early 30s, came to the Seventh Church of Iomedae as a desperate orphan after her parents died in a Mudhaven tenement collapse in the great earthquake of 4698 AR. For years she worked as a farrier for the temple, developing a knack for horses and even branching out to service some of the more exotic mounts of the faith's champions, such as hippogriffs, griffons, and even the rare pegasus or unicorn. When intrigue with a rival faith resulted in Charish's murder, the temple's then-high priest, Genedair the Faithful, named Dursk her replacement as houndmaster. (While the Tempering Hall's houndmaster does indeed train the church's war dogs, those who hold the title are in charge of all of the faith's animals, from lodging a veritable herd of warhorses to training animal companions, riding dogs, and other allied creatures.) The current high priest of the Seventh Church, Tavorae Falsebane, quickly bonded with Dursk as a kindred spirit also new to their role, and the two became fast friends. She is on less favorable terms with her fellow instructor, Evandor Malik, who frequently compares her unfavorably to her predecessor. Dursk is quick to befriend any member of the church with a trained mount or animal companion, offering to teach the creature new tricks and bonding with the owner over their mutual appreciation for beasts, and for their place in the faith of Iomedae.

Xvirac the Smokeborne

| NE | MALE | HUMAN | MONK | 16 |

This legless, maimed Nidalese man sits atop a cloud of smoke inside a spiked cage and promises transcendence through ritual destruction of the flesh. Each night he cuts off a piece of himself and burns it, wafting the smoke across Starstone Chasm with a black feather. He says when he has burned his entire body, he will reform as a deathless being on the other side and easily pass the Test.

Scion Lord Yamthar of House Ormuz

| N | MALE | HUMAN | INVENTOR | 11 |

Pudgy and bespectacled, Lord Yamthar carries himself with good cheer and enthusiasm, though his friendly nature conceals a great deal of political cunning and a tendency to dispose of threats with extreme thoroughness. Lord Yamthar has not aged in more than 20 years, and now looks more like the son of his brothers and sisters than their sibling. Most assume this is the result of his homeland's famous *Sun Orchid Elixir*, but Yamthar refuses to talk about it. He is, however, happy to discuss nearly everything else in great detail and with great enthusiasm. Lord Yamthar's salons are a haven for Absalom's intellectuals, a golden opportunity for the brilliant and unorthodox to meet the rich and powerful.

Yargos Gill

| CG | MALE | HUMAN | SCHOLAR | 8 |

Absalom's most famous military history expert is Yargos Gill, a cantankerous old Andoren scholar who has inexplicably found himself at the center of many of the city's greatest intrigues over the last two decades. Said affairs frequently involve the Pathfinder Society, whose own published accounts of these events in the *Pathfinder Chronicles* bring him additional unwanted exposure and notoriety. Gill's expertise proved pivotal in defeating the Black Echelon Uprising three years ago, an event that brought him even greater renown. Formerly a poor retired sage living in a Puddles tenement, Yargos Gill now finds himself uncomfortably thrust into the social circles of adventurers and nobles. Everyone wants him as

their personal investigator or party guest, commitments that keep him so busy these days he hardly has time for his own important research. He is friendly but frantic, and always seems to be thinking about some great work or important study he could finally get to at last if only he weren't engaged in his current obligation.

Gill was a military adjutant to the great General Eddage during the People's Revolt, the military genius responsible for many of the campaign's most ingenious victories over Cheliax. While at Eddage's side Gill worked closely with the general's aide de camp, the young Augustyn Naran. The two veterans kept up a correspondence in the decades since the war, and now that Naran's diplomatic work as a Senator in Andoran's People's Council brings him to Absalom regularly, the pair have become boon companions once more. In consideration for Gill's assistance in defending Absalom (and thus the interests of Andoran), Naran plucked his old friend from a life of penury in the Puddles and installed him in a fine estate in Eastgate paid for by the Andoren government. There Gill keeps a rapidly growing library of works on military history, as well as a vast collection of historical arms and armor donated by grateful patrons back in the homeland.

Despite his newfound life of upper class luxury and high-powered connections, Yargos Gill sometimes longs for the simplicity of his prior life in the Puddles. He still sometimes visits the Soggy Piper, his favorite old tavern. He and old friends—a few of them illiterate and all of them more humble than his current associates—gather there in friendship and quiet camaraderie. These days, Gill always picks up the bill. He also spends a great deal of time at the Forae Logos, in the Wise Quarter. He is close friends with Head Librarian Brivit Nae. He intrinsically distrusts Second Archivist Sandaril, despising the elderly elf's "nice-guy act" and warning everyone he can that the friendly old man is up to no good.

Yeena Quoros

LG | FEMALE | HUMAN | CLERIC | 13

Now in her fourth decade of service to Absalom's Seventh Church of Iomedae, Yeena Quoros is the institutional memory of the temple, a beloved senior priestess held in esteem by generations of the Inheritor's faith in Absalom. The ornate trim of her clerical vestments—themselves a relic of a previous era—indicate her high rank. Streaks of white marble her short black hair. Yeena's experience and wisdom make her a critical confidante of Tavorae Falsebane, the new high priest of the Seventh Church, who has come to rely heavily on her counsel as he settles into his new role. On the rare occasions in which she is away from the temple or the Tempering Hall nearby, Yeena can be found enjoying the cuisine and camaraderie of the House of Shade and Grace, in the Foreign Quarter. Her family left Thuvia hundreds of years ago, but the high priestess nonetheless strongly embraces her heritage. She is rightly skeptical of Lord Yamthar and his cohorts in House Ormuz, whom she believes to be embroiled in a number of suspicious activities throughout the city.

Yelmo

NG | MALE | HUMAN | BARTENDER | 2

The morose proprietor of the Soggy Piper tavern is something of an institution in the Puddles. He's managed his rickety, run-down dive bar at the northeastern edge of the district for nearly 40 years, which is longer than most residents of the district live their whole lives. Situated at the base of an uprise leading up to a coastal rock formation known as Torsen's Maw that overlooks a steep drop to jagged rocks in the surf below, the Piper stands at the gateway to an important gathering spot for opportunistic street gangs, ill-intended cultists, or other villains, who sometimes stop by for a quick drop of ale before engaging in their malfeasance. Of this particular class of blackguards Yelmo is least fond of the treacherous gang known as the War Hounders, holding a particular antipathy for their leader, Nessian. Years ago the gang burst into the Piper and kidnapped Yelmo's favorite customer, the scholar Yargos Gill. They nearly killed the old man by tossing him off the Maw only moments later. Yelmo has never forgiven the Hounders, and forbids members of the gang from entering his bar, openly threatening to poison their drinks should they dare to test him. Yelmo probably should have retired a decade ago. Long, stringy gray hair hangs limply from his head at the sides, but the top has been bald for 30 years. His front teeth are cracked, so he whistles when he talks. His left eye is always squinting.

Yiddlepode

LN | FEMALE | KOBOLD | BARD | 6

Eldest child of Kibizax, the founder of the Sewer Dragons kobold tribe, Yiddlepode now rules the tribe after her father's abdication. Her most trusted advisor is her brother, Trapmaster Tok, but she knows he resents her relative authority, so she trusts him only as far as necessary to lead her people effectively. Although Yiddlepode does not enjoy the public reputation on the surface that Tok does, she actually spends more time there than any Sewer Dragon, taking in the local opera and theater showings while magically disguised, typically as a blue-cloaked halfling. After gaining control of the Sewer Dragons, Yiddlepode brokered a pact with the Pathfinder Society that exchanges a safe smuggling route through the sewers for economic investment, protection, and other advantages.

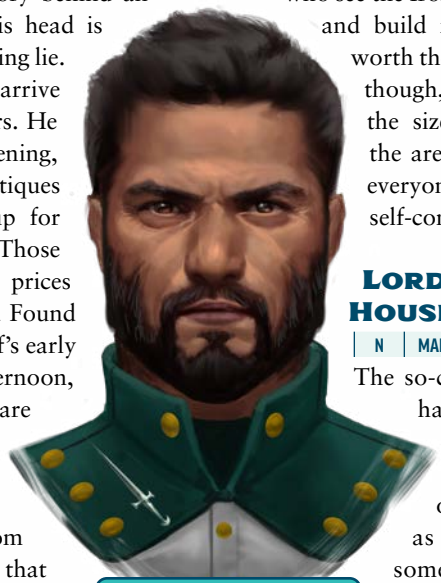
Yggwil

CN | MALE | DWARF | MERCHANT | 4

Quick to throw his arm about the shoulders of passersby and usher them into his cozy antiquities shop Lost and Found on the edge of the Grand Bazaar, charming Yggwil is a great friend to world travelers and adventurers. With a hearty chuckle and a theatrical stroke of his prodigious, bead-embellished black beard, Yggwil delights at conducting tours through his shop, extolling the beauty and virtues of his stock while rolling out facts about the item's mysterious origins. He has a fantastic eye for

quality and has an impressive command of historical trivia regarding ancient and modern material culture. When he doesn't know the true story behind an item, the hoard of anecdotes in his head is usually sufficient to inspire a convincing lie. Yggwil is usually one of the first to arrive at the market in the pre-dawn hours. He scans the market shortly before opening, snapping up the most interesting antiques and oddities and marking them up for certain sale at his well-known shop. Those who can afford to pay his inflated prices know that it's best to visit Lost and Found at mid-day, to benefit from the dwarf's early market exploitation. By mid-afternoon, most of Yggwil's best daily finds are already gone.

Yggwil currently serves as a fence for books provided to him by mysterious robed scholars from the Wise Quarter. He's figured out that these men are somehow affiliated with the Scriveners' Guild, but he has no idea that they play a minor role in Second Archivist Sandaril's sweeping plan to take over the Forae Logos. He's always quick to point out his latest titles to curious adventurers visiting his shop, a stock that rolls over every three or four days. Though the books are never magical, they are always of general interest to adventurers, bearing lurid titles like *Demonology of the Savant*, *Catalog of the Unruly Angels*, *House Thrune's Official Codex of Forbidden Texts*, *Seven Blades of Gloaming Moonlight*, *Elder Vistas of Arcane Development*, and so on.



Lord Yuvin Vatir

Ysia Iron-Palm

LN | FEMALE | SYLPH | CLERIC | 13

Many mistook the waifish Ysia for being an easy target in her youth, and those who survived the error in judgment never made that mistake again. The slender sylph received her initial training on the Isle of Jalmeray, where she studied for several years among the Houses of Perfection, particularly with the monks of the Monastery of Untwisting Iron. She excelled in these techniques, despite the fact that her nature would have suggested a better fit to the Monastery of Unfolding Wind. But Ysia was never one to take the easy route. In time, she realized that her true interests lay not in the perfection of the body, but in the perfection of the mind, and she left Jalmeray to travel among the cities of the Inner Sea. She decided to settle in Absalom when she first laid eyes on the Irorium, and began her training as a priest at once. She excelled, as her method of combining her monastic teachings with clerical studies gave her an advantage that she was eager to build upon. It seemed almost foreordained that she would eventually rise to the position of high priestess, and she's served in that capacity for well over a decade now. She rarely took part in public displays and contests in the arena during her youth, but has recently started to wonder if perhaps that was a mistake, as she suspects corruption has begun to infect the lower ranks of those who see the Irorium merely as a place to make money and build fame. Ysia hasn't yet decided if it's worth the trouble to try to reclaim the Irorium, though, for she also understands that a city the size of Absalom needs something like the arena to help sate its baser nature—not everyone has the advantage of patience and self-control, after all.

Lord Yuvin Vatir of House Damaq

N | MALE | HUMAN | FIGHTER | 11

The so-called "Champion of Azlanti Keep," has won 22 victories in the Irorium, and with each triumph his glory and fame grows among the people of Absalom. Lord Yuvin's popularity as quartermaster of Azlanti Keep is somewhat more difficult to gauge. He rules the Open Market there like a brutal tyrant, using his own fists to deal with thieves and refusing to call in the Starwatch (which, along with the Muckruckers, he bans from shopping there). The Silver Sword is unpopular with many merchants in the Coins, who view his steep discounts in the Open as illegal and unfair competition and seek combatants to embarrass him in the Irorium.

Zarta Dralneen

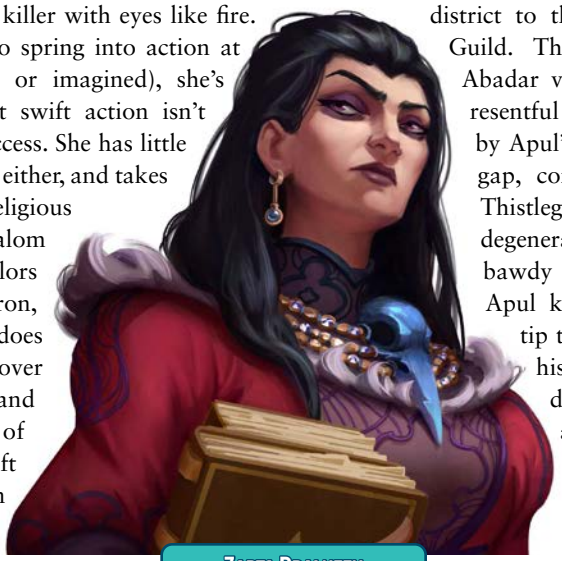
LN | FEMALE | HUMAN | BARD | 8

Zarta Dralneen grew up in Egorian as a favorite at court. For years she served as Grand Ambassador of Cheliax, living a life of indolent luxury at the converted Temple of Aroden in the Ascendant Court. In this capacity, the flirtatious and sexually liberated Dralneen (then a paracountess) acted as liaison to Chelaxian agents of the Pathfinder Society, subtly attempting to influence the adventuring guild toward assisting her home nation. Fearing her growing influence in Absalom, enemies back in Cheliax had Dralneen "disappeared" in 4712. Allies in the Pathfinder Society rescued her from imprisonment in the Hellknight Citadel Vraid, but the affair crushed her loyalty to Cheliax. She thereafter dropped the hedonistic facade and accepted a position as chief archivist of the Society's Dark Archive, dedicating herself to the study and proper handling of artifacts the Decemvirate deems dangerous enough to hide away. Dralneen's life has always been tied up with secrets, and now she considers herself the mistress of some of the most important and dangerous secrets in all of Golarion. She is, naturally, no longer welcome at the Chelaxian Embassy (and has, in any event, been replaced there by the pretentious Gulv Tevineg). Today she spends most of her time in the Dark Archive's tunnels and chambers below the Grand Lodge, or at one of several private properties she owns in the Ivy District.

Zelva

LE | FEMALE | HUMAN | ROGUE | 6

Zelva is a thin-lipped, slim killer with eyes like fire. While she's always ready to spring into action at any insult or threat (real or imagined), she's learned the hard way that swift action isn't always the best route to success. She has little interest in hiding her nature either, and takes full advantage of the religious freedoms allowed in Absalom to openly wear the colors and symbols of her patron, Asmodeus. Yet Asmodeus does not hold complete sway over her loyalties. She values and appreciates her hometown of Absalom, and has only left the city half a dozen times in her 25 years. One of Zelva's favorite things, in fact, is to catch others off guard when they assume that just because she worships Asmodeus, she must come from Cheliax. She's always quick to point out that the Prince of Darkness is so much more than a "flash-in-the-pan monarchy run by a child queen," or whatever other recent favorite insult she has ready to refer to Cheliax, Thrune, or Queen Abrogail. But there are other loyalties as well, and Zelva has room for them all. She's a member of the Gylou Sisters, and her success with the gang has seen her rise swiftly through the ranks. And even though she's acerbic and disrespectful to those who test her patience, to those she respects or values as friends, she's as loyal as any paladin to any code. One of her best friends is the half-orc Gurd, whom Zelva has been recently teaching to read. Zelva greatly values Gurd's ability to play on the stereotype of the dull-witted half-orc and use assumption to her advantage, and thinks her friend's goal to join the Knights of Lastwall as an envoy to Belkzen is a cause worth pursuing—even to the extent that she's considering methods by which she might be able to accompany Gurd into this new role. Getting those stuffy Lastwall knights to realize they could learn something about dealing with an evil enemy by thinking like an evil creature in the first place might be tricky, is all.



Zarta Dralneen

Zharep Apul

LN | MALE | HUMAN | WARRIOR | 8

Once a paladin of Abadar and a voice for reform and proactive law enforcement in the Ivy District, Zharep Apul, Captain of the Thistleguard, is today but a shadow of his former self, and the district is all the poorer for his continued decline into melancholy and irrelevance. A decade ago, Apul found himself ensnared in an illicit romantic affair that cost him his paladinhood and drummed him out of the church of Abadar. Everyone in the district knew that the captain's old nemesis, Alain Always, had orchestrated the imbroglio, but instead of fueling Apul's rivalry, the scandal sent him into a deep depression that largely ceded control of the district to the Street Performers and Actors' Guild. The citizen-based Brotherhood of Abadar vigilance committee—composed of resentful former flockmates scandalized by Apul's downfall—emerged to fill in the gap, considering Captain Apul and the Thistleguard every bit a part of the moral degeneracy threatening the district as the bawdy bullies aligned with Alain Always. Apul knows his own failings helped to tip the district toward lawlessness, but his overwhelming sense of duty—drummed into him after decades as a paladin—can't allow him to stand aside and hand the Thistleguard over to a more capable ruler.

Zharichela

NG | FEMALE | GNOME | CLERIC | 10

The Temple of the Shining Star may be the most grandiose and famous of Absalom's temples of Sarenrae, but Zharichela feels no jealousy. Indeed, as she's quick to remind those who work for her but grow frustrated at an apparent lack of recognition from the city for the good done by her temple, the House of Healing, that this lack of recognition comes hand in hand with a lack of control. The clerics of the House of Healing are largely left to serve Sarenrae as they wish. By providing healing and shelter to any who seek it, regardless of creed, they've drawn plenty of scorn and backlash—reactions that would doubtless be even greater if they were in the same position as the Temple of the Shining Star. Zharichela herself has fought hard to protect her parishioners and priests alike to shelter them from bureaucracy and blowback, but lately she wonders if there might be a limit to the wisdom of offering safety to any who ask for it. She certainly screens those who seek shelter, and has in large part weeded out those who sought to use these offers as a way to infiltrate the ranks, but recently she's been doubting herself after a succubus managed to worm her way into the organization. Zharichela managed to expunge the demonic influence before it caused any lasting damage, but the fact that the succubus managed to deceive her for so long after posing as one of her worshippers has her questioning more than the policies she's helped the House of Healing to foster.

Zifelez of Gyr

CG | FEMALE | ELF | RANGER | 10

Zifelez is the second-in-command of the Sally Guard and field commander of the Kortos Cavalry. She jokes about almost anything as long as it doesn't interfere with her orders. She sees the Kortos Cavalry as a place where the finest of Absalom can become knights regardless of their origin. Shadowy figures she suspects to be Starwatch sent by Urkon of House Ormuz lurk outside her father's home

in Westgate sometimes, discouraging her from patrolling certain parts of Shoreline. She is good friends with Lady Seleenae of House Damaq, and often goes riding with her on her beloved white horse, Aiudara.

Zozzler Vondorun

| LE | MALE | HUMAN | CLERIC | 17 |

With the worship of Zon-Kuthon among the oldest active religions on Avistan, it's certainly curious that a city with as much religious freedom as Absalom has no obvious temple devoted to the Midnight Lord. To Zozzler Vondorun, this is a boon, for it allows him to pursue his work unimpeded by the complications of having a needy flock of worshippers eager for excuses to self-flagellate or the interruptions to work arising from meddling guards and adventurers alike. Those who are truly devout and faithful to Zon-Kuthon either know of Zozzler Vondorun before their visit and know better than to flock to him, or are warned away from bothering the artist without an invitation. When someone needs to speak to Zozzler, Zozzler knows and calls to them in dreams tinged with nightmare. To the rest of the city, he's little more than a talented but somewhat eccentric painter whose works run the gamut of disturbing to downright horrific, yet only rarely in a way in which the offensive qualities overcome begrudging admiration. Zozzler works and lives in a small suite of rooms on the second floor of Tempest, within which he toils on his paintings and communes privately with the Midnight Lord. Often, days or even weeks go by without Zozzler's emergence from his locked rooms, yet this is not to say Zozzler is a shut-in. Quite the opposite, for his paintings can fade the boundary between this realm and the Shadow Plane, and Zozzler is fond of traveling to strange and remote reaches of that realm via his art to bask in places even others of his faith may have forgotten about—or have never known at all. Now and then, Zozzler allows one of his paintings to be sold to a collector or a curious aficionado. In some cases, these are fellow worshippers of Zon-Kuthon who work with Zozzler to expand his network of cunningly painted shadow portals, but most of those who purchase a Vondorun will never know that they're hanging a portal to an awful corner of the Shadow Plane in their homes until it is too late.

Zusgut, the Goblin King of Absalom

| CN | MALE | GOBLIN | ROGUE | 15 |

The self-proclaimed Goblin King of Absalom and the most unusual aide-de-camp of Lastwall's exiled leader, Zusgut has swiftly become Absalom's most unusual celebrity. Though his ego is placated by such notoriety, the burden of leadership weighs heavily upon his mind. Now in his rotting, dilapidated playhouse near the center of the Puddles, Zusgut finally finds a chance to advance his own gambits and improve his station in the world. He dresses himself as any would-be king should dress—in lavish regalia that still allows him the freedom to inflict vengeance upon those who would abuse him.

From his rickety wooden towers, Zusgut proselytizes to young goblins and wayward youths, spreading tales of pragmatic enrichment against oppressive and overwhelming enemies. He stokes the flames of audacious ambition so often found in the young, goblin or otherwise, encouraging membership in both his court and the ever-swelling ranks of the Soddenhouse Shankers, his knife-wielding Puddles militia and gang. He has commissioned a play or two from traveling authors, the subject of which seems to re-frame the events during which he traveled with the paladin Ulthun II to focus on the goblin as the hero—though ignored in most popular circles, dilettantes with an ear for scandal usually appreciate the lurid productions, despite the underprivileged youths who take up the roles upon the stage usually butchering any substance by way of rambling soliloquies and mispronunciations. More serious veterans of Absalom's political games have sometimes probed Zusgut for information that could be used against Ulthun, yet with these visitors the Goblin King has proven maliciously canny and notoriously close-lipped.

Zusgut

NPCs by Type

The following lists, broken down by types of NPCs frequently encountered in an urban campaign, can help you find the right NPC at the right level at a glance. Remember that the levels, names, and details of the NPCs provided in this book are designed as launching pads for further inspiration. If it makes sense to change a specific detail to improve the events of your campaign, do not hesitate to do so!

Ambassadors

Andoran	Senator Augustyn Naran
Azarketi	Lemaria Kumari
Cheliax	Lord Gulv
Lastwall	Ulthun II
Minotaurs	Nuar Spiritskin
New Thassilon	Ayandai and Firandivar
Osirion	Dremdhet Salhar
Qadira	Emir Thalzar Gaatan
Ravounel	Vita Aulamaxa
Taldor	Tolara Alverteen

Ancients

Level 2	Slithering Snare
Level 9	Urtox, Velasca
Level 12	Lord Absol, Roglund Tergurast
Level 14	Mother Jackal, Verimachius the Architect
Level 16	Etrenne Rylwynn
Level 17	Pasharran, Thulraga
Level 20	Iolanthe

Artists

Level 3	Lord Encarius (painter)
Level 8	Lady Dhrami (painter), Kosanti Hokamagi (poet and painter), Sheltas (shell painter)
Level 9	Aethlred Navar (author), Rajit Punjeer (choreographer)
Level 10	Iacovius Vatatze (composer)
Level 13	Tia Yi Gan (poet)
Level 16	Etrenne Rylwynn (composer)
Level 17	Endrik Archerus (painter), Zozzler Vondorun (painter)
Level 19	Sindoi of the Thousand Poems (poet)

Artisans

Level 5	Bothuk Thraske (watchmaker)
Level 6	Boldo Drenk (sculptor)
Level 7	Camani Jensen (clockworker), Trapmaster Tok (trap maker)
Level 8	Bagara Broadfoot (inventor)
Level 10	Theodora "Tea" Signe (tailor), Vittar Corusec (kitemaker)
Level 11	Ambroz Black (tailor), Jembar Dustyshankle (jeweler)
Level 12	Lord Absol (architect)
Level 13	Aarnock Xanthiss (perfumer), Parsin Guile (woodworker)
Level 14	Al-Amir Kai (tailor), Hans the Northman (woodworker)
Level 16	Engleton Embrey (swordsmith)
Level 17	Mama Shrog (alchemist)

Assassins

Level 14	Lady Annasendra
Level 16	Lord Celedo

Beggars

Level 1	Boils Caralne
Level 2	Lord Corian, Marten
Level 6	Darius Finch, Salindra Concilio

Children

Level 0	Tevis Severus, Tikria Gaatan
Level 1	Lady Chandarin, Niervok, Unavi
Level 2	Lord Corian, Dooley Gavix, Marten, Tall Hannah, Ilarra, Vanissi Gaatan, Venorium Blorm, Virgil the Swift
Level 3	Avesta Guile, Chani Muraabe, Chedra Rantore, Lord Darin, Hamlin Moore, Jada Moore, Lady Kiya, Rance Dellby
Level 4	Friendly Senn
Level 8	Derica Foss

City Watch

Level 3	Joriah
Level 5	Trakkus Clawfoot
Level 6	Brenna Robles, Casmia Evers
Level 7	Elmoira Taggart, Folant ap'Morilla, Lady Kythes, Shristi Melipdra
Level 8	Lord Ayunga, Faiza Pagani, Zharep Apul
Level 9	Alasmin Sarulamon
Level 10	Zifelez of Gyr
Level 11	Lord Winton
Level 12	Asilia of Gyr, Mendhir the Colossus
Level 13	Runewulf the Unbeliever
Level 14	Florian Gale
Level 15	Utgar of Gyr
Level 16	Haigen Topkick
Level 19	Lord Guirden

Collectors

Level 1	Jossie Slimfin
Level 2	Jarid Moltwin
Level 3	Heryn Gale
Level 4	Fenwick Severus, Sanloria Percota, Yggwil
Level 5	Murno Bloss
Level 7	Elmoira Taggart
Level 8	Clufton Kline, Coltan Menedrid, Darelli Gammathumalshire, Zarta Dralneen

Level 9	Alina Muraabe, Baragel Tindertales, Lady Delveris, Gewgaw, Pondo Funt
Level 10	Lord Oved, Sorinna Westyr, Yargos Gill
Level 11	Eras the Needle
Level 13	Guaril Karela
Level 16	Rosvierre Ibanc
Level 17	Lady Hamaria

Courtesans

Level 3	Evelessa
Level 4	Faelyn
Level 5	Nobukazu
Level 10	Versien of Nisroch
Level 12	Chesele
Level 17	Lady Dyrianna

Fences

Level 2	Jarid Moltwin
Level 3	Barnel
Level 4	Sanloria Percota, Yggwil
Level 5	Murno Bloss
Level 7	Skirma Toadlicker
Level 8	Coltan Menedrid, Erdan Sianovel, Fribinella Dracori
Level 9	Gewgaw
Level 11	Mama Shrog
Level 13	Guaril Karela
Level 18	Namira

Gamblers

Level 3	Barnel, Breslin, Bronton Guile
Level 4	Emral Xarcious, Vanius Cestanian
Level 5	Lady Anilah
Level 8	Lady Azoria, Golinarth
Level 9	Pondo Funt
Level 11	Nuar Spiritskin, Osprey
Level 12	Lady Miranda
Level 13	Guaril Karela, Metadame Vannessir
Level 14	Mother Jackal
Level 16	Lord Gulv
Level 17	Lord Gyr

Gladiators

Level 3	Bronton Guile
Level 7	Rubeis, Torman Iates
Level 8	Khoskhadi Ever-Silver
Level 10	Tergul, Undrul Vosh
Level 11	Lord Yuvin
Level 12	Bwutuzu the Panther, Ledford
Level 13	Runewulf the Unbeliever
Level 14	Atrandi Goldheart

Guides

Level 2	Illarra, Marten
Level 6	Frumlin Fruz
Level 7	Gevvid
Level 9	Donnica Mycelene Ia-Tep
Level 11	Tergul

Kite Enthusiasts

Level 0	Tikria Gaatan
Level 5	Bagwell Thomkin
Level 7	Ilrava Drogand
Level 10	Vittar Corusec
Level 13	Emir Thalzar

Laborers

Level 0	Hasjald
Level 1	Galven Rockbottom
Level 2	Bevran Blorm, Ilarra, Mulden Foss, Virgil the Swift
Level 3	Adula Tremane, Umlox Vulm
Level 4	Ezlip Terrag, Gaftrin, Gurd, Thavin Shuln
Level 5	Murno Bloss
Level 6	Feldreth Noor, Oldrik Elduthan
Level 7	Guyton Grerton, Shund
Level 8	Bagara Broadfoot
Level 10	Amaziah Meneha
Level 15	Vernus

Mercenaries

Level 3	Bronton Guile, Joriah
Level 6	Eggal Torkelson
Level 8	Kalavess, Khoskhadi Ever-Silver
Level 10	Marcos Farabellus
Level 12	Ledford
Level 14	Atrandi Goldheart, Lord Riodos
Level 15	Benkhal Blackblade, Garyth Pammenter

Merchants

Level 1	Jossie Slimfin
Level 2	Alinzia Gaatan, Jarid Moltwin
Level 3	Market Master Annavi, Jorula Karela, Marli
Level 4	Ezlip Terrag, Thavin Shuln, Urongu, Yggwil
Level 5	Bagwell Thomkin, Claudette Butterfoot, Pihma Lamar, Terrus Von
Level 6	Lady Alidane, Boldo Drenk, Gerig the Inspirer, Mirtion, Qidesca, Torail
Level 7	Lady Chesne, Galamere, Gron Humbolt, Kamata, Quar, Scarin Saloli, Skirma Toadlicker
Level 8	Coltan Menedrid, Darelli Gammathumalshire, Eudom Mansarian, Fribinella Dracori, Hilenda Guile, Sheltas, Ta Kohmar, Tern on the Wind
Level 9	Alina Muraabe, Beragel Tindertales, Lady Delveris
Level 10	Ptarnex Dexarion, Theodora “Tea” Signe, Vittar Corusec
Level 11	Ambroz Black, Jembar Dustyshankle, Mama Shrog, Lady Seichya, Lord Yuvin
Level 12	Aaqir al’Hakaam, Aftrin Undrol, Lord Archych, Bwutuzu the Panther
Level 13	Aarnock Xanthiss, Iltara Clavela, Lady Myleena, Parsin Guile
Level 14	Al-Amir Kai, Hans the Northman, Lord Rajit, Lord Riodos, Urmas Sirola

Level 15	Benkhal Blackblade, Lady Idara
Level 16	Engleton Embrey
Level 17	Lady Hamaria, Horner Shan, Vroclaw of Brevoy
Level 18	Namira
Level 19	Lady Darchana

Military

Level 2	Anceltan Berryhock
Level 5	Gurrik Vale
Level 6	Pyl Gillseed, Salif of Wynsal
Level 9	Lord Oirel, Sevana Kinhan
Level 10	Ultara Deepkeg, Zifelez of Gyr
Level 11	Mircen Kinsgate, Symo of Wynsal, Lord Yuvin
Level 12	Chun Hye-Seung
Level 16	Lord Lerefys
Level 19	Wynsal Starborn

Pathfinders

Level 0	Hasjald
Level 4	J Dacilane, Janira Gavix, Nester Rees
Level 5	Drock Ovix
Level 6	Arkonis Severus
Level 7	Lord Haimon, Nigel Aldain
Level 8	Drandle Dreng, Fola Barun, Maren Fuln, Shevala Iorae, Venla Sirola, Zarta Dralneen
Level 10	Ambrus Valsin, Kreighton Shaine, Marcos Farabellus, Sorinna Westyr
Level 11	Eras the Needle, Osprey
Level 13	Eliza Petulengro
Level 15	Aram bin-Kaleel, Benkhal Blackblade

Performers

Level 2	Dooley Gavix
Level 3	Avesta Guile, Chedra Rantore
Level 4	The Ignited Juggler, Larkin Waever
Level 5	Nobukazu
Level 6	The Fish-Head Queen, Fumlin Fruz, Jehanna, The Self-Consuming Troll
Level 8	Kosanti Hokamagi, Llew Gladwyn, Golinarth
Level 9	Emma Sadik, Jaivati
Level 10	Iacovius Vatatze, The Inverted Man, Ryni the Jest
Level 13	Lord Jaren, Tia Yi Gan, Verica Strange
Level 14	Lord Rajit, Sammael Rantore
Level 15	Alain Always, Durga Den
Level 16	Etrenne Rylwynn, Rosvierre Ibanc
Level 20	The Living Eye

Politicians and Bureaucrats

Level 2	Dalessa
Level 4	Bragus Stoutkeep, Sanloria Percota
Level 5	Lady Anilah, Bothuk Thraske, Fronsac Shimm, Gelda Dellby, Milly Tundall, Murno Bloss
Level 6	Lady Alidane, Darabele Fairwind, Grint Basatrel, Ninian Gallego
Level 7	Chugmuzz the Surly, Guyton Grerton, Lord Haimon, Jeon Raeng-Woo, Skirma Toadlicker, Torman Iates, Venlun Frusk
Level 8	Lord Ayunga, Beirivelle Starshine, Evessian Deris, Hilenda Guile, Kildress Fung, Venla Sirola, Vita Aulamaxa, Zarta Dralneen
Level 9	Lady Evigail, Lemaria Kumari, Lady Nymara, Pondo Funt, Lord Urkon, Varvara Amadei
Level 10	Ayandai, Lord Omrys, Saphira, Lord Toiden
Level 11	Grenduul Fleng, Jembar Dustyshankle, Nuar Spiritskin, Udiska
Level 12	Aaqir Al-Hakam, Lord Archych, Augustyn Naran, Dremdhet Salhar, Lord Ganfen, Lady Gloriana, Larrett, Lady Nahla, Olansa Terimor, Lady Seleenae
Level 13	Aarnock Xanthiss, Sealord Amodjun, Eliza Petulengro, Ferridan Severus, Gressil Kluun, Jaress Molinarro, Judae Tarshem, Lady Myleena, Parsin Guile, Thalzar Gaatan
Level 14	Brivit Nae, Hans the Northman, Goodman Hugen, Tolara Alverteen, Ulthun II
Level 15	Alain Always, Diasco Vade, Lady Idara, Jostlin Ferqyr, Kralte Grisham, Muar Gauthfallow, Tavorae Falsebane, Utgar of Gyr, Zusgut
Level 16	Lady Adrielle, Dhauken Tor, Engleton Embrey, Lord Gulv, Haigen Topkick, Lord Lerefys, Lord Rogren
Level 17	Brythen Blood, Garethal Brighteyes, Lord Gyr, Vroclaw of Brevoy, Lady Xansippe
Level 18	Lord Avid, Lady Neferpatra
Level 19	Lady Darchana, Lord Guirden, Sindoi of the Thousand Poems, Wynsal Starborn

Sages and Scholars

Level 2	Venorium Blorm
Level 3	Tontartigan Dellby
Level 4	Emral Xarcious, Nester Rees, Sanloria Percota
Level 6	Kavati Kuro, Renwick Graystone
Level 7	Ilrava Drogand, Nigel Aldain
Level 8	Kildress Fung, Maren Fuln, Trevlin Crest, Venla Sirola, Yargos Gill, Zarta Dralneen
Level 9	Varvara Amadei
Level 10	Haligander, Kreighton Shaine, Sorinna Westyr, Lord Toiden
Level 12	Nadine Vives
Level 13	Dorakotho, Judae Tarshem, Sandaril, Tia Yi Gan, Metadame Vannessir, Madame Vordris
Level 14	Brivit Nae
Level 15	Aram bin-Kaleel, Kralte Grisham, Tiberius Groopert
Level 16	Dhauken Tor, Lord Rogren, Rosvierre Ibanc
Level 18	Jovara Humbolt
Level 19	The Assembler, Lady Darchana

Ship Captains

Level 6	Darabele Fairwind (*Spray Scorpion*)
Level 7	Chugmuzz the Surly (*Black Revenge*), Elmoira Taggart (*Windward Warrior*), Thaddeus Barabus (*Lucky Devil*)
Level 8	Coltan Menedrid (*Old Heidi*), Evessian Deris (*Cutlass*)
Level 9	Torius Vin (*Stargazer*)
Level 10	Trelliun (*Sterling Sapphire*)
Level 11	Eras the Needle (*Grinning Pixie*)
Level 12	Asilia of Gyr (*Hurricane Wings*)
Level 16	Lord Lerefys (*Aeon Paragon*)

Slavers

Level 7	Benkt Slipshod
Level 9	Gewgaw, Torius Vin, Urtox
Level 11	Lord Navvem, Lady Seichya
Level 12	Lord Archych, Pardu Pildapush

Tavern and Restaurant Workers

Level 2	Yelmo
Level 3	Breslin, Dahar, Chedra Rantore, Heryn Gale
Level 4	Faelyn, Sendeli Foxglove
Level 5	Claudette Butterfoot, Drock Ovix, Fronsac Shimm
Level 6	Jehanna, Kurgatosh, Qidesca, Torail
Level 7	Dege Blackhill, Gasporian, Lady Kythes, Torman Iates
Level 8	Annara Laskin, Lady Azoria, Clufton Kline
Level 9	Lady Alyssia
Level 10	Saphira, Versien of Nisroch
Level 11	Skirma Toad-Licker
Level 12	Chesele, Valcent Minstros
Level 14	Sammael Rantore

Villains

Level 1	Boils Caralne, Feldus Chuld
Level 2	Jarid Moltwin, Mulden Foss, Slithering Snare, Tall Hannah
Level 3	Barnel, Bronton Guile, Hamlin Moore, Jada Moore, Marli, Mezuk
Level 4	Durward, Gurd, The Ignited Juggler, Larkin Waever, Sanloria Percota, Thavin Shuln, Tumult Flower Flourish, Vanius Cestanian
Level 5	Anchor, Fronsac Shimm, Gelda Dellby, Groske, Haven Bannister, Murno Bloss, Nessian, Terrus Von, Trakkus Clawfoot
Level 6	Boldo Drenk, Bor Dralfo, Darius Finch, Lord Deineis, Feldreth Noor, Friendly Senn, Fumlin Fruz, Jorry Slimfin, Oldrik Elduthan, The Self-Consuming Troll, Yiddlepode, Zelva
Level 7	Benkt Slipshod, Lady Eleanir, Gasporian, Gevvid, Lord Juartos, Lady Kythes, Rubeis, Torman Iates, Trapmaster Tok, Venlun Frusk
Level 8	Lady Azoria, Lord Donovar, Ealan Foxglove, Golinarth, Kildress Fung, Khaya, Trevlin Crest, Vyara
Level 9	Dr. Bensi Skule, Lady Delveris, Dras, Lady Evigail, Gewgaw, Pondo Funt, Torius Vin, Lord Urkon, Urtox, Velasca
Level 10	Iacovius Vatatze, The Inverted Man, Ptarnex Dexarion, Ryni the Jest, Theodora "Tea" Signe, Versien of Nisroch, Wrent Discapriron, Undrul Vosh
Level 11	Chaundralor God-Harvester, Jembar Dustyshankle, Mama Shrog, Lord Navvem, The Scorpion Prince, Lady Seichya, Tergul, Lord Yamthar
Level 12	Lord Archych, Bloody Benothar, Firandivar, Jaruke Dalagander, Larrett, Ledford, Olansa Terimor, Pardu Pildapush, Valcent Minstros
Level 13	Aarnock Xanthiss, Lord Damian, Flevvid Grummlin, Gressil Kluun, Guaril Karela, Korhül, Jaress Molinarro, Sandaril, Lady Sarnia, Metadame Vannessir, Madame Vordris
Level 14	Lady Annasendra, Atrandi Goldheart, Florian Gale, Layton Bryne, Mother Jackal, Samel Maleagant, Tolara Alverteen, Verimachius the Architect
Level 15	Alain Always, Garyth Pammenter, Jonis Flakfatter, Kralte Grisham, Vernus, Zusgut
Level 16	Lord Celedo, Lord Gulv, Haigen Topkick, Xvirac the Smokeborne
Level 17	Lady Dyrianna, Endrik Archerus, Lord Gyr, Lady Hamaria, Horner Shan, Pasharran, Thulraga, Vroclaw of Brevoy, Lady Xansippe, Zozzler Vondorun
Level 18	Lord Avid, Pasharran, Reginald Vancaskerkin, Vonthos of the Golden Bridge, Wrasp
Level 19	The Assembler, Lord Avid, Lady Darchana, Lord Guirden, Lord Kerkis, Sindoi of the Thousand Poems, Lord Synarr
Level 20	Iolanthe, The Living Eye

Adventure Toolbox

Azarketi Weapons

The following uncommon weapons are common on the Isle of Kortos and within azarketi settlements. Boarding axes are also common in the High Seas region.

Weapon Traits

Azarketi: Azarketis craft and use these weapons.
Climbing: The hand holding this weapon is freely available to Climb.

Weapon Descriptions

Details for the weapons in the table below are described here.

Boarding Axe: This small axe sports a spike opposite the blade that aids in climbing and is useful in clearing obstacles, such as fallen rigging.

Gill Hook: This spear has a specialized hook just before the tip that can catch on the gills of large fish. Azarketis primarily use this to hunt sharks, but it can also be used to hook flesh or armor.

Drugs

Drugs—illicit and otherwise—have always been popular in the City at the Center of the World, where tastes vary wildly, and leisure, lifestyle, and self-care take on many forms. Nearly any drug detailed in the *Gamemastery Guide* can be found in Absalom, alongside the following local concoctions (initially described on pages 56-57).

Qat — Item 0

ALCHEMICAL CONSUMABLE DRUG INGESTED POISON

Price 4 sp
Usage held in 1 hand; **Bulk** L
Activate ❖ Interact

The save for addiction to qat is DC 14, but the maximum addiction stage of qat never progresses beyond stage 1.

Saving Throw DC 14 Fortitude; **Onset** 10 minutes; **Maximum Duration** 8 hours; **Stage 1** +1 item bonus to Reflex saves (10 minutes); **Stage 2** stupefied 1 (1 hour)

Grit — Item 1

ALCHEMICAL CONSUMABLE DRUG INGESTED POISON

Price 3 gp
Usage held in 1 hand; **Bulk** L
Activate ❖ Interact

The save for addiction to grit is DC 15, and the addiction has the virulent trait.

Saving Throw DC 15 Fortitude; **Onset** 1 minute; **Maximum Duration** 4 hours; **Stage 1** +1 item bonus to Athletics, Crafting, and Performance checks (10 minutes); **Stage 2** +1 item bonus to Athletics, Crafting, and Performance checks, –2 item penalty to Perception checks (1 hour); **Stage 3** –4 item penalty to Perception checks (1 hour); **Stage 4** as stage 3 (1 hour); **Stage 5** confusion (1 round); **Stage 6** unconscious (remaining duration)

Demon Dust — Item 6

UNCOMMON ALCHEMICAL CONSUMABLE DRUG INHALED POISON

Price 45 gp
Usage held in 1 hand; **Bulk** L
Activate ❖ Interact

The save for addiction to demon dust is DC 24, and the addiction has the virulent trait.

Saving Throw DC 20 Fortitude; **Maximum Duration** 8 hours; **Stage 1** +2 item bonus to Athletics checks and treat up to 4 Bulk as being negligible in weight (1 minute); **Stage 2** +2 item bonus to Athletics checks, treat up to 4 Bulk as being negligible in weight, and stupefied 1 (1 hour); **Stage 3** stupefied 1 (1 hour); **Stage 4** stupefied 2 (1 hour); **Stage 5** stupefied 2 and all memories made since you were first exposed to this dose of demon dust become hazy and vague (1 hour); **Stage 6** stupefied 2 and all memories made in the previous 24 hours become hazy and vague (1 hour)

Succubus Kiss — Item 7

RARE ALCHEMICAL CONSUMABLE DRUG INGESTED POISON

Price 70 gp
Usage held in 1 hand; **Bulk** L
Activate ❖ Interact

The save for addiction to succubus kiss is DC 28, and the addiction has the virulent trait.

Saving Throw DC 24 Fortitude; **Onset** 1 minute; **Maximum Duration** 8 hours; **Stage 1** +2 item bonus to initiative checks (10 minutes) and to all saving throws against emotion and mental effects; **Stage 2** as stage 1 plus drained 1 (1 hour); **Stage 3** as stage 2 plus blindness or deafness (1 hour); **Stage 4** blindness and deafness (1 hour); **Stage 5** unconscious

Uncommon Martial Melee Weapons

Weapon	Price	Damage	Bulk	Hands	Group	Weapon Traits
Boarding axe	1 gp	1d6 S	L	1	Axe	Agile, azarketi, climbing, versatile P
Gill hook	2 gp	1d10 P	2	2	Spear	Azarketi, grapple, reach

AZARKETI ADVENTURERS

With their affinity to water, nautical navigation skills, and athletic capabilities, azarketis make ideal rangers. Azarketis' versatility both on land and in water make them particularly formidable fighters, while their direct connection to the sea leads others to become druids. As many azarketis have a connection to alghollthus' occult magic, it's not uncommon for azarketis to be sorcerers, though studious individuals sometimes become bards or wizards instead.

AZARKETI (UNCOMMON)

Azarketis, inheritors of a shattered empire's legacy, hold their proud traditions close but still surface to interact with the rest of the world.

The aquatic humanoids of the Inner Sea share a somber and burdened history. Most refer to these aquatic peoples as gillmen, or sometimes Low Azlanti, though they typically refer to themselves as azarketis, an Azlanti word that translates roughly to "people of the seas." After Earthfall, these proud humans were mutated into aquatic servants by their alghollthu foes. Feeling like they don't fully belong with their human brethren nor with the sea that binds them, many azarketis struggle for a sense of identity and purpose. Though they remain distrusted by the surface dwellers, azarketis celebrate their unique lineage and their descent from the venerated Azlanti culture.

You Might...

- Ambitiously seek to defy negative perceptions and prejudice laid against you.
- Be reclusive and skeptical of strangers.
- Regard the water as your home, but be intrigued by societies along the shore.

Others Probably...

- Assume you are an ambassador to the sea and ask for your advice on nautical matters.
- Misunderstand your gentle gestures and mild expressions.
- Treat you with distrust or suspicion and anticipate betrayal from you.

Physical Description

Azarketis appear as regal, athletic humans. Their soft, hydrophilic skin ranges from pearlescent white to pinkish, greenish, or brown tones reminiscent of coral. Azarketis with hair are somewhat rare; many sport fins or scaled ridges on their heads instead. Like the Azlanti people from which they descend, they often have violet eyes. Their aquatic lineage is obvious thanks to the sets of three gills on either side of their necks, as well as their webbed hands and feet. Azarketis have been known to live longer than humans, although they mature at about the same rate.

Society

Azarketis lack the center for combined culture that helps other groups maintain a cohesive identity. The vastness of the oceans and waterways spread these swift-swimming people across the Inner Sea and beyond. Many azarketis rely only on the small familial groups in their immediate community and prefer smaller populations with comrades they trust and know intimately.

Some azarketis prefer to foster connections with their surface-dwelling brethren. Living in ports, river towns and along the shore allows azarketis a greater scope of opportunities not afforded to exclusively land or sea peoples. Although integrating with land society can be difficult, azarketis manage by forming bonded communities. Members will often have fond familial names for one another, regardless of actual relation.

If they have the means, some azarketis dress in attire reflecting their Azlanti heritage. More commonly, azarketis do their best to remain inconspicuous when they emerge from the water. Many will wear shemaghs or other head wrappings, which both hide their gills and provide a few extra comfortable hours out of water if soaked before donning.

Alignment and Religion

As they are typically outsiders to the domains of surface life, azarketis tend toward deities with an affinity for the ocean or other forms of water, the most popular being Gozreh. They are also likely to give reverence to other deities of nature or navigation, such as Desna.

Some azarketis are tempted toward the call of the deep and serve their old alghollthu masters as gods. These individuals are enticed by eldritch entities such as the mysterious veiled masters—powerful beings of the deep ocean responsible for both uplifting and destroying the Azlanti people.

Azarketis vary wildly in beliefs and values, as evidenced by their broad divergence in allegiance; thus, azarketis can be of any alignment.

Names

Azarketis often take the names of nautical, weather, or geographical features important to the azarketi's family. Other azarketi groups will choose human names in order to encourage conformity with surface cultures. Some azarketi names have been passed down through so many generations that they still use ancient Azlanti roots or refer to bodies of water that no longer exist.

Sample Names

Aft, Aliz, Cascade, Delta, Harbor, Ilani, Inkua, Jib, Lagoon, Lobay, Marine, Tidal, Windward, Zarket

AZARKETI HERITAGES

An azarketi's heritage represents the waters they call home, and how the individual combines their human and aquatic origins. Choose one of the following azarketi heritages at 1st level.

Ancient Scale Azarketi

Your lineage stems from azarketis who remain dedicated to their deep-sea roots. Divorced from land society, you're a foreigner to any world above a thousand fathoms deep. You gain darkvision. Your body is dotted with phosphorescent spots that emit a guiding light and help you communicate. The spots—located primarily on your face, arms, and hands—illuminate a 10-foot radius around you with dim light. You can activate, deactivate, or change the arrangement of lights as an action, which has the concentration trait.

Benthic Azarketi

Your heritage traces to azarketis living deep beneath the sea, and you can handle the chilling depths more easily than most. You gain resistance to cold equal to half your level, and you don't treat environmental cold as one degree more severe when you are wet. You adapt to pressure changes from being deep underwater automatically without ill effect.

Mistbreath Azarketi

You descend from azarketis who migrated to land environments that could support their need for water. Over time, your people adapted to life on land culturally and physically, even resulting in azarketis born with human hair like their Azlanti ancestors. You no longer need to be immersed in water every 24 hours to maintain your skin and can instead mist or wipe your skin with water to live comfortably. Your land Speed is 25 feet, but your swim Speed is only 15 feet.

River Azarketi

You come from azarketis who abandoned the oceans for the fresh water of inland life. The varied geography of rivers required you to develop advanced physical skills to swim against rapids, leap through cascading waters, and deftly navigate shallow and narrow channels. When you succeed at an Athletics check to Swim, you get a critical success instead.

Hit Points
8

Size
Medium

Speed
20 feet
Swim 30 feet

Ability Boosts
Constitution
Charisma
Free

Ability Flaw
Wisdom

Languages
Common
Alghollthu
Additional languages equal to your Intelligence modifier (if it's positive). Choose from Aklo, Aquan, Azlanti, Draconic, Elven, and Undercommon and any other languages to which you have access (such as the languages prevalent in your region).

Traits
Amphibious
Azarketi
Humanoid

Low-Light Vision
You can see in dim light as though it were bright light and you ignore the concealed condition due to dim light.

Hydration
While you are an amphibious being equally as capable on land as in the water, your body requires you to return to aquatic environments at least once in a 24-hour period. You must submerge in water in order to rehydrate your water-acclimated skin. If you fail to do this, your skin begins to crack and your gills become painful. After the first 24 hours outside of water, you take a –1 status penalty to Fortitude saves. After 48 hours, you struggle to breathe air and begin to suffocate until returned to water.

AZARKETI ENCLAVES

Azarketis are mostly concentrated around the Inner Sea region. The Isle of Kortos hosts several pockets of azarketi settlements, helped by the presence of the azarketi city Kienek-Li to the north of Starstone Isle. Gilltown is the largest azarketi community in Absalom, but azarketis are also prevalent in the city's seaside districts.

Thalassic Azarketi

You trace your lineage from azarketis who lived their lives among the great oceans and seas of the world. You know how to use the currents and the primal magic of water to guide your attacks. You gain the Underwater Marauder skill feat, and your piercing ranged attacks don't have their range increments halved when fighting underwater targets.

ANCESTRY FEATS

At 1st level, you gain one ancestry feat, and you gain an additional ancestry feat every 4 levels thereafter (at 5th, 9th, 13th, and 17th levels). As an azarketi, you select from among the following ancestry feats.

1ST LEVEL

ALGHOLLTHU BOUND — FEAT 1

AZARKETI

Although you may not even be aware, the alghollthus your ancestors once served maintain a stranglehold on the deepest, tethered parts of your mind. You receive a +2 circumstance bonus to Will saves against mental effects that would make you controlled, and if you roll a success against such an effect, you get a critical success instead. However, you gain none of these benefits against effects originating from alghollthus and instead take a –2 circumstance penalty against mental effects from alghollthus.

AZARKETI LORE — FEAT 1

AZARKETI

You have learned the history and origins of your people and how to connect to both your land and sea heritage. You become trained in Athletics and Nature. If you would automatically become trained in one of those skills (from your background or class, for example), you instead become trained in a skill of your choice. You also become trained in Azarketi Lore.

AZARKETI WEAPON FAMILIARITY — FEAT 1

AZARKETI

You are familiar with weapons that excel underwater. You are trained with crossbows, hand crossbows, longspears, spears, and tridents.

In addition, you gain access to all uncommon azarketi weapons. For the purpose of determining your proficiency, martial azarketi weapons are simple weapons and advanced azarketi weapons are martial weapons.

CYNICAL — FEAT 1

AZARKETI

You've been approached with suspicion and distrust throughout your life and return these sentiments back to the strangers you encounter. As a result, you are difficult to deceive. You gain a +1 circumstance bonus to your Perception DC against Lies and Impersonations.

PERFECT DIVE ❖ — FEAT 1

AZARKETI

You dive into the water with exceptional skill and connection to the waves, urging the water itself to cushion your fall. You intentionally Leap or otherwise fall into the water, taking no falling damage regardless of the distance.

SURFACE SKIMMER — FEAT 1

AZARKETI

By sinking gently beneath the waves, you obscure your presence and utilize the water as a barrier between you and land combatants. While you are submerged

just below the water's surface, you have cover from attacks made by creatures out of the water.

5TH LEVEL

AZARKETI WEAPON APTITUDE — FEAT 5

AZARKETI

Prerequisites Azarketi Weapon Familiarity

You become familiar with using your weapons both in and out of water. Whenever you critically hit using an azarketi weapon or one of the weapons listed in Azarketi Weapon Familiarity, you apply the weapon's critical specialization effect.

DRAG DOWN ◆◆ — FEAT 5

AZARKETI

While swimming in water at least 10 feet deep, you grasp an adjacent creature (on nearby land or in the water) and pull it below the surface. Attempt an Athletics check to Grapple the creature. On a success, if the creature is on land, in addition to the normal effects of Grapple, you pull the creature into the water in a space adjacent to you. If the creature is already in the water, on a success, in addition the normal effects of Grapple, you drag the creature 10 feet deeper into the water, moving 10 feet with the creature. Moving a creature into water or deeper into water using Drag Down is forced movement for the creature but not for you.

9TH LEVEL

ABOLETH TRANSMUTATION — FEAT 9

AZARKETI

You have tapped into the ancient magic used by alghollthu masters (also known as aboleths) to mold the flesh of your ancestors. You can use this magic to transfigure other beings. You gain 3rd-level *feet to fins* and 2nd-level *water breathing* as arcane innate spells. You can cast each of these arcane innate spells once per day.

REPLENISHING HYDRATION — FEAT 9

AZARKETI

You draw life from the water around you. If you submerge in water and rest for 10 minutes, you regain Hit Points equal to your Constitution modifier × half your level.

RIPTIDE ↷ — FEAT 9

AZARKETI

Prerequisites Drag Down, expert in Athletics

Requirements You are within 10 feet of water at least 10 feet deep, and your Speed is sufficient to reach the water in one Stride.

Trigger You successfully Grapple a creature of the same size as you or smaller.

You Stride up to 10 feet to enter the water, bringing the grabbed creature with you into the water.

13TH LEVEL

AZARKETI WEAPON EXPERTISE — FEAT 13

AZARKETI

Prerequisites Azarketi Weapon Familiarity

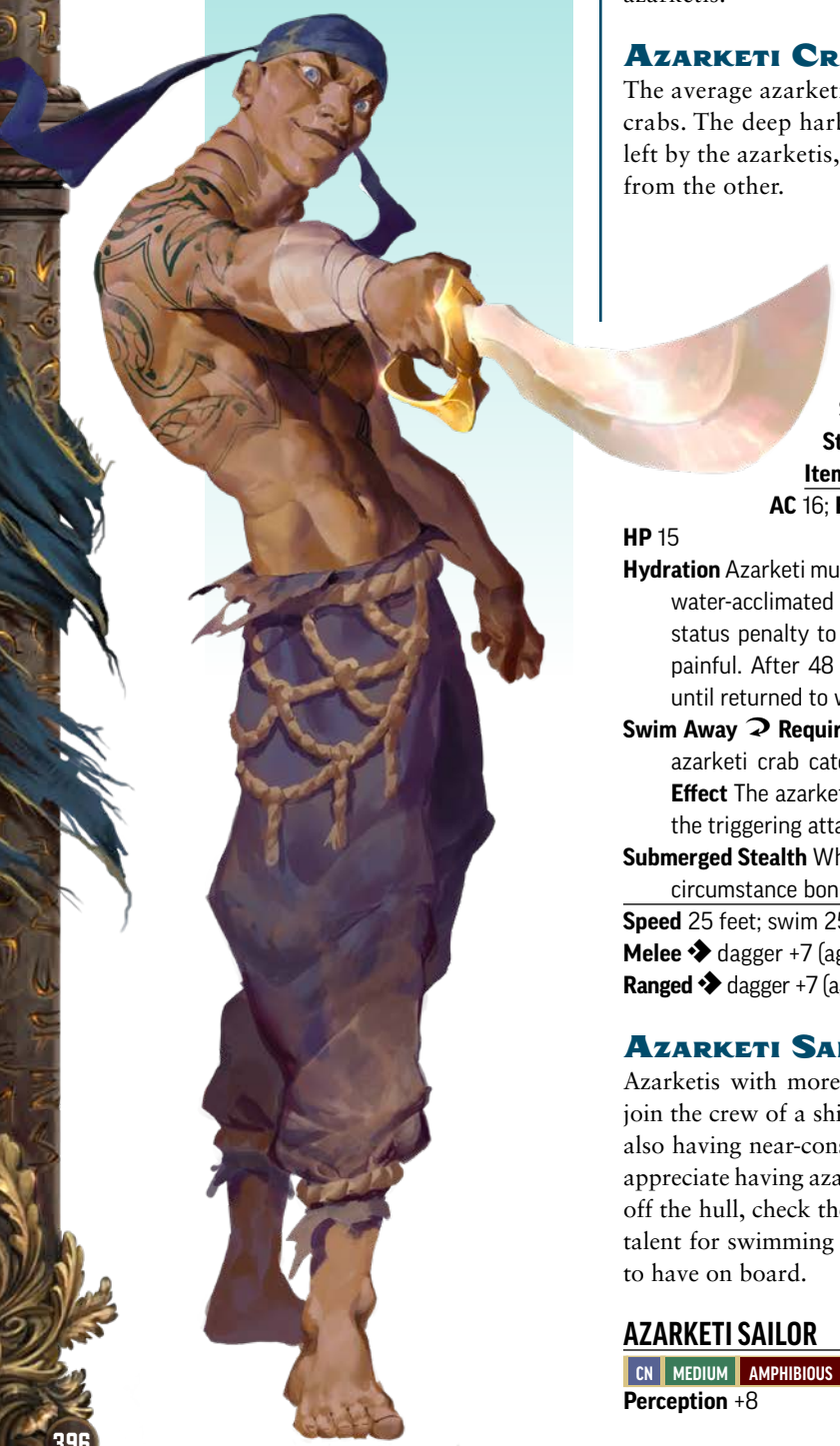
Your mastery with weapons both above and below water is unmatched. Whenever you gain a class feature that grants you expert or greater proficiency in certain weapons, you also gain that proficiency in crossbows, hand crossbows, longspears, spears, tridents, and all azarketi weapons in which you are trained.

AZARKETI TYPES

Some azarketis live near the ruins of Old Azlant or in the deepest trenches of the ocean and lead isolated and mysterious lives. River azarketis settle at the bases of waterfalls, or hidden away in the caves behind them. Small nomadic azarketi groups have taken to land in rainy or marshy locations, though such groups are rare.

FIGHTING SPIRIT

Surface azarketis often keep to the margins of human society, working menial jobs or filling roles that allow them isolation when necessary. Many consequently have a chip on their shoulder and are only too eager to prove themselves in the face of skeptics. Such azarketis often take up the life of a mercenary or adventurer.



AZARKETI NPCS

Azarketis, also known as Low Azlanti or gillmen, can be found all over Golarion, with a particularly high concentration around Absalom and the Inner Sea. Descendants of the ancient Azlanti, the azarketis survived the cataclysm of Earthfall by fleeing into the sea, where they were warped into amphibious forms by the alghollthu, the alien architects of Absalom's terrible demise. Generally found on the coast, azarketis favor life near a major body of water, as keeping their skin hydrated is a biological requirement. Though most azarketis live relatively peaceful lives of fishing or farming, they sometimes need to defend their homes against hostile forces, and some leave their communities to become adventurers. The following statistics may be used to represent commonly encountered azarketis.

Azarketi Crab Catcher

The average azarketi citizen in Absalom makes a living fishing or catching crabs. The deep harbor floor beneath the city docks is covered with traps left by the azarketis, who use individual glyphs to mark one crabber's trap from the other.

AZARKETI CRAB CATCHER — CREATURE 0

CG MEDIUM AMPHIBIOUS AZARKETI HUMANOID

Perception +6

Languages Common

Skills Athletics +4 (+6 to Swim), Diplomacy +3, Nature +3, Stealth +5 (+7 underwater), Survival +5, Underwater Lore +4

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

Items crab cage, dagger, sack

AC 16; **Fort** +6, **Ref** +9, **Will** +3

HP 15

Hydration Azarketi must regularly submerge themselves in water to rehydrate their water-acclimated skin. After the first 24 hours outside of water, they gain a –1 status penalty to Fortitude saves as their skin cracks and their gills become painful. After 48 hours, they struggle to breathe air and begin to suffocate until returned to water.

Swim Away ↷ **Requirement** The azarketi crab catcher is swimming; **Trigger** The azarketi crab catcher is targeted with an attack and can see the attacker; **Effect** The azarketi crab catcher gains a +2 circumstance bonus to AC against the triggering attack. After the attack, they Swim 5 feet.

Submerged Stealth While submerged in water, an azarketi crab catcher gains a +2 circumstance bonus on their Stealth check, indicated above.

Speed 25 feet; swim 25 feet

Melee ❖ dagger +7 (agile, thrown 10 feet, versatile S), **Damage** 1d4+2 piercing

Ranged ❖ dagger +7 (agile, thrown 10 feet, versatile S), **Damage** 1d4+2 piercing

Azarketi Sailor

Azarketis with more adventurous spirits often learn the art of sailing and join the crew of a ship. Such sailors get to enjoy their time above deck while also having near-constant access to large bodies of water. Ship captains also appreciate having azarketis on board, as they're able to easily scrape barnacles off the hull, check the rudder, and help patch any leaks. Though they have a talent for swimming more than sailing, they've earned a reputation as lucky to have on board.

AZARKETI SAILOR — CREATURE 2

CN MEDIUM AMPHIBIOUS AZARKETI HUMANOID

Perception +8

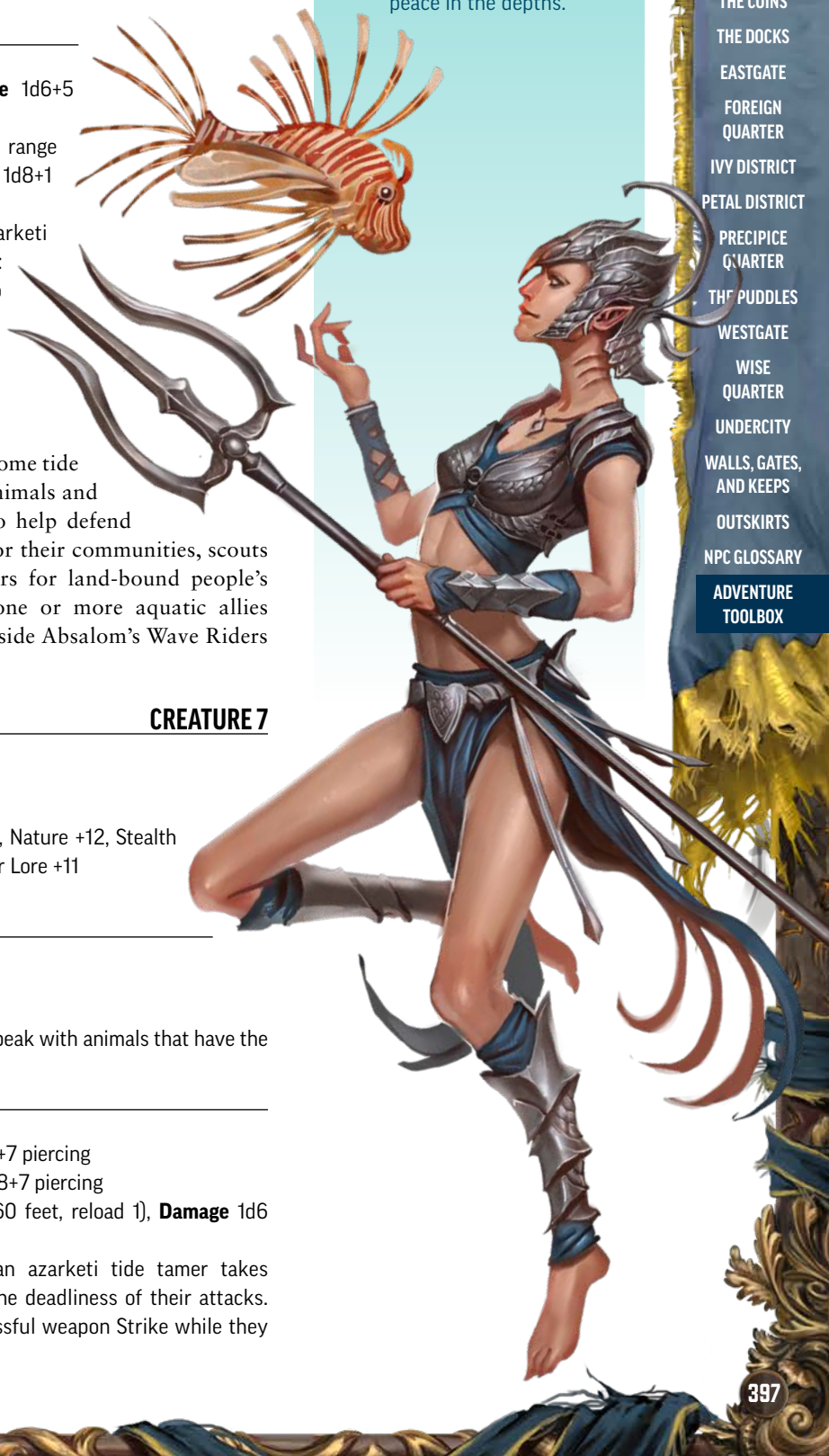
Languages Common
Skills Acrobatics +8, Athletics +7 (+9 to Swim), Nature +5, Sailing Lore +6, Stealth +8 (+10 underwater) Survival +7
Str +3, **Dex** +4, **Con** +2, **Int** +0, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +1
Items composite longbow (20 arrows), scimitar, studded leather

AC 18; **Fort** +8, **Ref** +11, **Will** +5
HP 30
Hydration As azarketi crab catcher.
Sea Legs (fortune) An azarketi sailor gains a +1 circumstance bonus to Acrobatics checks to Balance and can roll twice and take the better result on checks to Balance while aboard a ship.
Submerged Stealth As azarketi crab catcher.

Speed 25 feet; swim 25 feet
Melee ❖ scimitar +9 (forceful, sweep), **Damage** 1d6+5 slashing
Ranged ❖ composite longbow (deadly d10, range increment 100 feet, volley) +10, **Damage** 1d8+1 piercing
Swinging Strike ❖❖ (move) **Requirement** The azarketi sailor is hanging from a rope or vine; **Effect** The azarketi sailor swings a distance equal to up to twice their Speed, moving in a straight line, and makes a single Strike at any point during the movement.

A PLACE UNDERSEA

Due to their association with the alghollthu, azarketi often face discrimination on the surface. Below, however, they are just another ocean denizen. Many revel in the isolation from their human ancestors, finding true peace in the depths.



Azarketi Tide Tamer

The most ambitious and capable azarketis become tide tamers, learning how to speak with aquatic animals and even train the strongest of these creatures to help defend their territory. Tide tamers act as guardians for their communities, scouts at sea and on the shore, or even entertainers for land-bound people's amusement. They're generally found with one or more aquatic allies whom they've befriended. Several serve alongside Absalom's Wave Riders as scouts, animal interlocutors, and guides.

AZARKETI TIDE TAMER — CREATURE 7

N MEDIUM AMPHIBIOUS AZARKETI HUMANOID

Perception +15
Languages Common
Skills Athletics +15 (+17 to Swim), Intimidation +15, Nature +12, Stealth +15 (+17 underwater), Survival +14, Underwater Lore +11
Str +4, **Dex** +4, **Con** +2, **Int** +0, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +2
Items *+1 trident*, hand crossbow, studded leather

AC 25; **Fort** +15, **Ref** +18, **Will** +12
HP 115
Hydration As azarketi crab catcher.
Speaker of the Oceans An azarketi tide tamer can speak with animals that have the aquatic or amphibious trait.
Submerged Stealth As azarketi crab catcher.

Speed 25 feet; swim 25 feet
Melee ❖ *trident* +18 (thrown 20 feet), **Damage** 1d8+7 piercing
Ranged ❖ *trident* +18 (thrown 20 feet), **Damage** 1d8+7 piercing
Ranged ❖ hand crossbow +17 (range increment 60 feet, reload 1), **Damage** 1d6 piercing
Aquatic Predator While submerged in water, an azarketi tide tamer takes advantage of the shifting tides to increase the deadliness of their attacks. They deal 2d8 additional damage on a successful weapon Strike while they are underwater.

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