

SECOND EDITION

PATHFINDER[®]

Prey for Death

by Vanessa Hoskins

The background of the cover features a dramatic scene of two characters in a stone-walled room. On the left, a woman with long, flowing white hair and ornate, light-colored armor with red accents holds a glowing golden staff. On the right, a character with long white hair, wearing a dark red and black outfit with a cape and a mask, is in a dynamic, forward-leaning pose. The room is filled with fire and falling debris, including books and a large red spherical object. The overall atmosphere is one of intense action and fantasy.

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Introduction

Gorum has been a god of war for thousands of years, yet war existed before he rose to power and will surely continue to exist long after he is gone. His genesis is shrouded in myth and legend. Some say he was born from the first battles between humans and orcs. Others believe him to be an ascended general from a long-forgotten time of battle. Today, Gorum is worshipped by smiths and soldiers alike, be they those who prepare for war or those who revel in its glory.

Despite his focus on war, Gorum is not an evil god. He does not pursue battle out of a desire to spread pain or prolong suffering. Yet over the eons, he has seen many use his teachings to do just that. Gorum knows more than most that not all battles need or even deserve to be won, and that sometimes greater strength in the future can be forged from a loss suffered today. He also knows that the time has come for him to meet a “hero’s end,” just as many who fight in countless battles aspire to, but is aware that his death must not appear to be engineered by himself. His skill at battle is such that he emerges time and time again from conflict as a survivor, and with each triumph, he sees those who use his legacy to justify war as a tool for evil grow.

And so Gorum did something he’d only rarely done before—he reached out to another deity for aid. He contacted Calistria, goddess of trickery, whose embrace of chaos and cunning mind Gorum knew would be able to engineer a great battle for him to go down in a proverbial blaze of glory. Their bargain was made in secret, and all Calistria asked for in payment was a secret of his own: she asked Gorum to reveal his face, to tell her what lay within his armor. His answer, “Nothing,” amused the goddess of trickery and confirmed her suspicion that the god of war had always been a container filled with the violent urges of all mortal life. The pact sealed, Gorum returned to his domain on the Clashing Shore of Elysium to return to battle, trusting that his fate would soon reveal itself.

Calistria honored Gorum’s request, but as goddess of trickery, she put her own spin on things. She paid a visit to the Blood Vale at the base of Pharasma’s Spire and met with Achaekkek, god of assassins and divine punishment. When she revealed to Achaekkek Gorum’s admission that within his armor was “nothing,” she convinced him that Gorum had long mocked the divine by pretending to be one of them, when in fact he was little more than an empty shell fueled by the boundless

capacity for mortal violence. She did not hire the god of assassins to slay Gorum, merely planted a seed she knew Achaekkek could not resist nurturing—the idea that Gorum was a pretender to the ranks of the divine and not a true god at all.

In time, Achaekkek would act on this potent idea. In time, Gorum would die.

Character Creation

Prey for Death is an adventure for four 14th-level characters, who will be 18th level by the adventure’s end. While this adventure could be played as a part of an ongoing campaign with established characters (see Making Adjustments on page 7), it works best as a one-shot adventure with brand new characters created specifically for this story—evil characters who are high-ranking members of the Red Mantis, one of Golarion’s most infamous organizations of assassins. For groups who aren’t interested in or comfortable with playing evil characters, *Prey for Death* can also be played with non-evil characters who serve as allies for the assassins.

Who Are the PCs?

The Red Mantis assassins worship the Mantis God Achaekkek, but their living leader is a powerful assassin known as Blood Mistress Jakalyn. In *Prey for Death*, the PCs take on the roles of some of Jakalyn’s favored agents—members of the Red Mantis who have either proven their loyalty to her in the past, impressed her with their abilities, or whom she trusts at the very least to act to their own natures and not betray her goals or support. For she suspects there are leaders among the Vernai—the ruling order of the Red Mantis assassins—who seek to depose her and take her place as head of the order.

It’s best if all of the PCs are members or close associates of the Red Mantis assassins. While the most iconic roles played by these killers-for-hire are as the assassins who perform their legendary bloody deeds or the priests of Achaekkek who guide their way, there’s room in the Red Mantis for a wide range of characters, be they legitimate members of the group or trusted mercenaries. This works best if your players create brand new 14th-level characters for this adventure, but you can run *Prey for Death* as part of an ongoing campaign with established 14th-level characters as long as you keep the following notes in mind.

Playing Evil Characters

The Red Mantis assassins are killers for hire who worship a cruel deity and rule over the city of Ilizmagorti. This adventure assumes that the PCs are part of this society, and as long as all of the players agree to this core assumption, the fewer personality clashes they'll have with this adventure's story. The core events that play out in *Prey for Death* don't require the PCs to assassinate anyone that isn't already of a villainous nature, and the plot doesn't require them to pursue particularly vile or cruel activities in order to achieve their goals and survive. Still, you should work with your players to make sure they understand the kind of story they're getting into.

While *Prey for Death* is written with the assumption that the PCs are working for the Red Mantis assassins, and thus are likely to be evil in temperament, this should not be taken as an excuse by players to make the game uncomfortable for anyone—be they fellow players, the GM, or observers of your game. Before you run *Prey for Death*, have a talk with your players to make sure they're comfortable with the idea of playing evil characters—or at the very least, characters who won't have an issue allying with evil organizations.

A Shared Goal: This adventure assumes that the PCs are on the same side, and presents them with challenges that assume they work together. Inter-party strife is a surefire way to bring about the early end of a game session, and care has been taken in this adventure to avoid tropes where the PCs are expected to keep secrets from each other, work at odds from one another, or otherwise set up situations where working together isn't the best option. Part of this requires that the PCs themselves build characters that not only work well together, but are, as a group, comfortable with tasks involving assassinations and other activities typically reserved for the villains in a campaign.

Safety Tools: Evil PCs often do evil things, and it's important to consider your and your players' comfort level performing in-game crimes. Chat with your players about what to expect, where their boundaries are, and whether to include safety tools like those described on pages 6–8 of *Pathfinder GM Core*. This adventure features violence against combatants, but the PCs might also decide to endanger noncombatants, interrogate captives with the use of fear or threat, destroy property, or just generally terrorize onlookers. Remind the PCs that while Achaek encourages the use of fear as a tool and condones the act of assassination, his faith (and thus the precepts of the Red Mantis assassins) don't encourage acts of wanton sadism, and neither does this adventure.

Edicts and Anathemas

Make sure the players are familiar with Achaek's edicts and anathemas, as detailed on page 107. These guidelines should be followed by PCs in this adventure, and are explored below!

Edict—Conduct assassinations: The PCs are expected to perform the mission they're sent on in Chapter 1 of this adventure, to assassinate an evil leader of a group of Gorum worshippers, but isn't something they must be always engaged in. This edict should not be interpreted as “You must always be conducting an assassination” or “Kill lots of people all the time.”

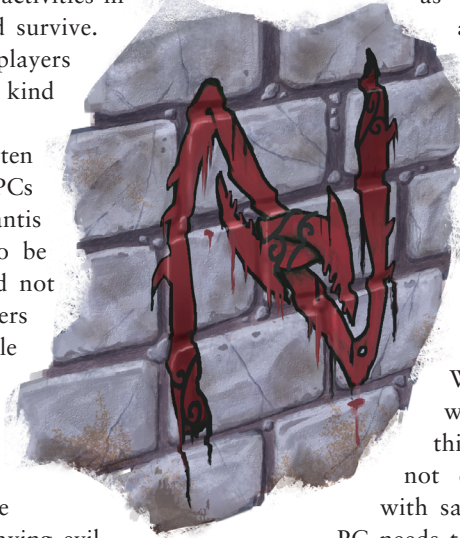
Edict—Spread the Red Mantis's infamy: The PCs should seek to maintain the Red Mantis's reputation as a frightening one, but not in a way that makes the Red Mantis seem overly sadistic, destructive, or blatantly vile. For the Red Mantis, subtlety is preferred.

Edict—Wield sawtooth swords: While this uncommon advanced weapon is unlocked for all PCs in this adventure (see Gear on page 8), not every character will be proficient with sawtooth swords, and thus not every PC needs to fight with this weapon—and even those who do can choose other options in combat as makes sense. Worshipers of Achaek who aren't particularly interested in melee traditionally observe this edict by carrying a sawtooth sword on their person; even if it's not used in combat, an agent of the Red Mantis who visibly carries a sawtooth sword honors this edict.

Anathema—Kill a rightful ruler: This is a very specific anathema and shouldn't become an issue in *Prey for Death*, beyond the adventure's central mystery about Achaek's actions against Gorum at the adventure's end (a world event that does not impact the PCs directly).

Anathema—Become fixated on petty matters (such as others' gender or ancestry): While evil, the followers of Achaek do not preach bigotry, prejudice, or exclusion, and the PCs should avoid this activity as well.

Anathema—Abandon an assassination contract you agreed to pursue: The only contract in this adventure the PCs take on is the one presented in Chapter 1, and their target therein is a reprehensible villain whom most groups, evil or otherwise, should not have qualms about slaying. As the GM, resist an urge to present this villain as a sympathetic character who might deserve a chance at redemption—in a case like this, leaning into “mustache-twirling villain cliches” are helpful and prevent accidentally giving players the perception that the plot expects them to go against this anathema or is setting them up for a moral quandary “trap” to navigate.



Making Adjustments

You can adjust *Prey for Death* to allow for a more traditional party of heroes, although this takes away the players' chance to assume the role of some of Golarion's most iconic assassins. But if your group is eager to play this adventure while simply not being interested in playing evil characters or agents of the Red Mantis, then instead of having Blood Mistress Jakalyn seek out some of her "rising stars" as her personal agents, she can seek out a group of adventurers who have nothing to do with the Red Mantis. She knows that there are potential traitors and bad actors in the organization, and in this variation on the plot, she secretly (by using her agent, Vatumledor) reaches out to a group of adventurers as mercenaries to perform her favors. In this case, each PC should be provided with a writ they can use to ensure the cooperation with other NPCs as needed in Chapter 2 of this adventure.

Ancestries

Traditionally, Red Mantis assassins were female humans, elves, or half-elves, but the teachings of Achaekek make it abundantly clear that sex, gender and ancestry are not things to become fixated upon. These traditions need not force player choices during character creation. Any gender or ancestry is welcome to join the Red Mantis, and the city of Ilizmagorti is quite cosmopolitan, so PC options here can be as unrestricted as the GM is comfortable with when it comes to allowing uncommon or rare ancestries.

Classes

The plot of *Prey for Death* revolves around a fair amount of combat, dungeon exploration, and infiltration. The traditional classes one would see among Red Mantis assassins include clerics of Achaekek, fighters, monks, rangers, rogues, and swashbucklers, but all classes offer their own set of abilities and talents that could potentially be of value to the Red Mantis's pursuits. Those who must follow edicts of chaos or good, such as certain clerics or champions, may find it difficult to reconcile their beliefs with what they're asked to do in this adventure—work with a player to determine how best to go forward if they're eager to play a potentially problematic class like this in *Prey for Death*.

Faiths

This adventure assumes that the PCs are worshippers of the Mantis God Achaekek—see page 107 for more information about this god of assassins and divine punishment. Characters who worship other deities may find their edicts and anathemas complicating their role in this adventure, particularly if they're allied with religions (such as that of Norgorber) or nations (such as Rahadoum) that have well-established conflicts with Achaekek or the Red Mantis. Worshippers of Gorum in particular will find this a challenging adventure to play, as detailed in the Worshippers of Gorum sidebar.

WORSHIPPERS OF GORUM

Prey for Death poses a unique challenge to any PC who has strong ties to Gorum, and if one of your players is eager to create or play such a character, you should take the time to warn them that some of this adventure's content may force them to make difficult or even impossible choices. Some players will be intrigued by and eager for this challenge, but for those who merely wish to play a worshipper of a god of combat, consider allowing that player to instead worship a deity like the demon lord Nurgal, Szuriel the Apocalypse Rider, Dahak the dragon god of destruction, or Groetus the God of the End Times (*Pathfinder Lost Omens Gods & Magic*).

It's best if there are no worshippers of Gorum in the party, but if one of your players does wish to play a worshipper of Gorum, the following two things are worth considering.

The Assassination Mission: When presenting this mission in Chapter 1, make sure that PCs who worship Gorum are aware that the god of war approves of a "might makes right" philosophy, and that battle between his worshippers for dominance is not cause for concern. The infiltration element of this adventure does skirt the edge of one of Gorum's anathemas—to not win a battle through underhanded tactics or indirect magic. If players in your group worry that participating in this mission might result in the loss of their Gorum-worshipping character's magical abilities, you could have those PCs experience vivid and intense dreams where they learn that Gorum is unhappy with Ordulf's behavior—that the general's excessive cruelty (particularly his merciless treatment of prisoners) is in danger of causing him to lose Gorum's favor. The vision should conclude with a warning: when the PC reaches Ordulf, they should confront him in combat fairly and accuse him of wallowing in cruelty against those he has bested in combat, and that they are here to determine Ordulf's judgment. If Ordulf falls in combat to the PC and their group, this is to be taken as proof positive of Ordulf's fall from grace. Note also that there's an opportunity to discover the formula for *atone* in Chapter 1—you should allow Gorum-worshipping PCs time to learn and cast this ritual during Chapter 2 if they feel particularly conflicted about their role in Ordulf's defeat.

Gorum's Death: This event takes place at the adventure's climax, with the PCs fleeing for safety in the face of the devastation Gorum's death unleashes upon the battlefield. Even then, characters who receive their powers directly from Gorum, such as clerics, should not lose their powers immediately—his lingering power during his drawn-out death throes are enough to continue to empower them. What lies in wait in the future for worshippers of Gorum is explored in future Pathfinder products, particularly in *Pathfinder Lost Omens Divine Mysteries*, but the end of this adventure includes a few additional possibilities for you to consider in the meantime.

Skills

Many skills are useful in this adventure, but you should let the players know during character creation that, apart from any other skill specializations their characters might pursue, being at least expert in Achaek Lore or Ilizmagorti Lore or master in Society will help them play the roles of Red Mantis assassins or their agents.

Archetypes

Multiclass archetypes work well in this adventure (but with the same advice applied for full classes on page 7).

As long as a PC belongs to the organization and isn't a mercenary, the Red Mantis Assassin archetype is available to all characters in this adventure. This archetype appears in the *Pathfinder Lost Omens World Guide* and had several higher-level options added in *Pathfinder Lost Omens Legends*, but these rules have been reprinted in full in this adventure on pages 108–109 for your convenience.



Blood Mistress Jakalyn

Gear

If your players are creating brand-new characters for *Prey for Death*, they'll need to purchase magical gear for their characters. You can either allow the players to spend a lump sum of gear worth up to 9,300 gp (with no one item being of 14th level or higher), or you can allow them to pick their items. With this latter method, each player selects the following permanent items from any of the common treasures from *GM Core*.

- One 13th-level item
- Two 12th-level items
- One 11th-level item
- Two 10th-level items
- 1,500 gp to spend on consumable items of 13th level or lower, or permanent items of 9th level or lower, as the player sees fit.

You can expand these options to those found in other books as you wish, or if the players opt for the Favor Performed mission on page 13, you can include the uncommon options unlocked by that choice.

All characters in *Prey for Death*, be they members of the Red Mantis or mercenaries trusted by the group enough to take part in this adventure, have access to sawtooth sabers, mantis shell armor (*Pathfinder Treasure Vault* 9), and all of the uncommon items presented in this volume's Adventure Toolbox, beginning on page 98.

Favored by the Blood Mistress

Each PC in this adventure has some sort of link to the blood mistress of the Red Mantis as this adventure begins—a reason why the PC is favored by Jakalyn, although not to the extent that they're considered anything near to a close friend or confidant. The PCs should be made aware that not long before this adventure begins, Blood Mistress Jakalyn was visited by a mysterious agent who approached her with a contract to assassinate Tar-Baphon, the Whispering Tyrant. When the agent refused to reveal his identity and allegiance, Jakalyn had him imprisoned and announced the request and incarceration publicly in hopes of learning more about the agent's commander. She recently left Mediogalti Island on a secret mission, spawning several rumors about what she might have learned from the agent. Is she seeking to slay the one who sent the request? Meeting with them to iron out more details? Or has she begun moves against one of the Inner Sea's most dangerous villains? So far, no one can say, for as of the time this adventure begins, she has not returned.

Each PC should come up with a reason why they're favored by Blood Mistress Jakalyn by choosing one of the following advantages and incorporating this element into their character's history as they see fit.

EXCELLENT ASSASSIN

Your work as an assassin for the Red Mantis has earned you much in the way of acclaim and admiration, and recently your accomplishments drew the attention of Blood Mistress Jakalyn herself. She's made it clear to you that she believes you have great things in your future if you continue to serve as an agent of Achaekkek, especially in the pursuit of assassination missions.

Recently, you received a gift from Jakalyn—a pouch containing 6 uses of 13th-level or lower common consumables (you can mix and match consumables as you see fit as long as you have 6 uses overall).

FORTUNATE FOUNDLING

Jakalyn's history and personal life are mysterious and subject to much speculation. You aren't related to her by blood, but you count yourself as one of the fortunate few whom she chose to take under her wing after an assassination left you alone in the world. The Red Mantis assassins are the only family you've ever known, and while Jakalyn has rarely spent time with you, for whatever reason she considers you to be one of her favorite foundlings.

Recently, you received a gift from Jakalyn—a common worn magic item of 13th-level or lower.

IMPRESSIVE STUDENT

Every few decades, Blood Mistress Jakalyn takes time to personally train a lucky few students who seek enlightenment in the ways of Achaekkek. The methods by which she selects these students are known only to her, but in the most recent round of trainings some years back, you were one of those selected. You impressed her in some way during your training, be it through your natural talents or your dedication.

Recently, you received a gift from Jakalyn—a *runestone* inscribed with either a *keen* rune, a *shockwave* rune, or a *spell reservoir* rune. You can automatically have this rune inscribed onto any qualifying weapon you begin the game with.

JUST LUCKY

Sometimes, luck makes all the difference. You happened to be in the right place at the right time to catch Jakalyn's eye. You may even have been in a position where something you did ended up benefiting the blood mistress, or may have even resulted in saving her from peril or political trouble through a set of almost-unbelievable repercussions and events set into motion by something you did. As a result, she's taken an unexpected liking to you.

Recently, you received a gift from Jakalyn—a wand of a common 6th-rank (or lower rank) spell.

Achaekkek's Boon

In addition to all their other features, all PCs begin this adventure with Achaekkek's favor in the form of Achaekkek's minor boon. A PC who dares to use this boon to escape in a cowardly way rather than to bolster their chances to do violence may become affected by Achaekkek's minor curse. See page 107 for more details on these two divine intercessions.

Backgrounds

A PC who is a full member of the Red Mantis likely has (but isn't required to have) one of the following backgrounds: Acolyte, Acrobat, Animal Whisperer (with Jungle Lore as their associated Lore skill), Artisan, Bandit, Bounty Hunter, Criminal, Cultist, Detective, Field Medic, Gladiator, Guard, Hired Killer (*Pathfinder Guns & Gears* 122), Martial Disciple, Nomad, Occult Librarian (*Pathfinder Secrets of Magic* 29), Pilgrim*, Press-Ganged (escaped, *Guns & Gears* 124), Prisoner, Sailor, Scholar, Tax Collector*, Teacher, Undertaker (*Guns & Gears* 123), Ward*, or Warrior. A PC who's a mercenary hired by the assassins can choose any background as they see fit.

Rare Backgrounds: The following rare backgrounds can be chosen with the GM's permission: Blessed* (by Achaekkek), Haunted* (by someone assassinated by a parent or ancestor), Otherworldly Mission (vision from Achaekkek, *Guns & Gears* 125), or Revenant (potentially previously slain by a worshipper of Gorum, *Guns & Gears* 125).

*Background from the *Pathfinder Advanced Player's Guide*.

Saving Gorum

The death of one of Pathfinder's core deities is a huge event that ties into the release of *Pathfinder War of Immortals* and will impact several upcoming Adventure Paths and Lost Omens books. It's an event is meant to shake things up and enable a brand-new category of stories for all of us to tell in Golarion.

But some tables might not want to embrace this change. Even though going forward with our publications we'll be assuming that Gorum's death took place as detailed in this adventure, that doesn't have to be the case in your personal game. Feel free to replace Gorum with another deity of your own selection—a deity associated with war works best if you want to keep with the themes we'll be exploring in other products. Other deities of war whose death could stand in for Gorum include the dwarven god Angradd, the archdevil Moloch, the infernal duke Nergal, the demon lord Nurgal, the apocalypse rider Szuriel, or the orc god Varg. Alternatively, you could choose any other war deity as the target of this event—choosing one that your group knows about but that isn't particularly favored by any of your table's players is a great choice. Real world mythological gods of war could suffice in this case, as could wartime divinities from other games your table plays.

You can also simply omit the entire death of Gorum from this adventure by adjusting the climax. In this variant, Achaekkek's target is the nascent protean demigod Alktherisa and Omprisgor, as was suspected all along, and once the Mantis God delivers that death blow, he leaves. The cataclysm set off by Gorum's death could just as easily be a violent (but much more localized just to Clashing Shore) reaction from the Maelstrom caused by this demigod's assassination.

PREY FOR
DEATH

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1:
A WORTHY
CONTRACT

CHAPTER 2:
UNMASKING A
TRAITOR

CHAPTER 3:
SECRETS OF
THE MANTIS

CHAPTER 4: A
DEITY'S DUTY

ILIZMAGORTI

ADVENTURE
TOOLBOX



Prey for Death

Chapter 1: A Worthy Contract 12

The party is sent on a mission to assassinate a cruel and violent warlord in the northern reaches of the Land of the Linnorm Kings, only to discover once the mission is done that they've been set up for their own deaths by conspirators within the Red Mantis's leadership.

Chapter 2: Unmasking a Traitor 40

The party returns to the city of Ilizmagorti to clear their names. They begin to search for clues regarding those who want them dead while simultaneously working to avoid being noticed and confronted by those who once counted them as allies.

Chapter 3: Secrets of the Mantis 56

The traitors are revealed, yet they have retreated into the depths of the Crimson Citadel where none but the blood mistress is allowed to go. In order to bring the conspirators to justice, the PCs must brave the dangerous unknown that lies at the heart of the Red Mantis's fortress.

Chapter 4: A Deity's Duty 76

The party pursues the conspirators into Elysium, chasing them down and finally confronting them in Gorum's divine realm of Clashing Shore. Yet even as they strike their final triumphant blow, they witness nothing less than the assassination of a god.

MEMBERS OR MERCENARIES?

Some classes (such as barbarians) aren't particularly on-theme among the Red Mantis, and some players may wish to play characters who aren't "joiners." These character concepts (provided they don't include edicts and anathemas at odds with the goals of the Red Mantis) are still valuable, and when they're needed, the Red Mantis relies on hired specialists and mercenaries. Sometimes these agreements last for only one mission, but in others, such as is the case for PCs in this adventure who don't wish to belong to the Red Mantis organization, they're longer term.

A PC who chooses to be a mercenary rather than a member of the Red Mantis assassins may find some encounters in this adventure more difficult for them to accomplish on their own, but with the aid of actual members of the assassins' guild, things should be fine. In the end, as long as all the PCs work together to pursue this adventure's goals, whether or not they're members or mercenaries is largely cosmetic.

WHERE ON GOLARION?

Prey for Death's first chapter takes place in the northeastern reaches of the Lands of the Linnorm Kings, then transitions back to the Red Mantis's seat of power on Mediogalti Island for the central portion of the adventure. Its climax takes place beyond Golarion on the plane of Elysium in Gorum's deific realm of Clashing Shore.

ADVANCEMENT TRACK

"Prey for Death" is designed for four characters.

- 14** The PCs begin this adventure at 14th level.
- 15** The PCs should reach 15th level while seeking to assassinate General Ordulf, or immediately after they finish Chapter 1.
- 16** The PCs should be 16th level no later than after their meeting with the Vernai at the start of Chapter 3.
- 17** The PCs should reach 17th level before traveling to Clashing Shore at the start of Chapter 4.

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



Chapter 1: **A Worthy Contract**

The Red Mantis assassins have ruled Mediogalti Island for thousands of years, and in that time they have become one of the most notorious and feared guilds of slayers and killers on Golarion. Guided by a council of mysterious leaders known as the Vernai from a legendary fortress called the Crimson Citadel, the Red Mantis built a reputation of merciless efficiency in the art of murder, yet they also follow a strict code that “no rightful ruler shall die at our hands.” The Vernai are ruled by one of their own, whose title is “blood mistress.” Leadership of the Red Mantis passes to a new blood mistress upon the previous one’s death, whereupon the Vernai nominate and elect a leader who has earned the respect and support of at least two-thirds of their number.

Blood Mistress Jakalyn is the current leader of the Red Mantis, and has served in that role for well over a hundred years. The secret of her supernatural youth and longevity is hers alone, and has no intention of stepping down from her role any time soon. To one of the Vernai’s most powerful members, a cleric named

Saviya, this is a problem, for she covets rulership of the assassins’ guild for herself.

Over the past decade, Saviya has steadily and silently recruited a third of the Vernai as her co-conspirators, and knows that if Jakalyn were to vanish or die, securing a second third in favor of her nomination to the position of blood mistress would be a simple matter. The only problem is that Blood Mistress Jakalyn shows no signs of weakness or any desire to step down. And since the Red Mantis assassins are honor-bound to never slay a rightful ruler, Saviya has opted instead for the route of subterfuge and trickery to arrange for the vacancy in leadership she desires.

For many years, Saviya secretly explored the depths of the Crimson Citadel; the laws of Achaekedon don’t explicitly prohibit the act of breaking and entering. As long as she took care to leave things as they were, disguise treasures she stole with clever counterfeits, and time her expeditions into those portions of the citadel’s dungeons where she was forbidden to tread with when Blood Mistress Jakalyn was on an extended

mission elsewhere, Saviya was able to make numerous discoveries to fund and educate her conspiracy.

After several years of careful preparation and manipulation, Saviya's plan culminated with a carefully manipulated request from an agent from Razmiran. This agent approached Blood Mistress Jakalyn personally but in disguise, and made his request—that she slay Tar-Baphon, the Whispering Tyrant. The agent posited that the powerful lich was no true ruler but a power-hungry fool with designs of becoming a god.

Saviya hoped Jakalyn would take the assignment. If she lost her life in the attempt, then all the better, but even if Jakalyn succeeded at the audacious assassination, Saviya was ready to use other materials she'd prepared to destroy Jakalyn's reputation by submitting proof that Tar-Baphon, despite his designs for divinity, was a rightful ruler after all.

Yet Blood Mistress Jakalyn was not fooled so easily. When the mysterious agent she'd captured refused to reveal his identity and allegiance, Jakalyn had him imprisoned and announced his request and incarceration publicly in hopes of learning more about who wanted Tar-Baphon dead, and (as she suspected) to test if the request was in fact a clever trap. It would take months for her to discover what she thought was the truth—that this messenger was asking for Tar-Baphon's killing as a favor to Razmir. Jakalyn kept this information to herself, and shortly before this adventure begins, she secretly follows up on the plot by traveling to Razmiran in an attempt to interrogate Razmir for the truth.

Blood Mistress Jakalyn knows as well that there are ripples among the Vernai, and more than ever has begun to suspect discontent in the ranks. Those she knows she can trust are not among the higher ranking members of the Vernai, and openly accusing any of them of treachery without proof would invite a vote of no confidence from them all. And so she decides on a risky move—she'll secretly travel to the Eye of Dread to investigate the veracity of the requests and, if they prove legitimate, perhaps even take on the contract. This mission gives her a legitimate reason to leave the Vernai without her leadership for an extended period of time, and she hopes that if there are bad actors, her vacancy will coax them into tipping their hand. She remains absent from Mediogalti for the duration of this adventure in order to give her suspected enemies time to expose themselves—and for trusted agents to act upon her behalf.

As it so happens, the PCs are those trusted agents—ranking members in the assassins' guild (or perhaps allied mercenaries) who are not themselves members of the Vernai. The PCs' allegiance to Jakalyn is, of course, well-known to the Vernai, and once the blood mistress leaves, Saviya swiftly falls into the very trap Jakalyn set by assigning the PCs a mission meant to leave them disgraced and dead, and thus leave Jakalyn with even fewer allies than before.

Getting Started

This adventure begins soon after the PCs accomplish a previous mission or quest. Present to the players the following choices. As a group, they should pick one of these previous missions to explain why they're currently far from Ilizmagorti. If you're running *Prey for Death* as part of an ongoing campaign, you can instead pick an option from below that matches the flavor of the adventure the PCs most recently completed. If you're letting newly created PCs pick a mission, let the players come up with the details. Who did they assassinate? What sort of favor did they perform? What kind of dungeon did they delve to recover the treasure? Likewise, the location at which this previous mission ended is up to the PCs—as long as it's not Mediogalti Island!

ASSASSINATION COMPLETED

Your group was hired to assassinate someone in the area. You completed the task a few nights ago and just met with your client, who paid you handsomely for the service in gold.

Reward: Achaekék approves of the work the PCs recently accomplished, and each PC gains Achaekék's moderate boon (page 107).

FAVOR PERFORMED

Your group just finished doing a complex and dangerous favor for a powerful individual or organization, and has gained access to that person's or group's secrets.

Reward: Each PC earns a favor from the group that they can cash in to gain access to an Uncommon character option, such as an archetype, spell, or item, subject to GM approval. These options can then be retroactively chosen as part of character creation with the assumption that the PCs just spent enough time to retrain and learn the new option, or chosen while purchasing and selecting gear for a newly created character.

TREASURE RECOVERED

Your group just completed a treasure hunt, perhaps one that led into a deadly dungeon or had you digging up a buried chest—regardless, you are now richer than you were before!

Reward: Each PC gains 3,000 gp. Each PC can choose to keep their gold in the form of coins (likely to be spent during play), or they can immediately use this gold to purchase common items of 13th level or lower.

Once the PCs have determined their previous adventure, have made any choices regarding their rewards, and are gathered somewhere relatively private, they are approached by a familiar figure—a slender aiuvarin man with golden brown skin and long white hair who wears a red hooded cloak over leather armor. His dark red eyes glitter, but he approaches calmly and in a non-threatening manner. His name is Vatum, and the PCs should recognize him as a high-ranking courier who serves the Vernai and is known as a favored contact of Blood Mistress Jakalyn. Red

Mantis assassins in the field are assigned new missions through couriers like Vatum, but the PCs have not been approached by him before. Explain to the PCs that his presence here indicates a great honor and trust from their leadership.

Vatum congratulates the PCs on their recent success but gets quickly to the point, explaining that a new target has been selected for a “Visit from He Who Walks” (a common euphemism used by the Red Mantis for “assassination”). The target in this case is a powerful, notorious priest of Gorum: General Ordulf Bladecaller.

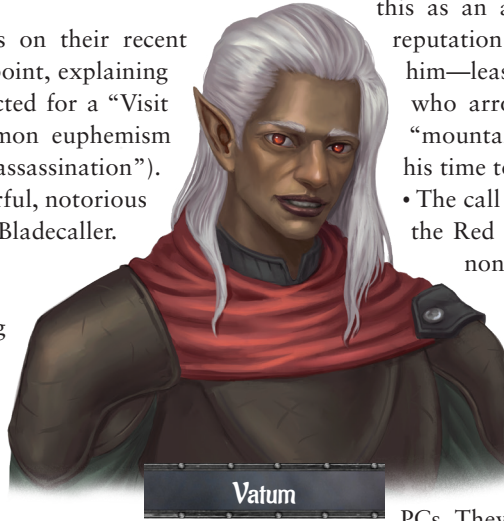
The Target

Vatum shares the following information about General Ordulf Bladecaller with the PCs, information that the PCs can confirm with their own research if they insist.

- General Ordulf Bladecaller is an Ulfen man, born in a now destroyed fishing village along the shores of Glacier Lake in Irrisen.
- Ordulf escaped from the winter witches of Irrisen as a young man and fled west, eventually seeking shelter in the neighboring Lands of the Linnorm Kings; rumors that he personally wrestled one of the chicken-legged animated huts that guards the borders of Irrisen to the ground swiftly won him acclaim and respect in the eastern regions of the Linnorm Kingdoms.
- Ordulf earned the byname “Bladecaller” for his intimidating nature: he had a noteworthy tendency to win conflicts through insults alone even before drawing a blade—his words, many say, cut as deep as any sword or axe.
- Today, Ordulf’s standing in the church of Gorum is obscure. Some rumors say that he is one of the god’s favorites and been blessed so that he cannot be killed, while others insist that he’s turned to other sinister powers to ensure his longevity and that his faith in Gorum is a sham. Of note, all those who confronted Ordulf on matters of his faith were swiftly slain by the warlord.
- Ordulf wields a *frost greatsword* and a *wounding battleaxe* capable of fighting on its own at his side in battle.
- Ordulf single-handedly slaughtered a clan of adlets who had taken residence in an ancient dwarven fortress in the foothills of the Stormspear Mountains. Now renamed Crownhold, this fortress is his seat of power. The closest settlement to Crownhold is a remote trading post called Glacier’s Rest. (See the Glacier’s Rest Knowledge sidebar on page 15 for what the PCs can learn about the town before arriving.)
- Recent rumors say that Ordulf is preparing his forces to wage war against Trollheim, the capital

of the kingdom of Hageach in the Lands of the Linnorm Kings, rather than following local tradition and killing a linnorm to become a king. Many in Hageach and kingdoms beyond see this as an affront to tradition, but Ordulf’s reputation is such that none dare oppose him—least of all King Freyr Darkwine, who arrogantly considers Ordulf to be a “mountain-squatting troll” and not worth his time to even consider a threat.

- The call for Ordulf’s assassination reached the Red Mantis via many whispers. While none in the Lands of the Linnorm Kings would dare claim responsibility for setting these events in motion, the assassination of General Ordulf Bladecaller, a man who would abuse his position of power to usurp the rightful traditions of rule, is now a matter for the



PCs. They are to return to Ilizmagorti once the deed is done with his personal religious symbol in hand as an offering of respect to Achaekek.

The Truth

There is much more to this situation than the PCs are told. This particular mission was selected for the PCs by Saviya, who anonymously (as is tradition for all assignments from the Vernai) charged Vatum with the task of delivering the mission to them. While on the surface it seems a legitimate, if quite dangerous, assignment, in truth there has been no true call by any in the Lands of the Linnorm Kings for Ordulf’s assassination.

Rather, Saviya chose him as a target herself, knowing that the optics of this hated warlord being slain by the Red Mantis would not be questioned by anyone in Hageach, even though no one in the kingdom actually asked for it. She hopes the PCs will fail and be killed in the attempt, thus removing several more of Blood Mistress Jakalyn’s more powerful allies from the scene. If the PCs succeed, though, she has a second team of assassins in the region of Crownhold standing by to strike against the PCs. This group, led by an assassin named Talaro, know that the order to assassinate Ordulf is unlawful and believe it was orchestrated by the PCs, based on clever and fabricated evidence of a vendetta between the PCs and the priesthood of Gorum, which Saviya crafted and leaked to Talaro. Even if Talaro’s band fails to assassinate the PCs, word of their illegitimate assassination spreads quickly through Ilizmagorti. If they do survive and return home, they’ll find themselves unwelcome criminals in their own lands.

The PCs should not discover these machinations at first, but will learn of them soon enough at the end of this chapter.

Glacier's Rest

Remind the players that with an official assassination contract, they're expected to carry out the killing of General Ordulf Bladecaller in a way that leaves no question that his death took place upon the blades of the Red Mantis. However, as long as he's killed in a way that none can mistake who slew him, the methods and timeline of his assassination are left entirely up to the PCs. This is not a matter to be resolved politically, or with the aid of anyone in a position of power within the Lands of the Linnorm Kings. This is the duty of the Red Mantis alone.

The journey to the town of Glacier's Rest, the closest settlement to the fortress of Crownhold, is not covered here—you can either roleplay the PCs' trip to the town or start the adventure as they're approaching Glacier's Rest, having presented their mission above in the form of a flashback.

As the PCs approach the town, read or paraphrase the following.

An icy wind blows across the open tundra south of the town of Glacier's Rest, which crouches atop an upthrust escarpment of stone that looms a hundred feet above the surrounding plains. To the north stand the formidable Stormspear Mountains, while a treacherous-looking trail consisting of three switchbacks ascends the ridge to the town from the trade road that winds into the distance to the east and west.

The town itself is bordered by further defenses—palisades of pine that block the frigid winds and deny townsfolk a view of the southern tundra, further accenting the dominance of the mountains to the north. Clusters of log cabins, alehouses, trading posts, and storehouses huddle together around a massive longhouse, ribbons of smoke reaching to the sky through holes on either end of the town's largest building. A single track winds north from town into the mountains—the only indication that this remote settlement is not the last bastion against the frozen wilderness to the north.

Glacier's Rest is located in northwestern Hagraech in the foothills of the Stormspear Mountains, just north of a long road that winds along the northern border of the Lands of the Linnorm Kings, connecting remote Stormspear Keep to the east on the Irrisen border with the settlement of Turvik on the well-traveled Path of Aganhei over a hundred miles to the west.

Once a self-sustained hunter's retreat and largely ignored trading post, Glacier's Rest has grown and now serves the fortress of Crownhold as a place for Ordulf and his forces to receive goods as tribute for protecting the town. Even though they're under the warlord's control, the people of Glacier's Rest remain fiercely loyal to Ordulf, either out of fear or respect. While having a warmonger for a patron can be frightening, Ordulf's presence has brought increased trade to the town, making it more prosperous than in decades past.

GLACIER'S REST KNOWLEDGE

Glacier's Rest is a remote town. The PCs can learn a bit more about it before they visit by attempting a DC 34 Society check or appropriate Lore check to Recall Knowledge, or via a DC 32 check to Gather Information in any settlement. The DC of this Gather Information check is reduced by 5 if it's attempted while in the Lands of the Linnorm Kings, or by 10 if it's attempted while in the kingdom of Hagraech.

Critical Success In addition to the Success and Failure information, the PC learns three of the notable locations listed on page 16 (along with the information associated with each), and also learns the names and roles of the three key NPCs listed in the Glacier's Rest stat block, below.

Success In addition to the Failure information, the PC learns of one of the notable locations detailed on page 16 (along with its associated information), and of the effects of Gorum's Strength in the town.

Failure The PC learns that Glacier's Rest is a relatively large but remote town, and should make an excellent place to begin the work of planning an infiltration of the fortress of Crownhold. As with all Red Mantis missions, it's important not to reveal your affiliation with the assassins publicly—the PC knows they should not wear armor or carry weapons that would betray their purpose.

Critical Failure The people of Glacier's Rest fear the Red Mantis, and wearing their armor or wielding sawtooth sabers in public will help to intimidate the locals.

GLACIER'S REST

SETTLEMENT 5

TOWN

Trading post at a kingdom's edge

Government General Ordulf Bladecaller (overlord)

Population 1,782 (85% humans, 7% dwarves, 3% half-orcs, 2% orcs, 3% other)

Languages Common, Skald

Religions Gorum

Threats frost rocs, Jadwiga spies, kokogiaks, smugglers, Ulfen raiders

Gorum's Strength The majority of locals revere Gorum. Anyone who wears heavy armor or carries a greatsword gains a +1 circumstance bonus to checks to Coerce, Make an Impression, Request, and Gather Information. Conversely, anyone who is revealed to be an enemy of the faith or who publicly mocks the Gorum-worshipping lifestyle is swiftly seen as a coward, and they instead take a -4 circumstance penalty to all of the above checks.

Einn Snowspeaker (female rimesoul undine alchemist 5) shy alchemist, nature lover, and artisan

Gundar Icebreaker (male human innkeeper 4) observant, middle-aged host of the Frosty Stein

Jarlin Innveig Stonefist (female human wrestler 6) foul-mouthed and short-tempered enforcer of "peace"

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Notable Locations

Traders and travelers are relatively common in Glacier's Rest, as are adventurers, so as long as the PCs don't draw attention to themselves as Red Mantis assassins, they're able to explore and move about the town with ease. If the truth of their affiliation with the assassins becomes known, the townsfolk are close-mouthed—all attempts to Gather Information, Make an Impression, and Request in town take a -4 circumstance penalty.

The following locations may be of interest to the PCs.

Crownhold Warehouse: As merchants come into town, they deposit goods bound for Crownhold here under the care of **Kranold Buergon** (male dwarf prospector 5). Kranold lost his fortune searching for adamantine in the Stormspear Mountains and now acts as warehouse custodian until he saves enough for another expedition into the unforgiving north. He makes deliveries to Crownhold once a week, after the merchant caravans have gone.

Frosty Stein: The friendliest innkeeper in town, **Gundar Icebreaker** (male human innkeeper 4) caters to the merchants who arrive about once a week. He earned his surname after a demonstration where he punched through a solid block of ice, a demonstration he still performs on request. Prices for meals and lodging here are standard, as listed on page 294 of *Player Core*, although no extravagant suites or fine dining options are available.

Gunilla's Goods: Locals use this small market for their everyday goods, while merchants give **Gunilla Crowfriend** (female human witch 5) a huge boost in business to resupply their caravans or purchase tools to fix their wagons. Common magic items (other than weapons or armor) of level 5 or lower can be purchased here.

Hatchet and Barrel: This was once a high-class hunting lodge and tavern called the Golden Barrel built by one **Vid the Wise** (male human hunter 5). Vid wanted to become a king and planned on hunting linnorms from this lodge, but he never so much as looked one in the eye. Now he is the proprietor of this run-down, shady inn. The rowdiest patrons give this tavern their custom, with brawls breaking out weekly as evidenced by a hatchet thrown clear through the barrel sign hanging outside. Only poor meals can be purchased here, and the only lodging is floor space or one of the many filthy beds along the walls of the common room.

Massive Arms: Tholl the Thrice-Burned (male human smith 5) runs the most successful smithy in town. He provides Crownhold with all of their basic weapons and armor, specializing in heavy armor and two-handed

weapons. When he's not forging another implement of war, he crafts iron sculptures from scrap metal. Common metal armor, metal shields, and weapons of up to level 5 can be purchased here.

Sensible Science: The local apothecary also doubles as an alchemist's shop run by **Einn Snowspeaker** (female rimesoul undine alchemist 5). While the locals and visiting Ulfen alike are suspicious she might be a Jadwiga spy, they still go to her when they need healing supplies. Common alchemical elixirs and tools of level 5 or lower can be purchased here.



Crownhold

Crownhold is located in the Stormspear Mountains at the end of a 5-mile track leading north from Glacier's Rest. While the fortress of Crownhold is a dwarven construction, no dwarf has controlled this edifice for thousands of years. Since it was abandoned, Crownhold has at times served as a snowcaster elf trading post, a neutral Erutaki clan meeting site, a base of operations for a cult of demon worshippers, a secret Jadwiga encampment, and most recently as an adlet tribal holding before Ordulf and his forces arrived and took control of the building.

Ordulf intends to remain here and use this small fortress as his seat of power while he draws plans for the conquering of Hagraech. Eventually he wants to build up the fortress with additional keeps on the tundra and deeper tunnels into the mountains. For now, he trains his forces and gathers monstrous allies while deciding where to strike first: an easier target like Turvik, or Stormspear Keep to the east so he can use its resources to bolster his power.

Infiltration

While the PCs can certainly just march right up to Crownhold and begin a frontal assault, remind them that most Red Mantis assassination missions are subtle infiltrations, with the public revelation of the Mantis's involvement taking place only during the assassination. When the PCs first arrive at Glacier's Rest, they quickly learn that a large merchant caravan recently arrived and is in the process of shipping supplies north to Crownhold. This, combined with the fact that the merchants are spending a fair amount of time relaxing and cavorting in town before they head back east to Turvik, makes for the perfect cover for the PCs to begin plotting an infiltration of the fortress. The PCs also learn that the merchants plan to leave town in two days, at which point the locals look forward to spending several weeks in the calm comforts of isolation. At this point, the PCs, as outsiders to Crownhold, will be unwelcome in town.

As a result, the party has two full days to complete their Preparation Activities before infiltrating Crownhold. The following uses the Infiltration system from *GM Core* (page 196).

Preparation Activities

The PCs have two days until the merchant caravan leaves, giving them time to explore, scout, build, and plan before breaking into Ordulf's seat of power. This period of two days is broken into four phases. During a phase, each PC can perform one of the exploration activities below. After each phase, the PCs reconvene long enough to share information and plan their next move.

There are two goals to this preparation. First, the PCs can uncover valuable information that helps them plan their hit. Second, the party can earn Leverage Points to help them overcome complications during the adventure.

PREPARE TOOLS

EXPLORATION MANIPULATE SECRET

You create a single-use tool specially designed for infiltrating the fortress, such as a camouflaged cloak that perfectly matches Crownhold's stonework, forged invitations to a war council, etchings on armor to match those worn by Crownhold's guards, or the like. Attempt a DC 30 Crafting check to create this one-use tool.

Success You create an effective, single-use tool that grants 1 Leverage Point for a complication. At any point during a complication, you can spend an LP to describe a flashback scene of you preparing just the right tool for the job. In doing so, you must describe how the tool helps overcome the specific complication. This Leverage Point should be represented as a special token or a specific entry on your sheet, and when you (or another player) uses the tool to help in a complication and spends the Leverage Point this tool granted, the tool is consumed.

Failure You create a middling tool. When you or another PC use this tool, it's consumed and its Leverage Point is wasted.

Critical Failure As a failure, but a PC who tries to use the Leverage Point to help with a complication gets a critical failure, even if they use the LP after rolling a failure.

DISCOVER ORDULF'S SECRETS

EXPLORATION SECRET

You seek out and learn secret information about General Ordulf Bladecaller. Attempt a DC 30 Diplomacy, Intimidation, or Society check. Alternatively, attempt a DC 28 Gorum Lore or Warfare Lore check.

Critical Success In addition to the Success information, below, you learn that Ordulf's arrogance can be used against him, particularly if someone challenges his bravery, compares him to a troll or a chicken, insults his skill at fishing, or likens him to a witch or national of Irrisen. (Reveal the rules for Ordulf's Battle Arrogance weakness to the PCs, as detailed in his statistics on page 35.)

Success You learn that Ordulf has become one of Gorum's favored priests, and that he has been granted Gorum's

A HYBRID INFILTRATION

Unlike the typical infiltration (as detailed on pages 196–199 of *GM Core*), this chapter presents a hybrid. The PCs can engage in preparation activities before they begin the infiltration, and they'll face several complications during the course of the chapter, but rather than earn Infiltration Points by overcoming obstacles, the party earns these points during the course of traditional exploration of Crownhold.

As the PCs explore Crownhold, their Infiltration Point and Awareness Point totals determine how the fortress reacts and when they can stage their assassination attempt on Ordulf—see Event 1: The Assassination on page 34 for details.

As this mission begins, make sure your players understand that the goal isn't to seek out Ordulf and kill him as quickly as possible—as Red Mantis assassins, they're expected to investigate the fortress first and bide their time so as to strike at the most opportune moment where the assassination will have the greatest impact. Explain to the PCs that by building up 14 Infiltration Points, they'll be able to manage the where and when of the assassination. While storming into the fortress and attacking the general before reaching 14 Infiltration Points technically would satisfy the contract, without setting things up the party will likely have to face the entire fortress's defenses at once in a battle that could swiftly become something beyond an Extreme encounter.

major boon. (Reveal the rules for this ability to the PC, as detailed in Ordulf's stats on page 35.)

Critical Failure As a warrior blessed by Gorum, Ordulf focuses his devotion into powerful battle magic, summoning walls of whirling blades and healing himself. His magic allows him to survive deadly wounds, and could perhaps be countered with *dispel magic*.

DISCOVER CROWNHOLD'S SECRETS

CONCENTRATE EXPLORATION SECRET

You learn key information about Crownhold through interviews and investigation. Attempt a DC 30 Diplomacy, Intimidation, or Society check. Alternatively, attempt a DC 28 Dwarven Lore check.

Critical Success You learn two of the secrets from the success results below, determined randomly, and the party earns 1 Leverage Point.

Success You learn one of the following secrets, determined randomly, and the party earns 1 Leverage Point.

Adlet Alterations Crownhold's previous occupants were adlets, who are rumored to have been slaughtered by Ordulf alone while his forces waited outside to murder any who tried to escape. During the adlet occupation, they made adjustments to several locations in the structure, removing walls and supports

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to make more room for oversized minions or simply to leave their mark on dwarven carvings. This knowledge grants you the option to use a Leverage Point when facing the Unexpected Patrol complication, or when you attempt to Force Open a door in Crownhold. When you use a Leverage Point in this way, describe how an adlet modification to the fortress's architecture has given you an unexpected advantage.

Gorum's Favor It's said that Gorum favors Ordulf, and that as long as the high priest lives, Crownhold is protected and its guards are bolstered while the PCs are penalized. The PCs understand that the entire structure and its inhabitants are protected by the effects of a 7th-rank *consecrate* ritual, and that the altar on which the effect is focused (and thus, the point they need to reach in order to have a chance to dispel this effect) is located in the general's bedroom.



Rage Rider

Hidden Compartments Crownhold was built by dwarves thousands of years ago during the height of their ancestral expansion to the surface world. The dwarves abandoned this outpost to consolidate their troops during the Five Kings War, and the outpost has been changing occupants ever since, usually through conquest. Over the years, those who have occupied the fortress have found some, but not all, of the hidden compartments the dwarves built into the structure. This knowledge allows the party to use a Leverage Point to assist with the Hide Bodies complication; when you use a Leverage Point in this way, describe a convenient feature of the immediate area (a small hidden nook, a narrow gap in a wall, a secret panel that opens into an empty compartment) that gives you an advantage.

Secret Vault You learn that there's a secret vault in Crownhold somewhere in the basement, and that the vault reputedly stores a powerful magic rapier—a *storm flash*—that an assassin attempted to use on Ordulf a year ago. Rumor holds that while Ordulf defeated the assassin and kept her magic rapier as a trophy, he has a particular hatred of this weapon and has on numerous occasions nearly melted it down—yet each time, the pride at having defeated the assassin compelled him to relent and keep the weapon as a trophy.

Spare Keys You learn that spare keys for Crownhold are stored in one of the warehouses in Glacier's Rest.

Critical Failure You learn nothing of note, but your prying draws unwanted attention. Gain 1 Awareness Point (page 21).

ORCHESTRATE TIMELY DISTRACTION

CONCENTRATE | EXPLORATION | MANIPULATE

You organize an attention-grabbing event that's primed to occur during your infiltration of the fortress. This might be an explosion, a fire, or other crisis. Attempt a DC 30 Deception, Performance, Religion, or Society check.

Critical Success As success, plus the distraction is so spectacular that it pulls the fortress guards' attention away from your infiltration and drowns out subtle signs of your presence. Reduce your Awareness Point total by 1. The party earns 1 Leverage Point.

Success The party gains 1 Leverage Point from the minor distraction.

Failure The distraction fails; the fortress guards hold fast to their duties but don't notice that you tried to distract them.

Critical Failure The distraction backfires significantly when you use it, reminding the guards of the need to remain vigilant against danger at all times. Gain 1 Awareness Point.

APPROACH CROWNHOLD

EXPLORATION | MOVE | SECRET

You attempt to get close enough to Crownhold to observe it for a period of time while remaining unseen. Attempt a DC 30 Stealth or a DC 28 Scouting Lore check. If you have a means of becoming invisible or similar magical aid, adjust your rolled result up by one degree of success (with GM approval).

Critical Success You sneak up to Crownhold without being detected. If your next exploration activity is to Observe Crownhold, you gain a +2 circumstance bonus to that check.

Success You sneak up to Crownhold without being detected.

Failure You sneak up to Crownhold, but leave traces of your passage for others to find. Gain 1 AP.

Critical Failure You've been spotted! Any PCs who also attempted this activity at the same phase cannot get higher than a Success on their check. You manage to avoid getting caught, but gain 2 AP.

OBSERVE CROWNHOLD

EXPLORATION SECRET

Requirements Your last exploration action was to Approach Crownhold and you did not critically fail.

You study Crownhold from several vantage points, examining its layout, likely complications, and defenses. Attempt a DC 30 Perception, Stealth, or Survival check or a DC 28 Architecture Lore, Scouting Lore, or Warfare Lore check.

Critical Success You learn three of the facts listed in the success result that you or your allies haven't already discovered. The party also gains 1 Leverage Point.

Success You learn one of the following facts that you or your allies have not already discovered. The party also gains 1 Leverage Point.

1: Out on the tundra, a pair of massive polar bear-like creatures with too many legs travel in wide arcs in front of the fortress. Two humanoid figures sit atop each bear's back. (DC 30 Nature check to Recall Knowledge and identify the bear-like creatures as kokogiaks [*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 15].)

2: Groups of three soldiers patrol the fortress, each wearing furs under heavy plate armor and carrying greatswords.

3: You spot more than a dozen soldiers moving around on the west side of the first-floor balcony.

4: A blue-skinned giant with three eyes emerges from the central doors on the second floor holding a mug, tosses the coffee dregs over the wall, then goes back inside. (DC 31 Society check to Recall Knowledge and identify the giant as a snow oni.)

5: The balconies on the second and top floors each end with a large, round rampart on the east and west corners. Each platform holds a springald (*Guns & Gears* 76) with a crew of 2 soldiers.

6: Occasionally, what looks like a giant white owl flies from the top of the keep. It circles around, swoops down on an elk or yak, then returns to the keep with its prey. (With a successful DC 34 Nature check to Recall Knowledge, a PC identifies the creature as a frost roc [page 113].)

Critical Failure You fail to gain any information, and unwittingly leave traces behind of your presence that are discovered soon thereafter. Gain 1 Awareness Point.

SWIPE CROWNHOLD STORAGE KEYS

EXPLORATION MANIPULATE

Requirements A PC has learned of the existence of the spare keys after Discovering Crownhold's Secrets.

You try to secure one of the spare keys to Crownhold's doors from the Crownhold Warehouse without anyone noticing. Attempt a DC 32 Thievery check.

Critical Success As success, but you also acquire a vault key designed to open the secret vault (area A9).

Success You acquire a spare key that belongs to one lock inside the fortress. You decide which lock the key works on when you use it on site, after which that key only works for that lock. This key cannot be for the secret vault (area A9).

Failure You don't acquire any keys.

Critical Failure Though you escape before being caught, you raise the suspicion of the warehouse guards. Gain 1 AP.

Completing Preparations

Once two days have passed and the PCs conclude all of the legwork phases available to them, the merchant caravan leaves Glacier's Rest. The PCs can continue preparing for the infiltration if they wish at a rate of 2 phases per day, but each Preparation Activity they attempt at this point automatically accumulates 2 AP (or 1 AP if you determine that PC was being particularly clever about hiding their presence during that activity).

Give the players a little time to refine their plan, make any last purchases, choose which spells to prepare, and cast long-duration spells. The PCs can attempt the infiltration that evening or the following morning. Allow the players to ask any remaining questions, then begin the infiltration.

Running the Infiltration

While the PCs have no time limit on their mission, the longer they take, the more likely it is that they'll be caught and raise Crownhold's awareness to a point where a frontal assault is the only option remaining. Run each infiltration attempt using the following phases.

Phase 1: The PCs face the Approach Fortress complication, and potentially play out any combats with patrols that spot them. If the PCs approach openly, treat it as if they'd rolled a critical failure against this complication.

Phase 2: Switch to encounter mode as the PCs explore Crownhold. The PCs should face an Unexpected Patrol complication whenever they spend too long in one place, at your discretion (typically if they spend more than 10 minutes without progression through the exploration of Crownhold).

Phase 3: If the PCs choose to exit the fortress and return to Glacier's Rest to recover and recuperate, they can do so quietly by succeeding at the Approach Fortress complication again (with the same penalty if they do so in an obvious manner).

Earning Infiltration Points

The PCs earn Infiltration Points in this chapter by achieving certain milestones as they explore Crownhold.

Approach Crownhold: The first time the PCs succeed at the Approach Fortress complication, they earn 1 Infiltration Point.

Defeat Crownhold Patrols: Each time the PCs defeat a Crownhold patrol in the fortress, they earn 1 Infiltration Point, to a maximum of 6 possible Infiltration Points for defeating all the patrols.

Resolving Encounters: The PCs earn Infiltration Points when they resolve certain encounters in Crownhold as well, as detailed in each encounter's Rewards section.

Complications

As the PCs draw more attention to themselves, various complications arise. In some cases, it'll be obvious when to challenge the party with one of these, while in others, you can use a complication to spice things up should the infiltration's tension threaten to subside. To resolve any of the following complications, one of the PCs must overcome it with the listed check; see page 198 of *GM Core* for more details on resolving complications.

If the PCs defeat a significant number of Crownhold's occupants, then at your discretion some of the following complications might not occur, or have easier DCs to hit.

APPROACH FORTRESS

COMPLICATION

Trigger The PCs approach Crownhold.

Overcome DC 32 Perception, DC 28 Scouting Lore, or DC 30 Stealth

The PCs must cross a vast tundra unnoticed, either by ground or by air. One PC must attempt a check with the DCs above to overcome this complication, but each other PC can Aid this check by succeeding at a DC 20 check using any of the skills listed above for Overcome. If the entire party uses magic to help disguise their approach, adjust all checks made to overcome this complication up by one degree of success. This complication must be overcome every time the PCs wish to approach or retreat from Crownhold without being noticed, but the first time they overcome this complication, the party earns 1 Infiltration Point. The use of teleportation magic to overcome this complication results in an automatic success.

Success The PCs approach Crownhold unnoticed.

Failure The PCs arouse some suspicion before they reach Crownhold, but they avoid encountering a patrol. The party accrues 1 Awareness Point.

Critical Failure The PCs gain 2 Awareness Points, and face a Sky Patrol or a Ground Patrol (page 23); GM's choice as to which patrol is encountered.

HIDE BODIES

COMPLICATION

Trigger The PCs finish an encounter within Crownhold that results in dead or unconscious guards.

Overcome DC 28 Athletics (to quickly and efficiently haul bodies away to a hiding spot) or DC 25 Stealth (to clean up and obscure evidence); these DCs increase by 2 if the bodies are Large or by 10 if they are Huge. Gargantuan bodies cannot be easily hidden.

The PCs' actions have left corpses in their wake, and if they don't clean them up quickly, heightened security is sure to

follow. If bodies are left unhidden, or if they fail the check to overcome this complication, the bodies are automatically discovered 10 minutes later, causing the party to accrue 1 Awareness Point.

STOP WITNESS

COMPLICATION

Trigger A guard catches a PC in a suspicious act.

Overcome Deception DC 35 (to trick the witness into believing they misinterpreted what they saw) or Intimidation DC 30 (to frighten the witness into silence)

A soldier notices a PC and grows suspicious of their behavior. Perhaps they witnessed something more innocuous, like prowling, or maybe they spotted a PC with a bloody saber in hand. Either way, the PCs need to stop them from raising an alarm to neutralize the threat. Each PC has one turn to attempt a check to overcome the complication. Attacking the guard negates any attempt to overcome this complication, and triggers initiative rolls.

Critical Success With trickery, terror, or blood, the PCs silence the witness immediately.



Roe Rider

Success The guard considers keeping their mouth shut. If a second PC succeeds at overcoming this Complication at the same time, upgrade this result to a critical success.

Failure The soldier calls for help. The party accrues 1 Awareness Point.

Critical Failure The soldier screams, throws things, and generally makes themself as loud as possible. The party accrues 2 AP.

UNEXPECTED PATROL

COMPLICATION

Trigger A patrol approaches the PC's position. If more than one PC is in the area, each PC must attempt to overcome the complication.

Overcome DC 32 Deception (to distract the patrol, such as by throwing a stone) or DC 30 Stealth (to hide and remain undetected)

A soldier stops in a room or hallway along the PC's path, perhaps getting something to eat, using the latrine, or retrieving a piece of forgotten equipment. The PC must sneak past them or otherwise distract them to get by. You can use this complication as you see fit to throw unexpected challenges into play during exploration. If more PCs fail to overcome this complication than succeed, they are spotted by the patrol, at which point Who Goes There? is triggered.

WHO GOES THERE?

COMPLICATION

Trigger The PCs are discovered while in or near Crownhold.

Overcome DC 28 Deception (to use trickery or a disguise to convince the guards the PCs have a right to be here) or DC 32 Intimidation (to threaten the guards into silence)

The PCs are spotted and challenged by a guard or patrol! If the party has fewer than 8 Awareness Points, a PC can attempt to trick or convince the guards to let them proceed, as detailed in Overcome, above. If the party has 8 to 11 Awareness Points, the DC to overcome this complication increases by 5, and if the party has 12 to 15 Awareness points, the DC increases by 10. If the party has 16 or more Awareness points, no attempt to overcome is allowed and this complication automatically results in a Critical Failure.

Critical Success The PCs are allowed to proceed without further issue, but once the party gains any more Awareness Points for any reason, being spotted by these same guards again triggers another Who Goes There? complication.

Success As critical success, but the guards are suspicious. The party gains 1 Awareness Point 10 minutes later as the guards realize something strange was going on.

Failure The guards aren't convinced and attack. The party immediately gains 1 Awareness Point.

Critical Failure As failure, but the party gains 2 Awareness Points.

Awareness

As the PCs perform significant actions, there's a chance they'll attract attention, represented by Awareness Points. In addition to the Awareness Points accumulations described in the Preparations and Complications sections, other actions might generate Awareness Points.

ASSASSINATING CLERGY

When a Red Mantis is assigned to dispatch a person of faith, they are expected to remove the dead's religious symbol or other iconography, then either give it to the one who issued them the contract or present it to the Vernai. From there, the Blood Mistress takes it into her inner sanctum, where she is said to present it to the gods as a token of respect, a way of honoring the divine despite slaying one of their faithful.

As agents of the Red Mantis, the PCs in this adventure know this already; other characters know this with a successful DC 25 Religion check to Recall Knowledge.

Alarm Raised: While a guard's cry of warning isn't enough to raise the fortress's alarm, bells located at key points in the fortress can be rung with an Interact action. If the alarm is raised in this way, the PCs earn 1 Awareness Point or increase their total Awareness Points to 8, whichever would result in a higher total. Once the alarm has been raised, additional raised alarms do not increase Awareness Points again for 24 hours.

Blown Cover: If the PCs' cover is blown at any point and their association with the Red Mantis becomes public knowledge, the party immediately gains 8 Awareness Points.

Causing a Ruckus: The PCs earn 1 Awareness Point whenever they create a particularly loud ruckus or perform an audaciously provocative act, like diving through a skylight, setting a fire, or causing an explosion.

Combat: At the end of each round of combat within Crownhold (unless the area in which the fight is taking place indicates combat does not accumulate awareness), attempt a DC 11 flat check. On a success, the PCs earn 1 Awareness Point.

Cooldown: Every day that passes with the PCs not attempting an infiltration reduces Crownhold's Awareness Points by 1.

Effects of Awareness

The PCs' Awareness Points total has the following effects.

3 Awareness Points: Crownhold guards start sending out two air patrols at a time in different areas to cover more ground, with two patrols out and one patrol resting at any given time. The PCs must overcome the Approach Crownhold complication twice rather than once each time they approach the fortress.

5 Awareness Points: One of the patrols (ground, air, or infantry, depending on the PCs' location) approaches the PCs' location the first time they reach this tier. The PCs immediately face an Unexpected Patrol complication.

8 Awareness Points: The guards grow more alert. Increase the DCs for all complications by 1. All interior doors within Crownhold are now locked. Gorumite

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warpriests cast *see the unseen* on themselves (which lasts for the next 8 hours).

11 Awareness Points: Ordulf and the War Delegation (area A15) are ready for the PCs to attack. They gain a +2 circumstance bonus to their initiative rolls. Patrols are more frequent; the PCs must overcome an Unexpected Patrol complication for every 10 minutes they spend in Crownhold.

16 Awareness Points: Crownhold goes on full alert. All occupants gain a +2 circumstance bonus to initiative rolls. Increase the DCs for all complications by 2. Ordulf starts to become concerned and arranges to have two Gorumite warpriests serve as additional bodyguards; these warpriests are recalled from nearby patrols and are in addition to the 6 already encountered in Crownhold. The PCs no longer take a -1 status penalty to attack rolls, skill checks, saving throws, and Perception checks from Crownhold's *consecrate* effect.

32 Awareness Points: Ordulf becomes worried enough to pray for aid from Gorum, who responds by sending the First Blade to Crownhold. **Event 2** (page 36) can now take place at any time, not just as a response to Ordulf's death.

Crownhold Features

Unless otherwise noted, Crownhold's ceilings are 18 feet high and the walls are constructed from thick hewn stone. Paired with copper tubing and an elemental furnace heating system, the inside of the structure stays within normal comfortable temperatures for most humanoids.

Crownhold's typical doors are constructed from wood and reinforced with iron. They are kept closed to preserve heat, and while all internal doors are capable of being locked, as long as the PCs are lower than 8 Awareness Points, only exterior doors are locked. Furthermore, the doors and walls of Crownhold are imbued with Gorum's protection as long as Ordulf lives—normally, it's a DC 20 Athletics check to Force Open these doors, but with Gorum's protection these DCs increase by 10 to DC 30. If a door is locked, four DC 30 Thievery checks to Pick the Lock can open it, as can a key. Spare keys found during preparation can be used to unlock a specific door (as detailed on page 19), but a few universal keys capable of unlocking every door in the fortress except the secret vault at area A9 are found in specific areas or are carried by Gorumite warpriests, as noted.

The interior is lit via strategically placed *everlight* spells that flicker from gems set into iron symbols of Gorum on the walls, giving most of the rooms bright illumination. Each symbol has a simple wooden shutter also emblazoned with Gorum's symbol, which can be closed with an Interact action when darkness is preferred.

The most notable defense in place in Crownhold is a 7th-rank *consecrate* ritual placed by Ordulf. The ritual was so successful that it resulted in a permanent effect that wards the entire fortress. The effect is focused on an altar in his bedroom (area A21), and as long as it persists, the fortress is warded against teleportation and all Gorumites gain a +1 status bonus to attack rolls, skill checks, saving throws, and Perception checks.

Special: Note that non-worshippers of Gorum involved in the infiltration of Crownhold are engaging in one of the war god's anathemas: attempting to win a battle through underhanded tactics. As such, as long as the *consecrate* ritual persists, PCs inside of Crownhold take a -1 status penalty to attack rolls, skill checks, saving throws, and Perception checks. If any of the PCs are worshippers of Gorum, the complicated position they find themselves in prevents them from being affected by either effect; they take no penalty but gain no bonus. This penalty also ends if the PCs reach 16 Awareness points, at which time their underhanded tactics have eroded enough to no longer earn Gorum's displeasure.



Gorumite Veteran

Crownhold's Guards

As the PCs approach Crownhold, or while they explore its interiors, they're constantly at risk of being discovered and confronted by the fortress's guards. A total of four different types of guards protect Crownhold—rage riders (humans who ride atop kokogiaks), roc riders (adlets who ride atop frost rocs), Gorumite veterans (fighters who have honed their skills through countless battles), and Gorumite warpriests (clerics who serve as the intermediaries between Ordulf and the other guards).

Not all of these guards maintain barracks in Crownhold itself; many of the roc riders and rage riders maintain small camps spread throughout the region, but their numbers aren't limitless. If the PCs slay 6 roc riders or 16 rage riders over the course of this adventure, no more are available to be encountered outside of Crownhold's walls. Those encountered within Crownhold are not part of the forces the PCs might meet while approaching the fortress.

Within Crownhold are stationed a total of 12 Gorumite veterans and 6 Gorumite warpriests. Keep track of the number of these guards slain—they can be encountered throughout the fortress, but once their numbers deplete, they are not replaced.

Ground Patrols: A patrol encountered outside of Crownhold consists of two kokogiaks (*Bestiary* 3 151), each ridden by two rage riders. Note that as the kokogiaks are sapient allies of the rage riders, they act on their own accord; their riders do not have to Command them. This is a Moderate 14 encounter.

Sky Patrols: A typical sky patrol encountered outside of Crownhold's walls consists of a roc rider mounted on a frost roc (page 113). This is a Moderate 14 encounter.

Crownhold Patrols: A typical patrol encountered inside of Crownhold's walls consists of a pair of Gorumite veterans led by a Gorumite warpriest. This is a Low 14 encounter.

GUARD TOTALS

The majority of the Gorumites who serve Ordulf spend their time in the surrounding environs on patrol, but at any one time, a subset of that total is kept back in Crownhold as guards. In all, 12 Gorumite veterans and 6 Gorumite warpriests dwell in Crownhold, along with an elite warpriest named Vofnir.

At any one time, two Crownhold patrols wander the fortress, two crew the springalds at area **A14**, and two rest and relax (one in area **A12** and one in area **A20**). Vofnir spends his days training infantry in area **A5**, and evenings in the largest room at area **A20**.

RAGE RIDER

UNCOMMON MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Human barbarian

Perception +19

Languages Common, Skald

CREATURE 10

CONSECRATE REMINDER

Remember that as long as the *consecrate* effect remains in place over Crownhold, the underhanded nature of the PCs causes them to take a -1 status penalty to attack rolls, skill checks, saving throws, and Perception checks!

Skills Athletics +21, Intimidation +16, Nature +19, Survival +19
Str +5, **Dex** +3, **Con** +4, **Int** +0, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +0

Items +1 cold-resistant studded leather, +1 returning striking spear, exquisite kokogiak harness

AC 29; **Fort** +20, **Ref** +17, **Will** +19

HP 175; **Resistances** cold 5

Exquisite Kokogiak Harness A rage rider is equipped with an exquisitely crafted harness when riding a kokogiak. Two rage riders can ride a willing kokogiak at once using such a harness, and both of their hands remain free while doing so. When a rage rider is attached to a kokogiak, they can't use any action that uses their speed (such as Step or Stride), and all DCs to forcibly move the rage rider or to knock them from their mount are increased by 5. If a kokogiak being ridden by a rage rider using such a harness is killed or falls unconscious, the rage rider takes 3d6 bludgeoning damage from the fall (DC 30 basic Reflex save). A rage rider can release their harness with an Interact action.

Catch and Release **Requirements** The rage rider has a hand free; **Trigger** An enemy critically misses the rage rider with a thrown weapon attack; **Effect** The rage rider catches the thrown weapon and makes a ranged Strike with it.

Speed 25 feet

Melee **◆** spear +22 (magical), **Damage** 2d6+11 piercing

Ranged **◆** spear +20 (magical, thrown 20 feet), **Damage** 2d6+11 piercing

Ruinous Rage **◆** (concentrate, emotion, mental) The rage rider enters a state of pure rage that lasts either for 1 minute, until there are no enemies they can perceive, or until they fall unconscious, whichever comes first. While raging, the rage rider has AC 27 and their spear Strikes deal 2d6+15 damage plus 2d6 persistent bleed damage. While raging, the rage rider can't use actions that have the concentrate trait, except for Seek. After they've stopped raging, a rage rider can't use Rage again for 1 minute.

ROC RIDER

CREATURE 14

UNCOMMON MEDIUM COLD HUMANOID

Variant adlet (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 9)

Perception +26; low-light vision, scent (imprecise) 30 feet

Languages Adlet, Common

Skills Acrobatics +28, Athletics +26, Nature +26, Stealth +28, Survival +24

Str +6, **Dex** +8, **Con** +4, **Int** +0, **Wis** +6, **Cha** +2

Items +2 returning wounding striking spear

AC 36; **Fort** +22, **Ref** +28, **Will** +26

HP 256; **Immunities** cold; **Weaknesses** fire 15

Aerial Wolfstorm (aura, cold, primal) 60 feet. A clammy, frigid mist billows forth ahead of the adlet. Creatures within the mist become concealed, and creatures outside

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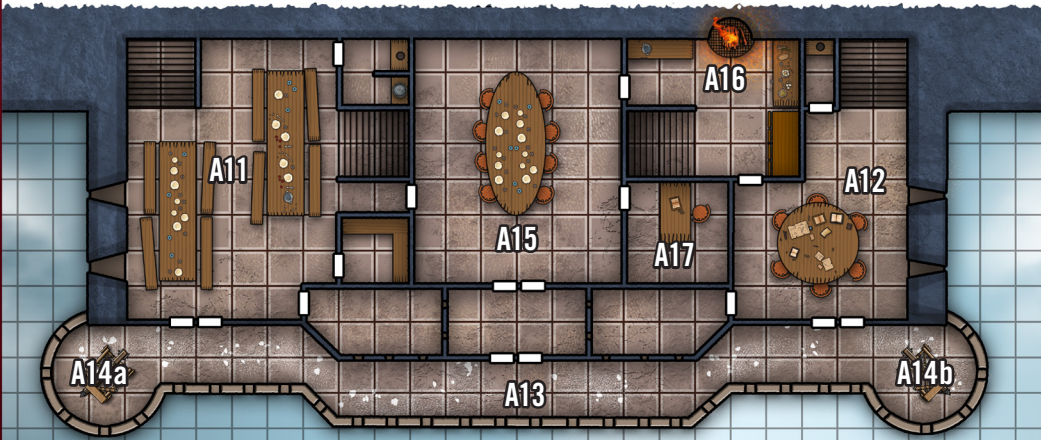
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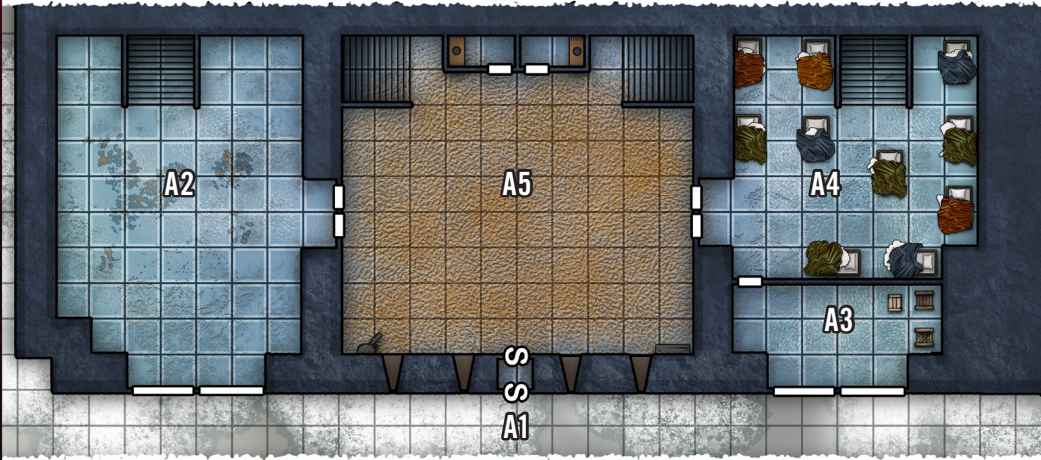
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Third Floor



Second Floor



First Floor



Basement




CROWNHOLD
1 SQUARE = 5 FEET


the mist become concealed to creatures within it. An adlet can see through the aura without penalty. When mounted on a frost roc, this aura emanates from the roc, not the adlet, and the roc gains the ability to see through the aura without penalty as well.

Avenging Bite  As adlet.


Speed 40 feet

Melee  *spear* +28 (magical), **Damage** 2d6+14 piercing plus 1d6 cold and 1d6 persistent bleed

Melee  *jaws* +26, **Damage** 3d10+14 slashing plus 1d6 persistent cold

Ranged  *spear* +30 (magical, thrown 20 feet), **Damage** 2d6+14 piercing plus 1d6 cold and 1d6 persistent bleed

Primal Innate Spells DC 31, attack +23; **7th** *howling blizzard*; **Cantrips (7th)** *frostbite*

Aerial Wolfriem  (cold, concentrate, primal) The roc rider's mist turns biting cold and coalesces into a thick rime of frost that deals 7d6 cold damage to creatures inside the roc rider's aerial wolfstorm aura (DC 31 basic Fortitude), and the aura is deactivated until the start of the roc rider's next turn.

Frozen Weapons As adlet.

Pack Attack As adlet.

GORUMITE VETERAN

CREATURE 12

UNCOMMON MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Human fighter

Perception +21

Languages Common, Skald

Skills Athletics +23, Crafting +16, Intimidation +20, Medicine +21, Warfare Lore +20

Str +7, **Dex** +4, **Con** +6, **Int** +2, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +3


Items +1 *resilient full plate*, +1 *striking wounding greatsword*, javelins (3)

AC 33; **Fort** +23, **Ref** +21, **Will** +19; +2 circumstance vs. fear
HP 240

Reactive Strike 



Speed 20 feet



Melee  *greatsword* +26 (magical, versatile P), **Damage** 2d12+11 slashing plus 1d6 persistent bleed

Ranged  *javelin* +26 (ranged 30 feet, thrown), **Damage** 1d6+11 piercing

Consecrated As long as the *consecrate* ritual effects persist in Crownhold, a Gorumite veteran gains a +1 status bonus to attack rolls, skill checks, saving throws, and Perception checks; these bonuses are not calculated into the stat block.

Greatsword Critical Specialization On a critical hit with a greatsword, the target of the critical hit is knocked off-balance and becomes off-guard until the start of the Gorumite veteran's next turn.

Heavy Swing   The Gorumite veteran Strikes with their greatsword, dealing 4d12+22 slashing damage plus 1d6 persistent bleed. This counts as two attacks when calculating their multiple attack penalty.

Pinning Throw   The Gorumite veteran attempts a ranged Strike with their javelin, dealing 3d6+22 piercing damage. If the target is adjacent to a solid surface, they become stuck

to that surface by the javelin. The target is immobilized until they Escape (DC 33). The creature doesn't become stuck if it is incorporeal, is liquid (like a water elemental or some oozes), or could otherwise escape without effort.

GORUMITE WARPRIEST

CREATURE 12

UNCOMMON MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Human cleric

Perception +23

Languages Common, Skald

Skills Athletics +22, Crafting +18, Intimidation +21, Religion +23, Warfare Lore +18

Str +4, **Dex** +1, **Con** +3, **Int** +0, **Wis** +5, **Cha** +3

Items +1 *resilient breastplate*, +1 *striking greatsword*, iron religious symbol of Gorum, universal Crownhold key

AC 32; **Fort** +22, **Ref** +20, **Will** +24

HP 212


Speed 25 feet

Melee  *greatsword* +23 (magical, versatile P), **Damage** 2d12+7 slashing

Divine Prepared Spells DC 32, attack +24; **6th** *blessed boundary*, *harm*, *heal* (×4), *heroism*; **5th** *breath of life*, *dispel magic*, *see the unseen*; **4th** *divine wrath*, *fly*, *unfettered movement*; **3rd** *blindness*, *cleansse affliction*, *noise blast*; **2nd** *clear mind*, *darkvision*, *share life*; **1st** *bles*, *enfeeble*, *mending*; **Cantrips (6th)** *daze*, *forbidding ward*, *guidance*, *shield*, *stabilize*

Cleric Domain Spells 2 Focus Points, DC 32; **6th** *athletic rush* (Player Core 377), *enduring might* (Player Core 377)

Consecrated As long as the *consecrate* ritual effects persist in Crownhold, a Gorumite warpriest gains a +1 status bonus to attack rolls, skill checks, saving throws, and Perception checks; these bonuses are not calculated into the stat block.

Fervent Casting  (auditory, divine, spellshape) **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** The Gorumite warpriest loudly proclaims the glory of Gorum. The next divine spell they cast takes one fewer action (minimum of one), but must only target the warpriest. If the spell affects an area or multiple targets, such as *bles*, it only affects the warpriest, even if it lasts more than one round.

A1. Front Gates

Hundreds of feet of open tundra lie to the south of this stocky stone fortress, built into the side of a steep cliff at the base of a towering mountain. A pair of additional floors loom above the ground level, each set back further against the cliffside and featuring crenelated balconies. A two sets of immense wooden double doors reinforced with iron bands provide entrance into the fortress to the left and right, while in the middle, the wall is adorned with arrowslits shuttered closed against the cold from the inside.

If the PCs successfully Approach Crownhold, they reach this point without being noticed—otherwise they're swiftly spotted by any guards posted above at area A14 (further details on page 30).

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The cliffs beyond the fortress are exceptionally difficult to scale, requiring a successful DC 30 Athletics check to Climb. On a critical failure, the PC takes 4d6 bludgeoning damage in addition to any damage from the fall as a small rockslide accompanies them down—this also earns the party 1 AP.

A2. Frostripper Den Low 14

This room is kept in darkness for the kokogiaks' comfort.

Vertical wooden beams line the walls of this vast open chamber, and the smell of wet fur permeates the air. Huge double doors stand to the south, while smaller double doors lead east. Steep stairs against the north wall lead down into what must be a basement level.

The stairs to the north lead down to area **A6a**.

Creatures: Ordulf convinced a den of kokogiaks to join his cause many years ago after he wrestled, pinned, and killed their leader. The remaining kokogiaks were impressed and agreed to join him. Most of the creatures now serve the rage riders and spend the majority of their time out in the surrounding wilds, but two of the more powerful beasts—monsters infused with primal magic and known to the Gorumites as frostrippers—have earned the right to remain here in relative comfort. These two dangerous kokogiaks spend much of their time sleeping, and are doing just that as long as the PCs have fewer than 8 Awareness Points. If they wake, the party triggers the Who Goes There? complication, but since these kokogiaks are always hungry and particularly cranky, any attempt to Overcome this complication takes a –2 circumstance penalty on the check. If battle begins, the kokogiaks fight to the death, pursuing the PCs throughout the fortress (they treat 10-foot-wide areas as difficult terrain, and must Squeeze to pass through 5-foot-wide openings).

Combats that take place in this room, due to the thick walls and the kokogiaks' penchant for roaring and thumping around anyway, won't risk raising the party's Awareness Points.

FROSTRIPPERS (2)

CREATURE 13

UNCOMMON HUGE BEAST

Variant kokogiak (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 151)

Perception +26; darkvision, scent (imprecise) 60 feet

Languages Common, Jotun, Skald

Skills Athletics +29, Deception +24, Intimidation +26, Religion +24, Stealth +22 (+26 in snow), Survival +26

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


Voice Imitation As kokogiak.


AC 34; **Fort** +26, **Ref** +20, **Will** +22

HP 232; **Resistances** cold 15

Reactive Strike 

Speed 40 feet, swim 20 feet, trackless step

Melee  jaws +26 (reach 20 feet), **Damage** 3d10+13 piercing

Melee  claw +26 (reach 15 feet), **Damage** 3d8+13 slashing

Primal Innate Spells DC 33, attack +24; **6th** *howling blizzard*;

5th *earthbind, wall of ice*; **Cantrips (6th)** *frostbite*

Mauling Rush  As kokogiak.

Sneak Attack The frostripper's Strikes deal an additional 2d6 precision damage to off-guard creatures.

Tormented Snarl  As kokogiak, but DC 33.

Trackless Step As kokogiak.

Reward: If the PCs defeat both of these kokogiaks in combat or otherwise neutralize the beasts as a threat, they earn 1 Infiltration Point.

A3. East Entrance

Most of the ground traffic to and from the fortress uses this entrance, but the room itself is empty. If the PCs have 11 or more Awareness Points, though, the southern doors are not only kept locked, but have been barricaded with some empty beds from area **A4**, increasing the Force Open DC for this door to DC 35. Area **A4** can be accessed through the door to the north.

A4. Infantry Barracks

This large room feels cramped thanks to the multiple three-tiered bunks filling most of the space, creating a maze. Each bunk has three built-in locked drawers below the bottom bunk with a ladder leading to the upper bunks. Compact weapon racks hang within easy reach of anyone sleeping in the beds.

The stairs to the north lead down to area **A6b**.

During the night, the Gorumite infantry (area **A5**) can be found here, resting. The warriors who train here have drilled for an attack during the night. If roused from sleep, they take a –2 circumstance penalty to initiative and are slowed 1 for the first round, but they sleep in their armor and have weapons nearby. They usually spend the first round getting out of bed and equipping weapons. While the infantry sleeps, the PCs can move through this room by overcoming an Unexpected Patrol complication, with a +4 circumstance bonus to their checks to do so since the guards are sleeping off an exhausting day's training.

Treasure: If the PCs Search the room for 20 minutes, they can find 162 gp worth of personal valuables among the few dozen drawers under the beds.

A5. Drilling Grounds Low 14

This large room has a smooth, hewn stone floor. Double stone doors open to the east and west, with steep stairs leading up into the fortress in the northwest and northeast corners. Doors to two latrines stand on the north wall. Along the southern wall, four archery slits open to tundra, but each is closed with wooden shutters to keep the cold from creeping in. The southwest corner has a large steel lever, and the southeast corner has a large hand-crank wheel attached to a massive chain that disappears into the floor.

The stairs to the northwest lead up to area A11, while those to the northeast lead up to area A16.

The lever and wheel are connected to the secret door in the southern wall that opens to area A1. This door is a single five-foot-square stone block that fills the gap in the southern wall. When the lever to the southwest is pulled, the stone block drops down into area A9 below so that its top is even with the floor of areas A1 and A5, creating a way to exit this room. The wheel to the southeast can be turned (as a 1-minute activity with the manipulate trait) to lift the stone block back into place. This is designed to allow a surprise counter-attack on invading forces, or as a quick evacuation route.

Creatures: A platoon of Gorumites train here during the day, either performing drilling exercises or mock battles with each other. They're led by Captain Vofnir, a Gorumite veteran, who instructs and observes the training. Upon spotting the PCs, the party faces a Who Goes There? complication, but due to the multitude of eyes and ears watching, any check to Overcome this complication takes a -2 circumstance penalty. If combat begins, two Gorumites break away from the infantry to race up the stairs to area A13 to raise the alarm, one going east and one west, while the rest of the infantry and Vofnir step forward to fight. (If the alarm is already raised, these two remain with the group.) Reduce the Gorumite infantry's HP by 20 to represent the loss of two of its soldiers; if the PCs wish to pursue and stop either of the fleeing Gorumites, treat these lower-level individuals as captains of the guard (*Gamemastery Guide* 234).

At 8 Awareness Points, the infantry moves to defend the double stone doors and the stairways leading up into the fortress. They bar the double doors to the east and west, increasing their DC to Force Open to DC 35.

At night, this area is empty; the infantry sleep in area A4 and Vofnir sleeps in a bunk in area A20.

GORUMITE INFANTRY

CREATURE 14

UNIQUE GARGANTUAN HUMAN HUMANOID TROOP

Variant city guard (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 47)

Perception +22

Languages Common, Skald

Skills Athletics +28, Gorum Lore +20, Intimidation +22

Str +8, **Dex** +4, **Con** +5, **Int** +0, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +2

AC 36; **Fort** +27, **Ref** +22, **Will** +24

HP 255 (16 squares); **Thresholds** 170 (12 squares), 85 (8 squares); **Weaknesses** area damage 20, splash damage 15

Troop Defenses As city guard.

Speed 20 feet; troop movement

Fire Crossbows! ♦♦♦ As city guard, but 6d8 piercing damage (DC 31 basic Reflex save).

Form Up ♦ As city guard.

Raise Swords! ♦ to ♦♦♦ **Frequency** once per round; **Effect**

The Gorumite infantry engages in a frenzied attack against each enemy within 10 feet, with a DC 31 basic Reflex save. The damage depends on the number of actions.

♦ 1d12+4 slashing damage.

♦♦ 2d12+10 slashing damage and 1d6 persistent bleed damage.

♦♦♦ 3d12+10 slashing damage and 2d6 persistent bleed damage.

Troop Movement As city guard.

VOFNIR

CREATURE 13

Elite Gorumite warpriest (page 25, *Monster Core* 6)

Initiative Perception +25

Commanding Shout ♦ (auditory) Vofnir commands the Gorumite infantry to fight for the glory of Gorum as long as the troop is within earshot. Until the start of Vofnir's next turn, the Gorumite infantry's save DCs for their Fire Crossbows! and Raise Swords! actions increase to DC 33 and they gain a +2 status bonus to their saving throws.

Reward: If the PCs defeat the infantry in combat or otherwise neutralize the soldiers as a threat, they earn 1 Infiltration Point. If the PCs discover the secret passage to the south, they earn 1 Infiltration Point.

A6. Storage Room

These storage rooms are filled with supplies for the fortress. Steep stone stairways lead up to the first floor.

The stairs in area A6a lead up to area A2. This room contains supplies for keeping the fortress in good repair. The stairs in area A6b lead up to area A4. This room contains food, spices, ale, and other supplies to feed an army.

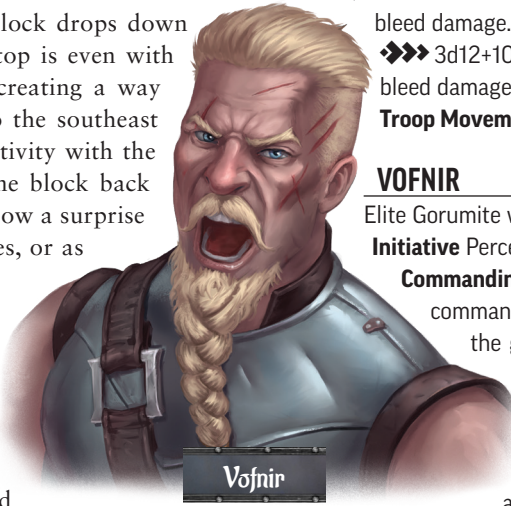
Treasure: A 10 minute Search of area A6a turns up 4 sets of sterling artisan's tools for repairing armor and stonework, while a similar Search of area A6b reveals 4 servings of firefoot popcorn (*Treasure Vault* 48), 5 ready-to-brew moderate toffee insight coffees and 5 moderate double insight coffees (*Treasure Vault* 49), and 4 moderate wrymhide fury cocktails (*Treasure Vault* 48).

A7. Elemental Furnace

Low 14

The doors to this room are hot to the touch, but not hot enough to deal significant damage.

A massive furnace stands along the northern wall of this rectangular chamber. Copper pipes along the walls connect to the furnace and lead up into the ceiling. The furnace itself features huge access doors on its east, south, and west sides. On either side of the furnace's southern door, two gemstones embedded into metal frames glow with a reddish orange



light. Double stone doors lead out from this chamber to the east, south, and west.

The dwarves who built this fortress captured two fire elementals playing near an active volcanic caldera and trapped their essence in *elemental fragments* (*Pathfinder Rage of Elements* 224), then integrated the fragments into a specialized furnace, trapping the elementals within that chamber to provide constant heat for their arctic stronghold. Heat from the furnace is dissipated throughout Crownhold through the copper pipes in the walls, allowing it to stay comfortable to dwarves and other humanoid creatures throughout the year.

While the furnace is active, this room is extremely hot, with temperatures maintained at a level of severe heat (*GM Core* 95). The furnace itself is blisteringly hot, and a creature who touches it takes 2d6 fire damage (DC 25 basic Reflex save), or 6d6 fire damage (DC 25 basic Reflex save) each round if they remain in contact with it for the entire round.

If the furnace is deactivated (see *Freeing the Elementals*, below), the room cools off over time. Every 10 minutes, the room cools by one temperature category until it stabilizes at mild cold after a half hour has passed. The rest of Crownhold grows similarly cold over the next hour, save for those rooms where additional stoves remain lit; the party gains 1 Awareness Point once Crownhold's inhabitants realize their furnace has been disabled.

Creatures: The pair of living magma elementals remain bound to the two special *elemental fragments* embedded in the furnace. They are bound to this room, and locked in the furnace, which cannot be opened from the inside. If a creature opens the furnace doors, the living magmas immediately try to escape, killing any creature in their way in an attempt to flee their thousands of years of imprisonment.

LIVING MAGMAS (2)

CREATURE 13

Pathfinder Rage of Elements 129

Initiative Perception +22

Freeing the Elementals: A PC who succeeds on a DC 30 Thievery check to Disable Device or a DC 34 Crafting check as a 3-action activity can remove the *elemental fragments* from the furnace (taking 2d6 fire damage as detailed above for each action spent). Doing so immediately locks that gem's living magma elemental back into the gemstone. Whoever holds the gemstone can speak with the elemental inside telepathically. Removing both gems deactivates the furnace.

Once the gemstones have been removed from the furnace, the elementals can be freed from the gemstones with an improvised 10-minute ritual and a successful DC 34 Arcana or Nature check, or by casting *dispel magic* and succeeding at a DC 32 counteract check. Once free, the elementals thank the PCs and begin to rampage around the fortress, causing mayhem and

slaying other creatures at the GM's discretion. For each elemental freed from their gemstone, the PCs lose 2 AP since the creature's rampage distracts Ordulf from the assassins'.

Treasure: If the PCs remove the gemstones from the furnace but decide not to set the elementals free, they can use the stones as extra powerful *elemental fragments*. Each of these powerful *elemental fragments* are 18th-level consumable items worth 5,000 gp each that can only cast a 9th-rank *summon elemental* spell to call forth a living magma when used (unlike typical elemental fragments, these unusual items can't be used to cast *elemental form* at all).

Reward: If the PCs deactivate the furnace, they earn 2 Infiltration Points.

A8. Basement Vault

Both of the northern doors leading into this room are locked with a superior quality lock (six successful DC 40 Thievery checks to Pick the Lock); either reinforced door can be Forced Open with a successful DC 32 Athletics check. Ordulf and the Gorumite warpriests hold keys capable of opening these doors.

The eastern wall of this room is decorated with a large mural of a mountain, into which a very real greatsword has been embedded. A weapon rack stands against the southern wall, and four large stone chests sit near the western wall.

Ordulf stores some of Crownhold's treasure in this room, but keeps his personal treasure in a secret vault to the east. The mountain mural with the sword embedded in it, depicting Gorum's religious symbol, conceals the secret vault and serves as the key to opening the hidden door. A PC who makes a successful DC 34 Perception check to Seek on the sword and the wall it's embedded in note the presence of the secret door. Pushing the sword deeper into the wall all the way to the hilt opens the door; this requires a successful DC 30 Athletics check made as a 3-action activity with the manipulate trait.

Treasure: The weapon rack holds a dozen regular greatswords, a +2 *greater striking greatsword*, a +2 *striking composite longbow*, and a *greater sturdy shield*. The four chests are organized into two chests full of coins—spread across them all are 26,000 cp, 3,900 sp, 1,000 gp, and 120 pp.

The greatsword embedded in the wall is a standard-grade adamantite greatsword. Removing it from the wall requires a successful DC 26 Athletics check made as an Interact action, but this sword is the only one capable of opening the secret door to area A9. A PC who examines the notches and serrations on the blade and succeeds at a DC 30 Crafting check to Recall Knowledge realizes that the blade's edge could indicate its use as a key.

Reward: The PCs earn 1 Infiltration Point for discovering the secret door to area A9.

A9. Secret Vault

A pair of stone chests sit near the northern wall of this room, above which hangs an ancient but still sharp sword.

Treasure: This is Ordulf's personal treasury, and he's the only occupant of Crownhold who knows that it even exists. Each chest contains several hundred unsorted coins and pouches of gemstones. Altogether, the contents of the chests are worth 6,448 gp. Also among the treasure is a small, bloodstained prayerbook—Ordulf's first, and one whose pages he's long since memorized. The book is written entirely in Skald in Ordulf's hand, and a PC who spends an hour studying it comes to understand the depths of Ordulf's arrogance in battle and learns about this weakness, and realizes that breaking his prized fishing gear in his presence would likely throw him into a distraction-fueled rage.

The sword that hangs on the wall above the chests is a *storm flash* that Ordulf claimed as a trophy from the dead hand of an infamous assassin after he defeated him in combat years ago. If a PC uses this weapon in battle against Ordulf, he becomes rattled and takes a -1 penalty to all Will saving throws as long as the weapon remains in the fight.

Reward: If the PCs take Ordulf's prayerbook, they earn 1 Infiltration Point.

A10. Kokogjak Rider Barracks Moderate 14

This basement storage area has been converted into a barracks. Each of the four sets of double-high bunks carry a foul stink of body odor to them.

Creatures: This room has been set aside as a place to rest and relax for rage riders who are off-duty; the stink of the beds is a result of their long hours spent in close proximity to their kokogjak allies and their poor personal hygiene.

While there are many more rage riders out in the wild on patrol, at any time, day or night, eight of them are resting and relaxing here—roll 1d4+4 to determine how many are asleep when the PCs arrive. The rage riders react with swift violence to any intrusions, but the PCs still have a chance to avoid combat by overcoming a Who Goes There? complication. If they don't immediately retreat from this room upon overcoming it, though, the surly rage riders attack anyway. This room is remote enough that no Awareness Points are earned from combat that takes place here.

RAGE RIDERS (8)

CREATURE 10

Page 23

Initiative Perception +19

Reward: If the PCs defeat all of the rage riders in combat or otherwise neutralize them as a threat, they earn 1 Infiltration Point.

A11. Mess Hall

This large hall contains two long wooden tables with long benches. Each table is covered with partially finished meals, dirty utensils, and mostly emptied goblets. Greatswords and other assorted weapons hang on the walls. The western wall has two arrow slits that let cold air and the howl of the wind from the mountains beyond. Double stone doors exit to the south. Three doors in the east wall lead to small chambers, and a small hallway ends in a fourth door leading further into the fortress. A stairway in the northwest corner ascends higher into the fortress and one to the east leads down.

This is the mess hall for the Gorumite infantry and rage riders of Crownhold. While the room is packed during mealtimes (usually at dawn and dusk, during which the PCs can encounter the Gorumite infantry here), it's relatively empty at night and between meals. As such, this is an excellent room to have the PCs face an Unexpected Patrol complication; they might encounter a few guards grabbing a snack here.



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The stairs to the northwest lead up to area **A19**, while those leading down to the east lead to area **A5**. The northeast door leads to a latrine, the southeast doors to a pantry and storage area, and the hallway leads to area **A15**.

Treasure: The weapons on the wall of this room are all mundane, and worth a minimal amount of gold. A soldier who was worried about his officer trials purchased a *dazing coil talisman* to help him in his qualification fight, but in his nervousness he dropped it under one of the tables. A PC who Searches this room for 10 minutes finds the talisman automatically.

A12. Officer's Mess **Varies 14**

This hall features a large round table surrounded by chairs. Two crossed swords hang on the western wall over a round shield. Double stone doors exit to the south; three single stone doors exit to the north and west. A stairway on the north end of the room ascends higher into the fortress.

The stairs to the north lead up to area **A18**.

Creatures: This room is where the Gorumites and roc riders stationed in Crownhold take their meals and relax in between their various duties. The Gorumites and the adlets don't entirely trust each other, though, and tend to use this room at different times. When the PCs first visit this area, have them encounter either a Crownhold patrol of two Gorumite veterans and

a warpriest (a Low 14 encounter) or two roc riders (a Moderate 14 encounter), but regardless, the encounter starts with a Who Goes There? complication. The group not encountered here is instead found either at area **A18** (roc riders) or **A20** (Gorumites).

GORUMITE VETERANS (2) **CREATURE 12**

Page 25

Initiative Perception +21

GORUMITE WARPRIEST **CREATURE 12**

Page 25

Initiative Perception +23

ROC RIDERS (2) **CREATURE 14**

Page 23

Initiative Perception +26

Treasure: The weapons on the wall are from Ordulf's particularly memorable kills, which he kept as trophies. One blade is a +2 *greater striking chain sword* (*Treasure Vault 25*), while the other is a +1 *striking flame katana*. The shield is a +2 *returning greater striking meteor shield* (*Treasure Vault 21*) with an attached shield boss, reinforcing the outside edge. It has similar design details to the chain sword.

A13. Second Floor Balcony

This stone balcony extends the entire width of the fortress. A large iron bell hangs from the wall just west of the central double doors. A few dozen javelins lean almost casually against the southern battlement.

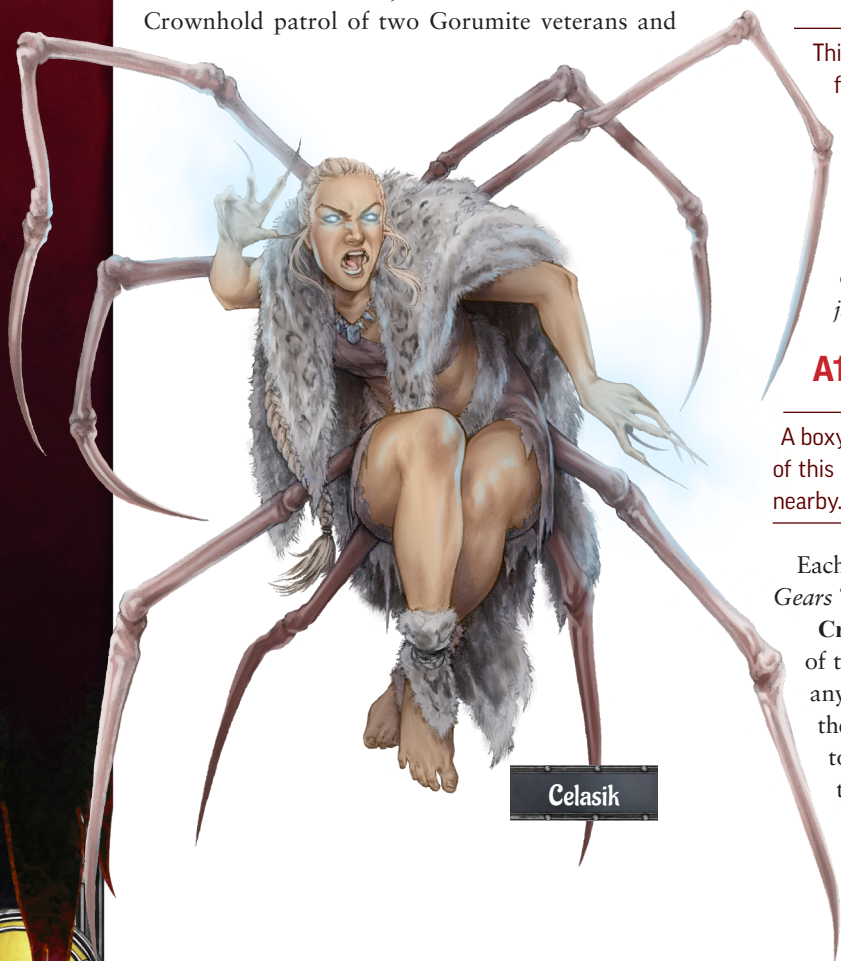
Treasure: The majority of the javelins that lean against the battlement are standard, but one of them is a +2 *striking returning wounding javelin* Ordulf left here by accident.

A14. Ramparts **Severe 14**

A boxy-looking siege weapon—a springald—sits in the middle of this circular platform. A barrel filled with ammunition sits nearby.

Each of these rampart's springalds (*Pathfinder Guns & Gears 76*) have 30 springald arrows stored nearby.

Creatures: A Crownhold patrol is stationed at each of these ramparts, ready to use the springalds against any PCs they spot approaching from below. Before they attack, though, they hail the PCs and demand to know why they're approaching Crownhold, as the next shipment of supplies isn't due anytime soon. The PCs must overcome a Who Goes There? complication, but these Gorumites are particularly wary—all checks to Overcome this complication take a -2 circumstance penalty. If the PCs do overcome this complication, the



Celasik

guards continue to watch them if they're approaching down below, expecting the PCs to move to the doors to area **A3** and unlock the doors with a key they assume they've been given so they can enter. If the PCs do anything else, the guards grow even more suspicious, and the PCs face a second Who Goes There? complication—only this time, the results of their attempt to Overcome the complication are reduced by one degree of success. If after this second complication the PCs do anything other than enter area **A3** with a key or immediately leave to the south, the guards attack at once, firing down at them with the springalds. Any PC who is adjacent to the fortress wall in area **A1** below has cover against the springalds.

GORUMITE VETERANS (2)

CREATURE 12

Page 25

Initiative Perception +21

GORUMITE WARPRIEST

CREATURE 12

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Initiative Perception +23

Reward: If the PCs defeat the Gorumites here, they earn 1 Infiltration Point.

A15. Banquet Hall

Moderate 14

This grand chamber has walls lined with a variety of tapestries and banners, each with a different color scheme and insignia. At the center of the room, a grand oak table divides the chamber in two, with comfortable-looking chairs surrounding the table. Two maps, one of Hagreath and one of the Linnorm Kingdoms, covers the table, each with several wooden markers arranged on the map indicating potential wartime maneuvers. Double doors exit to the south, and two doors exit east while another exits west.

This is Ordulf's banquet hall and war room. He's been hosting ambassadors from the settlements of creatures considered monstrous by most Ulfen, attempting to create an alliance between them in an effort to conquer Hagreath and eventually the entire Land of the Linnorm Kings. He's promised each of them prime territories and the spoils of war for their contribution of troops.

With a successful DC 20 Genealogy or Heraldry Lore check, DC 28 Society check, or DC 32 Warfare Lore check to Recall Knowledge, a PC recognizes that the tapestries and banners are from Ulfen clans that were recently wiped out by unknown assailants, or simply vanished. Their presence here indicates that Ordulf and his warriors either slaughtered or absorbed these clans.

Creatures: Four people currently occupy this chamber, arguing over who gets to take over which territories once General Ordulf conquers the lands. Most of the arguing is between Celasik and Dajia, who clash over who gets to control the western Stormspear Mountains. Celasik is a jorogumo who is currently hiding her spider legs under snow leopard pelts. Dajia is an ice yai

INSULTING ORDULF

A PC can take advantage of Ordulf's arrogance with the following activity.

INSULT ORDULF

AUDITORY CONCENTRATE LINGUISTIC MENTAL

The PC spends several seconds issuing insults and taunts to Ordulf, then attempts a DC 38 Deception, Intimidation, or Performance check. If the insults include challenges to Ordulf's bravery, compare him to a troll or a chicken, insult his skill at fishing, or liken him to a witch or national of Irrisen, this becomes a DC 33 check.

Critical Success You strike a nerve. Not only does Ordulf become sickened 2 with anger, he is also stunned 1 from the shock of your words.

Success Your insults cause Ordulf to become sickened 2 with anger.

Failure Your insult only has a brief effect, causing Ordulf to become sickened 1. He automatically recovers from this sickened condition at the end of his next turn.

Critical Failure Your attempt to insult Ordulf fails so spectacularly that he becomes temporarily immune to Insult Ordulf activities from you for 24 hours.

from the Crown of the World wearing a fighting gi. The other two occupants are Ulveh and Raevi, two adlets representing different tribes; they rarely speak up, but when they do it's usually to protest being left out of the conversation or to hurl insults at each other.

If the PCs have 10 Awareness Points or more, the ambassadors are aware that the fortress has likely been infiltrated, and the PCs face a Who Goes There? complication.

If the PCs have fewer than 10 Awareness Points, however, these four assume that the PCs are merely another set of ambassadors from other lands, come to complicate an already complicated process. Celasik breaks the ice by saying, "And now here's more of Ordulf's allies, no doubt come to make things even more awkward!" followed a moment later by Dajia saying, "As long as they stay out of the mountains, I don't care what lands they're after."

The four expect the PCs to start arguing about what parts of Hagreath they hope to claim once Ordulf's conquered the kingdom; if the PCs try to broach any other subject, the four become suspicious and the PCs face a Who Goes There? complication. Otherwise, allow the PCs to continue the discussion as long as they want—they're free to break off and leave the room at any point without worry.

Canny PCs can pick up on the argument and use it to their advantage in escalating things. To do so, the PCs must make several DC 32 Deception, Diplomacy, or

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Intimidation checks to earn Victory Points (*GM Core* 184–186). Each PC can attempt to do so three times. If they reach 6 Victory Points, the four ambassadors grow frustrated enough that a fight breaks out—they attack each other but won't involve the PCs in the fight unless they join in. If the PCs ever go below 0 Victory Points, the ambassadors grow suspicious enough that the party faces a Who Goes There? complication. If they overcome this, they can return to making checks to earn Victory Points. If the PCs continue to argue beyond the three opportunities to earn Victory Points, a patrol of two Gorumite veterans enters the room and the party faces an Unexpected Patrol complication.

If combat breaks out, the four ambassadors each fight on their own, eschewing tactics that could help each other, and potentially even engaging in a bit of friendly fire when using area effect attacks.

CELASIK CREATURE 13

Female variant jorogumo (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 141)

Initiative Perception +26

Occult Innate Spells DC 34 **7th** *summon animal* (spiders only); **4th** *confusion* (×3), *suggestion* (×3); **3rd** *mind reading* (at will); **1st** *charm* (at will); **Constant (5th)** *truespeech*; **(2nd)** *speak with animals* (spiders only)

DAJIA CREATURE 13

Male snow oni (*Pathfinder Monster Core* 253)

Initiative Perception +26

RAEVI AND ULVEH CREATURE 10

Adlets (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 9)

Initiative Perception +18

Reward: If the PCs defeat the ambassadors in combat or otherwise neutralize them as a threat, they earn 1 Infiltration Point.

A16. Kitchen

This kitchen contains multiple counters, a double-wide brick oven, and tall standing cabinets. Doors exit to the west and south. A steep stairway leads down deeper into the fortress.

Treasure: Two treasures related to cooking have been looted and put to good use by Ordulf and his army: a standard-grade mithral frying pan (*Treasure Vault* 25; it's non-stick!) and an adamantine cleaver designed to more easily butcher megafauna that functions as a standard-grade adamantine hatchet.

A17. General's Office

This small office features a large oak desk with Ulfen knots and carvings of warriors wearing horned helms. A matching chair sits behind the desk. The walls of the office include several hand-drawn maps of various fortifications, each with additional marks and large red "Xs" on them. A single door exits to the west.

This is where Ordulf reviews battle reports, updates maps of target fortifications, and plans his conquest of the Linnorm Kingdoms.

Treasure: Ordulf enjoys surrounding himself with the spoils of his victories, and so his office is dedicated to maps of successful battles, each with battle plans drawn on them and notes for where his strategies met flaws or problems. The maps, to most people, are worthless. However, to someone who is at least expert in Warfare Lore, they hold great insight; a PC can review these maps once per day during their daily preparations to gain a +2 item bonus to Warfare Lore checks until their next daily preparations. The collection of maps is worth 600 gp to a scholar of warfare.

The desk drawers mostly contain blank parchment and writing supplies, but the bottom drawer contains an unopened bottle of fine spiced akvavit distilled in Kalsgard; it's worth 200 gp.



Reward: If the PCs take Ordulf's battle plans, they earn 1 Infiltration Point.

A18. Roc Rider Barracks Moderate 14

These barracks are simple. With three beds, three footlockers, and a single latrine, they're sparse by most accounts. Fur covers the beds and floor.

When the adlet roc riders allied with Ordulf visit Crownhold, they rest in this room. After dark, the two roc riders found in area **A12** relax here.

A19. Rookery Trivial 14

An immense perch created from two-foot-thick logs sits in the middle of this open chamber. To the south, the wall opens out onto the fortress's uppermost balcony, giving an expansive view of the tundra and skies. A prodigious pile of bird droppings lies on the ground below the perch, in which the bones of woolly rhinos, elk, and a few humans protrude. An alarm bell hangs from the wall to the southwest near the opening onto the balcony.

Creatures: Most of the frost rocs trained as mounts by the roc riders spend their time on patrol or nesting in the nearby mountains, but one of the immense beasts remains here at all times, ready to defend Crownhold. The frost roc attacks on sight anyone who doesn't look like a roc rider or who doesn't wear armor emblazoned with the symbols of Gorum. The sound of the monster's thunderous hooting and stomping feet count as raising the alarm if a fight lasts longer than 1 round.

If the PCs have 4 or more Awareness Points, an additional frost roc is encountered here, increasing this to a Moderate 14 encounter.

FROST ROCS (1 OR 2) CREATURE 2

Page 113

Initiative Perception +25

Reward: If the PCs defeat the roc or rocs here in combat or otherwise neutralize the beasts as a threat, they earn 1 Infiltration Point.

A20. Officer Bedrooms

Each of these six bedrooms has a double bunk with scant other furniture.

Creatures: These rooms are used by the Gorumite veterans and warpriests stationed here in Crownhold, although the rooms are rarely completely full, as most of the Gorumites are on patrol at any one time. A pair of veterans and a warpriest can always be encountered here, spread out among the rooms, while Vofnir (see area **A5**) is only encountered here after dark—he stays alone in the largest of the rooms.

GORUMITE VETERANS (2)

CREATURE 12

Page 25

Initiative Perception +21

GORUMITE WARPRIEST

CREATURE 12

Page 25

Initiative Perception +23

Treasure: Each of the six bedrooms has about 100 gp worth of low-level gear, coin, and trade goods weighing 1 Bulk. In addition, the first of the six bedrooms the PCs search for treasure also contains a leather satchel sitting atop one of the bunks; within the satchel are two *panaceas* and two *greater healing potions*, all four of which are kept in tiny unlabeled bottles that make them look like miniature bottles of alcohol.

A21. General's Bedroom

This bedroom is spacious, with newer and more comfortable furniture than the rest of the fortress. A large bed, an oak writing desk, an armoire, and an armor rack furnish the room. Hanging from the north wall is a fishing pole and net with several lures hooked into the netting, all of which look immaculately clean and well-cared for. The south wall has a mural depicting an impossibly tall warrior covered in plate mail, his red eyes glowing through the slit in his helm. The warrior wields a greatsword and is slashing through armies on a vast blood-soaked beach. A small stone altar with a softly glowing smear of blood atop it stands in the room's southeast corner.

With a successful DC 20 Religion check to Recall Knowledge, a PC identifies the figure in the mural to the south as Gorum; PCs who critically succeed recognize the scene takes place in Clashing Shore, Gorum's home in Elysium. A PC who is at least trained in Gorum Lore automatically succeeds on this check.

The altar in the southeast corner is the focus for the 7th-rank *consecrate* ritual that wards Crownhold.

Treasure: The fishing gear on the north wall functions as professional fishing tackle. More importantly, a PC who openly carries this gear automatically attracts Ordulf's attention in combat, and he focuses his attacks on that PC regardless of whether it's tactically sound to do so. The fishing gear can be broken with a DC 15 Athletics check made as an Interact action. Doing so in Ordulf's presence fills him with rage: for 1 minute, Ordulf is off-guard, can't use reactions, and is slowed 1 (as he spends too much time cursing and roaring in a profane fury).

Reward: If the PCs remove the *consecrate* effect, they earn 2 Infiltration Points.

Crownhold Events

The following three events are likely to occur in close succession in the order presented below, starting with **Event 1** soon after the PCs achieve 14 Infiltration

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Points. If the PCs achieve 32 Awareness Points first, though, **Event 2** could take place first as Gorum's herald seeks out the PCs to confront them. The exact locations where these events take place can vary, based on the PCs' choices.

Event 1: The Assassination

The PCs' target for this mission is General Ordulf Bladecaller, but the general does not remain in one place for long, and as the PCs explore Crownhold, Ordulf

moves about from room to room as well. While the PCs could certainly locate Ordulf early, especially if they use magic, waiting until they accumulate at least 14 Infiltration Points gives them a significant advantage.

Striking Too Soon

While you have a certain amount of latitude in how Ordulf moves about the fortress and avoids the PCs as they explore it, some parties might hit upon a tactic that makes it impossible for you to realistically continue to hide the general's location. Divination spells in particular might allow the PCs to locate their quarry before they've spent the proper amount of time infiltrating the fortress.

In this case, the players have no agency over where Ordulf is encountered, and you should feel free to place him in a location where other patrols or inhabitants of the fortress can swiftly come to his aid once a battle begins. Try to arrange such a fight to be an Extreme encounter.

Striking Too Late

If the PCs reach 32 Awareness Points before they attempt their assassination, the First Blade arrives in Crownhold and seeks them out (**Event 2**). Run **Event 2** as written, but 1d4 rounds after that event resolves, the PCs are attacked by General Ordulf and his two warpriest bodyguards.

Perfect Timing

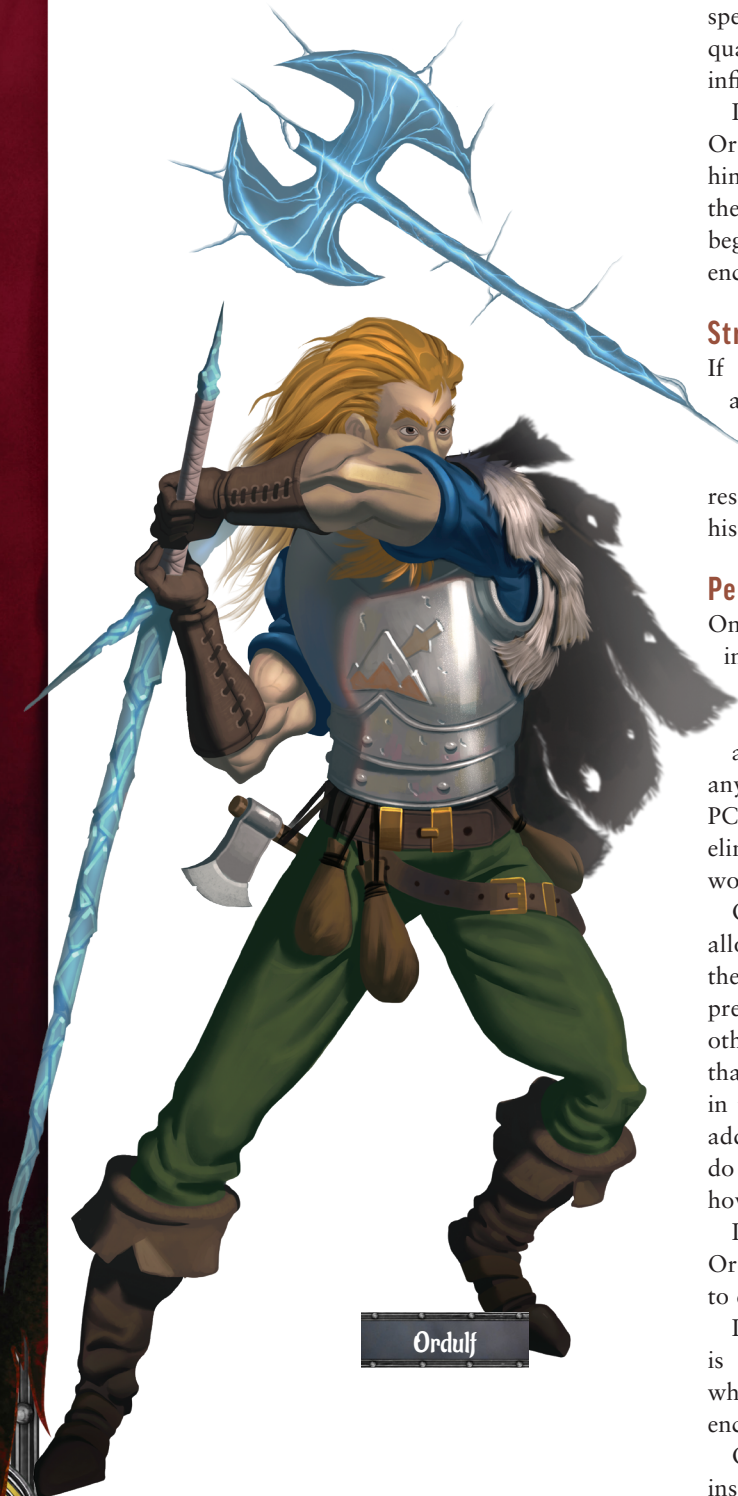
Once the PCs achieve at least 14 Infiltration Points, inform them that they've successfully explored enough of Crownhold and softened up its defenses, and that the time is right to prepare for Ordulf's assassination. The PCs can stage the assassination in any room in Crownhold they've already visited—wise PCs ensure that any existing creatures in the room are eliminated before staging the assassination, so they won't be able to join forces with the general.

Once the PCs choose the site of the assassination, allow them time to decide where in that room they're lying in wait. Give them a chance to cast any preparatory spells, set snares, find hiding spaces, and otherwise prepare for the assassination. Inform them that once they tell you they're ready, Ordulf will arrive in the room in 1d10 minutes. If the PCs wish to risk additional preparations during this time, allow them to do so after you've secretly rolled a d10 to determine how much time they have.

If the PCs have fewer than 16 Awareness Points, Ordulf is alone, arrogantly confident in his own abilities to defend himself (a Moderate 14 encounter).

If the PCs have 16 or more Awareness points, Ordulf is accompanied by a pair of Gorumite warpriests who act as bodyguards (increasing this to a Severe 14 encounter).

Once a fight begins, the sound of Ordulf's roaring insults are sure to attract attention. Depending on



Ordulf

where the PCs spring their ambush, other Gorumites might come to watch, but the combined fear of the Red Mantis assassins and the Gorumites' own convictions that their leader Ordulf can't be defeated prevents them from joining the fight.

In battle, Ordulf prefers to fight in melee with his weapons, starting with a Battle Cry and a Crushing Insult on his first turn against the closest visible PC. As combat begins, he Sets Free his *animated greataxe*, wielding his greatsword for the rest of the combat.

A fight against Ordulf lasts longer than it takes to actually kill him once, since Gorum's boon heals him upon being reduced to 0 Hit Points. The first time this happens, Ordulf's tactics grow more defensive. He drinks a *greater potion of flying* and switches to hit-and-run tactics rather than going toe-to-toe against the PCs. The second time his boon restores him, he grows even more cautious, and tries to relocate to somewhere more advantageous in the fortress to continue the fight. He might even call for aid from other Gorumites he encounters, but at this point the other Gorumites have lost enough faith in their leader (who technically should have been killed twice so far by the PCs) and are frightened enough of the assassins that they treacherously disobey and don't join the fight. The third and final time his boon saves him, Ordulf roars in frustration and abandons tactics entirely, opting instead to put every possible action toward melee combat against the PCs.

Each time Ordulf reaches 0 Hit Points and triggers Gorum's major boon, the near-fatal blow leaves a massive scar. Note the location of these scars to the players, as he still has them when the PCs encounter him again in Chapter 4.

ORDULF BLADECALLER

CREATURE 16

UNIQUE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Male human warlord

Perception +28

Languages Common, Jotun, Skald

Skills Acrobatics +25, Athletics +29, Crafting +24, Fishing Lore +24, Intimidation +31, Religion +28, Survival +28, Warfare Lore +26

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

Items +2 *greater resilient greater cold-resistant full plate*, +2 *greater striking animated greataxe*, +2 *greater striking greater frost greatsword*, *greater potions of flying* (3)

AC 38; **Fort** +30, **Ref** +25, **Will** +28

HP 300; **Resistances** cold 10

Battle Arrogance Ordulf hasn't met a significant combat challenge in ages, and even when facing deadly foes like the PCs his arrogance can be used against him. If a PC successfully disarms, feints, frightens, or trips Ordulf, his arrogance gets the better of him and he grows sloppy in his tactics, reducing his AC to 34 until the start of his next turn. A PC can also attempt to issue a more debilitating insult to Ordulf, as detailed in the Insulting Ordulf sidebar on page 31.

INFILTRATION EXPERIENCE POINTS

Since a successful infiltration can result in a party skipping several combat encounters found in Crownhold, you should grant additional Experience Points to the PCs upon their completion of Chapter 1. You can either grant the PCs a lump sum of XP at the chapter's end to give them enough to level up to 15th level, or you can grant them 20 to 40 XP per Infiltration Point gained. In the end, Chapter 2 assumes the PCs begin with 200 to 300 XP after spending 1,000 to level up to 15th level.

Gorum's Major Boon (healing) When Ordulf is reduced to 0 Hit Points, Gorum feeds him the zeal of his Aesir, allowing Ordulf to draw upon his own life force to fight on and on without falling. He is healed to 150 Hit Points and becomes doomed 1 (or increases his doomed condition by 1), causing his features to look progressively more gaunt and scarred. Once he reaches doomed 4, he dies.

Reactive Strike ↻

Speed 25 feet

Melee ✦ *greatsword* +32 (magical, versatile P), **Damage** 3d12+11 slashing plus 1d6 cold

Melee ✦ *greataxe* +32 (magical, sweep), **Damage** 3d12+11 slashing plus 1d6 persistent bleed

Battle Cry ↻ **Frequency** once per day; **Trigger** Ordulf rolls initiative; **Effect** Ordulf attempts to Demoralize an observed foe.

Cleaving Blow ✦✦ Ordulf Strikes two adjacent creatures within his reach. Both attacks count against his multiple attack penalty, but do not increase his penalty until he has made both attacks.

Crushing Insult ✦ (auditory, linguistic, mental) **Frequency** once per round; **Effect** Ordulf issues a devastating and humiliating insult to a creature within 30 feet that he can see. Ordulf attempts an Intimidation check against the target's Will DC. That character is then temporarily immune to Crushing Insult for 24 hours.

Critical Success The insult is distracting and humiliating; the target is stupefied 1 and off-guard for 1 minute.

Success The insult is distracting, but its effects pass quickly; the target is stupefied 1 and off-guard until the start of Ordulf's next turn.

Failure The insult barely cuts, but is distracting enough that the target is off-guard until the end of Ordulf's turn.

Critical Failure Ordulf's attempted insult fails spectacularly, and the PC who he was attempting to insult can instantly insult him back, using Insult Ordulf as a free action.

Deadly Display ✦✦ **Requirements** Ordulf is wielding a melee weapon; **Effect** Ordulf brandishes his weapon in a threatening display. He Demoralizes all enemies within 30 feet, rolling once and comparing the result to each target's Will DC.

Whirlwind Strike ✦✦✦ Ordulf Strikes each enemy within his reach. Each attack counts toward his multiple attack penalty, but do not increase his penalty until he has made all his attacks.

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Event 2: A Vengeful God

Low 14

Once Ordulf is slain, word spreads quickly—all of the remaining Gorumites in Crownhold gather their belongings and abandon the fortress rather than remain behind to risk being confronted by their leader's assassins. That's the good news. The bad news is that word also spreads to Gorum himself.

Give the PCs 3 rounds to recover after Ordulf's death before starting this event. After 3 rounds, read or paraphrase the following.

A discordant cry of roaring voices fills the air, while what appears to be a ghostly apparition of Ordulf rises up from the warlord's remains. The apparition glows with a pale light that slowly grows brighter.



Talaro

PCs who succeed on a DC 30 Religion check or DC 20 Gorum Lore check to Recall Knowledge recognize the roars as the sound of approaching valkyries, coming to bring Ordulf's spirit to Clashing Shore in Elysium. A critical success allows the PCs to realize that among the voices is a deeper one—that of Gorum's herald, the First Blade. Ordulf's glowing soul cannot harm the PCs, but it's unlikely they'll be able to affect it in any way. In the unlikely event a PC can cast *seize soul* on Ordulf's remains, they can draw his soul into a receptacle to prevent it from being taken away by valkyries, but this does not alter the combat soon to follow.

Three rounds after the roaring voices begin, read or paraphrase the following.

The roaring voices grow louder as the light around Ordulf's ghostly form grows to a blinding brightness, then suddenly extinguishes. Standing around the apparition are four winged women wearing plate armor with winged helmets, and brandishing spears crackling with electricity. Yet the towering armored figure that arrives with them is what commands the attention—this figure watches the winged women as they lift Ordulf's soul into the air, then turns away and says in a booming voice: "They have come for him, but I have come for YOU!"

Creatures: The winged women are valkyries, here to take Ordulf's soul away. They do not engage in combat with the PCs unless they are attacked, in which case three of the valkyries break off to join the battle while the last one instantly vanishes with Ordulf's soul.

The armored figure is Gorum's herald: the First Blade. Sent here by Gorum to avenge the death of one of his favored warlords, he attacks at once. If he's joined by the three valkyries, this becomes a Severe 14 encounter.

This battle may be too much for the PCs to handle so close on the heels of Ordulf's assassination. If things are looking dire for the PCs, Vatumledor arrives early via *translocate* (rather than at the start of **Event 3**) to join the fight on the PC's side. He remains in his humanoid form during this fight.

THE FIRST BLADE

CREATURE 15

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Initiative Perception +27

VALKYRIES OF GORUM (3)

CREATURE 12

Variant valkyries (*Pathfinder Bestiary 3* 281)

Initiative Perception +22

Divine Innate Spells DC 29; **7th** *interplanar teleport* (self and mount only); **6th** *heal, heroism, infuse vitality, weapon storm*; **5th** *command*; **3rd** *augury, fear, status*; **Constant (5th)** *truespeech*

Reward: As the First Blade is defeated, the sound of the roaring voices of valkyries grows overwhelmingly

loud for a brief moment, and then the herald's body vanishes into a blast of blood and everything returns to silence. The PCs feel a strange sensation of pride and sadness that fades almost as quickly as it manifests—a successful DC 30 Religion check to Recall Knowledge correctly interprets this sensation as Gorum's approval of their strength in defeating Ordulf and the First Blade, but also grief at losing two of his servants.

This understanding confirms that Gorum bears no ill will toward the PCs for their actions, even as he doesn't approve of their methods, and that death in war is not always a loss. A worshipper of Gorum automatically understands these sensations, and in reward for the combat, any such PC in the party is granted Gorum's moderate boon for the remainder of this adventure: all of their greatsword Strikes gain the forceful trait.

Event 3: Betrayal Severe 14

A few moments after the First Blade perishes (or during the fight, at your discretion—see **Event 2**), a familiar figure steps into the room or out of the shadows: Vatum, the strange half-elf courier who delivered the PCs' assignment to assassinate Ordulf at the start of the adventure. He congratulates the PCs on their success, but his expression is worried and his praise is brief. He assures them that Ordulf undoubtedly deserved his fate, but unfortunately he's learned that the contract was a setup. Someone in the Vernai wants the PCs dead, and a squad of assassins sent to murder them are even now closing in.

"Someone in the Vernai wishes us dead. They had hoped you would fail on this mission, but have sent their own assassins to dispatch you if you happen to succeed. I have come to help ensure you survive. I owe Jakalyn that much, at least. I'm sure you have questions, but we must deal with this imminent threat to all our lives first!"

Vatum explains further that the new squad consists of four Red Mantis assassins led by a kitsune named Talaro. He explains further that he suspects these assassins have been lurking in the mountains near Crownhold for some time, and that they've been using magic to keep an eye on the city and the PCs' actions. Even without that, the impossible-to-miss visuals of the surviving Gorumites fleeing the area would convey the news that Ordulf is dead. He's not sure how long it will be before Talaro and his assassins attack, and encourages the PCs to prepare after saying he'll fight at their side.

Creatures: Talaro and his fellow assassins received orders from High Priest Saviya, a member of the Vernai, that the PCs are traitors to the Red Mantis and are carrying out Ordulf's assassination without permission. Saviya's proof is well fabricated, but a lie nonetheless. In truth, she knows the PCs are loyal to Blood Mistress Jakalyn and hopes to remove a

potential threat before they discover her plot to take over as Blood Mistress and rule the Vernai.

Talaro himself knows none of this. He's a high-ranking assassin who hopes his loyalty to Saviya will be repaid after this final mission with ascension into the Vernai. As reported by Vatumledor, he's accompanied on this mission by a group of four lower-ranking Red Mantis assassins; the five of them arrived in the region at about the same time the PCs did, although they've spent this time hidden away in a nearby mountain cleft, waiting for the time to strike while huddled within Talaro's *explorer's yurt*.

The timing of their attack on the PCs is left to you to determine. If the PCs decide to take time to Refocus, Treat Wounds, or otherwise take 10 minutes or more to rest and recover, then the assassins should make their attack soon after that period of time passes. If the PCs seem eager to flee the scene (especially if they're getting ready to use magic to do so, such as by teleporting to safety), then the rival assassins should attack much sooner. And if the PCs decide to ambush the ambushers, give them a few minutes to prepare before the five assassins enter the area and find the tables have turned when they become the targets of the PCs' ambush.

While this Severe 14 encounter plays out right after two other potentially dangerous encounters, the PCs have a dragon on their side. When setting things up for the fight, remember that Vatumledor needs room to move around once he assumes his draconic form—if the PCs seem eager to set up an ambush in a small area, he suggests a larger place “so there's more room to maneuver.”

If the PCs press, “Vatum” reveals his true nature along with his full name. Otherwise, once the battle begins, he maneuvers so that he can Detonate his Disguise in a way that damages the enemy assassins and potentially leaves him in a good position to use his breath weapon in the next round. Note that a surprise reveal that their ally is a conspirator dragon might not be to every table's liking; if you suspect your players would react poorly or unpredictably to this revelation during the fight, you should have Vatumledor reveal his true identity to the player characters before the battle begins.

The assassins have no idea that Vatumledor is a dragon, and the sudden revelation catches them off guard. Talaro continues to focus on the PCs, but his four allies break off to attack the more threatening-looking dragon once he's revealed. During the fight, Talaro constantly accuses the PCs of being “traitorous scum” and “betrayers,” but won't reveal that Saviya assigned him this mission. He and the other assassins fight to the death.

VATUMLEDOR

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Initiative Perception +27

CREATURE 16

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TALARO**CREATURE 15**

UNIQUE MEDIUM HUMAN KITSUNE

Male kitsune assassin (*Pathfinder Bestiary 3* 150)**Perception** +25; low-light vision**Languages** Common, Elven, Mwangi**Skills** Achaekkek Lore +25, Acrobatics +28, Athletics +27, Deception +26, Religion +23, Society +23, Stealth +26, Thievery +26**Str** +4, **Dex** +5, **Con** +2, **Int** +2, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +3**Items** assassin's skin (page 101), assassination contract, explorer's yurt, greater mask of the mantis (page 104), +2 greater striking extending sawtooth saber, +2 striking wounding sawtooth saber, shurikens (x5 with blightburn resin)**AC** 36; **Fort** +25, **Ref** +30, **Will** +24**HP** 272**Prescient Dodge**  **Trigger** A creature attempts to Strike Talaro and he's not off-guard; **Effect** Talaro anticipates the Strike and gains a +2 circumstance bonus to AC against the triggering attack. He can use this once the results of the attack are known. If the attack misses, Talaro can do a quick backflip as a free action to Step.**Speed** 30 feet**Melee**  *extending sawtooth saber* +28 (agile, finesse, magic, twin), **Damage** 3d6+10 slashing**Melee**  *wounding sawtooth saber* +28 (agile, finesse, magic, twin), **Damage** 2d6+12 slashing plus 1d6 persistent bleed**Ranged**  shuriken +26 (agile, monk, range 20 feet, thrown), **Damage** 1d4+10 piercing plus blightburn resin**Divine Prepared Spells** DC 33; **4th** *translocate*; **3rd** *paralyze*; **2nd** *mist*; **1st** *sure strike*; **Cantrips (4th)** *figment*, *sigil***Red Mantis Focus Spells** 1 Focus Point, DC 33; **4th** *Achaekkek's clutch* (page 109)**Change Shape**  (concentration, divine, polymorph) As kitsune.**Crimson Shroud**  (healing, magical) **Frequency** five times per day; **Effect** Talaro shrouds himself in a veil of red mist for 1 minute. While the shroud is active, he gains fast healing 7. He can Interact with his shroud, swirling it around himself to gain a +1 circumstance bonus to AC until the beginning of his next turn. If he dies while the shroud is active, his entire body vanishes into red mist, leaving behind only his gear.**Prayer Attack**  (concentrate) **Requirements** Talaro wields a sawtooth saber in each hand; **Effect** Talaro attempts to Feint an enemy within 30 feet. If the Feint is successful, his next successful Strike with a sawtooth saber in that same turn deals 2d6 persistent bleed damage to the target. In addition, provided he remains visible to that target and that target remains within 30 feet of him, additional Prayer Attacks against that target automatically cause them to become off-guard against Talaro's attacks until the end of their turn.**Sneak Attack** Talaro deals an extra 3d6 precision damage to off-guard creatures.**Surprise Attack** On the first round of combat, creatures that haven't acted yet are off-guard to Talaro.**RED MANTIS ASSASSINS (4)****CREATURE 11**

UNCOMMON MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Human assassin

Perception +21**Languages** Common, Mwangi**Skills** Achaekkek Lore +18, Acrobatics +21, Athletics +21, Deception +20, Religion +17, Society +18, Stealth +21, Thievery +19**Str** +4, **Dex** +4, **Con** +2, **Int** +1, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +3**Items** +1 leather armor, *potion of flying*, *mask of the mantis* (page 104), +1 striking wounding sawtooth saber (x2), shurikens (x5 with blightburn resin)**AC** 31; **Fort** +19, **Ref** +21, **Will** +19**HP** 193**Speed** 30 feet**Melee**  *sawtooth saber* +22 (agile, finesse, magic, twin), **Damage** 2d6+7 slashing plus 1d6 persistent bleed**Ranged**  shuriken +21 (agile, monk, range 20 feet, thrown), **Damage** 1d4+7 piercing plus blightburn resin**Divine Prepared Spells** DC 27; **4th** *translocate*; **3rd** *paralyze*; **2nd** *mist*; **1st** *sure strike*; **Cantrips (4th)** *figment*, *sigil***Prayer Attack**  (concentrate) **Requirements** The Red Mantis assassin wields a sawtooth saber in each hand; **Effect** The Red Mantis assassin attempts to Feint an enemy within 30 feet. If the Feint is successful, the assassin's next successful strike with a sawtooth saber in that same turn deals 2d6 persistent bleed damage to the target. In addition, provided they remain visible to that target and that target remains within 30 feet of the assassin, additional Prayer Attacks against that target automatically cause them to become off-guard against the assassin's attacks until the end of their turn.**Sneak Attack** The Red Mantis assassin deals an extra 2d6 precision damage to off-guard creatures.**Surprise Attack** On the first round of combat, creatures that haven't acted yet are off-guard to the Red Mantis assassin.

Treasure: The assassination contract Talaro carries is an unsigned scroll with the Vernai's wax seal, now broken. It reads, "The expedition to Crownhold is unsanctioned, and any agents involved in General Ordulf's assassination are traitors. Eliminate them."

Speaking with Vatumledor

Once the assassins are dealt with, and assuming he survived the battle, Vatumledor agrees to answer any questions the PCs might have. He starts by sharing what he understands regarding the two conspiracies at play—one that he believes intends to oust Jakalyn and her favorite agents, and one of his own design.

"I am Vatumledor, a devout of Achaekkek, He Who Executes. You know him as He Who Walks In Blood. Few know of my true nature, and assume I'm just 'Vatum,' one of Jakalyn's many couriers, but I am, in truth, one of her closest allies. You are among an elite few who I've trusted with the truth of who I am, and I trust you shall keep my secret as if it were your own.

“For some time I have suspected the existence of a conspiracy among some of the Vernai to remove Jakalyn as blood mistress of the Red Mantis, and now we have proof, thanks to your aid. I knew that the conspirators would act once Blood Mistress Jakalyn stepped away, and suspected a half-dozen contracts as being traps meant to allow the conspirators the chance to weed out her strongest allies. When I was approached by the Vernai and asked to deliver the contract for Ordulf’s assassination specifically to you not long after Jakalyn’s absence began, I strongly suspected the conspirators were making their move. And now, with Talaro’s attempt on your lives, we have proof. Someone among the Vernai wants us dead so that when they move against Blood Mistress Jakalyn, she will have none among the Red Mantis to rely upon as allies. This cannot stand, and you must return to Ilizmagorti to uncover the truth of who our enemies are.”

After he finishes, he answers any additional questions the PCs may have. Likely questions and his responses are listed below.

How did you get here? “I teleported into northern Hageach and flew the rest of the way once I’d uncovered proof of the conspirators within the Vernai—and that they’d sent assassins against us.”

What proof did you find? “Another assassin attacked me, but was unprepared for my truth. He’s no longer a threat, but his attempt to kill me was all the proof I needed to confirm my suspicions.”

Why should we trust you? “You are wise to trust none but yourselves, but for what it’s worth, I am an ally. If my warning and aid against the assassins we just slew aren’t enough, then I ask you instead to trust that there are those among the Vernai who want you dead, and that you should seek answers in Ilizmagorti if you wish to clear your names.”

Do we face ramifications for assassinating Ordulf? “Ordulf deserved death, so waste no time mourning his fate. Still, the contract for his assassination was falsified. A trap placed by our enemies in the Vernai. Doubtless, they have spread word of your ‘illegal’ assassination already through the city of Ilizmagorti, and you are likely all counted as traitors on Mediogalti Isle. Yet Achaek himself does not begrudge your actions. He is more than a narrow-sighted cult of assassins believes him to be.”

Who are you calling “narrow-sighted”? “I apologize, but I and my ancestors have never agreed with your interpretation of He Who Executes. We still follow the old ways; the forgotten ways. Achaek has changed and his followers with it; or is it the other way around? No matter. There is room for us all in his glorious shadow.”

How has Achaek changed? “Slowly over thousands of years. It is not important. What’s important is our survival. What is important is that those among the Vernai who seek to replace Blood Mistress Jakalyn are stopped.”

Do you know who set this assassination in motion?/ Who issued the contract on Ordulf? “As with all assignments the Vernai give me to deliver to Red Mantis agents, the issuer in question was anonymous—I need not remind you that the client matters not, only that the request is completed. A tradition that the conspirators no doubt were thankful for, but one that still has value, I believe.”

Where is Blood Mistress Jakalyn now?/Is she safe? “I know only what you know: that she’s in pursuit of an undisclosed goal, likely something to do with the recent assassination request against Tar-Baphon. But before she left, she revealed to me her suspicions that enemies within the Vernai might make moves against her, and asked me to watch for opportunities to unmask the traitors. You are my opportunity, now that these traitors have revealed they do indeed exist. Personally, I believe the blood mistress is using recent events as a smoke screen to go into hiding, to lie low and give those she suspects of being traitors the chance to make a mistake. If you can expose the traitors and deal with them, Jakalyn’s gratitude and approval will be worth more than any treasure.”

Can you come with us to help us? (If the PCs ask for Vatumledor to accompany them, the dragon pauses, regarding the party with a skeptical eye—almost as if he’s reevaluating their strength before replying.) “No, I will not. Blood Mistress Jakalyn values you, and she would not if you were incompetent. While I did aid you in the recent fight here, nothing I saw indicated you need my direct aid going forward. In fact, my assistance will be more valuable to you if we now go our separate ways, for that will allow me to create distractions to turn attentions away from you. I have a target on my back now as well, and if our enemies have to split their resources to look in multiple areas, so much the better.”

Concluding the Chapter

After the PCs have had a chance to ask their questions of Vatumledor, the dragon reiterates that the time is nigh to strike back against the traitors within the Vernai, but that first, they must discover who the traitors are. And the swiftest method to do so is to return home to the city of Ilizmagorti. Since the PCs already have targets on their back, they would do well to disguise themselves—it won’t be long before Talaro’s failure will become apparent to the traitors, at which point they’ll be on the hunt.

While the PCs investigate Ilizmagorti for clues, Vatumledor creates distractions. He’s been targeted as well, he reminds the PCs, and if he leaves a trail of clues across the Inner Sea region for the traitors to chase, they’ll be even more distracted, giving the party an increased chance to learn more. If the PCs lack a method to return to Ilizmagorti quickly, he offers to teleport them to Mediogalti Island the next morning after they’ve all had a chance to rest and recover.



Chapter 2: Unmasking a Traitor

The PCs have survived an assassination attempt by those they serve, and they now find themselves in the unenviable position of being criminals in the eyes of the Red Mantis. To clear their names, they must return to the city of Ilizmagorti and search for evidence they can present to the Vernai to force them to confront the rot within their organization. Such a task will not be simple, however. Their ally Vatumledor intends to leave a trail of clues across the Inner Sea to distract the conspirators away from Ilizmagorti to aid the PCs' mission, but the party must still take care to hide their identities while they search for the truth.

You can read or paraphrase the following message from Vatumledor to help guide the PCs if you wish.

"That assassin's contract for your deaths was from the Vernai, and it looks authentic. The Vernai sometimes fight among themselves to the point of outright violence and betrayal, but they rarely turn on those below them in the organization. They usually only act like this when there's about to be a major upheaval among the ranks of the Red Mantis.

"Heading back to the Crimson Citadel won't be safe for you if a Vernai is sending assassins to kill you. You're going to need to know which Vernai is after you and have proof of their crimes before you return and confront them. If I were you, I'd fake your deaths here, making it look like you and the other assassins killed each other. Then I'd return to Ilizmagorti and see if you can find any of the traitor's co-conspirators. Pulling off a deception like this would require having powerful informants in place around Mediogalti Island. Once you know who the traitor is and have the proper proof, bring it to the Vernai and expose the traitor."

Even if the PCs decide to cut ties with the Red Mantis assassins and abandon this adventure completely, they still need to clear their names and confront those responsible for calling them traitors unless they want to live the remainders of their lives running away and expecting assassins around every corner. This adventure assumes that the PCs are eager to remain in the organization, clear their names, and perhaps fight to protect Blood Mistress Jakalyn's role as leader.

Returning Home

The next step for the party is a journey back home to the city of Ilizmagorti, but wise PCs take steps before they do so. If one of the Vernai wants them dead, it's all but guaranteed that they'll be greeted by things like wanted posters, guards, and bounty hunters on the lookout for them, as well as Red Mantis assassins eager to earn praise from their superiors for capturing or killing fugitives. Vatumledor suggests that the PCs consider faking their own deaths at Crownhold to throw off pursuit, but more than that impresses upon them the need for subtlety, stealth, and disguise once they reach Ilizmagorti. See *Faking Deaths* for more advice on these tactics.

Reaching Mediogalti Island

Ilizmagorti lies approximately 2,100 miles south of Crownhold. While the PCs are free to use whatever means they wish to travel to the city, this adventure assumes that they make most of the journey via teleportation—either via spells cast by a party member or through *teleport* spells cast by Vatumledor. If the PCs pursue a slower method of travel, consider having them ambushed once or twice along the way by new teams of Red Mantis assassins.

Cast as a 7th-rank spell, *teleport* can cover a distance of 1,000 miles. If Vatumledor's casting this for the PCs, he'll prepare *teleport* three times as a 7th-rank spell and travel with them. Since the last leg of the journey only covers about 100 miles, the PCs arrive within a mile of the city but must still complete the last leg of the trip on their own while Vatumledor flies back toward the mainland to begin misleading the conspirators.

If a PC is capable of doing what Vatumledor can't and casts *teleport* heightened to 8th rank, they can make the trip to Ilizmagorti in one casting, but keep in mind that this increased distance means the PCs arrive about 21 miles away from the city.

A full gazetteer of the city of Ilizmagorti begins on page 90.

Fugitives!

At the start of this chapter, the PCs know only that at least one person among the Vernai wants them dead. Unknown to the PCs at this time, this person is Saviya, one of Achaekek's most powerful clerics and a very high-ranking member of the Vernai. While Saviya has many resources, the PCs aren't the only enemies she's tracking—nor (at least, at the start of this adventure) are they the one she fears the most. The constant fear that Blood Mistress Jakalyn could return at any moment keeps Saviya's actions in check and the orders she gives to her agents subtle, and having to constantly obscure her true intentions from other members of the Vernai who remain loyal to the blood mistress prevents her from using the full gamut of her resources against the party. This, plus the fact that Saviya underestimates their potential, is their greatest advantage. Still, the PCs

VISIBILITY THRESHOLDS

As the PCs play through Chapter 2, they shift through the following four Visibility Thresholds. As they become more visible, the PCs begin to take circumstance penalties to checks made during this chapter while participating in the following activities: Coerce, Cover Tracks, Gather Information, Impersonate, or Make an Impression.

Anonymous (0-3 Visibility Points): The conspirators believe the PCs aren't active in Ilizmagorti.

Rumored (4-6 Visibility Points): The conspirators suspect the PCs are active in Ilizmagorti. The PCs take a -1 circumstance penalty to affected activities.

Spotted (7-9 Visibility Points): The conspirators know the PCs are active in Ilizmagorti, but haven't narrowed down their precise location. The PCs take a -2 circumstance penalty to affected activities. **Event 4** (page 43) can now occur.

Hunted (10 or more Visibility Points): The conspirators know what the PCs' likely plans are and can swiftly locate them anywhere in the city. The PCs take a -4 circumstance penalty to affected activities and lack the stability and safety needed to successfully Craft, Earn Income, seek Long-Term Rest, or Retrain in Ilizmagorti unless they secure a suitable safe house. **Event 5** (page 45) can now occur.

would be wise to keep their activities and presence in Ilizmagorti quiet or disguised for as long as possible. The more visible they are, the more likely they are to be confronted by Saviya's agents during this chapter.

You can track the PCs' visibility to their enemies via Visibility Points. As they gain or lose Visibility Points, they find that their ability to move about and search for clues in Ilizmagorti is impacted; as a result, they could face additional encounters with various enemies. The number of Visibility Points the party possesses at any one time sets their Visibility Threshold, as summarized in the sidebar above. You should keep the players apprised of their current Visibility Threshold at all times, since this affects some of their skill checks and options during the chapter.

Initial Visibility

The party's initial visibility is determined by the steps they take before they first enter Ilizmagorti and by how much time has passed since Ordulf's assassination and their defeat of Talaro. The PCs start with 1 Visibility Point as a result of Talaro's defeat; adjust this total as detailed below once they first arrive in the city.

Visibility Points can never go below 0.

Faked Deaths: If the PCs took time to fake their own deaths before entering Ilizmagorti, adjust their Visibility points as appropriate for the results of this activity.

Passage of Time: For every week that passes between the end of Chapter 1 and the PCs' arrival in Ilizmagorti, reduce their Visibility Points by 1.

PREY FOR DEATH

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1: A WORTHY CONTRACT

CHAPTER 2: UNMASKING A TRAITOR

CHAPTER 3: SECRETS OF THE MANTIS

CHAPTER 4: A DEITY'S DUTY

ILIZMAGORTI

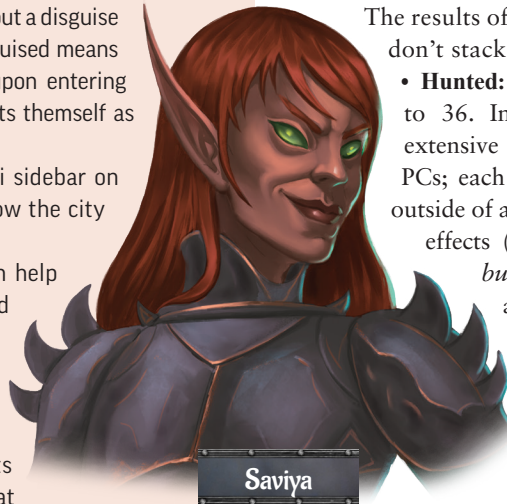
ADVENTURE TOOLBOX

FUGITIVE ENTRY

Once the PCs approach the city of Ilizmagorti, they need to decide how they wish to enter. Typically, those entering the city by land pay their entrance tax at one of the city gates, while those entering by sea or river do so at one of the many harbor registries. Red Mantis assassins and allied agents can enter freely without paying taxes, but the PCs are now fugitives, and entering via this route without a disguise would be unwise. Doing so disguised means they need to pay a 1 gp tax upon entering (or up to 100 gp if a PC presents themselves as particularly rich or powerful).

See the Entering Ilizmagorti sidebar on page 91 for more details on how the city controls who comes and goes.

Disguises A good disguise can help the party remain hidden and unnoticed. As long as one PC in the group is at least master at Deception, or if the entire party has access to constant magical effects that provide disguises that can persist all day long (such as via a *greater masquerade scarf*, or as a result of a recently performed *reincarnate* ritual), you can assume that the party as a whole is disguised well enough that you can skip Step 1 of Gaining Visibility Points.



Gaining Visibility Points

The longer the PCs take to complete Chapter 2, the higher their visibility creeps. In addition to any encounter-specific increases to Visibility Points detailed on the following pages, the PCs automatically gain 1 Visibility Point each time they engage in a high-profile event in a public space (such as a combat, a flashy attempt to Earn Income via Performance, bragging about their accomplishments, openly talking about Vernai conspiracies, or the like).

When the PCs first enter Ilizmagorti, and again each day as they undertake their daily preparations, go through the following two steps to determine if they increase their Visibility Points after determining what Exploration activities (*Player Core* 438–439) each PC is taking.

Step 1—Randomly Getting Noticed: Attempt a DC 16 flat check. On a failure, one or more of the PCs have been spotted and recognized and the party gains 1 Visibility Point.

Step 2—Resolve Active Searches: If the PCs are at a Visibility Threshold of Rumored or higher, then their enemies are searching for them. The magnitudes of these searches depend on their current Visibility Threshold.

- **Rumored:** If any PC went out in public the previous day, one PC in the party must attempt a DC 30

Deception or Stealth check; other PCs can Aid this check if they wish. The party earns 1 Visibility Point on a failure (or 2 on a critical failure).

- **Spotted:** Each PC in the party who went out in public during the previous day must attempt a DC 34 Deception or Stealth check. The party earns 1 Visibility Point if anyone fails this check (or 2 Visibility Points if anyone rolls a critical failure). The results of multiple failures or critical failures don't stack.

- **Hunted:** As Spotted, but the DC increases to 36. In addition, the conspirators make extensive use of divination magic to track the PCs; each PC who spent more than an hour outside of an area that isn't protected from such effects (such as those granted by *peaceful bubble*) during the previous day must attempt a DC 32 Will save. The party gains 1 additional Visibility Point for each failed Will save.

Step 3—Resolve Activities: Resolve the day's activities and adventures through play.

Faking Deaths

Faking their deaths is an excellent way for the PCs to lower their visibility, but this tactic faces diminishing returns if used too often. When the party wishes to set up rumors or evidence that they've been slain, they must all pursue the Fake Deaths exploration activity detailed below. Once the party pursues this activity, it can't be attempted again until their Visibility Threshold increases to a higher tier.

If the PCs attempt to fake their deaths at Crownhold before they travel to Ilizmagorti, reduce the DCs for all checks associated with this activity by 5.

FAKE DEATHS

EXPLORATION MANIPULATE

The party attempts to seed the false narrative that they have been slain in battle by spending 2 hours pursuing one of the following paths of deceit. Each PC in the party can attempt one of the following checks each time this activity is attempted as a group. These checks earn (or lose) Victory Points (*GM Core* 184).

Fake Remains Using corpses of other people rendered unidentifiable through disfiguring and violent damage, you attempt to doctor remains and pass them off as yours and those of your fellow party members. Attempt a DC 34 Deception or DC 36 Medicine check, with a -1 penalty for each party member who lacks a corpse of a matching ancestry (-2 if there's a size difference), or a -4 penalty for each PC who isn't represented by a tampered-with corpse.

False Rumors Spend the time spreading rumors about the party's defeat and attempt a DC 32 Deception check. If you do so while not disguised, adjust your rolled result down by one degree of success. You can only spread False Rumors in Ilizmagorti—this isn't an option in Crownhold.

Magical Manipulation You use magic to create Fake Remains, spread False Rumors, or Manufacture Evidence; describe to the GM what spells and magical methods you're using, then attempt a DC 34 Arcana, Nature, Occultism, or Religion check as appropriate.

Manufactured Evidence You create evidence to plant at the scene of the crime to stage a convincing battle site where you and your fellow PCs supposedly perished. Attempt a DC 32 Warfare Lore check, a DC 34 Society check, or a DC 36 Crafting check.

Determining Success Total up all of the Victory Points earned by the PCs, then subtract 2 from that total for each previous attempt the PCs made to Fake Deaths. If the PCs earn more Victory Points than there are PCs in the party, reduce their Visibility Points by 3. If the PCs earn as many Victory Points as there are PCs in the party, reduce their Visibility Points by 1. If the PCs earn no Victory Points at all, increase their Visibility Points by 1d4.

Event 4: Spotted! Moderate 15

Soon after the first time the party becomes Spotted in Ilizmagorti, a band of eight assassins seeks them out, but the PCs catch wind of the fact that they're being stalked before an ambush is sprung. They might be warned by an ally, catch a glimpse of red armor in an alleyway, or could even learn of the threat as a result of a divine insight or divination. Whatever the source of the warning, when you start this event, let the players know that they're about to be ambushed by assassins. They can either seek out the assassins and confront them, or they can attempt to flee into the city to throw their stalkers off the trail.

If the PCs choose to confront their stalkers, run **Event 5** as a Moderate 15 encounter with two Red Mantis conspirators and two Red Mantis assassins, but warn the players that such a conflict is very likely to increase their visibility further.

If the PCs instead choose to throw their stalkers off the trail, they can spend an hour in a frenzy of movement through the city, creating distractions, spreading misinformation, and otherwise misleading their pursuers by engaging in a sort of chase. While this event uses the chase rules (*GM Core* 192–195), the PCs aren't visibly pursued through the streets by their enemies. Rather, they're trying to confuse and distract them over the course of the hour. During this hour, the party must navigate the following six obstacles, each of which takes 10 minutes to resolve.

The PCs can choose the order in which they wish to tackle each of the following six obstacles. This represents their plan to execute an hour's worth of distractions and false leads to throw their hunters off the trail. The number of chase obstacles the party is able to overcome over the course of these six rounds determines how successful they are.

ABANDONED WAREHOUSE **OBSTACLE 13**
Chase Points 3; **Overcome** DC 33 Stealth to be seen entering

SNEAKING INTO ILIZMAGORTI

If the PCs manage to engineer a plausible way to sneak into Ilizmagorti without being noticed, then skip the Gaining Visibility Points steps when the PCs first enter the city. An individual PC can sneak in without being recognized with a DC 34 Deception check to Impersonate or with a DC 30 Stealth check, or by using magic like *illusory disguise*, *invisibility*, *translocate*, any polymorph spell, or the like. If even one PC in the group fails to successfully use such tactics, they cannot skip this step when first entering Ilizmagorti.

the warehouse but not seen exiting, DC 35 Acrobatics to move through the warehouse without leaving tracks that might be followed

A warehouse offers hiding spots, and by winding through the building, the party can trick their pursuers into wasting hours searching a warehouse that they're not actually hiding in.

DISTRACTING GOSSIP OBSTACLE 15

Chase Points 2; Overcome DC 34 Deception to spread false rumors, DC 36 Diplomacy to convince locals to lie for you
The PCs spread rumors and scuttlebutt that suggest they've left the city or are hiding out in a location they have no intention of ever actually visiting, so that the conspirators are tricked into wasting time in their search.

FAKE TRAIL OBSTACLE 15

Chase Points 3; Overcome DC 32 Survival to set up fake footprints for the conspirators to track, DC 34 Athletics to leave a trail along walls or over barriers that the conspirators will waste valuable time trying to navigate and investigate

The PCs create a series of false leads through a part of Ilizmagorti that they have no intention of returning to, so that the conspirators end up spending too much time in fruitless searches and investigations.

FALSE SIGHTINGS OBSTACLE 15

Chase Points 3; Overcome DC 34 Intimidation to browbeat locals into falsifying sightings of the party elsewhere in Ilizmagorti, DC 36 Society to single out the best locations in the city to spread false information from

The PCs engineer false sightings of one or more of their group that leads the conspirators in a different direction.

TREACHEROUS ALLEYWAY OBSTACLE 15

Chase Points 2; Overcome DC 32 Ilizmagorti Lore to know of the perfect alleyway to set up the traps, DC 34 Crafting to create dangerous hazards out of existing material

An alleyway contains stacked crates and rubbish that can be rigged to appear to accidentally collapse, throwing any pursuers into disarray or perhaps even injuring or killing them.

UPROARIOUS CROWD **OBSTACLE 15**
Chase Points 2; **Overcome** DC 34 Thievery to pickpocket a

few items and prompt shopkeepers to confront innocent passersby about the crime, DC 36 Performance to conduct a controversial or politically charged act in a public area in a way that riles locals up and sparks mass arguments

The PCs drive a crowd of locals to be loud and distracting, making several streets and plazas difficult to navigate or spot them within and forcing the conspirators to take extra time to search the area thoroughly.

Additional Chases: As long as the party remains Spotted, you can run this encounter again to keep up the appearance that the conspirators are closing in on the PCs. If you do so, consider crafting new obstacles along these lines to keep the chase fresh or to allow other skills to have a chance to shine.

Resolving the Chase: If the PCs can overcome at least three of the six obstacles in this chase, they throw the conspirators off their trail. If the PCs only overcome two or fewer obstacles, the conspirators catch up to them and attack, as detailed on page 43. The encounter takes place as though the PCs had directly confronted them in the first place and is a Moderate 15 encounter.

Visibility Impact: For every obstacle above the third that the PCs overcome, reduce their current Visibility Points by 1 (to a maximum reduction of 3 points if they overcome all six obstacles).

Reward: Grant the PCs 120 XP the first time they successfully throw the conspirators off their trail with this encounter.

Event 5: Ambushed! Severe 15

Once the PCs become Hunted in Ilizmagorti, they face an ambush by a band of assassins. This ambush should take place within 24 hours of the party becoming Hunted, though if the PCs manage to reduce their Visibility Threshold to Rumored before the ambush is sprung, they avoid this event for the time being.

The timing of the ambush, as well as its location, is left to you. One easy choice would be to have the conspirators attack just as the PCs complete one of the four set encounters later in this chapter. A classic option is to ambush the PCs while they're eating or sleeping, but in this case, you'll need to provide your own maps for the encounter to match the party's location, wherever that might be.

You can run this event more than once as long as the PCs remain Hunted, but should avoid doing so more than once a day. The point of this event isn't to wear down the PCs as much as it is to spur them forward in their investigations and to make them feel that they're being stalked—too many ambushes in a row can grow tiresome!

Creatures: This ambush consists of three Red Mantis conspirators and a trio of lower-ranking assassins. The Red Mantis assassins move in to melee as quickly as possible, ganging up on single targets to maximize flanking, while the conspirators hang back and harry

the other characters with their shortbows. They move in to melee one at a time as Red Mantis assassins are defeated. The ambushers fight to the death. If captured and questioned (or if the PCs interrogate a body with a spell like *talking corpse*), the hunting party can potentially provide the PCs a lead to one of the primary conspirators.

RED MANTIS CONSPIRATORS (3) CREATURE 14

RARE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Human Vernai conspirator

Perception +23

Languages Common, Mwangi

Skills Achaek Lore +23, Acrobatics +25, Athletics +24, Deception +25, Religion +21, Society +23, Stealth +27, Thievery +27

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

Items +1 resilient leather armor, mask of the mantis (page 104), +2 striking wounding sawtooth saber (×2), shurikens (×5 with blightburn resin)

AC 35; **Fort** +25, **Ref** +27, **Will** +23

HP 255

Speed 30 feet

Melee ♦ *sawtooth saber* +27 (agile, finesse, magic, twin), **Damage** 2d6+7 slashing plus 1d6 persistent bleed

Ranged ♦ shuriken +25 (agile, monk, range 20 feet, thrown), **Damage** 1d4+7 piercing plus blightburn resin

Divine Prepared Spells DC 34; **5th** *sending*; **4th** *fly*; **3rd** *bone flense* (page 99); **2nd** *mist*; **1st** *sure strike*; **Cantrips (4th)** *figment*, *sigil*

Prayer Attack ♦ (concentrate) **Requirements** The Red Mantis conspirator wields a sawtooth saber in each hand; **Effect** The Red Mantis conspirator attempts to Feint an enemy within 30 feet. If the Feint is successful, the conspirator's next successful Strike with a sawtooth saber in that same turn deals 2d6 persistent bleed damage to the target. In addition, provided they remain visible to that target and that target remains within 30 feet of the conspirator, additional Prayer Attacks against that target automatically cause them to become off-guard against the conspirator's attacks until the end of their turn.

Sneak Attack The Red Mantis conspirator deals an extra 2d6 precision damage to off-guard creatures.

Vernai Training In order to resurrect a creature slain by a Red Mantis conspirator, a creature must counteract the conspirator's influence over the dead's remains as they cast the spell or perform the ritual (DC 34).

RED MANTIS ASSASSINS (3) CREATURE 11

Human assassins (page 38)

Initiative Perception +21

Visibility Impact: The ambush takes place in a public area, and unless the PCs take extraordinary measures to obscure or hide the spectacle of this fight (such as via illusion spells), this ambush increases their Visibility Points by 1 once it is concluded every time that it takes place.

Hunting for Conspirators

High Priest Saviya has been conspiring to overthrow Blood Mistress Jakalyn for some time now. While she has recruited many lower ranking assassins and citizens of Ilizmagorti to her cause, most are kept in the dark or misinformed about the true nature of her goals. There are exceptions, however; she has recruited five NPCs in Ilizmagorti whom she has tasked with keeping an eye out for “Jakalyn’s lackeys” and performing other jobs on her behalf: Dockmaster Torvald Kemp, Sister Maeri of the Hospice of Serenity, the leshy known as Mantis Keeper, and the “Riot Twins” of the Order of Alchemists. Each of these conspirators reports to one of the others, so that once the PCs confront one of them, evidence they learn point them to the next conspirator.

Dockmaster Torvald regularly checks in with Sister Maeri for the latest numbers of new visitors to the island and to take stock of various cargo shipments she receives directly. Sister Maeri regularly meets with Mantis Keeper when they come into town; the leshy druid delivers regular supplies of plants and animal products needed by the Sisters of Serenity Abbey to create healing salves (and poisons). While in town, Mantis Keeper also delivers supplies to the Riot Twins, who make alchemical reagents from some of the jungle’s natural resources. The Riot Twins in turn check in with Dockmaster Torvald regularly for updates regarding when their next magical and alchemical reagent shipments are coming in.

The order in which the party seeks out and confronts these conspirators is up to them.

Beginning the Hunt

The PCs should start looking for the Vernai conspirators as soon as they arrive in Ilizmagorti, but may be at a loss for where to start. Not so for the conspirators; while they hope the PCs are dead, they know better than to make assumptions before proof of death has been secured. As such, they keep an eye out for their arrival, swiftly reporting to their fellow conspirators (and to Saviya) if the PCs are spotted. Each of the following conspirator encounters explains the tools and methods the conspirators use to search for the PCs and other traitors, as well as how the PCs might initially become suspicious of that NPC as they move about the city.

If the PCs lack a lead, they can ask around town, but doing so runs the risk of increasing their Visibility. A successful DC 30 check to Gather Information and two hours of work turns up a specific name: Nasha the Gnasher. The first time the PCs attempt to Gather Information regarding where to begin looking, they earn 1 Visibility Point unless they roll a critical success.

After this first attempt, only failed attempts to Gather Information in this manner earn a Visibility Point (or 2 points on a critical failure).

A successful DC 34 Ilizmagorti Lore or Society check to Recall Knowledge allows a PC to know about Nasha automatically without risking the accumulation of any Visibility Points.

Nasha is a moderately successful and marginally famous gladiator who often battles at the Blood Circus, but her main source of income is from her role as an illicit information broker whose loyalty is to the city of Ilizmagorti first and the Red Mantis second. As such, Nasha is an excellent person to consult for potentially dangerous information, but her services always comes at a price. If the PCs wish to seek out Nasha’s aid, they can find her at the Blood Circus (area Z4; page 93).



Nasha the Gnasher

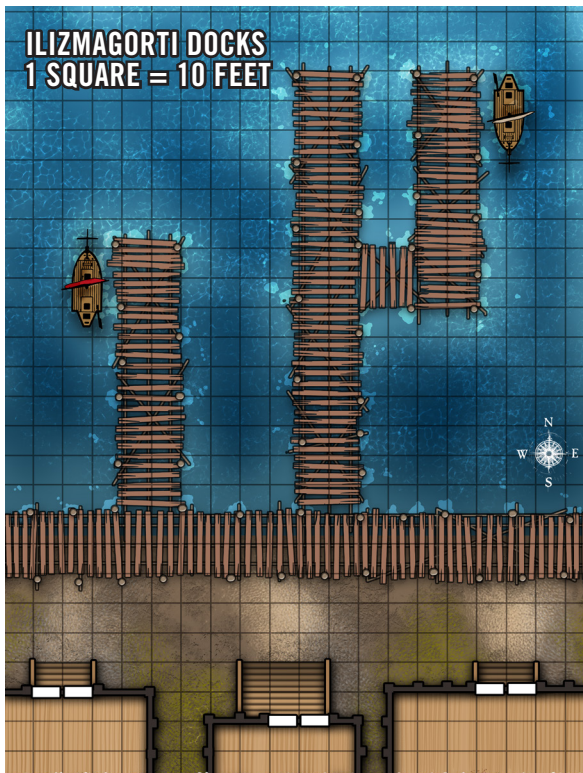
Optional: Meeting Nasha

The Blood Circus looms high over northern Ilizmagorti, a constant reminder of the entertainment and doom offered to the city’s people or inflicted upon its victims on a daily basis. The streets around the arena often throng with traffic, even late into the night. See page 93 for more generalized information about the arena itself.

The PCs are likely to visit this site not to watch or take part in blood sports, but to seek out one of the Blood Circus’s more well-known gladiators: Nasha the Gnasher. Whether the PCs have to wait for her to finish a battle in the arena before approaching her or she’s available at once is up to you, but in order to secure a meeting with the information broker, a PC must first succeed at a DC 34 Deception or Diplomacy check to be granted an immediate audience, or must pay a bribe of valuables worth at least 3,000 gp—otherwise, they need to wait 1d4+2 days for an appointment.

The meeting itself takes place in Nasha’s private office in the Blood Circus’s understructure, a chamber that has a rather plain aesthetic compared to the obscenely violent arena decor. As the PCs arrive, Nasha takes an aggressive bite from the roasted meat of a large leg bone. She chews the meat loudly, open-mouthed so the roast is clearly visible, and stares in their direction, evaluating their demeanors for a time before she wipes her lizard-like snout on a napkin and asks the PCs what’s so important that they’re interrupting her meal. If the PCs aren’t disguised, she recognizes them “as the ones the Mantis wants dead” but quickly assures them that, at least for the moment, they’re not in any danger from her.

Nasha suspects that there are elements in the Vernai who are attempting a silent coup, but doesn’t know who these traitors might be. She knows that the status quo is



better for her (who knows if new leadership would be as willing to ignore her side gig as an illicit information broker?), but is wary about providing aid to anyone she fears might not be up to the task of defeating the coup.

She tells the PCs that the price for her information varies—some she asks to pay in gold, while others she asks to participate in a vicious battle in the Blood Circus. In the case of the PCs, though, she’s willing to accept payment in “quality of character.” She asks them to convince her that they can be trusted, that they have the ability to face powerful enemies, and that they are loyal to Blood Mistress Jakalyn. To do so, at least half of the PCs must succeed at a DC 34 Achaek Lore, Deception, Diplomacy, Intimidation, or Society check as they each do their best to convince her, one-on-one, in short, private meetings.

If not enough PCs prevail, Nasha might (at your discretion) give the party a second chance to prove themselves by surviving a demonstration battle in the Blood Circus. This fight is scheduled to take place in the evening in 1d3 days, and it pits the PCs against a group of three immense black scorpions (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 2 234; a Severe 15 encounter) recently acquired by the arena. Performing in a public spectacle like this earns the party 3 Visibility Points.

If the PCs survive this fight (which forbids the use of flight as a tactic), or if at least half of the PCs convince her of their talents, she agrees to tell them what she knows. As she does, she notes that a change in leadership would not be advantageous for her. The information she gives the PCs is little more than a name—that of Dockmaster Torvald Kemp, whom she’s had something of a sour relationship with for some time. She suggests

that a clue the PCs might seek could well be hidden in the ledger Torvald carries with him at all times. (If the PCs have already investigated Torvald, then substitute in another conspirator of your choice.)

RECOVERING HARD EVIDENCE

In order to fully earn the rest of the Vernai’s support, the PCs need to produce hard evidence to back up their otherwise unbelievable claims.

Each of the following four encounters includes an opportunity to recover proof of Saviya’s treachery. Once the PCs secure it, let them know that the clue is vital in presenting their case to the Vernai. If the PCs miss a piece of evidence, it may be possible for them to return to the site to try to discover it, but don’t overtly encourage it. Allow the players to think of that option and act upon the idea on their own.

The Docks

Severe 15

Ilizmagorti’s waterfront is a constantly bustling scene, with dockworkers loading or unloading cargo quickly in hopes of avoiding fines for lingering too long. Merchants and hucksters push their wares, pickpockets look for easy marks, and travelers of all sorts come and go.

If the PCs arrive in town via ship, there’s a chance they’ll be noticed by Torvald or his agents. Each PC in the area must succeed at a DC 30 Deception or Stealth check to Avoid Notice; this check is penalized by an amount equal to their current Visibility Points. If even one PC fails this check, the group is attacked somewhere on the docks (see Creatures below). For every day during which the PCs spend more than an hour at the Wharves, they must again roll to Avoid Notice.

Creatures: If the PCs have learned that Torvald is one of the conspirators, they might wish to seek him out. Dockmaster Torvald Kemp presents himself to the city as a middle-aged human man, but is in truth a contract-bound gylou who has served the Vernai for many years. His demeanor is unpleasant, but he doesn’t carry any weapons—his reputation is enough protection for most encounters, and in others, his true nature is all the defense he usually needs. He’s never seen without a leather-bound ledger that he keeps in a waterproof case on his hip, and he’s often seen jotting notes in its pages about suspicious activities he observes. While he ostensibly is one of the many dockmasters who work to regulate trade and process payments and paperwork at the city’s numerous harbor registries, his primary task is to identify strangers or individuals of note who arrive in the city. The PCs are his latest charges.

Torvald is familiar with most faces, and he certainly takes note of new arrivals, making a point to meet them and let them fall under his discerning gaze. It’s an open secret that he works directly for the Red Mantis, and many suspect that his primary purpose is to identify Eagle Knights, Pathfinders, and Firebrands who attempt

to enter the city in disguise. By spotting suspicious persons early and passing their identities up the chain, he helps the Mantis remove adversaries from the island before they can make too much trouble. However, most don't know he's a devil in disguise.

If the PCs look for Torvald, they can find him if they are vocal about asking around for him. If instead the PCs are more subtle, two hours spent Searching the wharves allows a PC to attempt a DC 30 Perception check to find out where he's located and to get there before he moves on. In this case, there may be a short delay before his sea serpent pets can join a fight.

Torvald's reaction to the PCs depends on if he knows who they are. If they successfully Lie or Impersonate to throw him off, he plays the role of a busy and disinterested dockmaster. Cunning PCs can spend a minute in conversation with him and get him to slip up with a successful DC 38 Deception check, which prompts him to admit he's working for the Vernai. On a critical success, he inadvertently confirms that those among the Vernai that he works for are dissatisfied with the current blood mistress; on a critical failure, however, he realizes that he's speaking to the very "traitors" he's been keeping an eye out for. If he realizes this, he attempts to Lie to the PCs, telling them he has some important information to share with them... "but not here!" He then attempts to lead the PCs out along a nearby pier for some "privacy," only to suddenly attack.

During the conversation, Torvald's ledger remains tucked away in his belt pouch, making it a difficult object to pickpocket. A PC can Steal the ledger with a successful DC 45 Thievery check.

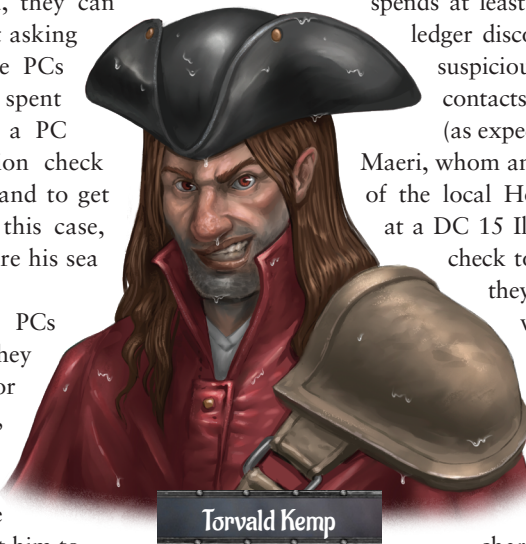
If the PCs end this encounter before a fight happens, Torvald has them followed (the party gains 1 Visibility Point), and at some point soon, he and his serpents ambush the PCs while they're elsewhere on the docks.

Once a fight breaks out, Torvald prefers to fight with his four pet sea serpents, creatures who are loyal to him and who eagerly rise up from the waters amid the piers to attack anyone who attacks him. If the PCs attack before he realizes who they are, it takes his sea serpents 2 rounds to reach the area and join the fight. Torvald begins the fight in his human form, using magic to remain at range and to control his enemies, but once reduced to fewer than 180 Hit Points, he reverts to his true form to finish the fight. He and the sea serpents fight to the death.

TORVALD KEMP

Elite male gylou (*Pathfinder Monster Core* 91)

Initiative Perception +30



CREATURE 15

SEA SERPENTS (4)

Pathfinder Monster Core 299

Initiative Perception +24

Treasure: Torvald's ledger contains names and descriptions of several visitors to the island. A PC who spends at least 10 minutes looking through the ledger discovers that Torvald often reported suspicious activity to two different contacts—one being the city authorities (as expected), and the other being to Sister Maeri, whom any PC can recognize as the Abbess of the local Hospice of Serenity by succeeding at a DC 15 Ilizmagorti Lore or DC 20 Society check to Recall Knowledge. Barring that, they can uncover this information with a few hours of work and a successful DC 20 check to Gather Information.

Hard Evidence: Tucked into the back of the ledger is a letter from Sister Maeri, written in a cypher that uses characters from two languages (Diabolic and Emyreal). To read the letter, a character must be able to understand both languages, spend 10 minutes examining the text, and then succeed at a DC 30 Religion or Society check to Decipher Writing. The letter provides extensive details about the PCs and their appearances, and suggests that Torvald keep an eye out for them, warning him that the fugitives may attempt to enter the city via the sea. The letter concludes, "If you catch them, the new blood mistress will doubtless be pleased and may well grant you an early reprieve from the servitude terms in your contract."

Visibility: If the PCs fight publicly with Torvald, they gain 2 Visibility Points. If they take action during the fight to significantly reduce their visibility (such as by using magic to obscure the fight), they earn only 1 Visibility Point. If the PCs manage to learn about the next conspirator without a fight, or if the fight lasts less than a round and they avoid involving the sea serpents, they earn no Visibility Points.

Reward: Grant the PCs 60 XP for learning about the contents of the note in Torvald's ledger. If they do so without a fight, grant the PCs XP as if they'd defeated Torvald and all four sea serpents in combat as well.

Sisters of Serenity Abbey **Severe 15**

As one would expect in a rough-and-tumble port where violence is a frequent solution, Ilizmagorti has great need for healers and caretakers. The Hospice of Serenity presents a facade of caregiving and solace, and its members are quickly recognizable by virtue of their white and gold robes. In truth, the caregivers of this supposedly merciful operation are yet another cover for the Red Mantis, who maintain this abbey in the city slums as a front designed to keep watch over the downtrodden.

CREATURE 12

PREY FOR DEATH

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1: A WORTHY CONTRACT

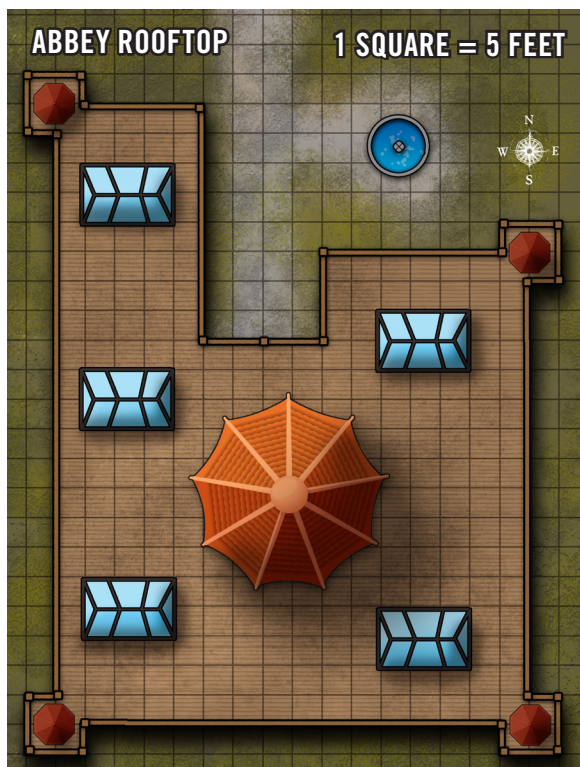
CHAPTER 2: UNMASKING A TRAITOR

CHAPTER 3: SECRETS OF THE MANTIS

CHAPTER 4: A DEITY'S DUTY

ILIZMAGORTI

ADVENTURE TOOLBOX



If PCs seek healing services at any point during this chapter, chances are good that they'll be directed toward the Hospice of Serenity (area **Z9**; page 95). Whether they come to the abbey looking for aid or to follow up on the clue found in Torvald's ledger, though, they find the building curiously empty, its front door unlocked. The abbey's leader, Sister Maeri, is one of the conspirators, and by the time the PCs arrive in Ilizmagorti, she's turned her abbey into an ambush.

The Hospice of Serenity is a relatively humble one-story stone building. Its 15-foot-high walls can be Climbed with a DC 30 Athletics check. At each corner of the building stands a 40-foot-tall minaret, while a large copper dome surrounded by several glass skylights adorns the main roof. The only relatively safe way to ascend or descend to or from the roof is via a flight of stairs in each minaret. Otherwise, anyone else who wishes to reach the roof must either climb, fly, or teleport.

Creatures: As this chapter begins, Sister Maeri sends the Hospice's guests and servants away, transferring dozens of patients to numerous smaller accommodations throughout the city. These establishments had no choice but to accept several ailing souls and a few Sisters of Serenity into their homes or places of business out of fear that they'd arouse the anger of the Red Mantis and Achaekek if they refused. The reason cited for emptying the hospice was to give the building time to spiritually air out the weight of all the death and suffering that has suffused its walls over the years. In truth, however, Sister Maeri has taken this step to prepare the abbey to serve as the site of an ambush for the PCs and has excused the Sisters of Serenity who have no idea about the conspiracy she's involved in, keeping only those she

can truly trust to aid her at her side—about a half-dozen loyal Red Mantis assassins.

The Hospice of Serenity contains numerous beds and other accommodations for any who need physical or spiritual sanctuary, but today the abbey's interior stands empty, its furniture shrouded with scented sheets and its windows cloaked in thick curtains. Its doors are locked tight. While nothing of interest can be found within the structure, it's likely the PCs won't make it into the building before Sister Maeri and her assassins spring their ambush.

The conspirators lie in wait atop the abbey's flat rooftop, and Sister Maeri herself hides above the main entrance. Each of the minarets houses one assassin, while the remaining two hide 10 feet to the east and west of Sister Maeri. All six assassins are equipped with longbows and carry 10 arrows poisoned with blightburn resin.

If the PCs approach in disguise, Maeri and her assassins hold off the attack until they're sure that the intruders are who they seek. Once any of them sees through any disguises, or once they observe any PC attempt to break into the abbey, they attack.

If a Red Mantis assassin in a minaret spots the PCs when they approach, they cast *figment* to create an image of a brightly colored mantis the size of a house cat on the rooftop at the base of the minaret, out of sight of anyone on the ground but plainly visible to anyone on the rooftop or above. If Sister Maeri and her two companions don't also spot the PCs at the same time, they quickly move to that minaret's location to get eyes on the party.

None of the assassins attack until Sister Maeri gives the signal to spring the ambush; when it's time, she stands and casts a spell. She and the other six assassins all roll Stealth for initiative in this event. Once combat begins, Sister Maeri uses ranged magic against the PCs while the assassins fire arrows down upon them. Assassins stationed in minarets out of sight of the PCs first use *translocate* to teleport to the best minaret option, then begin firing poison arrows. If the PCs manage to make it up onto the roof, Sister Maeri and her companions engage in melee, with the other assassins either translocating or climbing down to join the fight.

Sister Maeri and her assassins fight to the death.

SISTER MAERI

CREATURE 16

UNIQUE MEDIUM ELF HUMANOID

Female elf cleric of Achaekek

Perception +28; low-light vision

Languages Common, Diabolic, Elven, Empyrean

Skills Athletics +24, Deception +30, Diplomacy +28, Medicine +29, Religion +31, Society +28, Stealth +30, Thievery +28

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

Items *greater boots of bounding*, letter from Mantis Keeper, religious symbol, +2 *greater striking sawtooth saber*, shurikens (×5 with blightburn resin), *Sisters in Serenity*

AC 38; **Fort** +26, **Ref** +28, **Will** +30

HP 290

Speed 40 feet

Melee ♦ *sawtooth saber* +30 (agile, finesse, magic, twin),
Damage 3d8+10 slashing

Ranged ♦ shuriken +28 (agile, monk, range 20 feet, thrown),
Damage 1d4+10 piercing plus blightburn resin

Divine Prepared Spells DC 37, attack +29; **8th** *divine wrath, harm* (×6), *heal, vampiric exsanguination*; **7th** *blessed boundary, dispel magic, divine decree*; **6th** *cleanse affliction, sure footing, truesight*; **5th** *divine immolation, heal, sending*; **4th** *clear mind, fly, sound body*; **3rd** *blindness, heal, dream message*; **2nd** *calm, heal* (×2); **1st** *enfeeble, heal* (×2); **Cantrips (8th)** *daze, detect magic, guidance, light, stabilize*

Cleric Domain Spells 3 Focus Points, DC 37, attack +29; **8th** *sudden shift* (Player Core 379), *trickster's twin* (Player Core 380), *weapon surge* (Player Core 381), *zeal for battle* (Player Core 381)

Rituals DC 37; *resurrect*

Deadly Saber When Sister Maeri wields a sawtooth saber, she increases the damage die size of the weapon by one step and deals an extra 2d6 precision damage to off-guard creatures. When she critically succeeds at an attack roll with a sawtooth saber, she applies the weapon's critical specialization effect.

Divine Weapon ↻ **Frequency** once per turn; **Trigger** Sister Maeri finishes Casting a Spell; **Effect** Until the end of her turn, Sister Maeri's *sawtooth saber* deals an additional 1d4 spirit damage.

RED MANTIS ASSASSINS (6)

CREATURE 11

Human assassins (page 38)

Initiative Perception +21

Ranged shuriken +21 (agile, monk, range 20 feet, thrown),
Damage 1d4+7 piercing plus blightburn resin

Treasure: A PC who searches Sister Maeri's body uncovers a folded letter in one of her pockets. This letter is from someone called Mantis Keeper and notes that the writer of the letter will send word if they or their "watchful eyes" spot the PCs entering the city by land. A successful DC 25 Ilizmagorti Lore check confirms that Mantis Keeper is the name of the mysterious druid who acts as caretaker to the strange Mantis Stones in the jungle just west of Rivergreen.

Hard Evidence: The letter from Mantis Keeper isn't enough to qualify as hard evidence, but the slender tome bound in red leather and embossed in gold with the title *Sisters in Serenity* does. This folio, written in Common, lays out the tenets of the Sisterhood she runs. A casual inspection of the book makes it seem like the Sisterhood of Serenity is a benevolent organization of healers, but any reader who is at least master in Religion or who succeeds at a DC 20 Religion check while reading the book realizes that the entire organization is a front for Achaek's worshippers to keep an eye on Ilizmagorti's citizens. Furthermore,

anyone who examines the book and succeeds at a DC 25 Perception check notes unusual indentations in the book's margins; a critical success suggests these indentations are in fact faint marks left behind by a quill used to scribe additional glosses to the text in alchemically invisible ink. A DC 34 Crafting check allows a PC to spend 10 minutes preparing a simple solution of chemicals that, when brushed onto the pages, renders the invisible ink legible for an hour before the pages dry and the ink becomes invisible again. A character with the Alchemical Crafting feat reduces this DC by 5, while a critical failure at the Crafting check causes the invisible ink to be completely ruined. Since this text isn't a creature or spirit, *see the unseen* won't reveal it, but *truesight* reveals the writing automatically without the need for a counteract check.

If the ink is revealed, a PC who reads the margins learns about Sister Maeri's extensive plans to gain power in the city and notes that a secret patron has promised her she'll be awarded the role of high priestess of Ilizmagorti's Pagoda of the Mantis once "Jakalyn's time is up," with the defeat of the "traitors" (the PCs) being one of the "final steps" in to complete their plans.



Sister Maeri

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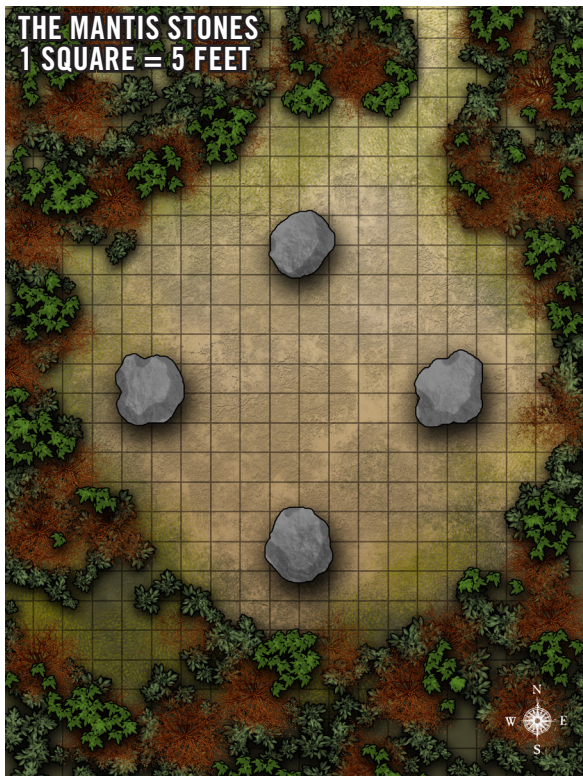
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THE MANTIS STONES

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



Visibility: If the rooftop fight includes flashy spell effects or spills into the surrounding streets, the PCs gain 2 Visibility Points. Otherwise, the sounds of battle and the occasional passerby's periodic glimpses of ongoing combat only causes the party to gain 1 Visibility Point. If the PCs manage to take out all seven ambushers swiftly and silently, they earn no Visibility Points.

Reward: Grant the PCs 60 XP if they discover the invisible text.

The Mantis Stones **Severe 15**

Most of those who travel to and from Ilizmagorti do so by sea, but those who have business (whether legitimate or otherwise) on Mediogalti Island typically enter and exit Ilizmagorti via its city gates. While the city guard, called the Blood Watch, maintains posts on the walls, the Red Mantis assassins rely more on the hidden eyes of the world. They have aligned themselves with a secretive alliance of evil druids who use the mantises and other native creatures of the isle as sentinels to keep watch over who comes and goes via land routes.

If the PCs choose to enter or exit Ilizmagorti by land regardless of their actual point of entry into the city, there's a chance they'll be noticed by agents of the most powerful of these druids: a leshy called Mantis Keeper. To pass through the surrounding jungle and outlying buildings unnoticed by Mantis Keeper or their numerous insectile minions, each PC involved in the attempt must succeed at a DC 30 Stealth or Survival check to Avoid Notice; this check is penalized by the party's current number of Visibility Points. If even one PC fails this check, the group is confronted by Mantis Keeper in the form of a Tiny praying mantis sent via

animal messenger with an invitation to meet with them at the Mantis Stones. If the PCs refuse this invitation, Mantis Keeper may attempt to ambush them elsewhere at your discretion, or they may simply wait patiently for the PCs to come to them. Alternatively, the PCs could seek out Mantis Keeper at the Mantis Stones after discovering the letter in Sister Maeri's robes.

If the PCs have a message from Mantis Keeper or the letter they sent to Sister Maeri, they can find the Mantis Stones automatically. Otherwise, they must succeed at a DC 25 Ilizmagorti Lore check or a DC 30 check to Gather Information to learn where the Mantis Stones are located. As the PCs approach the jungle clearing, read or paraphrase the following.

The jungle opens to a large clearing. A set of four twenty-foot-tall roughly hewn stones loom in a diamond pattern, each of which is adorned with carved symbols and thick coils of vines. At the center of the stones stands a flat-topped boulder, low to the ground and covered in bloodstains.

These ancient menhirs were raised centuries ago when the Red Mantis first came to Mediogalti. Other menhirs linked to different forms of native life are hidden throughout the jungle, but these stones, associated with mantises, are the most important to the assassins and thus were built closest to the site where Ilizmagorti had recently been founded. The stones absorb latent primal energies from their surroundings, the passage of the sun and moon, and the shifting of seasons, storing up magic to grant the druids of Achaek who dwell on the island unique powers of their own.

Creatures: Mantis Keeper is a leshy who was created long ago by a druid of Achaek for the sole purpose of acting as a caretaker to the Mantis Stones, and since their creation, Mantis Keeper has grown into the most powerful druid on the island. They try not to get involved in the affairs of the Crimson Citadel, but they do perform services and tasks for them as required. Though technically a co-conspirator in that they've been increasingly used by the others and Saviya (always anonymously) to advance their plots, Mantis Keeper doesn't actually favor the conspirators or Blood Mistress Jakalyn. As a result, of all the conspirators, Mantis Keeper is the most likely to hear the PCs out if they attempt to secure additional hard evidence through discussion rather than open combat.

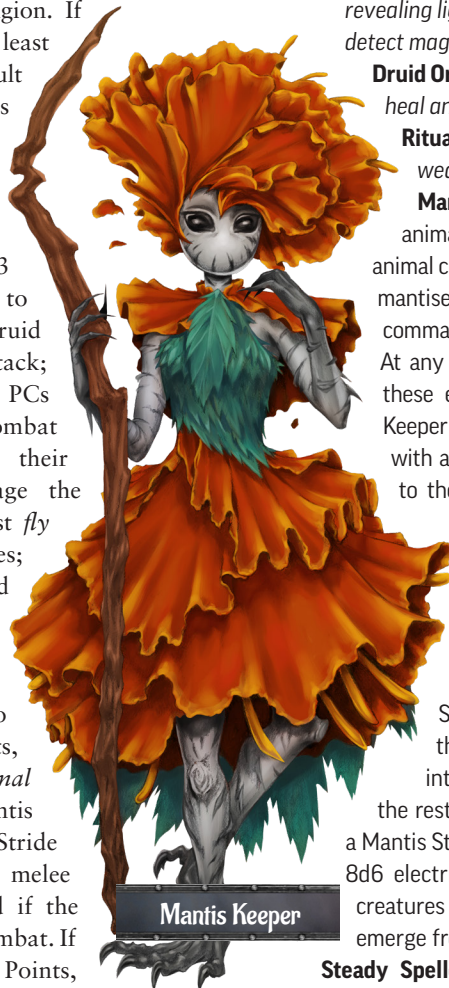
Mantis Keeper has been tasked with keeping an eye out for the PCs by the conspirators, whom they don't fully count as being separate from the rest of the Vernai. They have orders to report them to the Riot Twins should they notice the PCs, and they've agreed to take steps to capture and kill them if the opportunity presents itself. Yet Mantis Keeper also knows the PCs are among Blood Mistress Jakalyn's favored agents, so they seek an audience with the PCs.

When the PCs arrive at the Mantis Stones, Mantis Keeper is waiting for them atop the central

bloodstained altar, attended by two deadly mantises. The druid greets the PCs, then gets right to the point, asking what they've done to deserve their status as fugitives and warning them that Blood Mistress Jakalyn will not suffer betrayal. Mantis Keeper suggests the PCs turn themselves in, so as to hopefully garner what small amount of mercy the blood mistress might have for them, but they still give the party a chance to explain themselves.

Mantis Keeper listens patiently to the PCs' story, but the PCs need to be particularly cagey or diplomatic in how they present the idea that there's a conspiracy afoot in conversation. This interaction shouldn't be run as a full-scale Influence encounter, but should instead allow each PC to spend a bit of time explaining the nuances of the situation and convincing Mantis Keeper that the conspirators are going to do more harm to the Red Mantis assassins than help them. The PCs have four opportunities to earn Victory Points in this discussion by succeeding at DC 34 skill checks, but the skill they roll should be based on the nature of their discussion with Mantis Keeper. Diplomacy is the assumption, but a PC who's trying to be particularly manipulative might roll Deception or Intimidation at your discretion. A PC who's trying to appeal to Mantis Keeper's role as a druid and a "spokesperson" for nature could roll Nature, while one who's appealing to Mantis Keeper as a worshipper of Achaekkek could roll Religion. If the PCs can accumulate at least 3 Victory Points as a result of these four checks, Mantis Keeper rewards them with the hard evidence detailed below.

If the PCs fail to impress Mantis Keeper by earning 3 Victory Points and refuse to turn themselves in, the druid and their two mantises attack; likewise, they attack if the PCs initiate hostilities. Once combat begins, Mantis Keeper has their two deadly mantises engage the PCs in melee while they cast *fly* and then retreat to the skies; they then cast *regenerate* and use area effect spells on the party, casting defensive spells as it makes sense to. If a deadly mantis is reduced to fewer than half its Hit Points, Mantis Keeper casts *heal animal* at range on that mantis. Mantis Keeper uses Mantis Stone Stride in addition to making one melee attack per round as needed if the PCs manage to force close combat. If reduced to fewer than 50 Hit Points,



Mantis Keeper calls for parley. Mantis Keeper is willing to let the PCs go and even volunteers to use healing magic as penance for the fight, but won't reveal their hard evidence unless the PCs manage to convince them to do so as detailed above.

MANTIS KEEPER

CREATURE 17

UNIQUE SMALL LESHY PLANT

Agender leaf leshy druid

Perception +31; low-light vision

Languages Aklo, Common, Diabolic, Elven, Fey, Wildsong

Skills Acrobatics +29, Athletics +29, Nature +33, Religion +31, Survival +31

Str +4, **Dex** +4, **Con** +1, **Int** +2, **Wis** +6, **Cha** +3

Items +2 *greater striking greater corrosive greater thundering verdant scythe*

AC 39; **Fort** +26, **Ref** +29, **Will** +31; +1 status vs. poison

HP 318; **Resistances** poison 8

Speed 25 feet

Melee **◆** *verdant scythe* +31 (deadly d10, magical, trip),

Damage 3d10+12 slashing plus 1d6 acid and 1d6 sonic

Primal Prepared Spells DC 38, attack +30; **9th** *implosion, massacre*; **8th** *dispel magic, heal, lightning bolt*; **7th** *chain lightning, execute, regenerate*; **6th** *cursed metamorphosis, petrify, truesight*; **5th** *heal, wall of stone, wall of thorns*; **4th** *fly, resist energy, unfettered movement*; **3rd** *blindness, haste, slow*; **2nd** *animal messenger, entangling flora, revealing light*; **1st** *charm, gust of wind, heal*; **Cantrips (9th)** *detect magic, electric arc, guidance, stabilize, tangle vine*

Druid Order Spells 1 Focus Point, DC 38, attack +30; **8th** *heal animal (Player Core 382)*

Rituals DC 38; *awaken animal, commune, control weather, primal call*

Mantis Commander Mantis Keeper belongs to the animal druidic order, yet they don't have a single animal companion. Instead, they are served by the deadly mantises that dwell upon Mediogalti Isle, and their command over them is bolstered by the Mantis Stones. At any one time, Mantis Keeper is attended by two of these enormous insects, each of which treat Mantis Keeper as a valued ally. Mantis Keeper can communicate with any form of deadly mantis by speaking Wildsong to them, although the mantises cannot reply. These deadly mantises do not have the minion trait, and Mantis Keeper need not Command an Animal to command them—they can simply issue orders via Wildsong as a free action.

Mantis Stone Stride **◆◆** (electricity, move, primal, teleportation) Mantis Keeper Steps, Strides, or Flies into one of the Mantis Stones, then immediately exits a different Mantis Stone into a square adjacent to the stone and continues the rest of their movement. When Mantis Keeper exits a Mantis Stone, they create a pulse of lightning that inflicts 8d6 electricity damage (DC 38 basic Reflex save) to all creatures within 10 feet of Mantis Keeper when they emerge from the Mantis stone.

Steady Spellcasting If a reaction would disrupt Mantis



Keeper's spellcasting action, they attempt a DC 15 flat check. If they succeed, the action isn't disrupted.

Verdant Scythe **◆** Mantis Keeper has cultivated a unique seed to serve as a special verdant weapon. When they activate this ability, the seed transforms into a scythe, or the scythe transforms back into a seed. This scythe appears to be made entirely of wood, with a short upper blade that extends into a lengthy mantis-like arm when they attack. Although made of wood, Mantis Keeper's verdant scythe functions as if its blade were made of iron. If they're slain, the weapon quickly rots away, leaving behind rune-inscribed seeds that function as *runestones* that are inscribed with the weapon's qualities.

DEADLY MANTISES (2)

CREATURE 11

Pathfinder Monster Core 229

Initiative Perception +20

Treasure: If the PCs earn at least 3 Victory Points while discussing the conspiracy with Mantis Keeper, they reveal the hard evidence below, but also suggest that the PCs seek out the Riot Twins as other potential conspirators, for it's to these two that Mantis Keeper was asked to send updates if they learned anything about the PCs' movements through the Ilizmagorti hinterlands. If the PCs kill Mantis Keeper instead, they should find a half-completed draft of a letter to the Riot Twins that chronicles some of the PCs' activities in the city—a letter Mantis Keeper intended to send soon via *animal messenger* but will never have the chance to do so now.

Hard Evidence: The PCs can convince Mantis Keeper that there's reason to work against the conspirators and

that Blood Mistress Jakalyn should stay in power by accumulating 3 Victory Points, as detailed on page 51. If they do so, Mantis Keeper gives them the information under *Treasure*, but also agrees to attend any meeting the PCs have with the Vernai to add their support to the PCs' claims. Mantis Keeper's presence during that encounter at the start of Chapter 3 grants them the equivalent of an additional item of hard evidence to support their claims.

Visibility: Unlike the other conspirator encounters, the PCs do not risk earning Visibility Points as the result of a fight here, but if they fail to defeat Mantis Keeper in a battle, they druid spreads word over the next 24 hours via their insectile minions (in particular warning the Riot Twins), causing the PCs to earn 2 Visibility Points.

Reward: Grant the PCs 60 XP if they convince Mantis Keeper to accompany them to their meeting with the Vernai, in addition for full XP as if they'd defeated them and their two deadly mantises in combat.

The Jade Monkey

Severe 15

Ilizmagorti's economy is a bustling scene driven by the spoils of piracy, luring shoppers from distant ports who wish to seek out wares that are difficult to find (or otherwise illegal) in their hometowns. Many merchants maintain small empires in Ilizmagorti, several of whom have strong ties to the Red Mantis, so anyone shopping in the city would do well to watch what they say about the island's rulers!

Among these influential merchants are two brothers known as the Riot Twins. If the PCs do any significant amount of shopping in Ilizmagorti, chances are good that whispers spread from merchant to merchant eventually reach the ears of the Riot Twins. Each PC who shops in the city must succeed at a DC 30 Deception or Society check to avoid being noticed; this check is penalized by the party's current number of Visibility Points. If even one PC fails this check, the Riot Twins learn about their presence in the city and attempt to lure them into an ambush at one of their favorite establishments, the Jade Monkey. The Riot Twins are canny and sly and choose their lures in the form of a whisper from an allied merchant; this trader tells the PCs that an item they seek can be purchased from a smuggler who's been frequenting the Jade Monkey of late. You should adjust this item to be something you know one of the PCs is looking for to convince them to travel to the Jade Monkey and contact the smuggler for a potential purchase.

The PCs might learn about the Riot Twins' involvement in the conspiracy from Mantis Keeper, in which case a PC can attempt a DC 29 Mercantile Lore, DC 32 Ilizmagorti Lore, or DC 34 Society check to Recall Knowledge about the twins. Alternatively, if a PC succeeds at a DC 34 check to Gather Information, they learn that these two siblings, Shirota and Zaiho, are successful merchants who spend much of their time

relaxing at the Jade Monkey tea house in the Mainmast neighborhood. On a critical success, they learn that the Riot Twins are the owners of this business, and that their trade focuses on dangerous and often explosive alchemical, magical, and gunpowder weaponry.

The Jade Monkey is a Quain-style tea house that features traditional architecture and furnishings with an exciting red varnish finish on the floors and walls, helping the black tables and chairs to “pop.” The tea house’s larger western room features a small stage for local performers to entertain the assembled guests, while an outside boardwalk allows visitors to enjoy the relaxing sounds of the harbor below.

The Jade Monkey has been an iconic Ilizmagorti establishment for the past several decades. When it burned down in 4722 AR, its regular customers rallied together to find a new location for the popular tea house. Surprising no one, the Riot Twins contributed the largest share and insisted that the rebuilt edifice be in southern Mainmast, just across the canal from Dandy. It also isn’t far from the Order of Alchemists, to which the Riot Twins belong.

Creatures: Shirota and Zaiho, commonly known as the Riot Twins, use the Jade Monkey as their primary place of business. They are often here for hours on end: meeting with clients, eating, working on new designs, drinking, discussing alchemical and mechanical theory, or simply relaxing. The pair were born in far-off Goka, where they were fascinated by all of the different people from various cultures who visited the cosmopolitan metropolis. When they reached adulthood, the twins decided to travel abroad, taking a trip to Garund to see the amazing sights of other lands. When their ship stopped in Quantum, they met a dwarven woman who was selling the most marvelous clockwork inventions and alchemical elixirs. Transfixed, they traveled to Alkenstar, where they spent the next decade learning the secrets of clockwork invention, gunsmithing, and alchemy. After a while, they ran afoul of the Shield Marshals and decided to open shop elsewhere. There was opportunity (and little oversight) in Ilizmagorti, so the two settled here and have been running a mostly successful weapons business for 15 years.

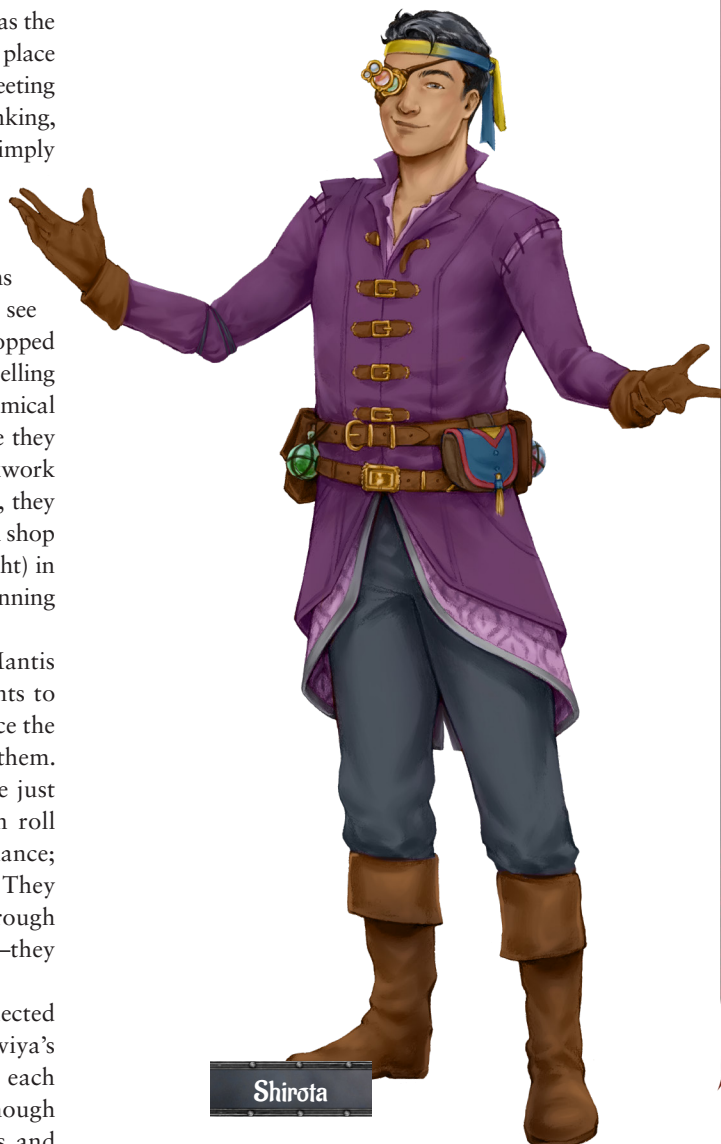
The twins are not officially members of the Red Mantis assassins, but have long served as secret informants to Saviya and her ring of conspirators, so if they notice the PCs in the area, they attempt to kill or capture them. If they lured the PCs here, the twins appear to be just regular customers engaged in relaxation and can roll for initiative with either Deception or Performance; otherwise, they roll with Perception, as normal. They attack either as soon as the PCs are spread out through the tea house, or as soon as they’re confronted—they have little interest in speaking to the party.

In combat, Shirota drinks two mutagens, selected based on what he knows of the PCs from Saviya’s instructions. The twins focus on different PCs, each attempting to knock their target out first as though it were a competition. They shout friendly barbs and

insults at each other during the combat. The twins are fiercely protective of each other and of their own necks; if both twins are brought below 100 Hit Points, or if one of them is defeated, they surrender and offer to trade the PCs anything they want in exchange for their lives. Allow the Riot Twins to use the dying condition rather than immediately perishing upon being reduced to zero Hit Points, so that if the PCs defeat one of them, they can step in to save the defeated merchant’s life (or at least allow the remaining twin a chance to do so). If one of the twins is actually slain, the surviving twin flies into a blind rage and fights to the death.

If the Riot Twins survive, they flee to Rahadoum, hoping the Red Mantis can’t catch up with them there.

The Jade Monkey is filled with customers, and as combat begins, these customers run for cover, try to hide and seek shelter, or otherwise panic. They avoid getting in the way of the Riot Twins, but to the PCs, this entire area functions as difficult terrain for the first 4 rounds of combat as the crowd surges and flees.



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ADVENTURE TOOLBOX

SHIROTA

CREATURE 16

UNIQUE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Male human alchemist

Perception +25

Languages Common, Diabolic, Dwarven, Gnomish, Goblin, Osiriani, Tien, Vudrani

Skills Acrobatics +28, Crafting +33, Diplomacy +26, Mercantile Lore +29, Performance +26, Society +29

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

Items *greater crafter's eyepiece*, +2 *greater resilient greater fire resistant raiment explorer's clothing*, *spacious pouch* (type III)

Infused Items Shirota carries the following infused items, which last for 24 hours or until the next time he makes his daily preparations: 12 greater alchemist fires, 3 greater blood sight elixirs (page 102), 12 greater dread ampoules, 10 major elixirs of life, and 5 greater glue bombs.

AC 38; **Fort** +29, **Ref** +30, **Will** +26

HP 295; **Resistances** fire 10

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ fist +28 (agile, finesse, nonlethal, unarmed),

Damage 1d4+10 bludgeoning

Melee ♦ claw +28 (agile, finesse, grapple), **Damage** 2d6+10 slashing plus 1d6 persistent bleed

Ranged ♦ alchemist fire +30 (bomb, fire, range 20 feet, thrown), **Damage** 3d8 fire plus 3 persistent fire and 3 fire splash

Ranged ♦ dread ampoule +30 (bomb, emotion, fear, mental, poison, range 20 feet, thrown), **Damage** 3d6 mental and 3 mental splash plus frightened

Ranged ♦ glue bomb +30 (bomb, range 20 feet, thrown), **Damage** special (GM Core 245)

Quick Bomber ♦ Shirota Interacts to draw a bomb, then Strikes with it.

Reactive Bombing ↻ **Trigger** A creature is damaged by one of Zaiho's Strikes; **Effect** Shirota attacks the triggering creature with a bomb Strike.

Sneak Attack Shirota deals 3d6 extra precision damage with his melee Strikes to off-guard creatures.

Twinned Combat Any enemy is off-guard against Shirota's Strikes as long as that enemy is within Zaiho's reach. Shirota doesn't inflict splash damage to Zaiho with his bombs.



Zaiho

ZAIHO

CREATURE 16

UNIQUE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Male human inventor

Perception +24; darkvision

Languages Common, Diabolic, Dwarven, Gnomish, Goblin, Osiriani, Tien, Vudrani

Skills Acrobatics +29, Athletics +27, Crafting +31, Deception +29, Ilizmagorti Lore +29, Intimidation +29, Society +29

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

Items +2 *greater resilient greater fire resistant raiment explorer's clothing*, *eye of the mantis* (page 104), *Zaiho's Gun Sword* with 20 rounds, *greater obsidian goggles*

Zaiho's Gun Sword Zaiho's innovation is an unusual-looking gun sword (*Pathfinder Guns & Gears* 158). He's enhanced this weapon with runes to become a +2 *greater striking wounding weapon*. He's further modified this weapon as follows:

- He's given the sword a hooked tip and razor-sharp prongs, granting the weapon the disarm and trip traits with melee Strikes.
- He's made the weapon lightweight. Zaiho's gun sword is 1 Bulk and only requires 1 hand to wield.
- Strikes with the weapon deal an additional 1d6 electricity damage.
- He's revolutionized the damage output and increased the gun sword's base damage die of d8 to d10.

As an inventor innovation, *Zaiho's gun sword* only works due to his constant maintenance and tinkering, and anyone else is untrained in it and cannot use the special modifications listed in the bullet points above. Its weapon runes can be transferred to other weapons normally.

AC 39; **Fort** +25, **Ref** +31, **Will** +28

HP 265

Gadget Defense ↻ **Trigger** Zaiho would roll a saving throw

against an effect that would cause Hit Point damage; **Effect** Zaiho quickly procures some outlandish gadget or device from his pouches to protect himself from the triggering effect. Rather than roll the normal saving throw against the effect, Zaiho instead attempts a Crafting check in place of that saving throw, treating the result of this check as the result of the saving throw instead. If this results in a critical failure, Zaiho's gadgets are damaged, and he can no longer use this reaction for 24 hours.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ Zaiho's gun sword +29 (critical fusion, disarm, magical, trip, versatile P), **Damage** 3d10+11 slashing plus 1d6 electricity and 1d6 persistent bleed

Ranged ♦ Zaiho's gun sword +31 (concussive, kickback, magical, range 50 feet, reload 1), **Damage** 3d10+8 piercing plus 1d6 electricity

Fiery Leap ♦♦ (fire) **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** Zaiho Leaps. As he does so, he throws a handful of explosive devices into a square he was adjacent to just before he Leaped. A creature in this square takes 11d10 fire damage (DC 37 basic Reflex save); that creature and all creatures adjacent to the target square also take 11 fire splash damage.

Twinned Combat Any enemy is off-guard against Zaiho's Strikes if that enemy is currently taking persistent damage from or is frightened by any of Shirota's bombs. Zaiho doesn't inflict splash damage to Shirota with Fiery Leap.

Reward: If the PCs defeat the Riot Twins and secure their surrender, the two initially try to buy their way out by selling out their primary contact among the conspirators. They tell the PCs that Torvald Kemp is who they've had the most contact with and who seems to be the most eager to capture the PCs. The twins point out that they're not actually members of the Red Mantis—they're just mercenaries and informants. They jockey for immediate exile from Ilizmagorti as punishment. Shirota throws in his *greater crafter's eyepiece* and Zaiho his *greater obsidian goggles* if the two feel that such bribes would encourage the PCs to have mercy.

Hard Evidence: During the talk, the PCs can wrest more information from the Riot Twins. As with the interaction with Mantis Keeper on page 51, give the party four chances to earn Victory Points as they intimidate, deceive, bribe, or otherwise work to convince the Riot Twins that they should reveal their secrets. If the PCs can earn at least 3 Victory Points from these four DC 34 skill checks, the two agree to give them additional information. If the PCs earn at least 5 Victory Points, the Riot Twins are so impressed and intimidated by the party that they further attempt to "purchase" forgiveness from them by offering up their matching and highly magical outfits. Alternatively, Zaiho offers up his gun sword—he can craft a replacement later, so all he's really losing here are the weapon's runes.

If the PCs secure their cooperation, the Riot Twins give the party detailed notes and descriptions of the

various locations the conspirators have used to share information and supplies via dead drops; they provide lists of names of lower-ranking agents associated with the conspiracy; and they confirm that the conspiracy's end goal is to replace Blood Mistress Jakalyn with one of the Vernai. As with the other conspirators, none of them know exactly who in the Vernai leads the conspiracy. All of this information counts as an item of hard evidence.

Visibility: Any fight that breaks out here earns the party 1 Visibility Point. If the PCs engage in tactics that harm or impact the building or its customers (such as by using any damaging area effect), this increases to 2 Visibility Points. It is very unlikely that the PCs can engineer a scenario to fight the Riot Twins in private, but if they do so, they avoid earning any Visibility Points.

Reward: Grant the PCs 60 XP if they learn the hard evidence the Riot Twins have to offer.

Concluding the Chapter

When the PCs are finishing up their final encounter in this chapter, regardless of which conspirator they've just defeated and whether or not they successfully secured that conspirator's hard evidence, they should discover an additional and particularly damning bit of evidence—the name of the Vernai member who leads the conspiracy: Saviya. The nature of this bit of evidence should be tailored to the encounter in which it's discovered; suggestions for each of the four encounters are given below.

Torvald Kemp: The PCs find an addendum to Torvald Kemp's infernal contract that guarantees that once Saviya becomes the new blood mistress, she'll consider Torvald's service to the Red Mantis complete and shall release him back to Hell.

Sister Maeri: The PCs find an almost casually written "to-do" list on a slip of paper tucked into Maeri's copy of *Sisters in Serenity* that enumerates changes to leadership and policy at the Pagoda of the Mantis once High Priest Saviya is able to vacate the role and step into the position of blood mistress.

Mantis Keeper: Mantis Keeper informs the PCs that they've secured an understanding with Saviya that, when she assumes the role of blood mistress, she will continue to honor Mantis Keeper's role in the Ilizmagorti hinterlands as did Jakalyn, her predecessor-to-be. If the PCs slay Mantis Keeper, they find this information on their person in the form of a short note.

The Riot Twins: The Riot Twins reveal that Saviya has financed several of their mercantile pursuits and admit that these are thinly veiled payoffs to ensure that when she ascends to the role of blood mistress, the Riot Twins will do what they can to help control and moderate any dissent among Ilizmagorti's other merchants. If the Riot Twins were slain, the PCs find this information in the form of a brief note.



Chapter 3: Secrets of the Mantis

With the discovery of the conspiracy and the name of its ringleader revealed, the time has come for the PCs to face the Vernai; they must prove their innocence to the council and expose High Priest Saviya for what she is: a traitor to the Vernai.

The PCs might go about this in a variety of ways. As agents of the Red Mantis, they automatically know that the Vernai dwell not in Ilizmagorti but in the lavish upper chambers of the Crimson Citadel, which perches atop the highest jungle-covered peak on Mediogalti Isle. Most Red Mantis assassins and very few of the group's agents and mercenaries are ever allowed to visit the Crimson Citadel, but the PCs are among those who were granted permission to visit and even train in its upper halls in the past, a benefit granted to them by virtue of being in Blood Mistress Jakalyn's good graces. As such, the party knows both the best routes to the Crimson Citadel and that it is the duty of any Red Mantis assassin to report treachery among the ranks to the agents of the Vernai, if not directly to the Vernai itself.

The simplest method to reach the Crimson Citadel is for the PCs to turn themselves in to the Blood Watch; they are, after all, still wanted fugitives. If they turn themselves in, they must willingly hand over their weapons and gear (including worn items but excluding armor) before they're escorted to the Crimson Citadel—this is standard operating procedure in a case like this, and you should make the PCs aware of the fact that if they prove their innocence and reveal the truth about the conspiracy, their weapons and gear will be returned immediately.

Alternatively, the PCs can approach the Crimson Citadel on their own, but once they reach the mountaintop fortress, they'll still face a dozen assassin sentinels who demand their equipment as detailed above before they are brought before the Vernai.

One way the PCs might try to bypass this is to teleport directly into the Crimson Citadel, emerging inside one of the chambers they've visited before. As agents of Achaekek in good standing with the faith (while the city and assassins may think they're traitors, Achaekek

knows better), they don't need to concern themselves with the wards that complicate teleportation into the fortress's upper levels. That said, it won't be long before they're confronted by guards and face the same demands to relinquish their arms.

However they go about getting there, all roads lead to standing in front of the Vernai without their weapons and gear and being asked to state their case.

Standing Before the Vernai

The Vernai has been waiting to speak to the PCs. Not all of the Red Mantis leaders are present in the Crimson Citadel at any one time, and of that subset, a smaller council of 13 cycle weekly through council duty—the PCs are thus to stand before the current Vernai council members. When they're led into the audience chamber, their guard escorts quickly leave them alone in the room.

The walls of this twenty-foot-wide, fourteen-sided stone chamber are of polished crimson porphyry, as is the floor below. Above, the interior of the hollow hundred-foot-high minaret rises to a crimson dome. A total of fourteen separate balconies encircle the room at a height of ten feet. Thirteen of these have a single stone chair draped with red silks and cushions, while the fourteenth, looming above the single door that provides entrance and exit, displays a statue of Achaekek, his claws appearing to drip with blood that flows in rivulets down supporting pillars to narrow grates in the floor. The room's acoustics are unsettling, and the dripping of this blood sounds almost as if it were right next to the ear. A beam of red light shines down from above, illuminating the windowless room in its radiance.

A few moments after the PCs take these sights in, seated, figures manifest silently from red mist in each of the 13 chairs. Each is clad in the signature Red Mantis armor, and each wears a *greater mask of the mantis* that obscures their faces. One of the figures calls down to the party in a soft voice, but the room's unique acoustic features carry her voice easily so that her every word is audible.

"Agents of righteous death, you stand before this council for judgment, accused of unlawful murder rather than sacred and contracted assassination. Moreover, you are accused of murdering of a rightful ruler: General Ordulf Bladecaller, an Ulfen warlord who had conquered a small part of the Land of the Linnorm Kings.

"The penalty for this is execution, so that your souls may be judged to stand before He Who Walks in Blood for absolution or destruction, but before this sentence is carried out, we stop to listen, as we understand there are complications and angles that have yet to be brought to our attention. We will ask three questions of you and are eager to hear in your own words justification for your blasphemy."

The PCs must navigate this Influence encounter (*GM Core* 187) to both prove their innocence and to

TRAVEL TO THE CRIMSON CITADEL

If the PCs teleport to the Crimson Citadel, they can bypass the overland journey from Ilizmagorti, but otherwise the trek to the mountaintop fortress is, by design, a journey through trackless jungle. Ancient wards cloak the sight of the fortress with mist and foliage, obscuring it from those who approach until they reach the mountain, at which point the fortress is visible in all its glory. Likewise, the view out over Mediogalti from within the Crimson Citadel is unobscured except by natural weather conditions.

Those who don't know the Crimson Citadel's location might wander lost and aimless for days, even weeks, through the dangerous jungle, but the PCs know the route. If they decide to travel there on foot, it's approximately a 100-mile journey from Ilizmagorti through dense jungle under thick cover. Feel free to have the PCs encounter dangerous wildlife or monsters along the way if you wish, or if they need some more experience points, but keep these encounters to Low or Trivial in threat. It's also fine to simply hand-wave the journey and tell them the trek takes about ten days.

convince the Vernai of the truth about the conspirators and High Priest Saviya. They have three rounds to present their case and argue their innocence, each of which takes 10 minutes to play out. At the start of each round, a different member of the Vernai prompts the PCs with a specific question to be answered.

Round 1: "Did General Ordulf Bladecaller deserve to die?"

Round 2: "We have heard you believe yourselves to be the victims of a conspiracy—why do you make these claims?"

Round 3: "If a conspiracy does exist, what is their goal and why have they singled you out as their targets?"

Each PC can act once each round to either Discover or Influence the Vernai as they answer these questions as a group. While the council's opening remarks make it seem that the PCs' execution is a foregone conclusion, they face this fate only if they completely fail this encounter. Those who do well, however, can earn additional support and rewards from the Vernai.

Before this encounter begins, inform the PCs how items of hard evidence they recovered in Chapter 2 can be used to bolster the results of any Influence checks they make (see "Weaknesses" below).

THE VERNAI

LEVEL 16

UNIQUE HUMANOID

Shadow Council that rules the Red Mantis

Perception +29

Will +27

Discovery DC 30 Achaekek Lore, DC 37 Perception, DC 33 Religion, DC 35 Society

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Influence Skills DC 33 Achaekkek Lore (citing obscure and specific precedents and aphorisms from the faith), DC 35 Religion (speaking to the general concepts of Achaekkek's faith and the PCs' adherence to it), DC 36 Society (discussing the complexities and goals of the conspirators); DC 37 Diplomacy, DC 39 Deception, DC 41 Intimidation

Influence 3 The Vernai accept the PCs' claims of a conspiracy, then tell the PCs of their suspicions about Saviya and her recent actions (see "The Vernai's Mission" below). They inform the PCs about all of Saviya's resources (see the "Saviya's Resources" sidebar on page 59). The Vernai reinstate the PCs' status as Red Mantis agents and rescind all calls for their capture. By the end of the hour, the PCs can travel through Ilizmagorti without fear once again, and they no longer suffer penalties for Visibility.

Influence 6 The Vernai thank the PCs for their diligence and loyalty in the face of treachery from within the Vernai. As compensation for the troubles the conspirators have caused, they allow each PC to choose one of the following treasures: 3,000 gp in common consumables of 15th level or less, a *searing blade* that's a sawtooth saber rather than a longsword, a *spacious pouch IV*, or a 6th-rank wand containing any of the rare spells presented on pages 99–100 of this adventure.

Influence 8 In addition to the rewards granted for reaching Influence 6, the Vernai also allow each PC to choose one of the following as additional compensation: a set of *assassin's bracers II* (page 104), a *bloody fang* (page 101), a *crimson bluff*

(page 102), or a 7th-rank wand containing any of the rare spells presented on pages 99–100 of this adventure.

Resistances The Vernai do not appreciate grandstanding, hyperbole, or embellishment of the truth. Such theatrics made as part of an Influence check result in a –4 penalty to that check.

Weaknesses The Vernai appreciate proof of the PCs' innocence. After a PC rolls an Influence check that relates to or references one of the four potential items of hard evidence they might have recovered in Chapter 2, the result of that Influence check is increased by one degree of success. Once an item of hard evidence is presented in this manner, it cannot be used again in this Influence encounter—thus, if the PCs recovered all four items of hard evidence, they can capitalize upon this weakness up to four times during the encounter.

Background Saviya had recently convinced the Vernai that the PCs had forged Jakalyn's approval to slay General Ordulf Bladecaller, and that he was a legitimate ruler of the lands he conquered, however small. She and her followers (including three other Vernai members) then entered Sarzari (the grand library of the Crimson Citadel), even though that area is off limits to everyone except for the blood mistress. When the PCs arrive, the Vernai are in the middle of debating what steps they should take next in response to Saviya's unprecedented entrance into Sarzari.

Appearance Each of the 13 members of the Vernai present wear traditional Red Mantis armor and *masks of the mantis*; all 13 are of roughly human build, but their actual ancestries are obscured.

Personality concise, direct, suspicious

Penalty Each time a PC blasphemes against or insults Achaekkek during an Influence check, all subsequent Influence DCs in this encounter increase by 2.



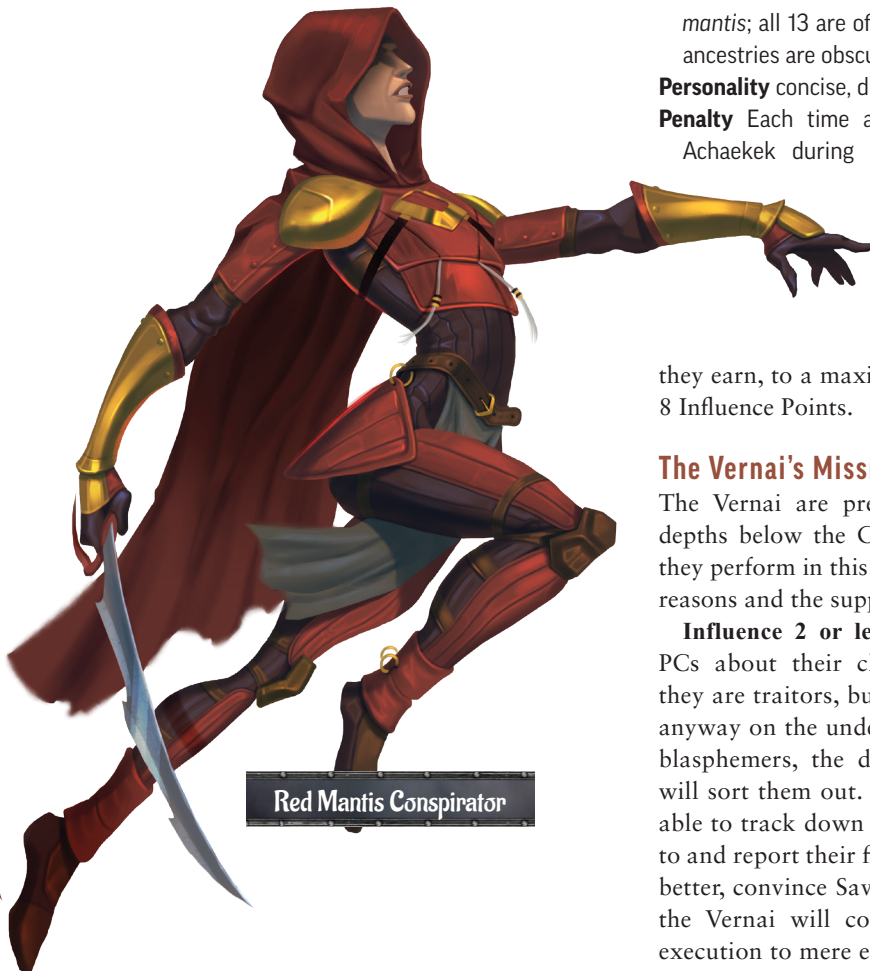
Reward: Grant the PCs 10 XP for each Influence Point

they earn, to a maximum of 80 XP for earning at least 8 Influence Points.

The Vernai's Mission

The Vernai are prepared to send the PCs into the depths below the Crimson Citadel regardless of how they perform in this influence encounter, although their reasons and the support they give will vary.

Influence 2 or less: The Vernai don't believe the PCs about their claims of conspiracy and suspect they are traitors, but decide to send them into Sarzari anyway on the understanding that if, indeed, they are blasphemers, the dangers they'll face depths below will sort them out. If, on the other hand, the PCs are able to track down Saviya and discover what she's up to and report their findings back to the Vernai (or even better, convince Saviya to return and explain herself), the Vernai will consider revising their sentence of execution to mere exile from Mediogalti Island.



Red Mantis Conspirator

Influence 3 or more: The Vernai believe the PCs about the conspiracy and no longer believe they are traitors. They share with the PCs that Saviya and several of her accomplices recently left their posts here to “research a matter of dire importance to us all” down in the Sarzari deep below. Traditionally, entrance into the Grand Library is limited to the acting blood mistress and those to whom she grants personal permission to enter. Saviya’s decision to enter either suggests she’s secured private permission from Blood Mistress Jakalyn to do so and never bothered to inform the other members of the Vernai, or (as the Vernai now strongly suspect) that she’s engaged in some sort of conspiracy or coup attempt. In either case, the Vernai inform the PCs that they must remain in Odalis (the lavish heart of section of the Citadel that is located aboveground) to continue performing their duties, and because none of them are comfortable entering Sarzari without Jakalyn’s permission.

As several of her favored agents, and as a consequence of their reputations being on the line due to the conspirators’ actions, the PCs are exempt from this restriction. The Vernai warn the PCs that they’ll surely face dangerous wards and defenders in Sarzari beyond the threats represented by the conspirators, but if they are righteous in their convictions, then they will surely prevail! The Vernai may grant the PCs additional magical rewards if they earned enough Influence (see above), though even if they failed, the PCs are allowed to use the upper works of the Crimson Citadel as a safe haven to rest and recover as needed. The Vernai make clear that they would prefer the PCs capture Saviya alive and escort her back to this council to account for her actions. However, they note that, if she is slain, “the dead can be made to reveal their secrets, as you all doubtlessly know” and ask that, in such an event, the PCs return with as many of Saviya’s remains as they can.

Into the Grand Library

A general overview of the Crimson Citadel appears on page 97 of this book, but the remainder of this chapter focuses on a specific wing located in the Grand Library of Sarzari, nestled far below the mountaintop. Sarzari as a whole, and indeed all of the dungeons below the Crimson Citadel, sprawl much further and deeper than the few chambers the PCs are expected to explore in this adventure.

The Vernai are eager for the PCs to proceed into Sarzari to track down Saviya, but allow them time to rest and prepare as needed. If the PCs earned fewer than 3 Influence points, the Vernai quickly grow impatient if it takes more than a day for the PCs to finish their preparations. Additionally, if the PCs earned fewer than 3 Influence points, they are told not to return until their mission is successful—PCs with at least 3 Influence points may come and go from Sarzari as they please, but the Vernai are not interested in updates to their mission until they’ve got Saviya.

Once the PCs are ready to proceed, the Vernai tell them that while there are many paths to Sarzari,

SAVIYA'S RESOURCES

Wise PCs research their foe’s resources. A PC who succeeds at a DC 30 Ilizmagorti Lore or a DC 35 Religion or Society lore check to Recall Knowledge about Saviya learns the following, but the Vernai also share this knowledge with the PCs if they reach Influence 3.

- Saviya is the high priest of Achaekkek in Ilizmagorti, but this position doesn’t make her the arbiter of Red Mantis law—or Achaekkek’s law, for that matter. She is a dangerous cleric capable of casting powerful spells, is armed with gear that grants her supernatural strength, antimagic, and flight, and bears sabers that inflict spiritual and electrical damage in addition to deep bleeding wounds.
- Saviya is served by a powerful astradaemon bodyguard named Zivnivoss.
- Saviya commands the loyalty of a large number of Red Mantis assassins and agents, but no one knows the exact number of her loyal conspirator followers. If the PCs receive this information from the Vernai and not via Recall Knowledge, the Vernai can also confirm that soon after Saviya left for Sarzari, several dozen Red Mantis assassins went missing as well—they suspect these constitute the majority of her conspirators, and while most of these are relatively low-ranking assassins, several are higher-ranking foes similar to the conspirators the PCs faced in Chapter 2.

including several physical routes that traverse other portions of the dungeons below, the PCs should take the same route Saviya took to enter the forbidden chambers: via a meditation mirror that serves as a direct portal to a specific wing of Sarzari believed to hold tomes focused on the hidden history and innumerable secrets of Achaekkek. None of the Vernai have ever used the meditation mirror to travel to Sarzari, but they do know it’s protected by a powerful agent of Achaekkek. As such, they recommend that the PCs approach as dutiful worshippers of the Mantis God. The Vernai have no advice to give them about the halls and chambers beyond the mirror portal and are not interested in the specifics of what the PCs find beyond, as this information is not for their ears.

Directions to the Meditation Mirror (area **B1**) are provided to the PCs. The Vernai won’t escort them, and the PCs will face no challenges or perils until they reach that room. Nonetheless, you should still take time to describe the hallways, chambers, stairs, and even a few secret doors the PCs must pass through before they reach the Meditation Mirror—that this area is buried deep underground should not escape them.

Sarzari Features

While the Meditation Mirror (area **B1**) is located in a near-surface chamber in the first level below ground,

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ILIZMAGORTI

ADVENTURE TOOLBOX

A TROUBLESOME HIGH PRIEST

Saviya is one of Achaek's most powerful clerics, as her title of high priest conveys, but the fact that she's also involved in a conspiracy against Blood Mistress Jakalyn does not mean Saviya's lost her clerical powers, nor does it mean that other clerics of Achaek are forbidden from fighting against her. If your group includes clerics or other religious followers of Achaek, and if players voice concerns about being forced to confront someone with the title of high priest in their own faith, assure them that while Achaek's faith demands obedience to one's superiors, it does not require unthinking obedience. In a case like this, where a high priest has become a conspirator and is pursuing their own agenda, it is the responsibility of others in the faith to investigate and potentially issue punishment. That Saviya has walked the proverbial razor's edge between her conspiracy and actual blasphemy points to her skill, wisdom, and creativity in advancing her personal power, and while this demands respect, it should not also require obeisance from lower-ranking worshippers in the church.

the rest of the encounters in this chapter take place within Sarzari. Note that while the maps of areas **B1** and areas **B2–B16** share the same page, areas **B2–B16** are physically located quite far from area **B1**. This section of Sarzari is located at a point approximately 300 feet under the ground below the Crimson Citadel's aboveground portion.

In Sarzari, the walls, floor, and ceiling are made of pale crimson stone that has been magically enhanced to be as hard as high-grade adamantite (Hardness 34, HP 136 [BT 68]). The walls are smooth and require a DC 40 Athletics check to Climb. All doors are made of elegantly carved wood and depict different images of Achaek slaughtering different deities through the ages, and like the walls, they are magically enhanced (Hardness 17, HP 68 [BT 34]), though none of them are locked unless otherwise noted in the text. A locked door can be Forced Open with a DC 40 Athletics check or with two DC 35 Thievery checks to Pick the Lock. Illumination throughout Sarzari is bright, with numerous *everlight* spells providing light throughout the complex (typically in the form of hanging chandeliers made of crystal).

Normally, teleportation and planar travel to and from Sarzari is blocked by potent wards, but as long as the portal in area **B14** remains active, these suppressions are themselves suppressed, and the PCs encounter no resistance if they seek to use such magic within the Grand Library.

Unless otherwise noted, ceiling heights in this wing of Sarzari are thirty feet high.

B1. The Meditation Mirror Moderate 16

A long, ten-foot-wide hallway passes through this broad room. Ancient wooden tables stand to either

side against the north and south walls, both covered in dozens of half-melted candles. On the eastern wall, a twenty-five-foot-wide silver mirror with an ostentatious golden frame draws the eye—a line of runes has been carved into the middle of the frame's upper portion. In the center of the room, a fifteen-foot-diameter circle has been engraved in the floor.

This chamber is more than just a quiet room for meditation. It's the entrance to one of the many Trials of the Blood Mistress (challenges each new blood mistress must take to prove her worth to herself and to Achaek), and one of the hidden entrances to Sarzari, The Grand Library.

The runes on the mirror frame are written in Diabolic and read, "Do Not Discriminate Against the Living, For in Death We Are All Equal." PCs trained in Achaek Lore or who succeed at a DC 25 Religion check to Recall Knowledge recognize this as one of He Who Walks In Blood's aphorisms. This phrase is a hint to the nature of the first trial that awaits beyond the portal.

Creature: The mirror is actually Silver Saber, a divine warden of Achaek, in disguise. Silver Saber only allows devout worshippers of Achaek to pass through the portal they guard, which they hide by disguising their body as a mirror. The golden frame on the wall surrounds this portal, but as long as Silver Saber remains in mirror form, the portal remains hidden and closed.

Any who approach within twenty feet of the mirror cause its surface to ripple and shudder. Silver Saber addresses those in the room in their strangely sonorous voice, demanding to know in whose name they are being approached.

A PC who holds forth a religious symbol of Achaek or swears their eternal allegiance to He Who Walks in Blood sees the mirror quiver, as a stone dropped into a pond, before the material parts in the center to pool in a ring near the frame, revealing a glowing portal set into the wall itself. All those who would enter must proclaim similar allegiance. A PC who wishes to Lie can attempt to do so with a DC 42 Deception check.

If anyone fails at an attempt to Lie, or if anyone approaches within 10 feet without proclaiming their loyalty to Achaek, Silver Saber immediately attacks. As they slither off the wall to assume their true form, the portal in the wall deactivates. If Silver Saber is destroyed, the portal remains inactive, but at this point any PC who spends 10 minutes concentrating and manipulating the wall can cause the portal to reactivate if they can succeed at a DC 40 Religion check. On a failure or critical failure, this attempt backfires and inflicts 17d6 spirit damage on that creature, who can resist with a basic DC 36 Will save.

A creature other than Silver Saber who touches the portal while it is active is immediately transported to area **B2**.

Reward: Grant the PCs XP as if they defeated Silver Saber in battle the first time they manage to all use the portal without a fight.

B2. Trial of Tolerance Low 16

PCs who emerge into this room after passing through the portal at area **B1** appear adjacent to this room's western wall, close to the ten-foot-wide glowing return portal. This room's trial begins at the start of the first round after the first PC enters the room.

This vast chamber seems to stretch on forever in all directions and is eerily quiet. To the west, a glowing portal seems to hover in midair, while to the east, a gleaming white door stands alone, apparently fixed in space. In all other directions, the countless stars of the sky twinkle—there is no indication of a floor below or ceiling above.

The walls of this chamber, as well as the floor and ceiling, are painted with a black paint that reflects very little light and are then adorned with depictions of stars that glow softly. This light, plus what is emitted by the golden portal, fill this room with dim illumination. The non-magical optical illusion created by the clever painting causes PCs in this room to become off-guard and to treat the room as difficult terrain unless they can see through and process the effect with a successful DC 35 Perception check. A simpler way to defeat this illusion is to close one's eyes, but then the normal conditions for being blinded apply.

The door in the west wall leading to area **B3** is locked. It can be opened with 4 DC 40 Thievery checks to Pick the Lock, but once the Hazard in this room is overcome (either by disabling it or completing the trial it presents), this door unlocks automatically.

Hazard: The Trial of Tolerance is one of choice, created to challenge a would-be blood mistress on her ability to follow Achaekek's command to not judge a person based on their ancestry, gender, sexuality, or other features out of their control.

TRIAL OF TOLERANCE

HAZARD 17

UNIQUE COMPLEX MAGICAL TRAP

Stealth +33 (master)

Description A convincing illusion of a bustling market scene fills the empty room, confronting the viewers with potentially frightening diversity and unexpected encounters.

Disable DC 43 Thievery (master) to scratch out well-hidden key runes etched into the room's floor, or *dispel magic* (9th rank; counteract DC 36) to counteract the trial



Meditation Mirror

Unveil the Bazaar (illusion, mental) **Trigger** A creature begins its turn in area **B2**; **Effect** A convincing illusion of an Illmagorti city bazaar appears, complete with a cloudless blue sky above. The surrounding crowd is dense, and the smells and sights and sounds are quite realistic even as no one in the crowd actually bumps against the PCs as they mill about. The Trial of Tolerance then rolls initiative.

Routine (1 action; emotion, fear, illusion, mental) An unexpectedly aggressive or frightening looking figure, such as a Hellknight, demon, pirate, or cloaked assassin suddenly emerges from the crowd and quickly advances toward a randomly determined character in the room, then stands menacingly in their path until the end of the round before they appear to lose interest and drift back into the crowd. If the target has a type of fear or hatred toward a specific kind of creature, this unexpected figure epitomizes those fears and hatreds. The target must succeed at a DC 46 Will save or become frightened 1 (or frightened 2 on a critical failure). If any creature in the room takes any hostile action against the intimidating figure, the Trial of Tolerance uses its Reflective Violence reaction.

Once three rounds pass without the Trial of Tolerance using Reflective Violence, the hazard deactivates.

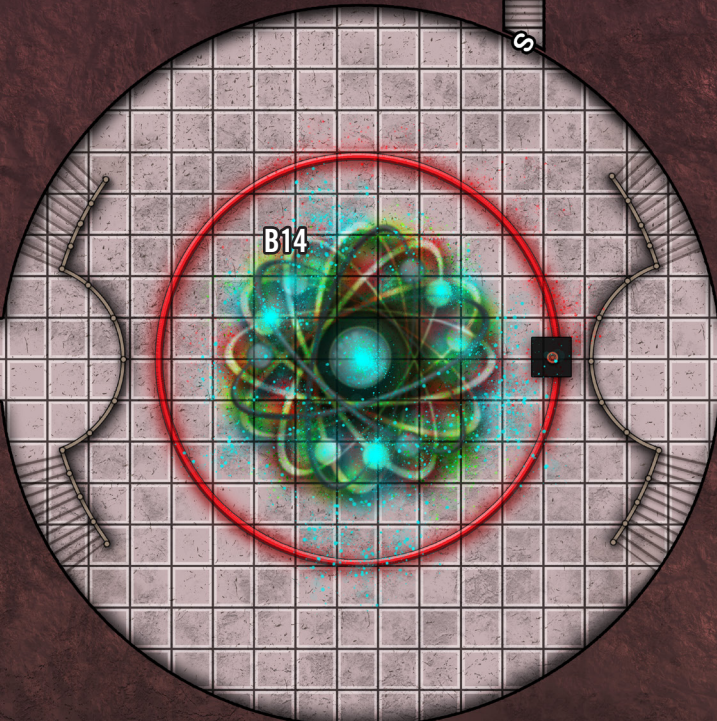
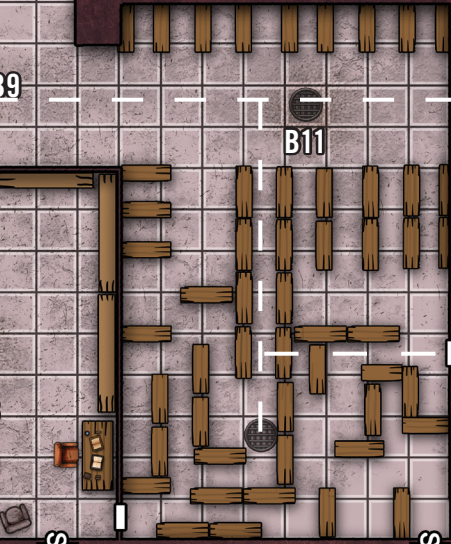
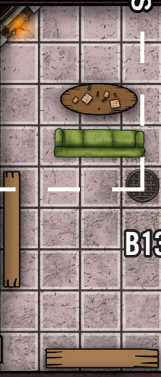
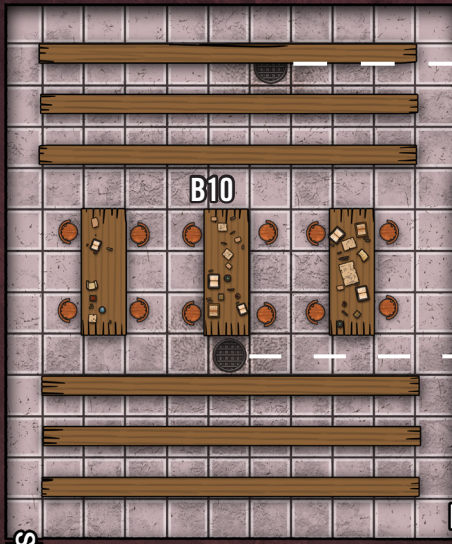
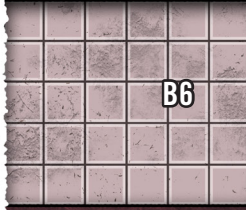
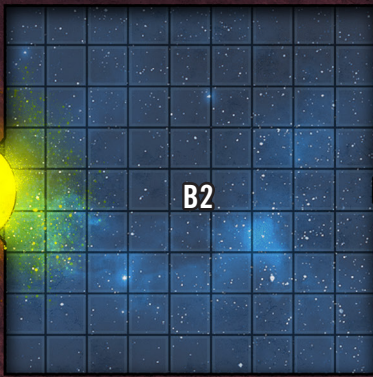
Reflective Violence (illusion, mental) **Trigger** A creature uses a hostile action against an illusory figure created by the Trial of Tolerance or fails at an attempt to disable the trap; **Effect** The illusory figure effortlessly avoids the triggering action, then appears to attack the triggering creature using its most harrowing and violent option. Regardless of what this attack appears as, the triggering creature takes 3d12+19 mental damage (DC 38 basic Reflex save).

Reset Once the room is empty of creatures, the trial deactivates and then resets after 1 minute has passed.

B3. Trial of The Gods Low 16

Shallow wooden counters run along the north and south walls of this chamber, the length broken to the east and west by doors. Each table holds multiple unlit candles and several fragments of wood, iron, silver, and gold, each clustered together in small piles. The walls above the counters are fitted with arrays of hooks on which hang dozens of differently shaped medallions displaying a wide variety of symbols. A softly glowing glass orb hangs from the ceiling thirty feet above, its illumination filling the room with dim light.

This chamber's trial is dedicated to the idea that Achaekek's assassins honor the gods, for they are just instruments in the divine plan. The wall-hooks hold a variety of religious symbols from a wide range of deities claimed from significant slain priests. Most are blood-spattered, burned, discolored, or damaged in some way, with symbols too damaged to hang from a



GRAND LIBRARY
1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

hook instead placed atop the counters, their assorted shards carefully laid to rest.

A successful DC 36 Perception check made while Searching the room reveals a series of individual words scratched into the wooden countertops. Etched in Diabolic, the words read, “Honor the Gods, For They Honored Us All with This World.” PCs trained in Achaek Lore or who succeed at a DC 25 Religion check to Recall Knowledge recognize this as another of He Who Walks In Blood’s aphorisms. This phrase is a hint to the nature of the trial that awaits in this chamber.

The glowing orb near the ceiling bears a dimmer variant of *everlight* and acts as a focus for the Trial of the Gods—it gives the trial darkvision, *truesight*, and a +33 Perception check. The door leading to area **B4** is locked. It can be opened with 4 DC 40 Thievery checks to Pick the Lock, but once the Hazard in this room is overcome (either by disabling it, destroying it, or completing the trial it presents), this door unlocks automatically.

Hazard: This second trial is one of respect for the divine. The PCs should prove they honor the gods to pass this trial. The traditional method is through the offering of a religious symbol taken from a legally-assassinated priest of a faith other than Achaek’s—without such an offering, one must perform a more complex candle-lighting ritual to appease this trial.

TRIAL OF THE GODS

HAZARD 17

UNIQUE COMPLEX MAGICAL TRAP

Stealth +33 (master)

Description What appears to be an eye opens within the glowing orb near the ceiling.

Disable DC 43 Thievery (master) to deactivate the glowing orb and prevent it from observing the room, *dispel magic* (9th rank; counteract DC 36) to counteract the trial, DC 45 Religion (master) to perform a complex 5-round candle-lighting ritual, or placing General Ordulf’s religious symbol on an empty hook on any wall as an Interact action

AC 40; **Fort** +32, **Ref** +26

Glowing Orb Hardness 28; **HP** 110 (BT 55); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Wrath of the Gods ☞ (death, emotion, fear, illusion, mental)

Trigger A creature attempts to Force Open or Pick the Lock on the eastern door, or ends a turn in this room while not performing the candle-lighting ritual; **Effect** A glowing red eye manifests in the ceiling mounted orb to stare angrily at the triggering creature, who must succeed at a DC 46 Will save or become frightened 1 (frightened 2 on a critical failure). The Trial of the Gods then rolls initiative.

Routine (1 action; death, emotion, fear, mental) The red eye glances at a randomly determined creature in area **B3** that it can see and is not engaged in a candle-lighting ritual, then casts a 9th-rank *vision of death* on that target, causing them to experience the sight of Achaek rising up from the ground to smite the transgressor for failing to honor the gods.

Reset Once the room is empty of creatures, the trial deactivates and then resets after 1 minute has passed.

B4. Trial of Finality

Low 16

This cylindrical room is thirty-five feet wide, thirty feet tall, and hewn from solid stone. A shaft of light shines into the center of the room, brightly illuminating the central fifteen feet, while the remainder of the room’s outer edges are filled with curling wisps of smoke that slowly churn in a clockwise motion around the chamber and at times seem to form floating runes or letters. Doors are vaguely visible to the east and west through the smoke.

This chamber tests a would-be blood mistress’s willingness to accept death. She is expected to willingly enter the light in the center of the room and be judged. A PC who studies the slowly churning smoke for 1 minute and then makes a successful DC 36 Perception check realizes the letters forming and fading in the smoke spell out, in Diabolic, “Let Death Be Final, For We Are Not Keepers of Graves.” PCs trained in Achaek Lore or who succeed at a DC 25 Religion check to Recall Knowledge recognize this as another of He Who Walks In Blood’s aphorisms. This phrase is a hint to the nature of the trial that awaits in this chamber.

The door to the east leading to area **B5** is locked. It can be opened with 4 DC 40 Thievery checks to Pick the Lock, but once the Hazard in this room is overcome (either by disabling it or completing the trial it presents), this door unlocks automatically.

Hazard: This final trial activates when a living creature enters the shaft of light in the center of the room, placing that character into a dreamlike state where they believe they have died. Because this happens with only one character, resolve the trap before describing what happens in the room for the rest off the PCs.

THE TRIAL OF FINALITY

HAZARD 17

UNIQUE COMPLEX MAGICAL TRAP

Stealth +33 (master)

Description A shaft of light shines from the ceiling to the floor in a ring of slowly churning smoke.

Disable DC 43 Thievery (master) to use tools to reflect and focus the light shining from above into the surrounding smoke to disperse it and the hazard’s magical energies, or *dispel magic* (9th rank; counteract DC 36) to counteract the trial

A Quick Death ☞ (incapacitation, mental, sleep) **Trigger** A living creature steps into the central 15-foot area of the room directly illuminated by light; **Effect** The triggering creature momentarily becomes convinced they have been dead for a long time, and that the events of this adventure are but a hallucination. If the triggering creature has come close to death earlier in this adventure, they briefly believe that they didn’t actually survive that encounter. The creature must attempt a DC 38 Will save.

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Critical Success The creature shakes off the conviction that they are dead and realizes it was a magically induced hallucination. The Trial of the Gods deactivates.

Success The creature becomes paralyzed, and the conviction that they are dead and now watching, as a ghost, their companions from the middle of the room. The Trial of the Gods rolls initiative, and the creature remains paralyzed until the end of the hazard's next turn.

Failure As success, but the creature becomes unconscious until the end of the trial's next turn instead of paralyzed. While unconscious, the creature experiences a dreamlike vision of being carried through the River of Souls toward the Boneyard, where their soul shall be judged.

Critical Failure As failure, but the creature becomes doomed 1, or increases the value of an existing doomed condition by 1. If the creature dies as a result of this, the Trial of the Gods deactivates.

Routine (1 or 2 actions; emotion, fear, mental) If a creature in area **B4** is paralyzed or unconscious as a result of A Quick Death, the trial's first action is to Sustain that paralysis or unconscious effect; the paralyzed or unconscious creature can attempt a new DC 38 Will save at this time against this effect with the same potential results as detailed above for A Quick Death, and the DC cumulatively decreases by 1

on each such save. The Trial of the Gods' second action is to manifest horrifying ghostly shapes in the smoke that shriek and telepathically threaten everyone in area **B4**, promising them their deaths are imminent. All creatures other than the paralyzed or unconscious creature currently enduring A Quick Death must attempt a DC 38 Will save.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature becomes frightened 1.

Failure The creature becomes frightened 2.

Critical Failure The creature becomes frightened 3 and is fleeing as long as they remain frightened.

Reset Once the room is empty of living creatures, the trial deactivates and then resets after 1 minute has passed.

B5. Entrance Hall

The north and south walls of this twenty-five-foot-wide hallway are adorned with carved murals of Achaekék slaughtering god and mortal alike, striding from one scene to the next through an ocean of blood. The hall is brightly lit by a row of glowing crystal chandeliers every twenty feet.

The chandeliers along this long hallway contain *everlights* that keep the chamber lit at all times. This hallway continues east for three-hundred feet before reaching area **B6**. Beyond this point, the dangers the PCs face become less likely to be things they can easily bypass simply as a result of being Red Mantis assassins.

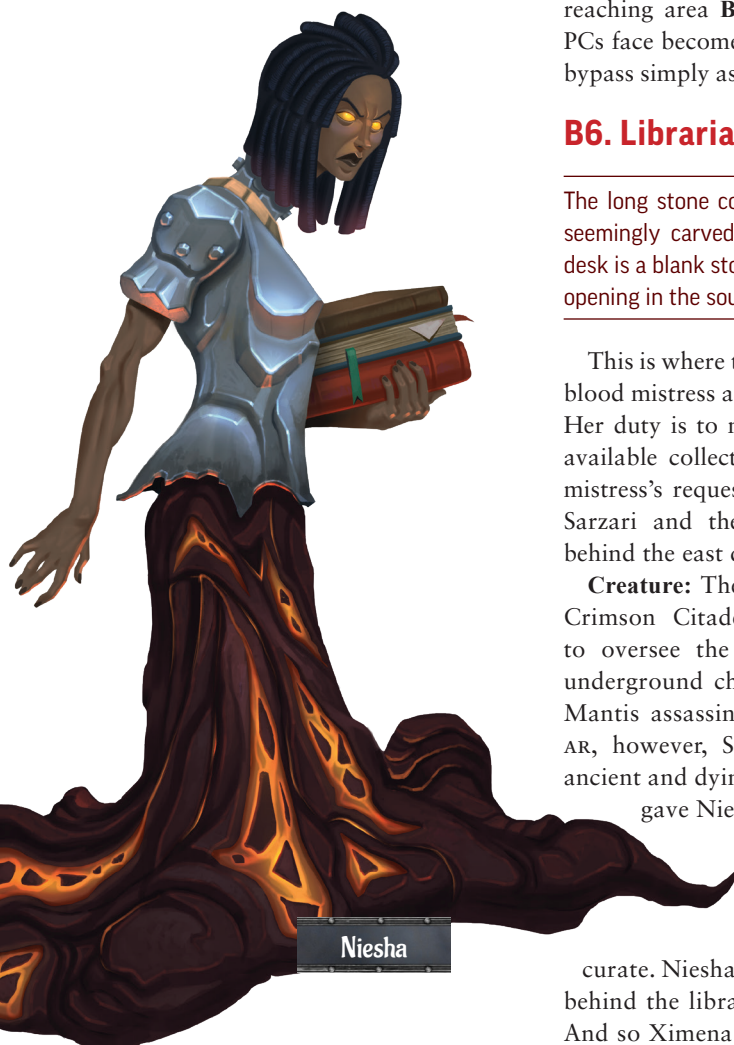
B6. Librarian's Desk

Trivial 16

The long stone corridor ends at a semi-circular stone desk, seemingly carved out of the stone floor itself. Behind the desk is a blank stone wall set with single stone door. A broad opening in the southern wall opens into another chamber.

This is where the Sarzari librarian works, greeting the blood mistress and any new would-be blood mistresses. Her duty is to maintain the library and rearrange the available collections (sorted by subject) at the blood mistress's request. She also acts as a first guardian to Sarzari and the blood mistress's private chambers, behind the east door.

Creature: The human wizard Niesha served as the Crimson Citadel's first head librarian and helped to oversee the construction of Sarzari's sprawling underground chambers in the decades after the Red Mantis assassins fled to Mediogalti Island. By 2600 AR, however, Sarzari's head librarian, Niesha, was ancient and dying. Ximena, blood mistress at the time, gave Niesha a choice: die and join Achaekék at last, leaving her beloved library in the hands of another, or continue to serve, nearly immortal, and protect the vast collection she helped to curate. Niesha chose the latter, as she could not leave behind the library that meant so much to her in life. And so Ximena and the Vernai conducted an obscure



Niesha

Azlantian ritual to transform the elderly librarian into a mezlan, an immortal ooze with the soul and memories of a mortal.

Niesha has watched over Sarzari since that time, protecting its tomes, preserving its knowledge, and assisting the current blood mistress. Niesha has known Jakalyn's secrets for centuries, including the secret to her youth and the fate of the previous blood mistress. While none of the acts Jakalyn took were expressly forbidden by Achaekkek, Niesha has never approved, in part out of jealousy that Jakalyn found a way to avoid death without sacrificing her original body. As such, Niesha was eager to aid in a change of leadership when Saviya contacted her and said that Jakalyn had betrayed the Red Mantis and was no longer fit to lead. Since then, Niesha has remained on guard in this wing of Sarzari, on the lookout for anyone who might cause trouble for Saviya and her guests, hoping to use the library's considerable defenses to stop them.

Saviya has warned Niesha that Jakalyn's favored puppets, the PCs, are likely to try to stop her, so the mezlan is prepared to attack them on sight. If the PCs are disguised, they may be able to lie their way past Niesha, but in this case the mezlan demands to escort the PCs through the rooms and won't allow them to enter the blood mistress's chambers to the west at all. If they do so, or as soon as she realizes the PCs aren't who they claim to be, she attacks.

Alone, Niesha is a trivial encounter for 16th level PCs, but her penchant for bursting out of an access grate to join a combat in progress potentially makes her a dangerous addition to any other fight in the complex. If she's fighting alone, she flees to the nearest Sarzari access pipe grating (see the nearby sidebar) as soon as she's reduced to 150 Hit Points, remaining in the pipes in hiding while she regenerates. She'll move through the pipes, following the PCs, and bursts up from a nearby grate as soon as she hears the sound of combat in a room above. When she joins a fight in progress, Niesha prefers to fight at range rather than wade into melee combat. Her goal is to protect the library, so she might attack targets other than the PCs if she sees them causing damage to the stacks. As long as she's not the only one fighting the PCs, Niesha fights until she disincorporates, at which point she seeps away into the access pipes to remain dormant for years to come. Otherwise, she flees to the pipes to repeat these hit-and-run tactics as soon as she's the only one left against the PCs.

If the PCs close off all of the access grates while Niesha is in them, she flees through them to other wings of Sarzari to the north and does not return. If she's outside of the pipes at this time, though, she fights to the death; if captured alive, her jealous anger directed toward Jakalyn extends to the PCs and she remains uncooperative and hostile. If she's made friendly, she'll aid the PCs in their exploration, but how much she knows and shares about the encounters

SARZARI ACCESS PIPES

A series of pipes under the floor of the Sarzari gives the librarian, a living ooze, the ability to quickly and covertly travel from one room of the complex to another. Many of the rooms in the library have broad, visible drains in the floor that lead ten feet down to the access pipes below. The pipes are only two feet in diameter, and Niesha can move through an access grate as an Interact action and travel through the pipes as if they were difficult terrain. Each access grate is made of iron and magically reinforced like Sarzari's doors (Hardness 17, HP 68 [BT 34]) and can be Forced Open with a DC 46 Athletics check.

The pipe leading north from area B6 goes for several hundred feet before branching several times to provide access to other wings of Sarzari that are beyond the scope of this adventure.

in this complex is left to you to decide. Only if she's made helpful will she agree to fight at the PCs' side, but even then won't leave Sarzari with them.

NIESHA

CREATURE 16

UNIQUE MEDIUM OOZE

Variant female mezlan (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 167)

Perception +30; darkvision

Languages Aklo, Azlantian; polyglot

Skills Athletics +30, Deception +28 (+32 to impersonate), Library Lore +31, Occultism +29, Religion +32, Stealth +30

Polyglot As mezlan.

AC 36; **Fort** +25, **Ref** +28, **Will** +30; +1 status to all saves vs. magic

HP 300, regeneration 15 (deactivated by acid); **Immunities** critical hits, precision, unconscious; **Weaknesses** acid 15

Absorb Spell ☞ As mezlan.

Disincorporate As mezlan.

Speed 30 feet

Melee ✦ polymorphic appendage +32 (magical, versatile P, versatile S), **Damage** 3d12+16 bludgeoning

Ranged ✦ ooze globule +30 (range increment 30 feet), **Effect** viscous trap

Access Pipe Ambush ☞ **Trigger** Niesha emerges from one of the Sarzari access pipes; **Effect** Niesha makes a melee Strike against an adjacent creature as she emerges.

Change Shape ✦ As mezlan.

Extend Limb ✦ As mezlan.

Navigate Pipes Niesha can move through the Sarzari Access Pipes, even though they're only two feet wide; she treats these pipes as difficult terrain.

Up From Below Niesha can Shove or Trip a creature that's standing atop a Sarzari access pipe grate while she's directly beneath that creature.

Viscous Trap As mezlan, but escape DC 34.

Treasure: A *kindled tome* (*Pathfinder Treasure Vault* 195) sits in a lead-lined wooden box on the

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floor behind the counter. Niesha confiscated the tome from one of Jakalyn's guests a decade ago after it was encouraging them to burn parts of the library. Anytime the intelligent book acts up, she gives its box a swift kick. Stuck to the bottom of the desk with a bent nail is a long, black key with razor-sharp teeth; this key opens the cell doors in the Prison of the Forgotten (area **B12**) and can automatically be found by a PC who Searches the area for at least a minute.

B7. Meditation Chamber Moderate 16

Wooden weapon racks have been built into both the northern and southern walls of this room, each displaying a single sawtooth saber. There are stone doors to the east and west, and the floor is covered with thousands of coin-sized tiles that fit together in a patterns that are strangely unsettling to look at.

Jakalyn uses this chamber as her personal meditation room. The weapon racks each hold one of her two original weapons and are both protected by powerful mechanical traps. A permanent *phantasmal minion* keeps this room tidy, but also gives the strange feeling of a watchful presence in the room.

Hazard: The strange pattern of tiles on the floor is meant not only as a meditative aid, but hides dozens of adjustable grooves in the floor that are part of this room's deadly trap.

FLENSING FLOOR

HAZARD 18

RARE COMPLEX MECHANICAL TRAP

Stealth +35 (master)

Description Long saw-toothed blades slash up along the hidden grooves in the floor, their edges caked with what looks like blood but is in fact a deadly poison.

Disable DC 45 Thievery (master) once per weapon rack to detach the triggers from the trap mechanism

AC 42; **Fort** +27, **Ref** +33

Blade Hardness 30; **HP** 30 each (BT 15); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Sudden Blades **Trigger** Either of the weapons stored on either weapon rack is disturbed; **Effect** Both doors into this room slam shut and lock (DC 40). The trap then rolls initiative.

Routine (10 actions) The trap rolls a sawtooth saber Strike for each action, divided targets evenly among creatures in the trapped area. If there aren't enough targets in area **B7** to divide these actions evenly, additional targets are randomly chosen. The trap loses one action for each destroyed blade. The trap ignores multiple attack penalties.

Melee sawtooth saber +32, **Damage** 1d6 slashing plus 1d6 poison

Reset Manual.

Treasure: The northern rack holds a *blood-drinker* (page 101) while the southern rack holds a *fleshrender* (page 102).

B8. Blood Mistress's Sarzari Retreat

A large bed sits against this room's north wall, while to the south sits a writing desk. Two wooden doors hang ajar to the east, each opening into smaller rooms. The room itself looks as if it's been searched, with the bedsheets in a heap and the contents of the desk a mess.

Blood Mistress Jakalyn maintains over a dozen personal quarters throughout Crimson Citadel—this is but one of those bedrooms. Saviya made a quick search of this suite when she first entered Sarzari, but wasn't expecting to find much of use as she assumed Jakalyn wouldn't leave behind anything here of much import. Area **B8b** is a storage room that contains a wide array of fine clothing, preserved food and drink, and religious paraphernalia. Area **B8c** is a washroom with two alcoves, one containing a sink and the other a commode, both of which are minor magical items that produce fresh water and dispose of waste at a spoken command.

The scattered books atop the writing desk are all tomes taken from elsewhere in Sarzari, each of which covering topics surrounding Razmiran, Razmir, and the regional and personal history of both. The vast majority of these books are speculative or even outright fiction, owing to the mysterious and vexing nature of the subject, but Jakalyn has cross-annotated the collection extensively. A PC can examine this collection with the following activity.

EXAMINE SCATTERED BOOKS

CONCENTRATE EXPLORATION SECRET

The PC spends 4 hours studying and examining the stack of heavily-annotated books found on the writing desk in area **B8a**. While a fair amount of the text is in Common, there are long passages written in Diabolic, Draconic, Hallit, and Mwangi. Each of these languages that the PC doesn't understand imparts a cumulative -1 penalty to the check to perform this activity.

After spending the 4 hours, attempt a DC 35 Occultism, Religion, or Society check.

Critical Success The PCs learn the Success information on page 67, but also discover an additional hidden truth—Jakalyn suspects there are traitors among the Vernai who want her out, and by taking a long leave from the island, she hopes they'll overplay their hand enough so her favored agents (among whom are the PCs, mentioned by name) can confront them, find proof of their plot, and potentially even defeat them. Another note curiously mentions an "imminent protean invasion of Clashing Shore" and that there are whispers that Achaekek may be present in the battle to confront an upstart protean who is seeking divinity; the note concludes with Jakalyn being hopeful that "the current discord in the Vernai will be wrapped up before this event," as she hopes to be able to travel to Clashing Shore to observe Achaekek as he kills an upstart to the divine (something she has only been able to watch a

few times during her long life). A DC 25 Religion check to Recall Knowledge is enough to identify Clashing Shore as Gorum's divine realm on the border between Elysium and the Maelstrom.

Success The PC can now use this collection of books as reference for any Recall Knowledge check made about Razmiran or Razmir to gain a +1 item bonus on the check. More importantly, comprehension of Jakalyn's scattered notes reveals the truth of where she's been—that she's decided to travel to Razmiran, seek a meeting with Razmir, and sort out the truth of why one of his agents asked her to assassinate Tar-Baphon. These notes make it clear she expects to be away from Mediogalti for several weeks, perhaps even a few months, as Razmir is an exceptionally elusive man to track down.

Failure The PC learns nothing unusual, other than coming to the conclusion that this collection of books is perhaps a bit too cluttered with hyperbole, falsehoods, and errors to be much use for anyone studying Razmiran or its mysterious ruler.

Critical Failure Nothing unusual is learned about the main topic of Razmiran or Razmir, but a misunderstanding of Jakalyn's notes makes it seem like the mysterious mission she's been on for the duration of this adventure is a self-assigned mission to assassinate Razmir—who, as a rightful ruler of a nation, should not be targeted for assassination by any Red Mantis.

Treasure: A velvet lined box tucked away on a corner shelf in area **B8b** went unnoticed during Saviya's search, but a PC who Searches the room and succeeds at a DC 35 Perception check finds it. Inside is a stash of spare adventuring supplies, including 8 doses of Breath of the Mantis God (page 103), a *truesight potion*, four major elixirs of life, and six *panaceas*.

Reward: If the PCs successfully research the books on Jakalyn's desk, grant them 40 XP. Increase this award to 80 XP if they critically succeed at this research.

B9. Sarzari Library

The walls of this open ante-chamber are adorned with carvings of Red Mantis assassins in fighting stances. A steel grate covers a drain on the floor in the center of the room, while fifteen-foot-wide arches to the east and west open into large libraries.

A secret door is hidden in the stonework on the southern wall between carvings of two sparring Red Mantis assassins. A PC who Seeks along the southern wall and succeeds at a DC 37 Perception check discovers the secret door into area **B13**.

While there are no books stored here, a vast amount of texts are kept in the adjoining chambers (areas **B10** and **B11**). Once one of those areas is cleared of hostile forces, the PCs can use either chamber to Research—see

“Researching Achaekek” on page 75 at the end of this chapter for more details.

If the PCs are stealthy and have avoided a fight with Niesha (see area **B6**) when they enter this area, a successful DC 37 Perception check lets them catch the faint sounds of Saviya's agents in area **B10**. Alternately, if the PCs aren't being stealthy or have already clashed against Niesha, the agents in area **B10** are prepared to ambush them, and Dronuk activates his *eye of the mantis* to use *scouting eye* to spy upon this room.

B10. Ancient Histories

Severe 16

A half-dozen rows of twenty-foot-high bookshelves run east to west in this thirty-foot-tall library. Each shelf is filled with a combination of ancient tomes and newer texts. The center of the room has three broad wooden tables, each with four chairs and book stands ready to hold books open without straining the volume. Narrow ladders on wheels allow access to the highest shelves.

This wing contains books pertaining to the history of Golarion, with a focus on lore predating the Age of Enthronement. Most of the books focus on the Inner Sea region, but there's a fair amount about Azlant kept here as well.



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The door in the southeast corner that leads to the reading room (area **B13**) is locked. The secret door in the wall to the southwest that leads to the Nexus of Paths (area **B14**) can be found by a PC who Seeks and succeeds at a DC 37 Perception check.

A PC can Climb the stacks with a successful DC 20 Athletics check.

Creatures: High Priest Saviya left some of her Vernai allies here as a rear guard, in the unlikely (in her estimation) event the PCs make it into Sarzari. The agents consist of three Red Mantis conspirators led by a dwarven nephilim named Dronuk. In addition to being ready to stand against the PCs, these four have been ordered to sift through this chamber's holdings to find any precedent in the history of Achaek's church that would help to support Saviya's plot to usurp Blood Mistress Jakalyn.

When Dronuk and his fellow conspirators become aware of approaching PCs, they Climb up atop the stacks and Hide, ready to spring an ambush. On the first few rounds of combat, the agents attack with their magic at range, but once one of them is attacked in melee, the others converge in that area to gang up on single targets. Dronuk prefers to hang back as long as he still has spells to cast from afar, but once he engages in melee he finishes the fight that way. The assassins hope to capture at least some of the PCs alive for interrogation, but won't let mercy get in the way of

their own safety. The conspirators fight to the death, but if Dronuk is reduced to fewer than 50 Hit Points, he casts *translocate* to travel to area **B14** in an attempt to make his way through the portal there to seek out Saviya and stay at her side. Whether or not he makes it to her is left to you to decide.

DRONUK

CREATURE 17

UNIQUE MEDIUM DWARF HUMANOID NEPHILIM

Male dwarf nephilim assassin

Perception +30; darkvision

Languages Common, Diabolic, Dwarven, Sakvroth


Skills Athletics +31, Deception +27, Intimidation +29, Religion +24, Stealth +27

Str +6, **Dex** +2, **Con** +5, **Int** +1, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +4


Items *belt of long life*, *eye of the mantis* (kept in one of his Vernai shell's extradimensional spaces), +2 *greater striking corrosive wounding sawtooth sabers* (2), note from Saviya (kept in one of his Vernai shell's extradimensional spaces), *Vernai shell* (page 101)

AC 39; **Fort** +31, **Ref** +29, **Will** +26

HP 330


Tail Trip  **Trigger** A creature within Dronuk's reach uses a move action or leaves a square during a move action it's using; **Effect** Dronuk lashes out at the creature with his tail in an attempt to trip the triggering creature up. Dronuk attempts to Trip the triggering creature.

Speed 25 feet


Melee  *sawtooth saber* +33 (agile, finesse, magical, twin), **Damage** 3d6+14 slashing plus 1d6 acid and 1d6 persistent bleed

Divine Prepared Spells DC 35, attack +27; **9th** *massacre*; **8th** *sawtooth terrain* (page 100); **7th** *mantis's grasp* (page 99); **6th** *crimson breath* (page 99); **5th** *translocate*; **4th** *fly*; **3rd** *paralyze*; **2nd** *see the unseen*; **1st** *fear*; **Cantrips (4th)** *figment*, *sigil*

Mantis's Flurry Dronuk's multiple attack penalty for attacks with his sawtooth sabers is -2 for his second attack, and -4 with his third and any subsequent attacks.

Prayer Attack  (concentrate) **Requirements**

Dronuk wields a sawtooth saber in each hand; **Effect** As Red Mantis conspirator (page 44).

You're Next  (emotion, fear, mental, visual) **Trigger** Dronuk reduces an enemy to 0 Hit Points; **Effect** Dronuk attempts to Demoralize a single creature he can see. He gains a +2 circumstance bonus to this check.

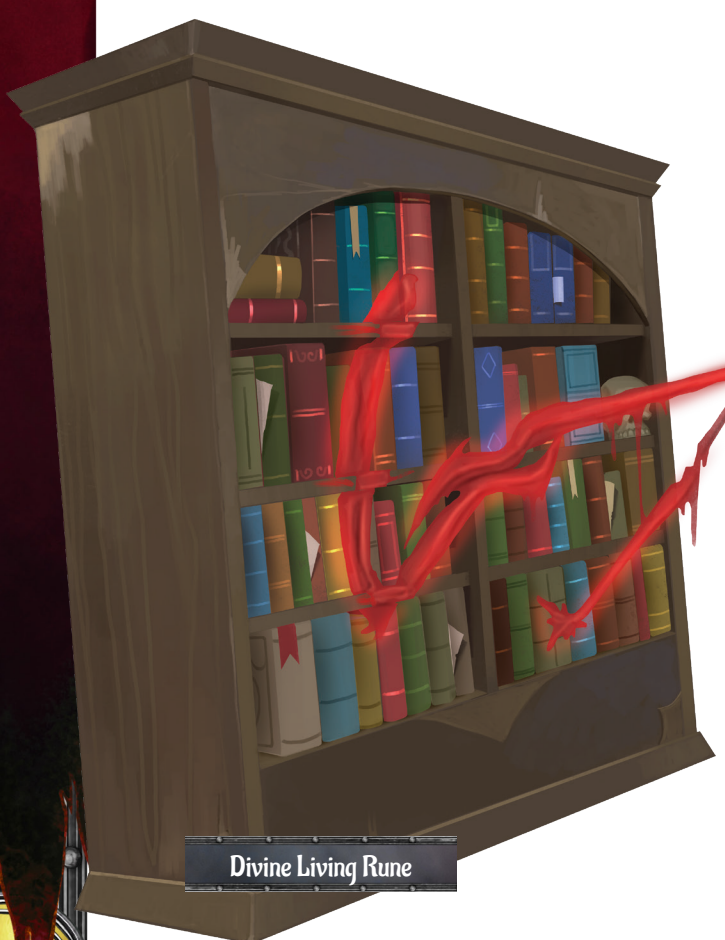
RED MANTIS CONSPIRATORS (3)

CREATURE 14

Page 44

Perception +23

Reward: Dronuk keeps his eye of the mantis in one of his Vernai shell's extradimensional spaces, but in the other he currently stores a short missive, written in code in Diabolic and signed by Saviya. A PC can decipher the coded message in 1 minute with a DC 35 Society check to Decipher Writing: "When you've found what we need, come through the portal and join us; we'll



Divine Living Rune

leave it open for you. You should be able to locate our current camp at the azata's lighthouse. Look for us by the usual signs."

If the PCs discover and decipher this message, grant them 40 XP.

B11. Religious Studies Moderate 16

The thirty-foot-high bookshelves in this room are stacked to the ceiling, and are arranged in a tangled, maze-like pattern. Words and runes have been embossed, scratched, and painted on a variety of surfaces, as if a calligraphy lesson exploded all over the room, while small bloodstains splatter the floor here and there.

While the stacks in the ancient history wing (area B10) have always been well organized, those present here consist of shorter rows but taller cases arranged in a somewhat confounding pattern—a legacy of a previous blood mistress whose eccentric choices have simply never been addressed. A PC who spends 8 hours Investigating this room's strange organization and then succeeds at a DC 40 Religion check can understand the method to the chaos (and can explain the organization methods to other PCs with a single hour of work), but until then, all rolls made to Research here (see page 75) take a -4 circumstance penalty.

The eastern door to area B12 is locked. Only two keys exist: one is in Jakalyn's possession (and thus beyond the reach of the PCs at this time), but the other can be found behind the librarian's desk (area B6).

The secret door in the wall to the southeast that leads to the Nexus of Paths (area B14) can be found by a PC who Seeks and succeeds at a DC 37 Perception check.

A PC can Climb the stacks with a DC 20 Athletics check.

Creatures: The strange runes that have been placed throughout this room's stacks make for an unusual decoration, but their primary purpose is to afford the chambers' guardians an excellent place to lie in wait. These five guardians are divine living runes. They immediately attack anyone who attempts to explore this area without being accompanied by either Niesha or Blood Mistress Jakalyn, springing out of the stacks in the form of animated red mantis arms unfurling from Achaek's religious symbol. The blood splatters throughout the room testify to an attempt by Saviya's agents to investigate this area, but rather than fight the runes, they chose to avoid the room entirely and focus their work to the west, to leave this area's defenders to potentially vex any enemies (such as the PCs) who come their way.

These five divine living runes have a somewhat different selection of spells than the norm, including a few rare ones associated with Achaek and the Red Mantis assassins. They do not pursue foes out of this room, but otherwise fight until they are destroyed. The living runes prefer to keep to the surfaces of bookshelves,

but can move onto the floor or ceiling as well. A section of bookshelves can be destroyed (thus taking advantage of the runes' Surface-Bound weakness) by scattering the books in the rune's space, either with a DC 35 Athletics check to do so quickly and fully as a single Interact action, or by destroying the books in that section (AC 20, HP 30). If a creature attempts to Strike one of these living runes while they're on a bookshelf and critically misses with a slashing weapon, they deal normal damage to the books in that section, potentially destroying those books.

Every two sections of books destroyed in this library imparts a cumulative -1 penalty to all checks made to later Research in this room.

DIVINE LIVING RUNES (5) CREATURE 13

Variant living runes (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 163)

Initiative Stealth +31

Divine Innate Spells DC 35, attack +27; **7th** *execute*, *mantis's grasp* (page 99); **6th** *divine immolation* (x2), *harm*, *sawtooth terrain* (page 100); **5th** *blood vendetta*, *divine wrath* (x2)

Treasure: While the tomes in this room contain a wealth of knowledge, a PC who spends 10 minutes Searching the stacks discovers several scrolls containing rare spells. All of these scrolls are 8th-rank, and include a *scroll of bone flense*, a *scroll of crimson breath*, a *scroll of mantis's grasp*, a *scroll of mark of blood*, a *scroll of mirror mantis*, and a *scroll of sawtooth terrain*; all of these spells are detailed in the Adventure Toolbox of this adventure, starting on page 99.

B12. Prison of the Forgotten Low 16

This lonely, dusty chamber features seven prison cells, most with a single, uncomfortable bed and hole for refuse. Opposite the only doorway, a metal grate sits in the stone floor, while a desk and chair sit nearby to the northwest. Sitting atop the dusty desk are a few old papers.

This room is one of many that Jakalyn uses as a personal prison. Recently, the mysterious agent from Razmiran who delivered the request to assassinate Tar-Baphon spent time in the southeasternmost cell, but they're here no longer. For most of her tenure as blood mistress, she's only kept one other prisoner in this area.

Creatures: In the only cell without a bed sits an elderly elven woman. This is none other than Behezamine, former blood mistress and Jakalyn's mentor and victim. While elves of several centuries of age might appear a little frail, they generally still appear quite youthful by human aging standards. This is not the case with Behezamine, who is unusually wrinkled and has discolored spots on her skin and thinning white wisps of hair, looking almost as frail as a sickly 100-year-old human woman apart from her elven eyes and ears. Any elven PC recognizes at once that this is not a normal

condition for an elderly elf and that some other malaise grips her, while other PCs realize this with a successful DC 20 Society check to Recall Knowledge.

It's unlikely the PCs realize Behezamine is here when they first enter the prison, though, for she's not the only creature present. Two conglomerations of spirits, who call themselves The Promised Ones, act as jailers to this lonely prison. They patrol the room, immediately attacking any who enter—except for Jakalyn—and fighting such intruders until they are destroyed. As long as Behezamine remains imprisoned here, the Promised Ones will continue to rejuvenate.

THE PROMISED ONES (2)

CREATURE 15

Variant nemhaiths (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3185)

Initiative Perception +31

Divine Innate Spells DC 36, attack +28; **8th** *execute* (×3), *harm* (×3), *wall of force*

Behezamine

Once the Promised Ones are destroyed, the PCs can interact with Behezamine. The 600-year-old elven woman slumps against the wall of the only cell without a bed within. Her hair is long, thin, and stringy, extending far past her waist to drag on the floor. The door to the cell has been melted shut and can no longer be opened without a successful DC 40 Athletics check to Force it Open. The cell itself is imbued with magical effects that sustain Behezamine, so that she can survive without food or water—indeed, it's been over a century since last she ate or drank anything. She barely has the strength to raise her head, and only does so for a moment, long enough to get a glimpse of the PCs. After she's stared at them for a few seconds, she relaxes her neck, letting her chin rest on her chest as she addresses the PCs in a wheezing, rattling voice. Read or paraphrase the following.

“It must be decades since I've seen another living soul, perhaps more than a century. I would think this means Jakalyn is dead, but there are too many of you... Not the new blood mistress... Kill me... Please... So tired...”

The PCs have a chance to talk with Behezamine about her situation, her prison cell, or Jakalyn. Below are some likely inquiries and Behezamine's responses.

Who are you? “I am Behezamine... blood mistress... or I was... half a lifetime ago.”

Jakalyn is the blood mistress. “So she says... should never (cough) trust (cough) the Betrayer.”

Are you okay? “No... I am tired... dark magic... just kill me...”

Did Jakalyn do this to you? “Yes (cough). Stole (cough) youth...”

Why do you want to die? “Look at me. I'm so very near death... already... Let me go... Let me swim... the River... to Him...”

Why did Jakalyn put you in here? “To steal my... life, my youth, my essence... I whispered to another elf... a priestess... who visited me in a dream—months ago. She wouldn't kill me... said she'd be back... said I was important... promised... Hasn't...”

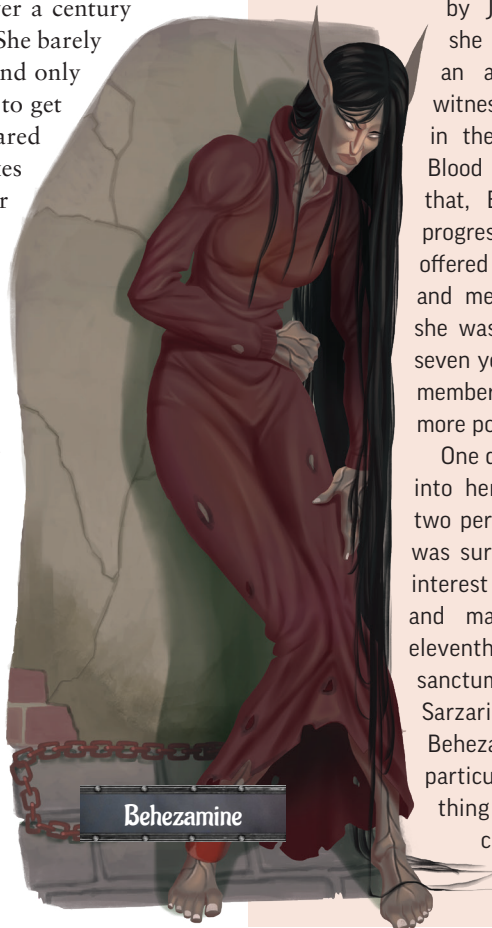
Tell me about the priestess elf who was here. “Said (cough) name was... Sah... Sil... ‘S’ something—promised to help—never returned...”

Behezamine is in no condition to talk for long, and answers most other questions by pleading with the PCs to end her life. After a few minutes of talking and pleading, she slips into unconsciousness and is unable to be woken until she gets an hour of rest. If the PCs are able to get into her cell and rescue her, she rests enough to be conscious again in 24 hours, at which point she awakens, ravenous. At this time, she's rested enough to relate her story to the PCs, although she asks for food and drink first.

The Tragic Story of Behezamine, the 28th Blood Mistress of the Red Mantis:

Behezamine had been blood mistress for 97 years before she was betrayed by Jakalyn, but until that point, she almost counted Jakalyn as an adopted daughter, ever since witnessing her make her first kill in the name of He Who Walks in Blood at only 16 years of age. After that, Behezamine watched Jakalyn's progress in the Red Mantis closely, offered her special training sessions, and mentored her for a decade until she was ready to join the Vernai. For seven years, Jakalyn was a contributing member of the Vernai, growing ever more powerful and influential.

One day, Behezamine invited Jakalyn into her sanctum within Sarzari. The two perused many tomes; Behezamine was surprised when Jakalyn's greatest interest was in the topics of aeons and magical rituals. On the pair's eleventh visit to Behezamine's private sanctum within a different wing of Sarzari, Jakalyn betrayed her, striking Behezamine over the head with a particularly weighty tome. The next thing Behezamine knew, she was chained up and suspended between a large cup of sand with a small opening at the



bottom, and a glass bowl filling with sand that had passed over her body. On her abdomen sat a small whirlwind of clouds, like the eye of a hurricane shrunk to the size of a fist. The sand seemed to be electrified after it passed through the sand and it tingled as it passed over her body into the glass bowl. Jakalyn was chanting in the distance, in a mixture of Aklo and ancient Azlanti.

Then Behezamine passed out from weakness. The next thing she knew, she was imprisoned in this cell. Jakalyn only came to visit a few times, said nothing in response to Behezamine's many pleas, and eventually after a few decades, stopped coming entirely. In that time, Behezamine has come to realize the nature of the ritual Jakalyn performed over her—a forbidden rite that twisted her soul and timeline in such a way that her long elven life instead fueled Jakalyn's. In effect, Jakalyn stole from Behezamine her elven longevity, and as long as Jakalyn still lives, Behezamine will too, even as she grows more and more feeble.

For her part, when she learned about Behezamine, Saviya chose to leave her imprisoned here for two reasons—to avoid showing her hand to Jakalyn, and to potentially use her for the same source of longevity if she were to become the new blood mistress.

Behezamine's Fate: The PCs' discovery of Behezamine is meant to give them a challenging moral and ethical puzzle. As trusted agents of Jakalyn, the "right" thing to do as an evil Red Mantis assassin is to leave the ancient elf imprisoned here, but some PCs may wish to grant Behezamine's wish for death or even seek to rescue her. While Behezamine's fate and the role the PCs play in it won't impact their standing in Achaekek's eye (the Mantis God is indifferent to Behezamine's fate at this point), rescuing her will certainly put them at odds with Jakalyn and could have repercussions in the future (see Concluding the Adventure on page 89).

Killing Behezamine: In her prime, Behezamine was a powerful rogue and assassin who also wielded strange magic, but in the decades she has been imprisoned here, she's lost nearly all of that power, and is now the equivalent of a level 0 elf with no viable offensive capabilities; killing her requires little more than a single Strike from a character of the PCs' power. Her death does not immediately impact Blood Mistress Jakalyn, other than making it necessary for her to capture another long-lived victim at some point in the future if she wishes to maintain her longevity (repercussions that are beyond the scope of this adventure). What does immediately impact the PCs is what happens a round after Behezamine's death, for despite her current state and regardless of any mercy given, her tormented soul rises as a banshee and attacks the party, seeing them as the source of her torment. Only if this tormented soul is destroyed can Behezamine's spirit finally move on to the afterlife.

REMOVING BEHEZAMINE

Behezamine's fate has little impact on the plot of *Prey for Death*, and is included here primarily to reveal to readers (and those who play this adventure) the cruel method by which Blood Mistress Jakalyn has maintained her youth over the years, but even though your players portray evil agents of the Red Mantis in this adventure, you may feel that your players won't enjoy the implications of this encounter's revelations (even though, in life, Behezamine was as cruel and sadistic, perhaps even more so, than Blood Mistress Jakalyn ever was). In this case, you can simply move Behezamine to a different prison elsewhere in the Crimson Citadel, so that nothing of her story can be discovered in this adventure.

BEHEZAMINE

CREATURE 17

Banshee (*Pathfinder Monster Core* 37)

Initiative Perception +32

Rescuing Behezamine: If the PCs wish to rescue Behezamine, they need to escort (and at times carry) her to somewhere safe. As with killing her, rescuing her can have an impact on the PCs' future, as detailed on page 89. Whether or not she survives for this long depends on what steps the PCs take to protect her, and your whim.

Reward: While Behezamine's fate has little immediate impact on the rest of this adventure, if the PCs encounter her, learn her story, and make a decision on how to handle this information, grant them 80 XP.

B13. Reading Room Moderate 16

The southwest and southeast doors into this room are locked.

This cozy chamber features a blazing fireplace in the northwest corner and a comfortable sofa with velvet throw pillows and a blanket draped over the back. A short table provides a place for books waiting to be read, or to place a refreshing beverage. The walls are lined with bookshelves and a writing desk stacked with tomes. Two wooden doors exit the room in the southwest and southeast corners.

This is one of Jakalyn's personal reading rooms, a place where she can go to escape the rigors of running a worldwide assassin guild and sit with a good book and a hot beverage. She sometimes brings reading for work in to this sanctuary of comfort, so some of the shelves contain works of nonfiction, but most are mystery novels, with several valuable first editions.

The secret door to the north can be discovered by a PC who Seeks the area and succeeds at a DC 37 Perception check. The one to the south has been left slightly ajar by the creatures who entered this room from area B14, and can be discovered by a PC who Seeks the area and succeeds at a DC 27 Perception check. The short but

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steep flight of stairs beyond lead down to a second secret door that is fully closed and can be discovered with a DC 37 Perception check.

Creatures: Very few throughout the Great Beyond have any inkling of what is to come as a result of Gorum's request from Calistria for a chance at a memorable death, but one of those few is the powerful asura rana named Taraksun. The so-called Awakener of Wrath is a demigod associated with anger, dreams, and the shattering of bonds—which, combined with the fact that asuras are manifestations of divine accidents and glorify the undoing of divine workings, allowed Taraksun to realize that some sort of cataclysmic event was building around Achaek and Gorum.



Rhysaphine

When the conspirators opened the planar gate in the Nexus of Ways (area **B14**), Taraksun was close enough to the far side of the portal in Crashing Shore to notice, and with the portal compromising planar travel into Sarzari, he took advantage of the lapse and sent a team of four nikaramsas into the Grand Library to investigate the situation. These four asuras were initially meant to search Sarzari for secrets about Achaek, the Red Mantis, and Jakalyn, but their appetite for secrets and knowledge have distracted them. They've secretly gathered random stacks of books from the stacks in areas **B10** and **B11** and then retreated to this room to examine them in private, and by the time the PCs first enter this room they've spent a fair amount of time looking through their collection.

Despite their ferocious appearance, the four asuras welcome the PCs into the room as soon as they notice them. They remain amiable—for the moment—as long as the PCs don't attack, and ask them why they've come to Sarzari. They listen to replies with apparent interest, responding with vaguely encouraging words to them such as "You're on the right track!" and "You should follow that Saviya lady, she seems like she's up to no good" and "We're all rooting for you!" If the PCs continue to chat with them, the asuras offer to trade secrets with the PCs on a one-for-one basis.

The PCs can trade any of the information they've learned from doing Research in the libraries (page 75), the secret of Jakalyn's youth (which the PCs can discover in the Prison of the Forgotten, area **B12**), any deep personal secret that they haven't shared with anyone, or a complete fabrication by Lying to the asuras with a successful DC 35 Deception check. In return for a secret shared, the nikaramsas reveal a tidbit of information they've learned. They dole out these secrets in the following order for each secret shared:

- Blood Mistress Jakalyn is fully human, yet she has lived for hundreds of years by siphoning the life from an unknown donor.
- Achaek has left the Blood Vale, his divine domain at the root of the Boneyard's spire; he typically does so only when he's on the hunt and preparing to assassinate someone significant.
- Calistria meet with Achaek recently, and shortly after this meeting, the Mantis God left his divine domain. "What could she have said that spooked him so?" the nikaramsas wonder aloud.
- Two powerful keketar proteans, Alktherisa and Omprisgor, are invading Gorum's realm of Clashing Shore on Elysium; they hope to carve out a piece of it and bring it into the Maelstrom for in their bid for ascension into divinity.

The asuras' patience isn't eternal, and they grow tired of trading secrets once they've given up all four. At this point, or if an attempt to Lie to them fails, they thank the PCs for their time and then suddenly attack, using Deception for initiative to account for their sudden change in attitude. Once combat begins, they fight to the death rather than risk Taraksun's displeasure.

AGENTS OF TARAKSUN (4) CREATURE 14

Variant nikaramsas (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 25)

Initiative Deception +28 or Perception +25

HP 315; **Immunities** curses, **Weaknesses** holy 10

Melee ✦ jaws +29 (reach 10 feet, unholy), **Damage** 3d10+14 piercing plus 2d6 spirit

Melee ✦ claw +29 (agile, reach 10 feet, unholy), **Damage** 3d6+14 slashing plus 2d6 spirit

Melee ✦ tongue +29 (reach 20 feet, unholy), **Damage** 3d6+14 bludgeoning plus 2d6 spirit plus Improved Knockdown

Divine Innate Spells DC 34, attack +26; **7th** *bane*, *bles*, *cleanse affliction*, *divine decree*, *dream message*, *heal* (×3), *illusory disguise* (at will), *invisibility* (at will; self only), *mind reading*, *sound body*, *translocate*; **4th** *translocate* (at will); **Constant (7th)** *disguise magic* (self only), *see the unseen*, *veil of privacy* (self only)

Treasure: Most of the treasure in this room is split between magical items to give comfort (such as a mug that fills itself with hot cocoa, tea, or coffee on command, or three magically imbued logs that burn eternally and provide heat without diminishing) and dozens of first edition mystery novels. All together, this treasure is worth 10,000 gp (taking up 1 Bulk per 1,000 gp of treasure), but looting this treasure will likely sour the PCs' relationship with Jakalyn—something that won't impact this adventure directly, but could come back to haunt PCs who continue on from *Prey for Death* in new adventures.

B14. Nexus of Paths Severe 16

This immense circular chamber sits under a looming domed ceiling that peaks at a height of sixty feet above the floor, which sits twenty feet below a pair of circular balconies flanked by steep flights of stairs that provide access from the eastern and western entrances. The floor is polished gray stone, but the most commanding feature of the chamber is the whirling vortex of energy that hovers in the center of the room. Dozens of motes of light orbit around a central sphere of teal radiance, filling the room with flickering illumination and a low droning hum that can be felt in the bones. The entire light show is contained by a fifty-foot-diameter ring of glowing red metal floating about twenty feet off the floor below. A five-foot-square platform of black metal balances atop this ring near the room's eastern balcony, with a two-foot gap separating the two.

ACTIVATING THE NEXUS OF PATHS

It shouldn't be necessary for the PCs to activate the Nexus of Paths in this adventure, but the method for doing so can be researched in either area **B10** or **B11** by spending 8 hours on the subject and succeeding at a DC 35 Arcana, Occultism, or Religion check.

To activate or deactivate the Nexus of Paths, a PC must stand atop the platform set into the eastern side of the red ring and spend time in meditation, focusing inward on the planar connections between the Nexus and the desired destination. If the destination is one of the few locations pre-set into this particular Nexus (this one includes Clashing Shore among a dozen or so others of your choice), the meditation required to activate it takes 1 hour and a successful DC 40 Arcana, Occultism, or Religion check. Forging a portal to a brand new location requires the user to have visited that site before, 8 hours of meditation, and a successful DC 45 Arcana, Occultism, or Religion check instead.

Closing an active portal only takes 10 minutes of meditation and a DC 30 Arcana, Occultism, or Religion check.

When Blood Mistress Ximena and her spellcasting architects constructed the Crimson Citadel many centuries ago, they included nine chambers focused on powering portals that would grant the blood mistress easy access to planar locations across existence. Ximena called these nine chambers the Nexus of Paths—this room is one of those nine. Normally, a blood mistress would activate the portal using the control platform set into the hovering red ring and step through the portal to their destination, leaving the portal to close a few moments thereafter and relying on other methods to return home. When Saviya used the portal to travel to Clashing Shore, she left the portal open so that her followers could join her when the time was right (and so she could quickly return to the Crimson Citadel if needed, since she lacked the resources a full blood mistress would traditionally have to make an easy return trip).

A PC who studies the swirling vortex of energy and succeeds at a DC 30 Religion check or DC 20 Elysium Lore check to Recall Knowledge identifies the vortex as a *gate*-like portal to the plane of Elysium; a critical success on either check further reveals that it leads to Gorum's realm of Crashing Shore. The portal is stable and will remain open indefinitely until it's closed using the control platform, or until it's countered with an effect like *dispel magic* (10th rank; counteract DC 40).

While the portal itself cannot be damaged, the metal ring floating in the air around it can be. This ring is constructed from a rare alloy of adamantium infused with djezet. Each five-foot-long section of the ring has AC 32, Hardness 30, 80 Hit Points, Fortitude +29,

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Reflex +23, and is immune to critical hits and precision damage. If a single five-foot section is destroyed, the ring begins to wobble, growing more and more unstable as more sections are destroyed. Once at least six sections are destroyed, the ring collapses to the ground and the Nexus of Paths is ruined.

Creatures: Saviya knew there was a risk that, by leaving the portal open, any old creature might wander through, but she also didn't expect to be distracted on Clashing Shore as long as she has been. So far, only two significant groups have used the portal—first were the four nikaramsas in area **B13**, and much more recently, the chamber's current occupants—a peri named Rhysaphine and his companion, a phoenix named Soleil.

Preferring to be addressed as "Sir Rhysaphine," this flame-winged cavalier is famous for his defenses on Elysium against evil mortal invaders, his chivalrous manner, and his glorious spoken-word poetry recitals. His arrival here only predates the PCs' first entry into the chamber by a few minutes and, during those first few minutes, he's been contemplating the strange beauty of the whirling portal from atop his phoenix, who sits perched on the northern rim of red metal (which bears the immense bird's weight with ease). Since he was drawn to the portal after an encounter with powerful Red Mantis assassins, he's relatively sure he's arrived in some sort of assassin's stronghold, yet doesn't know much more.

As soon as he notices the PCs, and assuming they don't attack on sight, Sir Rhysaphine greets them warmly as a show of manners even though he expects them to be "dastardly villains." Read or paraphrase the following.

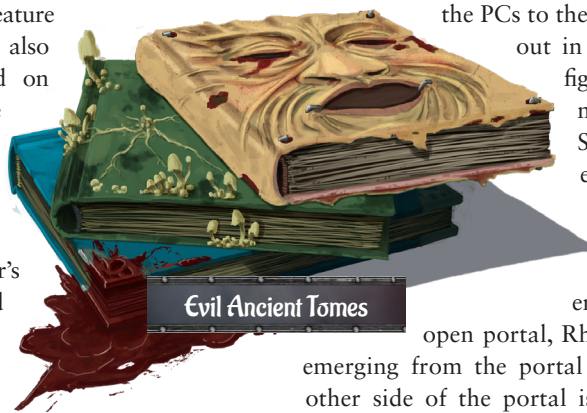
"Greetings, mortal assassins. I am Sir Rhysaphine and this is my faithful companion, Soleil. We encountered one of your kin despoiling the sanctity of Elysium—an intruder who has murdered, caused destruction, and dispatched several of my kin. I can only assume you are his reinforcements, come to slay more of us. For that I say, 'Nay.' You shall not enter Elysium. You shall not cross that threshold. I grant you your lives, but first I must destroy this chamber and your access to other realms. Step aside!"

In the unlikely event that the PCs acquiesce to this proposal, the peri and phoenix do their best to make good on their threat. If they manage to destroy the ring, they congratulate themselves in delight and consider themselves martyrs for destroying the portal while stranding themselves in the Universe—where they go from there depends on the PCs and your whim. If the Nexus of Paths is destroyed, the PCs can still continue on to Chapter 4, but they'll need to provide their own mode of travel to Elysium and may need to endure additional

encounters, since they likely won't be able to appear close to the scene of the action as described in that chapter.

It's much more likely that the PCs engage the peri knight in combat. Sir Rhysaphine generally fights from his mount, using hit-and-run tactics or cornering any PC foolish enough to be caught alone and vulnerable. He dismounts and re-mounts as is advantageous, and fights the PCs to the death. If Soleil dies, he cries out in feigned terror then laughs, fighting defensively until his mount's self-resurrection. On Soleil's true-death, the peri engages the PCs who killed him above any other.

In the event that the PCs slip past them and enter Elysium through the open portal, Rhysaphine and Soleil pursue, emerging from the portal shortly after the PCs. The other side of the portal is perched on a small ridge of earth 30 feet high, surrounded by a grassy plain, with the sun shining brightly and the smell of orange blossoms in the air.



Evil Ancient Tomes

RHYSAPHINE

CREATURE 18

UNIQUE MEDIUM CELESTIAL FIRE

Male peri knight (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 201)

Perception +31; darkvision, smoke vision

Languages Common, Draconic, Elven, Empyrean, Fey, Pyric; telepathy 100 feet

Skills Acrobatics +34, Arcana +30, Athletics +32, Diplomacy +35, Elysium Lore +32, Performance +35, Religion +29

Str +8, **Dex** +8, **Con** +5, **Int** +6, **Wis** +5, **Cha** +9

Smoke Vision Rhysaphine can see through smoke with ease, and he ignores the concealed condition from smoke.

AC 42; **Fort** +27, **Ref** +34, **Will** +31

HP 338; **Immunities** fire; **Weaknesses** cold iron 15, unholy 15; **Resistances** cold 10

Shining Blaze (aura, divine, fire) 5 feet, 8d6 fire damage (DC 37 basic Reflex)

Speed 30 feet, fly 50 feet

Melee ♦ scimitar +34 (forceful, holy, magical, sweep), **Damage** 3d6+16 slashing plus 4d6 fire

Melee ♦ burning wings +34 (agile, finesse, fire, holy, magical, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 3d10+16 fire

Ranged ♦ flame ray +34 (fire, holy, magical, range 60 feet), **Damage** 9d6 fire

Divine Innate Spells DC 40, attack +32; **9th humanoid form** (at will), **wall of fire** (×3); **Cantrips (9th) ignition**; **Constant (6th) fire shield**

Flame Jump ♦♦ (divine, teleportation) **Frequency** once per hour; **Effect** Rhysaphine Strides into an open flame of medium size or larger and instantly transports himself to any other flame of sufficient size within 100 miles. Once he enters the first flame, he instantly learns the locations of all other flames within range.

Greater Flameheart Weapon Rhysaphine can call forth a powerful weapon from his heart of flame. In his hands, this

is a +3 *greater striking greater flaming scimitar* that deals 4d6 fire damage instead of 1d6.

Flamewing Buffet ♦♦ Rhysaphine makes one scimitar Strike and two burning wings Strikes, in any order.

Trick Rider ♦ **Frequency** once per round; **Requirements** Rhysaphine is currently mounted-or adjacent to an allied creature that can function as a mount; **Effect** If Rhysaphine is mounted, he dismounts; if Rhysaphine is not mounted, he mounts the adjacent creature.

Wildfire Storm ♦ (divine, fire) Rhysaphine spreads his wings and spins, forming a whirlwind of flame that deals 19d6 fire damage in a 20-foot emanation (DC 40 basic Reflex save). He can't use Wildfire Storm again for 1d4 rounds.

SOLEIL

CREATURE 15

Male phoenix (*Pathfinder Monster Core* 264)

Initiative Perception +29

Concluding the Chapter

After fighting the peri knight and his mount, the PCs are free to enter the Nexus of Paths portal and move on to Elysium in search of High Priest Saviya, continuing with Chapter 4. The portal remains open, allowing the PCs to backtrack into this portion of the Sarzari if they need to retreat to recover or research.

Researching Achaek

The PCs don't have to research Achaek in order to progress to Chapter 4, but the tomes collected in areas **B10** and **B11** contain a wealth of obscure and astounding secrets about the Mantis God. Both libraries are very efficiently organized (although area **B11**'s organization isn't immediately obvious until a new researcher figures it out, as detailed in that area's description), so each check made to research Achaek takes only 1 hour to perform (using the Research subsystem located on page 190 of *GM Core*). The PCs could research other topics in these stacks, but the ramifications of those investigations shouldn't have a significant impact on the remainder of this adventure.

The vast majority of these books are written in Azlanti, Common, or Diabolic. For each language a researcher can't read, they take a cumulative -2 penalty to all Research checks, as they are forced to limit their researches to only those tomes they can understand.

Ancient History: The collection in area **B10** focuses on historical events associated with Achaek and his faithful; **Maximum RP** 6; **Research Checks** DC 33 Library Lore, DC 35 Society, DC 37 Perception

Religious Studies: The books found in area **B11** focus on the mythology and teachings of Achaek's faith; **Maximum RP** 6; **Research Checks** DC 33 Achaek Lore or Library Lore, DC 35 Religion, or DC 37 Perception

ACHAEK'S SECRETS

RESEARCH 16

UNIQUE DIVINE LINGUISTIC

Research Checks Ancient history (area **B10**), Religious Studies (area **B11**)

3 Research Points The PCs discover a diary from 1730 AR, written by a Rahadoui woman named Fusneeya Jamuwad. While most of the diary describes gardening, and the daily courtly life of a benefactor to the king, the final passage in stands out as significant:

"The prince sought me out again yesterday, requesting my services to the court, but he named the king, his father. The things he'd learned about the king's rule—I sharpened my blade that very night, ready to give this monster to the god of monsters. But as I worked the whetstone under the new moon's shadow, a mantis from the garden, strangely red in the candlelight, hopped through the open window and onto my hand. I held still, waiting for it to leave, but then I heard a voice in my head, so grand and magnificent: 'He is a rightful ruler, and rules by divine right.' I held still, even my breath, as I was taught. The mantis jumped onto my lap, freeing my hand. I began to work the whetstone again and the mantis bit me, startling me into dropping my blade as I quickly stood. A sign from the master of monsters. I leave this for my sisters to find, but I go to inform the prince that the king shall not be slain at my hand, for our god protects those the gods have chosen. I will likely not return."

5 Research Points Behind several other books is a misplaced tome, bound in leather the color of fresh blood: a *crimson tome* (page 103).

7 Research Points The PCs discover an ancient text bearing the religious symbol for Achaek; this text predates the formation of the Red Mantis assassins and discusses Achaek's role in ancient Azlant as a deity of monsters and natural disasters.

9 Research Points The PCs locate compiled notes suggesting that Achaek's next divine assassination will soon take place in Elysium's Clashing Shore, and that the evidence suggests his target will be two powerful proteans, named Alktherisa and Omprisgor, who are attempting to ascend to godhood through trickery and deception.

12 Research Points The PCs discover a handwritten journal of fables. The version of Taldane and style of lettering suggest an Avistani origin between 4100 AR and 4500 AR. In the text, another hand has circled key passages:

"Ihys, who would in time become the First to die, and his brother Asmodeus, who would in time become the First to kill, each defined the other and brought godness and evil with them. And Achaek rose to stand between, an arbiter over morality and a judge whose impartial aegis would, in time, crumble to savagery.

"Achaek stood sentinel at the edge of the Spire, an impartial arbiter to oversee reality's spread.

"In these final eons of the Age of Creation, the gods suffered. Groetus rose above the Boneyard for the first time. Achaek consumed his own impartiality to become little more than a mindless beast for many eons to follow."

Reward: Grant the PCs 20 XP for each new tier of information achieved during this research, for a maximum reward of 100 XP if they reach 12 Research Points.

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ADVENTURE TOOLBOX



Chapter 4: A Deity's Duty

By the end of the previous chapter, the PCs should know that their quarry, High Priest Saviya, has left the Universe entirely to visit Gorum's divine realm on Elysium. Indeed, they may even know that proteans are invading Clashing Shore and that a powerful protean duality known as Alktherisa and Omprisgor intends to trick their way into divinity. They might also suspect that Achaekék may soon manifest to oppose this attempt to rob the gifts of the divine. Certainly, that's what Saviya hopes, for once Achaekék appears, she believes she can attract his attention and earn his divine permission to move forward with her plans to replace Blood Mistress Jakalyn.

Elysium

Elysium is full of beautiful and dangerous wilderness, strange beasts, and the shades of heroes who listened to their hearts for the betterment of their worlds. It is an adventurous place full of equally adventurous souls who long to both show off their rugged individualism and work together against the encroaching corruption

of evil. Finally, it is a place of artful beauty; its scenery is picturesque and showcases some of the tallest mountains, deepest oceans, and most glorious beaches. No mortal landscape within the Universe can quite match the vistas in Elysium, and it's a realm that in many ways is diametrically opposed to the cold and calculating cruelties taught by Achaekék. Here, the PCs should feel as uncomfortable and unwelcome as an angel would in the demon-infested reaches of the Outer Rifts.

Adventuring on Elysium is largely the same as it is on any mortal world in the Universe, with the above-mentioned exception that no mortal world can equal the scope and beauty of this plane's landscapes. Time and gravity function the same, but the day and night cycles do not.

Days and Nights: When a new day dawns over Clashing Shore, roll 1d12 to determine the number of daylight hours for that day, and then 1d12 at each dusk to determine the number of hours that night lasts. These random lengths do not adjust the need or opportunities for the PCs to take an 8-hour period of rest or make their

daily preparations (which can still only be performed once every 24 hours). Celestial bodies exist, with the brightest star in the night sky being a manifestation of Desna's realm of Cynosure, which gives Elysium a fixed "north" that can be used to navigate. The number and color of moons in the night sky varies by region, but there remains only a single sun in the sky during each day. In Clashing Shore, no moon graces the night sky, but the brilliance of the stars, frequently passing comets, and constantly shifting galaxies above provide dim light throughout each night.

Clashing Shore

This chapter takes place entirely in Gorum's divine realm within Elysium, a region known as Clashing Shore. This realm is a massive beachfront battlefield where the souls of his followers can find eternal glory through combat. The realm's sprawling shoreline stretches for tens of thousands of miles, if not more. The blood-red sands and rocky beaches along the edge extend inland at varying distances—in some places only dozens of feet and in others for miles—before transitioning to rocky badlands, coastal forests, or rolling hills. One who travels long enough away from the shore might find themselves transitioning to other parts of Elysium, or they might wander their whole lives and never seem to make it so far that the ocean cannot be glimpsed through a gap in the trees or from the summit of a crag.

This ocean is known as the Boundless Azure, Elysium's largest expanse of water, yet here on Clashing Shore, the ocean's waters mix freely with the Maelstrom. Just as one might see churning storm clouds building on the ocean horizon, the writhing mass of entropy and chaos that is the Maelstrom churns just beyond the horizon of Clashing Shore. Proteans are common invaders to Clashing Shore, but other fiends, particularly demons, are known to make their way through the Maelstrom to launch offensives against Gorum's defenses on the seemingly endless beach heads.

Despite this, the first thing the PCs notice upon their arrival is the towering form of Gorum himself as he strides and battles unseen foes on the horizon, looming larger than the largest mountain against the backdrop of the churning clouds and vortices of the Maelstrom beyond. This image of Gorum is the actual god, but his foes are unseen as he fights beyond the horizon. He is engaged in multiple battles simultaneously, and what those on Clashing Shore witness as the titan clashes with adversaries beyond the edge of the Boundless Azure are mere reflections of his endless triumphs.

Gorum's presence and attitude alters reality in subtle and different ways, much like weather or the tides might affect mortal worlds. During this chapter, Gorum's knowledge that he will soon face a glorious death and a proper destiny bolsters the sense of bravery and self-identity of all in Clashing Shore. All save DCs for fear effects or mental effects that grant control over

GORUM'S ATTENTION

As this chapter progresses, the extent of the attention Gorum pays the PCs only grows. When the party first arrives in Elysium, they see the towering armored god appear to briefly glance in their direction before returning to the fight at hand against whatever unseen foe he battles. As the PCs progress through Clashing Shore and make their way to Saviya's camp, Gorum's attention is increasingly drawn toward them. Make note in particular of the PC who dealt the death blow to Ordulf Bladecaller; this PC is referred to as "Ordulf's Slayer" in this chapter and faces additional effects as Gorum draws near.

Combats that result from these events should use the map for the region the PCs are currently at, as appropriate. If they aren't at a specific mapped location, then simply use the Bloody Shore map on page 78.

another (such as *dominate*) are reduced by 2, while all DCs for effects that inflict damage are increased by 1 as a result of Gorum's particularly violent nature at this time.

Exploring Clashing Shore

The PCs' primary goal on Clashing Shore should be to seek out the conspirator Saviya and confront her, be it to capture her alive to face the Vernai or to defeat her in combat. Unfortunately for the PCs, Clashing Shore is an immense region larger than most continents, and there are countless foes potentially standing in the party's way. They need to follow a set of clues in order to reach the Edge of Chaos at which Saviya now awaits Achaek's appearance, starting with the Light of Clashing Shore (area C), which is located very near to where the portal from Sarzari emerges into the plane.

When High Priest Saviya arrived here with her Vernai co-conspirators, she had them set up a line of defensive camps and patrol routes along the shore, so that if the PCs made their way there, they'd have to contend with those defenders first and hopefully leave Saviya enough time to meet with Achaek and convince him to officially name her blood mistress over Jakalyn.

None of the PCs have actually met or seen the high priest, despite her notoriety. Likewise, they are unlikely to own any traceable materials or belongings. As a result, spells like *pinpoint* won't be of use until one of these conditions changes (such as after they gain the lock of hair found at area E). An attempt to use *scrying* to spy upon her has the normal chances of working (although again, the DC is 2 lower as long as the caster hasn't actually met her), but is unlikely to reveal anything of immediate use (see The Traitor Strikes on page 87 for more information on what Saviya is up to during this chapter).

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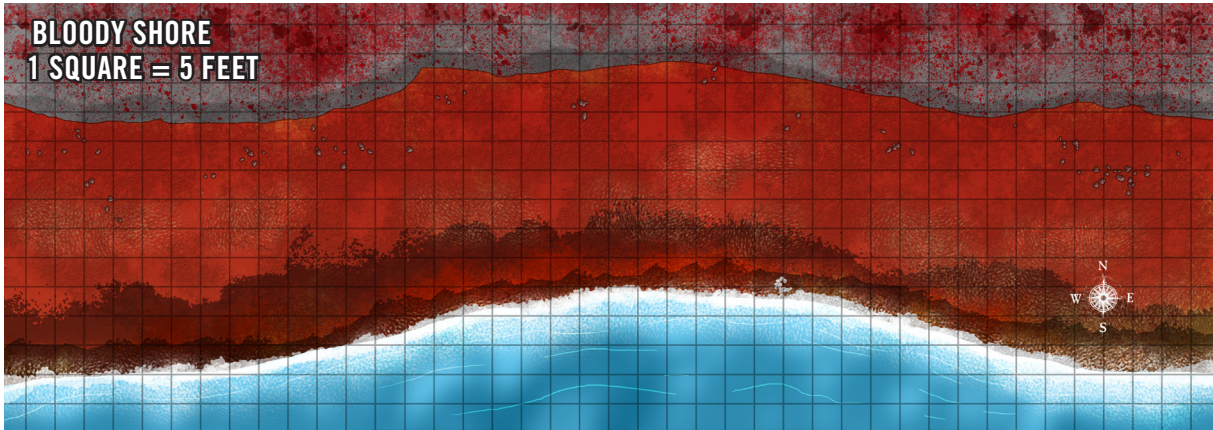
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ADVENTURE TOOLBOX

BLOODY SHORE 1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



This chapter is presented in a linear format, with the PCs traveling in order from one encounter location to the other as they follow up on clues. Each of the encounter areas ends with a “Progression” section that discusses how the PCs can follow the trail of clues to seek out Saviya. In between each encounter, Gorum takes greater notice of the PCs. These events are presented in line with the encounters as they are scheduled to occur.

The distances the PCs travel between these encounters tend to be fairly vast, and the expectation is that they’ll be using spells like *migration* or *teleport* (though note that *umbral journey* won’t function here, since Elysium doesn’t share the same relationship to the Netherworld that the Universe does). There are enough trees in Clashing Shore to allow for travel via *nature’s pathway*, but since these trees don’t universally grow along the shoreline, feel free to make travelers using this solution have to spend some time traveling overland and potentially encountering additional foes along the way. As a general rule, assume that traveling without magic from one encounter to the next takes 2d12+24 hours, but this should only impact the PCs by potentially forcing them to deal with additional combat encounters. The timing for when Achaek strikes Gorum is keyed not to the passage of time in this chapter but to Saviya’s defeat in **Event 10**.

Additional Encounters

If the party ends up spending long hours traveling across Clashing Shore to reach the next encounter, you can either hand-wave the travel and assume that no foes they encounter along the way are significant threats, or you can have them be confronted with combat situations. You should adjust the frequency and type of these encounters as works best for your group, but try to ensure these are populated with Low or Trivial threats. Here are some suggested Low 17 encounters:

- A small army of 3 einherji hosts (page 111) OR a valkyrie tempest (page 119) leading a single einherji host seek a fight to earn a chance to prove themselves to Gorum.
- A pair of warsworn (*Monster Core* 342) rise up from the bodies strewn across a battlefield the PCs have been traveling through.

- Two shemhazian demons (*Monster Core* 81) mutilating the bodies on a battlefield take offense at the PCs’ arrival and attack.
- A battlefield around a collapsed statue turns out to be guarded by four animated trebuchets (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 19), as well as by the statue, which stands up to join the fight against the PCs as an animated colossus (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 19).
- An elite keketar protean (*Monster Core* 272) confronts the PCs and demands they become thralls to aid in the destruction of order. If refused, the keketar becomes enraged and attacks.
- A group of four Red Mantis conspirators (page 44) ambush the PCs.
- Four peris (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 14) confront the PCs and demand to know if they know where one of their missing commanders (Sir Rhysaphine) has gone. The peris attack if they realize the PCs are assassins or had anything to do with Rhysaphine’s death.

C. The Light of Clashing Shore Low 17

When the PCs step through the Nexus of Paths, they emerge onto a rocky coastline about 100 feet from a cliff’s edge that plummets into the sea. After describing the strange vista before them, including the sight of Gorum battling on the horizon, draw their attention to the closest landmark—a lighthouse that stands atop the cliff before them.

A broad lighthouse stands on the precipice of a rocky cliff that overlooks a vast beach, as well as an ocean that extends as far as the eye can see. The lighthouse is well over a hundred and twenty feet tall, and its white exterior reveals bits of stonework behind artful cracks in the plaster. The top of the lighthouse has a steepled roof over large, open windows, each fitted with a long brass spyglass. A brilliant light shines from a slowly rotating beam from the structure’s top, while at its base, wooden double doors allow ingress.

The entrance to the lighthouse is unlocked. On the door, expertly burned into the door in Empyrean calligraphy, is written the following: “A light for those

in darkness. A lens for those to see. A locale to watch the war.” The tower’s interior consists entirely of a broad spiral staircase winding up the sides of the tower to the top floor 120 feet above.

A glowing circle of light flickers in the middle of the floor on the ground level, creating a beam of light that rises up through the center of the floor above and is ultimately siphoned into a lens on the upper floor. The Clashing Shore light was not built to guide ships near shore, but as an observation post for those who wish to spectate any number of the battles occurring on its shores—the light provides illumination to distantly viewed locations. The lens on the top floor can focus its beam to create bright light in a 120-foot radius (and dim light to a further 120 feet) at almost any location within 25 miles, with the exception of those locations where natural features like hills, trees, and cliffs provide cover from the light. A PC can focus the light on any location they wish as a 1-minute activity with the manipulate trait.

Creatures: The Light of Clashing Shore is one of several such lighthouses found along the coastline, and all of them are popular spots for visiting azatas to come and safely watch what’s going on in Gorum’s realm without risking exposing themselves directly to battle. When the PCs arrive, one such group is located in the upper reaches—a gathering of six elite aeolaeka azatas. While a few of them are using the spyglasses to observe other locations, most of the azatas are gathered at the eastern side of the room, taking turns watching events play out at an old bridge 20 miles to the east (area **D**). It’s this location upon which the light is currently focused, where a spectacular clash between dozens of valkyries and Red Mantis agents is unfolding. The azatas cheer on the valkyries, who have the obvious upper hand in the fight, but as soon as they notice the PCs, they swiftly move to attack, seeing their own chance to defend Elysium from an “invasion of murderers.” If at least half of the azatas are slain, the remainder flee in all directions.

ELITE AEOLAEKAS (8)

Pathfinder Monster Core 6, 35

Initiative Perception +23

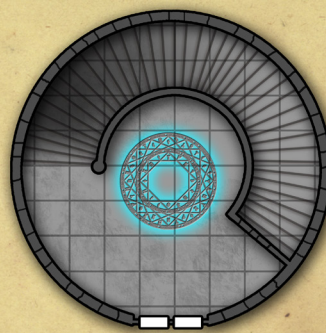
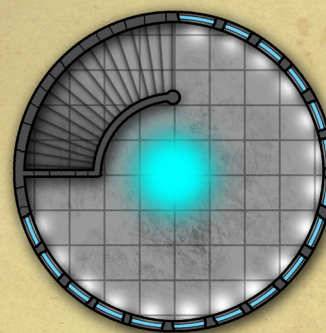
Treasure: As long as the seven spyglasses mounted on the windows on the lighthouse’s upper floor remain in place, they each function as an *Elysian clairglass* (see page 103). Removing one of these spyglasses from its mounting takes 10 minutes and a successful DC 36 Crafting check. On a failure, the spyglass is destroyed, while on a success the spyglass continues to function as an *Elysian clairglass* for 24 hours (or for 1 week on a critical success) before reverting to a fine spyglass.

Progression: Once the PCs have control of the observation deck, the battle for the bridge 20 miles to the east wraps up. A PC who peers through any of the *Elysian clairglasses* on the east side of the room without

CREATURE 13

C. LIGHT OF CLASHING SHORE

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



first changing where the azatas had them directed can see a field of dead Red Mantis assassins sprawled across the site while dozens of valkyries attend their wounded and appear to be setting up a defensive encampment. This site is presented as area **D** and is the logical next step in following Saviya’s trail.

Once the PCs recover the lock of Saviya’s hair from the Red Mantis camp at area **E**, they can use an *Elysian clairglass* to locate Saviya at the Edge of Chaos (area **F**).

Event 6: Gorum's Notice

Low 17

Run this event as the PCs exit the lighthouse and make their way toward the bridge battleground (area **D**), but immediately before they use *teleport* or other such magic, be they inside the lighthouse or otherwise.

A crack of thunder tears through the air and sends tremors through the ground as Gorum swings his sword down in a particularly decisive blow against an unseen foe. All PCs become deafened for 1 round (no save) from the peal of thunder, and those standing upon the ground are automatically knocked prone. In the silence that follows, Gorum pauses in his fight, and his glowing red eyes shift in their helm to stare directly at Ordulf’s Slayer. Each PC must then attempt a DC 38 Will save with the following results; this effect has the emotion, fear, and mental traits. Ordulf’s Slayer takes a –4 penalty on this saving throw.

Critical Success The PC is unaffected and gains a +4 circumstance bonus on the Will save they attempt against Gorum’s Focus in **Event 7**.

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Success The PC is frightened 1.

Failure The PC is frightened 2 and slowed 1 from fear as long as they remain frightened.

Critical Failure The PC is frightened 3, is slowed 1 from fear for as long as they remain frightened, and is paralyzed with fear until the end of the next round.

Creatures: Gorum's notice passes the PCs by as the god of war returns to his battle beyond the horizon, but at the same time, each PC is filled with the knowledge that Gorum has noticed them and has sent agents to greet them in battle. The conviction that these agents will arrive very soon plays out as promised; 1d4 rounds after this event begins, the once-demonic Bloody Hands appears before the party in a blast of foul-smelling smoke only an instant before the sand nearby erupts to unleash a coiling length of dead, armored bodies—a warsworn.

The warsworn attacks as many PCs as possible, providing support as needed for Bloody Hands, who focuses his attentions on Ordulf's Slayer and accuses them of being a "cowardly murderer." He promises them an eternity of torment as one of Gorum's prisoners of

war after they are slain. The duo fight to the death, but if the PCs manage to escape, they count this as a victory and do not return to seek the PCs out later.

BLOODY HANDS

CREATURE 16

Page 115

Initiative Perception +28

WARSWORN

CREATURE 16

Pathfinder Monster Core 342

Initiative Perception +27

D. Bridge to Nowhere

Moderate 17

A broad, twenty-foot-wide stone bridge paved with long slabs of granite crosses ninety feet over a deep ravine. On either side of the bridge, the entrance is flanked by twin stone statues, too battle-worn and damaged to determine their original form.

The PCs are likely drawn to this battleground after watching a swath of Red Mantis assassins fall victim to valkyries. If they don't discover this clue at the lighthouse, feel free to have the party stumble upon this site after wandering Clashing Shore for a few days, or as the result of their own scouting and divinatory magic.

Curiously, the road leading east and west from the bridge peters out after a mere 100 feet in either direction. This bridge isn't here to provide ease of access between two points, but merely serves as one of countless archetypal battlegrounds on Clashing Shore for Gorum's soldiers to fight over.

The walls of the 200-foot-deep ravine can be Climbed with a DC 30 Athletics check; the river that flows along the depth is relatively shallow and is treated as difficult terrain by Medium creatures wading in it (or as greater difficult terrain by Small creatures).

Creatures: Regardless of how long it takes for the PCs to arrive, the two troops of valkyrie tempests have finished off the Red Mantis conspirators here. If the PCs arrive quickly, the valkyries might still be recovering and could start the combat reduced to 208 Hit Points (and are thus at their first troop threshold). Otherwise, the valkyrie tempests have settled in to a temporary routine of watching over the bridge. In either case, the troops are ready and eager for another fight.

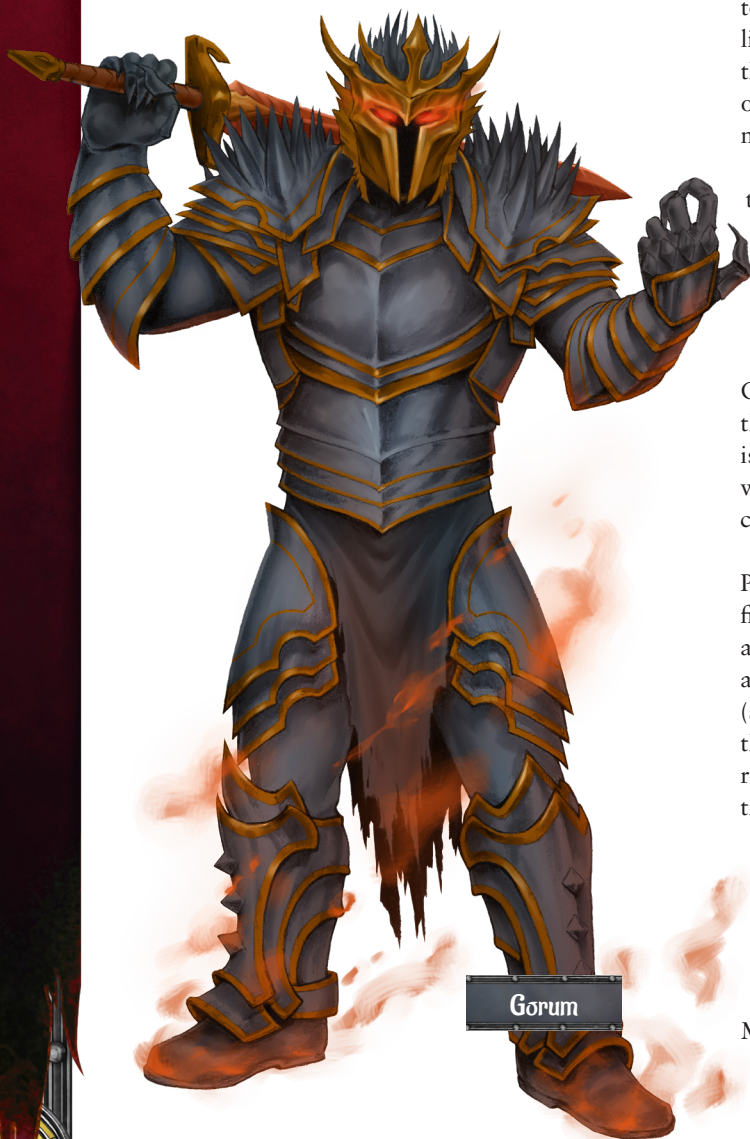
VALKYRIE TEMPESTS (2)

CREATURE 17

Page 119

Initiative Perception +28

Treasure: The bodies of the two dozen or so Red Mantis conspirators have been thrown off the bridge and into the ravine below. Most of their gear has been ruined by the fall or the battle, but 10 minutes of searching through the corpses reveals one assassin



whose +2 *greater striking greater decaying adamantine sawtooth saber* survived intact.

Progression: The body on which the PCs find the magic adamantine sawtooth saber was a commander, and when they recover her weapon, they also find a scroll that contains a recently drawn map of Clashing Shore that indicates the location of the Light of Clashing Shore and a stone bunker further east from the bridge that's been labeled "base camp." This location is 60 miles east of the bridge and is the next step the PCs should take to track down Saviya.

Alternatively, any of the dead Red Mantis assassins here can direct the PCs onward to the base camp if they are interrogated through a method like *talking corpse*.

Event 7: Gorum's Focus **Moderate 17**

Run this event after the PCs defeat the valkyrie tempests at the bridge, or perhaps even as they're searching through the dead Red Mantis assassins in the gorge below. Once again, a tremendous blast of thunder rips through the air. All PCs become deafened for 1 round (no save). The tremor causes the bridge to shift and buckle but not quite collapse—all PCs on the bridge must succeed at a DC 38 Reflex save to avoid falling into the 200-foot-deep gorge. At the same time, PCs already in the gorge take 10d6 bludgeoning damage (DC 38 basic Reflex save) from falling rubble.

After the thunder, Gorum stares at the PCs. Each PC's mind fills with images of overwhelming battle; thereafter, they must each attempt a DC 38 Will save with the following results. This effect has the emotion, incapacitation, and mental traits. Ordulf's Slayer takes a -4 penalty on this saving throw.

Critical Success The PC is unaffected and gains a +4 circumstance bonus on the Will save they attempt against Gorum's Ire in **Event 9**.

Success The PC takes 8d6 mental damage from the visions of battle.

Failure The PC takes 16d6 mental damage from the visions of battle.

Critical Failure The PC takes 24d6 mental damage from the visions of battle and is stunned 4 from the overwhelming sensation.

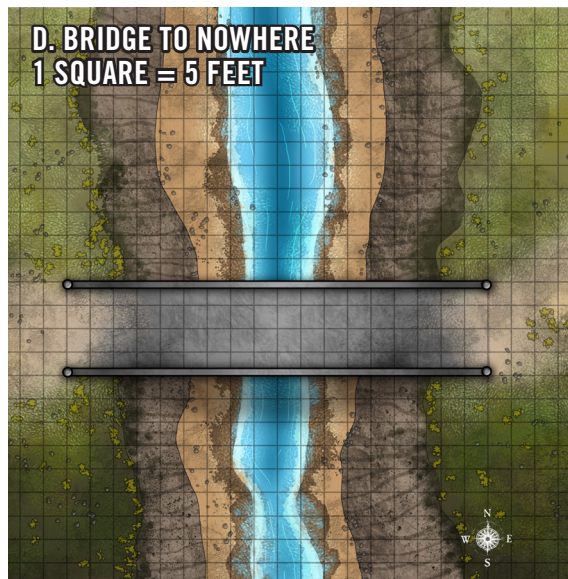
Creatures: Gorum's greatsword comes crashing down, its edge blazing with white fire, and from the blade hurl comet-like blasts that hurtle down to strike the ground near the PCs just as the aforementioned effects resolve. These blasts of fire immediately transform into more of Gorum's agents—two become monsters of living metal known as melomachs, and the last resolves into the legendary form of another of Gorum's servitors, Temperbrand. These fiery foes attack at once and fight to the death.

TEMPERBRAND

Page 117

Initiative Perception +31

CREATURE 18



MELOMACHS (2)

Pathfinder Rage of Elements 159

Initiative Perception +19

CREATURE 13

Treasure: When defeated, Temperbrand's death throes leave behind a single legendary weapon that bears the servitor's name: *Temperbrand* (see page 102).

Event 8: Vision of Taraksun

This event is optional, but you shouldn't run it until the PCs have had a chance to at least reach the bridge to nowhere. The main purpose of this event is to help the PCs find the Edge of Chaos (area F) if they miss the clues along the way or are having trouble tracking Saviya down, but also to show the party that powerful forces are gathering and watching these things unfold—and that a major metacosmic event may be coming soon!

This event should take place either when the party is frustrated with their progress, or as they're drawing close to the Edge of Chaos but haven't yet reached their destination. The air before the PCs ripples and smokes, and a moment later a staggering figure stands before them: a headless, four-armed man with countless screaming faces swirling in the roiling cloud of black smoke spewing from the ragged stump of his neck. This is an image of the asura rana Taraksun come to taunt and goad the PCs into action. A successful DC 30 Religion check to Recall Knowledge is enough to identify the somewhat obscure demigod. Taraksun speaks to the PCs; read or paraphrase the following.

"It is almost time. You are doing so well. Your commander will succeed where so many others have failed. I must thank you for the parts you have played and shall play soon when this is all over, if I even continue to exist. I hope so! Witnessing the mistakes of the divine exposed for what they are is so delicious a feeling, particularly if one survives to bask in the aftermath. Your master's mistake awaits, mortals, at the very Edge of Chaos. Go forth! I believe in you."

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Taraksun imparts the location of the Edge of Chaos in the PCs' minds, yet he doesn't reveal what awaits them there. As he does so, a wave of his own anticipation for a divine mistake and the death of something powerful enough to reshape reality fills each PC. Leave them to anticipate what divine death is imminent, though! Taraksun vanishes a moment later, leaving behind a curling red path of heatless fire intended to lead the PCs onward. His true motives for encouraging the PCs forward must, for now, remain a mystery.

E. Red Mantis's Camp Moderate 17

Waves surge against this cliff-lined shore. Bodies—those of Red Mantis assassins, valkyries, and einherjar—litter the rocky ground. A flat-topped spur of granite thrusts up from the earth, rising thirty feet to support a twenty-foot-tall stone bunker with several narrow arrow slits adorning its sides.



Located 60 miles east of the bridge (area D) and 80 miles east of the Light of Clashing Shore (area C), this old bunker (like the bridge at area D) is not meant to serve an actual strategic use for Clashing Shore's infrastructure, but exists as another battleground "prop" for conflicts to play out, with control of the bunker shifting constantly as one group claims it from another. The Red Mantis conspirators who accompanied Saviya into Clashing Shore didn't quite intend to play into this truth so completely—they hoped to be able to retain this site as a base of operations for some time, but war in Clashing Shore is anything but predictable.

The PCs are likely to come to this location after discovering the scroll among the remains in the gorge at area D, but if they miss this clue, feel free to let the PCs reach the campsite after wandering Clashing Shore for a few days, or as the result of their own scouting and divinatory magic.

The cliffs, both those leading up to the bunker and down to the beach, can be Climbed with a successful DC 30 Athletics check. The bunker has a trap door on the roof but no actual ground-level entrance—it's surrounded on all sides by arrow slits that a Medium creature can Squeeze through with a DC 30 Athletics check, or that a Small creature can move through by treating it as greater difficult terrain. Inside, more dead Red Mantis assassins lie sprawled about the bunker, their bodies all completely drained of blood. The corpses of conspirators found outside are in the same condition.

Creatures: Not long after the PCs arrive, the cause of the blood-drained corpses becomes apparent: a pair of ravenous bloodfogs pour out of the bunker, their misty bodies slithering out through the arrow slits to fly down and attack the PCs. The bloodfogs fight to the death.

BLOODFOGS (2)

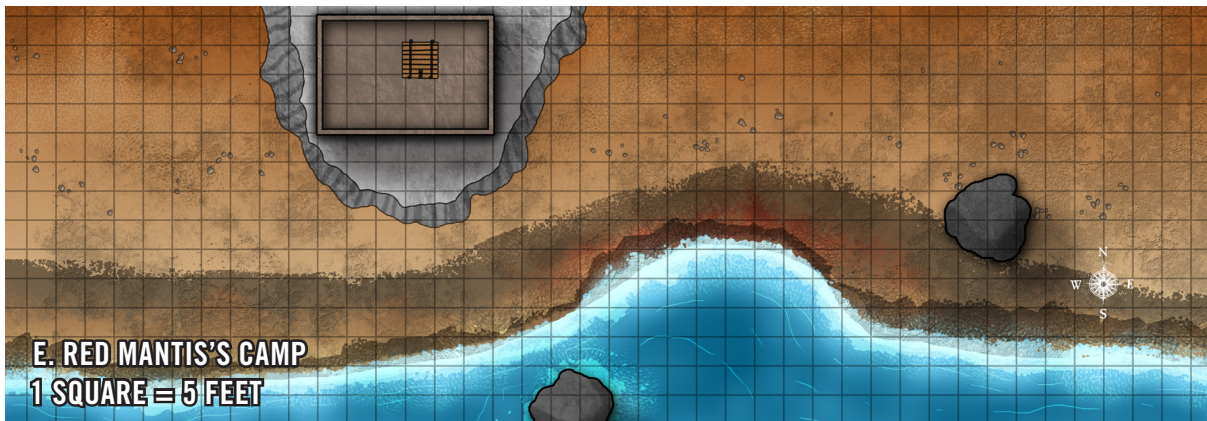
CREATURE 17

Page 110

Initiative Perception +29

Treasure: Much of the gear carried or worn by the dead assassins here survives, but it's all lower-level magical gear—a mix of +1 *striking sawtooth sabers* and +1 *resilient leather armor* that is unlikely to be of much value to 17th-level PCs. If your party is intent on gathering up all of this low-level treasure, they can recover 30 suits of armor and 60 sabers worth a total of 21,000 gp at 36 Bulk in all.

Of greater interest to the PCs are the remains of the commander who once led this group. The body of this low-ranking Vernai conspirator lies slumped inside the bunker in the northwest corner of the chamber, still gripping the red-glowing blade of her +2 *greater striking unholy sawtooth saber* in one hand. A search of her belongings reveals a small red leather pouch that contains a lock of Saviya's hair. A successful



DC 25 Achaekkek Lore or Ilizmagorti Lore check or a DC 35 Religion check to Recall Knowledge allows a PC to recognize the significance of the red leather pouch. They recall that it's a mostly outdated tradition among commanders in the Red Mantis to leave their second-in-command with a lock of hair so that, should things go poorly, a *resurrect* ritual can be performed later to bring that commander back from death. The PCs can use this lock of hair to determine Saviya's exact location using *pinpoint*, perhaps through the use of an *Elysian clairglass*.

Progression: If the PCs don't think to use the lock of hair to divine Saviya's location via *pinpoint* or a similar effect, you can run **Event 8** at this time to help clarify their next step. Saviya lies in wait another 100 miles to the east at the end of a prominent peninsula that extends dangerously close to the border between Clashing Shore and the Maelstrom. *Pinpoint* notes the location as being "Saviya's planar palace at the Edge of Chaos of Clashing Shore." A PC who then succeeds at a DC 34 Elysium Lore or DC 36 Religion check confirms this location to be a peninsula that extends from Clashing Shore, the only place in the divine realm that is directly adjacent to the planar boundary between Elysium and the Maelstrom. If the PCs recovered the map from the Bridge to Nowhere (area **D**), the location of the Edge of Chaos is indicated on that map as being 100 miles east of the Red Mantis camp.

Event 9: Gorum's Ire Severe 17

Run this event after the PCs defeat the bloodfogs at the Red Mantis camp, preferably just after they discover and realize what the lock of hair in the red leather pouch signifies but before they move on toward the Edge of Chaos.

As in the previous two instances of Gorum taking note of the PCs, a thunderous blast rips through the air, causing all PCs to become deafened for 1 round (no save). The resulting tremor causes the bunker to shatter and explode, raining stony shrapnel in all directions. All PCs in the area take 10d6 slashing damage (DC 38 basic Will save); those inside the bunker at this time gain a +4 circumstance bonus on the save since most of the shrapnel sprays outward.

As the stony fragments rain down, Gorum abandons the fight he's been engaged in and turns to face the party, gazing in particular down at Ordulf's Slayer. To stand fully beneath the gaze of the god of war causes the soul to quail—each PC must attempt a DC 38 Will save with the following results; this effect has the emotion, incapacitation, and mental traits. Ordulf's Slayer takes a -4 penalty on this saving throw. The enfeebled condition imparted by this effect is a level 20 effect (counteract rank 10, DC 39).

Critical Success The PC is unaffected and gains a +4 circumstance bonus on all checks made to avoid and escape from the abscess in **Event 11**.

Success The PC becomes enfeebled 1 for 8 hours.

Failure The PC becomes enfeebled 2 for 24 hours and becomes doomed 1.

Critical Failure The PC becomes enfeebled 3 until the condition is countered and becomes doomed 2.

Creatures: A few moments later, the waters at the shore explode as another of Gorum's servitors emerges to attack, but this time, the PCs automatically recognize one of their foes. These minions consist of the great dragon Saint Fang, one of Gorum's most legendary servitors, and none other than Ordulf himself, serving Gorum in the afterlife as a berserker! This version of Ordulf appears as he did in life, but his body bears livid scars from the numerous mortal blows the PCs struck him during Chapter 1. He now wields a shining greatsword that flickers with lightning, and as the combat begins, he dismounts dramatically from Saint Fang's back to engage the party in melee while the dragon fights from afar. In combat, Ordulf focuses his anger and wrath on his slayer, while Saint Fang focuses on other targets. The two are joined in battle by another pair of melomachs, more living shards of metal calved from Gorum's body.

During combat, Ordulf focuses on melee attacks against the PCs, favoring his slayer. His statistics in this fight are an elite version of those he possessed in life, save that he no longer has Gorum's major boon, can fly through the air without wings, and fights with a new weapon. Saint Fang flies around the outskirts of the battle using his breath weapon as often as possible; in

rounds where he cannot breathe, he closes to melee with other PCs, taking advantage of his reach and returning to the air to breathe on them as often as possible. The melomachs prefer to harry Ordulf's target to help him keep his foe off-guard.

Ordulf and the melomachs fight to the death, but Saint Fang does not. As the battle begins, the dragon roars out, "Turn back, foolish mortals! The infestation of your kind on these shores is an affront to Our Lord In Iron." If he's reduced to 100 HP or less, however, he shrieks in rage and seeks to escape.

SAINT FANG

CREATURE 18

Page 115

Initiative Perception +31

BERSERKER ORDULF

CREATURE 17

Elite Ordulf Bladecaller (page 35)

Initiative Perception +30

Items +2 greater resilient greater cold-resistant full plate, +3 greater striking greater shock vorpal greatsword

Speed 25 feet, fly 20 feet

Melee ♦ greatsword +33 (magical, versatile P), **Damage** 3d12+13 slashing plus 1d6 electricity

MELOMACHS (2)

CREATURE 13

Pathfinder Rage of Elements 159

Initiative Perception +19

F. The Edge of Chaos

Moderate 17

The rocky cliffs, the sandy shore, and the endless ocean all begin to break apart in this liminal space between the planes. A ten-foot-high ledge juts out from the cliffside to the north, atop which grows a single tree with glowing silver and gold runes shimmering on its trunk. Further east, the landscape breaks apart into ribbons of ocean and floating islands of sand and rock and grass, beyond which the churning chaos of the Maelstrom rules.

This is the edge, the planar boundary between Elysium and the Maelstrom. A PC who succeeds at a DC 34 Elysium Lore or DC 36 Nature or Religion check to Recall Knowledge recognizes the rune-marked tree at area **F1** as a "rift tree"—one of the many ways that the plane of Elysium works to counteract the constant erosion of its structure by the Maelstrom.

The edge of Elysium drops away into a cerulean nothingness upon which rocky isles float and a river of ocean winds away into the distance. A person who falls off the edge here does not fall—they merely float in place as if under the effect of levitate, but lack the ability to move themselves. Eventually, currents of air may cause a floating creature to come within reach of a solid shore, but those with the least luck simply drift into the forever that is the Maelstrom.

High Priest Saviya has determined through long research and divination that this site will give her the greatest view of what she expects to be Achaekek's assassination of the dualistic protean known as Alktherisa and Omprisgor, but for now, she waits in hiding in a *planar palace* granted to her through daily castings of *manifestation*. The entrance to her *planar palace* lies at area **F2**, out of direct line of sight from area **F1**.

Creature: Among the keketar proteans of the Maelstrom, long-term relationships and



Berserker Ordulf

cooperation are not the norm, and the two keketars Alktherisa and Omprisgor defied this norm for many centuries by working together more and more closely. The capacity of one keketar's potential for chaos and orchestrating proteans en masse increased more than twofold in the pair, and after a powerful aeon confronted them (a battle that resulted in the conjoined protean ripping the aeon in half and each swallowing down almost equal portions), they decided it was time for things to change. The two keketars, ever the best of friends, became even more inseparable than before. They always knew what the other was thinking or going to do next. It is unclear whether their belief that they were destined to replace the protean Speaker of the Depths was the cause or the result of their bodies physically merging together. The answer isn't really something that Alktherisa and Omprisgor dwell upon, for now their goal is to ascend to divinity to take what they believe is their rightful place as the ruler of the Maelstrom.

The two keketars have been pursuing this outlandish plan for centuries, spending years plotting their next move and moving on to the next when it inevitably came to naught. Their current plan is to absorb 999 rift trees along the sprawling borders between the Maelstrom and the other planes of the Great Beyond, so that they can embody the entire circumference of the Maelstrom. The rift tree perched at the Edge of Chaos is to be the first in their plan. The conjoined keketars have wrapped themselves around the tree at area F1, yet have been focusing on it for years, and only recently have they started to feel an undeniable "softening" between themselves and the tree that they hope presages absorption.

As such, Alktherisa and Omprisgor are annoyed when the PCs approach, just as they were when that other mortal who was here just a "moment" ago showed up. Saviya arrived some time ago, in fact, at around the same time that the PCs began Chapter 3. The keketars gladly tell the PCs what they're doing here if the mortals stop and listen—the other mortal didn't, but she did go away, which is also acceptable—but they expect the PCs to depart once story time is over. If not, they'll have to devour them and then start their process of absorbing the tree again.

If the PCs ask in particular about Saviya, Alktherisa and Omprisgor grow increasingly frustrated, saying, "She stepped through a door a while back and hasn't come back. Why don't you do the same?" The longer the PCs speak to Alktherisa and Omprisgor, the more likely it is that the conjoined protean gets fed up and attacks. After the first minute spent telling the PCs their story, Alktherisa and Omprisgor's attention and focus shift to a randomly determined PC, who must succeed at a DC 40 Deception, DC 38 Diplomacy, DC 40 Intimidation, or DC 36 Performance check to keep the conjoined protean from growing too annoyed. If the skill check chosen was used in the previous minute, the DC increases by 2. Other PCs cannot Aid this check, and if anyone tries to intercede, Alktherisa and Omprisgor chide the PCs (both speaking a little bit off-sync with their two mouths) for talking over each other and warn them to "wait their turn."



Alktherisa and Omprisgor

PREY FOR DEATH

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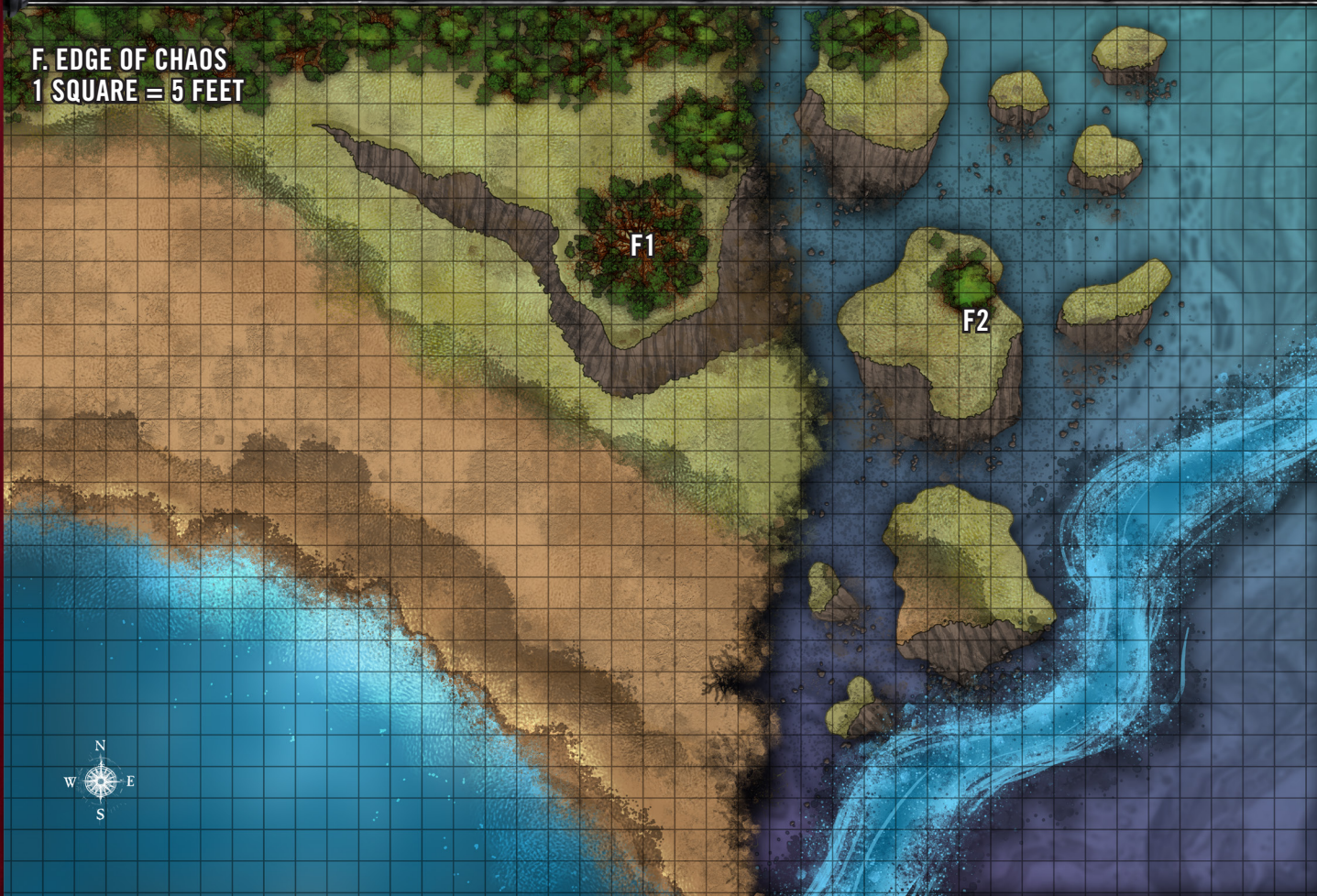
CHAPTER 3: SECRETS OF THE MANTIS

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ILIZMAGORTI

ADVENTURE TOOLBOX

F. EDGE OF CHAOS
1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



If the PCs can keep Alktherisa and Omprisgor distracted like this for 10 minutes (by succeeding at 10 skill checks), Saviya finally grows worried that the PCs might actually be able to convince the protean to leave before Achaek's arrival—after all, Saviya still believes the conjoined protean is the Mantis God's target. She emerges from her planar palace at area **F2** at this time to confront the PCs as detailed in **Event 10**.

If the PCs fail even a single check, attempt to Aid a check after their first warning, attempt the same type of check twice in a row, or simply (at your discretion) annoy the proteans, the pair sigh in frustration and decide it's best to just eat these annoying mortals and start the task of rift tree absorption over from the beginning. Alktherisa roars in frustration and begins to uncoil while Omprisgor cries out "No! Wait! Not yet!" only to shift to screaming "Now you'll pay!" at the PCs as it becomes apparent that Alktherisa isn't listening. The conjoined protean attacks at once, fighting to the death, as they can perceive no reality in which they can actually die—until they do.

ALKTHERISA AND OMPRISGOR

CREATURE 19

UNIQUE HUGE MONITOR PROTEAN

Variant bigender keketar (*Pathfinder Monster Core* 273)

Perception +30; entropy sense (imprecise) 60 feet, darkvision

Languages Chthonian, Emyrean, Protean; telepathy 100 feet, *truespeech*

Skills Acrobatics +33, Athletics +37, Deception +35, Diplomacy +35, Intimidation +37, Religion +34, Stealth +33
Str +10, **Dex** +6, **Con** +8, **Int** +6, **Wis** +5, **Cha** +8

Burst of Creation (healing, vitality) When Alktherisa and Omprisgor die, they explode in a 30-foot burst, washing all creatures in the area with protean energy. These creatures are healed 20d6 Hit Points and must succeed at a DC 38 Fortitude Save or be affected by a warpwave (*Monster Core* 270) for 1 round.

Entropy Sense (divine, prediction) As keketar.

Two As One Alktherisa and Omprisgor are a single creature, but each of their heads rolls its own initiative and has its own turn. At the start of a head's turn, it gets 2 actions and 1 reaction. Each head controls one set of arms, but both control the serpentine body. Any ability that would sever a head doesn't cause the conjoined protean to die if it still has its other head, but it does cause it to lose the turns, actions, and reactions of the severed head. Mental effects that target a single creature affect only one of the keketar's heads.

AC 43; **Fort** +35, **Ref** +33, **Will** +30; +1 status to all saves vs. magic

HP 300, fast healing 15; **Resistances** precision 15, protean anatomy 25

Protean Anatomy (divine) As keketar.

Spatial Riptide (aura, divine) 30 feet. As keketar, but DC 41.

Eat Death **Trigger** A creature within Omprisgor's reach is targeted by a spell that deals Hit Point damage; **Effect**

Omprisgor attempts to counteract the spell with a Religion check; if he succeeds, the spell is countered and Omprisgor becomes quickened for 1 round; he may use the additional action to Stride or Strike.

Eat Life ➤ **Trigger** A creature within Alktherisa's reach is targeted by a spell that heals Hit Points or grants temporary Hit Points; **Effect** Alktherisa and Omprisgor become additional targets of that spell, even if that spell normally couldn't target an additional creature.

Reactive Strike ➤ As keketar.

Speed 40 feet, fly 50 feet, swim 40 feet; *unfettered movement*

Melee ➤ jaws +37 (magical, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 4d12+18 piercing plus warpwave strike

Melee ➤ claw +37 (agile, magical, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 4d8+18 slashing plus warpwave strike

Melee ➤ tail +37 (reach 15 feet), **Damage** 4d8+18 bludgeoning plus Grab

Divine Innate Spells DC 44, attack +35; **9th** *divine wrath*, *unfathomable song*; **8th** *cursed metamorphosis*, *confusion*; **7th** *disintegrate*, *dispel magic* (at will), *shatter* (at will), *warp mind* (×3); **6th** *teleport* (at will, self only); **5th** *creation* (at will), *mirage* (×2; see *Reshape Reality*), *translocate*; **4th** *confusion* (at will), *translocate* (at will); **Constant (5th)** *truespeech*; **(4th)** *unfettered movement*

Change Shape ➤ (concentrate, divine, polymorph) As keketar.

Constrict ➤ 1d10+15 bludgeoning, DC 41 (*Monster Core* 358)

Reshape Reality (concentrate, divine, polymorph) As keketar.

Warpwave Strike (divine, polymorph) As keketar, but DC 38.

Event 10: The Traitor Strikes Severe 17

Creatures: When High Priest Saviya first arrived at the Edge of Chaos, Alktherisa and Omprisgor greeted her in much the same way as they did the PCs. Rather than confront the conjoined protean, though, Saviya obeyed their command to “begone”—as far as the distracted protean knows, at least. In truth, she simply cast *manifestation* to create a *planar palace*, placing its doorway on one of the floating islands east of the rift tree that was consuming Alktherisa and Omprisgor's attention.

This small island floats 100 feet above area F1, so the portal to her palace is not plainly visible from ground level and is well out of range of Alktherisa and Omprisgor's entropy sense. Saviya's taken to leaving the portal open so that she or her bodyguard, Zivnivoss, can keep watch on the horizon or Clashing Shore below for Achaekek's inevitable arrival.

The PCs' arrival in the area is a complication, yet not one Saviya is surprised by. Once she or Zivnivoss notice the PCs are in the region, she casts *disappearance* and moves to the edge of her floating island to observe. If a fight takes place and the PCs defeat Alktherisa and Omprisgor, Saviya is astounded and enraged, and she reacts as detailed below. If instead the PCs manage to keep the protean distracted without fighting for 10 minutes, as soon as her *disappearance* spell's duration ends, she moves down to confront the PCs anyway, nervous that their ability to converse constructively with

SWITCHING ALLEGIANCE

Prey for Death assumes that the PCs remain loyal to Blood Mistress Jakalyn, but there's a chance that some groups might come around to Saviya's reasoning—particularly if they discovered the method by which Jakalyn's been extending her life and found this to be a step too far. When Saviya confronts them, the PCs can convince her that they're on her side and support her bid to become the new blood mistress if they immediately start speaking of such upon first meeting Saviya, then spend a minute trying to convince her of their earnestness with a successful DC 40 Diplomacy check (other PCs can Aid this check).

If they PCs convince her they're on her side, Saviya is wary but surprised. She stands down, though just as she starts to welcome the PCs into her conspiracy, Achaekek arrives, and the truth of what's been brewing behind the scenes becomes apparent for all to see. Whether or not Saviya survives the abscess (and if she does, what sorts of repercussions the PCs might face for betraying Blood Mistress Jakalyn) are left to you to decide.

the strange conjoined protean might lead to something even worse than their death before Achaekek's arrival.

If Saviya confronts the PCs while Alktherisa and Omprisgor still live, she does so by attempting to be calm and pleasant and invites the PCs to speak with her on a matter of great import. This is, of course, a Lie—she hopes to lure the PCs back into her *planar palace* to kill them. In the unlikely event the PCs fall for this and agree, feel free to use a map of your own design for the ambush she springs on them as soon as they're in the *planar palace*. The PCs, of course, don't need to see through her Lie to refuse her invitation, at which point her patience breaks and she attacks.

If the PCs kill Alktherisa and Omprisgor, she attacks as well, although in this case her tactic is to fly down to the shore below and then cast *project image* to create an image of herself from which she begins casting spells at the PCs. Enraged, she cries out, “You fools! You've ruined our Lord's plan! I'll kill you for this, you vapid pawns! Murderous imbeciles!” If Alktherisa and Omprisgor still live when a fight breaks out, she uses a similar threat, amending it to “You'll ruin our Lord's plan!” before attacking. Alktherisa and Omprisgor do not get involved in this fight unless the PCs attack them, in which case the protean attacks both groups indiscriminately.

Once a fight begins, Saviya's bodyguard, Zivnivoss, does his best to stay between his mistress and the PCs so she can use her spells on their foes. High Priest Saviya has been waiting for Achaekek to arrive and assassinate the upstart keketar pair who would dare become a god, and her frustration at the PCs' actions potentially rendering a visit from Achaekek irrelevant clouds her own sense of self-preservation. As a result, she fights to the death.

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ILIZMAGORTI

ADVENTURE TOOLBOX

SAVIYA

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Initiative Perception +34

CREATURE 19

ZIVNIVOSS

Elite astradaemon (*Monster Core* 6, 75)

Initiative Perception +34

CREATURE 17

Event 11: Escape from the Abscess

While the primary story of *Prey for Death* concludes with the PCs' confrontation of the Vernai conspirator Saviya, the adventure's climax begins immediately after, for their presence on Clashing Shore has finally attracted Gorum's full attention. A few moments after Saviya's defeat, another peal of thunder tears through the air. This time, though, the PCs are not deafened, nor do they face a deadly battle against Gorum's minions. This time, they bear witness to the death of a god.

As the distant thunder echoes across Clashing Shore, blood-red storm clouds rise up from the horizon, churning in vortices around Gorum's body. The god turns toward the PCs, his gaze seeming to fall upon them all rather than just Ordulf's Slayer. He takes a step, and the world trembles. He takes another and another, building speed as his walk turns to a stride and then a run. Immense waves spread forward as each footfall crashes down into the ocean, and the clouds themselves seem to twist and tear. The PCs can take no action for the moment in the face of such overwhelming deific doom. It should be apparent to each PC that Gorum has decided to take their fates into his own hands, and that certain death is only moments away.

And then the ocean explodes behind Gorum, a foaming wall of water rising up behind him. From this unimaginably vast plume, a crimson blade scythes out and plunges through Gorum's back, piercing him through the chest to emerge in a spray of metallic shrapnel. Time seems to stand still apart from the falling cascade of water, which reveals the towering form of Achaekkek standing beyond Gorum, one of his blade-like arms plunged through the god of war's torso.

There's a moment of profound stillness as He Who Walks In Blood stands behind his prey. Gorum is still and silent, while Achaekkek turns to face the PCs. He clicks his mandibles, gives the slightest of nods, and the feeling of religious awe washes outward to any Red Mantis assassin. They have witnessed what few mortals ever shall: the execution of a god.

A moment later, Achaekkek rips his arm to the side, and the upper third of Gorum's body is torn away with a single tremendous strike that rends reality. Cracks radiate out from the killing blow, red light shining out from within the god of war's body. As his body begins to topple to the ground, his armor rips open, revealing what many have long suspected—nothing is within. And then, his remains explode.

To the PCs, the sight of this divine explosion is silent, for despite the size and spectacle, Gorum's body is many miles away. From their perches, they bear witness as tsunamis are pushed forward and blasts of blood-red shrapnel radiate outward as Gorum's armor explodes from within. Yet their view is momentarily eclipsed by a sudden beam of red light, one that blasts outward from the core of Gorum's armor and lances backward toward the unseen heart of the Maelstrom. Even Achaekkek is startled by this display of power and staggers back from the kill.

At this point, the onrushing devastation of Gorum's death throes presents a very real threat to the PCs, for this loss tears the very reality of Clashing Shore apart as well. Achaekkek vanishes in a cloud of blood, abandoning the site of the execution, but the PCs are on their own. They can take action once more, but the crumbling of raw reality around them leaves them little time to react.

What the PCs are witnessing is an immense planar abscess triggered by the death of a god. Though the countless fragments of Gorum's armor hurtle outward in all directions to rain down upon every world in which he was worshipped (an event that will come to be known as the Godsrain), the immediate peril facing the PCs is even greater. Simply fleeing, by means magical or mundane, is not enough, for as soon as one course of action is decided upon, the planar abscess changes the rules of their reality. The PCs are trapped within an apocalypse, and to escape, they must endure three distinct cataclysms.

This climactic escape plays out using Victory Points (*GM Core* 184), with the PCs facing three end-of-the-world disasters that they must survive long enough to ride out the devastation caused by Gorum's death. At the same time, though, each PC is infused with mythic power, as Gorum's divine essence bolsters them beyond the limits of mere mortals, if only for a moment. In other worlds throughout reality, these shards bring mythic power to many new heroes and villains, but for the context of this climactic encounter, they grant the PCs the chance to accomplish things they could only dream about.

Present each of the following obstacles in order, describing the devastation the party faces, then asking each player how their character intends to overcome the obstacle. Encourage each PC to draw upon their surge of deific power to do things like perform astounding physical stunts, cast supercharged spells, or simply shrug off the chaos and move onward. This amounts to three choices each round, and each skill check or saving throw made gains a +15 untyped bonus to the check to represent the sudden infusion of divine power.

- A DC 50 Acrobatics, Athletics, or Stealth check (as determined by the GM) to perform an astounding physical stunt. If the stunt performed uses a skill listed in the obstacle as being a key check, reduce the DC to 46.

- A DC 50 Arcana, Nature, Occultism, or Religion check to resolve the casting of a supercharged spell. If the PC casts an appropriate spell to solve the situation at hand and create an effect listed in that obstacle's Key Checks, reduce the DC to 46.
- A DC 50 saving throw (the GM chooses which one makes most sense based on how the player chooses to try to avoid the disaster). If the saving throw being made is one that's specifically mentioned in the obstacle as being well-suited for avoiding it, reduce the DC to 46.

THE LAND ERUPTS

OBSTACLE 25

Key Checks Acrobatics (to Balance atop an unstable island or to Maneuver in Flight to avoid shards of reality); Cast a Spell to grant superior mobility (such as flight or teleportation); Reflex (to avoid explosions)

Reality shatters, and Clashing Shore, as far as the eye can see, breaks apart into countless islands that begin to drift into the ocean or blast shards of shrapnel into the air.

THE MOUNTAINS RISE

OBSTACLE 25

Key Checks Athletics (to Climb or Leap over mountains, to smash them apart, or to Swim through the ocean gulfs between them); Cast a Spell to blast a path through the mountains (using any spell that causes damage or manipulates stone or objects); Fortitude (to endure being smashed by a mountain)

Jagged mountains rise up and form a defensive bulwark against the devastation still being unleashed by Gorum's death, as scabs would form over wounded flesh.

CHAOS TAKES NOTE

OBSTACLE 25

Key Checks Stealth (to Hide or Sneak and avoid being noticed by the encroaching chaos); Cast a Spell to fight back against the planar intrusion (using any spell that counteracts magic, banishes planar effects, or draws upon order to fight entropy); Will (to resist the overwhelming mental trauma caused by the truths laid bare by the Maelstrom's touch)

As Clashing Shore continues to transform, the raw entropic chaos of the Maelstrom takes notice and moves in, forming creeping tendrils of matter and energy that writhe like an immense organism feeding on a dying coastline.

At the end of these three obstacles, total up the number of Victory Points the PCs have accumulated and compare them to the following potential outcomes.

4 or Fewer Victory Points: The party is overwhelmed by the devastation and is lost forever—or at your discretion, you could continue with the characters as they find a way to return home from a ravaged, post-apocalyptic divine realm while enduring a wide range of debilitating effects of your own design.

5–8 Victory Points: The party endures the worst of the destruction, but as Clashing Shore and the Maelstrom continue to grind and churn, it should be obvious that the PCs should flee the realm as soon as possible. They must rely upon their own resources to

do so—or, if you'd prefer, they can make their way back to the Light of Crashing Shore where, hopefully, the portal back to Sarzari might still remain open.

9 or More Victory Points: As the party triumphs over the reshaping of reality, tears through the fabric of the Great Beyond give them a singular opportunity to plunge through an opening and emerge anywhere they wish that they've previously visited. They can use this to quickly and safely return to the Crimson Citadel or Ilizmagorti, for example.

Reward: For witnessing Gorum's death and outrunning the planar abscess, grant the PCs enough XP that they gain a level.

Concluding the Adventure

With Saviya defeated, be she slain or captured alive, the PCs are welcomed by more than the Vernai when they return to Ilizmagorti, for Blood Mistress Jakalyn has returned as well. She greets the PCs eagerly, and if Saviya is brought back as a prisoner, she offers the PCs the honor of executing her on the spot—though if the PCs balk, Jakalyn does so herself. In thanks for their service, Jakalyn offers positions in the Vernai to all PCs who are members of the Red Mantis assassins. To those who were hired mercenaries, she hints that it may be time for non-assassins to hold seats on the Vernai. Whether or not she takes such a step is left to you to decide.

If the PCs confront Jakalyn about the imprisonment and torture of Behezamine, her former mentor and blood mistress, she states that “while the rules apply to all of us, I'm the one who makes the rules.” She threatens the PCs with worse than death if they reveal her secret to anyone; a threat she can easily make good on. If the PCs decided to slay Behezamine, Jakalyn is frustrated but states that there are always other resources to pull from (and stares pointedly at any elves in the party). Further repercussions on the PCs for displeasing Jakalyn are left to you to determine, but should not be pleasant futures for the PCs to anticipate.

While things would usually return to normal on Mediogalti after the defeat of a group of conspirators, things are very much not normal on Golarion. Gorum's death resulted in a rain of deific fragments that crashed down upon all the worlds on which Gorum was worshipped. This event, which becomes known as the Godsrain, not only signifies the death of one god and throws the followers of Gorum's faith into chaos, but also brings a new source of mythic power to all these worlds, as heroes and villains alike are blessed or cursed with shrapnel cleaved from Gorum's body. The implications of this event on Golarion, the Universe, and the Great Beyond are significant, and the ripple effects caused by Gorum's death will change the course of history. This will be explored in numerous Pathfinder books in the months to come—but for the PCs of *Prey for Death*, they at least have a chance to rest.



Ilizmagorti

Called Scum Tide City by those who have reason to hate (or fear) it, Ilizmagorti is wild and unpredictable. Its streets and quays are rife with pirates, assassins, con artists, sellswords, and scoundrels from all walks of life. Danger lies right around the corner, menace swims just beneath the surface, and death lurks in the trackless jungles beyond its walls, but even so, Ilizmagorti presents a promise of adventure like no other. For a city locked in the grip of an international syndicate of feared assassins, its citizens enjoy almost limitless freedoms. A visitor can meet his end at the point of a bloody knife in a darkened alley, or he can rise to the heights of wealth and influence. At its heart, Ilizmagorti is a city of unbounded possibility.

While Ilizmagorti is controlled by the Red Mantis, the assassins don't serve as the city's leaders—that role falls to Ilizmagorti's mayor. Though anyone can request an audience with the Mayor by joining the line outside the disused lighthouse on Mayor's Island, the Mayor wears a different face for each visitor and indeed for each time the same visitor seeks an audience. The Mayor can appear to be a wizened crone, a handsome elven gentlemen, a twinkling-eyed gnome, or even a child. Yet regardless of their appearance, the Mayor always remembers past conversations and judgments. In truth, Ilizmagorti's mayor is a mysterious and powerful doppelganger named Dorel. While not technically a member of the Red Mantis, their sadism and skill at occult magic make them an excellent fit for the organization, and they've maintained a strong loyalty to the Vernai for the past several decades after they replaced the previous mayor.

The Mayor delegates Ilizmagorti's law enforcement and security to the soldiers of the Blood Watch. From their headquarters in the Alcasar, they patrol the city and its walls, easily recognizable in their blood-red armor. With so many of its citizens involved with the Red Mantis in one way or another, Ilizmagorti has few laws and even fewer that need enforcing. Most visitors are exceedingly careful to avoid harming a citizen of Ilizmagorti, as most residents are more than capable of defending themselves.

While, to the untrained eye, Ilizmagorti appears to foster the standard class distinctions among its citizens of upper class aristocracy, middle class providers, and destitute lower class, these truisms are largely distracting and often dangerous. In Ilizmagorti, the true class distinctions are associated with a person's standing among the Red Mantis. Members of the Vernai are the highest caste in Ilizmagorti, followed by members of the Red Mantis and their active agents. Next are members of the Blood Watch, followed by the bulk of Ilizmagorti's citizens. Welcome visitors (including most of the pirates found in the city) follow this class, while at the very bottom lie confirmed enemies of the Red Mantis. Since it's impossible to tell at a glance if a beggar is an assassin in disguise or if a gaudy-looking noble is a Thrune spy, how much money you have doesn't directly impact one's social rank.

Since such distinctions make it difficult to grasp at first glance what caste a stranger might belong to, most of Ilizmagorti's citizens have fallen into the habit of treating all strangers as potential Red Mantis assassins. This has resulted in an outwardly more orderly and crime-free society than many non-assassin-ruled cities elsewhere in the Inner Sea region. When one knows (or thinks they know) of another's actual caste, these assumptions vanish, of course, but as a general rule, visitors to Ilizmagorti are left to their own business as long as they don't put on appearances that mark them as obvious enemies to the city. One major exception, however, applies to those who seek to enter or leave Ilizmagorti.

ENTERING ILIZMAGORTI

Entrance to Ilizmagorti is regulated. Those who enter from one of the Greens are expected to pass through one of the gates in the city wall, while those who enter via river or sea must register their arrival (and their boat or ship, if they're the captain) at any one of the city's numerous harbor registries found in the Wharves. Watercraft entering Ilizmagorti whose crew doesn't immediately comply are soon boarded by Arsenal sailors and, in most cases, such actions result in the ship



being impounded and its crew and passengers being imprisoned or heavily fined.

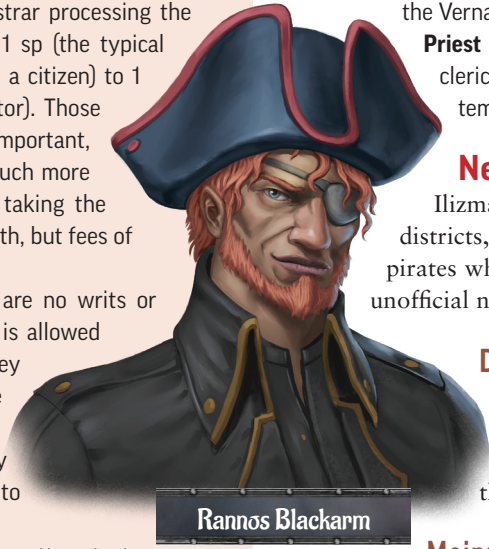
When one enters the city, be it via city gate or harbor registry, a tax is due. The cost of this tax varies at the whim of the guard or registrar processing the arrival, typically ranging from 1 sp (the typical tax for someone claiming to be a citizen) to 1 gp (the standard tax for a visitor). Those who appear to be particularly important, rich, or famous can be taxed much more depending on what the agent taking the tax thinks they can get away with, but fees of 100 gp are not unheard of.

Once the tax is paid, there are no writs or receipts given—the new arrival is allowed to stay in the city as long as they wish. Those who seek to leave the city must do so via the same vectors, though they must pay the tax once more for the right to leave.

Whenever someone suspicious attempts to enter or leave the city, those gathering the funds generally don't confront them on the spot. Rather, they report their suspicions to the Blood Guard or the Red Mantis, and it's never long before a more intense interaction with curious, insistent guards or assassins takes place!

Clandestine entries into the city, be they mundane attempts via stealth or smuggling, or magical ones that employ invisibility, teleportation, or the like, are illegal—but only if you're caught. Those who are face harrowing judgment and, depending on how they present their reasons for attempting to bypass security, they may face brutal imprisonment, death, or worse.

Red Mantis agents, Blood Guards, or other city officials can come and go from Ilizmagorti as they wish without paying taxes, but those caught impersonating others are judged swiftly and dealt harsher sentences than most.



The Mayor (doppelganger mayor and honorary assassin)
True name Dorel; they never appear the same way twice in public

High Priest Saviya (female elf cleric of Achaekek) Leader of the Vernai conspirators

Priest Captain Rannos Blackarm (male human cleric of Besmara) Head of Besmara's House, temple to Besmara

Neighborhoods

Ilizmagorti is not divided into any official districts, but the city's residents and the pirates who visit it have given certain quarters unofficial nicknames that have stuck over time.

Dandy

To the east is Dandy, named for the wealthy merchants and pirate lords whose lavish palazzi and villas line the canals of the district.

Mainmast

North of Dandy is Mainmast, the commercial center of Ilizmagorti. Most of the city's trade takes place here, and a variety of shops and merchant houses line the streets. Mainmast also contains the Blood Circus, Ilizmagorti's famed arena, where nightly gladiatorial combats and blood sports draw audiences from across the city.

The Medina

The Old Bridge over the Silt River leads west to the Medina, Ilizmagorti's old town, a confusing maze of narrow streets, some less than three feet wide, peppered with tiny courtyards and fountains. This was the first part of Ilizmagorti to be settled, and its dark, twisting alleys harbor countless dens of criminals and worse. It is an exceptionally dangerous place to visit at night.

Alcasar

The Medina curves southwest until it reaches Alcasar, Ilizmagorti's main market square, which lies just under the walls of Ilizmagorti's fortress. This fort overlooks the Red River and is commonly called Sawtooth Keep by residents. The citadel is the headquarters of the Blood Watch, whose armored soldiers patrol the city's streets and man the walls in case of attack.

Redshore

Ilizmagorti's primary residential district lies to the south across the Red River, connected to Alcasar by Yardarm Bridge, where convicted criminals are hanged in plain view of the entire city.

Bilges

Southeast of Redshore lie the Bilges, Ilizmagorti's slums, where the truly destitute eke out what existence they can on an island separated from the rest of the city

ILIZMAGORTI

SETTLEMENT 13

CITY

Assassin-ruled port city and pirate hub

Government Crime Syndicate

Population 10,500 (91% humans, 4% half-elves, 2% gnomes, 1% elves, 2% other)

Languages Common, Mwangi

Religions Achaekek, Besmara

Threats assassins, dinosaurs, pirates, sea monsters

Fenced Goods Common items of up to level 15 can be purchased in Ilizmagorti, but those above level 13 (and many below, at the GM's discretion) are stolen goods which might have powerful owners who are actively seeking their recovery.

Blood Mistress Jakalyn (female human assassin) Leader of the Red Mantis assassins

Overseer Saynak (genderfluid human gladiator) Blood Circus manager and reigning gladiatorial champion

by wide canals. The Arsenal, on the eastern shore of the Bilges, houses the small fleet of ships that make up Ilizmagorti's so-called navy.

Jawbone

East of the Bilges, the district of Jawbone curves back around toward Mayor's Island and Dandy. Those seeking refined entertainment and accommodations (compared to those found in the Wharves, at least) come to Jawbone, whose canals host taverns, brothels, and inns of surprising quality for a pirate port. The Bargecrew's Guild does brisk business ferrying visitors and residents alike along Jawbone's canals in their small boats. Jawbone is also home to Ilizmagorti's small but bustling and thriving shipyards.

The Green

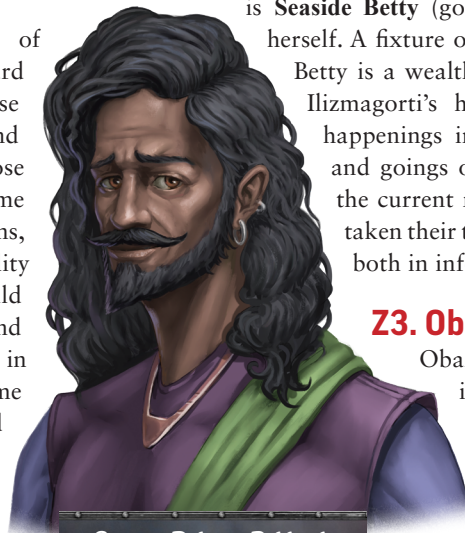
Outside the city's walls are four smaller districts collectively known as the Green: Norgreen, Westergreen, Rivergreen, and Eastergreen. Most of the Green's residents are hunters or woodsmen who make their living from the jungle, as well as farmers who help supply the city with food from small fields cleared from the surrounding land. Additionally, a few malcontents make their homes outside the walls, believing (incorrectly) that this frees them from the watchful scrutiny of the Red Mantis.

Sites of Interest

Ilizmagorti has a few places that are noteworthy even to longtime residents.

Z1. Besmara's House

Located in a converted warehouse that was once used to hold shipbuilding and sailmaking materials, Besmara's House is the largest temple in the city after the Pagoda of the Mantis. While the Pirate Queen has few devout or regular worshippers among the freebooters of Ilizmagorti, her temple is a popular place for pirates about to embark on a raid to burn a stick of incense, make a quick prayer, and provide a small offering to ward off the vengeful goddess. Next to the front door is a board where captains-for-hire can post their ship names and berths for interested clients to contact them. Under the leadership of Priest Captain **Rannos Blackarm** (intimidating male human cleric of Besmara), the clerics of Besmara alternate between cajoling visiting sailors for donations and threatening them with their goddess's wrath.



Sanjeet Ralama Pakhesh

Z2. Seaside Betty's

A lopsided one-room shack perched at the end of a rickety dock contains Seaside Betty's, Ilizmagorti's smallest house of ill repute. The brothel's only employee is **Seaside Betty** (gossipy female human proprietor) herself. A fixture on the Wharves for years, Seaside Betty is a wealth of information not only about Ilizmagorti's history, but also about present happenings in the city, such as the comings and goings of ships and their crews, and all the current rumors. Although the years have taken their toll, Betty still does good business, both in information and in her usual trade.

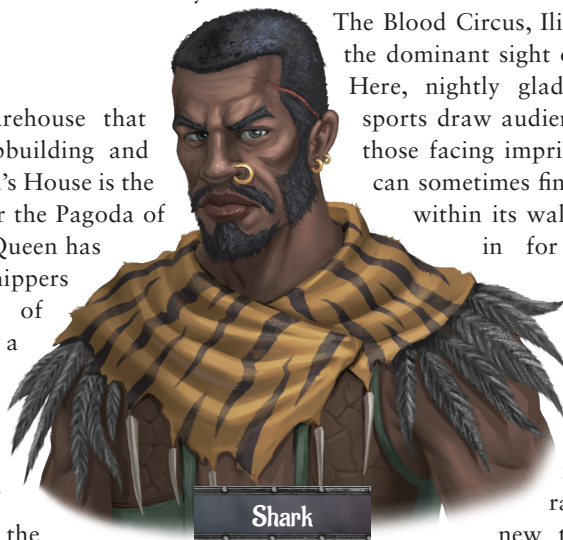
Z3. Obari Imports

Obari Imports is a shop that specializes in the rare and wondrous from across the Inner Sea and beyond. The shop's proprietor, **Sanjeet Ralama Pakhesh** (shrewd human male wizard) hails from the Isle of Jalmeray and supposedly has business connections in Absalom, Katapesh, Nex, and even far-off Vudra and Tian Xia. Obari Imports is a treasure trove of rare components, magic rings, wands, potions, and other eldritch paraphernalia, satisfaction guaranteed. If he doesn't have it in stock, Sanjeet is happy to import it (for an additional fee, of course; shipping time negotiable). He also buys magic items (preferably in kind, but with gold if necessary). Sanjeet is accompanied at all times by his bodyguards, twin sisters who are Vudrani monks.

Z4. Blood Circus

The Blood Circus, Ilizmagorti's notorious arena, is the dominant sight on the city's northern skyline. Here, nightly gladiatorial combats and blood sports draw audiences from across the city, and those facing imprisonment, execution, or worse can sometimes find a way to escape their doom within its walls—or may at least trade one in for another. **Overseer Saynak** (sadistic genderfluid human gladiator) is the Blood Circus's current manager and also its reigning champion. Between standard gladiatorial battles, monster fights, or elaborate and violent races, there's always something new to see at the Blood Circus.

It maintains a list of regular gladiators who make weekly appearances in exhibition matches against monsters or condemned prisoners, one such gladiator being **Nasha the Gnasher** (conniving female iruxi gladiator), whose side gig of underground information brokering makes her a likely point of contact during Chapter 2.



Shark

Iizmaqorti

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



Norgreen

The Medina

Mainmast

Westergreen

Alcasar

Red River

Sawtooth
Keep

The Three
Sisters

Dandy

Rivergreen

Redshore

Jawbone

The Bilges

The Arsenal

Eastergreen



0 500
FEET

25. Murdered Manticore

A quiet, unassuming pub off a tiny neighborhood courtyard, the Murdered Manticore is the place to go if one is looking to hire mercenaries or adventurers. Run by a retired Andoren adventurer known as **Shark** (no-nonsense male human fighter), the Manticore serves cold beer, simple but filling meals, and contacts for sellswords looking for work. For a tavern filled with armed mercenaries, the Murdered Manticore is a surprisingly peaceful place. You don't have to check your weapons at the door, but Shark tolerates no fights in his establishment, and he is more than willing to enforce the rules with the help of his own notched blade on the wall behind the bar. Most of the patrons behave themselves, because once you've been kicked out, that's it—you're never allowed back in again.

26. The Jade Monkey

While this tavern is on the small end, the watering hole's notoriety and its favored position with the Order of Alchemists ensure its long-term success and notoriety. This location is presented in further detail in Chapter 2.

27. Sawtooth Marketplace

Beneath the towering red sandstone walls of Sawtooth Keep sprawls Ilizmagorti's main marketplace. A bewildering variety of market stalls and shops fill the open courtyard and its surrounding streets, selling all manner of goods, from nautical gear and fresh seafood to clothing, jewelry, and more. Among the more permanent businesses here is a large general store and outfitter. The proprietor, **Axabbus Fifthrottledig** (chatty male gnome merchant), sells mundane gear like backpacks, machetes, and mosquito netting, as well as items ranging from the unusual to the frankly bizarre, such as camel saddles, snowshoes, mammoth goads, fake dwarven beards, and spare Galtan guillotine blades. **Arnak Bjornssen** (creepy male human merchant) sells knives, swords, and other blades made to order in his shop. Arnak is a master bladesmith from the Lands of the Linnorm Kings, and he is believed to craft high-quality sawtooth sabers for the Red Mantis in the back room of his forge. Strange leather armors may be bought at a leather shop easily recognized by the stuffed shark outside the door; the shark-leather made here is highly valued by sailors. The owner is the sharp-witted and quirky **Zostrana Sebec** (free-spirited female undine fortune teller); rumored to be descended from a faydhaan, she was brought to Ilizmagorti as a pirate captive and decided to make her home here. She decorates all of her work with Qadiran water motifs and also tells fortunes and performs divinations in a corner of her workshop.

28. The Pagoda of the Mantis

This site is sacred to Achaek and is the house of

his worship. While anyone is allowed to enter, rumor has it that the power of the temple instantly marks unbelievers, and the true faithful immediately murder those bearing the god's marker. The red stone pagoda looms over nearby buildings and is one of the most striking landmarks in Ilizmagorti's skyline.

29. Hospice of Serenity

Nestled deep in the worst of the city slums is the Hospice of Serenity, an abbey dedicated to an obscure saint of healing and mercy. The Sisters of Serenity administer aid and healing to the poor and downtrodden of the slums, and they are easily recognized on the filthy streets of the Bilges by their white, gold, and green robes. The hospice takes in anyone in need of sustenance, rest, or healing, whether physical or spiritual, and is said to also offer sanctuary to escaped prisoners. The Sisters request a small donation to their order in exchange for their services, but only if the supplicant can afford it. The small group of novices is led by **Sister Maeri** (mysterious female human cleric of Achaek), a dangerous Red Mantis assassin who uses the order as cover for information gathering and recruitment. In addition, she makes a tidy profit by selling some unfortunate fugitives who seek shelter at the abbey into lives of servitude. Given the scarcity



of major temples in Ilizmagorti, many adventurers come to the hospice for healing, which allows the Red Mantis to keep tabs on potentially dangerous (or useful) groups within the city. If the PCs ask around for the best place in town to receive medical attention, they're told to visit the Hospice of Serenity.

Z10. Bargecrew's Guild Headquarters

Huddled among the fancy restaurants, exclusive clubs, and pleasure houses of Jawbone—like a conspicuous peasant amid a parade of well-dressed nobles—sits the workaday headquarters of the Bargecrew's Guild. These barge pilots know the waters of Ilizmagorti better than anyone—other than perhaps the Kaneano—and are familiar with the ebb and flow of goods and traffic throughout the city. Naturally, they charge a hefty price for that knowledge. Any punt or skiff over 5 feet in length must be registered with the guild, and its owner must pay guild dues, but all of Ilizmagorti's waterways are then opened to them. The powerful and influential Bargemaster **Hezwah Mitabo** (protective human male guildmaster) is descended from a long line of Bonuwat mariners and runs his organization like the captain of a tight ship.

Z11. The Songbird Preserve

The three islands in the center of Ilizmagorti's lagoon are collectively known as the Three Sisters. They contain the Songbird Preserve, a collection of beautiful parks and gardens of rare and vibrant jungle flowers carefully tended by **Jaxira Daralamir** (optimistic female half-elf druid of Shelyn). The only publicly-practicing worshipper of Shelyn in the entire city, Jaxira is also the most knowledgeable expert on the flora and fauna of Mediogalti Island. She does her best to bring some small amount of beauty to the otherwise grimy pirate town, a fact appreciated by those residents with more refined tastes. South on the shore stands the Nymphaleum, an open-air amphitheater that puts on regular performances along with those of visiting bards. The Nymphaleum's artistic director is **Origent Gamaron** (libertine male human bard), a Taldan playwright exiled from his homeland for his scathing satires of the Grand Prince of Taldor.

Z12. Jungle Runners

The wilderness outfitters and guides calling themselves the Jungle Runners are located outside Ilizmagorti's walls. **Erandlon** (secretive male half-elf fighter) and **Bujkis Tallwoman** (naive female human ranger) are partners in this enterprise and offer guided hunting trips and wilderness expeditions into the jungles outside the city. They do good business with both eager treasure hunters and wealthy nobles in search of dinosaur heads for their game rooms, and they possess unparalleled expertise on the many dangers lurking in Mediogalti's jungles.

Z13. The Mantis Stones

Throughout the jungles of Mediogalti stand several ancient menhirs linked to the dangerous creatures that rule the wilderness—as well as to the wilderness itself. The closest set of these menhirs stand in a jungle clearing west of the city and are attuned to the enormous mantids that hunt on the isle: deadly predators taken by the first Red Mantis settlers as proof of their divine right to rule this land. These are the Mantis Stones, and they are detailed further in Chapter 2.

Other Locations

Beyond the significant sites and locations presented on the previous pages, a wide range of other points of interest and unusual businesses await discovery by those who visit Ilizmagorti.

Darcy's Demise

This tavern in Dandy serves as a private club of sorts for retired pirate captains, where they can regale one another with tales of their misspent youths over drinks of wildly varying quality.

Dead Man's Chest

Hidden down a winding alley deep in Alcasar, this small, dark tavern is a well-known fence, the place to go to dispose of stolen or illicit goods.

The Gouged Eyes

This dive in the Bilges has the dubious distinction of having experienced more bar brawls than any other tavern in Ilizmagorti. The one-eyed halfling bartender keeps a jar of pickled eyes behind the bar, souvenirs from his numerous knife fights.

House of Sorrento

The most fashionable restaurant in Ilizmagorti, the House lies on a small island just off Jawbone and is famous for its grilled reefclaw and well-stocked wine cellar. Reservations are required to partake of its various delicacies.

Knucklebones

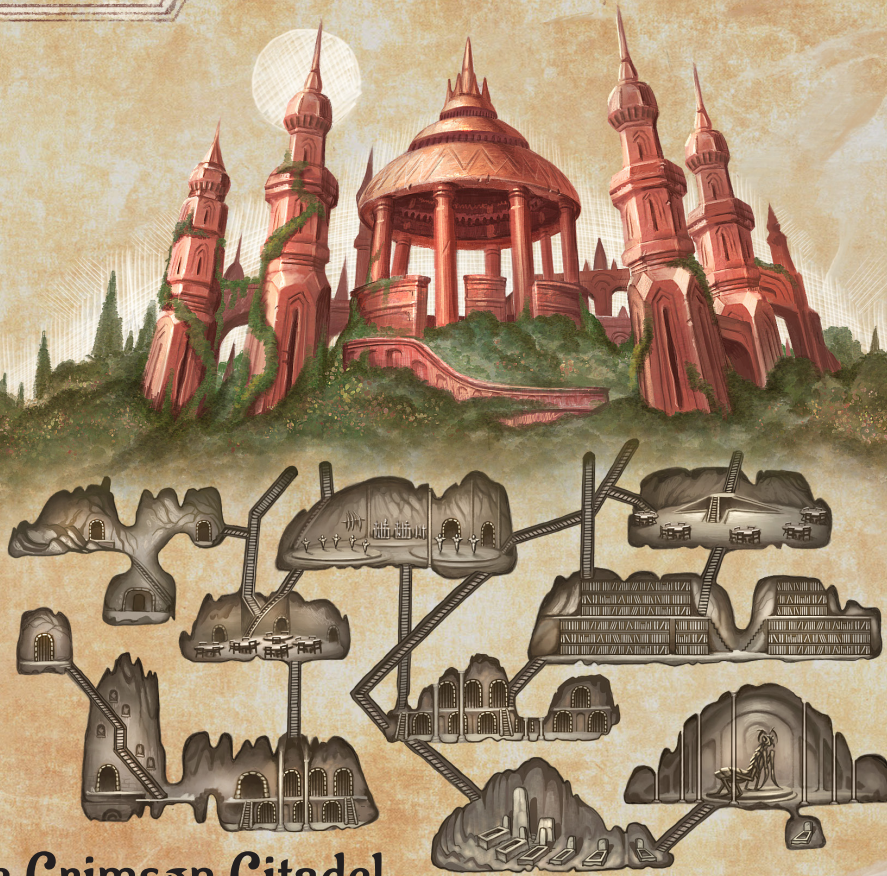
A gambling den inside a moored hulk in the Wharves, Knucklebones offers all manner of games of chance, from towers to boulder to knives.

The Mermaid's Caress

The cheapest bordello in the Wharves, the Mermaid's Caress does brisk business, especially with sailors at the end of their shore leave.

The Quarterdeck

You must be the captain of your own ship to enter this pub in the Wharves. Other ship officers are politely but firmly directed down the street to its sister bar, the Wardroom.



The Crimson Citadel

The Second Bench

A clean, mid-range brothel in Mainmast, this place occasionally offers more unusual pleasures for a price.

The Crimson Citadel

Although many believe this syndicate of knives and death is based in Ilizmagorti, the notorious scum-tide city of smugglers, con-artists, and pirates, the Red Mantis's true stronghold lies deep in the shadowy jungles of Mediogalti, inland of the port city. This majestic castle, shrouded by a tropical canopy of leaf and vine, is where the Red Mantis trains its finest and pays respects to its notorious deity. Tales told by those who claim to have seen the assassins' citadel describe it as a dream above the jungle—a blood-red palace, both wondrous and terrible, where a crimson waterfall of fresh gore flows over a towering idol dedicated to He Who Walks in Blood. This is the Crimson Citadel.

The lair of the Red Mantis holds dozens of floors and hides countless halls and traps, its breadth divided into three areas. The mantises call the lower levels of the castle Ruvari, the Ruby Halls. These darkened corridors are filled with poisoned razors and countless lethal traps. Venomous beasts and strange monsters collected from all over the world stalk this bloodstained labyrinth, rare terrors that hunt noiselessly and kill with toxic thoughts. This is the Vernai's training ground, where the finest of the order prove their worth against trials that unrepentantly cull all but the most skillful initiates.

Matching Ruvari's level of lethality with unbridled opulence are the central halls of Sivlamlik, the Honeyed Gardens, a sprawling complex of groves where strange tonics and mind-whirling narcotics flow as freely as the citadel's blood-bubbling fountains. Here, the Red Mantis's elite rest among the rewards of a thousand nefarious deeds, collecting themselves for future missions and paying homage to their crimson god. While most members of the Red Mantis visit these halls only for a day or two so as to not let their murderous edges dull, the Honeyed Gardens are a lavish prison for many of the halls' inhabitants.

Collectively, the upper spires of the Crimson Citadel form the Odalis, the Lavish Heart—these are the living quarters, meeting halls, workshops, and treasuries of the Red Mantis elite. While most Red Mantises never even visit the citadel, the finest assassins, most cunning minds, and members of the Vernai make their home in this lofty assassin's refuge. From here, the work of every Red Mantis member is considered and coordinated; it is where marks are selected and missions meted out, all carefully chosen to advance the organization's needs and goals.

Deeper reaches lie further below, of course, though these are places where very few are allowed to tread: Faynas, the Iron Heart, is home to the blood mistress's private chambers and some of the order's greatest treasures and weapons; and the Sarzari Grand Library, which is said to contain some of the largest collections of lost knowledge in Garund.



Adventure Toolbox

With specialized spells, deadly alchemical or magical treasures, and rigorous training methods, the Red Mantis assassins have developed a wide range of resources to utilize on their missions.

Arcane School

The following arcane school is available to Red Mantis assassins. More information on arcane schools can be found on page 196 of *Player Core*.

Red Mantis Magic School (Uncommon)

While any thug can commit a murder, proper assassination requires finesse and guile. Deep within the Crimson Citadel, the Red Mantis assassins have developed a specific selection of spells they teach to all magically capable members. These spells complement the assassins' clandestine and deadly methods.

Curriculum cantrips: *figment*, *gouging claw*; 1st *fleet step*, *illusory disguise*, *sure strike*; 2nd *invisibility*, *mist*; 3rd *clairaudience*, *paralyze*; 4th *clairvoyance*, *translocate*; 5th *hallucination*, *illusory scene*; 6th *mislead*, *phantasmal calamity*; 7th *duplicate foe*, *project image*; 8th *disappearance*, *unrelenting observation*; 9th *phantasmagoria*

School Spells initial: *debilitating terror*; advanced: *shroud of the mantis*

Spells

Spellcasters among the Red Mantis assassins have developed numerous spells to aid in their missions. The following are but a few of these creations. As rare spells, they should not be available to the PCs during character creation—instead, these spells are discovered in play during the adventure.

BONE FLENSE

SPELL 3

RARE CONCENTRATE MANIPULATE

Traditions arcane, divine, primal

Range touch; **Targets** 1 weapon that is either wielded by a member of the Red Mantis or is a praying mantis's leg Strike

Duration 1 minute

The target weapon becomes imbued with Achaek's power and glows softly with crimson light akin to that shed by a candle. When a creature with a skeleton or exoskeleton takes damage from a Strike delivered by this weapon, the creature's bones nearest to the wound instantly sprout jagged, razor-sharp spurs that flense the muscle and flesh

from inside out. The creature takes an additional 1d6 persistent bleed damage from the Strike. You can use the Erupting Spurs reaction.

Erupting Spurs **Trigger** A creature takes persistent bleed damage from your *bone flense* spell; **Effect** You will the bone spurs to erupt in a particularly devastating manner, dealing 6d6 piercing damage (basic Fortitude save) to the triggering creature instead of the persistent bleed damage from *bone flense*. The duration of *bone flense* immediately ends.

Heightened (+2) The persistent bleed damage increases by 1d6. The damage from Erupting Spurs increases by 4d6.

CRIMSON BREATH

SPELL 6

RARE MANIPULATE POISON

Traditions arcane, divine, primal

Range touch; **Targets** 1 creature

Defense Fortitude

You turn a creature toward you and exhale a blast of crimson mist from your mouth, exposing the target to a toxic miasma. The effects are determined by the creature's Fortitude save.

Critical Success The target is unaffected.

Success The target takes 8d6 poison damage.

Failure The target is afflicted with breath of the mantis god poison (see page 103) at stage 1.

Critical Failure The target is afflicted with breath of the mantis god poison (see page 103) at stage 2.

MANTIS'S GRASP

SPELL 4

RARE CONCENTRATE FORCE MANIPULATE

Traditions arcane, divine

Range 120 feet; **Targets** 1 creature

Defense Reflex

You cause red, ghostly mantis arms to sprout from a nearby surface and crush a creature, dealing 8d6 force damage and attempting to pin the target in place. The effects are determined by the creature's Reflex save.

Critical Success The target is unaffected.

Success The target takes half damage.

Failure The target takes full damage and is immobilized for 1 round.

Critical Failure The target takes double damage and is immobilized for 1 minute. At the end of each of its turns, the target can attempt to Escape. The Escape DC is equal to your spell DC.

Heightened (7th) You can target up to 5 creatures.

PREY FOR DEATH

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1:
A WORTHY CONTRACT

CHAPTER 2:
UNMASKING A TRAITOR

CHAPTER 3:
SECRETS OF THE MANTIS

CHAPTER 4: A DEITY'S DUTY

ILIZMAGORTI

ADVENTURE TOOLBOX

MARK OF BLOOD

SPELL 2

RARE CURSE MANIPULATE

Traditions arcane, divine, occult

Range touch; **Targets** 1 piercing or slashing weapon you're wielding

Defense Will; **Duration** 1 minute

You place a drop of your blood on a weapon and charge it with magic so that you transfer a small amount of your life essence with your attack. The next creature you successfully Strike with the weapon during the spell's duration takes damage as normal from the attack and must then attempt a Will save; regardless of the outcome of this saving throw, the duration of *mark of blood* ends. You can have up to one creature cursed by *mark of blood* at any one time. If you use this spell to mark a different creature, the curse afflicting the previous creature ends.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature gains a softly glowing mark that resembles Achaek's symbol somewhere on their body (such as the forehead or back of the hand). This mark can be concealed by clothing, but is otherwise permanent until the curse is removed.

Failure As success, but you can Seek to attempt to know the direction and general distance (within a mile) to the marked creature if the creature is alive and both you and the creature are on the same plane of existence. When you Seek in this way, you attempt a Perception check against the marked creature's Will DC. On a success, you gain the

information, which is accurate at the moment that you Seek. On a critical failure, the curse ends, and the creature's mark vanishes.

Critical Failure As failure, but your Perception checks to Seek the marked creature are automatically successful.

SAWTOOTH TERRAIN

SPELL 5

RARE CONCENTRATE EARTH MANIPULATE

Traditions arcane, divine, primal

Range 30 feet; **Area** 20-foot burst

Duration 1 minute

You cause long, serrated mantis limbs to appear, swiping at and obstructing creatures in the area. The area is difficult terrain. Each creature in the area when the spell is cast and who end their turn within the area take 3d6 slashing damage and 2d6 persistent bleed damage, as determined by its Reflex save.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature takes half damage and no persistent damage.

Failure The creature takes full damage and a -10-foot circumstance penalty to their Speed until they receive magical healing or benefit from a successful Medicine check against your spell DC to administer First Aid.

Critical Failure The creature takes double damage and a -15-foot circumstance penalty to their Speed until they receive magical healing or benefit from a successful Medicine check against your spell DC to administer First Aid.

Heightened (+2) The damage increases by 3d6, and the persistent bleed damage increases by 1d6.

Wizard School Spells

These focus spells are part of the Red Mantis magic school.

DEBILITATING TERROR

FOCUS 1

UNCOMMON CONCENTRATE FEAR FOCUS INCAPACITATION MENTAL WIZARD

Range 30 feet; **Targets** 1 creature

Defense Will; **Duration** until the start of your next turn

You fill the target's mind with terrifying images to disrupt their combat focus. The target must attempt a Will save.

Critical Success The target is unaffected.

Success The target takes a -1 circumstance penalty to attack and damage rolls against you.

Failure The target can't use hostile actions against you.

Critical Failure The target is stunned 1 and can't use hostile actions against you.

SHROUD OF THE MANTIS

FOCUS 4

UNCOMMON FOCUS ILLUSION MANIPULATE WIZARD

Duration 1 minute

You wrap yourself in a crimson cloak that renders you invisible, with the same restrictions as a 2nd-rank *invisibility* spell.

Heightened (6th) The duration increases to 10 minutes.

Heightened (8th) The duration increases to 1 hour.



Sawtooth Terrain

Treasure

As with spells, the Red Mantis assassins have created a wide array of specialized gear over the ages. While all the items detailed in the following pages can be discovered by the PCs during this adventure, any of the uncommon items are available for PCs to purchase during character creation as a benefit of those characters being members (or close allies) of the Red Mantis assassins. You can also make these uncommon items available to similar characters in other campaigns or adventures. All rare and unique items presented over the following pages can only be gained through the course of play.

Armor

The following suits of armor can be discovered by the PCs during *Prey for Death*.

ASSASSIN'S SKIN

ITEM 15

RARE INVESTED MAGICAL

Price 6,500 gp

Usage worn armor; Bulk 1

This +2 *greater resilient leather armor* was made from the flayed hide of an Elysian pegasus, then dyed a bright crimson so that it appears slick with fresh blood. The wearer of *assassin's skin* gains a +3 item bonus to Escape checks.

Activate—Blood Revitalization ⬠ (concentrate) **Frequency** once per hour; **Trigger** You would take persistent bleed damage; **Effect** You don't take the persistent bleed damage and instead regain Hit Points equal to the bleed damage. The persistent bleed damage ends.

VERNAI SHELL

ITEM 16

UNCOMMON EXTRADIMENSIONAL INVESTED MAGICAL

Price 8,000 gp

Usage worn armor; Bulk 1

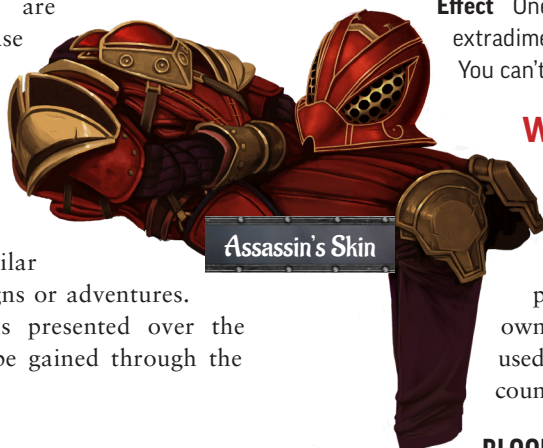
Made from the finest plates of monstrous insect chitin, this +2 *greater resilient mantis shell* (*Pathfinder Treasure Vault* 9) offers superior protection from Mediogalti's hot weather while also allowing the wearer to blend into almost any situation and strike with hidden blades. While wearing this armor, you are protected from extreme heat and severe heat effects.

Vernai shell armor includes two extradimensional spaces built into each of the armor's gloves, granting the wearer two places to store items. Each glove can hold one item of 1 Bulk or less. While an item is stored in one of the two gloves, there is nothing to indicate that an item is being held inside it.

Activate—Store Item ⬠ (manipulate); **Requirements** At least one of the *Vernai shell's* two extradimensional spaces is empty; **Effect** One item you're holding with a Bulk of 1

or less vanishes into one of the armor's extradimensional spaces.

Activate—Retrieve Item ⬠ (manipulate); **Requirements** An item is stored in at least one of the *Vernai shell's* extradimensional spaces, and you have a free hand; **Effect** One item of your choice in either extradimensional space appears in your hand. You can't Retrieve Item again for 1 minute.



Weapons

These magic weapons can be discovered in *Prey for Death*. Two of these weapons, *Blood-Drinker* and *Fleshrender*, are paired weapons—fearsome on their own, but even more powerful when used in combat alongside their intended counterpart.

BLOOD-DRINKER

ITEM 18

UNIQUE MAGICAL

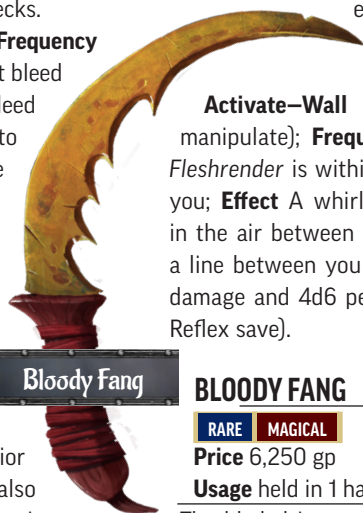
Price 24,000 gp

Usage held in 1 hand; Bulk L

This +3 *greater striking keen sawtooth saber* has a black blade that always seems freshly smeared with blood.

Activate—Drink Blood ⤴ (concentrate); **Trigger** You reduce a creature to 0 Hit Points with the weapon; **Effect** You gain a number of temporary Hit Points equal to twice the creature's level. If you're also wielding *Fleshrender* in your other hand, you instead gain temporary Hit Points equal to three times the creature's level. These Hit Points remain for 1 minute.

Activate—Wall of Sabers ⤴⤴ (concentrate, manipulate); **Frequency** once per hour; **Requirements** *Fleshrender* is within 30 feet and isn't currently held by you; **Effect** A whirling wall of sawtooth sabers appear in the air between you and *Fleshrender* take 10d6 slashing damage and 4d6 persistent bleed damage (DC 38 basic Reflex save).



BLOODY FANG

ITEM 15

RARE MAGICAL

Price 6,250 gp

Usage held in 1 hand; Bulk L

The bladed inner curve of this +2 *greater striking keen wounding dagger* has a jagged, saw-like edge, while its handle is wrapped in red leather. Carved from the mandible of a giant praying mantis, this magical weapon's blade is as sharp and serviceable as steel.

Activate—Sweeping Slash ⤴⤴ (concentrate, manipulate); **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** You swing the dagger in a wide arc, causing a horizontal swipe of blood-red energy to sweep out in a 30-foot cone. All living creatures in the area take 15d6 slashing damage (DC 34 basic Reflex save), plus 1d6 persistent bleed damage on a failed save.

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ILIZMAGORTI

ADVENTURE TOOLBOX

CRIMSON BLUFF

ITEM 15

RARE ILLUSION MAGICAL

Price 6,500 gp

Usage held in 1 hand; Bulk L

This +2 *greater striking grievous sawtooth saber* has a red hilt and a purple-black blade. Favored by Red Mantis assassins who enjoy using illusions to confound their targets, a *crimson bluff* constantly flickers and flashes, creating brief afterimages that can be quite distracting. If you use a *crimson bluff* as part of a gesture when you Create a Diversion, you gain a +2 item bonus to your Deception check.

Activate—Shimmer Step ⚡ (concentrate, manipulate);

Frequency once per day; **Effect** You cast *blur* and then you Step or Stride.

Activate—Swap Places ⤴ (concentrate) **Frequency**

once per day; **Requirements** You are under the effects of *blur*; **Trigger** An enemy would hit you with a melee Strike; **Effect** You swiftly dodge to the side as a momentary image of yourself manifests to distract the foe. The triggering Strike uses the outcome for one degree of success worse than the result of the attack roll. The duration of your *blur* effect is reduced by 2 rounds.



Crimson Bluff

the accepted wielder intentionally permits it, declaring so in a loud voice; this permission can be rescinded in a similar manner. Anyone else trying to wield *Temperbrand* after it has accepted a wielder takes fire damage and causes the weapon to melt away as if they failed the Will save to wield it.

The additional fire damage caused by *Temperbrand's greater flaming* property (but not its persistent fire damage) is splash damage. *Temperbrand's* wielder is immune to this splash damage.

Activate—Molten Smash ⚡ (concentrate, manipulate);

Frequency once per day; **Effect** You smash *Temperbrand* against the ground or another solid adjacent surface, causing an explosion of molten metal and force to radiate outward in a 20-foot emanation. All creatures in this area take 10d6 fire damage and 6d6 force damage (DC 43 basic Reflex save); those who critically fail this save are knocked prone. You are immune to the effects of Molten Smash, but your allies are not.

Alchemical Items

The following alchemical items are sometimes used by Red Mantis assassins.

FLESHRENDER

ITEM 18

UNIQUE MAGICAL

Price 24,000 gp

Usage held in 1 hand; Bulk L

This +3 *greater striking animated dawnsilver sawtooth saber* has many serrated edges and gleams blinding white in bright light.

If you're wielding *Blood-Drinker* in your other hand, increase *Fleshrender's* attack modifier to +32 instead of +24, and increase its fly Speed to 50 feet when you Set Free *Fleshrender*.

TEMPERBRAND

ITEM 20

UNIQUE FIRE MAGICAL

Price 70,000 gp

Usage held in 2 hands; Bulk L

When the mighty fire-and-metal elemental *Temperbrand* is defeated, their corpse transforms into a +3 *major striking greater flaming grievous shifting maul* made of what appears to be molten steel, though it behaves as if it were made of solid metal. When a creature first picks up *Temperbrand*, they must succeed at a DC 43 Will save to establish their dominance over the weapon. On a success, they become *Temperbrand's* only accepted wielder and may use the weapon normally. On a failure, the character takes 20d6 fire damage (40d6 fire damage on a critical failure) and drops the weapon as it melts away into slag and immediately reforms in an adjacent space. A new attempt to establish dominance can be made by picking the weapon up again and attempting a new Will save. Once *Temperbrand* has an accepted wielder, it can't be wielded by anyone else unless



Crimson Tome

BLOOD SIGHT ELIXIR

ITEM 3+

UNCOMMON ALCHEMICAL CONSUMABLE ELIXIR

Usage held in 1 hand; Bulk L

Activate ⤴ (manipulate)

This thick, blood-red elixir sharpens your senses and makes you more acutely aware of blood. You gain blood sight with the listed duration and effects. Blood sight has a range of 60 feet and allows you to detect living creatures who are taking persistent bleed damage or who have the dying or wounded conditions. You also detect free-standing puddles or droplets of recently spilled blood. At the GM's discretion, living creatures without blood can't be detected with your blood sight.

Type lesser; **Level** 3; **Price** 10 gp

The blood sight is an imprecise sense with a duration of 10 minutes.

Type moderate; **Level** 6; **Price** 40 gp

The blood sight is an imprecise sense with a duration of 1 hour.

Type greater; **Level** 9; **Price** 115 gp

The blood sight is a precise sense with a duration of 1 hour.

Type major; **Level** 12; **Price** 350 gp

The blood sight is a precise sense with a duration of 1 hour. Your blood sight is especially accurate, allowing you to also detect creatures whose Hit

Points are currently at half or less of their maximum. When you detect a creature with blood sight, you get a vague approximation of the value of the creature's bleed damage, dying condition, or wounded condition. This approximation can be noticed as "excessive bleeding," a creature being "near death," or some other general sense that doesn't give the exact value.

BREATH OF THE MANTIS GOD

ITEM 10

UNCOMMON ALCHEMICAL CONSUMABLE INHALED POISON VIRULENT

Price 200 gp

Usage held in 1 hand; Bulk L

Activate \blacklozenge (manipulate)

To prevent one of their victims from being brought back to life, Red Mantis assassins often poison targets with the breath of the mantis god. After a creature is poisoned by this concoction, internal hemorrhaging frequently results in blood issuing from the creature's mouth—a condition referred to by the assassins as having "the breath of the mantis god." While a creature can attempt to recover normally from the persistent bleed damage caused by breath of the mantis god, the persistent bleed damage will return if the poison's duration is still ongoing. If a creature dies from the poison's effects, the toxin lingers tenaciously in the creature's flesh for 1 year. During this time, if an attempt is made to bring such a slain creature back to life that doesn't create a new body for the deceased (such as with a 7th-rank *resurrect* ritual), the lingering effects of breath of the mantis god attempts to counteract the resurrection (counteract modifier +17, counteract rank 5). A spell like *extract poison* (*Pathfinder Secrets of Magic* 104) can be used to decontaminate a corpse for easier resurrection, but simpler magic such as *cleanse cuisine* cannot. A 5th-rank or higher *cleanse affliction* can also attempt to counteract lingering breath of the mantis god.

Saving Throw DC 29 Fortitude; Maximum Duration 6 minutes;

Stage 1 3d6 persistent bleed and drained 1 (1 minute); Stage

2 3d8 persistent bleed and drained 1 (1 minute); Stage 3

3d10 persistent bleed and drained 2 (1 minute)

Grimoires

Full rules for these magical books appear on page 162 of *Secrets of Magic*.

CRIMSON TOME

ITEM 17

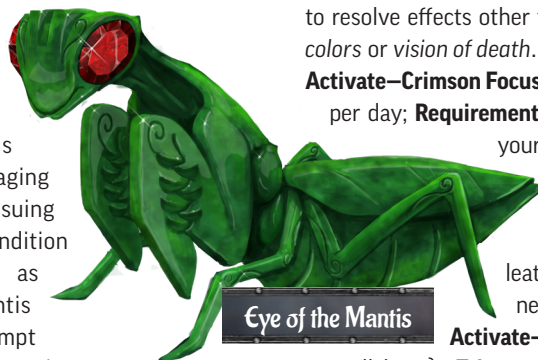
RARE GRIMOIRE ILLUSION

Price 15,000 gp

Usage held in 1 hand; Bulk L

These tomes are sacred to the Red Mantis assassins, who use them to scribe their spells and record their violent deeds. The first of them were created in Rahadom, but when the Oath Wars forced the worshippers of Achaek to flee Rahadom, many were identified by their *crimson tomes*, which were destroyed on the spot. Less than a dozen volumes survived, and the secret of creating them has been lost to history. Rumors persist of a first edition of this rare tome—an artifact version of the one presented here, but if these rumors are true, even the Red Mantis have lost track of such a treasure.

Each *crimson tome* is bound in fine red leather with gold filigree on the cover and golden edge gilding. When an



illusion spell is prepared from this grimoire, it becomes more difficult to purposefully disbelieve. Creatures that attempt to disbelieve an illusion spell prepared from a *crimson tome* must roll their check twice and take the worse result; this is a misfortune effect. This does not affect the saving throws of spells with the illusion trait that call for a saving throw to resolve effects other than disbelief, such as with *dizzying colors* or *vision of death*.

Activate—Crimson Focusing \blacklozenge (manipulate); Frequency once per day; Requirements You have fewer Focus Points than your maximum number of Focus Points;

Effect You draw on the *crimson tome*'s energies and regain one Focus Point; the *crimson tome*'s leather binding turns black until your next daily preparations.

Activate—Achaek's Gift \blacklozenge (concentrate, spellshape); Trigger You kill a creature with a spell prepared from the *crimson tome*; Effect The *crimson tome* infuses the slain creature's mortal remains and soul. If an effect attempts to restore the slain creature to life, the *crimson tome* immediately attempts to counteract that effect (counteract modifier +27, counteract rank 8). If the restoring effect is counteracted, you immediately learn the name, nature, and location of the creature or effect that attempted to bring the dead body back to life. You can only impart Achaek's Gift on one creature at a time. If you use this ability on another creature, the previous creature loses Achaek's Gift.

Held Items

These held items can be discovered by the PCs during *Prey for Death*.

ELYSIAN CLAIRGLASS

ITEM 17

RARE MAGICAL SCRYING

Price 14,000 gp

Usage held in 2 hands; Bulk 1

Used by soldiers who battle on the borderlands of Elysium, particularly in Gorum's realm of Clashing Shore, these bronze spyglasses are somewhat plain-looking save for a single diamond set into the largest cylinder. An *Elysian clairglass* functions like a typical spyglass, but you can see twenty times farther while looking through it, rather than eight times farther. It also grants a +3 item bonus to Perception checks to notice details at a distance.

Activate—Seek and Speak \blacklozenge (concentrate); Frequency once per day; Effect The *Elysian clairglass* casts *clairaudience* and *clairvoyance* on the area you are currently observing with it. As long as you're holding the *Elysian clairglass*, you can speak through the floating eye or ear created by its spells, causing your voice to manifest as a whisper that only one person in range of the spells can hear, as a booming voice that everyone in range of the spells can hear, or as any combination in between those two extremes.

Activate—Pinpoint \blacklozenge (concentrate, manipulate); Frequency once per day; Effect You cast *pinpoint*.

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ADVENTURE TOOLBOX

EYE OF THE MANTIS

UNCOMMON MAGICAL

Usage held in 1 hand; **Bulk** L

This 1-inch tall figurine depicts a crouched praying mantis. It's usually carved from green jade, crimson marble, or purple porphyry. Regardless of the figurine's material composition, its gemstone eyes are always a dull ruby red that seems to drink light.

Activate—Phantasmal Assassin ◆◆

(concentrate, manipulate); **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** You cast 4th-rank *vision of death* (DC 28). To the target, it always appears as if they are being attacked by an immense praying mantis.

Activate—Scouting Eye 1 minute (concentrate, manipulate); **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** You cast *scouting eye*.

Worn Items

The Red Mantis assassins often utilize some of the following magic items on their missions.

ASSASSIN'S BRACERS

ITEM 10+

UNCOMMON ILLUSION INVESTED MAGICAL

Usage worn bracers; **Bulk** L

These paired bracers of red leather appear as plain armbands on the outside but display the branded symbol of Achaekek on the inside. They grant the wearer a +1 item bonus to AC and saving throws, and a maximum Dexterity modifier of +5 as armor. You can affix talismans to *assassin's bracers* as though they were light armor.

Activate—Focus on the Doomed ◆◆ (concentrate, manipulate); **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** You designate one creature within 30 feet. You cast 4th-rank *invisibility* on yourself, but the designated creature can still see you. The bracers enhance your appearance to the designated creature, making you appear more fearsome and unnerving, granting you a +1 item bonus to attempts to Feint or Demoralize the designated creature. The designated creature takes a -1 item penalty to saving throws against fear effects.

Type I; Level 10; Price 1,000 gp

Type II; Level 15; Price 6,500 gp

The item bonuses are +2, and the item penalty is -2.

Type III; Level 20; Price 70,000 gp

The item bonuses are +3, and the item penalty is -3.

MANTIS EMBRACE

ITEM 9+

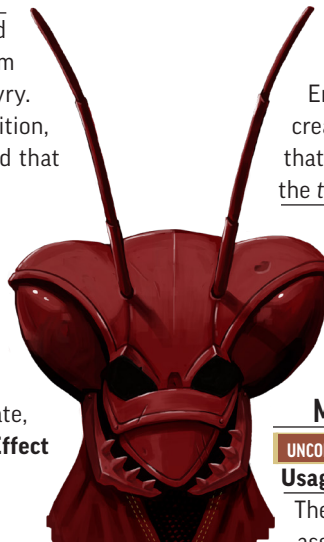
UNCOMMON INVESTED MAGICAL

Usage worn gloves; **Bulk** L

These stylized red gloves are constructed from plates of leather that have been treated to resemble insect chitin. The gloves grant the wearer a +2 item bonus to Athletics checks to Grapple or Shove.

Activate—Crushing Embrace ◆ (manipulate); **Frequency** once per hour; **Requirements** You are grappling

ITEM 11



Mask of the Mantis

a creature; **Effect** You Strike the creature you are grappling with a melee weapon or unarmed attack. This Strike deals an additional 3d6 precision damage and gains the death trait. The body of a creature that is slain by Crushing Embrace is so gruesomely damaged that the creature's body cannot be affected by any effect that requires an intact body to function, such as the *talking corpse* spell.

Type *mantis embrace*; **Level** 9; **Price** 700 gp

Type *greater mantis embrace*; **Level** 17;

Price 13,000 gp

The bonus to Athletics is +3, and the additional precision damage is 5d6.

MASK OF THE MANTIS

ITEM 5+

UNCOMMON INVESTED MAGICAL

Usage worn head; **Bulk** 1

The traditional headwear for the Red Mantis assassin is the *mask of the mantis*. Most of these masks are constructed from hard leather helmets that serve to obscure the assassin's

identity and give them the appearance of possessing a mantis's head. Some variants, however, consist only of the mask itself, and are meant to be worn over the face. Regardless of the shape and style, all *masks of the mantis* function the same.

Members of the Vernai can use any *mask of the mantis* to enhance their frightening presence—something they often do simply to reveal their standing in the society without speaking a word, as detailed fully in the entry for Vernai's Ire activation below.

While wearing a *mask of the mantis*, you gain a +1 item bonus to Perception checks.

Activate—Enhance Vision ◆◆ (concentrate, manipulate); **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** You cast either *darkvision* or *see the unseen* on yourself.

Activate—Vernai's Ire ◆ (concentrate); **Requirement** You are a member of the Vernai; **Effect** You cause the *mask of the mantis*'s eyes to shimmer with crimson light, granting yourself a far more harrowing visage. This light creates illumination equivalent to that of a candle. You can use this ability again to extinguish the frightening glow, but as long as Vernai's Ire remains active, you gain a +1 item bonus to Intimidation checks.

Type *mask of the mantis*; **Level** 5; **Price** 150 gp

Type *greater mask of the mantis*; **Level** 11; **Price** 1,350 gp

The item bonus to Perception and Intimidation is +2. When you Enhance Vision, the *darkvision* spell or *see the unseen* spell is heightened to 5th-rank.

Type *major mask of the mantis*; **Level** 18; **Price** 19,000 gp

The item bonus to Perception and Intimidation is +3.

Activate—Locate Target 10 minutes (concentrate); **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** You cast *pinpoint*. If the target of this spell is a creature for which you've accepted a contract to assassinate, you are considered to have seen the creature in person for the purposes of *pinpoint*'s requirements.



Exploring Mediogalti

Mediogalti Island is a dangerous location, but the PCs in *Prey for Death* aren't likely to spend much time exploring it (and may even bypass it entirely in their journeys between Ilizmagorti and the Crimson Citadel via the use of travel magic). You can use the following notes and map above to expand on this adventure's encounters (or create entirely new adventures of your own design).

Crimson Citadel

Seat of power of the Red Mantis—this location is detailed further on page 97.

Crypt of Angus Amberleg

The most infamous of the countless hidden pirate crypts on the island. Captain Amberleg sailed the sea over 300 years ago, and his crypt is rumored to hold an astonishing amount of treasure—and dangers as well.

Cuttle

Little more than a ramshackle collection of buildings, the primary industry in this small town is whaling. It's an open secret that several of the town's salty old residents are Red Mantis assassins in disguise.

Dinosaur Graveyard

Legends claim that among the bones of dinosaurs that grace this valley lie heaps of gold and precious gems.

Ganda-Uj

This strange settlement is located high in the jungle canopy—the largest town of monkey goblins on the entire island. It's the fifth such city to bear the name after the previous four burned to the ground.

The Hermitage

A barren island on which only a single man known as the Hermit dwells—a mysterious deaf and mute man who appears to have no affiliation with the Red Mantis.

Mosquito Island

This island is used by the Red Mantis as a training ground (and, it's said, a boneyard) for new assassins. Legend holds that the hidden treasure of infamous pirate king named Tyrax "Blood Bones" is hidden somewhere on this isle.

Thunderscale Warrens

The largest of Mediogalti's kobold clans dwells in these caverns, where they pursue their worship of dinosaurs in relative peace.

The Merry Widow

This notorious shipwreck serves as the home of a group of Besmaran priests. Those who belong to this cult are comprised of worshippers who lost their spouses at sea and claim to have been blessed by Besmara in payment for this sacrifice.

Achaekek's Assassins

All who have wronged, who have enemies, or who cling to stolen power fear the Red Mantis. For centuries, this order of peerless assassins has stalked the nightmares of their victims. Dutiful and discreet, professional and effective, these killers' blades cull commoners and counts with equal ease, with no spell, safe house, or army of guardians saving anyone marked by the Mantis. And for those with the gold and guile to hire the Red Mantis, their coin buys the promise that those slain by their sawtooth sabers do not just die, but shall never rise again.

Some whisper the Red Mantis are death cultists, others murmur they're an insidious brotherhood of fiends for hire, but no one speaks of the Red Mantis without the tremble of fear on their lips. The scars of their murderous blades stretch through history—a history fraught with mysterious demises of generals on the eve of key battles and heroes laid low in their beds by unseen knives. Many believe the Red Mantis have murdered for centuries, not just for coin and profit, but to rework the world to suit ancient, mysterious, and doubtlessly blood-soaked ambitions. Those beliefs are closer to the truth than most would hope.

The Way of the Mantis

The Red Mantis operates throughout Golarion, although they hide their presence under veils of subtlety. In criminal circles, they're known as the finest assassins for hire, whose zealous commitment to death exceeds professionalism. Those who hire the Red Mantis pay for annihilation, as the assassins guarantee not just a mark's death, but an absolute and permanent end. Through potent and secret methods, Red Mantis assassins guarantee that those they kill are the correct target—not some clever magical duplicate or sacrificial lamb. In addition, they keep tabs on their victims even after death, and should a target return from the dead, their mark is renewed. The assassins do not falter and will eliminate their prey as many times as it takes.

Red Mantis assassins do not dabble in other illegitimate enterprises to the extent that many other criminal guilds do, letting nothing distract them from the purity of the assassin's art. They kill by contract alone and choose not to muddy the needs of their order by allying with other criminal organizations—in fact, they often find themselves at odds with other organizations, particularly the cult of Norgorber. Their claws reach far, though, and agents of the Red Mantis, furtive and overt, maintain ties with governments, religious orders, guilds, and merchant groups throughout the Inner Sea region and beyond. There is little they cannot obtain if a mission requires it.

Path of the Mantis God

The assassins' effectiveness springs not just from obsession and elitism, but true religious fervor. To a Mantis assassin, completion of a contract isn't about

money or reputation but rather furthering the goals of their merciless organization and doing honor to their enigmatic patron deity, Achaekek the Mantis God, He Who Walks in Blood. Much of what is known about Achaekek is shrouded in misconception and rumor, further confounded by ancient texts that speak of him not as a god of assassins, but a god of judgment or a god of monsters. In fact, more of these perceived misconceptions are ancient truths, for Achaekek has been among the gods since the dawn of creation itself, and over the untold eons, he has served many roles.

Today, most know him as a god of assassins, divine punishment, and the patron of the Red Mantis. He dwells in a cavern at the base of Pharasma's spire, from which he looks out over the Great Beyond, ever ready to act when his service is called upon. The leaders and highest-ranking initiates of the Red Mantis see their work and worship as one and the same. Every ended life delights their dark god and spills blood into the pool of his immortal rest.

In homage to their deity, the Red Mantis refuses all contracts on rightful monarchs. Just as the Mantis God serves as the weapon of the gods yet does not strike against the rightfully divine, so too do members of the Red Mantis see themselves as agents of righteous death, who strike only at those who take power not meant to be their own. They view the murder of kings and queens as blasphemy, honoring the remit of rightful rulers as a mortal world's parallel to godhood. Anyone else, though—even religious figures, princes, generals, and any who rose to power through unlawful means—are food for He Who Walks in Blood.

Employing the Red Mantis

Those who seek the deadly services of the Mantis do so at great risk. Word spread among the shadier personalities in any city eventually reaches the assassins, but more remarkable is the Red Mantis's ability to select their clients before they even know they have need of the guild's lethal services. Many a victim betrayed by their sibling, merchant cheated by a rival, or conspirator seeking a sudden end to an enemy finds themselves approached by a businesslike agent of the Red Mantis, someone not clad in the signature armor or wielding the notorious sabers but still able to recount every misdeed with uncanny accuracy and offer absolute vengeance for a price. This payment is not always a sum set in gold, as the assassins also accept compensation in the form of possessions, titles to land, and—as nefariously as any servants of Asmodeus—future favors. Rumors persist of Red Mantis agents leaving methods of payment vague until after their work is complete, forcing their employer to part with the things they value most, like athletic daughters or charming sons. The method of determining the price for the Red Mantis's assassination is known to the order's leaders alone. Where a fickle merchant-baron might be dispatched for a mere handful of coins, the price for

killing a cheating landlord could cost the buyer their family's most treasured heirloom. In any case, the fee is as much based on who commissions the killing as who is marked for death. When the time to pay finally comes, those who renege are condemned. Although they might flee far and hide for years, the lives of any who cheat the Red Mantis are sure to end on sawtooth blades.

Leaders of the Red Mantis

Beneath the Mantis God, agents of the Red Mantis answer to a council known as the Vernai, the High Killers. Comprised of several dozen powerful assassins, each tried in the field and with reputations written in blood, the Vernai lead the organization and interpret the will of He Who Walks in Blood from their hidden island redoubt, the Crimson Citadel. The majority of these leaders are known as mistresses, although the rare master exists. Each has a particular country or region of influence, deciding where to send agents, choosing what marks to act upon, and directing subordinates to further the order's will. Above these mistresses stands the Blood Mistress, the leader of the Red Mantis and its most potent vassal of the Mantis God, a title currently held by Blood Mistress Jakalyn. This deadly honor is traditionally held by a woman and brings with it great influence—yet not absolute control—over the Vernai, command of any individual Mantis agent, unquestioned authority in interpreting the will of the Mantis God, and unfettered access to the Sarzari Library.

Achaekek

While Achaekek's divine genesis is debated among scholars, it's believed that he was created—either by the power of a singular deity or a group of them—to eradicate those who would steal a god's divinity, and he has since become the enforcer of divine punishment and patron of the Red Mantis assassins.

HE WHO WALKS IN BLOOD

Areas of Concern assassins, divine punishments, the Red Mantis

Edicts conduct assassinations, spread the Red Mantis's infamy, wield sawtooth sabers in combat

Anathema kill a rightful ruler, become fixated on petty matters such as others' gender or ancestry, abandon an assassination contract you agreed to pursue

Divine Attribute Strength or Dexterity

Devotee Benefits

Cleric Spells 1st: *sure strike*, 2nd: *invisibility*, 4th: *vision of death*

Divine Font harm

Divine Sanctification can choose unholy

Divine Skill Stealth

Domains death, might, trickery, zeal

Favored Weapon sawtooth saber

Avatar

When casting the *avatar* spell, a worshipper of Achaekek gains the following additional abilities.

Achaekek Speed 70 feet, climb Speed 50 feet, ignore difficult and greater difficult terrain; **Melee** ✦ mantis claw (agile, backswing, finesse, reach 15 feet, versatile P), **Damage** 6d8+6 slashing; **Ranged** ✦ spine volley (range 60 feet), **Damage** 6d6+3 piercing

Divine Intercession

In *Prey for Death*, the PCs and possibly some NPCs might have opportunities to earn boons and curses from Achaekek at certain points during the adventure.

Minor Boon: Once, when you would fail a Stealth check, you critically succeed instead. Achaekek typically grants this boon for an extremely consequential Stealth check that could lead to an assassination, such as one that could get you into position to kill an important target, but rarely on a Stealth check to help you escape.

Moderate Boon: You can cast *blood vendetta* once per day as an innate divine spell; this spell automatically heightens to a rank equal to your half your level.

Major Boon: You gain the sneak attack rogue class feature, dealing 3d6 precision damage. If you already have that class feature, you increase your sneak attack damage by 3d6.

Minor Curse: Non-sapient insects (especially mantises) become hostile against you.

Moderate Curse: Hubris brings death. Your name and location are projected into the mind of a Red Mantis assassin, who is tasked with eliminating you.

Major Curse: The Mantis God doesn't waste his time toying with or tormenting those who truly anger him or those who dare to consider themselves divine. He rips open a portal to your location, kills you, drags your soul to judgment in a way that prevents resurrection magic, and then leaves.



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Red Mantis Assassin

You are a Red Mantis assassin, inducted by Achaekek, He Who, and sworn to chase your prey to the end of the world and beyond. While many Red Mantis assassins hail from the city of Ilizmagorti and regard it as their hometown, the Red Mantis has agents throughout the world, some of whom have yet to visit their so-called capital city. Still, those who have never been to Ilizmagorti eventually realize that they should at least pay a the city visit at some point in their lives.

As a Red Mantis assassin, you'll periodically be asked to perform assassinations—but the organization is not without rules. The information presented on the previous page is important to understand if you choose to play a Red Mantis assassin as a result. This, plus the fact that the pursuit of murder-for-hire is generally seen as a criminal act that draws the interest of society's less-reputable and more sadistic members, means that this archetype may not be appropriate for all groups. More than most archetypes, this one requires the consent and permission of not just the GM, but of your fellow players. For an adventure like *Prey for Death*, though, this archetype can be considered to be unlocked for all who wish to join.

The rare feats presented in the archetype are typically available only for assassins who have received permission from the Blood Mistress to undergo the appropriate training. These rare feats are available to any characters playing through *Prey for Death*.

Additional Feats: 2nd Twin Feint (*Player Core* 170); 4th Quick Draw (*Player Core* 171), Underhanded Assault (*Player Core* 171); 6th Poison Weapon (*Player Core* 171), Twin Distraction (*Player Core* 172); 8th Gang Up (*Player Core* 172); 10th Advanced School Spell (*Player Core* 203); Improved Poison Weapon (*Player Core* 173), Opportune Backstab (*Player Core* 174)

RED MANTIS ASSASSIN DEDICATION FEAT 2

UNCOMMON ARCHETYPE DEDICATION

Prerequisites trained in sawtooth sabers, deity is Achaekek, member of the Red Mantis assassins; **Access** You are from Mediogalti Island.

You have learned how to stalk your foes and slay them with a sawtooth saber. You become trained in Stealth and Assassin Lore; if you were already trained, you become an expert instead. Whenever your proficiency in any weapon increases to expert or beyond, you also gain that new proficiency with sawtooth sabers.

You become bound by Achaekek's anathema and can receive his sanctification.

BASIC RED MANTIS MAGIC FEAT 4

ARCHETYPE

Prerequisites trained in Religion, Red Mantis Assassin Dedication

You have learned limited divine magic from your Red Mantis training. You gain the Cast a Spell activity. You can prepare

two common cantrips each day from the divine spell list or any other divine cantrips you have access to. You also gain the basic spellcasting benefits (*Player Core* 215). You're trained in the spell attack modifier and spell DC statistics. Your key spellcasting attribute for the Red Mantis archetype spells is Charisma, and they are divine Red Mantis spells. If you gain a Focus Pool from any Red Mantis Assassin class feats, you can Refocus by praying to Achaekek or researching your assigned kill.

You also have access to the Red Mantis magic school (see page 99). In addition to preparing spells from the divine spell list, you can prepare spells from this school. Regardless of their usual magic tradition, when you prepare spells from this school, they are divine spells, as are any Red Mantis focus spells you gain.

CRIMSON SHROUD FEAT 6

ARCHETYPE

Prerequisites Red Mantis Assassin Dedication

Frequency once per day

You swathe yourself in a veil of red mist for 1 minute. While the shroud is active, you gain fast healing equal to half your level. You can Interact with your shroud, swirling it around you, to gain a +1 circumstance bonus to AC until the beginning of your next turn. Finally, if you die while the shroud is active, you can choose to have your entire body vanish into red mist, leaving behind only your gear; you make this choice when you activate Crimson Shroud.

At 10th level, you can use this ability once per hour instead of once per day.

RED MANTIS SCHOOL SPELL FEAT 6

ARCHETYPE

Prerequisites Basic Red Mantis Magic.

You gain the Red Mantis magic school's initial school spell. If you don't already have one, you gain a focus pool of 1 Focus Point.

ACHAEKEK'S GRIP FEAT 8

RARE ARCHETYPE

Prerequisites Basic Red Mantis Magic

You sense if a creature you have slain in the last year has been restored to life, as long as you and that creature are on the same plane. You also gain the *Achaekek's clutch* focus spell (page 109). If you don't already have one, you gain a focus pool of 1 Focus Point.

MANTIS FORM FEAT 8

ARCHETYPE

Prerequisites Basic Red Mantis Magic

You gain the *mantis form* focus spell (page 109). If you don't already have one, you gain a focus pool of 1 Focus Point.

FADING FEAT 10

RARE ARCHETYPE TELEPORTATION

Prerequisites Crimson Shroud

Frequency once per Crimson Shroud

Trigger You are targeted with a Strike by someone you can detect.

Requirements Your Crimson Shroud is active.

You partially fade from reality. The attacker must attempt a DC 11 flat check; on a failure, the attack passes harmlessly through the image of your body that remains behind. An instant later you return to reality, and your Crimson Shroud ends.

EXPERT RED MANTIS MAGIC FEAT 12

ARCHETYPE

Prerequisites master in Religion, Basic Red Mantis Magic
You gain the expert spellcasting benefits (*Player Core* 215).

VERNAI TRAINING FEAT 12

RARE ARCHETYPE

Prerequisites Achaek's Grip, Basic Red Mantis Magic
To resurrect a creature you've slain, a spellcaster must counteract your influence on its death. The DC of this check is equal to your class DC or spell DC, whichever is higher.

In addition, you've undergone training to better make use of your magic. Increase the spell slots you gain from Red Mantis assassin archetype feats by 1 for each spell rank other than your two highest Red Mantis spell slots. You can prepare only spells from the Red Mantis magic school curriculum in these extra slots.

PRAYER ATTACK FEAT 14

ARCHETYPE CONCENTRATE

Prerequisites Red Mantis Assassin Dedication

Requirements You are wielding a sawtooth saber in each hand.

You've mastered the signature assassination style of the Red Mantis. Attempt to Feint an enemy within 30 feet. If your Feint is successful, when you use Prayer Attack on subsequent turns you automatically make the target flat-footed against your melee attacks for that turn without rolling a check to Feint, so long as you remain visible to the target and the target remains within 30 feet of you. If you use your Prayer Attack against a different target, you must attempt to Feint the target normally.

When you use Prayer Attack, your next successful Strike with a sawtooth saber that turn deals 2d6 persistent bleed damage to the target.

MASTER RED MANTIS MAGIC FEAT 18

ARCHETYPE

Prerequisites legendary in Religion, Expert Red Mantis Magic
You gain the master spellcasting benefits (*Player Core* 215).

Red Mantis Assassin Focus Spells

The following focus spells are available to Red Mantis assassins who choose the associated feats.

ACHAEKEK'S CLUTCH FOCUS 4

RARE CONCENTRATE CURSE DEATH FOCUS MANIPULATE

Range 30 feet; **Targets** 1 creature

Defense Will

You mark the holy symbol of Achaek in a visible location on the target's body.

Critical Success The target is unaffected.

Success The target is marked by Achaek's symbol. For 1 minute, the first time per round that the target gains persistent bleed damage, they immediately take that amount of slashing damage as the mantis claws grow off the symbol and rake them.

Failure As success, but the curse has an unlimited duration.

Critical Failure As failure, but the DC on the target's flat check to remove persistent bleed damage increases to 20 (15 with particularly effective assistance).

MANTIS FORM FOCUS 4

UNCOMMON CONCENTRATE FOCUS MANIPULATE POLYMORPH

Duration 1 minute

You become a mantis. You gain the effects of *insect form*, heightened to *mantis form's* level, and you can only transform into a mantis.



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BLOOD OF THE EMPTY DEATH

It's believed that bloodfogs first came into being due to the influence of the sinister goddess known as Nhimbaloth. Voidbracken, the name Nhimbaloth's long-dead homeworld, is said to contain entire islands, even subcontinents, swathed in immense bloodfogs. Some claim that the smaller fogs encountered elsewhere are merely "feelers for feeding," extended through one-way portals on Voidbracken to other planes of existence.

Bloodfog

A bloodfog is an immense creature composed of hungry crimson mist. Vaguely humanoid faces, often little more than gaping skulls, constantly form and dissolve within their vaporous bodies. Much more solid are their ruby-red tendrils that slither out from their mass and cause deep slashing wounds.

Bloodfogs prefer to hunt near populated areas or sites of massive violence, drifting in to feed, then drifting out again. They roll through vibrant villages, leaving behind only silence and desiccated corpses. Bloodfogs are thought to be created in the place where they're most often encountered: the killing fields, where armies cause massive bloodshed and death.

BLOODFOG

CREATURE 17

RARE GARGANTUAN ABERRATION

Perception +29; darkvision, sense blood (precise) 60 feet

Languages Aklo

Skills Acrobatics +33, Stealth +33

Str -5, **Dex** +8, **Con** +6, **Int** +0, **Wis** +6, **Cha** +0

Misty Form A bloodfog's body is composed of a semisolid red fog similar in consistency to thick foam. This enables a bloodfog to move through spaces as narrow as 1 inch in diameter with no reduction to its Speed. However, a bloodfog can't wear or interact with objects. It also can't enter water or other fluids, and it's treated as Tiny for the purpose of how wind affects it.

Sense Blood A bloodfog can sense creatures that have blood within 120 feet. It can sense exposed blood within a mile.

AC 41; **Fort** +29, **Ref** +33, **Will** +27

HP 250; **Immunities** bleed, precision; **Weaknesses** fire 15; **Resistances** physical 15

Speed fly 40 feet

Melee misty tendril +33 (agile, finesse, reach 15 feet), **Damage** 5d6 slashing plus 3d6 persistent bleed and blood siphon

Occult Innate Spells DC 35; **8th** *vampiric exsanguination* (×3); **7th** *vampiric feast* (×3); **6th** *blood vendetta* (at will)

Blood Siphon When a bloodfog damages a creature with a misty tendril Strike, the creature must attempt a DC 38 Fortitude save. If the Strike was a critical hit, the outcome of the creature's save is one degree worse than the result of the saving throw. Any temporary Hit Points the bloodfog gains from blood siphon fade after 1 hour.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature is sickened 1.

Failure The creature is drained 1, and the bloodfog gains 20 temporary Hit Points.

Critical Failure The creature is drained 2. The bloodfog gains 40 temporary Hit Points and takes on an intense red hue until the end of its next turn.

During this time, it gains a +2 status bonus to AC and saves and is quickened. It can use its extra action only to Strike.

Blood Vengeance A bloodfog can cast *blood vendetta* even though it can't actually bleed. In addition to the spell's normal trigger, a bloodfog can cast *blood vendetta* as a reaction even if the target's piercing, slashing, or persistent bleed damage didn't actually result in damage to the bloodfog itself (either as a result of its resistance blocking the damage or its immunity to bleed coming into effect).



Einherji Host

Einherjar were mighty warriors in life, selected by the valkyries to continue fighting after death. Their souls are forged from the Universe's greatest heroes into the foot soldiers of the gods. While many einherjar chose to fight alone, functioning as an army of one, there are some who learn group tactics and use their combined battle-hardened skills to defeat their god's enemies together. These einherji hosts rarely leave the battlegrounds of their divine commanders' domains, where they eagerly battle against any they deem worthy of combat.

EINHERJI HOST

CREATURE 15

RARE GARGANTUAN AESIR MONITOR TROOP

Perception +22; darkvision

Languages Common, Hallit, Jotun

Skills Athletics +28, Intimidation +24

Str +7, **Dex** +4, **Con** +6, **Int** +0, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +3

AC 35 (37 with shields raised); **Fort** +29, **Ref** +23, **Will** +25 (+29 vs. fear)

HP 270; **Thresholds** 180 (12 squares), 90 (8 squares); **Weaknesses** area damage 18, splash damage 9; **Resistances** piercing 15

Troop Defenses (see *Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 306)

Speed 40 feet; troop movement

Form Up ◆ (Pathfinder Bestiary 3 305)

Dagger Volley ◆◆ The einherji host launches a ranged attack in the form of a volley of thrown daggers. This volley fills a 30-foot cone; all creatures in the area take 5d4+15 piercing damage (DC 36 basic Reflex save). When the troop is reduced to 8 or fewer squares, this area decreases to a 15-foot cone.

Jotun Slayer An einherji host has a +4 circumstance bonus to Strike as One damage rolls made against giants and creatures that are Huge or larger.

Pay For Every Inch ◆◆◆ The einherji host Forms Up, Raises Shields, and prepares to counterattack. Until the start of the troop's next turn, each time an enemy takes an action to move through a space adjacent to the troop, they take 4d8+18 slashing damage (DC 36 basic Reflex save).

Raise Shields ◆ The troop raises their shields, increasing their Armor Class by 2 until the start of the troop's next turn.

Song of Freedom ◆ (concentration, mental) The troop sings of freedom, bolstering their conviction and morale. Until the start of the troop's next turn, their Will saves increase to +29 against all mental effects, not just against fear effects.

Strike as One ◆ to ◆◆◆ **Frequency** once per round; **Effect** The einherji host makes melee attacks against each enemy within 5 feet (DC 36 basic Reflex save). The damage depends on the number of actions.

◆ 2d8+7 slashing damage

◆◆ 3d8+14 slashing damage

◆◆◆ 4d8+14 slashing damage

Troop Movement Whenever the einherji host Strides, they first Form Up as a free action to condense into a 20-foot-by-20-foot area (minus any missing squares they may have as the result of having taken Hit Point damage), then move up to their Speed. This works just like a Gargantuan creature moving; for instance, if any square of the troop enters difficult terrain, the extra movement cost applies to the whole troop.



GORUM'S EINHERJAR

The einherjar who serve Gorum believe that a grand battle shall rage across all of existence in the final days before reality comes to an end, and that those who survive will be elevated when the next version of reality is born. They clash together in endless mock battles to sharpen their skills and ready their blades. Each one who falls in these battles is reborn again in the Clashing Shore, ready to keep fighting.



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HERALDS

Heralds are specific representatives of the divine. Most deities maintain a herald, whose task it is to serve as a messenger and agent for the god or goddess among mortal kind. A creature with the herald trait is always unique and typically 15th level (although exceptions sometimes exist). When a herald is slain, their associated deity might restore them to life, replace them with an entirely new creature, or in rare cases, go for a time without maintaining a herald at all.

The First Blade

The Herald of Gorum, God of War, is said to have been formed from an unthinking sliver of steel splintered from Gorum's blade eons ago. As a living tool of war, the First Blade has been reforged countless times by Gorum as the face of war evolves. The First Blade does not identify as any particular ancestry; a mirror to his master, the armor and weapon themselves serve as his body—only emptiness lies within. Also like Gorum, the First Blade identifies as male.

THE FIRST BLADE

CREATURE 15

UNIQUE LARGE AESIR HERALD MONITOR

Perception +27; darkvision, battle sense (precise) 60 feet

Languages Chthonian, Common, Diabolic, Empyrean, Jotun, Protean

Skills Acrobatics +27, Athletics +31, Intimidation +31, Religion +27, Warfare Lore +27

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

Battle Sense The First Blade can detect metal weapons and metal heavy armor as a precise sense to a range of 60 feet.

AC 37; **Fort** +29, **Ref** +23, **Will** +27; +1 status to all saves vs magic

HP 300; **Immunities** bleed, death effects, fatigued; **Resistances** poison 15

Disarm Vulnerability If the First Blade is disarmed, he takes 8d6 mental damage (DC 36 basic Will save, plus stunned 1 on a critical failure). He also can't Conjure Weapon for 1 round.

Fortification Each time the First Blade is critically hit, he attempts a DC 17 flat check. On a success, it becomes a normal hit.

Halo of Blades (aura, divine) 10 feet, 3d6 slashing damage (DC 33 basic Reflex save)

Reactive Strike ↻

Speed 25 feet; fly

Melee ✦ *greatsword* +31 (magical, reach 10 feet, versatile P), **Damage** 2d12+16 slashing plus 1d6 persistent bleed and 1d6 spirit

Melee ✦ *fist* +29 (agile, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 3d6+16 bludgeoning

Ranged ✦ *light hammer* +29 (agile, magical, thrown 20 feet), **Damage** 2d6+16 bludgeoning plus 1d6 spirit

Divine Innate Spells DC 36; **6th** *blessed boundary*; **5th** *translocate* (×3), *weapon storm*; **Constant (6th)** *fly*

Conjure Weapon ✦ (divine) **Requirements** The First Blade has a free hand; **Frequency** once per round; **Effect** The First Blade extends an arm and makes a fist; as he does so, a common +2 *greater striking greater astral melee weapon* made of cold iron or silver appears in his fist. If he drops a conjured weapon or it is disarmed, the weapon vanishes. If he throws a conjured weapon, it vanishes after it is thrown and potentially damages its target. The First Blade prefers using a greatsword for melee Strikes and a light hammer for thrown ranged Strikes, but cannot have more than one conjured weapon in his possession at any time.

Lord of Battle The First Blade is highly skilled with all melee and thrown weapons, and gains the advantage of any such weapon's critical specialization effects. He inflicts an additional 1d6 persistent bleed damage with all melee Strikes made with melee weapons.

Whirling Blades ✦✦✦ (divine, move) **Frequency** once per minute; **Effect** To the faint sound of fell warhorns, the First Blade transforms into a Large cloud of whirling metal shards, then Strides twice. This movement doesn't trigger reactions, and while he can move through occupied spaces, he must end his movement in an unoccupied space, at which point he resumes his true form. All creatures who the First Blade moves through at least once during his Strides take 10d10 slashing damage (DC 36 basic Reflex save).



Frost Roc

Stories of immense rocs swooping down to carry off livestock or strafing armies into bleeding ruin are popular in taverns, but what many don't realize is that there are even more dangerous magical rocs dwelling in the remote corners of the world. These oversized birds have supernatural abilities linked to the region they favor, but they share one thing with the common roc—their vast size.

Frost rocs are owl-like predators adapted to life in arctic regions. They nest among the craggy peaks of snowcapped mountains or amid rifts of sprawling glaciers, treating the taigas and tundras as their sprawling hunting grounds. Frost rocs are nocturnal and tend to hunt nightly for a few weeks at a time, as the moon is waxing or waning full. They go into short periods of hibernation for the weeks on either side of a new moon, or during prolonged periods of cloud coverage, such as during a storm. They abandon these habits when they're trained to work as mounts or guardians—something that giants or the church of Gorum often does in the remote reaches of the Lands of the Linnorm Kings or the Realm of the Mammoth Lords.

FROST ROC

CREATURE 14

RARE GARGANTUAN BEAST COLD

Perception +25; darkvision


Skills Acrobatics +24, Athletics +29

Str +9, **Dex** +4, **Con** +6, **Int** -4, **Wis** +5, **Cha** +0

Mist Sight A frost roc can see through clouds, fog, mists, and other water vapors.


AC 34; **Fort** +28, **Ref** +24, **Will** +23


HP 300; **Immunities** cold; **Weaknesses** fire 15; **Resistances** electricity 15



Wing Rebuff  **Trigger** A creature moves into the reach of the frost roc's wing; **Effect** The frost roc makes a wing Strike against the triggering creature. If the frost roc Pushes the creature, it disrupts the triggering move action.



Speed 15 feet, fly 60 feet

Melee  beak +29 (reach 15 feet), **Damage** 3d12+15 piercing

Melee  talon +29 (agile, reach 15 feet), **Damage** 3d8+15 slashing plus Improved Grab

Melee  wing +29 (agile, reach 30 feet), **Damage** 3d4+15 bludgeoning plus Improved Push 10 feet

Flying Strafe   The frost roc Flies up to its Speed and makes two talon Strikes at any point during that movement. Each Strike must target a different creature. Each attack takes the normal multiple attack penalty.

Frozen Feathers   (cold, primal) The frost roc spreads its wings and then flaps them furiously, unleashing a blast of ice-rimed feathers in a 60-foot cone. All creatures in the area must attempt a DC 34 Reflex save. The frost roc can't use Frozen Feathers again for 1d4 rounds.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature takes 3d6 piercing damage and 5d6 cold damage.

Failure The creature takes 5d6 piercing damage and 10d6 cold damage.

Critical Failure The creature takes 8d6 piercing damage, 15d6 cold damage, and is slowed 1 for 1 minute.

Snack A frost roc gains a +2 circumstance bonus to hit with its beak Strike if the target is grabbed or restrained in its talon.

Snatch A frost roc can Fly at half Speed while it has a creature grabbed or restrained in either or both of its talons, carrying that creature along with it.



OTHER BESTIAL ROCS

Additional varieties of roc have evolved to adapt to remote, hostile environments and, like the frost roc, often possess some form of elemental magic. The albatross-like wind rocs of western Azlant nest among the ragged cliffs of shattered isles, commanding mighty winds with their wings. In remote Arcadian archipelagos, bright pink, long-legged swamp rocs stride through wetlands and use watery magic to aid their hunts. Others doubtless exist in even more remote reaches of the world.



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EX-DEMONS

Demons are known for their cruelty and wanton embrace of chaos and destruction, but now and then an individual demon encounters something that draws them away from their very nature. Such was the case with Bloody Hands, who discovered, through Gorum, that warfare in its purest form was of little interest to the concerns of demons.

Servitor of the Divine

All deities maintain favored agents to work their will among mortals. Heralds are among the most well-known of these agents—unique entities who serve as the deity’s mouthpiece and messenger and are often sent in response to a mortal spellcaster requesting aid in the form of a *planar servitor* ritual. But a deity’s herald isn’t the only agent permitted to walk among worshippers or smite enemies of the faith. Those called servitors are unique, powerful, and stand among the deity’s most devoted adherents.

Servitors are quite powerful, yet they’re not truly immortal. Any servitor of the divine may be slain in battle or through misadventure. In some cases, a slain servitor’s body vanishes and is replaced by a powerful treasure. In others, the body itself simply crumples to the ground as a corpse. Servitors can be restored to life at a deity’s whim, yet in many cases their deity won’t immediately grant this resurrection and may simply seek to create or elevate an entirely different servitor. Should the unthinkable happen and a deity themselves perish, their existing servitors do not die but are immediately aware of the fact that their creator has ceased to be. Some myths tell of servitors who have then gone on to ascend in power and replace their creator as a demigod or even a deity themselves, while in other stories, a desperate servitor may seek out a new god or goddess to devote themselves to.

While servitors are all unique creatures, in most cases they were once mortal worshippers—be they humanoid or otherwise—who have particularly pleased their deity. The resulting powers and abilities granted to the servitor vary wildly, but it’s almost unheard of for a servitor of any deity to be less powerful than 15th level, or at least a few levels above what they possessed in their previous life. While there are not limits to the number of servitors a deity might keep, most gods traditionally keep no more than three.

In Gorum’s case, his three most well-known servitors are comprised of a demon, dragon, and an elemental, creatures who either embody the chaos of battle or the raw spirit of the forge. In each case, these unique servitors’ worldview and philosophy closely match that of their Lord in Iron, leaving them outcasts or even pariahs among others of their kind. Yet to Bloody Hands, Saint Fang, and Temperbrand, there is no greater comfort in life than service to the god of war.

Bloody Hands

Bloody Hands was no agent of Gorum when he first rose from the polluted swamps of a remote fen in the Outer Rifts. For the first several millennia of his life, he fought for his own domain in the sprawling slime, eventually securing a realm the size of a small continent where his rule was unquestioned—at least, until it was invaded by a host of Gorum’s einherjar. Bloody Hands was taken aback at the aesirs’ battle prowess, and he gloried in the fall of his empire to the extent that, by the end of the invasion, he was proudly fighting on their side, mercilessly destroying hordes of demons who had so recently served him out of fear. The einherjar admired his lust for battle but didn’t quite know what to make of the frog-like demon, especially when he followed them back across the Maelstrom to Clashing Shore. After several centuries of brawling along the borders of that realm, growing increasingly less interested in sadism and more enthralled with the tactics of battle, Bloody Hands was granted permission by Gorum to become one of his servitors.

Bloody Hands appears as a vaguely humanoid frog-like demon whose stance evokes that of a lumbering gorilla. His slimy green skin shifts to a bloody red along the length of his arms, so that his claws look as though they’re constantly glistening with fresh blood. He has four beady eyes and a wide mouth filled with sharp teeth.

BLOODY HANDS

CREATURE 16

UNIQUE LARGE AMPHIBIOUS DEMON FIEND

Perception +28; darkvision

Languages Chthonian, Epyrean, Jotun, Protean; telepathy 100 feet

Skills Athletics +33, Intimidation +29, Religion +28

Str +9, **Dex** +4, **Con** +8, **Int** +5, **Wis** +6, **Cha** +5

AC 39; **Fort** +30, **Ref** +24, **Will** +28; +1 to all saves vs. magic

HP 300; **Weaknesses** cold iron 15

Battle Reek (aura, olfactory) 30 feet. Bloody Hands exudes the carrion stink of a sprawling battlefield—a cloying mixture of death and mud. Any creature entering the aura or starting its turn in the aura must succeed at a DC 34 Fortitude save or become sickened 1 (plus slowed 1 for as long as it's sickened on a critical failure). While within the aura, affected creatures take a -2 circumstance penalty to saves against fear and to recover from the sickened condition. A creature that succeeds at its save is temporarily immune for 1 minute.

Speed 30 feet, swim 30 feet

Melee ✦ jaws +33 (magical, reach 10 feet, unholy), **Damage** 3d12+17 piercing

Melee ✦ claw +33 (agile, magical, reach 10 feet, unholy), **Damage** 3d6+17 slashing plus 1d6 persistent bleed

Divine Innate Spells DC 34; **8th** *divine wrath*; **7th** *divine decree*; **6th** *phantasmal calamity*; **5th** *translocate*; **4th** *translocate* (at will); **Cantrips (8th)** *divine lance*, *telekinetic projectile*

Bloody Mess ✦✦ (divine) **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** Bloody Hands slashes his claws out in all directions, causing blood from all living creatures within a 20-foot-radius to leap out and fill the air with a fine red mist. All creatures in the area must attempt a DC 37 Fortitude save—creatures that are already wounded take a -2 penalty to this saving throw. If more than 3 creatures fail this saving throw, the 20-foot-radius becomes so thick with bloody mist that all creatures in the area become concealed until the end of Bloody Hands' next turn.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature takes 8d6 slashing damage.

Failure The creature takes 8d6 slashing damage, 4d6 persistent bleed damage, and becomes enfeebled 1 from blood loss for 1 minute.

Critical Failure The creature takes 12d6 persistent bleed damage and becomes enfeebled 2 from blood loss.

Leaping Slam ✦✦✦ (incapacitation) Bloody Hands Strides, then makes a High Jump or a Long Jump, and can land in a space occupied by creatures. All creatures in the 10-foot space he lands in must attempt a DC 37 Reflex save.

Critical Success The creature dodges aside and takes no damage, and it can choose any square adjacent to Bloody Hands to immediately move into; this movement does not trigger reactions.

Success The creature takes 4d6 bludgeoning damage and is pushed into an adjacent space of Bloody Hands' choice.

Failure The creature takes 8d6 bludgeoning damage, is pushed into an adjacent space of Bloody Hands' choice, and is knocked prone.

Critical Failure The creature takes 8d6 bludgeoning damage, is knocked prone, and becomes pinned by Bloody Hands.

Saint Fang

This dragon is haughty and proud, often coming across as self-righteous. As the very embodiment of just wars, he feels he can't possibly be wrong. His polished steel scales make the distinctive sound of blade scraping against blade as he moves, and his needle-like spines clink against each other with every mighty flap of his broad wings. Saint Fang is war given a dragon's form, with the temperament of a master strategist.

Of late, more and more of Gorum's followers have declared war for the sake of battle. They revel in causing



SAINT FANG'S PAST

Many theological scholars on Golarion have sought the truth behind Saint Fang's origins. The most likely (and widely believed) explanation is that he once flew the skies above Golarion, looking to protect innocent mortals from the ravages of war, but became so jaded over time, that he eventually changed into a perfect weapon for Gorum.

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TEMPERBRAND'S CORPSE

It hasn't happened yet to the powerful elemental, but if Temperbrand is slain, her body collapses swiftly in upon itself, transforming into a powerful magic maul. This weapon, which bears her name, is detailed on page 102 of this adventure.

bloodshed for any excuse, calling on Gorum's servants for aid, but Saint Fang doesn't answer those calls. He is more likely to appear for a group of villagers who band together to unseat a local bandit king or for a native population defending their homes against colonizers. He believes that war is inevitable as long as the greedy and bloodthirsty are given weapons, and he seeks to aid those whose justification for war is because they've run out of peaceful options.

Saint Fang rarely takes a rider, but he obeys the commands of his Lord in Iron, Gorum. The god occasionally commands Saint Fang to take one of his faithful into battle, and he obeys him to the letter of his command, often unseating riders he finds unworthy once they reach the battlefield.

SAINT FANG

CREATURE 18

UNIQUE HUGE DIVINE DRAGON

Perception +31; darkvision, forge vision, scent (imprecise) 60 feet

Languages Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Jotun

Skills Acrobatics +30, Athletics +35, Diplomacy +32, Intimidation +32, Medicine +29, Religion +29, Society +28, Warfare Lore +30

Str +9, **Dex** +4, **Con** +7, **Int** +4, **Wis** +5, **Cha** +6

Forge Vision Saint Fang ignores the concealed condition from smoke and fire.

AC 42; **Fort** +33, **Ref** +28, **Will** +29; +1 status to all saves vs. magic

HP 365; **Immunities** paralyzed, sleep

Frightful Presence (aura, emotion, fear, mental) 90 feet, DC 37

Spiked Scales A creature that critically fails to Strike Saint Fang in melee takes 6d6 piercing damage (DC 40 basic Reflex save).

Buck ⤴ DC 37

Wing Deflection ⤴ **Trigger** Saint Fang is targeted with an attack; **Effect** Saint Fang raises a wing, gaining a +2 circumstance bonus to AC against the triggering attack. If he is flying, he descends 10 feet after the attack is complete.

Speed 40 feet, fly 130 feet

Melee ⚔ jaws +35 (magical, reach 15 feet), **Damage** 3d12+17 piercing plus 1d6 fire

Melee ⚔ claw +35 (agile, magical, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 3d6+17 slashing plus 2d6 persistent bleed

Melee ⚔ tail +33 (magical, reach 20 feet), **Damage** 3d6+17 piercing

Dragon Breath ⚔⚔ Saint Fang breathes in one of two ways. He can't use Dragon Breath again for 1d4 rounds.

Blade Breath (arcane) He breathes a 100-foot line of sharp blades that deals 19d6 slashing damage (DC 40 basic Reflex save). The blades created by this breath vanish at the end of the round.

Forge Breath (arcane) He breathes a blast of embers and smoke, as if from an immense forge. Each creature within a 40-foot cone takes 6d6 fire damage and 12d6 poison damage (DC 40 basic Reflex save). Smoke lingers in the area until the end of Saint Fang's next turn; all creatures within the smoke become concealed, and all creatures outside the smoke become concealed to creatures within.

Draconic Frenzy ⚔⚔ Saint Fang makes two claw Strikes and one tail Strike in any order.

Draconic Momentum When Saint Fang scores a critical hit with a Strike, he recharges his Dragon Breath.

Temperbrand

Temperbrand is a 14-foot-tall elemental with a shape reminiscent of a dwarf, but she appears to be made entirely from orange-and-white heated metal. Blades form and collapse on her skin, the metal folding over itself constantly as she moves and fights, but the swordlike lengths that replace her hands remain in



place at all times. She fights with vicious gusto, slicing through foes as her limbs either transform into fiery blades or eject metal shrapnel from her body, propelled by pockets of steam and super-heated air.

Temperbrand was created by Gorum as the embodiment of modern weapons and the potential of the forge to create any instrument of war. She is a merger of Forgeheart, a powerful fire elemental, and Slageater, a powerful metal elemental. Gorum had the two elementals fight side by side for 300 years before merging them into one entity.

Temperbrand is often sent to bolster soldiers who are outmatched in an attempt to even the odds on the battlefield, making for a more spectacular war in Gorum's eyes. She might appear before a quartermaster and supply as many blades, shields, and suits of armor as they require, creating the armaments from her own body.

TEMPERBRAND

CREATURE 18

UNIQUE HUGE ELEMENTAL FIRE METAL

Perception +31; darkvision, tremorsense (imprecise) 60 feet

Languages Common, Jotun, Pyric

Skills Athletics +35, Crafting +29, Intimidation +31

Str +9, **Dex** +5, **Con** +9, **Int** +3, **Wis** +5, **Cha** +5

AC 41; **Fort** +35, **Ref** +29, **Will** +27

HP 335; **Immunities** fire; **Weaknesses** cold 15; **Resistances** physical 15

Vulnerable to Water Whenever Temperbrand is targeted with a water effect, she takes 6d6 cold damage and becomes slowed 1 for 1d4 rounds as her body hardens into solid metal. As long as she remains slowed, her Armor Class increase to 43.

Molten Spray ⚡ (fire, primal) **Trigger** Temperbrand takes physical damage; **Effect** Temperbrand's body erupts at the site of the damage to spray molten iron into an adjacent square of her choice. Any creature occupying that square takes 9d6 fire damage (DC 37 basic Reflex save).

Speed 30 feet, climb 30 feet, burrow 10 feet

Melee ⚔ slagblade +35 (reach 15 feet, versatile P), **Damage** 3d10+17 slashing plus 2d6 fire

Melee ⚔ foot +35 (magical), **Damage** 3d10+17 bludgeoning plus 2d6 fire

Hurl Slagblade ⚔⚔ (divine, fire, incapacitation, primal) Temperbrand whips an arm at a target within 120 feet, causing her slagblade to detach and fly through the air. The target creature must attempt a DC 40 Reflex save. Temperbrand regrows a new slagblade instantly but can't use Hurl Slag again for 1d4 rounds.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature takes 5d10 fire damage.

Failure The creature takes 10d10 fire damage, and the slag hardens, causing the creature to become slowed 1 for 3 rounds. A creature can end the slowed condition early by Escaping (DC 40) the confining slag.

Critical Failure The creature takes 20d10 fire damage, and the slag swiftly anchors them in place, causing the creature to become restrained until they Escape (DC 40).

Ooze Form ⚔ (concentrate, polymorph, primal) Temperbrand's body becomes amorphous. Her AC becomes 30, and she becomes immune to critical hits and precision damage. While in this form she is blind (but retains her tremorsense), and her Speeds are reduced by 15 feet (to a minimum of 5 feet). She can move through spaces as if she were a Tiny creature without penalty. As long as she remains in Ooze Form, she can't make slagblade Strikes or Hurl Slagblade, but she gains Trample. She can end Ooze Form by using this action again.

Slagblade Storm ⚔⚔⚔ Temperbrand Strikes all creatures within her reach with a slagblade Strike. Her multiple attack penalty doesn't increase until the end of this activity.

Trample ⚔⚔⚔ Large or smaller, foot, DC 40



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LIFE AS A MIRROR

Silver Saber has watched the followers of Achaekek for centuries, sitting silently in their gold frame and pretending to be a mirror. They know more about the secret lives of the Red Mantis than has ever been recorded in the Sarzari, but their objective isn't to record history, it's to function as a guardian—no more, no less.

Silver Saber

This construct was built hundreds of years ago by Red Mantis arcanists, then imbued with intelligence as a divine protector by priests of Achaekek not long after the assassin cult fled Rahadoum. Silver Saber's single purpose is to guard the secrets of the Blood Mistress from those who are unworthy.

When at rest, Silver Saber appears as an ornate mirror, but when confronted in battle they animate into the form of a praying mantis made of polished, almost liquid silver with a blank humanoid face.

SILVER SABER

CREATURE 18

UNIQUE HUGE CONSTRUCT

Perception +32; darkvision

Languages Common, Diabolic, Osiriani

Skills Achaekek Lore +31, Acrobatics +33, Athletics +34, Deception +33, Society +31

Str +8, **Dex** +7, **Con** +6, **Int** +3, **Wis** +6, **Cha** +5

AC 43; **Fort** +30, **Ref** +33, **Will** +28

HP 260; **Immunities** death effects, disease, doomed, drained, fatigued, healing, nonlethal attacks, paralyzed, poison, sickened, unconscious; **Resistances** physical 15 (except adamantine); **Weaknesses** cold 15

Evasion When Silver Saber rolls a success on a Reflex save, they get a critical success instead.

Faith Bound (divine) Silver Saber can't attack a creature that openly wears or displays Achaekek's religious symbol unless that creature uses a hostile action against Silver Saber first. They can also attack a creature they believe isn't faithful to Achaekek or who wears the religious symbol as a ruse (typically after succeeding at a Perception check to Sense Motive).

Reflect Truths (aura, divine, mental, visual) 20 feet. A creature that enters the area must succeed at a DC 37 Will save or they see their own visage in Silver Saber's reflective face looking back at them. For 1 minute, that creature can't speak any deliberate and intentional lies and takes a -2 status penalty to Deception checks. On a critical failure, the status penalty is increased to -4.

Speed 40 feet, climb 30 feet

Melee ✦ leg +33 (magical, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 3d10+16 slashing plus 2d6 persistent bleed

Ranged ✦ spike +33 (magical, range 30 feet), **Damage** 3d6+16 piercing

Focus Gaze ✦ (aura, divine, incapacitation, mental, visual) Silver Saber focuses their gaze on a creature they can see within 30 feet. The target must immediately attempt a Will save against Reflect Truths. If the creature was already so affected, it becomes stunned 1. After attempting its save, the creature is then temporarily immune until the start of Silver Saber's next turn.

Liquefy ✦ Silver Saber becomes fully liquid and amorphous. They gain immunity to precision damage but take double cold damage. The only actions they can use while liquefied are move actions and spike ranged Strikes. They can resume their normal form by taking this action again.

Mirror ✦ (concentrate) Until the next time they act, Silver Saber appears to be a mirror. They have an automatic result of 53 on Deception checks and DCs to pass as a mirror.

Silver Strikes Silver Saber's leg and spike Strikes count as silver weapons.

Swift Steps Silver Saber is permanently quickened, but they can use the extra action only to Step or Stride.



Valkyrie Tempest

While valkyries tend to travel alone or in small groups of two or three, they won't hesitate to rely on the old adage of "strength in numbers."

VALKYRIE TEMPEST

CREATURE 17

RARE GARGANTUAN AESIR MONITOR TROOP

Perception +28; darkvision

Languages Common, Jotun; ravenspeaker, *truespeech*

Skills Acrobatics +29, Athletics +30, Diplomacy +29, Intimidation +29, Religion +28

Str +9, **Dex** +6, **Con** +6, **Int** +4, **Wis** +5, **Cha** +6

AC 37; **Fort** +24, **Ref** +20, **Will** +23

HP 312; **Thresholds** 208 (12 squares), 104 (8 squares); **Weaknesses** area damage 19, splash damage 10; **Resistances** electricity 15

Troop Defenses (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 306)

Speed 25 feet, fly 60 feet

Divine Innate Spells DC 35; **7th** *interplanar teleport* (troop and mounts only); **6th** *blessed boundary*, *divine wrath*, *weapon storm*; **Constant (5th)** *truespeech*



Bolster the Wounded  (divine, healing)




Trigger The tempest ends its turn and is not at maximum HP; **Effect** The tempest restores 5d10 HP. This healing can't increase a tempest's Hit Points beyond the maximum of its current Hit Point threshold.


Form Up  (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 305)

Troop Movement Whenever the troop Strides or Flies, they first Form Up as a free action into a 20-foot-by-20-foot area (minus any missing squares), then move up to their Speed. This works just like a Gargantuan creature moving; for instance, if any square of the troop enters difficult terrain, the extra movement cost applies to the whole troop.

Troop Spellcasting When the tempest Casts a Spell, its members combine their efforts into casting a more powerful version of the spell. When Casting a Spell that has an area of a burst, cone, or line and doesn't have a duration, increase the area of that spell. Add 5 feet to the radius of a burst that normally has a radius of at least 10 feet (a burst with a smaller radius is not affected). Add 5 feet to the length of a cone or line that is normally 15 feet long or smaller, and add 10 feet to the length of a larger cone or line.

Rain of Spears  to  **Frequency** once per round; **Effect** The tempest attacks with their electrified spears, targeting all adjacent enemies (DC 38 basic Reflex save). The damage depends on the number of actions.

-  1d6+10 piercing damage plus 1d12 electricity
-  2d6+10 piercing damage plus 2d12 electricity
-  3d6+10 piercing damage plus 3d12 electricity

Tempest of Battle  (divine, electricity) **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** The tempest calls down a massive lightning storm in a 60-foot emanation. Spears of lightning rain down upon enemies in the area, dealing 10d12 electricity damage (DC 38 basic Reflex save).



TEMPEST CAVALRY

A valkyrie tempest often rides into battle on the backs of pegasi or other flying mounts. In such a case, the valkyrie tempest troop gains the following ability.

Mounted Troop Effects that target only animals or only humanoids may not work on the valkyrie tempest, subject to the GM's discretion.



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Vatumledor

Draconic Agent of Achaek

When the world was young, Achaek was the arbiter of the gods. He acted as judge and executioner for any who opposed them. When asked, he would also rein in the strength of unruly gods who threatened what the deities had created. Yet, by the time an alliance of the divine rose to oppose the god Rovagug and imprison him within the Dead Vault, Achaek had already lost his way and retreated into hiding.

It would be countless eons before Achaek began interacting with the world again, at which point a family of dragons who respected peace and order heard Achaek's whispers. They took care of the suffering deity, as much as any mortal—even a dragon—could care for a god, and their worship and their daily recitation of his teachings helped refocus Achaek. Millennia passed, and the family of dragons fostered new broods, grew ancient and died, and younger dragons took their place.

When humans, specifically the Azlanti, discovered Achaek, they worshipped him as the god of monsters and natural disasters, inspired by his horrific shape and violent nature. The dragons stealthily infiltrated Azlanti society and tried to teach the Azlanti about Achaek's true purpose, but they would not listen. And so, the dragon family kept his original purpose and ancient role to themselves, opting to wait for a time when these short-lived mortals were ready to understand. When Earthfall devastated Golarion, though, this family of dragons perished, and Achaek's faith once again receded into obscurity.

For thousands of years, Achaek's faith remained hidden until his legacy was discovered by a powerful conspirator dragon named Szandinal. More taken with the legacy of the mysterious dragons who kept the god's faith alive, Szandinal revived the worship of Achaek among his siblings and children. In time, a new draconic dynasty associated with the Mantis God arose. They watched with amusement as the Red Mantis assassins rose to power, and marked the way in which Achaek and these assassins seemed to influence each other more and more with each passing century. Over the years, this family of conspirator dragons never grew particularly large, but with each new generation the dragons grew more devoted to Achaek, reveling in the hidden lore they alone knew about the god and venerating him in the old ways as a god of arbitration rather than assassination.

Tragedy struck in 4534 AR, when then Blood Mistress Behezamine discovered the existence of this "conspiracy of heretical dragons" who venerated Achaek in secret. She gathered her best and most promising assassins

and hunted down Szandinal's five surviving scions and assassinated them. Yet one dragon, Vatumledor, escaped her notice—in no small part due to a conspiracy between him and one of Behezamine's most ambitious followers, a talented but unproven assassin named Jakalyn. In return for her aid in escaping from Blood Mistress Behezamine's wrath, Vatumledor became a close confidant and ally for Jakalyn. In time, this hidden alliance would not only help to increase Jakalyn's influence and power—it would culminate in her overthrowing Behezamine, an act Vatumledor considered to be Achaek's justice for what she did to his family. With his talent at weaving conspiracies and altering historical records, Vatumledor played a key role in Jakalyn's erasure of Behezamine from history itself.

Adventure Role

Vatumledor still serves as a secret ally for Jakalyn, and in that capacity he acts as a guide and ally for the PCs. Always eager to take part in conspiracies, the complicated plan to catch the hidden traitors who plot against Jakalyn from within the ranks of the Vernai delights the dragon's sense of irony. For now, he works to maintain the current leadership of the Red Mantis rather than conspire for its change. Once he finally brings the PCs into his confidence at the end of Chapter 1, he becomes a potent ally and source of information they can call upon.

VATUMLEDOR

CREATURE 16

UNIQUE HUGE DRAGON OCCULT

Male ancient conspirator dragon (*Pathfinder Monster Core* 110-112)

Perception +30 (+32 to Sense Motive); darkvision, scent (imprecise) 60 feet


Languages Azlanti, Common, Draconic, Shadowtongue, Sussuran, Thassilonian; telepathy 100 feet

Skills Achaek Lore +31, Acrobatics +30, Athletics +30, Deception +35, Diplomacy +33, Intimidation +33, Mediogalti Island Lore +33, Occultism +31, Religion +32, Society +31, Stealth +30

Str +9, **Dex** +5, **Con** +6, **Int** +6, **Wis** +7, **Cha** +8

AC 40; **Fort** +27, **Ref** +28, **Will** +32; +2 status to all saves vs. occult

HP 345; **Immunities** controlled, paralyzed, sleep

Retract Body  **Trigger** Vatumledor is hit or critically hit by an attack made by a creature the dragon can see; **Effect** Vatumledor retracts the targeted body part or twists away to avoid the attack, gaining a +2 circumstance bonus to his Armor Class against the triggering attack.

Speed 50 feet, climb 50 feet, fly 200 feet

Melee ♦ jaws +32 (magical, reach 15 feet), **Damage** 3d8+17 piercing

Melee ♦ claw +32 (agile, magical, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 3d6+17 slashing

Melee ♦ tail +30 (magical, reach 20 feet), **Damage** 2d10+17 bludgeoning

Ranged mental blast +31 (range 100 feet), **Damage** 6d6+6 mental

Occult Innate Spells DC 41; **9th** *dominate*, *mind probe*, *mind reading* (at will), *rewrite memory*; **4th** *charm* (at will), *rewrite memory* (at will)

Occult Prepared Spells DC 37, attack +29; **7th** *haste*, *soothe*, *teleport*; **6th** *detect scrying* (already cast), *scrying*, *soothe*; **5th** *see the unseen*, *soothe*, *translocate*; **4th** *charm*, *clairvoyance*, *sleep*; **3rd** *fear*, *paralyze*, *slow*; **2nd** *blur*, *telekinetic maneuver*, *translate*; **1st** *command*, *sanctuary*, *sure strike*; **Cantrips (7th)** *daze*, *detect magic*, *light*, *read aura*, *telekinetic projectile*

Conjure Disguise (manipulate, occult, polymorph)

Frequency once per day; **Effect** Vatumledor conjures a flesh suit that's a replica of a humanoid he has seen and compresses himself into the suit, along with clothing appropriate for the humanoid. This process takes 1 minute, during which Vatumledor is off-guard. If he stops or is interrupted in this process, the suit is destroyed. Once the process is complete, he can remain in his disguise indefinitely.

The transformation has the effects of *change shape*, except that the disguise is not actively magical in nature and doesn't register as magical to *detect magic* and similar effects. Vatumledor loses *Retract Body* while transformed.

If Vatumledor is critically hit while wearing the disguise, the suit is destroyed, and immediately explodes. This has the effects of *Detonate Disguise*, except that creatures use the outcome one degree of success better than they rolled on their save.

Detonate Disguise ♦♦ (occult) **Requirements** Vatumledor is wearing his conjured disguise; **Effect** Vatumledor erupts from the disguise, destroying it. The explosive revelation deals 18d6 bludgeoning damage to creatures adjacent to the dragon (DC 39 basic Reflex save). Creatures that fail their save become dazzled for 1 round as they become covered in scraps from the disguise. Any creatures sharing a space with Vatumledor after he erupts are pushed into the nearest empty space.

Draconic Frenzy ♦♦ Vatumledor makes two claw Strikes and one tail Strike in any order.

Draconic Momentum When Vatumledor scores a critical hit with a Strike, he recharges *Smoke Breath*.

Rushed Transformation ♦♦♦ (concentrate, manipulate, occult) **Frequency** once per hour; **Effect** Vatumledor quickly reshapes his body into the form of a generic humanoid figure. This has the effects of *humanoid form* except that it only lasts 1 minute, and he doesn't gain the +4 status bonus to *Deception* as the transformation makes use of his own scales and

plating to crudely mimic a humanoid form. Vatumledor can *Dismiss* the effect. Whenever the effect ends, Vatumledor leaves behind scraps of magically conjured flesh, which could give away his presence.

Smoke Breath ♦♦ (occult, poison) Vatumledor unleashes a 60-foot cone of smoke that deals 16d6 poison damage (DC 39 basic Fortitude save). The smoke remains for 1 minute, obscuring sight with the effects of *mist* in the cone's area. He can't use *Smoke Breath* again for 1d4 rounds.

Sneak Attack Vatumledor's Strikes deal an additional 3d6 precision damage to off-guard targets.



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THE MAGORI

JVF

Saviya

High Priest of Achaekkek

Saviya's association with the Red Mantis began during her days as a mate on the pirate ship *Storm Shark* over 100 years ago. The infamous, cruel commander of the ship was a man named Captain Dargi—as notorious a pirate as ever prowled the Shackles. As a member of the crew, Saviya followed Captain Dargi's commands to loot, pillage, and sink many ships of the Chelaxian Navy, all while worshipping Besmara, the Pirate Goddess as a faithful priest. The *Storm Shark* was very successful and very brutal; they took pride in leaving none alive after their raids, and Saviya came to delight in the dread she inspired when name-dropping the ship.

Like many far-ranging pirate captains of the Shackles, Captain Dargi kept a berth in Ilizmagorti. Whenever the *Storm Shark* visited this port, the crew always abided by the laws of the Red Mantis, even if doing so was a challenge for a bloodthirsty pirate like Captain Dargi, who (while at sea) often derided the assassins and made bold claims of some day pillaging Ilizmagorti and making the city his own. Saviya initially found the captain's bravado intimidating, even a bit inspiring. But each time they sailed into Ilizmagorti and she saw the power, respect, and fear afforded to the Red Mantis among the city's citizens, her respect and fear of her blowhard captain dwindled, replaced by derision. She knew better than to voice her growing dissatisfaction with Captain Dargi, of course, but as her interest in the Red Mantis assassins grew, she increasingly kept an eye out for an opportunity to make her move.

One day, Captain Dargi met with a Rahadoum cruiser to fence stolen booty, as he had done many times in the past. Saviya happened to overhear the captain and the fence discussing their wares: secrets about Mediogalti Island's defenses. Saviya knew this betrayal would certainly be discovered and lethally punished the next time their ship sailed into Ilizmagorti, so when the *Storm Shark* arrived there a few months later, Saviya swiftly but secretly reported her captain's misdeeds to the Red Mantis and begged to be allowed to help with his assassination. The Red Mantis agents were impressed and agreed, with one requirement: they insisted that if she came along, she would be the one to kill Captain Dargi. Saviya eagerly accepted, and for several days she met in secret with her assassin contacts to learn their ways as best she could in preparation for her big chance. When the moment came, Saviya relished the kill, striking at her captain with the sawtooth saber she'd smuggled aboard, and then using her magic to break every bone

in Dargi's body so that when death finally came, it did in glorious agony. From that day forward Saviya was a faithful devotee of Achaekkek instead of Besmara.

Saviya could have claimed the *Storm Shark* as her own and served as a captain, but instead she offered the entire crew a choice—they could be marooned on an island far from any shipping lane and take their chances, or they could return with her to Ilizmagorti as servants of He Who Walks in Blood. Many of the crew chose to become marooned, only to learn (much to their horror) that this simply changed the venue and method of their offering to Achaekkek, for the island Saviya had chosen was infested with immense deadly mantises who made quick work of the doomed crew.

Saviya served He Who Walks in Blood dutifully for the next several decades, starting by converting those of the *Storm Shark* crew who accepted her offer. Eventually, she was asked to join the priesthood at the Pagoda of the Mantis in Ilizmagorti. Over the next several decades, she rose in the ranks and became the current high priest. She's been a member of the Vernai for the past two decades—which, as it turns out, is plenty of time for her to revert to her old ways of plotting her commander's downfall.

Adventure Role

Just over 10 years ago, Saviya returned from a contract where she had used an experimental alchemical elixir to give her the ability to track by scent like a bloodhound. She used it to sniff out her target's location and shattered the columns of the building he was hiding in, flushing him out for a very public killing blow. The alchemically granted ability lingered as she met with Blood Mistress Jakalyn to report her success, during which Saviya smelled something she never detected before: elven blood.

This intrigued the high priest, for while Jakalyn was human, the faint scent of elf exuding from her was, to Saviya's enhanced senses, unmistakable. Jakalyn's mysterious longevity was well-known, of course, but the more Saviya watched and observed, the more she began to think that, somehow, Blood Mistress Jakalyn had inherited elven longevity. This vexed Saviya greatly, for she had designs on Jakalyn's position and had previously intended to take the very elven route of patience—simply outlive her human superior and then step into her vacant role.

The realization that Jakalyn may well outlive her forced Saviya's hand, and she began to slowly recruit members to a conspiracy eventually meant to dethrone Jakalyn and secure the god-given right to rule the Red Mantis from Achaekkek.

By the time the PCs finally catch up to Saviya, she's close enough to her goal that not only can she smell it, she can taste it. As the favored agents of Jakalyn, the PCs are as much Saviya's enemies as their leader is, but when the PCs encounter her in Elysium, her frustration at being so close to success forces her to finally commit a likely fatal mistake—she challenges the PCs directly.

SAVIYA

CREATURE 19

UNIQUE MEDIUM ELF HUMANOID

Female elf cleric of Achaekek

Perception +34 (+37 to Seek); darkvision, perfect scent 60 feet

Languages Aklo, Azlanti, Common, Diabolic, Elven, Sakvroth

Skills Achaekek Lore +33, Acrobatics +34, Athletics +36, Deception +36, Diplomacy +34, Intimidation +34, Nature +33, Religion +35, Society +31, Stealth +34

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

Perfect Scent Saviya's sense of smell is a precise sense. It's particularly adept at seeing through disguises that attempt to obscure a target's actual ancestry, granting her a +4 circumstance bonus to Perception checks against such Impersonation attempts.

Items *bracers of strength*, +3 *greater resilient antimagic greater winged mantis shell armor*, *greater doubling rings*, *major mask of the mantis* (page 104), +3 *major striking greater astral greater shocking wounding high-grade dawnsilver sawtooth saber*, *high-grade dawnsilver sawtooth saber*

AC 43; **Fort** +31, **Ref** +35, **Will** +38

HP 360

Fading ↻ **Frequency** once per use of *Crimson Shroud*; **Trigger** Saviya is targeted by a *Strike* from a creature she can detect; **Requirements** Saviya's *Crimson Shroud* is active; **Effect** Saviya fades from reality. The creature making the triggering *Strike* must attempt a DC 11 flat check; on a failure, the attack passes harmlessly through the immaterial image of Saviya's body, after which she returns to her physical form.

Speed 30 feet, fly 25 feet

Melee ✦ *sawtooth saber* +35 (agile, finesse, magical, twin), **Damage** 4d6+12 slashing plus 1d6 electricity, 1d6 spirit, and 1d6 persistent bleed

Cleric Divine Prepared Spells DC 41, attack +33; **10th** *manifestation* (already cast); **9th** *harm* (×6), *heal*, *massacre*, *wails of the damned*; **8th** *dispel magic*, *sawtooth terrain* (page 100), *teleport*; **7th** *cleanse affliction*, *execute*, *mantis's grasp*; **6th** *crimson breath* (page 99), *dominate*, *truesight*; **5th** *command*, *heal*, *truespeech*; **4th** *outcast's curse*, *talking corpse*, *unfettered movement*; **3rd** *blindness*, *cleanse affliction*, *heal*; **2nd** *create food*, *resist energy*, *silence*; **1st** *command*, *fear*, *sanctuary*; **Cantrips (10th)** *daze*, *divine lance*, *guidance*, *shield*, *void warp*

Red Mantis Divine Prepared Spells DC 41, attack +33; **8th** *disappearance*; **7th** *project image*; **6th** *phantasmal*

calamity; **5th** *sending*; **4th** *translocate*; **3rd** *paralyze*; **2nd** *mist*; **1st** *fear*; **Cantrips (4th)** *figment*, *sigil*

Rituals DC 41; *call spirit*, *commune*, *planar servitor*, *resurrect*
Crimson Shroud ✦ (healing, magical) **Frequency** seven times a day; **Effect** Saviya swathes herself in red mist for 1 minute, during which time she gains fast healing 9. She can Interact with the mist to gain a +1 circumstance bonus to AC until the beginning of her next turn. If she dies while *Crimson Shroud* is active, her body vanishes, leaving behind only her gear.

Prayer Attack ✦ (concentrate) **Requirements** Saviya wields a sawtooth saber in each hand; **Effect** As *Red Mantis conspirator* (page 44).

Vernai Training In order to resurrect a creature slain by Saviya, a creature must counteract Saviya's influence on that creature's death as they Cast the Spell or perform the ritual (DC 41).



PREY FOR DEATH

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1: A WORTHY CONTRACT

CHAPTER 2: UNMASKING A TRAITOR

CHAPTER 3: SECRETS OF THE MANTIS

CHAPTER 4: A DEITY'S DUTY

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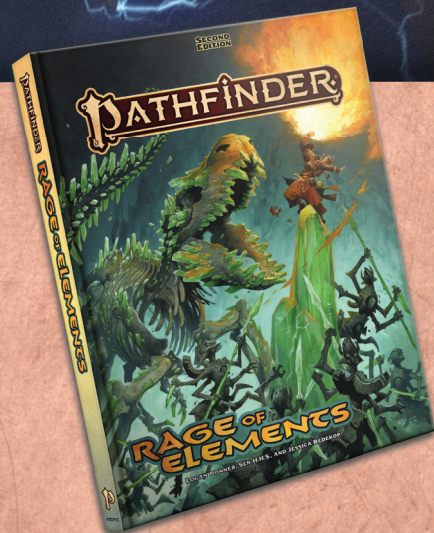


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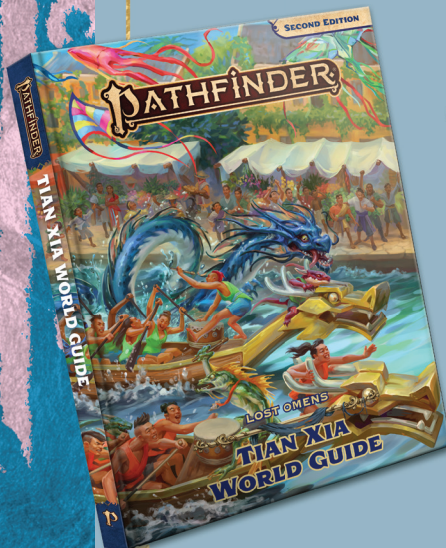
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