

STREETS OF ZOBECK



By McFarland, Franke, Harris, Pett, Stiles, & Stinson



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GRIM AND GRITTY

It's often considered its own niche of the fantasy genre, and I have to admit I've been influenced by it. Things started with Joel Rosenberg's *Guardians of the Flame*, then plunged me into the dark exploits of R. E. Howard's Cimmerian, walked me through the streets of Glen Cook's *Tun Faire* and Leiber's *Lankhmar*, and chased me leaping from rooftop to rooftop through the Poison Elves' *Mulehide Years* and all across Robert Asprin's *Thieves' World*, right into the arms of Glen Cook's deliciously mercenary *Black Company*. All those stories made me quite comfortable when I discovered the sooty, carved spires of China Mieville's *Bas-lag* and the sultry, crocodile-infested canals of K. J. Bishop's *Ashamoil*.

To me, it was the idea of people the Fellowship of the Ring would have ridden straight past—tales of rough men looking out for themselves in a rough world, people looking for the right score rather than the righteous quest—that seemed really interesting. These were characters with distinctive personalities and faults, striving against the powers of the land with a sharp blade and a smug grin. They fought on either side of the law and more often to save their own skin than anything else.

A healthy diet of heist and noir films gave me the exciting prism I used to view those stories. Cunning, trickery, and ruthlessness were the orders of the day as I consumed *Casablanca*, *The Man with the Golden Arm*, *The Way of the Gun*, *Reservoir Dogs*, *True Romance*, and *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*. If you were very good or very lucky, you might end up rich. But unless you were very smart, you almost always ended up dead sooner than you expected.

I labored with patrons and contributors to offer just that sort of environment here in the *Streets of Zobeck*. There are the tools of the trade, women of ill repute, and more than one dagger looking to slip between the ribs of some unfortunate soul. Hopefully, you'll find the dark, smoky places full of the sort of criminal scum you'd never invite over for dinner but can't help but love. Most importantly, you'll get a fist full of adventures I'm certain you'll enjoy.

So please, pay the gate toll and find your way to the Silk Scabbard. Tell the bouncer "Nicktail" sent you, and see what your luck looks like for the evening while you roll the bones. And when you make a run for it at the end of the night, make sure you ride that horse like you stole it. I'll be disappointed if you don't.

Ben McFarland

STREETS OF ZOBECK

AN ADVENTURE ANTHOLOGY FOR LEVELS 1 TO 10

By Ben McFarland, Mike Franke, Richard Pett, Christina Stiles, and Matthew Stinson
Converted for the 5th Edition of the world's first roleplaying game by Chris Harris

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FACES OF ZOBECK

What makes up a city? It's more than just walls and gates, people and places. A city has a personality of its own, a mosaic created by the collected impression of every face, every street sign, every locale. Sometimes there is good reason to hide that face.

Streets of Zobeck builds on the material presented in the *Zobeck Gazetteer* and *Kobold Quarterly* to look into the Clockwork City's seedier sections, to shine a lantern into corners and alcoves perhaps best left in shadow. This collection of urban crime and fantasy noir tales details some of the more notable characters of questionable moral fiber, describes the rough places where the floors get slick with beer and blood, and tells a fistful of stories touching on them all. You'll find

within various tools of the trade and the spells, traits, and feats to make best use of them. Most importantly, you'll get a look at a face of Zobeck that its more genteel citizens quietly try to ignore.

This is a city of daring grifters instead of brave Griffon Knights, sly killers rather than sagely Collegium wizards, and brilliant manipulators instead of clever Gearworkers. These back alleys and common spaces house those of low class and no conscience. Surviving day to day here is an adventure in itself, and no amount of water can wash away stains of lost innocence. There's no room for a principled dandy on a moral high horse here ...

... not on the *Streets of Zobeck*.

BLACK-EYE'S CARRIAGE

Anyone trying to navigate the busy streets and cluttered alleys of Zobeck knows the difficulty of getting anywhere in a hurry. Wherever a difficulty exists, especially in this city, someone will come along to ease the inconvenience for a price. Enter Black-Eye, business-kobold, fixer, gossip, and patriot. With his specially-modified hay wagon and mighty (docile) draft horse, he's prepared to take anyone anywhere in the Free City for a few coppers and good conversation.

Born and raised in the city's kobold ghetto, Black-Eye has spent his life learning Zobeck's twists and turns as his forefathers once learned to navigate below ground. He rapidly came to love the rich and varied life of his home, and he took great pride in pointing out places of interest to visitors and natives alike. Seeing the difficulty so many people had getting around, Black-Eye decided to fill the need for transport and indulge his love of Zobeck at the same time. No one else in the city operates a business like Black-Eye's, for what to everyone except him are obvious reasons, but he somehow makes it all work.

Most people don't know what to make of Black-Eye, and most of the rest can't quite bring themselves to trust the old carriage he's altered with better suspension, padded seats, lanterns, and a canopy. Still, those who take the chance always get where they need to go without trudging through the mud (and worse) of the streets and the jostling crowds. And if the cart must sometimes slow through an area where street merchants can approach and sell the passengers fine wares, well, that's just the nature of the city. And if some of those merchants sometimes slip a few coins to Black-Eye, well, that's just the nature of the city, too.

In his heart, Black-Eye's a good soul who loves his city, loves showing it off, and just wants to make a few coins while doing so. He's developed a good sense for his customers, and when he gets ignorant or oblivious types, he'll take roundabout routes past merchants willing to kickback a silver for the chance to make a sale. PCs with a map or some familiarity with Zobeck may make a DC 15 Wisdom or Intelligence check to notice that they're being "taken for a ride."

Black-Eye as a Regular Coachman

Black-Eye can become a useful contact or ally. The kobold will happily regale passengers with stories from the city (often whether they want to hear them or not). Black-Eye will pass out common information and recent gossip with virtually no prompting. A little extra cash going into the tip jar or a successful DC 13

Charisma (Persuasion) check can get him to reveal more obscure details, sensitive rumors, and theories. He rarely knows a great deal about any one thing, but he always knows a little about most things.

The kobold gladly points a group toward gambling, prostitution, pit fighting, and other less savory forms of entertainment, and he just as quickly takes them to the higher-brow establishments and cultural centers. A successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion, Deception, or Intimidation) check, along with a significant (10-25 gp) tip can convince him to take the party to any of several entrances he knows to the Cartways. At DC 20 and an additional 10 gp, he will show them a "private" entrance to the kobold ghetto.

Black-Eye can be hired by the day for 5 gp. In addition, Black-Eye has a network of kobold "nephews and cousins" who can carry messages, purchase items, and generally work for the party in one way or another. They are trustworthy, but only up to a point, especially where money is concerned.

Black-Eye and His Silent Protection

As a habit (learned the hard way), Black-Eye does not give out personal information about his customers; their conversation is fair game, but their addresses and destinations are not. This has saved both his skin and his reputation on multiple occasions, and he knows it. When asked to wait for a passenger or to not repeat what he hears, Black-Eye smiles, spreads his hands, and says philosophically that his mouth often runs away on its own if he can't afford to put some food in it. For a gold piece, Black-Eye waits and keeps his silence.

Oddly enough, if he works for the adventurers long enough, Black-Eye will come to consider them "his" and will take great offense at blatant attempts to cheat the group. He will make his displeasure known in a stream of profanity-laced draconic. As Black-Eye has connections to a surprising variety of people across the city, including the Redcloaks, most street thugs give him respect.

If things get serious, Black-Eye keeps a dagger at his belt and a crossbow under his seat, alongside a flask of alchemist's fire. Black-Eye will not die for a fare, and he can get his team to produce a surprising turn of speed when the going gets tough.

Black-Eye can act as an introduction to, or bridge between, many of the adventures in *Streets of Zobeck*. He can certainly point a party toward a person looking for a group of adventurers, or simply take the group to the Silk Scabbard and let nature take its course.

BLACK-EYE

Small humanoid, neutral

Armor Class 13 (leather armor)

Hit Points 7 (2d6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
7 (-2)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Sneak Attack (1/Turn). Black-Eye deals an extra 3 (1d6) damage when he hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of Black-Eye that isn't incapacitated and Black-Eye doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, Black-Eye has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Pack Tactics. Black-Eye has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of Black-Eye's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

ACTIONS

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

Light Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d8) piercing damage.

EQUIPMENT

flask of alchemist's fire

THE DRAGGED WOMAN

A wild-looking woman with ashen gray skin and rich but tattered clothing, her hair falls over her face though her ember-like eyes pierce the veil. A frayed rope trails from one wrist. Her voice is a half-choked sob that threatens to become a wail of despair, and she leaves fading, bloody footprints wherever she walks.

When someone seeks a lost place in Zobeck—the hidden passages into the Cartways, the door to the Shadow Fey embassy of Winter's Kiss, the secret tunnels into the Kobold Ghetto—they beseech the Draggged Woman. She is the unquiet soul of a noblewoman who was dragged to her death across the cobblestones during the Stross Revolt, and she endlessly retraces the route of her death.

That doesn't mean she's easy to find or contact. She must be offered the only currency she accepts: memories, which are irretrievably lost. She considers the memories of first love, righteous victory, and lost children the richest of all treasures. Once she accepts payment, the memory is lost forever to the person who offered it. Furthermore, she is frightened of nearly everything, and the slightest threatening move or tone of voice sends her fleeing. Being incorporeal and able to create magical doorways that work only for those she allows (she can use *Open the Path* on herself), she's impossible to catch when she chooses to escape. At the same time, she never forgets an insult and always seeks revenge eventually.

Beyond memories, the Draggged Woman wants three things before she can rest quietly: her bones pulled from the Argent and buried properly; her journal, which is still hidden in a secret place in her old home, placed in her hands; and her husband's skull retrieved from the mass grave it occupies and interred with her.

THE DRAGGED WOMAN

Medium fey, neutral evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 110 (17d8 + 34)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	20 (+5)

Saving Throws Cha +8

Skills Arcana +7, History +7, Insight +6, Stealth +8

Damage Resistances acid, fire; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Damage Immunities cold, necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Common

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Ethereal Sight. The Draggged Woman can see 60 feet into the Ethereal Plane when she is on the Material Plane, and vice versa.

Incorporeal Movement. The Draggged Woman can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. She takes 5 (1d10) force damage if she ends her turn inside an object.

Innate Spellcasting. The Draggged Woman's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 16, +8

to hit with spell attacks). She can innately cast the following spells requiring no material components:

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch*, *dancing lights*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*

1st level (5 slots): *fog cloud*, *ray of sickness*, *silent image*, *sleep*

2nd level (4 slots): *blindness/deafness*, *gust of wind*, *invisibility*, *knock*

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell*

4th level (1 slot): *confusion*

Open the Path. By touching a creature, the Draggled Woman imparts the ability to locate a door or passage that magically delivers the creature and up to seven of its allies to a desired physical location within 5 miles of their current location. The door or passage will be within 200 yards of the spot where she triggers this ability. The connection between the indicated passage and the destination remains open for up to one hour or until it's used, and it's one-way only.

Unearthly Poise. The Draggled Woman treats all saving throws as if they're Charisma saving throws.

ACTIONS

Blinding Fear. As an action, the Draggled Woman can panic a creature within 30 feet with a look. The target must succeed on a DC 16 Charisma save or be frightened of the Draggled Woman for 2d4 rounds.

Etherealness. The Draggled Woman enters the Ethereal Plane from the Material Plane, or vice versa. She remains visible on the Material Plane while in the Border Ethereal, and vice versa, but she can't affect or be affected by anything on the other plane.

GOLDSCALE

Set apart from most of his kobold kin by much more than the faint golden sheen of his scaly hide, Goldscale exudes a strength springing from force of personality and unflagging faith. Sincere and self-confident, Goldscale is a shining example that righteousness exists in unlikely places.

Goldscale developed his signature golden scales while quite young. Soon after, his father sparked a bloodbath by claiming Goldscale's appearance proved draconic heritage and his family's right to ghetto leadership. Traumatized, Goldscale swore to never again allow the criminals of Zobeck's streets to trample innocents, and he pledged himself to Lada as a paladin.

Serious about his role as a defender of the weak, Goldscale works toward improved relations between humans and kobolds. Although popular with the common people, criminal gangs detest him. However,

many gang members believe his golden-hued scales do indeed indicate that the blood of dragons runs in his veins and refuse to confront him.

Goldscale worries he should do more to safeguard the common people. He patrols the city looking to right injustices and protect innocents. Goldscale recognizes no boundaries and goes wherever he senses a need. As a negotiator and defender of the weak, Goldscale places himself between innocents and danger while attempting to diffuse tensions. If that fails, he tries to disarm opponents or incapacitate them. When mercy fails, he does anything necessary to defend himself and others. Being fearless and unhesitating, Goldscale would fight to the death to defend his beliefs. Despite all that he's accomplished, the kobold paladin still feels his efforts are insufficient and that he must do more to root out the causes of crime. Crime lords are wary of him, because Goldscale is a one-kobold crusade to improve the lot of the common citizen.

GOLDSCALE

Small humanoid (kobold), lawful good

Armor Class 18 (+1 scale mail, shield, defense fighting style)

Hit Points 67 (15d6 + 15)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Wis +4, Cha +6

Skills Athletics +5, Investigation +3, Intimidation +6, Perception +4, Persuasion +6

Condition Immunities charmed

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Aura of Protection. Goldscale and any allies within 10 feet of him gain a +3 bonus on saving throws. Goldscale must not be incapacitated to grant this bonus.

Divine Health. Goldscale is immune to disease.

Divine Sense (4/Day). As an action, Goldscale can detect the location of any celestial, fiend, or undead within 60 feet that is not behind total cover until his next turn. He knows the creature type of any being whose presence he senses, but not its identity. Within the same radius, Goldscale also detects the presence of any place or object that has been consecrated or desecrated (as with the *hallow* spell).

Spellcaster. Goldscale is a 7th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). He has the following paladin spells prepared:

1st level (4 slots): *bless, command, compelled, duel, cure wounds, protection from evil and good, sanctuary*

2nd level (3 slots): *branding smite, lesser restoration, locate object, protection from poison, zone of truth*

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, Goldscale has disadvantage on attack rolls and on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Pack Tactics. Goldscale has advantage on attack rolls against a creature if at least one of Goldscale's allies is within 5 feet of the target and the ally isn't incapacitated.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Goldscale makes two +1 *disarming flail* attacks.

+1 Disarming Flail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage and (if Goldscale chooses) the target must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw. On a failed save, the target drops an object it's holding at the target's feet. Goldscale chooses the object to be dropped. The attack does no damage. This weapon ability can be used once per turn.

Light Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage.

Divine Smite. When Goldscale hits a creature with a melee weapon attack, he can expend one paladin spell slot to deal radiant damage to the target, in addition to the weapon's damage. The extra damage is 2d8 for a 1st-level spell slot, plus 1d8 for each spell level higher than 1st, to a maximum of 5d8. The damage increases by 1d8 if the target is undead or a fiend.

Sacred Weapon (1/Day). As an action, Goldscale can imbue one weapon that he is holding with positive energy for 1 minute, adding +3 to attack rolls made with that weapon. The weapon also emits bright light in a 20-foot radius and dim light 20 feet beyond that.

EQUIPMENT

+1 *disarming flail*, +1 *scale mail*, shield, light crossbow, 20 bolts, holy symbol, 2 flasks of alchemist's fire

JAYZEL

The tall, raven-haired Jayzel is renowned throughout Zobeck for her beauty and for her haunting songs of the city's past. She is a cunning seductress who enjoys the affections of both men and women, a masterful manipulator and blackmailer, and one of the city's top

information brokers. Jayzel loves luxury and decadence as much as the thrill of the chase.

Jayzel is the estranged daughter of a renowned scholar who still lives and works in the College District. Rebelling against a strict upbringing, she joined the church of Marena in her youth and there learned to use music and her feminine wiles to best effect. She currently consorts with the goddess's Cult of Pain, headed by priestess Nariss Larigorn, using the Temple of Painful Pleasures' chambers to torture her victims.

Jayzel is always on the lookout (and slyly eavesdropping) for gossip at the galas she attends. She uses her wits, glib tongue, and seductive wiles to trick others into revealing secrets. If Jayzel's seductive approach fails, she lures targets to the Temple of Painful Pleasures to torture information from them—a service she provides for money, although always under the anonymity of an intermediary.

If combat appears imminent, Jayzel casts *enhance ability: cat's grace* on herself. If possible, however, she casts *charm person* or *dimension door* to avoid such situations. If violence does erupt, Jayzel stays in the background and leaves melee to those more capable. She would never fight to the death for any cause, but uses *dimension door* to escape when necessary.

JAYZEL

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (*leather armor +2, ring of protection*)

Hit Points 99 (18d8 + 18)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Dex +3, Cha +6

Skills Deception +8, Insight +4, Perception +4, Performance +8, Persuasion +6, Sleight of Hand +3

Senses passive Perception 14

Languages Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

All Flesh Fails. Devotion to the cult of Marena, the Red Goddess, grants Jayzel advantage on Wisdom (Persuasion) and Wisdom (Medicine) checks.

Bardic Inspiration (4/Day). Jayzel can inspire others through stirring words or music. To do so, she uses a bonus action on her turn to choose one creature other than herself within 60 feet of her who can hear her. That creature gains one Bardic Inspiration die, a d10. Once within the next 10 minutes, the creature can roll

the die and add the number rolled to one ability check, attack roll, or saving throw it makes. The creature can wait until after it rolls the d20 before deciding to use the Bardic Inspiration die, but must decide before learning whether the roll succeeds or fails. Once the Bardic Inspiration die is rolled, it is lost. A creature can have only one Bardic Inspiration die at a time.

Song of Rest. If Jayzel and any friendly creatures who can hear her performance regain hit points at the end of a short rest, each of those creatures regains an extra 1d8 hit points.

Spellcasting. Jayzel is a 10th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). She has the following bard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *dancing lights, light, minor illusion, prestidigitation, vicious mockery*

1st level (4 slots): *charm person, disguise self, silent image, hideous laughter*

2nd level (3 slots): *detect thoughts, enhance ability, invisibility*

3rd level (3 slots): *dispel magic, major image, nondetection*

4th level (3 slots): *confusion, dimension door, locate creature*

5th level (2 slots): *modify memory, scrying*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Jayzel makes two dagger or two whip attacks.

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4 + 1) piercing damage.

Whip. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4 + 1) slashing damage.

Light Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage.

EQUIPMENT

ring of protection, leather armor +2, potion of greater healing, potion of invisibility, fine clothing

PAVIC

Rail-thin, balding and always sporting three days of stubble, Pavic doesn't exude power or confidence. Rather, he stinks of whiskey, lotus powder extract, and a hint of calculating, nervous desperation. He forever seems to be looking for both the angle in a situation and the fastest way to the door.

Pavic's gambling habit cost him first his tuition and then his appointment to the Arcane Collegium. Now disgraced and an inveterate drinker and smoker, Pavic

sells his magical talents to anyone willing to pay in exchange for wagering money or interest payments, depending on how his luck is running. Most of the work he finds is using his spells to intimidate desperate folk who've become indebted to loan sharks and bookies. His cruel streak shows itself when Pavic senses he has the upper hand, but he's a pure coward in any situation where there's real danger. He always has one eye on the door and one hand hovering near his dagger.

Currently Pavic is trying to work out a method of cheating at cards based around using *detect magic* to sense cards he's marked with *magic aura*. If he can refine the method to where it's foolproof, he plans to host a high-stakes game, win a big score, get free of his debts, and finally show those snobs at the Collegium that he's every bit as smart as they are. His debts, however, are rapidly approaching the point where he might need to use this cheating method before all the kinks are fully worked out, and that could lead to big trouble.

PAVIC

Medium humanoid (human), lawful evil

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 22 (5d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)	17 (+3)	8 (-1)	12 (+1)

Skills Arcana +5, Deception +3, Persuasion +3

Senses passive Perception 9

Languages Aklo, Celestial, Common, Draconic, Elven

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Spellcasting. Pavic is a 3rd-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). Pavic has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *mending, minor illusion, prestidigitation*

1st level (4 slots): *alarm, charm person, comprehend languages, detect magic*

2nd level (2 slots): *detect thoughts, knock, see invisibility*

ACTIONS

Silvered Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4 + 1) piercing damage.

Light Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage.

EQUIPMENT

silvered dagger, light crossbow, spell component pouch, *potion of healing*, spellbook

RADU UNDERHILL

In life, Radu was broad shouldered and athletically built, a well-coifed and groomed gentleman of means. Now that he's a ghoul, he's kept himself in surprisingly excellent condition. In the proper light, he can still pass for human.

Sometimes you need things, or need things done, that you'd like to keep secret: a body to disappear, a person to stay quiet, an item or substance that no decent person would own or use. When you need such things, you need Radu Underhill.

A common sight in the Cartways Black Market, Underhill is a slaver, a businessman, a murderer, and a gentleman. He's also someone whose hands are already so dirty that no foul deed could possibly corrupt them any further. He's also polite and unusually reliable for undead. He claims to be an unofficial liaison to the Ghoul Imperium, but such a vague assertion is impossible to confirm or refute.

Underhill is a major operator in the Black Market, where he connects those who want with those who have, and asks no questions in the bargain. Perhaps his most important asset is his reputation for being absolutely, 100 percent discreet. Underhill has never, intentionally or accidentally, broken a confidence or revealed a secret he was paid to keep. He's amazingly well-connected all over the city, with useful contacts and favors at every stratum of society.

RADU

Medium humanoid (*darakhul*), neutral evil

Armor Class 16 (elven chain shirt)

Hit Points 130 (20d8 + 40)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Dex +4, Wis +5, Cha +6

Skills Intimidation +6, Insight +5, Perception +5, Persuasion +6

Damage Resistances force, necrotic

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Common, Darakhul, Draconic, Dwarven, thieves' cant, Undercommon

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Brooch of Shielding. This item grants Radu resistance to force damage and immunity to the *magic missile* spell.

Evasion. If Radu is subjected to an effect that allows him to make a Dexterity saving throw to take half damage, Radu instead takes no damage if the saving throw succeeds and half damage if it fails.

Sneak Attack (1/Turn). Radu deals an extra 14 (4d6) damage when he hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of Radu that isn't incapacitated and Radu doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

Spellcasting. Radu is a 7th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). He has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *mage hand*, *message*, *prestidigitation*, *true strike*

1st level (5 slots): *charm person*, *disguise self*

2nd level (4 slots): *invisibility*, *suggestion*

3rd level (2 slots): *fear*

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, Radu has disadvantage on attack rolls and on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Turning Defiance. Radu has advantage on saving throws against effects that turn undead.

Uncanny Dodge. When an attacker that Radu can see hits him with an attack, Radu can use his reaction to halve the attack's damage against him.

Undead Vitality. Radu can't be returned to life/undead by *raise dead* or *reincarnate*. *Resurrection* or *true resurrection* return him to life as a human. Radu does not need to breathe, drink, or sleep.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Radu makes two melee attacks, but he can use bite and claws only once each per turn.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage. If the target creature is humanoid, it must make a successful DC 14 Constitution saving throw or contract darakhul fever.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (2d4 + 3) slashing damage. If the target is a creature other than an elf or undead, it must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. A paralyzed target repeats the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

DARAKHUL FEVER

Spread mainly through bite wounds, this rare disease makes itself known within 24 hours by swiftly debilitating the infected. A creature so afflicted must make a DC 17 Constitution saving throw after every long rest. Failure costs the victim 1d6 Constitution damage and 1d4 Dexterity damage. The victim recovers from the disease by making successful saving throws on two consecutive days, but the accumulating Constitution damage makes this less likely with each passing day. *Greater restoration* cures the disease; *cure disease* allows the victim to make the daily Constitution check with advantage. Once the disease is cured, the victim recovers 2 Dexterity points per day naturally, but only magic can restore the lost Constitution.

Heavy Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d10) piercing damage.

EQUIPMENT

brooch of shielding, elven chain shirt, *handy haversack*, *ring of fire resistance*, fine clothing

SAM NESCLEM

Some call Sam Nesclem crazier than an outhouse rat—a barge and steamtug captain willing to take any job for a price. With his iron-gray beard, clockwork hand, and carved ivory pipe, he certainly looks the part. Many say the only thing quicker than his tugboat is his razor-sharp tongue.

Few know, however, that Sam struck a deal with the unseelie nixies of the Argent in exchange for a promise of safe passage. While other captains keep to shore or suffer from the appetites of scraggs and lorelei, Sam delivers cargo and travelers where they're wanted and on time, no matter the destination. Sam's only concerns are keeping to the restrictions of his pact with the nixies and making as much money on the river as possible.

The nixie Sam bargained with was missing its hand. As part of his bargain, Sam made two concessions: first, he agreed to never turn down a potential passenger; second, he gave his own hand to the nixie. If Sam could find the nixie's original hand—which purportedly has been mummified and enchanted so it allows whoever owns it to cast *mage hand* at will—and return it to the nixie, he might get his own hand back.

Generally spread among humanoids, the disease has nonetheless been found to affect ogres, and therefore it is thought possible that other giants may be susceptible.

If the infected creature dies while infected with darakhul fever, roll 1d20, add the character's current Constitution modifier, and find the result on the Adjustment Table to determine what undead form the victim's body rises in.

Roll	Result
00–09	None; victim is simply dead
10–16	Ghoul
17–20	Ghast
21–26	Dread Ghoul
27–30	Dread Ghast
31+	Darakhul

Sam is a gruff, salt-of-the-earth man who's seen many strange things. He doesn't posture but gets straight to the point, or to the business at hand.

SAM NESCLEM

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic good

Armor Class 14 (studded leather armor)

Hit Points 32 (5d8 + 20)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	8 (–1)

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Fey Pact. Creatures of the River Argent won't harm Sam Nesclem, his ship, or his passengers as long as he never refuses a customer or reveals the terms of his fey bargain.

Sneak Attack (1/Turn). Sam deals an extra 3 (1d6) damage when he hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of Sam that isn't incapacitated and Sam doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

ACTIONS

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

SERGEANT HENDRYK

A slight man with a thick but well-trimmed, coal-black beard, Hendryk looks at everything with a mercenary eye. Richly appointed for a guardsman, he has little kindness and feels he runs a business. Pay, and you've purchased your safety. Snub him, and you'll just pay another way.

Sometimes, dealing with the Watch is worse than dealing with the problem at hand. Times when Sergeant Hendryk darkens your door are just such times. Irredeemably corrupt, Hendryk leads a roving patrol in Lower Zobeck, taking food and drink from street vendors when he pleases, collecting protection bribes from businessmen, and earning a healthy cut from thugs who follow up on the scores he scouts. He prevents just enough crime to avoid attention and turns enough of a blind eye to live well.

The illegitimate son of a barrister guildmaster, Hendryk got his position in the Watch through his father's influence. A gentleman's fur-lined cloak and an appointment to the Watch were the extent of the support he received from his father. Hendryk has no intention of spending his entire career as a guardsman taking shopkeepers' bribes. He plans on becoming a wealthy Praetor by any means necessary and over any number of bodies.

Sergeant Hendryk is full of bravado and bluster. He threatens, cajoles, and insinuates, but never draws first. It keeps him legal. He relies on nonlethal force until foes get violent; then nothing is off the table, including poisoning his weapons.

SERGEANT HENDRYK

Medium humanoid, neutral evil

Armor Class 16 (+1 chain shirt)

Hit Points 52 (8d8 + 16)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)

Saving Throws Dex +5, Con +4, Wis +4

Skills Insight +4, Intimidation +3, Perception +4

Senses passive Perception 14

Languages Common, Draconic, thieves' cant

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Sneak Attack (1/Turn). Hendryk deals an extra 7 (2d6) damage when he hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the

target is within 5 feet of an ally of Hendryk that isn't incapacitated and Hendryk doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

ACTIONS

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

Club. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

Poisoned Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage plus 10 (3d6) poison damage, or half poison damage with a successful DC 13 Constitution saving throw.

REACTIONS

Uncanny Dodge. When an attacker Hendryk can see hits him with an attack, Hendryk can halve the damage against himself.

EQUIPMENT

+1 chain shirt, 2 potions of healing, bottle containing two doses of serpent venom

SLINGER

Slinger is a skinny goblin of average height. A distinctive tuft of spiky red hair rises from his head, when he deigns to uncover it. When not working, Slinger can be found at the Rampant Roach.

Slinger runs a gang of 30 ambush specialists headquartered near Scaler's Alley in the Kobold Ghetto. Slinger's a goblin of some personality who has managed to make a home and a living deep in kobold territory. Coin motivates Slinger, but he very much enjoys harassing the law, so he occasionally takes such jobs on the cheap. Groups and individuals hire his gang to cause disruptions, harass people, or to outright kill targets from a distance with their slings. Slinger will not accept jobs to assassinate Kobold Kings, as he prefers to let the kobolds deal with their own political issues. Everything else is fair game.

Slinger's pockets are always filled with odds and ends that will make usable sling ammunition. He relies on his sling and cover in combat. He doesn't believe any job is worth dying for, so he makes a quick exit when things turn sour.

SLINGER

Small humanoid (goblinoid), chaotic neutral

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 97 (15d6 + 45)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Dex +7, Con +6

Skills Acrobatics +7, Intimidation +3 Stealth +7

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages Common, Draconic, Goblin

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Bank Shot. By taking disadvantage on a sling attack, Slinger can bounce a sling stone off a hard object or an armored creature to attack a target behind cover or not in his direct line of sight.

Nimble Escape. Slinger can take the Disengage or Hide action as a bonus action on his turn.

Sneak Attack (1/Turn). Slinger deals an extra 10 (3d6) damage when he hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of Slinger that isn't incapacitated and Slinger doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

Uncanny Dodge. When an attacker that Slinger can see hits him with an attack, Slinger can use his reaction to halve the attack's damage against himself.

ACTIONS

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d4 + 4) piercing damage.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage.

Sling. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d4 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

EQUIPMENT

potion of healing

SYSSYSALAI

Golden horns and a matching fin crown this regal dark naga's head. Twenty gem-encrusted golden bands encircle her purple serpentine body.

The vain Syssysalai lives for intrigue and power, coveting artistic masterpieces. Residing in an abandoned temple in Lower Zobeck, she instigates trouble among the Kobold Kings in the Kobold Ghetto. She believes herself the most worthy leader of the kobolds. Syssysalai plans to overthrow the Kobold Kings within the next five years. She observes Zobeck's human community, looking for wealth she can gain from them and to learn how best to manipulate them when she's the Kobold Queen.

Syssysalai controls a group of kobold cat burglars

and their human rogue leader Ziv the Sly, who procure objects d'art for her growing gallery.

As a criminal leader, Syssysalai knows better than to fight to the death. She will *dimension door* away when combat turns sour.

SYSSYSALAI

Large monstrosity, lawful evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 136 (16d10 + 48)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	17 (+3)	16 (+3)	19 (+4)	15 (+2)	17 (+3)

Saving Throws Dex +7, Con +7, Int +8

Skills Deception +7, Intimidation +7, Perception +6

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages Common, Draconic, Infernal, telepathy 30 ft.

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Guarded Thoughts. Syssysalai is immune to any form of mind reading, such as that granted by *detect thoughts*.

Rejuvenation. If Syssysalai dies, the dark naga returns to life in 1d6 days with all its hit points. Only a *wish* spell can prevent this.

Spellcasting. Syssysalai is an 11th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks), and it needs only verbal components to cast its spells. It has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *acid splash, fire bolt, light, mage hand, prestidigitation*

1st level (4 slots): *alarm, detect magic, fog cloud, identify*

2nd level (3 slots): *blindness/deafness, invisibility, see invisibility*

3rd level (3 slots): *dispel magic, fireball, sending*

4th level (3 slots): *dimension door, black tentacles, sending*

5th level (2 slots): *cone of cold, passwall*

6th level (1 slot): *disintegrate*

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage, and the target takes 45 (10d8) poison damage and falls unconscious for 2d4 minutes. A successful DC 15 Constitution saving throw halves the poison damage and prevents unconsciousness.

PLACES OF ZOBECK

THE BLACK LOTUS

Located in Lower Zobeck, near the border with the Market District and the river, The Black Lotus has a nondescript store front. It's a two-story building in the usual Zobeckian style, with a simple wooden door next to a street-facing window on which "The Black Lotus" is printed in Common, Draconic and the exotic language of the owner's home. The window is alchemically reinforced and looks into the curiosity shop. People can come here to buy unusual trinkets and curios from afar, but that's not what the shop has a reputation for. It's an open secret that those looking for magical assistance of any kind can find it here with no questions asked, so long as they can meet the price set by the Painted Man.

FIRST FLOOR

1. Main Room

The main room of the curiosity shop holds goods and wares from far-off, exotic locales. These are sold at a fair mark-up but the wares hardly seem to turn over,

so there's rarely anything new in the shop. Shelving lines the walls, and there are several rows of tables containing goods on display.

2. Storeroom

Through a beaded curtain in the back wall lies a storeroom. Neatly stacked boxes and barrels hug the walls, with smaller goods on shelves. A table near the back corner is used for paperwork and cataloguing, and a rear door leads to the alley and down to the river. A staircase goes upstairs to the Painted Man's living quarters, while an illusionary wall in the side of the stairs conceals a second stairwell down.

SECOND FLOOR

3. Sitting Room

At the top of the stairs is a sitting room with a large, wooden table ornately carved to look like it's held up by exotic dragons. A large, plush couch sits opposite three leather chairs. Pillows embroidered with far-away script line each seat. A doorway leads off into a bedroom, while a beaded curtain leads into a kitchenette.

FIRST FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR

1 Square = 5 Ft



4. Bedroom

The Painted Man's bedroom features an enormous king-sized bed with silk linens. An ornate wooden chest and wardrobe hold his personal effects and clothes. He holds the key to both. One door leads to the sitting area, the other to the kitchen.

5. Kitchen

The kitchen has a table used for preparation, several cabinets, and a wood-burning stove. A barrel of rice sits to one side. This is supplemented by fresh fish the Painted Man has delivered daily.

BASEMENT

6. Library

This large library contains books on topics as mundane as identifying porcelain vases and as exotic as the construction of flesh golems. A large, ornate desk sits in the middle of the room, covered in whichever books the Painted Man is currently studying. A second, plush chair stands next to a small reading table.

7. Alchemical Lab

A small storage room, which doubles as an alchemical lab. Jars of acids, poisons, and more mysterious components occupy a shelf near a desk with a full alchemical set. A bottled homunculus sits on the desk as well, pickled in brine. Its eyes open if anyone gets too close, and it watches them until they leave the room. Its purpose is a mystery.

8. Altar

An ornate altar upon which lie jade figurines carved to represent zodiac symbols occupies this room. Off to one end stands a pedestal supporting an enormous, annotated spellbook, written in the flowing eastern script of the Painted Man's home. A quill made from a phoenix feather sits next to it.

9. Summoning Circle

This otherwise empty room is notable for the summoning circle set in the middle of the floor and the dried blood on the walls.

BASEMENT



PERSONALITIES

THE PAINTED MAN

Tall, fat, and smelling of rare spices—that's the easiest way to describe the Painted Man. His true name remains a secret, and the nickname has spread through the city. He wears silk robes embroidered with strange symbols and always paints his face in a kabuki style. Friendly and outgoing, if evasive, he speaks without a trace of an accent. Perpetually dissembling, he reveals little while constantly learning as much as possible.

Most claim the Painted Man has lived in Zobeck for decades. One story calls him an exiled member a cabal of eunuch arcanists from a distant land who once served their emperor's court. After a failed coup attempt, the survivors fled into exile. Supposedly, the Painted Man is one of only eight surviving conspirators, biding his time as he peddles his powers and continues his dark studies.

It's an open secret that if you need magical assistance of any kind—from arcane, to divine, to the most illegal

sorts of dark sorcery—you go to the Painted Man. He always helps for a price. Mundane magic may require money or goods, but more potent effects demand more outlandish costs. Perhaps he requires the recovery of a pearl lost in the Argent. Maybe he demands the delivery of a potion into a certain watchman's goblet. He could need a lich's phylactery brought back to him, or a living basilisk. He may not ask for payment immediately, but he always collects. No one knows of anyone who has denied his requests.

The source of the Painted Man's power is purposefully vague. How the Painted Man does what he does isn't as important as what he does. Need a *true resurrection* or a *wish*? He makes it happen. Need a bottled alchemical mutagen or someone to summon and bind a pit fiend? He makes it happen. His network of favors allows him access to skills outside his own purview. His curio trade has passed powerful artifacts into his possession. Perhaps his secret society stays in contact, or being a eunuch (if he is) grants him access to greater powers, or maybe he's an epic-level wizard keeping a low profile. Maybe he's not even human.

SCENARIOS

RETURNING THE FAVOR

A friend of the party comes to them with a problem. Many years ago, his wife came down with a fatal disease. Unable to afford proper clerical services, the friend went to the Painted Man for help. The Painted Man cured her in exchange for an equal favor in the future—a time that has now arrived. Deep in the Margrave grows a rare and deadly flower that the eunuch requires, and the friend must retrieve it. The friend can't leave his business for weeks to go searching for a deadly flower and doesn't fancy traveling into the Margrave anyway. He begs the group to help. Failure could mean the Painted Man undoing whatever he did to cure his wife.

HEART POTION

The daughter of a city Praetor has fallen deeply in love with a student of the Arcane Collegium. She previously scorned him on several occasions, but now is passionately devoted to him—possessively so. The student, having apparently gotten exactly what he wanted, is now looking for help. He got a love potion from the Painted Man, but it's too potent! He needs to find a cure, before she loves him to death. The Painted Man doesn't have a cure on hand, but he can mix one if the student provides a few exotic ingredients.

Unfortunately one of the primary ingredients is a human heart...

THE STOLEN FIGURE

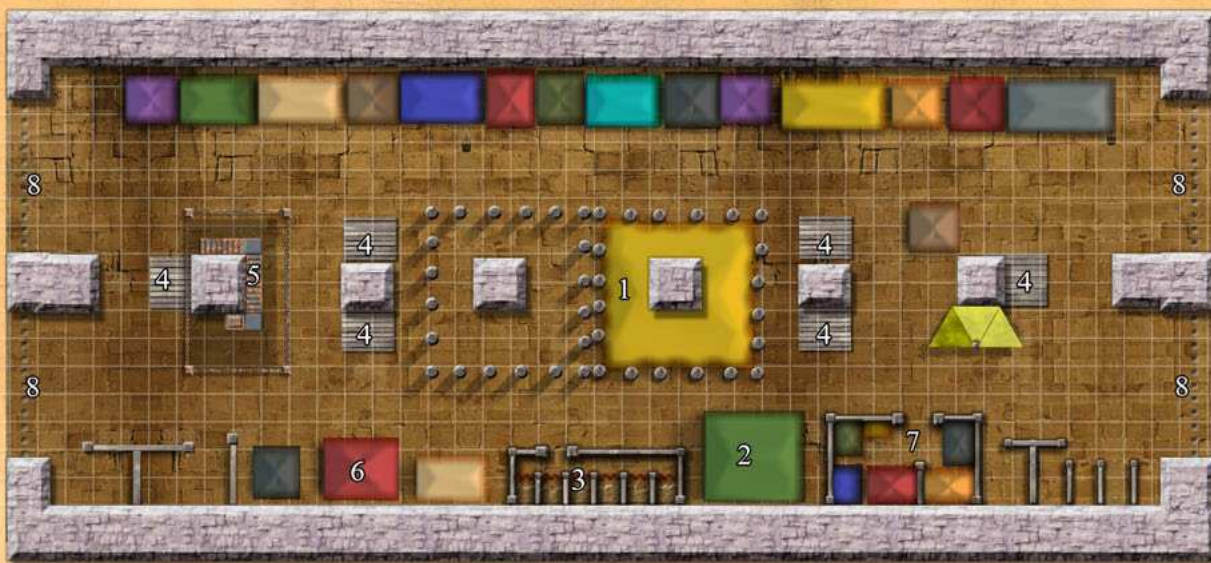
Recently, a thief stole a small, wooden carving of a phoenix from the Black Lotus. In exchange for a magical service, the Painted Man asks the party to retrieve it. The thief, a member of a kobold mining gang, spends most of his time in the Cartways. He stole the carving on a dare from the rest of his fellows, and after proving to them that he took it, quickly sold it to a fence at the Black Market for fear of the retribution he might incur if he kept it. The fence in turn sold it to a member of the City Watch, who gave it to his young, sickly son.

The Painted Man doesn't care who has it now. He wants it back, and he doesn't care how.

CARTWAYS BLACK MARKET

A long, vaulted gallery punctuated with enormous support columns, the Cartways Black Market is a hidden bazaar of the dark and sinister, the taboo and the forbidden. Several large chandeliers festooned with *continual flames* give the chamber a garish, flickering light that the vendors and regular patrons don't seem to mind. The constant murmur of commerce is occasionally punctuated by arguments as flesh, drugs, stolen goods, and precious information is bought and sold. The threat of violence lingers unspoken with each transaction, and when it does erupt, bystanders observe

THE CARTWAYS BLACK MARKET



1 Square = 5 Ft

with a detachment bordering on clinical. A single, unspoken rule guides commerce in the market: Keep to your own business and you'll live longer.

Two long aisles contain most merchants' excuses for storefronts, businesses, and entertainments, with the most powerful claiming places along the chamber's large center pillars. The Imperial Slave Block exists in a place of uneasy neutrality.

BLACK MARKET

1. Imperial Slave Block and Pens

The literal and figurative centerpiece of the Black Market, the Slave Block is run by a group of darakhul from the subterranean city of Fretlock commanded by a darakhul hunter named Dobricar. They bring humans, dwarves, gnomes, svirfneblin, occasionally derro or drow, and—very rarely—captured adventuring parties for sale as slaves to those with twisted appetites and deep pockets. Far too many come here to effectively ransom missing loved ones. Those unfortunate enough to go on the blocks unrecognized or uncontested end up in mines, fed to the undead of Morgau and Doresh, or pressed into more unsavory forms of slavery. The darakhul have a strict “no dealers” policy, refusing to sell more than five slaves to anyone with whom they have not previously established a relationship.

2. The Cut Purse Gambling Tent

Run by the tiefling Vukas, the generally accepted “mayor” of the Black Market, the Cut Purse offers no-limit games of chance. Vukas has taken bets as high as 1,000 gp and paid them off honestly when he's lost. Any who fail to pay find themselves in Dobricar's slave pens, so few people skip out on their bets. Many call Vukas a scion of Mammon, though without proof. A few quiet voices link him to Lord Greymark.

3. Small Brothel

The derro brothers Bjarni and Bjoris run this miserable slave brothel consisting of little more than curtained alcoves. Both of them wheeze, cackle, and jeer, generally acting disgustingly obsequious. Both have a disturbing habit of lightly drawing a knife over their forearm while speaking.

4. Guard Platforms

These small wooden platforms hold a rotating shift of guards supplied by the Cut Purse, the Imperial Slave Market, the Kobold Contingent, or the Merchant

Consortium to monitor activities. Guards bring their own weapons. The ghouls apply their saliva to bolts, and the kobolds use repeating crossbows.

5. Underhill's Perch

A rickety iron staircase winds up to the locked trapdoor opening into Radu Underhill's small structure, which clings to the column like a hungry tick. Its deceptive outward appearance hides a lavish interior. A trio of beggar ghouls linger at the trapdoor and guard against the foolish and unwary. No one comes here save by invitation.

6. Food Vendors

Kobolds dominate this area, serving up stews in hollowed out, edible mushroom caps, fried bits of meat (or whole insects) on a stick, and several ales that only the most adventurous epicureans might try. All of it is safe for consumption, but certainly not for every palate.

7. Common Merchants

This group of tents banded together in a loose confederation known as the Merchant Consortium. Sounding more powerful than the disorganized rabble they truly are, they barely manage to regularly supply their share of guards. One can find any number of items here, from the mundane to magic items worth no more than 5,000 gp.

8. Gates

Four enormous iron portcullises could seal off the Black Market if the locks holding them open are removed. A permanent guard detail from each of the factions who police the Market watches a different gate, and each captain carries an enormous key to the lock on his gate.

PERSONALITIES

Any number of strange personalities might appear in the Black Market. It is the proverbial hive of scum and villainy that attracts individuals of all types and demeanors. These are a few of the more notable.

DOBRICAR, SLAVER CAPTAIN

Grim and focused, Dobricar (LE male darakhul) is an opportunist who found he could operate on the fringe of the surface world if he tempered his appetites. Now he runs the slave market in the Cartways with an iron fist, hunting escapees before they flee to Zobeck and always happy to take new meat.

VUKAS, MARKET “MAYOR”

A slight man with a wiry build and curly dark hair that does nothing to hide his horns, Vukas (LE male tiefling gladiator) appears as an eager and gregarious satyr, an appearance that draws newcomers in the Black Market to him. He runs the Cut Purse Gambling Tent.

TICKER NICKTAILSON, GEARWORKER JOURNEYMAN

The pup of a lifelong member of the Redcloaks, Ticker (CN male kobold spy) found he had a talent for clockwork and locksmithing. Wanting a better life for Ticker, his father paid to apprentice him to the Geargrinder’s Guild. Now a senior journeyman specializing in self-repinning locks, Ticker wonders about the fate of his long-lost father Nicktail and strives to keep out of the Kobold Ghetto’s gangs for his mother’s sake. He comes to the Black Market for goods and tools he can get nowhere else.

SCENARIOS

SNATCHED FROM THE SLAVE PENS

The ghouls managed to capture or purchase someone fairly important to either the characters or a well-known NPC. The hostage languishes in the Black Market’s Imperial Slave Pens—possibly bound for a darakhul noble’s larder, another slave market, or even transformation into a darakhul to further some dark scheme. The prisoner must be rescued before he or she is sold and moved somewhere that rescue will be even more difficult, if not impossible.

LOST TRINKETS

Some ill-gotten loot is too unique or dangerous to fence on the street. When a thief steals something he can’t move through surface channels, chances are good the item will shortly appear in the Black Market. Whatever the trinket, it caught the eye of Vukas, who prominently displays it in the Cut Purse gambling tent over his overstuffed chair. How do you plan a heist from a place that never closes?

THE CRACKED COIN

To outward appearances, the Cracked Coin is a cozy, two-story money lending establishment, built in the same style as many other businesses in Lower Zobeck. The inside, however, includes several secret rooms, a hidden vault, and a sub-basement in addition to the expected business space on the first floor and living space above.

MAIN FLOOR

1. Lobby

The lobby of the Cracked Coin is divided roughly in half by a long wooden counter. On the entrance side of the counter, a seating area and table allow customers to wait in relative comfort. On the far side of the counter, either Ivan Kazimir (LE male human spy) or his main representative Cassandra (CN female human spy) waits on customers while a guard (LE male human veteran) watches silently. A heavy, iron-banded, wooden double door opens onto the street, and a smaller version of the door leads from behind the counter into the next room.

2. Counting Room

Tables piled with ledgers, scales, and gemological equipment dominate this room. During work hours, two staff members appraise the value of coins, gems, and valuables offered as collateral for loans. A clockwork watchman stands vigil by the vault door day and night, and a guard (LE male human thug) watches the employee entrance. A secret door next to the staircase leads to the alley behind the building.

3. Vault

The Cracked Coin stores all its cash and collateral here. The vault stays open during work hours and firmly locked otherwise. Ivan typically has between 3,000 gp and 5,000 gp worth of coins and valuables in the vault. Only Ivan and Cassandra have keys.

4. Barracks

Each guard quarters contains a pair of bunks and two trunks, each with the clothing and personal items of a guard. When not on duty, there is a 50% chance that a guard will be here or in the kitchen (area 9).

SECOND FLOOR

5. Lounge

This small waiting area sits at the top of the spiral stair outside Ivan's personal apartment.

6. Terrace

This terrace overlooks the front entrance. During the day, a guard (LE human male thug) keeps watch from the balcony.

7. Apartment

Ivan's apartment is richly decorated. Paintings and tapestries line the walls. A canopied bed sits in the corner, and the armoire holds expensive clothing. A door to the south leads to the terrace where Ivan likes to sit when not working and the weather allows. A clockwork myrmidon stands patiently in the corner of the room, awaiting Ivan's orders.

8. Private Vault

Ivan's personal vault contains 4,000 gp in gems, coins, and valuables. It also includes a secret escape route that Ivan will use if he believes invaders are likely to find him in his vault. A rope ladder allows him to descend to the alley behind the Cracked Coin.

BASEMENT

9. Lower Kitchen

The basement at the bottom of the spiral staircase serves as a kitchen and larder. Employees not on duty can prepare the food stored here. A secret door in the south wall leads to a narrow stair that descends to the sub-basement. A clockwork watchman stands in the corner with orders to make sure only authorized individuals open the secret door.

THE CRACKED COIN

SECOND FLOOR



KEY

S = Secret Door

C = Clockwork Watchman

M = Clockwork Myrmidon

1 Square = 5 Ft

MAIN FLOOR



BASEMENT



SUB-BASEMENT



SUB-BASEMENT

10. Black Storage

Ivan stores contraband and other materials that he keeps “off the books” in the sub-basement. Illegal or otherwise difficult-to-dispose-of items stay here until he can move them out of the city or to the Black Market in the Cartways.

DEFENSES

Exterior doors are locked (can be picked with thief’s tools and a successful DC 20 Dexterity check) and are protected by locking pit traps. The main entrance door remains unlocked (with its trap deactivated) during office hours. All employees carry keys to unlock the doors and deactivate the exterior traps.

The vaults are each protected by a *glyph of warding* that triggers a *lightning bolt* spell. A glyph can be spotted with a successful DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check. The trap does 8d6 lightning damage, or half damage with a successful DC 16 Dexterity saving throw. Only Ivan and Cassandra have keys to unlock the vaults and deactivate the vault traps.

Ivan is not the trusting sort. A small number of people work at the Cracked Coin. Most customers only deal with Ivan or Cassandra, as they handle all business transactions. Ivan is a thin, middle-aged man who always dresses in expensive, well-tailored outfits. Cassandra is a red-headed beauty. Her job is to be charming and personable, but underneath she is a shrewd businesswoman. In addition to four human guards, Ivan “employs” several clockwork guardians and a clockwork myrmidon.

PERSONALITIES

IVAN KAZIMIR

Shifty-eyed, oily, and self-important, Ivan Kazimir (LE male human spy) is the owner of the Cracked Coin. He is condescending and obsequious by turns, depending on the amounts involved.

CASSANDRA CHYORNY

A beautiful, red-haired woman in her late twenties, Cassandra (CN female human spy) seems to be everything Ivan is not. Confident, sweet, and easy to get along with, she uses her looks to great advantage. This façade is, of course, her job, but this cut-throat businesswoman prefers her approach to Ivan’s.

SCENARIOS

BETRAYER WITHIN!

One of the master keys that can deactivate the mechanical and magical defenses of the Cracked Coin is missing. Ivan Kazimir is convinced that one of his employees has betrayed him to one of Zobeck’s large criminal organizations. He fears an imminent attack and that he will not have time to reset his defenses before it comes. Ivan needs adventurers to bolster his defenses, find out who is responsible, and make sure this situation never happens again.

CONTRABAND

Deep within the bowels of the Cracked Coin lie crates of contraband provided to Ivan as collateral for loans. An anonymous note to the Watch says this evidence could send the high-ranking members of several street gangs straight to the gallows. The Watch wants the goods but is unable to act for reasons having to do with its own internal politics (officers being paid by Ivan Kazimir, no doubt). Whether for the good of Zobeck or for a hefty financial reward, the Spyglass Guild wants the adventurers to break into the Cracked Coin and procure the contraband material. The government will, of course, never admit involvement if something goes wrong. Unbeknownst to all involved, Ivan sent the note to eliminate some troublesome street contacts.

HOMMAL’S BOTANICAL ROOFTOP

Hommel Agic owns a five-story tenement that borders the Market District and Lower Zobeck, just on the waterfront. Atop this building lies Hommel’s true passion and major source of income—a lush and overgrown botanical garden with multiple interlocking greenhouses and patios overburdened with ferns, saplings, and hanging mosses. Hommel has a small monopoly on certain fibers and extracts within Zobeck and supplies brewers, alchemists, and cooks across the city. An honest businessman for the most part, Hommel’s garden is considered a neutral and safe meeting place by many of Zobeck’s criminal organizations. For serving tea and keeping silent, Hommel avoids paying protection money to any group.

THE GARDEN TENEMENT

The building has four workshops on the lower level complete with store fronts. Floors 2-4 contain simple

apartments. The most notable feature is its rooftop garden with greenhouses, a tall, twisted white oak that reaches over the street below, and thick, purple-leaved vines crawling down a quarter of the building. The first two levels are made of massive gray stone, but the three uppermost floors are timber encased in brick.

An experimental piping system was installed to reroute the river water into fountains inside the tenement. The experiment failed; the fountain only works when the water level is high, such as after heavy rain. This building has seen better days but still stands strong.

STORE FRONTS

The ground level of this building contains four large workshops with small store fronts, each occupying a full corner of the building. Narrow alleys between these shops lead to the staircase at the center of the building, which connects to the tenement floors above.

1. Tenement Living Quarters

Each room has a small fireplace in the corner with hanging pots, pans, and utensils for cooking. Many

worn chairs and a few small tables fill the room, with shelves and nets holding common belongings.

Multiple families share each flat. Though not comfortable, it is dry, warm, and safer than the street or a slum.

2. Tenement Sleeping Areas

Bunks line the walls, with a few small windows near the ceiling. Bedrolls also cover the floor, and more rolled blankets are stashed around the walls for sleeping in other rooms when this one gets too crowded, as it inevitably does. Enough floor space is left open in the middle of the room for a small table, which is covered in candle butts. In the corner, behind a half wall, is a toilet that drops sewage to the street gutter.

3. Staircase Hall

A staircase leads to the floors above and below. To the north and south of the staircase are two floor-to-ceiling columns. Upon the columns, four stone cow heads spit water into a trough.

THE GARDEN TENEMENT

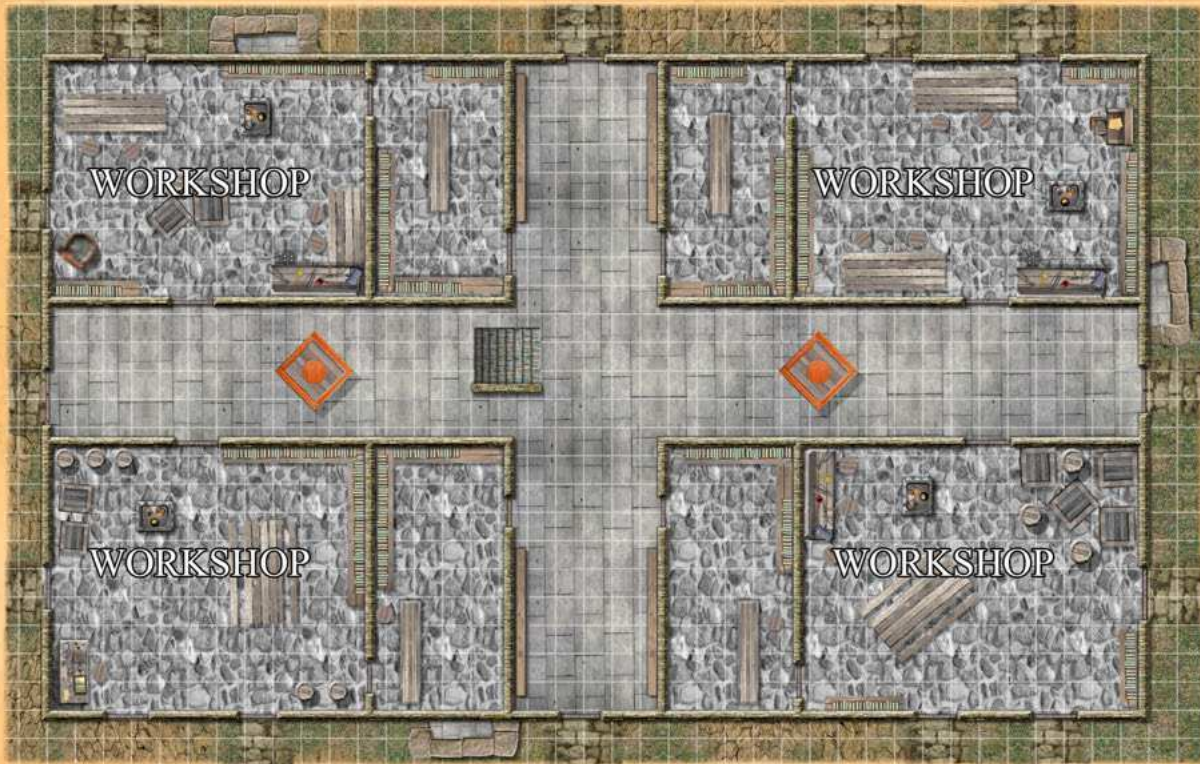
TENEMENT FLATS LEVELS 2 thru 4



THE GARDEN TENEMENT

THE STORE FRONTS

1 Square = 5 Ft



HOMMAL'S BOTANICAL ROOFTOP (LEVEL 5)

4. Roof Entrance

This staircase area is where one enters the roof. North and south of the staircase are column fountains crowned by statues of dancing female minotaurs spitting water into overflowing buckets. Potted and hanging plants adorn these statues, lending to the illusion of paradise. Just east of the staircase grow two vines that bear ripe grapes. Hidden within the grape stocks is a **vine blight** that attacks anyone Hommal has not told it to ignore. The vine can move, but it never leaves this area.

5. Belladonna House

This greenhouse has a high ceiling, roofed and walled in bubbled green and brown glass. Many multi-layered benches crowd the room, making it hard to walk around; a successful DC 14 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check is needed to move faster than half-speed. Potted plants of every type cover table tops and floor space, yet one shoulder-tall plant with bell-shaped flowers

and black berries seems the most prominent. It is a belladonna, a toxic plant used in making ingested poison. It can be recognized with a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Nature) check.

6. Gold Pond

This pool is 3 feet deep and blanketed in lily pads and bright orange flowers. Hundreds of frogs with red, orange, and white spots croak and splash in the water.

7. Gardener's Den

This small room, carpeted in many rugs, contains a warm fireplace and bookshelf-style bunks on the east wall with four small beds. A hookah stands near the bed with smoke hoses hanging on hooks near each pillow.

Four kobolds who work Hommal as gardeners can be found here most hours of the day, zoned out under their covers.

8. Storage Room

This room smells of earth and is full of gardening equipment, bags of seed, fertilizer, and a wheelbarrow.

HOMMEL'S BOTANICAL ROOFTOP



9. Twisted Oak

This gnarled, twisted oak grows out at a 45 degree angle from the northwest corner of the building. It reaches to within 15 feet of the building across the street. Multiple chairs and benches are set about this area along with potted flowers, lanterns, and game boards. Hommal entertains his noncriminal guests here and occasionally throws small parties.

10. Requiem House

This greenhouse has a high ceiling, roofed and walled in bubbled green and brown glass. Neat rows of benches hold potted flowers, each with a brightly-colored, fist-sized bulb. A small alchemist's lab stands on the western wall near a fireplace. Someone who examines the alchemy setup and makes a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Nature) check deduces that the drug known as requiem is concocted here.

11. Vineyard

Twisting, interlocking vines grow along multiple rows of arbors to create wide curtains of greenery. Grapes, berries, and ferns all intermingle, walling off the

individual rows as a blanket of vines crawls down the western side of the building. The arbors conceal anyone hiding behind them. Characters can climb the vines hanging from the side of the building with a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check, but the lowest portions of the vines are 25 feet above the ground.

12. Garden's Edge

Along the edge of the building's southwest corner runs an earth-filled box in which hardy, flowering vines grow and hang down the building's side. This appears intentional, to add to the tenement's allure. The area is also used for storing rain barrels. Characters can climb the vines hanging from the side of the building with a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check, but the lowest portions of the vines are 25 feet above the ground.

13. Tea Kitchen

Within this room of green glass sits a dining table and kitchen area near the fireplace. Along the east wall grow multiple potted tea plants with leaves of various colors, sizes, and shapes.

Criminal bosses sometimes meet secretly in this room to negotiate and socialize. Hommal serves them tea and stays in the corner, trying not to be noticed, or plays his lute when asked.

PERSONALITIES

AVERAGE TENANT

The average male tenant—and many of the women—leave the garden for work before sunrise and don't return until nightfall. Many are porters, laborers, or domestic help. Some women stay home to tend children and housework, often sharing such duties between families. All use the **commoner** stat block.

HOMMAL AGIC

Hommal (N male human commoner) owns the building and relies on the income he earns from it, but he doesn't care about managing it or its tenants. He's not an evil man, but the only things he really cares about are tending to his plants and enjoying the city's exciting night life.

SCENARIOS

POISON AND POTIONS

Recently, Hommal has been strong-armed into including addictive substances in the many mundane ingredients he sells to certain potion shops that are secretly owned by criminals. The idea is that customers will become addicted to expensive but otherwise harmless potions and medicines, and the repeat business will generate massive profits. Hommal is quite concerned that if this becomes public, he will be blamed as much as the criminals behind the plot, and the punishment could be severe for this crime. He sees no safe and easy way out of this predicament, but he might turn to adventurers for help if he becomes desperate enough—or if he's confronted with damning evidence.

A PARTY AND OPPORTUNITY

Bullied by the criminals of Zobeck for too long, Hommal secretly asks the PCs for help. He invites them to his next "tree party"—a summit meeting of high-ranking criminals—where he plans to poison the tea. He wants the characters to burst in and finish the job with their blades and spells once the criminals are weakened by the poison. Just talking about this scheme leaves him trembling in terror.

OLD STROSS PUBLIC BATHHOUSE

The Old Stross Public Bathhouse lies at the heart of Zobeck, just south of Crown Square and facing the Founders' Statues at the tip of the Crown Spike. The Baths once served only the aristocracy. After the Revolt, the spring waters were opened to the general population. This is one of the few places in Zobeck where one can see the lost extravagance of the old regime, but the people appreciate it as a reminder and monument. The Bathhouse is now a shared social space dedicated to the triumph of the Revolt.

Generally considered both neutral ground and sanctuary, the baths permit no weapons or armor inside except those carried by Watch members while on duty. It's not unusual to find trade factors soaking alongside gang lords and chatting up guildmasters in a relaxed and casual environment at any hour of the day or night.

LAYOUT

The bathhouse has two floors. The street level houses the entrance and terrace, but most of the structure is below ground, where it can sprawl beneath the wide street. The underground space consists of several chambers containing mineral baths, plunge pools, a massage parlor, lounging areas, and a gymnasium.

1. Street Level Entry Hall

This vaulted marble hall serves as the gateway to the baths and a waiting area for servants whose masters are bathing. Plush benches line the walls around a small fountain and the receptionist's station.

2. Terrace

Lined with statues by several famous sculptors, this area overlooks the great bath and provides a space where visitors can bask in the sun on reclining chairs.

3. Great Bath

A warm, azure-tiled pool 30 feet deep at its center, the great bath is fed by a channel from the spring. The pool itself is open to the sky, covered only by the portico of the surrounding terrace above. A wide, shallow step permits patrons to relax in the water without submerging. Over the years, a few intoxicated patrons have tumbled from the terrace to this step, knocking themselves unconscious and drowning, but it doesn't happen often enough for the city to be overly concerned.

4. Grand Lounge

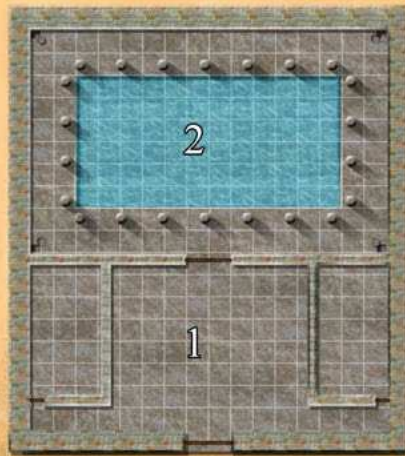
Dimly lit and comfortably appointed, the grand lounge serves as a meeting room and rendezvous point. A trio of musicians always plays here, filling the air with an ambient noise to prevent casual eavesdropping—a breach of etiquette that is strongly discouraged. Management holds competitions every season to select which musicians will perform. The contest is judged by the public and is very popular, and the contract is lucrative for the performers. Many musicians have found long-lasting sponsors while performing here.

5. Gymnasium

Equipped with weights, practice bags, and other athletic equipment, several different “clubs” meet here regularly for fitness or to teach self-defense. The people using this room generally are reasonably wealthy and work in trades that don’t demand much physical exertion. Teamsters, longshoremen, and others who get plenty of exercise during their daily jobs regard this room as a joke. Even so, more than a few of them still use the facilities to stay flexible or to meet and socialize with individuals outside their professions. The only

THE OLD STROSS BATH HOUSE

1 Square = 5 Ft



GROUND FLOOR

UNDER STREET LEVEL



“weapons” allowed inside the baths are the various nonlethal sparring swords made from wicker that are stored in a locker here and which can be used with permission from an attendant.

6. Spring Pool and Overflow

A large volume of water flows up from the spring each day, enough to fill the great bath in a few hours after it's emptied for maintenance. Many city residents believe the water has medicinal properties and leave votive offerings. When necessary, the naturally-heated water can be diverted through the channel to the various pools. Once a pool is full, a gate closes the channel, shunting excess water to the overflow tunnel and out into the Argent. The tunnel has been breached in a few places, allowing those daring few who know the paths access to the Cartways.

7. Heated Rooms and Plunge Pools

These two pools are regularly warmed by large stones pulled from a nearby hearth. They adjoin a softly-lit room filled with reclining chairs and low tables that is pleasantly sultry and inviting year round. Citizens enjoy this room most on cool days in spring and autumn and nearly every day in winter. Summer weather drives people to other parts of the baths. The staff keeps a few games here for patrons to play. Courtesans like Svetlana, masseurs, and masseuses regularly wander through, offering their services.

8. Changing Rooms and Saunas

These small rooms have lockers and alcoves for storing clothing while attending the bathhouse. A continuous flow of warm water from the spring fills the sauna while a series of hot metal rods supplements this heat. In a marvel of clockwork engineering, patrons can increase the temperature by baring additional rods; the rods are controlled by levers mounted on the wall.

9. Chilled Pool

Set into the raw stone of the ground and occasionally augmented by deliveries of ice from local icehouses, the construction of this room reinforces the cooler temperatures enjoyed by so many patrons in the sweltering summer weeks. Famous mosaics decorate the walls, floor, and pool, supposedly portraying prominent members of the unseelie fey Shadow Court. Rumor has it that the pool itself contains an entrance to the Shadow Court, but exactly where it is and how it works is never specified in these fanciful tales.

10. Massage Parlor

Located off the chilled pool, this service rents its space from the bathhouse and must undergo a review process similar to the musicians in the grand lounge. Run by Mikhail, a very gregarious and engaging half-elf, it is popular with patrons for both the small stable of high-quality masseurs and masseuses, and for the gossip Mikhail provides.

PERSONALITIES

The bathhouse hosts a wide range of Zobeck's citizenry. Lord Greymark himself visited last spring. With the Public Bathhouse's reputation, it is also a trusted place for rivals to meet and discuss delicate matters. Certain city residents can be found there nearly every day.

ZSOLT, BATHHOUSE MANAGER

A middle-aged man with a paunch and almost embarrassingly wispy hair, Zsolt (LN male human commoner) likes to gamble, aspires to wealth, and accepts bribes. He'd like the bathhouse to charge an entrance fee to restrict its clientele to “the better sort of folk,” but he's one of the few people in the city who feel that way. How he managed to become the bathhouse manager is anyone's guess.

SVETLANA, LOCAL COURTESAN

Petite and raven-haired, Svetlana (NG female human commoner) is very professional and refined. She speaks only in innuendos and inferences without ever directly stating what she does. She detests Mikhail, though she sometimes uses him to make contacts she needs to feed her opium habit.

MIKHAIL, MASSAGE PARLOR PROPRIETOR

Mikhail (CN male human half-elf commoner) is a trim, muscular half-elf with carefully groomed appearance and friendly demeanor. He is in love with Svetlana and is oblivious to her cutting remarks and spurning behavior toward him. Mikhail is a gregarious gadfly; he makes friends easily with people from all levels of society, but once he's won their confidence, he uses any information he gains for blackmail. Despite having so many friends and acquaintances, it's hard to find anyone who'll say something nice about Mikhail. Occasionally, he even stoops to robbing from clients' clothing while they're soaking or relaxing after a massage.

RADU UNDERHILL

Radu (NE male darakhul) enjoys soaking in the hot pool in area 7 where, as he jokes, he “holds embassy court.” He occasionally spends time in the grand lounge, playing a game of stones, but that’s uncommon; he doesn’t want people to think of him as a strategic thinker. Underhill knows of the secret route into the Cartways through the spring overflow but rarely uses it.

SCENARIOS

THE COVER OF FIRE

No matter how sacred a place may be, someone will exploit it. Two rival wine merchants have been pursuing a trade war. One of them decides that the market is the wrong place for blood and the bathhouse would be better. Hiring several thugs, he pays them to start a fire inside the sauna and then murder his rival in the ensuing chaos. The characters might be visiting the baths or simply passing by when the screaming begins.

NIXIE IN THE ROOM

Sometimes, one finds a blue-skinned man swimming in the chilled pool. He claims to be a messenger of the Shadow Court seeking the River Court, but he took a wrong turn. Does the pool actually lead elsewhere, as the rumors claim?

THE SILK SCABBARD

By no means a small operation, the Silk Scabbard occupies an otherwise nondescript two-story brick structure near the junction of Upper and Lower Zobeck and the Kobold Ghetto.

Tyron, Lord Greymark’s fixer, owns and operates the Scabbard with the approval and protection of the trade oligarch. This den of excess draws patrons of all social strata. Fond of risk, Tyron runs many games and fixes only a few. The management sees the occasional brawl as a cost of doing business, so the furniture is sturdy but comfortable. The Scabbard’s girls are well kept; a local bard advertises the brothel as “a dozen lovely ladies, and two ugly ones!”

Layout

The Silk Scabbard has two floors. The street level contains the brothel, main bar, and pit fighting areas. The upper level hosts gambling and the auxiliary bar with a couple of overflow rooms for the brothel.

1. Street Level Entryway

A heavily-reinforced metal door with a sliding view plate serves as the portal to the Scabbard. A clockwork mechanism allows people in area 3 to open this door.

2. Attendant Station

A thug behind a caged window sits in this small room to collect a cover charge from each attendee during advertised events. It remains closed otherwise.

3. Kill Station

Three thugs with heavy crossbows stand watch over the entryway from this room, in case someone foolishly attempts something. Their crossbow bolts are poisoned and do an extra 9 (2d8) poison damage, or half damage with a successful DC 13 Constitution saving throw against poison.

4. Mustering Area

Thugs gather in this open space before heading to any trouble in the Scabbard.

5. Office

The Silk Scabbard’s ancient clerk works here, maintaining inventory and tracking cash flow. Other than Tyron, he is the highest paid member of the staff.

6. Armory and Vault

Tyron stores about two weeks’ profits here in a safe—roughly 600 gp—along with a dozen longswords, ten heavy crossbows, fifty crossbow bolts, and six jars of poison for the bolts (2d6 poison damage, or half damage with a successful DC 13 Constitution saving throw).

7. Storage

Casks of wine, beer, and liquor are stacked neatly here. A single thug always watches this room and the adjacent service door.

8. Comfort Rooms

These rooms offer beds that fold down, simultaneously barring the door from opening. Each room belongs to a specific girl and some contain a secret door leading to the service passage.

9. Lower Gambling Tables

Tyron doesn’t run the games at these tables; anyone can play. He demands a 1 gp sitting fee for the night.

THE SILK SCABBARD

GROUND FLOOR



10. Booths

These four simple booths provide comfortable seating for six medium creatures. They offer reasonable privacy for conversation.

11. Lower Bar

The Silk Scabbard offers drinks at standard prices but no food other than salted nuts.

12. Fighting Pits

A sturdy metal rail encircles these 20-foot-square, 12-foot-deep pits with sand floors.

13. Service Tunnel

This passage allows thugs near the comfort rooms in case of belligerent customers and ensures discerning patrons can slip into the Cartways unnoticed.

14. Open Gaming Area

Tyron offers a number of games of chance here. Dice, cards, and roulette are common.

15. Upper Bar

This area is identical to the bar on the first floor and has adjoining storage.

16. Comfort Rooms

These rooms are identical to the ones downstairs but have no secret doors.

17. Viewing Rail

There is ample space here for spectators to watch any of the bouts in the fighting pit below.

18. Office

Tyron's private workspace boasts windows overlooking the main floor. He rarely spends much time here, but it is lavishly decorated.

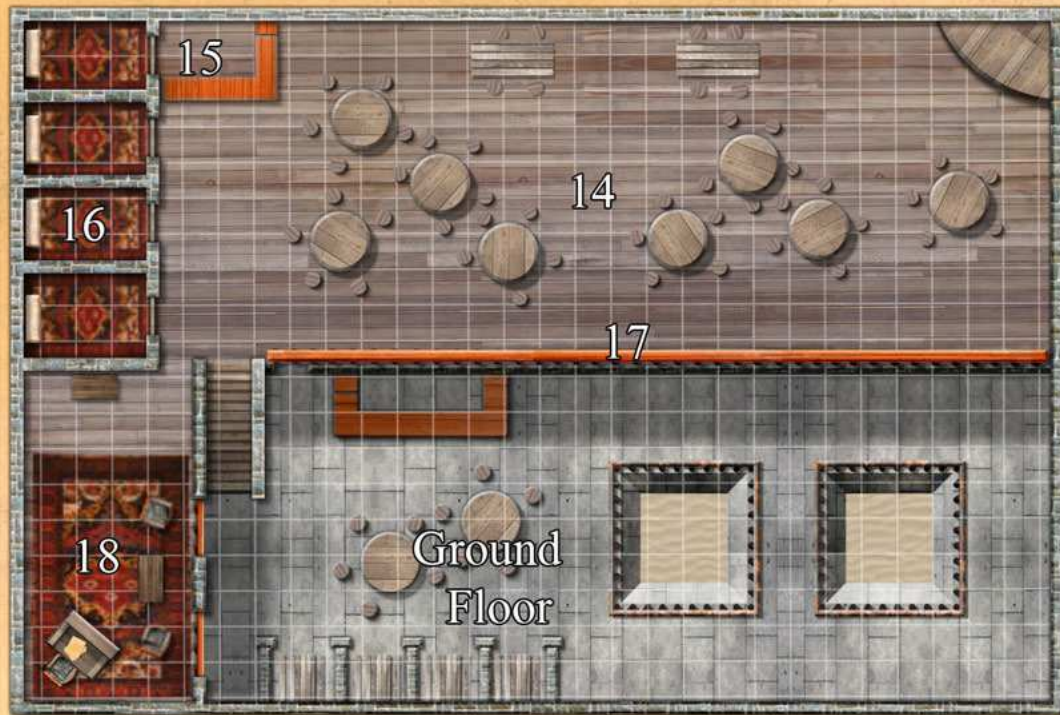
PERSONALITIES

ATSEN, BOUNCER

A barrel-chested brawler (CG male human veteran) with a thick accent and thicker forearms, likes the girls and often loses his wages on table games.

FIRST FLOOR

1 Square = 5 Ft



DRAJAN, BARTENDER

Drajan (LN male human commoner) keeps his head shaved and his appearance neat, always wearing sleeveless vests to display his tattoos. A teetotaler, he only drinks spring water.

JITKA, PIT BOSS

A half-Kariv who left his Margreve clan for Zobeck, Jitka (CN male human bandit captain) undisputedly rules the game floor.

KAJYA, MADAM

This raven-haired spitfire (LE female human bandit captain) watches over the other girls like a mother bear. Offend her, and you won't see the back rooms again soon.

TIMOLIUS DRUZELDORG, PATRON

A tall, dark-haired aristocrat (LN male human noble) with a potbelly and a braided beard, Timolius spends his days regaling listeners with stories of ancient kingdoms, lost treasures, and unusual monsters. He is a fountain of knowledge, assuming one can steer the topic of conversation. His mouth never shuts, but interestingly, his money never runs out.

TYRON, CURRENT OWNER

Tyron (NE male human bandit captain) wears a long coat and a narrow-brimmed felt hat. He is tall, thin, and in the later years of middle age. Befitting his role as Lord Greymark's trusted retainer, Tyron wears only the finest clothing and carries himself with dignity and calm disinterest.

VANDESIAN THRIKK, PATRON

A prodigious man with a prodigious thirst and a connoisseur's love of the Scabbard's ladies, Vandessian (NG male human bandit captain) is quick to point out his wide-traveling merchant background and heritage, claiming with a trademark guffaw, "That's Thrikk with two K's, at your service m'dear."

SCENARIOS

LET'S BUY A BAR!

Over the course of their adventures, the characters could become the proprietors of an establishment like the Silk Scabbard. For example, the characters could:

- **Purchase the Scabbard from Tyron.** Tyron would sell the place for about two years' profits up front, a sum of 30,000 gp.

- **Inherit the Silk Scabbard.** Should the party perform a great service to Tyron, he might make them heirs. And on the streets, accidents happen all the time.
- **Become a Partner.** Tyron might feel—or the PCs might persuade him—that it's time to step back from the business. A socially-inclined and morally flexible character with leadership tendencies might find herself with an opportunity to buy into the Silk Scabbard for a reasonable cost.
- **Earnings from Companions.** A prostitute at the Silk Scabbard can expect to bring in 2 gp/day, or roughly 500 gp/year after subtracting for holidays and alchemical expenses such as birth control and *cure disease* potions. Assume half of that goes to the establishment.

Earnings from Gambling. Gambling income from a house such as the Silk Scabbard is potentially immense but also highly variable. One possible method for determining the amount earned is to set each day's income equal to (d1000 – 480) gp. Losses must be paid immediately or the house's reputation will suffer, and a string of losses could ruin the joint if it doesn't have deep pockets. Someone must also be constantly on the lookout for cheaters.

Earnings from Fights. Wagering on pit bouts is handled privately around the event, so they aren't big moneymakers for the house. Mainly they bring in people who'll then partake of the Silk Scabbard's other attractions. Tyron schedules fights weekly, and impromptu grudge matches happen once or twice a week. A scheduled fight nets the Scabbard about 20 gp. Under Tyron, fights are restricted to bare-knuckle brawls to limit the need to dispose of corpses. Dogfights, cockfights, and more exotic animal matches are also held.

Earnings from Liquor Sales. The bar reliably brings in 15 gp profit every week, or 780 gp/year.

BAD HABITS

Gambling debts incurred by the bouncer lead him to tipping off local thugs when wealthy clients depart the establishment. One of these client's family holds the owners responsible for the fate of their injured or dead scion.

EVERYONE LOVES TRINKETS

A regular client is also a thief who gives his favorite girl a stolen, and possibly cursed, item. The understandably angry original owner sends demons, devils, or some other agents to recover the item.

THE MOONLIGHTING WAR

A competing gang shakes down the brothel by stealing girls through threats, bribes, and trickery. Welcome to a low-key crime war that escalates as one gang intimidates the neighborhood around the Scabbard, making it difficult to get supplies or services.

LIKE ROACHES AND RATS

The Scabbard sees an infestation of another illegal business—drug dealers hiring prostitutes to push their product. The owners are threatened by clients who want more drugs, and are sought by the Watch or Spyglass Guild who want the drugs controlled or eliminated.

GOOD CLEAN FUN

Daughters of the upper class decide it will be fun to go slumming as part-time prostitutes. It's less fun when girls get kidnapped and maimed, and their families hold the owners responsible for the incident.

PROMISE ME WE'LL GET ROBBED

The characters find their roles reversed when a group of adventurers decides to make a play for the receipts from a particularly lucrative pit fight or holiday casino celebration. They attempt a multi-pronged heist that forces the characters to use every option at their disposal to either foil the thieves or pursue them into the Cartways to recover their cash. The robbery might also be a cover for something more sinister.

THE RAMPANT ROACH

The Rampant Roach, located a few blocks away from Crown Square on the border of Lower Zobeck, is one of the few kobold-oriented restaurants outside the Ghetto. Local kobolds that work in the city frequent the Roach for lunch and dinner. Unfortunately, nonreptilian clients remain a rarity, and Skirtal barely makes enough to keep up with expenses.

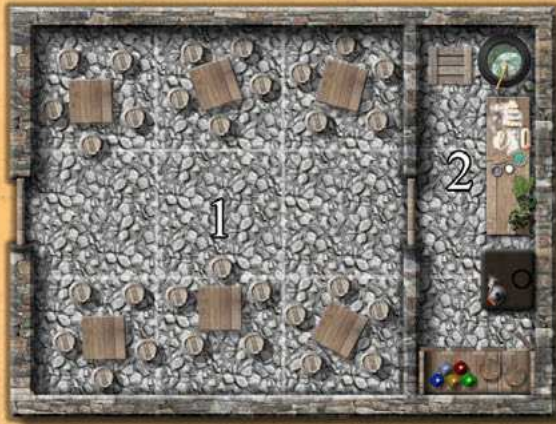
The doors open early in the afternoon and stay open until just before dawn, but business is light until well after dusk. The ambience is cozy and dark. Skirtal warmly welcomes anyone who enters. Food is cheap but filling, if the patron can stomach kobold meals.

LAYOUT

1. Dining Area

Boarded up windows keep the atmosphere dark and cavelike. Jars of fresh fire beetle glands at each table

THE RAMPANT ROACH



1 Square = 5 Ft



provide both dim illumination and appetizers. The half-dozen tables scattered around the room are low for Medium-size creatures. At 2 feet by 3 feet, the tables fit six kobolds comfortably or four humans uncomfortably.

2. Kitchen

This cramped cooking area can barely fit a single kobold between the stove and the cooking pot. A narrow cabinet holds bottles of various gooey liquids. Nets of vegetables hang over the worktable. A small hatch in the corner leads down to the basement.

3. Food Storage

Cages of cockroaches, rats, worms, and beetles litter the area with no apparent organization. Boxes of roots and other vegetables are stacked in a corner. A pile of what some would consider trash is actually a collection of ripening ingredients.

4. Skirtal's Room

Carved into the side of the basement is a small cave. At 3 feet high, only a kobold can stand inside comfortably. Skirtal sleeps on a pile of straw in the corner. He keeps his dearest possession—a recipe book handwritten in Draconic—in a hidden niche behind a loose stone.

PERSONALITIES

SKIRTAL

Skirtal (kobold) dreams of spreading his joy of traditional kobold cuisine to other humanoid. He stubbornly insisted on opening his restaurant inside the city proper instead of in a likely more prosperous location within the kobold ghetto. His concern for others often overshadows his business sense. Far too often he serves meals on credit and forgets to collect later. Meals come served with generous helpings, extra sides, and boisterous explanations of his latest recipe. When business is slow, Skirtal can be found at the doorway inviting passersby in for a free taste.

THE ROACHES

A gang of kobold urchins hunts vermin for Skirtal. Most citizens call them roaches with disdain, but the young kobolds have adopted the name with pride. Their enthusiasm for collecting ingredients often takes them to parts of town kobolds usually avoid. They are chased out of upscale neighborhoods, but occasionally an enterprising manservant will employ them for pest control. Skirtal can't pay them much more than a copper a day, but he keeps them well fed, which earns him fierce loyalty. For a small fee, Skirtal will pass messages into the ghetto through the roaches, as long as he believes they'll remain out of danger.

SCENARIOS

NEIGHBORHOOD BULLIES

Skirtal doesn't participate in illegal activities, but sometimes the local thugs cause mischief. He may ask regular patrons to intercede on his behalf if things get troublesome.

MISTAKEN IDENTITY

The roaches are spotted near the scene of a crime and are wrongly accused of it. They go deep into hiding in the ghetto while waiting for things to blow over. Skirtal asks the characters to clear their names. This may involve finding the roaches' hiding spot in order to learn what they saw.

RARE INGREDIENT

Skirtal has been asked to cook for an important kobold, and he wants to serve a special dish. He asks the characters to get a rare ingredient for him: an ochre jelly. He's heard of an abandoned Margreve mine that contains a nest.

ULMAR'S RARE BOOKS

A dwarf-run bookstore is rare indeed. Ulmar's attitude toward customers is rare as well. Situated at the edge of the Market District near Lower Zobeck, Ulmar's Rare Books doesn't seem to see enough traffic to stay in business. The assortment of books is impressive, however, and scholars searching for an obscure reference often come to Ulmar's as a last resort.

Besides selling books, Ulmar also repairs damaged books. Few people know that he also forges near-exact duplicates. Any particularly noteworthy volume he comes across will be duplicated for his special collection. On occasion, wealthy merchants desiring to impress will purchase rare books at bargain prices, not knowing they're getting slick forgeries.

Ulmar actually works for several masters and provides different services depending on how a request is phrased. A customer who knows the right code words to use can get a well-wrapped "book" from the Rivermen. Use a different phrase, and the sealed package is from the Spyglass Guild.

LAYOUT

1. Store

The main room of the store is filled with books piled on shelves without any apparent organization. Shelves are labeled by category, but the labels are wildly inaccurate. Ulmar usually knows where to find specific books, if he can be bothered to look or to answer questions.

2. Special Collection

In contrast to the front room, the back room is very organized. All books of significant value are stored here. Nobody is allowed in. Ulmar brings out only one book at a time from his private reserve. A few special books are hollowed out to store contraband materials, usually drugs.

3. Book Workshop

This well-kept workroom houses everything required for the manufacture and repair of books. Many types of parchment and vellum allow him to create identical copies of most books.

4. Storeroom

Additional workshop supplies are stored here, along with any contraband Ulmar is currently holding.

5. Secret Tunnel

Hidden behind a movable cupboard, this tunnel leads to an abandoned section of the Cartways with easy access to the waterfront.

PERSONALITIES

ULMAR

Aside from Ulmar's (CN male hill dwarf commoner) disdain for customers, he is a knowledgeable scholar and skilled bookbinder. He certainly prefers the company of books to other people. He can usually be found behind the counter reading and ignores new customers unless they ask him specific questions. Even then, he usually makes them wait until he reaches a good stopping point in his book before answering. Only the prospect of inspecting a new book perks him up, but he quickly derides anyone who brings in something he considers rubbish.

ULMAR'S RARE BOOKS



1 Square = 5 Ft

SCENARIOS

The secrets behind Ulmar's Rare Books are left to the GM, but here are several possibilities.

SECRET MESSAGES

The Spyglass Guild passes messages tucked between the pages of certain books in the store. One of the characters, or an NPC friend of the characters, accidentally purchases a book containing a coded message. The Spyglass Guild will stop at nothing to get it back. If they believe the accidental owner is smart enough to decipher the message, they're likely to want him or her silenced permanently.

STOLEN BOOKS

Sometimes a book is too valuable not to sell twice. Ulmar often tells his criminal associates—usually the Rivermen—which patrons purchase particularly expensive volumes. Armed with the knowledge of which estate to hit and what specific book to grab, an accomplice steals it back a few weeks after the purchase.

Ulmar won't sell re-stolen books in town. Instead, he sends them to contacts in other cities such as Bratislor. A wealthy collector may hire the characters to investigate after a clumsy break-in curiously targets only her library while ignoring other valuables.

KOBOLD SLAVES

Kobold children are disappearing from the Ghetto. A prominent kobold asks the characters to investigate rumors of a slave ring. The trail eventually leads to Ulmar's basement, where the young kobolds are locked up, awaiting the time when they're picked up by purchasers from the Ghoulish Imperium.

EVERYONE LIES

By Ben McFarland

Multiple groups seek a thug's girlfriend through the streets and alleys of Zobeck. The adventurers' lives may depend on finding her first.

Everyone Lies is an urban noir adventure suitable for four PCs of 1st to 3rd level.

BACKGROUND

Ilyana Dukovich has issues with her father, Lord Greymark. He refuses to name her as his daughter, preferring to see her struggle, but the wily Ilyana plans to force her father's recognition. She has used her seductive charms and exotic beauty to find her way into the beds of influential people in both reputable and illicit circles, eventually falling in with the Lord Commander of the Free Army and Praetor of the Blue House, Lady Marack. After learning Marack kept a black book of confession, Ilyana worked out a plan to steal it. She convinced a capable second-story man named Grigori to snag it along with a substantial collection of jewelry in a deal that would benefit them both—but she never revealed her relationship with Marack.

The pair executed the heist marvelously, and Ilyana seemed close to achieving the next step toward her goal. Some of Grigori's fellow gangsters learned of the scheme, however, and decided they wanted the book. Realizing the gang's interest, Ilyana stole the book from Grigori, planted some of the jewelry on members of the Cloven Nine, and tipped off the Spyglass Guild to make it appear that Grigori had betrayed them all. The secret police captured Grigori for interrogation shortly afterward. Ilyana hoped that taking the book would safeguard Lady Marack from the Nine and that returning it to the Lord Commander would help her convince Marack to force Lord Greymark into publicly recognizing Ilyana. Then Grigori talked. Now the Spyglass Guild's enforcers hunt her, the Cloven Nine hunt her, and nothing seems to be working out.

Synopsis

A local thief, Grigori, approaches the party. He needs help finding his girlfriend Ilyana, and he'll pay. Recently interrogated by the Blue House, he fears for her safety. If the PCs accept, Grigori sends them into Lower Zobeck.

Regardless of their acceptance, a group of gruff, hard-nosed individuals from the Spyglass Guild approach the party. They claim to know of the party's

involvement, threaten them with the Blue House's dungeons unless they turn over Ilyana, and make clear that they will be watching. Ilyana's trail leads into Cloven Nine territory and the Silk Scabbard, where the gang tells the PCs to quit searching for Lord Greymark's illegitimate tiefling daughter before they end up dead.

With the underworld breathing down their necks, the law on their heels, and the threat of Lord Greymark's fury hanging over their heads, the party has nowhere left to turn until Sergeant Hendryk approaches them with the real score. If the party works with Hendryk, he'll help them out of the situation. The book is the key, and the best place to start looking is the Cartways Black Market.

In those dark tunnels where the Watch dare not go, the group meets Radu Underhill, who knows where Ilyana hides and will trade the information if the PCs will cooperate. If the PCs can get the girl and get everyone to agree to a midnight exchange at Hommal's Rooftop, then the ghouls have a way for the PCs to escape with the greatest treasure they could hope for: their lives.

Radu sends the group to the Old Stross Bathhouse. There they find Ilyana who, once discovered, explains her tangled story. Unfortunately, everything's gone wrong, and the party is Ilyana's only hope of surviving the night.

Ilyana agrees to exchange the book for a hiding place. Once safely tucked away, she tells the group where she hid the book. Only with the book can the group attend the meeting with secret policemen and gangsters with any chance of survival.

Fulfilling his part of the bargain, Radu and a pack of ghouls ambush the enforcers outside Hommal's, capturing Lady Marack as the party mops up the stragglers. With their deal consummated, the adventurers can trade the book to the waiting members of the Cloven Nine, knowing they've escaped by the skin of their teeth. They return to their safe house triumphant, only to find Ilyana gone.

Hooks

What draws adventurers into this twisted trip down Zobeck's streets? An offer they can't refuse. At their low level, they can't afford to make enemies of either the Spyglass Guild or the Cloven Nine, and yet they risk just that simply because Grigori sought them out. But why would Grigori come to the adventurers? Some options include:

- Grigori shares an ethnic or national origin with one of the PCs and approaches a countryman he may have heard of, hoping this connection will motivate the PC to assist him.
- A rogue, bard, or other PC has a shady background or a (possibly undeserved) reputation for finding lost things or people. Grigori hopes to capitalize on this.
- Grigori has a professional connection to a PC from a previous job. He seeks out the fellow thief for a favor.
- A mutual NPC acquaintance tells Grigori that the party can likely get the job done, and no one will miss them if they blow it.

Whatever the reason, our tale begins as Grigori approaches the adventurers.

PART 1: I'LL SEE YOUR OFFER

While relaxing in a public place, the adventurers receive an unexpected visit from the well-dressed second-story thief Grigori (CN male human spy).

Only Hope

You didn't invite him, but he sat down anyway. Your uninvited guest is an unshaven man who obviously has had some rough treatment quite recently. He wears a look of desperate exhaustion that's as obvious as the fine stitching on his forest green doublet. He nods knowingly to you, trying to muster an expression of false confidence. "You may not remember me," he says. I'm Grigori."

Using whatever connection you've chosen, Grigori attempts to establish some relationship with the party. Once he has his in, he gets to the heart of the matter.

He takes a swallow of his weak beer. "I need your help with something. I did a job the other night, and I think I got in over my head." He looks sideways, as if checking for something. "The Spyglass Guild just got

done grilling me hard for most of the afternoon. I've got to lie low for a while, but my girl Ilyana, she doesn't know. They may not be so kind to her, especially since she's wearing some of my handiwork, if you know what I mean." Grigori takes another pull from his flagon. "If you can find her first, I'll make it worthwhile." He hands you a square of artists' canvas bearing the charcoal sketch of a striking tiefling woman.

The party may wonder if Grigori's lying or if they know of him. Someone who makes a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check realizes he's not lying, but he might be withholding information. Someone who makes a successful DC 15 Intelligence check has heard rumors connecting Grigori to the Cloven Nine in the past, so he might still be a member of the gang.


If pressed, Grigori explains Ilyana helped plan the job and might crack under interrogation. He worries she'll end up in the gibbet. He can't ask any members of the Cloven Nine for help because he knows they don't want the attention. The adventurers, as an uninvolved third party, can investigate freely, whereas he would only draw suspicion closer. He knows he wasn't followed here; he took precautions to be certain.

Everyone in the group has heard of the Spyglass Guild; it's Zobeck's secret police, a quasi-legal organization that ultimately answers to the Lord Mayor and the Council of Praetors. Ersebet Cemilla is mistress of the Guild, and she answers to Lady Marack, Praetor of the Blue House. Lady Marack is a flamboyant personality, with rather more colleagues than friends among the city's elite, and it's not hard to believe she might use her position for personal matters if given sufficiently strong reasons. Be sure to fill the players in on this background information, because it will help to make them nervous.

If the adventurers rebuff Grigori, he shrugs and departs, leaving the sketch with the party. The enforcers who show up next see the sketch and assume the PCs took the job.

If characters agree to help, Grigori continues.

"My thanks," he smiles, revealing a couple missing teeth. "Take this picture," he taps the sketch, "and look in Lower Zobeck. She has friends working at the Silk Scabbard. Filipa maybe, or Iskra. Either might know where she is. They'll probably talk to you, since you're not Cloven Nine." He takes one last drink from his mug. "Tell them Grigori brought them their earrings. They'll know I sent you."



Grigori (Spy): AC 12; HP 27 (6d8); Spd 30 ft; **Melee** shortsword (+4, 1d6+2 piercing); **Ranged** hand crossbow (+4, 30 ft/120 ft, 1d6+2 piercing); **SA** multiattack (shortsword x2); **Str** +0, **Dex** +2, **Con** +0, **Int** +1, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +3; **Skills** Deception +5, Insight +4, Investigation +5, Perception +6, Persuasion +5, Sleight of Hand +4, Stealth +4; **Traits** cunning action (can use a bonus action to dash, disengage, or hide), sneak attack (1/turn; +2d6 damage when attacking with advantage or with an ally within 5 ft of target); **AL** CN; **CR** 1; **XP** 200.

Departing the Scene

Grigori leaves first, saying he doesn't want his presence to cause the group trouble. He plans to lie low, knowing that the authorities are watching him. He hopes (but doesn't tell the characters) they they'll draw some heat away from him. When they turn up Ilyana, everyone should forget about him.

As soon as characters leave whatever place they're in and venture into the street, they are approached by a group of five rough, serious men. These men have no unifying dress, color scheme, or symbol to identify them as anyone official, but they are obviously more than street thugs.

.....
"Good evening. We need to talk. What say we slip over to that quiet alley and have a chat?"
.....

They clearly won't take no for an answer, but a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) check gives the feeling that, despite their menacing manners, they really just want to talk. A successful DC 13 Intelligence (Perception) check spots a polished pin shaped like a griffon holding a gear in its foreclaws on one man's cloak (the spy). This man never speaks, but all of his companions take their cues from him. As long as characters don't start a fight, the enforcers simply talk. They'll put up with a certain amount of cocky attitude and backtalk but not with physical assaults (see "Breaking the Law" for details on a possible fight). Otherwise, continue.

.....
A wiry man with a thick, blond mustache does the talking. "You seem like smart people. Let me explain how you can continue to be smart. We know about the girl, and we know you're after her. We're after her too. If you find her, you turn her over to us or you'll all see the bottom of Blue House." He lets this sink in for a second. "And don't bother trying to run. None of you are hard to find, and we're watching." He smiles as if he's

genuinely pleased to have the unpleasant part out of the way. "If you do this quick enough, we'll even pay you the reward for her. That's a short-term offer, though." He glances to one of his companions, who nods, and the group starts drifting away, some swinging silver-tipped ebony batons. The spokesman smiles again before leaving. "We need to move along. It's getting late."

.....

Some groups of characters or players might not put up with threats or coercion. If your group puts up a fight, proceed to "Breaking the Law."

The Blue House is the headquarters for Zobeck's secret police. The blue-tipped batons are *tipstaves*: magical clubs capable of paralyzing creatures.

Breaking the Law

The figure who does the talking is a **veteran**. The silent leader wearing the griffon pin is a **spy**. The others are **3 thugs**. All five carry *tipstaves*, which they can use when making a melee weapon attack.

The enforcers don't want to kill the PCs or even incapacitate them. If a fight breaks out, they rely on their *tipstaves* to subdue the PCs. Any characters who drop to 0 HP stabilize automatically. When the characters awaken a few minutes later, they're in the alley with their hands tied and the NPCs are still waiting to talk to them. The veteran and the spy won't run from the fight under any circumstance; the thugs flee if both of their leaders are killed.

Once their message is delivered, the enforcers leave. The best move for the characters is to proceed to "The Silk Scabbard."

Veteran: AC 17; HP 58 (9d8+18); Spd 30 ft; **Melee** longsword x2 (+5, 1d8+3 slashing); shortsword (+5, 1d6+3 piercing); **Ranged** heavy crossbow (+3, 100 ft/400 ft, 1d10 piercing); **SA** multiattack (longsword x2, shortsword); **Str** +3, **Dex** +1, **Con** +2, **Int** +0, **Wis** +0, **Cha** +0; **Skills** Athletics +5, Perception +2; **AL** LN; **CR** 3; **XP** 700.

Spy: AC 12; HP 27 (6d8); Spd 30 ft; **Melee** shortsword (+4, 1d6+2 piercing); **Ranged** hand crossbow (+4, 30 ft/120 ft, 1d6+2 piercing); **SA** multiattack (shortsword x2); **Str** +0, **Dex** +2, **Con** +0, **Int** +1, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +3; **Skills** Deception +5, Insight +4, Investigation +5, Perception +6, Persuasion +5, Sleight of Hand +4, Stealth +4; **Traits** cunning action (on its turn, can use a bonus action to dash, disengage, or hide), sneak attack (1/turn, does +2d6 damage when attacking with advantage or with an ally within 5 ft of target); **AL** any; **CR** 1; **XP** 200.

Thug (×3): AC 11; HP 32 (5d8+10); Spd 30 ft; Melee mace x2 (+4, 1d6+2 bludgeoning); Ranged heavy crossbow (+2, 100 ft/400 ft, 1d10 piercing); Str +2, Dex +0, Con +2, Int +0, Wis +0, Cha +0; Skills Intimidation +2; AL CN; CR 1/2; XP 100.

TIPSTAFF

Magic weapon; uncommon

A *tipstaff* is a quarterstaff made of ebony with a glowing blue tip. It can be used in all ways as a quarterstaff. The *tipstaff* has 7 charges. When you hit with it in a melee attack, you can expend a charge to paralyze the target unless it makes a successful DC 13 Constitution saving throw. A paralyzed character repeats the saving throw at the end of its turn, ending the effect on itself with a success. The *tipstaff* regains 1d6 + 1 charges each day at dawn.

THE SILK SCABBARD

See “Places of Zobeck” for a detailed description of the Silk Scabbard.

Rough men and women pack this establishment looking for all manner of opportunities. It is a bar, a casino, a brothel, and a death trap, all in one convenient location.

Many activities are available to PCs visiting the Silk Scabbard. Eventually, they should seek out Filipa or Iskra. Filipa is in the upper gaming area (14) with a fat cattle merchant, looking bored but milking him for an eventual trip to the comfort rooms. Iskra is trolling the lower bar (area 11) on the arm of a belligerent local tough looking for a fight.

Both women are greatly annoyed if the PCs interrupt their business. Their starting attitudes are hostile if the PCs try to (or successfully) separate them from their potential customers, and they’re unfriendly toward anyone asking about Ilyana’s whereabouts under any circumstances. Their attitude improves by one level for each 1 gp offered as compensation. Once an attitude shifts to friendly, that woman pulls at least one PC into a vacant booth (area 10) to talk, and they speak without reservation once they hear Grigori’s code phrase.

The girl has an anxious, concerned look as she speaks. “Ilyana didn’t tell anyone where she was going, honest. She didn’t want us to get hurt, so she said it was better if nobody knew.”

PCs trying to learn more about Ilyana by talking to Silk Scabbard patrons can make Charisma (Persuasion) checks. Results are listed on the following table:

Result Information

10	Ilyana was a regular at the Silk Scabbard, but not an employee.
12	Ilyana associated with the Cloven Nine, but she wasn’t a member.
14	Ilyana had many lovers, some of great influence.
16	Ilyana’s father is rumored to be the very powerful Lord Greymark.

Talking openly about Ilyana at the Silk Scabbard draws the attention of the Cloven Nine. In a scene which should seem familiar, a few members of the Cloven Nine approach as the characters prepare to leave. They’re armed but don’t intend on starting trouble. They leave the adventurers with a stern warning.

The gangsters motion for you to stop. “We know who you’re looking for, and you should quit.” Their spokesman cuts you off with a gesture, menacing in its simplicity. “Why? Because Lord Greymark would hate to find out she died because of you. You’d hate for him to find that out, too. It’s the sort of thing that gets people killed, you know? You should just enjoy the rest of the evening, and then go home and forget all this nonsense.”

Defiant PCs are told that speaking against the Cloven Nine usually earns someone a beating, and they mind their manners. The gang members don’t start anything here unless a PC presses the issue. In that case, they clear a space and a single PC faces a **thug** in one-on-one, unarmed combat. The loser is knocked unconscious.

Development: With their threat—and possible beating—delivered, the gang tells the PCs to get out. If the PCs are polite, or at least keep their mouths shut, the staff forgets about the encounter. If the PCs are combative, the gang and the staff don’t forget them or the incident.

If the party starts trouble, a group of Watchmen arrive within four rounds and help to subdue the characters. The Silk Scabbard’s staff and some patrons will assist. Once they’re dragged outside, the PC with the highest Strength score is beaten to less than 5 hp while the others are restrained and held at sword point. As the Watchmen leave, the last one looks at the PCs and says, “Don’t you have a job to do?” The party don’t recognize him, but he’s wearing a griffon pin identical to the one worn earlier by the silent spy.

The party gets no time to heal or recover before proceeding to “Part 2: The Plot Thickens.”

PART 2: THE PLOT THICKENS

After departing the Silk Scabbard, the party may feel out of options. Fortunately, Sergeant Hendryk and three Watchmen (guards) await them. See “Faces of Zobeck” for Hendryk’s full description. If the party just got roughed up, this encounter takes place a moment after they’ve picked themselves up.

Four Watchmen approach you. In a bold voice, the largest one calls out, “You there, hold in the name of the Watch!” A slight man with a thick but well-trimmed black beard and a casual air of authority grins and gives you an obvious wink. “Step this way!” continues the larger man, “and keep your hands where we can see them.” The smiling sergeant nods toward the alley.

The Watchmen don’t draw weapons, and it should be clear they have no hostile intent. Presuming the party complies, Hendryk continues. If they run, the Watchmen sigh and repeat the encounter an hour later, although they have weapons drawn when they track down the characters the second time.

Once in the alley, the sergeant speaks up. “Right. I appreciate you playing along out there. You’re in a bit of a tight spot, eh? Fortunately for you, Sergeant Hendryk knows what’s what. You hear me out and do what I say, and I’ll get you out of this jam. Can’t go wrong with that, eh?”

If the party refuses, Hendryk laughs. He tells them they have guts; it won’t be enough, but it’s worth something. He throws them a map and tells them to go to the Cartways Black Market and find Radu.

If they agree to hear what Hendryk has to say, he explains the situation while his fellows stand guard. Hendryk relates how Ilyana stole the Lord Commander’s black book of confession, the log of some egregious sins, from Grigori and made the Cloven Nine think he betrayed them. Now everyone’s looking for leverage over Lady Marack, and the book is the key. If the characters talk to Radu Underhill and do as he says, Hendryk will help them out. The best place to find Radu is the Cartways Black Market, a place the Watch dares not go. Hendryk gives them a small map and walks them through the directions.

Development: Hendryk’s map is correct, leading the group into the Cartways. If characters use an *augury* spell, it reveals both weal and woe for traveling to the Cartways.

Sergeant Hendryk: AC 16; HP 52 (8d8+16); Spd 30 ft; **Melee** shortsword (+5, 1d6+3 piercing), club (+5, 1d4+3 bludgeoning), poisoned dagger (+5, 1d4+3 piercing plus 3d6 poison; half poison with DC 11 **Con** save); **Ranged** poisoned dagger (+5, 20 ft/60 ft, 1d4+3 piercing plus 3d6 poison; half poison with DC 11 **Con** save); Reaction uncanny dodge (can halve damage against self if Hendryk can see attacker); **Str** +0, **Dex** +3, **Con** +2, **Int** +1, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +1; **Skills** Insight +4, Intimidation +3, Perception +4; **Saves** **Dex** +5, **Con** +4, **Wis** +4; **Traits** sneak attack (1/turn can do +2d6 damage with weapon if has advantage or has ally within 5 ft of target); **AL** NE; **CR** 3; **XP** 700.

Guard (x3): AC 16; HP 11 (2d8+2); Spd 30 ft; **Melee** spear (+3, 1d6+1 piercing); **Str** +1, **Dex** +1, **Con** +1, **Int** +0, **Wis** +0, **Cha** +0; **Skills** Perception +2; **CR** 1/8; **XP** 25

Into the Cartways

Adventurers reluctant to enter the Cartways soon find they don’t have much choice. Ilyana has gone to ground, and without new information, their only other option is to wander a city of 20,000 souls hoping to stumble onto her. Asking around the city, with or without successful Charisma checks, always points toward the Cartways as the best place to hide out and the Black Market as the best place to start looking. Travel to the Black Market is fairly uneventful.

Dark, clammy tunnels envelop you. Following the twisting passageways and odd landmarks on the Watchman’s map brings you to a passage echoing with the faint hum of conversation. A short walk and a dogleg corridor later, you find yourselves staring at a bustling hive of activity. Kobolds push carts while humans trudge past duergar and what appear to be a ghoul. This can only be the Cartways Black Market!

See “Places of Zobeck” for a full description of the Cartways Black Market. An inquiry with the gate guards (kobolds) indicates Radu’s quarters are in Area 5. Shortly after characters arrive, an incident occurs outside the gate, in the 40-foot-wide gallery approaching the doors into the Black Market. It has a smooth, natural stone floor and walls, and the ceiling is 35 feet high. Small tunnels lead off the gallery to unknown locations in the Cartways.

A kobold tinker, not paying attention to where he's pushing his cart, accidentally bumps into a pack lizard led by a duergar. The creature hisses and rears up, dropping its cargo across the floor. The deep dwarf turns menacingly on the lone kobold. At the same time, a mixed group of humans and dwarves arrives to relieve the agitated kobold guards. "Tough break, eh?" chuckles one rough-looking man. "That's the rules. We don't act beyond the gates. Shuffle off, belts!" The kobolds shoot poisoned glances at the new guards but simply watch.

The duergar beats the kobold to a pulp unless the party intervenes.

Duergar: AC 16; HP 26 (4d8+8); Spd 25 ft; **Melee** war pick (+4, 1d8+2 piercing or 2d8+2 when enlarged); **Ranged** javelin (+4, 30 ft/120 ft, 1d6+2 piercing or 2d6+2 piercing when enlarged); **SA** enlarge (becomes Large for 1 minute; makes **Str** checks and saves with advantage; recharge after rest), invisibility (turns invisible until it attacks or enlarges; recharges after rest); **Resist** poison; **Str** +2, **Dex** +0, **Con** +2, **Int** +0, **Wis** +0, **Cha** -1; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft; **Traits** duergar resilience (has advantage on saves against poison, spells, illusions, charm, and paralysis), sunlight sensitivity (has disadvantage on attacks and Perception checks that rely on sight while in sunlight); **AL** LE; **CR** 1; **XP** 200.

Giant Lizard: AC 12; HP 19 (3d10+3); Spd 30 ft, climb 10 ft; **Melee** bite (+4, 1d8+2 piercing); **Str** +2, **Dex** +1, **Con** +1, **Int** -4, **Wis** +0, **Cha** -3; **Senses** darkvision 30 ft; **AL** unaligned; **CR** 1/4; **XP** 50.

The kobold guards take note if the PCs act on behalf of the kobold tinker, and this may work to the characters' benefit later.

Meeting Radu

The adventurers find Radu's sanctuary easily (Area 5). Climbing the ladder brings them to a cozy room perched on the side of the support pillar. See "Faces of Zobeck" for a description of Radu Underhill. He smiles, welcoming the group.

"Good," he says, smirking. "Took your time getting here. I think I have a solution to your problem. Listen close."

Radu explains that if the group finds the book and Ilyana, and keeps her safe while offering the book to both Lady Marack and the Cloven Nine, he'll trade their lives for Lady Marack. The PCs need to arrange a midnight exchange at Hommal's Rooftop with both



groups, something perhaps best done by courier letter. If they get the lord commander there, Radu will ensure they can deliver the book and that the gangsters get nothing useful out of the deal. If they agree, Radu explains that Ilyana is at the Old Stross Bathhouse, attempting to hide in plain sight, but it's only a matter of time before someone finds her.

What does the darakhul hope to get out of all this? Radu needs to talk to Lady Marack for a while; that's all he wants in payment.

As they depart, Radu offers each adventurer a *potion of greater healing*, "for emergencies."

A Message from the Cloven Nine

As they cross the gallery to return to the surface, the hunter hired by the Cloven Nine arrives. It is a wererat, part of a murdering Cartways gang contracted to kill the party. It has run here in a desperate attempt to stop the characters before they can leave the Cartways, so it has one level of exhaustion (disadvantage on ability checks). If the party aided the kobold tinker, a group of kobold guards helps them now, beginning on round 3, initiative count 8, by firing a volley of poisoned crossbow bolts. As soon as a bolt hits the wererat, it flees from the fight.

Wererat: AC 12; HP 33 (6d8+6); Spd 30 ft; **Melee** bite (rat or hybrid form only; +4, 1d4+2 piercing and humanoid must make DC 11 **Con** save or be cursed with lycanthropy), shortsword (humanoid or hybrid form only; +4, 1d6+2 piercing); **Ranged** hand crossbow (humanoid or hybrid form only; +4, 30 ft/120 ft, 1d6+2 piercing); **Immune** nonmagical, nonsilvered bludgeoning, piercing, slashing; **Str** +0, **Dex** +2, **Con** +1, **Int** +0, **Wis** +0, **Cha** -1; **Skills** Perception +2, **Stealth** +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft (rat form only); **Traits** keen smell, shapechanger (can use an action to switch between humanoid, rat, and rat-humanoid hybrid forms); **AL** LE; **CR** 2; **XP** 450.

Bathhouse Express

Following Radu's advice brings the adventurers to the Old Stross Bathhouse.

The clerk seated at the entry hall's front desk notes that policy prohibits weapons and armor within the bathhouse. He points to lockers along the walls and says everyone needs to stow their gear or go away. Two large warriors wearing the city's livery monitor the entrance.

The two warriors (**guards**) in Area 1 refuse entry to anyone dressed inappropriately. Guards search anyone carrying more than a towel. Most regular visitors know this and come carrying nothing. The clerk sounds the alarm at any attack. **Five guards** arrive within 1d6 rounds and ten more arrive after 10 rounds. If the PCs are not detained, 10 guards systematically search the Bathhouse while five more hold the front door. Killing any of these guards is a very bad idea; the bathhouse is enormously popular in Zobeck.

Once inside, PCs quickly find Ilyana relaxing in Area 4. She's poorly disguised and barely dressed. Her initial attitude is unfriendly, and she tries to maintain the bluff that she's not the woman the characters are seeking.

Using Grigori's suggested phrase gains her confidence, and if she learns the PCs are on good terms with Iskra or Filipa, she becomes helpful. Once characters explain the current situation to her, read the following.

Ilyana finally grasps the situation. "That idiot. He's pulled you into this. And the Spyglass Guild...? But, she and...I...we..." Grim realization sweeps across Ilyana's face. "I don't have the book with me." She looks up. "You must believe me. They're going to kill me, aren't they? Just for that book." She blinks away tears, eyes wide with fear. "This was never my plan. Never. But then they were never supposed to know I had it. Damn Grigori."

Ilyana shares the details of the plot: she gained Lady Marack's confidence and convinced Grigori to steal the book, all so she could blackmail Lord Greymark into recognizing her as his daughter. She wants to survive this ordeal and will work with any plan based on Radu's suggestions.

When the PCs approached Ilyana, the Bathhouse masseur Mikhail realized her identity. A greedy schemer, he tells the group of citizens who are training in self defense (Area 5) about the reward for catching Ilyana. They move in as the adventurers try to leave with her.

Any character who's keeping watch or who has passive Perception 15 or higher notices the suspiciously gathering crowd.

We're Professionals

The masseur convinced these poor citizens they can overwhelm the PCs and capture Ilyana. They surround the group while the adventurers are talking to her and then try to intimidate the party through numbers. When those tactics fail, they try to overwhelm PCs with unarmed attacks. The exact number of people in this group is up to you; it should be enough to make the characters nervous but not so many they just surrender Ilyana. More can arrive during the fight if necessary. They fight until two of them are killed or six are incapacitated.

Development: With the mob defeated, the adventurers can depart, and Ilyana asks them if they've someplace to hide. If they have no immediate or prepared answer, she mutters, "This is one lousy rescue." She recommends a room at the Dented Shield hotel. The proprietor, a man named Benyosef, is willing to rent a secure room. Other options include the back room at a regular tavern, within a temple where a PC worships, the hideout of a small neighborhood gang, or the store of a friendly shopkeeper. Allow the players to be creative, but offer Ilyana's suggestion if they're short on ideas.

She refuses to accompany them to the meeting. With a safe room established, Ilyana offers a *potion of healing* to each adventurer as a token of her appreciation, since, "there's no way you're going to save me if you're dead."

Commoner: AC 10; HP 4 (1d8); Spd 30 ft; **Melee** dagger (+2, 1d4 piercing); **Str** +0, **Dex** +0, **Con** +0, **Int** +0, **Wis** +0, **Cha** +0; **AL** LN; **CR** 0; **XP** 10.

Letters to Bad People

The adventurers need to send instructions to the Spyglass Guild and the Cloven Nine. Some may not trust a messenger to deliver their letters, but Zobeck has

services that do this reliably, cheaply, and quickly. Ilyana recommends the Masters of Small Matters or the Brown Blaze Boys, both of which can be contacted rapidly from any hotel, inn, tavern, or temple. If the group writes out missives as directed by Ilyana with the details suggested by Radu, the gang and the Guild follow them. Both groups want the book very badly. Ilyana suggests they meet the messenger in the tavern across the street.

The adventurers still don't have the book, however, and they need it to make the hand-off to the Cloven Nine. Once in a safe room, Ilyana explains:

"I hid the book, and you're probably not going to like where." Ilyana smiles weakly. "Iskra has it, sewn into a cloak I left in her comfort room at the Silk Scabbard." She shrugs. "It seemed like a safe place at the time, and no one was going to break in there to take it." She chuckles, "Except you, it seems."

The adventurers need the book in hand. Ilyana suggests two options: the group can disguise someone to walk in the front door and hire Iskra's services, or they can sneak in through the Cartways entrance. Ilyana knows about the back hallway entrance (Area 13). She sends them to the exit point in the nearby building, gives them her key to the doors, and tells them which secret door leads to Iskra's room. Then it's a matter of the party completing their own heist.

This encounter can be as involved or as quick as the players want. They need to infiltrate the Silk Scabbard and recover the black book of confession hidden within the cloak in Iskra's comfort room. See "The Silk Scabbard" for the complete description of the area. The Scabbard is very busy with a well-advertised pit fight, meaning guards and employees in the service areas have disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks. A guard is always stationed at the Vault (Area 6), at the door to the Cartways (Area 13), and in the hallway between comfort rooms (Area 8). Guards won't pursue thieves into the Cartways, but a reinforced lock and 3 guards will be posted at the door in the future. The guards use nonlethal attacks against unarmed foes and shortswords against armed enemies. Guards immediately call for help while fighting.

Development: With the book in hand and letters delivered, all that remains is waiting until midnight. As darkness falls, Ilyana paces the floor, anxious as the PCs prepare to leave. If questioned, she says she worries about being alone as the group goes to the exchange. She promises to wait at the safe house until the PCs return. Proceed to "Part 3: Rooftops and Crossbows."

Guard (x3): AC 16; HP 11 (2d8+2); Spd 30 ft; Melee shortsword (+3, 1d6+1 piercing); Str +1, Dex +1, Con +1, Int +0, Wis +0, Cha +0; Skills Perception +2; CR 1/8; XP 25

PART 3: ROOFTOPS & CROSSBOWS

As Radu directed, one of the shops in Hommal's building is unlocked and open when the PCs arrive, despite the hour. No one is inside. From this vantage point, they can see the street through a barred window. After some time, a group approaches the tenement.

You almost don't see the enforcers arrive. People seem to just break away from the thinning crowd on the street and gather outside the tenement door at some unspoken signal. One minute there's nothing; the next, you see an intimidating group. They seem to have gathered around a woman, who is apparently giving instructions.

Then the cobblestones erupt with violence. Snarling ghouls pile out from the shadows, knocking some enforcers to the ground where they lay as still as statues. Five well-dressed ghouls with heavy jaws overwhelm the woman and drag her into the alley, panic evident on her frozen and scratched face. Those not immediately incapacitated bolt into the foyer of the tenement.

One clear voice rises over the din. "You heard the Lady. The city depends on us getting that book. We go to the roof, and we take it."

If the PCs attack now or any time before the group leaves, they gain a surprise round. The enforcers catch their breath here for three rounds and then ascend the stairwell. Proceed to "Stairwell Brawl".

Stairwell Brawl

The enforcers pause on the landing to load their crossbows, and one must replace his string. If the PCs decide to follow, this encounter occurs with their enemies on the landing just as the crossbow is repaired. Otherwise, the enforcers are in the foyer of the building as the party attacks, and their crossbows are loaded but not drawn.

The already-haggard looking men seem shocked as you advance on them. These are not the sort of men to throw insults or banter. They move immediately for a fight.

The group consists of one **Spyglass Guild specialist**, 1 **guard**, and 2 **thugs**. The specialist uses the acolyte's stat block but with Int 12, Wis 10, and a different spell

selection. The guard and each thug is equipped with a *tipstaff*.

This battle takes place on the stairwell between the first and second floors. See “Hommal’s Tenement” for a map of the stairwell. Characters can move on the stairs without penalty.

The enforcers intend to arrest whoever has the ledger, which they believe contains city secrets. They presume this attack is a continuation of the earlier ghoul ambush and prefer to use *tipstaves*, only using lethal force if the PCs do. Enforcers reduced to 5 hp or less flee out the front door and take their chances evading the ghouls. The ghouls, uncertain if fleeing enforcers are the PCs, don’t try to detain them.

Development: With the enforcers defeated, PCs can proceed upstairs to “The Handoff.”



Spyglass Guild Specialist (Acolyte): AC 15; HP 9 (2d8); Spd 30 ft; **Melee** club (+2, 1d4 bludgeoning); **Str** +0, **Dex** +0, **Con** +0, **Int** +0, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +0; **Skills** Medicine +4, Religion +2; **AL** any; **CR** 1/4; **XP** 50.

Spells (slots): 0 (at will)—*acid splash*, *mage hand*, *minor illusion*, *prestidigitation*; 1st (4)—*alter self*, *mage armor* (already cast, included in AC), *sleep*, *sanctuary*.

Guard: AC 16; HP 11 (2d8+2); Spd 30 ft; **Melee** spear (+3, 1d6+1 piercing); **Str** +1, **Dex** +1, **Con** +1, **Int** +0, **Wis** +0, **Cha** +0; **Skills** Perception +2; **CR** 1/8; **XP** 25.

Thug (x2): AC 11; HP 32 (5d8+10); Spd 30 ft; **Melee** mace x2 (+4, 1d6+2 bludgeoning); **Ranged** heavy crossbow (+2, 100 ft/400 ft, 1d10 piercing); **Str** +2, **Dex** +0, **Con** +2, **Int** +0, **Wis** +0, **Cha** +0; **Skills** Intimidation +2; **AL** CN; **CR** 1/2; **XP** 100.

The Handoff

The PCs still need to deliver the black book of confession to the Cloven Nine. See “Places of Zobeck: Hommal’s Rooftop” for a full description of this area. Hommal’s is commonly known as neutral territory among most thieves and criminals. A human of average build, wearing a dark-washed chain shirt and creaking leathers, meets the group at the roof entrance and escorts them across the roof to the Tea Kitchen. He doesn’t say much unless the majority of the group is badly injured; in that case, he observes, “Gods and demons. Someone beat the hell out of you, eh?”

A well-dressed tiefling sits at the dining table inside this green glass room. The air is cool and humid, as if it might rain soon. Fireflies wink between fragrant, flowering vines in large ceramic pots. Two heavily-muscled and well-armed Kariv men wait outside the door with their longswords sheathed and their heavy crossbows slung over their shoulders. Your escort opens the door and ushers you inside.

The tiefling smiles. He finishes his tea before refilling his cup and pouring tea for you. He gestures for you to sit. “Good of you to come. Hopefully, we can all be reasonable. We just want the book.” He sips his tea. “There’s no need for anyone to die over this.” He watches you closely. “I trust you have it with you?”

The tiefling’s name is Andros (LE male human mage). An apprentice of one of the Nine, he has orders to collect the book but not to kill the PCs unless they betray him. He smiles and accepts the book from them, casting *dispel magic* followed by *detect magic* to authenticate it. When satisfied, he declares the matter settled, adding that the Nine bear them no ill will, but

they'd be wise to forget the entire exchange. Terrible things tend to happen when people tell wild tales.

He nods to the guards and tells the adventurers they may leave. No one makes any moves against the party, but if the PCs attempt to start trouble, Andros flies away with the book, and the remaining veteran and 2 thugs attack. If they win, they leave the PCs unconscious and depart; Hommal heals them to 1 hp, asking, "What were you thinking?" Otherwise, proceed to "Concluding the Adventure."

Andros (Mage): AC 12 (15 with *mage armor*); HP 40 (9d8); Spd 30 ft; **Melee** dagger (+5, 1d4+2 piercing); **Ranged** dagger (+5, 20 ft./60 ft., 1d4+2 piercing); **Str** -1, **Dex** +2, **Con** +0, **Int** +3, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +0; **Skills** Arcana +6, History +6; **AL** any; **CR** 6; **XP** 2,300.

Spells (+5, DC 14): 0 (at will)—*fire bolt, light, mage hand, prestidigitation*; 1st (4)—*detect magic, mage armor, magic missile, shield*; 2nd (3)—*misty step, suggestion*; 3rd (3)—*dispel magic, fireball, fly*; 4th (3)—*greater invisibility, ice storm*; 5th (1)—*cone of cold*.

Veteran: AC 17; HP 58 (9d8+18); Spd 30 ft; **Melee** longsword x2 (+5, 1d8+3 slashing); shortsword (+5, 1d6+3 piercing); **Ranged** heavy crossbow (+3, 100 ft./400 ft, 1d10 piercing); **SA** multiattack (longsword x2, shortsword); **Str** +3, **Dex** +1, **Con** +2, **Int** +0, **Wis** +0, **Cha** +0; **Skills** Athletics +5, Perception +2; **AL** LN; **CR** 3; **XP** 700.

Thug (x2): AC 11; HP 32 (5d8+10); Spd 30 ft; **Melee** mace x2 (+4, 1d6+2 bludgeoning); **Ranged** heavy crossbow (+2, 100 ft./400 ft, 1d10 piercing); **Str** +2, **Dex** +0, **Con** +2, **Int** +0, **Wis** +0, **Cha** +0; **Skills** Intimidation +2; **AL** CN; **CR** 1/2; **XP** 100.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

The PCs are not engaged by anyone as they depart Hommal's Rooftop, but the only sign of the enforcers are a few dried pools and wide smears of blood. The living escaped, and someone carried away the corpses. Even the bloodstains appear fated to a short existence.

The rain that threatened while you were on the rooftop finally arrives, and a light precipitation washes the cobbles. Long crimson strokes and ruby footprints begin to fade, melting with the water and flowing into the troughs and drains. The street is eerily empty, as if anyone who might have dared to glance outside is still holding their breath.

The ghouls departed with their meals and prisoners. The PCs return to their safehouse unmolested, where they find the following:

There is no sign of Ilyana when you arrive. Her pack is gone, and her things are missing. There's no sign of a struggle. In fact, it seems she tidied up before going.

Ilyana couldn't chance the party would fail and decided to hide elsewhere. She may have taken a riverboat out of town, blended in with the rest of the everyday people of Lower Zobeck, decided to seek out aid from other gangs, or found a welcoming bed in the house of a rich patron; it's up to the GM. A handwritten note sits on the windowsill. It reads:

"Thank you. I know you did this as much to help yourselves as me, but thank you."

Depending on what reward the GM feels is appropriate, the PCs might find a key under the note corresponding to a safe deposit box at the Cracked Coin. This box contains some portion of Lady Marack's stolen jewelry, left by Ilyana as a token of gratitude. The exact composition of the stash depends on the party and the campaign, but this is an easy lead into new adventure. Perhaps Grigori knows of the stash and watches it. Certainly Lady Marack will look dimly on anyone fencing her jewelry, assuming she survives.

Development: The Cloven Nine and the Praetor Council (and by extension, the city government) will not appreciate this outcome, though the PCs' clever escape protects them from immediate retribution.

The ghouls may or may not kill Lady Marack, as best suits your campaign. They may slowly interrogate her regarding Zobeck, its leaders and prominent citizens, defenses and access points. They may transform her into a darakhul, so she can later lead plots against Zobeck. She may die during her interrogation or infection with darakhul fever. She may escape, be rescued, or cut a deal to go free. The Cloven Nine will certainly realize they've been tricked once word of Lady Marack's disappearance gets out. They will remember the incident and may try to blackmail the PCs into a job or favor later on.

RUST

By Richard Pett

Beware the night-things, strangers!

Rust is an urban adventure suitable for four PCs of 4th or 5th level.

BACKGROUND

They say Kaple's Ward never slept. Petty parish overseer Jon Kaple, a vile and hated man, ruled his tiny plot in Lower Zobeck with a rod of iron machines. Kaple's Workhouse—his monument to toil and industry—sat at the heart of his small domain. Even petty dictators have a way of coming undone, however, and soon Kaple found he had a rebellion on his hands.

The short and brutal rebellion saw mobs descend upon the workhouse, murder Kaple, and smash his machines. Kaple's Ward became known as the Tarnish; a rusting corner of Lower Zobeck haunted by the corroded ghosts of machinery.

But Kaple's death brought no rest. His ruined soul remained trapped in his workhouse, able only to whisper in the dark to his rusting machines. Deemed haunted, the workhouse proved impossible to sell.

This suited Grief, a gargoyle artist who took over the ruin with the help of some dubious contacts in the Steamworker's Union. He began to sculpt and create, to oil and free cogs, and as he did so, he became aware of something else in the workshop.

Kaple's Ghost

Kaple whispered to him at night and made promises. "Give me a body," he promised, "and I shall show you a great treasure hidden at the heart of my workhouse."

Grief began to build an iron angel as a mad body for Kaple to wear and walk in once more. But Grief

began to free other things that had lay rusting in the workhouse, and soon twisted iron creatures came by night to plague the Tarnish. These creatures—called night-things by the locals—ventured out seeking vengeance on those who betrayed their master.

The night-things, and the bragging tongue of Grief's (now deceased) manservant, brought the attentions of those with even fewer scruples than Kaple.

Mister Corpulent and Master Doldrum are local merchants. They hear useful things. They heard about the night-things and the whispered treasure, but they are cowards and didn't want to go to the trouble and risk of stealing it. When a handy group of PCs appears, however, each seeks to gain the upper hand and get the treasure for himself.

Synopsis

Approached first by Corpulent and then by Doldrum, the PCs get an offer they find hard to refuse, clues pointing to a local menace—the night-things—and the offer of a sizeable reward to remove them. Unfortunately, their would-be employers don't trust the characters to do the job without close supervision. Refusing to cooperate, Corpulent or Doldrum seek to get the PCs to remove the menace within the workhouse so that one merchant can get his hands on the whispered treasure at the expense of the other. Whichever employer the party rebuffs—woe to them if they deny both—only adds to their list of opponents.

The adventure is non-linear, with the PCs free to choose their allies as they enter Kaple's haunted workhouse, which is once again stirring with mechanical hatred. Whichever way they choose, a surprise waits at the adventure's climax.

Hooks

The PCs need only be in Lower Zobeck to trigger the events in the adventure. They could be in the region for any number of reasons. Perhaps they seek a rare clockwork component among the rusting remnants of Kaple's petty empire, maybe they are just passing through, or perhaps rumors of the night-things have drawn them here.

The Tarnish

While outwardly similar to any other part of the city, the signs of rusting industry litter the Tarnish; chimneys rise from the sides of buildings, waterwheels rust in crumbling pits, and gears clutter street sides. Anyone who asks around about the Tarnish is warned to stay away after dark, lest they fall afoul of "the night-things." No one knows much about them specifically, only that they're rumored to arise from the cast-off dregs of industry and to resemble iron apes.

PART 1: MISTER CORPULENT AND MASTER DOLDRUM

The adventure commences in Lower Zobeck with Mister Corpulent approaching the PCs. A pair of selfish, corrupt, greedy, and amoral merchants, Corpulent and Doldrum have worked the Tarnish markets for years. Their feud, begun with a tiff over a plate of pickled herring, has grown into true hatred over the years, yet


never spilled into direct violence. Perfectly cordial in public, each would happily see the other skinned alive for the price of a loaf of bread. Both are as cowardly as they are selfish, however, and the fear of open battle keeps the cordiality in strong supply. Each is also unaware of the other's dark secret—that Doldrum is a wererat, and Corpulent is devil-bound.

TARNISH



KEY

- | | | | |
|-----------|-----------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Bres | 3. Storla | 5. Kaple's Warehouse | 7. Doldrum's Souk |
| 2. Hazram | 4. Bolvar | 6. Corpulent's Bazaar | |



Both men have their fingers in countless pies, and the activities of the night-things have piqued their greedy interest. Corpulent has had more success. An imaginative use of *speak with dead* on one victim's remains revealed the night-things' nature, and a servant new in this region had been bragging in a low tavern in Lower Zobeck called the Crooked Cat about some great hidden treasure, the night-things, and a gargoyle artist. Said servant vanished, however, and no one knew much about him, particularly where he worked. A *commune* spell confirmed for Corpulent that the night-things, the gargoyle, and treasure are all linked.

Sadly for Corpulent, one of Master Doldrum's rat henchmen (part of a pack he sometimes refers to as his 'weanlings') who habitually spies on Corpulent, overheard the *commune* conversation and has reported back to Doldrum.

Now Corpulent and Doldrum compete to locate the night-things, get someone to dispatch said gargoyle, and then move in to take the treasure. Corpulent, the brighter of the two, has sent word to his dubious associates that he needs adventurous types to carry out a little service. Again, however, the weanlings have learned his plans, and Doldrum is following his old adversary. Corpulent decides that the PCs are ideal tools to make him rich, or at least discover more about the treasure before they die. Doldrum is right on his tail.

An Offer from Mister Corpulent

Corpulent approaches the PCs in public at a moment you deem appropriate, either offering to meet privately later or simply making his offer straightaway.

Corpulent tells the PCs that the night-things are terrorizing the local population, but the authorities are doing little—indeed Lower Zobeck likely won't receive any help until many more people die. Corpulent plays the concerned local to a party of notably good-aligned PCs or the irritated businessman to any other group.

Corpulent knows that a foul gargoyle leads the night-things. He greatly desires to see them dispatched but has no idea of their location. He offers to pay the PCs 500 gp to trace the night-things back to their lair and destroy them. He stipulates, however, that he must take part in any attack upon the gargoyle's lair. He wants to see the night-things killed first hand, and payment of the reward depends on it. Corpulent assures the PCs that he can take care of himself. In any event, he has his "little beauties" (he doesn't elaborate) to take care of him.

An Immediate Counter-Offer

Within minutes of their meeting with Corpulent, Master Doldrum approaches the PCs, either where they meet Corpulent (if in public) or on the street otherwise.

Doldrum tells the PCs that in fact Corpulent is completely untrustworthy and has been responsible for several acts of skullduggery in Lower Zobeck; why he wants the gargoyle and night-things killed is anybody's guess. Doldrum makes them a counter-offer of 600 gp to locate and kill the gargoyle and night-things (thereby ridding Lower Zobeck of an unwelcome horror). He also insists on accompanying the PCs, however, for the same reasons as Corpulent, and he accepts no alternative plan. He claims to be a very capable fighter.

Dealing with Corpulent and Doldrum

The PCs may try to tail the merchants back to their homes and/or start asking questions around the city. The PCs need only a successful DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) check to find the homes by asking questions, or a successful DC 10 Dexterity (Stealth) check to follow either character to his home without being noticed.

Furthermore, characters who investigate either of these NPCs can learn (with a successful DC 13 Charisma check) that Doldrum runs an incense and unguent business in Lower Zobeck, and Corpulent deals in antiquities.

Corpulent and Doldrum don't work together, and neither will submit to any kind of magical questioning or probing. Allow the PCs to have fun playing the characters off each other—perhaps even raising the reward—but both merchants will pay only after the work is complete. If the characters decide to go off and attack the night-things themselves, the two NPCs, horrified that their plans have backfired, act independently as listed in the "Friends and Enemies" sidebar.

Use these two as you wish, but let the plot and PCs lead their actions. Both Corpulent and Doldrum can move invisibly and follow the PCs, either at a safe distance (60 feet) or by Stealth. If the merchants ever feel the PCs have discovered them, they flee. If discovered and caught, it falls to you to decide how the two react, but bear in mind that each has a very active, greedy imagination, and each will do his utmost to follow the PCs to the gargoyle's lair.

If they successfully stalk the PCs, have both turn up at the final scene of this adventure as detailed in Area 9.

Mister Corpulent

Corpulent has made a deal with an imp, agreeing to a tithe of his wealth each mid-winter until his death.

Corpulent's Bazaar

This simple, single-chambered dwelling is cluttered with curious objects. A cramped bed lurks at the rear of the shop behind a mahogany counter on which rests a small cashbox.

The bazaar lacks windows and remains open throughout the day. The lock on the entrance can be picked with thief's tools and a successful DC 13 Dexterity check; it's locked anytime Corpulent is away.

Development: When Corpulent is not here, he leaves his "little beauties" on the bed in a wooden box made for fighting cocks and closed with a simple latch. The case has tiny air holes to allow the creatures to breathe. A character who inspects the box without opening it realizes immediately that it contains birds, but only a character who makes a successful DC 18 Intelligence (Nature) check recognizes them as cockatrices; otherwise, the character misidentifies them as harmless cockerels. If the box is opened, of course, the truth becomes immediately obvious.

During combat, Corpulent likes to make use of his little beauties by opening the box, becoming invisible, and climbing the nearest wall for safety. Corpulent has no control over the creatures once released, and they generally rush as a pair to attack the nearest target. They flee if reduced to 8 or fewer hit points. Corpulent knows that the stench of a well-rotted fish carcass will draw the greedy little buggers back into the case to feast. Corpulent consumes his *potion of blur* if confronted by someone who can see invisible creatures. He uses his *necklace of fireballs* only if he can catch at least three enemies in the blast. He may choose to appear as a black constrictor snake if he thinks that might frighten opponents away. Corpulent flees from combat if reduced to 15 or fewer hit points.

The recently exhumed coffin of Hazram Guilt lies hidden under the bed and covered in clothes. Corpulent cast a *speak with dead* spell on the mangled corpse three days ago, and intends to dispose of the body once this business is over.

Treasure: The cashbox contains 700 gp.

MISTER CORPULENT

Medium humanoid (human) devil-bound, lawful evil

Armor Class 15 (chain shirt)

Hit Points 75 (10d8 + 30)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Str +5, Dex +5, Con +6

Skills Insight +2, Intimidation +5, Perception +2, Stealth +5

Damage Resistances acid, cold

Damage Immunities fire, poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Infernal

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Cunning Action. On each of his turns, Mister Corpulent can use a bonus action to take the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.

Innate Spellcasting. Mister Corpulent's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13). Mister Corpulent can innately cast the following spells, requiring only verbal components.

At will: *detect evil and good*, *detect magic*, *invisibility* (self only)

1/Day: *suggestion*

1/Week: *commune*

Cunning Action. On each of his turns, Mister Corpulent can use a bonus action to take the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.

Shapechanger. Mister Corpulent can use his action to polymorph into a beast form that resembles a constrictor snake (speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.), a dire wolf (speed 50 ft.), or back into his true form. His statistics are the same in each form, except for the speed changes noted. Any equipment he is wearing or carrying transforms with him. He reverts to his true form if he dies.

Sneak Attack (1/Turn). Mister Corpulent deals an extra 7 (2d6) damage when he hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of Mister Corpulent that isn't incapacitated and Mister Corpulent doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

ACTIONS

Dagger of Venom. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage and the first creature hit during combat must

succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or take 11 (2d10) poison damage and become poisoned for 1 minute.

Light Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.

Special Equipment. *dagger of venom, potion of greater healing, necklace of fireballs (4 beads left), potion of blur, rotting fish in a jar, fine clothes, extremely fine high boots worth 75 gp, small silver mirror, gold comb worth 50 gp, 50 gp in assorted coins, key to his bazaar.*

Cockatrice (×2): AC 11; HP 27 (6d6+6); Spd 20 ft, fly 40 ft; **Melee** bite (+3, 1d4+1 piercing and target must make a DC 11 Con save or be restrained; restrained creature repeats saving throw at the end of its next turn; a success ends the effect, but a failure petrifies the creature for 24 hours); **Str** -2, **Dex** +1, **Con** +1, **Int** -4, **Wis** +1, **Cha** -3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft; **AL** un; **CR** 1/2; **XP** 100.

Master Doldrum

Master Doldrum runs an incense shop that doesn't do much business. The shop struggles to keep afloat because Doldrum himself is a rather unpleasant person to be around—the result of his wererat lycanthropy.

Doldrum's Souk

This is a small souk that sells incense and unguents. The place has but a single room with a small stepladder leading to a cot on boards placed above the rafters.

Friends and Enemies

This adventure allows the PCs to choose their allies.

If PCs choose either Corpulent or Doldrum, that NPC comes along and seems ready for a fight but proves curiously reluctant to enter combat (both intend to remain fresh for when they betray and attack the party; see Area 9). The spurned NPC watches the PCs from a distance, invisibly if possible, and flees if discovered but returns later. He stalks the PCs into the warehouse, keeping close but not close enough to be heard or noticed, and also enters the fray at the climactic moment. Everyone is fair game at that point: PC, NPC, or any other opponent.

If the characters reject both NPCs (an understandable choice, given how odd they both are), then both NPCs stalk the PCs. Unless they're discovered, the two turn up at the height of the battle against the night-things, 1d6 rounds apart.

The souk is windowless, but the entire front wall is a set of sliding doors that open up the whole shop front; it is open throughout the day.

When not here, **Doldrum** always locks his place with a poor lock; it can be picked with thief's tools and a successful DC 12 Dexterity check. When Doldrum isn't here, a **giant rat** watches from the cot in the loft, where it sleeps most of the time. When it hears intruders breaking in, it hides and informs Doldrum later about what happened.

Master Doldrum tries to avoid combat with adventurers, but if he must fight, he can summon his **weanlings** within 1d6 rounds if he's anywhere in Lower Zobeck. He summons them before combat if possible. They are devoted to him and never flee from combat. Doldrum, on the other hand, flees when reduced to 10 or fewer hit points, but once he recovers, he goes looking for revenge.

Master Doldrum uses the standard wererat stat block, with the following added abilities, which increase his challenge rating to 3 (700 XP).

- **Gnome Cunning.** Master Doldrum has advantage on Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma saving throws against magic.
- **Sneak Attack (1/Turn).** Master Doldrum deals an extra 10 (3d6) damage when he hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally that isn't incapacitated and Doldrum doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.
- **Uncanny Dodge.** When an attacker that Master Doldrum can see hits him with an attack, he can use his reaction to halve the attack's damage against him.

Treasure. The incense and unguents in the shop are worth 700 gp, and 35 gp in cash is hidden under the bed in a small box.

Master Doldrum (Wererat): AC 12; HP 33 (6d8+6); Spd 30 ft; **Melee** bite (rat or hybrid form only; +4, 1d4+2 piercing and humanoid must make DC 11 Con save or be cursed with lycanthropy), shortsword (humanoid or hybrid form only; +4, 1d6+2 piercing); **Ranged** hand crossbow (humanoid or hybrid form only; +4, 30 ft/120 ft, 1d6+2 piercing); **Immune** nonmagical, nonsilvered bludgeoning, piercing, slashing; **Str** +0, **Dex** +2, **Con** +1, **Int** +0, **Wis** +0, **Cha** -1; **Skills** Perception +2, Stealth +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft (rat form only); **Traits** keen smell, gnome cunning (has advantage on Int, Wis, and Cha saves vs. magic), sneak attack (+3d6 damage when

weapon attack hits with advantage), shapechanger (action; can switch between humanoid, rat, and rat-humanoid hybrid forms), uncanny dodge (reaction; can halve damage from attacker he sees); **AL** LE; **CR** 3; **XP** 700.

Doldrum's Equipment: *potion of greater healing*, *potion of invisibility*, *oil of sharpness*, mummified cat head worth 600 gp (made into a locket set with jet stones in its mouth and tiny amethyst eyes), 82 gp, fine clothing and cloak worth 30 gp, key to his souk.

Giant Rat: **AC** 12; **HP** 7 (2d6); **Spd** 30 ft; **Melee** bite (+4, 1d4+2 piercing); **Str** +0, **Dex** +0, **Con** +0, **Int** +0, **Wis** +0, **Cha** +0; **Traits** pack tactics; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft, keen smell; **AL** unaligned; **CR** 1/8; **XP** 25.

Weanlings (Rat Swarm): **AC** 10; **HP** 24 (7d8-7); **Spd** 30 ft; **Melee** bites (+2, 2d6 piercing, or 1d6 piercing if the swarm has 12 or fewer HP); **Immune** charm, fright, paralysis, petrification, prone, restraint, stun; **Resist** bludgeoning, piercing, slashing; **Str** -1, **Dex** +0, **Con** -1, **Int** -4, **Wis** +0, **Cha** -4; **Senses** darkvision 30 ft; **Traits** swarm (can occupy another creature's space and vice versa); **AL** un; **CR** 1/4; **XP** 50.

PART 2: TROUBLE WITH NIGHT-THINGS

The night-things comprise all five workhouse chattel in Kaple's Workhouse. They exit through the rusted millrace (Workhouse Area 5) 1d3 hours after dusk each evening and move about the gables and alleys in this small part of Lower Zobeck until they've completed their mission and return.

Roll 1d6 for every half-hour the PCs are in the area at night. They randomly encounter the night-things on a roll of 6. Characters can track the night-things by sound with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception or Survival) check. The Tarnish map shows the night-things' future attacks; they attack one location per night and don't hit the same place twice. Unless the PCs intervene, each attack results in the grisly death of 1d3 locals inside the indicated house or workshop.

Although their attacks seem random, the night-things are actually pursuing a sinister purpose. For the past three nights, Kaple's ghost has sent them to places that were once his senior workers' almshouses, to kill those who killed him. The ghost's intended victims are long dead, however, so Kaple's demented, vengeance-twisted mind is ordering the swarms to kill innocent people unconnected with his death.

Tracking the Night-Things the Clever Way

The victims so far—Hazram Guilt, Storla Heink, Bres Murman, and Bolvar Happ—died at the locations shown on the Tarnish map.

In each case except Happ's, the night-things broke in through windows and killed everyone they found inside. Guilt and Heink were bachelors, but Murman had a wife who also was killed. Only Happ died in the street (an unhappy coincidence). The bodies have been buried, although Corpulent secured Guilt's corpse before it could be interred and still has it in his home.

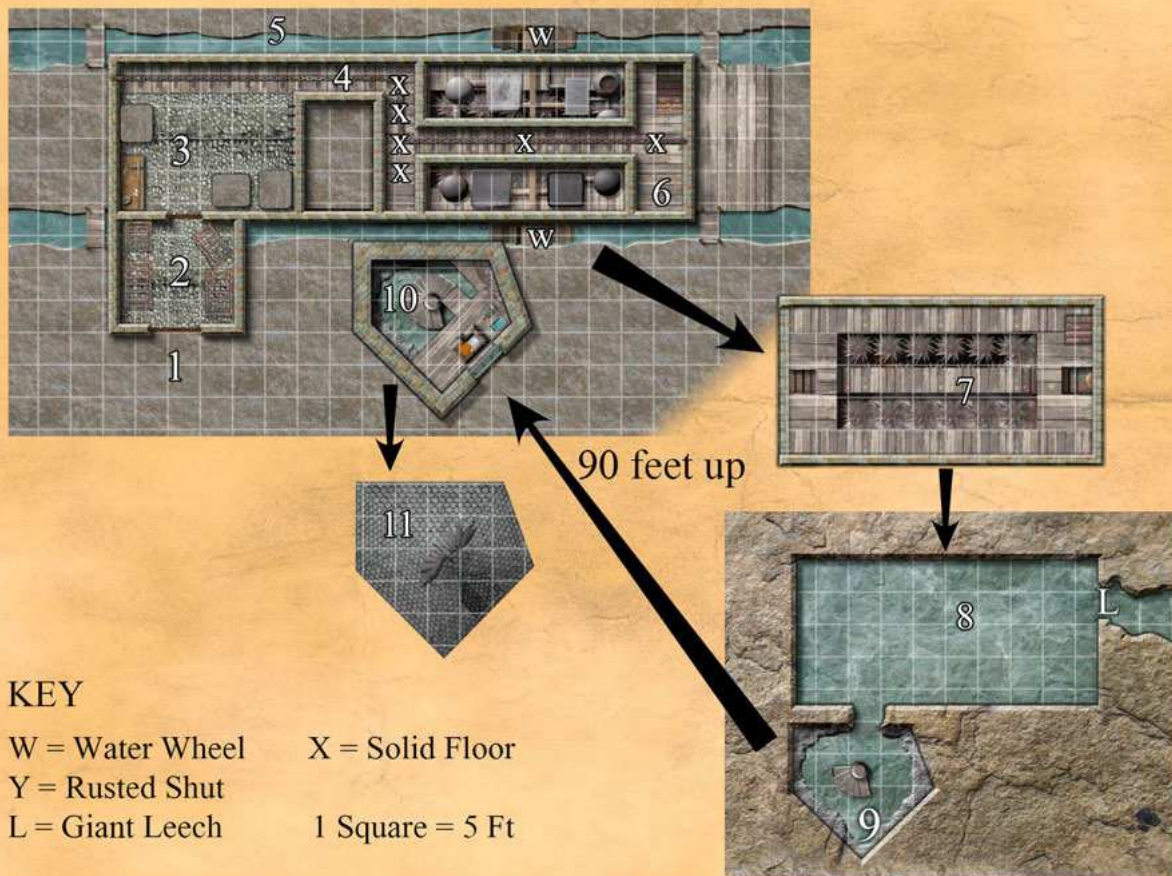
Each house is locked (can be opened with thief's tools and a successful DC 13 Dexterity check) and all windows are boarded up (windows can be forced open with a successful DC 15 Strength [Athletics] check). The interiors of all the houses are very bloody and show clear signs of great violence. No obvious clues can be found within the houses, but each has a small, weathered metal plaque showing a waterwheel turning the moon set into the lintel above the door. Anyone who examines the doorway spots the plaque automatically; others notice it with a successful DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check, provided they inspect the outside of the house and not only the interior. A few quick questions around town identifies the plaque as a sign used long ago by a workhouse master called Kaple who died in a riot decades ago.

PCs asking for historical records are directed to the records room in the Moon's Grace Temple. A few hours of research there leads them to the correct records and enough information to piece together the adventure background involving Kaple, the petty rebellion, and the location of Kaple's workhouse.

Tracking the Night-Things the Obvious Way

The night-things clamber along gables, sewers, and watercourses in Lower Zobeck, sticking to the area shown on the Tarnish map in this adventure. Characters who stake out the workhouse in the evening notice the night-things leaving and can follow them with successful DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) checks, once they know what they're looking for. Characters who patrol the area at night might also stumble onto a group of night-things randomly.

KAPLE'S WORKHOUSE



KEY

W = Water Wheel X = Solid Floor
 Y = Rusted Shut
 L = Giant Leech 1 Square = 5 Ft

NIGHT-THING (WORKHOUSE CHATTEL)

Medium construct, unaligned

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 75 (10d8 + 30)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	3 (-4)	10 (+0)	6 (-2)

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities charmed, deafened, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, stunned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages understands Common but cannot speak

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Immutable Form. The night-thing is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Magic Resistance. The night-thing has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The night-thing makes two slam attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage. If the target is Medium or smaller, it is grappled (escape DC 13) and restrained until the grapple ends.

Hammer. The night-thing slams creatures grappled by it into a solid surface. A grappled creature takes 11 (2d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage and is stunned until the end of the night-thing's next turn; a successful DC 14 Strength saving throw halves the bludgeoning damage and prevents stunning.

PART 3: KAPLE'S WORKHOUSE

Kaple developed a way to mechanically butcher animals and ran his workhouse with a small number of animated objects and human employees. Humans brought the animals into the outer workhouse and slaughtered them. Chains brought the carcasses up to the main workhouse where a flensing machine stripped

their flesh, fat, and bones, all gathered in vats below and distributed to outer workshops for rendering, packaging, and sale. The tower served as Kaple's office, although the interior floors burned in the attack. Kaple was the only death. His machines were attacked, generally unsuccessfully, but many were bent or broken. Kaple himself met a more terrible end; he fell into his own flensing machine (Area 7).

All doors in the workhouse are wooden, with rusted iron latches but no locks unless noted otherwise. Descriptions within the workhouse assume that Kaple is aware of the PCs when they enter and switches on his machines as detailed in his tactics.

Kaple uses the standard ghost stat block with one additional ability—**Malevolence**: Kaple has a potent bond with the workhouse. Once per round, the ghost can merge itself with an adjacent object in the workhouse. The object becomes an animated object of the appropriate size and type while Kaple remains merged with it. There may be additional effects depending on the object, as detailed in the adventure.

The very building seems alive. Above the grinding, methodical thump and grate of machinery is another noise, the noise of something passing through the very foundations of this building.

Kaple remains in a machine until it is either destroyed or he is injured (even 1 damage is enough). When only the iron angel (Area 10) remains, Kaple fights until he or the intruders are finished. Kaple's ghost is truly slain only when his bones are removed from the flensing machine (Area 7) and properly buried, or when the flensing machine itself is destroyed.

Kaple's Ghost: AC 11; HP 45 (10d8); Spd 0 ft, fly 40 ft; **Melee** withering touch (+5, 4d6+3 necrotic); **SA** horrifying visage (60 ft, DC 13 Wis save, frightened 1 min.; if save fails by 5 or more, age 1d4x10 years), possession (5 ft, DC 13 Cha save or possessed); **Immune** charm, cold, exhaustion, fright, grapple, necrotic, paralysis, poison, prone, restraint; **Resist** acid, fire, lightning, nonmagical weapons; **Str** -2, **Dex** +1, **Con** +0, **Int** +0, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft; **Traits** ethereal sight (sees 60 ft from Material to Ethereal Plane and vice versa), incorporeal movement (moves through objects and creatures as difficult terrain; takes 1d10 force damage if inside an object at end of turn), etherealness (as an action, moves from Material Plane to Ethereal Plane or vice versa), malevolence (can inhabit objects in Kaple's workhouse, turning them into animated objects); **AL** any; **CR** 4; **XP** 1,100.

Dust and Decay: Outer Workhouse

A sick and decayed building, its windows boarded up and its main entrance barred and locked with rusty padlocks. The outer double doors bear marks of violence.

1. Barred Entrance

Planks of wood, clearly nailed up long ago, cover the outer doors, and rusting iron bars held in place by even rustier padlocks secure the entrance.

The padlocks are too rusty to pick open, but they can be broken with a successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check. The wooden planks can be broken or torn loose with only a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check.

2. Workroom And Rust

A large open space with a cobbled floor, this room is divided up by a series of iron cages that probably once housed livestock. The clanking and grating of machinery can be heard from somewhere ahead.


This room was used to take delivery of stock.

3. Slaughterhouse

This room has a high, vaulted roof, rising some twenty feet above you. It is clearly an old slaughterhouse; there are butchers' blocks, thralls for slicing meat, racks of rusting knives and hooks, all coated in dust. Ahead, a conveyor chain covered in billhooks emerges through a high hole in the wall ahead and continues into the corridor below, hanging just below the ceiling.

The chain hooks carried meat from here to the upper areas beyond, but they serve another use now. Characters can easily avoid the hooks (which are about a foot long), but anyone who gets hung up on one must use an action to make a successful DC 15 Dexterity check to escape. Otherwise, characters move 10 feet per round along the chain via the linking corridor below and into the Upper Workhouse, taking 1d3 points of piercing damage at the start of their turn while hanging from a hook.

Grief has freed up the caretaker, an old creation of Kaple's, to watch for intruders. The caretaker, a **night-thing**, lurks in the linking corridor. Three **dust mephits** have also taken up residence in this chamber, and while they aren't allied with the caretaker or Kaple,



they like the moving, hooked chains and would very much like to see someone hanging from them. The animated object is like others in the workhouse—it resembles an iron pig that moves clumsily on all fours but has huge metal arms like an ape.

During combat, the caretaker attacks normally unless possessed by Kaple, in which case it tries to grapple opponents, then hook them onto the moving chain hooks. The mephits try to stay out of danger. They don't move from the dust of the floor unless the PCs notice them. Once discovered, they fly up to the high roof. If attacked, they use their breath weapons. If the caretaker is possessed by Kaple, the mephits use their breath weapons to assist its attacks, hoping to see someone get hung from a meat hook. They flee if reduced to 5 or fewer hit points.

Caretaker (Workhouse Chattel): AC 14; HP 75 (10d8+30); Spd 30 ft, climb 30 ft; **Melee** slam (+6, 2d6+4 bludgeoning; Medium or smaller target is grappled and restrained; escape DC 13); **SA** multiattack (slam ×2), hammer (grappled creature takes 2d6+4 bludgeoning and is stunned until end of night-thing's next turn; DC 14 Str save halves damage, prevents stun); **Immune** charm, deafen, fright, paralysis, petrify, poison, psychic, stun; **Str** +4, **Dex** +2, **Con** +3, **Int** -4, **Wis** +0, **Cha** -2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft; **Traits** immutable form (immune to effects that alter its form), magic resistance (has advantage on saves vs. magic); **AL** un; **CR** 3; **XP** 700.

Dust Mephit (×3): AC 12; HP 17 (5d6); Spd 30 ft, fly 30 ft; **Melee** claws (+4, 1d4+2 slashing); **SA** blinding breath (recharge 6; 15 ft cone; creatures in cone must make DC 10 **Dex** save or be blinded 1 minute); **Immune** poison; Vulnerable fire; **Str** -3, **Dex** +2, **Con** +0, **Int** -1, **Wis** +0, **Cha** +1; **Skills** Perception +2, Stealth +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft; **Traits** death burst (each creature within 5 ft when dust mephit dies must make DC 10 Con save or be blinded 1 minute), innate spellcasting (innately casts *sleep*; save DC 11); **AL** NE; **CR** 1/2; **XP** 100.

4. Linking Corridor and Grill

A short, dirty corridor with a metal grill near the ceiling, along which clanks the mechanical chain with hooks.

The chain bears those trapped on it along the corridor to Area 6. The 2-foot-square grill gives access to the sough beyond, and the night-things use it to leave the workhouse, climbing the wall outside.

5. Millrace and Sough

A constant stream of water held in an underground, man-made channel.

Two underground streams drive the waterwheels in the workhouse. The current in the 15-foot-deep channel is strong, and characters in the water are pushed 10 feet downstream at the start of their turn unless they make a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check. Characters drawn into the waterwheels (WW 1 and WW 2) take 3d6 bludgeoning damage at the start of their turn. They can move away from the water wheel only by making a successful DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. Characters who do that successfully must then make an immediate DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check to grab the edge of the millrace and haul themselves out. PCs who fail the second check are swept beyond the waterwheels and emerge 10 rounds later in the River Argent, next to a pier southwest of the Ragpicker's Guild.

The waterwheels can be destroyed; each has AC 15 and 35 hp. This effectively stops the flensing machine in Area 7 but doesn't destroy it (Kaple's ghost isn't laid to rest by this action).

A 2-foot gap in the stone roof exits immediately above the grill in Area 4. A character who climbs out of the mossy water channel by this route emerges in the street above.

Dust and Bones: Upper Warehouse

A large chamber built on three levels functioned as Kaple's main workroom. Meat entered on the chain hooks and workers threw it into the flensing machines on the floor below. The machine stripped off the flesh and fed the carcasses into hoppers on the first level.

Eight-inch wide iron supports crisscross the workhouse, and while timber floors exist (shown brown on the map), only those marked X are solid. A DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check can spot the rotten floors, which collapse under 10 lb. or more weight. Characters stepping on rotten timber must make a successful DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) saving throw or fall. The locations of the beams can be seen from the floor above by the rust stains that have seeped through the rotten timber; a character who makes a successful DC 15 Intelligence check correctly interprets the significance of the stains.

The sound of machinery echoes loudly in the chamber. The first time characters enter while the machinery is running, they must make a successful DC 10 Constitution saving throw or be deafened for 1d2 minutes.

The ceilings are 15 feet high.

6. Flimsy Upper Floor

A broad, open space stretches ahead of you. From beneath the timber floor, the sound of grating machinery comes from a huge machine that has twelve open mouths facing upward. The maws clearly once accepted whatever went into the grating, thumping machine, but mercifully, the mouths lie to the side of a 5-foot wide timber walkway, which stretches ahead to a set of iron steps. The iron stair descends below the floor ahead, perched beyond which is another strange iron creature. The iron chain hooks exit through a small opening above the entrance, clearly designed to dislodge things held on them.

Characters still hooked on chains when they enter this room smash into the opening above and rip free, an act that causes 2d6 slashing damage and a 10-foot fall to the floor below.

The mouths above the flensing machine (Area 7) extend to the floor here. Characters falling in a square with a mouth below must make a successful DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or fall into the machine.

The iron figure is a guard set by Kaple. Kaple possesses the object as soon as the PCs enter the room but remains motionless, hoping to lure the PCs onto the weak floor or goad them with metallic taunts that they are too cowardly to attack the great Kaple in his lair.

Night-Thing (Workhouse Chattel): AC 14; HP 75 (10d8+30); Spd 30 ft, climb 30 ft; **Melee** slam (+6, 2d6+4 bludgeoning; Medium or smaller target is grappled and restrained; escape DC 13); **SA** multiattack (slam x2), hammer (grappled creature takes 2d6+4 bludgeoning and is stunned until end of night-thing's next turn; DC 14 Str save halves damage, prevents stun); **Immune** charm, deafen, fright, paralysis, petrify, poison, psychic, stun; **Str** +4, **Dex** +2, **Con** +3, **Int** -4, **Wis** +0, **Cha** -2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft; **Traits** immutable form (immune to effects that alter its form), magic resistance (has advantage on saves vs. magic); **AL** un; **CR** 3; **XP** 700.

7. Flensing Mouth And Gullet

The floor below has two large machines, both identical. They are a whirring mass of blades and nails and arms contained in a metal skin with funnel mouths decorated with vile grins above. These iron mouths distend and reach the floor above like funnels.

Three workhouse chattel attend the machine. A chattel possessed by Kaple climbs to the floor above and tries to push characters into the flensing machine, caring nothing if it falls into the machine along with a victim. Other chattel simply rush up to attack, but they are careful to step only on the iron beams.

Flensing Machine. The flensing machine was designed to strip flesh from bones. It consists of a mechanical conveyor that runs on chains through a machine of blades and nails that slice off flesh that enters it, effectively de-boning the meat. Twelve chutes allow meat to enter. Characters falling onto any of these areas must make a successful DC 15 Dexterity saving throw to twist away or grab onto something that prevents them from tumbling into the machine, where they take 6d6 slashing damage before dropping via chutes into the water below.

One section of the machine (labeled Y) is rusted shut. It contains the mangled, crushed skeleton of Kaple. If the bones are removed and properly buried, or the machine is destroyed, the ghost is laid to rest.

Kaple's Ghost: AC 11; HP 45 (10d8); Spd 0 ft, fly 40 ft; **Melee** withering touch (+5, 4d6+3 necrotic); **SA** horrifying visage (60 ft, DC 13 Wis save, frightened 1 min.; if save fails by 5 or more, age 1d4x10 years), possession (5 ft, DC 13 Cha save or possessed); **Immune** charm, cold, exhaustion, fright, grapple, necrotic, paralysis, poison, prone, restraint; **Resist** acid, fire, lightning, nonmagical weapons; **Str** -2, **Dex** +1, **Con** +0, **Int** +0, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft; **Traits** ethereal sight (sees 60 ft from Material to Ethereal Plane and vice versa), incorporeal movement (moves through objects and creatures as difficult terrain; takes 1d10 force damage if inside an object at end of turn), etherealness (as an action, moves from Material Plane to Ethereal Plane or vice versa), malevolence (can inhabit objects in Kaple's workhouse, turning them into animated objects); **AL** any; **CR** 4; **XP** 1,100.

Night-Thing (x3): AC 14; HP 75 (10d8+30); Spd 30 ft, climb 30 ft; **Melee** slam (+6, 2d6+4 bludgeoning; Medium or smaller target is grappled and restrained; escape DC 13); **SA** multiattack (slam x2), hammer (grappled creature takes 2d6+4 bludgeoning and is stunned until end of night-thing's next turn; DC 14 Str save halves damage, prevents stun); **Immune** charm, deafen, fright, paralysis, petrify, poison, psychic, stun; **Str** +4, **Dex** +2, **Con** +3, **Int** -4, **Wis** +0, **Cha** -2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft; **Traits** immutable form (immune to effects that alter its form), magic resistance (has advantage on saves vs. magic); **AL** un; **CR** 3; **XP** 700.

8. Pool

The bottom floor of the workhouse is concealed beneath rusty water. The top of a doorway is visible by the far wall.

The water is 5 feet deep and very dark. The doorway leads to the base of the Tower of Deranged Artistry.

Grief secreted his own guardians in this room, throwing the creatures the occasional rat, cat, or dog to keep them fed. The 2 swarms of quippers attack anything that falls into the water.

Quipper Swarm (×2): AC 13; HP 28 (8d8–8); Spd swim 40 ft; **Melee** bite (+5, 4d6 piercing, or 2d6 piercing if the swarm has 14 or fewer HP); **SA** blood frenzy (has advantage against creature with fewer than maximum HP); **Immune** charm, fright, paralysis, petrification, prone, restraint, stun; **Resist** bludgeoning, piercing, slashing; **Str** +1, **Dex** +3, **Con** –1, **Int** –5, **Wis** –2, **Cha** –4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft; **Traits** swarm (can occupy another creature's space and vice versa), water breathing (can't breathe out of water); **AL** un; **CR** 1; **XP** 200.

9. Tower of Deranged Artistry

Beyond the door lies a tower, the bottom floor of which is flooded. Rusting chains swing in this open tower, each ending in cruel, inhuman iron faces, one of which is much larger and has a gaping mouth. An open, spiral stair rises ninety feet into the heart of the tower until it reaches a black and ochre nest of rust and decay hanging from the roof. Platforms have been lashed beneath this metal corpse, while the walls are covered in foul objects made of flesh and metal.

The lair of Grief is decorated with his work: strange sculptures made of metal with parts of bodies hung from them. The 5-foot-wide stair rises 90 feet to the upper platform (Area 10).

Unless Kaple's ghost has already been slain, it and Grief are in the tower, along with an unusual chattel guardian: the swinging chain maw hanging among the chains.

Treasure. Grief wears an iron band set with aquamarines worth 600 gp. The sculptures (which include the recently slain Vorkstarll) have been stripped of belongings.

Kaple's Ghost: AC 11; HP 45 (10d8); Spd 0 ft, fly 40 ft; **Melee** withering touch (+5, 4d6+3 necrotic); **SA** horrifying visage (60 ft, DC 13 Wis save, frightened 1 min.; if save fails by 5 or more, age 1d4x10 years), possession (5 ft, DC 13 Cha save or possessed); **Immune** charm, cold, exhaustion, fright, grapple, necrotic, paralysis, poison, prone, restraint; **Resist** acid, fire, lightning, nonmagical weapons; **Str** –2, **Dex** +1, **Con** +0, **Int** +0, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft; **Traits** ethereal sight (sees 60 ft from Material to Ethereal Plane and vice versa), incorporeal movement (moves through objects and creatures as difficult terrain; takes 1d10 force damage if inside an object at end of turn), etherealness (as an action, moves from Material Plane to Ethereal Plane or vice versa), malevolence (can inhabit objects in Kaple's workhouse, turning them into animated objects); **AL** any; **CR** 4; **XP** 1,100.

Grief (Gargoyle): AC 15; HP 52 (7d8+21); Spd 30 ft, fly 60 ft; **Melee** bite (+4, 1d6+2 piercing), claws (+4, 1d6+2 slashing); **SA** multiattack (bite + claw); **Resist** nonmagical weapons that aren't adamantite; **Immune** poison, exhaustion, petrified; **Str** +2, **Dex** +0, **Con** +3, **Int** –2, **Wis** +0, **Cha** –2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft; **Traits** false appearance (while motionless, is indistinguishable from a statue); **AL** CE; **CR** 2; **XP** 450.

CHAIN MAW

Medium metal construct, unaligned

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 52 (8d8 + 16)

Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	1 (–5)	4 (–3)	1 (–5)

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 7

Languages —

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (3d6 + 2) piercing damage and the target is grappled (escape DC 12).

REACTIONS

Hoist. When a creature grappled by the chain maw makes an unsuccessful attempt to escape from the grapple, the chain maw can lift the grappled character

20 feet above the floor and release the grapple. The character falls to the floor and takes 2d6 bludgeoning damage, unless it can fly or has some other means of avoiding falling damage.

10. Angel of Rust and Corrosion

A crude platform near the top of the tower gives access to a hole onto the roof (Area 11). A Medium or smaller creature can get through the hole. This platform has a small forge burning and a large iron object hanging from the roof: a flotsam angel made of rusting iron.

The angel doesn't move or attack unless it's possessed by Kaple. Although incomplete, the angel can clamber about the tower (its wings are unfinished, so it can't fly). It tries to engage lone characters, and it fights until it's destroyed.

ANGEL OF RUST AND CORROSION

Large construct, unaligned

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 105 (14d10 + 28)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	1 (-5)	10 (+0)	1 (-5)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons that aren't adamantite

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The angel of rust and corruption makes two attacks: one slam and one wing attack.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Wing Attack. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (3d6 + 4) slashing damage.

11. Rooftop, the Black Bird

A steeply sloping gabled roof wreathed in ivy rises high above the city streets. A small platform has been lashed just below the exit hole.

The ivy is decayed, and the gable is so steep that it requires a successful DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to move on it. At the apex of the roof, under the ivy, lies a weather vane depicting a snake coiled around a raven. The raven is Kaple's only unfound treasure. The black coating masks its true value.

The snake, however, is an **iron cobra** Kaple set to guard his secret treasure. Fighting the cobra on the precipitous rooftop is very dangerous, as the snake can anchor itself around the base of the weather vane and still strike. It fights until destroyed.

Treasure. Beneath the covering of grime and black enamel, the bird sculpture is covered in fine jewels. The black bird's true value is up to you; it should be at least 1,000 gp and may be two or three times that much. The more valuable the bird is, however, the more other people want it, when word gets around that the characters have it (as it's bound to do once they try to sell it). Most normal pawnbrokers refuse to buy it out of fear for its curse—which may be real or may be only legend. It could be an icon sought by a secretive and murderous cult. Or, it could simply be a valuable art object that is a rich reward for the PCs' endeavors.

IRON COBRA

Medium construct, unaligned

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 33 (6d8 + 6)

Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	2 (-4)	10 (+0)	3 (-4)

Skills Perception +2

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons that aren't adamantite

Damage Immunities fire, poison, psychic

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages —

Challenge 1 (50 XP)

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) poison damage; poison damage is halved by a successful DC 13 Constitution saving throw.

THE FISH AND THE ROSE

By Christina Stiles

"I Have this job for youse. Profitable, aye; lucrative, even. Benefactor's got coin and means, dig, and could offer youse continued work, so it'd be wise to deal. I'd do the job, if'n I could, but the heat's on, dig? Nothin' I wants to chat about. But this; easy money, I says. Youse can handle it. Easy, easy money. Real easy."

—Ziv the Sly

The Fish and the Rose is a heist adventure suitable for 5th-level characters.

The adventure initially pits the PCs against some tough combat situations, like getting through Scaler's Alley alive, so an entire party of rogues is not suggested. PCs can negotiate their way through some encounters, but unless you run the adventure for higher level characters, you need some combat types. The adventure culminates in testing the rogues' skills against traps to acquire the desired treasure. In fact, acquiring the actual painting within the vault may be as easy as Ziv suggests, but getting to it and then getting safely back to Ziv are the real issues in the adventure.

Background

The Fish and the Rose is a famous painting of unknown origin capable of divining the future and currently owned by Lord Greymark. The dark naga Syssysalai (see "Faces of Zobeck") covets it for her growing art collection, but unlike the many others who desire the painting, she knows where it's located, thanks to information purchased from Jayzel (see "Faces of Zobeck"). Unfortunately, the Watch recently sent Syssysalai's regular acquisition experts, all but their leader Ziv, to the Blue House. Since Ziv's burglars can't complete the mission and because Syssysalai is not pleased with the cat burglars' ineptitude, she has tasked Ziv with finding another group of discreet thieves to acquire the painting for her.

Synopsis

The PCs' street reputations lead Ziv the Sly to believe them skillful and savvy enough to pull off Syssysalai's requested heist, so he approaches them with a business opportunity. If the PCs accept the job, Ziv provides them a very old and very rough map of a section of the Cartways leading to the area beneath Lord Greymark's mansion where his vault and the painting lie.

As the Watch has sealed off the Cartways and refuses to patrol them, the PCs will need to locate an appropriate entrance. Ziv tells them that an entrance, one that would be the most effective in getting them to Lord Greymark's vault, is believed to exist in Scaler's

Alley in the Kobold Ghetto. To get there, the PCs have to survive Slinger's Ambush Gang (see "Faces of Zobeck") and Scaler and his monitor lizards.

PCs must also deal with the hazards inherent to the Cartways. Currently, a barghest gang leader named Vralgor Szarn claims this section, and he and his gang hunt the area, as does an unaffiliated band of derro who recently made their way below Zobeck and encamped in an area just outside the PCs' target zone. To get to the Greymark vault area, the PCs must evade or slay the mad derro and overcome a vast, man-made chasm to locate the tunnel entrance to the Greymark's estate. Once inside, they must skirt or disable the clockwork watchmen and traps protecting the vault area. After all this, the PCs must escape with the painting unharmed to collect their reward. Easy, easy money.

Hook

The adventure assumes the PCs have a bit of a reputation as acquisition specialists. A cloaked Ziv the Sly approaches the characters at a tavern, such as the Silk Scabbard, and says he has a job for them. He'll only disclose the details at an agreeable, discreet location; even the Scabbard has ears. The PCs know Ziv, by reputation if not personally, as a capable thief who leads a gang of cat burglars. No one knows his employer, though, someone he only refers to as his "benefactor." Assuming the PCs agree to meet him (the GM or players choose where), he reveals nothing about his boss; he assures the characters that his benefactor is an art collector who will provide 1,000 gp for the acquisition of a certain painting, which he describes with details (see "The Fish and the Rose" sidebar). The painting is purported to be magical, capable of divining the future. Ziv won't reveal that fact; PCs learn that aspect of the painting's reputation only if they ask other knowledgeable NPCs (art dealers, museum curators, specialists in odd, obscure information) about it.

If the PCs accept the job, Ziv provides them with a rough Cartways map (for the GM to provide) and directs them to an entrance in Scaler's Alley. When

they have the painting, he asks they tell Beetle, a busboy at the Silk Scabbard, to have Ziv meet them. Ziv will only work out exchange details with them after the job.

Use this hook rather than have the PCs learn of Greymark's possession of the painting on their own, because the successful completion of the job puts the precognitive painting in the hands of an NPC (you may not want such a device in the PCs' hands), and the dark naga and Ziv become contacts for future opportunities. An alternative hook could be that the characters owe someone a favor, and that someone wants them to retrieve the painting to clear the debt.

PART 1: SCALER'S ALLEY

This adventure takes place in the Kobold Ghetto and Cartways of Zobeck. The characters' first stop should be Scaler's Alley in the Kobold Ghetto, where getting through the alley alive is a feat unto itself. From the alley, they can gain entrance to the Cartways, whereupon they can follow Ziv's map to Lord Greymark's vault to secure the painting.

Scaler's Alley is infamous as a very dangerous place in the Kobold Ghetto. If the PCs haven't heard of it, they can easily find out about it by asking just about anyone. Most long-time residents of Zobeck have heard of Scaler, a winged lizardfolk the height of a dwarf and likewise as wide, who has a reputation as a fighter of great skill and who makes his home in the alley to which the locals have given his name. In short, Scaler's Alley is a place best avoided if you value your hide. Wise PCs, once they get past the slingers, will negotiate with Scaler rather than fight him, as he is quite powerful (every rumor reaffirms this).

If characters put some effort into gathering information before approaching Scaler's Alley, they can learn any of the following points.

- Smoke covers the area, making it difficult to traverse the trap-riddled alley.
- Rumor says Slinger's Ambush Gang makes their home there.
- Scaler has some mean lizard pets.
- An old entrance to the Cartways lies at the back of the alley, supposedly hidden in Scaler's abode. It leads to the area under the mansions, where the wealthy keep their valuables in vaults.
- Scaler can shoot blood from his eyes! Few people know this because his victims don't generally survive to tell the tale.

Alley Entrance

Shabby, dilapidated buildings mark your path through this part of the Kobold Ghetto. As you enter further, you see several kobolds engrossed in a knife fight ahead of you. You step over a few drunken or drug-fogged kobolds as you skirt the fight and continue toward the smoky entrance to Scaler's Alley. As you near, the smell of burning lard and long-dead things assaults your senses. You also hear an occasional whistling, like that of steam passing through metal. Some of the smoke drifts toward the surrounding buildings, paragons of decay; the rising haze obscures your vision beyond 15 feet. The buildings' rooftops climb up to 40 feet above you and appear to be a murky mishmash of scavenged materials.

Scaler's Alley is shaped like an upside-down L. Its main stretch runs straight for 200 feet, then turns right, ending 80 feet later at Scaler's stone house. The street itself is 15 feet wide and surrounded by boarded-up, dilapidated, 40-foot-high buildings, some of which hold squatters and wandering creatures (accessible entrances exist on the buildings' opposite faces).

You can place the alley anywhere in the Kobold Ghetto, though it is suggested it lie near the Ghetto's northern wall.

If the PCs enter the alley, they encounter a few passed-out, vomit-covered kobold drunks lying outside the buildings (no farther than 20 feet into the alley). The kobolds are indeed harmless drunks and not rogues seeking to relieve the party of their money at an opportune time. Still, you can make the PCs wary by calling for Wisdom (Perception) checks as they enter the alley and advance through the fog.

Slinger's Ambush Gang boarded up all the buildings' doors and windows to prevent their victims from escaping. The gang lies in ambush 60 feet in. PCs can break through a door with a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check. Should the PCs break into any buildings, you must decide what lurks within. The ambushers can get into the buildings through the windows on the backsides of the buildings, which are not boarded up.

While traveling the alley, a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check lets the PCs spot one or more pipes jutting from the alley floor in various spots. The pipes are emitting the foul haze and are the source of the whistling. While the smoke stinks and clings to the PCs, it does not have any ill effect requiring a saving throw.

The greatest threats in the alley besides Slinger's Ambush Gang are the numerous traps lining the

alleyway (starting 20 feet into the alley and running the 200-foot length of the main stretch). A variety of nastiness lurks hidden under the heavy, low-lying smoke, and the smoke-pumping pipes and skeletons lying along the way, which PCs can trip over.

The best way to deal with this is for the GM to roll a d6 any time a character moves. On a 1, roll another d6 and consult the Hazards Table below to see what the PC encountered. Anytime a PC trips, roll another d6 to see if he encounters a hazard by falling. Smart characters will put a sharp-eyed companion at the head of the line and follow in single file, to avoid hazards. Flying PCs can, of course, bypass the traps, but they must deal with the slingers (see “Slinger’s Ambush Gang”) on the rooftops.

d6	Hazard	Effect
1	Pipe	DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check to avoid tripping and falling prone.
2	Pipe	DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check to avoid tripping and falling prone.
3	Spiked Pit Trap	DC 15 Dexterity check to avoid falling in and taking 1d6 bludgeoning damage plus 1d10 piercing damage.
4	Acid Splash Trap	4d6 acid damage, or half damage with a successful DC 14 Dexterity saving throw.
5	Skeleton	DC 15 Dexterity check to avoid tripping on an undead skeleton and “awakening” it.
6	Electricity Trap	3d10 lightning damage, or half damage with a successful DC 16 Dexterity saving throw.

Slinger’s Ambush Gang

The PCs stay fairly safe until they get about 60 feet into the alley. At that point, five members of Slinger’s Ambush Gang (4 goblins and a goblin boss) attack from the rooftops with slings. They stand two on either side of the alley at 60 and 70 feet in, with the boss on the right at 80 feet. They have half-cover (+2 AC) versus those below. The goblins don’t suffer any smoke penalties when firing down from above. Slinger keeps four gang members at this ambush point at all times, though the gang numbers 30 or more goblins in all. Two other goblins protect the area around Scaler’s abode, should anyone make it through to test their mettle against Scaler himself. Few ever make it that far. Slinger (see

“Faces of Zobeck”) is not among the group protecting the alleyway unless you choose to include him—not a bad play if any of the characters can fly.

The goblins attack relentlessly with their slings, their jobs being to keep the alley clear of riffraff. They never break morale, because they know Slinger or Scaler will kill them if they fail to guard the alley.

Goblin Boss: AC 17; HP 21 (6d6); Spd 30 ft; **Melee** scimitar (+4, 1d6+2 slashing); **Ranged** sling (+4, 30 ft/120 ft, 1d4+2 bludgeoning); **SA** multiattack (scimitar x2, 2nd attack with disadvantage); **Str** +0, **Dex** +2, **Con** +0, **Int** +0, **Wis** –1, **Cha** +0; **Skills** Stealth +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft; **Traits** nimble escape (can disengage or hide as a bonus action on its turn); **AL** NE; **CR** 1; **XP** 200.

Goblin (x4): AC 15; HP 7 (2d6); Spd 30 ft; **Melee** scimitar (+4, 1d6+2 slashing); **Ranged** sling (+4, 30 ft/120 ft, 1d4+2 bludgeoning); **Str** –1, **Dex** +2, **Con** +0, **Int** +0, **Wis** –1, **Cha** –1; **Skills** Stealth +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft; **Traits** nimble escape (can disengage or hide as a bonus action on its turn); **AL** NE; **CR** 1/4; **XP** 50.

Scaler’s Abode

At the end of the alley’s main road (200 feet), the street turns to the right and extends 80 feet ahead, where it ends in a stone structure (Scaler’s abode). When the PCs look around the corner, read the following:

.....
The alley here is smoke-free, so fog no longer obscures your vision or clings to your legs—though the stench of it certainly does. Rocks of various sizes, trash, and bones clog this end of the alley. Rats scurry among the debris. About 80 feet ahead, you see a structure composed of uneven sections of stone. It looks shaky in places.

This part of Scaler’s Alley is home to Scaler’s pack of pet monitor lizards (5 **giant lizards**). They are Scaler’s friends, and they help protect the alley and alert him to intruders. Currently, three are hiding among the rocks. Two others reside in the stone structure with Scaler. **Two goblins** are also present on opposite rooftops 40 feet in.

It is possible for the lizards or the goblins to take note of the PCs entering the alley. The goblins don’t alert Scaler but ready their slings. Any lizard that notices the PCs gives off a loud hiss. PCs who don’t know about the lizards’ association with Scaler may assume they are just warning the PCs away from their territory, but Scaler hears the “alarm” and responds to the intrusion, as do the slingers. If a battle breaks out, the lizards join in 1 round after Scaler.

Though he isn't literally a king of the lizardfolk, Scaler uses the lizardfolk king stat block with three differences.

- His javelin is poisoned so it does an additional 10 (4d4) poison damage, or half damage with a successful DC 11 Constitution saving throw.
- He has the ability **Gout of Blood (recharge 5-6): Ranged Weapon Attack:** +7 to hit, range 15 ft., one target. **Hit:** target must succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened of Scaler. A frightened creature repeats the saving throw at the end of its turn, ending the condition on itself with a success.
- He carries a +1 *morningstar*, 2 *potions of greater healing*, 2 *potions of invisibility*, and 4 doses of serpent venom.

As soon as he becomes aware of intruders in the alley, Scaler drinks a *potion of invisibility* and exits his house. He spends one round surveying the situation to determine the most threatening enemy and then makes his way invisibly to that individual to attack.

If the PCs are losing and try to bribe him for passage, he stops attacking if they lay down their weapons and give him 500 gp to enter the Cartways. The PCs can try to talk down the price, but he won't go below 300 gp and an unspecified favor to be called in later.

If the fight turns against Scaler, he doesn't want to die. He really just wants to be left alone, and feared. Before any fatal blow is delivered, he yells out to the PCs (in Draconic) that he'll help them if they let him live. He will remove the rock covering the Cartways to provide them entrance, and he may strike a deal to allow them entry through his alley in the future. He can also steer them toward alternative exits that will allow them to bring the recovered painting to the surface, should any character think of asking about that.

Developments. The party's best bet is to negotiate with Scaler. Mainly, he just wants to keep his reputation as a badass intact. A promise from the PCs to boast about his fighting prowess, especially from a bard or similar character, might be enough, but likely he'll want more. (In playtest, a character dashed to his hovel door and knocked, offering himself up as Scaler's lackey for a year. Scaler accepted the offer and allowed the characters passage. This isn't as likely to happen in an ongoing campaign, for obvious reasons.)

Inside Scaler's Abode

The following details the interior of Scaler's abode. If the PCs haven't yet encountered Scaler and the other two monitor lizards, then they are inside as well. The lizards usually rest on the boulders in the one-room house.

.....
An open archway leads into the stone structure. Inside is a single room 15 feet wide and 30 feet long. A sleeping pallet consisting of various sewn-together animal pelts rests on the earthen floor. The room's side and back walls are actually the walls of adjoining buildings that this area's roof has been attached to in a somewhat haphazard manner. A massive boulder rests in the middle of the room. Additional boulders rest along the wall at each side of the room, making four in all.
.....

The center boulder covers the Cartways entrance that the PCs are seeking. Moving the 5-foot-wide, 5-foot-high boulder takes a successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check. One character makes the check, with others aiding. Using a stout lever provides a +2 bonus on the check. If Scaler shows characters the "trick" to shifting the boulder, they get advantage on this check.

The entrance itself is only 3 feet in diameter, so the painting won't fit through it. If players don't comment on this, anyone with passive Perception 15 or higher realizes it.

The other rocks conceal holes where Scaler hides his food and wealth. They can be shifted with successful DC 18 Strength (Athletics) checks.

Treasure: The rock along the northern wall hides a chest containing 1,500 gp; the southern one, upon which the lizards usually rest, holds a bag of 36 gems totaling 2,500 gp and 2 *potions of superior healing*; the western and eastern boulders hide stashes of beetle jerky, cured ham, cheap wine, and moldy bread and cheese.

Scaler (Lizardfolk King): AC 15; HP 78 (12d8+24); Spd 30 ft, swim 30 ft; **Melee** bite (+5, 1d6+3 piercing), claws (+5, 1d4+3 slashing), +1 *morningstar* (+6, 1d8+4 piercing), poisoned javelin (+5, 1d6+3 piercing plus 4d4 poison; DC 11 Con save halves poison damage); **Ranged** poisoned javelin (+5, 20 ft/60 ft, 1d6+3 piercing plus 4d4 poison; DC 11 Con save halves poison damage); **SA** multiattack (bite plus claws, or bite plus weapon, or weapon x2), skewer (1/turn, the lizardfolk does an extra 3d6 piercing damage with its javelin and gains the same number of temporary HP), gout of blood (recharge 5-6; +7, 15 ft; DC 12 Wis save or target becomes frightened of Scaler; frightened creature repeats save at end of turn); **Str** +3, **Dex** +1, **Con** +2, **Int** +0, **Wis** +0, **Cha** +2; **Traits** hold breath (lizardfolk can hold their breath for 15 minutes); **Saving Throws** Con +4, Wis +2; **Skills** Perception +4, Stealth +5, Survival +4; **Immunity** fright; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft; **AL** CE; **CR** 4; **XP** 1,100.

Goblin (x2): AC 15; HP 7 (2d6); Spd 30 ft; **Melee** scimitar (+4, 1d6+2 slashing); **Ranged** sling (+4, 30

ft/120 ft, 1d4+2 bludgeoning); **Str** -1, **Dex** +2, **Con** +0, **Int** +0, **Wis** -1, **Cha** -1; **Skills** Stealth +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft; **Traits** nimble escape (can disengage or hide as a bonus action on its turn); **AL** NE; **CR** 1/4; **XP** 50.

Giant Lizard: **AC** 12; **HP** 19 (3d10+3); **Spd** 30 ft, climb 10 ft; **Melee** bite (+4, 1d8+2 piercing); **Str** +2, **Dex** +1, **Con** +1, **Int** -4, **Wis** +0, **Cha** -3; **Senses** darkvision 30 ft; **AL** unaligned; **CR** 1/4; **XP** 50.

PART 2: IN THE CARTWAYS

After the PCs deal with Scaler, they can gain entrance to the Cartways, and thence, to Lord Greymark's vault.

Duergar Downs

The PCs should follow Ziv's sketchy map for about an hour. As they near the vault area, have them note the tunnel is coming to an open area. Depending on how they approach the opening and what kind of light source they have, the GM should adjust the following text to suit the situation. The duergars' passive Perception is only 10, so characters should have an easy time creeping up on them if they're moving stealthily; if they're not, the duergar automatically notice them approaching and yell a warning to their companions.

The tunnel opens into a larger section of the Cartways, an area lying just under Zobeck's richer citizens—if the map is correct. Looking out from the tunnel, you see the Cartways all right, but they are inhabited. Several dwarves with ashen gray skin and filthy white hair are moving about a campsite ahead. Behind them, you can see that a massive chasm blocks your passage to the vault you seek.

The duergar and their leader staked out this section of the Cartways just over three days ago. So far, the barghests following Vralgor have noted them, but they haven't pushed the humanoids along or hunted them as food. That may soon change, however, especially if the duergar capture more victims. They currently have a young girl (Gillian Logersmann, 13, a rich girl from one of the mansions) tied up under their cleric's bedding. The cleric found her the previous evening exploring the Cartways with some friends and captured her. The others escaped. The duergar plan to sell her or put her to work as a mess hall slave, but they would like at least three more captives before quitting the area. They're waiting for others to come in search of the missing girl.

If the PCs rescue the girl, she becomes a complication in their mission to retrieve the painting. Her parents will give the PCs a 200 gp reward for her safe return, however, and she can lead the PCs to an alternate route out of the Cartways, allowing them to get the painting out.

Creatures. There are 6 duergar in the encampment. They have no treasure except the girl.

If the duergar see the PCs coming, they turn invisible and move to surround them. Once in position, the duergar drop their invisibility as they Enlarge and attack. Any duergar reduced to 6 or fewer hit points flees from the fight.

One of the duergar is a cleric. It has the standard stats for a duergar but also has the Spellcasting ability noted below.

Spellcasting. The duergar cleric is a 6th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 10, +2 to hit with spell attacks). He has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *mending, resistance, spare the dying, thaumaturgy*

1st level (4 slots): *bane, command, cure wounds*

2nd level (3 slots): *blindness/deafness, hold person*

3rd level (3 slots): *bestow curse, dispel magic, meld into stone*

Duergar (×6): **AC** 16; **HP** 26 (4d8+8); **Spd** 25 ft; **Melee** war pick (+4, 1d8+2 piercing or 2d8+2 when enlarged); **Ranged** javelin (+4, 30 ft/120 ft, 1d6+2 piercing or 2d6+2 piercing when enlarged); **SA** enlarge (becomes Large for 1 minute; makes **Str** checks and saves with advantage; recharge after rest), invisibility (turns invisible until it attacks or enlarges; recharges after rest); **Resist** poison; **Str** +2, **Dex** +0, **Con** +2, **Int** +0, **Wis** +0, **Cha** -1; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft; **Traits** duergar resilience (has advantage on saves against poison, spells, illusions, charm, and paralysis), sunlight sensitivity (has disadvantage on attacks and Perception checks that rely on sight while in sunlight); **AL** LE; **CR** 1; **XP** 200.

Chasm Crossing

A chasm stretches 200 feet across this end of the Cartways. It abuts the wall leading to Lord Greymark's vault, leaving no ledge at all on the other side; just a sheer drop. The chasm does not appear on the map Ziv provided.

Lord Greymark had the chasm magically excavated to protect what he felt was a weak spot in his vault's

defenses. The chasm is 60 feet deep and 35 feet wide. Its walls are sheer, requiring a successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check to climb. If someone shines light into its depths, the PCs can see that rubble, large rocks, and several skeletons (both animal and humanoid) lie below. If the PCs scan the wall abutting the chasm for its entire length, they note a crevice large enough for a Medium-sized creature to pass through.

Two giant scorpions lurk in the rock-strewn basin. The scorpions sometimes climb through the crevice in the natural cavern (area 1), though they make their home in the chasm. These cliff-dwelling scorpions have a climb speed in addition to the giant scorpion's normal speed.

Treasure. If PCs search the six humanoid skeletons in the crevice, they find a total of 135 gp in mixed coins and gems, a +1 dagger, and three +1 arrows. One of the skeletons is missing a finger. If they search the rubble, a successful DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check finds the finger bone still bearing a ring of jumping.

Giant Scorpion (×2): AC 15; HP 52 (7d10+14); Spd 40 ft, climb 20 ft; **Melee** claw (+4, 1d8+2 bludgeoning and target is grappled; escape DC 12), sting (+4, 1d10+2 piercing plus 4d10 poison; DC 12 Con save halves poison damage); **SA** multiattack (claws x2 and sting); **Str** +2, **Dex** +1, **Con** +2, **Int** -5, **Wis** -1, **Cha** -4; **Senses** blindsight 60 ft; **AL** un; **CR** 3; **XP** 700.

PART 3: LORD GREYMARK'S VAULT

The crack in the Cartways wall leads to the area surrounding Lord Greymark's vault. Characters may attempt to widen the crevice to allow individuals wearing heavy armor a means to pass through it. They need to inflict 25 damage against the wall to enlarge the opening. This also makes noise, which echoes down the Cartways and has a 50/50 chance of being heard by the clockwork hounds in the vault area and attracting their attention.

1. Natural Cavern

When PCs emerge from the crevice, read the following:

The crevice opens into a natural cavern, which appears empty except for a dwarven body lying near the northern end. As no stench permeates the air, the body seems fairly fresh.

The corpse is the remains of one of the duergar slavers. Any character with proficiency in Medicine can spot that the duergar died from deep slashing wounds, which scorpions can't inflict. (It was killed by the clockwork hounds.) The corpse has nothing of value.

2. Man-made Corridors

Beyond the cavern, you notice a man-made corridor stretching 20 feet to the north before turning right. Splotches of dried blood are spattered on the stone floor, and they continue around the corner.

Creatures: If they heard the PCs enlarging the opening, 3 clockwork hounds wait around the corner to deal with any intruders. Otherwise, they are at various points in the corridor—wherever you choose to place them. Four other hounds wait up ahead at the doors leading into area 3. If any of their fellows sound an alarm, they join the other guards in fighting off the PCs.

CLOCKWORK HOUND (×3)

Medium construct, unaligned

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 65 (10d8 + 20)

Speed 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	1 (-5)	10 (+0)	1 (-5)



Saving Throws Dex +4, Con +4

Skills Athletics +7, Perception +4

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages understands Common but can't speak

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Diligent Tracker. Clockwork hounds are designed to guard areas and track prey. They have advantage on Wisdom (Perception and Survival) checks when tracking.

Explosive Core. The mechanism that powers the hound explodes when the construct is destroyed. All creatures within 5 feet of the hound when it drops to 0 hit points take 7 (2d6) fire damage, or half damage with a successful DC 12 Dexterity saving throw.

Immutable Form. The clockwork hound is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Magic Resistance. The clockwork hound has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (2d10 + 3) piercing damage.

Tripping Tongue. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

3. Vault Entrance

If the 4 clockwork hounds here did not get a chance to aid the other hounds, they wait beside the doors. Read the following:

Four clockwork hounds rest on opposite sides of double iron doors. As soon as you can clearly see them, they move to attack.

The standard 2-inch-thick iron doors have the Greymark coat of arms etched on them. They are locked; they can be opened with thief's tools and a successful DC 18 Dexterity check. Alternatively, they can be demolished by 100 damage, but they have AC 18 and are immune to all but bludgeoning and force damage.

Clockwork Hound (×4): AC 12; HP 65 (10d8+20); Spd 50 ft; **Melee** bite (+5, 2d10+3 piercing), tripping tongue (+5, 15 ft, 1d8+3 slashing and DC 13 Str saving throw to avoid being knocked prone);

Immunity charm, exhaustion, fright, paralysis, petrification, poison, psychic; **Str** +3, **Dex** +2, **Con** +2, **Int** -5, **Wis** +0, **Cha** -5; **Saving Throws** Dex +4, Con +4; **Skills** Athletics +7, Perception +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft; **Traits** diligent tracker (advantage on Wis [Survival and Perception] when tracking), explosive core (all creatures within 5 ft of clockwork hound when it dies takes 2d6 fire; DC 12 Dex save halves damage), immutable form (immune to magic that would alter its form), magic resistance (has advantage on saves against magic); **AL** un; **CR** 2; **XP** 450.

From this point forward, the threat of monsters is nonexistent; traps become the PCs' problem instead.

Read the following when the doors are opened:

The doors open into a 20-foot by 20-foot foyer lit with magical torches. Portraits, likely of the Greymark family, hang on the wall, and two plush reading chairs with side tables rest atop an expensive rug on the western side of the room. A mural of a beautiful raven-haired woman lying suggestively in bed, with pieces of the bed's sheet strategically covering her nakedness, rests on the eastern wall. Magical sconces illuminate her attractive form.

If the PCs are familiar with Jayzel (see "Faces of Zobeck"), Zobeck's resident bard and information broker, they recognize the younger (17-18 year old) Jayzel in the mural with a successful DC 13 Intelligence check. Jayzel has shared some history with Lord Greymark dating back over a decade, one reason she knew the painting's location.

If the PCs search the mural and make a successful DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check, they discover a secret door's outline within the mural's sheets and a small keyhole in the woman's right eye. The door is a fake door and opens to a blank wall. It is also part of a trap which is triggered if the secret door is opened past a 90-degree angle (perpendicular to the wall).

Gelatinous Pit Trap

Mechanical trap

A 10 ft. by 20 ft. section of floor drops open above a rectangular pit that takes up the eastern half of the room. The pit appears to be filled with dark, scum-covered water 10 feet below the level of the floor. Any creature standing in the eastern half of the room when the pit opens must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or fall 10 feet into a gelatinous cube. They are automatically engulfed by the cube, restrained, can't breathe, and take 10 (3d6) acid damage. At the

LORD GREYMARK'S VAULT



S = Secret Door

X = Clockwork Guardians

1 Square = 5 Ft

beginning of each of the cube's turns, an engulfed creature takes 21 (6d6) acid damage.

If anyone falls in, nearby characters who didn't fall notice the lack of a splash.

A secret door leading into area 4 stands in the center of the northern wall behind several portraits of stoic-looking men. It can be found with a search of the wall and a successful DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check.

Gelatinous Cube: AC 6; HP 84 (8d10+40); Spd 15 ft; **Melee** pseudopod (+4, 3d6 acid), engulf (cube can enter spaces of Large or smaller creatures as it moves; creature must make DC 12 Dex save; on success, creature is pushed aside 5 ft; on failure, cube enters creature's space and creature takes 3d6 acid damage, can't breathe, is restrained, and takes 6d6 acid at start of cube's turn; engulfed creature moves with cube; escaping takes an action and a DC 12 Str check); **Immune** blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, fright, prone; **Str** +2, **Dex** -4, **Con** +5, **Int** -5, **Wis** -6, **Cha** -5; **Senses** blindsight 60 ft (blind beyond); **Traits** ooze cube (creatures that enter cube's space are engulfed; getting free takes an action and a DC 12 Str check by engulfed creature or ally within 5 ft), transparent (cube that hasn't moved or attacked seen with DC 15 Wis [Perception] check; unaware creature that tries to enter cube's space is surprised); **AL** un; **CR** 2; **XP** 450.

4. Fake Gallery

The real secret door from area 3 opens up into this fake gallery, meaning that all the paintings here are copies. Lord Greymark is an excellent forger. Read the following:

.....
Beautiful paintings from various regions hang on the walls of this room, which is lit by magical sconces. In the center of the room rests a painting on a golden easel. The painting faces north toward the double iron doors. No furniture is present in this room, just painting after painting.
.....

Even though the 20 paintings here are all copies, including the Fish and the Rose, which is the painting on the center stand, they still hold value, and only a DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check would identify them as fakes. Any roll below that, and the PCs believe each painting is worth at least 500 gp; if sold as forgeries, they would still fetch 100-150 gp each.

When the PCs check out the stand, use the description of the Fish and the Rose from the sidebar of the same name. If they decide to *detect magic* on the painting, it reads as magical, as Lord Greymark has *magic aura* cast on it.

The double doors leading to area 5 are not locked or trapped.

The easel the painting rests on is trapped, however (and what self-respecting art thief worth his salt wouldn't expect it to be)? The *glyph of warding* can be detected with a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check. Lifting the painting off the easel triggers an *acid arrow* spell that attacks with +6 to hit and causes 5d4 acid damage immediately and another 3d4 acid damage at the start of the target's next turn. If the arrow misses, it causes half damage immediately and no followup damage.

5. Secret Bedroom

.....
A four-poster bed of mahogany sits against the western wall here. A chest the length of the bed rests at its foot. A lounging couch sits next to the eastern wall with a side table beside it, upon which sits a book. Rich red tapestries cover the walls.
.....

Lord Greymark sometimes brings his female companions to this room for privacy. The bed looks very much like the one depicted in the mural in area 3.

The chest contains fine linens worth 150 gp, and is unlocked. The book on the table, entitled *The Erotic Tales of Zobeck, Vol. 4* by Theosis Vlod, is quite rare and would bring 200 gp from a collector of such literature.

The tapestries conceal two secret doors along the northern wall and one on the west wall. The one to area 6 can be found with a search behind the tapestry and a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check, as can the western door leading to area 8. Neither door is trapped. The secret door leading to the vault (area 7) can be found with a search behind the tapestry and a successful DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check. The vault door is locked, requiring thief's tools and a successful DC 22 Dexterity check to unlock, but it isn't trapped. However, considering the level of PCs involved in this adventure, it's best if you just arbitrarily don't allow them to find this door, or allow them to find it but make it impossible to open, because the fabulous treasure vault beyond is guarded by 3 **guardian nagas** that would instantly *flame strike* and poison the characters into charred, toxic corpses!

6. Real Gallery

This real gallery looks just like the fake gallery (area 4). The real Fish and the Rose painting's stand has a more powerful version of the trap on the decoy in area 4. The *glyph of warding* can be detected with a successful DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check. Lifting the painting off the easel triggers an *acid arrow* spell that attacks with +8 to hit and causes 7d4 acid damage immediately and another 5d4 acid damage at the start of the target's next turn. If the arrow misses, it causes half damage immediately and no followup damage.

7. Vault

Greymark's treasure vault, which does indeed store his fortune, waits here. If PCs spot the well-hidden secret door, it should be impossible for them to get through. The knowledge of the vault's existence should whet their appetites for a future adventure when they have a chance to succeed. Otherwise, the 3 **guardian nagas** handily kill them if they enter the vault.

8. Stairs To The Greymark Mansion

A set of stairs leads 30 feet up to an iron door.

An audible alarm guards this door. If it's opened, 8 **thugs** rush the characters from the guard room across the hall, and 2 more rush in from nearby corridors every round. The PCs' best bet is to flee. Greymark's mansion is not detailed in the adventure. You're on your own if you allow characters to keep exploring from this point forward!

Thug (8+): AC 11; HP 32 (5d8+10); Spd 30 ft; Melee mace x2 (+4, 1d6+2 bludgeoning); **Ranged** heavy crossbow (+2, 100 ft/400 ft, 1d10 piercing); **Str** +2, **Dex** +0, **Con** +2, **Int** +0, **Wis** +0, **Cha** +0; **Skills** Intimidation +2; **AL** CN; **CR** 1/2; **XP** 100.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

If the PCs turn the undamaged painting over to Ziv, he eventually offers them more work from Syssysalai. The thief continues as her go-between until she comes to trust that the PCs can keep her secrets; a trust they can gain by performing four or more discreet jobs for her and holding their tongues about the details. When that day of trust comes, Syssysalai arranges a meeting with the PCs, feeds Ziv to some of her pets, and introduces herself. She makes the best rogue among the party her liaison to the group and sets him up to spearhead her art-theft operations. She might also send some assassination work the group's way.

Successfully stealing the painting from Lord Greymark certainly makes him an enemy should he uncover the thieves' identities—unless he planned it all to test their mettle and to learn something of Ziv's mysterious "benefactor," or to seek competent thieves for his own plans. If the PCs managed to take anything from his vault, however, he seeks their deaths without hesitation or rest.

If other gangs learn of the PCs' heist, they will be out for blood. Gangs dislike competition and the unnecessary attention such a high-profile caper generates. A cut of the profits appeases them, of course. If the PCs don't at least grease Ziv's palm, he very likely will squeal on the them to the gangs just to minimize competition. He doesn't want to be replaced as Syssysalai's right-hand man, after all.

It's possible the PCs may choose to keep the painting for themselves. If so, they become targets, as others seek to seize the painting for their own ends. The PCs likely don't have a vault of their own to keep it in. Additionally, Syssysalai sends assassins after them for betraying her. If that fails, she becomes an implacable enemy and keeps trying.

THE FIRST LAB

By Mike Franke

History states that Zobeck was reborn in blood 80 years ago, thanks in part to the creation of gearforged by a revolutionary coalition of workers and mages. Unfortunately, history has recorded only part of the truth, and the Praetors will do anything to make sure the rest remains buried.

The First Lab is an urban adventure suitable for four 7th-level PCs.

BACKGROUND

Eighty years ago, the Revolt led to the death or exile of House Stross, Zobeck's former ruling family, and the imprisonment and impoverishment of many of their followers. This time of bloody chaos and struggle saw a coalition of arcanists, geargrinders, and followers of Rava defeat the aristocracy led by House Stross. The Free City of Zobeck emerged from the violence, and the descendents of the Revolt's leaders became today's guildmasters, consuls, and civic leaders.

While most people know how the geargrinders and steamworkers collaborated frantically to build the 100 powerful clockwork knights that defeated House Stross's heavy cavalry, few know of the actual origins of the gearforged. A powerful clockwork mage named Kovac, who cared nothing for either House Stross or the rebels, invented and refined the process of creating the gearforged, which the rebels stole and repurposed.

Once considered the greatest arcane mind of his generation regarding constructs, Kovac's name has vanished from nearly every record outside the private libraries of the Masters of the Arcane Collegium. Artificial life fascinated Kovac; he obsessed over it. He refused to settle for the simple clockwork constructs of his day and pursued a new form of true life. His experiments drifted further and further from the accepted practices of his time. A lack of progress combined with a perceived lack of support from other members of the Collegium frustrated Kovac.

After an apprentice of one of the other Masters went to speak with Kovac and never returned, the members of the Collegium entered Kovac's laboratory. What they found horrified them. Carcasses of animals, their vital organs replaced with mechanical parts, stood next to diabolic texts with obscene illustrations and blueprints calling for vitality harvested from sentient beings to power clockwork creatures. Above it all hung the body of the apprentice. Investigation found his life force had been torn away magically.

The Collegium declared Kovac an outlaw and drove him into hiding, but the Revolt began and restricted

the manpower to search for him. By accident, a rebel hiding in the Cartways discovered a secret pathway behind a false wall. He reported strange clockwork creatures guarding the tunnel. Sensing an opportunity, a team of rebels and mages entered the Cartways and found Kovac's secret lab. What the victors found sickened them. Mechanical abominations acted as sentinels and the notes and experiments found in the lab indicated Kovac stripped souls from sentient creatures to power his creations. He even summoned infernal spirits to give his constructs greater cunning. Kovac died in the fight, but some of his clockwork creatures escaped into the Cartways.

The rebels failed to completely defeat the lab's guardians, so they grabbed what they could and sealed the secret tunnel.

However, the difficulty of the battle provided the rebels with an insight. A meeting of Collegium Masters and Geargrinder Guildmasters determined the survivors stole enough information to recreate some of Kovac's work. They sought volunteers to create the "first" gearforged. They decided no one should learn stolen souls infused the prototypes or that some even housed infernal spirits. A few of Kovac's creations escaped during the fight. Perhaps some of the gearforged walking the streets today are his handiwork.

Synopsis

The characters receive an urgent summons to a private audience at the Collegium with Guildmaster Clockwork Mage Orlando. Orlando tasks them with recovering at all costs a diary stolen from his office. It details a secret, underground laboratory and the attempts of a powerful Clockwork Mage named Kovac to create automatons powered by living souls. Kovac forcefully stole the souls of revolutionaries, House Stross supporters, and even infernal creatures to power his experiments.

Although Kovac died when rebels raided and partially destroyed his lab, the revolutionaries found his experiments too useful to destroy; these tragic abominations eventually resulted in the gearforged

heroes of the revolution. Unfortunately, some of Kovac's creations escaped and others remain in the sealed lab. Orlando believes the thief intends to find the hidden laboratory. The Guildmaster wants the adventurers to stop the thief and recover the diary before anyone reveals its secrets and destroys the public's confidence in their gearforged protectors.

Orlando possesses a series of clues the characters can follow to catch up with the thief but only with the help of someone from the time of the Revolt. He suggests they seek out and bargain with the Dragged Woman for passage into the long-hidden section of the Cartways which holds Kovac's lab.

Once in the Cartways, gearforged assassins ambush the characters to keep them from following the trail to Kovac's lab. The gearforged fight to the death, and a search of the bodies identifies them as followers of Marena the Red, Goddess of Death.

When the characters reach the lab, they find its door forced open. Inside, the remains of Kovac's heretical experiments cover the floor, but not all have been destroyed. Clockwork abominations unlike anything the characters have seen rise up to defend the laboratory.

Deeper in the lab, the adventurers must face Bogdan, the thief and the Red Goddess' gearforged priest, and more of his followers. To succeed, the characters must recover the diary, seal Kovac's laboratory, and make sure no word of this ever gets out.

Hooks

At the beginning of this adventure, the characters should already have a reputation in Zobeck as problem solvers, especially of the no-questions-asked variety. They are summoned by Guildmaster Mage Orlando to a private meeting at the Arcane Collegium. The letter promises great reward for serving the interests of Zobeck—and declining an invitation from such a powerful individual would surely ruin their reputations in the city.

Other motivations might include:

- The characters have previously performed discrete jobs for a consul or the government of Zobeck and are contacted at the behest of the Arcane Collegium.
- The characters already have some involvement in the activities of the Arcane Collegium, and Guildmaster Orlando approaches them personally.
- One or more characters are devout followers of Rava, and the Temple asks them to aid Guildmaster Orlando.

- The characters have criminal records or affiliations and are looking to wipe the slate clean or for help escaping their associates.
- The characters are members of, or have worked with, the Spyglass Guild and are chosen for this special mission.

PART I: SUMMONS

This adventure takes place in the streets and back alleys of Zobeck. The characters begin the adventure in their homes or in a local establishment. After their summons to the Arcane Collegium they find their way into abandoned areas of the Cartways and confront the long-buried abominations of the mad wizard Kovac.

Just Another Day in Zobeck

If you're using a hook for the whole party, assume they have gathered in a favorite spot between jobs to relax or discuss opportunities.

.....
You've gathered together to celebrate another day of opportunity in the Free City of Zobeck. Although currently between jobs, you have reputations on the streets of Zobeck as individuals who can get things done. Clearly, the man approaching you in the stained cloak with an official-looking crest thinks so. He walks up without hesitation, confirms your identity, and hands over a folded square of stiff, heavy parchment closed with a solid seal of golden wax.

.....
If only one or two characters have any connection to the Collegium or the government, have the messenger approach one of them before he can reach the others.

.....
Another day of opportunity dawns in the Free City of Zobeck. Although currently between jobs, your companions await you to discuss changing that situation. You've barely moved beyond your lodgings, however, when a man in a street-stained cloak with an official-looking crest approaches you.

With a formal, businesslike air he confirms your identity and hands over a folded square of stiff, heavy parchment closed with a solid seal of golden wax.

.....
The summons bears the official seal of the Arcane Collegium and promises great reward, and even possible forgiveness for past crimes, by serving the interests of Zobeck. It requests the characters proceed immediately to the Arcane Collegium and meet with Guildmaster Mage Orlando. The summons gives no

further information, and the messenger has already departed. Assuming the characters decide to answer the summons, proceed to “Arcane Collegium.”

Arcane Collegium

You enter the Steam Gate and can see wizards, apprentices, and clockwork servants hurrying about the impressive grounds. As large as Crown Square, the Collegium consists of two courtyards and a dozen gray, two-story buildings. Guards direct you to a building on the opposite side of the first square, and stewards usher you into the office of Guildmaster Clockwork Mage Orlando.

The characters probably have many questions for Orlando (LG male human archmage). Before he answers any questions, however, he asks the characters to swear to keep the conversation in confidence.

What I am about to tell you is of great importance to the City of Zobeck and not for the ears of the average citizen. I must ask you to swear you will hold whatever I tell you today in strict confidence or we can proceed no further.

Guildmaster Orlando is an excellent judge of character, and he probably sees through any dissembling by the PCs. If he feels it necessary, he requires them submit to a *geas* spell, although he would prefer not. He feels agents who voluntarily swear are more reliable in the long run. This is, however, a matter of utmost importance, and he does whatever he feels necessary to get the job done. Assuming the characters promise to keep their mouths shut, Orlando describes the mission.

“Last night a thief broke into my office here at the Collegium, a difficult feat I assure you. Rather than take any of the obviously valuable objects, he stole only a diary from the time of the Revolt. The diary contains the account of a young mage’s involvement in catching a wanted criminal, a powerful wizard named Kovac. This and other information in the diary could prove very damaging. I want you to track down the thief and return the diary before anything...unfortunate happens.”

Orlando entertains any pertinent questions. Use these likely questions and Orlando’s answers, along with the Adventure Background, to form answers for questions not listed below.

Why was Kovac wanted by the law?

“Kovac performed unsanctioned experiments on citizens of Zobeck in an attempt to create a new form of clockwork life. He was also in league with infernal forces.”

What information in the diary is so dangerous we had to swear to keep it secret?

“The diary contains clues to the location of Kovac’s hidden laboratory in the Cartways. Sealed but not destroyed during the Revolt, it still contains dangerous and forbidden items and lore. The diary also contains information about the contents of Kovac’s lab and the type of abominable experiments he was undertaking.”

That doesn’t sound so dangerous. Are you telling us everything?

“Kovac was the original creator of gearforged, but he used infernal essences and stolen souls to power his creations. Some of his handiwork may remain in the lab or even in the city unbeknownst to the citizens. This information would undermine the confidence of the city in its gearforged and possibly lead to a movement to eliminate them. This is unacceptable.”

The summons mentioned a great reward for our help?

“The city itself will provide you with a substantial reward for your aid, assuming you achieve our goals and the information remains secret. I can offer you 2,000 gp each for your services. Additionally, the Praetors authorized me to offer survivors clemency for past crimes.”

The thief has a 12-hour head start on us. How do we find him?

“I believe the thief intends to follow the clues in the diary in an attempt to find Kovac’s lab, which will slow his progress. I know of a way for you to reach the lab first. The Dragged Woman could show you a route.”

Who is the Dragged Woman, and how will she help us reach Kovac’s lab?

“The members of the Arcane Collegium know of the Dragged Woman. She is the unquiet spirit of a

noblewoman killed during the Revolt. I will tell you how to locate her. She can show you the way to Kovac's lab...for a price."

What is her price?

"The price is never the same, but she has never asked for coin. It has also never been life threatening."

What can we expect to find in Kovac's lab?

"The lab was sealed after Kovac was killed because the rebels who raided it did not want to face what likely still lurked within. I cannot say for certain what you may find, however some of Kovac's twisted creations likely remain."

Before the characters leave his office, Orlando offers a final bit of advice.

"Needless to say, you receive your reward only after you return the diary to me. If this information somehow spreads beyond this office, the Spyglass Guild will know exactly who to look for."

Development: Even if the characters don't ask about the Dragged Woman, Orlando suggests contacting her as a means to reach Kovac's lab quickly. He says they must travel after nightfall to the place of her death near the King's Head Tavern in the Citadel District. There, they must burn a broken fragment of rope soaked in human blood. The light of the rope reveals bloody footprints leading to the Dragged Woman.

PART 2: THE DRAGGED WOMAN

After nightfall, even in the Citadel District, the street lamps are just islands of dim light in seas of darkness. The streets have started to empty as the business of the day concludes and the business of the night has not yet begun. The air is cool but not uncomfortable, perhaps a hint of rain. As you pass the King's Head Tavern, you can hear the already-raucous crowd within, and the trollwife bouncer Peppercorn glares at you suspiciously.

Characters who follow Orlando's directions and manage to locate or create a bloody stump of rope to use as a torch soon discover faint, smeared, bloody footprints leading into a nearby alley.

The air chills the instant you enter the alley, and you can see your breath mist in the air. Ahead, you can make out a hint of movement. After a few cautious steps, you hear a quiet sobbing followed by a wail of despair. The bloody footprints become more and more distinct as you approach. A wild-looking woman with ashen grey skin and rich but tattered clothing slouches toward the end of the alley. A bloody rope hangs from one wrist. When she looks up, the hair falls away from her face, and you feel your blood freeze as you meet her gaze.

The Dragged Woman (see "Faces of Zobeck") can see and smell the bloody rope and knows the characters have purposely sought her out. Those who withstand her gaze earn the right to bargain with her. She has no interest in money or material things, only in causing pain because of all of the pain she suffered at the hands of the mob. She exchanges information or aid for precious memories. The more precious the memory sacrificed, the more aid she provides. She considers memories of first loves, righteous victories, and lost children the most desirable of all. The Dragged Woman allows the characters to tell her of their needs and make an offer before making her demands plain.

The Dragged Woman waives away your offer and pierces you with her burning gaze. "I desire neither coin nor magic, only your joy. I have none and will take the memory of yours. I will consume your memories, lost and gone forever, and the more you value the memory, the greater I shall aid you. What will you forget? A first love? Your only memory of a parent? Choose ... or leave me!

Allow the players to pick appropriate memories and make sure they note them for future reference. Afterwards tell them their characters feel soiled by the touch of her magic and subtly lacking although they can't remember why. The characters suffer 1 level of exhaustion from the experience, but don't reveal this until the characters attempt to make use of their abilities. The sacrifice complete, the Dragged Woman indicates a bricked-up doorway halfway down the alley toward the street. At her gesture it begins to glow a sickly green.

"Hurry. My portal leads as close to your desired location as I may bring you." With a gust of cold wind, she fades into the darkness.

The Dragged Woman is not interested in combat. Although she might subject the characters to her blinding fear ability to test their mettle, it is only meant as a test, not an initiation of combat. If the characters insist on turning the encounter into a battle, the Dragged Woman escapes at the first opportunity. If the characters follow her directions, they enter the portal and find themselves in a long-abandoned section of the Cartways.

Ambush

The sickly green light of the portal fades, plunging the passage into almost total darkness. The only illumination comes from a faint crimson glow far down the tunnel ahead.

After passing through the Dragged Woman's portal, characters emerge inside the long-secret tunnel leading to Kovac's hidden lab, just beyond the door. Assuming the characters can either see in the dark or produce a light, they can investigate their surroundings. There is no sign of the Dragged Woman's portal once its light fades, just a seemingly solid, rough stone wall. With a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation), characters make out the outline of a door. They can tell it was

sealed for a long time but has recently been forced open from the other side. Although it's impossible to be sure, dwarves suspect they are near a frequently traveled section of the Cartways but in a corridor that hasn't been used for a very long time.

Two gearforged assassins wait in hiding (Stealth +6) farther down the passage to make sure no one follows Bogdan and the other cultists. They saw the light of the Dragged Woman's portal and are ready for the characters. The gearforged are fearless, but their primary purpose is to alert Bogdan to intruders. If either falls below 10 hp, it flees to warn the others. Gearforged that escape are in fact slain by the abominations guarding the Broken Portal.

GEARFORGED ASSASSIN (x2)

Medium humanoid (gearforged), neutral evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 91 (14d8 + 28)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	17 (+3)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Dex +6, Con +5

Skills Perception +4, Stealth +6

TO THE LAB



A = Gearforged Assassins
P = Dragged Woman's Portal

1 Square = 5 Ft

Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities poisoned
Senses passive Perception 14
Languages Common, Machine Speech
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Assassinate. During its first turn in combat, the gearforged assassin has advantage on attack rolls against any creature that hasn't yet taken a turn this combat. Any hit the gearforged assassin scores against a surprised creature is a critical hit.

Constructed Nature. The gearforged assassin doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep. The gearforged assassin can't drink potions or gain benefits that come from drinking, eating, or inhaling vapors.

Evasion. If the gearforged assassin is subjected to an effect that allows it to make a Dexterity saving throw to take half damage, the gearforged assassin instead takes no damage if it succeeds on the saving throw, and only half damage if it fails.

Repairs. The gearforged assassin can't be stabilized when dying with a Wisdom (Medicine) check or *spare the dying*. Instead, a successful DC 10 Intelligence check or a *mending* cantrip is needed. The gearforged assassin regains only one-half the usual number of hit points from spells or magical effects with the words cure, heal, or healing in their titles.

Sneak Attack (1/Turn). The gearforged assassin deals an extra 10 (3d6) damage when it hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of the gearforged assassin that isn't incapacitated and the gearforged assassin doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The gearforged assassin makes two shortsword attacks.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage plus 10 (3d6) poison damage; a successful DC 15 Constitution saving throw halves the poison damage.

Light Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage plus 10 (3d6) poison damage; a successful DC 15 Constitution saving throw halves the poison damage.

PART 3: KOVAC'S LABORATORY

The crimson glow grows brighter as you proceed down the tunnel. After traveling perhaps a hundred yards, you see the light pouring forth from a large gap in the wall. Bronze doors lay on the ground, ripped from their hinges.

.....
If either of the gearforged assassins escaped during Part 2, the characters also see the following.

.....
The metallic form of one of the assassins lies on the floor of the tunnel, perhaps 20 feet from the opening. It appears horribly mauled, as if torn apart by some great force.

1. Broken Portal

.....
Two clockwork abominations wait for anyone approaching the laboratory. They have already dealt with any gearforged assassin that escaped the previous fight. One has pushed itself into a crevice in the wall and one clings to the ceiling. Their positioning and the dim light give them advantage on their Stealth checks. They emerge from hiding and attack if they've obviously been seen or once the characters move between their positions.

.....
A sudden clicking of mechanisms and the scrape of metal on stones reveals a creature pushing forth from a crevice on the side of the tunnel. A second drops with a crash from the ceiling. At first glance they look like some sort of infernal creature, but closer examination reveals the whirring gears, cogs, and cables binding their joints together. These creatures are clockwork, but as their glowing crimson eyes attest, they are like nothing you have ever seen.

.....
At rest, a clockwork abomination resembles a pile of debris and scrap on the ground, but in motion it reveals an insectoid form with smoke rising between the plates of its hide. Its multifaceted eyes shine like deep black gemstones and reveal no hint of expression or intent.

Clockwork abominations result from ill-considered attempts to bind lesser devils into clockwork or steam-driven constructs. The disciplines of devil binding and engineering seemingly don't mix well, and the results of such attempts are typically disastrous. Every now and then, however, something goes right, and a clockwork abomination is created.

Clockwork abominations are canny enough to collect bits of old wagons, tools, or machinery as camouflage. Motionless among such objects, they can often surprise a foe.

Malevolent in the extreme, these fiendish automatons are frustrated by the limits of their new forms, and they delight in inflicting suffering on others. Constantly seeking to break free of their creators' control, the most they can be entrusted to do is to serve as a guardian or attack something.

They know nothing of fear, only duty and programming. These particular units have been ordered to prevent anyone not wearing Kovac's symbol from entering the laboratory. They interpret this order very strictly and stop fighting once a character enters the lab, since they can no longer be prevented from entering at that point.

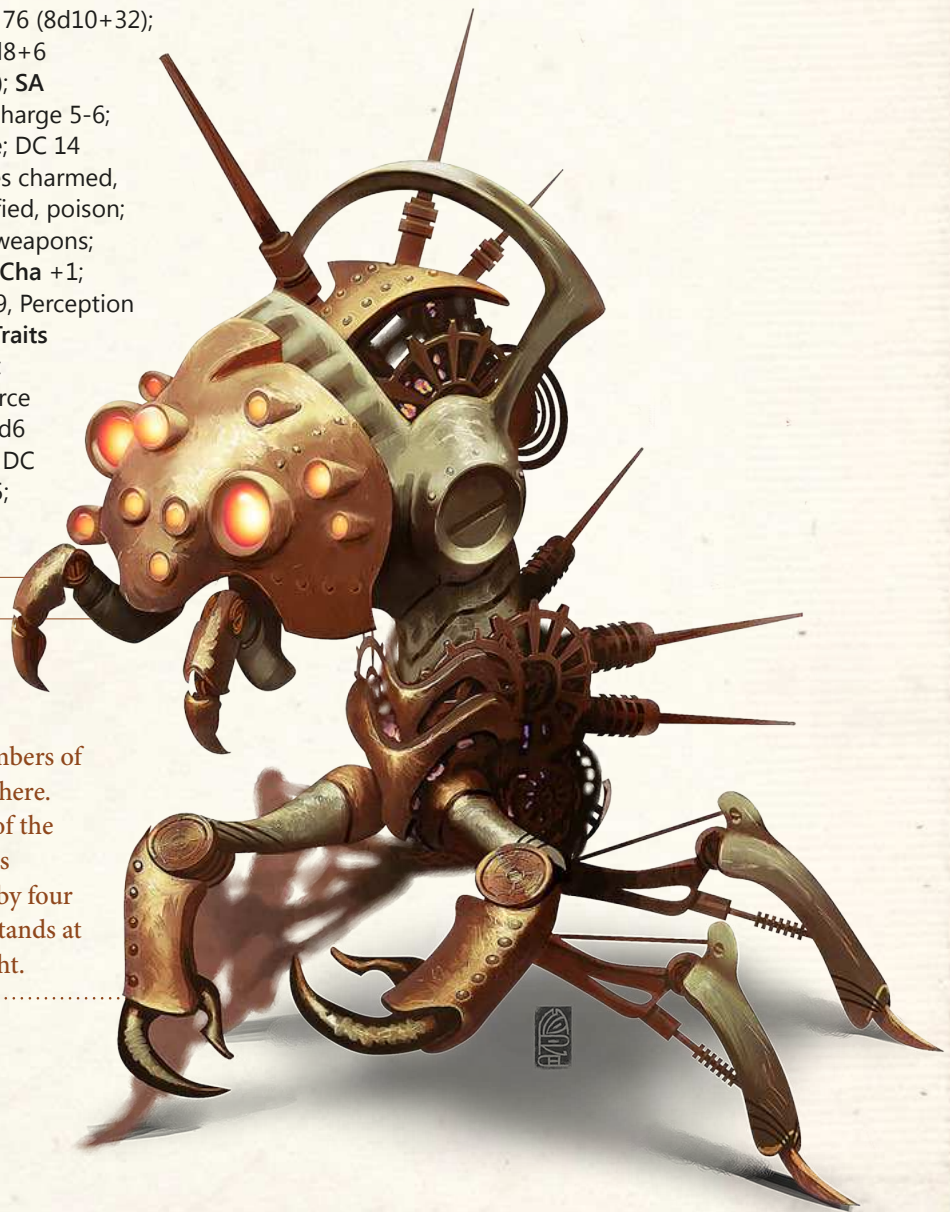
Clockwork Abomination (×2): AC 16; HP 76 (8d10+32); Spd 30 ft, climb 30 ft; **Melee** bite (+9, 2d8+6 piercing), slam (+9, 2d6+6 bludgeoning); SA multiattack (bite + slam), fire breath (recharge 5-6; 20 ft cone; targets in cone take 4d10 fire; DC 14 Dex save halves fire damage); Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poison; **Resistances** acid, cold, fire, nonmagical weapons; **Str** +6, **Dex** +1, **Con** +4, **Int** +0, **Wis** +0, **Cha** +1; **Saves** Dex +4, Con +7; **Skills** Athletics +9, Perception +4, Stealth +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft; **Traits** immutable form (immune to effects that would alter its form), infernal power source (at 0 hp, abomination explodes, doing 4d6 fire damage to all creatures within 10 ft; DC 15 Dex save halves damage); **AL** LE; **CR** 5; **XP** 1,800; see *Tome of Beasts*.

2. Kovac's Workshop

The right side of this large room is filled with intact work benches. The left side is covered in stone and metal rubble. Piles of gears and scrap indicate large numbers of clockwork creatures have been destroyed here. Large stone basins sit in the rear corners of the room, and a grand two-level staircase rises straight ahead to a platform surmounted by four tarnished, bronze pillars. A metal statue stands at attention near the workbenches to the right.

This room was obviously the site of a great battle. Rubble and broken metal bits cover most surfaces. Scorch marks mar several walls. Most of the room is covered in dust and appears long abandoned; however, characters standing in the entrance can discern fresh footprints in the dust leading up the staircase, and large areas of rubble appear to have been moved recently. As soon as anyone enters the room, read:

As soon as you cross the threshold and enter the workshop, a metallic, insectoid form rises and shakes itself free from a pile of debris to the left of the door. The metal statue to the right reveals itself to be a gearforged with glowing crimson eyes. They move toward you menacingly.



Both constructs fight like mindless automatons. The infernal gearforged, however, does not intend to remain the entire battle. Having languished in the lab for 80 years, it flees from the fight at the first opportunity, hoping to escape into the Cartways and gain its freedom.

Treasure: Searching the room yields many interesting items. Because of the chaos, no single check can find more than two items. Either multiple characters need to search, or multiple checks must be made. Allow each searcher to make an Intelligence (Investigation) check. A result of 12-17 finds one item on the list below; a result of 18 or higher finds two items.

- A rotting bag filled with clockwork caltrops on one of the work benches (see below).
- A bag of spring-operated jaw traps on top of one of the rubble piles.
- The skeletal remains of Kovac under a pile of rubble.
- 4 flasks of alchemist's fire near the empty stone basin.
- A short (6 inches) metal rod with a gear on the end of it near the bottom of the stairs (Kovac's Key; see area 3).
- An unidentifiable but nonetheless fascinating mechanical object under the remains of a destroyed clockwork abomination; it's worth 150 gp to someone who studies clockwork items.
- A *wand of acid arrow* made from the claw of a black dragon, at the bottom of the acid pool at the right rear of the room. The wand can hold 7 charges, and it regains 1d6 + 1 charges every day at dawn.

Development: If characters spend too much time lingering in this room, the assassins in the hallway might appear on the platform and shoot arrows at the characters before withdrawing and shutting the door behind them.

Speak with dead doesn't work if cast on Kovac's remains. Bogdan cast the spell on Kovac within the last few hours.

Clockwork Caltrops

Clockwork caltrops resemble and work like regular caltrops with the following exceptions. A bag of clockwork caltrops covers an area 10 feet square (100 square feet) instead of 5 feet square, because they hop around erratically once activated. To work, they must first be activated; this involves using an action to shake the bag vigorously. The caltrops remain active for 10 minutes afterward. If they're spread without being activated, treat them exactly as normal caltrops.

INFERNAL GEARFORGED

Medium humanoid (fiend, gearforged), lawful evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 102 (12d8 + 48)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Str +6, Con +7

Damage Resistances cold, fire; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons that aren't silvered

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Dwarven, Infernal, Machine Speech

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Constructed Nature. The infernal gearforged doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep. The infernal gearforged can't drink potions or gain benefits that come from drinking, eating, or inhaling vapors.

Devil's Sight. Magical darkness doesn't impede the infernal gearforged's darkvision.

Magic Resistance. The infernal gearforged has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Repairs. The infernal gearforged can't be stabilized when dying with a Wisdom (Medicine) check or *spare the dying*. Instead, a successful DC 10 Intelligence check or a *mending* cantrip is needed. The infernal gearforged regains only one-half the usual number of hit points from spells or magical effects with the words cure, heal, or healing in their titles.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The infernal gearforged makes two maul attacks. Alternatively, it can use Hurl Flame twice.

Maul. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

Hurl Flame. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +5 to hit, range 150 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) fire damage. If the target is a flammable object that isn't being worn or carried, it also catches fire.

Clockwork Abomination: AC 16; HP 76 (8d10+32); Spd 30 ft, climb 30 ft; **Melee** bite (+9, 2d8+6 piercing), slam (+9, 2d6+6 bludgeoning); **SA** multiattack (bite + slam), fire breath (recharge 5-6; 20 ft cone; targets in cone take 4d10 fire; DC 14 Dex save halves fire damage); Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poison; **Resistances** acid, cold, fire,

nonmagical weapons; Str +6, Dex +1, Con +4, Int +0, Wis +0, Cha +1; **Saves** Dex +4, Con +7; **Skills** Athletics +9, Perception +4, Stealth +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft; **Traits** immutable form (immune to effects that would alter its form), infernal power source (at 0 hp, abomination explodes, doing 4d6 fire damage to all creatures within 10 ft; DC 15 Dex save halves damage); **AL** LE; **CR** 5; **XP** 1,800; see *Tome of Beasts*.

3. Pillared Platform

At the top of the stairs is a platform 25 feet long and 10 feet deep. A metal door stands closed on the wall directly ahead. On each corner of the platform, intricate bronze pillars extend to the ceiling 10 feet above.

The pillars are decorated with a mechanical motif of gears and chains interspersed with representations of clockwork creatures.

Searching with a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals a small, irregularly shaped hole in the door. Two of the pillars are actually clockwork traps. If the door is opened without Kovac's key, a section of each trapped pillar begins spinning and whipping chains across the platform.

Swinging Chain Trap

Mechanical trap

The fact that the door lock is trapped can be detected with a close inspection of the lock and a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check. The fact that two pillars incorporate actual mechanical devices in their clockwork motifs can be detected with close inspection of the pillars and a successful DC 17 Intelligence (Investigation) check. The trap is triggered by trying to unlock the door without Kovac's key. When it's triggered, two pillars begin spinning, slinging chains across the entirety of the platform. Every creature on the platform takes 16 (3d10) bludgeoning damage, or half damage with a successful DC 13 Dexterity check; if the check succeeds, the creature also drops prone. After the initial attack, every creature that starts its turn on the platform while not prone must repeat the saving throw, with the same consequences for success and failure. The trap can't be disarmed or bypassed at the lock, but ropes tied tightly around the pillars can prevent the chains from swinging out, if that portion of the trap was discovered. Once it's triggered, the trap remains active for 1 minute (10 rounds) before the chains reel back into the pillars and the trap resets.

4. Hallway

Two gearforged assassins wait in the hallway beyond the platform. If the trap goes off, the assassins surprise the characters as they come through the door. If they open the door without triggering the chains (which are very noisy), the gearforged are automatically surprised. Either of these gearforged try to escape to inform Bogdan of intruders if their hit points drop below 20.

Gearforged Assassin (x2): AC 15; **HP** 91 (14d8+28); **Spd** 30 ft; **Melee** shortsword (+6, 1d6+3 piercing plus 3d6 poison; DC 15 Con save halves poison), light crossbow (+6, 80 ft/320 ft, 1d8+3 piercing plus 3d6 poison; DC 15 Con save halves poison); **SA** multiattack (shortsword x2); **Immune** poison; **Str** +1, **Dex** +3, **Con** +2, **Int** +0, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +0; **Saving Throws** Dex +6, Con +5; **Skills** Perception +4, Stealth +6; **Traits** assassinate (has advantage on attack rolls if target hasn't taken a turn this combat; any hit against a surprised target is a critical hit), constructed nature (doesn't need air, food, drink, or sleep; can't benefit from potions), evasion (if a save reduces damage by half, gearforged assassin takes no damage on success, half on failure), repairs (regains only half the usual number of hp from magic with cure, heal, or healing in titles), sneak attack (1/turn; does +3d6 damage with weapon attacks when gearforged assassin has advantage on attack or when a nonincapacitated ally is within 5 ft of target); **AL** NE; **CR** 5; **XP** 1,800.

5. Parts/Storage

Rusting and abandoned metal tools and parts fill this room. Gears litter the floor, and jars filled with cloudy fluid rest precariously on several crumbling shelves.

Characters who investigate the jars find they contain the mangled, barely-recognizable forms of various creatures such as rats, cats, and dogs. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) check identifies one of the creatures as a sprite. Someone dissected the corpses, replacing body parts—arms, legs, and even internal organs—with clockwork parts.

6. Kovac's Study

This room is obviously the office of a studious person. The walls are lined with bookshelves, and a large desk dominates the center of the room. It appears that no one has been here for a very long time, however, as everything is covered under decades of dust and crumbling with age. A closed door to the right provides the only other exit from the room.


KOVAC'S LAB



KEY

IG = Infernal Gearforged
 CA = Clockwork Abomination
 B = Bogdan

1 Square = 5 Ft

 = Clockwork Pillar Trap

Everything in the room is rotting after 80 years of neglect. The books crumble into flakes if opened, and the desk collapses under 100 pounds of weight. The only things still functional in the room are several small wind-up toys made from mithral, shoved into the back of a desk drawer. The clockworks are intricate, beautiful, and worth 500 gp all together.

7. Kovac's Quarters

This room contains a partially-collapsed, rotting bed, a dresser, and a wardrobe. What really catches your eye when you open the door, however, is the gearforged standing near the far wall. Its face is painted red, and its hollow, metallic voice cackles with insane glee.

The floor just inside the door is trapped with a *glyph of warding*. It can be spotted only with a careful inspection

of the floor and a successful DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check. The trap is triggered by anyone stepping on the floor inside the room, within 5 feet of the doorway. When the glyph explodes, every creature within 20 feet of the doorway takes 5d8 thunder damage, or half damage with a successful DC 16 Dexterity saving throw.

The gearforged with its face painted red is Bogdan. He wears a holy symbol of Marena the Red openly; the symbol is recognized by anyone with proficiency in Religion or who's seen it before. Bogdan calls out in Machine Speech for Marena to smite the characters. If the trap on the Pillared Platform (area 3) went off, or if any gearforged escaped from previous encounters, Bogdan has had time to cast several spells in preparation for this meeting. Any surviving cultists are also here, on the far side of the room and out of range of the *glyph of warding*.

Bogdan is insane and tends to talk to himself, or perhaps his goddess, during combat. He loudly proclaims any or all of the following during the fight with the characters.

- The lab and its secrets are his and only his.
- Gearforged are an abomination and an affront to Marena. They should be dead, not living on in some metal shell.
- He wants to be destroyed so he can join his goddess.
- He wants to destroy all gearforged so they can join his goddess.
- Kovac's research will allow him to end the creation of gearforged forever.

Bogdan might be insane, but he fights intelligently. The *glyph of warding* on the floor was his handiwork. If he had warning the characters were coming or has time during the fight, he casts *shield of faith* on himself. He casts *cloudkill* wherever it can do the most harm (since he's immune to its effect) and probably will hit the first creature to come through the cloud with *contagion*.

Bogdan has nowhere to run, so he fights to the death.

Treasure: Besides Bogdan's +1 *flaming flail* and +1 *breastplate*, Kovac's diary can be found in Bogdan's pouch.

BOGDAN THE INSANE

Medium humanoid (gearforged), lawful evil

Armor Class 16 (+1 *breastplate*)

Hit Points 130 (20d8 + 40)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	9 (-1)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Dex +3, Con +5, Wis +7, Cha +5

Skills Athletics +5, Perception +7

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 17

Languages Common, Machine Speech

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Constructed Nature. Bogdan doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep. Bogdan can't drink potions or gain benefits that come from drinking, eating, or inhaling vapors.

Divine Strike. Bogdan can infuse his weapon strikes with necrotic energy. Once on each of Bogdan's turns

when he hits a creature with a weapon attack, he can cause the attack to deal an extra 1d8 necrotic damage to the target (included below).

Inescapable Destruction. Necrotic damage dealt by Bogdan's cleric spells and Channel Divinity options ignores resistance to necrotic damage.

Reaper. When Bogdan casts a necromancy cantrip that normally targets only one creature, the spell can instead target two creatures within range and within 5 feet of each other.

Repairs. Bogdan can't be stabilized when dying with a Wisdom (Medicine) check or spare the dying. Instead, a successful DC 10 Intelligence check or a *mending* cantrip is needed. Bogdan regains only one-half the usual number of hit points from spells or magical effects with the words cure, heal, or healing in their titles.

Spellcasting. Bogdan is an 8th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks). Bogdan has the following cleric spells prepared.

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch*, *mending*, *resistance*, *thaumaturgy*

1st Level (4 slots): *bane*, *command*, *false life*, *ray of sickness*, *shield of faith*

2nd Level (3 slots): *blindness/deafness*, *hold person*, *lesser restoration*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *silence*

3rd Level (3 slots): *animate dead*, *dispel magic*, *glyph of warding* (already cast), *vampiric touch*

4th Level (3 slots): *blight*, *death ward*, *divination*, *freedom of movement*, *guardian of faith*

5th Level (1 slot): *antilife shell*, *cloudkill*, *contagion*

ACTIONS

+1 Flaming Flail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage plus 3 (1d6) fire damage.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

The characters must return the stolen diary to Orlando at the Arcane Collegium if they want their reward. Orlando pays 2,000 gp to each surviving character and has a letter of clemency stamped by the Lord Mayor for anyone who requested it, forgiving him or her of all prior crimes and misdeeds. Of course, if the characters don't return the diary or if the information it contains somehow spreads to the public, the characters become wanted criminals. Either way, they know the authorities are watching them.

REBUILDING A GOOD MAN

By Matthew Stinson

*How much evil should be done for the greater good?
How many sinful men should die to save a pure soul?*

Rebuilding a Good Man is an urban adventure for four 9th-level PCs.

Background

The osyluth Nyerta and other slaves have come to Zobeck under orders from their master, a king of the eastern lands who wishes to place all his wives into golden clockwork bodies. He sent Nyerta to Zobeck to steal a gearforged body as an alpha blueprint for his golem-crafters and powder-men, without Zobeck's leaders knowing of the deed. Nyerta approached the Painted Man, whom she knows from past dealings, and used old pacts to force the master of the Black Lotus to aid her. No one makes the Painted Man a servant, however. Though bound by arcane laws not to strike against the osyluth directly, the Painted Man plans to pull down his new "master" with a whisper.

After a life of good deeds, Heet Nul is dying. After starting with one river barge 65 years ago, Heet now owns a small flotilla of trading vessels along with warehouses, store fronts, and offices.

The Nul Shipping Company has become well-loved by the poor, as it sponsors many soup kitchens, orphanages, and job fairs. All that will end when Heet passes away and his black-hearted grandson Remmee Nul takes ownership. That is, unless Heet's company manager and close friend Michul Obbin can get the characters to help him with his unorthodox plan.

The week Heet took to his bed, the Painted Man approached Heet's heartbroken friend Michul. While purchasing passage to smuggle Nyerta and her men downriver after the heist, he "accidentally" let slip too much information about the theft. Cunningly, he gave the desperate Michul the idea of defeating Nyerta's men and stealing the gearforged body so it can house Heet's soul, and made Michul think the idea was his own. The next morning Michul calls on the PCs for help.

Synopsis

After accepting Michul's proposal, the PCs acquire the gearforged body to help the poor of Zobeck by robbing foreign thieves. The PCs confront these thieves as they return to the Black Lotus while Nyerta is engaged with the Painted Man. After bringing the construct to Michul at Heet's bedside, however,

they discover the body is incomplete, and the PCs must quickly search all over Zobeck for the materials to finish it and place Heet's soul inside before he inevitably passes away.

The PCs must go in many directions to gather what they need in a hurry; first kidnapping the drunken gearsmith Shean Dulak at the Silk Scabbard while being hounded by bully boys sent by Heet's grandson Remmee, then crashing an upscale party at Hommal's botanical rooftop and robbing him of plant oils needed by Shean, and finally to the Cartways Black Market and the alchemist shop of Joony Verasso to gather last minute items while being hunted by Nyerta. The longer the PCs take, the less chance the weakened soul will have to enter the gearforged body. During the soul transfer, Remmee Nul comes to end his grandfather's life, but must get through the PCs first.


Hooks

At the beginning of this adventure, Michul contacts the characters for help based on any number of reasons.

- The PCs have gained a reputation for accomplishing impossible jobs.
- One of the PCs is related to Michul or the Nul family.
- The PCs have been helped by Nul Shipping Company charities earlier in their lives.
- The PCs have aided Nul Shipping Company before with delicate matters.
- Remmee Nul is a hated enemy.
- A PC owes a debt to the Painted Man and this "favor" is the payment.

PART 1: STEALING STOLEN GEARS

Michul approaches the PCs through one of Zobeck's confidential messenger companies, likely the Masters of Small Matters. A successful DC 13 Intelligence check tells them everything they want to know about Nul Shipping, including Heet's reputation among the poor. If the check succeeds by 5 or more, the character also identifies Michul as Heet's associate and friend.



The PCs meet Michul at a small Nul company office at the docks. Michul explains that his master Heet Nul is dying from old age and his physicians don't expect him to live out the night. He then explains his plan to the PCs, to remove Heet's soul and place it within a gearforged body, a body that is going to be stolen by a group of foreign thieves this very night. Michul does not know where the thieves are acquiring the body in the Gear District, but he knows that they are bringing it to the Black Lotus in Lower Zobeck and suggests the PCs ambush them there.

Unsure of the Painted Man's level of involvement or power, Michul stresses not making an enemy of him if possible. Michul is very upset, a combination of grief and agitation over the mission. He does not mention Remmee Nul nor his relationship to the situation unless pressed; Michul believes that swift action will get everything done before Remmee can find out.

Ambush at the Black Lotus

It's just before midnight, and a cold, wet mist thickens the air. The streetlamp near the front of the Black Lotus blankets the building in a soft yellow light, but even just three feet away, the street lies under large and heavy shadows. Some City Watch passed a few minutes ago, but no one else seems to be about, the damp air and chill keeping them indoors.

To distract Nyerta, the Painted Man has taken her and some of her followers to the ship Michul has falsely given them to make their getaway. He times this perfectly using *divination*, so the PCs will not see him or Nyerta unless they go to the ship. There he seduces the devil in the captain's cabin, so she will not make it back to the Black Lotus for an hour or more.

Nyerta has entrusted the actual theft to several of her master's mortal minions. The jade mouth servants are slaves who follow orders without question. They speak only when spoken to by their masters, which in Zobeck is only Nyerta. They don't fear death, only the rebuke of their masters. Their traditional dress involves covering their upper faces with a porcelain mask and capping their teeth in jade.

The grand king secretly sent the slave efreeti Lasif along with Nyerta to ensure the mission's success. Posing as one of the jade mouth servants, no one in the group, including Nyerta, knows Lasif's true power.

Rounds 1, 2, and 3

At the Black Lotus, one **jade mouth servant** keeps watch from a window in room 3 for the others to return, bow in hand. (Feel free to sketch out nearby buildings and rooftops for this encounter, as they might come into play.)

Round Event

- | Round | Event |
|-------|--|
| 1 | Two jade mouth servants leap to the roof of the Black Lotus from the top of a nearby building. One servant carries the arms and legs of the gearforged body on his back. The other carries the head and torso. |
| 2 | One servant climbs down to the windowsill of room 4 and enters the Black Lotus. |
| 3 | The second servant follows the first from the roof through the window, as Lasif leaps onto the roof. |

Lasif and the jade mouth servant standing watch try to hold off the PCs as the other two go after Nyerta, who they believe is in the basement of the Black Lotus. Upon discovering their devil master gone, they try to flee to the ship.

The sounds of combat, displays of power, and cries of the wounded cause the neighborhood people to peer out windows and doorways to see what's going on. Some will go to fetch the Watch, who arrive in ten minutes. Lasif flees if she falls below 20 hit points or if the Watch arrive.

Lasif is a standard efreeti, but with an additional trait:

Disguise (3/Day): Lasif can cast *true polymorph* on herself as an action, requiring no material components. The duration is indefinite, but she can only use the ability three times per day. She can revert to her true form as a bonus action. If she dies, she reverts to her true form. Any objects she is carrying are transformed or not, as she prefers.

Lasif's slave contract means she can't *plane shift* without permission. She has used her Disguise ability to appear as a human, and refrains from using her *wall of fire* near the Black Lotus. Once she discovers Nyerta isn't inside, however, she will use *wall of fire* to help the jade mouth servants escape with the gearforged parts and then enter melee.

While jumping across rooftops, the jade mouth servants attack PCs with poison arrows while trying to make off with the gearforged parts. These expert thieves follow their master's orders absolutely, never fearing pain or death. Along with 50 feet of rope, a

grappling hook, and their silvered daggers, each jade mouth servant also carries a *potion of invisibility* which they'll use if it could help them to escape.

If one of the jade mouth servants gets away, the PCs find him and a number of City Watchmen dead just down the street, having killed each other. Witnesses will see the PCs loot the gearforged body parts and report them to the Spyglass Guild as "involved" in the guards' deaths, causing problems for them later. If Lasif escapes, she is not found but returns to Nyerta defeated and without the body. Any time spent chasing down the fleeing thieves wastes time that Heet does not have; add a 4% failure chance to the soul transfer process.

Treasure. Each jade mouth servant carries 5 poisoned arrows, a silvered dagger, 1 *potion of invisibility*, 50 feet of silk rope, a grappling hook, and 11 gp in mixed coins. Their teeth are capped with jade; a mouthful is worth 55 gp.

Lasif (efreeti): AC 17; HP 200 (16d10+112); Spd 40 ft, fly 60 ft; **Melee** scimitar (+10, 2d6+6 slashing plus 2d6 fire); **Ranged** hurl flame (+7, 120 ft, 5d6 fire); **SA** Multiattack (scimitar x2 or hurl flame x2); **Immune** fire; **Str** +6, **Dex** +1, **Con** +7, **Int** +3, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +3; **Saving Throws** Int +7, Wis +6, Cha +7; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft; **Traits** elemental demise (body disintegrates when efreeti dies), disguise (3/day; can cast *true polymorph* on self as an action; duration until dispelled or Lasif dismisses effect); **AL** LE; **CR** 11; **XP** 7,200.

Innate Spellcasting (+7, DC 15): at will—*detect magic*; 3/day—*enlarge/reduce, tongues*; 1/day each—*conjure elemental* (fire elemental only), *gaseous form, invisibility, major image, plane shift, wall of fire*.

JADE MOUTH SERVANT (x3)

Medium humanoid (human), lawful evil

Armor Class 15 (unarmored defense)

Hit Points 71 (13d8 + 13)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	8 (-1)

Saving Throws Dex +5

Skills Acrobatics +7, Stealth +5

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Common

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Evasion. If the jade mouth servant is subjected to an effect that allows a Dexterity saving throw to take only

half damage, she takes no damage if her saving throw succeeds and half damage if it fails.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Jade Mouth servant makes two unarmed strikes or one shortbow or dagger attack.

Unarmed Strike. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage plus 10 (3d6) poison damage, or half poison damage with a successful DC 11 Constitution saving throw.

Silvered Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage.


PART 2: PLACING MANY PARTS

The job seems finished after delivering the gearforged body to Michul at the dock office. Michul becomes frantic, however, when a quick inspection of the body reveals it's missing fluids and a large chest piece, along with being mostly disassembled. Michul will need a gearsmith to assess what needs doing, and it must be someone whose reputation is already so damaged that they have nothing to lose by handling the stolen gearforged body. Michul knows of only one such engineer: Shean Dulak.

Just a few months ago, Dulak was the most promising gearcrafter of the new generation. However, when a guard killed Shean's friend at the Dwarven Gate over a minor disagreement and then was released without punishment after a sham investigation of the event, the engineer vowed revenge. A short time later, every clockwork guard Shean had ever worked on attacked and killed the man. The gearforged guards had no memory of the murder and no one could prove that Shean had a hand in it. Nevertheless, other engineers were certain he was guilty, and that was enough to destroy his reputation. Private individuals and the city's government couldn't trust Shean not to tamper with any gearforged.

He now drinks himself into a stupor nightly at the Silk Scabbard. Michul needs the PCs to fetch Shean from the Silk Scabbard, willingly or otherwise. Michul gives the PCs 500 gp to pay Shean for one night's work, but stresses speed. Heet is running out of time.

Unfortunately, one of Michul's underlings is an informant for the Jayzel. Jayzel knows all of Michul's dealings and in turn has been selling that information to Remmee Nul. The underling chooses this time to escape, and Jayzel quickly learns of everything up to this point. She sells the knowledge even more quickly.



Remmee, who terribly wants his inheritance, is enraged by the news of the gearforged body for his grandfather and sends some highly skilled cutthroats to the Silk Scabbard to take care of the PCs and Shean Dulak.

Leaving the Silk Scabbard

The thick-armed, wide-shouldered bouncer openly holds his sap with his arms crossed. The room smells of wine, sweat, and smoke, and half-clothed women lounge around the place in exotic poses. A gaggle of greasy patrons crowd the edge of the fighting pits and the viewing rail above, cheering for blood.

The midnight crowd is in full swing. Shean is at a small table near the fighting pits and very drunk. At first he refuses to go with the PCs, but then asks them to get him back in Madam Kajya's good graces. A week ago, Shean drunkenly tripped and fell, hurting one of the Scabbard's more popular prostitutes, and Kajya cut him off from the girls. He wants the PCs to fix that. If they can get him into the back rooms, he will leave with them for 300 gp.

Shean Dulak has the stats of a standard noble, but because of his drunkenness, he is poisoned for the next hour.

Madam Kajya can be persuaded to let Shean in through the back entrance with a really good argument or with a successful DC 18 Charisma (Persuasion) check. Unfortunately, Shean tries drunkenly to talk to Madam Kajya along with the PCs. If they don't shut him up quickly, they have disadvantage on any Charisma checks with Kajya, as she dislikes drunks in general and Shean in particular. Letting Shean inside for a romp uses up extra time and adds a 4% failure chance to the soul transfer ritual.

Taking Shean out by force is much quicker, but if the PCs make a scene, the Scabbard's bouncer (Atsen: LN human male gladiator) bans them from the Silk Scabbard indefinitely. Drunk as he is, Shean will not fight back, but he yells and makes a loud show as the PCs drag him out, unless the PCs threaten to kill him, in which case he shuts up at once.

Two of Remmee's cutthroats (gladiators) are inside the bar near the door and two are in the street. When the PCs and Shean appear ready to leave, the group inside signals their friends, and they all drink their *potions of invisibility*. They attack as the PCs leave, trapping them in the doorway. Once the fight moves out of the doorway, the cutthroats focus their attacks against the least-armored PC. The last cutthroat standing flees back to report to Remmee.

Development: Once Shean reaches the office, he looks over the gearforged body and gets to work, strangely excited about doing his job again. He explains as he works that the needed spells were forged into the parts and runes placed upon them. A gearforged, in its simplest definition, is a thousand tiny magic items placed together. He makes a list of what he needs to finish the body and complete the soul transfer: a clockwork heart, oil from the belladonna plant, and 10 *potions of false life* to be administered to Heet during the hour-long ritual.

Acquiring these things in the middle of the night seems unlikely without tipping off the Spyglass Guild that Michul and the PCs have the stolen the gearforged body, but Shean thinks he knows where the PCs can get everything.

Remembering that Heet could pass at any moment, the PCs might feel the need to split up, which speeds up the process but makes the adventure much harder. If they decide to split up to gather items, subtract 15% from the failure chance of the soul transfer ritual.

Shean Dulak (Noble): AC 15; HP 9 (2d8); Spd 30 ft; Melee rapier (+3, 1d8+1 piercing); Str +0, Dex +1, Con +0, Int +1, Wis +2, Cha +3; Skills Deception +5, Insight +4, Persuasion +5; Traits drunk (treat as poisoned); AL any; CR 1/8; XP 25.

Remmee's Cutthroats (x4; Veteran): AC 17; HP 58 (9d8+18); Spd 30 ft; Melee longsword x2 (+5, 1d8+3 slashing); shortsword (+5, 1d6+3 piercing); Ranged heavy crossbow (+3, 100 ft/400 ft, 1d10 piercing); SA multiattack (longsword x2, shortsword); Str +3, Dex +1, Con +2, Int +0, Wis +0, Cha +0; Skills Athletics +5, Perception +2; AL CN; CR 3; XP 700.

Joony's Potions & Powders

Michul knows of a potion shop that would not mind opening in the middle of the night. Joony's Potions & Powders, a small establishment, has fallen on hard times since the owner's son fell ill. Everyone knows Joony has spent most of the shops' funds on healing for the boy.

Even now, in the middle of the night, a light burns behind the curtained windows of Joony's Potions & Powders. The wooden sign squeaks as it slowly swings in the cold wind. Inside, Joony sits at his alchemist station behind the counter, brewing up something that smells caustic. He welcomes you with a smile and asks how he may help you this night. His son holds a ratty stuffed bear as he sleeps restlessly in a corner.

Joony Verasso will gladly tell the PCs all his troubles. Trolls killed his wife the last time he brought wares to smaller towns in the far north, and his son Carlen would have died as well if not for Joony's alchemical fire. Carlen took sick on the return trip and became bedridden. Though various priests and alchemists in Zobeck have tried healing him, Carlen always becomes sick again within days. Joony is at a loss, and has gone broke from constantly caring for his son.

To help pay the bills, Joony will try and sell the PCs diluted *potions of false life* at the regular potion's full price, using his Charisma (Deception) skill (+6) to lie to the PCs. If the PCs fail to detect the deception, they see only that Joony is terribly worried about his son, which is true. He will not cheat the PCs if they offer to heal his son. Once the PCs have the potions, a little study and a successful DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals the dilution. If they pass any of these checks and call him out, Joony protests for a moment but quickly admits the falsehood, saying he wouldn't have cheated the characters, but needs the money for his son. He then replaces the diluted potions with full-strength potions from behind the counter.

Young Carlen has troll worm cough caused by spores from mushrooms that grow in troll dung in the far north. This disease is practically unknown in Zobeck, so no one knows how to treat it. These spores take root in the fur of passing animals; the pelt of such an animal was eventually used in making Carlen's toy bear, which he sleeps with every night. A careful inspection of Carlen's toys and a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Medicine) check reveals tiny bits of troll worm fungus growing on the bear. All of Carlen's personal items (including the bear) must be burned, or no amount of treatment will prevent the disease from recurring. If PCs cure young Carlen but don't destroy the bear, he sickens again within days and Joony accuses them of being charlatans.

If PCs leave Joony's with the diluted *potions of false life*, Shean discovers the mistake just before the soul transfer ritual starts. Using these or fetching new potions adds a 10% failure chance to the ritual. If the PCs return to Joony's and explain, he repents of his trickery and shamefacedly hands over the needed potions.

PCs should get an experience bonus of 2,000 XP if they cure Carlen and burn the toy bear.

To Have a Heart

Shean sold a clockwork heart to Nake Boan of the Merchant Consortium in the Cartways Black Market when he realized he was going to be fired, and directs the PCs there. The Cartways Black Market does most of its business at night, since it requires torches and lanterns anyway, and the customers are usually running a business or working during the day. Shean believes Boan will still have the heart, given that only a few months have passed and the item is terribly expensive.

Michul gives the PCs 10,000 gp for the part but lets them know this will greatly hurt the Nul Shipping Company and its community projects. Also, if they spend this money and Heet is not saved, Remmee will not only kill them (which he plans to do anyway) but will go after all those close to the PCs, looking for compensation. He insists that they should try to haggle with Nake Boan, and clumsily hints that he'd give them 5 percent of the saved money if they outright stole the needed part. Shean gives the PCs a password for Nake's customers for the gate guard: "Paradise."

Entering the Cartways Black Market, a thousand smells hit you all at once; spices, filth, perfumes, and kobold cooking overwhelms your nose. Pale lanterns of every color light the tents, wagons, and shanties, and the warm, thick air is a welcome change from the wet mist outside. Enslaved whores wearing thick iron chains watch a column of porters with heavy baskets step over a body still trickling blood in the thoroughfare.

When the PCs arrive, **Nake Boan** is half asleep in his dimly-lit tent (Area 7) and talking to a broad-shouldered man in fine clothes and a shirt of rings, **Radu Underhill**. Underhill will remain for the negotiations, posing as Nake's guard. Nake allows only two PCs inside the tent at a time. He offers them the clockwork heart for 15,000 gp, but increases the price to 20,000 gp if the PCs reveal that they must have it tonight.

A successful DC 16 Charisma (Persuasion) check brings the price down by 3,000 gp, but only persuasive roleplaying will lower it further. Nake is willing to take magic items as part of his payment. He also offers an alternative deal: If the PCs accept the Merchant Consortium's guard duties on the watch platforms for the next two years, he'll sell the heart for 7,000 gp and will get Market "Mayor" Vukas himself to write up the blood contract.

If threats are made, Nake simply rings a small gong, and guards (4 veterans) arrive in 3 rounds. If he's

attacked and doesn't have a chance to ring for help, **Nake** cowers and tells the PCs to take whatever they want. If a fight lasts more than 3 rounds, the guards arrive anyway. PCs who haven't killed **Nake** and who don't resist the guards are just escorted out of the Black Market and warned not to come back. Otherwise, the guards attack.

Nake Boan (Noble): AC 15; HP 9 (2d8); Spd 30 ft; **Melee** rapier (+3, 1d8+1 piercing); **Str** +0, **Dex** +1, **Con** +0, **Int** +1, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +3; **Skills** Deception +5, Insight +4, Persuasion +5; **AL** CN; **CR** 1/8; **XP** 25.

Black Market Guards (×4, Veteran): AC 17; HP 58 (9d8+18); Spd 30 ft; **Melee** longsword x2 (+5, 1d8+3 slashing); shortsword (+5, 1d6+3 piercing); **Ranged** heavy crossbow (+3, 100 ft/400 ft, 1d10 piercing); **SA** multiattack (longsword x2, shortsword); **Str** +3, **Dex** +1, **Con** +2, **Int** +0, **Wis** +0, **Cha** +0; **Skills** Athletics +5, Perception +2; **AL** LN; **CR** 3; **XP** 700.

Radu Underhill

Radu listens in on the PC's exchange with **Nake Boan**. **Nake** knows **Radu's** line of work and doesn't seem to mind. If a fight breaks out, however, **Radu** doesn't get involved anyway, on either side. He will protect himself if he is attacked and flees with an *invisibility* spell if he drops below 28 hp. If attacked, **Radu** goes out of his way in the future to hound the PCs, to spy on them for their enemies, and to persuade merchants in the Black Market and Lower Zobeck to jack up their prices for the PCs by as much as 100%, if they sell to them at all.

Nyerta and her remaining 4 **jade mouth servants** are also in the Cartways Black Market, looking for clockwork parts. They spot the PCs while exiting the Merchant Consortium's tent from the other side of the guard platform. After violently questioning witnesses of the battle outside the Black Lotus, **Nyerta** recognizes the PCs and attacks.

Nyerta uses her *Etherealness* ability to maneuver near and attack any obvious spellcasters in the group. One **jade mouth servant** climbs on something high and makes ranged attacks against the PCs with poison arrows while the other three enter melee.

If **Lasif** is still alive, she attacks whoever hurt her most during their last battle. If the PCs did not start trouble with **Nake**, the guards help them in this fight, focusing ranged attacks on one **jade mouth servant** at a time. Otherwise, the guards only enter the fight after one side has clearly lost, when they attack the winning group. Any survivors are cast into the Cartways to fend for themselves.

Nyerta (Succubus): AC 15; HP 66 (12d8+12); Spd 30 ft, fly 60 ft; **Melee** claw (fiend form only; +5, 1d6+3 slashing); **SA** charm (30 ft; 1 humanoid; DC 15 Wis save or charmed for 24 hrs; maximum 1 creature charmed at a time), draining kiss (kisses a charmed creature; 5d10+5 psychic damage, halved by DC 15 Con save; max HPs reduced by amount of damage until after long rest), *etherealness* (enters or exits the Ethereal Plane as an action); **Resist** cold, fire, lightning, poison, nonmagical weapons; **Str** -1, **Dex** +3, **Con** +1, **Int** +2, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +5; **Skills** Deception +9, Insight +5, Perception +5, Persuasion +9, Stealth +7; **Senses**



darkvision 60 ft, telepathy 60 ft; **Traits** telepathic bond (ignores range of telepathy with charmed creatures), shapechanger (can polymorph into S or M humanoid or back to true form as an action; equipment isn't transformed); **AL** NE; **CR** 4; **XP** 1,100.

Jade Mouth Servant (x4): **AC** 15; **HP** 71 (13d8+13); **Spd** 40 ft; **Melee** unarmed strike (+5, 1d4+3 bludgeoning), silver dagger (+5, 1d4+3 piercing); **Ranged** shortbow (+5, 80 ft/320 ft, 1d6+3 piercing plus 3d6 poison; **DC** 11 **Con** save halves poison), silver dagger (+5, 20 ft/60 ft, 1d4+3 piercing); **SA** multiattack (unarmed strike x2); **Str** +2, **Dex** +3, **Con** +1, **Int** +0, **Wis** +2, **Cha** -1; **Saving Throws** Dex +5; **Skills** Acrobatics +7, Stealth +5; **Traits** evasion (if an effect allows half damage on successful save, jade mouth servant takes no damage on successful save or half damage on failed save); **AL** LE; **CR** 3; **XP** 700.

Lasif (efreeti): **AC** 17; **HP** 200 (16d10+112); **Spd** 40 ft, fly 60 ft; **Melee** scimitar (+10, 2d6+6 slashing plus 2d6 fire); **Ranged** hurl flame (+7, 120 ft, 5d6 fire); **SA** Multiattack (scimitar x2 or hurl flame x2); **Immune** fire; **Str** +6, **Dex** +1, **Con** +7, **Int** +3, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +3; **Saving Throws** Int +7, Wis +6, Cha +7; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft; **Traits** elemental demise (body disintegrates when efreeti dies), disguise (3/day; can cast true polymorph on self as an action; duration until dispelled or Lasif dismisses effect); **AL** LE; **CR** 11; **XP** 7,200.

Innate Spellcasting (+7, **DC** 15): at will—*detect magic*; 3/day—*enlarge/reduce*, *tongues*; 1/day each—*conjure elemental* (fire elemental only), *gaseous form*, *invisibility*, *major image*, *plane shift*, *wall of fire*.

Crashing a Tree Party

Hommal Agic is known throughout Zobeck for two reasons; first, his beautiful botanical garden atop the tenement he owns, with green-glass houses and flowers blooming all year. One tree even grows from a corner reaching over the street. The second reason is that he uses the money earned by selling his exotic plants all around the city to throw lavish parties nearly every night. When Shean was doing well in society, he would often frequent these parties and knows that Hommal's main crop this cycle is belladonna. Shean also knows that Hommal extracts the oil from these plants, for the gear chemists who helped construct the model gearforged that the PCs have obtained, and stores it somewhere on his botanical rooftop. Now the PCs must obtain a gallon of the belladonna oil to mix with Shean's other oils.

Hommal is hosting a party tonight, as he has every night this week. No invitation is needed, but Shean lets the PCs know that Hommal fancies his parties high class affairs, and they won't get in without looking the part. Fine clothes will get the PCs in the door. The only type of armor allowed is a breastplate.

Eerie music haunts the air as you enter the party. Behind a thousand clouds hangs a giant moon, full and silver above the mist and fog. Nearly 200 people crowd the rooftop, all adorned in pearls and gold and something warm against the night's chill. Some wear jeweled masks and others tall wigs. The smell of flowers and perfume mingles with the guests. Hommal is nowhere to be seen.

Many random events can happen at this party. Feel free to have the PCs run into any NPCs from prior adventures that would be at such a function. The guests of the party, for the most part, stay around areas 6, 9, and 11.

Here are some random events that may take place at the party.

d10 Encounter

- 1 Someone drunkenly falls into a fountain.
- 2 A PC is offered a free dose of a major drug.
- 3 A PC is offered sex in one of the tenement rooms downstairs.
- 4 Someone overturns a lantern, starting a small fire.
- 5 A nude couple streak across the party.
- 6 It begins to softly rain, but no one seems to mind.
- 7 A fight breaks out between two dandies.
- 8 The PCs are offered hors d'oeuvres from a kobold servant; they are quite tasty.
- 9 A masked bard sings one of the PCs' favorite songs.
- 10 Some PCs are pulled to the floor to dance, even if poorly.

The doors to areas 5, 8, and 10 are locked, requiring thief's tools and a successful DC 15 Dexterity check to open; however, the PC also needs to make a successful DC 15 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check as well to prevent anyone from seeing the act. If guests do spot the PC unlocking doors, they alert Hommal's security. The guards (4 veterans) are indifferent to the PCs when they arrive and merely ask what they are doing. A successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check gets

the men to leave, but only once. If they're called back, they intend to toss the characters out of the party. Four of them guard the locked door to room 13 and won't let anyone in without a successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion or Deception) check.

Rooftop Guard (x4, Veteran): AC 17; HP 58 (9d8+18); Spd 30 ft; **Melee** longsword x2 (+5, 1d8+3 slashing); shortsword (+5, 1d6+3 piercing); **Ranged** heavy crossbow (+3, 100 ft/400 ft, 1d10 piercing); **SA** multiattack (longsword x2, shortsword); **Str** +3, **Dex** +1, **Con** +2, **Int** +0, **Wis** +0, **Cha** +0; **Skills** Athletics +5, Perception +2; **AL** LN; **CR** 3; **XP** 700.

Hommel is in room 13 and emerges after about fifteen minutes to find the three PCs that are the most famous, have the highest Charisma score, or are wearing the most expensive outfits. These he invites back to room 13, but asks the others to stay outside.

In the center of this room is a circular table with two men and a goblin sitting around it. A large fire in the fireplace causes the green and brown glass of the walls to flicker and dance. The men have cups full of bone dice in front of them along with some large piles of coins.

Hommel asks the PCs to play. The three dice players at the table are Ziv the Sly, the goblin bully boy Slinger, and Pavic the gambler. They don't offer their names, but they introduce themselves if the characters ask.

The belladonna plant oil is in clearly-labeled, 1-gallon casks near the wall. Hommel says that he has promised the plant oils to another customer, but if they play a few throws with the group, they may win a barrel.

The game requires the players to roll any number of d20s they wish, total the dice rolls, and add their

Wisdom (Perception) and Charisma (Deception) modifiers to the total. The highest result that doesn't go over 100 wins.

Here is how the NPCs roll:

- Ziv the Sly: 6d20 + 8
- Slinger: 5d20
- Pavic: 7d20 + 6
- Hommal: 7d20 + 3

If a character wants to cheat, he or she can adjust their total up or down by a number equal to their Dexterity modifier plus twice their Sleight of Hand proficiency modifier, but a successful DC 13 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check must also be made or one of the NPCs notices the dice manipulation. Anyone caught cheating is ejected from the party by Hommal's guards.

The winner of a round collects 20 gp from everyone else in the game.

If the PCs as a group win six games in a row, Hommal will sell them the belladonna oil for 600 gp.

If the PCs play for more than 30 rolls or leave to steal the oil after the party, add a 4% failure chance to the soul transfer ritual.

If the PCs decide they would rather fight than gamble, none of the other players challenges them over oil that isn't theirs. Hommal alone is outraged, more embarrassed at being robbed in front of his guests than over the loss of property. He informs the PCs that the oil's rightful owner is a powerful figure in Zobeck (your choice) who won't take kindly to being robbed. If the PCs simply take the oil at sword point, award them only 1,000 XP for the group.

PART 3: BATTLE FOR BODY AND SOUL

Remmee has learned of his cutthroats' failure at the Silk Scabbard and sends men for Michul and his grandfather. He misses them, however.

If the PCs stay together, Michul and Shean move everything after the party returns with the second component. If the PCs split up, Michul and Shean move their operation immediately. In the dark hours of the morning, Michul smuggles his beloved friend and his only chance for life into the Old Stross Public Bathhouse and sets up in the massage parlor (Area 10). Read the following when the PCs return with the final item.

You see two massage tables set side by side. One holds Heet, covered with many blankets. The other sags under the weight of the now-assembled iron and brass

Riverine Blade

Weapon (longsword), rare

The crossguard of this distinctive +2 longsword depicts a stylized garotter crab with claws extended, and the pommel is set with a smooth, spherical, blue-black river rock. Any creature wielding this sword while on a boat of any kind or while standing in any depth of water has advantage on Dexterity-based skill checks and saving throws. This sword is mentioned in a poem set during the Great Revolt against the Stross regime, wherein a barge captain slew two knights with it while the barge swirled down the Argent out of control.

gearforged body. Michul lights candles as Shean chalks runes on the floor. The faint sound of moving water comes from the nearby rooms.

It takes nearly an hour for Shean to add the heart and fill the tubing with the proper fluids. Shean now discovers the diluted *potions of false life*, if they haven't been replaced already. Shean asks the PCs to stand outside the room, as the ritual takes over an hour and he needs to concentrate. Michul remains. Any character who can cast 4th-level spells can stay to help, making the ritual 4% more likely to succeed per PC. Roughly 45 minutes into the process, Remmee and his followers (4 veterans) walk into the grand lounge (area 4), having received a tip from a morning bath worker. They attack without discussion or negotiation.

Remmee attempts to avoid fighting personally and tries to reach the massage parlor, where he can hear the ritual taking place.

Heet and the gearforged body are as one at the moment, while Shean is adjusting the body to best accommodate Heet's soul. Shean will not fight Remmee or his men but hurries to finish the ritual. Michul fights (poorly) only to protect Shean. If Heet or Shean are attacked, increase the failure chance of the soul transfer ritual by 4% for every hit. Remmee uses his *chime of opening* to open any doors the PCs close and lock between him and his grandfather. Remmee will do anything to see his grandfather dead so he can gain his inheritance. He fights to the death.

Treasure. Remmee Nul carries the *riverine blade* (see sidebar), a *chime of opening*, +1 *ringmail*, a Nul Shipping Company signet ring (possibly useful for bluffing company guards), fine clothing, 28 pp.

REMMEE NUL

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (+1 *ringmail*, shield)

Hit Points 112 (15d8 + 45)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	8 (-1)	13 (+1)

Saving Throws Str +5, Con +5, Cha +3

Skills Athletics +5, Perception +1

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Dwarven

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)



Brave. Remmee has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

Command Underlings. Each of Remmee Nul's allies within 30 feet of him and able to hear his voice gain advantage on attack rolls until the start of Nul's next turn. Remmee Nul can then make one *riverine blade* attack as a bonus action.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Remmee makes two *riverine blade* attacks.

Riverine Blade. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d8 + 5) slashing damage, or 10 (1d10 + 5) slashing if used with two hands.

Remmee's Cutthroats (x4, Veteran): AC 17; HP 58 (9d8+18); Spd 30 ft; **Melee** longsword x2 (+5, 1d8+3 slashing); shortsword (+5, 1d6+3 piercing); **Ranged** heavy crossbow (+3, 100 ft/400 ft, 1d10 piercing); SA multiattack (longsword x2, shortsword); **Str** +3, **Dex** +1, **Con** +2, **Int** +0, **Wis** +0, **Cha** +0; **Skills** Athletics +5, Perception +2; **AL** LN; **CR** 3; **XP** 700.

RITUAL OF SOULFORGING

The ultimate act in creating a gearforged is casting the *soulforging* ritual. The spell is available to wizards and clerics. *Soulforging* can't be added to a wizard's spellbook as one of the two spells learned for gaining a level. It must be found in written form and copied into the spellbook. Clerics can prepare the spell only if they worship a god of smithing, crafting, or a similar portfolio.

Soulforging

5th-level necromancy (ritual)

Casting Time: 1 hour (see below)

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (a complete mechanical body worth 10,000 gp)

Duration: Instantaneous

You and a willing humanoid subject must chant an incantation in unison during the entire casting time. At the end of this period, the subject's soul and consciousness leave its body. The subject must make a successful DC 14 Charisma saving throw. If it fails, you take 2d10 psychic damage and 2d10 radiant damage from waves of uncontrolled energy ripping out from the disembodied spirit. You can maintain the spell, allowing the subject to repeat the saving throw at the end of each of your turns, with the same consequence to you for each failure. If you choose not to maintain the spell or are unable to do so, the subject's soul is traumatically drawn back to its body; the subject immediately drops to 0 hit points and is dying.

If the save succeeds, the subject's soul is transferred into the waiting soul gem and immediately animates the constructed body. The subject is now a gearforged. It loses all of its previous racial traits and gains gearforged traits. The subject's original body dies and can't be returned to life by any means unless its soul is freed from the soul gem.

If the spellcaster dies during a *soulforging*, the subject also dies and its soul becomes a wraith.

Up to four other spellcasters of at least 5th level can assist you in casting *soulforging*. Each assistant reduces the DC of the subject's Charisma saving throw by 1. In the event of a failed saving throw, the spellcaster and each assistant take damage. An assistant who drops out of the casting can't rejoin.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

After killing or subduing Remmee and his men, calculate the failure chance of the soul transfer ritual based on the events up to this point, then roll percentile dice. A result higher than the failure chance succeeds, and Heet awakens in his new body with all his memories. If the ritual fails by less than 20%, the gearforged body wakes up with Heet's alignment but not his memories or personality; the memories return and the personality develops over the next few years while Michul runs the company. Failure by 21% or more means Heet passes away from old age and the gearforged body does not awaken.

Soul Transfer Ritual Failure Modifiers

The base chance for failure begins at 0%.

- +10% The ritual is begun with diluted *potions of false life*, or time was spent exchanging potions
- +8% If one of the jade mouth servants escaped with the gearforged parts and had to be stopped by the City Watch
- +4% If the PCs gave Shean time to go into the back rooms
- +4% PCs played 30 or more games of dice or came back after the game to steal the oil
- +4% For every time Remmee struck Heet or Shean during the ritual
- 4% Per character able to cast 4th-level spells who helped with the ritual
- 15% If the PCs split up to save time after Shean tells the party the supplies he needs to finish the body

The total of all modifiers equals the chance for the ritual to fail.

Upon returning to his old life with a youthful step, Heet rewards the PCs with high places in his company, if they wish, and a sailing ship for the party. He also increases their payment to 4,000 gp every six months if they defeat Remmee without killing him. He offers Shean a permanent position with Nul Shipping, which the man accepts.

If the PCs threatened Shean in the Silk Scabbard, he is indifferent toward them; otherwise he is friendly toward the PCs for the rest of their time in Zobeck and will happily assist them whenever he can.

If the PCs ever venture into the Black Lotus again, they see Nyerta's head floating in a jar on the Painted Man's mantle, though he insists he doesn't recall how he got it.

RIPPER

By Mike Franke

Rumors fly up and down the river. People have vanished. Bodies have appeared, horribly mutilated. Death stalks the streets of Zobeck, and the people are afraid. Will you stop the killer before he strikes again, and again ... and again?

Ripper is an urban adventure suitable for four 10th-level PCs.

Background

Ten years ago, a cult summoned the powerful gelugon named Xazagra to this world, both to enhance their own power and to spread the influence of the lords of Hell. Xazagra proved a cunning leader. Rather than manifest physically, he allowed his infernal spirit to be housed in a magic dagger. From there, he could possess mortals and lead the cult from the safety of the dagger.

Xazagra used his mortal pawns to hunt down any who attempted to avoid paying on the infernal pacts they signed. As fear spread up and down the river, the smaller settlements begged Zobeck for help. After a brief reign of terror, the Spyglass Guild eventually sent agents to investigate the killings, and they discovered the truth.

The cultists fought fanatically except for a chosen few commanded to avoid battle and hide. Xazagra would call them back when the time came. The authorities inevitably defeated the small cult, a local guard captain claimed the dagger, and Zobeck's agents returned to report the evil defeated. In truth, the horror was just beginning.

The gelugon did not immediately overwhelm the captain who picked up its unholy dagger. At first, the man was not even aware of the devil's presence, only what seemed to be his own thoughts running in new and disturbing directions. The voice in his head encouraged him to aggressively hunt criminals to bring them to justice. Later he found himself dealing out his own justice more often than bringing perpetrators to the authorities. His appetite for killing grew, but he rationalized that evil couldn't be reformed, only destroyed. The voice continued its suggestions, which seemed so reasonable and natural that the captain felt surprised he hadn't seen things this way before. There were so many evils to set right and so little time. He had to become more efficient in his tasks. It was then the Ripper was born.

The captain left his town to travel the River Argent. It seemed only natural to listen to the voice when it suggested he head to Zobeck. People began

disappearing in the small villages along the river. Xazagra sent out the call, and the remaining cultists headed for Zobeck as well. Long before the captain neared the city, he became little more than a shell for the devil's terrible will. Xazagra now revealed itself to him fully, and they began working together to see Hell's will done.

Now, with a group of infernal cultist followers, the Ripper seeks to make Zobeck into its personal killing ground. There are those in Zobeck trying to renege on their infernal pacts, but the Ripper is going to make sure that the devil gets its due.


Synopsis

For weeks a killer has stalked the streets of Zobeck. The deaths seem to have no connection beyond the killer's horrible signature. Each and every body was left where it was guaranteed to be found, after being slashed and mutilated almost beyond recognition.

The killings have garnered enough attention that Zobeck's power brokers can no longer ignore them. The apprentice of a prominent member of the Arcane Collegium recently went missing, and people high and low whisper that his mangled body will soon be displayed for all to see.

While traveling through the Dock District, the characters get caught up in the middle of a riot. The citizenry plans to lynch a terrified foreigner. Whether or not characters intervene to save the man, they come into conflict with the corrupt Sergeant Hendryk, who informs the characters that they can avoid arrest and possibly earn a reward by investigating the murders and hopefully finding the lost apprentice.

Assuming characters agree to investigate the murders, Hendryk suggests they start by talking with Captain Sam Nesclém. Rumors indicate a recent victim came to Zobeck on his steam tug. Nesclém remembers the victim as a rough sort who mentioned his desire to make a name as a pit fighter. Nesclém also tells the party that his ship was vandalized with strange carvings around the same time.



Further investigation could take the adventurers to the location of a murder in the Citadel District, the Arcane Collegium, or to local information sources such as Jayzel. The adventurers could even try the Painted Man or their own divinations. Slowly, the characters discover that all recent victims have a connection with the Silk Scabbard. The gladiator fought there, the courtesan worked there, and the apprentice gambled there. Divinations will not reveal the killer but will identify the next victim: the Silk Scabbard is awash in blood, and the owner Tyron is the next target.

During the investigation, the body of the missing apprentice turns up displayed in the characters' path. Is the killer taunting them? The mutilation isn't random: infernal runes are carved into the body. If the body is investigated or disturbed, devils hidden among the crowd attack the party.

Eventually, characters must head to the Silk Scabbard to confront the devil-possessed killer and his followers. If victorious, the characters have the opportunity to find evidence for the reason behind these seemingly random killings, but they're still likely to be left asking—is the danger past, or has it just begun?

Hooks

At the beginning of this adventure, the characters are either residents of Zobeck or are traveling through Zobeck on their way elsewhere. While going about their business in the city, the characters are swept up in a mob planning to lynch a foreign man blamed for gruesome serial killings. Whether or not the characters try to save him, they come into conflict with Sergeant Hendryk. He puts the characters in a difficult situation: they can do it for Zobeck or for themselves, but either way, they will do what he says.

Other motivations might include:

- Goldscale informs the characters of a substantial reward offered by the city for the successful apprehension of the killer.
- One of the victims was a friend or a useful associate of the characters, and they decide to seek their own revenge against the killer.
- The characters have ties to the Arcane Collegium, and one of the masters asks them to search for the missing student.
- One of the temples asks a pious character to help put an end to the killings and the fear that grips the streets.

PART 1: RIOT

The adventure begins with the characters meandering through the Docks District.

The streets of Zobeck's Dock District are their usual chaotic mass of people and animals. Merchants and sailors shove past stevedores and travelers all dodging carts and horses. As you arrive at an intersection, a large, screaming mob surges past, dragging a bloodied figure in torn clothes from the Mharoti Empire. Several in the mob carry nooses, and they obviously intend to lynch the man. As you watch, a rope flies over the hoist spar of a warehouse, a noose slips around the man's neck, and the mob hoists him off his feet. His legs jerk crazily, and his face quickly turns blue.

This is a precarious position for the characters. The mob bursts with fear and anger over the recent murders and the uncertainty of where and when the Ripper will strike next. A mob mentality has firmly taken hold. Individual qualms about violence have vanished beneath bloodlust and a desire to protect themselves. The characters can either try to save the man or stand by and watch him die. It is all, perhaps, none of their business. Either way, however, the man dies, and they have an uncomfortable meeting with Sergeant Hendryk.

If characters desire to save the victim, they must either fight the mob or find some way to calm or distract the mob away from its current course of action.

If the party attempts to use Persuasion to settle the mob, the peoples' attitude toward the characters starts as unfriendly. A successful DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check improves that to friendly. Only one check can be made, but multiple characters can aid. You should reward good roleplaying with a bonus or advantage on the check.

Any attempt to use Intimidation against the mob or to intervene physically quickly causes the mob to turn violent and attack the characters.

No matter what PCs do, they are too late to save the unfortunate man unless they get him down before the end of the 2nd round. In any event, Sergeant Hendryk and his men arrive on the scene within minutes.

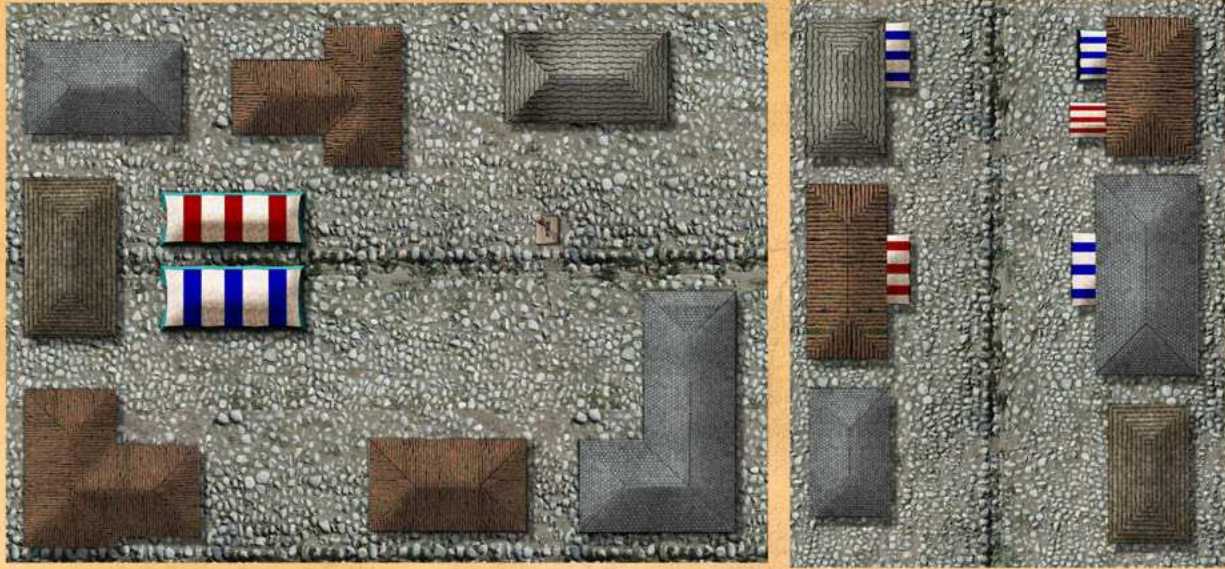
LYNCH MOB

Gargantuan humanoid (mob of medium humans), chaotic neutral

Armor Class 9

Hit Points 180 (40d8)

THE RIPPERS MAP SHIFT



Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	8 (-1)	10 (+0)	6 (-2)	6 (-2)	14 (-2)

Condition Immunities charmed, grappled, paralyzed, prone, restrained

Senses passive Perception 8

Languages Common

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Leaderless. For every 40 points of damage done to the mob, it must make a successful DC 10 Charisma saving throw or disperse and cease to exist at the start of its next turn.

ACTIONS

Engulf. The mob moves up to its speed. While doing so, it can enter Medium or smaller creatures' spaces. Whenever the mob enters a creature's space, the creature can make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. On a successful save, the creature is pushed out of the mob's path. If the saving throw fails or the creature chooses not to make a saving throw, the mob enters the creature's space and the creature takes 10 (3d6) bludgeoning damage and is engulfed. While engulfed, the creature is restrained and it takes 21 (6d6) bludgeoning damage at the start of the mob's turn. When the mob moves, all engulfed creatures move with it. An engulfed creature can escape by using an action and making a DC 15 Strength check. If the check succeeds, the creature is placed in a space of its choice within 5 feet of the mob and is no longer engulfed.

If characters choose to let the man die, read the following.

As you watch, the Mharoti man jerks crazily at the end of the rope. Before long his spasms cease, and the body dangles motionless from the end of the rope. The mob mills about angrily for a few minutes before dispersing into the nearby streets and alleys.

While the characters are watching the man die, Sergeant Hendryk and his men arrive on the scene.

Sergeant Hendryk Applies Pressure

Whether the characters talk down the mob, disperse the mob by force, or just sit and watch, Sergeant Hendryk and his men (6 thugs) approach and surround them.

A group you easily identify as City Watch moves out of a nearby alley, fanning out to surround you as they approach. The leader of the group steps in front of you and prominently brandishes his tipstaff. He sneers in a way only a man confident in his authority can sneer.

Hendryk's tactics differ depending on how the characters dealt with the mob. Hendryk and his men don't actually have the personal power to confront the characters. He relies on the authority of his office and the threat of action by more powerful personages within the city if the characters don't cooperate.

- If the characters used Diplomacy to disperse the mob, Hendryk claims the characters should have acted decisively to help the man. The characters' slowness to act led to the man's death.
- If the characters used force to disperse the mob, lethal or nonlethal, Hendryk claims they are vigilantes who've injured many citizens of the city.
- If the characters did nothing, Hendryk claims they aided in murder by not attempting to help.

Hendryk will first put the screws to the PCs using every threat he can think of to impress upon them the seriousness of the situation. Then, after he has listened to all of their arguments, he offers them a way out.

.....
 "The way I see it, you lot are criminals, plain and simple, and if I have anything to say about it, you'll spend a nice long time in some dark hole for what happened here today." Hendryk looks about as if watching for something before continuing. "Of course, if you were to do something to make up for it, I might be willing to overlook this."

If the party listens, Hendryk explains that this man was killed because the mob mistakenly thought he was responsible for the Ripper murders. Hendryk wants the characters to find and stop the real Ripper. He also wants to be given credit for leading the investigation, to further his career. In exchange, he'll give them 60 percent of the 10,000 gp reward and forget about what happened here today. If they don't follow through, he'll reinstate the charges against them. At no point does he imply that he's looking for a fight here and now, but it should be obvious that Hendryk is an ambitious man with powerful and unscrupulous friends in the city. Characters could easily beat, even kill, him if they choose to fight, but no such threats will frighten Hendryk; he knows the repercussions for attacking him would be more than even characters of the PCs' level could deal with.

Assuming characters agree to Hendryk's blackmail, he tells them to begin their investigation by talking with Captain Sam Nesclem, who supposedly brought a recent victim to Zobeck on his steam tug. Nesclem and his tug are at the docks on the Argent River.

If the party tells Hendryk to take a flying leap, he arrests them. After a long night in the clink, he makes his offer again. If they resist and escape, they become wanted fugitives for assaulting a Watch officer, and Hendryk does his level best to turn every resource of the city against them.

Sergeant Hendryk: AC 16; HP 52 (8d8+16); Spd 30 ft; **Melee** shortsword (+5, 1d6+3 piercing), club (+5, 1d4+3 bludgeoning), poisoned dagger (+5, 1d4+3 piercing plus 3d6 poison; DC 13 Con save halves poison); **Ranged** poisoned dagger (+5, 20 ft/60 ft, 1d4+3 piercing plus 3d6 poison; DC 13 Con save halves poison); **SA** sneak attack (1/turn; +2d6 damage with weapon if he has advantage on attack or if he has an ally within 5 ft of target); **Reaction** uncanny dodge (takes half damage from attack he sees coming); **Str** +0, **Dex** +3, **Con** +2, **Int** +1, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +1; **Saving Throws** Dex +5, Con +4, Wis +4; **Skills** Insight +4, Intimidation +3, Perception +4; **AL** NE; **CR** 3; **XP** 700.

City Watch (×6, Thug): AC 11; HP 32 (5d8+10); Spd 30 ft; **Melee** mace x2 (+4, 1d6+2 bludgeoning); **Ranged** heavy crossbow (+2, 100 ft/400 ft, 1d10 piercing); **Str** +2, **Dex** +0, **Con** +2, **Int** +0, **Wis** +0, **Cha** +0; **Skills** Intimidation +2; **AL** CN; **CR** 1/2; **XP** 100.

PART 2: INVESTIGATION

Investigating the murders occupies a large part of this adventure. As residents of the city, for at least a short time, the PCs know some things already (see "Common Knowledge"). They can learn more through roleplaying and Charisma checks (see "Pounding the Cobblestones"). Other information must be discovered through magic (see "Magical Investigation").

Common Knowledge

The following information is commonly known throughout Zobeck about the recent string of murders. They can learn any of these details simply by talking to people in the city.

- The killings began about five weeks ago.
- At first, it was only about one victim each week, but recently the frequency has increased.
- The Ripper is known to have killed eight people.
- All of the Ripper's victims were horribly slashed and mutilated, probably with a very sharp knife.
- The victims are left where they're certain to be found, as if they're being put on display. It seems unlikely that they were killed where they're found, but the actual murder sites haven't been identified.
- Victims have been found in every district of the city. The Ripper seems to have no home district.

Pounding the Cobblestones

Characters can dig out deeper information with successful Charisma (Persuasion) and Intelligence (Investigation) checks. Exactly how these checks are used is up to you, but players should specify who

they're talking to, or at least what type of informant they're looking for (dockworker, streetwalker, healer, City Watch, scholar, etc.). You can do as much or as little roleplaying as your group is comfortable with, but it's best not to just gloss over this type of investigation with rapid, bland skill checks.

Not all of this information is entirely accurate.

Some information can only come from investigating specific locations around the city. The characters are likely to investigate Captain Sam Nesclém, The King's Head Tavern, and/or the Arcane Collegium. The characters could also visit a local source of knowledge such as the information broker Jayzel.

- The killer is called the Ripper because his victims are always cut and mutilated as if the killer was trying to inflict maximum pain on his victims. (True)
- Known Ripper victims have been cremated because of the unusual nature of these killings. (True)
- The victims are all the illegitimate children of powerful individuals like Lord Greymark. Someone is obviously cleaning house. (False, but Lord Greymark is involved; he owns the Silk Scabbard)
- The Ripper must be supernatural, because he kills simultaneously in multiple locations. (True and False; the Ripper is supernatural, but multiple killings are the result of multiple killers)
- Several victims have been killed in Zobeck. Known Ripper victims include a warrior found near the docks, a young woman found on the streets outside the King's Head Tavern in the Citadel District, and a young wizard who went missing from the Arcane Collegium. (True)
- Infernal writing has been found at the scene of the murders. The killer is obviously some type of devil. The Collegium has deciphered the writing but is withholding its meaning from citizens, because it reveals that a plague of devils is about to descend on the city. If that got out, it would start a panic. (True and False; the Ripper is possessed by a devil, but there is no imminent attack by a diabolical army)
- The Ripper wields an unholy weapon that consumes the souls of his victims. (technically False but helpful if it points characters toward the Ripper's devil-inhabited dagger)

Captain Sam Nesclém

The characters probably seek out Captain Nesclém (CG male human; see "Faces of Zobeck") on the recommendation of Sergeant Hendryk. He can be found on his steam tug at a berth in the Docks District.

At the end of one of the docks along the River Argent, you find the steam tug, *Margaret's Dream*. You see the gray-bearded figure of Captain Nesclém moving about on the deck, an ivory pipe clenched in his teeth and his signature metal hand glinting in the sunlight.

Sam Nesclém takes any job for the right price, and as soon as he figures out he has something the characters want, this becomes another job for which he expects payment. If the characters play it cool, the price stays low: 30 to 50 gp. The price rises to 200 gp if characters let slip the matter's importance. Captain Nesclém knows he transported the victim found near the docks and has told authorities as much. He has not said that the man confided in Sam that he planned to make his reputation as a pit fighter.

If characters ask to search the boat, Nesclém refuses. If characters ask whether he found anything unusual and pay 50 gp, Nesclém says someone vandalized his boat around the time of the killing. For 500 gp, he sells the vandalized rail, which he replaced but hung onto just in case. Anyone who can read Infernal recognizes the runes as that language, but a successful DC 13 Intelligence check is needed to decipher the tangled writing as repeating the word "Pay" over and over.

Any longtime resident of the city can direct characters to numerous pit fighting establishments. Some are regular businesses similar to sparring gyms, but most are clandestine.

Citadel District: King's Head Tavern

The King's Head looks like a typical tavern in the Citadel District: slate roof, half-timbered walls, and a stone foundation. The sign over the door shows a golden crown and the white-haired head of a bearded man. This sense of normalcy quickly fades, however, as one sees the scowling trollwife guarding the door.

Peppercorn the trollwife gives everyone dirty looks and a few snide comments, but she allows characters into the bar. The most important and informative person in the establishment is the bartender, a dark-haired beauty in early middleage named Seatia. She vividly remembers the young lady found horribly mutilated in the gutter near their door. The victim, a young woman named Sophia, had applied for work at the King's Head the day before, but the owner told her she had the wrong reputation to work at the tavern. Seatia believes Sophia might have worked as a courtesan, but more likely was a prostitute, around

Lower Zobeck and the Kobold Ghetto. She came to the King's Head looking to improve her situation. Seatia is cagey about her answers, but she opens up more if she finds out the PCs are not working directly with the Watch.

If characters question Peppercorn, she tells them most of the same information as Seatia. Peppercorn doesn't know the woman's name, but she does know one other tidbit: she refers to Sophia as "that Devil Girl." If asked why, Peppercorn relates that "devilry was written all over that girl." Peppercorn can speak Infernal, and she sprinkles her description of Seatia with Infernal words and phrases.

Arcane Collegium

If the characters go to the Arcane Collegium to inquire about the missing student, they are referred to the office of one of the Masters of the Collegium, Ariella Scarpetti (LG female human mage).

Ariella appears as a tall, stately, middle-aged woman with round features and long, silver hair, but given her mastery of illusion, no one can be certain what she truly looks like. Even though you've been told that she is sitting at her desk, she appears to be sitting on a tree stump in the middle of a beautiful glade.

Ariella fears the Ripper killed her apprentice Janos, and she is clearly upset but controlling it well. She also suspected Janos was involved in something other than his studies with her. He kept odd hours and was often away. While such habits are not unusual in Collegium students, this seemed more than youthful exuberance. She checked his room after he disappeared and found betting slips and promissory notes to someone named Tyron. She also learned Janos was seen heading toward Lower Zobeck on many nights. By asking around that part of the city, characters can learn of a man called Tyron who works for Lord Greymark.

CONTINUING MURDERS

At least one murder should occur during the investigation: the missing apprentice shows up in "Part 3: Here There Be Devils." If characters take an unusually long time to reach Part 3, or if they discover the location of the next attack after Part 3, then more victims should periodically appear. All information found out about these murders should eventually lead back to the Silk Scabbard.

Jayzel, Information Broker

If the characters decide to seek out Jayzel (see "Faces of Zobeck"), they learn that she's not easy to locate. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) or Charisma (Persuasion or Intimidation) check is needed, coupled with interrogating three or more possible informants. Jayzel moves about continually, but she's also a well-known entertainer. Eventually characters should track her to a popular tavern in the Citadel District.

A tall, raven-haired beauty sits in the corner of the tavern's main room. She will not take the stage until after dinner, but she is already performing, in a manner of speaking, for a group of well-dressed and obviously well-to-do admirers who surround her table, vying for her attention.

When the characters indicate that they need to speak with her on business, she pouts prettily and shoos away her admirers. They leave but level dark glares at the characters. More than just a beautiful entertainer, Jayzel is a shrewd information broker, and her information is never cheap. At least 100 gp must change hands before she reveals anything, but it's guaranteed to buy something useful. What she tells the PCs depends on what they tell her and what they already know.

- She knows the names of two victims: one was Sophia, a prostitute. The most recent was Janos, an apprentice illusionist with a gambling problem.
- If the characters say they know one victim was a pit fighter, Sophia was a prostitute, and Janos was a gambler, Jayzel suggests they check the Silk Scabbard, it being the only establishment catering to all three vices.
- If characters relate that they suspect the Ripper is supernatural, she suggests they visit the Black Lotus and speak with the Painted Man instead, because supernatural isn't her area of expertise.

Magical Investigation

At 10th level, the characters might have access to powerful divination magic. If they don't, the Painted Man certainly does. Here are some examples of how to deal with the most likely spells.

- **Augury:** Investigation into the murders will bring weal if cast early in the investigation (indicating a successful investigation) and woe if cast as the characters approach Part 3 or Part 4 (indicating the upcoming killings).

- **Divination:** Depending on the questions asked, the following are possible responses: “The Ripper punishes the guilty” (a reference to the Ripper’s mission); “Blood will soak the walls where pleasure, pain, and greed are one” (a reference to the Silk Scabbard).
- **Commune:** Answer yes, no, or unclear based on the information in the “Background” and “Synopsis” sections. The only information out of bounds is the exact location of the Ripper. This answer must be “unclear,” because he moves around frequently.

The Black Lotus and the Painted Man

If the characters should seek out the Painted Man—a mysterious figure with access to powerful magic—they find him at the Black Lotus, the curiosity shop he owns, located in Lower Zobeck near the border with the Market District (see “Places of Zobeck”).

The Black Lotus is a nondescript, two-story building in the usual Zobeckian style with a simple wooden door facing the street. The words “The Black Lotus” are painted in Common as well as several exotic languages on the window facing the street.

Inside, the characters meet the tall, fat figure of the Painted Man. He smells faintly of exotic spices, white paint covers his fleshy face, and symbols of mysterious origin decorate his silk robe. While the Painted Man appears strange and foreign, no one in Zobeck doubts his power, especially his ability to divine the future. The Painted Man will divine the location of the next attack, but not for money. He wants a favor.

The Painted Man’s perfectly unaccented voice belies his exotic appearance. “I see the future, and it is red with blood. I will tell you the location of the next attack, for a small service.”

If the characters agree, he requests only “the mask of one of the killers” as payment. The next attack will take place at the Silk Scabbard. He warns them, “I will be sorely angry if you fail to procure a mask for my shop.” If asked why he said “killers” instead of killer, or what the mask looks like, he simply says, “You will understand when you arrive at the Scabbard. I won’t spoil the surprise.”

PART 3: HERE THERE BE DEVILS

Read the following after the characters have investigated Sam Nesclém, ideally before they determine the Silk Scabbard as the site of the next killing, or after they have met with the Painted Man if they skip the encounter with Sam Nesclém.

As you hurry through the streets, you hear screams and cries of alarm from ahead. When you round the corner, you see the bloody form of a naked man, spread-eagled and spiked to the clapboard siding of a merchant shop. Several bystanders are standing nearby, white with horror or vomiting on the street.

The Ripper knows he is being tracked. He expects the Spyclock Guild to hunt him again, so he laid a trap, and the characters have walked into it.

Anyone who inspects the body and makes a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check notices a pattern to the lacerations; they aren’t random. Once that’s known, someone who reads Infernal can make out that it’s the word “Due” repeated over and over. With a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check, a character is certain the victim wasn’t killed here; with so many deep lacerations, blood should be sprayed everywhere, but there’s very little blood on the ground here.

Unfortunately, a close inspection of the body also triggers an attack by the erinyes waiting invisibly nearby. Once she attacks, or if any characters can see invisible creatures, read the following.

A woman appears suddenly above the body, 10 feet in the air. Enormous blue-gray feathered wings hold her aloft, and ornate armor covers her to the neck. Her face is near perfection, marred only by the cruel turn of her mouth and eyes that blaze with fury. The flapping of her wings almost drowns out the sound of her creaking longbow as she draws an arrow to her cheek and looses.

The erinyes attacks anyone who investigates the body. She begins by using her *rope of entanglement* on any obvious spellcaster, then uses her bow from the air or from a nearby rooftop. She breaks off combat and retreats if anyone makes a melee attack against her. If it happens a second time, she flees, but remembers and seeks revenge at a later time of your choosing.

Bystanders who are questioned about the body (if any are still around after the erinyes attacks) say they saw a cloaked figure nailing the body to the wall. He was not especially tall or powerful-looking, but he easily held

the body with one hand and pushed the spikes into the wall without a hammer. Then he vanished into thin air.

This is the first time the Ripper has been seen. A witness comments on that, if characters don't realize it on their own. They may also realize it's no coincidence that the killer displayed a body directly in the path of those who are investigating the killings.

Erinyes: AC 18; HP 153 (18d8+72); Spd 30 ft, fly 60 ft; **Melee** longsword (+8, 1d8+4 slashing plus 3d8 poison; 1d10+4 slashing plus 3d8 poison if used two-handed); **Ranged** longbow (+7, 150 ft/600 ft, 1d8+3 piercing plus 3d8 poison and DC 14 Con save or target is poisoned until cured by *lesser restoration* or comparable magic); **SA** multiattack (longsword x3 or longbow x3); **Reaction** parry (+4 AC against one attack that would hit, if erinyes sees attacker and has melee weapon); **Str** +4, **Dex** +3, **Con** +4, **Int** +2, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +4; **Saving Throws** Dex +7, Con +8, Wis +6, Cha +8; **Resistance** cold, nonmagical weapons that aren't silvered; Immunity fire, poison; **Senses** truesight 120 ft, telepathy 120 ft; **Traits** hellish weapons (weapon attacks are magical), magic resistance (has advantage on saves against magic); **AL** LE; **CR** 12; **XP** 8,400.

PART 4: THE SILK SCABBARD

When the characters approach the Silk Scabbard (see "Faces of Zobeck"), they witness the following:

The streets outside the Silk Scabbard are pure chaos. People are running out of the front door screaming for help. Some are obviously injured. Others are covered in blood but appear unharmed. Bystanders nearby take up the cries. The front door lies in pieces on the ground as if frozen and then shattered by some great force. The entrance room beyond is dark, but a thin rivulet of blood leads into the interior.

Assuming the characters follow the trail of blood into the interior of the Silk Scabbard, they arrive at the lower gambling tables (Silk Scabbard Area 9)

The main room of the Silk Scabbard is empty except for corpses. Several bodies lie on the rough wooden floor. Two others have been prominently nailed to one wall. Obscene but now familiar writing is scrawled in blood between the two bodies.

The characters can determine the symbols on the wall are Infernal and translate to "Pay devil's due" if someone can read Infernal. The Ripper's six devil-masked

followers have spread out and hidden in this room: one is in the fighting pit (area 12), one is behind the bar (area 11), one is behind the booths (area 10), and one is in the kill station (area 3). The diabolist and cambion lurk at the viewing rail (area 17). The diabolist uses the **mage** stat block with an altered spell list, advantage on certain saving throws, and the ability to sculpt spells around allies. He cast *see invisibility* on himself from a scroll 15 minutes ago. The devil-masked killers are **cult fanatics**, and each of them carries one *potion of healing*.

Three of the devil-masked killers wait for the diabolist and cambion to begin the assault before leaping out to attack. The fourth killer, the one in the kill station (area 3), sneaks into the main room to catch them from behind. He attacks on round 3 of combat. The doors between his position and the main room stand open to allow him to approach undetected.

The cambion takes to the air as soon as characters enter the gaming area. He uses fiendish charm against the most capable-looking warrior among the PCs, then switches to throwing fire rays at spellcasters.

The diabolist waits at the upper viewing rail (area 17). He begins combat by casting *lightning bolt* on the most inviting target. He then casts *mirror image* on himself. He'll hit a spellcaster with *witch bolt*, if possible.

All of these creatures are either fanatics or they fear Xazagra more than their own destruction. Only the diabolist will flee from this fight, and only if the cambion is destroyed.

If the diabolist is captured, he can be forced to explain the purpose of the cult with a successful DC 18 Charisma (Intimidation) check. As a last resort, he trades knowledge of the Ripper's dagger for his life.

Diabolist (Mage): AC 12 (15 with *mage armor*); HP 40 (9d8); Spd 30 ft; **Melee** dagger (+5, 1d4+2 piercing); **Ranged** dagger (+5, 20 ft./60 ft., 1d4+2 piercing); **Str** -1, **Dex** +2, **Con** +0, **Int** +3, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +0; **Skills** Arcana +6, History +6; **Traits** dark devotion (has advantage on saves vs. charm, fear), sculpt spells (can choose creatures = 1 + spell's level to automatically succeed on saves against his evocation spells; selected creatures take 0 damage if they would otherwise take half damage from the spell); **AL** any; **CR** 6; **XP** 2,300.

Spells (+6, DC 14): 0 (at will)—*eldritch blast*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*, *ray of frost*; 1st (4)—*disguise self*, *shield*, *thunder wave*; 2nd (3)—*invisibility*, *mirror image*, *witch bolt*; 3rd (3)—*counterspell*, *fly*, *lightning bolt*; 4th (3)—*greater invisibility*, *ice storm*; 5th (1)—*cone of cold*.

Cambion: AC 19; HP 82 (11d8+33); Spd 30 ft, fly 60 ft; **Melee** spear (+7, 1d6+4 piercing, or 1d8+4 piercing if used two-handed, plus 1d6 fire); **Ranged** fire ray (+7,

120 ft, 3d6 fire), spear (+7, 20 ft/60 ft, 1d6+4 piercing plus 1d6 fire); SA multiattack (melee spear x2 or fire ray x2), fiendish charm (one humanoid in cambion's LOS; 30 ft; DC 14 Wis save or charmed for 1 day; charmed creature obeys cambion's spoken commands; repeat save if harmed or given suicidal command); **Str** +4, **Dex** +4, **Con** +3, **Int** +2, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +3; **Saving Throws** Str +7, Con +6, Int +5, Cha +6; **Skills** Deception +6, Intimidation +6, Perception +4, Stealth +7; **Resist** cold, fire, lightning, poison, nonmagical weapons; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft; **AL** E; **CR** 5; **XP** 1,800.

Innate Spells (DC 14): 3/day each—*alter self*, *command*, *detect magic*; 1/day—*plane shift* (self only).

Devil-Masked Killer (×4, **Cult Fanatic**): **AC** 13; **HP** 33 (6d8+6); **Spd** 30 ft; **Melee** dagger (+4, 1d4+2 piercing); **Ranged** dagger (+4, 20 ft/60 ft, 1d4+2 piercing); SA multiattack (dagger x2); **Str** +0, **Dex** +2, **Con** +1, **Int** +0, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +1; **Skills** Deception +4, Persuasion +4, Religion +2; **Traits** dark devotion (has advantage on saves vs. charm, fear); **AL** LE; **CR** 2; **XP** 450.

Spells (+3, DC 11); 0 (at will)—*light*, *sacred flame*, *thaumaturgy*; 1st (4)—*command*, *inflict wounds*, *shield of faith*; 2nd (3)—*hold person*, *spiritual weapon*.



A Contract's a Contract

While the fight is happening, the Ripper makes his way to the office of Tyron (area 18), the manager of the Silk Scabbard, and Lord Greymark's personal fixer. The Ripper intends to see that Tyron fulfills the infernal contract he signed long ago. Time this so characters hear a terrified scream from area 18 just as their fight against the Ripper's minions is winding down. When characters reach the office, they see the following.

The office of Lord Greymark's fixer has been turned upside down. Tyron is cowering behind what is left of his desk. Blood drips from the walls and furniture, and Tyron is covered in bloody cuts. An average-sized man wielding a bloody dagger turns cold, unnaturally blue and piercing eyes upon you as you enter. Tyron is babbling, apparently pleading for his life by repeatedly claiming eternal allegiance to Dispat, the First King and a lord of Hell.

The Ripper expected his lackeys to deal with whatever opposition arrived. When confronted, he prefers to finish off victims by hand. The Ripper is

fearless, knowing that even if his host is killed, he can't be destroyed unless the dagger is destroyed.

Developments. The characters should have heard Tyron professing allegiance to the forces of Hell when they arrived at the office. If he survives the battle against the Ripper, he doesn't wish to discuss this further. A successful DC 16 Charisma (Intimidation) check persuades him to explain how he sold his soul for 25 years of prosperity and influence. His time is up, and the Ripper came to collect. This also clears up the real motivation behind the killings along the River Argent.

Tyron also knows the real evil is the possessed dagger. If he's threatened, he tries to bargain with this information to persuade the characters to save his life or convince them not to turn him over to the authorities. A thorough search of the office (or a convincing threat to Tyron) uncovers his infernal contract.

THE RIPPER

Medium humanoid (human, devil-possessed), lawful evil

Armor Class 17 (breastplate, ring of protection)

Hit Points 127 (15d10 + 60)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	18 (+4)	15 (+2)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Dex +6, Con +8, Wis +6, Cha +8

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons that aren't silvered

Damage Immunities cold, fire, poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Infernal, telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Devil's Sight. Magical darkness doesn't impede the Ripper's darkvision.

Magic Resistance. The Ripper has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Innate Spellcasting. The Ripper's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components.

At will: *chill touch*

1/day each: *cone of cold*, *wall of ice*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Ripper makes three *Red Lady's scalpel* attacks.

Red Lady's Scalpel. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d4 + 6) slashing damage. See sidebar for further details on the Red Lady's scalpel.

EQUIPMENT

breastplate, *Red Lady's scalpel* (see sidebar), *ring of protection* (bonus included in AC and saving throws)

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

The defeat of the Ripper and his minions, and the discovery of the infernal infestation, brings a tense peace to the streets of Zobeck. Just because the Ripper is destroyed, however, does not mean the killing is over. If the Ripper's weapon hasn't been destroyed, there is a chance the killing could begin again.

RED LADY'S SCALPEL

Weapon (dagger), legendary (requires attunement)

This silver surgeon's scalpel is permanently stained with dried blood. Enchanted by the followers of Marena the Red, it now spreads pain and disease. The scalpel functions as a +1 *dagger of wounding* that does slashing damage rather than piercing. Hit points lost to this weapon's damage can be regained only through a short or long rest, rather than by regeneration, magic, or any other means. Once per turn, when you hit a creature with an attack using this magic weapon, you can wound the target. At the start of each of the wounded creature's turns, it takes 1d4 necrotic damage for each time you've wounded it, and it can then make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, ending the effect of all such wounds on itself on a success. Alternatively, the wounded creature or an ally within 5 feet of it can use an action to make a DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check, ending the effect of such wounds on it on a success.

Once per day, the wielder can cast *contagion* (save DC 18) as a bonus action on a creature that was just wounded by the blade.

The essence of the gelugon Xazagra currently resides in the *Red Lady's scalpel*. From there it can possess humanoids as it has done with the Ripper. The owner of the dagger must make a DC 15 Charisma saving throw every day while in possession of the dagger; each failure moves his or her alignment one step toward Lawful Evil. Once the possessor's alignment reaches Lawful Evil, Xazagra takes control of the person immediately when the dagger's owner fails a third daily saving throw in a row. *Dispel evil and good* drives Xazagra back into the dagger temporarily, but the devil can repossess its host again as an action. To drive Xazagra back to its home plane, *dispel evil and good* must be directed specifically at the dagger.

The scalpel detects as magical, as any +1 *dagger* would do, but not specifically as housing a devil. Some divination magic can reveal that fact, as can a successful DC 25 Intelligence (Arcana) check when coupled with *detect magic* and a close examination of the weapon during a time when Xazagra isn't possessing a human host.

FLESH FAILS

By Christina Stiles

Kidnapping and politics as usual? Not so much. Something is different about this job, and you just hope that difference doesn't get you killed.

Flesh Fails is an investigative adventure suitable for a party of 11th-level characters.

Sometimes at the Collegium, one's colleagues are not so *collegiate*, especially when one is a master of necromancy with desires outside society's norms and a high penchant for secrecy and jealousy.

It is no secret that tragedy struck within the walls of Zobeck's great Arcane Collegium. One of their own, Master Summoner Linnea Thorn, fell victim to a summoning gone awry, murdered by the very creature she summoned. The Arcane Collegium covered up most of the details—Linnea had been trucking with the infernal, and her killer was a summoned devil. They closed down her lab and decided to let the matter rest lest word of it leak out and affect the Collegium's reputation.

The real secret, however, is that her death was no accident. Master Necromancer Konrad von Eberfeld, one of Linnea's lovers and good friends, persuaded Consul Radover Streck, a practicing alchemist and the third in their lovers' triangle, to experiment with the formula for some material components, weakening their effect (thereby causing them to pull in a weaker summoning target) and thus making summoning rituals safer for Linnea. Streck did as Konrad asked, hoping to help Linnea's work. Konrad knew Linnea planned to summon a devil, and he replaced her summoning components with the weakened ones and informed her that the "improved" components were a gift from the smitten Streck to her.

When she performed her ritual with Streck's components, the summoned devil broke free and killed her. Konrad happened to visit Linnea's lab that evening and witnessed the freed devil ripping into Linnea's body. He roused several other colleagues and helped destroy the creature.

Because Linnea died while consorting with devils, the Arcane Collegium decided not to raise her. Instead, the administration quietly buried her in the Collegium's cemetery, and all official comments regarding her death remained sketchy, except to blame it on a summoning gone awry.

Konrad von Eberfeld promptly stole her body, however, and secured it in his warehouse lab, where he

intends to keep Linnea forever. All of these events had been engineered by him; Konrad *needed* Linnea dead because she'd discovered his plan to unleash an undead army to conquer Zobeck. He *wanted* her dead because he'd tired of sharing Linnea with Streck. His plan for her death ensured he could preserve her in undeath forever for himself. Currently, he searches for a suitable replacement for her shredded body while keeping her animated head in his personal study.

Consul Streck, knowing his complicity in Linnea's "accident," is filled with guilt. He has recurring nightmares about the devil eviscerating Linnea.


Streck's guilt finally drove him to confront Konrad at his home in the College District two nights ago, where he threatened to reveal everything to the authorities. Konrad tried to console Streck by taking him to the warehouse lab to show him Linnea's head and explain his plan to provide her a body so that she can live again. This, too, was a trap; Konrad nonchalantly handed Streck a gem that triggered an *imprisonment* spell against him. Streck now resides in the gem in Konrad von Eberfeld's secret study, observing everything that happens but unable to intervene.

Just to be on the safe side, Konrad also cast *sequester* on Streck. Because of that, Streck can't be located with divination spells. Konrad hopes that will be enough to keep suspicion from falling on him over the disappearance of his acquaintance.

Synopsis

Hadlen Osrick noticed his master, Consul Radover Streck, had been visibly troubled over the last few months. Then, two nights ago, Streck summoned Hadlen and ordered his servant to seek discreet help if Streck should disappear for any reason, explaining what money and favors to offer as payment. Hadlen watched Streck, whose eyes blazed with determination and murderous intent, slip a dagger into his coat before leaving the manor.

That was the last time Hadlen saw Streck. Hadlen waited a day to see if Consul Streck would return, but he never did. So, with many issues pressing—like the



party his lord is to host in two days' time—Hadlen set out to find assistance according to his master's instructions. Hadlen can promise the PCs up to 25,000 gp, political favors from people who owed Streck, and the chance to avert genuine political upheaval.

While Hadlen wants the PCs to recover his master, his first priority is the upcoming party, as invitations are already sent and guests are en route. Someone must convincingly pose as Streck for the event, which is too politically important to cancel. A PC could easily portray the reclusive Streck's quiet-but-gruff personality with magic, disguise, and coaching.

At the party, the pretender must handle some delicate political matters, but the biggest problem occurs when the evening's entertainment, the renowned bard Jayzel, presses the fake Streck for her late "hush money" and threatens dire consequences if she doesn't receive it soon.

When the PCs investigate Streck's recent activities, they learn he frequented the Book Fetish in the College District, a bookstore and magic shop also known as "The Temple of Painful Pleasures" for the activities hidden behind the shop's basement doors. Characters who infiltrate or pose as customers learn Streck usually visited the temple with a couple: Linnea Thorn and Konrad von Eberfeld, masters at the Collegium.

If they are not aware of Thorn's death, they can learn this as well.

Temple exploration brings the PCs into conflict with Jayzel, the temple's brutes, the cleric Nariss, and various magical protections.

Investigating a warded area reveals kidnapped and maimed victims and exposes the storefront's nefarious operations: torture for information and sacrifice. To save their own skins, the women disclose that Streck killed the mage Linnea Thorn by sabotaging her summoning components. While the Collegium claims Thorn was murdered by the creature she summoned, the real murderer is Streck for altering her components. They don't have Streck, however, or know where he is. They know he and Konrad quarrelled. Konrad has not been seen at the Temple for days.

Seeking out Konrad, a powerful and politically-connected necromancer, is fraught with peril. He despises intrusions, and he's likely to send conjured assassins or undead to eliminate adventurers who pester or threaten him. Searching his campus office yields a cryptic note linking him to Linnea and hinting at secrets beyond their relationship. If PCs search his off-campus lab, they encounter Konrad's magical defenses and undead creations. Linnea Thorn's head sits on a pedestal in his office. Questioning her reveals that a gem secured in the pedestal holds the imprisoned Streck, who

threatened to reveal all that transpired to authorities and ruin Konrad.

By penetrating Konrad's hidden lab and defeating its guardians, the characters can restore the extremely grateful Consul to his post, thereby gaining both an ally and a necromancer enemy.

Hooks

Ideally, Hadlen Osrick approaches the PCs, who have been recommended to him as discreet and helpful with large problems. If you want to build in some personal attachment, then have a PC be distantly related to Consul Streck, or the party in debt to the consul for some past aid. Or, with some tweaking of the adventure, a PC could be related to Linnea Thorn and seeking the truth of her death, since the Collegium won't provide details. Although you'd need to restructure the adventure somewhat, that hook could be compelling, with Streck's freedom then becoming a result of the investigation into Thorn's death.

PART 1: CONSUL STRECK'S PARTY

This adventure takes the characters from Upper Zobeck to the Collegium District and eventually to the Docks area. The PCs don't need to fight all the encounters; they could choose to make a deal with Jayzel and Nariss instead. If so inclined, they could use this adventure as a step toward a political future in Zobeck, becoming major players in the behind-the-scenes happenings in their city. Whatever their reasons for helping, Hadlen insists that the first priority is the party and requires that the PCs help him get through that before anything else happens. To succeed, they must select one of their number to impersonate Consul Streck.

Being Consul Streck

Hadlen Osrick coaches the PC selected to portray Streck. Consul Streck is a middle-aged man of average height and build with dark hair, brown eyes, and the sort of features one sees everywhere in Zobeck. He has no leader-like bearing. Except for his expensive clothes, one might not give him a second look if he passed down any street from Crown Square to the Docks. No one would take him for a consul.

Hadlen spends the day before the party instructing the PC on Streck's mannerisms and proper party etiquette. Streck kept most of his political opinions to himself, except at Consul gatherings, so Hadlen can't pass along such information. The PC has to wing it with such questions or use diversion to avoid them. Hadlen advises, above all, that Streck is a private

man, gruff in his dealings with others, of few public words—and those generally issued through grunts of annoyance. He is known for his problem-solving ability, not his eloquence. There are few people he can stand to be around for long periods, but some of those will be at the party. Hadlen's advice to the PC:

.....
“Just watch and nod a lot, where appropriate. The master has always said very little, believing most people not worth his effort. He is fascinated with the problems of the city, however, and does like to hear about them to ponder solutions when he's alone in his study. He's an avid reader and loves searching out interesting tomes. In fact, he spends a lot of time in the Collegium, perhaps discussing the ideas therein with people he finds his equals.

“Although Master Streck never married, he has a considerable eye for the ladies, and is usually very courteous and most definitely civil to them—except for Lady Fenyll Marack, of course. He despises her. But, thank the gods, she will not be in attendance.”

.....
Allow the PC to ask Hadlen any questions desired. He responds honestly, but he has no intention of revealing any skeletons in Streck's closet unless convinced through conversation or magic that such information will help find Streck. He does know, through rumor, about Streck's interest in the Book Fetish and the Temple of Painful Pleasure in the Collegium District.

The Party

Guests begin arriving at Streck's mansion at 4:30 p.m. Streck is to mingle with them until 6:00, when supper is served. At 7:30 they retire to the ballroom for dancing. Musicians entertain them throughout the evening.

Drinks flow freely. Promptly at 9:00, the famous bard Jayzel performs songs of Zobeck's history for one hour. The musicians then return to the stage, and the dancing continues until after midnight. The local guests then retire to their homes, escorted by their house guards. The guests from afar retire to rooms in the mansion. Streck is to greet them for breakfast before they leave for home.

Many of the guests are interested in the political happenings in Zobeck, and many are among Zobeck's rich and influential. Introduce NPCs that are important to your campaign. The party is a good place to drop information the PCs may want to investigate in the future, providing an opportunity for spin-off adventures.

Jayzel's Threat

After Jayzel performs her last song, she bows, accepts the hardy applause for a few moments, and then leaves the stage. She meanders through Streck's guests, who stop her briefly to compliment her performance and/or beauty, acquires a drink from a passing servant, and then heads straight for Consul Streck. If the PC playing Streck has met Jayzel and he's not using magic in his disguise, he likely has some strong pretending to do; fortunately, Jayzel does not know of Streck's disappearance, so she has no reason to be wary. Keeping her head directed toward the guests, she says the following to Streck in a low whisper, all the while smiling through her teeth:

.....
“Consul, you've been derelict in paying your *dues* this month. You wouldn't want your secret to reach the Praetors, would you? It would be such a tragedy for a consul to be convicted and beheaded for murder, wouldn't it? I suggest you remedy the situation soon, or word *will* leak out.”

.....
How the PC reacts to this determines what happens beyond this point. The PCs may decide to follow Jayzel after the party. She leaves at midnight and heads for the Temple of Painful Pleasures, whose entrance lies behind the Book Fetish in the Collegium District.

PART 2: THE BOOK FETISH AND THE TEMPLE OF PAINFUL PLEASURES

PCs should follow Jayzel here or learn of Streck's love of the Book Fetish at the party. If the PCs follow Jayzel, they see no sign of her when they enter the shop.

The Book Fetish

Upon entering the shop, you find its walls lined with book-filled shelves. Tables and chairs fill the center of the room. Some faculty and students from the Arcane Collegium appear to be perusing the tomes at the tables, and a few academic discussions are ongoing in various corners of the store. A horseshoe-shaped counter filled with glass-fronted cupboards sits to the right of the entrance, behind which a pretty, young, dark-haired woman in a flowing scarlet robe stands watching the till. A scarlet tapestry hangs behind her.

.....
Elindora (the woman behind the counter) and Kayla, both priestesses of Marena (**cult fanatics**), currently run the store, and two temple muscle men (**2 veterans**) stand guard behind the scarlet tapestry. From behind

the counter, Elindora welcomes the PCs to the store and asks if she may assist them with anything. Kayla is walking about the store helping patrons find books and answering questions.

Characters examining the southern and eastern sides of the counter see it contains common to uncommon spell components. The northern side holds libido-affecting herbs; various objects for heightening sexual intercourse, including through pain; and contraceptives. The store also sells rare components, potions, scrolls, wands, and some wondrous items (as you feel appropriate for the campaign and group). These stay locked up in a vault behind the temple muscle men. PCs checking the bookshelves find they contain tomes on topics related to alchemy and magic, some even written by the Arcane Collegium's faculty. There is also a large section of erotic literature and sexual practices. If the PCs bother the patrons, Elindora and Kayla allow them to do so, but they try to listen in on what the PCs ask, mainly out of boredom.

The PCs can learn quite a bit about the Temple of Painful Pleasures by questioning the bookstore's patrons or its two "clerks." Plying the patrons or priestesses with money is helpful. They can reveal any of the following information.

- Temple entrance is behind the Book Fetish.
- Temple is open from 6 p.m. to 3 a.m.
- High priestess is Nariss Larigorn, an elfmarked.
- Entry fee is 10 gp, which must be paid with a platinum "headsman," a coin called that for the axe on the side opposite the city crest.
- Coin must be handed over with the axe facing up.
- Book Fetish sells "headsman" coins (for 11 gp, the extra gp being a donation to the Temple).
- No weapons are allowed in the sanctuary, except whips.
- Only allowable clothing is see-through material. Most people enter naked.

- High priestess practices torture as a religious ritual.
- The listed Temple Rules (see "Temple Rules" sidebar).

Elindora and Kayla (Cult Fanatics): AC 13; HP 33 (6d8+6); Spd 30 ft; Melee dagger (+4, 1d4+2 piercing); Ranged dagger (+4, 20 ft/60 ft, 1d4+2 piercing); SA multiattack (dagger x2); Str +0, Dex +2, Con +1, Int +0, Wis +2, Cha +1; Skills Deception +4, Persuasion +4, Religion +2; Traits dark devotion (has advantage on saves vs. charm, fear); AL LE; CR 2; XP 450.

Spells (+3, DC 11); 0 (at will)—*light, sacred flame, thaumaturgy*; 1st (4)—*command, inflict wounds, shield of faith*; 2nd (3)—*hold person, spiritual weapon*.

Temple Muscle Men (x2, Veteran): AC 17; HP 58 (9d8+18); Spd 30 ft; Melee longsword x2 (+5, 1d8+3 slashing); shortsword (+5, 1d6+3 piercing); Ranged heavy crossbow (+3, 100 ft/400 ft, 1d10 piercing); SA multiattack (longsword x2, shortsword); Str +3, Dex +1, Con +2, Int +0, Wis +0, Cha +0; Skills Athletics +5, Perception +2; AL LN; CR 3; XP 700.

Temple of Painful Pleasures

The entrance to the temple, a set of stairs leading down, lies in the alley behind the Book Fetish.

By going to the Temple of Painful Pleasures, the PCs can gain information about Streck and possibly Konrad, especially if they corner Jayzel and/or the high priestess Nariss. The two overheard a heated conversation between Streck and Konrad, know about the role of the weakened material components in Linnea Thorn's death, and have blackmailed Consul Streck ever since. They have not questioned Streck about it, however, and believe he killed her in a lover's spat; they don't know the truth. The two women know Konrad and Streck have been on the outs ever since Linnea's death. Jayzel also knows Konrad's real lab lies in a warehouse in the Docks, not at the Arcane Collegium, which she learned from Linnea before her death.

TEMPLE RULES

1. You may not enter the temple with weapons other than whips.
2. You may only enter the temple clad in a robe or entirely nude. Doing otherwise dishonors Marena.
3. The acolytes, denoted with the red neck ribbons, are here to fulfill your desires, but beating them or being beaten by them requires a private room at 100 gp for an hour session. An hour of pleasurable pain from High Priestess Nariss costs 1,000 gp.
4. Everyone else in the sanctuary is a guest, and any activities you seek with them must be negotiated and mutually agreed upon.
5. There is no fighting in the temple.
6. DO NOT interfere with the other guests' pleasure.
7. If you kill or attempt to kill an acolyte or guest, you will be sacrificed to Marena.

If the PCs don't force the women to bargain for their lives, they're willing to sell the information for 300 gp each.

They would be willing to answer some questions about Consul Radover Streck, whom they call Raddie, or the Temple for a bit of coin.

Once inside, PCs might question guests at the sanctuary. Many of the establishment's patrons are wealthy and powerful, and they value their privacy. Questioning such individuals requires a successful DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion or Intimidation) check. Members of the college, merchants, and travelers aren't as obsessed about their reputations, so they can be gotten talking with a successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion or Intimidation) check, but Intimidation checks against them are made with disadvantage unless the threat is to their immediate well-being. Questioning obviously drunk patrons provides a +2 bonus on the check, but the information should be fragmented and repetitive. Elven PCs get a +1 bonus on all these checks, because the patrons seek to please those who might be connected to the high priestess. If PCs adopt the red ribbon of the temple prostitutes, they get advantage on all their Charisma checks.

Dole out the following information as you see fit, to reward successful Charisma checks.

- Konrad and Streck haven't been to the temple together since Linnea's death. The three used to be very close, participating in the temple's gatherings together.
- Streck said he felt guilty about Linnea's death.
- Linnea had been acting a little standoffish toward Konrad the last time they all came to the temple. Konrad spent the evening with another couple.
- Konrad has been renting property from some fellow in the warehouse district.
- This person claims to be one of Streck's few close friends. Streck confided in him that he had some things to work out with Konrad. Streck hoped it would go well, but feared it would not.

If a fight develops, Nariss casts *shield of faith* on herself as soon as possible; ideally, before rolling initiative. Nariss prefers to talk enemies down or incapacitate them rather than fight, using spells like *calm emotions* and *hold person*. Even in a real battle, she tries to avoid killing her patrons. She has no problem killing other people, especially intruders in her goddess's temple, but she prefers her temple and place of business not be destroyed. Battles are seldom good for a business built around pleasures of the flesh. If Nariss gets the upper hand, she allows the PCs to negotiate for their lives.

NARISS, HIGH PRIESTESS OF MARENA

Medium humanoid (elfmarked), lawful evil

Armor Class 14 (*ring of protection*)

Hit Points 104 (16d8 + 32)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Wis +7, Cha +8

Skills Acrobatics +6, Insight +9, Perception +6

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages Common, Draconic, Elven

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Fey Ancestry. Nariss has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put her to sleep.

Spellcasting. Nariss is a 10th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). Nariss has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *mending, resistance, spare the dying, thaumaturgy*

1st level (4 slots): *command, cure wounds, false life, inflict wounds, ray of sickness, shield of faith*

2nd level (3 slots): *blindness/deafness, calm emotions, enhance ability, hold person, ray of enfeeblement*

3rd level (3 slots): *animate dead, bestow curse, remove curse, revivify, vampiric touch*

4th level (3 slots): *banishment, blight, death ward, freedom of movement, guardian of faith*

5th level (2 slots): *antilife shell, cloudkill, flame strike, insect plague*

ACTIONS

Whip of Compliance. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) slashing damage, and a target who is currently defying the will of the wielder in thought or deed must succeed on a DC 15 Charisma saving throw or take an additional 7 (2d6) psychic damage.

Touch of Death (2/Day). When Nariss hits a creature with a melee attack, she deals an extra 25 necrotic damage to the target.

EQUIPMENT

ring of protection (included in AC and saving throws), *whip of compliance*

Temple Prostitutes (×5, cult fanatic): AC 13; HP 33 (6d8+6); Spd 30 ft; **Melee** dagger (+4, 1d4+2 piercing); **Ranged** dagger (+4, 20 ft/60 ft, 1d4+2 piercing); **SA** multiattack (dagger x2); **Str** +0, **Dex** +2, **Con** +1, **Int** +0, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +1; **Skills** Deception +4, Persuasion +4, Religion +2; **Traits** dark devotion (has advantage on saves vs. charm, fear); **AL** LE; **CR** 2; **XP** 450.

Spells (+3, DC 11); 0 (at will)—*light, sacred flame, thaumaturgy*; 1st (4)—*command, inflict wounds, shield of faith*; 2nd (3)—*hold person, spiritual weapon*.

Temple Muscle Men (×8, veteran): AC 17; HP 58 (9d8+18); Spd 30 ft; **Melee** longsword x2 (+5, 1d8+3 slashing); shortsword (+5, 1d6+3 piercing); **Ranged** heavy crossbow (+3, 100 ft/400 ft, 1d10 piercing); **SA** multiattack (longsword x2, shortsword); **Str** +3, **Dex** +1, **Con** +2, **Int** +0, **Wis** +0, **Cha** +0; **Skills** Athletics +5, Perception +2; **AL** LN; **CR** 3; **XP** 700.

1. Temple Stairs

Behind the alley, a 10-foot-wide set of stone stairs leads down 20 feet to double doors.

.....

If PCs knock on the door, one of the temple's muscle men (**veteran**), a brawny fellow in a breastplate, opens a door and holds out his hand. The entrance fee he expects is the platinum headsman coin, axe facing up. If the PCs hand him anything else, no matter what, they are turned away. PCs can, of course, attempt to push through anyway. The following text assumes they don't; adjust as appropriate.

2. Temple

The large man in a scarlet tunic and breastplate opens the door. He carries both a longsword and a shortsword at his side. Another man, equally large and armed, stands beside the door. From their features, they appear to be from the north. The floor is marble, and scarlet tapestries line the walls.

.....

If the PCs are dressed inappropriately for the sanctuary (carrying weapons and clothed/armored up), the guard says:

.....

"Only whips are allowed in the sanctuary, no other weapons. And you are all overdressed. Follow me to the disrobing area."

.....

The guard leads them through the tapestry in area 2 to the door leading to area 3. If PCs attack or run for it, he sounds a gong hidden behind a tapestry to alert others inside, half of whom answer the call, while the remainder protect Nariss and Jayzel.

3. Disrobing Room

Two beautiful youths in their early twenties, one male and one female, both scantily clad in see-through material, welcome you when the guard leads you into this room. They have scarlet ribbons around their necks and whips wrapped around their hips. "They need equipment checked and robes," the guard says to them, and then he shuts the door behind you.

.....

The temple prostitutes inform newcomers of the temple's rules (see the "Temple Rules" sidebar) and then assist the characters with removing their equipment and clothing. They place the PCs' items in large, locked chests and give each PC the key on a black ribbon that can be looped around their necks.

The two ask the characters whether they require a robe and sandals to enter the sanctuary. The robe is made of the same sheer material the two are wearing, so it offers not much more privacy than being naked. When characters are appropriately (un)dressed, the acolytes lead them into the inner corridor (area 4), past two more guards standing beside double doors, and through the northern entrance to the sanctuary (area 5).

4. Inner Corridor

The 10-foot-wide corridor wraps around the sanctuary. Two guards stand at red tapestry-covered archways.

.....

The guards are regular temple muscle (2 **veterans**).

5. Sanctuary

Passing between the guards and through the tapestry, you enter the massive sanctuary. Couches and pillows fill the room, many with writhing, naked bodies on them. The sounds of pleasure echo throughout the sanctuary. A bar staffed by acolytes stands along the northeast wall. In the center of the room sits a round, slowly rotating dais. A handsome couple is engaged in intercourse upon it, as a beautiful elven woman in scarlet gauze and wearing a golden, ruby necklace and matching earrings watches them and the entire room from her golden chair. A beautiful human woman sits

TEMPLE OF PAINFUL PLEASURES



X = Temple Guard S = Secret Door

in a chair beside her. A small gong rests at the feet of the elf. Two guards stand to either side of the chairs, just behind them.

The patrons include Zobeck's bored rich and many of the Collegium's faculty of all ranks (all people who could be blackmailed). The elven woman on the dais is the high priestess Nariss. She enjoys watching her subjects' lustful worship. Jayzel lounges by her side, likewise dressed and bejeweled.

The PCs can find groups of people who are resting and willing to talk, but they must walk through the orgiastic display to do so. Guests of all genders find the newcomers fascinating, and many entreat them for an encounter. The acolytes likewise try to engage them. Having a conversation with anyone can prove quite distracting and difficult. Many of the patrons are drunk, loosening their tongues for talk but also making them slightly less coherent than usual; see the list of information that can be gleaned from patrons at the beginning of the temple section, above.

Make DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) checks for both Nariss and Jayzel when the characters enter, to see whether either of them notice the arrival of the PCs. They keep an eye on newcomers, out of amorous

curiosity but also as a low-key defense against titillated onlookers and opportunistic blackmailers, both of which find their way into the temple occasionally. If the characters appear to be interrogating people but not participating in the temple activity, Nariss sends a guard to invite them to speak with her. If Jayzel has met the characters before and recognizes them, she informs Nariss about whatever happened in that earlier encounter.

Developments: How this encounter plays out is entirely up to the PCs' actions and reactions. If they become hostile, the guards try to eject them from the temple. If the PCs fight back, a guard strikes the gong beside Nariss, summoning more guards to the sanctuary. Acolytes try to steer the guests to safety; the acolytes join in the battle only to aid the guards with healing or to assist Nariss and Jayzel in escaping. Jayzel and Nariss cast protective spells on themselves and then aid the guards with their ranged spells. If the intruders are winning the fight and killing people, Jayzel and Nariss flee through the secret door in area 11 to hide in the torture chamber. The remaining guards and acolytes cover their escape. If Nariss and Jayzel become trapped, they try to deal with the PCs for their lives.

6. Guards' Quarters

This room contains sixteen beds, each with a locked chest at its foot.

Guards rest here in the morning and afternoon. Two guards watch the store above, while the other 14 are on duty throughout the temple (in the evening). Locked chests can be opened with thief's tools and a successful DC 15 Dexterity check. Each contains 1d10 x 10 gp worth of coins, clothing, and miscellaneous personal items.

7-10. Private Pleasure

The sounds of whipping and screams of pain and pleasure emanate from this room.

Anyone opening the door to one of these rooms sees either an acolyte (male or female) whipping a chained-up, nude patron (male or female), or a patron whipping a chained-up acolyte. The occupants are likely engaged in intercourse as well. The room contains a table for the victim, with chains and manacles attached to the wall behind it to keep the victim in place. Whips hang from pegs on the wall. The chains aren't especially sturdy; they can be broken with a successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check.

11. Nariss's Private Pleasure Room

This room contains a padded leather table with leather straps attached. Whips, torture implements, and chains with manacles hang from the wall behind the table. Other sets of chains hang from the ceiling.

Unless a PC paid for a session with Nariss, this room is empty at the moment, with Nariss being either in the sanctuary or having fled through this room into area 12. A secret door in the south wall can be found with a successful DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check. It's protected with a *glyph of warding* that can be found with a close inspection and a successful DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check. When triggered, the glyph does 5d8 lightning damage, or half damage with a successful DC 18 Dexterity saving throw.

12. Nariss's Torture Chamber

The iron door to this room is locked and guarded with a *glyph of warding*. The glyph can be found with a successful DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check. If triggered, it does 5d8 fire damage, or half damage with a successful DC 18 Dexterity saving throw.

Two guards protect this room, which contains two racks. Both racks are occupied by bloody, half-conscious, naked men. Torture implements hang from pegs on the wall, as do many chains and manacles.

Development: Nariss and Jayzel may have fled here to make a last stand. They attempt surrender and try to negotiate a deal with murderous PCs rather than fight to the death. They have information to bargain with, and they offer it up for their lives (see the list of information that can be gained from the temple at the beginning of this section). The men on the racks are Karl and Zekler von Hilpner, wealthy residents of Zobeck with ties to the Black Market. Jayzel and Nariss have been torturing them—real torture, not fetish torture—for information about their contacts and commodities. Nariss's *zone of truth* spell reveals whether the victims are speaking truth or just babbling anything to lessen the pain. Nariss has a knack for inflicting real pain and she enjoys this work. The men might offer a reward to their rescuers, if they're assured the incident will be kept quiet.

13. Acolytes' Quarters

This room contains fifteen beds, each with a locked chest at its foot. Scarlet robes of regular (non-translucent) cloth hang from pegs on the walls.

Locked chests can be opened with thief's tools and a successful DC 15 Dexterity check. Each contains 4d10 x 10 gp worth of coins, gems, jewelry, and miscellaneous personal items.

PART 3: AT THE ARCANE COLLEGIUM

If PCs decide to go to the Arcane Collegium to search Konrad's office, they must make their own way on campus. You can decide what protections the Collegium has in place, but it certainly includes sentries and protective magic such as *guards and wards*.

No faculty or staff will discuss Linnea's death, and they will only point the way to Konrad's office if PCs

don't mention Linnea first. Anyone asking about her or the murder is given the official story and asked to leave the grounds.

Konrad's Office

Konrad's office is locked and *alarm* is cast on the door. The lock can be opened with thief's tools and a successful DC 18 Dexterity check. If it's opened, the alarm alerts Konrad silently, and he sends an arcane eye to find out what's happening. If the situation warrants, he sends conjured creatures or undead to deal with intruders before they can pry too far into his business.

.....
This room contains a mahogany desk and a matching chair. On the desk sit two pen and ink sets and an untitled book, but nothing else. Two chairs rest in front of the desk.
.....

The desk's unlocked drawers are empty. A hidden compartment in the lower drawer can be found with a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check. Inside it is a parchment on which are doodled various undead creatures. A message winds through and around the doodles, stating "Linnea forever keeps my secrets!"

The book is trapped with a *glyph of warding* that's detectable with a successful DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check. If the book is opened, the glyph does 5d8 cold damage, or half damage with a successful DC 18 Dexterity saving throw. The pages of the book are all blank.

Konrad's Unused Lab

.....
This room contains three work tables and numerous cabinets along the north wall. Everything in it is pristine, appearing unused.
.....

Konrad does not, in fact, use this lab, as others at the university abhor his work—even though he is an accepted member of the faculty—and they've complained vehemently about his experiments. Thus, he decided he'd rather do his experiments elsewhere, and rents property in the Docks.

The cabinets contain jars of basic spell components. Magic-using PCs could stock up on 100-200 gp worth of components from them. Other than that, the room holds nothing of value.

PART 4: KONRAD'S WAREHOUSE LAB

While the PCs can figure out that Konrad has rented space in the Docks, nothing gives away the actual location until they start asking questions in the Docks area. Let the players formulate a plan for how they want to approach this problem, then let one person in the group make a Charisma check, with other characters aiding. Subtract the result of the check from 25; the difference is the number of hours it takes characters to track down the location of Konrad's lab (minimum of 1). If characters specify that they're talking to people at the Owl and Moon Tavern, they get advantage on the main Charisma check. Eventually they track down witnesses who've seen Konrad multiple times entering and leaving a warehouse a block from the tavern, along a narrow side street.

The warehouse is 20 feet tall, 40 feet wide along the street, and 100 feet long. It has just one door, which is blocked off from the inside (see area 1), and has no windows or skylights. Characters must either force their way through the door, smash a hole through the wall, or find some magical means to get inside.

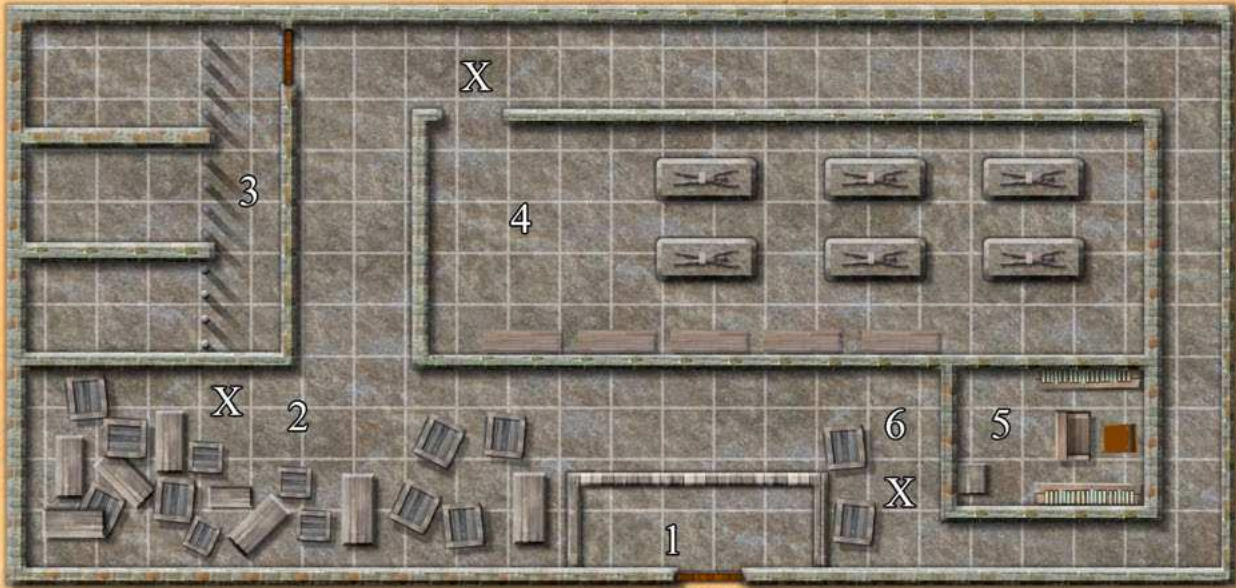
1. Entrance

.....
The warehouse's door is made of reinforced wood (AC 16, 24 HP) and locked. The lock can be picked with thief's tools and a successful DC 18 Dexterity check, or the door can be smashed open with a successful DC 20 Strength check. An *arcane lock* on the door, however, increases both DCs to 28 unless the spell is *dispelled* or suppressed with a *knock* spell. There is no light beyond the entrance, so the PCs must supply their own light in the warehouse.
.....

.....
This room is entirely bare, with no doors or exits besides the one to the street, and no other contents or decorations of any kind. The dusty floor, however, shows the prints of someone wearing soft shoes who's entered and exited many times by the door.
.....

Konrad walled over the only door that leads into the warehouse to keep out thieves and curiosity seekers. Characters are likely to search for a secret door here. They won't find one, but anyone who makes a successful DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check as part of that search notices magical markings scribed in a circle beneath the dust on the floor. These marks are found automatically by anyone who sweeps aside the dust at the point where the slipped footprints lead.

KONRAD'S WAREHOUSE LAB



KEY

X = Protean Zombies S = Secret Door

1 Square = 5 Ft

The marks are a low-energy teleportation portal linked to the matching portal inside the warehouse, and only to that location. Konrad uses these portals to enter and leave the warehouse. They can only be activated by someone who knows the command word. It can be learned by casting *identify* in the circle.

The only other way into the warehouse is to destroy the wall. It has AC 12, 35 HP, and is immune to necrotic, poison, and psychic damage. Alternatively, someone can smash through it with a successful DC 20 Strength check.

Konrad knows immediately when anyone enters this area because the floor is rigged with an *alarm* spell that mentally alerts him. When that happens, he herds his **protean zombies** (area 2) into the inner portal and sends them through in groups of three to attack whoever is in this chamber. The first three zombies arrive 1 minute after the characters do, and the rest 1 round later. After the zombies are sent, Konrad casts *invisibility* and *nondetection* on himself, then waits to see what happens. He remains hidden until intruders enter his study (area 5) unless characters somehow find him sooner.

Protean zombies strongly resemble flesh golems and use the same stat block, with two alterations. A protean zombie is considered undead instead of a construct, and if a protean zombie's two slam attacks both hit the same creature in a round, the creature is infected with corporeal instability (see sidebar) unless it makes a successful DC 15 Constitution saving throw.

Protean Zombie (×6, **Flesh Golem**): AC 9; HP 93 (11d8+44); Spd 30 ft; **Melee** slam (+7, 2d8+4 bludgeoning); SA multiattack (slam x2), corporeal instability (if both slam attacks hit same creature in a round, creature is infected with corporeal instability [see sidebar]; DC 15 Con save negates); **Immune** charm, exhaustion, fright, lightning, nonmagical/nonadamantine weapons, paralysis, petrification, poison; **Str** +4, **Dex** -1, **Con** +4, **Int** -2, **Wis** +0, **Cha** -3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft; **Traits** berserk (if the golem has fewer than 40 HP at the start of its turn, it has a 1/6 chance to go berserk and attack nearest creature), fire aversion (has disadvantage on attacks and ability checks until end of its next turn after taking fire damage), immutable form (immune to form-altering magic), lightning absorption (regains HP equal to lightning damage), magic resistance

(advantage on saving throws against magic), magic weapons (zombie's attacks are treated as magical); AL N; CR 5; XP 1,800.

2. Crates of the Dead

This section of the warehouse is filled with crates. Some are three or four feet long and rectangular, while others are square, measuring one or two feet on a side.

Not all of Konrad's bodies are fresh from the grave. The crates contain embalmed body parts. Opening the long crates reveals arms or legs. The box-shaped crates have feet, hands, or even heads in them.

Six **protean zombies** wander freely in the open section of the warehouse, but characters probably already fought and destroyed them in area 1. If the zombies still exist when characters enter this area, four are lurching about in the open while two lurk behind stacked crates in the southwest corner. They growl loudly when they see intruders, to alert other zombies and the wight in area 4.

Another portal, linked to the one in area 1, is in this area, likewise obscured by dust.

3. Zombie Pens

The door to this room is unlocked.

This room contains three cages. Inside each mill 20 zombies.

These are normal **zombies**, not Konrad's special protean zombies.

Konrad is assembling a zombie army. He is building more cages in area 6, and when he runs out of space entirely, he'll rent more warehouses until he's ready to unleash his creations on Zobeck. Linnea Thorn learned of his plans, which is why she was killed.

Xavier might release some of these zombies to attack the characters, if he has the opportunity. That decision is left up to you.

4. Workroom

This room is filled with tables that are strewn with bodies and pieces of bodies. The stench of death mingles with a chemical odor to create a strong air of repulsiveness. Cabinets line most of the southern wall.

Xavier, Konrad's **wight** assistant, works in this room. If the protean zombies alerted him to intruders, he may run to area 3 to release more zombies.

The cabinets contain material needed for Konrad's necromantic experiments and tools for cutting apart bodies and stitching them back together.



A secret door to area 5 in the southern wall can be found with a successful DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check. It's trapped with a *glyph of warding* that goes off when the door is opened, doing 5d8 thunder damage, or half damage with a successful DC 18 Dexterity saving throw. The glyph can be spotted by someone who inspects the door closely and makes a successful DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check.

Xavier uses the standard wight's stat block, but it is also a spellcaster (as noted below) and is equipped with a +1 *quarterstaff* instead of longsword and longbow. Xavier should have enough warning from the protean zombies to cast *mage armor* and *false life* on itself. Xavier fights until destroyed, being fanatically loyal to Konrad.

Wight: AC 12 (15 with *mage armor*); HP 45 (6d8+18); Spd 30 ft; **Melee** life drain (+4, 1d6+2 necrotic and the target must make a successful DC 13 Con save or its HP maximum is reduced by the same amount), +1 *quarterstaff* (+5, 1d6+3 bludgeoning or 1d8+3 bludgeoning if used two-handed); **SA** multiattack (2 attacks; only 1 can be life drain); **Resist** necrotic and nonmagical, nonsilvered weapons; **Immune** poison, exhaustion; **Str** +2, **Dex** +2, **Con** +3, **Int** +0, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +2; **Skills** Perception +2, Stealth +4; **Senses**

darkvision 60 ft; **Traits** sunlight sensitivity (while in sunlight, has disadvantage on attack rolls and Perception checks that rely on sight); **AL** NE; **CR** 4; **XP** 1,100.

Spellcaster (+4, DC 12): at will—*acid splash*, *mage hand*, *poison spray*, *shocking grasp*; 1st (4)—*fog cloud*, *grease*, *mage armor*, *witch bolt*; 2nd (4)—*false life*, *scorching ray*, see *invisibility*, *spider climb*; 3rd (3)—*blink*, *lightning bolt*, *slow*; 4th (2)—*black tentacles*, *phantasmal killer*.

5. Konrad's Study

This room contains a desk with a high-backed chair and bookshelves filled with tomes. On a pedestal on the western side of the room sits a gruesome sight: the head of a young woman. It opens its eyes when you enter the room.

The door has an *alarm* spell cast on it, which mentally alerts Konrad that his sanctuary has been disturbed. With his work and secrets threatened, he can no longer remain hidden; he must deal with the intruders. While characters are exploring his office, he casts *mage armor* and *fire shield*. He has big plans and

CORPOREAL INSTABILITY

A living creature that is infected with corporeal instability immediately metamorphoses into a spongy, amorphous mass of fleshy material. Its flesh, bones, and organs melt, flow, writhe, and boil, so the following effects occur:

- Its speed becomes 10 feet.
- It can't cast spells and can't use magic items, tools, or weapons. It can make unarmed melee attacks with reach 5 feet.
- It becomes blind and deaf.
- Its items don't transform with it but instead fall to the ground in the creature's space.
- An affected creature repeats the saving throw at the end of its turn. On a success, the corporeal instability is suppressed for 1 minute. While the instability is suppressed, the creature reverts to its normal form. Its armor, clothing, and other gear remain scattered on the ground around it. During this minute, no saving throws against corporeal instability are necessary unless the creature is hit by both of a protean zombie's slam attacks. After the minute of stability elapses, the affected creature must make another DC 15 Constitution saving throw at the end of its turn. On a success, it has another minute of stability; on a failure, it is again reduced to a blob of flesh and it repeats the saving throw at the end of its turn until it becomes stable again.
- The effect ends permanently (until the creature is reinfected by a protean zombie) if *greater restoration* or comparable magic is cast on the infected character, or if the character remains stable (in their normal form) for 3 minutes.
- An infected creature dies when it is reduced to an amorphous mass of flesh for a third time by the same corporeal instability infection. Note that it doesn't matter how many times a creature fails the saving throw while it's unstable; it dies from the infection only if it becomes stable twice, then fails the saving throw and becomes unstable a third time. A creature that dies this way from corporeal instability rises at the next dusk as a zombie.

big ambitions, so he doesn't fight to the death. Instead, he tries to escape to save himself.

The head is what remains of Linnea Thorn. She can talk and answer questions, albeit slowly. Her mind is quite traumatized by the manner of her death and continued existence.

The tomes on the bookshelves all deal with necromancy. The pedestal contains a secret compartment that can be spotted with a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check. Inside it is the gem containing the tiny, *imprisoned* Consul Streck. Linnea Thorn knows Streck is trapped in the gem and that the gem is somewhere in the room behind her, but she couldn't see that its hiding place is actually in the same pedestal she's on.

KONRAD VON EBERFELD, COLLEGIUM NECROMANCER

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil

Armor Class 13 (16 with *mage armor*)

Hit Points 127 (17d8 + 51)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	17 (+3)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Dex +6, Int +6, Wis +5, Cha +3

Skills Arcana +6, Perception +5

Senses passive Perception 15

Languages Common, Draconic, Infernal, Undercommon

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Spellcasting. Konrad is a 13th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). Konrad has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *blade ward, chill touch, dancing lights, mending, shocking grasp*

1st level (4 slots): *alarm, hideous laughter, mage armor, ray of sickness*

2nd level (3 slots): *crown of madness, invisibility, ray of enfeeblement*

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell, nondetection, vampiric touch*

4th level (3 slots): *arcane eye, black tentacles, fire shield*

5th level (2 slots): *cone of cold, telekinesis*

6th level (1 slot): *chain lightning*

7th level (1 slot): *finger of death*

ACTIONS

+2 **Quarterstaff.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage, or 8 (1d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage if wielded with two hands.

EQUIPMENT

+2 *quarterstaff*, 2 *scrolls of teleport*

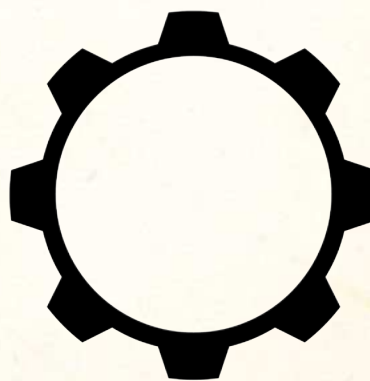
6. Construction Area

This area contains boards and the materials to build more cages to house Konrad's ever-growing army of zombies.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

If the PCs kill Konrad, the Collegium may ask for an investigation into his disappearance. You must ultimately decide how this plays out with the law. Consul Streck, if rescued from the gem, does everything in his power to keep the PCs out of jail and he informs the governing bodies about Konrad's plan to take the city with his undead creations. He also reveals the truth about Linnea's death. Streck can be a strong ally for the PCs in the future, especially if any of them have political ambition. Additionally, if they granted mercy to Jayzel and Nariss, the two can be used as information agents to aid their rise to power.

If Konrad escapes, he's in a tight spot. Several people in the city are now able to implicate him in capital crimes, but he doesn't wait around for that to happen. He clears out his residence in the College District and vanishes that night, leaving the characters to explain everything to the Collegium. The evidence left behind in Konrad's warehouse should be enough to persuade the Collegium that PCs are telling the truth about what happened (assuming they are!) and that Konrad was behind the recent evil deeds.



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