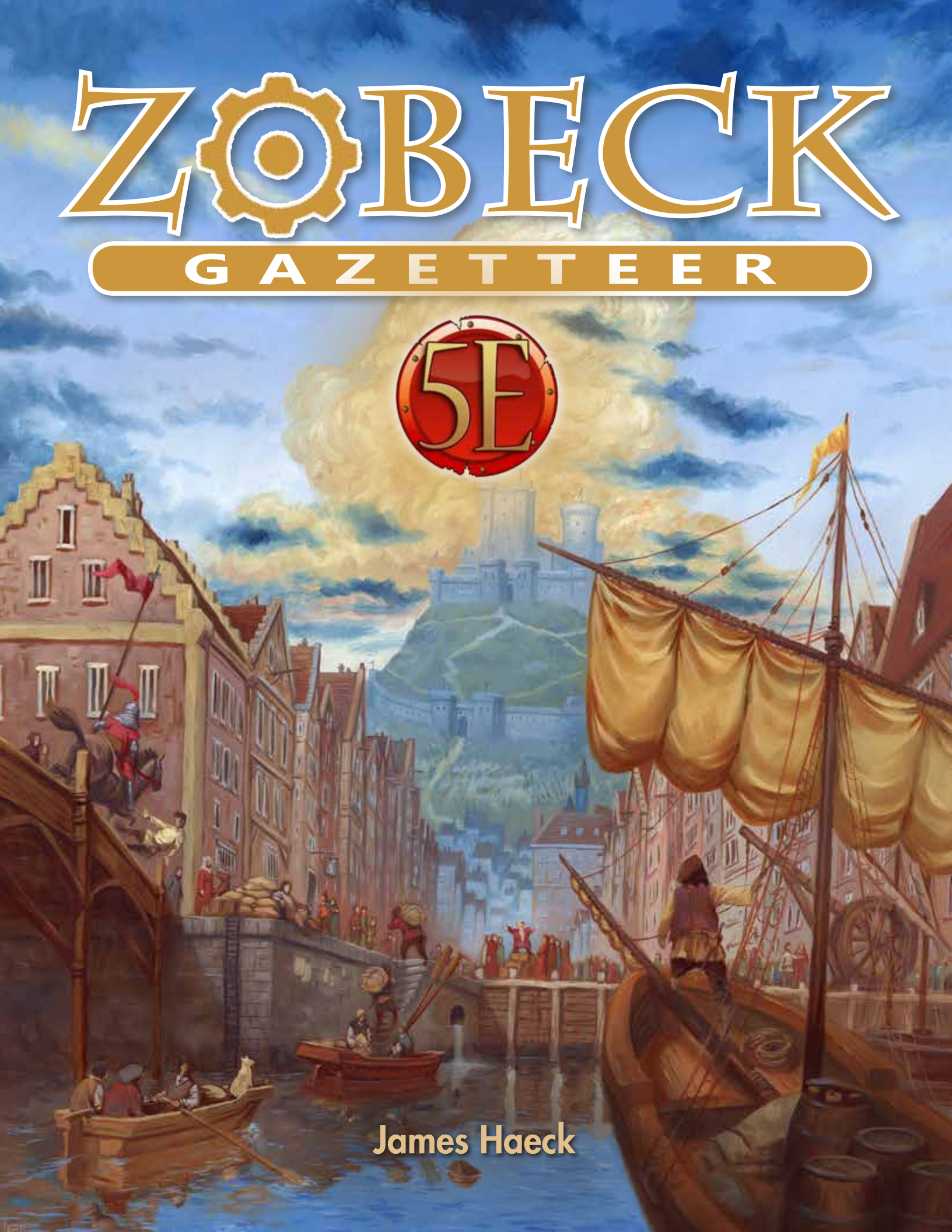


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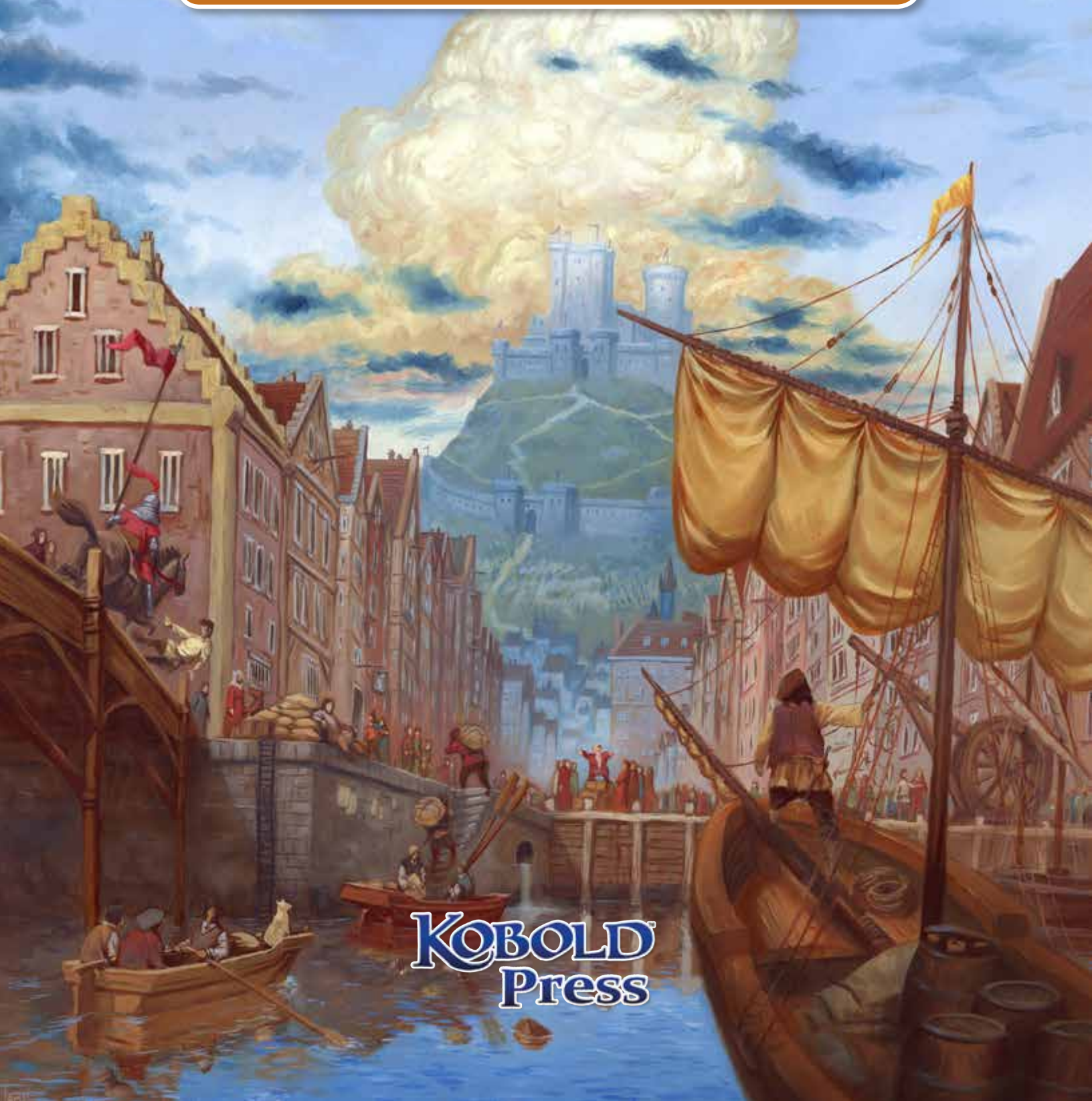
GAZETTEER



James Haeck

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FOR 5TH EDITION

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WHAT IS ZOBECK?

The Free City of Zobeck stands proud at the crossroads of the world. It is a city where adventurers, merchants, and scoundrels from all walks of life and all nations intermingle. It is a city where wondrous inventions are dreamt and great tales of glory begin—for it is the boiling cauldron in which Midgard's most potent minds, its largest personalities, and its most inflated egos are mixed together.

Yet no more than a century ago, the people of Zobeck lacked the freedom they enjoy today. In those days, they toiled and suffered to fill the coffers of House Stross, their feudal rulers. Everything changed when the people took up arms against the plutocrats of House Stross and threw off the shackles of tyranny. In the intervening decades, the few remaining aristocratic houses have fallen away, their hereditary lines replaced by merchants and elected officials. While the local aristocracy raged against the Revolt, the surrounding nations believed an independent Zobeck might prove a useful pawn in their political machinations. A city-state without a lord, they figured, would be too weak to prove noisome. They agreed that so long as Zobeck remained neutral in the affairs of its “betters,” its neighbors would allow it to live on sufferance.

The people of Zobeck had other plans. Ignored by its haughty neighbors, the Free City rose like a phoenix from the ashes of the Revolt. The flames of freedom heated its forges, and Zobeck's citizens transformed their city into a hotbed of innovation. Guided by the Free City Council, new social and political structures were born. Aided by the hand of Rava the Gear Goddess, new machines of steam and brass were forged. In a short nine decades, the citizens of Zobeck have transformed their sleepy fiefdom into a city-state with the power to affect change all across Midgard.

Now updated for 5th Edition, the *Zobeck Gazetteer* provides all the information you need to run a campaign in the Free City at the crossroads of Midgard. Home to merchants, priests, conniving cultists, backstabbing thieves, and the occasional pure-hearted altruist, Zobeck is the trade center of the dark fantasy world of Midgard—a world thoroughly detailed in the newly updated *Midgard Worldbook* and

Midgard Heroes Handbook. Of course, Zobeck can be easily adapted into a thriving fantasy city in your own campaign world. Whether in Midgard or your own setting, Zobeck is the perfect home base for spinning stories of intrigue and street-level fantasy.

ONWARD!

To those of you new to Zobeck, again, welcome to the Free City! Even in a world of dragons and magic, there are no greater dangers to life and livelihood than those found on the streets of the big city. Tighten your purse-strings, friend, and venture into the unknown.



ADAPTING ZOBECK TO YOUR CAMPAIGN

While the Free City of Zobeck resides at the Crossroads in a world called Midgard and includes many details about Midgard's deities, clockwork technology, and neighboring territories, Game Masters can easily

remove Zobeck from this realm and slip it into their own. This requires a few adjustments, certainly, but Zobeck makes a fine trade hub in any campaign world.



1

A HISTORY

The wise and enlightened guidance of House Stross over their various domains—including the provinces of Grisal, Zobeck, and the Smolder Hills—is demonstrated by the fact that they have made trade with the Winter Court and a tight alliance with the Order of the Undying Sun the twin, somewhat contradictory, pillars of their rule.

Balancing the tensions between the Order, where the eldest son of the Stross generally earns his spurs, and the wilder shadow magic of Sarastra and her

followers, beautifully illustrates the Stross's ability to play competing interests against each other while still securing their city against outside aggression, especially from the Ironcrags and Morgau. Everywhere is evidence of the people's deep love for House Stross, and they support its rule faithfully. Indeed, I think no crown in the Crossroads is more secure than that of His Grace, Kranos Stross.

—From *Travels down the River Argent*
(published one year before the Great Revolt)

The Free City's austere feudal history has greatly defined the city's current freedom-loving citizenry. After suffering under the long, harsh reign of the aristocratic Stross family, the people of Zobeck have little love for nobles or the institution of feudalism. They have vowed to never again accept a lord's yoke.

Instead, commerce and the ability of every man and woman to grab life's wealth and gusto rule the Zobeckan spirit. Free to make their way in the world, they work to secure a living in whatever manner they see fit—though some occupations clash with the city's laws—and answer to no one but themselves.

Still, certain citizens are not as free as others. The kobolds fought alongside the rebels to emancipate Zobeck and thus gained a seat on the Free City Council, but as a whole, the kobolds remain very much second-class citizens. They do not experience the same uplifting spirit of freedom as their dwarf or human neighbors, or even the gearforged. Those formerly flesh-and-blood beings now living in metal bodies hold more privileges than any kobold in the greater city. For all their assistance in the Great Revolt, kobolds have been relegated by others to their own little ghetto and the most menial professions. Life remains harsh for the little dragon men who once steered their own destiny and mined freely in service to a proud kobold king of these lands.

Here's how the present Zobeck came to be. . . .

EARLY DAYS: THE FEY, THE CURSE, AND THE KOBOLDS

For thousands of years, the fey ruled the Margreve and the surrounding area, including the lands upon which now sit the city of Zobeck and Castle Shadowcrag. Over fourteen hundred years ago, on the advice of an evil advisor named Chorvodni, the Holly King and his fey followers sacrificed a young fey woman with a sword of light and planted a black oak on Rosehaven Hill.

Chorvodni—a shadow lammasu who served Sarastra, the goddess of night, magic, and shadow—led the Holly King to believe this magical sacrifice would trick the goddess and allow him to steal much of her power. Instead, the Heartwood Pact, as the ritual became known, forever cursed the fey to the Plane of Shadow, where Sarastra forced them all into servitude. Their pact also linked the hilltop, and the castle that would later rise upon it, to the Shadow Plane.

The Pact ultimately granted the fey great power, and they became the goddess's willing servants. However, their time on the Plane of Shadow transformed them into a twisted version of their former selves called scáthesidhe, the shadow fey. Over time, their hearts grew bitter, and they longed to regain all they had left behind. But they could not act directly against the curse, which they had sworn to honor in the Heartwood Pact.

About 600 years after Sarastra stole the fey from the land (and 200 years before the Stross family came to rule Zobeck), a tribe of kobolds began mining the abandoned lands. Under King Brandorek's orders, the kobolds built Brandor's Keep, a simple square fortification, on the fey's beloved Rosehaven Hill. The structure remains intact as a part of Castle Shadowcrag (see "Castle Shadowcrag," pg. 65).

Eventually, Sarastra allowed the fey to occasionally return to the place where they had struck their bad

bargain. When the fey discovered the kobolds had usurped "their" lands, the Moonlight King and his followers drove the kobolds off the hill in a rage. The kobolds, under the leadership of a kobold wielding the fey's sword of light, resisted from the shelter of their mines. But the fey worked carefully to destroy the kobolds who had trespassed on "their" black oak.

THE FEY AND THE STROSS FAMILY


The fey formed a hidden alliance with an ambitious human merchant family named Stross, and through Adrastus Stross, the fey saw the kobolds enslaved and the sword of light broken. Lord Stross brought in 20 shadow mastiffs, more than 20 grim dwarves, and a column of 200 human soldiers. He called out for Brandorek, the kobold king, and the king surrendered, offering his oath of fealty. The dwarves sundered the magical sword.

The Goddess of Night, realizing the black oak now bound the land as well as the fey, commanded the fey to defend the site. No one should have a chance to destroy the black oak. Indeed, Sarastra commanded the fey to bring the site over the planar boundary. When they failed to do so with sorcery, the fey decided to manipulate one of the Stross children. They sought to tempt a Stross scion to swear allegiance to them, to swear fealty to their King upon reaching adulthood, and eventually to grant the castle to the fey upon death. They never quite succeeded, but they did come close.

In the Black Oak Bailey, site of their great black oak, the fey struck this bargain with the Stross. In exchange for their eldest daughter and eldest son fostering in the courts of the shadow fey, the Stross gained access to shadow magic and the right to rule the Rosehaven lands, as the fey called the small walled city of Zobeck and the kobold mines all around it. The eldest of the Stross patriarchs entered the realm of shadow near his death, and some believe he lives there still, his soul forfeit for the power the fey gave his descendants.

The Shadow Plane still seeps through the dark oak and tempts those near it into darkness. Merely living near the bailey does not trigger the curse. The victims must also ask for help from the Goddess of Night and Magic—and for many long decades, the Stross remained loyal to the Sun God Khors. Over time, the fey turned them more and more toward Sarastra, convincing each generation to go a little further into shadow, but the Stross were canny bastards.

While the Stross did offer some worship to the goddess, they never fully embraced her. Instead, they used the scáthesidhe's wish to corrupt them to manipulate the fey. The family taught its sons and



daughters the secrets of power over the shadow fey. And, indeed, their teachings kept the fey at their command until the Great Revolt (see below) brought down the family.

THE STROSS FAMILY'S RULE

The Stross ruled in the city and province of Zobeck for nearly 600 years, marrying well, fighting off invasion from the Magocracies to the west, and holding their own against the advances of Morgau & Doresh to the northeast. They did it the old-fashioned way, with fistfuls of silver and a ruthless cruelty that scattered their enemies.

The Stross family's wealth flowed from river trade and deep silver mines. Their peasants worked hard, their enslaved kobold miners pulled ore from the earth day and night, and their soldiers kept the eastern Morgau undead at bay. But over time, the costs of defense and the nobility's luxurious upkeep grew very steep. The knights and landowners took more and more, and one day, the merchants, artisans, and peasants decided to stop paying. It took only a small spark.

The Stross guards dragged Halsen Hrovitz, a boy of ten, from the city's streets for denouncing the Stross as "leeches" and screaming that he did not want to die in their mines. Ordinary Zobeckers blocked the guards' path. News of the incident raced through the city, and citizens flocked to the boy. A mob grew. The people initially threw insults at the guards holding Halsen. As their numbers and courage grew, however, their pent-up anger manifested in thrown cobblestones. They pelted the guards relentlessly and freed the boy, who lived but suffered a terrible injury to his leg that never healed.

The hard-pressed guards fought to return to the prison. Hussar reinforcements arrived and rode into the mob, trampling a half-dozen people. A silversmith named Abelard and a journeyman wizard named Marcenzo reformed the crowd and gave it direction and goals. Within hours, they led the citizens to seize the city barracks, but soldiers from Castle Stross continued to march in, as did the troops from the gatehouses on the river, the Great Southern Road, and the Griffon Gate. The battle was far from over when the sun set on the first day.

The mob looted the Stross barracks and armory throughout the night and passed out weapons to a thousand willing hands.

THE GREAT REVOLT

By mid-morning the next day, Abelard and the wizard Marcenzo led the rebels to accomplish the impossible: they chased all the hostile guards and soldiers out of

the city. Clever maneuvering during the night allowed them to surprise the Stross men just before dawn at a half-dozen different places, and the guards never recovered from the shock. The soldiers regrouped near the Oros Bridge, however. The citizens and a few adventurers gathered in Crown Square to plan and prepare for the counterattack. The city folk swore that the revolt must not falter nor end until they had cast off House Stross completely.

All day the rebellious citizens gathered their forces. A huge mob threatened the commandery of the Order of the Undying Sun, staunch supporters of the Stross family who supposedly held a king's ransom in gold. The threats were a ruse, however, to keep the knights from supporting the city guards who yet remained loyal. In the meantime, Abelard and Marcenzo proclaimed Zobeck the Free City and struck a bargain with the majority of the remaining guards: in exchange for supporting the rebellion, their captain would have a lifetime seat on the new Free City Council that would govern Zobeck. With the bargain struck, word went out to sack Stross warehouses, counting houses, their city palace on Crown Square, and even their ships and barges.

The rebels released prisoners and arrested nobles and tax collectors. The mob ruled the city while the Watch stood aside, powerless to resist. Meanwhile, the aristocracy's forces fled to plot their revenge. They had lost the battle for the city, but the war was far from over. The knights of the Order of the Undying Sun gave their word not to return to Zobeck, and so were set free. They marched out to the sound of hisses and cries of, "Traitors to the people!"

One month later, the aristocratic army returned. Nobles and knights of the Undying Sun sent from other commanderies rode warhorses, while footmen and other allies—including mercenary crossbowmen—followed on foot or on lighter horses. With the group also came powerful shadow fey called the Four Deaths. The Stross allies seized the Oros Bridge, dividing the castle from the city and cutting off a main trade route. They stopped barge traffic on the River Argent and slowly pushed back the Free City's patrols.

THE BATTLE OF OROS BRIDGE

On a rainy, late spring day, almost 7,000 rebels met Lord Kranos Stross and his 1,400 retainers and 2,200 allies at the Battle of Oros Bridge. The revolutionaries' numbers and bravery overcame their shortage of training and proper arms and armor. Peasant archers, kobold miners, stout mercenary pikemen hired by merchant interests, and the wizardry of Marcenzo

formed the backbone of the Free City's Army. A few dwarves had worked tirelessly to make spears, shields, and armor for hundreds of the most experienced warriors, but more than half of Zobeck's army carried little more than knives and hate. The Watch, now firmly committed to the revolt, formed the remainder of the force, with the priests of Yarila the Harvest Goddess and Volund the Forge God providing support. The Free City Army's anger gave them courage against their better-trained foes.

The first morning, the Free City Army attempted to use that rage and courage to retake the bridge. The nobles held against repeated attempts to drive them off by magic and numbers, however. Confident in their superior skill and equipment, the Stross alliance counterattacked around noon. Cavalry poured over the bridge, shattered the front ranks, and overran the Free City Army's supply area. Almost as soon as they reached the reserves line, though, they fell into a clever trap. A field of holes and mud prepared by miners ensnared the advancing horses. Kobolds, artisans, and peasants dragged almost 50 knights down into mud and death.

Both sides retreated in good order.

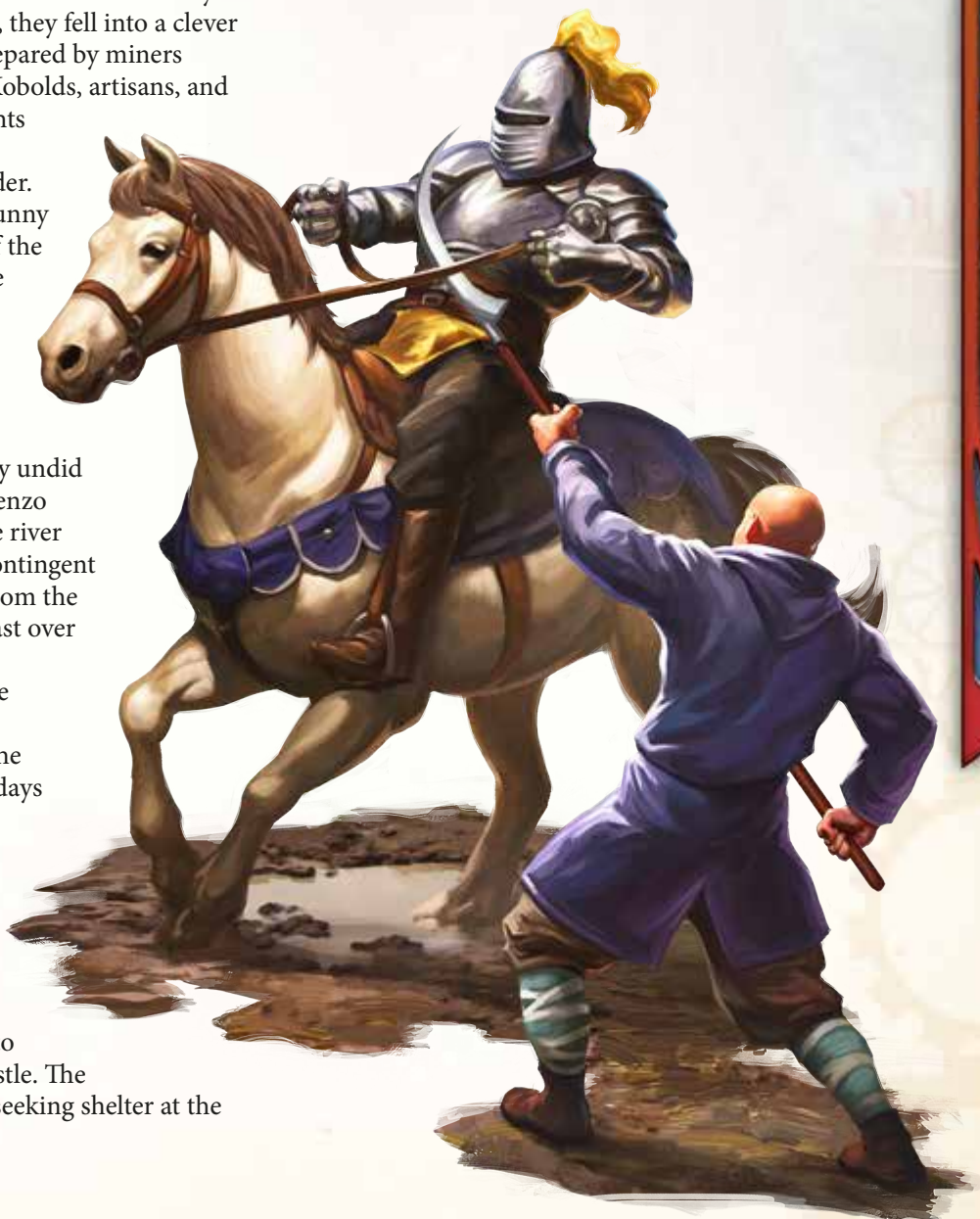
The second day was clear and sunny enough to see the muddy mess of the previous day's struggle. The battle continued into late afternoon with only skirmishes, feints, and small probing attacks while the Stross forces waited for the ground to dry sufficiently for another cavalry charge. That delay undid them, however. The wizard Marcenzo had taken his best men across the river during the night to join a large contingent of kobold reinforcements freed from the Stross silver mines and moving fast over the drying river bank.


Suddenly flanked, the Stross line at the bridge collapsed, and the mercenaries took flight, leaving the cavalry to struggle alone. In two days of bloody ruin, the peasants and kobolds took hundreds of noble prisoners and finally ended the reign of the Stross family. Kobold archers, owl-flying raiders, and other deadly night fighters prevented the remaining army from retreating to Strossheim, the Stross family's castle. The stragglers instead retreated east, seeking shelter at the village of Briarwood.

THE CASTLE FALLS

That night, the mob stormed Strossheim, forced the gate, and sacked the castle. They freed prisoners from the dungeons, tore down tapestries, and carted off food and gold. By dawn, more than 40 bodies hung from the battlements, arranged from youngest to eldest.

The Stross supporters fled to neighboring states, sought refuge downriver, or simply changed sides. After the looting ceased, the castle briefly served as the Free City Army's headquarters. One Stross child, Evander Stross, survived the massacre, though no one realized it. The quiet child was playing amidst the castle's shadows, as he usually did, when the mob struck. In the midst of the clash, he pledged his soul to the forces of shadow, and the shadows enfolded him into their protection.





The looting of the upper halls and the death of the inhabitants turned the castle into a place haunted by new ghosts. Fortunately, the fires started in the Great Hall failed to catch (or were suppressed by summoned water elementals). Many looters sought to find the “hoard of silver” the Stross family vaults contained, though they never did. Some claimed demons had guarded it, others vanished in the search, and some were driven mad by the terrors they saw below the hill. The army sealed up the entrances to the kobold’s silver mines for a few months, until the kobolds offered to work the mines in exchange for a fair share of the silver and a permanent position on the City Council. The city gratefully accepted over the objections of those who still saw kobolds as nothing more than slaves.

AFTER THE REVOLT

Five years later, the Free City Army abandoned the castle as the rising number of missing or dead sentries became unacceptable. The rumors of the castle’s haunting date to that time. The dwarves of Clan Grimbold stayed, however, and remain there still. Certain wizards and cultists visit them on occasion to purchase things best not discussed. Likewise, fighters seeking weapons of starmetal or pure shadow, or weapons aligned with the heavens, often make their way here and pay high prices for goods not available anywhere else.

The kobold silver miners worked the castle’s mines for more than 30 years. When the deep mines suffered a series of devastating collapses and explosions, even the kobolds abandoned them as haunted, or at least unlucky. The mines recently reopened with the help of clockwork pumps and new techniques for bracing the old tunnels.

THE PRESENT DAY

The Zobeck Revolt is 90 years past; only a few dwarves and gearforged remember it firsthand. The brash, rich city found its footing as an independent mercantile state. The sons and daughters of the Revolt’s leaders became the city’s Consuls and Lord Mayor and formed the Free City Council, a ruling body elected by the human, dwarven, and kobold citizens of Zobeck. The kobold slaves of ages past were freed from their shackles, and after centuries of prejudice, kobolds finally began to rise to positions of power in Zobeck.

The citizens of Zobeck have largely cast aside the gods and traditions of the Stross Dynasty and now honor Rava the Gear Goddess as well as some older deities. All faiths are welcome in Zobeck, though most of its people have no love for Sarastra, the Goddess of Night and Magic. Only a handful of Sarastrans live in the city, most of them shadow fey, whom the other citizens of Zobeck have yet to accept. Even the appearance of the Winter’s Kiss—the shadow fey embassy—within the city has done little to ease the tension between Zobeck’s older citizens and their new neighbors.

Despite years of expeditions, the dangers of Castle Shadowcrag—the haunted ruins of old Strossheim—still weigh heavily upon the minds of the Free City Council.

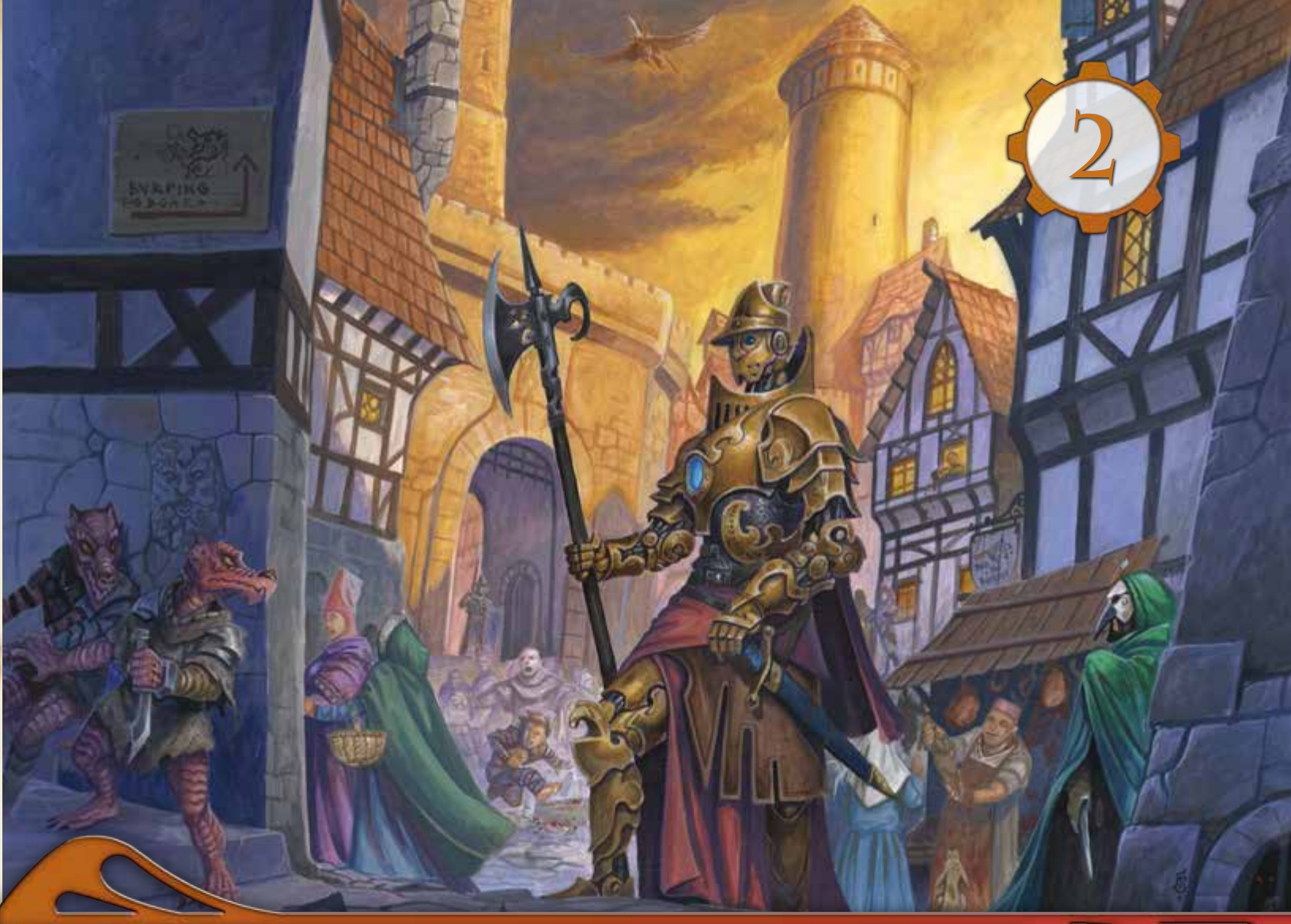
DANGEROUS NEIGHBORS

Zobeck shares borders with five states: the dwarven Ironcrag Cantons to the west, the undead lords of Morgau and Doresh to the north and east, the human kingdom of the Magdar to the south, and allied Perunalia, the Duchy of Perun’s Daughter far to the east, at the mouth of the River Argent. Raiding bands of militant ghouls from the subterranean Ghoul Imperium sometimes harry the city’s trade, though the ghouls send no ambassador to the city.

In the past decade, Zobeck’s prominence on the world stage has only grown. Its tangled web of alliances has grown thicker. Most unsettlingly, the Mharoti Dragon Empire’s hunger for conquest has urged the draconic legions northward into Midgard. In response to Mharoti aggression, Zobeck has bound its fate to the realms of Grisel and Magdar, forming the Argentine Alliance. The alliance also stands against the recently ascendant Vampire King Lucan, who also hungers for the blood of the free people of Midgard.

Almost as dangerous as those nations are the less organized groups. Bands of centaurs occasionally make their way through the Margreve Forest to raid the city’s fields and outlying villages.

Close but not quite bordering Zobeck are seven to 12 more states, depending on who does the counting: the nomadic elves of the Rothenian plains, the human lands of the Grand Duchy of Dornig, the Free City of Salzbach, the small mountain state of Verrayne, the powerful but sharply-pressed Electoral Kingdom of Krakova, and two of the Seven Cities, Melano and Triolo. All have trade relationships and not infrequently alliances with Zobeck.



THE FREE CITY OF ZOBECK

Mammon scratched his golden beard, sending a shower of silver ducats to the floor. Lesser devils scrambled to gather them up, but the erinyes Issiloth waited and watched her master's darkening expression. "Why, oh worthless servants of mine," he asked, "is this merchants' city not entirely within my claws?"

The servants outdid each other in avoiding their master's gaze, and the silence grew weightier. Finally, Issiloth judged the moment right, licked her lips, and stepped forward. "My lord, most of the merchants already bow to your fiendish mastery." The words almost made her gag, but she pressed on. "We have plans to secure more—"

"Most is not all!" the arch-devil thundered. "All of Zobeck must bend its knee. Or have you forgotten your sums, you lintpicking dungeater?" His gaze began with


her, swept over the rest, and returned to the erinyes. The other devils edged toward the chamber's platinum doors. Issiloth bowed her head to hide her expression and choose her next words carefully.

"Perhaps the ones who resist you serve other gods?"

"Of course they do." Mammon sounded more annoyed than angry, and Issiloth held her breath. "You give tedious council because you do not know better. Perhaps, oh clever servant, you should learn firsthand. Go, and bring their greatest heroes to my service."

Issiloth tried to look stricken. "But my lord, the heroes of Zobeck are known for their patron goddess and stout—"

"Go, little fool," Mammon said in his most quiet tone, and Issiloth shivered with real fear. "And if you fail, do not return."



Issiloth felt the pull of the link to the city forming quickly. “I am already gone, your Golden Magnificence, with a thousand pardons for my rudeness and sloth,” she said and meant every word. With a twinkle of coinage, she found herself in a summoning circle, just one more newcomer looking to make her own way in Zobeck. Whether that meant seeking glory and souls for Mammon, or just finding a berth out of his reach, at least she finally had her chance.

A city’s people are its foundation and its soul. The city of Zobeck houses a more industrious group of citizens than most, all of them free to trade, bargain, gather, and even scheme to make themselves rich, powerful, or wise. As one of the very few Free Cities in Midgard, it answers to no king or noble lord. Instead, its Free City Council rules from secret chambers, its Watch is both human and gearforged, and its people know what makes a life worthwhile: freedom, trade, and the blessings of the Gear Goddess. The city ticks and tocks, and its people keep a steady rhythm of mercantile life. Trade flows up and down the River Argent, out the Dwarven Gate to the Ironcrag, north through the Margreve, and south to Harkesh and Siwal and the distant cities of spice and silk.

Underneath all that hard work and pragmatism lies a darker city, a place built on kobolds enslaved in silver mines; a place still scarred by a harsh family’s diabolical practices and autocratic rule; a place corrupted by pacts of blood, by temptations of the flesh, and by the raw power of untrammelled greed that blackens men’s hearts. The people of Zobeck lust for power, wealth, success, and pleasure, and they bargain with anyone they believe can provide them: Kariv soothsayers, strange cults, harsh gods, and other unscrupulous schemers. The people’s hungers draw devils like crows to a corpse.

Yet the city prospers. Its heroes avert disaster again and again. Somehow, Zobeck’s heart keeps ticking, overseen by Rava, the goddess that gave it life.

DISTRICTS

The Free City encompasses ten main districts, each briefly described below. More detailed information about each district can be found in Chapters 3 and 4.

THE CARTWAYS

Originally kobold mining and drainage tunnels, Zobeck’s vintners and greengrocers later expanded and used these underground passageways for storing

wine and perishables. Noble revelers used them to travel back and forth to the Stross-sponsored Winter Festival in the underground cavern called Winter Hall. Eventually, the city’s nobles claimed the Cartways as their private highways, using them for everything from business to sexual rendezvous. After the Great Revolt, the victors saw the tunnels as symbols of the rich and sealed them for good.

Entrances to the Cartways still exist, however, and Zobeck’s smugglers, gangs, and undesirable residents frequently conduct business or lair therein. Travelers in the Cartways have encountered ghouls, devils, demons, otyughs, and various cults, including a cult of Marena. The Free City’s Watch officially prohibits exploration in the Cartways. Anyone entering them does so at their own risk.

CITADEL DISTRICT

Located in the northern part of the city, this section contains the walled Citadel and its highly skilled Griffon Knights, who protect Zobeck’s uppermost river entrances. The King’s Head tavern and the White Rose tavern both reside in this district. The former caters to average soldiers, while paladins and priests of Khors and Perun patronize the latter.

COLLEGIUM DISTRICT

As its name suggests, this district’s greatest feature is Zobeck’s famous Arcane Collegium. Lada’s Temple of the Celestial Dawn is its other great landmark. Scholars, scribes, mages, students, and alchemists frequent this district and often gather at the Hedgehog tavern or peruse the shelves at the Book Fetish.

DOCK DISTRICT

Also called the Gullet—and one of the busiest areas of the Free City—the Docks along the Argent River are the center of the city’s trade, just slightly eclipsing the Great Northern Road. Its wharves, alleys, and thoroughfares see traffic from merchants, bargemen, and stevedores at all hours. Its taverns, gambling dens, and bordellos stand beside warehouses, dry docks, and other industries of the water trade. Brawls are common, and the Watch tends to patrol the area heavily to ensure the smooth continuation of commerce.

GEAR DISTRICT

The city’s dwarves dominate this district, which houses many trade guilds, like the Geargrinder’s Guild, Foundryman’s Guild, and Steamworker’s Union. The area is awash in tin, iron, and brass creations, and the sound of dwarves striking anvils carries throughout the streets. Many gearforged frequent this district.

ZOBECK, THE CROSSROADS CITY

Symbol: A red and gold quartered shield with a gear on it, countercharged on it, countercharged

Ruler: Free Mayor Constantia Olleck (CG female dwarf bard 7) and the Free City Consuls

Free City Consuls: Guildmaster of the Arcane Collegium Orlando (CN male human wizard 15); Field Marshall of the Free Army Sir Jorun Haclav (LN male human fighter 2/cleric 6 [Perun]); Ondli Firedrake, First Consul and High Priest of Rava Among the Dwarves and Volund (LG male dwarf fighter 4/cleric 9 [Rava and Volund]); Quetelmak, Kobold King of Kings (LE male kobold rogue 7); Radovar Streck, Lector of the Collegium (NE male human wizard (alchemist) 5); Melancha Vendemic (LN female human bard 10); Kekolina of the Derry Mine (NG female kobold rogue 6/cleric 2 [St. Piran]); Myzi I, Mouse King (N male human, shapechanger fighter 11); Lady Wintesla Marack, master merchant of House Marack (LG female human cleric 5 [Lada]); Halsen Hrovitz IV, master merchant of House Hrovitz (NG male human bard 8); Selena Harbeck, Guildmistress of the Weaver's Guild (LN female human cleric (Rava) 4)

Important Personages: Lord Commander of the Free Army of Zobeck and Keeper of the Blue House Lady Fenyll Marack (LE female human rogue 12); Master Necromancer Konrad von Eberfeld (NE male human wizard 7); Master Illusionist Ariella Scarpetti (N female human wizard (illusionist) 9); Master Diviner Rudwin Whitstone (N male dwarf sorcerer 8); Sir Janush Hermass, Commander of the Order of the Undying Sun (LG male human paladin 13 [Khors]); Sir Malkus Lineguard, Commander of the Order of Griffon Knights (LG male dwarf fighter 4/wizard 5); Lucca



Angeli, High Priestess of Lada (NG female human cleric 11 [Lada]); Medlin Gorzax, High Priest of Perun (N male human cleric 11 [Perun]); Lena Ravovik, High Priestess of Rava Among the Humans (LN female human cleric 9 [Rava]); Lord Volstaff Greymark, Master of Coin and prominent wool merchant (LE male human rogue 12), His Excellency Ambassador Glaninin Thelamandrine (NE male shadow fey bard 12)

Population: 16,000 (12,000 humans; 850 dwarves; 2,800 kobolds; 200 gearforged; 150 other)

Towns: Neuraddel, population 4,320 (4,300 humans, 20 gearforged); Obersteinau, population 3,200 (1,200 humans, 2,000 kobolds); Vesslau Mines population 2,800 (all kobolds); Altbach, population 2,200 (2,000 humans, 200 dwarves)

Castles: Gelburg, Obertal, Remmauer, Shadowcrag, Stefanstor

Great Gods: Rava (patron), Lada, Perun, Holda, Svarog/Volund

KOBOLD GHETTO

Zobeck's hard-working kobolds reside in this section of the city. Their many kings hold sway in this small realm, and any Bigs or Too Tallers entering the Ghetto have to submit to the kobold border authority, paying taxes on declared goods and often bribes just to gain admittance.

The Ghetto's streets are narrow, crowded, and often trapped. Nonkobolds are walking targets for pickpockets and gangs.

LOWER ZOBECK (ASHMILL)

Ashmill is home to the Free City's poor and unskilled working classes, though a few merchants, like the

Kappa family, have purchased large chunks of space here near the Moon Temple and the shrine to St. Charon. Lower Zobeck also houses the W heatsheaf tavern, a favored drinking hole for smugglers and rogues. Merchants selling foodstuffs, livestock, and spices do brisk business in this district.

TEMPLE DISTRICT

Temples to the Free City's five main deities—Lada (her largest temple in Zobeck), Perun, Rava, Volund, and Porevit and Yarila (the Green Gods)—comprise the extent of this district. A small shrine to Holda is the newest in the district. The structures surrounding the temples house their staff or store goods and livestock to support the clerics.

MARKET DISTRICT (VINEYARD DISTRICT)

Merchants selling carpets, cloth, leather, wine, weapons, alchemical powders, poisons, goods from other lands, and even otherworldly goods from the Realm of Shadow hawk their wares from tiny stalls in this district. Most anything can be found for sale here.

MERCHANT DISTRICT

Weavers, cobblers, coopers, carpenters, jewelers, armorers, and other skilled workers have shops lining this district. Some of their wares are sold in the Market District, supplementing their income, but these craftsmen generally work to order and keep quite busy. Many merchants reside in the upper levels of their shops, though the wealthier ones have residences in Upper Zobeck.

UPPER ZOBECK

The Free City's government centers, including the Council Hall, City Archives, the Redrock Bailey (jail), and the Civic Courthouse, cluster in this district. The opulent, painted-brick houses of the city's richest and oldest families stand in the Crown Square portion of the district, where the great Old Stross Clock tolls the hours.

LIFE IN ZOBECK

Despite commerce's importance, not everyone in Zobeck is a merchant or business owner. The average citizen makes his wage through common labor, as a farmer, apprentice, launderer, miner, sailor, servant, stevedore, watchman, wait staff, or any of a myriad of other professions. Some individuals, of course, prefer illegal endeavors, such as smuggling, thieving, and narcotics dealing. For the most part, however, Zobeck is a city of hardworking people who highly value their freedom.

PEOPLE OF ZOBECK

As a thriving trade center, Zobeck draws people from across Midgard. The Free City calls to enterprising individuals desiring to make their own way in the world. It offers even the lowliest peasants the chance to forge new beginnings. Opportunities in nearly every arena abound for those who know how to grab them, and many come to the Crossroads in hopes of bettering their lot. In Rava's ticking city, people can join the hum of the seamless trade machinery and forge their own destiny.

Zobeck's population has grown slowly but steadily over the past ten years, rising from 14,000 to 16,000. Though the change seems insignificant, Zobeck is beginning to feel growing pains. Housing is growing scarce, and the city's poorest residents are being forced underground by the cost of rent—into the dark and

cavernous Old City deep beneath the stones of Zobeck. Still, the city welcomes all human visitors and many of the other races. In a city of commerce, newcomers are all viewed as walking money, and the citizens of the Free City are eager to relieve them of their coin—whether legally or not.

HUMANS

Humans comprise the city's largest population. Most hail from the Magdar Kingdom to the south, though some have immigrated from the Duchy of Perun's Daughter or from Salzbach and Grisal (the latter of which was human before the dwarves took it). A few have arrived after fleeing from the harsh masters of Morgau and Doresh. Others have trickled in from all over Midgard in search of opportunity. Even a few Kariv have made the city their permanent home.

Overall, the humans here are a varied lot, and many different hair colors and skin tones make up the city's crowds. At least a dozen languages echo through the city's streets and docks.

DWARVES

Zobeck's dwarves are, in some senses, the weakest and least martial dwarves in Midgard. For a time, their cousins in the Ironcrag Cantons considered them a strange sort of "lowland canton," but their unusual behavior has put the lie to even this. They rarely gather for war, they rarely cloister their women, and they show little interest in the Old Gods Wotan and Perun. Instead, they devote themselves to the strange cult of Rava the Gear Maiden and to the construction of ever more sophisticated mechanisms and tools. They are master jewelers and craftsmen, excellent diviners, and even respectable bards, but they seem to lack the reaver's temperament entirely.

The dwarves of Zobeck live almost exclusively in the Gear District to be close to their work and, some say, to keep one ear open for what the kobolds might do to their forges at night. They labor long and hard, and many gain great wealth; a few maintain summer villas in the alpine reaches. Some work as factors for the great dwarven trade houses, but this is rare because of their uncharacteristic behavior. They show much less passion for the ancient ways than most dwarves. Indeed, when pressed for their clan, canton, and lineage, some merely reply that they are "children of the city and the Goddess Rava." This formulation troubles the more devout visitors from Stannasgard or Winterheim. The most famous among them is Ondli Firedrake, a pantheist priest who represents Rava and Volund and is First Consul of the city.

In addition to their industrial innovations, the dwarves are also creators of the school of ring magic. As masters of the forge, they imbue magical power

into the rings and sigils that safeguard their homes, workplaces, and even their personal belongings. This magic is described in *Midgard Heroes Handbook*.

KOBOLDS

The Free City is home to at least 2,200 kobolds, though only a few hundred are ever present in the city at one time. They work the Vilgau silver mines north of the city and the Tromburg iron mines north and east. When they do come to the city, they have money to spend and a desire to drink their wages away.

Drunken kobold miners pick fights and they especially hate gnomes, none of whom live within the city walls for fear of assault. Why does the city tolerate such disruptive creatures? Partly the populace suffers the kobolds because few other creatures are willing to work in the dangerous, wet, tiny mines, and certainly not for the pittance the kobolds earn. The iron, silver, and lead they pull from the earth fuel Zobeck's smithies and foundries. But that is only half an answer.

Small but strong, the kobolds of Zobeck walk the city streets in large groups every night, visiting the various establishments to spend their coin. Most are miners, but almost as many live and work in the Kobold Ghetto on the southeast side of the city. Their Ghetto houses hundreds of the best metallurgists, assayers, alchemists, and clockworkers in Zobeck. The kobolds' talent for sorcery means they even have an apprentice in the Collegium. Their small, nimble fingers make them valuable in all the fine work required to build clockworks of all kinds, from scullions to toys to deadly traps and weaponry, such as the Zobeck self-winding crossbow.

GEARFORGED

The gearforged were human once. Created during the Great Revolt when the Collegium sided with the rebels, the first gearforged were little more than a desperate ploy to hold off the knights of the Order of the Undying Sun and the heavy cavalry of House Stross. Dedicated dwarves and humans worked closely with wizards from the Collegium for long hours in the guildhalls using borrowed blood and souls to put life into lifeless metal.

Constructed of steel and brass, their intricate mechanical bodies needed more life than simple animating magic could provide, and the Collegium turned to dark and shunned techniques to transfer the life force of sentient creatures into artificial forms. Disturbed but desperate, the rebels went ahead with the work. The Steamworkers and Geargrinders built the gearforged as fast as the foundries allowed, and the clockwork mages animated more than 100 powerful soldiers to counter the heavy cavalry of House Stross.

The animating spirits came from the people of the city: elderly volunteers, angry and idealistic young men, criminals seeking a reprieve, and a few seeking a

new life in a whole body. Their bodies died, but their souls lived on, fought bravely, and won.

These are the gearforged—once human, now mechanical and undying. They guard against the creeping return of aristocracy and against the decay and corruption of diabolic cults. Many remember how things were, and they do not easily forgive the slaughter in the streets, still so vivid in their memories. A few individuals join these first gearforged every year. Many are wealthy merchants at the end of life; others, soldiers seeking a new edge; and a few are criminals compelled to serve the city as the price of their crimes.

In the past decade, a new breed of gearforged has emerged from the workshops of Zobeck's Gear District: automata animated by the spirits of elementals plucked from the Elemental Planes instead of taken from the bodies of living creatures. These new elemental gearforged are a controversial creation; gearforged with human souls are wary these new mindless creations will cheapen the value of gearforged life. Likewise, some guild artisans worry these automata will mark the return of slavery in the Free City.

Ever since the slavery of kobolds was abolished, Zobeck's wealthiest merchants have hunted for a way to cut the costs of labor. Living workers must rest, eat, and drink, and they demand wages. Elemental gearforged—or "soulless" gearforged as they are callously known—are created without memories or souls. If instructed to work on a production line, they do so unquestioningly. If commanded to fight, they do so without hesitation.

Most damningly, it has been shown that elemental gearforged are capable of learning and developing a personality. Groups of covert activists and gearforged have rescued some of the new elemental models from mass-production lines and attempted to socialize them through human contact—with great success. Over the course of a few months or years, even the "blank slate" elemental models have begun to talk, joke, and tell stories of their past, just like the gearforged animated with human souls.

Each gearforged's iron, brass, and steel body has a distinct appearance, making it as varied as any other of Zobeck's peoples, though they always have a humanoid shape. Deep in their ticking hearts, the gearforged are much more than war machines. They are thinking creatures with souls who serve the city as watchmen, in the Spyglass Guild, and as soldiers. Their minds grow with time. And they remember. They remember everything. Their curse is that they never forget until they strip their gears and die. This is what separates them from mere devices, the simple servants only responsive to orders and capable of little more than a limited amount of memorization.

A VISITOR'S GUIDE TO ZOBECK: AN EXCERPT

It's said a merchant of the Free City would sell his own mother to slavers for two coppers. That's false, of course; he'd need at least two gold. Two coppers would only get a kobold a dance with mum.

Though Rava the Gear Goddess remains the ticking heart of the Temple District, industry and trade are the city's soul. Caravans and mule trains clatter and tromp through the city gates day and night. Barges and river-runners keep the dockhands constantly busy. Free City fortunes arise from commerce, whether built on cantonal steel and iron, the spices from distant Khandiria, or stallions of questionable pedigree.

But while steel, spices, and steeds have their charms, nothing draws the eye so much as the monthly arrival of the glass merchants. Though many caravans brave the Shadow Road, none of the imitators have a patch on this Zobeck original.

—Darian Darkfyre

OTHERS

Drawn to the bustling city's rich opportunities, numerous other races call Zobeck home. Many of these may not reside in the city proper, especially those with more monstrous natures or shapes. Instead, they live in the Cartways or other dark corners and do not openly walk the city's streets in daylight hours. They remain residents of a sort all the same.

Some beings known to exist (or to have existed) within the city's boundaries include dark nagas, devils, darakhul, derro, elves, ghouls, goblins, halflings, lizardfolk, shadow fey, and tengu. This list is not exhaustive; other creatures may certainly reside or pass through Zobeck at any given time.

CULTURE

Zobeckers value commerce above everything except freedom. They fiercely celebrate their hard-won freedom during the Stross's Fall celebration, and none of them forget freedom can be tenuous—especially with neighbors like Morgau and Doresh. Still, common Zobeckers give thanks daily for the ability to run their own lives and make their own way in the world, and they teach their children the importance of this gift.

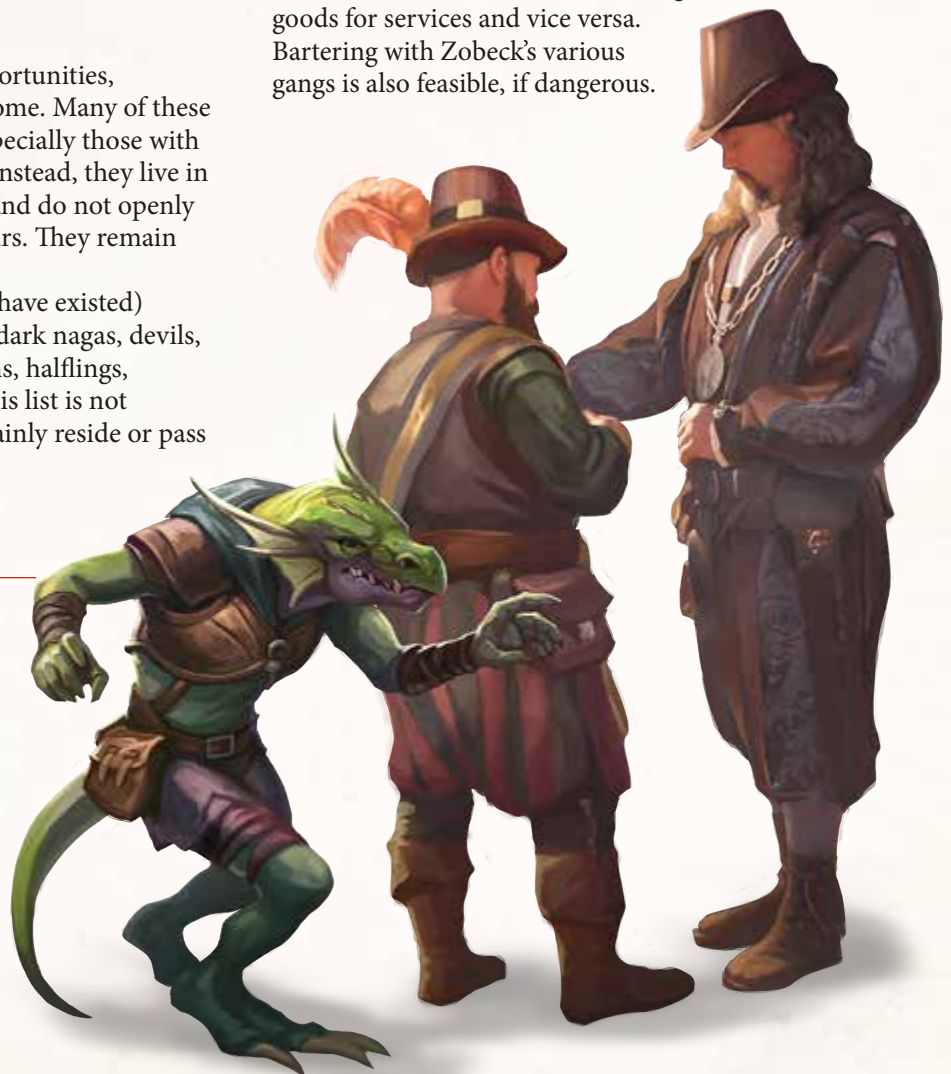
Zobeckers also have a tremendous love for their patron deity Rava and her inspired gearforged creations. They also hold the Free City's other four main gods in high regard. Most of them stand ever vigilant against cultists, especially those of Marena, who seek to undermine the accepted faiths in Zobeck.

LANGUAGES

In a trade city like Zobeck, Common suffices as the principal language of the streets alongside the natives' many dialects of the Northern Tongue. Dwarven and Draconic are other popular languages. The ever-turning wheels of commerce continually bring diverse people to Zobeck, however, and most any language or dialect can be heard in the city on any given day.

CURRENCY

The silver piece is the basic exchange standard in Zobeck, as it is in many municipalities and countries throughout Midgard. Copper, gold, and even a little platinum also circulate, along with somewhat more exotic currencies. Bartering is less common in Zobeck's markets, where coin is king, but certain groups, like the Kariv and the kobolds, often exchange goods for services and vice versa. Bartering with Zobeck's various gangs is also feasible, if dangerous.



TRADE BY ROAD AND RIVER

The commerce of a trade city sounds glamorous and exotic; silks and spices, mithral and magic, relics and lore all change hands between locals, visitors, and sharp-eyed wanderers. Everything seems sweeter when minstrels sing about it—largely because they go easy on the sweat and donkey dung. But the Crown Square merchants have a saying: “There’s no such thing as easy money.”

TRADERS AND CARGO

The traders and stevedores make their coin because someone has to actually move all the iron, wheat, silver, ale, wool, and timber sold in Zobeck. The traders take a (sometimes literal) whip to kobolds or humans who load and unload the city’s barges, oxcarts, mule trains, and hay wagons. Once the trip begins, the costs rise: time, toil, fodder, and travel itself all drain money. All too often, blood is a price of doing business—someone has to defend the cargo against bold robbers, ravaging ogres, or grasping petty lordlings who close their bridges and demand a toll.

Still they come, more and more, and Zobeck welcomes each shipment. The Free City spurns no opportunity to gain every copper. Many merchants prize the most uneventful and short routes, often to Cronstadt or Hammerfell. Specialists—rare and spectacular—can command far greater fees and profits. The Templeforge airships down from the Ironcrags, the Flying Cities of Sikkim, charging the air with their alluring spice, even the Shadow Road of the scáthesidhe, connecting the Free City to the courts of the Shadow, can return many times an investment’s cost to a bold and careful merchant. Everyone wants something and everything wants someone—meaning that there is always money to be made if you can bring the right goods to the right market.

RIVER TRAFFIC

Certainly, pulling an oar is easier than marching up a mountain, but the “easy money” of floating on a barge downriver to Srevresta or the Duchy of Perun’s Daughter is not so easy that guards are tripping over one another volunteering for it. The river gods are fickle, especially in spring, and a pack of river trolls can capsize a barge no matter how heavily laden. Worse, the songs of the lorelei can distract a pilot, and hill-giant bandits can sink a cargo with a few well-placed boulders and loot the wreck. And, of course, if the cargo doesn’t go through, the guards don’t get paid.

A successful run south creates still more work when going back upriver. Guards are expected to pull at the oars. Forests crowd the riverbank for long miles, hiding

ZOBECKERS AND ZOBECKIANS

Zobeck’s local inhabitants refer to themselves as Zobeckers. For ages, however, tourists have called the citizens Zobeckians, and this name has promulgated throughout Midgard. Zobeckers generally dislike being called Zobeckians, but they enjoy taking foreigners’ money, so most politely ignore the inaccuracy. The names are interchangeable among the lower classes, but in polite company or after the locals have had a few drinks, visitors should remember the distinction if they want to score social points or avoid fights.

bandits and worse. And the river itself is often filled with snags, shifting sandbars, and other bargemen whose cargo may have been stolen. Some bargemen turn to banditry, pretending friendship before revealing piracy. Say what you want about the stink of a mule train, at least you won’t drown in your armor.

THE ROAD SOUTH

The Magdar Kingdom is a kingdom of insanely ambitious and scheming barons, dukes, and bastard princes. They all spend their time vying for the kingdom’s Eagle Crown, and the Magdar have at times had as many as 12 Immortal Kings within 18 months. Their politicking and scheming relies on the trade flowing through their kingdom, for they spend their tariffs and tolls to import the rarest poisons and the priciest assassins.

Since the death in battle against the Dragon Empire of both the king and his heir, the Widow Queen has assumed rulership of the kingdom. Zobeck, fearing for its neighbor’s fall, has worked to strengthen its alliance with the Magdar even further. The flow of goods—particularly iron, wagons, armor, and weapons—to the south and east have increased substantially.

Goods reach the Magdar Kingdom in oxcarts, meaning they might travel twelve miles on a good day. Though glacially slow, this method has at least two good points to recommend it: oxen are cheap and pull well, and ox carts can be circled for protection each night. The latter’s importance cannot be overstated—the White Mountain Marches are nothing but a nest of robbers, and the raiders from the Mharoti Empire are patient and vicious. The third, unspoken, benefit of this system is its reduced personnel cost and plentiful opportunities for advancement: half the guard company will likely die before reaching Harkesh.

THE ROAD NORTH

Zobeck's Order of the Griffon Knights protects travel and trade along the Great Northern Road, which stretches over 200 miles from Zobeck past Castle Valach on its way to the city of Bratislor in the north. Though only a wagon width wide in most places, the forest seems unable to totally reclaim it; the road remains a scar cut down the Margreve's face. High overhead, the branches of flanking trees reach for each other, turning the road into a long tunnel with a tall, green gothic arch. Some sun breaks through, but night falls early here even in high summer.

Due to boggy, rocky, and overgrown stretches, travelers frequently take a fortnight to traverse the road on foot. Riders typically take eight to ten days if they pull no wagons. Coaching inns, spaced one to three days apart, offer travelers a respite from beasts and weather.

Though snow and cold challenge winter travelers, the road's condition suffers most from melt waters, rains, and mud in the early spring. Coaching inns are either closed or not prepared for travelers during this time. Merchants willing to risk the Great Northern Road before the annual Road Opening festival in Zobeck can expect tough going from both the terrain and the hungry creatures emerging from the deeper hollows.

The Great Northern Road is the only passable route to the rich cities of the Red Queen and the undead princes of Morgau and Doresh. As the second source of wealth for the city of Zobeck—the first being the River Argent—the Great Northern Road sees heavy, steady use.

TRADE WITH THE SHADOW FEY

Antonidas Jabber was a young highwayman, brash enough to get rich and smart enough to never get caught. He loved knives, cheap beer, and cheaper women, traits that endeared young Jabber to the even younger—and vastly richer—Tuck Marick, the youngest son of the Marick merchant house with an allowance that beggared description.

Jabber and Tuck were fond of songs and stories, and while on a bender of heroic proportions, they decided the minstrels' tales of callous fey were all terribly one-sided; nobody who spun straw into gold and turned frogs into princes could be all bad.

At the very least, they thought there was money to be made trading with the Winter Court. Though Zobeck boasted many wonders, the city's market for myth was underexploited, and Jabber and Tuck were notoriously bullish.

CARAVANS OF THE SHADOW ROAD

With Tuck's fortune and Jabber's brass balls, the pair commissioned a mule train and wagons to drive the Shadow Road (also called the Niflheim Road). The

wagons would travel the impossible route by way of blood and poetry gathered from the poorest and most desperate minstrels of Zobeck.

It shouldn't have worked, but it did.

Though the first emissaries to the Winter Court returned to the Free City in pieces over a period of six months, the youths-turned-merchants persevered. The pair took on a promising young linguist of the Arcane Collegium named Matthias Yronwood, known for his controversial publications on the intricacies of shadow fey speech. Soon enough, Yronwood's research on the shadow fey tongue and insights into fey customs gave Jabber's brashness and Tuck's money the chance to actually see returns.

With Yronwood's guidance, the young factors established trade routes and even spoke to the Winter Court—still ruled by the Goddess of Night and Magic—without offending the nobility in attendance. Yronwood established protocols to ensure negotiations and conversation between human and fey in moderate safety.

Before the year was out, the first glass caravans returned to Zobeck from the far-off Shadow Realm. The profit margin was enormous, given the fey's belief that haggling for gold—as opposed to the sublime intangibles of mortal memory and human degradation—was beneath them, and the simple fact that the Winter Court had little use for money.

Gold changed hands, of course . . . just not nearly as much as Jabber and Tuck feared. The alabaster fey happily took gold for the children's toys and journeymen's work the caravans seemed so interested in (such as ghostly silver lutes, goblets of spun ice, or essence of blizzard), but the rarest items were sold only for happy memories, years of the human haggler's life, or sex. Given the beauty of the Winter Court, the last was the most freely traded; when asked why such a premium is placed on congress with mortals, the fey invariably replied, "It warms us."

For the first decade, Jabber and Tuck controlled the market for Winter Court moonlight steel; to this day, their original caravan—the Chartered Merchants of Scáthesidhe—conveys the most intricate wares directly from the Winter Court's capital. Other caravans now brave the Shadow Road each year, returning with riches and wonders never before seen, but for moonlight steel and mirrors, Zobeck has the market cornered.

APPEARANCE OF THE EMBASSY

Very recently, the shadow fey unveiled their embassy in Zobeck. Little trade goes on in the embassy itself, though His Excellency Glaninin Thelamandrine, Ambassador-In-Extraordinary of the Winter Court, did give the city a gift of gorgeous, black and silver speckled griffons from his personal collection. Instead, the embassy represents a seed of possibility—and a

kernel of disaster. The shadow fey have much to give Zobeck, both in terms of material wealth and military information, and are willing to trade. Yet the Free City Council has left the fey alone for years without an official alliance. Just over half the councilors fear that diplomacy with the capricious fey could bring chaos to Zobeck, something they can ill afford with the Dragon Empire gobbling up the south.

THE FLYING TRADERS OF SIKKIM: FROM DESERT TO MOUNTAINS AND BACK AGAIN

Zobeckers are practical people, but even the dourest moneychanger on the Street of Silver Fish opens his purse once or twice in a lifetime. That day is usually when the Flying Traders of Sikkim come to town.

The flying cities of Sikkim were once the marvel of the ages, built with the aid of the djinn and allied with servants of the Mharoti Sultan. When that alliance broke, the city folk became merchants, dealers, and mercenaries, selling the magic of their flying home as just another commodity. There's a sense that Sikkim's best days are gone. They are outlaws now, for they refuse to bow to the Sultanate.

The flying cities travel the world, enormous round islands up to a half-mile across, with names that resonate in every port from the desert gardens of Siwal to the icy fastness of Trollheim. Only three cities remain active from a fleet once dozens strong: fast Farokhan, stately golden Ushu, and mysterious Attimahl of the veiled women. One in particular is missed, the lost sorcerer-city of Ulduvai. Certain magical compasses are said to point always toward this city of wonders.

THE FLYING CITIES

The cities wander the world, but when they dock at Zobeck, they are almost home. Zobeck's mastery of sorcery, divination, and steam makes it a kindred spirit for the far-flying Sikkimese traders, and their shared respect for profitable dealing gives the two cultures a great deal in common.

Superficially, the societies are opposites. The dress of the flying cities is loud, shimmering, and colorful. Zobeckers wear drab woolens or rich lace, but never in scarlet, orange, and lime all at once. Likewise, the Sikkimese worship elemental forces, which are at odds with Zobeck's more traditional religious life.

Both groups feel a bit isolated in an unfriendly if not openly hostile world, and they each have things the other wants. Zobeck's griffons fetch a high price in any flying city, while the latter's spices, salt, and information sell at a premium in the Free City. Zobeck's mastery of clockworks commands great respect from the Sikkimese.

Stories of swindling or even robbing the Sikkim

traders circulate freely in Zobeck, but nobody knows anyone who has actually tried it. Given the flying cities' excellent defenses—invisible and ever-vigilant aerial spirits, wards of lightning magic and storm glyphs, and rumors of darker guardians—sneaking or breaking into the cities themselves seems less foolish than suicidal.

All three cities use huge sails and vast quantities of amber, brass, and silver to power their magic, but they can readily pay for these materials with the profits from the spice trade, their elemental engines, and with the knowledge they bring from far corners of the world.

A few masters of the Collegium have traveled with the Sikkim, seeing distant lands for themselves, learning to fly carpets and bargain with djinn, efreeti, and elementals. Few make a second trip, though, as life aboard the flying cities seems to sap arcane vitality in some fashion.

THE CLOCKWORK CALIPH

The flying cities have a regular seasonal route: Zobeck, the Magocracy of Allain, the snows of distant Trollheim in the summer months, back south along the Rothenian plains, and to the garden city of Siwal by late autumn, when the heat fades and the harvest comes in. In winter, they retreat to hidden Sikkim, a high desert plateau, for refuge.

The flying traders refer to the rulers of the lands they visit by fanciful titles. The Lord Mayor and City Praetors of Zobeck are always called the Clockwork Caliphs, for example, while the trolls are the Odorous Effendi.

Adventurers and pilgrims seeking to visit the oracles of Siwal (or the city's dancers, said to be the most seductive in the world) pay a fare of little more than 300 gp for a pleasant four-week journey. Likewise, Mharoti gnomes seeking alchemical instruction often use the cities to reach Zobeck's Collegium to perfect their alchemical fire techniques.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

- Someone has poisoned the beer shipped from a specific brewery, sickening dozens. Many suspect the cult of Marena the Red, but it might be simply a rival brewery.
- A new fighter took the brawling at the Wheatsheaf to a fine art and openly calls for bouts against all comers. The Watch doesn't interfere, as the man is one of their officers. The Cloven Nine and other gangsters are furious at this intrusion on their territory and threaten retaliation.
- Some say a furnace gargoyle haunts the rafters above the Grey Friar, each night bringing in one piece of machinery from the Geargrinders. What is it building?



EDUCATION, TECHNOLOGY, AND MAGIC

The Free City houses the Arcane Collegium, an institute of learning specializing in the study of magic, though its staff includes experts in languages, alchemy, geargrinding, and clockwork craftsmanship. Currently, about 40 students matriculate in the various schools of magic, including clockwork, necromancy, illusions, divination, and the unusual study of star and shadow magic called the illumination school—a field closely related to illusion, with a touch of creation, conjuration, and necromancy mixed in. The practice of star and shadow magic, like clockwork magic, is native to Zobeck. Outside the Free City, only a few elves may actually know its associated spells.

Zobeck is known far and wide for its clockwork technology. Common clockwork devices include the auto scribe, bolt-thrower, climber, firebox, market scale, scullion, trip-hammer, walking tower, watchman, and weaving spider.

FESTIVALS AND FAIRS

The citizens of Zobeck enjoy several celebrations throughout the year, many related to seasonal changes and the particular gods associated with the solstices and equinoxes. With trade so central to the city's life, events like the River Fair and the Road Opening Festival, held to honor the city's successful commercial endeavors, enjoy great popularity.

CLOCKWORK FESTIVAL

Each year in the month of Goldflower, when other nations celebrate the Crown Festival, all Zobeck honors Rava and her great gifts by celebrating the Clockwork Festival. Zobeckers know the Clockwork City would simply not live or prosper as it does without Rava's blessings and continued interest.

On this summer day, the citizens wreath Rava's creations—the gearforged and the various clockwork constructs—in flowers and parade them through the streets to cheers and joyful applause. Many families carry (or hire others to carry) their revered gearforged ancestors on palanquins. Clockwork items abound throughout the bustling markets, from tools to toys and even gear- and wheel-shaped cakes, and this attracts many travelers to the city during this time.

FESTIVAL OF LIGHT (MIDSUMMER FESTIVAL)

This festival celebrates the harvest of early crops and the long days of light. Lada's priestesses bless the harvests,

heal the sick, and offer up prayers to provide for those who toil so that others may eat. The celebrants also honor Khors and his priests for the light that brings them bounty. The farmers make food offerings to the clerics of both gods. Lanterns, bonfires, and magical lights keep the fields bright from dusk until dawn.

MINER'S HOLIDAY

During Redleaf and following Volund's Festival, the kobolds receive a celebratory release from all mining to exalt in their own Miner's Holiday. Kobolds actually begin celebrating the night before, which has become known as "All Kobolds' Eve." On the Eve, groups of drunken kobolds—some 20 or more strong—assail public houses to drink a week's wages and yip out traditional songs. Drinking, fighting, and property damage ensue. With the exception of the doubled Watch patrols, most of Zobeckers stay indoors or give the revelers a wide berth.

SPRING FESTIVAL

"Attending the Spring Rite" has become a polite way of saying half the citizens of Zobeck spend a night in the month of Thunders rutting like rabbits, while the other half pretend not to notice.

Torches and bonfires rule the fairgrounds and lanterns glimmer on every street. Young and old alike celebrate the rites together, making the festival as much about community building as religious observance.

The rites of Porevit and Yarila forbid payment for affection, so the courtesans and lovers for sale see the Spring Festival as a day off, a chance to celebrate love instead of simply selling it. Anyone seeking partners offers them the finest flower or bouquet they can afford, or sometimes a simple garland. Even those who live alone or celibate often receive flowers from admirers or friends, and some describe the city as buried in petals.

Among many young people in the city, the Spring Festival commonly results in weddings at Midwinter and/or births the following spring. Even when lacking the vows, the births carry no shame; children born in the springtime to the brides and grooms of Porevit and Yarila are considered lucky. Those born precisely on the winter solstice are always invited to join the Green Gods' priesthood and enter into the druidic mysteries at the age of 10 or 11. Though dedicated to the Green Gods, Lada also gains from this festival, as many a new love often blooms here.

RIVER FAIR

A part of Lada's Midsummer Festival, the River Fair is a trade fair that takes place along the Docks. Wanderers, bargemen, stevedores, and all the apprentices of the city join together for midsummer

madness—with the Sisterhood and dwarven brewers providing the potables. Makeshift stalls line the Docks, and merchants hawk their wares in a bustle of noisy commerce. Barges anchor up and down the river, Kariv music flows into the city proper, and dancing abounds.

ROAD OPENING FESTIVAL

Shortly after the Spring Festival, Zobeck celebrates the opening of the Great Northern Road running through the Margreve, marked when no snows can be seen from the Citadel. As with many festivals in the Free City, this entails a great deal of drinking and reveling. The merchants supply copious amounts of spirits for their workers and caravan leaders as both a reward for past service and a bracing for jobs yet to do.

STROSS'S FALL

For the past 90 years, Zobeckers have commemorated the day that Halsen Hrovitz's courage inspired the Great Revolt. This celebration has several names, depending on the nature of the celebrant: the Free City Council and government officials call it Free City Day; the kobolds call it Miners' Day, in honor of the freeing of the miners that the Strosses had enslaved for centuries; the Ravans and gearforged call it Forge Day, to honor the gearforged and their contribution to the Great Revolt; the Ladans call it the Golden Day Festival; but most citizens call it Stross's Fall or Hrovitz's Rise.

Food and drink flow freely on this day. The Watch has its hands full but never deals harsh punishments to revelers arrested on this day. For the most part, it tries to keep people from endangering themselves and others or damaging too much property too badly, but otherwise, this is a free-for-all of rejoicing.

SPRING TRADE FAIR

In the month of Thunders, or sometimes as late as Goldflower, Zobeck's fields host the annual Spring Trade Fair, when all the farflung partners of Zobeck's merchant houses bring their best wares to begin the trading season. The Spring Trade Fair begins after the Road Opening and lasts throughout the spring season. Merchants set up their colorful tents around the perimeter of the city's pastures, and many visitors flock to the city to purchase the exotic items offered.

VOLUND'S FESTIVAL

During the autumnal equinox in Redleaf, the priests of Volund offer their Fire Blessing to all weapons, armor, and metal tools (and some say to the gearforged as well) brought before them, whether at Volund's temple or at portable anvil stations set up throughout the city. This tremendously noisy event ends in a great and fiery nighttime service culminating in the Anvil Prayer. Throughout the festival, nearly every priest,

smith, geargrinder, and steamworker in the city brings an anvil or a metal pan to hammer on during the chorus, creating a cacophonously beautiful salute to the forge god.

WINTER FESTIVAL OF KHORS

Roughly 200 years ago, House Stross and its aristocratic allies held the Winter Festival in the Cartways, in a cavern called the Winter Hall. The revelers travelled to the site in donkey-drawn carts filled with candles and were greeted with casks of wine large enough to dance on. Debauchery ensued.

After the Great Revolt, the festival celebration changed. Much wine remains an important part of it, but the chilly festival now consists of a parade and feasts throughout the city.

WE NO WORK DAY!

Every once in a while, the kobolds (all of them) decide to shrug their duties for drink and revelry throughout the day and evening. They claim this celebration takes place on the anniversary of their enslavement by the Stross family, and they celebrate it as a way of snubbing the upper classes. This celebration never seems to take place on the same day of the year, however, and in some years, the kobolds have celebrated it more than once.

As with All Kobolds' Eve, chaos spreads throughout the Free City when the kobolds refuse to work. We No Work Day never coincides with any other holidays when workers have the day off, and it always seems to take place at the most inconvenient time. Humans have tried their best to discover dates of upcoming festivals but unsuccessfully. No official word passes through the streets or Kobold Ghetto; the kobolds just instinctively seem to know when every We No Work Day rolls around. Some scholars believe this knowledge might be transmitted by scent.

RELIGION: GODS OF THE CROSSROADS

The Crossroads region—from the Cantons to the Free City to the Duchy of Perun's Daughter, and from the Magdar Kingdom to the blood-soaked principalities of Morgau and Doresh—is a place of contrasts and confusion. Peoples from all points of the compass live or wander through here, and they bring their gods with them. The five greatest deities are the patrons of the five great nations. The sixth god, Khors, slowly fades in most places as Rava usurps his position. He remains strong in the Magdar Kingdom, however, and still has pious adherents elsewhere who value his power against darkness.

ENTERTAINMENT

Zobeck never sleeps, both because its kobold citizenry are nocturnal, and because its tavern keepers are always searching for one more coin. Most districts have establishments that cater to the common vices—drinking, gambling, whoring, and fighting—though such places abound in Lower Zobeck. Street fights on the bridge or on the docks are popular, with the loser dunked into the water.

The wealthier citizens also pay for less common entertainment, including dancing bears and musicians accomplished with the lute, recorder, drum, and trumpet. Sometimes bards sing to accompany Kariv dancers, and in summer those with the taste and the coin for it go hunting or hawking in the forest north of the Argent.

INNS, TAVERNS, AND ALEHOUSES

Zobeck's inns, taverns, gambling halls, and alehouses serve as the living rooms and parlors of the community, where public and private life plays out in front of free-flowing taps. The city has 16,000 hardworking souls who depend on 24 breweries and seven vintners, and everyone has a favorite drink. Dwarven brewmasters vie with the importers of Rothenian and Morgaunic wines. Even the kobolds brew up something called Dog's Breath Ale, which they prize but no one else can stomach.

The city's taverns are as unusual as its guilds and its gods. The Broken Seal, the Dancing Bear, the Grey Friar, the Hedgehog, the King's Head, the Moon and Owl, the Seven Bells, the Silk Scabbard, the Wheatsheaf, and the White Rose are the Free City's most famous establishments, and each caters to a slightly different clientele. Information on each tavern is detailed in the district in which it resides.

GAMBLING

Opportunities to gamble include traditional dice, card, or drinking games, but Zobeckers also bet on fights, between both animals (usually dogs, rats, and dire weasels) and humanoids in the city's various organized

pits. Favored gambling dens include the Broken Seal, the Dancing Bear, Seven Bells, the Silk Scabbard, and the Dire Weasel Kennels in the Kobold Ghetto. In the Gullet, there is also the Red Queen, the Cup and Pentacle, and the Rooster. Dice, card, and other games of chance can appear in most any tavern.

NARCOTICS

Certain narcotics can be purchased in Zobeck's back alleys, dark tavern corners, or the Cartways Black Market. Specifically, buyers can locate requiem from Kammae, poppy's draught from the south, various hallucinogenic mushrooms from the Margreve, dragon's root, and a local opiate called akori blossom.

PIT FIGHTING

For skilled and clever fighters, the city's pit fighting rings can provide a decent income, though not nearly as good as the organizers and hosting establishments make from the wagers. Moreover, successful fighters often find work as muscle in one of the gangs, as bodyguards for wealthy and worried individuals, or with people who need specific "jobs" done. The Silk Scabbard hosts the most popular fights in the city. Most fighting rings are temporary; once the Watch finds them, the dens usually decline as the bribes outweigh the profits.

INFLUENTIAL FAMILIES

Many of Zobeck's influential families are merchant houses. Members of these families often hold positions on the Free City Council, and they help ensure the city remains a commerce-friendly place. Currently, only the Greymark and Hrovitz Houses have sitting Consuls.

ARMANAC

Norek Armanac (N male human rogue 3) and his daughter Ardora (CN female human rogue 5) lead the Armanac House, best known as the king of shipping in Zobeck. They own a fleet of river barges and their own shipwright company. Their sailors travel the river nonstop to collect the most exotic goods from far and wide. Of course, some of what they transport isn't, strictly speaking, legal, but so far, the Watch can prove nothing. The Armanacs have strong ties with the Stevedore's Brotherhood and the Bargeman's Fellowship, and they supposedly have some type of control over the Barge King, Sundran Karesh.

GREYMARK

The elderly Lord Volstaff Greymark has long been known as the gruff, bullheaded curmudgeon of the Free City Council. Over the years, Greymark has

ADVENTURE HOOKS

- Consuls are always getting in trouble: people try to extort them, bribe them, seduce them, or otherwise gain influence over them. Thus the Praetors closely watch the Council. When a Consul falls prey to a devilish seductress, the Praetors—indirectly, of course—call in the PCs to exorcise her. The plot goes deeper than that, however, as the Consul in question has given the seductress information about the city's plans for a new army.

married and disposed of five wives, all gorgeous young women with jet-black hair. Just three years ago, however, Greymark abruptly withdrew from his seat on the Council and married a new raven-haired beauty not six months later. Volstaff is now Zobeck's Master of Coin, handling all matters of tolls and taxes—but he is also privately expanding his trade network into the vampire kingdom of Morgau. The old man is obsessed with his own age, wealth, and mortality, and some whisper that his recent mercantile overtures to Morgau are merely a way to get in the vampires' good graces.

Volstaff's bastard son, a tiefling named Edmure Orillian, is said to be the offspring of a succubus. One year ago, Edmure fled the city under mysterious circumstances; even Lord Volstaff knows not his whereabouts. Some speculate the Volstaff bastard fled to Lillefor to be closer to his kobold comrades, while others say he died in the night and his "disappearance" is merely a cover-up for a greater conspiracy. In truth,



Edmure failed to deliver the soul of Orlando to his master, the Arch-Devil Mammon, and he is on the lam from Mammon's agents.

HROVITZ

This once down-and-out family rose to prominence after Halsen Hrovitz sparked the Great Revolt. He and his five siblings had been forced into labor to pay off the family's debts. After the Great Revolt, the new Free City Council gave the Hrovitz family the remains of the Stross estate in Crown Square. Skilled workers volunteered their time to repair it, and revolutionaries showered the family with goods and gold, some of it looted from the very house they now owned.

Fifteen years ago, the priests of Rava completed a platinum gearforged body for the elderly Halsen, unlike any built before or since, which held many magical powers. The gearforged Halsen appeared at the Gear Festival that year, but he has not been seen since. The priests of Rava do not speak of his disappearance and merely smile when his name is mentioned.

In Zobeck, to say one has "the heart of a Hrovitz" is to say that one is courageous beyond measure. Halsen's descendants remain merchants and stalwart supporters of the Free City, but few have sought the prominence of their forbearer.

Halsen Hrovitz IV is the current head of House Hrovitz and a member of the Free City Council. Under his leadership, the Hrovitz family's trade network spans Midgard, selling goods ranging from flax to raw mithral to dwarven weaponry.

KAPPA


Once a successful silk merchant, Orem Kappa (LN male human fighter 2) has retired in good health and in good fortune. The sudden and aggressive expansion of the Dragon Empire abruptly ended his lucrative silk trade with the Mharoti Sultanate, and he decided to end his career on a high note. His adult daughter Nashya has left Zobeck after an unfortunate incident ten years ago and has become an adventurer and a sorceress of some renown.

SLYGASS

Lord Grimaldi Slygass (LN male human fighter 7) leads House Slygass, which trades in rare metals, including mithral and adamantine. They have strong connections to the Grimbold dwarves at Castle Shadowcrag and can acquire starmetal weapons with uncharacteristic ease.

VANDEREIK

The historic Vandereik Vineyards are tended to by the Seven Women of Wine—a common nickname for the seven Vandereik daughters who took the business over from their late mother. The eldest Vandereik sister,



Rolskya (N human female druid 3/rogue 1), is married with children at age 42, while the youngest, named Tissifina (CG human female rogue 2), is age 20 and in search of a wife.

ZEERGHAST

One of Zobeck's oldest families, the wealthy Zeerghasts helped fund the creation of the Arcane Collegium, and several of their members have served as faculty there. Former allies of the Stross, the Zeerghasts survived the Great Revolt by temporarily fleeing the city, some say to Morgau and Doresh. The Zeerghasts never assisted the Stross when the chaos broke out, and as soon as House Stross fell and the Free City settled quietly into its new government, the Zeerghast quietly reappeared. Through all the violence, their home remained intact and untouched while the mob burned and looted others around it.

The Zeerghasts claim to hail originally from Magdar, the sitting king's distant cousins. Rumors hold that they also have familial ties to Morgau, but no one says so very loudly. For the most part, this reclusive family eschews the political dance and social machinations the higher classes seem to enjoy.

ZILAS

The Zilas family makes its money cultivating rare plants and herbs from the Margreve, mostly for spell components or alchemical ingredients. The Arcane Collegium and the Chartered Brotherhood of Alchemists are the family's main customers in Zobeck, but it trades widely beyond the city. The family has land outside the walls and has produced some interesting plant hybrids. One such, the akori blossom, has made a big splash in some circles as a hallucinogenic opiate. Very, very few know that the Zilas grow this plant, however.

GOVERNMENT

Zobeck's government is a many-layered nightmare to visitors seeking to bend it to their own purposes, but familiar enough to locals who know just how to get things done. For the most part, it serves the master merchants with security and safety for trade, the common people with justice and fair dealings in the markets, and the poor with work as conscripts or ditchdiggers.

THE FREE CITY COUNCIL

The Free City Council replaced the Stross-era Praetorian Council after the Revolt. Once composed of hand-picked noble allies of House Stross, the Praetorian Council generally deferred to their lord's wishes in running the city and spent most of their time scheming and plotting against one another. They

pilfered money from the city to fund their own projects and interests, ruinously taxed the city's bourgeoisie, restricted trade with tariffs on goods entering the city and exit fees on goods leaving the city, and used the Watch as their personal enforcers to settle vendettas, illegally detain or imprison citizens, and seize private property. This flagrant corruption laid the groundwork for the violence that destroyed the old aristocracy.

After the Great Revolt, the rebels imprisoned or executed any Praetorian Council members they caught. The Revolt's leaders created the Free City Council to administer the city as the Praetorian Council should have done. Its standing Consul members were citizens who helped lead the Revolt and who held strong interests in the city: mostly guildmasters, priests, and even kobolds. The Council is charged with ensuring the welfare of the city and its citizens, protecting Zobeck from all threats to its freedom, and maintaining the flow and profitability of commerce within the Free City.

LORD MAYOR

The sitting Consuls choose the Lord Mayor from among their peers to serve a 10-year term, though most have held the position for life. The Lord Mayor oversees the administration of justice by appointing all Zobeck's judges, establishing and provisioning the army, appointing all knight-commanders of the Citadel, and commanding the Free City's militant orders—except the paladins of the Order of the Undying Sun. The Order predates the city's independence, and this chapter only serves on the condition that their commander answer to no one “not of noble blood.” In practice, the Order of the Undying Sun acts as an independent military force.

CURRENT LORD MAYOR OLLECK

The newly chosen Mayor Constantia Olleck represents the growing dwarven influence in the city, though it has limits; she has sworn to serve a single 10-year term. She took over after the old mayor, Karillian Gluck, was asked to step aside by the shadow fey (and who did, fearing for his life). Constantia showed great courage in commissioning several efforts to drive the fey out or at least limit their influence to the undercity and a few of the outlying districts. She speaks with the shadow fey ambassador, but the two will never be friends.

Mayor Olleck is a cheerful, smiling, and hardworking dwarf who knows every alley, every tavern, and every honest (and less honest) person of influence in Zobeck. In her prior mercantile life as a mule driver, Olleck had a way of making any donkey follow her, gentle as a lamb, over rocks and declivities and through brambles; this, wags aver, was excellent practice for working with the Zobeck Council and the Praetors (see “The Praetors,” pg. 26).



As a younger dwarf, she spent twenty years making a small fortune as a muleskinner, leading mule trains up to the Obertal Freehold and through the Silbertal into the Ironcrag. Bandit attacks were rare as she marched into the Ironcrag loaded with grain, timber, and fine brass gearwork; on the way back, bandits attacked for her mule train's silver, metalwork, and sometimes bars of gold, which she usually brought safely back to the city forges, shops, and mint. To this day, matters of trade and banditry are uppermost in her mind, though she also has forged a strong alliance with neighbors against the Mharoti after the fall of Illyria.

CONSULS

Generally descendants of the Great Revolt's leaders, the 12 Consuls serve for life or until they receive a "silent office" (a retirement sinecure). Sitting Consuls fill any vacancies from among the city's most prominent civic leaders, typically guildmasters, merchants, or powerful members of the priesthood—but once in a while, the Consuls choose an adventurous individual seeking a quieter life.

By tradition, the Free City Council always includes the Guildmaster of the Arcane Collegium and the Kobold King of Kings. During the Revolt, the leaders

gave the city's Watch commander a lifetime council seat but secretly decided that, unlike the deal they struck with the kobolds and the Arcane Collegium, this "seat for life" would only extend to that individual. Upon his death, the Council did not give the position to his successor but added a second seat for a cleric of Rava. To this day, this "betrayal" remains a point of contention between the Council and the Watch. The Watch's current captain, Horvart Edelstein, is bent on regaining his "rightful seat" on the Council.

CURRENT CONSULS

Ondli Firedrake. *LG male dwarf fighter 4/cleric 9 (Rava and Volund).* A dwarven priest of Rava (and Volund), Ondli has served as First Consul, or Council House Chairman, for 30 years. His consul peers selected him to guide the meetings, recognizing him as the most patient and fair-minded among them.

Orlando. *CN male human wizard 15.* Guildmaster of the Arcane Collegium and Consul and member of the Free City Council, Orlando has withdrawn from many of the Collegium's affairs and is spending many days of summer and fall with Aldona Silberhof (N female sorcerer 6), a whip-smart sorceress who serves as a Captain in the Runkelstad Wands. While his enemies gossip about his lack of attention to Zobeck's affairs, his friends seem pleased that Orlando has found an equal in arcane matters.

Lector and Consul Radovar Streck. *NE male human wizard (alchemist) 5.* Radovar, the city's most famous alchemist, has been promoted to Lector of the Collegium, a title usually reserved for those times when the Guildmaster is otherwise engaged. And indeed, he has promulgated a number of edicts in Orlando's name when the titular Guildmaster has been out of the city. In addition, he seems to be investigating the alchemical properties of shadow with help from a handsome young shadow fey apprentice named Frost, and he enjoys occasional visits from a dust goblin bringing needful items from Maillon and the Goblin Wastes.

Sir Jorun Haclav. *LN male human fighter 2/cleric 6 (Perun).* Field Marshall of the Free Army, Captain of the Zobeck Hussars, Consul, and Master of the Citadel, Sir Jorun continues to expand the hussars and has sent a company of 200 human light infantry to stand with the Magdar on the border of the Dragon Empire.

Quetelmak. *LE male kobold rogue 7.* Kobold King of Kings and Consul to Zobeck, Quetelmak seems like a kobold king who might stick around for more than a season; he has weathered two years since his ascension to the position and consulship. This seat's consul fluctuates with the rapid rise and fall of the Kobold King of Kings in the Kobold Ghetto.

Melancha Vendemic. *LN female human bard 10.*

Melancha is the golden-voiced consul, capable of moving rhetoric in defense of causes of law and security. Her arguments are often carried out through mocking songs in the taverns rather than confined to discussion with other consuls. She has a great ear for what discomfits or worries Zobeckers.

Kekolina of the Derry Mine. *NG female kobold rogue 6/cleric 2 (St. Piran).* Kekolina is a long-serving kobold; rather an oddity, but she represents the mine gangs that provide silver and wealth to the city. She is honored among the mine gangs as having the ear of St. Piran, the local patron saint of miners. She keeps kobold interests always in view.

Myzi I. *N male wererat fighter 11.* Myzi, called the Mouse King and Lord of the Undercity, is a consul and (most believe) a corrupt rogue. He has a drooping moustache and a twitchy nose, and he seems to always have the news from the docks, the smugglers, and the riverfolk. Few know that he is indeed a wererat and lord of the rodents of Zobeck.

Lady Wintesla Marack. *LG female human cleric 5 (Lada).* Lady Marack is beloved as a priestess of Lada for her healing of the poor and the sick. She is also a well-connected merchant, selling timber, wool, and tin from Zobeck to the dwarves, the Magdar, and especially in Perunalia. The amazons of the duchy find it more congenial to do business with a woman, so her oxcarts and barges carry much of the Zobeck trade to and from Perunalia.

Halsen Hrovitz. *NG male human bard 8.* Halsen is the fourth of his name, and the Hrovitz family founder was once known as the “merchant to the noble House Stross” (an honor they’ve not mentioned in generations). Hrovitz deals in finished dwarven weapons and armor, as well as raw copper, flax, sheep, mining tools, and he also trades heavily with the kobolds of Lillefor (unusual for a human merchant) for mithral, iron, and precious gems.

Selena Harbeck. *LN female human cleric (Rava) 4.* Guildmistress Harbeck keeps the weaver’s guild disciplined and extremely productive, building weaving spider automatons to create cloth and tapestries at a rate no other town can match. Selena opens the guildhall each day with a prayer to Rava, and she is on excellent terms with Consul Hrovitz and Lady Marack, her principal suppliers of raw wool and flax. Guild tapestries are especially popular in Bemmea and the Seven Cities; Consul Harbeck often visits both sites on extended business tours and as an unofficial envoy for Zobeck’s interests in the south and west.

THE PRAETORS

A secret council known as the Praetors serves as the Lord Mayor’s inner cabinet and her eyes, ears, and hands throughout the city. The Praetors are the core of Zobeck’s secret police network, indirectly controlling the city’s internal and external spies, jailers, and tax collectors. The number of Praetors never exceeds five, and Consuls sometimes also serve as Praetors.

The identity of the Praetors typically remains secret. Many have suspected, but none have ever proven, strong ties between the Order of Griffon Knights and the Praetors. Any citizen may denounce another citizen by a charge given to the Blue House (the seat of the secret police, just outside the Citadel).

LADY FENYLL MARACK

Lady Fenyll Marack is the Praetor of the Blue House and the only Praetor to make her identity known to the public. She has served the city for three long decades, and her face and body have the scars to prove it. Despite her graying hair and the five long scars that cross her face, Lady Marack dresses extravagantly and uses her public office to gain access to all the city’s private parties—and often shows up all the guests in the process. While Lady Marack clearly revels in her own glamor, her profligacy serves a dual purpose; none suspect that such a conspicuous woman could be one of the subtlest and most efficient assassins in the Crossroads.

MILITARY

Zobeck’s military might consists of the Free Army, the Griffon Knights, and the Zobeck Hussars. The Free City can also count on assistance from the Order of the Undying Sun.

THE FREE ARMY

The bright red banner with a golden gear of the Free City’s army flies high from the Citadel walls, and rarely does it march against a foe in anger. But Zobeck is surrounded by neighbors who might demand tribute, bluster with outrageous threats, or even seek to compel the city’s submission and fealty. Thus the Free City retains a standing army, though a small one, and cultivates good relationships with some neighbors and some prominent mercenary companies.

ELITE FORCES

The city rarely commands more than 1,000 troops in the city itself, and half those come from a levy of the citizens to man the walls when its professional soldiers go raiding. For all its wealth—and the bounteous patronage of the Gear Goddess—the Free City is smaller than the great metropolis of the Seven Cities or the Mharoti Empire. The gearforged company is

still its preferred heavy infantry, and its mages from the Arcane Collegium are second to none—but both groups are relatively small and scattered, no matter their individual strength.

The city's true elites are the Order of Griffon Knights (primarily scouts, despite their name) and the Zobeck Hussars, a set of ridiculously brave (some say foolhardy) cavalry. The Griffon Knights ride their mounts to scout the forests and open plains; the hussars patrol roads, hills, and woods in their green jackets and gold braid. The hussar's colorful plumage hides hard steel, and they burn border villages when needed. The hussars are also inordinately fond of dueling.

MILITARY LEADERS

Lady Fenyll Marack. *LE female human rogue 12.* Praetor of Blue House and Lord Commander of the Free Army of Zobeck (see "The Praetors," pg. 26)

Sir Jorun Haclav. *LN male human fighter 2/cleric 6 (Perun).* Field Marshall of the Free Army (see "Current Consuls," pg. 25)

Sir Janush Hermass. *LG male human paladin 13 (Khors).* Commander of the Order of the Undying Sun

Sir Malkus Lineguard. *LG male dwarf fighter 4/wizard 5.* Commander of the Order of Griffon Knights

ZOBECK ORDERS OF BATTLE

Griffon Knights. 20 flying cavalry

Zobeck Wands. 25 human wizards of the Collegium

Zobeck Hussars. 50 human light cavalry

Rava's Legion. 75 gearforged heavy infantry

1st through 5th Companies. 250 human medium infantry each

Volund's Hammer. 50 dwarven crossbowmen

Raven Feeders. 100 kobold archers/light infantry

The Exiles (cantonal mercenaries). 75 dwarven heavy infantry/pikes

City Levy. Up to 500 human, dwarven, and kobold citizen-soldiers

FOOTMEN AND MERCENARIES


Infantry is the queen of the battlefield, and Zobeck has been blessed in this regard. Its citizens willingly volunteer when needed, and its kobold and dwarven folk make excellent skirmishers and crossbow troops, respectively. The city is also notorious for its skill in conducting night raids.

However, Zobeck depends on companies of mercenaries to fill out its ranks. Most of these are Ironcrag dwarves or the pikemen of Dornig, though Rothenian centaurs occasionally serve as light cavalry, scouts, and skirmishers.



ADVENTURE HOOKS

- The Free Army needs scouts to investigate shadow fey activity in the Margreve and offers a large bounty to anyone signing up for this venture.
- River bandits have repeatedly drowned patrols along the shore and on river barges. Giants, ogres, and the lorelei are all rumored to be involved, and the army is tasked with ending the problem.
- The priests of Perun the Thunderer need someone to fly a griffon into a thunderstorm to bottle a lightning elemental. Strangely, the Citadel's griffon riders have not volunteered.



The city of Zobeck's main strength has always come from the willingness of her people to fight. Their wealth and skill make them formidable, and her neighbors approach battles with the city warily. Most find it easier by far to strike a deal with Zobeck than to overcome her army.

ORDER OF THE UNDYING SUN

The commandery of the Order of the Undying Sun in Zobeck is a faded place. Its knights no longer enjoy the privileges they once had when they served as the officers and generals of House Stross's private army, and they have grown somewhat bitter at their "exile" to this backwater. Most of their duties involve guarding trade caravans on the Great Northern Road, riding down ghoul infestations along the foothills of the Ironcrag, or chasing bandits. Honorable work, surely, though not exactly suffused with glory. Still, their primary service is to Khors, and so long as he is worshipped in Zobeck, the knights will maintain a presence, whatever their private feelings on the matter.

Recently, however, the Order sent Janus Hermass, a renowned Magdar knight with a strong following, to replace the retiring Sir Fryderyk Sieboski (who now serves as an advisor). Instructed to encourage the Order's growth within Zobeck's territory, and accompanied by several charismatic priests of Khors, Janus's arrival has caused a stir and surge in morale among the knights in the Free City, and many within and outside the Order wonder what might ultimately come of it.

ORDER OF THE UNDYING SUN IN THE CROSSROADS

The Order of the Undying Sun is strongest in the Magdar Kingdom and the canton of Grisal, with a lesser presence in the Free City of Zobeck. Hundreds of knights serve in dozens of small and major commanderies from the Wagenstein to the Ruby Sea and the borders of the Mharoti Empire. The Order is widely admired, and the queen of the Magdar Kingdom would never think of excluding its Grand Marshall Lord Clarikon from her deliberations when the season of war approaches. Its scarred and devoted warriors each fight harder than half a dozen mercenaries, and their unwavering devotion to high ideals make them the elite backbone of the Magdar's army.

Though known for its outstanding heavy cavalry, the order also raises most other troops, though rarely archers. These include companies of warrior-priests of Khors in war wagons, swift White Riders who primarily act as scouts and skirmishers, and even companies of devout pike fighters who serve a season for pay and honor (the "Sunset Regiments," so-called because their service sees an end).

The Sunset Regiments obey the Provost Marshall Ulrichus Valotto and, though they are not knights, these troops vastly increase the order's martial power. With weapons and basic armor provided by the order's armorers, these soldiers are uniformly of a higher quality than most levied troops. Some claim the order's infantry and horse are superior even to some vassals in the Magdar Kingdom.

The order's headquarters is at Wagenstein, though it also controls Smoltenberg, several small keeps in Grisal, and a smaller commandery named Gelburg outside Zobeck. It is currently building the new fortification of Neusonnenstein in the south and recently lost the castle of Zamak Petros with the fall of Illyria.

ENTERING KNIGHTHOOD

Joining the knights is a simple matter: swear allegiance to the local commander, swear to obey the priests of Khors and uphold the creed of the sun god, show your proficiency in mounted combat with lance and sword, and you're in. New recruits receive armor and weapons of simple quality (but not trained warhorses).

The first rank involves service as a squire to a senior or veteran knight, fetching, carrying, and polishing armor. This might last a month or a year, depending on the age and skill of the applicant. Once the senior knight considers the squire fit, the candidate receives spurs, a sword, and the title of knight-novice. Though the knight-novice now answers to the order's captains and commanders rather than the senior knight, such young warriors remain junior figures within the order.

PALADINS OF KHORS

The elite of the order (and most of its officers) are paladins of Khors. Their white- and yellow-plumed helmets are striking and distinctive, as are their blue cloaks and the white or dappled gray horses they favor. Most speak the Magdar dialect or Common (with a Magdar accent), and they are generous to their friends and implacable against their foes. Their light truly does shine brighter than most, and their bright swords cut through the darkness.

Zobeck's council gives them little respect because the order supported the wrong (losing) side during the Revolt, but everywhere else, the white plumes of Khors are a sign of righteous might and outstanding skill. They include dwarves and centaurs in their ranks, but by far the majority are human.

THE WATCH

The City Watch is composed of human warriors, clockwork watchmen, and several gearforged. Most members of the Watch are looking out for the city's best interest, but there are a few who seek to use the position for their own gain. Horvart Edelstein (NE male human fighter 8) is the current Captain of the Watch.

About 260 individuals serve as watchmen in the 10 main districts, with most patrolling the Merchant and Market Districts in teams of three or more. Each team reports to a sergeant, who in turn reports to a lieutenant. The watchmen carry tipstaves to more easily arrest individuals without seriously harming them (see “Tipstaff,” pg. 130). The Watch’s headquarters, the Redrock Bailey, is located in Upper Zobeck.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

The Watch fines citizens for committing minor crimes and usually holds drunks and disorderly individuals overnight in addition to fining them. Serious crimes may result in flogging, long-term imprisonment, or hard labor. Exile or death punishes the worst crimes.

All fines are equal to the property damage caused or 50 gp for personal assaults. Flogging consists of six lashes. For additional offenses, criminals receive the offense’s number times the listed punishment, meaning a second offense doubles the listed punishment, while a third offense triples it, and so on.

DOING TIME IN THE CLOCKWORK CITY

The physical effects of Zobeck’s justice merit some mention.

Hard Labor. Characters sentenced to hard labor must make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, the character contracts sewer plague (see the 5th-Edition rules section on diseases) or another sickness of the GM’s choosing.

Imprisonment. Prisoners held in the Citadel must spend 100 gp per week to buy the amenities needed to keep themselves healthy. For each month they do not pay this fee, the character must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw at the end of each day spent unclean. On a failure, the character has disadvantage on Constitution and Charisma checks and saving throws for the next 24 hours.

Crime	Punishment
Arson	Fine and 1d4 weeks imprisonment
Assault	Fine
Blackmail	Flogging and 1 week hard labor (mines)
Blasphemy Against Rava	Fine
Breach of Contract	Flogging and 1 week imprisonment
Bribery	Flogging
Burglary	1d4 weeks imprisonment and 2 weeks hard labor
Counterfeiting	Fine and 3 months imprisonment
Cult Membership	1 year imprisonment; death for a second offense
Demon/Devil Summoning	Exile or Death
Dueling	Fine
Embezzling	6 months imprisonment
Espionage	Imprisonment or Death/Exile (depends on the spy)
Murder	2d4 years imprisonment

Crime	Punishment
Murder, Mass	Death
Necromancy	Exile (Fine for members of the Collegium)
Perjury	6 days of flogging and 6 months hard labor
Pickpocketing	Flogging and fine equal to twice the value of stolen goods
Rape	Flogging and 2d4 months imprisonment
Rioting	Fine and flogging
Sedition	Exile
Slander	Fine; flogging for a second offense
Slave-Owning/ Slave-Trading	Flogging and 6 months imprisonment
Strong-Arm Robbery	Flogging and fine equal to twice the value of stolen goods
Tax Evasion	Fine and 2 months hard labor
Treason	Death
Vandalism	Fine

Sentences for hard labor can be fatal or merely exhausting, as it usually means 12- to 16-hour workdays in the silver mines, unloading barges, digging graves or sewage ditches, constructing roads, or (in the best case) harvesting crops. Those sentenced to imprisonment have a better chance of coping well and emerging unscarred, but usually only if they have money or wealthy friends. Most prisoners are held in the Citadel, and those with the funds may purchase some comforts, such as furniture or better food. Without this, however, inmates have a rough time, and most prisoners emerge gaunt and sickly.

GANGS, GUILDMASTERS, PRIESTS, AND PROFESSORS

Gangs, clerics, guildmasters, and masters at the Arcane Collegium hold sway and power in different parts of the city. Several priests and guildmasters (including Guildmaster Orlando of the Arcane Collegium) also serve as Consuls on the Free City Council.

The tables below include the names of the most notable of these individuals. Chapter 5: Gangs, Guilds, and Guardians provides more details about the gangs, while information on the Arcane Collegium and each guild or temple appears in its associated district in Chapter 4.

GANGSTERS AND SMUGGLERS

Izachar, or “Eyebite.” *CE male tiefling warlock 9/fighter 4.* Leader of the Cloven Nine gang

The Red Mask. *LE male, race and class unknown.* Master of the Redcloaks gang

Mama Rye. *N female human sorcerer 6/cleric 3.* Matriarch and crab diviner of the Kariv

Goldbiter. *N female kobold rogue 5.* Kobold smuggling king

Jorleele, Son of Silver-Fingers. *CE male human rogue 3/warlock 2.* Prince of the Barge Bandits

GUILDMASTERS AND MERCHANTS

Lord Volstaff Greymark. *LE male human rogue 12.* Master merchant and Consul

Lord Grimaldi Slygass. *LN male human fighter 7.* Master merchant of House Slygass

Lady Wintesla Marack. *LG female human cleric 5 (Lada).* Master merchant of House Marack and Consul

Ursli Schramm. *LN male dwarf fighter 7.* Guildmaster of the Steamworker’s Guild

Philomena Flaxe. *LN female human rogue 6.* Guildmistress of the Honorable Order of Weavers

Ersebet Cemilla. *N female human rogue 12.* Leader of the Spyglass and Cartographer’s Guild

PRIESTS AND MAGES

Lucca Angeli. *NG female human cleric 11 (Lada).* High Priestess of Lada, the Golden Goddess

Medlin Gorzax. *N male human cleric 11 (Perun).* High Priest of Perun

Ogolai Kiyat. *CG male centaur cleric 9 (the Green Gods).* High Priest of Porevit and Yarila, the Green Gods

Ondli Firedrake. *LG male dwarf fighter 4/cleric 9 (Rava).* First Consul and High Priest of Rava Among the Dwarves and Volund

Lena Ravovik. *LN female human cleric 9 (Rava).* High Priestess of Rava Among the Humans

Orlando. *CN male human wizard 15.* Guildmaster of the Arcane Collegium

Konrad von Eberfeld. *NE male human wizard 7.* Master Necromancer of the Arcane Collegium

Ariella Scarpetti. *N female human illusionist 9.* Master Illusionist

Rudwin Whitstone. *N male dwarf sorcerer 8.* Master Diviner

ZOBECK’S NEIGHBORS

The River Argent flows stern and chill beneath the bridges and along the docks of the Free City. It traces the northern border of the Magdar Kingdom before snaking further east to the Ruby Sea. Barges and ships ply this deep and slow waterway, connecting east to west. Its towpath provides a roadway for both farmers and oxen. Most of the time, the patrols of Zobeck’s Order of the Griffon keep robbers, fey maidens, and ogres away from the riverbanks.

Zobeck survives on the trade that flows into and out of it and thus takes a great interest in those lands reached by the Argent or the great roads. Many of the lands surrounding the Free City have threatened or aided it at one time or another, and every Zobecker knows that maintaining their freedom and wealth means keeping a careful eye on their neighbors.

IRONCRAG CANTONS

Located in the Ironcrag Mountains and their foothills, the Ironcrag Cantons are centers of dwarven trade, industry, and culture. Each canton is defined by a settlement that has existed at least 100 years, contains both free and cloistered dwarves, and encompasses a set of halls. More than mines and simple shelter, proper halls must include forges or smelters, a brewery, clan

homes, and at least one temple or shrine. The total population of the cantons is difficult to determine (dwarves are reticent to count their numbers, or at least to share those numbers with anyone). The best guesses say the cantons hold as many as 150,000 dwarves and perhaps 25,000 slaves, mostly human.

The 14 settled cantons are Bareicks, Bundhausen (Liadmura), Grisal, Gunnacks, Hammerfell (Mazzot), Juralt, Kubourg (Friunsgorla), Nordmansch, St. Mishau, Templeforge (Favgia Baselgia), Tijino, Vursalis, and Wintersheim (Inviernusa). Some of the cantons have two or three names, one in Trade, one in Dwarven, and one in the southern speech.

Other cantons besides the 14 constantly rise and fall and are not accorded equal status. Most notably, the small settlements of Roglett and Mynnasgard have been inhabited for about 60 and 90 years, respectively. While not yet established enough to merit mention among the cantons, they are certainly on their way.

The former canton of Citadel (Friundor) was abandoned for many long years until a gold rush a decade ago caused the canton to fill with prospectors. Boom towns rose around the digsites, and merchants, entertainers, prostitutes, adventurers, bounty hunters, and countless other folk hurried to Friundor to get rich quickly. The gold in Citadel has all but evaporated, and derro and devils lurking in the subterranean caverns have driven the few remaining prospectors to madness. Treasure may still lurk in Friundor, but it is the well-guarded sort that only adventurers dare reclaim. The cantons of Krongard, Sargau, Villershall, and Volund's Beard also lie abandoned for one reason or another.

The dwarven cantons all lie in the Ironcrags, although varying altitudes and passes make some much more accessible than others, and a few are separated from the main cantons by lowlands and rivers inhabited by humans. The two outliers are Wintersheim to the north, and the dark canton of Grisal, which stands across the River Argent, near the Morgau and Doresh border.

MAGDAR KINGDOM

The rolling hills and grasslands south of Zobeck are the provinces of the Magdar Kingdom, a place rich in traditions of chivalry and warfare, where the good king Stefanos holds tourneys every summer and hires a great many mercenaries from the Ironcrags when war threatens. Indeed, the Magdar Kingdom must fight often to defend its borders both to the east against the wild tribes of the Rothenian Plain and to the south against the akinji skirmish troops and the dragon-blooded sorcerers of the Mharoti Empire. Thanks to this constant conflict, one of the greatest weapons of the Magdar is the war wagon.

Most armies travel with a baggage train. The dwarves prefer mules, the Rothenian centaurs manage on

their own, the armies of Morgau and Doresh rely on zombies, but all carry their weapons, food, tents, and other supplies somehow. The Black Army of the Magdar, however, turned this logistical requirement into a portable fortification on the open plains where it so often fights. These war wagons are easy to circle into a tall wall of iron-reinforced wood, a laager against attack almost as good as a palisade.

War wagons provide protection and cover for crossbowmen, and even ballistae can be mounted and fired through their firing slits. But this is only half the Magdar Kingdom's strength. The rest lies in the Black Army itself. No part-time peasant force or hodge-podge of lords' guardsmen, this highly disciplined and professional corps serves the kingdom year in and out as a standing army.

THE MARGREVE

The Margreve Forest is an ancient place, already old when most of the gods were young. In time immemorial, it cradled the great spirits of nature, and its loam felt the footfalls of the old ones. As millennia passed, its roots swallowed rivers, its canopy stole the sun from vast tracts of land, and its groves crested mountains that have since weathered to hills.


In all that time, the Margreve has changed little. History seems to transpire around it, lapping at its edges like the sea does the shore, but never truly invading. Though kingdoms rise and fall beyond its borders, the Margreve remains a world apart—a place where memories and old magic linger in the rings of trees and where new ideas and ways never quite take root.

A strange realm that lives by its own rules, the Margreve harbors wonders and horrors in equal measure. Those few regions men know fairly well have an evil reputation as not worth risking to gain their potential rewards. Every year, however, a few brave souls decide to ignore the old stories and cautionary tales. Most never return.

MORGAU AND DORESH

The Princes of Morgau and Doresh are exclusively ghouls, vampires, and other intelligent undead. Their cold hands control a nightmare realm where peasants suffer without hope or sanctuary. The Imperial Principality fights against all its neighbors from time to time, Krakova in the north, Rothenia and even Rubyat to the east, the Ironcrag Cantons to the southwest, and Zobeck to the south.

The rulers of Morgau and Doresh rightly believe themselves surrounded by a sea of enemies. They could dispatch any one of these foes in short order, but the alliance formed against the undead nobles of the Imperial Houses means the undead hold the passes when they must and raid the lowlands with fire and



sword whenever they can. Morgau and Doresh draw special hatred for their tendency to wage winter wars and to fight by night, as neither condition bothers their undead soldiers very much and plays to the Principality's strengths.

For the most part, the wars remain small: holding a village for a season, despoiling a graveyard for new troops, laying waste to crops, or turning a tenacious enemy's daughter into a ghoulish or vampiric spawn. The Principality does not wish to make friends, only to terrify its neighbors and dissuade them from denying undead sovereignty.

Just as important, raids and warfare keep its neighbors from spreading the seeds of rebellion among the living who suffer beneath the undying gentry. The peasants of Morgau, often restless and always fearful, long to shake off their masters. Despite their undeniable strength of arms, the one war the undead princes can never win is that waged for the hearts of their people.

Most right-thinking men acknowledge that extracting taxes and enforcing laws are the price of civilization, which makes any ruling class bloodsuckers in a sense. But everyone outside the Principality believes the undead aristocracy's demands for its subjects' warm blood and cold corpses are beyond the pale. Some citizens think their undead masters' command of death and darkness is a glorious beginning, but most of the living folk realize Morgau is a place of suffering. They obey their masters and fight in their armies out of fear rather than patriotism, as doing anything else invites reprisals against their families or forced enlistment in the "bone company."

As a result, the army is very much led by its officers, and its success comes from undead troops and ghoulish darakhul mercenaries. The darakhul are the true ghouls who dwell in their own lands below the earth. They are both entirely evil and among the best troops the Principality can field, when available. Great victories in the field, however, are actually secondary to the vampire princes' desires. They are smart and join together to field the best troops whenever a real threat appears. Everything else—the raids, the constant drumbeat of war, the slave-taking—serves merely to keep the border in flux and their neighbors off balance.

PERUNALIA, DUCHY OF PERUN'S DAUGHTER

This nation of beautiful women lies at the Argent River's mouth, several days downriver from the Free City. The Duchy of Perun's Daughter interests Zobeck for two reasons. First, it controls the River Argent's connection to so much land and so many trade venues on the shores of the Ruby Sea. Second, its matriarchy is ruled by the demigoddess Vasilka Soulay, more often called Perun's Daughter.

The god of war and thunder, Perun goes by the names Donar or Thor in the north or Mavros in the south. As a deity of destruction, chaos, and blood, he makes a fitting mate to Marena, the Red Goddess (see "Cults and Heresies of Zobeck," pg. 85). This child, however, seems to take more after her human mother, a woman named Mother Illyena. Vasilka is a woman of wisdom and learning and a goddess of courage, teaching, and stern mercy.

RULED BY A DIVINE HAND

Though small, the duchy is rich in the trade of the fish and oysters from the river mouth and in the crafts of timber, fine jewel-work, and divine magic. None of these will ever raise the land to glory, but they keep its people happy, healthy, and give them time for reflection, recreation, and the pursuit of art. The duchy is, by far, the land most given to education, literacy, scholarship, and the keeping of ancient lore. The people's learning focuses on mathematics, botany, agronomy, and architecture rather than the arcane. The vast library in the capital city, a wing of the royal palace, is open to the public one day each week.

Oddly, people here largely neglect worship and theology. Her Divine Transcendence the Duchess Vasilka grants boons and answers prayers to a small priesthood, though most of her people also revere the Green Gods and Lada. Most importantly, Vasilka's power provides a bulwark against the Rothenian centaurs and against the bandits of the Ruby Despotate, the dragonborn legions of the Mharoti Empire, and the cunning cavalry of the Magdar Kingdom. Her most powerful defenders are the amazons of Perunalia.

AMAZONS AND GUARDIANS

Perunalia sits at a crossroads of danger. It is besieged by raiding centaurs from the east and dragon legions to the south, and the wicked slavers of the Ruby Despotate from the sea want nothing more than to capture one of the "shameless women of Perun." Yet despite the danger, the warrior women of Perunalia—and their matron demigoddess—are entirely capable of defending their people.

The Perunalian warrior tradition is old, well respected, and primarily female. Many visitors remark on the strangeness of the nearly all-female city guard and fall into shocked silence when they see the duchess's horse guards pass—every one of them a woman of skill and daring. Though capable, this force is not always sufficient to put off attacks by larger neighbors, especially when led by men dismissive of the "girls on their ponies." In times of trouble, though, the people of Perun have a friend in the Free City of Zobeck; their mutual alliance dates back 90 years and remains firm.

Women who flee the Despotate or the Magdar Kingdom are welcomed into the duchy and soon find work, usually as guards, soldiers, weavers, or farmers if they know no other trades. The Perunalian generals and marshals of the Order of the White Lions—a society of female paladins—willingly raise levies of both men and women in times of war.

Lest it be misunderstood, the duchy is not entirely gloriously enlightened, selfless, and wise; the merchants of Zobeck consider Perunalians especially sharp traders who sometimes take goods by force to feed their troops or negotiate contracts at sword point. Certainly the duchy is an unusual realm, and its people would have it no other way.

THE SHADOW REALM

The Shadow Realm is a place of long winter and wan summers—a home to elves as unforgiving as a blizzard. They are the twisted servants and worshipers of their goddess and queen, Sarastra, the Goddess Night and Magic. Her Moonlit King is rarely seen but is feared even among the shadow fey.

She sits on a mirrored throne within her palace of glass and dreams, attended by 1,000 lords and ladies with alabaster skin and hearts of ice. Human tales describe the Queen as a demigoddess and implacably cruel, though many details are likely exaggerations. The queen dreams of conquest, blood, and loss; she remembers too many worlds that once were hers.

The Winter Court waits trapped within a world stitched together from memories of a past that never was. Shadow ships sail seas of fog. Fey hounds lurk near crossroads and echoes of forests in hope that something warm will find its way between the worlds. Each summer is weaker than the last.

But where before they despaired, now the shadow fey hope. The world of men remembers them and comes to trade, and for these isolated and dangerous fey, this presents the greatest opportunity in many bleak years.

Mankind comes to bargain, and the Winter Court loves nothing so much as a bargain. The humans entreat the fey to return with them to their wondrous, vibrant city to stimulate commerce, and they offer the Winter Court their desires in exchange.

The Winter Court knows much about desire. These humans talk of caravans, nursery rhymes, blood sacrifice, and ambassadors. They speak of mutual profit, normalized trade relations, and the chance to heal the breach between their world and the dark creatures of the Shadow Realm. They speak so much that they never notice the desperation of the alabaster fey or the way their living breath thaws the ceaseless snow.

They welcome the return of the Winter Court, and the Winter Court welcomes them. If it is ambassadors the humans want, then ambassadors they shall receive. The Shadow Realm is stirring for the first time in living memory. The shadow fey ambassador to Zobeck has been seen on the streets, and changes are certainly afoot.





THE KOBOLD GHETTO

O King, know that your people have dug deep into the earth for another week, and again we have brought forth silver, lead, and other valuables to the enrichment of all the people of the city. And we have given a portion of that wealth to the humans and the council of the city, and we have kept a small portion for our own treasures. The people await your words, O King, to build traps, to confuse the foolish Big People, and to someday seize all that was ours, in the days before the shadow fey came.

—Foreman Bardozeck,
a kobold miner in his weekly report

For many, living in a ghetto—dingy, crowded, and walled off from the rest of the city—might seem a miserable fate, a hard life of poverty and an early grave. For Zobeck’s kobolds, this is actually an improvement.

SLAVES AND WORSE THAN SLAVES

The Kobold Ghetto, a warren of streets no more than six feet wide (at best), lies between the Argent and Derry rivers. Throughout most of the Ghetto, roofs meet overhead to keep out the glare of the sun for the nocturnal inhabitants.

The Ghetto has only two official entrances, the Ghetto Gate and the Water Gate, each carefully watched from both sides. Multiple kobold “kings” or tribal chieftains rule the district, retaining power only as long as they keep their relatives and minions in line. One king, the King of Kings or Queen of Queens, holds the others in check until their united strength undercuts the monarch.

Five years ago, Queen Clarhida ousted Kuromak, the 7th of that name, to claim the leading position. King

Quetelmak ousted Clarhida two years later. Few kings last more than a few years. Some barely last a year.

More than 90 years ago, the kobolds were slaves to House Stross, and the Ghetto was their pen. They were chattel used by the family to do the dirtiest and most dangerous jobs so that humans and dwarves could work at finer crafts and live comfortably. Kobold slaves mined silver, built clever clockworks, and worked deadly steam boilers for the constructs and automatons that fueled Zobeck's industry. History largely ignored them, but some believe the kobolds helped invent the everwound spring, the aeolipile generator (a steam engine used in places where water or muscle power won't suit), and the reciprocating balance wheel, thus laying the foundations for Zobeck's fame. These centuries of enslavement form an indelible part of the kobolds' culture, and despite their (relatively) short lives, no kobold in Zobeck has ever forgotten the indignity.

Now, the Ghetto is a place of free kobolds, the legal equal of any man or woman of the Clockwork City. They remain a people apart, however, physically, culturally, and habitually. The single biggest obstacle to full equality is their nocturnal nature. Kobolds labor all night and return home before dawn to spend the day in sleep and rest before venturing back out shortly before sunset. Their unusual entertainments include rat fights, owl races, and pigeon hunts, visiting the Lynx gladiator pit, and pursuing amateur alchemy, often with hilarious results.

GREATER AND LESSER KINGS

The kobolds are fiercely loyal to their lesser kings, who function variously as attendants to the great King Quetelmak, as his rivals, as clan leaders, and as guild masters. Only kobolds seem to really understand the current incarnation of their political structure, and it continues to evolve almost as quickly as their religious practices.

Various wild stories circulate about the current King of Kings: he is a secret Mharoti spy, he is actually just a very small lizardfolk, he secretly wishes to destroy the Kobold Ghetto and spread kobolds throughout Zobeck. Even if any of those tales have a grain of truth to them, King Quetelmak is far too busy to enact such schemes. His uncommonly long and stable reign as King of Kings requires too much bribery, ring-kissing, and assorted legwork and diplomacy for him to act on any sort of secret agenda.

Quetelmak's greatest challenge is Prince Karremark, a foul-tempered kobold known as the Prince of the Night Ghetto. Karremark was once the closest ally of Kuromak, a previous King of Kobolds. Most kobolds believed that Prince Karremark would succeed

Kuromak as King of Kings, but the crown passed over him not once, but twice. Karremark holds a festering grudge against King Quetelmak for holding a crown that "rightfully" belongs to him. The Prince of the Night Ghetto has the ear of the Red Mask, the mysterious leader of the Redcloaks gang, and is using this network of thugs and killers to make life difficult for King Quetelmak. He will make his move in due time.

Others are not so patient, and assassins frequently attempt to kill the King of Kings. Most fail, and the heads of would-be usurpers invariably top pikes above the entrance to the Silver Palace. The next chieftain with a foolproof plan for regicide usually ignores these warnings, however. The 15 current lesser kings include sly long-term leaders who navigate the currents smoothly and brash newcomers who might disappear by the next new moon.

King Ardurak the Patient. *LN male kobold rogue 6.*

The Patient King is a wizened old kobold who rose to power by killing the previous king after an elaborate, months-long assassination plot. His age belies his wily mind and his willingness to play the long game.

Queen Blee'uk the Ascendant. *CG female kobold*

warlock 4. Blee'uk is a former consort and advisor of the puppet-king Illanak. After her husband was killed by a rival faction, she took his crown and continues to rule with the aid of his many former wives.

Queen Chainbreaker. *NG female kobold fighter 7.*

Some humans still illegally own kobold slaves. Queen Chainbreaker was once an idealistic outcast in her clan but later returned to win her crown by defeating her predecessor after freeing a small army of kobolds from slavery.

King Gearheart. *LE male gearforged fighter 4/wizard*

5. The ostentatious King Gearheart is the tallest of all kobolds, thanks to his gearforged body. This king of the tinkerers is hellbent on destroying the Free City Council by creating (or stealing) a gearforged army and putting the souls of his loyal kobolds inside, just as he was.

King Greenflower. *N male kobold druid 3.* The king of the Little Park has filled his tiny patch of territory with vibrant flowers. He loves them for their beauty, of course, but also because they are perfect cover for his ambushers. His airheaded, flower-child attitude is no act, but it belies a cruel streak.

Queen Harky the Trapsmith. *LE female kobold rogue*

5. Queen Harky is a kobold with a keen mind for mechanics. She and her subjects are some of the best trapsmiths in the Ghetto—no small feat in a society of kobolds. Their wealth is largely predicated on selling their contraptions to other kobolds, with little care for the consequences.

Mine King Hrodik-Killer. *CN male kobold barbarian 8.* The former leader of the kobold mining gangs, King Hrodik, was killed in a duel by a nameless kobold from the undercity. Now called Hrodik-Killer, the new Mine King has formed a cult of personality around his mysterious past and martial prowess and is much beloved by his subjects. He has extended the kobold mining operation deeper into the ground than ever before.

King Kan-Tor the Jovial. *CG male kobold bard 3.* Kan-Tor is a young and surprisingly bright-eyed kobold who travels the ghetto with his troupe of kobold performers. Though he lacks wealth and martial power, he is considered a king nonetheless; his songs and japes are too important to the culture of the Ghetto to be ignored. It is expected that Kan-Tor will be a king for years to come.

Old Queen Nemevene the Keeper. *LG female kobold paladin 8.* One of the longest-serving lesser kings, Old Queen Nemevene is a noble knight who holds some of the poorest territory in the Ghetto. Unlike many petty kobold kings, she commands immense respect for standing up to the Big People, including targeting human smugglers and corrupt city guards.

King Nerborg the Stitched. *NE male kobold (undead) sorcerer 9.* This king, an undead kobold wight, is the oldest and perhaps deadliest of all the kings. He leads Brandorek's Chosen, the bodyguards and elite troops of the King of Kings. His lair brims with magical traps and endless unraveling scrolls. Some say he communicates only by writing, his voice withered away to silence.

Slurrker, the Sewer King. *NE male kobold wizard 5.* The Cartways, Zobeck's so-called sewers, are a popular trade route, but one taxed to the breaking point by the foul-mouthed, foul-faced, and foul-tempered Sewer King Slurrker. He is content to reign in the sewers, and his vast wealth is almost entirely spent on mercenaries to keep him safe from assassins and usurpers. His black market connections also make him a common fence for thieves in Zobeck.

The Three Princes of Lillefor. *A trio of NE male kobold rogues 3.* The triplet sons of the now-deceased King Kondak of Lillefor—named Tai'rar, Tai'brin, and Frett—are sharing the crown in order to keep from falling into chaos. Like their father before them, the three princes are spies for King Kekarrac of Lillefor, and are working to extend his influence into Zobeck.

Queen Rurburakka the Newblood. *CG halfling bard 6.* Just two weeks past, a halfling bard named Gilly Redburn disguised herself as a kobold in order to solve the mystery of her mother's death; she was suspected to have been killed by one of the kobold kings in a long-unsolved murder case. However, Gilly accidentally killed a lesser king while snooping, and now has become a kobold king herself. She is trying to find a way out of this situation and still solve the mystery that brought her here in the first place.

King Zorb the Blasphemous. *CE male kobold warlock 10.* The story goes that not a single kobold in the Ghetto likes Zorb. Those few who follow him only do so because they fear him, or they wish to find the secrets of his great power, which is rumored to be linked to the demons of the Abyss. The only reason he has not taken over the Kobold Ghetto is because the other, better-liked and more charismatic kings have the numbers to keep his ambition in check.



The Keeper in White. *NE male kobold (undead) wizard* 12. The Keeper in White is an albino kobold lich whose real name has been lost to time. His followers are misfits who obey him with a cult-like fanaticism. The Keeper's torso is made of grafted mithral, and a clockwork heart locked away in his chest has kept him alive for over a century. He demands utter silence in his presence, save for the unsettling clicking of his mechanical heart.

The Keeper used to live in the Throne of Keys, a house littered with thousands of keys stolen from all over the city. Persistent rumors say the Keeper holds a terrible secret locked within him, one even he does not know. Whatever the truth, the Keeper obsesses over finding the one key that unlocks his chest, and his desperation has led him to commit murder throughout the city. The City Watch now keeps clockwork watchmen around the Throne of Keys at all hours of the day and have hunted the elusive Keeper for weeks.

THE INHABITANTS

No respectable human or dwarf visits the Ghetto often, but its kobolds reflect the character of Zobeck as a whole. Mine gangs, street gangs, silver syndicates, followers of the Red Mask, and cultists all rub shoulders with perfectly respectable servants and clockworker kobolds.

Clockworker kobolds, mechanically adept craftsmen trained by the Geargrinder's Guild, serve as the protectors and stewards of the city's many gear-work doors, bridges, gates, lifts, devices, and scullions. Kobolds also repair locks, wind-up keys, and gravity-fed devices. Unnoticed, they feed fuel to boilers in the guildhalls and wind the springs and oil the joints of the Watch's automatons, though not officers or gearforged. This maintenance takes them to every corner of the city, but their dusty gray-green uniforms make them invisible.

The dock crews in Zobeck's small but bustling harbor also make good use of kobolds, which allows the city to maintain a working night shift. The river crews wear blue hats and work in sets of three, six, or nine to carry crates that a single human could easily lift. Most longshoremen from the day shift assume kobold dock crews are corrupted by smugglers, but this seems far more common among humans than kobolds.

BIG TROUBLE IN TINY STREETS

Kobolds hold themselves apart and are instantly suspicious of anyone who comes to visit them. While kobolds can pass unnoticed in the rest of town, no human or dwarf can visit the Ghetto so discretely. The kobold kings take an interest in nearly every visitor, even if only a commercial interest. The streets are

cramped, dark, and filled with traps. The residents quickly hush up any violence involving Bigs. People disappear there all the time, and when kobolds die at the hands of outsiders, well, no one wants to talk about that either. Because respectable society willfully ignores the Ghetto, it is a perfect place for assassinations, gang fights, and plain old murder.

A REPTILIAN HEART

Somewhere under the streets of the Ghetto are the kings' halls and queens' boudoirs, where kobolds fight, scheme, and gossip among themselves. The wilder stories claim these underground halls are just as large or larger than the surface buildings.


Truthfully, humans and dwarves largely don't care what the kobolds do so long as the drudge work of

SMALL BUT MIGHTY

Getting into, out of, and around in the Ghetto is almost an adventure in itself. Once the crowds close in, PCs who do not speak Draconic suffer a -10 penalty on Wisdom (Perception) checks while in the Ghetto from being overwhelmed by the alien nature of the kobolds and their activities. Indeed, non-kobold visitors are poisoned for 3d6 rounds when they first enter the Ghetto. GMs may wave or reduce these penalties for frequent visitors, but these PCs should fall under far closer scrutiny from authorities on both sides of the wall.

Kobold Shackles. When the guards want to "check" individuals before entry to or exit from the Ghetto, two large or obese kobolds holding small, geared manacles flank the target. Each makes an unarmed melee weapon attack against the largest or most dangerous-looking visitor. If they both succeed, the devices' springs work as expected and the shackles latch onto the target's legs, reducing the target's movement to 5 feet. Two more kobolds then make two more attacks to bind the target's arms. A creature with one bound arm cannot wield anything in its off-hand and has disadvantage on Strength and Dexterity checks. A creature with two bound arms also makes attack rolls with disadvantage and must succeed with disadvantage on a DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check before casting any spell with somatic components. On a failure, the spell is not cast and its spell slot is not expended.

A bound creature can attempt a DC 15 Strength or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to escape its shackles (remember to apply disadvantage). The kobold guards can quickly release the shackle locks. While the target is held, more agile kobolds frisk the character for odds and ends to tax or steal.



mining and maintenance gets done cheaply and well. In return, the kobolds get one small patch of ground to call their own, and for now, that seems to be enough.

The narrow streets of Zobeck are filled with people walking, working, and brawling. In the even narrower streets of the Ghetto—where humans must turn sideways to pass through and even a dwarf might brush his head against the top of a doorframe—all that energy is magnified. The buildings lean toward each other, creating deep shadows, and some streets are completely roofed over so that kobolds can stroll down them untroubled by rain or sunshine.

Like the kobolds themselves, the Ghetto is both an integral part of Zobeck and still distinctly separate from it. In some ways, it's as alien as the Margreve, and in other ways, almost more unsettling. It resembles the city visitors know, yet it plays by a different set of rules that no one will explain. It is a place made for kobold comfort with no thought given to others: no lanterns at night, no room to stretch, and few open spaces.

It has many sites of interest, however, and it has plenty of reasons, personal and professional, for Big Folk to visit. And traps, of course. It has lots and lots of traps.

GHETTO AUTHORITY

Sometimes getting out of the Ghetto is even harder than getting in. Just after dusk and just before dawn, the Ghetto Gate clogs with official “border kobolds,” who hold up exiting non-kobolds by requiring they declare their activities in the Ghetto and produce any purchased clockwork items for taxation.

The ghetto authority slows exiting the Ghetto by at least 20 minutes and up to an hour on the worst days. Declared items are taxed at a rate of 1 cp per 1 gp of value. Undeclared items that are discovered are confiscated but can be redeemed for a fine of 1 sp per 1 gp of value.

While the Ghetto guards conduct their checks, the area swarms with kobold peddlers, charlatans, and children. It is almost impossible to keep everything organized. This is an ideal time for pickpocketing, card scams, begging, and general troublemaking.

KOBOLD PROFESSIONS

Zobeck's kobolds are remarkably hard-working creatures. They are members of the city's guilds and participate in many industries, although the

STREET LIFE

More challenges than just traps await unwary Ghetto visitors.

Beggars. The PCs are harassed by begging kobold adults. They make loud requests for coins or other items of interest (such as shiny armor or weapons). The kobolds follow the PCs for some time if they are ignored, persisting in their requests for aid. If the PCs do not gratify them with some coins or goods within a minute or two, the beggars bombard them with rotten kobold foodstuffs.

The Cutting Swarm. A dense swarm of kobold children passes the PCs. They crowd in tightly, stomping toes and scratching shins. As they pass, they claw dozens of little slits in the pants, robes, and other leg clothing of the PCs. PCs with exposed skin or light clothing suffer minor scratches but take no damage. They do, however, need to make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, they contract sewer plague (see the 5th-Edition rules section on diseases).

Drunken Kobold Band. The crowded streets part as a procession of kobold musicians makes its way down the street. As the band passes, the kobolds break out into a high-pitched, crooning caw, a not entirely unmelodious sound that is kobold music. Containers of drink appear almost immediately, and the crowd quickly takes on a festive mood, cackling and hooting. The kobolds reach a fevered pitch of song and dance

after about 30 minutes. If the PCs stay and watch, the kobolds eventually become rowdy and fights break out, possibly catching the group up in a street brawl.

Mining Gang. A group of kobolds (two per PC) plus their mine boss (a kobold with AC 16, 44 hp, and a Strength score of 18) is out in the street after payday and looking for trouble. Armed with kobold picks, they try to swarm the weakest-looking PC. A successful DC 13 Charisma (Intimidation) check makes them scatter, as does the first kobold incapacitation or death. The Ghetto guards come to investigate within 1d4+2 rounds, flying to the rooftops on giant owls. Unless bribed—10 gp per party member or half that with a successful DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check—the guards escort the troublemaking Too Talls out of the Ghetto.

Street Games. The PCs meet a few street kobolds running a scam with a shell game or dice. A PC interested in the game makes a Wisdom (Perception) contested by the lead kobold's Charisma (Deception) check (equal to the party's average level +5). The street kobolds always bet more than they have. If a PC beats the kobold's Charisma (Deception) check, the kobolds claim they don't have the coins on them to cover the bet (which is true) and try to leave to “get the coins they owe” (which is a lie). PCs who try to stop the kobolds or protest too much soon find themselves surrounded by a gang of three kobolds per PC.

majority of them are miners. Most kobolds don't match the stereotype of a dirty face with a miner's pick and a pocket full of silver. Some are innkeepers, stinkrunners (movers of the dead, especially during plagues), blacksmiths, leatherworkers, and quite a few are artisans or smallholders of various kinds. These include scribes in the Vigilant Brotherhood, masters in the Geargrinders, and clockworkers. And some, like the Kobold Wreckers, are professional demolitionists, destroying any Zobeckian structure without questions if the money is right.

The clockworkers are mechanically adept in every way (equal to the dwarves, they claim). The Collegium, alchemists, and the wealthy employ them to maintain nearly all Zobeck's myriad gear-driven wonders.

Of the major kobold professions, the miners are the most clan-ridden and gang-like. Each mine gang serves a "boss" or "mine chief" and number anywhere from around ten up to more than 40. These gangs sometimes brawl with one other over rights to a particular ore seam, alehouse, or simply right of way in the street. The scars that some miners bear with pride were most likely inflicted with a kobold mining pick.

Together with the miners (whom most kobold craftsmen consider uncouth), the clockworkers and scribes are the mainstays of legitimate life in the Ghetto. All obey their guilds and their lesser kings in large matters and prey on one another and gullible humans whenever they can. It's said that a kobold will always give good work with a sour face, and it is true: their love of hard work is innate, but so is their love of complaint.

GHETTO LOCATIONS

The city of Zobeck is a river town of stone, wattle, and daub, and wealthy enough for slate and tile roofs rather than just thatch. What lies under those roofs, though, varies quite a bit from quarter to quarter, and nowhere is stranger than the small doors and low ceilings of the Kobold Ghetto. For larger characters, the place always feels too small and too crowded. Here are the highlights.

GHETTO GATE AND WATER GATE

The Ghetto has a rough reputation, and the kobold guards and traps surrounding the one surface gate are part of the reason why. The poison spikes on the portcullis and several pit traps are widely known. Pre-aimed fiery ballista bolts and other deadly weapons also defend this portal.

Widely rumored but unconfirmed among the Big People of Zobeck are the numerous other traps in the surrounding streets, ranging from the degrading to the deadly. Among the more lethal creatures defending the site are two furnace gargoyles. The underground


gate to Lillefor is said to be similar, although there the guards are tame bulettes large and old enough to retire from mining duties. The traps surrounding the Water Gate are better disguised, as are the defenses.

Entering the Ghetto is tedious and slow, making it much easier to bribe your way in, at least during nighttime (the gates are firmly shut from dawn to sunset, when kobolds sleep). The typical bribe is 5 gp for humans, 10 for dwarves. Elves, gnomes, and halflings are usually told (repeatedly) to go elsewhere, but they might enter for a 20 gp bribe, minimum. As the guards quickly point out, they don't have to allow anyone into "the Quarter" at all.

Permission to enter doesn't mean things go easily. People trying to bluff or intimidate their way in draw the guards' suspicions, and they insist on searching the troublemakers for contraband. They use kobold shackles and go through backpacks, purses, sacks, and

ADVENTURE HOOKS

- The PCs must visit the kobold workshops to pick up (but not open) a delivery for the Arcane Collegium. The package contains a squirming, mewling thing (a homunculus, pseudodragon, or similar) that escapes and leads the party on a merry chase through the Ghetto.
- Some kobold smugglers want a little help putting together a "honeypot" shipment to draw out a group of bandits ambushing their barges by day. They need some PCs who can stand sunlight to guard the barge. Naturally, the ogres and their human master attack at noon, when the kobolds are all asleep.
- A scroll found by the Vigilant Brotherhood of Scribes seems to imply a link between kobold necromancy and spies from Morgau. The Brotherhood asks the party to question Nerborg the Stitched.
- The PCs need to find an entrance into the Cartways. Their investigation leads them to Scaler's Alley, but getting through the alley is an adventure in itself. (See "The Fish and the Rose" in *Streets of Zobeck*.)
- A dragonblooded Northlander named Grizolotoris Cairvos (NG male human fighter 12/cleric 5 [Bahamut]) is intent on becoming the next King of Kings in the Kobold Ghetto. This human wants to better the kobolds' lot in Zobeck and quell the infighting by unifying the kobolds under one king and one god: Bahamut, a heretical face of the dragon wind god Azuran. What happens when the kobolds unite under one strong king? Will the Keeper in White allow a human to rule them?



even scroll cases with reckless disregard for property, dumping everything to the ground (fragile items, such as potions or vials, sometimes break).

The same “search and shame” procedure might be applied to people who attempt to bribe their way out of the Ghetto, or who fail to pay the proper bribes, or who are not accompanied by a kobold of good reputation, or who simply look like they might have some extra coins weighing them down. The guards have to make a living, and shakedowns are their racket. Procedures are similar around the Water Gate, but since this is primarily used for cargo, any individuals coming into the Ghetto this way get a lot of extra, usually unwanted, attention.

CHAIN BRIDGES

Under Quetelmak, the kobolds have built several small bridges using linked iron chains and barrel floats to connect their territory to other districts—and even to span the Argent over to the Margreve side at night, when traffic is low. These chain bridges are a clear route for smugglers avoiding the gate taxes that fund city coffers, and they might allow passage to Mharoti spies or cultists of the dark gods. Mayor Olleck hates the chain bridges, but whenever the City Watch attempts to seize them, the chains and barrels are cut loose (and later recovered). Mayor Olleck is coming around to the position that these bridges are useful to the kobolds, and she is negotiating with King of Kings Quetelmak for a way to impose a new “Bridge Tax” on smugglers. The king sees real merit in the idea of a kobold-controlled portion of the city treasury.

THE DOCK AND FERRY (\$48)

The kobolds have a single dock used for fishing boats and small merchant vessels. Most people consider it a smuggling hub, perhaps because vessels load and unload there only by night and without lanterns. The Citadel turns a blind eye to this, if true, because any smuggling brings in goods that kobolds need for mining and clockworking which likely come from hostile nations such as Morgau and Doresh or the dark Niflheim road.

The docks shelter a small fishing fleet and a single ferry, which takes kobolds across the river to mines east of the city and back roughly every 40 minutes day or night. The ferry charges 1 cp to cross and allows only Small or Medium creatures, up to 12 at a time. Horses and other large or heavy creatures must walk the long way to the Puffing Bridge in the Dock District.

Kandrepoor II, the ferry captain, wears smoked goggles during daylight to avoid the glare of the sun on the water. Because clockwork or human Watchmen don't closely watch the ferry, rumors suggest he carries many rogues, smugglers, and rascals out of the city. For a mere 5 gp, some say, Kandrepoor can forget your passage entirely. Some claim he controls several kobold

smuggling gangs, or at the very least, he can find them for a small fee.

THE UNDERCITY

The undercity beneath the Ghetto is a comfortable run of warrens, cellars, small passageways, and smaller doors that the kobolds find quite congenial, and many of their taverns, bedrooms, shops, and dire weasel kennels are underground. Visitors rarely enjoy these confined quarters, and all of them complain about the vaguely reptilian musk. Kobolds apparently find it homey.

The Ghetto also connects to the Cartways at numerous places and to the River Derry, which flows not far from its walls. Unknown to most humans, though, it connects to another, much larger city: the kobold metropolis of Lillefor. Although fully 140 miles away, a brisk trade flows between Lillefor and the Ghetto, with mostly foodstuffs, wines, and wooden goods descending and metalwork, ore, and enchanted works—such as carrion beetle armor and everlit lanterns—ascending.

This undercity is where the kobolds' other great profession—smuggling—is practiced most openly. Wines, silks, spices, black lotus, and poppywine are all heavily taxed, but not when they arrive on kobold mules, caravan beetles, or courier lizards through Lillefor. Ghetto merchants are happy to cut the taxman out of these transactions entirely, and the soldiers of the Citadel and gentlemen of the Watch have (so far) declined to pursue the matter.

PIT OF THE FIERCE LYNX

One less domestic and savory locale in the Undercity is the Lynx Pit, a gladiatorial arena where a friendly, scheming fight promoter named Yshka Bishka (LE male kobold rogue 8) runs a bloody business in fighting roosters, hounds, and humans, with occasional knife fights or honor duels by kobold lovers for variety. Fights are held weekly, in a round pit that is easy to sluice clean after each evening's butchery.

Winners at the Lynx are treated as kobold royalty for a day or a week, and the whole ghetto finds the fights enthralling. The whole setup is wildly illegal, and the mayor has made it clear she wants to shut it down. So far, she's not willing to send in the number of Watch guards required to actually end the practice, but a recent proclamation offers 500 gp for anyone who brings Yshka Bishka in for “questioning or burial, for crimes against nature.” The mayor would be perfectly happy if he showed up dead.

THE KING'S SQUARE

One of the few truly open spaces in the Ghetto, where the sky is allowed to peak through, is the King's Square. A tall building fronting this square includes the owl roosts, where the various kobold lordlings keep their



avored flying mounts. Here kobold crowds celebrate various religious and civic events, typically at the full moon and new moon.

The main building on the square is the King of Kings' Silver Palace (§46), a marble-faced wonder of tasteless statuary and gilding that displays the king's power and wealth very clearly. Fully 50 kobold guards in heavy armor watch over the entrances to the Silver Palace, and all around it cluster the offices of mine sub-chiefs, assayers, smelting barons, and priests of the various kobold gods. The whole square is a mass of statues, status symbols, and power-hungry ambitions.


The King's Square is also a gathering place for kobold merchants, fishmongers, mine recruiters, couriers, freelance clockworkers, and smugglers for hire. During the night hours, something is always going on, from songs and acrobatics to dueling and ritual scarification.

PENTRICK'S MUNDANE MAGIC ITEMS

A jumble of curios, bric-a-brac, and knickknacks spills from this canvas-covered stall near the Ghetto Gate. Pentrick plies his wares here among the street markets of Zobeck, always looking for a big score. While this shifty kobold already lives extravagantly (by more than just kobold standards), the cunning creature is always looking for more.

A devious and wicked entrepreneur, Pentrick owns a workhouse filled with indentured servants in the cramped warrens below the city that cranks out simple arcane trinkets. His own clockwork beetle lies always within arm's reach, and he offers similar magic to fit any size purse.

In case of bothersome visitors, Pentrick has rigged his stall with a handful of traps (see "Street Traps," pg. 45), and he has a trapdoor under his low, drapery-covered table leading directly into the nearby



warrens, also liberally laced with menacing traps. Visitors whispering the secret phrase—“Little is bigger where the river winds,” rather obvious bait for forced appreciation of Pentrick and his kin—gain access to his more interesting wares.

His magic items, popular with the well-to-do merchants cramming the Free City, provide easy solutions to mundane worries. Both visitors and residents find Pentrick’s utilitarian items essential. These simple magic items bring customers of all stripes to the Ghetto. (See “Magic Shops in Zobeck,” pg. 125 for more information on what Pentrick sells.)

SCALER’S ALLEY

Scaler’s Alley is infamous as a very dangerous part of the Ghetto. Scaler (see “Scaler,” pg. 107), a winged lizardfolk the height of a dwarf and just as wide, has a reputation as a fighter of great skill and makes his home in the alley to which the locals have given his name. Visitors and residents alike who value their skins avoid Scaler’s Alley.

Shabby, dilapidated buildings line this alley and the area around it. Kobold drunks and gang fighters hang outside the alley’s entrance, which smells of burning lard and long-dead things. An occasional whistling, like steam passing through metal, emanates from the alley. Inside the alley, smoke drifts toward the surrounding buildings and obscures vision beyond 15 feet. The buildings appear to be a murky mishmash of scavenged materials, and their rooftops rise four stories over the dirty street. Unusually, the sky is visible down the length of the alley.

Scaler’s Alley is shaped like an upside-down L and filled with traps. Slinger’s Ambush Gang guards the rooftops. (See “Slinger,” pg. 108; for more on Scaler’s Alley, see “The Fish and the Rose” in *Streets of Zobeck*.)

THE ROYAL WORKSHOPS (\$47)

The workshops are the only section of the Ghetto absolutely closed to visitors. The various kings keep their weasel kennels at the entrances and flank them with guards, traps, and clockwork guardians to keep their treasures safe. These treasures include jeweler’s workshops, distilleries, geargrinding workshops, trap work armories, alchemical labs, smuggling dens, and traditional armories making mail so fine as to be almost elven.

THE ALCHEMICAL

This workshop, with the tang of fuming acid always around and ventilation that can only be called “barely adequate,” is where kobold poisoners, metalsmiths, tanners, and alchemists acquire their goods. If it is a mined mineral or a pickled body part, this workshop sells it by the dram, pennyweight, or ton.

THE DEFENDER’S WORKSHOP

All weapons and armor herein are made to fit kobolds and similarly sized creatures and crafted to the highest kobold standards. This includes highly questionable grooving for poisoning weapons and weapons designed to kill particular species (such as the dwarfbane and elfbane arrows).

DIRE WEASEL KENNELS

The finest fighting weasels anywhere come from these trainers, including dozens of standard breeds from the black, silent nightfeet to the vicious ratting sport weasel to the pure white and showy kingsruff and everything in between. Fights occur weekly, with heavy betting (see Goldscale’s dire weasel mount in “Goldscale,” pg. 97).

THE DISTILLERY

There’s nothing here that a human or dwarf wants to drink and certainly nothing an elf ever wants to smell. It’s a rank, nasty brewery and distillery that seems to cook up recipes involving fermented rat and moldering potato; best avoided by non-kobolds.

Kobold PCs can find delightful reeks and superb spirits here, starting at 10 sp/cup and extending as far as a purse will open. Wormbottom wine, tannery’s lark, and roachling’s get are three of the more popular spirits here, though all are banned from consumption in the rest of town.

THE NIGHT SHIP

This workshop is a warehouse and smuggler’s paradise, with goods going to and from the river, the Great Northern Road, the mines, and the dark road to Lillefor. If a kobold wants a thing, here is the place to find it. Exotic foods, heatstones, spiced humanoid meats, fine poisons for traps, and even forbidden tools and lore go on sale here, often in shipping crates with somewhat illegible labels. Stock changes nightly.

THE TICKING SHOP

Herein are produced the components of a clockworker’s dream: gears, springs, valves, arbors, escapements, armatures, and even hydraulics and pneumatics for constructs, traps, or just tinkering. The shop only sells to kobolds, of course, with many tools and goods available nowhere else. Masterwork clockwork tools are available for just 400 gp.

THE CARTWAYS


Many blame the kobolds for the Cartways. As they were the first settlers at the confluence of the Derry and the Argent, the charge seems valid. In those days, kobold stories say, nuggets of silver were everywhere, and mining revealed rich seams of metal. So mine they did. Once below the surface layers of sand and clay, they soon found they could contain the problems of water seepage, and the mines soon ran in all directions.

The seams eventually ran out, but the wide passages carved for wooden-wheeled ore carts made it possible for humans to store foodstuffs and the wines of the Smolten Hill vineyards in cool temperatures. So the vintners and greengrocers expanded the passageways. That might have been enough for most people but not for Zobeck's aristocrats.

Roughly 200 years ago, House Stross invited all the noble houses of the city to a Winter Festival in the deep cavern now called the Winter Hall. Small donkey-drawn carts brought revelers down to what seemed like the gates of the underworld, where they found exquisite food, wonderful music, and wine casks large enough to dance on. Passageways connected the Winter Hall directly with the Stross Manor on Crown Square and the Citadel.

The festival ended, but all the guests wanted their own grottos and their own passageways, and the golden age of the Cartways began, with many brightly-painted wagons and chariots going from house to house underground, carrying visitors, lovers, messages, and gifts. The Cartways stayed busy by night as well, as servants carried goods below ground so as to not trouble their betters in the streets near Crown Square.





In a few years, the mania for subterranean drinking halls and young lovers meeting secretly in the depths subsided. The carousers and courting scions moved to the theatre and the park in the newly built Gear District, and over time, the passages became more and more the province of human servants, clockworker kobolds, and delivery carts. Members of the Arcane Collegium moved their necromantic studies here. The Sisterhood and the Alchemists and others began to dump wastewaters here. The first sewage pipes ran through Cartways tunnels from the wealthier districts to the river. The place began to smell.

The general use of the Cartways ended with the Revolt. The victorious rebels sealed the passageways as decadent toys of the idle rich, and humans largely abandoned them. This began a great era for kobold rediscovery of their ancient passages. The first connection to the deepest tunnels made it clear that other creatures lived far below Zobeck. Kobolds joyously took the opportunity to found the underground city of Lillefor (or, at least, to loudly claim that they did) a few days' march from Zobeck. Most kobolds stuck closer to the surface and used the tunnels to smuggle goods in and out of town or across the river without paying tolls.

Recently, however, ghouls have harassed kobolds in the Cartways, and death haunts the dark tunnels. Stories tell of connections to shadowy realms filled with demons or devils, and many who venture into the depths fail to return. The Watch continues to enforce the prohibition against exploration in the Cartways,

LILLEFOR

The kobold city of Lillefor lies near Morgau and Doresh. It has two simple defenses protecting it from the Ghoul Empire's ambitions. First, kobold merchants bring valuable goods to the empire. Second, the city's tunnels are very small, and their stone is too hard to burrow through easily. Lillefor is really a haven for the small races: dark creeper bandits sell their ill-gotten gains, derro sell ore or ingots, and goblins hire themselves out as bat riders or scouts. The kobolds discourage Big Folk (and *svirfneblin*) from visiting.

From a central square inside all those trap-riddled tunnels rules the kobold King Kekarrac. Appropriately sized and diplomatic creatures can wrangle a short pass to visit the city for eight, 12, or 24 hours (often depending on the size of their bribe). Larger travelers can enter Lillefor but must constantly squeeze through the passages and doorways and can never escape observation or suspicion.

for clearly there are creatures resting in the depths that Man was Not Meant to Wake.

THE CARTWAYS TODAY

The underbelly of Zobeck is a strange and wondrous mix of wet and cavernous chambers, smooth passages clearly carved by magic, alchemical runoff, river channels, and the cart tracks that give the tunnels their name. The place's kobold market serves as the hub of a great deal of shady dealing in poison, blood, stolen property, magical items, hexes, and arcane lore. The Cartways Black Market caters to still darker customers.

Many visitors refer to these as the "sewers of Zobeck," but that's only true in the sense that filth runs freely through them. They are nothing like a planned system; most people of Zobeck still empty their chamberpots in the street in the traditional manner.

The upper levels of Zobeck's undercity are simple tunnels for alchemical waste and tannery slop. Its depths conceal deadly things, from gangs and other criminals, to devils and undead, to still more twisted powers. Wise explorers tread carefully. The everyday comforts and expectations of the Free City vanish when one steps into the Cartways, and help from the Watch is never available below ground level.

LOCATIONS

Most townsfolk consider the Cartways a minor set of disused tunnels, when they think of them at all. Their surprising extent and limited accessibility make them very valuable to certain kinds of people, however, and exploration reveals new sections all the time. Whether the work of the Stross in their heyday, the kobolds in their prime, or even sporadic dwarven efforts, the Cartways reach to more places than anyone imagines.

THE BLACK CHAMBER OF ANU-AKMA

Persistent rumor claims that in the darkness beneath Zobeck, Anu-Akma—the guardian god of death and the underworld—keeps a shrine set with silver pillars and warded by ancient spirits of the city's defenders. Lies, perhaps, but each year sees a few curious and foolish individuals seeking the Black Chamber. Here, some say, resurrections may be performed more easily because of the close connection to the Gate of the Dead. Souls called to the Black Chamber return more readily to the realms of the living, suffering less of the difficulty, weakness, and peril that such a journey sometimes entails.

The priests of Anu-Akma certainly do have power in the lands of the dead and over souls of the departed, so these rumors may be true. Just as persistent, however, are more cynical whispers declaring that the Black Chamber is nothing but a maw of the god, and those seeking it become food for ghouls, demons, or worse.

THE CART TRACKS

Before the Revolt, nobles used the Cartways as private thoroughfares to avoid the unwashed crowds or for private rendezvous. More commonly, servants used the tunnels to bring firewood, foodstuffs, and other goods to the noble houses quickly and quietly.

After the Revolt, the Cartways fell into disuse except for brave souls who used them for assassinations and smuggling, and the tunnels gradually declined without upkeep. A few enthusiasts continued to map them, but this grew dangerous as goblins, kobolds, and wererats took up residence. Some even say the devils once bound to service by the old nobles and young merchants slipped their bonds and now roam the tunnels to devour or enslave incautious visitors.

THE 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 cast a garish, flickering light the vendors and regular patrons no longer notice. The constant murmur of commerce is occasionally punctuated by arguments as flesh, drugs, stolen goods, and precious information changes hands. The threat of violence hangs over each transaction, and when it does erupt, bystanders observe with a detachment bordering on the clinical. A single, unspoken rule governs commerce in the market: mind your own business.

The Slave Block, the literal and figurative centerpiece of the Black Market, 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—groups of adventurous souls, for sale as slaves to those with twisted appetites and deep pockets. Far too many come here to bid for missing loved ones.

Those unfortunate enough to go on the blocks unrecognized or uncontested end up working in illegal 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. (Slavery is illegal and harshly punished in Zobeck, so slavers take great care in their choice of customers.)

The Cartways Black Market also includes a gambling tent known as the Cut Purse, a derro-run brothel, guard platforms, Radu Underhill’s home, food vendors, and a series of merchant tents connected to the loose confederation called the Merchant Consortium (see *Streets of Zobeck*, pg. 17).

THE SMUGGLER’S MARKET

With access from the docks around the Gullet and from the Kobold Ghetto, the Smuggler’s Market is a wet, foul, and violent place to do business, but it is the only place for some business to get done. The Cloven Nine ensure the gates stay well sealed, and they traditionally allow around 50 people to enter each night (the number is almost never the same night to night and seems to vary without pattern, though some claim that it is astrologically or diabolically determined).

The lucky cutthroats and nervous merchants who do gain entry trade in secrets, lore books, and stolen jewels, or they sell their swords and wands in service to any cult, mule-train master, or patron willing to trade hard cash for stout hearts and discretion. The market ends at dawn, and its visitors scatter. Some claim its location is not truly underground at all but a closed mews in the Kobold Ghetto. Others say the location changes weekly, and a sharp ear in low places is required to stay ahead of the Watch.

The city expressly forbids the Smuggler’s Market and occasionally raids it with a flying company of hussars, wizards, clockwork guardians, and the Order of Griffon Knights, but few normal citizens of the Free City even know it exists. Those who visit require both stealth and smooth speech in addition to their mercantile acumen to get out of the market with the deals they need at the price they’re willing to pay.

STREET TRAPS

The streets and byways near the Ghetto gate conceal a staggering number of traps in marvelous variety. The traps presented here are used exclusively to make life difficult for Bigs. The more deadly traps are usually near the main streets, the dock, and the gates, as those are the areas most often disturbed by the Too Tall.

The following traps are fairly typical of what one finds on the street. All these traps can be discovered with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. The more valuable bits of property, such as the lesser kings’ homes, the houses of mine bosses, or the workshops below, are all defended with rather deadlier devices.

Breaking Boards. On upper floors and bridges between houses, the kobolds place intentionally weakened boards that have at least a foot of clearance beneath them. The boards will break under anyone weighting more than a kobold or halfling, trap the victim’s foot, and deal 5 (2d4) piercing damage from the jagged edges of the broken plank. Characters running through such a trap take 11 (2d12) piercing damage instead and must make a successful DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or have their movement speed reduced to half because of a sprain or tear. This trap requires repairs to reset and cannot be disarmed (although sturdier planks can be laid down over the top of the trap).

Chalybeate Beggar. Most people overlook this decoy of wood, waxed paper, and rags designed to resemble a hunched kobold beggar. It hides a very weakened (and thus, much more inexpensive to cast) *glyph of warding (explosive runes)* spell and several packs of caltrops that deal 3 (1d6) fire damage and 2 (1d4) piercing damage to any creature within 10 feet. Most Chalybeate beggars explode when touched, but more devious kobolds will set up tripwires nearby. A creature can disarm Chalybeate beggars with a DC 18 Dexterity check made with thieves' tools. Kobold thieves sometimes set one or more as an ambush-lure or line an escape route with them to slow pursuers.

Chickenhead. Typically used in the narrow claustrophobic streets of the Ghetto to warn off and humiliate rather than kill, a tripwire triggers a heavy wooden beam that swings down (+5 to hit) for 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage. In addition, a character struck by the chickenhead must make a DC 12 Fortitude save. On a failure, the target is stunned for 1 round. As the victim staggers about, the trap dumps a disgusting concoction of runny glue and chicken giblets from a jar above, rendering the target poisoned for 1d4 rounds or until it succeeds on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw at the end of one of its turns. Finally, the trap empties a box of feathers over the target, causing the target to become blinded for 1d6 rounds or until it succeeds on a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw at the end of one of its turns. It may only make one of these saving throws per turn.

This complicated trap requires several kobolds to manually reset it, while disarming it requires a successful DC 12 Dexterity check made with thieves' tools.

Jolly Water. At night, adolescent kobolds on rooftops hurl stoppered porcelain vases at intruders and then scurry away. The thin vases only deal 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage on a direct hit, but they shatter and douse everything in adjacent squares in water filled with lichen that visibly glows in darkvision. Creatures with darkvision gain advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks to see creatures covered in the lichen. No reset, no disarm.

Like Bees to Honey. This small clockwork mechanism triggers when someone comes within 5 feet of it. It turns toward its target and explodes when adjacent, and all creatures within 5 feet must make a DC 12



Dexterity saving throw. On a failure, the creature takes 2 (1d4) piercing damage and is sprayed with a pheromone that causes nearby rats to attack the marked intruders. This results in a swarm of rats appearing in 1d6 rounds and attacking affected creatures for 1d4 rounds or until dispersed. On a successful save, a creature takes half damage and is not sprayed. No reset, no disarm.

Loose Coins. A glint of gold at the end of an alley lures the greedy or desperate. When a Medium or larger creature enters the alley, a log on chains falls off the roof, dealing 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage and the creature must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw. On a failure, the target falls into a concealed 40-foot pit for an additional 14 (4d6) bludgeoning damage. On a successful save, the target takes half as much damage and does not fall into the pit.

The coins are copper pieces painted gold. This trap requires a manual reset and can be disarmed with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check made with thieves' tools.

Mantrap. This trapped lock allows doors to only open from one side. Whenever anything is inserted into the lock from the wrong side, two metal jaws slam shut on the lock picker's arms, dealing 1d6 slashing damage and immobilizing the target. A DC 13 Dexterity saving throw successfully avoids the jaws (and thus the damage and immobilization). A DC 16 Strength (Athletics) check (which can be performed by someone else) or a DC 20 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check allows the held person to escape. Disarming this trap requires a successful DC 16 Dexterity check made with thieves' tools, and it is reset manually.

Neckwire. Spiked wire is strewn at regular intervals across a narrow alley and positioned at human head height. The wire is surprisingly visible, noticeable with a successful DC 8 Wisdom (Perception) check, and not difficult to avoid by simply ducking. Unfortunately for intruders, though, one of the flagstones in the alley is on a strong spring. Creatures of 50 pounds or less do not set off the trap, but heavier beings do. The spring-loaded flagstone hurls its victim into the spiked wires above. The creature must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw, taking 7 (2d6) slashing damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one. This is a repair reset trap that can be disarmed with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check made with thieves' tools.

Peek Poke. A wooden fence or wall conceals the source of an intriguing noise. A cacophony of whirling, buzzing, and clicking sings from the other side, while a hole drilled 5 feet from the ground provides a peek. Someone foolish enough to look through the hole is poked in the eye by a stick (wielded by a generally bored kobold). The creature must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 3 (1d6) piercing damage and being blinded for 1d4 hours on a failed

save. On a failure by 5 or more, the eye is permanently blinded. On a successful save, the creature takes no damage and is not blinded. No reset, no disarm.

Pit and Post. This pit trap is camouflaged, requiring a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check to spot. It is 40 feet deep, and any creature that steps into the pit must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, falling in on a failed save and suffering 14 (4d6) bludgeoning damage. The pit also has a steel bar set in the wall and a pressure plate on the bottom.

When more than 50 pounds hits the bottom, a creature must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage from the falling post on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. This trap requires a manual reset and can be disabled with a successful DC 18 Dexterity check made with thieves' tools.

Skunk Box. A block ahead of the party, a large kobold approaches a smaller one, who is carrying two large wooden boxes. The large kobold grabs one of the boxes and runs off. The smaller kobold squeals, drops the other box, and runs after the first. This foolery usually draws observers to investigate the dropped box. When a creature picks up the box, it and all creatures within 5 feet must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw as the box explodes in a shower of terrible-smelling rot. On a successful save, a creature avoids the stench entirely. On a failed save, the creature must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. If the creature fails this save, it is poisoned for 1d2 hours or until it washes the rot off. A creature poisoned in this way is marked with the stench and has disadvantage on all Charisma checks made with creatures that can smell it. Additionally, creatures with a strong sense of smell can automatically identify the victim's exact location and has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks made to find it.

No reset, but the trap can be disarmed with a successful DC 16 Dexterity check made with thieves' tools.



DISTRICTS & LOCATIONS

“Did you get the requiem?” Dobricar asked, forcing himself to sound disinterested. He glanced from the four grimy dwarves to the full cart behind them.

“Yes, Dobricar,” the lead dwarf said tiredly. “The dara—The other darakhul were right where you said they’d be, with the shipment.” He glared up at Dobricar. “This better be worth it. Three of my companions died.”

Dobricar waved away the dwarf’s bitterness. “Cheer up, Garzot. More for the rest of you. The only things worth having are bought with blood.” He led the dwarves into the great cavern ahead. A hundred or more buyers and sellers mingled under the flickering light. He grinned as he saw stolen goods, slaves, drugs, information, and rarer items changing hands for

favors, coin, or more exotic currency. “All this, Garzot, was paid for in precious, delicious blood. I’ve seen a lot of it spilled to maintain my little bazaar. And much, much more will flow in time.”

The districts of Zobeck retain their character and charm, from the huts and hovels at the confluence of the rivers where the kobolds first settled, to the small hill where House Stross built its great citadel, to the tangled docks and warehouses. The city’s houses are stacked two and three and four floors high, but the real action is always in the streets and squares.

Here are some of the most prominent.

THE GEAR DISTRICT

The Gear District lies on the city's western side, near the Dwarven Gate, and is primarily a region of tin and brass merchants, gear grinders, and gearforged repair shops. Here one sees the greatest concentration of the city's gearforged, and the best dwarven clockwork mages and engineers create wondrous new creations in iron and brass.

The entire region revolves around the Steamworker's Guildhall and the Geargrinder's Emporium, two structures built at enormous expense with ribs of cast iron. The tin toys and sharp knives sold here are very well made, but the greatest prizes are the new gearforged given life each month through the combined efforts of mages, geargrinders, clockworker kobolds, and dwarven engineers, all at phenomenal expense. Despite the cost, one new clockwork watchman emerges each month (some believe the Free City is slowly building an army of loyal gearforged soldiers), and most months, so does a privately funded gearforged. These private gearforged must pay off the cost of their creation, and most do so through service to a wealthy family, temple, or guild.

From time to time, dwarven mule trains from the Ironcrag bring in shipments of iron and unusual alloys, jewels for precision gearing, and offerings for the temple of Volund. His shrine here clearly shows the dwarven influence. An ever-burning altar and anvil stand before his statue, and his dwarven acolytes often call his name in Dwarven as they tap out the rhythm of his hymns and songs of praise.

The noise of worship is often lost in the district's other racket. Recently, the city attempted to silence the trip-hammers and bellows at least on holy days, with mixed results.

GEAR DISTRICT LOCATIONS

The city of Zobeck is defined by its guilds, its merchants, its trade—and its clockworks. The patronage of Rava made craft and artistry the city's pride and the city a vibrant hub of trade. Rava chose well when she became patroness of this Crossroads town, for here the hammers ring all day and into the night.

GEARGRINDER'S GUILD (\$2)

Rivals and allies to the Steamworker's Union, the Geargrinder's Guild creates the many gears that run the city's clocks and devices, from the small intricate wheels and balance arms of automaton birds to the enormous iron cogs that power the city gates and bridges.

Unlike the Arms and Armory masters (who concern themselves most with attack and defense in all its forms) or the Steamworker's Union (which concerns itself with motion and motive power), the Geargrinder's Guild concerns itself with the tiny details

of memory, reaction, vision, and ethics in mechanical form. They build and repair memory gears, command plates, low-light amplifiers, and similar fragile and complex devices. These elements almost always go to the Steamworkers in sealed brass cylinders, spheres, or cases to better protect their secrets.

Kobolds compose roughly a third of the guild, which values them for their vision and nimble claws. The guild's leader is the Guildmaster Krick-ok White (CG male kobold sorcerer 3), a pale kobold well into his advanced years with one living eye and one made of fused and enchanted glass lenses, which (so it is said) can see spirits, auras, and even the intentions of those who visit him.

THE GREY FRIAR (\$5)

Located near the Temple District and popular with the followers of the Gear Goddess, this tavern and restaurant attracts a scholarly clientele. It has both a scribe and a gear kobold on staff to handle communications and repairs. The owner, named Abrostar, is one of the few gearforged who seem to have a deep love of learning.

Abrostar claims to remember the entire contents of every conversation she has ever had, every book she has ever read, and every face she has ever seen. The depth of detail she recalls even exceeds that of other gearforged. Many have tested her, but none have ever caught her out. Her eye for nuance means the Watch often consults her in inquiries about travelers.

The Grey Friar's wait staff consists of two gearforged and three young students. The food is terrible but cheap; the beer is average and also cheap. The priests of Rava bless the tavern and its patrons each day at noon, and the place is always packed after services at the goddess's temple.

THE STEAMWORKER'S UNION (\$1)

The most powerful of the mechanical guilds, the Steamworker's Union creates the everwound springs, hydraulic joints, and the boilers that give all constructs locomotion. Its members also build the gearforged workers and scullions. They are a strangely pious group, universally devoted to Rava, and they count many dwarves among their ranks.

Old rumors claim the Steamworkers originated as the Hammerfell clan, and the Union's patriarch is still often a dwarf. The guild also has close ties to planar guardians of Law, who sometimes visit to assist in animating a gearforged or to offer advice on the making of stronger, faster, wiser, and more durable creatures. A few members of the guild claim the worship of Rava itself came to Zobeck with these guardians from the Gear Plane.

Steamworkers are one of the few guilds that accept both dwarves and kobolds as full members. Their



feet
0 100 200 400 600



- Gear District**
1. Steamworker's Guildhall
 2. Geargrinder's Emporium
 3. Temple of Volund
 4. Foundryman's Guild
 5. Glassblower's Guild
 6. The Grey Friar Tavern
 7. Solderers' and Braziers Guild

- Temple District**
8. Church of Perun
 9. Temple of Vanla and Porevit
 10. Temple of Golden Lada
 11. Temple of Rava
 12. Temple of Volund

- Market District**
13. The Brewer's Sisterhood
 14. Stonemason's Guild
 15. Wainwright's Guild
 16. The Vintner's Guild
 17. Lanternmakers & Tinkers Guild
 18. Limner's Guild
 19. Shadow Fey Exchange

- Merchant District (Vineyard District)**
20. Honorable Order of Weavers
 21. Ancient Order of Jewelers
 22. Shrine of Khors & Perun
 23. Carpenter's Brotherhood
 24. Cooper's Union
 25. Order of Arms and Armory
 26. Order of Tanners & Leather Workers
 27. Six Lanterns Playhouse



Upper Zobeck

- 28. The Great Stross Clock Tower
- 29. City Archives
- 30. Civic Courthouse
- 31. Council Hall
- 32. Redrock Bailey
- 33. Old Stross Public Bathhouse
- 34. The Seven Bells Tavern

Lower Zobeck (Ashmill)

- 35. The Wheatsheaf Tavern
- 36. Moon's Grace Temple
- 37. Red Queen Gambling Hall
- 38. Shrine of St. Charon
- 39. Spyglass and Cartographer's Guild
- 40. Miner's Brotherhood
- 41. Ragpicker's Guild

Collegium District

- 42. Arcane Collegium
- 43. Book Fetish
- 44. The Hedgehog Tavern
- 45. The Vigilant Scribes
- 46. Shadow Fey Embassy
- 47. Temple of Celestial Dawn
- 48. Fellowship of the Arcane Collegium
- 49. Chartered Brotherhood of Alchemists
- 50. Arcane Square

Kobold Ghetto

- 51. Ghetto Gate
- 52. Pit of the Fierce Lynx
- 53. King of King's Palace
- 54. Royal Workshops
- 55. Kobold Dock
- 56. Undercity Entrance

Citadel District

- 57. Blue House
- 58. The Citadel
- 59. Griffon Rider Barracks
- 60. Western Barbican
- 61. King's Head Tavern
- 62. The White Rose Tavern

Pastures

- 63. Shrine of Hubertus

Dock District

- 64. Smuggler's Market
- 65. Blackened Fish Tavern
- 66. Blue Barbers of Wharf Street
- 67. Broken Seal Tavern
- 68. Greymark Warehouse
- 69. The Dancing Bear
- 70. The Moon and Owl Tavern
- 71. Altar of the Lorelei
- 72. The Bargeman's Fellowship
- 73. Shipwright's and Chandler's Guild
- 74. Stevedore's Brotherhood

North and East
to Morgai & Doreth

guildhall is a workshop that rings with hammers and burns with hissing steam at all hours. Humans tend the forges during the day, kobolds by night, and dwarves at all hours.

TEMPLE DISTRICT

The Temple District is so named for the many temples it contains. Lada's largest temple stands here, along with important temples to the other major Crossroads gods: Rava, Volund, Perun, and Porevit and Yarila. Shrines to the various saints also dot these streets.

TEMPLE DISTRICT LOCATIONS

The temples of the district are open from dawn to dusk. After nightfall, only priests and the most devoted followers travel through its streets.

CHURCH OF PERUN (\$7)

A large stone building with virtually no outer embellishments, the church of Perun might be unrecognizable at all but for his thunderstone symbol over its doors. Many still mistake it for a warrior's guild.

Inside rests a small shrine, but the majority of the building houses an armory and rooms dedicated to martial training. Behind the building lies a courtyard also used for weapons practice.



ADVENTURE HOOKS

- A bottle shipment to the Four Quarters has released an efreeti, who demands humans bring him incense, spices, jewels, and virgins. The city leaders are not amused, and even less amused is the lamp's seller, whose shop has become the efreeti's private palace, at least in an illusory way.
- A merchant of Sikkim seeks a guide to the taverns, brothels, gambling halls, and smuggling dens of Zobeck, and someone has recommended one of the PCs. Once the guide is drunk, the spy of Sikkim questions him closely.

The clerics here train the lowliest of citizens in basic combat and the arts militant, and those willing to offer themselves to Perun receive a spear and dagger or a pike and short sword, with the understanding that they will answer the priests' call to arms if needed. The church of Perun serves as the unofficial recruiter and officer corps for the Zobeck levies.

TEMPLE OF GOLDEN LADA (\$9)

This tall, elaborate edifice of pink stone rests on a small hill, and its tallest tower peeks above the city walls to better to see the first glint of dawn. As with Lada's more popular Celestial Dawn Temple in the Collegium District, petitioners line up before dawn to receive the priests' healing touch when the doors open.

Inside the temple, the statues, pillars, and pews radiate a golden sheen, quite calming to supplicants seeking Lada's blessings. No one is denied healing during daylight hours, though any receiving powerful curative magic must serve the temple for a period or perform a great task to repay the debt.

Lucca Angeli is the high priestess of Lada, a small woman with dark hair and a powerful personality. She keeps rooms in both temples and rotates weeks between them to give her lesser priests and lay persons equal attention.

TEMPLE OF VOLUND (\$11)

The temple of Volund is a majestic piece of dwarven masonry on the outside. Fine statues show forges, hammers, horses, dwarves in battle array, and humans and dwarves in prayer by a forge fire. Inside, the temple is a vast forge that runs 24 hours a day, keeping Volund's fires burning and the temple interior warm and smelling of fuel and sweat. The temple walls dampen the sounds of hammering so as not to disturb the priests' neighbors, but the rhythm never ceases.

The temple maintains a stable in the town as well, with horses supposedly blessed by Volund. Certainly the priests do a bit of a sideline in horse-trading, shoeing, and animal care. A yellow or russet blaze in some breeds of draft horses, called the "mark of Volund," is highly prized.

Ondli Firedrake serves as the temple's high priest and often works the forge himself, creating a novice's iron holy symbol or fulfilling a commission for a devout warrior or traveler.

TEMPLE OF POREVIT AND YARILA (\$8)

An open series of plant-entwined columns serves as the temple to the Green Gods. Behind this rise vast, beautiful gardens and shrubbery mazes. Many herbs and plants usually only found in the Margreve grow here. Spellcasters often make donations to the temple for the rights to cuttings from the plants as spell components—the clerics won't sell them directly.

Ogolai Kiyat, an elderly centaur from the eastern plains, is the temple's current high priest. He leads the opening of the Spring Festival Rites.

TEMPLE OF RAVA (§10)

A metallic structure with brass-bound iron doors and a green copper roof, the temple of Rava stands out. Two steam golems guard its entrance to protect the valuable work that takes place within, for this is the birthplace of the gearforged.

The main temple level includes three important sections: a shrine of trade, where balances are trued and weights and measures blessed; a shrine of fate

and foresight, which includes the sacred and private territory of the Clockwork Oracle; and the open Hall of the Patroness, where the arts and industry of the city are featured alongside minor paintings of Zobeck, its founding, and history. This last is where public services are held, such as contract signings, marriages, priestly investments, and funerals.

The temple's crypt is not for burials but for births. The lower halls contain a series of workshops and assembly rooms. In the Sanctuary of Gears, the clerics perform binding rituals to seal humanoid souls into metal bodies and create the children of Rava.

REAL ESTATE, RENTS, AND LIVING EXPENSES

Ownership	District 1	District 2	District 3	District 4
Manor	60,000+ gp	40,000+ gp	100,000+ gp	25,000 gp
Villa	40,000 gp	20,000 gp	80,000 gp	18,000 gp
Townhouse	30,000 gp	15,000 gp	60,000 gp	12,000 gp
House	20,000 gp	10,000 gp	45,000 gp	8,000 gp
Apartment Suite	8,000 gp	5,000 gp	15,000 gp	1,000 gp
Apartment	800 gp	500 gp	1,500 gp	100 gp
Building, Small	10,000 gp	5,000 gp	15,000 gp	4,000 gp
Building, Large	20,000 gp	10,000 gp	45,000 gp	8,000 gp
Tavern	12,500 gp	7,500 gp	17,500 gp	5,500 gp
Warehouse	40,000 gp	20,000 gp	80,000 gp	18,000 gp

District 1: Gear District, Merchant District, and Temple District
 District 2: College District, Lower Zobeck, and the Market District

District 3: Upper Zobeck and Citadel District
 District 4: Kobold Ghetto and Dock District


RENT (PER MONTH)

Manor	1,000 gp	700 gp	2,000 gp	500 gp
Villa	500 gp	250 gp	1,000 gp	175 gp
Townhouse	250 gp	150 gp	750 gp	100 gp
House	200 gp	100 gp	500 gp	50 gp
Apartment Suite	100–150 gp	40–60 gp	500 gp	30 gp
Apartment	75 gp	30 gp	200 gp	10 gp
Tenement Flat	10 gp	5 gp	—	2 gp
Building, Small	200 gp	100 gp	500 gp	50 gp
Building, Large	1,000 gp	500 gp	1,500 gp	400 gp
Warehouse	500 gp	250 gp	1,000 gp	175 gp

GENERAL EXPENSES*

Food Costs	100%	100%	150%	100%
Transportation Costs	100%	100%	125%	75%
Goods Costs	125%	100%	150%	100%

* Cost percentage of items listed in the 5th-Edition rules equipment section.



Ondli Firedrake, also the high priest of Volund, serves as the dwarven high priest of Rava. Lena Ravovik serves as the high priestess for the humans. This is the only temple where gearforged number among the priesthood.

MARKET DISTRICT (VINEYARD DISTRICT)

Also called the Vineyard District or the Market Ward, this quarter is filled with small shops and artisans who sell the goods everyone needs. Cloth, leather, weapons, poison, scrolls, and carpets are all for sale here—everything but foodstuffs, livestock, spices (which are sold in Lower Zobeck), and slaves (which are forbidden in the Free City). The merchants work out of tiny stalls and areas no larger than pantries, but the demand for space in the district is huge. Most merchants live above or behind their shops and have done so for generations.

The Four Quarters street in the Market District is devoted to the goods of distant lands. The street's markets offer indecipherable scrolls from Siwal and the Arbonesse, strange alchemical powders, and statues of unknown gods. More mundane goods also appear here, such as amber, Rothenian furs, exotic woods, and garments of silk, shimma, and Harkesh lace. Even some minor magical items from Bemmea turn up somewhere along the street, although nothing too fine.

MARKET DISTRICT LOCATIONS

The Market district is all about trade. It is busiest from the months of Mustering to Redleaf, or spring to harvest time. In winter, the district caters only to the city's own inhabitants.

THE BREWER'S SISTERHOOD (§12)

The brewmistresses are beloved throughout the city for the beer, ale, and barley wine they make in their vast copper kettles. These hardworking craftswomen often compete with one another in a fierce but friendly way. Some have a contest each year during the River Fair, when the Bargemen, stevedores, and all the apprentices of the city sample and vote on the quality of the copious amounts of potables the Sisterhood provides.

In terms of numbers, the Sisterhood has always been fairly small, rarely more than 40 members at a time, with about 60 or 70 apprentices. Many young girls apprentice, starting at age nine or ten, and it is a popular destination for urchins and runaways. The Guildmistress is Ludmeya Shenk (NG female dwarf cleric 6 [Ninkash]), a crookbacked dwarven crone who is canny enough to keep the Bargemen and the Coopers close allies. Zobeck's various beers, from the

heavy Chimneysweep Stout to the summery Silverhops Lager, are widely distributed up and down the river and popular among the centaurs.

The Sisterhood owns no magic and its finances, while sound, are not extravagant. It remains among the best-loved guilds in the city, and when Guildmistress Ludmeya speaks, her words carry great weight with the Council. Many leaders count on her guild to quench the thirst in their quarters of the city, and no one wishes to cross her. Ludmeya has ears in every taproom and friends at every table, so they say, and this information is a great asset. She remembers the Revolt, and her loyalty to the city's freedom and prosperity means what she learns often reaches people who can do something about it.

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 Hommal'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. Hommal 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, Hommal has found his garden declared a neutral and safe meeting place for a number of Zobeck's criminal organizations. For serving tea and keeping silent, Hommal avoids paying protection money to any group (see *Streets of Zobeck*, pg. 20).

ULMAR'S RARE BOOKS

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

Ulmar repairs damaged books, though few know that he forges near-exact duplicates as well. He will duplicate any particularly noteworthy volume he comes across for his special collection. On occasion, wealthy merchants desiring to impress will purchase duplicated rare books at "discounted" prices.

Ulmar works for several masters and provides different services depending on which code word customers use. With the right phrase, Ulmar will recommend a book for purchase from the Spyglass Guild. Another code word, and he brings out a book or package from the Rivermen. The service never improves, though (see *Streets of Zobeck*, pg. 32).

MERCHANT DISTRICT

Like the Market District, this district houses many of the guild orders, such as the Honorable Order of Weavers (§18), the Ancient Order of Jewelers (§19), the Carpenter's Brotherhood (§20), the Cooper's Union (§21), the Order of Arms and Armor (§22), the Order of Tanners and Leatherworkers (§23), and the Six Lantern Playhouse (§24). The Watch patrols more frequently here than the Market district, however.

MERCHANT DISTRICT LOCATIONS

The Merchant district is more concerned with trade on road and river compared to the Market district and organizes shipments in and out. Many master merchants live here as well, and carts and wagons often clog the streets.

HONORABLE ORDER OF WEAVERS (§18)

This guild is one of the oldest and yet most modest of Zobeck's guilds. It produces an astonishing variety of patterned and simple woolen, cotton, and silk cloth using looms threaded and tended by its members and its spidery weaving automatons. The guild sells one or two enormous tapestries, true works of art, each year, and they command huge sums. Its clockwork weaving spiders are inhumanly quick and accurate but also feared. Terrible rumors claim that they poison and destroy the Weavers' enemies, and sometimes merchants who buy from the guild carry a spider to distant targets outside Zobeck as part of their payment. This seems entirely baseless and rooted in the spider's fearsome appearance. The single proven case of a weaving spider attack took place within the city walls.

The Honorable Order does seem to have some touch of the magical about it. Its members are close allies of the Steamworker's Union (who provide some of their more specialized looms and counting tools) and the Vigilant Brotherhood of Scribes (who rely on the Weavers for certain obscure mathematics and accounts). The Honorable Order clearly uses arcane techniques to make such enormous volumes of cloth and to weave such tight sailcloth. Like most guilds, though, they keep their secrets well.




The guildmistress of the weavers, a young woman named Philomena Flaxe (LN female human rogue 4/bard 4), is thin with long limbs and a quiet way about her. Her followers believe she is blessed by Rava, for Philomena has received admittance to the Clockwork Oracle not just once but a dozen times. Each time, the Oracle's words have helped her and her guild. A few believe she should leave the guild and join the priesthood.

SIX LANTERN PLAYHOUSE (§23)

One of the few public places in Zobeck nodding to the arts, the Six Lantern Playhouse seats up to 3,000 occupants, but it rarely draws a full house these days and is really in a state of decline. The Stross era, when nobles considered the Six Lantern the place

ADVENTURE HOOKS

- The PCs are approached for hire by an elderly widow of the Slygass family who lives a life of paranoia. She fears her own children seek her death so they can claim their inheritance, and she wants the PCs to deal with the situation. As it happens, her paranoia is justified.
- The party hears of a secret oracle of the Gear Goddess who says the city is threatened by a plague of darkness. The PCs are asked to go bring a powerful hermit priest of the Sun God back from his retreat deep in the Ironcrag Mountains. The hermit has little interest in returning unless the party slays a few giants for him first.



to congregate and be seen, marked the playhouse's heyday. Since the Great Revolt, the playhouse has suffered because Zobeckers associate it with the largess of nobility. Most merchants consider it a frivolity.

The building is worn with age inside and out, and owners Joran and Cyndis Zirmac cannot afford to replace the fading fabrics and threadbare seats. They seek a bard or other performer of renown to aid them in attracting patrons and returning the playhouse to its glory days. Unfortunately, said star would need to work for free for several weeks until the playhouse earned the needed funds to make repairs. So far, no one they've approached has been altruistic enough to sacrifice his or her fee. Without an infusion of coin, the playhouse will soon close.

CROWN SQUARE AND UPPER ZOBECK

Crown Square is the newest place to see and be seen. The tall houses all around the edge include the Council Hall (\$28), the City Archives (\$26) (wherein is lodged the tower of the Great Stross Clock), and the homes of the wealthiest and most powerful families in the city, such as the Greymarks, the Vandereik, the Armanac, the Hrovitz, and the Slygass. Their homes are brightly painted blue, yellow, or brick red, with the paint frequently refreshed.

On major holidays and state occasions, thousands gather in the square to hear the benediction of the High Priestess of Rava or a declaration of war against Morgau or the death sentence of a notorious river bandit.

The city typically executes criminals here. The city jail, called the Redrock Bailey (\$29), lies just down the street behind the Civic Courthouse (\$27). The trip from the Redrock to the square is 200 yards along a wide road, and the executioner's cart rolls along it at least once each month. Common murderers, frauds, smugglers, and bandits stay in Redrock. The Citadel holds those convicted of diabolism, sedition, coining, treason, spying, or other high crimes.

The public enjoys the displays in Crown Square. The exercise of authority and the great temple of Rava make the place an axis of power. After the Revolt, the square was briefly called the Great Folk Square, but this name never stuck, making this one of the few places that actively recalls the old feudal days.

The only things approaching a commercial interest on Crown Square are the small tavern called the Red Pig and the enormously wealthy Merchant's Bank of Yorn and Federhan. The tavern is outrageously expensive and does not admit anyone in armor or carrying weapons or wands—its clientele hires those sorts of people, and they eat in the kitchen.

UPPER ZOBECK LOCATIONS

Though filled with history and grandeur, most of the goings-on in this district remain behind closed doors. The great and good of Zobeck have as much desire, and perhaps more need, as anyone to keep their private business private, and they take some pains to do so. Still, the various landmarks of this district are tied to the city itself, its past, present, and future, and that importance keeps this a busy place.

THE GREAT STROSS CLOCK (\$25)

This masterpiece of horology tracks the hours of the day, the phases of the moon, eclipses, sunsets, and sunrises. Two panels show the seasons of the year. Despite the Revolt, the clock retains the Stross name, even in official language, and is a focal point in the district.

Rumors hold that the clock has much greater powers, however. One hidden chamber within the clock's uppermost reaches supposedly displays omens related to the fate of the city. Some claim another secret chamber contains a gear altar where the souls of the gearforged are bound and returned to serve the city after their deaths—and might even be the seat of the Goddess Rava's visitation. Certainly, many gearforged in the city claim their flywheels and escapements move and ring in time with the Great Clock's chimes.

Some say the First Gear given to the city by the goddess is the prime gear within the Stross Clock; others claim that gear turns in the Temple of Rava or the Geargrinder's guildhall. What is certain is that the clock is warded by the Collegium and protected by furnace gargoyles, animated armored knights, and traps.

THE OLD STROSS PUBLIC BATHHOUSE

The Old Stross Public Bathhouse lies at the very heart of Zobeck. Located 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 opened to the general population. This is one of the few places remaining in Zobeck where one can see the lost extravagance of the deposed regime, but the people appreciate it as a reminder and a monument. The Old Stross Public 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 the Watch on official business. Given that, 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.

The bathhouse has two floors. The street level houses the entrance, while the bulk of the structure lies belowground, sprawling out beneath the wide street before it. The underground space consists of several chambers containing mineral baths, plunge

pools, a massage parlor, several lounging areas, and a gymnasium (see *Streets of Zobeck*, pg. 24).

THE SEVEN BELLS (§30)

By far the most important trade tavern in the district, the Seven Bells is more a market than an alehouse. The tavern stands just off Crown Square and employs, in addition to the wait staff, a scribe, a moneychanger, a notary, and a shipping clerk with connections to the barge trade and the caravan masters. The food and drink are both reasonably good and relatively inexpensive for the area. Drinking to excess is frowned on, and attempts to duel, brawl, or gamble result in summary ejection from the premises.

THE SILK SCABBARD

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

Tyron, Lord Greymark's fixer, owns and runs the Scabbard with the approval and protection of the trade oligarch. This den of excess draws in 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 and keeps the furniture sturdy but comfortable. The Silk Scabbard's girls are well kept; a local bard advertises the brothel as "a dozen lovely ladies and two ugly ones!"

The Silk Scabbard has two floors. The street level contains the brothel, main bar, and pit fighting areas. The upper level hosts the gambling and auxiliary bar with a couple of overflow rooms for the brothel (see *Streets of Zobeck*, pg. 27).

LOWER ZOBECK (ASHMILL)

Not every district teems with wealth, power, and treachery. Lower Zobeck houses the poor and common citizens just trying to make their way. Many are servants, unskilled workers in the fields or forests, charcoal burners, and dockworkers. The district is lively, with plenty of rivalries between various streets and families, but few of its troubles reach the eyes and ears of the Citadel or the Consuls.

ASHMILL LOCATIONS

The most notable element of Lower Zobeck is the emphasis on the Green Goddess and her spheres. The Sisterhood of Brewers and numerous bakers, livery stables, and butchers all surround this district, and many consider it the city's pantry. In a place known for automatons and diabolism, this is a district of human needs and hungers. Perhaps it is no surprise cults to Marena also spring up in this district from time to time.

THE BLACK LOTUS

Found near the border with the Market District and the river, the Black Lotus has a plain storefront marked with a black half-timbered style. It's a two-story building with a simple wooden door next to a street-facing window on which "The Black Lotus" is printed in Trade, Draconic, and the exotic characters of the owner's native language. The window is alchemically reinforced and looks into the curiosity shop. People come here to buy unusual trinkets and curios from afar—but that's not what the shop has a reputation for. 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.


Tall, fat, and smelling of rare spices—that's the easiest way to physically 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 foreign 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 of a cabal of eunuch arcanists from a distant land. They once served their emperor's court but fled into exile after a failed coup attempt. 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. Common magic may require money or goods, but the more potent effects demand more outlandish costs. Perhaps he requires the recovery of a pearl once 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 or a living basilisk brought back to him. He may not ask for payment immediately, but he always collects. No one knows of anyone who has denied his requests.

BUT HOW DOES HE DO IT?

The source of the Painted Man's power is purposefully kept 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 can arrange that. His network of favors allows him access to skills well outside his own purview, making him an ideal source for PCs and tool for GMs.



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 astonishingly powerful wizard keeping a low profile. Maybe he's not even human. Most who go to him for help don't care, and perhaps that desperation is the greatest expression of his power (see *Streets of Zobeck*, pg. 13).

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 business space on the first floor and living space above (see *Streets of Zobeck*, pg. 18).

THE RAMPANT ROACH

On the border of Lower Zobeck, just a few blocks away from Crown Square, stands one of the few kobold-oriented restaurants outside the Ghetto. The owner, a kobold named Skirtal, insisted on opening his restaurant outside the Ghetto to spread his joy of traditional kobold cuisine to the whole city. Local kobolds working in town frequent the Rampant Roach for lunch and dinner. Unfortunately, non-reptilian 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 and comes in generous portions, if the patron can stomach kobold meals (see *Streets of Zobeck*, pg. 30).

ADVENTURE HOOKS

- The wines of the temple of Yarila distributed for the high holy day tasted flat and the festival failed. The farmers fear a poor harvest unless they can appease the goddess. Some call for blood sacrifice, but the centaur high priest says what's needed is a pilgrimage to a holy place deep within the Arbonesse to make a long overdue offering. The road is dangerous, though, and the pilgrims need protectors.
- Recently, many woodsmen and charcoal burners have gone into the Margreve and never returned. The whole district worries about their fate. Are they held prisoner by dark fey, or have they been eaten by wild griffons? The patrols have found nothing, but the natives refuse to venture into the forest until the disappearances are solved.

SPYGLASS AND CARTOGRAPHER'S GUILD (\$35)

This wide, two-story guild house has many windows on its main level to flood its high-ceilinged, open workrooms with light. The panes' outside surfaces are opaque, however, to prevent curious passersby from peering in. On the main level, 20 permanent drafting stations fill the vast central room, which has space for more if needed. No matter the hour, at least 10 diligent cartographers are hard at work copying stolen maps, drafting floor plans of observed vaults, mapping out discovered tunnel systems, drawing legitimate maps for clients, and all keeping a careful eye on the entrances.

The upper level contains lodging for those guild members who frequently travel on business for Ersebet Cemilla, the guild's leader (see "The Spyglass Guild," pg. 69, for more information). This level also houses guardrooms, supply and special equipment rooms, and Ersebet's private chambers, which she shares with her second-in-command, Grigory Kaldozh.

The guild house's warded secret basement contains a document-filled vault, a treasure room, a few very strong and magically shielded cells, and a scrying-protected meeting hall.

THE WHEATSHEAF (\$31)

A favorite smuggler's tavern and second home of anyone who needs a thug now and again, the Wheatsheaf nightly serves up strong beer and spicy food with a healthy side of information, especially from the Redcloaks or the Cloven Nine. The collection of rogues, sharpers, cultists, assassins, fences, and cold-eyed hard cases who drink at the Wheatsheaf is ever-changing but always dangerous, alert, and looking for an opening.

Despite its clientele and infernal connections, the Wheatsheaf remains a remarkably nonviolent place . . . most of the time. The tavern provides a secure place to conduct public and private business or just have a meal, and that ends if people are watching for a knife in the back or fear the Watch will show up. When violence starts at the Wheatsheaf, it's never a simple brawl—it's a murder. The killer had best have powerful friends or excellent protection, however, as all the biggest gangsters in Zobeck prefer that the Wheatsheaf operate under a flag of truce, and they look askance on anyone threatening that.

THE DOCKS OR THE GULLET

The docks along the river Argent hum with the loading and unloading of barge traffic six days a week, with lulls—but rarely stoppages—primarily in the winter and in times of river banditry. Attempts to alter or control the loading and unloading work have led to bruising run-ins with the Stevedores Brotherhood (\$63), and the expense involved means the greater merchant

houses have stopped trying. The slips each have room for a dozen barges at a time, almost none of which stay longer than a day or two to off-load or take on cargo. Time is money, after all.

The city's wealth depends on the smooth functioning of the docks, so attempts to disrupt this activity are very serious crimes indeed. Lawbreakers attacking barge captains have sometimes been charged with treason and beheaded. Even dockside brawling is frowned on. To provide an alternative, the Docks provide many other vices, mostly fighting pits, whorehouses, and gambling halls. Prime among the last are the Red Queen (\$33), the Cup and Pentacle, and the Rooster.

The Docks take on a very different character after dark, in particular that area called the Gullet, where many gangs have their dens. By night, the Watch rarely ventures down these streets, and everyone guarding the warehouses and counting houses keep their doors, shutters, and windows tightly sealed. The gangs will not break into any building that has kept up its protection payments, but people found on the streets are fair game.

The Kariv are the only exception. They trundle along in the dark and even leave their wagons in clumps around the district without fear. They make their home here intermittently, when expecting to meet friends among the barge workers, hoping for a shipment of fine horses, or for their own mysterious interests. More often, though, the Kariv use the Pastures across the river.

DOCKS LOCATIONS

The buildings of the Docks are rough and worn, built quickly and used frequently. The houses are typically wattle-and-daub construction, though the warehouses are brick and better guarded.

THE BARGEMAN'S FELLOWSHIP (\$61)

The Bargeman's Fellowship is a strange guild in that its members do all their best work up and down the river, far from Zobeck. They maintain close ties to the Stevedores, and the two often work together when there's a need to load and unload cargo quickly or in bad weather. The Bargemen, though, are more sailors than dockworkers and often stay somewhat aloof. Their guildmaster calls himself the Barge King, and his reputation is extremely suspect: consorting with the Kariv, bribing fey for passage along the waters, and even smuggling are all charges regularly laid at his door. For the most part, though, as long as the shipments go through on time and without heavy losses, the merchants of Zobeck don't care.

The current Barge King is named Jorleele, Son of Silver-Fingers (CE male human rogue 3/warlock 2). He is the son of old Silver-Fingered Yorick, the previous Barge King, and wears his father's silver prosthetic fingers on a necklace—a reminder to all what happens

ADVENTURE HOOKS

- The PCs hear infernal chanting while passing through the warehouses. If they investigate, they find a branch of the Cloven Nine conducting an augury that involves spilling a certain amount of (very fresh) human blood.
- The silver-tongued king of the barge bandits is said to visit the Red Queen gambling house (\$33) each full moon with an elven courtesan on his arm. There's a big price on his head, if only someone were daring enough to try to arrest him in the midst of a pack of gamblers, gangsters, and diabolists.
- Merchant families always seem to be at one another's throats. The PCs are asked to visit a warehouse and inventory the goods, returning with a particularly valuable set of alchemical fire. The only trouble is that when they arrive, the warehouse is open, the guards are dead, and the alchemical fire is missing. Unless the PCs act quickly, a nasty string of arsons occurs the next day—and the PCs are prime suspects, seen at the robbed warehouse by an eyewitness.

when you cross Jorleele. Rumor has it he made a pact with the shadow fey for power, and they asked for his father's life as a sacrifice.

ALTAR OF THE LORELEI (\$60)

A small altar to the river spirits resides here. The lorelei are water fey (see *Tome of Beasts*), not goddesses, and yet the river is thought to be a minor divinity and the lorelei its handmaidens. Captains leave offerings for luck, and sailors and bargemen at least say a prayer at the shrine. There are no priests of the lorelei, but some say the priestesses of the Green Gods tend this shrine, claiming the lorelei is one of the masks of Yarila (see *Midgard Worldbook*).

THE BROKEN SEAL

Deep in the Gullet, the section of warehouses that are a stronghold of the city's gangs by night, stands the Broken Seal, a tavern where the city's worst scum seems to settle. Headquarters of the Cloven Nine—the infernalist tieflings who until recently were the city's premiere gang for extortion, gambling, and (most of all) diabolism—the Broken Seal nightly hosts Cloven lieutenants and foot soldiers who drink cheap wine and tell whopping lies about their debaucheries and plundering of barge shipments. The recent death of Akad, one of their founders, has shaken them, but the gang continues to frequent the Broken Seal to maintain at least the appearance of strength.

The bar itself is largely below ground. A short flight of stairs leads down to a cellar well stocked with barmaids and thugs. The primary modes of entertainment are gambling and wenching with occasional dogfights for variety. The Broken Seal is also among the more arcane sites in the city, although its reputation for black magic and diabolism makes it unpopular with the masters of the Collegium. So far, nothing resembling an arcane crime can be conclusively linked to the Seal.

THE DANCING BEAR (\$58)

The dockworkers and Bargemen all drink here, and it's a rough place; they even serve kobold gangs, though not with any good cheer. Brawls, gambling, and whoring are part of the expected entertainment in the common room and the bunks upstairs, but the regulars keep everyone from getting too far out of hand, mostly for their own good. For all its lively distractions, however, the whole place comes alive when Masha the

dancing bear performs. She dances, bows, counts, and knows a dozen other tricks. Her favorites get a big bearish kiss.

The dancing bear is also the inn's bouncer. When she growls, all but the most drunken patrons remember to take their business out into the courtyard. For a dockside place, the Dancing Bear loses remarkably few tables and chairs. On the other hand, it runs up huge bills for mead and honey, and Masha is a hopeless scrounger for treats and attention.

THE MOON AND OWL (\$59)

This kobold tavern, the only one of its kind outside the Ghetto, stands near the Puffing Bridge, close to where mine gangs enter the city when they return from the pits. Humans and dwarves are distinctly unwelcome here, as the language of the tavern is Draconic and the menu caters only to kobold tastes. Indeed, it is open only from sundown to sunup.

Kobolds themselves sit at tables or benches by tribe or work-gang affiliation. An enormous, grizzled dire weasel serves as the Moon and Owl's mascot. Rumor claims that she can detect an elf or gnome by smell and has dragged more than one such visitor screaming into her burrow.



COLLEGIUM DISTRICT

This powerful district houses the influential Arcane Collegium (\$38), as well as Lada's popular Temple of the Celestial Dawn (\$41). Its most famous tavern is the Hedgehog (\$39), and it is home to the Chartered Brotherhood of Alchemists (\$43).

COLLEGIUM LOCATIONS

The Collegium's neighborhood is home to student quarters overflowing with impoverished scholars and scribes and those who make money from them. Stationers, sellers of quill and ink, brewers, cheap tailors, and a few tutors all do a brisk business here.

THE ARCANE COLLEGIUM (\$38)

Composed of two small courtyards and a dozen two-story buildings (with a mix of gray and yellow stucco and red tile rooftops) housing masters, apprentices, alchemists (near the river), and clockwork servants, the Arcane Collegium opens its doors but rarely.

The most common means of entrance are the Steam Gate that leads into Arcane Square (\$44), just across from the Hedgehog tavern, and the Water Gate at the docks, which uses a set of stairs down the embankment to a single pier. The stairs are always slippery and guards and other traps make them impassable to the unwelcome.

Even when the Steam Gate does open, those visitors admitted are most often hired help or someone seeking to offer great treasures in exchange for the Arcane Collegium's wisdom, rather than townfolk with a casual interest. The interior includes the two courtyards and buildings, as well as a black tower, the large gray hall of the summoners, underground labs, and sturdy alchemical bunkers. The buildings have tarnished silver runes inscribed along the eaves, gates, and windows.

The grounds are protected by clockwork traps, gargoyles, and even undead under the control of the masters of the collegiums. Those masters are: Guildmaster Clockwork Mage Orlando (CN male human wizard 15); Master Necromancer Konrad von Eberfeld (NE male human wizard 7); Master Illusionist Ariella Scarpetti (N female human wizard [illusionist] 9); and Master Diviner Rudwin Whitstone (N male dwarf sorcerer 8).

The positions of Master Summoner and Master of Stars and Shadows are currently vacant and were last held by Linnea Thorn and Sariel of Morgau, respectively. Mistress Thorn was recently murdered, and Master Sariel retired to the mountains.

The Collegium itself has roughly two dozen apprentices studying under the masters, including kobolds, tieflings, dwarves, and humans. The staff numbers about 40 and includes alchemists, scribes, maids, cooks, a chamberlain, language tutors, arcane tutors, clockworkers, a priest of the Gear Goddess, a few clockwork scullions, and even a falconer from Siwal named Kaashif al-Rashid.

THE BOOK FETISH

Tucked in an alley corner just around the bend of a curving side street, the Book Fetish bookshop caters to a scholarly and refined crowd. The shop is surprisingly roomy—though clearly made by combining several smaller spaces—and lit by large windows. Bookshelves line the walls, and a few stand free on the floor. Tables and chairs fill the center of the room. A horseshoe-shaped counter with glass-fronted cupboards sits just to the right of the door and always has a pretty young woman behind it. The Fetish keeps slightly irregular hours but usually opens around mid-morning and stays open far into the night. At any given hour in between, visitors can find Arcane Collegium faculty and students browsing the shelves, sampling the books, or arguing over the low tables.

The Fetish sells new and used books, common and rare volumes, and a wide range of ordinary to exotic spell components (usually kept in the back room or behind the counter, with only samples displayed). Many customers see it simply as a cozy shop that often stocks the right items but perhaps charges too much. A closer examination of the stock and the staff, however, begins to reveal the secret of the Fetish's popularity.

The side of the counter furthest from the door, tucked close to a wall, contains libido-affecting herbs; various objects for heightening sexual pleasure, including through pain; and contraceptives. The attractive and polite female staff occasionally fetch special items from beyond the faded scarlet tapestry behind the counter, almost always books on proscribed sexual or religious practices. Eavesdropping among the customers reveals some careful, perhaps coded, conversations. Questioning of the staff reveals nothing, of course, unless the correct phrases are used.

The Book Fetish actually is a quality bookshop, but it also serves as a front for the Temple of Painful Pleasures. Many of the customers (though by no means most) frequent the shop for its large selection of erotic literature and treatises on sexual practices, as well as to pay their 11 gp to obtain the platinum headman's coin that serves as their entry fee to the Temple, located in the alley behind the shop. Most of these customers—and the Watch—have no idea the Temple of Painful Pleasures isn't just a high-end brothel but actually is a real temple dedicated to Marena the Red. They don't suspect the additional gold piece in their entrance fee goes to supporting her proscribed cult, their pleasurable activities serve as rites to the Red Goddess, or the Temple and Book Fetish staff are all her dedicated servants and priests.

THE CHARTERED BROTHERHOOD OF ALCHEMISTS (\$43)

Second only to the Arcane Collegium in its mastery of the mystic arts, the Chartered Brotherhood of Alchemists is obsessed with fire, immortality, healing, and a thousand other things, all generated through potions, salves, and oils of various kinds. The

ADVENTURE HOOKS

- The Dawn Temple contains a single statue of real gold, and it has been stolen. The PCs must recover it from the Cloven Nine.
- The Collegium infrequently requires a stout person of strength and physical prowess to pass through the Door of Knives into the Collegium Library and capture one of the rogue books that has escaped its chain. These animated objects have metal covers, fly, and are magical enough that spells alone do not return them to the shelves.
- One of the clockwork servants at the Collegium has gone missing, and it might have taken many secrets with it. The Collegium fears Sikkim, Harpesh, or Osmanli mages took this servant and are questioning its perfect memory for every scrap of arcane lore it has ever overheard.



Brotherhood is very closely entwined with the city's merchants, as it requires a constant supply of sulfur, quicksilver, phoenix feathers, ivory, amber, dragon's blood, and many other exotic materials. It also works closely with the City Watch and the Order of Griffon Knights to create weapons, poisons, and soporifics.

The Chartered Brotherhood is dominated by humans and has no kobold members. It works in a series of stone bunkers near the river, in chambers constructed with stone runnels to carry failed experiments directly out into the water.

THE HEDGEHOG (§39)

This is the unofficial tavern of the Arcane Collegium, as it stands just outside the Collegium's grounds on Arcane Square (§44) (which is, of course, a trapezoid, as any student points out with a sniff to the less geometrically inclined). Magic keeps the Hedgehog clean and unseen servants constitute the entire wait staff.

Its owner, a retired mage named Radomir Schlenk, seems to have been cast out of the Collegium long ago. Since that time, he has befriended many of the apprentices and even some of the masters, but his crime was diabolism, and he has not been forgiven.

THE TEMPLE OF CELESTIAL DAWN (DAWN TEMPLE) (§41)

Sometimes called the Moon Temple, this edifice to Lada, the Golden Goddess, is built from a pink stone that seems to glow in early morning light. This temple's priests use their healing power on any who ask, not just those who pay, making this a very popular place.

Each morning, the line of petitioners stretches along the street leading to the temple. As soon as dawn breaks, the temple doors open, and the sick and injured proceed into the heady aroma of incense and beeswax candles for cures or—at the very least—painkilling medicaments.

The temple's interior lives up to the goddess's name, as gold covers all its statues and most of its pillars. Some stories claim the statues are solid gold, but other rumors hold that most of the golden statues are illusions, made of nothing more than simple stone or wood.

The temple is considered a holy site in Zobeck, as the goddess's avatar appeared here on several occasions in the past, and that is one of the reasons the farmers favor it.

THE TEMPLE OF PAINFUL PLEASURES

Officially a brothel, this secret temple of Marena lies in the alley behind the Book Fetish, and both businesses are connected to the same priestess of Marena, Nariss Larigorn (see “Nariss Larigorn,” pg. 101).

The entrance to the temple is a set of 10-foot-wide stairs leading down 20 feet to double doors. A blond, brawny Northman in a breastplate opens a door to any knocks and holds out his hand. The entrance fee he expects is the platinum headman coin, axe facing up, available only from the right people for the right price, and usually only in the Book Fetish. If he receives anything else, the guard accepts it and closes the door, not allowing entrance.

The entrance leads directly to a disrobing room and then into the sanctuary proper, where the temple’s guests and acolyte whores engage in pleasurable activities while Nariss Larigorn, and often the bard Jayzel, watch from a rotating dais. Patrons may also purchase torture sessions as desired. (See “Flesh Fails” in *Streets of Zobeck*, pg. 97.)

VIGILANT BROTHERHOOD OF SCRIBES (\$40)

The Vigilant Brotherhood is a place of careful thought, where every word set down must be checked and corrected. Its members serve not only as the keepers of memory and history, but also as the city’s unofficial accountants, making the guild enormously powerful. Scribes report earnings, losses, and taxes to the Lord Mayor through his Praetorian Council. They copy out all reports from visiting merchants, compile information from every visitor, and notate every bill of lading and sale.

The Vigilant Scribes serve as part of Zobeck’s secret police. They know the questionable folks to whom citizens write, what people sell to the pawnbrokers and fences in the Docks, and what neighbors really think about one another. And yet they are the most modest of men, with ink-stained fingers, close-cropped hair, and shoulders hunched from long hours at a writing desk or a standing desk.

WINTER’S KISS, EMBASSY OF THE SHADOW FEY

Winter’s Kiss can currently be found at the court called Alchemist’s Folly, in Zobeck’s Collegium District. His Excellency, the Winter Court Ambassador-In-Extraordinary of the Shadow Realm, Glaninin Thelamandrine, moved Winter’s Kiss here after he grew bored with its previous location in the Temple of Volund—or more specifically, in the shrine of Ninkash. Winter’s Kiss remained undetected for many long decades, but is now clearly visible to the public . . . even if it occasionally drifts a few streets up or down.

The shadow fey ambassador has invited most of the gentlefolk of Zobeck (but notably, no priests of Lada or Khors) to dine and discuss matters of interest, especially

as pertains to the looming succession to the west in the Grand Duchy, and also with respect to forming a wider alliance against the Dragon Empire to the southeast. So far, Zobeck’s councilors and military leaders have not decided on any such alliance, but the shadow fey are known for deep and fathomless patience.

The fey recently gifted a set of black and silver speckled griffons to the city’s Griffon Knights. The animals are smaller than the usual breed found in the Ironcrags, but they are swift on the wing and quick to learn battle commands and their rider’s wishes.

THE CITADEL (\$50)

Rising above the northern section of the city, the Citadel defends the river entrance from upstream threats, but it also houses the Order of Griffon Knights. This group of scouts, arcanists, and daredevils fly patrols against centaurs and other bandits throughout the Margreve and serve as the city’s eyes and ears in wartime. Their speckled griffons rarely number more than five or six, each lovingly cared for by a staff of grooms and trainers.

As befits his rank as Field Marshall of the Free Army, General Jorun Haclav (LN male human fighter 2/ cleric 6 [Perun]) lives and trains in the Citadel. In time of war, he commands most of the city and can even dictate to the Council and (most) guilds. In times of peace, the Citadel prepares for the next assault against the city’s freedoms and strives to expand Zobeck’s influence into the wilder territories of the North.

TEMPLE OF PAINFUL PLEASURES RULES

- You may not enter the temple with weapons other than whips.
- You may only enter the temple clad in a robe or entirely nude. Doing otherwise dishonors Marena.
- 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.
- Everyone else in the sanctuary is a guest, and any activities you seek with them must be negotiated and mutually agreed upon.
- There is no fighting in the temple.
- DO NOT interfere with the other guests’ pleasure.
- If you kill or attempt to kill an acolyte or guest, you will be sacrificed to Marena.



ADVENTURE HOOKS

- A centaur asks the PCs to help heal a disease that has struck down many herds lately. The ailment is strangely resistant to magical healing and might not be a true disease at all. Its cure requires special knowledge from the Temple of the Dawn, which leads the PCs to the Smolten Hills south of the city to recover something buried deep beneath a stone circle.
- A Kariv fortuneteller offers to tell a PC his future, in particular the fate of his friends and family and the death of one of them. If the PC pays, he witnesses a lot of spectacle and very little fortunetelling. If the PC refuses, the fortuneteller secretly curses him.
- The great Trade Fair is in full swing, with items magical and mundane available to those with the gold to pay. Among the many stalls are a group of kobold pickpockets, dwarven duelists looking for a fight, and a priest of the Sun God who seeks new recruits to "root out evil everywhere." A cartographer offers to sell a map to the legendary Tomb of St. Helba, patroness of thieves, and the kobolds, dwarves, and priest alike seek to get their hands on the map.

Haclav and his officers frequently consult with all the major players of the city, masters and journeymen of the Arcane Collegium, Griffon Knights, guildmasters, and even crab diviners when called for.

Outside wartime, the Citadel answers more to the scarred but outrageously glamorous Lady Fenyll Marack (LE female human rogue 12). She is feared for her cutting remarks and her powers as Praetor of the Blue House, mistress of the secret police and any malcontents who can be convinced to serve the city's greater good.

Lady Fenyll comes from a long line of successful merchants, is profoundly wealthy, and drives a hard bargain with everyone. A widow and a survivor, she is the paranoid mind that helps keep Zobeck free; Sir Jorun's brilliance in matters of strategy and tactics protects the city when her diplomacy, sabotage, and misdirection fail.

CITADEL LOCATIONS

As a military district, the Citadel is closely watched and heavily patrolled. Visitors may be asked their purpose in visiting the area if they loiter or act suspiciously.

THE KING'S HEAD (\$53)

From the outside, this building's heavy slate roof and half-timbered walls set on a field-stone foundation makes it look like just one of the city's many taverns. The sign over the door shows a golden crown and the white-haired head of a bearded man, resembling the last Stross to rule before the Revolt. The first thing that sets the King's Head apart from other such establishments is that it is notoriously difficult to get in. Peppercorn, a trollwife and the inn's bouncer, guards the door during business hours. She hates strangers and makes entry difficult (see "Peppercorn, Bodyguard of the Mouse King," pg. 104).

Once inside, the place is warm and smells good. Brewmistress Hazel and Chef Jako keep an excellent beer and wine cellar and serve first-rate food (blood pudding is a specialty, as is a stinky cheese made onsite). Tymon, the resident bard (see "Tymon, the King's Bard," pg. 112), is very talented but snide and easy to anger; his music is clearly magical but also haunted and even dissonant. Soldiers, especially hussars, seem to form a large part of the clientele, and the place even has a small dog-door leading into the common room, which the staff calls "the King's Door."

The King's Head serves as the Mouse King's headquarters.

THE WHITE ROSE (\$54)

A knightly tavern for the paladins and priests of the Sun God and the War God, the White Rose is not to everyone's tastes. Shrines and statues to the patron gods and various saints decorate the walls. Bouts of combat occur each night, and prayer services are held at dawn and noon. Candles and incense are available for a modest sum, as are cantors who intone the verses of the Sun God's mass and the War God's liturgy for a fee of 200 sp per hour. A number of merchants who are not especially devout use this service when negotiating particularly delicate or secret contracts.

THE PASTURES

This small section of lush green ground on the northern side of the River Argent is reserved for shepherds to keep their flocks, cowherds to ready cattle for slaughter, and hostlers to graze the horses of the wealthy. The fields are also the site of the annual Spring Trade Fair, when all the far-flung partners of Zobeck's merchant houses bring their best wares to begin the trading season.

Kariv horse traders in their caravans, the dark-skinned merchants of Siwal and Harkesh, the flying cities of Sikkim, dwarven clans from the Ironcrag, and the traders dealing in pale amber and fine wood of Morgau and Doresh all gather for two weeks of

often-frenzied business on the green pastureland. During the winter and autumn, the pastures commonly host some herds of Rothenian centaurs. Their tents stay until the first blossoms appear in the spring, when they return to their wanderings.

In high summer, the pasturage is used for haying and boarding the horses of the Zobeck Hussars, who often perform maneuvers here. Experts with lance and sword, they patrol the roads that carry goods to the Crossroads City. Most people are quite happy to give them prime pasturage for part of the year.

JUST OUTSIDE THE CITY

Several areas of great importance to Zobeck, and a few steeped in mysteries, lie just outside the walls of the Free City.

CASTLE SHADOWCRAG

Once the home of House Stross (and called Castle Stross at that time), this black stone ruin is lightly inhabited by dour dwarves and a few human holdouts. The village below burned the same night Zobeck's rebels hung the men, women, and children of House Stross from the battlements. Ever since, the place has had an evil reputation. The castle sits a day's ride north of the Oros Bridge. The Free Army maintained a presence here for some years but abandoned it as unexplained casualties mounted. Most consider the ruin haunted by fey and dark memories.

CASTLE REMMAUER

Located south and east of the city, Remmauer is a well-garrisoned castle that overlooks the last pass into the river valley and southern vineyards toward the Magdar Kingdom and the plains of the Rothenian centaurs. It is primarily known for its hussars, though its commander is invariably from the Order of Griffon Knights.

OROS BRIDGE

The Oros Bridge is the main connection to the Margreve and the North and a required crossing for any horse or mule train going to Niemheim, Morgau, Krakova, and Trollheim. The Zobeck Hussars guard the bridge, the furthest northern garrison of the Free City, although the city claims the whole of the Margreve as its territory.

OUTLYING VILLAGES

More than a dozen villages of shepherds, dairy farmers, charcoal burners, and peasants dot the countryside around Zobeck and are counted among its lands. These include Villendorf, Riverbend, Kuburg, Ostic, and Eulendorf.

STEFANSTOR

This small keep (little more than a gatehouse on a steep mountain track) is the easternmost extent of the Free City's lands. It guards a road leading up into the Brom Plateau of Morgau and Doresh.

GRIFFON TOWERS & THE MARGREVE FOREST

Long the private property of House Stross, the Margreve Forest retains a certain hushed atmosphere of wild decay and noble privilege. Travelers go quietly through the deepest woods, seeking to avoid throat-slitting bandits, howling dire wolves, and even kobolds bitterly defending their secret mines.

At the same time, the untamed regions of the Margreve call to Zobeckers' lust for wealth. The forest provides the timber that builds its barges, fuels its smithies, and braces its silver mines. The noise of kobold miners, timber-cutters, and merchants rumbling along the Great Northern Road grows each year. Silence returns only in winter. The road brings goods from cities of the Red Queen, the undead princes of Morgau and Doresh, and the Bemmean Magocracy to the banks of the Argent. Acting as the connection between this route and the river makes Zobeck half its fortune as a trade center. Naturally, castles and towers defend the road.

The most famous of these are the dozen Griffon Towers. Eight of them stand on the road itself while the others guard hunting lodges, mines, or powerful wellsprings of magic. Most people assume they got their name from the griffon blazons carved in their walls, but that was merely the mark of the Stross border guards.

House Stross built the towers for its griffon riders, an elite company of couriers and shock cavalry, and each served as stables, roosts, and shelters for the animals and their riders. The parsimonious council of the Free City does not pay to maintain these outposts any longer and keeps its own Griffon Knights closer to home.

Now the Margreve griffons run wild, and they come in both black and speckled varieties. Knowing the difference is important. The black griffons are more aggressive and very fond of horseflesh; some claim they are fey steeds. The speckled ones are shy, tamable, and can serve as animal companions to suitable heroes.

GRIFFONS FOR ADVENTURERS

With griffon eggs for the taking, adventurers often wander into the Margreve to make their fortune. These expeditions rarely end well. In the vast forest, landmarks attract attention, so the towers are always inhabited by men or monsters. The towers are more than 50 feet tall and half that wide. Most have no easy way up, their wooden staircases long since destroyed.

The griffons themselves are careful about who or what may approach a tower during nesting season. Many merchants who travel the Great Northern Road refuse to travel there in spring, when griffon attacks are common. Pikes are the preferred weapons to keep the creatures at bay but difficult to use properly in the dense confines of the forest.

TOWER ENCOUNTERS

- An abandoned tower contains a treasure cache. Unfortunately, centaur bandits have discovered this particular tower and claimed its goods for themselves. Their leader, Radu Voinod, is using the money to buy kegs of ale from the kobold miners near Shadowcrag to reward his followers. If the party takes some of the gold, the centaurs have excellent tracking and ambushing skills and will try to cut off their escape at several points in the forest.
- Though the forest is dangerous, a few young, rich, and stupid sons of Zobeck merchant houses always try to prove themselves by hunting Margreve deer, boar, or the fabled White Hart. They usually hire a ranger, barbarian, or druid as a guide. Once the young hunters set out, they make a mess of things

and might lose a horse to a boar attack. In the worst case, shadow fey might lead the hunting party astray, as they resent this poaching. The moment of truth comes when arrows shot to kill a deer are returned with interest.

- Stories tell of a hag of the greenwood who helps travelers caught in rainstorms or stuck in mires of the road's wetter sections. This help usually involves bringing them to her modest hut and feeding them a hot meal, while pleading for help against the "kobold bandits" who plague her life as an herbalist. In fact, she is quite familiar with monkshood, hemlock, and other poisons and usually attempts to kill one or more of her guests during the night.



GUILDS, GANGS, & GUARDIANS

A man in a red mask looked out his window into the night sky. He gazed at the moon—its pale face and its star-scarred surface. All knew the name and face of the moon, but none could hurt it. A tear rolled down his cheek, and his gloved hand instinctively reached up to whisk it away, but his fingers touched only the cold porcelain of his mask. He lowered his hand, now a clenched fist, and took a long, ragged breath.

His reverie was broken by a knock at his door. “Enter,” he barked. In the entryway was a one-eyed tiefling, his lieutenant, Jhoram. He was draped in the scarlet cloak of his gang.


“Red Mask,” Jhoram said, holding a sheathed blade hilt-first to his commander. “Our boys on the street found the wagon. It’s moving south past the Collegium. All of the portents are right. We’re ready.”

“Excellent,” said Red Mask. He stepped forward and grabbed the offered blade by the hilt and drew it in a single flourish. “Muster the Redcloaks. Tonight, the streets will run gold with coin . . . or red with blood!”

GUILDS AND MASTERS

Each of Zobeck’s dozens of guilds forms its own world, filled with princes and paupers, and each organization is powerful in its narrow sphere. Most important for the city, the guilds make things, from the mundane weapons and armor of the Fraternal Order of Arms and Armory (§22) to the magical potions and scrolls of the Arcane Collegium (technically a guild as well as a teaching institution).

From the lowest-ranking apprentice to the most powerful Consul, the guilds define the rhythm of daily



life—brewing beer, making clockwork devices, mining, weaving, and plotting against their rivals in the other great trade cities from Siwal to Trollheim.

APPRENTICES AND MASTERS

There are two types of apprenticeship in Zobeck: one easy and short, the other long, difficult, and sometimes lethal. The easy apprenticeship is the paid, or sponsored, apprenticeship, where a sum of no less than 500 gp is paid for a guild master to teach his trade in three years to an apprentice of any age. For some guilds (alchemy and steamwork, for example), the sum paid can easily reach 10,000 gp. The apprentice must swear to obey his master and preserve the guild's secrets from outsiders. In some brotherhoods (notably alchemy and the Collegium) these oaths are magically and alchemically enforced.

The more difficult apprenticeship is unpaid and essentially a form of indentured servitude. The guild master agrees to teach a trade to a child as young as eight or nine who shows some promise. The apprenticeship typically lasts for at least five years and sometimes longer (up to eight years in the Steamwork's Guild and the Arcane Collegium). If the apprentice is obedient and does good work, he may become a journeyman by passing a test. The form of the test depends on the guild but might involve questions, bribes, demonstrations of skill, or simply affirming an oath and paying a tithe of earnings.

A journeyman may accept guild work and commissions in the city and his guild considers him a full member in everything but leadership. Once a journeyman has created a masterwork (a process judged by a council of existing masters), he becomes a master with full guild membership, including voting privileges, the right to establish a workshop of his own under guild auspices, and the right to take on apprentices.

THE GREAT SHIP OF THE DESERT

The guilds of Zobeck have long envied the sandships of Siwal and the Flying Cities of Sikkim, both of which give those southerly lands powerful advantages in trade and war. To counteract those advantages, the Steamworkers, Geargrinders, Scribes, Cartographers, and Alchemists banded together and, two years ago, launched an enormous "landship" fueled by alchemy. The vessel could travel over both land and wave and—carrying a cargo of valuable metals, constructs, glass, and a group of explorers and vigilant scribes—set sail along the Great Southern Road to explore and unlock new lands for trade or adventure.

The ship has not been heard from since. The guilds involved wonder what might have happened to it.

ZOBECK'S MOST POWERFUL GUILDS

Zobeck's eight most powerful or influential guilds are the Bargeman's Fellowship at the Docks (\$61), the Geargrinder's Guild (\$2) and the Steamworker's Union (\$1) in the Gear District; the Vigilant Brotherhood of the Scribes (\$61) and the Chartered Brotherhood of Alchemists (\$43) in the Collegium District; the Brewer's Sisterhood in the Market District (\$12); the Spyglass and Cartographer's Guild (\$35) in Lower Zobeck; and the Honorable Order of Weavers (\$18) in the Citadel District. Information on each can be found in its associated district.

GUILD NAMES

Ancient and Honorable Order of Jewelers (\$19)
The Bargeman's Fellowship (\$61)
The Brewer's Sisterhood (also known as Kettle and Mash) (\$12)
Free Fellowship of the Arcane Collegium (\$42)
Carpenter's Brotherhood (\$20)
Chartered Brotherhood of Alchemists (\$43)
Cooper's Union (\$21)
Foundryman's Guild (smelting, bars, and wire) (\$3)
Fraternal Order of Arms and Armory (\$22)
Geargrinder's Guild (\$2)
Glassblower's Guild (\$4)
Honorable Order of Tanners and Leatherworkers (\$23)
Honorable Order of Weavers (\$18)
Lanternmakers and Tinker's Guild (\$16)
Limner's Guild (\$17)
Miner's Brotherhood (\$36)
Ragpicker's Guild (\$37)
Ropemaker's Guild
Shipwrights and Chandler's Guild (\$62)
Solderers and Brazier's Guild (\$6)
Spyglass and Cartographer's Guild (\$35)
Steamworker's Union (\$1)
Stevedore's Brotherhood (\$63)
Stonemason's Guild (\$13)
The Vigilant Brotherhood of Scribes (\$40)
The Vintner's Guild (\$15)
Wainwright's Guild (\$14)

GANGS OF ZOBECK

The constant commerce of even a modest river city like Zobeck calls to certain men as irresistibly as a siren's song. All manner of thieves, rogues, smugglers, and bandits prowl the shadows of the town and prey on barge traffic, baggage trains, and the fat purses of fatter merchants. The constant quest to prosper from

someone else's labor, especially in such a (literally) cutthroat environment, leads to energetic and creative thieves of all stripes. Indeed, to convert the cacophony of commerce into the clink of hard coin, a few will even barter their souls.

The underworld of Zobeck is a shifting place of mysterious masters, dubious alliances, and hidden secrets. Major players range from the mystic to the mundane to the diabolic. Little is as it appears, and everything changes rapidly.

Once, the formally recognized Spyglass Guild worked hand-in-paw with the more secretive and widespread forces of the ancient Mouse King. Recently, however, a hidden rival has seized control of the Spyglass Guild and uses his new power to carve out an underground empire. A mysterious death has shaken the Cloven Nine, sending these dilettante diabolists running and breaking up their ring of thieves. And lurking behind it all, the mysterious smuggler named the Red Mask deals with anyone able to pay his exorbitant (and occasionally unorthodox) fees.

In addition to the major players, many smaller gangs, guilds, and freelancers operate in the gaps and go largely unnoticed. Each faction strives to seize control of the fluid situation and ensure that every coin that changes hands in the Free City is clipped or shaved ever so slightly.

Welcome to the thieves' world of Zobeck. May you survive the experience.

THE SPYGLASS GUILD

Leader: Ersebet Cemilla (N female human rogue 12)

Lieutenant: Grigory Kaldozh (NG male human cleric fighter 8)

Members: 21 human, 3 gearforged, 3 dwarves

Suspected Headquarters: The Cartographer's Guildhall, the Green Goat Tavern near the Market District

Activities: Pickpocketing, blackmail, forgery, tax evasion, and spying

Symbol: A scroll case

Alignment: Neutral evil

The men, gearforged, and dwarves of the Spyglass Guild are the city's spies. The city tolerates its quasi-legal operations because the guild reports everything it learns to the Praetors, who pass it on to the Lord Mayor and the Watch. The guild remains a gray organization, however, made up of individuals of dubious backgrounds and morals whose human members have a history of corruption from outside influences—from accepting bribes to acting as double agents for various cults and even the Arcane Collegium.

The Spyglass Guild is an open secret, and its leader, the scarred and embattled Ersebet Cemilla (N female human rogue 12), struggles in a web of treachery that she no longer controls. The Spyglass Guild's failings in recent years have allowed several embarrassing slips that caught the rulers of the city flat-footed, including the changes in the court of the Moonlit King, the zealotry among the followers of the Red Goddess, and even the ghoulish stirrings within the subterranean fiefdoms loyal to Morgau and Doresh.

The city responded first by recruiting more heavily among the best-connected informers and younger sons of merchant princes, who easily gather information from well outside the city walls. They altered the patrol patterns of scouts and griffon riders along the roads and rivers, and they changed the focus of what their agents look for in the field.

The second response was to assign the Steamworker's Guild and the Arcane Collegium to build three incorruptible gearforged spies. These mechanical agents might seem entirely too obvious to gather information, but in practice, they blend in with the city's other mechanical servants. Their powerful hearing gives them perception beyond any human or dwarf; one of the apprentices who built them claims they can hear a dozen conversations at once, both through walls and several streets away. If true, this powerful eavesdropping tool gives the guild a tremendous advantage. Even if it's mere fabrication, the story itself seems to have made plotters more cautious, and thieves have curtailed their most outrageous excesses. If it is just a wild tale, perhaps Ersebet is not so overwhelmed as she appears.

Secrets: Ersebet Cemilla has fought magic, steel, and treachery with equal daring, cunning, and bravery for years. A few years ago, though, she fell under the magical domination of a potent enemy who trapped Cemilla within her own body. Her harsh voice still carries the note of command, and her followers continue to respect her, but they fear that something is terribly wrong.

Her break with the Mouse King is commonly known within her organization. No one likes it much, but no one wants to challenge her about it just yet. Her scarred arms are the souvenirs of many knife fights in her youth, struggling among the lesser rings, and she is still a ruthless hand with a blade. She is known to use poison, which keeps her lieutenants nervous every time she proposes some new madness and asks them to drink a toast.

Ersebet's chief lieutenant and lover, Grigory Kaldozh (NG male human fighter 8), knows for certain that the woman sharing his bed is not herself, but he cannot figure out what is going on. He is desperate to discover the truth.

THE MOUSE KINGDOM

Leader: Myzi the First, the Mouse King (N male wererat fighter 11)

Lieutenant: Yiri Tepeck (NE male human, ranger 3/ fighter 3/rogue 3)

Members: 32 humans, 15 wererats, 13 river halflings, countless rodents

Suspected Headquarters: King's Head tavern, Sixes and Sevens gambling hall

Activities: River smuggling, gambling, burglary, snatch thievery

Symbol: A crown

Alignment: Neutral

The Mouse King has ruled in Zobeck as long as the city has stood. His servants include halflings, humans, and various rats, mice, and more dangerous rodents; supposedly, every rat and mouse in the city obeys him.

Anyone refusing to give the Mouse King his due supposedly dies a death of ten thousand bites as the Mouse King's servants devour the fool. This might be purely a gruesome story meant to scare newcomers to the city's thieves' dens, but the old-timers and most of the dockworkers swear it's true. Of course, the tale becomes more graphic, and their protestations of its truth louder, as their audience buys more drinks.

The Mouse King, they say, knows everything. The city's rats whisper to him all that happens in Zobeck. They even know when a river barge is about to arrive, so they can come to the wharves to meet it. This may be only rumors and rattish propaganda, but many otherwise jaded people take great precautions to avoid speaking in the presence of a rat.

Few beyond his servants have seen the Mouse King himself. Some describe him as a halfling wererat that rarely takes humanoid form. Some believe he is a ratwere who takes human form only when it suits him. Some believe him merely the figurehead for a group mind resulting from the presence of so many escaped familiars near the Arcane Collegium.

Whatever the truth, the former Mouse King (Theodore XII) ran the city's underworld in partnership with Ersebet Cemilla until 14 years ago. While the servants of the new king (Myzi I) still take coin purses and snatch jewels, his funds mainly come from smuggling and the gambling hall called Sixes and Sevens between the Gullet and King's Head Tavern. However, the break with the Spyglass Guild has reduced the Mouse King's influence, and his rodent minions now swarm everywhere, seeking to regain that power.

Secrets: The truth about the Mouse King is he wants Zobeck to prosper, and he is almost as rich as the Red Mask. At the same time, they are normally very short-lived; rare indeed is the Mouse King who

lives more than five years (the lifespan of a venerable rat). Myzi has survived far longer than expected, and rumors have begun to spread that he has drawn on magic to sustain his unnatural youth. Regardless of an individual's longevity, the post itself is immortal. Each succession to the throne comes from the Council of Rats, held after the reigning king's death. The successor gains all the memories and many of the skills and powers of the previous king. For this reason, the king is essentially un-killable, and he works to keep merchants fat and to keep the city free of foreign control. No one loves him, and only a few individuals of power swear him fealty, but the Mouse King is one of Zobeck's greatest allies.

The current Mouse King is Myzi the First (see "Myzi the First, His Majesty the Mouse King," pg. 110), and he favors red puffed shirts, ash-white hair with a thick moustache, and light weapons such as rapiers while in human form. In mouse form, he is always perfectly groomed, two feet tall, and with dark-streaked pale fur. In humanoid form, he is short as a river halfling, though it is unclear if this is due to his youth or whether he is truly a halfling. Rumor has it the king has a brother enchanted by the Arcane Collegium and a sister who has taken service there as a familiar. Certainly, he came from a lucky litter.

When prepared for an audience, he always wears a gray frock coat with golden buttons, keeps his whiskers long and white, and wears a golden crown carved with images of nuts, grains, cheese, and a strange spiral symbol. He usually holds court in a tiny chamber that only Small creatures can move in without squeezing below the low ceiling. The King willingly hears petitioners out (though he prefers them to address him as "Your Majesty," and he uses the royal "we") and rules generously. His followers are considerably less forgiving. The Mouse King always has numerous followers around, either gray or brown rats or (as humans) green-jacketed soldiers with exceptionally fine white or brown moustaches.

The Mouse King's current right hand man is Yiri Tepeck, a human horse thief from the Rothenian plains who is known to toss entire ale kegs during a brawl. He has already seen two kings come and go and understands rattish policies and magics well enough to know he would rather serve them than join them—he has rejected several offers of "the Moon Gift," as some wererats call their lycanthropy. He is honest, as long as he is well fed, and his rolls of fat conceal a lot of muscle.

One of the Mouse King's more dangerous followers, Tymon the wererat bard (see "Tymon, the King's Bard," pg. 112) has a sharp temper, quickly takes offense, and often spitefully casts a disguised *suggestion* within his music. Other servants merely carry poisoned daggers and can enter any house within the city with relative ease.

THE REDCLOAKS

Leader: the Red Mask (LE male unknown race/class/levels)

Lieutenant: Jhoram, the Money Changer (LE male tiefling wizard 9)

Members: 22 humans, 88 kobolds

Suspected Headquarters: The Wheatsheaf tavern, the Greymark Warehouse

Activities: Diabolic cult, kidnapping for ransom, smuggling, drugs, counterfeiting, silver caravan ambushes

Symbol: Red feather

Alignment: Lawful evil

Perhaps the least-understood group of gangsters and thugs in Zobeck are the followers of the Red Mask, commonly called the Redcloaks. They work primarily by night, and everyone knows they include both humans and kobolds in their ranks.

Most members of the City Watch assume the Redcloaks are a kobold gang from the Ghetto. Indeed, the Red Mask's lowest (and yet, perversely, most loyal) minions are kobolds, to whom the master has promised a much greater role in rulership someday.

Better still, he offers immediate wealth to his servants. Enough gold and silver flows from his hands that his kobolds need no longer toil in the silver mines but can build their own mansions and rule over much more than a small city ghetto.

Much less widely known, for obvious reasons, is the Redcloaks use the profits from smuggling and banditry to fuel their deeper purpose of expanding the cult of Mammon (see "Mammon," pg. 86 and the *Tome of Beasts*), the arch-devil of wealth and greed. This group of gangsters has a huge bankroll with enough money to hire all the mercenaries, assassins, alchemists, forgers, and other specialists they require.

Some even say shape-shifters, warlocks-for-hire, and priestesses of the Red Goddess serve the Redcloaks, but this may be nothing more than bluster and rumormongering. It is certainly a topic Jayzel the bard, the mistress of information brokering (see "Jayzel," pg. 98), will not delve into for any amount of money.

The Redcloak guards are crossbow-wielding kobolds, geargrinders, trapspringers, and trainers of the enormous owls beloved by kobold messengers and scouts. These kobolds work to scout out and organize likely ambushes of silver caravans from the mines in the Margreve Forest, to gather up human and centaur bandits to rob those caravans, and to deliver the plunder to the Red Mask's private storehouses. Other creatures like devils and dark priests sometimes take part in the ambushes. These creatures presumably take their orders from the Red Mask himself.

Secrets: Red Mask's bankroller is Lord Greymark Volstaff. Once Red Mask himself, the aging Lord Volstaff has retired from direct criminal activity and now merely supports his gang and secret cult from the shadows. Volstaff's relentless greed has led him to found the cult of Mammon in the city (or rather, to restore the long-dead cult once he gained enough power to ensure political protection).

The new Red Mask is a once-proud man named Minacio Tenebras, a warrior from a small noble family in the Seven Cities. His noble house was destroyed by cultists of Mammon. He lost his family, his wealth, and his beauty—his face was horribly scarred in the fire that destroyed his villa. He swore to destroy the cult of Mammon from the inside out, but as he infiltrated its ranks, he found himself seduced by their luxury and power. He was soon taken under the wing of Greymark Volstaff, one of its senior financiers, and was offered the leadership of the Redcloaks. Now, the



disfigured and wretched Teneba has all but completely lost sight of his quest for justice and has embraced his role as the Red Mask—blade of Mammon. Teneba is an Oathbreaker paladin of unknown strength—but it is possible that he could be redeemed.

THE CLOVEN NINE

Leader: Izachar aka “Eyebite” (LE male tiefling warlock 9/fighter 4)

Members: 9 tiefling warlocks, 27 human Kariv nomads, urchins, and minions

Suspected Headquarters: The Broken Seal, a brothel and tavern

Activities: Slave trade, summoning, secrets, enchantments, curses, prostitution, quiet killings

Symbol: Nine-pointed star

Alignment: All Evil

The Cloven Nine are a group of tiefling warlocks who lead a thuggish cabal of old and entrenched gangsters; most believe this small-but-powerful group to be untouchable. Long ago, the Cloven operated as outcasts in the city, shunned even by other underworld groups, but they grew powerful enough to openly flaunt their devilish heritage. The Cloven Nine deal flesh, secrets, and pacts to those desperate enough to ignore the consequences.

To hire them, rumors claim, one need only draw a drop of blood and call their name. They always make the conditions of their agreements clear, but they rarely name a price up front or specify a time of payment. Whether the death of a



SWAGGER AND BLUFF

Not every encounter with a gang is a fight. The wiser gang leaders try to intimidate visitors into giving them a few coppers as a toll. Some prefer talking their way into a meal and will hint at dark connections with the Cloven Nine or the secrets the Mouse King has told them in exchange for a beer and some food.

Intelligence (Investigation) checks often result in meeting informers from among the street gangs. For many, joining a gang is a matter of survival rather than a calling. In the city's most famous case, the Order of the Undying Sun years ago took in a street urchin gang leader who became the celebrated Sir Ottracz Grivoly, one of the greatest paladins of his age. It is said he always carried a rat's poniard with him, as a reminder of where he came from and a call to humility.

loved one, a portion of the bargainer's soul (including several years off their life), information, servitude, etc., the Cloven collect the fee they want when they want. The Cloven Nine worship Asmodeus and claim direct blood ties to him, though many times removed.

As a coven of warlocks, the Nine are hired by some to cast subtle and horrific curses. They know secrets about everyone of import in town, and their informants, enforcers, and mystique keep much of the city's petty gangs awed and respectful. They hold themselves apart from (and, they believe, well above) the other criminal guilds, and they rarely sully their own hands with criminal activity. That is what lesser gangs are for. The Cloven Nine reserve for themselves magical crimes and the summoning of evil familiars and servant creatures such as dretches and yeth hounds.

The Cloven Nine enjoyed an air of professional and personal invincibility, well founded on their magical prowess and ruthless cruelty. Thus, the recent murder of Akad the Elder, one of their founders, has deeply

shaken the gang at all levels. Where once the Nine maintained regular haunts, they have now disappeared into hiding. The free flow of orders and jobs to subordinates and client gangs has slowed to a trickle of cutouts, magically encrypted notes, and blind drops. They suspect everyone, and large amounts of their time and resources have turned to finding the culprit.

The Cloven Nine's invincibility was always an illusion, of course. They were simply street children who banded together against a hostile world; some took it more seriously than others, but all are re-evaluating their loyalty to a gang—which they joined as a survival mechanism—that is now an unsafe place to be. The murder shattered their image, meaning the Nine may have to forfeit their souls to Asmodeus fairly soon, and they are understandably enraged. They have worked for years to reach this point, and many have made pacts for abnormally long lives to service this earthly ambition. They won't give it all up now.

Some among the Cloven Nine believe they grew soft and overly reliant on their control of the underworld. Many of their minions are little more than bored merchants' sons or posers with a yen to annoy their parents with tattoos, horned masks, and body paint, but little taste for real violence. They never expected anyone to walk in unannounced and just kill one of their founders, and this brash show of power has them scared. The founders, however, are old, evil, and very dangerous. The gang may shrink, but the core that remains will be deadly.

Secrets: The most notable of the Cloven Nine is a tiefling named Izachar, nicknamed "Eyebite." Obese and covered in a fresh sheen of sweat, Izachar's corpulent frame is often found draped in a plush seat in a back room of the Broken Seal. Izachar has two white stag horns growing from his forehead, which he keeps trimmed small.

Izachar has taken to wearing a *scarf of deception* to avoid being easily recognized while he tries to ascertain who murdered Akad. However, the innate magic of his heritage causes the effect to sometimes flicker and shift between his disguises and his true form. He once strolled down the street looking like a pale if bloated human with his tell-tale stag horns quite visible for two or three minutes without realizing it.

Izachar is a master of divination. The past, present, and future hold few secrets for this perpetually bored tiefling. Gossips whisper his love of the poppy blossom is a result of viewing things best left unseen. They say he has even glimpsed the moment of his own death and waits it as serenely as the pipe allows.

Izachar works his magic by casting bones, blood, and intestines into a fire. Questions about a living person usually require blood, while the dead naturally require bones. Seeing the future requires intestines, their

source varying depending on the client and the nature of the questions. As payment, Izachar typically requires clients to gouge out one of their own eyes. Up front.

The only one of the Nine still appearing in public, Izachar furiously wards himself in private against magical detection and calls in every favor he has to locate and avenge himself on Akad the Elder's killer. His continued public presence might be bravado, but he has taken on the role of the Cloven Nine's public face with all the determined cunning of his youth. He has reverted to fighting for the survival of himself and his gang, as it was long ago, and he has not reached his present age and position without knowing how to survive.

LESSER GANGS

Outside the five major powers in the city, who influence most of the underworld, freelance thieves, gamblers, whores, and thugs form their own cliques, alliances, and small-time gangs. One might even add some of the more unruly kobold mining gangs into this category.

PAINFUL PLEASURES

Sometimes wealthy Zobeckers do not desire the soft hand of a genteel woman or fascinating conversation. Sometimes, they long for the crisp crack of a whip and steaming oils against bare flesh. Others just want to be bound and spanked. Very few courtesans cater to such requests, knowing how easily such things can go wrong. Consequently, such seekers must look longer and harder to satisfy their needs, but satisfy them they can.

Recently, Nariss Larigorn, a cleric of the Red Goddess, set up shop at the Temple of Painful Pleasures (see Chapter 4, pg. 63 and "Flesh Fails" in *Streets of Zobeck*) beneath the Book Fetish in the Collegium District. Her cult—a cult within a cult, really—worships Marena as the goddess of lust and torture, and her temple whores are beyond skilled in the art of torture for pain and pleasure. Their religious affiliation, however, remains a strict secret, as worshipping Marena is forbidden in Zobeck. Most customers consider the name "Temple" a joke or cheeky baiting of moralists.

Nariss welcomes all to experience the love of pain within the Temple's confines—for a price. Her customers include scholars, merchants, and Consuls. So far, the Watch has not interfered with the Temple, considering it just an exclusive brothel with some powerful clientele. If the religious nature of the establishment ever became public, Blue House would come down on the Temple like Volund's hammer, and a lot of important people would suffer a great deal.

For most honest citizens, these lesser gangs are called “rings” or even “clubs” and are to be avoided. A few claim to be affiliated with one of the larger gangs, and some actually are. Many, however, just scrape by and refuse to learn an honest trade, believing riches and fame await, just one big score away. They would rather live bright, quick lives than grind it out in the fields with peasants or at the forge with apprentices.

Their lives are certainly colorful, and only the most successful of these small rings are flashy enough to draw the eye of the larger gangs. Joining one of the big gangs means the small gang will live longer and better, and the ring’s leader might become an important lieutenant in the larger gang. Minor gangs with enough of a reputation to make them worth mentioning currently include Jetty’s Seven, the Wire Cutters, the Ferrydrivers, the Clocktower Divers, Slinger’s Ambush Gang (see “The Fish and the Rose” in *Streets of Zobeck*; Slinger is detailed in “Slinger,” pg. 108), and the all-female Silent Banshees. Within two years, three-fourths of those groups will vanish.

BLUE BARBERS OF WHARF STREET

This group of a dozen blue-haired gnomes arrived some years ago and was met with immediate suspicion from the Praetors and bullying visits from city guards

and hussars. They are, strangely enough, not Niemheim gnomes at all but claim to hail from the Court of Midnight Teeth, a shadow fey court of long standing in the Shadow Realm. Their proficiency with razors, moustache wax, and restorative hair tonics has slowly won them a loyal following among the Griffon Knights and hussars and some of the city’s dwarves. Others mutter that the Blue Barbers are not merely gossips and barbers good with a quip and a tale, but actually serve as smiling spies and assassins for the shadow fey.

THE KARIV

The Kariv people are dark-haired, dark-eyed gypsies who continually seem to come and go from Zobeck in droves. Their mustachioed men have dangerous eyes, while their women wear their hair in intricate braids and dance for coins in ways that make softer men blush. The Kariv value horseflesh and horsemanship above just about everything else.

Many Kariv serve the Cloven Nine as low-level thugs, informants, and enforcers. Not all Kariv are in league with the Cloven, but enough are that they have earned the entire people a black name in Zobeck. The Kariv are commonly referred to as “wagon trash,” referring to the colorful wagons they live in and convert into makeshift ghettos in Zobeck’s pastures and docks.

Kariv society is matriarchal, and when the Mothers of the clans issue orders, everyone hops to obey. Many of these honorific Mothers made pacts with members of the Cloven to gain powers of divination or to retain their beauty, and their entire clans are now beholden to them. As a result, many Kariv bear the Cloven Nine’s tattoo of a nine-pointed star on their hands.

Those Kariv not so sworn consider their brethren “fallen,” and much bad blood runs between the two factions. Fortunately for Zobeck, the Kariv prefer to keep their internecine warfare hidden from the eyes of “dechas.”

COURTESANS

The courtesans of Zobeck are not the whores of Harkesh or the crude slatterns of Morgau. Yes, anyone looking for an hour’s diversion can find it on almost any street corner in Lower Zobeck, but these are not courtesans. The courtesans are not simply tradeswomen for hire; they are intriguers who must be won fairly with gifts, wits, and sometimes, with blood.

The courtesans generally work from one of the Red Houses, establishments along the Street of Joy near the Temple of Lada and the Vineyard District, and operate largely by invitation. They open their homes for feasts featuring fine food and dangerous intrigue all accompanied by the finest music sung by castrati



from Valera and played by musicians from Friula. The largest of these houses are the Red Faun and the Lusty Mermaid, though many smaller ones offer much finer pleasures at a much higher price.

The rumors in the street always speak of a courtesan's parties as events of deep debauchery and gluttony and wild excess, and that may be true of some. But a courtesan has no reason to take a drunkard or a dull man into her bed. So generally, she doesn't.

GUARDIANS

The secret of the courtesans is twofold: the merchant families and the sons of the Praetors and Consuls must have something to do that has the least potential to damage them or their families. In the cold calculations of power, fighting over a few worthy companions causes fewer problems than bedding every tavern slut. Young men need prizes to win, and if their elders can guide them in learning what constitutes a worthy mistress at the same time, so much the better.

So the families of import in Zobeck encourage their male scions to find a mistress and keep her as a sign of status and their own virility. The most popular courtesans may have invitations to all the great houses, and may receive callers from bitter mercantile or political rivals. Successful courtesans must juggle multiple suitors and keep them all interested, making these women quite accomplished in intrigue, in politicking, and in the act of love. Such women are worth winning, especially because doing so requires more than money. It requires courage.

PROPER DUELING

A few new courtesans arrive in Zobeck each year, announcing themselves at the Winter Festival or the Green God's Spring Festival. Each year, just as many seem to retire or even marry into wealth, meaning the supply of available, educated, stunningly beautiful courtesans is always smaller than the demand from rich, ambitious, and often hotheaded young men.

So, the men ply their suits with gifts of clockwork birds, scented oils and elaborate silks from Sikkim, or enchanted and numinous pearls from the distant sea. And if that does not clear the field of competition, they sometimes challenge the honor of their rival.

Proper dueling in Zobeck, where a courtesan is the subject of dispute, does not leave the woman uninvolved, as is sometimes the case elsewhere. Instead, she has the right to turn a challenger away.

A courtesan may ask her suitor to decline a duel if she is truly content (or finds the challenger unworthy), or she may ask him to accept duel after duel if she feels her lover neglects her. The man placed in such straights must constantly defend his name. Sooner or later, his luck runs out or he seeks another mistress.

COURTESANS AND CONSULS

The work can be lucrative. Indeed, one woman of Arbonesse found it worth her while to take up a courtesan's fan and silks for more than a century, serving three generations of House Slygass and reportedly amassing enough wealth of her own to buy herself a company of Rothenian hussars and a castle in which to lodge them.

The Consuls of the city are expected to keep a courtesan, and only the kobold Consuls flout this tradition (kobold mating customs are a source of great disinterest to the rest of the city, who Do Not Wish to Know). The Consuls' choices are debated on their merits, and a poor choice or a failure to value a courtesan highly enough can reduce a Consul's standing among his peers.

Female Consuls are, perhaps strangely, expected to acquire a courtier (see below) or a courtesan as well, though some of these are advisors first and lovers second.

COURTIERS OF ZOBECK

Lest one fear the upper-class women of Zobeck simply sit quietly while their husbands and sons wile away the days in the company of (ahem) professional young women, be reassured. They have their own private society, one that (mostly) excludes the men of their class, and features as much ambition, intrigue, and lust as that of the menfolk.

Welcome to the salons of Zobeck.

MATRONS AND HUSBANDS

The salons themselves are a state of mind, a gathering of artistic individuals and their patronesses. While upper class Zobeckian men spend their time gambling, dueling, and drinking in the company of beautiful women of negotiable virtue, the salons instead host poets, artists, and musicians who strive to match in their art the beauty of the matrons and elder daughters who sponsor the gatherings.

At least, that's what the matrons and daughters tell their husbands and fathers.

On the surface, the salons exist to promote culture and the arts. Artists, musicians, and storytellers present new works or recreate popular efforts from previous seasons. A wide variety of arts go on display in the salons, including odes and lyric poetry, sagas, epic poems, paintings, sculpture, portraiture, weapon demonstrations and mock fights, magical crafts, illusions, clockwork, tableaux, speeches, and short plays. For many of the attendants, however, the fine art is secondary to social connections and potential liaisons.

Many young performers, craftsman, and artists have enjoyed the sponsorship or mentoring of an older woman powerful in her guild, business, or family. Though both artist and patroness usually deny it, such arrangements come with a cost if not exactly a price tag. So while no coin changes hands, many artistic courtiers get as involved as the courtesans in a trade of favors for support.

Talent is not a requisite for admission into the cadre of courtiers, though it certainly helps. Many a matron or ambitious daughter appears at these events with one or more young bravos at her side, with a bright young magical tutor, or with a fiery young theologian who wishes to confront a traditional cleric with radical views. The fact that these young men (and the occasional young woman) inspire jealousy from the other patrons is purely coincidental.

THE ARTISTS AND TYPES OF SALONS

Some artists from this ever-changing roster of the talented and handsome appear for a brief season and find a patroness, gain sufficient support to establish themselves in their own craft, or disappear in a flurry of scandal. Some become fixtures in salon society by switching patronesses several times or playing rivals off against each other and spend the seasons cattily analyzing and dissecting the latest crop of talented young things. A rare few even marry into the families that have served as patrons.

The most basic of the three types of salons is the afternoon salon, which runs from early afternoon into early evening. Guests and artists gather in the front visiting rooms of a house, either by specific invitation or as a general invite. Artists and amateurs alike provide several readings, songs, and unveilings of recent work. Herbal infusions are served on chill days and sorbets on warm ones. On larger estates, the salons spill over into garden parties, and in the more civilized rural manors south of the city, they can run late into the night and require the participants stay over. An afternoon salon at a distant manor occasionally morphs quite easily into a house party lasting days.

Aside from the moveable feasts of individual salons, select guilds or individuals host a few permanent salons. Mansions or townhouses whose former owners have passed on without issue make the best venue (the Grand Salon of Zobeck was designated in its previous owner's will for just for this purpose, along with a small endowment to maintain it). Courteous servants become familiar faces—and sometimes players—at these salons, and private chambers are available.

The third type of artistic salon is the legendary Salon of the Night, the time and location of which are supposedly set by precise astrological research, though always after midnight. The attendees always



arrive masked, and patronesses are encouraged to bring their spouses. The fare is considered more daring and outré than at traditional salons, often including exotic flavors or ingredients from places like Morgau or the Margreve. The wine flows freely, secrets fly quickly, rumors run wild, and indiscretions become unavoidable. The most recent Salon of the Night proved particularly scandalous, when one patroness wooed an aged, masked war hero, only to discover that it was her husband.

The salons are the place of gossip and daring and are tolerated by the lords and husbands in the same way ladies and wives tolerate the men's activities; attempts to end one or the other have all failed. However, the art and culture generated by these salons has helped establish Zobeck as an enlightened city, an example to communities leagues away.

THE WINTER COURT'S AMBASSADORS

The delegation from the Council of Zobeck sat stiffly at the banquet amid the alien splendor of Winter's Kiss. Their glass goblets brimmed with a pale silver liquid that smelled like sorrow. A forlorn goat crouched, tied and bleating, at the center of the table.

Across from them, His Excellency Glaninin Thelamandrine, Ambassador-In-Extraordinary of the Winter Court to the Free City of Zobeck, fingered a translucent dagger. His servants, little more than shadows and moonlight, flickered just at the edges of their sight.

Ondli Firedrake, High Priest of Rava and Volund, cleared his throat. "The Free City Council has concerns about the tariffs levied by Her Majesty the Queen of Night and Magic—"

The goat screamed like a child as the ambassador gutted it on the table.

"We taught your ancestors to fear the dark," the ambassador said softly, cutting bloody slabs from the still-quivering beast. "When your world was young and this city not yet a dream, your women left us offerings of milk in hopes that we would pass by. I grow weary of your complaints. Speak not of tariffs and taxes." He paused. "I trust you like your meat rare."

The Queen of Night and Magic and her Winter Court needed no convincing to open trade with the Free City, but they feigned reluctance when first petitioned by Matthias Yronwood to maintain appearances. The Winter Court demanded their first embassy on mortal soil nearly 10 years after trade between the worlds began, and they wanted it in Zobeck.

Zobeck's Council, happy with the influx of trade, acquiesced. Aware of the premium the Winter Court places on protocol and decorum, the city also secured Yronwood a position at the Collegium and placed him in charge of relations with the fey.

He took to the work with vigor. Mere months after Gilgalline of Whisper's End, the first Ambassador-In-Extraordinary to Zobeck, arrived in the Free City, Yronwood ratified the Yronwood-Gilgalline Accord of 4021 A.S. by the fey reckoning. This accord—the first of six—codified the new understanding between humanity and Winter Court fey, delineating in absurd detail the rules governing all interactions between the races.

Gilgalline consulted with none of his kind before committing the shadow fey to the treaty. As ambassador, he spoke for the Queen of Night and Magic; his decisions were hers. It took many meetings to impress upon him that Zobeck, by contrast, could not speak for all mankind.

Once Gilgalline understood, nothing more was said, and trade continued, but within a few years, word trickled into Zobeck that other cities were entertaining requests from the fey to establish a diplomatic presence within their walls.

There were soon as many ambassadors as major cities, from Harkesh to Bemmea.

For the past 24 years, Glaninin Thelamandrine has served as the Winter Court Ambassador-In-Extraordinary to Zobeck. He eschews the traditional sort of embassy, one open to receive guests. Instead, Thelamandrine has established his household—called Winter's Kiss—in a location and manner most decorous for a fey of his station: hidden through glamour and misdirection near the Collegium District (see "Winter's Kiss, Embassy of the Shadow Fey," pg. 63).



GODS, CULTS, & RELICS OF ZOBECK

The barge pilot sighed pointedly and rolled his eyes when he saw his captain pause in front of the small shrine. “Why are you wasting your time at the altar of the lorelei? The last three trips were just like the last three hundred. Nothing’s going to happen.” The captain hesitated, a few silver ducats in his rough fingers. “Nothing happened because I left candles and gear oil and silver for the gods.” His hand hovered over the altar as he considered. “All the gods.”

“Well, they like their gifts, true enough. I left a silver foot charm at Lada’s temple, and now?” He hopped from foot to foot. “Walking with hardly a limp.” He gestured to the small shrine. “But these? Not even a proper goddess.”

“Never hurts to play it safe.” He dropped two coins onto the altar. He still didn’t feel quite right.

“Hah! You want to play it safe, hire a priestess to guard this cargo. I’ve heard the Barge King is loose again, with giants.”

“Giants?” the captain muttered. He dropped the third coin onto the altar and rose. He felt lighter, like the coins had been weighing him down. He smiled.

“Then get off to the temple of Perun.” He chuckled at the pilot’s confused look. “Tell any priest of Perun there’s giants to fight, and he’ll pay us for the chance to knock them into the river!” The captain laughed and walked toward the docks. The gods would watch over them, he was sure of it.

The gods of Zobeck are complicated. Not simply distant power sources for divine magic, they are present and demanding contestants in a game of influence and bragging rights played through the actions of important people. In Zobeck, gods do not simply listen and respond to prayers. They dabble and interfere. Frequently.

In a crossroads city, the gods of Zobeck are sometimes known by two or three names. Dwarves and humans differ in their names for the god of smiths and fire, for example, although they recognize and respect the alternate names. The gods are listed here alphabetically by their most common names, and each has only a brief description. The *Midgard Worldbook* contains more detail on each of the major deities, including domains, favored weapons, symbols, and additional masks—other names and personalities they wear throughout Midgard.

LADA, THE GOLDEN GODDESS

The Golden Goddess of Healing, Love, and Mercy

Everyone loves Lada, although few truly follow her tenants of mercy and forgiveness. A maidenly goddess of the dawn and the day, she is the tireless enemy of Marena, the Red Goddess. Most idols and images depict Lada as meek and mild, but she has a powerfully wrathful side, sometimes called the Bear Maiden, that defends children, the elderly, and the weak. She champions compassion and mercy, though her mercy can sometimes seem harsh, such as granting merciful death to suffering plague victims.

Lada always appears as a young woman with braided black hair and bright green or blue eyes. She wears flowers in every season but winter, and her altars are often fragrant and covered in rose petals.

Lada has many worshipers among the centaurs, the Rothenian elves, and humans. These followers see her take the form of their own species, but they acknowledge that this outer seeming is simply a bridge to her worshipers. Their prayers are similar, and their rites are always held at daybreak.

Lada's holiest sites are on high ground, where the dawn breaks earliest. For this reason, her temples always sit on hills or mountaintops or (in places without high ground) incorporate a large steeple. The main doors always face east.



HIGH PRIESTESS: The current high priestess is Lucca Angeli, a human woman born and raised in Zobeck. She spent her youth adventuring and made her reputation during one of the many sieges of Zobeck, when her steadfastness helped the Griffon Knights repel a dark army of fey.

WHAT LADA DEMANDS: Heal all who ask. Defend lovers from all dangers and trials. Show mercy to those who ask. Lada's followers must make a pilgrimage to the healing school in the south once every seven years.

MARENA, THE RED GODDESS

The Red Goddess of Winter, Lust, Sickness, and Death; the Blood Maiden; Patron Goddess of Morgau and Doresh

Although she has no official temple in the city, Marena is the dark face of Zobeck's fears. All flesh fails, and unbridled lust and rampant plague can destroy any happy life. Her cults flourish in secret, especially in the small surrounding villages when times are hard and in cellars and sanctuaries within the Vineyard District and Lower Zobeck.

Those who see her face—reportedly both beautiful and chilling—and survive are invariably marked with white hair, wine-colored birthmarks, or haunted silver eyes. Most of her followers believe her strict worship grants them power, and her orders include anchorites, flagellants, torturers, and orgiasts. (See "Cults and Heresies of Zobeck," pg. 85, for more information on Marena's followers.)

Marena is very popular north of the River Argent in the Principality of Morgau and Doresh, and she serves as the patron goddess of whores, vampires, ghouls, and the Ghost Knights of Doresh. Indeed, she is worshiped openly both in the Principality and, with somewhat less fervor, in Rothenian lands in her aspect as the Winter Maiden. Some kobolds worship her out of fear or awe, although most kobolds prefer the simple faith of Volund or St. Piran, patron of miners.

HIGH PRIESTESS: Nariss Larigorn, an elven Arbonesse exile who joined the cult of Marena while residing in Morgau, has set up a temple disguised as a brothel in the Collegium District. As worship of Marena is forbidden in Zobeck, her residency could quickly end once anyone realizes the Temple of Painful Pleasures is a temple of Marena. (See Nariss Larigorn in Chapter 7 and "Flesh Fails" in *Streets of Zobeck*.)



WHAT MARENA DEMANDS: The goddess of lust and death is stern but not unrelentingly cruel. She demands her followers kill her foes (especially followers of Lada), and she requires rites of seduction, blood sacrifice, and flagellation. Although her worship is harsh and bitter, she grants strength and magical power far more often than other gods, even to non-clergy. Marena's followers must make a pilgrimage to Morgau if they reach the age of 50.

NINKASH, THE BEER GODDESS

Mother of Beer, Goddess of Merriment, Patron of Brewers and Tavern Keepers, Matron Goddess of the Cantonal Dwarves



Many humans believe all dwarves love ale and customarily consume prodigious amounts of it—at least by human standards—and become incoherent and unable to stand or stay conscious. The dwarves call this last condition “gone,” short for “gone to visit Ninkash.” The matron mother goddess of ale and merriment was a great gift to the dwarves from the Kariv, who brought their goddess with them to the cantons and the Crossroads. Ninkash turned brewing and drinking

from the rarity of Wotan's stern priests toasting the dwarven dead at midwinter to a more frequent and joyful sacrament, though still a serious one. Ninkash embraced the dwarves, and they embraced her.

The public face of Ninkash is an oversized tankard with a golden glow and a simple handle, an ever-full vessel made of steel that floats in midair. To her faithful, she appears as a jovial, buxom dwarf woman clad in simple garments as a tavern maid in ever-shifting colors. She goes barefoot with her clothes unbelted and low-cut. Ninkash always smiles. When displeased, her smile is slight and she shakes her head, and when pleased, she beams and extends her arms to sweep all to her bosom.

Dwarves from Zobeck to the Cantons to the South all revere Ninkash, as do the lower classes of Nuria-Natal and even some in the Mharoti Empire, Khandiria, and Sikkim. She is also widely popular among the Kariv, who sometimes call her simply “Mother Ale.”

HIGH PRIEST/PRIESTESS: Ninkash has a shrine in Zobeck but no official temple, and no one person heads her worship. Her temples blanket the Ironcrag Cantons but lack a central authority even there. In Zobeck, many of the Sisterhood of Brewers serve Ninkash as clerics. Additionally, some master brewers consider themselves the “Blessed of Ninkash,” and carry some clout within the community. (See “New Backgrounds” in Chapter 9).

ALTERNATE LUST DOMAIN

Nariss Larigorn leads a sub-cult within the cult of Marena, one that practices the combined arts of pleasure and torture. Her clerics use the following Lust domain.

ALTERNATE LUST DOMAIN SPELLS

Cleric

Level	Spells
1st	<i>charm person, enhance ability</i>
3rd	<i>heat metal, suggestion</i>
5th	<i>fear, hypnotic pattern</i>
7th	<i>compulsion, polymorph</i>
9th	<i>dominate person, hold monster</i>

Lustful Performance

At 1st level, you gain proficiency in the Performance skill.

Additionally, you may use your raw sexual charisma to create fascination and lust within others. You can use this ability a number of rounds per day equal to your Wisdom modifier + your cleric level. At the start of each round, you must make a Charisma (Performance) check. Each creature of your choice within 30 feet of you that can see you must make a Wisdom saving throw contested by the result of your Charisma (Performance)

check. On a failure, the creature is charmed by you for the duration of your performance.

Channel Divinity: Aura of Awe

Starting at 6th level, you can use your Channel Divinity to enthrall creatures with either your sheer beauty or your sultry voice. As an action, you project a 60-foot-radius aura centered on you by speaking (affecting creatures that can hear you within the radius) or by posing (affecting creatures that can see you within the radius). This aura lasts for a number of rounds equal to your cleric level. Each creature affected by this aura must make a Wisdom saving throw; any creature that cannot be charmed automatically succeeds on this save. On a failure, a creature has disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks made to perceive any creature other than you until the spell ends or until the target can no longer appropriately perceive you. On a success, a creature is immune to this aura for 24 hours.

This effect ends on a creature if it leaves the aura, but it does not gain immunity to this aura.

WHAT THE GODDESS DEMANDS: All must procure or make a tankard of their own and use it to drink ale every day. Learn to brew ale before you marry. Offerings of ale are always accepted at her altars. Her clergy must learn the craft of brewing and often alchemy as well. A dwarf is not a true dwarf unless that dwarf faces his fears, wants, and delights. The ales of Ninkash help worshippers set aside the armors of civility, reserve, and secrecy for a time, to let them see more clearly. While ordinary ale is a road to truth, the holy ale of Ninkash is the road to the Truth.

PERUN, LORD OF LIGHTNING (MAVROS PERUN)

God of Lightning and War

Superficially, Perun is perhaps the simplest of gods—a creature of destruction, strength, and war. He has a deeper, stranger side, however, of healing and rebirth. His mysteries involve not just death and glory but also resurrection and a cleansing of the soul. Most soldiers, guards, watchmen, bandits, and scouts make offerings to Perun.

Perun's role in resurrection is tied to his role as a master of the spearmaidens, angelic figures said to have once visited Zobeck in corporeal form to rule it in complete justice. Records from the period are mixed with references to flower angels, but it is clear that Perun was behind it to some degree.

The worship of Perun is most visible in spring when the campaign season begins. Many of his worshippers use a lightning bolt, a red bull, or a red circle in their heraldry.

His priests are often indistinguishable from mercenary captains, and indeed, some serve as captains in the Free Companies.

The cities of Triolo and Valera call him Mavros. Worshipers in the north call him Thor or Donar, but in Zobeck he is Perun. As the war god, he is also quite popular among centaurs. The Windrunner elves of the Rothenian Plain know him as Tilla the Bull-God.

HIGH PRIEST: Medlin Gorzax, a bald, gruff man in his sixties and a veteran of many wars, leads the church of Perun in Zobeck.

WHAT PERUN DEMANDS: Perun wants action! Worshipers must seek out battle and keep their martial skills well honed. The perfect death is on the battlefield—death of old age is abhorred. Followers of



MASKS OF THE GODS

Midgard's gods do not steadfastly embody a certain alignment or control very specific domains. Instead, the appearance and goals of these mysterious, malleable, and unfathomable deities shift in unpredictable ways from town to town and region to region. They change names, tenants, and sometimes portfolios, and they become many different things to different peoples.

For this reason, Midgard's religious scholars say the gods wear masks, and they liken these divinities to powerful universal forces rather than superhuman individuals. The scholars say these beings' true identities can never be known or their motivations fully understood; and because of their "masks," these gods' faiths cannot ever be fully eradicated, as they manifest themselves in so many ways all across Midgard.

Though scholars claim the ultimate truth of the divine is unknowable, this doesn't stop people from guessing at the gods' alliances and enmities and which entities are simply different names for the same divine force. Some gods are open about the names they prefer in different lands, but others are secretive and actively obscure the links between their followings in various parts of the world.

Perun must attend the mysteries at his temple (or at least overseen by a priest) before any great battle or long journey.

POREVIT AND YARILA, THE GREEN GODS

Twin Green Gods, the Goddess of Fertility, Wealth, Forests, and Wine

The most complicated of deities is Porevit, the Forest God of harvest, wine, and greenery who is also the goddess Yarila during the spring planting and even the goddess Kostroma as the earth mother. The mystery of how one god carries so many forms, names, and genders is best left to the druids and field priests who prepare the many sacrifices to Porevit and Yarila.

As a deity both wild and tame, both growing and harvested, only his priests (and the peasants who rely on his blessings) seem to know when to call on Porevit and when to call on Yarila. It really surprises no one to learn that the fey brought Porevit and Yarila to Zobeck.



The rites of Porevit and Yarila almost always involve food, wine, or green wood burnt to smoke, and often extend for six or eight hours. The spring equinox and the winter solstice are especially sacred times, when symbolic human sacrifices are buried in the fields, and figures made of straw are set alight to bring back the sun, respectively.

HIGH PRIEST: The current high priest of Porevit and Yarila is Ogolai Kiyat, an elderly centaur who wandered in from the Rothenian plains one winter and has led the faith in the Vineyard temple ever since. His wisdom is profound, and his unusual race seems only to confirm the dual nature of his god to the pious followers he guides in worship.

WHAT POREVIT AND YARILA DEMAND: More than merely respect for the wild and growing things, Porevit's mysteries demand that one frequently abstain from meat, plant as often as reap, and be fruitful, drunken, and generous on high holy days. Worshipers must provide alms if asked. Male followers of Porevit must participate in the harvest, while Yarila's female followers must participate in the spring planting.

RAVA, GODDESS OF GEARS

Gear Goddess, the Clockwork Oracle, Mother of Industry, Spinner of Fate, Merchant Goddess, patron of the city of Zobeck

Rava is a goddess whose beneficence has given Zobeck autoscribes, clockwork scullions, the gearforged, and many more inventions. Merchants believe she blesses their hard work, and her mark goes on many contracts and bills of lading as a surety of delivery or payment. She is the patron goddess of the city and a sponsor of magic, knowledge, and industry.

Rava's physical form resembles a six-armed woman, and she is often shown weaving or spinning. She is depicted as a maiden, as the mother of industry, and as a wise crone in different shrines and at different seasons.

The industrious, the learned, and the gearforged are Rava's closest followers, and dwarves, humans, and kobolds all have shrines to her. Most of her followers are hard-working and willing to try new things; novelty and invention are a part of her teachings as much as tradition and crafting. Alchemists, wizards, scribes, guild masters, weavers, and merchants all turn to Rava for wise counsel.



HIGH PRIEST/PRIESTESS: The current human high priestess of Rava is Lena Ravovik. Her surname is the traditional one for priests and priestesses of Rava, who abandon their families and former lives when they enter the service of the goddess. The current dwarven high priest is Ondli Firedrake.

WHAT RAVA DEMANDS: Rava demands her followers be wise and hard-working. While learning and scholarship are prized among her followers, so too is the discovery and the making of new things. As a goddess of both novelty and fate, she demands her followers seek out new learning and steer the world's fate to peace and plenty. In Zobeck, Rava's followers must defend her patron city against any threat the Clockwork Oracle identifies.

THE CLOCKWORK ORACLE

The temple of the Gear Goddess inspires the citizens of Zobeck to great deeds of industry, to the manufacture of ever-better clockworks, to the understanding of mechanisms and the natural philosophy of breath, blood, and steel that led to the birth of the gearforged. But the temple is also a place of mysteries, and nothing is more mysterious about the Gear Goddess than the Clockwork Oracle, a wall of silver dials, actuators, golden balance wheels, and reciprocating gears that together form a face said to be inhabited on high holy days by the goddess herself.

On those occasions when the Oracle speaks, roughly every 60 days, the temple is packed with supplicants the priests must organize and whose petitions the priests weigh. Unlike the city's crab diviners, the Oracle's pronouncements are not a matter of simple yes-or-no fortunetelling.

The Clockwork Oracle tells when a person might die, who might betray a merchant's hidden dealings, and other secrets of the Free City's highest and most powerful. More than that, she speaks to the members of the Spyglass Guild, and she actively works to keep Zobeck independent. The Oracle is the goddess's most powerful form of support for the city's peace and prosperity.

SUPPLICANTS TO THE ORACLE

In any particular session, the Oracle may speak for hours or may refuse to speak at all. As a result, the priests of the Gear Goddess monitor access to the Clockwork Oracle very strictly indeed.

Wealth and power are important considerations when determining who might speak to her, but so are arcane knowledge, piety in the faith of the city's patron goddess, and devotion to civic duty.

Only four supplicants are usually chosen, though in times of great danger, more supplicants are sometimes granted a chance to ask their questions. A donation

to the temple helps one's odds, and many desperate merchants offer hundreds of gold ducats to the temple for this purpose; many are disappointed.

Citizens are always given preference in gaining an audience with the Oracle. One Consul from the Free City Council and one guildmaster from the city's great guilds always receive invitations, and one hero or arcanist of note is usually invited to attend the day. The fourth is usually a petitioner from the public.

THE FACE OF THE DIVINE

The lucky few enter the sanctum beneath the temple's rotating pulpit, a place filled with the smell of metal and oil, not far from the workshop where the goddess's followers create small examples of clockwork magic in her name. The small shrine below the temple is just large enough for the supplicants and two priests. One priest is invariably Lena Ravovik and the other often the youngest and strongest in the temple. The chosen supplicants may each ask one question. If the goddess deems the question worthy she may answer, but on many occasions, the goddess answers no questions. Instead, she charges her listeners with a quest or task in service to the city. Those who refuse are invariably exiled or even attacked by zealous gearforged.

The supplicants who succeed in such tasks are hailed as heroes, if they survive. Those who fail are said to be reborn within the forges of the Foundryman's Guild as new gearforged souls.

VOICE OF THE GODDESS

The Gear Goddess's answers are often strange and sometimes physical. A strip of paper may scroll out of the Oracle's mouth or rest on its clacking wooden tongue. This small paper is neatly marked with a map or a message written in some strange cipher the priests will solve for a small fee.

Sometimes the Oracle's communication takes the form of a weaving or a clever piece of inlaid steel, but the physical prophecies of the Oracle are always holy items, kept and revered by the priests of the shrine.

A few of these items are hidden away from public eyes, but many of the older ones are displayed as a manifestation of the goddess's power, her word made real. Gearforged and clockwork mechanisms that ask questions of the Oracle generally understand the answer without speech. No one but the clockwork creatures seem to understand how this works. A small clockwork mechanism (usually but not invariably humanoid) may step forward to act out a scene in answer to a question. Or the many-gear face of the Oracle may whirl, click, and buzz, and within the overtones and harmonics of her mechanism, the faithful may hear her voice speaking, though the impious or faithless hear nothing but noise.

VOLUND, LORD OF FIRE

*God of Fire,
Smiths, Marriage,
and Horsemanship*



Called Svarog among humans and Volund among dwarves, the god of smiths and fire is a friend and rival to the Gear Goddess Rava. Bearded and often a traveler, the work of the smith-god is part of many things, from tools to weapons, from nails to hearths. Every dwarven anvil is sacred to him and bears his mark.

Among humans, Svarog is also the god of marriage and horsemen, although dwarves consider this a corruption of the true faith. In Zobeck, Svarog's son, the Sun God Khors, is worshiped in his father's temple. The old temple was associated with the nobility and burned to the ground during the Great Revolt.

The great festival of Volund is the autumnal equinox, when the Fire Blessing is laid on weapons, armor, and metal tools (and some say on the gearforged as well) at a great and fiery nighttime service that culminates in the Anvil Prayer. The noise of it is tremendous, as nearly every priest, smith, geargrinder, and steamworker in the city brings an anvil or a metal pan to hammer on during the chorus.

HIGH PRIEST: Ondli Firedrake serves the community as both the high priest of Volund (in addition to his duties as high priest of Rava for the dwarves).

WHAT VOLUND DEMANDS: Volund demands his dwarven followers master metalwork and have no fear of fire, smoke, and ashes. He demands his human followers master the horse and marry by the age of 23 or leave his priesthood. All Volund's followers must make pilgrimages to his shrines in the South and in the North once in their lives, carrying a hammer as his token. The truly devout pull an anvil on the pilgrimage for his blessing.

SAINTS AND LESSER GODS

The shrines in Zobeck are intermingled and syncretic, with some gods appearing to visit in other gods' temples, and some temples drawing worshipers of many races and lands. Two gods who are not native to Zobeck but who have some following there are Sarastra and Khors. Neither has a dedicated temple or shrine within the city, although the Sun God once did, and his followers in the Order of the Undying Sun maintain a shrine to him in their commandery.

KHORS, THE SUN GOD

Lord of the Sun, Bright Master of the Chariot, Son of Svarog

Son of Svarog (whom the traders of Siwal call Aten or Amon-Ra), Khors resembles one of the elemental gods of the Eastern Empire, though he is their foe. He is popular primarily among a few of the Collegium, and the knights of the Order of the Undying Sun are his followers. Though the Sun God is generally in decline in the Crossroads, Khors stands supreme within the Magdar Kingdom. He is a creature of hope, magic, and the glory that a noble cause may win. Kings and aristocrats are among his most devoted servants.

WHAT KHORS DEMANDS: Rise and pray at dawn and noon. Bring light to the darkness; never approach a foe by stealth, but only bravely and openly. Cast down demons, devils, and the dark gods without quarter. Stand fast in battle, for courage is the greatest virtue of the warrior. If you must retreat, make clear your intention to return and win the day.

SARASTRA, THE GODDESS OF NIGHT AND MAGIC

Said to be a goddess among the fey and certainly popular in Triolo, Corremel, and the South, Sarastra's priests claim she is the source of all darkness and raw arcane energies. She is also the patroness of the shadow fey.

SAINTS

Many gods who rate no temple or priests in Zobeck nevertheless have shrines or statues somewhere in the city, such as the altar of the lorelei and the River God along the docks, or the shrines of St. Charon, St. Piran, St. Helba, and St. Hubertus. The lorelei and River God receive offerings from all who work the river, and yet the city has never fully embraced them.

Followers of St. Charon are not priests but simply mourners or gravediggers who call on the saint in times of grief. Followers of St. Hubertus are hunters and woodsmen who rarely do more in town than sell their furs and venison taken from the Margreve. The followers of St. Piran are miners, almost all of them kobolds.

Everyone concedes these shrines, although lesser holy places, nonetheless hold a small spark of the divine. Almost any god from outside Zobeck may (and likely does) have a shrine somewhere in the city, which the people respect and do not vandalize. The size and frequency of the offerings are a sign of the god's popularity among the citizenry. If no offering is left for a year, another god's followers may adopt and rededicate the shrine, and so the sites of such altars sometimes are renewed.

ST. PIRAN

King of the Kobolds, Caretaker of the Cradles, The True Vein, Mammon's Bane

DOMAINS: Light, Trickery

St. Piran is a god of caves and those who work or dwell in them. Like many of the most ancient gods, he is a little bitter, very wily, protective of his own, and has amassed considerable resources. Anyone spending a serious length of time within the earth, seeking its protection or mining its treasures, lights candles and speaks devotions to St. Piran eventually, even if by a different name.

The True Vein appears most often as a humanoid appropriate to his viewer wearing the heavy clothing, helmet, and mask of a miner and covered in such dirt, dust, and filth as to make details of his appearance impossible to determine. Other forms include a vein of light that appears in darkness and pulses with his words or a point of blinding light above a pair of stone hands veined with gold.

WORSHIPERS: Caves were, and still are, the first homes for countless peoples and races. Altars to St. Piran, whatever his local name, appear in mining town chapels, the shelters of bandits or rebels, and the dens of monsters the world over. So St. Piran is worshiped in nearly every culture to some small degree. His most visible worshipers are kobolds, who value all his aspects and mimic many of them in his name. Dwarves, and humans to a lesser extent, venerate him as well, though both claim the right to do so to the exclusion of all others. The majority of his faithful are rumored to be of the various savage peoples, hiding and multiplying throughout the world.

SYMBOLS AND BOOKS: St. Piran's most common symbol is "The Light in the Darkness," a still flame of copper and gold backed by a silver disc. A black bullseye lantern tattoo or brand and a square with four or more inward facing triangles inside it, the "Spiked Pit," are two others. His holy texts often double as guides for mining and cave exploration in civilized lands and remain purely oral in the wilderness.

FAMOUS SHRINES AND PRIESTS: The most famous Temple of St. Piran stands in Lillefor, the great kobold capital, and is said to house that city's treasury. As one gigantic building filled with so many traps that even the attendant clergy don't know all of them, it is considered an act of worship simply to enter it to deposit a tithe. Shrines and altars found elsewhere serve in a similar fashion and are always expected to be trapped for the glory of the god. The current Tunnel-Saint of St. Piran is Goylevick Sarli (NE female derro cleric 5/rogue 4), a derro "Merchant Queen" who has agents throughout the underground areas around Zobeck and

conducts significant trade through its passages for the enrichment of the faith.

MASKS: Mammon's Bane is sometimes accused of being that very devil for his tightfisted grip on his treasures and tricky nature. Other times, with his influence over darkness, he has been called a Mask of Anu-Akma. Surprisingly, his flame symbol and focus on family, community, and their protection has even caused rumors that he is Lada attempting to bring her holy warmth to those in the darkness.

OTHER FAITHS: As an ancient deity, St. Piran gets on best with other old faiths. Sarastra, The Hunter, and even The White Goddess have known him as an ally. Newer gods, like most of the Crossroads' gods and those of the Dragon Empire, have yet to earn his trust. The devil Mammon is an old rival who always seeks St. Piran's treasure and power and has attempted to kill him on many occasions.

WHAT THE PIRAN DEMANDS: Dig deeper. Find treasure. Protect what is yours. Confound thieves. Steal what is theirs. Punish them with pain.

ST. HELBA

Foolish Fortune, Rebellion's Yell, The Instigator and Investigator, The Blue Exorcist

DOMAINS: Arcana, Knowledge, Trickery

Probably the youngest of all the deities of Midgard, St. Helba Stross is credited with redeeming her family line and freeing the Crossroads through selfless action, foolish directness, and heroic faith. She is the patron of investigators, adventurers, and other fighters of corruption.

St. Helba appears as she did in life: a brilliantly blue-skinned tiefling with long, blue-white hair, tiny horns, and wearing robes closely resembling one of Rava's faithful. She has yet to appear in any other form, although she has been known to send heralds who have occasionally been heard complaining of someone not quite understanding the situation.

WORSHIPPERS: St. Helba is worshiped primarily by the citizens of the Free City of Zobeck and its surrounding lands. Her followers have been spreading her faith into other lands with limited success, focusing on regions where they perceive oppression by any sort of "higher class" and have found themselves popular with slaves desiring liberation.

SYMBOLS AND BOOKS: Flaming and broken blue shackles are the holy symbol of St. Helba. Shattered locks, doors off of their hinges, and a halo of blue flame are common in her other iconography.

The holy words and battle cries of the saint have yet to be compiled into a single book. Flyers and

broadsheets from her time supporting the citizenry before the Great Revolt are currently copied and distributed by her faithful. Her hymns were once protest chants. Correspondences to other nobles that argued against corruption both infernal and mundane are still being compiled and verified and any aid finding more is richly rewarded.

FAMOUS SHRINES AND PRIESTS: The entire city of Zobeck is considered holy to St. Helba's church, and numerous small shrines exist throughout the city. A handful of locations within the city are considered pilgrimage sites: the Redrock jailhouse where she was supposedly imprisoned and tortured for her words, the dock where she was executed by her own infernally corrupted family, and the shrine to Rava where she is said to have appeared in a vision to the rebellion's leaders and their first gearforged allies.

MASKS: The Investigator and Instigator is sometimes accused of being Rava or a mere mouthpiece for her and other times of being a corruption of a different kind as a mask for the Goat of the Woods.

OTHER FAITHS: The church of St. Helba is on friendly terms with most of the gods of Zobeck, especially Rava. Few other faiths even know of her church's existence.

WHAT THE SAINT DEMANDS: Defend the weak. Root out corruption wherever you find it, be it supernatural, magical, mortal, or within your mind, your blood, or your community. Explore, and learn the truth.

CULTS AND HERESIES OF ZOBECK


Most citizens of the Free City are hard working, thrifty, and honest, the foundation of a prosperous polity and the envy of nations of serfs, peasants, and slaves. But there are always exceptions.

While Zobeckers are mostly honest, they also have their share of bandits and robber barons; trade and commerce are nothing if not cutthroat enterprises. To gain an edge in that struggle, some merchants and barge captains will pledge blood and souls to dark masters.

MARENA, THE RED GODDESS

The goddess of death and the debauched has a cult that simply cannot be stamped out, no matter how hard the Watch and the Griffon Knights try. The Red Goddess's lust for flesh and sacrifices is unquenchable. Her followers snatch citizens from the streets; children are warned the Red Bride will take them away if they do not obey their parents.

Marena's shrines are often small, little more than an innocuous stone smeared with blood that serves as an



altar. She is exceedingly popular with both the very wealthy (who enjoy her debaucheries) and the very poor (who lust for revenge or at least protection against her plagues). Her sign of a small red-stained skull is a common bit of beadwork or brooch, though technically even this is forbidden within the city walls.

Her more devout followers use strangling sashes to murder their offerings, though her kobold followers are supposedly quite inventive in their sacrifices. Kobolds seem quite insanely fond of the Red Goddess, despite the fact she seems to offer them little in return. Rumor has it, though, that she is seen as a kobold equivalent to Yarila and Porevit, and that Marena blesses all kobold eggs to hatch and grow stealthy.

MAMMON, ARCH-DEVIL OF GREED

In a city where everyone seems to be growing rich, some can never quite get enough. The arch-devil Mammon's worship spreads among the guilds and the merchants of Zobeck despite all efforts to destroy it, and they honor him with shrines boasting floors of hammered coins and bejeweled idols of gold and silver. The devil of wealth promises Zobeckers exactly what they want to hear. Indeed, so prevalent is the cult that any successful businessman soon finds himself hounded by rumors of a pact with Mammon.

The reality is much less than the rumor, in this case. Mammon preys on the wealthy of the city, but rarely does he grant wealth. Rather, he plays on the fears of those already rich that they might lose their good fortune, and in this way ensnares them into his vile service, coupling with devils and abasing themselves to win the Golden Devil's favor. Dwarves seem more than usually tempted by Mammon's offers to make their wealth safe and to make it breed.

The Redcloaks and the Sons of Mammon (also called Levelers) are worshippers of Mammon.

PACTS WITH THE SCÁTHESIDHE

Not all malign cults are those of demons, devils, and dark gods. The Lords and Ladies of the Shadow Kingdoms are also fond of pacts and gifts with foolish men and women. Sometimes the shadow fey take children and leave changelings behind to lead stolen lives. More often the scáthesidhe take grown men or women as lovers, and many of those do not return.

Worst of all, these humans often see the truth of the fey realms, which are so beautiful and desirable they make strong men weep and beg to return. By keeping paradise just out of reach, the fey gain devoted followers.

Kobolds and dwarves seem remarkably resistant to fey blandishments. Gnomes are, if anything, fey lackeys and thralls, serving the Shadow Court as its couriers, toadies, and (sometimes) arcane enforcers.

CULT OF THE YELLOW SIGN

Little is known of this cult outside the Arcane Collegium—though perhaps some hint exists in the records kept at the Blue House and the Spyglass Guild. The cult of the Yellow Sign is one of alien magic and power granted to those initiates to a mystery tied somehow to the wellsprings of star and shadow magic. The masters of the Collegium say little about it, though they look worried when the subject comes up.

What is known is the Cult of the Yellow Sign originates in the East. It is tied to the worship of Khors and involves the imminent return of a messiah or herald of some great power. This herald is sometimes called Hallisar or sometimes the Shining One, and he will speak directly to the minds of those who grant him obeisance and worship.

What Hallisar wants is unclear; a “pure land” and a “great cleansing” are both popular images in the repetitive, mind-numbing chants and screeds of his followers. His cultists seem to have some mastery over space and time, appearing and disappearing within the city at will, and no shrine to the Yellow Sign has ever been found.

The clockwork mages are experimenting to see if they might isolate some clue to Hallisar's origins or determine any weaknesses of the cult, so far without success.

CRAB DIVINERS OF ZOBECK

“You, boy! You have the look of a lost one about you. I can speak with Mother Crab on your behalf, but her truth does not come cheaply. Will you bare your soul to Mother Crab? More importantly, boy, can you bear the weight of your destiny?”

—Mama Rye

The future is not seen in crystalline orbs, tea leaves, or paper cards. It is whispered by crabs. For ages untold, the Kariv matriarchs have passed down to their daughters the secret rites of the ancient practice of Caruth, better known as crab divining or crab soothsaying. Originally, the travelling Kariv practiced Caruth to survive, divining safe passages, the weather, and sources of food and water. Now, however, the Kariv use crab readings to divine the answers to any number of topics.

During Caruth, a crab diviner or soothsayer will draw a female garroter crab (see *Tome of Beasts*) from the waters of the River Argent, ritually cleanse it, and use it to perform a divination. The crabs can reputedly answer yes-or-no questions and reveal portents of the future through their actions and behavior. A crab divination always ends in the death of the chosen crab,

and their corpses are examined for hidden clues about what the uncertain future holds.

The Kariv and the garroter crabs reputedly have an ancient pact whereby crabs willingly divulge secret truths to the Kariv at the price of their lives. What the crabs gain in return is a mystery, and certainly the Kariv say nothing of it. If crabs are unavailable, the Kariv can substitute a red-banded line spider (see *Tome of Beasts*), but they dislike doing so. Spiders are known to lie and are not bound by any truth pacts with the Kariv.

People that have experienced a crab reading are often awestruck by the power of Caruth and the eerie accuracy of the reading. These readings are not cheap, however, and a river of golden coins flows into the pockets of Zobeck's more renowned crab diviners. Often, a crab diviner will demand gold or favors as payment, depending on their whims at the time.

CALLING THE CRAB

Before attempting Caruth, diviners spend long hours choosing the right crab. The crab diviner will speak to various crabs to determine which is most knowledgeable about the topic at hand, a process known as Calling the Crab. Once she finds the proper crab, the Kariv cleanses it in a solution of equal parts rock salt and powdered silver. Thereafter, the diviner must wear gloves, for the touch of flesh will contaminate the cleansed crab.

The crab diviner must then prepare her soothing vessel—a large bowl made of woven river reeds and painted with arcane symbols. Many such bowls have passed through the matriarchs of each clan for generations. Meticulously, the crab diviner sprinkles handfuls of white-gray ash into the bowl while uttering barely audible intonations. This special ash comes from the cremated remains of prior crabs that gave their bodies to Caruth.

Apprentice crab diviners receive a pinch of their mentor's ash to cultivate their own soothing bowl, and in this way, modern practitioners trace their power back to the very first crab diviners. Using a special ivory comb, the crab diviner then grooms the bed of ash 13 times, top to bottom, then side to side, until the ash is perfectly level and even. She then reverently lowers the crab into the bowl.

The garroter crab sits listless in the bowl, slowly moving its strangling claw back and forth. When the crab diviner enchants the crab using *animal friendship*, the crab stops whipping the air and stands on its hind legs with claws outstretched in a penitent position.

Now the reading may begin, and the crab diviner pulls the tools of her trade from a black velvet sack—a ceremonial dagger of exquisite design and a polished, rune-scored finger bone.

With the finger bone placed on the left of bowl, the crab diviner takes the client's right hand and, without explanation, quickly slashes the client's palm with the dagger. She holds the bleeding palm over the right side of the bowl to guide a single drop of blood onto the ashen bed. The client's hand must bleed throughout the reading; any attempt to stop the bleeding or bandage the hand brings a sharp warning: "Close the wound, you close my window. Hold still."

The crab diviner may ask only yes-or-no questions as she slowly circles the top of the bowl with the dagger, alternating clockwise and counter-clockwise with each question asked. To signal "yes," the crab paces to the right and touches the client's blood. To signal "no," the crab veers sharply left and touches the finger bone.

This crescendo of questioning builds until the crab diviner feels the time has come to bark a sharp command at the crab, which rolls over onto its back. The crab diviner then kills the crab with a single smooth stroke of her dagger. She removes the crab from the bowl and examines the shapes in the ash left by its wanderings and the blood spattering. Finally, she peels back the crab's shell and scrutinizes the markings on its inside to discern Mother Crab's secret truth.


PROPHET OF THE CRAB: MAMA RYE

Mama Rye ("Mother Rye," pg. 99)—matriarch of the powerful Galati clan and the closest thing the Kariv have to nobility—is the most renowned crab diviner in Zobeck. Despite standing just over five feet tall with thin, iron-gray hair, no one is fooled by Mama Rye's age and physical frailty; a domineering personality instantly establishes her as a force to be reckoned with in any social exchange.

Her prowess in Caruth is legendary, and her readings are only given to those of prestige and standing in Zobeck. Even then, her readings often cost thousands, and this price can increase dramatically depending upon the nature of the information sought or the person seeking it.

Mama Rye is so named because of the elixir she frequently brews from rye infected with ergot, which produces vivid hallucinations. Under the influence of her concoction, Mama Rye's consciousness travels to other planes. Her frequent use of ergot led her to suffer a stroke several years ago, and as a result, her right eye is dead and clouded. The Kariv believe Mama Rye's dead eye only increases her divinatory powers.

Mama Rye also prominently bears the sign of the Cloven Nine, a nine-pointed star, on the back of her left hand. If asked about her diabolical branding, Mama Rye coolly responds, "Aye, in the battle between the heavens and hells, my allegiance was chosen for me." She refuses to elaborate.



Mama Rye's familiar, a homunculus named Aden, resembles a child's doll covered in black raven feathers. Mama Rye often carries Aden around on her belt, and he appears as nothing more than a strange fetish. Aden can often be found lying about motionless in Mama Rye's wagon, mentally recording all that he sees and hears about Mama Rye's clients while they wait for their crab divining. To those who know about Aden, he is quite animated and chirps frequently. Aden has a long prehensile tail completely hidden by his feather coat, and he can occasionally be found hanging upside down from one of his various perches in Mama Rye's wagon.

DIVINING THE SHELL

As with all divinations, the best readings during play are often vague or riddles, and the full weight of their meaning is not realized until a crucial point in time when the PCs have that sudden "Aha!" moment. You should never part with more information than you want the players to have. If used correctly, divinations can make wonderful tools for adventure and campaign advancement. If all else fails and the players are absolutely stumped and need help getting to the next point of the adventure, a crab divination is a flavorful (no pun intended) way of getting them back on track and into the game. Of course, a visit to a crab diviner is also a great way to supply the party with adventure hooks, as their destiny unfolds according to the ken of Mother Crab.

Mood and tone are central to a crab divination scene. The reading should be methodical and not rushed. The crab diviner's dagger scrapes the reeds as it slowly

circles the soothing bowl (which you can pantomime for the players). She phrases questions as such, "Mother Crab, we must know your truth. If the vampire is truly slain, choose the blood, if not, then grasp the bone," for basic true-or-false questions.

Additionally, the spot of blood can represent life or good, whereas the bone can represent death or evil. Play up the culture of the Kariv as well. If a spider is being used instead of a crab, for example, instead of using the reverent title "Mother Crab," the crab diviner uses the term "foul witch." The Kariv believe wicked people reincarnate as spiders.

After a series of "yes" or "no" responses, a particular question that stymies Mother Crab or leads to indecision on her part could also be a powerful plot catalyst. ("Mother Crab says you are not ready for such knowledge" or "Mother Crab cannot answer that question. Your acts shall decide the answer.") It is also a particularly useful way of dealing with unexpected or off-topic questions directed to the crab diviner from the players.

Less significant points should be the subject of direct "yes" or "no" questions directed to the crab, while larger issues and plot points should be saved for the final vague divination of the crab's shell. As the crab diviner scrutinizes the crab's behavior, certain responses become more emphatic and meaningful based on the crab's actions.

For example, the crab could dip its claw into the blood and taste it, signifying "yes" to a question but with a decidedly macabre undertone. An emphatic

KNOWLEDGE OF CARUTH

A creature proficient in the Arcana or History skills can learn more about the practice of Caruth. When a character makes a successful Intelligence (Arcana or History) check, reveal the following information, including the information from lower DCs. A character raised among the Kariv or who has spent at least 10 years in the close company of the Kariv has advantage on this Intelligence check.

DC	Knowledge Gained
10	Many Kariv are known to practice a type of divination known as Caruth, where garroter crabs are drawn from the river and used to reveal the future during a special ceremony. The technique is passed down from mother to daughter and is never taught to "dechass" (non-Kariv).
13	Only female crabs are used in Caruth. They can be called on to answer questions and their bodies examined to reveal portents of the future. A true Caruth reading always ends in the death of the crab, which delivers the final message. If a crab survives, the reading is incomplete and is bad luck, as the crab carries that person's future away with it (disadvantage on all saving throws for a month, or until remove curse is used)
17	Due to their semi-nomadic nature, the Kariv cannot always find crabs for their divinations. They may substitute a large spider, but they rarely do. Spiders are known to lie, whereas the crabs' pact with the Kariv ensures they always tell the truth. A crab diviner using a spider in a Caruth reading is either a fraud, intentionally trying to swindle the party, or unable to call a crab for some reason.
20	Reveal all information from the "Calling the Crab" section above.

“no” response might entail Mother Crab snapping the finger bone with her claw or flinging it across the bowl. If possible, make the crab’s behavior symbolic of something the PCs are likely to encounter later. This requires some planning on your part, but a little planning can go a long way when it comes to foreshadowing events.

Reading the actual markings beneath the crab’s shell provides a wonderful opportunity for the GM to create a climactic and spooky moment to cap off the entire scene. Examples of possible signs include:

- Garroter crabs reproduce prolifically and carry hundreds of eggs beneath their shells, but this crab has no eggs. The crab’s barren nature is a sign of impending death.
- An actual word or short phrase, easily read by the party but ambiguous in its meaning, appears on the underside of the shell formed out of natural convolutions in the shell’s structure.
- A rudimentary map can be seen on the underside of the shell, made by the scratching of the crab diviner’s blade as the crab squirmed beneath in its death throes.
- A crude picture, resembling an inkblot, formed of the crab’s blood appears on the underside of the shell. This picture could be anything—a portrait of someone the PCs will later meet, a scene involving one of the PCs, or an ominous symbol.
- Peeling back the shell reveals an object that plainly should not be there, such as a lock of hair, a pearl, or a key. This is especially powerful if the party is tracking someone and something of the target’s appears beneath the crab’s shell.
- When the crab’s shell is removed, an incomplete proto-shell is found beneath. Under the surface, things are not as they appear.
- The bottom of the crab’s shell is rotten and diseased. Something evil has been fomenting for some time and threatens to consume the party.
- The crab’s shell is brittle and breaks into hundreds of tiny pieces. The party’s current plans may fall apart and fail.
- When the crab’s shell is removed, a noticeable and strange scent escapes. This scent could be anything, and the PCs could notice it again in the future at a critical time to warn them of danger or help them find someone.
- A rough outline of a spider can be seen beneath the shell, huddled above a number of dots equal to the number of party members. This signifies that an evil force pursues the party.

RELICS AND RELIQUARIES OF ZOBECK

Hidden in darkened shrines and catacombs beneath gilded altars, the relics of Zobeck’s multitude of saints linger in sacred monstrosities and phylacteries as physical embodiments of the power of the faithful and the miracles of belief. Of the many saints, there is St. Gregario for alchemists and St. Charon for gravediggers. Dwarven airship captains curse their crews in the name of St. Kalimachus, and the taverns of the Gullet hang empty mugs to honor St. Emeric. The Kariv crab diviners invoke Mother Crab, also known as St. Caruth, who gives her name to their art. Minions of the Mouse King pay homage to the Thousand-Mouthed St. Norvegicus, to whom commoners pray to relieve toothache. Some ironies persist as well, such as St. Agnetta, who receives homage from the courtesans of the Red Houses though she herself was chaste.

Unlike common magic items infused with arcane and divine energy through elaborate rituals, no man’s hand controls the spontaneous divine spark that gives a relic its miraculous power. Faith and veneration somehow give rise to a relic’s holy energy. Yet the process is unpredictable, and no one has ever witnessed the birth of a relic. For instance, a family may find that generations after their grandsire cut a souvenir finger from the corpse of St. Lodovico, martyred patron of portals, the shriveled and morbid keepsake prevents the picking of nearby locks; or the finger may simply remain a powerless curiosity of faith.

True relics—the bodies and personal items of saints—are rarely entrusted to individuals except in the most dire of circumstances. They are usually held within castles or secured deep within temples. Lesser relics, such as scraps of cloth and small items of jewelry, can take on a divine spark over time. Below is but a small selection of the thousands of hallowed objects found in Zobeck and the powers these bones, ashes, and other fragments grant to those who venerate their source.

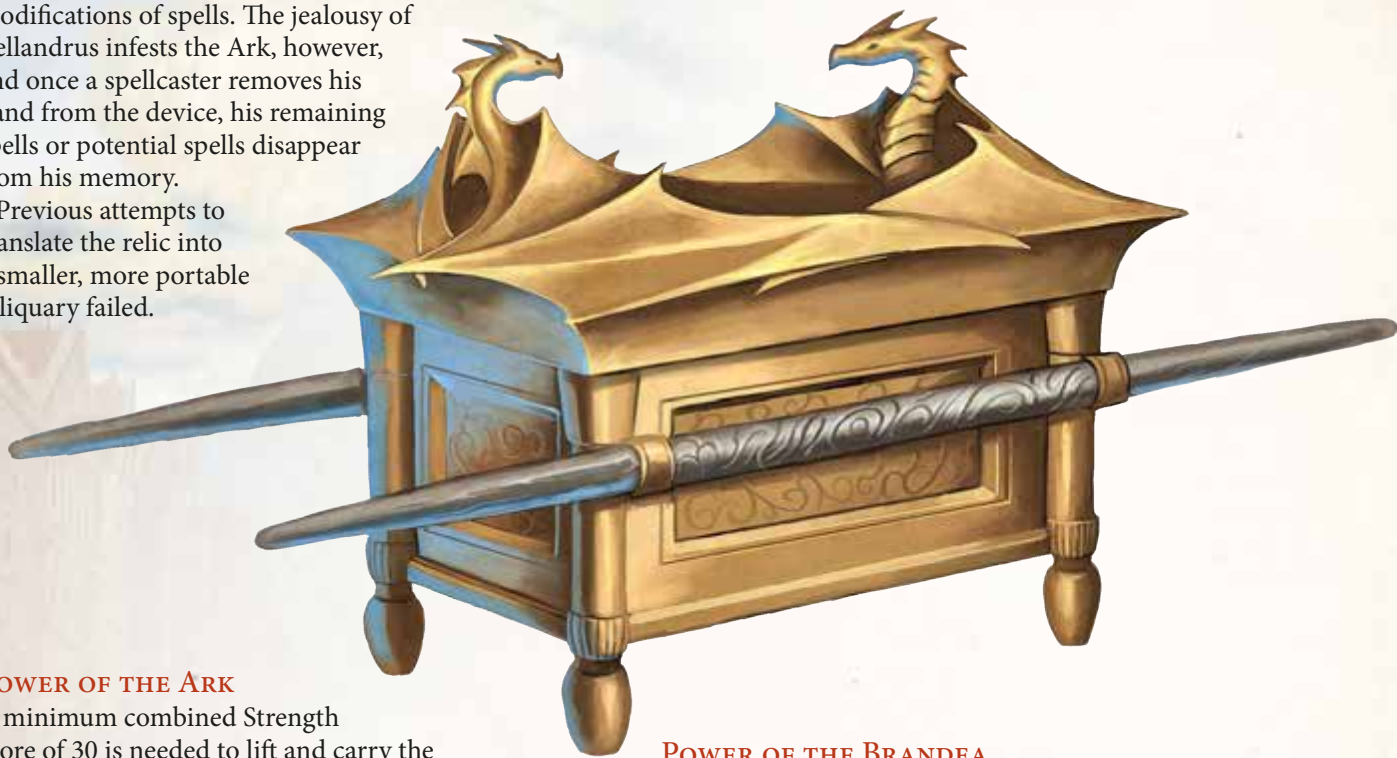
THE ARK OF ST. BELLANDRUS

Once a source of tremendous power for House Stross, this ark is a large, solid-gold receptacle that acts as a massive arcane battery. Now held by the Arcane Collegium, the Ark contains the single remaining bone fragment of St. Bellandrus—the most powerful sorcerer to ever attend the college. A prideful and petty child, Bellandrus was disintegrated by jealous rivals, but this remnant retains a powerful spark of his arcane energy. The Ark weighs 1,500 lbs. and requires at least two creatures to lift it.

The influence of the relic within causes the Ark to amplify arcane energies and allows for incredible

modifications of spells. The jealousy of Bellandrus infests the Ark, however, and once a spellcaster removes his hand from the device, his remaining spells or potential spells disappear from his memory.

Previous attempts to translate the relic into a smaller, more portable reliquary failed.



POWER OF THE ARK

A minimum combined Strength score of 30 is needed to lift and carry the Ark. While in physical contact with the Ark, an arcane spellcaster gains access to 10 sorcery points and the ability to use the following Metamagic abilities as a sorcerer: Careful Spell, Distant Spell, Empowered Spell, Extended Spell, Heightened Spell, Quicken Spell, and Twinned Spell. These sorcery points cannot be used to regain spent spell slots. When a caster touching the Ark loses contact with it for any reason, she loses a number of spell slots equal to the number of sorcery points left in the Ark, starting with her highest-level spell slots. The Ark's sorcery points are replenished at dawn, and the spellcaster regains lost spell slots after a long rest.

BRANDEA OF THE PILLAR SAINTS

In protest against of the despotic regime of House Stross, six hermits now revered as saints perched atop skinny, four-story pillars outside the walls of Zobeck. Preaching from that height, they made a public display of morality and rejection of the greed and corruption of the nobility. Martyred by House Stross, their deaths sparked a seed of dissent that would lead to revolution. Grateful citizens regularly honor their crypts in the Shrine of Martyrs in the Temple District.

Stored in proximity to the saints are small bone boxes containing portions of silk, known as brandea, carefully snipped from the death robes of the saints. After lying for a time in contact with the holy remains and being properly prepared, these brandea are thereafter treated as relics. They carry the martyrs' belief that unbridled pursuit of earthly ambition corrupts.

POWER OF THE BRANDEA

If one of these small snippets is worn as a tied cloth ring, it becomes a *ring of feather falling*. While worn as a cloth bracelet, it allows the wearer to cast *levitate* once per day (restored at dawn) for a number of rounds equal to the wearer's character level.

CLOCKWORK MUMMY OF ST. HEVITICUS

The incorruptible body of St. Heviticus still rests where the dwarf hermit expired—hunched over a scribe's desk deep below the Temple of Rava. However, his well-preserved corpse is now almost completely hidden by a nest of complicated gears, golden levers, pulleys, and pneumatic ink pumps.

Responsible for the design and construction of the Clockwork Oracle, the dying hermit produced a final set of schematics: meticulous plans for the preparation of his own corpse that involved the incorporation of enchanted gears and blessed cylinders. Acolytes transformed the saint's body where it expired, turning his secluded alcove into a marvelous contraption to venerate the divinely inspired inventor. His humble desk became a shrine.

The grand contraption can be reset and wound but once a month, and it operates for one week. During this time, the contraption produces a single set of plans for miraculous mechanical wonders—usually clockwork familiars, advanced scullions, clockwork hounds, and steam golems—that provide the guilds of Zobeck with technology that grows more complex each year. Considered relics themselves, these meticulous technical drawings are masterpieces of clarity and

innovation. Pious prayers to Rava for the bequest of some specific technology are often heard by the saint if made in his presence, although access to the chamber is granted rarely and only in times of great need.

POWER OF THE BLUEPRINTS

A creature in possession of a technical drawing gains a +10 bonus to all ability checks made to produce the creation described.

POWER OF THE MUMMY

Instead of producing a technical diagram, the Clockwork Mummy can produce up to 20 spell levels of spell scrolls each day from the school of clockwork magic (see Chapter 8 or *Midgard Heroes Handbook*).

MUMMIFIED MONKS OF MARENA

Scattered among dark sanctuaries and hidden cellars in lower Zobeck are roughly two dozen self-mummified monks of the Red Goddess. Typically older male followers of the goddess who have outlived their usefulness as subordinates to the priestesses of the faith, they end their own lives in a slow sacrificial suicide by eating only harsh, mildly poisonous strands of cavelight moss. This diet preserves their bodies to a remarkable degree in a foul mockery of holy incorruptibility.

These relics are periodically displayed as an example of loyalty to the Red Goddess, at which time her priestesses remove patches of parchment-like skin from these perfect specimens, which is a rare prize among the faithful.

POWER OF THE MUMMIES

Any corpse within 30 feet of any one of the mummies gains the benefits of the *gentle repose* spell.

HOLY GEARS OF RAVA

Once per decade, acolytes replace the worn gears of the *Clockwork Mummy of St. Heviticus*, sharpening and recycling the sacred components and donating them to the production of scullions and clockwork familiars, granting these gifted creations enhanced sentience. The filings and shavings from these recycled gears are meticulously collected and worked into small amulets, worn by the faithful as an encolpion.

POWER OF THE GEARS

A creature with the construct or humanoid (gearforged) type built or repaired with some of these gears increases its Intelligence and Wisdom scores by +2 each.

MUMMY-SKIN TEA OF THE RED GODDESS


This potent concoction is brewed from a fine brown powder ground from thin strips of parchment-like skin meticulously removed from the preserved bodies of devout monks. Those imbibers with the strength to drink this tea fall into a gentle state of dulled sensation but heightened consciousness lasting several hours, which also elicits a certain recognition, and grants some concessions, from the undead.

POWER OF THE MUMMY-SKIN TEA

The drinker of this tea must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the drinker takes 36 (8d8) necrotic damage and has its hit-point maximum reduced by the same amount. Its hit-point maximum can be restored with the *greater restoration* spell or similar magic. On a successful save, the creature gains 2d10 temporary hit points and the next time it would be reduced to 0 hit points, it is reduced to 1 hit point instead.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

- Kobolds of the Geargrinders Guild, fed up with Rava's monopoly on the dissemination of technology, attempt to sabotage the *Clockwork Mummy of St. Heviticus*. The PCs are hired to perform the deed or investigate the disappearance of the missing gears.
- When ground to a powder, the poisonous bark of the yam yam root is deceptively similar to that used to brew *Mummy-Skin Tea of the Red Goddess* and is a key ingredient in the manufacture of dark reaver powder. The adventurers investigate a series of mysterious poisonings of the followers of the Red Goddess.
- Ghouls are stealing true relics and corrupting them in unholy rites, staging elaborate feasts of the mummified flesh in hopes of absorbing the power they believe lies within. The church of Lada requests the party's aid and loans them the powerful *Thigh Bones of St. Mauritz*.
- The Mouse King is murdered, and the adventurers are caught in the ensuing power struggle. They must discover and return his body to the relic's care.
- The PCs seek to bring a companion back from the dead and wish to gain the blessings of Perun's relics. However, there is a price.
- An army of ghouls advances on Zobeck, and spellcasters are called to repel the invaders with incredible arcane blasts from the *Ark of St. Bellandrus*.



All undead recognize and respect this state, and the imbiber gains advantage on all Charisma checks made to interact with intelligent undead. Finally, the imbiber gains the ability to *speak with dead* and may ask three questions of any corpse encountered.

RESURRECTION RELICS OF PERUN

Long ago, Perun sent the spear-maidens to walk the streets of Zobeck in corporeal form and bring justice to the young city in a time of great suffering. These angelic maidens fought bravely through dismemberment and death, reborn each time to wage war on injustice, until their earthly incarnations finally failed and they passed into true death with honor.

These spear-maidens continue to serve their god in the mortal realm via the relics venerated in Perun's temples. While their bodies lie in deep catacombs, the spear hands of several maidens rest in elaborate gilded reliquaries that depict scenes of great victories. Once per week, a *Holy Hand of the Spear Maiden* can bestow a powerful blessing on heroes who die with their quests unfulfilled.

POWER OF THE HOLY HAND

A spellcaster that uses a *Holy Hand of the Spear Maiden* as a spellcasting focus when casting *raise dead* instead casts *resurrection*, requiring no higher spell slots or more expensive material components. Additionally, if a druid uses this relic while casting *reincarnation*, it can choose which race the target is reincarnated as. A living member of the desired species, who cannot have recently performed any unjust acts, must be present. This artifact has no effect on those dying of old age.

ST. NORVEGICUS, THE THOUSAND-MOUTHED KING

Unique among patrons, St. Norvegicus is not a single individual, nor even human, for that matter. Rather, St. Norvegicus is an accumulated and growing mound of relics—the desiccated remains of dozens of rats and mice intertwined and knotted at their tails. Indeed, the city's mice and rats believe this mound contains the interwoven corpses of each and every past Mouse King of Zobeck.

Kept in a golden idol shaped in the form of multiple rearing rats, ownership of the relic serves as the true badge of authority for all sitting Mouse Kings and enables them to reliably consult the collective wisdom of their predecessors three times each day. Due to the sometimes treacherous relationship between generations of kings contained in the relic, however, any consultations beyond the first three in a single day are often colored by spite and falsehoods. When jealousy and ancient rivalries rupture into argument in

this way, the relic goes silent for a month or more.

In addition, the relic commands the obedience of all rodents. They pay it homage and whisper information to it from throughout the city, feeding the knowledge of the relic. It can call rats and mice to do the bidding of the sitting Mouse King, and the Kings make excellent use of this power.

When a Mouse King passes, the body is recovered (if possible) and moved to the center of the relic. In this strange ritual, the relic animates in a ravenous display of gnashing teeth, consuming the spirit and knowledge of the deceased king before absorbing the body, adding another corpse to the relic's growing collection.

POWER OF THE THOUSAND-MOUTHED KING

A creature that consults the relic while making an Intelligence check gains a +10 bonus to that check as the mummified relic erupts in a chattering chorus. Any consultations past the third in a 24-hour period have a cumulative 20% chance of providing misinformation or outright falsehood. The sitting Mouse King can use the relic to call 2d6 swarms of rats in urban environments, which arrive within 1d2 rounds.

THIGH BONE OF ST. MAURITZ FRUMARCH

A giant of a man and a dedicated hunter of the undead, the paladin St. Mauritz Frumarch infamously died, not at the hands of the quarry he spent his life pursuing, but in the jaws of a great drake that threatened Zobeck. Though little remained of his body, adventurers later recovered both of the saint's thighbones.

Hard as iron and sporting wrapped grips of moldering shrouds, each bone displays an extraordinary power to harm undead and ward off ghouls, who well remember the sting of the paladin's holy crusades against their kind. One of the bones rests in Lada's healing school to the south of Zobeck, while the church often loans the other to righteous heroes when Zobeck faces threats from the ghoul empire.

Each bone counts as a *mace of disruption*. Additionally, whenever the wielder kills a ghoul or a ghastr of any sort, all undead within 30 feet must make a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the undead creature is turned for 1 minute or until it takes any damage. A turned creature must spend its rounds trying to move as far away from the wielder as it can, and it can't willingly move to a space within 30 feet of the wielder. It also can't take reactions. For its action, it can use only the Dash action or try to escape from an effect that prevents it from moving. If there's nowhere to move, the creature can use the Dodge action.

A creature that succeeds on this saving throw is immune to the thigh bone's turn effect for 24 hours, but not other Turn Undead or fear effects.



DENIZENS OF ZOBECK

“A barrel here, a few coins from the dock tax there.” The young stevedore grinned and winked at the dock foreman. “These aren’t for a Consul, nor the Mayor, nor any of their friends, so where’s the harm?”

“You don’t know who you’re crossing,” the foreman said, frowning.

“What? There’s someone else with the clink to bring this stuff in? Someone else who spends his nights eating veal and aspic and farting through silk?” He glanced around and spotted a dusky woman sauntering down the River Road. “Whoever they are, they won’t miss a barrel or two and a few coins.”

“The Council wouldn’t miss it, but the master merchants here all do sums in their sleep.” The foreman glanced up at the young man, who was clearly not

paying attention. He tapped the stevedore’s shoulder. “And some keep closer count than them. Don’t do anything stupid. Pay the tax, keep the Watch happy, keep things moving, and don’t try to steal anything from Mama Rye and the Nine.”

“Mama who? Nine what? Are they new on the Council?” The stevedore flexed his muscles and tried to catch the Kariv woman’s eye. She paused and cast him a sly grin.

The foreman glanced from the stevedore to the Kariv and back. He worked hard not to smirk. “There’s more powers in Zobeck than the fat behinds on the Council. You’ll learn soon enough never to cross Mama Rye. One way or the other.”

Some of Zobeck's more colorful NPCs appear below. Where these characters come from previous Kobold Press adventures, that information is detailed in their listing.

THE DRAGGED WOMAN

A wild-looking woman with ashen-gray skin and rich but tattered clothing, she has hair that 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.

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

Incorporeal Movement. The Draggled 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 Draggled 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 Draggged 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 Draggged Woman for 2d4 rounds. A creature that succeeds on this save is immune to the Draggged Woman's blinding fear ability for 24 hours.

Etherealness. The Draggged 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.

TACTICS

Before Combat. The Draggged Woman is found when she chooses to be found.

During Combat. The Draggged Woman attempts to flee using her open the path trait and remembers the insult for later.

Morale. An immortal creature who died once already, the Draggged Woman has no stomach for combat.

BACKGROUND

When you need to find lost places in Zobeck—the hidden passages into the Cartways, the door to the shadow-fey embassy, the secret tunnels into the Kobold Ghetto—you ask the Draggged Woman. The unquiet soul of a noblewoman dragged to death across the cobblestones during the Revolt, brave souls can pay her to reveal magical byways that never work twice, but the only payment she accepts is memories.

The Draggged Woman appears in "The First Lab" in *Streets of Zobeck*.

MOTIVATIONS & GOALS

Bound to walk the route of her death, she considers the memories of first loves, righteous victories, and lost children the richest of all treasures. These are only to ease her misery, however. What she truly wants is to rest, and she may provide great service to those she believes can and will aid her.

SCHEMES & PLOTS

The Draggged Woman needs her bones pulled from the Argent and buried. She desires her journal returned from a secret place in her old home. She wants her husband's skull back from the mass grave it occupies.

DAME TERAGRAM

Standing roughly six feet tall, Dame Teragram is fashioned of brass and dark iron with copper highlights and a heavy helm set with a thick braid of hair the color of polished mahogany. The mechanical frame suggests a woman, and the polished greatsword leaves no doubt as to her soldierly profession.

DAME TERAGRAM

Medium humanoid (gearforged), lawful neutral

ARMOR CLASS 16 (+1 chain shirt)

HIT POINTS 119 (14d8 + 56)

SPEED 30 ft.

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

SAVING THROWS Con +7, Wis+5

SKILLS Insight +5, Intimidation +6

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES poison

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charm, poisoned

SENSES passive Perception 12

LANGUAGES Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Northern

CHALLENGE 6 (2,300 XP)

Constructed Body. Dame Teragram 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. Additionally, she cannot fall asleep, including by magical effects.

Power Attack. When Dame Teragram makes a greatsword attack, she can take a -5 penalty to hit. If this attack hits, she gains a +10 bonus to damage.

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

1st (4 slots): *compelled duel, cure wounds, heroism*

2nd (3 slots): *branding smite, find steed, magic weapon*

3rd (2 slots): *dispel magic, daylight*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Dame Teragram makes 3 greatsword attacks.

Greatsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage.

EQUIPMENT

+1 greatsword, +1 chain shirt, holy symbol (Rava), fine clothes, silver hand mirror



BACKGROUND

A former matron of a well-moneyed, rather than well-born, house, Teragram's military service made her the black sheep. She "married her lance" and never had more of a family beyond the nieces and nephews of her brothers. Years of service and the unjust (in her opinion) executions of two of her brothers soured her on the nobility in general and the Stross in particular. She joined the Great Revolt from the first, but her age prevented her from providing more than moral support and advice. With the creation of the first gearforged, she jumped at the chance to serve actively again. To this day, she continues to protect Zobeck and the extended family it has come to represent.

MOTIVATIONS AND GOALS

Teragram is strange for a gearforged in that she still maintains a vain streak regarding her appearance. She has purchased several thick braids of human hair and

affixed them to her steel skull. She cares for these as if they were her original hair and tends to hold vicious grudges against any who damage the hair in any way. She's relentless in seeking out potential weaknesses in the city's defenses and finding ways to secure them. Her handpicked unit of "tunnel rats" is absolutely loyal to her and includes Kariv, dwarves, and kobolds.

SCHEMES AND PLOTS

The bones of her brothers were never returned, and both had several brass teeth. Part of her underground investigations is an attempt to locate these skulls and have her siblings raised from the dead. She knows they would be excited to see the city now, and they would give Teragram someone to socialize with beyond her fellow Gearforged. While she enjoys her duty, she misses the sound of children in the familial household she maintains. Someone who managed to acquire the skulls or knew their specific location could gain considerable leverage over her.

TACTICS

Before Combat. Dame Teragram understands the value of diplomacy and attempts to parlay before engaging the enemy. She gained a second chance in a fairly resilient form and remembers all too well the weaknesses of old age and injury. She prefers to keep combat to an absolute minimum.

During Combat. Teragram holds the line and rallies troops, keeping defenses holding.

Morale. An old soul who fought House Stross, this professional soldier does not brook insubordination. She does know when to retreat to preserve her allies or to gain an advantage.

GOLDSCALE

Set apart from his kin by much more than the faint golden sheen of his hide, this kobold exudes an inner strength that can only spring from unflagging faith.

GOLDSCALE

Small humanoid (kobold), lawful good

ARMOR CLASS 19 (+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 to the object. 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 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.



BRYAN SYME

EQUIPMENT

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

TACTICS

Before Combat. As a negotiator and defender of the weak, Goldscale places himself between innocents and danger while attempting to diffuse tensions.

During Combat. Goldscale first attempts to disarm opponents or incapacitate them. When mercy fails, he does anything necessary to defend himself and others.

Morale. Considered fearless and unhesitating, Goldscale fights to the death in order to defend his beliefs.

BACKGROUND

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 pledged himself to Lada as a paladin.

MOTIVATIONS & GOALS

Serious about his role as a defender of the weak, Goldscale works toward improved relations between humans and kobolds. Although popular with the average citizens of Zobeck, criminal gangs detest him. However, many gang members believe his golden-hued scales do indeed indicate the blood of dragons runs in his veins and refuse to confront him.

SCHEMES & PLOTS

Goldscale worries that 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 where he is needed most. He feels his patrols are insufficient, however, and he must root out the causes of crime. Crime lords should stay wary, for Goldscale is a one-kobold crusade looking to improve the lot of the common citizen. (Goldscale appears in an adventure hook for "Ripper" in *Streets of Zobeck*).

STEED

Goldscale's loyal steed is a celestial giant weasel named Shinespark. Its statistics are identical to a giant weasel, but its Intelligence is 6 (-2), it can speak Draconic, and Goldscale and Shinespark can communicate telepathically while within 1 mile of each other. When Shinespark is reduced to 0 hit points, it disappears, leaving behind no physical form. If he needs to, Goldscale prepares *find steed* in order to resummon him.

JAYZEL

This tall, raven-haired bard exudes a bold, sensuous, and confident air that borders on arrogance. She is clearly used to getting her way with both men and women, and she has a knowing, appraising look in her eyes.

JAYZEL

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic evil

ARMOR CLASS 15 (+2 *leather armor*, *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 Str +0, Dex +4, Con +2, Int +2, Wis +1, Cha +3

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

TACTICS

Before Combat. Jayzel casts *enhance ability (cat's grace)* and *invisibility* on herself. She casts *charm person* or *dimension door* to avoid combat.

During Combat. Jayzel stays in the background and leaves melee to those more capable. She initially attempts to incapacitate an enemy with a *hideous laughter* spell, then fires her crossbow and sings to boost allies' morale.

Morale. Jayzel doesn't fight to the death. She uses *dimension door* to escape when necessary.

BACKGROUND

The estranged daughter of a renowned scholar who still lives and works in the Collegium District, Jayzel rebelled against her strict upbringing by joining the cult of Marena in her youth. There she learned how to use music and her feminine wiles to best effect. She currently consorts with the goddess' Cult of Pain, headed by priestess Nariss Larigorn, and uses the Temple of Painful Pleasure's private chambers to torture information from victims to use for blackmail.

MOTIVATIONS & GOALS

A master information broker, Jayzel listens for gossip at the galas she attends and uses her wits, glib tongue, and seductive wiles to trick others into revealing secrets. Jayzel loves luxury and decadence as much as the thrill of the chase, and though she enjoys playing with fire, she will not pursue inquiries that threaten her life or lifestyle.

SCHEMES & PLOTS

If Jayzel's seductive approach fails, she often lures targets to the Temple of Painful Pleasures to torture information from them—a service she provides to clients, although always under the anonymity of an intermediary. She has irons in a great many fires across Zobeck's society—high and low—but involves herself only enough to make some money and gain a little bit of leverage.

MOTHER RYE

Despite standing just over five feet tall with thin, iron-gray hair and a dead, clouded right eye, this craggy woman's advanced age and physical frailty fools no one. Her domineering personality instantly establishes her as a driving force in any conversation.

MOTHER "MAMA" RYE

Medium humanoid (human), neutral

ARMOR CLASS 12 (*bracers of defense, cloak of protection, ring of protection* [15 with *mage armor*])

HIT POINTS 42 (12d8 – 12)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
5 (–3)	7 (–2)	9 (–1)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)

SAVING THROWS Str –1, Dex +0, Con +1, Int +8, Wis +5, Cha +9

SKILLS Arcana +6, History +6



SENSES passive Perception 13

LANGUAGES Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Gnome, Infernal

CHALLENGE 8 (3,900 XP)

Foresight (5/Day). When Mama Rye makes an ability check, attack roll, or saving throw, she can record the number on the die and reroll it. She must take the new result. At any point in the next 24 hours when a creature she can see makes an ability check, attack roll, or saving throw, she can force the creature to use one

of her recorded die rolls instead of rolling. Rerolling or forcing a creature to use a roll both count as uses of this trait.

Metamagic. Mama Rye has 10 sorcery points. She can spend them when she casts a spell to use one of the following Metamagic options:

Careful Spell (1 sorcery point): When Mama Rye casts a spell that forces other creatures to make a saving throw, she can protect a number of creatures up to her Charisma modifier from the spell's full force (minimum of one creature). A chosen creature automatically succeeds on its saving throw against the spell.

Empowered Spell (1 sorcery point): When Mama Rye rolls damage for a spell, she can reroll a number of the damage dice up to her Charisma modifier (minimum of one). She must use the new rolls. She can use Empowered Spell even if she has already used a different Metamagic option during the casting of the spell.

Heightened Spell (3 sorcery points): When Mama Rye casts a spell that forces a creature to make a saving throw to resist its effects, one target of the spell has disadvantage on its first saving throw made against the spell.

Spellcasting. Mama Rye is a 10th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). Mama Rye has the following sorcerer spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch, light, message, minor illusion*

1st level (4 slots): *charm person, color spray, mage armor, shield*

2nd level (3 slots): *alter self, misty step, scorching ray*

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell, hypnotic pattern, slow*

4th level (3 slots): *blight, greater invisibility, confusion*

5th level (2 slots): *cloudkill, hold monster*

ACTIONS

Chill Touch. Ranged Spell Attack: +8 to hit, range 120 ft., one target. Hit: 9 (2d8) necrotic damage and the target can't regain hit points until the start of Mama Rye's next turn.

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

REACTIONS

Uncanny Dodge. When Mama Rye is hit with an attack made by an attacker she can see, she can halve the attack's damage against her.

EQUIPMENT

Dagger, raven skulls bracelets (*bracers of protection*), *ruby ring of protection*, *cloak of protection*, fetish-adorned darkwood walking cane; 1,500 gp nonmagical jewelry

TACTICS

Before Combat. Mama Rye always casts *mage armor* before meeting with clients.

During Combat. Mama Rye attempts to use *color spray* and *charm person* to subdue an opponent and, if necessary, an empowered *scorching ray*. Mama Rye is always surrounded by members of her Galati clan, and if she is in trouble, 1d10 + 1 Kariv bandits appear within 1d3 rounds. Further, her homunculus Aden will give its life to buy Mama Rye time to escape.

Morale. Mama Rye is frail and never enters battle by choice. She attempts to flee as soon as violence breaks out.

BACKGROUND

Mama Rye—the 62-year-old matriarch of the powerful Galati clan and the closest thing the Kariv have to nobility—is the most renowned crab diviner in Zobeck (see “Crab Diviners” in Chapter 6).

Her name comes from the elixir she frequently brews from rye infected with ergot, which produces vivid hallucinations. Under this influence, Mama Rye’s consciousness travels to other planes. Her frequent use led to a stroke several years ago, and her right eye is now dead and clouded. The Kariv believe this only increases her powers, giving her second sight into the world beyond.

Mama Rye also prominently bears the Cloven Nine’s nine-pointed star on the back of her left hand. If asked about it, she coolly says, “In the battle between the heavens and hells, my allegiance was chosen for me.” She refuses to elaborate. She has a homunculus named Aden that resembles a child’s doll covered in black raven feathers.

MOTIVATIONS & GOALS

Other than understanding which side of good and evil she rests on, Mama Rye is motivated by the money she gains from divining. She uses this, her powers, and her position to look out for her own Galati clan and the Kariv in general, especially their place and well-being in Zobeck.

SCHEMES & PLOTS

Mama Rye does not actively participate in scheming and plotting; she simply divines answers for money. She does aid the Cloven Nine in their plots, however. Aden keeps an eye and ear out on any clients who seek readings from her, though, and he informs her of anything useful.

NARISS LARIGORN

This golden-haired elven woman wears scarlet gauze and a golden, ruby necklace, neither of which cover much. She has a glint of mischief in her eyes.

NARISS LARIGORN

Medium humanoid (wood elf), lawful evil

ARMOR CLASS 17 (*bracers of defense*, *ring of protection*)

HIT POINTS 91 (14d8 + 28)

SPEED 35 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	19 (+4)	20 (+5)

SAVING THROWS Str +1, Dex +5, Con +3, Int +2, Wis +8, Cha +9

SKILLS Medicine +7, Perception +7, Performance +8, Religion +4

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 17

LANGUAGES Common, Draconic, Elven

CHALLENGE 6 (2,300 XP)

Beloved of Death. Whenever Nariss would be hurt by necrotic damage, she is instead healed for the amount of damage she would have taken.



Divine Eminence. As a bonus action, Nariss can expend a spell slot to cause her melee weapon attacks to magically deal an extra 10 (3d6) radiant damage to a target on a hit. This benefit lasts until the end of the turn. If she expends a spell slot of 2nd level or higher, the extra damage increases by 1d6 for each level above 1st.

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 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). She has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *light, sacred flame, thaumaturgy*

1st level (4 slots): *cure wounds, guiding bolt, inflict wounds, shield of faith*

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

3rd level (3 slots): *dispel magic, spirit guardians*

4th level (3 slots): *compulsion, polymorph*

5th level (2 slots): *dominate person, hold monster*

ACTIONS

Agonizing Whip. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 4) slashing damage, and the target must make a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the target loses all its temporary hit points and is stunned until the start of Nariss's next turn.

Aura of Awe. Nariss projects a 60-foot-radius aura centered on her by speaking (affecting creatures that can hear her within the radius) or by posing (affecting creatures that can see her within the radius). This aura lasts for 10 rounds. Each creature affected by this aura must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw; any creature that cannot be charmed automatically succeeds on this save. On a failure, a creature has disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks made to perceive any creature other than Nariss until the spell ends or until the target can no longer hear (or see) her. On a success, a creature is immune to this aura for 24 hours.

This effect ends on a creature if it leaves the aura, but it does not gain immunity to this aura.

EQUIPMENT

Leather *bracers of defense*, bloodstone *ring of protection*, whip, fine clothes

TACTICS

Before Combat. Nariss casts *shield of faith* on herself, if possible.

During Combat. Nariss attempts to catch enemies in her Aura of Awe, talk them down, or incapacitate them using *dominate person* and *hold person*—or *polymorph*, if she's feeling playful—rather than fight. She relies on

guiding bolt and *inflict wounds* only as a last resort. She has no problem killing, especially for her goddess, but combat can damage her temple, patrons, and the anonymity of both, and she can't afford that. If she gets the upper hand, she allows enemies to negotiate for their lives.

Morale. Nariss believes in negotiation. She has a thriving temple in Zobeck, and she intends to keep the gold, orgiastic rituals, and torture sessions flowing in the name of her goddess Marena. She takes every opportunity to end combats quickly.

BACKGROUND

A rather exotic Arbonesse exile who arrived by way of Morgau, and possibly the only elven resident of Zobeck, Nariss has been building the Red Goddess' following in the Free City for over two decades. About a decade ago, she opened the Temple of Painful Pleasures, a brothel in the Collegium District that serves as a front for Marena's temple. She works with Jayzel to find and torture victims for secrets, money, and pleasure.

MOTIVATIONS & GOALS

Nariss is interested in building the Red Goddess' power in Zobeck. Over the years, many of Marena's cults have been stomped out, but Nariss intends to be the one cleric who succeeds in growing the religion in the Clockwork City.

SCHEMES & PLOTS

Nariss keeps tabs on the wealthy and learns many of their secrets through the Temple and Jayzel. The two use this information to benefit both themselves and the cult. They intend to gather enough information about the Consuls to protect themselves and the Temple, should anyone discover its true nature. (Nariss Larigorn appears in "Flesh Fails" in *Streets of Zobeck*.)

ORLANDO

This old man clearly takes no care for his appearance, but he has a sharp and alert look about him. He wears a long wizard's robe, a bit tattered around the hem and sleeves, with a bandolier of potions and an elegantly carved quarterstaff in one hand.

ORLANDO

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic neutral

ARMOR CLASS 12 (15 with *mage armor*)

HIT POINTS 99 (18d8 + 18)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)

SAVING THROWS Int +10, Wis +7
SKILLS Arcana +10, History +10
SENSES passive Perception 12
LANGUAGES any six languages
CHALLENGE 13 (10,000 XP)

Golem Form (Recharges after a Long Rest). As a bonus action, Orlando transforms into a golem or clockwork creature of CR 15 or lower for up to 15 minutes per day. These minutes need not be consecutive, and he can end Golem Form as a bonus action. He prefers to take the form of a stone golem or smaragdine golem (*Tome of Beasts*) for combat, or that of a clockwork beetle (*Tome of Beasts*) for stealth. If this form is reduced to 0 hit points before the 15 minutes are up, Orlando reverts to human form and any extra damage spills over into his regular hit points. He cannot use this trait again until he completes a long rest.

Spellcasting. Orlando is a 15th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 18, +10 to hit with spell attacks). He can cast *machine speech** and *repair metal** at will and has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *analyze device**, *fire bolt*, *light*, *mage hand*, *read magic*

1st level (4 slots): *animate construct**, *armored shell**, *identify*, *shield*

2nd level (3 slots): *armored heart**, *lock armor**, *ray of enfeeblement*

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

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

5th level (3 slots): *cone of cold*, *dominate person*, *wall of force*

6th level (1 slot): *catapult**

7th level (1 slot): *teleport*

8th level (1 slot): *feblemind*

*New spell listed in Chapter 8

ACTIONS

Staff of Striking. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage. This staff has 10 charges. On a hit with a melee attack, Orlando can expend up to 3 charges, dealing an additional 1d6 force damage per charge expended. The staff regains 1d6 + 4 charges daily at dawn.

EQUIPMENT

Staff of striking, common clothes, *potion of resistance*, *spell scroll of cone of cold*, *spell scroll of disintegrate*

TACTICS

Before Combat. Orlando casts *armored shell* and animates any nearby constructs.



During Combat. He casts *dominate person* and *feblemind* to remove opponents quickly.

Morale. Orlando flees battle with his *teleport* spell.

BACKGROUND

Orlando was once a simple clockmaker, the expert in gearing, hydraulics, and balances who built the Puffing Bridge and many of the early steam devices in the Free City. Most considered him a harmless crank, but he stayed gainfully employed for years while building and refining his art.

Gradually, he spent more and more time working on his gears, balance wheels, and mechanical forms of magic, learning wizardry as a way to expand his skills with machinery. More than twenty years ago, he joined the Arcane Collegium and began teaching his craft to others.

Orlando currently serves as Guildmaster of the Arcane Collegium and a Consul on the Free City Council. As a master of clockwork magic, he has created several interesting clockwork creatures he keeps hidden in his labs. He hopes to someday replace the need for human servants and apprentices entirely.

MOTIVATIONS & GOALS

Orlando wants to keep creating various clockwork experiments and thus is often in need of money. He seeks outside funding when possible, but he can occasionally be talked into creating magical items for patrons for a high fee. His desire for knowledge is a form of greed in that he can never resist just one more experiment, even when it threatens others or runs a

little bit out of control. In some cases, his devices have caused significant damage to the city, but his usefulness always outweighs the risk.

SCHEMES & PLOTS

Orlando is building himself a steam golem body, which he intends to inhabit upon completion. Volstaff Greymark is Orlando's greatest enemy, for reasons not particularly clear to outsiders—a few say that Volstaff once refused to fund Orlando's first successful experiment, and Orlando has borne a grudge ever since. Others claim Volstaff seduced Orlando's late wife Ikaterina and Edmure was Volstaff's bastard child by her. This may be entirely untrue, but it is very evident in Council meetings that they hate each other, and other Consuls have spread this bit of gossip. (Orlando appears in "The First Lab" in *Streets of Zobeck*.)

PEPPERCORN, BODYGUARD OF THE MOUSE KING

A trollwife, broad in the shoulders and the hips, with skin that looks dusted with dirt or pepper, stares with a sour expression. Her hard gaze looks as if she's seen every dirty trick in the book. "The King don't like holdin' audience with strangers, and I don't recognize your faces. Give me one good reason to let you lot see 'Is Majesty."

PEPPERCORN

Large giant, chaotic evil

ARMOR CLASS 18 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 144 (14d10 + 70)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	8 (-1)	20 (+5)	10 (+0)	9 (-1)	8 (-1)

SAVING THROWS Dex +4, Wis +4

SKILLS Perception +4, Intimidation +4

DAMAGE RESISTANCES bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing (while raging)

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charm, frightened (while raging)

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

LANGUAGES Common, Draconic, Dwarf, Giant, Infernal

CHALLENGE 13 (10,000 XP)

Frenzied Rage (4/Day). As a bonus action, Peppercorn can enter a frenzied rage for 1 minute. While in this state, she gains the following benefits:

- Advantage on Strength checks and saving throws
- Her melee weapon attacks deal an additional 2 damage (included).

- She gains resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage.
- She cannot be charmed or frightened, and ongoing charm or fear effects are suspended.
- She makes an extra attack as part of the Multiattack action.
- She gains 1 step of exhaustion at the end of her rage.

Keen Smell. Peppercorn has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Regeneration. Peppercorn regains 10 hit points at the start of her turn. If she takes acid or fire damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of her next turn. She dies only if she starts her turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Peppercorn makes three melee attacks (four while raging):

Greataxe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (4d6 + 5) slashing damage, or 21 (4d6 + 7) while raging.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) slashing damage, or 14 (2d6 + 7) while raging.

EQUIPMENT

Two *potions of greater healing*, common clothes, a coinpurse containing 150 pp, 150 gp, 30 sp.



TACTICS

Before Combat. Peppercorn enters a Frenzied Rage.

During Combat. She attacks with her greataxe. Any of the Mouse King's faithful servants present will come to her aid. In time, this means 3d6 swarms of rats appear from every direction, and 1d4 wererats may arrive as well.

Morale. Peppercorn does not back down from a fight.

BACKGROUND

Peppercorn worked as the bouncer at the King's Head tavern for many years, protecting the secret headquarters of the Mouse King from prying eyes and wandering drunks. Nowadays, she only pretends to be the tavern's bouncer, leaving most of her duties to her protégé, a young male tiefling berserker named Sweat-and-Blood. Agents of the Mouse King know she is actually one of Zobeck's most fearsome berserkers, and her combat prowess has earned her a spot at the left hand of the Mouse King himself.

As the Mouse King's bodyguard, Peppercorn refuses to let anyone she doesn't recognize see her liege. A character who tries to bribe her, smooth talk her, or sneak past her earns a date with her trusty greataxe.

MOTIVATIONS & GOALS

Peppercorn's motivations are simple: she wants to keep the Mouse King safe. Moreover, she wants to keep her favorite tavern free of riff-raff.

SCHEMES & PLOTS

Peppercorn is often involved in the Mouse King's schemes, but she pursues none of her own. She likes her job, her employers, and the staff at the King's Head. (Peppercorn appears in "Ripper" and "The First Lab" in *Streets of Zobeck*.)

RADU UNDERHILL

A broad-shouldered and athletically built darakhul, this confident and clearly intelligent creature could pass for human in the proper light.

RADU

Medium humanoid (darakhul), neutral evil

ARMOR CLASS 14 (elven chain)

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*

4th level (1 slot): *blight*

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/undeath 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.

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, handy haversack, ring of fire resistance, fine clothing

TACTICS

Before Combat. Calm and collected, Radu is a shark in a sea of fish, biding his time. If he senses trouble in the offing, he tries to position himself to paralyze the enemy leader in the first round.

During Combat. Radu prefers to paralyze foes using unarmed attacks to deal with them later.

Morale. Radu views situations for the long-term, retreating when appropriate. He keeps one use of his *invisibility* spell handy for such escapes.

BACKGROUND

A known fixer and common sight in the Cartways Black Market, Radu is a slaver, businessman, murderer, likely a spy, and always a gentleman. Ever polite and unusually reliable for an undead, Underhill claims to be a sort of diplomat and liaison to the Ghoul Imperium. It is a claim no one has yet been willing to test.

MOTIVATIONS & GOALS

Radu is a middleman in the Black Market. He connects those who want with those who want to sell and asks no questions. For now, he appears content to wait and watch.

SCHEMES & PLOTS

Sometimes you need things you don't want people to know you need; a body to disappear, a person to stay quiet, an item of questionable use. "When you need those things," people whisper, "you need to find Radu." Radu works to collect favors and contacts.

SERGEANT HENDRYK

This Watchman has a slight build, unusually good clothes for his profession, and a thick but well-trimmed, coal-black beard. He looks at the world with a mercenary eye.

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:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d4) 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

TACTICS

Before Combat. Sergeant Hendryk is full of bravado and bluster. He threatens, cajoles, and insinuates but never draws first. It keeps him legal.

During Combat. Hendryk uses nonlethal force until foes get violent, then he uses blue-whinnis-poisoned weapons.

Morale. Dead men collect no bribes. Hendryk flees when he must and never forgets such an embarrassment.

BACKGROUND

The illegitimate son of a barrister guildmaster, Hendryk got his position in the Watch through his father's influences. His cloak and appointment were his father's final supporting gifts.

MOTIVATIONS & GOALS

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 (3 street thugs), 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.

SCHEMES & PLOTS

Hendryk has no intention of spending his life as a guardsman taking shopkeepers' bribes. He plans on becoming a wealthy man (and a Praetor) by any means necessary and over any number of bodies. (Hendryk appears in "Everyone Lies" and "Ripper" in *Streets of Zobeck*.)

SCALER

This dwarf-sized lizardfolk is as tall as he is wide. A set of wings rising from his back marks his half-dragon heritage.

SCALER

Medium humanoid (half-red dragon lizardfolk), neutral evil

ARMOR CLASS 17 (scale mail, shield)

HIT POINTS 93 (11d8 + 44)

SPEED 30 ft., fly 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	7 (-2)

SKILLS Perception +4, Stealth +4, Survival +4

DAMAGE RESISTANCES fire

SENSES passive Perception 14

LANGUAGES Draconic

CHALLENGE 6 (2,300 XP)

Hold Breath. Scaler can hold his breath for 15 minutes.

Improved Critical. Scaler's weapon attacks score a critical hit on a roll of 19 or 20 (but a roll of 19 is not an automatic hit).

Second Wind. As a bonus action, Scaler can regain 12 (1d10 + 7) hit points.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The lizardfolk makes three melee attacks, each one with a different weapon.

Fire Breath (Recharges 5-6). Scaler exhales fire in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 24 (7d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d6 + 6) piercing damage.



Morningstar. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d6 + 6) bludgeoning damage.

Javelin. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d6 + 6) piercing damage.

EQUIPMENT

Scale mail, morningstar, steel shield, 8 javelins, 2 *potions of greater healing*, 2 *potions of invisibility*

TACTICS

Before Combat. If he has time, Scaler drinks a *potion of invisibility* before he enters melee. He spends one round surveying the battle to determine the most threatening enemy and then moves to attack that individual, hopefully by surprise. The sound of the battle imposes disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks to hear him.

During Combat. Scaler uses his multiple attacks to take out individual combatants quickly. When an enemy falls, he moves on to the next rather than deliver a killing blow. Defeated opponents can bribe him; he ceases attacking if they lay down their weapons and offer him 500 gp. Individuals may attempt to talk him down lower, depending on how or why the fight started, but he won't go below 300 gp and a favor to be named later.

Morale. Scaler doesn't want to die. He just wants to be left alone. Before any fatal blow is delivered, he yells out to his attackers (in Draconic) that they may have whatever it is they want if they let him live.

BACKGROUND

Scaler has built an infamous reputation in the Ghetto. He took over the L-shaped alley that now bears his name over a decade ago, which is a long time in kobold years. He has allowed Slinger's Ambush Gang, a group of goblin slingers, to make the surrounding buildings their home in exchange for rooftop security in keeping others out of his alley. His home guards an entrance to the Cartways, and treasure hunters are always seeking a way down. Many of them do not make it past the ambushers or the alley traps to confront Scaler himself. Those that do make it to Scaler rarely make it further.

MOTIVATIONS & GOALS

Scaler just wants to be left alone. He wants for naught, as Slinger's Ambush Gang, a runt kobold runner, and his reputation see to his every need.

SCHEMES & PLOTS

Scaler is not related to any schemes and plots. He is primarily an encounter for adventurers seeking a Cartways entrance from the Ghetto (see "The Fish and the Rose" in *Streets of Zobeck*), but he does keep a close eye on activity in the tunnels near his home. If anything unusual and big is going on in the Ghetto or the Cartways tunnels under it, Scaler likely knows it.

SLINGER

This skinny goblin of average height has a distinctive tuft of spiky red hair sticking out from under his cap. A well-used sling hangs from his belt, and his pockets bulge with all manner of random shapes.

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

A *potion of healing*, traveler's outfit

TACTICS

Before Combat. Slinger always pockets usable sling ammunition (he can sling unusual objects) from his surroundings and seeks out the best point of cover.

During Combat. A master with the sling, Slinger prefers to attack opponents with his Bank Shot feat to stay out of their direct line of sight.



Morale. Slinger doesn't believe any job is worth dying for, so he makes a quick exit when things turn sour.

BACKGROUND

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.

MOTIVATIONS & GOALS

Coin motivates Slinger, but he very much enjoys harassing the law, so he occasionally takes such jobs on the cheap.

SCHEMES & PLOTS

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. (See "The Fish and the Rose" in *Streets of Zobeck*.)

SYSSYSALAI

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

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 her hit points. Only a *wish* spell can prevent this.

Spellcasting. Syssysalai is an 11th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks), and she needs only verbal

components to cast her spells. She 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, stoneskin*

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.

TACTICS

Before Combat. Syssysalai casts *invisibility* on herself if she can avoid battle. Otherwise, she casts *stoneskin*.

During Combat. Syssysalai casts *black tentacles* and *cone of cold* as her first two attacks.

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

BACKGROUND

The vain Syssysalai lives for intrigue and power and covets artistic masterpieces. She has fled her old lair and now resides in the Zobeck undercity. She continues to instigate trouble among the kobold kings but now chooses her subtle attacks with utmost care. She dares not reveal that she still lives.

MOTIVATIONS & GOALS

Syssysalai seeks to overthrow the kobold kings and crown herself Queen of Queens. She also seeks to collect rare *objets d'art* to rebuild her gallery—after she was forced to abandon her original lair after a failed coup against the kobold kings.

SCHEMES & PLOTS

Syssysalai's plot to overthrow the kobold kings has failed (see "The Fish and the Rose" in *Streets of Zobeck*), and she has since retreated into hiding. She is brewing a new scheme to bring down the kobold kings, but her latest plot may be some ways off. She watches 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.

MYZI THE FIRST, HIS MAJESTY THE MOUSE KING

This mouse is about the size of a large dog. His fur is ash-white with streaks of dark gray across his back in an asymmetrical pattern, his tail is hairless, and his eyes are copper.

Myzi the Mouse King

Small celestial, neutral

ARMOR CLASS 19 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 135 (18d6 + 72)

SPEED 40 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	25 (+7)	18 (+4)	20 (+5)	18 (+4)	18 (+4)

SAVING THROWS Str +8, Dex +11, Wis +8

SKILLS Acrobatics +11, Deception +12, Perception +8, Stealth +11

DAMAGE RESISTANCES acid, fire, cold

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES lightning; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, frightened



SENSES blindsight 120 ft., passive Perception 18

LANGUAGES Common, Druidic, Goblin, Gnome, Halfling, Rodent, Sylvan (telepathy 120 ft.)

CHALLENGE 12 (8,400 XP)

Keen Senses. The Mouse King has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight, hearing, or smell.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the Mouse King fails a saving throw, he can choose to succeed instead.

Rejuvenation. The Mouse King is effectively immortal and nearly impossible to slay. When slain, the Mouse King's soul reforms on the Astral Plane. Within one week, it inhabits another mouse or rat on the Material Plane and the Mouse King reforms. No form of mortal magic (such as magic that would contain or trap his soul) prevents this. To permanently kill the Mouse King, one must destroy every mouse and rat in existence (so his soul has no creature to inhabit).

Rodent Passivism. No rodents, such as mice, giant rats, dire rats, or wererats, willingly attack the Mouse King. They can be forced to do so through magical means.

Speak with Rodents. The Rat King is constantly under the effect of *Speak with Animals*, but he can converse only with mice, rats, dire rats, and other rodents. This ability is always active and cannot be dispelled or negated.

Innate Spellcasting. The Mouse King's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks). He can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *blur*, *confusion*, *detect magic*, *disguise self*

3/day each: *etherealness*, *teleport*

1/day: *astral projection*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Mouse King makes three melee attacks.

Change Shape. The Mouse King can assume the shape of a human as an action. In human form, the Mouse King cannot use his Bite or Claw attacks but can wield weapons and wear armor. The Mouse King retains his movement options in human form.

Bite (Mouse Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) piercing damage plus 22 (4d10) poison damage, and the target must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, the creature contracts Black Fever. Succeeding on this saving throw does not provide immunity to further saving throws.

This disease incubates for 24 hours and then lowers the victim's Dexterity and Constitution scores by 1d4 points at the start of each day as huge red buboes



appear on the victim's skin. A creature dies if its Dexterity or Constitution is reduced to 0 in this way. Once cured, the victim regains 1 point of Dexterity and Constitution per day.

Rapier (Human Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (1d8 + 7) piercing damage.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The Mouse King can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The Mouse King regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Attack. The Mouse King makes a bite attack if in mouse form or a rapier attack if in human form.

Change Shape. The Mouse King uses his Change Shape.

Quick Casting (Costs 3 Actions). The Mouse King casts an innate spell.

LAIR ACTIONS

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the Mouse King can take a lair action to cause one of the following magical effects; the Mouse King can't use the same effect two rounds in a row:

- The Mouse King raises his arms and squeals, calling 4d6 swarms of rats from the environment to attack his enemies. All previously summoned rat swarms scurry away the next time he uses this lair action.

- The Mouse King chooses a point within 120 feet that he can see. A wave of spectral rats emerges from the ground at that point and attacks all creatures within a 30-foot radius centered on that point with a +10 bonus to hit. On a hit, a creature must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, it contracts Black Fever, as described in the Mouse King's bite attack.
- All creatures of the Mouse King's choice within 60 feet of him must make a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the creature is transformed into a rat as the *polymorph* spell. It can make another save at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect and becoming immune to the effect for 24 hours on a success.

TACTICS

Before Combat. The Mouse King casts *blur* on himself.

During Combat. He enters combat using his bite attack. When enough foes are within range, he unleashes *confusion* and uses *disguise self* to pretend to be one of the PCs while they are confused.

Morale. If combat goes against him, he summons other rodents to aid him or to cover his escape.

BACKGROUND

Like the Cat Lord, there is only one Mouse Lord, and he is the King of all rodents. In his natural form, he resembles a large dire rat with copper eyes. He can assume a human form of either a woman with darkened skin, raven-black hair, and copper eyes, dressed in robes of flowing silver or gray, or a man with pale skin, ash-white hair, a long moustache, and dark eyes, dressed all in tailored white or black frock, breeches, and waistcoat.

The Mouse King spends his days looking after the concerns of rodents on the Material, Astral, and Ethereal Planes. When slain (often by the Cat Lord), a new Mouse King is crowned within a week.

MOTIVATIONS & GOALS

Ultimately, the Mouse King wants to see Zobeck prosper, as that is good for his people and his coffers. Trade and river barges take his people far and wide.

SCHEMES & PLOTS

While his servants still take coin purses and snatch jewels, his main source of funds is smuggling and the gambling hall called Sixes and Sevens. The Mouse King schemes to make sure his wealth continues to grow, and that often means entering into conflict with other gangs. When it comes to making money, he additionally takes into account what is best for Zobeck's long-term prosperity, as he correctly believes its wealth and his are entirely connected.

TYMON, THE KING'S BARD

A thin, charismatic man with a narrow, drooping moustache and mousebrown hair, this bard dresses in fine clothing and has a voice like velvet.

TYMON

Medium humanoid (human, shapechanger), neutral evil

ARMOR CLASS 16 (studded leather)

HIT POINTS 60 (11d8 + 11)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)

SKILLS Perception +2, Stealth +6

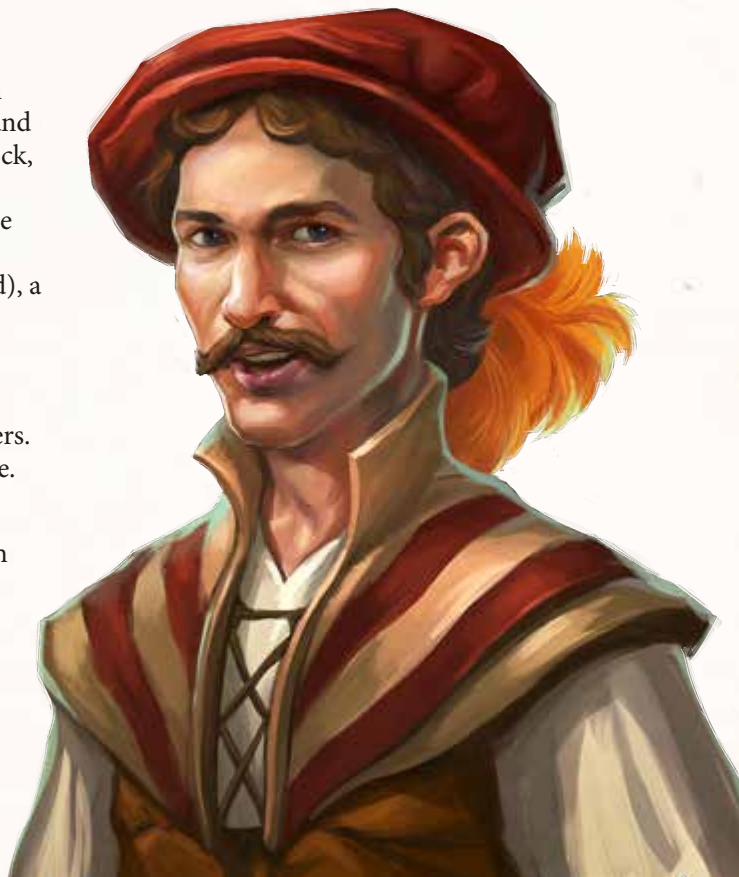
DAMAGE IMMUNITIES bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks not made with silvered weapons

SENSES darkvision 60 ft. (rat form only), passive Perception 12

LANGUAGES Common (can't speak in rat form)

CHALLENGE 4 (1,100 XP)

Keen Smell. Tymon has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.



Shapechanger. Tymon can use his action to polymorph into a rat-humanoid hybrid or into a giant rat, or back into his true form, which is humanoid. His statistics, other than his size, are the same in each form. Any equipment he is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. He reverts to his true form if he dies.

Spellcasting. Tymon is a 5th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). He has the following bard spells prepared:

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

1st (4 slots): *bane, charm person, disguise self, hideous laughter*

2nd (3 slots): *invisibility, suggestion*

3rd (2 slots): *fear*

ACTIONS

Multiattack (Humanoid or Hybrid Form Only). The wererat makes two attacks, only one of which can be a bite.

Bite (Rat or Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d4 + 4) piercing damage. If the target is a humanoid, it must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be cursed with wererat lycanthropy.

Shortsword (Humanoid or Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage.

Hand Crossbow (Humanoid or Hybrid Form Only). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage.

EQUIPMENT

Studded leather armor, rapier, jester's clothes, a coinpurse containing 14 pp, 13 gp, and 12 sp

TACTICS

Before Combat. Tymon casts *invisibility* on himself.

During Combat. Tymon avoids combat if at all possible and uses diplomacy or *suggestion* to try to get opponents to stand down or leave. He calls for aid from the Mouse King's wererat hussars or other minions if they are around, especially Peppercorn.

Morale. Tymon does not fight to the death. He flees or bargains for his life.

BACKGROUND

Tymon, the resident performer at the King's Head tavern, is a racist wererat in the Mouse King's court. He covets the Rat Throne and is tired of waiting for his reign to begin. For three long years, he bit his lip as the former Mouse King Theodore XII entrusted secrets to human lieutenants and watered down the kingdom's blood with afflicted lycanthropes. When the

mouse kingdom parted company with the Spyglass Guild and the underworld influence of the Rat Throne diminished further, Tymon took action.

The precise events that followed remain murky to outside observers, but the bard's plans obviously failed. Theodore XII died, but Tymon did not take his place. With his schemes derailed, if not his ambition, Tymon has gone back to keeping a low profile and waiting for the current Mouse King, Myzi the First, to slip up. He grows more and more impatient with Myzi's uncanny longevity with each passing year. In the meantime, he does Myzi's bidding, which sometimes includes casting *suggestion* spells on patrons of the King's Head to perform tasks for the Mouse King.

MOTIVATIONS & GOALS

Tymon still seeks to kill the Mouse King to take his place. He grows ever more frustrated at the constant foiling of his plots and is beginning to turn to darker sources of power.

SCHEMES & PLOTS

Tymon has been attempting to kill the Mouse King for over a decade, and he is not a patient rat. He has made secret deals with the Redcloaks—and even the devilish servants of their master, the Arch-Devil Mammon.

TYRON, KING OF FIXERS

This older and well-groomed man has a warm voice and the rich clothing of a respectable business owner. The hard glint in his hazel eyes, however, shows just how he got so successful and how far he'll go to stay that way.

TYRON

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil

ARMOR CLASS 15 (mithral chain shirt)

HIT POINTS 52 (8d8 + 16)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)	17 (+3)

SAVING THROWS Dex +6, Int +4

SKILLS Acrobatics +6, Perception +3, Persuasion +6, Stealth +6

DAMAGE RESISTANCES poison

SENSES passive Perception 13

LANGUAGES Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Ghoulish, Thieves' Cant

CHALLENGE 6 (2,300 XP)

Assassinate. During his first turn, Tyron has advantage on attack rolls against any creature that hasn't taken a turn. Any hit he scores against a surprised creature is a critical hit.

Cape of the Mountebank (1/Day). Tyron can cast *dimension door* as an action, leaving behind a faint puff of smoke, lightly obscuring the space he left until the end of his next turn.

Canny Charmer. Tyron has advantage on Wisdom (Insight) and Charisma (Persuasion) checks.

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

Sneak Attack. Once per turn, Tyron 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 his that isn't incapacitated and he doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The assassin makes one rapier attack and one dagger attack.

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

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 17 (5d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Light Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 17 (5d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

EQUIPMENT

Mithral chain shirt, fine clothes and a darkwood walking stick, *cape of the mountebank*.

TACTICS

Before Combat. An older gentleman of high standing, Tyron ensures he's nowhere near combat. He hires thugs to take care of that for him.

During Combat. If he must fight, Tyron fights defensively unless an opening presents itself to escape using his *cape of the mountebank*.

Morale. Tyron knows Lord Greymark doesn't pay dead men, and he likes the lifestyle that comes with regular paychecks. He avoids or escapes combat at the first opportunity unless ordered to remain for some reason.

BACKGROUND

Tyron, Lord Greymark's fixer, owns and runs the Silk Scabbard in Upper Zobeck with Greymark's approval and protection. Never ambitious (or, as he prefers to think of it, stupid) enough to step forward and run his own operation, Tyron greatly enjoys the security of having a powerful patron and partner. He sees Greymark's orders and restrictions as just part of the price of doing business.

MOTIVATIONS & GOALS

Tyron seeks to make his business lucrative. He's even willing to make a deal with a devil if necessary to ensure this happens.

SCHEMES & PLOTS

In his connection to Volstaff, Tyron is often involved with the Redcloaks' affairs, though he spends many of his off-duty hours taking care of messes for Greymark himself (see "Ripper" in *Streets of Zobeck*).






MAGIC OF ZOBECK

Azren attached the last wing to the owl and tested the gears. Both golden clockwork wings extended easily, flapped smoothly, and made a pleasing tick-tick-tick as their armatures moved. He smiled fondly, and Master Orlando nodded at the sight of a mage not so much pleased with his own power to create as awed by what he had made.

He clapped the young man on the shoulder, his own smile as wide as Azren's. "Well done, my boy. You've become quite adept over the years." His gaze roamed over the contours of the delicate machine and picked out small artistic details on the acid-etched feathers and carved into the brass joints. "And developed quite an eye. Let's do your last check."

Orlando lifted the owl but frowned when he could not find the gear panel. Azren's smile became impish, and he traced a pattern in the yielding metal feathers on the machine's back. The body split open along delicate hinges. Orlando nodded approvingly and spent several minutes examining the inner workings. He poked and tested the gears and inspected the actuators for the creature's eyes. He closed it again with gentle pressure and felt a satisfying click as it locked together. "Excellent work. But I expected nothing less, Azren." He set down the owl and took the younger man's hand. "You make your former teacher proud. Now, let's see you finish what you've started." Azren nodded and began chanting the words that would call an animal soul to give animation to his new familiar.



Zobeckers value all forms of magic. The Arcane Collegium recognizes clockwork, divination, elementalism, enchantment, illusion, necromancy, stars and shadows, and summoning as the proper schools of arcane study. The study of alchemy is considered a lesser craft, rather than a full school, as are shamanism, spirit magic, and pacts, though they acknowledge the last only grudgingly and consider it corrupt. All but one of these schools of magic are widely known throughout Midgard, and can be found in the *Midgard Heroes Handbook*. The one special school is a uniquely Zobeckian sort of magic—the magic of clockwork.

CLOCKWORK MAGES OF ZOBECK

Zobeck, the Clockwork City, is home to a unique school of magic. Clockwork spells are taught at the Collegium but not widely known outside the city. It is common among advanced dwarven, gnome, and even kobold priests, among certain societies of scholars and engineers dedicated to constructs and automatons, and among planar travelers from mechanical realms.

WIZARD SCHOOL: CLOCKWORK

The origins of clockwork magic are nebulous at best. Those of a religious bent say that it's derived from the divine, that a follower of some god of smiths or machines or even time had an epiphany. Others, usually those of a less religious bent, claim that clockwork magic was the discovery of an ancient artificer who, while experimenting with gears and steam, built the first device animated by enchantments. Whatever its origin, clockwork magic involves time manipulation, constructs, and mechanical devices of all kinds.

The school of clockwork magic is a blending of technology and magic not often seen. While some would argue that all spells of this so-called school are simply applications of the more traditionally acknowledged branches of arcane magic, clockwork mages understand that there is qualitative difference in thought between casting, say, an evocation (clockwork) spell and an ordinary evocation. The school thrives alongside industry, using a small number of spells, compared to the older schools, to create a wide range of styles. Fool is he who fails to notice arcane glyphs and wands and mistakes a clockwork mage for a common gear grinder or tinkerer.

The following class abilities are available to wizards of the clockwork school.

CLOCKWORK SAVANT

Beginning when you choose this school at 2nd level, the gold and time it takes to copy a clockwork spell into your spell book is halved. You also gain proficiency with clockwork tools (25 gp, 2 lb).

CLOCKWORKER'S CHARM

Beginning at 2nd level, whenever you cast an *animate construct* spell, increase the duration by a number of minutes equal to your proficiency bonus. At 20th level, you can make the spell permanent until dispelled but cannot have more than one made permanent at a time.

METAL SHAPE

When you reach 6th level, you gain the ability to reshape metal with a touch. When you grasp a piece of metal of Small size or smaller, you can alter its form into any shape that suits your purpose. The item must be in your hands and under your control; you can't, for example, reshape a piece of armor or a weapon that's being worn or wielded by someone else. To create a specific object, such as a key or mechanical component, you must be completely familiar with it. Thus you could replicate a key that you had in your possession for an extended period of time, but you could not create a working key based on seeing the lock alone.

Objects you create can have up to two hinges and a latch, but finer mechanical detail is not possible. This effect can be used to repair metal as per the spell. You may use this feature once before completing a long or short rest.

GOLEM FORM

Beginning at 10th level, you can transform yourself as an action into a living construct for up to 1 minute per level. You retain your Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma and the ability to speak and cast spells. You can transform into a golem or a clockwork creature whose CR is less than or equal to your current level in this class. Otherwise, this ability functions as the druid's Wild Shape ability.

CLOCKWORK MASTERY

Starting at 14th level, you can use magic to bring constructs under your control. As an action, you can compel one construct you can see within 60 feet of you to make an Intelligence saving throw against your wizard spell save DC. This is a magical effect. If the saving throw fails, the construct becomes friendly to you and obeys your commands for 1 hour, until you use this ability again, or until it takes damage from you or one of your allies. If the saving throw fails by 5 or more, the duration is extended to 6 hours or until one of the other conditions is fulfilled. When the effect ends, the construct is aware it was controlled by you.



CLOCKWORK FAMILIARS

Clockwork mages who use the spell *find familiar* substitute a small clockwork device in the form of an animal worth 10 gp for the spell's usual material components. It must resemble one of the allowable animals listed in the spell. When the ritual is complete, the clockwork animates. It has the statistics of the chosen form but is a construct. The familiar's form can be changed by rebuilding the clockwork device in the new form and casting *find familiar* again. If the familiar is destroyed, it can be rebuilt (in the same or a new form) with the same components, if they're recovered; otherwise, 10 gp must be spent on replacement parts. The familiar is never counted when determining the number of constructs a mage can control.

SPELLS

The following spells come from the unique school of clockwork magic and are generally known only to students of the Arcane Collegium. Some spells may have two schools, such as transmutation (clockwork). A dual-school spell counts as being from both schools.

WIZARD SPELLS

CANTRIPS

Fist of Iron
Tick Stop

1ST LEVEL

Analyze Device
Animate Construct
Armored Shell
Find the Flaw
Gear Shield
Machine's Load
Machine Speech
Pendulum
Tireless

2ND LEVEL

Armored Heart
Gear Barrage
Heartstop
Lock Armor
Repair Metal
Spin
Winding Key

3RD LEVEL

Overclock
Thousand Darts

4TH LEVEL

Absolute Command
Gremlins
Grinding Gears
Read Memory
Steam Blast
Write Memory

5TH LEVEL

Imbue Spell
Mass Repair Metal
Mechanical Union

6TH LEVEL

Robe of Shards
Catapult

7TH LEVEL

Hellforging
Timeless Engine

8TH LEVEL

Machine Sacrifice
Move the Cosmic Wheel
Power Word Restore
Steam Whistle
Time Jump

9TH LEVEL

Time in a Bottle

ABSOLUTE COMMAND

4th-level transmutation (clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (a pair of small gloves fitted with a conduit and worth 100 gp)

Duration: Concentration, up to 10 minutes

You can control a construct you have built with a challenge rating of 6 or less. You can manipulate objects with your construct as precisely as its construction allows, and you perceive its surroundings through its sensory inputs as if you inhabited its body.

The construct uses the caster's Proficiency bonus (modified by the construct's Strength and Dexterity scores). You can use the manipulators of the construct to perform any number of skill-based tasks, using the construct's Strength and Dexterity modifiers when using skills based on those particular abilities.

Your body remains immobile, as if paralyzed, for the duration of the spell. The construct must remain within 100 feet of you. If it moves beyond this distance, the spell immediately ends and your mind returns to your body.

AT HIGHER LEVELS: When you cast this spell using higher-level spell slots, you may control a construct with a challenge rating 2 higher for each slot level you use above 4th. The construct's range also increases by 10 feet for each slot level.

ANALYZE DEVICE

1st-level divination (clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 hour

Range: Touch

Components: V, M, S (a set of clockworker's tools)

Duration: Instantaneous

You discover all mechanical properties, mechanisms, and functions of a single construct or clockwork device, including how to activate or deactivate those functions, if appropriate.

ANIMATE CONSTRUCT

1st-level transmutation (clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 30 feet

Components: V, S, M (a construct body of appropriate size)

Duration: Concentration, up to 10 minutes (see below)

This spell animates a carefully prepared construct of Tiny size. The object acts immediately, on your turn, and can attack your opponents to the best of its ability. You can direct it not to attack, to attack particular enemies, or to perform other actions. You choose the

object to animate, and you can change that choice each time you cast the spell. The cost of the body to be animated is 10 gp × its hit points. The body can be reused any number of times, provided it isn't severely damaged or destroyed.

If no prepared construct body is available, you can animate a mass of loose metal or stone instead. Before casting, the loose objects must be arranged in a suitable shape (taking up to a minute), and the construct's hit points are halved.

An animated construct has a Constitution of 10, Intelligence and Wisdom 3, and Charisma 1. Other characteristics are determined by the construct's size as follows.

ANIMATED CONSTRUCT STATISTICS

Size	HP	AC	Attack & Damage	Str	Dex	Spell Slot
Tiny	15	12	+3, 1d4 + 4	4	16	1st
Small	25	13	+4, 1d8 + 2	6	14	2nd
Medium	40	14	+5, 2d6 + 1	10	12	3rd
Large	50	15	+6, 2d10 + 2	14	10	4th
Huge	80	16	+8, 2d12 + 4	18	8	5th
Gargantuan	100	17	+10, 4d8 + 6	20	6	6th

AT HIGHER LEVELS: Casting this spell using higher-level spell slots allows you to increase the size of the construct animated, as shown on the table.

ARMORED HEART

1st-level conjuration (clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 bonus action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (5 gp worth of mithral dust sprinkled on the target's skin)

Duration: 1 round

The targeted creature gains resistance to bludgeoning, slashing, and piercing damage. This resistance can be overcome with adamantine or magical weapons.

ARMORED SHELL

1st-level conjuration (clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self

Components: V, S, M (a rivet)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 hour

This spell creates a suit of magical studded leather armor (AC 12). It does not grant you proficiency in its use. Casters without the appropriate armor proficiency suffer disadvantage on any ability check, saving throw, or attack roll that involves Strength or Dexterity and cannot cast spells.

AT HIGHER LEVELS: Casting *armored shell* using a higher-level spell slot creates stronger armor: a chain shirt (AC 13) at level 2, scale mail (AC 14) at level 3, chain mail (AC 16) at level 4, and plate armor (AC 18) at level 5.

CATAPULT

6th-level transmutation (clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 400 feet

Components: V, S, M (a small platinum lever and fulcrum worth 400 gp)

Duration: Instantaneous

You magically hurl an object or creature weighing 500 lbs. or less 40 feet through the air in a direction of your choosing (including straight up). Objects hurled at specific targets require a spell attack roll to hit. A thrown creature takes 6d10 bludgeoning damage from the force of the throw, plus any appropriate falling damage, and lands prone. If the target of the spell is thrown against another creature, the total damage is divided evenly between them and both creatures are knocked prone.

AT HIGHER LEVELS: When you cast this spell using a higher-level spell slot, each additional level increases the damage by 1d10, the distance thrown by 10 feet, and the weight thrown by 100 lbs.

FIND THE FLAW

1st-level divination (clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (a broken gear)

Duration: Instantaneous

You touch one creature. The next attack roll that creature makes against a clockwork or metal construct, or any machine, is a critical hit.

FIST OF IRON

Transmutation cantrip (clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self

Components: V, S

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You transform your naked hand to iron. Your unarmed attacks do 1d6 points of bludgeoning damage and are considered magical.



GEAR BARRAGE

3rd-level conjuration (clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self (60-foot cone)

Components: V, S, M (a handful of gears and sprockets worth 5 gp)

Duration: Instantaneous

You create a burst of magically-propelled gears. Each creature within a 60-foot cone takes 3d8 slashing damage, or half damage with a successful Dexterity saving throw. Constructs have disadvantage on the saving throw.

GEAR SHIELD

1st-level abjuration (clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet

Components: V, S, M (a small handful of gears and sprockets worth 5 gp)

Duration: 10 minutes

You cause a handful of gears to orbit the target's body. These shield the spell's target from incoming attacks, granting a +2 bonus to AC and to Dexterity and Constitution saving throws, without hindering the subject's movement, vision, or outgoing attacks.

GREMLINS

4th-level conjuration (clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet

Components: V, S, M (a single gear)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You target a construct and summon a plague of invisible spirits to harass it. The target resists the spell and negates its effect with a successful Wisdom saving throw. While the spell remains in effect, the construct has disadvantage on attack rolls, ability checks, and saving throws, and it takes 3d8 force damage at the start of each of its turns as it is magically disassembled by the spirits.

AT HIGHER LEVELS: When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 5th or higher, the damage increases by 1d8 for each slot above 4th.

GRINDING GEARS

4th-level evocation (clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 120 feet

Components: V, S, M (a single gear)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You designate a spot within range, and massive gears emerge from the ground at that spot, creating difficult terrain in a 20-foot radius. Creatures that move in the area must make successful Dexterity saving throws after every 10 feet of movement or when they stand up. Failure indicates the creature falls prone and takes 1d8 points of bludgeoning damage.

HEARTSTOP

2nd-level necromancy (clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S

Duration: Concentration, up to 10 minutes

You slow the beating of a willing target's heart to the rate of one beat per minute. The creature's breathing almost stops. To a casual or brief observer, the subject appears dead. At the end of the spell, the creature returns to normal with no ill effects.

HELLFORGING

7th-level necromancy (ritual; clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 hour (see below)

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (a complete mechanical body worth 10,000 gp inscribed with demonic runes and containing a ready soul gem)

Duration: Instantaneous

You spend an hour calling forth a disembodied evil spirit. At the end of that time, the spirit must make a Charisma saving throw. If the saving throw succeeds, you take 2d10 psychic damage plus 2d10 necrotic damage from waves of uncontrolled energy rippling out from the disembodied spirit. You can maintain the spell, forcing 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 evil spirit returns to its place of torment and cannot be recalled.

If the saving throw fails, the summoned spirit is transferred into the waiting soul gem and immediately animates the constructed body. The subject is now a hellforged; it loses all its previous racial traits and gains gearforged traits except as follows:

Vulnerability: Hellforged are vulnerable to radiant damage.

Evil Mind: Hellforged have disadvantage on saving throws against spells and abilities of evil fiends or aberrations that affect the mind or behavior.

Past Life: The hellforged retains only a vague sense of who it was in its former existence, but these memories are enough for it to gain proficiency in one skill.

Languages: Hellforged speak Common, Machine Speech, and Infernal or Abyssal

Up to four other spellcasters of at least 5th level can assist you in the ritual. Each assistant increases the DC of the 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.

IMBUE SPELL

5th-level transmutation (ritual; clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 hour

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (a specially designed gear worth 100 gp per spell level—see below)

Duration: Instantaneous

You imbue a spell of 1st through 3rd level that has a casting time of instantaneous onto a gear worth 100 gp per level of spell you are imbuing. At the end of the ritual, the gear is placed into a piece of clockwork that includes a timer or trigger mechanism. When the timer or trigger goes off, the spell is cast. If the range of the spell was Touch, it effects only a target touching the device. If the spell had a range in feet, the spell is cast on the closest viable target within range, based on the nature of the spell. Spells with a range of Self or Sight can't be imbued. If the gear is placed with a timer, it activates when the time elapses regardless of whether a legitimate target is available.

AT HIGHER LEVELS: You can perform this ritual as a 7th-level spell to imbue a spell of 4th or 5th level.

LOCK ARMOR

2nd-level transmutation (clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet

Components: V, S, M (a pinch of rust and metal shavings)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You target a piece of metal equipment or a metal construct. If the target is a creature wearing metal armor or is a construct, it makes a Wisdom saving throw to negate the effect. If the saving throw fails, the spell makes metal cling to metal, making it impossible to move pieces against each other. This effectively paralyzes a creature that is made of metal or that is wearing metal armor with moving pieces; for example, scale mail would lock up because the scales must slide across each other, but a breastplate would be unaffected. Limited movement might still be possible, depending on how extensive the armor is, and speech is usually not affected. Metal constructs are completely paralyzed. An affected creature or construct repeats the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself with a success. A *grease* spell dispels *lock armor* on everything in its area of effect.

AT HIGHER LEVELS: When casting this spell using a 3rd-level slot or higher, you may target 1 additional creature or item per level.

MACHINE'S LOAD

1st-level transmutation (clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (a 1-lb. weight)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You touch a creature and give it the capacity to carry, lift, push, or drag weight as if it were one size category larger. If you're using the encumbrance rules, the target is not subject to penalties for weight. Furthermore, the subject can carry loads that would normally be unwieldy.

AT HIGHER LEVELS: When you cast this spell using a spell slot higher than 1st, you can touch one additional creature for each spell level.

MACHINE SACRIFICE

8th-level necromancy (clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (a construct with at least 3 HD, which is consumed in the casting)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You sacrifice a willing construct you can see to imbue a willing target with construct traits. The target gains resistance to all nonmagical damage and gains immunity to the blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, petrified, and poisoned conditions.

MACHINE SPEECH

1st-level transmutation (clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 bonus action

Range: Self

Components: V, S

Duration: 1 round

Your voice, and to a lesser extent your mind, changes to communicate only in the whirring clicks of machine speech. Until the end of your next turn, all clockwork spells you cast have advantage on their attack rolls or the targets have disadvantage on their saving throws.

MASS REPAIR METAL

5th-level transmutation (clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self (60-foot radius)

Components: V, S

Duration: Instantaneous

As repair metal, but you can affect all metal within range. You repair 1d8 + 5 damage to a metal object or construct by sealing up rents and bending metal back into place.

AT HIGHER LEVELS: Casting *mass repair metal* as a 6th-level spell repairs 2d8 + 10 damage.

MECHANICAL UNION

5th-level transmutation (clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet

Components: V, S, M (a tiny hammer and adamantite spike worth 100 gp)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 hour

You can take control of a construct by voice or mental commands. The construct makes a Wisdom saving throw to resist the spell, and it gets advantage on the saving throw if its CR equals or exceeds your level in the class used to cast this spell. Once a command is given, the construct does everything it can to complete the command. Giving a new command takes an action. Constructs will risk harm, even go into combat, on your orders but will not self-destruct; giving such an order ends the spell.

MOVE THE COSMIC WHEEL

8th-level conjuration (clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 120 feet

Components: V, S, M (a music box worth at least 250 gp attuned to a particular plane of existence)

Duration: 24 hours

You wind your music box and call forth a piece of another plane of existence with which you are familiar, either through personal experience or intense study. The magic creates a bubble of space with a 30-foot radius within range of you and at a spot you designate. The portion of your plane that's inside the bubble swaps places with a corresponding portion of the plane your music box is attuned with.

There is a 10% chance the portion of the plane you summon arrives with native creatures on it. Inanimate objects and non-ambulatory life (like trees) are cut off at the edge of the bubble, while living creatures that don't fit inside the bubble are shunted outside it before the swap occurs. Otherwise, creatures from both planes caught inside the bubble are sent along with their chunk of reality to the other plane for the duration of the spell, unless they make a successful Charisma saving throw when the spell is cast; with a successful save, a creature can choose whether to shift planes with the bubble or leap outside of it a moment before the shift occurs.

Any natural reaction between the two planes occurs normally (fire spreads, water flows, etc.), while energy (such as necrotic energy) leaks slowly across the edge of the sphere (no more than a foot or two per hour).

Otherwise, creatures and effects can move freely across the boundary of the sphere; for the duration of the spell, it becomes a part of its new location to the fullest extent possible, given the natures of the two planes. The two displaced bubbles shift back to their original places automatically after 24 hours.

Note that the amount of preparation involved (acquiring and attuning the music box) precludes this spell from being cast on the spur of the moment. Because of its unpredictable and potentially wide-ranging effect, it's also advisable to discuss your interest in this spell with your GM before adding it to your character's repertoire.

OVERCLOCK

3rd-level transmutation (clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 30 feet

Components: V, S, M (a clock key)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You cause a targeted piece of clockwork to speed up past the point of control for the duration of the spell. The targeted clockwork can't cast spells with verbal components or even communicate effectively (all its utterances sound like grinding gears). At the start of each of its turns, the target must make a Wisdom saving throw. If the saving throw fails, the clockwork moves at three times its normal speed in a random direction and its turn ends; it can't perform any other actions. If the saving throw succeeds, then until the end of its turn, the clockwork's speed is doubled and it gains an additional action, which must be Attack (one weapon attack only), Dash, Disengage, Hide, or Use an Object. When the spell ends, the clockwork takes 2d8 force damage. It also must be rewound or refueled and it needs to have its daily maintenance performed immediately, if it relies on any of those things.

PENDULUM

1st-level enchantment (clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (small pendulum or metronome made of brass and rosewood worth 10 gp)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You give the target creature a degree of regularity in its motions and fortunes. If the target fails a Wisdom saving throw, then for the duration of the spell it doesn't make d20 die rolls but instead follows the sequence 20, 1, 19, 2, 18, 3, 17, 4, and so on.

POWER WORD RESTORE

8th-level evocation (clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V

Duration: Instantaneous

You speak a word of power, and energy washes over a single construct you touch. The construct regains all its lost hit points, all negative conditions on the construct end, and it can use a reaction to stand up if it was prone.

READ MEMORY

4th-level divination (clockwork)

Casting Time: 10 minutes

Range: Self

Components: V, S, M (a memory gear from a gearforged)

Duration: Instantaneous

You copy the memories of one memory gear into your own mind. You recall these memories as if you had experienced them but without any emotional attachment or context.

REPAIR METAL

2nd-level transmutation (clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S

Duration: Instantaneous

A damaged construct or metal object regains 1d8 + 5 hit points when this spell is cast on it.

AT HIGHER LEVELS: The spell restores 2d8 + 10 hit points at 4th level, 3d8 + 15 at 6th level, and 4d8 + 20 at 8th level.

ROBE OF SHARDS

6th-level abjuration (clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self

Components: V, S, M (a metal shard)

Duration: 1 minute

You create a robe of metal shards, gears, and cogs that provides a base AC of 14 + your Dexterity modifier. As a bonus action while protected by a *robe of shards*, you can command bits of metal from a fallen foe to be absorbed by your robe; each infusion of metal increases your AC by 1, to a maximum of 18 + Dexterity modifier. You can also use a bonus action to dispel the robe, causing it to explode into a shower of flying metal that does 8d6 slashing damage, +1d6 per point of basic (non-Dexterity) AC above 14, to all creatures within 30 feet of you.

SPIN

2nd-level enchantment (clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet

Components: V, S

Duration: 1 minute

You target a creature within 60 feet that you can see and tell it to spin. The creature can resist this command with a successful Wisdom saving throw. If the saving throw fails, the creature spins in place for the duration of the spell. A spinning creature repeats the Wisdom saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect with a success. A creature that has spun for 1 round or more becomes dizzy and has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks until one round after it stops spinning.

STEAM BLAST

4th-level evocation (clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self (15-foot radius)

Components: V, S, M (a tiny copper kettle or boiler)

Duration: Instantaneous

You unleash a burst of superheated steam in a 15-foot radius centered on you. All other creatures in that area take 5d8 fire damage, or half damage with a successful Dexterity saving throw. Nonmagical fires smaller than a bonfire are extinguished and everything becomes wet.

AT HIGHER LEVELS: When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 5th level or higher, add 1d8 damage per spell level.

STEAM WHISTLE

8th-level evocation (clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self (30-foot radius)

Components: V, S, M (a small brass whistle)

Duration: Instantaneous

You open your mouth and unleash a shattering scream. All other creatures in a 30-foot radius take 10d10 thunder damage and are deafened for 1d8 hours. A successful Constitution saving throw halves the damage and reduces deafness to 1d8 rounds.

THOUSAND DARTS

3rd-level evocation (clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self (120-foot line)

Components: V, S, M (set of mithral darts worth 25 gp)

Duration: Instantaneous

You launch thousands of needlelike darts in a 5-foot-wide line at a target. Creatures in the line take 6d6 piercing damage, or half damage with a successful Dexterity saving throw. The primary target of the needles makes the saving throw with disadvantage.

AT HIGHER LEVELS: When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 4th level or higher, add 1d6 to the damage per spell level.

TICK STOP

Transmutation cantrip (clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 30 feet

Components: V

Duration: 1 round

You speak a word and the target construct can take one action or bonus action on its next turn, but not both. The construct is immune to further *tick stops* from the same caster for 24 hours.

TIME IN A BOTTLE

9th-level transmutation (clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Sight

Components: V

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You designate a spot within your sight. Time comes under your control in a 20-foot radius centered on that spot. You can freeze it, reverse it, or move it forward by as much as 1 minute as long as you maintain concentration. Nothing and no one, yourself included, can enter the field or affect what happens inside it. You can choose to end the effect at any moment on your turn, and events progress naturally from there.

TIME JUMP

8th-level transmutation (clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S

Duration: Instantaneous

You throw a construct forward in time if it fails a Constitution saving throw. The construct disappears for 1d4 + 1 rounds, during which time it cannot act or be acted upon in any way. When the construct returns, it is unaware that any time has passed.

TIMELESS ENGINE

7th-level transmutation (clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S

Duration: Until dispelled

You halt the normal processes of degradation and wear in a nonmagical clockwork device, making normal maintenance unnecessary and slowing fuel consumption to 1/10th of normal. For magical devices and constructs, the spell greatly reduces wear. A magical clockwork device, machine, or creature that normally needs daily maintenance only needs care once a year; if it previously needed monthly maintenance, it now requires attention only once a decade.

TIRELESS

1st-level transmutation (clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: S, M (ever-wound spring worth 50 gp)

Duration: 24 hours

You grant machinelike stamina to the target. The target requires no food or drink or rest. It can move at three times its normal speed overland and perform three times the usual amount of labor or read at three times the normal rate. Creatures under the effect of the spell are immune to nonmagical exhaustion and suffer no consequences for not sleeping or for overexertion. This spell does not reduce or prevent magical fatigue or magical exhaustion.

WINDING KEY

2nd-level transmutation (clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet

Components: V, M (an ornately carved silver key worth 50 gp)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You target a construct, giving it an extra action or move on each of its turns.

WRITE MEMORY

4th-level transmutation (clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 hour

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (one empty memory gear)

Duration: Instantaneous

You copy your memories, or those learned from the spell *read memory*, onto an empty memory gear.



MAGIC SHOPS IN ZOBECK

Zobeck has no true magic shops to speak of. For the most part, the Arcane Collegium frowns on such establishments. What magic someone finds in the course of his travels, however, is none of their concern—unless they want to acquire it. That said, a few faculty members might, with some persuasion, create items for patrons. Most faculty members are too busy with personal studies and classes to take on commissions, but they do enjoy being asked over a free meal or two.

The Book Fetish in the Collegium District does deal in a limited selection of magic items, including those acquired through the Temple of Painful Pleasures. The shop does some buying and trading, and the priestesses also make certain potions and wands for sale. As their clients run the magical gamut, they offer a few non-clerical items. The temple concentrates on divine and sex-related magic, but the temple's high priestess acquires many items in trade or through confiscation, and—for an additional fee—she can talk some of her Arcane Collegium patrons into creating items for her that they normally wouldn't make.

Additionally, customers may purchase more mundane magical items at Pentrick's Mundane Magical Items stall in the Kobold Ghetto. His stock constantly changes, and customers with specific desires may have to visit often.

PENTRICK'S MUNDANE MAGICAL ITEMS

Item	Cost
Blinding lantern	900 gp
Boots of solid footing	1,100 gp
Brawler's leather	250 gp
Burglar's lock and key	1,000 gp
Hardening polish	400 gp
Jungle mess kit	500 gp
Scoundrel's gambit	50 gp
Shifting shirt	850 gp
Spicebox spoon	700 gp
Spider grenade	300 gp
Tactile gel	250 gp
Tailor's clasp	1,100 gp
Whispering powder	250 gp

MAGIC ITEMS

The following magic items can be found or, on occasion, commissioned to be made in Zobeck.

ALCHEMICAL LANTERN

Wondrous item, uncommon

The lantern has 3 charges that replenish at twilight. While the lantern is lit, you can spend 1 charge as an action to cause the lantern to spit gooey alchemical fire.

This lantern sheds bright light in a 60-foot radius and dim light for an additional 60 feet. When you spend a charge, the lantern makes a ranged-spell attack (+5 to hit) against a target within the radius of bright light, or with disadvantage against a target in the area of dim light. On a hit, the target takes 2d8 fire damage and takes 1d8 additional fire damage at the start of each of its turns until it uses an action to put out the fire.

BAG OF TRAPS

Wondrous item, rare

Anyone reaching into this apparently empty bag feels a small coin, which resembles no known currency. Removing the coin and placing or tossing it up to 20 feet creates a random trap (from the 5th-Edition rules or another source) that remains for 10 minutes or until discharged or disarmed, whereupon it disappears. The coin returns to the bag only after the trap disappears. You may draw up to 10 traps from the bag per week.

BLINDING LANTERN

Wondrous item, uncommon

This ornate brass lantern comes fitted with heavily inscribed plates shielding the cut crystal lens. With a flick of a lever, as an action, the plates rise and unleash a dazzling array of lights at a single target within 30 feet.

You must use two hands to direct the lights precisely into the eyes of a foe. The target creature must roll a DC 11 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the creature is blinded until the end of its next turn. A creature blinded by the lantern is immune to its effects for 1 minute afterward. This power can be used at will in dark conditions; it has no effect in full daylight.

By opening the shutter on the opposite side, the device functions as a normal bullseye lantern, yet illuminates magically, requiring no fuel and giving off no heat.

BOOTS OF SOLID FOOTING

Wondrous item, uncommon

A thick, rubbery sole covers the bottoms and sides of these stout leather boots. Useful for maneuvering in cluttered alleyways, slick sewers, and the occasional patch of ice or gravel, they allow normal movement over difficult terrain for up to 10 rounds. The boots regain 1d10 rounds of movement at dawn each day.

BOOTS OF THE SWIFT STRIKER

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

While wearing these boots, your walking speed increases by 10 feet. Additionally, when you take the Dash action while wearing these boots, you may make a single weapon attack at the end of your movement. You cannot continue moving after making this attack.

BRAWLER'S LEATHER

Weapon (unarmed strike), common

These rawhide straps have lines of crimson runes running along their length. They require 10 minutes of bathing them in salt water before carefully wrapping them around your forearms.

Once fitted, you gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with unarmed strikes. The straps become brittle once they set after fitting and only last for the 10 attacks before crumbling away.



BURGLAR'S LOCK AND KEY

Wondrous item, uncommon

This heavy iron lock bears a stout, pitted key permanently fixed in the keyhole. As an action, you can twist the key counterclockwise to instantly open one door, chest, bag, bottle, or container of your choice within 30 feet.

Any container or portal weighing more than 30 lbs. or restrained in any way (latched, bolted, tied, or the like) automatically resists this effect.

CATALYST OIL

Wondrous item, rare

This special elemental compound draws on nearby energy sources. Catalyst oils are tailored to one specific damage type (not including bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing damage) and work once per dose. Whenever a spell or effect of this type goes off within 60 feet of a dose of catalyst oil, the oil catalyzes and becomes the spell's new point of origin. If the spell affects a single target, its original point of origin becomes the new target. If the spell's area is directional (such as a cone or a cube) you determine the spell's new direction.

This redirected spell is easier to evade; if it allows for a saving throw or attack roll, its saving throws are made with advantage and the attack roll is made with disadvantage (using the caster's spell attack bonus).

CHRONOMANCER'S POCKET CLOCK

Wondrous item, very rare

Winding this golden, enchanted pocketwatch as an action allows you to cast *haste*. This effect can be used 3 times and regains spent uses at the stroke of midnight each night.

If the pendant is destroyed (AC 14, 15 hit points) while it has all 3 uses remaining, the creature that broke it gains the effects of the *time stop* spell.

CLOAK OF THE INCONSPICUOUS RAKE

Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement)

Spun from simple gray wool and closed with a plain, triangular copper clasp, this cloak may activate once per day as an immediate action that does not provoke opportunity attacks. For 5 minutes after speaking the command word, you become completely forgettable.

Those who see you while under this effect must make a DC 15 Intelligence saving throw as soon as you leave their sight. On a failure, the witness remembers a person doing whatever you did but can only describe your appearance and mannerisms in the vaguest terms, "an androgynous person, of average height, dressed like everyone else."

Creatures with blindsight and truesight are unaffected by this item.

CLOAK OF THE RAT

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

While wearing this gray garment, your passive Wisdom (Perception) score improves by 5. Additionally, once per day as a bonus action, you can shrink to one size category smaller for 1 round. This contortion allows you to fit through spaces normally too small for you, to escape bonds, or any other too-tight situation.

Finally, once per day as a bonus action, you can transform into a rat for up to 1 hour. You can revert to humanoid form as a bonus action. This effect is otherwise identical to a druid's Wild Shape feature.

CLOCKWORK HAND

Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement)

A beautiful work of articulate brass, this prosthetic clockwork hand (or hands) cannot be worn if you possess both of your hands. While worn, you gain a +2 bonus to damage with melee-weapon attacks made with this hand or weapons wielded in this hand.

CLOCKWORK PENDANT

Wondrous item, rare

This pendant resembles an ornate, miniature clock and possesses 10 charges. You may expend 1 charge by winding the clock as an action in order to cast *haste*, *slow*, or *blur*. This spell's duration is changed to "3 rounds."

Only one spell cast from a clockwork pendant can be active at a time. Casting a second spell negates an existing spell effect.

If the pendant is destroyed (AC 14, 15 hit points) while it has at least 3 charges remaining, it creates a temporal distortion in a 10-foot sphere centered on the pendant. This stasis effect disappears in 1d4 rounds. All creatures in the distortion are incapacitated and immune to all damage, all spells, and other magical or physical effects.

FANGED MASK

Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement)

This tribal mask is made of wood and adorned with animal fangs. Once donned, it melds to your face and grants you a bite attack that deals 1d4 piercing damage (plus your Strength modifier), regardless of your size. If you already have a bite attack when you don this mask, your bite attack's damage dice double (e.g., 1d4 becomes 2d4).

GLIDING CLOAK

Wondrous item, uncommon

By grasping the ends of the cloak while falling, you can glide up to 5 feet horizontally in any direction for every 1 foot you fall. You descend 60 feet per round but take no damage from falling while gliding in this way.

A tailwind allows you to glide 10 feet per 1 foot descended, but a headwind forces you to only glide 5 feet per 2 feet descended.

HARDENING POLISH

Potion, uncommon

This unguent, when applied to a melee weapon, hardens its edge and strengthens the material, granting the weapon or material the properties of adamantite for 10 rounds. One vial coats a single melee weapon or 20 units of ammunition.

JUNGLE MESS KIT

Wondrous item, uncommon

This crucial piece of survival gear guarantees safe use of the most basic of consumables. The hinged metal container acts as a cook pot and opens to reveal a cup, plate, and eating utensils. This kit renders any spoiled, rotten, or even naturally poisonous food or drink safe to consume (it does not neutralize brewed poisons, venoms, and similar toxins).

It can purify only mundane, natural effects and affects up to 1 cubic foot of food and drink 3 times per day. After it is spent, it regains all uses at next dawn.

LIFEBLOOD GEAR, SMALL

Wondrous item, common

This small bronze gear, if attached to a statue, pile of junk, or object, creates a small animated object. This animated object has the statistics of an animal with a challenge rating of ¼ or lower but has the construct type and is immune to poison, charm, and exhaustion.

The animated object lasts for 5 hours, if asked to perform non-combat tasks, or 5 rounds of combat. Once affixed, the gear pulsates like a beating heart. If the gear is removed, you lose control of the construct, which then attacks indiscriminately until its duration expires. Once the duration expires or the animated object is destroyed, the lifeblood gear becomes a normal, non-magical gear.

ORB OF ENTHRALLING PATTERNS

Wondrous item, uncommon

Upon activation, this orb levitates and emits multicolored light. Each creature in a 10-foot radius must make a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw. On a

failure, the creature must look at the orb and has disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks to perceive anything that is not the orb for 1 minute. Affected individuals can remember nothing from the time they were enthralled.

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, you can cast *contagion* (save DC 18) as a bonus action on a creature that was just wounded by the blade.

The essence of the ice devil Xazagra currently resides in the *Red Lady's scalpel*. From there it can possess humanoids. While attuned to the dagger, you must make a DC 15 Charisma saving throw every day while in possession of it; each failure moves your alignment one step toward lawful evil. Once your alignment reaches lawful evil, Xazagra takes control of you immediately when you fail a third daily saving throw in a row. *Dispel evil and good* drives Xazagra back into the dagger temporarily, but the devil can repossess you again as an action. To drive Xazagra back to its home plane, *dispel evil and good* must be directed specifically at the dagger.

This dagger appears in "Ripper" in *Streets of Zobeck*.

RING OF GIANT MINGLING

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

This ring has different powers depending on your size. If you are a Large creature, this ring makes you Medium size while within 100 feet of four or more Medium creatures. Likewise, if you are a Medium creature, this ring makes you Large while within 100 feet of four or more Large creatures.

This ring only affects creatures with the humanoid, goblinoid, or giant type, but it allows you to change size based on the size of nearby creatures of any type.

SCARF OF DECEPTION

Wondrous item, rare

While wearing this scarf, you appear different to everyone who looks upon you for less than 1 minute. You also smell, sound, feel, and taste different to every creature that perceives you. Creatures with truesight or blindsight can see your true form, but their other senses are still confounded.

If a creature studies you for 1 minute, it may make a DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check. On a success, it perceives your real form.

SCOUNDREL'S GAMBIT

Wondrous item, uncommon

This fluted silver tube, barely two inches long, bears tiny runes etched between the grooves. When held and activated using the command word and an action, the tube fires a single *magic missile* (1d4 + 1 force damage) at a target within 120 feet.

Once used, you cannot fire another *magic missile* for 1 minute.

SHADOWHOUND'S MUZZLE

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

If a dog (such as a hound or a mastiff) is muzzled with this item, it undergoes a horrific transformation into a shadow mastiff over the course of 1d4 rounds. It only obeys orders given by you, and only while you remain attuned to this item. No one but you can remove the muzzle.

If the mastiff is reduced to 0 hit points, the dog reverts to its original form and the muzzle is permanently destroyed. If you remove the muzzle (by stroking the mastiff's snout), the dog reverts to its original form and the muzzle is undamaged. If you become unattuned to this item while the muzzle is on a dog, its transformation becomes permanent and it acts with a will of its own.

SHIFTING SHIRT

Wondrous item, uncommon

This non-descript, smock-like garment changes its appearance on command. You can use a bonus action to speak the shirt's command word and cause it to assume the appearance of a different set of clothing. You decide what it looks like, including color, style, and accessories—from filthy beggar's clothes to glittering court attire. The illusory appearance lasts until you use this property again or remove the shirt.

SHOES OF THE SHINGLED CANOPY

Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement)

These well-made, black leather shoes have chimney-shaped brass buckles. While wearing them, you are proficient in the Acrobatics skill.

Also, as a reaction, you may cast *feather fall* once per day as the spell by holding your nose while falling. This effect recharges at sundown.

SIGNET RING OF KARREMARK, KOBOLD PRINCE OF THE NIGHT GHETTO

Ring, rare (unique)

This ornate signet ring bears an insignia well known to Zobeck's human guards and clockwork watchmen and often deters them from harassing its bearer, granting you advantage on Charisma checks made to interact with the Watch.

The ring's real power, however, is to summon Karremak's personal giant riding owl. (Use giant fey owl statistics in Chapter 9). The owl communicates with you telepathically and informs you of all it sees and hears. The owl can carry two Small creatures or one Medium creature and will fight on your behalf. If the owl dies, the ring loses its power.

SPICEBOX SPOON

Wondrous item, common

This lacquered wooden spoon carries an entire cupboard within its smooth contours. When you swirl this spoon in any mixture, whether drink or stew, it exudes a flavorful aroma and infuses the edibles. This culinary wonder mimics any imagined variation of simple seasonings, from salt and pepper to aromatic herbs and complex spice blends. These flavors persist for 1 hour.

SPIDER GRENADE

Wondrous item, uncommon

This preserved spider—silver runes burned into its hairy legs and plump abdomen—barely fits in an adult human's hand. It can be thrown up to 30 feet and explodes into a sticky burst of fibrous webs when it hits a solid surface. Any creature within a 20-foot cube when the grenade explodes or that enters the webs on its turn must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, the creature is restrained as long as it remains in the webs or until it breaks free.

A creature restrained by the webs can use its action to make a DC 14 Strength check. If it succeeds, it is no longer restrained. The webs are flammable. Any 5-foot cube of webs exposed to fire burns away in 1 round, dealing 2d4 fire damage to any creature that starts its turn in the fire. The webs also naturally unravel after 1 hour.

TACTILE UNGUENT

Wondrous item, common

Cat burglars, gearworkers, locksmiths, and even street performers often use this gooey substance to increase the sensitivity of their hands. You can apply this unguent to your hands as an action. After applying the unguent, you gain advantage on all tactile Wisdom (Perception) or Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) checks for 1 hour.

TAILOR'S CLASP

Wondrous item, common

This ornate brooch often appears in the form of a jeweled weaving spider or scarab beetle. When activated, it skitters across the attached fabric, mending any tears, adjusting frayed hems, and reinforcing seams. This item only works on nonmagical objects made out of fibrous material (e.g., not leather) such as clothing, rope, and rugs. This item can cast *mending* at will and does so for up to 10 minutes until an item is totally repaired.

TICK STOP WATCH

Wondrous item, rare

By stopping the hands on this silver pocketwatch as an action, you can magically stop a single clockwork device or creature within 10 feet for 1d4 + 1 rounds. The clockwork creature may make a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw and resists this effect on a successful save. Once used, you cannot use this magic again until next dawn.



BRYAN
SYME

You must wind this watch at least once every 24 hours, just like a normal pocketwatch, or its magic ceases to function. If left unwound for one day, the watch loses its magic, but the power returns 24 hours after the next time it is wound.

TIPSTAFF

Weapon (club), rare (requires attunement)

To the uninitiated, this short ebony baton resembles a heavy-duty truncheon with a cord-wrapped handle and silver-capped tip bearing the seal of Zobeck. The Watch uses tipstaves to ambush and immobilize their targets. This weapon has 5 charges, which recharge at dawn. After making a successful melee attack with this weapon, however, the wielder may say the command word as a bonus action to expend a charge to force the target of the attack to make a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw. If the attack dealt more than 20 damage in a single blow, the target makes this save with disadvantage. On a failure, the target is paralyzed for 1 minute.

Additionally, an officially issued warrant slipped under the cords of the grip causes the tipstaff to deal an additional 1d6 bludgeoning damage to the persons named in the warrant. A tipstaff may have only one warrant on it at a time, naming no more than three people.

WHISPERING POWDER

Wondrous item, common

When sprinkled from its paper envelope, this fine dust covers up to four 5-foot squares and reacts audibly to friction. Any creature of Small size or larger that steps into an affected area must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw. On a failure, loud squeals and pops erupt with each footfall, audible up to 150 feet (subtract 10 feet for each closed door and 20 feet for each substantial wall between the area and the listener).

The creator dictates the manner of sounds produced, making custom variations available at a 20% markup. The first creature to enter an affected square sets off the alarm and renders the powder in that square inert. Otherwise, the effect lasts indefinitely.



HEROES OF ZOBECK

A woman on a brown and white horse rode into Zobeck through the South Gate. Her armor bore the scars of a hundred battles and was coated in the dirt of a long and arduous quest, but still it gleamed in the sunlight. Everyone around her gawked in surprise. Kobolds in the gutter sneered up at her, eying her coin purse. Regular folk in street clothes looked up at her in awe. All who looked upon her knew who she was, and her kind wasn't a common sight in the city.

She rode down the street about a mile 'til she arrived at the sign of the Crooked Horn, where she swung herself off her horse and landed with a heavy thud on the cobblestones. The coins in her pocket rattled

as much as her armor. Every thief watching from the alleys began to salivate, dreaming of the luxuries they could afford if they could pinch even a single handful of those gold pieces. They all leapt on her at once; a half-dozen kobolds, wererats, and masked darakhul threatened to bury the armored woman in a pile of rusty blades and stinking flesh.

But those cutpurses hadn't given a second's thought to how she'd gained all that gold in the first place. It weren't from mopping floors, and weren't her daddy's money, neither. Three punches rang out, followed by three screams, then the thump of three bodies on the stones. The remaining thieves scattered, and the

assembled people of Zobeck gazed at her again in renewed amazement. All who looked upon her knew who she was; they knew from the grime on her armor, the blood caked in her black, braided hair, the bruises on her knuckles, and the symbol of Horus on her tarnished shield.

She was a hero.

NEW BACKGROUNDS

Heroes of a metropolis like Zobeck rarely share the same upbringing as the adventurers in the rest of the world. Heroes born and raised in a city don't live the same lives that knights-errant, outlanders, and folk-heroes do; they start their lives as table stewards in local taverns, as book-headed collegians in the lyceums, or as courtesans who accompany a powerful lord or lady.

The standard backgrounds used in 5th Edition are all perfectly suitable for characters going on adventures in the Free City of Zobeck, of course. The Blessed of Ninkash, Collegian, Courtesan, Kobold King, and Politican backgrounds allow players to build characters who are specialized in adventuring within a major fantasy metropolis. These backgrounds give certain characters an edge in urban exploration compared to characters with traditional 5th-Edition backgrounds—but they are likewise less suited to epic, cross-country quests than their more adventuresome counterparts. As usual, the GM can work together with the players to customize their character backgrounds to fit the needs of a given character, region, or campaign in general.

BLESSED OF NINKASH

Ninkash, also known as the Mother of Beer and the Goddess of Merriment, is a much-beloved deity within the Crossroads. Zobeck's working class drinks ale as if it were water (indeed, dwarven beer is often cleaner than water in the city), and many dwarves from the nearby Iron Cantons now live in Zobeck and extoll their matron goddess's tenets wherever they go. Since Ninkash has no temples in Zobeck, and her priesthood lacks a central authority even in the Ironcrag, the Beer Goddess's followers instead heed the authority of master brewers known as the Blessed of Ninkash.

The Blessed of Ninkash have no formal priestly authority, and only a few of them command any divine magic, but they possess such a mastery of the art of brewing that the people of Zobeck agree they must possess the divine gifts of Ninkash herself. Likewise, the Blessed of Ninkash are not an official guild or club; the title of Blessed is often given by patrons of bars who delight in a local brewer's experimental draughts.

Those who bear the title of Blessed of Ninkash are rarely professional brewers, and those who do make money from their craft are not a part of any guild. The Blessed are typically professional barflies who make a hobby of brewing, gambling, and playing music while keeping a paying job elsewhere in the city.

SKILL PROFICIENCIES: Nature, Persuasion

TOOL PROFICIENCIES: Brewer's supplies, one type of gaming set

D8 PERSONALITY TRAITS

- 1 I greet everyone I meet with a smile and a free drink. When my enemies come for me, I want to have friends to save my neck.
- 2 I stay at the bar because it's the only place that makes me feel happy.
- 3 I end every statement with a quick blessing to Ninkash. Everything I have is thanks to her!
- 4 Ha!
- 5 My language may be foul enough to strip paint, but I would never take the name of the Beer Goddess in vain!
- 6 I love a pretty face, but if that person can't outdrink me, I'll have nothing to do with them!
- 7 Brewing's just a hobby for me, but I guess I ain't half bad at it! What're the odds?
- 8 Making drinks is my one true love in life. I wouldn't survive ten days without it.

D6 IDEAL

- 1 **Excellence.** I will become the best brewer this city has ever seen! (Any)
- 2 **Secrecy.** The key to my success is a secret recipe. If anyone discovers it, I'm ruined. (Neutral)
- 3 **Spite.** I started practicing my craft because of an old grudge. Shame I'm so good at it, because it's not much fun. The only thing keeping me brewing is spite. (Chaotic)
- 4 **Community.** The people here are kind to me. It's only right that I share my brew with them in return. (Lawful)
- 5 **Divinity.** Ninkash teaches that all the people of the world deserve to make merry. I hope everyone is able to find solace in a golden beer, even when times are hard. (Good)
- 6 **Treachery.** I've spent years getting close to my so-called "friends," learning how to worm secrets out them. If anyone betrays me, their next drink will contain a swift and painless death. (Evil)

EQUIPMENT: A set of common clothes or traveler's clothes, a set of brewer's supplies and one type of gaming set, a 4-pint cask of homebrewed ale, beer, or mead, and a belt pouch containing 5 gp.

FEATURE: BLESSINGS AT THE BAR

You feel more at home while in taverns and inns than you do at your own home, your workplace, or your school. Determine with your GM the name and location of your favorite tavern; what city is it in, and where in that city is it located? Before being thrown

D6 BOND

- 1 I've named my brewer's supplies. Each cup, ladle, and kettle has a name and I love them like the family I never had.
- 2 I was taught to brew by a woman who passed through town when I was young. I've spent all my life trying to find her and show her how much I've learned.
- 3 I was raised by a priest of Ninkash, and I grew up in the temple seeing how happy her blessings made people. I vow to spread my goddess's blessings wherever I go.
- 4 My brewmaster was murdered before my eyes by a thief who wanted his recipe. I have spent all my life searching for the murderer's identity, to no avail.
- 5 The people in my home tavern treat me like some sort of celebrity. I've always wanted to be famous, so I keep coming back!
- 6 A traveling priest of Ninkash once saved my life when I drank too much one night. I owe her my life.

D6 FLAW

- 1 I drink too much. It's cost me friends, family—now all I have left is my devotion to Ninkash.
- 2 Whenever someone tells me they don't drink, I get angry. How can they refuse my goddess's perfect drink?
- 3 I'm a fraud. My famous brew is actually someone else's work that I'm profiting from.
- 4 I'm pretty good at starting bar fights. Not so good at finishing them, 'cuz I usually run away in the middle.
- 5 I will do anything for fame. Anything.
- 6 I once messed up my brew so badly that three people died after drinking it. Turns out they were crime lords, and now their goons are after me.

into your adventures, you visited that pub every day and know all the regulars. Because of your famed brews, 50 percent of all other taverns in the city also know your name.

When in a tavern that knows your identity and knows of your fame, its bartender will give you and your companions free meals and lodging as long as you spend 4 hours brewing and succeed on a DC 15 Intelligence check made with brewer's supplies to make them a barrel of your brew. Additionally, while in this tavern, you can call upon its patrons for assistance, provided the assistance you ask for does not risk their lives and you remain in good standing with the tavern's patrons.

SUGGESTED CHARACTERISTICS

The Blessed of Ninkash are linked by a common trade skill, not by social station or birthplace. Nevertheless, as master brewers, they have a certain fondness for drink and the rough-and-tumble atmosphere of taverns. Wealthy bearers of Ninkash's blessing are rare, but they tend to have a talent for mixing divine cocktails in bars better suited for gatherings of high society.



COLLEGIAN

The Arcane Collegium sees hundreds of students and professors walk through its hallowed halls each day. The diligent students walk with leather packs filled with textbooks and arcane tomes and scrolls in hopes of mastering the basics of wizardry. A rare few students enter the halls of higher education in hopes of gaining mastery in the ways of swordplay or bardic performance, as some of the lands' premiere swordsmen and bards settle down in the city and become teachers once their age prevents them from adventuring.

The collegian background represents a student of an institute of higher learning, including the Arcane Collegium, but also the many smaller academies that dot the Collegium District. A professor of such an institution would be of the sage background, though a new and untested professor could be a collegian.



SKILL PROFICIENCIES: Two of your choice from Arcana, History, Nature, and Religion

LANGUAGES: Two of your choice

EQUIPMENT: A bottle of black ink and an ink pen, a leather-bound journal, a pair of reading glasses, a liquor flask, a set of fine clothes, and a belt pouch containing 10 gp.

FEATURE: KNOWLEDGE OF THE AGES

As a current student or alumnus of your university, you have free access to its expansive library. While in this library, you can spend 1 hour of research to make an Intelligence (Arcana, History, Nature, or Religion) check with advantage. At your GM's discretion, if this knowledge is present within the library, you can spend 8 hours of research to learn it.

If this knowledge is beyond your university's knowledge, you can request a research grant to discover the information you seek. The university supplies your travel and lifestyle expenses (up to a Modest lifestyle) for up to 2 months while researching. You cannot request a grant more than once per year.

SUGGESTED CHARACTERISTICS

Collegians are sages-in-training. Because young collegians have a greater lust for life than their older counterparts, they have yet to partake in the long, sleepless nights and years of rigorous study that sages have endured in order to obtain vast knowledge.

D8 PERSONALITY TRAITS

- 1 That thing you just mentioned? I know all about it. Yes, even that. Oh definitely that. Listen, you can be quiet now, I can take it from here.
- 2 Don't wake me at this hour! Don't make such a racket this early in the morning! Oh, it's lunchtime!
- 3 Please don't bother me. I'm trying to meditate. I read about this special technique from the jungles of Kush in the Southlands. It should open my third eye, whatever that is.
- 4 I'm always hungry. I can never stop thinking about the next mess hall visit.
- 5 Psst, new gossip! Did you hear Lady Marack's granddaughter is seeing the fellow we met at the pub yesterday?
- 6 Let's go sneaking around the professor's hall tonight! We'll find all sorts of cool stuff there.
- 7 I hate doing anything the same way twice. I need to try new things!
- 8 The students in Ridgcroft Hall next door are so loud! How am I expected to study with the racket they make partying every night?

D6 IDEAL

- 1 **Power.** Knowledge is power, and I aim to be the most powerful person in the world! (Any)
- 2 **Discipline.** I can never reach my full potential if I lollygag or relax. My personal code of discipline is all that matters! (Lawful)
- 3 **Spontaneity.** Let's just do something tonight! I hate getting stuck in a rut. (Chaos)
- 4 **Tranquility.** Just . . . go with the flow. Whatever happens will happen. (Neutral)
- 5 **Misinformation.** I need to know the truth so I can spread lies. (Evil)
- 6 **Accountability.** I never make excuses for sloppy work! I own up to my errors, no matter the consequences! (Good)

D6 BOND

- 1 My test partner passed away in his third year. Everything I do is to honor his memory!
- 2 My parents sold everything they owned to help pay my tuition. I must make them proud.
- 3 I heard a fragmented secret of the stars in a dream. The professor of Divination and Astronomy has to help me make sense of this riddle!
- 4 Learning is the only thing that makes me happy. I need as much knowledge as I can handle!
- 5 My family has an ancient secret. I need to learn the history of my great-grandfather's death, and the academy is the only place with records old enough.
- 6 I have a favorite professor, and I attend office hours as frequently as possible. I need expert advice before I make a major decision!

D6 FLAW

- 1 I know I'm paying a load of gold to go here, but I can't go a night without partying or hitting the pub.
- 2 My studies have revealed things to me man was not meant to see.
- 3 My classes have overworked me to the brink. I'm a nervous wreck!
- 4 I must stay busy all the time. I don't want to be alone with my thoughts.
- 5 I hate how I just don't understand things as quickly as my friends.
- 6 I cheat on everything. Tests. Fights. Partners. I can't help it!

COURTESAN

The wealthy lords and ladies of Zobeck are often in need of companionship, and canny courtesans are able to fill their own pockets and learn valuable secrets by cozying up to a noble patron or two. Courtesans are well-respected in Zobeck, and while some may sneer at the sexual side of their profession, the fact remains trading sex for money and favors is but one aspect of a courtesan's life. Many of these wealthy, upper-class prostitutes are also well-regarded artists, as their aristocratic benefactor enables them to create paintings, perform music, and direct acclaimed stage plays. Some use their position of privilege to enter politics, and though they face an upward battle, a few courtesans with a steely will have become powerful magistrates and lawmakers.

SKILL PROFICIENCIES: Deception, Persuasion

TOOL PROFICIENCIES: One type of gaming set, herbalism kit

EQUIPMENT: A set of fine clothes, a gaming set, an herbalism kit, and a coin purse containing 15 gp

FEATURE: COURTLY INTRIGUE

Even though you are not of noble birth, you fit right in at upper-class social functions. You are treated as a person of noble standing by other highborn people and are privy to all the latest gossip. You easily gather rumors of important and tantalizing scandals, political maneuvers, and even major criminal activity if you spend at least 1 hour gossiping with a person of power.

SUGGESTED CHARACTERISTICS

Courtesans must fight tooth and nail for their position of privilege and take pride in their newfound social power. A courtesan likely rose from poverty into great wealth predicated upon her beauty and charm.

D8 PERSONALITY TRAITS

- 1 The only armor I wear is invisible, and I never take it off. It keeps people from seeing my inner fears.
- 2 Let's be honest—I like sex. It's fun and it feels good.
- 3 I tell so many white lies, I don't even know what my real personality is anymore.
- 4 Someday, my prince will come. I just have to wait.
- 5 I hope some big noble takes me under his wing and makes me famous some day.
- 6 The palace is so pretty. I could live around beautiful things forever.
- 7 I wish I didn't have to meet people . . . I get so anxious about every little thing.
- 8 Life is short and painful and then you die. I might as well have a great time while I'm here!

D6 IDEAL

- 1 **Loyalty.** I would never betray the trust of my benefactor, or my friends. (Lawful)
- 2 **Profit.** I've become rich pitting these blockheaded aristocrats against one another. (Chaos)
- 3 **Comfort.** When you strip away all the ego and lies, everyone's broken and looking for someone to make them feel good. I'll be that person. (Good)
- 4 **Truth.** My word is my bond. Someone in this godsforsaken profession has to be honest. (Any)
- 5 **Theft.** Oh, my last patron's precious jewels went missing? How careless. (Evil)
- 6 **Chaos.** I spread rumors for fun. I love seeing these petty nobles run around like headless fowl. (Chaotic)

D6 BOND

- 1 My benefactor is a kind noblewoman. I would not see her harmed or slandered.
- 2 I answer to only one person, and that person is me.
- 3 The mob has dirt on me and my family. They take every bit of money I earn.
- 4 I have a second job as a dancer at a tavern. Those people are my real family.
- 5 I have a kid in a village in the Cantons. I have to feed her somehow.
- 6 My old mother needs the money I give her each month, but she would die if she learned about my profession.

D6 FLAW

- 1 I learn all these secrets and bits of gossip, but my memory is so bad, I . . . uh, sorry, what was I talking about?
- 2 I always blurt out something stupid at the wrong time!
- 3 There's someone hunting me . . . someone I crossed years ago.
- 4 I'm worried I caught something last week. I feel queasy all the time . . . and it's only getting worse.
- 5 I take everything as a criticism, and I'm not good at keeping my temper in check.
- 6 None of the lords of court will invite me back with them, just because I don't like sex. Can't we just cuddle and drink wine while I extract state secrets from you?

KOBOLD KING

The title of Kobold King sounds prestigious to the average traveler, but the citizens of Zobeck look upon them with disdain. In the eyes of most of Zobeck, a kobold king (or queen, though even female kobold monarchs are called kobold kings) is little more than a petty tyrant, commanding a singular neighborhood in the kobold ghetto.

The kobolds themselves take a different view. While it's true lesser kobold kings rarely reign for more than a few weeks before being overthrown, they are a symbol of kobold independence. The mere existence of the lesser kings—let alone the Great King—are a constant reminder that the frightful days of kobold slavery are behind them.

SKILL PROFICIENCIES: Stealth, Persuasion

TOOL PROFICIENCIES: One type of artisan's tools, thieves' tools

EQUIPMENT: A tiny scalpel, a tattered map of the Kobold Ghetto, a set of thieves' tools, a set of common clothes, a pet lizard, and a belt pouch containing 5 gp

FEATURE: KOBOLD HIDEY-HOLES

Every kobold worth its salt knows how to hide from the law and from other belligerent tall folk. While in a city, you can take 10 minutes to make a DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check to locate a place within 1 mile for you and up to 5 other creatures no larger than Large size to avoid detection for up to 24 hours. If you are in the wilderness, you must make this check with disadvantage. If you are in the Kobold Ghetto, you can make this check with advantage.

This hiding spot is a sort of safe house that doesn't attract the attention of the law, thugs, or other non-supernatural threat. Creatures viewing your safe location from the street cannot see you, but being in it provides no bonus to Dexterity (Stealth) checks.

SUGGESTED CHARACTERISTICS

Kobold kings are often loathe to help others if it doesn't provide some benefit to the people of the Kobold Ghetto. Kobold kings are typically kobolds, but there are stories of human children who have become kobold kings for a short time—before they grow too tall to fit in the kobold warrens, that is!

D8 PERSONALITY TRAITS

- 1 I am constantly looking over my shoulder for assassins and usurpers.
- 2 I am the greatest kobold king to ever live! I will reign for a dozen years!
- 3 I may not be a kobold king yet, but mark my words, I will be!
- 4 Hate mud. Gotta be clean . . . gotta be clean.
- 5 I trust no one to be a loyal friend, not after last time. . . .
- 6 I try to be friends with everyone, even the City Watch. No one wants to be friends with me, though.
- 7 I may be ugly, and smelly, and rude, and cowardly, but I'm good at heart!
- 8 I don't believe I can actually be the kobold king, but hopefully I will become worthy if I pretend to be for long enough.

D6 IDEAL

- 1 **Selflessness.** Every little thing I do is for the kobolds! (Good)
- 2 **Community.** We stick together. We're family. (Lawful)
- 3 **Independence.** Every kobold for itself! (Chaos)
- 4 **Self-Preservation.** I'm looking out for Number One! (Any)
- 5 **Might.** Weak kobolds have no right to live. (Evil)
- 6 **Selfishness.** The kobolds live to serve me! I am their king! (Evil)

D6 BOND

- 1 My little one is going to be king one day. I must protect her until she comes of age, and I must not be usurped before that day.
- 2 King of Kings, Quetelmak, can do no wrong. I would die for him!
- 3 I'm saving up my pieces of silver to buy something big that will change my life!
- 4 I am loyal only to Karremark, Prince of the Night Ghetto. Our day will soon come.
- 5 I have a little house. I want to keep my little house safe.
- 6 Generations ago, my family was owned by a human nobleman. His family will pay for the way he tortured them.

D6 FLAW

- 1 My paranoia makes it impossible for me to make friends. I'm always looking for ways to kill them and ways to save my own hide.
- 2 If any of my rivals learn my secret, I'll be ruined forever.
- 3 I love money! (Money's the little gray rocks on the street, right?)
- 4 I carry a lit candle at all times. For some reason, I can't see in the dark without it.
- 5 I take everything that isn't nailed down. I can't help it.
- 6 I'm too soft. I hate the sound of screams and violence. I will do anything to avoid killing, even if it puts my own life in danger.

POLITICIAN

Not all public officials in Zobeck are nobles. The consuls, the Lord Mayor, and dozens of other local magistrates, judges, and guild lobbyists keep the bureaucracy of Zobeck afloat. Most minor politicians have very little sway in the grand scheme of things but nevertheless scrabble for power and notoriety in the hopes of gaining a seat on the Free City Council.

SKILL PROFICIENCIES: Deception, Insight

TOOL PROFICIENCIES: Forgery kit, one type of musical instrument

EQUIPMENT: A fancy hat, a set of fine clothes, an ink pen and a bottle of black ink, a ream of parchment paper, a gold ring indicating your office, a certificate of office

FEATURE: GUBERNATORIAL POSITION

As a public official, you own a house in Upper Zobeck. Your income as a politician pays for the house and allows you to keep a Comfortable lifestyle without requiring you to pay lifestyle expenses. Your house has enough beds for you and your family and enough food to serve you and your family for up to 1 week before having to restock.

SUGGESTED CHARACTERISTICS

Politicians are often reviled in Zobeck as duplicitous and self-serving predators, preying upon the very people they are sworn to protect.



D8 PERSONALITY TRAITS

- 1 I use easy words. My voters need to know what I'm saying. I might only know little words, too.
- 2 Life and politics are both just big popularity contests, so I must be popular!
- 3 I lie a lot. It's fun to lie. I'm probably lying right now.
- 4 I'm very careful with what I say in public. I never want anything I've discussed to come back to haunt me later.
- 5 I am not afraid of some hard work. Let's roll up our sleeves and get things done.
- 6 I live in a bubble. Doesn't everyone think like I do and believe the same things about the world?
- 7 I can win anyone over, and eventually everyone likes and supports me. I'm just a friend you haven't met yet.
- 8 I may show a pretty face to the people of this city, but behind closed doors, my aides are treated to a deluge of rancor and profanity.

D6 IDEAL

- 1 **Order.** The power of the law must be used to maintain existing hierarchies and social orders. (Lawful)
- 2 **Faith.** The people of Zobeck ought to have leaders they can put their faith in! (Good)
- 3 **Aggression.** My electorate needs to know how terrible my political rivals are. (Any)
- 4 **Repayment.** Like for like. I will repay those who service me. (Neutral)
- 5 **Cruelty.** People are my playthings. I will use them and dispose of them to stay in power. (Evil)
- 6 **Hypocrisy.** Laws only exist to keep the common rabble in line. As a creator of laws, I am above such petty things. (Chaotic)

D6 BOND

- 1 My manservant is the most important person in the world to me. Without him, I would hardly know how to get up in the morning, let alone pass legislation.
- 2 I've been trying to build a gearforged body for someone important to me. I think I'm getting close to finishing it.
- 3 I will challenge the corruption in this city.
- 4 My mentor was the most important person in my life. I have to honor her memory.
- 5 The gangs must go down. I will put Zobeck back on the righteous path.
- 6 I need money. I love gazing into the gilded, mirror surface of a polished coin. My mother says I have a little dragon blood in my veins.

D6 FLAW

- 1 I was born under a jealous star. If someone is more successful than me, I must destroy them.
- 2 I don't have any original thoughts; I rely too much on my aides and advisors.
- 3 My enemies are growing stronger, and I'm too afraid to face them.
- 4 I have an office, but I want more. A title. An estate. I need more power.
- 5 Winning is the only thing that matters to me. The only thing.
- 6 I never learned the value of money. I spend recklessly, and I can't understand how anyone can suffer from poverty. Can't they just work harder?

NEW MOUNTS

The people of the Crossroads travel on more than just horses. Most notable of Zobeck's unusual mounts are the griffons, made famous by the city's Order of Griffon Knights, though other factions within Zobeck and the Crossroads region have brought their own unique steeds to the Free City.

CLOCKWORK WARHORSE

Warhorses are easily the most popular steed for adventurers in Midgard. However, the gearforged and clockwork soldiers of Zobeck find flesh-and-bone mounts to be finicky, unreliable, and temperamental, and they have spent years of effort and thousands of gold pieces to develop a mechanical steed for their own ease of use. These mechanical destriers never tire and do not eat, but their incredible bulk means they cannot move quite as quickly as their living counterparts. A mechanical warhorse requires maintenance every week, taking 1 hour of work and 10 gp worth of materials.

CLOCKWORK WARHORSE

Large construct, unaligned

ARMOR CLASS 13 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 37 (5d10 + 10)

SPEED 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	11 (+0)	15 (+2)	3 (-4)	7 (-2)	7 (-2)

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES poison, psychic

CONDITION IMMUNITIES exhaustion, poisoned

SENSES passive Perception 8

LANGUAGES —

CHALLENGE 1 (200 XP)

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

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

Trampling Charge. If the clockwork warhorse moves at least 20 feet straight toward a creature and then hits it with a hooves attack on the same turn, that target must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. If the target is prone, the horse can make another attack with its hooves against it as a bonus action.

ACTIONS

Hooves. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

FLYING MOUNTS

Zobeck is in the center of a great mountain range, and the tall crags of the Iron Cantons make traditional mounts difficult to ride without special training. Adventurers that seek to move unimpeded through the bluffs can find rare flying steeds on the black market—or in the possession of wealthy patrons like the consuls. Finding a seller is a difficult task that might require an entire adventure to complete. Once found, a trained flying mount costs 1,200 gp.

Controlling a beast as powerful as a griffon or a wyvern in the air may seem an impossible challenge, but a well-trained flying mount is just as easy to fly and fight upon as a warhorse. Flying mounts require an exotic saddle (60 gp, 40 lbs.) but can otherwise be armored and outfitted just like an earthbound beast.

GIANT FEY OWL

Though the shadow fey are a secretive and mysterious people, they nonetheless like to travel in style. The people of Zobeck have caught glimpses in the night sky of shadow fey riding through the sky on giant snowy owls, the feathers glistening with a prismatic sheen. The hunt was on the moment the first fey owl was spotted in the sky. Trappers and hunters began stringing nets across rooftops and laying snares in hopes of trapping a fey owl. Adventurers have even delved into the Shadow Realm in hopes of bringing back a fey owl to sell to wealthy nobles.

The shadow fey are unconcerned with adventurers trapping owls from the Shadow Realm, but have only icy fury for any hunter who would attack an ambassador of the Winter Court. Anyone who buys a fey owl off the black market would be well advised to learn of the owl's place of origin, lest they find themselves pursued by a murderous shadow fey in search of its stolen steed.

GIANT FEY OWL

Large beast, neutral

ARMOR CLASS 14

HIT POINTS 45 (6d10 + 12)

SPEED 10 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	18 (+4)	15 (+2)	9 (-1)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)

SAVING THROWS Wis +6

SKILLS Perception +6, Stealth +6

SENSES darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 16

LANGUAGES Common, Elvish, Sylvan

CHALLENGE 1 (200 XP)

Flyby. The fey owl doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when it flies out of an enemy's reach.

Keen Hearing and Sight. The fey owl has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or sight.

ACTIONS

Invisibility. The fey owl turns invisible, along with any equipment or creatures it is carrying.

Talons. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) slashing damage.

RIDING GRIFFON

Most griffons in Zobeck are owned by the Order of Griffon Knights. It is, in fact, illegal for anyone to own a griffon within city limits unless they are a member of that venerable order. Of course, that has not stopped a thriving black market of griffon smugglers from blossoming in the Zobeck underworld. Sometimes literally; the vast caverns of the Zobeck Undercity are perfect places to give griffons a chance to stretch their wings in secret.

A griffon trained for riding has the same statistics as a typical griffon, though trained griffons also understand one language, typically Common.

WAR WYVERN

Wyverns are savage dragons considered untamable by the people of the Crossroads. Yet somehow, the beastmasters of the Mharoti Dragon Empire were able to train wyverns for war. Their mighty wyvern knights ride upon the backs of these scaled nightmares and rain terror upon the battlefield from the safety of the sky.

Mharoti contraband rarely makes it as far north as the Crossroads, but some mercenaries who have fought against the Dragon Empire in their recent wars of conquest have been able to capture war wyverns alive. Even the military commanders of Zobeck are hesitant to use these unpredictable creatures for casual riding, let alone for war. Adventurers, however, are made from more reckless stock. Their thirst for excitement has led some black-market wyvern dealers to take up shop in the Undercity of Zobeck, though their price is steep: 10,000 gp for a single wyvern, plus its saddle and barding.

WAR WYVERN

Large dragon, unaligned

ARMOR CLASS 15 (scale barding)

HIT POINTS 119 (14d10 + 42)

SPEED 20 ft., fly 80 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	6 (-2)	14 (+2)	6 (-2)

SAVING THROWS Wis+5

SKILLS Athletics +8, Perception +5

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

LANGUAGES understands Common and Draconic, but can't speak

CHALLENGE 7 (2,900 XP)



War Dragon. The wyvern deals double damage to vehicles and siege equipment.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The wyvern makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its stinger. While flying, it can use its claws in place of one other attack.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) piercing damage plus 10 (3d6) poison damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 18 (3d8 + 5) slashing damage. If the target is a Medium or smaller creature, it must make a DC 15 Strength saving throw. On a failed save, it is grappled (escape DC 15).

Stinger. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) piercing damage. The target must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 24 (7d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Spit Venom (Recharge 5–6). The wyvern spits venom at a target within 60 feet. The target must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 42 (12d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one.

NEW GEARFORGED RACIAL FEATS

The gearforged are the only major race unique to the Crossroads. Whereas humans, elves, dwarves, and the other humanoid people of the world came to the Crossroads as immigrants, the gearforged are a people entirely of these immigrants' creation. As such, new types of gearforged are constantly being invented in the clockwork workshops and factories of Zobeck.

The newest type of gearforged is a being with an elemental heart. While the original gearforged were crafted by wealthy humans and dwarves as ways to survive after death, these new models are animated with the life force of elementals to serve as soldiers, butlers, and laborers. Instead of undergoing a *soulforging* ritual, elemental gearforged are created through a *spiritbinding* that reaches into the Elemental Planes.

At 4th level, a gearforged may forgo its Ability Score Increase trait to gain one of the following feats. Additionally, a traditional gearforged may augment its soul gem with an elemental core by undergoing a *spiritbinding* ritual (see below) to gain the benefits of one of these feats.

WAVESTEEL CORE

You bear the power of elemental water in the core of your being. The ever-shifting strength of water grants you advantage on saving throws against damage-dealing spells.

Additionally, you can cast *create or destroy water* once per day.

IRONFLARE CORE

Within your iron heart is the burning essence of a fire elemental, and its power bursts forth whenever you are under physical duress. You gain the following benefits:

- Whenever a creature within 5 feet of you deals damage to you, you can choose to take an additional 1d6 fire damage. The attacker also takes this damage.
- When you score a critical hit with a spell attack that deals fire damage or a melee weapon attack, you deal an additional 1d6 fire damage. This damage is not doubled by the critical hit.
- You know the *produce flame* cantrip. Constitution is your spellcasting ability for this spell.

BRONZESTONE CORE

A core of dwarven bronze surrounds the mountain-shaking power of your elemental heart. Whenever you take the Dodge action, a layer of stone covers your body, granting you resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks until the beginning of your next turn.

Additionally, you have advantage on Strength saving throws to resist being moved or knocked prone.

STORMCRYSTAL CORE

Your elemental core is made of cloudy crystal that churns internally with black stormclouds. Whenever you fall, you may cast the *feather fall* spell on yourself as a reaction.

Additionally, you know the *shocking grasp* cantrip. Constitution is your spellcasting ability for this spell.

THE RITUAL OF SPIRITBINDING

Similar to the *soulforging* ritual that gives life to many gearforged, elemental gearforged are imbued with life through the ritual of *spiritbinding*. A spiritbinder conjures an elemental and forces it to bond with a rune-etched core inside the construct's chest.

The spell is available to wizards and clerics but cannot be added to a wizard's spellbook as one of the two spells learned for gaining a level. Instead, it must be found in written form and copied into the spellbook. Clerics can prepare this spell only if they worship a god of the specific elemental spirit they are channeling.

SPIRITBINDING

5th-level conjuration (ritual)

Casting Time: 1 hour (see below)

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (a complete mechanical body worth 10,000 gp)

Duration: Instantaneous

Before the incantation begins, you must create a circle inscribed with Auran, Aquan, Ignan, or Terran runes, depending on the type of elemental you intend to bind, and place an inert gearforged body in its center. You must chant an incantation in this language throughout the ritual. At the end of this period an elemental is summoned into the circle. The caster must make a DC 16 Charisma saving throw to bind the elemental to the construct. If it fails, you take 2d10 psychic damage and 2d10 damage based on the type of elemental (lightning for an air elemental, cold for a water elemental, fire for a fire elemental, or bludgeoning for an earth elemental) from the primal energy radiating from the elemental. The gearforged chassis also fails one death saving throw and is destroyed if it fails three saving throws. If you choose not to maintain the spell or are unable to do so, the elemental is instantly killed and you drop to 0 hit points and are dying.

If the save succeeds, the elemental is bound to the elemental core and immediately animates the constructed body. The gearforged has its own personality and retains none of the elemental's memories, but may recall memory fragments as time passes.

If you die during a spiritbinding, the elemental is also destroyed and completely consumes the constructed body.

Up to four other spellcasters of at least 5th level can assist you in the ritual. Each assistant reduces the DC of the Charisma saving throw by 1. If you fail this save, each assistant takes the same damage you do. An assistant who drops out can't rejoin.

NEW HUMAN RACIAL FEATS

Zobeck is a melting pot of cultures at the Crossroads and is home to humans and other creatures from all parts of the world. The following racial feats allow the cultural differences between human denizens of Zobeck to make an impact in the way human characters interact with the world.

KARIV NOMAD

Prerequisite: Must be chosen at 1st level by a Karivi human

You never stop moving and have lived on wagons and horses your entire life. Even in the big city, you have found a way to make animal handling your profession, perhaps as a carriage driver or as a delivery person. You gain the following benefits:

You may spend 8 hours with a horse or other riding animal or pack animal to make it your animal companion. This companion adds your proficiency bonus to its Armor Class, attack rolls, damage rolls, saving throws, and ability checks it is proficient in. It obeys your commands and acts on your initiative, though you must use your action to command it to take the Attack, Dash, Disengage, Dodge, or Help action. If you have the Extra Attack feature, you can command it to make an attack in place of one of your own attacks.

Additionally, you have advantage on Wisdom (Animal Handling) checks made to interact with horses and other riding or pack animals.

SEPTIME WARMONGER

Prerequisite: Must be chosen at 1st level by a human of the Seven Cities

You were raised in the Seven Cities, where endless war is a way of life. Even in the relative peace of the Crossroads, the thought of battle is never far from your mind. You gain the following benefits:

You have advantage on initiative rolls.

Whenever you roll initiative, you gain temporary hit points equal to the number of creatures below you in initiative.

You have advantage on attack rolls against creatures that have not yet acted in combat.



SLEET-SCARRED TRAVELER

Prerequisite: Must be chosen at 1st level by a human of the Northlands

Before arriving in the Crossroads, you spent your life in the frigid wastes of the Northlands. Your harrowing journeys have left you frostbitten and dour but thirsty for a life beyond the snowfields. You gain the following benefits:

You have advantage on death saving throws and saving throws to resist exhaustion. Additionally, whenever an effect that deals cold damage would impose another penalty (such as a reduced movement speed), you ignore this penalty.

WASTELAND SURVIVOR

Prerequisite: Must be chosen at 1st level by a human of the Wasted West

Your body and mind have been hardened through exposure to the horrors of the wastes. You gain the following benefits:

Your Wisdom score increases by 1 to a maximum of 20. You are immune to short-term madness and have advantage on saving throws against spells or effects that would charm you.

WALKER OF SHADOWED ROADS

Prerequisite: Must be chosen at 1st level by a human of Dornig; an elf or elfmarked of Dornig can gain this feat by sacrificing the Fey Ancestry trait.

As a child, you learned the secrets of navigating the ancient fey roads. You gain the following benefits:

Your Charisma score increases by 1 to a maximum of 20 (elves and elfmarked do not gain this ability score increase). Additionally, you can learn the distance and direction of the nearest gate to the Shadow Realm by spending 10 minutes in meditation. Also, when traveling along a shadow road, you and others traveling with you reach your destination 1 day quicker than usual, and you have advantage on Wisdom (Survival) checks made to avoid getting lost while in the Shadow Realm.

ZOBECK DILETTANTE

Prerequisite: Must be chosen at 1st level by a human of Zobeck

Humans of Zobeck must learn the ways of many different peoples. Thanks to your lifetime in the cosmopolitan Free City of Zobeck, you gain the following benefits:

You may multiclass into a class even if you do not meet its requirements. Additionally, whenever you multiclass into a class you have not previously taken levels in, you may increase any ability score by 1, to a maximum of 20.

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