

WHISPERS OF THE DARK DAEVA



A Parsantium
adventure
for 1st-level
characters

Richard Green



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A Parsantium Adventure for the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game
Suitable for 1st-level characters

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Running the Adventure

Set on the run-down streets and houseboats of the Dock Ward in Parsantium's Old Quarter, this adventure for four or five 1st level PCs brings them into conflict with an ancient evil intent on increasing its power by spreading murderous carnage throughout the city.

Adventure Background

Back in Parsantium's dim and distant past, following the fall of its rakshasa rajah, certain black-hearted citizens turned to the worship of demonic false gods known as daevas, forming cults that met in secret beneath the city streets. One of these cults was dedicated to Hidimba, a murderous spirit of great evil who encouraged its worshippers to take bloody revenge on their enemies by sacrificing them in its name.

Each sacrificial death empowered the daeva, which eventually manifested within the idol in its underground temple. After a particularly grisly series of murders, Hidimba's cult was destroyed by priests of Vishnu from the god's great mandira. The cultists were killed, their subterranean shrine was sealed up with wards, and Hidimba lay dormant and forgotten for centuries.

Around 20 years ago members of a criminal gang seeking to expand its territory in the Hidden Quarter broke through the wards to the shrine and awakened the daeva. Before they realized what was happening, the hateful spirit had commanded the thieves to kill each other in a frenzy of bloodlust.

In the weeks that followed, Hidimba, still trapped in the idol, used its demonic powers of domination to reach out to passing thieves and monsters in the nearby passages, commanding them to commit murder in its name. The more killings there were, the more Hidimba's power grew, until it was able to reach as far as a tavern on the street above, and compel its owner, a man named Mikulas, to murder all his customers by feeding them meals laced with poison. Mikulas was killed by an angry mob shortly afterwards, the tavern closed down and Hidimba's supply of victims dried up. Isolated, the daeva's power waned.

Now that a hapless fellow called Riyad has bought the disused tavern, the Black Dolphin's Wake, and reopened it for business, Hidimba is attempting to make history repeat itself. So far, the tavern's dim-witted landlord has resisted the spirit's murderous overtures, but his customers have proved all too willing to listen to the whispers of the dark daeva.

About Parsantium

The Free City of Parsantium stands astride the wide and slow-moving Dolphin Strait at the crossroads of two continents and five trade routes. To the east, at the end of the Silk Road, is the exotic land of Tiangao; to the southeast, beyond the Pillars of Heaven Mountains, are the Kingdoms of Sampur. Across the sea to the southwest lies the wealthy Caliphate of Aqhran. To the west are the Sunset Lands and the feuding city states of the former Bathuran Empire. The Griffin Water to the northeast is the quickest route to the frozen but beautiful land of Urskovia.

Parsantium is built on the ancient ruins of Dhak Janjua, founded 2,000 years ago by refugees from Sampur and ruled by the ruthless rakshasa rajah Vrishabha. Slain by a great hero, the tyrant's reincarnated form is encased in ice atop the distant Pillars of Heaven Mountains. Perhaps one day his disciples will find a way to free him from his prison so he might reclaim his throne.

Today, Parsantium is home to more than 75,000 souls; the bustling city is ruled by its basileus, Corandias XVIII the Lion-Blooded, direct descendant of the famous Bathuran conqueror, Corandias I the Magnificent.

Parsantium is divided into three quarters, one on each side of the Dolphin Strait and a third on the central island. Great stone bridges, built many centuries



ago in the Sampuran style and each over 300 yards long, connect the three separate parts of the city. The Bathuran rich tend to live in the Imperial Quarter on the northern side of the Dolphin Strait, while the poor (many of Sampuran or Aqhrani origin) live in the Old Quarter on the southern side, creating a cultural as well as a physical division.

The Old Quarter is, as its name suggests, the oldest part of the city, built on top of the ancient ruins of Dhak Janjua. Here the streets are narrow, dusty and dingy, and often feel claustrophobic, as a great press of people, bullock carts, donkeys and camels all vie for right of way. The quarter is a chaotic, cosmopolitan blend of cultures – onion-domed mosques and Aqhrani coffee shops have been built next to serene Tiangaon teahouses and Sampuran temples covered in colourful carvings. The Old Quarter is where most of the city’s poorer districts and slums can be found and where this adventure takes place.

The Imperial Quarter is on the north side of the strait. This is the location of the Great Palace of the Basileus, the Holy Basilica of Helion, the Hippodrome, and other important buildings. It is also home to the wealthy and decadent noble class, many of whom claim to be descended from the Bathuran emperors of old.

Between the two, in the middle of the Dolphin Strait, is the Mercantile Quarter, filled with one of the world’s largest markets. A bronze colossus over 200 feet high, depicting Corandias the Magnificent, stands at the centre of the marketplace.

A fourth “Hidden Quarter” exists beneath the city streets, composed of the ancient, crumbling ruins of Dhak Janjua. Frequented by criminals and worse, it is best avoided.

Adventure Summary

As the Old Docks prepare for the upcoming Festival of Flowers, the PCs witness the murderous rampage of a minotaur merchant captain on the waterfront. Whether or not they intervene, the party are approached afterwards by Chandipati, the priestess at the nearby Floating Temple of the Sapta Sindhu in the boat-town of Flotsam. Chandipati explains that this is the latest in a series of recent violent incidents in the local area; she asks the PCs to investigate and try to put a stop to these brutal altercations before the festival gets underway.

The adventurers can track down and speak with three key witnesses to the previous incidents – some are more willing to talk than others. Their evidence seems to point to the Black Dolphin’s Wake tavern, a pub with a dark past.

DOCK WARD

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------|
| 1 Flotsam | 7 Yellowfin Fishery |
| 2 St. Carinus’ Redemption | 8 Fish Market |
| 3 Orloch’s HQ | 9 Bilal’s Blades |
| 4 Mandira of Solace | 10 Old Docks |
| 5 Watchhouse | |
| 6 Black Dolphin’s Wake | |





While the PCs are visiting the tavern, a group of sellswords attack Riyad, the tavern's landlord, after he apparently poisons one of their number. If the heroes manage to save him, they can learn about the malevolent whispering voice Riyad has been hearing. Further investigation uncovers a trapdoor in the cellar leading down into the sewers, the source of the dark whispers.

In the sewer tunnels, the PCs battle giant cockroaches and crocodiles, and must themselves resist the urgings of the daeva as they search for the hidden shrine where Hidimba awaits. Inside the ancient temple, they must overcome the evil spirit's undead minions and its demonic powers of domination to defeat the daeva and put an end to the violence on the streets above.

The Daeva

The main villain the PCs will face in this adventure is the daeva **Hidimba**. Daevas are demon-like evil outsiders who are charged by the gods with the punishment of sinners in the Seven Hells of Naraka. Around 2,000 years ago, following the fall of the rakshasa rajah Vrishabha, secretive cults sprang up in the city to worship certain daevas. Hidimba was one of these – bloody sacrifices by its fanatical worshippers allowed the daeva to manifest inside its idol in the cult shrine. Unfortunately for Hidimba, its cult was destroyed before there were enough deaths in the daeva's name for it to be freed from the statue, preventing it from spreading its evil further afield. Without a constant supply of deaths, Hidimba's influence

HIDIMBA, THE DARK DAEVA

CR 2, XP 600

CE Medium outsider (chaotic, evil, extraplanar)

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft; Perception +1

DEFENSE

AC 13, touch 5, flat-footed 13 (–5 Dex, +8 natural)

hp 16 (3d10)

Fort +5, **Ref** +1, **Will** +6

Defensive Abilities hardness 5, Immune construct traits.

OFFENSE

Speed 0

Special Attacks animate dead, *dark whispers* (DC 13), *detect thoughts* (DC 13)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 3rd)

At will – *ray of decay* (+3 ranged touch, 1d6 necrotic damage)

STATISTICS

Str –, **Dex** –, **Con** –, **Int** 10, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 15

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 13

Feats Iron Will, Persuasive

Skills Diplomacy +10, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (history) +6, Knowledge (planes) +6, Knowledge (religion) +6,

Sense Motive +7; **Languages** Sampurana (cannot speak), Abyssal; telepathy 150 ft

SQ trapped in stone

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Animate Dead (Su) Once per day, Hidimba can turn a corpse anywhere in its temple into an undead skeleton or zombie that obeys its telepathic commands. Hidimba can control up to 12 HD worth undead at any one time (but see "Body Count" below).

Detect Thoughts (Su) Hidimba can detect thoughts as per the spell of the same name, with a range of 150 feet. When Hidimba uses this ability, it always functions as if it had spent three rounds concentrating and thus gains the maximum amount of information possible, and is not blocked by stone, metal, lead, wood or dirt. A creature can resist this effect with a DC 13 Will save.

Dark Whispers (Su) Hidimba can crush an opponent's will as a standard action. The daeva can target any humanoid within 150 feet whose thoughts it has previously read with *detect thoughts*. The target must succeed on a DC 13 Will save or fall instantly under the daeva's influence as though by a *dominate person* spell for 8 hours. Hidimba can use *dark whispers* once per round, although it can only have 1 creature dominated at a time (but see "Body Count" below). A target that successfully saves against *dark whispers* is immune to further attempts at control for 8 hours.

Trapped in Stone (Su) Hidimba is trapped inside a black stone idol in the likeness of its true form until the body count reaches 50. The daeva gains construct traits, but cannot move or make melee or ranged attacks while trapped in the idol.



faded and its spirit became dormant. After awakening briefly 20 years ago and causing more murders, Hidimba is now once again awake and continues to seek to increase its power by feeding on slaughter and death.

Tactics

Hidimba reads the surface thoughts of drinkers in the Black Dolphin's Wake located 150 feet above its secret temple and thus within range of its powers. In particular, the daeva looks for individuals who are angry or resentful about what's going in their lives and can more readily be incited to commit acts of bloody violence.

After it has identified a suitable target, Hidimba makes telepathic contact with the potential victim, using its *dark whispers* ability. Once the victim has been dominated, the daeva's power is no longer limited by range – Hidimba can issue commands to its victim as long as he or she remains on the same plane. The evil spirit waits until the subject comes into contact with individual(s) they dislike or find exasperating, and then uses its telepathic link to urge them to kill that person “to teach them a lesson”. Since Hidimba can only control one victim at a time, the daeva will relinquish control voluntarily once it no longer has use for a particularly victim, allowing it to whisper to a fresh target. If a victim falls unconscious, that also breaks the link.

Note that the *protection from evil* spell can potentially keep the PCs safe from being affected by the daeva's powers and allows a new saving throw with a +2 morale bonus to break free of the spirit's control if this is already in effect. PCs who fall under Hidimba's influence and are commanded to attack other members of the party also get a new saving throw with a +2 bonus – unless they have a track record of inter-party fighting!

Body Count

As the adventure unfolds, Hidimba grows in power with every death it causes – whether it's the death of those it has dominated or those they kill makes no difference.

At the start of the adventure the Body Count stands at zero. Each death in a combat encounter during the adventure involving an NPC (or PC) under Hidimba's control adds to the Body Count.

When certain milestones are reached, the daeva's abilities improve as per the table below. Each time this happens, any PCs close by with a Wisdom score of 12+ will feel a brief but nasty sensation of impending doom. Clever PCs can avoid adding to the Body Count total (and thereby increasing Hidimba's power) by subduing rather than killing combatants.

If the PCs take too long to identify the cause of the violence and put a stop to it, the Body Count will increase. It is assumed the PCs will rest once to replenish spells, hit points and other resources at some point during the adventure, most likely before entering the sewers. For each additional day they delay, increase the Body Count by 5 as more deaths occur offstage. The PCs should hear about these new killings from the locals – the details are left up to the GM.

BODY COUNT	POWER
5	Control +1 HD undead – add an extra skeleton to the temple
10	+1 to Save DCs (DC 14)
15	Control two victims simultaneously with <i>dark whispers</i>
20	Control +2 HD undead – add an extra zombie to the temple
25	+2 to Save DCs (DC 15)
30	Increase range of <i>detect thoughts</i> and <i>dark whispers</i> by 100 ft.
50	Hidimba is freed from the idol



Adventure Hooks

The adventure begins on the waterfront in the Dock Ward in Parsantium's Old Quarter. Here are some possible reasons the PCs might be in the area and get mixed up in what's going on:

- The party have come to Flotsam to enjoy the Festival of Flowers, a colourful, week-long celebration in honour of the Sapta Sindhu, the seven river gods and goddesses of the Sampurans.
- Down on their luck and short of cash, one or more PCs live locally, renting a leaky houseboat in Flotsam. Perhaps they bought fish for their meals each day in the market from Jamia the stallholder (see page 17), or they may be on friendly terms with Param and his family (see page 17), and want to help them.
- The adventurers are at the Old Docks to meet a relative or contact due in on a ship from the Urskovian port of Karjolat, or from one of the islands in the Corsairs' Sea. This contact might fall victim to Calbiades' murderous rampage in the opening scene (see page 8).
- One or more members of the party have criminal connections and are in the area on business for one of the local gangs run by the Dock Ward Bosses. The PC(s) might be an associate or acquaintance of Misaq (see page 12).

ICONS OF PARSANTIUM

If you are using Parsantium's icons* in your campaign, those listed below are most likely to take an interest in the events of this adventure. Characters with positive or conflicted relationships with these icons might be called upon to investigate and put a stop to the daeva's machinations:

The Boss of All Bosses is annoyed at the disruption to criminal operations in the Dock Ward caused by the incidents. He wants things running smoothly again as soon as possible.

The Dragon is determined to keep Parsantium's citizens safe from harm. She may prompt the PCs to investigate in her guise as Jarwyn, an elderly male dwarven carpenter who lives in Flotsam.

The Grand Master of the Blue Lotus is intrigued by a newly uncovered ancient temple below the city streets, but also wary of the supernatural threat the daeva represents.

The Maharani feels a responsibility to protect Sampurans living in Parsantium's Old Quarter. The priestess Chandipati (see page 10) acts on her behalf.

The Witch of Flotsam is concerned by the possibility of a powerful new rival to the Cult of the Black Mother lurking in the tunnels of the Hidden Quarter.

* see *Icons of Parsantium* – available from drivethrurpg.com or Paizo.





Slaughter at the Docks

The adventure gets underway on the waterfront in the Dock Ward, when the PCs witness the murderous rampage of a minotaur ship's captain who has fallen under the daeva's fell influence.

The Minotaur's Rampage

It's a warm, sunny day and the waterfront is bustling as the locals get ready for the Festival of Flowers, decorating the boats and rope bridges of Flotsam with bright yellow, orange and red marigolds. This week-long celebration dedicated to the Sapta Sindhu, the seven river gods and goddesses of the Sampurans, starts tomorrow and brings large crowds into the Dock Ward from all over the Old Quarter as worshippers seek the deities' blessings for the coming year.

As you wander among the throng, you hear loud, angry shouting from the quayside, above the raucous cries of the seagulls. A seven-foot-tall burly white minotaur is berating a pair of hapless longshoremen who appear to have dropped a wooden crate on the jetty, spilling dozens of painted clay pots on to the dock, smashing them into pieces.

This encounter takes place at the eastern end of the Old Docks, close to the boat-town of Flotsam. As the minotaur bellows at the dock workers in fury, he hears the voice of Hidimba in his head and events take a dramatic turn. Attentive PCs succeeding at a DC 20 Sense Motive check might notice a confused look flash across the minotaur's face for a split second.

Suddenly, in a blur of motion, the furious minotaur pulls a battleaxe from his belt and swings it, chopping the arm off one of the longshoremen. As blood sprays everywhere, he swings again, this time hitting the second man in the head. A woman screams in horror as three dock workers rush the minotaur, brandishing belaying pins and boat hooks. He makes short work of the first one, as panicked cries ring out all around: "Send for the Watch!", "Varuna preserve us!" and "Help! He's going to kill us all!"

Creatures (CR 2)

The fearsome minotaur is **Calbiades Hot-blooded**, the captain of the merchant ship *Stormrunner*, recently arrived from the island of Phokris and moored close by. The minotaur captain cuts an impressive figure: his shaggy hair is bright white, and his magnificent horns are etched with swirling spiral patterns and tipped with gold.

It had been a difficult voyage to Parsantium and Calbiades was desperately in need of a drink when the *Stormrunner* arrived. Once the ship had docked, he went off in search of beer, finding his way to the nearest pub, the Black Dolphin's Wake, where he fell victim to the insidious whisperings of Hidimba. Returning to the dock after a couple of swiftly downed pints, he was furious to see that the incompetent idiots unloading his cargo of valuable pots had broken part of the shipment. As he ranted and raved, he heard the daeva's words in his head, whispering insistently: "They must be punished for their carelessness. Punish them now. Kill them!"

The PCs can answer the frantic cries for help and try to stop the minotaur's bloody rampage. If they do so, the two surviving dock workers (NG male Sampuran human commoners 1) run for safety. If the PCs choose not to intervene, Calbiades kills both dockers, before continuing to run amok, swinging his axe into terrified bystanders and festival-goers alike. If the PCs have come to the docks to meet a contact (see Adventure Hooks, page 7), this person should be a potential victim. Eventually, if the adventurers continue to do nothing, the minotaur is brought down by four tattooed minotaur sailors from his own ship.



Features of the Area

- The spilled and broken pots have created an area of difficult terrain around Calbiades. Wild sword swings could lead to more splintered crates and smashed pottery.
- Barrels and crates sitting nearby on the jetty provide cover.
- Since the battle takes place on the quayside, combatants can attempt to bull rush their opponents into the filthy waters of the Dolphin Strait, or topple a stack of crates onto their enemies with a DC 15 Strength check to inflict 1d6 damage.

Body Count

When the combat begins the Body Count has already risen to 3. Add Calbiades if he's killed and any more slain dock workers to the Body Count total during the battle.

CALBIADES HOT-BLOODED

CR 2, XP 600

Male minotaur fighter 3

N Medium humanoid

Init -1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +1

DEFENSE

AC 13, touch 9, flat-footed 13 (+4 armour, -1 Dex)

hp 31 (3d10+9)

Fort +6, **Ref** +0, **Will** +0; +1 vs. fear

Defensive Abilities bravery +1, natural cunning (cannot be caught flat-footed)

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee mwk battleaxe +9 (1d8+4/x3) or gore +7 (1d4+4)

Ranged light crossbow +2 (1d8/19-20/x2)

STATISTICS

Str 19, **Dex** 8, **Con** 16, **Int** 10, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +7; **CMD** 16

Feats Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (battleaxe)

Skills Intimidate +6, Perception +1, Profession (sailor) +6, Survival +5; **Languages** Bathuran, Phokriot

Combat Gear *elixir of swimming*, *oil of magic weapon*, *potion of cure light wounds*; **Other Gear** masterwork chain shirt, masterwork battleaxe, light crossbow, 10 bolts, dagger.

Add an extra 1d6 to the count if the PCs stand by and do nothing to stop the minotaur's rampage. If the Body Count reaches 5 or 10 (the first and second milestones) during the encounter, any PCs with a Wisdom score of 12+ will feel a brief but nasty sensation of impending doom at the moment this happens.

Treasure

Light-fingered PCs will have the chance to grab a few smaller items from Calbiades' body without their absence being noticed before his shipmates from the *Stormrunner*



arrive on the scene. The minotaur captain has a purse containing 127 gp and 3 cyclops agates (worth 50 gp each) in addition to his gear.

Development

If the PCs took down Calbiades without killing him and bring him round, they can question him briefly before the City Watch arrive to arrest him. He seems dazed and confused and only says that he had to punish the clumsy longshoremen.

The PCs can also speak with the minotaur sailors – they tell the party that Calbiades disappeared for an hour shortly after the ship docked and had just returned when the incident happened. The crew don't know where he went – it hadn't been smooth sailing from Phokris and the captain said he was going for a walk now they were at last on dry land.

The *Stormrunner's* first mate, a reddish brown-haired minotaur named Lysander, is shocked and surprised by Calbiades' murderous behaviour. Although the captain had a terrible temper, he would normally rant and rave for a few minutes, then storm off for an hour or so before eventually calming down. Lysander can't remember a time when he lashed out physically at one of the crew, let alone with a weapon.

As the conversation with the minotaurs draws to a close, the PCs notice a tall, thin, brown-skinned woman dressed in yellow and orange robes squinting at them; she looks rather stern. This is **Chandipati** (LN female Sampuran human cleric 6), priestess of the Floating Temple of the Sapta Sindhu. As she approaches, the PCs will realize with a DC 10 Sense Motive check that the

intense look was because she is short-sighted, rather than disapproving. Chandipati congratulates the adventurers on their bravery in confronting the minotaur (if they did so). She tells them that this is not the first such incident in recent days and she is worried, with the Festival of Flowers about to begin tomorrow, that it won't be the last. Will the PCs come to the temple to speak with her more about this matter?

The Floating Temple

To reach the Floating Temple of the Sapta Sindhu, the PCs need to make their way through Flotsam, a community built from boats of every size and shape that bobs on the water at the eastern end of the Old Docks. Around 70 vessels are joined together by a confusing network of gangplanks and rope bridges. Luckily, they have Chandipati to guide them to the temple if they don't know the way – the gangly priestess hops nimbly from one houseboat to the next, leading the adventurers past floating shops selling rice, flour and vegetables, woven baskets, ropes and fishing nets, to their destination. Hanging baskets of bright red, orange and yellow marigolds are everywhere in readiness for the festival.

The Floating Temple is a riot of colour in the heart of Flotsam. Vibrantly dyed pennants and flags run on strings from the mast down to the front, back and sides of the large houseboat, and the entire vessel is absolutely covered in beautiful flowers. On the deck stand seven brightly painted wooden statues depicting the Sapta Sindhu, the seven river gods and goddesses of the Sampurans. Each wears a floral garland of marigolds.

Chandipati's Traits

"I am a strict vegetarian. All living things have souls and should be treated with respect and compassion."

"I serve the Sapta Sindhu and watch over the Sampuran community of Flotsam."

"My husband walked out on me and joined the Golden Scimitars gang, but I still love him."

Chandipati warmly welcomes the PCs to the temple, naming each of the seven gods' statues in turn, and explaining that worshippers from all over the Old Quarter (and beyond) will bring gifts and offerings for their chosen deity during the festival, in hopes that their prayers will be answered in return. After the brief tour, Chandipati leads the PCs below decks to her quarters, thanks them for coming, and offers them tea.

As she pours the tea, the priestess explains that the minotaur's rampage is the fourth such incident in as



many days. She outlines the other three episodes to the PCs, conveying the information below, and doing her best to answer their questions.

- Three nights ago, a fight broke out between **Bazel**, a notorious halfling pickpocket, and **Misaq Hardknuckles**, an enforcer working for the Boss of Robbers, over a game of hazard (a popular dice game). The normally cowardly halfling went for the much bigger Misaq with his boot knife, with predictable results. Misaq fled the scene and is lying low. See *The Thug* on page 12.
- Two days ago, **Jamia**, a stallholder in the Fish Market, attacked the man sent to collect her regular protection payments on behalf of the Boss of Con Artists and Racketeers. The racketeer responded in kind, beating Jamia senseless before limping away and bleeding out in an alleyway. Jamia later died of her injuries too. A young orphan girl, **Ashna**, saw the whole thing. See *The Orphan* on page 14.
- Then, yesterday, a fisherman named **Param**, a regular at the Floating Temple, attacked his cousin with a fish hook as they sailed out for the morning, and nearly gutted him. Now he is being held in the Watchhouse cells for murder. See *The Fisherman* on page 17.

In all three cases, the attackers were not known as violent individuals before they attacked their victims. Chandipati knows Param – he has always seemed a hard-working, patient and mild-mannered fellow to her.

He would pray regularly at the shrine to Kunar for a bigger catch to help feed his wife and six daughters.

Now, with today's incident on the docks involving the minotaur captain, Chandipati is convinced there is a connection between the killings. The priestess does not want to see anyone else hurt and is worried that any further instances of violence might get out of hand once the Festival of Flowers is underway and the area is packed to the brim with celebrants.

Because of her duties presiding over the festival, Chandipati is unable to look into what is going on herself, and the Watch are worse than useless in her opinion. Will the PCs investigate and, if possible, put a stop to the violence? She offers them a reward of 100 gold bezants (gp) from the temple treasury and one *potion of cure light wounds* per PC if they will help.

Chandipati will suggest that the adventurers seek out the witnesses. She should be able to speak to them again at some point tomorrow in between ceremonies if they need her advice.





The Three Witnesses

The adventurers seek out and speak with the key witnesses to the previous incidents. Some are more willing to talk than others, but the PCs should discover that the Black Dolphin's Wake is a common thread running through their stories.

The Thug

Misaq Hardknuckles works as muscle for Sisethros Clovenhoof, the Boss of Robbers, one of the six Bosses who control crime in the Dock Ward. He is a thickset Aqhrani, with a short, stubby beard and no neck; his shaved head is covered in razor nicks.

The party can track Misaq down to his mother's houseboat where he is hiding out without too much trouble. PCs with connections to the Hidden Quarter criminal gangs may be acquainted with the thug and know his mother lives in Flotsam. Alternatively, Ashna or Sergeant Saurish can point them in the right direction. By talking to the locals and succeeding on a DC 12 Diplomacy check, the PCs can find a Flotsam resident who knows Misaq's long-suffering mother Rema and is willing to point out the decrepit-looking houseboat where she lives.

The houseboat is an old fishing boat, sitting low in the water, its blue paint peeling, with a flimsy wooden shack built on the deck to serve as a one-room home. The shack has front and back doors and two windows – both windows are covered with makeshift canvas curtains. Inside, it is cramped and dingy. The floor is strewn with dirty bowls and plates of half-eaten food and there is a rank smell of unwashed bodies. Rema isn't home but Misaq is, sitting on the bed and staring into space, rattling a pair of bone dice in his hand.

Creatures (CR 2)

Misaq really doesn't want to talk to the PCs, and unless they succeed on a DC 15 Stealth check, he will make a run for it through the back door or a window, leading the adventurers on a merry chase through the boat-town of Flotsam. Even if they do manage to creep up on him and then cover all four exits, Misaq will attempt to bull rush

his way past a weak-looking PC to escape. If cornered, he fights, and the PCs will need to subdue or *charm* him to gain his cooperation.

MISAQ HARDKNUCKLES

CR 2, XP 600

Male Aqhrani human fighter 2/rogue 1

CN Medium humanoid

Init +2; **Senses** Perception +5

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14 (+4 armour, +2 Dex)

hp 23 (2d10+1d8+6)

Fort +4, **Ref** +4, **Will** +0; +1 vs fear

Defensive Abilities bravery +1

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee club +6 (1d6+3) or dagger +5 (1d4+3/19–20)

Ranged dagger +4 (1d4+3/19–20)

Special Attacks sneak attack +1d6

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 15, **Con** 13, **Int** 8, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +2; **CMB** +5 (+7 bull rush); **CMD** 17

Feats Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Intimidate), Toughness

Skills Acrobatics +8, Climb +7, Intimidate +9, Knowledge (local) +5, Perception +6 (+7 to find traps); **Languages** Bathuran, Aqhrani

SQ trapfinding +1

Combat Gear tanglefoot bags (2), thunderstones (3); **Other Gear** +1 studded leather, masterwork club, daggers (2), 39 gp, pair of dice.



Flotsam Chase

Pursuing Misaq through the jumble of houseboats, rope bridges and gangplanks that make up Flotsam should make for a frenetic chase. This encounter uses the Pathfinder chase rules – see the *Gamemastery Guide* for details.

Start

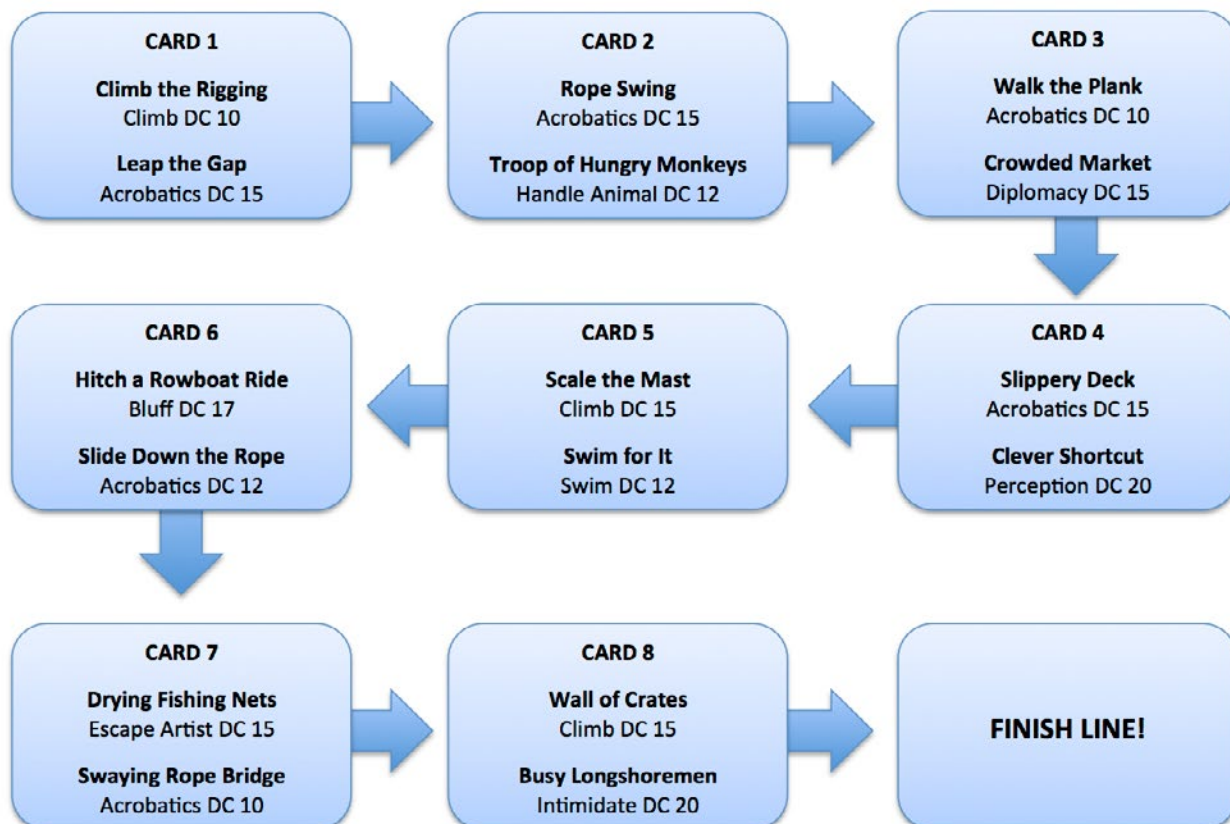
- Misaq and the PCs roll initiative at the start of the chase and act in order.
- The PCs begin at the start line. The chase consists of eight cards. Misaq begins on Card 3 unless he had to force his way past the adventurers.

Chase Cards

- See the Flotsam Chase Chart below.

- Each card contains two obstacles and the skill checks needed to overcome them.
- Each card represents 30 feet of movement. For every 10 feet of speed more or less than 30 feet, the character takes a +2 or –2 to every skill check made to navigate obstacles. At the GM's discretion magical abilities (e.g. flight) may bestow additional bonuses.
- It takes a move action to move through a single card. When a character exits from a card, they must choose one of the card's obstacles to overcome as a standard action before moving to the next card. Success means they move on; failure means they must face the obstacle again next round.
- A character may choose to take other actions, such as casting a spell or making a ranged attack, instead of exiting a card. A character can only make melee attacks

Flotsam Chase Chart





against a target on the same card. Misaq will throw his tanglefoot bags at chasing PCs to halt their pursuit.

- By using a full-round action, a character can attempt to move three cards, instead of just one. To exit the first card, the character must overcome both obstacles. If they fail either check by 5 or less, they move only one card forward. If they fail either check by 5 or more, they do not move at all. Failing both obstacle checks mires the character in the current card. A mired character must spend another full-round action to free herself and may suffer damage or additional penalties at the GM's discretion.

Development

If Misaq reaches the finish line first, he escapes into the backstreets of the Dock Ward and won't be seen again. But if the PCs catch up with Misaq, he surrenders. Panting from his exertions, he offers to spill the beans and tell the adventurers about his fight with Bazel, as long as they promise not to turn him in to the Watch.

Misaq's Story

Misaq explains that he likes to get together with his mates from time to time to play hazard, a popular dice game, over a few drinks. They play for small stakes – certainly not the kind of amounts anyone would try and kill each other over.

A few nights ago they were playing hazard in the pub and Bazel was on a losing streak. All of a sudden the halfling started acting really weird – he got very angry and shouty, accusing Misaq of cheating by using loaded dice. Then he pulled a knife from his boot, leaped across the table, and tried to stab Misaq in the guts.

The thug attempted to defend himself from the attack. "I tried to knock him out with me club but I must've hit him too hard," Misaq says. "His brains were splattered all over the table. Very messy. I thought I'd best make a run for it and lie low for a few days."

Misaq also knows the following information, which he will divulge in response to the PCs' questions:

- The fight took place in the Black Dolphin's Wake, a scruffy waterfront tavern near the Old Docks.
- Bazel had been drinking Crescent Moon lager; Misaq prefers Marlin Brew ("There's something funny about the Crescent Moon in that place – doesn't taste right").
- Both had eaten food in the tavern. Misaq had the dolmas (stuffed vine leaves); Bazel ordered the fish kabobs.

Misaq's Traits

"I rob people because I'd rather be one of the 'haves' than one of the 'have nots.'"

"I need to keep my dear old mum safe from all the bad people around here."

"I don't know my own strength."

There is one more thing that Misaq has omitted from this story – with a DC 20 Sense Motive check, the PCs can figure out he's not telling them everything. If pressed, Misaq says that as he made for the door after killing Bazel, he thought he heard a voice whispering to him, telling him it would be better not to leave any witnesses alive. The thug ignored the voice and ran out into the night. Now he thinks he must have imagined it.

Award the PCs 600 XP if they successfully chase down Misaq and obtain the information they need.

The Orphan

Ashna, witness to the second incident, is one of the Water Boys, a gang of around 20 human orphan children, aged between 7 and 14 and mostly Sampuran. They live on a large fishing boat in Flotsam and get by with begging, running errands, pulling stuff out of the water to sell, and a fair bit of pickpocketing and petty theft.

The PCs can track Ashna down on the busy waterfront by asking around. When they find her, the little orphan girl is attempting to lift a gold anklet from the leg of **Marjan**, an ifrit sorcerer known for her fiery temper. Marjan's elemental ancestry is obvious – tall and lithe,



she has bronze-coloured skin, mottled horns and reddish-orange hair that appears to be on fire. She is wearing a crimson thigh split dress and lots of showy jewellery. Ashna, in contrast, is a scruffy-looking nine-year-old Sampuran girl, wearing a grubby yellow sari over dark trousers. This time, Ashna's normally deft fingers let her down and she fumbles with the anklet as she unclasps it from Marjan's ankle. The ifrit notices and roars at her in anger: "What in Agni's name do you think you are doing, you little wretch?!"

Ashna is about to make a run for it, but the sorcerer isn't going to let her get away. To make matters worse, Marjan is Hidimba's latest victim, and has fallen under the daeva's control. PCs watching the scene unfold can make a DC 15 Sense Motive check to observe a distant look come over

Marjan's face as the daeva whispers to her. The ifrit casts *touch of combustion* – flames spring from her fingertips as she attempts to set the child on fire. Ashna leaps out of the way just in time and dashes away.

Creatures (CR 1)

If the PCs haven't already intervened, have them roll initiative now. Marjan will attack Ashna again on her turn with her fiery elemental ray, as the pickpocket ducks and weaves in and out of the festival crowds, but she will turn on the PCs if they attack her. Urged on by the daeva, she happily uses *burning hands*, unconcerned about collateral damage to innocent bystanders in the area of effect. As Marjan flings spells around, terrified onlookers scatter, making gestures to ward off the "Evil Eye".





MARJAN

CR 1, XP 400

Female ifrit sorcerer 2

CN Medium outsider (native)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception –1

DEFENSE

AC 13, touch 13, flat-footed 10 (+3 Dex)

hp 10 (2d6+2)

Fort +1, **Ref** +3, **Will** +1

Resist fire 5

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee masterwork dagger +1 (1d4-1/19-20/x2)

Ranged elemental ray +4 (1d6+1 fire)

Bloodline Spell-Like Abilities (CL 2nd; concentration +1)
7/day – elemental ray, range 30 ft. (1d6+1 fire)

Ifrit Spell-Like Ability (CL 2nd; concentration +1):
1/day – *burning hands* (DC 15)

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 2nd; concentration +1)
1st (5/day) – *burning hands* (DC 15), *touch of combustion*

0 (at will) – *acid splash* (fire), *flare* (DC 14), *mage hand*,
read magic, *touch of fatigue* (DC 14)

Bloodline elemental (fire)

STATISTICS

Str 8, **Dex** 16, **Con** 13, **Int** 12, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 17

Base Atk +1; **CMB** +0; **CMD** 13

Feats Combat Casting, Eschew Materials

Skills Intimidate +8, Knowledge (arcana) +6, Spellcraft +6;
Languages Bathuran, Aqhrani, Ignan

SQ fire affinity (treat Charisma score as 2 points higher
for sorcerer spells and class abilities); bloodline arcana
(change energy damage spells to fire)

Combat Gear *potion of cure light wounds*, *scroll of shield*,
scrolls of true strike (2); **Other Gear** masterwork dagger.

ASHNA

CR ½, XP 200

Female Sampuran human rogue 1

N Small humanoid

Init +3; **Senses** Perception +3

DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 13, flat-footed 10 (+1 size, +3 Dex)

hp 5 (1d8+1)

Fort +1, **Ref** +5, **Will** –1

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee sap –2 (1d6–1 nonlethal)

Special Attacks sneak attack +1d6

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 17, **Con** 12, **Int** 13, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +0; **CMB** –2; **CMD** 11

Feats Deft Hands, Skill Focus (Sleight of Hand)

Skills Acrobatics +7, Appraise +5, Bluff +6, Disable Device
+9, Disguise +6, Escape Artist +7, Knowledge (local) +5,
Perception +3 (+4 to find traps), Sense Motive +3, Sleight
of Hand +12, Stealth +11; **Languages** Bathuran,
Sampuran

SQ trap finding +1

Other Gear sap, thieves' tools, stolen silver bracelet worth
30 gp, 11 cp, 17 sp, 9 gp.

Body Count

Increase the Body Count total by 1 if the PCs kill Marjan, and add another 1d6 for the unfortunate onlookers killed if the ifrit uses *burning hands* in the crowded streets. Remember that PCs with a Wisdom score of 12+ will feel a brief, nasty sensation of impending doom if the Body Count reaches a milestone during the encounter (see page 6).

If the PCs skip this encounter, it can occur offstage, with the adventurers hearing about it later on. If this happens, add 7 to the Body Count.



Treasure

Marjan's bronze and gold jewellery is worth 300 gp total. She also has a pouch containing 53 gp in addition to her gear. Ashna has a stolen silver bracelet worth 30 gp, but she won't give it up willingly. If the PCs loot Marjan's body, Ashna is likely to try and steal the jewellery from them later on.

Development

Ashna is very grateful if the PCs save her from the sorcerer's wrath, and is happy to tell the PCs about the fight she witnessed.

Ashna was in the Fish Market in search of her supper when she saw Jamia and Abriq, a collector for the Boss of Con Artists and Racketeers, arguing at Jamia's fish stall. Jamia had refused to pay her weekly protection money and the thug was warning her about the repercussions of not coughing up.

Suddenly, Ashna says, Jamia picked up the knife she uses for dressing fish and stabbed Abriq in the chest with it. The racketeer staggered back, pulled out his club, and beat Jamia with it over and over again, before limping off. Ashna didn't want any trouble with the Watch so she fled. Later on, she heard both had died from their injuries.

Ashna adds that Jamia was quite a formidable character. She had apparently been to a pub earlier that day to deliver some fish, and told the landlord there that Abriq was going to get what was coming to him if he didn't give her longer to pay back what she owed.

As soon as the City Watch arrive on the scene, Ashna scarpers, but may return later. If a PC acted particularly heroically in the battle or is especially kind to Ashna, she is likely to latch onto that character for a while, constantly

Ashna's Traits

"I may not have much, but no one tells me what I can and can't do."

"Being in the Water Boys means we all look out for each other."

"It isn't stealing if people don't look after their stuff properly."

asking questions and hustling for sweets or a few coppers by offering to run errands and so on. She can prove helpful to the party if they get stuck – for example, Ashna knows where Misaq Hardknuckles is hiding out.

Marjan's Story

If Marjan was knocked unconscious, rather than killed by the PCs, they can interrogate the sorcerer after bringing her round. Although she's still arrogant and quick to anger, she is no longer under the daeva's control. The ifrit tells the PCs she heard a rasping, whispering voice in her head telling her to punish Ashna severely for her crime, and she felt compelled to obey.

Although not yet a member of the Esoteric Order of the Blue Lotus (see *Parsantium: City at the Crossroads*), Marjan is a former apprentice of the Order's Master of Western Magic, Sabir al-Falasifa. The temperamental sorcerer's reaction to his ex-pupil's demise or arrest is up to the GM to determine.

The Fisherman

To speak to Param the murderous fisherman, the PCs need to visit the Dock Ward's Watchhouse where he is being held. The Dock Ward's City Watch is notorious for both its corruption and its ineffectiveness, so it might be something of a surprise to the PCs when they meet its only conscientious and well-intentioned policeman.

Sergeant Saurish (LG male Sampuran human fighter 4) is 30 years old, well turned out, with a neatly trimmed beard and moustache. He wears the white tabard of the Watch emblazoned with the city's horse and crescent moon emblem in purple over his armour, and a purple turban, fastened with a clasp depicting the leaping dolphin symbol of the Dock Ward. Saurish is sitting behind his desk writing up a report on the day's events in the ward in his immaculate handwriting. He looks up and asks the PCs politely how he can be of service.

To persuade the sergeant to let them speak with Param, the PCs need to convince Saurish they are acting in the best interests of the city. While most watchmen would be happy to have arrested the obviously guilty fisherman,



Saurish is perplexed by the murder – why did a normally easy-going, decent man brutally kill his own cousin with a fish hook? So far, Param has been sobbing continually and has said nothing to explain his actions. He is due to be transferred to the Courthouse in the Imperial Quarter for trial in a couple of days.

Saurish recognizes the PCs from his report if they helped stop the minotaur attack earlier, which shifts his starting attitude from indifferent to friendly. If they tell him they are investigating the violence for Chandipati, he becomes helpful and will allow them to question Param in his cell. Alternatively, they can make a DC 15 Diplomacy check to convince Saurish to let them spend 15 minutes with the prisoner.

Bluffing the sergeant is also possible but more difficult: the PCs must roll an opposed check against his +7 Sense Motive skill. Sergeant Saurish can't be intimidated, and if they try to bribe him, he threatens them with a night in the cells – although if they are locked up, they can at least talk to Param, who is being held in the adjacent cell.

Saurish has little to offer if asked about the other incidents, but he does tell the party that Misaq Hardknuckles' mother lives in a decrepit houseboat in Flotsam. Maybe Misaq is hiding out with his dear old mum? The sergeant also knows about the dark past of the Black Dolphin's Wake and will recount the story of Mikulas poisoning his customers and his subsequent death at the hands of the mob (see Adventure Background, page 3) if the PCs mention the tavern. He knows nothing about the daeva's role in the earlier killings, however.

If the PCs fail to persuade Saurish to grant them access, they can return later when he's not on duty and bribe a different Watchman with at least 10 gp.

Saurish's Traits

"I will do everything I can to rid Parsantium of crime and corruption."

"My duty is to protect and serve the good people of the Dock Ward."

"Lazy, cowardly and corrupt Watchmen make me very angry, and I include my Watch Captain in that group."

The Cells

An overwhelming reek of stale sweat and day-old fish greets you when you reach the cells. Only one is occupied – the bedraggled-looking man sitting inside is rocking back and forth and sobbing to himself. He smells terrible. He looks up as you approach, wailing mournfully, "What will happen to my family? Who will feed them?"

The PCs can try to get **Param** (NG male Sampuran human expert 1) to speak to them – offering to help his soon-to-be-starving family is a sensible approach. If they appear sincere, either through roleplaying or a successful DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) check, they can coax him into talking. Spells such as *charm person* could also prove effective. PCs already on friendly terms with Param or his family (see Adventure Hooks, page 3) do not need to make a skill check.

Param tells the PCs, in between sobs, what happened between him and his cousin Bhargav. The pair had a running competition as to who could catch the most fish every month. Bhargav was winning and had been taunting Param the night before and again in the morning as they got their boats ready.

His cousin kept on teasing him, saying he might as well give up and concede that Bhargav was by far the better fisherman, that Param was wasting his time praying to Kunar, and so on. Param wasn't in the mood as he'd just found out that Jamia, the stallholder he sold his fish to each day, had died in a street fight.

Param could feel himself getting more and more annoyed, then a voice in his head started whispering to him. "Shut him up for good," the voice said. "Go on, do it. Do it." Before he knew what was happening, he'd stuck his fish hook into Bhargav's stomach. His cousin screamed, blood went everywhere, and everything went black. Param must have fainted. When he came to, he was locked up in this cell and told he is to be put on trial for murder.

Param does not mention the Black Dolphin's Wake, but if asked, he confirms that he and Bhargav had popped into the tavern for a pint of Crescent Moon and a bite to eat the night before the incident.



Param's Traits

"If I work hard every day, Kunar will answer my prayers."

"My family means everything to me."

"Bhargav is a better fisherman than me and I resent him for it."

Before the PCs leave, Param begs them to tell his wife Thai and his children that he loves them, that he's not a killer, and that he's desperately sorry for what's happened. "It was the voice. It lusts for blood and I had to obey. Please believe me!"

The Minotaur

If Calbiades wasn't killed at the docks, he will be locked up in one of the cells here too, brooding and lamenting his fate. His attitude to the PCs will be hostile, making it very hard to get him to talk – this requires a DC 30 Diplomacy check to shift his attitude to indifferent.

Rewards

The PCs earn 100 XP each for speaking to Param and finding out what happened. If they seek his family out in Flotsam after the visiting the Watchhouse and tell Thai they are trying to help, the PCs earn an additional 50 XP each as an ad-hoc experience award.



The Black Dolphin's Wake

The PCs visit the seedy tavern that seems to connect all the violent incidents. Here, they can save the pub's hapless landlord from angry sellswords under the daeva's control, and learn more about the malevolent whispering voice behind the murders. A trapdoor in the cellar leads down to the source of the evil whispers. Before investigating, the PCs might decide to return to Chandipati for help and advice.

Visiting the Tavern

After they have talked to the three witnesses to the earlier violent incidents, the Black Dolphin's Wake is likely to be the PCs' next port of call. This scruffy tavern is located close to Flotsam on the waterfront. Above the entrance hangs a faded sign depicting the black fin of a dolphin cutting through the waters of the Dolphin Strait, with the city of Parsantium in the background. In an effort to attract festival-goers, baskets of red and gold flowers swing from hooks on the ramshackle porch.

Stepping across the threshold into the pub's dingy interior, your senses are assailed by the sound of several loud conversations and a pungent blend of smells – stale beer, sweat, and not so fresh fish. The festival has lured plenty of thirsty celebrants to the shabby tavern and the place is buzzing. A few regulars, mostly fishermen, sit quietly nursing their near-empty tankards and staring into space, while the newcomers stand around in groups, chatting. You spot the odd rat scurrying around beneath the tables hunting for crumbs. Behind the bar stands a lanky, rather goofy-looking Aqhrani, who beams in joy at the arrival of yet more patrons.

This is **Riyad**, the landlord of the Black Dolphin's Wake, who bought the empty tavern at a knockdown price with some lucky gambling winnings a few months ago. Overwhelmingly cheerful but a bit slow on the uptake, Riyad is determined to make a success of his new career as a tavern keeper, serving cheaply priced drinks and tasty snacks to those locals who are willing to forget the pub's dark past.

As they approach the bar, any PC with a Wisdom score of 15+ will get a strange feeling something isn't quite right here, as the hairs stand up on the back of their neck. Affected characters are unable to pinpoint the source of the weird vibe and it quickly passes.

Riyad greets the PCs warmly and asks them what they'll be having. The Wake serves Marlin Brew, a cheap, watery pale ale (2 cp), as well as Crescent Moon, a popular light beer (5 cp). A plate of dolmas costs 1 sp, a spiced fish kabob costs 5 cp, and a cheese and spinach pastry costs 3 cp. The "Crescent Moon" Riyad serves is actually a cheap knock-off, which he buys from Saqil, a dodgy merchant in the pay of the Boss of Con Artists and Racketeers. PCs who have drunk Crescent Moon before will notice a peculiar aftertaste if they order a pint here. Saqil has a warehouse near the Old Docks, should the PCs want to investigate spurious connections between the violent deaths and the beer. Riyad used to buy his fish from Jamia but has had to find another supplier following the merchant's death. There is nothing odd about the fish kabobs – they're very tasty.

The PCs can chat to Riyad briefly as he pours the party's drinks. He is not keen to discuss the bloody altercation between Bazel and Misaq in his tavern, and if confronted with the fact that Param and Jamia had both visited the pub before they committed their acts of violence, he looks uncomfortable.

If asked, Riyad reluctantly confirms that both Calbiades and Marjan were also recent customers, but protests that this is all a coincidence. "The Wake is really going places," he says. "Business couldn't be better." With a DC 15 Sense Motive check, the PCs can determine that there is something the landlord isn't telling them.



Riyad's Traits

"I'm determined to make the Black Dolphin's Wake a roaring success."

"I've put my heart and soul into this pub. It means everything to me."

"I must have imagined those strange whispers."

One of the fishermen sitting on a stool at the bar – a balding, red-nosed Bathuran named **Arktaros** – overhears the conversation and loudly mutters, "Told you the place is still cursed!" If the PCs haven't heard the story of Mikulas and the tavern's dark past (see page 3), Arktaros is more than happy to fill them in, much to Riyad's dismay.

RIYAD

CR 1/3, XP 100

Male Aqhrani human commoner 1

CN Medium humanoid

Init +0; **Senses** Perception +0

DEFENSE

AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10

hp 5 (1d6+1)

Fort +1, **Ref** +0, **Will** +2

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee flagon –4 (1d3 nonlethal)

Ranged flagon +0 (1d3 nonlethal)

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 11, **Con** 12, **Int** 9, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +0; **CMB** +0; **CMD** 10

Feats Iron Will, Throw Anything

Skills Diplomacy +2, Profession (innkeeper) +4;

Languages Bathuran, Aqhrani

Gear belt pouch, 7 gp, 25 sp, 37 cp.

Poisoned! (CR 3)

Note: It is possible that the PCs visit the tavern early in the adventure before they have spoken to all three witnesses. If this happens, save this encounter until they return.

Before the adventurers have a chance to press Riyad further, a strangled cry comes from a table over by the fireplace where a female gnoll and three dark-skinned, bearded men, clearly sellswords of some sort, are sitting. One of the three men starts twitching and foaming at the mouth, a half-eaten dolma clutched in his hand. Suddenly he cries out, then collapses face-down on the table.

Ediz, the poisoned sellsword, is not dead, although he will be if he doesn't receive assistance. The dolmas were laced with arsenic (**Type** ingested; **Save** Fortitude DC 13; **Onset** 10 minutes; **Frequency** 1/minute for 4 minutes; **Effect** 1d2 Con damage; **Cure** 1 save) and Ediz suffered an extreme reaction. His Con has dropped to 8, and he will continue to lose 1d2 Con per minute until he saves (Fort +2) or the poison is treated with a DC 13 Heal check.

Unfortunately, his friends don't know this. **Natalka**, the gnoll warrior, leaps to her feet, her seven-foot-tall frame imposing in the low-ceilinged taproom. "He's been poisoned!" she shouts. "You murdering bastard!" yells one of the men. Drawing weapons, the three mercenaries push past the other patrons and advance on the hapless Riyad, who begs the PCs to save him. "I haven't poisoned anyone!" he cries in anguish.

Creatures

The PCs can intervene to protect Riyad or can stand aside and let the mercenaries take out their anger on the tavern keeper by cutting him down in cold blood. As the sellswords advance, a DC 15 Sense Motive check allows a PC to spot the distant look on Natalka's face, indicating Hidimba's influence, just before she enters her barbarian rage.

The fearsome gnoll mercenary has dirty yellow fur covered in light brown blotches; she brandishes a spear decorated with feathers and tiny animal skulls. The two bearded humans look more than capable of handling themselves in a fight too. Samir has a long scar running down his left cheek; Wasid has lost part of his right ear.



NATALKA

CR 1, XP 400

Female gnoll barbarian 2

CN Medium humanoid

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +6

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 10, flat-footed 16 (+6 armour, +2 Dex, +2 natural, -2 rage)

hp 28 (2d12+10)

Fort +7, **Ref** +2, **Will** +3; +2 vs spells, supernatural & spell-like abilities

Defensive Abilities uncanny dodge

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee masterwork spear +8 (1d8+5/×3)

Ranged throwing axe +4 (1d6+5)

Special Attacks rage (8 rounds/day), rage powers (superstition)

STATISTICS

Str 20, **Dex** 15, **Con** 19, **Int** 10, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +2; **CMB** +7; **CMD** 17

Feats Combat Reflexes

Skills Acrobatics +7, Climb +10, Intimidate +4, Perception +6, Survival +6; **Languages** Bathuran, Aqhrani, Gnoll

SQ fast movement

Combat Gear *potion of cure light wounds*; **Other Gear** masterwork breastplate, masterwork spear, throwing axes (2), 74 gp.

Base Statistics When not raging, Natalka's statistics are **AC** 20, touch 12, flat-footed 18; **hp** 24; **Fort** +5, **Will** +1; **Melee** masterwork spear +6 (1d8+3/×3); **Ranged** throwing axe +4 (1d6+3); **Str** 16, **Con** 15; **CMB** +5; **Skills** Climb +8.

Riyad will throw a flagon at Natalka, before cowering behind the bar. Whatever happens, the other patrons dash for the exit as soon as the trouble starts. Arktaros exclaims "It's happened again! I knew it would!" as he rushes for the door.

SAMIR & WASID, SELLSWORDS

CR ½, XP 200

Male Aqhrani human warrior 2

N Medium humanoid

Init +0; **Senses** Perception +0

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 10, flat-footed 16 (+6 armour)

hp 18 (2d10+1)

Fort +4, **Ref** +0, **Will** +0

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee scimitar +5 (1d6+2/18-20)

Ranged light crossbow +2 (1d8)

STATISTICS

Str 15, **Dex** 11, **Con** 13, **Int** 9, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 9

Base Atk +2; **CMB** +4; **CMD** 14

Feats Toughness, Weapon Focus (scimitar)

Skills Intimidate +3, Profession (soldier) +4; **Languages** Bathuran, Aqhrani

Gear scimitar, light crossbow, bolts (10), scale mail, belt pouch, 20 gp

Body Count

Add the number of dead sellswords (and Riyad, if applicable) to the Body Count total. Remember that PCs with a Wisdom score of 12+ will feel a brief but nasty sensation of impending doom if the Body Count reaches a milestone during the encounter.

Treasure

If the PCs loot the bodies of the sellswords, they can find a *potion of cure light wounds* and 74 gp on Natalka. The other two sellswords have 20 gp each.

Development

If the PCs take down Natalka, both Samir and Wasid will lose their stomachs for the fight and run, threatening to



return when Riyad doesn't have his "hired thugs" around to protect him. The wretched landlord is pathetically grateful if the PCs save him from the mercenaries, but is thoroughly perplexed by how his dolmas came to be poisoned. "How in Amur's name could someone die from one of my delicious dishes?"

The answer can be found in the kitchen where the culprit, the Wake's plump Sampuran cook, **Harita** (LG female Sampuran human commoner 1), is sitting on the floor. Now freed from the daeva's influence, she is clutching a small empty vial and sobbing to herself. If the PCs can calm her down enough to talk, Harita tells the party that a whispering voice told her to punish Ediz, her ex-lover, for dumping her. Following the voice's instructions, she sprinkled the poison she uses to get rid of rats in the kitchen onto the dolmas Ediz ordered. She thought he'd just get sick – she didn't intend for him to die.

A character examining Ediz can tell the sellsword is alive but is still suffering from the effects of the poison. If successfully treated with the Heal skill, he slowly comes round. He thanks the PCs for their help, calls Harita "a crazy bitch who should be locked up by the Watch", and leaves.

It's up to the PCs to decide whether to call for the Watch or not following this encounter. If they do, Harita will be arrested and taken to the Watchhouse.

The Cellar

After the poisoning and the fight with the sellswords, Riyad is willing to tell the PCs everything. He explains how he came to buy the empty tavern, tells them the story of Mikulas if they haven't heard it already, and says he didn't believe the rumours that the place was cursed at first. Recent events, though, have made him begin to think there might be something in the tales after all. He often gets an "odd feeling" when he goes down into the cellar to fetch a barrel, and has heard a strange whispering voice in his head several times, urging him to "Kill them! Kill them all!" He thought he must be imagining things, but now he's not so sure. Maybe the

curse has returned? Would the adventurers be willing to go down into the cellar to investigate? He'd happily offer them free beer and dolmas for a month if they can get to the bottom of things.

In the dusty cellar, PCs with a Wisdom score of 15+ get a similar feeling to the one they experienced when they first entered the tavern, but this time the sensation is stronger and takes a few seconds to pass. If the adventurers search the room, they soon find an old trapdoor under some empty crates in the southeastern corner. The trapdoor is stuck, requiring a DC 13 Strength check to open. A dank, musty smell rises up from the darkness as the PCs lift it open to reveal stone steps spiralling downwards.

Getting Help

By now the PCs have probably realized they are dealing with some kind of demonic possession and may decide to return to Chandipati at the Floating Temple, or perhaps visit Sergeant Saurish at the Watchhouse, before heading down into the cellar. They may also want to do some research into daevas after talking to the priestess.

Chandipati

Depending on how much time has elapsed, the Festival of Flowers may already be underway and the adventurers will need to push their way through the crowds waiting to make their offerings – typically rice balls, flowers and sweets – to the river gods and goddesses at the Floating Temple. Although very busy, Chandipati will spare the PCs a few minutes in her chamber to hear what they have discovered.

If the PCs tell her they believe something is possessing the perpetrators of the violent acts, Chandipati agrees a demonic spirit or daeva could be involved. If this is the case, the adventurers themselves may be at risk from its attacks. She opens a carved wooden box and hands them an ebony wand of *protection from evil* with 12 charges (caster level 1st). The priestess explains the wand can be used to ward against possession, and also suppress a spirit's influence on someone it has already possessed. She encourages the PCs to continue their investigations



beneath the tavern and confront and destroy whatever is behind the violent attacks.

If the PCs mention the ominous feeling they have experienced as a result of the Body Count reaching a milestone, Chandipati explains that a certain type of daeva feeds on slaughter and its power will grow with each death in its name. She advises the heroes to prevent further killing if they can.

Finally, if any PCs are wounded, she will offer to heal them by channelling positive energy.

WATCHMEN (2)

CR ½, XP 135

Male or female Sampuran human warrior 1

N Medium humanoid

Init +1; **Senses** Perception +3

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14

hp 8 (1d10+3)

Fort +2, **Ref** +1, **Will** +0

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee halberd +3 (1d10+2/x3) or longsword +3 (1d8+2/19–20/x2)

Ranged light crossbow +2 (1d8/19–20/x2)

STATISTICS

Str 15, **Dex** 12, **Con** 11, **Int** 9, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 9

Base Atk +1; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 14

Feats Alertness, Toughness

Skills Intimidate +3, Perception +3, Sense Motive +2;

Languages Bathuran, Sampuran

Gear chain shirt, halberd, longsword, light crossbow, 20 bolts, lantern, 2 gp.

Sergeant Saurish

The Watch sergeant has his hands full with the Festival of Flowers and is not willing or able to accompany the PCs through the trapdoor. However, if the PCs have been finding the adventure tough going so far, Saurish offers to send two Watchmen to help them, as long as he believes the adventurers are acting in the Dock Ward's best interests. The sergeant warns them to be careful in the Hidden Quarter – a crew of sewer workers from the Department of Night Soil Management went missing down there a week or two ago.

Researching Daevas

With a DC 15 Knowledge (Religion) check a PC can recall the following information about daevas:

- Daevas are evil, demon-like fiends who are charged by the gods with the punishment of sinners in the Seven Hells of Naraka.
- Around 2,000 years ago, following the fall of the rakshasa rajah Vrishabha, clandestine cults sprung up beneath the city streets of the Old Quarter to worship certain daevas as gods.
- These cults honoured their false gods with bloody human sacrifices, believing they could summon them into this world in spirit form by performing enough killings in the daeva's name.
- Warrior-priests of Vishnu waged war on these cults centuries ago and wiped them out.

Alternatively, Chandipati or another suitable PC contact might be able to provide this information. Visiting the Library of All Knowledge in the Imperial Quarter (see *Parsantium: City at the Crossroads*, page 63) is another possibility, but this is likely to take the PCs an entire day.



Into the Hidden Quarter

The adventurers descend the steps beneath the Black Dolphin's Wake and enter the city's ancient sewers, which date back 1,200 years to the time of its great sultan, Hulieman. In the dank tunnels of the Hidden Quarter, the PCs encounter an insane servant of the daeva, battle sewer monsters, and try to resist the daeva Hidimba's dark whispers as they search for the entrance to its secret shrine. Inside the 2,000-year-old cult temple, the heroes must overcome the evil spirit's undead servitors and its fearsome powers of domination to vanquish the daeva and put an end to the carnage it has caused in the city.

The Sewers

The stone spiral stairs leading down from the trapdoor in the Wake's cellar are worn and clearly very old, but safe to walk down. There is no illumination down here so the PCs must provide their own light source. The air smells musty and damp, as if it hasn't been disturbed for some time.

A. Sewer Entrance

The steps lead down for fifteen feet or so, into a small square chamber, its floor made from ancient flagstones, cracked in places and partly covered with pale blue-green moss. There is a sturdy wooden door in the east wall.

The door leads into the sewers – no Perception check is needed to notice the stench of sewage beyond. It is old and swollen in its frame, needing a DC 13 Strength check to force open.

PCs with a Wisdom score of 15+ get the same creepy feeling that something isn't right here, just as they did in the tavern above. A cold shiver runs down their spines, but this time those affected also get a brief sense that the source of their unease lies behind this door. And just as quickly, the feeling passes.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

If the PCs spend time exploring the sewer tunnels, roll a d6 once per hour. On a 5 or 6, they experience a random encounter. Roll the d6 again and consult the table below:

1	1d6 dire rats (CR 1; <i>Bestiary</i>)
2	Rat swarm (CR 2; <i>Bestiary</i>)
3	Giant cockroach (CR ½, <i>Bestiary</i> 2)
4	Crocodile (CR 2; <i>Bestiary</i>)
5	1d4+1 sewer workers
6	1d3 pickpockets (CR 1; <i>Gamemastery Guide</i>)

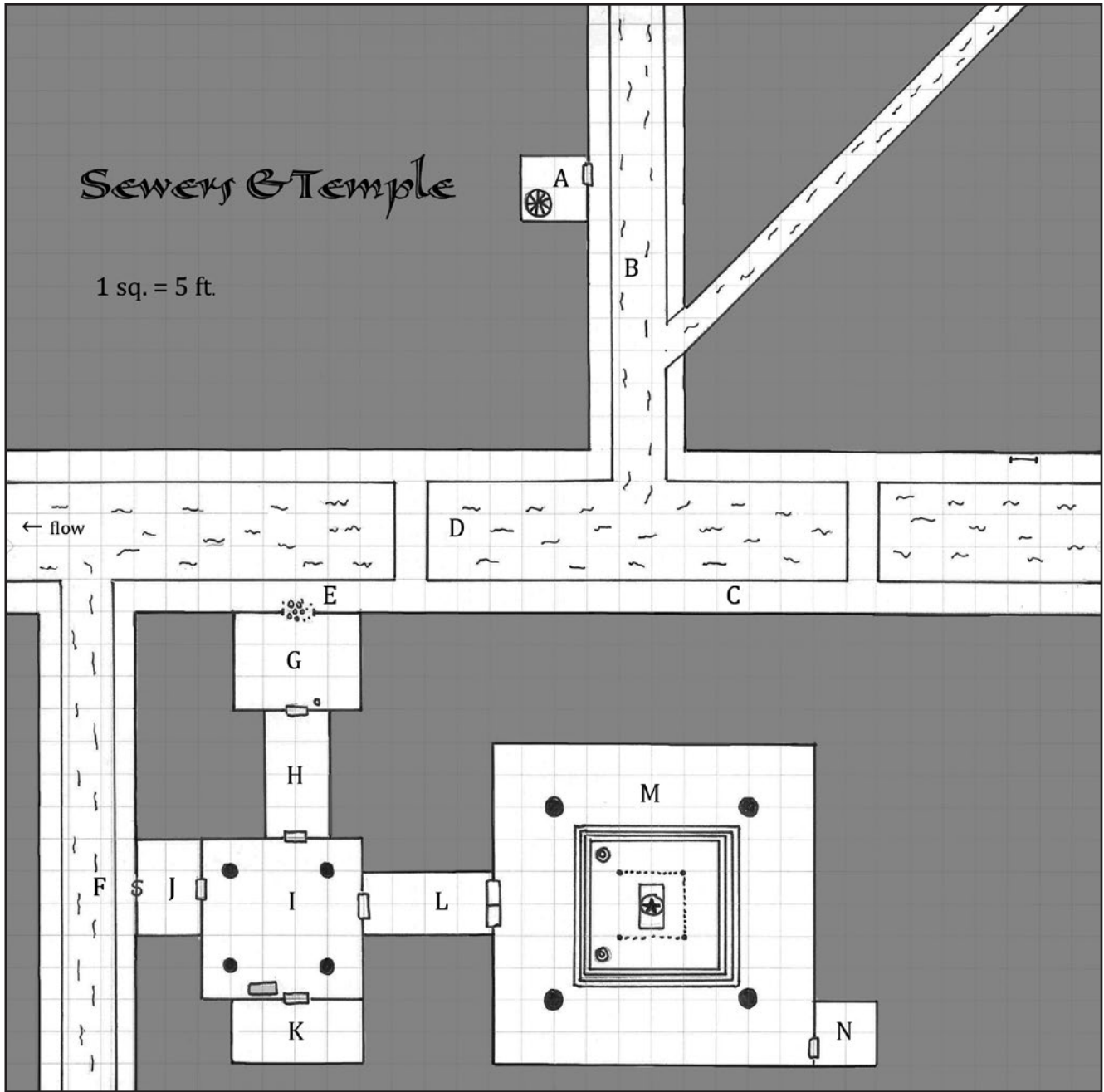
Sewer Workers

These sewer workers (NG male and female half-orc and human commoners 1) wear the brown uniforms of the

Department of Night Soil Management and are employed to keep the sewer system functioning properly. They are searching for a group of colleagues who went missing over a week ago, led by a half-orc named Gorgi (see C). The workers describe what lies beyond the bricked-up archway as "evil" and warn the PCs to steer clear – "It's bricked up for good reason!"

Pickpockets

Scruffy street urchins working for the Boss of Beggars and Pickpockets, these kids are using the sewer tunnels to escape from the City Watch, and will try to avoid a confrontation with the PCs. They avoid the area around the bricked-up temple entrance – it gives them the creeps.





B. Side Tunnel (CR 1)

The pungent stench of sewage greets you as you open the door into a 15-foot-wide sewer tunnel. The entrance emerges onto a 3-foot-wide walkway above a sewage channel filled with foul-smelling effluent, flowing to the south. Two giant cockroaches, each the size of a large dog, are feeding on a humanoid corpse a short distance away; their antennae twitch back and forth.

On the other side of the channel, a smaller drainage tunnel pours its odious contents into this one. Beyond, to the south, you can see dim light, perhaps from a torch.

GIANT COCKROACHES (2)

CR 1/2, XP 200

N Small vermin

Init +1; Senses darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft.; Perception +4

DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 13 (+1 Dex, +2 natural, +1 size)

hp 8 (1d8+4)

Fort +6, **Ref** +1, **Will** +0

Weaknesses light sensitivity

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft., fly 40 ft. (poor)

Melee bite +1 (1d4)

STATISTICS

Str 11, **Dex** 12, **Con** 19, **Int** –, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 2

Base Atk +0; **CMB** -1; **CMD** 10

Feats Diehard, Endurance

Skills Climb +8, Fly –1, Perception +4, Stealth +9

SQ hold breath

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Hold Breath (Ex) A giant cockroach can hold its breath for 114 rounds (6 times its Constitution score) before it risks drowning.

Creatures

Giant cockroaches are not normally aggressive, but these repellent creatures are devouring the remains of a sewer worker from the Department of Night Soil Management and will fight to protect their meal if the adventurers approach. With a DC 10 Perception check, the PCs can spot that one of them has a human leg in its mandibles, still clad in brown trousers and wearing a leather boot.

The walkways here are very slippery with unpleasant sewer muck – PCs attempting to move at full speed or who take damage in combat while on the walkway must make a DC 10 Acrobatics check or fall prone, with a 50% chance of falling into the sewer channel.

The filthy sewer water is knee deep and counts as difficult terrain for the PCs, but not for the cockroaches. Characters who fall in or enter willingly are exposed to filth fever and need to make a DC 12 Fortitude saving throw to avoid contracting the disease.





Treasure

The PCs can find a silver brooch shaped like a scorpion worth 30 gp hidden in the sewer worker's boot. There's too little left of the body to find out what caused his death, but the greenish skin and clawed toes indicate he was a half-orc.

C. Main Tunnel (CR 2)

Here, the side tunnel enters a wider, main sewer tunnel, 25 feet in diameter, with a 15-foot-wide channel running down the centre and 5-foot-wide walkways to either side. Standing on the opposite side of the channel is the source of the light you saw earlier – a male half-orc dressed in shabby black and red robes, holding a burning torch. He is humming to himself. Small stone bridges cross the sewage channel to the east and west of the figure. A rusty iron ladder leads up to the city streets above.

Creatures

The half-orc is Gorgi, a sewer worker who fell under the influence of Hidimba when the daeva first reawakened two weeks ago. Hidimba instructed Gorgi to unseal the archway leading to its temple (see E), before ordering him to murder his colleagues. One of them, another half-orc, escaped but fell foul of a hungry sewer crocodile. His right leg is all that remains of him (see B). Gorgi slew the rest of the sewer crew and they now serve the daeva as zombies in its temple.

Gorgi's mind snapped when he killed his friends, and he became a fanatical servant of the daeva. Now, he wanders the sewer tunnels, living on rats and seeking to bring new victims to his master. He wears a threadbare cultist robe from the temple over what's left of his Department of Night Soil Management uniform. The half-orc's hair is matted with blood and sewage, and he smells terrible – no mean feat down here. Gorgi mutters and cackles to himself constantly.

Gorgi is more than happy to talk to the PCs, telling them he serves “the master, the great and powerful Hidimba” as the daeva's new high priest. He offers to take them to see his master, attempting to lure them to the bridge (see D) where a hungry sewer crocodile is lurking.

GORGI, DAEVA CULTIST

CR ½, XP 200

Male half-orc commoner 1/expert 1

CE Medium humanoid

Init +1; **Senses** Darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +0

DEFENSE

AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10

hp 10 (2 HD, 1d6+1 + 1d8+1)

Fort +1, **Ref** +1, **Will** +4

Defensive Abilities orc ferocity

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee light mace +0 (1d6)

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 12, **Con** 12, **Int** 10, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +1; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 14

Feats Iron Will, Skill Focus (Bluff)

Skills Bluff +5, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (local) +5, Perception +4, Profession (sewer worker) +4, Survival +5, Stealth +5; **Languages** Bathuran, Aqhrani

SQ orc blood

Gear light mace, lantern.

Features of the Area

- The bridges and walkways are not slippery, allowing the PCs to move along them normally.
- The rusty iron ladder leads up to a metal grate providing sewer access from the surface; the grate is locked and requires a DC 18 Dexterity check or Gorgi's key to open it. If the PCs decide to enter the sewers without going through the cellar of the Black Dolphin's Wake, the grate here is the nearest entry point.



D. Bridge

As you walk west following the direction of the sewage flow, you feel a disturbing presence, as if something twisted and evil is trying to get inside your head and read your private thoughts.

When the adventurers draw close to the bricked-up archway, Hidimba uses *detect thoughts* in an attempt to read the PCs' deeper thoughts. Each PC must make a DC 13 Will save to resist, DC 14 if the Body Count has reached 10 or more. Whether they succeed or fail at the saving throw, the PCs are all now aware of the daeva's evil presence and can sense that its power emanates from somewhere to the south.

If Hidimba succeeds in making contact with one or more PCs, it will attempt to use *dark whispers* on a single target. If it has a choice, the daeva will select an angry or violent personality, ideally someone who harbours resentment for one or more of their companions, as its preferred target. If the PC fails the saving throw (Will DC 13, or DC 14 if the Body Count has reached 10 or more) and heeds Hidimba's malicious whispering, he or she is under the spirit's control.

Take the player to one side and tell them the following:

You try to resist but your mind is too weak and you feel yourself giving in to the insistent whispers. The rasping voice in your head speaks. "Hidimba is your master now – henceforth, you will do as I command. For now, say nothing to your companions, for they are not to be trusted." You sense the spirit's presence receding, but you can feel it is still there lurking in the back of your mind, like a persistent low humming sound on the edge of your hearing.

Creatures

To make matters worse, a large crocodile lurks beneath the surface of the effluent near the bridge – only the top of its head is visible above the sewer water, making it hard to spot (Perception DC 23). The croc is hungry and will attack anyone crossing over to the southern side of the channel, lunging out of the sewage with its jaws gaping.

Gorgi will join in the attack on the PCs when the crocodile strikes; if the PCs are unsuspecting, he attacks with surprise on the first round.

SEWER CROCODILE

CR ½, XP 200

N Large animal

Init +1; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +8

DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 10, flat-footed 13 (+1 Dex, +4 natural, –1 size)

hp 22 (3d8+9)

Fort +6, **Ref** +4, **Will** +2

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., swim 30 ft.; sprint

Melee bite +5 (1d8+4 plus grab) and tail slap +0 (1d12+2)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Special Attacks death roll (1d8+6 plus trip)

STATISTICS

Str 19, **Dex** 12, **Con** 17, **Int** 1, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 2

Base Atk +2; **CMB** +7 (+11 grapple); **CMD** 18 (22 vs trip)

Feats Skill Focus (Perception, Stealth)

Skills Perception +8, Stealth +5 (+13 in water), Swim +12

SQ hold breath

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Death Roll (Ex) When grappling a foe of its size or smaller, a crocodile can perform a death roll upon making a successful grapple check. As it clings to its foe, it tucks in its legs and rolls rapidly, twisting and wrenching its victim. The crocodile inflicts its bite damage and knocks the creature prone. If successful, the crocodile maintains its grapple.

Hold Breath (Ex) A crocodile can hold its breath for 68 rounds (4 times its Constitution score) before it risks drowning.

Sprint (Ex) Once per minute a crocodile may sprint, increasing its land speed to 40 feet for 1 round.

If Hidimba has a PC under its control, it looks for an opportunity to have them finish off another character who is having a hard time in combat. If this situation occurs, the daeva whispers a command to the PC to kill their erstwhile companion. Hidimba will refer to any



reasons for acrimony between the two PCs it has been able to glean from the victim's thoughts. For example:

"He's never liked you. He pretends he does, but he doesn't. Remember that time he tricked you out of your fair share of hard-earned treasure? Now's your chance to punish him for his selfish greed. Go on! Teach him a lesson he'll never forget! Bash his brains in with your mace! Do it!"

The controlled PC gets another Will save to resist the daeva's command with a +2 bonus; if successful, Hidimba's influence over the character ends.

If no such opportunity arises, the daeva bides its time, waiting until the PCs enter the temple.

Body Count

If Gorgi (and any PCs) are killed, add them to the Body Count total. Remember that PCs with a Wisdom score of 12+ will feel a brief, nasty sensation of impending doom if the Body Count reaches a milestone during the encounter.

E. Bricked-up Archway

An ancient archway is built into the southern wall of the tunnel, clearly older than the sewer walls and constructed from a different type of stone. The archway had once been sealed up with bricks matching those used to build the sewer tunnels, but there are signs that someone or something has broken through the brickwork, making a hole just large enough for a person to squeeze through. Rubble lies strewn on the walkway in front of the portal.

With a DC 15 Knowledge (Engineering or History) check, a PC can recall that when the city's sewers were built around 1,200 years ago during the enlightened rule of the sultan Hulieman, the men and dwarves digging the tunnels sometimes came across existing passages and older chambers. If this happened, the construction teams would seal these areas back up again. The archway here is one such example, bricked up hundreds of years ago and unsealed much more recently. A DC 10 Knowledge (Engineering) check allows a PC to determine that the brickwork was first breached around 20 years ago, and

then resealed by sewer workers. It now appears to have been breached yet again.

The PCs can clamber one at a time through the hole in the archway into the temple vestibule – here the daeva's undead minions await (see G). It costs 2 squares of movement to squeeze through the gap, and PCs doing so are at a –4 penalty to attacks and AC.

F. Secret Entrance

Sewage flows north down the centre of this 15-foot-wide side tunnel and into the main sewer.

With a DC 20 Perception or DC 15 Knowledge (Engineering) check, the PCs can discover a secret door in a section of ancient brickwork used in the construction of the sewer's eastern wall. This stone door pivots open when pushed, leading into the temple library (see J).

The Temple of the Daeva

Dating back nearly 2,000 years to the time after the fall of the rajah Vrishabha, this was once the underground temple of Hidimba's cult in Dhak Janjua, until it was wiped out by warrior priests of the god Vishnu. The temple was sealed shut by the priests and warded with magical protections. It lay undisturbed for over 700 years until construction workers building the city of Parsantium's new sewer system dug through the entrance and broke the magical wards, awakening the daeva. A series of bloody deaths occurred among the construction crews, until the temple was again sealed and its wards restored, this time by imams of Amur. Then 20 years ago, members of a Hidden Quarter criminal gang tunnelled into the shrine and Hidimba woke once more, leading to the poisonings in the Black Dolphin's Wake 150 feet above.

Now the daeva has awakened yet again. It awaits the PCs in its shrine, hoping that this time there will be enough deaths to free it from imprisonment in its idol.



Dark Whispers

As the adventurers explore the temple, the daeva will use *detect thoughts* followed by *dark whispers* to bring a PC under its control, if it didn't do this when the party were exploring the sewers. Once Hidimba has a PC dominated, it will wait for an opportune moment to turn them against the rest of their companions – this could be when the party are in combat with its minions, perhaps in the vestibule (G) or in the assembly hall (I); alternatively, the daeva might wait until the adventurers enter the *garbhagriha* itself.

Temple Features

Doors are wooden and of good quality. They are unlocked, although some are stuck (Break DC 16).

The walls and floors are made from ancient stone, with 12-foot-high ceilings. The temple complex is unlit unless otherwise indicated.

G. Vestibule (CR 1)

Faded frescoes cover the walls in this chamber, depicting hellish scenes of torture. Multi-armed demons are punishing the souls of the damned – boiling them alive; hanging, drawing and quartering them; impaling them, or suspending them upside down over fires. There is a wooden door in the centre of the opposite wall. A threadbare rope is attached to a bronze bell hanging from the ceiling to the left of the door.

SEWER WORKER ZOMBIES (2)

CR ½, XP 200

NE Medium undead

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +0

DEFENSE

AC 12, touch 10, flat-footed 12 (+2 natural)

hp 12 (2d8+3)

Fort +0, **Ref** +0, **Will** +3

DR 5/slashing; **Immune** undead traits

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee slam +4 (1d6+4)

STATISTICS

Str 17, **Dex** 10, **Con** –, **Int** –, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +1; **CMB** +4; **CMD** 14

Feats Toughness

SQ staggered

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Staggered (Ex) Zombies have poor reflexes and can only perform a single move action or standard action each round. A zombie can move up to its speed and attack in the same round as a charge action.

Creatures

Two zombies, former sewer workers animated by the daeva, are hiding on either side of the hole, ready to attack any character who climbs through the opening. These walking corpses' pale, rotting flesh is partly covered by what's left of their brown sewer worker's uniforms.

The zombies strike with surprise unless a PC looks through the hole first and succeeds at a DC 15 Perception check – their rotting stench is masked by the stink from the sewers. PCs squeezing through the opening are at a –4 penalty to attacks and AC while doing so; it costs 2 squares of movement to clamber through. A successful DC 12 Heal or Knowledge (Religion) check can determine that the zombies have been dead for about two weeks.





Frescoes

With a DC 10 Knowledge (Planes or Religion) check, a PC can determine that the frescoes depict the Seven Hells of Naraka, where the souls of the wicked are punished by demons until they have worked off their sins. Once their sins have been expurgated, souls can be reborn, most likely as a slug or similarly low animal. If the PCs examine the frescoes closely, they will notice that a black-skinned, six-armed demon with large tusks and terrible claws is depicted in each scene of torture. This demon appears to be supervising or observing the punishments, as if it is too important to be carrying them out itself. In one scene it is riding in a chariot being pulled along by two sinners using only their teeth.

The Bell

The bronze bell was once used by the daeva's cultists to summon worshippers to the temple. It is worth 50 gp and weighs 10 pounds. If the PCs ring the bell, read the following:

The bell sounds with a great clang that seems to reverberate through the centuries to the time thousands of years ago when it was last sounded. You get a sense that its ring was heard by something other than human ears.

Ring the bell alerts the skeletons in the assembly hall (see I) – they climb to their feet, standing ready to attack when the PCs open the door.

H. North Gallery

The door opens to reveal a 10-foot-wide hallway heading south. Worn carvings in bas-relief decorate the walls. The ancient flagstone floor is cracked and dusty; there are signs that the dust has been disturbed recently.

The carvings depict the rise of the daeva's cult in Dhak Janjua. On the west wall, shaven-headed, robed priests are shown building an underground shrine to the six-armed demon, while on the east wall they are depicted

committing acts of violent murder in honour of their dark patron, who looks on with an evil smile. With a DC 14 Survival check, a PC can determine that a group of four or five individuals (the sewer workers) came through this hallway in the last week or so.

I. Assembly Hall (CR 2)

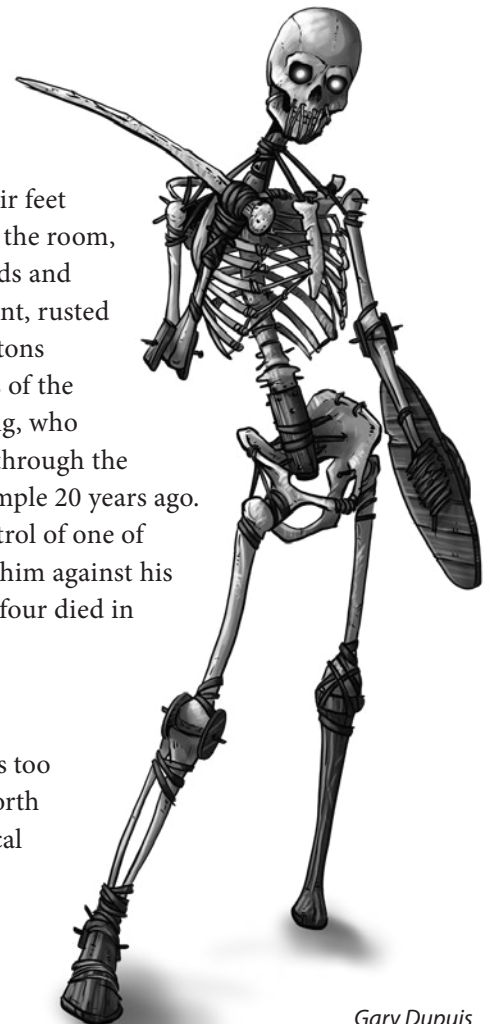
The ceiling of this 25-foot-square room is supported by four stone pillars carved with bas-reliefs depicting the same six-armed demonic being that featured in the frescoes in the entrance chamber. Four skeletons lie on the floor, dressed in mouldy leather armour and clutching scimitars in their bony hands, rusty round shields strapped to their arms or lying nearby. A wooden table against the south wall holds several musical instruments – a brass gong, a drum and a pair of cymbals. Three more doors, one in each wall, lead out of the room.

Creatures

In time-honoured tradition, the four skeletons rise to their feet when the PCs enter the room, grabbing their shields and wielding their ancient, rusted scimitars. The skeletons were once members of the Boss of Thieves' gang, who smashed their way through the archway into the temple 20 years ago. The daeva took control of one of the rogues, turning him against his companions. These four died in the ensuing fight.

Treasure

The skeletons' gear is too old or rusty to be worth much, but the musical instruments are worth 5 gp each.





ROGUE SKELETONS (4)

CR 1/3, XP 135

NE Medium undead

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +0

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14 (+1 armour, +2 Dex, +2 natural, +1 shield)

hp 4 (1d8)

Fort +0, **Ref** +2, **Will** +2

DR 5/bludgeoning; **Immune** cold, undead traits

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee rusted scimitar +0 (1d6)

STATISTICS

Str 15, **Dex** 14, **Con** –, **Int** –, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +1; **CMB** +2; **CMD** 14

Feats Improved Initiative

Gear mouldy leather armour, rusted scimitar, light shield.

J. Library

The wooden door to the library is stuck (Break DC 16).

This room appears to have been a library once, but the contents have been long since removed. Empty bookcases line the walls, their shelves holding nothing but cobwebs and thick layers of dust.

Secret Door

PCs entering via the secret door from the sewers (see F) cause the central part of the bookcase on the west wall to swing open. Finding the secret door from this side requires a DC 20 Perception check.

Treasure

The unholy religious texts kept in here were removed by the priests of Vishnu who raided the temple nearly 2,000

years ago, but they missed one – an illuminated scroll of prayers to Ravana, Lord of the Rakshasas, which can be found with a DC 10 Perception check or by anyone looking under the feet of the bookcases. The scroll is worth 100 gp to a collector. Morphrestes, tiefling owner of The Dark Path in Tinker's Alley in the Mercantile Quarter (see *Parsantium: City at the Crossroads*, page 80) is a potential buyer.

K. Priests' Quarters

This austere chamber has clearly not been used in centuries: a thick layer of dust covers the wooden table, chairs and crude sleeping cots in here.

Serving as the living quarters for the daeva's priests when the temple was in its heyday, this room holds little of interest now. If the PCs poke around in the ashes that lie in the simple stone stove, they can find a couple of ancient silver rupees bearing the rajah Vrishabha's head on one side and the great stone bridges over the Dolphin Strait on the other. Each coin is worth twenty times its face value.

L. East Gallery

Behind the door is a 10-foot-wide hallway heading east. The stone floor is thick with dust, recently disturbed by footprints that lead up to (and away from) the pair of double doors at the end. Bas-relief carvings decorate the north and south walls, depicting dozens of frenzied acts of bloody, savage murder, while the grinning six-armed demon, now much larger, looks on. The carvings on the doors show the same terrible figure of the daeva, towering over an altar, holding a much smaller idol in its likeness.

The footprints belong to Gorgi and the half orc zombie (and former sewer worker) guarding the daeva in the inner shrine beyond the double doors. If it doesn't already have a PC under its control, Hidimba will use *detect thoughts* followed by *dark whispers* on the party as they approach the doors.





Note: PCs who have successfully saved against *dark whispers* in the last 8 hours are vulnerable to the power again here until they make a new successful saving throw.

M. Garbhagriha (CR 4)

Pushing open the double doors into the garbhagriha – the inner sanctum of the temple – the sense of pure evil that greets you is palpable. Torches and braziers burning with continual flame bathe the room in an eerie reddish light; menacing shadows flicker on the walls and ceiling.

Worn steps lead up to a grotesque idol fashioned from polished black stone standing on an altar stained with blood, both ancient and recent, and surrounded by a

wooden lattice screen. The foul statue depicts the six-armed demonic figure of the daeva – the source of the baneful atmosphere that dominates the room.

Shuffling around at the base of the steps are the daeva's undead servitors – a zombie still dressed in a brown sewer worker's uniform and a pair of skeletons armed with scimitars and shortbows.

Creatures

There are two skeletons and a zombie protecting Hidimba, making this a potentially deadly encounter. If the Body Count has reached 5+, add an extra skeleton; if it has gone over 20, add an extra zombie too.

ROGUE SKELETONS (2 or 3)

CR 1/3, XP 135

NE Medium undead

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +0

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14 (+1 armour, +2 Dex, +2 natural, +1 shield)

hp 4 (1d8)

Fort +0, **Ref** +2, **Will** +2

DR 5/bludgeoning; **Immune** cold, undead traits

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee rusted scimitar +0 (1d6)*

Ranged shortbow +2 (1d6/x3)

STATISTICS

Str 15, **Dex** 14, **Con** –, **Int** –, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +1; **CMB** +2; **CMD** 14

Feats Improved Initiative

Gear mouldy leather armour, rusted scimitar, light shield, shortbow, arrows.

*One of the skeletons wields a masterwork scimitar and is +1 to hit.

SEWER WORKER ZOMBIES (1 or 2)

CR 1/2, XP 200

NE Medium undead

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +0

DEFENSE

AC 12, touch 10, flat-footed 12 (+2 natural)

hp 12 (2d8+3)

Fort +0, **Ref** +0, **Will** +3

DR 5/slashing; **Immune** undead traits

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee slam +4 (1d6+4)

STATISTICS

Str 17, **Dex** 10, **Con** –, **Int** –, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +1; **CMB** +4; **CMD** 14

Feats Toughness

SQ staggered

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Staggered (Ex) Zombies have poor reflexes and can only perform a single move action or standard action each round. A zombie can move up to its speed and attack in the same round as a charge action.



HIDIMBA, THE DARK DAEVA

CR 2, XP 600

CE Medium outsider (chaotic, evil, extraplanar)

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft; Perception +1

DEFENSE

AC 13, touch 5, flat-footed 13 (–5 Dex, +8 natural)

hp 16 (3d10)

Fort +5, **Ref** +1, **Will** +6

Defensive Abilities hardness 5, Immune construct traits.

OFFENSE

Speed 0

Special Attacks animate dead, *dark whispers* (DC 13), *detect thoughts* (DC 13)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 3rd)

At will – *ray of decay* (+3 ranged touch, 1d6 necrotic damage)

STATISTICS

Str –, **Dex** –, **Con** –, **Int** 10, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 15

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 13

Feats Iron Will, Persuasive

Skills Diplomacy +10, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (history) +6, Knowledge (planes) +6, Knowledge (religion) +6,

Sense Motive +7; **Languages** Sampuran (cannot speak), Abyssal; telepathy 150 ft

SQ trapped in stone

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Animate Dead (Su) Once per day, Hidimba can turn a corpse anywhere in its temple into an undead skeleton or zombie that obeys its telepathic commands. Hidimba can control up to 12 HD worth undead at any one time (but see “Body Count”).

Detect Thoughts (Su) Hidimba can detect thoughts as per the spell of the same name with a range of 150 feet. When Hidimba uses this ability, it always functions as if it had spent 3 rounds concentrating and thus gains the maximum amount of information possible, and is not blocked by stone, metal, lead, wood or dirt. A creature can resist this effect with a DC 13 Will save.

Dark Whispers (Su) Hidimba can crush an opponent’s will as a standard action. The daeva can target any humanoid within 150 feet whose thoughts it has previously read with *detect thoughts*. The target must succeed on a DC 13 Will save or fall instantly under the daeva’s influence as though by a *dominate person* spell for 8 hours. Hidimba can use *dark whispers* once per round, although it can only have 1 creature dominated at a time (but see “Body Count”). A target that successfully saves against *dark whispers* is immune to further attempts at control for 8 hours.

Trapped in Stone (Su) Hidimba is trapped inside a black stone idol in the likeness of its true form until the body count reaches 50. The daeva gains construct traits, but cannot move or make melee or ranged attacks while trapped in the idol.

You may also want to consider increasing the number of undead if the PCs have been finding things fairly easy up to this point, or if several adventurers are under the effect of *protection from evil* spells. See also “Unholy Reinforcements” below.

Tactics

The daeva’s undead servants seek to prevent the PCs from climbing the steps and getting close enough to the idol to harm it. Hidimba will rasp instructions to a PC under its control, telling them to attack their companions – particularly anyone threatening the idol – as well as using its *ray of decay* each round. If it loses control of a PC, it will attempt to take control of a new target if one is available.

A PC can attempt to topple the daeva statue with a DC 20 Strength check – if successful, Hidimba takes 3d6 damage, minus hardness.

Features of the Area

Four stone pillars carved with scenes of torture and punishment in the Seven Hells of Naraka mark the boundary of the inner sanctum, which contains the idol and altar; a 10-foot-wide path runs around it. Within the sanctum, a wooden lattice screen surrounds the idol on three sides; the western end is open to allow worshippers to approach the altar to make their bloody offerings. The ceiling is 20 feet high around the outside of the room, rising to 30 feet above the inner sanctum.



Option: Unholy Reinforcements

If your PCs are tough and make short work of the daeva's guardians, you can have Mikulas, former landlord of the Black Dolphin's Wake, appear as a lesser shadow under Hidimba's control. Mikulas rises up from the floor in front of the idol to defend his master.

Defeating the Daeva

When the PCs inflict enough damage to destroy the idol, it shatters into hundreds of shards. There is a terrible scream of agony and frustration from the daeva – its furious spirit briefly manifests, towering menacingly over the PCs, before it is pulled back into the Seven Hells, disappearing through the floor with an tremendous “whoosh”. Any undead still standing fall to the ground, becoming inanimate corpses or skeletons.

Treasure

Four *everburning torches* are in sconces on the pillars. One skeleton's scimitar is a bit rusty but can be polished until it gleams again. It has a hinged secret compartment in the pommel, which conceals a silk packet of *dust of disappearance*. A blood-stained kukri with a jade hilt carved with demonic faces lies on the altar near the idol (worth 250 gp).

N. Robing Room

Three threadbare black and red robes hang from hooks on the walls in this small chamber; a fourth hook is empty. A niche in the southern wall holds a plain clay bowl.

This room was used by Hidimba's priests to prepare themselves for the dark rites they performed in the daeva's honour. The ritual robes are all but rotted away and will fall apart if worn; Gorgi wears the rags of the missing fourth robe. The bowl in the niche contains a still-beating human heart, preserved with fell necromantic magic. Its significance is up to the GM to determine as desired.

MIKULAS, LESSER SHADOW

CR ½, XP 200

CE Medium undead (incorporeal)

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +8

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 15, flat-footed 11 (+2 deflection, +1 dodge, +2 Dex)

hp 6 (1d8+2)

Fort +2, **Ref** +2, **Will** +2

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +1, incorporeal, shadow blend; Immune undead traits

OFFENSE

Speed fly 40 ft. (good)

Melee incorporeal touch +2 (1 Strength damage)

STATISTICS

Str –, **Dex** 15, **Con** –, **Int** 5, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +0; **CMB** +2; **CMD** 15 (can't be tripped)

Feats Dodge

Skills Fly +6, Perception +8, Stealth +6

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Shadow Blend (Ex) In any light condition less than bright light, the lesser shadow's form blends into the surrounding shadows, granting it concealment.



Concluding the Adventure

Success

If the PCs destroy Hidimba's idol, the threat to the Dock Ward is over and everyone can get on with enjoying the Festival of Flowers. Chandipati will be very relieved and grateful for what the party have done. In addition to the reward offered originally, she will cast *remove disease* on any PC who has contracted filth fever, and promises to aid the heroes with healing and other spellcasting in the future should they need it. On the last day of the festival, when all the flowers are cast into the Dolphin Strait to honour the river gods, a pod of dolphins is sighted for the first time in seven years – a lucky omen for the people of Flotsam!

Sergeant Saurish of the City Watch is likely to have the PCs down as ones to watch. Depending on what they got up to during the adventure, this could lead to unofficial police work on his behalf, or he might decide they are potential troublemakers who need keeping an eye on.

The PCs may wish to testify on Param's behalf at his murder trial at the Courthouse or hire an advocate to defend him (for example, Luaira Thastin – see *Parsantium: City at the Crossroads*, page 59). If they can convincingly present their evidence in the fisherman's defence, Param will be acquitted. If he is found guilty, he will be sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment.

Award each PC 1,000 bonus XP, minus 10 XP for every point of total Body Count at the end of the adventure.

Failure

If the PCs fail to stop Hidimba, the bodies continue to pile up until the daeva is released from the idol. Once this happens, the malevolent spirit is free to roam the Old Quarter at will, creating bloody mayhem wherever it goes. It won't be long before a new cult springs up in the dark daeva's service.

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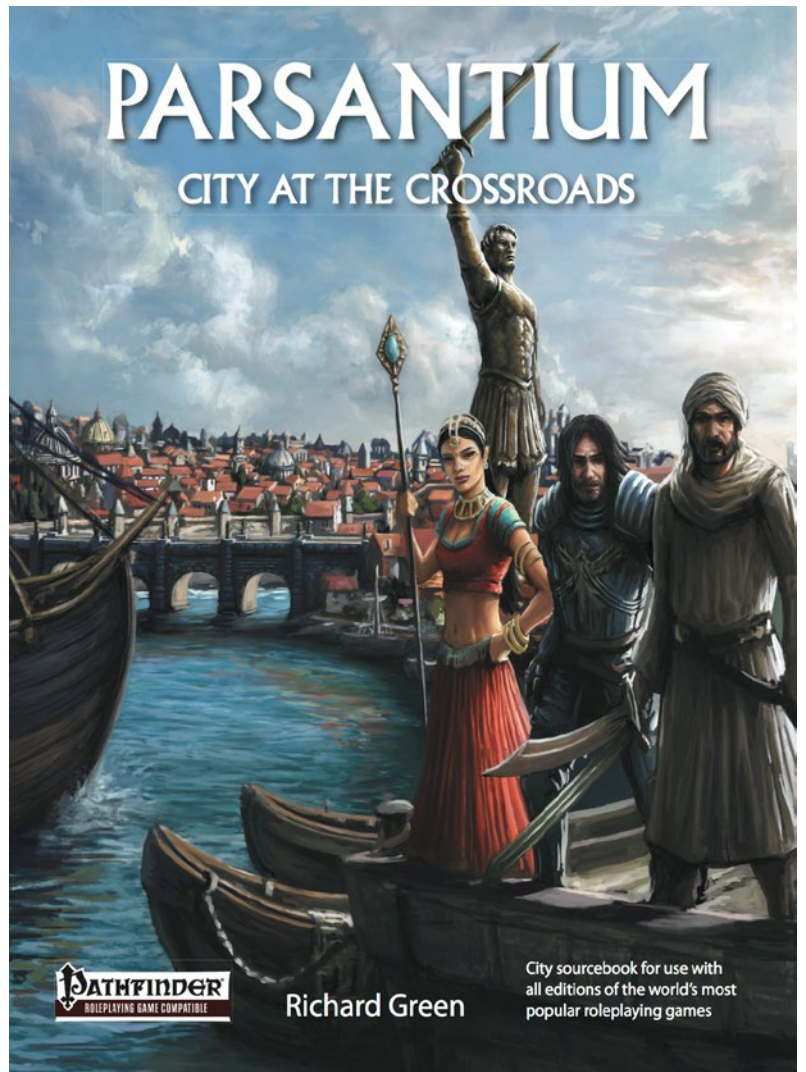
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