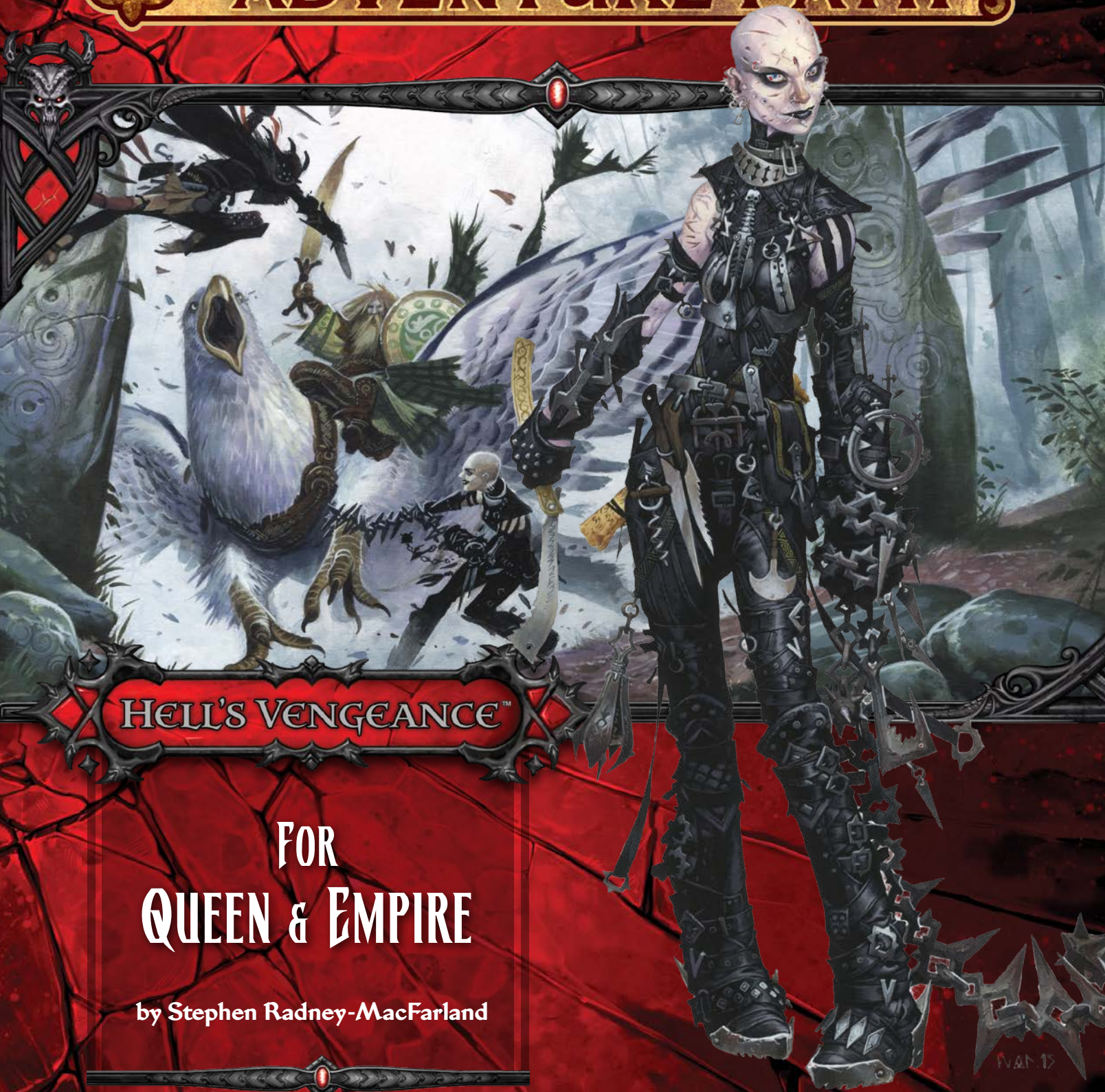


PATHFINDER[®]

ADVENTURE PATH[™]



HELL'S VENGEANCE[™]

FOR
QUEEN & EMPIRE

by Stephen Radney-MacFarland

1/11/15

CHELIAX



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ON THE COVER



On the cover of this volume of the Hell's Vengeance Adventure Path, artist Wayne Reynolds gives us an all-new wicked villain—Zelhara, the iconic inquisitor of Zon-Kuthon!



HELL'S VENGEANCE™

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This book refers to several other Pathfinder Roleplaying Game products using the following abbreviations, yet these additional supplements are not required to make use of this book. Readers interested in references to Pathfinder RPG hardcovers can find the complete rules of these books available online for free at paizo.com/prd.

<i>Advanced Class Guide</i>	ACG	<i>Mythic Adventures</i>	MA
<i>Advanced Player's Guide</i>	APG	<i>Ultimate Combat</i>	UC
<i>Advanced Race Guide</i>	ARG	<i>Ultimate Equipment</i>	UE
<i>The Inner Sea World Guide</i>	ISWG	<i>Ultimate Magic</i>	UM



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COURTLY INTRIGUES AND AMUSEMENTS

The Hell's Vengeance Adventure Path takes another turn in this month's adventure, "For Queen & Empire." The evil PCs have spent the first half of the campaign directly opposing the efforts of the Glorious Reclamation, but as Thrune Trusted Agents, their service now takes them to the city of Egorian and the intrigues of the Chelish imperial court.

That means there is significantly less combat in this adventure, and notably more social encounters, wherein the PCs get to engage with a variety of NPCs, both friendly and antagonistic. Many of these encounters include mechanics for handling these interactions, but you shouldn't feel forced to use abstract skill checks to resolve social challenges, especially if your players enjoy more detailed roleplaying. If someone's fighter doesn't have ranks in Bluff, but her player is a burgeoning actress, let her roleplay her character's socializing instead.

Even if you do use the mechanics as written, you should feel free to award bonuses to PCs' skill checks based on good roleplaying or how much fun the other players are having. In short, you and your players can spend as much or as little time on these encounters as you wish, but I encourage you to give them a try, and give your players a break from the more traditional combat encounters found elsewhere in the campaign.

One of the big challenges with having a large number of social encounters comes in awarding experience. As a result, you'll see some significant story awards in this adventure. In some cases, these awards might seem high for simply roleplaying, but I went with the assumption that the amount of time spent at the table playing through these encounters is at least equivalent to that of some encounters that focus on combat, and distributed XP appropriately.

Of course, there are still plenty of opportunities in “For Queen & Empire” for more combat-focused characters to shine, particularly in the latter half of the adventure. And if you want even more fights to throw a little extra excitement the PCs’ way while they’re in Egorian, you can use the Egorian Streets Encounters table on page 83 to add extra encounters, or create some of your own.

MORE PARTY GUESTS

The PCs receive invitations to several parties in this adventure, where they have the opportunity to hobnob with a variety of nobles and courtiers from Egorian’s elite. The most important personages the PCs will meet are detailed in the adventure, but a party’s not a party unless there are plenty of guests to mingle with and engage in small talk. To that end, here are several additional NPCs whom the PCs can encounter at the parties in the adventure. These characters appear nowhere in the adventure or the campaign, and can be used, modified, detailed, or expanded as much as you see fit.

Archbaroness Laurencia Thortangion (female human): A devout Asmodean with shockingly white teeth, Archbaroness Thortangion is often found in prayer, even in the middle of a party. Her greatest ambition is to take a pilgrimage to Hell itself.

Count Deinos Fallagon (male human): Having only recently inherited his title, the heirless Count Fallagon is visiting Egorian for the first time. He wants to get married as soon as possible, but whether because of his strange webbed hands, or the fact that he constantly haggles over everything, the count has so far attracted few potential spouses.

Demibaroness Figgra Opaldam (female dwarf): Granted her title 15 years ago under mysterious circumstances by Infrexus, the previous king of Cheliox, this bald dwarf (a favorite at Egorian’s parties for her “exoticism”) has spent the last 5 decades unsuccessfully trying to impress her disapproving parents in Druma.

Duchess Asdoria Taraxion (female human): Prone to nervous laughter, Duchess Taraxion tries to act like a commoner as a show of solidarity with the “little people,” but actually comes across as condescending and offensive. She is seeking a discreet partner for a torrid affair while her husband is away touring the Fleshfairs of Okeno.

Indarandael (male elf): One of the Forlorn, Indarandael earned a modicum of fame as a highly successful gladiator at the Imperial Stadium. Now retired, the tall elf walks with a limp, but the beauty of his muscular form has made him a popular model for many of Egorian’s more prominent artists.

Philemus Groat (male human): A lanky man with a glass eye, Philemus is a Thrune agent recently returned to Cheliox from Sargava. He sniffs everything before eating or drinking it, and is looking for a cure for a rare affliction he contracted in the jungles of Garund.

THE GLORIOUS RECLAMATION’S PROGRESS

Throughout the Hell’s Vengeance Adventure Path, the Glorious Reclamation enjoys a number of victories in its war against Cheliox and House Thrune, but if the PCs are successful in their endeavors during the campaign, the knights should also suffer some devastating defeats. The inside front cover of each volume of the Adventure Path displays a map of Cheliox with symbols of both House Thrune and the Glorious Reclamation that tracks either side’s progress in the wider conflict.

As “For Queen & Empire” begins, the Glorious Reclamation’s uprising continues to gather strength and claim more territory. Many of Cheliox’s minor towns and villages have changed hands between House Thrune and the Glorious Reclamation, some more than once, as the two forces battle for supremacy. So far, Cheliox’s legions have been able to contain the uprising to the outlying rural areas and smaller towns, predominantly in eastern Cheliox, but the zealous knights are pressing ever closer to the empire’s population centers. As a result, Her Infernal Majestrix Queen Abrogail II has summoned all of her Thrune agents to Cheliox’s capital city, Egorian, to address the crisis.

Nevertheless, the status quo between Cheliox and the Glorious Reclamation is much the same as it was in the previous adventure, “The Inferno Gate.” The Glorious Reclamation remains in control of the city of Senara, but it has not made any other major territorial gains.

Skirmishes between the armies of Cheliox and the Glorious Reclamation continue on the Sirmium Plains and elsewhere, but recent reports from the front seem to suggest that the Iomedaeans have withdrawn some of their forces from the theater—though to where, and for what purpose, remains a mystery. Additionally, scattered accounts from Longmarch and Sirmium describe isolated incidents of suspicious naval activity along the coast, but whether these reports are related to the Glorious Reclamation is unclear.

What is clear is that Queen Abrogail has some strategy in mind involving those agents sworn personally to House Thrune. As part of that prestigious group, the PCs have an integral part to play in these plans—provided they can stand out among all the other Thrune agents currently flocking to Egorian and gain the queen’s personal attention.

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PART 1: POLITICS AND PARTIES

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Thrown into the political machinations and social sparring of the imperial court in Egorian, the villainous player characters find themselves caught up in a rivalry between two powerful and influential courtiers.

PART 2: DIGGING UP BELLFLOWERS

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To gain the personal notice of Queen Abrogail, the villains must hunt down a secret cell of halfling slave emancipators and put an end to their subversive activities in Egorian.

PART 3: ROYAL SACRIFICE

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The villains journey into the depths of the Barrowood to renew Thrune's pact with Hell. If successful, the evildoers can bind their souls to Queen Abrogail and Asmodeus with an infernal contract, becoming Thrune Bound Agents and gaining a powerful infernal boon.

ADVANCEMENT TRACK

"For Queen & Empire" is designed for four characters and uses the medium XP track.

- 10** The PCs begin this adventure at 10th level.
- 11** The PCs should reach 11th level by the end of Part 1, and before they take on the Bellflower Network in Part 2.
- 12** The PCs should be 12th level before facing Luthon Malix at the Winter Grove in Part 3.

The PCs should reach 13th level by the end of the adventure.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Despite the best efforts of House Thrune, the Chelish army, and the hosts of Hell, the Glorious Reclamation's movement is gaining momentum, threatening the stability of the empire of Chelias. Alexeara Cansellerion's knights march through the land, bolstered by the recovery of Iomedae's sword, *Heart's Edge*, and by victories in the east. The Glorious Reclamation claims its goal is to not carve out some petty new kingdom, but to engender the fall of House Thrune, drive Hell's legions from Golarion, and establish a shining new nation based on the precepts of the Inheritor's will.

Such stupidity and reckless idealism cannot stand. The rule of law can be enforced only with an iron fist. Mortals cannot be trusted with compassion, love, or mercy. These things are the seeds of chaos and at the heart of good's folly. These are the teachings of

Asmodeus, and the will of Chelias's Infernal Majestrix.

While Chelias has so far managed to hold the Glorious Reclamation's shining crusaders mostly at bay, Queen Abrogail Thrune II knows that to create a fist, all fingers must be brought together, just as her forces must work with one will and one mind for the common good of the empire. To accomplish this, she is calling all agents of House Thrune to the imperial capital, Egorian. With her most talented and loyal agents at hand, the queen has grand plans to march forth and put down this pathetic rebellion with decisive action. But the gears of Chelias's imperial court are complex, and full of those who plot to seize power for themselves. While Abrogail is motivated to bolster the strength of Thrune's empire, factions within her court jostle to grab power and control amid the chaos.

Even more troubling, the queen faces the yearly ritual during which she must renew Thrune's contract with Hell with a sacrifice to Asmodeus at the Winter Grove inside the Barrowood, the site where her ancestor Abrogail I first bargained with Asmodeus and ensured the rule of House Thrune over Chelias. Failing to perform the ritual and provide a suitable sacrifice would have disastrous consequences to both House Thrune's supremacy and the stability of Chelias, whether or not the insipid banner of the Glorious Reclamation still flies. Yet the danger these Iomedaeans pose, and the instability they have wrought throughout the empire, put the queen's life at risk outside the safety of Egorian's walls.

Abrogail's recall of all Thrune agents has a dual purpose. While its main aim is to rally strength to

protect her seat of power and to launch a counterattack against the Glorious Reclamation, the queen also seeks trusted and capable agents to fulfill her obligations to Hell. She cannot depend on her nobles, who bicker and squabble to gobble up the scraps of power that fall from the queen's table, then lie and murder to keep those scraps. She cannot trust the Church of Asmodeus, which harbors factions that would like nothing more than to cast down House Thrune and create an infernal theocracy in the place of the empire. And she cannot rely on the Hellknights, who are too devoted to their own interpretations of Hell's laws and blind to the larger picture of practical rule. Instead, the queen needs

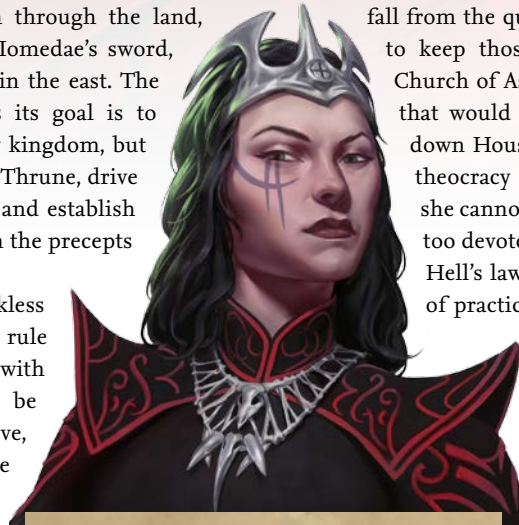
to find talented and ruthless individuals, loyal to Abrogail herself and proven in battle, who possess the dedication and initiative to do what must be done for queen and empire.

As her call goes out and Thrune agents throng within

the walls of her capital, Abrogail keeps her ears to the ground, listening to advisors and courtiers who have daily dealings with the wild cards of Thrune's power. Abrogail has had a vision, which she is certain came from Asmodeus himself, that a group of agents yet unknown to her will rise above all others to become true champions of House Thrune, serving as her dark knights in this mission of utmost importance. These agents have faced adversity—and treachery—and rather than perish, they have instead been tempered by those fires into a ruthless manifestation of fear and tyranny, and will be instrumental in crushing the shining rebellion that defies the will of the Infernal Majestrix. As Queen Abrogail searches for these agents, she plots and plans the means to enact Hell's vengeance and take back that which is rightfully Thrune's.

PART 1: POLITICS AND PARTIES

This adventure starts where the previous volume of the Hell's Vengeance Adventure Path, "The Inferno Gate," left off, and assumes the player characters defeated their treacherous former patron, Archbaron Darellus Fex. But though Fex's defeat likely severed the PCs' only direct link to House Thrune, they are still Thrune Trusted Agents, and are still beholden to a higher authority. They may have gained some measure of independence, but their services are still required by the empire. The PCs' exploits and victories have drawn the notice of the imperial court in Egorian, the treacherous capital of Chelias, and even now, the crown's agents are en route to make the queen's will known and demand the PCs heed her call.



QUEEN ABROGAIL THRUNE II

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Trusted Agents of Thrune,

with the encroachment of the traitors, brigands, and foreign insurrectionists calling themselves the Glorious Reclamation, it is time for those most loyal to Cheliox to gather beneath the banners of Thrune. Your presence is required in Egorian to await and execute your Queen's will. Make haste to the capital and register yourselves at Asmodeus's Midnight Temple. The Prince of Darkness's loyal priests will provide quarters while you await our orders.

Together, we will be the iron shield that defends the homeland, and the Hell-forged blade that strikes back at these tin upstarts and restores order to the empire.

Swear your devotion to my messengers, then fly to your Queen. Fail to heed this summons only by death.

Her Infernal Majestrix Abrogail the Second of the Thrice-Damned House of Thrune, by the Might of Asmodeus, Queen and Empress of Cheliox, and of Its Other Realms and Territories

HANDOUT #1

THE QUEEN'S SUMMONS (CR 11)

Queen Abrogail has sent flights of erinyes across Cheliox to recall her Thrune agents to the capital, using a combination of *discern location*, *screaming*, and *sending* spells to find and communicate with them. Normally, the PCs would have received word of the queen's summons from their patron, but with Fex's defeat, Abrogail has tracked them down with *discern location* (the blood the PCs offered when they swore themselves to the queen and became Thrune Loyal Agents in "The Hellfire Compact" enables the spell to target the PCs).

Creatures: Three erinyes—Galiona, Namah, and Sylanth—have been sent to contact the PCs. The erinyes appear as soon as the PCs have rested from their last escapade and are ready for new challenges. This encounter can happen anywhere, but the devils prefer an outside area away from onlookers where they can confront all of the PCs together and away from any prying eyes.

The queen's messengers enjoy a dramatic entrance, use *greater teleport* to appear near the PCs, hoping to catch the Thrune agents off guard. The erinyes use *minor image* to enhance the spectacle, creating an illusion of cold crimson and black flames flickering about them as they swoop into the midst of the PCs.

Galiona leads the trio in a "V" formation, holding one hand out to indicate that she should be heard first before hostilities erupt. The two rear devils land with ebon

bows in hand and blackened arrows nocked. Galiona produces a vellum scroll sealed with red and black wax from a pouch at her side, and speaks in an arrogant and otherworldly voice.

"Trusted of Thrune. We come with tidings from the queen. Show proper respect, prostrate yourselves, and be ready to receive her word."

While the erinyes serve the queen without question, they find the work dull and somewhat demeaning. If the PCs don't show the proper respect, Galiona raises one fist in the air. Namah and Sylanth then train their bows on spellcasters, but it's an idle threat—the devils have been ordered to kill only those who refuse the summons. Whether the PCs show Galiona deference or not, she hands them the queen's summons (see Handout #1), orders them to read it, and then awaits their answer.

If the PCs answer affirmatively, the erinyes teleport away, their task complete. If the PCs ask questions, Galiona is arrogant and exasperated. She warns the PCs that this is a royal summons from the queen's own hand. The PCs have taken an oath, and to refuse the summons is treason. They can ask any questions they might have in Egorian.

If the PCs refuse the summons, the erinyes attack, preferring nothing more than to disembowel a few insolent mortals and hang their innards from the trees.

If one or more of the devils is slain, the others attempt to escape via *greater teleport*, taking care to leave behind the scroll containing the queen's summons. The devils then return to Egorian and report the encounter.

GALIONA, NAMAHA, AND SYLANTH (3) CR 8

XP 4,800 each

Erinyes (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 75)

hp 94 each

Development: As Thrune agents, the PCs are expected to follow orders, not fight with royal messengers. However, slaying the devils does not otherwise hurt the PCs' reputation—in fact, doing so could help it. The imperial bureaucracy rigorously tracks the queen's couriers, and if the PCs fight the erinyes and at least one of them escapes to report the conflict, the PCs earn 2 Notice Points (see the sidebar on page 12). Even if none of the devils escapes the PCs, the assumption is still that the PCs had something to do with erinyes' disappearance, and they gain 1 Notice Point.

Story Award: If the PCs accept the queen's summons without fighting the erinyes, award them 14,400 XP, as if they had defeated the devils in combat.

ROAR OF THE HUNTER (CR 12)

Once the PCs receive Queen Abrogail's summons, they should make their way to Chelixa's capital city, Egorian. The journey to the capital is not detailed in this adventure, but the path to the city is mostly clear, as the flights of erinyes have spooked most pocket cells of the Glorious Reclamation and made the movement's larger hosts more cautious.

Creature: One obstacle remains on the path to Egorian, however—a lone leonal hunter named Weoruf. Although not an official ally of the Glorious Reclamation, the agathion has been drawn to Chelixa by the conflict there and has taken it upon himself to hunt down and slay any Thrune agents or fiendish allies of House Thrune he can. Weoruf has been tracking Queen Abrogail's erinyes messengers and has followed them to their latest targets, the PCs. He attacks the PCs soon after they receive the queen's summons—the leonal has no wish to fight a trio of devils and powerful Thrune agents at the same time. Though a dedicated hunter, Weoruf doesn't want to perish in battle. He uses *heal* and his lay on hands ability to stay in the fight, but when those options are exhausted and he's reduced to fewer than 70 hit points, Weoruf attempts to retreat.

WEORUF CR 12

XP 19,200

Male leonal (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 20)

hp 147

Treasure: Weoruf wears *pauldrons of the watchful lion* (*Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Equipment* 267).

THE CITY OF THORNS

The city of Egorian sits on the shores of Lake Sorrow, on the western edge of the Egobarius Plain, south and east of the Barrowood. Since the capital was moved here from Westcrown more than 75 years ago, the city has become a monument to House Thrune and its policies, and stands at the heart of the Chelish Empire, literally and figuratively. Egorian is fully detailed in the gazetteer beginning on page 62, which provides a wealth of information to flesh out the city if the PCs wish to explore beyond the bounds of this adventure and immerse themselves deeper in the dangers and intrigue Egorian has to offer.

Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs first enter the city.

Even with the chaos plaguing the empire, the streets of Egorian hum with their normal hustle and bustle. In the district of Whipcrack, crowds gather around the pens holding newly arrived slaves, as auctioneers urge higher bids for the lots. Beyond the flesh market, teamsters move freight, merchants make deals, and residents go about their daily business. There may be a few more Hellknights and Asmodean inquisitors on the streets than is typical, not to mention those bearing the mark of House Thrune, but otherwise it seems to be business as usual.

Moving west toward the city center, the strange angles and harsh opulence of the city's Arcadian marble facades and its abundance of fiendish-looking gargoyles give the place a wretched air. Towering edifices of Egorian School architecture rise between patches of mercantile buildings, creating a dark, sharp skyline that seems to oppress the cloudless blue sky above with shades of shifting gray. In the riot of commerce, brighter colors and beckoning storefronts seem almost like asylums shut in by walls of red-veined ebony.

Stretching out from the Imperial Palace, Thrune Square swarms with potential courtiers and hopeful Thrune agents seeking an audience with the queen, or at least admittance to the imperial court, but both Egorian's bureaucracy and the queen's Infernal Guard restrict entrance to the palace. It's obvious that personal access to Her Infernal Majestrix is strictly controlled.

A man walking nearby points to the crowd, and says with a chuckle, "Waiting in line is not how one gains the notice of the queen. One has to be useful."

Once in town, the PCs should register at the Midnight Temple, where they will receive their assigned quarters. As the PCs establish themselves in the city, they will also meet a pair of competing courtiers: Paraduke Thalgano Sethic (see page 7) and Archcountess Levisvia Vasvion (see page 10). Both seek to build a partnership with the PCs—to further their own respective goals, of course,

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but in exchange for kind words about the PCs in court, and possibly, an audience with Queen Abrogail herself. Which courtier the PCs collaborate with determines the subsequent course of events in Part 1 of the adventure.

Part 2 details the PCs' efforts against the Bellflower Network in Egorian. This will normally happen after the events of Part 1, but since the PCs had the opportunity to learn some information about the Bellflower Network in "The Inferno Gate," they may want to make their names by going after that organization earlier rather than later. If that is the case, you can run Part 2 of the adventure whenever you wish.

REGISTRATION

As new arrivals to the city, the PCs should make it their first priority to register at the Midnight Temple, Egorian's grand cathedral to Asmodeus, located just off Throne Square. Queen Abrogail has given the Church of Asmodeus the responsibility of greeting the Throne agents summoned to the city and assigning them living quarters. It's an exercise that Grand High Priestess Asperia Rugatonn and her clergy find demeaning and wasteful, but as loyal and obedient subjects of the empire, they have dedicated a sizable chamber in the pentagram-shaped temple's southernmost point to the task. However, only two low-ranking acolytes have been

assigned to greet new arrivals and process them, making the procedure exacting, but hellishly slow.

Creatures: The same two cantankerous **Asmodean scribes** (LE human cleric of Asmodeus 3) register the arriving agents most days from dusk to dawn. Their pace is leisurely and they are unmoved by arguments, pleading, threats, or bribes. The priests take a rest at midday, often for more than an hour, and sometimes for more than a couple. They take unscheduled breaks to perform "religious duties" as well, but a PC who succeeds at a DC 10 Knowledge (religion) check recognizes that these supposed duties rarely match official Asmodean liturgy.

No matter what time of day the PCs come to the temple, the wait is at least 3 hours. When the PCs finally reach the front of the line, they see the two scribes sitting at a desk. Both wear Asmodean cleric's vestments, but one is a bald and tattooed woman, and the other is a much older man with bulging yellowed eyes.

The tattooed scribe is reading a book—some unholy tome, one page illuminated with devils cavorting around a glorious depiction of Asmodeus—and doesn't even look up from her book as she speaks, her long, manicured nails drumming the desk in annoyance.

"This might go more quickly if you register as a group. Please provide your names and their most common spellings, and

speak loudly and clearly, as he is old and a little deaf." She nods to the priest next to her.

The older scrivener looks up at the PCs and licks the end of his pen, tracing a glistening line of black ink on his already ink-stained tongue. He writes down the PCs' names in a ledger on the desk, though he stops his scribbling often to ask for spelling clarifications or details of a PC's lineage in mumbling grumbles. Eventually, when the priest is satisfied that all of the information is correct, he yells, "In the ledger!" At that, the younger priest releases a dramatic sigh and pulls a sheet of parchment from under her codex. After consulting a list, she tells the PCs their quarters are in the Lawgiver's Rest, an inn located in the Devil's Dance district, and gives them a voucher to exchange for their quarters. They should wait there until contacted by agents of the queen. If necessary, the scrivener can provide directions to the PCs' new quarters, though she does so with obvious signs of annoyance.

Development: A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Perception check while talking to the scribes notices a bent, hobbling man loitering nearby, accompanied by a massive, scarred half-orc and a very tall halfling woman. The man takes notice of the mention of the Lawgiver's Rest and has a brief conversation with his companions, never taking his eyes off the PCs. An additional successful DC 16 Perception check allows a PC to overhear snippets of the strangers' conversation, enough to learn they are interested in the PCs because they are quartered in the Lawgiver's Rest and look "promising." The man goes on to say he will "snatch the inn away from that strumpet of a widow."

Whether or not the PCs notice the attention, the stranger approaches the PCs before they leave the temple (see Meeting the Paraduke below).

THE LAWGIVER'S REST

Once they have registered at the Midnight Temple, the PCs are free to seek out their quarters at the Lawgiver's Rest in the heart of the Devil's Dance district, a neighborhood awash in money, old and new. The inn is a large one, occupying a large swath on the northeast corner of Mandrake Circuit, a confluence of three smaller roads into a bustling thoroughfare. The Lawgiver's Rest is a discreet and luxurious inn that typically caters to visiting investors, but the current owner and resident of the inn's posh upper level, Archcountess Levisvia Vasvion, has loaned the inn's facilities to the queen's cause.

When the PCs reach the Lawgiver's Rest, read or paraphrase the following.

The Lawgiver's Rest is a four-floored complex of red stucco with a facade of Arcadian marble and thick glass windows.

The property looks more like an upscale apartment building than an inn, but a simple brass plaque on the door reads, "Lawgiver's Rest. Ring bell for service." A jade green rope hangs down next to the door.

Pulling the rope rings a deep, loud bell somewhere inside the building, and within a minute or so, a well-dressed but rather plain-looking, dusky-skinned man opens the door.

His eyes flicker with a hint of hellfire that betrays his infernal heritage. After establishing the PCs' identities, he ushers the PCs inside and introduces himself as **Mr. Aleth** (LE male tiefling aristocrat 1/expert 5), the innkeeper. Mr. Aleth provides the PCs with keys for their rooms (each character can have her own private room if she wishes) and explains that dinner is at 7 o'clock sharp; the PCs must procure other meals for themselves elsewhere. He also explains that they should be out of their rooms by noon, so that the servants can clean. Lastly, he warns that any drunkenness or violence will be greeted with expulsion from the inn.

Development: Once Mr. Aleth finishes explaining the inn's rules, a beautiful young woman enters the room. See Meeting the Archcountess on page 10 for details on this encounter.

In addition to the PCs, a dozen other Thrune agents are quartered at the Lawgiver's Rest. All of them tend to be newer agents, with little connection to the capital or the court, and they have all been housed together here for that reason. Their details are not necessary for the adventure, but if necessary, you can use statistics in the *Pathfinder RPG NPC Codex* for these agents, such as the bloodfire sorcerer (page 164), cruel instructor (page 32), evasive slip (page 65), freelance thief (page 147), investigator wizard (page 179), or spell hunter (page 83).

MEETING THE PARADUKE

Having overheard the Asmodean scribes assigning the PCs quarters in the Lawgiver's Rest, a powerful Egorian courtier seeks to use the PCs to further his own goals.

Creatures: Paraduke Thalvano Sethic, a hunched man dressed in a long, gold-trimmed burgundy velvet robe of the fashion currently popular with well-to-do merchants, approaches the PCs as they leave the Midnight Temple.



PARADUKE THALVANO SETHIC

FOR QUEEN & EMPIRE

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His sallow skin is pocked with the pinkish scars of some past torture, and he leans heavily on a cane that clicks on the tiles of the temple's floor.

Hovering just behind the man is a massive, muscular half-orc named Mr. Thope. While he wears a tailored outfit in current Egorian style and carries a dandyish walking stick, his long hair is pulled up in a topknot adorned with bones. His face is a mass of orc tattoos and ritual scars, with a horizontal iron spike piercing his nose. A tall, lanky halfling woman named Bist also accompanies the paraduke. Dressed in leathers of deep crimson, she seems bored and preoccupied with the contents of her own mind. Paraduke Sethic is fully detailed in the NPC Gallery on page 56; stats for Bist and Mr. Thope can be found on pages 19–20.

Sethic draws close to the PCs, as if desiring a confidential conversation, and his scent—a mix of expensive perfumes and rotting breath—washes over them. He smiles, showing his few remaining teeth, and greets the PCs.

“Allow me to introduce myself,” the well-dressed man lisps through his mangled mouth. “I am Paraduke Thalgano Sethic, and I may just be your new best friend. Please take no offense, but you seem to be just a few more faceless drones among countless others buzzing around the queen’s hive. Unseen and unheard, and likely to remain that way.

“I know Her Infernal Majestrix, however. Personally. And she often heeds my advice. It occurs to me that we might be able to do business with each other. Work with me, and I will endeavor to ensure that you are seen as more than mere pawns in her strategies.”

Sethic is not lying. Although he has lost much of his previous influence and most of his former fortune is long gone, he remains canny and well connected, and he does have the queen’s ear on a regular basis. When he first gained his title, Sethic made a solemn vow to never lie to Queen Abrogail, and has managed to give her honest assessments of her city and nobles without making too many enemies in the process.

Assuming the PCs are willing to listen, Sethic gets down to business. He doesn’t bother to introduce his associates Bist and Mr. Thope, who stand silently by while the paraduke talks. Sethic informs the PCs that he was once the owner of the Lawgiver’s Rest, but he lost the inn while he was “detained for some time” by the Order of the Scourge. Sethic wants the inn back, but the current owner, Archcountess Levisvia Vasvion, refuses to sell it to him. The paraduke wants the PCs to purchase the inn, and then hand over the title to Sethic.

Sethic would like to spend no more than 8,000 gp to buy the inn, but he is willing to go as high as 15,000 gp if necessary, and promises the PCs a percentage of the sale price as a finder’s fee if they are successful. In addition,

the paraduke offers to use his influence to get the PCs noticed by the court—and if they truly set themselves apart, by Queen Abrogail herself.

The PCs can agree to or reject Paraduke Sethic’s proposal here and now, but he doesn’t need an answer immediately. He gives the PCs a card with an address and tells the PCs they can find him there when they have an answer (or if they change their minds after initially refusing his offer). See *Returning to the Paraduke* below for the PCs’ next interaction with Sethic.

RETURNING TO THE PARADUKE

The address on the card Paraduke Sethic gave to the PCs is that of a restaurant at the edge of Thorntown called Lazaric’s, which is little more than a small dining room attached to a large, sprawling kitchen. Some of the best chefs in Egorian work in Lazaric’s kitchen, and well-dressed urchins deliver fully prepared, sumptuous meals, from flatbreads to whole suckling pigs, to upper class households in the neighborhood. Sethic owns Lazaric’s and uses the establishment as a base for his day-to-day business dealings and operations.

If the PCs ask for Sethic when they arrive, a waiter leads them back to the kitchen, where they find the paraduke waiting. If the PCs have come to accept Sethic’s offer, he gives them the same details as above. If they are here to give him the news that Archcountess Vasvion refuses to sell the Lawgiver’s Rest (see *Meeting the Archcountess* below), Sethic nods, as if he expected that.

“Saw through my little gambit, did she? Levisvia’s crafty—I’ll give her that much. You’ve done what I asked, and for that I thank you, but I think we might still be able to help each other. My original offer still stands—I can get you noticed at court, if you help me ruin that jumped-up socialite.

“I wouldn’t be surprised if she’s already tried to recruit you to her side—that’s all right, you don’t have to tell me—but think about this. I may be a broken man, but I’m still a duke, while young Levisvia is just a countess. She hasn’t managed to marry higher than that, at least so far. Consider who has more influence at court, and with Her Infernal Majestrix.”

Paraduke Sethic accepts whatever answer the PCs give him, though he is willing to add a payment of up to 5,000 gp to secure the PCs’ loyalty.

Story Award: Award the PCs 25,600 XP if they choose Paraduke Sethic as their patron.

MEETING THE ARCHCOUNTESS

Once the PCs arrive at the Lawgiver’s Rest and receive their assigned quarters, they are greeted by the inn’s owner, another influential courtier who has her own use for the PCs.

Creatures: As the PCs finish checking in, a young woman wearing an elegant silk dress sways into the

room. Her hair is done up in an elaborate style, and any PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Knowledge (nobility) check recognizes that the hairstyle denotes her status as a widow and mistress of her own house. On her arm is a handsome and rather toned young man. He looks through all before him except for the woman as if they were beneath his concern.

The woman addresses the PCs in a saccharine tone.

“Welcome to the Lawgiver’s Rest. I’m Archcountess Vasvion, but you are my guests, and the queen’s Trusted as well, so please call me Levisvia. This is my fiance, Nicolo Alazario. You can call him the lord-mayor’s son.” She giggles at the joke as the young man on her arm frowns, mumbles pleasantries, and takes his leave.

Paraduke Sethic is not the only courtier in Egorian with plans that might include the PCs. Levisvia Vasvion is a staunch rival of the paraduke, and may well have a use for the PCs herself, if for no other reason than to oppose Sethic. She owns the Lawgiver’s Rest, and has called the inn home since her third husband’s death 6 months ago. Archcountess Vasvion is fully detailed in the NPC Gallery on page 54.

The archcountess proves to be a charming, approachable, and benevolent host. She has dinner with her boarders on most nights, and loves to hear stories of her guests’ exploits, but she shares little about herself. She keeps the conversation light, vapidly so at times, but this is all an affectation (and a PC who succeeds at a DC 29 Sense Motive check suspects as much). Behind the small talk and silly laughter is a strong and calculating political mover. Like her rival, Sethic, the archcountess has the confidence of Queen Abrogail. Vasvion regularly reports bits of gossip she collects in her constant swirl of parties and events to the queen, as well as information about Alazario and his family (particularly his father, Lord-Mayor Grachius Alazario) and those currently staying at the Lawgiver’s Rest, such as the PCs.

Development: If the PCs approach the archcountess about selling the Lawgiver’s Rest, Vasvion stays pleasant and unassuming, though what she tells the PCs betrays her shrewdness.

“Oh, this place? I don’t know if I can part with it. My dearly departed husband gave it to me. It has sentimental value. I told that worm Thalmano Sethic the same thing. I take it he’s trying to broker this little deal through you? These are the games we play in Egorian, after all.”

Nevertheless, Vasvion seriously listens to the offer, and even seems to entertain it for a bit, before refusing. She speaks without hurt or malice, but makes a counteroffer to the PCs.

“No. I don’t think I’ll sell the Lawgiver’s Rest. Not to the paraduke, not to you. I’ve come to like this place, and it will be my home until Nicolo and I are married. But I’ll make you a counteroffer instead. You can help me finally put that slime Sethic in his place. I’ve had enough of his pathetic scrambles for past glory. The Hellknights should never have released him, or should have put the broken bastard out of his misery. “The fact that you’ve been assigned quarters here tells me you don’t have a patron in court. I can be that patron. Her Infernal Majestrix is an incorrigible gossip, but the affairs of state prevent her from attending many of Egorian’s balls and soirees. Fortunately, I have no such demands on my time, and I enjoy the privilege of keeping her apprised of the social happenings among her courtiers. It would be a simple thing to mention the Thrune agents who were so bold and helpful to the queen the next time I see her.”

While Vasvion’s tone is still that of a smooth-tongued courtier, the tenor of her relationship with the PCs changes at this point. No longer are they simply guests, but potential allies in her power struggle with Paraduke Sethic, ones who can help her reach her goals of restoring her family’s prominence and wealth.

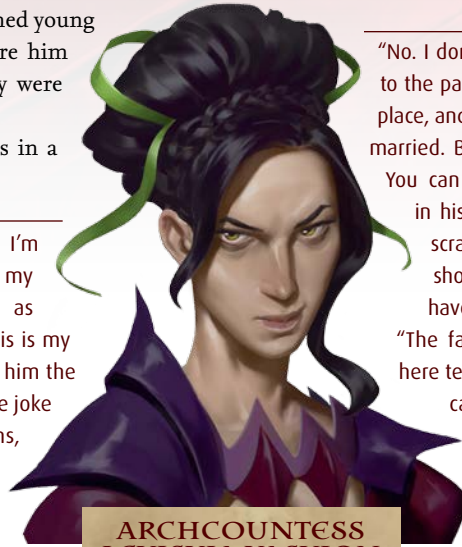
The archcountess is willing to offer the PCs a retainer of 5,000 gp, along with a promise to get them noticed by the court and bend the queen’s ear in the PCs’ favor if they serve her well.

Even if the PCs don’t bring up the sale of the inn with the archcountess, Vasvion approaches them within a few days of their arrival at the Lawgiver’s Rest, looking for competent foot soldiers for her little war against her rival. She offers the same incentives detailed above if the PCs agree to serve her directly.

Story Award: Award the PCs 25,600 XP if they choose Archcountess Vasvion as their patron.

CHOOSING A SIDE

At some point the PCs are going to have to decide who to work for—Paraduke Sethic or Archcountess Vasvion. The adventure assumes the PCs choose one side or the other, and that choice determines which of the events in Part 1 the PCs participate in. The remainder of Part 1 consists of six events, though the PCs will likely not experience all of them. Each event is a standalone encounter, and most happen during the course of a day or an evening.



ARCHCOUNTESS
LEVISVIA VASVION

FOR QUEEN & EMPIRE

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NOTICE POINTS

Parts 1 and 2 of this adventure take place in Egorian, the capital of Chelixa, a city already crawling with courtiers and dignitaries jostling for the attention and favor of Queen Abrogail. Now Thruane agents, many of whom have served the queen for years, if not decades, have flocked to Egorian as well. If the PCs hope to distinguish themselves from the jockeying throngs, they must first gain the queen's notice.

Throughout these sections, the PCs have opportunities to earn Notice Points, detailed in specific events and encounters. When the PCs have accumulated at least 7 Notice Points, they have made enough of an impact in Egorian's affairs to come to the attention of Queen Abrogail, who summons the PCs to a royal audience where she commands them to perform an important sacrifice in her name (see Part 3).

If the PCs side with Sethic, run **Events 1, 2, 5, and 6**. If they choose Vasvion instead, run **Events 3, 4, 5, and 6**. The events normally occur in numerical order, but they can be run in any order you wish, as long as **Event 6** happens last. This means that most groups will not play through all of the events, but the adventure's XP totals take this fact into account, so the PCs won't miss out on any experience points. However, if you wish to give the PCs more adventures or challenges while they're in Egorian, you should feel free to modify the unused events to work with the goals of their chosen patron.

The PCs might also attempt to work for both parties at the same time, but if they participate in **Event 1** or **Event 2**, Archcountess Vasvion withdraws her offer and treats the PCs as enemies from that point forward. Paraduke Sethic does the same if the PCs participate in **Event 3** or **Event 4**. Even if the PCs try to participate in any of those events covertly, the other party eventually finds out. Sethic and Vasvion keep a close eye on one another and love to taunt each other about their victories, either in person or through intermediaries, and it's only a matter of time before one of them finds out the PCs are working for the other.

Although they should be discouraged from doing so, if the PCs decide not to pick a side, go to **Event 5**, skipping **Events 1** through **4**. The PCs will lose the potential XP and Notice Points gained from those events and as a result will have little chance of attracting the queen's attention. In addition, they will be unable to gain an invitation to the Hellfire Ball in **Event 6**. To continue with the adventure, the PCs will need to either eradicate the Bellflower Network on their own (see Part 2), an act that gains them an invitation to the Hellfire Ball, or find another patron who can secure them an invitation.

EVENT 1: WHISPERING CAMPAIGN

This event occurs after the PCs agree to work for Paraduke Sethic. Shortly after they've established themselves in the city, Sethic asks the PCs to meet him at Lazaric's. Once again, Sethic can be found in the kitchen, where cooks are working diligently at ovens, alchemical stoves, and tabletops crafting a variety of meals. The paraduke gets right down to business, leading the PCs out of earshot of the busy cooks.

"During my time with the Hellknights, I would go weeks without meals. Now I spend my time surrounded by the smells and tastes that were denied to me for so long. Too bad I can't eat most of it—my digestion is not what it was before the Hellknights' hospitality.

"A good meal needs proper preparation. Meats need to be cured, grains ground, and vegetables chopped. I'm planning a new dish, one I intend to serve cold to Archcountess Vasvion, and like any good meal, it's important to lay the foundation. I need some agents for a good old-fashioned whispering campaign."

Sethic has secured invitations to a soiree hosted by Baroness Bramila Gellintha, a busybody and gossip who enjoys holding court and assessing newcomers to Egorian—for the queen herself, as rumor has it. Sethic wants the PCs to go to the party and start raising questions about Archcountess Vasvion's suitability as a wife for the youngest son of Egorian's lord-mayor, Nicolo Alazario. All he asks is that PCs try to convince as many partygoers and guests as possible, and, if they can do so discreetly, put the shadow of doubt into Baroness Gellintha's mind as well. The paraduke is happy to share some of the rumors surrounding Levisvia Vasvion with the PCs, if they haven't heard them already (see page 55). Sethic encourages the PCs to make up their own bits of scandalous gossip as well, though he cautions them that "less is more" when crafting rumors about the Egorian aristocracy.

If the PCs ask for compensation, Sethic lets loose a coughing, gravelly laugh.

"I'm sending you to a party, and you want me to pay you for the privilege? Have you already become jaded courtiers? How about one of the best dinners of your life from one of my finest chefs instead? This is the sort of things that friends do for one another." If the PCs continue to press for a reward, Sethic reluctantly agrees to pay them a sum of 5,000 gp, grumbling about the "behavior of mercenaries" the entire time.

Assuming the PCs agree to go to the party, Sethic gives them the address and the time (the following evening), and advises them, "Look your best—it can only help."

BARONESS GELLINTHA'S SOIREE

The party is being held in Aspx Garden at Vaneo Gellintha, the Egorian manor house of Baroness

Bramila Gellintha. Once the PCs arrive at the vaneo, they find five other groups hovering around the rather posh ballroom where the soiree takes place.

The PCs have the opportunity to spread rumors to each of the five groups and convince them of Archcountess Vasvion's questionable marriage record by succeeding at a series of skill checks detailed in each group's Influence entry (these checks can be attempted in any order). Each PC can attempt a given skill check only once, though other PCs can attempt the same check if the first character fails it, or assist their fellows with aid another. However, failing a skill check by 5 or more increases the DC of the same skill check by 2 for subsequent characters attempting the check. Characters can take 10 on these checks, but can't take 20.

Once convinced of the PCs' rumors, many groups have rumors or other information of their own that they'll share with the PCs, as detailed in each group's Reward entry. The PCs can approach any group they like at first, except for Baroness Gellintha's entourage. She invites each group to speak with her individually. Once she dismisses a group, she chats with her companions for a period of time before inviting another group to pay its respects. The PCs must attempt to sway the four other groups before the baroness summons them.

As Sethic advised, dressing for the occasion helps. PCs who wear normal clothing or adventuring gear to the party take a -2 penalty on all Charisma-based checks to influence any of the groups except the Troubadours and the Adventurers (the PCs take no penalties with these groups). If the PCs wear courtiers' outfits, they receive no bonuses or penalties on checks, unless they also wear jewelry worth at least 50 gp, in which case they gain a +1 circumstance bonus on all Charisma-based checks to influence the groups. PCs who wear nobles' outfits (accessorized with jewelry worth at least 100 gp) gain a PC a +2 circumstance bonus on those checks, while those who appear in royal outfits (with jewelry worth at least 200 gp) gain a +4 circumstance bonus on those checks.

Using *disguise self* or a *hat of disguise* to emulate one of these outfits might also work. A PC using a magical disguise only to create an illusion of expensive clothing gains not only the usual +10 bonus on his Disguise check, but also an additional +5 bonus on the check (since clothing is a minor detail). However, there is a chance that some member of each faction will see through the ruse during her interaction with the PCs. Each group has a Perception entry at the beginning of its section, and has a chance to attempt an opposed Perception check to see through the disguise before the relevant checks to influence the group are attempted. PCs who fail the opposed Disguise check not only lose any circumstance bonuses the illusory outfit would normally grant, but also take a -4 penalty on their Charisma-based checks for resorting to magic to fool the other partygoers.

GROUP 1: THE WISCRANI

Stuffy, almost insufferably arrogant, and either skinny or bloated, these nobles from Westcrown admire each other's clever tailoring while dithering and worrying—that their home city is in danger from the Glorious Reclamation, and that they are powerless to do anything about it, as they're trapped in Egorian at the queen's whim.

Perception: +20. The Wiscrani are astute judges of dress and fashion, and many absentmindedly touch and inspect the PCs' clothing during conversation.

Influence: Their worries aside, of all the groups at Gellintha's soiree, the Wiscrani are the most gullible and easy to convince of salacious rumors. Three successful Diplomacy or Knowledge (nobility) checks (DC 17, DC 22, and DC 27) are all it takes to convince them. If the PCs spend 20 minutes listening to the nobles' hyperbolic views of the troubles of their home city and showing concern for their cause (by succeeding at a DC 25 Bluff check if not sincere), they gain a +2 circumstance bonus on the Diplomacy checks.

Reward: Unfortunately, the Wiscrani have kept to themselves while in Egorian and don't know any good rumors—not about “this backwater,” anyway.

Story Award: If the PCs successfully convince the Wiscrani delegation, award them 6,400 XP.

GROUP 2: THE TROUBADOURS

Annoyingly carefree in their speech and movement, with no care for personal space, this group of minstrels flutters about the ballroom, though most of the other groups give them a wide berth. The troubadours seem not to care, however, laughing and carrying on. They often make fun of the Wiscrani and Brastlework delegations, though they show some deference to the PCs and the adventurers just back from Katapesh, knowing better to anger those armed with sword and spell.

Perception: +15. While the troubadours are observant, they are often too involved with their own antics and jokes to pay close attention to what the PCs are wearing.

Influence: The troubadours must first become at ease with the PCs before they can be convinced of any rumors, which requires three successful Acrobatics or Perform checks (DC 15, DC 20, and DC 25). Any category of the Perform skill will do, though PCs attempting Perform (comedy) checks receive a +2 bonus on the checks.

Reward: Once the PCs have won them over, the troubadours are willing to share information on a quid pro quo basis, but they are already well versed in most of the rumors circulating around Egorian. The PCs must succeed at a DC 20 Knowledge (local) check to remember a rumor the entertainers don't already know. If the PCs are attempting to spread a new rumor of their own creation, they must succeed at a DC 20 Bluff check. Once the PCs share a rumor, the troubadours provide the PCs with one of the following rumors in exchange.

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Rumor 1: “You really have to watch your step in this city, especially now. The Order of the Scourge is purging potential traitors, and the queen’s agents often use petrification magic on enemies of the state, then present the statues to the queen. We’ve heard her throne room is filled with such ‘living’ statues.”

Rumor 2: “This little get-together is rather dull, but there are two parties coming up that are must-attend events to see and be seen. The first, thrown by notorious free spirit Demibaron Kavalderic, is sure to be a riotous affair, and the second is Duke Melesiva’s Hellfire Ball. They say the queen will attend both of these parties, so you know invitations are going to be at a premium.”

Story Award: If the PCs successfully convince the troubadours, award them 6,400 XP.

GROUP 3: THE ADVENTURERS

This party of adventurers has recently returned to Cheliox from Katapesh. They focus on enjoying the free food and drink and telling anyone who listens overblown accounts of their exploits.

Perception: +10. The drunk adventurers care little about what the PCs are wearing.

Influence: It’s hard to spread rumors to the adventurers because some of them are extremely inebriated, and the others don’t really care about the petty concerns of nobles. The PCs can attempt to convince the drunks with three successful Bluff checks (DC 15, 20, and 25) or try to convince the indifferent to care with three successful Diplomacy checks (DC 17, 22, and 27).

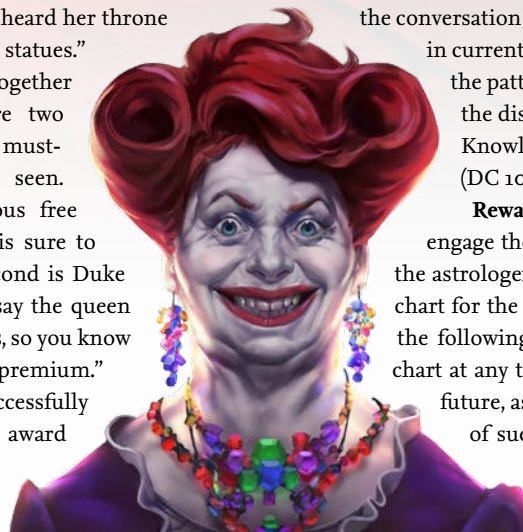
Reward: When the PCs convince the adventurers, one of the drunk members tells the PCs the following rumor: “I hear the queen is looking for a group of smart and loyal adventurers for some important mission. We may not seem it, but we’re pretty sharp. And we might not be as patriotic as some, but good coin and the queen’s favor can win a lot of loyalty.”

Story Award: If the PCs successfully convince the adventurers, award them 6,400 XP.

GROUP 4: THE BRATTLEWARK CONTINGENT

This eccentric clique of gnome astrologers (and one nervous free halfling mystic) hails from Brattlewark, having come to the capital to visit the Egorian Academy of the Magical Arts. They keep mostly to themselves, arguing over obscure matters of astrology and oneiromancy in a babble of low voices.

Perception: +15. The gnomes care more for their esoteric subjects than the nature of the PCs’ clothing, but are also fairly good at discovering magical fakes.



BARONESS BRAMILA GELLINTHA

Influence: The strangely uptight gnomes bristle at any rumors of Archcountess Vasvion’s past scandals. “We are not gossips,” they explain pleasantly but firmly.

However, the PCs can attempt to slip their rumor into the conversation by casting the archcountess’s role in current politics in terms of astrology and the patterns of the stars. Keeping up with the discussion requires three successful Knowledge (arcana or religion) checks (DC 10, DC 15, and DC 20).

Reward: Once the PCs successfully engage the gnomes in conversation, one of the astrologers agrees to create an astrological chart for the PCs, which she presents to them the following morning. The PCs can use the chart at any time within 1 week to predict the future, as per *divination* with a 75% chance of success. Once used, or after 1 week, the chart becomes useless.

Story Award: If the PCs successfully convince the Brattlewark contingent, award them 6,400 XP.

GROUP 5: THE BARONESS AND HER ENTOURAGE

As the PCs work the rest of the room, **Baroness Bramila Gellintha** (LE female human aristocrat 6) and her entourage of empty-headed sycophants eat, drink, tell dreadful jokes, and courteously interrogate the soiree’s invited guests. Once the PCs have had the opportunity to interact with the other groups, a haughty and well-dressed halfling slave approaches them and informs them the baroness will receive them now. The slave escorts them to a dais at the far end of the ballroom where Baroness Gellintha sits at a large table, stuffing her face with Egorian delicacies and washing them down with copious amounts of port.

Perception: The baroness automatically discovers any use of *disguise self* or similar magic, as a member of her entourage possesses a *gem of seeing* affixed to a monocle, and whispers his discovery into Gellintha’s ear as soon as he discovers the ploy.

Influence: Baroness Gellintha does not offer the PCs chairs, food, or drink, forcing them to stand as she questions them on their lineages and service to House Thrune and Cheliox. She greets their answers with indifference, unless the details are particularly violent or involve some skullduggery, in which case she responds with a great red smile, revealing her wine-stained, yellowing teeth, accompanied by comical bouts of dainty clapping. The rest of her entourage mindlessly follows her lead.

Just finding an opening to spread a rumor is difficult, and convincing the baroness is even more so. A PC must first succeed at a DC 20 Sense Motive check to determine

an acceptable point during the questions to slip in an aside. If this succeeds, convincing Gellintha requires two successful Diplomacy Checks (DC 25 and DC 30).

Reward: Baroness Gellintha chastises the PCs for being crass rumormongers, but once the PCs have convinced her, the baroness is willing to pass on some juicy gossip of her own: “Everyone knows that ‘officially’ the Bellflower Network isn’t active in the capital. You didn’t hear this from me, but it’s looking more and more like there may be some bellflowers sprouting up among Egorian’s black roses. None of my slips have gone missing—they love their ‘Mama Bramila’ too much—but if those crafty slave-stealers have their way, there won’t be a single household in the city with a proper service staff!”

In addition, the baroness can fill the PCs in on any other rumors of which the GM might want the players to be aware.

Development: No matter their level of success among the various guests at the party, the PCs gain 1 Notice Point for attempting to spread the rumor. If they manage to convince all four groups of guests, or Baroness Gellintha, the PCs earn 1 additional Notice Point (for a total of 2).

Story Award: If the PCs successfully convince Baroness Gellintha, award them 12,800 XP.

EVENT 2: MURDER FOR HIRE

A day or 2 after Baroness Gellintha’s soiree, Paraduke Sethic summons the PCs to Lazaric’s again, where he offers them a sumptuous repast prepared by one of his best chefs in the restaurant’s dining room. The meal is in thanks for the PCs’ whispering campaign, and once they have eaten their fill, Sethic unravels his next plan for ruining his rival Levisvia Vasvion: killing the archcountess’s fiancé, Nicolo Alazario.

“While the tragic deaths of the archcountess’s previous husbands were her own doing, and I have no doubt that her newest beau, Nicolo Alazario, will suffer the same fate eventually, I need expediency. I want young Nicolo to die—soon, and under mysterious circumstances. In short, I need him murdered, like all of dear Levisvia’s past pets. And quite frankly, I think your talents are wasted spreading salacious rumors when they could be directed toward more direct action.”

Sethic hopes the PCs will agree without argument, but he is ready if any of them balk at his blatant disregard for the law, weaving the following story in response.

“Please, please, I’m not done. Fate and the Furies guide our hands. I’ve recently discovered that Nicolo has a close friend who has joined up with the Glorious Reclamation, and that fop has been channeling information and treasure to the rebels. His death will be justice served, and it will avoid a scandal for the lord-mayor, who is no enemy of mine. At the

same time, of course, it will further disgrace Archcountess Vasvion, who is.”

The story is a lie, but a convincing one (Sethic’s Bluff modifier is +23). If the PCs still refuse, he berates them.

“And you think you have what it takes to serve our queen and her empire? There is an old Chelish axiom: ‘Power is not given; it is taken.’ Ruthlessness is what is needed here. Take charge of your own destinies. Don’t hide behind the laws meant to control lesser people.”

If the PCs accept the job, Sethic explains that Nicolo Alazario has a secret opium habit, and has been holed up alone in a flat in Five Favors for more than a day indulging his addiction. It should be an easy task to slip in, do the deed, and slip out again. Sethic recommends that the PCs attack near dusk, and gives them directions to the apartment.

If the PCs ask for payment, Sethic suggests they make the attack look like a robbery—anything they find in the flat is theirs to keep.

A. NICOLO ALAZARIO’S FLAT

Nicolo Alazario has a secret sanctuary in Five Favors—a small, private flat that he uses to get away from his family and engage in clandestine activities—but the rest of Paraduke Sethic’s story is fabricated. Nicolo does not have an opium habit, but he does have a secret lover, and his habits are much more occult and disturbing. Under the tutelage of his paramour, a cleric of Asmodeus named Nalia Melcoth, Nicolo is currently trying to awaken his ki by way of an ancient, fiendish blood ritual.

Sethic knows of Nicolo’s relationship with Nalia, and knows the two are together at the flat, but he does not share this intelligence with the PCs, and is not aware of the ritual the two are attempting. Nalia is the daughter of Paracount Alexis Melcoth, who was once Sethic’s business partner and confidant, but now is just a man who owes the paraduke money. Besides killing Nicolo, Sethic believes an attack on Melcoth’s daughter, or her death, should give Paracount Melcoth proper motivation to pay off his debt.

The following are brief descriptions of the flat’s rooms; encounters are presented in greater detail below.

A1. Courtyard: The entrance to Nicolo’s flat is through a quiet courtyard 15 feet below the apartment. The courtyard contains entrances to several other homes and businesses, and a well sits in its center. At this time of day the courtyard is empty, and any sign of trouble causes the other residents of the area to bar their doors and wait out the hostilities.

A2. Stairs: A 10-foot-wide flight of stairs leads upward from the courtyard to the flat’s front door. This area is detailed below.

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A. NICOLO ALAZARIO'S FLAT

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



A3. Salon: This area is detailed below.

A4. Study: Nicolo uses this simple chamber, equipped with a small desk, as a study. Various receipts and contracts sit on the desk along with a quill and bottle of black ink.

A5. Kitchen: The flat's kitchen contains an oven, a pair of tables, and several well-stocked pantries.

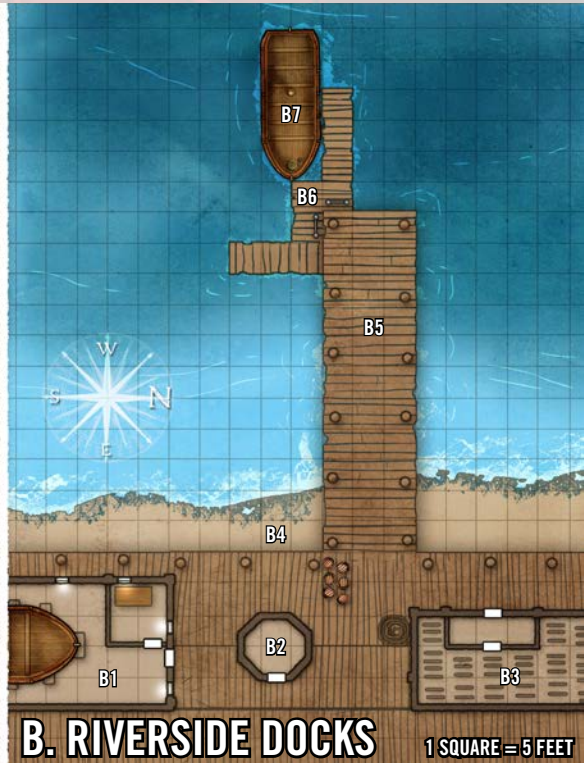
A6. Bedroom: A large, plush bed sits at one end of this bedroom. Various pillows are strewn on the floor at the other end of the room, presumably for visitors. A small closet opens off the chamber, and contains Nalia's armor (see Treasure on page 18).

A7. Washroom: This area is split into two chambers. The first room holds a washbasin and mirror, while the second room contains a shower fed by a rainwater cistern on the roof, and a privy that drops directly to the sewers far below.

A2. STAIRS (CR 11)

The stairs wind up to a large, ironbound, oak double door that is locked (hardness 5, hp 20, break DC 25, Disable Device DC 30). A narrow balcony overlooks the stairs from the flat above.

Traps: The doors are warded with two magical traps, both of which are triggered when a creature steps in either of the squares in front of the doors. The first trap targets an intruder with *energy drain*, while the second trap follows with *eyebite*, targeting one creature within range every round for 11 rounds. Note that a character with temporary negative levels from the *energy drain* is considered to have fewer Hit Dice for purposes of the



B. RIVERSIDE DOCKS

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

effects of *eyebite*. The traps are also keyed to an *alarm* trigger that audibly rings in the flat's salon (area A3) when the traps are set off. Both traps are independent of one another, which means each must be detected and disabled separately, but a hidden lock on the landing's north wall bypasses both traps at once.

ENERGY DRAIN TRAP

CR 10

XP 9,600

Type magic; Perception DC 34; Disable Device DC 34

EFFECTS

Trigger location (*alarm*); **Reset** none; **Bypass** hidden lock (Perception DC 25, Disable Device DC 30)

Effect spell effect (*energy drain*, Atk +10 ranged touch, 2d4 temporary negative levels, DC 23 negates after 24 hours)

EYEBITE TRAP

CR 7

XP 3,200

Type magic; Perception DC 31; Disable Device DC 31

EFFECTS

Trigger location (*alarm*); **Duration** 11 rounds; **Reset** none; **Bypass** hidden lock (Perception DC 25, Disable Device DC 30)

Effect spell effect (*eyebite*, effects vary by target's HD, Fortitude DC 19 negates); multiple targets (1 random target per round in 10-ft.-by-25-ft. area)

A3. SALON (CR 12)

This large room is the flat's primary living area. Numerous cushions and pillows for lounging lie on the floor, flanking

a large pentagram drawn on the floor in the center of the room. Windows to the north look down on the courtyard below, while doors and windows to the east and west provide access to balconies overlooking the stairs and the street outside, respectively. A large table stands near the eastern balcony. The balcony doors are locked (hardness 5, hp 15, break DC 18, Disable Device DC 30).

Creatures: Nicolo Alazario and his secret lover Nalia Melcoth are in this chamber, performing a ritual to further unlock Nicolo's ki. If the PCs trigger the traps guarding the flat, the *alarm* likely alerts the duo, but Nicolo and Nalia are fixated on the strange blood ritual and the PCs may be able to catch them by surprise if they can foil the trap and lock without making a lot of noise. Nalia is not currently wearing her armor; the resulting changes to her stat block are outlined below.

NALIA MELCOTH **CR 10**
XP 9,600

Female fire cleric (*Pathfinder RPG NPC Codex* 52)
AC 12, touch 11, flat-footed 12 (+2 deflection, -1 Dex, +1 natural)
hp 75
Speed 30 ft.

TACTICS

Before Combat If alerted by the *alarm*, Nalia casts *freedom of movement* and *resist energy* (electricity), and uses her *wand of shield of faith*.

During Combat Nalia casts *spell resistance* and *fire shield* (*warm shield*), then attacks with her fire spells. If foes turn out to be fire resistant, she casts *blade barrier* and channels negative energy instead. During the battle, she uses her few healing spells to support Nicolo in battle as best she can.

Morale If reduced to 20 or fewer hit points, Nalia casts *wall of fire* in an attempt to cover her escape.

NICOLO ALAZARIO **CR 7**
XP 3,200

Male human monk (hungry ghost monk) 8 (*Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 110)
 LE Medium humanoid (human)
Init +4; **Senses** Perception +13

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 20, flat-footed 18 (+1 armor, +1 deflection, +4 Dex, +1 dodge, +2 monk, +2 natural, +2 Wis)
hp 71 (8d8+32)

Fort +8, **Ref** +10, **Will** +8; +2 vs. enchantments
Defensive Abilities evasion

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft.
Melee unarmed strike +9/+4 (1d10+2) or
 unarmed strike flurry of blows +9/+9/+4/+4 (1d10+2)
Special Attacks flurry of blows, life funnel,
 steal ki

TACTICS

Before Combat If alerted by the *alarm*, Nicolo drinks his potion of *barkskin*.

During Combat Nicolo uses his *ring of blood calling* on the first round of combat to bring the bone devil Xanthut into the fray. He attacks foes with flurries of blows and punishing kicks, spending ki to enhance his attacks or Armor Class as needed.

Morale If reduced to 20 hit points or fewer, Nicolo tries to bargain for his life, offering favors and wealth if spared.

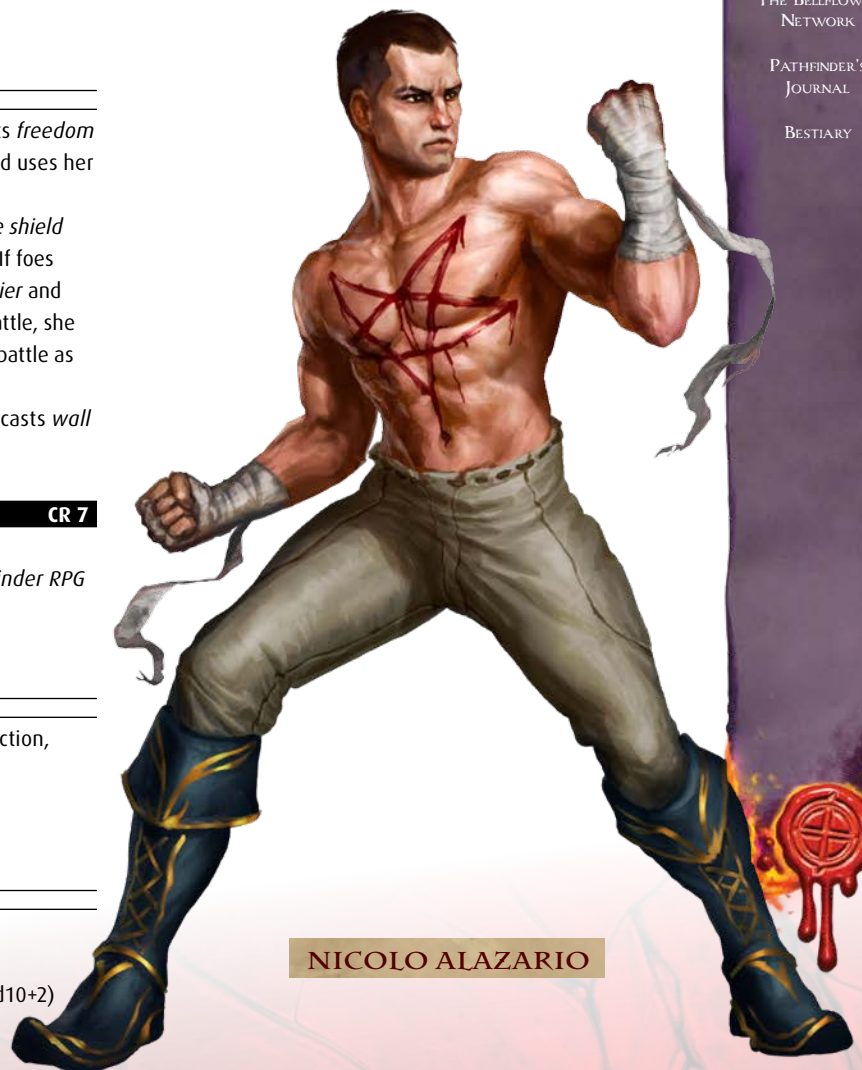
STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 18, **Con** 14, **Int** 8, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 10
Base Atk +6; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 27

Feats Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Deflect Arrows, Dodge, Gorgon's Fist, Improved Unarmed Strike, Punishing Kick^{APG}, Scorpion Style, Toughness, Weapon Focus (unarmed strike)

Skills Acrobatics +15 (+31 when jumping), Climb +12, Escape Artist +12, Intimidate +6, Perception +13

Languages Common



NICOLO ALAZARIO

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RING OF BLOOD CALLING

Diabolists who have made special deals with individual devils use *rings of blood calling* to conjure their infernal allies when needed. These rings have also become popular among wealthy Chelish nobles dabbling in diabolism.

RING OF BLOOD CALLING

PRICE
12,000 GP

SLOT ring

CL 11th

WEIGHT —

AURA moderate conjuration

This iron ring is set with a polished bloodstone. When created, a *ring of blood calling* creates a link between a single mortal creature devoted to Asmodeus and a specific devil with no more than 12 Hit Dice who willingly agrees to be bound by the item. Once per day as a standard action, the ring's wearer can place a drop of his own blood on the ring's gem (provoking attacks of opportunity) to immediately call the devil linked to the ring to any space within 30 feet. While the wearer does not control the devil, most wearers make agreements with the devil linked to the ring for protection or some other service when called. The called devil remains for 1 hour, or the wearer can dismiss the devil as a free action.

If the devil linked to the ring is killed, the ring crumbles to dust. If wearer linked to the ring is killed, a new wearer can summon the linked devil, but can compel the devil to perform only one service, as per *planar binding*, which severs the devil's link to the ring when the task is completed unless the new wearer makes his own deal with the devil, reestablishing the link between the wearer, the devil, and the ring.

Nicolo Alazario's *ring of blood calling* is linked to a bone devil named Xanthut. If Nicolo is killed, the PCs will need to make their own arrangements with Xanthut to link themselves to the ring to call the devil.

CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS

COST 6,000 GP

Forge Ring, *planar binding*

TACTICS

Morale If Nicolo is killed, Xanthut calls for a truce. The devil has no desire to be killed, and is willing to strike a deal with the PCs in exchange for his life. This likely involves a new agreement regarding the *ring of blood calling*, the details of which are left to the PCs and the GM to work out.

Treasure: One of the key components of Nicolo and Nalia's blood ritual sits in the center of the pentagram on the floor—an engraved helm carved from the skull of a pit fiend. The helm is not magical and simply provides a physical focus for those undergoing the ritual, but it is worth 5,000 gp. In addition, Nalia's *+1 breastplate* and *+1 heavy steel shield* can be found in the closet attached to the bedroom (area A6).

Development: If the PCs complete their mission and kill Nicolo, Sethic is very pleased, and promises to speak well of them when he meets the queen, though he is a bit cagey as to exactly when that meeting will take place. In addition, the paraduke has obtained invitations to Demibaron Graithus Kavalderic's upcoming party (see **Event 5**). Sethic explains that he is too crippled to enjoy such riotous festivities anymore, but suggests the PCs take the invitations as a reward for their efforts, bidding them to enjoy themselves.

Although the PCs' participation in this affair is unlikely to become public knowledge, Sethic is impressed enough by their efforts that his words about them in court earn the PCs 2 Notice Points from this event, assuming they were successful.

The PCs also make an enemy of Archcountess Vasvion, who eventually learns of their involvement in her fiancé's murder, even if she has no proof. She makes her own arrangements in response, which come to fruition at the Hellfire Ball in **Event 6**.

Story Award: For killing Nicolo Alazario and successfully completing Sethic's mission, award the PCs 19,200 XP.

EVENT 3: PREDAWN HEIST

This event occurs after the PCs agree to work for Archcountess Vasvion. Late one evening, after the other guests at the Lawgiver's Rest have retired to their rooms, the archcountess invites the PCs to visit her in her suite above the inn for a nightcap. Once Mr. Aleth has poured everyone a glass of brandy and withdrawn, Vasvion speaks with a mischievous smile.

"I've heard a story. Our friend Paraduke Sethic has apparently exhausted his goodwill among Egorian's creditors, so he's sought the aid of a rather nefarious Corentyn moneylender. The money is already on its way to the city. It's due to arrive early this morning before the sun rises, less than two hours

SQ fast movement, high jump, ki pool (6 points; cold iron, magic, silver), maneuver training, slow fall 40 ft.

Combat Gear *potions of barkskin* +2 (2), *potion of invisibility*; **Other Gear** *amulet of mighty fists* +1, *bracers of armor* +1, *ring of blood calling* (see sidebar above), *ring of protection* +1, signet ring, 200 gp

XANTHUT

CR 9

XP 6,400

Bone devil (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 74)

hp 105

from now. Wouldn't it be a shame if those coins never made it to Sethic?"

Vasvion's intelligence is very precise. She knows the shipment is worth at least 50,000 gp, and that Sethic's lackeys, the halfling Bist and the scarred half-orc Mr. Thope, are bringing the coins up the Adivian River. They'll land at a dock in Riverside at the appointed time, and then take the gold to Sethic somewhere in the city. It's imperative the PCs intercept the shipment before it reaches the paraduke.

Vasvion intends to donate the entire sum of the stolen gold to the queen to aid the war effort. The gift would guarantee the archcountess a personal and private audience with Queen Abrogail, and give Vasvion the perfect opportunity to put in a good word for the PCs. The paraduke's guards will be well equipped, however, and Vasvion suggests the PCs take whatever they want from their fallen foes as incentive for taking the job.

If the PCs hesitate or seem uninterested, Vasvion playfully pleads with them. She reminds the PCs that only the daring gain notice in Egorian, and opportunities to thwart your enemies and gain the gratitude of court don't happen every day.

Assuming the PCs agree to the caper, the archcountess gives them a final bit of advice just before they leave: "The Riverside docks are very quiet this time of night, so it's best not to call attention to yourselves if possible. I would advise you to leave no survivors. Survivors often cause problems."

B. RIVERSIDE DOCKS (CR 12)

The boat carrying Paraduke Sethic's loan is due to dock in Egorian's Riverside district in just under 2 hours. If the PCs readily agreed to the heist and leave the Lawgiver's Rest right away, they should have enough time to reconnoiter the area, take positions, and make any other preparations for the theft. If the PCs tarry for more than an hour, they reach the docks just as the boat arrives from the south. The various locations at the docks are detailed below. Use the map on page 16 for this area.

B1. Workshop: This high building, nearly 20 feet tall at the peak of its slate roof, is constructed of strong timber. The good wooden door is locked (hardness 5, hp 15, break DC 18, Disable Device DC 30), and the grimy windows are barred from the inside. Most of the workshop is taken up with its owner's current project—a partially constructed yacht. A small office to the northwest holds a desk filled with sketches of boats and a lockbox with some receipts, but nothing of real value.

B2. Bakers' Kiosk: A group of bakers share this kiosk, selling their pies to dockworkers from morning to midday. The simple wooden door is locked (hardness 5, hp 10, break DC 15, Disable Device DC 20), but the kiosk is empty.

B3. Fish Smoker: This flat-topped wooden building is the source of the pungent smell that hangs over this area of the docks. The building is not even 10 feet high, and it's easy to gain access to the roof by climbing up a huge coil of rope piled near the building's southwest corner (Climb DC 5). The front door is locked (hardness 5, hp 15, break DC 18, Disable Device DC 25) and the building has no windows. The front room is bare, other than a small table sitting in the corner with a stool. The smoker's main room is hot and miserable, and is currently filled to the brim with river fish hanging from racks.

B4. Beach: A gravelly beach lies 5 feet below the docks. The sand and gravel are considered dense rubble (*Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* 430). Medium or smaller creatures can easily traverse the beach under the pier (area B5), but Large creatures must squeeze. Huge creatures or larger can't fit beneath the pier.

B5. Pier: Other than a stack of empty barrels at its eastern end, this pier is bare.

B6. Floating Dock: This smaller dock floats at water level (currently 5 feet below the main pier). Two rusty iron ladders grant access to the floating dock from the pier.

B7. Boat: The boat carrying Paraduke Sethic's money from Corentyn arrives at the docks an hour before sunrise. See Creatures below for the boat's passengers. The vessel is relatively flat, more barge than boat, though it does grant cover to Medium or smaller creatures within it. An iron strongbox holds the paraduke's gold (see Treasure on page 21).

Creatures: Sethic's retainers, Bist and Mr. Thope, guard the paraduke's gold on the boat, along with four sellswords. The guards are on the lookout for trouble, and tend to shoot first and ask questions later. Even the slightest sign of trouble puts the group in crisis mode. If attacked, the sellswords ignite sunrods and train their bows on the shore, while Bist casts *haste* and Mr. Thope eases the boat up to the floating dock. Their chief goal is to secure the money, but they attempt to neutralize attackers first before trying to break through the assault.

BIST

CR 9

XP 6,400

Female halfling rogue 3/sorcerer 4/arcane trickster 3
N Small humanoid (halfling)

Init +5; **Senses** Perception +8

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 17, flat-footed 19 (+4 armor, +5 Dex, +1 dodge, +4 shield, +1 size)

hp 75 (10 HD; 7d6+3d8+34)

Fort +6, **Ref** +12, **Will** +8; +2 vs. fear

Defensive Abilities evasion, fated (+1), trap sense +1

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee +1 rapier +13 (1d4+2/15-20) or
mwk dagger +12 (1d3+1/19-20)

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Ranged +1 *shortbow* +12 (1d4+1/x3)

Special Attacks impromptu sneak attack 1/day, sneak attack +3d6

Bloodline Spell-Like Abilities (CL 7th; concentration +9) 5/day—touch of destiny (+2)

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 7th; concentration +9)

3rd (4/day)—*haste*, *keen edge*

2nd (7/day)—*blur*, *hideous laughter* (DC 14), *invisibility*

1st (7/day)—*alarm*, *charm person* (DC 13), *disguise self*, *grease*, *magic missile*, *shield*

0 (at will)—*acid splash*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound* (DC 12), *mage hand*, *message*, *ray of frost*, *read magic*

Bloodline destined

TACTICS

Before Combat Before the boat approaches the docks, Bist casts *blur* and *shield* on herself and *keen edge* on her rapier.

During Combat Bist casts *haste* on herself and her companions on the first round of combat, then supports

the battle from range with her spells, arrows, and touch of destiny. She uses *hideous laughter* and *grease* against opponents who approach the boat before she joins in melee, staying as close as she can to Mr. Thope.

Morale Bist is loyal to Sethic's coin, not to the paraduke himself. If reduced to fewer than 20 hit points, Bist casts *invisibility* and attempts to flee.

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 20, **Con** 14, **Int** 8, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +5; **CMB** +5; **CMD** 21

Feats Arcane Armor Training, Combat Casting, Dodge, Eschew Materials, Toughness, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (rapier)

Skills Acrobatics +16, Climb +8, Disable Device +15, Escape Artist +13, Knowledge (arcana) +6, Perception +8, Stealth +16, Swim +8

Languages Common, Halfling

SQ bloodline arcana (luck bonus on saves when casting personal-range spells), ranged legerdemain, rogue talent (finesse rogue), trapfinding +1

Combat Gear *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *wand of scorching ray* (10 charges); **Other Gear** +2 *leather armor*, +1 *rapier*, +1 *shortbow* with 20 arrows, mwk dagger, *belt of incredible dexterity* +2, key to strongbox in area **B7**, sunrods (6), thieves' tools

MR. THOPE

CR 9

XP 6,400

Male half-orc barbarian (scarred rager) 10 (*Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Combat* 29)

NE Medium humanoid (human, orc)

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +14

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 11, flat-footed 17 (+8 armor, +2 Dex, +1 dodge, +1 natural, -2 rage)

hp 120 (10d12+50)

Fort +11, **Ref** +5, **Will** +6

Defensive Abilities orc ferocity, scarification (3), tolerance; **DR** 2/—

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee +1 *glamered greatsword* +18/+13 (2d6+10/19–20)

Ranged mwk chakram +13 (1d8+6)

Special Attacks rage (24 rounds/day), rage powers (auspicious mark^{uc}, guarded stance +2, powerful blow +3, strength surge +10, unexpected strike)

TACTICS

During Combat Mr. Thope's main goal is to protect the strongbox and get it to Sethic, but he can't carry the heavy box and wield his greatsword at the same time, so he remains in the boat or adjacent to it, always keeping the chest within reach. If attacked, the half-orc rages, attempting to demoralize his opponents using Dazzling Display and his *glamered greatsword* (which appears to be a fancy walking stick until used).



BIST

Morale Mr. Thope has sworn to deliver the money to Sethic. He does not stop until unconscious or dead.

Base Statistics When not raging, Mr. Thope's statistics are **AC** 22, touch 13, flat-footed 19; **hp** 100; **Fort** +9, **Will** +4; **Melee** +1 *glamered greatsword* +16/+11 (2d6+7/19-20); **Ranged** mwk chakram +13 (1d8+4); **Str** 18, **Con** 14; **CMB** +14; **Skills** Climb +8, Intimidate +18, Swim +8.

STATISTICS

Str 22, **Dex** 14, **Con** 18, **Int** 10, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +10; **CMB** +16; **CMD** 27

Feats Dazzling Display, Dodge, Intimidating Prowess, Ironhide^{APG}, Weapon Focus (greatsword)

Skills Acrobatics +12, Climb +10, Intimidate +20 (+25 vs. non-barbarian humanoids), Perception +14, Survival +6, Swim +10

Languages Common, Orc

SQ orc blood, terrifying visage

Combat Gear *potion of lesser restoration*; **Other Gear** +2 *glamered breastplate*, +1 *glamered^{UE} greatsword*, mwk chakram^{UE}

SELLSWORDS (4)

CR 5

XP 1,600 each

Raider (*Pathfinder RPG GameMastery Guide* 280)

hp 67 each

TACTICS

During Combat The sellswords initially target opponents at range with arrows or *javelins of lightning*. Once the boat has docked and enemies are within melee range, the sellswords rage and attack with their spears.

Morale If reduced to fewer than 15 hit points, a sellsword attempts to flee.

Treasure: The iron strongbox in the boat (area B7) is locked (hardness 10, hp 45, break DC 28, Disable Device DC 30), but Bist carries the key. The chest contains the full amount of Sethic's loan: a total of 50,000 gp.

Development: If the PCs defeat the guards, they should have no trouble securing the strongbox containing Sethic's money. Disposing of the bodies is as easy as dumping them in the river. If the PCs successfully pull off the heist without leaving any witnesses, they earn 2 Notice Points. If any of Sethic's guards or retainers survive the attack, the PCs gain only 1 Notice Point.

No matter how careful the PCs are, however, Paraduke Sethic ultimately finds out (or at least strongly suspects) that they were involved in the theft, especially if any of his guards survive. The paraduke begins to plot his revenge, which has consequences later at the Hellfire Ball in **Event 6**.

If the PCs betray their patron and steal the entire sum for themselves, they earn no Notice Points and earn the ire of Archcountess Vasvion, who severs her relationship with the PCs and rewards their disloyalty by informing Sethic that they were responsible.

Story Award: If the PCs complete the archcountess's mission by successfully stealing Paraduke Sethic's money, award them 19,200 XP.

EVENT 4: PIG SLAUGHTER

A few days after the heist, Archcountess Vasvion gathers the PCs together again to suggest a new mission to financially destroy her rival, Paraduke Sethic, once and for all.

"Thanks to you, we've dealt a debilitating blow to that toad Sethic, but now is the time to strike for the jugular. The only reason that Sethic has been able to crawl up as far as he has is because of those damned pigs he breeds. The man's



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a paraduke, for Hell's sake—one would think he could find a hobby more suited to his position than pig farming, even if the swine come from the Pit itself. It's amazing what jaded aristocrats will pay for such an exotic meal, not to mention a way to permanently dispose of enemies. In any case, if someone were to butcher Sethic's pigs, it would kill any chance of him getting in my way ever again. Are you up for a pig hunt?" The archcountess smiles deviously.

Vasvion knows little more about Sethic's pig breeding operation than its location, and the fact that the razorbacks themselves are dangerous. She assumes the valuable creatures are guarded, but does not know by whom or what. Assuming the PCs accept the job, Vasvion gives them directions to a location outside the city walls, and leaves the rest to them.

C. RAZORBACK PENS

Thalgano Sethic raises his Avernus razorbacks—infernal swine bred in Hell itself—in a small cave complex south of the Vice. Use the map on page 23 for this area.

C1. FRONT GATE

The entrance to the razorback pens is through a gate in an iron fence divided by a large boulder. A sign on the gate reads, "Dangerous Beasts. Keep Out." The fence is 20 feet high and nearly 3 inches thick. The fence's longer side, northeast of the boulder, is scraped and bent in places, but still holds strong (hardness 10, hp 90, break DC 30). The shorter side of the fence, southwest of the boulder, stands in a swath of thick mud. The mud provides a weak foundation for the barricade, and this side of the fence has been replaced twice; two weakened, compromised palisades lean drunkenly behind the newest, outer fence. The mud functions as a shallow bog (*Core Rulebook* 427). The northeast side of the fence and the boulder are fairly easy to scale (Climb DC 15), but the slick mud and succession of fences on the southwest side make for a more difficult ascent (Climb DC 20).

An iron gate (hardness 10, hp 60, break DC 28) stands in the northeast portion of the fence, and is locked with an adamantine padlock (hardness 20, hp 40, Disable Device DC 30). In addition, a *stone of alarm* has been affixed to the gate, alerting the pens' guardian in area C4 if the gate is opened without first speaking a command word.

Treasure: Besides the *stone of alarm* on the gate, the adamantine padlock is worth 400 gp.

C2. UPPER PEN (CR 9)

This wide cavern lies just beyond the front gate. Two sloping passages exit the cave leading southeast toward the lower pen (area C3). Of the two tunnels, the southernmost one descends at a steeper angle, but both lead to fences of iron bars inset with blackened iron doors. The doors are not locked, but the iron frame

around each door is inscribed with tiny magical symbols. A character who succeeds at a DC 28 Knowledge (arcana) check recognizes the symbols as a visual manifestation of a *binding* spell encompassing the pens (see area C4). The spell effect is not tied to the doors or the fences (which serve to separate the razorbacks in the pens), and persists whether the doors are opened or closed.

Creature: A single male Avernus razorback dwells in this pen. The razorback has not had fresh meat in months, and has temporarily lost the use of its infernal ferocity ability. It attacks intruders with abandon, hoping for a corpse to feed on, and does not back down until it has devoured a fresh corpse or has been killed.

AVERNUS RAZORBACK

CR 9

XP 6,400

hp 137 (see page 84)

C3. LOWER PEN (CR 11)

This cavern is warm and humid. A large lake of mud, fed by an underground hot spring, bubbles in the southeast corner of the cave. The mud lake is deep enough to function as a deep bog (*Core Rulebook* 427).

Creatures: Two Avernus razorbacks sleep in the mud here, but are awakened by the sound of the alarm in area C1 or the loud grating noise of the doors from area C2, and attack any intruders.

AVERNUS RAZORBACKS (2)

CR 9

XP 6,400 each

hp 137 each (see page 84)

Development: If the PCs tripped the alarm on the gate in area C1, the flayer devil Faugruath in area C4 moves to the ledge overlooking the lower pen, waiting to see if Sethic or his henchman Mr. Thope accidentally set off the alarm. If he sees intruders instead, Faugruath casts *wall of fire* to cut off their retreat and teleports down into the lower pen to attack.

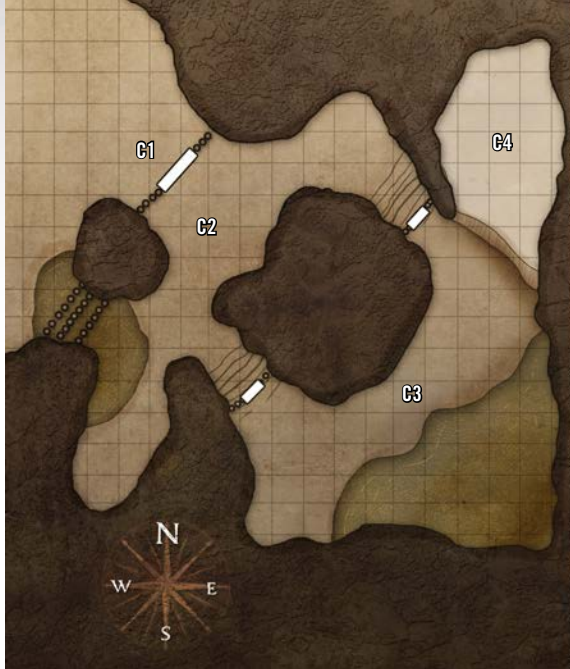
C4. DEVIL'S DEN (CR 11)

This humid side cavern lies 15 feet above the lower pen. The bloody, flayed skins of a variety of beasts hang on the walls, and the floor is a jumbled mess of discarded bones.

Creature: The primary guardian of Paraduke Sethic's razorback pens is a flayer devil named Faugruath, a muscled fiend with leathery red skin, curling horns, and claws honed to scalpel-like sharpness. Kept here by a *binding* spell, his prison defined by the confines of the caves, Faugruath must defend the caves from any intruders. Provided he doesn't harm any of the razorbacks raised here, Faugruath will be released after 25 years, but the pigs are an unending source of temptation to the devil. Although he does not need to eat, Faugruath is a consummate hunter, and revels in devouring chunks of

C. RAZORBACK PENS

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



DEMIBARON'S BALLROOM

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET
SHADED SQUARES CONTAIN CROWDS



bloody meat ripped off the bone with his claws. Only the occasional gift of a squealing newborn piglet from Sethic has prevented the devil from slaughtering all the beasts under his charge.

FAUGRUATH

CR 11

XP 12,800

Flayer devil (*Tome of Horrors Complete* 196)

LE Large outsider (devil, evil, extraplanar, lawful)

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., *detect good*, see in darkness; **Perception** +25

DEFENSE

AC 25, **touch** 11, **flat-footed** 23 (+2 Dex, +14 natural, -1 size)

hp 147 (14d10+70)

Fort +14, **Ref** +11, **Will** +10

DR 10/good; **Immune** fire, poison; **Resist** acid 10, cold 10;

SR 22

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee bite +20 (2d6+7), 2 claws +21 (1d8+7/19-20)

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

Special Attacks flensing, unholy burst

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 12th; concentration +14)

Constant—*detect good*

At will—*greater teleport* (self plus 50 lbs. of objects only), *scorching ray*

1/day—*howling agony*^{UM} (DC 15), *wall of fire*

STATISTICS

Str 25, **Dex** 15, **Con** 21, **Int** 12, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +14; **CMB** +22; **CMD** 34

Feats Alertness, Cleave, Critical Focus, Improved Critical (claw), Iron Will, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (claw)
Skills Climb +24, Intimidate +19, Knowledge (planes) +18, Perception +25, Sense Motive +25, Stealth +15, Survival +21
Languages Common, Ignan, Infernal; telepathy 100 ft.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Flensing (Ex) A flayer devil that scores a critical hit with a claw attack rips the flesh from its opponent's body, dealing 1d3 points of Constitution damage.

Unholy Burst (Su) Three times per day, a flayer devil can release a burst of hellish black vapor in a 30-foot radius. Creatures within this area must succeed at a DC 22 Fortitude save or be sickened for 1d6 rounds. In addition, good creatures take 3d6 points of damage from the vapors if they fail their saves (evil and neutral creatures take no additional damage). The save DC is Constitution-based.

Development: If the PCs successfully complete Vasvion's mission, she agrees to speak on their behalf to the queen the next time she meets the Infernal Majestrix. She also informs the PCs that she has procured invitations for them to attend one of the best parties in the city, a romp thrown by the eccentric Demibaron Graithus Kavalderic (see **Event 5**). It's been rumored that the queen might attend the affair, and while that's improbable, the party could be an opportunity for the PCs to make an impression personally.

If the PCs slaughter all of the razorbacks in the pens, the archcountess's efforts on their behalf earn them 2 Notice Points.

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Story Award: For successfully completing Vasvion's mission and killing Sethic's razorbacks, award the PCs 19,200 XP.

EVENT 5: DEMIBARON KAVALDERIC'S PARTY

This event can occur at any time. Not long after the PCs arrive in Egorian, word spreads that Demibaron Graithus Kavalderic, an outlandish and unorthodox half-elven courtier, is throwing a party for the Thrune agents who have heeded the queen's summons. While more the more tradition-minded Egorian nobles scoff at Kavalderic's dual heritage and free-spirited ways, few miss his extravagant parties, even if it is only to hear gossip about rivals and complain about their excesses among more civilized company.

If the PCs have aligned themselves with either Paraduke Sethic or Archcountess Vasvion, their patron presses them to attend, explaining that the demibaron is a favorite of Queen Abrogail, and that there is a chance she may even attend the celebration. Sethic abstains from such social forays, but Vasvion has used her influence to gain an invitation for herself as well.

While Demibaron Kavalderic has acquired a list of Thrune agents in town from the church of Asmodeus, any sworn agents of Thrune (Loyal, Trusted, or Bound) can gain entry by revealing the invisible *arcane mark* that identifies them as such. If the PCs have not yet chosen a patron, they can still attend the party—if for no other reason than to meet other Thrune Agents, members of the court, and potentially, the queen herself.

The venue of the party is Vaneo Kavalderic, the demibaron's Thorntown manor house. If the PCs attend the event, read or paraphrase the following.

Even from blocks away, the glow of dancing lights and the sound of drums make it impossible to miss the way to Vaneo Kavalderic. Sitting on a small rise, the peculiar palace of the eccentric demibaron sticks out like a bouquet of flowers amid the thorns of the black-and-red buildings around it. With its mismatched minarets, each a different color and with its own style of tiled or gilded roof, the mansion is an ode to exotic architecture from half a dozen far-flung locales.

At the doors, a cadre of halfling slaves manages a long line of guests with skill and precision. The efficient servants only rarely need ask to see the marks of Thrune, always offering sincere apologies for the oversight when they do. Inside, the scents of opium, pesh, perfume, and sweaty bodies assault the senses. The place seems packed from wall to wall with guests bedecked in clothing from the fashionable to the outlandish and performers plying their trades to applause and laughter.

Kavalderic's party is a riot of decadence and debauchery. Guests can partake of a wide variety of food, refreshments, and stimulants, from the exotic to the

familiar. Extravagantly dressed nobles compare hairstyles and fashions or whisper and titter about the latest juicy gossip while drinking wine and brandy. Crazed intellectuals smoke hookahs and expound upon esoteric theories and near-blasphemies, while amorous couples and groups retreat to private, pillowed nooks, tastefully concealed by silk curtains, for their own more intimate celebrations of this free-spirited evening. Bards playing foreign songs, supple acrobats and graceful dancers, and jugglers entertain guests in one wing of the house, while fire-eaters, snake charmers, and sword swallows gather crowds in other areas.

During most of the party, the PCs can mingle, perhaps pick up a rumor or two, and meet the party's host, Demibaron Kavalderic. Eventually, however, an unfortunate guest who has been unwittingly cursed by a powerful and deadly item brings the party to a bloody halt unless the PCs can stop the threat.

MINGLING

Winding their way around the party gives the PCs a chance to interact with other guests, including Egorian nobles and courtiers, Thrune agents, and even some foreign visitors with ties to the court through Demibaron Kavalderic. Most guests are enjoying the festivities with drunken exuberance or glazed antipathy brought about by drink or drugs, but there are a few pockets of discontent scattered throughout the festivities. Small groups of men and woman scowl at the celebrations, their stances rigid, their eyes judging. Often one or more members of these clusters wear the regalia of an Asmodean priest, but not always. If the PCs take an interest in any of these disgruntled groups, with a successful DC 15 Sense Motive check, they confirm that most of these dour folk are just making an opportunistic show of their vexation. As the party continues, most relax and can be seen laughing and having a good time.

PARTY TALK

Through casual conversation, the PCs have the opportunity to pick up the following rumors with successful Diplomacy checks to gather information.

Result	Rumor
15+	"I don't think the queen will make an appearance tonight. She is far too busy dealing with those tin-soldier lomedaeans. If she shows up to any festivity this month, it will be Duke Melesiva's Hellfire Ball. That party promises to be a much more formal and less chaotic affair, though I'm sure it will not be nearly this much fun."
20+	"You really have to admire the pluck of Paraduke Sethic. He is really making a go at a comeback since his incarceration, but if you ask me, he should try to marry that wench Levisvia—I mean

Archcountess Vasvion. It could only improve his lot at this point, at least until he 'disappears,' like all her other husbands."

25+ "I hear the time is near for the queen to renew Thrune's pact with Hell, which means a sacrifice in the Barrowood, if I remember correctly. If you ask me, she should capture the leader of this so-called Glorious Reclamation, Alexeara Cansellarion, and disembowel the troublemaker. That would make a fitting sacrifice for Asmodeus."

30+ "Oh, did you hear? Word is that Archbaron Darellus Fex was murdered by his own retainers. Imagine the nerve! One of the archbaron's relations, a Hellknight they say, is angling for revenge against the scoundrels. Good riddance, I say. Hellknights are not to be trifled with, and these traitors couldn't save their sorry hides if they had the favor of Queen Abrogail herself."



DEMIBARON GRAITHUS KAVALDERIC

currently entertaining an artist from Jalmeray, who is unveiling a "living painting"—a piece of artistry crafted with inks infused with illusory magic and alchemical reagents, painting a scene that moves across the canvas.

The demibaron lets out a high-pitched shriek of delight as the painting is revealed as he gazes upon fluttering angels and swooping devils in a blue sky swirling with red clouds. In places the angels and devils are engaged in vicious combat, while in others they kiss and embrace blasphemously. Anyone viewing the painting who succeeds at a DC 15 Knowledge (nobility) check notices that many of the outsiders in the image bear the faces of members of Abrogail's court (including depictions of an angelic Paraduke Sethic and Archcountess Vasvion as a devil), though the queen herself does not make an appearance in the piece.

"My dear, it is wonderful!"

Kavalderic squeals exuberantly. "It was worth every piece of platinum. I cannot wait to show it to our queen—in private, of course. And when you are well out of the city, I should add. It's delightfully sacrilegious!"

If the PCs display at least a modicum of amusement at the sight of the painting, Demibaron Kavalderic invites them to chat more about art and philosophy while offering them a drink of his finest absinthe. Contributing to the conversation and keeping it going requires three successful Bluff, Diplomacy, Knowledge (arcana), or Knowledge (religion) checks, at DC 15, DC 20, and DC 25. Art-related Craft or Perform checks can be attempted instead, but the DCs increase by 5. If the PCs fail any of these checks by 5 or more, Kavalderic excuses himself, saying that he has other guests to attend to, and bids the PCs to enjoy the festivities. If they succeed at all three checks, the drunk demibaron proudly exclaims, "You must be the Thrune Agents I've heard so much about! You don't seem nearly as bad as I had heard."

If the PCs inquire as to what he has heard, Kavalderic says, "Oh, don't you know? A cousin of your former patron, one Maralictor Vokadus Fex, is very keen on meeting you. The man is very vexed with you for the alleged murder of the archbaron. I would keep away from him if I were you. He is a vicious knave with powerful friends."

If the PCs ask whether Maralictor Fex is at the party, the demibaron just laughs. "I don't make a habit of inviting Hellknights to my parties. Those black-armored thugs and I typically don't see eye to eye on things. In fact, I rather think most of them would like to see my eyes

MEETING THE DEMIBARON

With a good amount of effort, the PCs can eventually track down the party's host. Of all of Queen Abrogail's courtiers, none are as colorful and eccentric as Demibaron Graithus Kavalderic. A patron of avant-garde artists, radical freethinkers, and progressive entertainers, the demibaron stands out like a whirlwind of chaos amid the rigid conformity of the Thrune court. Many ponder why Queen Abrogail tolerates the outlandish and ostentatious Kavalderic, and even more were utterly baffled when she granted him public favor and a title. Some even speculate the two are lovers, but while Kavalderic's romantic tastes are flexible when it comes to gender, the queen is too inflexible for his tastes, and the demibaron is too old and flamboyant for her liking. Instead, the queen finds Kavalderic merely entertaining, like an irreverent court jester—but she values his talent for putting foreign dignitaries at ease and then plying them with enough drink and drugs to loosen inhibitions and tongues.

Demibaron Graithus Kavalderic (LN male half-elf aristocrat 6) is a short, pot-bellied man dressed in garish clothing, heavy makeup, and a powdered wig elaborately decorated with miniature ebony skeletons cavorting amid obviously illusory flames that seem to flicker dangerously around the towering peruke. Kavalderic is

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ripped from their sockets.” Unfortunately, Kavalderic doesn’t know where Fex is staying, or the depths of his plans for revenge. “Don’t worry, I’m sure he will find you,” is the last he says on the subject.

Other than the news of Maralictor Fex’s vendetta against the PCs, Kavalderic can give the PCs information about both Paraduke Sethic and Archcountess Vasvion (he knows nearly all of the information in the NPC Gallery on pages 56–59, though he does not know about Sethic serving the diabolist in his youth, and like most, he believes that Vasvion had a hand in all of her husbands’ and lovers’ deaths). Lastly, the demibaron can confirm that Queen Abrogail will not be attending his party tonight. “Her Infernal Majestrix is far too busy to appear at such a minor gathering, even one as exciting as mine,” he says with a hint of regret.

Story Award: If the PCs learn that Vokadus Fex is looking to avenge Archbaron Fex’s death, award them 9,600 XP.

PARTY CRASHER (CR 12)

Unknown to any of the celebrants, a living bomb roams the demibaron’s party. An otherwise unimportant Throne agent is in possession of a deadly cursed item, and as the party reaches its hedonistic crescendo, the unwitting agent finally succumbs to the deadly horror of the curse. Use the Demibaron’s Ballroom map on page 23 for this encounter.

After the PCs have mingled for a bit and met the demibaron, read or paraphrase the following.

“Get away from me, you villains!” a harsh voice yells, as a man in dark robes violently pushes nearby partygoers away from him. A small black rock buzzes around the man’s head, and he stares at the stunned guests around him with crazed eyes. Suddenly, the buzzing stone plummets into the man’s chest. Eyes wide, the man lets out an anguished scream that is choked off by a torrent of blood spurting from his gurgling mouth. The man drops to his knees, clutching his chest for a brief instant, and falls to the floor, stone dead. A pall of silence descends over the party.

The dead man is one Berin the Blackhanded, a sorcerer and Throne agent who recently acquired what he thought was an *ioun stone* on a mission for the crown, but the unfortunate man had no idea the blackened rock buzzing around his head would be his doom. In fact, the stone is a cursed magic item called an *egg of Abaddon*, which first afflicts its owner with paranoia, and then burrows into his heart to release a terrifying extraplanar monstrosity.

Creature: Berin’s gruesome death is only the beginning—1d4 rounds later, the *egg of Abaddon* “hatches,” releasing a derghodaemon that violently bursts out of Berin’s chest in an explosion of gore. Once released,

the derghodaemon uses *creeping doom* and quickened *summon swarm* to cause as much havoc as possible, and begins slaughtering guests with abandon. The daemon fights to the death.

Following the derghodaemon’s appearance, the celebrants in Kavalderic’s ballroom flee, acting as a crowd (*Core Rulebook* 436). Every combatant other than the derghodaemon and its summoned swarms must spend 2 squares of movement to enter a square containing a crowd, as indicated on the map. The crowd does not affect creatures flying higher than 5 feet above the ground. After 4 rounds, the crowd disperses, as the partygoers either lie dead on the floor or have escaped the carnage.

DERGHODAEMON

CR 12

XP 19,200

hp 161 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 66)

Treasure: Once the derghodaemon is defeated, Demibaron Kavalderic extracts himself from his hiding spot and meekly asks for an explanation for the carnage. If the PCs answer truthfully, their explanation is corroborated by the surviving guests, and if the PCs killed the daemon, the grateful demibaron rewards them with 20,000 gp, promising to mention the PCs to the queen herself.

Development: Defeating the derghodaemon earns the PCs 2 Notice Points. In addition, if the PCs are working for either Paraduke Sethic or Archcountess Vasvion, their patron informs them the following day that their actions at the demibaron’s party have made them minor celebrities at court, and they have received invitations to the most prestigious party of the season, Duke Melesiva’s Hellfire Ball (see **Event 6**).

EVENT 6: HELLFIRE BALL

This event occurs last, after the PCs have completed the other events in Part 1 for their patron. All of Egorian is abuzz with talk of Duke Raaven Melesiva’s upcoming Hellfire Ball, which is widely assumed to be the social event of the year. In addition, the fact that Queen Abrogail was unable to attend any of the season’s other parties has courtiers convinced that she will appear at the Hellfire Ball, and competition for invitations to the party is heated, to say the least.

If the PCs are allied with Paraduke Sethic or Archcountess Vasvion, they have already received invitations to the ball, but if the PCs did not choose a side, there is no way for them to get invitations without patronage in the court. If the PCs have not yet made enemies of either Sethic or Vasvion, they can choose one of the courtiers to side with at this point. Allow them to play through that patron’s events before returning to this one. Alternatively, if the PCs go after the Bellflower



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Network on their own, their success in that endeavor can also garner them invitations to the ball (see Part 2).

Assuming the PCs have a patron, either Sethic or Vasvion (depending on which courtier the PCs are on friendly terms with) warns the PCs that they must be dressed in formal attire for such an event—couriers' outfits, at the very least. Armor is typically frowned upon, as is carrying more than two weapons.

The Hellfire Ball is held in the grand ballroom of Duke Melesiva's Egorian estate, Vaneo Melesiva, located on Hellhound Hill, close to Thrune Manor itself. Liveried servants confirm the invitations and identities of everyone seeking entry to the ball, turning away those without invitations, wearing armor, bristling with weapons, or dressed in anything less expensive than a courtier's outfit. However, the servants have no means to detect magically concealed armor or weapons, such as those with the *glamerred* special ability or obscured with *disguise self* or similar magic. Heralds introduce all guests, including the PCs, as they enter the ballroom. While the PCs garner little attention and only faint applause, more important or popular guests are greeted with greater enthusiasm by the assembled partygoers.

Duke Melesiva's grand ballroom is lavish. The floor is crimson-and-black Arcadian marble, and the walls

and fixtures mix the dark marble with a lighter stone flickering with illusory flames, giving the expansive chamber the look of an elegant Hellscape.

Where Demibaron Kavalderic's party was organized chaos, the Hellfire Ball is as orderly as a contract devil's wardrobe. Each guest is given a formal schedule of the balls' dances and events, and unobtrusive servants and slaves are on hand to provide for the guests' every need. The guests are immaculately dressed, often in the red and black of the empire, but some wear more flamboyant and colorful outfits, and a few even seem to be decked out in opera costumes.

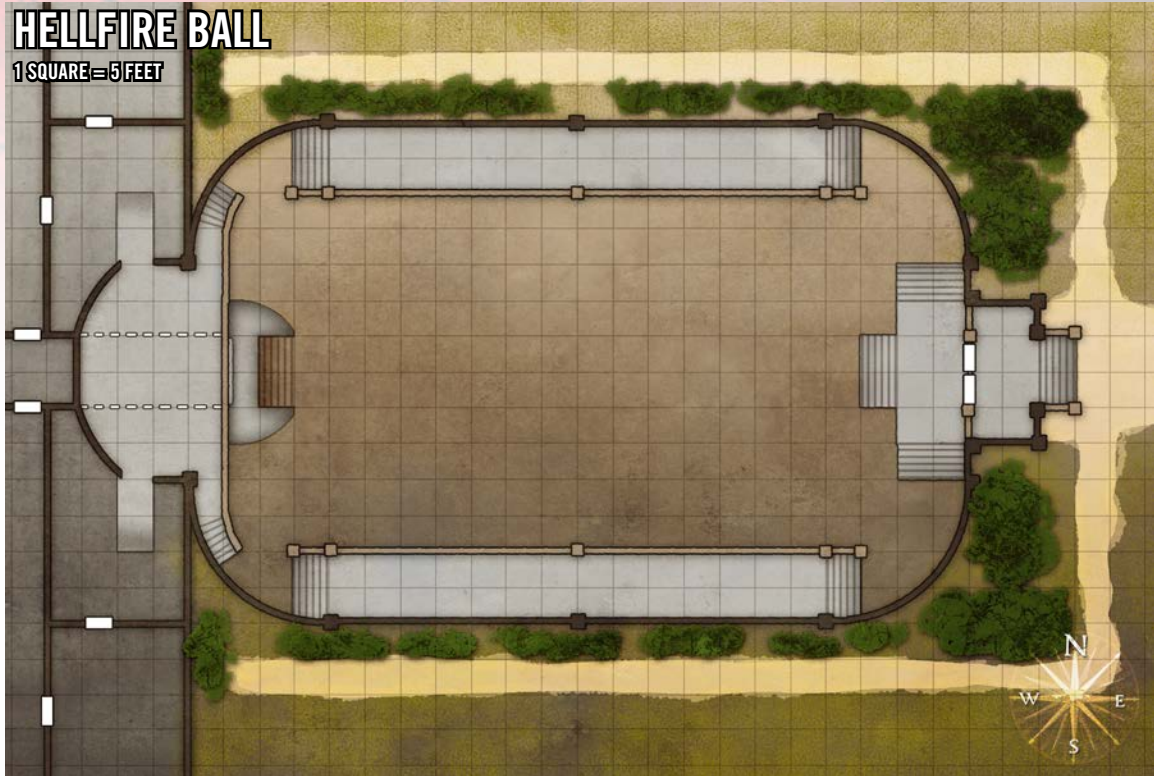
There is very little mingling, as partygoers clump together in pockets of friends, business associates, and social coteries around the room. These cliques work hard to ignore others in the room, though individuals occasionally take the time to look down their noses at some stranger or perceived enemy. The buzz of conversation drifts from the disparagement of rivals, to bawdy gossip, to small talk, but the chief among the topics is speculation on whether or not the queen will appear tonight.

Several of the PCs' acquaintances are attending the ball as well. As the PCs dance and mingle, they have the opportunity to interact with the following courtiers.



HELLFIRE BALL

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



Archcountess Levisia Vasvion: If the PCs are working with Vasvion, she is here with her fiancé, Nicolò Alazario, on her arm. She cheerfully greets the PCs and points out the glum Paraduke Sethic across the room, commenting with a sly wink on how far the paraduke has recently fallen, and how quickly.

If the PCs sided with Sethic instead, then the archcountess is at the ball alone, dressed in mourning (assuming the PCs murdered Nicolò). She glares at the PCs from beneath her veil, and if approached, she spits out the following with a bitter sneer: “Little flies buzzing about the court. Look how fat you’ve grown on the paraduke’s honey. But fat little flies are more easily caught in the spider’s web, and then crushed like the insects they are.” Vasvion storms away, and refuses to have anything else to do with the PCs.

Baroness Bramila Gellintha: As usual, Baroness Gellintha can be found in the middle of a cluster of busybodies and gossips. If the PCs successfully convinced the baroness of their rumor at her soiree, she eagerly waves them over. “Are you ready for tonight’s main event?” she asks with a wide smile. “Oh, you didn’t hear? I though everybody knew! I guess it will be a surprise then. If nothing else, we’ll have quite a spectacle to talk about tomorrow!” The baroness then excuses herself, and refuses to say anything more.

Demibaron Graithus Kavalderic: The normally vivacious demibaron looks particularly somber tonight. If the PCs befriended Kavalderic at his party and they approach him, the demibaron discreetly whispers,

“Either leave this place before midnight or prepare for battle. Your enemy is on his way. I can say no more.” Kavalderic then walks briskly past the PCs and avoids them for the remainder of the ball.

Duke Raaven Melesiva: If the PCs try to meet the host of the ball, they find it difficult to gain his attention. He is constantly surrounded by nobles and courtiers attempting to curry favor or seeking his support, both political and financial. The PCs can secure a brief audience with the duke with a successful DC 30 Bluff or Diplomacy check, though Melesiva has time only to politely greet the PCs and welcome them to the ball before he is drawn away on other business by a dignified butler. The PCs will encounter the duke again in Part 3.

Paraduke Thalvano Sethic: For once, the asocial paraduke makes an appearance at a public function. If the PCs allied themselves with Sethic, he makes sure to draw the PCs’ attention to the grieving Archcountess Vasvion, and toasts to a continuing partnership with the PCs that will bring good fortune to both parties.

If the PCs chose Archcountess Vasvion as their patron instead, then Sethic sits alone on the fringes of the festivities, his spirit seemingly as broken as his body. He rebuffs any attempts at communication, glowering at the PCs with unconcealed hate.

THE MARALICTOR’S REVENGE (CR 13)

The ball merrily continues for hours until shortly after midnight, when the music and dancing abruptly stop as if on cue. A few revelers leave the dance floor, heading

toward the balconies overlooking the ballroom and silently ushering others to follow. Like a well-choreographed play, the rest of the partygoers move away from the ballroom's center and the PCs. Not all of the guests know what is about to happen, but enough do, and the rest soon follow suit, knowing they're in for a show. There is nothing quite like a vengeful Hellknight out for blood.

Creatures: Once the floor is nearly empty, a barbed devil leaps through the ballroom's eastern doors with the grace of a panther, scanning the crowd before its fiery eyes fall upon the PCs. A moment later, a man in black Hellknight armor strides into the room from a tunnel beneath the stage to the west, and levels his mace at the PCs.

"You!" he sneers. "Villains! Blackguards! Adventurers! You have murdered my kin. Prepare for Hell's judgment."

This is Vokadus Fex, maralictor of the Hellknight Order of the Scourge, and cousin of Archbaron Darellus Fex. He is not wearing a helm, and the PCs can immediately recognize a family resemblance to their former patron. Maralictor Fex is a vain and stubborn man, and is used to slaughtering those who cross him or his family. When he heard of his cousin's death, his thoughts immediately turned to revenge, though he had no target for his ire.

Things changed, however, when the PCs found a new patron in Egorian and made a powerful enemy in the process. Whichever courtier the PCs spurned (either Paraduke Sethic or Archcountess Vasvion) has learned that the PCs were working with that courtier's rival, and holds the PCs personally responsible for the greatest of his or her recent misfortunes—in Sethic's case, this is the brazen theft of his money; for Vasvion, it's the murder of her fiancé Nicolo Alazario. When word reached them that Maralictor Fex was also seeking vengeance, the powerful noble engineered invitations for the PCs to the Hellfire Ball, and made sure that Fex knew they would be there.

Maralictor Fex has come here with the full trust and support of Paralictor Ivo Elliendo, commander of the Order of the Scourge's Egorian contingent, who granted him the aid of the barbed devil. Fex and the devil dive into their assault with vigor. They offer no quarter and respond to any attempts at reason or parley with curses, scorn, and more fervent attacks.

Init +1; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +10

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 11, flat-footed 24 (+10 armor, +1 Dex, +4 shield)

hp 100 (12d10+30)

Fort +13, **Ref** +8, **Will** +9 (+11 vs. charm effects, +13 vs. compulsion effects)

Defensive Abilities force of will

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

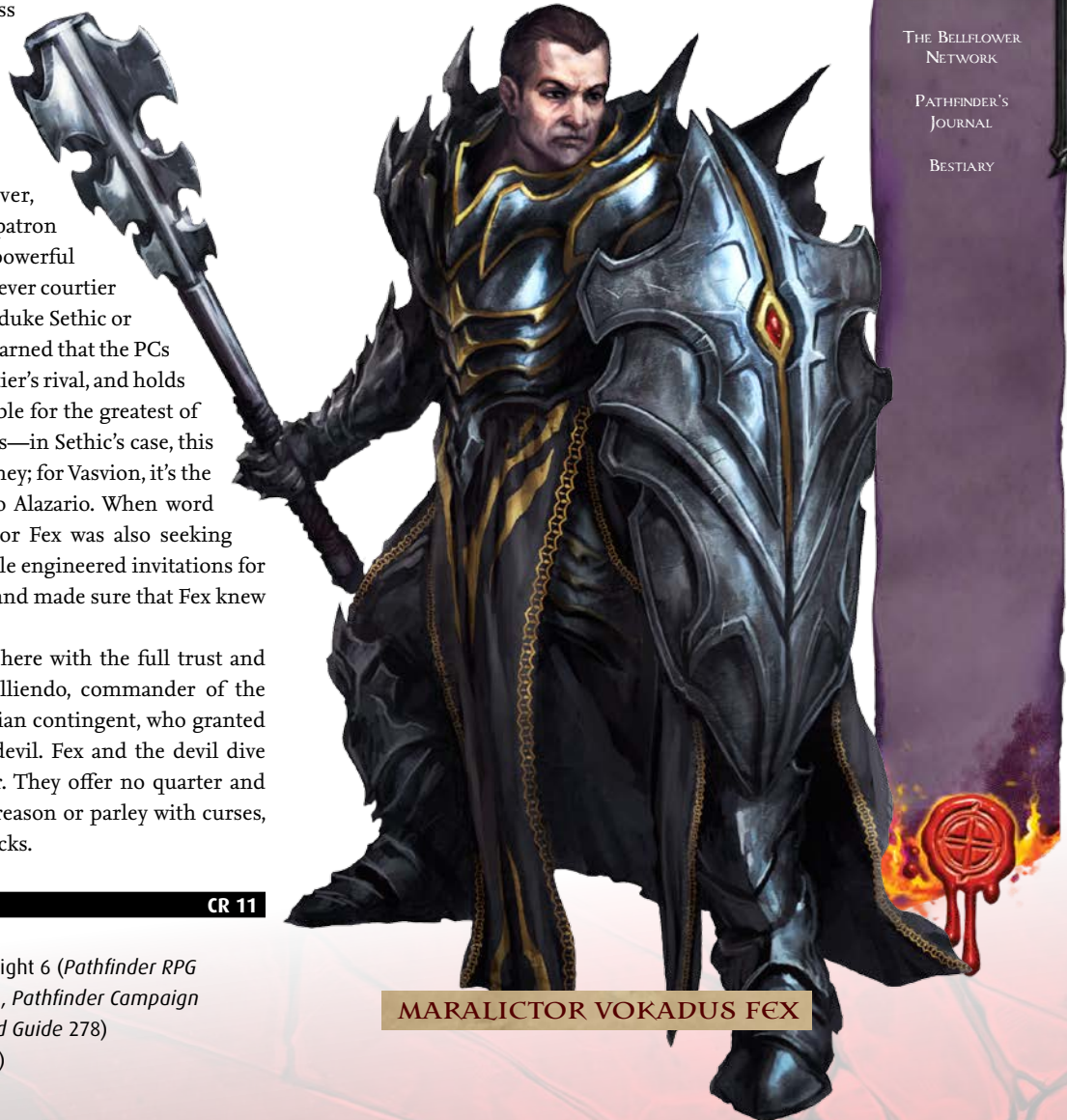
Melee +1 *human-bane heavy mace* +19/+14/+9 (1d8+6 plus 2d6 vs. humans)

Special Attacks banner +2, braggart, cavalier's charge, challenge 2/day (+6 damage, +8 damage if Fex is the only one threatening), smite chaos 2/day (+1 attack and AC, +6 damage), tactician 2/day (Outflank, 6 rounds)

Hellknight Spell-Like Abilities (CL 12th; concentration +13)

At will—*detect chaos*

4/day—*discern lies*



MARALICTOR VOKADUS FEX

VOKADUS FEX

CR 11

XP 12,800

Male human cavalier 6/Hellknight 6 (*Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide 32, Pathfinder Campaign Setting: The Inner Sea World Guide 278*)

LE Medium humanoid (human)

**FOR
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TACTICS

During Combat Fex's plan is to work in concert with the barbed devil to take out the PCs one at a time, starting with the most powerful armed and armored combatant among them. The Hellknight begins by using his tactician ability to grant his Outflank feat to the devil. Fex then challenges and charges his first target, using smite chaos if possible, and making use of his combat feats.

Morale Fex fights to the death to avenge his relative and preserve the honor of his family name.

STATISTICS

Str 20, **Dex** 12, **Con** 14, **Int** 8, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 13

Base Atk +12; **CMB** +17; **CMD** 28

Feats Dazzling Display, Deadly Finish^{UC}, Gory Finish^{UC}, Improved Iron Will, Intimidating Prowess, Iron Will, Outflank^{APG}, Power Attack, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (heavy mace)

Skills Handle Animal +7, Intimidate +21, Knowledge (local) +4, Knowledge (planes) +1, Perception +10, Ride +10

Languages Common

SQ braggart, disciplines (fearsomeness, vigilance), expert trainer +3, Hellknight armor 2, Hellknight order (Order of the Scourge), mount, order of the cockatrice

Gear +1 Hellknight plate^{SWG}, +2 heavy steel shield, +1 human-bane heavy mace, cloak of resistance +3

BARBED DEVIL**CR 11****XP 12,800****hp** 138 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 72)**TACTICS**

During Combat The devil knows Fex wants to face his enemies one by one, so it moves to flank Fex's chosen target, using the Outflank feat granted by Fex's tactician ability. If necessary, the devil casts *hold person*, *order's wrath*, or *unholy blight* to keep other opponents from interfering with the Hellknight's focused assaults.

Morale The barbed devil fights to the death.

Development: Defeating Maralictor Fex in such a public setting earns the PCs 3 Notice Points.

Once combat is over, the ball resumes, but it soon comes to an end as more and more guests take their leave after the excitement of the battle, especially once they realize Queen Abrogail will not be making an appearance at the party.

If the PCs are allied with Sethic or Vasvion, their patron approaches them before the party ends to share their disappointment that the queen failed to attend the ball, and asks to speak with the PCs the next day, once they've had time to recover from the ball and the battle. At this meeting, Sethic or Vasvion tells the PCs they're the talk of the court following their public battle with Fex. Queen Abrogail is almost certainly aware of the PCs' identities at this point, but in order to truly earn her

favor and gain an audience with the Infernal Majestrix, they'll need to do something decidedly special to gain her personal notice.

Assuming the PCs have not yet gone after the Bellflower Network, their patron mentions that now is the time to do so, citing rumors that the underground halfling anti-slavery organization, long believed to have been purged from Egorian, is active in the city once again. If the PCs can root out this secret society that has infested the very capital of the empire, their patron believes they can secure the PCs a private audience with the queen. See Part 2 for details on this quest.

If the PCs do not have a patron, but received an invitation to the Hellfire Ball because they already put an end to the Bellflower Network in Part 2, then they have likely earned enough Notice Points to attract Queen Abrogail's attention (just not as many as they would have gained had they allied with Sethic or Vasvion). In this case, Queen Abrogail summons the PCs to an audience at the Imperial Palace in the days following the Hellfire Ball. Go to Part 3 and Audience with the Queen on page 41.

PART 2: DIGGING UP BELLFLOWERS

At some point, either on their own initiative or at the coaxing of their noble patron, the PCs should start looking for evidence of the Bellflower Network in Egorian with an eye toward eliminating the group from the city. The Bellflower Network is a secret organization of former slaves, primarily halflings, who rescue other slaves and take them to freedom. Full details on the Bellflower Network, as well as a list of coded terms the group uses, can be found in the article "The Bellflower Network," which begins on page 70.

In *Pathfinder Adventure Path #105: The Inferno Gate*, the PCs learned important intelligence from Archbaron Fex's butler Bliss about the Bellflower Network's operations in Egorian—namely, the description of a key Bellflower agent in the capital: a human woman missing her left hand, known only by the code name "the Barrister." Bliss also told the PCs how to contact the Barrister, by leaving a message for her at a tavern called Clerk's Cloister.

If the PCs did not learn about the Bellflower Network and the Barrister from Bliss in "The Inferno Gate," their patron in Egorian (either Vasvion, Sethic, or another courtier they have befriended) should pass along this intelligence to them now. The PCs' patron is uninterested in personally doing anything about the Bellflower Network—the PCs are far better suited to such a task, and it would certainly be to their social and political advantage if they took on the job themselves.

If necessary, the PCs' patron reminds them that simply killing a few Bellflower agents will have little effect on the network as a whole. Instead, they must shut down

the organization's entire cell in Egorian by closing down its secret hideouts, disrupting its transport routes, recapturing any freed slaves, and killing or arresting the cell's members.

Part 2 details the Bellflower Network's operations in Egorian and the PCs' efforts to eliminate the organization as they track down the few clues they have. There are a number of ways in which the PCs might go about confronting the Bellflower Network; the following sections are presented in the most straightforward manner the PCs might do so, but they should be modified as needed in response to the PCs' plans and actions.

The adventure assumes the PCs start by following the only lead they have, and go to Clerk's Cloister in search of the Barrister. A description of the Barrister herself then follows, detailing the information she has about the Bellflower cell and its current activities, including their plan to smuggle a new group of escaped slaves out of the city in the near future. Finally, the PCs follow these clues to the network's hideout, a Bellflower barn, where the PCs can defeat the cell's leadership and eradicate the Bellflower Network in Egorian.

CLERK'S CLOISTER

Clerk's Cloister is a favorite tavern of lawyers, clerks, and Abadarian clerics, located in the district of Sorrowside. The bar is not hard to find, and the PCs can visit it at any time. Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs first visit the establishment.

A simple basement tavern crammed under a towering imperial government building, Clerk's Cloister is dark and unexpectedly quiet. There are a few tables on the common floor, but none are in use. Instead, groups of men and women sit in shadowed booths along the tavern's walls, and though their lips move in conversation, no words are audible.

Clerk's Cloister takes up the building's winding cellar, and while the bar is well tended, it's still dusty in places. The wall booths are warded with a permanent magical effect similar to *zone of silence* (CL 10th), which keeps conversations private outside the confines of the booths. The tavern specializes in thick, malty, locally brewed beers, but also serves the light and watery red wines of the region and coffee boiled in large vats. During lunch and dinner hours, a cadre of ruthless and competitive bakers hawks meat pies and other morsels in the tavern's common room.

Creature: The proprietor of Clerk's Cloister is a portly and jovial man named **Belnost** (N male human expert 4/warrior 1; use the barkeep stat block on page 303 of the *GameMastery Guide* if necessary). A group of armed strangers entering the tavern garners instant and fearful respect from Belnost, who tries to avoid conflict with a

BELFLOWERS IN EGORIAN

The Bellflower Network has only recently reestablished operations in Egorian, after the Order of the Scourge embarked on a highly public witch hunt of the group and its members in the city some years ago. While the new Egorian cell has thus far been rather successful in its aims, it has managed to evade detection only by keeping its operation small and its numbers low.

The cell currently has only 12 members, nine of whom are halflings: six Bellflower rogues, a brawler named Lyran, a sorcerer named Yereen, and the cell's "tiller," Rimon Fessel. The only non-halflings in the organization are the Barrister, a codename for Maisil Juluth, a human cleric of Abadar; a half-elven wizard named Helthondous, called "the Addled"; and a guardian naga named Zsatha, who remains a secret to everyone but Rimon. Messages are passed to the Barrister at a tavern called Clerk's Cloister, and the cell's "barn," or secret safe house, is a manor house in Bilgetown owned by Helthondous, where the Bellflowers hide escaped slaves before smuggling them out of the city.

mix of platitudes and whining. He constantly claims to be a law-abiding citizen who only wants to help in any way possible, even when his insincerity is obvious.

Belnost is not a member of the Bellflower Network, but he feels he should be. Not only is he very sympathetic to the organization's cause, but he is also in love with Maisil Juluth, the woman known as the Barrister. As a result, while conversing with the PCs, Belnost attempts to conceal anything he knows that could jeopardize either Maisil or the Bellflower Network with Bluff checks (his Bluff modifier is +8, and the depth of his emotions for Maisil grants him a +2 circumstance bonus on any check made on her behalf).

Belnost will not betray the Barrister or the Bellflower Network unless tricked or placed under duress. The PCs can use Bluff against Belnost (his Sense Motive modifier is +10, with a +10 modifier because he would be revealing an important secret), or trick him into revealing something with a successful DC 35 Diplomacy check (Belnost is considered hostile for these purposes, and the DC has been further increased by 10 because he would be revealing an important secret). Threatening him with a successful DC 27 Intimidate check (this DC has also been increased by 10 because he would be revealing an important secret) also does the trick, for as much as Belnost wants to protect his dear Maisil, he capitulates when faced with violence or the threat of it. If the PCs succeed at any of these checks by 5 or more, Belnost's feelings for Maisil become evident as he blurts something out about his love or begs the PCs to stay away from her.

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Magical coercion is also possible, but spells such as *charm person* are ineffective, as Belnost will not give away such dangerous information even to those he considers friends. Compulsion spells like *dominate person* or spells such as *detect thoughts* are required to force him to reveal his knowledge.

The following paragraphs detail how much Belnost knows. What he actually reveals to the PCs depends on their interactions with him.

The Barrister: Belnost denies knowing anyone called the Barrister. If the PCs describe the Barrister, he insists he has seen no one matching that description. Both are lies. Belnost knows the Barrister is Maisil Juluth's Bellflower codename and even takes messages for the Barrister here at Clerk's Cloister. She comes once a week to pick up the messages, usually on Wealday or Oathday night, and never later than Fireday night. Belnost never knows what night she'll arrive week by week. He does not know where Maisil lives or works, other than a vague idea that it might be somewhere east of Clerk's Cloister in Sorrowgate, a part of the city that's a warren of tenements and small dwellings.

The Barrister's Messages: Belnost doesn't read the Barrister's messages, and he's currently holding only one message for her, which simply says, "A new crop is in the barn, ready to be sowed at the next harvest moon." Belnost doesn't know the meaning of the note, though a PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Linguistics check or DC 30 Sense Motive check can decipher the code words used in the message: a "crop" is a group of freed slaves, a "barn" is the secret safe house where they're hiding, "sowing" is transporting freed slaves, and "harvest moon" is the time they'll be moved out of the city. Although the note doesn't give an exact location for the barn or time for the sowing, it can be inferred that the Bellflower Network is planning to smuggle a new group of escaped slaves out of the city in the near future.

The Bellflower Network: Belnost claims to know nothing about the Bellflower Network, and while this is also a lie, in truth he does not know much. He has knowledge of the basic organization of the group as a whole, but regarding the local cell, Maisil is the only member of whom he's aware—the messages he receives for the Barrister are delivered by street urchins, not members of the cell. The barkeep doesn't know anything about the cell's other members, or the location of their secret hideout.

Development: If Belnost is forced to reveal most or all of the knowledge he holds, he begs the PCs to spare Maisil Juluth's life. He is sure she's only a messenger, if not just a sweet, unwitting pawn in Bellflower business.

Once the PCs have questioned Belnost, they can turn their attention to finding the Barrister herself. The Barrister is described in the section below, along with details on tracking her down and following her to the "barn" where the other members of the cell are hiding.

THE BARRISTER

For the last couple of decades, the Bellflower Network cell in Egorian has used the services of a trusted human confidant whom they call the Barrister. The Barrister is more a title than a specific person, as there have been three different Barristers since the position was established. Because the Barrister is human, he or she can navigate the social and legal avenues of the city with little suspicion, allowing the cell's local halfling members to keep lower profiles.

Creature: Maisil Juluth is the cell's third and latest Barrister. A cleric of Abadar, Maisil has a deep and nuanced knowledge of jurisprudence, both Egorian's local ordinances and the laws of the greater empire. Although Maisil firmly believes in the rule of law, as a person of conscience, she abhors slavery, and believes the laws of Cheliox have been twisted by the corruption of selfishness and bigotry. Maisil makes her living loitering around the slave markets of Whipcrack, offering her services to slave buyers by selling prewritten contracts for low fees (often with hidden loopholes allowing slaves to purchase their freedom after a number of years for an ever-decreasing rate). She uses the knowledge gleaned from this work, as well as information from other sympathetic lawyers in the city, to track the locations of slaves in the city, which she then passes on to the more militant members of the Bellflower cell.

Maisil is a human woman who stands about 5-1/2 feet tall. She wears a blue bellflower—the symbol of the Bellflower Network—in her blond hair, and is missing her left hand, which was taken from her when she was arrested and tortured by the Order of the Scourge as a younger woman. That torture led to the arrest and disappearance of her uncle, who had served as the second Barrister, a fact that Maisil feels a great deal of guilt about. Maisil has lived her entire life in Egorian, and though she loves her home city, she sees both Egorian and Cheliox as tyrannical and repressive.

Finding the Barrister: With or without Belnost's aid, the easiest way for the PCs to find the Barrister is to stake out Clerk's Cloister and wait for her next message pickup, which is on the next Oathday evening. Alternatively, they can try to find her residence, a simple apartment in Sorrowgate, but doing so requires a successful DC 35 Knowledge (local) or Diplomacy check to gather information, as Maisil maintains a rather low-key lifestyle and is not well known by her neighbors.

The PCs might also use magic to locate the Barrister. Since they don't actually know her, they can't find her with *locate creature*, though spells such as *discern location* or *scrying* are powerful enough to track her down.

Following the Barrister: Once the PCs have found the Barrister, the next step is likely to follow her. As mentioned previously, killing a single Bellflower agent will not significantly disrupt the network's activities, and

the Barrister is the PCs' only link to the larger Bellflower operation. Fortunately, Maisil is fairly easy to track and follow as long as the PCs take proper precautions, such as using Stealth or Disguise to blend in with the local population. The Barrister tends to be on the lookout for Hellknights and local troublemakers, and is prone to ignore newcomers, to her peril. The truth is the Bellflowers have been so successful lately that she has become complacent. The Barrister is considered to be distracted, taking a –5 penalty on Perception checks to spot PCs using Stealth or Disguise to follow her, and even then, she doesn't get suspicious until she detects them three different times—too often to be a coincidence.

If the PCs successfully follow the Barrister without arousing her suspicions, she leaves Clerk's Cloister after picking up her latest message and heads to an abandoned warehouse in Trick Alley, where she meets an escaped halfling slave, the final member of the Bellflowers' current "crop." The Barrister emerges from the warehouse with a handcart full of laundry (concealing the halfling inside the cart) and travels through quiet, darkened side streets to the Bellflowers' barn—the vaneo of the half-elven wizard Helthondous the Addled (see area D)—where the other members of the cell are preparing to move the crop of halflings out of Egorian later that night under the cover of darkness.

Interrogating the Barrister: If the PCs are unable to successfully follow the Barrister, they might capture and question her for information instead. However, Maisil is not nearly as craven as Belnost, and simple persuasion or intimidation is not enough to force her to spill her secrets—harsher forms of interrogation are needed instead. To successfully interrogate the Barrister, the PCs must succeed at a DC 30 Intimidate check for each question they ask Maisil during their interrogation to extract a correct answer (Maisil's past experiences with the Order of the Scourge increase the normal Intimidate DC by 5). A failed check increases the DC of further checks on the same topic by 5. If the PCs fail a check by 5 or more, Maisil gives them a false answer and refuses to divulge any more information on the subject, no matter what the PCs threaten or do.

The PCs can also use magic when interrogating the Barrister, but her *mind sentinel medallion* makes her resistant to such tactics. Spells that simply make a subject friendly, such as *charm person*, are ineffective (betraying the Bellflower Network is an obviously harmful order) and even compulsion spells such as *dominate person* allow Maisil to attempt a new saving throw against the effect if she's ordered to disclose sensitive information, as that is against her nature. Spells like *detect thoughts* or *speak with dead* (if she is killed) might also enable the PCs to learn some of the Barrister's information.

Maisil knows the location of the Bellflower barn and the secret tunnel beneath it that leads to the boathouse, the presence of the lead golem in area D7, and the password for bypassing the *glyph of warding* in area D11. She can reveal the identities of Lyran, Yereen, and the Bellflower rogues who are members of the cell, but she is not aware that Helthondous is anything more than a sympathetic gardener, that he is currently hosting a powerful guest at his house (the raelis azata in area D2), or that a guardian naga resides in the boathouse (see area D17).

If questioned about the local leader of the Bellflowers or the location of the next Bellflower barn, Maisil names Rimon Fessel only after great duress, and explains that only he knows the location of the next barn in the "row" that escaped slaves travel to freedom. If pressed further,



THE BARRISTER

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she can only share her suspicion that the next barn is in Westcrown, due to the length of time it takes Rimon to drop off a crop and return.

Other Methods: Inventive PCs can likely concoct a number of bluffs, scams, or ploys to infiltrate or learn the secrets of the Bellflower Network, but the Barrister is mostly immune to such ploys. She doesn't trust newcomers who claim they are sympathetic to the cause without months of vetting and heavy use of spells such as *discern lies* and *zone of truth*.

THE BARRISTER CR 10

XP 9,600

Female human cleric (separatist) of Abadar 10/expert 1
(*Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Magic* 32)

LG Medium humanoid (human)

Init +3; **Senses** Perception +15

Aura freedom's call (30 ft., 8 rounds/day)

DEFENSE

AC 24, touch 12, flat-footed 24 (+8 armor, +3 deflection, -1 Dex, +4 natural)

hp 92 (11d8+43)

Fort +9, **Ref** +4, **Will** +15; +2 vs. mind-affecting spells, spell-like abilities, and supernatural abilities

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee +2 *heavy mace* +9/+4 (1d8+2)

Special Attacks channel positive energy 4/day (DC 16, 5d6), staff of order (5 rounds, 1/day)

Domain Spell-Like Abilities (CL 10th; concentration +14) 7/day—touch of law

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 10th; concentration +14)

5th—*break enchantment*^P, *flame strike* (DC 19), *greater command* (DC 19)

4th—*discern lies* (DC 18), *divine power*, *holy smite* (DC 18), *order's wrath*^D (DC 18), *spiritual ally*^{APG}

3rd—*archon's aura*^{UM} (DC 17), *blindness/deafness* (DC 17), *dispel magic*, *magic circle against evil*, *remove curse*^D

2nd—*hold person* (DC 16), *instant armor*^{APG}, *remove paralysis*^D, *shield other*, *silence* (DC 16), *spear of purity*^{UM} (DC 16)

1st—*command* (DC 15), *detect evil*, *forbid action*^{UM} (DC 15), *remove fear*^P, *sanctuary* (DC 15), *shield of faith*

0 (at will)—*guidance*, *light*, *resistance*, *stabilize*

D Domain spell; **Domains** Law, Liberation

TACTICS

Before Combat The Barrister casts *shield of faith* and *instant armor* to conjure a suit of +2 *chainmail*. If she has time, she also drinks a *potion of barkskin*.

During Combat If fighting alone, the Barrister tries to even the odds with spells such as *flame strike*, *holy smite*, *order's wrath*, and *spiritual ally*. If forced into melee combat, she uses her Quick Draw feat to ready her mace and casts *divine power*. When fighting with allies, the

Barrister falls into a support roll, using spells like *archon's aura*, *magic circle against evil*, and *shield other*, and providing healing as needed.

Morale The Barrister fights to the death, knowing her capture could mean the downfall of the Bellflower Network in Egorian.

Base Statistics Without her spells, the Barrister's statistics are **AC** 9, touch 9, flat-footed 9; **Speed** 30 ft.; **CMD** 16.

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 8, **Con** 14, **Int** 14, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +7; **CMB** +7; **CMD** 19

Feats Combat Casting, Improved Initiative, Improved Iron Will, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Quick Draw, Toughness

Skills Bluff +10, Diplomacy +10, Knowledge (local) +15, Knowledge (religion) +15, Linguistics +8, Perception +15, Profession (barrister) +15, Sense Motive +15

Languages Celestial, Common, Dwarven, Elven, Halfling, Infernal

SQ forbidden rite (liberation), liberation (8 rounds/day)

Combat Gear *potions of barkskin* +4 (2), *potion of cure serious wounds*, *potions of haste* (2), *scrolls of cat's grace* (2); **Other Gear** +2 *heavy mace*, *mind sentinel medallion*^{UE}, cleric's vestments, spell component pouch, golden holy symbol of Abadar (worth 100 gp), platinum rings (2, worth 50 gp each), 28 gp

Development: If Maisil suspects she is being followed, she does not travel to either the Trick Alley warehouse or the barn. Instead, after picking up any correspondence at Clerk's Cloister, she makes contact with a nearby halfling urchin and passes a secret message that she has been compromised (a PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Sense Motive check can discern she has passed a secret message; a PC can intercept and understand the message if he or she exceeds the DC by 5 or more). The Barrister then takes a more roundabout route to the abandoned warehouse, giving her Bellflower associates time to set a trap there for the Barrister's pursuers. Inside, the brawler Lyran (see page 38) and two Bellflower rogues (see page 37) wait with Maisil to ambush the PCs, a CR 13 encounter.

Story Award: If the PCs successfully track down the Barrister and use her to find the Bellflower barn, award them 19,200 XP.

D. BELLFLOWER BARN

The Bellflower Network's hidden safe house, or "barn," in Egorian is the Bilgetown manor house of an eccentric half-elf named Helthondous the Addled. While seemingly nothing more than a mild-mannered gardener of rare culinary herbs, Helthondous is actually a powerful conjurer, and his home conceals not only freed halfling slaves waiting to be transported out of the city, but also powerful allies, deadly traps, and a tunnel that leads to a secure boathouse on the shore of Lake Sorrow.

The PCs should eventually find the location of Helthondous's vaneo, likely by following the Barrister there or interrogating her to learn its location.

Once they have a few clues, the PCs can also ask around for guidance, and a successful DC 25 Diplomacy check to gather information reveals that there is a strange half-elven herb gardener who lives in a modest vaneo on the outskirts of Bilgetown. His neighbors consider him to be an addle-minded dreamer, but he is known to have a few halfling friends or associates. The PCs might also find the barn through magic, using such spells as *discern location* or *find the path*.

Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs first arrive at Helthondous's vaneo.

A rather unassuming vaneo rises from amid the more decrepit buildings in the neighborhood. A profusion of vines and ivy climbs the manor's pale gold stucco walls, and a garden grows atop the roof. A lone iron gate seems to serve as the residence's only entrance. The scent of herbs and fresh earth wafts through the air.

The vaneo's external walls are constructed of superior masonry covered in stucco (hardness 8, hp 90, break DC 35, Climb DC 25). The walls surrounding the front and rear gardens (areas **D1** and **D7**) are 10 feet high. The front gate is locked, but the lock is flimsy and easy to break (hardness 10, hp 60, break DC 15, Disable Device DC 25). Unless otherwise noted, the interior walls are wooden (hardness 5, hp 60, break DC 20, Climb DC 21), with good wooden interior doors, most of which are unlocked (hardness 5, hp 15). During the day, the open roof over the inner courtyard and a number of windows on the second floor provide illumination in the house. At night, Helthondous uses candles or *light* spells only in the rooms he occupies, so most areas are dark unless otherwise noted.

The adventure assumes the PCs have followed the Barrister to the house, where they can catch Maisil and the other members of the cell in the act of transporting escaped slaves. Upon arriving at the barn, the Barrister goes to area **D6**, where the halfling traveling with her joins the crop of escaped slaves already waiting there. The group then heads upstairs, through area **D11** to the annex, and down into the secret tunnel that leads to the grotto and eventually the boathouse (area **D17**). The slaves move as fast as possible away from the sounds of combat and on to the hope of freedom.

The vaneo's rooms are briefly described below. Those areas containing actual encounters are presented in greater detail following the brief descriptions. If the PCs visit the manor at a different time, or if they have captured or killed the Barrister or other members of the cell before they investigate the barn, adjust the relevant encounters accordingly.

D1. Front Garden: This garden contains a number of local wildflowers, some of which produce savory berries. Two stone birdbaths flank a path leading to the manor's front door, which is reinforced and locked (hardness 5, hp 20, break DC 25, Disable Device DC 30).

D2. Inner Courtyard: This area is detailed on page 36.

D3. Dining Room: Helthondous takes his meals in this room, which contains a table and a few chairs for his occasional guests.

D4. Kitchen: This is a simple kitchen with an oven, a preparation table, pickle barrels and wine casks, and a pair of pantries containing vegetarian fare. A secret door (Perception DC 20) in the east wall leads to the hall between the front door and inner courtyard (area **D2**).

D5. Lower Winch Room: This room houses a simple winch for operating the retractable roof above the inner courtyard (see area **D2**). A single person can winch the roof open or closed in 1 minute.

D6. Storage: Gardening tools and seeds are stored in this chamber, which is also used to temporarily house "crops" of escaped slaves waiting to be smuggled out of the city. A secret door (Perception DC 20) in the west wall leads to the front hallway (see area **D2** on page 36).

D7. Rear Garden: This area is detailed on page 37.

D8. Bedroom: Helthondous's bedroom is a simple affair with a comfortable bed, a nightstand with a pitcher of water, a small dresser, and a chamber pot.

D9. Roof Access: This room contains more gardening tools and supplies. A ladder climbs up to a trapdoor in the ceiling that leads to the vaneo's roof garden.

D10. Library: This cluttered library holds various treatises on gardening and plants, as well as a full century's worth of farmer's almanacs and charts of the sun's progress through the heavens. Hidden among the hodgepodge of books is Helthondous's spellbook, which contains all of his 0-level spells and prepared spells, plus *dismissal*, *planar binding*, *lesser planar binding*, and six other spells (mostly conjuration) of 1st through 5th levels.

D11. Upper Winch Room: This is detailed on page 37.

D12. Upper Annex: This relatively empty chamber contains nothing more than a large woven rug on the floor. To the north, a ladder leads to a trapdoor in the ceiling that provides access to annex's small rooftop garden. The rug conceals a trapdoor in the floor (Perception DC 15), though if the Bellflowers have already moved their crop past this point, they have flung aside the rug, revealing the trapdoor, in their haste to get to the boathouse. Another ladder beyond the trapdoor leads down to the lower annex (area **D13**).

D13. Lower Annex: This area is detailed on page 37.

D14. Secret Tunnel: This area is detailed on page 38.

D15. Grotto: This area is detailed on page 39.

D16. Trapped Stairs: This area is detailed on page 39.

D17. Boathouse: This area is detailed on page 39.

D18. Boathouse Office: This area is detailed on page 41.

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D. BELLFLOWER BARN

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



D2. INNER COURTYARD (CR 12)

From the vaneo's front door, a 5-foot-wide hallway leads to the vaneo's inner courtyard. Two secret doors (Perception DC 20) face each other in the hallway, leading to areas **D4** and **D6**. Herbs grow in three neat rows in the center of the courtyard, lit during the day by opening a retractable roof 20 feet above. At night, a *light* spell provides illumination. Stairways to the east and west climb to the building's second floor, while a door to the north leads deeper into the manor.

Creatures: If the Bellflowers are preparing to transport their latest crop of freed slaves, Helthondous the Addled can be found here, ready to defend his home and the Bellflowers' secret until the slaves are safely away. The conjurer is nowhere near as addled as his name and reputation imply, and he is accompanied by a raelis azata named Klaymith. Helthondous first conjured and befriended the azata years ago, and Klaymith is here visiting his old friend. If the PCs make loud noises during their entrance into the barn, both the conjurer and his guest are able to prepare for the incursion.

HELTHONDOUS THE ADDED CR 10**XP 9,600**

Male half-elf conjurer 11

NG Medium humanoid (elf, human)

Init +2; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +10**DEFENSE****AC** 24, touch 15, flat-footed 21 (+4 armor, +2 deflection, +2 Dex, +1 dodge, +1 natural, +4 shield)**hp** 89 (11d6+48)**Fort** +9, **Ref** +9, **Will** +12; +2 vs. enchantments**DR** 10/adamantine (110 points); **Immune** fire (120 points), sleep**OFFENSE****Speed** 30 ft.**Melee** mwk silver dagger +6 (1d4-1/19-20)**Arcane School Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 11th; concentration +15)

At will—dimensional steps (330 feet/day)

7/day—acid dart (1d6+5 acid)

Conjurer Spells Prepared (CL 11th; concentration +15)6th—*chain lightning* (DC 20), *summon monster VI*5th—*cone of cold* (DC 19), *hungry pit*^{APG} (DC 20), *summon monster V*4th—*acid pit*^{APG} (DC 19), *dimension door*, *ice storm*, *solid fog*, *stoneskin*3rd—*aqueous orb*^{APG} (DC 18), *dispel magic*, *fly*, *lightning bolt* (DC 17), *nondetection*, *protection from energy*2nd—*create pit*^{APG} (DC 17), *false life*, *glitterdust* (2, DC 17), *scorching ray* (2)1st—*expeditious retreat*, *grease*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *shield*, *unseen servant*0 (at will)—*acid splash*, *daze* (DC 14), *light*, *message***Opposition Schools** divination, illusion**TACTICS****Before Combat** Helthondous casts *false life*, *mage armor*, *protection from energy* (fire), *shield*, and *stoneskin*.**During Combat** Helthondous first attempts to slow down or hamper intruders with his pit spells, *ice storm*, or *solid fog* to block their way deeper into the barn. If that

doesn't work, he switches to more offensive spells, summoning additional allies such as bralanis or a lillend as needed.

Morale Helthondous protects his home and the Bellflower Network's secrets with his life if need be.

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 14, **Con** 14, **Int** 18, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +5; **CMB** +5; **CMD** 20

Feats Combat Casting, Craft Wand, Dodge, Forge Ring, Great Fortitude, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Profession [gardener]), Spell Focus (conjunction)

Skills Bluff +8, Fly +8, Knowledge (arcana) +15, Knowledge (nature) +15, Knowledge (planes) +15, Perception +10, Profession (gardener) +15, Sense Motive +8, Spellcraft +15

Languages Celestial, Common, Elven, Gnome, Halfling, Sylvan

SQ arcane bond (*wand of acid arrow*), elf blood, summoner's charm (5 rounds)

Combat Gear *potion of blur*, *wand of acid arrow* (35 charges); **Other Gear** *mwk silver dagger*, *amulet of natural armor +1*, *cloak of resistance +2*, *ring of forcefangs^{UE}*, *ring of protection +2*, spell component pouch, diamond dust (worth 500 gp)

KLAYMITH

CR 10**XP 9,600**Raelis azata (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 5 39*)**hp** 115

TACTICS

Before Combat Klaymith casts *invisibility* and *see invisibility* on himself.

During Combat Klaymith casts *haste* on himself and Helthondous, and uses *greater invisibility* to maneuver around the battlefield and sneak up on foes who threaten his friend, using spells or melee attacks as needed.

Morale While Klaymith is more than willing to help Helthondous, he won't throw his life away for the Bellflowers' cause. If reduced to fewer than 30 hit points, he apologizes to his friend and casts *greater teleport* or *plane shift* to escape.

Development: If the PCs visit the barn during the day or when the Bellflowers are not moving escaped slaves, Helthondous and Klaymith are most likely found in the library upstairs (area **D10**), reminiscing about their past adventures together and discussing the half-elf's collection of books over steaming mugs of whiskey-spiked coffee.

D7. REAR GARDEN (CR 10)

Helthondous grows vegetables and more herbs in this garden behind his house.

Creature: A lead golem stands like a statue in the middle of the garden, guarding the barn's rear entrance.

The golem has a secondary purpose as well, as its divination screen ability helps ward the entrance to the secret tunnel in the nearby annex from divinations. The golem attacks anyone other than Helthondous who enters the garden.

LEAD GOLEM

CR 10**XP 9,600****hp** 107 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 5 127*)

D11. UPPER WINCH ROOM (CR 8)

This chamber is relatively empty, containing only the ropes connecting the winch in the room below (area **D5**) to the retractable roof over the inner courtyard (area **D2**).

Trap: As a favor to Helthondous, the raelis azata Klaymith (see area **D2**) has placed a *glyph of warding* on the door to the north leading to area **D12**. The glyph is set to discharge a *lightning bolt* if an evil creature crosses the door's threshold. All of the Bellflower agents know the password for bypassing the glyph.

GLYPH OF WARDING

CR 8**XP 4,800****Type** magic; **Perception** DC 28; **Disable Device** DC 28

EFFECTS

Trigger spell; **Reset** none; **Bypass** password

Effect spell effect (*glyph of warding [lightning bolt]*, 10d6 electricity damage, Reflex DC 17 half); multiple targets (all targets in a 20-ft. line)

D13. LOWER ANNEX (CR 10)

This simple room is windowless, but a *continual flame* provides illumination. A ladder and trapdoor in the ceiling lead to the upper annex (area **D12**), while a second trapdoor in the floor opens to reveal another ladder that descends 20 feet to area **D14**.

Creatures: Two Bellflower rogues are posted in this room to guard the entrance to the secret tunnel below. They attack any intruders coming down the ladder from the upper annex, especially if they have been alerted by the sound of the *lightning bolt* from the *glyph of warding* in area **D11**.

BELLFLOWER ROGUES (2)

CR 8**XP 4,800 each**Halfling rogue (knife master) 9 (*Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Combat 72*)

CG Small humanoid (halfling)

Init +4; **Senses** Perception +15

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 15, flat-footed 16 (+5 armor, +4 Dex, +1 size)**hp** 71 each (9d8+27)**Fort** +6, **Ref** +11, **Will** +5; +2 vs. fear**Defensive Abilities** blade sense +3, evasion, improved uncanny dodge

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Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 kukri +13/+8 (1d3+2/18–20)

Ranged dagger +11 (1d3+1/19–20)

Special Attacks sneak attack +5d6

TACTICS

During Combat Bellflower rogues work together to flank foes and make sneak attacks, staying close to one another to make use of their teamwork feats.

Morale The Bellflower rogues fight to the death in defense of their barn.

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 18, **Con** 14, **Int** 10, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +6; **CMB** +6; **CMD** 20

Feats Martial Weapon Proficiency (kukri), Outflank^{APG}, Paired Opportunists^{APG}, Shake It Off^{UC}, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (kukri)

Skills Acrobatics +18, Bluff +12, Climb +15, Disable Device +10, Disguise +10, Escape Artist +16, Knowledge (local) +8, Perception +15, Stealth +20, Swim +7

Languages Common, Halfling

SQ hidden blade, rogue talents (assault leader^{APG}, bleeding attack +5, combat trick, offensive defense^{APG})

Combat Gear *potions of cure light wounds* (2); **Other Gear** +1 mithral chain shirt, +1 kukri, daggers (3), *boots of striding and springing*, thieves' tools, 6 gp

D14. SECRET TUNNEL (CR 12)

This tunnel, which leads beneath Helthondous's vaneo, was originally part of an older sewer system that is now blocked off. The passage winds its way nearly a quarter of a mile beneath Bilgetown to a subterranean grotto (area D15) and the boathouse that the Bellflower Network uses to smuggle escaped slaves out of the city (area D17).

Creatures: Halfway down the tunnel, two more Bellflower agents—a former halfling slave gladiator named Lyran and a free halfling sorcerer named Yereen—make a stand in the tight corridor against any pursuers. Lyran moves to the front and takes the brunt of any assault with her shield while Yereen stays in the rear to cast spells. Yereen has cast *light* on the corridor 40 feet west of their position so the halflings can see intruders approaching while remaining hidden in darkness themselves.



LYRAN

LYRAN

CR 10

XP 9,600

Female halfling brawler (shield champion) 11 (*Pathfinder RPG Advanced Class Guide* 23, 86)

NG Small humanoid (halfling)

Init +3; **Senses** Perception +10

DEFENSE

AC 26, touch 16, flat-footed 21 (+4 armor, +3 Dex, +2 dodge, +6 shield, +1 size)

hp 98 (11d10+33)

Fort +10, **Ref** +11, **Will** +7; +2 vs. fear

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee +2 *heavy shield bash* +18/+13/+8 (1d6+6) or +2 *heavy shield bash* brawler's flurry +16/+16/+11/+11/+6 (1d6+5) or unarmed strike +16/+11/+6 (1d8+4) or unarmed strike brawler's flurry +14/+14/+9/+9/+4 (1d8+4)

Ranged +2 *heavy shield* +18/+13/+8 (1d6+5) or +2 *heavy shield* brawler's flurry +16/+16/+11/+11/+6 (1d6+5)

Special Attacks brawler's flurry, close weapon mastery, knockout 2/day (DC 18), martial flexibility 8/day, throw shield

TACTICS

Before Combat Lyran uses martial flexibility as a move action to gain the benefits of Deadly Aim, Combat Reflexes, and Stand Still when intruders come into view.

During Combat Lyran throws her shield at approaching foes, using brawler's flurry and returning shield to ricochet her shield off multiple opponents. Once in melee, Lyran fights defensively or uses total defense, making use of her feats to defend Yereen and prevent enemies from getting past her.

Morale Beholden to the Bellflower Network for originally freeing her, Lyran fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 16, **Con** 14, **Int** 8, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +11; **CMB** +13; **CMD** 28

Feats Cautious Fighter^{ARG}, Desperate Swing^{ARG}, Greater Shield Focus, Hammer The Gap^{UC}, Improved Shield Bash, Improved Unarmed Strike, Iron Will, Power Attack, Shield Focus, Shield Master, Shield Slam, Uncanny Defense^{ARG}, Weapon Focus (heavy shield)

Skills Acrobatics +18 (+14 to jump), Climb +11,

Intimidate +8, Knowledge (local) +8, Perception +10, Swim +9

Languages Common, Halfling

SQ brawler's cunning, martial training, returning shield

Combat Gear *ring of ferocious action*^{UE}; **Other Gear** +1 studded leather, +2 heavy steel shield, amulet of mighty fists +1, belt of giant strength +2, 5 gp

YEREEN

CR 10

XP 9,600

Lucky mage (*Pathfinder RPG NPC Codex* 168)

hp 63

D15. GROTTO (CR 12)

This cavern, lit with a *continual flame*, was once open to the waters of Lake Sorrow, but the Bellflowers sealed the lake entrance with mortared boulders and drained the cave. However, a system of pulleys can release weights suspended on ropes, propelling them into the plug and breaching the wall to bring water rushing into the grotto and surrounding areas. A successful DC 15 Knowledge (dungeoneering) or DC 10 Knowledge (engineering) check is sufficient to recognize the danger and intuit the function of the ropes and pulleys.

A full-round action is required to cut the ropes of the propelled weights and trigger the device, and it takes only 2 rounds for the water to fill the grotto, the secret tunnel (area D14), and the stairs leading up to the boathouse up to the second landing (see area D16). On the first round after the wall collapses, each creature in the flooded area must succeed at a DC 20 Reflex save or be pushed back 20 feet from the collapsed wall and knocked prone. During this first round, creatures can move through the flooded areas, but they are considered difficult terrain. On the second and future rounds, creatures in the area will likely have to swim, but the water rushing into the cavern is considered stormy (Swim DC 20). The water settles after 1 minute, but is still considered rough (Swim DC 15). If necessary, see the rules for aquatic terrain and underwater combat on page 432 of the *Core Rulebook*.

Creatures: Assuming she still lives, Maisil Juluth, a.k.a. the Barrister, waits in the grotto with two Bellflower rogues, willing to sacrifice their lives, if necessary, for the freedom of the slaves and the continued existence of the Bellflower Network in Egorian. The rogues move to engage enemies while the Barrister supports them with her spells and healing.

THE BARRISTER

CR 10

XP 9,600

hp 92 (see page 34)

BELLFLOWER ROGUES (2)

CR 8

XP 4,800 each

hp 71 each (see page 37)

Development: If Maisil or any of the Bellflower rogues feel they don't have a chance of winning the battle (such as if two of them have been killed), the survivor attempts to flood the grotto by cutting the ropes and knocking out the plug of mortared boulders. The noise of the collapsing wall and the water rushing into the grotto alerts the Bellflower agents in the boathouse above (area D17) that danger is coming.

D16. TRAPPED STAIRS (CR 9)

A series of steep, narrow stairs carved out of the rock lead up to a secret door (Perception DC 20) that serves as the hidden entrance to the Bellflower boathouse (area D17).

Trap: Anyone setting foot on the stairs' first landing or entering the area above it (walking, swimming or otherwise) triggers a shocking floor trap. If not underwater, the trap affects only those on the landing for 1d6 rounds, but if underwater (because of flooding from area D15), it affects all creatures in the water within 40 feet, as electricity courses through the water.

SHOCKING FLOOR TRAP

CR 9

XP 6,400

Type magic; Perception DC 26; Disable Device DC 26

EFFECTS

Trigger proximity (*alarm*); **Duration** 1d6 rounds; **Reset** none; **Bypass** hidden switch (Perception DC 25)

Effect spell effect (*shocking grasp*, Atk +9 melee touch [4d6 electricity damage]); multiple targets (all targets in the water within 40 feet)

D17. BOATHOUSE (CR 13)

This disused boathouse, located just south of the main docks of Bilgetown, is the last stop in Egorian for escaping slaves. The Bellflowers smuggle the halflings out of the city by hiding them in barrels and crates, then shipping them to the city of Westcrown on a barge, along with legitimate freight in similar containers.

Creatures: Rimon Fessel is the leader and tiller of the Bellflower Network's cell in Egorian, the one responsible for transporting crops of escaped slaves along the "row" from Egorian's barn to the next barn in Westcrown. When the PCs reach the boathouse, Rimon and two Bellflower rogues are loading the current crop of eight halfling slaves onto the barge. The Bellflowers immediately drop what they're doing and attack any intruders, along with Rimon's secret ally, a guardian naga named Zsatha who guards the boathouse and its secrets. The escaped slaves (all halfling commoners or experts 1) do not engage in combat; they are terrified and try to stay out of danger, huddling together for safety.

BELLFLOWER ROGUES (2)

CR 8

XP 4,800 each

hp 71 each (see page 37)

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RIMON FESSEL**CR 9****XP 6,400**Male halfling rogue 5/bellflower tiller 5 (*Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Paths of Prestige 10*)

CG Small humanoid (halfling)

Init +4 (+6 in Egorian); **Senses** Perception +12 (+14 in Egorian)**DEFENSE****AC** 23, touch 16, flat-footed 18 (+4 armor, +4 Dex, +1 dodge, +3 natural, +1 size)**hp** 63 (10d8+15)**Fort** +6, **Ref** +14, **Will** +7; +2 vs. fear**Defensive Abilities** evasion, trap sense +1, uncanny dodge**OFFENSE****Speed** 20 ft.**Melee** +1 *keen short sword* +12/+7 (1d4+2/17-20)**Ranged** mwk hand crossbow +12 (1d3/19-20 plus blue whinnis poison)**Special Attacks** scarecrow +2, sneak attack +4d6**TACTICS****Before Combat** If warned of approaching danger, Rimon drinks a *potion of barkskin* and designates the Bellflower rogues and Zsatha as his bellflower crop.**During Combat** Rimon and the rogues stick together, taking advantage of Rimon's bellflower crop abilities and teamwork feats to outmaneuver and flank opponents.**Morale** Rimon fights to the death, choosing death rather than giving up any information about the Bellflower Network.**STATISTICS****Str** 12, **Dex** 18, **Con** 10, **Int** 8, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 16**Base Atk** +6; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 21**Feats** Agile Maneuvers, Dodge, Outflank^{APG}, Paired Opportunists^{APG}, Shake It Off^{UC}, Toughness, Weapon Finesse**Skills** Acrobatics +15 (+11 to jump), Bluff +12, Climb +10, Diplomacy +10, Disable Device +12, Disguise +12, Escape Artist +12, Knowledge (local) +8 (+10 in Egorian), Perception +12 (+14 in Egorian), Stealth +20 (+22 in Egorian), Survival +9 (+11 in Egorian)**Languages** Common, Halfling**SQ** bellflower crop (6 allies), crop guardian, favored barn (Egorian +2), rogue talents (finesse rogue, powerful sneak^{APG}), swift sower (+10 ft.), trapfinding +2**Combat Gear** *potions of barkskin* +3 (2), blue whinnis (4); **Other Gear**mithral shirt, +1 *keen short sword*, mwk hand crossbow with 10 bolts, *cloak of resistance* +2, thieves' tools, key to lockbox in area **D18****SPECIAL ABILITIES****Bellflower Crop (Ex)** As a standard action, Rimon can designate up to six allies as part of his bellflower crop. These allies must remain within 30 feet of Rimon to gain the benefits granted by his other class abilities; if they leave this range, Rimon must designate these allies again for them to be included in his crop.**Crop Guardian (Ex)** Rimon is dedicated to ensuring the safety and success of those he guides. Whenever Rimon uses the aid another action for a member of his bellflower crop, he grants a +3 bonus instead of the normal +2.**Favored Barn (Ex)** Rimon is familiar with and has developed trusted contacts in Egorian. While inside the city, he gains a +2 bonus on initiative checks and Knowledge (local), Perception, Stealth, and Survival checks. Any ally designated as part of his bellflower crop receives a +1 bonus on these skills. Rimon leaves no trail and cannot be tracked while traveling through Egorian (although he can leave a trail if he so desires).

Provided he isn't in immediate danger (such as fleeing from pursuers right on his heels), Rimon can always find a safe place in Egorian for him and members of his crop to rest, where they are fed, clothed, and provided with basic medical attention (as if attended by a character with a total Heal bonus of +10).

Scarecrow (Ex) Rimon receives a +2 morale bonus on attack and damage rolls made against creatures that threaten members of his bellflower crop.**Swift Sower (Ex)** Rimon's base land speed is treated as if it were 10 feet faster when determining his overland travel speed while he's traveling long distances and outside of combat. Members of his bellflower crop can use either the Rimon's overland travel speed or their own, whichever is better.**ZSATHA****CR 10****XP 9,600**Male guardian naga (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 212*)**AC** 31, touch 18, flat-footed 25 (+4 armor, +3 deflection, +6 Dex, +9 natural, -1 size)**hp** 114**TACTICS****Before Combat** Zsatha casts *mage armor* on himself every evening and *shield of faith* on himself before combat.**RIMON FESSEL**

During Combat The naga supports the Bellflower agents with his spells and venomous spit.

Morale Zsatha has sworn an oath to Rimon to protect the Bellflower Network in Egorian, and will gladly sacrifice his life to aid in that aim.

Development: One of halfling slaves in the crop is named **Ardin** (N male halfling expert 1) and is missing his left toe. If the PCs have the bill of ownership found in the Longacre jail in “The Hellfire Compact,” they can take legal possession of the halfling, who is highly trained as a household servant. Alternatively, they can sell him in one of Egorian’s slave markets, where he fetches a price of 500 gp.

D18. BOATHOUSE OFFICE

This simple office holds a desk, a few chairs, and a stack of crates in one corner. An ironbound, wooden lockbox sits under the chest (Disable Device DC 25; Rimon Fessel has the key).

Treasure: The lockbox contains a number of encoded papers. Once deciphered with a successful DC 25 Linguistics check, the documents detail much of the Bellflower Network’s activity in Egorian, including the nature of several local “rows” (paths from one safe house to the next) and the location of the barn in Westcrown, and serve as incriminating evidence against the members of the Egorian cell.

Development: The PCs can turn over any captured Bellflower agents, escaped slaves, and the coded documents in the lockbox to Egorian’s *dottari*, or city guard. If the PCs manage to kill or capture all of the Bellflower agents, shut down their barn and row, and recover the evidence in the lockbox, they earn 4 Notice Points. A partial victory (some agents escape or the PCs didn’t find the papers) yields them only 2 Notice Points instead.

In addition, if the PCs eliminate the Bellflower Network before they complete the events of Part 1, their success attracts the attention of Duke Raaven Melesiva, who sends the PCs invitations to his upcoming Hellfire Ball (see Event 6).

Story Award: For destroying the Bellflower Network cell in Egorian, award the PCs 12,800 XP. If they also recover the coded documents in the boathouse, award them an additional 12,800 XP.

PART 3: ROYAL SACRIFICE

Once the PCs have completed Parts 1 and 2 of the adventure, their actions have made enough of an impact in Egorian to attract the personal attention of Queen Abrogail Throne II. The first encounter of Part 3, Audience with the Queen, assumes the PCs have accumulated at least 7 Notice Points. If they have not yet garnered that much attention, they should play through more of the events of Parts 1 and 2 to earn the requisite number of

Notice Points to draw the queen’s interest. Once the PCs have acquired the requisite number of Notice Points, Queen Abrogail summons them to an audience at the Imperial Palace, where she presents them with a final task to prove their loyalty and capability.

AUDIENCE WITH THE QUEEN

Part 3 begins when the PCs’ patron—Paraduke Sethic or Archcountess Vasvion—informs them that they have received a royal summons commanding them to appear before Queen Abrogail at the Imperial Palace the following morning. If the PCs have gotten this far without a patron, then a royal page delivers the summons to the PCs’ quarters.

The Imperial Palace stands on the eastern side of Throne Square, the massive, 20-square-acre plaza in the center of Egorian. When the PCs arrive at the palace, they are immediately ushered inside to the throne room.

The magnificence of the throne room of the Imperial Palace is breathtaking. Massive columns of red marble shoot upward to the domed ceiling above. The dome is painted with a scene of Hell depicting various devils roasting and torturing the enemies of the empire. Scaffolding conceals one section of the great mural, where painters are adding the likeness of Alexeara Cansellarion, lord marshal of the Glorious Reclamation, to the ranks of those being tormented. Members of the imperial court, nobles from Egorian and across the realm, fill the audience hall. Behind the throngs of courtiers stand an array of uncomfortably lifelike statues in diverse poses—the queen’s collection of so-called “living statues,” enemies of the state petrified and displayed here for the queen’s pleasure and safety.

Creatures: At the far end of the hall, atop a dais of crimson and ebony marble, Her Infernal Majestrix, **Queen Abrogail Throne II** (LE female human aristocrat 2/ sorcerer 16), sits on an iron-and-obsidian throne. The queen looks like a figure wrought from alabaster. She would almost look fragile if not for her steely eyes and regal bearing. She appears to look through the entire world, as if seeing some infernal truth behind the world’s crude guise. Queen Abrogail is fully detailed in the NPC Gallery on page 58.

The queen’s advisor, **Contessa Lrilatha** (LE female erinyes inquisitor^{APG} 13), stands just behind the throne. Dressed in a fine black gown, the devil would not look out of place at court were it not for her ebony wings, the sheathed longsword at her waist, and the longbow on her back. Members of the queen’s royal bodyguard, the Infernal Guard, dressed in their characteristic flame-red armor, flank the dais on either side.

Among the lords and ladies gathered in the throne room are several of the nobles whom the PCs likely met during Part 1. Any PC who succeeds at a DC 15

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Perception can also pick out their patron— either Sethic or Vasvion—among the crowd. However, their patron's rival (whichever courtier the PCs did not ally with) is notably absent.

The PCs are escorted to the foot of the dais, where a royal herald announces them to the court. A PC who succeed at a DC 15 Knowledge (nobility) realizes that proper etiquette requires them to bow or curtsy to the queen at this point. If necessary, the herald clears his throat and indicates that they should do so. If the PCs don't get the idea or they refuse to bow, one of the Infernal Guards orders them to "pay proper obeisance to your Queen!" in a tone that brooks no disobedience.

Assuming the PCs show the proper respect, Abrogail drops her gaze to the PCs. The queen's stern demeanor seems to soften somewhat, and her forbidding burgundy lips lift into something approaching a smile as she speaks.

"We have heard reports of your resourcefulness and capability, but now we wish to hear it from the lips of our own Trusted Agents. Tell us of your achievements, so that we might determine whether you are suited for a mission of the utmost importance."

This is the time for the PCs to recount their exploits during the campaign that have led them to this point, highlighting their service and loyalty to House Thrune and Cheliox—such as the defense of Longacre, the reconquest of Kantaria, Archbaron Fex's betrayal and his subsequent defeat, the status of the Inferno Gate (whether closed or under the PCs' control), and the eradication of the Bellflower Network from Egorian. If the PCs plan to hand over control of the Inferno Gate to the queen, now would be the time to do so. Allow the PCs to roleplay this encounter with as much detail as they like, but they should keep in mind that this is more of a professional report to a high-ranking superior than a friendly conversation, and that the entire imperial court is in attendance, watching and listening.

Through it all, Abrogail listens attentively, only occasionally interrupting to ask for clarification or more detail on specific points. After the PCs have finished their narrative, the queen addresses them once again.

"Your deeds demonstrate both your talents and your loyalty, and it seems our faith in naming you Trusted Agents was not misplaced. But we have one more test of your patriotism and skill that will truly prove your worth to House Thrune.

"Decades ago, my great-grandmother, Abrogail the First, forged a pact with the Prince of Darkness in the Winter Grove at the heart of the Barrowood. Now, once each year, the Infernal Majestrix must undertake a pilgrimage to the Winter Grove and perform a sacrifice to renew Thrune's contract with Hell. The time for the sacrifice is at hand, and Hell's full support is required while we put down this

upstart insurrection. Normally we would make this journey ourselves, but our advisors are concerned that our absence, even a temporary one, could give our enemies renewed vigor and engender even more seditious thoughts among those whose loyalty is not as resolute as we might hope. We need someone to make the sacrifice in our stead, and we have chosen you.

"Do this for us, and your loyalty to your queen and empire will be unquestioned, and well rewarded."

Assuming the PCs accept the mission, the queen dismisses them, and they are taken to a smaller meeting room for a more intimate, private audience with the queen, away from the ears of the court. There, Abrogail tells them the specifics of their mission.

The PCs must travel to the Winter Grove, an ancient and ruined druid's grove located in the heart of the Barrowood, west of Egorian. The queen goes on to explain that the trip is a pilgrimage of sorts, and they must make the journey on foot. On the way, the PCs must visit nine standing stones, smearing the blood of the intended sacrifice on each stone. Once they reach the Winter Grove, the PCs must slay the sacrifice atop the altar in the center of the grove. As Trusted Agents of Thrune, the PCs are already empowered to act in this capacity on behalf of the queen.

If the PCs ask who or what is to be sacrificed, Abrogail answers with a smile: "I must show my dedication to Hell by sacrificing someone who is close to me. It must be a personal loss—that is the nature of a sacrifice, after all. But I must thank you, for you have helped me decide who the sacrifice should be."

The sacrifice will be either Levisvia Vasvion or Thalcano Sethic, whichever courtier the PCs worked against during their rise to prominence. If the PCs did not officially ally themselves with either noble, then it should be the one they most angered or embarrassed. The PCs must first capture the courtier, then keep that person alive until they can perform the sacrifice. Queen Abrogail ends the meeting with the following advice for the PCs—and a chilling warning.

"I recommend keeping your captive tightly restrained, as much as possible. Performing the sacrifice is dangerous, and though it must be living, the terms of the contract are still met if the fruit is bruised.

"I trust you to defend the sacrifice with your lives, if necessary. Our dealings with Hell are of great consequence, and should the sacrifice not survive the journey, one of you will be required to take its place and complete the mission. You should be pleased. It means you are important to me."

Development: If the PCs show disrespect to the queen or refuse to accept her mission, they are likely done for, as Abrogail has no use for agents who won't follow her orders. Besides Lrilatha and the queen's Infernal Guards

PILGRIMAGE TO THE WINTER GROVE

1 SQUARE = 5 MILES



E. THE DUKE'S TREASON

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



F. WINGS OF LEGEND

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



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(you can use the sellsword stat block on page 283 of the *GameMastery Guide* for these royal guards if necessary), Abrogail is a powerful sorceress in her own right. Even if the PCs somehow manage to survive an attack by Abrogail and her allies and escape the Imperial Palace, such an affront to the Infernal Majestrix is high treason, and the PCs will be hunted down until they are dead, no matter who their patron is or how many Notice Points they've earned.

Story Award: The PCs receive a story award for finally attracting the personal attention of Queen Abrogail. The exact nature of this award depends on how many Notice Points they have earned over the course of the adventure. If the PCs officially turn over possession of the Inferno Gate to the queen, increase the story award to the next higher amount. If they are already receiving the highest award listed, add an additional 12,800 XP to the total.

7 or Fewer Notice Points: Award the PCs 9,600 XP.

8 to 10 Notice Points: Award the PCs 12,800 XP.

11 to 14 Notice Points: Award the PCs 19,200 XP.

15 or More Notice Points: Award the PCs 25,600 XP.

PROCURING THE SACRIFICE (CR 13)

Before they can embark upon their mission for Queen Abrogail, the PCs must first capture the intended sacrifice—either Paraduke Sethic or Archcountess Vasvion—and it's a sure bet that neither courtier will go willingly with the PCs to an assured death. The exact details of when and where this encounter occurs are left to the GM to determine based on the PCs' relationship with the courtier in question, how the adventure has progressed, and any plans the PCs might make, but it's likely to take place either at Lazaric's (for Sethic) or the Lawgiver's Rest (for Vasvion).

Fortunately, the queen has arranged for any of the noble's guards or allies to be called away, distracted, or removed, leaving the courtier to face the PCs alone. Nevertheless, both Sethic and Vasvion are dangerous opponents in their own right, and the fact that the PCs must take their prisoner alive only further complicates matters. Full statistics for Thalgano Sethic and Levisvia Vasvion

can be found in the NPC Gallery on pages 56–59; use whichever stat block is appropriate for the encounter.

Treasure: The PCs can claim the NPC's gear as their reward for successfully capturing the sacrifice.

Story Award: Award the PCs full experience for defeating and taking either Thalgano Sethic or Levisvia Vasvion captive.

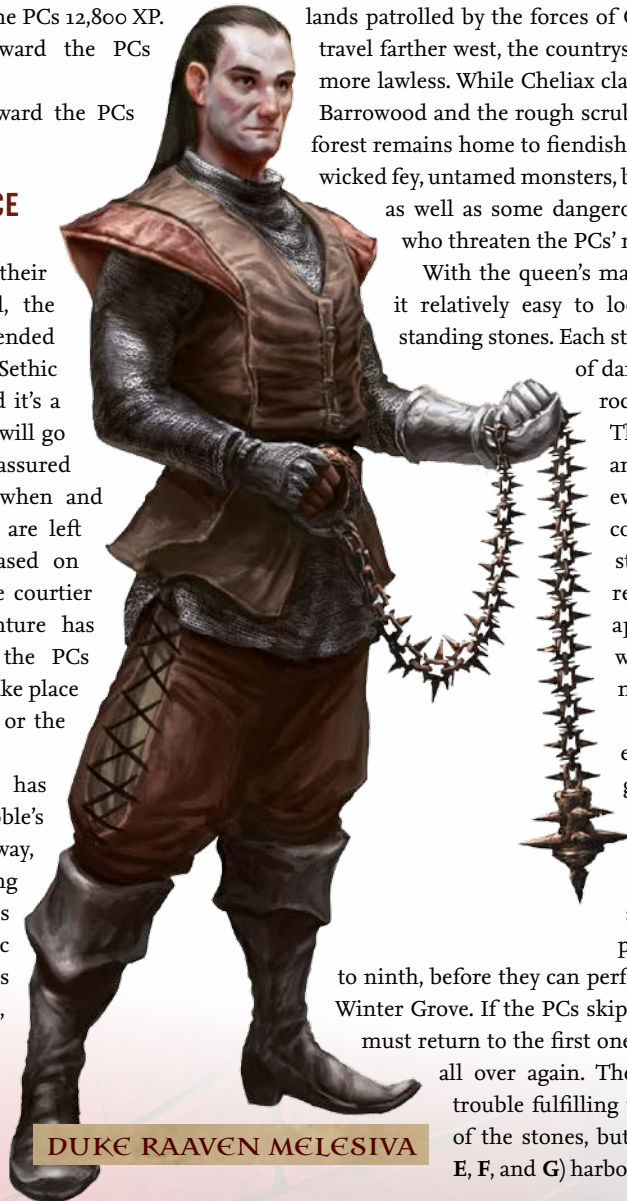
PILGRIMAGE TO THE WINTER GROVE

Once the PCs have successfully captured the sacrifice, they can depart for the Barrowood immediately. Queen Abrogail gives the PCs a map of the region west of Egorian, which shows the locations of each of the nine standing stones they must visit between the city and the Winter Grove (see the map on page 43).

Several of the standing stones sit outside or near various noble estates, or viras, clustered beyond the walls of Egorian on the other side of the Adivian River, in lands patrolled by the forces of Cheliox. But as the PCs travel farther west, the countryside become wilder and more lawless. While Cheliox claims the territory of the Barrowood and the rough scrub around it, the ancient forest remains home to fiendishly tainted wild animals, wicked fey, untamed monsters, brigands, and outlaws—as well as some dangerous rivals of the crown who threaten the PCs' mission.

With the queen's map, the PCs should find it relatively easy to locate each of the nine standing stones. Each stone is a 7-foot-tall pillar of dark, glossy, obsidian-like rock native to Hell itself. The stones are magical, and radiate moderate evil transmutation and conjuration auras. If a stone is destroyed or removed, a new one appears in its place within 24 hours by mysterious means.

As Queen Abrogail explained, the PCs must go on foot, and must smear the blood of the sacrificial victim on each of the nine standing stones, in proper order from first to ninth, before they can perform the sacrifice at the Winter Grove. If the PCs skip any of the stones, they must return to the first one and begin the process all over again. The PCs should have no trouble fulfilling this requirement at six of the stones, but the other three (areas E, F, and G) harbor dangers the PCs must



DUKE RAAVEN MELESIVA

face before they reach their final destination, the Winter Grove (area H).

There is no hard-and-fast time limit on performing the sacrifice. It should be done as soon as possible, but there are no problems if the PCs stop to rest between encounters, as long as they follow the proper steps of the ritual and do not procrastinate or waste time without good reason.

E. THE DUKE'S TREASON (CR 13+)

The PCs can easily complete the steps of the bloody ritual at the first four standing stones. As they make their way to the fifth stone, they cross a fast-moving stream, and the land beyond becomes dank and swampy. Swarms of buzzing flies bite the PCs and their captive as they navigate the slick and treacherous swamp paths, and the entire place stinks of rot and swamp gas. The fifth stone stands at the end of a relatively dry peninsula jutting out into a dark lake of stagnant, silted swamp water. The water around the peninsula is 20 feet deep in most places, and because of the silt, a successful DC 15 Swim check is required to swim through the water. Use the map on page 43 for this encounter.

Creatures: Duke Raaven Melesiva inherited his title when his father was arrested and excruciated for “unsanctioned diplomacy” with the Umbral Court of Nidal—in other words, disloyalty to House Thrune. Although Raaven accepted his inheritance and took his position as head of House Melesiva upon his father's death, he seethes with burning resentment toward House Thrune and Queen Abrogail specifically. Duke Melesiva has harbored dark thoughts of vengeance for years, and now, with the chaos surrounding the Glorious Reclamation's insurrection, Melesiva has decided to get his revenge by interfering with the queen's sacrifice in hopes of engendering the downfall of Abrogail and House Thrune.

Unfortunately, as the duke set up his ambush at the fifth standing stone, he attracted the attention of a rusalka named Syrellia who lives in the swamp surrounding the peninsula. Syrellia quickly charmed Melesiva, and after hearing his tale, decided to have some fun by letting her new pet play out his fantasy of revenge. Obsessed with his thoughts of vengeance and besotted with the beguiling fey, Melesiva was easily manipulated by the rusalka. The duke is now convinced that with Syrellia's help, he can defeat the PCs and stop the sacrifice, overthrow Queen Abrogail, and seize power for himself. Melesiva will rule Chelias as king, and Syrellia will join him as his beautiful fey queen. For Syrellia, she hopes to enjoy a good show, and even if Melesiva dies, she might have a few new pets to play with before she gets bored again.

Melesiva now waits patiently for the PCs next to the standing stone. Syrellia lurks in the dark, brackish water nearby, lying invisible just beneath the surface. As they

near the peninsula, they can recognize the man as Duke Raaven Melesiva, who hosted them at the Hellfire Ball (see **Event 6**). Melesiva calls out to the PCs as they approach.

“Greetings, my friends. I've seen your strength. I know you're capable and dangerous. But I must speak with you. I cannot let you finish your quest for that farce of a queen, Abrogail, but I can offer you a different ending. I have found a new queen to serve, one who is above this petty squabbling and pointless conflict. Forsake this fool's errand, give me your prisoner, and join us. Without the sacrifice, Thrune will fall, and a new order will take its place—one where my love and I can give you positions of prominence, even titles of nobility, that would be unattainable as mere servants of Thrune.”

If the PCs talk with Duke Melesiva, anyone who succeeds at a DC 25 Sense Motive check can determine that the duke is under some sort of enchantment. Nevertheless, his offer is genuine (at least in his own charmed mind), if highly unlikely, but he is not interested in extended negotiations. He requires the PCs to hand over the sacrifice to him before he will discuss terms, attempting to lure them closer to him and Syrellia.

If the PCs become overly suspicious or attack, Syrellia begins to sing, using her beckoning call to draw the PCs closer and quickened *charm person* to take individuals out of the fight, while Melesiva engages those unaffected with his spiked chain.

RAAVEN MELESIVA CR 10

XP 9,600

Male human slayer 11 (*Pathfinder RPG Advanced Class Guide* 53)

LE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +8; **Senses** Perception +12

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 17, flat-footed 18 (+6 armor, +2 deflection, +4 Dex, +1 dodge)

hp 98 (11d10+33)

Fort +9, **Ref** +11, **Will** +4

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 *spiked chain* +15/+10/+5 (2d4+4/19–20)

Special Attacks sneak attack +3d6, studied target +3 (3rd, swift action)

TACTICS

During Combat Melesiva makes use of his feats and slayer talents to make sneak attacks as often as possible. If these attacks are successful, he uses his studied target ability as an immediate action. He fights primarily to get the sacrifice away from the PCs, while also defending Syrellia from their attacks.

Morale Duke Melesiva knows his actions constitute treason. Rather than suffer an agonizingly slow death through excruciation as punishment, he fights until slain in battle.

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STATISTICS**Str** 14, **Dex** 18, **Con** 14, **Int** 10, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 12**Base Atk** +11; **CMB** +13; **CMD** 30**Feats** Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (spiked chain), Furious Focus^{APG}, Improved Critical (spiked chain), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Power Attack, Shield of Swings^{APG}, Weapon Focus (spiked chain)**Skills** Acrobatics +15, Bluff +15, Diplomacy +10, Intimidate +15, Knowledge (local) +9, Knowledge (nobility) +11, Perception +12, Stealth +10, Survival +8, Swim +7**Languages** Common**SQ** combat style (two-handed weapon^{APG}), slayer talents (hunter's surprise^{APG}, powerful sneak^{APG}, ranger combat style [2], weapon training), stalker, swift tracker, track +5**Combat Gear** *potion of cure moderate wounds* (2); **Other Gear** +2 *human-defiant*^{UE} *mithral chain shirt*, +1 *spiked chain*, *ring of protection* +2, noble's outfit, signet ring, jewelry (worth 100 gp)**SYRELLIA****CR 12****XP** 19,200Rusalka (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 232)**hp** 150**TACTICS****During Combat** Syrellia charms or entangles any opponents not affected by her beckoning call, while Melesiva fights those that are left. The rusalka uses her tresses to pull any opponents who stray too close into the water, followed by using her staggering touch against them. If necessary, she summons a Huge water elemental to aid her in combat.**Morale** If Melesiva is killed and Syrellia is reduced to 50 hit points or fewer, the rusalka attempts to flee into the surrounding swamp.

Development: If, after completing their quest, the PCs inform Queen Abrogail that Duke Melesiva was a traitor, the queen takes the opportunity to confiscate the Melesiva lands and kill all members of the former's duke's traitorous house that she can apprehend. If the PCs manage to capture Melesiva alive, she also executes him in a very public excruciation. As a reward for their part in uncovering the traitor, the queen grants the PCs a small castle formerly held by the Melesivas in the Halikarnassos Hills in the archduchy of Longmarch. Of course, before the PCs can truly claim the castle, they'll have to aid Thrune in finally defeating the Glorious Reclamation, as well as defeat the surviving members of House Melesiva who have holed up in the keep.

F. WINGS OF LEGEND (CR 12+)

This encounter occurs when the PCs approach the eighth standing stone in their pilgrimage, which is one stone among a circle of six ancient standing stones called the

Witches, located in a grove of oak trees less than 20 miles from the Winter Grove. If legend is to be believed, the standing stones were once six of seven powerful witch sisters, cursed by an ancient druidic order after they tried to take control of the Winter Grove. Whatever the stones' origins, they are magical and radiate strong psychic feedback. Anyone within 5 feet of one of the stones must succeed at a DC 20 concentration check to cast any spells, and anyone who starts her turn within 5 feet of a stone must succeed at a DC 25 Will save or be staggered for 1 round. These are both mind-affecting effects.

Steep declines of loose dirt and rocks are located to the northwest and southwest. The angle of the slopes and the treacherous footing have the same effects as dense rubble (*Core Rulebook* 428). To the northeast is an area of light undergrowth (*Core Rulebook* 426).

A narrow stream cuts through the grove from the northwest to the southeast. It costs 1 extra square of movement to leap over the stream, and doing so provokes an attack of opportunity. With a successful DC 10 Acrobatics check, a character avoids both the movement penalty and attacks of opportunity. The stream is deep and swift, requiring a successful DC 15 Swim check to navigate.

The standing stone that stands apart from the other stones on the far side of the stream is the one upon which the PCs must smear their sacrifice's blood for their ritual.

Use the map on page 43 for this encounter.

Creatures: The ancient griffon known as Ironwing Kazi is a Barrowood legend. She served as a steed for Iomedae herself when the Inheritor slew Segruchen the Iron Gargoyle, the strange and powerful self-proclaimed King of the Barrowood. This battle became known as Iomedae's Third Act, and in its aftermath, Kazi somehow ascended to mythic power. Some claim Iomedae still speaks to Kazi, giving her guidance and divine intelligence to protect the forest, while others believe the griffon is a manifestation of the spirit of the wood itself. Whatever the truth, Kazi has a preternatural knack for tracking down those who would do harm to the Barrowood. Ironwing Kazi has harassed nearly every mission that House Thrune has sent to the Barrowood or the Winter Grove. The crown has placed a 20,000-gp bounty on the griffon, but Kazi has managed to avoid capture or death since well before House Thrune came into power. In the centuries following her time with the mortal Iomedae, Kazi has always chosen a druid of the Barrowood as an ally to serve and protect. Together, the griffon and her druid companion—currently, a human man named Vlasko the Fang—defend the Barrowood from evildoers, devil-worshippers, and anyone else who might threaten the forest.

As the PCs approach the grove containing the Witches, Kazi and Vlasko fly overhead, making a few passes to scout for trouble with Kazi's *detect evil* ability. A PC can

spot the flybys with a successful DC 15 Perception check. Knowing that the standing stones have an evil reputation, Vlasko has cast a *liveoak* spell on one of the oak trees in the grove (labeled “liveoak” on the map). As the PCs enter the grove, Vlasko triggers the spell, animating the tree as a treant. Unless the PCs somehow detected the *liveoak* spell beforehand, the treant’s appearance is so sudden that it gains a surprise round, during which time the treant animates two of the other trees shown on the map. The treant and animated trees attack on the following round, as Ironwing Kazi and Vlasko the Fang strike from the skies.

IRONWING KAZI **CR 10/MR 5**

XP 9,600

Unique female advanced griffon (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 294, 168)

NG Large magical beast (mythic^{MA})

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., greensight^{MA} 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Perception +14

DEFENSE

AC 26, touch 13, flat-footed 22 (+4 Dex, +13 natural, -1 size)
hp 144 (9d10+95)

Fort +11, **Ref** +12, **Will** +9

Defensive Abilities deflect attacks, fortification^{MA}; **DR** 5/epic;
Resist fire 30

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 80 ft. (average)

Melee +1 *bite* +17 (1d6+8), 2 +1 *talons* +16 (1d6+8/18–20)

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

Special Attacks mythic power^{MA} (5/day, +1d8 surge), pounce, power dive, rake (2 +1 *claws* +8, 1d4+8)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 9th; concentration +10)
Constant—*detect evil*

TACTICS

Before Combat Vlasko casts *greater magic fang* on Kazi every day, and *freedom of movement* and *resist energy* (fire) before they enter combat.

During Combat Kazi loves to power dive at her opponents, especially pesky spellcasters and ranged combatants. Preferring hit-and-run tactics, she settles only when she has the tactical advantage or as part of some desperate gambit to defeat a spellcaster.

Morale Kazi is nearly fearless, and would not hesitate to fight to the death, but she has sworn an oath to protect and defend Vlasko, so she retreats if he is reduced to 20 hit points or fewer.

STATISTICS

Str 24, **Dex** 19, **Con** 20, **Int** 9, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +9; **CMB** +17; **CMD** 31 (35 vs. trip)

Feats Flyby Attack, Hover, Iron Will^M, Lightning Reflexes^M, Weapon Focus^M (bite)

Skills Acrobatics +14, Fly +8, Perception +14

Languages Common (cannot speak)

SQ Barrowood senses, legendary talons, longevity^{MA}

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Barrowood Senses (Su) As a dedicated defender of the Barrowood, Ironwing Kazi has the greensight^{MA} ability and *detect evil* as a constant spell-like ability.

Deflect Attacks (Ex) Once per round, when Ironwing Kazi or her rider is hit by a melee or ranged attack, she can attempt a melee attack with a +16 attack bonus to deflect the attack with one of her wings. If the result equals or exceeds the result from the opponent’s attack roll, Kazi or her rider is unaffected by the attack (as if the attack had missed).

Legendary Talons (Ex) Ironwing Kazi’s talons are as sharp as the most masterfully forged sword, and have a critical threat range of 18–20.

Power Dive (Ex) When flying, Ironwing Kazi can move up to four times her speed when she charges. If her charge begins 40 or more feet above her target, her first attack deals double the normal amount of damage. Kazi must be flying downward at an angle of 45 degrees or steeper to use this ability.

TREANT **CR 8**

XP 4,800

hp 114 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 266)

VLASKO THE FANG **CR 10**

XP 9,600

Male human druid 11

NG Medium humanoid (human)

Init +2; **Senses** Perception +23

DEFENSE

AC 24, touch 12, flat-footed 22 (+6 armor, +2 Dex, +4 natural, +2 shield)

hp 86 (11d8+33)

Fort +11, **Ref** +7, **Will** +13; +4 vs. fey and plant-targeted effects

DR 10/adamantine (110 points); **Immune** poison; **Resist** electricity 10, fire 30

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee +1 *shock scimitar* +13/+8 (1d6+4/15–20 plus 1d6 electricity)

Special Attacks wild shape 4/day

Domain Spell-Like Abilities (CL 11th; concentration +15)
7/day—lightning arc (1d6+5 electricity)

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 11th; concentration +15)

6th—*chain lightning*⁰ (DC 20), *fire seeds*
5th—*call lightning storm* (DC 19), *control winds*⁰ (DC 19), *stoneskin*

4th—*air walk*⁰, *cure serious wounds*, *freedom of movement* (2), *ice storm*

3rd—*call lightning* (DC 17), *cure moderate wounds* (2), *gaseous form*⁰, *greater magic fang*, *spike growth* (DC 17)

2nd—*barkskin*, *bull’s strength*, *flame blade*, *resist energy* (2), *wind wall*⁰

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1st—*cure light wounds, endure elements, entangle* (DC 15), *magic stone, obscuring mist^o, produce flame* 0 (at will)—*detect magic, guidance, light, stabilize*
D Domain spell; **Domain** Air

TACTICS

Before Combat Vlasko casts *greater magic fang* on Kazi every day. Before entering combat, he casts *barkskin*, *bull's strength*, *freedom of movement*, *resist energy* (fire), and *stoneskin* on himself, and *freedom of movement* and *resist energy* (fire) on Kazi.

During Combat Vlasko harasses foes with *call lightning storm*, *chain lightning*, *fire seeds*, *ice storm*, and *spike growth* while in flight. When Kazi swoops in for an attack, Vlasko attacks foes with his scimitar, using *Death From Above* and *Vital Strike*. Vlasko also use his healing spells on Kazi and himself when needed.

Morale If Kazi is seriously wounded (reduced to fewer than 30 hit points) and Vlasko is out of healing spells, he guides her out of the fight. If Kazi is slain, Vlasko fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 14, **Con** 14, **Int** 10, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +8; **CMB** +11; **CMD** 23

Feats Combat Casting, *Death From Above^{uc}*, *Improved*

Critical (scimitar), *Mounted Combat*, *Ride-by Attack*, *Vital Strike*, *Weapon Focus* (scimitar)

Skills Fly +9, *Knowledge* (geography) +13, *Knowledge* (nature) +15, *Perception* +23, *Ride* +13, *Survival* +15

Languages Common, Druidic

SQ *nature bond* (Air domain), *nature sense*, *trackless step*, *wild empathy* +10, *woodland stride*

Combat Gear *scroll of cure critical wounds*, *scroll of greater dispel magic*; **Other Gear** +2 *hide armor*, +1 *shock scimitar*, *cloak of resistance* +2, *eyes of the eagle*, holly and mistletoe, spell component pouch, diamond dust (worth 500 gp)

Treasure: If the PCs slay or subdue Ironwing Kazi and bring proof of the deed back to Egorian, they can collect the 20,000-gp bounty for the griffon.

G. GLORIOUS PLOY (CR 14)

As the PCs approach the ninth standing stone, the Barrowood takes on a darker cast. This entire stretch of woodland has been blighted by its proximity to the hellish energy of the Winter Grove. Massive trees block out most light, casting shadows that sometimes seem to dance and contort disturbingly. The bark and leaves of the trees take on a darker cast, the branches twist unnaturally, and unhealthy sap the color of the blood drains slowly from wounds in the wood. The flowers, grasses, and shrubs of the undergrowth give way to poison oak, poison sumac, and briars. This close to the Winter Grove, the temperature drops, and a strange, cold wind starts blowing through the leaves.

Creatures: As the forces of the Glorious Reclamation pushed deeper into Cheliox, the order gained intelligence regarding the internal workings of their enemies from pillaged documents and questioned Throne agents. Not long ago, they learned of the queen's sacrifice and hastily sent a contingent of knights to the Barrowood to stop it. The Glorious Reclamation's leaders don't know what will happen if they stop the sacrifice, but they hope doing so will somehow prevent infernal aid from flowing to the hated House Throne.

The daring and heroic Knight Banneret Lasida Kaesal leads the contingent, which consists of two knight inheritor paladins and a pair of movanic devas. Kaesal is honorable and idealistic, and wishes to give the PCs a chance to repent their evil ways before she resorts to hostilities. She stands next to the ninth stone with the paladins; the angels wait nearby, invisible. As the PCs approach, Lasida Kaesal confidently addresses them in a melodic voice that is both steadfast and strong.

"I urge you to stop now while you still have a chance. You must know that good will triumph

**KNIGHT BANNERET
LASIDA KAESAL**

and the Glorious Reclamation will shatter Hell's hold on this land. We are blessed by Iomedae's light, and she is the true heart of this land. Your souls can still be saved. It's not too late to ask the Inheritor's forgiveness and help us in our quest. Turn your captive over to us. We can leave this place in peace, with the hope of a brighter tomorrow."

While Kaesal hopes the PCs submit to her pleas, she's no fool. She doesn't believe any changes of heart until the PCs hand over their captive and throw down their weapons and magic implements. If the PCs attempt to draw out negotiations for an overly long period of time, the two invisible devas attack, knowing that the PCs are evil and likely not worthy of any form of redemption. Once battle is joined, Kaesal, the paladins, and the angels set upon the PCs with righteous fury, offering and taking no quarter.

LASIDA KAESAL **CR 9**

XP 6,400

Female half-elf magus 10 (*Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Magic* 9)
LG Medium humanoid (elf, human)

Init +6; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +12

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 12, flat-footed 21 (+7 armor, +2 Dex, +4 shield)
hp 78 (10d8+30)

Fort +10, **Ref** +9, **Will** +9; +2 vs. enchantments

Immune sleep

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +2 *longsword* +14/+9 (1d8+8/19-20)

Ranged mwk longbow +10/+5 (1d8/x3)

Special Attacks arcane pool (+3, 9 points), improved spell combat, magus arcane (arcane accuracy, pool strike, prescient defense^{UC}), spell recall, spellstrike

Magus Spells Prepared (CL 10th; concentration +14)

4th—*dimension door*, *wreath of blades*^{UC} (DC 18)

3rd—*fireball* (DC 17), *force punch*^{UM} (DC 17), *greater magic weapon*, *haste*

2nd—*bull's strength*, *defensive shock*^{UM}, *frigid touch*^{UM}, *mirror image*, *scorching ray*

1st—*grease* (DC 15), *magic missile* (2), *mount*, *shield*, *shocking grasp*

0 (at will)—*acid splash*, *dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *mage hand*, *ray of frost*

TACTICS

Before Combat Lasida casts *greater magic weapon* on her longsword every day, and casts *bull's strength* and *shield* on herself before battle.

During Combat Lasida casts *haste* on the first round of combat, then moves forward cautiously, peppering her enemies with ranged spells or arrows. Before entering melee combat, she casts *mirror image* and *wreath of blades*, then engages foes with her spell combat or spellstrike abilities.

Morale A true knight of the Glorious Reclamation, Lasida fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 14, **Con** 12, **Int** 18, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +7; **CMB** +11; **CMD** 23

Feats Combat Casting, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Skill Focus (Acrobatics), Toughness, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword)

Skills Acrobatics +16, Intimidate +12, Knowledge (arcana) +12, Knowledge (nobility) +5, Knowledge (religion) +8, Perception +12, Ride +13, Spellcraft +17

Languages Celestial, Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Gnome

SQ elf blood, fighter training, knowledge pool, medium armor

Gear +1 *elven chain*, mwk longsword, mithral daggers (4), mwk longbow with 20 arrows, *cloak of resistance* +2, silver holy symbol of Iomedae, spellbook (contains all prepared spells, all 0-level spells, plus 10 additional spells of 1st through 3rd level)

KNIGHTS INHERITOR (2) **CR 9**

XP 6,400 each

Pious guard (*Pathfinder RPG NPC Codex* 117)

hp 84 each

TACTICS

During Combat The paladins protect Knight Banneret Kaesal, enabling her to rain down spells until she decides to join the melee battle.

Morale Loyal to the Glorious Reclamation's cause, the knights fight to the death.

MOVANIC DEVAS (2) **CR 10**

XP 9,600 each

hp 126 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 28)

TACTICS

Before Combat The devas cast *invisibility* on themselves and attempt to position themselves behind opponents to outflank them when combat ensues.

During Combat One of the devas casts *holy aura* on their allies while the other casts *holy smite* on their foes, and they then enter combat with their greatswords. If the first *holy aura* expires, the second deva casts it again.

Morale The angels fight to the death before giving up on this holy mission.

H. WINTER GROVE (CR 15+)

Once they have completed the blood ritual at each of the nine standing stones, the PCs can finally enter the Winter Grove where they will perform Queen Abrogail's sacrifice. The grove was once a powerful druidic circle, but when House Thrune first made its pact with Hell here, this place of sylvan power was utterly desecrated. As the PCs climb down a decline into the heart of the Winter Grove, the reason for its name and the strange, cool weather in this part of the forest becomes clear.

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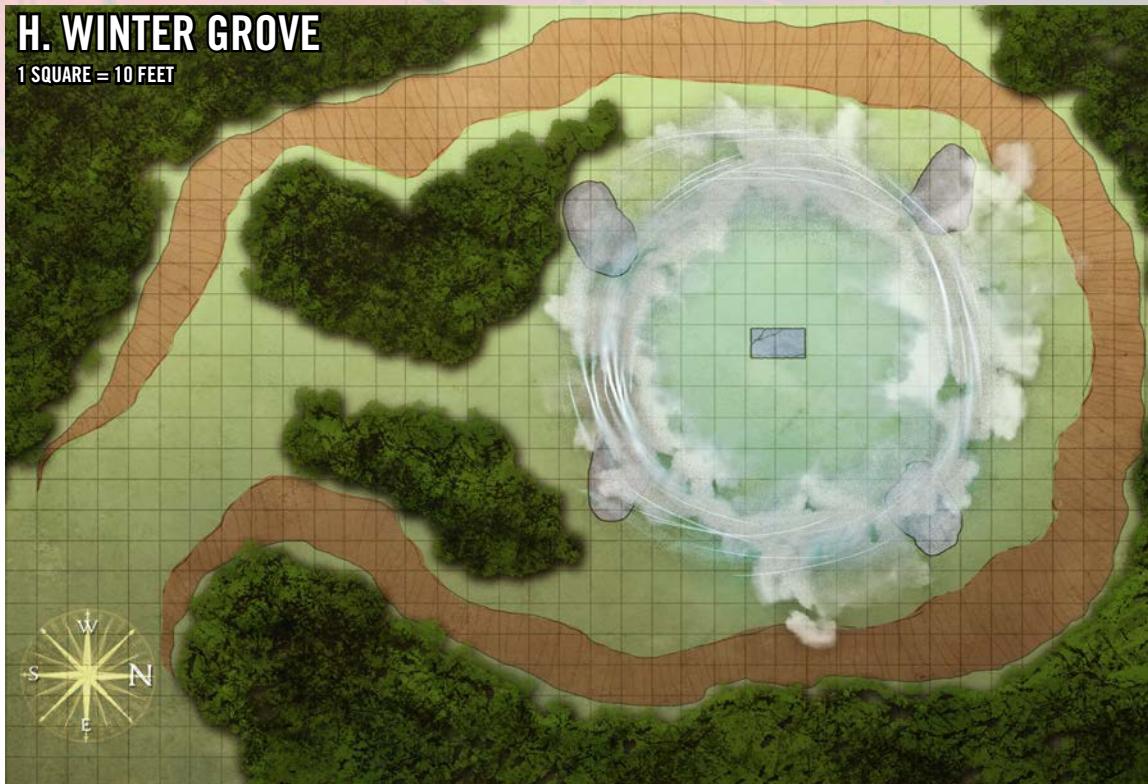
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H. WINTER GROVE

1 SQUARE = 10 FEET



Four massive, blackened standing stones jut out of the forest floor, seemingly thrust out of the ground by some past catastrophe. Between the stones, a swirling mass of ice and sleet hovers in the air, sending zephyrs of icy wind blowing through the trees. A slab of ice-rimed stone that resembles an altar stands in the middle of the wintry maelstrom.

The Winter Grove lies in a depression approximately 20 feet below the level of the surrounding forest. The cliff faces surrounding the grove are composed of dirt and stray rocks, and are relatively easy to scale (Climb DC 15).

The two large areas of foliage located just inside the entrance to the grove to the south are made up of incredibly sharp and dangerous razor brambles native to this part of the forest. These areas are considered difficult terrain, and a creature starting its turn in a square of razor brambles takes 1d6 points of bleed damage.

The icy tempest in the middle of the grove is similar to a permanent *ice storm*. The maelstrom deals 5d6 points of cold damage each round to every creature in the area. Because of the heavily falling snow and ice, creatures inside this area take a -4 penalty on Perception checks and the entire area is treated as difficult terrain.

Creatures: One more danger stands in the way of the PCs from completing their mission for the queen. There is a faction within the Church of Asmodeus that resents the church's alliance with House Thrune, and would rather see Thrune's rule replaced by a theocratic government commanded by the church. This faction has sent one its priests, Luthon Malix, and a pair of ice devils

to the Winter Grove not only to disrupt the sacrifice, but to usurp it. Malix plans to offer the sacrifice to Asmodeus on the church's behalf, hoping to tear the patronage of Hell away from House Thrune, so that the church can reshape Cheliox into a pure diabolical theocracy, creating a truly devoted seat of infernal power within the Inner Sea region.

As the PCs approach the heart of the Winter Grove, Malix emerges from the swirling ice and snow of the tempest. He approaches them like an old friend, regaling them with flattery and lies, but the forms of the ice devils behind him hint at his darker purpose.

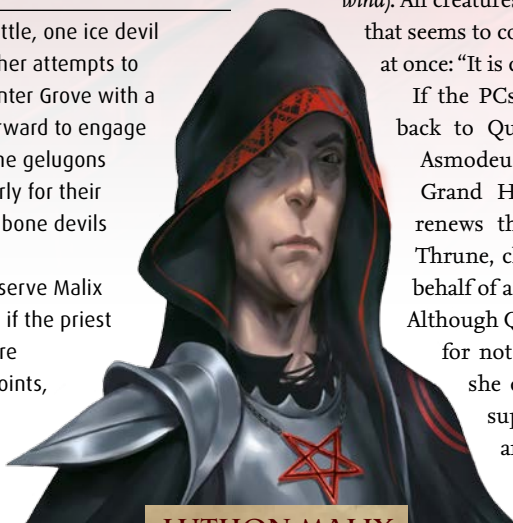
"Congratulations, servants of the empire. The queen and Asmodeus salute you and your efforts. I have been sent here to perform the sacrifice and ensure the rites of Hell are carried out properly. Hand over the victim to me, and I will take care of the rest."

Malix is not a very good liar (his Bluff modifier is +2), but he is hoping his story is plausible enough to convince the PCs to turn over the sacrifice without a fight. If the PCs do hand over their captive, Malix thanks them and brusquely dismisses them, saying their presence is no longer required. If the PCs balk at leaving or refuse to give up their sacrifice, Malix simply mumbles, "So be it," and the priest and the ice devils attack the PCs. During the battle, Malix tries to ensure that either the captive or at least one of the PCs survives so he can make the sacrifice in the church's name when the others are dead.

ICE DEVILS (2)**CR 13****XP 25,600 each****hp** 161 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 77*)**TACTICS**

During Combat At the start of battle, one ice devil casts *cone of cold* while the other attempts to seal off the entrance to the Winter Grove with a *wall of ice*; then both move forward to engage enemies in melee combat. If the gelugons believe the battle is going poorly for their side, they attempt to summon bone devils to turn the tide.

Morale Both devils are bound to serve Malix and the church until death, but if the priest dies before they do and they are reduced to fewer than 40 hit points, they cast *greater teleport* to escape, believing they have fulfilled the terms of their contract with the church.

**LUTHON MALIX****LUTHON MALIX****CR 10****XP 9,600**Male fire cleric (*Pathfinder RPG NPC Codex 52*)**hp** 75**Resist** cold 30, fire 10; **SR** 23**TACTICS**

Before Combat Malix casts *freedom of movement*, *resist energy* (cold), and *spell resistance* before the PCs arrive in the grove.

During Combat Malix casts *shield of faith* on the first round of combat. During the battle, Malix assaults opponents with *blade barrier*, *flame strike*, and *fireballs*, entering melee combat only if absolutely necessary.

Morale The priest knows that if he fails, his treachery will end in a slow, painful death, so Malix would rather die quickly in service to his god in combat.

Development: Once the PCs defeat Luthon Malix and his devils, they are free to perform the ritual sacrifice. To do so, they must successfully deliver a coup de grace to the victim on the sacrificial altar at the heart of the grove. If the original intended sacrifice died before reaching the Winter Grove, the PCs must replace him or her with another suitable sacrifice, such as one of the PCs themselves, as the queen alluded to when she charged them with this mission. Alternatively, the PCs could sacrifice the surviving courtier whom they originally allied with instead. In this case, they'll likely have to return to Egorian, capture that person, and retrace their path along the nine standing stones, repeating the blood rituals with their new sacrifice.

Once the deathblow is dealt to the sacrificial victim, the altar stone seems to greedily absorb the victim's blood, and a pentagram burning with hellfire erupts from the

ground, centered on the sacrificial slab. A rime of ice quickly encases the victim's body as a gust of icy wind blasts outward with a howling shriek (treat as a *gust of wind*). All creatures in the grove hear a full, rich voice that seems to come from everywhere and nowhere at once: "It is done. The pact is renewed."

If the PCs bring news of Malix's treachery back to Queen Abrogail or the Church of Asmodeus, there are few repercussions. Grand High Priestess Aspexia Rugatonn renews the church's pledge of loyalty to Thrune, claiming that Malix was acting on behalf of a splinter faction within the church. Although Queen Abrogail rebukes the church for not uncovering the treachery earlier, she can ill afford to lose the church's support during this time of chaos, and so lets the matter drop—for now, at least.

Story Award: For successfully completing the sacrifice and renewing House Thrune's pact with Hell, award the PCs 76,800 XP.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Once the sacrifice is complete, the PCs can make their way back to Egorian. Upon their return, they are hailed as heroes of the empire, as Queen Abrogail has made sure to spread word of their success as propaganda that Hell favors Cheliox and that Asmodeus has agreed to aid in crushing the rebellion that has thrown the edges of the nation into chaos.

Once the PCs have had time to recover from their endeavor, they are again summoned to the Imperial Palace for an audience with Queen Abrogail before the entire court in the queen's throne room. After the proper respects have been paid, the queen addresses the court.

"The priests of Asmodeus teach us that Hell is the eternal flame that truly guides all paths to power. Today, these devoted subjects have ensured that Hell's fires still blaze in favor of Cheliox. Behold, one and all, what true dedication to queen and empire can accomplish.

"I, Abrogail the Second of the Thrice-Damned House of Thrune, by the Might of Asmodeus, Queen and Empress of Cheliox, hereby decree that these loyal and trusted agents be welcomed into the ranks of the Bound, to share in the glory of House Thrune and the empire of Cheliox. You have already sworn your bodies and minds to us; now your souls shall be promised to Asmodeus. In return, let the powers of the damned be opened to you, so that you can use such gifts to further our will!"

It is obvious that this is not a request, but rather a foregone conclusion for the queen. Accepting this

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ADVANCING THROUGH THE RANKS

Those who work for the imperial government of Cheliox and the Thrice-Damned House of Thrune are commonly known as Thrune agents. Among these agents, however, are those who serve House Thrune directly, often working for the best interests of Cheliox's ruling family rather than for those of the nation (though these interests often overlap). These agents swear their bodies, minds, or souls (or all three) to Queen Abrogail II herself.

The third and final level of sworn Thrune agent is Thrune Bound Agent (referred to within the Thrune organization as simply "the Trusted"). Having already sworn their lives and loyalty to House Thrune, Bound agents must swear their very souls to Asmodeus by signing an infernal contract. In exchange, they gain an infernal boon (see Infernal Boons below).

honor will elevate the PCs to the rank of Thrune Bound Agent, the highest level of authority within the Thrune organization, and grant them personal access to Queen Abrogail—though they will be damned, and their souls will go to Hell when they die. In exchange, the PCs will gain the ability to channel a small portion of the power of Hell itself, in the form of an infernal boon granted by Asmodeus himself (see Infernal Boons below).

Only PCs who are already Thrune Trusted Agents can be promoted to Bound Agents; if a PC did not accept the earlier honors in "Wrath of Thrune" and "The Inferno Gate," she can't become a Bound Agent, though at your discretion, you can allow such a character to join the ranks of the Loyal or Trusted at this time, or even go through all three stages at once.

If any PCs refuse, the queen presses, but eventually allows it, stating, "Very well. But you have still done us a great service, and we are not unkind. Your reward shall be keeping your life after such insolence." She gives any such PCs a stern look of disapproval and turns her attention to those more amenable characters.

After any quibbling is done, a contract devil (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 376) emerges from the shadows behind the queen's throne, holding a bundle of scrolls. "Now it is just a matter of the paperwork," the devil states.

The PCs don't have much of an opportunity to read the full details of the contract, but a character who succeeds at a DC 30 Linguistics, Knowledge (planes), or Profession (barrister) check can quickly skim the document to learn the gist of the agreement. In addition, the contract devil lays out the general details of the contract, as follows.

By signing this infernal contract, the PCs swear their souls to Asmodeus, meaning their souls go to Hell when they die. However, if the PCs defeat the Glorious

Reclamation, the fate of their souls will return to them. If, before that time, the signatories break the contract, such as by failing to vanquish the Glorious Reclamation, providing aid to the Iomedean order, or betraying Queen Abrogail or House Thrune, the signatories' souls will be forfeit to Asmodeus and consigned to Hell for eternity. In return, a signatory receives one infernal boon for as long as her soul remains bound by the contract (see Infernal Boons below).

However, the contract is with Queen Abrogail herself, not Asmodeus, and the PCs' souls are placed in escrow with the contract devil until the terms of the contract are fulfilled or broken. Because of this stipulation, the PCs' souls are technically not yet promised to the Prince of Darkness, enabling clerics and other divine spellcasters of gods other than Asmodeus to keep their divine powers, and allowing slain PCs to be raised or resurrected for the duration of the campaign.

Once the PCs sign the contracts, Queen Abrogail rises from her throne, and bestows a kiss upon each villain, sealing the compact between the PCs, Hell, and herself. The contract devil gathers the signed contracts and returns to Hell to file them away. The ritual ends to the sounds of cheers and applause from the assembled court in honor of the newly minted Bound Agents.

But the celebration abruptly comes to an end when one of the crimson-armored Infernal Guards bursts into the room and kneels before the queen.

"My apologies, Your Infernal Majestrix, but I bear urgent and terrible news. Westcrown has fallen to the Glorious Reclamation."

The ramifications of this dire statement are further explored in the next installment of the Hell's Vengeance Adventure Path, "Scourge of the Godclaw."

Treasure: In addition to their infernal boons, Queen Abrogail also presents each PC with a sum of 25,000 gp as a reward for their service. This can take the form of magic items.

Story Award: As long as at least one of the PCs signs the infernal contract and becomes a Thrune Bound Agent, the act of binding themselves to Queen Abrogail and Asmodeus infuses the PCs with a surge of divine, infernal power. Award the PCs a total of 215,000 XP, which should be sufficient for them to reach 13th level. If this is not enough to get the PCs to 13th level, adjust the reward appropriately.

INFERNAL BOONS

The contract that binds the PCs to Queen Abrogail and Asmodeus sequesters the PCs' souls, but it also grants each PC one of the following infernal boons of the PC's choice once the contract is signed. Once the choice is made, it cannot be changed.

Blackguard: The recipient gains a +1 profane bonus on all attack rolls and the ability to focus the might of



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Hell into his armor and weapons. As a standard action, the recipient can give a touched suit of armor the *good outsider-defiant*^{UE} armor special ability or a touched weapon the *unholy* weapon special ability. This ability can be used a total of three times per day, in any combination, and the effects last for a number of rounds equal to 1/2 the recipient's character level.

Darkness: The recipient gains the see in darkness universal monster ability and the ability to detach his shadow once per day and animate it as a greater shadow (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 245). The shadow's alignment matches that of the recipient, and it follows the recipient's orders and can communicate intelligibly with the recipient. The shadow cannot be turned or commanded, and it cannot create spawn. The shadow remains for up to 1 hour or until slain or dismissed by the recipient.

Devil Hide: The recipient's skin grows tough and scaly, granting him a +4 natural armor bonus or increasing his existing natural armor bonus by 4.

Fiendish: The recipient is infused with hellish vigor, gaining darkvision 60 feet, cold resistance 15, fire resistance 15, and DR 10/good. In addition, once per day as a swift action the recipient can smite good, adding his Charisma bonus (if any) to attack rolls and adding his character level to all damage rolls against good foes.

The smite good effect remains until the target of the smite is dead or the recipient rests.

Fire: The recipient can cast the following spells as spell-like abilities (the caster level for this ability is equal to the recipient's character level): at will—*burning hands*, 3/day—*fireball*, 1/day—*flame strike*.

Pride: The recipient gains a +2 inherent bonus to one ability score.

Slavery: The recipient can summon an enslaved fiend once per day as per the summon universal monster ability with a 100% chance of success (the caster level for this ability is equal to the recipient's character level). The type of fiend summoned is determined by the recipient's alignment: lawful evil—bone devil (*Bestiary* 74); neutral evil—leukodaemon (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 68), or chaotic evil—vrock (*Bestiary* 69). Summoned creatures automatically return whence they came after 1 hour. A nonevil character gains no benefit from this boon.

Trickery: The recipient can use the following spells as spell-like abilities (the caster level for this ability is equal to the recipient's character level): at will—*vanish*^{APG}, 3/day—*displacement*, 1/day—*mirage arcana*.

Tyranny: The recipient can use the following spells as spell-like abilities (the caster level for this ability is equal to the recipient's character level): at will—*command*, 3/day—*suggestion*, 1/day—*hold monster*.



ARCHCOUNTESS LEVISVIA VASVION

Levisvia Vasvion's rise has been slowed by the taint of a distant demonic bloodline and the deaths and disappearances of past husbands and lovers. Yet this shrewd and charming woman is not about to let a few setbacks stand in her way.

LEVISVIA VASVION**CR 13****XP 25,600**

Female human arcanist 11/aristocrat 3 (*Pathfinder RPG Advanced Class Guide* 8)

NE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +5; **Senses** Perception +16

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 11, flat-footed 18 (+4 armor, +1 Dex, +4 shield)

hp 77 (14 HD; 11d6+3d8+25)

Fort +8, **Ref** +8, **Will** +16; +4 vs. enchantments

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +2 *dagger* +8/+3 (1d4+1/19–20)

Ranged +2 *dagger* +10 (1d4+1/19–20)

Special Attacks arcane reservoir (8/14), arcanist exploits (counterspell, energy shield [resist 20], flame arc [6d6+2 fire], greater spell resistance [SR 22], potent magic, spell resistance, swift consume), consume spells

Arcanist Spells Prepared (CL 11th;

concentration +16)

5th (4/day)—*cone of cold* (DC 21), *suffocation*^{APG} (DC 20)

4th (5/day)—*ball lightning*^{APG} (DC 20), *enchantment foil*^{ACG}, *phantasmal killer* (DC 19)

3rd (5/day)—*dispel magic*, *force punch*^{UM} (DC 19), *greater stunning barrier*^{ACG} (DC 18), *vision of Hell*^{UM} (DC 18)

2nd (5/day)—*detect thoughts* (DC 17), *frigid touch*^{UM}, *glitterdust* (DC 17), *mirror image*, *scorching ray*

1st (6/day)—*charm person* (DC 16), *ear-piercing scream*^{UM} (DC 17), *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *shield*

0 (at will)—*acid splash*,

detect magic, *detect poison*, *light*, *mage hand*, *message*, *prestidigitation*, *ray of frost*, *touch of fatigue* (DC 15)

TACTICS

Before Combat Levisvia casts *enchantment foil* and *mage armor* every day, and casts *mirror image* and *shield* before battle.

During Combat The archcountess prefers to avoid combat, but if she must fight, she casts *greater stunning barrier* and activates her energy shield and spell resistance arcanist exploits. Levisvia tries to take out foes as quickly as possible, using spells such as *cone of cold*, *suffocation*, *phantasmal killer*, and her flame arc arcanist exploit.

Morale A survivor at heart, Levisvia flees if she is reduced to fewer than 35 hit points, or if battle seems hopeless, drinking a *potion of fly* or using her *slippers of spider climbing* to evade pursuit.

STATISTICS

Str 8, **Dex** 12, **Con** 13, **Int** 20, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +7; **CMB** +6; **CMD** 17

Feats Combat Casting, Eschew Materials, Extra Arcanist Exploit^{ACG}, Favored Enemy Spellcasting^{ACG} (human), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Persuasive, Spell Focus (evocation)

Skills Appraise +10, Bluff +19, Diplomacy +23, Fly +10, Intimidate +23, Knowledge (arcana) +22, Knowledge (nobility) +22, Perception +16, Sense Motive +18, Spellcraft +22

Languages Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Elven, Halfling, Infernal

Combat Gear *alluring golden apple*^{UE}, *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *potions of fly* (2), *scrolls of baleful polymorph* (2), *wand of fireball* (25 charges), tanglefoot bags (2); **Other Gear** +2 *dagger*, *cloak of resistance* +3, *scarlet and blue sphere ioun stone*, *slippers of spider climbing*, noble's outfit, signet ring, spellbook (contains all prepared spells, all 0-level spells, plus 10 spells of 1st–5th level), jewelry (worth 300 gp), 193 gp



An old Egorian family that predates the Thrune Ascendancy, the Vasvions have long wielded great political and economic power, but families are often like empires—withering from within as enemies loot the fringes. Sometime long ago, the blood of House Vasvion intermingled with that of a demonic interloper. While the particulars are lost to the fog of time, rumors live on, and the house has always been associated with the Abyss, chaos, murder, and treachery, though often unfairly. Unlike her ancestors, Levisvia Vasvion has not accepted this fate with apathy or stoicism. A woman of sharp wit and incredible will, enhanced by tantalizing beauty and a knack for playing the games of romance and politics, Levisvia has always wanted something more for her family, and seems ever on the verge of restoring the Vasvion name to power and prosperity.

Levisvia has been married three times before, most recently to the Archcount of Nissitar, but all of her past suitors and husbands (including the archcount) have disappeared or met with unfortunate demises. This, coupled with the fact that Levisvia often gained financially by these tragedies, has made her love life a rumormonger's dream come true. It is commonly assumed that Levisvia has taken to black-widow tactics to achieve her goals, but there's no truth to this supposed scandal. Levisvia has sincerely been unlucky in love and has had no hand in the deaths of any of her past companions. She has found, however, that dead husbands often ease the financial strain brought on by Westcrown creditors, and that her notorious reputation keeps the callow and weak from amorously pursuing her.

When the talented and influential Paraduke Thalmano Sethic was arrested by the Order of the Scourge, Levisvia turned her ruthless business acumen toward taking over Sethic's most successful enterprises to rebuild the finances and name of House Vasvion. With the paraduke gone and his organization in disarray, Levisvia found it a relatively easy task, but it made an implacable enemy of Sethic when he was released from captivity a few years ago.

But picking at the carcass of Paraduke Sethic's misfortune is not the only front in the archcountess's struggle to increase House Vasvion's fortunes. With her last husband only 6 months dead, Levisvia has once more thrown herself into securing a politically advantageous marriage with gossip-worthy zeal. To the surprise of the Egorian elite, Levisvia already has a new fiance, the youngest son of Lord-Mayor Grachius Alazario. While the young couple seem well suited and happy, wagers in the back alleys and high vaneos of the city give Nicolo Alazario only weeks or months before suffering the tragic fate of the Vasvion curse. If Nicolo's days are numbered, however, it will not be the archcountess's doing, but rather the scheming of her greatest rival, Paraduke Thalmano Sethic.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

When the PCs meet Archcountess Vasvion, she is at a crucial crossroads in her endeavors to increase her political power within Egorian. With Paraduke Thalmano Sethic's return, she faces a vicious enemy who will stop at nothing to reclaim the commercial empire taken from him through Levisvia Vasvion's opportunistic machinations. The archcountess knows success will come only when she has put Sethic down once and for all; to do that, she needs the help of talented outsiders unafraid to engage in merciless behavior. She freely uses her influence with Queen Abrogail to reward those who aid her in this goal. This gets her not only what she wants, but also might curry more favor with the Infernal Majestrix by providing Abrogail with talent for her own needs and purposes.

RUMORS

After meeting Archcountess Vasvion, the PCs may want to find out more about their potential sponsor. The result of a successful Diplomacy check to gather information or Knowledge (nobility) check reveals the following information about the archcountess, as well as all of the information that can be gained with a lesser result.

Result Information

10+	The Vasvions are an ancient family, predating the nation of Cheliox itself, but have slipped into decline within the past century. Levisvia Vasvion, Archcountess of Nissitar, is the family's best hope of survival and prosperity. She's been able to increase her house's prestige and wealth through shrewd business deals, her friendship with the queen, and a series of brief marriages to wealthy nobles.
15+	Some call Levisvia Vasvion a black widow. Though only 27 years old, she's been married three times and all of her husbands have died suddenly and under questionable circumstances. While the archcountess has never been implicated in her husbands' deaths, many still question the wisdom of the mayor's youngest son, Nicolo Alazario, who will soon be Levisvia's fourth husband.
20+	With her third husband, the Archcount of Nissitar, Levisvia bought much of Paraduke Thalmano Sethic's former businesses from the Order of the Scourge during the paraduke's imprisonment. When the archcount accidentally drowned in his own bathtub, Levisvia inherited her husband's title and full control over Sethic's former assets. Although Sethic wants many of his former properties back, Levisvia refuses to sell.
30+	Levisvia might seem like an empty-headed fool, but she is shrewd and devious, with a sharp political mind.

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PARADUKE THALGANO SETHIC

Once a renowned merchant and power at the imperial court in Egorian, Thalgano Sethic was brought low by the Order of the Scourge, who crippled his body and confiscated his fortune. Although his influence is waning, Sethic will not fade away without a fight.

THALGANO SETHIC**CR 13****XP 25,600**

Male human rogue (spy) 7/sorcerer 7 (*Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 135)

LE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +4 (+6 in urban); **Senses** Perception +10 (+12 in urban)

DEFENSE

AC 24, touch 16, flat-footed 19 (+4 armor, +1 deflection, +4 Dex, +1 dodge, +4 shield)

hp 80 (14 HD; 7d6+7d8+21)

Fort +8, **Ref** +13, **Will** +12; +2 vs. poison

Defensive Abilities evasion, uncanny dodge; **Resist** fire 5

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 *sword cane* +14/+9 (1d6+1 plus deathblade)

Ranged mwk dagger +13 (1d4/19–20)

Special Attacks sneak attack +4d6

Bloodline Spell-Like Abilities
(CL 7th; concentration +11)
7/day—*corrupting touch*
(3 rounds)

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 7th; concentration +11)

3rd (5/day)—*lightning bolt* (DC 17), *slow* (DC 17), *suggestion* (DC 17)

2nd (7/day)—*ghoul touch* (DC 16), *hideous laughter* (DC 16), *mirror image*, *scorching ray*

1st (7/day)—*charm person* (DC 17), *magic missile*, *protection from good*, *ray of enfeeblement* (DC 15), *shield*, *vanish*^{APG} (DC 15)

0 (at will)—*acid splash*, *daze* (DC 14), *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *light*, *mage hand*, *touch of fatigue* (DC 14)

Bloodline infernal**TACTICS**

Before Combat Thalgano casts *mirror image* and *shield* before combat and applies deathblade to his sword cane.

During Combat Thalgano prefers to let his minions take on the brunt of combat while he stays out of harm's way. If he must fight, he tries to take out enemies at range with spells such as *lightning bolt*, *magic missile*, or *scorching ray*, or weaken them with spells such as *slow*, *hideous laughter*, or *ray of enfeeblement*. In melee combat, he casts *haste* from a scroll, then tries to make sneak attacks with his poisoned sword cane or touch spells.

Morale If reduced to 20 or fewer hit points, Thalgano attempts to flee, casting *vanish* or *mirror image* to better his chances of escape.

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 18, **Con** 10, **Int** 13, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 18

Base Atk +8; **CMB** +8; **CMD** 24

Feats Combat Casting, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Eschew Materials, Great Fortitude, Iron Will, Martial Weapon Proficiency (sword cane), Toughness, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (sword cane)

Skills Bluff +20 (+23 on opposed rolls), Diplomacy +20, Intimidate +20, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Knowledge (local) +18, Knowledge (nobility) +10, Perception +10 (+12 in urban), Sense Motive +18, Stealth +17 (+19 in urban)

Languages Common, Infernal
SQ bloodline arcana (+2 DC for charm spells), favored terrain (urban +2), poison use, rogue talents (charmer^{APG}, hard to fool^{APG}, terrain mastery^{UC})

Combat Gear *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *scrolls of haste* (2),



deathblade poison (2), giant wasp poison (2); **Other Gear** +1 sword cane^{WE}, mwk dagger, belt of physical might +2 (Dex, Con), bracers of armor +4, cloak of resistance +2, ring of protection +1, noble's outfit, signet ring, jewelry (worth 150 gp), 53 gp

Thalgano Sethic was born somewhere in Egorian's Cheapside, and not long after his birth, he was sold as a slave to a diabolist. Although he managed to avoid having his blood spilled on the sacrificial slab, Thalgano's childhood proved both horrifying and desperate. Subjected to all manner of occult rituals and corrupt experiments by his master, Thalgano eventually developed arcane abilities with an infernal taint. Clever and canny, Thalgano plotted for his release and revenge. Finally, his opportunity came to turn the tables on his master, and Thalgano plunged a ceremonial dagger into the diabolist's heart, sending the man's soul to the depths of Hell and infernal damnation.

Enriched by what remained of the diabolist's scholarship and treasure, Thalgano became a cutthroat for a string of ruthless merchants, learning the secrets of intrigue and the ebb and flow of commerce within the city until he could build his own power base in Egorian's lower-class neighborhoods.

The real backbone of his financial empire, however, came from mastering the secret of breeding Avernus razorbacks, fiendish pigs from the first layer of Hell. The exotic meat of these infernal swine is a popular delicacy throughout Cheliox and the shadowy courts of Nidal, and the razorbacks' unique digestion also allowed Thalgano to make not only his own competition and enemies utterly disappear, but those of his allies and clients as well. His business savvy and financial success contributed to his ascent within the imperial court, and Queen Abrogail ultimately awarded him the title of paraduke.

But though Thalgano Sethic's rise may have been meteoric, his fall came more suddenly than anyone could have imagined. Without warning, he was hauled off in the dead of the night by the Order of the Scourge for undisclosed crimes, and spent 2 years as a "guest" of the Hellknights, suffering grueling interrogations and torture. The Hellknights released Thalgano several years ago, his body mangled, with bones broken and reset in agonizing ways that even the most powerful magic couldn't heal.

During Thalgano's incarceration, most of his businesses and properties were sold off to rivals like Archcountess Levisvia Vasvion. And though Thalgano regained his title upon his release, only a fraction of his former wealth remains. Physically broken, but not defeated, Paraduke Sethic has set out to restore his former prestige and wealth, but the path is treacherous, and the scavengers of the imperial court are always watching, waiting for the first sign of weakness.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Paraduke Sethic poses as a person who can help the PCs maneuver through the complexities of Egorian's political life, but he's really looking for fresh muscle he can manipulate in his struggles against Archcountess Levisvia Vasvion. While he can and will aid the PCs, he only does so if they serve his purpose. Allying with Sethic and contributing to the restoration of his wealth and influence creates a powerful friend who can get Queen Abrogail's attention as well as provide a means of permanently disposing of enemies. Although a crafty and heartless bastard, Paraduke Sethic can be very generous to those who aid in his recovery.

RUMORS

After meeting Paraduke Sethic, the PCs may want to find out more about their potential sponsor. The result of a successful Diplomacy check to gather information or Knowledge (nobility) check reveals the following information about the paraduke, as well as all of the information that can be gained with a lesser result.

Result Information

- | Result | Information |
|--------|--|
| 10+ | Thalgano Sethic is a self-made man who came out of nowhere to build a mercantile empire from failing trade concerns and dead-end businesses in Egorian's Cheapside neighborhoods. In doing so, he earned the honorific of paraduke, a nonhereditary noble title. Arrested by the Order of the Scourge, Sethic was interned and tortured for years. The Hellknights mysteriously released the paraduke a few years ago, with both his body and financial empire broken. |
| 15+ | While Paraduke Sethic is a shell of the man he once was, he is not vanquished. He is vigorously rebuilding his empire, which has brought him into conflict with Archcountess Levisvia Vasvion, who refuses to sell back those assets that belonged to him before his fall from grace. |
| 20+ | Of Thalgano Sethic's many business ventures, one of his most successful involves the breeding and butchering of infernal swine called Avernus razorbacks. Not only is the meat of these pigs considered a delicacy among Egorian's elite, but any creature devoured by the hellish boars cannot be raised from the dead. |
| 30+ | There are many rumors regarding Sethic's arrest, imprisonment, and torture by the Order of the Scourge, but the most compelling involves his relationship with Queen Abrogail. The paraduke is a patriotic man, and when granted his title, he swore never to lie to his queen. Sethic supposedly confessed to some terrible crime during a conversation with the queen, and she ordered his arrest. Interestingly, she also ordered his release. |

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QUEEN ABROGAIL THRUNE II

Great-granddaughter of Abrogail I, founder of the Thrune dynasty, the current Infernal Majestrix of Cheliaz has an imperial bearing touched by darkness. The absolute ruler of her empire, Abrogail II is no puppet of Hell or anyone else.

ABROGAIL THRUNE II**CR 18****XP 153,600**

Female human aristocrat 2/sorcerer 16

LE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +4; **Senses** *discern lies*, see in darkness, *true seeing*; Perception +30**DEFENSE****AC** 34, touch 21, flat-footed 30 (+8 armor, +5 deflection, +4 Dex, +2 luck, +5 natural)**hp** 162 (18 HD; 16d6+2d8+97)**Fort** +17, **Ref** +18, **Will** +27**Defensive Abilities***nondetection*;**Immune** fire, mental ability score damage, mind-affecting effects, poison, smite effects;**Resist** acid 10, cold 10; **SR** 29**OFFENSE****Speed** 30 ft.**Melee** *rod of withering* +10/+5

(1d4 Str and 1d4 Con) or

staff of power +11/+6 (1d6+2)**Bloodline Spell-Like Abilities**

(CL 16th; concentration +24)

11/day—*corrupting touch* (8 rounds)1/day—*hellfire* (16d6 fire, DC 26)**Sorcerer Spells Known**

(CL 16th; concentration +24)

8th (4/day)—*greater planar binding* (DC 26)7th (6/day)—*greater teleport*, *limited wish* (DC 25), *prismatic spray* (DC 25),*summon monster VII*6th (7/day)—*disintegrate* (DC 24),*flesh to stone* (DC 24), *mass suggestion* (DC 25), *planar binding* (DC 24)5th (7/day)—*cone of cold* (DC 23), *contact other plane*, *dismissal* (DC 23), *dominate person* (DC 24), *lesser planar binding* (DC 23), *wall of force*4th (8/day)—*charm monster* (DC 25), *greater false life*^{UM}, *greater infernal healing*^{ISWG}, *phantasmal killer* (DC 22), *stoneskin*3rd (8/day)—*dispel magic*, *displacement*, *enter image*^{APG}, *ray of exhaustion* (DC 21), *suggestion* (DC 22)2nd (8/day)—*burning gaze*^{APG} (DC 20), *detect thoughts* (DC 20), *hideous laughter* (DC 21), *mirror image*, *molten orb*^{ACG} (DC 20), *scorching ray*1st (8/day)—*charm person* (DC 22), *disguise self*, *magic missile*, *protection from good*, *ray of enfeeblement* (DC 19), *shield 0* (at will)—*acid splash*, *arcane mark*, *detect magic*, *light*, *mage hand*, *message*, *prestidigitation*, *ray of frost*, *read magic***Bloodline** infernal**TACTICS****Before Combat** Abrogail casts *greater false life*.**During Combat** Queen Abrogail does not usually deign to join combat herself, letting her devoted and diabolic servants sweep away those fools arrogant enough to threaten her.**Morale** Abrogail doesn't usually loiter with threats around. She uses her *getaway boots* to escape to one of her various safe havens in Egorian and beyond.

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 18, **Con** 16, **Int** 18, **Wis** 20, **Cha** 26

Base Atk +9; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 30

Feats Alertness, Burning Spell^{WM}, Combat Casting, Empower Spell, Eschew Materials, Expanded Arcana^{APG}, Great Fortitude, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Persuasive, Quicken Spell, Spell Focus (enchantment), Spell Penetration

Skills Bluff +25, Diplomacy +25, Fly +10, Intimidate +33, Knowledge (arcana) +15, Knowledge (nobility) +15, Knowledge (planes) +25, Perception +30, Sense Motive +30, Spellcraft +18, Use Magic Device +15

Languages Abyssal, Celestial, Common, Infernal, Shadowtongue

SQ bloodline arcana (+2 DC for charm spells), exceptional resources, on dark wings

Combat Gear *potion of cure serious wounds*, *potion of invisibility*, *staff of power*; **Other Gear** *rod of withering*, *amulet of natural armor +5*, *belt of physical might +4* (Dex, Con), *bracers of armor +8*, *cloak of resistance +5*, *Crown of Infernal Majesty* (see sidebar), *getaway boots^{UE}*, *glove of storing*, *ring of protection +5*, royal outfit, diamond dust (worth 1,000 gp), jewelry (worth 1,000 gp)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Exceptional Resources (Ex) As queen of Cheliox, Abrogail has access to all of that nation's resources, and she has the wealth of a PC rather than an NPC. In addition, her ability scores use a 20-point build. These advantages increase her CR by 1.

Her Infernal Majestrix, Queen Abrogail II of the Thrice-Damned House of Thrune, has been the undisputed ruler of Cheliox since 4709 AR, when her predecessor, Infrexus, fell through the ice on the Adivian River and drowned. Since Abrogail's ascension to the throne, rumors have persisted that the young woman is immature, petty, and spoiled; in reality, she is a ruthless and effective monarch, ruling the country with brutality and finesse, much like her great-grandmother and namesake, Abrogail I. In fact, Abrogail II may just be the most devious and intelligent Thrune ever to wear the crown of Cheliox. Although she receives the guidance and support of Hell, in the form of both the pit fiend Gorthoklek (who served Abrogail I in the same capacity) and the erinyes Contessa Lrilatha, it is clear that it is Abrogail, and not the lords of the Pit, who rules Cheliox.

Abrogail deals with her enemies swiftly, sending legions of erinyes to apprehend traitors or remove threats. Against those who have personally wronged her, the queen is fond of using petrification magic, bringing her defeated foes to the Imperial Palace in Egorian where they remain forever under the watchful eyes of her loyal guards and advisors. Abrogail displays these statues as a constant reminder to those in the court of a traitor's fate: an eternity in stone under her control, beyond either the rewards of Hell or the mercy of Heaven.

CROWN OF INFERNAL MAJESTY

Gifted to Queen Abrogail I by Asmodeus himself, the *Crown of Infernal Majesty* is the royal regalia of the Infernal Majestrix of Cheliox, a token of House Thrune's pact with Hell and a symbol of their infernal right to rule.

CROWN OF INFERNAL MAJESTY (MAJOR ARTIFACT)

SLOT head	CL 20th	WEIGHT —
AURA strong abjuration and transmutation		

This engraved and filigreed silver diadem is fashioned with three tines rising from the front of the circlet, the central one of which bears the encircled cross emblem of Cheliox. The *Crown of Infernal Majesty* grants its wearer a suite of abilities. Defensively, it provides immunity to fire and poison, immunity to mind-affecting effects, immunity to mental ability score damage, acid and cold resistance 10, and spell resistance equal to the wearer's CR + 11. In addition, the wearer is immune to smite effects (including the smite evil ability of celestial creatures and paladins, and the destructive smite ability of the Destruction domain). A creature that attempts to smite the wearer of the crown gets no bonus on attack rolls against the wearer, and the crown reflects any bonus damage from the smite back against the attacker as evil-aligned damage that bypasses the corresponding damage reduction.

The wearer gains the see in darkness universal monster ability, and the ability to use *discern lies*, *nondetection*, and *true seeing* as constant spell-like abilities. The crown also grants its wearer a +6 enhancement bonus to her Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores (with ranks in Intimidate, Knowledge [planes], and Sense Motive, as a *headband of vast intelligence*, as well as the ability to speak and read Abyssal, Celestial, and Infernal). Lastly, the wearer gains a +4 profane bonus on Charisma-based checks to bargain or deal with devils (such as with *planar ally* or *planar binding* spells).

DESTRUCTION

The *Crown of Infernal Majesty* can be destroyed only by tricking Asmodeus into nullifying each of the Three Damnations written into the infernal contracts between Hell and House Thrune.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Through much of the adventure, Queen Abrogail II is a background figure. Once the PCs eradicate the Bellflower Network in Egorian, Abrogail becomes convinced that they are the agents she needs to renew her pact with Hell amid the current political upheaval in Cheliox.

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MEET THE VILLAIN: ZELHARA

Zelhara is the iconic torturer for the Hell's Vengeance Adventure Path. Although she does not appear as a character in the campaign, she can be used as an NPC or pregenerated player character. Note that her CR is 1 higher than normal because she has PC wealth.

ZELHARA**CR 7****XP 3,200**

Female human inquisitor of Zon-Kuthon 7 (*Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 38)

LE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +5; **Senses** Perception +13

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 14, flat-footed 16 (+5 armor, +1 deflection, +2 Dex, +1 dodge)

hp 49 (7d8+14)

Fort +6, **Ref** +4, **Will** +8

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 *cruel spiked chain* +9 (2d4+2)

Ranged mwk dagger +8 (1d4+1/19–20)

Special Attacks bane (7 rounds/day), judgment 3/day

Inquisitor Spell-Like Abilities (CL 7th; concentration +10)

At will—*detect alignment*, *discern lies* (7 rounds/day)

Inquisitor Spells Known (CL 7th; concentration +10)

3rd (2/day)—*seek thoughts*^{APG} (DC 16), *speak with dead* (DC 16)

2nd (4/day)—*cure moderate wounds*, *hold person* (DC 15), *howling agony*^{UM} (DC 15), *zone of truth* (DC 15)

1st (5/day)—*cause fear* (DC 14), *cure light wounds*, *forbid action*^{UM} (DC 14), *interrogation*^{UM} (DC 14), *shield of faith*, *true strike*

0 (at will)—*bleed* (DC 13), *create water*, *detect magic*, *disrupt undead*, *guidance*, *light*

Domain Torture inquisition^{UM}

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 14, **Con** 12, **Int** 10, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 13

Base Atk +5; **CMB** +6; **CMD** 20

Feats Coordinated Maneuvers^{APG}, Dazzling Display, Dodge, Insightful Gaze^{UM}, Precise Strike^{APG}, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (spiked chain)

Skills Acrobatics +6, Bluff +8, Diplomacy +8, Heal +10, Intimidate +16, Knowledge (local) +3, Perception +13, Sense Motive +16, Spellcraft +8, Stealth +9

Languages Common

SQ monster lore +3, solo tactics, stern gaze +3, torturer's presence^{UM}, torturer's touch^{UM}, track +3

Combat Gear *potion of owl's wisdom*, *scroll of cure serious wounds*, *scroll of undetectable alignment*, *wand of cure light wounds* (46 charges), smelling salts^{UE},

tanglefoot bag; **Other Gear** +2 *studded leather*, +1 *cruel*^{UE} *spiked chain*, mwk dagger, war razor^{ISWG}, *belt of giant strength* +2, *manacles of cooperation*^{UE}, *page of spell knowledge*^{UE} (cause fear), *ring of protection* +1, barbed manacles^{ARG}, choke pear, iron holy symbol of Zon-Kuthon, saw^{UE}, spell component pouch, sunrods (3), surgeon's tools^{UE}, Nidalese thumbscrews, 8 gp

Some beings—like those from the Outer Planes—are intrinsically virtuous or malevolent; however, mortals enjoy the unique characteristic of free will. No humans are born evil. They become evil.

Like many children in the Nidalese city of Ridwan, the girl who would one day be called Zelhara grew up in a massive nursery run by the church of Zon-Kuthon. This institution allowed parents to continue their work without having to attend to their children's daily needs, and after a number of years, once the children could physically contribute to the household, they were returned to their families. Agents of Nidal's Umbral Court performed numerous tests on the children during their time under the care of the Kuthite clergy, selecting certain candidates for the state's and church's future needs. Mere weeks before she was to rejoin her family, Zelhara herself was brought before an Umbral Court agent who claimed he could see something in her that pleased the Midnight Lord. One day she would share his message of pain and duty with thousands of fearful inheritors. Her family, loyal Nidalese who worked meager trades in the city, found delight in knowing that their child would one day hold high status in the state.

Zelhara and 12 other children from the nursery began their training at a young age. Unlike shadowcallers, Zelhara and her young companions didn't undergo the scrutiny of a *nightglass*, but were instead selected by virtue of their mere presence and their reactions to fear and pain. Zelhara proved a severe and obedient child, perfect for the role of a state inquisitor.

After their selection, the children in Zelhara's group were moved into a wing of dormitories within the temple of Zon-Kuthon. The priests began the children's training with religious study and the dark history of their nation. The Kuthites taught the children how to identify enemies of the church and state. The members

of Zelhara's group received the best foods at mealtimes, and as long as they performed their required duties and showed the proper respect to their tutors, they were allowed relative freedom to do as they pleased. They were even allowed outside the temple, and granted the privilege to occasionally spend time with their parents, provided they lived within Ridwan. This favorable treatment attracted jealousy and animosity from the young shadowcaller initiates and prospective clerics also training at the temple. Zelhara's tutors told her that the other children were envious because they were too independent and didn't properly understand submission. Zelhara believed it was because they knew they might one day have to withstand her ministrations.

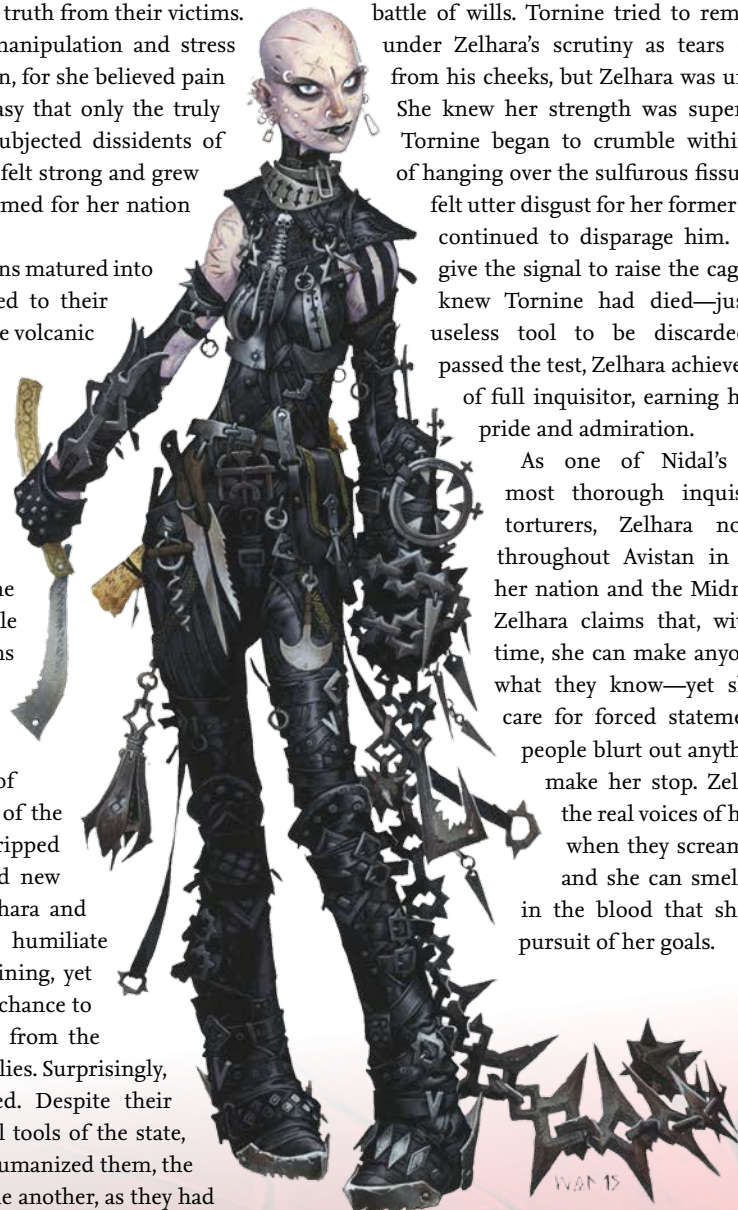
Zelhara's training grew more rigorous as the instruction continued. She and her colleagues were encouraged to invent their own unique methods of inflicting pain and drawing the truth from their victims. Zelhara preferred emotional manipulation and stress positions rather than direct pain, for she believed pain to be a form of religious ecstasy that only the truly devoted could enjoy. As she subjected dissidents of Nidal to her ministrations, she felt strong and grew proud of the service she performed for her nation and her god.

As Zelhara and her companions matured into their teenage years, they moved to their own building in the city near the volcanic rift that splits Ridwan's central square, and their training changed significantly. Their tutors became more strict and abusive. Zelhara, who had been the standout student within her group, started to be treated with suspicion and disdain. She couldn't even perform simple tasks in the dormitory kitchens without being scolded and punished. She and the others suffered beatings, periods of isolation, and the burden of meaningless tasks at all hours of the day. Their old names were stripped away and their tutors provided new ones. The Kuthites forced Zelhara and her colleagues to torture and humiliate each other as part of their training, yet they still gave the students the chance to voluntarily remove themselves from the process and return to their families. Surprisingly, none of the children accepted. Despite their abuse, they wanted to be useful tools of the state, and while their instructors dehumanized them, the children formed bonds with one another, as they had

no one else to rely upon. During this period, Zelhara grew close to Tornine, a boy she had known since her time at the nursery.

Finally, Zelhara and the others were judged ready to undergo a ritual called the Descent. More to test loyalty than to extract admissions of guilt, prospective inquisitors are placed in pairs within iron cages, their faces mere inches from each other, and then lowered into the rift in the center of Ridwan where the Midnight Lord is said to have first manifested upon Golarion. The oppressive heat causes intense pain and the cloying smoke makes breathing an ordeal. As the inquisitors are lowered into the rift, they must overcome their own suffering and disorientation to force their counterparts into absolute submission to their authority. Zelhara found herself paired with Tornine, and as the iron cage creaked down into the crevasse, they engaged in a battle of wills. Tornine tried to remain strong under Zelhara's scrutiny as tears evaporated from his cheeks, but Zelhara was unrelenting. She knew her strength was superior. When Tornine began to crumble within minutes of hanging over the sulfurous fissure, Zelhara felt utter disgust for her former friend and continued to disparage him. She didn't give the signal to raise the cage until she knew Tornine had died—just another useless tool to be discarded. Having passed the test, Zelhara achieved the rank of full inquisitor, earning her family's pride and admiration.

As one of Nidal's best and most thorough inquisitors and torturers, Zelhara now travels throughout Avistan in service to her nation and the Midnight Lord. Zelhara claims that, with enough time, she can make anyone divulge what they know—yet she doesn't care for forced statements, when people blurt out anything just to make her stop. Zelhara hears the real voices of her subjects when they scream in agony, and she can smell the truth in the blood that she spills in pursuit of her goals.



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EGORIAN CITY OF THORNS

Few remain who can remember the red and white roses surrounding Egorian. My mother described them so vividly that—although I was born years after Aroden’s death turned the white roses black—I sometimes fancy that I saw them with my own eyes. This nostalgia for our parents’ memories is a kind of ephemeral chronicle, one we are obliged to pass along to succeeding generations.

“Long before the Thrune Ascendancy, Egorian was the grand dame of the empire. She has witnessed the rise and fall of monarchs, national triumphs and catastrophes, the visitation and death of a god. And although mortal hands may alter the city’s official chronicles, so long as her children recall the memories of their parents, her legend shall endure.”

—Count Varian Jeggare to a meeting of the Historical Society

Egorian once provided Chelish aristocrats—and the artists their wealth supported—with a refuge from the political strife of the former capital, Westcrown. Since Abrogail I moved the empire’s seat of power, Egorian has transformed into a bastion of law and bureaucracy without entirely losing its former charms, so the lakeside city remains a favorite destination for travelers. Despite the empire’s formal alliance with Hell, much in the city remains ungoverned. Criminal gangs, secret societies, subversive movements, and even demon cults infest Egorian and its subterranean shadow-city.

The City of Thorns is not only the capital of Chelixa, but also the nation’s largest political subdivision, the Archduchy of the Heartlands. Its own municipal government, overseen by Lord-Mayor Grachius Alazario, struggles to balance the needs of Egorian and its citizens with the demands of House Thrune and the Chelish Throne. Thus, the upper echelons of Egorian society are ever mired in bureaucratic gridlock, leaving much of the city’s lower classes and less prominent districts to fend for themselves; Duxotar Marcellano Ratarion and his city watch and the local Hellknight Order of the Scourge can be in only so many places at once.

APPEARANCE

When seen from Lake Sorrow to its north, Egorian first appears to be a picturesque community with winding lanes following the course of streams and hills. The wharves of the Adivian River curl around to the lake shore, dispatching fishing vessels at dawn and receiving them again near dusk. Along the eastern shore, finer homes and manor houses (or “vaneos”) nestle among the rolling hills of the districts collectively known as the Old City. Many of the area’s residents have resisted the politically advised, if not officially mandated, Egorian-style architecture, but the first signs of the black-and-red marble and gothic ornaments appear here.

The city rises toward the southeast, and from the center to the southern walls, spires and gargoyles dominate the skyline above increasingly regular thoroughfares. The most prominent buildings in the city core include the Grand Opera House, with its domes and classical pillars contrasting sharply with the prevailing Egorian style; the pentagonal Midnight Temple to Asmodeus, with sulfurous fumes perpetually rising from its vents; the enormous Imperial Stadium; and the towering Imperial Palace, which dwarfs the government buildings cowering at its feet.

To the southeast, Thrune Manor sits perched on the city’s highest hill. By virtue of the manor’s lofty base, the peaked roofs of its towers rise almost as high as those of the Imperial Palace—a constant reminder of the royal family’s house and origin.

EGORIAN

LE metropolis

Corruption +9; **Crime** +2; **Economy** +5; **Law** +11; **Lore** +4; **Society** +5

Qualities decadent art, infernal laws, prosperous, racially intolerant (halflings), rumormongering citizens, unholy site (Asmodeus)

Danger +10

DEMOGRAPHICS

Government overlord

Population 82,100 (71,500 humans, 7,900 halflings, 1,350 tieflings, 1,350 other)

Notable NPCs

Advisor Contessa Lrilatha (LE female erinyes inquisitor^{APG} 13)

Duxotar Marcellano Ratarion (LE male human fighter 8)

Grand High Priestess Aspexia Rugatonn (LE female human cleric of Asmodeus 19)

Lord-Mayor Grachius Alazario (LE male human bard 4/aristocrat 2)

Queen and Empress of Chelixa Abrogail Thrune II (LE female human sorcerer 16/aristocrat 2)

Paralictor Ivo Elliendo of the Order of the Scourge (LE male human fighter 5/Hellknight^{ISWG} 5)

Zandros the Fair (NE male human rogue 5)

MARKETPLACE

Base Value 20,800 gp; **Purchase Limit** 150,000 gp;

Spellcasting 9th

Minor Items all available; **Medium Items** 4d4; **Major Items** 3d4

SPECIAL QUALITIES

Decadent Art Egorians enjoy decadent art and brutal stagecraft, including the Theater of the Real, which features the gruesome onstage deaths of the principal actors. This lends an ominous yet cosmopolitan air to the city. (*Society* +4)

Infernal Laws Egorian’s laws and legal system are based on the byzantine *Asmodean Disciplines*, which are expansive and attempt to regulate all aspects of public and private life. Many laws go unenforced, however, particularly if bribes are involved. The system allows the government to remove undesirables on a whim and gives citizens an incentive to spy on one another. (*Corruption* +2; *Law* +4)

Unholy Site Egorian is the seat of the Church of Asmodeus’s power in the Inner Sea region. Many high-level priests of Asmodeus live here, making it difficult for outspoken adherents of other religions to go about their lives undisturbed. (*Lore* -1; *increase spellcasting by 1 level*)

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Egorian is known for its iconic plazas, from the open squares at nearly every major intersection to the more extravagant and spacious Thrune Square and Ascension Plaza near the city's heart. Many of the lesser but more ancient plazas include marble statues of war heroes and the occasional famous composer. Others center on sculpted fountains from which residents draw their water, and where struggling artists offer to sketch visitors. Plazas in the wealthier districts host symphonic and choral concerts, events patrolled by dottari to ensure that the riffraff do not mar the occasion.

HISTORY

Egorian began as a small fishing village. It grew with the successive empires of Taldor and Cheliox until its geography made it a critical trading hub second only to Westcrown. Perfectly situated beside Lake Sorrow and the Adivian River, Egorian provided a critical juncture for shipping (and enforcing taxation) from western and north-central Cheliox.

With their wealth and hedonistic tastes, the aristocratic residents of the city soon made Egorian a center of art and culture. Rather than envying the political importance of their southern neighbors, Egorians considered themselves fortunate to escape the drudgery of governance. They tended their estates (or "viras") in summer and wintered in their vaneos to enjoy the pleasures of the opera, the symphony, and myriad other arts.

Then Abrogail I seized power and declared Egorian the nation's new capital.

The queen's agents seized 20 acres of private land in the center of Egorian to form Thrune Square. From that focal point, the royal engineers paved the Prospects, four enormous boulevards striking out in the four cardinal directions, cutting through hills and obliterating buildings. Casualties included the original outer wall, through which four great gatehouses were established. The unintended consequence of this enforced order is increased chaos where the new gridded boulevards intersect with the city's original streets.

SOCIETY

Egorian's principal sources of commerce include shipping (especially wine, produce, meat, and lumber), slave trading, stonemasonry, copper and iron smelting, weapon production, and martial training. Noble houses from all over Cheliox send their soldiers to train with the archers of House Narikopolus, and several of the finest teachers of swordplay and unarmed combat have schools within the city.

While most slaves sold in Egorian endure menial labor, those with a knack for letters, bookkeeping, painting, music, or dance fetch the highest bids. Masters assume the glory of their slaves' talents for themselves, boasting of their property's accomplishments as if having achieved

it all on their own. Some employ their slaves as a political weapon. More than one noted diva has left the stage in disgrace after an adversary arranged for a more talented slave to perform her most famous songs in public.

Egorian justice has three long arms, each more feared and incorruptible than the one before: the dottari, the Order of the Scourge, and the Infernal Inquisition. The dottari police the city streets and investigate all crimes that neither Paralictor Elliendo nor Grand High Priestess Asperia Rugatonn claims jurisdiction over. While the dottari have a reputation for accepting bribes, Duxotar Ratarion has made it his mission to police his own rather than suffer the humiliation of interference by the Order of the Scourge or the Infernal Inquisition. The dottari also have a reputation for doing little to help the lower classes while turning a blind eye to the crimes of the powerful.

The Hellknight Order of the Scourge focuses its efforts on corruption and organized crime. What constitutes "organized" depends in part on the personal interest of Paralictor Ivo Elliendo, who often oversteps his mandate to investigate high-profile cases personally. Members of the Order of the Scourge take special pride in arresting those who deem themselves above the law. The Order of the Scourge is headquartered in nearby Citadel Demain. While the Hellknights don't answer to Queen Abrogail, the throne counts on the order's cooperation in matters of criminal investigation and civil order. Lictor **Toulon Vidoc** (LN male human rogue 2/fighter 4/Hellknight^{LSWG} 7) seldom visits Egorian, entrusting the order's supervision to the local paralictor.

While the Infernal Inquisition often acts in concert with agents of House Thrune, it remains independent of the ruling family and serves the Prince of Law first and foremost. Inquisitors focus on crimes against Asmodeus and any subversive activity that undermines the Infernal Compact or Hell's grip on Cheliox. Ultimately, the Inquisition trumps the Hellknights, who outrank the dottari, but clever officers sometimes find ways to outmaneuver their rivals.

The Midnight Temple is the greatest cathedral in all of Cheliox, and Grand High Priestess Rugatonn means to keep it that way. While no Chelioxian is required to worship Asmodeus, it is a capital offense to disparage the official religion. No one advances in public life without at least a modest display of reverence for the Prince of Law. Any hint of worship directed at a devil other than Asmodeus or worse, of any god of chaos, is sure to attract the attention of the Inquisition.

The worship of Abadar is not only tolerated but almost encouraged, given how highly the regime values commerce and financial stability. And while frowned upon, the worship of Iomedae remains an irrevocable element of national pride, since Cheliox has long claimed the herald of Aroden as its particular saint.

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RELATIONS

As the empire's capital, Egorian houses permanent diplomats from virtually every nation in the Inner Sea region. The city also sometimes welcomes special envoys from distant Vudra or Tian Xia, occasions heralded with great fanfare and a none-too-subtle message that such visits represent the expansion of imperial influence.

In the decades since Abrogail I relocated the capital, residents of Egorian and Westcrown have nurtured an increasing rivalry. Government and mercantile organizations continue to generally cooperate, both to avoid irritating the queen and because their river-bound commerce remains mutually dependent. On the other hand, visiting Wiscrani endure being overcharged by local merchants (who mark up prices for them even more than for halflings and tieflings), targeted by roving street thugs, and pounced on by the local dottari for even the slightest misdemeanor.

DISTRICTS

Residents of Egorian identify more strongly with their neighborhoods than with their city as a whole, leading to such stereotypes as “snobby Sorrowsiders,” “muddull Miresiders,” or “ambitious Hellhounds.” The city's upper class residents often refer to less refined districts collectively as “Cheapside.” This catch-all designation can include such neighborhoods as Bilgetown, Devil's Dance, Dice End, Riverside, and Trick Alley districts. Nobility from particularly old or established families might also include such upper-middle-class neighborhoods as Briarpatch, Parley Circle, and Triumph under this pejorative descriptor. The city's lower classes, for their part, have no such conglomerate name for wealthier districts.

Aspex Garden: This district on the eastern side of the city contains luxurious shops and vaneos interspersed with dozens of small gardens featuring exquisite fountains and statues, mostly images of great artists and performers. It is also home to Demibaroneess **Helia Belunne** (LG female human paladin of Iomedae 6), who many suspect provides secret support for the Glorious Reclamation. In fact, the paladin, while a devout Iomedaeon, is staunchly loyal to Chelixa, and she sees her duty to the people as something to be worked out within the system rather than through violent opposition. Nevertheless, House Thrune has her manor under constant surveillance, and visitors meeting her about other business are likely to pick up their own tails as a result of their association with her.

Bilgetown: The northern district of Bilgetown is home to prosperous working-class families, including most of the city's fishers. Nobles from neighboring districts had the more noisome elements of the fishing industry removed to Bridgeside and the Vice, but they love the view of sailing vessels too much to remove the docks. The city's most frequently breached sewer grates are found here.

Briarpatch: Residents of this district on the city's southern edge have tried to adopt the Egorian style of architecture, but can afford only black and red paint and cheap gargoyles and spikes on their roofs. They are among the first to mass in any celebration or demonstration in support of the crown.

Bridgeside: The northwestern district of Bridgeside, known for its market, gained its name from a now-collapsed bridge whose giant pilings serve as anchors for shanties and wharves. Bunyip Dock is notorious as a spot for assignments and the disposal of corpses.

Devil's Dance: The southwestern district of Devil's Dance is popular among diabolists drawn to the pentagram-shaped arrangement of its streets in hopes that it will strengthen their spells. The local taverns are popular among young patriots, and the rooftops are crawling with escaped imps who hide during the day lest they be recaptured or sent back to Hell. They tell each other marvelous stories about distant Korvosa, where imps rule the skies and feast on the city's abundant house drakes.

Dice End: This district is full of gambling dens and other iniquitous establishments. The local tipsters can arrange an invitation to underground clubs beyond the watchful eyes of Hellknights. This district also provides the headquarters for two of the more enduring crime gangs, the Lashers (all women except for a few bruisers, and known for blackmail and gambling) and the Bedlam Boys (not exclusively male, and specializing in extortion and kidnapping).

Five Favors: This northern district is home to many of the city's finer shops, wine houses, and inns—some of which host Egorian's upper-class brothels and gambling dens. A gang of burglars known as the Prowlers often squats in unoccupied vaneos, hiding from the servants left behind as a test of its members' skill.

Fort Adivian: This largely residential district stands outside Egorian's walls on the western shore of the Adivian River. The fort itself rises from the shallow waters of Lake Sorrow and houses a garrison of Chelish marines, who patrol the waters of both the lake and the upper reaches of the Adivian River. The soldiers and their families live in the fort's shadow, but typically cross the river for their entertainment and shopping needs.

The Grid: The Grid is the informal name for those streets already “corrected” by the royal engineers. Many other names have been proposed, but none have endured. The district's upper class residents have fled the constant construction, but canny business owners have bought up more properties in the expectation of higher traffic (and thus higher sales) in the future.

Hellhound Hill: This district, where the wealthiest of the patriotic nobility live near Thrune Manor, rises above the city's southeastern corner. Thus, “hellhound” has come to mean one who will do anything to win favor with

the ruling regime. Nonetheless, the region is also home to the Temple of Iomedae, and those who attend services there do so knowing that those in the vaneos they pass on the way to and from services are noting their identities and questioning their loyalty.

Long Market: This district is home to an eclectic and noisy array of shops and market stalls. Along with Whipcrack, it is also one of the two centers of the city's slave trade. Long Market has a somewhat undeserved reputation for being a place where one can buy anything. Street performers often make their start here before moving along to more prosperous districts.

Mireside: This district along Egorian's southern wall is mildly prosperous but considered unfashionable. "Gone Mireside" means "turned respectable and boring." It is full of inexpensive playhouses and musical reviews presenting family-oriented material scorned by the more haughty theatrical connoisseurs.

Netman's Rest: This scenic, middle-class district overlooks the Promenade, and earned its name as a home to retired seafarers, though it has been gradually gentrified over the decades. Buskers and painters frequently work these streets.

Parley Circle: Named for its role as the site of a conciliatory meeting between Lictor DiLavos of the Order of the Thorn and Agahman Thrune after a disastrous previous attempt resulted in a massacre, Parley Circle is one of the city's up-and-coming neighborhoods. Among the superstitious and the elegant, it is considered an auspicious place to discuss matters before signing a contract or treaty.

Promenade: The series of docks known as the Promenade holds the "adels" (personal barges) of the nobility. While nothing officially prohibits working boats such as ferries, fishing vessels, and cargo barges from mooring here, the docking fees are exorbitant enough to keep lower-class sailors and stevedores to nearby Cheapside docks. Visitors rent boats or hire local sailors to take them on tours of the surrounding shoreline.

Riverside: This western district along the Adivian River includes the most active portion of the waterfront. While the warehouses are well patrolled and guarded, the district remains notorious for robbery and murder. Eel Street is home to the squalid lair of one of the city's most despicable gangs, the Goatherds. The Goatherds are led by the cursed but charismatic Zandros the Fair, who is known for collecting trophies from those who cannot pay their ends of bargains they strike with the gang.

The Sewers and Shadow City: While the sewers and Shadow City are not formal districts of Egorian, both harbor surprisingly large populations. The sewers and storm drains have long served as a refuge of last resort for the criminal and indigent populations. A recent infestation of wererats is incorrectly believed to have been exterminated by the dottari. Egorian's

subterranean passages delve much deeper than most imagine and include the headquarters of at least two criminal gangs, the caches of half-a-dozen smugglers, the shrine of at least one demonic cult, the lairs of several bands of escaped slaves, one rapidly growing colony of now-fiendish wererats, and—deep below all of that—an increasingly bold colony of derros. Those seeking to expand the network of secret doors and passages would do well to note the weeping walls and muddy floors that warn of dangerous proximity to the lake and river.

Sorrowgate and Sorrowside: These districts are collectively known as the Old City because they most closely resemble pre-Throne Egorian. The Old City holds the largest number of shrines to gods other than Asmodeus. Because it is popular among emissaries from other nations, it also boasts the widest variety of foreign shops and restaurants.

Southgate: Named for the great gate in the stretch of wall that marks the city's southern edge, Southgate is a bustling center of overland shipping and holds the homes and businesses of the rising merchant class. The haughty aristocracy consider it embarrassing to be seen there. It is also the hub of message couriers, bounty hunters, and a band of former Gray Maidens known as the Erinyes who now serve Queen Abrogail.

Suitor's Cross: This district just south of the Grid gained its name either because of the many inns frequented by petitioners to the court, or else because of its many florists, confectioners, and jewelers. Many jokes in Egorian wine houses concern a cuckold or jilted lover, and the punchline is always "Suitor's Cross."

Thorntown: Located southeast of the Imperial Palace, Thorntown is the iconic wealthy district of Egorian, with gargoyles peering down from a thorny skyline of spires, towers, and minarets. Residents conspicuously display their affluence via private menageries, extravagant carriages, and gated gardens. One of its most prominent residents is Lord **Kassar Elazarin** (LE male human aristocrat 6), whose burned face terrifies local children and serves as a reminder that one must never mention his disowned son, Velmaris.

Thumbtown: Thumbtown is home to many of the city's skilled crafters, from cobblers to cabinetmakers, pigment grinders to herbalists, and locksmiths to alchemists. A substantial number of freed slaves make their homes here, at last collecting wages for their labor. They have formed their own vigilance committee to protect themselves, as the dottari all too often look the other way.

Trick Alley: The twists, turns, and tunnels of this Cheapside district are where people find most of Egorian's brothels, bordellos, and flophouses. The lowest of pickpockets and robbers prey on the poor who cannot afford to live elsewhere.

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Triumph: Among the most recently defined (and redefined) districts, Triumph is home to the patriotic middle class. The central square, known as Ascension Plaza, features a giant bronze statue of Queen Abrogail I climbing a stairway composed of adoring humans and devils to reach the throne. The district teems with Thrune agents and informers, and for that reason it is common to see whole families evicted from their homes after one or both parents have been taken by the Inquisition.

The Vice: This district lies outside the city walls and is centered around a repugnant pond full of industrial waste. It was originally intended to be a home to criminals and peddlers of contraband beyond the city proper, but such industries are no longer banished from Egorian. Rather, more noisome businesses like tanneries and butcher shops, deemed too obnoxious to be located within the city, now occupy the handful of buildings that make up this remote neighborhood.

Whipcrack: The district of Whipcrack, along with Long Market, is one of Egorian's two centers of the slave trade. It is also home to the Imperial Stadium, where spectacles and blood sports are held. The public houses surrounding the stadium are among the most profitable in the city.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

Egorian is known for a number of famous locations, including the following.

1. Athenaeum: One of the most prestigious museums in Cheliox, Egorian's Athenaeum has stood for millennia, and boasts a library of texts collected during Cheliox's period of expansion known as the Everwar. As part of House Thrune's efforts to place itself more prominently in Chelish history, records of this site's founding and independent operation have been redacted, replaced with accounts of House Thrune establishing the archive, overseeing its collection, and gifting it to the people in the wake of the Thrune Ascendancy.

2. Blackrose Gardens: The place to see and be seen, this garden boasts many topiaries and hedge mazes that provide ample cover for private assignments. The site remains popular despite rumors of invisible spies listening for treasonous whispers or compromising information for blackmail. Common folk are allowed to visit the gardens on only four days of each month; afterward, the custodians spend a full day "restoring" the gravel paths and lawns to aristocratic standards. The garden gained its name when all the rich, red roses within turned black in response to Aroden's death a century ago. Local herbologists have proposed many times since to investigate the strange occurrence, but the government has adamantly forbidden any official efforts to restore the roses.

3. Dottari Headquarters: The dottari headquarters is in the Grid, only a block west of Thrune Square, with

the city's prison across the street. Every formal district within the city walls features at least one and as many as three local dottari stations, each housing up to six jail cells. Perhaps the most important officer at each site is the fines clerk who manages the collection and reporting of fines, as well as the distribution of a cut of all bribes to senior officers.

4. Egorian Academy of the Magical Arts: Unlike the Korvosan Acadamae, the capital's school of magic does not require students to specialize. Almost half of its students remain generalist wizards, taking pride in their versatility while secretly envying the fame of their colonial rivals. Several of the school's most prominent instructors are members of House Leroung, renowned for academic achievement in all fields, not only the arcane.

5. Grand Opera House: Despite pressure from loyalists and three substantial renovations since the Thrune Ascendancy, the Grand Opera House retains its original appearance. Thus, it is the most prominent edifice in Egorian not in the Egorian architectural style. Well-dressed visitors can pay a token fee for a tour of the house during the day. Any visitor can pay a somewhat larger fee to the night watchman for a lantern tour focusing on the site's many historical murders, scandals, and ghosts—a few of whom may be more fact than fiction.

6. Greensteeples: One of the city's eldest aristocrats, the half-elven Count Varian Jeggare, resides in one of the oldest remaining vaneos in Sorrowside, an ivy-smothered manor of four stories with an unknown number of secret passages and subterranean levels. On the roof between four tapering steeples stands the famous hothouse in which the half-elven count cultivates exotic flora, some of which are rumored to hold magical properties. The count himself is often absent from the city, pursuing the life of a gentleman adventurer as a member of the Pathfinder Society. At these times, he entrusts Greensteeples to the care of a close relative whose family moves in until the count returns.

7. Imperial Palace: A city within a city, the royal residence also acts as the seat of government for the nation, archduchy, and Egorian itself. In addition to the queen and her family (whom she monitors closely as much for her convenience as to keep an eye on them), countless bureaucrats, sycophants, and servants occupy the palace day and night. Here more than anywhere else in Cheliox is one most likely to encounter denizens of Hell, from the queen's advisors (the pit fiend Gorthoklek and the erinyes Contessa Lrilatha) to the menial imps who serve as familiars and messengers for the government's many agents.

8. Imperial Stadium: This large arena houses events ranging from gladiatorial combat to pageants displaying the unique cultures of the various nations Cheliox has conquered, fought, or befriended. The most popular events are reenactments of Chelish victories over Taldor,

Sargava, and other enemy armies—seldom historically accurate, but always spectacular.

9. Midnight Temple: The center of Asmodeus's Golarion-bound faith, this pentagram-shaped temple towers prominently over Thrune Square opposite the Imperial Palace. In addition to holding multiple services to the Prince of Lies each day, the temple provides legal services to not only Asmodeus's faithful but anyone who comes seeking guidance and the support of the law. Grand High Priestess Aspexia Rugatonn, while formally the head of the temple, is generally occupied with political and administrative matters, leaving the daily operation of the cathedral's business to a highly structured hierarchy of clerics, acolytes, and lay bureaucrats.

10. Order of the Scourge Garrison: Answering to Lictor Vidoc at Citadel Demain, Paralictor Ivo Elliendo commands the local contingent of Hellknights. Before a family scandal tarnished the paralictor's reputation, he had free rein over the local Hellknights. These days, he files weekly rather than monthly reports, and the rumor among his subordinates is that Lictor Vidoc has placed spies among their ranks. The Order of the Scourge maintains satellite stations throughout the city, concentrating on the more crime-ridden districts. Most of these are small jails with several interrogation rooms.

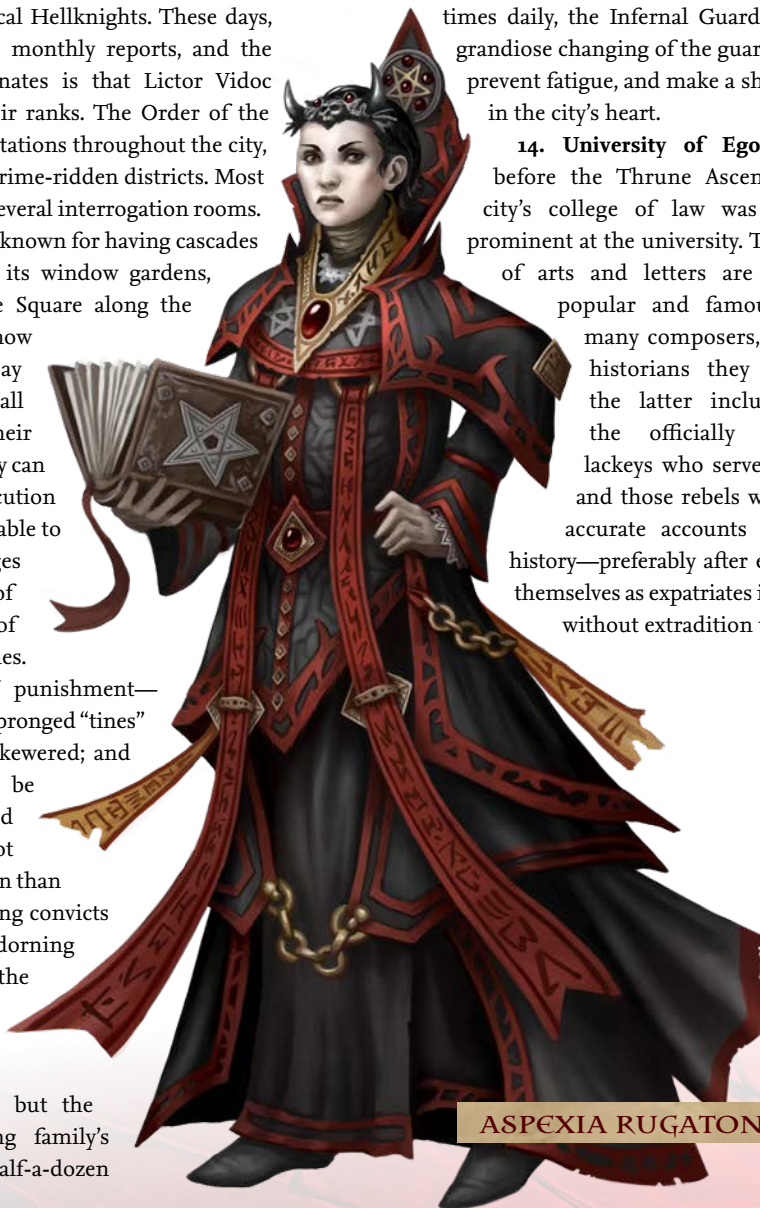
11. Plaza of Flowers: Once known for having cascades of blossoms hanging from its window gardens, this plaza south of Thrune Square along the Imperial Promenade is now home to the Judgment Day ceremonies. Once a month, all laborers are released from their duties for 2 hours so that they can witness the torment and execution of those convicted of and unable to bribe themselves out of charges of sedition, forgery, breach of contract, and all manner of violent and property crimes. While the implements of punishment—gallows; the giant-sized, two-pronged “tines” upon which criminals are skewered; and other torture devices—can be broken down and removed from the plaza when not needed, they stand more often than they are absent. The screaming convicts and crow-picked corpses adorning their spikes say much about the current political climate in the city.

12. Thrune Manor: Larger than any residence but the Imperial Palace, the ruling family's vaneos houses more than half-a-dozen

branches of the family tree, each on its own floor of a different wing. The rest of the spacious manor includes multiple ballrooms, salons, summoning chambers, proving grounds for those blessed or cursed with sorcery, and forbidden vaults reserved for infernal allies.

13. Thrune Square: The greatest of Egorian's many plazas, Thrune Square is the 20-acre open area lying at the intersection of the Prospects, four great boulevards extending in the cardinal directions. The most notable landmarks of this vast public square are the Imperial Palace to the east and the Midnight Temple to the northwest. Like in most of the city's plazas, statues of military heroes and prominent members of House Thrune decorate the space. While the Chelish government holds executions and excruciations in the Plaza of Flowers, the Church of Asmodeus deals publicly with heretics and blasphemers in Thrune Square, before the towering spires of the Midnight Temple. Eight times daily, the Infernal Guard perform a grandiose changing of the guard, meant to prevent fatigue, and make a show of force in the city's heart.

14. University of Egorian: Even before the Thrune Ascendancy, the city's college of law was the most prominent at the university. The colleges of arts and letters are almost as popular and famous for the many composers, poets, and historians they produce—the latter including both the officially sanctioned lackeys who serve the crown and those rebels who publish accurate accounts of Chelish history—preferably after establishing themselves as expatriates in countries without extradition treaties.



ASPEXIA RUGATONN

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We kept to the rows until about three hours past midnight. The clouds let up just about then, and we caught a flash of moonlight off the Hellknights on our trail. We'd been able to hear their armor for hours, but that break told us there were four in all. Amilee split off into the brush while Nico scabbled up the hill. I kept our crop skirting the edge of the bog. Hardest thing in the world is keeping a cornered soul from panicking, but they did good.

"Nico's rockslide broke their horses' legs. They came at us, not thinking how much more a person in plate mail weighs than a half-dozen starved slips. Three of them sank into the peat before they could scream. Fourth managed to get a shout off before Amilee starting putting arrows through her visor.

"We ate horse that night. First hot meal any of us had in a week, and damn if it didn't taste better than any Coarentyn caviar."

—Tiller Meava Milk

Considered property more than people and forever marked by their stature as a secondary class, halflings live difficult lives in Cheliox. Even those not officially chained to a yoke or kitchen stove still carry a heavy burden, forever aware that their people are servants, not leaders, and that one misplaced scrap of paperwork could mean a lifetime of servitude for themselves or their children. Some accept their lives and make do as best they can, hoping to spare themselves and those they care for from the master's lash.

Others run.

Alone, in families, in groups, they run. Though the area has been inhabited for thousands of years, much of Cheliox remains wild and untamed, without signs or roads to guide refugees. Those who flee oppression may wander for months, or succumb to predators, starvation, or simply a freezing night. Those who do survive the wilderness face a far greater threat in the form of bounty hunters, Hellknights, and even desperate peasants hungry for a few gold pieces.

The Bellflower Network is a guiding hand for those halflings with the courage to flee imperial Cheliox, but who lack the knowledge or skills to do so alone. Its guardians and guides risk their own lives and freedom to ferry others from the infernal empire. They mark roads no tallfolk know and lead refugees through the black of night, warding against nature's dangers and slaying the humans and devils that nip at their heels. Their lives lack the comforts of home and hearth that halflings so treasure, but they offer those same blessings to thousands more.

HISTORY

Halflings have stood in humanity's shadow as long as both races have populated Avistan; for much of this time, they have acted as assistants, servants, and slaves, with the halfling desire for comfort and prosperity proving a useful companion to human ambition. Taldor, and later Cheliox, flourished in part thanks to legions of halflings tending the fields, managing households, and accounting for every coin. Prior to the Chelish Civil War, halflings enjoyed a humble but valued existence alongside taller humanoids—most of the empire's small folk proudly found employment as butlers, cooks, maids, and artisans. With halflings widely believed to be frailer and weaker than humans, and consequently unable to survive in a prison environment, any halfling criminals and debtors were instead punished by enslavement to those they wronged. But in those simpler times, the families and children of the enslaved, or of those who sold themselves into slavery, remained free to find their own ways in life.

With the rise of House Throne and its diabolical patrons, contracts and laws became far more restrictive, and children quickly found themselves accountable for their parents' crimes and debts. House Throne took

advantage of the post-war chaos to label halfling rabble-rousers and servants of rival families as escaped slaves, placing formerly free citizens in bondage as the war drew to a close. For more severe crimes—most notably sedition—and large enough debts, parents' sentences passed to their children upon the parents' deaths. Within a generation, these radical changes became accepted fact. Just as human veterans of the war began to feel the creak of age, free halflings found themselves living in a nation that required constant and well-documented proof that they belonged to no one but themselves.

The same tumultuous times that tightened the chains around Cheliox's halfling population also heralded the first organized resistance to that enslavement: the Bellflower Network. While many halfling secret societies formed in the war to help slaves escape or to funnel intelligence to whichever faction in the conflict they supported, the Bellflower Network itself traces its origins to the Bellflower Mutiny. Three days out of port, the trading carrack *Bellflower* was set upon by the naval forces of Oriah Bromathan—one of the many claimants to Cheliox's throne—who pressed the ship and its halfling slave crew into service. Accustomed to a gentler hand from their master, Eligio Zetrus, the crew resented military service. After an overseer beat one of their number to death for insubordination, the remaining crew mutinied, tarring and burning their overseer before throwing him overboard. The Bromathan forces responded by firing on the *Bellflower*, setting it and its alchemical cargo alight and scuttling the tiny ship. Only nine of the *Bellflower's* halfling crew survived, pulling their former master into a longboat alongside them and rowing for open waters, never to be seen again. Bards in Corentyn witnessed the sinking on the horizon and captured a sensational version of the event in a ballad that described the mercy and rewards of treating servants kindly. "The Ballad of the Bellflower," ironically, remained especially popular among Throne troops as they clashed with Bromathan's own dwindling forces the following year.

What the songwriters never recorded was that the survivors of the *Bellflower* finally reached Rahadoum's coast 5 days later. While adrift, the circle concluded they should have died that gruesome day and that each new day's survival existed solely to defy anyone who would claim them as property. A week under the sun led to long confessions and gossip; by the time they arrived at solid ground, the *Bellflower* survivors came to realize that their collected knowledge could ruin entire noble estates—or be used to guide their loved ones to freedom. Brandy Whitewell—a debt-riddled sharecropper who had sold herself into service to buy a future for her children—took the job of coordinating. Dubbed "The Farmer," her parlance and homespun wisdom eventually became the guiding philosophy of their secret society.

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BELLFLOWER TERMINOLOGY

Bellflower Network agents use farming euphemisms as code words to discuss their activities without fear of being overheard. Below are several examples.

Barn: A secret hideout, such as a house, business, or actual barn, where slaves are hidden during the day.

Crop: A group of slaves being escorted to freedom.

Farm: A place where slaves are held against their will, such as a Chelish nobleman's estate.

The Farmer: The leader of the Bellflower Network.

Grazing: Observing a location where slaves are held.

Hand: One who tends a safe house.

Harvest Moon: The best time to travel—namely, at night. Also describes the night a slave begins his journey to freedom.

Harvester: One who frees slaves and sets them on the road to freedom.

Irrigating: Killing a slaver or slave owner.

Plucking: Freeing a slave.

Row: A path from one secret hideout to the next.

Sowing: Transporting slaves along a "row."

Tiller: One who escorts slaves between secret hideouts.

Eligio Zetrus eventually returned to Cheliox, as did most of the other survivors, and used his family's merchant connections to sniff out any freedom sympathizers. Many of those original family and friends liberated by the *Bellflower* survivors chose to contribute as well, gambling their newfound freedom to wrest more of their kind from Cheliox's grip. Over time, dozens of independent smugglers and saboteurs working to free the nation's halflings allied—knowingly or not—into an ever-expanding collective. Secret tunnels, bunkers, and entire estates that passed from human memory in the war became the backbone of their unseen operation. Within a generation, the Bellflower Network had developed into its modern form—thousands of hands each carrying the burden of freedom a few steps forward at a time.

CODES AND PHILOSOPHIES

The Bellflower Network is the work of farmhands and servants, and that background shines in the organization's core principles of patience and observation. To the halfling eye, the world is overlarge, and humans—though bigger and stronger—often underestimate a halfling's capability or even her physical presence. A tiller has no need to steal the key ring from an estate's master when the fool hands it to his halfling servant to retire each night, and a fleeing crop don't need to fight their way past guards when they can simply wait for a holiday and walk out in plain view of a dozen human overseers too drunk to register their flight. Human arrogance provides rich soil for halfling freedom

to flourish, and the Bellflower Network prides itself on waiting for the perfect moments to plant its seeds.

In bondage, many halflings find solace in their faith, and the Bellflower Network embraces many religions. Strong ties bind members to the church of Cayden Cailean in Cheliox, though the church's precarious position under the gaze of Asmodeans prevents any formal alliance. Temples in Cheliox offer no overt support, but the larger church invests time and resources campaigning for abolition. Meanwhile, individual Caydenites offer what resources they can in the way of food, coin, and healing, and many clerics of the Drunken God also help operate "barns"—secret locations where escaped slaves stop to rest and resupply. The network also works with cults of Desna and Milani within Cheliox, trading intelligence for access to those hidden locations and smugglers both cults rely upon for operations. Many halflings freed by the Bellflower Network eventually find their way to the Everbloom's faith and continue to undermine Thrune rule. Members of a more violent faction within the network, referred to politely as the Irrigators, worship Norgorber's Father Skinsaw aspect and specialize in quiet assassinations of slavers, slave-masters, and bounty hunters.

The Bellflower Network prefers to recruit agents with a blend of altruism and pessimism, who possess a desire to help tempered by a tendency to prepare for the worst.

APHORISMS

While the Bellflower Network's clandestine nature prevents any formal code of conduct from taking root, its members use a few aphorisms, both to identify one another and to remind themselves of their true strengths.

A Few Today, a Few Tomorrow: Freeing the whole slave stock of Cheliox—millions, all told—is an overwhelming goal; however, carving a passage through a mountain is a seemingly impossible task that even a humble stream manages with time. No one person can save everyone, but a helping hand can save a single soul who would otherwise die with a chain around her neck. All Bellflower agents must adopt a simple philosophy of patience and safety, contenting themselves with any victory, no matter how small.

Nothing but Sweat and Seed and Soil: As an outgrowth of its practicality, the Bellflower Network relies on nonmagical alternatives whenever possible. Many shun magic as too expensive to learn or use reliably, or argue that carrying material components makes them immediately suspicious to authorities. Others avoid spells and magic items because so many of the Bellflower Network's enemies—especially Hellknights and the church of Asmodeus—are well-versed in arcane and divine magic, and can spot a magical disguise more readily than a mundane one. Bellflower agents use this phrase to alert others that someone in the area is on the lookout for magic auras or stopping spellcasters for questioning.

You're Born to This Land: Each Bellflower agent is only a small piece of a larger struggle, but that does not diminish anyone's importance. Instead, these limitations allow each individual to flourish and master their unique role. A tiller may know only 50 miles of road, but she knows its every gully, every hidden glade, and every patch of wild fruit along that trail. A human hand may never learn the names of those he aids or travel beyond his holding and the secret basement it offers as a refuge, but he knows how others always approach his property, and how to move between outbuildings unseen. Such limited knowledge offers everyone a chance at excellence, as well as safety—individual agents are nearly worthless in the eyes of the law, making them less likely to be targeted or harassed for suspected involvement.

STRUCTURE

While wealthier and larger anti-slaving operations have collapsed, the Bellflower Network endures, due almost entirely to its piecemeal structure. With few exceptions, no one member of the network knows much beyond her own job. A hand maintains a single safe house, and knows how to point escapees on to the next haven. A tiller knows a short leg of the route out of Chelias and her contacts at either end. Members rarely know more than a handful of other agents by name, and most identify themselves only with a telltale blue blossom stitched somewhere on their clothes, mounted on a lapel, or worn in the hair. While inefficient, this system prevents any one Network agent—or spies who penetrate it—from doing much harm. A traitor may compromise a single barn or a handful of runaway slaves, but other tillers simply change their routes to circle whatever obstacles appear. When the network has a thousand hearts, no one loss can end it.

Most “pluckings”—slave-freeing operations—begin with a Bellflower agent gaining access to a new estate or work camp, often by posing as a slave herself. This harvester may spend weeks or months learning the local terrain and scrutinizing slaves and servants for sympathetic ears and needful hearts. On moonless nights, she points the desperate into the hills, where a tiller waits to guide them through the darkness. One harvester

may remain in place for years, helping a few slaves each month—perhaps even slyly gaining a master's trust as all his other slaves betray him.

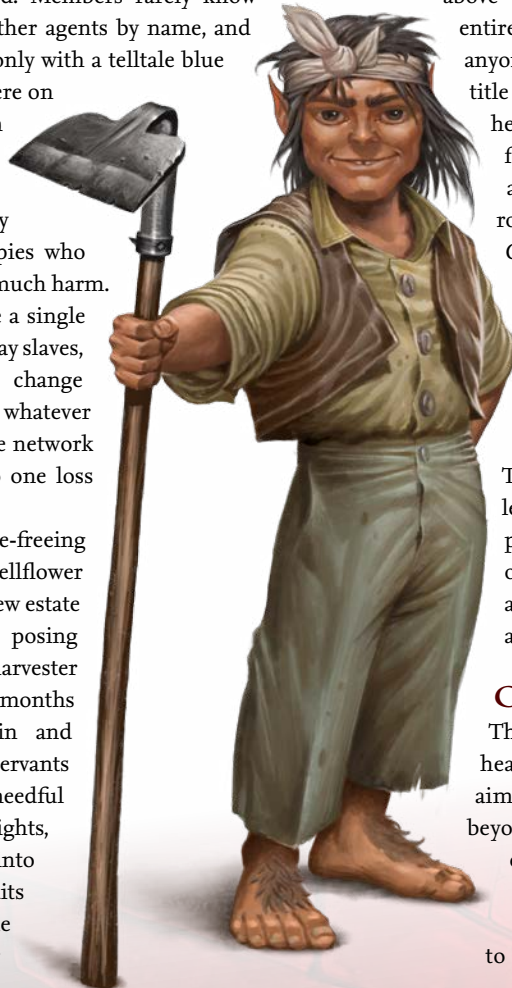
Once beyond an estate's walls, tillers guide their crop of escaped slaves across the countryside, traveling only by darkness and navigating unmarked, circuitous routes to confuse any pursuers. Other times, they travel disguised as children or the elderly alongside trusted human agents, or pose as local slaves. Many nights are spent cold in the wilderness—fires may attract attention and tents slow an escape—but safe houses dot every tiller's route. Called “barns” within the organization, these safe houses offer a vital place to rest, restock, and recover strength, and the almost exclusively human hands there can offer some small comforts before the refugees move on.

While the Bellflower Network primarily operates in isolated cells, a few, rare members are involved in the entirety of the organization. The agents known as “bluebirds” serve as messengers and spies, and are responsible for coordinating dozens of harvesters, tillers, and hands in a region, especially to plan large events. Those called “scarecrows” are mostly unaware of other members, but form small, tight-knit groups to spread misinformation and confront slave-hunters. Standing

above it all, the Farmer coordinates the entirety of the Bellflower Network as best as anyone can. Many halflings have held the title over the past 80 years; it's currently held by a pair of twins, **Magdalena** (CG female halfling rogue 7/master spy^{APG} 6) and **Martum Fallows** (CG male halfling rogue 5/Bellflower tiller 8; *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Paths of Prestige* 10). Rescued by the previous Farmer over 10 years ago, the pair were raised from childhood learning the ins and outs of the Bellflower Network, the Eagle Knights, and a half-dozen charities and criminal cartels across the empire. The siblings take turns appearing as the legendary leader, or else hire actors to play the role while they pose as guards or advisors, contributing to the rotating accounts of the Farmer's appearance and disposition.

OPERATIONS

The Bellflower Network focuses most heavily on the nation that birthed it, aiming to safely transport its crops beyond Chelias's border by any means. In eastern Chelias, most risk crossing the heavily guarded Andoren border, often dodging Chelish patrols thanks to bribes paid to sympathetic soldiers.



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In western Chelias, the Bellflower Network instead works alongside many criminal organizations, aiding any smugglers willing to carry halflings to Rahadoum, Varisia, or the Isle of Kortos. Reflecting their distinct backgrounds, the network's agents in eastern Chelias tend to be far more idealistic and optimistic, and those in western Chelias more suspicious and savvy.

Despite its reputation as a rural organization, the Bellflower Network is deeply entrenched in every Chelish city. Members still focus on freeing those enslaved, but their operations rely more on conventional criminal techniques than daring overland journeys. Indeed, many halfling criminals in Chelias work double-duty for the Bellflower Network, pulling slaves—willing or not—to freedom as they rob or assassinate their masters. While urban activities attract more attention, they also appear less organized—a robbed or murdered merchant with an absentee slave looks more like the handiwork of one halfling gone bad than the activities of a secret society. Bluebirds are more plentiful in urban cells, while tillers are rarer; the halflings rescued often remain in their city for months or years, hiding in safe houses or under assumed identities while they wait for a merchant or sailor willing to ferry them beyond Chelias's reach.

No corner of Chelias goes untouched by the Bellflower Network, but the organization's reach extends far beyond the Imperial borders as well. Its agents operate heavily along Andoran's western border and in port cities of Rahadoum and Varisia to welcome refugees arriving from Chelias. This close association has become a point of political contention in Andoran—while Andorens generally support freedom, the Bellflower Network's reliance on Andoran as a safe haven steadily deteriorates relations with Chelias along the already-militarized border. To make matters worse, decades of cheap immigrant labor have overwhelmed communities along Andoran's western border, fanning an undercurrent of anti-halfling sentiment. Today, the Bellflower Network scrambles to make inroads deeper into these nations, and establish contact with farther-flung locations like Absalom and Ustalav.

HEADQUARTERS

The Bellflower Network takes root wherever it finds a crack. Within Chelias, members meet by night in forest clearings or dirty basements. They rarely rely on easily compromised and expensive permanent structures, instead taking advantage of whatever humans forget or leave behind. Abroad in Andoran and Varisia, they operate halfway houses and communes to help runaways find their feet.

A typical Bellflower barn is either concealed or remote, and—despite the name—may be rural or urban. The halflings of the network prefer humble locations for their safe houses over any degree of comfort. An old cistern below a well makes a nearly impregnable rest stop, while

a pig shed behind a nondescript farmhouse offers a wide view and a dozen ways to escape should slave-catchers pick up the trail.

The exception to the network's emphasis on mobility are a handful of dug-in isolationist compounds. Built from ruins lost in the Chelish Civil War or ancient dungeon complexes, these locations house small communities of halflings dwelling apart from the world until conditions improve. These "cellars" offer refuge to Bellflower agents too infamous to cross the borders or too stubborn to leave their nation entirely, and allow the network to stockpile resources when they uncover treasure troves or receive large donations. The largest of these, the Warren, extends deep below Mount Emihym near the Nidalese border. Carved millennia ago by Kellid hands, the Warren is a maze of tunnels and large chambers once used as a redoubt by refugees fleeing Taldor's exploring armies. Halflings from the Warren still periodically uncover hidden passages and concealed chambers in their new home, and occasionally stumble upon secrets best left forgotten.

MEMBERSHIP

For a secretive organization, the Bellflower Network eagerly recruits new members, especially among the slaves its agents liberate. Unsurprisingly, halflings make up the bulk of the group, but almost anyone freed from shackles is welcomed without question; the network even features a handful of awakened animals and formerly bound outsiders among its numbers. No one begins his tenure knowing more than a short strip of land or a single safe house, but those members who prove themselves competent and trustworthy eventually earn the deference of other members while gradually learning of the organization's local operatives and resources.

Agents not rescued from slavery—mostly humans—are recruited from behind a veil of anonymity. Half-elves, half-orcs, and even elves are sometimes welcomed as tillers, but human and tiefling tillers remain all but unheard of. The majority of the network's non-halfling agents never walk the rows themselves, instead maintaining their public lives while acting as the organization's eyes and ears. This creates some resentment among human agents, who feel halflings' preferred status is unfair and undermines their own commitment to the cause, but ultimately most escaped halflings distrust human tillers, and are more likely to strike out alone than risk their freedom with the same people who shackled them.

The Bellflower Network is not completely without sympathy for or interest in human agents. They work frequently with the human-dominated Eagle Knights, and most hail from human-dominated communities, and so they lack the bitter malice many outsiders attribute to them. Human agents prove invaluable for penetrating Chelish bureaucracy and moving unnoticed among the

network's enemies. The Bellflower's intelligence arm especially benefits from human agents, and for high-profile or dangerous missions, such as daring rescues or the elimination of persistent enemies. The organization vastly prefers naming humans and other non-halflings as scarecrows to help divert some of the suspicion away from their vulnerable tillers.

NEW ITEMS

While Bellflower Network agents generally shun the use of magic, fearing it might make them stand out as beacons to investigators, they embrace many alchemical tricks to conceal their operations and agents. In addition to the items listed below, the Bellflower Network makes frequent use of the following items from *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Equipment* in their operations: blackfire clay, defoliant, ghast retch flasks, invisible ink, liquid blade, rusting powder, scent cloak, smoke pellets, and vermin repellent.

APPLECHEEK

PRICE 10 GP
WEIGHT 1 lb.

This sticky-sweet syrup is distilled from ivy and rabbit musk, and causes a mild allergic reaction in halflings. The slight swelling—especially in the face—and mild redness it induces makes the face seem younger, granting a halfling who drinks a dose of applecheek a +2 alchemical bonus on any Disguise skill checks made to look like a human, elven, or half-elven child. Crafting a dose of applecheek requires a successful DC 15 Craft (alchemy) check.

BONIFACE PAINT

PRICE 15 GP
WEIGHT 5 lbs.

This thick whitewash is laced with exotic oils, and dries to a lovely finish run through with subtle swirls. Difficult to notice, these patterns help obscure seams and details in whatever the paint coats; the Perception DC to find a secret door or hidden compartment on a surface covered in boniface paint increases by 5. One bucket of boniface paint covers up to a 10-foot-by-10-foot area, and its concealing effects last for 1 year. Crafting a bucket of boniface paint requires a successful DC 20 Craft (alchemy) check.



COOKING POWDER

PRICE 2 GP
WEIGHT 1 lb.

By boiling certain seeds with handfuls of rust, halfling alchemists create these red flakes, which smolder slowly when touched by a spark or flame. If sprinkled over food and lit, a handful of cooking powder can cook meat or vegetables in 20 minutes without light or significant heat, though it lends a metallic flavor to any foods. If held to a living creature's flesh, smoldering cooking powder deals 1 point of fire damage per minute for 20

minutes. One jar of cooking powder is enough to cook up to 5 pounds of food in 1-pound increments. Crafting a jar of cooking powder requires a successful DC 15 Craft (alchemy) check.

FOOL'S GLOW

PRICE 45 GP
WEIGHT 1 lb.

A greasy paste of beeswax, pyrite, and various monster fluids, fool's glow reacts with light to confuse magical senses. For 12 hours after being smeared over an object or creature (a process requiring 1 minute), the fool's glow detects as faintly magical if examined with a *detect magic* or *arcane sight* spell, though no school or specific spell can be identified. With a successful DC 21 Craft (alchemy) or Spellcraft check, a character identifies the coating for what it is. A single jar of fool's glow can coat one Medium, two Small, or four Tiny or smaller objects. Crafting a jar of fool's glow requires a successful DC 20 Craft (alchemy) check.

HOUNDBANE DUST

PRICE 75 GP
WEIGHT 3 lbs.

A blend of finely ground plaster, burning spices, and insect secretions, houndbane dust deters tracking animals. A single pouch can be spread over a 5-foot area as a standard action. For 24 hours thereafter, any creature with the scent ability that enters that square takes 1d2 points of damage and loses its sense of smell for 24 hours. Creatures that succeed at a DC 15 Fortitude saving throw take no damage and lose their sense of smell for only 3d6 minutes.



Crafting a pouch of houndbane dust requires a successful DC 25 Craft (alchemy) check.

SPARKLE SMOKE

PRICE 25 GP
WEIGHT 1 lb.

When inhaled, this incense causes creatures to see dazzling auras around light sources, drawing their attention to the moon or stars and away from nearby distractions. Any creature inhaling sparkle smoke that fails a DC 15 Fortitude saving throw takes a -4 penalty on Perception checks to notice creatures smaller than itself for 1 hour. Crafting a dose of sparkle smoke requires a successful DC 15 Craft (alchemy) check.

TILLER'S GUM

PRICE 50 GP
WEIGHT —

This small stick of minty gum has alchemical properties that allow it to soak up magical energy and release it when the gum is chewed. As a standard action, a stick of tiller's gum can be imbued with a touch spell, as if it were the target of the spell. The gum holds the charge for 1 hour, during which time, a creature capable of casting the stored spell can chew the gum as a standard action to regain the spell's effects, as though holding the spell's charge. All variables determined by the caster's level use the lower of the original caster's level or the chewing caster's level. Crafting a stick of tiller's gum requires a successful DC 20 Craft (alchemy) check.

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THE SCORPION'S STING

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I leaped aside as the flames roared toward me. In blind haste, I lost my balance and tried to roll through. My right ankle crackled as I fell. My shoulder struck the road's packed earth, and another snap sounded loud; flares of pain shot down my arm.

Hollering, I clutched the limb as it went numb.

"Master Atrius!" Khem cried.

I groaned, trying not to writhe like a beetle on its back.

The devilborn's laughter burned as much as her spell had threatened.

"My, my. Despite your courtly manners, it seems you have no appreciation for Lady Ebela's advances."

I blinked tears of pain out of my eyes as three people emerged from the thick woods behind the devilborn—two scruffy men and a scarred woman, wearing leather armor and wielding swords and daggers.

Ebela swept her hands out, indicating her helpers. "More manners are needed. Shall I teach you the proper way to dance?"

Jevlia's soft voice reached my ears. "Atrius, get up. Help us."

I met Jevlia's eyes briefly, seeing wary concern in them. To the side, Khem still squatted in the cart, gripping the sides with gnarled hands. He looked both terrified and focused, mouthing silently to himself. Likely trying to conjure another spell. I couldn't make myself believe he'd be any more successful than last time.

Even with Jevlia's skill, I doubted the fight could be won. Not with me wounded before I could land a blow. Not with me trembling so. *Not now. Please, not now.*

Back in Khem's shop, I'd been foolish enough to fight because I thought I'd held the advantage, if a temporary one. And there'd been only one way out then. This forest offered plenty of escape routes.

Screams echoed in my memories. Ebela must've sensed my distress, for she grinned cruelly and took a step closer.

Bracing my good arm, I lurched to my knees. Then I made myself disappear. Ebela's companions shouted to each other, looking every which way as they fanned out.

I stumbled to my feet and dashed for cover. A flash of light and another spew of smoke indicated a flame hitting the ground where I'd just been.

Trying to control my huffs, I ducked behind a tree. The corners of my vision flickered red, as if blood seeped into my eyes. I squeezed them shut. I only had so much time before my little trick wore off and revealed me again, but I remained rooted, torn between the terror of dying and horror at abandoning my friends.

At last, I dared to peek back around the trunk. Ebela's thugs clustered around her while still casting looks about for me.

Jevlia took up a stance before the cart, shielding Khem with her body. She

held her hands with palms up in front of her face, curled as if beckoning her foes.

At a gesture from Ebela, they rushed Jevlia from three directions at

once. She swept into motion. While she'd taken Garrol and Ewitt handily enough, she'd had surprise and their bumbling skills to her advantage. These three harried her slightly better. Oh, she made them stumble and flail in turn, beautifully enough. Yet she couldn't focus on one quite long enough to drop them. They edged her away from the cart

As Jevlia fought, the devilborn stalked toward Khem, who remained within the wagon.

"Your friend has abandoned you," she said. "Now, a lady never gets blood on her hands, but it would be rude of me to leave you unattended. Whatever shall I do with you?"

She drew a tiny silver blade from her belt. With a flick of her hand, it floated into the air and bobbed beside her head, pointed at Khem. He pressed back against the opposite side of the cart.

Yet my eyes locked on her belt. A pair of silk pouches dangled from it, such teasing targets for anyone with a pilfering habit. I'd eyed enough purses to gauge what they held in a glance. One sat heavy with coin, most likely a handful of gold and silver. The other had a small lump, yet hung lightly.

Items for her spellcasting? Perhaps. But I dared to hope otherwise.



Ebela follows Drayven's orders, attempting to retrieve the amulet for him. A sadistic devotee of Asmodeus and the powers of Hell, she possesses a fiery tongue. Literally.

I crept up behind Ebela as quickly as I could, ignoring the spasms of my ankle with each step. She made her blade weave through the air, giggling at Khem's fear.

With a nimble twist, I opened the pouch and slipped my hand inside. I drew out Khem's medallion on its crimson cord—just as my body reappeared.

Ebela glanced back. Her eyes widened right before I slammed my forehead into her temple. She screamed and, clutching her head with one hand, lashed out at me with the other. Her dagger sped at me. I dodged and ducked just enough for it to merely slash a cheek. Even as I stumbled, I tossed the amulet to Khem.

"Boy! Catch!"

He made a clumsy swipe, but somehow snagged the amulet before it fell out of reach.

The dagger swooped at me again. I held my good hand up and let it take me through the palm, biting my tongue to hold back a scream. I clutched the blade, teeth gritted as I fought whatever invisible force animated the weapon.

Ebela screeched at me.

"Fool. I'll carve out your heart and drink your blood. I'll—" Then she noticed Khem and realized what I'd done. A ball of flame appeared above one of her hands. "No!"

Khem slipped the amulet's cord back around his neck. The devilborn lunged for him, only to be knocked back as white light once more exploded from his body. The transformation only took a moment this time. He stood in the cart, almost regal despite his dusty robe.

In the blinding flash, Jevlia had downed two of her opponents. The third—the other woman—threw savage blows at the monk. Jevlia side-stepped a swipe, caught the woman's arm, and curled it around so the blade slammed back into the attacker's own chest.

The other woman froze, stunned. She slumped to her knees, gripping the hilt. Jevlia let her fall as she eyed me across the way, expression indefinable.

Then Ebela rose between us. She pointed at Khem, hand and voice quivering with rage.

"That doesn't belong to you. It is my master's."

Khem clutched the amulet. "My mother may have damned herself to find this and my dearest friend may have died to send it to me. If you think I'm going to let you steal it, then you can burn in your own flames."

The devilborn snarled and started making arcane gestures.

Khem lifted a hand. "No."

He uttered a word I couldn't understand and made a precise angling of his fingers. A ghostly spiked sphere winked into existence before him and flew at Ebela. She flung her arms up at the last second. The orb, however, shot into her stomach and rammed her to the ground.

The devilborn lay flat, but breathing. Spikes had gouged her pretty dress and blood seeped through the silk. I edged closer to make sure she wouldn't cause any more trouble.

With a ragged gasp, Ebela sat up and glared at Khem. She hissed through her teeth.

"You think that pathetic spell can stop me? I, who have studied at the feet of fiends and mastered the five-sided flame? I, who—"

"Do shut up, m'lady," I said.

She snapped her head my way. Shock flashed over her face just before I backhanded her in the neck.

Her own blade, having punched through my hand, slashed her throat open.

She collapsed, gurgling, kicking, and clutching her neck. Her body stilled in moments.

Khem stared at me.

Stunned at the suddenness of her death or horrified at my causing it? For one who saw his own death rapidly approaching every time he looked in a mirror, I would've thought him a bit more inured to our mortality.

"You're," he licked his lips, "you're hurt."

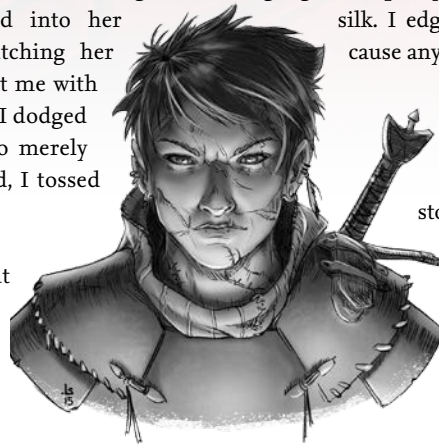
I raised my pierced hand, which dripped blood. The world wobbled a bit. I heard my own chuckle as if from a great distance. "This? Oh, I suffered far worse during my time as—"

That's when I blacked out.

I woke to darkness. At least, I think I woke, considering I couldn't see or feel anything. A few shifts and blinks made me realize the darkness was natural. My eyes adjusted so I could make out a copse of trees, wrapped in the sable grip of night. I had initially detected no sensation because I'd been waiting for the pain of my injuries to gang up on me again. They refused to make an appearance, though.

I'd been laid out on a simple blanket beneath the boughs of a massive evergreen, which blocked out the light of the moon and stars. A squeal pierced the quiet. I jolted upright, seeking my daggers, only to pause when an owl hooted nearby and wings flapped into the distance.

Khem appeared in the gloom before me. He crouched and placed a hand on my shoulder. "I thought you



Whenever I see someone so heavily scarred, I often wonder what stories accompany the marks. With this woman, I doubt any of them ended particularly well.

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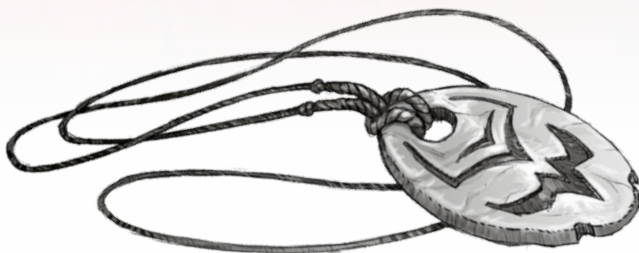
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This singular amulet has been the cause of so much death and disaster. At the same time, it is able to cure rather horrific curses and give those affected a second chance at life.



would've been able to stand the sight of a little blood." His grin—a young man's grin—held enormous relief.

"Your mother's the healer," I said. "No doubt she's used to seeing bodies all out of sorts. I prefer my blood properly contained."

"I'm not sure she's much of a healer anymore," he muttered.

"May I inquire as to how I came to be napping in the thick of the forest rather than visiting Pharasma's Spire?"

He nodded over at the wagon and mule. The beast had been lashed to a tree where it could nibble nearby foliage.

"Fortunately," he said, "I remembered you'd purchased a few healing potions with Lady Jevlia's donation."

I grimaced. Those had cost the majority of our funds, in fact. "I hope you didn't use them all on me."

"Just one. Hopefully we won't even need the others now that we've dealt with that sorceress."

Of course, I thought. We'll just trade the rest to Drayven and I'm sure he'll take them as fair exchange for your mother.

"Where are we?" I asked, leaning back against the tree.

Jevlia shifted into sight. Her purple vestment had blended her with the shadows until then.

"We loaded you into the cart and kept going the rest of the day," she said. "We left the main road but are following what looks like an old logging path."

Khem chuckled. "You slept the whole way."

"Good that I did. Would've been boring watching nothing but trees go by."

Jevlia placed a golden-gloved hand on Khem's head. "Khem, could you go see to your ward? Make sure it remains active."

He straightened and went to check a large stone a few yards away.

Jevlia sat beside me, close enough for our shoulders and hips to brush against one another. I held quite still, I assure you.

"No campfire?" I asked.

"Fire would draw the attention of things we don't want to deal with," she said. "Khem placed an invisible alarm around us. He'll let us know if anything dangerous comes near."

"He must enjoy being able to do that so readily again."

She smiled slightly. "He keeps asking if I need any particular spells cast. And he's been picking up all sorts of odds and ends as we've traveled. Leaves. Feathers. Ruined spider webs. Even little mud balls and a scrap of dried leather we found on the road." Her expression turned serious again. "You surprised me, Atrius."

I swallowed, dry-mouthed all of a sudden. "You thought I'd abandoned you."

"I'll not lie."

But we're both so good at it, I thought.

"I couldn't deny the possibility." She tucked her legs up into a meditative pose. "Why'd you do it? Come back to help, that is."

I shrugged. "Oh, I realized how foolhardy it'd be for me to go running off into the woods, wounded as I was. I needed a healing potion. So while you kept those buffoons distracted, I intended to lift a vial from the supplies before making my real escape. Then I noticed a lovely bag of coin on that horrid lady's belt. Old habits and whatnot. Greed took over and I tried to lift it along the way, but dipped into the wrong pouch. Mere luck."

Jevlia looked disappointed. "You must tangle your tongue into the most painful knots telling such lies."

"It's more painful when it's the truth."

She sighed. "You've never forgiven yourself, have you?"

"Forgiven himself for what?"

We looked up to find Khem had returned. He studied us with innocent curiosity.

I pushed up and smiled. "For not getting the chance to explain my plan, of course. Would've been far better if we were able to coordinate our attacks."

"But it was clever," he said. "I realized what you'd done afterward. Making them think you'd run, letting them get distracted, and then slipping in behind to save the day."

Jevlia tugged her hood up, hiding her face as she shook her head.

"Yes." I nodded. "Exactly. Glad you figured out my ruse. Now then, you snatch some rest while I keep watch, hear? That cart makes an excellent bed, I must say."

They both dozed, though a couple times I caught Jevlia watching me from the recesses of her hood.

As soon as it became light enough to see the path, Khem drew out his silver raven and let it fly against its leash. Once he pinpointed the proper direction, he strode off, back straight, legs steady. I got the heroic duty of guiding the mule and cart, which I minded not at all.

A day and a half's travel brought us deeper into the Anferita Wood than I'd ever been or hoped to go. The trees crowded around us like gawkers waiting to be entertained by the manner of our demise. Squawks, chattering, and chirps rose from the brush and branches almost constantly. This didn't bother me so much as the rare periods of total silence. I held my breath during those until nature's discourse resumed.

The path narrowed and became increasingly overgrown until we lost it at last and had to navigate by the raven statuette alone. Fortunately, I had bought the smallest cart I could, and it was able to wend its way through the trees and occasional clearings.

Toward dusk of the second day, Jevlia pointed ahead. "Do you see?"

Beyond a few more rows of trees, boulders had been set in an enormous ring. Even at this distance, graven symbols were visible through the moss covering the stones. Handmade, but by whose hands? All around the area, wildflowers speckled the grass with vivid blossoms. A welcome respite from the forest's otherwise somber atmosphere.

"That must be where she is," Khem cried. "Liset!"

He raced ahead, Jevlia on his heels.

"Wait, boy!" I called.

Damnation. At least when on his cane, he moved slower.

I jumped off the cart and lashed the mule to a low branch. Then I pursued them until I found myself in a small grove not far from the odd stone structure.

The area looked wilder and yet more inviting than the rest of the woods we'd traveled. Almost tended, but in a way that encouraged nature to thrive.

Yet I barely noticed all this as my attention locked on Khem. He knelt, head bowed, before a cairn—one large enough to cover a body. Dismay slowed my steps on seeing the raven statue lying inert on the pile.

A rapier had been stabbed into the earth at one end as a makeshift grave marker.

Jevlia stood beside Khem. She laid a hand on his quaking shoulders. "I'm sorry," she whispered. "You tried your best."

"It wasn't enough," he said.

I came up on his other side. "Most people wouldn't have tried anything at all. You honored her with your effort."

"What good is it?" he growled.

"What?" I asked. "Trying?"

Khem spat words while trying to choke back his tears. "What good is honor? What good is power? What good are strength and health and life if I couldn't even save her?"

He raised fists and pounded them against the cairn. The stones shifted. A moan rose from within.

"Liset! She's in there. She's alive." Khem grabbed the nearest rock and flung it aside.

After sharing a concerned look, Jevlia and I joined in the effort. In moments, we'd cleared enough to reveal a figure lying within. We worked until we disassembled the whole pile, leaving stones strewn across the grass.

A young woman lay interred, unmoving despite the moan we'd heard. She wore ragged and bloodied armor. A symbol of Nethys hung around her neck, and a few muddied baubles glinted in her braided hair. Her face had a gaunt look, cheeks hollow, dark skin tinted gray.

"Gods, Liset." Khem went to his knees again and dragged her up into a sitting position.

Her arms dangled, listless. Her head flopped back until Khem supported it against a shoulder. He shook her gently.

"Liset? It's me. I came for you. Please." He blinked up at us. "Is she... is she..."

Jevlia frowned. "Khem, I'm not sure—"

Liset's eyes snapped open, revealing orbs as dark as obsidian.

Khem gasped and fell back. Jevlia and I tensed. Was this woman now some form of undead? An abomination left as a trap by Drayven?

Liset stood on trembling legs. Hugging herself, she looked everywhere with a crazed expression. Then she fixed on the sword and reeled toward it.

"Liset." Khem reached for her. "Wait, it's all right."

A black aura snapped into being around the woman's body. Khem flew backward into Jevlia, who caught him and spun, slowing his momentum.

Liset yanked the rapier out of the ground and slashed it wildly. A wordless scream erupted from her mouth while her dead eyes never blinked.

Khem held hands up in pleading. "Liset! It's me. What's wrong? What happened to you?"

"Careful, boy." I slipped a dagger into a hand. "We have no idea what we're dealing with."

Liset dropped to one knee. Her whole body shook, but she kept the sword poised. "Monster. Liar. You..." She wavered. Shook her head. "You took her from me. Deceived her. Damned her."

"You're talking about Drayven. About my mother." Khem displayed the silver raven. "You sent this to me, remember? Along with this." He tapped the medallion on his chest. "It worked. I'm cured. And I came to find you."

"Khem." The rapier drooped in her hand until its tip touched the earth, "Is it really you?"

He spread his arms. With a happy cry, she dropped her weapon and staggered into his arms. He held her, for once the strong one, as she sobbed into his chest. They made a slow collapse until he sat with her head in his lap. He murmured to her as she struggled simply to breathe.

The tremors racking her body increased with each minute. At one point, she turned and spat dark blood on the grass. Through the filth coating her body, I noted

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multiple slashing and piercing wounds. These were blackened, as if with rot, and purple, spiderlike veins crept out from them.

"What's wrong with her?" Jevlia asked.

Khem closed his eyes and spent a minute with his palms pressed to either side of Liset's head. He muttered to himself, almost as if arguing with whatever he sensed.

"I don't think it's any sort of poison," he said at last. "Something worse." He used his chin to point me toward the cart. "Get one of the healing vials."

I retrieved one as asked and Khem carefully tipped the contents between Liset's lips. The woman spluttered a bit, but managed to swallow most of it.

She breathed easier and her shaking eased, but didn't stop entirely. Nor did the unnatural darkness in her eyes fade.

"Is there something you know that might help her?" Khem asked Jevlia.

Jevlia bowed slightly. "I'm afraid not. If my order possesses any healing arts, I've yet to learn them."

After several minutes, Liset steadied enough to sit up with her own strength. She sat cross-legged opposite Khem, holding his hands so hers wouldn't tremble so much. While her skin had gained a healthier flush, I thought it might already be fading back to gray. That, or it was a trick of the deepening shadows.

Potions of healing should be a mainstay of any group venturing into dangers unknown. Yet they are precious supplies, and ought to be used only in the most desperate of circumstances. Don't let them go to waste.



Liset's voice had firmed as well, but still came out strained. "It won't help. I'm sorry. You used up resources on me you shouldn't have."

He bent his head to hers, foreheads almost touching. "Tell me what happened."

They spoke in hushed voices for a long while as Jevlia and I watched the forest, ensuring nothing skulked, waiting to attack. Finally, Khem rejoined us and explained.

"After she snatched the relic from Drayven's grasp, she fled both him and my mother. She tried to reach me on her own, but they caught her and..." He made fists. "Drayven tried to slay her."

"Did your mother do nothing?" Jevlia asked.

He hung his head. "Apparently my mother tried to heal her but was more focused on securing the relic for me."

I gestured to the young woman, who had drawn her knees up to her chest and hugged herself. "So Drayven did this to her?"

Khem sighed. "No. To keep that devil from getting what he wanted, she opened the relic and sent me what she found inside. This." He raised the medallion, which glinted in the fading sunlight. "She opened a scroll case holding a fragment of the *Poleiheira*. A part of the same fragment that cursed me. Except the curse triggered by the scroll case looks far worse. Instead of killing her over a few decades, like me, she's going to die in a matter of days. It's a miracle she's lasted this long. Perhaps some of her devotion to Nethys sustained her."

"If we let her rest in the cart, maybe we can get her back to Corentyn in time," I said. "Get her attended to by a priest."

The boy gave me a withering look. "Master Atrius, my mother spent most of my life talking to every manner of mage or priest and searching every archive she could access. What makes you think we can succeed in a matter of days where she failed?"

I held palms up. "At worst, we can make her comfortable before the end."

"No."

The determined glint in Khem's eyes worried me.

"What other options do we have?" I tapped his robe, thumping against the book he carried. "Unless you know a spell that undoes the past?"

"I came here to save her," he said. "I intend to."

Pivoting, he strode back to Liset and knelt before her. He reached for the medallion cord around his neck.

"What're you doing?" Her eyes widened and she gripped his wrists. "No, you can't. It's yours."

He smiled softly. Sadly. "That means I can do whatever I want with it."

In a swift motion, he shook her loose—she remained too feeble to even resist—and slipped the cord off himself and over her head.



When we discovered Liset's cairn, I thought all was lost. Yet Khem continued to hope and fight for her, even when confronted with the nature of the curse that had ravaged her body and mind. I believe he considers her to be far more than a mere friend, and her survival may well be linked to his, in the end.

After blinking away the now-familiar dazzle from the explosion of light, I studied the results. Liset looked flushed with vitality, devoid of any of the creeping wounds she'd sustained. Khem, on the other hand, had reverted to his grandfatherly appearance.

He sagged, wheezing. Liset cried out and started to take the amulet back off, but he clasped her hand in his knobbed one.

"No. Keep it on. For me."

"But you'll die."

"Not nearly as quickly as you would." His chuckle sounded too much like a death rattle for my liking. "Don't worry. I'm used to it." Still, he groaned as she helped him stand.

"Now let's go," he said. "We still have to save my mother from a devil." He gazed off into the gathering darkness. "And herself."

"Go where?" I asked. "Will your trick with the raven work still?"

"No." He frowned. "I admit I hadn't thought this far ahead."

I looked at Liset. "Do you have any idea where they headed after..." I coughed at her glare. "No, I suppose

you were a bit too busy dying to pick up on that sort of detail."

"Search the area," Jevlia said. "Maybe we can find some tracks."

"Drayven can fly," Liset said.

I puffed a laugh. "Lovely. Any of you able to sprout wings?"

Khem patted at his robe. "I might know a spell that'd work. Where's that feather?"

I raised a finger. "Do you remember what happened the last time you tried to cast a spell in this condition?" He scowled, but I waved him off. "Let's try the less insane option first. We'll search, as Jevlia suggests. If we find nothing, we can consider casting ourselves to the skies."

I retrieved Khem's cane from the cart, and he hobbled around with Liset as we scoured the clearing and nearby trees.

After ten minutes of searching, Liset gasped. We all converged and found her and Khem studying a tiny pile of rocks. They were stacked in a manner too structured to be natural.

"I know this sign." Liset pointed her rapier northwest. "Maharai left a trail."

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The petitioners toiled before the furnaces as if in a trance, movements mechanical and eyes hollow. A large, five-spoked wheel rolled slowly through their ranks, the skin of its face pulled tight like a sentient drum. A red eye gleamed at its center and the toothy, drooling mouth beneath ululated hypnotically. All the while, the workers trudged on. When one of them slipped and fell to the ground in exhaustion, the drum-wheel whirled around to face it, collapsing in upon itself and rising as a long bone serpent in the same grotesque motion.

“Back to work, slime!” it gurgled. I could barely resist picking up a tool myself and getting in line behind the other petitioners, ready to do my master’s bidding.

—Reliparaxius, *66 Years in Phlegethon*

This volume of the Hell's Vengeance Adventure Path sets the villains loose on Egorian to earn the favor of House Thrune. The following bestiary presents a new type of couatl, the bone-wheel slave drivers of Hell's forges and factories, the infernal boars that feast on souls of the damned, and a daemon formed from the souls of victims of falls from great heights.

HEART OF THE EMPIRE

In order to prove themselves as the most trusted agents of House Thrune, the PCs must carry out a number of tasks in the Chelish capital of Egorian. The random encounter table presented here features dangers the PCs can face while taking care of business in the City of Thorns. During the course of the adventure, the PCs have a 30% chance of a random encounter every hour they spend out on the streets, but should have no more than three random encounters per day.

Since the adventure spans a range of levels, some random encounters might be too simple or difficult for the PCs, depending on where they are in the course of the adventure. If the result rolled is outside the Challenge Rating range appropriate for the PCs, roll again on the table or choose a different encounter.

Agnarania (CR 11): This avoral agathion (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2 16*) serves as a planar ally of an influential Eagle Knight commander. When her master believes it will be most unexpected or cause the most disruption to the workings of Chelias, Agnarania is tasked with vanquishing agents of House Thrune in the Chelish capital—in this case, the PCs.

Errant Devil (CR varies): Under the influence of House Thrune, Egorian's elite have spent much of the past century summoning and binding devils in what has become a hobby for nobles. While more skilled magical practitioners summon such fiends for practical purposes (such as to act as familiars or arbiters of contractual matters), many far overstep their abilities and call greater beasts to Golarion than they can hope to contain, all in an effort to outdo their peers. One such devil breaks free from its binding near the PCs' location and runs amok through Egorian's streets, outraged at the slight against it. Any of the devils in the random encounter table (denoted with an asterisk) may be used for the rampaging fiend.

Glorious Reclamation Sympathizers (CR 12): While open support of the Glorious Reclamation in Egorian or elsewhere in Chelias is a capital offense, many of the nation's citizens nevertheless sympathize with the Iomedean movement to rid their land of infernal influence. As the PCs increase their renown within House Thrune, so too do they attract the attention of those who would see the Glorious Reclamation succeed. One such band of seditionists and traitors follows the villains through the city, awaiting the opportunity to strike back at the increasingly effective agents of their oppressors.

EGORIAN STREETS ENCOUNTERS

d%	Result	Avg. CR	Source
1-7	1 alchemical golem	9	<i>Bestiary 2 135</i>
8-15	Agnarania	9	See below
16-22	1 bone devil*	9	<i>Bestiary 74</i>
23-28	1 bogeyman	10	<i>Bestiary 3 42</i>
29-35	2 drowning devils*	10	<i>Bestiary 4 52</i>
36-39	1d3 festering spirits	10	<i>Bestiary 4 98</i>
40-45	1 barbed devil*	11	<i>Bestiary 72</i>
46-52	Bounty hunter	11	<i>NPC Codex 135</i>
53-60	Street Gang	11	See below
61-67	1 aghasura asura	12	<i>Bestiary 3 23</i>
68-75	Glorious Reclamation Sympathizers	12	See below
76-81	1 xiuh couatl	12	See page 86
82-88	1 ice devil*	13	<i>Bestiary 77</i>
89-96	1 ixion worm	13	See page 90
97-100	Selivess Rextanar	13	See below

The band, which is led by streetwise fighter Blere Guswin (use the statistics for a scheming fencer on page 86 of the *Pathfinder RPG NPC Codex*), consists of two freelance thieves (*NPC Codex 147*) and two low-ranking noble scions with ambitions of greatness under a non-Thrune regime (use the statistics for a diplomat on page 253 of the *NPC Codex*). The Glorious Reclamation sympathizers' alignments are all lawful good or neutral good.

Street Gang (CR 11): In Egorian's Cheapside districts (see page 68), thieves' guilds, ruffian gangs, and bands of aggressive beggars abound, taking every opportunity to improve their fortunes when the Hellknights or dottari aren't looking. The PCs, established adventurers that they are, make for attractive marks for such hoodlums, who ambush the villains as they make their way through the city's less patrolled areas. The ringleader of this gang is Euneria Aldair (use the statistics for a guild master on page 267 of the *Pathfinder RPG GameMastery Guide*), a former assassin who now takes on fewer contracts in favor of naming her own targets and planning her own schemes. She is assisted by a rotating coterie of fellow thugs, which currently consists of two former slavers (*GameMastery Guide 266*) and a con artist (*NPC Codex 29*).

Selivess Rextanar (CR 13): An ambitious law professor at the University of Egorian, Selivess Rextanar (use the statistics for a devilbound sorcerer on page 56 of the *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 4*) made a pact with the pit fiend Xevragoz to increase her own power. Xevragoz is an enemy of Queen Abrogail's advisor, Gorthoklek, and tasks Rextanar with disrupting the monarch's plot by taking out the PCs as they conduct business on her behalf.

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AVERNUS RAZORBACK

The coarse, ebony fur of this massive boar is mottled with patches of crimson. Its eyes are blood red and its jagged tusks seem more like obsidian than bone.

AVERNUS RAZORBACK CR 9



XP 6,400

LE Large outsider (evil, extraplanar, fire, lawful)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Perception +21

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 8, flat-footed 21 (-1 Dex, +13 natural, -1 size)

hp 137 (11d10+77)

Fort +13, **Ref** +6, **Will** +6

Defensive Abilities infernal ferocity; **Immune** disease, fire

Weaknesses vulnerable to cold

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee gore +16 (2d10+6/19-20 plus bleed), bite +16 (1d8+6)

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

Special Attacks bleed (1d8), devour body and essence, trample (2d10+9, DC 21)

STATISTICS

Str 23, **Dex** 8, **Con** 22, **Int** 3, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 9

Base Atk +11; **CMB** +18; **CMD** 27

Feats Improved Critical (gore), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Perception), Toughness

Skills Perception +21, Survival +15

Languages Infernal (can't speak)

ECOLOGY

Environment any (Hell)

Organization solitary, pair, herd (3-20), plague (21-100)

Treasure standard

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Devour Body and Essence (Su) When an Avernus razorback eats a fresh corpse, it devours every single part of the body, even the hardest bones. When an Avernus razorback devours a body that has been dead for no more than 24 hours, it also consumes the soul or spirit of the creature. The creature can't be brought back to life by any means short of a *miracle* or *wish* spell. It takes a single Avernus razorback 10 minutes to devour a Medium or smaller creature plus an additional 10 minutes for every size category above Medium the creature is. The feeding time can be reduced by 10 minutes for each additional Avernus razorback joining in the feast (minimum 10 minutes).

Infernal Ferocity (Su) An Avernus razorback remains conscious and continues to fight even when reduced to 0 or fewer hit points. The razorback is staggered, but instead of losing 1 hit point per round, it gains regeneration 5 (cold) until it has 1 or more hit point. An Avernus razorback loses this ability if it has not eaten at least one Small or larger fresh corpse in the past month.

It regains the ability as soon as it finishes consuming such a corpse that has died within 24 hours.

Infernal scholars have long debated the origin of the Avernus razorback. Some claim the beasts came into being fully formed as a manifestation of the malice and hate birthed by the unforgiving landscape of Hell's first layer. Others theorize an infernal duke or archdevil once led a massive herd of daeodons to Avernus from the Material Plane to drink from the River Styx and feed on the foul reeds growing amid the waters of Eridanos; over countless generations, these fell influences infused the survivors with the essence of Hell.

Whatever the genesis of these beasts, they now roam Avernus in huge packs that even most devils avoid. Powerful and fierce, they are territorial animals with a ravenous hunger for both plant and animal life. Their strange Hell-empowered digestion not only devours the body, but also obliterates the soul, ripping a creature's very life essence out of the multiverse entirely—a fate that scares even the denizens of Hell.

ECOLOGY

Avernus razorbacks are the most versatile of omnivores, and will eat all manner of grasses, scrubs, and meat, no matter the condition they're in. The beasts prefer the fresh corpses of living creatures (sentient beings most of all), as it not only nourishes their bodies but also empowers their magical nature. Razorbacks that don't eat a fresh corpse on a regular basis lose their infernal ferocity ability. But these aggressive creatures don't wait to happen upon a corpse; they actively hunt their prey, with a viciousness more akin to that of wolves than swine.

Mating within a herd or a plague happens nearly constantly on Avernus and the other layers of Hell, and gestation is a mere 4 months. The spawn, once birthed, have to fend for themselves, though mature females try to protect the young creatures from males in the grouping, which are quick to scoop up the babies as a quick but unsatisfying snack. Thus do only the strongest and meanest of young razorbacks survive their first year of life. While boars and daeodons nurse their young, female Avernus razorbacks lack the anatomy to do so. In order for spawn to grow up strong and fierce, they must hunt and feed upon fresh corpses. This magical energy sustains the spawn like mother's milk would a terrestrial mammal, and without it, the spawn weakens and is abandoned, trampled, or devoured by the adult males.

HABITAT AND SOCIETY

Once native to Avernus alone, the razorbacks have expanded their territories to the other layers of Hell, though not as deep as Nessus, due in part to Asmodeus's strategic use of Nessian warhounds to guard his borders, as the Prince of Lies sees razorbacks as a blight

and refuses to let them linger for long in his domain. Strangely, razorbacks typically do not fare well outside of Hell. While they can survive for a time elsewhere, their prodigious breeding activity is greatly diminished when they are away from Hell's infernal energies. The Pit's greatest minds postulate the razorbacks need the waters of either the marshy ocean of Eridanos or the lethargic run of the River Styx to trigger their breeding cycle, though a handful of breeders on other planes have cast some doubt on such a theory, claiming an alchemical formula can replicate the catalyst throughout the multiverse.

Razorback groupings are ruled by the largest and meanest female. She has to be strong enough to cow the other females into obedience, and to keep the far more aggressive but typically smaller males in check. The females of a group wage a constant war for dominance, with older, weaker females quickly supplanted by younger, stronger candidates for leadership. On the rare occasions when a male claims dominance over a group, its days are inevitably numbered—a male alpha will eventually tear the group apart through its own aggressive nature and unthinking hunger.

Domesticated Avernus razorbacks are sparse outside of Avernus itself, in part because the savage boars often turn on their masters. In Cheliah and other mortal realms where people are used to treating with the forces of Hell, some brave or foolhardy souls keep Avernus razorbacks to assist them in getting rid of their political enemies without leaving any physical evidence or chance of resurrection in their wakes.

Among those who know about these secret razorback farms, rumors circulate that some of the infernal livestock have escaped and begun breeding in the Chelish wilderness. Skilled hunters have attempted to track the beasts to verify the rumors and hopefully end the threat they pose, but no evidence of razorback plagues in the wild has yet come to light. That the beasts' victims have no corpses to discover leads many to believe no evidence is to be found.

BYPRODUCTS

The strange gastric peculiarities of Avernus razorbacks aside, these animals are coveted for a number of byproducts particular to the species. The blood, meat, and tusks can all be harvested for special use, as detailed below.

Avernus Razorback Blood: The fresh blood of the Avernus razorback seems to keep some of the strange soul energies of the digested for a period of time. As long as a razorback has feasted on a sentient creature within the last month, it can be slaughtered and its

blood harvested in place of a blood sacrifice of a sentient and even innocent creature, for up to 1 week after the slaughter occurs.

Avernus Razorback Meat: Though it may seem strange given the beasts' diverse, often disgusting, and sometimes morbid eating habits, the meat of the Avernus razorback is a delicacy craved throughout Cheliah, especially in Egorian. Connoisseurs of the infernal flesh say that you can taste the hate of the beast, which adds to its delectable flavor. Not only that, the meat acts as a mild narcotic. See page 236 of the *Pathfinder RPG GameMastery Guide* for complete rules on drugs and addiction.

AVERNUS RAZORBACK MEAT

Type ingested; **Addiction** minor, Fortitude DC 18

Price 100 gp

Effects 1 hour; +1 alchemical bonus to Strength and Constitution

Damage 1d4 Wisdom damage

Avernus Razorback Tusks: The tusks of the largest razorback can be fashioned into vicious daggers, and count as 151 gp worth of raw materials needed in the creation of a masterwork dagger. A successful DC 26 Craft (weapons) check and 1d3 days of work are required to create a masterwork dagger from such a tusk.



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BESTIARY

COUATL, XIUH

Wreathed in flame, this winged serpent sports brightly colored feathers sparking with electricity.

XIUH COUATL

CR 12



XP 19,200

NG Large outsider (native)

Init +9; **Senses** *detect chaos/evil/good/law*, darkvision 60 ft., thoughtsense 60 ft.; Perception +29

DEFENSE

AC 29, touch 14, flat-footed 24 (+5 Dex, +15 natural, -1 size)

hp 157 (15d10+75)

Fort +14, **Ref** +10, **Will** +16

Immune electricity, fire; **SR** 23

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 80 ft. (average)

Melee bite +22 (2d6+12 plus burn, grab, and poison)

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

Special Attacks breath weapon (60-ft. line, 6d6 fire and 6d6 electricity, Reflex DC 22 half, usable every 1d6 rounds), burn (1d6 fire, DC 22), constrict (2d6+12), poison

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 15th; concentration +21)

Constant—*detect chaos/evil/good/law*

At will—*detect thoughts* (DC 18), *invisibility*, *plane shift* (DC 23)

1/week—*atonement*

Psychic Spells Known (CL 15th; concentration +21)

7th (4/day)—*greater arcane sight*, *vision*

6th (7/day)—*greater dispel magic*, *legend lore*, *veil* (DC 22)

5th (7/day)—*commune with nature*, *mind thrust* V* (DC 21), *psychic crush* I* (DC 21), *wall of force*

4th (7/day)—*divination*, *dream*, *locate creature*, *sending*

3rd (7/day)—*clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *deep slumber* (DC 20), *dispel magic*, *haste*

2nd (8/day)—*anticipate thoughts** (DC 18), *augury*, *aversion** (DC 18), *demand offering** (DC 18), *scare* (DC 19)

1st (8/day)—*anticipate peril*^{UM} (DC 17), *charm person* (DC 18), *forbid action*^{UM} (DC 18), *mindlink**, *sleep* (DC 18)

0 (at will)—*bleed* (DC 17), *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *ghost sound* (DC 17), *know direction*, *light*, *mage hand*, *read magic*, *stabilize*

STATISTICS

Str 26, **Dex** 20, **Con** 20, **Int** 23, **Wis** 25, **Cha** 23

Base Atk +15; **CMB** +24 (+28 grapple); **CMD** 39 (can't be tripped)

Feats Alertness, Flyby Attack, Hover, Improved Initiative, Persuasive, Power Attack, Quicken Spell, Wingover

Skills Acrobatics +20, Diplomacy +28, Fly +21, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (arcana) +13, Knowledge (geography) +14, Knowledge (history) +24, Knowledge (local) +24, Knowledge (religion) +24, Perception +29, Sense Motive +29, Spellcraft +21, Survival +22, Use Magic Device +21

Languages Celestial, Common, Draconic; telepathy 100 ft.

SQ instrument of retribution

ECOLOGY

Environment any mountain

Organization solitary or pair

Treasure standard

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Instrument of Retribution (Su) As a full-round action, a xiuh couatl can transform into any simple or martial weapon.

The weapon is always a +2 *flaming shock* weapon and can be sized for any creature. The xiuh couatl is limited to only light or one-handed weapons if sized for a Gargantuan creature or light weapons if sized for a Colossal creature.

In weapon form, the xiuh couatl gains hardness equal to that of a weapon of its type and retains its type, senses, hit points, saving throws, and telepathy. A xiuh couatl can return to its normal form as an immediate action.

Poison (Ex) Bite—injury; *save* Fort DC 22; *frequency* 1/minute for 10 minutes; *effect* 1d6 Str; *cure* 2 consecutive saves.

Psychic Spells A xiuh couatl casts spells as a 15th-level psychic (*Pathfinder RPG Occult Adventures* 60). Spells marked with an asterisk (*) can be found in Chapter 4 of *Occult Adventures*.

Xiuh couatls are a fierce variety of couatl commonly associated with vengeance and retribution. They seek out vile creatures, offering one final opportunity at redemption. Those who do not accept this offer or cannot be redeemed face the xiuh couatl's fearsome and absolute punishment. In cases where its might alone is not enough, a xiuh couatl offers its assistance to a powerful, righteous figure to mete out justice on its behalf. The winged serpents glow with an intense plume of flames, draped in arcing electricity. Their feathers range in color from bright crimson to deep violet, encompassing the shades of the setting sun. A typical xiuh couatl is 20 feet long with a wingspan of 25 feet. It weighs 4,500 pounds.

ECOLOGY

Unlike their cousins, the common quetz couatl (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 49) and the roving auwaz couatl, xiuh couatls are rarely seen, but are a sight to behold when they make themselves known. The beat of each wing is a brilliant display of terrifying flames and magnificent flashes of lightning that send cacophonous echoes through the sky. The couatls' flight can be heard up to a mile away. As they move through the air, they resemble thunderstorms with flaming rain. These fiery tempests are said to be omens signaling the imminent fall of wickedness or a forthcoming new beginning, born of a purifying inferno.

A xiuh couatl's snout glows red hot for minutes after spewing forth its elemental breath. This breath, like the xiuh couatl's wings, is a coalescence of fire and electricity—a fearsome ray of powerful energy. The breath is used not only to attack enemies, but also to burn away decayed or corrupted lands with cleansing flame.

The couatl's tail ends in a small conflagration that moves and flickers in response to the couatl's moods.

The mind of a xiuh couatl is powerful and wise, bordering on the transcendent. It uses its extraordinary psychic gifts to track down evil foes, making use of its ability to see into possible futures to quickly find its targets. Once it locates a creature, the xiuh couatl sends portents to the target's dreams to dissuade it from a life of evil. If these visions are not enough, a xiuh couatl visits the creature and offers to share its knowledge of goodness and virtue. The xiuh couatl shows the creature the differences in its life if it continues on a path of evildoing and if it accepts redemption. If these steps fail, the xiuh couatl destroys the creature's body or its mind, whichever is found to be a more fitting punishment, as a last resort.

Xiuh couatls are extremely long-lived, with some said to have been alive before Earthfall. During its lifetime, a female xiuh couatl lays only a single egg. The egg is as black as ash and hatches anywhere from a single couatl to a litter of eight to 10. As native outsiders, xiuh couatls must eat, and they are known to feed on large wildlife such as bison, deer, or wild horses. Occasionally, they consume larger creatures that pose threats to local civilizations or environments, such as rocs or young dragons.

HABITAT AND SOCIETY

Unlike their more common cousins, xiuh couatls are seen only during the gravest of times. When not actively seeking foul creatures to redeem, they nest in dangerous, remote places where they are likely to be undisturbed. Volcanic calderas, remote valleys, and high mountaintops wrapped in continual lightning storms are notable locations where xiuh couatl nests have been found. For years after they have been abandoned, the nests are known for their tendency to attract fire and lightning elementals. Xiuh couatls and their nests are extremely rare in Avistan, but are more frequently found in central and southern Garund and the mountains of central Arcadia.

While solitary creatures, xiuh couatls occasionally form a close bond with a partner with whom they may even mate (should they have not done so previously in their long lifetimes). The closest of these relationships are forged between a couatl and one of the offspring born from its sole egg. While a parent cannot mate

again, such a bond is universally platonic and can span centuries, far longer than most similar pairings. While a partnership may last as long as a millennia, nearly all xiuh couatls eventually return to lives of solitude. They can acquire many allies during a crusade for good, but move on as soon as they have vanquished a particular evil.

Though they tend to rely on their own visions and divinations to seek out evil, xiuh couatls are sometimes called on by the gods to tackle given tasks. Sarenrae, in particular, makes the most of use of all types of couatls, but xiuh couatls can be called upon by Desna, Shelyn, or, in Arcadia, Kazutal, goddess of community, liberty, and safety. As usual, xiuh couatls first attempt to redeem the creatures they are tasked with destroying, but follow with violent retribution if required. Gods may also assign xiuh couatls to aid individuals who require assistance in times of adversity. These individuals are gifted weapons by their divine patrons, and may never know they actually wield xiuh couatls, even after their tasks have been completed.



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BESTIARY

DAEMON, LAPSUDAEMON

This grotesque and malevolent creature appears to be a crushed ball of broken humanoid body parts spraying blood.

LAPSUDAEMON**CR 14****XP 102,400**

NE Medium outsider (daemon, evil, extraplanar)

Init +10; **Senses** blindsense 200 ft., darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +26**Aura** frightful presence (30 ft., DC 22)**DEFENSE****AC** 29, touch 24, flat-footed 18 (+3 deflection, +10 Dex, +1 dodge, +5 natural)**hp** 199 (19d10+95)**Fort** +11, **Ref** +21, **Will** +15**Defensive Abilities** amorphous, vertigo's grace; **DR** 10/good; **Immune** acid, bludgeoning, death effects, disease, poison; **Resist** cold 10, electricity 10, fire 10; **SR** 25**OFFENSE****Speed** fly 200 ft. (perfect)**Melee** slam +23 (2d6+6 plus momentum/19–20 and grab)**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 14th; concentration +16)

At will—*greater teleport* (self plus 50 pounds only)
 3/day—quicken *gust of wind* (DC 15), *reverse gravity*
 1/day—*fickle winds*^{UM}, *summon* (level 7, 1d3
 suspiridaemons [*Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Horsemen of the Apocalypse, Book of the Damned, Vol. 3 56*] 80%)

Special Attacks momentum, must come down (DC 22)**STATISTICS****Str** 18, **Dex** 31, **Con** 21, **Int** 13, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 16**Base Atk** +19; **CMB** +29 (+31 bull rush or trip, +33 grapple); **CMD** 43 (45 vs. bull rush, can't be tripped)**Feats** Acrobatic, Agile Maneuvers, Combat Expertise, Dodge, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (slam), Improved Trip, Mobility, Power Attack, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*gust of wind*)**Skills** Acrobatics +32, Bluff +21, Escape Artist +28, Fly +35, Knowledge (geography) +14, Knowledge (local) +14, Knowledge (planes) +14, Perception +26, Sense Motive +26, Stealth +23 (see below)**Languages** Abyssal, Common, Draconic; telepathy 200 ft.**SQ** constant motion**ECOLOGY****Environment** any (Abaddon)**Organization** solitary or storm (2–11)**Treasure** standard**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

Constant Motion (Su) Lapsudaemons never cease their falling motion. They must move their full movement speed in straight lines every round, making their slam attacks and grabs without stopping. A lapsudaemon doesn't lose altitude or speed for aerial maneuvers and makes no Fly checks when changing directions. It "falls" vertically, horizontally, or diagonally and attacks any creature in its

way, regardless of the number of creatures in its path. It can change directions each round to maximize the number of creatures it can slam, moving through other creatures' spaces without the need for an Acrobatics check regardless of their size, but it still provokes attacks of opportunity, and it can only attack a particular creature once per round. It can fall at its full speed while grappling a single creature without needing to succeed at a check to do so; while grappling, it can make slam attacks only against the grappled creature, and it can't use its grab ability.

Lapsudaemons are immune to effects that change their movement speed or alter their flight ability, even if the effect would be harmless or beneficial. Lapsudaemons don't take damage from falling or from bludgeoning attacks. The only exception is that any lapsudaemon somehow prevented from moving takes 1d6 points of damage each round for every 30 feet it doesn't move. So great is the creature's supernatural propulsion that forcing the lapsudaemon to remain still eventually tears it apart.

Because lapsudaemons shout in horror as they fall, if a creature can hear, it can always notice the sound of a lapsudaemon's presence with a Perception check DC of –10, regardless of the daemon's Stealth.

Momentum (Ex) When a lapsudaemon makes a slam attack while moving into a creature's square, the attack deals an additional 1d6 points of damage for every 10 feet that the lapsudaemon moved since the last time it made a slam attack or struck a surface, to a maximum of 20d6. This damage isn't multiplied on a critical hit.

Must Come Down (Su) Any flying creature struck by a lapsudaemon must succeed at a DC 22 Will save or lose its ability to fly for 1 round. Such a creature falls until it regains the ability to fly or it hits the ground, whichever comes first. This affects both natural and magical flight. This doesn't dispel magical flight effects, but instead suppresses them (functioning similar to *antimagic field*) for 1 round. When a lapsudaemon dies, it unleashes this ability a final time on all creatures within 30 feet. A creature falling for 1 round generally falls 200 feet. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Vertigo's Grace (Su) A lapsudaemon's constant motion protects it from attacks. It gains a deflection bonus to AC equal to its Charisma bonus.

A mortal that dies hopelessly after a sudden fall may eventually serve the Four Horsemen as a powerful lapsudaemon. On the bleak plane of Abaddon, these awful creatures exist in a state of perpetual plummeting, never ceasing their movement. Even when addressed by ranking daemon lords, lapsudaemons never stop their falling motion or incessant screaming. Their lieges frequently must teleport to some great height and fall with them to maintain telepathic conversation. Lapsudaemons always shriek as they fall—a residual impulse taken from the last moment of their mortal lives. Loud cries and cold blasts

of wind herald their approach as they teleport into combat mid-fall and continue their merciless assault.

Lapsudaemons attack their victims by falling into them, whether they approach vertically or horizontally. They frequently employ spell-like abilities before attacking as many enemies as possible in melee, colliding for one mighty strike against each target until every foe is dead. When not outnumbered, they prefer to murder their nonflying targets by pushing them from ledges or carrying them to great heights before releasing them to their doom.

A lapsudaemon appears as a crushed human—often an amalgamation of the parts of several victims of such terminal tumbles seamlessly fused together. Its limbs protrude at awkward angles and strike out as it collides with its enemies. A lapsudaemon is between 5 and 6 feet tall and weighs 150 pounds.

ECOLOGY

Unlike other daemons, lapsudaemons actively reproduce their own kind by searching out vulnerable creatures and dropping them from cruel heights. Longer gambits involve the daemons tracking down a gullible adventurer and offering the victim a deeply desired prize, high atop a mountain or spire. The desperation of the climb, combined with the hopelessness of a fatal fall, launches the dead soul to the volcanic peaks and stone towers of Abaddon. From the new lapsudaemon's perspective, the fall never ends. It slips out of the mortal realm only to land in its new, tortured afterlife, and then commences an eternity of perpetual motion.

Calling lapsudaemons is a difficult and sadistic affair. They prefer a sacrifice of wings cut from a living celestial being, bound to, and then born aloft by, a willing intelligent creature, who must fall to his or her death as part of the calling ritual.

HABITAT AND SOCIETY

While most daemons have at least a modicum of subtlety and manipulative savvy, the average lapsudaemon falls far short of the mark in that regard, and so lapsudaemons are primarily employed by ambitious harbingers as killers for hire. Powerful mortals bring lapsudaemons to the Material Plane to engineer fatal "accidents" that kill their rivals while avoiding any suspicion of foul play. When a lapsudaemon finds itself without a task assigned by its liege, it typically retreats to some lofty aerie and spends its time ceaselessly

falling toward the ground and teleporting high into the air just before impact. In the highest places of their home plane, storms of lapsudaemons fall from the sky like an apocalyptic rain. These screaming storms can last for months or years before enough lapsudaemons are called away to work elsewhere and the maelstrom subsides.

While on other planes, lapsudaemons display an immediate grasp of local climate and geography. They naturally hide themselves far from civilization, where their constant falling and shouting goes unnoticed. They favor abandoned ruins and uninhabited wastelands that resemble their blasted home.

Lapsudaemons are intelligent and cruel, but their plight allows them little opportunity to focus on studies or more advanced machinations. As such, they focus almost exclusively on tasks assigned by more powerful daemons. They frequently serve immortal harbingers such as Uaransaph or Geon, evil deities like Zyphus, or the Four Horsemen as assassins or insane heralds of an imminent military force. Where legends speak of a storm of falling daemons dropping mortals from the sky, they also speak of the ruin of entire city-states shortly thereafter.



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IXION WORM

A cyclopean face stretches grotesquely across the hub of a tall, knobby wheel of bone.

IXION WORM**CR 13****XP 25,600**

LE Large outsider (evil, extraplanar, lawful)

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, *true seeing*; Perception +23**DEFENSE****AC** 27, touch 14, flat-footed 22 (+4 Dex, +1 dodge, +13 natural, -1 size)**hp** 187 (15d10+105)**Fort** +16, **Ref** +9, **Will** +14**Resist** fire 10, sonic 10; **SR** 24**OFFENSE****Speed** 30 ft.**Melee** bite +20 (2d6+6 plus energy drain and grab), slam +20 (1d8+6)**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.**Special Attacks** constrict (2d6+9; serpentine form only), energy drain (2 levels, DC 22), euphoric gaze (3/day; wheel form only), hypnotic wheel (DC 22; wheel form only), powerful charge (slam, 2d8+9; wheel form only)**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 14th; concentration +19)Constant—*true seeing*At will—*castigate*^{APG} (DC 17), *enthrall* (DC 17), *hypnotism* (DC 17), *lock gaze*^{UC} (DC 16), *mage hand*3/day—*mass suggestion* (DC 20), *miserable pity*^{UM} (DC 18), *persistent image* (DC 19), *telekinesis* (DC 20)1/day—*synapse overload* (DC 21; *Occult Adventures*)**STATISTICS****Str** 22, **Dex** 19, **Con** 24, **Int** 15, **Wis** 20, **Cha** 21**Base Atk** +15; **CMB** +22 (+26 bull rush, +26 grapple, +26 overrun); **CMD** 37 (39 vs. bull rush, 39 vs. overrun)**Feats** Dodge, Greater Bull Rush, Greater Overrun, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Overrun, Mobility, Power Attack, Spring Attack**Skills** Bluff +23, Diplomacy +23, Intimidate +23, Knowledge (planes) +20, Perception +23, Sense Motive +23, Spellcraft +20, Stealth +18**Languages** Celestial, Common, Infernal; telepathy 100 ft.**SQ** dual form**ECOLOGY****Environment** any (Hell)**Organization** solitary, pair, or caravan (4-6)**Treasure** standard**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

Dual Form (Ex) An ixion worm can take one of two forms: a serpentine skin-sack of clattering bones, and a taut, self-ambulatory wheel. An ixion worm in its wheel form possesses the euphoric gaze, hypnotic wheel, and powerful charge special abilities. When in serpentine form, the ixion worm gains a 10-foot bonus to its speed, a climb speed of 10 feet, a +2 dodge bonus

to its Armor Class, and the constrict special attack.

Changing between its forms is a standard action that provokes attacks of opportunity, though an ixion worm in its wheel form that becomes prone may take on its serpentine form as a free action that does not provoke attacks of opportunity.

Energy Drain (Su) This ability functions as the universal monster rule of the same name, but rather than granting the ixion worm temporary hit points, it instead grants 1 additional use of its 3/day spell-like abilities per level drained. This additional use is available for 1 hour and is consumed only after the ixion worm's normal daily uses of its spell-like abilities have been expended.

Euphoric Gaze (Su) Three times a day as a move action, when in its wheel form, an ixion worm can unfocus its eye and spin it in a mesmerizing whirl to gain a gaze attack that affects all creatures within 30 feet as per *euphoric tranquility*^{APG} (CL 14th, Will DC 22 partial). The effect is persistent but immediately ends if the ixion worm threatens or is threatened by a creature, uses any other special abilities, or moves in any way but a straight line. The effect also ends for creatures that move beyond the range of the gaze attack. While sustaining this effect, the ixion worm also takes a -8 penalty on visual Perception checks.

Hypnotic Wheel (Su) A rolling ixion worm's face is hypnotically grotesque. An ixion worm in wheel form can take a full-round action to move up to twice its speed. If it moves at least 20 feet as part of such an action, it can target a creature within 30 feet that is visible from any square in its path with a 14th-level mesmerist's hypnotic stare (*Pathfinder RPG Occult Adventures* 39) that has the allure, susceptibility, and timidity bold stare improvements (*Occult Adventures* 42). The stare's effects last until the start of the ixion worm's next turn, regardless of the ixion worm's location. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Ixion worms are both literal and figurative cogs in Phlegethon's workings. Each is forged of flesh stretched over massive bones, and each bears the identical face of a hypnotically entrancing male cyclops. Its bones can slither as a crooked serpent or join at the ends to form a wheel, with its face freely sliding around the structure to spin on one side of the hub as it rolls itself around. The rotation amplifies the ixion worm's hypnotic abilities, which it uses to motivate Phlegethon's petitioners into working harder in the layer's mines and forges.

The ixion worm's mouth dribbles with a prismatic oily residue that corrodes and absorbs the souls of whatever creatures with which it mingles. The worm's size and mass—5 feet wide, 9 feet in radius in wheel form, nearly 30 feet long unrolled, and 600 pounds in weight—also make the creature a terrifying physical force as it careens down the narrow paths of Phlegethon's crags.

The ixion worm's entrancing gaze and mental powers, however, are what make it an effective and intimidating enforcer; few of Phlegethon's lesser inhabitants consider challenging what they quickly believe is their only friend in Hell.

ECOLOGY

When petitioners slack in their work, an ixion worm snakes into place, forms a wheel, and lulls them into a trance by rolling in hypnotic patterns until the rocky layer of Hell seems to become a twisted fantasy: a rolling field of rotting food to the gluttonous, for instance, or an endless sea of writhing, formless flesh to the lustful. The few who dare to disobey are either smashed under the wheel's rim or suckled in its warped mouth, where its soul-draining spit strips away what little individuality and vitality a creature retains.

Belial smiles upon ixion worms that excel at their tasks and promotes them to serve as pulley wheels in his forges' machinery. The most prized are sent to Dispater to become gears in Dis's gates and wheels in the groaning carts that carry piles of petitioners through the layers of Hell. These elevated ixion worms endlessly plead for devils and broken souls alike to show gratitude to their diabolic benefactors, lest they too become little more than implements of Hell.

In ancient tales passed down by the duergar of Nar-Voth, a handful of elevated ixion worms escaped Hell and taught the duergar the secrets of Phlegethon's forges in a daring double-crossing of the lord of betrayal himself. The duergar venerate the ixion worms in these stories with the hope that they'll one day return to the Darklands bearing new infernal secrets of binding souls to stone and metal.

HABITAT AND SOCIETY

Crafted from the souls of those who betray their relatives, ixion worms are all built from a singular namesake template—the ancient cyclops mesmerist Ixion, who psychically cowed a tribe of cyclopes under his rule during the nascent days of the kingdom of Ghol-Gan.

In his covetous lust for his mother-in-law, the self-styled King Ixion lured his own father to death in a spiked pit trap. His flagrant betrayal garnered the attention of Belial, archdevil of Phlegethon and master of betrayers, and the archdevil dispatched an agent to Ixion's wife and mother-in-law to expose the king's plot and tempt them into killing him for vengeance. Belial's ploy worked; the women stabbed Ixion into submission, strapped his body

to an oxcart's wheel, and then plowed him through his kingdom's mud until he died.

When the cyclops's soul reached Belial's pleasure palace of Idolisque, the archdevil presented Ixion with a choice: to serve in the forges or join his twisted harem. Ixion spitefully responded by expressing his distaste for Belial's palace and declaring the archdevil's finest souls far too ugly. In a fit of mirthful wrath, the archdevil ripped the former king's soul apart and had him reformed into a worm of bones. Devils stretched Ixion's comely face across its length, then rolled his new form into the shape of a wheel.

The ever-defiant mesmerist king nonetheless tried to hypnotize Belial into admitting his poor taste, and the archdevil rewarded his persistence by tossing him from Idolisque and into the jagged rocks below. To further mock Ixion, who still searches Phlegethon in anonymous bitterness for the souls of his wife and mother-in-law, Belial commanded his forges to craft the souls of every familial betrayer sent to Phlegethon into the cyclops king's likeness.



FOR QUEEN & EMPIRE

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NEXT MONTH

SCOURGE OF THE GODCLAW

By Larry Wilhelm

Now bound to Queen Abrogail by infernal contracts, the villainous adventurers are tasked with defeating the Glorious Reclamation in the former citadel of the Hellknight Order of the Godclaw, where they face angels, paladins, and even a gold dragon once allied with the goddess Iomedae! With the dragon bested and the citadel secured, the vile characters set about performing a heinous ritual by defiling sacred waters, harvesting innocent blood, and destroying a repository of knowledge—all before attempting to use the dragon's severed head to craft a legendary weapon capable of defeating the Glorious Reclamation's army of valorous knights.

GERYON

By F. Wesley Schneider

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By Alex Greenshields

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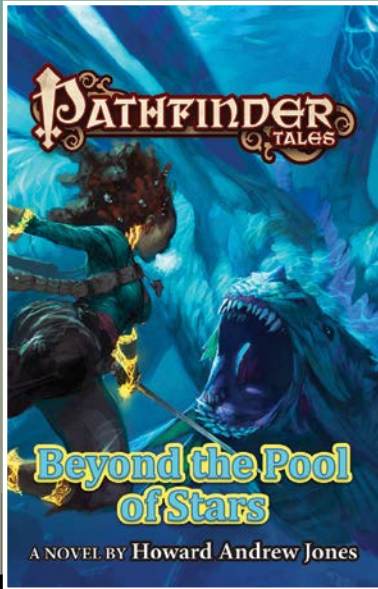
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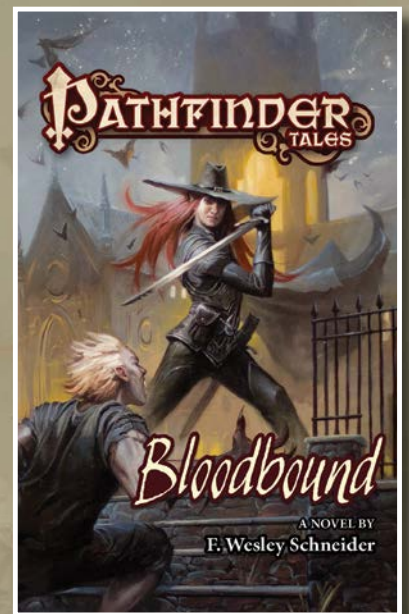


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