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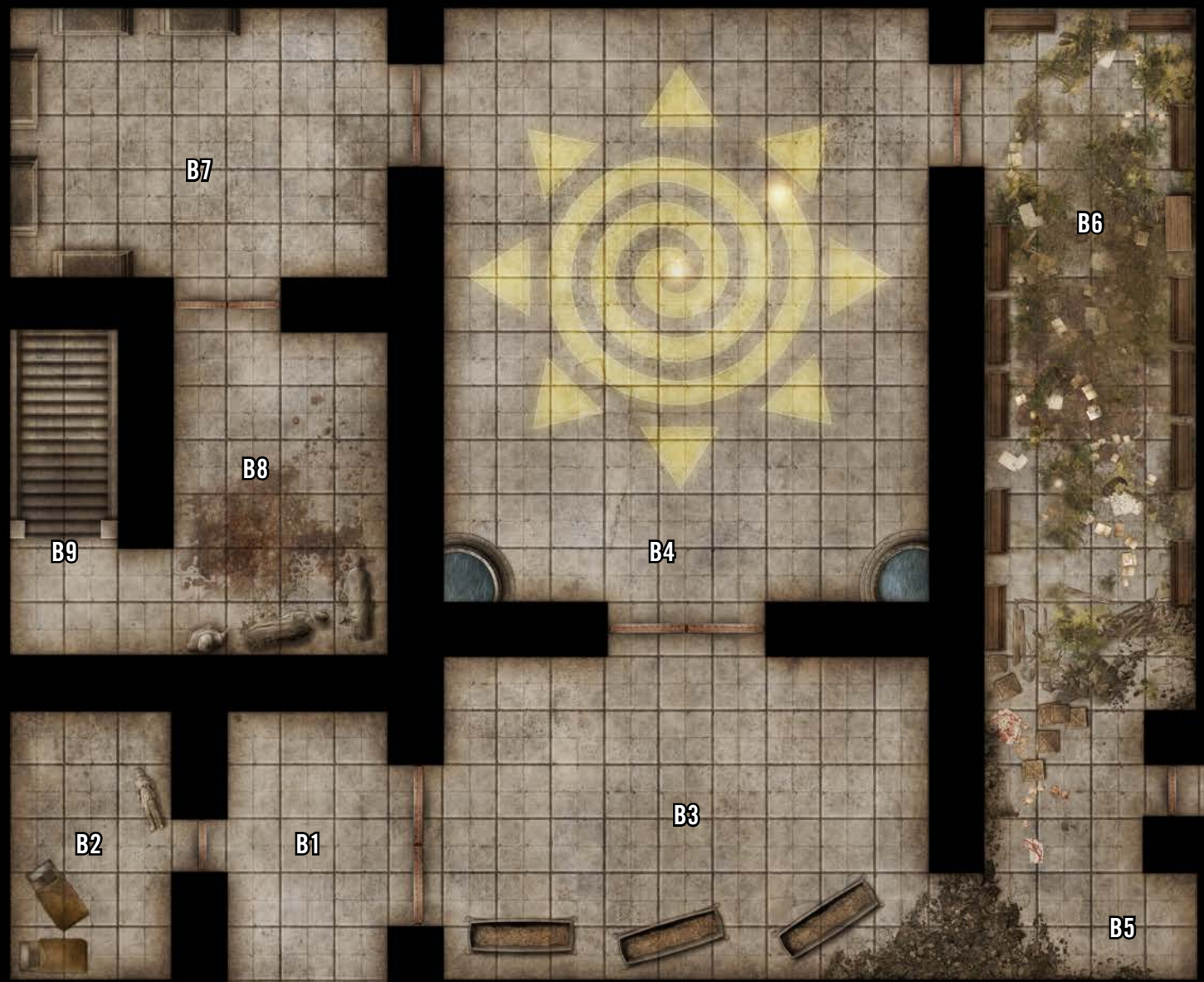
PATHFINDER[®]



the slithering

RON LUNDEEN

ARCHIVE OF THE SUN



1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

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THE SLITHERING

by Ron Lundeen

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Content Note

While *Pathfinder Adventure: The Slithering* contains typical Pathfinder action and adventure, it also includes themes of contagion and quarantine. Before you begin, understand that player consent (including that of the Game Master) is vital to a safe and fun play experience for everyone. You should talk with your players before beginning the adventure and modify descriptions or scenarios as appropriate.



ON THE COVER

Terror strikes a bustling market, throwing merchants and shoppers into screaming chaos as an ooze erupts from the body of a merchant in this exciting cover by Setiawan Lie.



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Chapter 1: Tracing the Curse 4

The heroes witness a peculiar curse in the markets of Kibwe and are asked to investigate. The heroes discover that the Aspis Consortium has acquired an artifact that's spreading the curse and seek out an enchanted statue that could cure the afflicted. Venturing into an old archive, they learn the statue is gone!

Chapter 2: Journey to Holy Xatramba 24

The heroes trace the missing statue to the dangerous city known as Holy Xatramba. They face several dangers on the jungle trek and must penetrate the fiend-ridden city to recover the statue from the cult of the Ravenous King, Angazhan. The statue is no inanimate relic, however, but a magical construct eager to return to Kibwe.

Chapter 3: Against the Aspis 40

The heroes return to Kibwe alongside the golem and find the city suffering from ooze attacks in every quarter. The golem heads directly to the archive it was stolen from. Because the archive is now held by Aspis Consortium agents, the heroes must defeat these agents and return the golem to its rightful place in order to defeat the curse!

NO HUMANS ALLOWED

"The Slithering" is an unusual adventure in that the players are prohibited from playing human characters. The curse unleashed in this adventure strikes humans specifically. Non-human characters are in the unique position of being able to save the city and break the curse, whereas humans would simply succumb, perhaps as soon as the first encounter. The pregenerated characters in the web supplement for this adventure at paizo.com make excellent choices to play, but any non-human characters of 5th level will do. This restriction applies to any character with the human trait, thus prohibiting half-elves and half-orcs, for example, but the GM can decide to allow these characters while prohibiting characters with exclusively human ancestry.

ADVANCEMENT TRACK

The Slithering is designed for four characters.

- 5 The heroes begin this adventure at 5th level.
- 6 The heroes should reach 6th level prior to leaving for Holy Xatramba in Chapter 2.
- 7 The heroes should reach 7th level before their return to Kibwe in Chapter 3.

The heroes should reach 8th level by the time they complete the adventure.

THE SLITHERING FLIP-MAT

This adventure makes use of a custom Flip-Mat, available now everywhere you buy your games. Each side depicts an important location found in this adventure, and each map is also available on the inside covers of this book. There's no need to draw out these locations when you can pick up this Flip-Mat and have the work done for you!





CHAPTER 1: TRACING THE CURSE

The city of Kibwe in the Mwangi Expanse has recently seen a surge in both population and attention. As a well-fortified waystation for traders with huge, ancient granite walls, it is both safe and prosperous. The Representative Council that rules the city works to balance its fractious factions while preserving the open trade that brings in wealth from the Mwangi Expanse and greater Garund alike. But unease in the city of Usaro has sent many hundreds of refugees to seek shelter behind Kibwe's walls, and the council's recent ban on buying and selling slaves doesn't sit well with its established slave traders. The greatest threat to Kibwe, however, might be an organization that's been present in the city for many years.

The Aspis Consortium has a reputation across the Inner Sea region for tough dealing and ruthless exploitation, and its position in Kibwe is no different. An agent named Tomil Jabrin clawed his way to the

top of the consortium's operation in Kibwe through amoral ruthlessness hidden beneath a charitable facade. Tomil was raised in the demon-infested city of Holy Xatramba, 140 miles southwest of Kibwe, in a cult that worshipped Angazhan, the Ravenous King. Tomil absorbed the demon lord's doctrine of tyranny and domination, but instead of enforcing this doctrine through brute might, Tomil planned to personally overthrow Kibwe in a scheme that would demonstrate his cunning and power.

Tomil solidified the Aspis Consortium's reputation in Kibwe by investing heavily in infrastructure, selling pipes to deliver water from city wells to beleaguered districts and privately funding new construction. These efforts are primarily focused in the neighborhood around the Aspis Consortium's headquarters, known as the Brass Block, where Tomil is considered the de facto leader. With the Aspis Consortium in control of

far more of Kibwe than even the Representative Council suspects, Tomil is ready to make his next move.

TOMIL COMMISSIONS THE SLITHERING

Tomil planned to assassinate key leaders in Kibwe, but decided against using ordinary assassins that might raise suspicions—or worse, trace the deeds back to him. Instead, he reached out to an Aspis contact in Nex to construct a deadly curse to make the deaths seem like a supernatural punishment. Because all of his targets were humans, Tomil demanded a curse that would prove lethal only to humans; though human himself, Tomil's ego never allowed him to consider that he might also be susceptible to it. His Nexian contact shipped a case of magical *slitherbound stones* that would impart a terrible curse, called the *slithering*, that transforms its victims into oozes from within a matter of minutes to a few days at most. The wizard included a note warning against keeping the stones together for too long, which would increase their potency to a potentially dangerous degree. The private caravan carrying the stones then encountered several delays on its way to Kibwe, and the shipment arrived far later than Tomil had planned.

But Tomil hadn't been idle. He learned that the mysterious statues that grace the walls and pillars around Kibwe, known as the Pillar-Watchers, are more than landmarks left by the city's ancient builders—they have dormant magical powers that protect the city. Tomil decided that he needed to remove the Pillar-Watcher called Cursebreaker before he could enact his magical assassinations, so he and a few trusted agents ventured into the abandoned Archive of the Sun where Cursebreaker was kept. Tomil was too focused on acquiring the statue to wonder why Cursebreaker alone stood inside a building instead of on a high pillar.

Although Tomil's first instinct was to destroy Cursebreaker, he realized that by hiding it, he could undo the curse whenever he saw fit and position himself as Kibwe's savior. He took the statue home to the city of Holy Xatramba, where his family happily welcomed him, hid his strange statue for him, and eagerly sacrificed all of the expendable Aspis agents he'd brought along. Tomil returned to Kibwe alone and just in time for his delayed shipment from Nex to finally arrive at a nondescript caravan house. However, the *slitherbound stones* had steeped in their magic for far too long, and the *slithering* curse had transformed into a communicable plague.

MATALA'S DOOM

The spread of the *slithering* in Kibwe is principally due to a human porter named Matala. Matala worked at the Khalibi Caravan House as an employee of the Aspis Consortium. She knew that secrecy and discretion were part of her job, but Matala was curious by nature. When Tomil's shipment of the *slitherbound stones* arrived, she couldn't help but take a peek at this mysterious cargo. The *slitherbound stones* had so much concentrated power that Matala's peek was enough to unleash the curse on the entire caravan house, transforming Tomil as he sat in his office. The curse might have ended there, but Matala—who contracted the curse as a carrier but didn't immediately succumb—fled into the city.

Matala first went to her brother, an acolyte following a popular pro-human mystic named Baats'ulan, but he admitted that Baats'ulan's acolytes don't actually command any supernatural powers. Matala then went to an old friend, an orc named Grissbuk who worked as hired muscle in the Bekyar Block neighborhood. In exchange for helping him intimidate a few people

CHAPTER 1 SYNOPSIS

This adventure kicks off when a merchant transforms into an ooze right before the player characters' eyes. He's the most recent victim of a spreading curse called the *slithering*, and a representative of Kibwe's leadership council tasks the heroes with learning more. After investigating around the city, the heroes trace the curse's source to a nondescript Aspis Consortium caravan house. When the heroes report back about the curse, the representative asks them to activate a statue in an abandoned building called the Archive of the Sun. But when the heroes fight their way through the archive's occupants, they learn the statue is gone!

CHAPTER 1 TREASURE

- +1 breastplate
- +1 striking greatclub
- barkskin potion
- boots of elvenkind
- diplomat's badge
- feather token (fan)
- healing potion, moderate
- oily button
- scroll of nondetection
- slippery ribbon
- traveler's any-tool
- wand of noisome acid

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in the Bekyar Block, Grissshuk suggested seeking out a healer in the Bwamandu Camp. By the time Matala reached this healer—an elf named Numu—the curse overtook her; she died and transformed into an ooze. By this point Matala had already passed the curse to many people in Kibwe. Matala didn't tell anyone where she'd contracted her curse, but the heroes can trace her movements and find clues that lead back to the Khalibi Caravan House.

TERROR IN THE MARKET MODERATE 5

This adventure begins with the heroes together in the Central Market around Adayenki Pavilion, at the heart of Kibwe. They have come to an open-air shop belonging to a seller of rare wood named Kendi Laughs-Long, who stocks some of the city's most intricately carved darkwood. The heroes might be looking for weaponry or carvings made from the rare material.

To begin the adventure, read or paraphrase the following.

"Ah, not one buyer, but many!" cries Kendi Laughs-Long, the proprietor of this spacious stall in Kibwe's bustling Central Market. His expansive gesture draws attention to his many skillful carvings of rare wood, including darkwood. "Please, all of you, browse my wares and feel free to ask me..." Kendi utters a strange, deep gurgle, and his features begin to flow and melt like wax. He stares plaintively as his eyes droop and then liquefy. Within seconds, the merchant has become a quivering pile of dark goo in his stall. The goo suddenly ripples, extrudes a pseudopod, and slithers forward.

Kendi has just fallen victim to the *slithering* and made his final, lethal transformation into a black pudding. All of Kendi's memories and nature are gone, and the ooze is mindless and violent. The shop's expensive darkwood carvings are all splattered during Kendi's transformation and destroyed by the ooze's acid.

Several merchants and shoppers in the market witness Kendi's horrid demise. Most wisely scatter or hide, although a few gawkers might come closer to look.

Creatures: The black pudding attacks aggressively and indiscriminately, although heroes who attack it keep its attention and prevent it from spreading into the market. The ooze fights to the death. Pay attention to heroes and onlookers who are struck by the black

pudding or who strike it with a natural attack, and make a secret Fortitude save for them; they are also exposed to the *slithering*. Since they aren't humans, the heroes aren't at risk of transforming into oozes, but they might become carriers of the curse.

BLACK PUDDING CREATURE 7

Pathfinder Bestiary 255

Initiative Perception +9

Treasure: When the heroes have dispatched the black pudding, the merchants nearby congratulate them for their quick action. They plan to take Kendi's surviving wares and see that they're properly distributed to his heirs, but they insist the heroes take a *traveler's any-tool* as a reward.



THE COUNCIL'S REQUEST

It doesn't take long for a member of Kibwe's Representative Council, an affable middle-aged human woman named **Abayone Munme** (LG female human politician), to hear of the heroes' deed. As a formal representative of the Zenj Trading Alliance in Kibwe, she's already nearby in the market.

Abayone hurries over to meet the heroes and make their acquaintance. She wears thick gloves that hide painful scars on her hands and arms from her youth laboring in Kibwe's gold refinery and is disinclined to touch or carry anything despite her open and friendly nature—a habit that is likely to insulate her from the *slithering*. She has a grim sense of humor but an unshakable desire to do what's best for her city.

Abayone greets the heroes as follows.

A middle-aged Zenj woman dressed in colorful fabrics hails you from a few stalls away. "Ah! Heroes! I would speak with you!" When the woman gets closer, she bows and introduces herself. "I am Abayone Munme, and I have the pleasure of serving on the Representative Council that administers Kibwe. Might I bother you for a moment of your time? That unfortunate transformation you just witnessed was, alas, not an isolated event."

Abayone has heard of others in the city being spontaneously transformed into oozes and worries that there's some dangerous plague or curse at work. It hasn't escaped the clever Abayone that, in a city filled with a diverse array of ancestries, it's only humans who have been afflicted by this transformation. She therefore

considers the heroes to be excellent agents to look deeper at this problem. Abayone continues as follows.

“Many rumors are circulating about these ghastly transformations in the city; other than myself, however, most are inclined to dismiss them as foolish jokes or the effects of too much alcohol.” She smiles grimly, tapping the side of her nose. “At first, so did I. But this is no joke. I would hire you to investigate. I can offer a stipend of ten gold pieces per day for expenses, but also the Representative Council’s gratitude, which you may find quite valuable.”

Kibwe is a city famed for its negotiators, and Abayone is willing to haggle to as much as 12 gp per day (to the group, not per hero) if the heroes succeed at a DC 20 Diplomacy check, but this is all she can authorize. Whatever the rate she agrees upon, Abayone provides 5 days of payment (50 to 60 gp) up front.

“Excellent, my friends. I have two leads so far; I ask you to follow up on these and find out anything else you can by asking around the city. First, I hear that a mystic named Baats’ulan preaches in the Adayenki Pavilion every sundown. Baats’ulan’s acolytes are numerous and secretive, but several have apparently been afflicted with this transformation. Second, the nation of Nex is known for crafting oozes, and a Nexian envoy named Mafzat A’Haddin maintains an office at the edge of the Iwisa Block, near the northern gate. I believe your investigations there would bear more fruit if you neglect to mention that you are working on behalf of the city—Mafzat has an unreasonable dislike of his post, and of the Kibwe government as a result.” Abayone gives a slight chuckle, as though incredulous that anyone might dislike Kibwe.

“If you can find some source of these transformations and put a stop to it, or if you find yourself at a dead end, come see me in the eastern market. My home is beneath the Pillar-Watcher that resembles a standing rhinoceros—ah, look, you can just see it from here.”

Rejecting Abayone: It’s possible the heroes reject Abayone’s offer and look into the rumors themselves. This is fine by Abayone; she nevertheless pays them 10 gp total just for hearing her out. She then keeps tabs on the heroes from a distance to see what they uncover. In this case, the heroes must ask around the city (see the sidebar on page 8) to uncover the two leads she would otherwise have given them.

ADAYENKI PAVILION

The heart of Kibwe is an enormous common area strewn with flower petals. Hanging hides and tapestries shelter this area, known as Adayenki Pavilion, from the

THE SLITHERING

The *slithering* is a magical curse created at great expense by Nexian alchemist-wizards. Local Aspis Consortium leader Tomil Jabrin hoped to use the *slithering* to specifically target the human leaders in Kibwe, but the curse was far more powerful than he anticipated; Tomil is now afflicted, along with a much larger proportion of Kibwe’s population than intended. The affliction is so powerful that many who contract it critically fail their Fortitude saves and immediately progress to Stage 2. Those who resist the curse only end up becoming more powerful oozes when they finally succumb. Afflicted humans experiencing great stress or anger are most likely to transform.

SLITHERING

AFFLICTION 15

UNIQUE CURSE VIRULENT

Saving Throw DC 37 Fortitude. Non-humans can’t progress beyond Stage 1; **Onset** 1d6x10 minutes; **Stage 1** carrier with no symptoms, but anyone who touches or is touched by the carrier (skin-to-skin contact) must save against the curse (1d4 days); **Stage 2** The target dies and transforms into an ooze with a level no greater than the target’s level plus 1 for each day since the target contracted the curse.

surrounding market. Although often the site of large festivals and lavish ceremonies, it is primarily a place for public prayer and debate. Preachers and mystics stake out areas in the pavilion around the clock to shout their scriptures and offer mystic truths to passersby.

One of these mystics is an intimidating bearded man named **Baats’ulan** (N male human preacher). Baats’ulan preaches about the need to surrender worldly goods in order to acquire a spiritual enlightenment rooted in Mwangi traditions. His unique sermons draw large crowds every sundown. A few of his adherents have given away their possessions to become his acolytes, and each wears a simple robe with many golden-colored threads on the inside to mark their status. As these acolytes keep their golden threads hidden, they move largely unnoticed among Kibwe’s population and keep Baats’ulan well-informed about current events.

Baats’ulan preaches about community and sacrifice, but his emphasis on Mwangi tradition is decidedly human-centric. He considers non-humans to be not only unworthy of enlightenment, but also unequipped to ever attain it, and accepts only humans as acolytes. One of his acolytes was brother to the porter Matala, and she spread the *slithering* to him and to others.

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RESEARCHING THE CURSE

If the heroes aren't able to acquire the clues from Abayone's initial leads, or if they simply want to hit the streets to find out more, they can attempt a DC 20 Diplomacy check to Gather Information. Success gives the hero a random rumor from the below list that they don't already know; a critical success gives two rumors. On a critical failure, the hero learns a false rumor of your invention.

- Baats'ulan is an influential mystic who preaches in the Adayenki Pavilion every night at sundown. Some of his devoted adherents have disappeared, and it's rumored they came down with a mysterious affliction that compels Baats'ulan to keep them out of sight. (More information on the Adayenki Pavilion encounter can be found on page 7.)
- Oenopion is a Nexian city renowned for its ooze crafting. There's even an entire lake in the middle of Oenopion that is a single, sentient ooze! The Nexian envoy, Mafzat A'Haddin, possibly knows more. (See the Nexian Envoy encounter on page 9.)
- An orc strongarm in the Bekyar Block named Grishuk has become so terrifying that his foes literally melt into puddles of ooze. (See the Bekyar Block encounter on page 10.)
- A healer in the Bwamandu Camp, an elf named Numu, has been studying a strange disease that causes the victims' skin to collapse into slime. (See the Bwamandu Camp encounter on page 11.)
- The East Mwangi Mining Company has several storehouses in town. A strange sloshing noise has been heard from an old storehouse in the miners' camps. (See the Mining Storehouse encounter on page 12.)

Baats'ulan realized the problem in his ranks and quickly sequestered the acolytes in an abandoned storehouse of the East Mwangi Mining Company, but he isn't likely to share this embarrassment, fearing that it will reflect badly on his public image.

Meeting Baats'ulan

The heroes can find Baats'ulan in the Adayenki Pavilion any day at sundown. He is an imposing man with a long beard who dresses in gold and white and is always followed by a large crowd. After a short sermon about how coins are material representations of sin, he asks the crowd for testimonials and prayer requests. This is a good time for the heroes to bring up the *slithering*, although they might want to wait until Baats'ulan's public sermon is complete. No matter how they broach the topic, the mystic sizes them up and speaks.

"You would ask about transformations? Look to yourselves! The Mwangi of the past were honorable and wise, and men and women should seek inspiration from them. Those who are not Mwangi lack this wisdom. Do you, who stand as a non-human, and are thus incapable of attaining the true benevolences of the human past, claim to be a seeker of wisdom? I say you cannot be. Be gone."

If the heroes bristle at this rude dismissal, Baats'ulan smiles and offers to engage the heroes in a public debate before the crowd. If they can convince the crowd that non-humans are no less enlightened or worthy than humans, he will tell them what he knows; otherwise, Baats'ulan believes their public failure simply proves his point.

Public Debate

In the public debate, the heroes must extol the virtues of being non-human, or of having diverse ancestries within a community. Baats'ulan rebuts their points, insisting that non-humans are unenlightened and inferior. Baats'ulan is perfectly willing to lie to make his points, such as incorrectly ascribing past wrongs to non-humans.

To provide some structure to this social encounter, use the following rules. First, have Baats'ulan and each hero roll initiative using their Deception or Diplomacy skills (Baats'ulan's Deception is +12 and his Diplomacy is +14); everyone present can have their say in turn. The heroes begin with 5 Debate Points.

On his turn, Baats'ulan automatically subtracts 1 of the heroes' Debate Points with his malicious statements about non-human pettiness, unworthiness, or lack of honorable history. He also attempts a DC 20 Diplomacy or Deception check. On a success, he subtracts 1 additional Debate Point. On a critical success, he subtracts 2 Debate Points instead. On a critical failure, the crowd grows uncomfortable with his rhetoric and the heroes gain 1 Debate Point.

Each hero can do one of the following when it is their turn to speak:

Demonstrate a Talent: The hero attempts a DC 20 Acrobatics, Athletics, or Performance check to prove their physical prowess to the crowd. The crowd normally responds to only one attempt to demonstrate a talent, as this is a debate and not an exhibition. A success adds 1 Debate Point, while a critical success adds 1 Debate Point and entertains the crowd sufficiently that they accept an additional demonstration from another hero. A critical failure instead removes 1 Debate Point.

Discredit Baats'ulan: The hero can directly counter Baats'ulan's points by attempting a DC 20 Deception

or Diplomacy check. A success puts Baats'ulan on the defensive and the result of his next check of that type (Deception or Diplomacy) is reduced by one degree of success (for example, from a failure to a critical failure). If the hero's check is a critical failure, Baats'ulan seizes on the hero's bumbling, and the result of his next check of that type is increased by one degree of success.

Support an Argument: The hero attempts to aid an ally's argument by identifying another hero and making a DC 20 check using Diplomacy, Deception, or a relevant Lore skill. On a success, the ally's next check to sway the crowd has a +1 circumstance bonus. A critical success also adds 1 Debate Point due to the insightful support. On a critical failure, the ally's next check to

sway the crowd has a -1 circumstance penalty instead.

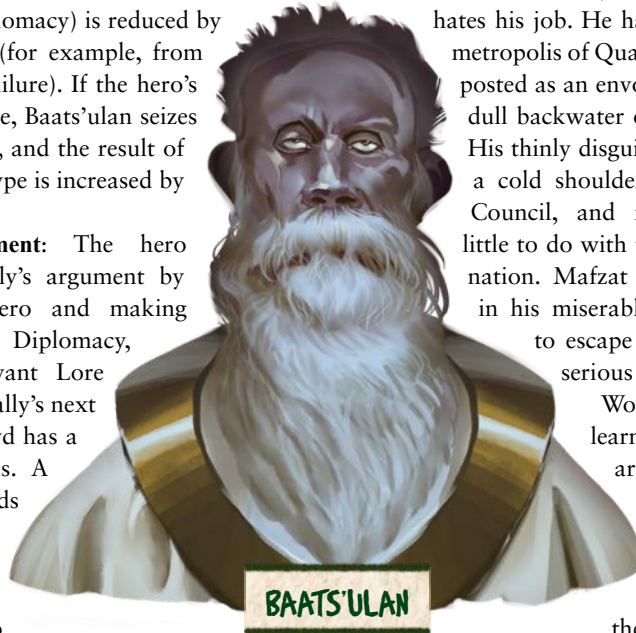
Sway the Crowd: The hero attempts a DC 20 check using Diplomacy, Society, or a relevant Lore skill to convince the crowd of the contributions of non-humans, the value of diversity, or a similar topic. The first time a hero mentions a curse that seems to be afflicting only humans in Kibwe, the DC is only 18; the crowd has heard these rumors, and the hero is playing on those concerns. A success adds 1 Debate Point, while a critical success adds 2 Debate Points. A critical failure instead removes 1 Debate Point.

If the Debate Points reach 0, the crowd acknowledges Baats'ulan as the debate winner. The mystic smugly dismisses the heroes from his presence and doesn't give them any information.

If the Debate Points reach 10, the heroes have won the debate. Baats'ulan is in a sour mood, but he keeps his word. He admits confidentially to the heroes that he has a few acolytes who succumbed to this strange transformation, which he believes to be a disease, and he's quarantined them at a former storehouse of the East Mwangi Mining Company. He provides directions to this storehouse; see the Mining Storehouse encounter on page 12. Baats'ulan also mentions that he's heard of a similar affliction in the Bwamandu Camp and believes a Kallijae elf healer named Numu would know more; see the Bwamandu Camp encounter on page 11.

XP Award: If the heroes win the debate, award them 80 XP.

NEXIAN ENVOY



BAATS'ULAN

Mafzat A'Haddin (LN male human diplomat) hates his job. He hails from the cosmopolitan metropolis of Quantum in Nex, but he's been posted as an envoy to what he considers the dull backwater of Kibwe for the past year. His thinly disguised disgust has earned him a cold shoulder from the Representative Council, and mercantile interests want little to do with the official envoy of a rival nation. Mafzat therefore spends his days in his miserably hot office plotting how to escape his post without suffering serious ramifications back home.

Worse, the envoy recently learned that a Nexian shipment arrived in Kibwe without his foreknowledge or approval. He takes this as a sign that his superiors are cutting him out of the loop, which angers and frustrates him. In fact, this shipment was secretly arranged by Tomil Jabrin of the Aspis Consortium to deliver the *slitherbound stones* from their Nexian manufacturer—and Mafzat's superiors in Nex have already forgotten about him anyway.

When the heroes arrive at Mafzat's office, read or paraphrase the following.

This cramped office is filled with folios, scrolls, and stacks of loose paper. Even the papers seem to wilt in the hot, humid air of the stuffy office. A large cat sprawls atop a cabinet, motionless except for the tip of its tail.

The office's sole occupant, besides the tired cat, is Mafzat. He's a thin man with half-moon spectacles over watery eyes, a weak chin, and a perpetual scowl. He demands to know what business the heroes have with the Vaunted Bureaucracy of Nex and assures them that he keeps meticulous notes about events of import in the city. Mafzat speaks as though he reports directly to Nex's ruling body, but a successful DC 18 Perception check to Sense Motive reveals that Mafzat doesn't possess nearly as much influence as he claims.

When the heroes bring up the strange plague of ooze transformations striking Kibwe, Mafzat assumes that they blame his nation (or worse, him personally) for these deaths, and his demeanor toward them becomes even colder. Mafzat is initially unfriendly to the heroes, and they'll have to get on his good side to convince him to share what he knows.

Mafzat's Will DC is 20, which is also the DC for Intimidation checks to Coerce him into sharing information, as well as for Diplomacy checks to Make an Impression on him. Any character who talks to Mafzat about Nex's wondrous magic, fabled inventions, or legendary people can get on his good side. A hero can attempt to Make an Impression using Arcana, Crafting, or Society at the same DC. You should adjudicate other efforts—such as charming Mafzat or distracting him while the heroes go through his notes—as you see fit.

Mafzat has very little to do, which should allow the heroes enough time for multiple attempt to Make an Impression on him. He only ejects them from his office if his attitude toward them becomes hostile, in which case he resolves to never speak to them again.

Unfriendly: So long as he's unfriendly toward the heroes, Mafzat deflects most questions toward speaking about the grandeur and glory of Nex.

Indifferent: If indifferent, Mafzat is more interested in talking about his own woes (how much he dislikes this city and longs for Nex, how little consideration the Representative Council gives to him, and how he's heard of a Nexian shipment about which he wasn't informed). A hero who plays to one of Mafzat's specific concerns, such as offering to speak well of him to Abayone, gains a +2 competence bonus on a skill check to Make an Impression on Mafzat.

Friendly: If the heroes make Mafzat friendly toward them, he shares two reports of interest. First, an elven healer named Numu in the Bwamandu Camp has been treating people suffering from a strange slime sickness; this clue leads to the Bwamandu Camp encounter on page 11. Second, a brute in the Bekyar Block named Grishshuk keeps turning people who cross him into oozes, an ability he hasn't shown until very recently. This clue leads to the Bekyar Block encounter (see below).

Helpful: Mafzat gives his newfound allies his spare *diplomat's badge*, as described in the **Treasure** entry below.

Treasure: If the heroes return to Mafzat after exploring the Khalibi Caravan House and report to him on the Nexian caravan, Mafzat realizes that his home country wasn't shutting him out. This pleases him so much that he gives the heroes his spare *diplomat's badge* in gratitude. (He gives this to the

heroes right away if they find another way to change his attitude toward them to helpful.)

XP Award: If the heroes make Mafzat at least friendly toward them, give them 30 XP.



BEKYAR BLOCK

The Bekyar Block is the largest concentration of Bekyar humans in the city. Until recently, it was the site of the city's slave market. Slave-taking has always been illegal in Kibwe, but slaves captured elsewhere were traded in the Bekyar Block. Kibwe's Representative Council made slave trading illegal a few years ago, so slavers started protection rackets, "hiring" their former slaves as muscle.

The heroes come to the Bekyar Block seeking an orc named **Grishshuk** (CN male orc warchief; *Pathfinder Bestiary* 257), either at the recommendation of the Nexian envoy Mafzat or from gathering information on the street. Grishshuk is connected to the unusual transformations because of his temporary association with Matala, but he doesn't know that. He believes he's cursed by the gods for the wickedness he's done in life and is doing his best to repent—although as a carrier of the *slithering*, he's unknowingly spreading the curse even more.

Grishshuk isn't hard to find. Casually asking around the Bekyar Block is enough to provide the heroes with his description and current whereabouts. He's nearly 7 feet tall and powerfully muscled, with large iron fishhooks dangling from his ears and nose. Everyone in the block knows he's been hanging out near a small shrine to a deity named Grandmother Grace, which is unusual for such an amoral, irreligious thug like Grishshuk.

Shrine of Grandmother Grace Moderate 5

A group of freed Osiriani slaves established a shrine to Sarenrae in the Bekyar Block when they were released from bondage. Since they hadn't been in contact with formal priests of the Dawnflower for many years, they mixed half-remembered worship with local ancestor worship and interpreted Sarenrae as a kindly woman who offers redemption to the willing. The shrine to "Grandmother Grace" isn't popular, but most people in the Bekyar Block know the back alley where it's located.

The back-alley shrine's door is already open. A stylized symbol of a smiling old woman holding a glowing orb

lovingly to her chest has been carved above it. The interior is a single large room with low partition walls and a few tattered mats. At the far end, a stone font filled with water stands in a large box of sand. A muscular orc wearing blood-stained hide armor kneels in front of the font while reverently pouring water into the sand.

A hero who succeeds at a DC 18 Religion check realizes that Grandmother Grace is a local interpretation of Sarenrae, with a particular focus on her redemptive aspect. The libation of water into sand is a folk custom used by some Mwangi and Osiriani shamans.

The orc Grissshuk turns to the heroes when they address him, or after a few minutes of meditation if they allow him to continue his devotion. When the heroes explain their investigation to Grissshuk, a pall of remorse casts across his face, and he replies as follows.

“People turning into slime? Yes, that’s me. I’ve been breaking legs and taking slaves most of my life. Never thought it would catch up to me, but it did. I’ve been cursed by the gods, and cursed hard. Now, people I meet turn into slime. You probably will, too, for meeting me. I figure I gotta repent of my evil ways and ask for mercy from the gods. Can’t think of any other way.”

A little probing shows that Grissshuk can’t possibly be the locus of the curse. He had nothing to do with the acolytes of Baats’ulan, nor with the merchant Kendi Laughs-Long in the market; in fact, he hasn’t left the Bekyar Block in months. The party might want to let Grissshuk continue with his mistaken assumption, though, if they don’t want to stymie his genuine attempt at redemption.

The Name Clue: If the heroes ask Grissshuk when he got the curse, or who must have started it, he describes his meeting with Matala.

“I got cursed about the time my old friend Matala came to me. She worked for someone named Khalibi somewhere in the city, until a few days ago when she got sick. I sent her to a healer I heard about in the Bwamandu Camp named Numu and haven’t seen her again. Maybe she died. Maybe I should look for this Khalibi and see if he’s hiring. Maybe the gods would like it if I got an honest job.”

This clue points to the Bwamandu Camp, which the heroes might already have heard about. More importantly, it points to “Khalibi” as potentially the source of Matala’s “illness,” which is of course the *slithering*. Grissshuk misheard and thinks Khalibi is a person when it’s actually a place—the Khalibi Caravan House.

Creatures: When the conversation with Grissshuk is winding down, two humans wielding large clubs burst in through the shrine doors. One calls out, “Grissshuk! We said we weren’t done with you, fool. If you don’t come back to work for us, we’ll...” The *slithering* that both men already contracted catches up to them, transforming them into ochre jellies. Bearing only a dimly remembered sense of hostility, these oozes fight until destroyed. Grissshuk joins the heroes in this fight, using his Battle Cry every turn if there are any orcs among the heroes.

OCHRE JELLIES (2)

Pathfinder Bestiary 254

Initiative Perception +7

CREATURE 5

XP Award: Give the heroes 30 XP for finding the clue about the name Khalibi.

BWAMANDU CAMP

Once a tiny site of tents and huts occupied by refugees fortunate enough to have escaped Usaro, the Bwamandu Camp has recently exploded in size. Fresh upheaval in Usaro has made escaping it easier, and many have fled here. The Bwamandu Camp has done what it can to welcome this influx, but its resources are badly strained.

Numu (CG female elf healer) is a Kallijae elf who helped liberate several prisoners in Usaro and escorted them here to safety. She has sharp features and a high hairline with straight white hair that she keeps in a tight bun. When she saw the suffering in the Bwamandu Camp, Numu resolved to stay in Kibwe to help. She set up a rudimentary hospital by connecting several donated tents together, and she tends to as many wounded and sick as she can.

When the heroes ask Numu about the transformations, she confirms that she’s seen people die from them, and that she’s glad she never stopped carrying the light mace she used in Usaro to crush slavers’ heads. Numu would like to talk more, but she has several people who require her care. If the heroes are willing to help her, she’ll have more time for further discussion.

The sick and injured are spread out among three different tents, and at least one hero must succeed at helping patients in each tent to sufficiently assist Numu. Numu has sufficient healer’s tools to meet the requirements of Medicine checks if the heroes lack them. If no hero succeeds at helping patients in a tent, or if any hero critically fails a Medicine check, Numu has to cover for their failure. If she has to cover for two or more failures, she can’t make time to speak with the heroes.

Disease: The poor waste drainage in the Bwamandu Camp has caused several residents to come down with

filth fever. These people require a successful DC 20 Medicine check to Treat Disease, the expenditure of a *remove disease* spell, or a 6th-level antiplague.

Injury: The first tent contains several people injured in a brawl started by the residents of the Bekyar Block. These people require a successful DC 15 Medicine check to Treat Wounds, the expenditure of at least three healing spells of 2nd level or higher, or three healing items of 3rd level or higher.

Poison: One of the refugees inadvertently brought an egg sac from a poisonous spider from the jungle, and the spiders hatched and bit several people in the camp before being discovered. These people require a successful DC 18 Medicine check to Treat Poison, the expenditure of a *neutralize poison* spell, a *restoration* spell, or a 6th-level antitoxin.

The Last Gasp Clue: If the heroes help in at least two tents, Numu has the time to speak with them. She says that she's seen a few victims of the ooze transformation, and she can confirm that it's a curse and not a disease. The very first victim was a woman named Matala, who wasn't particularly lucid by the time she reached Numu, but Numu could tell she was a laborer by trade. When Numu asked about the affliction, Matala only said "Crimson Asp" before dying; moments later, she swelled up into a gelatinous cube that Numu and her assistants destroyed. Numu doesn't have any idea who the "Crimson Asp" is. (See Assembling the Clues below.)

If the heroes succeed in all three tents, Numu also offers them Matala's belongings, which she kept. The only item of interest among the porter's effects is a small key, which fits the doors to areas A3, A6, and A9 at the Khalibi Caravan House.

XP Award: Award the heroes 10 XP for each tent they successfully help treat and another 30 XP for finding the clue about the name Crimson Asp.

MINING STOREHOUSE

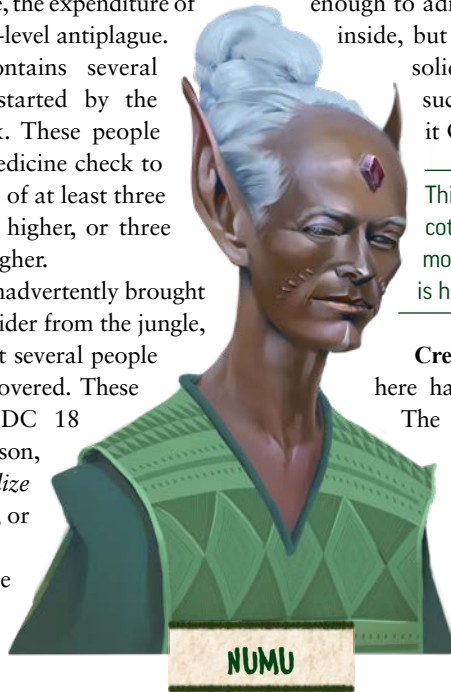
MODERATE 5

The heroes learn of the old East Mwangi Mining Company storehouse by winning the debate with Baats'ulan or from Gathering Information in the streets. In either case, they find the squat stone building without incident. Although this single-room building was constructed to keep ore and gold dust safe from theft, it contains nothing of value now. Baats'ulan's acolytes took over the building and slept there communally after giving up their own homes to join Baats'ulan.

The stone doors to the storehouse, each wide enough to admit a wagon, are bolted shut from the inside, but the hinges are old and break with a solid push. A hero can open a door with a successful DC 18 Athletics check to Force it Open.

This cavernous storehouse contains five cots, each overgrown with a profusion of mold and toadstools, but little else. The air is heady with strange pollen and a rank odor.

Creatures: The five acolytes who once lived here have all transformed into slime molds. The molds occupy the cots by resembling sheets of fungus or mildew. As soon as two creatures enter the storeroom, the oozes slither forth and spread out to fight as many opponents as possible until destroyed.



SLIME MOLDS (5) CREATURE 2

Pathfinder Bestiary 2 193

Initiative Perception +6

The Letter Clue: The people who died here were instructed to dedicate themselves solely to Baats'ulan, but one secretly kept in contact with his sister. Underneath a mattress are handwritten notes from someone named "M," a porter in an unnamed caravan house. The latest communication is "M" mentioning that a confidential shipment was due at the caravan house and that she was curious about it. A hero who Searches this room automatically finds the notes.

XP Award: Give the heroes 30 XP for finding the clue about a caravan house.

ASSEMBLING THE CLUES

Three clues point to the source of the *slithering*. The first clue is the reference to someone named Khalibi, but this is the name of a business, not a person. The second clue is the name Crimson Asp, which refers to an obscure street in the Brass Block called Crimson Asp Way. The final clue points to a caravan house, but doesn't indicate which one.

Separately, none of these clues lead the heroes to the Khalibi Caravan House on Crimson Asp Way. As soon as the heroes have two clues, they can attempt a DC 25 Society check to realize they refer to a place and pinpoint its location. When the heroes have all three clues, the Society DC drops to 10. If the heroes remain stymied even after acquiring the clues, Abayone can put them together.

XP Award: When the heroes identify the source of the *slithering* as the Khalibi Caravan House on Crimson Asp Way, award them 30 XP.

KHALIBI CARAVAN HOUSE

The Aspis Consortium operates this small caravan house near the city's west gate to accept clandestine shipments. The Consortium's direct ownership of the Khalibi Caravan House isn't public knowledge, and it appears to be simply one of the many caravan houses in Kibwe.

Tomil Jabrin quietly planned the shipment of the *slitherbound stones* from Nex to the Khalibi Caravan House, but a porter named Matala opened the box early and released the *slithering*. Matala survived the curse's release and fled, creating the trail that the heroes followed here.

The Khalibi Caravan House is made of stone and remains cool and comfortable even on hot days. The caravan house has no windows; narrow slits near the ceiling allow for airflow. The interior caravan yard (area **A5**) is open to the sky, but the other rooms have a ceiling that is either 10 feet high (in the western half of the building) or 15 feet high (in the wagon stalls on the eastern side of the building). *Continual flame* lanterns illuminate all of its rooms.

The doors throughout the caravan house are made of sturdy wood and are all unlocked, except for the three doors leading to the northernmost rooms of the caravan house: the office (area **A3**), vault (area **A6**), and north wagon stall (area **A9**). Those doors can be opened as described in each of those areas.

A1. Entry

This stone room is cool and comfortable. Shelves line two of the walls, and a large desk opposite the shelves bears a few large tomes. A high wooden chair is behind the desk. Doors lead north and south; the door leading north bears a sign reading "No Admittance" in Common and Mwangi.

This reception area is normally where an Aspis Consortium agent would meet with outsiders. The shelves contain cheap travelogues and atlases of the region around Kibwe. The ledgers on the desk are appointment books and account statements. Everything in this room is carefully curated (or outright falsified) to suggest only legitimate business.

A2. Meeting Chamber

Moderate 5

This meeting room has a large table with several chairs around it, although all but one of the chairs have been

moved to one side, as though for an interview or tribunal. A wooden statue stands in the corner, and a large map is spread across the table. A wet patch fills the center of the room's stone floor. A double door leads south, and two other doors lead east.

This meeting chamber served many purposes in the caravan house. Most recently, it served as the planning room where Tomil instructed his agents on where to take the Pillar-Watcher known as Cursebreaker. The map clearly indicates the city of Kibwe and the ruined city of Holy Xatramba, which is approximately 140 miles away. An old road connecting the two cities is marked on the map.

Creatures: A statue in the corner depicts a Chelaxian big-game hunter and Aspis ally who left the consortium a small fortune in her will. The bequest was sufficient to not only create this statue in her honor, but to have it animated as a wood golem to protect this room. The golem animates if anyone who isn't an Aspis agent spends more than 2 rounds in this room.

The puddle on the floor is a gray ooze. It was once the caravan house's receptionist, but now it's a mindless creature that attacks any living thing it detects. (The golem still recognizes the ooze as an authorized person and doesn't attack it.) Both the golem and the ooze pursue any foes that flee and fight until destroyed.

WOOD GOLEM

CREATURE 6

Pathfinder Bestiary 2 130

Initiative Perception +12

GRAY OOZE

CREATURE 4

Pathfinder Bestiary 2 193

Initiative Perception +8

Treasure: Underneath the map is a *feather token (fan)*.

A3. Office

Moderate 5

The door to this room is locked. A hero can Force Open a locked door with a successful DC 25 Athletics check or Pick a Lock with four successful DC 25 Thievery checks. The heroes might have obtained Matala's key from Numu, which fits this lock.

This office is elegantly appointed, with a large rosewood desk and a leather chair. A strange, greasy fog surrounds the desk in thin wisps. A wide bookshelf stands against the west wall, next to the room's only door.

This was the caravan house manager's office. Tomil has used this office for the past few weeks, rather

KHALIBI CARAVAN HOUSE



than his normal office elsewhere in the city, in order to personally oversee the shipment of the *slitherbound stones*. As a result, one of the desk drawers contains several notes about Tomil's plans.

The east wall behind the chair contains a secret door leading to the vault (area A6). A hero who Searches the room and succeeds at a DC 20 Perception check notices the secret door.

Tomil Jabrin is still here, in a manner of speaking. The *slithering* transformed him into a powerful ooze called a fuming sludge. The desk's chair bears markings from the ooze, and it's plain that someone sitting in the chair behind the desk transformed into the ooze and didn't go far.

Creatures: The fuming sludge currently lurks under the desk and is the source of the thin fog. It surges forth to attack anyone in this room and fights until destroyed.

FUMING SLUDGE

Page 63

Initiative Perception +11

CREATURE 7

Tomil's Tome: Inside the upper desk drawer, the Aspis leader's plans are enclosed in a heavy leather book held shut with an enchanted iron clasp. Rather than having a space for a key or other mechanism, this magic clasp instead has a single serrated blade protruding from it next to the symbol of a horned demon's face. A successful DC 18 Religion check identifies that the horned demon represents the demon lord Angazhan. A successful DC 20 Occultism or Thievery check—or a critical success on the initial Religion check—reveals that this clasp can be opened in two ways: either a religious symbol of Angazhan must be touched to the blade, or the blade must be used to shed blood (dealing 1d3 persistent bleed damage). In either case, the book opens. If all else fails, a hero can Force Open the magic clasp with a successful DC 25 Athletics check, but the serrated blade writhes and jabs with each attempt, dealing 1d8 persistent bleed damage on a failed Athletics check (2d8 persistent bleed damage on a critical failure).

The book contains records of a shipment of several magical bloodstones coming from the city of Oenopion in Nex with what could be used to inflict a fatal curse called the *slithering*. The *slithering* affects only humans and transforms them into mindless oozes, but Tomil plainly thought he could control the curse and target only his enemies. The names of several human targets, including most of Kibwe’s Representative Council, are listed within the book. The last page bears the words “Cursebreaker could be a problem?”

Tomil’s Map: A lower drawer in the desk contains an overland map tracing an old highway from Kibwe to the demon-haunted ruins of Holy Xatramba, some 140 miles east of Kibwe. Several stops are marked on this map.

Treasure: The clasped book also contains a *scroll of nondetection* and a bearer’s note from a moneylender in the Iwisa Block for 250 gp. The heroes need only present the note to get the money.

Another desk drawer contains two bronze badges bearing the twisting serpent symbol of the Aspis Consortium. These signify that their bearers are bronze agents, the lowest formal rank of the organization. Each is worth only 1 sp for their simple workmanship, but foes of the Aspis Consortium will pay as much as 10 gp each for the badges, which let them more easily impersonate their enemies.

A4. Storeroom

Low 5

Several sturdy shelves hold a variety of crates, urns, barrels, and boxes. A double door leads west, and two double doors lead east.

The Aspis Consortium stores mundane caravan goods in this room. An urn nearly as large as a man sits against the north wall, and it vibrates slightly when approached.

Creatures: The urn contains thousands of voracious Mwangi millipedes. The urn shatters if touched or damaged, and the millipede swarms surge forth to fight until destroyed.

MWANGI MILLIPEDE SWARM (2) CREATURE 4

Elite centipede swarm (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 6, 61)

Initiative Perception +11

Treasure: Eight narrow wooden boxes are stacked on one of the shelves. Seven contain sticks of cinnamon and are worth 15 gp each, and the eighth holds a vial containing a *moderate healing potion*. Any hero who Searches this room discovers this treasure.

A5. Caravan Yard

Moderate 5

This wide yard is open to the sky. The ground, covered with straw and sand, is crisscrossed with human and animal tracks. Two sets of large loading doors lead east, with the southern set of doors standing slightly ajar. Other doors leading west and north are labeled “Storage” in Common and Mwangi. A trough of stagnant water stands between the two doors to the west, and a flimsy table and chairs occupy the yard’s southwest corner. A veritable mountain of boxes, casks, and crates are piled in the southeast corner of the yard beneath a makeshift awning.

Caravan wagons were loaded or unloaded directly from the storeroom (area A4) or the vault (area A6) into this central yard. The yard is large enough for wagons to turn around, which allows them to either enter or exit from the two connecting wagon stalls (areas A7 and A8). The trough offered some comfort to the animals pulling the wagons. The expedition gear piled in the southeast corner of the yard is better sheltered from the elements than the animal trough or the table.

Hazard: This yard was intended only for Aspis agents. A large sigil carved into the stone ground beneath the sand and straw isn’t visible, but nevertheless provides a lingering magical protection. When a creature that isn’t wearing an Aspis Consortium badge crosses the midpoint of the yard, the trap summons an invisible stalker named Yashatto, who is bound to hunt and kill any intruders in the caravan house. Yashatto dislikes being summoned and interprets the lethal instructions very broadly by trying to kill as many humanoids as it can find, starting with any who are already in the yard.

STALKER SUMMONING RUNE

HAZARD 7

UNCOMMON COMPLEX MAGICAL TRAP

Stealth +15 (expert)

Description The sand conceals a rune that summons an invisible stalker into this yard.

Disable Acrobatics DC 25 to approach without triggering the trap followed by Arcana DC 25 (expert) or Thievery DC 27 (expert) to erase the rune, or *dispel magic* (4th level; counteract DC 25) to counteract the rune

Summon Monster ⤵ (arcane, conjuration, summon);

Trigger A creature that isn’t openly bearing an Aspis Consortium badge crosses the center of the yard; **Effect** The trap summons an invisible stalker (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 144). The invisible stalker rolls initiative and remains for 2d6 rounds, after which the spell ends and the invisible stalker disappears. The invisible stalker also disappears if someone disables the trap before the duration expires. The invisible stalker can use 3

actions each round and can use reactions, unlike most summoned creatures.

Reset The trap resets after 24 hours.

Treasure: The expedition gear in the yard contains dried food, casks of water and ale, rope, shovels, tools, insect-repelling herbs, and other mundane equipment to supply a journey of several weeks through the Mwangi Expanse. It is worth 25 gp in total and weighs 20 Bulk. The heroes might find it useful for their trek to Holy Xatramba in Chapter 2.

A6. Vault

The double door to this room is locked, just like the office door. If the heroes lack Matala's key, they can Force it Open with a successful DC 25 Athletics check or unlock it with four successful DC 25 Thievery checks to Pick a Lock.

Draperies of fine cloth, large teak chests bursting with clothing, and fine furniture are all stored in this vault. Empty manacles bolted to the north wall indicate that this chamber might have also had other, more brutal uses.

This vault stores valuable or illegal goods, which has often included slaves. The room's current contents all come from the estate of a Chelaxian noble family called the Alteirs, who died from a nasty plague about two months ago. The family's loyal servants immediately shipped the estate's valuables back to Chelax, but the Aspis Consortium intercepted the shipment and is keeping the goods here until they can be discreetly sold. Any hero who succeeds at a DC 15 Society check while looking over these goods can recall the Alteirs' tragedy; on a critical success, the hero realizes that these valuables are much too distinctive to sell in Kibwe.

Both the west and east walls of this vault contain secret doors that the heroes can discover by Searching this room with a successful DC 20 Perception check.

Selling the Alteirs' Property: Although the contents of this room might someday be worth a small fortune, they are too bulky to easily move and too well-known to sell. Any hero attempting to sell them is politely rebuffed and warned against peddling obviously stolen goods from a family with infernal connections. A quest to find a buyer for these stolen goods could be an adventure all its own, with vengeful Chelaxians and relentless devils.

A7. South Wagon Stall

This long room is a stall large enough for a fully laden wagon, with double doors leading west and east. The double door to the west, which bears a sign reading "Authorized

Agents Only" in Common and Mwangi, stands slightly ajar and reveals a sandy courtyard behind it. Shelves contain tools for repairing wagons, such as crowbars, hammers, and spare wheels.

Agents would drive incoming caravan wagons into this room to check their contents and settle up with their crews. Aspis Consortium workers would then drive the wagon into the adjacent yard (area A5) and unload it before reloading it with other goods and returning it to a wagon stall. Another crew would take the laden wagon to its next stop.

A8. Central Wagon Stall

Double doors stand in the west and east walls of this room. The west door bears a sign reading "Authorized Agents Only" in Common and Mwangi. Shelves contain several old boxes and rags along with a greasy wagon axle. A puddle of glistening yellowish oil, nearly 12 feet across, covers the floor in the center of this room.

This room has the same purpose as the south wagon stall. The puddle is a spilled vat of sunflower oil that no one has gotten around to cleaning up.

A9. North Wagon Stall

Severe 5

The door to this room is locked and barred from the inside. If the heroes have Matala's key, they can unlock the lock, or they can unlock it with five successful DC 30 Thievery checks to Pick a Lock. However, the door still won't open as long as it remains barred; Forcing it Open requires a DC 30 Athletics check.

A small wagon—little more than a cart—has been backed up to the west wall of this large room. Double doors stand at the room's east end. An open teak box is overturned in the wagon with a few dark red gemstones scattered around it.

This is the wagon from Oenopion that brought the *slitherbound stones* to Kibwe. The stones are still in the wagon, but their magic is expended and they are now nothing more than moderately valuable gemstones. They rest in a violet-colored residue that was once the arcane concoction that amplified their power.

The box is clearly marked as a shipment from Oenopion in Nex to Tomil Jabrin at the Khalibi Caravan House in Kibwe. The box also contains a note on folded parchment, which no one read before the disaster spread from the caravan house. It reads: "Beware, Tomil. As the stones steep in their brew during the long trip to Kibwe, they gain power. How much power, I do not know; the curse might intensify enough that it is not limited to

those who contact the stones, but could perhaps become transmittable by touch or even proximity.”

Creatures: Two caravan overseers were present when the box from Oenopion was opened, and they were among the curse’s first victims. They now lurk in this chamber as verdurous oozes and attack any creature entering this room.

VERDUROUS OOZES (2) CREATURE 6

Pathfinder Bestiary 2 194

Initiative Perception +8

Treasure: There are 10 non-magical gemstones remaining in the wagon; each is worth 40 gp. The shelf in this room also contains *boots of elvenkind*.



SLITHERBOUND STONES

RETURNING TO ABAYONE

When the heroes visit Abayone Munme at her home and inform her of their discoveries at the Khalibi Caravan House, read or paraphrase the following.

Abayone gives a grim laugh. “So, those who would release the curse upon their enemies have fallen victim to it themselves? Such is the price of malice. But this curse is spreading, and Kibwe is plainly in danger. Fortunately, those who built this city made many preparations to save it.

“The statues on the walls and columns around the city are the Pillar-Watchers. They are old, old magic. Some we understand; others we do not. There is an abandoned archive, built even before Kibwe was merely a provincial capital in a large empire. It was called the Archive of the Sun—and still is, I suppose! There is a Pillar-Watcher inside it with the head of an eland. It is called Cursebreaker, and its function is to obliterate any curse that would threaten the city. It will work to stop the spread of this *slithering* curse. You must go to the Archive of the Sun to find and activate Cursebreaker.”

Abayone provides the heroes with directions to the Archive of the Sun in the southern end of the Mozimba Camp neighborhood. She also gives them a gold token she wears on a chain around her neck. She explains that these tokens are held by the leaders of Kibwe and used to activate the Pillar-Watchers in times of need. She believes the heroes should be able to use it to activate Cursebreaker, although she isn’t sure how to do so—no one has activated a Pillar-Watcher in decades.

About the Archive of the Sun: The Archive of the Sun was perhaps once a laboratory or library, but is

now abandoned. It’s notable only as the resting place of the eland-headed Pillar-Watcher known as Cursebreaker. The statue is rumored to be able to lift any curse levied upon the population of Kibwe, although the specifics of this ability are unclear. Cursebreaker is also the only Pillar-Watcher placed within a building instead of atop one of the stone pillars around Kibwe, but no one understands why. Abayone has never been inside the Archive of the Sun and knows nothing about its interior. She believes the building to be abandoned, but she assures the heroes that the token she’s given them should prove their official authority if anyone questions them.

ARCHIVE OF THE SUN

The Archive of the Sun is one of the oldest structures in Kibwe. It is made from the same durable, glyph-carved granite as the city’s walls and ornamental pillars. It abuts one of the city’s internal walls in the southern end of the traditionalist Mozimba Camp. Only the building’s most durable fixtures and the enormous sun carvings on the floor of its two principal rooms remain intact. The Pillar-Watcher known as Cursebreaker is said to be within the building.

The truth is that the Archive of the Sun isn’t Cursebreaker’s intended resting place. Rather, the archive is the facility where the Pillar-Watchers were each individually empowered with their energy in the city’s distant founding days. The lore to empower the Pillar-Watchers is long lost, and its rediscovery might lead to a new golden age of Kibwe as each statue’s fading magic is renewed. But Cursebreaker, which was left in the Archive of the Sun when the building was abandoned centuries ago, retained its power. The legends of Cursebreaker’s ability to lift curses are true because it remained connected to its power source—that is, until Tomil had it secretly removed from the city.

Current Inhabitants

After Tomil removed Cursebreaker from the Archive of the Sun, he wanted to discourage anyone who might poke around in the abandoned building and discover the statue’s absence. He therefore invited a small group of boggards to lair within the archive. The boggards, led by Croakchief Globblit Skink-Eater, guided some Aspis

FLIP-MATS SET THE SCENE

When the heroes explore the Archive of the Sun, they don't have any particular reason to think they might come back. However, Chapter 3 of this adventure details their return to the Archive of the Sun—one side of *Flip-Mat: The Slithering*—when it's under the control of the Aspis Consortium rather than boggards. Note a few changes that the heroes make while they're here, such as scorch marks from a *fireball* spell, grisly remnants from a well-placed critical hit, or similar indications of their visit. Call back to these details when the heroes return in Chapter 3, so they'll feel the impact of their actions.

Consortium agents to a ruin in the swamps outside of Kibwe nearly a year ago in exchange for a favor to be named later. Tomil didn't intend to ever repay the boggards, but when Globblit showed up at his office in Kibwe demanding compensation, Tomil realized he could solve two problems at once: he magnanimously gifted the Archive of the Sun to the boggards and agreed to provide them with food and treasures to ensure they killed anyone who intruded in the building, which also discharged his obligation to Globblit.

Globblit is an imperious, demanding boggard who enjoys the easy life of having food and treasure delivered to him. For now, the croakchief is content to do as Tomil asked, even though the latest shipment of meat and baubles is long overdue. Globblit has several boggards and other reptilian creatures under his command.

Features of the Archive of the Sun

The Archive of the Sun is comprised of two levels, although the upper level is only half the size of the ground floor. The structure has no windows and is normally unlit, although the Room of the Lower Sun (area **B4**) and the Room of the Upper Sun (area **B13**) both have large floor carvings that illuminate those rooms with bright glowing light. Ceilings throughout the Archive of the Sun are 12 feet high. The doors are all heavy wood magically treated to be as durable as stone, and none of them are locked. Much of the structure has a faint, musty smell, but a much sourer reek permeates the areas where boggards have been lairing.

B1. Entry

The Archive of the Sun is an impressive building made of ancient stone abutting the city wall. Its entry is a square tunnel in the structure's south side. A single door to the

west and a double door to the east are set deep in the shadows of this entry.

The door leading to the entry guard room to the west has a small hole set at eye level for a human, but nothing of note can be seen in that room by looking in. The double door leading east is carved with the image of a sunburst and opens inward.

B2. Entry Guard Room

This large room has only a single entrance. It is bare except for two old bedrolls—indicating that squatters have slept here—and a realistic statue of a woman with a disgusted look on her face. The statue is on its side near the door as though it had been simply shoved out of sight.

Once occupied by guards who kept an eye on anyone entering or leaving the Archive of the Sun, this room has been periodically used by drifters or trysting lovers throughout the years. The statue is a victim of the boggards' basilisks. The boggards found her revolted expression hilarious and put the statue in the entry to discourage intruders. The next time Tomil's agent came by to deliver payment to the boggards, he angrily demanded the statue be removed. After all, the boggards aren't supposed to be advertising their presence. The boggards simply deposited the statue here and have by now forgotten it.

B3. Welcome Chamber

Low 5

This large chamber has double doors leading north and west. The southeast corner is filled with rubble, indicating that part of the building has collapsed.

Three large metal troughs have been dragged into this room and pushed against the south wall. They are filled with slick mud and smell foul; the boggards in this chamber rest in them. Pushing over a trough requires a successful DC 22 Athletics check and doing so spreads the slick mud across a third of the floor (the west trough coats the western 15 feet of the floor, the center trough coats the middle 15 feet, and the east trough coats the eastern 15 feet). The slick mud makes the area uneven ground (*Core Rulebook* 476; Balance DC 17) for 1 hour, by which point the mud dries out.

Between the troughs are messy piles of bones and gristle, which are all that remains of previous meals brought to the boggards.

The collapse in the room's corner is several decades old and has completely covered a narrow door leading to area **B5**. Removing enough rocks to pass through

would take several days of work, and the archive's current inhabitants haven't yet had the inclination to do so.

Creatures: Six boggard scouts live in this room. They're supposed to be keeping watch but are particularly bored with this duty. They've captured and leashed four rats using leather cords and constantly stage rat races, fights, feasts, and other activities upon which they wager large sums they don't actually have.

If these scouts detect intruders, they immediately leap to the room's defense. Half of the boggards rush into melee, while one uses its Terrifying Croak, and the other two attempt to overturn the troughs to impede the intruders' movements. The boggards' swamp stride ability doesn't help them on the uneven ground, so this action makes the room's floor just as challenging for them as for their enemies, but the boggards haven't really thought that part of their plan through. They fight to the death.

BOGGARD SCOUTS (6)

CREATURE 1

Pathfinder Bestiary 44

Initiative Perception +7

Treasure: A *wand of noisome acid* (page 61) is concealed in the pile of gristle on the floor. A hero Searching this room automatically finds it.

B4. Room of the Lower Sun

This large room is lit by an enormous glowing sun symbol on the floor. The symbol is a loose spiral with eight triangles arranged around it like rays. The ceiling bears two holes, each about a foot in diameter. One is positioned directly above the center of the sun symbol on the floor, while the other is offset from it by about ten feet. Two large stone fonts in the southwest and southeast corners of the room bear clear, clean water. Double doors lead out to the south, east, and west.

This room still contains the ancient magic present in the Archive of the Sun. This magic not only keeps the sun symbol lit, but also prevents water in the fonts from going bad or growing mold. The water is safe to drink. Because of the brightness of the unfamiliar symbol and the unnatural purity of the fonts' water, the boggard swampseers have declared this room unlucky and insist that no boggard should enter except to quickly pass through.

The holes in the ceiling lead to area **B13** through 10 feet of stone. Small characters who are trained in Acrobatics can attempt a DC 20 Acrobatics check to Squeeze through a hole; Medium characters must be a master in Acrobatics to attempt this check.

The south door leads to the welcome chamber (area **B3**), the east door leads to the library (area **B6**), and the west door leads to the scribing chamber (area **B7**). Although all of those rooms have creatures lairing in them, the thick walls and doors mean no creatures in those areas hear combat taking place elsewhere.

Activating the Sun Symbols: Although the sun symbol's glow is plainly magical, it has another, greater power described in the Room of the Upper Sun (area **B13**) that requires someone to stand beneath the center hole. Any hero examining the symbol and succeeding at a DC 22 Nature or Religion check understands that this symbol is part of a network of power that can be activated, but not from here. On a critical success, the hero realizes that there is a second sun symbol directly above this one, and energy is somehow exchanged between the two via the holes in the ceiling.

B5. Side Entrance

This small entry contains a great amount of rubble from a long-ago collapse. A sturdy door leads east, and an opening to the north is nearly obscured by the rubble.

A few flimsy crates and heaps of blood-stained butcher paper are stacked just inside the door. This is where Aspis Consortium agents, under Tomil's direction, deliver shanks of raw meat and shiny, cheap baubles to the boggards. These materials are days old but still reek of rotten meat.

The collapse covers a narrow door leading to area **B3**. Removing enough rocks to pass through would take several days of work.

Treasure: A long-ago explorer dropped a *slippery ribbon* (page 61) in this room, and no one has yet noticed it. A hero who Searches this room and succeeds at a DC 20 Perception check locates it.

B6. Library

Moderate 5

The east and west walls of this long room are covered with cubbies and shelves. A few scraps of leather and parchment remain, but most materials in this room have been heaped on the floor and slathered with mud to create a sodden nest. The south end of the room has collapsed and seems impassible. A large pool of blood and the remains of a messily-butchered carcass, both crawling with fat flies, rest near this collapse.

Two boggard swampseers took over this library as their personal domain, primarily so they can be the ones to distribute the goods delivered into the side entrance by the Aspis Consortium (area **B5**). They pulped the ancient texts in this room to craft their lumpy, stinking nest.

The swampseers lair here with their two giant lizards. Because food and trinkets haven't come in the last few days, however, the boggards improvised in order to feed the tribe by butchering one of their lizards for meat. They are only a day or two away from doing the same with the other lizard.

The collapse to the south is extensive enough that the rubble-choked passage to area **B5** isn't immediately obvious; only heroes who Search that end of the room discover it, but the boggards know it's there.

Creatures: Two boggard swampseers named Lorgblo and Olbbit live here and spend their time arguing about which of them Croakchief Globblit will blame for the lack of deliveries. When the heroes arrive, the swampseers seize the chance to blame someone else and eagerly attack. They prefer to remain out of reach and cast *acid arrow*, but they use their Terrifying Croak and Destructive Croak against foes who close to melee range.

The swampseers are aided in combat by their remaining giant frilled lizard. It is blissfully ignorant of the fate that awaits it in the coming days and remains utterly loyal to the boggards.

All of these foes fight to the death and pursue any enemies that flee.

LORGBLO AND OLBBIT CREATURE 3

Male boggard swampseers (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 45)

Initiative Perception +11

GIANT FRILLED LIZARD CREATURE 5

Pathfinder Bestiary 229

Initiative Perception +11

Treasure: Part of the reason the boggards here are so guilty is because they've been embezzling valuables from Croakchief Globblit. Their nest contains five onyx insect figurines worth 50 gp each, a pouch containing 99 gp, and an *oily button* (page 60).

B7. Scribing Chamber Moderate 5

Five slabs protrude from the walls of this room about 3 feet above the floor. Carvings of scrolls in the walls above hint that they may once have been used as desks or worktables, but they're now all covered with a mat of muddy reeds to serve as sleeping ledges. Double doors lead east and south.

This scribing chamber has been taken over by one of the boggard swampseers and her retinue of warriors. They have little to do here but await Croakchief Globblit's orders, and therefore frequently doze on their sleeping slabs.

Unstable Scroll Symbols: The boggards haven't realized that the scroll symbols above the each of the desks light up (as the *light* spell, if a character uses an Interact action to push a symbol inward). The lights go out when pushed again or after 24 hours. Detecting Magic or Searching in the area reveals this feature, and a DC 20 Arcana or relevant Lore check suggests to the heroes that these lights are subject to a magical overload due to how unstable the magic imbued here has become over time. On a success, a hero realizes that turning on all five of the lights at the same time will create a dangerous overload. On a critical success, the character realizes that this overload will occur 1 round after the last light is illuminated, providing just enough time to leave the room.

If the five lights are all illuminated simultaneously, they begin to flicker ominously. One round later, all five scroll symbols explode in a blinding burst. Creatures in the room take 5d8 electricity damage (DC 22 basic Reflex save). On a failure, the creature is also blinded for 1d4 rounds (1 hour on a critical failure). After this explosion, the lights are inoperable for 1 week.

Creatures: Golga is a corpulent boggard with a grating laugh. The warriors all consider her quite attractive and fight to the death to defend her from intruders. Golga enjoys fighting from behind her warriors, but she's fundamentally cowardly and surrenders if all of the warriors are killed. Golga is quick to give up information about the other boggards, but she knows little about Croakchief Globblit's arrangement with the Aspis Consortium, other than that they make regular deliveries of food and shiny treasures. Although Golga is willing to give information about the other boggards, she does her best to keep the presence of the basilisks in the adjacent room secret to present a nasty surprise for the intruders.

GOLGA CREATURE 3

Female boggard swampseer (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 45)

Initiative Perception +11

BOGGARD WARRIORS (4) CREATURE 2

Pathfinder Bestiary 44

Initiative Perception +8

Treasure: Golga wears a silver necklace worth 150 gp that is obscured beneath the rolls of her neck. The heroes notice it if she uses her Destructive Croak or Terrifying Croak; otherwise, they need to Search her and succeed at a DC 15 Perception check to find it.

B8. Reflection Room

Moderate 5

Two large sheets of metal are affixed to the stone walls to the west and east, reflecting each other and this room. Three statues, each so damaged as to be unidentifiable, litter the south end of this room next to a large nest of leaves and mud. A double door leads north, and an opening to the southwest reveals a flight of stairs leading up.

This room was used for meditation and reflection, but when Croakchief Globblit realized it had mirrors, he decided it was the perfect place to keep his two basilisks. Globblit hopes to breed the mated pair and raise more basilisks, but they haven't yet produced any eggs.

The statues are three beggars who attempted to seek shelter in the Archive of the Sun a few days ago, but were captured by the boggards.

Creatures: The two surly basilisks are trained to not attack boggards, but they rush at any other creatures they see. They can look into the mirrors to see targets for their petrifying gaze and Petrifying Gaze, but contrary to Globblit's assumption, this doesn't make their petrifying attacks any more dangerous than they already are. The basilisks fight to the death and generally pursue fleeing creatures, but they know there is a painful trap on the stairs and don't chase anyone fleeing that direction.

BASILISKS (2)

CREATURE 5

Pathfinder Bestiary 38

Initiative Perception +11

B9. Stairs

Severe 5

Well-worn stone forms this long staircase, and stone handrails protrude from the walls to the west and east.

This staircase is trapped to keep intruders out of the archive's most important chambers. The stairs are steep enough that ascending them is difficult terrain.

A character Searching near the stairs can attempt a DC 20 Perception check to discover a few small darts remaining from a time the trap was previously triggered. A successful DC 20 Thievery check identifies them as poisonous darts fired from a nearby trap.

Hazard: The poisoned dart gallery trap doesn't trigger until a creature steps on the stairs, but its attacks affect creatures on the staircase and in the 10-foot-square areas at the top and bottom of the stairs.

The Aspis Consortium discovered the trap here, as well as the control panel hidden in the west handrail at the top of the stairs. Tomil mentioned the trap to Globblit in a note, which Globblit kept (see area B10).

POISONED DART GALLERY

HAZARD 8

Pathfinder Core Rulebook 528

Initiative Stealth +16

B10. Upper Landing

This oddly shaped landing has stairs descending to the south, a narrow door with a small window in it to the north, and a grand double door to the east. The double door bears a carving of a sunburst with rays pushing away storm clouds. An irregular alcove near the doors has a small stone table bearing an open chest.

The chest contained Tomil's first gifts to Croakchief Globblit. Now, the only thing it contains is a note written in Abyssal that reads, "The stairs are trapped, ally Croakchief, and the switch to deactivate it is beneath the west handrail at the top of the stairs. You may consider reactivating it the same way to improve the building's defenses. I know you will not fail me in keeping intruders out of the building, or I will consider our lucrative deal void and let the Kibwe guard deal with you as they would any other pests in the city." If the heroes have looked through the notes in Tomil's office (area A3), they recognize the handwriting. Globblit kept the note at first because he didn't fully understand it, but the boggard soon realized that the note might prove valuable if Tomil attempts to betray him. Globblit doesn't realize that Tomil is dead.

Creatures: A single boggard warrior stands guard in front of the door to antechamber (area B12). If the trap on the stairs (area B9) is triggered or if she spots any intruders, she slips into area B12 to warn Globblit and join him in the fight there.

BOGGARD WARRIOR

CREATURE 2

Pathfinder Bestiary 44

Initiative Perception +8

B11. Upper Guard Room

The door to this room has a small opening at eye level to a human, similar to the entry guard room (area B2). It was also used as a guard room, but contains nothing other than a stone bench.

B12. Antechamber

Moderate 5

This wide, arcing room has a double door leading west and two double doors leading east; all of the doors bear a large sunburst symbol. The southern double doors on the east wall have been knocked off their hinges and lie askew on the floor. Against the north wall, an elaborate wooden chair balances atop a wooden chest, which itself balances atop

a stone shelf that's been knocked over to serve as a base. The chair is festooned with large leaves and reeds to give it a more ostentatious and dramatic appearance.

This is the “throne room” of Croakchief Globblit, although he's had to manufacture his throne from things found in the Archive of the Sun or stolen from nearby residences. It rankles the imperious boggard to set up his throne room in an antechamber, but the light in the adjacent Room of the Upper Sun (area **B13**) intimidates him so much he doesn't want to set foot inside and has forbidden his boggard minions from doing so.

Creatures: Croakchief Globblit gives occasional commands to the two loyal boggard warriors who guard him. Imperious and lazy, Globblit is remarkably fat and has a discolored splotch the rough shape of a dragonfly atop his round head—a sign, he insists, of Gogunta's favor and his divine mandate to lead. Globblit loves smashing enemies



CROAKCHIEF GLOBBLIT SKINK-EATER

with his greatclub and leaps into combat to show off in front of his warriors. He hasn't become croakchief by being foolish, however, and he surrenders if his warriors are dead and he's reduced to fewer than 20 Hit Points.

CROAKCHIEF GLOBBLIT SKINK-EATER CREATURE 5

UNIQUE NE MEDIUM AMPHIBIOUS BOGGARD HUMANOID

Perception +13

Languages Abyssal, Boggard, Common, Mwangi

Skills Athletics +14, Intimidation +13, Survival +11, Swamp Lore +8

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

Items breastplate, +1 striking greatclub, javelins (3)

AC 21; **Fort** +14, **Ref** +9, **Will** +13

HP 85

Speed 20 feet, swim 25 feet; swamp stride

Melee ♦ *greatclub* +15 (backswing, magical, shove), **Damage** 2d10+5 bludgeoning

Melee ♦ tongue +14 (reach 10 feet), **Damage** tongue grab

Ranged ♦ javelin +12 (thrown 20 feet), **Damage** 1d6+5 piercing

Bounding Leap ♦♦ Globblit Leaps twice; this movement doesn't provoke reactions. If he ends his movement within melee reach of at least one enemy, he can make a melee Strike against that enemy.

Commanding Croak ♦ (auditory) Globblit gives a loud, belching croak to compel his allies to action. Each boggard within 30 feet can use a reaction to Step, Stride, or Strike.

Smash and Slurp ♦ **Frequency** once per turn; **Effect** Globblit makes a greatclub Strike and a tongue Strike against the same target. If the greatclub Strike hits, the target is flat-footed against his tongue Strike. This counts as two attacks for Globblit's multiple attack penalty, but the penalty doesn't increase until after his Smash and Slurp.

Swamp Stride Globblit ignores difficult terrain caused by swamp terrain features.

Tongue Grab If Globblit hits a creature with his tongue, that creature becomes grabbed by him. Unlike a normal grab, the creature isn't immobilized, but it can't move beyond the reach of Globblit's tongue. A creature can sever the tongue by succeeding at an AC 18 Strike and dealing at least 6 slashing damage. Though this doesn't deal any damage to Globblit, it prevents him from using his tongue Strike until it regrows, which takes a week.

BOGGARD WARRIORS (2)

CREATURE 2

Pathfinder Bestiary 44

Initiative Perception +8

Interrogating Globblit: If Globblit surrenders, he eagerly tells the heroes what he knows if they'll spare his life. He explains that he and his tribe were gifted this building by someone named Tomil in the

Aspis Consortium. Tomil had recently stolen something of value from the building and didn't want anyone to know about it, so the boggards were supposed to keep intruders away. Globblit isn't sure what Tomil stole or where he took it, but the boggard is pretty sure it once stood in the adjacent room that he's too afraid to enter. Globblit enthusiastically agrees to any other conditions the heroes put on his surrender, such as to leave Kibwe and never return, although the boggard is unlikely to adhere to any condition that lasts more than a day or two. His loyalty might be extended with offers of meat or treasure, but Globblit is an unreliable ally at best.

Treasure: The chest that Globblit uses to elevate his bizarre chair contains the croakchief's treasure: several cleverly woven mats of reeds and grasses that are interesting but valueless, several pieces of fake jewelry, a smelly leather pouch containing 48 gp, five gold bracelets worth 60 gp each, eight playing pieces from an ivory chess set worth 12 gp each, a *barkskin potion*, and a +1 *breastplate*.

B13. Room of the Upper Sun

An enormous sun symbol carved into the floor of this room glows with a warm light. The symbol is a loose spiral with triangles surrounding it like rays. Two holes pierce the stone floor in the symbol, one at the symbol's center and the other at the end of the sun-spiral. The walls are carved with intricate runes and myriad shapes of animalistic humanoid warriors, and it takes only a moment of examination to realize that these shapes represent the Pillar-Watchers around Kibwe. A raised dais at the far end of the room contains a pedestal for a statue, but no statue is present.

This room was created to power the city's Pillar-Watchers by channeling the energy of the sun symbols into the pedestal on the dais. Although the people of Kibwe value the strange statues as landmarks and guideposts, they were once active defenders of the ancient city. The secrets of empowering the Pillar-Watchers are long lost, and rediscovering them and empowering the Pillar-Watchers' faded magic would be another adventure of its own.

The carvings on the walls are an inventory written in an archaic version of Mwangi that can be read with magic or by succeeding at a DC 20 Arcana or Society check to Decipher Writing. The inventory isn't exact, however, because some well-known Pillar-Watchers aren't presented here and others are now lost to the city, either having been stolen or destroyed long ago. The Pillar-Watchers are named in the text with titles such as "Boneseeker," "Crykeeper," and "Fallowbringer."

Cursebreaker is one of the listed Pillar-Watchers, and the eland-headed image here is just as Abayone described to the heroes.

In addition to the Pillar-Watchers inventory, the wall carvings use pictograms to explain a power-generating ritual using the sun symbol here and in the chamber below. Understanding the ritual doesn't require interpreting the accompanying text—the pictograms alone are sufficient to provide the general gist of it—but a hero who can also read the accompanying text gains a +2 circumstance bonus to activate the sun symbols (see below).

The hole at the center of this symbol looks down onto the end of the spiral of the lower sun, while the hole at the end of this spiral looks down on the center of the lower sun.

Activating the Sun Symbols: The holes in the sun symbol on the floor are positioned directly above the sun symbol in the Room of the Lower Sun (area B4) below. To activate the sun symbols, the heroes must first perform the ritual illustrated on the wall carvings and succeed at a DC 22 Nature or Religion check. A hero with a divine or primal connection to the sun, such as the sun domain, has a +2 circumstance bonus on this check. At least one character must succeed while in the center of this symbol, and at the same time another character must also do so while in the center of the lower sun symbol. If both characters succeed, an intangible orb of light 1 foot in diameter appears around the character at the center of the upper sun symbol and moves away along the spiral. When it reaches the end of the spiral, it drops through the hole in the floor to the center of the lower sun and traces a similar path along that spiral. When the orb reaches the end, it rises up through the ceiling to the center of this symbol and begins the path again. The orb moves quickly, completing the circuit of the upper symbol in 1 round and then a circuit of the lower symbol in the following round.

The orb continues along its path for 10 minutes. It passes through anything in its way and can't be touched or redirected. After 10 minutes, the orb dissipates and can't reappear for 1 day.

Each time the orb returns to the upper sun symbol, the pedestal on the dais at the east end of the room glows as well. The moving light is plainly powering the pedestal, although its precise effects aren't clear until Cursebreaker returns here at the end of Part 3. In addition to powering the dais, the orb's energy is life-giving. Each time the orb enters a room, creatures in the room regain their level in Hit Points.

XP Award: The first time the heroes successfully activate the sun symbols, award them 80 XP.



CHAPTER 2: JOURNEY TO HOLY XATRAMBA

REPORTING THE MISSING

After exploring the Archive of the Sun in Chapter 1, the heroes should realize that the Pillar-Watcher Cursebreaker is gone and report the theft immediately to Abayone.

When the heroes return from the Archive of the Sun to meet with Abayone, the representative hasn't been idle. While the heroes have been busy exploring the ancient building and dealing with its challenges, she's been following up on information about the Khalibi Caravan House and the Aspis Consortium agents that operated it. She relates the following information to the heroes.

"The leader of the Aspis Consortium in Kibwe, an unsavory human named Tomil Jabrin, is dead. But oh, he was a busy man before he died. He recently left town with several Aspis agents for a long trip and returned

nearly three weeks later by himself. He had a heavily laden wagon when he left, but he returned without it. Rumors say he ventured to the demon-haunted city known as Holy Xatramba in the jungles to the southeast. Evidence is that he took something large—perhaps a heavy statue—there.

"And this is not the first time Tomil has been connected with that evil place. There have been persistent rumors for as long as he's been in the city that he was raised in Xatramba among wicked cultists who revere the demon lord Angazhan. Tomil never formally disavowed these rumors or Angazhan's worship, so perhaps he retained some connection with his homeland. Explorers tell of a complex called the Plaza of the Feasting Fiend on the north edge of Xatramba, where humans venerate Angazhan with horrid sacrifices and schemes to dominate those around them. It sounds like Tomil didn't stray far from his upbringing.

“Tomil prepared for the release of this vile curse by stealing away and hiding the only thing that could break it. We need that statue back.”

If the heroes found Tomil’s map detailing the journey to Holy Xatramba, they can confirm he was prepared for such a journey and identify the trail he used.

The heroes’ next step is to journey to Holy Xatramba to recover the stolen Pillar-Watcher. Abayone wastes no time in arranging for mundane provisions, a large wagon, and oxen to pull it. A sturdy wagon will be necessary to bring the statue back to Kibwe once the heroes recover it, and she doesn’t count on the heroes stumbling across the wagon Tomil used to take Cursebreaker there.

OVERLAND JOURNEY

The trip from Kibwe to Holy Xatramba is 140 miles. Fortunately, an ancient road that once connected the capital of Xatramba to the provincial outpost of Kibwe is still evident, albeit in terrible disrepair. Vegetation grows wild over the path, but because Tomil passed this way within the last month or so, overgrowth and deadfalls haven’t yet had time to reobscure the old highway. With the wagon they’re pulling, the journey takes the heroes about 9 days. Knowing the danger the *slithering* poses to the city of Kibwe, the PCs will likely want to press as hard as they can to make the journey and return before the curse impacts too many citizens.

The following encounters occur during the journey through the jungle to Holy Xatramba. The GM can place these encounters in any order, but no more than two encounters should occur during the same day of travel. If the PCs haven’t managed to reach 6th level before starting this part of the adventure, you can provide more of these encounters along the way so that they reach 6th level before entering the haunted city. You could also look through the *Bestiary* and find level-appropriate threats to challenge the PCs and allow them to earn additional XP.

Haunted Campsite

Severe 6

The crumbled remains of the highway pass the ruins of a large stone building. Most of the building’s side wall is gone, and plain evidence of past campfires is scattered inside.

Although people have camped in this sheltered spot many times over the past centuries—including, most recently, Tomil and his Aspis Consortium crew—it’s often unsafe. The interior walls of the ruined building are covered with old graffiti in a variety of languages, left there by various travelers through the area. A successful DC 20 Perception check reveals that the most recent are hastily scrawled words in Mwangi: “Run from the witch lights!”

Creatures: Three will-o’-wisps hunt in this area, and they know travelers are often an easy meal. The will-o’-wisps are invisible when the heroes arrive. If it looks like the heroes are camping here, they wait until most of the party is asleep before attacking anyone on watch. If the heroes instead look to move on, or if they find the graffiti warning and discuss it out loud, the will-o’-wisps immediately attack. They prefer to attack foes that use *magic missile* over all other targets because they know this spell is among the few that can harm them. When two of the

CHAPTER 2 SYNOPSIS

In this chapter, the heroes make the perilous journey across the jungle from Kibwe to the demon-infested city of Holy Xatramba. This is where Tomil Jabrin was raised, and he could think of no better place to keep Cursebreaker safe. The heroes must confront the cult and its demon allies to recover the statue. Although the heroes likely believe they need to physically haul Cursebreaker back to Kibwe with them, they learn upon freeing the statue that it is animate, and it has its own implacable directive to march right back to Kibwe whether the heroes accompany it or not!

CHAPTER 2 TREASURE

- +1 armor rune
- antiplague, lesser
- dust of appearance
- elixir of life, minor
- flaying knife
- gluttonous spear
- moonlit chain
- putrescent glob
- salve of antiparalysis
- scroll of darkness (4th)
- scroll of fear (3rd)
- sixfingers elixir
- wand of teeming ghosts

Chapter 1:
Tracing the
Curse

Chapter 2:
Journey to Holy
Xatramba

Chapter 3:
Against the
Aspis

Kibwe
Gazetteer

Adventure
Toolbox



will-o'-wisps are defeated, the third flees if reduced to fewer than 20 Hit Points.

WILL-O'-WISPS (3)

Pathfinder Bestiary 333

Initiative Perception +16

Treasure: A half-buried leather knapsack is near the cold campfire. It contains a darkwood music box carved with cavorting animals worth 20 gp, a lensatic compass, a minor elixir of life, a vial of lesser antiplague, and a *wand of teeming ghosts* (page 61).

Hidden Bridge

The crumbled highway ends at the edge of a large gorge, which must have cut across this path after the highway was already built. Trees and vines choke its entire width and obscure how deeply it plunges, but the sound of rushing water far below indicates a river flowing at its bottom. Two large posts support a wide bridge of rope and planks, but

CREATURE 6

Severe 6

the opposite end of the bridge leads into darkness within the thick jungle.

This bridge was built many years ago, but it remains in remarkably good shape. Only a third of its 300-foot length is visible through the dense jungle foliage at any time, granting it its moniker of the “Hidden Bridge.” Tomil used the bridge both coming and going from Holy Xatramba without difficulty, and the heroes can simply bring their wagon across it without problem. A successful DC 22 Crafting or relevant Lore check reveals that this end of the bridge is stable, although any character examining this side of the bridge realizes the need to check the other end as well (which is at the same DC). A character who critically succeeds doesn’t need to check the other side of the bridge and realizes it’s safe all the way across. You should roll these Crafting or Lore checks secretly.

Creatures: The bridge itself is safe, but a group of predators recently moved into the area. Three jungle

drake siblings lurk in the foliage and are eager for a quick meal. They wait until an opportunity to gain an advantage against the PCs presents itself—for instance, if some of the PCs split off to check the other side of the bridge while others wait at the wagon—before commencing their attack. They don't group up and attack a single individual, but instead spread themselves and attack different members of the split party.

JUNGLE DRAKES (3)

CREATURE 6

Pathfinder Bestiary 132

Initiative Perception +13

Scene of Slaughter

Severe 6

Bright red patches of fresh blood mar the stones that mark the ancient highway's route. The corpses of two female humans wearing leather armor are sprawled face-down in the blood. The lush jungle spreads out for miles on either side of the ancient road.

When Tomil and his crew came this way from Kibwe weeks ago, they encountered a group of lost explorers headed in the other direction. The haggard group had been lost for many days and was entirely out of food. The group saw Tomil and his entourage approaching and pleaded for assistance with their dire situation. Rather than aid the harried travelers, Tomil gestured for his guards to attack, starting with the twin sisters who were the expedition's leaders. The other three explorers, seeing their employers slain so quickly and being both weak and outnumbered, surrendered. Tomil took the three of them captive and turned them over to the cult of Angazhan in Xatramba's Plaza of the Feasting Fiend, and the heroes might find them imprisoned there (area C12).

Even though this fight happened weeks ago, the site looks as though the murder happened just minutes earlier. This is due to the lingering presence of the sisters' spirits, who remain livid at the betrayal of Tomil and the abandonment of their companions. A hero who Investigates or Searches the area can attempt a DC 22 Perception check or DC 17 Nature check. On a success, the hero realizes that there are no insects or scavengers in the area, and the bodies seem to be undisturbed, a sure sign that things aren't as they seem. On a critical success, the hero realizes that this attack happened several weeks ago, and the natural decay is being held in check by a hateful supernatural presence.

Creatures: When the bodies are approached, two spectres rise up and attack. The spectres resemble the dead sisters, even appearing to wield matching rapiers (which are nevertheless treated as the spectres' vile touch Strike). They fight until destroyed while shouting that the heroes need to leave Dhira, Tavik, and Wachira alone. The names probably don't mean anything to the heroes just yet, but these are the survivors Tomil delivered to the cult's prison.



SPECTRAL SISTER

HOLY XATRAMBA

This adventure shows only a small part of the sprawling, ruined city of Holy Xatramba. Founded in 3699 AR, the city was once the capital of a sprawling empire of which Kibwe was only an eastern provincial capital. Holy Xatramba warred with the now-extinct neighboring nation of Rastel, which summoned legions of demons to defeat their enemy. Though strong in their worship of hero-ancestors and the goddess Pharama, the people of Holy Xatramba were overrun and the city fell. The few survivors fled, principally to Kibwe, and left behind many ancient secrets and powerful relics.

Demons have cavorted in the ruins of Holy Xatramba ever since, in mockery of the city's former name. Evil cultists also flock to the site to openly worship demon lords. However, a green dragon named Olohimba—a devout Pharasmin who labors to unlock the city's many religious secrets—still dwells at the heart of Holy Xatramba and fights against the demons, cultists, and ghosts who all occupy the fallen city.

SPECTRAL SISTERS (2)

Specter (*Pathfinder Bestiary 2* 248)

Initiative Perception +15

Treasure: The Aspis agents looted these bodies of nearly everything of value. Their broken rapiers and torn armor remain but are essentially worthless. The agents missed a secret compartment in the heel of one of the sisters' boots, which contains 6 pp and a small emerald worth 45 gp. Finding it requires Searching the body and succeeding at a DC 22 Perception check.

PLAZA OF THE FEASTING FIEND

The Plaza of the Feasting Fiend is on the northern edge of the city of Holy Xatramba. At the height of its prominence, the plaza was a fixture of the city—though it was then known as the Plaza of Bountiful Heroes—and much of the settlement grew up around it. The plaza is now hemmed in on three sides and consists of a series of chambers and rooms in the shadows of looming, crumbling stone buildings. The area is particularly defensible, which is why a cult of the demon lord Angazhan took it over generations ago. They center their worship in the plaza and its surrounding chambers, but sleep, cook, and perform other mundane activities in the surrounding buildings. The cult occasionally makes alliances with the fractious fiends and restless ghosts in nearby neighborhoods, but these unreliable allies haven't provided much help in recent years. At

Tomil's request, the cult keeps the Pillar-Watcher Cursebreaker in one of the plaza's back rooms (area C15) under demonic guard.

The most direct route to the plaza leads to area C1, and heroes entering the city of Holy Xatramba from the east find a route to this area easily. However, even a cursory amount of scouting around the city shows that there are two other ways to approach the plaza: one from the north (leading to area C4) and one from the south (leading to area C7). These are slightly safer, and they're the approaches that the cult members use.

Features of the Plaza of the Feasting Fiend

The Plaza of the Feasting Fiend, as the plaza and its surrounding rooms are called, is made of old stone. The entry chambers (areas C1, C4, and C7) and main plaza (area C8) are all open to the sky, and roofs over the other chambers are supported by wooden beams 10 feet above the floor. Lighting is provided by smoky oil lanterns burning in each room. The doors are all made of wood and aren't locked or stuck except where indicated. Walls throughout the plaza contain paintings of Angazhan feasting upon many kinds of creatures. Beneath these, so faded and defaced as to be nearly unrecognizable, are original images of fertile fields, fat cows, and parents surrounded by numerous happy children.

C1. Trapped Entry

This wide courtyard has an imposing wooden double door at the western end. Each side of the double door bears an enormous carving of a six-fingered hand with long, curved talons. Mosaics on the walls show a horrifying humanoid with saurian and simian features, long sharp horns, and six-fingered clawed hands devouring a variety of creatures. Narrow alcoves to the north and south lead to smaller doors, and the north door is slightly ajar.

A hero who succeeds at a DC 20 Religion or applicable Lore check identifies the figure in the images as Angazhan, the demon lord of beasts, jungles, and tyrants. Angazhan is often depicted as a bestial ape, but some of his cults also depict him as a humanoid dinosaur. Regardless of his form, he bears enormous horns and has six fingers on each clawed hand.

Hazard: The lintel above the double door conceals a trap that is triggered when anyone steps on a large pressure plate in the center of the room. The trap launches six chains into the room, each ending in a

large talon as though fingers on an enormous hand, which swing wildly around before retracting into the lintel.

ANGAZHAN'S RAKE TRAP

HAZARD 7

UNCOMMON MECHANICAL TRAP

Stealth DC 27 (expert)

Description Six metal talons concealed in the walls swing out and rake across the room.

Disable Thievery DC 25 (expert) to disable each talon
AC 25; **Fort** +18, **Ref** +10

Hardness 15, **HP** 60 (BT 30); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Raking Strike ☞ (attack) **Trigger** one of the pressure plates is depressed; **Effect** Six talons swing out from the walls, each striking a different random creature in the room. No creature can be struck by more than one talon until every creature in the room has been attacked by at least one talon.

Melee talon +22 (deadly d10), **Damage** 1d10+2 piercing; no multiple attack penalty.

Reset The trap resets after 1 minute.

Curious Dinosaurs: As soon as the trap triggers, the two dinosaurs from area C2 come to investigate. They nose open the door and attack anyone whose scent they don't recognize. They are familiar with the scent of all the cultists within. This alerts the ahvothian in area C2, which comes to investigate 1 round after its dinosaurs do.

C2. Training Room Moderate 6

This large room has a low table bearing a few half-eaten slabs of bloody meat.

The cult used this chamber as a guard room for many years, but have recently assigned this dull task to an ahvothian, a reptilian fiend recently arrived to serve the cult from Angazhan's Abyssal realm of Ahvoth-Kor.

Creatures: The ahvothian, whose name is Gargzith, has grown bored with guard duty and uses its down time to train a pair of elite deinonychuses as hunters for the cult. The dinosaurs are more alert and curious than the ahvothian, and they quickly react to sounds of intruders in nearby rooms (such as the commotion in area C1). Gargzith follows them 1 round later after patiently readying its weapons for battle. The ahvothian fights to the death, but if the ahvothian is slain, the deinonychuses flee if reduced to fewer than 20 Hit Points.

GARGZITH

CREATURE 7

Ahvothian (Page 62)

Initiative Perception +18

ELITE DEINONYCHUSES (2)

CREATURE 3

Pathfinder Bestiary 6, 97

Initiative Perception +9

C3. Expedition Supplies

A few precariously stacked tables contain bedrolls, ropes, cooking pots, and other supplies suitable for a lengthy and arduous expedition.



ANGAZHAN CULTIST

THE HEROES AS VECTORS

The heroes probably don't realize that they're carriers of the *slithering*, but they might learn it while in the Plaza of the Feasting Fiend. If they touch or are touched by a human cultist (such as a cultist casting a touch-range *harm* spell), the cultist could contract the *slithering*. The heroes might never realize the effect if they dispatch the cultists quickly, but if the heroes withdraw or keep a living cultist as a prisoner, the cultist might transform into an ooze. The cultists should transform into gelatinous cubes, while Nyamat Mshwe should transform into a verdurous ooze (or even a black pudding, if he fights off the curse long enough).

Afflicted cultists generally remain in their own locations and avoid contact with each other, which prevents the curse from spreading to other cultists.

This room contains a variety of supplies that the cult uses for excursions into the jungle, although they're not particularly diligent about maintaining or cleaning this equipment. As a result, not much of it is particularly valuable.

Anyone looking through this stack might bring it crashing noisily down, and unless a hero is taking special care when Searching this pile, it tips precariously. A successful DC 22 Acrobatics or Thievery check prevents the pile from tipping over.

Curious Dinosaurs: If the pile makes noise, the dinosaurs from area C2 push their door open to investigate and attack anyone whose scent they don't recognize. This alerts the ahvothian in area C2, which comes to investigate 1 round after its dinosaurs do.

Treasure: A hero Searching the pile discovers a salve of antiparalysis marked "Ghoul Prevention" and a pouch containing 12 chips of polished obsidian worth 40 gp each.

C4. North Entry

This irregularly shaped room provides a good view into the weed-choked streets of Holy Xatramba. Two long-dead corpses, each with skin the purple of a livid bruise and a strange rune adorning their bare chests, hang from the ceiling's wooden beams.

These bodies are two ghouls who were caught creeping into this area and hung here as a warning to anyone else that might intrude on the cult's territory. The ghouls each have the symbol of Zura, demon lord

of cannibals, tattooed on their chests, which they've borne since they were living creatures decades ago. A hero who succeeds at a DC 22 Religion or applicable Lore check identifies the symbol as belonging to Zura. A hero who succeeds at a DC 20 Society check understands that the symbol belongs to a rival group or gang, and that the bodies hang here as a warning.

C5. Butchery

Moderate 6

Some dried blood has caused the door connecting this room to area C1 to stick. A hero must succeed at a DC 20 Athletics check to Force it Open.

Dried blood coats the floor and lower walls in this room. Several animal carcasses hang from hooks in the wooden ceiling. A low table contains several tools for carving meat, and a large tub contains slabs of it. The room is thick with flies.

The cult carves and cures meat in this room so that the attending insects don't bother the cultists elsewhere in the plaza. The biting flies cause enough of a distraction that any character attempting to Cast a Spell in this room must succeed at a DC 3 flat check or have the spell disrupted.

Creatures: A babau is instructing two Angazhan cultists in the best way to quickly and efficiently carve meat. They're all supposed to be keeping an ear out for intruders, but they're so wrapped up in the lesson that they're unlikely to notice the heroes until they open a door to this room. These foes all enter combat eagerly and fight to the death.

BABAU

CREATURE 6

Pathfinder Bestiary 2 64

Initiative Perception +13

ANGAZHANI CULTISTS (2)

CREATURE 4

CE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +11

Languages Abyssal, Common, Mwangi

Skills Athletics +12, Demon Lore +8, Diplomacy +8 (+10 against demons), Intimidation +10, Religion +8, Stealth +9, Survival +11

Str +4, **Dex** +1, **Con** +1, **Int** +0, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +2

Items hide armor, wooden shield (Hardness 3, HP 12, BT 6), silver religious symbol of Angazhan, spears (3)

AC 21; **Fort** +13, **Ref** +9, **Will** +11

HP 60 each

Bloody Fanaticism **Trigger** The cultist rolls a failure (but not a critical failure) on a Will save against an effect with the mental or fear trait; **Effect** The cultist takes 2d8 mental damage, and the saving throw is a success.

Shield Block **Trigger**

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ spear +14 (fatal d10), **Damage** 2d6+6 piercing

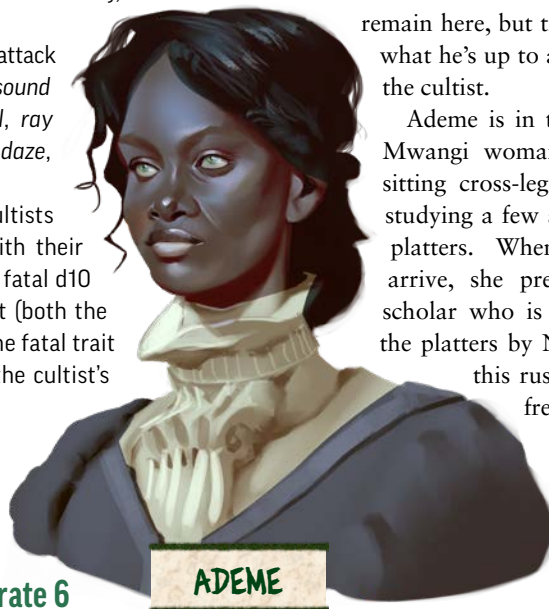
Ranged ♦ spear +11 (fatal d10, thrown 20 feet),

Damage 2d6+6 piercing

Divine Prepared Spells DC 21, spell attack +13; **2nd** *dispel magic*, *harm*, *sound burst*; **1st** *bane*, *command*, *heal*, *ray of enfeeblement*; **Cantrips (2nd)** *daze*, *forbidding ward*, *light*, *stabilize*

Demonic Strength Angazhani cultists inflict an extra 1d6 damage with their spears, and any spear gains the fatal d10 trait while the cultist is using it (both the extra weapon damage die and the fatal trait have already been included in the cultist's spear Strikes above).

Treasure: Stuck into one of the slabs of meat is a *flaying knife* (page 60).



were, they've realized, an outpost of the Xatramban empire). The cunning Nyamat has been very stingy with these records in hopes of enticing Ademe to remain here, but the lamia matriarch knows what he's up to and is losing patience with the cultist.

Ademe is in the form of a long-haired Mwangi woman with large green eyes, sitting cross-legged on her mattress and studying a few ancient, rune-carved silver platters. When the intruding heroes arrive, she pretends to be a captured scholar who is being forced to interpret the platters by Nyamat. If the heroes buy this ruse, she says she'll earn her freedom much faster if the heroes can help her, and invites them to look at the platters alongside her. She uses her *charm* and *suggestion* spells to encourage compliance.

The platters are ancient

hymns to Pharamasma written in Requian, the language of Pharamasma's psychopomps. In addition to being hymns, they each also function as a spell scroll (see Treasure, below). A successful DC 22 Religion check (DC 10 if the character can read Requian) interprets their meaning. Ademe grows more frustrated with the result: they don't have anything whatsoever to do with her ruins. This fresh setback drives her to rage against the heroes as useless buffoons who might be holding something back, and she casts *mind reading* to gauge the translator's honesty.

If the heroes see through Ademe's deception or take issue with the spells she casts on them, she changes to her natural form and attacks. If any particular hero has proven particularly sagacious or useful, she might spare that hero while commenting that useful scholars are hard to find in the demon-haunted ruins.

C6. Guest Quarters Moderate 6

The west side of the room contains a low table with a scattering of gems on it and doors leading west and north. The east side of the room contains a large bed, although the mattress has been pulled onto the floor and the bedframe turned upright and covered with a sheet to create a large impromptu canopy over the mattress.

The cult's few visitors stay in this room, far from the cultists' personal chambers. This room is used almost exclusively by mortal creatures since visiting demons don't need to sleep and have no need for a bed or the comforts of the mortal realm. The bed's strange configuration is the room's current occupant's effort to make it more comfortable. Several shed snake scales on the mattress indicate that it's been occupied for at least a few weeks.

Creatures: A lamia matriarch named Ademe, who normally lairs in isolated ruins deeper in the jungle, recently came to Holy Xatramba looking for aid. A trap in her dwelling activated after many years of quiescence and killed the matriarch's subservient lamias, which drove Ademe out. The lamia matriarch was about to give up on dealing with the demons and ghosts of Holy Xatramba when she met Nyamat Mshwe, leader of the cult of Angazhan. Nyamat saw the wisdom of an alliance with a creature as powerful as Ademe and offered to help her, and Ademe has laired here since. Nyamat leverages his demon contacts within the city and draws on his cult's stash of Holy Xatramba's records about Ademe's ruins (which

ADEME

CREATURE 8

Female lamia matriarch (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 217)

Initiative Deception +20

Aiding Ademe: If the heroes engage Ademe in conversation, she might explain about her now-dangerous ruins elsewhere in the jungle and request their aid in reclaiming it. She has no qualms about giving up information about the cult and their forces here in exchange for the heroes' aid. Ademe is as untrusting as she is untrustworthy; she won't reveal

the locations of the ruins by personally taking the heroes there, and she's likely to betray them as soon as they exhaust their usefulness to her. The site of Ademe's ruins is outside the scope of this adventure, and it should be clear to the heroes that the ruins are far enough away that they should deal with the affliction in Kibwe first.

Treasure: The two platters together weigh 1 bulk and are worth 100 gp each. If translated, a hero can also see interlaced writing that includes a *scroll of fear* (3rd) on one platter and a *scroll of darkness* (4th) on the other. Even if the spells are cast from the platters, they retain their value from their artistry and silver composition.

C7. South Entry

This large alcove contains a door leading east. The front of the door is defaced with slashes, as if someone had attacked it with a blunt pick. Next to the door is a pile of wicker baskets, each stained an ominous red color.

This is one of the entries the cult uses to come and go from the Plaza of the Feasting Fiend. This entrance is closest to a former city park that is rarely occupied by either demons or ghosts and is filled with berry bushes, so the cultists often leave this way to harvest berries. They're careless in their collection, and most of these wicker baskets are stained with berry juice from hasty harvests.

Because of the visitor in the guest quarters (area C6), the cultists have avoided using this entrance as much. Ademe has insisted the berry collection baskets remain outside her room, and it's probably only a matter of time before some scavenger or vandal in the city takes or destroys them.

Hazard: This entrance isn't unprotected. The door's divots conceal a series of tiny buttons that, when pressed in the correct order, cause the door to open harmlessly. Otherwise, a magical trap emits a blast of force that affects creatures within 20 feet of the door. As the cult particularly wants to deter demons from entering, they've rigged the trap to be most effective against fiends.

FIENDRIPPING BLAST TRAP

HAZARD 7

UNCOMMON MECHANICAL TRAP

Stealth DC 25 (expert)

Description A blast of energy damages all creatures within 20 feet, with particularly severe damage to fiends.

Disable Thievery DC 27 (expert) to identify the proper sequence of buttons in the divots, or *dispel magic* (4th level; counteract DC 25) to suppress the magical effect for 1 hour

Forceful Blast ☞ (divine, evocation) **Trigger** The door is

touched without first pressing the correct sequence of buttons; **Effect** A blast of energy ripples outward from the door, dealing 4d10 force damage to all creatures within 20 feet and forcing them to make a DC 25 Fortitude save. Fiends treat the result of their saving throw as one degree worse.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature takes half damage.

Failure The creature takes full damage and is sickened 1.

Critical Failure The creature takes double damage and is sickened 2; while it is sickened, it's also slowed 1.

Reset The trap resets after 1 hour.

Alerting Ademe: If the heroes trigger this trap, it alerts Ademe in area C6 and she prepares her innocent guise as described there.

Treasure: One of the wicker baskets near the bottom of the pile contains a forgotten *putrescent glob* (page 61) that one of the cultists discovered in the park.

C8. Main Plaza

Severe 6

This huge plaza is open to the sky. Several slender pillars stand at the plaza's edges, with each ending at a broken point a dozen feet above the ground. The western edge of the plaza is painted with a massive hideous face—a simian creature with scaly skin, open mouth, and horns long enough to stretch from one side of the plaza to the other over a pair of double doors. The face's open mouth contains a semicircular pool adorned with small stone spikes that resemble sharp teeth. An enormous rune of a crude multi-limbed stick figure is carved into the plaza's floor, and blood splatters testify to past sacrifices made in this circle.

The cult of Angazhan holds its primary ceremonies here, in which they mimic the bloodthirsty violence of their vile patron. The open roof allows occasional heavy rains to wash most of the bloody evidence away. As with the images elsewhere in the temple, a successful DC 20 Religion or applicable Lore check identifies the figure as Angazhan.

Tucked away in one of the alcoves to the east is a large wicker chest containing a disturbing number of drums made of human skin.

Pool: The pool is fed from a spring deep underground. A hemispherical stone canopy above the pool shelters it from the elements. Although it appears to be clear water, it's tainted by the wicked worship in the plaza. Evil creatures find the water revitalizing; an evil creature adjacent to the pool can take an Interact action to drink from the pool and recover 1d8 Hit Points. The water is merely

unpleasant to neutral creatures, tasting of old sweat. Good creatures drinking from the pool receive a measure of Angazhan's contempt in addition to the noxious taste and must attempt a DC 22 Fortitude save against the effects of *baleful polymorph* to avoid transforming into an animal like a waddling gecko or a fat lemur—animals fit only to be hunted and eaten by more powerful predators. The cultists particularly enjoy forcing their victims to drink the foul water prior to a sacrifice. The water's transmuting properties don't function if it's removed from the plaza.

Creatures: The leader of the cult of Angazhan, a tall and imposing man named Nyamat Mshwe, is nearly always here. He has thick, graying hair and a bushy beard. Like many leaders of Angazhani cults, he has six fingers on each hand. He prominently wears his religious symbol of Angazhan—a spiked rune just like the symbol carved into the floor of this plaza—on a heavy gilded iron necklace.

Nyamat is rarely alone. When the heroes arrive, he's practicing ceremonies with two cultists—both young women whose attentions Nyamat favors—and a hulking ahvothian. The fiend is ostensibly here to ensure the cult's sacrificial methods appropriately funnel the victims' souls to Ahvoth-Kor, but it's been impressed at how much it's learned from Nyamat's grasp of Angazhan's doctrine.

All these foes despise intrusion, Nyamat most of all, and they attack intruders who arrive. A clever disguise or ruse might capture Nyamat's attention for a moment, but in a city filled with shapeshifting demons and other treacherous inhabitants, he's well-practiced in spotting trickery.

The ahvothian lumbers forward and puffs out its chest to show the necklace of humanoid hands it wears as wicked trophies. The cultists stay back to cast spells, and Nyamat makes sure to stay near the two cultists as much as possible to use his reaction. The foes other than Nyamat fight to the death. If reduced to fewer than 20 Hit Points, Nyamat either flees to the workroom (area C9) to rally support from the cultists there or surrenders.

Skills Athletics +12, Demon Lore +13, Diplomacy +13 (+15 against demons), Intimidation +15, Religion +16, Society +9, Survival +12

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

Items *gluttonous spear* (page 60), hide armor, key to Cursebreaker's lock, religious symbol of Angazhan

AC 23; **Fort** +13, **Ref** +11, **Will** +16

HP 90



AHVOTHIAN

CREATURE 7

Page 62

Initiative Perception +18

NYAMAT MSHWE

CREATURE 6

CE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Male human cult master

Perception +16 (+18 to Sense Motive)

Languages Abyssal, Common, Mwangi

Protect the Master ➤ (auditory, emotion, linguistic, move) **Trigger** Nyamat is targeted with an attack and a lower-ranking cultist is adjacent to him; **Effect** Nyamat orders their cultist to leap in front of the attack. The cultist and Nyamat swap places, and the cultist becomes the target of the attack.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ➤ *spear* +17 (fatal d10, magical), **Damage** 3d6+4 piercing

Ranged ➤ *spear* +16 (fatal d10, magical, thrown 20 feet), **Damage** 3d6+4 piercing

Divine Prepared Spells DC 24, spell attack +16; **3rd** *chilling darkness, fear, harm*; **2nd** *death knell, heal, see invisibility, spiritual weapon*; **1st** *bane, bless, command, ray of enfeeblement*; **Cantrips (3rd)** *daze, forbidding ward, light, stabilize*

Divine Rituals DC 24; *Abyssal pact*

Cleric Domain Spells 2 Focus Points, DC 24; **3rd** *glare of obedience* (as *touch of obedience*, *Core Rulebook* 398, but with a range of 30 feet)

Demonic Strength Nyamat inflicts an extra 1d6 damage with his spear, and any spear gains the fatal d10 trait while Nyamat is using it (both the extra weapon damage die and the fatal trait have already been included in Nyamat's spear Strikes above).

Steady Spellcasting If a reaction would disrupt Nyamat's spellcasting action, on a successful DC 15 flat check, the action isn't disrupted.

ANGAZHAN CULTISTS (2)

CREATURE 4

Page 30

Initiative Perception +11

Questioning the Cultists: The lower-ranking cultists know little that's of use to the heroes, however they can give a basic layout of the temple complex and describe many of the threats the PCs might face. Nyamat knows where Cursebreaker is, and that Tomil—one of his former acolytes whom he prides for practicing a new kind of tyranny in Kibwe—asked him to keep it here.

However, Nyamat has no interest in aiding the visitors that Tomil warned might come and lies as much as possible to send the heroes in the wrong direction. He intends to send them toward the most powerful forces the cult has. Nyamat is a terrible liar, so the heroes are quite likely to see through his deception, but the fierce cult master keeps spitting his lies with a mixture of hatred and contempt as long as the heroes let him talk.

Treasure: Eight feet below the semicircular pool of water is a small copper tube capped with sapphire-studded stoppers. Anyone Searching the pool

spots it right away but they will likely have to swim to reach it unless they can figure out another way to remove it from the water. The tube is worth 350 gp and contains a dose of *dust of appearance*. Opening the tube underwater ruins the dust.

C9. Workroom

Moderate 6

This long, odd-shaped room has a few narrow tables to the east and shelves lining many walls. The shelves hold crates of supplies such as bolts of cloth, pieces of lumber, nails, dried reeds, and scraps of leather, and the tables bear tools like hammers and pliers.

This workroom has the tools and supplies necessary to keep the cult's items in good repair, although few get around to this mundane drudgery unless coerced by Nyamat. One of the tables contains a half-finished book of thin metal plates strung together with wire and filled with startlingly gory pictures of Angazhan, depicted as a dinosaur with six claws on each limb, tearing all manner of creatures to ribbons. Each page contains an aphorism or short tale about Angazhan, such as "The strong who do not terrify the meek are themselves meek," and "When Angazhan speaks, it is with a mighty roar that only the foolish and doomed fail to heed."

The door leading to the west (area C10) has a small iron bell on it that rings whenever the door is opened and lets this room's occupants know when anyone is coming out of the cult's living quarters, so they can look busy.

Creatures: Four cultists occupy this room. They are assigned to both watch the door and repair items within, although they mostly just sit around retelling stories of the most gruesome sacrifices they've participated in, the most debased acts they've seen the demons in the surrounding city perform, or their deeds in past skirmishes with rival cults. Each of these cultists wants the others to see them as the bravest, so none of them back down from a fight. A single remaining cultist reduced to 30 Hit Points or fewer surrenders, but only long enough to cast *heal* and renew their attacks against less-prepared foes.

ANGAZHAN CULTISTS (4)

CREATURE 4

Page 30

Initiative Perception +11

Keys: A character Searching the shelves who succeeds at a DC 22 Perception check finds an old metal strongbox that's been recently covered with some rags and forgotten. This strongbox contains the

keys to the doors of the prison (area C12), as well as keys to all the manacles there.

Treasure: A hero Searching the room discovers a fine spyglass and a *runestone* with a +1 *armor* rune, both discarded in a box of old rags.

C10. Living Quarters Entry

This small room has doors to the east and west. Paintings of clawed, six-fingered hands rising from the floor adorn the north and south walls, as though they were cupping anything in this small room between them.

The door to the west leads to several abandoned buildings containing the living quarters, workrooms, and other mundane chambers used by the cultists. The door is also barred from the other side, requiring a DC 25 Athletics check to Force Open. There are another dozen Angazhan cultists living in the warren of unmapped rooms on the other side of the door, but they simply flee into Holy Xatramba without fighting if the door is breached. The heroes should quickly realize there isn't anything of interest or value in those rooms.

C11. Forge

Moderate 6

A forge burns hot in the northeast corner of this room. It is surrounded by blackened iron tools of several kinds, all mismatched and plainly compiled from other collections. Shelves against the south wall contain several ingots and lumps of scrap metal, along with a few crude finished goods like nails and spear-heads.

This forge is where the cultists make the metal goods they don't simply steal from traders or explorers. None of the cultists are particularly good at smithing, however, so the output here is normally quite crude.

Creatures: An ahvothian is teaching one of the cultists how to use the forge more efficiently. Although ahvothians don't often forge metal equipment, the fiend nevertheless knows basic principles of smithing that the cultists don't. The fiend finds teaching both demeaning and frustrating, but it perseveres in the interest of strengthening the cult. The cultist is intimidated to be in the presence of the fiend, and she's being as attentive as she can because she's well aware that her ignorance and inability is gradually irritating her teacher.

These foes both relish the break provided by a fight and attack anyone unfamiliar to them with eager glee. Both of them fight to the death—the ahvothian because it doesn't want to admit defeat, and the cultist

because she views death in battle as more exciting (and worthy of Angazhan) than more days of dull lessons at the forge.

AHVOTHIAN

CREATURE 7

Page 62

Initiative Perception +18

ANGAZHANI CULTIST

CREATURE 4

Page 30

Initiative Perception +11

The Aspis Badge: A hero Searching the shelves spots a large iron symbol of a twisting serpent. This is the symbol of the Aspis Consortium, and the key to free Cursebreaker in area C15. If the heroes discovered the bronze Aspis badges in Tomil's office (area A3), they immediately spot the similarity, although this iron symbol is larger. Otherwise, a hero who succeeds at a DC 17 Society check recognizes the symbol of the Aspis Consortium.

Treasure: The cultists and fiend have nearly completed a suit of *moonlit chain* that must cool before it can be used. The heroes can either wait an hour before handling it or cool the item to make it ready for immediate use with a successful DC 20 Crafting check. On a failure, the armor gains the broken condition; on a critical failure, the inexperienced cooling destroys it.

C12. Prison

This small, squalid prison has rows of manacles affixed to the stone walls to the east and west. Noisome gutters at the base of the walls channel waste into small floor drains. A bloody table rack sits in the center. Narrow doors with small grilled windows at eye level stand in the north and south walls. Several dried leaves are scattered across the floor.

Although this room has doors at either end, prisoners shackled to the manacles must lean against the walls and can't reach anyone traveling through the center of the room between the doors. Cultists sometimes cross through this room to mock prisoners, jab at them with spears, or insist that their weakness makes them rightful victims of Angazhan, the Ravener King.

Unlocking any of the manacles requires four successful DC 24 Thievery checks to Pick a Lock. This DC is increased by 10 if a character is attempting to Pick a Lock on their own manacles. Forcing manacles open requires a successful DC 32

Athletics check. If this check result is at least 27, the character attempting to force the manacles open can wrench them free from the stone walls, although the manacles remain fastened.

The keys to all these manacles are in a strongbox in the workroom (area C9).

Creatures: The two prisoners here are survivors from the group of lost travelers that the heroes discovered in the jungle on their way to Xatramba from Kibwe. One of these is a middle-aged female ratfolk scholar named Dhira Graycheeks, and the other is a brooding black-haired orc named Tavik. They were imprisoned several weeks ago along with their guide, a slight human man named Wachira Chombugu, and are in a sorry state. The cultists took Wachira away and sacrificed him, and Dhira and Tavik know it's only a matter of time before they meet the same fate. They beg the heroes for release and tell them all they know.

The Survivors' Tale: Dhira and Tavik explain how they joined two cheerful twin sisters on what promised to be an expedition to Mwangi holy sites. Dhira wanted to see the sites for her own research, and Tavik was brought along as muscle. Wachira was their scout, but he wasn't nearly as skilled as he'd promised. After the group had been good and thoroughly lost for days, they finally found an old road that Tavik knew would take them to Kibwe. Before they had taken it far, however, they met a human man with a few assistants and guards driving a wagon toward Xatramba containing a large, chained statue. After assessing their misfortune, the human gestured to his guards, who attacked them. The sisters who led the expedition were killed in combat, and after surrendering, the three survivors were bound, blindfolded, and brought here. They've been in the cultists' hands since and received only minimal food and disgusting water that tasted like sweat.

Replacement Heroes: If any of the player characters are overcome by the cult, they are chained up here with the prisoners until the cult sacrifices them on the next new moon. Alternatively, if any characters have been killed in the adventure before now, the prisoners here are an opportunity to introduce a new hero to the party.

XP Award: Award the heroes 30 XP for freeing Dhira and Tavik, hearing their story, and getting them to safety outside Holy Xatramba.

C13. Hand Gallery

This room has doors to the north, east, and an open passage south. The wall to the west has several displays bearing mummified hands, with a small plaque next to each.

When the cult's leaders die—which is rarely of natural causes—their left hand is mummified and hung in this room to honor their memory. Thirty-eight hands are affixed to the wall, although the oldest is little more than rag-wrapped bones. Each plaque lists a name, date, and often some notable accomplishment, such as defeating a rival cabal, expanding the cult's territory, or summoning a particularly powerful demon. A surprising number of hands have six fingers on them, as this mutation is so prized among high priests of Angazhan that cult leaders unfortunate enough to have only five fingers often surgically graft a sixth to show their devotion to their six-fingered god.

Treasure: One of the hands isn't a former cult leader's hand at all, but a hollowed-out hand containing a dose of sixfingers elixir (page 61). Its plaque explains the item's basic function, and that it was a stolen from a rival cult of Angazhan decades ago.

C14. Private Shrine

Moderate 6

A small metal altar stands against the room's south wall. The chipped and worn shrine is shaped like a bent, muscled humanoid dinosaur with its broad back serving as the altar's surface. The entire structure seems to exude an ancient and oppressive malice. A double door leads east.

When the cult of Angazhan was smaller, this altar was the focal point of their worship. But as the cult grew, this altar was relegated to being a minor shrine used primarily by the cult's leader in private, bloody ceremonies. The figure depicted here is a saurian version of Angazhan as found in some older records; examination shows that the figure has the wide horns and six-fingered hands common to representations of the demon lord.

The millennium-old altar has acquired so much negative energy that it constantly emits an unpleasant psychic emanation of brutality and cruelty within 15 feet. Cultists of Angazhan consider the altar's negative emotions washing over their minds to be an esteemed religious experience, and Nyamat is too clever to let this effect go to waste. He sometimes requires reluctant or faltering cult members to spend days or weeks in the presence of the altar so their minds are reshaped with the brutality and malice that Angazhan demands.

This effect is no more than unpleasant to the heroes; they aren't likely to spend the days in the altar's presence necessary to shift their alignment toward chaotic evil.

Creatures: Nyamat's youngest son Ngira has recently shown some startlingly forgiving attitudes—something entirely inappropriate in a cult of Angazhan, especially for the son of the cult leader. Nyamat hopes to curtail these tendencies by keeping his son in the altar's presence for a few rehabilitating days. He therefore set Ngira to the menial task of smoothing and polishing the altar with a crimson cloth to occupy his mind while the altar does its wicked work.

A succubus named Sanura recently came to the Plaza of the Feasting Fiend in the guise of a human Angazhani worshipper bringing aid from a cult in Usaro. In truth, Sanura hadn't come from much further than another district in Holy Xatramba, where an ill-timed coup against more powerful demons forced Sanura to flee for her life. She intends to lie low here for a few years while her former masters forget about her transgression and welcome her back. Sanura is therefore rarely found anywhere other than this room or the adjacent hand gallery. She finds the psychic emanations of the altar to be soothing, and a welcome difference from the churning and conflicting emotions that seem to consistently wrack mortal minds.

Sanura spends her time stoking Ngira's lust and entertaining him with fabricated tales about Usaro when she isn't physically engaged with him. Nyamat knows about these dalliances and doesn't mind, as long as Ngira remains within the altar's corrupting emanations. Sanura has given Ngira her profane gift, which she intends to remove as soon as she tires of him.

Unless alerted by the sounds of noisy combat nearby, the two are likely to be surprised by the heroes' intrusion. Heroes who press this advantage have a +2 circumstance bonus on their initiative checks. Ngira uses his spear in combat while Sanura tries to remain at a distance and turn enemies to allies with her spells. Both of these foes fight to the death—Ngira out of devotion, and Sanura because she doesn't believe there's anywhere else that she can flee to.

NGIRA

CREATURE 4

Male Angazhani cultist (page 30)

Initiative Perception +11

Profane Gift Ngira has a +1 profane bonus on attack rolls, skill checks, and saving throws from Sanura's profane gift. Sanura can communicate with Ngira telepathically at any distance, and Ngira treats saves against Sanura's *suggestion* spells as one degree of success worse.

SANURA

CREATURE 7

Succubus (*Pathfinder Bestiary 77*)

Initiative Perception +15

Treasure: A basket near the altar contains a few cleaning supplies that Ngira brought here, and beneath them is a jeweled hair comb belonging to Sanura and worth 140 gp.

C15. Cursebreaker Storage

Moderate 6

This storage room is jammed with lumber, pieces of broken old stone, and a variety of strange lumps of metal. A large soapstone statue of an eland-headed humanoid, wrapped in chains and locked to the floor, leans against the south wall while holding a small shield close to its chest in one hand. The chains around it crackle with bursts of magical energy.

The Angazhani cultists use this room as a storage area. The 20 lumps of metal are all wrought iron sconces shaped like trees bursting with fruit. The cultists took them down long ago when they renovated the plaza for their own use because the images of bounty didn't fit with Angazhan's theme, but they haven't yet gotten around to melting them into something more useful.

The eland-headed statue is Cursebreaker, but it remains wrapped in the magical chains that Tomil Jabrin used to transport it. The chains cross at the statue's chest with a round iron plate 3 inches thick. The plate bears an indentation of the Aspis Consortium's coiled serpent symbol, and a matching symbol is clearly designed to fit within the indentation. The correct symbol is in the forge (area C11). If the heroes discovered the bronze Aspis badges in Tomil's office (area A3), they can see that this symbol is definitely the right one, but the bronze badges are too small to properly fit in the indentation.

The chains around Cursebreaker are further bolted to the floor with an enormous metal lock. This is an average lock reinforced with a 2nd-level *lock* spell. Unbolting the lock from the floor requires four successful DC 30 Thievery checks to Pick a Lock. The chains crackle with harmless magical energy; any failed Thievery check to pick the lock is treated as a critical failure, breaking the pick used. Even if the chain is unlocked from the floor, however, the heavy chains that wrap the statue make it too cumbersome to move without numerous hands and a lot of time.

Creatures: The cultists stationed two babaus here to guard Cursebreaker. The demons take their

guard duty seriously and don't leave this room under any circumstances. If they're aware of intruders in the area, they hide behind boxes to ambush any trespassers once they're in the room. The fiends fight to the death.

BABAUS (2)

CREATURE 6

Pathfinder Bestiary 2 64

Initiative Stealth +16

Treasure: The goods stored here include a small wicker chest containing three bloodstained platinum necklaces, each worth 250 gp.

Liberating Cursebreaker

To free Cursebreaker, the heroes must loosen its magic chains and remove the bolts securing it to the floor. The heroes don't need to do anything specific with the token Abayone gave to them; simply having it in Cursebreaker's presence awakens the Pillar-Watcher once it's freed.

The large Aspis badge from area C11 deactivates the binding magic when inserted into the plate across the statue's chest, causing the chains to slacken and the lock to no longer break picks on a failed Thievery check to Pick a Lock (just on a critical failure, as usual). The lock can then be removed as normal, or the heroes might easily unlock it with the key held by Nyamat Mshwe.

Once the heroes have accomplished both these tasks, Cursebreaker animates. Even this far from Kibwe, Cursebreaker knows its city requires its services and it intends to return. Read or paraphrase the following.

Cursebreaker stands up with a sudden grinding of stone, its narrow horns grazing the ceiling 10 feet overhead. It swivels its head from side to side to assess its surroundings, and its shield briefly flares with the same stylized sun symbol as the floors in Kibwe's Archive of the Sun, then fades. The statue looks east and squints, as though trying to see something far away, then trundles out of the room with a slow but determined gait.

The heroes should be surprised to find that Cursebreaker is a stone golem, which makes any transport they brought with them unnecessary. Cursebreaker cannot be deterred from its return path to Kibwe. It doesn't have a mind, doesn't speak, and can't be reasoned with, and its only directive is to return to the room at the top of the Archive of the Sun. It methodically pushes through or around any obstacle in its way. If this obstacle is a creature,

Cursebreaker first gestures for the creature to move, then taps the creature with its stone hand lightly in warning, then uses *Inexorable March* until the creature isn't in its way any longer. The heroes should soon realize that the implacable statue is returning to Kibwe.

CURSEBREAKER

LEVEL 9

UNIQUE N MEDIUM CONSTRUCT GOLEM MINDLESS

Variant stone golem (*Bestiary* 187)

Perception +18; darkvision

Skills Athletics +23, Kibwe Lore +12

Str +6, **Dex** +0, **Con** +4, **Int** -5, **Wis** +3, **Cha** -5

AC 27; **Fort** +21, **Ref** +17, **Will** +20

HP 140; **Immunities** acid, bleed, death effects, disease, doomed, drained, fatigued, healing, magic (see below), mental, necromancy, nonlethal attacks, paralyzed, poison, sickened, unconscious; **Resistances** physical 10 (except adamantine)

Golem Antimagic harmed by cold and water (5d8; 2d6 from areas and persistent damage); healed by acid (area 2d6 HP); slowed by earth

Vulnerable to Stone to Flesh A *stone to flesh* spell negates Cursebreaker's golem antimagic and its resistance to physical damage for 1 round. A *flesh to stone* spell reverses this effect immediately.

Speed 20 feet

Melee ✦ fist +21 (magical, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 2d10+10 bludgeoning

Impose Paralysis ⤴ (incapacitation) **Trigger** Cursebreaker hits a slowed creature; **Effect** The creature must succeed at a DC 27 Fortitude save or become paralyzed for 1 round.

Inexorable March ✦ Cursebreaker Strides up to its Speed, pushing back each creature whose space it moves into and damaging them if they try to stop its movement. A creature can attempt to bar the way by succeeding at a DC 32 Fortitude save. On a critical success, the resisting creature takes no damage; otherwise it is damaged as if hit by Cursebreaker's fist.

Slowing Pulse ✦ (arcane, concentrate, transmutation) Each creature in a 10-foot emanation must succeed at a DC 27 Fortitude save or be slowed 1 for 1 minute. Cursebreaker can't use Slowing Pulse again for 1d4 rounds.

Undo Curse Cursebreaker can cast a 10th-level *remove curse* spell at will, targeting every resident of the city of Kibwe. Cursebreaker must be stationed in the upper level of the Archive of the Sun with its sun symbols activated to use this ability.

XP Award: Award the heroes 30 XP for freeing Cursebreaker.

RETURNING TO KIBWE

Cursebreaker walks in a direct line back to Kibwe, diverting only to go around or over any obstacle it can't determine how to push through. Although it doesn't stop to rest, its single-minded detours mean it moves at the same overland speed as a character with a Speed of 20 feet—16 miles per day. The symbol that appeared on Cursebreaker's shield when it was freed should make it clear to the heroes that the golem is heading back to the Archive of the Sun as quickly as it can. If none of the PCs pick up on this detail or seem confused as to why this animated statue seems so intent on a single-minded direction, allow them to attempt a DC 21 Arcana or Occultism check to discover this information and make the proper connections as to where Cursebreaker might be headed.

If the slowest of the heroes has a faster Speed than 20 feet, they can make it back to Kibwe at least a day or two ahead of Cursebreaker. This allows them to explore the Archive of the Sun at a more leisurely pace, or even eliminate all of the Aspis Consortium agents there well ahead of Cursebreaker's arrival.

If the slowest of the heroes has a Speed of 20 feet, they can keep up with Cursebreaker or be an hour or two ahead of it as they see fit. The heroes should therefore still have at least a couple of hours in Kibwe to explore the Archive of the Sun before Cursebreaker arrives.

The heroes can extend any lead over Cursebreaker on their return to Kibwe by beating Cursebreaker to Hidden Bridge and cutting the bridge down. This forces Cursebreaker to find a way down and through the gorge, giving the heroes a two-day head start over the golem.

If the slowest of the heroes has a Speed of less than 20 feet, Cursebreaker outpaces them and makes it back to Kibwe before they do. In this case, the heroes will find Cursebreaker destroyed in area B8, as described in the sidebar on page 43.

It's understandable that the PCs, knowing how important Cursebreaker is to solving the catastrophic issue in Kibwe, don't want to let the Pillar-Watcher out of their sight. The PCs can attempt to restrain Cursebreaker, possibly using the same chains it was found in. Doing so requires a successful DC 20 Athletics check. Alternately, the heroes can attempt to have Cursebreaker rest with them overnight by attempting a DC 20 Arcana check. If successful, Cursebreaker stays with the group and doesn't start walking again until the group begins heading toward Kibwe. The heroes must attempt this check each time they want the golem to halt its progress.



CURSEBREAKER



CHAPTER 3: AGAINST THE ASPIS

Once the heroes return to Kibwe, they find the city has changed dramatically. The *slithering* has spread since the heroes left. Fortunately, the city's healers have determined that the curse spreads by touch, and have encouraged people to remain apart from each other to attempt to contain the curse. Few people leave their homes or shops. The people whom the heroes see out on the streets move with purpose and avoid touching others.

The heroes must travel through the city to the Archive of the Sun. From nervous passersby who give the heroes a wide berth, they can learn specifics of the *slithering* that they might not yet know. Along the way, the following encounters can showcase the city's troubles. Feel free to run them in whatever order you choose.

IRATE DINOSAUR

When the heroes are moving through one of Kibwe's wide streets, they see a human merchant tugging on

the reins of his beast of burden, a surly triceratops with garish stripes painted along its frill. The wagon behind the dinosaur is plainly overloaded, even for such a strong animal, but the merchant is anxious to move away from Kibwe as quickly as possible. As the heroes approach, the man strikes the dinosaur in obvious anger, then quickly transforms into a sewer ooze. The thrashing triceratops snaps its harness and tramples the ooze, releasing a filth wave that covers it and only makes it angrier.

Creatures: Wounded when its master becomes a sewer ooze, the irate triceratops rampages up and down the street and fixates upon the heroes as the closest target for its ire. The angry triceratops fights until slain or until soothed with an effect such as *calm emotions* or *charm*.

MODERATE 7

ELITE TRICERATOPS

Pathfinder Bestiary 6, 99

Initiative Perception +18

CREATURE 9



Filth Covered The triceratops has failed its save against the Filth Wave ability of a sewer ooze. It has a -10-foot penalty to its Speed for 1 minute.

RAIN OF OOZE

MODERATE 7

Humans have been quarantined, or have quarantined themselves, across Kibwe. The heroes pass a tall wooden watchtower with a pair of scimitar-wielding orcs guarding the only door. From wide windows 30 feet up, a crowd of humans looks out over the city while wearing cloths over their noses and mouths and observing the growing chaos. If the Nexian envoy Mafzat A'Haddin survived his encounter with the heroes in Chapter 1, they recognize him as one of the people crowded in the watchtower.

The orcs are mercenaries hired by the humans to keep everyone else out, in the hopes they will be safe until the curse passes. Unfortunately, three of the humans have already contracted the *slithering*, as one person brought it in, and the crowded conditions in the watchtower means it spread.

Creatures: When the heroes pass near the watchtower, a cry of “Infection!” rises up from inside. The mercenaries rush in to help the humans evacuate. As they file out, one wall of the wooden watchtower splits, spilling three oozes into the air 30 feet above the street. The oozes fall and strike the ground with a repulsive splat before attacking both the heroes and the exiting humans.

OCHRE JELLIES (3)

CREATURE 5

Pathfinder Bestiary 254

Initiative Perception +7

REDCAP PARADE

LOW 7

Not all residents of Kibwe are unhappy about the spread of the curse, and some malevolent creatures are reveling in spreading the *slithering* to as many humans as possible. This includes a band of three redcaps who know they’ve contracted the *slithering* but also know it won’t harm them. They’ve been marching through a street lined with market stalls holding crude human dolls slathered with slimy, viscous oil on each of their scythes. The redcaps have also written slogans like “Watch Your Step around Humans!” and “New Flavor: Human Jelly” in chalk along their scythes.

Creatures: The redcaps prowl through the street and go out of their way to touch as many humans as they can, cackling every time they do. If the heroes confront them, they decide to make an example of the “human lovers” by shaking the dolls free of their scythes and attacking. The redcaps don’t back down from a battle and fight to the death.

REDCAPS (3)

CREATURE 5

Pathfinder Bestiary 278

Initiative Perception +12

THE OOZE KILLER

As the heroes travel through the city, they see a ripple in the air of an upcoming cross street. Heroes who are expert or better in Perception, or who succeed at a DC 18 Perception check, realize that the ripple is a gelatinous cube moving down the street. On a critical success, the heroes realize that it’s badly injured.

Before the heroes can get close, a battle cry rings out from atop a nearby building. The orc leg-breaker Grissbuk leaps from the building into the

CHAPTER 3 SYNOPSIS

The heroes find Kibwe in chaos. The *slithering* has struck a large portion of the population, and the heroes must navigate several hazards as they traverse the city to reach the Archive of the Sun. The archive is now the headquarters of the surviving non-human members of the Aspis Consortium, who plan to defend the building and wait out the curse. Yet stopping the curse requires getting Cursebreaker to the top of the archive, so a confrontation with the Aspis agents is inevitable. In this chapter, the heroes might be ahead of, behind, or traveling alongside Cursebreaker. The golem has its own programmed agenda independent of the heroes’ actions, but clever players can use the tireless golem to aid them in retaking the Archive of the Sun.

CHAPTER 3 TREASURE

- +1 striking battle axe
- +1 composite shortbow
- +1 striking rapier
- +1 studded leather
- bomber’s eye elixir, lesser
- bracers of armor type I
- cheetah’s elixir, moderate
- elixir of life, lesser
- everburning torch
- hunting spider venom
- iron cube
- murderer’s knot
- potion of acid resistance, lesser
- potion of quickness
- rod of wonder
- slime whip
- smokestick, greater
- sturdy shield, lesser
- wyvern poison

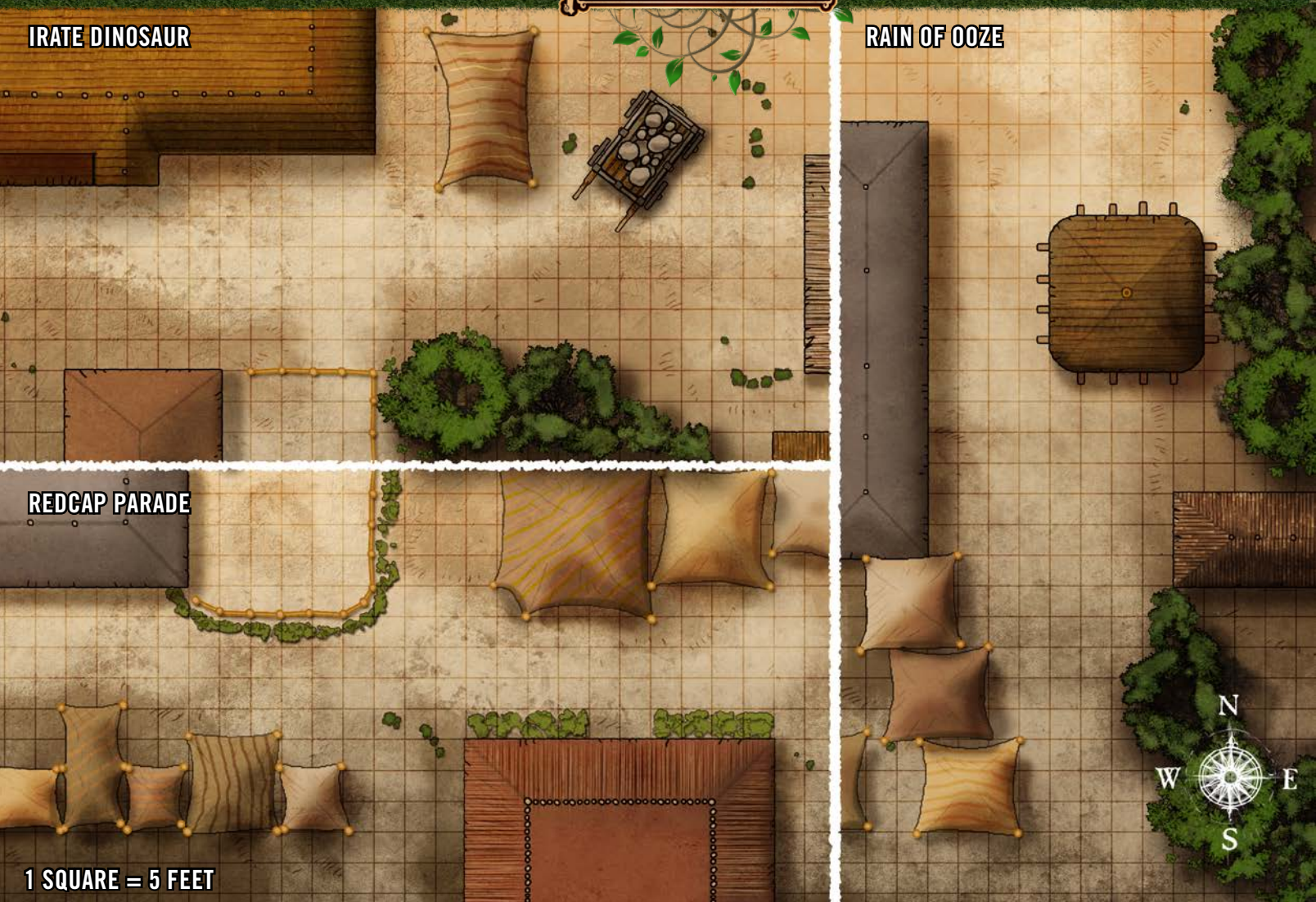
Chapter 1:
Tracing the
Curse

Chapter 2:
Journey to Holy
Xatramba

Chapter 3:
Against the
Aspis

Kibwe
Gazetteer

Adventure
Toolbox



gelatinous cube while swinging his greatclub. The gelatinous cube breaks his fall, and a few powerful strikes from his club cause the cube to slough away into a greasy stain on the street.

Grissbuk is pleased to see the heroes again. He's found his redemption, in a manner of speaking, in that he's using his brawn to hunt down and destroy the oozes menacing the city. He's seen a lot of movement in the city, and if the heroes mention the Aspis Consortium, he shares the rumors that the new leader of the Aspis Consortium, a halfling woman whose name Grissbuk doesn't know, has relocated many of her subordinates to an old building in the southern end of the Mozimba Camp neighborhood (where the heroes know the Archive of the Sun to be located).

If the heroes didn't beat Cursebreaker back to Kibwe, Grissbuk also shares that the golem was seen striding through the city in that direction. He can let the heroes know just how far behind Cursebreaker they are, if they don't already know.

Treasure: Grissbuk has received a few rewards from grateful citizens he's saved in the past several days. He feels uncomfortable keeping them—being paid to fight is a reminder of his mercenary past—so he wants to give them to the heroes. They include 242 sp, a wide silver anklet worth 60 gp, and *bracers of armor type I* designed to look like overlapping baobab leaves.

SEEKING ABAYONE

The heroes might seek out Abayone before approaching the Archive of the Sun, but the woman is in quarantine working to save the city, along with most human members of the city's Representative Council. Heroes who persist in attempts to locate Abayone and succeed at a DC 25 Diplomacy check to Gather Information locate a messenger who can get a missive to the representative. Abayone sends a return message quickly to apologize to the heroes for her unavailability, but emphasizes the trust she's placed in them to use Cursebreaker at the Archive of the Sun to stop the curse. If the players are in the dark about the

Aspis Consortium's role in the *slithering*, the problems in Kibwe, or what they should do next, a missive from Abayone is a good opportunity to fill in anything they don't know; in this case, they don't need to reach out to Abayone because she has non-human messengers waiting for them along the city's main thoroughfares.

RETURN TO THE ARCHIVE OF THE SUN

The Archive of the Sun is, physically speaking, mostly unchanged from the heroes' last visit. The locals, never inclined to trespass on the abandoned building in the first place, now wholly leave it alone as they deal with the *slithering* wrecking their city.

Current Inhabitants

The opportunistic halfling Paga Nikohian, Tomil's second-in-command, was rarely privy to her superior's schemes. She didn't know that Tomil had preemptively removed Cursebreaker from the Archive of the Sun prior to the *slitherbound stones*' arrival, but she knew that the Archive of the Sun was somehow important to Tomil. She's correctly deduced that the *slithering* is Tomil's plan gone horribly awry, and she's surmised that Tomil was killed by the very curse he'd planned to unleash.

Paga collected the non-human Aspis Consortium agents in Kibwe, and in looking to take advantage of the situation, she retreated to the Archive of the Sun. If the ancient archive was instrumental in stopping the curse, she intends to hold it at all costs so the curse wipes out every human in Kibwe. At that point, she intends to assert as much control over the decimated government as she can.

In the meantime, Paga and her agents have fortified the Archive of the Sun by adding to its traps and bringing in additional monstrous guard creatures. They try to stop anyone from reaching the archive's upper level—especially anyone who wants to see the curse stopped. Paga isn't yet sure how the Archive of the Sun fits into Tomil's schemes, but she's confident she'll have plenty of time to figure it out behind the safety of her traps and guards while the city of Kibwe tears itself apart.

The current inhabitants of the Archive of the Sun are much more powerful and entrenched foes than the boggard rabble who previously occupied it, and the heroes might have a more difficult time. Paga has little contact with other Aspis agents scattered throughout the city and is unable to call in reinforcements to replace defeated agents.

Features of the Archive of the Sun

As before, the Archive of the Sun consists of stone rooms 12 feet high with heavy wooden doors magically treated

WITH CURSEBREAKER

The heroes might choose to accompany Cursebreaker into the Archive of the Sun. Although this gives the heroes some extra muscle, it doesn't appreciably decrease the danger to them; most foes target the heroes instead of the golem (either under the mistaken belief that the heroes control it, or because—like the *aurumvorax* and the *medusas*—they don't prefer to attack the golem). Cursebreaker takes a consistent path through the Archive of the Sun, plodding at 20 feet each round through the following rooms: **B1, B3, B4, B7, B8, B9, B10, B12, and B13**. Once in the Room of the Upper Sun, it stands motionless on the dais until someone else activates the sun symbols. On this journey, it stops when confronted with enemies and waits for 1 round to see whether the enemies simply let it pass. If not, it fights just long enough to push the enemies aside and continue moving forward. It's likely to leave the heroes in its wake to deal with injured but angry Aspis agents.

AFTER CURSEBREAKER

If the heroes haven't beaten Cursebreaker to the Archive of the Sun, they'll find evidence of the golem's prior passage. The *aurumvorax* in area **B2** didn't have any appetite for a stone opponent, so it didn't attack Cursebreaker at all. The golem smashed open the doors to area **B3** and killed the guards there, and their corpses remain in this room. The golem then entered area **B4**, where the technicians damaged it badly before being slain. Cursebreaker walked through area **B7** without triggering the trap, then fought the foes in area **B8**. The Aspis agents were lucky and defeated it here; the technician is currently examining it with great interest. The dwarven guards, concerned about the lack in security, asked the *medusas* in area **B11** to relocate to area **B4**. Unwilling to spend much time around the *medusas*, the guards returned to area **B8** to protect the technician.

The heroes must haul Cursebreaker's form onto the dais in area **B13** to restore and reactivate it. This will likely be a lengthy ordeal because of Cursebreaker's weight, and is best performed after they've cleared out all the other dangers in the Archive of the Sun.

to be as durable as stone. Now, however, all the rooms are lit; the Aspis Consortium brought several *everburning torches* with their supplies. Doors are unlocked unless otherwise indicated. The sounds of industry—dwarf guards moving stones and gnome technicians building traps and defenses—echo throughout the building.

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The room descriptions below are particularly sparse, and you can supplement them with updated descriptions from the heroes' first visit to the Archive of the Sun as you see fit.

Treasure: Any treasure the heroes didn't discover during their first visit to the Archive of the Sun has been discovered and collected by the Aspis Consortium, whose agents use them against the heroes if convenient.

B1. Entry

This entrance to the Archive of the Sun is little more than a deep, square alcove. A few discarded jars lie on the ground near the single door. A double door opposite it bears a sunburst and is closed.

The pots here once contained some grease; the Aspis agents greased the hinges on the door to area **B2** so its occupant can open the door simply by pushing it.

The Guardian: If the heroes linger here for more than a round or two, the aurumvorax in area **B2** bursts through the door to attack.

B2. Entry Guard Room Moderate 7

Shredded fabric covers the floors of this small guard room.

If the heroes left the statue here (described on page 18), the aurumvorax has idly gnawed at its face.

Creatures: The Aspis Consortium keeps a half-trained aurumvorax in this room. It listens for any intruders in area **B1** and bursts out to attack and defeat the nearest foe, then moves on to the next. The aurumvorax fights until slain.

AURUMVORAX CREATURE 9

Pathfinder Bestiary 2 29

Initiative Perception +18

B3. Welcome Chamber Moderate 7

The guards in this room stacked the three metal troughs that were here against the door, which no longer opens more than an inch or two when pushed. A successful DC 28 Athletics check is necessary to Force Open the doors by pushing the troughs aside. If the troughs were emptied when the heroes were here the first time—either by the boggards or by the heroes themselves—this DC is only 23. Alternatively, a hero who succeeds at a DC 25 Thievery check can remove the hinges from a door to open it, although the stack of troughs provides cover and is greater difficult terrain to cross.

Three metal troughs are stacked by a double door leading west. The southeast corner has several tidy piles of rubble after the collapsed portion there has been partially cleared.

The Aspis Consortium guards stationed here looked over the collapse to the southeast and realized they could clear it with some work. They haven't gotten much further than exposing the upper few feet of the wood door leading to the side entrance (area **B5**). This door has a small window that allows the dwarves to see into, but not access, area **B5**.

The Southeast Door: If the heroes took some time to clear away the rubble exposing the southeast door to area **B5** when they were here the last time, they've given the dwarves a significant head start. In this case, the dwarves have uncovered the door completely and can use it to come and go from area **B5** easily.

Creatures: The guards here are diligent and resourceful. They know they're likely to be Paga's primary soldiers when the humans of Kibwe are all dead, so they do their best to prove their worth. If they spot intruders here, they take cover behind the piles of stone they've stacked and pepper the heroes with crossbow bolts to keep their foes off-guard. However, they prefer fighting with their axes and rush into melee if enemies approach their defensive positions or try to get past them to one of the room's double doors. They fight to the death but don't pursue enemies that flee—they don't want to be tricked into leaving their posts. If they manage to subdue any intruders, they deposit their captives outside the Archive of the Sun, confident that the intruders have learned their lesson and won't trouble the Aspis Consortium any further.

ASPIS GUARDS (4) CREATURE 5

LN MEDIUM DWARF HUMANOID

Perception +14, darkvision

Languages Common, Dwarven, Mwangi

Skills Aspis Consortium Lore +9, Athletics +15, Intimidation +10, Society +9, Survival +12

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

Items +1 striking battle axe, crossbow (20 bolts), dagger, half plate, tower shield (Hardness 5, HP 20, BT 10)

AC 22; **Fort** +14, **Ref** +10, **Will** +12 (bravery)

HP 80 each

Attack of Opportunity ☞

Bravery When the guard rolls a success on a Will save against a fear effect, they get a critical success instead. In addition, anytime they gain the frightened condition, reduce its value by 1.

Shield Block ☞

Speed 20 feet; unburdened iron

Melee ♦ battle axe +16 (magical, sweep), **Damage** 2d8+8 slashing plus powerful swing

Melee ♦ dagger +15 (agile, versatile S), **Damage** 1d4+8 piercing

Ranged ♦ crossbow +12 (range increment 120 feet, reload 1), **Damage** 1d8+4 piercing

Ranged ♦ dagger +12 (agile, thrown 10 feet, versatile S), **Damage** 1d4+8 piercing

Powerful Swing If the guard hits with a battle axe Strike, they can choose a creature adjacent to the target and within their own reach. That creature takes slashing damage equal to the result of the battle axe's weapon damage dice.

Unburdened Iron The guard ignores Speed reduction from armor. In addition, any time the guard takes a penalty to their Speed, deduct 5 feet from the penalty.

ASPIS TECHNICIANS (2)

CREATURE 7

CE SMALL GNOME HUMANOID

Perception +15; low-light vision

Languages Common, Gnomish, Mwangi, Sylvan

Skills Acrobatics +15, Arcana +15, Aspis Consortium Lore +15, Crafting +17, Stealth +15, Thievery +15

Str +1, **Dex** +4, **Con** +2, **Int** +4, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +0

Items expanded alchemist's tools, lesser bomber's eye elixir, bronze Aspis Consortium badge, moderate cheetah's elixir, hunting spider venom (2), +1 striking rapier, studded leather armor

Infused Items An Aspis technician carries the following infused items: 2 lesser antidotes, 2 moderate acid flasks,

B4. Room of the Lower Sun Moderate 7

The sun symbol on the floor of this room continues to glow, although a network of wires across the floor spark, hiss and dim the glow where the wires cross it. The wires are connected to a contraption of iron and wood about two feet square. Two large stone fountains in the southwest and southeast corners of the room bear clear, clean water. Double doors lead to the south, east, and west.

The Aspis agents know that this room contains magic power they haven't yet tapped (they lack the Nature and Religion skills to properly activate the sun symbols), so they've jury-rigged a technological solution to try to bleed off some of the symbol's power. The network of wires aren't dangerous to handle and can simply be pulled off to one side. The sun symbol can't be activated while the wires are present.

Creatures: Two enterprising Aspis Consortium technicians are hard at work in this room. These gnomes particularly love reckless alchemy and radical science, so the opportunity to experiment with the ancient magic of the Archive of the Sun delights them. They're so wrapped up in their work that they're unlikely to notice any combats in adjacent rooms, and take a -2 penalty to initiative checks against anyone entering this room. They support Paga and look forward to a time when she has significantly greater authority in Kibwe, if only so she'll support the gnomes' more expensive and dangerous scientific experiments. They therefore fight any intruders to the death, endeavoring to poison their foes first so they can apply sneak attack damage consistently.



2 moderate alchemist's fires, and 2 lesser elixirs of life. These items last for 24 hours or until the next time the technician makes their daily preparations.

AC 25; **Fort** +13, **Ref** +17, **Will** +15

HP 115 each; **Resistances** poison 5

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ *rapier* +18 (deadly d8, disarm, finesse), **Damage** 2d6+8 piercing plus hunting spider venom

Ranged ♦ acid flask +18 (range increment 20 feet, splash), **Damage** 5 acid damage plus 2d6+2 persistent acid and 4 acid splash

Ranged ♦ alchemist's fire +18 (range increment 20 feet, splash), **Damage** 2d8+2 fire plus 4 persistent fire and 4 fire splash

Hunting Spider Venom (poison); **Saving Throw** DC 21 Fortitude; **Maximum Duration** 6 rounds; **Stage 1** 1d10 poison damage and flat-footed (1 round); **Stage 2** 1d12

poison damage, clumsy 1, and flat-footed (1 round); **Stage 3** 2d6 poison damage, clumsy 2, and flat-footed (1 round)

Poison Weapon ♦ (manipulate) **Requirements** The Aspis technician is wielding a piercing or slashing weapon and has a free hand; **Effect** The Aspis technician applies a poison to the weapon.

Quick Bomber ♦ The Aspis technician Interacts to draw a bomb, then Strikes with it.

Sneak Attack The Aspis technician deals an extra 2d6 precision damage to flat-footed creatures.

Treasure: The wood-and-metal contraption where the wires lead functions as an arcane storage battery. The energies flowing into this contraption have transformed its metal core—a steel rod about 18 inches long—into a *rod of wonder*. Removing the rod causes the wires to flare and disintegrate into dust.

B5. Side Entrance

This small entry contains a great amount of rubble, much of it stacked from floor to ceiling in irregular and unstable columns. The top half of a door is just visible in the rubble to the east, and a passage leading north has been cleared of rubble.

These stacks of loose stones are the work of the bored earth elemental in area B6. There is a stack in each square of the room adjacent to the rubble pile. If touched, or if a creature standing in a square with a stack critically fails an attack roll or saving throw, the stack falls over. The stones in the stacks are too small to seriously damage anyone when they fall.

If the heroes knock over a stack, the elemental in area B6 hears the clatter and prepares an ambush as described in that room. They also alert the dwarves working in area B3, who spot them through the small window in the half-uncovered door and take up defensive positions. Breaking through the door to area B3 requires a successful DC 23 Athletics check to Force it Open, which breaks off the upper part of the door but allows Medium or smaller creatures to scramble between areas B3 and B5 (treat the rubble between the two rooms as greater difficult terrain).

B6. Library

Moderate 7

Scraps of leather and parchment are stuffed into a few cubbies and shelves along the east and west walls of this otherwise clean long room. A huge pile of rubble fills the south end of this room, with several stacks of irregular stones piled precariously from the floor to the ceiling.



ASPIS TECHNICIAN

The Aspis Consortium wiped away any traces of the noisome boggard habitation in this room, and it still smells faintly of bleach. As with the stacks of stones in area **B5**, the stacks here were formed by the bored earth elemental in this room. There is one stack in each square adjacent to the rubble pile on the map.

Creatures: An earth elemental conjured long ago by the Aspis Consortium is stationed in this room. If it suspects enemies are nearby (either from the heroes making noise or via its tremorsense), it hides in the floor of the room and prepares to ambush the heroes. In this case, it erupts from the ground as soon as the heroes are in this room and sprays stones around the chamber. This allows it to use its Athletics for initiative and activate its Spike Stones aura as a free action as it does so.

The stacks of stone in this room are more dangerous when the elemental's Spike Stones ability is active. When one of the pillars of stone topples, anyone in the square with it takes 4d6 piercing damage (basic DC 21 Reflex save). As in area **B5**, a creature standing in a square with a stack of stones knocks it over when critically failing any attack roll or saving throw.

The elemental fights until destroyed.

STONE MAULER

CREATURE 9

Pathfinder Bestiary 147

Initiative Athletics +21 or Perception +16

Treasure: The Aspis agents put some of the supplies they brought with them here. One of the cubbies contains a pouch with 40 pp and another contains a satchel with a *potion of quickness* and an *iron cube*.

B7. Scribing Chamber

Moderate 7

The five slabs protruding from the walls are covered with maps and plans. Double doors lead east and south.

The Aspis Consortium keeps files on Kibwe's population, military strength, and nonhuman politicians. It's clear that these plans describe an Aspis Consortium takeover of the city once the curse has run its course, with someone named Paga Nikohian as the leader of the consortium (and of the city).

As before, scroll symbols adorn the stone walls above each of the five slabs and produce magical light when touched. However, the Aspis technicians have rigged them into a dangerous trap to protect their notes, and they control it by using a hidden control panel under the central slab.

Hazard: When a creature who isn't wearing an Aspis Consortium badge is adjacent to a table, the scroll

symbols glow brightly and unleash bolts of electricity at all creatures in the room (even creatures with Aspis Consortium badges).

If the heroes overloaded this trap the last time they were here, they gain a +4 circumstance bonus to disable the trap. In addition, the trap isn't yet operating at full effectiveness and doesn't deal persistent electricity damage.

SCROLL SHOCK TRAP

HAZARD 9

COMPLEX MECHANICAL TRAP

Stealth +17 (expert) or DC 29 (expert) to spot the hidden control panel

Description Five scroll symbols shoot electricity bolts around the room.

Disable Thievery DC 25 (expert) or *dispel magic* (3rd level; counteract DC 24); Thievery DC 29 (master) to disable the entire trap from the hidden control panel beneath the central slab.

AC 28; **Fort** +21, **Ref** +15

Symbol Hardness 16; **Symbol HP** 64 (BT 32); **Panel Hardness** 18; **Panel HP** 72 (BT 36); **Resistances** electricity 15; **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Reactive Charge ⤷ (arcane, evocation) **Trigger** A creature without an Aspis Consortium badge approaches within 5 feet of a slab; **Effect** Both double doors leading out of the room shut and lock. While the trap is active, the doors must be battered open (Hardness 18; Panel HP 72 [BT 36]; Athletics DC 29 to Force Open). The closest symbol to the triggering creature shoots an electricity bolt attack at it. The trap then rolls initiative.

Routine (5 actions) Each disabled symbol reduces the trap's number of actions by 1. For each of its actions, a different symbol shoots an electricity bolt at a random creature in the room. The trap doesn't take multiple attack penalties.

Ranged electricity bolt +21 (range 40 feet), **Damage** 1d6+2 electricity damage and 1d6 persistent electricity damage

Reset The trap deactivates 1 round after it has no target creatures and resets after 1 minute.

Treasure: Underneath the slab closest to area **B6** is a crate that the technicians brought with them. It includes alchemical reagents worth 480 gp, a dose of wyvern poison in a clay vial resembling a drake in flight, a *lesser potion of acid resistance*, and four clearly labelled lesser elixirs of life.

B8. Reflection Room

Moderate 7

Two large sheets of metal are affixed to the stone walls to the west and east, but both are a speckled black in color,

as though reflecting the empty void of a moonless night. A double door leads north, and an opening to the southwest reveals stairs leading up.

One of the Aspis technicians has high hopes for building a trap in this room, envisioning something like a bottomless pit hazard that hurls intruders sideways through the mirrors to tumble endlessly in the chill of deep space, looping back around through the other mirror and thus falling sideways forever. The calculations are proving too tricky, however, and the trap isn't complete; the mirrors simply reflect deep space for the next few minutes.

Creatures: A single Aspis technician mutters calculations to himself while he works on the mirrors. Two Aspis guards are resting on a few crates of equipment against the south end of the room before swapping their shift with guards in area **B3**. If the heroes didn't trigger the trap, the dwarves don't have their armor on and their AC is only 17. If they've had any warning at all that intruders are present, they've donned their armor by the time the heroes arrive.

If they're able to push the heroes back into the scribing chamber (**B7**), the technician commands one of the guards to get a map from the nearest slab. The guards don't realize there's a trap on the slabs, and since the guard isn't wearing an Aspis badge, the trap in that room is triggered when the unwitting guard follows the order.

These foes all fight to the death to repel intruders.

ASPIS TECHNICIAN CREATURE 7

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Initiative Perception +15

ASPIS GUARDS (2) CREATURE 5

Page 44

Initiative Perception +14

Treasure: The Aspis technician is consulting an esoteric tome written by a logically bereft mathematician titled "Folding Space to Touch the Void." The book is a rare first edition worth 700 gp. In addition, the crates of equipment contain a few items that the technician was supposed to distribute to the guards but has been too preoccupied to do so. These include a *lesser sturdy shield* and a *murderer's knot*.

B9. Stairs

The stone of this long staircase is well-worn, as are its stone handrails.

The Aspis agents have disarmed the trap that was previously on the stairs. The heroes can rearm it if they'd like, but all the Aspis agents know it's there. Heroes who examine these stairs carefully not only discover the expended darts they might have seen their first time in the Archive of the Sun, but might also spot some damage from leaking acid and errant scorch marks—evidence of the unstable golem in area **B10**.

If the heroes make a lot of noise on the stairs, the golem in area **B10** comes to investigate. The golem is used to Aspis agents coming and going from area **B8** and ignores noises from there, including the sounds of combat.

B10. Upper Landing Moderate 7

A table stands in an alcove to the south of this oddly shaped landing. The floor bears bearing recent scorch marks and pitting that resemble the effects of droplets of acid.

Creatures: An alchemical golem servitor of the Aspis Consortium is stationed here to protect Paga deeper in the upper level. Made primarily of wood and glass, it's more unstable than other golems of its kind and has been leaking some of its internal fluids. It leaks these fluids as it fights and explodes when reduced to 0 Hit Points. A hero who succeeds at a DC 25 Crafting check to Recall Knowledge while looking at the golem realizes that it will explode.

ALCHEMICAL GOLEM CREATURE 9

Pathfinder Bestiary 185

Initiative Perception +15

Explode When the alchemical golem is reduced to 0 Hit Points, it explodes and deals damage from its alchemical rupture ability in a 10-foot emanation. If a critical hit reduced the golem to 0 Hit Points, creatures in the area treat their saving throws against the rupture effects as one degree worse.

Treasure: The table contains a sack with several broken vials and a single surviving greater smokestick.

B11. Upper Guard Room Moderate 7

This room contains only a stone bench and three large leather trunks. The room's only door has a tiny window at eye level.

The traveling trunks belong to the room's denizens. In addition to mundane clothes, the trunk contain a dizzying array of disguises.

Creatures: Paga extended her invitation to hole up in the Archive of the Sun to two special agents she'd been

courting for the Aspis Consortium for some time: medusa sisters named Djana and Djoka. Both understood the danger that the *slithering* posed to the city and appreciated the opportunity to sit out the chaos, but they've since started to realize that the Aspis Consortium—if not Paga specifically—was behind the tragedy. They worry that their association with Paga means they'll be blamed when the curse's origins eventually come to light.

As a result, Djana and Djoka aren't likely to leave their room, even if they hear fighting right outside their door. They might peek through the window in the door to see what's going on, but they consider a band of armed drifters to be Paga's problem, not theirs. The medusas defend themselves if the heroes burst into this room to fight, but they otherwise try to avoid a confrontation. Unfortunately, both of the medusas are heavy-handed in their attempts to negotiate and prefer to do so from a position of strength. They therefore keep their auras active and plan to use their petrifying gazes if threatened.

If a fight begins, Djana and Djoka alternate their melee Strikes with their focused gazes and surrender or flee as soon as either is reduced to fewer than 30 Hit Points. If survival doesn't seem likely, they fight to the death.

XP Award: If the heroes gain valuable information from the medusas, award them 80 XP.

B12. Antechamber

This antechamber has a few cots placed in it for Paga and her guards, but they all sleep very little given the tensions in the city. Paga placed an *alarm* spell on this area to give her a mental alarm. If she receives it, she casts *illusory scene*, as described in area B13.

MEDUSA AGENTS (2)

CREATURE 7

Pathfinder Bestiary 234

Initiative Perception +16

Negotiating with the Medusas: If the heroes talk with the medusas, they explain how they were approached by Paga Nikohian, second in command of the Aspis Consortium in Kibwe. Paga offered a place to lie low while the *slithering* ravaged the city, and the medusas took her up on the offer. Paga had been attempting to recruit the medusas as agents anyway, and this seemed like a good time to join the Consortium. But in eavesdropping on the Aspis agents, the medusas have learned that Paga's superior, Tomil Jabrin, was in fact responsible for the *slithering* and one of its first victims. Paga chose to hole up in this building for some specific reason, but the medusas aren't sure what that is—and at this point, they don't want to know. They have a general sense of Paga's abilities, including her predilection for illusion magic, and know that she's protected by two dwarven bodyguards. Though Paga can be charming, the medusas have noticed the halfling's harsh cruelty beneath her thin veneer of fine manners and find it quite off-putting.

Treasure: The clothing and disguises in the trunks include two jasper and diamond earrings worth 95 gp each, a silver tiara worth 140 gp, a heavy gold necklace worth 200 gp, and three matching rings inset with onyx and garnets worth 20 gp each.



MEDUSA AGENT

B13. Room of the Upper Sun

Severe 7

The sun symbol on the floor of this room still glows, but the walls covered with carvings of Pillar-Watchers and ancient runes are now plastered with several pieces of paper.

The papers are Paga's notes about the carvings. It's clear from looking them over that she's not yet anywhere close to understanding what the Archive of the Sun is for or how to activate the sun symbol.

A Small Army: If Paga knows the heroes are coming, most likely due to tripping her *alarm* spell in area **B12**, she's cast *illusory scene* to fill the east end of the room with several figures: Tomil Jabrin (whom the heroes haven't met, but is a striking Zenj human with short hair dyed red and sweeping robes of red and black) upon the dais, four more Aspis guards, a

gelatinous cube, the medusas Djana and Djoka, and two statues that look like specific Pillar-Watchers from around the city. Paga isn't certain who's coming, but she's hoping at least one of these figures will distract and confuse any intruders. These figures shuffle about and act menacing, but they're incapable of speaking or attacking and repeat their programmed actions every minute. Paga does her best to remain in the background, invisibly if she has time to cast *invisibility*, while intruders deal with these illusory foes as well as the two genuine guards here.

If Cursebreaker has arrived here before the heroes, it's standing motionless on the dais (and its appearance has puzzled Paga and the guards). In this case, Paga's *illusory scene* has Tomil working to disassemble the golem with some large tools.

If Cursebreaker arrives with the heroes, it's also subject to the illusion since *illusory scene* doesn't have the mental trait and doesn't directly affect the golem, so its magic immunity doesn't apply. Cursebreaker

therefore treats the illusions like it does any other creatures: by waiting for them to get out of the way and, when they don't, attacking.

After a few minutes, Cursebreaker manages to disbelieve enough of the illusions to reach the dais and then stands there.

Creatures: Paga Nikohian has led the Aspis Consortium in Kibwe since Tomil's death. A gaunt halfling with thin lips and large, dark eyes, Paga wears leather armor under functional robes of blue and green. If she's not lurking in the *illusory scene* she created, she's examining the many carvings on the wall. Paga is endeavoring to understand why the Archive of the Sun was so important to her deceased boss, and how the archive might be useful to her when she finally emerges to a Kibwe wiped clean of human inhabitants.

The esoteric information about "lighting the sun" and "awakening the Pillar-Watchers" doesn't mean much to her, but she assumes she's got plenty of time to figure it all out. Two loyal bodyguards stand near her at all times and act as Paga commands.

In combat, Paga prefers to remain out of melee to bolster her guards—whom



PAGA NIKOHIAN

she deems utterly expendable—and cast debilitating spells on her foes. If forced into melee range, she uses the repulsive *slime whip* (page 61) that she recently crafted from an ooze that she defeated in the Aspis Consortium headquarters before coming here.

These foes all fight to the death, with Paga spitting curses at the heroes as she dies.

PAGA NIKOHIAN

CREATURE 9

UNIQUE NE SMALL HALFLING HUMANOID

Female halfling Aspis silver agent

Perception +19; keen eyes

Languages Common, Dwarven, Halfling, Mwangi

Skills Acrobatics +19, Arcana +16, Aspis Consortium Lore +16, Crafting +16, Deception +22, Diplomacy +20, Intimidation +20, Occultism +16, Society +18, Stealth +21, Thievery +19

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

Items daggers (3), *slime whip*, +1 *studded leather*

Keen Eyes Paga gains a +2 circumstance bonus when using the Seek action to find hidden or undetected creatures within 30 feet of her. When she targets an opponent that is concealed from her or hidden, she reduces the DC of the flat check to 3 for a concealed target or 9 for a hidden one.

AC 28; **Fort** +16, **Ref** +21, **Will** +18

HP 155

Halfling Luck **Trigger** Paga fails or critically fails a skill check or a saving throw; **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** Paga rerolls the saving throw and must take the new result.

Speed 25 feet

Melee **◆** *slime whip* +21 (disarm, finesse, reach 10 feet, trip), **Damage** 2d4+10 slashing

Melee **◆** dagger +20 (agile, thrown 10 feet, versatile S), **Damage** 1d4+10 piercing

Ranged **◆** dagger +20 (agile, thrown 10 feet, versatile S), **Damage** 1d4+10 piercing

Occult Spontaneous Spells DC 28, attack +21; **5th** (2 slots) *command*, *illusory scene*; **4th** (3 slots) *phantasmal killer*, *soothe*, *vampiric touch*; **3rd** (3 slots) *fear*, *paralyze*, *magic missile*; **2nd** (3 slots) *hideous laughter*, *invisibility*, *touch of idiocy*; **1st** (3 slots) *alarm*, *charm*, *unseen servant*; **Cantrips (5th)** *daze*, *detect magic*, *guidance*, *light*, *prestidigitation*

Bard Composition Spells DC 28; **5th** (2 Focus Points) *counter performance*; **Cantrips (5th)** *dirge of doom*, *inspire courage*

Feign Harmlessness **◆** (emotion, enchantment, occult, visual) Paga cringes and cowers before a creature within 10 feet that can see her. The target must attempt a DC 28 Will save. The target is then temporarily immune for 1 hour.

Critical Success No effect.

Success The creature is fascinated by Paga until the end of its next turn.

Failure The creature is fascinated by Paga and can't use hostile actions against her until the end of its next turn.

Critical Failure As failure, and the creature isn't temporarily immune to Feign Harmlessness.

Unbreakable Concentration Paga's spells are disrupted by reactions only if she is critically hit.

ASPIS GUARDS (2)

CREATURE 5

Page 44

Initiative Perception +14

Activating Cursebreaker: Cursebreaker can use its ability to cast *remove curse* on the city and lift the *slithering*, but it can't do so on its own. The golem marches to the dais in area **B13** and simply stands there. If Cursebreaker is destroyed before reaching this spot, the heroes must deposit the broken pieces of the golem there instead. The heroes must then activate the sun symbols in areas **B4** and **B13**, as described on page 20. When they do so with Cursebreaker in place, the Pillar-Watcher glows with a fierce, bright fire that washes over the room, through the walls, and across the city. This dramatic effect acts as a 10th-level *remove curse* spell that automatically cures the *slithering* from everyone in Kibwe at once (although people killed by the curse remain dead).

XP Award: If the heroes break the *slithering* curse, award them 80 XP.

CONCLUSION

With the *slithering* gone, the Representative Council comes out of hiding and works with their constituents to restore order. Abayone makes it very clear to her fellow representatives and other dignitaries in the city that the heroes were responsible for stopping the curse, which results in heartfelt thanks and tokens of appreciation being lauded upon the heroes in the short term. In the longer term, they can expect employment offers from important people who know the heroes are capable troubleshooters.

Kibwe will likely have a problem with oozes for quite some time, and its population is now more than a hundred humans fewer than it was a few short weeks ago. For a city of less than 4,000 people, this loss is noticeable and tragic. If the city is known for anything, though, it is for being a place where disparate people can come together in commerce and community—so Kibwe will survive.

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For over a thousand years, the granite walls of the city-state of Kibwe have towered above the surrounding Mwangi jungles—a jarring juxtaposition of smooth, speckled gray stone amid the impenetrable riot of jungle greenery. The original builders of the towering walls, and their intent, are long lost. It is thus a mystery why the walls—built of blocks of stone fitted together without mortar—slope inward and curve irregularly to define a shape like a human heart, or why innumerable exquisite, indecipherable runes are carved everywhere into their surface.

Within this irregular ovoid lies a patchwork jumble of neighborhoods. Despite the crowds and twisting streets, Kibwe is easy to navigate thanks to another mysterious feature created by its ancient builders. Perched atop high pillars throughout the city, a series of unique, large soapstone sculptures stand armed and alert in defensive positions. These statues, known as the Pillar-Watchers, have fanciful forms resembling anthropomorphic creatures, such as saurian humanoids or horned avian people. Legends say that the Pillar-Watchers will come alive in the time of Kibwe’s greatest need, although the sparks that once animated the Pillar-Watchers are long extinguished. Today they serve as indispensable landmarks that the burgeoning city’s people use to navigate their way through its bustling, multilingual neighborhoods.

Trade is Kibwe’s lifeblood, and merchants and trading companies from across Garund meet within its walls to exchange goods and news. The city’s dedication to diplomatic trade and studied neutrality make the comingling of its many diverse peoples possible. Indigenous humans from Garund predominate its population, particularly Zenj—bolstered by the influx of refugees from war-torn Usaro—as well as Bekyar, Mauxi,

and Bonuwat. Yet Kibwe also hosts a remarkable number of nonhumans who are rare in other cities, including Mualijae elves, lizardfolk, kobolds, and giants. Because of Kibwe’s diverse population, its people prize those who can graciously engage with a variety of others; indeed,

bargaining is considered the single highest form of art, and the best negotiators are keenly admired celebrities, and often imitated.

Kibwe has a tropical climate, ranging from hot to unbearable and from moist to steamy. Rain showers are common even outside of the region’s rainy season. Flora and fauna alike thrive in this climate, with

ferns and moss sprouting everywhere in the city. Insects and small mammals likewise thrive, and magic charms against heat and pests are in high demand.

HISTORY

The towering walls of Kibwe predate not only the current city, but also the fallen empire of Holy Xatramba. More than a thousand years ago, when Kibwe was little more than a trading post secured by the stone walls left behind by an older, vanished nation, it was chosen as a provincial capital of the empire. Goods throughout the empire and beyond flowed to Kibwe, where enterprising officials would arrange trades with goods coming through the Ndele Gap from Nex, Katapesh, and beyond. The indigenous Zenj population supported this trade, contributing hides, lumber, livestock, and magic to grow Kibwe into a small city. They welcomed travelers of different cultures, and creatures who found themselves unwelcome elsewhere—such as giants, kobolds, or lizardfolk—found themselves welcome in Kibwe. When Holy Xatramba fell in 4699 AR, Kibwe was more than capable of asserting its independence.



KIBWE

BWAMANDU

IWISA BLOCK

3

BRASS BLOCK

6

8

WHITEMARKS

CENTRAL MARKET

MOZIMBA

BEYKAR BLOCK

1

4

8

MINERS CAMP

5

2

WALK OF SHRINES

8

STRAGGLEBLOCK

7



Diamonds and gold soon boosted Kibwe's economy, which drew attention from international trading houses, including the Aspis Consortium and East Mwangi Mining Company. Contention was perhaps inevitable and quickly devolved into bloodshed. Descendants of the same Zenj who had helped build the city now set about to establish peace, beginning with the establishment of the casually democratic Representative Council that administers the city to this day.

GOVERNMENT

Kibwe's Representative Council has an ever-shifting membership of people appointed or elected by the various clans, guilds, and other communities that constitute the city's permanent population. While large mining companies and trading houses do their best to influence the council, they have governmental authority only through elected representatives who are also their workers or belong to their guilds. The Representative Council meets only informally, with generation after generation discussing issues and resolving disagreements through animated debate in the Adayenki Pavilion.

The council's decisions rest on a guiding principle—"Freedom and fairness from the North and the West"—that refers to Kibwe's support and protection of the traders and travelers who flow through the city's gates. The Representative Council has judicial authority over crimes that affect trade or exceed the authority of the individual neighborhoods. Punishments include fines, banishment, and execution, though the latter is reserved for only the most severe offenses. In all matters, representatives are expected to act in the best interests of the city first, before the interests of their own constituency. Representatives who act in a self-serving manner, which includes acting on behalf of a single mining company or trading house, can be expelled not only from the council but perhaps even from the city. The council has recently banned slavery within Kibwe, acknowledging it was incompatible with the city's guiding principle.

Kibwe maintains a strict and practiced neutrality in matters regarding any foreign powers or the greater Mwangi Expanse and seeks only to protect its own independence. Lacking any military, Kibwe is in no position to extend its authority or thwart any other nation's concerns. Its able-bodied residents are pledged to form a militia should the city ever fall under attack, but given its impenetrable walls, such attacks seem unlikely—and, indeed, none have happened in the centuries since Holy Xatramba fell.

Issues of internal unrest are dealt with by the neighborhoods themselves, which maintain their own policing according to their traditions. Trading houses

KIBWE

SETTLEMENT 6

N CITY

Mercantile city-state where diverse interests rub shoulders

Population 3,885 (71% humans [predominantly Zenj], 8% elves [predominantly Mualijae], 5% orcs, 5% lizardfolk, 11% other)

Government representative council

Trade Hub Items of up to 11th level can be found in Kibwe with diligent searching. Items higher than 6th level, when found, are for sale at 90% + 2d10% of their normal price.

Languages Common, Mwangi

Abuyone Munme (LG female human) Council Representative for the Zenj Trading Alliance

Clatriani Orridik (LE male human) Bloodman of Bekyar Block and former slave-trader

Darvian Estabar (LN male human) Lord Magistrate of the East Mwangi Mining Company

Kosa Et (N agender elf) Council Representative for Whitemarks

and mining concerns can wield significant power at this level, and most attempt to resolve "local matters" swiftly and decisively before accusations of bribery or corruption are appealed to the Representative Council.

PEOPLE OF KIBWE

Kibwe has nearly 4,000 permanent residents, but on any given day the population can swell by over a thousand. Large caravans and transient explorers make up much of this temporary population, but refugees from Usaro have recently swelled these numbers, putting a strain on Kibwe's resources. Although Kibwe harbors a diverse array of ancestries, its population is nevertheless mostly human and predominantly Zenj. Other indigenous Mwangi peoples, particularly Bekyar and Bonuwat humans, Mualijae elves, and lizardfolk and orcs from the deep jungles, all have sizable populations. Kibwe's commitment to freedom and fairness keeps all these unlikely neighbors living together in a mutually beneficial, if sometimes raucous, peace.

KIBWE AT A GLANCE

Two gates pierce Kibwe's immense granite walls: one in the north and one in the west. The gates are guarded at all times but rarely closed. Most traffic to and from the city occurs in the early morning and evening, with the pace slowing in the midday heat (or rainstorms, depending on the season), when many inhabitants enjoy an unhurried meal followed by a refreshing nap.

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Neighborhoods

Within the walls, the city is informally broken into 10 neighborhoods. Irregular granite walls—shorter than the city walls but still substantial—separate some of these neighborhoods, but most are marked merely by a change in architecture.

Bekyar Block: This neighborhood around the west gate contains some of Kibwe's oldest structures. Built of the same granite blocks as the city walls along straight, short streets, many of these small, roughly rectangular houses are painted in vibrant colors. Generations ago, the buying and selling of slaves was outlawed in the Central Market and relocated to this neighborhood, as Bekyar people were the city's main proponents of slavery. After Kibwe recently outlawed slavery, many Bekyar abandoned their homes, feeling betrayed by their city. Some who remained now angrily plot to reestablish the trade or work at various competing black markets. Meanwhile, manumitted slaves and refugees from Usaro have moved into the abandoned houses, creating further tension. These newcomers look to rehabilitate the neighborhood and its reputation by bringing greater prosperity and blossoming artistry.

Brass Block: The northwestern Mothlight neighborhood of the city was once the most opulent in Kibwe. A few wealthy residences still cling to the city walls, as does the sprawling Aspis Consortium headquarters, but the rest of the neighborhood slowly declined as wealthier residents abandoned their homes, left to crumble. Poor residents have moved into these abandoned residences. Consortium-backed financiers and urban planners have recently begun renovating the neighborhood, replacing old structures with Kibwe's only planned housing and even installing brass plumbing, giving the revitalized neighborhood its new name.

Bwamandu: Generations ago, philanthropist abolitionist Mbawe Bwamandu donated her extensive property on the northern edge of the city for the housing of ex-slaves and refugees. As this population grew and acquired surrounding property, it became a new neighborhood eager to receive any who escaped torment and torture. The current influx of refugees from Usaro has strained Bwamandu's resources, however, with food and housing becoming scarce.

Central Market: The heart of Kibwe, this market is situated in the city's geographic center. Stalls shift with the seasons and caravans, although some well-established sellers can always be found here, and locals know where to go for a wide array of goods, from diamonds and other luxury items to goats and cassava. By decree, the city prohibits all permanent

structures here; rug floors and hide walls are common, and the labyrinthine paths through the stalls change almost daily.

Iwisa Block: The neighborhood just east of Kibwe's north gate draws on the wealth that flows through the city, and is the home of many warriors, veterans, and professional caravan guards. Iwisa Block is diverse in both its housing and its inhabitants. The streets are a messy jumble that reflects the neighborhood's tangled ownership history and the degree to which it has been reshaped over generations. Iwisa Block is one of the few neighborhoods in Kibwe to elect its representatives to the city council.

Miners' Camp: Along the southern edge of the Central Market runs a neighborhood of small, tightly clustered tents and round wooden huts erected along irregular streets. These dwellings house miners and their families, drawn to Kibwe by the lure of steady employment or the hope of striking it rich. Few operate independently, however, and of those few only a vanishingly small number achieve dramatic success. Nearly all of the neighborhood's residents work for the brutal East Mwangi Mining Company, and many have lost fingers or limbs as punishment for theft (whether genuine or presumed).

Mozimba: Zenj humans predominate this large neighborhood on the city's eastern side. Many of its inhabitants serve as guides, hunters, or artisans such as tanners, furriers, and weavers. Some tend small farms or groves of fruit trees in the jungle just outside Kibwe, while others keep small flocks of chickens or packs of covies in communal pens within the neighborhood. The housing here consists of the round wooden homes with thatched roofs traditional in the region and of sturdy tents. Mozimba's leadership is often held up as a model for the rest of Kibwe, as it governs and polices the neighborhood in an amicable, energetic, and fair manner. The leaders' ability to maintain such contented camaraderie, despite the neighborhood not having the wealth of some others, gives them considerable clout on the governing council.

Straggleblock: To the south of the Miners' Camp lies Kibwe's least-adequate housing: a collection of tents and shanties propped up among the ruins of ancient stone houses. The destitute, outcast, and disadvantaged live here, along with criminals evading punishment. The neighborhood traditionally sends a "beggar prince" to the Representative Council, but that representative usually lacks any real power to command the ear of the council, a harsh reality of Kibwe's loose and locally focused government.

Walk of Shrines: Tucked into the southwestern curve of the city wall, this neighborhood takes its

name from one of the most famous and picturesque streets in Kibwe. Arising from a single street of small churches and shrines, the area has grown to include not only these stalls and buildings but also the homes of priests, shamans, and acolytes. Dozens of deities, spirits, and philosophies are worshipped or honored here, with most of them a unique mélange of typical deity worship, animism, and ancestor worship. Feast days and special religious celebrations draw huge crowds from throughout the city.

Whitemarks: Mualijae elves populate this neighborhood. Their distinctive communal longhouses and rejection of linear planning and roads signal their intention to maintain their traditions even within their urban home. Mainly Ekujae elves, the neighborhood's residents see themselves as defenders of the shorter-lived peoples around them and treat them cordially. This includes welcoming non-elves (and particularly half-elves) who wish to live among them, provided that the newcomers adapt to elven customs. The Ekujae here mark not only their faces with their characteristic white paint, but also their buildings; those who understand the meanings of these marks can easily navigate the neighborhood. These building markings are the source of the neighborhood's name.

Notable Locations

Among the many interesting sites in Kibwe, the following are prominent.

1. Adayenki Pavilion: The Central Market is the heart of Kibwe, but the Adayenki Pavilion is the heart of the Central Market. Originally set aside for religious purposes, this large common area enabled the organic growth of the market around it thanks to its position between the two city gates. Over time, the debates held here led to the formation of the Representative Council. Fittingly, the council holds its public debates, votes, and trials here. The area is deemed sacred, strewn with flower petals, and walled off from the bustling market with thick hides and tapestries, with pavilions named for historical figures providing partial shade as needed.

2. Archive of the Sun: This ancient stone

structure is as old as the city's walls and is commonly believed to have been a library or ritual building.

3. Aspis Consortium Headquarters: This sprawling complex runs along the western city wall of the Brass Block neighborhood. The headquarters houses local Aspis leaders in an opulent fashion and provides spaces for entertaining as well as storage and provisioning for the Consortium's many caravans. The complex also serves as the Brass Block's political center.

4. Bloodman Hall: The seat of political power in Bekyar Block, this stone building also served as the center for negotiating slave sales and contained communal holding cells for slaves. While slavery is now illegal in any form in Kibwe, those who scheme to reverse that decision are rumored to secretly meet here.

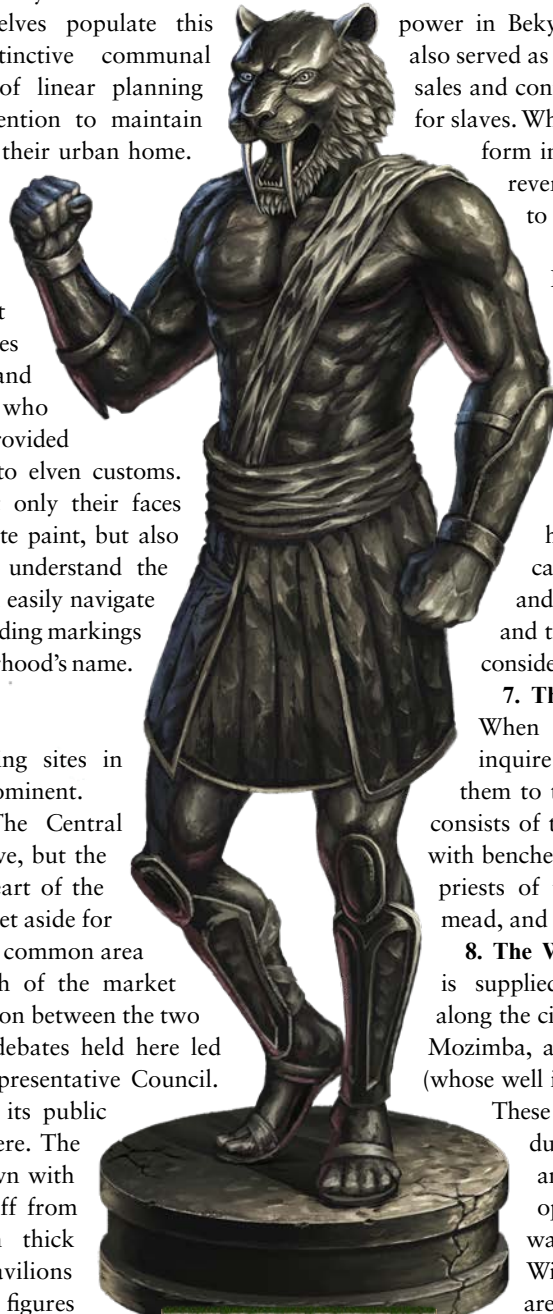
5. East Mwangi Gold Refinery: Employees of the East Mwangi Mining Company process the rocks from the company's mines and smelt golden ore into ingots here.

6. The Road's Gentle End: This oval complex near the north gate is a sumptuous hospitality center prized by caravans and other travelers. Rest and relaxation await the weary and the foot-sore at prices the locals consider shockingly high.

7. The Shrine of Cayden Cailean: When foreign travelers to Kibwe inquire for a drink, locals often direct them to this small pavilion. The shrine consists of two casks and three tall tables with benches modeling Avistani styles, and priests of the Drunken Hero serve ale, mead, and other "northern" beverages.

8. The Wells: Much of Kibwe's water is supplied by three substantial wells along the city walls in the Iwisa Block and Mozimba, and along the Walk of Shrines (whose well is tended by priests of Gozreh).

These relatively modern wells were dug about two centuries ago and funded by taxing mining operations to ensure a secure water supply in case of a siege. With the wells, the city's residents are confident of being able to maintain their independence regardless of the circumstances.



PILLAR-WATCHER



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OOZEMORPH ARCHETYPE

You have suffered from the deadly touch of an ooze or other amorphous creature, like a gibbering moulder or a shoggoth, and have come away changed. Alternatively, you might have been exposed to some alchemical accident involving experiments with oozes, such as those performed in the city of Oenopion in Nex. Parts of your body occasionally liquefy and threaten to slough off, and only through force of will can you keep your natural form intact. Your affliction is plainly supernatural in origin and distressingly permanent.

OOZEMORPH DEDICATION FEAT 2

UNCOMMON ARCHETYPE DEDICATION

You are plagued by sporadic anatomical rearrangements, which grant you insights into other creatures with unusual anatomies. You become trained in Occultism and Ooze Lore; if you were already trained, you become an expert instead. You gain a +2 circumstance bonus to Reflex saves to avoid being Engulfed by creatures, and to checks to Escape after being Engulfed.

As you develop more abilities based on your amorphous affliction, you become increasingly off-putting to mundane creatures. You take a penalty to Diplomacy checks against animals and humanoids. This penalty is equal to your number of class feats from the oozemorph archetype, to a maximum of -4 for four or more feats.

Special You can't select another dedication feat until you have gained two other feats from the oozemorph archetype.

DISTURBING DEFENSE FEAT 4

ARCHETYPE

Prerequisites Oozemorph Dedication

Your internal organs and blood vessels have shifted and changed, and even you don't know precisely where in your body they are. You gain resistance to precision damage equal to 2 + your number of class feats from the oozemorph archetype. The DC of your flat checks to recover from persistent bleed damage is 13, rather than 15.

HIDEOUS ULULATION FEAT 4

ARCHETYPE SKILL

Prerequisites Oozemorph Dedication, trained in Performance

Your throat has multiple separate chambers that can give your voice an eerie echo. You can be clearly heard at distances of up to 300 feet regardless of ambient sound, although your voice doesn't penetrate a magical *silence* effect.

VACATE VISION FEAT 6

ARCHETYPE

Prerequisites Oozemorph Dedication

Trigger You fail (but don't critically fail) a saving throw against an effect with the visual trait.

You cause your eyes to liquefy and run out of your eye sockets, leaving them empty. You get a success on the save against the triggering effect, but you are blinded for the duration the effect would have had on a failure. At that time, your eyes regrow and your normal vision returns.

OOZE EMPATHY FEAT 8

ARCHETYPE

Prerequisites Oozemorph Dedication, at least two other class feats from the oozemorph archetype

You can connect with oozes (and other amorphous aberrations, at the GM's discretion) on a rudimentary level. You can use Diplomacy to Make an Impression on oozes and to make very simple Requests of them. In most instances, oozes will give you time to make your case.

RUBBERY SKIN FEAT 10

ARCHETYPE

Prerequisites Disturbing Defense

Your skin develops a malleable, rubbery quality. You gain resistance to bludgeoning damage equal to 2 + your number of class feats from the oozemorph archetype. You also gain resistance equal to twice that amount to extra damage from critical hits; if the resistance is greater than the extra damage, it reduces the extra damage to 0 but doesn't reduce the attack's normal damage.

UNCANNY SUCTION

FEAT 12

ARCHETYPE

Prerequisites Oozemorph Dedication

Your limbs produce strange, sucker-like growths that allow you to adhere to walls, objects, and most other surfaces. You gain a climb Speed equal to your half your land Speed (minimum 5 feet). If you have the Quick Climb feat, your climb Speed is equal to your land Speed. In addition, you gain a +2 circumstance bonus to your Reflex DC to avoid being Disarmed.

PECULIAR ANATOMY

FEAT 14

ARCHETYPE

Prerequisites Disturbing Defense

Your circulatory system contains viscous protoplasmic fluid instead of ordinary blood. You gain a +2 circumstance bonus to saving throws against disease and poison, and resistance to poison damage equal to half your level.

In addition, your resistance to precision damage from Disturbing Defense increases to an amount equal to 7 + your number of class feats from the oozemorph archetype, and the DC of your flat checks to recover from persistent bleed damage is 8 rather than 13.

MAGIC ITEMS

The following new magic items appear in *Pathfinder Adventure: The Slithering*.

FLAYING KNIFE

ITEM 8

UNCOMMON MAGICAL NECROMANCY

Price 480 gp

Usage held in 1 hand; **Bulk** 1

This long, thin +1 *striking wounding dagger* has a smooth edge on one side and a serrated edge on the other. Its persistent bleed damage comes from slicing away long strips of the target's flesh, and it deals 1d8 persistent bleed damage on a hit instead of 1d6. A creature takes a -2 status penalty to saving throws against diseases for as long as it has persistent bleed damage from this knife.

GLUTTONOUS SPEAR

ITEM 6

UNCOMMON MAGICAL NECROMANCY

Price 250 gp

Usage held in 1 hand; **Bulk** 1

The head of this +1 *striking returning spear* is wrapped in greasy hide, and its head resembles a thick, clawed finger. On a critical hit, the target is enfeebled 1 for 1 minute, and you gain 1d8 temporary Hit Points that last for 1 minute.

OILY BUTTON

ITEM 5

UNCOMMON CONJURATION CONSUMABLE MAGICAL TALISMAN

Price 30 gp

Usage affixed to armor; **Bulk** –

Activation ◆ *envision*; **Trigger** You succeed at an Athletics check to Disarm; **Requirements** You are an expert in Athletics.

A thin sheen of slick oil covers this gaudy button. When you activate the *oily button*, your attempts to Disarm your opponent of an item before the start of the opponent's next turn gain a +4 circumstance bonus instead of +2, and the -2 circumstance penalty to attacks with the item or other checks requiring a firm grasp on the item lasts until the end of its next turn or until it uses an Interact action to adjust its grip.



PUTRESCENT GLOB

ITEM 7

UNCOMMON CONJURATION CONSUMABLE MAGICAL TALISMAN

Price 65 gp

Usage affixed to a weapon; Bulk –

Activation \diamond envision; **Trigger** You damage a creature that is sickened 1 with a Strike using the affixed weapon;

Requirements You are an expert with the affixed weapon.

This repulsive, hairy glob dangles from the end of your weapon. When you activate the putrescent glob, the creature you damaged must succeed at a DC 23 Fortitude save or its sickened condition increases to sickened 2, and it can't reduce its sickened condition until the end of its next turn. On a critical failure, it's also slowed 1 until the end of its next turn.

SIXFINGERS ELIXIR

ITEM 5+

UNCOMMON ALCHEMICAL CONSUMABLE ELIXIR POLYMORPH

Usage held in 1 hand; Bulk L

Activation \diamond Interact

This gritty, spicy fluid causes you to grow a sixth finger on each hand and gives you a spiderlike grip. You gain a +2 item bonus to your Reflex DC to keep from being Disarmed and a climb Speed of 20 feet for the listed duration.

Type lesser; **Level** 5; **Price** 25 gp

The duration is 10 minutes.

Type moderate; **Level** 11; **Price** 250 gp

The duration is 1 hour.

Type greater; **Level** 17; **Price** 2,500 gp

The duration is 8 hours.

SLIME WHIP

ITEM 7

UNCOMMON MAGICAL TRANSMUTATION

Price 360 gp

Usage held in 1 hand; Bulk 1

This thick, greasy *+1 striking shifting whip* is made from a slimy pseudopod. You don't take the usual -2 circumstance penalty to your attack rolls when using the *slime whip* to make a lethal attack. The whip's form can be changed just like any weapon with the *shifting* rune, but it reverts to its original form as soon as it isn't wielded. When in its whip form, you can use the following action.

Activate \diamond command, Interact; **Frequency** once per hour;

Effect For 1 round, the *slime whip* deals acid damage rather than slashing damage. If the attack deals persistent damage, the persistent damage is also acid damage instead of its usual type.

SLIPPERY RIBBON

ITEM 1

UNCOMMON CONSUMABLE MAGICAL TALISMAN TRANSMUTATION

Price 12 gp

Usage affixed to armor; Bulk –

Activation \diamond envision; **Trigger** You succeed at an Acrobatics check to Tumble Through, but you don't have enough Speed to move all the way through the enemy's space; **Requirements** You are an expert in Acrobatics.

This ribbon is constantly greasy to the touch and stains the armor it's affixed to. When you activate the *slippery ribbon*, your Speed increases by an amount necessary for you to move all the way through the enemy's space.

WAND OF NOISOME ACID

ITEM 6+

UNCOMMON ACID EVOCATION MAGICAL WAND

Usage held in 1 hand; Bulk L

This greasy stick emits a stomach-churning scent when held in a hand.

Activate Cast a Spell; **Frequency** once per day, plus overcharge; **Effect** You cast *acid arrow* of the indicated level. A creature that takes acid damage from this spell must succeed at a Fortitude save against your spell DC or become sickened 1.

Type 2nd-level spell; **Level** 6; **Price** 250 gp

Type 4th-level spell; **Level** 10; **Price** 1,000 gp

Type 6th-level spell; **Level** 14; **Price** 4,500 gp

Type 8th-level spell; **Level** 18; **Price** 24,000 gp

Craft Requirements Supply a casting of *acid arrow* of the appropriate level.



WAND OF TEEMING GHOSTS

ITEM 6+

UNCOMMON MAGICAL NECROMANCY WAND

Usage held in 1 hand; Bulk L

This pale wooden wand is carved to resemble a thigh bone with metal caps at each end. Ghostly tendrils seem to swirl around it every so often.

Activate Cast a Spell; **Frequency** once per day, plus overcharge; **Effect** You cast *false life* of the indicated level. During the duration of the spell, wisps that resemble spirits flit around you as long as you have any temporary Hit Points from *false life*, and you can use the following action.

Activation \diamond envision; **Trigger** You successfully impart the frightened 1 condition to a creature; **Requirements** You have temporary Hit Point; **Effect** You end *false life* and increase the creature's frightened condition value to 2.

Type 2nd-level spell; **Level** 6; **Price** 250 gp

Type 3rd-level spell; **Level** 8; **Price** 500 gp

Type 4th-level spell; **Level** 10; **Price** 1,000 gp

Type 5th-level spell; **Level** 12; **Price** 2,000 gp

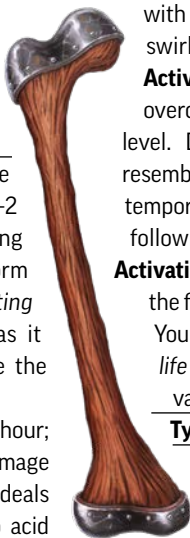
Type 6th-level spell; **Level** 14; **Price** 4,500 gp

Type 7th-level spell; **Level** 16; **Price** 10,000 gp

Type 8th-level spell; **Level** 18; **Price** 24,000 gp

Type 9th-level spell; **Level** 20; **Price** 70,000 gp

Craft Requirements Supply a casting of *false life* of the appropriate level.



AHVOTHIAN



HUNTERS OF AHVOTH-KOR

The realms of the Abyss are vast, and most have complex ecosystems that supplement, or even predate, the demons that lair within them.

The Abyssal realm of Ahvoth-Kor is the jungle-covered domain of the demon lord of strength and tyranny, Angazhan. But Ahvoth-Kor had life before Angazhan came to rule it, and the smartest of these creatures were the cunning hunters called ahvothians. Today, the ahvothians are fully subjugated by the Ravenous King and serve him faithfully in Ahvoth-Kor and beyond.

Ahvothians are feral and cunning fiends from an Abyssal realm of jungles, dinosaurs, and relentless brutality. They resemble humanoid dinosaurs with narrow, fanged heads similar to raptors and solid, heavy legs like sauropods. Relentless trackers and survivalists, ahvothians are skilled at navigating jungles and are most commonly encountered stalking prey or operating out of fortified ruins. Ahvothians have an uncanny affinity with reptiles, and they often use dinosaurs—particularly carnivores such as allosauruses or deinonychuses—as hunting companions or guard animals. Although dangerous in large groups, ahvothians have such a strong desire to assert dominance over others that ahvothian armies frequently fall to infighting and bloody battles for dominance within days, or even hours. The mightiest ahvothians might lead dozens of their kin and herds of carnivorous dinosaurs.

AHVOTHIAN

CREATURE 7

UNCOMMON CE MEDIUM FIEND

Perception +18; darkvision

Languages Abyssal, Common; *speaks with animals*

Skills Athletics +19, Crafting +11, Intimidation +15 (+17 against humanoids), Religion +11, Survival +17

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

Items javelins (3), longspear, trophies (animal, beast, and humanoid)

AC 25; **Fort** +18, **Ref** +12, **Will** +15

HP 160; **Resistances** fire 10;

Weaknesses cold 5, good 5

Attack of Opportunity ☞

Speed 30 feet; *freedom of movement*

Melee ♦ jaws +18; **Damage** 2d10+8 piercing

Melee ♦ longspear +18 (reach 10 feet); **Damage** 1d8+8 piercing plus wicked trophies

Ranged ♦ javelin +14 (thrown 30 feet);

Damage 1d6+8 piercing plus Wicked Trophies

Divine Innate Spells DC 23; **4th** *creation*; **3rd** *earthbind* (at will), *fear* (at will); **2nd** *death knell* (at will); **1st** *charm* (at will); **Constant (4th)** *freedom of movement*, *speaks with animals*

Reptile Master When an ahvothian uses an innate spell against a reptile, the DC is 27 rather than 23.

Wicked Trophies An ahvothian chooses a creature type (such as animal, celestial, or humanoid) from which they currently carry a trophy from a past kill.

Their weapon Strikes against creatures of that type deal an additional 1d10 damage and they gain a +2 status bonus on Intimidation checks against creatures of that type.

The ahvothian doesn't lose these bonuses if they lose the trophies. Once per day, an ahvothian can change the creature type of their wicked trophies in a ritual that takes 1 hour. Nearly all ahvothians encountered on the Material Plane have selected humanoids as the focus of their wicked trophies.



FUMING SLUDGE

The slurry from alchemical experiments is often as flammable as it is toxic. In especially volatile cases, a fuming sludge can form from ignited pools of unstable alchemical runoff. It resembles a charcoal-colored slurry studded with tiny embers, and it continually emits a thin haze of accelerant that amplifies the fires it starts.

A fuming sludge must consume the base chemicals of living creatures to survive and can instinctively identify the complex molecules found in most animate creatures. The first meal of many a fuming sludge is its accidental creator, but it soon moves on to hunt in lush forests or densely populated settlements. A fuming sludge can extrude a powerful pseudopod to strike its victims, but it can also eject portions of its body with peristaltic contractions. These rapidly-cooling globs of goo slow down fleeing prey, but the cold, crusty residue can also alert canny explorers to their presence.

FUMING SLUDGE

CREATURE 7

UNCOMMON N MEDIUM MINDLESS OOZE

Perception +11; chemical sense 60 feet, no vision

Skills Athletics +19

Str +6, **Dex** -3, **Con** +5, **Int** -5, **Wis** +0, **Cha** -5

Chemical Sense A fuming sludge detects nearby living and undead creatures by their complex chemical compositions, but it can't detect elementals or other creatures composed of a single element.

Smoldering Haze (aura, fire) 15 feet. The fuming sludge constantly emits incendiary smoke that creates concealment around it. The smoke doesn't impair the fuming sludge's chemical sense. A creature that enters the aura or begins its turn in the aura becomes sickened 1 (DC 25 Fortitude negates) and cannot recover from persistent fire damage for 1 round. It is then temporarily immune to the sickening effect of the smoldering haze for 1 minute. A creature that is currently holding its breath, that doesn't need to breathe, or that's immune to poison is immune to the aura's sickened effect but not the concealment or inability to recover from persistent fire damage.

AC 16; **Fort** +18, **Ref** +8, **Will** +11

HP 160; **Immunities** critical hits, fire, mental, piercing, precision, slashing, unconscious, visual; **Weaknesses** cold 5

Attack of Opportunity ↻

Speed 20 feet, climb 20 feet

Melee ✦ pseudopod +17, **Damage** 2d10+6 bludgeoning plus 1d8 persistent fire and Grab

Ranged ✦ ejected glob +17 (brutal, range increment 20 feet), **Damage** 3d6+6 bludgeoning plus 1d8 persistent fire and cooling glob

Constrict ✦ 1d8+6 bludgeoning plus 1d8 persistent fire, DC 24

Cooling Glob A fuming sludge's ejected globs cling to targets. A creature hit by an ejected glob Strike is encumbered for 1 round. If the attack was a critical hit, the creature is instead restrained for 1 round (Escape DC 24).



THE FIRES OF MALICE

Some fuming sludges are not created alchemically but arise spontaneously when the exceptionally spiteful die and are buried in swampy ground. Residual bits of ire from the spiteful soul remain within the decomposing corpse, eventually igniting into a fuming sludge. A fuming sludge that originates this way loses the mindless trait and immunity to mental damage, but its Strikes deal an additional 1d6 mental damage to creatures that injured it within the last minute.



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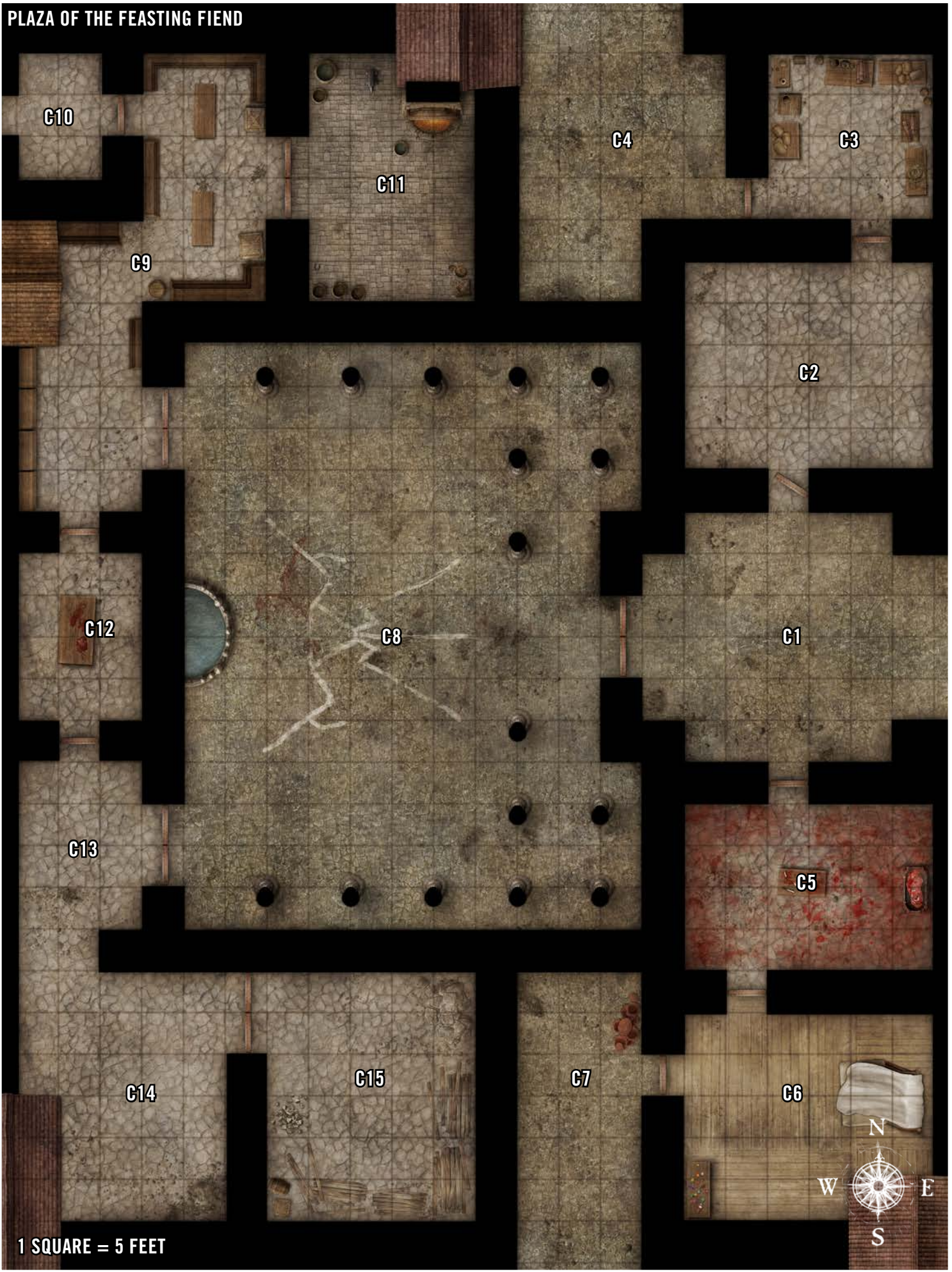
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PLAZA OF THE FEASTING FIEND



C10

C4

C3

C11

C9

C2

C12

C8

C1

C13

C5

C14

C15

C7

C6

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



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US \$22.99
ISBN 978-1-64078-272-3



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