



PIOLUS™

THE NIGHT OF DISSOLUTION



An Adventure By
MONTE COOK

For Characters of 4th to 9th Level

MALHAVOC PRESS®



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AN ADVENTURE IN SIX PARTS

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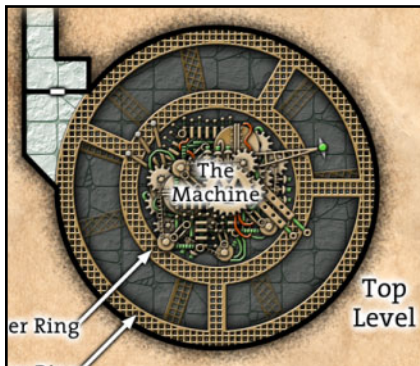
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Introduction:

ONE NIGHT OF DISSOLUTION, MANY NIGHTS OF ADVENTURE

The city of Ptolus is about to face some of the darkest foes it has ever known—and your player characters are right in the middle of it all!



Iltumar Shon, page 30
Bull and Bear Armory:
 Ptolus, page 201
Delver's Square: Ptolus, page 198

Barbarian tribes: Ptolus, page 41

Following the threads of a hidden conspiracy in this adventure, the PCs find themselves up against insane cultists, wild chaos magic, and horrors from the primordial days of the world. The quest culminates in their attempt to stave off the Night of Dissolution: a dark time long foretold when the slumbering Galchutt will awaken in their hidden lairs deep below the city and bring catastrophe and woe to the world.

The Night of Dissolution is an adventure for 4th-level player characters that most likely will take them to 9th level. The events in this book involve investigation, intrigue, action, and dungeon exploration.

This adventure was written as a companion to *Ptolus: Monte Cook's City by the Spire*, a d20 campaign sourcebook describing the fantasy city of Ptolus. It is designed to pick up right where the adventures in Chapter 33 of that book left off, although the story arc of *The Night of Dissolution* deals with a different focus. This book is a collection of six linked scenarios, each of which could be used separately.

The scenarios here come directly from my original Ptolus Campaign. Many brave player characters fought against the insidious spread of

chaos over a great many game sessions, some surviving, and some not. Using this product in its entirety is sure to fill many game sessions of your own with action and intrigue.

RUNNING THE NIGHT OF DISSOLUTION

This adventure deals with the insidious chaos cults of Ptolus that revere the Galchutt, either directly or indirectly. Read Chapter 4: Cosmology and Religion in *Ptolus* for background information about the cults and their evil lords. The DM should also be very familiar with chaositech (see Chapter 30 of *Ptolus*, as well as the *Chaositech* sourcebook on the CD-Rom included with *Ptolus*).

BEFORE THE ADVENTURE BEGINS

At some point earlier in the campaign, the player characters should have met a young man named Iltumar Shon, who works at the Bull and Bear Armory in Midtown. This eager apprentice armorsmith wants nothing more than to live a life of excitement like the adventurers he sees around him every day in Delver's Square.

Furthermore, PCs should hear rumors that the barbarian tribes of the far eastern lands

are on the move again, crossing the Grey Mountains and heading west. Most people say they believe the horde is on its way to sack Tarsis once again, as it did a few years ago.

THE FLOW OF THE ADVENTURE

At the start of this adventure, the player characters find themselves in need of a key to open a magical chest that they found in a recent encounter. They learn that this key lies in a long-abandoned brothel named Pythoness House. Ten years ago, this establishment served as a front for one of the early chaos cults, and a trove of magical items is said to lie within it still; one of them is the key the PCs need. At the house, they learn some interesting tidbits about the still extant (and growing) cult and the dangers it might represent. A final encounter ensures a personal enmity between the PCs and a powerful cultist named Wuntad.

Meanwhile, a young man the adventurers know, Iltumar Shon, gets caught up with the wrong crowd. The PCs learn he has been spending time with a group called the Brotherhood of Ptolus. However, based on facts they discover while in Pythoness House, they know that the brotherhood is actually a chaos cult.

Information from Iltumar leads them to a secret meeting of this cult, the Brothers of Venom. Once they break up that ring of conspirators, the player characters discover more about other cult cells and the Night of Dissolution itself, when the “Lords of Chaos” will awaken and wreak havoc.

It’s at this point in the adventure that the party learns that a force of barbarians from the far east, beyond the Grey Mountains, is on its way to Ptolus. Before they can deal with that information, however, the PCs must stop Iltumar before he gets involved with the dreaded Surgeon in the Shadows, Kinion Luth. This mysterious chaositech surgeon transforms others into monstrosities with strange powers. Iltumar has gone to find him, willingly or perhaps not. Either way, the player characters must locate Luth and possibly put a stop to his insidious operation once and for all.

Eventually the PCs learn the location of the Temple of Deep Chaos, a major cult gathering point and the focus of two terrible chaotic plots—one to transform innocent commoners into horrible monstrosities using a magical poison, and the other to store chaotic energies in a huge chaositech machine in order to revive one of the Galchutt’s ancient servitors named Mrathrach. The temple lies beneath Oldtown.

At around this time, the barbarian horde arrives at the gates of Ptolus.

Worse, within the Temple of Deep Chaos, the PCs learn that the Cult of the Tolling Bell, the

most powerful of the chaos groups, is unifying not just the various cults but the Forsaken and perhaps even the Fallen for a terrible ritual to bring upon the prophesied Night of Dissolution. The adventurers must find Shigmaa Wuntad, the leader of the Tolling Bell cult, in his secret lair beneath the Temple of the Fifty-Three Gods of Chance in the Temple District. If they don’t put a stop to this ritual, it will start a chain of events that could bring an end to . . . well, everything.

Moreover, Wuntad has kidnapped the barbarian king and holds him in secret to draw the barbarians to Ptolus and cause even more chaos. Freeing the king can bring an end to the conflict before it really starts.

USING THIS BOOK

Throughout *The Night of Dissolution*, spells, items, or monsters introduced in this adventure, *Chaositech*, or *Ptolus: Monte Cook’s City by the Spire* are noted in the outside panels. Otherwise, all references to spells, feats, and other rules are from the three Core Rulebooks: the *Player’s Handbook*, *DMG*, and *MM*.

The Night of Dissolution assumes that the DM has access to the full *Ptolus* book (or its PDF editions) and that the players have access to *A Player’s Guide to Ptolus*. The *Chaositech* sourcebook, which you might find helpful as you run this adventure, is found on the CD-Rom included with *Ptolus*. It’s also available as a separate print product.

Bonus source material and ideas to augment the adventures in *The Night of Dissolution* appear on Monte Cook’s website. To find the links to these free web enhancements, visit www.ptolus.com.

This adventure book is protected content except for items specifically called out as Open Gaming Content on page 95 in the Appendix. Open content is not otherwise marked in the text of this book.

OTHER PTOLUS SCENARIOS

As previously noted, *The Night of Dissolution* is designed to be inserted into a campaign right after the player characters play through the adventures found in Chapter 33 of *Ptolus*. In addition, DMs will find *The Banewarrens* adventure for 6th-level characters on the CD-Rom.

Ambitious DMs might wish to combine the two adventures and thread them together. Basically, this would mean having the characters start with *The Night of Dissolution* and move into *The Banewarrens* when they reach 6th level at the conclusion of Chapter 2. Next they embark upon Chapters 1 to 4 of *The Banewarrens*, followed by Chapter 3 of *The Night of Dissolution*. Then, use Chapter 5 of *The Banewarrens*, with

Forsaken: Ptolus, page 112
Fallen: Ptolus, page 110
Temple of the Fifty-Three Gods of Chance, page 80

Tarsis: Ptolus, page 44

Don’t care for “save the world” scenarios or anything that even resembles them? Just run everything but the last chapter of this adventure. Or, you could simply let the characters learn of the barbarian king and attempt to rescue him to halt the horde. With this spin on the scenario, the chaos cults are a real thorn in the city’s side, but not a threat to all creation.

Brothers of Venom:
 Ptolus, page 71
Lords of Chaos: Ptolus, page 60

Kinion Luth, page 40

You can find A Player’s Guide to Ptolus as Chapter 1 of Ptolus: Monte Cook’s City by the Spire. It is also available as a separate player aid at your local game store, and is downloadable for free from <www.ptolus.com>.

Temple of Deep Chaos, page 42
Mrathrach, page 69

Tolling Bell cult: Ptolus, page 73

FROM MY CAMPAIGN TO YOURS

You can never predict what players will do. In my campaign, the PCs skipped over the entire Pythoness House section (Chapter 1) and went straight into the other parts of the adventure. However, I was still able to use all of Pythoness House in my second Ptolus Campaign, so no harm done.

Ibulli the Pactlord, page 54
Navanna Vladaam:
Ptolus, page 97

Temple of the Rat God:
Ptolus, page 390
Temple of the Ebon Hand cult:
Ptolus, page 379
Lilith: Ptolus, page 111
Dark Reliquary:
Ptolus, page 238

The Commissar: Ptolus,
page 149

House Vladaam: Ptolus, page 96
The Vai: Ptolus, page 139
Balacazars: Ptolus, page 100
Malkuth: Ptolus, page 129
The Shuul: Ptolus, page 131
Brotherhood of Redemption:
Ptolus, page 107

Shigmaa Wuntad, page 86
Rosegate House:
Ptolus, page 298



City Watch: Ptolus, page 150
Church of Lothian:
Ptolus, page 64
Twelve Commanders:
Ptolus, page 148

Chapters 4 and 5 of *The Night of Dissolution* next, and then Chapters 6 and 7 of *The Banewarrens*. Finally, use Chapter 6 of *The Night of Dissolution*, and then run the rest of *The Banewarrens* adventure. Of course, blending these two adventures will lead to the characters being higher level than expected at the end; adjust encounter levels as needed for the later chapters of both books.

Ibulli the Pactlord in Chapter 4 of *The Night of Dissolution* presents a possible crossover link between these two books, as does Navanna Vladaam, a villain in *The Banewarrens*, as she reveres the Galchutt.

Alternatively, a DM could use various sections of the *Ptolus* book as side scenarios to complement *The Night of Dissolution*. For example, in Pythoness House (Chapter 1), the PCs may find clues to lead them to the Temple of the Rat God and/or the Temple of the Ebon Hand (*Ptolus*, Chapter 17: Temple District). A note from Lilith of the Fallen found in the Temple of Deep Chaos (Chapter 4) might take the PCs to the Dark Reliquary (*Ptolus*, Chapter 11: Necropolis).

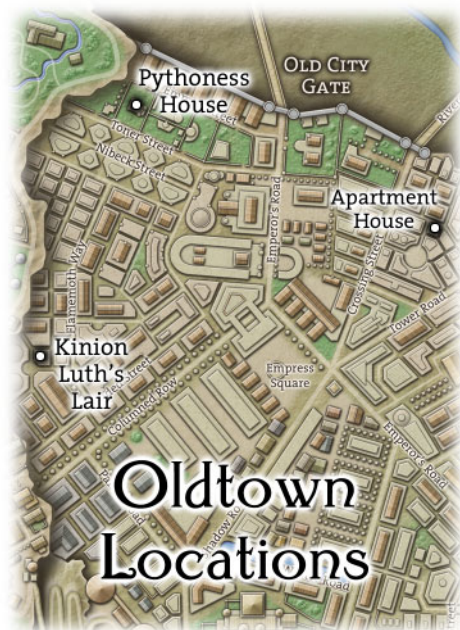
EXPANDING THIS ADVENTURE

A DM could use the information found in *Ptolus: Monte Cook's City by the Spire* to expand *The Night of Dissolution*. For example, House Vladaam might get involved, as its members secretly serve the Galchutt, or the Vai and even the Balacazars could take a more active role. The player characters might go to the Malkuth or even the Shuul for help, or bring monsters to the Brotherhood of Redemption. They might find clues in the chaos temples that send their investigations into the Necropolis (or elsewhere) to confront the Forsaken. The DM may wish to create even more cult safe houses or secret temples throughout the city.

THE INVESTITURE OPTION

As with a great many urban adventures, one pitfall that DMs may encounter here is that the player characters might find a plot hook that should lead them to the next part of the scenario but, instead of seizing it, they just turn over the information to the authorities and assume that they will take care of the problem.

A solution to this problem is to have the authorities invest the PCs with the responsibility of taking care of the problem. The first time in *The Night of Dissolution* when the characters bring information about the chaos cults to the City Watch, the Church of Lothian, or whomever, they are contacted the very next day by a woman named Carrina Juten (female human fighter5), a dark-haired Prustan special investigator working for the Twelve Commanders. She tells (not asks)



This map shows the location of important sites from Chapters 1, 3, and 4.

the PCs that they have been invested by the authority of the Commissar with the power and responsibilities of Imperial Investigators. In this role, they have been commanded to spearhead the investigation into the chaos cults in the city. As Imperial Investigators, each receives a special card to add to their Imperial Identification papers, identifying them as such. They also receive a stipend of 75 gp per month, each. They report directly to Carrina. She never accompanies them on their missions, but she does record everything that they discover and continually urges them to investigate further. She can even grant them bonuses for a job well done (usually from 500 gp to 1,000 gp). She constantly assures the characters that the Commissar appreciates their work and their sacrifices. If they ask for help or for someone else to take care of something, Carrina tells them, "That's what the Commissar pays you for."

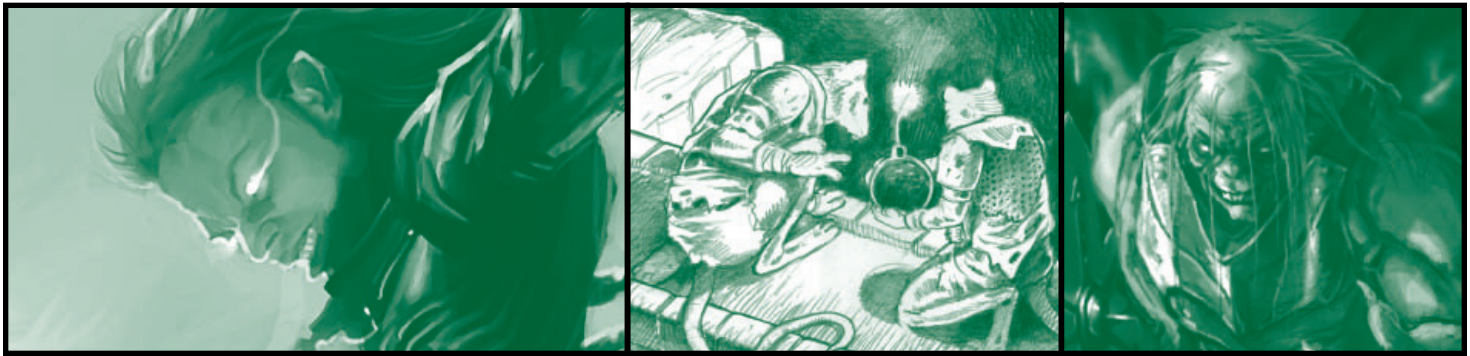
At the end of the adventure, if the adventurers defeat Shigmaa Wuntad, they are granted a meeting with the Commissar himself, who congratulates them and thanks them personally. He also offers them a boon from the city: ownership of Rosegate House in the Nobles' Quarter.

The adventure is written so that you can use the investiture option or not. It does not assume the PCs are Imperial Investigators.



Chapter 1: PYTHONESS HOUSE

As the adventure opens, the characters discover the secrets of Pythoness House, a haunted oracle and former brothel that hides a trove of weapons vital in the fight against the Cults of Chaos.



Pythoness House is an old brothel/oracle that once served as a front for a chaos cult. The player characters need to go there to find a particular item, and in so doing they learn something of the chaos cults. Ultimately they may make some real enemies, developing a mutual hatred that will carry them through the rest of the adventure.

GETTING STARTED

The PCs may have just finished Adventure 4: Shilukar's Lair from Chapter 33 in the *Ptolus* book, or they may have undertaken some other adventure to get them here. Either way, by the time this adventure begins, they should have had plenty of downtime to rest and be ready to jump back in.

The party may or may not have experience with chaos cults, ratmen, and the like. The scenario in this chapter assumes they do not.

THE HOOK

This hook makes clear to the player characters that they need a magic item called *Neveran's all-key*. After some research, they can discover that it was most recently in the hands of a bizarre cult called the **Crimson Coil**, and that these cultists kept it in a now-abandoned brothel called Pythoness House.

The Setup (EL 5)

The group encounters a pair of ogres with a chest. DMs can stage this encounter in one of many different ways.

Encounter Option 1: The PCs, already exploring the subterranean regions below Ptolus on an unrelated matter, come upon the ogres carrying the chest away from where they found it (even deeper underground) to their lair. The ogres are extremely protective of their treasure and fight to the death to protect it. This is a good ending to an otherwise fairly routine or even entirely uneventful underground exploratory mission. Perhaps the adventurers got a tip from an acquaintance in a tavern, or maybe they found an old map. Either way, this section of the Dungeon has been cleared by previous delvers, and the PCs decide to head home, only to run into the ogres.

Encounter Option 2: The characters hear a strange noise one evening down a dark alleyway. If they investigate, they find two ogres moving a heavy chest, trying to keep a low profile while transporting their burden through town.

Encounter Option 3: The PCs talk to a woman named Ireale Tesimal (half-elf expert2) in a tavern, shop, or some other such locale. She tells them that she overheard a merchant named Kellisan Faymar (male human expert6) say that

DM TIPS

Before this adventure starts, have the group members encounter an eager Itumar Shon (see page 30) in Delver's Square, either at the Bull and Bear or in a tavern like the Ghostly Minstrel. They may not think much of him now, but he will become important later.



*Chaos cults: Ptolus, page 71
Ratmen: Ptolus, page 625*

Crimson Coil: Ptolus, page 71

The Story of the Chest

A cleric of Nivaler, god of secrets, named Faraban Kagestos was researching the Five Lost Lore fifteen years ago, and attempted to master the secret of the first fire with the help of a sorcerer named Alestia Fornol. Together, the two created many powerful magic items based on fire, but never actually mastered the lost lore. They sealed up some of their creations in a chest before one last attempt at summoning the “first fire.” Finally, they succeeded, but this uniquely powerful flame consumed them, and its magical heat seared the chest in a way that no normal fire would, sealing it forever.

The chest was stolen by looting bandits thirteen years ago. They moved it, but of course could not get it open. Soon the legend of the “unopenable” chest grew, and people began to wonder about its contents. Eventually, the chest fell into the hands of a Harrow elf named Ealistar Fallingeye (male monk/sorcerer6), who sold it to the human merchant Kellisan Faymar for 4,000 gp. The ogres are Ealistar’s henchmen.

You can find the location of Pythoness House marked on the map on page 6.

Dragonscales: Ptolus, page 359

Library: See Ptolus, page 319 (City Library), page 322 (Delver’s Guild Library), or page 332 (Sages’ Guildhouse).

Crimson Coil: Ptolus, page 71

two ogres were bringing him a very valuable cargo that night, and that he was paying them with two child slaves, presumably for them to eat. Ireale says she is afraid to go to the authorities, but that she had to tell someone. She tells them how to find Kellisan’s shop in the South Market.

The truth is that, while Kellisan is no angel, he is paying the ogres in gold. Ireale hates Kellisan for betraying her in a love affair and wants to see his valuable shipment get intercepted (and wouldn’t mind if harm should come to Kellisan).

No matter how the encounter begins, eventually the characters meet the ogres with the chest. When this happens, the ogres threaten them (in halting Common), telling them to mind their own business if they don’t want to die. One ogre even throws a javelin at them to chase them off.

Ogres (2): hp 31 and 40; see MM.

The Chest

The chest measures about three feet long, two feet wide, and two feet tall and weighs three hundred fifty pounds. It appears to be made of wood bound in bronze, with small bronze plates set into its back and sides; images of winged horses are engraved upon the plates. A hefty, built-in lock is obvious at the front of the chest.

The chest radiates a strong aura of abjuration magic, and its lead-lined interior foils most attempts to learn anything about the contents. At least for characters with the PC’s resources, it seems impervious to harm and magic. No lock-pick will pick the lock, no amount of force will pry open the lid, remove the hinges, or stave in the sides. No standard magic—like *knock* or a *chime of opening*—opens the chest. Only the special magical key or a *limited wish*, *wish*, or *miracle* opens the chest (or something more dramatic, like an artifact or the intervention of a divine being). Even divination spells are somewhat foiled, because they always indicate that it is impossible to open the lock or the chest.

After the adventurers try and fail to open the chest, allow them to attempt a Knowledge (arcana) check (DC 20). With a successful check, a PC remembers hearing or reading about a local minor artifact called *Neveran’s all-key*, which could open *any* lock, regardless of the magic involved. Doing research in a library or speaking with a sage or other knowledgeable person also turns up that information, as well as hints to the key’s location. A Gather Information, bardic knowledge, Knowledge (arcana), Knowledge (local), or Knowledge (history) check (DC 22) produces the following information: A bizarre cult called the *Crimson Coil*, whose god or religious practices are unknown, last held *Neveran’s all-key* and kept it in a now-abandoned brothel called Pythoness House in Oldtown.

A Knowledge (religion) check (DC 22) reveals information about the *Crimson Coil* (see *Ptolus*, Chapter 4: Cosmology and Religion). Another Gather Information, bardic knowledge, Knowledge (local), or Knowledge (history) check (DC 20) allows a character to recall that Pythoness House was once a manor home, built before there was a Nobles’ Quarter for the rich to occupy, and that it has changed hands many times. A DC 25 check reveals some of the house’s long and strange history (see below, but keep the details available to the players general at this point).

Opening the Chest

When the PCs open the chest, they find . . .

- a +1 *heavy steel shield of fire resistance*
- a +1 *flaming flail*
- a *wand of fireball* (5th level, 50 charges)
- fifty flasks of alchemist’s fire

The three magic items are special in that each must be doused in alchemist’s fire once per day to retain their power. If twenty-four hours goes by without an application, they lose their power until this requirement is met.

Once the chest is opened, it becomes a normal, nonmagical chest henceforth.

HISTORY OF PYTHONESS HOUSE

The building now known as Pythoness House has a long history and has been damaged, added onto, and renovated many times.

Approximately Two Hundred Fifty Years Ago:

The building that will be Pythoness House is completed by a wealthy human woman named Darma Kollotis. This is her manor home, and after she dies, the house passes through a number of her descendants.

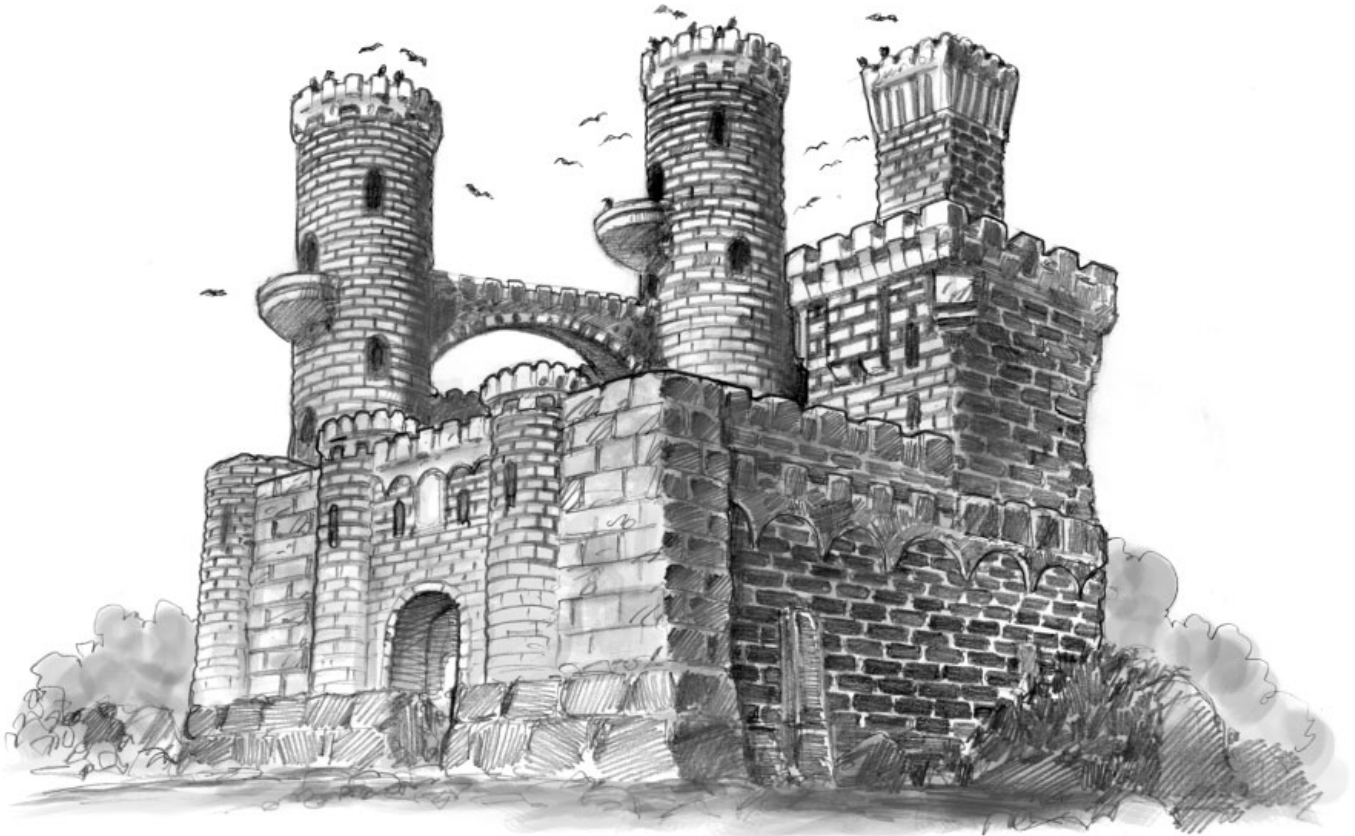
Approximately One Hundred Ninety Years

Ago: Brigands seeking the Kollotis family jewels attack the house. Among those slain during the raid is a young cleric named Taunell.

Eighty-Three Years Ago: The manor becomes the home of an elf historian named Navaen Blueflight. He is an expert player of the game *Dragonscales* and won the house in a game with Erwar Kollotis. The house, badly in need of repairs, is significantly renovated.

Twenty Years Ago: Navaen Blueflight leaves the city to live in the Moonsilver Forest. The house sits empty for many years, eventually becoming the demesne of squatters and minor criminals.

Five Years Ago: Two human women, Maquent Dellisaria and Radanna Scalth, set up Pythoness House as a popular albeit illegal brothel with an odd twist. The prostitutes working here claim to be able to see the future during sexual intercourse; members of the clientele frequently pay for sex and a “reading” of their future at the



same time. Only Maquent could really divine the future, however (with varying degrees of success). She created a special divination room (Area 18) where she could do so.

One of the two proprietors, Radanna, is a chaos cultist and eventually invites other members of the **Crimson Coil** to use Pythoness House as a front for their activities. The Crimson Coil members use the **underground level** to store powerful items of chaotic power, saving them until something they call “the Night of Dissolution.”

The leader of the Crimson Coil at the time is named **Wuntad**, although he personally spends little time at the house.

Four Years Ago: Crimson Coil cultists (including Radanna and a few of the other prostitutes whom she managed to convert) perform a ritual that slays one of their members (a human man named Segginal Fesbon) and infuses his spirit into the house to become its guardian. A **statue of Segginal** is crafted and placed in Area 8.

Three Years Ago: The **Knights of the Pale** raid Pythoness House, killing most of the cultists and demons and driving out the rest. A number of the prostitutes who are also cultists (such as Radanna) die in the attack, while the others simply flee. Intent on pursuing those who escape, the knights do not scour the house as thoroughly as they might have; they fail to kill all the inhabi-

tants (including the demon in Area 41) and destroy all the unholy symbols (such as in Area 35). Instead, they use a powerful, singular spell that denies entrance to any of the chaos cultists who exist at the time and consider the job done.

Loss of the house is a terrible blow to the Crimson Coil cult, which has still not truly recovered. Wuntad escapes but joins the **Tolling Bell cult**, as do many of the surviving Crimson Coil members at the time—even those who were not at Pythoness House.

Today: Denied access to the weapons stored beneath Pythoness House, the remaining cultists write off the location, thinking that perhaps one day, when some of their newer recruits gain enough power, they can go inside and retrieve the weapons stored below the house.

Meanwhile, **ratmen** and other undesirables begin to take up residence. Radanna and some other former residents haunt the place as undead creatures. The ghost of the cleric Taunell from long ago inhabits the gatehouse (Area 22).

THE CHAOS SPIRIT

Thanks to a ritual performed by members of the Crimson Coil, the undead spirit of one of their powerful priests now dwells within Pythoness House. The focal point of this haunting spirit’s essence lies within the statue in Area 8. When

Should a character decide to jump off a wall or climb out a window during Condition #1 (see next page), the DM should obliquely warn the group of the chaos spirit’s effect on the place. “The ground suddenly looks much farther down than it should be, and the walls seem more slippery and crumbling.”

*Crimson Coil: Ptolus, page 71
Underground level, page 23*

Tolling Bell cult: Ptolus, page 73

Wuntad, page 27

Ratmen: Ptolus, page 625

Statue of Segginal, page 14

Knights of the Pale: Ptolus, page 125

DM TIPS**Using the Conditions to Maximum Effect**

Let the player characters discover for themselves that they are trapped in Pythoness House before the condition changes for the first time. Ideally, don't allow them to associate the statue in Area 8 with the voice until they have been there a while, and don't allow them to associate the voice with the change in condition for even longer. Once the PCs learn they are trapped inside, it may take them quite some time to think to recheck that status, even after the condition has changed. Likewise, they may not think to check the statue when they hear the voice until they fully realize the connection. Such disconnects keep the mystery going longer and heighten the characters' eventual discovery of the phenomena's true meaning.

Subterranean level, page 23



The chaos statue

Maquent's Journal, page 91

someone enters Pythoness House, the spirit stirs and activates Condition #1, as described below. Thereafter, at random intervals (usually every 3d100 minutes), the condition changes to another random condition (or even the same one—roll 1d3). To herald the change in condition, the spirit animates the statue and speaks through it; one can hear the low, rumbling voice throughout the house.

Condition #1: The spirit says, “Come to me . . .” It is now impossible to leave the house via the main entrance. A *wall of force* seals the main exit. One can jump or climb out a window, the balcony door in Area 18, or off the top of the wall. However, anyone who jumps and falls suffers *maximum* damage from the vengeful spirit. In addition, Climb Difficulty Classes increase by +5. Magically flying or levitating will get someone out of the house safely.

Of course, the player characters could just wait until the spirit changes the condition.

Condition #2: The spirit says, “I must feed....” During this condition, anyone who touches the statue in Area 8 suffers 1 point of temporary damage to a random ability score. Touching it again (and each subsequent time) during this same condition period results in the character suffering 1 point of permanent drain to the same score. There is no saving throw.

Condition #3: The spirit says, “Chaos is the key....” During this condition, a secret panel opens in the statue's stomach, revealing a depression where one can place the chaos spirit key (see below). Once the key is inside, the statue slides forward, exposing a hole down into the **subterranean level** of the house. A change of condition causes the statue to move back into place and closes the panel, forcing the chaos spirit key out and onto the floor.

THE CHAOS SPIRIT KEY

The key to the chaos spirit's statue is a disk about five inches across. It bears a red spiral symbol: the “crimson coil.” A Knowledge (religion) check (DC 20) reveals this to be the cult's sign. When placed in a depression in the stomach of the statue in Area 8 (during Condition #3), the statue moves to reveal a ladder down to the subterranean level.

When the PCs arrive, the key is in two pieces. The Cobbledman (see Area 33) has one piece, and the other is sealed away in the northeast tower (Area 43). **Maquent's Journal** provides clues to finding and using the key.

The key carries a faint aura of transmutation. If anyone removes it from Pythoness House, the chaos spirit can go with it to haunt a new location—any location the key moves to. The effects of the new haunting are up to the DM.

OTHER CHAOS SPIRIT EFFECTS

Throughout their time in Pythoness House, the player characters experience some odd phenomena.

Strange Sounds: They hear strange whispers, as well as creaks, groans, and moans, always coming from one or two rooms away. Sometimes they sound like a creature moving around, sometimes like a person speaking or in pain. The noises are never intelligible. Occasionally, make the PCs attempt Listen checks (DC 15) to hear these noises. Other times, allow everyone to hear.

Unexpected Movement: The characters see things move. Small objects—braziers, candlesticks, and so on—slide across tables or the floor. Chairs fall over on their own. Tables rattle for a moment, then stop. Doors open and close. Occasionally, make the PCs attempt Spot checks (DC 15) to note these occurrences. Other times, allow everyone to see. Very occasionally, have these moving effects threaten a PC. In such a case, an object flies through the air at a character or drops off a high shelf, making a +10 attack against the character and inflicting 1d3 points of damage on a hit. (This proves particularly effective when the PCs have grown blasé about the strange phenomena. They need to feel that what's going on around them is not only creepy but actually threatening.)

Odd Shadows: The adventurers see strange shadows moving in their peripheral vision. They glimpse ghostly apparitions for just a moment, only to see them fade right before their eyes. Always make them attempt a Spot check (DC 17) to see the shadows.

These effects all result directly from the spirit infused in the house but are enhanced by the other ghosts and undead spirits here as well. Pythoness House contains many empty rooms, but these chaos spirit effects can make even those “boring” rooms interesting and disturbing. Between these strange effects, the voice and associated conditions, and the actual encounters in the house, players should remain unnerved during this entire adventure.

LAYOUT OF PYTHONESS HOUSE

Pythoness House is a square keep with a tall western tower, an exterior walkway connecting keep and tower, and an impressive gatehouse with twin guard towers. Although not really all that big, the place has many little nooks and crannies to explore. Remember that the house has been heavily modified more than once, so visitors will see different types of masonry here and there, particularly in the outer wall.

The lower three levels of the main house and the western tower are the oldest portions of Pythoness House, while the gatehouse, the upper floors of the main house, the upper levels of the

western tower, and the central tower are newer, and the northeastern tower is the newest portion of the structure.

Climbing the walls of Pythoness House requires a Climb check (DC 20) due to crumbling masonry.

The areas described below correspond to the maps on pages 13 and 21.

OUTER GROUNDS

The entire structure sits atop a hill overgrown with weeds and shrubs amid the tall, unkempt grass. The hill is surrounded by a wrought iron fence in poor repair. In the front, a gate in the fence swings in the wind.

Behind the house sit piles of rotted wood debris, the remains of a balcony that collapsed long ago.

LEVEL 1

The ceilings on this level are twelve feet high unless stated otherwise. All windows on this level are a narrow six inches across. Only a Small character could get through such an opening, and only after making an Escape Artist check (DC 15).

1. Courtyard (EL 2)

Rats and mice scurry away into hiding places among loose stones as anyone enters the overgrown courtyard. The walls are so high that it almost seems like an interior chamber, except that it lacks a roof. Sunlight finds its way into this place only rarely—mosses and fungi cover the stones more so than weeds or grass. Everything feels damp, and there is a palpable chill that was not felt outside. An open archway ahead and to the left leads into the structure, its door long gone.

Steps and Ledges: A set of narrow (one foot wide) and slippery (Balance check, DC 10, or fall) steps leads up to a small well on a ledge that sits twelve feet above the level of the courtyard on its eastern side. A ledge, also twelve feet high, runs along the west portion of the courtyard, too, but there is no easy way to reach it (see Area 9, below).

The Well: The well is four feet across and fifty feet deep. Slime covers the stones around the well, and characters standing near it must make Balance checks (DC 10) each round or slip and fall off into the courtyard below. Although the well is choked with broken bits of masonry and other trash, more than eight feet of water remains in it.

At the bottom of the well dwells a nameless undead creature, the spirit of someone murdered and thrown down there years ago to steep in the residue of the evil the manor has hosted in recent times. It resembles a vaguely humanoid mass of dark, blue-green ooze. The spirit does not stir unless disturbed (by someone dropping something down the well, for example). In such a case, it oozes up out of the well and attacks anything nearby, attempting to grapple foes and drag them

into the well (the spirit suffers no falling damage, but its victim does).

Undead Well Spirit: hp 9; see MM (use lemure stats, with the undead type rather than the outsider type).

2. Ratmen Ambush (EL 5)

Three ratlings and one ratbrute keep watch here, waiting for someone to approach. (It's rare that anyone does, but the occasional child or thrill-seeker does attempt to enter the house.)

The damp room is filled with leaves and refuse blown in through the open doorway. A red carpet, dark with moisture and grime, covers most of the floor. The walls are bare stone, most of it rather crude, although upper portions were rebuilt with greater skill. A staircase along the northwestern wall of this chamber leads to a ledge twelve feet above to the north. (A bridge up there connects that ledge to a similar one on the south end.) The ledges are likewise covered in refuse, but not as much as the main floor. A mildew-coated, heavy curtain hangs to the east, concealing another room. One door leads south and two north. The ceiling here is twenty-four feet high.

Ratmen, Ratlings (3): hp 5, 6, 7, 7; see *Ptolus*, page 625.

Ratman, Ratbrute: hp 51; see *Ptolus*, page 625.

Tactics: Two of the ratlings have powder bombs and stand on the ledge above the entrance. On the



The player characters might think to contact the Knights of the Pale regarding Pythoness House. As it turns out, however, this is a bad idea. The Knights likely have no reason to trust the PCs, and they don't want anyone going into the house for any reason. They might even suspect the adventurers of being cultists trying to reestablish the former base. They not only refuse to give the characters information, they forbid them to go into the house.

Ratlings: *Ptolus*, page 625

Ratbrutes: *Ptolus*, page 625

Powder bombs: *Ptolus*, page 560

Characters can climb up the walls from the courtyard to Areas 21 or 27 with a Climb check (DC 20).

At first appearance, Pythoness House seems to be a very suitable place for the Cults of Chaos. Its hodgepodge architecture makes it seem like a chaotic jumble. Years of building, rebuilding, and adding on have made the interior almost a maze.



In its heyday, Pythoness House offered more than simple carnal pleasures. The prostitutes all suggested that, through intercourse, they would be able to see their clients' futures. In truth, only a woman named Maquent (see page 8) enjoyed this supernatural ability. Before their involvement with the chaos cults, the women of Pythoness House were in no way sinister and had no association with demons and their ilk.

*Condition #3, page 10
Chaos spirit key, page 10
Subterranean level, page 23*

Even as these undead creatures attack and strangle their victims, they whisper seductive and charming phrases, almost as if they somehow believe that their victims want them to choke them to death.

first round of combat, they will light and drop them down on intruders if there are more than three foes. Otherwise, they throw knives at those coming in. The ratbrute charges from where it lurks in the northeast corner by the curtain.

3. Empty Room

The room south of Area 2 is bare of furnishings or decoration. A door to the southwest leads into the western tower.

4. Western Tower Base

This is the first level of the tall western tower. A wooden ladder leads up through a hole in the ceiling to get to the next level (and the level beyond that). Remnants of broken wooden furnishings, covered in grime and cobwebs, fill the room.

5. Boudoirs

Two chambers at the north end of the keep clearly were once used by the prostitutes of the brothel—each room contains three or four beds covered with silk sheets and pillows, now layered in grime, dust, and cobwebs. Silk draperies filthy with mildew and dirt line the walls. Between the draperies hang lewd, moldy paintings in wooden frames. Brass braziers once lit and heated these rooms, but today they lie dust-covered and overturned. The floors are carpeted with thick rugs, now worm-ridden and rotten. The boudoirs smell of mold and mildew.

Treasure: Each painting is still worth about 3 gp. There are four in each room.

6. Haunted Boudoir (EL 5)

Similar to Area 5, this room in the keep's northeast corner is furnished with silk-covered beds, lush carpets, draperies, and lewd paintings, all covered in dust and dirt. However, as soon as anyone steps into the room, it changes to appear as it did years ago, with everything luxurious and clean. Three beautiful, scantily clad women here look aggressively seductive. A Will save (DC 11) reveals this to all be an illusion, generated by the spirits that cling to this room. Only *after* characters see through the illusion do they notice the undead prostitutes, their tawdry garments in tatters hanging from dried, desiccated flesh.

Whether they appear as living women or as rotting animate corpses, the undead creatures here move toward living victims with arms open, as if to embrace them. Instead, they attempt a grapple, putting their hands around a victim's neck and wringing the life out of him or her. Once they grapple a foe, they continue grappling (and draining) until either the undead or the victim is destroyed.

Choking Corpses (3): hp 20, 24, 30; see MM (treat as wights, but they must successfully achieve a grapple, provoking an attack of opportunity, to use their energy drain ability).

Treasure: Each undead creature wears a gold ring worth 30 gp and a gold bracelet worth 50 gp. A dresser in the chamber holds a dozen bottles filled with 230 gp worth of perfume. In a jewelry box in the top drawer are two gold rings worth 30 gp each, a gold bracelet worth 50 gp, and a gold necklace worth 250 gp. The jewelry box is a wind-up music box, itself worth 75 gp.

The lewd paintings here are different than those in Area 5. When one looks closely at any of the four of them, it becomes apparent that the women in the paintings are actually demons with almost unseen horns and batlike wings. These paintings, although damaged, are still worth 10 gp each.

Experience Points: Treat the choking corpses as CR 2 monsters.

7. Eastern Room

The chamber east of the curtain in Area 2 is empty. A black iron spiral staircase leads up to Area 14 on Level 2. To the south lies the chaos statue.

8. Chaos Statue

At the end of a ten-foot wide hall south of Area 7 stands a statue of an obese, naked human man (see page 14). The statue is life size, and the figure's pose and expression show a diabolical confidence. The statue stands on a round platform three inches high and four feet across.

A Search check (DC 18) on the floor reveals scratch marks leading away from the platform to the north; it looks as though the platform may slide. It does. During **Condition #3**, a secret panel opens in the statue's stomach, revealing a depression where one can place the **chaos spirit key**. Once it is inserted, the statue and platform slide forward five feet, exposing a hole almost four feet across that opens into the **subterranean level** of the house. An iron ladder offers a way down. Anyone who intentionally stands in the way of the moving statue is knocked prone and suffers 1d4 points of damage. Any character simply standing so can get out of the way, however.

No amount of pulling or pushing can make the statue move, short of destroying it and the platform—which has been magically hardened and strengthened (hardness 10, 180 hit points, break DC 30). However, doing so frees the chaos spirit to haunt the characters wherever they go, effectively manipulating objects and creatures around them so that each character suffers a –2 penalty on attack rolls, saves, and checks until all those involved have had a *remove curse*, *banishment*, or similar spell cast upon them. A cold chill, an aura of dire emotion, and strange noises dog the haunted characters' every step.

A change of condition causes the statue to move back into place and closes the panel, forcing the chaos spirit key out and onto the floor.

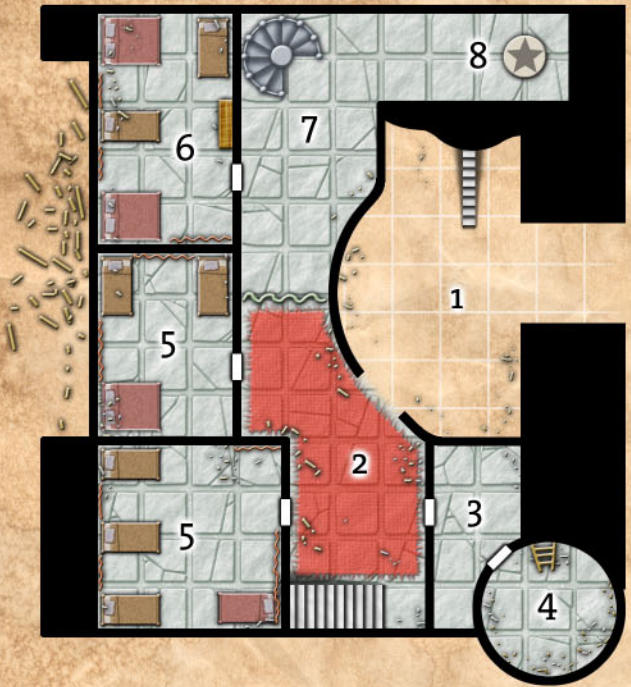
Pythoness House

Main Levels

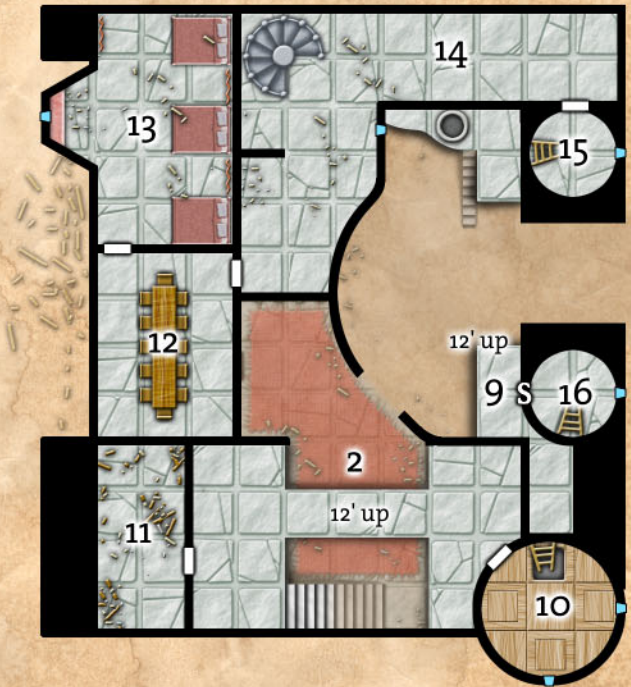
1 square = 5 feet



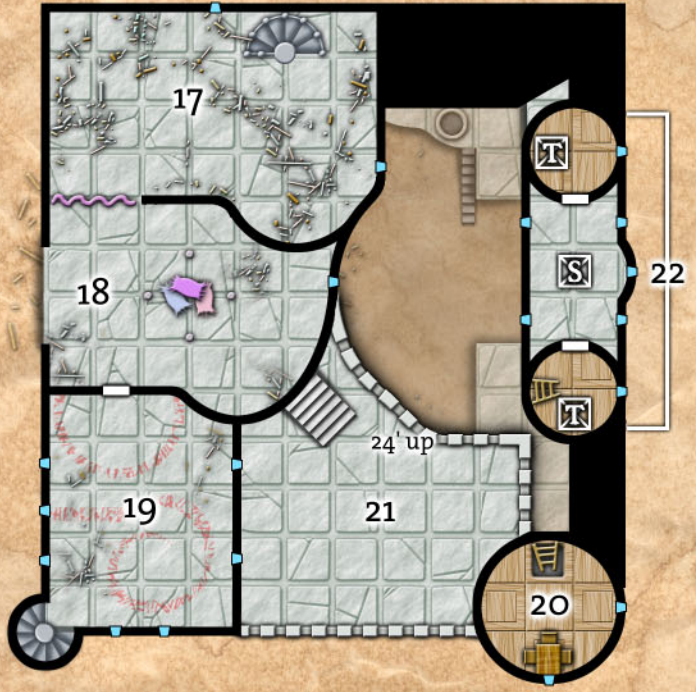
Level 1



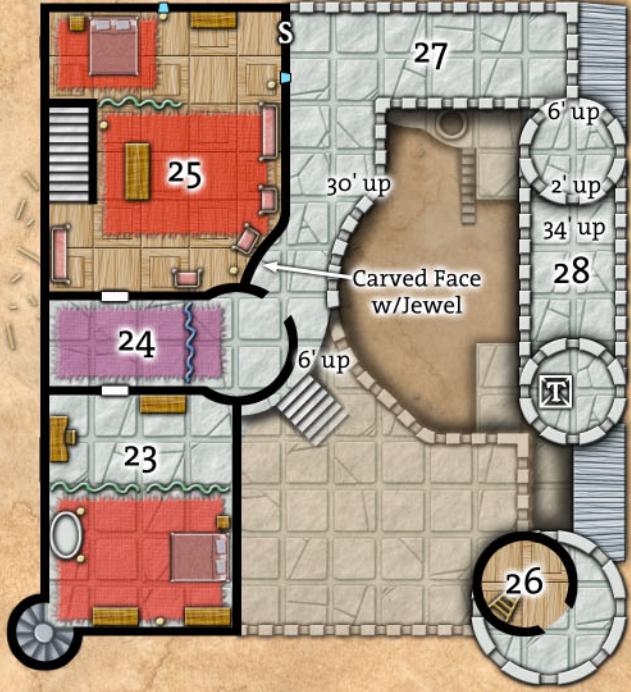
Level 2



Level 3



Level 4



 = Crenellated Wall

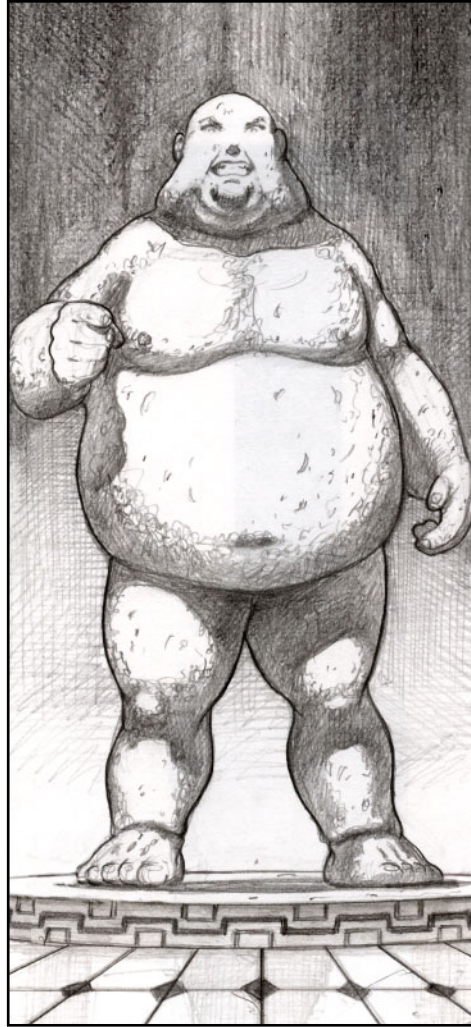
Segginal Fesbon was a chaos cultist, both a cleric and a wizard of some power. Known for his insatiable appetites, he was both feared and reviled throughout the city. This exceptionally paranoid figure had a hand in murdering a number of fellow cultists whom he believed would betray him in some way.

He decided that, in death, he would achieve even greater power than he had in life. So he willingly allowed his compatriots to slay him and invest his spirit into Pythoness House. Although Segginal was a madman, he was not entirely incorrect, for he does possess great power within the house as an undead spirit. The chaos statue (right; also see page 12) takes his form.

Maquent's Journal, page 91

Ratmen: Ptolus, page 625

Since the figurines in Area 13 are not constructs in the truest sense of the word, they don't move stiffly or clumsily like animated statues would. The spirits within them allow them to move, react, and even speak like tiny living creatures.



LEVEL 2

The ceilings on this level are twelve feet high unless stated otherwise. All windows on this level are a narrow six inches across. Only a Small character could get through such an opening, and only after making an Escape Artist check (DC 15). The floors are made of stone, two feet thick, except in the western tower, where the floor is wood.

9. Outer Ledge

A ledge twelve feet off the ground runs above the southwestern part of the courtyard and behind the western guard tower. The modification and renovations to the house over the years have left a strange open area five feet wide between the western tower and the western guard tower. One can reach this open area only from the ledge, which itself can be reached only by climbing up from the courtyard or via the secret door from the western guard tower (Search check, DC 20, to find).

No one can see the open area from the ground, and no window in the house looks into it. However, one can see it from above by standing

on the southern end of Area 21 and looking down. Amid piles of dried leaves, dirt, and refuse lies a key that allows access into the northeast tower (Area 38). It was dropped here in the year 718 by a prostitute named Thabitha when she stood on the rooftop garden (Area 21), as revealed in *Maquent's Journal*.

10. Western Tower: Empty Room

A ladder runs through a hole in the floor up to a wooden trapdoor in the ceiling and down to Level 1 as well. The floor and ceiling are made of wood. There is little here but cobwebs and some old leaves blown in through the windows. A pair of old leather boots lies amid the refuse.

11. Rat Nest (EL 2)

North of the ledges described in Area 2 lies a room that was once a fully furnished kitchen. Today, however, it is the nest of the **ratmen** from Area 2. Dwelling here with them are a number of normal rats, which form a swarm to attack anything living that comes into their lair—anything other than a ratman, that is.

The nest is in utter disarray, with trash and scraps pulled in from other rooms (and from outside Pythoness House) as well as the plates, pots, cutlery, and towels that originally came from the kitchen.

Rat Swarm: 20 hp; see MM.

12. Dining Room

Once a well-appointed room for entertaining guests, this room east of the old kitchen is now as dirty, dusty, and cobweb-filled as all the others. A long table with a dozen chairs covered in a moldy cloth dominates the room.

A chandelier covered in cobwebs and dust hangs from the ceiling. After searching it closely (DC 16), a character notes that the chandelier was once set with gemstones and that six of them remain. Each is worth 20 gp.

13. Haunted Figurines (EL 4)

The chamber in the northeastern corner of this level appears to be another boudoir, like Area 5. A small alcove on the north wall is a window seat that projects out of the wall. It has a built-in padded seat. Rather than lewd paintings, the walls have recessed shelves that were once filled with tiny figurines, some made of stone, some of porcelain, and others of glass, clay, wood, or bone. Six of these statuettes remain intact. Due to the power of the spirits inhabiting this place, they leap off and attack 1 round after anyone enters this room.

Each figurine is a Tiny animated object. Most are statuettes of people, although one is a dog and one is a winged angel. The angel figurine flies

rather than walks. Player characters must succeed at a Spot check (DC 18) or the figurines attack with a surprise round, charging into their foes. They are likely to concentrate on one creature, probably the least armored one.

Animated Figurines: hp 2, 2, 3, 3, 4, 5; see MM.

14. Decorated Hall

Old paintings still hang on the walls of the ten-foot-wide corridor in the southeast corner of this level. These portraits depict various people who have lived in the house over the years. Some have hung undisturbed for well over a century and a half. Compared to most of the other paintings in Pythoness House, however, they seem almost disturbingly untouched by the ravages of time. Characters walking down this corridor can make a Spot check (DC 16) to notice that some of the eyes and even faces in the portraits move to stare at them. This phenomenon is a result of the ghost in Area 22.

If removed, the paintings seem far more normal outside of the house. Each of the ten portraits is worth 50 gp.

15. Eastern Guard Tower: Lower Level

The door from Area 14 into this tower is locked (DC 20 to open). The chamber is empty other than a wooden ladder that goes up to a trap door in the ceiling. The ladder is rickety and creaks, but it will hold a character's weight.

16. Western Guard Tower: Lower Level

The only way into this level of the western guard tower is from the gatehouse above, reached by a wooden ladder up to a wooden hatch. A secret door here on the north wall (Search, DC 20) leads to Area 9.

The room is otherwise empty, except for a half-dozen crossbow quarrels that lie scattered across the floor.

LEVEL 3

The ceilings on this level are twelve feet high. All windows here are narrow, measuring six inches across. Only a Small character could get through such an opening, and only after making an Escape Artist check (DC 15). The floors are made of stone, two feet thick, except in the towers.

17. Rats! (EL 4)

The odd-shaped room in the northeast corner of this level is filled with overturned furniture—tables, chairs, divans, braziers, and more. Broken bits of crockery and various utensils and items lie scattered across the floor. A heavy purple curtain blanketed with mold and mildew covers the exit leading to Area 18. An iron spiral staircase leads

down to Area 14 (on Level 2) and Area 7 (on Level 1).

The room is also filled with rats, both normal and dire. They scurry about the refuse and disarray, but attack *en masse*. One of the dire rats is blood red with a mane of grasping (but useless) tendrils around its head, having been warped by an evil ritual conducted in Area 19.

If a battle here persists for more than 4 rounds, the ratlords (and their mounts) from Area 19 arrive to join the fight.

Dire Rats (4): hp 4, 6, 7, 7; see MM.

Rat Swarms (2): hp 21 and 22; see MM.

Fiendish Dire Rat: hp 9; see MM (SR 6, resistance to fire 5 and cold 5, smite good 1/day for +1 damage to good foe).

Treasure: Amid the wreckage, characters who Search (DC 17) find a bronze urn worth 60 gp, a silver cup worth 25 gp, and three tindertwigs.

18. Divination Room

This room in the center of the north end of the keep stands empty except for a pile of silken pillows in the center of the floor, surrounded by four-foot-tall iron candlesticks holding white candles. The pillows are now covered in grime and spiderwebs, as are the candlesticks, but this was once the room Maquent used for her divinatory sessions.

An open archway—the wooden door it once held is now long gone—opens into the outside, in midair, about twenty-five feet above the ground. It once gave access to a wooden balcony, which has since collapsed.

19. Demonic Rats (EL 6)

The room in this level's northern corner is mostly empty, except for the creatures that use it as a lair. Holes in the walls and discolored places in the floor suggest that the chamber once sported more features, but they have all been stripped away.

Someone has scrawled diabolic symbols on the walls and painted them in blood on the floor and the door. A Knowledge (religion) check (DC 12) suggests their general evil/fiendish nature.

Two **ratlords** dwell here; they are the leaders of all the rats and ratmen in the house. They ride Large dire rats in battle.

Tactics: If prepared (such as if they hear a fight in Area 17 or activity in Area 18), the ratlords are mounted and ready for battle when the characters arrive. In fact, if the battle in Area 17 persists for more than 4 rounds, they come to join the fight. They charge into battle, but if either they or their mounts fall to less than half their hit point totals, they flee, likely to Area 17 or up to Area 23 (but going up would require dismounting, and the Large dire rats can move only at half speed up the stairs).

DM TIPS

You can make an empty room more interesting by including some of the effects of the chaos spirit discussed on page 10.

DM TIPS

Don't forget to have the chaos statue in Area 8 change the condition in the house every 3d100 minutes; see page 10.



Ratlords: Ptolus, page 625

The two ratlords that dwell in Area 19 have shaved off patches of their own fur so that others may see the ritual scarring they have done to themselves. The hair that remains is matted with splashes of blood in the shape of crude demonic symbols. They have likewise adorned their dire rat mounts. Even their weapons and equipment are covered in symbols and blood.

The ratlords, using diabolical rituals, granted the fiendish rat in Area 17 its special nature—they tainted it with evil. They now strive to do the same to themselves. If either of the ratlords survives an encounter with the characters and the PCs leave Pythoness House for more than a day, the remaining ratlord has the fiendish template when they return.

DM TIPS

Follow-up on the “Rat God” reference with a Knowledge (religion) or Gather Information check (DC 20) can lead the player characters to the Temple of the Rat God in the Temple District (Ptolus, page 390).

Characters can climb down the walls from the rooftop garden to the courtyard or out of the house (or climb up the walls to the garden from those locations). They also can climb up, to Area 32 or 40. Either way, the Climb DC is 20, unless the characters are climbing to get out of the house while Condition #1 is in effect (see page 10). Then the DC becomes 25.

Rhodintor: Ptolus, page 628

Ratmen, Ratlords (2): hp 20 and 25; see *Ptolus*, page 625 (but they each have the Mounted Combat feat instead of Stealthy and a +7 Ride check bonus; their Move Silently and Hide scores each suffer a –5 penalty to make up for these changes).

Giant Dire Rats (2)

Large animals (Neutral)

CR 2

HD 7d8+21 hp 52

Init +1 Speed 40 feet

AC 13, touch 10, flat-footed 12

BAB/Grapple +5/+14

Attack/Full Attack +10 melee (1d8+5 and disease, bite)

SA Disease (Fortitude save, DC 16, filth fever)

SQ Low-light vision, scent

Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +3

Str 20, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 4

Crucial Skills: Climb +10, Hide +7, Listen +4, Move Silently +8.

Other Skills: Swim +10.

Crucial Feats: N/A

Other Feats: Ability Focus (disease), Alertness, Weapon Focus (bite).

Treasure: One of the ratlords wears a gold ring with a sapphire worth 120 gp. The other carries a rolled-up scrap of cloth with the words “Hail to the Rat God” written in Common, Abyssal, and Draconic. One of the dire rats has three silver earrings pierced into its large ear, each worth 10 gp.

20. Western Tower: Jar, Candle, and Book

The floor of this chamber is made of wood, but the ceiling is stone. There is no way to progress up farther from here. This level of the tower contains a table and three chairs, all wooden and rickety but usable. Three objects sit on the table, covered in cobwebs: a glass jar; a short, fat candle on a copper plate; and a book.

The Jar: The well-sealed jar has a brass lid and holds a dark yellow liquid that is, in fact, urine. The jar is actually a diamond worth 6,000 gp that has been *polymorphed* into a simple jar. Further, the diamond is a material component for a *trap the soul* spell that holds a bralani eladrin. The defilement of the jar was a part of the disgusting chaos rituals that once occurred here. If freed (by destroying the jar), the bralani thanks the PCs and says, full of passion and vigor, “I can sense two great evils in this place, but only one can be fought directly. Shall I strike at the assailable evil myself, or shall I aid you now?”

If the PCs choose the bralani’s aid now, it casts *cure serious wounds* twice (if needed) and *blur* on everyone in the group, then transforms into a whirlwind and leaves. Should the party ask the eladrin to “strike at the evil,” it flies up to Area 41 and assaults the **rhodintor**, but loses that fight.

However, the rhodintor suffers 20 points of damage and is thus made weaker. Player characters can watch the battle only if they retreat all the way down to the courtyard, from which point they can get occasional glimpses of the titanic struggle.

The Candle: This yellow tallow candle is non-magical, but someone has etched a name in the wax: Segginal. This is the name of the chaos spirit. If someone speaks this name in Area 46, the skeletal hill giant becomes powerless.

The Book: Once a magical beneficial tome, the evil spirit in this place has transformed the book on the table into a *vacuous grimoire*.

21. Rooftop Garden

This large outdoor area on the western side of the keep once was used as a rooftop garden. Some of the plants in boxes and pots still thrive today, while many others have long since died. One can reach these old gardens only from the steps from Area 27.

22. Gatehouse and Towers

The gatehouse floor is stone and stands directly over the entrance into the courtyard. A secret, removable stone block on the floor (Search check, DC 20) provides a murder hole from which one could attack invaders. One could also use it as an exit down into the courtyard (but not out of the house altogether). A narrow wooden table in the middle of the gatehouse holds four decrepit crossbows (too old to function) and three quivers of rotten quarrels, all covered with cobwebs and dust. An iron pot of fifty caltrops sits in the northwest corner of the room.

At this level, the side towers each have wooden floors and trap doors that give access to the level below. The western tower also has a wooden ladder that leads up to a hatch to the top of the tower (Area 28). Five glaives lean against the wall in the western tower as well.

The Ghost

The entire front gate complex—the gatehouse above the entrance as well as the two side towers—is haunted. In Pythoness House, that may not sound like anything special. The unique aspect is that it is haunted by a ghost other than the chaos spirit. In fact, it has been haunting the gatehouse and towers for years longer than the chaos spirit. One hundred ninety years ago, a human cleric named Taunell died defending the house. The tower that was here in those days has long since collapsed, so Taunell inhabits the western gate tower; he can move to the gatehouse and the eastern tower as well.

The ghost can see into any area of Pythoness House, but one can only encounter and interact with him here.

Taunell

Male human ghost (Neutral)

Medium undead (augmented humanoid, incorporeal)

Cleric3 (Lothian) **CR** 5**HD** 3d12 **hp** 23**Init** +5 **Speed** fly 30 feet**AC** 17, touch 11, flat-footed 16**BAB/Grapple** +2/+4**Attack/Full Attack** +3 touch (1d6, corrupting touch)**SA** Rebuke undead 7/day, manifestation, malevolence (DC 19), telekinesis, corrupting touch**SQ** Darkvision 60 feet, undead traits, rejuvenation, turn resistance +4, incorporeal traits**Fort** +5, **Ref** +2, **Will** +5**Str** 14, **Dex** 12, **Con** —, **Int** 12, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 19**Languages:** Common, Elvish.**Crucial Skills:** Concentration +2, Hide +9, Listen +12, Search +11, Spot +11.**Other Skills:** Heal +8.**Crucial Feats:** N/A**Other Feats:** Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Scribe Scroll.**Domains:** Good, Law**Spells:** 4/3+1/2+1; save DC 12 + spell level (caster level 3rd, +4 melee touch, +3 ranged touch).2nd—*aid**, *bear's endurance*, *hold person*.1st—*bless*, *protection from evil**, *sanctuary*, *shield of faith*.0—*cure minor wounds*, *detect poison*, *read magic*, *virtue*.**Possessions:** +1 *breastplate*.

* Indicates a domain spell.

Interacting With the Ghost: Taunell is hostile to the player characters at first. He uses *telekinesis* to hurl objects at them and attacks them with his corrupting touch. Eventually, however, he tries to use his malevolence ability to possess a character, forcing that PC to attack his or her friends.

A character can attempt to reason with Taunell, either while he possesses a body or while he is just a spirit. Assuring the ghost that they mean no harm and/or that attacking them serves no purpose requires the character to make a Diplomacy check (DC 20). If it succeeds, Taunell stops attacking.

Should someone reason with the ghost after he has possessed someone, he can speak to the PCs. They might convince him to provide what information he has (he can do this only by speaking through another, not on his own):

- He watched a young woman drop a key from Area 21 down into Area 9 some time ago, and no one ever came to get it.
- He died in a raid here at the house one hundred ninety years ago.
- He watched the wanton women and the red-cowled priests of Pythoness House perform all manner of unholy rites, although one strong woman seemed to resist their evil.

- He says that before the red-cowled priests came, he hurt a young woman, and for that he is sorry. Sometimes the sin of anger overtakes him.
- The Cobbledman has one half of a strange spiral-patterned disk. The other is in the northeast tower, although Taunell doesn't know how to reach that tower.
- Protecting the house is the most important thing to him, and he deeply regrets being unable to stop the red-cowled priests.
- He doesn't really know anything about the other spirit infused in the house, or much of anything about the level below, other than that it exists and the other spirit—which he calls the “chaos spirit”—guards what lies below in particular.

If the PCs treat him with respect, he will even cast healing spells on them, using the body that he possesses.

Putting the Ghost to Rest: Taunell can never leave until someone recites the Lothianite Prayer of Protection here in the gatehouse complex. He is not aware of this fact. However, the prayer book in Area 26 has that prayer circled, and he does stress protecting the house, so these are subtle clues.

Experience Points: Award normal experience points for dealing with Taunell, a CR 5 challenge. Putting him to rest permanently, however, is a CR 7 challenge and experience points should be awarded accordingly.

LEVEL 4

The ceilings on this level are only eight feet high. Any character or creature more than seven feet tall suffers a –1 penalty to attack rolls and Reflex saving throws. Characters over eight feet tall suffer a –2 penalty. The floors are made of wood.

23. Maquent's Chamber

A heavy green curtain, moth-eaten and grimy, hangs in the middle of the room in the western corner of the level, separating the east and west halves of the room. In the west, red carpets cover the floor, and a large bed is made up with red and gold silks (all of which are filthy and worthless now). The chamber also holds a porcelain bathtub, a brass rack for towels and another for clothing, a table with an oil lamp, three braziers, and two chests of drawers. Everything is intact and relatively undisturbed, but covered with dust and cobwebs. The chests hold nothing but women's clothing, most of which is extremely revealing.

The other end of the room, on the eastern side of the curtain, has a wooden bureau, a dark wood writing desk, and a wooden chair. The bureau is empty, but the desk still holds a pair of

Someone looking down from the southern end of the rooftop garden can see a secret open area between the western tower and the western guard tower (see page 14). Amid piles of dried leaves, dirt, and refuse there lies a key that allows access into the northeast tower (Area 38).



In life, Taunell was a short, round-faced man with brown hair and pale skin. This cleric of Lothian was quite stocky and tough.



Potentially, the characters could use the ledger to blackmail or embarrass various of Pythoness House's old clientele, but in truth, it's all so old that it's not all that important anymore.

Maquent's Journal, page 91

A character attempting to use disguise or deception to penetrate a chaos cult stronghold, temple, or safe house could use the Crimson Coil robe to gain a +2 circumstance bonus to Bluff and Disguise checks. However, this tactic works only for someone wearing it in secret or out of the public eye. Wearing the robe out in public is too brazen for the cult at this time, and other cultists would assume that the wearer either was trying to trick them or had gone insane (madness and self-destruction being a frequent hazard in the ranks of chaos). Either way, they would not associate with them.

*Knights of the Pale:
Ptolus, page 125*

From the battlements, characters can climb down the walls to the courtyard or out of the house. They can also climb up to Area 39. Either way, the Climb DC is 20, unless the characters are climbing to get out of the house while Condition #1 is in effect (see page 10). Then the DC becomes 25. Characters can climb up the walls from the courtyard to the battlements with a Climb check (DC 20).

This sideview outline of a human male face is a bit of decoration that appears to have a large red gem in its eye. However, the "gem" is actually just a painted part of the carving.

dusty books as well as some parchment, writing pens, and ink. One book is a ledger showing all the business the brothel did from five years ago to three years ago. The other is **Maquent's Journal**.

24. Hallway

A blue and purple rug runs down the middle of a wide corridor between Areas 23 and 25. A heavy blue curtain, thick with dust and mildew, hangs to the south, blocking off a section of the hall that is also the base for the central tower of the keep. This area also has an archway opening out into the battlements near the stairway down to the rooftop gardens.

25. Radanna's Chamber (EL 6)

Another large and once-sumptuous bedchamber, this room in the keep's northeast corner is filled with dust-covered furnishings: a large bed, a wardrobe, a dresser with drawers, three padded chairs, two divans, four braziers, and two tables (one large table covered in dishes and cutlery, all enshrouded with dust and cobwebs, and one small table with an oil lamp next to the bed).

The wardrobe and drawers contain clothing and personal effects of little value, except for a single red robe with a hood, decorated in all manner of chaos symbols. This is a **Crimson Coil robe**. Any chaos cultists (or their enemies) today would recognize it as such.

Secret Door: A secret door in the south wall (Search, DC 22) leads out to the battlements in the southeast corner of the keep (Area 27).

Undead: Seven skeletal figures of the women who once worked here remain in this chamber. Six are the remains of the prostitutes Radanna slew before the **Knights of the Pale** came to Pythoness House, and the other is Radanna herself. Radanna is a skeleton that has managed to tenaciously cling to her intelligence, personality, and skills, although the negative energy coursing through her makes her even more deprived and evil than she was in life.

Human Skeletons (6): hp 4, 5, 6, 6, 9, 10; see MM (but they have both shortbows with a dozen arrows each and short swords).

Radanna

Skeletal human (Chaotic Evil)
Medium undead
Fighter3/expert2 **CR** 5
HD 5d12 **hp** 52
Init +7 **Speed** 20 feet
AC 21, touch 12, flat-footed 19
BAB/Grapple +5/+7
Attack/Full Attack +8 melee (1d8+2, battleaxe)
SQ Darkvision 60 feet, DR 5/bludgeoning, immune to cold undead qualities
Fort +3, **Ref** +3, **Will** +6
Str 15, **Dex** 17, **Con** —, **Int** 15, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 11

Crucial Skills: Climb +2, Escape Artist +5, Jump +7, Sense Motive +2.

Other Skills: Appraise +4, Craft (trapmaking) +5, Diplomacy +5, Gather Information +2, Handle Animal +5, Intimidate +6, Perform (act) +1, Perform (stringed instruments) +2, Ride +5.

Crucial Feats: Combat Expertise, Improved Disarm.

Other Feats: Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Weapon Focus (battleaxe).

Possessions: Masterwork battleaxe, masterwork chainmail, masterwork heavy steel shield, gold bracelet with rubies worth 900 gp, ruby ring worth 750 gp.

Tactics: If intruders are in the house, Radanna watches out the narrow window looking out onto the battlements. If she sees someone on the battlements or the gatehouse roof, either climbing up the walls or out of the gatehouse complex, she commands the skeletons to move out through Area 27 and attack. Otherwise, she and they wait for intruders to come into this chamber through the door.

26. Western Tower: Small Tower Base

At this level, the width of the tower narrows—basically, it becomes a smaller, newer tower perched atop a larger, older one. An archway opens out onto a balcony the width of the tower below. The interior of the smaller tower has a ladder leading up to a hole in the floor of the level above. One can reach this level easily only by coming down from the higher levels, which they can access by a bridge (Area 36).

The floor of the tower's interior is filled with old bones—many are animal (particularly rat) bones, but a few belonged to humanoids. These are the remains of meals devoured by the Cobbledman (see Area 33). Amid them (Search check, DC 18, to find) is a rather ancient prayer book that once belonged to Taunell, the ghost in Area 22. Paging through its yellowed, stained pages, one can find circled a particular prayer for the protection of a house.

27. Battlements

This area, atop the narrow eastern wing of the house, is open, with a crenellated wall on either side. A secret door gives access to Area 25 (Search, DC 22). This area is accessed through the archway in the southern end of Area 24. A stairway leads down to the rooftop gardens, which is about six feet lower than the battlements. Near the archway leading into Area 24 a crude face is carved on the exterior wall.

28. Gatehouse Roof

A trap door in the floor of the western guard tower leads down to Area 22. The tower rooftops are two feet higher than the roof of the gatehouse itself.



LEVEL 5

The ceilings on this level of Pythoness House are only eight feet high. Any character or creature more than seven feet tall suffers a –1 penalty to attack rolls and Reflex saving throws; those over eight feet tall suffer a –2 penalty. The floors are made of wood.

29. Open Room (EL 4)

This large open area lies in the keep's northeastern corner. Visitors can find a staircase up from Area 25 in its north end and a staircase up to Area 34 in its western corner. The room is otherwise empty.

Secret Ceiling Door: There is a four-inch-thick secret door made of stone in the ceiling here. A Search check (DC 25) allows a character to locate the door, although anyone less than six feet tall cannot find it without something to stand upon or a boost up. The door is extremely well locked (DC 35 to open), and its key lies in **Area 9**. The door is also trapped. Any method of opening the door other than with the key triggers the trap, which causes a block to fall out of the now-open door onto the character trying to open it.

Falling Block Trap: CR 4; mechanical; touch trigger; manual reset; attack +15 melee (6d6) against character(s) in the square below the door; Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 25.

30. Narrow Hall

A narrow little hallway west of Area 29 opens out into midair on the keep's north side. A wooden balcony once hung there; it was connected to a lower balcony outside Area 18 via a wooden stairway. The ground lies forty-four feet below.

31. Undead Rats (EL 3)

This oddly shaped room in the center of this level has some old wooden bookcases along the northern wall. No books remain, although three human skulls sit on the shelves, along with a small iron box. The locked box (DC 20 to open) contains four vials, each with a dose of black adder venom, and another containing a dose of oil of taggit.

Four piles of bones lie on the floor here as well. As soon as anyone enters, these piles animate as skeletal dire rats. In life, these rats were particularly large and strong. They attack anything living that enters the room. Even in death, they retain their disease-ridden bite.

Skeletal Dire Rats (4)

Small undead (corporeal), (Neutral Evil)

CR 1

HD 3d12 hp 11, 13, 16, 18

Init +8 Speed 40 feet

AC 16, touch 15, flat-footed 12

BAB/Grapple +2/+3

Attack/Full Attack +3 melee (1d4+1 and disease, bite)

In life, Radanna (above, center) was an enigmatic woman with a harsh temper and an odd sense of duty. In a way, she brought the chaos cult into Pythoness House for the good of all the women who worked there—she believed the association would bring them all power and prestige. At the very end, however, she went completely mad and killed many of the prostitutes living there.

Area 9, page 14

Sickening rod:
Chaositech, page 23
Bone-lacing implant, page 38
Allegiance implant, page 38

Rooftop garden, page 16

DM TIPS

You can make an empty room more interesting by including some of the effects of the chaos spirit discussed on page 10.

Maquent, page 8



The chaos spirit of Pythoness House and the chaos spirit key are described on page 10. The Cobbledman has one piece of the chaos spirit key, but the other is sealed away in the northeast tower (Area 43). *Maquent's Journal* (page 91) provides clues to finding and using the key.

Chaos-shaped creature:
Chaositech, page 84

SA Disease (Fortitude, DC 16, filth fever)
SQ DR 5/bludgeoning, immune to cold, undead traits
Fort +1, **Ref** +5, **Will** +4
Str 12, **Dex** 19, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 4
Skills: N/A
Feats: Improved Initiative.
Possessions: N/A

32. Outer Balcony

A round room on this level, filled with dirt and leaves, leads out onto a balcony with a short, protective wall. It is a fourteen-foot drop down to the rooftop garden to the southwest (Area 21), and a forty-four-foot drop to the ground.

Runestone: A large piece of alabaster bearing a rune is affixed to the balcony wall. This runestone was placed here long ago, ironically, to ward away evil spirits. It has since been defaced, which changed its power. Now those who touch it must make a Will save (DC 14) or fling themselves off the balcony. The compulsion lasts only 1 round, so if victims are prevented, they stop trying to jump. A Search check (DC 20) or Knowledge (arcana) check (DC 22) suggests that the runestone has been altered from its original intent, although only the Knowledge check reveals the true original intent.

33. Western Tower: The Cobbledman

This level of the keep's western tower contains more broken bits of bone and some feces. A ladder here goes up through a hole in the ceiling to the level above.

This chamber is the lair of the Cobbledman, a creature the cultists created using chaositech. This hideous monstrosity appears to have been literally cobbled together using bits from various corpses, not all of which were human (or even humanoid). It has two heads, three arms (one of which ends in claws), and two legs. Strange tubes and pipes are woven throughout its body, but much of him looks held together with metal stitches and even some screws, bolts, and pins.

The Cobbledman wears half of the chaos spirit key pinned to the inside of its tattered shirt. It cannot leave the house and has subsisted on rats and whatever else it could find; luckily, its unnatural state requires little food and water (it drinks pooled rainwater).

The Cobbledman
Chaos-shaped creature
Medium aberration (Chaotic Neutral)
CR 5
HD 6d8+30+20 **hp** 77
Init +1 **Speed** 30 feet
AC 15, touch 13, flat-footed 15
BAB/Grapple +6/+11
Attack +11 melee (1d6+5, slam + sickening)
Full Attack +11 melee (1d6+5, 2 slams) and +6 melee (1d8+2, claw)

SA Built-in chaositech: **sickening rod** in arm (can be used as a light mace; Fortitude save, DC 14, or touched creature sickened for 20 minutes; second Fortitude save, DC 14, or the creature is also nauseated 1d6 rounds)
SQ Darkvision 60 feet, **bone-lacing implant** (already figured in), DR 10/slashing and piercing, **allegiance implant** ("Do not leave Pythoness House"); multiple heads grant +2 bonus to Listen, Search, and Spot checks
Fort +10, **Ref** +6, **Will** +0
Str 20, **Dex** 13, **Con** 20, **Int** 4, **Wis** 6, **Cha** 5
Crucial Skills: Listen +4, Search -1, Spot +5.
Other Skills: N/A
Crucial Feats: Cleave, Dodge, Power Attack.
Other Feats: N/A
Possessions: N/A

Tactics: The Cobbledman is aggressive. He likely attacks anyone on the bridge above (Area 36), grappling foes and tossing them off, if possible. A large offering of food might make a friend of him, however—or at least get him to stop attacking. He only knows a handful of words and hasn't actually spoken to anyone in years. He hates everything else that lives in the house. He will not give up his portion of the key, however, unless magically compelled to do so. It was given to him by a "friend," meaning **Maquent**.

LEVEL 6

See the room descriptions below for details.

34. Central Tower: Base

The floor here in the house's central tower is wooden, and the ceiling goes up twelve feet. A staircase leads down to the open room (Area 29), a wooden door provides access to the ritual room (Area 35), and an archway leads out onto the bridge (Area 36).

There is a secret shelf up near the ceiling in the northwestern part of the chamber. A Search check (DC 25) made at floor level allows one to find it, but anyone climbing, levitating, or flying up to the ceiling spots it automatically. On the shelf is a small wooden cask, inside which there are two draughts of a *potion of barkskin* +2.

35. Ritual Room

The floor in this room north of the central tower is wooden, and the ceiling measures only eight feet high. Magic circles and symbols are painted on nearly every surface of the ritual room, making one's initial entrance a dizzying experience. Characters can attempt a Knowledge (arcana) check (DC 20) to identify the symbols: They all have to do with summoning demons, summoning evil power, and dedicating souls to specific purposes (like infusing one into Pythoness House). A character who succeeds at Difficulty Class 25, however, notes that one symbol on the wall means "secrets." In the center of that symbol is a

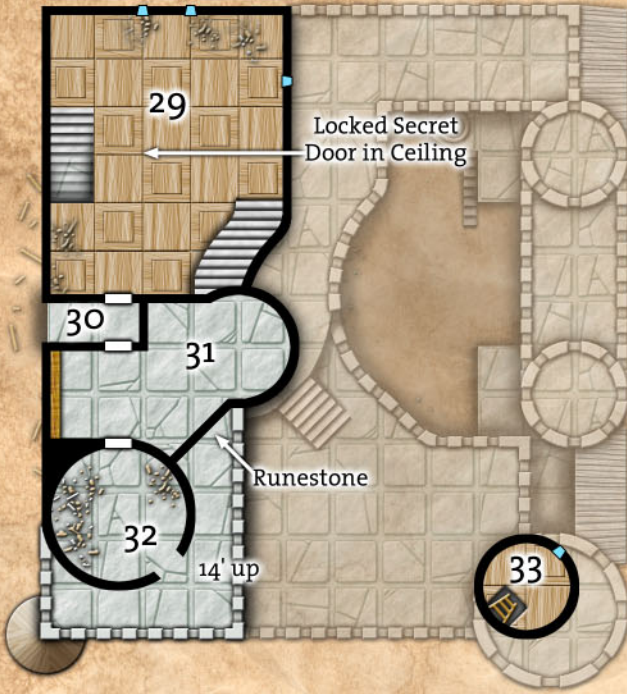
Pythoness House

Upper Levels

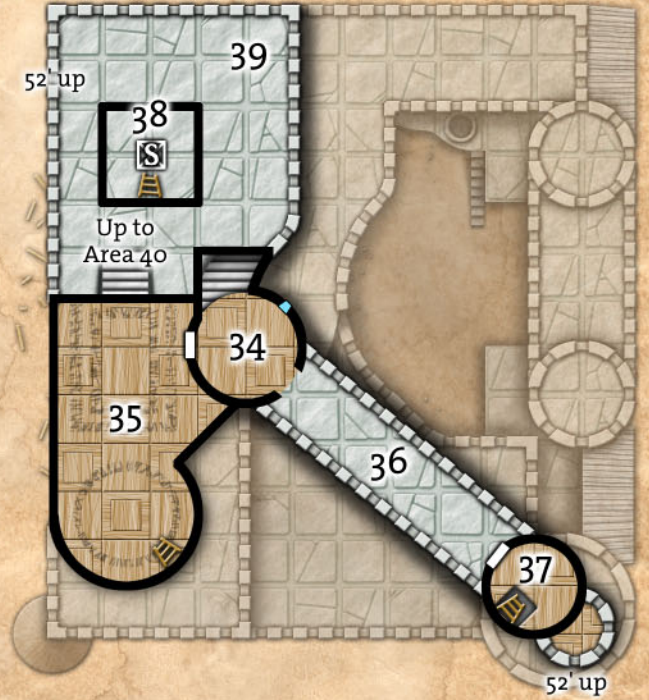
1 square = 5 feet



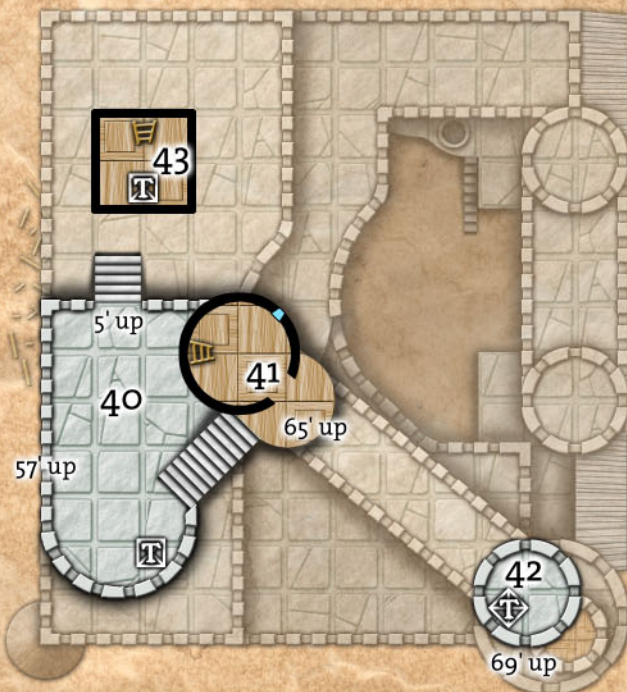
Level 5



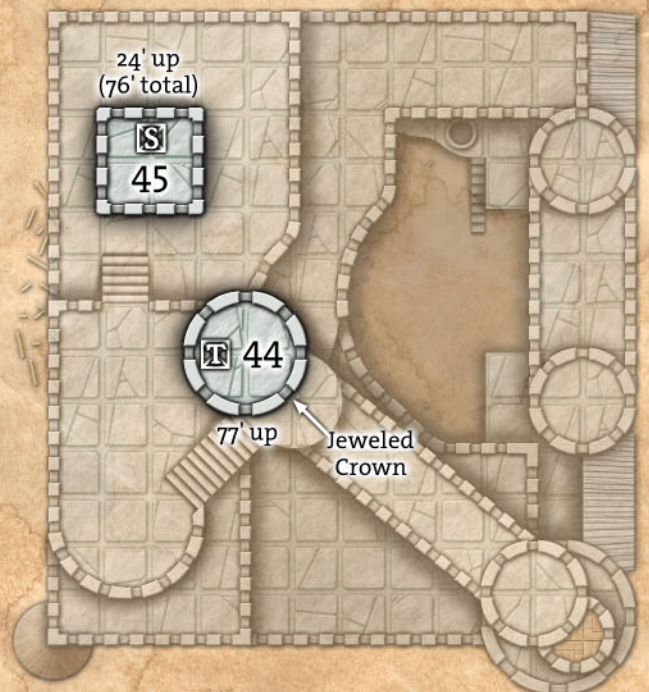
Level 6



Level 7



Level 8



 = Crenellated Wall

Brothers of Venom:
Ptolus, page 71

Rhodintor: Ptolus, page 628
Night of Dissolution:
Ptolus, page 60

Incense of Visions

Burning this dark green incense creates a cloud of thick mist, causing anyone within five feet to make a Concentration check (DC 15). Those who succeed experience a vision given to them by the DM. The DM completely controls the nature of the vision, the topic it might cover, and whether it is a vision of the past, the present, or the future. The DM may describe the images the character sees and allow the player to interpret them or can simply call for a Wisdom check (DC 15) to gain a general impression of what the vision involves. The vision should grant the character some new information and possibly lead to a new adventure. Incense of vision is a one-use item—once activated, it cannot be stopped, and it cannot be reused.

Moderate divination; CL 7th; Craft Wondrous Item, divination; Price 800 gp; Weight 1 lb.

Characters can climb down the walls from the rooftop to the courtyard or out of the house. They can also climb down to the battlements (Area 27) or even around the central tower to the bridge (Area 36). Either way, the Climb DC is 20, unless the characters are climbing to get out of the house while Condition #1 is in effect (see page 10). Then the DC becomes 25.

Crimson Coil robes, page 18

Chaos spirit key, page 10

secret switch that, when pressed, reveals a secret cache just below it that contains a gold ring bearing the device of a broken square. Though non-magical, this ring is a secret pass that allows the wearer and guests into the secret meeting of the **Brothers of Venom** cult (see Chapter 2).

A ladder leads up to a trap door in Area 40.

36. Bridge

A stone bridge ten feet wide connects Areas 34 and 37. The span has a short crenellated wall on either side. It is likely that the player characters will end up fighting the Cobbleman here (see Area 33).

37. Western Tower: Bridge Entrance

This chamber contains nothing special. An open archway grants access to a tiny balcony opposite the door that leads out onto the bridge (Area 36). A ladder emerges into the room from a hole in the floor that goes down to Area 33. The ladder continues up to a trap door that takes a climber to the top of this tower (Area 42). The floor here is wooden, and the ceiling rises twelve feet.

38. Northeastern Tower: Base

Only someone coming up through the locked secret door in the ceiling of the open room (Area 29) can enter this chamber. The floor is stone and the ceiling is twelve feet high. An iron ladder built into the tower's stone wall rises up to a wooden trap door in the ceiling.

The walls here have niches carved into them. Many are empty, but flasks of unholy water sit in four of them. In another rests a bit of *incense of visions* wrapped in cloth. In a sixth niche a searcher can find a small grey idol—it appears to be a demonic figure made of compressed ash. It is worth 20 gp.

39. Rooftop

One can reach this area only from the stairs down from the upper rooftop (Area 40). The hounds from that area can reach here easily, as they patrol the roof endlessly. This rooftop stands fifty-two feet above the ground.

LEVEL 7

Any ceilings on this level are twelve feet high (but not all the areas have ceilings). Interior floors are wooden, while the rooftop's floor is stone.

40. Upper Rooftop (EL 5)

Surrounded by battlements, this flat roof is covered with patches of moss and black slime, as well as dirt and old leaves. The rhodintor in the nearby central tower (Area 41) has two hell hounds that endlessly patrol the rooftop here and

in Area 39. They attack anything they encounter; they never need to sleep, eat, or drink.

This rooftop is fifty-seven feet above the ground. Stairs lead up to the rhodintor's nest in Area 41, and a trap door in the western corner leads down to Area 35. The stairs in the east end of the rooftop go down to Area 39.

Hell Hounds (2): hp 24 and 30; see MM.

41. Central Tower: Rhodintor Nest

A character who climbs the outer stairs from Area 40 reaches an open balcony. This balcony sixty-five feet above the ground juts out from the central tower. Within the tower lies a weblike nest of bits of old cloth and other rubbish held together with a hardened, glistening excretion.

This is the nest of a **rhodintor** demon, called by the cultists years ago. It sleeps in this tower, awaiting the **Night of Dissolution** like so many of its kind. However, it awakens if anyone comes to Areas 39, 40, or 36 (the bridge). Incensed at being disturbed, it attacks all comers and fights to the death. The rats and undead in the house obey the rhodintor's commands.

This rhodintor may have been injured in a fight with the bralani eladrin; see Area 20 (page 16).

Rhodintor (Kravren): hp 60; see *Ptolus*, page 628.

Tactics: The "earthbound demon" takes whatever time it has to use its *heroism*, *displacement*, *bull's strength*, and *shield* abilities, in that order. In a fight, it uses its great strength to push people out of its lair, either down to the bridge or all the way down into the courtyard.

The Nest: After carefully searching the nest (Search, DC 25), characters find two more **Crimson Coil robes**. Although one is tattered and ruined from being in the nest, the other is passable, though filthy. The filthy robe is also a *robe of resistance +1* (it works just like a cloak).

42. Western Tower: Roof

On the crenellated top of the western tower, a trap door leads down to the bridge entry (Area 37). The rooftop is sixty-nine feet above the ground.

43. Northeastern Tower: Second Level

This second level of the northeastern tower has a ladder that goes up to a trap door on the roof (Area 45). The trap door is barred from this side and secret from the outside (Search, DC 28); someone outside would need to batter in the four-inch-thick stone door, which has hardness 8, 60 hit points, and a break DC of 28.

The only thing in this room is a locked iron chest (Open Lock, DC 28). It contains 6,572 sp, 1,951 gp, a gold candlestick worth 100 gp, a silver headband worth 300 gp, and one-half of the **chaos spirit key**. This was once the brothel's secret treasury.

LEVEL 8

The highest level of Pythoness House is nothing more than rooftops.

44. Central Tower: Roof

A trap door on this rooftop seventy-seven feet off the ground leads down to the rhodintor's nest (Area 41). On the wall of the tower just below the crenellations of this rooftop level (above the archway into Area 41), hangs a large painted stone crown. Eight large blue garnets, each worth 200 gp, are set into this crown. However, each gem is also cursed. A character who removes a gem (Strength check, DC 18), must make a Will save (DC 15). Failure inflicts a *bestow curse* spell upon the character and returns the gem to its original setting in the crown. Success allows the character to obtain the gem successfully, but it has no further special powers.

45. Northeastern Tower: Roof

A secret trap door (Search, DC 28) gives access to the interior of the northeastern tower (see Area 43). The door is barred from the inside. The four-inch-thick stone door has hardness 8, 60 hit points, and a break DC of 28.

This rooftop seventy-six feet above the ground stands twenty-four feet above the keep's roof (Area 39).

SUBTERRANEAN LEVEL

Once the player characters get the chaos statue in Area 8 to move, they expose a shaft leading down to an underground level. An iron ladder is bolted to one side of the shaft.

46. Undead Guardian (EL 6)

The shaft is twenty feet deep and ends in a room that measures thirty feet square. Another shaft leads farther down, but without a ladder this time.

The Membrane: A thin, fleshy, translucent membrane covers and seals the second shaft. This is a chaositech alarm. While cutting through it is simple, doing so immediately alerts **Wuntad**, leader of the **Tolling Bell cult**, that someone has penetrated it. Unless the player characters leave immediately after destroying the membrane, Wuntad and his followers will be waiting when the PCs come out of the house.

When the membrane is destroyed, a gust of frigid air blows up from below, alerting the characters to the conditions of Area 47.

Hill Giant Skeleton: A very large corpse, dressed in faded and tattered ceremonial garb of strange design, sits upright against the north wall of this chamber. This creature animates based on the power of the chaos spirit. It attacks all those who enter this chamber unless they speak the spirit's name (Segginal Fesbon). It fights until destroyed.

Chaos statue, page 12

Wuntad, page 27

Tolling Bell cult: Ptolus, page 73

Come out of the house: See "Leaving With the Goods," page 26.

The chaos spirit of Pythoness House and the chaos spirit key are described on page 10. The Cobbledman (Area 33) has one piece of the chaos spirit key, and the other is sealed away in the northeast tower (Area 43). Maquent's Journal (page 91) provides clues to finding and using the key.



DM TIPS

The player characters should be given every warning that this final area (Area 50) might be too much for them. Their foe's construct immunities, very high Armor Class, and fast healing make it extremely difficult to defeat. Perhaps ominous rumblings that make it seem as though the ice cave will collapse might frighten them off. If they press on, however, they'll have to live with the consequences. Fortunately, it would be fairly easy to run from this creature—although it swims well, it is so large that it can move at only half speed through the door and through the underwater passage.

Cults of Chaos: Ptolus, page 71
Cult Book, page 92

Skeletal Hill Giant

Large undead (corporeal), (Neutral)

CR 6

HD 12d12 **hp** 95

Init +4 **Speed** 30 feet

AC 23, touch 9, flat-footed 23

BAB/Grapple +6/+17

Space/Reach 10 feet/10 feet

Attack +12 melee (1d6+7, slam) or +13 melee (3d6+10, 19–20/×2, greatsword)

Full Attack +12 melee (1d6+7, 2 slams) or +13/+8 melee (3d6+10, 19–20/×2, greatsword)

SQ Low-light vision, darkvision 60 feet

Fort +4, **Ref** +4, **Will** +8

Str 25, **Dex** 11, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 1

Skills: N/A

Feats: Improved Initiative.

Possessions: Masterwork breastplate, masterwork greatsword.

47. Icy Stasis (EL 6)

The cave at the bottom of the second shaft is naturally formed, though unnaturally cold. Ropelike strands of ice cover the stone walls, icicles hang from the ceiling, and a thick layer of ice and frost lines the floor. The western portion of the cave is, in fact, a pool frozen over with two feet of solid ice.

The Cold and Ice: An unprotected character must make a Fortitude save once every ten minutes (DC 15, +1 per previous check), taking 1d6 points of nonlethal damage from the cold or exposure on each failed save. A character with the Survival skill may receive a bonus on this saving throw and may be able to apply this bonus to other characters as well (see the skill description in Chapter 4 of the *Player's Handbook*). Characters wearing winter clothing need to check for cold and exposure damage only once per hour.

Characters who take any nonlethal damage from cold or exposure are beset by frostbite or

hypothermia (treat them as fatigued). These penalties end when the character recovers from the nonlethal damage suffered.

Those who try to walk on the ice must spend two squares of movement to enter a square covered by ice. The Difficulty Class for Balance and Tumble checks on icy ground increases by +5.

Minotaurs: Two side alcoves in this chamber each contain a minotaur held in stasis behind a thin wall of ice. As soon as anyone enters the cave, the ice walls magically begin to melt, and the minotaurs awaken. This process takes 3 rounds. (Attacking the ice walls hastens the process by a round, but gives the attackers no special advantage.)

When finally released, the minotaurs both say in Common, “Ah, the Night of Dissolution has come!” If they see creatures who do not bear the symbols of chaos or utter the correct praises of chaos, they attack. “Defilers!” they shout.

The minotaurs bear amulets, tattoos, and brands of chaotic symbols. Each carries a greataxe. They have been down here for about three years, but they have no idea how long it has actually been.

They do not know exactly what they guard, but they know that they were not supposed to have awakened until the Night of Dissolution—“when the forces of chaos finally win against the oppression of order,” they were told. They fight to the death.

Minotaurs (2): hp 39 and 43; see MM.

Frozen Book: PCs who make a Search check (DC 16) find an old book covered in the ice. They must chip or burn through 10 hit points worth of ice to get at it.

This book contains crude, handwritten notes offering important details regarding the *Cults of Chaos*. See the *Cult Book* handout in the Appendix.

48. The Frozen Pool (EL 2)

To get into the pool, characters must hack or burn their way through the ice, which measures two feet thick (it has 72 hit points). After that's done, the pool reveals itself to be a submerged passageway that connects to Area 49. It measures ten feet across and about forty feet long—and is entirely filled with freezing water.

Characters who enter this extremely cold water suffer 1d6 points of lethal damage and afterward sustain 1d6 points of lethal damage per minute spent in the water (no save). In addition, a character must make a Fortitude save (DC 15, +1 per previous check) or take 1d4 points of nonlethal damage as well. Those wearing metal armor in the water are affected as if by a *chill metal* spell.



NEW ITEMS OF CHAOS

Dust of Chaotic Warding: This dust protects the creature it is sprinkled upon as a *protection from law* spell for five minutes. It can be used only once.

Faint abjuration; CL 5th; Craft Wondrous Item, *protection from law*; Price 250 gp

Rod of Chaos: This two-foot-long rod has a skull on one end. When the wielder wishes it, the skull speaks a *word of chaos*. When it is finished, it turns into a dose of *dust of protection from law*. When the dust is used, the item is entirely used up.

Strong enchantment; CL 20th; Craft Rod, *word of chaos*; Price 7,250 gp.

Skull of Chaos: This is a real human skull, well preserved and covered with symbols of chaos and other arcane runes. The skull's wielder can command it to produce a *chaos hammer* spell once each day.

Moderate evocation; CL 7th; Craft Wondrous Item, *chaos hammer*; Price 11,200 gp.

Spear of Chaos: This black-shafted, red-tipped *+1 spear* stuns for 1 round anyone of lawful alignment whom it strikes (Fortitude save, DC 15, negates).

Moderate enchantment; CL 9th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *chaos hammer*; Price 13,302 gp.

Neveran's All-Key: This minor artifact looks like a normal key, although as one examines it, the key subtly changes shape. It morphs constantly in this fashion. It opens any lock, regardless of the Open Lock DC or the spells involved, although it will not open things that lack an actual lock with a keyhole (something sealed with *arcane lock* but no normal lock, for example). Further, using the key proves extremely dangerous, for it draws upon the user's own life energy to power its magic—it bestows two negative levels each time it is used (a Fortitude save, DC 16, removes them). Further, a character suffers a temporary negative level at all times while the *all-key* remains in his or her possession (including in a *bag of holding* or similar device). This latter level goes away immediately when the character gets rid of the key.

Strong transmutation; CL 20th.



49. The Treasury

The frozen passageway emerges into another ice-capped pool in another cave. To escape the pool, characters must break through another foot of ice at its surface (36 hit points).

In the dry portion of this cavern sit six chests, each covered with a thin layer of frost and ice. Each is *arcane locked* and bolted to the solid stone (Strength check, DC 26, to remove, likely destroying the chest). When one clears off the frost, an inscription is evident.

- **Chest 1:** This six-foot-long chest bears the inscription: “Twinned weapons sure to deal death to the oppressor angels.” It contains two *+1 bane (lawful outsider) bastard swords*. Any time more than thirty feet separates these swords, their magic abilities are suppressed.
- **Chest 2:** A chest four feet long carries this inscription: “A blade to slice the flesh of any foe of freedom.” The chest contains a *+1 anarchic long sword*.
- **Chest 3:** A narrow chest eight feet long bears these words: “This is sure to pierce the heart of an overwhelmed tyrant.” It contains a *+1 spear of chaos*.
- **Chest 4:** A small chest, three feet long, is marked with the following admonition: “Hear the word of chaos, fools, and despair.” It contains the *rod of chaos*.
- **Chest 5:** This small chest has inscribed upon it the words: “Tools of the fearsome chaos priest.” It contains a scroll of *cloak of chaos*, two pinches of *dust of chaotic warding*, and the *skull of chaos*.

- **Chest 6:** Another small chest bears this inscription: “No chains can bind us, and no lock can resist the magic of this key of freedom.” It contains *Neveran's all-key*.

It is important to note that each and every one of these items bears a distinct chaotic aura sensed by a *detect chaos* spell.

50. The Vengeance of Chaos (EL 8)

The steel door that serves as an entrance into this cave is secured with an *arcane lock*. The door, which has a hardness of 10 and 90 hit points, bears this inscription:

*The Greatest Threat to the Stalwart
Kings of Order, Created by
That Ancient Elven Champion,
Vaiod the Slayer*

The Construct: Beyond the door is a large, empty cave, where waits a terrible chaositech construct: a **chaosomaton** six-headed hydra. This construct, Shigmaa Wuntad's greatest prize, was brought here in pieces and reassembled within this cave. The creature has been immobile for years, but now attacks anything it encounters. If it slays those who free it and the door is open, it attempts to escape on its own. (This will take a very long time—perhaps years—for it will have to smash, dig, and claw its way up and out, during which time people in the surrounding area will report strange, thunderous underground noises.) It obeys the commands of Wuntad, but no other.

Neveran's all-key, above

The blade of the anarchic longsword in Chest 2 has a mysterious purple hue. The wood of the spear in Chest 3 is bright red.

Chaosomatons are devices created from chaositech that mimic living creatures. These constructs function as non-intrinsic chaositech items, so they make chaotic failure checks each week. Each has a small controller module that accepts verbal commands, which can be transmitted from up to a mile away. For more information, see Chaositech, page 86.

Chaosomaton: Chaositech,
page 86



Animated armor, page 73

Neveran's all-key, page 25

FROM MY CAMPAIGN TO YOURS

As of this writing, in the current Ptolus Campaign, the player characters officially own Pythoness House and have set up residence there—after clearing out all the unwanted spirits, vanquishing all the dangers, and generally cleaning the place up. This plan was the brainchild of wizard Barbatos Kem, who managed to win the deed to the place in a game of Dragonscales.



Chaosomaton Six-Headed Hydra

Huge construct (Chaotic Neutral)

CR 8

HD 6d10+27 **hp** 60

Init +1 **Speed** 20 feet, swim 20 feet

AC 29, touch 9, flat-footed 28

BAB/Grapple +6/+22

Attack/Full Attack +13 melee (1d10+8, 8 bites)

Space/Reach 15 feet/10 feet

SQ Darkvision 60 feet, low-light vision, fast healing 16, scent, construct qualities, built-in **animated armor**

Fort +10, **Ref** +6, **Will** +1

Str 27, **Dex** 12, **Con** —, **Int** 0, **Wis** 4, **Cha** 3

Crucial Skills: Listen +3, Spot +4.

Other Skills: Swim +10.

Crucial Feats: Combat Reflexes.

Other Feats: Iron Will, Toughness, Weapon Focus (bite).

LEAVING WITH THE GOODS

Once the player characters have the treasures from the subterranean level, they are likely to want to leave Pythoness House (and probably never come back). However, while the chaos cultists cannot enter Pythoness House any longer, a special sympathetic alarm alerts them if any of their items are disturbed. Unless the PCs move incredibly fast—for example, they find the chest with *Neveran's all-key* in Area 49, open it, and flee immediately—certain powerful cultists wait in ambush for them outside the house.

Shigmaa Wuntad himself leads this group of cultists, which includes a female litorian cleric, a female lizardfolk fighter, and a band of warriors. Of course, the characters are already weakened from their adventure, while the cultists are ready for battle and have the drop on them. Consequently, the PCs likely have no chance against them, even if Wuntad and the others aren't much more powerful than the party (which they probably are).

The cultists demand the “weapons of chaos.” If they don't get them immediately, they attack without hesitation or fear. They brook no disrespect from the player characters.

Basically, the cultists are so high level and single minded, the only reasonable outcome involves the PCs either giving them what they want or ending up in a fight they cannot win. However, fortunately for the adventurers, Wuntad doesn't care about them enough to kill them. In fact, Wuntad likes to leave behind people who can spread rumors about how frightening and powerful he is. He has commanded those with him to use nonlethal force where possible.

The PCs' best chance is to use diplomacy or deception and take advantage of the fact that Wuntad only remembers the *weapons of chaos*. That is to say, if they are careful, the characters need only hand over the swords, spear, and rod



of chaos—not the other stuff and, perhaps most importantly, not *Neveran's all-key*.

If the cultists defeat the player characters in battle, they leave them alive (although they do not tend the wounds of the dying) but take everything with a chaotic aura, as well as any portable treasure, including gems, jewelry, and coins.

THE CULTISTS (EL 11)

Wuntad is a massive creature with wings made of darkness and shadow that crackle like lightning. His flesh is a sallow yellow-green, and his long, grey-white hair seems to be coming out in clumps. He has drooping eyes that glow with a white malevolence, and dirty white teeth and claws.

He wears a silvery breastplate, a dark red kilt, and little else. He seems extremely confident in his own power—so much so that in this meeting he gives the PCs his name and even taunts them .

Wuntad

Male human half-demon (Chaotic Evil)
Medium outsider (augmented humanoid)
Barbarian4/cleric4 (Galchutt) CR 10
Init +4 **Speed** 30 feet, fly 20 feet (average)
HD 8d8+24 **hp** 87
AC 21, touch 14, flat-footed 21
BAB/Grapple +7/+12
Attack +12 melee (1d6+5, bite)
Full Attack +12 melee (1d6+5, bite) and +7 melee (1d4+2, 2 claws)
SA Rage 2/day, rebuke undead 3/day, smite good, spell-like abilities
SQ Darkvision 60 feet; immunity to poison; resistance to acid 10, cold 10, electricity 10, and fire 10; DR 5/magic; SR 18; fast movement; uncanny dodge; spell-like abilities; spells; trap sense +1
Fort +11, **Ref** +6, **Will** +8
Str 20, **Dex** 18, **Con** 16, **Int** 14, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 11
Languages: Common, Elvish, Infernal.
Crucial Skills: Climb +7, Heal +6, Intimidate +6, Jump +6, Listen +6, Search +8, Spot +7, Swim +5.
Other Skills: **Craft (chaositech)** +6, Knowledge (arcana) +3, Knowledge (religion) +10.
Crucial Feats: Blind-Fight, Dodge, Power Attack.
Other Feats: Iron Will.
Domains: Chaos, Evil.
Spell-Like Abilities: Caster level 8th. The save DCs are Charisma based.
3/day—*poison, darkness*.
1/day—*unholy blight, desecrate*.
Spells: 5/4+1/3+1; save DC 12 + spell level.
2nd—*bear's endurance, bull's strength, mark of chaos, shatter**.
1st—*bless, deathwatch, detect chaos, protection from law*, shield of faith*.
0—*cure minor wounds, detect chaositech, detect poison, light, resistance*.
Possessions: +1 mithral breastplate, gloves of dexterity +2 (fitted with holes to accommodate claws), *potion of aid*, 11 pp, 11 gp.
* Indicates a domain spell.

Tactics: In the ambush, Wuntad's already cast *bear's endurance* (+16 hp), *bull's strength* (+2 bonus to attacks and damage in melee), and *shield of faith* (+2 bonus to Armor Class for a total of AC 23). At the beginning of the fight, if there is one, he rages, and attacks with his claws and teeth, probably suffering the penalty to make nonlethal attacks.

Rage (Ex): The following changes remain in effect as long as Wuntad rages:

hp 103
AC 19, touch 12, flat-footed 15
BAB/Grapple +7/+14
Full Attack: Bite +14 (1d6+7) and 2 claws +9 (1d4+3)
Fort +13, **Will** +9
Str 24, **Con** 20
Skills: Climb +9, Jump +8, Swim +7

Ibard the litorian appears quite savage, with chaos symbols shaved into her hair. She wears chain armor and hefts a large shield in the shape of an eight-pointed star. In her other hand, she holds a large handbell.

Ibard

Female litorian (Chaotic Evil)
Cleric6 (chaos gods) CR7
HD 6d8+18 **hp** 35
Init +2 **Speed** 20 feet
AC 19, touch 12, flat-footed 17
BAB/Grapple +4/+5
Attack/Full Attack +8 melee (1d8+2, heavy mace) or +7 ranged (1d10, heavy crossbow)
SA Rebuke undead 1/day, spells
SQ Low-light vision, scent
Fort +10, **Ref** +6, **Will** +10
Str 15, **Dex** 14, **Con** 16, **Int** 8, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 7
Crucial Skills: Intimidate +0, Listen +5, Search +1, Spot +3.
Other Skills: Diplomacy +3, Knowledge (religion) +8, Survival +3.
Crucial Feats: N/A
Other Feats: Iron Will, Weapon Focus (heavy mace).
Domains: Chaos, War.
Spells: 5/4+1/3+1/2+1; save DC 11 + spell level (caster level 6th, +3 melee touch, +6 ranged touch)
3rd—*dispel magic, magic circle against law*, magic vestment*.
2nd—*aid, find traps, lesser restoration, shatter**.
1st—*bless, detect chaos, divine favor, magic weapon*, protection from law*.
0—*detect magic, detect poison, guidance, purify food and drink, virtue*.
Possessions: Masterwork chainmail, heavy steel shield, masterwork heavy mace, heavy crossbow, bolts (12), *bell of sleep, cloak of resistance* +2, *potion of owl's wisdom*, scroll of *hold person* (x3), bell-shaped jeweled amulet worth 100 gp, 19 gp, 5 sp.
* Indicates a domain spell.

DM TIPS

Stealing From the PCs

The players will be furious if the cultists steal from them, particularly if they take Neveran's all-key before the characters can get their box open. Try to direct this anger at the cultists, not at you or the scenario. Don't be gleeful in the PCs' defeat—ask them what they're going to do to avenge themselves.

The point here is to make them hate the chaos cult and Wuntad in particular. This gives them their own motivation for following the course of this adventure. Every mention of Wuntad should get them angry and propel them forward.

Some player characters may try to use divinations (probably from paid NPC casters) to find the stolen items. Unfortunately, they are hidden away in a place called the Eschaton Sanctuary beneath the Temple of the Fifty-Three Gods of Chance (see page 84). This sanctuary is protected against all divinations less powerful than discern location and, thus, likely beyond the characters' means.

Craft (chaositech):
Ptolus, page 568

Mark of chaos: Chaositech,
page 17
Detect chaositech:
Ptolus, page 641

The bell of sleep works in every way like a wand of greater sleep, except that any member of the Cult of the Tolling Bell can use it. It has eight remaining charges.



Troubleshooting

Obviously, if the PCs manage to get away with the goods, they get away. If they slay Wuntad, he gets raised from the dead to be part of the rites in Chapter 6: The Final Ritual—in fact, that chapter assumes that Wuntad has died and come back in the intervening period. However, the remaining Tolling Bell cultists use locate object and scry to find the PCs and the chaos items. They could send representatives to buy the items, steal the items, or kill the characters and take the items. The cultists might even sic Vai assassins on the player characters (see Ptolus, page 139).

Tactics: Ibard has already cast *aid* on herself (+10 hp, +1 bonus to attack rolls and saves against fear) as well as *divine favor* (+2 bonus to attacks and damage), *magic vestment* (+1 AC), and *protection from law*. If there's a fight, she uses the *bell of sleep* to take down foes fast.

Saavia is a savage lizardfolk fighter with scars and brands ritually cut and burned into her scaly flesh. She wears black chainmail and carries a spike-covered longbow.

Saavia

Female lizardfolk (Chaotic Evil)
Medium humanoid (reptilian)
Fighter2 **CR3**
Init +2 **Speed** 20 feet
HD 2d8+4 + 2d10+4 **hp** 29
AC 23, touch 12, flat-footed 21
BAB/Grapple +4/+8
Attack +9 melee (1d4+4, claws) or +7 ranged (1d8+4, longbow)
Full Attack +9 melee (1d4+4, 2 claws) and +3 melee (1d6+2, bite) or +7 ranged (1d8+4, longbow)
SQ Hold breath (56 rounds)
Fort +7, **Ref** +5, **Will** -1
Str 18, **Dex** 14, **Con** 14, **Int** 6, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 4
Crucial Skills: Balance +7, Jump +10.
Other Skills: Handle Animal -2, Swim +11.
Crucial Feats: Dodge, Point Blank Shot.
Other Feats: Great Fortitude, Weapon Focus (claws).
Possessions: +1 chainmail; composite longbow (+4); masterwork arrows (20); *potions of*

cure moderate wounds, *magic fang*, and *fly*; gold ring worth 50 gp; 4 pp; 16 gp.

Tactics: In melee Saavia uses her natural weapons (as does her master Wuntad, whom she practically worships), but she would be just as happy using her bow at range. Wuntad has told his followers to leave most if not all of their foes alive to spread the word of his might, but Saavia might forget about that in the heat of battle.

Wuntad's Warriors (6)

Human males and females (Chaotic Evil)
Warrior **CR 1/2**
Init +2 **Speed** 20 feet
HD 1d8+1 **hp** 9
AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15
BAB/Grapple +1/+2
Attack +3 melee (1d8+1, two-bladed sword) or +3 ranged (1d6+1, javelin)
Full Attack +3 melee (1d8+1, two-bladed sword) or +1/+1 (1d8+1, two-bladed sword) or +3 ranged (1d6+1, javelin)
Fort +3, **Ref** +2, **Will** -2
Str 13, **Dex** 14, **Con** 12, **Int** 8, **Wis** 7, **Cha** 5
Crucial Skills: Jump +2, Intimidate -1.
Other Skills: N/A
Crucial Feats: N/A
Other Feats: Exotic Weapon Proficiency (two-bladed sword), Two-Weapon Fighting.
Possessions: Masterwork breastplate, masterwork two-bladed sword, javelins (2), 3 gp, 13 sp, 8 cp.



Chapter 2: SECRET MEETING

The player characters are asked to intervene in the life of a young man who is getting involved with a chaos cult.



In this adventure, the characters learn that an acquaintance of theirs, Itumar Shon, has been spending time with a group that is actually a cover for a chaos cult. Before they know it, they hear about a secret meeting of the cult where they are sure to discover more about the group's insidious conspiracies and the mysterious Night of Dissolution. . . .

GETTING STARTED

The player characters should get some time to recuperate after their ordeal in Pythoness House. They are likely hurt and possibly quite angry and humiliated after the theft of what they had found there (see Chapter 1: Pythoness House). The events of this chapter should take place about a week after the events of the last adventure.

THE HOOK

Hirus Feek (male human expert6), one of the two owners of the **Bull and Bear Armory** in **Delver's Square**, contacts the characters. Hirus is a skinny, balding man with a thin grey beard trimmed short on his face. His sunken eyes betray too many years of working long hours as an armorsmith in his workshop. He's not much with words, and he knows it. Still, he has a problem that he can't solve, and it involves his young employee, Itumar Shon,

for whom he cares very much. Itumar, abandoned by his parents to the streets when he was only ten years old, is like a son to Hirus.

Hirus knows, even if the PCs do not, that Itumar looks up to them with respect and envy. The young man wants to live a life of adventure and battle the way they do. Hirus seeks out the party at a tavern or restaurant in Midtown, or even out in the middle of Delver's Square.

After introducing himself, he tells the group that Itumar has fallen in with a bad bunch of people calling themselves the Brotherhood of Ptolus. He doesn't know much about this so-called brotherhood, but he has seen some of the people who have come looking for Itumar, and they are clearly unsavory types (he doesn't know any of their names and can't really provide much of a useful description). He has tried to talk to Itumar about it, but the young man remains tight lipped about his new friends and won't listen to Hirus or his brother Sholum.

Hirus humbly asks the characters to talk to young Itumar, find out whom he has been spending time with, and convince him to choose better company. Although he offers no payment or reward for doing so, if the PCs ask for something, he'll grant them a 20 percent discount at his shop on their next purchases.

DM TIPS

Should the adventurers refuse Hirus' request, DMs must find another way to expose them to the information about the cult's secret meeting that they would have learned from Itumar. Possibilities include having them use divination spells or follow or interrogate a known cultist agent.

*Bull and Bear Armory:
Ptolus, page 201
Delver's Square:
Ptolus, page 198*

Brothers of Venom:
Ptolus, page 71
Cult Book, page 92



While in Pythoness House, the characters might have found a secret cache in the Ritual Room (Area 35) that contained a gold ring bearing the device of a broken square. They might have seen the symbol of the broken square on the Crimson Coil robe they found in Radanna's chamber (Area 25), on the walls of the Ritual Room, or on the frozen minotaurs in the subterranean level of the house.

Bull and Bear Armory:
Ptolus, page 201
Ghostly Minstrel:
Ptolus, page 204

Broken square ring, page 22

DM TIPS

If possible, the DM should play the "talk with Iltumar" encounter as just a minor sideline or flavorful roleplaying encounter between "real" adventures.

Shivvel users: Ptolus, page 557

"The Brotherhood of Ptolus" is actually a chaos cult called the **Brothers of Venom**. In his search for adventure, Iltumar has been recruited to join this dangerous cult, which reveres murder and mayhem for their own sakes. The player characters should have learned this fact about the Brotherhood of Ptolus from the **Cult Book** they found in Pythoness House. This alone should be incentive enough for them to help Hirus and Iltumar. After the events of the last chapter, the PCs are probably looking for revenge against the chaos cults.

CONFRONTING ILTUMAR

The player characters can find Iltumar (male human commoner1) either while he is at work at the **Bull and Bear Armory** during the day, or at the **Ghostly Minstrel** almost any evening. They might speak to him where they find him, or they might ask him to go with them to another location. Iltumar will do whatever they ask, curious as to why *they* would seek *him* out. He is still in awe of the party, at least a bit.

Iltumar seems like the same eager youth they've seen around before. He's got sandy brown hair, a smooth face, and a wiry build. He wears simple clothing. Now, however, he also wears a ring with a device upon it that looks like a square broken into many pieces. This ring is a secret sign to other cultists that he is one of them and is allowed into meetings. A Spot check (DC 15) allows a character to notice the ring, and an Intelligence check (DC 15) confirms that it's not one he has worn before. Of course, the PCs might have seen a **ring like that** (or at least the symbol) in Pythoness House.

When the adventurers bring up the Brotherhood of Ptolus, Iltumar becomes very defensive—if they use the term "Brothers of Venom," even more so. At first, he denies even having heard of them. "I don't know what you're talking about," he claims, rather unconvincingly. When they tell him it's a bad group to associate with and begin explaining why, he drops the denial and instead tells them that they've got the brotherhood all wrong. Should the PCs try to get Iltumar to reveal anything about the cultists, they must attempt a Diplomacy check (see below).

Convincing Iltumar takes both roleplaying and a good skill check result or two. The PCs need to handle the youth carefully, using his respect for them to their advantage. Characters could use Bluff (lying to him about things they "know" about the group) or Intimidate (threatening him either with harm or with stories of what will happen to him if he gets involved with the brotherhood), but the best tactic is likely to use the Diplomacy skill.

Success with Iltumar depends ultimately on the check's resulting Difficulty Class, although DMs should award a +2 or even +4 bonus to the check if the players use good roleplaying. Remember that the group can use the aid another rules to work together on this check.

DC	Diplomacy Result
14 or less	Iltumar either tells the PCs to mind their own business or tries to lie, saying he'll stay away from the cult (but he has no intention of doing so).
15	Iltumar says he'll think about what the PCs have said.
20	Iltumar sincerely agrees not to meet with the Brotherhood of Ptolus again, but he won't willingly tell the PCs what he knows (either out of fear or simply misplaced loyalty).
22+	Iltumar sincerely agrees not to meet with the Brotherhood of Ptolus again and tells the PCs everything he knows about the group.

WHAT ILTUMAR KNOWS

Young Iltumar knows three other members of the "Brotherhood of Ptolus," but all of them by false names. He doesn't know how to contact any of them, and he does not know that this group is really the Brothers of Venom.

The three members are as follows:

1. "Skairris Noll" is actually a male human expert named Juliar Krill. He is a physicker who tends the sick in Midtown. Iltumar has met him only once, when two other members of the brotherhood (see below) brought him to the older man; he got the feeling Skairris held some kind of position of authority. He is tall and heavyset, and has dark hair with a dark beard.

2. "Jamill Roshama" is a human commoner named Noriss Ittarva, a troubled young man only a few years older than Iltumar. He has a reputation as a troublemaker in certain neighborhoods. "Jamill" has come to speak with Iltumar a number of times. He has strange tattoos and scars, long black hair, and the sunken eyes of a **shivvel user**.

3. "Anikka Thersil" is a young half-elf commoner whose real name is Tora Whistlelost. She has been subtly seducing Iltumar, with the result that he has what he thinks are true feelings for her. She has long dark hair and is slight of build. "Anikka" has accompanied "Jamill" a few times to meetings with Iltumar.

All three wear the same broken square ring that "Jamill" gave to Iltumar. That very night, Iltumar is supposed to wear the ring and walk down Tavern Row in Midtown after sunset. From there,



someone will show him where a secret meeting is being held. During this meeting, Iltumar is to be inducted officially into the brotherhood.

About the group in general, Iltumar can tell the characters that its members care about freedom and change, and they aren't afraid to cause some trouble to achieve what is best for all. The excitement of being a part of something like that is what attracted Iltumar, but the young man is no evil cultist—at least, not yet.

IF THE PCS FAIL

If the characters botch their attempt to convince Iltumar or fail to get any information out of him, they still have avenues to find out what they need to know. Should they follow the youth, he will lead them right to the secret meeting. Or, they could spot the cultist spies (see below) and follow or confront them, possibly gaining information. Some PCs might try to use *detect thoughts* or other magic to get background from Iltumar.

CULTIST SPIES

The cultists do not yet trust Iltumar, so they watch him closely. If the player characters meet with him, the cult attempts to eavesdrop on the conversation using special agents whom Iltumar has not met. The spy method only works if the PCs meet with Iltumar in public, such as at the **Ghostly Minstrel**, which is very near the **Bull and Bear**. In

such a case, the cultists just sit at a nearby table. Characters can make Spot checks (DC 22) to notice the spies paying a little too much attention. Likewise, if the PCs meet with the young man at the **Bull and Bear**, the cultists attempt to pose as customers. Mostly, they are just interested to see whether Iltumar is revealing any secrets. They are not there to take any other actions.

Adronna attempts to pass for a cleric of Lothian. She has forged papers identifying herself as Laila Ferris. If she thinks there's even a chance of a paladin or spellcaster using *detect evil* (or *chaos*) on her, she drinks her *potion of undetectable alignment*. Her weapon is coated with greenblood oil poison (see below).

Adronna

Female human (Chaotic Evil)

Rogue6 **CR 6**
Init +6 **Speed** 30 feet

HD 6d6+6 **hp** 30

AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 17

BAB/Grapple +4/+5

Attack/Full Attack +6 melee (1d8+2, morningstar)

SA Sneak attack +3d6

SQ Trapfinding, evasion, trap sense +2, and uncanny dodge

Fort +3, **Ref** +7, **Will** +2

Str 13, **Dex** 14, **Con** 13, **Int** 15, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 11

Crucial Skills: Balance +10, Climb +11, Escape Artist +10, Hide +9, Listen +7, Spot +8, Use Magic Device +9.

Other Skills: Appraise +10, Disguise +8, Forgery +10, Knowledge (local) +5, Open Lock +13.

Crucial Feats: Combat Expertise, Dodge, Power Attack.

Other Feats: Improved Initiative.

Possessions: +1 chain shirt; +1 morningstar; potions of cat's grace, pass without trace, and undetectable alignment; masterwork thieves' tools; climber's kit; holy symbol; two doses of greenblood oil poison (DC 13; 1 Constitution/1d3 Constitution); 13 gp, 7 sp.

Like Adronna, Arveth also coats her weapon with greenblood oil poison (see next page). Arveth passes for a simple commoner and drinks her potion if Adronna does. Adronna takes the lead and tries to get in close, if possible. Arveth hangs back—she's there only if the “cleric” needs her help. If confronted, they attempt to flee, first and foremost. If they must fight, they leap into melee and attempt to flank one foe, taking down their enemies one by one.

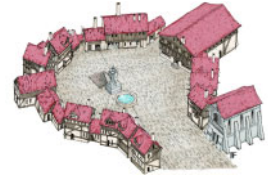
Arveth

Female human (Chaotic Evil)

Rogue6 **CR 6**
Init +4 **Speed** 30 feet

HD 6d6+6 **hp** 29

AC 18, touch 14, flat-footed 18



As its name would suggest, *Delver's Square* is always bustling with adventurers. Businesses there—like the *Bull and Bear Armory* and the *Ghostly Minstrel*—cater to the needs of *Dungeon* explorers. For more on this part of *Midtown*, see *Ptolus*, page 198

Both Adronna and Arveth are tall, physically fit women with blond hair. Arveth has sparkling green eyes and a small scar right above her lip. Adronna has a deep, soothing voice, while Arveth has an odd accent (she is originally from the faraway land of *Kem*).

Ghostly Minstrel:
Ptolus, page 204
Bull and Bear Armory:
Ptolus, page 201



The Cult Organization

The Brothers of Venom have two levels of membership. The first is called the “fellowship.” These are the people who retain their public personas and meet only in secret and only occasionally. Fellow brothers do not know the identities or in some cases even the true appearance of most other members, as they use false names and masks during the meetings. Only members who recruit new brothers know any of the fellowship’s real names. The second level of membership is that of the “deep brothers.” These cultists discard their real identities altogether and devote all their time to the Lords of Chaos.

In Chapter 3, the hapless Iltumar may be kidnapped by cultists and taken to see the Surgeon in the Shadows; see page 36.

The cobbler and his family are dead. The Brothers of Venom murdered them—not just to use their house and workshop as a meeting place, but to further their own love of murder. The meeting space is just an extra benefit.

Balacazars: Ptolus, page 100

Rat’s Nest: Ptolus, page 100 (#185, G6, on map)

BAB/Grapple +4/+5
Attack/Full Attack +7 melee (1d4+2, dagger)
SA Sneak attack +3d6
SQ Trapfinding, evasion, trap sense +2, uncanny dodge
Fort +3, **Ref** +9, **Will** +1
Str 12, **Dex** 18, **Con** 14, **Int** 14, **Wis** 9, **Cha** 11
Crucial Skills: Climb +11, Escape Artist +12, Listen +3, Move Silently +12, Search +4, Spot +4, Use Magic Device +9
Other Skills: Appraise +7, Gather Information +8, Knowledge (local) +8, Open Lock +15, Ride +7, Sleight of Hand +10, Swim +12.
Crucial Feats: Combat Expertise.
Other Feats: Investigator, Skill Focus (Knowledge [local]), Weapon Focus (dagger).
Possessions: +1 studded leather armor; +1 dagger; masterwork dagger; *potions of remove fear, invisibility, and undetectable alignment*; thieves’ tools; two doses of greenblood oil poison (DC 13; 1 Constitution/1d3 Constitution); gold ring worth 75 gp; 17 gp.

If the player characters meet with Iltumar somewhere that the spies cannot go, they wait around outside or in another nearby location to watch both the young man and the PCs.

Should the spies get away knowing that the adventurers heard about the meeting, the meeting is moved to an abandoned house in Midtown near the Warrens. No more cultists contact Iltumar, at least for now (but see Chapter 3).

ON THE STREET

Hopefully, one way or the other, the characters have learned about the secret meeting on Tavern Row in Midtown tonight. Going to the row before dark does no good (unless the PCs are looking for a drink). Going there after dark, however, gets the attention of the lookouts.

The lookouts are the aforementioned “Jamill Roshama” and “Anikka Thersil” (Noriss Ittarva and Tora Whistlelost). These commoners watch for anyone walking down the row with a broken square ring. “Jamill” is on the street. When he sees someone with a ring, he makes eye contact and subtly points, with a nod or a half-shrug, to a nearby rooftop. PCs who look up will spot a shabbily dressed young girl on the roof. She runs down the length of the rooftops on that side of the street, making sure the party can see her. (This girl is not a cultist, but just a waif Jamill paid to do this. She doesn’t even know why.) The various taverns and establishments abut each other for a distance, so she can make her way easily along the roofs. She stops on a particular roof and points across the street. Again, if the PCs look where she points, they see “Anikka,” who calls them over, then shoos them toward a narrow alley between two buildings, one of which is a horrible little restaurant called the Rat’s Nest.

The thing that can work to the party’s complete advantage is that not all the cultists know the other cultists’ real identities. If at least one PC wears a ring, they will be guided straight to the meeting in the so-called “Back Room.”

THE BACK ROOM

“The Back Room” is actually a cult code for whatever establishment the members are using as a meeting place. They always meet at night, and they always choose places where late-night activity won’t draw attention, such as in (or right next to) a restaurant, tavern, gambling den, brothel, and so forth. For their latest meeting, they have chosen an abandoned workshop behind a nasty little eatery called the Rat’s Nest on Tavern Row. The proprietor of the Rat’s Nest is Caudil Thinflame (male halfling commoner2). Caudil is not actually involved in the cult and has nothing to do with any of this.

Caudil has a single employee, Nhara Beezil (female human commoner1), who waits tables while Caudil cooks. Nhara is not a cultist either, but she’s been bribed to help things move along. When the characters approach down the alleyway, she comes out and unlocks a door for them. The door leads into an open space between the Rat’s Nest and a two-story cobbler’s workshop that faces another street. This open area is used for storage and contains a number of crates. Some of them have been stacked like stairs, allowing one to climb up onto the flat roof of the workshop’s lean-to. This small rooftop has a number of soil-filled boxes where the cobbler’s wife grew vegetables. From up there, the PCs see a door that leads into the second floor of the workshop.

ENTRY (EL 4)

This room is actually the main portion of the cobbler’s family’s living quarters. It is simply furnished with some chairs and a table. It also opens into a small kitchen. Doors lead off to two bedrooms and a garderobe, and stairs go down into the workshop, now used as the meeting room.

Three guards in this entry room keep a watch out the peepholes recently drilled into the walls; from them, they can see out onto the roof of the lean-to. These guards are not cultists themselves, just hired muscle from the Balacazar family. As such, they are not fanatics—they run or even surrender if seriously threatened.

Guards (3)

Male humans (Neutral Evil)

Warrior2 **CR** 1

Init +1 **Speed** 20 feet

HD 2d8+6 **hp** 20

AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 15

BAB/Grapple +2/+5



Attack/Full Attack +6 melee (1d12+4, 19–20/x3, greataxe)
Fort +6, **Ref** +3, **Will** +2
Str 17, **Dex** 13, **Con** 17, **Int** 10, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 11
Crucial Skills: Climb +4, Intimidate +4, Jump +3.
Other Skills: Swim +2.
Crucial Feats: Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes.
Other Feats: N/A
Possessions: Masterwork scale mail armor, masterwork greataxe, *potion of cure light wounds*, 3 gp, 8 sp, 10 cp.

Four white hoods lie on the table in the entry. Cultists (or people coming in posing as cultists) are told to don a hood. If there are more than four player characters, the guards seem confused (they weren't expecting more people than hoods) and tell them that only four can go in.

MEETING ROOM (EL 6)

Four commoners and three experts wait down here in the meeting room. All of them wear white hoods to conceal their identities, even from one another, and refer to each other by false names. These are all typical Ptolusites: businesspeople and commonfolk who secretly belong to the Brothers of Venom cult. Despite their secret love of blood, death, and violence, they seem like normal people to their friends, family, and acquaintances.

One of the experts is “Skairris Noll” (Juliar Krill), whom Illumar met once. The cultists are

here to plan further murders, trade advice on poison use, and engage in perverted sexual acts.

Commoners (4)

Male and female humans (Chaotic Evil)
Commoner 2 **CR 1**
Init +4 **Speed** 30 feet
HD 2d4 **hp** 8
AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10
BAB/Grapple +1/+2
Attack/Full Attack +2 melee (1d4+1, dagger) or +1 ranged (1d4+1, dagger)
Fort +0, **Ref** +0, **Will** +0
Str 12, **Dex** 10, **Con** 11, **Int** 10, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 13
Crucial Skills: Bluff +3, Spot +5.
Other Skills: Handle Animal +5, Use Rope +1.
Crucial Feats: N/A
Other Feats: Improved Initiative, Iron Will.
Possessions: Daggers (2), broken square ring, white hood, dose of Small centipede poison (DC 11, 1d2 Dexterity/1d2 Dexterity), 1 gp, 5 sp, 15 cp.

Experts (2)

Male and female humans (Chaotic Evil)
Expert 2 **CR 1**
Init +0 **Speed** 30 feet
HD 2d6+3 **hp** 13
AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10
BAB/Grapple +1/+1
Attack +2 melee (1d4, dagger) or +3 ranged (1d4, dagger)

The map above shows the upper level of the workshop next to the Rat's Nest, as it is likely that the player characters will enter the workshop by climbing up to the rooftop garden and going down to the ground level from there. Meeting attendees are not admitted from the ground level.

DM TIPS

Player characters may want to spend some time exposing these cultists, who are trying so hard to hide their identities. In such a case, the DM should come up with names and backgrounds for these commoners and the last expert: the more mundane, the better.

Skairris Noll, page 30



The workshop and house have already been looted of valuables. There are about 75 gp worth of tools and equipment left.

*Aram or centaur:
Ptolus, page 50
Deep brother, page 32
Adronna and Arveth, page 31*

Fort +0, **Ref** +1, **Will** +3
Str 10, **Dex** 12, **Con** 10, **Int** 13, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 11
Crucial Skills: Listen +2, Search +2, Spot +7.
Other Skills: Appraise +3, Forgery +3, Knowledge (local) +6.
Crucial Feats: N/A
Other Feats: Alertness, Toughness.
Possessions: Masterwork dagger, broken square ring, white hood, dose of blue whinnis poison (DC 14, 1 Constitution/unconsciousness), 5 gp, 11 sp, 15 cp.

Tactics: If attacked, these cultists defend themselves, albeit poorly. (Note, however, that they all have poison on their daggers.) They would prefer to flee from danger, though, and use the workshop's main entrance to do so if possible.

DILAR (EL 8)

Dilar, an **aram**, is a so-called “**deep brother**.” He is here to supervise the meeting and make sure everything goes smoothly, but not really get involved. He waits in the storeroom of the workshop next to the meeting room, although he emerges immediately at the sound of trouble, charging into melee. If **Adronna and Arveth** did not show up before the meeting, Dilar suspects trouble.

Dilar
Male centaur (Chaotic Evil)
Large monstrous humanoid
Fighter4 **CR 7**
Init +9 **Speed** 35 feet
HD 4d8+20 + 4d10+20 **hp** 86
AC 20, touch 12, flat-footed 17
BAB/Grapple +8/+19
Attack +15 (2d6+11, 18–20/×3, falchion)
Full Attack +15/+10 (2d6+11, 18–20/×3, falchion) and +9 melee (1d6+7, 2 hooves)
Space/Reach 10 feet/5 feet
SQ Darkvision 60 feet
Fort +10, **Ref** +12, **Will** +7
Str 24, **Dex** 20, **Con** 21, **Int** 11, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 10
Crucial Skills: Jump +10, Listen +8, Move Silently +12, Spot +5.
Other Skills: Knowledge (religion) +1, Survival +5.
Crucial Feats: Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Power Attack.
Other Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes.
Possessions: +1 *scale mail armor*, +1 *falchion*, *ring of counterspells (magic missile)*, broken square ring, coiled viper amulet worth 10 gp, important papers, 1 gp, 14 sp.

Tactics: Dilar is, as always, accompanied by a pair of thugs who obey his every word. These thugs are loyal cultists. In a fight, one attempts to flank whomever Dilar is fighting while the other guards his back.

Thugs (2)

Male humans (Chaotic Evil)

Rogue1 **CR** 1

Init 3 **Speed** 30 feet

HD 1d6+2 **hp** 8

AC 15, touch 13, flat-footed 12

BAB/Grapple +0/+1

Attack/Full Attack +1 melee (1d6+1, club) or +3 ranged (1d4+1, dagger)

SA Sneak attack +1d6

SQ Trapfinding

Fort +2, **Ref** +7, **Will** +0

Str 12, **Dex** 16, **Con** 14, **Int** 11, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 9

Crucial Skills: Climb +5, Escape Artist +7, Hide +7, Intimidate +3, Listen +4, Move Silently +7, Sense Motive +4, Tumble +7.

Other Skills: Use Rope +7.

Crucial Feats: Blind-Fight.

Other Feats: Lightning Reflexes.

Possessions: Leather armor, club, daggers (3), broken square ring, coiled viper amulet worth 10 gp, 18 gp, 19 sp, 13 cp.

Treasure

Dilar has a number of papers and notebooks with him. These contain many of the same facts as the **Cult Book** in Pythoness House, as well as new information. Among other things, the papers show the location of the Brothers of Venom's secret project: an **apartment building** in Oldtown off of Crossing Street. The documents refer to the building only as the "secret project" or the "joint project," however. (The address can lead them to the Temple of Deep Chaos, found in Chapter 4.) The pages also discuss the cult's new allies, the **Ebon Hand cult**, and mention that cult's leader, **Malleck**, and their activities involving **kidnapping young people** and transforming them. Going through these papers thoroughly takes at least an hour.

Both Dilar and the thugs wear coiled viper amulets made of copper that show their allegiance to the Brothers of Venom.

BLOODLESS SOLUTION

It's entirely possible that careful player characters can go through this entire scenario without rolling initiative, let alone killing anyone. If the PCs pose as cultists wearing the ring(s) and, once inside, the hoods, they can make Bluff checks, opposed by the cultists' Wisdom checks (+0) to convince them they are who they pretend to be. In the meeting, they can find out the information from Dilar's papers (the location, but not the nature, of the "secret project," as well as details about the Cult of the Ebon Hand, the new allies of the Brothers of Venom). When Dilar emerges during the meeting, the characters need to make Bluff checks to oppose his Wisdom check (+2, with a +2 bonus if he is suspicious due to Adronna's and Arveth's disappearance, for a total of +4).

Should the adventurers leave before they are discovered, it may take the cultists days or even a week to suspect that they have been infiltrated. By that time, the PCs may already be attacking the **Temple of Deep Chaos**.

BARBARIAN INVASION!

When the player characters complete this portion of the adventure, they are likely to hear rumors in public places about an advancing barbarian horde. Unlike the one that attacked the Empire eleven years ago, it has bypassed the capital city of Tarsis. By all accounts, the barbarian army is on its way to Ptolus and will arrive in two to three weeks. (This is astonishingly fast for an army to move, but the majority of the soldiers are fast-moving, hardy barbarians.)

Many people, including the **Commissar**, openly blame the impending attack on the **Holy Emperor** for having declared Ptolus the capital of the Empire. They accuse in error, however; the barbarians come to Ptolus because Ptolus is holding their kidnapped king hostage—or so they believe. In fact, it is **Shigmaa Wuntad** who holds the barbarian king prisoner, specifically to draw his army here. **King Oulgas** languishes in a cell in the **Eschaton Sanctuary** below the **Temple of the Fifty-Three Gods of Chance**.

When the PCs have dealt with all the cultists here, it should be obvious that there are more elsewhere—if for no other reason than there were no clerics here, and a cult without priests makes little sense.

Temple of Deep Chaos, page 46

If the characters did not find the Cult Book below Pythoness House, give them the handout now (see page 92). Otherwise, explain that they find many more papers and notebooks that contain details similar to those they have already learned from that book.

Tarsis: Ptolus, page 44

Apartment building, page 42 (map, page 6)

Ebon Hand cult: Ptolus, page 72

Malleck: Ptolus, page 381

Kidnapping young people:

Ptolus, page 379

Commissar: Ptolus, page 149

Holy Emperor: Ptolus, page 293

Shigmaa Wuntad, page 86

King Oulgas, page 88

Eschaton Sanctuary, page 84

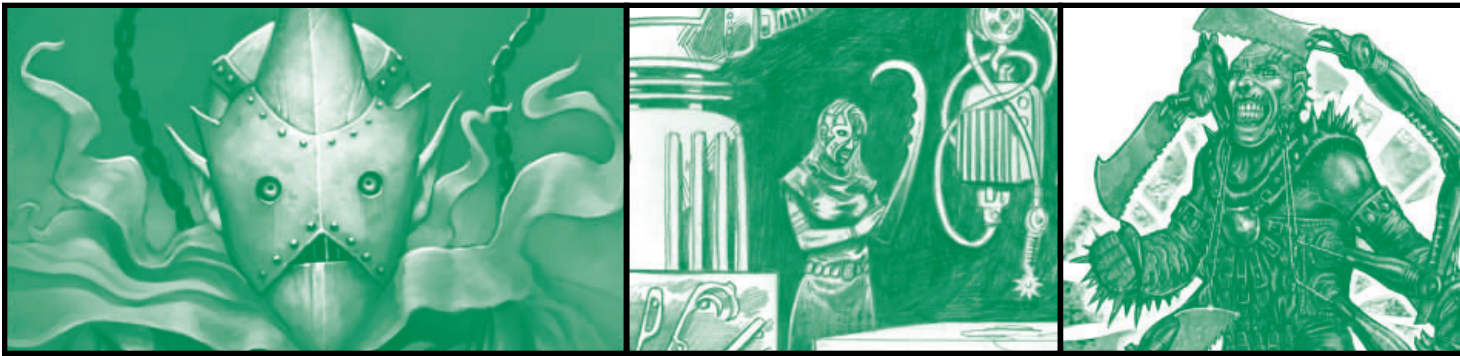
Temple of the Fifty-Three Gods of Chance, page 80



Chapter 3:

THE SURGEON IN THE SHADOWS

Throughout the Ptolus underworld, the Surgeon in the Shadows' name strikes fear into the hearts of listeners, even though most of them don't understand exactly what he does. To the uninitiated, he simply uses unknown but painful processes to change people, giving them new forms or powers. He is, in reality a skilled chaosithech surgeon who applies forbidden techniques to rebuild people into monsters and implant chaosithech devices into willing—and not-so-willing—subjects.



DM TIPS

Depending on how events in Chapter 2 transpired, the DM should choose whether Iltumar went willingly or not to the Surgeon in the Shadows.

Throughout this chapter, NPCs' chaosithech implants and items are described in sidebars. For more information on such items, see the Chaosithech sourcebook on the CD-Rom that comes with Ptolus.

Bull and Bear Armory:
Ptolus, page 201

Brotherhood of Ptolus: See the *Brothers of Venom:*
Ptolus, page 71
Illadras, page 62
Tolling Bell cult:
Ptolus, page 73

In this chapter, the player characters learn that young Iltumar Shon has, one way or another, ended up in the hands of the infamous Surgeon in the Shadows, Kinion Luth. The events that kick off this chapter can occur immediately after those described in Chapter 2: Secret Meeting, or at any time during the rest of *The Night of Dissolution* adventure, as the DM sees fit. In fact, these events might work best if instigated when the PCs take a break during the events of the following chapters, as a change of pace.

GETTING STARTED

Once again the player characters receive a visit from Hirus Feek, Iltumar Shon's mentor at the **Bull and Bear Armory**. He seems incredibly upset as he tells the PCs that Iltumar has disappeared. Depending on the circumstances surrounding Iltumar's departure, there are different clues Hirus can offer.

ILTUMAR WENT WILLINGLY

Iltumar was never fully convinced that the members of the **Brotherhood** were all that bad, or at least he still thought they might be what he was looking for. Knowing his new friends would have difficulty accepting him after the PCs had interrogated him, Iltumar found out how to contact Illadras, a **Tolling Bell** priestess who has been

looking for volunteers to alter. Illadras agreed to pay for the process and was responsible for directing Iltumar to Kinion Luth. (If Illadras is dead due to PC actions, either replace her or assume this happened before her death.)

Unbeknownst to Illadras, Iltumar left a note behind for Hirus and his brother Sholum. It read simply:

"Thank you for everything you have done for me. I go to live a new life with a new body now. –Iltumar"

Upon reading that rather disturbing missive, the brothers contacted another friend, a bard named Lavis Fallomire. As a favor to Iltumar (whom she knew in much the same way the PCs did), she searched around town, gathering information, using her bardic knowledge, and (most importantly, as it turns out), casting *locate object* spells in various locations, looking for Iltumar's leather jacket. She got lucky and located the jacket in "an old storehouse behind a school in Oldtown." After telling Hirus and Sholum this news, she went to investigate the place.

They have not heard from her since.

ILTUMAR WAS KIDNAPPED

Perhaps more likely, Iltumar did not go willingly to the Surgeon in the Shadows. Instead, some

cultists nabbed him after learning that he provided information that enabled the characters to raid the secret meeting of the **Brothers of Venom**. They have taken him to Kinion Luth to have implants put into his brain to make him a helpless slave, followed by physical enhancements that will turn him into a living weapon.

Iltumar managed to put up a bit of a fight, however—Hirus and Sholum found the room where Iltumar lived in total disarray. After coming upon the scene of the struggle, the brothers contacted another friend, a bard named Lavis Fallomire. She knew Iltumar in much the same way the PCs did, and searched around town gathering information, using her bardic knowledge, and (most importantly, as it turns out), casting *locate object* spells in various locations, looking for Iltumar's leather jacket. She got lucky and located the jacket in “an old storehouse behind a school in Oldtown.” After telling Hirus and Sholum this news, she went to investigate the place.

They have not heard from her since.

TRACKING DOWN LAVIS

Hirus asks the player characters if they can spare the time to check up on their bard friend Lavis and maybe even help her find Iltumar. He promises to give them a magical suit of *+1 chainmail armor* that just came into the shop in return. If they agree, the first thing they need to do is figure out where Lavis went.

A Knowledge (local) check (DC 25) allows a character who heard the clue from Lavis to remember an old storehouse behind Master Allam's School of Thought in Oldtown. Otherwise, the PCs need to ask around, using Gather Information (DC 25) or inquiring among people who know Oldtown better than they.

KINION LUTH

No one knows exactly where Kinion Luth came from, and few can remember when he first appeared in Ptolus. He's known throughout the city's criminal underworld, however, and even beyond. It seems that virtually every pickpocket, thug, thief, extortionist, assassin, sinister cultist, and diabolical mage has heard the name “the Surgeon in the Shadows.” Most can tell you rumors that, for a price, he can alter you in horrid ways to grant you fantastic abilities. You may not always appreciate your physical appearance when he's done, but you'll be stronger, faster, and deadlier than you ever were before.

Gather Information or Knowledge (local) checks about him offer the following results:

DC Check Result

- 15 The “Surgeon in the Shadows” will, for a price, alter you in horrid ways to grant you fantastic abilities.
- 20 Kinion Luth is the real name of “the Surgeon in the Shadows.”
- 22 Kinion Luth has connections to virtually every criminal and illegal organization in the city.
- 25 Luth uses both magic and chaostech to transform his subjects.
- 27 Luth has transformed himself into a powerful chaostech creature but always avoids danger.
- 30 Luth has a lair somewhere in Oldtown.



Once they make their way to Luth's lair and workshop, they'll have to go inside to find any evidence of what happened to either Lavis or Iltumar.

THE LAIR

Kinion Luth makes his lair in a small abandoned storehouse behind a school of philosophy called Master Allam's School of Thought. The location of this place is a carefully guarded secret. Clients are brought here blindfolded via circuitous routes.

The location of this lair (an old storehouse behind Master Allam's School of Thought) appears on the map on page 6.

Brothers of Venom: Ptolus, page 71

FROM MY CAMPAIGN TO YOURS

In the original Ptolus Campaign, a character named Serai, who was in love with another PC, Aliya, wanted to take Aliya to Kinion Luth after she fell in battle. He hoped the Surgeon's augmentations would protect her and make her stronger, so she would never die again. The rest of the Runewardens didn't trust chaostech, however, and managed to grab Aliya's body back from Serai before the deed was done.

DM TIPS

Kinion Luth can provide an interesting roleplaying dilemma for the player characters. For the right price, they too could obtain some of his chaotic handiwork. Is this “betrayal of the flesh” an unforgivable sin or simply another tool they can use to further their fight against chaos? All groups and characters will have to decide for themselves whether Luth is an enemy to oppose, an opportunity to exploit—or possibly both.



Guardian's Implants and Devices

Bone Lacing: *Lacing a host's bones with metal and hardened, living tissue takes four procedures but grants an inherent Strength bonus of +2 and 20 bonus hit points. Further, the host gains DR 10/slashing or piercing.*

Allegiance Mind Implant: *A host with this implant must remain loyal to the individual, group, or cause, designated during surgery. Alternatively, the implant may be a single command that prevents an action, such as "Do not speak of the Legacy of Cordaris." The host cannot resist or overcome the conditioning or command, even under magical compulsion or charm. Only removal of the implant allows him to overcome the conditioning or command.*

Cleaver Harness: *This device fits Small to Large creatures. Attached to it are four articulated arms, each ending in a wicked, serrated cleaver. The wearer runs a cable from the harness to his jaw and controls the cleaver-arms with subtle jaw movements, using them to slash at adjacent foes. He makes four attacks per round, using his base attack bonus modified by Dexterity, not Strength. He can attack multiple foes but takes no other actions in such a round—not even a five-foot step—and can make no other attacks even with weapons in his hands. The cleavers each inflict 1d8 points of damage (19–20/x2, no bonus for Strength).*

Craft (chaositech):
Ptolus, page 568

Chaos-shaped creature:
Chaositech, page 84

Castor, page 40

1. FRONT ENTRANCE (EL 4)

The storehouse has two entrances, but both are disguised so that anyone entering still believes it is an abandoned, unsafe structure full of refuse. A trapped secret door (Search check, DC 25) leads into Luth's actual lair.

Electrical Discharge Trap: CR 4; mechanical (chaositech); touch trigger; manual reset; 6d6 points of electricity damage (Reflex save, DC 16, for half damage); Search DC 23; Disable Device DC 28.

2. BACK ENTRANCE (EL 8)

As with Area 1, those entering through the back entrance door are likely to think they've stepped into an old storehouse whose roof could collapse at any moment. Also as in Area 1, a secret door behind the stacked trash hides the actual entrance (Search check, DC 25). It is also trapped.

Acid Spray Trap: CR 5; mechanical (chaositech); touch trigger; manual reset; 6d6 points of acid damage (Reflex save, DC 16, half damage); Search DC 23; Disable Device DC 28.

A **chaos-shaped creature** of Luth's creation watches this back entrance, just on the other side of the secret door, peering through a tiny peephole. This brute was once a human man but now is almost unrecognizable as anything but a hideous, malformed monster with extra, bladed limbs. It attacks any intruders and fights to the death.

Guardian

Chaos-shaped human male (Chaotic Neutral)
Medium aberration

Warrior6 CR 7
HD 6d8+50 hp 85
Init +2 **Speed** 30 feet
AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15



BAB/Grapple +6/+11

Attack +13 melee (1d4+5, spiked gauntlet)

Full Attack +11/+6 melee (1d4+5, spiked gauntlet) and +11 melee (1d4+2, spiked gauntlet) or +8 melee (1d8, 4 cleavers)

SQ DR 10/slashing or piercing

Fort +10, **Ref** +5, **Will** +2

Str 21, **Dex** 15, **Con** 20, **Int** 8, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 7

Crucial Skills: Intimidate +7, Jump +6, Listen +2, Spot +2.

Other Skills: N/A

Crucial Feats: Dodge, Combat Reflexes.

Other Feats: Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (spiked gauntlet).

Built-In Device: Cleaver harness.

Body Implants: Bone lacing.

Mind Implants: Allegiance implant.

Possessions: Masterwork studded leather armor, masterwork spiked gauntlets (2).

3. STOREROOM

This chamber in the building's southeast corner is filled with drums of strange chemicals and a clutter of tools and half-finished machines and devices. A character making a **Craft (chaositech)** or **Craft (alchemy)** check (DC 20) could identify parts or substances worth about 500 gp here. Otherwise, it all appears simply strange and inert.

4. HOLDING CELL

In this simple room adjacent to the storeroom, Kinion Luth keeps unwilling subjects until it is time for their procedures. Three cots sit along the walls, and there is a slop bucket as well.

Prisoners

If Iltumar was taken against his will, he may be here or in Area 5. Lavis the bard is here either way.

Lavis is bound and gagged to keep her from casting spells. Luth's dwarf assistant **Castor**—who should have disposed of Iltumar's clothing, and is thus responsible for Lavis finding the place—keeps her here, planning to kill her later. (He's already taken her gear and sold it.) If freed, she helps her rescuers fight her captors in any way she can. She's also very interested in helping Iltumar.

Lavis is attractive and petite, with short brown hair, pale skin, and brown eyes.

Lavis Fallomire

Female human (Chaotic Good)

Bard5 CR 5

Init +5 **Speed** 30 feet

HD 5d6 **hp** 23

AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10

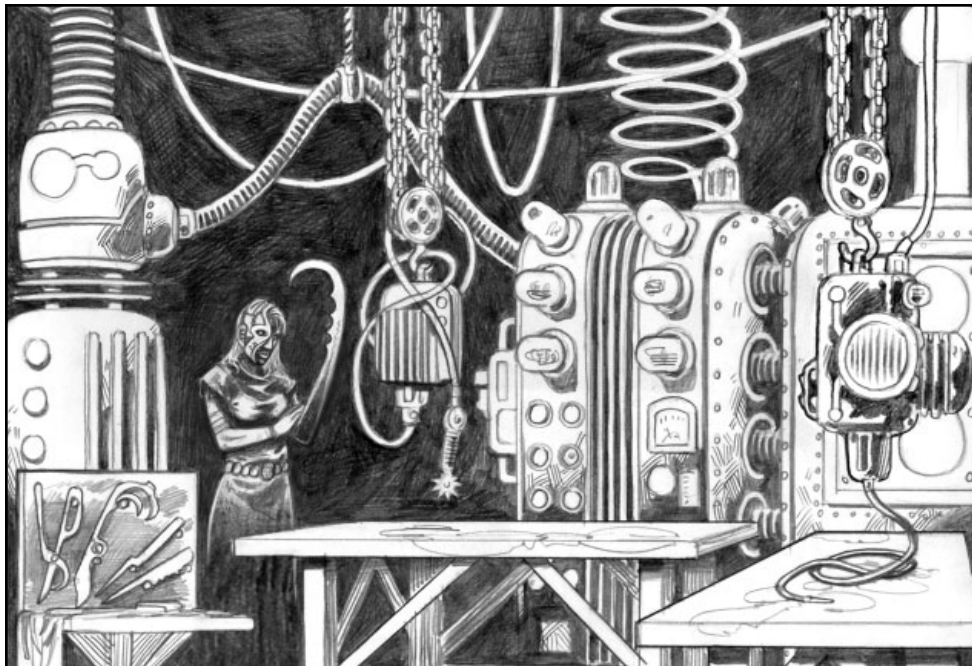
BAB/Grapple +3/+2

Attack/Full Attack +2 melee (1d3–1, unarmed)

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

Str 9, **Dex** 12, **Con** 11, **Int** 12, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 17

SQ Bardic knowledge, bardic music 5/day (countersong, fascinate +2, inspire courage +1, and inspire competence)



Crucial Skills: Balance +5, Listen +3, Search +3, Use Magic Device +7.

Other Skills: Appraise +6, Disguise +10, Gather Information +10, Knowledge (local) +4, Perform (wind instruments) +11, Swim +6.

Crucial Feats: N/A

Other Feats: Improved Initiative, Spell Focus (evocation), Track.

Languages: Celestial, Common, Elvish, Giant, Gnoll, Gnomish, Halfling, Infernal, Palastani, Sylvan.

Possessions: N/A

Spells Known: 3/4/2; save DC 13 + spell level. 2nd—*darkness*, *locate object*, *sound burst*.

1st—*cause fear*, *lesser confusion*, *magic aura*, *ventriloquism*.

0—*daze*, *know direction*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*, *resistance*.

5. OPERATING ROOM (EL 7 OR HIGHER)

At the heart of his lair, Luth keeps his operating room. This terrible place stinks of blood and chemicals. Stained place stinks of blood and chemicals. Stained operating tables stand within the chamber, with strange devices hooked up to them and hanging by chains over them. Spatters of dried blood surround everything. Gruesome tools of his trade hang on hooks and sit on small shelves on one wall. Another wall is covered in grisly charts and diagrams.

If Iltumar was not in Area 4, he is here on a table, being prepped for an operation by Kinion Luth himself. See Area 7 for details about the Surgeon and his tactics.

This room is watched over by a creature of Luth's own creation, once human but now resembling only a shadow of her former self. Covered in scars and stitched-on additional layers of flesh, the guardian has had one hand and forearm replaced with a magical blade. Foes should not

allow her stooped stature and shambling gait to deceive them—this warrior is fast and very dangerous. Mind implants compel her to serve her master without question and to the death.

If Luth is present, the guardian fights anyone who enters the room, while her master attempts to escape. If he is not present, she may observe the characters for a round or two with curiosity, not sure whether they should be here or not.

Guardian

Chaos-shaped human female (Chaotic Neutral)

Medium aberration

Warrior6 CR 7

HD 6d8+24 hp 54

Init +7 Speed 30 feet

AC 21, touch 13, flat-footed 18

BAB/Grapple +6/+11

Attack +13 melee (1d8+6, replacement blade)

Full Attack +13/+8 melee (1d8+6, replacement blade)

Fort +11, Ref +5, Will +4

Str 20, Dex 17, Con 19, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 8

Crucial Skills: Intimidate +8, Jump +10, Spot +2.

Other Skills: N/A

Crucial Feats: N/A

Other Feats: Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Weapon Focus (replacement blade).

Possessions: Masterwork studded leather armor.

Built-In Device: Vigor boots (gain +10 bonus to speed or Jump checks but suffer 1d3 points of damage/round when used).

Body Implants/Replacements: **Blade replacement** (+1 longsword), **dermal armor**.

Mind Implants: Allegiance implant (see sidebar, previous page).

Castor, Luth's dwarf assistant, found the bard Lavis snooping around the outside of the lair and subdued her. He brought her to the holding cell (Area 4) and questioned her, but has not told Luth about any of it. Luth knows there is a prisoner here, but nothing more.

If Iltumar is here willingly, he seems angry that the player characters have come, but he does not struggle as they attempt to remove him from the lair.

Chaos-shaped creature:
Chaositech, page 84

Guardian's Replacements and Implants

Blade Replacement: *Replacements are enhancements used in place of an existing part of a host's body, or to replace an already missing body part. They often incorporate organic components as well as inorganic ones. Any blade the subject could wield in one hand can replace her forearm and hand completely. The procedure leaves the subject with no hand on that arm at all and a forearm that serves simply as a reinforced support for the weapon. The blade can be magical, or it can be made magical later. The subject gains automatic proficiency with the now-intrinsic weapon.*

Dermal Armor Body Implant: *Additional layers of leathery flesh are implanted onto a host's body in vital areas. The host gains a +3 natural armor bonus.*

Iron God: Ptolus, page 69

Paralysis ray emitter, page 41



Obviously, Kinion Luth is likely far out of the player characters' league. Regardless, if he sees that the location of his lair has been compromised, he immediately teleports to a hiding place beneath the city rather than staying to trade blows with intruders—he won't risk the chance that they were sent by someone else, and that others could be on their way.

Chaositechnician:

Chaositech, page 78

Chaos-shaped creature:

Chaositech, page 84

Chaos Surgery: Ptolus, page 569

Craft (chaositech): Ptolus, page 568

Steaming Axe: *Pulsing tubes run up the shaft of this battleaxe, connecting the blade and head with a cylinder attached at the other end of the weapon. The cylinder generates heat, which is channeled up into the blade, making it steam whenever there is at least an average amount of water vapor in the air. The axe inflicts an additional 1d6 points of fire/heat damage per strike. Using the steaming axe is just like using a normal battleaxe.*

Surgical healing, jury rig chaositech, resist insanity, chaositech stabilization, and rapid tinker: Chaositech, page 80

6. CASTOR'S ROOM (EL 5)

This chamber in the lair's northwestern corner lies in such disarray that one might not even think it a bedchamber, let alone the bedchamber of a dwarf. Piles of clothing, blankets, pillows, books, tools, and various gear fill the room.

Luth's assistant, Castor, is a dwarf who once served as an acolyte of the **Iron God**. This dwarf rejected the ways of order for the allure of chaos and has served Luth ever since. Having cast off his god, changed his alignment, and lost much of his Wisdom score due to chaositech experimentation, he has lost all spellcasting abilities (and thus is treated as one level lower than his actual level for Challenge Rating purposes).

Castor remains fiercely loyal to Kinion Luth, for he assumes that his master eventually will reveal all of his secrets to him. Castor will defend Luth with his life, using his **steaming axe** with great skill. Castor's main duties, however, involve dealing with prospective clients. Castor informs clients of prices (never haggling) and attempts to size them up as to whether they can be trusted. Usually, to even get an appointment with Castor, a prospective client must have someone of real import in the city—a crime boss, a guildmaster, or perhaps a previous client—vouch for him. Castor brings subjects to Luth when it is time to perform a procedure.

Cold-hearted creature that he is, Kinion Luth holds no special attachment to Castor; threatening him to get at Luth accomplishes nothing.

Castor is short and broad, even for a dwarf. His hair and beard are long, wild, and unkempt, stained with grease and chemicals. He smells of strange substances, some organic and others inorganic. He carries a number of tools with him at all times in pouches and pockets crudely stitched into his armor.

Castor

Male Stonelost dwarf (Chaotic Neutral)
Ex-Cleric (Iron God)/chaositechnician CR 5
HD 5d8+10 + 1d8+2 **hp** 43
Init +2 **Speed** 20 feet
AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15
BAB/Grapple +3/+7
Attack/Full Attack +9 melee (1d8+4+1d6 fire damage, steaming axe)
Fort +6, **Ref** +6, **Will** +6
Str 18, **Dex** 14, **Con** 14, **Int** 13, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 13
Crucial Skills: Disable Device +7.
Other Skills: Appraise +3, **Chaos Surgery** +8, **Craft (chaositech)** +12, Heal +6, Knowledge (religion) +8.
Crucial Feats: N/A
Other Feats: Lightning Reflexes, Skill Focus (Craft [chaositech]), Weapon Focus (battleaxe).
Possessions: **Steaming axe**, masterwork studded leather armor, masterwork heavy shield, *potions of cure moderate wounds* and *invisibility*, masterwork tools, 26 gp.

Treasure. Those willing to search this mess (DC 22) can find a bag of 340 gp and a set of chaositech repair tools worth 1,000 gp.

7. LUTH'S CHAMBER (EL 0 OR 19)

Accessible from Area 5, this bedroom resembles nothing of the kind. Instead, it seems like a bizarre mechanical crypt. Weird devices and huge vats all seem focused on a central slab of stone about the size and shape of a bed. This is where Kinion sleeps, hooked up to all the machines in the room.

Kinion Luth is nearly impossible to find, either magically or by other means. Once found, he is extremely wary of others. In fact, if discovered—no matter what the circumstances—he attempts to flee. Only when a person is brought to him, usually by Castor, blindfolded, will he hold a conversation or perform a service.

Luth harbors no interest in combat or confrontation. If assaulted he most likely teleports away.

The Surgeon wears a voluminous robe that conceals most of his body except his head and his hands, which look like long, spindly metal claws made of scalpels, needles, and tools rather than actual hands. A featureless steel mask conceals his face and the **paralysis ray emitter** built into his forehead (it comes out of a small hidden aperture in the mask when needed). He speaks only in muffled whispers and never repeats himself.

The Surgeon in the Shadows is a hateful, fearful creature. He despises all that lives and gains a perverse joy in resculpting—and thus perverting—flesh. His demeanor does not belie his mania, however. At all times he is calm and collected, never rash or panicky. Luth knows all about the Galchutt, but he does not serve them (other than indirectly). No chaos cultist himself, he earns a handsome living from cultists who buy his services. They have learned the hard way not to cross him.

Kinion Luth

Chaos-shaped male human (Chaotic Neutral)
Medium aberration
Sorcerers/expert1/chaositechnician10 CR 19*
Init +7 **Speed** 30 feet
HD 5d4+15 + 1d6+3 + 10d8+50 **hp** 163
AC 17, touch 15, flat-footed 15
BAB/Grapple +9/+13
Attack +14 melee (1d6+4+poison, claw) or +13 ranged (paralysis ray)
Full Attack +14/+9 melee (1d6+4+poison, claw) or +13 ranged (paralysis ray)
SA Poison claws (DC 18, 1 Constitution/1d3 Constitution)
SQ DR 10/slashing or piercing, **surgical healing** (6d8), **jury rig chaositech**, **resist insanity**, **chaositech stabilization**, **rapid tinker**
Fort +10, **Ref** +10, **Will** +17
Str 18, **Dex** 16, **Con** 16, **Int** 19, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 18
Crucial Skills: Bluff +8, Concentration +20, Disable Device +10, Hide +7, Listen +2,
* CR higher than normal due to his equipment.

Move Silently +7, Search +14, Sense Motive +5, Spot +1.

Other Skills: Craft (alchemy) +12, **Chaos Surgery** +27, **Craft (chaositech)** +27, Forgery +7, Heal +14, Knowledge (arcana) +11.

Crucial Feats: N/A

Other Feats: Improved Initiative, Great Fortitude, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Craft [chaositech]), Skill Focus (Chaos Surgery).

Built-In Device: **Paralysis ray emitter.**

Body Implants/Replacements: Bone-lacing (see sidebar, page 38), **headclamp**, **poisonous claws**, **spinal clamp** (attached to no suit), *see invisibility*, three **tool fingers**.

Mind Implants: **Intelligence implant**, **feat implant** (Weapon Focus [claws]).

Incidental Mutation: Pointed ears.

Spells Known: 6/7/7/7/7/4; save DC 14 + spell level (caster level 11th, +13 melee touch, +12 ranged touch).

5th—*prying eyes*, *teleport*.

4th—*confusion*, *enervation*, *stoneskin*.

3rd—*dispel magic*, *gaseous form*, *lightning bolt*, *major image*.

2nd—*alter self*, *blur*, *invisibility*, *mirror image*, *siphon**.

1st—*identify device**, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *resist chaotic contamination**, *shield*.

0—*dancing lights*, *daze*, *detect chaositech**, *detect magic*, *detect mutation**, *ghost sound*, *light*, *mage hand*, *read magic*.

Possessions: *Ring of protection* +2, **attack sphere**, **surgical assistants** (2), **chaos storage cube**, **no suit**, **life sensor**, protective goggles (built into a mask), **ear serum**, **eye serum**, **flesh ichor**, **mobility milch**.

* Indicates a spell from Chapter 1: Chaos in Chaositech on the *Ptolus* CD-Rom.

Experience Points: Kinion Luth has more gear than his level would suggest. Therefore, treat an encounter with him as one level higher for purposes of Encounter Level. However, do not award experience points unless the PCs actually manage to “encounter” him. If he teleports away immediately (which is most likely), this is worth no experience points, as he would do so no matter who invaded his lair, or why.

WRAPPING UP

In the best-case scenario, the player characters were able to sneak into the lair, free Iltumar, and get away without ever having Luth lay eyes on them. The Surgeon in the Shadows will know that someone has found his lair (and thus he will move his operation), but he won't know who the PCs were.

If they did see Luth, and he saw them, he will want to eliminate them or capture them to give them mind implants that will keep them from talking. To accomplish this, he will offer free chaositech surgical services as a reward in order to entice criminals to go after the characters and

kill them or deliver them to him. If they actually attacked him, his attackers soon find themselves the targets of **Vai assassins** (who may have been paid in chaositech surgery, making them even deadlier). This retribution occurs after the entirety of *The Night of Dissolution* adventure is over.

In any case, if the party rescues Iltumar, he settles down and returns to work in the Bull and Bear, never to be involved with the chaos cults again. He can tell the adventurers what happened to him, and may include details about **Illadras**, the Tolling Bell priestess.

If the characters somehow eliminated Kinion Luth, this act produces ripples throughout the criminal underworld. It is likely that someone will try to raise him from the dead, just as it is likely that powerful organizations like the **Balacazars** will attempt to avenge his death.

WHAT ILTUMAR KNOWS NOW

After he is freed, Iltumar can provide the PCs with some interesting tidbits that he learned while in the clutches of the cultists:

- The cultists are up to something big. They believe they can bring about something called the Night of Dissolution.
- The cultists speak frequently of something that is going to happen in the sky soon.
- The cultists are about to destroy a powerful anti-chaos device in a place called the Kaleidoscope Temple (see page 64).
- The Cult of the **Ebon Hand** is actually a chaos cult involved with all these others. They have a temple in the Temple District.
- The Cult of the Ebon Hand and the **Brothers of Venom** have some joint project, centered on a certain location in Oldtown.

He knows nothing more about any of this.

MORE RUMORS

Back in the city, player characters who make Gather Information checks might learn the following bits of information about events in the city relating to Wuntad's plans:

DC	Check Result
20	Menon Balacazar's grandson Dullin reportedly has disappeared. The family is offering a 5,000 gp reward for his return and the heads of those who took him.
22	Someone has broken into Mahdoth's Asylum and removed two inmates. No one knows whether the inmates were a party to this or not.

Of course, you can mix these in with other unrelated events, if you like (use the “Events in the City” sheet in the *Ptolus* envelope).

Kinian Luth's Implants/Devices

Cited pages refer to Chaositech: A paralysis ray emitter fires a ray of chaositech energy, range up to 200 feet, range increment 50 feet; 1d6 points of nonlethal damage plus Fortitude save, DC 17, or paralyzed for 1d6+4 rounds; ranged touch attack (page 49); a headclamp implant connects his brain to certain chaositech items, allowing a device to receive mental commands or transfer information directly into the brain; (page 50); a spinal clamp powers a chaositech device using Luth's life energy rather than raw chaos; instead of checking a device for chaotic failure, he suffers 1 point of Constitution damage (page 52); headclamp and spinal clamp have AC 14 + Luth's Dexterity bonus, hardness 1, and 5 hp; pull cord out with Strength check (DC 8); can extend/retract the poisonous claws as a free action, for use in regular and off-hand attacks; each strike injects target with poison up to six times per day per claw (page 48); his bladed attack sphere hovers within ten feet of Luth and attacks his foes for 10 rounds while he is in melee (+10 attack bonus, 2d6 points P/S damage, AC 24, must move into foe's space to attack; page 31).

Craft (chaositech): Ptolus, page 568

Chaos Surgery: Ptolus, page 569

Intelligence and feat implants, Chaositech, page 57

Tool fingers: Chaositech, page 56

Surgical assistants: Chaositech,

page 65

Chaos storage cube:

Ptolus, page 572

No suit: Chaositech, page 35

Life sensor: Chaositech, page 34

Serums, ichor, and milch:

Chaositech, page 64

Vai assassins: Ptolus, page 139

Illadras: page 62

Balacazars: Ptolus, page 100

Ebon Hand: Ptolus, page 72

Brothers of Venom:

Ptolus, page 71



Chapter 4: TEMPLE OF DEEP CHAOS

Perhaps the largest and most extensive chaos temple in Ptolus, the Temple of Deep Chaos is a stronghold of the Tolling Bell cult. The other cults use it as well, as the Tolling Bell attempts to unite all followers of chaos to bring about the Night of Dissolution in the service of the Galchutt.



Brothers of Venom:

Ptolus, page 71

Ebon Hand cult: Ptolus, page 72

Although it's unlikely that the PCs have been to the Dark Reliquary yet, the location of the Temple of Deep Chaos, as well as the site of the Final Ritual (see Chapter 6), is revealed in a notebook in Area 33: Lilith's Secret Room, (see Ptolus, page 247).

Twelve Commanders:

Ptolus, page 148

Commissar's Men:

Ptolus, page 149

Commissar's Guns:

Ptolus, page 148

Venom-shaped thralls, page 94

At first, the player characters are not aware of the existence of the Temple of Deep Chaos—they only know about a “secret project” conducted by the **Brothers of Venom** and the **Ebon Hand cult** in an apartment building in Oldtown.

Characters should be at least 6th level by the time they reach this point in the adventure.

RUMORS OF WAR

Throughout this adventure, news of the advancing barbarian army dominates the talk in the city on all levels. Whenever the PCs are not in the temple itself, they are likely to overhear more details about the coming siege. Such details include the following:

- The barbarian army is fifty thousand strong (untrue—it is twelve thousand strong).
- The **Twelve Commanders** have turned to the Inverted Pyramid for help in fighting off the barbarians (true).
- The **Commissar's Men** are already preparing the **Commissar's Guns** for the coming battle (true).
- The Commissar has sent requests to Tarsis for military aid, but they have been ignored (true).
- The barbarians intend on razing the entire city to kill the Holy Emperor because they hate Lothian (untrue).

- Prophecies spoken long ago refer to some strange celestial event that would occur during this time (true).

THE APARTMENT HOUSE

The action of this adventure starts at an innocuous apartment house in northern Oldtown off of Crossing Street. A few days ago, cultists sneaked into the building and killed or captured all the tenants to experiment upon them with a terrible new mutating poison they have developed.

The Brothers of Venom and the Cult of the Ebon Hand have worked together, under the guiding hand of the Cult of the Tolling Bell, to create a terrible poison that mutates its victim in a prolonged misery that lasts for weeks or even months until the victim dies. For a time, the victim's mind becomes so pliable he or she becomes a slave of the cult(s) before finally dying. This magical poison, called *askara*, has a Fortitude saving throw DC of 16. Its mutated victims are called **venom-shaped thralls**.

When victims are injected with *askara*, they weaken until they collapse. Within twelve hours, their bodies secrete a dark, syrupy substance that covers them and then hardens, forming a black, spherical cocoon. Within another twenty-four hours, the victim emerges from the cocoon, mutated into a hideous amalgam of an insectlike

creature and his former self. See the appendix for more information about venom-shaped thralls.

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

Player characters who investigate within the building will encounter not only the venom-shaped thralls and chaos priests but other unique challenges as well. On the map on page 44, the DM will find references to nests, cocoons, and violet slime.

Nests

Discarded cocoons of dark, hardened material are scattered throughout the apartment building. One often finds these used cocoons in corners, attached to the walls. Each one is about seven feet across, although they are all broken open. The “shells” of these remnants measure about ten inches thick.

As a result of the *askara* poison’s magical effects, after a venom-shaped thrall comes out of its cocoon, the cocoon becomes a nest for some spontaneously-generated insects. These terrible, chaos-spawned creatures are red and black and carry a powerful sting. Treat each nest as though it has a centipede swarm within it.

Chaos-Spawned Insects: hp 31; see MM (as centipede swarm).

The nests themselves have a hardness of 8, about 100 hit points, and a break DC of 27. This durability becomes particularly problematic when a cocoon was created in front of a door.

Cocoons

Cocoons are like nests, but they still have a mutating thrall inside. The cocoon is made of dark, hardened material but is only one inch thick. It has a hardness of 8, 10 hit points, and a break DC of 24. *Askara* victims in mid-transformation removed from their cocoons prematurely must make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 18). Success means they live, and the process slowly reverses over the next twenty-four hours, during which time the victims remain comatose. Failing the save means they die.

Violet Slime

When a new venom-shaped thrall comes out of its cocoon, some disgusting purple muck spills out of the cocoon as well. This slime is a colony organism not unlike green slime. Violet slime moves extraordinarily slowly (about one foot per hour) and positions itself on the ceilings of the apartment building so it can drop down on living creatures. Every patch marked on the map on the next page is on the ceiling. A character must succeed at a Spot check (DC 20) to notice it before it drops. Characters in the area of the patch (usually about ten feet square) must make a Reflex save (DC 16) to avoid getting some of the slime on themselves. A creature whom the slime touches suffers 1d2 points of temporary

Strength damage each round of contact. It can be destroyed in the same manner as green slime (see MM). Violet slime is a CR 3 challenge.

The violet slime was an unpredicted side effect of the *askara* process and poses a threat to PCs and NPCs alike.

LAYOUT

After his rescue in Chapter 3, Iltumar tells the player characters that he heard about a “secret project” conducted by some cultists at a certain address in Oldtown. The PCs may decide to explore the apartment building there for themselves.

The areas described below correspond to the map on the next page.

1. Entrance (EL 5)

A wide portico once offered an outdoor gathering area for tenants. Now it is empty. The door is not locked, but a patch of violet slime hangs immediately above it. The open room beyond the door was a common area for all residents to share. It contains simple furnishings such as tables, chairs, and a few divans. A nest lies in the northwest corner.

The dead body of a middle-aged woman lies near the middle of the room. A Heal check (DC 15) reveals that she’s been dead a few days and was killed by a claw attack.

2. Thrall Guardians (EL 6)

Once a one-room apartment, this ground floor room east of the entrance chamber is now a shambles, with all its furnishings destroyed. Two venom-shaped thralls wait here. Their cult masters have charged them with defending the building if intruders should enter.

The thralls listen for intruders (+3 Listen checks) and investigate if they hear activity. Otherwise, they remain here, resting. If they come upon intruders they do not recognize, they attack and fight them to the death.

Venom-Shaped Thralls (2): hp 40 and 45; see appendix, page 94.

3. Injection Room (EL 4)

In this former sitting room down the hall from the building’s entrance chamber, the cultists inject their victims with *askara* poison. They have cleared the room of furnishings except for a large wooden table covered in a stained white cloth. Three vials of *askara* rest on the table, as well as a large syringe and five empty vials.

Two dretches working for the cultists squat on the ground near the far eastern end of this chamber, a very small kitchen area. They are supposed to be guarding the prisoners in Area 4, but they seem more interested in banging pots and pans and eating garbage. They attack anyone they see other than those wearing one of the well-known

DM TIPS

As the player characters enter the apartment house and begin to explore, play up the horrific aspects of the transformation the askara victims have undergone, as well as the alien nature of the cocoons, nests, and violet slime.

Find the apartment house’s location on the map on page 6.



What’s going on now at the apartment house is merely an experiment. However, should the Cults of Chaos get their way—and especially if they are unified under a forceful leader—they will seed the city with nests of venom-shaped thralls.



DM TIPS

If the PCs retreat from the apartment house and report the goings-on there to the City Watch, the guards investigate and decide that the best thing to do is simply burn the entire place down. This is a terrible idea; not only does destroying the house unintentionally slay the innocent victims inside, but it cuts off the passage inside to the sewers (see Area 5), which the PCs can use to reach the Temple of Deep Chaos. The characters are also likely to think that the Watch's drastic and rather heartless solution is the wrong one.



chaos symbols. One wears the key to Area 4 around its neck.

Dretches (2): hp 13 and 18; see MM.

4. Prisoners

The door to this room is locked (DC 22 to open). The wooden door has a hardness of 5, 10 hit points, and a break DC of 15.

The only people who were in this apartment house when the cultists struck and remain alive and untransformed now wait here for the chaos cultists to do with them as they will. Each is a 1st-level commoner; four are human and one is a half-elf. They are frightened and hungry, but not wounded. If freed, they make it out of the house and into the city on their own.

Experience Points: DMs may wish to award experience points for successfully freeing these prisoners as if a CR 3 challenge were overcome.

5. The Hole

This room on the ground floor in the northwest corner of the building has a hole punched through the wooden floorboards from beneath. The opening reveals a shaft twenty-five feet deep, ending in the sewer. (See “The Sewer” on page 46 for more information.)

6. Venom-Shaped (EL 4)

This room in the northwest corner of the building's second floor lies in shambles. A single venom-shaped thrall waits here, resting. It has orders to attack and kill any intruders, and it does so—fighting to the death.

Venom-Shaped Thrall: hp 42; see appendix, page 94.

7. Weakened Floor (EL 1)

This room in the central portion of the building's second floor looks like any other in the apartment house—which is to say, torn apart and strewn with debris. However, due to actions of the venom-shaped thralls, the floor here is very weak and could collapse when more than one hundred pounds rests on it (40 percent chance per round).

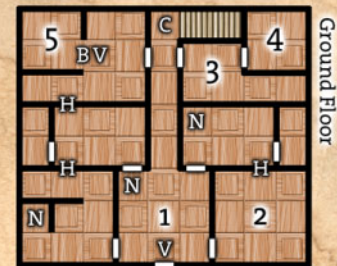
Should it collapse, anyone standing in the area must make a Reflex saving throw (DC 20) or fall down into the area below. This fall inflicts 1d6 points of damage. A Search check (DC 20) reveals the floor's weakness, but it cannot be disabled using a Disable Device check.

8. The Accident (EL 5)

Like most of the rooms here, this one in the southwest corner of the building's second floor has been thoroughly torn apart, with furnishings tossed about, holes punched in the walls, and slime coating various surfaces.

Not every application of *askara* poison worked correctly. The process is still not perfected, and a

The Apartment House



B = Broken Down Door
C = Cocoon
H = Hole in the Wall
N = Nest
V = Violet Slime



1 square = 10 feet

fair number of victims die immediately or are transformed into random, bizarre creatures. The victim here has become a blob of protoplasmic goo not unlike a gibbering moulder. The only difference is, unlike a standard gibbering moulder, this mutant lacks the ground manipulation ability. Instead, it is much stronger than normal, with a Strength score of 18. This means that its bites inflict 5 points of damage, its bite attack bonus is +8, and its grapple bonus is +7.

Gibbering Moulder: hp 45; see MM, but note adjustments listed above.

Treasure: Lying beneath an overturned chest of drawers (Search, DC 18) is a silver platter and tea set worth 140 gp.

9. Betrayer Priests (EL 7)

This room on the eastern side of the building's second floor is a disheveled mess like all the rest. The two blood-spattered men in here are breathing heavily as they stand over a corpse.

Priests: Audon and Uranik are priests of the Brothers of Venom—so-called “deep brothers,” as they are full-time cultists, not clandestine members who live double lives. They have just murdered the Ebon Hand priest Reggaloch Murchand after a fevered argument about the right way to handle the venom-shaped thralls. Specifically, Reggaloch

thought that the thralls, being the recipients of the divine blessing of mutation, should be treated with more respect. Audon and Uranik disagreed, and Reggaloch called them fools for not understanding the true nature of chaos.

Audon is thin and almost seven feet tall. He is clean shaven with a large nose and light brown hair. Uranik is rather stocky with thick bushy black eyebrows and hair.

Audon Ablenad

Male human (Chaotic Evil)

Cleric5 (chaos gods) **CR** 5

Init +0 **Speed** 20 feet

HD 5d8+5 **hp** 34

AC 23, touch 12, flat-footed 23

BAB/Grapple +3/+4

Attack/Full Attack +6 melee (1d8+2, morningstar)

SA Rebuke undead 5/day

Fort +5, **Ref** +1, **Will** +7

Str 13, **Dex** 11, **Con** 13, **Int** 11, **Wis** 17, **Cha** 14

Crucial Skills: Climb +5, Listen +4, Spot +5.

Other Skills: Knowledge (religion) +6, Spellcraft +7.

Crucial Feats: Power Attack, Weapon Focus (morningstar).

Other Feats: Scribe Scroll.

Domains: Chaos, Evil.

Spells: 5/4+1/3+1/2+1; save DC 14 + spell level (caster level 5th, +4 melee touch, +3 ranged touch).

3rd—*magic circle against law**, *poison, protection from energy*.

2nd—*hold person, remove paralysis, shatter**, *spiritual weapon*.

1st—*cure light wounds, magic weapon* (cast), *protection from good**, *sanctuary, shield of faith* (cast).

0—*cure minor wounds* (2), *detect magic, detect poison, guidance*.

Possessions: +1 full plate armor, heavy steel shield, +1 morningstar, wand of cure moderate wounds (14 charges), scroll of *dispel magic*, two doses of lich dust poison (ingested DC 17; 2d6 Strength/1d6 Strength), climber's kit, broken square ring, coiled viper amulet, 5 gp, 14 sp.

* Indicates a domain spell.

Uranik Storn

Male human (Chaotic Evil)

Cleric3 (chaos gods)/**rogue**2 **CR** 5

Init +6 **Speed** 30 feet

HD 3d8 + 2d6 **hp** 23

AC 19, touch 14, flat-footed 18

BAB/Grapple +3/+5

Attack/Full Attack +7 melee (1d8+4, heavy mace) or +5 ranged (1d8, light crossbow)

SA Rebuke undead 6/day, and sneak attack +1d6

SQ Trapfinding, evasion

Fort +5, **Ref** +4, **Will** +7

Str 15, **Dex** 15, **Con** 11, **Int** 10, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 16

Crucial Skills: Climb +11, Concentration +4, Hide +7, Listen +10, Move Silently +7, Search +1, Spot +10.

Other Skills: Heal +8, Knowledge (local) +4, Knowledge (religion) +8, Open Lock +5.

Crucial Feats: N/A

Other Feats: Improved Initiative, Great Fortitude, Weapon Focus (heavy mace).

Domains: Chaos, Evil.

Spells: 4/3+1/2+1; save DC 12 + spell level. 2nd—*desecrate**, *hold person, spiritual weapon*.

1st—*bane, protection from law, protection from law**, *shield of faith* (cast).

0—*cure minor wounds, detect chaositech, detect magic, read magic*.

Possessions: +1 chain shirt, masterwork heavy mace, light crossbow, bolts (18), +2 gloves of dexterity, scroll of cure moderate wounds, one dose of Medium spider poison (DC 14; 1d4 Strength/1d6 Strength), masterwork thieves' tools, climber's kit, flask of alchemist's fire, broken square ring, coiled viper amulet, 3 gp.

* Indicates a domain spell.

Tactics: Even though they've just finished a fight, neither cleric is wounded, thanks to Audon's wand (the charges have already been deducted from the listed total). Audon has cast *magic weapon* on Uranik's mace (+1 bonus to attack and damage). Both clerics have *shield of faith* cast on them currently (+2 bonus to AC). Audon still has four minutes left on his *shield of faith* spell; Uranik has two minutes left on his. All of these details are already figured into their stats above.

Since they've been in a fight with Reggaloch, these two are unlikely to be aware of intruders until they enter this room. If the priests discover the threats to them in time—for example, if they hear foes but the foes are not yet attacking them—Uranik casts *protection from law* (+2 bonus to AC and saves against lawful foes) and Audon casts *protection from good* (+2 bonus to AC and saves against good foes).

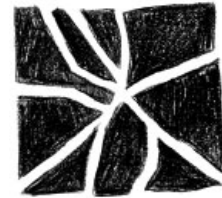
Otherwise, on the first round of real combat, both cast *spiritual weapon* and direct the weapons (wickedly curved knives) to attack the same foe—either someone who looks like a mage or whoever looks the “toughest.” Then they enter into melee, hoping to flank a single opponent and take down their foes one at a time. If things get bad for them, they both use *hold person* spells on warrior-type foes and retreat, trying to reach any of the venom-shaped thralls in the house. The thralls obey their commands.

Treasure: The corpse of the murdered Ebon Hand priest still has the following gear: a masterwork quarterstaff, chainmail armor, a *potion of invisibility*, a scroll of *inflict serious wounds*, a gold and silver ring worth 100 gp, 56 gp, and 15 sp. He also has a note with large lettering that reads as follows:



For more on the Ebon Hand Cult's feelings about the divine nature of mutation, see their temple writeup in Ptolus, Chapter 17.

Detect chaositech: Ptolus, page 641



The broken square symbol of these cultists is often found on rings.

From the beginning, Reggaloch did not trust the Brothers of Venom and thought they would betray him and his fellow Ebon Hand cultists (see his note to cultmate Rhinnis, page 58). The irony is that the Brothers of Venom didn't start out with treachery in mind. That idea emerged only later, partially because of the hostility that Reggaloch bred toward them. As a further bit of irony, when the true treachery was at hand, and Audon and Uranik attacked and murdered him, they caught him totally unprepared. He didn't see it coming.

Rhinnis, page 65

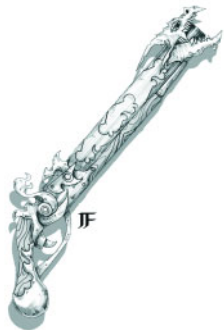
Ghul's Labyrinth:
Ptolus, page 418
Sewers: Ptolus, page 439

One can also access another area of the Buried City via the cellars beneath the Clock Tower in Oldtown. See Ptolus, Chapter 22 (page 448).

Remember that Pits of Insanity can arise beneath Ptolus to plague explorers. While not an unwelcome occurrence to many chaos cultists, adventurers may feel differently! See Ptolus, Chapter 19.



Dragon rifle: Ptolus, page 560



Reggaloch,
I agree. The Brothers of Venom likely do plan violent treachery so they can be in sole control of the venom-shaped thralls. You should leave and find Malleck in the Ebon Hand Temple, to tell him what's going on.

—Rhinnis

THE SEWER

The hole in the floor of Area 5 in the apartment house leads down into a place where Ghul's Labyrinth and the sewers intersect. This area serves as the entry into the chaos temple beneath Oldtown.

1. SHAFT UP

Above the sewer line here is the hole that leads up to the apartment building. A rope ladder extends down this twenty-five-foot shaft. It is currently unguarded, but if foes repeatedly use this egress as a way to attack the nearby chaos temple (for example, if PCs come down, attack the temple, retreat back up to the city, and then come back down), two ratlords as in Area 3 are posted here as guards.

2. LADDER

The ceiling of an ancient passageway running just below the level of the sewer collapsed years ago. The city's workers sealed off the collapsed area with a brick wall and built a sewer run around it. The chaos cultists placed a ladder here to use the hole as a secret exit out of their newly established temple, and then built a secret door in the brick wall (Search, DC 20 to find it from the sewer side).

The passage below the sewers is a part of Ghul's Labyrinth, but an ill-used one because it is unstable—most of the area has already collapsed. Still, the chaos cultists and their ratman allies utilize this small section for their own purposes.

3. SENTRIES (EL 4)

Two ratlords stand vigil at this intersection. Each has a dragon rifle and twelve rounds as well as a short sword. They watch for intruders and, being trigger happy, are likely to shoot first and ask questions later. On the other hand, if they hear the sounds of combat coming from within the temple, they are likely to run off into the sewers, never to be seen again.

They know about the dangers of the pool in Area 4 and steer well clear of it.

Ratmen, Ratlords (2): hp 24 and 25; see Ptolus, page 625.

4. CONGEALED POOL (EL 3)

Runoff from the sewers has seeped down into this chamber for centuries. Ancient muck and waste, congealed here, has generated into a living gelatinous creature similar to a gelatinous cube in every

way except shape. Rather than being a cube, it is a mass of jelly that lives in the center of the pool, covered in sewage and garbage. It attacks anything that comes near, but won't stray more than ten feet from the pool unless its life is in danger.

Gelatinous "Cube": hp 50; see MM.

TEMPLE LAYOUT

The Temple of Deep Chaos was created by the Tolling Bell cult about a year ago, using both newly built chambers and converted existing subterranean areas. Some of the existing areas are part of Ghul's Labyrinth, but the deeper levels are part of what is known as the "Buried City." The Buried City is the remains of an ancient settlement about the size of Oldtown which was also called Ptolus. Evidence suggests it was annihilated in some kind of huge conflagration, which may explain why some of the ancient structures still survive, at least after a fashion. In most places, the remnants of the Buried City exist only as underground chambers that were once surface structures of some kind, or portions of such structures.

This temple is used by the alliance of chaos cults, which right now consists of the Brothers of Venom and the Ebon Hand cult. Uniting the various chaos cults has been difficult and, of late, some of the Brothers of Venom and the Ebon Hand cultists have been fighting. In general, the Brothers of Venom possess the upper hand in this conflict.

Unless otherwise described, doors are wooden and unlocked, and ceilings are fifteen feet high.

If the secret meeting in Chapter 2 was infiltrated or wiped out, the people in this temple might be on their guard, knowing that someone is attacking the forces of chaos.

ENTRANCE LEVEL

The Temple's uppermost level connects with the sewers beneath Oldtown, as described above and shown on the map on the next page.

5. Locked Door and Alarm

Explorers can find a rather new, rust- and grime-free iron door in the wall of the sewer run here (hardness 10, 30 hit points, break DC 28). It is locked (DC 28 to open). The symbol-happy cultists have even managed to keep it smooth and free of markings.

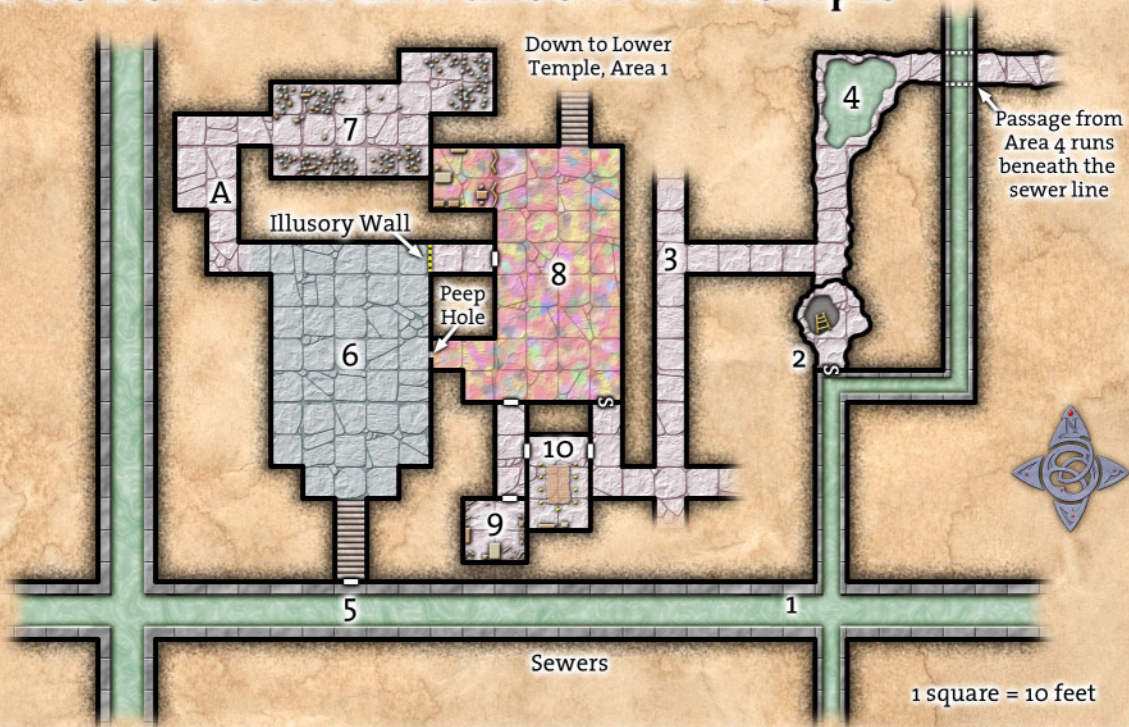
The door is rigged with a rather simple wire-based trap that sets off a ringing bell alarm on the other side. The ringing bells alert the ratmen in Area 3; they amass in Area 2.

Bell Alarm Trap: CR 0; mechanical; touch trigger; manual reset; rings bells; Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 20.

6. Entry Hall

From the locked door to the south, a set of steps clearly of newer construction than the sewer leads

The Sewer and the Entrance to the Temple



down to a large hall. This vast, open entry chamber, also newly built, is empty and quiet. The dark stones of the walls, floor, and ceiling are laid in strange patterns that catch the eye in a distracting, even disturbing manner that one can't quite name.

A huge banner hangs on the western wall. A Knowledge (nobility and royalty) check (DC 18) reveals it as a traditional **Palastani** war banner. To hang it displays the intention of going to war, or the statement that one is at war.

Illusory Wall: An *illusory wall* spell covers the passage to Area 8.

Peephole: A Search check (DC 15) uncovers a peephole in the middle of the east wall. If someone in Area 8 watches through it, PCs can attempt a Spot check (DC 22) to see the watcher.

Creatures: Although no creatures are here usually, if the alarm bell rings, the ratling on duty in Area 7 runs from his position (marked "A" on the map above) and throws a **smokebomb** that fills much of the southern end of the room with smoke. Meanwhile, 1 round later, half the rats in the garrison (Area 7) move into this area and attack anything that comes through the smoke. Three rounds later, if the battle still continues, the other half moves in to reinforce the first wave.

Similarly, if the alarm sounds or if there are combat noises here, the priests in Area 8 watch the encounter through the peephole beginning 2 rounds after they are alerted. They likely can cast

only defensive spells and prepare to defend their own area. However, they may use a secret latch on their side of the peephole to open a one-foot-square hole in the wall there, through which they can cast spells into this area. Theral might cast *summon monster III*, and Vocaetun might cast *acidic curse* in this fashion; Grealdan might use his pistol as well. See Area 8, next page. If the PCs get into a position to use the peephole against them, the priests can both close the secret window and cover the peephole from their side.

7. Rat Garrison (EL 8)*

Garbage and feces litter the floor of this chamber north of the entry hall and are spread on the walls as well. Amid piles of rotting refuse dwell a number of rats and ratmen. A single ratling is always in the outer room, in a position marked A on the map. If the alarm sounds, it runs into Area 6 (see above). Otherwise, if it sees intruders rounding the corner coming toward it, it squeals to warn its comrades in the room beyond and runs to join them there.

Creatures: Twelve ratlings, four ratlords, and six dire rats dwell in this garrison. As devout followers of chaos, they obey the priests in Area 8 unquestioningly. Each ratman, from ratling to ratlord, carries a **dragon rifle**. The ratlings use small rifles, which inflict 2d6 points of damage, while the ratlords use medium rifles that inflict 2d8 points. The

Weapon Jams

The ratmen's rifles jam on roll of a natural 1. A Craft (firearms) check (DC 15; requires a full-round action) is needed to clear a jam; see Ptolus, Chapter 29, for brief notes on this skill. If the DM is already using this optional rule as a standard for all firearms, these particular weapons jam instead on a 1 or a 2. They are worth only 50 percent of their normal resale value due to poor upkeep.

Acidic curse, page 50

Palastan: Ptolus, page 42

Smokebomb: Ptolus, page 560

Dragon rifle: Ptolus, page 560



Replenishing the Ranks

Ratmen are cheap and expendable from the cult's point of view—it's easy to get more. If the PCs attack the temple here and then retreat, the cult replenishes half of the dead ratmen in this chamber (from nests elsewhere in the sewers) after just twenty-four hours, and all them in forty-eight hours. Replacement ratmen are armed normally (no rifles), unless there are rifles left here from fallen ratmen for them to use. Thus, over the course of the adventure, the PCs may have many ratman battles here or in Area 6.

These replenishments come even if the priests in Area 8 are gone, but not if Illdras in Area 23 is gone.

Assess creature: Ptolus, page 639



Knights of the Dawn:
Ptolus, page 67

ratlings here have Exotic Weapon Proficiency (firearms) as a bonus feat.

Ratmen, Ratlings (12): hp 6 each; see *Ptolus*, page 625.

Ratmen, Ratlords (4): hp 20, 22, 23, 30; see *Ptolus*, page 625.

Dire Rats (6): hp 5 each; see MM.

Tactics: As mentioned in Area 6, half of the rats here move to the entry hall if the alarm sounds, with the other half charging in 3 rounds later if needed.

In this room (Area 7), they use the mounds of trash as cover, crouching behind or within them while they fight.

No matter where they are, the ratmen attempt to set up a system so that half of them fire while the other half loads, in order to keep up a constant barrage.

Treasure: Within one pile of garbage (Search, DC 18), searchers can find a silver idol of a crouching ratman (the Rat God). It is worth 250 gp.

* Since it is unlikely that the characters will encounter all these ratmen at once, the Encounter Level listed on the previous page is misleading. It is more likely that the PCs will have two EL 6 encounters.

8. Priests of the Outer Reaches (EL 9)

Painted in horrific combinations of color, this room is disturbing to spend time in, unless one is a chaos cultist, insane, or both. Two folding wooden screens create a partition between the main chamber and the twenty-foot-square area in its northwest corner. In that area, one can find a large bed, two wardrobes, a table, two chairs and a chest of drawers. The main room, however, has no furnishings, although an *everburning torch* rests in a sconce along the north wall, and a normal lantern full of oil hangs on a hook on the south wall.

The stairs in the north end of the room lead down to Area 1 of the Lower Temple.

The Priests: The Priests of the Outer Reaches, as they call themselves, consist of a sorcerer/rogue, a cleric, a fighter, and a wizard. Their “priest” title represents their station. These are all cultists who once belonged to a religion called the Seekers of the Outer Reaches. They practiced narcotic-fueled acts of depravity in their small temple in the Temple District until they were run out by the **Knights of the Dawn**. This defunct chaos cult believed in the beauty of nothingness and strove toward the ultimate elimination of all matter, which they called the “Outer Reaches.” When their sect disbanded, they joined the Brothers of Venom cult. Now the “outer reaches” refers simply to the outer reaches of the temple to everyone but these four.

Theral Egourd is a grim, bitter human cleric with a terrible temper. He wears grey robes with an iron breastplate bearing the symbol of a coiled

asp, ready to strike. His mace looks like a serpent's head, similar to that on his chest. He lives in the sectioned-off area to the northwest with his lover, Zlith.

Theral Egourd

Male human (Chaotic Evil)

Cleric6 (chaos gods) CR 6

Init +0 **Speed** 20 feet

HD 6d8+6 **hp** 31

AC 16, touch 10, flat-footed 16

BAB/Grapple +4/+6

Attack/Full Attack +7 melee (1d8+4, heavy mace)

SA Rebuke undead 6/day

Fort +8, **Ref** +4, **Will** +8

Str 14, **Dex** 10, **Con** 12, **Int** 12, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 17

Crucial Skills: Concentration +7, Search +5.

Other Skills: Appraise +2, Craft (sculpting) +8, Diplomacy +6, Heal +9, Spellcraft +5.

Crucial Feats: Extra Turning, Spell Penetration, Run.

Other Feats: Great Fortitude.

Domains: Chaos, Destruction.

Spells: 5/4+1/4+1/3+1; save DC 13 + spell level.

3rd—*contagion**, *dispel magic*, *magic vestment*, *summon monster III*.

2nd—*bear's endurance*, *bull's strength*, *owl's wisdom*, *shatter**, *sound burst*.

1st—*bless*, *cure light wounds*, *divine favor*, *entropic shield*, *protection from law**.

0—*assess creature*, *cure minor wounds*, *detect magic*, *read magic*, *resistance*.

Possessions: +1 *breastplate*, +1 *heavy mace*, *wand of inflict moderate wounds* (22 charges), *potion of protection from arrows 10/magic*, amulet with a green spiral, 2 gp, 4 sp.

* Indicates a domain spell.

Zlith is a half dark elf woman of exotic beauty and savage tastes (she uses the same stats as a normal half-elf). She wears a long red cape and has a charcoal-grey skin tone.

Zlith

Female half-elf (Chaotic Evil)

Fighters5 CR 5

Init +3 **Speed** 20 feet

HD 5d10+15 **hp** 47

AC 19, touch 13, flat-footed 16

BAB/Grapple +5/+8

Attack/Full Attack +10 melee (1d8+7, spear) or +9 ranged (1d8+3, longbow)

SQ Half-elf traits, low-light vision

Fort +7, **Ref** +6, **Will** +2

Str 17, **Dex** 16, **Con** 16, **Int** 14, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 13

Languages: Common, Dark Elvish, Elvish, Goblin.

Crucial Skills: Bluff +4, Jump +13, Listen +4, Search +4, Spot +5.

Other Skills: Gather Information +6, Knowledge (religion) +3, Ride +7.

Crucial Feats: Combat Reflexes, Power Attack.

Other Feats: Lightning Reflexes, Weapon Focus (spear), Weapon Specialization (spear).



Possessions: Masterwork breastplate, +1 spear, composite longbow (Strength +3), masterwork arrows (12), ring of jumping, potion of cure light wounds, eight-pointed arrow medallion, key to the locked drawer in this room (see below), 3 gp, 18 sp.

Grealdan Fesick is a weasel-faced human sorcerer/rogue in a hooded robe. He delights in killing and uses his spells to supplement his sneaky, back-stabbing nature. He lives in Area 9 but most likely is encountered here. He is in love with Zlith and secretly hates Theral. He will not help if Theral is in danger, but he will help Zlith.

Grealdan Fesick
Male human (Chaotic Evil)
Sorcerer3/rogue2 CR 5
Init +2 **Speed** 30 feet
HD 3d4+6 + 2d6+4 **hp** 30
AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14
BAB/Grapple +2/+0
Attack/Full Attack +1 melee (1d6–1 plus poison, short sword) or +6 ranged (1d10, double pistol)
SA Sneak attack +1d6
SQ Trapfinding, evasion
Fort +3, **Ref** +6, **Will** +3
Str 7, **Dex** 15, **Con** 14, **Int** 14, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 16
Crucial Skills: Bluff +11, Climb +7, Concentration +7, Jump +6, Listen +8, Search +10, Sense Motive +8, Spot +8, Tumble +9
Other Skills: Spellcraft +7.
Crucial Feats: Point Blank Shot.

Other Feats: Exotic Weapon Proficiency (firearms), Weapon Focus (double pistol).
Spells Known: 6/6; save DC 13 + spell level, spell failure 15%.

1st—*protection from law, shield, true strike.*
0—*daze, detect magic, detect poison, ghost sound, ray of frost.*

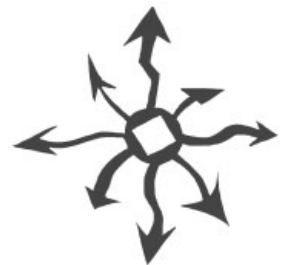
Possessions: +1 studded leather armor, +1 short sword, masterwork double pistol, climber's kit, three doses of Medium spider venom (DC 14, 1d4 Strength/1d4 Strength), broken square ring, key to Area 9, 2 gp, 19 sp, 5 cp.

Vocaetun Neverlost is a hideous Harrow elf who wears a hooded maroon robe and silver bracers. He lives in Area 10 with his hawk familiar. Vocaetun hates the other three priests and seeks to betray them and, ultimately, the entire cult—but only if it benefits him in the end.

Vocaetun Neverlost
Male Harrow elf (Chaotic Evil)
Wizard5 CR 6
Init +3 **Speed** 30 feet
HD 5d4 **hp** 15
AC 16, touch 13, flat-footed 13
BAB/Grapple +2/+2
Attack/Full Attack +3 melee (1d6+1, quarter-staff)
SA Spell-like abilities
SQ Harrow elf traits, low-light vision, familiar, spell-like abilities
Fort +1, **Ref** +4, **Will** +5
Str 11, **Dex** 16, **Con** 11, **Int** 14, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 10

From left: Theral, Vocaetun, and Grealdan

Double pistol: Ptolus, page 560



Harrow elves: Ptolus, page 52

The hatred that Grealdan bears for Theral is all too typical of the interrelations among the members of the various Cults of Chaos—which is why the idea of unifying them has never worked in the past.

Acidic Curse*Evocation [Acid]***Level:** Sor/Wiz1**Components:** V, S, M**Casting Time:** 1 standard action**Range:** Close (25 feet + 5 feet/two levels)**Target:** One creature with eyes**Duration:** Instantaneous**Saving Throw:** Fortitude negates**Spell Resistance:** Yes

You cause a victim's eyes to burst with acid, inflicting 1d6 points of acid damage and blinding the target for 1d4 rounds. Creatures who suffer no damage from the acid (due to a successful saving throw, an immunity, or a spell granting resistance) are not blind.

Material Component:*A bit of ragweed.***Crucial Skills:** Bluff +2, Listen +7, Search +6, Spot +8, Use Magic Device +2.**Other Skills:** Craft (alchemy) +4, Intimidate +2, Knowledge (arcana) +9, Knowledge (history) +3, Spellcraft +10.**Crucial Feats:** N/A**Other Feats:** Alertness, Craft Wand, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (illusion).**Spell-Like Abilities:** Caster level 5th. The save DCs are Charisma based.1/day—*cat's grace*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*.**Spells:** 4/4/3/1; save DC 12 + spell level, DC 13 + spell level for illusions (caster level 5th, +2 melee touch, +5 ranged touch).3rd—*displacement*.2nd—*invisibility*, *minor image*, *mirror image*.1st—*color spray*, *protection from law*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *shield*.○—*acid splash*, *detect poison*, *ghost sound*, *mage hand*.**Possessions:** *Bracers of armor* +3, *wand of acidic curse* (14 charges), +1 *quarterstaff*, flask of acid, flask of alchemist's fire, spell component pouch, 3 pp, 10 gp, 9 sp.**Vocaetun's Hawk Familiar:** hp 8; see MM.

Tactics: As mentioned in Area 6, if alerted, the NPCs here use the peephole to spy on what's going on in the entry, and then take several rounds to prepare for combat. They are *more* than willing to let all the ratmen die to buy themselves time. When they're ready, they activate a secret latch near the peephole (Search, DC 23, to find), which opens up a one-foot-square hole through which they can cast offensive spells.

Theral requires a great deal of preparatory time before a fight. If possible, he casts *entropic shield*, *owl's wisdom* (+2 bonus to the save DCs of his spells), and *divine favor* (+2 bonus to attacks and

damage) on himself in that order, and *bull's strength* (+2 bonus to melee attacks and damage) and *bear's endurance* (+10 hit points) on Zlith. On the first round of combat, he casts *summon monster III*, and then uses *shatter* and *sound burst* on foes while Zlith engages in melee. Only later does he close to fight, threatening with his mace, but using his wand to make damaging touch attacks.

Zlith typically uses Power Attack for 2 points, 4 points if she has *bull's strength* active on her.

Grealdan casts his spells ahead of time if at all possible, then concentrates on physical combat once the encounter starts. If he can (assuming his spells don't fail due to his armor), he casts *protection from law* (+2 bonus to AC against lawful foes) and *shield* (+4 AC). That makes his Armor Class 20 (22 versus lawful foes). Then, he seeks to go into the first round of combat with *true strike* in effect, likely using that with his pistol. If he can't flank, he flees from melee combat, preferring to use his firearm. He enjoys a +1 bonus to attacks and damage using Point Blank Shot when he can. Although physically weak, his poison and sneak attack still make him dangerous with his short sword.

If possible, Vocaetun goes into battle with this impressive array of defensive spells already cast: *cat's grace* (+2 bonus to AC and Reflex saves), *displacement*, *mirror image*, *shield* (+4 bonus to AC), and *protection from law* (+2 bonus to AC versus lawful foes). That makes his Armor Class 22 (24 versus lawful foes) and gives attacks against him a miss chance of 50 percent, assuming they don't strike his illusory images. Once in combat, he relies heavily on his wand, going out of his way to stay clear of melee.

Treasure: In Theral and Zlith's chamber, one can find clothing for both of them, as well as various worthless personal items. However, in the only

VOCAETUN'S BETRAYAL

If the priests in Area 8 fare poorly, Vocaetun may turn his spells or wand against his "allies," telling the player characters that he is on their side. The other three react with surprise, anger, and ultimately dismay. If Vocaetun survives, at the end of the encounter he tells the PCs that he's been waiting for them and thanks them for helping him rid the world of these vile cultists. He'll even tell them that he intentionally infiltrated the cult to learn about their fiendish plots (Bluff +2). To back up this statement, the Harrow elf does give them information—he tells them about the venom-shaped thralls and explains that the Tolling Bell is behind the unification of the various chaos cults. He doesn't know about the Mrathrach Machine (see Chapter 5), although he does tell the PCs the cult is working with some crime lord in the city (they may suspect the Balacazars, which isn't altogether inaccurate, but Vocaetun actually refers unknowingly to Aggah-Shan). He knows nothing of the Final Ritual (see Chapter 6), but he does know that the leader of the Tolling Bell cult is a half-fiend named Wuntad who's got something big planned to bring about the Night of Dissolution. If he gives the characters this information, he gains a +2 circumstance bonus to his Bluff checks.

If caught in his lie, or if someone *detects evil*, he accuses the characters of discriminating against him because he is a Harrow elf. He says they cannot blame him for his inherent nature or appearance, and that he's doing what he can to redeem himself (a lie).

What Vocaetun really wants is to leave the cult behind and go up into Ptolus and study magic, but he knows that if he just leaves, his "friends" will try to bring him back into their ranks again, likely ruining any chances he might have of making it in the city. Ultimately, he hopes to join the Inverted Pyramid.

If he must, he will tell the PCs the actual truth and hope they grant him quarter since he helped them. In no case, however, does he willingly accompany them farther into the Lower Temple. At best, he'll tell them to watch out for Woreron in Area 2 of the Lower Temple, the tiefling assassin (as he calls Gavele) in Area 3, and the trap in Area 5. He doesn't know much about the rest of the temple.

locked drawer in the chest (DC 25 to open; Zlith has the key), one can find a jeweled, gilt-covered box worth 300 gp. It contains two vials of *unguent of timelessness* and three 100 gp amethysts.

Secret Door: Finding the secret door in the southeast corner of the area requires a Search check (DC 20). It is meant to be a secret escape route, joining up with the old Labyrinth tunnels as described in Areas 2 to 4.

9. Grealdan's Chamber

The door into this room is locked (DC 30 to open; **Grealdan** has the key).

Grealdan's room is extremely untidy, with a fetid smell permeating everything. It has simple bedchamber furnishings, fairly crude and ill kept.

Treasure: In a secret cache below a loose stone in the floor under the bed (Search, DC 25, to find), Grealdan keeps a leather bag with 372 gp and 451 sp.

10. Vocaetun's Chamber

More a meditative study than a bedchamber, this mostly empty room has a straw mat in the middle of the floor surrounded by candles. On the walls hang tapestries **Vocaetun** has collected that depict great wizards of the past. Along the south wall rest a small trunk and a wooden bookshelf.

Treasure: The trunk contains clothing and personal gear, including ten tindertwigs and a flask of antitoxin. The bookshelf holds a dozen books about various magical subjects, as well as Vocaetun's own spellbook.

Vocaetun's Spellbook: The spellbook contains these spells: 0—*acid splash*, *arcane mark*, *assess creature*, *dancing lights*, *daze*, *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *disrupt undead*, *flare*, *ghost sound*, *light*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *message*, *open/close*, *ray of frost*, *read magic*, *resistance*, *touch of fatigue*; 1st—*acidic curse*, *color spray*, *comprehend languages*, *endure elements*, *protection from chaos*, *protection from law*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *reduce person*, *shield*, *silent image*; 2nd—*invisibility*, *minor image*, *mirror image*, *obscure object*; 3rd—*displacement*, *fly*.

LOWER TEMPLE

Ask anyone in Ptolus with an extensive knowledge of ancient history and they can tell you: Ptolus is actually the second city on this spot with that name. The first one existed ten thousand years ago in the location Oldtown occupies today. Remnants of this ancient settlement, called the Buried City, still exist beneath Oldtown. Within a series of natural caves and excavated chambers stand ancient stone buildings, at least some of which belong to this lost city. They have been swallowed up figuratively by time and literally by the earth. In this area of the Buried City, however, the cultists have refitted ancient walls with new doors, and reinforced old ceilings with iron poles so that modern inhabitants can use them.

Part of the Buried City, undiscovered until now, is used by the Cult of the Tolling Bell as its Temple of Deep Chaos. This includes Areas 1 through 8, 12, and 22, below. These areas and the others that follow correspond to the map on page 53.

Unless otherwise described, all doors are one-inch-thick iron and remain unlocked.

1. Ancient Courtyard

Stairs from Area 8 in the entrance level lead down to this large courtyard, which is part of the Buried City. It appears to be a cavern with some fairly crude (and very old) portions of masonry stone and a man-made cylindrical structure in the center, rising from uneven floor to rough ceiling. This tower (see Area 3) stands in the middle of the walled courtyard; a wall bisects the area. The tower and the wall that cuts through the middle of the "cavern" have been reinforced over time to keep them from collapse. Portions of the perimeter wall still survive as part of the surrounding cavern bounds.

The ceiling here is thirty feet high. The room is normally unlit.

As another sign of cultist infighting, a corpse lies on the floor here—it's been dead only about twenty-four hours. This male half-orc has no gear but wears a tattered grey robe and has a black hand tattoo on his chest.

Attacks From Above: It is likely that the dwarf cleric in Area 2 or the aranea in Area 4 will attack characters in the courtyard from high above. Both are likely to start with round after round of summoned monsters, probably Small fiendish monstrous spiders and fiendish hawks.

Secret Door: Finding the secret door in the south wall requires a Search check (DC 20). Behind it are narrow steps that lead to a five-foot-high passage to Area 2 over the top of this chamber.

2. Ceiling Cache (EL 5)

The ceiling of this small chamber is only about six feet high. A low, narrow passage leads to the stairs down to the secret door in Area 1. This room is empty of furnishings. The floor has a sliding metal panel, about one foot by two feet, that gives access down to Area 1.

Dwarf on Watch: There is a 50 percent chance that Woreron, a dwarf cleric, is on watch here (100 percent if the temple is alerted to intruders and he has time to get here from Area 10). With his dark-vision, he needs no light to see all of Area 1.

Woreron has a thick, jet black beard and thick black eyebrows, but his head is bald and he has no mustache. He mumbles and talks to himself, and is a bit delusional. Growing up, he was an outcast among his Stonelost brethren and lived alone on the streets of Ptolus for years before joining the Ebon Hand cult. He has seen that the Brothers of Venom are murdering his fellow cultists, but he has

Grealdan, page 49



Vocaetun, page 49



Assess creature: Ptolus, page 639
Acidic curse, page 50

DM TIPS

As the player characters head down into the Lower Temple, play up the great age of everything they see as well as the incongruity of seeing structures that once stood on the surface now located deep underground.



Longfingers Guild:
Ptolus, page 128

Assess creature: Ptolus, page 639

Gavele's Weapon Abilities

Roguefriend: *The wielder can make sneak attacks that inflict +1d6 points of damage, as a rogue. If the wielder can already make sneak attacks, her sneak attack damage increases by +1d6. One cannot place this ability upon a weapon more than once.*

Faint transmutation; CL 1st; *Craft Magic Arms and Armor, rogue's stab (from The Complete Book of Eldritch Might); Price +1/2 bonus.*

Champion Detecting: *The weapon identifies the wielder's most powerful foe in sight (based on Challenge Rating) within sixty feet. The weapon communicates this information to the wielder mentally. Foes not known to the wielder, or not known to be foes (someone in disguise, someone hidden) are ignored. In other words, this ability does not allow the wielder to distinguish friends from foes, just allows her to identify the most powerful of those creatures she knows to be foes.*

Faint divination; CL 3rd; *Craft Magic Arms and Armor, augury; Price +1/2 bonus*

not yet acted on that fact, out of fear that he, too, will be slain. If given the opportunity, he would join the Brothers of Venom or another group that seems to be in power.

Woreron Racksmite

Male Stonelost dwarf (Chaotic Evil)
Fighter3/cleric2 (chaos gods) CR 5
Init +1 **Speed** 20 feet
HD 5d8+20 **hp** 44

AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 20
BAB/Grapple +4/+7
Attack/Full Attack +9 melee (1d8+4, battleaxe)

SA Rebuke undead 3/day
SQ Darkvision 60 feet, dwarven traits
Fort +10, **Ref** +4, **Will** +8

Str 17, **Dex** 12, **Con** 19, **Int** 15, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 11
Crucial Skills: Concentration +10, Intimidate +6.

Other Skills: Appraise +6, Craft (armor-smithing) +15, Craft (weaponsmithing) +13, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +4.

Crucial Feats: Power Attack.

Other Feats: Iron Will, Scribe Scroll, Weapon Focus (battleaxe).

Domains: Chaos, Evil.

Spells: 4/3+1; save DC 12 + spell level (caster level 2nd, +7 melee touch, +5 ranged touch).
1st—*protection from good**, *summon monster I* (3).

○—*assess creature, inflict minor wounds, purify food and drink, read magic.*

Possessions: Full plate armor, heavy wooden shield, +1 battleaxe, pearl of power (1st-level spell), *potion of levitation*, scroll of *summon monster I* (×3), scroll of *cure light wounds* (×3), silver and mithral amulet of a black skull worth 150 gp, key to the chest in Area 10 hidden in his boot (Search, DC 18, to find), 6 gp, 11 sp.

* Indicates a domain spell.

Tactics. When on duty, Woreron stands in the crawlspace above Area 1 and summons creatures into the room below if intruders appear. After he has exhausted his summoning spells, he casts *protection from good* (+2 bonus to Armor Class against good foes), drinks his potion, and levitates down to engage in melee.

3. Buried Tower (EL 5)

An ancient tower, now buried, rises from floor to ceiling within the larger surrounding chamber. The doors are new. The tower has two levels. The bottom level is a round room with a table, a wooden bed (with a straw-filled mattress), a full-length free-standing mirror, and a chest with drawers containing clothing and little of value. A strange statue rests on the table. This green ceramic figure represents a hideous, tentacled, bloated, humanoid thing holding a large, cracked

bell. On its underside is written, "And on the Night of Dissolution, we shall awaken and break free." It is worth only about 10 gp.

This is the home of Gavele, a cultist. Gavele is a current member in good standing of the Longfingers Guild as well as the Cult of the Tolling Bell. She makes sure that neither group knows of her relationship with the other, however, so that neither questions her loyalty nor asks her to betray the other. She works as a thief and assassin for the cult, infiltrating locales and eliminating enemies when needed, usually with her bow.

She doesn't like or trust Ibulli the aranea in the tower level above her (see Area 4) and will not fight alongside him—she'd rather flee.

Gavele has a quasit ally named Irixathat that follows her around. It doesn't obey her commands, exactly, but it does help her when she's doing something the quasit considers chaotic or evil.

Gavele Fevermind

Female tiefling (Chaotic Evil)

Medium outsider (native)

Rogue5 CR 5

Init +4 **Speed** 40 feet

HD 5 **hp** 37

AC 17, touch 14, flat-footed 17

BAB/Grapple +3/+4

Attack/Full Attack +5 melee (1d6+1, 18–20/×2, rapier) or +8 ranged (1d6+2, shortbow)

SA Sneak attack +3d6, spell-like abilities

SQ Darkvision 60 feet; resistance to cold 5, electricity 5, and fire 5; trapfinding, evasion, trap sense +1, uncanny dodge

Fort +3, **Ref** +8, **Will** +3

Str 13, **Dex** 18, **Con** 14, **Int** 17, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 10

Crucial Skills: Balance +10, Bluff +10, Hide +14, Intimidate +10, Jump +6, Move Silently +10, Spot +8, Tumble +12, Use Rope +10.

Other Skills: Diplomacy +10, Disguise +8, Forgery +11, Open Lock +14.

Crucial Feats: Point Blank Shot.

Other Feats: Iron Will.

Spell-Like Abilities: Caster level 7th. Save DCs are Charisma based.

1/day—*darkness*.

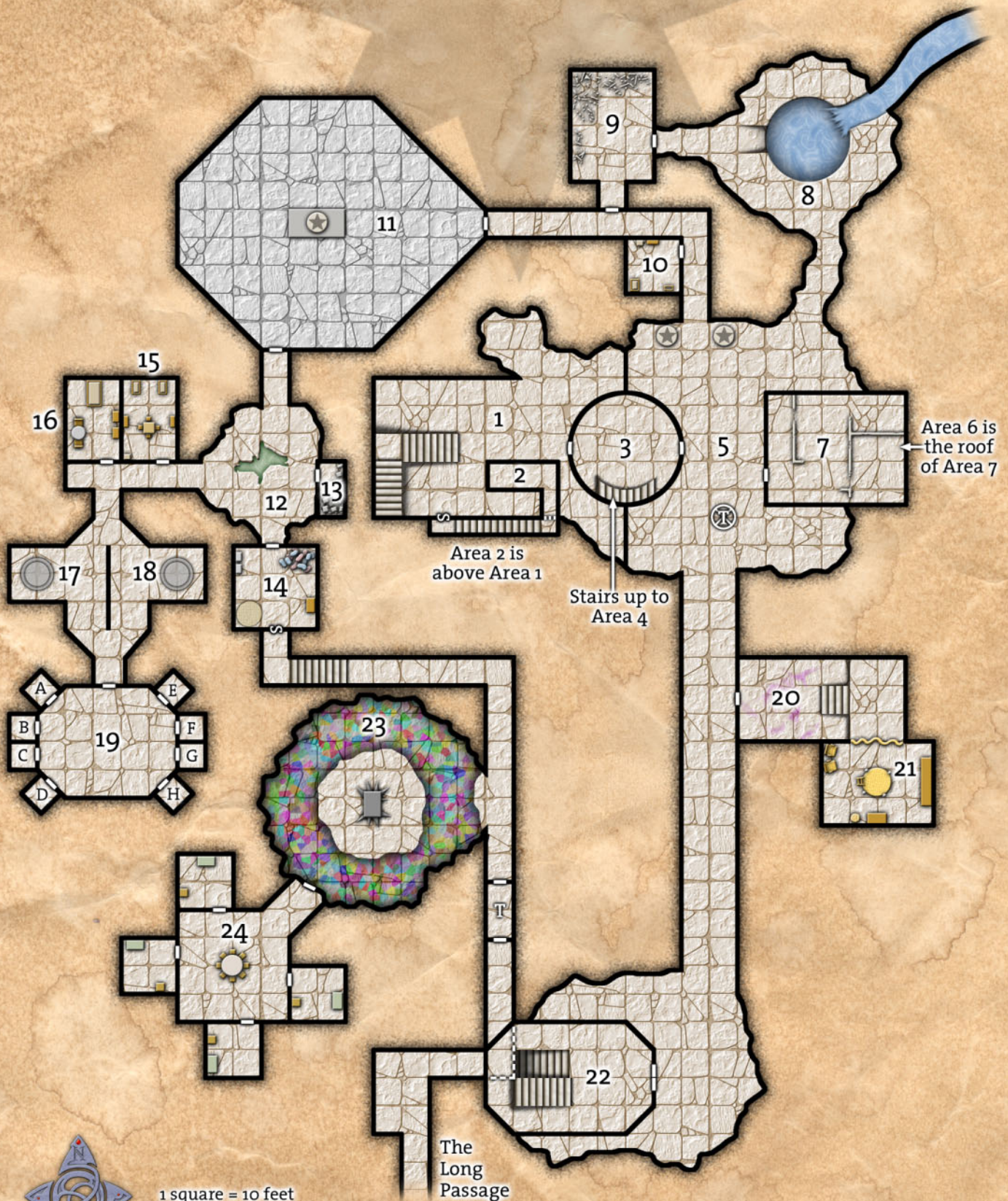
Possessions: Masterwork studded leather armor, masterwork rapier, +1 composite *roguefriend champion detecting* shortbow (+1), boots of striding and springing, masterwork thieves' tools, cracked bell amulet (in boot), 4 gp, 15 sp, 6 cp.

Irixathat, Quasit: hp 13; see MM.

Tactics: Gavele won't wait in the tower for foes to come and beard her in her "lair." She's likely to be caught here only if surprised. If alerted, she moves to Area 7, gathers the ratlords, and fights alongside them in Area 5, 8, or even 9 (possibly all three).

In a fight, she wants to use her bow whenever possible. She takes her time, using this strategy:

The Temple of Deep Chaos



Area 6 is the roof of Area 7

Area 2 is above Area 1

Stairs up to Area 4

The Long Passage



1 square = 10 feet

DM TIPS

Gavele exists so that DMs can have the cult send someone to find and attack the party in between forays into the Temple of Deep Chaos. For example, if the PCs attack the temple, but then retreat back to the city to rest, Gavele will go up and try to find them and attack them while they are unprepared.



Quaan bone ring:
Ptolus, page 131
Pactlords of the Quaan:
Ptolus, page 130

INFO CHECKS

Characters can identify the Quaan bone ring for what it is with a successful Knowledge (local) check (DC 23).

hide, attack (with sneak attack), flee, hide, attack (with sneak attack), flee, and so on. She could potentially lead foes all over the temple.

Irixathat can help her by using this strategy: become invisible, attack, become invisible, attack, and so on, all the while moving around to confuse his foes.

4. Tower's Upper Level (EL 8)

This tall, cylindrical room directly above Area 3 is thirty feet high, although only the bottom fifteen feet are visible. The upper half of the room is obscured by webs. Bones and grisly detritus cover the floor; the top layer is fairly fresh, although underneath lies a thick layer of dust-and-grime-covered debris.

The magically treated webs are tough and difficult to cut or burn. Treat them as a *web* spell with only a 50 percent chance of catching on fire when exposed to any kind of flame, and with a 50 percent chance each round that any flames will go out. They also provide 50 percent concealment to the aranea within them (he, however, has adapted to looking through them and has no such difficulties).

A hole at the top of the chamber, five feet across, is obscured by permanent magical darkness about ten feet in diameter. The hole is next to the top of the tower, where it meets with the ceiling in Area 1. There, the darkness blends into the shadows and is noticeable only in bright light. This provides the aranea inside the tower with both a place to hide and an escape route/secret entrance.

Aranea: Ibulli the aranea lives in this level of the ancient tower and has been here since before the cultists came to establish the temple. When they arrived and encountered the aranea, they agreed to work together.

Ibulli wears a *Quaan bone ring*, which signifies (to those in the know, at least) that he belongs to the **Pactlords of the Quaan**. Ibulli is a spy for the Pactlords, who are interested in the growing power of the chaos cults. While the Pactlords want to see the destruction of all humanoids, they do not want to destroy all creation, by any means. The cultists are unaware of his other affiliation.

Through sheer coincidence, Ibulli has a quasit companion just like Gavele. This familiar, Spysys, usually takes the form of a Medium monstrous spider unless he needs to fly.

Ibulli

Male aranea (Chaotic Evil)
Medium magical beast (shapechanger)
Sorcerer4 **CR 8**
Init +4 **Speed** 50 feet, climb 25 feet
HD 3d8+15 + 4d4+20 **hp** 60
AC 15, touch 14, flat-footed 11
BAB/Grapple +6/+6
Attack/Full Attack +6 melee (1d6 plus poison, bite) or +6 ranged (web)

SA Poison (DC 18, 1d6 Strength/2d6 Strength), webs

SQ Darkvision 60 feet, low-light vision, familiar

Fort +9, **Ref** +8, **Will** +8

Str 11, **Dex** 18, **Con** 21, **Int** 18, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 22

Crucial Skills: Climb +14, Concentration +15, Escape Artist +8, Hide +10, Jump +8, Listen +16, Spot +11.

Other Skills: Knowledge (arcana) +12, Spellcraft +16.

Crucial Feats: Combat Reflexes, Silent Spell.

Other Feats: Alertness, Improved Familiar (quasit).

Spells Known: 6/8/8/5; save DC 16 + spell level (caster level 4th, +6 melee touch, +10 ranged touch).

3rd—*fly, lightning bolt*.

2nd—*bear's endurance, daze monster, hypnotic pattern*.

1st—*mage armor, ray of enfeeblement, shield, summon monster I*.

0—*acid splash, arcane mark, detect poison, ghost sound, light, mage hand, mending*.

Webs (Ex): Ibulli can throw a web six times per day. This resembles an attack with a net but has a maximum range of 50 feet, with a range increment of 10 feet, and proves effective against targets of up to Large size. The web anchors the target in place, allowing no movement.

An entangled creature can escape with an Escape Artist check (DC 16) or burst the web with a Strength check (DC 20). The check DCs are Constitution based; the Strength check DC includes a +4 racial bonus. The web has 6 hit points, hardness 0, and takes double damage from fire.

Possessions: *Quaan bone ring, ring of charisma* +2 (as cloak), note (see below), 54 gp.

Spysys, Quasit: hp 13; see MM.

Tactics if Attacking From Above Into Area 1:

Assume that Ibulli has *mage armor* cast (+4 bonus to AC for a total of Armor Class 19). If given some time, he also casts *shield* (+4 bonus to AC, for a total of Armor Class 23), *bear's endurance* (+14 hp and +2 bonus to Fortitude saves), and *fly*, in that order. He peers out of the magical darkness and casts silent *summon monster I* to attack enemies below. Once detected, he uses his webs on foes that look like they could reach him, followed by *lightning bolts*.

If opponents reach him in his perch, he escapes through the magical darkness into the webs in this chamber.

Tactics in This Chamber: Assume that Ibulli has *mage armor* cast (+4 bonus to AC for a total of Armor Class 19). If given some time, he also casts *shield* (+4 bonus to AC, for a total of Armor Class 23), *bear's endurance* (+14 hp and +2 bonus to Fortitude saves), and *fly*, in that order. If possible,

he hides in his webs and casts silent *summon monster I* and silent *daze monster* upon foes so that they will not know where he is. If the webs are cleared, he hides half in the magical darkness, giving himself 50 percent concealment unless bright light enters the situation. Once detected, he uses his webs on foes that look like dangerous melee combatants, followed by *lightning bolts*. The bolts are a last resort, since they likely will slice through and destroy his webs.

If foes reach him in his perch, he uses his *fly* spell to escape through the magical darkness into the open air above Area 1. From high above, he looses more *lightning bolts* on foes. He also may attempt to retreat up into Area 2 and out the back passage, if need be.

Treasure: Within the bones and refuse on the floor are hidden (Search, DC 20) a masterwork short sword, a large amethyst worth 300 gp set into a sword pommel (the blade has long since broken away), a gold necklace worth 200 gp, plus 39 gp and 84 sp.

Note: Ibulli carries an unfinished note written in Sylvan and addressed to “Brothers of the Quaan.” It reads as follows:

The chaos cultists prepare something big. They talk of a huge machine in the caves beyond, and of something called the Final Ritual, which will be performed beneath a temple.

5. Open Room (EL 5)

Unlike the chamber to the west, the cultists created this room by excavating an area between the buried tower and the ancient structure to the east (Area 7). The excavation is incomplete, though, and loose stone, bits of wood, and even some tools lie about the area.

Within the room is a very old well that they also uncovered, which now serves as a trap for intruders, although it was originally created by accident. It looks like a slight pile of discarded planks and chunks of broken masonry, but these actually disguise a deep, dank pit. The pit is particularly dangerous because it has green slime at the bottom, amid about a foot of foul water.

Covered Pit Trap: CR 3 (and 4); mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; Reflex save, DC 20, avoids; 30 feet deep (3d6, fall); multiple targets (first target in each of two adjacent squares) plus green slime—see DMG; Search DC 18; Disable Device DC 20.

In the north end of the room, two statues flank the westernmost exit. These are life-sized figures of stone, carved to look like humans in robes. However, rather than normal heads, they have translucent, smoky grey glass spheres about nine inches in diameter atop their shoulders.



6. Rooftop Guardians (EL 6)

The top of the old building east of the open room (see Area 7) is flat and still surprisingly sturdy. From this vantage, fifteen feet off the ground, two venom-shaped thralls stand watch. There is a barrel of twenty-five javelins here on the roof.

Each of the guardians has a **chaositech bomb** to hurl at intruders; one has a **binding bomb** and the other a **needle bomb**. After they have used their bombs, they hurl javelins at foes below them.

Venom-Shaped Thralls (2): hp 41 and 50; see appendix, page 94.

7. Ruined Structure (EL 4)

This ancient structure, like the tower to the west (Area 3), was a portion of the old city, now buried by time. Its surroundings have been excavated and the building itself reinforced, leaving it surprisingly intact. The door into the structure is new. Although the building once had many rooms, it is now entirely open inside; remnants of the old interior walls still exist in places, forming what seem to be irregular columns or sometimes half-walls. Within, a pair of ratlords has made a lair, as the place was already full of the refuse and garbage they love. The piles of trash, coupled with the remnants of the interior walls, create many hiding places and areas of cover within the building. All Hide checks inside have a +2 bonus and at any given time characters can gain cover if they choose.

Ratlords: The ratlords that live here are allies of Gavele in Area 3. If she comes here, they will do as she says. Likewise, they obey the direct commands of a cult priest. Otherwise, they remain in this lair, even if they hear activity or fighting. Should intruders enter this structure, the ratlords fight to defend themselves, attacking immediately (perhaps with surprise, from hiding spots and cover). As there are no other exits, they fight to the death. However, the sounds of their

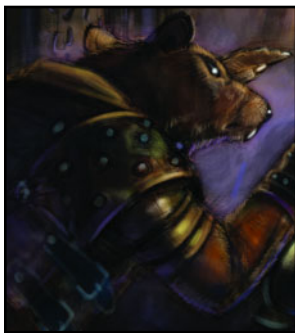
Chaositech Bombs

See also Ptolus, Chapter 30.

Binding Bomb: Exploding with strands of sticky material, this bomb entangles everyone within ten feet of it who fails a Reflex saving throw (DC 15). Assuming the area of the explosion contains a floor or wall, the creatures are held fast to it and suffer a –2 penalty on attack rolls and a –4 penalty to their effective Dexterity scores. An entangled character who attempts to cast a spell must make a Concentration check (DC 15 + spell level) or lose the spell. If the creatures are not stuck to a surface, they can move at half speed but cannot run or charge. The sticky bonds dissolve after 3d6 minutes, although a Strength check (DC 26) can burst them and an Escape Artist check (DC 30) allows a creature to slip free. The bonds do not burn and are immune to most types of damage, although acid dissolves a five-foot-square area of them if it inflicts at least 12 points of damage.

Needle Bomb: This bomb explodes with a hail of tiny needles that spreads out in a twenty-foot radius. Anyone in this area suffers 3d6 points of piercing damage (Reflex save, DC 13, for half).

Originally the pit in Area 8 was created to be a relatively shallow grain storage area. However, with the passage of time and the burial of the ancient city, it has become a much deeper pit that opens at the bottom into an underground stream. The ramp was originally for the carts that hauled the grain here and carried it away.



Woreron is a fairly paranoid fellow and, considering the conflict between the different factions of the cult, he's got good reason to be. He's a loner, and no one from either faction really cares much for him.

gunfire will draw the ratbrutes from Area 9. The ratbrutes obey any commands of the ratlords.

One of these ratlords wears a tattered red cape, and the other an eyepatch.

Ratmen, Ratlords (2): hp 21 and 23; see *Ptolus*, page 625.

8. Watery Pit

Water from a natural underground river to the northeast flows into this room and down into a thirty-foot-wide pit. This chamber in the northeastern portion of the temple seems to be a natural cave, but the pit is man-made, lined with masonry stone of ancient creation. The room and pit are covered in dark, slippery slime. The pit measures eighty feet deep; the bottom fifteen feet are filled with water. Numerous small passages, all submerged, extend from the pit, providing a place for the rushing water to go. Because the water breaks the impact of anyone's fall, a character who falls down the pit suffers 3d6 points of normal damage and 2d3 points of nonlethal damage.

A steep ramp ten feet wide slopes down into the pit on its western side. This slope is particularly slick; anyone on the ramp must make a Balance check (DC 20) to avoid slipping down into the pit.

Ratbrutes: If the ratbrutes from Area 9 come into this room, they attempt to grab foes and throw them into the pit or onto the slick ramp until there are only one or two left, at which point they attack normally.

9. Reinforcements (EL 6)

This large room west of the watery pit serves as a lair for two ratbrutes. In its northwest corner the inhabitants have made beds for themselves of old straw and strips of cloth and rags. Spread out next to them are odd collections of things: string, shiny stones, teeth, bits of fur, a copper coin, and so on.

These creatures are here to provide support for the defenders in Area 7, if needed. They also move to attack anyone they hear in Area 8.

Ratmen, Ratbrutes (2): hp 50 and 59; see *Ptolus*, page 625.

10. Woreron's Chamber (EL 3)

A small chamber southeast of the ratbrutes' room belongs to the dwarf, Woreron, who is usually found in Area 2. It has a wooden bed, a chest of drawers, a large, locked iron box, and an open-topped wooden box. The chest of drawers and the wooden box contain clothing and personal items, most rather worthless.

If Woreron is not on duty in Area 2, he is likely here asleep or in the Kaleidoscope Temple (Area 23) paying homage to the Lords of Chaos.

Treasure: The locked iron box (DC 30 to open) is trapped so that it fires a poisoned arrow when someone opens it without using the key in a second, hidden lock (DC 19 to find). The iron box

contains a collection of fancy snuff bottles worth 500 gp, a scroll of *cure light wounds, bless*, and *divine favor*, 10 gp worth of snuff, and a silk bag with 532 gp and 111 sp.

Poisoned Arrow Trap: CR 3; mechanical; touch trigger; manual reset; lock bypass (Open Lock, DC 30); attack +12 ranged (1d8 plus poison, arrow); poison (Large monstrous scorpion venom, Fortitude save, DC 14, resists, 1d4 Constitution/1d4 Constitution); Search DC 19; Disable Device DC 15.

11. The Sanctuary (EL 7)

This huge chamber on the northwest side of the temple is newly built, with masonry walls and a vaulted ceiling that reaches a height of twenty-five feet in the center and eighteen feet near the walls. Painted or chiseled chaos symbols of different types—spirals, multipointed arrows, black hand prints, and so on—cover the walls. A stone structure in the center of the room measures ten feet high, twenty feet long, and ten feet wide. Adorned with demonic visages and sculpture, it resembles a gothic sepulcher, although there is no obvious door. Atop the structure in the center squats a stone statue of a bloated, misshapen demon. Candles in various colors rest in sconces along the walls. Hundreds of candles are placed irregularly around the room, although they are unlikely to be lit unless a ceremony is going on.

This room serves as a sanctuary and gathering area for chaos cultists, although it is not the innermost temple (that's Area 23). The structure in the center pulses with power any time anyone of chaotic alignment enters—even those who are chaotic good. The structure's pulsing energy varies in color depending on the moral outlook of the character: shimmering gold for chaotic good, whitish grey for chaotic neutral, and blackish purple for chaotic evil. If multiple chaotic characters stand in the room, the energy fluctuates among the different relevant colors. The aura lasts for as long as the chaotic creature is present, shifting and pulsing silently for the duration.

Characters who search this central structure (DC 20) find a seam that suggests that its entire top or "lid" is a separate piece, although one far too heavy to move (some ten to twelve tons). However, touching the sepulcher while it pulses draws the attention of the creature within.

The Creature Within: The power of the pulsing structure comes from the chaos beast that dwells inside. If anyone touches the sepulcher while it pulses with power, its top slides slightly to one side with a teeth-clenching scraping sound, and the chaos beast oozes out.

Once out, the beast expects words of praise and physical objects of sacrifice. Any object tossed in its direction or laid before it will do—it relishes matter to twist and distort, which it can do as easily as it transforms flesh (see MM). If it

does not receive both adulation and gifts after 3 rounds, it attacks everyone in the sanctuary, regardless of alignment.

Chaos Beast: hp 45; see MM.

12. Demons (EL 9)

An underground chamber of ancient, broken masonry lies just south of the sanctuary. It contains a dark waterfall that pours down from a hole in the ceiling into a small pool created by a large rift in the paving stones. The dirty water pours in from the sewer run above, which has been damaged. Mushrooms and other fungus grow up from the cracks. The room stinks of sewage and stale water.

Although they live in the chamber directly to the south (Area 14), Astarred and Nirech-thes, two demons, spend most of their time here. These demons are representatives of **Lilith of the Fallen**.

Nirech-thes is a babau with dark red—almost black—skin and glowing yellow eyes.

Nirech-thes, Babau: hp 66; see MM.

Astarred

Male centaur half-demon (Chaotic Evil)
Large outsider (augmented monstrous humanoid)

Cleric₃ (the Demon Gods) CR 8

Init +4 **Speed** 50 feet, fly 50 feet (average)

HD 4d8+16 + 3d8+12 **hp** 66

AC 22, touch 13, flat-footed 17

BAB/Grapple +6/+17

Attack +13 melee (2d6+10 +1d6 fire, longspear) or +12 melee (1d8+3 +1d6 fire, bite) or +12 ranged (1d6+7, dagger)

Full Attack +13/+8 melee (2d6+10+1d6 fire, longspear) and +7 melee (1d6+7+1d6 fire, 2 hooves), or +12 melee (1d8+3+1d6 fire, bite) and +7 (1d6+7+1d6 fire, 2 claws), or +12/+6 ranged (1d6+7, dagger)

Space/Reach 10 feet/10 feet

SA Rebuke undead 6/day, smite good 1/day (+7 damage to good foe), spell-like abilities, blessing of Baltaroth (+1d6 fire damage to all melee attacks)

SQ Darkvision 60 feet, immunity to poison; resistance to acid 10, cold 10, electricity 10, and fire 10; DR 5/magic, SR 17

Fort +8, **Ref** +9, **Will** +10

Str 25, **Dex** 19, **Con** 18, **Int** 14, **Wis** 17, **Cha** 16

Crucial Skills: Listen +10, Move Silently +15, Spot +10.

Other Skills: Decipher Script +7, Diplomacy +12, Handle Animal +7, Open Lock +9, Sleight of Hand +8, Survival +10, Swim +11.

Crucial Feats: Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Quick Draw.

Other Feats: N/A

Domains: Chaos, Evil.

Spell-Like Abilities: Caster level 7th. Save DCs are Charisma based.

1/day—*unholy blight*, *desecrate*.

3/day—*poison*, *darkness*.

Spells: 4/3+1/2+1; save DC 13 + spell level



(caster level 3rd, +13 melee touch, +10 ranged touch).

2nd—*augury*, *cure moderate wounds*, *shatter*.*.

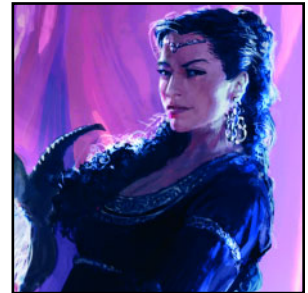
1st—*command*, *cure light wounds*, *hide from undead*, *protection from good*.*.

○—*assess creature*, *detect magic*, *mending*, *resistance*.

Possessions: +1 chain shirt, masterwork large longspear, masterwork large throwing daggers (2), brooch of shielding, oil of greater magic weapon +2, letter from Lilith pledging her secret support for Wuntad, 2 gp, 9 sp, 9 cp.

* Indicates a domain spell

Tactics: The demons here are extremely wary—almost paranoid. They listen for activity in Area 11. If he has the time to prepare for combat,



Lilith of the Fallen:
Ptolus, page 111

Astarred is a half-fiend centaur with jet black flesh and curling ram's horns. He has batlike wings on his back and wears a lightweight chain shirt on his upper body. In both hands he wields a wickedly barbed spear. Astarred is such a pinnacle of chaos and evil, the Demon Gods have granted him the special blessing of Baltaroth ability in melee combat (see main text).

Assess creature: Ptolus, page 639

Illdras, page 62

Rhinnis, page 65

Cult Book, page 92

Some of the other books on Rhinnis' shelf include Catechism of Blood, Appeasement of the Poison Gods, The Cursed Shadow of Longing, and Hymns of Vengeance.

Rhinnis' Notes

Rhinnis: The Cheilsecaro must be completely immersed in acid or some other such substance when it is destroyed. We cannot allow the "heart's breath" to escape during the ritual, for that would be extremely dangerous. For now, we store it within the altar in the Kaleidoscope Temple. This hated artifact's destruction will be the culmination of the rite. Wuntad may be ascending to Vested status, but our glorious lord will grant us vast new power. All will bask in the glory of chaos! All will know us, and know fear in the presence of our might at last. —Illdras

Rhinnis, beware. The Brothers of Venom seek treachery. Their help in the creation of the thralls was all a ruse. They want them all to themselves. It may not be safe for us here, and while you have Illdras' ear, I do not. I think I may leave for our temple on Terrock Road. Perhaps Malleck can help. Watch your back, and don't hesitate to strike first if you see it as necessary. Your Brother in Chaos, Reggaloch

[The Temple of the Ebon Hand cult on Terrock Road is #137, G4, on the poster map in the Temple District; Malleck is the high priest. See Ptolus, page 379. Sadly, Reggaloch was not able to make it to safety before being slain by other cultists; see "The Apartment House," page 44.]

Astared uses his *oil of greater magic weapon* (+2 bonus to attacks and damage), and then casts *bull's strength* (+2 bonus to attacks and damage). In a fight, he might attempt to hurt a group of foes at range with *unholy blight*, but then he charges in for melee combat.

If he is significantly wounded, Astared may attempt to flee to the Kaleidoscope Temple (Area 23) to get healing from Illdras, using the secret passage out of Area 14.

Meanwhile, Nirech-thes the babau attempts to *gate* in another babau; whether or not he succeeds, he moves into melee combat, flanking foes with either Astared or the other babau.

13. Storeroom

The cult uses this room off of Area 12 to store supplies. It holds many crates and barrels of foodstuffs, as well as dry goods and a few tools. It's unlikely that the PCs will find anything of real value here, however.

14. Demons' Lair

Astared and Nirech-thes use this chamber as a lair, although they don't spend much time here. A large pile of pillows and blankets serves as Astared's bed, while the babau has a round straw mat that he sits on from time to time. Along the western wall rest two iron chests. Along the eastern wall lies a grisly pile of bones and bloody clothing, the remnants of victims given to these demons to do with as they wished. Above these remains hang manacles bolted to the wall and a wooden cabinet filled with torture implements including thumbscrews, knives, scalpels, hammers, and more.

Chests: Each chest is locked (DC 27 to open). The first contains 3,829 gp. The second contains 4,177 sp, a jeweled mace worth 200 gp, ten flasks of alchemist's fire, and an empty crystal bottle with a silver stopper worth 75 gp.

The Bones: Characters who search the bones and clothing (Search, DC 16) can find a page ripped out of a book. This passage is circled:

But before they slept, they committed one last act of divine betrayal. They fell upon one of their beloved named Gellasatrac, shredding him completely so that one future day their servants could feast upon his flesh and his blood and be changed. Gellasatrac's ebon hand would bring blessed mutation and lovely transformation, granting those who dared partake the power to free the masters once and for all.

Secret Door: Part of the south wall pivots to reveal a newly created secret passage (Search, DC 25).

15. Empty Bedchamber

This room west of the waterfall chamber (Area 12) has a pair of beds, a table with four chairs, a pair of empty, unlocked trunks, an empty wardrobe, a free-standing mirror, and a chandelier. This bedroom is reserved for guests or future cultists of import.

16. Rhinnis' Chamber

This room adjacent to Area 15 contains a large bed, a round, marble-topped table, two very large chairs, and two huge trunks. A bookshelf is mounted onto the wall opposite the door. Neither trunk is locked. Both contain clothing (for a minotaur) and personal items of little value.

Rhinnis, an Ebon Hand priest, is not here but instead in the Long Passage (see page 64). When his fight there with a trio of Brothers of Venom is over, he returns to his room here.

Books: The books on the bookshelf are all religious tomes, most with a dark edge. One, unmarked and untitled, looks extremely similar to the **Cult Book** found in Pythoness House. Tucked into this volume, however, are two notes written in very different hands (see sidebar).

17. Cursed Dais of Sacrifice

South of Rhinnis' bedchamber, a large chamber bisected by a thirty-foot wall holds two daises.

The western half of the chamber has a round, two-tiered dais of black stone ten feet across. It dominates the otherwise empty chamber. On the south wall, someone has painted strange and horrific pictures of misshapen creatures of darkness with many eyes and tentacles.

Any noncultist who so much as touches the dais must attempt a Will save (DC 20). On a failure, the character's most cherished possession is consumed utterly, completely, and irrevocably (except by a *miracle* or *wish*). Black power rises from the dais to the ceiling like a dark column when this occurs, lasting for a full round. Anyone who steps into the energy during this round must make a Will saving throw (DC 20) or *all* of their possessions are consumed amid deep, resonant laughter.

A cultist who touches the dais can choose which item in his possession is consumed. The same black column of energy appears, but a cultist can stand within it without losing any items. The cultist who does so gains a +1 bonus on his next die roll for each 200 gp worth of sacrifice he makes (maximum +5).

The *dais of sacrifice* has an aura of strong evocation magic and evil.

18. Cursed Dais of Vengeance

In the eastern half of the chamber south of Area 15 sits a round, two-tiered dais of black stone that measures ten feet across. Veins of red and blue run through the dark stone. It dominates the

otherwise empty chamber. On the south wall, someone has painted grisly and crude pictures of people in agony, with names and rude epithets scrawled next to them.

Any noncultist who so much as touches the dais must attempt a Will save (DC 20). Failure indicates that the character has been infused with evil energies that wait until the victim reaches a place he calls “home” (DM’s discretion) or, if no such place exists, a location with at least half a dozen unsuspecting, innocent victims within thirty feet (DM’s discretion). At this point, the energies explode within the victim, inflicting 6d6 points of force damage to him and 3d6 points of damage to anyone within ten feet (Reflex save, DC 18, halves the damage, but only for nearby victims, not for the main victim). Further, the curse emits a plague, so that all within thirty feet must make a Fortitude save (DC 18) or contract red ache (see Chapter 8: Glossary of the DMG).

After making a sacrifice in Area 17 worth at least 1,000 gp, a faithful cultist can stand upon this dais and name a victim. That victim, wherever she is, must make a Will saving throw (DC 15) or suffer 3d6 points of force damage. The cultist must have actually touched his victim at some point in order for the damage to occur. This dais can be used no more than once per month. This horrible device has been used more than once to torment and even kill enemies of the cult. However, the cultists use it very sparingly, for fear that a victim might use a *divination* spell to track the occult attack back to its source.

The *dais of vengeance* has an aura of strong necromancy magic and evil.

19. Prison

This small complex of chambers is newly built. Lorelii, the mutant gaoler, dwells in the central chamber; individual cells radiate out from there. Each cell is locked with a magical lock identical to *arcane lock*. The cells’ two-inch-thick iron doors (hardness 10, 60 hit points, break DC 28) each have a small circular glass plate inset at about eye level. Lorelii herself is the key to these cells—her hand touching the round glass plate causes the door to open. This is true even if she is dead.

Mutant Gaoler: Lorelii, an Ebon Hand cultist, allowed herself to be transformed by both cultist magic and the intervention of the **Surgeon in the Shadows**. Her duty is to keep the prisoners in line and prevent them from escaping, but she is too chaotic to truly take such responsibility seriously. She torments the prisoners on her own, inflicting painful tortures that she dreams up. She’s also eager for a fight, so if intruders come here she attacks them with relish.

Lorelii

Female human major mutant (Chaotic Evil)

Fighter4 **CR** 4

Init +3 **Speed** 30 feet

HD 4d10+12 **hp** 41

AC 20, touch 15, flat-footed 17

BAB/Grapple +4/+8

Attack/Full Attack +9 melee (2d6+6, bite)

SA Bite mutation

SQ Enhanced flesh mutation (+3 total natural armor), +2 to saves against poison and disease, resistance to acid 10, mute

Fort +8, **Ref** +3, **Will** +3

Str 18, **Dex** 17, **Con** 17, **Int** 14, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 12

Crucial Skills: Climb +12, Intimidate +7, Jump +9, Listen +4, Spot +4.

Other Skills: Diplomacy +3, Knowledge (local) +3, Swim +10.

Crucial Feats: Blind-Fight, Dodge, **Enhance Mutation** (+1d6 damage with bite), Power Attack, Track.

Other Feats: Weapon Focus (bite).

Possessions: Leather armor, *ring of protection* +2, *potion of owl’s wisdom*, 13 pp, 12 gp, 9 sp, 14 cp.

Prison Cell A (EL 1/3)

This cell is empty except for a dire rat that flees through a hole in the north wall into a hidden nest if approached.

Dire Rat: hp 6; see MM.

Prison Cell B

This cell is empty.

Prison Cell C

This cell holds a pair of human commoners (level 1): Kori Vessamor, a teenage girl, and Lorat Muester, a man in his twenties. Both were kidnapped recently from the streets above by cult agents. Neither knows anything about where they are, who is keeping them, or why. Lorat seems distrustful of anyone, even those appearing to be his liberators. Kori, on the other hand, is extremely grateful for anyone who helps them. These prisoners do not have the ability to reach the surface on their own, and neither would provide any real help in fighting alongside the player characters.

Experience Points: If PCs escort them to the surface, award them experience as for overcoming a CR 3 challenge.

Prison Cell D (EL 3)

This cell holds an ogre named Ugglam, whom the cultists plan to sacrifice, since he stubbornly refuses to serve them (originally they wanted him to work as a guard). If characters manage to talk to him (he speaks only Giant), he offers to help them fight the cult. He is lying, however (Bluff check –2). If his rescuers agree, he waits for an opportunity to flee, or—better yet—to attack



Enhance Mutation: Chaositech, page 68

FROM MY CAMPAIGN TO YOURS

In an ironic twist, the wizard Barbatos Kem lost the skull of chaos (as described in Area 49 of Pythoness House; see page 25) when he foolishly stepped onto the cursed dais of sacrifice. The fact that that skull was his most cherished possession says a lot about his character.



Surgeon in the Shadows, page 40

The halfling fighter Eliava was pulled off the street one night by cultists who hoped to use her as a sacrificial victim in an upcoming rite. They didn't need her for the ritual, however, and so she has remained imprisoned for more than three months, subject to the wicked cruelty of Lorelii.

The Brotherhood of Redemption offers bounties for creatures like Murlash; see Ptolus, page 107.

Nastrax means "dissolution" in Abyssal. This password is useful in Areas 20 and 23, as well as Area 1 of the secret chambers below the Temple of the Fifty-Three Gods of Chance (see Chapter 6).



them when they are weak and unsuspecting, take their valuables, and then flee.

Uggiam, Ogre: hp 30; see MM.

Prison Cell E

This cell is empty except for the corpse of a male Shoal elf, dead for over a week. Lorelii killed him "accidentally."

Prison Cell F

This cell holds a halfling fighter named Eliava Farstride. Eliava has been horribly mistreated here. She knows much of the temple's layout (no secret areas) and basic information about the cults (likely only what the PCs also know). She is extremely angry and, if the characters intend to fight against the cult further, she would like to join them. If they give her a weapon to use and perhaps some armor, she fights alongside them without even requesting a share of any treasure. However, any hesitation on the PCs' part to kill each and every creature in the temple associated with the cult earns them her disrespect and causes her to leave their company as soon as reasonably possible after they exit the temple.

Eliava did not used to be so bloodthirsty or hateful. She has very short brown hair, hazel eyes, and a number of scars from recent depredations. Yesterday, she heard a woman's voice telling Lorelii, "the word is 'Nastrax,'" but Eliava has no idea what that means. (It's the password to bypass a number of traps and alarms.)

Eliava Farstride

Female halfling (Neutral)

Fighters

CR 5

Init +2

Speed 20 feet

HD 5d10+10 **hp** 43 (currently 4)

AC 13, touch 12, flat-footed 11

BAB/Grapple +5/+3

Attack/Full Attack +8

melee (1d2+2, unarmed attack)

Fort +7, **Ref** +4, **Will** +5

Str 15, **Dex** 14, **Con** 15, **Int** 12,

Wis 12, **Cha** 10

Languages: Common, Elvish,

Halfling.

Crucial Skills: Climb +7, Hide +6, Intimidate +1, Jump +4, Listen +5, Move Silently +4.

Other Skills: Handle Animal +2, Ride +8.

Crucial Feats: Blind-Fight, Point Blank Shot, Power Attack.

Other Feats: Iron Will, Weapon Focus (small longbow).

Possessions None.

Prison Cell G

This cell is empty.

Prison Cell H (EL 5)

This cell holds Murlash, a troll. Murlash is a cultist who served a Brother of Venom elf priest named Aestran Neversoul, now dead. Aestran was the first of the Brothers of Venom to start attacking Ebon Hand cultists in their struggle for power, and he died because of it. Murlash went on a rampage afterward, but was subdued and brought here only a few days ago. The cultists hope that, once he calms down, Murlash can still work for them.

Murlash—never the brightest candle in the chandelier—is highly suggestive at the moment. He will "imprint" his loyalties upon whoever lets him out of this cell. However, he is still an evil, hungry troll and acts as such without constant reminders from his new leader not to. If attacked, he fights to defend himself and then attempts to flee the temple.

Murlash, Troll: hp 61; see MM.

20. Tentacle Trap (EL 7)

This chamber south of the excavated open room (Area 5) appears empty except for some strange dark violet stains on the floor and walls. These are the remnants of magical tentacles that appear and attack, oozing up out of the floor, whenever someone enters this chamber without giving the proper verbal passkey ("Nastrax"). The tentacle trap resets after twenty-four hours.

Tentacle Trap: CR 7; magic device; proximity trigger (alarm); automatic reset; spell effect (ever black tentacles, 7th-level wizard, 1d4+7 tentacles, attack +7 melee [1d6+4, tentacle]); multiple targets (up to six tentacles per target in each of two adjacent five-foot squares); Search DC 29; Disable Device DC 29.

21. The Medusa in the Iron Mask (EL 8)

At the top of an open staircase in Area 20 lies a curtained-off chamber. This room has a large round bed in the center, suspended from the ceiling by four iron chains. A stepladder beneath it gives access. The room's other furnishings include a pair of padded chairs, a long table (much of which is covered in folded clothing of silk and lace), a wardrobe with more clothing inside, an armor stand, and a tall, lidded wicker basket containing fruit. A small musical jewelry box worth 200 gp rests upon the table as well; it contains 900 gp worth of jewelry.

The Medusa: This room's occupant, Herriakadal, is a medusa who wears ornate plate armor. She also dons a custom-made helmet that looks like a hinged iron mask, so she can show her face, or not, as she desires. The helmet also has openings for her snake-hair. She has no desire to take sides in the recent feud between the various cults. She serves the Tolling Bell cult, or—more accurately—simply chaos in general.

Herriakadal

Female medusa (Chaotic Evil)

Medium monstrous humanoid

Fighter CR 8**Init** +8 **Speed** 20 feet**HD** 6d8+24 + 1d10+4 **hp** 60**AC** 23, touch 11, flat-footed 22**BAB/Grapple** +7/+10**Attack** +12 melee (1d6+3, short sword) or +11 melee (1d4+3 plus poison, snakes) or +11 ranged touch (1d6 nonlethal + nausea for 1d6+1 rounds; Fortitude save, DC 13, negates latter, emitter)**Full Attack** +12/+7 melee (1d6+3, short sword) and +7 melee (1d4+3 plus poison, snakes), or +11/+6 ranged touch (1d6 nonlethal + nausea for 1d6+1 rounds; Fortitude save, DC 13, negates latter)**SA** Petrifying gaze (Fortitude, DC 17, negates), poison (Fortitude, DC 17, negates, emitter)**SQ** Darkvision 60 feet**Fort** +8, **Ref** +9, **Will** +8**Str** 17, **Dex** 19, **Con** 18, **Int** 16, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 18**Crucial Skills:** Bluff +12, Jump +9, Move Silently +5, Spot +10.**Other Skills:** Diplomacy +14, Intimidate +16.**Crucial Feats:** Blind-Fight, Dodge.**Other Feats:** Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse.**Possessions:** +1 full plate armor, masterwork short sword, chaositech **noxious ray emitter**, *potion of greater magic fang* +1, 14 pp, 20 gp.

Tactics: Herriakadal is always spoiling for a fight and eager for action. Thus, she's unlikely to be found here in her chamber. If there's any chance that she is aware of intruders about, she will be patrolling the temple, looking for them. If she thinks she's about to enter a fight, she drinks her potion to give her a +1 bonus to attacks and damage with her snakes, then moves into combat. She carries a short sword, but prefers to use her chaositech emitter at range, coupled with her gaze attack.

Herriakadal can open or close her hinged mask as a move action. When closed, it blocks her gaze attack, allowing her to interact with the other temple inhabitants.

If significantly hurt, she may attempt to flee to the Kaleidoscope Temple (Area 23) to get healing from **Illadras**, who is her close friend.

Treasure: Besides the jewelry in the box (see above), Herriakadal keeps 950 gp in a secret cache under the table (Search, DC 22, to find) and a pair of large emeralds at the bottom of the fruit basket (Search, DC 25, worth 1,000 gp each). There is also a large tome of historical knowledge hidden in the bed (Search, DC 12) and a sketchy map of how to get from this chamber to the **Mrathrach Machine** (see Chapter 5). The machine is labeled "chaositech tower—Mrathrach."

22. Ancient Building (EL 7)

Another ancient building lies at the south end of a long tunnel from the excavated open room (Area 5). Located within a natural air pocket, this structure from the Buried City has not been altered or reinforced. Its door is its original stone door. Part of the building has collapsed, but much of it remains, rising up to the roof of the cavern. In fact, it once was a two-story structure and, although its second story has collapsed, the stairs leading up to it (now up into solid rock) still exist. Next to those steps is a staircase leading down—this is the accessway to the innermost sanctum of the Temple of Deep Chaos, as well as the path to the Mrathrach Machine (see next chapter).

The tunnel leading into the cavern surrounding the ancient building is newly built.

Dangers of the Ruin: Combat or similar activities inside this ancient building present their own dangers. The floor is covered in loose, uneven stones, requiring anyone who takes quick, strenuous action within this chamber (basically, anything other than standing still) to make a Balance check (DC 10) or fall down. This includes the rhodintor below, although it gets a +4 bonus (total bonus +6) due to its familiarity with the chamber. Further, if anyone casts a destructive area spell such as *fireball* or *lightning bolt* inside the building, the structure collapses. One can ascertain this fact with a Knowledge (architecture and engineering) or Craft (stonemasonry) check (DC 20).

Characters inside the ancient building when it collapses (including the rhodintor) take 8d6 points of damage, or half that amount if they make a Reflex save (DC 15). They are subsequently buried. Characters take 1d6 points of nonlethal damage per minute while buried. If such a character falls unconscious, he must attempt a Constitution check (DC 15). Should it fail, he takes 1d6 points of lethal damage each minute thereafter until freed or dead. For more on collapsed ceilings and being buried, see Chapter 3: Adventures in the DMG.

Guardian: A rhodintor dwelling in this ruin serves as its guardian. It technically takes no side in the feud between the Brothers of Venom and the Ebon Hand cultists. This rhodintor is a follower of the **path of Kravren**.

Rhodintor: hp 65; see *Ptolus*, page 628.

Tactics: With all of the recent in-fighting, the rhodintor watches through a crack in the building's eastern wall for intruders. Assume it has *heroism* already active (+2 bonus to attack rolls, saves, and checks). If it sees someone coming, it casts *bull's strength* (+2 bonus to attack and damage rolls), *shield* (+4 bonus to AC), and *displacement* (50 percent miss chance) on itself, in that order. Then it waits inside and attacks anyone who comes in.

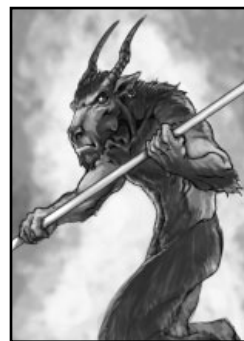
Herriakadal's Emitter

In addition to the emitter described in Chapter 30 of Ptolus, you can add another type into the adventure here.

Noxious Ray Emitter: *This ray deals 1d6 points of nonlethal damage. Targets that fail a Fortitude saving throw (DC 13) are nauseated for 1d6+1 rounds after being struck by the ray. Nauseated creatures cannot attack, cast spells, concentrate on spells, or do anything else requiring attention. The only action such a character can take is a single move action per turn, plus free actions (except for casting quickened spells). Price 5,000 gp.*

DM TIPS

DMs should make the weakness of this ancient structure very clear to the players through description as their characters enter and begin to explore Area 22.



Path of Kravren: Ptolus, page 628

Illadras, page 62

Mrathrach Machine, page 66

Illadras is second only to Wuntad in the cult's current (albeit ever-changing) hierarchy. Illadras commands the respect and fear of most other cultists here and elsewhere. Many of them are indebted to her for healing and other aid, which she gives freely, knowing that by doing so she implants herself in their minds as a vital leader whom they should help and obey.



Nonstandard Galchutt Domains

Some clerics who worship the Galchutt (or simply "chaos gods" by those who don't know their true nature) can focus their dreadful faith in a way that grants them access to domains other than the typical Chaos, Destruction, and Evil. To do so, they must use their atypical domains for destructive ends, such as Fire for burning foes, etc.



Illadras may have brought young Iltumar Shon to the Surgeon in the Shadows (see page 36).

23. Kaleidoscope Temple (EL 10)

This is a complex room, with traps and alarms that go off before the player characters arrive, a number of special effects that take place once they reach the temple itself, and a powerful foe with many options for them to fight inside. The DM should be prepared for all of these aspects of the encounter.

The Hallway and Doors

The hallway leading up to the temple from either direction has a magical *alarm* cast upon it. Anyone who does not say the password "Nastrax" sets off the alarm, which sounds only in the temple itself, warning anyone inside to prepare for trouble.

The two doors leading up to the temple from the southeast are iron (hardness 10, 60 hit points, break DC 28) and locked (DC 28 to open). They are also trapped; when someone so much as touches the inner door, the outer one slams shut and locks again (this is true even if the outer door's lock was picked or *knocked* open, but obviously not true if the door was broken down). Characters adjacent to the door when it starts to close can attempt a Strength check (DC 20) to keep it from shutting or a Reflex save (DC 20) to leap through the doorway before it closes. Then the area between the doors fills with greenish vapor.

Poison Gas Trap: CR 5; magic device; touch trigger; automatic reset; poison gas (Fortitude save, DC 16, 1d6 Strength/1d6 Strength); multiple targets (everyone in the hallway between the doors); Search DC 25; Disable Device DC 25.

The area beyond the doors also has an *alarm*, with the same password. It sounds in the temple, differently, so that those in the temple can tell how close intruders are.

The Temple Itself

This strange chamber appears to be a shaft made entirely of multifaceted crystal, about eighty feet across and twice that in height (the entrance is thirty feet from the ceiling, one hundred thirty feet from the bottom). The crystal glints and shimmers brilliantly, almost blindingly, with a multitude of colors. A rough stone "island" about forty feet across floats in the middle of the shaft. On this island rests the central altar, which is black and covered in jagged black spines and spikes of metal, except for a flat surface in the very middle.

Standing next to the altar is a woman—she appears to be naked and on fire, but not in pain or dying. Chains dangle from the sides of the island, and a few of them hold prisoners hanging from manacled hands. Hanging beneath the island, out of sight of characters standing in the entrance, is a massive, black iron bell.

The door to the southwest shown on the map is not at the level of the entrance, but at the bottom of the shaft, more than one hundred feet below.

Getting to the floating island is difficult. At the verbal command of anyone who touches the altar (a free action), the island floats to the chamber's entrance, which takes a full round. Similarly, it can be directed away from the entrance; it also can be commanded to float to the floor, but that trip takes 12 full rounds.

Characters without this option must get to the island some other way, if that is their goal. Aside from spells like *fly*, the best option may be a running long jump (DC 20).

Illadras

Illadras is a Tolling Bell priestess who reveres the Lords of Chaos with a fire aspect—she revels in fire's destructive power. She wears a **burning totality**, a skin-tight sheath that fits over her body and generates flames that do not harm her. She keeps her equipment in a **pouch graft** on her thigh.

Illadras

Female human (Chaotic Evil)

Cleric8 (chaos gods) CR 8

Init +5 **Speed** 30 feet

HD 8d8+16 **hp** 63

AC 13, touch 13, flat-footed 12

BAB/Grapple +6/+8

Attack/Full Attack +10 melee (2d6 fire, touch)

SA Rebuke undead 5/day, rebuke fire/turn water 6/day

SQ Fire resistance 20

Fort +8, **Ref** +3, **Will** +10

Str 15, **Dex** 12, **Con** 14, **Int** 13, **Wis** 19, **Cha** 16

Crucial Skills: Concentration +7, Listen +6, Spot +5, Tumble +4.

Other Skills: Diplomacy +4, Heal +11, Knowledge (religion) +8, Spellcraft +8.

Crucial Feats: Combat Casting, Combat Expertise.

Other Feats: Improved Initiative, Leadership.

Domains: Chaos, Fire.

Spells: 6/5+1/4+1/4+1/3+1; save DC 14 + spell level (caster level 8th, +8 melee touch, +7 ranged touch).

4th—*cure critical wounds* (2), *restoration*, *wall of fire*.*

3rd—*bestow curse*, *blindness/deafness*, *magic circle against law**, *magic vestment*, *summon monster III*.

2nd—*bear's endurance*, *cat's grace*, *hold person*, *owl's wisdom*, *shatter*.*

1st—*bane*, *burning hands**, *cure light wounds*, *divine favor*, *entropic shield*, *magic stone*.

0—*cure minor wounds*, *detect magic*, *mending*, *resistance*, *virtue* (2).

Possessions: Chaositech **burning totality flesh**, chaositech **pouch graft**, *potions of fly* and *blur* (in crystal flasks, each worth 20 gp), *wand of cure moderate wounds* (23 charges, made of iron), key to the doors into the temple.

* Indicates a domain spell.



Tactics: Assume that Illadras has *magic vestment* already in effect (+2 bonus to AC; it is figured into her stats already). If she has the time, she casts the following preparatory spells, in this order: *cat's grace* (+2 bonus to AC and Reflex saves), *owl's wisdom* (+2 bonus to spell save DCs and Will saves), *magic circle against law* (+2 bonus to AC and saves against lawful foes), *bear's endurance* (+16 hp and +2 bonus to Fortitude saves), and *shield of faith* (+3 bonus to AC for a total of Armor Class 16). She also will drink her potions.

In combat, she attempts to cast a *wall of fire* right on characters as they stand looking into the temple, and then flies (thanks to her potion) around to engage foes with *bestow curse* or spontaneous *inflict wounds* spells, adding +2d6 points of fire damage to the touch attacks (she sacrifices spells such as *restoration*, *entropic shield*, *magic stone*, and *bane*, if needed—her cure spells are the last ones she gives up).

Illadras is quick to use her healing spells upon herself or other wounded allies in the room, if any.

Temple Features

Below are descriptions of the Kaleidoscope Temple's notable features.

The Prisoners: Although four human victims hang from chains beneath the floating island, only three of them are still alive. These sacrifices are doomed to die a long, agonizing death (of thirst, most likely) as they hang there unless rescued. Those still alive are a woman and two men (commoners¹). Even if freed, these prisoners cannot reach the surface on their own, and none of them would provide any real help in fighting alongside the player characters.

Crystalline Walls: The Kaleidoscope Temple gains its name from its magical crystal walls.

These shimmer and glare with multicolored hues, generating their own inner light. They also have two magical effects.

1. Magical fire increases the shimmering of the walls dramatically. Nonchaotic creatures must make a Fortitude save (DC 15) to avoid being dazzled for one minute if someone casts a magical fire spell in here. Dazzled characters suffer a –1 penalty to attack rolls, Spot checks, and Search checks. Only one save per spell is needed, regardless of the spell's duration.
2. Spells striking the walls reflect back upon their casters. This is likely to come into play only in the case of area spells (unless some foolish PC attacks the walls with a spell). Any spell, such as a *lightning bolt* or a *fireball*, that touches the walls is immediately negated and the caster (and only the caster) is subject to its effect. Thus, the aforementioned *lightning bolt* or *fireball* harms the caster, although he still gets a saving throw as normal.

The Bell: The bell beneath the floating island begins to ring at the priestess' command (a free action) and rings every third round afterward. This represents the "tolling bell" that signals the end of all things. In this specific case, however, the sound merely signals bad news for nonchaotic characters. During the round in which it rings, all nonchaotic characters within hearing must attempt a Will save (DC 16). Those who fail suffer a –2 penalty to attacks, saves, and checks that round. This is both an enchantment and a fear effect. The tolling is deep and dreadful to hear. It seems to cause the walls to shimmer and ring as well.

Illadras' Grafts

Chaositech grafts require no special operation—like parasites, grafts naturally seek to adhere to a host. Usually, the portion of the graft intended to adhere to a creature is covered in thick, viscous mucus. (For more details, see *Chaositech*, Chapter 3.)

Standard grafts are chaos-shaped flesh items that exist outside a host but can be grafted onto her flesh. They stick to the host almost greedily. A graft causes no actual pain, but the host can feel it drawing sustenance from her. A Strength check (DC 20) is required to remove an attached graft, and doing so inflicts 1d6 points of damage to the host and the graft.

A pouch graft is basically a large, watertight belt pouch that clings to the host's flesh.

New flesh totalities are grafts that cover one's entire body. Like the host itself, new flesh grafts require nourishment, heal from damage, and are vulnerable to disease. The new flesh looks different from the host's native flesh; burning flesh, for instance, is coal black with glowing orange glints. A Strength check (DC 20) can remove an attached graft. Removing a totality inflicts 3d6 points of damage upon the host.

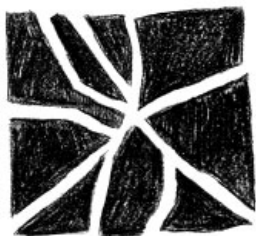
In the case of a burning totality, the new flesh on the host's entire body generates heat and fire, to which the flesh is immune. The host enjoys fire resistance 20. She can inflict 2d6 points of fire damage with a touch attack (requiring an attack action, not as a part of a full attack) or add 1d6 points of fire damage to any unarmed or natural attack. However, she can inflict no more than +1d6 points of fire damage per round—regardless of how many attacks she makes. The character cannot wear clothing or armor unless it is immune to fire.

The Cheilsecaro

This device at first looks like a five-inch ceramic hemisphere with a long iron bar extending out of the flat portion of the stone. The entire thing measures about three feet long. It gets its odd name from ancient Westron, where it means “heart’s breath.” Although it looks like a weapon, it is something a bit different—but it could be used as a weapon. The ceramic portion of the device contains the dying breath of Emperor Rudolf Von Tessel, who once held the title Main Purveyor of Law. Breaking the ceramic vessel releases the breath. All chaotic creatures within one hundred feet suffer 10d6 points of damage (no saving throw or spell resistance allowed). Further, all lawful creatures in that area gain a +2 morale bonus to saving throws and a +2 deflection bonus to Armor Class for 10 rounds.

This one-use artifact does not carry an aura of magic. It does, however, have an overwhelming aura of law, revealed if such is detected. The cultists here plan to destroy the artifact in a ritual soon (as Itumar Shan overheard in Kinion Luth’s lair; see page 41).

Obviously, this item is extremely valuable to characters fighting the chaos cult. It would be of particular use in the Final Ritual (Chapter 6), assuming the PCs can manage to wait that long to activate it.



Spiked Altar: As mentioned above, the altar governs the position of the floating island—either in the middle of the temple, next to the entrance, or at the floor of the temple. Further, the top of the altar can slide to one side (a Search check, DC 20, reveals this), revealing a hollow cavity within. An artifact called the *Cheilsecaro* lies within this cavity. Although the altar’s lid is not locked, a *glyph of warding* within the cavity (cast by Illadras) activates if anyone attempts to reach into it.

Glyph of Warding Trap: CR 4; spell; spell trigger; no reset; spell effect (*glyph of warding* [blast], 8th-level cleric, 4d8 acid, Reflex save, DC 17, half damage); multiple targets (all targets within 5 feet); Search DC 28; Disable Device DC 28.

Reinforcements

If the player characters allowed either Herriakadal (Area 21), Astared (Area 12), or other foes to escape from them alive, they are likely here, healed by Illadras and ready to aid her. Astared can fly, which makes him dangerous in this room; he might even attempt to grapple and then drop foes. Herriakadal is dangerous at range and would remain on the floating island. Their presence raises the room’s Encounter Level to 11 or even 12 (if both are present). This encounter likely would be too much for the PCs—DMs should try to make this fact obvious to players and give the party members the opportunity to flee.

Experience Points: If the characters escort the prisoners to the surface, award them experience as if they had overcome a CR 3 challenge.

24. Illadras’ Chambers

The chambers southwest of the Kaleidoscope Temple are for Illadras and the acolytes she is training. All are spartan, holding little more than a cot and a small chest for personal belongings and clothing. The central chamber has a round table with a stone top covered with an eight-pointed arrow chaos symbol and eight chairs around it. The bookcases lining the walls of this chamber are filled with books on religion and magic, although they are common titles and not terribly valuable.

The Acolytes: Illadras’ three acolytes, Fistrial, Theissa, and Normas, are here. They have no way to get up the walls of the Kaleidoscope Temple (Area 23) on their own, but if Illadras commands the island to lower, they will be ready to help fight in any way they can. They might attempt to fire their crossbows up at obvious foes, but frankly they aren’t very good with those weapons.

The PCs probably will encounter the acolytes after Illadras has met defeat. In this case, they surrender quickly, as they are demoralized (and trapped down here). If interrogated, they know the following information (and nothing else of value):

- The Tolling Bell cult is organizing the other, disparate chaos cults.
- So far, the main two other cults involved, the Brothers of Venom and the Ebon Hand, are not getting along.
- The leader of the Tolling Bell is Wuntad. He wants to bring about the Night of Dissolution, which will awaken the Lords of Chaos.
- Beyond this temple, down a long passage, is a huge chaostech device called the Mrathrach Machine, located beneath a high-class brothel called the White House. It absorbs some energies of randomness and chance in the city, but they don’t know what it uses them for. Wuntad is not there with the machine, but those who are there likely know where he is.

Acolytes (3)

Female humans (Chaotic Evil)

Cleric (chaos gods) CR 1

Init –1 **Speed** 20 feet

HD 1d8+5 **hp** 13

AC 14, touch 9, flat-footed 14

BAB/Grapple +0/+1

Attack/Full Attack +2 melee (1d8+3, heavy mace) or +0 ranged (1d10, heavy crossbow)

SA Rebuke undead 6/day

Fort +4, **Ref** –1, **Will** +7

Str 13, **Dex** 9, **Con** 15, **Int** 11, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 16

Crucial Skills: N/A

Other Skills: Diplomacy +7, Heal +7, Spellcraft +4.

Crucial Feats: N/A

Other Feats: Iron Will, Toughness.

Domains: Chaos, Fire.

Spells: 3/2+1; save DC 13 + spell level (caster level 1st, +1 melee touch, –1 ranged touch).
1st—*bless*, *burning hands**, *deathwatch*.

0—*cure minor wounds*, *detect poison*, *guidance*.

Possessions: Masterwork chainmail, masterwork heavy mace, masterwork heavy crossbow, bolts (10), broken square ring, 6 gp, 9 sp, 9 cp.

* Indicates a domain spell.

THE LONG PASSAGE

This passage at the south end of the Temple of Deep Chaos leads to another of the Tolling Bell cult’s secret projects: the Mrathrach Machine. It winds around, changing width, height, and construction style more than once. It even has an empty side chamber now and again, but it only goes one place. The whole length of the passage is well over a thousand feet. It is also the site of another battle between feuding cultists.

The Battle: Rhinnis, an Ebon Hand priest, battles a trio of Brothers of Venom here in the Long Passage. One of the brothers, a male human, already lies dead. Rhinnis is a minotaur and a close ally of Illadras. He has a black hand-print tattoo on his left shoulder.

Rhinnis

Male minotaur (Chaotic Evil)

Large monstrous humanoid

Cleric4 (chaos gods) **CR** 8**Init** +4 **Speed** 30 feet**HD** 6d8+18 + 4d8+12 **hp** 72 (currently 65)**AC** 20, touch 11, flat-footed 20**BAB/Grapple** +9/+20**Attack** +14 melee (2d6+14, morningstar) or +13 melee (1d8+13, gore) or +9 ranged (1d8+9, javelin)**Full Attack** +14/+9 melee (2d6+14, morningstar) and +8 melee (1d8+13, gore), or +9/+4 ranged (1d8+9, javelin)**Space/Reach** 10 feet/10 feet**SA** Powerful charge (4d6+10 damage), rebuke undead 5/day**SQ** Natural cunning, scent**Fort** +9, **Ref** +6, **Will** +13**Str** 28, **Dex** 11, **Con** 17, **Int** 8, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 14**Crucial Skills:** Concentration +4, Intimidate +5, Jump +9, Listen +10, Search +4, Spot +9.**Other Skills:** Heal +7.**Crucial Feats:** Quick Draw, Power Attack.**Other Feats:** Improved Initiative, Scribe Scroll.**Domains:** Chaos, Evil.**Spells:** 5/4+1/3+1; save DC 14 + spell level (caster level 4th, +17 melee touch, +9 ranged touch).2nd—*bull's strength* (cast), *hold person*, *shatter**; *sound burst*.1st—*detect law*, *divine favor* (cast), *protection from good**, *sanctuary*, *shield of faith* (cast).0—*assess creature*, *detect magic*, *mending*, *purify food and drink*, *virtue*.**Possessions:** +1 studded leather armor, +1 large morningstar, masterwork javelins (3), flask of elixir of hiding, scroll of cure serious wounds, scroll of cure moderate wounds, green spiral medallion, 5 gp, 16 sp, 18 cp.

* Indicates a domain spell.

Brothers of Venom (2)

Female humans (Chaotic Evil)

Fighter4 **CR** 4**Init** +3 **Speed** 20 feet**HD** 4d10+12 **hp** 44**AC** 20, touch 13, flat-footed 17**BAB/Grapple** +4/+7**Attack/Full Attack** +8 melee (1d8+4, longsword)**Fort** +7, **Ref** +4, **Will** +3**Str** 16, **Dex** 16, **Con** 16, **Int** 14, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 13**Crucial Skills:** Climb +6, Intimidate +6, Jump +4, Listen +3, Spot +3.**Other Skills:** Handle Animal +6, Ride +9, Swim -2.**Crucial Feats:** Blind-Fight, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Sunder, Power Attack.**Other Feats:** N/A**Possessions:** +1 scale mail armor, large steel shield, +1 longsword, three doses of Large monstrous scorpion venom (DC 18; 1d6 Strength/1d6 Strength), climber's kit, tinder-

twigs (3), broken square ring, coiled viper amulet, 6 gp, 7 sp, 11 cp.

Tactics: Rhinnis has already cast *shield of faith* (+2 bonus to AC), and *bull's strength* (+2 bonus to attack and damage). Each of these has three minutes of duration left and has been figured into his stats here. He also uses 4 points of Power Attack when fighting in melee, which is also already figured in—although he will change this if he finds himself missing a lot. Lastly, he has 3 rounds of *divine favor* left (+1 bonus to attack and damage), but since this duration is so short, this has *not* been figured into his stats.

The remaining fighters are unharmed but very likely to be slain by the minotaur priest if left to their own devices.

Smart player characters might allow these foes to finish their battle before intervening. If they do not, Rhinnis offers the PCs his healing scrolls if they will help him, and he is sincere in his offer. The fighters, on the other hand, just tell the newcomers, “The minotaur is lying. He’ll betray you. Help us kill this monster!” In other words, they attempt to play the “We’re all normal people and he’s a monster” card.

If the characters help Rhinnis, he gives them the scrolls after the fight is over and lets them go on their way, although he tells them, “If we meet again, it will be as enemies.” He then moves to his chamber in Area 16.

If the PCs wait until the fight ends, Rhinnis is the victor, but he’s down to 50 hp. The remainder of the fight takes 4 rounds, with one of the fighters dropping after 2 rounds.

Treasure: The fallen cultist has the following possessions: masterwork banded mail armor, masterwork dire flail, masterwork longbow, grey bag of tricks, +1 arrows (10), +1 flaming arrows (2), a *potion of gaseous form*, a healer’s kit, 129 gp, and 15 sp.

NEXT?

At this point, the player characters are likely to believe that the Mrathrach Machine described in the next chapter is the “big threat” that they have heard about. Let them. The Long Passage will take them there, terminating at the door on the top level of the shaft the machine is in (see page 70).

The PCs also might decide to go back up to the city for a time. This is another opportunity to drop hints about the upcoming barbarian incursion (see “Rumors of War,” page 42) and a general feeling in the city that something big is going to happen—and not necessarily something good. Tales of mysterious disappearances and kidnappings continue to be topics of conversation and speculation.

DM TIPS

If the player characters watch the battle between Rhinnis and the fighters, the DM should make it obvious that the minotaur is dishing out an incredible amount of damage; against foes without a very high Armor Class, he’s likely to inflict 40 or 50 points of damage in a round. This serves as a clue that PCs who are unready to take him on—and thus unlikely ready to proceed to the next chapter—should retreat or perhaps use tactics other than melee combat.

Assess creature: Ptolus, page 639



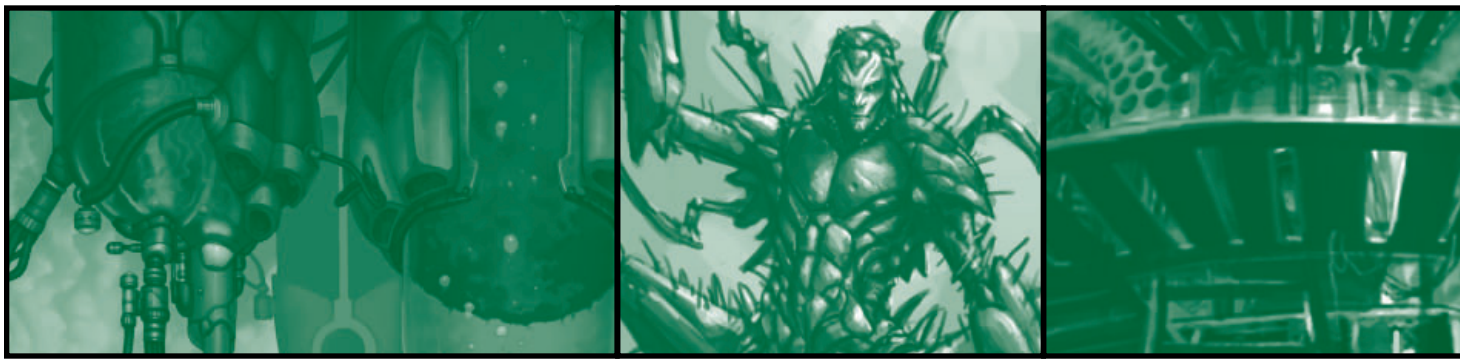
Remember that there are many adventures and locations in the Ptolus book that you can insert into the flow of this adventure, particularly in between chapters. Some examples include the Temple of the Ebon Hand cult (Chapter 17) and the typical ratman nest (Chapter 21).



Chapter 5:

THE MRATHRACH MACHINE

This chapter details an underground area connected to the Temple of Deep Chaos by the Long Passage. Player characters should find the entrance to this region as they explore the Temple of Deep Chaos in the previous chapter.



INFO CHECKS

A *Knowledge (local)* check (DC 18) reveals that Mrathrach is the name of a new gambling game in Ptolus, gaining in popularity of late. For more on the game, see Ptolus, page 356. A *Knowledge (history)* check (DC 25) provides details about Mrathrach the Vested of the Galchutt (see page 69). A *Knowledge (geography)* check (DC 13) reminds a character of a location called Mrathrach's Pit that lies in the Cold Desert to the south.

White House: Ptolus, page 334

Aggah-Shan: Ptolus, page 335

Venom-shaped thralls, page 94

Cock Pit: Ptolus, page 355

Barbarian invasion, page 42

Mrathrach, page 69

This chapter ties in directly with the description of the White House in Chapter 14:

Oldtown in the Ptolus book. Although the player characters might not encounter the crime lord lich Aggah-Shan as described there, DMs should be familiar with that section of the book and with Aggah-Shan. This character, it should be noted, is not technically a “chaos cultist.” However, the rhodintor are pleased to be working with him on his Mrathrach Machine project, and thus the cults have devoted themselves to helping him as well, mainly by providing some of their foremost chaositech experts and a number of venom-shaped thralls as manual labor.

It is natural that the PCs will believe that this machine is the cultists’ “big project” to bring about the Night of Dissolution when, in fact, the cults are only peripherally involved with it; Aggah-Shan is the one behind it. In a way, the machine is a red herring, although it’s certainly worth opposing. Further, at the bottom of the huge machine chamber, the characters will find information that can put them on the path to the actual project intended to bring about the Night of Dissolution. This discovery leads to the adventure’s final chapter and the ultimate confrontation with the most powerful chaos priest of them all. Putting an end to the Mrathrach Machine along

the way would be an additional victory for the forces of good and life.

The discovery of this chaositech machine would be much more meaningful to player characters who have been to the Cock Pit or other gambling establishments in the city that use the new game “Mrathrach.” It would be even more meaningful if they knew going in that all such establishments are owned by the independent crime lord Aggah-Shan.

Note that rumors and news of the impending barbarian invasion continue during the events of this chapter as described in the previous one.

THE MACHINE

At the Cock Pit—a South Market gambling hall that Aggah-Shan owns—a new game called Mrathrach is gaining popularity. Unknown to players of this new game, it is magical: Each time someone plays, it collects a bit of the randomness at the table and stores it as a chaotic aura. Aggah-Shan channels this stored chaos into a huge chaositech machine in his lair beneath the city. The lich’s rhodintor allies helped him complete the monstrous device, which he hopes to use soon to resurrect a late Vested of the Galchutt named Mrathrach. The machine, which resembles a big metal tower, is designed to control this

powerful creature just enough for Aggah-Shan to unleash him upon his enemies: the government, the Shuul, and the Balacazars.

This colossal chaositech device stands two hundred fifty feet high within a shaft three hundred feet tall. Roughly cylindrical, the machine measures about fifty feet in diameter, while the shaft is one hundred feet in diameter. Iron scaffolding has been built in the space between the edges of the machine and the sides of the chamber. The scaffolding has ten levels, spaced about every twenty feet along the device's height. These walkways allow workers and technicians access to the machine.

The levels are joined to each other by two ladders near the sides of the chamber. Each level of scaffolding is made up of a pair of ringlike platforms: one right up against the machine, and one that circles the chamber's interior. Each of these walkways measures about five feet wide, leaving a fifteen-foot gap between the two rings that is bridged by additional five-foot-wide catwalks.

Passages on certain levels lead out of the cylinder and into cavernous areas that serve as storage, residences, and workshops, as follows:

- On the third level from the top, one such hall leads out of the cylinder and into a set of caves called the **mutated thrall level**.
- Five levels from the top, a similar passage leads to a series of rooms called the **storage level**.
- Seven levels from the top, a passage connects to the **chaositechnician level**.
- The **bottom level** of the cylinder includes a wide corridor that leads to a series of rooms and, eventually, to Aggah-Shan's lair beneath the White House.

These levels are described in detail below.

The Mrathrach Machine has all kinds of moving parts. Much of it rotates, in fact, with different segments moving at different speeds in different directions. This makes the walkway nearest the machine on each level a dangerous place to be, as strange arms, mysterious antennae, and spinning machine parts could knock one off.

The machine chamber is stiflingly hot. The machine vents copious amounts of steam into the room, often in scalding gouts around the scaffolding, which makes the platforms even more inhospitable than they already are.

Even though Aggah-Shan's machine has been in operation for many months, the process of collecting and channeling the chaos from the Mrathrach game is a slow one, and he is still many months away from resurrecting and controlling Mrathrach the Vested.

The machine has already produced some effects, however. Characters who travel to the lowest portion of its interior encounter undead spirits, newly come into the world via the machine's power. This great chaositech device is literally tearing a hole in

the veil between life and death. Its long-term use could prove even more catastrophic than simply unleashing one of the ancient Vested. It could seriously damage reality.

NAVIGATING ON THE SCAFFOLDING

Getting up and down from one level to the next on the scaffolding is not difficult using the ladders. Of course, characters can attempt to climb up or down the iron pole supports almost anywhere in the scaffolding (Climb check, DC 15).

The Outer Ring

Walking along the outer ring of each level is not difficult, either. Its five-foot width should allow plenty of room for most characters. Even a Large creature can move along the walkway at half speed. However, the scaffolding shakes and shudders almost continually due to the spinning and vibrating machine. Fighting on such a narrow, unstable platform requires a Balance check any time a character suffers damage (DC 5 + damage sustained). Failure means that the character is knocked off, although a successful Reflex save (DC 20) means the character grabs onto the side of the walkway or one of the iron supports and catches himself. Creatures with four or more legs get a +10 bonus to the Balance checks, and characters with *spider climb* or a similar effect gain a +5 bonus. Of course, careful characters can take precautions like tying themselves to the scaffolding with rope or using magic to *fly*, *levitate*, or fall safely. Obviously, bull rush attacks can prove deadly in this environment.

Damaged NPCs need to make the same Balance checks as PCs. **Venom-shaped thralls**, however, gain a +15 bonus to their checks due to their multilegged nature and *spider climb* ability.

The Inner Ring

Getting around on the inner ring of each level is far trickier. Moving parts extend five or even ten feet out from the machine, even as the whole thing rotates, with various portions spinning in different directions at different speeds. For each round spent on this inner ring, a character must make a Reflex save (DC 15). Failure means the character has been struck by a moving part or has had to move so far to avoid being struck that he falls off. Falling characters can make a Reflex save (DC 20) to catch themselves as mentioned above. Remember too that characters on the inner ring who suffer damage must make Balance checks as described above.

The NPCs in this area understand the workings of the machine well enough that they never have to attempt saves to avoid the moving and spinning parts—after months of constant exposure to them, they know how to avoid them with well-practiced ease.

DM TIPS

Adjacent characters can attempt Reflex saves (DC 20) to catch a falling friend as a standard action. Kind DMs allow such actions even out of turn; in such cases a PC sacrifices the standard actions she would have taken on her next turn.

Caldor the machine mage (page 72) is eager to fight intruders on the scaffolding, and he comes running if he hears them.

DM TIPS

DMs may wish to allow characters who fall more than fifty feet through this chamber to make a second Reflex save (DC 20) to catch themselves on a platform at least fifty feet below the point from which they fell. Such characters still suffer 3d6 points of damage from the fall.

Mutated thrall level, page 70
Storage level, page 70
Chaositechnician level, page 71
Bottom level, page 73



Venom-shaped thralls, page 94



Steam Venting

One further danger exists for characters on the scaffolding. There is a one-in-six chance each round that the machine vents steam on a level where the player characters are (roll for each level where PCs stand each round). Choose one PC on that level randomly and ask him to make a Reflex saving throw (DC 18). The five-foot-wide gout of steam inflicts 4d6 points of fire damage to a character on the inner ring and 2d6 points of fire damage to one on the outer ring; a successful save reduces this damage by half. The only way this event can affect more than one character in a single round is if someone else is in the direct line of effect from the machine to the random character, or past that character to the wall.

All of the NPCs understand the complex working of the machine well enough that they are never where the steam vents when a venting occurs. To them, the seemingly random nature of steam venting isn't random at all. The exceptions to this rule are NPCs who are rendered unable to move (held, disabled, etc.) or who are within the direct line of effect of a randomly chosen player character as described in the previous paragraph.

ENTERING THE MACHINE

Every level of scaffolding, other than the bottom one, has a round hatch three feet in diameter that provides access into the machine. Each hatch is secured with a combination lock (DC 30 to open with a lockpick). The cultists and the thralls here know the combinations.

Each of the ten levels within the machine has a small interior area. Most of these are relatively empty except for working mechanisms: a complex tangle of water- and steam-pipes and buzzing devices pulsing with energy. Interior shafts connect these areas with each other via ladders. Large or smaller creatures can use the five-foot-diameter shafts to move from level to level inside the machine. For the most part, this is actually a much safer way for intruders to move up and down the chamber than on the scaffolding outside.

The ceilings in these interior chambers are very low (about six feet) and the floors are uneven, as they are made of pipes and panels rather than stable flooring. Although the inside is warm and humid, there are no steam ventings or dangerously-spinning machine parts here (any moving machine parts pose no threat to characters).

If the **venom-shaped thralls** or any other NPCs see intruders entering the machine, they get extremely worried and move to intercept them. All the cultists and their servants know that the machine is most vulnerable inside. Using multiple entrances, they can attempt to outflank intruders inside the machine and surround them.

Interior areas within the machine are more cramped than the map on page 71 might suggest, due to pipes and mechanisms extending out from the walls, up from the floor, or down from the ceiling. Coupled with the low ceilings and uneven floors, this condition hampers combat within the machine—for both PCs and NPCs. All attacks suffer a –2 penalty, as do Reflex saving throws and checks involving physical actions (basically, ability or skill checks based on Strength or Dexterity). Attacks with melee weapons that are not light suffer an additional –2 penalty, for a total of –4.

Lastly, because the machine absorbs and stores chaos in the form of randomness, characters will notice that reality seems slightly skewed within the machine. Objects move of their own volition. Tindertwigs light on their own in a character's pack. A coin dropped on the floor lands on its edge. In other words, the improbable becomes far more probable here. This doesn't affect the game mechanics—it's entirely a descriptive element.

The Machine's Lower Levels (EL 5, 7, or 13)

Only the bottom three interior levels of the Mrathrach Machine are inhabited. Player characters who explore down this low note that, inexplicably, it grows colder as they descend. Characters here occasionally have flashes of mental visions involving a vast swamp, huge snakes, or other serpentine creatures (such as nagas). On the third and second levels from the bottom, characters encounter a wraith or two.

Unlike most wraiths, these are not automatically hostile. Instead, they seem uneasy and confused. The power of the machine has yanked them back into the land of the living against their will and without their understanding. They don't know where they are or why. Any hostile action on the characters' part, however, leads the undead to attack. A successful turn attempt sends them back to their proper afterlife (as does slaying them).

The bottom level harbors a **zaug**. This minor Galchutt never leaves, and its essence initially helped fuel the machine. If anything comes down to its level, it attacks ruthlessly, using its acidic spew over and over again. The spew does not harm the machine. The creature continually repeats the name "Mrathrach" during the attack.

The zaug may be too powerful for the PCs to take on directly; however, if they destroy the Mrathrach Machine, they also slay the zaug.

Wraiths (1–2 on each level): hp 32 each; see MM.

Zaug: hp 130; see *Ptolus*, page 633.

HARMING OR DESTROYING THE MACHINE

A Disable Device check (DC 28) made on any exterior level causes that level to stop rotating and spewing steam (making it safer to be out on the scaffolding). Alternatively, inflicting at least 100 points of damage to the machine's interior (hardness 10) accomplishes the same thing. Such attacks set the entire operation back 1d6 days as the **chaositechnicians** work to undo the damage.

Accomplishing this degree of damage on at least seven different levels creates a volatile situation. If none of the chaositechnicians, rhodintor, nor the **machine mage** (Caldor in Area 12) can get inside to spend at least 5 rounds working within 10 rounds of the last Disable Device check or last interior damage inflicted, the machine's energy builds up with no means of release, and the whole thing explodes. Anyone in the machine at that time suffers 20d6 points of damage.

Anyone in the shaft but outside the machine itself suffers 10d6 points. In both cases, a Reflex save (DC 25) reduces the damage by half. Also in both cases, characters who are not on the bottom level suffer falling damage as the entire scaffolding collapses (so no saving throws are allowed to catch oneself).

Experience Points: If the player characters actually destroy the machine, award them experience points as though they had overcome a CR 10 challenge, plus experience points for destroying the CR 13 zaug.

Chaositechnicians: Chaositech, page 78

Machine mage: Chaositech, page 81



Zaug: *Ptolus*, page 633

Venom-shaped thrall, page 94

MRATHRACH, VESTED OF THE GALCHUTT

Mrathrach was an incredibly powerful entity that lived more than ten thousand years ago. If the name sounds even vaguely familiar to the player characters, it is likely because of a location to the south called Mrathrach's Pit. (A Knowledge [local] check [DC 18] also reveals that it is the name of a new gambling game in Ptolus that is gaining in popularity.) Unknown to all except the most learned history scholars (Knowledge [history], DC 30), this location in the middle of the Cold Desert is where Mrathrach died. Such scholars also know a few details of his life, as follows.

Mrathrach was the first of the Vested of the Galchutt, mortals infused with power from the Lords of Chaos in order to wreak destruction. His contemporaries among the Vested included Vladaam, the ancient ancestor of House Vladaam, and Gorgoth-Lol, who went on to create the dark elves and become their goddess. Mrathrach used his invested power to create horrible serpentine creatures and master many inhabitants of the swamp in which he lived. The sacrifices he demanded in vast stepped-pyramid temples there granted him ever greater power.

Mrathrach's death was entirely unconventional and thus only a very special effort can bring him back. Although he died in a pitched battle with ancient heroes of legend, his demise came about as he was consumed by his own power. His death created a point of singularity that continues, to this day, to slowly draw matter into itself and consume it. This singularity point created the Cold Desert—in Mrathrach's day, the area was a vast swamp—as it slowly drew all moisture into itself. Further, Mrathrach died before the first rent in the veil between life and death occurred, making it nearly impossible to resurrect him by normal means.



Long Passage, page 64

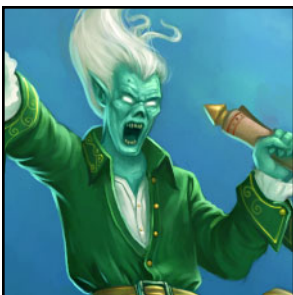
The mutated thralls (page 94) found either tending the machine or on their own level tend not to work very well together. Nor do they work well with others.

However, they have been conditioned to obey the commands of virtually anyone associated with the machine, including the chaositechnicians and the rhodintor.

Venom-shaped thralls, page 94

*Chaos storage cubes:
Ptolus, page 572*

*Chaositech siphon:
Ptolus, page 573*



TOP LEVEL (EL 4)

The **Long Passage** from the Temple of Deep Chaos (as described in the previous chapter) emerges at the entrance to the shaft holding the Mrathrach Machine. The door into this area is made of four-inch-thick iron (hardness 10, 120 hit points, break DC 30) and is locked (DC 30 to open). The door is covered with graven images of coiling serpents and plants found in a swamp.

A single venom-shaped thrall is found on the scaffolding of this level at any given time, watching both the entrance and machine for trouble. It lets loose with a keening wail if it spots intruders, alerting the thralls on the level below.

Venom-Shaped Thrall: hp 46; see appendix, page 94.

MUTATED THRALL LEVEL (THIRD FROM TOP)

When they are not working on or guarding the machine, the **venom-shaped thralls** dwell in a series of small caves off of the third level down.

They receive only the minimum amount of food and rest, and their “quarters” are little more than empty caves. The numbered areas below correspond to those shown on the map on the next page.

1. THRALL QUARTERS (EL 4 OR EL 0)

Each of these six caves is home to a venom-shaped thrall. The almost-empty chambers contain only vile stains, droppings, and bits of shed carapace. When the adventurers happen upon these areas, they will find two or three thralls on the scaffolding, performing maintenance work. The others will come out of these caves when the thrall at the top level warns of danger.

The Cults of Chaos granted the thralls here to Aggah-Shan because of his allegiance with the rhodintor, whom most cultists look upon with awe and respect. All the thralls are trained to shriek if they see intruders, even as they attack and fight to the death.

Venom-Shaped Thralls (3–4): hp 42 each, but never more than one per chamber; see appendix, page 94.

2. GATHERING HALL (EL 6)

This large central chamber has a wide wooden trough where the thralls are fed a horrible slop. Piles of excrement fill the edges of the room. The place reeks of spoiled food and an acrid odor that is difficult to place.

Two venom-shaped thralls are here at all times. They attack any intruders they see, but otherwise they do not leave.

Venom-Shaped Thralls (2): hp 40 and 52; see appendix, page 94.

3. EMPTY CAVES

Four caves on this level are filled with droppings and carapace scraps that indicate that they were used as thrall quarters in the recent past.

STORAGE LEVEL (FIFTH FROM TOP)

The caverns on this level five levels down are used for storage. There are no permanent residents on this level, and if the area is on alert (due to screaming thralls), no NPCs will be here. However, if the place is not on alert, two venom-shaped thralls are moving crates around in Area 6.

4. PARTS STORAGE

One northerly chamber is filled with stacked machine parts. Without any kind of special training, an observer would not recognize most of these parts as anything—just strange bits of oddly-shaped metal, many with wire, wood, and glass attachments. The value of these parts is 10,000 gp, but they are bulky and hard to move. And with their jagged edges and unwieldy shapes—not to mention the volatile liquids and energies within them—they are often dangerous to move as well. Thus the price is applicable only if the characters can find an interested buyer.

5. CHAOS STORAGE CUBES

The iron door (hardness 10, 60 hit points, break DC 25) into this square chamber near the center of this level is locked (DC 30 to open).

Six **chaos storage cubes** are kept here to provide additional power to the Mrathrach Machine and other devices when necessary.

Secret Compartment: Player characters searching this chamber (DC 24) can find a loose stone about two feet long and one foot high, concealing a small niche. Hidden within this niche is a **chaositech siphon**, which is used to draw energy out of the storage cubes.

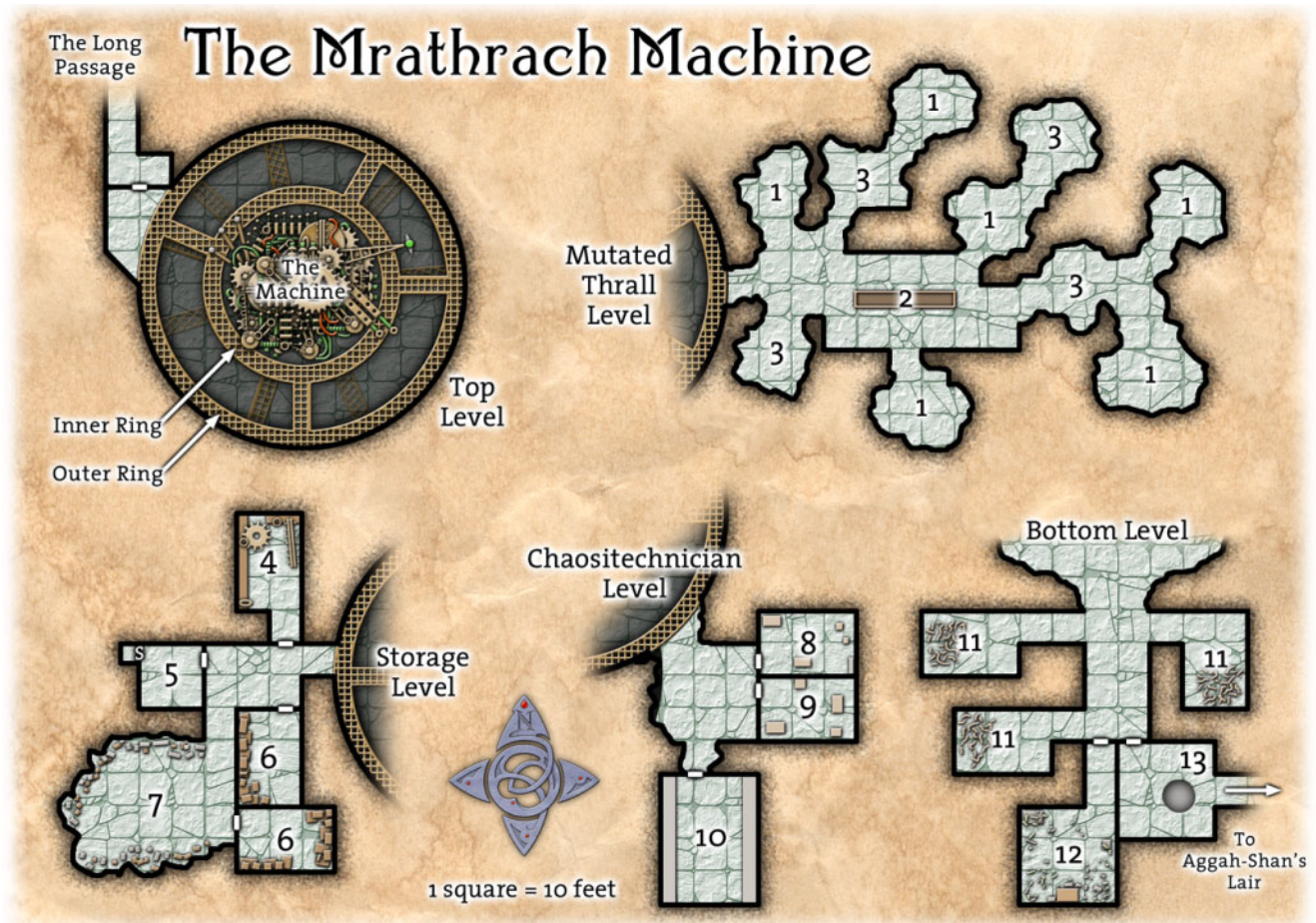
6. SUPPLIES STORAGE

Two caves on the south end of this level contain crates, sacks, and barrels holding mundane food, drinks, and dry goods of all kinds.

7. GUARD CAVE (EL 7)

A large cave on the southwest end of the level is filled with strange odds and ends and bric-a-brac, much of it entirely out of place here—old clocks, tiny statuettes, old jewelry, vases, stemware, dishes, bottles, musical instruments, and more. Much of it is slightly damaged, although it is all mostly intact. A few large rocks, set up like tables, help hold all the stuff.

Aggah-Shan made an alliance with a phasm to serve as a guard of his machine. In return for its service, he gives it a steady supply of miscellaneous



junk that it values. Since the coming of the thralls, however, the phasm has been needed less. Now it has been relegated to guarding these supplies and spare parts.

Phasm: hp 100; see MM.

Tactics: The phasm is likely to treat intruders in a straightforward manner: It turns into a fire giant and attacks. However, if they offer it some interesting inanimate object, it might let them past unscathed, as it is rather disgruntled with its lot these days. If lured out into the shaft, it turns into something that can fly quickly in confined areas (like a rast) or climb (like a Large monstrous spider).

Treasure: PCs who search amid the junk (DC 15) can find a crystal vase worth 120 gp, a pair of silver tongs worth 45 gp, a gold amulet on a chain worth 90 gp, and an ivory idol of an octopus worth 75 gp.

CHAOSITECHNICIAN LEVEL (SEVENTH FROM TOP)

In the caverns on this level seven levels down dwell the human cultists who control the venom-shaped thralls and work tirelessly on the machine.

8. LEGIRE'S CHAMBER (EL 5)

The iron door (hardness 10, 60 hit points, break DC 25) into the northernmost chamber on this level is locked (DC 30 to open). It is also rigged with a chaositech trap that triggers when someone tries to open the door.

Chaositech Lightning Shackle Trap: CR 5; chaositech; touch trigger; manual reset; lock bypass (Open Lock, DC 30); Lightning shackles (Reflex save, DC 15, negates, lightning shackles grab victim and hold like iron manacles, inflicting 1d6 points of electricity damage each round as well—shackles must be broken to escape); Search DC 23; Disable Device DC 30.

The room is a disheveled mess of notebooks filled with what seem to be indecipherable notes, formulae, diagrams, and rantings. There is also a bed, a chest, a wardrobe, a desk and two chairs. The chest and wardrobe contain only mundane items. The desk has a locked drawer (DC 25 to open) with a false back (Search, DC 25, to find) containing a bag with 155 pp and a jeweled amulet of a tiger worth 1,200 gp.

This chamber is home to a human male named Legire Endaw, who usually can be found in the Workshop on this level (Area 10).

There are ten levels surrounding the machine. Only those levels with side passages are shown on the map above. Although every level has an inner ring and an outer ring, each level has a slightly different bridge configuration.

Chaositechnicians are people who have become adept at working with chaositech. Many of them go mad attempting to master the science of chaos, but those who manage to hang onto their sanity can excel at the craft. For a full description of the class, see Chaositech, page 78.

Hao is short and dark skinned, with dark hair. All of his fingers have crudely been turned into claws, except one that is a precision chaositech tool.

Hao's Implants

For more details on these items, see *Chaositech*, Chapter 3.

Claws: Implanted within a clawless creature's fingers, paws, tentacles, or other extending limbs, these deadly sharp claws usually measure about four inches long for a Medium creature. Made of both organic materials and steel, they can be retracted or extended as a free action. The host is still limited in the number of attacks he can make in a round, although he can use the claws on his off hand to make an off-hand attack.

Tool Finger: A Chaos Surgery procedure replaces one of the host's fingers with either a single light tool or with a lockpick.

Ebon Hand cult: Ptolus, page 72

Chaos Surgery: Ptolus, page 569
Craft (chaositech): Ptolus, page 568

Legire stands well over six feet tall, with broad shoulders and long, nimble fingers. He has shaved a stripe through his brown hair, right down the middle of his scalp.

9. HAO'S CHAMBER (EL 8)

The iron door (hardness 10, 60 hit points, break DC 25) into the chamber near the center of this level is locked (DC 30 to open). This room is rather bare: A wooden bed, a table with some dishes and food, a chair, and a locked chest (DC 30 to open) comprise the entire furnishings.

The chamber's resident, Hao Adus, is a chaositechnician responsible for helping to create and maintain the Mrathrach Machine. Aggah-Shan hired him; he is not technically a chaos cultist. He is almost certainly found here—sleeping if not alerted, and hiding if alerted. He does not like combat or danger, but will fight with his claws if cornered.

Hao Adus

Male human (Chaotic Evil)
Expert8/chaositechnician CR 8
Init +6 **Speed** 30 feet
HD 8d6 + 1d8 **hp** 34
AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 13
BAB/Grapple +4/+6
Attack +8 melee (1d6+2, claw)
Full Attack +6 melee (1d6+2, claw) and +6 melee (1d6+1, claw)
SA +1 attack with chaositech weapons
Fort +4, **Ref** +4, **Will** +7
Str 14, **Dex** 14, **Con** 10, **Int** 16, **Wis** 17, **Cha** 17
Crucial Skills: Climb +4, Disable Device +6, Move Silently +4, Open Lock +3, Search +5, Spot +4.
Other Skills: Appraise +6, **Chaos Surgery** +8, **Craft (chaositech)** +17.
Crucial Feats Combat Expertise.
Other Feats: Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Craft [chaositech]), Two-Weapon Fighting.

Possessions: Masterwork studded leather armor, chaositech **claw implants**, chaositech **tool finger** implant, *potion of bull's strength*, key to Area 9, 16 gp.

Treasure: In addition to clothing and personal items, Hao's chest contains a box with three doses of **nutrient solution** and two glass jars filled with a nutrient solution mixture that has strange creatures floating within them. One contains an **adhesion rope** and the other a **chaositech detector**.

10. WORKSHOP (EL 7)

Two long workbenches line the side walls of the large, rectangular chamber at the south end of this level. Stools are pushed beneath them. The room is filled with tools, some on the benches and others hanging from the walls. Half-made machines and strange devices lie on the benches and on the floor. None of them do anything—yet.

Legire Endaw is an **Ebon Hand** cultist brought here because of his knowledge. He was crucial in the completion of the machine. Legire is a natural warrior, but his passions lie with chaositech. He spends almost all of his time here, tinkering with new creations.

Legire Endaw

Male human (Chaotic Evil)
Fighters5/chaositechnician2 CR 7
Init +2 **Speed** 20 feet
HD 5d10+10 + 2d8+4 **hp** 54
AC 21, touch 12, flat-footed 19
BAB/Grapple +6/+10
Attack +12 melee (3d6+6+pincer action, shearing blade)
Full Attack +12/+7 melee (3d6+6+pincer action, shearing blade)

HAO'S TREASURE

For more details on these items, see *Chaositech*, Chapter 3.

Nutrient Solution: This thick liquid feeds intrinsic chaositech items, so they do not feed off their host or so they can survive without a host. (See the "Host and Symbiote" section in *Chaositech*, Chapter 3). To feed an implant or other internal item, the host must drink the solution. Once the chaositech device is sated, a Medium creature can down another dose of this solution as a (distasteful) replacement for his own week's worth of food and water. Living chaositech items, like those described below, must receive a dose of nutrient solution once per week or they die, becoming useless.

Craft DC 40; Price 50 gp.

Adhesion Rope: This thick line looks like a normal fifty-foot hemp rope. However, as soon as someone touches it, it becomes clear that it's something strange. The rope feels sticky, almost gummy, but strong. It has 20 hit points and sticks to a surface with Strength 16—it's almost as good as a grappling hook.

Craft DC 24; Price 450 gp; Weight 3 lbs.

Chaositech Detector: This device comprises a dark-colored fleshy sphere three inches in diameter atop a metal base. The detector shrieks when it comes within ten feet of any type of chaositech, other than itself. This particular specimen is in hibernation in its jar and will "awaken" when removed from the solution.

Craft DC 35; Price 1,200 gp; Weight 2 lbs.

LEGIRES EQUIPMENT

For more details on these items, see *Chaositech*, Chapter 2.

Animated Armor: Animated armor resembles plate armor, but it is covered in moving iron bars, some gearlike apparatuses, and even tough, resilient tubing. All the plates and pieces of the armor share sturdy joints and connections so that, once the wearer has donned the suit, it is more like an outer shell than armor. The wearer must attach his headclamp inside the helmet of the animated armor. Without a headclamp, this armor functions as normal plate armor, except that it weighs more. The devices attached to the armor allow it to move under its own power, as directed by the wearer. Thus, it adds its strength to the wearer's, granting a +4 enhancement bonus to his Strength score. Further, because the armor can walk and run for the wearer, he can move twice the distance he normally could travel before facing fatigue. It provides an armor bonus of +9, has a maximum Dexterity of +2, an armor check penalty of -2, and an arcane spell failure chance of 40 percent.

Headclamp activation; Craft DC 42; Price 20,000 gp; Weight 80 lbs.

Shearing Blade: This greatsword is shorter than most of its ilk. It resembles a sword with two side-by-side blades affixed to each other with a hinged mechanism. The weapon is used like a normal sword, but when the wielder scores a hit he can activate a switch as a free action that moves the shorter of the two blades. He can immediately make a pincerlike attack with it, using the original attack bonus +2. If the second attack succeeds, the sword inflicts an additional 2d6 points of damage (no bonus for Strength, magic, and so on). This is an exotic weapon.

Switch activation; Craft DC 24; Price 4,250 gp.



SA +1 attack with chaositech weapons

SQ Tinker

Fort +6, **Ref** +3, **Will** +5

Str 19, **Dex** 14, **Con** 14, **Int** 12, **Wis** 9, **Cha** 12

Crucial Skills: Disable Device +5, Intimidate +5, Jump +12, Listen +4, Search +4.

Other Skills: **Chaos Surgery** +10, **Craft (chaositech)** +17, **Knowledge (machines)** +3.

Crucial Feats: Dodge, Mobility, Power Attack.

Other Feats: Exotic Weapon Proficiency (shearing blade), Iron Will, Skill Focus (Craft [chaositech]), Weapon Focus (shearing blade).

Possessions: Chaositech **animated armor**, chaositech **shearing blade** (tinkered with to inflict an additional +1d6 points of damage), chaositech **headclamp implant**, masterwork tools, goggles, key to Area 8.

Tactics: If unaware of any kind of trouble, Legire *will not be wearing his armor*. This makes his AC 12, his Strength 15 (decreasing his melee attack by -2 and damage by -3), and his Jump check +14. If alerted, he will be in his armor waiting here for trouble or at Caldor's side (see Area 12). However, he does not like the idea of fighting on the scaffolding.

Legire surrenders if given the chance, rather than die. He will even betray his cult and Wuntad. He knows that Wuntad is preparing what he calls "the Final Ritual," which will bring about the Night of Dissolution. He also knows that some of the other Ebon Hand cultists kidnapped some children with **strange runes on their faces and hands** and took them somewhere in the Temple District.

BOTTOM LEVEL

Obviously, there are no walkways or scaffolding to fall from here—the ground is flat stone. The Mrathrach Machine is embedded deep into the rock for support. This level is where the

machine's rhodintor masterminds live. The mortal who works with them most often also lives here. Lastly, a passage in the level's southeastern corner gives access to Aggah-Shan's lair and the White House, far above.

11. RHODINTOR NESTS (EL 7)

Three rectangular rooms on this level each provide a lair for a rhodintor. The chambers are filled with strips of cloth, paper, leaves, fungus, and other materials woven together and covered in a hardened, glossy residue. Chaositech tools and parts can be found scattered about the nests, and the walls are covered in scrawled notes and equations indecipherable to anyone but the earth-bound demons, even if magic such as *comprehend languages* is used.

In one chamber, scrawled in Abyssal on the wall, is this phrase: "The Moon Shall Return. It Brings the Night."

Each of the rhodintor here is a **Sarycal follower**, and each possesses one of their trademark +1 *flaming staves*, which they use as two-handed weapons. This makes their attack +12 melee (1d6+5+1d6 fire) and their full attack +12/+7 melee (1d6+5+1d6 fire); since they have no shields, their Armor Class is only 21.

Rhodintor (3): hp 60 each, but never more than one per chamber; see *Ptolus*, page 628.

Tactics: These demons come running to sounds of trouble. However, they do not leave this level. They use *lightning bolts* and flame blasts (from their staves) against foes; in particular, they like to send *dispel magic* up into the shaft at characters using magic such as *fly* or *levitate* to move through it. The rhodintor gladly fight alongside Caldor in Area 12 but, as previously stated, they do not leave this level, and he does so eagerly.

Tinker: A chaositech technician can work 1d4+6 days to double a chaositech item's range, area, duration, or increase its damage or save DC. See *Chaositech*, page 80, for details.

Chaos Surgery and Craft (chaositech): Ptolus, pages 568–569
Knowledge (machines): Ptolus, page 565

Headclamp implant, page 41



Sarycal path: Ptolus, page 628

Strange runes on their faces and hands: See runebearers in Ptolus, page 60.

Machine mages attempt to use the forces of chaositech to enhance their magical talents and bolster their spells. Many of them use custom chaositech implants called spellcircuits. For a full description of the class, see Chaositech, page 81.

*Chaos Surgery: Ptolus, page 569
Craft (chaositech):
Ptolus, page 568*

*Detect chaositech:
Ptolus, page 641*

Chaositech emitter, see below.

*Jolt ray and spiderleg harness,
see below.*

*Caldor calls his chaosomaton
cat familiar "Sprocket."
Chaosomatons are devices
created from chaositech that
mimic living creatures; see
Chaositech, page 86*

12. THE MACHINE MAGE (EL 7)

This room has strange machine parts and tools scattered all over—on the floor, on the wooden-frame bed, on the dressing table, on the other large wooden table, and even on the two chairs. Only the desk in the back of the room is free of this clutter; it holds only three books and a few scattered papers and scrolls, as well as ink and some pens.

The mortal mastermind behind the Mrathrach Machine, and Aggah-Shan's trusted commander of this project, is a Grailwarden dwarf named Caldor Sharptongue. Caldor has devoted his life to chaositech and the fusion of magic and machines. He is driven and cruel, delighting in using his creations to show off his power and skill. He wears goggles on his head and a harness around his midsection from which sprout four articulated, segmented spider legs made of metal. He uses these ten-foot-long legs to "stand" (his real legs just dangle). In his hands he holds a chaositech emitter that connects to a wire plugged into his temple.

Caldor Sharptongue

Male Grailwarden dwarf (Chaotic Evil)

Wizard5/machine mage2 CR 7
Init +8 **Speed** 40 feet
HD 5d4+20 + 2d4+11 **hp** 51

AC 14, touch 14, flat-footed 10

BAB/Grapple +3/+3

Attack/Full Attack +7 ranged touch (3d6+shaken [Fortitude save, DC 15, negates shaken condition], jolt ray emitter)

SQ Darkvision 60 feet, red spellcircuit (stores charm person heightened to 4th level; can be cast with no verbal or somatic components), dwarven traits

Fort +5, **Ref** +5, **Will** +7

Str 11, **Dex** 18, **Con** 18, **Int** 18, **Wis** 9, **Cha** 8

Crucial Skills: Concentration +13, Move Silently +12.

Other Skills: **Chaos Surgery** +9, **Craft (chaositech)** +16, Craft (weaponsmithing) +7, Decipher Script +7, Knowledge (arcana) +14, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +6, Spellcraft +11.

Crucial Feats: N/A

Other Feats: Heighten Spell, Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Craft [chaositech]), Toughness.

Spells: 4/5/4/3/2; save DC 14 + spell level (caster level 7th, +3 melee touch, +7 ranged touch).

4th—*confusion, stoneskin.*

3rd—*dispel magic, lightning bolt, suggestion.*

2nd—*arcane lock, false life, see invisibility, spider climb.*

1st—*feather fall, jump, mage armor, magic missile, ray of enfeeblement.*

0—*acid splash, detect chaositech, mending, prestidigitation.*

Possessions: Chaositech jolt ray emitter (with headclamp attachment), chaositech spiderleg harness, chaositech tools, goggles, 14 pp, 11 gp.

Caldor's Chaosomaton Cat Familiar: hp 24 (treat as a normal cat with a +4 natural armor bonus to AC).

Tactics: If forewarned of trouble, Caldor casts *mage armor* (+4 bonus to AC for a total of Armor Class 18), *stoneskin* (DR 10/adamantine), *spider climb* (adding a +5 bonus to Balance checks on the scaffolding), *false life* (granting him 13 extra hit points for a total of 64), and *see invisibility*, in that order.

Once in a fight, he casts *confusion* and *lightning bolt*, then saves the rest of his spells as backup

CALDOR'S EQUIPMENT

For more details on these items, see *Chaositech*, Chapter 2.

Jolt Ray Emitter: This long, metallic two-handed weapon fires a ray of energy that deals 3d6 points of electricity damage. Targets that fail a Fortitude saving throw (DC 15) are shaken for 1 round after being struck by the ray. Shaken characters suffer a –2 penalty on attack rolls, saving throws, skill checks, and ability checks. The ray has a maximum range of two hundred feet, with a range increment of fifty feet. Emitters require only a ranged touch attack roll to strike a target. Some are fitted with bayonets.

Lever activation; Craft DC 40; Price 8,200 gp; Weight 5 lbs.

Spiderleg Harness: This harness fits around virtually any creature, size Small to Large. Attached to the harness are four multiple-jointed metal legs, each about ten feet long, but the multiple joints can make them seem much shorter. Once the harness is secured around the wearer's torso, he attaches a cable that runs from the harness to his jaw. The wearer controls the articulated legs with subtle jaw movements, allowing him to walk with the spiderlegs rather than his own. This device's potential benefits include the following:

- The wearer can walk across or wade through hazardous substances.
- The wearer can extend the legs to attain a height increase of ten feet (minus the length of his own legs, since the harness legs are affixed to his waist).
- The wearer can climb over obstacles or low walls (those six feet tall and smaller) with ease and no reduction in speed.
- The legs are also quite fast, allowing the wearer to move at a speed of 40 regardless of size, although still modified by encumbrance. Each leg has an Armor Class of 19 (+9 armor), a hardness of 10, and 30 hit points.

Lever activation; Craft DC 35; Price 4,500 gp; Weight 10 lbs.





while he blasts foes with his emitter. If grappled, Caldor uses the *charm person* stored in his spellcircuit. Otherwise, he uses it in more casual situations to make someone just suddenly like him.

If at all possible, Caldor wants to meet foes on the scaffolding. As soon as he can after learning of intruders, he casts his spells and goes to meet them, climbing as fast as he can get up to them, using his spells and emitter to attack foes from below.

The Tools and Parts: If gathered together, the parts and tools in this room would be worth 1,500 gp. The pile weighs almost eight hundred pounds, however.

The Desk: The desk in Caldor's chamber holds three books. One is a rare manual on aelectricity worth 250 gp. The other two are his spellbooks:

Caldor's Spellbooks: The spellbooks contain these spells: 0—*acid splash, arcane mark, dancing lights, daze, detect chaosittech, detect magic, detect poison, disrupt undead, flare, ghost sound, light, mage hand, mending, message, open/close, prestidigitation, ray of frost, read magic, resistance, touch of fatigue*; 1st—*burning hands, charm person, comprehend languages, feather fall, grease, hold portal, identify device, jump, mage armor, magic missile, protection from good, ray of enfeeblement, shield, silent image, unseen servant*; 2nd—*arcane lock, command undead, false life, magic mouth, see invisibility, siphon, spider climb, touch of idiocy*; 3rd—*dispel magic, lightning bolt, major image, suggestion*; 4th—*confusion, contagion, locate creature, stonewalk*.

The desk also holds a small set of scribbled notes, one of which appears to have been written very recently. It says, in Common:

"The Final Ritual can now begin. Wuntad invested with Galchutt power after feeding on Galchutt flesh and bathing in Galchutt blood. Erepod knows the location. Find the demon Gisszagat. The return of the moon will herald the time."

The other notes are indecipherably complex notations about chaosittech machines and the integration of magic and technology.

13. EXIT (EL 7)

The iron door (hardness 10, 60 hit points, break DC 25) into the room in the southeastern corner of this level is locked (DC 30 to open). Only **Aggah-Shan** has the key. Beyond this chamber is a long winding set of stairs and passages that leads up to the secret door in a room of Aggah-Shan's secret lair. That room is guarded by ten wights and has a staircase leading up from it to the White House on the surface.

The room itself is empty except for a pool of murky, oily liquid where its pair of cloaker guardians recline when at rest.

These two cloakers—more monstrous allies of Aggah-Shan—do not leave this room, even if they hear sounds of trouble elsewhere. They fight to the death here.

Cloakers (2): hp 44 and 51; see MM.

Aggah-Shan (Ptolus, page 335) knows nothing of the coming Night of Dissolution or the Final Ritual.

Aelectricity: Ptolus, page 564

Aggah-Shan's secret lair: Ptolus, page 335

DM TIPS

DMs could have the player characters go up this staircase to confront Aggah-Shan directly, but he may very well be beyond their power level. Alternatively, he could be here, overseeing the operation of his machine. In any case, he would be quick to flee if endangered—even a project such as this is not enough for him to risk his existence.

Identify device: Ptolus, page 642
Siphon: Ptolus, page 644

For more on the secret entrance and the demon Gisszaggat mentioned in the note from Caldor's desk, see page 80.

INFO CHECKS

A Knowledge (arcana) check (DC 28) reveals that the name "Gisszaggat" means "random chance" in some ancient magical traditions. No information about that specific demon is available, however.

A Knowledge (arcana, religion, or history) check (DC 17) reminds a character that a person with a rune on his face or hand may be a runebearer.

Pythoness House, page 7
White House: Ptolus, page 334

Temple of the Fifty-Three Gods of Chance, page 80

Characters who learn of the disappearing runebearer children might suspect that Helmut Itlestein, High Priest of the Watcher of the Skies, is behind it, assuming they have played through the adventures in the Ptolus book (see Ptolus, page 389, for more on Helmut). This is an excellent red herring, but ultimately entirely untrue. However, if they confront him, they discover that he is preoccupied with some very strange sights in the sky. He believes that something is coming toward the world from far off, but he doesn't know what it is or why it approaches.

BACK IN THE CITY . . .

One way or another, the player characters hopefully have found some information regarding Wuntad and the Final Ritual. They may know about Erepodis from Caldor's notes, or they may only have heard about the kidnapped children taken to the Temple District (see page 73).

EREPODI

Erepodis worked at Pythoness House, but was one of the few who escaped the destruction of that brothel. She now works at the White House and has served as the primary go-between for the cults and Aggah-Shan throughout the Mrathrach Machine project. A Gather Information check (DC 25) on her name provides this information: "Erepodis is a well-known prostitute at the White House in Oldtown."

If the PCs go to the White House, it is not difficult to learn that Erepodis has gone to the Temple District. If the characters are diplomatic and nonthreatening, they even learn that she just left and are told roughly what she looks like.

Smart player characters will try to find her (Spot check, DC 16) and follow her. If they are discreet (Hide check opposed by her Spot check), they watch her go into the Temple of the Fifty-Three Gods of Chance. If they are very discreet (she gets a +2 bonus on her opposed Spot check) and follow her into the temple, they can watch as she goes to a secret door and disappears into it.

Erepodis

Female tiefling (Chaotic Evil)
Medium outsider (native)

Expert³/sorcerer²/rogue¹ CR 5

Init +3 Speed 30 feet

HD 3d6+6 + 2d4+4 + 1d6+2 hp 38

AC 13, touch 13, flat-footed 10

BAB/Grapple +2/+4

Attack/Full Attack +6 melee (1d4+4, dagger) or +7 ranged (1d4+4, dagger)

SA Sneak attack +1d6, spell-like abilities

SQ Darkvision 60 feet; resistance to cold 5, electricity 5, and fire 5; trapfinding

Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +7

Str 14, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 17, Wis 17, Cha 13

Crucial Skills: Escape Artist +12, Hide +14,

Jump +8, Listen +10, Move Silently +15,

Spot +8, Tumble +9.

Other Skills: Bluff +12, Diplomacy +12,

Intimidate +12, Knowledge (arcana) +10,

Spellcraft +7.

Crucial Feats: Combat Expertise, Combat

Reflexes, Dodge.

Other Feats: Weapon Focus (dagger).

Spell-Like Abilities: Caster level 6th; save DCs are Charisma based.

1/day—darkness.

Spells Known: 6/5; save DC 11 + spell level (caster level 2nd, +4 melee touch, +5 ranged touch).

1st—charm person, shocking grasp.

0—acid splash, detect magic, disrupt undead, message, prestidigitation.

Possessions: +1 dagger, wand of burning hands (8 charges), wand of charm person (10 charges), potion of eagle's splendor, scroll of false life, silver earrings worth 115 gp, 4 pp, 12 gp, 8 sp.

Erepodis is lascivious and darkly alluring. She has long dark hair, pale white skin, and dark eyes. Her feet are cloven hooves, but she does her best to hide that when possible. She doesn't try to fight (if she must, she uses Combat Expertise to add to her Armor Class) but attempts to flee if endangered. She's more than willing to cry for help on the city streets, pretending to be an innocent woman in distress, and then fleeing when someone intervenes to help her.

She resists attempts to intimidate her with a +4 bonus. If captured and successfully intimidated (or magically compelled), she can tell the player characters that Wuntad prepares the Final Ritual below the Temple of the Fifty-Three Gods of Chance, and that he intends on bringing about the Night of Dissolution, an event she also wants to see happen. She doesn't know anything else, other than the location of a secret door entrance into the chambers below the temple, which is guarded by a vulturelike demon named Gisszaggat.

THE TEMPLE DISTRICT

It's possible that all the player characters will have to go on is "the Temple District," either with the description of children with runes on their faces and hands, or with the description of Erepodis. But the characters still can use Gather Information to learn something important.

Asking around about Erepodis requires a Gather Information check (DC 23). If successful, someone saw her go into the Temple of Fifty-Three Gods of Chance.

Asking around about the runebearer children requires a Gather Information check (DC 26). If successful, someone saw a young boy with a rune on his face being led into the Temple of Fifty-Three Gods of Chance late at night very recently.

STILL MORE RUMORS

Gather Information checks might reveal other bits of information about events in the city relating to Wuntad's plans:

DC	Gather Information Result
22	A young girl named Tarthia Kor has disappeared from her home. She is a runebearer.
25	Two, or possibly three sorcerers have disappeared in the city recently (beyond those "liberated" from Mahdodh's Asylum; see page 41).

Of course, you can mix these in with other unrelated events (use the "Events in the City" sheet from the Ptolus envelope).



Chapter 6: THE FINAL RITUAL

In this chapter, the plans of Shigmaa Wuntad (who first appeared in Chapter 1), and thus the plans of the Galchutt themselves, come to fruition. Wuntad has become the first of the new Vested of the Galchutt by exposing himself to the flesh and blood of a dead Lord of Chaos.



Wuntad and his underlings plan to perform something called the Final Ritual, a rite so powerful it requires the participation of one of the **Vested of the Galchutt**. If successful, this ritual will bring about the Night of Dissolution, which means that the Galchutt themselves will stir in their strange lairs beneath the city, awaken, and attempt to escape.

What **Wuntad** doesn't realize in the fever of his faith in his dark masters is that, although the Final Ritual will awaken the Galchutt, they still won't have the power to escape the bonds of this world. This requires the severing of the **Seven Chains**. So while Wuntad believes his actions will result in his masters' ultimate victory and the end of the world, it will not. It will mean the end of Ptolus, however, for the city certainly cannot survive the presence of the Galchutt.

And to stop him, the player characters first must find him.

THE INVASION BEGINS

After the characters have dealt with the **Temple of Deep Chaos** and the **Mrathrach Machine**, they can return to the surface for some needed rest and recuperation. But it likely doesn't last long. Before (and/or perhaps while) the adventurers deal with Wuntad and the Final Ritual, the barbarians

arrive at the gates of the city; this event should occur two to three weeks after the PCs finish Chapter 2: Secret Meeting. They do not attack immediately, but instead begin creating a defensible encampment. They've been told their king is being held hostage within the city walls, but as they have received no official demands (or threats) from the Ptolus government, they plan to take further stock of the situation before attacking.

The barbarian horde is comprised of twelve thousand men and women, as well as dire wolves and dire lions. These folk are tall and broad shouldered with pale skin. They wear their hair long, and the men are covered with shaggy hair over their bodies (but particularly on their faces, as they wear wild, long beards). They supplement their leather and hide armor with animal and beast skins of all kinds. They adorn themselves with the bones and teeth of animals and foes they have slain. Some members of the horde ride wolves and lions, but the vast majority are on foot. They have no horses. They also have no siege engines, instead intending to simply break down the gates of the city and storm in if it proves necessary.

The **Commissar** has already positioned his battery of cannons along the southern wall. When

Although it's unlikely that the PCs have been to the Dark Reliquary yet, the site of the Final Ritual, as well as the location of the Temple of Deep Chaos (see Chapter 4), is revealed in a notebook in Area 33: Lilith's Secret Room, (see Ptolus, page 247).

*Vested of the Galchutt:
Ptolus, page 60*

*Wuntad, page 86
Seven Chains: Ptolus, page 62*

*Temple of Deep Chaos, page 42
Mrathrach Machine, page 66*

Commissar: Ptolus, page 149

DM TIPS

Despite the fact that they are “barbarians” and come from a distinctly nonurban culture, resist the temptation to portray these easterners as being savage and unsophisticated. Surprise your players who interact with the barbarians by showing them to be intelligent and reasonable. Only in battle are they wild and unfettered.

Inverted Pyramid:

Ptolus, page 115

House Khattru: Ptolus, page 92

Volunteers and other forces:

Ptolus, page 152



Vallis moon: Ptolus, page 40

Inverted Pyramid headquarters:

Ptolus, page 324

Heliophil: Ptolus, page 46

Soaring Idyll: Ptolus, page 300

Banewarrens: Ptolus, page 419

Jabel Shammar: Ptolus,

page 501

Nall: Ptolus, page 41



the barbarians advance to within range, he begins bombardment of their ranks without hesitation. Mages from the **Inverted Pyramid** gather on the wall, ready with battle magic, alongside clerics of Lothian. The Commissar’s Men, the City Watch, and the troops of **House Khattru** assemble, ready for battle, alongside conscripted mercenaries and **various volunteers and other forces**. All in all, the Commissar has mustered about thirty-four hundred troops, and he prepares to put the majority of them on the field. Even though the barbarians outnumber him four to one, he is confident, thanks to the cannons and the quality of his forces, coupled with the mages and powerful clerics on his side. They all seem prepared to move out to meet the barbarians on the field, rather than allow them to assail the city walls.

Meanwhile, the people of Ptolus, having never experienced a war, seem unsure of what to do. Many are terrified and hide in their homes. Others are fascinated and thrilled, gathering in high points around the city to see what they can of the horde and the eventual battle. Still others attempt to take advantage of the situation and commit crimes while most authorities are otherwise occupied.

Many people suddenly turn on anyone who looks like a barbarian—those wearing furs or hides or with shaggy beards, for example—thinking them enemies even if they come from elsewhere. It would be difficult to distinguish one of the light-skinned, wide-shouldered, hairy barbarians outside the city from a light-skinned, wide-shouldered, hairy individual from **Nall** or some other northeastern land, for instance.

The player characters may attempt to get involved at this point, but it might be best if they did not. It will distract them from the real root of the problem: the cultists. Perhaps the coming of the Vallis moon will cause them to change their minds and go after the chaos cultists once again.

RETURN OF THE VALLIS MOON

As prophesied, the **Vallis moon** returns. This event happens in the middle of the day, as the barbarians gather before the gates of the city. The world is suddenly bathed in a greenish glow and, visible to all, a green moon appears in the sky. No one knows what to make of it—the population at large, ignorant of ancient history and arcane lore, has never heard of Vallis and never knew that the world once had a third moon.

This extraordinary event changes the campaign world, even if only slightly. There are three ways to handle it:

1. **The moon disappears again immediately.** It was a strange celestial event that people will talk about for years to come all over the world, debating its cause and its meaning, but that is it. The event scares the barbarians, and causes them to halt their advance for one day while their soothsayers analyze the weird omen.

2. **The moon does not disappear immediately.** As the moon of magic, it has a profound effect on the way that magic works and, in fact, disrupts the flow of magic briefly. Magic items and spells are suppressed as if in an *antimagic field*. The **Inverted Pyramid headquarters** suddenly becomes visible above Oldtown (although it does not fall, as it is supported by natural **heliophil**). The **Soaring Idyll** apartment building in the Nobles’ Quarter falls, killing many dozens of people. Magical vaults are suddenly unprotected. The **Banewarrens** seals are gone. Even **Jabel Shammar** becomes accessible. Neither arcane nor divine spells work at all. This situation lasts for anywhere from an hour to a full day, depending on the DM. The **Inverted Pyramid** organization cannot aid in the defense of the city, and even when magic returns to normal, they refuse to come out of their headquarters or take any action until they know what is going on. The event scares the

barbarians, causing them to halt their advance for one day while their soothsayers analyze the strange omen.

3. **None of this ever happens.** Prophecies and rumors of an impending celestial event were false.

If either Option 1 or 2 is chosen, it will be clear to many, PCs and NPCs alike, that something big is afoot.

KNIGHTS OF THE PALE

Some of those alerted by these extraordinary events are the **Knights of the Pale**. While most other powerful forces for good are helping to defend the city, a few Knights of the Pale have learned some of the same information that the PCs have. They know that the chaos cults are up to something big, and that it is worth paying attention to them even as things escalate outside the city walls.

The encounters in this chapter are exceedingly challenging, particularly the finale, which has the possibility of having an Encounter Level of 15 if the PCs wind up fighting all the foes in the **Eschaton Sanctuary** at once. If these encounters appear to be too much for the group, the DM can use the Knights of the Pale as a resource for the party. Knowing the importance of the threat they face, the player characters might feel compelled to contact some outside source of assistance on their own; if they do not, they simply may encounter the knights on the trail of the cultists, looking for **Wuntad** as well.

Aid or reinforcements from the Knights of the Pale consists of either one or two knights, each accompanied by three to four men-at-arms.

Knight of the Pale

Male human (Lawful Good)

Paladin/Knight of the Pale CR 8

HD 7d10+21 + 1d10+3 **hp** 71

Init +1 **Speed** 20 feet

AC 20, touch 11, flat-footed 10

BAB/Grapple +8/+15

Attack +12 melee (2d6+5, 17–20/×2, greatsword)

Full Attack +12/+7 melee (2d6+5, 17–20/×2, greatsword)

SA Smite evil (+3 attack, +7 damage) 2/day, +1 bonus to attack outsiders, *bless weapon* 1/day

SQ Lay on hands (21 points), immune to fear, turn undead, *remove disease* 1/week

Fort +13, **Ref** +6, **Will** +10

Str 17, **Dex** 12, **Con** 17, **Int** 10, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 16

Crucial Skills: Listen +4, Spot +4.

Other Skills: Diplomacy +10, Heal +9, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +2, Knowledge (religion) +12.

Crucial Feats: **Devout Faith**, Power Attack.

Other Feats: Improved Critical (greatsword), Weapon Focus (greatsword).

Knight of the Pale Suite: Knight's stats assume that he uses the **Suite of St. Chausle** power.

Spells: 2; save DC 13 + spell level.

1st—*bless weapon*, *cure light wounds*.

Possessions: +1 full plate armor, +1 greatsword, potions of cure moderate wounds and eagle's splendor; healer's kit, 50 feet of rope, flasks of holy water (2), 80 gp.

Man-at-Arms

Male human (Lawful Good)

Warrior CR 2

Init +1 **Speed** 20 feet

HD 3d8+6 **hp** 24

AC 16, touch 10, flat-footed 16

BAB/Grapple +3/+5

Attack/Full Attack +7 melee (1d10+3/×3, halberd) or +6 melee (1d8+3, longsword) or +5 ranged (1d10+1, heavy crossbow)

Fort +7, **Ref** +2, **Will** +3

Str 15, **Dex** 13, **Con** 14, **Int** 12, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 8

Crucial Skills: Climb +2, Spot +1.

Other Skills: Handle Animal +4, Intimidate +3, Knowledge (local) +2, Ride +8.

Crucial Feats: N/A

Other Feats: Great Fortitude, Iron Will, Weapon Focus (halberd).

Possessions: Masterwork splint mail armor, masterwork halberd, masterwork longsword, masterwork heavy crossbow, +1 bolts (20), *potions of cure moderate wounds*, 1 gp, 9 sp, 13 cp.

FINDING WUNTAD

The PCs might already have made contact with the prostitute **Erepodi**, either following her or interrogating her after discovering the note about her in Area 12 of the Mrathrach Machine. They also could have followed up on the runebearer children who have disappeared to learn that one was seen being taken into the **Temple of the Fifty-Three Gods of Chance**.

If the characters did not find the note (see page 75), they may need help making the connection between vanishing runebearer children and Wuntad.

If they attempt to answer the question of Wuntad with divination magic, such as *divination* or *commune* spells, the results should lead them to follow up on the runebearers' disappearance.

Asking around about the runebearers specifically should lead them to the Temple of the Fifty-Three Gods of Chance. Otherwise, the DM could simply have the adventurers talk to NPCs who tell them about the runebearer disappearances and even provide a clue that part of Wuntad's Final Ritual involves runebearer children.

If all else fails, the DM can have the Knights of the Pale tell the player characters where Wuntad is. In this case, however, the knights will be asking the PCs to assist them and expect to have the leadership role.

Suite of St. Chausle: Ptolus, page 654

DM TIPS

If you choose Option 2 here, many people in the city will attempt to take advantage of the event. Wizards are assassinated, and wizards' towers are robbed. Well-protected vaults are plundered. Likewise, temples are attacked, and important people protected by magic (such as crime lord Menon Balacazar) are assailed.



Knights of the Pale

Organization: Ptolus, page 125

Prestige class: Ptolus, page 654

Eschaton Sanctuary, page 84

Wuntad, page 86

Erepodi, page 76

Temple of the Fifty-Three

Gods of Chance, page 80

DM TIPS

If the DM knows players who do not regularly participate in the campaign but would like to play for a short period, this would be a good time to invite them to join. They could play Knights of the Pale or other good-aligned characters interested in saving the city.

Devout Faith: Ptolus, page 655.



Fifty-Three Gods of Chance:
Ptolus, page 68

The Temple of the Fifty-Three Gods of Chance is located on the Street of a Million Gods in the Temple District (#150, H4, on the city map).

Ghul's Labyrinth:
Ptolus, page 416

Ercan Amblested has dark hair and dark eyes. He wears the multicolored robes of his order.

If Ercan attempts to use his scroll of sending, he must roll a 3 or higher on a d20 to succeed.

Nastrax means "dissolution" in Abyssal. The characters may have learned this password in the prison of the Temple of Deep Chaos; see page 60.

Wuntad, page 86
Lilith and Raguel:
Ptolus, page 111

DM TIPS

The PCs would do well to keep the demon from using the warning rods. A magical barrier of some kind might keep him from them just long enough; positioning a powerful guardian between the vrock and the rods would also be smart. The advantage the PCs have is that the vrock doesn't head for the rods right away—probably not until the second or third round.

TEMPLE OF THE FIFTY-THREE GODS OF CHANCE

Although one might naturally assume the worshippers of the **Fifty-Three Gods of Chance** are allied with cultists, this is not true for the most part. They are not interested in chaos and destruction, but rather in luck, chance, and randomness.

Jewel Nabbascor (female human cleric9) serves as the high priestess of the temple. She is a kindly and sincere woman in her early fifties with short, greying hair and grey eyes. She wears the multicolored robes common to her faith (there are, in fact, fifty-three colors in the robe). If the characters confront any of the seven priests in the temple, they direct the group to speak with Jewel. She tells the PCs sincerely that she knows nothing of "the Final Ritual," or even of the Galchutt. She is familiar with some of the city's chaos cults, and the idea that they serve some mysterious "lords of chaos," but she assures the characters that they have nothing to do with her, her religion, or her gods.

If the PCs visit the priests of the Fifty-Three Gods of Chance, the cult's one plant among them, a halfling named Ercan Amblested, uses his scroll of *sending* to contact Wuntad and warn him of their coming. He then attempts to tail the PCs invisibly (and with *nondetection* and *cat's grace* active) for as long as possible. If they approach the secret entrance described at right, he does anything he can to stop or even distract them—even if it means his certain doom.

Ercan Amblested

Male halfling (Chaotic Evil)
Cleric5 (chaos gods) CR 5
Init +3 **Speed** 15 feet
HD 5d8 **hp** 19
AC 20, touch 14, flat-footed 17
BAB/Grapple +3/−2
Attack/Full Attack +4 melee (1d6−1, mace) or +9 ranged (1d4, sling)
SA Rebuke undead 3/day
Fort +7, **Ref** +5, **Will** +7
Str 9, **Dex** 16, **Con** 10, **Int** 10, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 11
Crucial Skills: Climb −1, Hide +4, Jump +0, Listen +5, Move Silently +3.
Other Skills: Knowledge (local) +1.
Crucial Feats: Point Blank Shot.
Other Feats: Great Fortitude.
Domains: Chaos, Trickery.
Spells: 5/4+1/2+1/1+1; save DC 12 + spell level (caster level 5th, +2 melee touch, +6 ranged touch).
 3rd—*magic vestment*, *nondetection**.
 2nd—*cat's grace*, *invisibility**, *spiritual weapon*.
 1st—*detect good*, *disguise self**, *endure elements*, *entropic shield*, *magic stone*.
 ○—*cure minor wounds*, *inflict minor wounds*, *mending*, *purify food and drink*, *read magic*.
Possessions: +1 *breastplate*, masterwork mace, +1 *sling*, masterwork bullets (12), scroll of *sending*, 3 gp, 15 sp, 12 cp.
 * Indicates a domain spell.

THE CHAMBERS BELOW

The chambers beneath the Temple of the Fifty-Three Gods of Chance are unknown even to the clergy of the temple. Originally part of **Ghul's Labyrinth**, these areas were claimed, renovated, and sealed off by chaos cultists more than a decade ago. Until recently, the chambers have seen very little activity. The demon Gisszaggat watches over them continually.

The entrance to the secret chambers beneath the temple lies in a side room off the main entrance into the temple, behind a secret door.

As with the Temple of Deep Chaos in Chapter 4 and the area surrounding the Mrathrach Machine in Chapter 5, the actions and even positions of the inhabitants described here depend in large part on whether or not they know there is a threat. Here, this probably depends on the actions of the demon Gisszaggat, who guards the entrance and warns others of possible threats.

The areas described below correspond with those shown on the map on page 81. Unless otherwise noted, all chambers are fifteen feet high with masonry stone construction. Doors are made of sturdy wood and unlocked.

1. THE DEMON (EL 9)

The entrance is protected behind a secret door (DC 24 to find) made of stone six inches thick (hardness 8, 90 hit points, break DC 29). It is locked (DC 30 to open).

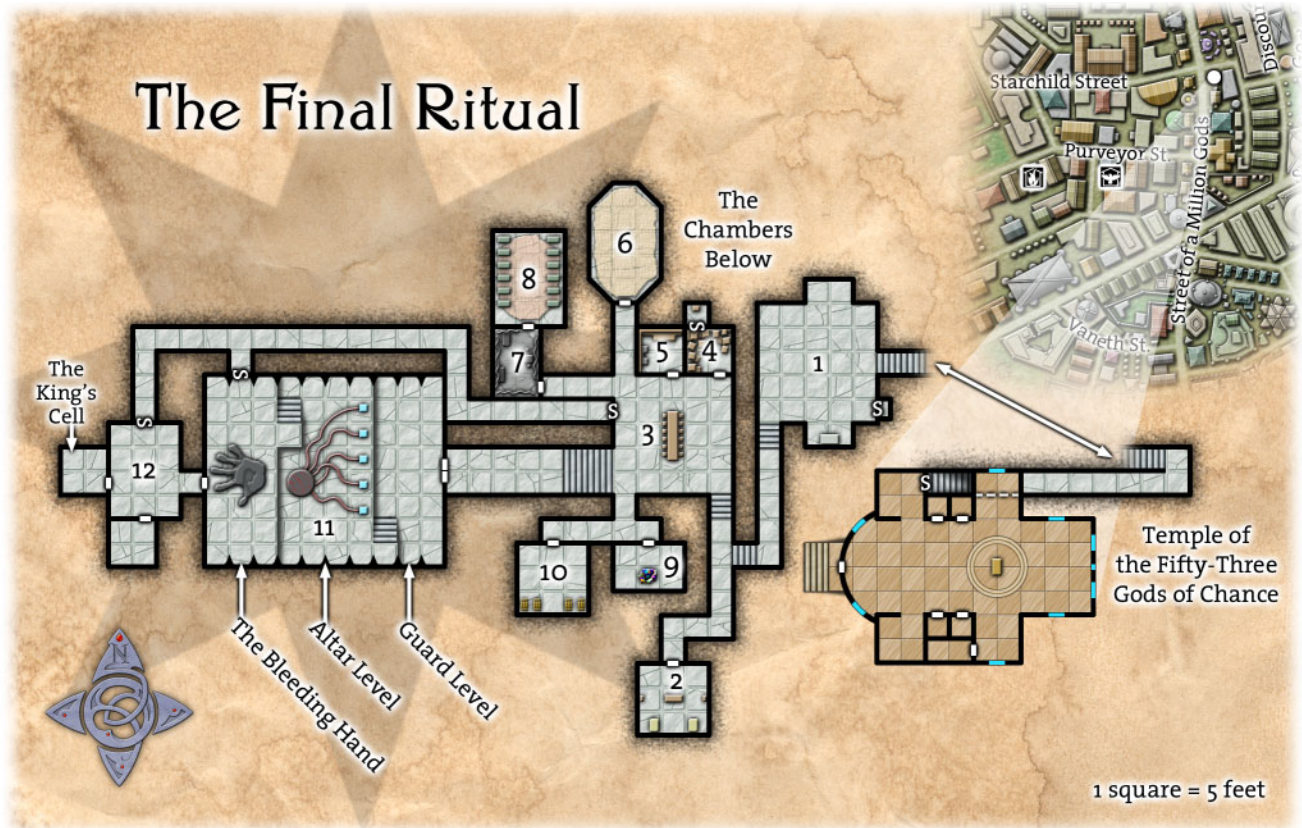
About 75 percent of the time, a vrock named Gisszaggat watches out a tiny peephole (DC 30 to find). If he is not watching, he is in the middle of his chamber, although he will hear someone bashing on the door and might even hear someone picking the lock (Listen check +24, DC 35).

He opens the door for anyone who gives the proper password, which is "Nastrax." However, once the door is open, the PCs had better have a good story as to who they are and what they are doing here, or the demon will attack them immediately.

The vrock demon Gisszaggat serves **Wuntad**, but he also serves **Lilith** (and **Raguel**, although Raguel actually knows nothing of what's going on here). He has been here for far longer than the other inhabitants, and thinks of the entire complex as his. Gisszaggat attacks any intruder but has also been instructed to use the *warning rods* described on the next page to alert the rest of the nonplayer characters positioned in the chambers below.

Gisszaggat, Vrock: hp 120; see MM.

Tactics: At the first sound of an intruder, Gisszaggat casts *heroism* (+2 bonus to attacks, saves, and checks) then investigates. If attacked, he uses his *mirror image* ability and moves into



melee. He knows he must use the *warning rods* (see below) at some point during an encounter. Doing so requires a standard action once he's there. He has four options to use them:

- First, move to the table where the rods are and use them.
- Second, *teleport* to the table and use the rods.
- Third, use *telekinesis*.
- Fourth, summon another vrock to do it.

He does whatever seems like the best option in the current situation. He won't hesitate to try to summon another vrock to help him fight, and he uses his mobility to take out the most dangerous foes first, or those that seem physically weak but remain threatening, such as mages.

The Warning Rods: In the southern end of the chamber, characters see three wooden rods lying on a table pushed up against the wall. On the wall above the table are three holes. This is a magical warning system.

If a rod is placed in the leftmost hole, this means, "Someone is coming in, but they are (or appear to be) allies." Wuntad and **Muallah**—the human cultist in charge of defending this secret cult sanctuary—receive this message telepathically.

Placing a rod in the middle hole means, "I need help immediately." All intelligent beings in the other chambers receive this message telepathically.

If a rod is placed in the rightmost hole, this means, "Hostile forces are on their way in." All intelligent beings in the other chambers receive this message telepathically.

If rods are placed in the left and right holes at the same time, this means, "Hostile forces are on their way in" but only Wuntad and Muallah get the message. Any other combination of rods sends no message. The *warning rods* all radiate a moderate aura of divination, but they have no other powers and no real value.

Reinforcements: If the vrock uses the middle hole, Muallah and her orc troops arrive in three rounds; see Areas 7 and 8.

The Demon's Book: There's also a book on the table with the rods. The cover of this short but disturbing tome seems to be fashioned from human bones and batwings. Its few pages describe **the Final Ritual** itself. Reading through this book doesn't take long, and doing so would prove extremely valuable to PCs interested in stopping Wuntad, as they can use it to figure out what targets in the Eschaton Sanctuary may be the most important.

Hidden Cache: Hidden in the east wall, behind a removable stone (Search, DC 22, to find) is a small cache of the vrock's possessions: Four *potions of cure serious wounds*, a *sustaining spoon*, a golden statue of a marilith (worth 1,200 gp but weighing thirty pounds), and a type I *bag of holding* with 2,560 gp in it.

All the stairways shown on the above map, from Area 1 through Area 10, are steps leading down as one heads west through the temple's lower chambers.

For a description of the Final Ritual, see the sidebar on the next page.

Muallah, page 83



Ibard (top) and Saavia
in Chapter 1.

Eschaton Sanctuary, page 84

The Final Ritual

The ritual that Wuntad is about to perform is a complex one. It has the following requirements:

1. At least ten thousand people within one mile must be afraid for their lives while it is being performed.
2. The runes of four runebearers must be consumed in flames.
3. An altar resonating with arcane energies must be split asunder.
4. A Vested of the Galchutt must oversee the ceremony.
5. At least four devoted cultists must chant and dance wildly for a day.
6. A beloved king must die.

2. IBARD AND SAAVIA (EL 8)

Down a long and twisting hallway from Gisszagat's guardroom is the bedchamber of two cultists. This room has two wooden beds with straw-filled mattresses, a long table covered with food and drink, and a pair of chests with large padlocks on them (Open Lock, DC 20).

This chamber is shared by a litorian cleric named Ibard and a lizardfolk fighter named Saavia. Assuming both of these cultists survived the **encounter in Chapter 1**, they are present here. Of course, they're immediately hostile to unwanted intruders, but these two don't particularly like each other, either. If Wuntad is not present, they will not help each other in combat (through spell-casting, flanking, and so on). In fact, they may give each other verbal barbs as they fight, pointing out each other's shortcomings. "Can't even handle a few pitiful fools like these?" one might say to the other, or simply, "You can't do anything right."

Ibard: hp 45; see page 27.

Saavia: hp 29; see page 28.

Tactics: If these two are alerted to intruders, they go to the **Eschaton Sanctuary**. Otherwise, they are here and entirely unprepared. Neither is even wearing armor in such a case; Ibard, with just her mace and shield has AC 14, and Saavia has AC 17 (thanks to her natural armor).

Chests: Each chest contains clothing and personal items. One also holds a leather pouch with 125 gp and an amber ring worth 50 gp. The other also contains two vials of *elixir of truth*.

3. MEETING HALL

Near the center of these chambers is a large gathering hall. This room contains a long wooden table flanked by a dozen chairs. Tapestries hanging on the walls each bear a different chaos symbol—red multipointed arrow, green spiral, broken black square, cracked grey bell, and so on.

Secret Door: A stone secret door in the western wall (Search, DC 25, to find) leads to a secret passage that connects to much of this complex.

4. STOREHOUSE

This room north of the meeting hall has many crates, barrels, and sacks containing food and mundane dry goods. The labels on some of the containers indicate they were stolen from the Docks, intended for outbound ships. There is also a table with many different kinds of tools and one hundred feet of rope.

Secret Room: Behind a pivoting secret door in the stone wall (DC 20 to find), the PCs can find a tiny room with a locked chest (DC 27 to open) labeled "to sell." Inside are items of no use to the cultists here. They include a scroll of *teleport*, a *wand of scorching ray* (39 charges), a quiver of

five +2 *holy arrows*, and a +1 *evil outsider bane short sword*.

5. KITCHEN

This simple kitchen off the meeting hall includes a well-stocked larder. It is extremely disordered and dirty, though, with spoiled food lying about.

6. WUNTAD'S BODYGUARD (EL 7)

A long chamber on the northern end of the complex looks more like a combat training room than a bedroom, although it serves both roles. The floor is covered in a woven wicker mat, and weapons and shields of all types and sizes hang on the walls (all are mundane). In one corner, a small unlocked chest holds clothing and personal effects, all suited for someone of Large size.

Wuntad's bodyguard is also his daughter, whom he sired with an ogre woman. Jerallan has the size and strength of her mother and the hell-born qualities of her father. He has been training her in combat techniques in his spare time. Despite his relationship with her, his own need for power and his service to the Lords of Chaos is much more important to him than she is. Jerallan, on the other hand, is entirely devoted to Wuntad.

In appearance, Jerallan looks more human than most ogres. Her fiendish nature displays itself in the small spiny ridge running down her scalp and back. She is eight feet tall and bald.

Jerallan

Female fiendish ogre (Chaotic Evil)

Large giant (extraplanar)

Fighter2

Init +1

HD 4d8+16 + 2d10+8

AC 21, touch 10, flat-footed 20

BAB/Grapple +5/+17

Attack/Full Attack +13 melee (2d8+12/×3, halberd)

Space/Reach 10 feet/10 feet

SA Smite good 1/day (+6 bonus to damage to good foe)

SQ Low-light vision, darkvision 60 feet, resistance to cold 5 and fire 5, DR 5/magic and SR 11

Fort +13, **Ref** +2, **Will** +2

Str 26, **Dex** 13, **Con** 19, **Int** 9, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 9

Crucial Skills: Climb +10, Jump +7, Listen +5, Spot +2.

Other Skills: N/A

Crucial Feats: Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Power Attack.

Other Feats: Great Fortitude, Skill Focus (Climb).

Possessions: +1 *breastplate*, masterwork halberd, *potion of cure moderate wounds*, 12 gp, 17 sp, 20 cp.

Tactics. If she knows of any threat to Wuntad, Jerallan is at his side, or—more literally—at his

feet. She will be guarding him by standing at the base of the **Bleeding Hand** in the **Eschaton Sanctuary**. Otherwise, she's here, training.

7. DARK MISTRESS OF DEFENSE (EL 9)

The door to this chamber down a passage from the gathering hall is locked (DC 25 to open). The room is filled with permanent magical darkness. The characters can only really see its contents if they dispel or counter this effect.

This room's walls are shrouded in black draperies. A black rug covers the floor. Furnishings include a bed made up with black sheets and blankets, and a table, chair, dresser, and wardrobe of ebony. The dresser and wardrobes are filled with black clothing (all female) and other personal belongings. The dresser holds a small pouch containing 50 pp.

The Mistress: Muallah Elidia, known as the Dark Blessed, is the human cultist in charge of defending this secret sanctuary. She commands a force of twelve mercenary **Toruk-Rul orcs** whom she converted to the worship of chaos. They now follow her unquestioningly—even to live here in a large city.

Muallah was a young warrior in lands to the south, chosen by some minor gods of darkness to be their champion. They granted her the gift of darkvision that functions even in magical darkness, and the ability to create magical darkness. True to form, however, Muallah betrayed her patrons and instead began worshipping what she calls the Destructor Gods (the Galchutt).

She had no idea there were any other cultists like herself until she came to Ptolus, where she immediately joined the **Tolling Bell cult** and eventually became a close associate of Wuntad. He has appointed her to be in charge of the defense of the chambers below. As such, she has also become close with **Gisszaggat** the vrock.

Muallah has the ability to suppress the magical darkness in this room as a free action, which she will do so that it does not hamper her orcs.

Muallah Elidia, the Dark Blessed

Female human (Chaotic Evil)

Fighter6/**rogue**1/**blackguard**2 **CR** 9

Init +6 **Speed** 20 feet

HD 6d10+18 + 1d6+3 + 2d10+6 **hp** 78

AC 23, touch 11, flat-footed 22

BAB/Grapple +8/+11

Attack +11 melee (1d8+8 plus poison, longsword)

Full Attack +11/+6 melee (1d8+8 plus poison, longsword)

SA Sneak attack +1d6, smite good 1/day (+2 bonus to attack and damage against a good foe), *darkness* 3/day (CL 9th)

SQ Darkvision, trapfinding, *detect good*, poison use, aura of evil

Fort +13, **Ref** +6, **Will** +3

Str 16, **Dex** 14, **Con** 16, **Int** 10, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 14

Crucial Skills Concentration +6, Hide +6, Listen +5, Spot +8.

Other Skills: Handle Animal +4, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (local) +3, Knowledge (religion) +7, Ride +9.

Crucial Feats: Blind-Fight, Cleave, Dodge, Improved Sunder, Mobility, Power Attack.

Other Feats: Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (longsword).

Spells: 2; save DC 11 + spell level.

1st—*corrupt weapon*, *doom*.

Possessions: +1 *full plate armor*, +1 *large steel shield*, +2 *human bane longsword*, one dose of purple worm poison (DC24, 1d6 Strength/2d6 Strength), *antivenom* (2 flasks), key to Area 7, 85 gp, 11 sp.

Tactics: If alerted by the demon, Muallah and her troops wait in the lowest level of the Eschaton Sanctuary. Otherwise, she is here, meditating alone in the dark (but wearing her armor), ready to spring into action if she hears someone trying her door. In that case, she immediately calls out a command to her troops as a free action. They come to her aid, obeying all of her commands, in 2 rounds. Next she casts *corrupt weapon*.

No matter where she is, Muallah spends her first round of combat obscuring the sight of her foes with *darkness*, and the next one using that distraction to cast *corrupt weapon*, if she hasn't already done so. She then enters melee with her poisoned sword. She is quick to use her smite good ability and always attempts to use darkness to her advantage.

If in the company of her troops, she commands them to flank foes with her and uses some of her actions to sunder opponents' weapons—otherwise she just strikes to kill.

Remember that her first strike is poisoned, and that against humans she has a +13/+8 attack bonus and inflicts 1d8+10+2d6 points of damage with her sword. Also, note that Muallah's stats are configured assuming she uses 3 points of Power Attack.

8. MUALLAH'S TROOPS (EL 8)

A room just north of the chamber of the Dark Blessed is a barracks for the dozen fanatical orcs whom Muallah commands. It has twelve crude beds, a few extra weapons hanging on the walls, and a straw mat on the floor.

These are Toruk-Rul orcs from the south, where Muallah also comes from. They do whatever their mistress commands, which usually consists of flanking her opponents and swarming over an enemy. Since she no longer pays them, they have no money or treasure beyond their weapons and armor.

Orcs (12): hp 9 each; see MM.

Bleeding Hand, page 86
Eschaton Sanctuary, page 84

DM TIPS

DMs may wish to have the characters learn the details of the Final Ritual even before they arrive at this location. It makes for better foreshadowing that way. However, the PCs might get too bogged down in predicting and attempting to prevent the details of the ritual in the city (tracking down all runebearers to guard them or some such) rather than coming here for the grand finale.



Toruk-Rul orcs: Ptolus, page 58

Tolling Bell cult: Ptolus, page 73
Gisszaggat, page 80

The investiture of Muallah by the gods of darkness and the blessing of Baltaroth that Astared received from the Demon Gods indicate that the many forces of evil—even though they are not all necessarily aligned—realize that some monumental event is soon to occur. It seems that the various malevolent entities all want their representatives on hand to observe and even direct these portentous times. Whether they realize it or not, this event is the Night of Dissolution and the awakening of the Galchutt.

Kaleidoscope Temple, page 62

The demon, page 80

Muallah, page 83

Ibard and Saavia, page 82

Jerallan, page 82

DM TIPS

All of the description of the Eschaton Sanctuary assumes that the ceremony (which takes a day to complete) is currently going on. If for some reason the DM does not want that to be the case, the dancing priests are likely to be in their cloister (Area 10) and the sorcerers from the glass boxes are probably in the prison behind the sanctuary (Area 12).

Wuntad, however, spends all his time here, preparing the chamber.

The Eschaton Sanctuary (Area 11) is protected against all divinations less powerful than discern location.



Dragon rifles: Ptolus, page 560

DM TIPS

Remember that the glass tanks suffer half damage from electricity and fire attacks and one-quarter damage from cold attacks.

Mahdoth's Asylum: Ptolus, page 361

9. WUNTAD'S CHAMBER

The door to this room just south of the meeting hall is locked (DC 25 to open).

In the middle of this mostly empty chamber sits a thronelike chair made of crystal that resembles the walls of the **Kaleidoscope Temple** in Chapter 4. When Wuntad rests, he reclines in this unusual chair, which infuses him with a steady stream of chaotic energies from its multicolored brilliance.

Wuntad is unlikely to be here when the player characters arrive, regardless of whether he is warned or not.

The Chaos Throne: The crystalline throne has a strong aura of both magic and chaos. Its effects depend on the alignment of the character seated in it. Anyone of a chaotic alignment who sits in the throne is healed 4d6 hit points of damage (even if undead—this isn't positive energy). Unwounded chaotic characters are affected by an *aid* spell as if cast by a 10th-level caster. In either case, no one can gain this benefit more than once per day. Wuntad does not share his throne with others, so even though it could benefit the other cultists here, they don't know about its powers.

Anyone of nonchaotic alignment who sits in the throne must make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 20) or become sickened for one hour. A sickened character takes a –2 penalty on all attack rolls, weapon damage rolls, saving throws, skill checks, and ability checks.

10. CLOISTER

Just west of Wuntad's own chamber is the spartan home of the priests of the Eschaton Sanctuary. It has four short wooden beds without mattresses or pillows. The room contains a number of short whips (used for self-flagellation) and other masochistic tools and devices (belts barbed on the inside, small iron flesh clamps, and worse). The walls here are covered in large, crude chaos symbols and bright splashes of clashing, discordant-colored paint.

11. ESCHATON SANCTUARY (EL 11 OR 14)

The heart of this complex is a massive underground chamber with three levels. The Eschaton Sanctuary is made of grey masonry stone and has ceilings forty feet high.

The first (bottom) level is an open area called the **guard level**. The far wall has built-in cells with iron bars. In these cells wait ratmen with **dragon rifles**.

The next level up, the **altar level**, has five glass tanks filled with some kind of gas. Within each one, a human stands perfectly still. Each tank measures about seven feet tall and three feet wide. Tubes run from the tanks to a round altar, around which stand four humans in dark robes with pointed hoods.

On the final (top) level, a small set of steps leads up to what appears to be a massive black claw on the end of an arm thrusting itself up from the floor. Dark blue blood pours from a wound in the palm of the claw and runs down the sides of the arm. Standing on the palm, with a short flight of stairs leading up to it, is Wuntad. This is the **Bleeding Hand** level.

There may be other figures in this room as well, depending on circumstances. If the **demon** managed to alert the temple complex, **Muallah** and her orcs wait on the guard level, outside the barred walls, ready to engage in melee with foes who enter the room; **Ibard and Saavia** are on the altar level, guarding the stairs and armed with one or more of the chaos items from Pythoness House (see next page); **Jerallan** is on the Bleeding Hand level, guarding Wuntad.

A more detailed discussion of each level appears below.

Guard Level

In the western wall of the sanctuary's lowest level, three barred archways prevent entry into an area ten feet deep beneath the altar level. Six ratlords stand guard here. One gains entry into their area through a cage door built into the northmost set of bars. This door is locked (DC 25 to open—one of the ratmen has the key). The bars have a hardness of 10 and 30 hit points. The break DC of the bars is 25.

Each of the ratmen has a +1 *dragon rifle* and six rounds of +1 *unholy ammunition*. They simply stay in their secured area and shoot at intruders. The bars don't actually give them cover, but they do make it difficult to engage them in melee.

Ratmen, Ratlords (6): hp 25 each; see *Ptolus*, page 625.

Altar Level

The middle level is perhaps the most complex portion of the Eschaton Sanctuary. Near the edge of this area, overlooking the one below, sit five rectangular glass boxes that measure seven feet high and three feet across. Each one holds what appears to be a humanoid in some kind of trance, enveloped by roiling gas. Cables attached to the boxes' bases run across the floor to a round, low altar of black stone veined with red streaks. Around this dais, four red-robed priests dance in an ecstatic ritual, shouting and waving curved knives.

The Glass Tanks

Each of the figures trapped in a glass box is a sorcerer: a person who harbors innate magical energy. Some of them were kidnapped from the city streets, while others were spirited away from **Mahdoth's Asylum** as mentioned on page 41. The tanks siphon their magical might away (draining their life force as well) and transfer it to the



power of the altar. The tanks hold a narcotic gas that keeps the sorcerers in a hallucinogenic state.

Inflicting 10 points of damage destroys a tank; it has 1 point of hardness. Destroying a tank releases the gas inside. For 1 round, all characters adjacent to the broken box must succeed at Fortitude saves (DC 16) or be overcome by the effects of the gas and fall into a helpless stupor for 1d4 rounds.

The sorcerer inside a destroyed tank collapses immediately, with a 50 percent chance of inflicting 1d6 points of damage to himself or herself on the broken glass (this is not enough to kill any of them, but it might make the PCs hesitate to do it again).

Destroying all the glass tanks ruins the ritual, although the fanatical cultists carry on anyway.

The Altar

The low, round altar is made of black stone veined with red streaks. Those who approach it can see that four children cower in terror *within* the altar. All of these children bear a strange runelike tattoo on their face or hand. Using powerful magic, Wuntad has imprisoned the four **runebearer children** that his cult kidnapped inside the altar, body and soul.

At the appropriate point in the ritual, Wuntad will use his *Mel's acid arrow*-like ability to blast the altar. This will split it asunder, causing the children to rise up out of it, magically levitating through the power of the altar. Then the four

priests will use their *produce flame* ability to slay them, burning their runes and completing an important part of the ceremony.

To free the children, the characters must destroy the altar. A *Mel's acid arrow* spell will do so immediately. Otherwise, normal means can break it apart. It has a hardness of 8, 200 hit points, and a break DC of 30.

With each blow or attack, the children cringe and recoil in fear. Careful observation (Spot, DC 20) reveals that such attacks do not actually harm them, however. When it is broken, the children float up and out of it. A Knowledge (arcana) check (DC 20) confirms that this is the way to get them out—PCs without that knowledge may worry that destroying the altar will harm the children.

The **items of chaos** that Wuntad stole from the PCs at the end of Chapter 1 rest here on the altar.

The Flagellant Priests

These four fanatical priests were trained by **Illadras** and, like her, focus on the destructive, fiery nature of chaos. Now they serve Wuntad directly. They continue with the ritual despite any threats and dangers around them, although not entirely oblivious to them. Each one wears a red robe and hood over chainmail armor.

The death of any of the four priests cancels the effects of the ritual, although they will continue their wild dance nevertheless.

DM TIPS

Sorcerers freed from the tanks remain helpless and incoherent for at least an hour after being released. A neutralize poison spell reduces this to only one minute. In any event, these sorcerers will have no spell slots available to them for twenty-four hours. No stats are provided for these NPCs; assume that each is level 1d6 if needed.

*Items of chaos, page 25
Illadras, page 62*

The runebearer children are named Dullin Balacazar, Darata Chornim, Corrent Epathi, and Tarthia Kor. Dullis is the son of Maystra Balacazar and the grandson of Menon Balacazar, a well-known crime lord in the city (see Ptolus, page 100). Freeing him could earn the PCs a reward of 5,000 gp, should they choose to collect it (see page 41).

Detect chaositech:
Ptolus, page 641

Curved Knife of Rituals

This long, curved knife is essentially a +1 short sword. It also adds a +2 bonus to the owner's Concentration and Knowledge (religion) checks. Evil clerics can use it proficiently.

Faint divination; CL 3rd; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Wondrous Items, owl's wisdom; Price 4,310 gp.

Wuntad in Chapter 1, page 27

Wuntad the Vested

By infusing himself with the flesh and blood of a dead Natharl'nacna and attaining the title Vested of the Galchutt, Wuntad enlarged and improved his physical form: His ability scores increased, his speed went up, he gained a +3 natural armor bonus, and his spell resistance increased. Further, thanks to his masters' chaotic blessings, he can cast confusion 1/day and can loose a burst of destruction at will (treat as Mel's acid arrow). His spells and spell-like abilities gain a +2 bonus to save DC and effective caster level.

Treat all his natural melee attacks as both magic and unholy; they inflict +2d6 extra points of damage to good foes.

Lastly, before this ritual began, Wuntad killed himself so he could be raised from the dead and become a shigmaa (see Ptolus, page 647).

Craft (chaositech):
Ptolus, page 568
Mark of chaos:
Chaositech, page 17

Ebon Hand cult: Ptolus, page 72

Priests (4)

Male humans (Chaotic Evil)

Cleric4 (chaos gods) **CR 4**

Init -1 **Speed** 20 feet

HD 4d8+4 **hp** 45

AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 16

BAB/Grapple +3/+5

Attack/Full Attack +8 (1d6+4, short sword)

SA Rebuke undead 6/day, rebuke fire/turn water 6/day

SQ Resistance to fire 10, +2 AC against lawful opponents, +2 bonus to saves against lawful opponents, +1 bonus to saves against fear, cannot be magically compelled

Fort +7, **Ref** +0, **Will** +8

Str 14, **Dex** 9, **Con** 13, **Int** 13, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 16

Crucial Skills: Concentration +12, Search +3, Spot +9.

Other Skills: Heal +13, Knowledge (religion) +12.

Crucial Feats: N/A

Other Feats: Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (evocation), Weapon Focus (short sword).

Domains: Chaos, Fire.

Spells: 5/4+1/3+1; save DC 14 + spell level, 15 + spell level if evocation (caster level 4th, +5 melee touch, +2 ranged touch).

2nd—*aid, bear's endurance, produce flame**, *resist energy*.

1st—*burning hands**, *divine favor, protection from law, shield of faith, summon monster I*.

0—*create water, cure minor wounds, detect poison, inflict minor wounds, read magic*.

Possessions†: Masterwork chainmail, +1 curved knife of rituals, healer's kit, black pearl ring worth 200 gp, silver holy symbol.

* Indicates a domain spell.

† The leader of these priests also has a strand of lesser prayer beads.

Tactics: The priests do all they can to keep up the ritual, no matter what is going on around them. Wuntad has used his power to ensure that the spells they have cast on themselves last throughout the rite, so they all have *shield of faith, aid, protection from law*, and *resist energy* (fire) active. During the ritual, they can still use the full defense action, which grants them a total bonus to AC of +4, for Armor Class 20. At any given time while all four remain alive, one priest can stop what he's doing long enough to take a round's worth of actions while the others continue the ritual. They do this to cast *summon monster* or *burning hands*, or to engage in melee with foes.

Bleeding Hand Level

The sanctuary's top level centers upon a huge black hand that thrusts up out of the floor, oozing streams of dark blue blood. A small set of steps leads up to the palm. This is the "Ebon Hand" foretold in prophecies that chaos cultists have whispered for centuries, and revered in particular by the **Ebon Hand cultists**. Those legends call it the "hand of transformation," and they were right. It is the hand of Gellasatrac, one of the

Lords of Chaos, who was slain by his brethren ages ago, so that one day—today—mortals could use his blood to transform themselves into avatars of the Galchutt and enable their eventual freedom.

Wuntad stands atop the palm of the hand. For all intents and purposes, he is completely mad with power: The passion and thrill of being so close to awakening his masters and the rush of power given to him as a new Vested have driven him insane. He cackles and wails throughout the encounter, praising the Galchutt and issuing wild threats, not just to his opponents, but to the whole world.

Player characters who encountered **Wuntad** in **Chapter 1** note that he is literally bloated with power—much larger and even more horrid than before. He looks as though he might actually burst from within, as though his body cannot contain the energies that infuse him.

Shigmaa Wuntad, Vested of the Galchutt

Male human half-demon (Chaotic Evil)

Large outsider (augmented humanoid)

Barbarian4/**cleric**3 (**Galchutt**)/

Forsaken shigmaa1 **CR 11**

Init +6 **Speed** 40 feet, fly 30 feet (average)

HD 4d12+20 + 3d8+15 + 1d12+5 **hp** 108

AC 23, touch 14, flat-footed 23

BAB/Grapple +7/+19

Attack +14 melee (1d6+8, bite)

Full Attack +14 melee (1d6+8, bite) and +9 melee (1d4+4, 2 claws)

SA Unholy natural attacks (+2d6 to good foes), rage 2/day, rebuke undead 4/day, smite good, spell-like abilities

SQ Darkvision 60 feet, immunity to poison, resistance to acid 10, cold 10, electricity 10, and fire 10, DR 5/magic, SR 20, fast movement, uncanny dodge, trap sense +1, second chance, call of death (1/day), secrets of the dead

Space/Reach 10 feet/10 feet

Fort +16, **Ref** +10, **Will** +9

Str 26, **Dex** 22, **Con** 20, **Int** 14, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 13

Languages: Common, Elvish, Infernal.

Crucial Skills: Climb +10, Jump +9, Listen +6, Search +8, Spot +7.

Other Skills: **Craft (chaositech)** +6, Heal +6, Intimidate +7, Knowledge (arcana) +3, Knowledge (religion) +10, Swim +8.

Crucial Feats: Blind-Fight, Dodge, Power Attack.

Other Feats: Iron Will.

Domains: Chaos, Evil.

Spell-Like Abilities: Caster level 10th; save DCs are Charisma based.

1/day—*confusion, desecrate, unholy blight*.

3/day—*darkness, poison*.

At will—*Mel's acid arrow*.

Spells: 5/4+1/3+1; save DC 14 + spell level (caster level 6th, 8th if necromancy).

2nd—*hold person* (2), *mark of chaos, shatter**.

1st—*bless, deathwatch, detect chaos, protection from law**, *shield of faith*.

—cure minor wounds, *detect chaositech*, *detect poison*, *light*, *resistance*.

Possessions: +1 mithral breastplate, *gloves of dexterity* +2 (fitted with holes to accommodate claws), *potion of aid*, 11 pp, 11 gp.

* Indicates a domain spell.

Rage (Ex): The following changes go into effect when Wuntad rages:
hp 124

AC 21, touch 12, flat-footed 21

BAB/Grapple +7/+21

Full Attack +16 (1d6+10, bite) and +11 melee (1d4+5, 2 claws)

Fort +18, Will +11

Str 30, Con 24

Skills: Climb +12, Jump +11, Swim +10

Tactics: If alerted ahead of time, Wuntad will have *shield of faith* (+1 bonus to AC) and *protection from law* (+2 bonus to AC and saves against lawful characters) active when the player characters arrive. He will just have summoned a shadow (with +4 turn resistance) using his *call of death* shigmaa ability. It lasts for 10 rounds, and he sends it to attack right away.

For the most part, Wuntad uses ranged attacks (see sidebar, previous page) from his high vantage, blasting intruders with his destructive bursts or using spells and abilities like *hold person*, *unholy blight*, and *confusion*. He continues to favor these tactics until someone manages to get up to him on the hand. Then he rages and engages in melee (remember that his attacks inflict +2d6 damage to good foes). He fights to the death, but do not forget his second chance ability, which allows him to rise up once after seemingly being slain, retaining 10 hit points and a single energy drain attack that inflicts 1d4 negative levels and restores 10 hit points to him per negative level bestowed (see the prestige class ability description in *Ptolus*, page 648).

If Wuntad Dies: Upon Wuntad's true death, the hand of Gellasatrac dissolves into a horrid black goo that burns like acid (1d6 points of damage per round, 10d6 points of damage for total immersion). It seeps its way into the depths of the earth, gone for good—or at least for a long, long while.

Secret Door: A stone secret door in this level's north wall (Search, DC 25, to find) leads to a secret passage that connects to much of this complex.

STOPPING THE FINAL RITUAL

The death of any of the four priests, the destruction of all the glass containers holding sorcerers, the freeing of the trapped runebearers, the death of Wuntad, or the freeing of the barbarian king from the prison behind the sanctuary (see next page) will keep the ritual from succeeding in bringing about the Night of Dissolution. However, unless *all* of those things occur, the fanatic cultists likely will keep going ahead with it anyway.

Wuntad can get more priests and more sorcerers. He also can get more runebearer children (or kidnap some of the same ones again). He might even be able to dredge up another king (such as the King of Palastan), another requirement of the ritual. Only *his* death ensures that the ritual will not be performed again. If he survives, he will continue to attempt to awaken his dread masters and pave the way for their ascendancy.

Note that the Night of Dissolution still could come one day, even without the ritual. "Night of Dissolution" simply signifies the date at which the Galchutt awaken, and they will awaken someday. But if the player characters succeed, that day (or night) will not come today—and hopefully not for a long, long time.



Eschaton Sanctuary, page 84

Barbarian tribes: Ptolus, page 41

RUNEBEARERS AND HELMET ITLESTEIN

It is, in fact, a vague and misunderstood precognition of the Final Ritual that prompted Helmut Itlestein's belief that runebearers pose a danger to the city. Once the Final Ritual is prevented, the "threat" that the runebearers present ends, although Helmut may not know that. (See Ptolus, page 389, for more on this important character.)

The DM may wish to involve Helmut in events after the adventure ends, as the player characters attempt to return the children to their rightful homes and families. Alternatively, Helmut may be blamed for the children's disappearance and may be grateful to the PCs for helping to clear his name.

The vampire Aelindai Whispersong was a member of the Forsaken who willingly allowed a vampire to slay her so that she could rise again as a creature of the night. She still technically belongs to that group and represents the allegiance of at least some of the other members to Wuntad.

Assess creature: Ptolus, page 639

12. THE PRISON (EL 9)

Behind the Eschaton Sanctuary, beyond an unlocked iron door, lies a special prison constructed to hold sacrificial victims. Currently, it holds King Oulgas, leader of all the barbarian tribes of the distant east.

Another of Wuntad's close allies, the elf vampire Aelindai Whispersong, waits here. The new Vested has charged her with guarding King Oulgas and, when the ritual reaches its end, bringing him into the Eschaton Sanctuary and slaying him. This prison matron is darkly beautiful, with waist-length black hair, dark flesh, and dark eyes. She wears a long, black leather coat studded with iron spikes. Four wights serve her unquestioningly.

Aelindai's coffin is far off, below Midtown in a secret lair reached only through a long passage that winds through the Dungeon.

Aelindai Whispersong

Female elf vampire (Chaotic Evil)
Medium undead (corporeal)

Cleric6 (chaos gods) **CR 8**
Init +8 **Speed** 30 feet
HD 6d12 **hp** 31

AC 24, touch 14, flat-footed 20

BAB/Grapple +4/+9

Attack/Full Attack +9 melee (1d4+5, slam)

SA Rebuke undead 7/day, blood drain (1d4 Constitution), children of the night (1d6+1 rat swarms, 1d4+1 bat swarms, or a pack of 3d6 feral dogs), create spawn, dominate (Will save, DC 18, CL 12th), energy drain (2 negative levels)

SQ Alternate form (bat, dire bat, feral dog, or dire wolf), DR 10/silver and magic, fast healing 5, *gaseous form*, resistance to cold 10, electricity 10, *spider climb* at will, +4 turn resistance

Fort +7, **Ref** +8, **Will** +9

Str 21, **Dex** 18, **Con** —, **Int** 15, **Wis** 19, **Cha** 18

Crucial Skills: Balance +5, Bluff +14, Concentration +6, Hide +13, Listen +18, Move Silently +14, Search +13, Sense Motive +15, Spot +19.

Other Skills: Knowledge (religion) +7.

Crucial Feats: Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Dodge.

Other Feats: Alertness, Endurance, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes.

Domains: Chaos, Evil.

Spells: 5/4+1/4+1/3+1; save DC 14 + spell level (CL 6th, +9 melee touch, +8 ranged touch).

3rd—*deeper darkness*, *dispel magic*, *magic circle against law**, *protection from energy*.

2nd—*aid*, *cat's grace*, *death knell*, *hold person*, *shatter**.

1st—*detect evil*, *detect good*, *hide from undead*, *protection from good**, *sanctuary*.

0—*assess creature*, *detect magic*, *light*, *purify food and drink*, *virtue*.

* Indicates a domain spell.

Possessions +1 studded leather armor, scrolls of *magic vestment* and *animate dead*, *lens of detection*, ebony brooch worth 250 gp, ebony and silver ring worth 300 gp, keys to both prison cells, 416 gp.

Wights (4): hp 26 each; see MM.

Tactics: No matter what sounds she hears from the Eschaton Sanctuary, Aelindai does not come unless called. If she does hear trouble heading her way, she casts *protection from good* and *magic circle against law* (+2 bonus to AC and saves against good or lawful foes), as well as *cat's grace* (+2 bonus to AC and Reflex saves) and *protection from energy* (fire). Once foes show themselves, she dives into combat, relying on her spells only if she must. She will, however, spontaneously cast *inflict wounds* spells to heal herself, or perhaps a wight.

The wights always try to stay in a flanking position with their mistress. She might command them to attack those trying to keep clear of melee (like spellcasters) while she fights the main hand-to-hand foes.

If it's clear that Wuntad is dead or otherwise defeated, Aelindai fights only half-heartedly. In such a case, suffering even half her hit points in damage is enough to send her fleeing, leaving her foes to deal with the wights.

Secret Door: A stone secret door in the north wall of the prison (Search, DC 25, to find) leads to a secret passage that connects much of this complex.

Empty Cell

This cell on the south end of the prison was used for the sorcerers and the runebearers before the ritual began. Now it is entirely empty.

The King's Cell

The door to the only occupied cell is locked (DC 25 to open—Aelindai has the key).

King Oulgas is held in this dank cell with two of his warriors. All three were captured and spirited away from their home far in the east.

The king is furious, to say the least. He stands almost seven feet tall, a massive mountain of a man covered in thick, shaggy but greying hair. One would never know by looking at him that he is sixty years old.

Unfortunately for both the king and his would-be liberators, neither he nor his men speak Common, which, of course, is actually Prustan—the language of the Empire of which he is not a part. (Truthfully, he knows a few words from the time he sacked Tarsis, like “Ptolus,” “Tarsis,” “King” and “army.”) Obviously, *tongues* or *comprehend languages* spells would be very helpful here.

Player characters might look upon King Oulgas as an enemy—he did invade the Empire years ago, and now his army stands outside Ptolus' gates. However, in this case *he* is the one who has



been wronged. Treating him well and bringing him back to his army likely will send the barbarians back to their homeland without further conflict (see below).

Any hostility or poor treatment from the PCs, however, will lead the king and his guards to attack the group, even if doing so is suicide for them. They are very angry at being held prisoner here in this hated city by these horrific people and creatures.

The stats here for King Oulgas and his barbarian guards have their listed equipment figured in. This equipment is held in a wooden box outside the cell.

King Oulgas

Male human (Neutral)

Barbarian 8 **CR** 8

Init +2 **Speed** 30 feet

HD 8d12+24 **hp** 106

AC 20, touch 14, flat-footed 20

BAB/Grapple +8/+12

Attack +14 melee (1d8+8, greatclub)

Full Attack +14/+9 melee (1d8+8, greatclub)

SA Rage 3/day

SQ Fast movement, trap sense +2, improved uncanny dodge, DR 1/—

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

Str 19, **Dex** 15, **Con** 17, **Int** 14, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 14

Languages: The Tribal Tongue

Crucial Skills: Climb +11, Listen +9, Search +3, Spot +7.

Other Skills: Diplomacy +6, Handle Animal +10, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (nature) +4, Ride +10, Survival +6, Swim +6.

Crucial Feats Combat Expertise.

Other Feats: Endurance, Great Fortitude, Leadership.

Possessions: +1 breastplate, +2 greatclub of the grandfathers (provides a +2 deflection bonus to AC), gold ring worth 50 gp, necklace of teeth and jewels worth 250 gp.

Rage (Ex): The following changes remain in effect while Oulgas rages:

hp 122

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 16

BAB/Grapple +8/+14

Full Attack +16/+11 melee (1d8+11, greatclub)

Fort +13, **Will** +6

Str 23, **Con** 21

Skills: Climb +14, Swim +10

His fit of rage lasts for 8 rounds, though he may voluntarily end it prematurely. After raging, he remains fatigued (–2 Strength, –2 Dexterity, can't charge or run) for the duration of the encounter.

The King's Guards (2)

Human male and female (Neutral)

Barbarians **CR** 5

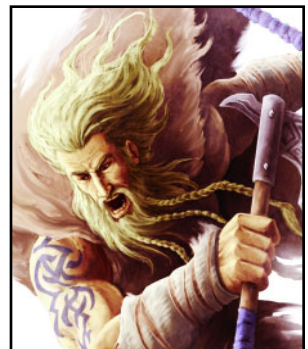
Init +2 **Speed** 30 feet

HD 5d12+15 **hp** 61

AC 18, touch 12, flat-footed 18

BAB/Grapple +5/+8

King Oulgas' guards are named Svalt and Unilli. If the player characters befriend the king and impress him as true heroes, he may command these two guards to serve the PCs as bodyguards of their own. This raises interesting situations, as neither guard speaks Common.



FROM MY CAMPAIGN TO YOURS

In the original Ptolus Campaign, after defeating Wuntad, the player characters freed King Oulgas. Immediately thereafter, Serai the sorcerer teleported himself, the king, and the paladin Zophas to stand before the advancing barbarian horde. Zophas, with his high Charisma and skill at Diplomacy, not only convinced the army that the assault was unnecessary (as the king had been rescued) but that the folk of Ptolus had nothing to do with his kidnapping. Thanks to Zophas' silver tongue, Oulgas gave the group his bodyguards; they became the guardians of Rosegate House, where the player characters lived.



Note that the Commissar never refers to what the characters did as "saving the city." He's not convinced that the Final Ritual would have actually done anything, and he believes he could have driven off the barbarians successfully himself. In fact, he's a little disappointed that he didn't get to try.

Rosegate House:
Ptolus, page 288

Angry mob: Ptolus, page 587

Twelve Commanders:
Ptolus, page 148

Fallen: Ptolus, page 110

Forsaken: Ptolus, page 112

Rhodintor: Ptolus, page 628

Zaug: Ptolus, page 633

Longfingers Guild headquarters:

Ptolus, page 429

Dwarvenhearth: Ptolus,
page 460

Attack/Full Attack +9 melee (1d12+5/×3, greataxe)

SA Rage 2/day

SQ Fast movement, trap sense +1, improved uncanny dodge

Fort +9, **Ref** +3, **Will** +3

Str 16, **Dex** 15, **Con** 16, **Int** 10, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 12

Languages: The Tribal Tongue

Crucial Skills: Climb +4, Jump +5, Listen +4, Search +1.

Other Skills: Handle Animal +8, Intimidate +3, Knowledge (geography) +2, Ride +8, Survival +8.

Crucial Feats: Blind-Fight.

Other Feats: Great Fortitude, Weapon Focus (greataxe).

Possessions: +1 breastplate, +1 greataxe, 50 feet of rope, healer's kit, flask of antitoxin, hunting horn, gold ring worth 50 gp.

Rage (Ex): The following changes remain in effect while the king's guards rage:

hp 71

AC 16, touch 10, flat-footed 18

BAB/Grapple +5/+10

Attack +11 melee (1d10+8/×3, greataxe)

Fort +11, **Will** +5

Str 20, **Con** 20

Skills: Climb +6, Jump +7

Their fit of rage lasts for 8 rounds, though they may voluntarily end it prematurely. After raging, they remain fatigued (–2 Strength, –2 Dexterity, can't charge or run) for the duration of the encounter.

ENDING THE WAR

Of course, the adventure's still not over. The player characters should try to return King Oulgas to his people. But that involves getting him out of the city and to his army. This plan presents a few problems. First of all, if the barbarians are spotted in the streets they will raise suspicions and even an **angry mob**. Second, if the PCs take the king to any city authority, such as the Commissar or the **Twelve Commanders**, those authorities may attempt to imprison him again—and that won't end the war. (They would, however, reward the player characters richly for such a prisoner, offering 10,000 gp or its value in magic items or property.)

The best option involves the player characters sneaking or magically transporting the King and his guards (perhaps using the scroll of *teleport* found in the secret room in Area 4: Storehouse) through the city and out, and then carefully approaching the barbarian horde.

If he has been treated well and with respect, Oulgas re-enters the ranks of his people—after a brief test to ascertain that it's really him and not a product of vile magic. He convinces them that Ptolus is not to blame for his kidnapping, after all, but that it was the design of evil creatures

that have been dealt with by the good people who brought him here.

Once that is settled, the army prepares to withdraw. King Oulgas grants the characters gifts: necklaces of teeth to mark them as honorary members of the horde and friends of the tribes. He further gives each of them a masterwork battleaxe and a gold ring worth 50 gp. Then he leaves them with assurances that his army will inflict no harm on their lands; a translator from his army makes this understood, if necessary.

It is unlikely that the PCs' actions will go unnoticed. Many of Ptolus' eyes, magical and otherwise, are trained on the horde, after all. When the army has turned to leave, the characters will be brought before the Twelve Commanders and the Commissar himself, to deliver an explanation. If they tell the truth, the commanders will be satisfied, although angry that they were not informed or consulted. As a reward for saving the city much bloodshed, the Commissar grants them a large reward. Ownership of **Rosegate House** would be appropriate.

The DM is encouraged to make this a reward appropriate to the specific PCs involved, and not just a bag of coins. This is a unique opportunity for the characters to interact with the most powerful figure in the city and get something out of the ordinary out of it. He could clear their names of past crimes, create a one-time holiday in their honor, or intervene directly in some dispute they are having with a rival. If cash, services, or items are needed, something along the lines of 15,000 to 20,000 gp in value is in order.

Experience Points: For returning the king and stopping the invasion, DMs should award player characters experience points equal to overcoming a CR 10 challenge.

CONTINUING THE ADVENTURE

The player characters become the talk of the city for weeks after they divert the attack. People buy them drinks in taverns and bother them with questions and requests for stories. On the flip side, they earn the everlasting enmity of the remaining chaos cultists, as well as their allies among the **Fallen** and the **Forsaken**. Certain **rhodintor**, **zaug**, and others below the city have now taken notice of them as well.

Even if the PCs killed every chaos cultist described in this adventure, plenty more still remain around town, and the cults grow in power and membership every day.

Where to go from here? Following this adventure, the PCs are the proper level to venture into the **Longfingers Guild headquarters** or down to **Dwarvenhearth**. See "Levels 1 to 20!" in *Ptolus*, Chapter 33, for more adventure ideas.

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**Chapter 6:
 The Final Ritual**

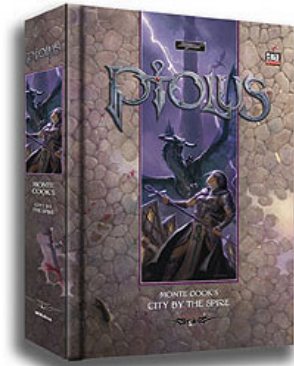
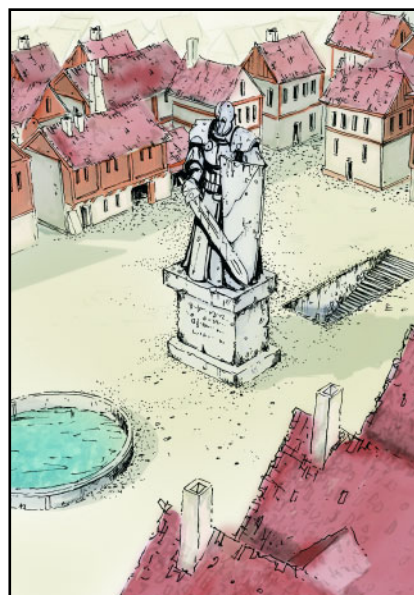
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This adventure is for use with Ptolus.

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NOTE:

This book owes much to the works of H.P. Lovecraft and Michael Moorcock.



PTOLUS™

THE NIGHT OF DISSOLUTION

An Adventure By
MONTE COOK

For Characters of 4th to 9th Level

The adventures in *The Night of Dissolution* pit the player characters against the darkest forces the city of Ptolus has ever faced. Following the threads of a hidden conspiracy, the characters find themselves up against insane cultists, wild chaos magic, and horrors from the primordial days of the world.

The urban intrigue, dungeon exploration, and high action take PCs to a former brothel, the laboratory of the dreaded Surgeon in the Shadows, and even secret temples of chaos. It all culminates as the characters attempt to stave off the Night of Dissolution: a dark time long foretold when the slumbering Lords of Chaos will awaken in their hidden lairs deep below the city—and bring catastrophe to the world.

A PDF version of this adventure is found on the CD-Rom that comes with Ptolus: Monte Cook's City by the Spire. You need a copy of Ptolus to run The Night of Dissolution.

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May 2006

MAQUENT'S JOURNAL

In a beautiful, flowing script, this journal relates details regarding the operation of Pythoness House from 716 1A to as recently as 718. Maquent Dellisaria was a seer and prophetess expelled from the Fate Weavers. She and her partner, Radanna Scalth, operated the house as a brothel. An ardent follower of chaos, Radanna insisted that the two allow the house to be used as a front for a chaos cult called the Crimson Coil.

Following are some of the most interesting entries.

Bloom 18, 716

Urieth says that all of the girls believe the gatehouse towers to be haunted by the spirit of a young priest named Taunell.

Bloom 22, 716

Urieth has been attempting to communicate with the spirit of Taunell. She thinks he somehow has the ability to see anywhere in the house, but that one can interact with him only in the gatehouse towers.

Bloom 29, 716

No one shall go into the gatehouse towers. I shall lock the door myself. That unwelcome spirit is quite tenacious, and not a little dangerous. We attempted to put it to rest, but it made the process far too difficult, so we shall simply leave it there forevermore. (Which is fine with me—I have no liking of holy men and did not relish the idea of bringing one here for an exorcism when Urieth's attempts failed.)

Growth 10, 717

There is another spirit within this house. At first I thought it was our old friend Taunell, but this is different. It has something to do with the statue of that horrid man. This is Radanna's doing. I do not like it.

Moons 1, 717

Radanna and her friends keep going on about this "Night of Dissolution," and the "coming changes." And Lords of Chaos. The spirit in this house is growing stronger. I no longer feel at home here.

Rain 15, 717

The spirit in this house now has the ability to keep out those it does not want, and keep in those whom it does not wish to leave. Only while it sleeps are we truly free to come and go. At other times, I am a prisoner in my own home, though in truth I rarely wish to leave anymore. Where would I go? This filthy city has little for me. I see mostly darkness in its future, with just one possible ray of light. And even then, the light will never reach me. I shall end in darkness, and soon.

Harvest 9, 717

Radanna's cultists have hidden some great weapons of power and items of chaotic magic in the cellars beneath the house and used the enchanted statue to seal the entrance. Only the spiral contrivance can move the statue, and it is broken into two halves—one for me, and one for Radanna. She says we are to keep them hidden and safe until the time when they are needed.

The cultists say the hidden weapons will strike down their enemies on the Night of Dissolution. I no longer care. Their true future



is too entwined with chaos to foretell with any accuracy. Perhaps what they say is true. I do sense great changes coming in the next few years.

Yearsend 14, 717

I have somewhat befriended the Cobbledman. He grows more mad with each day, however. I hid my half of the spiral contrivance in his tower with him. I shall not even tell Radanna. Of course, she will not tell me where she keeps her half, either, but there's really only one place it could be. Certainly no one could sneak a ladder up to that secret door without her knowing about it.

Sun 10, 718

The Day of Joining. Not a favored day for those in my profession. Radanna and her friends have brought forth a goat-headed demon to live in the high tower. Its presence disrupts my ability to foretell the future. It is a creation of beings called the Galchutt, Radanna says. An "earthbound demon" she calls it. To me, a demon is a demon. I do not care for the way it looks at us—like domesticated animals. I can also feel its oppressive age. It is very old.

Sun 21, 718

The goat-headed thing has called demons from the Dark Reliquary to it here. They join the horrible menagerie of rat-things the cultists already hide in our house. And, of course, the Cobbledman. Soon, it seems, demons will walk the streets of this city, and no one will give it a second thought. I have had a dream of death.

Sun 29, 718

The name of this month means nothing to Ptolus now. No sun shall shine here again, although a strange new moon haunts my vatic dreams.

Blessing 2, 718

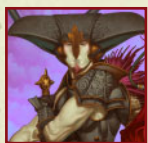
Thabitha lost the key to the square tower. Radanna is furious. I shall have to protect the girl, or Radanna will certainly hand her over as a sacrifice to her terrible friends. Thabitha says that she was on the rooftop garden when she last had the key.

Harvest 22, 718

Well, it appears to be over. Urieth says the Knights of the Pale are on their way. The cultists flee. Radanna is slaying the girls one by one. I cannot stop her. The spirit keeps anyone else from leaving. My end comes in darkness.

THE CULT BOOK

This terrible book is actually a collection of handwritten documents, letters, and notes (all scribbled in different hands, some nearly illegible) that someone has stuffed into a very short but disturbing tome called the *Book of Faceless Hate*. However, one can't learn that title without reading the book itself—no title marks the tattered, dark brown cover at all. The Cult Book is full of rhetoric, myths, suppositions, half-truths, and twisted logic, but also some important information from three years ago. Characters who take the time to read through and decipher all of its pages learn the following information.



CHAOS

True chaos, or “deep chaos,” is a religion based on the fundamental aspects of hate, destruction, death, and dissolution. The philosophy of chaos is one of change. It teaches that the current world is a creation of order and structure, but that it was flawed from the beginning due to lack of foresight or understanding of what living creatures really want or need. The gods of creation—gods of order—are untouchable and unknowable. They are aloof and uncaring, says the teaching of true chaos.



THE LORDS OF CHAOS

Even before the world existed, the Lords of Chaos were. Beyond mortals, beyond gods, these great beings wielded power unimaginable. Called the Galchutt by some, the Natharl'nacna by others, these dark ones attended the creation of the universe and called it flawed.

The Lords of Chaos were unjustly trapped in a terrible prison, and we have been trapped with them, but soon we shall all be free.

To a fortunate few, the Lords of Chaos granted great personal power. These blessed individuals were called the Vested of the Galchutt, for they were invested with the Galchutt's own essence. The first Vested were named Baalhazor, Gorgoth-Lol, Mrathrach, Thoggidrum, and Vladaam. Perhaps today, as the power of chaos rises again, new Vested will receive the Galchutt's blessing. With such power, the faithful can strike down their enemies and clear the way for their ascendancy.

In the ancient days, the Galchutt spawned new creatures called the Elder Brood. Chief among them were the zaug, some of whom eventually rebelled and struck out on their own. Much more successfully, they forged the “earthbound demons” called the rhodintor. The pinnacle of their creations, however, was the new type of craft called chaositech: devices fueled by chaos itself that granted wondrous powers.



CHAOSITECH

Chaositech, the gift of the Galchutt, is slowly returning to the world, as more and more of it is discovered in hidden caches every day. In Ptolus, much of it appears to be in the hands of a mysterious figure known only as the Surgeon in the Shadows. This individual uses his skills, coupled with chaositech and magic, to transform paying customers into living weapons or otherwise enhanced versions of themselves. Sometimes this transformation results in a hideous appearance, all for the glory of chaos. The Surgeon in the Shadows can not only alter the bodies of his subjects, but also the minds.



THE CHAOS CULTS

The various Cults of Chaos in Ptolus today are numerous but small. However, they are growing. More and more citizens see the truth and the light in chaos. They finally acknowledge the oppression and wrongness of order and life as most people know it.

Each of the many cults usually has its own chaos symbol. Plus, there are more general symbols, such as the many-pointed arrow, the green spiral, and the broken square. Even when it would be prudent to avoid use of any kind of symbols, the cultists use them anyway. They feel they gain strength and power from them.

Brothers of Venom

Like the Deathmantle cult described below, the Brothers of Venom have a taste for death and murder. Unlike those in the Deathmantle, however, these worshippers of chaos like their deaths slow and their murders subtle. As their name suggests, they love poisons of all kinds.

The Brothers of Venom's symbol is that of a shadowy, coiled serpent. They typically allow themselves to be called only “the Brotherhood” or “the Brotherhood of Ptolus.”

Crimson Coil

Members of the Crimson Coil wear hooded red robes and do not believe in showing their faces. They don't mix into normal society, but prefer to spend their lives cloistered in remote temples, often established within the ruins of another structure for symbolic purposes. The only time these cultists make an appearance is *en masse*, to carry out some act of terrible destruction. They are neither subtle nor gentle.

The Deathmantle

Members of the Deathmantle cult, known also as Death's Grimace, revere death, and obviously so. Each cultist wears a death's head mask, usually of copper or bronze, but occasionally of iron painted skull-white. They worship murder, specifically slaughter. Mass murder to the greatest degree—the slaying of a whole town, a whole city, or a whole nation—is their ultimate goal.

The Deathmantle cult associates closely with an assassin's guild called the Vai and with the death-lovers in the Necropolis known as the Forsaken.

The Ebon Hand

The Cult of the Ebon Hand worships physical deformity and mutation. The cultists refer to mutation as "the touch of the Ebon Hand." The chapel of this cult always keeps a large, black-painted stone hand, palm exposed, somewhere within it. This statue is the heart of the cult.

Cultists of the Ebon Hand have no distinctive garb but usually bear some black hand symbol—a tattoo, a charm, a small embroidery on their clothes, and so on. And, of course, many of them are physically deformed in some way, ranging from a prominent birthmark or a withered leg to ritual scarring or a functional mutation, like an extra eye or oversized arms.

Order of the Blooded Knife

In prehistoric times, before most organized religions of today, a bloodthirsty human cult sacrificed people in honor of a moon goddess whose name no one remembers any longer. This cult exists today, after a fashion, in the form of the Order of the Blooded Knife. Gone is the reverence for the moon, but this newer religion preserves many of the exact same rituals involving human sacrifice. But human sacrifice is not enough to distinguish this cult from the other followers of chaos. The order's unique trait is that it poses as other religions in order to establish itself secretly in society.

The members of the order usually keep a symbol on them somewhere depicting a curved knife dripping blood. Other than that (usually secret) symbol, they dress like members (and priests) of whatever religion they use as a front.

The Plagueborn

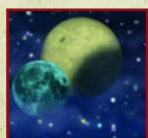
The cultists known as the Plagueborn seek to achieve the elegance and artistry of destruction through disease and pestilence. The Plagueborn also promote the accumulation of filth, rot, and decay that harbors disease.

Not surprisingly, Plagueborn temples are found in sewers, trash heaps, waste pits, and other places of filth and decay. They take the rat as their totem and call ratmen their brethren. They bear rat symbols and even wear the skins of rats and dire rats.

Tolling Bell

Certain ancient books describe the end of the world as coming like the "tolling of a bell." The cultists of the Tolling Bell name themselves with this fact in mind. These cultists seek nothing short of the eschaton—the end of all the world. It seems that members of other cults sometimes "graduate" to this one, as though it held one of the inner mysteries of a general Cult of Chaos.

Cultists of the Tolling Bell wear tattered blue cloaks and carry large handbells. Their symbol is a bell with cracks in its surface.

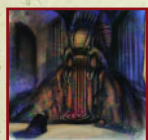


THE NIGHT OF DISSOLUTION

In all chaos cults, change is regarded as a good thing. Members always speak of the "coming changes": revolt, revolution, a rejection of the status quo, a reorganization of society, and punishment for those who oppose them and do not see the truth of chaos. The "coming changes," and the goal of every cult, is ultimately the actualization of the Night of Dissolution, or the eschaton.

The Night of Dissolution is the theoretical night when chaos overwhelms the world. Most cultists, of course, have no real idea of when such a thing may happen, other than vague references to "sooner than you think." They also have a multitude of scenarios in which they predict the night will arise:

- The Lords of Chaos will return all at once and destroy all who oppose them—and possibly the entire world, remaking it in their own image and somehow rewarding those who helped them.
- The world will destroy itself in conflict, revolution, and natural disasters, because that is the natural way of things (and why chaos reigns supreme).
- Ever so slowly, through the workings of those loyal to chaos, the world's order will fall apart. The Night of Dissolution is merely the very end of that process.
- A cosmic event, like the fall of a meteor, the appearance of a new moon, or a single, terrible earthquake that rends the world asunder—sent by the Lords of Chaos—will end it all.



THE FINAL RITUAL

Spoken of only in whispers even by cultists, this ceremony is rumored to be the ultimate expression of loyalty and fidelity to the Lords of Chaos. It can be performed only by someone whom the dark masters choose to invest with power as they did in the ancient days, and it can occur only in times of widespread fear and panic. If completed, this ritual actually brings about the Night of Dissolution before its predestined time.

NEW MONSTER: VENOM-SHAPED THRALL

This new monster, the venom-shaped thrall, comes into play in Chapters 4 through 6. A magical poison known as *askara*, developed in tandem by the Brothers of Venom and the Cult of the Ebon Hand, transforms humanoids into venom-shaped thralls.

VENOM-SHAPED THRALL

Large Aberration

Hit Dice: 6d8+18 (42 hp)

Initiative: +5

Speed: 30 feet

Armor Class: 18 (–1 size, +1 Dexterity, +8 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 17

Base Attack/Grapple: +4/+10

Attack: +6 melee (1d6+2 plus poison, bite)

Full Attack: +6 melee (1d6+2 plus poison, bite) and +3 melee (1d4+1, 2 claws)

Space/Reach: 10 feet/10 feet

Special Attacks: Improved grab, poison

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 feet, *spider climb*

Saves: Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +5

Abilities: Str 15, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 5, Wis 10, Cha 6

Skills: Jump +5, Listen +3, Spot +3

Feats: Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Weapon Focus (bite)

Environment: Underground

Organization: Solitary, pair, or swarm (3–10)

Challenge Rating: 4

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always chaotic neutral

Advancement: 7–8 HD (Large); 9–18 HD (Huge)

Level Adjustment: —

Victims injected with *askara* weaken until they collapse. Within twelve hours, their bodies secrete a dark, syrupy substance that covers them and then hardens, forming a large, black, spherical cocoon around them. Within another twenty-four hours, victims emerge from their cocoons, mutated into hideous amalgams of their previous forms and some insectlike creature.

Once reborn, the thralls must obey the commands of any chaotic evil cleric to the best of their abilities.

The thralls live in a state of continuous agony, making their existence torture and death a welcome relief. This means that, when given the chance, they throw themselves into danger and battle (their masters won't let them commit suicide). They seem angry and vicious, but it is just due to the pain of the magical poison and the commands of their evil and twisted masters.

Most venom-shaped thralls die within 1d4+2 weeks of their transformation, but a few hang on for 3d6 weeks. A *neutralize poison*

spell, followed by a *remove disease* and a *restoration* spell, causes the pain to end and the transformation to reverse itself over 1d4 days. A *heal*, *greater restoration*, or more powerful magic (such as *wish* or *miracle*) reverses the transformation over the course of just 1d6 rounds.

Venom-shaped thralls do not speak, but they understand whatever languages they could speak in their prior lives. They retain some semblance of their former memories as well, but no skills, feats, spells, combat abilities, or anything else. A 1st-level orc warrior and a 15th-level human wizard transformed by *askara* end up being thralls identical in strength and capabilities, and only slightly different in appearance.

COMBAT

Venom-shaped thralls battle fiercely and with abandon. They fight to the death, using teeth and claws in their new chitin-covered forms. Their bite carries a dose of the same venom that created them. They can use weapons and are proficient in all simple and martial types. However, they rarely wield them, as their masters generally consider them unworthy of weapons.

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 16, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Strength. The save DC is Constitution based.

Concentrated Dose (Su): This is a more potent injection of venom than the standard bite delivers. It is possible only against a grappled or helpless foe, as using it requires a full-round action. It also has a Fortitude DC of 16. Those affected suffer 1 point of Strength damage

per round until their Strength is 0, at which point they collapse into a coma. Within twelve hours, they are in a black cocoon. Within another twenty-four hours, the victim emerges from the cocoon as a venom-shaped thrall.

If someone administers a *neutralize poison* spell at any point before the cocoon forms, the process stops and the victim recovers slowly, 1 point of Strength returning every ten minutes.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a venom-shaped thrall must hit with a claw attack. It then can attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold, and the next round it can make a bite attack with a concentrated dose of venom using a full-round action.

Spider Climb (Ex): Thralls can move on walls or even ceilings as though using *spider climb*.

