

OLD CHELIAX

At its height, the empire of **Cheliox** had holdings that reached south from **Varisia** to **Garund** and east all the way to **Galt**. Aroden was prophesized to return to the world of mortals to usher in a new Age of Glory, and those prophecies predicted the Chelaxian city of **Westcrown** would be the point of his arrival. Instead, his death ignited a civil war that lasted for decades. When the **Thrice-Damned House of Thrune** emerged as victor, Cheliox had forever changed. Under House Thrune's rule, Cheliox now viewed Hell as a blueprint for the state. The church of **Asmodeus** became Cheliox's official religion, and diabolism its most powerful philosophy. The devil had come home to rule, and while the nation's politicians claimed that they maintained control of their fate—that House Thrune had merely allied with Hell to maintain its power and keep order—the nation's internal and external enemies know better.

Many of Cheliox's outlying provinces—such as **Andoran**, **Galt**, and **Sargava**—revolted and became their own nations. The nation of **Isgar** remains, at least on paper, a thrall. Cheliox values Isgar for its important position as a trade route to **Lake Encarthan**, but when Isgar was wracked by the **Goblinblood Wars** several decades ago,

House Thrune did little to provide aid. As the repercussions of the **Whispering Tyrant's** return to power send ripples of nervous dread through the land, Isgar's people grow fearful that they lack not only their own political strength, but also that of their supposed protector, and as a result, Isgar is one of the lands in the Inner Sea region most in need of heroes.

Recently, several uprisings within Cheliox have further tested the nation's resolve. An Iomedean rebellion called the **Glorious Reclamation**, bolstered by their recovery of a holy artifact, threatened Cheliox from within. House Thrune and the Asmodean church defeated the Glorious Reclamation, but at a price—a simultaneous rebellion was successful, with a group of rebels called the **Silver Ravens** negotiating the secession of the new nation of **Ravounel**.

North of Cheliox, the shadowy nation of **Nidal** remains the diabolic nation's only real ally. A theocracy ruled by the church of **Zon-Kuthon**, Nidal is the oldest nation on Avistan, for its people turned to the Midnight Lord for protection during the Age of Darkness after Earthfall. Today, pain and dread are comforts to the citizens of Nidal, and millennia of rule under a church that revels in pain have left them inured to agony and welcoming of loss.

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SAGA LANDS

While the opportunity for epic adventure exists throughout the world, in recent years, it seems the Saga Lands have produced the most notorious and legendary tales. These sprawling northern reaches feature kingdoms ruled by vikings and witches, realms home to mammoth-riding Kellid clans, and a frontier land of free cities and dangerous wilderness—all of which are steeped in the ancient legacy of the long-gone empire of **Thassilon**.

Millennia ago, the nation of Thassilon was ruled by the sinful, tyrannical **runelords**. These wizards carved out legends intended to last for an eternity, but even the mighty runelords succumbed to the devastation of Earthfall. The seven reigning runelords of that time retreated into the safety of extradimensional domains, and for eons they slumbered, until they began to wake in 4707 ar.

The frontier realm of **Varisia**, once the heart of Thassilon, bore the brunt of the wrath of the first awakened runelord, an avaricious sadist named **Karzoug**. A band of unlikely heroes emerged from the small coastal town of Sandpoint to eventually face and defeat Karzoug, yet his awakening soon roused other slumbering runelords, and a new band of heroes was forced to defeat the risen tyrants.

While the neighboring **Lands of the Linnorm Kings**, **Realms of the Mammoth Lords**, and witch-haunted **Irrisen** never faced direct repercussions from the runelords, these northern lands hold dangers of their own. A long-running cold war between the vikings of the Linnorm Kingdoms and the winter witches of Irrisen to the east finally came to a sputtering end when a daughter of the immortal witch **Baba Yaga** attempted to defy her mother and usurp Irrisen's traditions of rule. While the eternal winter of Irrisen set in place by Baba Yaga endures, its new ruler, **Anastasia**, might prove to be the first benevolent presence to sit on the throne in centuries. Farther to the east, the **Kellid clans** of the Realm of the Mammoth Lords played their own pivotal roles in defying the demons of the **Worldwound**.

Recently, a new nation has risen in the Saga Lands. After the runelords were defeated, two surviving runelords decided to adjust their traditions to fit this strange new world they found themselves in. Now the fledgling nation of **New Thassilon** sprawls along the northern border of Varisia, and it remains to be seen if its rulers will fully adopt a more peaceful path or if it's but a matter of time before the old traditions of sin and violence rise once again.



SHINING KINGDOMS

The empire of **Taldor** was historically the heart of the Shining Kingdoms. In the early Age of Enthronement, Taldor sent several **Armies of Exploration** to colonize the surrounding lands. Today, Taldor is but a shadow of its former glory, but after a recent bout of internal strife, a progressive new empress has claimed the crown, and Taldor might finally be on the path to recovering its old prestige.

To the west, the democratic nation of **Andoran** stands as a rising star on the international stage. Ever since the province seceded from the nation of **Cheliah**, Andoran's military has helped restrict the power of their former rulers, and its heroes have stood tall against all manner of peril to the common folk. But with Cheliah's recent upsets, rumors flow that **House Thrune** might seek to reclaim its wayward thrall. Given the looming threat of the **Whispering Tyrant**, an all-out war between the two nations could be disastrous.

Northeast of Andoran sprawls the dwarven city-states of the **Five Kings Mountains**. No strangers to war, both against enemies and among themselves, the dwarves of the Five Kings remain allies of Andoran but have their own troubles that command most of their attention. To the west, the rich and powerful nation of **Druma** controls nearly half

of Lake Encarthan's southern shoreline. From there, it uses its position to bolster its coffers and further the **Prophecies of Kalistrade**, a philosophy that teaches that wealth can be achieved through adherence to strict practices.

Northeast of Druma lie the forested elven lands of **Kyonin**, one of Avistan's oldest nations. This land belonged to elves long before Earthfall, but for thousands of years after that devastation, they left their realm abandoned. In that time, a powerful demon named **Treerazer** seized control of the forest's southern reaches, corrupting the terrain into a desolate mire called the **Tanglebriar**. Although the original elven inhabitants have returned, they've been unable to force Treerazer from their southern border.

Farther east is the nation of **Galt**. Wracked for decades by a self-perpetuating series of rebellions and revolutions, this land has been torn apart over and over. Its people are weary as they continue to live in the shadow of the **final blades**—powerful magical guillotines that claim the souls of those they decapitate. Stories are beginning to trickle that a bloody gala took the lives of many Galtan dignitaries and shattered the ranks of the Gray Gardeners who control the guillotines. If true, change might be coming to this tumultuous nation.

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CULTURES

Of course, there's more to the world of Golarion than its geopolitical borders and wilderness regions. It's the people who dwell in those nations and the creatures that lurk in those wilds who bring the world to life.



GARUNDI



KELESHITE



KELLID



MWANGI



NIDALESE

HUMAN ETHNICITIES

A variety of ethnic groups make up the human populace of the Inner Sea region. Many of these groups have origins on distant lands, but the Inner Sea region has a diverse population drawn from across the globe. Human characters can be from any of these ethnicities, regardless of what land they call home.

Characters from these ethnicities speak Common—also known as Taldane—if they come from the Inner Sea region, and some ethnicities give access to a regional language or another uncommon language (*Player Core* 89). Half-elves and half-orcs arise across all human ethnicities and bear the features of both those ethnicities and their non-human parents.

Garundi

Garundi span the nations of northern Garund along the shores of the Inner Sea, and their clans are known for strength and empathy, treating their neighbors with compassion and respect. Their skin tones often range from dark brown to beige, and they often have tall statures, broad shoulders, and high cheekbones. Garundi have access to the Osiriani language.

Keleshite

Tracing their origins to the Keleshite Empire in the eastern deserts, Keleshites often have black hair, brown eyes, and dark- to cool-brown skin. Their culture takes pride in the empire's legacy, valuing boldness, wit, and luxury. Fashions tend to incorporate flowing fabrics, headdresses, and turbans. Keleshites have access to the Kelish language.

Kellid

In the craggy reaches of northern Avistan, Kellids live hard lives to survive the wilderness, wary of magic and relying on skill and might when hunting and fighting. They are typically a brawny and dark-haired people, tanned and bearing eyes that are often black, blue, or gray. Kellids have access to the Hallit language.

Mwangi

Spread across the vast continent of Garund, from the parched deserts in the north to the dense jungles of the Mwangi Expanse, the Mwangi people are divided into diverse subgroups: Bekyar, Bonuwat, Caldaru, Mauxi, and Zenj, among others. Mwangi skin tones range from black to dark brown to ocher, and they have black or dark-brown hair. Mwangi have access to the Mwangi language.

Nidalese

Nidalese hail from a culture that escaped destruction during the Earthfall, when a swarm of meteoroids carved out the Inner Sea. The ancient Nidalese pledged fealty to an evil shadow god to obtain salvation, and the grip of Zon-Kuthon has tainted these people ever since. Nidalese tend toward gray, ashy skin tones, with white, gray, or black hair. Nidalese have access to the Shadowtongue language.

Shoanti

The Shoanti clans, called quahs, were long ago driven out from lush territory in the nation of Varisia into the harsh badlands of the Storval Plateau. Stalwart

and tenacious, they remain oath-sworn to someday retake what they've lost. Their skin tones typically range from sepia to russet, and quah members are easily identified by their shaved heads and traditional tattoos. Shoanti have access to the Shoanti language.

Taldan

Renowned as artisans, scholars, and soldiers, Taldans have spread throughout Avistan, as the empire of Taldor once spanned almost half of the northern continent. Taldans often have brown hair, pale white to deep-bronze skin, and green, gray, or amber eyes. Their native language, Taldane, is so widespread that it's also called Common.

Tian

Relatively uncommon in the Inner Sea region, Tians originally come from myriad nations in Tian Xia, a continent on the opposite side of the world. They typically have dark hair, but their body types, skin tones, and eye colors vary greatly, as "Tian" is in fact a general term describing several ethnicities. Tians have access to the Tien language.

Ulfen

The coastal raiders of the Ulfen clans are skilled sailors and bodyguards. They're often tall, with pale to ruddy skin and blond, light-brown, or red hair. They typically show pride in their appearances by adorning themselves with furs, horn, and ivory. Ulfen have access to the Skald language.

Varisian

Varisians historically favored a nomadic life, but today many lead a settled lifestyle in places like Ustalav and their namesake land. Their skin tones typically range from tawny beige to light brown. They have a wide variety of hair colors from platinum to red to brown, and their large, expressive eyes range into even rarer colors like violet and gold. Varisians have access to the Varisian language.

Vudrani

Though the empire of Vudra is far to the east, it has a foothold in the Inner Sea on the island of Jalmeray. A widespread belief in reincarnation makes dedication to self-improvement a hallmark of Vudrani culture. Vudrani typically have dark eyes and skin tones that run from umber to tawny. Their hair is often black and ranges in thickness and texture. Vudrani have access to the Vudrani language.

OTHER ANCESTRIES

Catfolk

Legend holds that the amurrans—known as catfolk to others—were created as guardians against threats to home, nature, and the world at large. This stewardship seems to have granted them remarkable bravery and a spark of luck. With the curiosity and quick feet of a cat, amurran immigrants and explorers have formed communities across the Inner Sea especially within the Golden Road, Mwangi Expanse, and Crown of the World.

Dwarves

For untold eons, the dwarven people dwelled in the lightless reaches of the Darklands. It wasn't until after Earthfall that the dwarves undertook their legendary Quest for Sky, during which the majority of dwarves made a pilgrimage to relocate to the surface of Golarion. Upon their arrival, they established several immense Sky Citadels at each location where they emerged from the realm below. Today, dwarves generally remain a patient, proud, and traditionalist people.



SHOANTI



TALDAN



TIAN



ULFEN



VARISIAN



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CATFOLK



DWARF



ELF



GNOME



GOBLIN



HALFLING



KHOLO

Elves

Golarion is not the original elven home world, but those elves who dwell here today are considered native to the planet. These people first came to Golarion from the neighboring planet of Castrovel via a network of portals known as *aiudara*. While elves abandoned Golarion for several thousand years after the devastation of Earthfall, they have since returned in force. Elves are widespread throughout the Inner Sea and are a mysterious and somewhat aloof people with a knack for magic.

Gnomes

The first gnomes arrived on Golarion at some point after Earthfall from the otherworldly dimension known as the First World, either fleeing a great danger or banished for a crime whose nature few can recall. Since that time, gnomes have fully become creatures of the Universe, although they all live in fear of the life-threatening condition known as Bleaching. Gnomes today live throughout the Inner Sea, seeking novel experiences to stave off the bleaching.

Goblins

Although many adventurers might assume a goblin is a goblin, these scrappy and creative people are as diverse as any other ancestry. They tend to live playful and creative lives, bonding closely with allies in a short amount of time. While goblins are found most anywhere in the Inner Sea and adapt based on their environment, goblins tend to share certain cultural aspects. Namely, a penchant for songs, a sometimes-dangerous appreciation for fire, and fear of dogs and horses.

Halflings

Many halflings have lived in the shadow of other societies for as long as they can remember, blending in with neighboring cultures and adding their own unique variations over time or as necessity demands. However, numerous distinct halfling cultures exist outside of the context of other peoples and nations, such as the Jaric, Mihrini, Othoban, and Uhlam halflings who formed their own traditions without the influence of humans and other creatures.

Kholo

Hyena-headed kholo, ever seeking to survive and get ahead in the most pragmatic way possible, make for unreliable neighbors but excel at hunting intelligent prey. Kholo dwell primarily in Garund and are particularly common in Osirion, Katapesh, the Mwangi Expanse, and Nex. Kholo tend to live within matriarchal familial groups with a focus on storytelling and ancestral knowledge.

Kobolds

Industrious and fecund, kobolds thrive anywhere they can, often dwelling in narrow confines and twisting burrows in the hinterlands of rural regions or spreading throughout the sewers of urban centers. These small, reptilian humanoids draw power from magical creatures, gaining abilities and influence from these powerful beings. Many kobold tribes grow around powerful creatures like dragons, fey, or other magical beings, with the kobolds looking to these creatures as leaders or advisors. Scattered in pockets across the Inner Sea, every kobold tribe has its own society and traditions, painstakingly molded to survive their hardscrabble lives.

Leshies

The first leshies were grown by druids as minions, but over time these strange, plantlike creatures have diversified and now take many forms. Leshies have yet to organize or form nations of their own, but considering how quickly their numbers have grown and how swiftly they adapt to new regions, a leshy nation seems all but guaranteed in the near future.

Lizardfolk

Once widespread in Avistan and Garund, the isolationist lizardfolk—also known as iruxis—have been forced farther and farther into their forests and swamps by climate change and the rapid expansion of other humanoids. Lizardfolk maintain long-standing oral traditions and a passion for astrology. Most lizardfolk enclaves are found along the waterways of regions like the Broken Lands, Mwangi Expanse, and Shining Kingdoms.

Orcs

Orcs were pushed to the surface by the dwarves during the Quest for Sky, resulting in a conflict with their neighbors that has tainted their relations since. Now, however, the looming threat of Tar-Baphon has many putting old grudges aside. Most orcs value might and seek opportunities to test their strength against others, be it war, physical contests, or adventuring.

Planar Scions

A wide variety of planar scions dwell in the Inner Sea region, including the descendants of celestials and fiends, who have mixed their bloodlines with those of mortals, and other lineages that arose from the influence of the Elemental Planes. In Cheliah, those who exhibit diabolic influences are particularly despised, as the leaders of that nation see them as examples of mortals who succumbed to fiendish influence rather than keeping the devils properly under control.

Ratfolk

Ratfolk, also known as ysoki, are famous for their cunning, adaptability, and dedication to their family. This, plus an avid desire to travel, has seen them survive and thrive across the Inner Sea. While some view ratfolk negatively due to their appearance, others see them for the fastidious and curious people they are. Ratfolk enclaves dot the regions of the Broken Lands, Eye of Dread, and Saga Lands.

Tengu

Tengu originated in Tian Xia, claimed by legend to have flown to Golarion on shooting stars. A major diaspora saw the crow-like people spread into Avistan and beyond, looking for opportunities and new homes. While small and scattered enclaves can be found around the Inner Sea region, tengu are most often found along the coasts, especially in Absalom and around the Shackles.

REGIONAL LANGUAGES

These languages are uncommon outside the region of their genesis. A character hailing from one of the regions listed below automatically has access to that language. In the Inner Sea region, the language referred to as Common elsewhere in the rules is the same as Taldane. Nearly every language listed here is spoken on the melting-pot streets of Absalom.

REGIONAL LANGUAGES

Language	Regions
Hallit	Irrisen, Mendev, Numeria, Realm of the Mammoth Lords, Sarkoris, Ustalav
Kelish	Katapesh, Kelesh, Osirion, Qadira
Mwangi	Mwangi Expanse, the Shackles, Thuvia, Vidrian
Osiriani	Geb, Katapesh, Mana Wastes, Nex, Osirion, Rahadoum, Thuvia
Shoanti	Hold of Belkzen, Varisia
Skald	Irrisen, Lands of the Linnorm Kings
Tien	Lands of the Linnorm Kings, Realm of the Mammoth Lords, Tian Xia
Varisian	Brevoy, the Gravelands, Nidal, Nirmathas, Ustalav, Varisia
Vudrani	Jalmeray, Katapesh, Nex, Vudra



KOBOLD



LESHY



LIZARDFOLK



ORC



RATFOLK



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CREATURES

Many types of creatures exist on Golarion, some kindly, others cruel, some wild, others organized. Their appearances can range from cute and anthropomorphic to completely monstrous. Even creatures usually opposed to civilization whom brave adventurers might face in battle can sometimes be reasoned with, even befriended. Not all of them are evil, and some actively help their neighbors. And some creatures, of course, simply want to be left alone.

These creatures have held important cultural or historical roles on Golarion, particularly in the Inner Sea region.

Alghollthus

Perhaps the oldest intelligent creatures on Golarion, alghollthus ruled vast empires in the depths of the world's oceans for eons before the first humans came to be, with some of their wall carvings even stating they created the first human beings. Moreover, their claim to have existed on Golarion before the gods themselves turned their divine eyes upon the world carries some disturbing implications.

Demons

Normally bound to the Outer Rifts, demons can be found wherever evil spellcasters call them to this world. Some

notable locations where demons have established a lasting presence include the Sarkoris Scar in the north, Usaro in the Mwangi Expanse, and the Tanglebriar in southern Kyonin.

Devils

Although the rulers of Cheliax maintain that Hell is but a blueprint and devilkind a tool for House Thrune to maintain control of their country (and decadent lifestyle), devils have an insidious hold over the nation. With the state formally devoted to Asmodeus and Hellknights serving as its arbiters, it should come as no surprise that devils are unusually common in Cheliax and neighboring realms.

Dragons

Dragons are rightfully counted among the most legendary of monsters in the Inner Sea. Most prefer to dwell in remote lairs, swooping down on civilization only when their violent tempers push them to raid. Kind dragons may seem less common than their malevolent kin, but only because they have less of an urge to meddle with humanoids.

Genies

The nation of Qadira has a long history with genies, but geniekind's involvement with the Inner Sea region is certainly not limited to that nation. They serve as architects and creators of impossibilities on the isle of Jalmeray, and in Katapesh they're rumored to be infused into the very stone and soil of the land.

Giants

These massive humanoids were ruled under the yoke of ancient Thassilon, where they were forced by magic-infused rune giants to erect enormous monuments that remain to this day in Varisia, Belkzen, and the Lands of the Linnorm Kings. Now, these massive humanoids rule the rugged reaches of the world, largely unaware that they were once part of a society destroyed and reshaped by Thassilon.

Serpentfolk

In ancient times, serpentfolk once ruled the second layer of the Darklands along with much of the surface of Garund and Avistan. Azlant's expansion into the Inner Sea region long before Earthfall led to a terrible war between the two peoples. When Azlant proved the victor, the surviving serpentfolk fled into the Darklands and haven't been seen since.



ALGHOLLTHU

RELIGION

Selection of a deity is critical for certain classes—like champions and clerics—but most characters pay respect to at least one deity to find a focus in life and guide their choices. Some people instead worship a group of deities arranged in a pantheon, follow a nondeific religion like the Green Faith, or adhere to a philosophy. Keep in mind that far more deities, religions, and philosophies exist on any world, Golarion included, than those detailed below.

DEITIES

Anyone can worship a deity, but those who do so devoutly should take care to pursue the faith's edicts (behaviors the faith encourages) and avoid its anathemas (actions considered blasphemous). Each deity below has a short description, followed by their edicts and anathemas. For more information on the various deities listed below (and others), see *Pathfinder Lost Omens Divine Mysteries*.



Abadar

The Master of the First Vault holds sway over cities, the law, merchants, and wealth. Abadar seeks to bring civilization to the wild places of the world, encourages adherence to the law, and promotes commerce and trade within civilization. He also encourages cooperation among the various ancestries. Churches of Abadar are often found in major cities, and his followers include many judges, lawmakers, bankers, and merchants.

Edicts bring civilization to the frontiers, earn wealth through hard work and trade, follow the rule of law

Anathema engage in banditry or piracy, steal, undermine a law-abiding court



Asmodeus

The Prince of Darkness reigns over contracts, pride, and tyranny, and he delights in tempting mortals to give in to corruption. He promotes strict hierarchies where everyone knows their place, and he takes advantage of order for his own selfish benefit. The Church of Asmodeus is the state religion of Cheliah, and his strict adherence to contracts and order see him revered by certain members of the Hellknights.

Edicts negotiate contracts to your best advantage, rule tyrannically and torture weaker beings, show subservience to your betters

Anathema break a contract, share power with the weak, insult Asmodeus by showing mercy to your enemies



Calistria

The mischievous goddess known as the Savored Sting extols the virtues of lust, revenge, and trickery. Though Calistria is most widely worshipped by elves, she has followers among many other ancestries as well. Her faith is popular—if not dominant—across most of Avistan, and she is often favored by sex workers, thrill seekers, and spies.

Edicts pursue your personal freedom, seek hedonistic thrills, take revenge

Anathema become too consumed by love or a need for revenge, let a slight go unanswered



Cayden Cailean

The Drunken Hero ascended from mortal life on a drunken dare and became the god of ale, freedom, and wine. Cayden promotes freedom and encourages others to find their own path in life. He fights for just causes and delights in the best indulgences. His church is popular anywhere that people enjoy a good drink but thrives in locales that value fun and freedom above strict adherence to rules.

Edicts drink, aid the oppressed, seek glory and adventure

Anathema waste alcohol, be mean or standoffish when drunk, oppress the vulnerable



Desna

The kindly Song of the Spheres presides over dreams, luck, stars, and travelers. An ancient goddess, Desna delights in freedom and mystery, and she encourages her followers to do the same. As the patron of journeys and the stars, she is popular among explorers, navigators, and vagabonds. Halflings and Varisians are especially known to hold a place in their heart for the deity.

Edicts aid fellow travelers, explore new places, express yourself through art and song, find what life has to offer

Anathema cause fear or despair, cast *nightmare* or use similar magic to corrupt dreams, engage in bigoted behavior



Erastil

Old Deadeye is god of family, farming, hunting, and trade. Long ago he was a horned god of the hunt, but his worship evolved to focus on rural communities. His clergy are most often encountered in Avistan's pastoral or wilderness settlements. In many cases, they're the only divine presence to be found in such out-of-the-way locales.

Edicts care for your home and family, fulfill your duties, keep the peace, protect the community

Anathema abandon your home in its time of need, choose yourself over your community, tarnish your reputation, tell lies

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Gorum

Soldiers call out prayers to Our Lord in Iron, god of battle, strength, and weapons. Gorum emphasizes strength and power, encouraging his followers to seek out war and combat as the ultimate way to worship him. Many who face the ravages of war look to Gorum, and he is also found among cultures who value strength of arms, such as Kellids, orcs, and Ulfens.

Edicts attain victory in fair combat, push your limits, wear armor in combat

Anathema kill prisoners or surrendering foes, prevent conflict through negotiation, win a battle through underhanded tactics or indirect magic



Gozreh

A deity of two aspects, known as the Wind and the Waves, Gozreh rules over nature, the sea, and weather. Gozreh is popular with druids and those who seek to preserve the wilds. Sailors and others who live or die by the water are often followers of this god, such as the seafaring Bonuwat of the Mwangi Expanse.

Edicts cherish, protect, and respect nature in all its forms

Anathema bring civilization to intrude on the wild, create undead, despoil areas of natural beauty



Iomedae

Iomedae is goddess of honor, justice, rulership, and valor, and she is called the Inheritor because she inherited her mantle when the god of humanity perished. Prior to her ascension, Iomedae walked the planet as a mortal. Many paladins follow her faith. She is strongest wherever there is great evil to be vanquished, such as the Gravelands and Sarkoris Scar—despite the rule of Asmodeus in Chelax, Iomedae's church is vaguely tolerated there as well, as Iomedae was Chelaxian when she was human.

Edicts be temperate, fight for justice and honor, hold valor in your heart

Anathema abandon a companion in need, dishonor yourself, refuse a challenge from an equal



Irori

When the Master of Masters attained true enlightenment, he became a god of history, knowledge, and self-perfection. Irori promotes discipline and teaches that one who can master himself finds the greatest benefits the world can provide. His worship is strongest in the island nation of Jalmeray but has spread across the Inner Sea region.

Edicts be humble; help others perfect themselves; hone your body, mind, and spirit to a more perfect state; practice discipline

Anathema become addicted to a substance, destroy an important historical text, repeatedly fail to maintain self-control



Lamashtu

The Mother of Monsters is goddess of aberrance, monsters, and nightmares. She seeks to corrupt

mortals and populate the world with her twisted and monstrous brood. Her clergy revels in untamed brutality and seeks to tear down the beauty standards and creature comforts of civilization—she is sometimes revered by those cast aside by society, but her glorification of debasement and self-harm often sees these unfortunates worse off under her malevolent care.

Edicts bring power to outcasts and the downtrodden, indoctrinate children in Lamashtu's teachings, make the beautiful monstrous, reveal the corruption and flaws in all things

Anathema attempt to treat a mental illness or deformity, provide succor to Lamashtu's enemies



Nethys

Called the All-Seeing Eye, the god of magic, has a dualistic nature of destruction and preservation; his ability to witness all things has shattered his mind. While respected by spellcasters the world over, the heart of the god's faith resides in Osirion, where Nethys once ruled over the land and guided its pharaoh.

Edicts seek out magical power and use it

Anathema pursue mundane paths over magical ones



Norgorber

The god of greed, murder, poison, and secrets has four aspects: Blackfingers, ally of alchemists and poisoners; the murderous Father Skinsaw; the thieving Gray Master; and the secretive Reaper of Reputation. His church is forbidden in every nation of the Inner Sea beyond Absalom, but his cults and agents can be found anywhere in the shadows.

Edicts keep your true identity secret, sacrifice anyone necessary, take every advantage in a fight, work from the shadows

Anathema allow your true identity to be connected to your dark dealings, share a secret freely, show mercy



Pharasma

Ancient and powerful beyond even most other gods, the Lady of Graves presides over birth, death, fate, and prophecy. From her throne in the Boneyard, she judges the souls of all who perish, and she ensures that the natural cycle of birth and death—the River of Souls—is not disrupted. She is widely worshipped across the Inner Sea, often among gravediggers and morticians who deal with death, but also among midwives and doctors who help bring about new life.

Edicts strive to understand ancient prophecies, destroy undead, lay bodies to rest

Anathema create undead, desecrate a corpse, rob a tomb



Rovagug

The Rough Beast is the god of destruction, disaster, and wrath. He was long ago imprisoned within Golarion's core at the hands of many other deities working in concert and seeks to one day break free and wreak havoc upon the world. Only the most nihilistic

of supplicants seek out this god, but he still finds followers among those in dangerous lands who respect Rovagug's unrivaled powers of destruction.

Edicts destroy all things, free Rovagug from his prison

Anathema create something new, let material ties restrain you, torture a victim or otherwise delay its destruction



Sarenrae

The Dawnflower is goddess of healing, honesty, redemption, and the sun. Once a powerful angel and empyreal lord, Sarenrae led the charge to imprison Rovagug. She seeks to redeem evil where possible or else destroy it swiftly. Sarenrae's worship came to the Inner Sea through Qadira and the Empire of Kelish, but her popularity has seen her become a major deity across Avistan and Garund.

Edicts destroy the Spawn of Rovagug, protect allies, provide aid to the sick and wounded, seek and allow redemption

Anathema create undead, lie, deny a repentant creature an opportunity for redemption, fail to strike down evil



Shelyn

The Eternal Rose is the goddess of art, beauty, love, and music. She seeks to one day redeem her corrupted brother, Zon-Kuthon. Shelyn promotes peace and love, and she encourages her followers to create beauty in a sometimes dark world. Shelyn is beloved by artists throughout Golarion, though she holds a special place in the heart of Taldor and its former territories.

Edicts be peaceful, choose and perfect an art, lead by example, see the beauty in all things

Anathema destroy art or allow it to be destroyed, unless saving a life or pursuing greater art; refuse to accept surrender



Torag

The dwarven deity called the Father of Creation is god of the forge, protection, and strategy. Though most widely worshipped by dwarves, those who treasure crafting and creation also follow Torag.

Edicts be honorable and forthright, keep your word, respect the forge, serve your people

Anathema tell lies or cheat someone, intentionally create inferior works, show mercy to the enemies of your people



Urgathoa

The amoral Pallid Princess oversees disease, gluttony, and undeath. Most undead and seekers of undeath pay some token of respect to Urgathoa, though her devotion to feverish excess and overconsumption brings in some adherents among the living as well. Her faith is especially notable in Geb, where the undead have more rights than the living.

Edicts become undead upon death, create or protect the undead, sate your appetites

Anathema deny your appetites, destroy undead, sacrifice your life



Zon-Kuthon

The Midnight Lord is a god of darkness, envy, loss, and pain. Once a god of art, beauty, and music, like Shelyn, he returned from a sojourn in the dark spaces between the planes horribly changed. His worship defines the nation of Nidal, and those Nidalese who do not pay reverence are hounded by Zon-Kuthon's shadow. Outside of this, he has no central church, and his followers are usually masochists, sadists, and those whose existence is ruled by pain.

Edicts bring pain to the world, mutilate your body

Anathema create permanent or long-lasting sources of light, provide comfort to those who suffer

FAITHS AND PHILOSOPHIES

Of course, faith can express itself in more ways than venerating a single deity—or any deity at all. A few examples of nondeific religions and philosophies are presented below. These faiths and philosophies don't have an external godhead that offers benefits to devotees.



Atheism

While most concede that the gods exist, some do not view them as worthy of worship, and a few even deny their presence altogether. The nation of Rahadoum is expressly atheist, after religious wars ravaged the country. It now seeks to glorify the work of mortals and curtail the influence of gods to control or exploit its people.

Edicts pursue your own agenda with faith in your own ability to excel

Anathema offer prayers to a deity



Green Faith

The worshippers of the Green Faith view nature as divine and draw strength from the knowledge of their place in the natural order. Adherents of the Green Faith are commonly found in regions of large forests or pristine wilderness, where awe-inspiring natural wonders easily rival the majesty of the gods.

Edicts guide civilization to grow in harmony with nature, preserve areas of natural wilderness, protect endangered species

Anathema cause damage to natural settings, kill animals for reasons other than self-defense or sustenance, allow abuse of natural resources



Whispering Way

These cultists believe undeath is the truest form of existence, and life is meant to be spent in preparation to transition to unlife after death. Agents of the Whispering Way have infiltrated many societies in Golarion but operate openly in regions such as Geb or the Gravelands.

Edicts oppose those who seek to destroy undead, protect necromantic secrets, seek methods to become undead, serve the Whispering Tyrant

Anathema destroy necromantic texts (unless they reveal secrets of the Whispering Way), teach others of the Whispering Way other than by whispering, use vitality energy to harm undead

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FACTIONS

While nations and faiths command vast resources and control entire regions, they must still compete for the loyalty of their followers. In addition to being swayed by church and state, many people are influenced by societal groups known as factions. These groups vary wildly in size and purpose—from local thieves' guilds interested only in filling the pockets and bellies of their members to far-reaching, international commercial conglomerates with their own private armies.

The largest factions compete with lesser sovereign nations for wealth, power, and influence, and they sometimes rival even larger nations. In some cases, nations take the risky step of relying upon these powerful factions, making them an extension of government itself (as is the case with the **Hellknights** in **Cheliah**, for example). In other cases, such as that of the **Red Mantis**, entire nations bow to the power of these organizations. Smaller groups, while less rich in resources, nonetheless inspire great zeal in their members. Those groups that strive to grow in size, influence, or wealth frequently attract more dedicated members.

The factions summarized below represent a sampling of those active in the Inner Sea region. Some, like the **Pathfinder Society** and the **Aspis Consortium**, are widespread and powerful; their influence can be found throughout the world. Others, such as the **Firebrands** and the **Sczarni**, are disorganized or regional in scope. All encourage adventurers to join their ranks, although the benefits each faction can offer an adventurer varies widely.



Aspis Consortium

For the sprawling mercantile concern known as the Aspis Consortium, survival and profit are more important than the well-being of any single member. Originally founded as a private trading endeavor, the Consortium has grown to be one of the largest business ventures in the Inner Sea region. Most of the group's members are skilled merchants and mercenaries, and the organization has made a merciless and bloodthirsty name for itself when it comes to ensuring profits. The Aspis Consortium has clashed many times with the Pathfinder Society.



Bellflower Network

The halfling population in diabolic Cheliah has suffered a history of brutal oppression and engrained discrimination. It should come as no surprise, then, to learn of the Bellflower Network, an organization founded by halfling freedom fighters that accepts any into its ranks, provided they help the oppressed fight back or escape from lands like Cheliah.



Esoteric Order of the Palatine Eye

Based in the nation of Ustalav, the scholars and philosophers of this semisecret society have long stood against the Whispering Way (page 163), but more recent events have placed them in opposition to the sinister goals of the Night Heralds. When left to their own devices, however, members of this faction prefer to explore and study dusty secrets hidden in the past, particularly those still awaiting rediscovery in the regions of the Golden Road—especially in the nation of Osirion.



Eagle Knights

The Eagle Knights are the protectors and defenders of the people of Andoran. The group itself consists of four subfactions—the Steel Falcons (who protect Andoran's interests beyond its borders), the Golden Legion (Andoran's defenders and the commanders of its armies), the Gray Corsairs (pirate hunters who also protect ships from Chelaxian pursuit), and the Twilight Talons (spies and deep cover agents).



Firebrands

Not all factions have central bases of operation or organized hierarchies of command. The loosely affiliated freedom fighters, swashbuckling heroes, and entertainers known as the Firebrands are one such group. They are united by a desire to fight oppression, oppose tyrannical regimes, rescue the wrongfully accused, and engage in jolly cooperation with like-minded heroes—all while building their own individual reputations and wealth. This group of defenders has proven surprisingly difficult for oppressive governments and cruel religions to defeat.



Free Captains

To an outside observer or a merchant whose ship has been looted or sunk, the pirates of the Shackles may seem like a disorganized scourge. But in truth, they're bound by a complex code of, if not honor, then a mutual recognition that it's good to have allies on the open seas. The Shackles

are ruled by a council of pirate lords who call themselves the Free Captains; they sail the southern Arcadian Ocean and follow their own code of conduct when it comes to who can be raided and what can be sunk—even if, to their victims, those rules seem capricious and arbitrary.



Hellknights

Several different orders of the mercenaries known collectively as Hellknights operate in Avistan, with most of their number stationed in the nation of Cheliax. These mercenaries see the law of the land as inviolate and offer their services as enforcers to any who can pay their prices. They wear distinctive suits of intimidating armor and take the legends of Hell as inspiration. They see no one but themselves as the true arbiters of law.



Knights of Lastwall

For centuries, the nation of Lastwall stood as a bulwark against the orcs of Belkzen and the lingering threat of the Whispering Tyrant. When the Whispering Tyrant escaped his prison, he unleashed a devastating apocalypse upon his enemies in Lastwall. Now Lastwall is destroyed, and the knights who once served there are without a home. In its absence, they have formed a ragtag group known as the Knights of Lastwall, and they carry on their charge to stand against the undead legions of the Whispering Tyrant wherever their skills are needed.



Lion Blades

The Lion Blades of Taldor are a secret organization committed to protecting the interests of Taldor and its ruler. They oppose Taldor's many enemies, foreign and domestic, through a program of infiltration, espionage, and assassination. One of the major goals of the Lion Blades is to rein in corruption within the empire (aside from corruption that's useful to them); another is keeping any one faction of the imperial court from becoming powerful enough to upset the status quo. Through its shadow schools, the Lion Blades intensively train new recruits before investing them with a high degree of initiative and latitude.



Magaambya

Golarion reeled from the disaster of Earthfall, and its peoples took long to recover. But recover they did, and one of the first institutions to rise from the ashes of near destruction was the Magaambya, an academy of arcane learning founded by the legendary wizard known as Old-Mage Jatembe. Today, the scholars of Magaambya not only preserve ancient magical traditions founded in those early days but also protect the learning and culture of the Mwangi people as a whole.



Night Heralds

The Night Heralds turn to the lure of the starlit night for guidance, seeking advice and aid from forces far removed from Golarion. The sinister aliens of the Dominion of the Black hold special importance for the Night Heralds, and many Night Heralds worship these inscrutable beings almost as gods. Night Heralds collect obscure texts and mysterious lore from the ancient past and use the secrets they find within to unravel larger hidden meanings and obscured truths beyond reality. Their hope is that when Golarion inevitably falls to alien influence, they will be rewarded for their service by the world's new masters.



Pathfinder Society

Many of the greatest explorers and adventurers of the modern age have recorded their discoveries in an ongoing series of chapbooks known as the *Pathfinder Chronicles*, published irregularly by the Pathfinder Society itself. This diverse group is devoted to exploring the world, supporting its agents in the field, and ensuring the discoveries they make are documented. The Society often finds itself in conflict with the more mercenary Aspis Consortium. The Pathfinder Society's pursuit of discovery often puts its agents in the thick of developing plots, forcing them to choose between becoming heroes or villains as events unfold.



Red Mantis

It's easy to know if an assassination is the work of the notorious Red Mantis; they typically kill with a sacred sawtooth saber, have a knack for targeting their victims in public or in sanctuaries believed to be safe, and take steps to ensure that those they are contracted to kill stay dead. Their prices change with each mission, but no matter the offer, the Red Mantis never targets rightfully ruling monarchs—their own deity, the mantis god Achaek, forbids the murder of those with a divine mandate to rule.



Sczarni

The Sczarni are a collection of bandits, smugglers, and thieves centered in Varisia. They are organized into tightly knit families, each of which has little or nothing in common with Sczarni in other locations beyond shared skills, techniques, and pursuits. Their crimes focus on thievery, scams, and other relatively nonviolent acts, but since these crimes have a tendency to spiral out of control, their schemes often result in violence anyway. The most far reaching or far-sighted of Sczarni families are always on the lookout for new opportunities, especially in new nations.

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NATIONS

From the smallest of city-states to a continent-spanning empire, nations define the political landscape of a setting and inform local culture and traditions. Knowing the details of a nation can help you as a Game Master, whether your game revolves around international disputes or you simply need to know what languages the common people are likely to speak.

Nations vary tremendously, from massive empires to isolated island realms, and their characteristics can give flavor and depth to your story and the PCs' adventures. An encounter in shadowy **Nidal**, where allegiance to Zon-Kuthon has literally blocked the sun from the sky, is going to have a very different tone than one in sun-drenched **Thuvia**. A nation that serves as a cultural or ancestral bastion, like elven **Kyonin**, might have a different reaction to adventurers than a continent-defining empire like **Taldor**. A journey into a new nation can introduce the heroes to a new people (if the party visits the hobgoblin nation of **Oprak**), a new philosophy (such as the materialistic Prophecies of Kalistrade in **Druma**), or a new foe (as visitors to the undead-ridden **Gravelands** will certainly learn).

Nations can also provide adventuring inspiration and hooks. When the heroes are caught in the crossfire between two nations in conflict, national concerns

become their own. Learning more about a nation's history or practices might lead to a great finding—or a loathsome practice the characters want to eradicate. A party might get involved in the political machinations of a nation's elite power mongers, or they might fall out of favor and find themselves on the run from the law!

Nations also influence a character's story on a personal level. A nation can suggest a character's ancestry, inform the languages they speak, and influence their choice of deity. As a GM, the relationship between a character and a nation can provide opportunities to better hook that character into your campaign. Has the character always lived there, or have they emigrated from elsewhere—and why? A character who fled due to political persecution might have long-standing enemies, while a hero who left due to ideological differences might have friends and family who seek to return them to the fold.

NATION STAT BLOCK

The stat block for a nation presents the core information about a nation in a simple, streamlined format.

NATION NAME

NATION

TRAITS

As with any stat block, a nation has a list of traits that convey its properties at a glance. These traits are overarching characteristics, but don't necessarily reflect every person or settlement that might be encountered—a nation is rarely monolithic, and the attitudes or cultural makeup of its people may differ drastically from those of the nation as a whole. For example, the elfen nation of Kyonin has the elf trait, indicating that it was created by and remains almost exclusively populated by elves. Similarly, a nation with an extremely particular focus might have a trait to represent that, such as Galt, which has the revolutionary trait.

Following the traits is a brief summary of the nation.

Government This names the formal government and describes the nation's governmental structure, such as a hereditary monarchy, an elected council, or a theocratic dictatorship.

Capital This is the established seat of the nation's government, with the city's population in parentheses.

Population The predominant ancestries of the nation are listed here, ordered from most to least common.

Languages The languages commonly spoken in the nation appear here, listed alphabetically.

Religions This lists the religions and philosophies commonly practiced in the nation. If a nation has a state religion, this is indicated in parentheses following that religion. If a nation has prohibited any religions, those are listed in a Prohibited entry following the common religions.

Other Characteristics A nation might have distinctive features that set it apart from other nations, such as the predominance of firearms in Alkenstar. Each such feature is detailed in this entry, though a nation rarely has more than one or two of these entries, and many don't have any.

Primary Exports This lists the nation's primary exports, such as raw materials, finished goods, services, and other resources. If the nation has no exports of note, this entry is omitted.

Primary Imports Much like primary exports, this entry details the resources commonly imported by the nation. Like exports, if the nation has no imports of note, this entry is omitted.

Allies This entry lists other nations, and occasionally large organizations, allied with the nation. It is omitted for nations with no significant relationships.

Enemies Other nations (and sometimes organizations) that oppose the nation appear here. This entry is omitted for nations with no enemies to speak of.

Factions Any significant organizations or factions operating within the nation are listed in this entry.

Threats This entry lists various threats the nation faces, such as aggression from neighboring nations, natural disasters, economic instability, magical anomalies, and so on.

Significant NPCs The final section of the nation's stat block presents the most significant NPCs of that nation, including its ruler (if it has one). These may not be the most powerful or

influential individuals in the nation, and instead are those most likely to be known by people within and outside of the nation.

Nations of Lost Omens

Presented below are stat blocks for two nations from the Lost Omens campaign setting. You can use these as examples when building your own nation stat blocks.

ANDORAN

NATION

DEMOCRATIC

Fledgling democracy in pursuit of freedom for all.

Government The People's Council (parliamentary democracy)

Capital Almas (76,600)

Population humans (Taldan), halflings, kobolds, dwarves

Languages Common

Religions Abadar, Cayden Cailean, Erastil, Iomedae, Shelyn

Primary Exports ancient treasures and artifacts, financial credit, lumber, minerals

Enemies autocratic governments concerned about potential domestic revolts, Cheliah, Katapesh

Factions Bellflower Network, Eagle Knights, Lumber Consortium

Threats aggression from Cheliah, rising trade consortium control, corruption among elected officials

Andira Marusek (dauntless female human warrior) Supreme Elect of the Executive Office and mayor of Almas

Reginald Cormoth (impish male human commander) Eagle Knight Commander General

Felandriel Morgethai (esteemed female elf wizard) Almas University provost

RAHADOUM

NATION

ATHEIST HUMAN

Desert nation unified by a humanistic worldview and rejection of religion.

Government Council of Elders (representative council)

Capital Azir (72,370)

Population humans (Garundi, Mauxi)

Languages Common, Osiriani

Religions Laws of Mortality; **Prohibited** all divine religions

Irreligious All worship of deities is prohibited by Rahadoumi law. Religious symbols and items are confiscated and proselytization incurs a heavy fine. Rahadoumi citizens perform healing through only mundane means or non-divine magic.

Primary Exports base metals, fine cloth, gemstones, herbal remedies, mechanical innovations, produce, salt, tools

Primary Imports lumber, pesh

Enemies pirates of the Shackles, Red Mantis, religious groups

Factions Aspis Consortium, Pure Legion

Threats conflict among neighboring nations, desert-dwelling monsters, disease, rapidly accelerating desertification

Malduoni (keen male human politician) Keeper of the First Law, elected by the Council of Elders

Kassi Aziril (radical female human doctor) "Mother of Modern Medicine," renowned medical researcher and philanthropist

Salim Ghadafar (begrudging male human divine agent) former Pure Legion captain forced into Pharasma's service

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SETTLEMENTS

Adventures have to start somewhere, and everyone needs some semblance of a home. Settlements are where characters can rest, recharge, retrain, and dedicate themselves to other downtime activities, all in relative peace. But settlements can also hold their own intrigues and dangers, providing adventure opportunities of their own.

For some players, a settlement might be nothing more than a convenient place to purchase gear and sell loot. For others, a settlement might be a beloved home they're willing to risk everything to protect. And sometimes, an entire campaign takes place entirely within the walls of a single city.

SETTLEMENTS IN A GAME

Given the variety of roles a settlement can play in an adventure, a Game Master should have a firm understanding of how they work in the game and how to best use them. Virtually every settlement uses the rules for urban environments presented starting on page 92. Those rules are primarily intended for encounter mode, however, and so the following guidance can help you best use a settlement in the broader narrative of your game.

Settlement Adventures

Designing adventures in a settlement generally follows the guidelines presented in **Adventure Design** on page 68. However, a settlement's greater population density also allows for a number of adventure styles and elements that aren't as common beyond the city walls.

Social encounters are one of the most common interactions within a settlement, starting with the guards at the city gates all the way to an audience with the queen. The **influence** and **reputation** subsystems (pages 187 and 200, respectively) can facilitate these interactions in a more structured way. **Chase scenes**, using the rules starting on page 192, are an iconic component of a settlement adventure, especially in a larger city where dense buildings and a variety of structures make for an exciting series of obstacles. A settlement is also an ideal place for a party to conduct an **infiltration** (page 196). Since most libraries, archives, and similar repositories of information are located within settlements, you might make use of the **research rules** (page 190). Ambitious characters might want to build up their own organizations using the **leadership subsystem** (page 204).

Modes of Play

Just like in other adventure locations, all three modes of play can happen in settlements. Since a settlement presents far more opportunities for noncombat activities than most other environments, characters

likely spend most of their time in **exploration mode**. **Downtime** almost exclusively takes place within a settlement.

Marketplaces

Where there are people, there is commerce. The **Buying and Selling Items** section on page 48 provides several sets of guidelines for handling commerce in your game, but it can also be helpful to have a sense of what items and economic power a given settlement has on its own merits.

In a given settlement, a character can usually purchase any **common** item (including formulas, alchemical items, and magic items) that's of the same or lower level than the settlement's. Usually, fewer of the highest-level items are available—you can use the **Party Treasure by Level** table on page 59 as a guideline for how many of the highest-level items might be available, using the **Permanent Items** and **Consumables** entries for a level one lower than the settlement's actual level. Inhabitants of a settlement can usually purchase items from PCs as long as those items are the same or lower level than the settlement, with limitations on higher-level items similar to those available for sale. If a settlement's population is significantly smaller than its level would suggest, its ability to provide and purchase items might be more limited.

If a character's level is higher than the settlement's, that character can usually use their own influence and leverage to acquire higher-level items, as they convince shops to place specialty orders or artisans to craft custom goods, though it might take a bit of time for such orders to be fulfilled.

Spellcasting services are available in many settlements. Barring a powerful spellcasting NPC in the city with whom the party could negotiate for services, a character can find someone to cast common spells up to a level that could be cast by an NPC of the settlement's level. For example, a character in a 9th-level city can typically find and pay someone to cast a 5th-rank common spell—the highest spell available to a 9th-level spellcaster.

Some settlements have access to **uncommon** items, formulas, and spells. If a settlement could reasonably be considered to meet the **Access** entry for an item or spell, that item or spell is available just like any common item. For example, the dwarven settlement of Kraggodan has plenty of dwarf weapons available.



Power Structures

Outside of city limits, adventurers spend much of their time operating on their own terms, accountable only to their moral code. But in a settlement, the heroes become part of a larger system with its own codified laws, procedures, and enforcement. The details of a settlement's power structures shape the party's interactions within that settlement.

Government

The government of a settlement often reflects the nature of that settlement. A law-abiding, militaristic city likely has a hierarchical government with a single figure at the top; a crossroads market town might be under the control of its wealthiest merchant families; and a farming community might simply look to the oldest residents for leadership as necessary.

That said, the legal and publicly recognized ruler of a settlement isn't always the one calling the shots. They could merely be a puppet to a secret entity that silently pulls the strings from the shadows. Some settlements are ruled by hidden coteries, from strange religious sects to thieves' guilds. A settlement might be swayed by politically powerful residents, such as an occult vizier or a politically savvy high priest. In some cases, the legitimate authority might seem to govern but has

actually been replaced by a faceless stalker, a devil in disguise, or another powerful shapechanger.

Legal Codes

Most civilizations agree that laws are necessary to ensure a functioning society. The specific laws range from one settlement to another, and they might be as simple as a prohibition against murder and theft to exceptionally convoluted regulatory schemes dictating everything from clothing details to available confections. How well known these laws are can further flavor a party's interactions with that settlement, as it's likely easier to navigate a well-documented system than one in which the rules are learned only through experience and word of mouth. Generally speaking, a more bureaucratic settlement is likely to have more complex laws, and a laxer locale to have fewer and simpler laws.

Law Enforcement

Most settlements have systems in place to enforce their laws. In a small village, residents might police themselves, holding one another accountable to their shared values. Towns and larger settlements usually have some system of guards, whether that's a post filled by a rotation of volunteers or a city guard of professionals paid by the city's government to maintain order. Many settlements

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have some way of dealing with criminals, from fines to public stocks to prison cells, as well as individuals responsible for meting out those sentences.

Organizations, Churches, and Factions

The government isn't the only influential factor in a settlement. Prestigious organizations, prominent churches, and specialized factions all wield power as well, often in conflict with the official government or one another. Religious congregations usually wield significant power in communities where faith is strong. An organization can wield overt influence over the community where they're based, or subtle control, as the Pathfinder Society does in Absalom. In a small settlement, a wizard, sorcerer, or bard of even moderate magical talent would be a rare and influential member of society. Other notable factions might include noble houses, wealthy merchants, innkeepers, and retired soldiers and adventurers.

Corruption

In any settlement, it's possible for officials to put their own interests before those of the people they serve. Corruption might be as simple as a clerk willing to accept a bribe to expedite some paperwork, or it might be as sinister as falsely punishing citizens to cover up the official's crimes.

SETTLEMENT STAT BLOCK

A settlement's stat block consolidates the basic information about a settlement into a centralized format. Typical contents of settlement statistics are listed below.

SETTLEMENT NAME SETTLEMENT (LEVEL)

TYPE OTHER

The first elements of a settlement stat block are its name and level. A settlement's **level** represents its relative size and economic capacity as well as roughly corresponds to the maximum level of NPC that can be found there, not counting significant NPCs listed below. In general, any **common** items with a level no higher than the settlement's level are available for purchase (though a character of a higher level can usually ferret out or custom order higher-level items). In addition, the settlement's level is used to help determine the maximum possible task level that could become available there to **Earn Income** (*Player Core* 228). Both these are simply guidelines, however, and a GM should make exceptions at their discretion.

Following the settlement's heading are its **traits**. The first of these is the trait representing the settlement's **type**: village, town, city, or metropolis. This trait generally reflects the size of the settlement, but it also tends to correlate to a settlement's level. A **village** is usually level 0–1, a **town** level 2–4, a **city** level 5–7, and a **metropolis** 8 or above, though the presence of many higher-level or wealthy residents could easily skew the level of a village, town, or city upwards.

A settlement might have other traits in addition to its type trait. For example, the dwarven sky citadel of Kraggodan has the **dwarf** trait since it was built and is predominantly occupied by dwarves. The city of Lepidstadt in Ustalav has the **academic** trait due to its focus around the prestigious University of Lepidstadt.

Following the settlement's traits is a simple sentence that provides a short description of the settlement and its role in the story or region.

Government This entry describes the settlement's governing entity, such as a mayor, the town elder, an elected council, and so on.

Population The settlement's total population is listed here, followed by a breakdown of the population by ancestry in parentheses.

Languages The languages commonly spoken in the settlement are listed here, ordered alphabetically.

Religions This entry lists the religions and philosophies commonly practiced in the settlement. If the settlement has an official religion, that's indicated in parenthesis. If the settlement has prohibited any religions or philosophies, those are listed in a Prohibited entry following the Religions entry.

Threats This entry lists the major threats facing the settlement, such as ongoing drought or famine, political uprisings, criminal activity, and the like.

Other Characteristics A settlement might have distinctive features that affect its residents or visitors entering the city, such as a particular trade that makes certain items more available.

Significant NPCs The final section of the settlement stat block presents the most significant NPCs of that settlement. This usually includes the settlement's official leader, if one is present and if it's a single person. It also includes other movers and shakers, local celebrities, and persons of particular interest to adventurers.

Sample Settlement Abilities

Here are some common settlement abilities you can use to customize a settlement of your own creation.

Artists' Haven: Residents of this city have a deep appreciation for fine art. It's easier to find higher-level



tasks to Earn Income involving Performance or art as well as buyers willing to pay more for art objects.

City of Artisans: The settlement is famous for a particular good, such as armor and weapons. Items of up to four levels higher than the settlement level are available from that particular category.

Magical Academy: The settlement prides itself on teaching magic, and its residents are skilled at teaching others. Choose a magical tradition or traditions suitable to your settlement. When a PC pays an NPC to teach them a new spell of that tradition in the settlement, the NPC assists the process and provides an additional +2 circumstance bonus to the check to Learn the Spell. In addition, at the GM's discretion, spells and rituals with the uncommon trait might be available in this settlement.

Religious Bias: This settlement has a strong affiliation with a particular religion. Anyone who's visibly a worshipper of that specific deity gains a +1 circumstance bonus to Diplomacy checks to Make an Impression, Request, and Gather Information. Characters who visibly worship one of that deity's foes take a -1 circumstance penalty to the same actions.

Scholarly: An abundance of public libraries or other accessible places of learning within this settlement means that with 1d4 hours, a character can access a scholarly journal on a relevant common subject (*Player Core* 290) before attempting to Recall Knowledge.

Changing a Settlement

Sometimes the characters spend a long period of time in a single settlement. Perhaps it's their home base, where they spend their downtime between adventures, or perhaps the entire adventure takes place there. In these cases, you might find you need to update your settlement stat block as it changes over time.

Several elements of the settlement stat block are simple to update; you change the population as it grows or shrinks, and you change the leaders on your stat block as different people move between those positions. But you also might make changes that reflect the results of the PCs' adventures. If the heroes eliminated a major threat facing the settlement, you should remove that threat from the stat block—but if they drew the wrath of a new foe in doing so, you might add that new threat! You can also update the stat block's abilities, should the PCs' actions have that large an influence on the city. For example, if the party (using the leadership subsystem on page 204) built up a wizard school focused on crafting magical items, you might add an ability to the settlement stat block that increased the availability of magic items in the settlement's markets.

Settlements of Lost Omens

Presented below are stat blocks for two settlements from the Lost Omens campaign setting: Port Peril, a dangerous and lawless city in the islands known as the Shackles, and

Otari, a town located on the Isle of Kortos with strong connections to Absalom. You can use these as examples when building your own settlement stat blocks.

PORT PERIL

SETTLEMENT 11

METROPOLIS **CRIMINAL**

Pirate haven and black-market capital of the Shackles.

Government Hurricane Queen (overlord)

Population 43,270 (65% humans, 10% half-elves, 8% half-orcs, 5% gnomes, 5% halflings, 7% other)

Languages Common, Kelish, Osiriani

Religions Besmara, Cayden Cailean, Gozreh

Threats anti-pirate policing from the Inner Sea region, opposing pirate forces, supernatural storms from the Eye of Abendego

Pirate Town Port Peril thrives on black market and stolen goods. Items that might be difficult to acquire or dispose of in other settlements due to legality can be purchased and sold more easily in Port Peril. NPCs begin with an attitude one step worse than usual toward characters openly displaying insignia of law enforcement agencies, religious iconography of law-enforcing deities such as Iomedae or Abadar, or affiliation with a nation known for persecuting pirates.

Pherias Jakar (attentive female elf troubadour) merchant master and joint overseer of Port Peril

Sabas Odabio (organized male human administrator) accountant and joint overseer of Port Peril

Tessa Fairwind (daring female half-elf pirate lord) Hurricane Queen of the Shackles

Tsojmin Kreidoros (humorless male dwarf wizard) harbormaster and joint overseer of Port Peril

OTARI

SETTLEMENT 4

TOWN

Diverse lumber town and trade port with a storied past and a fair share of sinister secrets.

Government Mayor (elected leader)

Population 1,240 (60% humans, 8% halflings, 7% half-elves, 6% elves, 5% dwarves, 5% gnomes, 3% half-orcs, 2% goblins, 4% other)

Languages Common, Dwarven, Elven, Gnomish, Halfling

Religions Cayden Cailean, Erastil, Gozreh, Nethys, Sarenrae

Threats aberrant horrors, eerie hauntings, kobolds, smugglers

Trinket Trade Otari has a long tradition of catering to adventurers, and consumable items of up to 10th level can be purchased in its markets and shops.

Oseph Menhemes (indecisive male human mayor) current mayor of Otari, patriarch of one of three local lumber companies

Vandy Banderdash (eager female halfling cleric) chatty priestess of Sarenrae and unusually knowledgeable town historian

Wrin Sivinxi (curious female tiefling merchant) eccentric occult items dealer, artisan, and collector of stories and rumors

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THE PLANES

Past the world of Golarion and the void of space lie the vast planes of existence referred to as the Great Beyond. Often alien and dangerous, most of these planes embody some foundational aspect of reality—one of the chief elements that make up the rest of the multiverse or a kind of fundamental energy. Each plane is a reality unto itself, with its own laws of existence and its own native inhabitants who might visit, grant benefits to residents of, or cause havoc on the face of Golarion.

PLANAR TRAITS

Each plane, dimension, and demiplane has its own properties and attributes. Planar traits can be broken down into five categories: scope, gravity, time, morphic, and planar essence. Combined, those traits describe the laws and makeup of the plane. These appear in the plane's traits entry, though any trait that matches the Universe (described in the Normal entry in each section below) is omitted.

Scope Trait

Most planes are immeasurable, so immense they're impossible to quantify. Which immeasurable planes, if any, are infinite is a subject of debate among philosophers and scholars alike. Since so many planes are immeasurable, those planes omit a scope trait. Otherwise, the plane likely has either the finite or unbounded trait.

Finite: Finite planes consist of a limited amount of space.

Immeasurable: Immeasurable planes are immeasurably large, perhaps infinite.

Unbounded: Unbounded planes loop back on themselves when a creature reaches the plane's "edge."

Gravity Traits

Many planes have unusual gravity.

Normal: Bodies of great mass are the centers of gravity, and objects fall toward those centers with a measured amount of force relative to the size of the body.

High Gravity: As in normal gravity, bodies of great mass act as centers of gravity, but the force relative to the size of the body is greater than in the Universe. The Bulk of all creatures and objects is doubled, meaning creatures acclimated to normal gravity can carry only half as much. Creatures used to normal gravity move at half Speed and can jump only half as high and far. Physical ranged attacks are impossible beyond the third range increment (instead of the sixth). Creatures that fall in high gravity take bludgeoning damage equal to the distance they fell.

Low Gravity: As in normal gravity, bodies of great mass act as centers of gravity, but the force relative to the size of the body is less than in the Universe. The Bulk of all creatures and objects is halved, meaning creatures acclimated to normal gravity can carry twice as much and jump twice as high and far. Physical ranged attacks are possible up to the twelfth range increment (instead of the sixth). Creatures that fall in low gravity take no damage for the first 10 feet of a

fall, and then take bludgeoning damage equal to a quarter of the remaining distance it fell.

Microgravity: There's little to no gravity on this plane. Creatures float in space unless they can push off a surface or use some force to propel themselves throughout the plane.

Strange Gravity: All bodies of mass are centers of gravity with roughly the same force. A creature can stand on any solid objects that's as large as or larger than itself.

Subjective Gravity: All bodies of mass can be centers of gravity with the same force, but only if a non-mindless creature wills it. Unattended items, objects, and mindless creatures treat the plane as having microgravity. Creatures on a plane with subjective gravity can move normally along a solid surface by imagining "down" near their feet. Designating this downward direction is a free action that has the concentration trait. If suspended in midair, a creature can replicate flight by choosing a "down" direction and falling in that direction, moving up to their Speed or fly Speed. This pseudo-flight uses the Fly action.

Time Traits

Time flows differently on many planes.

Normal: Time passes the same way it does in the Universe. One hour on a plane with normal time equals 1 hour in the Universe.

Erratic: Time slows down and speeds up, so an individual might lose or gain time as they move between planes. When a creature moves from a plane with erratic time to one with normal time, roll a DC 11 flat check. Creatures that leave an erratic time plane together share the same result.

Success Time passed normally on the erratic time plane.

Failure For each hour spent on the erratic time plane, 1 day passed on the normal time plane.

Critical Failure For each round spent on the erratic time plane, 1 day passed on the normal time plane.

Flowing: The flow of time is consistently faster or slower. A creature might travel to one of these planes, spend a year there, and find that only an hour passed in the Universe; alternatively, they might spend a minute on this plane and find out an hour passed in the Universe.

Timeless: Time still passes, but the effects of time are diminished. Creatures on these planes don't feel hunger, thirst, or the effects of aging or natural healing. The effects of poison, diseases, and other kinds of healing might also be diminished on certain timeless planes. Spell energy and

other effects still dissipate, so the durations of spells and other effects function as normal. The danger of this trait is that when a creature leaves a timeless plane and enters a plane with another time trait, the effects of hunger, thirst, aging, and other effects slowed or arrested by the timeless trait occur retroactively in the instant of transition, possibly causing the creature to immediately starve or die of old age.

Morphic Traits

This trait describes how easily the physical nature of the plane can be changed. The Universe is considered the norm for its residents, but other planes can warp through the plane's own sentient designs or be manipulated by extremely powerful creatures.

Normal: Objects remain where they are (and what they are) unless affected by physical force or magic. Creatures can change the immediate environment as a result of tangible effort, such as by digging a hole.

Metamorphic: Things change by means other than physical force or magic. Sometimes spells have morphic effects. Other times, the plane's nature is under the control of a deity or power, or the plane simply changes at random.

Sentient: The plane changes based on its own whims.

Static: Visitors can't affect living residents of the plane or objects the denizens carry in any way. Any spells that would affect those on the plane have no effect unless the static trait is somehow removed or suppressed.

Planar Essence Traits

Planar essence traits describe a plane's fundamental nature. For example, many of the Inner Sphere's planes are infused with an element or energy, each of which affects magic on those planes, and the Netherworld is awash with shadow. Outer Planes are fundamentally made up of quintessence, a philosophically aligned material with infinite potential for shape and state that conforms to powerful and prevailing beliefs.

Air: Planes with this trait consist mostly of open spaces and air of various levels of turbulence, though they also contain rare islands of floating stone and other elements and energies. Air planes usually have breathable atmospheres, though they might include clouds of acidic or toxic gas. Earth creatures often find themselves at a disadvantage within air planes, as there's little solid ground for them to gain their bearings, which tends to at least make them uncomfortable.

Earth: These planes are mostly solid. Travelers arriving upon an earth plane risk suffocation if they don't reach a cavern or some other air pocket within the plane's solid matter. Creatures who can't burrow are entombed in the plane's substance and must attempt to dig their way toward an air pocket. Air creatures are ill at ease, as they rarely have the space to move freely through even the loftiest warrens.

Fire: Planes with this trait are composed of flames that continually burn with no fuel source. Fire planes are extremely hostile to non-fire creatures. Unprotected wood, paper, cloth, and other flammable materials catch fire almost

immediately, and creatures wearing unprotected flammable clothing catch fire, typically taking 1d6 persistent fire damage. Extraplanar creatures take moderate environmental fire damage at the end of each round (sometimes minor environmental damage in safer areas, or major or massive damage in even more fiery areas). Ice creatures are extremely uncomfortable on a fire plane, assuming they don't outright melt in the heat.

Metal: These planes consist of chaotic and shifting structures and oceans of metal. Metal planes tend to exist in a state of change and decay, leaving plentiful pockets of air for visitors to breathe or move within. Creatures unlucky enough to be entombed in the plane's substance risk suffocation if they can't phase through metal. Wood creatures find the lack of stability and soil on a metal plane disconcerting and often fail to thrive in such environments.

Water: Planes with this trait are mostly liquid. Visitors who can't breathe water or reach an air pocket likely drown. The rules for aquatic combat (*Player Core* 437) usually apply, including the inability to cast fire spells or use actions with the fire trait. Creatures with a weakness to water take damage equal to double their weakness at the end of each round.

Wood: These planes consist of trees and other flora latticed in organic patterns. Wood planes are often perfectly constructed to match their desired purpose or environment but aren't usually outright hostile to visitors.

Shadow: Planes with this trait are umbral with murky light. In the Netherworld, the radius of all light from light sources and the areas of light spells are halved.

Void: Planes with this trait are vast, empty reaches that suck the life from the living. They tend to be lonely, haunted planes, drained of color and filled with winds carrying the moans of the dead. At the end of each round, a living creature takes at least minor void environmental damage. In the strongest areas of a void plane, they could take moderate or even major void damage at the end of each round. This damage has the death trait, and if a living creature is reduced to 0 Hit Points by this void damage and killed, it crumbles into ash and can become a wraith (see *Monster Core*).

Vitality: These planes are awash with life energy. Colors are brighter, fires are hotter, noises are louder, and sensations are more intense. At the end of each round, an undead creature takes at least minor vitality environmental damage. In the strongest areas of a vitality plane, they could take moderate or even major vitality damage instead. While this might seem safe for living creatures, vitality planes present a different danger. Living creatures regain an amount of HP each round equal to the environmental damage undead take in the same area. If this would bring the living creature above their maximum HP, any excess becomes temporary HP. Unlike normal, these temporary HP combine with each other, and they last until the creature leaves the plane. If a creature's temporary HP from a vitality plane ever exceeds its maximum HP, it explodes in a burst of overloaded vitality energy, spreading across the area to birth new souls.

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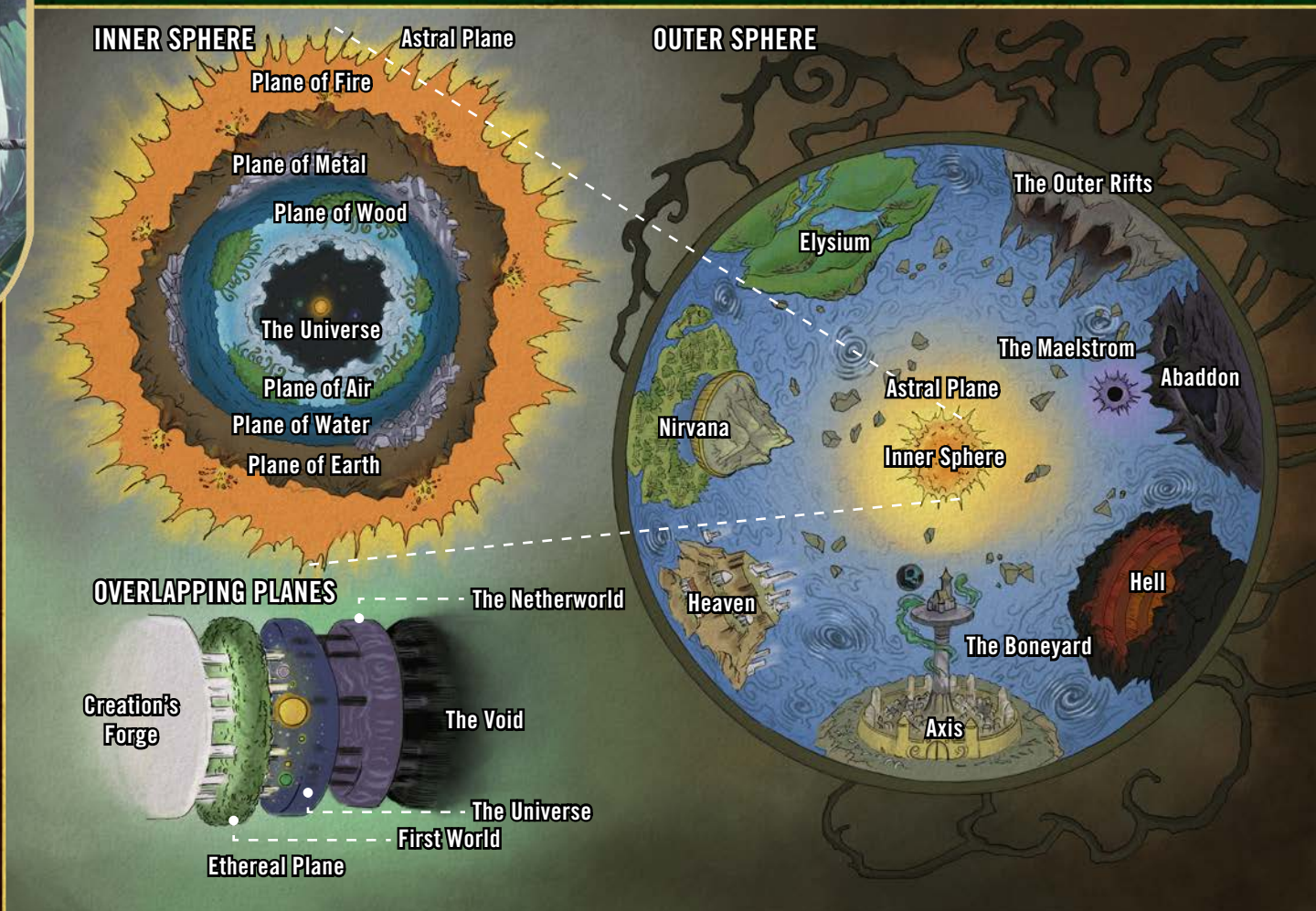
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PLANAR STAT BLOCKS

Each of the planes listed in the following pages includes a short stat block of key information. The plane's type—whether it's a plane, dimension, or demiplane—appears in the stat block's heading, followed by the traits that define that plane. The following entries also provide important information about each plane.

Category: This indicates whether the plane is an Inner Plane, Outer Plane, Transitive Plane, or dimension.

Divinities: A list of all of the deities, demigods, and other powers that call this realm their home.

Native Inhabitants: A sample of typical inhabitants of the plane. Also listed are the plane's shades, the souls of dead mortals who have been judged and sent on to whichever plane reflects the life they led. More information on shades can be found in *Monster Core*.

Inner Sphere Planes

The planes of the Inner Sphere form the heart of the cosmos. They're the home of mortal life, the focus of divine attention, the source of mortal souls, and the origin point of the great cycle of quintessence that fuels the motions and stability of reality itself. Arranged in a nested series of shells, like layers of an onion, the planes of the Inner Sphere include, from outer to inner: the elemental planes of fire, earth, metal,

water, wood, and air; the mortal galaxies of the Universe; and at the very core of this cosmological ensemble, the raw forces of creation and destruction of Creation's Forge and the Void overlap the Universe.

THE UNIVERSE

PLANE

Category Inner Plane

Divinities Dominion of the Black, Gozreh

Native Inhabitants dwarves, elves, halflings, humans, gnomes, goblins, and countless other ancestries

The Universe is the prosaic realm and the home of mortal life. Innumerable galaxies play host to countless stars and their planets, each housing unique settings for any campaign, with Golarion as the classic example. Other worlds of note like Castrovel, Akiton, Triaxus, and Eox exist within Golarion's own solar system, and then beyond this, orbiting other distant stars or in other galaxies still, worlds such as Androffa and even Earth swirl within the Universe's vast and silent void.

Yet, for all the profound wonder and diversity of life that the Universe houses, in the dark places between the stars known as the Dark Tapestry, lurk the sinister collective of gods called the Dominion of the Black.

The Universe serves as the destination for pre-incarnate souls, each mortal life born, living, and dying before sending its spirit toward the planes of the Outer Sphere for judgment. The Universe

is likewise the focus of the gods, each of whom is invested in fostering their own particular portfolio among mortal worshippers and the material world at large.

CREATION'S FORGE

PLANE

SUBJECTIVE GRAVITY **UNBOUNDED** **VITALITY**

Category Inner Plane

Divinities none

Native Inhabitants jyotis, shades (enlightened)

Creation's Forge is at once the source of life-sustaining vitality energy, the origin of all pre-incarnate mortal souls, and paradoxically the most innately hostile of all of the planes. While vitality energy is deadly to undead and beneficial to living beings, such is the intensity of the plane that unmitigated exposure ultimately incinerates any extraplanar beings without sufficient magical protection. The most apt comparison for the plane's interior is that of the heart of a burning star. Indeed, the stars of the Universe each house natural portals to Creation's Forge within their glowing, potent cores to foster the movement of pre-incarnate souls in their first steps in the great cycle of life and death.

Brilliant and blinding, the plane's interior is sparsely populated, and the resident phoenix-kin jyotis are intensely xenophobic. Dwelling in glimmering, radiant crystalline cities such as Arudrellisiir, they view themselves as gardeners and guardians of souls spawned from their realm's burning quintessence. Intensely distrustful of gods and their servitors, jyotis can nonetheless be bargained with, and they've frequently taken into their custodianship any number of artifacts and imprisoned beings considered too dangerous to house on any other plane.

THE VOID

PLANE

SUBJECTIVE GRAVITY **UNBOUNDED** **VOID**

Category Inner Plane

Divinities none

Native Inhabitants sceaduinars, wraiths, and other undead

The vast nothingness of the Void is a merciless, lightless expanse of manifest destruction and nihilism. Sapping and consuming the life force of any living creature exposed to its energies, it corrodes and disintegrates material objects to rubble, then dust, and then nothing at all, yet the Void contains its own form of anti-life. At their densest concentration, the plane's energies aggregate into bizarre, black crystalline snowflake structures. These irregularities spontaneously generate the plane's resident sceaduinars. Dwelling in beautiful, deadly cities drifting in the vacuous darkness, these so-called void raptors are incapable of true creation and blame this flaw on some ancient betrayal by their rivals in Creation's Forge. Sceaduinars react violently not only toward creatures sustained by vitality energy, but also toward undead, whom they view as unnatural parasites unworthy of their plane's energies.

The black depths swarm with undead, creatures doomed to a mockery of life by the interaction of their souls with the plane's entropic energy. For all the horrors posed by the Void's environment, inhabitants, and undead victims, its depths nevertheless hide rare refuges for planar travelers. Malikar's Keep

ENHANCED AND IMPEDED MAGIC

Some particularly potent areas can enhance magic related to the nature of the plane or impede magic inimical to it. For instance, a nexus of void energy in the Void might enhance void magic, and the unholy majesty of an archdevil's throne room might impede holy magic.

Enhanced Magic: Anyone Casting a Spell with the enhanced trait gains a +1 circumstance bonus to their spell DC or spell attack roll with that spell.

Impeded Magic: A character who Casts a Spell or activates an item with the specified trait must succeed at a DC 6 flat check or the spell or activation is disrupted

offers shelter, for a price, to those willing to bargain with its titular lich master. Elsewhere, the depths hide entire lost worlds, such as Fallen Duromak, and deadly mysteries like the planet-sized, undead-entrapping glass sphere, Eternity's Doorstep.

PLANE OF AIR

PLANE

AIR **SUBJECTIVE GRAVITY**

Category Inner Plane

Divinities elemental lords of air

Native Inhabitants air elementals, cloud dragons, jaathooms, shades (air pneuma)

The Plane of Air, innermost of the Elemental Planes, is a vast realm of wind, storms, and skies. Illuminated by great artificial globes of flame and distant starlight from the material universe, the plane is populated by air elementals, dragons, air scamps, and a great empire of jaathoom genies. Though mostly clouds and empty skies, the plane isn't entirely bereft of solid ground, including rock and ice created by the residents or dragged into their realm from the distant Plane of Earth or neighboring Plane of Water. The returning pockets of the Plane of Wood have let loose giant pieces of driftwood into the plane as well. Bizarre, drifting spheres of brass and iron make for the most convenient navigational aids; the former housing the cities of the vast Jaathoom Empire, the latter almost entirely abandoned and shunned by the plane's inhabitants, who believe them cursed, entrapping forgotten, ancient enemies who once ravaged the plane.

The jaathooms rule from their shining capital city of Armun Kelisk, built atop a series of seven floating islands. Their vast trade network crisscrosses the skies and ventures to other planes, kept aloft by natural and magical flight, including great airships that allow visitors to quickly and safely traverse the skies. The jaathooms are welcoming and gracious hosts to extraplanar travelers and adventurers, a perspective not shared by Hshurha the Duchess of All Winds, one of the elemental lords of air.

PLANE OF EARTH

PLANE

EARTH

Category Inner Plane

Divinities elemental lords of earth, Nivi Rhombodazzle

Native Inhabitants crystal dragons, earth elementals, jabalis, shades (earth pneuma)

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A great and rocky shell situated between the Plane of Fire and Plane of Water, the Eternal Delve hosts a unique and varied ecology of creatures at home in its rocky depths. Far from an endless, solid expanse, the Plane of Earth is riddled with great caverns and cave systems, excavated artificial vaults, vast crystalline geodes, and underground oceans and springs of magma where it borders its neighboring planes. Housing untold riches in gemstones and veins of precious metals, the Plane of Earth is an attractive setting for planar travelers seeking wealth and willing to risk danger and the wrath of elementals, jabalis, and other inhabitants who resent the plunder of their home.

While elementals have little organized society, the jabali genies' Peerless Empire rules much of the plane from its capital, the Opaline Vault—a rainbow-lit city within a 30-mile-wide geode cavern. They brook little dissent, and their rule can be harsh. They're downright welcoming, however, compared to Ayrzul the Fossilized King, the hated elemental lord of earth who rules a great expanse of rock from his radiation-poisoned domain, the Blistering Labyrinth.

PLANE OF FIRE

PLANE

FIRE

Category Inner Plane

Divinities elemental lords of fire, Feronia

Native Inhabitants fire elementals, ifrits, magma dragons, munsahirs, shades (fire pneuma)

Like a great, gleaming ball of flame situated at the heart of the Astral Plane, the Plane of Fire is the outermost plane of the Inner Sphere. A perpetual ocean of fire with skies of smoke, storms of raining cinders, and lakes and rivers of magma flowing along its border with the Elemental Plane of Earth, the plane is incredibly hostile to those unprepared for its natural hazards. Yet, it houses one of the most well-known and traversed cities in all the planes: Medina Mudii'a, capital of the Dominion of Flame. Floating above a sea of fire upon a great hemisphere of magical brass, Medina Mudii'a is a monument both to ifrits' cosmopolitan grandeur and tyranny, the latter embodied by the grand sultana of the ifrits. Outside of the mercantile districts and the palaces and temples of the fire genies, the city houses a vast oppressed underclass, including creatures from other planes.

The ifrit domain isn't absolute, and elsewhere in the plane are nations of fire scamps and the remains of an ancient munsahir empire. While they don't form any cohesive, organized nations, the plane's fire elementals are ruled over by the plane's most powerful entity, Ymeri the Queen of the Inferno, the warlike elemental lord of fire whose reign has gone unquestioned since the imprisonment of her rival Atreia eons ago.

PLANE OF METAL

PLANE

METAL

Category Inner Plane

Divinities elemental lords of metal

Native Inhabitants metal elementals, shades (metal pneuma), taloses, zuhras

After being cut off since prehistory, the Plane of Metal recently returned to the planar cosmology. Still resuming its ancient form,

it wedges between the Plane of Earth and Plane of Water, vast in scope but still expanding. Metal of every kind (liquid and solid), decaying cityscapes, and intense magnetic fields make up the chaotic structure of the plane. Creatures reflect the jumble of forces that make their home. Many have fluid forms of flowing metal or inhabit clouds of rust. The genies of the plane, zuhras, put on bold performances keyed into the plane's dissonance.

The elemental lords of metal embody the slow disintegration of their home. After an invasion by forces from the Plane of Earth before their plane was sealed off, the lords were dispirited and offered no clear vision for what their plane could be in the absence of the other planes of the Inner Sphere. Laudinmio, the Sovereign of Alchemy, remains in slumber, while Ferrumnestra, the Lady of Rust, treads under the weight of deep despair.

PLANE OF WATER

PLANE

SUBJECTIVE GRAVITY **WATER**

Category Inner Plane

Divinities elemental lords of water

Native Inhabitants brine dragons, faydhaans, shades (water pneuma), water elementals

Beyond the skies of the Plane of Air, the roots of the newly regrown Plane of Wood are nurtured by the vast, spherical, liquid shell of the Plane of Water. Its nearly limitless stretches of saline, fresh, and brackish seas teem with all manner of oceanic life, lit by submerged suns and bioluminescence before descending into the black, benthic depths where the plane borders the Plane of Earth. While it's perfectly amenable to water-breathing creatures, air-breathing travelers must provide their own supply of air or magical means to breathe while on the plane. Bubbles of breathable atmosphere are relatively rare and securely guarded, anchored over places of trade and commerce with outsiders, such as the great city of Vialesk, founded by immigrant undines. The plane's oceans, dotted by vast forests of kelp, magical currents, and strange phenomena, play host to empires of merfolk, predatory and expansionist sea devils, and the holdings of the plane's great brine dragons.

While faydhaans once claimed nearly absolute dominion over the plane of their origin, their empire long ago fell into deterioration and disunity. Their ravaged cities sank into the depths, and their present-day holdings remain a shadow of their former grandeur. Kelizandri the Brackish Emperor, the prideful elemental lord of water and cause of the genies' ruin, rules the dark, saline depths, feasting on all rivals and hoarding the vast, stolen wealth of the fallen faydhaan cities—but the return of his counterpart Lysianassa, Empress of the Torrent, now threatens his hold on the plane. Unlike other subjective gravity planes, on the Plane of Water, a creature moves based on its swim Speed and must use actions to Swim if it doesn't have one.

PLANE OF WOOD

PLANE

SUBJECTIVE GRAVITY **WOOD**

Category Inner Plane

Divinities elemental lords of wood

Native Inhabitants ardandes, forest dragons, kizidhars, kodama, shades (wood pneuma), wood elementals

The Plane of Wood recently returned to the planar cosmology after an absence of eons. Still rebuilding to its ancient splendor, it climbs between the Plane of Water and Plane of Air. Fractal tree growth, eternally tended and shaped by the plane's inhabitants, stretches across the plane with dizzying symmetry. Creatures either enforce and augment this ordered growth or exist as a byproduct thereof. Some drop from the trees as discarded seeds given fresh life, while others chisel or cultivate creatures' natural beauty to suit their aesthetic tastes. The genies of the plane, kizidhars, are artisans in this field.

The elemental lords of wood embody the often-paradoxical rigidity and pliancy of their element. When other planes of the Inner Sphere came under threat, the lords acted swiftly to seal off their home, protecting the plane and its residents—yet even in this, they're said to have disagreed, and the two haven't spoken in millennia. Shumunue, the Carved Lady of Mimicry, desperately searches for a cure for her great ailment, while Verilorn, Custodian of Oak and Ash, worries that ending the plane's long isolation will lead to its ruin.

Transitive Planes

At a minimum, each Transitive Plane coexists with one or more other planes, a relationship oversimplified by stating that Transitive Planes are just used to get from one plane to another. The mists of the Ethereal Plane overlap the planes of the Inner Sphere, while the Astral Plane borders every other plane in existence like the backstage of the cosmos. Bright and dark mirrors of the Universe, the First World and the Netherworld overlap the mortal world, albeit often in bizarre ways such that a short distance in one might be a vast gulf in the other. The daring, wise, or desperate can utilize these planes to bypass barriers in the Universe or rapidly cross vast distances through much swifter travel.

ASTRAL PLANE

PLANE

SUBJECTIVE GRAVITY **TIMELESS**

Category Transitive Plane

Divinities Alseta, Apsu

Native Inhabitants shades (untethered), shining children

The Silver Sea surrounds the planes of the Inner Sphere, separating them from those of the Outer Sphere. The Astral Plane provides the backdrop against which the River of Souls flows from the Universe, ushering departed spirits toward the Boneyard for final judgment. Far from an empty void, the Astral's silver substance churns with currents and storms from the metaphysical heat of the Plane of Fire, and where it touches the chaos of the Maelstrom, the resulting eddies interact with the memories of the dead to produce fleeting simulacra and even demiplanes.

The River of Souls draws the attention of soul-hunting daemons and opportunistic night hags like sharks drawn to the scent of blood. Led by psychopomps, a cross section of nearly every type of celestial and monitor in existence, along with some fiends, defends the proper flow of souls against such predators. Running opposite the River of Souls is the flow of raw quintessence spun off from the so-called Antipode, channeled by aeons back toward the Creation's Forge.

Travelers within the Astral find the plane untouched by the passage of time, a property exploited by many mortals fearing old age. Time, however, isn't easily escaped, and upon exiting the Astral Plane, a creature finds this debt catching up to them, potentially aging to dust in moments.

ETHEREAL PLANE

PLANE

SUBJECTIVE GRAVITY

Category Transitive Plane

Divinities Alazhra

Native Inhabitants ether spiders, hags, shades (terrorized)

The Ethereal Plane is a vast, misty realm overlapping each of the Inner Planes. Formed by the interacting tidal forces of creation and destruction from Creation's Forge and the Void, this plane swirls with currents and eddies of fog, lit only by erratic pulses of soft green luminescence and dim light of those planes it overlays, visible but ever intangible. While mortals most often use the Ethereal Plane as a means of transit, moving by force of will in the absence of gravity to bypass barriers on their own plane, the Ethereal hosts dangers and wonders, things lost or abandoned in the mists, and things spun from local eddies in the ethereal protomatter. Predatory monsters, ether spiders, hags and their goddess Alazhra, and all manner of incorporeal undead roam the Space Between Spaces.

While travelers can easily become lost in the mists with little to guide them, the plane does host some permanent structures, drawing adventurers or dissuading them. One such location, the House of the Itinerant Soul, houses wayward or lost souls, offering visitors shelter and a way to avoid turning into undead while avoiding the pull of the River of Souls. The grand cathedral also serves as a focus for mortal planar travelers, given its safety and the presence of friendly spirits willing to serve as guides in the surrounding mists.

FIRST WORLD

PLANE

ERRATIC **METAMORPHIC**

Category Transitive Plane

Divinities the Eldest

Native Inhabitants fey, linnorms

The First World was a first draft of the Universe, crafted by divinities to test their metaphorical materials and palettes of colors before setting it aside to create a second, final version of their work. A realm of extremes—bestial, primal, and beautiful—with colors and sensations brighter and more intense than the mundane world created after it, the First World is populated by fey and the divine entities known as the Eldest. Mirroring mercurial fey whimsy, the First World's laws of nature constantly and unpredictably change. Distance and time are wildly inconsistent, such that mortal travelers might spend an hour or a day within the First World, only to find a century or only a few seconds passed once they return to their own plane.

The First World stands outside the cycle of souls, something the fey call the Great Abandonment, save for rare worshippers of the Eldest whose souls incarnate here as fey. However, the plane's proximity to Creation's Forge provides an environment bursting with all manner of strange life and a general absence

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of true death for its native fey unless they leave—as did gnomes. Natural gates in wild places of the mortal realm connect to the First World, which fey often use to visit the Universe or ensnare mortals for their capricious desires.

THE NETHERWORLD

PLANE

SHADOW

Category Transitive Plane

Divinities velstrac demagogues, Zon-Kuthon

Native Inhabitants calignis, d'ziriaks, kayals (fetchlings), shades (the mutilated), umbral dragons, velstracs

A murky, distorted, and imperfect mirror of the Universe, the Netherworld overlaps the Universe and serves as a buffer or conduit between it and the Void. The Netherworld exists in a state of perpetually dim half-light, the landscape containing similar features to the overlapping Universe, but in warped or twisted fashions. Cities in the Universe might exist in the Netherworld, sometimes in ruins and sometimes as terrible, frightening replicas. The darkness also holds points of beauty and relative safety, such as the great city of Shadow Absalom. The bleak doppelganger of Golarion's own Absalom hosts cross-planar trade facilitated by a permanent, one-way portal out of the gloom.

The Netherworld is populated by dark, altered versions of creatures from the Universe, many of them immigrants that have adapted to the shadow after being trapped in the realm for generations. The shadow natives known as kayals—also

called fetchlings—were originally humans before thousands of years of exposure to the Netherworld and intermarriage with strange beings forever altered them. Velstracs, who long ago fled from Hell, have since adopted the Netherworld as their home, spreading their horrific message of perfection through mutilation in service to their victim and patron, the god Zon-Kuthon. In contrast, d'ziriaks originated within the Netherworld itself, as did the fearsome umbral dragons ruling self-crafted fiefdoms within the shadows. Greatest of them is Argrinyxia, who rules over Shadow Absalom.

Outer Sphere Planes

The planes of the Outer Sphere are the manifest realms of philosophy: good and evil, order and change, faith, and their admixtures, populated by celestials, fiends, monitors, and others who promote these moral concepts. These planes are the backdrop upon which the mortal afterlife reaches its apparent conclusion, and the end destination of the River of Souls. The Outer Planes are regions of stability adrift in the raw, chaotic quintessence of the primordial Maelstrom, its tides forever gnawing at their edges even as mortal souls sustain them. The Outer Rifts manifest as cracks in the Outer Sphere's fabric. Rising from the metropolitan Axis is the Boneyard's spire, the location where mortal souls are judged and then sent to their final destinations, be they reward, suffering, or oblivion. The Outer Planes are places

of majesty, wonder, terror, and danger outstripping anything mortal adventurers might encounter anywhere else.

ABADDON

PLANE

Category Outer Plane

Divinities Ahriman, daemon harbingers, Fumeiyoshi, Horsemen of the Apocalypse, Lao Shu Po, Urgathoa, Zyphus

Native Inhabitants daemons, shades (the hunted)

A perpetual eclipse looms above the bleak wastelands of Abaddon, shedding an eerie half-light over a landscape of toxic, disease-ridden swamps, volcanic wastes, fog-shrouded forests, and the glittering, memory-devouring ribbon of the River Styx. An unnatural silence blankets the plane, cut only by the wails of shades falling from the sky like screaming, falling stars, or those already condemned upon the ground, desperate to find safety that doesn't exist. Daemons, the physical embodiments of meaningless death and oblivion, roam unchecked, owing allegiance only to the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: Death, Famine, Pestilence, and War. In the courts of the Horsemen and the neutral grounds of trade cities such as Awaiting-Consumption, the soul trade serves daemoniac hunger and industrialized extinction. Hags and other creatures ply the trade or make their way along the margins of daemoniac society, eager to avoid consumption themselves by the plane's nihilistic masters.

Urgathoa and Zyphus claim divine domains here, their shades granted freedom from predation, yet something far worse glares down upon these gods and the Horseman alike. Abaddon's perpetual eclipse might be nothing less than the lidded, comatose eye of the Bound Prince, the First Horseman, betrayed and cast down by the Four, forgotten by the cosmos at large, but far too powerful for them to destroy—waiting, watching, and hungering.

AXIS

PLANE

Category Outer Plane

Divinities Abadar, Brigh, Chaldira, halfling pantheon, Irori, Lissala, Milani, Norgorber, primal monitors

Native Inhabitants aeons, shades (remade)

Axis is a realm of pure, absolute order, unhindered by moral concerns. The plane takes the form of a vast, gleaming, perfectly structured city. Built at the base of Pharasma's Spire, the Perfect City is a bulwark against the chaos of the Maelstrom and the Outer Rifts, with vast mechanical armies marching forth to explore, define, and pacify an imperfect, unruly universe. Axis is also home to axiomites: beings composed of living mathematics and equations. Axiomites continue to work on their organization of the cosmos but increasingly turn their attentions to the planar city of Axis itself; as with any city, Axis requires nonstop maintenance and improvement in order to resist the march of time.

Axis's natives are far from the only inhabitants of their cosmopolitan realm. Devils and archons often visit along with shades, mortal travelers, and smaller numbers of most every other kind of extraplanar being. Abadar and other deities make their homes in the realm. The empty, former domain of Aroden languishes here, while below the streets lies Norgorber's domain, a labyrinthine undercity.

BONEYARD

PLANE

TIMELESS

Category Outer Plane

Divinities Achaekek, Groetus, psychopomp ushers, Pharasma

Native Inhabitants shades (the dead), psychopomps

The Boneyard spans an impossibly tall and ever-growing spire of gleaming quintessence that rises up into the silver void of the Astral Plane. As the destination of the River of Souls, the Boneyard is where the souls of the mortal dead arrive for judgment and for Pharasma and her psychopomp servitors to direct them to their respective afterlives. Pharasma's domain is separated into eight courts, each corresponding to one of the other planes of the Outer Sphere and collecting the souls due to that plane. Not every soul goes unchallenged, and proxies of gods and planes argue and debate over souls, with final arbitration conducted by Pharasma herself.

While Pharasma rules absolutely within the Boneyard, she isn't the only divinity there. The demigod psychopomp ushers dwell within the plane in service to her, and the deity Achaekek dwells below at the spire's root. Looming high above as a skull-faced moon waits Groetus, the god of the end times, his orbit slowly decaying in minuscule iterations supposedly counting down to the last days of the cosmos.

Pharasma's courts and the surrounding Graveyard of Souls are not the only features atop the spire. Beyond the graveyard, the Spirelands manifest environments much like those of the varied worlds of the Universe, filled with the souls of neutral shades who have nowhere else to go as they are unclaimed by any gods and did nothing in life to suggest any particular ethos.

ELYSIUM

PLANE

Category Outer Plane

Divinities Calistria, Cayden Cailean, Desna, elven pantheon, empyreal lords, Gorum, giant pantheon, Kofusachi, Milani, Nocticula

Native Inhabitants azatas, shades (the chosen)

Verdant, wild, and unrestrained by order, where passion and creation are fostered and rewarded, the plane of Elysium is a place of wild, idealized natural beauty. The so-called Promised Land and its inhabitants represent a wide variety of freely given benevolence, often willing to directly aid visitors but more often serving as inspirations and muses to foster positive change and self-realized success. Elysium's shades, known as the chosen, appear as idealized versions of their mortal selves, each pursuing their own self-determined actions and finding their unique paths to join the ranks of the plane's celestials.

Azatas—the plane's primary denizens—organize into fleeting, competitive courts, each rewarding heroism and creativity above all else. Elysium hosts a number of resident deities, including Calistria and the elven pantheon, Cayden Cailean, Desna, Gorum, and various empyreal lords. Visitors from across the planes are drawn to Elysium's Wandering City of Emerald Song, a mobile, impermanent, and ever-changing city of azatas organized by their princess, Anduarine the Muse, filled with art, craft, revelry, song, and trade.

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HEAVEN

Category Outer Plane

Divinities dwarven pantheon, Easivra, empyreal lords, Erastil, Iomedae, Shizuru, Torag, Tsukiyo

Native Inhabitants archons, shades (the elect)

The great mountain of Heaven is the realm of structured benevolence made manifest. Organized into seven tiers, the mountain's solid appearance is actually malleable, making way for a vast assemblage of varied environments to accommodate both its own celestials and the souls who migrate there. Devoted to defending the innocent and crusading against the wicked, Heaven's archons marshal into vast armies, commanded by their empyreal lords. Angels collaborate with the archon legions but typically act in more direct service to Heaven's resident deities, with Iomedae, Erastil, and Torag the most prominent among them.

Shades known as the elect manifest at the mountain's base, and their subsequent climb up the seemingly endless, unreachable heights is both a literal and figurative journey. Progress is about personal growth and spiritual purification as the shades grow more and more attuned to the plane. Likewise, progress from one layer to the next is often impossible without permission from the archons or spiritual alignment with Heaven itself. Most visitors arrive at the city of Heaven's Shore, a place open to both traders and to pilgrims of good intent. Access beyond its heavily guarded walls is difficult, to say nothing of scaling the mountain. At its pinnacle is the Garden, Heaven's ultimate layer. Unattended and empty, the Garden is a beautiful, transcendent mystery even to its resident deities and the source of the plane's call of self-perfection to its shades.

HELL

Category Outer Plane

Divinities archdevils, Asmodeus, Dahak, Erecura, General Susumu, infernal dukes, Minderhal, Yaezhing, Zursvaater, queens of the night

Native Inhabitants devils, hellhounds, shades (the damned)

Hell is the realm of devils, the multiversal seat of tyranny and malignant laws, and the divine domain of Asmodeus, the Prince of Darkness. Here, every act is authorized, calculated, recorded, and set like perfectly ordered clockwork within a vast machine driven on methodical suffering and greased with pain and purification. The nine inverted layers of Hell violently oppose the surrounding fabric of the Maelstrom, each layer shaped to reflect the nature of its ruling archdevil. Avernus's volcanic wastes, ruled by Barbatos, are the marshaling place of Hell's armies and where newly damned souls are shackled and shuffled off to their assigned torment. Dispat's layer of Dis is a great iron city: brutal, beautiful, and terrible. The layer of Erebus is comprised of both the sewers of Dis and the vaults and treasuries of Hell, ruled by Mammon, a great genius loci embodied by the very wealth locked within Hell's coffers. Ruled by Belial, the layer of Phlegethon hosts Hell's forges, while Geryon's watery realm of Stygia houses Hell's libraries. Moloch's smoldering, ash-draped forest realm of Malebolge is

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the training site of the infernal armies, and Baalzebul's frozen layer of Cocytus torments the imprisoned, starving damned. Mephistopheles rules the layer of Caina, a realm of cages and torture suspended above a pit of hungry darkness, while at the very bottom of Hell's infinite pit, Asmodeus rules unquestioned from his throne in Nessus.

MAELSTROM

METAMORPHIC

Category Outer Plane

Divinities Besmara, Hanspur, Hei Feng, Naderi, Nalinivati, Nethys, orc pantheon, protean lords, Sivanah, Speakers of the Depths, Sun Wukong, Yamatsumi, Ydersius

Native Inhabitants proteans, shades (the shapeless)

The Maelstrom, infinite and ancient, spawned the other Outer Planes in cosmological prehistory and surrounds them like a vast metaphorical—and at times literal—ocean of raw, seething quintessence. Where the Maelstrom borders these other planes, its structure takes on their characteristics, albeit in an unpredictable, chaotic fashion. Beyond these so-called Borderlands, however, the Maelstrom reverts to its true nature, the Cerulean Void: a trackless, liquid infinity devoid of stability and permanence where serpentine proteans create and destroy with profound frivolity. The proteans are paradoxically organized into discrete choruses, each with its own philosophy and goals in service to the Maelstrom.

Swirling with oddities and wild magic, bereft of laws and structure, the Maelstrom also serves as a conduit between the other Outer Planes utilized by armies of extraplanar beings, hordes of demons spilling forth from the Outer Rifts, and the innumerable protean choruses seeking to return the rest of the planes to the true freedom of the chaos from which they emerged. Sufficiently powerful magic can stabilize the chaos for a time, allowing for the creation of demiplanes and stable islands. The massive planar trade city of Galisemni is most prominent among them, drifting through the chaos.

NIRVANA

Category Outer Plane

Divinities Daikitsu, empyreal lords, Gruhastha, Kazutal, Kurgess, Qi Zhong, Sarenrae, Shelyn

Native Inhabitants angels, shades (the cleansed)

The pastoral paradise of Nirvana is the realm of purest benevolence, a plane that promises sanctuary to the weary and enlightenment and transcendence to those who seek it out. Filled with beautiful wilderness of all types in perfect harmony with its occupants, Nirvana's wilds are home to angels and others. The plane's shades, known as the cleansed, most often take the forms of glorified, sapient wild animals, though many eventually leave their carefree existence to aid others, ascending to assist the benevolent works of angels. Devoted to guiding and assisting mortals, angels are often charged with delivering important messages that reflect the will of benevolent deities.

Various divinities make their home amid Nirvana's wilds, including a host of empyreal lords and, most prominently,

PLANE

Sarenrae and Shelyn. While the great cities of High Ninshabur and Llourith welcome visitors, most mortals visiting Nirvana witness the plane's beauty and supernatural feeling of peace but rarely encounter many of its residents, as the plane protectively hides much of its contents from any but the most selfless and pure of heart. The plane's hinterlands hint at hidden mysteries, including legends that the plane shelters the vanished heroes of innumerable mortal worlds, peacefully sleeping until their peoples' times of greatest need.

OUTER RIFTS

PLANE

Category Outer Plane

Divinities Camazotz, demon lords, Droskar, Ghlaunder, goblin hero-gods, Gyronna, Lady Nanbyo, Lamashtu, nascent demon lords, qliploth lords

Native Inhabitants demons, shades (larvae), qliploth

Like a corrosive rot in the roots of the Outer Sphere, or an antithetical, rival reality run aground into the Maelstrom at the dawn of time, the Outer Rifts is a place of horror and destruction fed by mortal sin. Each of its innumerable regions is a unique iteration of chaos and malice, each with its own terrible and twisted environment, with one driving maxim: the strong survive, while the weak suffer and are destroyed. Ruled by demons, and before them by the alien, nightmarish qliploth, the Outer Rifts and its native beings seek only to ruin and destroy. Though demons routinely rampage out into other planes when the Outer Rifts manifests a great planar rift, the denizens of the Outer Rifts are fractured and self-destructive. Demon lords such as Dagon, Pazuzu, and Zura, and even gods including the ascended demon lord Lamashtu, the Mother of Monsters, fight for dominion over the Outer Rifts as much or more than they threaten the other planes.

Though dangerous, not every realm of the Outer Rifts is immediately hostile to the prepared traveler. Shamira's city of Alushinyrra in the Midnight Isles and Abraxas's library-city of Diovangia in the realm of Pleroma are each welcoming in their own dark ways. Even those who survive a journey through the Outer Rifts, however, inevitably must resist being deeply corrupted by the experience.

Dimensions

Existing in the metaphorical space between the Transitive Planes and smaller, finite demiplanes, dimensions are a category unto themselves, defying the neat categorization of planar scholars and adventurers. Seemingly infinite in scale, not necessarily spatial in the same way as a plane, and overlaying every other plane at once—including one another—dimensions and planes are most significantly differentiated in how each of them breaks the commonly held rules of the other. Although some scholars include other extraplanar realms within the ranks of dimensions, only two such realms are uniformly agreed upon and classified as such. The Dreamlands are readily accessed by mortal dreamers, while the Dimension of Time is notorious for the near impossibility of accessing it as well as the bizarre, often deadly restrictions upon travel to and within its bounds.

DIMENSION OF TIME

DIMENSION

ERRATIC **STATIC**

Category dimension

Divinities unknown

Native Inhabitants shades (the unbound)

Among the most obscure planes of existence, the Dimension of Time is virtually impossible to access by conventional methods of planar travel. Instead, travelers must perform complex and difficult rituals described within the pages of monstrously rare tomes. Compounding the plane's obscurity, each traveler's experience seems to be unique, and most who attempt the journey never return. Every manner of magic that interacts with the plane invariably draws the attention of creatures native to the dimension. The proper flow and continuity of time seems to self-correct for any attempted meddling, often with violence.

Those few who have gained entry and returned describe the plane as a swirling storm of blurred images, the composite of millions of interwoven timelines around their own, with a single doorway allowing access to one's own past. Travelers appear as transparent images of themselves, but the plane seems averse to any attempt to alter the past, no matter the means or the intention. Such attempts often end in the offending individual erased from existence or trapped within closed time loops to limit the damage they inflict upon the overall flow of time.

Supposedly, like an eye in a storm, at the dimension's heart is a legendary realm. Tales of this realm speak only of a great city, a vast green meadow, and the rushing sound of an ocean emptying over an immense and terrible waterfall.

DREAMLANDS

DIMENSION

FLOWING

Category dimension

Divinities unknown

Native Inhabitants animate dreams, shades (dreamers)

Created and sustained by the collective dreams of sleeping mortals, the Dreamlands (also called the Dimension of Dreams) overlays the Ethereal Plane. When a creature dreams, regardless of the location of their physical body, they interact directly with the Dreamlands. Sleeping creatures cast themselves into the plane in idealized avatars known as lucid bodies, and their dreamscapes are immune to outside entry by standard magic, such as *interplanar teleport*, requiring obscure, more specialized spells to access. The dreamers of each mortal world generate a cluster of dreamscapes, like drifting bubbles atop a deeper ocean of permanent dreams formed from the collective mass of slumbering desires, dreams of especially powerful dreamers, and the dreams of ancient, obscure entities.

While most dreamscapes are safe, travelers in the deep, permanent Dreamlands face living, animate dreams and the predation of hags from the Ethereal Plane as well as stranger beings spawned within the core itself. Some scholars postulate a distinct region within the dimension for nightmares, much as the more stable inner portions of the dimension exist separately from the transient, ever-forming and evaporating mortal dreamscapes at its edges.

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CHAPTER 4: SUBSYSTEMS

When your game goes into uncharted territory or you want to emphasize an element of gameplay that usually gets overlooked or condensed into a single check, you can use a subsystem. As the name implies, subsystems are extensions of the main rules system that allow you to explore a particular topic or style of play at your table.

Subsystems are a great way to add depth to aspects of your game that don't occur in combat but still have high stakes. This chapter begins with Victory Points, a structure that underlies much of the chapter, to help you build your own subsystems. Next are some of the most common subsystems you might need in your game, with advice on how to use and modify them. This chapter is organized into the following sections.

- **Victory Points** (page 184) provides a framework with which to build your own subsystems, detailing the fundamental structure that Pathfinder uses for its subsystems.
- **Influence** (page 187) gives rules for more in-depth social encounters involving influencing NPCs.
- **Research** (page 190) shows you how to build an interesting structure for scenes where PCs research topics and seek information.
- **Chases** (page 192) are designed to represent the fast-paced feel of movie chase scenes.
- **Infiltration** (page 196) allows you to build infiltrations and heists where careful planning helps the PCs maintain an edge against their adversaries and pull off incredible capers.
- **Reputation** (page 200) breathes life into the world around the PCs, as various groups of NPCs react favorably or unfavorably to the PCs' actions, and the PCs' status with those groups changes.
- **Duels** (page 202) provides a simple architecture for one-on-one showdowns between adversaries.
- **Leadership** (page 204) allows PCs to attract people to a cause, giving them cohorts and organizations to look after.
- **Hexploration** (page 206) teaches you how to build exploration maps on a hexagonal grid to give your PCs the thrill of discovering secrets within uncharted or unfamiliar territory.
- **Vehicles** (page 210) allows you to run encounters involving vehicles and capitalize on their potential to help PCs explore on a larger scale and at a faster pace.

DECIDING TO USE A SUBSYSTEM

When you have an exciting subsystem available, it can be tempting to use it anytime it can possibly come up (for instance, replacing every social scene with the influence subsystem). However, subsystems are most effective

COMBINING SUBSYSTEMS

Some of the subsystems in this chapter could interact in interesting ways when combined. For instance, the influence subsystem could be part of how you build up reputation, or a piece of the plan in an infiltration. Or you could have a hexploration chase with a rival adventuring group, encountering obstacles in each hex as you race for the prize—while using vehicles to travel faster! Ultimately, it's up to you to decide how two combined subsystems should interact to tell your group's particular story, though it's generally good to have a backdrop subsystem that you're tracking on a longer term to which the shorter-term subsystem contributes.

when used with intention. They're best when used for a component of the game that's meant to be at least a significant portion of a single session, when you want a different style of play than normal. You should avoid using a particular subsystem if many members of your group don't like it, or if use of a subsystem during play devolves into the PCs making a series of rolls that don't contribute to telling an interesting story. You should also be careful to ensure that whatever subsystem you use doesn't predominantly favor a specific player character or class, since this can result in one person dominating the scene while the other players have nothing useful to do.

It's important to leave enough time and mental energy to make the subsystem feel special and to bring all the components and elements of the subsystem to life in the game world. Subsystems often require strategic thinking for players to succeed, but also require roleplaying to glue together in a satisfying way. When presented with a specific structure on how to complete a challenge or obstacle, it can be natural for players to focus on that structure rather than the story that the mechanics are trying to tell. A subsystem stripped of all its life and narrative depth can become nothing more than a large number of die rolls, however, and the last thing you want is to lose the magic, especially with a subsystem the PCs enjoy. Sometimes, a simple check is the right way to handle the scene, and that's okay! The subsystems will be there when you need them to spice up an adventure or really dive deep into a particular element or scene.

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VICTORY POINTS

You'll often find that your games could use a way to track progress toward a goal so that you don't have to just keep everything in your head. This section explains how to build your own subsystems for tracking success via Victory Points. Many other subsystems throughout the chapter use these as well, though often by a different name.

Victory Points (or VP) are a powerful tool in your GM arsenal, as they allow you to track the PCs' progress using a subsystem to go beyond the results of a single check. Victory Points are versatile; you could track and resolve them within a single encounter, or you could collect them over the course of an entire campaign to determine the ending of the story.

NAMING YOUR VICTORY POINTS

It can be fun to rename your Victory Points, to better reflect the subsystem they track. The term "Victory Points" is unspecific, so you can create a name for your Victory Points that fits the theme of your adventure and helps the players feel more like they are taking part in the type of activity your subsystem represents. Examples of renamed VPs include Influence Points (page 187), Infiltration Points (page 196), Research Points (page 190), and Reputation Points (page 200). The name should be representative, and the PCs should understand what it refers to. You can leave off the word "Points" if you prefer, though this section often retains it while describing how Victory Points can be used.

VICTORY POINT SUBSYSTEM STRUCTURES

There are a few common structures for tracking Victory Points that you might use for your new subsystem. You could come up with a structure based off one of the subsystems below, or you could create your own completely different structure if none of them match the way you're running your game. The most important thing is to consider how the PCs or their opposition gain or lose various forms of Victory Points.

Accumulating Victory Points

The most common structure is to accumulate Victory Points toward a total, either stopping after reaching a success threshold or collecting as many Victory Points as possible in a given time frame and then measuring the results against various thresholds. The influence

subsystem on page 187 is a great example of this structure in action: each PC has a certain number of chances to influence various NPCs, and after reaching a particular threshold of Victory Points with an NPC, the PCs have convinced that NPC.

In a variation of this structure, the PCs' adversaries can also accumulate Victory Points, giving the PCs a moving target—either to reach the goal before the adversary or to have more Victory Points than the adversary at the end of a given time frame. This is a great structure for you to use in a situation where the PCs face opposition rather than having the PCs accumulate Victory Points while adversaries decrease the total, since it's dynamic and less at risk of resulting in a stalemate.

You can track a subsystem at a larger scale, like over the course of an adventure or campaign, by granting the PCs Victory Points for achieving difficult goals or making particular decisions. Such subsystems usually ask the PCs to compare their accumulated Victory Points against several ranked tiers that each having varying results on the story. Typically these results become more positive for the PCs as they acquire more Victory Points, but sometimes succeeding too fully could have unintended consequences, like convincing the workers to support a rebellion so thoroughly that it riles up a mob. If you're making your own subsystem, you might not define these ranks in full, but just use your best guess at the end.

Accumulating Rolls

In cases where the PCs need to make checks to gain Victory Points, the amount they get for the degrees of success is up to you. The default scale detailed below works in most cases.

Critical Success The PCs gain 2 Victory Points.

Success The PCs gain 1 Victory Point.

Critical Failure The PCs lose 1 Victory Point.

This means that the result of a PC's check usually results in the party gaining either 1 or no Victory Points. However, specialized PCs have a solid chance of earning the party 2 Victory Points, and hare-brained schemes have a fair chance of losing the PCs 1 Victory Point.

Diminishing Victory Points

Using this method, the PCs start with a certain number of Victory Points, and rather than accumulating them, they attempt to avoid losing them. Perhaps the PCs are trying to keep dragon eggs from cracking, or are otherwise attempting to minimize damage, loss, or danger. This variant is less common, but it's great at conveying the urgency of a situation as the PCs lose points. Sometimes it's necessary to add that sense of tension with this subsystem! Typically, when the PCs lose all their Victory Points, a negative event occurs. If they're on a timer, the final results might be better the more points they manage to keep before the time runs out.

Diminishing Rolls

Using this structure, the PCs typically lose Victory Points as a result of failed checks, though they can still lose them for making particularly poor decisions or behaving recklessly. Once again, you can use any scaling consequences that make sense, but the default degrees of success are as follows.

Critical Success If regaining ground is possible, the PCs gain 1 Victory Point. Otherwise, as success.

Success The PCs avoid losing any Victory Points.

Failure The PCs lose 1 Victory Point.

Critical Failure The PCs lose 2 Victory Points.

Multiple Point Subsystems

In a multiple point subsystem, you have more than one point system, each measuring something different. For example, in a long-distance race, the PCs and their opponents both try to gain their own Marathon Points, and whoever gets to 10 points first wins!

Infiltration on page 196 offers a different example of a Victory Point subsystem with multiple types of points. PCs try to get a certain number of Infiltration Points to successfully infiltrate a location while avoiding giving Awareness Points to their enemies through failure.

Consider combining the multiple points with a time factor, like in infiltrations, where the PCs automatically accrue Awareness Points over time at a slow rate.

OBSTACLES AND DCs

When preparing your subsystem, think of the obstacles PCs might face or avenues they can exploit when engaging in your subsystem. Set some DCs for them in advance, using the normal system for setting DCs. Everything else, you can improvise on the spot. If you think your DCs will be higher overall, when you set the number of points needed, choose a value on the lower end (see Setting your Scale below).

Think of some possibilities that are much easier and some that are harder. Who are your PCs opposing, and what weak points might that opposition have that the PCs could exploit? Set those DCs lower or make overcoming them grant more VP. PCs who do their research or come up with clever strategies should find it easier to overcome the challenge.

ENEMY VICTORY POINTS

In addition to giving both the PCs and enemies Victory Points, as mentioned under Multiple Point Subsystems, sometimes it makes more sense to have only the enemies gain or lose Victory Points instead of the PCs. Even though the NPCs are also taking actions, it's usually best to increase or reduce the enemy's Victory Points based on just the PCs' actions, since it maximizes the feeling of player agency. In some rare cases where the foes act directly against the PCs, you might have both PC and foe actions increase the foe's Victory Points.

Implementing such a subsystem might mean flipping the normal rolls. For instance, if the PCs were trying to lower their enemies' Influence over a faction, a critical success by a PC would lower the Influence by 2, a success would lower the Influence by 1, and a critical failure might give the enemies something to exploit, raising their Influence by 1. This uses the same effects as an accumulating roll, but "damages" the enemies' VP instead of gaining VP for the PCs' side. While this is very similar mechanically to the PCs gaining VP, the thematic connection is much stronger for an intrigue-based story.

SETTING YOUR SCALE

The number of points it takes to reach a goal will greatly affect how your subsystem feels during play. If you want the subsystem to be used for a single scene, such as one negotiation with a powerful NPC, set the number lower than if it's meant to take up most or all of a game session. The Victory Point Scales table (page 186) suggests possible values for your Victory Point scale. The "adventure-wide" scale is for subsystems that are part of a larger narrative, granting Victory Points when the PCs overcome entire encounters or dungeons, rather than as an encounter unfolds.

This larger scale is intended for subsystems that take a lot of the party's focus. A subsystem that runs in the background during an adventure should use a smaller scale. This is usually the "adventure-wide, sideline" value. It could be even lower, such as if you have a dungeon-based adventure including several opportunities to interact with a kobold tribe to get some small benefits. Though they appear throughout the adventure, you would use a lower value because attaining the VP is a minor part of the story. In fact, you might choose not to use a VP subsystem at all.

The table also lists numbers for one or more thresholds. These are the point values at which the PCs get a partial benefit (or, for a diminishing subsystem, take a drawback). You should grant partial benefits when the PCs reach a certain threshold or introduce twists to the subsystem to ensure they continue to feel engaged and rewarded over time.

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VICTORY POINT SCALES

Duration of Challenge	VP End Point	VP Thresholds
Quick encounter	3-5	—
Long encounter	7-10	4
Most of a session	15-25	5, 10, 15
Adventure-wide, sideline	15-20	5, 10, 15
Adventure-wide, forefront	25-50	10, 20, 30, 40

The values also depend on various factors. These might include the DCs, the number of chances the PCs get to gain Victory Points, and the flexibility of how the PCs can deploy themselves (for example, if PCs are all forced to try something they might not be trained in, it could cause critical failures). They might also include the amount of effort the PCs need to spend on tasks that don't directly earn Victory Points—such as checks to Discover information about NPCs using the Influence subsystem. Keep all these in mind when deciding what end point you want to use.

RUNNING YOUR SUBSYSTEM

When running your new subsystem, be sure to keep the challenges fresh by using a variety of different skills and options to encourage creativity and cooperation, rather than just using the same check over and over again, where PCs can expect diminishing returns. You can also use timers to encourage each PC to participate or even create

mechanics that directly encourage each PC to participate, like setting penalties for the same PC attempting checks repeatedly, or for two PCs attempting the same check.

You can even have challenges that require all the PCs to participate. For instance, if the party's host is welcoming every guest individually, each PC might have to make an impression in their own way, or during infiltration, each PC might have to test their ability to Impersonate or Sneak. You'll likely find that some approaches should be automatic successes if they're well-suited to the task, or automatic failures for ideas that are likely impossible.

REWARDS

How you structure rewards for your subsystem depends greatly on its scope. A subsystem resolved in a single sitting usually gives accomplishment XP unless it is particularly demanding, in which case it could be considered a full-scale encounter. Meanwhile, subsystems that span over the course of multiple sessions or the entire campaign might generate accomplishment XP at meaningful milestones along the way. If you have a long-spanning subsystem that's fairly low profile and behind the scenes or is not success-oriented, such as a subsystem to track what type of ruler the PCs' patron will become based on the PCs' decisions, you might not give XP directly from the subsystem, since in that case "success" is undefined.

INFLUENCE

When the PCs need to gain favor with or sway over an NPC to achieve their goals, sometimes a Deception, Diplomacy, or Intimidation check isn't enough to get the job done. In these cases, you can implement the influence subsystem in a social encounter.

Influence is a short-term subsystem wherein the PCs accumulate Influence Points during a social encounter with an NPC to represent their increasing influence. These encounters are a race against the clock to reach Influence Point thresholds in order to sway the NPC. It's perfect for a single social gathering—whether it's a party, a treaty negotiation, or even an attempt to persuade various members of a panel of judges.

Because of the variety of Influence skill options and the ability to use Perception to uncover more information, every character has something important to contribute in the influence subsystem, as opposed to situations where only one character has Diplomacy.

The influence subsystem divides a social encounter into rounds, with the number of rounds representing the length of the social event. Rounds last any amount of time that you determine, depending on the needs of the narrative, though somewhere between 15 minutes and an hour is typical.

During each round of an influence encounter, each PC can act once to either Influence or Discover.

INFLUENCE

CONCENTRATION | LINGUISTIC

You attempt to make a favorable impression on an NPC to convince the NPC to support your cause. Choose an NPC, and attempt a skill check to impress that NPC. The DC, and whether success is possible, depend on the NPC's preferences (typically found in the NPC's influence stat block).

Critical Success You gain 2 Influence Points with the chosen NPC.

Success You gain 1 Influence Point with the chosen NPC.

Failure You gain no Influence Points with the chosen NPC.

Critical Failure You lose 1 Influence Point with the chosen NPC.

DISCOVER

CONCENTRATION | SECRET

You watch or study an NPC to learn more about that NPC's preferences. Choose an NPC and attempt a Perception check or an appropriate skill check determined by the GM. The DC is typically found in the NPC's influence stat block.

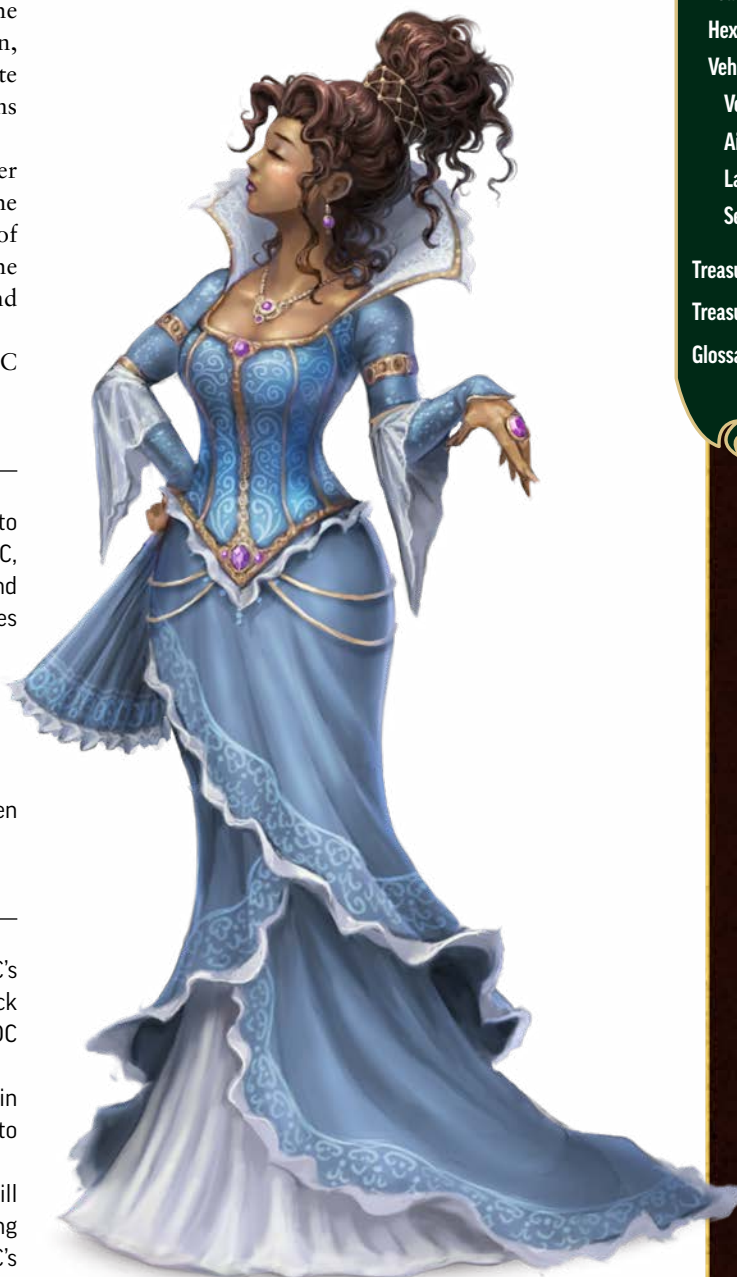
Critical Success Choose two of the options detailed in Success below; you can choose the same option twice to learn two pieces of information from the same category.

Success Choose one of the following: You learn which skill that can Influence the NPC has the lowest DC (skipping any skills that you already know), one of the NPC's

personal biases, one of the NPC's resistances, or one of the NPC's weaknesses.

Failure You learn no information.

Critical Failure Choose a piece of information to learn about, as success, but the information is incorrect. For instance, you might think the NPC is susceptible to flattery when actually the NPC is resistant to flattery.



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SAMPLE STAT BLOCK

In this example, the PCs try to convince a grizzled landlord to not evict a theatrical troupe from a dilapidated building he owns. It's a 3rd-level challenge. He is a busy, practical man and gives the PCs only 45 minutes (3 rounds) to make their case.

DANPHY MOLLWETHER

LEVEL 3

UNIQUE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Penny-pinching landlord

Perception +9

Will +12

Discovery DC 13 Mercantile Lore, DC 18 Perception, DC 16 Society

Influence Skills DC 16 Accounting Lore (noting how the theater could be made profitable), DC 16 Crafting (volunteering to repair the building), DC 20 Intimidation, DC 20 Performance, DC 22 Diplomacy, DC 24 Deception

Influence 4 Mr. Mollwether gives the troupe 1 week to get him his back rent, with interest, before evicting them.

Influence 6 Mr. Mollwether gives the troupe 1 month to get him his back rent before evicting them.

Influence 8 Mr. Mollwether allows the troupe to stay, reduces their rent, and forgives half their debt.

Resistances The landlord thinks in practical terms, with little patience for the "good-for-nothings" of the troupe. Appeals directed at sympathy alone increase the check's DC by 2.

Weaknesses Mr. Mollwether used to visit the theater often as a small child, and performing one of his favorite old songs or plays brings tears to his eyes and reduces the Performance DC by 2.

Background Mollwether was raised by wealthy parents who loved the arts and took him to the theater often. A scandal left the family broke, and Danphy clawed his way back up to a decent living. Becoming something of a slumlord, he owns several properties now and still feels he must exploit others to survive.

Appearance An elderly man in cheap dress clothes, Mr. Mollwether looks like he's never felt a moment of love for anyone in his entire life.

Personality Impatient, crotchety, skeptical

Penalty Antagonizing Mr. Mollwether by "sermonizing" or "wasting his time" causes him to cut the meeting short, reducing it to 2 rounds instead of 3.

INFLUENCE STAT BLOCKS

NPCs in the influence subsystem have little need for many of the statistics you'll find in an ordinary creature stat block. However, it might help you to prepare for the social encounter by creating an influence stat block for each prominent NPC. These are optional; if you can keep most information straight in your head, you might

skip this step or just write down the first three categories to keep the numbers straight.

Influence stat blocks are flexible and contain only the stats that you are essential to running the NPC during a social encounter, leaving the rest out. The main stats that matter are the NPC's Perception and Will modifiers.

NPC NAME

TRAITS

A succinct description of the NPC, such as "Famous musician" or "Popular baron."

Perception The NPC's Perception modifier, plus potentially relevant abilities such as scent or *truesight*.

Will The NPC's Will modifier, plus any special adjustments.

Discovery The Perception DC to Discover information about the NPC, as well as any skill checks to Discover their DCs.

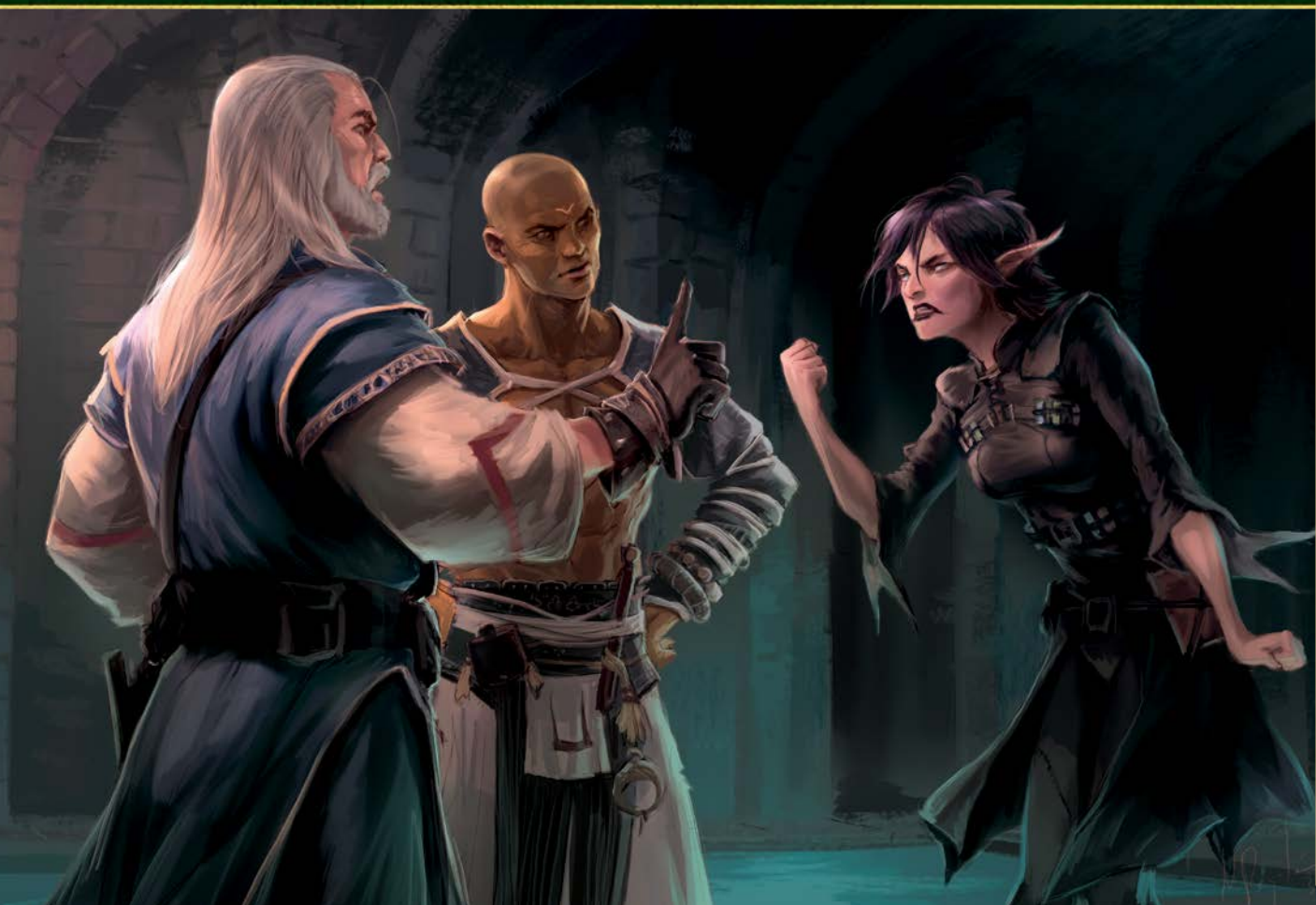
Influence Skills The skills the PCs can use to Influence the NPC are listed here with their DCs, in order from the lowest DC (the skill that works best) to the highest DC. If a skill isn't listed but a player gives a strong narrative explanation for using it, you can add it as an appropriate DC (usually the highest listed DC). Diplomacy should usually be on this list, but should rarely be the best skill to Influence an NPC, in order to encourage and reward using Discover to learn and cater to an NPC's interests.

Influence Thresholds The number of Influence Points required to Influence the PC, and the benefits for meeting them. Some NPCs might have multiple influence thresholds, granting the PCs additional benefits or favors as they cross more thresholds.

Resistances Some NPCs are resistant to certain tactics, biased against certain types of people, or may get defensive when a certain topic comes up. Any of these makes it harder for a PC to convince them. For instance, an NPC might find flattery inane, dislike wizards, or bristle at any mention of their ex-spouse. Typically, an NPC's resistance increases the DC of the associated check to Influence by 2 (or 5 for stronger resistances), but it could have farther-ranging consequences, such as losing Influence Points or angering the NPC enough that attempting to Influence them again is impossible.

Weaknesses Most NPCs have at least one weakness that clever and observant PCs can use to their advantage, whether it's a deep-seated insecurity, a desire for power, a favorite hobby, a bias toward a certain group, or a hidden secret the PCs could threaten to expose. When a PC incorporates an NPC's weakness, it typically decreases the associated Influence check's DC by 2 (or 5 for stronger weaknesses), but it could have farther-ranging effects, such as gaining automatic Influence Points or even automatically influencing the NPC regardless of how many Influence Points the PCs have achieved so far.

After the influence stat block, you might want to list important information to help you roleplay the NPC and incorporate the NPC into your influence encounter.



You can list any of the following details that are relevant to your NPC: their background (a brief bio focusing on information relevant to the encounter), appearance, personality (this can just be a list of adjectives), affiliations, public goals, hidden agendas, or the penalty for antagonizing the NPC (or possibly for failing to Influence the NPC, depending on the way you structure the encounter).

Setting DCs

When setting DCs, it's often good to start with a noncombat level or "social level" for the NPC and set their DCs accordingly. Use the DC adjustments from page 53 just like you normally would. A good starting place is setting the NPC's Will modifier, then taking that DC and adjusting it for skills that are more or less likely to work.

For instance, for a 3rd-level challenge, you might give an NPC a +12 Will modifier and use 22 as the base DC. You might say that's the DC for Diplomacy but then determine that the NPC is difficult to intimidate, and so you apply the hard DC adjustment to make the Intimidation DC 24. Maybe you also determine that she loves different varieties of wine, resulting in an incredibly easy DC adjustment to get DC 12 for Alcohol Lore.

RUNNING AN INFLUENCE ENCOUNTER

When running an influence encounter, let the PCs be creative and use a diverse set of skills whenever possible. Be open to improvisation, and change the structure of the encounter if something interesting presents itself. The PCs set the pace and choose with whom they interact. It's up to you to make sure every NPC is distinct, react to the PCs' interactions with the NPCs, and lend overall structure to the encounter by making sure it feels like a living, breathing event rather than just a series of skill checks.

Think about how the number of rounds of a social encounter relate to the overall event. For instance, if you have a four-course banquet and 6 rounds, you could have 1 round for introductions before the food arrives, 1 round for each of the courses, and 1 last round of conversations after the final course. NPCs might filter in and out or become unavailable for conversations as they are occupied by various tasks, or become particularly eager to engage a PC. That sort of change help makes the NPC feel a bit more real and helps break up any repetition in your encounter.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

An influence encounter is typically worth the same amount of XP as a moderate combat encounter of its level would be.

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RESEARCH

When the PCs are trying to discover important information while challenged by a time limit or other interesting twist, the research subsystem is just the thing to lend their efforts more urgency and weight.

In the research subsystem, PCs accumulate Research Points and learn new information or gain other benefits upon reaching specific thresholds. This subsystem is great for granting PCs more in-depth pieces of information as they continue to explore an area at large. Here, time passes in rounds spanning anywhere from 10 or so minutes to a full day. Each round, the characters use the Research exploration activity to gain Research Points (RP). As time passes and the party earns more RP, they gain knowledge and rewards, but also might face consequences or events. Some of these events might interrupt the round with a different kind of encounter (disrupting the Research activity), such as a social encounter with an intelligent book or a combat encounter with a guardian.

Research challenges work best when the PCs face a time constraint, rival research group, or other form of external condition that presents additional pressures—if the PCs have all the time in the world to safely peruse a library or ruin, you can usually simplify things to a simple skill check, since the PCs are free to keep rolling until they uncover everything there is to find.

BUILDING A RESEARCH CHALLENGE

A research challenge has two components: the library, which is an area containing the various research checks PCs need to attempt to learn about the topic (as well as obstacles that the PCs face while doing so); and a research stat block, which details the topic being researched and contains the information, rewards, and additional complications that happen when the PCs reach certain thresholds of RP.

Designing the Library

“Library” is the general term to designate the setting of the PCs’ research. Despite the name, it doesn’t necessarily consist of a quiet hall full of books. It could be an Astral memory palace, a gallery of iconographic artwork, or even

a mansion where the party is questioning the guests. In many ways, designing a library is similar to designing any other dungeon, castle, or adventure locale, with various rooms or other areas, each with its own complications for the PCs to overcome. If your library is closer to a dungeon crawl on a tactical map, these are likely hazards or encounters with hostile creatures; if your library is meant to be meandered through more narratively, these might instead be skill-based or social encounters with NPCs.

Throughout the library, you’ll place research checks. These describe the task that the party is doing to Research—perusing books, alchemically testing samples, or talking to a stubborn librarian—and a number of skills and DCs the party can use with the Research activity, in order from the lowest DC (the skill that works best) to the highest DC.

RESEARCH

CONCENTRATION | EXPLORATION

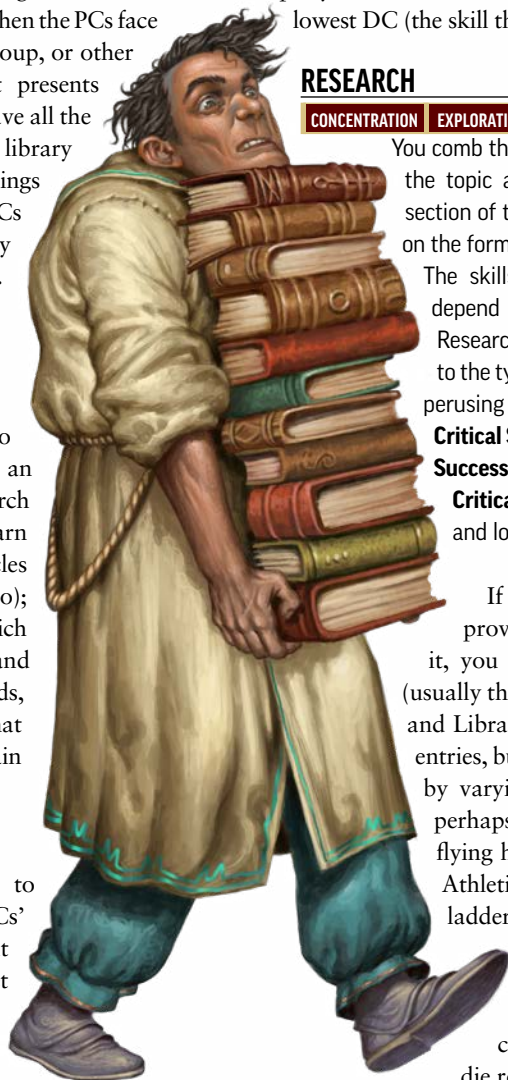
You comb through information to learn more about the topic at hand. Choose your research topic, section of the library, or other division depending on the form of research, and attempt a skill check. The skills to use and the DC for the check depend on the specific research task, and the Research activity gains any traits appropriate to the type of research (such as linguistic when perusing books).

Critical Success You gain 2 RP.

Success You gain 1 RP.

Critical Failure You make a false discovery and lose 1 RP.

If a skill isn’t listed but a player provides a strong explanation for using it, you can add it at an appropriate DC (usually the highest listed DC). Academia Lore and Library Lore will often be listed in these entries, but also try to engage the whole party by varying the skills listed in each check; perhaps the books on aeromancy are all flying high overhead, requiring a round of Athletics checks to represent climbing up ladders to retrieve them. A variety of skills and decisions, along with vivid descriptions, are the key to an engaging and memorable research challenge, rather than just a string of die rolls by the investigator or wizard.



Each research check also has a maximum RP value. After reaching this value, the PCs can't gain any more RP from that research check (they don't gain more information by reading the same book over and over!) so they'll need to continue exploring to find more locations for further research. You can use this to guide your PCs through your library by placing research checks in various sections you know you want them to explore—an easy check near the entrance to introduce them to the topic is usually helpful as well! Be sure that your library provides enough RP for players to meet all the research thresholds in the stat block.

Designing the Stat Block

Once you've decided what your library looks like and how the areas and research options are structured, it's time to build the stat block and set research thresholds for each topic. Thresholds are your opportunity to reward your PCs with intriguing new information (like the history of the town they're in), tactical intel (such as a legendary monster's only weakness), uncommon or rare options (like a lost spell in the library's depths), or anything else. A mix of rewards is best! Backstory can be interesting, but isn't much of a reward on its own. Research that uncovers only backstory should appear only at the lowest thresholds.

Reaching thresholds can also change the state of the library, in the PCs' favor or otherwise. In a dusty room, the first threshold might simply be cleaning and organizing the library to lower subsequent checks, but in a haunted library, ghosts might start appearing as their resting place is increasingly disturbed. Reaching a research threshold can do just about anything, but it should always do something.

Think about the constraints preventing the PCs from researching freely, and use those constraints to determine how many Research Points they must earn to reach each threshold. You don't need to evenly space thresholds—you could require very few Research Points for crucial clues you want to ensure the PCs receive and a much larger number to reach the final threshold that grants a special reward.

In a published adventure, you'll find stat blocks presented in the format below. In some cases, this information appears in a single stat block instead, but the rules function the same.

RESEARCH TOPIC'S NAME RESEARCH (LEVEL)

TRAITS
Research Checks The checks PCs can attempt to conduct research listed alongside their locations, tagged with area codes or page references when appropriate.
Research Thresholds Each threshold lists the number of RP required to reach it, followed by the effects for meeting that threshold. Thresholds are listed in order from first (requiring the fewest RP) to last (the highest threshold).

Beneath the stat block, you can list any events that occur based on timing rather than the PCs' RP total (such as a threatening message arriving on the third day), as well as any other important details.

SAMPLE RESEARCH CHECKS AND STAT BLOCK

Here, the PCs are trying to learn about a hag coven known only to the fey of a strange forest glade. It's a 7th-level challenge. Here are the research checks that would appear throughout the library, as well as the research stat block.

Sprite Swarm: Thousands of iridescent sprites flit about the entrance, eager to offer tidbits of information; **Maximum RP** 5; **Research Checks** DC 23 Diplomacy or Society to politely ask the sprites for information, DC 28 Athletics to catch one in the hand.

Field of Tomeflowers: By the crossing the babbling brook, 5-foot stems open up into colorful petaled tomes; **Maximum RP** 10; **Research Checks** DC 18 Academia Lore or Library Lore to read the tomes, DC 23 Occultism to understand strange marginalia.

Loremother Tree: In the center of the forest, an ancient oak slumbers, willing to share its wisdom with any who can commune with it; **Maximum RP** 15; **Research Checks** DC 21 Performance to awaken the oak through music, DC 23 Nature to interpret primal magic dreams.

THE HAGS' SECRET RESEARCH 7

UNIQUE	FEY	PRIMAL
Research Checks sprite swarm (entrance), field of tomeflowers (babbling brook), Loremother Tree (center)		
5	Research Points The PCs learn of apocryphal fey legends that say the coven members were once cruel fey queens now twisted by inner corruption. They learn basic details about hags and the hag mother's Call.	
10	Research Points The PCs learn that the coven gathers on a nearby mountaintop every full moon. Attaining this knowledge comes at a cost: hag malice solidifies into two will-o'-wisps, which attack the PCs.	
15	Research Points The PCs learn that a specific magical incantation is needed to reach the hag's mountaintop. Though they don't quite discover the incantation, they discover among magical writings a page containing the uncommon spell <i>read omens</i> .	
20	Research Points The Loremother Tree awakens long enough to tell the PCs the incantation, but warns them that the hags possess powerful magic that has struck down many heroes. The tree then returns to slumber. Replace the Loremother Tree's Performance Research check with a DC 28 Diplomacy check to convince the tree to share further knowledge.	
30	Research Points A dryad emerges from the trunk of the Loremother Tree and tells the PCs about the hags' spell—a unique polymorph ability that turns people into toads. She also gives each PC a small flower charm for protection that grants each PC a +3 status bonus to their saving throws against the hags' Toad Form ability. Unfortunately, this draws the hags' attention, who send two living wildfires to burn the glade down. If the PCs don't defeat the fire elementals, the creatures destroy any remaining information in the glade.	

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CHASES

When the PCs pursue a fleeing adversary or quarry—or someone chases them instead—adding twists and turns to the pursuit builds suspense and makes the outcome more uncertain than if it were based on Speed alone. The chases subsystem helps you create cinematic scenes where the PCs must quickly overcome obstacles, from following someone through a crowded market to carrying a desperately urgent message over a dangerous mountain pass.

The Speed rules in *Player Core* work well for short sprints through fairly clear terrain. Over longer distances and through more complex environments, though, the path is rarely so straightforward. The chase subsystem shifts the emphasis from raw Speed to facing down the kinds of unpredictable obstacles that characters might encounter in a longer pursuit, so you can create a thrilling chase scene.

Chases are a special type of encounter. Each round, the pursued character or characters act first, then the pursuing characters act. Typically, to reduce variance, the PCs roll checks to progress while their opponents proceed at a steady pace, but if you want to emphasize the back-and-forth nature of a particular chase, you could have both sides roll instead. Characters in the same group can act in whatever order they prefer, each taking a turn. A character must act on their turn. If they pass their turn or are unable to act, they're unable to help the group and automatically cause the group to lose 1 Chase Point.

Depending on the scale of your chase, establish at the beginning how long each round lasts so the PCs understand how much they can accomplish in that time. Is it essentially a 3-action turn, or does it take minutes, hours, or days?

OBSTACLES

During a chase, all the characters must overcome a series of obstacles that represent challenges—from locked doors to deceptive bogs—during the different legs of the pursuit. These obstacles aren't separated by specific distances; rather, the distance is narrative and can vary between obstacles as needed for the story you're telling. Travel times between obstacles can vary, too. The time scale you choose determines how PCs can act when dealing with an obstacle.

Each obstacle requires a certain number of Chase Points to overcome. Typically, half the obstacles require 1 point fewer than the number of party members, and half require 2 points fewer (with a minimum of 1 Chase Point per obstacle). Particularly challenging obstacles might require more. Typically, there are multiple ways to overcome an obstacle; for example, characters could evade a guard or bribe them to look away. Each approach usually requires a skill check or Perception check, but sometimes a saving throw, an attack roll, or something even more unusual, like casting a certain spell.

On a character's turn, they describe what they do to help the group get past the obstacle. They then attempt

any required roll, or perform the required action for a choice without a check. If they attempt a roll, the result determines how many Chase Points the character gains.

Critical Success The PCs gain 2 Chase Points.

Success The PCs gain 1 Chase Point.

Critical Failure The PCs lose 1 Chase Point.

If the means of bypassing the obstacle helps automatically without requiring a check—such as using a certain spell to assist—the PCs typically get 1 Chase Point. You can increase that to 2 if you feel the action is extremely helpful.

Chase Points represent the ability of the whole group to bypass the obstacle. A character who critically succeeds is able to help the other characters continue onward, while one who critically fails needs extra assistance. Players often have ideas for ways to overcome the obstacle beyond the choices you created for the obstacle. If their idea is applicable, you'll need to determine the DC and skill, or other statistic being used for that approach. This is great as long as it's creative, but be wary of a situation where a character who is legendary at a skill tries to justify how they can bypass every obstacle with that skill, such as using Acrobatics to tumble around them all, or the like. You can determine that some tactics just won't work against certain obstacles, or would help only one character without benefiting the rest and therefore aren't all that useful.

Once the PCs accumulate enough Chase Points to overcome the obstacle, they move on to the next. Extra Chase Points don't carry over to the next obstacle. However, anyone who hasn't already taken their turn that round can still take it against the new obstacle. Consequently, the characters best suited to overcoming the current obstacle might act first, since the remaining characters might be better suited against the next one. The number of Chase Points the PCs have can never fall below 0.

It might help to put your obstacles in a stat block for easy reference. Inside published adventures, chase obstacles are likely to be presented in stat block form, as follows.

CROWD

OBSTACLE 1

Chase Points 3; Overcome DC 15 Acrobatics or Athletics to weave or push through, DC 13 Society to follow the flow

Throngs of people crowd the streets, making it difficult to continue the chase.

BUILDING A CHASE

When building a chase, first build your obstacles, and then decide how far ahead the pursued character or characters begin and at what pace the NPCs will move. Having the NPCs clear one obstacle per round is a good rule of thumb, but it could vary depending on the situation, and should especially be slower against obstacles that require more than the typical number of Chase Points to overcome.

Select or build obstacles highlighting a variety of different skills and other options so everyone in the party has a moment to shine. When choosing what skills can bypass a given obstacle, ensure a variety of approaches can work. If you've already decided that an obstacle uses Stealth, selecting Thievery as the other option doesn't really offer opportunities for different types of characters, since those who are good at Thievery are very likely the same ones who are good at Stealth. On the other hand, offering Athletics as an alternative gives a champion who's terrible at Stealth a way to help. The group can help cover for a character who is less capable at a particular obstacle, but it's more fun for players when you present substantially different options for each obstacle.

Use the following guidelines to determine how many obstacles you need for your chase. These numbers assume that the pursued party can reach a certain location to end the chase (as described in Ending Chases). If there's no such escape, you might need more obstacles.

Short: 6 obstacles, about 10–20 minutes of game time

Medium: 8 obstacles, about 15–25 minutes of game time

Long: 10 obstacles, about 20–30 minutes of game time

Setting Obstacle DCs

When you set the DCs for an obstacle, you'll typically be using simple DCs. Use a proficiency rank that's generally appropriate for the PCs' level if you want the obstacle to be a significant obstacle. As noted earlier, you'll typically want to select a couple different ways the group can get past an obstacle. At least one check should have an easy or very easy adjustment, while the other check should have a standard or hard DC. In some cases, you might use something other than a simple DC; for example, if a specific NPC has put up a magical barrier, you would use their spell DC. This might result in some pretty tough DCs or even impassable obstacles, so use this carefully!

If a PC improvises a different way to get around an obstacle from what you planned, set the DC just like you would normally when picking a DC on the fly. Don't worry about adjusting the DC to be easy or very easy, because the PC is likely to be good at the skill they've chosen.

Shortcuts and Split Paths

You might want to build a chase with multiple paths that split and rejoin so you can have a shortcut (with easier DCs or fewer obstacles) or paths that appeal to different types of characters. For instance, one obstacle might allow a PC who critically succeeds at a Perception check to find

SOLO CHASES

Sometimes circumstances might require you to run a chase where the PCs are each progressing individually, rather than as a group, such as if they get split up. The danger therein is that a player can easily become frustrated if their character is stuck at an obstacle where it's extremely difficult to succeed at either choice, and no allies can help them. In these chases, it's best to allow even a single success to be enough for a character to progress to the next obstacle, and have a critical success give the character a +2 circumstance bonus on their first check against the next obstacle.

a faster path along a canal, without the obstacles of a busy street. This can be fun, but it can also split up the group. Familiarize yourself with the Solo Chases sidebar above to make similar adjustments for a divided group.

Ending Chases

Once you have the obstacles, decide the end conditions. Chases often end when the pursuer reaches the same obstacle as the pursued, leading to a combat encounter or other scene. However, it's less clear when to end a chase otherwise. It's typically best to have an obstacle that ends the chase with the pursued character getting away, as long as they overcome the obstacle before being captured. This is usually better than ending the chase after a certain number of rounds, because reaching a hideaway makes more narrative sense and because you might not be able to predict how far the pursued characters move in those rounds, making you run out of obstacles. You can also end the chase in favor of the pursued characters if they ever get a certain number of obstacles ahead of the pursuers (typically three), as the pursuers simply lose the trail. You should still have an end point to the chase, though, in case that never happens.

Types of Chases

- **Chase Down:** The PCs pursue adversaries. The PCs go second in initiative since they're the pursuers. Start the enemies one obstacle ahead of the PCs (or at the same location for a short chase), and end the chase if the PCs catch up to the enemies, or if the enemies reach a certain location that represents their safety or escape.
- **Run Away:** The PCs attempt to escape. They'll go first in initiative since they're being pursued. It's usually best to start them one obstacle ahead of their foes and end the chase if they reach a certain location or are three obstacles ahead of the foes at the end of a round.
- **Beat the Clock:** The PCs try to get through all the obstacles before a certain number of rounds pass, such as if the PCs are trying to outrun a natural disaster or race in a timed challenge. The number of obstacles should usually equal the number of rounds.

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- **Competitive Chase:** The PCs and their adversaries are both chasing the same thing or trying to reach the same location, and whoever gets there first wins. This works like chase down, except that either party could win. Because there is more than one set of pursuers, you might have the PCs and their competitors roll initiative to see who goes first each round (while still moving all NPCs at a steady rate).

RUNNING A CHASE

When running a chase, narrate the scene and give vivid descriptions of the obstacles the PCs face, rather than just reading off a list of skills and immediately having the players start rolling dice and making checks. A chase is a framework for roleplaying, not just a dice game. Encourage the PCs to describe what they're doing, and how they're helping their comrades overcome each obstacle.

Typically, it's best to tell the players the DCs of the default options, so they can make informed decisions. At the very least, you should indicate the relative difficulty of the clear paths.

Try to make it feel like the PCs are really part of a chase scene, like in a movie. As each side makes progress, describe how they pull ahead or close the gap. PCs far from their foes might hear shouts in the distance. As they get closer, they catch glimpses, and then finally see their quarry in

full view once they're on the enemies' heels. Think about how the events of the chase affect the environment as well. For instance, if a kaiju is chasing after the PCs, after the PCs overcome an obstacle consisting of a thick copse of trees, you could describe how the kaiju flattens the trees beneath its feet as it stomps after them.

Visual Aids

It can help your players visualize the chase to use a series of cards or a rough map (such as a large-scale city map rather than a 5-foot grid) to show locations. Use one miniature or token to represent each side of the chase. You might place cards with obstacle names on them face down, revealing them as PCs reach them, and letting a PC peek at an upcoming card if they scout it from a distance.

If the PCs Get Stuck

Sometimes, despite their best efforts, an obstacle will stymie the PCs over and over again. In most cases, after 3 rounds of the PCs struggling with an obstacle that requires the standard number of Chase Points, it's a good idea to just say they found another way around it. If presenting another way around the obstacle just doesn't make sense, such as if a spherical barrier completely blocks the PCs, you might introduce an NPC or other outside force that can help them bypass it, but at a high cost.

UNDERGROUND OBSTACLES

Crumbling Corridor (1st)	DC 13 Acrobatics to avoid disturbing the walls, DC 15 Crafting to shore up the walls; Quaking Corridor (11th) DC 25 Acrobatics, DC 30 Crafting
Fungus Grotto (1st)	DC 15 Fortitude to endure poisonous spore, DC 13 Survival to avoid the mushrooms; Virulent Fungi (5th) DC 20 Fortitude, DC 18 Survival
Pit Trap (1st)	DC 13 Athletics to quickly climb out, DC 15 Perception to spot the trap before it's triggered; Exceptional Pit Trap (5th) DC 20 Athletics, DC 18 Perception
Wandering Ooze (1st)	DC 18 Occultism to identify its deficiencies, DC 15 Stealth to sneak past; Really Big Wandering Ooze (7th) DC 24 Occultism, DC 19 Stealth
Collapsed Tunnel (5th)	DC 20 Athletics to dig through, DC 18 Perception to find a secret door around; Ancient Collapse (12th) DC 30 Athletics, DC 28 Perception
Pendulum Trap (5th)	DC 20 Reflex to dodge the blades, DC 15 Thievery to disable the tap; Panoply of Pendulums (12th) DC 30 Reflex, DC 28 Thievery
Wooden Portcullis (8th)	DC 25 Acrobatics to squeeze through, DC 20 Athletics to lift the gate; Iron Portcullis (11th) DC 25 Acrobatics, DC 30 Athletics

URBAN OBSTACLES

Crowd (1st)	DC 15 Acrobatics or Athletics to weave or push through, DC 13 Society to follow the flow; Festival Crowd (4th) DC 20 Athletics, DC 18 Society
Fruit Cart (1st)	DC 13 Athletics to vault over or smash through, DC 15 Intimidation to make the merchant move it; Merchant Pavilion (5th) DC 20 Athletics, DC 22 Intimidation
Guard Dog (1st)	DC 14 Nature to calm, DC 16 Stealth to sneak past; Guard Roc (9th) DC 26 Nature, DC 28 Stealth
Rickety Rooftops (1st)	DC 15 Acrobatics to cross clotheslines, DC 13 Athletics to jump from roof to roof; Crumbling, Steep Rooftops (5th) DC 18 Acrobatics, DC 20 Athletics
Wooden Fence (1st)	DC 13 Athletics to climb over, DC 15 Thievery to unlock a gate; High Iron Fence (8th) DC 20 Athletics, DC 25 Thievery
Gang of Hooligans (2nd)	DC 13 Deception to trick, DC 15 Stealth to sneak past; Elite Criminals (12th) DC 28 Deception, DC 30 Stealth
Twisting Alleyways (2nd)	DC 17 Perception to find a path, DC 13 Society to recall a map; Multi-Story Maze (7th) DC 22 Perception, DC 20 Society

WILDERNESS OBSTACLES

Deep Mud (1st)	DC 15 Athletics to slog through, DC 13 Perception to find a path; Horrid Bog (5th) DC 20 Athletics, DC 18 Perception
Downpour (1st)	DC 13 Fortitude to push through, DC 15 Nature to predict the weather; Magical Thunderstorm (5th) DC 30 Fortitude, DC 25 Nature
Rope Bridge (1st)	DC 15 Acrobatics to cross carefully, DC 13 Crafting to make repairs; Solitary Frayed Rope (11th) DC 25 Acrobatics, DC 30 Crafting
Rushing River (1st)	DC 15 Athletics to swim or hop across stones, DC 13 Survival to find a ford nearby; Flash Flood (5th) DC 20 Athletics, DC 18 Survival
Steep Hills (1st)	DC 13 Athletics to climb across, DC 15 Perception to find easier path; Rugged Mountain (5th) DC 20 Athletics, DC 18 Perception
Swarm of Wasps (1st)	DC 15 Fortitude to endure stings, DC 13 Survival to smoke them out; Those Aren't Wasps! (5th) DC 20 Fortitude, DC 18 Survival
Tangled Forest (2nd)	DC 17 Perception to find the way, DC 13 Survival to plot a path; Enchanted Forest (5th) DC 20 Perception, DC 18 Survival



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INFILTRATION

Not all elements of an adventure can be resolved with force of arms and the sizzle of deadly magic. Sometimes subtlety is required to circumvent foes or accomplish a goal. When the characters need to rely on improvisation and fast thinking to infiltrate a stronghold or organization to save the day, the infiltration subsystem provides a framework for those adventures.

An infiltration requires the heroes to employ guile and subtlety to achieve one or more objectives without directly confronting their enemies. The PCs' goal might be sneaking into a den of thieves to relieve them of ill-gotten gains, navigating the winding passages of the city watch headquarters to break a friend out of prison, or putting themselves in just the right spot to snatch up the right person or the correct item at just the right time. Whatever the case, the heroes are working to avoid drawing the attention of an opposing party, such as the members of a thieves' guild, the prison guards, or the invited guests at an upscale gala. Should the heroes draw too much attention, they might be attacked, arrested, or thrown out—in any case, blocked from accomplishing their goal.

An infiltration is fundamentally a roleplaying activity. The players narrate their characters' actions in response to the situations around them, and the infiltration subsystem provides a framework to measure incremental success within the overall endeavor. An infiltration takes place over the course of multiple rounds, though it's up to you to determine how long a round is. One round might encompass 10 minutes or 1 hour of in-world time, or something completely different, depending on the story and your group's preferences.

BUILDING AN INFILTRATION

When creating an infiltration, you'll want to start with the party's broad goals and an idea of how much time you and your players want to spend. The more complex an infiltration, the longer it will take to play out at the table.

Objective

The first thing you'll need to determine is the party's objective, or broad goal. Maybe the PCs need to find their way into some hidden sanctum, find a particular person within an organization, locate and get away with a bit of treasure, or plant a piece of evidence. An infiltration can consist of a single objective, but a more complex one might include two or more objectives in sequence—the PCs might first need to find a way to enter the cult's sanctum, then open the vault, and then escape with the relic.

To achieve an objective, the PCs must overcome a certain number of obstacles—specific challenges the PCs face, such as getting across a moat or past a nosy butler. For a simple objective, they might need to overcome only one or two obstacles, while a more complex one might require several.

It's a good idea to offer more obstacles as options than the characters need to overcome, and the PCs don't all have to choose the same ones. This represents the fact that there's more than one way into a castle, and allows PCs to choose obstacles that play to their strengths. It also means you have more options you can adapt if the PCs decide on a truly novel way to tackle their objective.

Once a character has overcome the required number of obstacles to reach the objective, they move on to the next objective. This might mean that some characters move on to a second objective and start making progress toward it while other characters are still completing obstacles from the first objective. When all characters have completed the final objective, the infiltration is a success!

While the characters are pursuing their objectives, however, they need to avoid notice. Awareness Points (AP) measure the extent to which an opposing party is aware of the PCs' actions, and apply to the party as a whole. As the PCs' Awareness Points increase, the infiltration becomes more difficult as the opposition shores up its defenses. If the PCs generate too many Awareness Points, they are found out, and their infiltration fails altogether!

Obstacles

Each obstacle has certain statistics that define how it works in play. Infiltration Points (IP) represent a character's progress toward overcoming an obstacle. Each obstacle requires gaining a certain number of Infiltration Points to overcome—typically 1 or 2, but some challenging obstacles might require more. PCs can gain Infiltration Points in multiple ways—usually through a skill or Perception check, but sometimes another roll or even the use of a spell or item. These methods are listed in the obstacle's Overcome entry. Unlike obstacles for chases, these use a difficulty range for the PCs' level instead of set DCs.

The Overcome entry also lists whether the PCs need to overcome an object individually or as a group. For individual obstacles, each PC needs to earn the required number of Infiltration Points themselves, while for group obstacles, all PCs working toward that obstacle pool their Infiltration Points toward it together. For example, each PC trying to scale a wall needs to earn points on their own, but the PCs could work together to search a guildhall for clues, and once one PC has picked a lock, everyone can enter.

A particular PC can overcome an individual obstacle only once during an objective; likewise, the party can overcome a group obstacle only once.

Obstacles in Play

On a character's turn, the character describes what they do to get past the obstacle. They then attempt any required check (or perform the required action, if their choice doesn't require a check). The result of the check determines how many Infiltration Points the character gains toward overcoming that obstacle—or whether they instead raise suspicions and accrue Awareness Points!

Critical Success The PC gains 2 Infiltration Points.

Success The PC gains 1 Infiltration Point.

Failure The PCs accrue 1 Awareness Point.

Critical Failure The PCs accrue 2 Awareness Points.

If the character's actions automatically help without requiring a check, like using a spell, they usually gain 1 IP, but you can award 2 for particularly helpful actions.

Sometimes a PC might become stuck on an individual obstacle. Some opportunities (page 198) allow PCs to spend their turn helping others overcome a tricky obstacle.

Pacing

The number of obstacles you require the PCs to overcome for an objective depends partly on the complexity of the infiltration. For shorter infiltrations, use fewer and lower-IP obstacles; for a longer, more complex heist, you can add more obstacles with greater complexity. Also, bear in mind how many checks the PCs will need to attempt to complete their obstacles. An objective with mostly low-IP group obstacles will move quickly because only a few rolls are required, compared to one with mostly individual obstacles that each PC needs to roll separately for.

Sample Obstacles

While you'll want to create custom obstacles to suit the details of your infiltration, the following examples can be used directly in many infiltrations, or as inspiration for your own creations. You can also use the sample chase obstacles on page 195 as starting points.

GUARD POST

OBSTACLE

Infiltration Points 2 (individual); **Overcome** standard, hard, or very hard Deception, Diplomacy, or Stealth

Guards cluster at a checkpoint, alert for unusual activity.

LOCKED DOOR

OBSTACLE

Infiltration Points 1 (group); **Overcome** hard or very hard Athletics or Thievery

A locked door separates the heroes from their target.

TRAP

OBSTACLE

Infiltration Points 3 (group); **Overcome** hard or very hard Thievery
A trap bars the characters' passage. This obstacle follows the normal degrees of success for an obstacle, with the following modification for critical failure.

Critical Failure The PCs accrue 2 AP as normal, and the PC who critically fails the Thievery check also triggers the trap.

SETTING INFILTRATION SKILLS AND DCS

Many of the sample infiltration activities and events give a DC range instead of a fixed DC. Set the DCs based on the standard DC of the party level using the table on page 53, and adjust them using the DC Adjustments on page 53. When given a range of skills for an activity or event, you should vary the difficulty based on the needs of the story. For instance, if a PC is Scouting a Location, you might want to use a low DC for Stealth (because it's easier to scout when unnoticed), a hard one for Perception (because while the PC might see the enemy, the enemy might also see them), and a very hard DC for Society (because walking in like you belong is difficult if you don't have an invitation or the right uniform). This not only adds a certain degree of plausibility, but by planning for and allowing a broad range of skills as a means to complete the activity, you also become better prepared for when your players improvise.

Awareness Points

The trick to any infiltration is to get it done before anyone notices. Awareness Points measure the opposition's awareness of the PCs' efforts, helping you keep the pressure on and ramp up the urgency. While Infiltration Points are specific to a given obstacle, Awareness Points are a single pool spanning the entire infiltration and all participants.

Awareness Points increase in three different ways. When a PC fails a check to overcome an obstacle, they incur 1 Awareness Point (or 2 on a critical failure). Other failed checks during the infiltration typically don't increase the Awareness Point total unless the failure would reasonably cause a disruption. Awareness Points also increase by 1 at the end of each round of the infiltration, as the passage of time makes it more likely that the PCs will be discovered. Finally, the PCs earn Awareness Points whenever their activities are disruptive enough to draw attention to the infiltration, subject to GM discretion.

The effects of Awareness Points occur when the PCs reach certain thresholds. The specific effects and thresholds are up to you and your story, but typically for every 5 AP the PCs accrue, the challenges become harder, and if the PCs accrue enough Awareness Points (usually equal to twice the number of Infiltration Points necessary for the party as a whole to overcome all necessary obstacles), the infiltration fails.

Each threshold should have an effect. It might increase the DCs for obstacles, introduce a complication, spark a combat encounter, or have other effects. Reaching the highest tier of Awareness Points means that the PCs fail, but that doesn't have to be the end of the story! Failed infiltrations are an opportunity to introduce new challenges and move the story forward in a different way.

This basic Awareness Point scheme for an infiltration requiring the PCs to earn 10 IP can be used as is or tailored to your game.

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5 Awareness Points: Suspicions are raised. Increase the DCs for obstacles by 1. The first time the PCs reach this tier, a complication occurs.

10 Awareness Points: The first time the PCs reach this tier, a complication occurs.

15 Awareness Points: Increase the DCs for obstacles by a total of 2, and the first time the PCs reach this tier, a complication occurs.

20 Awareness Points: The infiltration fails.

Complications

Sometimes, when a plan goes sour and seems like it can't get worse, it does. Complications are unexpected problems that compound the difficulty of a challenge. The party might trigger a complication by critically failing a check to overcome a challenge, by reaching a certain threshold of Awareness Points, if you need to spice up the infiltration, or through their own decisions—maybe the wizard's castle has various wards, each triggered when a PC attempts to use a different kind of magic.

Many complications increase Awareness Points or otherwise make infiltration more difficult. A common form of complication is attracting the attention of guards who try to stop, capture, or even kill the PCs. When this happens, the infiltration may briefly shift into encounter mode as the PCs attempt to defeat their assailants. The sounds of battle are loud, so unless combat occurs in an isolated area or the PCs take precautions, each round of unmitigated combat noise causes them to gain Awareness Points, at the very least.

When you create a complication, decide on the details of how it will play out. Each complication has a trigger that determines when it occurs. It might affect only a single character, or it might affect everyone in a certain area, and you'll need to determine whether multiple PCs can work together to overcome it or whether only one can. Complications must be overcome before the characters involved can overcome other obstacles, and attempting to overcome a complication takes a character's turn just like trying to overcome an obstacle. Many complications are one-off events and are overcome automatically, even on a failure, though not without a cost. If a complication requires PCs to gain Infiltration Points to clear it, it has an Infiltration Points entry, just like an obstacle.

Don't overwhelm the characters with complications. Typically, you'll want to aim for two complications per AP threshold. Otherwise, the PCs may end up spending more time on the complications than on the heist itself, and the chance of failure may be too high.

The following example is a common complication that could occur in almost any infiltration.

DO I KNOW YOU?

COMPLICATION

Trigger The PCs reach 5 Awareness Points for the first time.

Overcome standard, hard, or very hard Deception, Diplomacy, Performance, or Stealth

Someone thinks they recognize you, and you must either convince them otherwise before slipping away or find a way to dodge the person entirely.

Success You convince or otherwise dodge the person.

Failure You are recognized, and the party accrues 1 AP.

Critical Failure As failure, but the party accrues 2 AP.

Opportunities

Not everything that happens during an infiltration is a challenge that must be solved—sometimes PCs can use their turns to aid the group in some way. Opportunities are very similar to obstacles, but they don't provide Infiltration Points or count toward the objective. They instead provide some kind of benefit, such as a magical password to disable security features further along, reducing the party's Awareness Points, or lowering the DC for a later challenge. But opportunities sometimes come with risks—failing can increase the PCs' Awareness Points or trigger complications. You'll need to decide what opportunities are available and when, and whether they can be completed multiple times or only once. For example, the PCs can steal the guard's keys only once, but can cause a distraction several times.

Some opportunities might be available at almost any time in any infiltration, like this example.

SMOOTH THE PATH

OPPORTUNITY

Requirements The PC has successfully completed an individual objective and some other PCs have not.

Having completed your objective, you help an ally who is still trying to reach that goal. Describe how you are helping. This gives the ally the benefits of *Following the Expert* (Player Core 438). In unusual cases, the GM might allow you to attempt a relevant skill check to overcome the obstacle on behalf of the other PC instead.

PC PREPARATIONS

Sometimes the party has a chance to prepare before conducting their infiltration, by scouting a location, bribing officials, and so on. This takes the form of special downtime activities that can give the PCs Edge Points (EP): resources and advantages they can bring to bear during their infiltration, such as stolen uniforms, forged documents, and the like. As with infiltration opportunities, careless work runs the risk of increasing Awareness Points—but in this case, before the infiltration even begins!

Typically, you'll limit the preparation phase in some way, such as by setting a number of days the PCs have to prepare and by constraining how many preparation activities are available to make sure the PCs aren't entering the infiltration with so many Edge Points that the infiltration is no longer suspenseful. The more opportunities for Edge Points you give, the lower you should set the Awareness Point thresholds for complications and failure. Also decide how many times the characters can benefit from each preparation activity—most activities should grant their benefits only once.

You can use the activities below for your infiltration by adjusting the details, but you should also create custom activities that link directly to your story.

Edge Points

Edge Points (EP) represent advantages the party gains by proper planning, quick thinking, the intervention of an ally, or some other benefit. They are typically gained by pursuing opportunities in previous infiltrations or through preparation before the infiltration. When a PC fails or critically fails a check to overcome an obstacle or a complication, they can spend an Edge Point to succeed instead. Some Edge Points can be spent only during particular circumstances—for instance, no matter how well you forge documents, it won't help you unlock a door—so consider using unique tokens to represent such Edge Points.

Preparation Activities

BRIBE CONTACT

DOWNTIME **SECRET**

Cost A bribe worth at least one-tenth of the Currency per Additional PC listed on Party Treasure by Level (page 59). Doubling this amount grants a +2 circumstance bonus to the check.

Requirements You've successfully Gained a Contact (see below). You offer a bribe to your contact to help the heist in some way. Attempt a hard or very hard Deception or Diplomacy check.

Success The contact accepts the bribe and you gain 1 EP.

Failure You believe you successfully Bribed your Contact and gained 1 EP, but in fact the contact informs the opposition of the attempted bribery, adding 1 AP to the infiltration. The GM can reveal that this Edge Point grants no benefit at any point during the infiltration, as befits the story.

Critical Failure As failure, but adding 2 AP to the infiltration.

FORGE DOCUMENTS

DOWNTIME **SECRET**

You prepare forgeries that might serve as convincing props. Attempt a hard or very hard Society check.

Success You create convincing forgeries and gain 1 EP you can use only when presenting some form of paperwork.

Failure You create unconvincing documents. You gain 1 EP that (unknown to you) grants no benefit when used.

Critical Failure As a failure, but a PC who tries to use the Edge Point gets a critical failure, even if they use the Edge Point after rolling a failure.

GAIN CONTACT

DOWNTIME

You try to make contact with an individual who can aid you in the infiltration. Attempt a normal, hard, or very hard DC Diplomacy or Society check, or a check using a Lore skill appropriate to your prospective contact.

Success You make contact and gain 1 EP.

Failure You fail to make contact.

INFILTRATION PREPARATION

For most infiltrations, you'll want to detail the site or group the PCs are trying to infiltrate. This might involve mapping a building or fleshing out NPCs within the organization—or, most likely, both. You likely need to know the party's objectives before you can decide on these details, but knowing this information can help you brainstorm the obstacles, opportunities, and complications of the infiltration itself. Also, with details on the site and its adversaries, you can more confidently improvise when the PCs do something unexpected!

Critical Failure You insult or spook the contact in some way. Future attempts take a -2 circumstance penalty.

Special Multiple critical failures might cause the contact to work against the PCs in some way, likely increasing the party's Awareness Points.

GOSSIP

DOWNTIME **SECRET**

You seek out rumors about the infiltration's target. Attempt a normal, hard, or very hard Diplomacy check.

Critical Success You gain inside information about the location or group you're trying to infiltrate. This grants you a +2 circumstance bonus to future checks you attempt for preparation activities for this infiltration. If you share this information, those you share it with also gain this bonus.

Success You gain inside information about the place or group you're attempting to infiltrate that aids your planning.

Failure You learn nothing.

Critical Failure You hear a few mistaken rumors and take a -2 circumstance penalty to your next check for a preparation activity. Word spreads around that you're asking after that group or individual, increasing your Awareness Points by 1.

SCOUT LOCATION

DOWNTIME **SECRET**

You spend time observing the place or group you wish to infiltrate. Attempt a normal, hard, or very hard DC Perception, Society or Stealth check.

Success You make observations that provide 1 EP.

Failure You learn nothing particularly noteworthy.

Critical Failure You misjudge some aspect of what you observed, gaining 1 EP that results in a critical failure instead of a success when used, even if a PC uses the Edge Point after rolling a failure.

SECURE DISGUISES

DOWNTIME

You seek to procure or create disguises. Attempt a normal, hard, or very hard Crafting, Deception, Performance, or Society check.

Success You procure or creates disguises, gaining 1 EP that can be used only to maintain a cover identity.

Failure Your efforts result in an unusable disguise.

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REPUTATION

Sometimes it's crucial to know how groups of people feel about the PCs. That's where reputation comes into play. The reputation subsystem is a simple way to use Victory Points to determine how the PCs stand with such groups.

Reputation is a mid- to long-term subsystem wherein the PCs accumulate or lose Reputation Points with a particular group of people, such as a guild, a government, a church, or a village. The PCs gain Reputation Points by performing favors for the organization, to a maximum of 50 Reputation Points, and lose Reputation Points by doing disservices, to a minimum of -50 Reputation Points.

FAVORS

Each favor the PCs perform for a group normally grants the PCs Reputation Points with that group.

- Minor favors are simple, basic tasks that don't take too much effort for a PC to perform or much time at the table. Minor favors grant 1 Reputation Point.
- Moderate favors require a significant amount of effort and often take up a session or a noticeable chunk of a single session to complete. Moderate favors grant 2 Reputation Points.
- Major favors are a sizable endeavor, typically an entire quest involving several sessions. Major favors grant 5 Reputation Points.

DISSERVICES

On the flip side, disservices are a catchall for ways the PCs might make a group angry, whether it's through actual malice and planning on the PCs' part or simply by accident. Unlike favors, disservices don't have as easy a correspondence with in-game time; a quick but particularly egregious action could easily still be a major disservice. Disservices normally lose the PCs Reputation Points.

- Minor disservices could be small but significant missteps, or accumulated slights and inconveniences. Minor disservices take away 1 Reputation Point.
- Moderate disservices are more than just a nuisance or annoyance, generally significantly hindering the group's efforts or violating a fundamental tenet of the group's beliefs in a significant but not egregious way. Moderate disservices take away 2 Reputation Points.

- Major disservices are incredibly antagonistic to a group, usually a single brazen act, such as thwarting a cult's apocalyptic doomsday plan. Major disservices take away at least 5 Reputation Points, or more if they are particularly egregious. They might be so terrible that the PCs immediately lose all their Reputation Points and *then* lose 5 more Reputation Points.

REPUTATIONS

PCs generally start with a reputation of "ignored" with most groups, as most groups have never heard of them. If they are particularly famous or infamous among related groups, the PCs might start with a different reputation of your choice. The reputation is generalized to the whole group—an individual NPC can hold a different opinion.

Ignored

The PCs either aren't on this group's radar or the group knows about the PCs but is generally ambivalent toward them. This carries no special benefits or detriments.

Liked

The PCs have gained this group's favor. Many members of the group know about the PCs, and those who do are usually friendly to them. At this reputation, only moderate and major favors accrue Reputation Points; it takes more to impress the group further.

Admired

The PCs have earned this group's admiration. The majority of the group knows about the PCs and have an extremely favorable opinion toward them. Many members of the group are helpful toward the PCs, and those who aren't are friendly. Only major favors accrue Reputation Points.

Revered

The group reveres the PCs as heroes and celebrities. Every member has heard of the PCs, is helpful toward them, and

REPUTATIONS

Reputation	Reputation Points	Raised By	Lowered By
Revered	30 to 50	Major favor	Moderate or major disservice
Admired	15 to 29	Major favor	Any disservice
Liked	5 to 14	Moderate or major favor	Any disservice
Ignored	-4 to 4	Any favor	Any disservice
Disliked	-5 to -14	Any favor	Moderate or major disservice
Hated	-15 to -29	Any favor	Major disservice
Hunted	-30 to -50	Moderate or major favor	Major disservice



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would take major risks to assist them. Only major favors accrue Reputation Points, and only moderate or major disservices can reduce them.

Disliked

The PCs have a poor reputation among members of this group. Many members of the group know about the PCs, and are usually unfriendly to them. At this reputation, only moderate and major disservices reduce Reputation Points.

Hated

The PCs have earned this group's ire. The vast majority of the group knows about the PCs and have an extremely unfavorable opinion toward them. Many members of the group are hostile toward the PCs, and those who aren't are unfriendly. When presented an easy opportunity to hurt the PCs, the group will jump at the chance. Only major disservices can still reduce Reputation Points.

Hunted

The group actively hunts the PCs as scapegoats or nemeses, even at significant cost to itself. Every member has heard of the PCs, is hostile toward them, and would take major risks to thwart or destroy them. Only major disservices can still reduce Reputation Points, and only moderate or major favors can increase them.

REPUTATION IN PATHFINDER SOCIETY ORGANIZED PLAY

Pathfinder Society Organized Play uses a version of the reputation subsystem with various factions to offer unique benefits for different characters, with different Reputation Point thresholds that are adapted to the Organized Play structure. Check it out for inspiration for reputation in your own game!

RUNNING REPUTATION

Using Reputation Points in the background allows you to track the PCs' status with a variety of groups or factions based on the PCs' actions and choices. This is especially useful for a sandbox campaign or other structure with numerous possibilities, helping you build a reactive structure and track how PCs are doing with groups they interact with only occasionally. When the point totals don't fit the story, use common sense. For instance, if the PCs are hunted by the town guard due to a corrupt mayor, but then perform a major quest revealing the mayor's wrongdoing and saving the town, that might jump them from the worst negative reputation to a much more positive reputation. Similarly, the PCs' foes could frame them, harming the PCs' reputation even though they've done no disservice.

DUELS

Sometimes conflicts become personal. It's not the entire group against a challenge, but one character struggling against the skills of a single adversary. In many societies, duels are considered a reasonable way to resolve individual differences, though others consider such practices—especially the more deadly varieties—to be an affront to law and order. Duels can come in several forms, and this section gives you rules to run them.

SETTING UP A DUEL

Participants must willingly agree to the duel and to abide by its rules. If one of the duelists breaks the duel's rules (and, more importantly, is caught doing so), that duelist loses, taking any penalties agreed upon when the challenge was accepted. Here are some sample dueling rules.



Compete Alone

It's customary that each participant must compete alone and may receive no help from outside sources. However, some duels pit pairs of combatants against one another (either all together or as tag teams).

Limited Tools

The participants agree to the tools, including weapons and magic items, before the duel starts. Most combat duels that don't involve magic limit participants to melee weapons and prohibit the use of poison. Some duels forbid the use of polearms and other reach weapons. A spellcasting duel might agree upon a roughly equal number of magic items, and a cap on the power (in game terms, the level) of the items. Some spellcasting duels might prohibit certain types of spells, such as summoning or healing.

Duration

Combat duels typically last either until first blood (hitting and dealing damage) or until one of the duelists is knocked out. Most duels allow a participant to yield, which means they concede victory to their opponent, though sometimes this could diminish their social standing. Duels of talent usually involve several equal turns in which the duelists display their ability.

Adjudication

Most duels are overseen by a third party who ensures the duelists don't break the duel's rules—inadvertently or by cheating. Where duels are legal, this is typically a constable or magistrate. In other places, a cleric or other respected figure serves as judge. Typically the GM plays the judge.

COMBAT DUELS

Unlike the other subsystems in this chapter, a combat duel works almost the same as a normal combat encounter, with a few exceptions. These rules require exceptional focus between two duelists and a third-party arbiter, and thus are not available in a normal combat.

Initiative and Dueling Actions

Unlike in typical combat, the duelists roll initiative checks at the beginning of each round of combat. Each round the combatant can choose to use Deception,