

STARSHIP



MCDM

DESIGN & PRODUCTION

MANAGING EDITORS

James Introcaso, Hannah Rose

AUTHORS

V.J. Harris, Sadie Lowry, Erin Roberts

EDITORS

Scott Fitzgerald Gray, Ashley Michaela Lawson,
Sadie Lowry

SENSITIVITY CONSULTANT

Kiki Nicole

PLAYTEST DIRECTOR

Lars Bakke

LAYOUT

Jen McCleary

TITLE LOGO

Tom Schmuck

ACCESSIBILITY

Chris Hopper

MUSIC

Composed by Austin Caughlin
Recorded and Mixed by Rich Isaac

COMMUNITY COORDINATOR

John Champion

CUSTOMER SUPPORT

Bobby McBride

ILLUSTRATION

ART DIRECTOR

Nick De Spain

COVER ARTIST

Zachary Madere

CARTOGRAPHY

Miska Fredman

INTERIOR ILLUSTRATORS

“Magic for the People”: Gustavo Pelissari
“The Crossroads”: Marcela Medeiros
“The Last Seven Notes”: Zuzanna Wuzyk

MCDM CONTRACT QA

SENIOR TESTER

Spencer Hibnick

TESTERS

Nathan Clark, Cassandra “Dig” Crary, Alecson de Lima Junior, James Dewar, Anna Guimarães, Alex Hencinski

MCDM TEAM

Lars Bakke: Development & Production

Jerod Bennett: Technology

Grace Cheung: Art

Matt Colville: Writing & Design

Nick De Spain: Art & Art Outsource Management

Jason Hasenauer: Art & Art Direction

James Introcaso: Lead Game Designer

PLAYTESTING

PLAYTEST COORDINATORS

Aaron Flavius West, davidqshull, Durante Bozzini, Iris Gorton, ItsTheITGuy, Jarrad Tait, Joel Russ, Madeleine Bray, Matthew Vansprang, Roman Penna, Meg Hanna

PLAYTESTERS

Alex Chapman, Andre Haftevani, Aradesh, Lorenzo Venegas-Villa, Otto "ohartenstein23" Hartenstein, Sami Khan, Sigma

Join us on the MCDM Discord server, where you can chat with others about *ARCADIA* and more!

mcdm.gg/discord

Product Identity: The following items are hereby identified as Product Identity, as defined in the Open Game License version 1.0a, Section 1(e), and are not Open Content: All content which is not included in the Systems Reference Document version 5.1 or has otherwise been specifically designated as Open Game Content, including Magic for the People, The Crossroads, The Last Seven Notes, all Trademarks, registered trademarks, proper names (including the names of characters, place names, monsters, organizations, new spells, new abilities, etc.), dialogue, plots, story elements, locations, characters, artwork, graphics, sidebars, and trade dress.

ARDENT

1 LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

James Introcaso

RULES MAGIC ITEMS NPCs

2 MAGIC FOR THE PEOPLE

Erin Roberts

Bringing folk magic practices to your magical world

RULES NPCs

14 THE CROSSROADS

V.J. Harris

An extraplanar marketplace where you can get whatever you can't get anywhere else

ADVENTURES MONSTERS

23 THE LAST SEVEN NOTES

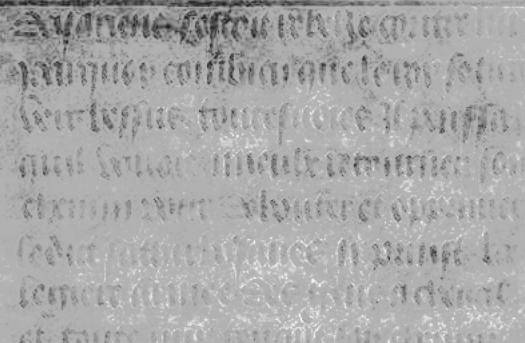
Sadie Lowry

A 7th-Level adventure about weaving song and soothing a soul

38 GLOSSARY

39 RESOURCES

ISSUE 30 JULY 2023





LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Over 175 magic items, 150 stat blocks, 50 spells, 20 encounters, and 12 adventures—that's just a little bit of what *ARCADIA* has brought you over the last 30 issues. I am so incredibly proud of and grateful for the work every artist, author, community manager, consultant, editor, graphic designer, playtester, and producer has given to this magazine. It is bittersweet for me to say that this is the last issue of *ARCADIA* that contains fifth edition content and the last issue we'll make ... at least for a while.

As many of you know, at MCDM we're making our own tabletop roleplaying game. The lessons we've learned from *ARCADIA* and the people who worked on the magazine are going to be a big factor in this new game's creation. Just like we believed in every article that appeared in the pages of *ARCADIA*, we know this game is the right direction for MCDM. Everyone working on it is really excited about it.

We're a small company, and we only have so many places to put our time and resources. We want to make this new game the best it can be. So *ARCADIA* won't be releasing any new issues for at least the foreseeable future. If the magazine does come back, it will likely have content for the MCDM RPG. You will still be able to buy existing issues from our online store or grab them on Patreon.

With the logistical details out of the way, I wanted to take the opportunity to talk about what this magazine means to me. I freaking love *ARCADIA*. Working on it is one of the highlights of my professional career. I feel so lucky that this magazine allowed me to work with industry veterans and emerging artists and authors. Some of the best relationships I have in this business started in *ARCADIA*'s pages, which also contain some of the best and most interesting creations I've worked on.

I am most grateful to the MCDM community. You embraced *ARCADIA* and everyone who worked on it with open minds. The praise and constructive criticism you had for each issue helped shape the next. Most

importantly, you celebrated the risks. We put out some pretty wild rules for mounted combat, aerial dogfights, level-0 characters, long-lasting curses, cooking and eating monsters, group maneuvers, seafaring campaigns, spellsled races, games with just one player and a GM, and a whole lot more that had us saying, "I hope people are open to this." You were every time. We also took a lot of narrative risks with adventures about sapient laboratories and divine challenges, aberrant ancestries, cleric and warlock subclasses for characters who had fallen from grace, and other original lore tidbits that got folks sharing stories about their games and characters across the internet. I really love knowing how *ARCADIA* inspires you and makes your game better.

This final issue of *ARCADIA* brings in two veteran authors. V.J. Harris is back with "The Crossroads," a marketplace where you can buy pretty much any services an adventurer might require that they can't legally purchase anywhere else. Sadie Lowry, a long-time editor of *ARCADIA* (she's working on editing this letter ... hi, Sadie!) and author since the first issue, brought her A game once again in "The Last Seven Notes," a music-themed adventure that has an original song to go along with it.

ARCADIA has also always been about bringing on new authors with fresh ideas, so this final issue also brings us "Magic for the People" from Erin Roberts, which introduces the idea of everyday magic and the people who practice it.

All in all, this is a heck of a way to go out. I'm so glad to bring you the amazing work of these authors.

This is goodbye—for now—for *ARCADIA*. It is not goodbye from MCDM or the people we work with to make this magazine. In fact, we're just getting started.

Ex animo,
James Introcaso
MCDM Lead Game Designer

MAGIC FOR THE PEOPLE

BRINGING FOLK MAGIC PRACTICES TO YOUR MAGICAL WORLD

by Erin Roberts

The high-powered and high-impact spells of sorcerers, wizards, and warlocks may turn the tide during epic adventures, but they don't need to be the only form of magic in your fantasy world. Folk magic is the magic of daily life, focused on bringing health, happiness, prosperity, and protection to the everyday inhabitants of fantastical settings. Its practitioners go by many names—hedge mage, wise one, crafter, sage—and draw on their knowledge of folk magic to create healing items, mix potions, set and remove curses, and make predictions about love, money, and happiness. Some use these talents to become fixtures of their local communities, others discreetly provide their services to those they know and trust, and still others travel from place to place, plying their craft for those who need them. All may, in the end, become part of the Thread.

The Thread is a cross between a refuge and a life-line—a loose organization of folk magic practitioners that stretches across nations, providing its members with solidarity, community, and the uncanny ability to be there when they are needed most. As a group that spans places, practices, and perspectives, the Thread can shift itself as the situation warrants, providing everything from training in the practice of folk magic to a vital port in a storm. Use the Thread as an organization, or use the practitioners, items, and folk magic practices below as additional content for your own world.

THE THREAD

The name of the Thread's founder has been lost to time, but it is said they once practiced their craft for a powerful leader—until a disastrous failure. The story's details shift from region to region—in one place, the founder was a rune doctor attempting to help a queen win a war; in another, they were a fortune teller trying to keep a wealthy merchant from certain financial ruin—but all end the same way. The unhappy practitioner was banished from their homeland, a single thread set loose and drifting from the weave. As they made their way from place to place, they found others like them, binding skills and fates together to make a fabric of their own. The founder named this newfound family the Thread, both to remind them where they came from and to honor the connection they provide to any and all who may need them.

Today, the Thread is a thriving community of folk magic practitioners that is broader and deeper than any single place or practice. Although there is an organized group at its core—providing sanctuary to those who need a place of refuge, training in folk magic to those who want to learn more, and supplies to those who practice folk magic as their craft—the Thread remains connected to many practitioners whose lives it has touched and who remain a part of its work and reach. Those who stay part of the Thread are offered information about new ideas and concoctions, advice from those whose practices may be different but whose concerns are similar, opportunities to help those who may need it, and a helping hand in times of crisis. In return, they are asked simply to share any information and assistance they can.

In addition to its work in communities, the Thread also maintains a small settlement, Ravel, which exists on a demiplane and can be reached by members of the Thread in times of need simply by speaking the need out loud (a process which is never explained to members and yet has never failed). Members of the Thread who have nowhere else to go or prefer to associate only with other practitioners are welcome to stay in Ravel for as long as they want and need, and the settlement is sometimes used as a place to introduce the Thread to prospective members or allies. Ravel is also the permanent home of the three influential leaders who help to guide the Thread's actions—the Diviner, the Healer, and the Traveler.

THE DIVINER

If members of the Thread often seem to know where and how they are needed before anyone else does, it is thanks to the Diviner, who uses their fortune telling skills to learn of events that either call for the Thread's assistance or could impact its future. They remain in this role until their divinations reveal that they should step down in favor of someone new. The current Diviner, dream walker and former pariah Kamira Suhan (kuh-MEER-uh soo-HAHN), like most in her role, is good at making quick judgment calls and is trusted implicitly by those around her.

KAMIRA SUHAN

Kamira Suhan (CG tiefling druid; she/her) has always dreamed of events yet to come, sometimes even while awake. When the dreams were bad, she tried to warn those in danger, but the warnings never helped. More often than not, they led to the events Kamira foresaw, as if those events were written by the hand of fate. Over time, she became seen as a bad omen throughout the river lands near her home, avoided by almost everyone except her family. After her brother nearly died in a fishing accident she couldn't prevent, Kamira ran away, hoping to spare the people she loved from pain.

Before Kamira could travel further than a day from home, she encountered a fisher, Khalet, in a small fishing village she had never seen before. Khalet, a longtime Thread member, brought Kamira to Ravel, where fortune tellers taught her how to interpret and use her premonitions safely. Today, Kamira tells fortunes using a combination of dream interpretation and a special deck of cards, unafraid to share the futures she sees. She is proficient with fortune teller's tools (see "Folk Magic Practices") and uses a deck of divination to provide readings. She also occasionally has dreams filled with premonitions, which she jots down in a book she keeps under lock and key, noting when, where, and if each has come true.

Kamira has a booming voice and strong presence that might be intimidating in someone less friendly. She works hard to make people like her from the moment they meet her, deploying considerable charm to disarm those around her. Deep down, the Diviner hopes to show those who knew her as a child how her divinations are used for good, and often brags about the predictions she has made in a way that is both self-deprecating and calculated to impress any old friends or neighbors who might hear of her.

When characters first meet or encounter Kamira, read or paraphrase the following:

You hear the rustling of a deck of cards being shuffled in fast-moving hands just as a tiefling appears before you, grinning broadly. She is in her middle years, with dark-red skin, black eyes, and a set of black horns nearly as long as her broad shoulders are wide, and she has an air of confidence about her. "Want to know your future?" she asks with a wink and a nod toward the nearest table. "I promise you'll probably enjoy it."



THE HEALER

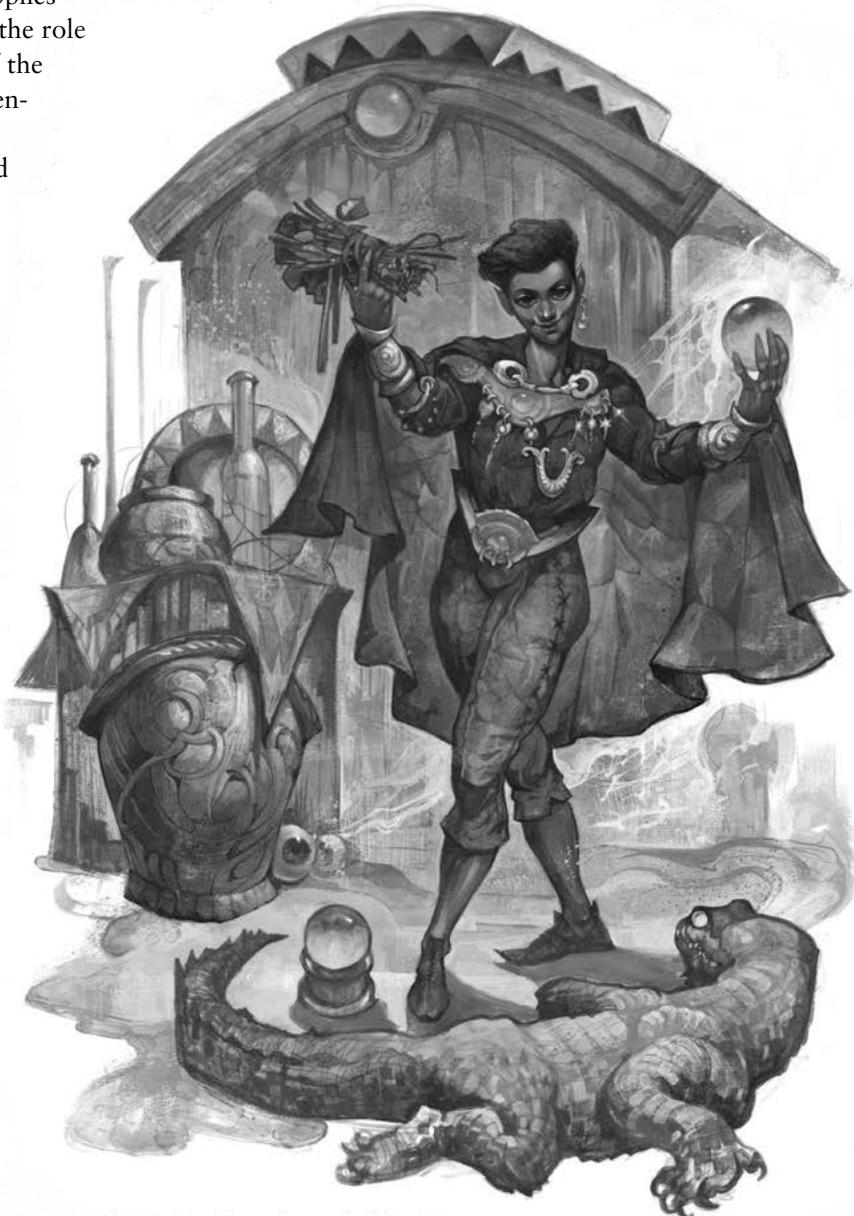
The Healer takes responsibility for Ravel, but spends most of their time managing a group of apprentices who catalog, store, and retrieve folk magic supplies from around the world. Each Healer serves in the role for three years before being replaced by one of the apprentices, often working alongside the apprentices after their serving their term. The current Healer, Nazin (nuh-ZEEN), brings the required empathy and business acumen to the role, which she gained as a performer in a traveling circus troupe.

NAZIN

Nazin (NG half-elf scout; she/her) grew up learning about herbs and poultices from her father, a small-town healer, but always craved adventure over the quiet life. After a traveling circus troupe, the Fantastical Faire of Fun Galore, visited her town, bringing their magic-assisted acts and aerial maneuvers, she decided to travel with them as a tumbler. Unfortunately, the circus owner and master of ceremonies, Fun Galore, was exploitative, pushing performers past their physical limits and refusing to put safety measures in place. Nazin found her calling as the troupe's healer, using the skills learned from her father to patch up their many injuries.

One day, while looking for supplies, Nazin came across Fortune's Alley, a shop on a cart run by Thread member Darel Allkin, who encouraged her to learn craft magic. She, along with a few members of the troupe, left the circus that very night. A few years later, Nazin was recommended by Darel to become a Healer's apprentice, and was chosen as Healer one year ago. Though she is responsible for Ravel, Nazin likes to make deals herself and can often be found in local markets operating a cart, Fortune's Corner, with her apprentices.

Nazin is a whirlwind of energy, but very shrewd, with a tendency to ask insightful questions at odd moments. She feels guilty about the members of the Fantastical Faire she left behind and has a deep enmity for Fun Galore.



When characters first meet or encounter Nazin, read or paraphrase the following:

A young half-elf catalogs the goods in front of her, shifting her body between counting, loading, and making notes with the speed and fluidity of a dancer. She is young and brown-skinned with a lean build and whistles as she works, often pausing mid-tune to toss something to one of the many helpers around her. Each throw is done with a bit of flourish, as if she has spent time on the stage.



THE TRAVELER

The Traveler helps to keep members of the Thread updated with information, visiting places near and far to share the latest news, find new contacts, and check on the needs and concerns of Thread members. Most Travelers eventually tire of life on the road and leave the role to settle down somewhere after training a few potential replacements, remaining a key contact for the next Traveler going forward. The current Traveler, Finch Palaro (finch puh-LAIR-oh), is new to the role, but has both the charisma and the survival skills to do the job.

FINCH PALARO

Finch (CN human spy; they/them) grew up in the port city of Kikarra, “the City of Charms,” where folk magic shops can be found on nearly every corner. Finch worked

in one of the city’s largest shops, Fouls and Favors, as a promising trainee with a specialty in bespoke blessings. When two powerful families in the city fell into a trade dispute, Finch was pressured into using their skills to create curses instead, leading them to work long hours under increasingly stressful conditions during what became known citywide as the Cursed Summer. When an errant unsteadiness curse resulted in the accidental death of a young art student named Kecil, Finch left town immediately, unsure whether they were to blame, and called on the Thread for shelter in Ravel.

Finch usually listens more than they speak when they meet someone new, but once they feel comfortable, they can talk at length about the things that matter to them, starting with the importance of providing local practitioners of folk magic with the support, training, and

supplies they need to work safely. These lectures include well-tested practices and a few superstitions that only Finch keeps track of.

Finch's sharp sense of humor, paired with their incredible memory, tends to keep whoever they are talking to in good spirits, even while they delve into the nittiest and grittiest of details. This humor also helps Finch disappear into the shadows if needed, as those they talk to tend to remember their wit more than their face.

When characters first meet or encounter Finch, read or paraphrase the following:

When you notice the onlooker in the gray suit, they seem as if they have been standing nearby for a while, fading into the background. Their skin is lightly tanned, as if they would be chalky pale if they spent too long inside, and their suit is well-tailored, if nondescript. Their only truly distinguishing feature is a long shock of dark-brown hair and the slightly crooked teeth of their smile. And yet something about them draws the eye, a sense that they are patiently waiting for the right moment to speak.

ENCOUNTERING THE THREAD

Due to its wide influence and broad membership, encountering the Thread and its members can take many different forms. A single member may set up shop in a marketplace, looking for adventurers who can help them find a rare craft magic ingredient (see “Craft Magic”) while saving a town from being overrun by monsters. A small caravan of carts may travel a lonely road, carrying survivors of a supernatural illness to those who can help them understand and combat it. A field may become a small village of quickly constructed homes and shops that trains folk magic practitioners in an area struggling with an ancient curse.

The Thread’s many members and guises also bring many opportunities for adventure. Choose or roll on the Thread Encounters table below for additional situations that may bring the Thread and its members into contact with your characters.

THREAD ENCOUNTERS

d4	ENCOUNTER
1	The characters encounter Lakel, one of Healer Nazin’s many apprentices, who has come under attack from local monsters while trying to gather mandrake root for the Thread. Lakel is grateful for the help and asks the characters for help with the rest of his list. He wants to stand out as a potential replacement for Nazin, so he has volunteered to retrieve several substances from especially dangerous locations. If the characters help Lakel to gather his items, he gifts them a craft magic item (see “Craft Magic”) of their choice after he has delivered everything to Nazin.
2	A character repeatedly encounters a sign—birds, a symbol on the ground, a haunting melody—that they can’t shake. Soon after, they are approached by Kamira Suhan, who tells them they have walked through the ashes of the site of a terrible fire that killed several members of a family of folk magic practitioners, the Irzoles, who were dealing with potential ruin after their local Archon declared all folk magic illegal and unethical. Kamira asks the characters to investigate what truly happened the night of the fire—which they can do by asking neighbors, investigating the scene, or cozying up to the Archon. In truth, the fire was set by young Pel Irzole, in an attempt to burn the family’s folk magic supplies so they would start a new business and leave folk magic behind. If Pel is found and confronted with evidence, they confess. When the mystery is solved, the sign dissipates.
3	Rena Soles, renowned for her skills in making healing salves and love lockets from a small shop in the back room of her house, hasn’t been seen in six days. A note on her door reads “Back after lunch,” but it has been crossed through in red ink alongside a symbol locals associate with evil deeds, and a trail of ingredients she uses in her work leads toward the woods nearby. The Thread has called for help in tracking Rena down and determining what has happened to her, and is willing to pay in money, supplies, or training.
4	A counter-organization to the Thread, calling itself Stitched, has begun gaining members in communities large and small. Though the Thread has no problem with others wishing to create their own organization of folk magic practitioners, the Thread has received word that Stitched is using substandard materials, creating fake folk magic practices, and charging exorbitant prices for useless training. The Thread is willing to pay to have someone who appears to be unaffiliated with them to infiltrate the next Stitched gathering, being held in Kikarra, “the City of Charms,” and find proof of the group’s deception. This request is made by Finch Palaro, who also offers a side job for the adventurers; to discover whether or not Finch’s curse was the one that killed Kecil, an unfortunate student who died due to an errant curse during Kikarra’s Cursed Summer.

FOLK MAGIC PRACTICES

The Thread's biggest impact in the world may be its dedication to the teaching of folk magic practices to any and all who are interested. Though there are many kinds of folk magic in the world, including some intended only for the use of specific communities or belief systems, practitioners within the Thread focus on three types of magic that are available to all: **craft magic** (practices rooted in physical materials), **fortune telling** (practices focused on divination), and **heartwork** (practices that rely on the intervention of ancestors or other spirits).

To use a specific folk magic practice, a creature must have proficiency with the relevant set of tools as shown on the Folk Magic Tools table, generally gained by learning folk magic practices as detailed in “Learning Folk Magic.” A creature without proficiency in the tools can’t use that folk magic practice.

FOLK MAGIC TOOLS

PRACTICE	TOOL
Craft Magic	<i>The Book of Common Things</i>
Fortune Telling	Fortune teller’s tools
Heartwork	Token of the heart

CRAFT MAGIC

Practitioners of craft magic create magic items for everyday use, typically using easily accessible materials. This is the most common type of folk magic, and it can take many forms, including potions, poultices, and charms. In some traditions and for some items, simply possessing the item is enough to feel its effects, but often craft magic items include specific activation words and rules for use, from time of day to physical placement on the body or in the home.

THE BOOK OF COMMON THINGS

Each craft magic item uses a formula found in the craft magic tome *The Book of Common Things*. Proficiency with the book allows you to craft all objects found within it (which includes all the craft magic items in this article and walking powder, a poison). At the GM’s discretion, you can also craft common potions using your proficiency with *The Book of Common Things* (instead of requiring proficiency with herbalism kits). *The Book of Common Things* can only be used by someone trained in folk magic. Each copy of the book is created with a charm that makes creatures who don’t own a copy of the book actively ignore or discount it.

Proficiency with *The Book of Common Things* allows you to add your proficiency bonus to any ability check you make while using it. If you are proficient with the book and are already adding your proficiency bonus to the ability check from a skill or other proficiency, then using the book gives you advantage on the check instead.

Arcana, History. You can use *The Book of Common Things* when you make an Intelligence (Arcana or History) check to recall lore about magic items.

Nature, Survival. You can use *The Book of Common Things* when you make an Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Survival) check to identify which plants and animal products can be safely consumed or used to create folk magic.

CRAFT MAGIC ITEMS

Each formula in *The Book of Common Things* typically includes a vessel (such as a potion bottle, a craft bag, or a piece of metal, wood, or stone), specific materials required by the formula, and instructions for activation. Though the act of activation differs from item to item, it always includes preparation time—focused meditative time dedicated solely to its creation outside of a short or long rest, which is done using *The Book of Common Things* as a focus and must be done in no more than two individual sessions.

Due to the dedicated practice required to make each item, craft magic practitioners can only create one item at a time, but the cost of creation is minimal compared to other magic items, with no specific expense other than the time and materials needed. Craft magic items also generally cost less to purchase than other magic items, and most practitioners accept barter in lieu of payment.

The following magic items and supplies can be created with craft magic.

THE THREAD'S CRAFT MAGIC ITEMS AND SUPPLIES

ITEM NAME	COST
Devil's gold	250 gp
Everything salve	125 gp
Evil's bane	125 gp
Love locket	250 gp
Seeking stick	750 gp
<i>The Book of Common Things</i>	2 gp
Walking powder poison	200 gp
Watchful eye	750 gp

PRICEY ITEMS

The price of some of these craft magic items are a bit high for normal folk because they are balanced with similar items from the official rules, where magic is expensive! Most adventurers can afford these prices, but a farmer or a village blacksmith may not have the coin to spend on this more common magic. For this reason, many craft magic practitioners are willing to accept barter in exchange for an item or discount, and practitioners need all manner of materials that almost anyone can gather.

DEVIL'S GOLD

Wondrous Item, Uncommon

Vessel: A craft bag

Materials: Any small circular object that could reasonably be mistaken for a coin (such as a flat rock, shaped metal, or sea glass), yellow or golden pollen, 50 gp

Activation: After performing 8 hours of focused preparation, you must carry the vessel and the materials on your person for 3 days, during which time you can't sell or purchase any items. At the end of this time, you must give the 50 gp used as a material to a stranger in need.

At first sight, this ordinary piece of metal or rock appears to be a gleaming gold coin. While it is in your possession, you have bad luck and an inability to hold onto money. Whenever you finish a long rest while the *devil's gold* is active, the amount of money you are carrying reverts to however much you were carrying when the *devil's gold* first came into your possession, unless you are carrying less money than that amount. Additionally, you take a -1 penalty to ability checks and saving throws.

You can't discard the *devil's gold* or give it to an unwilling creature (though the creature doesn't need to know the nature of the gold to willingly receive it). You may discard the *devil's gold* for up to 1 hour after being targeted by a *remove curse* spell or similar magic, and you may give it to a willing creature.

EVERYTHING SALVE

Potion, Uncommon

Vessel: A potion bottle or a vial

Materials: Gel from within the leaf of a healing plant (typically aloe vera), a vial of holy water, something naturally shed from a living body during sleep (often an eyelash)

Activation: After going 24 hours without finishing a short or long rest, you must spend 4 hours in focused preparation, then combine all the materials in the vessel.

This commonly used topical lotion numbs minor pain and restores depleted energy. Applying the lotion to your

body takes 5 minutes. After you apply it, you regain 2d8 hit points and your exhaustion level, if any, is decreased by 1.

EVIL'S BANE

Wondrous Item, Uncommon

Vessel: A small cloth bag, glass bottle, or clear jar

Materials: The leaves of a plant with natural defenses (such as a stinging nettle or a venus flytrap), powdered silver worth 50 gp, a large handful of rice or sand, each grain of which has been counted by the preparer over the course of an hour

Activation: After 2 hours of focused preparation, which must begin at midnight on a clear night, physically attach the vessel with materials to an item at least 5 feet above the ground and sit beneath it, unmoving, until dawn. While you sit unmoving, you may rest. If an *evil's bane* is moved after activation, it becomes inert.

This small bag or bottle, usually hung from a high place in a home or place of business, repels negative or evil energy that attempts to enter the location it guards. Once activated, an *evil's bane* wards a 30-foot-radius sphere centered on itself. Each Undead or evil-aligned creature in the area is outlined in a faint glowing yellow light and has disadvantage on attack rolls. A creature in the area who is charmed or frightened by an Undead or an evil-aligned creature is no longer charmed or frightened and can't be charmed or frightened by such creatures. Every 24 hours from the time of activation, the area protected by an *evil's bane* decreases, losing 5 feet from its radius. After 6 days, the *evil's bane* loses its magic and becomes inert.

LOVE LOCKET

Wondrous Item, Uncommon (Requires Attunement)

Vessel: A necklace, a small bottle on a string, or another wearable item

Materials: Any spicy substance, a sprig of mistletoe, crushed bloodstone

Activation: After 2 hours of focused preparation, which must begin at sunset or sunrise under a clear sky, you must speak the name of a loved one while combining the materials. You will be unable to recall the person named for 1 week and the locket won't function if the love (whether platonic, romantic, or filial) isn't genuine.

This small item, usually worn as close to the heart as possible, attracts love to whoever wears it. While you wear it, each nonhostile creature who isn't immune to the charmed condition within 5 feet of you regards you as a friendly acquaintance, and you gain a +2 bonus to Charisma (Persuasion) checks made to influence such creatures.

SEEKING STICK

Staff, Rare (Requires Attunement)

Vessel: A whittled piece of hollowed-out wood at least 4 feet long

Materials: A handful of tilled earth

Activation: Perform 8 hours of focused preparation while holding the staff in your hands in one of the following locations: within 100 feet of a body of water, in a grove or cluster of plants, or within 100 feet of a house filled with love. When this has been completed, carry and wield the stick in lieu of another weapon for 12 hours.

You can use this whittled walking stick to find an item of personal importance. It has 6 charges. While holding it, you can use an action to expend 1 charge from the staff and cause it to be pulled toward one of the following for 1 hour: a specific lost item that you have had in your possession in the last 3 days and name when you spend the charge, the nearest source of fresh water, the nearest fertile spot for planting, or the nearest place of refuge from danger. If what you seek isn't on the same plane of existence as you, the stick fails to work and the charge isn't expended.

The staff regains 1d4 + 2 charges daily at dawn. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a roll of 1, the staff loses its abilities, becoming a mundane walking stick.

WALKING POWDER

Contact Poison

Vessel: A cloth bag

Materials: Crushed bone from a magical creature, saliva, three silk threads

Activation: While carrying the powder, perform 2 hours of focused preparation followed by 2 hours of pacing under the afternoon sun at a location at least a mile away from the location used to prepare it. Do not consume water or food for 4 hours before or afterward.

This powder appears fine to the eye, but has the rough scratch of sandpaper against the skin. A creature subjected to this poison must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 4 hours. While poisoned this way, the creature is consumed with the desire to travel as far away from their current location as possible, regardless of danger. The poisoned creature can repeat the saving throw every hour, ending the effect on a success. When the effect ends, if the creature is in a location where they have never been before, they must succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw or be unable to remember the route they have taken to get to there.

WATCHFUL EYE

Wonderous Item, Rare

Vessel: A small round object, usually a stone, but sometimes a piece of metal or wood

Materials: Naturally shed animal skin or tree leaf, crushed moonstone, serpent venom

Activation: While barefoot and wearing no armor, perform 4 hours of focused preparation, then plant the *watchful eye* at least 1 foot beneath the surface of the ground using no tools. Once it is planted, you can't wear armor for 12 hours.

This painted stone, usually decorated to resemble an open eye, is planted in the earth and protects outdoor spaces from the intrusion of thieves and local wildlife. When you plant the eye, choose a 20-foot-cube area that the eye touches at least one edge of. This area is warded as if you had cast the *alarm* spell with a mental alarm for as long as the eye remains planted. Whenever this alarm is tripped, the creature that tripped it is transported outside the protected area into the closest unoccupied space of their choice.

If the eye is removed from the ground after being planted, it becomes mundane.

FORTUNE TELLING

Fortune tellers primarily use a physical item of some kind to ground their divination, whether that involves reading the coals of a fire, using a deck of divination cards, or tossing painted stones; though some people's divination comes through dreams or interpreting omens. Purists stick to exactly what their method of divination reveals, but others have been known to combine the truth of what they divine with what they know their customers want to hear.

FORTUNE TELLER'S TOOLS

Fortune teller's tools take many different forms, with each fortune telling practitioner using the tools that work best for them, but common variations include stones of fortune (polished stones thrown onto a table that are read via their positioning), divination powder (powder dropped into liquid or thrown into fire, generating patterns or remains that the fortune teller interprets), and decks of divination (decks of cards, each with their own meaning, that are dealt onto a table to be interpreted).

FORTUNE TELLER'S TOOLS

ITEM	COST	WEIGHT
Deck of divination	5 sp	—
Divination powder	1 gp	1 lb.
Stones of fortune	2 gp	1/2 lb.

Proficiency with fortune teller's tools is required to attempt fortune telling. Proficiency with fortune teller's tools allows you to add your proficiency bonus to any ability check you make while using them. If you are proficient with the tools and are already adding your proficiency bonus to the ability check from a skill or other proficiency, then using the tools gives you advantage on the check instead. Each fortune teller's tool requires a separate proficiency.

Insight. You can use fortune teller's tools on Wisdom (Insight) checks that involve predicting how someone might behave in the future.

Intimidation, Persuasion. You can use fortune teller's tools to help convince someone to take a different course of action in the hopes (or fear) of finding a better future when you make a Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion) check.

Investigation. Fortune telling requires interpreting signs and symbols to divine the future. You can use fortune teller's tools to gain additional insight on Intelligence (Investigation) checks that involve symbols, signs, or omens about the future.

FORTUNE TELLING (FEAT)

Prerequisite: Proficiency with fortune teller's tools, you have trained in fortune telling with the Thread

You use your training and fortune teller's tools to gain insight into the future. As an action, you can learn about

the future of a willing creature you can see within 30 feet of you, granting them a boon that helps this future come true. This boon must be rolled on the Fortune Teller's Boon table. A creature can only benefit from one boon at a time and a boon disappears when you or the creature with the boon finishes a long rest. You can't bestow another boon until you finish a long rest.

HEARTWORK

Heartwork focuses on shifting the balance of the living world by reaching outside of it. This can mean calling on the power of one's ancestors or other revered spirits to create a change in the world, or, through the spirits' intercession, countering a supernatural effect that has been placed on someone. Given the power of this work, heartwork is usually reserved for especially important endeavors, including births, deathbed healings, and the blessing of marriages, which is where its name comes from. Although outside scholars who have looked into heartwork believe it is a channeling of the Ethereal Plane or the interference of deities, this is usually scoffed at by folk practitioners who use it, who generally see it as the direct intercession of the spirits of loved ones and ancestors in ways that can't be measured.

Heartwork rituals follow the rules for spellcasting, but they require no spellcasting ability, they always require a token of the heart, and each ritual can only be cast as a ritual using the casting time specified. A creature trained in folk magic can perform the heartwork rituals in this article. They must finish a long rest before they can perform another heartwork ritual.

TOKEN OF THE HEART

The appearance of a token of the heart varies from practitioner to practitioner, but is always something portable that holds sentimental value—a ring passed down from

FORTUNE TELLER'S BOON

d6	BOON
1	You Will Learn the Truth. You have a +5 bonus to Wisdom (Insight) checks and advantage on Wisdom saving throws.
2	Luck Guides Your Way. You gain 2 luck points. Whenever you make an ability check, an attack roll, or a saving throw, you can spend 1 luck point to roll an additional d20. You can choose to spend a luck point after you roll the die, but before the outcome is determined. You choose which d20 is used for the ability check, attack roll, or saving throw.
3	You Have the Strength to Face Any Trial. You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls.
4	Inner Peace Awaits You. You can't be charmed or frightened. If you are charmed or frightened when you receive this boon, the effect is suppressed.
5	Danger Lurks; Watch Your Back. You have a +5 bonus to your passive Intelligence (Investigation) and passive Wisdom (Perception) scores and a +5 bonus to initiative checks.
6	Your Fortune Is Your Own. Choose one of the boons above and use its associated benefits.

a family member, a childhood toy, a vial of dirt from the grave of a loved one. With training, the item in question is transformed into a token of the heart, which is used similarly to an arcane focus when performing heartwork rituals. Proficiency with a token of the heart is required to perform all heartwork rituals. A token of the heart can only be used by someone trained in folk magic.

Proficiency with a token of the heart allows you to add your proficiency bonus to any ability check you make while using it. If you are proficient with a token of the heart and are already adding your proficiency bonus to the ability check from a skill or other proficiency, then using the token gives you advantage on the check instead.

Arcana. You can use your token of the heart on Intelligence (Arcana) checks made to recall lore about spells and magic items that are used in or affected by heartwork rituals.

History. You can use your token of the heart on Intelligence (History) checks made to gain insight into aspects of the past which were affected by a member of your extended family.

JOINED AS ONE

Heartwork Ritual

Casting Time: 10 minutes

Range: 30 feet

Duration: 7 days

Component: V, S, M (a piece of string, a forked twig or branch, a token of the heart)

You bond together a group of two or more willing Humanoids who seek a deeper connection with each other. For the duration, each member of the bond has advantage on death saving throws when they are within 30 feet of another bond member and is immune to being charmed or frightened when touching another bond member. If a bond member is already charmed or frightened, the condition is suppressed while they are touched. However, when a bond member is blinded, dazed, deafened, paralyzed, poisoned, or stunned, each other bond member must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or suffer the condition for the same duration as the original member. In addition, if a bond member dies, each other bond member must succeed on a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw or be incapacitated until the end of their next turn.

The *joined as one* ritual can be repeated every 7 days. If it is repeated at that frequency for a year on the same individuals, its effects become permanent. An individual can only be part of a single *joined as one* bond at a time. An individual can leave this bond early at any time as a bonus action, but they must then wait 7 days before they can join a new bond.

LASTING PEACE

Heartwork Ritual

Casting Time: 1 minute

Range: Touch

Duration: 1 hour

Component: S, M (a handful of sand or salt, a seed from a flowering plant, a token of the heart)

You touch a willing creature to calm their mind and body while protecting their remains from misuse after death. For the ritual's duration, or until you use an action to touch the target and dismiss the ritual, you suppress any effect causing the target to be frightened. The target is cured of any disease, poison, or exhaustion affecting them, but is incapacitated and has a speed of 0. If the target dies while under the effect of the ritual, their remains can't be reanimated into an Undead. If the creature's remains are targeted by an effect that reanimates them into an Undead, the remains dissipate into dust.

LINGERING CURSE

Heartwork Ritual

Casting Time: 10 minutes

Range: 10 feet

Components: S, M (a token of the heart)

Duration: Varies

You curse a creature you can see within range with one of the options below. The target must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or be cursed. While cursed, the target must repeat the saving throw every 8 hours, reducing the DC by 2 each time (to DC 14 at 8 hours, to DC 12 at 16 hours, and so on). On a successful save, the curse ends. The curse also ends if the saving throw DC becomes 0.

Forgetful. The target has trouble remembering facts and figures. They have disadvantage on Intelligence checks.

Lack of Trust. Others find the target untrustworthy. They target has disadvantage on Charisma (Persuasion) checks.

Poisonous Disposition. The target is susceptible to poisons. They have disadvantage on saving throws made to avoid or end the poisoned condition on themselves and have vulnerability to poison damage.

Unrelenting Honesty. The target has trouble telling lies, even when it would be to their benefit. They have disadvantage on Charisma (Deception) checks.

Weather Worn. The target feels the temperature more keenly. They have vulnerability to cold and fire damage, and have disadvantage on attack rolls and saving throws while subjected to extreme cold or extreme heat.

PUSH THROUGH

Heartwork Ritual

Casting Time: 1 minute

Range: Touch

Duration: 10 minutes

Component: V, S, M (a pebble worn smooth, unsweetened tea, a token of the heart)

You touch a willing creature and allow them to call on the strength of their ancestors to momentarily ignore impairments, exhaustion, and injury. For the duration, or until you use an action to touch the target and dismiss the effect, the target has advantage on Constitution saving throws and treats their exhaustion level as 1 lower than it is (minimum 0).

LEARNING FOLK MAGIC

Members of the Thread are happy to teach anyone who wishes to learn folk magic. They generally know one or more forms of folk magic: craft magic, which uses physical materials and formulas from *The Book of Common Things*; heartwork, which uses rituals that call on connections to the ancestors and a token of the heart; or fortune telling, which attempts to predict the future using fortune teller's tools. The folk magic practitioner background may also be chosen when creating a new character in lieu of requiring this training.

Learning folk magic takes 1d4 + 3 consecutive days, during which you must spend at least 8 hours a day learning and provide a gift for the teacher. Most teachers will accept 250 gp, 2 weeks of working for the teacher after training as an apprentice, or the collection of a material of their choice from the wilderness as their form of payment. Folk magic, in all its forms, can be learned by any character; it requires no inherent spellcasting or magical ability.

Once you are fully trained in folk magic, you gain proficiency with a specific folk magic tool of your choice: *The Book of Common Things*, fortune teller's tools, or a token of the heart. Gaining proficiency with an additional tool takes an additional 3 days of training and an additional payment of 150 gp, 1 week of apprenticeship, or the collection of an additional material of the instructor's choice.

BACKGROUND: FOLK MAGIC PRACTITIONER

You are a practitioner of folk magic. You have been trained in practices that have existed for as long as mortals have, meant to ease the lives, treat the suffering, and protect the welfare of others. You may specialize in divining the future, creating magical physical objects to be used in daily life, or using the guidance and power of ancestral ties to shift the world around you.

Skill Proficiencies: Insight, plus one of your choice from Arcana, Medicine, Nature, Persuasion, and Religion

Tool Proficiencies: One of the following tools: *The Book of Common Things*, fortune teller's tools, or token of the heart

Languages: One of your choice

Equipment: A set of folk magic practitioner's tools with which you are proficient, a scroll case containing your notes on your craft and practices, a set of common clothes, and a pouch containing 10 gp

FEATURE: OF THE PEOPLE

As people of all classes and means may turn to folk practitioners at some point in their lives, your status as a practitioner makes you welcome everywhere. If you make your background known, you and your companions receive free room and board during your travels. In addition, anyone who has personally benefited from your services as a practitioner will assist in finding information for you as long as it doesn't put them in any danger.

SUGGESTED CHARACTERISTICS

d6	PERSONALITY TRAIT
1	I value solitude—even when around people I love, I take time on my own for my craft.
2	If I don't understand why someone is asking me for something, I can't put my all into it.
3	There's no challenge I'm not willing to take on.
4	I collect odds and ends, assuming I'll find something to do with them one day.
5	I'm fixated on figuring out an impossible question that I believe would change everything.
6	I love telling stories about my clients and work. The wilder, the better.
d6	IDEAL
1	Luxury. I like the finer things in life, and my work helps me afford them.
2	Knowledge. I believe the practice of folk magic can help me better understand the world.
3	Pride. I will be the best at what I do. I owe that to myself.
4	Power. If others need my services, they must do what I want.
5	Altruism. I want to help others live the best lives they can.
6	Community. Keeping those around me safe and strong gives me purpose and renown.
d6	BOND
1	No matter how far I travel, I'm always thinking of the first place I called home.
2	I owe everything to the practitioner who taught me their skills.
3	Those I help with my abilities are what keeps me going.
4	I have a rival who I constantly compete with, but secretly admire a great deal.
5	My work brings honor and respect to my ancestors.
6	I feel a kinship to all other folk magic practitioners.
d6	FLAW
1	I exaggerate my abilities and then blame others for my failures.
2	As long as everyone knows my name, I don't care why.
3	I'm known to fly into rages at the tiniest provocation.
4	I have a secret I would kill to keep—and it wouldn't be the first time.
5	I'll let anyone push me around as long as it makes them happy.
6	I spread gossip—including gossip I know is untrue—anytime I'm bored.

THE CROSSROADS

AN EXTRAPLANAR MARKETPLACE WHERE YOU CAN GET
WHATEVER YOU CAN'T GET ANYWHERE ELSE

by V.J. Harris

"IF YOU CAN THINK OF IT, THE CROSSROADS HAS IT, OR SOMEONE WHO KNOWS WHERE TO GET IT. JUST ... MIND YOUR MANNERS. YOU DON'T WANT TO END UP ON THE WRONG SIDE OF THE FOSCARI OR THE GAZE OF DREAMFANG."

—ENTROPY, LOCAL GOSSIPMONGER

Tucked away behind the mouth of a tamed oversized mimic disguised as an ordinary brick wall, the Crossroads is an extradimensional marketplace that caters to the exotic needs of criminals, villains, and adventurers. A traveler who knows the frequently changed password (or who is accompanied by an escort who does) can step inside the mimic's maw without being devoured, then enter the portal behind the creature and the criminal marketplace beyond. Nearly everything can be purchased at the Crossroads, from weapons and armor, to forgery services, to assassinations. But hyperrealistic stone statues of people with expressions of fear and defiance warn of the market's perils.

This article presents a location that can be used to flesh out the criminal underworld of any fantasy realm, and which extends into the planes. Access to the Crossroads and to the NPCs and services found there can be given to the players as a reward for some of their shadier dealings, or they might embark on a quest to gain access after learning of the marketplace through criminal contacts.

THE PARRIARCHS

"If you can't find it here already, me or one of my kids will try to find it for you. But the Foscari way isn't cheap."

—Gillia Foscari

The Crossroads is run and protected by the Parriarchs, a criminal gang run by Gillia Foscari (JIL-lee-uh foh-SCAR-ee) and her family. Before setting up the marketplace, the Parriarchs connected fences, smugglers, assassins, and other criminals to clients in need of illegal or restricted items or services.

When Gillia became the head of the gang, she had a vision to grow her family's business by creating a marketplace for all criminal enterprises. With help from the members of a mage circle who owed her favors, she created the Crossroads. The Parriarchs take a cut from all sales made in the market, and get the first pick of new items that appear there. On the rare occasion that one of the merchants in the Crossroads can't provide for the needs of a customer, the Parriarchs are there to obtain the item or do the job ... at an exorbitant cost, of course.



FOSCARI FAMILY

NAME	PRONOUNS	DESCRIPTION	COST	SUCCESS RATE
Gillia	She/her	This 72-year-old human woman stands 5 foot 11, and has dark brown skin, gray curly hair, and a jagged scar across her right cheek that extends to the left side of her chin. The matriarch of the family, Gillia uses the assassin stat block.	8,000 gp	90%
Alessio	They/them	A 55-year-old half-elf nonbinary individual with dark brown skin and dark blonde hair, Alessio is the younger brother of Gillia. They use the gladiator stat block.	4,000 gp	80%
Orsa	She/her	Orsa is a 35-year-old half-elf woman with pale white skin, light-blonde hair, and the top half of her left ear cut off. The eldest child of the family, she uses the knight stat block.	2,000 gp	70%
Zaneta	She/they	A 23-year-old half-orc genderfluid individual, Zaneta stands 6 foot 1 and has light brown skin, a shaved head, and three piercings in her right eyebrow. The youngest child, they use the veteran stat block.	1,000 gp	65%

The Parriarchs employ only one enforcer, a human berserker named Thrugraun (he/him; THROO-gron) who patrols beyond the mimic's jaws to keep the peace in the Crossroads. But that guard is really there to wrangle the family's six basilisks: Dreamfang, Firetail, Ironclaw, Oldjaw, Sunforge, and Sunbite, who patrol the Crossroads with blindfolds covering their eyes. All six have been trained to slash apart the blindfold with their claws upon hearing the command word *sciopera* from Thrugraun or any other member of the Parriarchs.

HIRING THE FOSCARI

The members of the Foscari family can be hired to retrieve or obtain items and creatures that the other merchants of the Crossroads can't. They don't work alongside the characters as NPC adventurers, but function independently to carry out specific tasks. Each family member has an upfront cost based on their years of experience and success rate, but their clients are also expected to pay room, board, and travel expenses. If a Foscari fails to complete the job in a month, the client is refunded their money.

The Foscari Family table details each family member, the costs for their services, and their typical success rate. As the GM determines, magical artifacts and other extremely rare items might incur a higher fee or be impossible to retrieve.

GOODS AND SERVICES

Anyone who enters the Crossroads peacefully can purchase the following goods and services from the market. As the GM determines, other merchants might also be in the market offering their skills and wares.

ASSASSINATIONS

"I can get into anywhere. Kill anyone you want. I can do it quietly. I can do it flashy. Just tell me what you need, and I'll tell you what it costs."

—Tegan Borel

Tegan Borel (she/her; TEE-guhn bor-ELL) appears to be an unremarkable halfling woman. In the darkest corner of the market, she sits behind a booth whose sign openly reads: "Assassinations." Standing at 2 foot 6 with pale white skin and short light-brown hair, she is known for her lack of distinguishing features, allowing her to easily blend into a crowd. But what very few know is that Tegan is a doppelganger, whose advanced shapechanging ability and unique skill set allow her to move as she pleases.

The Assassination Costs table shows Tegan's prices for assassinating individuals of various lifestyles. The Success Rate column shows the likelihood that she can complete a job. If she fails to assassinate a target, she offers a full refund.

ASSASSINATION COSTS

LIFESTYLE	COST	SUCCESS RATE	TYPICAL TARGETS
Wretched	300 gp	100%	Beggars
Squalid	600 gp	95%	Wanted criminals, gamblers
Poor	1,200 gp	80%	Unskilled laborers, costermongers, thieves, mercenaries
Modest	2,400 gp	75%	Soldiers, skilled laborers, students, priests, self-taught spellcasters
Comfortable	4,800 gp	70%	Merchants, skilled tradesfolk, military officers
Wealthy	9,600 gp	65%	Merchant lords, chamberlains, powerful landowners
Aristocratic	19,200 gp	60%	Politicians, guild leaders, high priests, members of the nobility

COST INCREASES

The prices on the Assassination Costs table are subject to change based on the profile and protections of a target.

Bodyguards. The cost of assassination increases by 500 gp for each personal bodyguard a target has, provided the bodyguard's challenge rating is 8 or lower. Each elite bodyguard with a challenge rating of 9 or higher increases the cost by 900 gp or more.

Make a Statement. If the client desires to make a statement with a flashy death, the price doubles as Tegan's risk of capture is elevated.

Powerful Leaders. The death of the leader of a nation, a popular church, or a similar person of influence causes a wide and dogged search for an assassin, so Tegan charges a premium for such targets. Leaders fall into three levels of influence based on the number of people at their command (which the GM can change to suit the world):

Low. A leader with a low level of influence has at least 100 but no more than 5,000 people at their command. Their death costs an additional 10,000 gp.

Medium. A leader commanding more than 5,000 but no more than 100,000 people has a medium level of influence, and costs an additional 20,000 gp.

High. A leader with a high level of influence has 100,000 or more people at their command, raising Tegan's fee by 40,000 gp.

TEGAN BOREL

Medium Monstrosity (Shapechanger), Neutral Evil

Armor Class 16 (studded leather)

Hit Points 123 (19d8 + 38)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	19 (+4)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)

Skills Deception +7, Insight +5, Perception +5, Stealth +8

Condition Immunities charmed

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Common, Halfling, Undercommon

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +4

Ambusher. Tegan has advantage on attack rolls against any creature she has surprised.

Evasion. If Tegan is subjected to an effect that allows her to make a Dexterity saving throw to take only half damage, Tegan instead takes no damage if she succeeds on the saving throw, and only half damage if she fails.

Sneak Attack (1/turn). Tegan deals an extra 17 (5d6) damage when she hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of her that isn't incapacitated and she doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

Surprise Attack. The first time Tegan surprises a creature and hits them with an attack during the first round of combat, the target takes an extra 17 (5d6) damage from the attack.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Tegan makes three Longsword attacks.

LOST KNOWLEDGE

"Day and night, my mind races with the knowledge of eons. Dead languages and lost civilizations. Their secrets are on the tip of my tongue."

—Ooth'orr

In a corner of the Crossroads market stands an enormous glass tank filled with water, and which contains a strange creature. Gelatinous, see-through skin covers the humanoid skeletal frame of this 7-foot-tall being, whose three eyes form a vertical line down the middle of the creature's face. Ooth'orr (no pronouns; noncombatant; OOTH-or) was once a human, but was permanently transformed into a unique being by an aboleth. The change left Ooth'orr connected to

Longsword. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d8 + 4) slashing damage.

Read Thoughts. Tegan magically reads the surface thoughts of one creature within 60 feet of her. The effect can penetrate barriers, but 3 feet of wood or dirt, 2 feet of stone, 2 inches of metal, or a thin sheet of lead blocks it. While the target is in range, Tegan can continue reading their thoughts, as long as her concentration isn't broken (as if concentrating on a spell). While reading the target's mind, Tegan has advantage on Wisdom (Insight) and Charisma (Deception, Intimidation, and Persuasion) checks against the target.

Change Shape. Tegan polymorphs into a Small or Medium Humanoid she has seen, or back into her true form. Her statistics, other than her size, are the same in each form. Any equipment she is wearing or carrying is absorbed or borne by the new form (her choice).

Alternatively, Tegan polymorphs into a Beast who has a challenge rating of 9 or lower, or back into her true form. Any equipment she is wearing or carrying is absorbed or borne by the new form (her choice). In a beast form, Tegan retains her alignment, ability to speak, hit points, Hit Dice, proficiencies, and Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores, as well as this action and the Read Thoughts action. Her statistics and capabilities are otherwise replaced by those of the beast form.

Tegan reverts to her true form if she dies.

BONUS ACTIONS

Cunning Action. Tegan takes the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.

the collective knowledge of all aboleths. Ooth'orr can communicate telepathically with any creature within 120 feet of the tank, offering to reveal the mysteries of any person, place, or object for a price. The creature requires a payment of 1,000 gp placed within the tank or the promise of a future favor, chosen or rolled for on the Ooth'orr's Favors table, to those seeking the aboleths' wisdom. If characters fail to deliver on the promised favor, Ooth'orr sends Tegan Borel (or another assassin) after them.

Ooth'orr can cast the *legend lore* spell at will, requiring no components, and uses that magic to gain the knowledge a customer seeks. Ooth'orr relays all knowledge gained from the spell to the purchaser.

Although the knowledge of the aboleths is vast, it isn't infinite. The GM can decide that Ooth'orr finds no

information on a particular topic, or that Ooth'orr has anywhere from a 40 to 70 percent chance of knowing about a particular item.

If Ooth'orr can't provide the knowledge the characters seek, a refund is granted.

OOTH'ORR'S FAVORS

d6	FAVOR
1	Bring Ooth'orr a dragon's tears.
2	Bring Ooth'orr a specific permanent uncommon magic item.
3	Bring Ooth'orr the heads of six different Monstrosities.
4	Bring Ooth'orr three living Aberrations.
5	Bring Ooth'orr three eyes from three different devils.
6	Bring Ooth'orr the crown of a monarch.

VALNOS SALES

NUMBER OF SALES	CHARACTERS' SHARE OF SALE
1–9	30%
10–19	40%
20–29	50%
30–39	60%
40–49	70%
50 or more	80%

VALNOS ADVENTURE HOOKS

CHARACTER LEVEL	ADVENTURE	CHARACTERS' SHARE OF SALE
1–4	Mayor Daxalim Silentvale has gotten their hands on a golden statuette in the shape of a chimera with emeralds for eyes. His home is protected by ten guards , a guard captain (bandit captain), and five mastiffs .	55%
5–10	Vaynulth the Ironfang (a young red dragon) possesses a platinum earring with an entire lost language magically inscribed upon it.	65%
11–16	Rumors suggest that the crypt of the wealthy and tyrannical Quagg family contains a unique ornate silver snuffbox bearing an inscription of the Elvish word for "dream." (Valnos doesn't know that the crypt is the resting place of a vampire and five vampire spawn .)	75%
17–20	A pit fiend named Xer'ezeth, his erinyes lieutenant Felith, and five hell hounds guard the treasury of Rechrem the Sorrowsworn in the Seven Cities of Hell. The treasury contains an idol in the image of Rechrem carved of solid diamond. A GM using <i>Kingdoms & Warfare</i> can add a fang devil and a steel devil to this adventure. A GM using <i>Flee, Mortals!</i> can add a devil adjudicator and a devil magistrate .	85%

FENCE

"If you had anyone else to go to you would! If you complain about my prices, you can try and fence it yourself. I'll laugh when you get caught."

—Valnos

A 2-foot-tall blood-red **imp**, Valnos (it/its; VAL-nohs) flies around the Crossroads, pestering patrons and asking if they have items to fence. The little devil returns to its table only after annoying all available customers.

Valnos has a reputation for making sure the items it fences can never be traced back to the thieves who stole them, but the imp is equally well known for ripping off new customers. However, characters who fence items repeatedly with Valnos improve both their relationship with the imp and the amount of money they can earn, as shown on the Valnos Sales table.

Characters looking for a better deal can also recover items for Valnos. The Valnos Adventure Hooks table provides sample quests that the imp gives to characters asking for a better cut of the profits for fenced items. After each successful quest, the percentage of each sale earned by characters fencing goods with Valnos increases as noted, replacing any percentage based on number of sales (unless that percentage is higher).

FORGERY

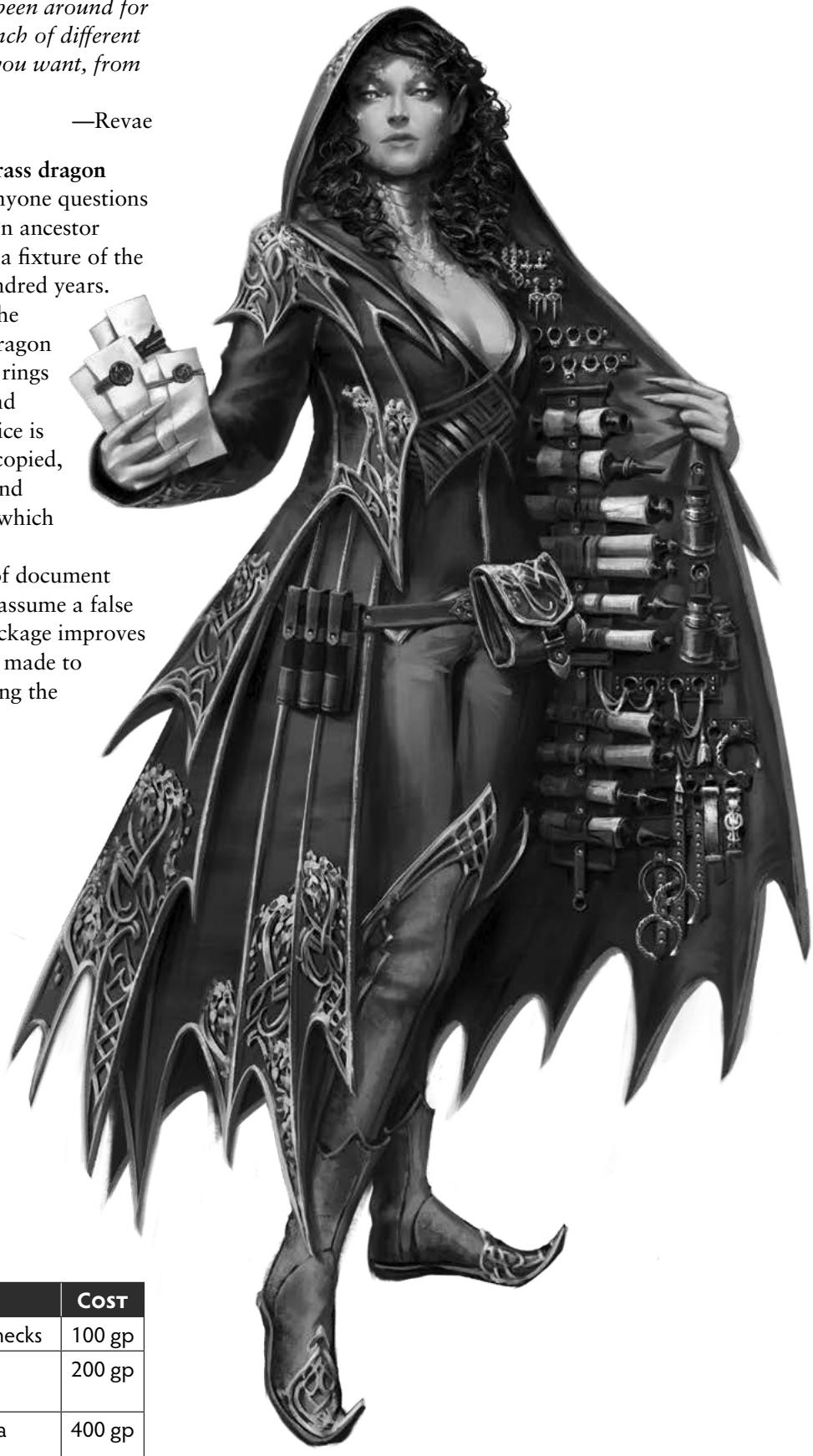
"I've got a great eye for detail! And I've been around for a really long time, so I've picked up a bunch of different crafts. I can pretty much forge anything you want, from papers to signet rings."

—Revae

Revae (they/she; reh-VEYE) is an **adult brass dragon** disguised as a bronze-scaled high elf. If anyone questions her about the scales, she talks of having an ancestor who was a brass dragon. Revae has been a fixture of the criminal underworld for close to nine hundred years.

Revae's booth stands at the middle of the Crossroads marketplace. The disguised dragon sells forged items of all sorts, from signet rings to letters of pedigree and introduction, and anything in between. The cost of the service is 30 percent of the price of the item being copied, which includes the costs of cheap metal and stone made to look more expensive, and which includes Revae's fee.

Additionally, Revae offers three types of document packages that allow a character to easily assume a false identity: copper, silver, and gold. Each package improves a creature's Charisma (Deception) checks made to impersonate the chosen identity while using the documents.



FORGED DOCUMENTS PACKAGES

PACKAGE	BENEFIT	COST
Copper	+2 to Charisma (Deception) checks	100 gp
Silver	Advantage on Charisma (Deception) checks	200 gp
Gold	+4 and advantage on Charisma (Deception) checks	400 gp

"LIVESTOCK"

"You can do whatever you want with these eggs. But let's be clear. If you hatch 'em and raise 'em and I hear you're abusin' em, me and my good girl Nyx will be payin' you a painful visit."

—Tharig

Tharig (he/him; THARR-igg) is a 7-foot-tall, pale-green-skinned orc **veteran** covered in scars, who exclusively wears leathers and furs that he has hunted and crafted himself. Nyx, a massive russet **dire wolf**, is always at Tharig's side, typically snoozing away as he trades his wares.

Tharig travels across the planes and the timescape, gathering the eggs of various creatures and selling them to the highest bidder. The Tharig's Eggs table notes the eggs Tharig typically sells, along with their prices and the time it takes each egg to mature. The GM has final say as to which eggs Tharig has in stock at any given time. Each egg has AC 10 and 20 hit points. Each dragon egg is immune to the same damage type dealt by the dragon's breath weapon.

In general, an egg needs to spend 72 consecutive hours inside an area at least 80 degrees Fahrenheit (27 degrees Celsius) to hatch. The eggs of dragons who breathe

and are immune to fire might require even higher temperatures. When an egg hatches, a Tiny baby version of the indicated creature (a noncombatant) emerges. The Days to Mature column then shows how much time it takes for a creature to mature into the youngest version represented by their stat block. (The GM can speed up or slow down this time as fits the campaign.) A dragon hatched from one of Tharig's eggs becomes a wyrmling when they mature, and remains a wyrmling for 5 years.

If the characters are kind to a creature they've hatched and raised, that creature can join them on adventures at the GM's discretion. If the characters are cruel to the creature, the creature flees the first chance they get. When a dragon wyrmling becomes a young dragon after 5 years, they leave the characters to make their own way in the world.

HUNTER FOR HIRE

Tharig can also hunt for mundane or rare creatures at the characters' request. He'll go after any Beast or Monstrosity with a challenge rating of 8 or less and an Intelligence of 3 or less, bringing them back dead or alive—though alive adds 30 percent to his fee, which must be paid up front. The cost to hunt a creature is that creature's challenge rating × 300 gp (minimum 300 gp). A hunting expedition takes a number of days equal to 5 times the creature's challenge rating (minimum 3 days).

THARIG'S EGGS

Egg Type	Cost	Days to Mature
Basilisk	3,200 gp	180
Chimera	12,000 gp	360
Cockatrice	400 gp	30
Dragon, Black	11,600 gp	120
Dragon, Blue	13,200 gp	180
Dragon, Brass	10,800 gp	60
Dragon, Bronze	11,600 gp	120
Dragon, Copper	10,800 gp	60
Dragon, Gold	13,200 gp	180
Dragon, Green	11,600 gp	120
Dragon, Red	16,400 gp	240
Dragon, Silver	11,600 gp	120
Dragon, White	11,600 gp	120
Griffon	1,600 gp	120
Hippogriff	200 gp	60
Manticore	3,200 gp	180

POISONS

"Be careful handling those. Don't wanna get burned. Heh heh."

—Entropy

Entropy (he/him) is an alabaster tiefling (a noncombatant) whose skin and large ram's horns are shot through with onyx cracks. He has a number of chemical burns on his hands, arms, and face, and his table at the Crossroads features a bubbling chemistry set and a number of vials of strange liquid.

Characters looking for a poison to feed someone, coat their weapons in, or apply to something's skin, can find all the poisons described on the Entropy's Poisons table available for purchase. The table shows each poison's cost per dose, method of application, and effects.

ENTROPY'S POISONS

Name	Type	Description	Cost per Dose
Basilisk breath	Injury	The target takes 3d6 poison damage, and must succeed on a DC 19 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 minute. While poisoned in this way, the target's speed is halved. The target can repeat the save at the end of each of their turns, ending the effect on themselves on a success. A target who fails the save four times is paralyzed until the poisoned condition is removed.	400 gp
Body's bane	Injury	The target must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or take a -3 penalty to Constitution saving throws for 1d4 minutes.	200 gp
Bonebreaker	Injury	The target takes 1d10 poison damage and must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or have their bones weakened for 1 minute. While the target's bones are weakened, any attacks against them that deal bludgeoning damage score a critical hit on an attack roll of 18–20.	300 gp
Mage's bane	Inhaled	The target must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution saving throw or have their vocal cords become useless, leaving them unable to speak for 1d4 hours.	350 gp
Peacekeeper	Ingested	The target must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be incapable of violence for 1 hour. While in this state, the target is unable to make weapon attacks or use any action or feature that deals damage to another creature or forces another creature to make a saving throw.	50 gp
Vile touch	Contact	The target must succeed on a DC 19 Constitution saving throw or become violently ill and incapacitated for 1d4 + 2 rounds. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of their turns, ending the effect on themselves on a success.	275 gp

CUSTOM SPELL POISONS

Entropy also takes commissions to create magical poisons from scratch. He can create a poison that replicates the effect of any offensive spell of 3rd level or lower that targets a single creature and forces that target to make a saving throw. The purchaser can specify the poison's type (contact, ingested, inhaled, or injury).

The level of the spell determines the poison's save DC and base cost, with the spell's effect manifesting as if cast at its lowest level. A spell with expensive material components adds the cost of those components to the cost of the poison.

CUSTOM SPELL POISONS

Level	Save DC	Cost
Cantrip	15	150 gp
1st	16	200 gp
2nd	17	250 gp
3rd	18	300 gp

CROSSROADS OF THE PLANES

A gateway shaped of many stones, each etched with an arcane rune, stands in the center of the Crossroads—and is guarded by No'mrend the Fatebringer (he/any; NOHM-rend), a hulking crimson pit fiend. No'mrend has been an agent of the Foscari family since the time of Gillia's great-great-great-great grandfather Romolo, who outsmarted the devil while negotiating power and riches for the Foscari family in return for his own soul. As a result, No'mrend is bound to the Foscari line until it ends.

Though No'mrend's angry demeanor suggests that he must hate the fate he's been dealt, service to the Foscari family is actually a welcome change of pace. The devil has been slowly amassing a fortune while working at the Crossroads as guardian and gatekeeper. Plus, according to No'mrend's contract with the Foscari family, he gets to reap the two best souls from each generation of the family for hell.

For 6,000 gp or at the behest of Gillia Foscari, No'mrend activates the gate, allowing individuals to be transported to different marketplaces across the planes, each similar to the Crossroads. Gillia helped each of these markets get up and running—and of course, a cut of all profits earned at the markets goes to her family.

SEVEN CITIES OF HELL

Run by Qusghal (QUISH-gull), a barbed devil, the Hell Crossroads are one of the few places where mortals, devils, and demons can be found wheeling and dealing together in a peaceful manner. Individuals who travel to this marketplace can find cursed magic items for sale, as well as the rare materials used to craft them.

ABYSSAL WASTELAND

Run by Yirag (YEE-rag), the spirit of an ogre who died in the wasteland, the Abyssal Crossroads offer powerful weapons and armor taken from the infinite battles raging across the plane. All the merchants here are the spirits of fallen warriors.

SHADOWFELL

Run and staffed exclusively by an elf named Vemna (VEHM-nah), the Shadowfell Crossroads trades in the memories of that plane's inhabitants. For the right price, Vemna can track down the memories of specific individuals and bring them back to the customer in the form of an orb swirling with pale gray smoke. Anyone who touches the orb experiences the memories.

QUINTESSENCE

Oris (ORR-iss), an earth elemental, runs the Quintessence Crossroads, which provides access to a wide variety of gems and crystals, many of which don't exist on any other plane. Granius (GRAHN-ee-us), another earth elemental, is responsible for hiring adventurers to seek and collect gems when the market's stock is low.



THE LAST SEVEN NOTES

A 7TH-LEVEL ADVENTURE ABOUT WEAVING SONG AND SOOTHING A SOUL

by Sadie Lowry

“WHERE WORDS FAIL, MUSIC SPEAKS.”

—HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN

Dark forces ensnare a cathedral in “The Last Seven Notes,” an adventure built around a corrupted lion-like Celestial, and the power of music to heal and connect. The characters must explore the cathedral to clear out corrupted spirits, save terrified clergy, and weave a song that can restore the rampaging spirit to his natural peaceful state.

This adventure is balanced for four to five 7th-level characters.

BACKGROUND

War, peace, and music are intertwined with the history of Giocoso, a city of artisans, musicians, and clergy established on a battlefield where holy warriors defeated a devastating fiendish incursion. In the ashes of triumph, the surviving warriors established the city and built the massive Paean (PI-uhn) Cathedral, both as a refuge and as a sign that evil would never again hold that site.

Millennia later, the city flourishes as a haven of art, peace, and worship. Those with no religious predilection can visit and wander its streets, taking in the thriving inspiration of its artisans. And there is music. Gods, but there is music! From communal harvest songs to ballads to hymns, Giocoso is alive with music—so much so that a Celestial lion spirit of music made a home atop the cathedral a few years ago.

Iahhel (EYE-ah-hel), the Celestial, is the Giocosans’ pride and joy. He can be heard baying along with songs and purring when the music fades. A magnificent harp-like instrument called the soulstrings was built atop the roof so the clergy could play for him, and many came to regard Iahhel as the city’s guardian and patron.

However, even as the clergy works for the good of Giocoso, a fell, pernicious presence has snuck its way behind the cathedral’s walls. Varadah Zostira (vah-RAH-dah zohs-TEER-ah), a dragonborn bishop with a soul highly receptive to magic and other planes, recently began to see unsettling visions and dreams. In those visions, the lands around Giocoso were littered with the corpses of powerful archfiends from the historical incursion—and the spirits of these archfiends began to torment Varadah. By masquerading as a dead god who knew the truth of all things, the spirits led Varadah to dig up “the heart of a god”—a withered fiend heart that strongly affected her. Corrupted by the heart, she saw further visions of the weaknesses of the gods, dreaming about their terrible wrath and ancient flaws. And so doubt in her own faith quickly grew.

As the fifth anniversary of Iahhel’s arrival in Giocoso approached, the clergy prepared a divine song as a ritual that would strengthen their bond to the Celestial and empower him once played. Six priests meditated to receive the last six notes of the song, allowing Iahhel to

provide the seventh and final note. But as they undertook the ritual, the spirits of the archfiends battered Varadah with visions of a terrible future where Iahhel transformed into a great beast who would fell all before him. Believing that she was saving everyone, Varadah hijacked the ritual at the fiends' direction, causing fiendish magic to corrupt Iahhel. The Celestial rampaged, bringing with him a raging storm. Distorted divine spirits overran the cathedral, killing priests in their frenzy.

Now, the priests of Giocoso are desperate for a solution—but one that can restore and save Iahhel, rather than killing him.

THE CATHEDRAL ELSEWHERE

The city of Giocoso can be placed in any suitable campaign setting, or Paean Cathedral can be placed in any metropolitan city with an artisanal or religious history. Iahhel's appearance or history can also change without affecting the adventure.



ADVENTURE HOOKS

Use one of the following hooks to draw the characters into the adventure.

Priest's Plea. With the characters already in Giocoso, they hear the first signs of trouble at the cathedral. Narimae the high priest has heard of their exploits, and even if the characters are already on their way to the cathedral, a runner meets them, having been sent by Narimae to beseech them for assistance.

Sight to See. While the characters are in the general area of Giocoso, merchants and travelers tell them they *must* go see Paean Cathedral. When the characters arrive, they find the cathedral in chaos.

Called by Your Class. A bard receives a message from a companion of their college, asking them and any compatriots to go to the cathedral to see what song Iahhel loves the most, as they have heard of the incredible spirit who lives there. This fun road trip for a song quickly goes wrong when the characters arrive to a scene of mayhem and destruction. Alternatively, a cleric or paladin is contacted by a religious leader who sends them to Giocoso to help with the upcoming celebrations, with characters hearing word of a rampaging divine spirit even as they enter the city.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The characters arrive at Paean Cathedral to see fear and confusion running rampant. The high priest, Narimae, asks them to go inside and calm the rampaging Celestial Iahhel, using the ritual song that the priests were composing. To do so, the characters must collect the last seven notes of the song. As they explore the cathedral in search of those notes, the characters fight corrupted Celestial spirits and aid injured members of the clergy. They then face Iahhel, claim the final note, and save the Celestial.

During their exploration and investigation, the characters might also discover that someone betraying the cathedral is the source of the corruption. What they do with this information is up to them. As long as the characters calm Iahhel, the cathedral is saved and they have the gratitude of both the clergy and the heavens.

KEY NPCs

The following NPCs feature heavily in this adventure.

IAHHEL

Iahhel (EYE-ah-hel, he/him) is a massive, golden, winged lion Celestial. He sports an impressive mane and tail, along with two horns curving elegantly back from his head, and wears white-and-gold armor. Iahhel is the firstborn son of Hanniah, the proud lioness companion of a goddess of the hunt, and as a spirit of music, he often joined the hunter goddess's prayer songs to honor her fallen prey. When he came of age, Iahhel left his Celestial pride to search the mortal realms, eventually coming upon Gioco. There, he settled down atop the cathedral, quickly growing fond of its worshipers. The more time he spends with the clergy, creating music together, the more powerful Iahhel grows as their protector and patron.

Relationships. Iahhel and Narimae have become close friends over their years together, and he enjoys every incomplete, tentative melody she brings him.

NARIMAE LESYR, THE MOST HIGH

Narimae (NAIR-ih-may, she/her, half-elf, 52) is the high priest of Paean Cathedral and Iahhel's longtime companion. She has warm-brown skin, straight black hair with graying strands, and smile lines around her eyes. Stern and sensible, Narimae keeps the cathedral running in a well-organized fashion, so that those who seek peace and inspiration inside can always find it. Though her responsibilities leave her little time to create music, she brings Iahhel her half-finished songs.

Relationships. Narimae and Silence occasionally clash over Narimae's strictness, but the high priest truly appreciates the tiefling's ingenuity. In a way, she is envious of Silence's creative passion, knowing that her own sternness is a requirement of her position, even as it stifles her creativity somewhat. Narimae believes that Rhys will make a fine member of the clergy given time, and wishes that he could better believe in himself. She trusts Varadah deeply.

SILENCE

Silence (they/them, tiefling, 38) enjoys the irony of their name in the context of their role as the cathedral's choir director. They are a pale-blue tiefling with white hair and eyes, with that hair often falling loose from its thick braid. Silence has a frenetic relationship with creativity, scrawling ideas on any available parchment, and managing dozens of creative projects at once. They balk against Narimae's strict leadership, citing often

that "passion and discipline rarely coexist." Still, they acknowledge that the cathedral's music has prospered under Narimae.

Relationships. Silence encourages Rhys often, and ensures that Narimae doesn't push him too far, too fast. They respect Narimae as well, and sometimes enjoy the push-and-pull of disagreeing with her. They were wary of Varadah before Iahhel's corruption, sensing a darkness in the music Varadah produced. When Silence refused to join Varadah in her corrupted goals, the dragonborn mage cursed the tiefling and sent them into a magical slumber.

VARADAH ZOSTIRA

Varadah (vah-RAH-dah zohs-TEER-ah, she/her, dragonborn, 40) is a high-ranking member of the clergy who keeps to herself while observing those around her. She is a sleek silver dragonborn, whose many curving spines and horns sharply frame her face in an angular halo. A talented mage, Varadah harnessed the powerful magic of the growing ritual song to break the cathedral's divine protections, accidentally allowing the spirits of ancient archfiends to move against and seize Iahhel before the clergy could complete their song revering him.

Relationships. Narimae and Varadah were close before the archfiends' manipulations filled Varadah with doubt. The dragonborn mage has since drawn away, and Narimae has been too busy overseeing the ritual's preparation and working with Rhys to fully notice. Believing that Silence might be an ally because of their critique of the cathedral's strictness, Varadah tried to convince the choir director to support her. When that failed, she sent them into a cursed magical slumber instead.

RHYS DENHOLM

Rhys (REESE, he/him, human, 18) is the newest member of Paean Cathedral's clergy, a gangly and tan human with dark-red curls that spill over his left eye. After escaping a cruel household only a few weeks previous, Rhys came to Narimae seeking peace, but has so far struggled to find his voice—both literally and figuratively. Narimae wants him to meet Iahhel, but Silence believes Rhys needs time. The young man isn't sure what he needs, but knows that within him is a voice that matters, if only he can find the courage to use it.

Relationships. Skittish and shy, Rhys still holds Narimae and Silence at arm's length, but he opens up more each passing day. When Iahhel's rampage began, Rhys fought the initial outbreak of corrupted Celestials, ensuring the escape of many of his fellow clergy.

ARRIVING AT THE CATHEDRAL

When the characters arrive at the cathedral, read or paraphrase the following:

A cacophony of howling winds and desperate voices fills the city. A storm rages above Paean Cathedral, centered over the vaulted roof where a golden beast stalks, massive wings silhouetted against the dark sky. Two figures—a middle-aged half-elf woman in religious robes and an older human woman—pace frantically at the bottom of the cathedral steps, the main doors shut tight above them.

The half-elf is Narimae Lesyr, the high priest, and the human woman is Carys Kyr. Carys's son Ellio is one of the clergy trapped in the cathedral, and Narimae is trying to calm her even while attempting to organize a response to the situation.

Recognizing the characters as either those who responded to her summons to help or as capable adventurers, Narimae quickly explains what's happened.

The half-elf is haggard as she beckons you closer. "Forgive the ... chaotic welcome to Paean Cathedral. I am Narimae, the high priest. We have a problem, as you can see. Gods, where do I start?"

The priest runs a hand through her graying hair. "The being you see above the cathedral—his name is Iahhel. A divine spirit of music, and our protector. But he became enraged, and then ... evil creatures appeared, targeting clergy and worshipers alike. It was so sudden. Our evacuation was disastrous, and I'm still piecing together who lived, who died, and who might be inside."

As Narimae watches the predatory movements of the lion-like creature above, her expression is heartbroken. "I don't understand what's happened to him. He doesn't hear anyone—not even me." But then she seemingly shakes away her sorrow. "But it has something to do with our divine song. I'm certain. Look here."

Narimae produces a piece of sheet music, wrinkled and stained with a few faded blood spatters. Any character who reads Celestial recognizes the name of the piece as *On the Wings of Song* (play [TheLast7NotesUnresolved.mp3](#)). Even to characters who don't read music, it is clear that the last line of the piece is missing the song's final notes.

"The fifth anniversary of Iahhel's arrival is today, and we were preparing a ritual song of celebration. Six of his priests prayed, each receiving the musical note that would end the song we had written, with Iahhel to provide the last note. But near the end of our meditation, all of us heard the song fill the cathedral ... but wrong, and ... somehow tainted. When the false song finished, Iahhel's rampage began, and we were overrun by monsters."

Narimae's jaw sets resolutely as she assesses you. "I believe the ritual song, played correctly, will save Iahhel. I believe that if you can determine the last seven notes and complete the song, it will cleanse him of this ... this horrid corruption."

As the high priest holds out the sheet music, her voice strengthens with hope. "And I have the first note."

Narimae offers the characters 500 gp each if they can save Iahhel, and answers any questions she can regarding their goal:

- Her own note is D.
- The priests' ritual prayers were completed in solitude, their notes recorded privately. Narimae has the first note. A tiefling choir director named Silence has the second. A human priest named Anneliese has the third, a tiefling priest named Theris has the fourth, a young human priest named Rhys has the fifth, and a drow priest named Sarasyne has the sixth. Iahhel has the seventh note—though the characters might have to fight him to obtain it while the Celestial is in his state of rage.
- Once the characters have the completed song, one of them needs to play the song on the soulstrings atop the cathedral roof. The soulstrings were made to celebrate Iahhel, but the Celestial has been heard and seen attacking the instrument in its open tower, so the characters must stop him before it is destroyed.
- Narimae is worried about the missing clergy members. Aside from those who have the notes, she hasn't been able to find Carys's son Ellio, a dragonborn bishop named Varadah, a gold dragonborn priest named Ganxor, a dark-skinned elf priest named Tias, and a pale human priest named Malia.
- The cathedral is full of corrupted Celestial songbird spirits, as well as a few other creatures summoned or animated as a result of Iahhel's corruption. The music spirits are volatile and attack on sight.
- The high priest is desperate to determine what happened to cause Iahhel's rampage, but her primary concern is stopping that rampage and clearing the cathedral of corrupted Celestials before anyone else is hurt.

If the characters agree to help, Narimae unlocks the cathedral's main doors (leading into area P1) and lets them in. Characters who scout around or spot the door to the east of the main doors can also enter the cloister (area P4) if they choose. Narimae whispers a prayer for good luck as they go.

PAEAN CATHEDRAL

Paean Cathedral is a large structure known for its impressive architecture and its soulstrings tower. The front face of the edifice features two enormous arches, and the building's twin octagonal spires rise above the roof to east and west, flanking the smaller open tower where the soulstrings is installed on the north end of the roof. Built from pale golden limestone, the cathedral looks weathered and old, but still in pristine condition—though the Celestial raging atop it seems intent on changing that.

PAEAN CATHEDRAL FEATURES

Paean Cathedral has the following features:

Light. Unless otherwise noted, the cathedral is dimly lit, with only faint storm light coming in through the windows.

Ceilings. The nave (area P1), quire (area P2), sanctuary (area P3), and cloister (area P4) rise to a height of 80 feet. Any other indoor location has a height of 25 feet.

Called by Music. If any character plays music while in the cathedral, there is a 1-in-4 chance that two songthieves (see “Stat Blocks”) hear them and appear within 60 feet of them to attack.

The Soulstrings. Iahhel is raging and attacking the soulstrings atop the roof (area P10). As such, the more time the characters spend exploring, the more danger there is that the Celestial destroys the instrument. Each time the characters take a short rest, Iahhel deals 10 damage to the soulstrings. If the characters take a long rest, he destroys the instrument.

FORMING THE HYMN

The final notes of the hymn are D (given by Narimae), A (area P3), G (area P4), F# (area P5), A (area P7), E (area P8), and D (given by Iahhel who is in area P10), arranged in this order: D E G A F# A D. (The last D is an octave higher than the first.) Since Narimae has given them the order, have the players keep track of the notes, then confirm the correct order before a character performs the complete version of the song during the final battle.

As this is a ritual song steeped in magic, a character can play the song on the soulstrings even if they don't have any familiarity with instruments. While it's preferable that the song be played by a bard, cleric, or paladin (and you can lower the DC for nonperforming characters if you feel it's appropriate), the ritual song can grant an inherent understanding of how to play it for any character who takes a seat at the soulstrings.



PAEAN CATHEDRAL LOCATIONS

The following locations are keyed to the map of Paean Cathedral.

P1. NAVE

When the characters enter Paean Cathedral for the first time, read or paraphrase the following:

Where once it would have been filled with worshipers raising their voices to the vaulted ceiling's heights, the nave of the cathedral now stands eerily empty. Its towering pillars stand in shadow, with only dim light spilling in through arched gothic windows. Two smaller arms branch off to left and right at the far end of the nave, just before a set of heavy double doors. Along the far wall of both arms, smaller doors can be seen.

The nave is the largest area of the cathedral, open to lay worshipers. It is currently empty of threats.

P2. QUIRE

Wrought-iron dividers make up the wall in which the double doors are set, beyond which stands the quire chamber. Beneath an arched ceiling, this sizable space contains rows of pews facing each other, providing space for the cathedral's distinguished choir to perform for their congregation.

A smaller chamber juts into the area at the quire's far end, closed off behind ornate, gilded gates.

Paean Cathedral's *quire* is larger than the average cathedral's due to the clergy's focus on music. The doors to the north lead into the sanctuary (area P3).

Songful Ambush. Any character with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 16 or higher, or a character who succeeds on a DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check to scan the room, notices a **songthief** lurking atop the intricate arches above. If unnoticed or left alone, the songthief attacks once the characters try to leave the quire.

When the songthief attacks, they summon two Celestial spirits to aid them. The spirits use the **will-o'-wisp** stat block, except their creature type is Celestial and their Shock attack deals radiant damage.

Key. Wrapped around the talons of the songthief is a thin cord with a tiny key dangling from it. This is the key to the journal in the cloister (area P4).

P3. SANCTUARY

The cathedral's sanctuary opens up beyond the gilded gates. An altar stands at the center of the space, beautifully wrought from marble and gold, depicting musical notes and instruments surrounding a graven image of a winged lion. An impressive-looking organ is incorporated into the far wall, its pipes surrounded by vivid stained glass.

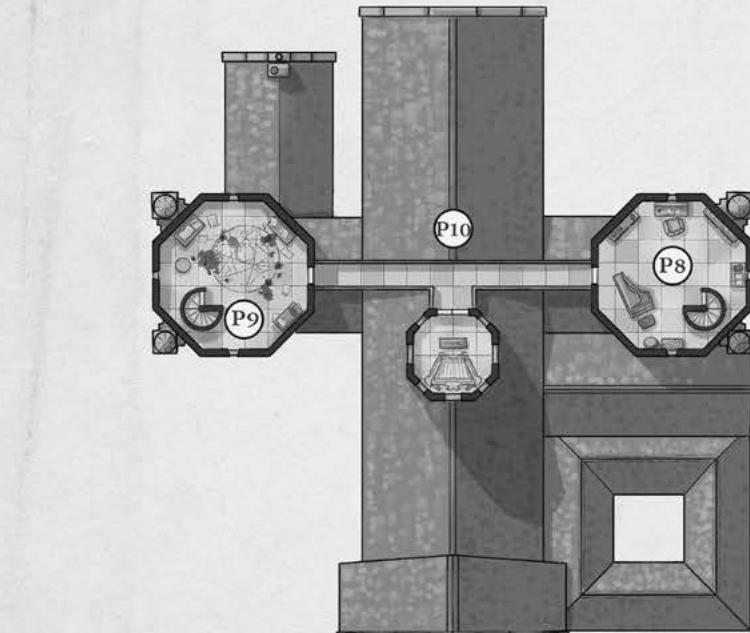
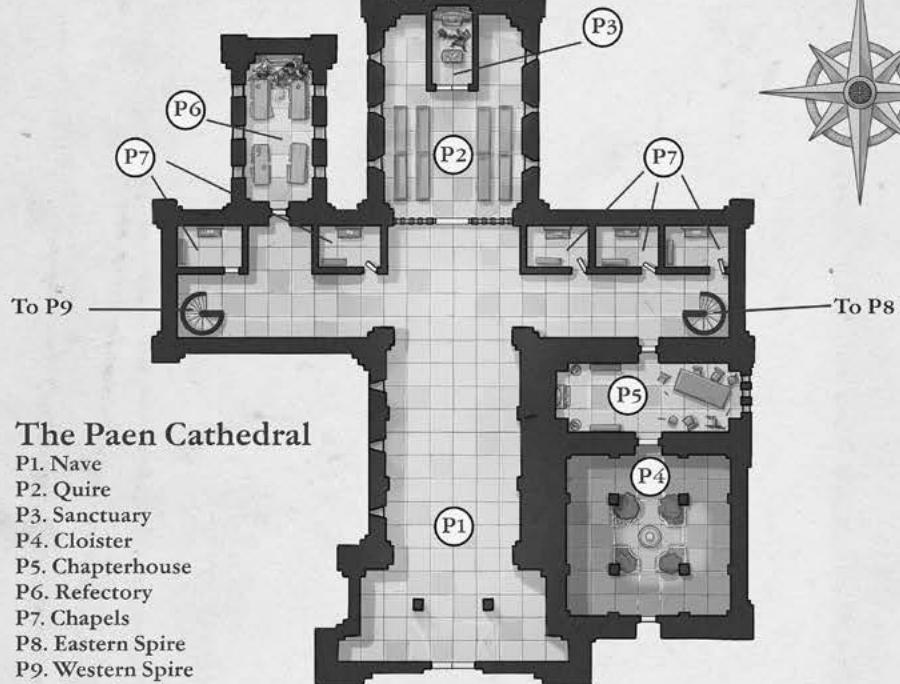
A body lies before the instrument, a trail of blood leading from the seat to the corpse.

The sanctuary's altar is dedicated to music and Iahhel, and stands before a great keyboard instrument known as the *piari*. The *piari* resembles an organ, but specially enchanted gemstones worked into the pipes allow musicians to weave the sounds of nature into their music, including whistling winds, rushing waters, and birdsong.

Ritual Note. The corpse is the priest Sarasyne, a drow woman in simple robes, and is holding a crumpled piece of paper. The paper has a few lines of music scribed on it, making it clear the figure had been playing the *piari* before being struck down. But at the bottom of the paper, a single note—A—is circled several times.

Sarasyne. The character with the highest passive Wisdom (Perception) score is the first to hear a melody faintly echoing in the *piari*'s pipes. When any character comes within 10 feet of the *piari*, they see a translucent outline of the dead drow woman playing the melody. A single tear slides down her cheek as her fingers dance over the keys.

If a character interacts with Sarasyne's spirit in any way, she gestures to the *piari*, inviting them to play it too. A character can attempt a DC 15 Charisma (Performance) check to replicate the melody on the *piari*. (Playing the *piari* doesn't risk attracting songthieves; see "Called by Music" in the "Paean Cathedral Features" section.) On a success, Sarasyne sadly smiles and produces a *pearl of power* for the characters to take. On a failure, her eyes widen and she points upward before disappearing. A **songthief** then appears at the entrance to the sanctuary, drawn by the discordant melody, and attacks.



P4. CLOISTER

This area is partly open to the sky, with a square covered walkway extending around the edges of the space, set with intricate arches that offer views into a cultivated garden at center. Four trees stand in the garden, festooned with purple, violet, white, and blue blooms. A fountain surrounded by bushes bearing gold-and-white flowers flows with a quiet trickling of water, barely discernible over the howling of the storm above.

This haven garden is a place where priests of the cathedral meditate, study, and exercise.

Whistlebloom. Characters examining the gold-and-white trumpet flowers that surround the fountain can see where a much larger flower emerges from those bushes, shaped similarly to a snapdragon, and bearing petals of white, pink, and gold. As it sways in the wind, the flower curls and uncurls its leaves around itself as if breathing.

A character who succeeds on a DC 16 Intelligence (Nature) check recognizes the flower as a magic plant known as a whistlebloom (use the **awakened shrub** stat block), which has the ability to mimic music it's heard before. Anyone within 5 feet of the whistlebloom can see a leather-bound journal beneath its lower leaves, with the name "Anneliese" written on the front.

The journal is sealed with a small lock, and the key is with the songthief in the quire (area P2). The lock can also be picked with a successful DC 17 Dexterity check using thieves' tools, or snapped off the leather cover with a successful DC 14 Strength check.

Once the journal is open, the characters find it filled with notes detailing experiments conducted with the whistlebloom by the priest Anneliese (see below). A note on the last page reads: "The whistlebloom must be as excited about the ritual song as we are! He's always loved singing with me, but when I sang him my ritual note, he sang me such beautiful trills, each ending with my note."

Beneath that is scrawled another small note: "Nibbled my sleeve. Check if there's more honeydew?"

Anneliese. The human priest Anneliese was attacked and killed by songthieves during Iahhel's initial rampage. Any character who succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check or makes a thorough search of the garden finds her body concealed in a flowerbed, her torso bearing deep gouges.

Ritual Note. The whistlebloom holds Anneliese's ritual note: a G. A character can convince the flower to sing by using a *speak with plants* spell or similar magic, with a successful DC 16 Charisma (Performance) check that includes a song or musical instrument, or by retrieving

honeydew from a jar in the refectory (area P6) and feeding the plant. Any character who hears the whistlebloom sing the note magically recognizes it as a D.

P5. CHAPTERHOUSE

Both the doors leading into this room are damaged and don't open easily. Characters who approach without making undue noise can hear a faint, raspy singing within the room. Each door can be forced open with a successful DC 14 Strength (Athletics) check, or by three or more characters working together.

When the characters force their way into the room, read or paraphrase the following.

This meeting room has been torn apart, bloodstains smeared across a main table where it's been knocked aside. Two winged stone creatures crouch at the center of the room, flexing their wings, uncurling blood-covered claws, and making soft, stony clicking sounds as they stare at a trembling, red-haired young man slumped in the corner. The badly wounded figure sings a soft hymn, with a hoarse voice seemingly on the verge of giving out.

The figure glances up, frantically holding up a piece of parchment. Between his crimson-stained fingers is a desperate scrawl: "*If I stop singing they'll kill me HELP.*"

The human is Rhys (use the **scout** stat block). The two **gargoyles** watching him were once statues, and were awakened by Iahhel's rampage. However, their spree of destruction was halted by Rhys's singing. To get Rhys out of the room before his voice gives out, the characters must succeed on a group DC 15 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check to distract the gargoyles with their own careful movements, then help the exhausted young man through the cramped chamber and out the door without attracting notice. On a failed check, the gargoyles attack.

If the characters join in the singing to help keep the gargoyles soothed, each character has advantage on the group check, but the increased volume runs the risk of attracting songthieves (see "Called by Music" in the "Paean Cathedral Features" section). If the characters fight the gargoyles, Rhys joins them, but he has only half his hit points remaining. (In the event that Rhys is killed, he whispers the name of his note in the ritual with his dying breath. See "Ritual Note" below.)

The characters can barricade either door from the outside with a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check. If they don't kill the gargoyles or barricade them in, there is a 50 percent chance that the gargoyles find and attack them later during another combat encounter.

Ritual Note. Rhys's voice is raspy and choked with emotion as he tells the characters about his note, F#.

He's had trouble singing since he arrived at the cathedral just weeks ago. Stifled, silenced, and neglected at home, he's been trying to feel worthy of joining his voice with the clergy's. Narimae, hoping to encourage him, let him be part of the ritual despite his lack of experience.

When his prayer was answered and he heard the note, Rhys wept, realizing that he does belong. He offers the characters a *potion of resistance* (*radiant*) and begs them to save Iahhel before he flees the cathedral to rejoin Narimae.

P6. REFECTIONY

This unpretentious refectory is set with shelves along the walls, several long tables, and a hearth along one wall that is currently cold. Several plates holding unfinished meals are scattered irregularly across one of the tables. The acrid tang of blood hangs in the air.

Victims. Characters who enter the room are able to spot three corpses wearing robes, all sprawled beneath a table near the far wall: a lithe gold dragonborn (Ganxor); a broad-shouldered, dark-skinned elf (Tias); and a plump pale human (Malia). All their bodies bear deep gouges consistent with talon attacks by songthieves. Tias and Malia are still tightly clutching each other's hands.

A character who succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check finds a *ring of protection* on the floor near the door. If they search the bodies for identifying information, they also find a ring on Tias engraved with the following: "May we be united forever in love and song—M."

If the characters report these priests' deaths to Narimae, she sorrowfully expresses gratitude for finding them.

Honeydew. On one of the shelves where staples are stored is a jar of fresh honeydew. It can be used to feed the whistlebloom in the cloister (area P4).

Key. A character who searches Ganxor's body finds a thin, gilded key that opens the door to the eastern spire (area P8).

P7. CHAPELS

These identical rooms set along the arms of the nave are dedicated to worship. The characters can see into the nearest chapels as they move through the nave.

Open doors reveal that most of the chapels off the nave are empty. Only the last door to the west stands closed. At both ends of the arms of the nave, spiral staircases lead upward.

If any character approaches the closed door, the faint sound of sobbing can be heard from the other side. Trying to open the door reveals that it is barricaded from the inside.

Saving Ellio. The young half-elf Ellio (an acolyte) has sealed himself into the chapel in a state of terror. He is anxious and paranoid, and thus slow to trust. A character who speaks to him through the door and succeeds on a DC 14 Charisma (Persuasion) check can convince Ellio that the characters are there to rescue him. If Ellio can't be convinced to open the door, he won't leave until Rhys (area P5) or Silence (area P8) comes to collect him.

The barricaded door can also be destroyed (it has AC 16, 25 hit points, and immunity to poison and psychic damage), or forced open with a successful DC 17 Strength (Athletics) check. If the door is forced, the panicked Ellio attempts to push past the characters and flee the cathedral.

If the characters convince Ellio to leave and keep him safe, his mother Carys rewards them when they exit the chapel with a *potion of greater healing*.

Ritual Note. In the last chapel to the east, a tiefling priest named Theris lies dead on the floor next to a piano, having succumbed to a songthief attack. A trail of blood drips from a single piano key—A—to the floor, where Theris's hand is loosely curled around a holy symbol.

P8. EASTERN SPIRE

The staircase spirals up, becoming a narrow passageway occasionally interspersed by small arched windows that let in the gray stormlight outside. As occasional bursts of rain rattle the glass, the deep bellowing of Iahhel's rage grows louder.

The stairs end at a door with a lock, which also shows wedges forcefully driven under it from the other side to hold it fast.

The door is locked, and can be unlocked with the key in the refectory (area P6) or with a successful DC 18 Dexterity check using thieves' tools. However, Varadah also wedged the door shut. The unlocked door can be forced open with a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check, or it can be destroyed (AC 14, 15 hit points, and immunity to poison and psychic damage).

When the characters can see into the main room, read or paraphrase the following:

The octagonal interior space of the eastern spire holds only a door and a desk against the adjacent wall—with a body slumped over it.

Silence. Silence, the cathedral's tiefling choir director, has been cursed by Varadah and trapped in a magical slumber. Any character who inspects the body confirms that Silence is alive, but the tiefling resists any mundane attempts to wake them. With a DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check, a character intuits that Silence can be woken with *dispel magic* (DC 16), *lesser restoration*, or similar magic.

If Silence is woken before Varadah is found, they can reveal that Varadah is the traitor who hijacked the ritual, though they don't know why. They don't know where Varadah is, but guess that she's probably holed up in the western spire (area P9). Though Silence would like to confront the duplicitous priest, they're too weak to do so, and they ask that the characters deal with her. In addition, they give the characters a *periapt of wound closure* in gratitude for saving them.

Ritual Note. If Silence is woken, they share that their note in the ritual was an E. If the tiefling remains asleep, any search around the desk reveals an encoded note on a piece of parchment underneath Silence. A character who succeeds on a DC 16 Intelligence check can decode the note, determining Silence's note.

P9. WESTERN SPIRE

At the top of the spiral staircase, Iahhel's howling echoes even louder. A door at the end of the stairs is unlatched and askew, revealing a chamber lit by dim light through the windows. Two desks stand against the walls, covered in scattered papers. More papers are spread across the floor, covering a field of other detritus.

A dragonborn is bent over some of the scattered papers on the floor, clutching her head. "Get out, get out, get out, get out!"

Three songthieves lurk outside the spire, the flapping of their wings masked by the sounds of Iahhel on the roof. When they see the characters, the Celestials smash through the windows and attack. A character who has a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 18 or higher, or who succeeds on a DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check to scan the windows while entering the area, gains a moment's warning of the attack. All other characters are surprised.

The western spire is where Varadah enacted her ritual, channeling the growing power in the cathedral, commanding it, then opening the door for the archfiends' corrupting influence. The dragon priest is now struggling to shake off the archfiends' control.

Ritual Components. The detritus spread across the floor is fiendish ritual components—withered monstrous

hearts, drained vials of humanoid blood in ruby vials, and charred sulfuric rocks. The papers are scrawled notes Varadah made regarding the ritual. Any character who succeeds on a DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana) check to examine the notes and components understands that the ritual is a conduit for strong fiendish enchantment magic, powerful enough to command Celestials.

Varadah. As Varadah fights the archfiends' influence, she responds to characters who try to talk to her with frantic exclamations:

- "I don't want them! Take the dreams back!"
- "Stop talking! Everyone stop talking, it's too much!"
- "Gods! Lies! All lies! Stop!"

The archfiends' control over Varadah can be broken with any of the following spells: *dispel evil and good*, *dispel magic*, *hallow*, or *protection from evil and good* (with Fiends as the chosen creature). Alternatively, a character can draw her attention away from the archfiends with a successful DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check. Freeing Iahhel (area P10) from the influence of the archfiends also frees Varadah. If the archfiends' influence over her is broken, Varadah tremblingly explains what happened, speaking honestly about the archfiends' manipulation of her.

If the characters are unable to break the archfiends' influence (including failing three Charisma (Persuasion) checks before one success), Varadah attacks, her eyes glowing a hazy red. During combat, the characters can use any of the above spells to break the archfiends' control, or a character can do so by using an action and succeeding on a DC 25 Charisma (Persuasion) check. Otherwise, the dragonborn mage fights until killed or knocked unconscious.

The encounter with Varadah can end one of the following ways:

Varadah Is Killed. If Varadah is killed, Narimae mourns her if Varadah is branded a traitor. If the archfiends' control is revealed, Narimae might choose to resurrect Varadah. The archfiends then search for a new servant in Giocosco.

Varadah Is Saved. If the archfiends' influence over Varadah is broken, she apologizes to the characters and Narimae for everything she's done. She gives the characters a *potion of greater healing* and offers to help hunt down the archfiends (see the "Continuing Varadah's Story" sidebar).

Varadah Is Incapacitated. If the characters incapacitate Varadah, Narimae can dispel the archfiends' influence. Things then play out as described under "Varadah is Saved."

Varadah Flees. If the characters break off the fight with Varadah, she either follows to continue attacking

or flees the cathedral, as you determine. The “Conclusion” section offers suggestions for what happens if she flees.

Varadah Wins. If Varadah defeats the characters, she kills them outright and gives their corpses to the archfiends.

Message to Narimae. A character who searches the room and succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check finds that one of the papers on the floor is a frantic message that Varadah tried to give Narimae before the archfiends took hold of her: “*They have proven we can command gods, even causing them to destroy that which they love. He rages! Strongly, terribly! But they are liars, Narimae, they are no gods, help me, what do I do, what can I do ...*”

Withered Fiend Heart. Most of the ritual components in the room have expended any magic they carried. However, one withered fiend heart still gives off a faint aura of abjuration magic to a *detect magic* spell. A character who carries the heart has resistance to fire damage, as well as the following flaw: “I see weaknesses in the gods, and believe they deserve no power, respect, or authority.”

CONTINUING VARADAH'S STORY

If the characters determine that Varadah was manipulated and controlled by the spirits of the archfiends whose corpses litter the lands around Giocoso, they might want to permanently excise the archfiends’ influence. If they don’t, Narimae promises that her priests will work to purify and magically consecrate the land. If the characters do take part in this mission, they can explore old battlefields in search of the archfiends’ remains, letting you set up adventures in deep caves, ancient ruins, or even the realms of the dead.

These spirits can be left as nameless generals, developed with names and backstories, or pulled from your own existing worldbuilding. Consider using stat blocks such as the **glabrezu**, **nalfeshnee**, and **rakshasa** to represent the spirits of the archfiends, except each is both a Fiend and Undead. If you use *Flee, Mortals! The MCDM Monster Book* in your games, consider using the **chimeron**, **tormenauk**, **wobalas**, or **Aurumvas** stat blocks. The **ruinant** can act as an ally to one of the archfiend spirits, while **spitlings** can be used as minions that serve any of these ancient foes. (These stat blocks are also available in *Flee, Mortals!* Packet Seven for those who backed or preordered the book.)

PIO. ROOF

When the characters reach the roof, the full state of Iahhel’s rampage is seen for the first time.

An open walkway extends from east to west, connecting the cathedral’s two spires. The storm swells, a crescendo of fury to match the divine being at the center of it. Even under a dark sky, Iahhel is a commanding presence, his white-and-gold armor framing his muscular form, two majestic horns rising from his head, and his mane whipping in the wind.

Seemingly lost, he turns his rage toward the gift built for him—the massive harp-like soulstrings, strung inside the open tower at the center of the walkway connecting the spires. Strings shriek and snap as the Celestial rakes his claws across them, as if intent on bringing the instrument down.

Consumed by his fiendish rage, Iahhel doesn’t immediately attack when the characters appear on the roof. The characters can cross between the cathedral’s spires without alerting him with a successful DC 12 group Dexterity (Stealth) check, or can approach Iahhel under cover of the storm with a successful DC 20 group Dexterity (Stealth) check. The Celestial attacks when he notices the party.

Iahhel can be calmed only by a performance of the complete ritual song, which can be undertaken once he gives them the seventh note during his transformation (see his stat block for details). The complete song cleanses him of fiendish corruption and imbues him with new power—a power that could come only from the faith and love of those who live alongside him.

Soulstrings. The soulstrings have AC 18, 75 hit points, and immunity to poison and psychic damage. However, the instrument might have taken damage from previous attacks by Iahhel (see “The Soulstrings” under “Paean Cathedral Features”).

Until now, Iahhel has been fighting the fiends’ influence, but the characters’ arrival both distracts the Celestial and forces the fiends to push their control harder. On each round in which the characters don’t play music (see “Roleplaying Iahhel” below) or deal a combined total of 30 damage to Iahhel, he attacks the soulstrings.

Roleplaying Iahhel. Iahhel is a divine spirit driven to thunderous destruction. In this state, he mercilessly hounds characters who distract him from the soulstrings, picking off either the weakest-looking characters or those who demonstrate strong tactical thinking. If a character plays music during the fight, they gain advantage on saving throws made to resist any of Iahhel’s features, but Iahhel targets them exclusively.

When Iahhel has been cleansed of corruption, he is gentle, warm, protective, and regretful of the devastation he's wrought. His primary concern is helping Narimae rebuild the temple, and reforge the trust between himself and his clergy.

The Seventh Note. When Iahhel uses his Seventh Note trait, read or paraphrase the following:

The Celestial lion staggers, thunder resounding through the heavens as loudly as his roar. For a moment, clarity and rage are at war within his eyes. His breathing comes heavy, and the sky quiets as if holding its breath.

If the players are putting the song together themselves (as described under “Forming the Hymn” above), you can sing Iahhel’s note (a D, which is an octave higher than the one the characters found in the cathedral), play it on an instrument, or search online for a video or app that plays the note, then let the players and characters figure out the ending of the song. If you use this approach, read or paraphrase the following:

Rearing back his head, Iahhel bellows a crystal-clear musical tone that seems to pierce the sky. Golden light floods from him and renews him, and radiant fire wreathes his massive claws. Then the fiendish corruption takes hold of him once more, fury twisting his expression into a snarl as he prepares for a new onslaught. But you have heard the seventh note! All that remains is to put the notes together and play the song.

If you instead give the characters the complete song once they hear the seventh note (as described under “Forming the Hymn”), read or paraphrase the following:

Rearing back his head, Iahhel bellows a musical note that seems to pierce the sky: a crystal-clear D. Golden light floods from him and renews him, and radiant fire wreathes his massive claws. Then the fiendish corruption takes hold of him once more, fury twisting his expression into a snarl as he prepares for a new onslaught. But the ritual song takes shape within your mind, even as the soulstrings start to reverberate softly nearby. A divine understanding settles warmly in your chest—the ending of the song, and how to play it on the soulstrings.

Healing Iahhel. Any character who uses an action to play the song for Iahhel on the soulstrings and succeeds on a DC 15 Charisma (Performance) check cleanses him of his corruption, at which point Iahhel is no longer hostile. If the check is failed, it can be repeated, but Iahhel continues to attack. If the soulstrings is destroyed, a character can instead sing the song or play it on another instrument, but the DC increases to 18.

Read or paraphrase the following text as the song is played successfully (play [TheLast7NotesCompleted.mp3](#)) and Iahhel is saved:

The air around you seems to swell with sound, the wind and skies joining the song and carrying it louder, louder through Giocoso. As the song builds, Celestial avian spirits appear on the roof—the songthieves, but the malicious air has gone from them. They lift their birdsong to add to the melodious soulstrings, their voices adding other instruments and harmonies, bringing the ritual hymn to a full and joyous crescendo that fills the city. For the last seven notes, one final voice completes the choir: Iahhel, his rumbling bass fading into a contented purr as he settles himself on the roof. “My saviors. Thank you.”

CONCLUSION

When Iahhel is cleansed, the storm recedes, any remaining songthieves become divine avian spirits, and the gargoyles of area P5 return to stone if still standing. Iahhel flies down to meet Narimae on the ground, carrying any characters who want a ride with him. In the immediate aftermath, Narimae and the other priests resurrect their fallen companions.

If Varadah escapes from the cathedral without being freed from the archfiends’ corruption, she flees Giocoso. You might have Narimae ask the characters to hunt down the dragonborn mage, which can lead to future story arcs where Varadah tries to corrupt and bring down other divine beings as the archfiends’ corruption grows stronger.

Narimae can ask the characters to help rebuild the cathedral, which has seen much destruction and sorrow. But whether the characters continue to aid her or not, she rewards them with 500 gp each for their aid, adding 50 gp for each of the ten NPCs the party was able to find or aid. Rhys and Ellio count if they made it out alive; Silence counts if they were woken from their arcane slumber; Varadah counts if she was saved or defeated; and Sarasyne, Anneliese, Gaxnor, Tias, Malia, and Theris count if their deaths were discovered and reported.

STAT BLOCKS

This section contains the unique stat blocks featured in this adventure, presented in alphabetical order.

IAHHEL

Iahhel is a formidable Celestial, who wields music as a potent magical power against his foes.

IAHHEL (CORRUPTED)

Huge Celestial, Neutral Evil While Corrupted (Neutral Good Normally)

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 105 (10d12 + 40)

Speed 50 ft., fly 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Str +9, Wis +6, Cha +8

Skills Perception +6, Performance +12

Damage Resistances radiant, necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities thunder

Condition Immunities charmed, deafened

Senses darkvision 120 ft., truesight 30 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages all

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +4

Seventh Note (1/Day). When Iahhel is reduced to 0 hit points, he doesn't die or fall unconscious. Instead, he bellows out the seventh note (D) as a clear tone and is revitalized by the corrupting influence that has a hold over him. He regains 105 hit points and three expended song motes, and when he expends a song mote on a feature that targets a creature, the target takes an extra 7 (2d6) radiant damage.

Song Motes. Iahhel is encircled by seven incandescent song motes, which he can expend to use or enhance his features. Additionally, if Iahhel fails a saving throw, he can expend a song mote to succeed instead.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Iahhel makes one Bite attack and two Claw attacks. Two of these attacks can be replaced by a Divine Harmony attack.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 10 (1d10 + 5) piercing damage plus 5 (1d10) radiant damage. Iahhel can expend a song mote to make this attack with advantage.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 9 (1d8 + 5) slashing damage, and Iahhel can move the target up to 5 feet horizontally.

Divine Harmony. Ranged Spell Attack: +8 to hit, range 60 ft., one target. Hit: 10 (3d6) thunder damage, and Iahhel can expend a song mote to cause the target to become frightened until the end of the target's next turn.

BONUS ACTIONS

Discouragement (Costs 1 Song Mote). Iahhel chooses one creature he can see within 120 feet of him who can hear him, and sings a dispiriting melody. The next time the target makes an attack roll or saving throw in the next 10 minutes, they must roll a d10 and subtract the number rolled from the attack roll or saving throw.

REACTIONS

Distracting Tone. When a creature within 60 feet of Iahhel casts a spell that requires concentration, Iahhel sings a keening, painful note. The target must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or lose concentration and have the spell fail. Iahhel can expend a song mote to impose disadvantage on this saving throw.

VILLAIN ACTIONS

Iahhel has three villain actions. He can take each action once during an encounter after an enemy creature's turn. He can take these actions in any order but can use only one per round.

Action 1: Discouraging Chorus. Iahhel carries a disheartening song. Each creature within 120 feet of him who can hear him gains the effect of his Discouragement bonus action.

Action 2: Oncoming Despair. Iahhel bellows an ominous dirge. He moves up to his speed without provoking opportunity attacks and regains three song motes.

Action 3: Breaking Dawn (Requires the Seventh Note to be Active). Iahhel unleashes a storm of divine magic. Each creature within 60 feet of him must make a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes 33 (6d10) radiant damage and is restrained by Iahhel. On a successful save, a creature takes half as much damage and isn't restrained. A restrained creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of their turns, ending the effect on themselves on a success.

SONGTHIEF

A songthief is a corrupted yet beautiful avian Celestial whose dark plumage shines opalescent in the light. They are drawn to spellcasters, especially bards and others who use sound to wield magic.

SONGTHIEF

Medium Celestial, Typically Neutral Evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 91 (14d8 + 28)

Speed 20 ft., fly 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Dex +6, Cha +6

Skills Perception +4, Performance +6

Damage Resistances radiant, thunder

Condition Immunities deafened

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Celestial

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +3

Corrupted Cacophony. Creatures within 5 feet of the songthief have disadvantage on Constitution saving throws to maintain concentration.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The songthief makes one Beak attack and one Talons attack.

Beak. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 10 (2d6 + 3) piercing damage plus 3 (1d6) radiant

damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or be blinded until the end of their next turn.

Talons. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d8 + 3) slashing damage, or 16 (3d8 + 3) slashing damage if the target is blinded.

Discordant Choir (Recharge 6). The songthief trills a dissonant hymn. Each creature within 30 feet of the songthief who isn't a Celestial must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw, taking 16 (3d10) thunder damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. Each other songthief within 30 feet of this songthief can use their reaction to join the hymn, increasing the radius of the effect by 10 feet and the damage by 5 (1d10) per songthief. Each additional songthief doesn't expend the use of their own Discordant Choir action.

REACTIONS

Stolen Voice (2/Day). When a creature the songthief can hear within 30 feet of them uses an action to cast a spell with a verbal component, the songthief can steal that spell. The target must succeed on a DC 14 Charisma saving throw or have the spell fail. The songthief then casts the spell instead, using the target's spell attack bonus and spell save DC.

VARADAH

Varadah is a talented mage whose corrupted magic shows the power of the fiends manipulating her.

VARADAH (CORRUPTED)

Medium Humanoid (Dragonborn), Chaotic Evil While Corrupted (Lawful Good Normally)

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 130 (20d8 + 40)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Int +8, Wis +4

Skills Arcana +8, Perception +4

Damage Resistances cold, necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities charmed

Senses passive Perception 14

Languages Common

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +4

Fiend Hearts. Varadah carries three fiend hearts that she can use to empower her magic using her Consume Heart bonus action. Additionally, if Varadah fails a saving throw, she can expend a fiend heart to succeed instead.

Magic Resistance. Varadah has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Varadah makes three Arcane Might attacks or three Gales of Power attacks.

Arcane Might. *Melee Spell Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) force damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 16 Intelligence saving throw or be dazed until the end of their next turn.

Gales of Power. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +8 to hit, range 60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (3d8 + 4) force damage.

Songs and Fire (Recharge 5–6). A whorl of discordant music and hellfire swirls out from Varadah. Each creature within 30 feet of her must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes 16 (3d10) force damage and 11 (2d10) fire damage and is pushed up to 10 feet away from Varadah. On a successful save, a creature takes half as much damage and isn't pushed.

BONUS ACTIONS

Consume Heart. Varadah destroys one of her fiend hearts. Until the start of her next turn, she has a +1 bonus to AC, a +4 bonus to attack rolls, and her attacks deal an extra 5 (1d10) necrotic damage.

REACTIONS

Arcane Shield. When Varadah takes cold, force, lightning, psychic, or necrotic damage as a result of a magical effect, she can convert that damaging energy into a magic barrier. She gains 10 temporary hit points, and until she loses those temporary hit points, each time she is hit with a melee attack, the attacker takes 5 (1d10) damage of the damage type that created the shield.

GLOSSARY

In recent issues of ARCADIA, we've begun to incorporate terminology from the upcoming *Flee, Mortals! The MCDM Monster Book*. These describe new rules designed to make combat encounters easier to run, more fun, and more memorable. Rather than scatter definitions throughout individual articles, this glossary provides a reference for terms used in ARCADIA.

COMPANION CREATURES

Companions are wild allies who adventure with characters. Each companion has unique traits and actions that make them a great ally. Every companion has a player character **caregiver** who commands the creature. The caregiver's player controls the companion most of the time during the game, though the GM can step in to take control if the companion and caregiver are separated, or if the caregiver mistreats the companion in some way.

The full rules for companion creatures are described in *Beastheart and Monstrous Companions*, as well as the packets available for backers of *Flee, Mortals!*

CONDITIONS

Some creatures inflict—or are immune to—the following new condition.

DAZED

A dazed creature can only do one of the following things on their turn: move, use an action, or use a bonus action. If a creature becomes dazed during their turn, their turn ends. The *lesser restoration* spell and *greater restoration* spell remove the dazed condition. At the GM's discretion, other powers, spells, or effects might also remove the dazed condition.

When a dazed creature is affected by a spell or effect that gives them an extra action on their turn (like the *haste* spell or the fighter's Action Surge feature), they can still take this extra action, in addition to the movement, action, or bonus action allowed by the dazed condition.

Some creatures have immunity to the dazed condition. At the GM's discretion, a creature published in another supplement who has immunity to the paralyzed or stunned condition also has immunity to the dazed condition.

MUNDANE AND SUPERNATURAL

The term **mundane** refers to attacks, items, and effects that are not magical, psionic, or otherwise supernatural.

On the other hand, the term **supernatural** describes an effect or item that is either magical or psionic. For instance, a creature's stat block might say they're resistant to "bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from attacks that aren't supernatural." This means that when you deal them bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing damage using a spell, power, magic weapon, or psionic weapon, the damage is supernatural and thus the creature isn't resistant to it.

VILLAIN ACTIONS

Some creatures are designed to be bosses: enemies who can take on an entire party by themselves or with a handful of underlings. These creatures have three **villain actions** they can use after an enemy creature's turn. Villain actions are similar to legendary actions with the following exceptions:

- A creature can only use one villain action per round (as such, villain actions tend to be more powerful than legendary actions).
- Each villain action can only be used once during a combat encounter.

Like legendary actions, a creature can't use villain actions if incapacitated or otherwise unable to take actions.

CHOOSING VILLAIN ACTIONS

Each trio of villain actions has a recommended round order. These abilities give the battle a logical flow and a cinematic arc:

- The first villain action is an opener, which shows the characters they're not battling a typical creature. Openers generally deal some damage, summon a lackey or three, buff the boss, debuff the characters, or move the creature into an advantageous position. They're just a taste of what's to come.
- The second villain action provides crowd control. It typically fires after the heroes have had a chance to respond once or twice, get into position, and surround the villain. This second action helps the villain regain the upper hand. Like an opener, this action comes in many flavors, but it's even more powerful than an opener.
- The third and final villain action is an ultimate move or "ult"—a showstopper the villain can use to deal a devastating blow to the characters before the end of the battle.

While every creature has a recommended order of actions, you can take villain actions in any order if it makes your fight more dramatic. You could push back a villain action if a creature is stunned or might stay alive for more than three rounds, or you could perform the recommended third action in round two after several surprise critical hits!

RESOURCES

MCDM TABLETOP SAFETY TOOLKIT

<https://mcdm.gg/SafetyToolkit>

You can find all issues of *ARCADIA* on [Patreon](#) and in the [MCDM shop](#).

THE LAST SEVEN NOTES

<https://mcdm.gg/Arcadia202307/TheLast7Notes.pdf>

<https://mcdm.gg/Arcadia202307/TheLast7NotesLast7Missing.pdf>

<https://mcdm.gg/Arcadia202307/TheLast7NotesCompleted.mp3>

<https://mcdm.gg/Arcadia202307/TheLast7NotesUnresolved.mp3>

<https://mcdm.gg/Arcadia202307/ThePaenCathedral-100ppi-GM.jpg>

<https://mcdm.gg/Arcadia202307/ThePaenCathedral-100ppi-Player.jpg>



ERIN ROBERTS (she/her) is a writer, teacher, and game designer based in Austin, TX. Her work has appeared in TTRPG publications including *Hunter: The Reckoning Fifth Edition*, *Journeys through the Radiant Citadel*, *Pathfinder: Lost Omens Highhelm*, *Pathfinder: Lost Omens Travel Guide*, and *Starfinder: Interstellar Species*, and she was recently honored to be chosen as one of the winners of the 2023 Emerging Designer Program of the Diana Jones Awards. When not working on TTRPGs, Erin writes science fiction and fantasy prose and interactive fiction, teaches creative writing, and talks about all things writing every Sunday on the award-winning Writing Excuses podcast. You can keep up with all her various escapades by finding her online at linktr.ee/erinroberts.



V. J. HARRIS (they/he) is a DMs Guild Adamantine best-selling author and an award nominated roleplayer. They work in the TTRPG field full time as a designer and professional GM on [Start Playing Games](#). He is most well known for his work on *An Elf and an Orc Had a Little Baby Volumes 1 - 3* and “Monstrous Components” from ARCADIA 8. They produce the podcast, *VJ Talks* which discusses the breadth and depth of TTRPGs, stream game design and indie games on [Twitch](#), and makes [TikToks](#) educating people on how to recognize, fight, and remove bigotry in the industry.



SADIE LOWRY ([@incandescaent](#)) is a gold ENNIE award-winning writer, game designer, and editor. She has worked with Critical Role, Wizards of the Coast, MCDM, and other TTRPG companies, with notable credits including *Critical Role Presents: Call of the Netherdeep*, *Spelljammer: Light of Xaryxis*, *Keys from the Golden Vault*, and MCDM's *The Illtrigger*. An editor at a book publisher by trade, she can usually be found baking cupcakes, stargazing, or drawing her D&D characters.

OPEN GAME LICENSE VERSION 1.0A

The following text is the property of Wizards of the Coast, LLC. and is Copyright 2000 Wizards of the Coast, Inc ("Wizards"). All Rights Reserved.

1. Definitions: (a) "Contributors" means the copyright and/or trademark owners who have contributed Open Game Content; (b) "Derivative Material" means copyrighted material including derivative works and translations (including into other computer languages), notation, modification, correction, addition, extension, upgrade, improvement, compilation, abridgment or other form in which an existing work may be recast, transformed or adapted; (c) "Distribute" means to reproduce, License, rent, lease, sell, broadcast, publicly display, transmit or otherwise distribute; (d) "Open Game Content" means the game mechanic and includes the methods, procedures, processes and routines to the extent such content does not embody the Product Identity and is an enhancement over the prior art and any additional content clearly identified as Open Game Content by the Contributor, and means any work covered by this License, including translations and derivative works under copyright law, but specifically excludes Product Identity. (e) "Product Identity" means product and product line names, logos and identifying marks including trade dress; artifacts; creatures characters; stories, storylines, plots, thematic elements, dialogue, incidents, language, artwork, symbols, designs, depictions, likenesses, formats, poses, concepts, themes and graphic, photographic and other visual or audio representations; names and descriptions of characters, Spells, enchantments, personalities, teams, personas, likenesses and Special abilities; places, locations, environments, creatures, Equipment, magical or supernatural Abilities or Effects, logos, symbols, or graphic designs; and any other trademark or registered trademark clearly identified as Product identity by the owner of the Product Identity, and which specifically excludes the OPEN Game Content; (f) "Trademark" means the logos, names, mark, sign, motto, designs that are used by a Contributor to Identify itself or its products or the associated products contributed to the Open Game License by the Contributor (g) "Use", "Used" or "Using" means to use, Distribute, copy, edit, format, modify, translate and otherwise create Derivative Material of Open Game Content. (h) "You" or "Your" means the licensee in terms of this agreement.

2. The License: This License applies to any Open Game Content that contains a notice indicating that the Open Game Content may only be Used under and in terms of this License. You must affix such a notice to any Open Game Content that you Use. No terms may be added to or subtracted from this License except as described by the License itself. No other terms or Conditions may be applied to any Open Game Content distributed using this License.

3. Offer and Acceptance: By Using the Open Game Content You indicate Your acceptance of the terms of this License.

4. Grant and Consideration: In consideration for agreeing to use this License, the Contributors grant You a perpetual, worldwide, royalty-free, nonexclusive License with the exact terms of this License to Use, the Open Game Content.

5. Representation of Authority to Contribute: If You are contributing original material as Open Game Content, You represent that Your Contributions are Your original Creation and/or You have sufficient rights to grant the rights conveyed by this License.

6. Notice of License Copyright: You must update the COPYRIGHT NOTICE portion of this License to include the exact text of the COPYRIGHT NOTICE of any Open Game

Content You are copying, modifying or distributing, and You must add the title, the copyright date, and the copyright holder's name to the COPYRIGHT NOTICE of any original Open Game Content you Distribute.

7. Use of Product Identity: You agree not to Use any Product Identity, including as an indication as to compatibility, except as expressly licensed in another, independent Agreement with the owner of each element of that Product Identity. You agree not to indicate compatibility or co-adaptability with any Trademark or Registered Trademark in conjunction with a work containing Open Game Content except as expressly licensed in another, independent Agreement with the owner of such Trademark or Registered Trademark. The use of any Product Identity in Open Game Content does not constitute a Challenge to the ownership of that Product Identity. The owner of any Product Identity used in Open Game Content shall retain all rights, title and interest in and to that Product Identity.

8. Identification: If you distribute Open Game Content You must clearly indicate which portions of the work that you are distributing are Open Game Content.

9. Updating the License: Wizards or its designated Agents may publish updated versions of this License. You may use any authorized version of this License to copy, modify and distribute any Open Game Content originally distributed under any version of this License.

10. Copy of this License: You MUST include a copy of this License with every copy of the Open Game Content You Distribute.

11. Use of Contributor Credits: You may not market or advertise the Open Game Content using the name of any Contributor unless You have written permission from the Contributor to do so.

12. Inability to Comply: If it is impossible for You to comply with any of the terms of this License with respect to some or all of the Open Game Content due to statute, judicial order, or governmental regulation then You may not Use any Open Game Material so affected.

13. Termination: This License will terminate automatically if You fail to comply with all terms herein and fail to cure such breach within 30 days of becoming aware of the breach. All sublicenses shall survive the termination of this License.

14. Reformation: If any provision of this License is held to be unenforceable, such provision shall be reformed only to the extent necessary to make it enforceable.

15. COPYRIGHT NOTICE

Open Game License v 1.0a Copyright 2000, Wizards of the Coast, LLC.

System Reference Document 5.1 Copyright 2016, Wizards of the Coast, LLC.; Authors Mike Mearls, Jeremy Crawford, Chris Perkins, Rodney Thompson, Peter Lee, James Wyatt, Robert J. Schwalb, Bruce R. Cordell, Chris Sims, and Steve Townshend, based on original material by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson.

ARCADIA Issue 30, Copyright 2023, MCDM Productions, LLC. Authors: Erin Roberts, V.J. Harris, Sadie Lowry, James Introcaso, Hannah Rose