

SECOND EDITION

PATHFINDER®



Blood Lords

ADVENTURE PATH

THE GHOULS HUNGER

By Leo Glass and James Jacobs

Mechitar

200 FEET



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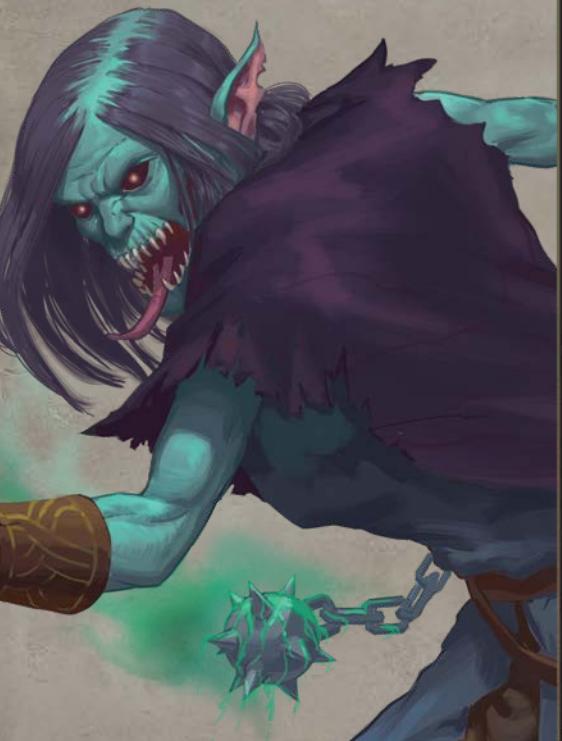
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Content Warning

Pathfinder Adventure Path #184: The Ghouls Hunger contains typical Pathfinder action and adventure. It also includes content related to child abuse, the murder of a parent, graphic depictions of torture and violence, narcissistic personalities, and other themes that are appropriate for more mature audiences. Before you run this adventure, understand that consent from everyone at the table—including the players and the Game Master—is vital to a safe and fun play experience. You should talk with your players before beginning the adventure and modify descriptions or events as appropriate.



The Ghouls Hunger

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Chapter 1: Aristocrats of Blood.....4

The characters travel to Mechitar to seek an audience with Geb, where he appoints them as the nation's newest Blood Lords and assigns them to serve as honor guards for visiting ruler Kortash Khain. The characters are also awarded a place in one of Mechitar's aristocratic tetrahedrons, but must ensure that the previous tenants didn't leave any nasty surprises behind.

Chapter 2: Tower of Gnawed Bones.....18

Kortash Khain sends the characters to the lair of exiled Kabriri cultists with orders to excise the rot from his faith. The characters must travel to the Tower of Gnawed Bones, a site once used to prepare skeletons for animation that now houses a fractious cult with devastating plans for Mechitar.

Chapter 3: A Plot of Poison32

As their fame as Blood Lords increases, the characters become embroiled in a public scandal when a shipment of poisoned food results in violence on the waterfront. The characters must investigate the source of the poison to clear their names, culminating in a trip to an Urgathoan cathedral where damning evidence awaits discovery.

Chapter 4: The Hanging Castle.....54

The characters challenge fellow Blood Lord Hyrune to a contest of violence in the Deathless Arena. After they win, Geb strips Hyrune of his title, enabling the characters to track the vampire down in his secret lair and discover where the trail of conspiracies leads next!

ADVANCEMENT TRACK

"The Ghouls Hunger" is designed for four characters. Players should level up their characters between chapters.

11 The characters begin this adventure at 11th level.

12 The characters should be 12th level after receiving their first mission from Kortash.

13 The characters should be 13th level before the incident at the waterfront occurs.

The characters should be 14th level before challenging Hyrune to combat in the Deathless Arena.

CORNERING KEMNEBI

At the end of *Pathfinder Adventure Path #183: Field of Maidens*, the characters learned that Chancellor Kemnebi, leader of the Blood Lords, orchestrated the plot to ship poison into Geb and other nations. Unfortunately, the characters don't have any proof of Kemnebi's involvement and don't know exactly how far the chancellor plans to go. The characters have come to Geb with a summons from the ghost king himself, and they might worry that their investigation and Geb's request are connected. These events aren't related—Geb has simply identified the characters as useful agents capable of dealing with a visiting dignitary.

However, the characters' newfound stature provides them with a unique opportunity to learn more about Kemnebi's plan. Their titles grant them the freedom to move about the city of Mechitar and uncover treacherous secrets others might not be able to learn. As their investigation concludes, the characters face off against one of Kemnebi's most ruthless agents: a Blood Lord named Hyrune Loxenna.

While this adventure takes place in Mechitar, comprehensive descriptions of the city have not been included beyond presenting key details that affect the plot significantly. If your players wish to explore Mechitar further, more information can be found on pages 140–157 of *Pathfinder Lost Omens Impossible Lands*. To provide basic details, Mechitar's stat block has been reprinted in this book on page 75.



Chapter 1: Aristocrats of Blood

While no official hierarchies have been established for the Blood Lords of Geb, the truth of the matter is that with time served comes seniority. For a new Blood Lord, the fact that one's brethren can hold their positions for centuries or even millennia might make the fear of being an imposter to the elite all too real. This may hold even more true for a Blood Lord who is only one of a few who knows—but can't yet prove—the highest-ranking member of their organization is a traitor to the nation!

Getting Started

The city of Mechitar is both the capital and the largest city in the nation of Geb. When the characters arrive,

they can rest, recover, and resupply easily. They should also have plenty of time to reach the city before the next new moon; that timing has been left intentionally vague so that the characters don't feel compelled to rush. The characters are likely eager for a chance to spend some coin or engage in Downtime activities.

Once the characters are ready, they should seek their audience with the nation's ghostly leader at the Cinerarium—the seat of Geb's throne. Though Geb spends most of his time in Mechitar's capitol building, far more than the ghost king can be found within the building's sprawling chambers. Many of the city's barracks and armories were constructed in the

CHAPTER 1 SYNOPSIS

The characters present themselves to Geb's high court at the start of this chapter. A trusted emissary directs the characters to prepare a grand processional through the city to honor Geb and earn the right to a royal audience. The characters meet Geb and the leader from a powerful subterranean nation of ghouls, Kortash Khain, and are perhaps surprised to both be appointed as Blood Lords and directed to serve as Kortash's emissaries in the city. Clever characters might realize their sudden elevation is something of a snub against Geb's rival monarch, but it nevertheless gives the characters significant authority and power in the nation.

The characters' first responsibility is to secure their new residence in the alcazars, the monumental tetrahedrons in which all Blood Lords maintain residence. The former tenant left behind some dangers and secrets the characters must discover and overcome—all while agents of a rival Blood Lord do their best to make the characters feel unwelcome in their new home.

CHAPTER 1 TREASURE

The permanent and consumable items available as treasure in Chapter 1 are as follows.

- bloodclaim item (page 9)
- marvelous medicines
- scroll of undertaker (page 72)
- wondrous figurine, golden lions
- Writhing Gleam (page 93)

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depths below the Cinerarium, while numerous libraries, laboratories, and scriptoriums can be found among its upper levels.

Little of this should concern the characters, however. To obtain a meeting with Geb they need only visit the Cinerarium's high court. The characters aren't the only ones who seek an audience—the high court is packed with visitors both living (known as the quick) and undead. Normally, petitioning Geb's court requires navigating several layers of bureaucracy, but once the characters make it clear they received a personal request by means of a *sending* spell, they're allowed to advance to the front of the line immediately.

Geb rarely sits upon the throne at the high court's heart. Instead, one of his many emissaries, **Dizonn Dizuul** (NE female mummy grand marshal 9) receives the petitioners and determines if their concerns warrant Geb's time, if they can be handled by a lower-ranking member of the ghost king's court, or if they should be dismissed out of hand. Very few earn the right to speak to Geb personally—most are directed to one of a dozen smaller administrative offices accessible by doorways lining the high court's walls. Now and then, Dizonn judges a petitioner to be a waste of her time and resources. The lucky who find Dizonn in good spirits tend to be escorted from the Cinerarium harmlessly. The less fortunate are dragged, sometimes kicking and screaming, through bone-gilt doors in the back of the hall to fates best left unspoken. Dizonn can suppress her aura of great despair (DC 26; *Pathfinder Bestiary* 241) as she wishes, but she normally allows it to exude from her in waves when petitioners are removed forcibly from the chamber.

Dizonn is the one who cast the *sending* spell to summon the characters to Geb. When it comes time for the party members to step before Dizonn and request their audience with the ghost king, she asks them to approach and introduce themselves. Assuming they mention the magical missive, Dizonn inclines her head and makes a wry inquiry to the creature resting in her lap, an undead feline named **Mortis** (NE male mummified cat; *Pathfinder Book of the Dead* 130). “What say you, Morty? Do they strike you as subjects worthy of his majesty's consideration for advancement? I expected to be substantially more impressed. No matter!” After a wave of her hand, the guards begin closing down the high court by escorting out frustrated petitioners who must wait yet another day for their chance to be heard. Dizonn bids the characters accompany her down a hall to the north, leading them to a smaller office where they can meet in private.

To Honor Geb

Dizonn doesn't waste the characters' time with pleasantries or small talk. “Look, my schedule is full and I assume the same of yours, if you are to become the nation's newest Blood Lords.” Dizonn makes this pronouncement as though the characters know the promotion is the reason they've been summoned to Mechitar. For some, this might be the first they hear of it!

Dizonn insists that all must prove themselves before receiving an audience with Geb. It is her duty to ensure that subjects who approach the ghost king remain true in their allegiance and admiration for both ruler and nation. “And what better way to prove one's devotion than a processional?” she muses with a leathery smile. Mortis purrs approval.

Dizonn invites the characters out to the office's balcony, which affords a glorious view of the Cinerarium plaza. There, no less than four processions led by revelers who make their way around the open plaza surrounding the central tetrahedron. Each procession is a display orchestrated and performed by citizens of Mechitar who, along with the Celebrants, declare their support

of the nation. The processions exude varying degrees of extravagance, including some combination of elaborate costumes, somber dirges or uplifting paeans, and carefully crafted props. The more impressive a procession, the larger the crowd of delighted onlookers it draws. Processions that draw the largest crowds tend to be regarded as the greatest successes.

Dizonn demands the characters organize such a procession in honor of Geb. It's unlikely he'll observe it, but word of a triumphant and memorable procession on the streets of Mechitar establishes a skill at pageantry that is expected of a Blood Lord in a way that expertise

with combat, politicking, or intrigue can't demonstrate. Dizonn makes it clear that tradition precludes interference with other processions—to truly succeed, a procession must outshine the competition on its own merits without resorting to sabotage. She leaves the exact nature of the procession to the characters to decide, but informs them that once they've finished the task, they'll learn if (and when) they've earned an audience with Geb. She then excuses the characters to go about their preparations, mentioning that she has her own tasks left to perform today that don't involve playing hostess to "baby Blood Lords."

THE PERFECT PROCESSIONAL

Creating a procession is unlikely to be a challenge that the characters have experience with, but they can draw upon their skills and reputations alike to create something truly memorable. Their procession need not be composed of hundreds of revelers nor lengthy enough to traverse multiple streets at once, but it should be as striking a spectacle as possible. The characters can easily discover that the most extravagant processions usually include four different elements: themes, exhibits, pageantry, and revelers. Once these elements are incorporated, the characters must then lead the procession through the plaza in hopes of honoring Geb. The results of the Prepare the Processional and Perform the Processional (page 7) downtime activities determine the characters' reputation with the Celebrants and their XP reward for the task.

To plan their celebration, each character can use the Prepare the Processional Downtime activity on page 7. A character can attempt a skill check for each element—themes, exhibits, pageantry, or revelers—that they wish to incorporate into the group's procession (up to four). A character can attempt only one skill check per element. Depending on the results of each skill check, each character gains 0, 1, or 2 Preparation Points or loses 1 Preparation Point for the party. After the character completes their skill checks for the elements they wish to incorporate, record their Preparation Points and allow the next character to Prepare the Processional. After all characters who wish to participate have done so, determine the total amount of Preparation Points for the group. The number of Preparation Points sets the DC for the Perform the Processional downtime activity, which is then used to determine the celebration's success. You can increase or reduce the number of Preparation Points associated with each DC for parties with a nonstandard number of characters.

At your discretion, a character who comes up with a creative way to use magic instead of a skill check, and who is also master in the skill associated



Dizonn Dizuul and Mortis

with their spellcasting tradition, can instead attempt a spell attack roll in place of a skill check to Prepare the Processional or Perform the Processional.

The characters can also devote their efforts toward bolstering their reputation with a different faction other than the Celebrants if they wish. Dizonn expresses disappointment if the characters do so, but there's not much she can do about their choice since Geb doesn't care which faction gains prestige from their hard work.

PREPARE THE PROCESSIONAL

DOWNTIME **CONCENTRATE** **MANIPULATE**

You spend four days incorporating the following elements into your processional (up to four). Attempt one DC 28 skill check from the skills listed for each element you choose to incorporate into your processional. The results of these checks determine how many Preparation Points you earn.

Themes: You come up with one theme essential to the processional and determine how to infuse it into every aspect of the celebration. Attempt one of the following skill checks: Lore (if you draw upon knowledge of a thematic topic), Religion (if the theme involves religious inspiration or relies heavily on undead in some way), or Society (if you focus on Geb's history, politics, and zeitgeist).

Exhibits: You work to create or arrange the physical elements of the processional's display, such as statues or icons carried aloft, decorated wagons, extravagant puppetry, trained animals, or the like. Attempt one of the following skill checks: Athletics (if you provide manual labor), Crafting (if you create puppets, chisel statues, or decorate vehicles), or Nature (if you train animals to take part in the processional).

Pageantry: You create the costumes and accessories the participants carry or wear during the processional. Attempt one of the following skill checks: Crafting (if you design the outfits or items to be carried), Deception (if you intend the outfits to be recognizable representations of specific individuals in the form of a disguise), or Performance (if you choreograph dances or compose original music).

Revelers: You recruit a large number of locals to take part in your processional. Attempt one of the following skill checks: Diplomacy (to convince people to join your processional), Intimidation (to threaten them with dire consequences if they don't take part), or Performance (to inspire them to share in your artistic vision).

Critical Success You gain 2 Preparation Points for the party.

Success You gain 1 Preparation Point for the party.

Critical Failure You lose 1 Preparation Point for the party.

PERFORM THE PROCESSIONAL RESULTS

Preparation Points	DC	XP Earned
8 or less	33	10 XP
9–13	30	20 XP

14–18	28	40 XP
19–23	26	60 XP
24 or more	23	80 XP

PERFORM THE PROCESSIONAL

DOWNTIME **MOVE**

The party works together to lead their processional through the streets of Mechitar and on a circuit around the Cinerarium. The processional takes 6 hours to complete as the characters attempt to impress Dizonn and the Celebrants. Geb takes note, despite Dizonn's predication.

One character must attempt the primary skill check to determine the overall success of the processional. Before that character attempts the primary check, the other characters can each attempt a secondary check to affect the primary check, similar to how secondary checks can bolster a ritual's primary check (*Core Rulebook* 408). Any number of characters can attempt secondary checks. Any of the following skills can be used to make primary or secondary checks to Perform the Processional: Acrobatics (to perform eye-catching stunts), Intimidation (to appear menacing and memorable), Performance (to entertain the audience), or an appropriate Lore (such as Circus Lore, Mechitar Lore, Theater Lore, or a Lore associated closely to one of the processional's themes). The DC of all checks is set by the results of the characters' results from the Prepare the Processional downtime activity (see the Perform Processional Results table at left).

Critical Success The processional overwhelms and inspires onlookers, spurring a rumor that Geb took note long enough to observe for a few moments. For the following week, the characters gain a +1 circumstance bonus to Diplomacy and Intimidation checks attempted within Mechitar.

Success The processional turns many heads, but doesn't particularly attract significant notice from Geb.

Failure The processional fails to impress in any way.

Critical Failure Not only does the processional fail to impress passersby, but the characters' local reputations suffer. For the following week, they gain a -2 circumstance penalty to Diplomacy and Intimidation checks made within Mechitar unless they are disguised.

Faction Reputation: The characters earn Reputation Points with the faction they chose to support, or with the Celebrants, if they didn't overtly support another faction. They earn 3 on a critical success, 2 on a success, and 1 on a failure. The characters fail to earn any Reputation Points only if they critically failed to Perform the Processional.

XP Award: The characters earn 40 XP (in addition to the XP award described in the Perform the Processional Results Table) for Performing the Processional. Increase this award to 80 XP if they succeeded and to 120 XP if they critically succeeded.

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AN AUDIENCE WITH GEB

The characters won't need to wait long after they finish their processional. Within a half hour of its completion, Dizonn contacts the characters via a *sending* spell: "Geb will see you an hour after the next sundown—meet me in the high court and I will escort you to him."

When the characters arrive, they find Dizonn is either delighted or disappointed with them, depending on the results of their attempt to Perform the Processional. She states that Geb took note of their efforts (on a critical success), or (on a success or failure) muses "at least you didn't humiliate yourselves." If the characters did critically fail, Dizonn notes

that she's surprised Geb still wants to speak to them, and notes that their allegiance with Seldeg is certainly the reason why. "I suspect you'll owe him thanks for convincing Geb of the importance of meeting you in the wake of such a spectacular failure." If the characters supported a different faction other than the Celebrants during the processional, Dizonn is terse and standoffish regardless of their success.

Regardless, Dizonn escorts the characters to Geb and remarks while traveling that, "Geb is busy, but he's made time to receive you nevertheless. He won't be alone. Another... visitor... will also be in attendance." A character who succeeds at a DC 30 Perception check to Sense Motive notices that Dizonn doesn't approve of the visitor, whoever they are. She doesn't reveal that Geb's guest is none other than Kortash Khain, ruler of the ghoul necropolis of Nemret Noktoria.

Eventually, the characters arrive at a small lecture hall on an underground level of the Cinerarium. Five rings of benches sit empty in the semicircular balcony above the central pulpit, where two figures engage in conversation at a large metal table.

Undead Royalty

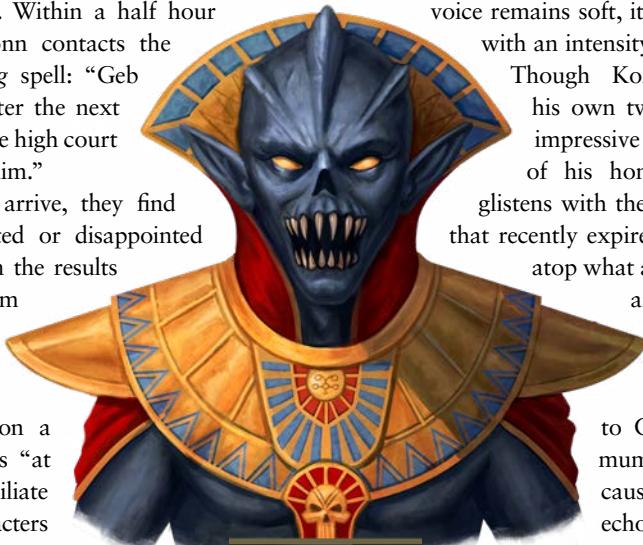
The figures are two of Golarion's most powerful and most dangerous undead rulers—Kortash Khain, high priest of Kabriri and lord of the underground ghoul city of Nemret Noktoria, and Geb, the ghost king of the nation that bears his name. Each undead lord offers an imposing and frightening presence. Geb drifts in the air just above the ground. Much of his robe-clad body appears to be composed of a sickly blue-green translucent mist, while only his hands and head appear

to be solid. The lower reaches of his body twist and coil in smoky tendrils and writhing shapes. While his voice remains soft, it carries through the room with an intensity that is difficult to ignore. Though Kortash Khain stands on his own two feet, he makes no less impressive a sight clad in the regalia of his homeland. His cobalt flesh glistens with the oily sheen of sliced meat that recently expired. Kortash rests his palm atop what appears to be the head and armless torso of a mummy floating in the air at his side. Kortash doesn't speak. When replying to Geb, he gestures atop the mummy's leathery scalp, causing his raspy, dry voice to echo from the creature's jaws.

As the party approaches, a character who succeeds at a DC 30 Perception check and understands ancient Osiriani concludes that the two are discussing an interruption of tithes and prisoners from Geb to Nemret Noktoria. A party member who succeeds at a DC 28 Society check to Recall Knowledge remembers hearing rumors that due to increasing tensions between Geb and Nex, the ghost king has been restricting the export of precious resources. On a critical success, a character notes that an ancient feud between the Urgathoans of Geb and the ghouls of Nemret Noktoria further complicates the presence of the powerful high priest in the city of Mechitar.

When Dizonn announces the characters' arrival, Geb interrupts the Kortash to pause discussion. Kortash stands silently as he regards the characters with a faint-but-curious glance. Geb sweeps forward to greet them while alluding that Seldeg is an old colleague of his and that the spymaster has spoken highly of them. As he approaches, the temperature in the room lowers and a sensation of worry washes over the characters. Dizonn steps back into the shadows at the edge of the room but does not exit.

Geb asks the characters to step forward and introduce themselves. Once they've done so, he extends an arm toward his other guest, introducing Kortash Khain as the "Sovereign Ruler of the ghoul-depths of Nemret Noktoria." Geb says "Kortash has come to us today concerned of whispered rumors. Rumors that suggest potential shortfalls of certain trade exports to his domain from our coffers." If the characters didn't understand the topic of discussion when they entered, allow them a chance to Recall Knowledge about the political relationship between the two rulers and their realms.



Kortash Khain

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Geb then pauses as a smirk curls on his lips. “Tell me, in times as fraught and uncertain as these, is it wise to continue to send exports beyond our borders when we may well need these resources ourselves in the future?” Geb isn’t actually interested in the characters’ stance one way or another, but he’s curious to see if the characters reply with zealous patriotism for their nation or misplaced concern for Kortash’s situation.

Any character who replies can attempt a DC 26 Diplomacy check to phrase their answer well. A success earns a smirk from Geb regardless of the character’s stance, but a success earned while arguing in favor of continuing to export resources to Nemret Noktoria indicates that the character’s words have unexpectedly impressed Kortash.

The first time any member of the party attempts to Influence Kortash later in the adventure (page 17), they gain a +2 circumstance bonus to the associated skill check (+4 circumstance bonus on a critical success).

If the characters mention the poison plot they’ve been investigating, Geb shows some interest and congratulates them for their diligence in defending his nation’s reputation. He encourages them to find those responsible. If the characters name Chancellor Kemnebi, Geb raises an eyebrow and says, “I presume, then, that you have some proof of his involvement?” After the characters respond (they can’t yet provide any), Geb says, “In your time with Seldeg, you’ve clearly not learned much about keeping unsubstantiated rumors to yourselves.” He raises a ghostly arm and says, “Come to me when you have something less... ephemeral.” Kortash smiles thinly in response to Geb’s attempt at a joke.

Becoming Blood Lords

Geb decided to elevate the characters to Blood Lords before they arrived in Mechitar—in part out of respect for their service to the nation, but mostly out of convenience. Regardless of how a character answers Geb’s question, a success on the Diplomacy check above causes the ghost king to note that such eloquence will serve the characters well as Blood Lords. On a failure, Geb admonishes that the characters will need to practice their statecraft if they are to excel in their new roles. Either way, he informs them of their promotions.

Geb’s demeanor might feel anticlimactic to characters who expect more pomp or grandeur to accompany their new titles. Geb’s lack of revelry is a deliberate power play: he wants to deny the characters a sense of pride. In

time, should the characters fill their new roles well, Geb might offer the characters significant rewards or even his respect. For the moment, the new Blood Lords function only as instruments to humiliate Kortash politically (as described in *Escort Duty*, below).

Still, Geb applauds the characters for their “aggressive diplomatic efforts” along the southern border of his nation. In addition, the new Blood Lords are afforded accommodations within one of Mechitar’s alcazars—one of six tetrahedrons that encircle the Cinerarium. He tasks Dizzonn with escorting the characters to their new home.

Treasure: As new Blood Lords, the characters are granted a bloodclaim—permission to requisition a single item of value from

Geb’s vast stores of treasure and resources. This allows each character to select one permanent common magic item of 11th level or less. Once chosen, this item is delivered to the Blood Lord within a day, and is theirs to keep as long as the character remains a Blood Lord. All bloodclaim items are well known to numerous government officials in Mechitar, making them excellent targets for spells like *locate* or *discern location* by Geb’s agents, should the need arise to track down a Blood Lord’s location.

Escort Duty

Before he dismisses them, Geb adds—almost as an afterthought—that the characters’ first official assignment as his newest Blood Lords is to serve as Kortash Khain’s escort and honor guard throughout Mechitar for the duration of the high priest’s stay. Kortash stiffens, but says nothing in response.

In time, if the characters do well in this task, Geb can come to see them as legitimate and useful agents. For now, these new Blood Lords serve as little more than instruments who, by escorting his rival, might make Kortash uncomfortable or frustrated enough to make a political mistake. Should the high priest react negatively to the gesture or publicly reject the “gift” of an honor guard, Geb could capitalize on the misstep to gain political leverage.

Kortash doesn’t take the bait. He turns to the characters and taps his fingers on the leathery scalp of the partial corpse at his side, an animated being that serves as his Voice (page 92). The Voice speaks in Common. “Very well. Once you settle into your new accommodations, seek me out at Coffinstone Manor. I wish to get to know my new honor guard and have a few tasks for you.”

After this, Kortash and Geb expect the characters to leave—something Dizonn notes if the characters don’t.

XP Award: For meeting these two powerful figures, award the characters 60 XP. If at least one character manages to impress the pair with a successful Diplomacy check, increase this award to 120 XP.

DIZONN'S ADVICE

Dizonn escorts the characters out of the Cinerarium after their meeting. Once they’re back out in the open air, she congratulates them on becoming the newest Blood Lords of Geb. Dizonn is very knowledgeable about the city of Mechitar and can quickly guide the characters to places they may wish to visit. She can continue to advise and assist the characters during this adventure long after they’ve established their new home.

One vital function Dizonn can provide is to explain to the characters what their roles in the city as Blood Lords entail. First and foremost, she informs the characters that while their position might afford them additional influence at times, most of Mechitar’s residents won’t be impressed by their titles immediately. “Blood Lords come and go,” she notes. The populace doesn’t grant the characters full respect until they establish themselves as Blood Lords by completing this adventure.

Dizonn warns the characters that all Blood Lords are forbidden from direct conflict with one another. Blood Lords can manipulate and deceive other Blood Lords, but if such machinations become public knowledge these actions could result in disgrace, exile, or even execution. Actual combat between Blood Lords often results in the destruction of both offenders, so Blood Lord characters should avoid such confrontation at all costs.

The Mortician's Suite

A residence in one of the city’s alcazar remains one of the greatest honors afforded to a Blood Lord. Massive swaths of silk and cloth billow like sails from lengthy ropes and chains affixed to each alcazar’s immense facades, shielding the structure from the sun. While the uppermost reaches of these buildings are reserved for the elite among the elite, all Blood Lords are granted at least some accommodations in the structures. Geb leaves the choice of residence up to Dizonn, who grants the characters a small complex in the southeastern alcazar on a lower terrace of its southeastern face. Long abandoned for several years, this suite of chambers is known informally as “the Mortician’s Suite.”

Dizonn is willing to escort the characters to the Mortician’s Suite immediately, but if they delay she gives them the address and bids them be on their way. If the characters ask about the suite, Dizonn tells them that its previous occupant was a necromancer by the

name of Xharduun. He never distinguished himself among the other Blood Lords as anything other than a sycophant whose appointment to the aristocracy, many mused, was as much the result of a clerical error than anything else. Certainly, Xharduun did little to nothing to advance society in Geb as a whole, and after securing his position and post in the alcazar, he rarely left his chambers and kept to himself. He claimed to spend his time researching more efficient methods for autopsies and preparations of dead bodies for “bespoke animations” that required a corpse be altered in unusual ways before it was granted the gift of undeath.

Before he made public any results of this supposed research, Xharduun was arrested and executed with no possibility of animation almost a year ago. While evidence emerged that implicated him as a Nexian sympathizer, these reports were confirmed to have been falsified just hours after Xharduun’s death. The necromancer left behind no will, so his suite was repossessed and sealed. Due to clerical errors during government reassignment of the residence, the Mortician’s Suite has remained abandoned and unoccupied for the past 11 months.

By assigning the characters this suite, Dizonn accomplishes an additional goal: she clears out and repurposes the complex. As she explains to the characters, while she doesn’t know what to expect within the residence, whatever they find within is theirs to keep by “right of salvage.” She suggests that if the characters recover any items of note from the suite, they might be able to redeem them for a reward if presented to interested parties in Mechitar. She leaves it to the characters to determine who these individuals might be.

XHARDUUN'S SECRET

While the evidence that implicated his role as a Nexian spy proved to be fabricated, it wasn’t entirely inaccurate. Xharduun was indeed a double agent, save that he didn’t serve the nation of Nex. He was, in fact, an undercover Pharasmin who worked secretly with members of the Carters Consortium. His research did not pertain to an investigation into alternate forms of necromantic animation but instead to a “life contagion”—an affliction infused with positive energy he intended to unleash upon the undead citizens of Geb. The falsified evidence was leaked to the authorities by Consortium members who realized that Xharduun’s secrets were about to be discovered and chose to burn that particular bridge rather than risk even further disgrace. Since his death, Consortium agents have been unable to gain entry to the suite and remain concerned that someone might search the premises and find evidence of what was actually going on there.

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SUITE FEATURES

The Mortician's Suite has three entrances: two at terrace level and one from a balcony that looks out over the terrace. All three of these entrances were locked tight and have remained sealed since Xharduun's execution almost a year ago, but Dizonn explains to the characters that by the time they arrive, she'll have arranged for those seals to have been removed. She gives the characters a heavy bronze key that, she believes, opens the locks to any doors in the suite.

The suite has no interior lighting, bare stone floors, and 15-foot-high ceilings except where otherwise noted. The air in the suite is stale, dry, and unpleasant, but not actively harmful to characters who still need to breathe. Doors are made of reinforced wood, and all can be locked (or unlocked) with the key Dizonn supplies—or a character can Pick a Lock with five successful DC 30 Thievery checks.

A1. ALCAZAR TERRACE

This fifteen-foot-wide terrace wraps around the alcazar's southeastern corner. The steep slope of the stony structure falls away, while the view beyond affords a sweeping panorama of Mechitar. Two reinforced doors set into the walls at the corner afford entrance to the suite on either side of an alcove containing a mummified sentinel.

Several more sentinels stand guard in alcoves along the outer walls of the suite. While the remains on display around more powerful and prominent Blood Lords' apartments often have dangerous wards or are themselves undead guardians, those placed in alcoves here are merely corpses used as decoration.

No railing runs along the edge of the terrace, and while the terrace is wide enough that, normally, the characters won't need to worry about slipping and falling, those who do (or are pushed over the edge) can Grab an Edge with a successful DC 25 Reflex save. Otherwise, they suffer a painful fall down the tetrahedron's steep slope to the ground, 80 feet below.

The doors leading into area A2 have had their magical wards removed (as Dizonn suggested), but remain locked. The bronze key she provided unlocks them.

A2. RECEPTION HALL

Moderate 11

A thick layer of dust coats everything in this chamber, including a long V-shaped stone table and its eight high-backed chairs. Shelves filled with books and eccentric art objects line a few walls. A long workbench has been placed against a wall to the northeast. An alcove to the northwest contains some sort of mummified bat-winged creature, its arms crossed over its

chest. Yet the most eye-catching feature in the room is the twenty-foot-tall, fully-articulated fossil skeleton of a towering bipedal dinosaur that stands in the room's center.

Originally intended to serve as a reception hall to greet and entertain guests, the room was barely used by Xharduun at all. The strange bat-winged mummy in the alcove can be identified as a long-dead sabosan (a batlike humanoid from the Mwangi expanse) by a character who succeeds at a DC 20 Society check to Recall Knowledge. The specimen is unusually large and is 12 feet tall. A critical success on the check suggests its unusual size indicates that the body is likely that of a long-dead "night giant"—a legendary and frightening monster that some sabosan cultures see as incarnations of vengeful ancestral spirits. The night giant is not only well preserved, it's a dangerous hazard (see below) that guards against anyone who might approach the northwestern part of the room.

A character who succeeds at a DC 28 Perception check spots the secret door in the northern wall. Noticing the hidden spy holes in the upper parts of the walls between here and area A4 requires a successful DC 33 Perception check.

Creature: The trapped night giant mummy is the less obvious danger Xharduun left behind in this room. The fossil in the center of the room is a fossil golem constructed from the bones of a tyrannosaurus. A character who succeeds at a DC 23 Nature check to Recall Knowledge identifies the remains. On a critical success, the character notes that the creature is in fact a patiently still construct. The golem lurches to life and attacks all intruders who approach further into this room than the southeastern table, as Xharduun no longer remains to issue commands to the contrary. It pursues foes from the chamber (but treats the double door as difficult terrain as it forces itself through them) for up to 4 rounds before returning. If the characters approach from area A5, they might have discovered command words to deactivate the golem or even take control of it (see that area for details). Otherwise, the fossil golem fights until destroyed.

FOSSIL GOLEM

Pathfinder Bestiary 3 116

Initiative Perception +20

CREATURE 12

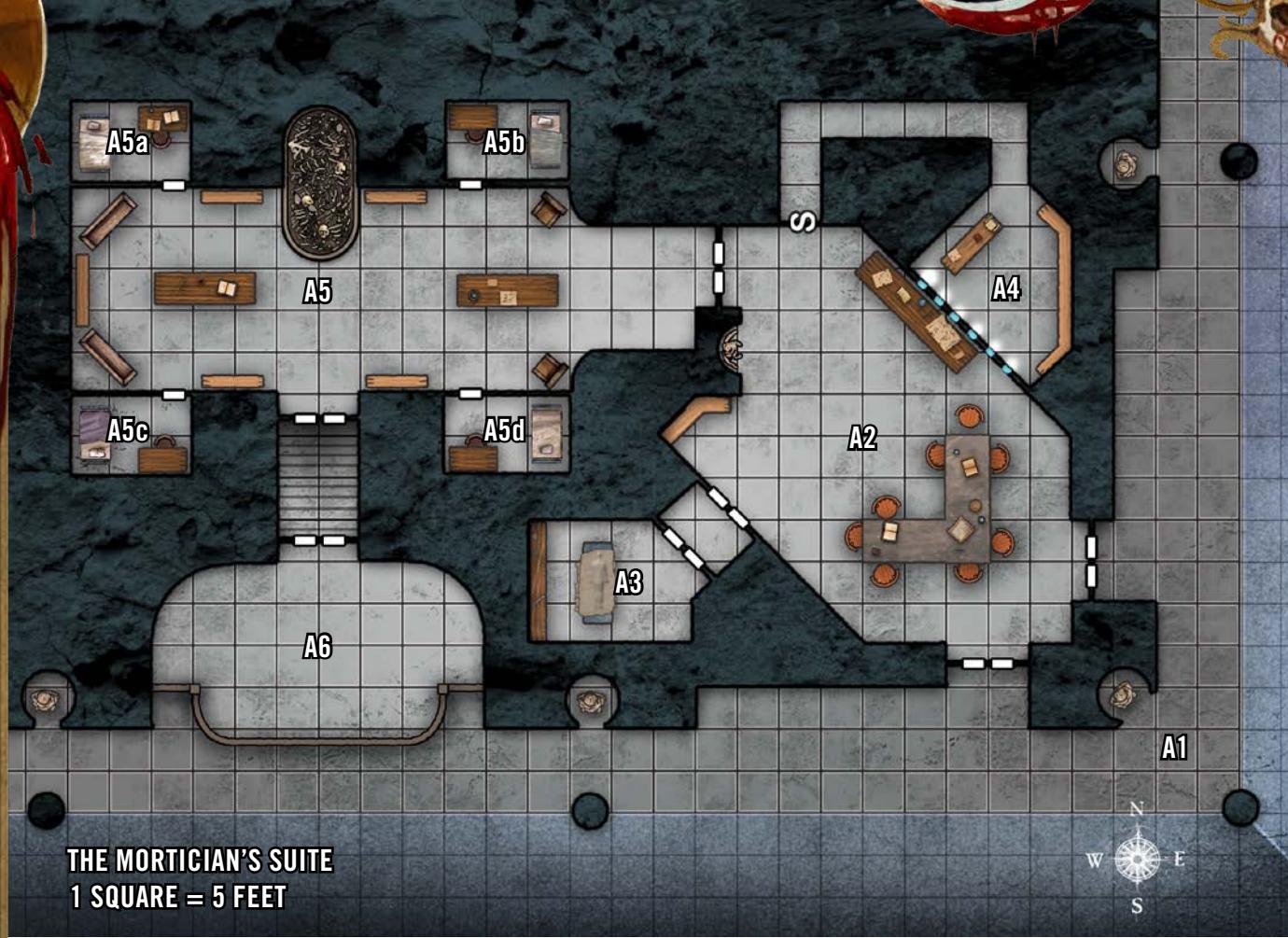
Hazard: Anyone who approaches within 15 feet of the secret door in the north wall or the doors to area A5 triggers this sinister hazard.

NIGHT'S BREATH TRAP

RARE MAGICAL TRAP

Stealth DC 38 (master)

HAZARD 14



Description The night giant mummy unfolds its arms and leans forward to exhale a blast of gray mist and shrieking spirits into the room.

Disable DC 33 Thievery to “blind” the statue so that it cannot notice any who approach, DC 35 Occultism to redirect and expend the trap’s occult energies harmlessly, or *dispel magic* (7th level, counteract DC 32) to counteract the trap.

AC 33; Fort +28, Ref +22

Hardness 22; **HP** 90 (BT 45); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Night’s Breath ↘ (emotion, fear, illusion, mental, occult)

Trigger A small or larger creature in area **A2** moves within 15 feet of the secret door to the north or the double door to area **A5**; **Effect** The mummy exhales a blast of gray mist into the room that imparts an overwhelming sense that night itself is consuming all thought. The trap deals 12d6 mental damage to all creatures in area **A2**, who each must attempt a DC 36 Will saving throw.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature takes half damage and is frightened 1.

Failure The creature takes full damage, is frightened 2, and is fleeing for as long as they remain frightened.

Critical Failure The creature takes double damage, is frightened 3, and is fleeing for as long as they remain frightened.

Reset The trap resets during the following round, after which it can be triggered again.

Treasure: Among the art objects scattered on the shelves are seven different cat figurines made of different precious stones and metals—six of these are merely statuettes worth 40 gp each, but the seventh is a *golden lions wondrous figurine* with the name “Cleops and Chasmere” etched on the base (these are the names needed to activate the item).

A3. AUTOPSY ROOM

This dusty room contains a large metal table, atop which lies a large figure covered by a dusty shroud. Now and then, the figure twitches under the sheet. The western wall is lined with shelves covered with surgical equipment and writing supplies.

When he needed to send messages to other Pharasmin agents, Xharduun smuggled missives within the body of

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a mindless undead creature that he rigged to explode in a burst of positive energy and fire if tampered with. Xharduun captured and immobilized undead creatures—only to bring them here to perform complex operations on them before releasing them back into the world. Such creatures followed magical commands to travel to a prearranged location at a specific time, whereupon the person to receive the message would destroy the undead with positive energy and be able to reclaim the message intact. Any other attempt to do so would trigger the undead into a devastating burst of fire and positive energy, not only destroying the message but harming the one who triggered the destruction.

The shape under the shroud in this room is one such undead creature, although Xharduun hadn't quite finished the operation before he was arrested. If the characters pull aside the shroud, they reveal the immobilized body of a zombie horse that still twitches periodically. Even a cursory examination of the body reveals the stitching along its belly that indicate it has undergone some sort of invasive surgery, and that further examination to determine exactly what was done would require time and proper tools. A character who succeeds at a DC 23 Medicine check notes that obscure methods indicative of an autopsy were used, while a critical success on this check notes that some sort of magical examination and augmentation has been performed on the remains and that examining the body further might be dangerous. Fortunately, the proper tools to examine the zombie can be found on the western shelves—characters who wish to examine the immobilized zombie horse further can do so using the Autopsy Zombie Horse activity. Any attempt to move the zombie horse off the table or any damage dealt to it automatically triggers an explosion, as detailed in the critical failure entry below.

AUTOPSY ZOMBIE HORSE

EXPLORATION | MANIPULATE

A character attempts to open up the zombie horse with surgical tools and uncover what sort of procedure was done to the undead creature. This requires a character to perform 10 minutes of work and succeed at a DC 28 Medicine check, a DC 30 Occultism check, or a DC 33 Religion check. Up to three other characters can attempt to Aid this check using any of these skills.

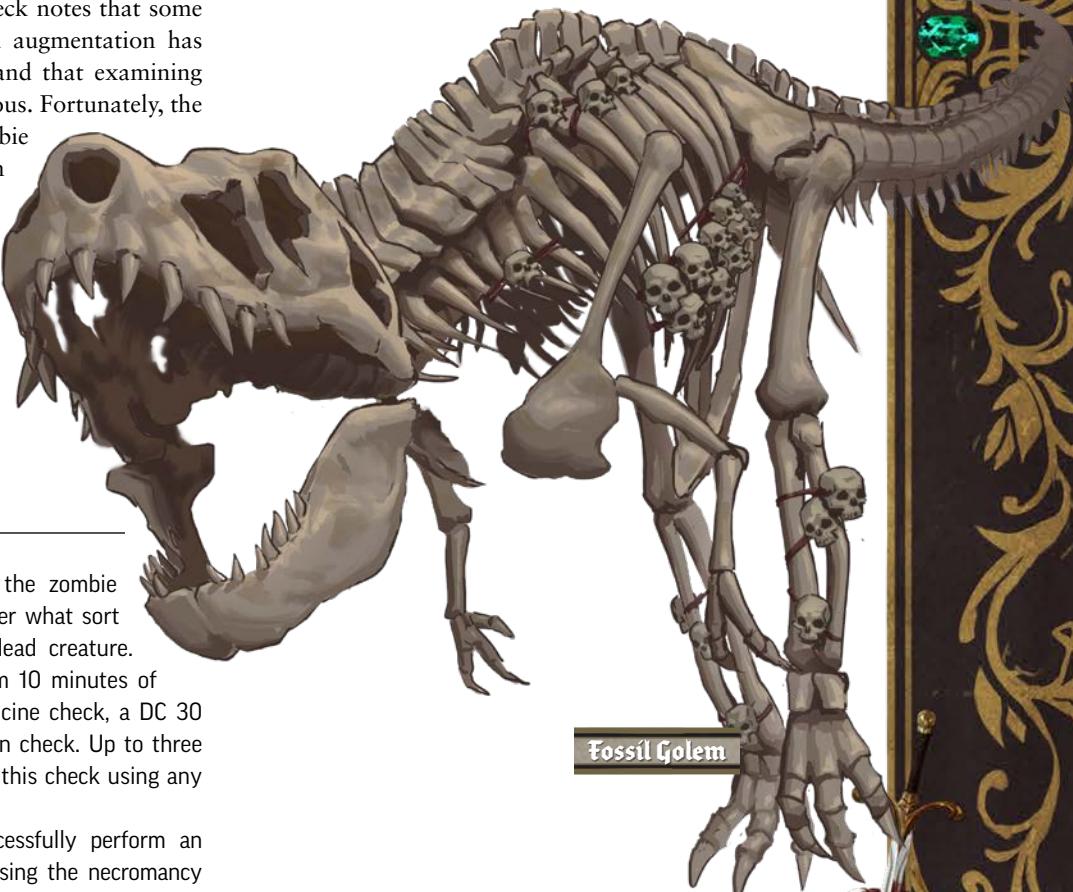
Critical Success The character successfully perform an autopsy of the zombie horse, causing the necromancy

animating it and the explosive magic to fade and rendering the body a normal corpse. The character recovers a thin metal scroll tube hidden deep within one of the horse's lungs; the scroll tube contains a message to the Carters Consortium about Xharduun's fears that his cover might soon be compromised. He requests additional funds to enhance his security, and indicates the "life-contagion project" might suffer irrevocable setbacks if his request is denied.

Success The character makes progress, and can tell that something long, thin, and solid seems to be hidden within the horse's lung. They also realize that delicate magical energies suffuse the remains that could explode into fire and positive energy upon the slightest mistake. A character can attempt the activity again. Reduce DCs to Autopsy Zombie Horse by 2.

Failure The character makes no significant progress on the autopsy. The character may attempt the activity again. Increase all DCs to Autopsy Zombie Horse by 2.

Critical Failure The character triggers the zombie horse's fail safe and the corpse explodes. This blast of fire and positive energy destroys the zombie horse and the hidden message, and deals 5d6 positive, 5d6 force, and 5d6 fire damage to creatures within a 30-foot radius (DC 28 basic Reflex save).



Xharduun's Secret: If the characters successfully extract the message from the zombie horse, they gather circumstantial evidence that links the Carters Consortium to Xharduun's plot. Combined with the information recovered from area A4, this proof becomes more damning.

Treasure: The tools on the eastern walls include a *marvelous medicines*.

XP Award: For successfully extracting these documents, grant the characters 80 XP.

A4. OBSERVATION CHAMBER

A lone desk sits against the northwestern wall of this room, opposite a long row of shelves lined with books and scrolls. The wall to the southwest is decorated with what appear to be several movable metal slats placed at eye level.

This room was meant to be used as an observation chamber where occupants could watch events in the reception hall. The slats on the southwestern wall slide open to reveal hidden peepholes through which one can watch in privacy. Since Xharduun never entertained guests, he instead used this room as a library and writing room where he did most of his research to spread contagious life throughout Geb.

Among the books are several mediocre works of fiction that feature cats in prominent roles. These books might look out of place. While Xharduun did fancy cats, the books themselves are disguises for his research journals; they are disguised by *secret page* spells. Speaking the passwords "Cleops" or "Chasmere" reveals the pages for what they are, or a successful casting of *dispel magic* (DC 30 counteract check) can undo the magic. When revealed, the actual contents of these books detail Xharduun's plans to create a form of contagious life to plague Geb. A character who studies these theories for a day and succeeds at a DC 28 Occultism or Religion check can tell that while such plans would be devastating for Geb, the methods Xharduun used were flawed and based on inaccurate assumptions. While his plot never posed any real danger, his records prove he had ulterior motives beyond merely serving as a Blood Lord.

Xharduun's Secret: If the characters successfully discover the information about the life contagion, they gather circumstantial evidence that exposes Xharduun's secret plans—combined with the evidence from area A3, this becomes overwhelming evidence.

Treasure: The books on the shelves in this room are focused on the topics of positive and negative energy, the creation and destruction of undead, and methods of using necromancy to animate flesh. The collection as a whole is 10 Bulk, is worth 600 gp, and if referenced during

exploration or downtime provides a +2 item bonus to checks made to Recall Knowledge on these subjects.

Slim folios that contain all the information needed to learn the rituals *word of recall* and *planar ally* can be found among the shelves here.

XP Award: For discovering Xharduun's plans, grant the characters 80 XP.

A5. MAIN SUITE

MODERATE 11

This dusty lounge is furnished with a few wooden tables, chairs, and benches. A long oval pool sits to the north. Instead of water, this recess contains a large mound of fossilized bones. Several doors provide exits to the north and south.

This is the main suite of the chamber. Its furnishings are relatively plain, but they served Xharduun well enough—he used this room primarily as a workshop. The fossils heaped in the dry pool are the remnants of his first (and failed) attempt to craft a fossil golem. The four side rooms are all plain, dusty bedrooms.

Xharduun lived in the northwestern room, and several more cat-themed novels can be found stacked on the table there. A search of this northwestern bedroom turns up a journal that catalogued his efforts to create a fossil golem. The journal is written in Requian and is incomplete and rambling—while it's largely useless to the characters as a resource to build their own fossil golem, a section near the end does include three short command phrases that can be used on the fossil golem in area A2—one to command the golem to stand down and not attack, one to command the golem to guard area A2 and attack anyone other than the person who commanded it and up to six others designated by them, and one to attack a specific indicated target. At your option, other golem commands can be found here as well.

Creatures: In the weeks leading up to his capture and execution, Xharduun had grown wary that he was about to be found out. He used *planar ally* to call forth a group of four guardian creatures from the positive energy plane—gliminals—and bargained with them to serve as protectors here for a span of a year. The glimimals remain here to this day, having had no cause to move to defend the chamber since Xharduun's arrest. With only a few weeks left on their charge, boredom has left them ready for a fight, and they attack the characters at once. Each glimimal has linked to another with Bond in Light to grant them all fast healing 10 and illumination, but once only one glimimal remains, it attempts to form this bond with a living character so that the fast healing it grants might well overpower them. They don't pursue

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REPORTING THE EVIDENCE

If the characters recovered the damning evidence linking Xharduun to the Carters Consortium and the life-contagion plot, they need to decide what to do with it. Destroying the evidence maintains the status quo but earns no additional rewards, while making the evidence public further condemns the Carters Consortium.

Faction Reputation: On the other hand, the characters can turn the evidence over to the faction of their choice. Any of the Great Factions welcome this unexpected gift—something they can stash away and keep as leverage against the Carters Consortium should the need arise. Handing the evidence over to a Great Faction earns the characters 1 Reputation Point with that faction. If the characters make duplicates and hand the evidence over to multiple Great Factions, they can earn 1 Reputation Point for each one as long as they remain subtle about it. If word gets out (at your discretion) that the characters gave the information to more than one faction, all Reputation Points gained by this offering are removed, and the characters lose 1 additional Reputation Point with the faction they first approached, damaging trust with that group.

If the characters turn the evidence over to the Carters Consortium and no other faction, though, the Consortium is very grateful for the characters' discretion. This act earns the characters 2 Reputation Points with the Carters Consortium.

XP Award: Once the characters make their decision as to what to do with the evidence, grant them 80 XP. They only earn XP for making this decision once, even if they change their mind later.

A “NEIGHBORLY” VISIT

Feel free to have NPCs of your design or those whom the characters have met and befriended (or oppressed) over the course of the campaign stop by to visit them in their new home now and then. After claiming the Mortician's Suite as their own and are home pursuing downtime activities, they receive a visit from a trio of strange individuals one hour after sunset.

These three visitors are **Harmony in Agony** (NE female human vampire bard 13; page 60), **Rumin Purgo** (CE male gnome smuggler 11; page 42), and **Weeping Jack** (CE male halfling vampire rogue 13; page 61). The trio presents an unlikely gathering, even in Mechitar—a prim and proper (and apparently living) human woman dressed in a riot of silken colors, an unusually muscular halfling man wearing a smiling demonic mask that weeps tears of blood from the eyes, and a strange gnome man deep into the process of bleaching.

The trio introduce themselves as “upstairs neighbors—representatives of this alcazar’s greatest

foes from this room, but use their radiant ray attacks against creatures who attack from range outside of areas A5.

GLIMINALS (4)

Pathfinder Bestiary 3 114

Initiative Perception +18

CREATURE 9

A6. BALCONY

This wide balcony is open to the air and provides a commanding view of southern Mechitar.

Hazard: Xharduun had little use for this balcony, but he did take steps to install a deadly trap on the door leading into area A5. This trap consists of a mass of discarded fossils attached to an articulated metal arm that swings down to smash anyone who attempts entry through the door. To those approaching from area A5, the trap is obvious and has a Stealth DC of 0, but otherwise it functions the same as a hammer of forbiddance trap. If triggered, the sound is loud enough that the glimimals in area A5 take note and move up the stairs to investigate and attack the would-be intruders.

HAMMER OF FORBIDDANCE

Pathfinder Core Rulebook 525

Stealth DC 30 (expert)

HAZARD 11

MOVING IN

The characters can move in to the Mortician's Suite immediately, although wise characters take the time to explore it and defeat its dangers before they make it their new home. The characters can treat the suite as their headquarters as long as they remain Blood Lords. Decorating the suite and making it their own can perhaps make for some fun and idle roleplaying scenes. Note that the suite can also serve as an excellent target for *word of recall*, should the characters discover and learn that ritual. You should encourage the players to come up with a new name for the suite—this adventure refers to it by its previous name, the Mortician's Suite, but once the characters come up with a new name, the people of Mechitar quickly use it as a reference instead. Finally, you should also establish what sort of defenses the characters might install in their base, as some of this adventure's developments could well have repercussions where their enemies seek the characters out in their own home!

XP Award: Once the characters claim their new home, grant them 120 XP.



resident, Hyrune Loxenna" and claim to be here to welcome the characters to the alcazar. However, they've been sent by rival Blood Lord Hyrune Loxenna to size up the newcomers. Harmony does most of the talking, doing so in an insufferably condescending tone and offering phrases like, "Look at you up-and-comers and your cute little downstairs suite" or "seems like Geb'll make just anyone a Blood Lord these days, doesn't it? Oh! No offense meant!" When Weeping Jack speaks, it's inevitably to make a crass or crude observation about a character or their home, while Rumin's contributions to the discussion tend to be passive-aggressive quips about how the characters accidentally became the city's latest aristocrats.

The group's goal is to be invited into the characters' suite and be given a tour, during which they grow increasingly frustrating, disrespectful, and obnoxious. During the visit, a character who succeeds at a Perception check to Sense Motive on any of the three can tell that despite their claims, the real reason for their visit seems to be a combination of examining the characters and their home, as if appraising their power and interests. If the characters ask them questions about themselves, the three grow evasive, perhaps deflecting with quips, such as, "My, I had no idea you were interested in me, but you're hardly my type." If asked about Hyrune, they scoff and note that, "No one truly deserving of the title of Blood Lord would ask about Lord Hyrune. They would already be aware of his immense stature." Strive to make this visit uncomfortable and frustrating without pushing the characters to attack. If the characters start to or become aggressive, the three put up their hands in mock surrender, with Harmony observing, "My my, I can see we're not wanted—we'll just take our leave. Best of luck down here in the gutter!" If they're attacked, all three retreat to the upper reaches of the alcazar to Hyrune's abode. They don't fight the characters here except, as needed, to leave their presence.

At some point during the visit, Harmony asks the characters directly, "You haven't discovered anything scandalous left behind by the old mortician here, have you?" If she learns the characters discovered some evidence, she cackles in delight and asks to be shown the documents. If the characters deny her, she grows surly and the three leave, as if the characters had grown violent. If the characters comply, she delights over the evidence before asking for the tour to continue, but the three pay close attention to who carries the documents and where they might be stashed. If the characters don't hand over the documents within a few days, Weeping Jack returns to their suite to try to steal the documents for Hyrune to keep as blackmail material.

Whether or not the halfling rogue is successful depends on what sort of defenses the characters have in place when he pays his midnight visit.

Once the tour is completed, allow the characters to attempt a DC 28 Deception, Diplomacy, or Intimidation check to determine how successful they were in playing host. Choose which skill seems the most appropriate for how the characters comported themselves. One of the characters should roll the primary check, while others can attempt to Aid that roll with the same skill.

Faction Reputation: If the characters adequately present themselves with a successful skill check, word gets out that the characters are already quite at home in the ancient and distinguished building; they gain 1 Reputation Point with the Builders League (2 Reputation Points if the check was a critical success).

XP Award: Grant the characters 80 XP for this role playing encounter. If they succeed at the skill check to present themselves, increase this reward to 120 XP.

Investigating the Neighbors

At some point, the characters might be intrigued enough by these three curious visitors that they might decide to investigate who they are. They can do so as a downtime activity by attempting a DC 30 Diplomacy check to Gather Information. The characters can also investigate Hyrune, although this is a more intricate process requiring a bit more research than a single check. See page 90 for details on investigating Hyrune.

Critical Success The character learns everything from the success result, plus an additional bit of information they can use to their advantage.

Harmony in Agony: Since becoming his vampire thrall, Hyrune has grown bored with Harmony and treats her less as a companion and more as a servant. She's grown increasingly bitter about this, and anyone who mentions it to her causes her to become dangerously distracted by her anger.

Rumin: Rumin's frustrations at not yet being made a vampire, despite Hyrune's promises to do so, have undermined his confidence as he continues to grow older. Those who mock him for not being a vampire say that his sputtering fits of anger are quite the sight to behold.

Weeping Jack: They say Weeping Jack killed his own mother, and that he keeps her vengeful undead body around as a trophy, keeping her in his control by wearing that frightful demon mask he's never seen without. Without this mask, who knows what his vengeful mother might do?

Success The character confirms that the NPC works for Hyrune, and also determines what their specialty is.

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Harmony in Agony: She's a powerful bard from Varisia who was seduced by Hyrunne and transformed into a vampire decades ago.

Rumin: He's an accomplished smuggler and scoundrel who recently caught Hyrunne's eye, but who hasn't yet been given the gift of vampirism.

Weeping Jack: A pattern killer in life, he was one of the first vampires Hyrunne created, after catching him in the act and admiring his talent for murder.

Critical Failure The character gains information that indicates the NPC in question is less powerful than they actually are. They gain the Success information above, but as if the NPC were of a level that is 3 levels below their actual level.

VISITING KORTASH KHAIN

Kortash Khain invites the characters to come speak to him once they've settled into the Mortician's Suite, but if the characters take more than a week to pay him this visit, they receive an impatient invitation to come present themselves to him at once. This request is delivered by a nervous ghoul with the invitation sewn onto his back with black twine (so that when the ghoul prostrates himself before the characters, the message is displayed to them).

For the duration of his stay in Mechitar, Kortash Khain and his retinue of guards, sycophants, and advisors have been granted a stone mansion owned by the Builders League—a trapezoidal structure called Coffinstone Manor. When the characters arrive, they are escorted by a well-dressed ghoul to the manor's meeting room, where a grisly "meal" of humanoid limbs and organs in various states of decay have been laid out artfully on a table. The food is, of course, unfit for consumption by the living, but a character who takes part in the ghoulish repast might be able to curry Kortash's favor for a time. Any living character who partakes of the gravemeat appetizers must attempt a DC 25 Fortitude save to resist being sickened 1 (or sickened 2 on a critical failure), and is also exposed to a potent strain of ghoul fever identical to that inflicted by a ghoul razorclaw (page 85). Sickened conditions imparted by consuming gravemeat persist for the duration of this initial meeting, after which the condition ends. Any living character who eats gravemeat, though, gains a +2 circumstance bonus to skill checks to Influence Kortash during this initial meeting. The effects of eating gravemeat have the disease trait.

Kortash arrives to meet the characters soon after, greeting them with a barely-concealed impatience through his Voice. He begins the meeting by asking each of the characters to introduce themselves and tell him a bit about their accomplishments. "Why,"

he asks, "are you worthy of being Blood Lords, much less members of my so-called honor guard?" Give the characters time to present their accomplishments, with Kortash interrupting now and then for clarification. You can roleplay this scene out as you wish, but at the very least, inform the characters that this is the first of several opportunities to Influence him. Kortash Khain's influence stat block appears on page 92—wise characters take advantage of this initial meeting to attempt to Discover information about Kortash and how best to influence him before jumping right in to try to earn Influence Points.

Once the introductions are complete, Kortash explains to the characters that he knows Geb has appointed them as members of his honor guard as an insult to them both—to the characters by assigning them "attendant duties," but also to Kortash by assigning to him the least noteworthy of all the nation's Blood Lords. "Fortunately, I fear nothing in this city or, indeed, any who might wallow in this thin and tasteless surface air, so your duties as guards to me are unnecessary. You can do with your time what you wish, but—there is something I would have you do for me. Something that could well benefit us both."

Kortash goes on to explain the existence of a cell of Kabriri worshippers here in Mechitar led by an exile from Nemret Noktoria, a ghoul named Yurgak. While Yurgak has led this cell in secret for years, she's always been smart enough to maintain a low enough profile when choosing meals, often feasting on low-ranking members of Mechitar's society who would likely go unnoticed. Lately, however, Yurgak's ghouls have been hunting and killing high-ranking members of Mechitar factions. The cult has taken the name of an ancient sect called the Secret Eaters, and are taking worship of Kabriri to an extreme. As a practical and political personality, Kortash understands that there must be balance. He views Yurgak's actions as disruptive and politically problematic, but sweeping in and wiping them out himself would put him at risk of being viewed by Mechitar's citizens as rude (at best), or as declaring war on Geb (at worst). With the characters, though, a much more elegant solution presents itself—if the characters can infiltrate the cult's headquarters and wipe them out, they do both Kortash and the city of Mechitar a favor.

Kortash also informs the characters that he is intrigued by them, and invites them to return to Coffinstone Manor whenever they wish. This allows each character the chance to perform a single round of Influence activity with Kortash each day, be it to Discover or Influence him.

XP Award: For meeting with Kortash Khain the first time, grant the characters 60 XP.



Chapter 2: Tower of Gnawed Bones

Ever the political manipulator, Kortash Khain seeks whatever method he can to cultivate a stronger alliance with Geb. Playing a role in the defeat of a band of extremists from his own religion would be a significant step toward showing both the leader and nation that Kortash is an ally. By sending his honor guards, the characters, out to destroy Yurgak and the Secret Eaters, Kortash aims to do just that. He doesn't expect this to be enough to influence Geb to renew the tradition of tithes to Nemret Noktoria, but it's certainly be a strong first step.

Once the characters agree to the task, Kortash gives them a bit more information about the situation.

He informs them that he knows where the Secret Eaters base their operation—in an old skeleton preparation facility known today as the Tower of Gnawed Bones—or “Nodbones” in local slang. In years past, swarms of beetles flensed flesh from bodies to clean and prepare the skeletons for animation, but in Mechitar, more magical methods of bone-cleaning have always been favored due to their efficiency and prestige. The Tower of Gnawed Bones was little more than an expensive gamble that put too much faith in the populace’s interest in mundane methods of skeletonization, and it took but a fraction of the time of the structure’s creation for it to fail financially. Shamed and humiliated by fellow

CHAPTER 2 SYNOPSIS

In this chapter, the characters undertake a mission on behalf of Kortash Khain to eliminate a rival cult of Kabriri-worshipping ghouls who threaten to destabilize Geb's Great Factions. The ghouls inhabit the Tower of Gnawed Bones in Mechitar, and they're suffering from a crisis in leadership that the characters might be able to exploit.

members of the Builders League, the tower's owner Zulgama abandoned Mechitar entirely and never returned. Nodbones remained private property, and as Zulgama had spared no expense on its security, the structure was left to slowly fall into ruin.

Yurgak's Secret Eaters were more than a match for the tower's defenses, and as Kortash explains, they were able to claim the tower as their own without drawing much attention. The ghouls have been dwelling in Nodbones uncontested for many months in relative secrecy. Kortash suspects that government authorities know about the cult but have been allowing members to slowly increase their attacks on citizens to provide further justification for the claim that all who worship Kabriri—Kortash Khain included—are enemies of Geb.

One additional and deeply personal reason for him to avoid giving the characters more assistance is something he'd never admit—as much as he loathes Yurgak and the damage she's done to his reputation, he can't deny the fact that she and her cultists still receive the support of his god Kabriri. At least a small part of his faith fears that he might be the one in the wrong here, and that Kabriri might favor the Secret Eaters. As such, Kortash is reticent to take decisive action himself in order to avoid divine backlash from his god.

Kortash explains to the characters that once they defeat the Secret Eaters, he has two requests. First, he asks them to hang a set of Geb's banners from the tower's upper reaches. If those banners remain in place without the cultists destroying them, that'll give incontrovertible proof to the city that Kabriri's Secret Eaters hold no sway in Mechitar. He also notes that such proof will surely appeal to the Builders League, as this will allow them to start the process of reclaiming the property without appearing to be in collusion with the cultists. Displaying the banners in this manner sends a firm and decisive message that the structure has no allegiance to anyone but Geb. The Reanimators might also be interested in some of the characters' findings as well, for the structure could yield both information on the Secret Eaters' methods of animating the dead, as well as knowledge regarding ancient beetle-flensing methods of skeletonization that could be useful to the faction's work.

Kortash's second request is for the characters to bring him the cult leader, Yurgak—or more specifically, her head and lungs. He wishes to make the cultist his latest Voice, as a warning to all those who would seek to worship Kabriri in a way that encroaches upon Kortash's beliefs and proclamations.

If she learns the characters are planning to infiltrate Nodbones, Dizonn approaches them as well, sharing that the Celebrants are interested in the corpses of any Secret Eaters the characters might come across, for it has been the Celebrants who have suffered the most of late from clandestine attacks by the cult. If the characters deliver the bodies of these slain ghouls to the Celebrants instead of the Reanimators, her own faction will reward them well.

Nodbones

The Tower of Gnawed Bones is located in one of the oldest reaches of Mechitar, deep in a part of the city called Vassal Alley. Here, the distinctive spire of pitted stone rises above the surrounding sprawl to a height of 120 feet, with its central section flanging outward to give the structure the vague appearance of a mace planted in the ground. None travel casually into the 40-foot-wide open ring of skull-paved

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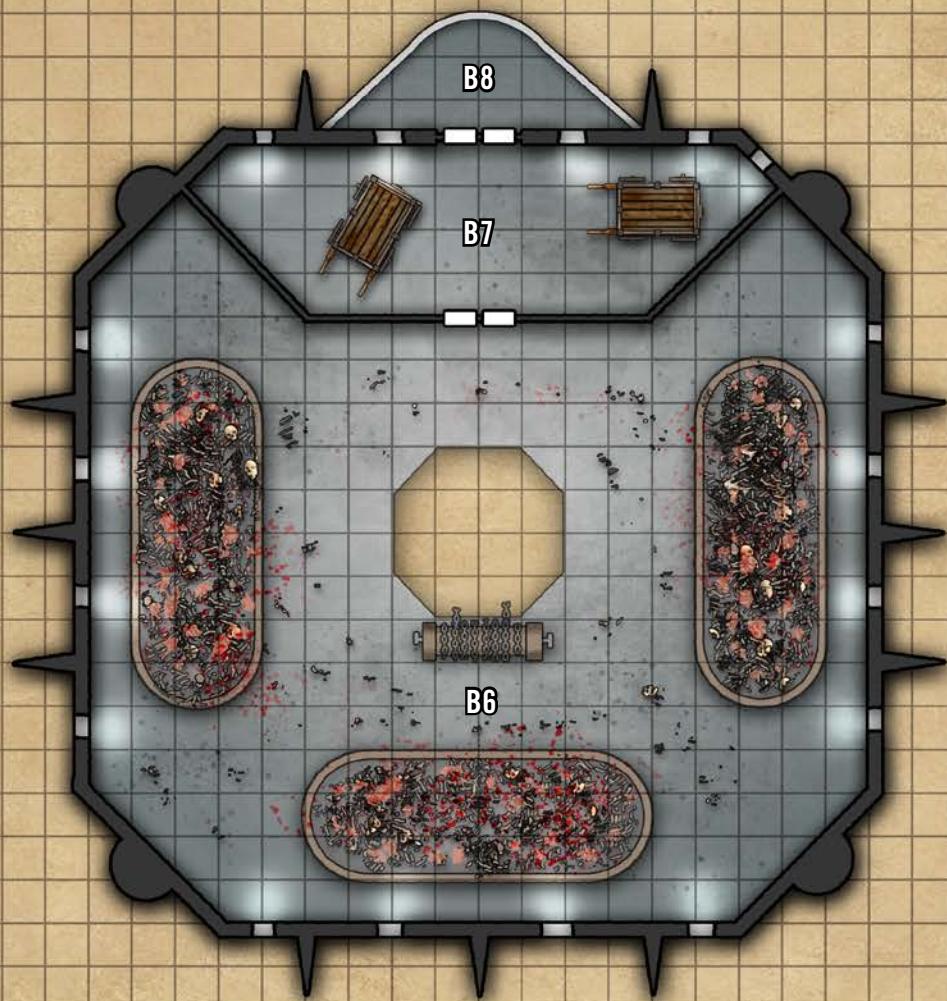
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Kabriri

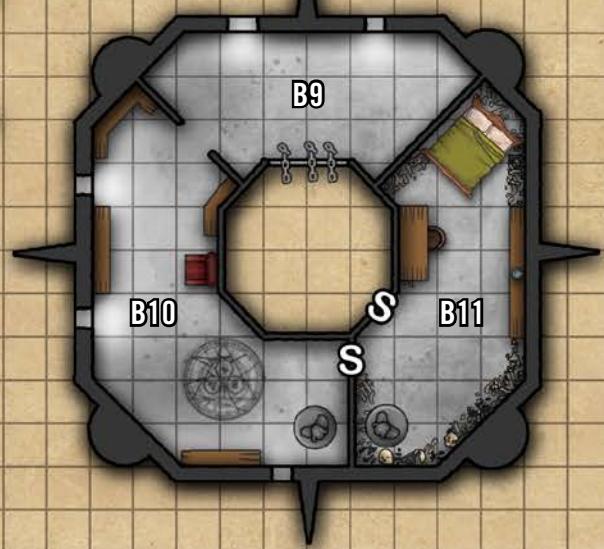
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THE TOWER OF GNAWED BONES: LEVEL 5

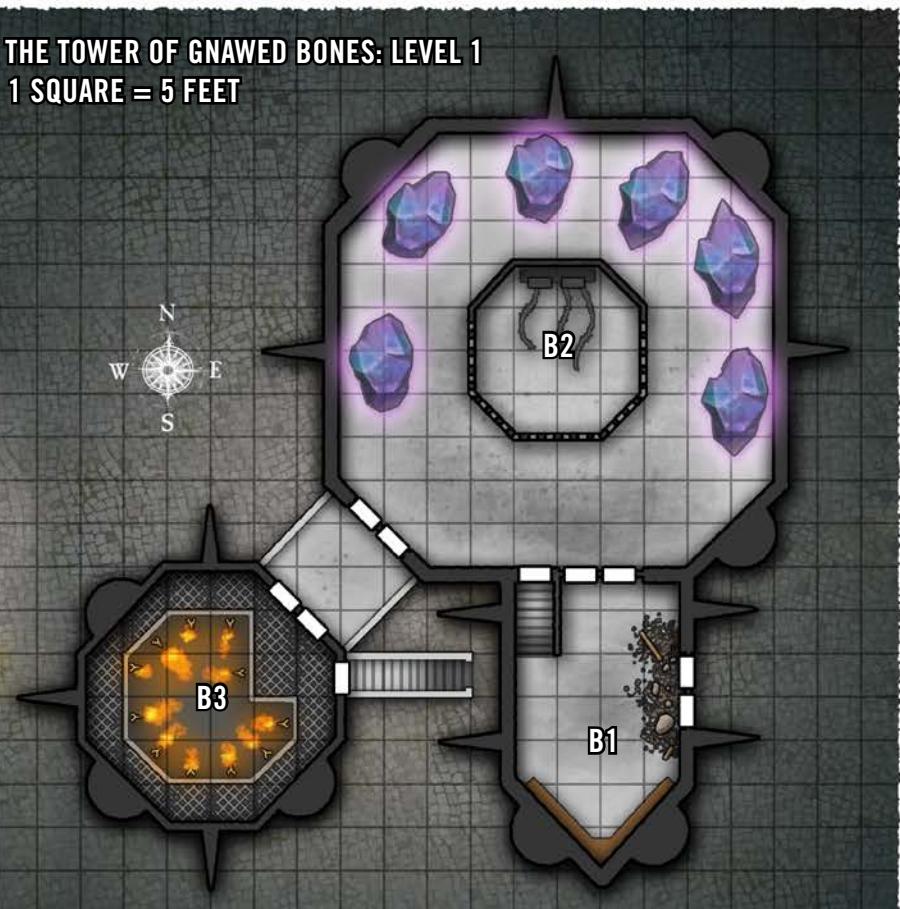


THE TOWER OF GNAWED BONES: LEVEL 4

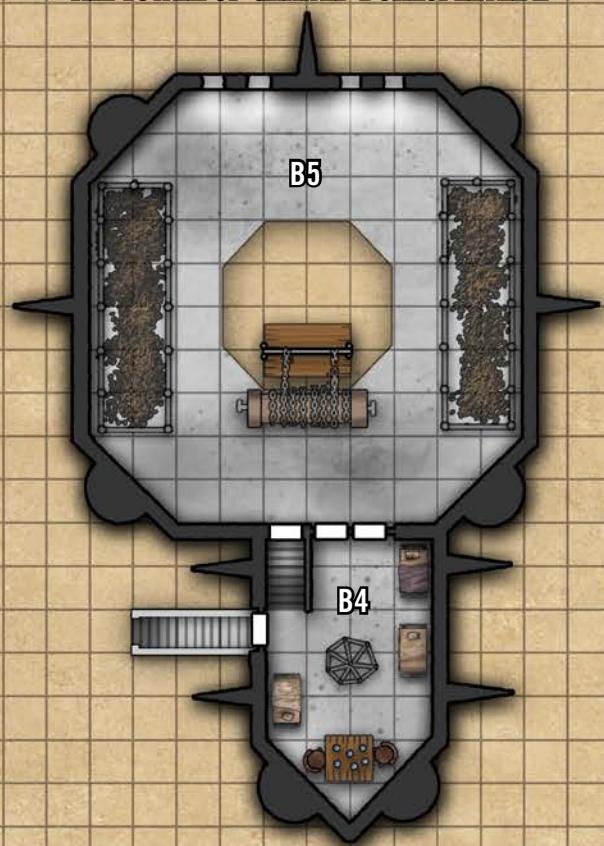


THE TOWER OF GNAWED BONES: LEVEL 3

THE TOWER OF GNAWED BONES: LEVEL 1
1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



THE TOWER OF GNAWED BONES: LEVEL 2



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ground that surrounds the octagonal structure. To the residents of Vassal Alley, Nodbones has remained a lurking threat and object of idle worry for some time—more so now thanks to the rumors of ghouls who have developed a taste for undead flesh residing within its walls. Reports of strange supernatural lights pulsing from within the tower's numerous windows, or even of strange thrumming vibrations that shiver up through the ground at odd hours, only enhance the site's sinister reputation.

That the Secret Eaters have begun to prey upon agents of the Great Factions is a relatively recent development. In time, if the characters don't defeat the cultists, these predations force the government to take action, and relations with Nemret Noktoria degrade as many in Mechitar assume that all cultists of Kabriri think alike (an assumption publicly bolstered by the words of worshippers of Urgathoa, who have long been at odds with Kabriri's faithful). For many years, the Secret Eaters kept to themselves, their presence hidden from Mechitar's citizens, but the influence of a new addition to the cult—a conniving grave demon named Ragrathax—changed the balance of power in the cabal and cast aside Yurgak's preference for subtlety. Yurgak had hoped to conjure the powerful demon to serve as a personal bodyguard but failed to properly perform the *planar binding* ritual. Ragrathax responded, but he was not bound by the magic and seized the chance to claim the cult as his own. He keeps Yurgak around as something of a trophy, but once he's confident the ghouls are entirely under his sway, he plans on feasting on Yurgak with her former followers in a grisly banquet.

Certainly, the new secrets Ragrathax has been revealing to the ghouls has earned a growing amount of loyalty and subservience with them. Once he controls the cult, Ragrathax intends to expand its reach into the warrens and sewers below, open explosive portals to the Abyss using hazards he calls *portalrenders*, and eventually sink all of Mechitar into Kabriri's Abyssal realm in a catastrophic mass grave. The demon's managed to create a prototype explosive for one of these portals but hasn't yet tested it out. His plan may or may not work if allowed to come to fruition, but if the characters defeat him and gather evidence about his plot, they can earn even more respect from Geb.

TOWER FEATURES

There are two primary entrances to Nodbones—a ground floor entrance to area **B1** that was used by workers and beetle farmers, and a loading bay entrance (area **B8**) where new bodies or freshly cleaned skeletons were brought out to be loaded

onto giant undead bats called skavelings for delivery. Numerous 3-foot-wide windows can also be used to gain entry to the tower as well, as long as the characters can reach these heights. Flight is the best option, as the tower's walls are quite smooth and require a successful DC 30 Athletics check to Climb. The tower's walls are made of stone, while all of its doors are of wood reinforced with iron bands but are kept unlocked. Ceiling heights in the tower are 25 feet, but a skeleton of supporting rafters fills the uppermost 5 feet of each room. A character can Balance on these rafters with a successful DC 20 Acrobatics check. The chambers within are generally unlit beyond what ambient light filters in through windows.

Make sure to be familiar with all of the tower's chambers, as depending on which method the characters choose to enter, they might provoke different levels of defensive response. The safest way to infiltrate the tower is from the ground floor up, since those above tend to ignore sounds of conflict from below, where the less disciplined of the Secret Eaters have been known to get into bickering brawls.

B1. TOWER ENTRANCE

LOW 12

The entrance door here is unlocked but has been barricaded from the inside with a large mound of debris and sizable beetle carapaces. A character can Force Open these doors from the outside with a successful DC 30 Athletics check, but doing so causes enough noise to alert the occupants of areas **B1** and **B2**.

A large mound of stone blocks, broken timbers, and the bodies of numerous beetles the size of guard dogs lies heaped amid an eastern door in this room. A V-shaped shelf runs along the angled walls to the south, atop which are set up several displays of bright, shiny beetles. A flight of stairs leads up to the north next to a double door.

Creatures: A group of four of the lowest-ranking Secret Eaters—antipaladins in the service of Kabriri, stand vigil in this room. The ghouls don't expect intruders and have taken to treating this post lackadaisically. They suffer a -4 circumstance penalty to Perception checks as they are engaged in a slow-paced but intense scrimshaw-carving competition. They automatically notice if the doors to the east are forced open and no longer take this penalty to Perception. The ghoul antipaladins attack on sight and fight until only one remains standing, at which point that ghoul flees upstairs to area **B5** to warn the ghouls

there and join forces with them to defend that room. They don't pursue foes from this chamber and take 15 minutes to re-barricade the door if left alone.

GHOUL ANTIPALADINS (4)

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Initiative Perception +15

CREATURE 9

B2. PAIN MILKER

SEVERE 12

A group of six immense violet crystals stands along the walls of the northern half of this octagonal chamber. Each of the jagged crystals is seven feet across and reach up nearly to the rafters twenty feet above, appearing almost as if they were flames of purple fire solidified to some sort of smoky quartz. Each crystal contains a shadowy humanoid shape inside. Flickering light pulses within the crystals, and now and then a mote of glowing radiance breaks free to drift toward the center of the room, where a twenty-foot-diameter domed cage sits. The cage is mostly made of gray metal bars, but a low, solid metal wall to the north features a panel of strange machines to which three hoses are attached to an awful-looking monstrosity that



Pain Milker

slumps awkwardly within the confinement. An octagonal hole in the ceiling above the central cage opens to the tower's upper floor.

This room once served as a farm of sorts where the original owners could breed and raise the beetles they needed for their work, but today the chamber serves an entirely different purpose. When the grave demon Ragrathax took over the Secret Eaters, he set his new cultists to work building a large, cold iron cage to his specifications. The demon used seed crystals harvested from Everglut on the Abyss, sacrificing six of the Secret Eaters to grow the larger crystals. These crystals are a hazard from the Abyss known as crystallized agony (see the Hazard on page 23).

Once the crystals are in place, Ragrathax had his ghouls build the cage within the center of the room, along with a contraption capable of receiving the agony motes exuded from the crystals and then infusing them into a living victim via the long tubes. The torment and pain produced is one of the primary resources Ragrathax needs to craft his *portalrenders*, and he's found that agony milked from a creature of the purest form of chaos and evil works best for his purposes.

Creatures: The cage's current occupant is an augnagar qlipper named Nydazuul, a creature Ragrathax had Yurgak conjure directly into the cage. Since then, the pain milking machine has greatly diminished the augnagar's powers and leaves the creature in constant agony—although its softly liquefying shrieks and gurgles may not seem like the cries of torment one would expect, it is indeed in constant torment. See The Agonized Qlipper on page 24 for more details on Nydazuul.

The caged augnagar is watched over by a pair of Secret Eaters who are also charged with constantly modulating the pain milker, adjusting its levers and dials from the northern wall and harvesting full containers of milked agony whenever one is produced.

The process is slow, taking weeks to produce a single container, but requires constant manipulation to keep the augnagar from growing used to the torment or the machine from breaking down.

Two ghoul Secret Eaters also reside in this room. Imbued with occult powers surging within their bloodlines, ghoul gnawers fanatically seek to uncover hidden magical secrets and harness them to become the most feared necromancers in Golarion.

While many such cults exist throughout Geb and Nemret Noktoria, the members of the

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Secret Eaters of Kabrirri claim to be able to unlock the mysteries of undeath by literally digesting revelations from the consumed flesh of their victims.

The two Secret Eaters, both ghoul gnawers, quickly move to attack the characters once they notice the chamber's been infiltrated. They call out an alarm to the ghouls in area **B5** above, but other than gather along the pit edge above to peer down and watch the fight play out below, those ghouls don't aid the two downstairs, instead taking delight in the battle as it plays out. The ghoul gnawers fight to the death.

If the characters defeat these two ghoul gnawers though, the ghouls in area **B5** realize that things have gone sour and move to attack the characters by climbing down the sides of the opening from above, then dropping down onto the top of the cage and clambering down its sides to engage the party. The ghouls' climb Speed lets them make this transition from area **B5** to the floor surrounding the cage below with two actions, automatically.

GHOUL GNAWERS (2)

CREATURE 11

UNCOMMON NE MEDIUM GHoul UNDEAD

Perception +18; darkvision

Languages Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Kelish, Necril

Skills Arcana +21, Crafting +21, Diplomacy +23, Deception +23, Intimidation +23, Kabrirri Lore +21, Occultism +21, Secret Eater Lore +21, Stealth +19

Str +1, Dex +3, Con +1, Int +5, Wis +3, Cha +7

Items hooded robe, staff of necromancy

AC 28; Fort +18, Ref +21, Will +24

HP 190, negative healing; **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, unconscious

Speed 30 feet

Melee ♦ jaws +19 (finesse), **Damage** 2d10+12 piercing plus ghoul fever and paralysis

Melee ♦ claw +19 (agile, finesse), **Damage** 2d8+10 slashing plus paralysis

Melee ♦ staff +19 (two-hand 1d8), **Damage** 2d8+10 bludgeoning

Occult Spontaneous Spells DC 34; **6th** (3 slots) dominate, scrying, spirit blast, vampiric exsanguination; **5th** (4 slots) abyssal plague, invoke spirits (*Secrets of Magic* 113), rip the spirit (*Secrets of Magic* 126), wall of flesh (*Advanced Player's Guide* 227); **4th** (4 slots) chroma leach (*Advanced Player's Guide* 217), clairvoyance, dimension door, talking corpse; **Cantrips** (**6th**) chill touch, detect magic, haunting hymn (*Secrets of Magic* 109), shield, sigil

Consume Flesh ♦ (manipulate) **Requirements** The ghoul gnawer is adjacent to the corpse of a creature that died within the last hour; **Effect** The ghoul gnawer devours a chunk of the corpse and regains 5d6 Hit Points. It can regain Hit Points from any given corpse only once.

Drain Corpse ♦ (occult) **Frequency** once per day; **Trigger**

The ghoul gnawer uses Consume Flesh; **Effect** In addition to gaining Hit Points, using Consume Flesh refreshes one spell slot the cultist has already expended.

Ghoul Fever (disease) **Saving Throw** DC 29 Fortitude; **Stage**

1 carrier with no effect (1 day); **Stage 2** 3d6 negative damage and regains half as many hit Points from all healing (1 day); **Stage 3** as stage 2 (1 day); **Stage 4** 3d6 negative damage and gains no benefit from healing (1 day); **Stage 5** as stage 4 (1 day); **Stage 6** dead, and rises as a ghoul the next midnight

Paralysis (incapacitation, occult, necromancy) Any living, non-elf creature hit by a ghoul gnawer's attack must succeed at a DC 27 Fortitude save or become paralyzed. The creature can attempt a new save at the end of each of its turns, and the DC cumulatively decreases by 1 on each such save.

Swift Leap ♦ (move) The ghoul gnawer jumps up to half its Speed. This movement doesn't trigger reactions.

Hazard: Each of the slabs of crystal constitute a single crystallized agony hazard. These crystals are relatively harmless unless struck with a solid blow or an attempt to disable one critically fails. The pain milker machine is also dangerous if anyone attempts to adjust its settings or damage it.

CRYSTALLIZED AGONY (6)

HAZARD 11

ENVIRONMENTAL

Stealth DC 10

Description A violet crystal containing the body of a dead creature, grown from its dying agony, pulses as it exudes motes of flickering energy.

Disable DC 33 Thievery (master) or DC 35 Survival (master) to know where to Strike a specific crystal perfectly on a facet to cause it to shatter harmlessly

AC 31; Fort +18, Ref +24

Hardness 20; **HP** 80 (BT 40); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Emit Agony ♦ (divine, necromancy) **Trigger** The crystallized agony is struck hard enough to take damage; **Effect** A shimmering mote of violet light flashes from the point of origin from the triggering action, unerringly striking the triggering creature. This bolt of agony deals 10d10 mental damage (DC 30 basic Fortitude save).

Reset A crystallized agony resets automatically and can be triggered again the next round.

PAIN MILKER

HAZARD 12

ENVIRONMENTAL

Stealth DC 10

Description An eerie machine made of levers, crystals, and glowing bits of metal that, as one draws near, causes unsettling aches and pains.



Disable DC 33 Thievery (master) to deactivate the machine, or DC 38 Perception (expert) to decipher the proper order in which the switches and dials should be adjusted in order to power the device down harmlessly

AC 31; **Fort** +24, **Ref** +18

Hardness 22; **HP** 60 (BT 30); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Agonizing Overload  (divine, necromancy) **Trigger** The pain milker is struck hard enough to take damage, or any of its dials and levers are adjusted carelessly; **Effect** The pain milker emits a shrill whine and exudes a blast of violet light. All creatures in area **B2** must attempt a DC 30 Fortitude save. This DC is reduced by 2 if the machine is broken.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature takes 4d10 positive or negative damage (whichever is more harmful).

Failure The creature takes 8d10 positive or negative damage (whichever is more harmful) and is enfeebled 1.

Critical Failure As failure but 16d10 damage and enfeebled 2.

Reset If the augnagar still lives and at least one crystallized agony is still functional, the pain milker resets automatically in a number of rounds equal to 7 - the number of remaining crystallized agonies.

The Agonized Qliphoth

The trapped augnagar is unable to do much more than gibber and gurgle helplessly as long as it remains attached to the pain milker. The creature can take no actions, but it can telepathically project its thoughts into the minds of the characters as soon as it notices them. A character who can't speak Abyssal simply hears an awful wailing and growling in their mind, but those who understand Abyssal can understand its furious demands to "kill the ghouls, set me free!" The augnagar is hardly intelligent enough to try to bargain. If the characters attempt to secure a deal it only roars back its demands for freedom.

If the characters can establish communication with the augnagar—only after they've defeated the ghouls in areas **B1** and **B5**—they can secure its tenuous cooperation by promising to free it as a reward for answering the characters' questions—doing so requires a successful DC 30 Deception check, Diplomacy check, or Intimidation check (regardless of whether the characters are telling the truth). On a success, the augnagar can tell the characters it was conjured here by a ghoul in robes, that a towering demon made of grave soil put it in this cage, and that the ghouls tormented it for a long time. It's not particularly smart, nor does it understand why it's been brought here, but it can say that now and then the ghouls used a hook and chain to hoist containers of something glowing from the backside of the machine up into the room above. Asked further about the "demon made of grave soil" the augnagar can give a better description of Ragrathax; enough that a character who succeeds at a DC 33 Religion check to Recall Knowledge recognizes it as an urglid demon (recalling additional information about the demon as you see fit).

If the characters critically succeed at the check to bargain with the augnagar, it even promises to attack the ghouls first instead of the characters, and once freed it casts *dimension door* to move out of the cage and up into the room above to do just that. You can run the augnagar's fight alongside the characters if you wish, or simply hand-wave its results and have the

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characters encounter its dead body later in area B6—the ghoul gnawer in that room, in this event, is destroyed.

To set the augnagar free, the characters must destroy or disable the pain milker. The augnagar isn't trustworthy, and unless the characters manage to convince it to go after the ghouls, it attacks them the instant it's freed from the horrific machine. The cage has no doors, but the augnagar can escape with ease by casting *dimension door*; once it does, it fights the characters to the death. Fortunately for them, the qlippoth's time spent in torment has left it quite diminished.

NYDAZUUL

CREATURE 11

UNIQUE CE HUGE FIEND QLIPPOTH

Variant augnagar (*Pathfinder Bestiary 2* 216)

Perception +20; greater darkvision, scent (imprecise) 30 feet, true seeing

Languages Abyssal; telepathy 100 feet

Skills Acrobatics +21, Athletics +23, Intimidation +20

Str +6, **Dex** +4, **Con** +6, **Int** -2, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +3

AC 31; **Fort** +23, **Ref** +21, **Will** +20

HP 180; **Immunities** controlled, fear; **Weaknesses** lawful 10; **Resistances** mental 10, physical 10 (except cold iron)

Speed 40 feet, climb 40 feet, fly 40 feet

Melee ♦ bite +23 (chaotic, magical, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 2d10+12 plus 2d6 persistent bleed, 1d6 chaotic, and rotting curse

Melee ♦ sting +23 (agile, chaotic, magical, finesse, reach 15 feet), **Damage** 2d4+12 slashing plus 2d6 persistent bleed and 1d6 chaotic

Occult Innate Spells DC 31; **5th** *dimension door* (x3); **Constant (7th)** true seeing

Confusing Display ♦ (concentrate, emotion, enchantment, fear, incapacitation, mental, occult, visual) As augnagar, but DC 30.

Inhale Vitality ♦ (necromancy, occult) **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** As augnagar, but 12d6 negative damage and DC 30.

Rotting Curse (curse, disease, necromancy, occult) As augnagar, but DC 30.

XP Award: If the characters manage to learn anything useful from the augnagar, grant them 80 XP. If they convince it to go kill ghouls, grant them additional 30 XP, as if they had defeated it in combat.

B3. DISPOSAL FURNACE MODERATE 12

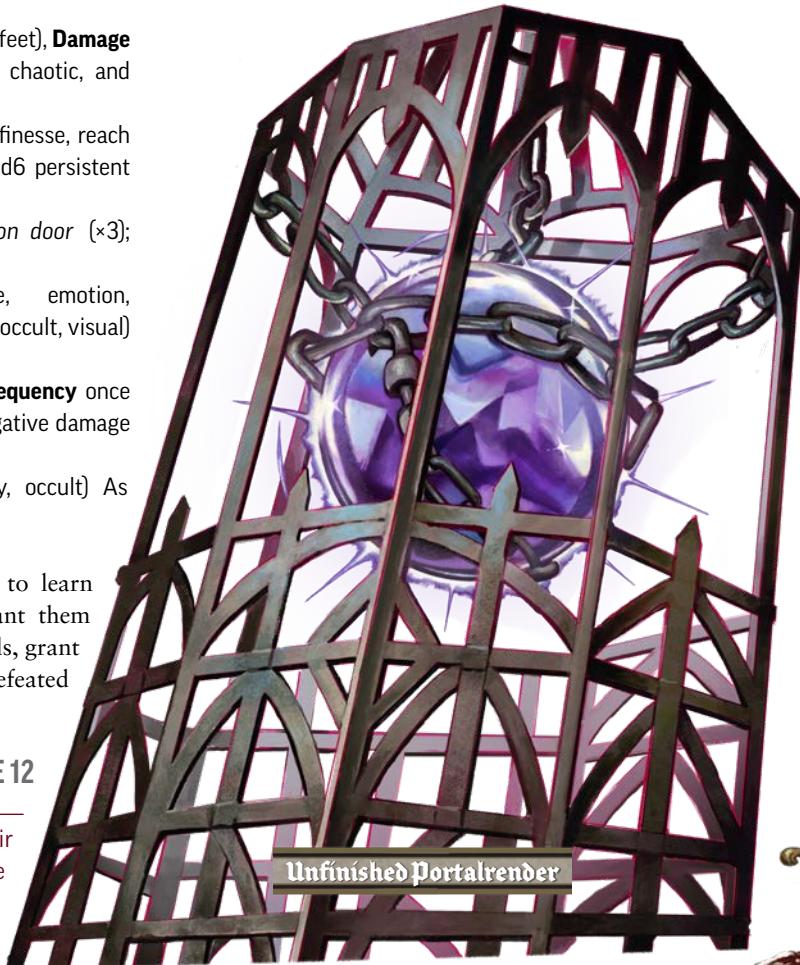
The heat in this room is intense, the air chokingly dry. A five-foot-wide metal grate at floor level provides a walkway around a deep pit filled with gouts of blisteringly

hot but smokeless fire below. A large double door and a smaller door grant two exits from the room to the east.

The pit in this room is 30 feet deep, and its walls are lined with spouts that constantly fill the chamber with magical fire. The flames are hot but cause no damage to anyone above and do not provide smoke. However, anything or anyone that falls into the pit quickly catches fire and certainly does send plumes of smoke up as long as it burns. A creature that falls into the pit takes falling damage as normal, but also takes 8d6 fire damage (DC 30 basic Reflex save) at the start of each turn it spends in the pit. The pit walls can be Climbed with a successful DC 30 Athletics check, but navigating the overhanging grate is trickier, requiring a successful DC 35 Athletics check to clamber up and out.

The magic of the pit can be extinguished by *dispel magic* (9th level, counteract DC 36).

Creatures: This pit was used by the original owners as a disposal furnace to burn the bodies of dead beetles and other by-products of the skeletonization process—and now and then, to dispose of workers who had outlived their loyalty or use. The first four victims



Unfinished Portalrender

fed to the furnace were the original architects of the device, sent to the fires by Zulgama so that he didn't have to pay them for their work. He was delighted when the four rose as pyrogeists, even though that meant a bit of extra work to keep the undead in check whenever new shipments of refuse were sent here. Today, the pyrogeists remain. They don't leave this room, but can certainly fly up to attack anyone who enters. The ghouls learned the hard way to avoid this chamber and don't pursue characters into it.

PYROGEISTS (4)

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Initiative Perception +20

CREATURE 10

B4. PORTALRENDER WORKSHOP

LOW 12

Three dusty bunk beds sit against the walls of this room. While to the south sits a sturdy wooden table topped with six metal urns, each capped with a waxed seal that glows softly with violet light. In the middle of the room sits a frame of metal bars arranged in the shape of a five-foot-tall, seven-sided spire. Suspended on chains within the spire is a single orb of glowing violet crystal.

This room once served the tower's custodial staff as a barracks, but now functions as a workshop for the construction of a potentially dangerous device. The six urns that sit on the southern table each contain a semi-liquid mass of agony, milked from the augnagar below, aging until they're ready to anoint the *portalrender* with its final doses. They can be dumped out with ease, at which point the agony within swiftly evaporates with the soft sound of sighs.

Hazard: The seven-sided framework rests in the middle of the room: Ragrathax's incomplete *portalrender*. Fortunately for Mechitar, Ragrathax's ambitions outstrip his skill and knowledge—while he's got a good start on the device, he's hit a proverbial brick wall regarding how to use the stored agony to trigger an explosive portal, and has set the project aside for now while tasks the Secret Eaters with feasting on dead bodies gathered throughout the city in hopes one will find the knowledge he needs to complete his task.

While the *portalrender* isn't finished, it's still dangerous and if handled improperly can release its pent-up agony in a devastating blast. A character can examine the device safely with a successful DC 30 Arcana or Occultism check. On a success, they can determine the device is an incomplete magical bomb designed to use concentrated agony to rip an explosive portal open to the Abyss. On a critical success, the character confirms that the device is

dangerous and should not be moved or jostled, but this knowledge grants any attempts made to Disable the hazard a +4 circumstance bonus.

UNFINISHED PORTALRENDER

HAZARD 13

COMPLEX MAGICAL TRAP

Stealth +27 (master)

Description A sphere of concentrated agony harvested from a qlippoth begins pulsing with violet light as it blasts the room with otherworldly agony.

Disable DC 37 Thievery (master) to dismantle the housing and refocus the agony inward so it consumes itself harmlessly, DC 33 Arcana or Occultism (master) to vent the agony in a controlled way that causes the *portalrender* to become inert after 1 minute (during which it can still be triggered normally), or *dispel magic* (7th level; counteract DC 31)

AC 34; Fort +26, Ref +20

Hardness 22; HP 88 (BT 44);

Agonizing Pulse (emotion, enchantment, mental, occult)

Trigger The *unfinished portalrender* takes any damage or is moved (the *portalrender* is Bulk 5); **Effect** The central sphere of concentrated agony flashes bright violet, filling the mind's of the room's inhabitants with overwhelming mental sensations of pain and hallucinations that the world around them is being torn away and replaced by a demon-haunted apocalypse. All creatures in area **B4** must attempt a DC 33 Will save, then the trap rolls initiative.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature takes 4d6 mental damage from the pain.

Failure The creature takes 8d6 mental damage from the pain and is confused until the end of their next turn.

Critical Failure The creature takes 16d6 mental damage from the pain, is stupefied 1, and is confused for 1 minute.

Routine (1 action) The *unfinished portalrender* continues to flood area **B4** with agony, and everyone in the room must attempt a DC 33 Will save against its Agonizing Pulse. At the end of its turn, the *unfinished portalrender* attempts a DC 6 flat check. On a failure, its stores of agony deplete and it deactivates, causing the central orb of agony to fade away permanently.

B5. BEETLE PENS

LOW 12

A pair of long, low cages rest against the east and west walls of this octagonal room, but their tops have been ruined to allow for a mass of human-sized nests of filthy straw, ripped cloth, and soil. A smaller octagonal pit sits in the floor at the room's center, directly below a similar hole in the ceiling twenty-five-feet above. A wooden platform

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attached to a set of chains on pulleys hangs over the pit's southern edge, attached to a set of cranks nearby. A few windows dot the north wall, while to the south, two doors provide exits.

The pit drops 30 feet down to area **B2** and the hole in the ceiling ascends to area **B6**. The platform can be raised and lowered between this area and **B6** above, but the slow process of doing so takes a minute to complete. The cages to the east and west are empty, but were once used to house flesh-eating beetles after they hatched until they were old enough to be used in the chamber above.

Creatures: The one-time beetle pens are used now as "nests" for the Secret Eaters when they wish to digest a meal, meditate, or simply relax. A search of the nests reveals a wide range of unpleasant smells and dozens of gnawed bones. Currently, a single ghoul gnawer and two ghoul antipaladins can be found here, engaged in a lively debate over whether agony makes flesh taste better or worse. The ghouls quickly attack intruders, but if one of them is defeated, the other two flee to area **B6** above by clambering up the chains that raise and lower the platform. If they reach area **B6**, they rouse Ragrathax from his meditation and then prepare to fight at his side.

GHOUL GNAWER

Page 23

Initiative Perception +18

CREATURE 11

GHOUL ANTI-PALADINS (2)

Page 84

Initiative Perception +15

CREATURE 9

Treasure: The ghouls are normally good at spotting valuables on the bodies they eat, but a character who succeeds at a DC 30 Perception check while investigating the western tangle of ghoul nests turns up a *greater pendant of the occult* the ghouls missed.

B6. FLENSING PITS

SEVERE 12

Three fifteen-foot-wide but relatively shallow pools sit to the east, west, and south of this large chamber. Each of the pools is only about a foot deep, and the floors are strewn with a tangle of bones, body parts, and in a few places entire corpses. An octagonal pit sits in the middle of the room, with chains from a winch descending downward. Twenty-five feet above the pit, a hole of equal size opens to the floor above. Three iron chains hang down from an opening on the northern face up there to jangle softly against the pit's northern edge in the floor of this room.

The three pools here were once used as staging areas for flensing beetles to consume the flesh from bodies in order to prepare their skeletons for eventual animation. The pit drops 30 feet down to areas **B5**, while the hole above leads to area **B9**. The winch allows for a platform to be raised and lowered.

Creatures: Since Ragrathax took over, the demon spends most of his time in this chamber overseeing the consumption of bodies in the three pits. Secret Eaters now work where once beetles toiled, ordered by Ragrathax to feed on flesh harvested from graves or homes throughout Mechitar. As the Secret Eaters feed, they hunt through the consumed memories in search of any information they can use to help Ragrathax finish the construction of the first *portalrender*. After too long spent with frustrating dead ends after consuming lowlives, criminals, or the poverty-stricken for clues, Ragrathax has ordered the Secret Eaters to begin harvesting bodies of those from the Great Factions. While the results have been more promising, Ragrathax knows he's now in something of a race against time to discover the final tidbits of occult lore he needs before the factions realize that something is going on in Nodbones.

At this time, each of the three pits in this room contains six ghouls each, "disposable" victims that Ragrathax uses to sift through the bodies in much the same way one might hire dozens of researchers to study the tomes of a vast library. Yet in this example, the "tomes" are the bodies of Mechitar's dead. The ghouls here are all capable of ingesting memories from those they eat, after having trained in the hidden ways of the Secret Eaters. Whenever one makes a discovery of note, they are sent up the chains to the floor above to report to their leader before they are granted a promised reward and allowed to leave Nodbones. In fact, those who report are instead consumed by Yurgak, their discovered memories adding to her own.

The demon Ragrathax is currently meditating in this room, not quite asleep but certainly not paying attention to the room while he ponders solutions to his problem. He is attended by two ghoul gnawers whose main job is to wake Ragrathax should anything of note occurs—such as an attack by the characters. Ragrathax has little interest in speaking to the characters, but he tries to keep their bodies as intact as possible so that bits and pieces that could well contain secrets don't go missing. He fights to the death, but if the characters prove to be more trouble than he expected, he opens the doors to area **B7** in hopes that the guardians there come in to help (although they don't join the fight unless they're attacked or their territory is invaded).

In the event of combat, the eighteen ghouls in the pits panic and flee the tower—they don't take part in the fight. If one of them is restrained or captured, they fearfully explain what they were doing, and that they were promised a “reward” if they found any knowledge in the flesh they ate that pertained to the topics of the Abyss, emotion magic, planar magic, or the crafting of explosives.

RAGRATHAX

Male urgild (page 83)

Initiative Perception +20

CREATURE 13

GHOUL GNAWERS (2)

Page 23

Initiative Perception +18

CREATURE 11

B7. SHIPPING BAY

LOW 12

A pair of old wooden wagons sit abandoned in this otherwise empty chamber.

These wagons were used to transport freshly cleaned skeletons or newly arrived bodies between the loading dock and the flensing room (areas **B8** and **B6**), but they haven't been used in years. The door to area **B8** is trapped (see area **B8** for details).

Creatures: Today, this room houses a trio of immense undead owlbears known as straughns, creatures kept at one point as pets by the Secret Eaters but now regulated here to the role of guard dogs. They ferociously attack any non-ghoul that enters this room. They pursue foes out of the room once a battle begins, fighting to the death.

STRAUGHS (3)

CREATURE 10

Page 88

Initiative Perception +17

B8. LOADING DOCK

This wide dock-like balcony extends off the side of the Tower of Gnawed Bones, a full sixty feet off the ground below.

The shipping of bodies and export of skeletons was handled here by a pair of immense undead bats called skavelings, creatures who were loyal to Zulgama but quickly abandoned their post here after his execution.

Characters who aren't careful and stealthy here are likely to attract the attention of the demons who keep watch in area **B12** above, and if the characters are spotted, three nabasus swoop down silently to stalk the characters, hoping to attack them when they're distracted by another fight.

Hazard: Yurgak placed a *glyph of warding* on the door to area **B7**.

GLYPH OF WARDING

MAGICAL TRAP

Stealth DC 33 (trained)

Description A magical glyph flashes before triggering a spell.

Disable DC 33 Thievery (trained) to disable the glyph, or *dispel magic* (7th level, counteract DC 33) to counteract the glyph

Discharge Glyph  (abjuration, divine) **Trigger** A creature opens the door between area **B8** and **B7**; **Effect** A sound burst, heightened to 6th level (DC 33), is centered on the creature opening the door. The sound alerts all creatures in the tower.

B9. GUARD POST

LOW 12

The south wall of this trapezoidal chamber opens into an octagonal pit. Three chains affixed to iron rings dangle over the pit's edge, while twenty-five feet above, a ten-foot diameter hole provides access to a chamber for those who can fly.

Any significant amount of sound here is sure to alert the nabasus in area **B12** above, who quietly observe and come to join any battle that takes place here.

Creatures: Once Yurgak's bodyguard, a single ghoul razorclaw named Vaock stands guard in this room at the orders of the demon Ragrathax. Ever the opportunist, Vaock isn't sure who'll end up triumphant in this clash of wills. While Ragrathax certainly has the upper hand, he suspects Yurgak has plots of her own she could instigate at any moment. Until then, the ghoul razorclaw has done his best to keep both of them appeased—a balancing act he finds easiest when he stays out of both their ways. His primary role is to escort ghouls who clamber up here with freshly consumed secrets to Yurgak, making sure that they are bound properly in the feeding chair in area **B10** before leaving their fate to Yurgak's fangs. He takes note of any battle against Ragrathax below, and if the characters are triumphant he congratulates them on their tenacity and skill. When they arrive here, he offers to escort them to the “true ruler of the tower.” He hopes that by presenting them to Yurgak he can earn favor with the ghoul. He leads the characters into area **B10** before calling Yurgak out from area **B11**, where he remains on hand to aid the other ghoul should the discussion go bad.

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If, on the other hand, the characters attack, Vaock is only too eager to fight back against them. Even dead, their flesh makes a fine offering to Yurgak.

VAOCK

CREATURE 13

Male ghoul razorclaw (page 85)

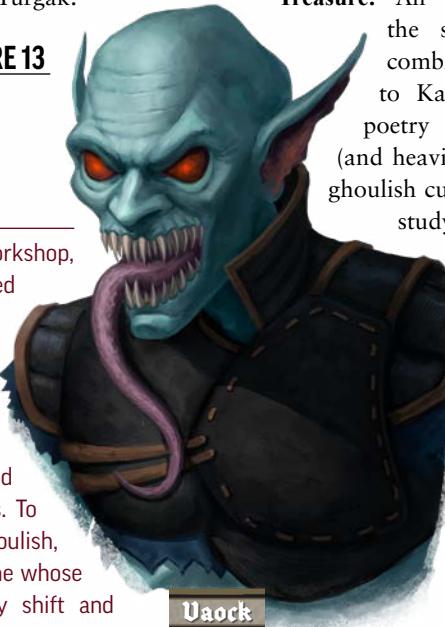
Initiative Perception +25

B10. YURGAK'S WORKSHOP

This room was once some sort of workshop, judging by the workbenches mounted on the walls and the book-laden shelves, but very little other furniture remains. A single chair pushed against the western wall has been fitted with several leather straps on the arms and legs. Blood and decay stain its wooden surfaces. To the southeast, a stone statue of a ghoulish, emaciated elf crouches on a tombstone whose carved epitaph seems to constantly shift and change. Finally, in the southeast corner, a summoning circle appears to have been etched into the stone floor.

This room once served Zulgama as a workshop, but Yurgak transformed it into a shrine to Kabriri. It was here that she summoned the nabasus that now guard area **B12**, but when she attempted to enhance the summoning circle she'd etched into the floor to bind even more powerful demons, she made a critical error. A character who examines the summoning circle and succeeds at a DC 25 Arcana, Occultism, or Religion check confirms that the summoning circle is intended to be used in *planar ally* or *planar binding* rituals used to conjure demons from the Abyss. A critical success notes that the circle is flawed. If it were used to perform such a ritual, the conjured demon would have little problem escaping the confines!

The statue to the southeast bears the visage of the demon lord Kabriri (recognizable with a successful DC 25 Religion check). The shifting carving on the tombstone is a minor but unsettling enchantment that causes those to view it to see the letters shift into their native tongue. A character who tries to read the letters and succeeds at a DC 30 Will save finds that the letters never quite seem to focus or settle on a single name or phrase, but one who fails this saving throw sees the name and a humiliating memory of a loved one immortalized in stone. Such a creature becomes frightened 1 and unable to reduce this frightened condition below 1 while in sight of the statue.



Vaock

The secret door to area **B11** can be discovered with a successful DC 30 Perception check.

Treasure: An investigation of the books on the shelves reveals them to be a combination of religious texts devoted to Kabriri, books of philosophy and poetry from ghouls, as well as grisly (and heavily illustrated) recipe books about ghoulish cuisine. A character who takes time studying this collection of books (taken together, the collection is 6 Bulk) discovers that the tomes contain much of the hidden techniques of the Secret Eater cult. After spending at least 1 week of downtime studying these texts, a character gains access to the ghoul ancestry feats presented on page 79. The collection is worth 500 gp, but if sold, other sects of Secret Eaters might seek out the characters to punish them at your discretion!

Faction Reputation: If the characters hand over the tomes to the Reanimators, they earn 2 Reputation points with that faction. The Reanimators also pay the characters double (1,000 gp) for the collection.

B11. CURATOR'S CHAMBER

Moderate 12

A statue of a ghoulish elf stands in the southwest corner of this stuffy, stale-smelling room. It seems to have once been a bedroom, but the place is now more of an ossuary, with stacks of bones—skulls and femurs, ribs and pelvises, hips and spines—all stacked neatly by size and shape along the walls of the room. A small shrine sits to the southeast holding a bowl made from a skull, its open top filled with writhing maggots. To the north sits a dusty, long-ignored bed and a much more recently used writing table.

Most of the documents and journals on the writing table are a combination of Yurgak's overwrought poetry and records of her time in the city, with notes that show how the demon Ragrathax took over her cult and planned to devastate Mechitar. Several pages detail numerous plans to defeat him that showed she was better at finding faults in her plots than concocting viable solutions.

The secret doors in this room can both be discovered by separate successful DC 30 Perception checks; the one leading to the northwest opens out into the shaft with nothing beyond to stand upon (Yurgak, and

Zulgama before her, would come and go through this door via magical flight or *air walk* spells).

The statue is identical to the one in area **B10**, save that the inscription that appears on a failed saving throw reveals the name and humiliating memory of the reader, causing them to become frightened 2 and unable to reduce this frightened condition below 2 while in sight of the statue.

Creature: The sole occupant of this chamber is the former leader of the Secret Eaters, the ghoul priest Yurgak. Technically, she still serves as the cult's commander, but she's little more than a figurehead these days. Her worshippers now remain loyal to the demon Ragrathax, whom they believe to be closer to their demonic god than Yurgak could ever be. Yurgak is bitter and frustrated, but also grateful that the demon hasn't ordered her one-time flock to turn on her. She knows her situation is precarious, and spends her time here, working on her poetry and sorting and resorting her slowly growing collection of well-gnawed bones. Ragrathax keeps her around as a repository for all the consumed memories gathered in the flensing pits, and since the demon can't quite use this ability himself, she knows that as long as he doesn't recover all the information he needs, she remains safe.

While a foul and sadistic creature, Yurgak is also desperate. She doesn't attack on sight, but instead greets the characters as potential allies, adopting the disconcerting role of a welcoming librarian and thanking the characters for their visit. She wastes no time in asking them to dispose of "her mistake" down below, by which she means Ragrathax. If the characters comply (or have already done so), she is delighted but knows she remains on dangerous ground. In thanks for their services, she offers them the grimoire on her writing desk as a reward before doing her best to encourage the characters to leave her home.

If the characters tell her that Kortash Khain is in Mechitar (or that he's sent them here to destroy her cult and bring her remains back to him as a trophy), she grows desperate. She offers all of the magic items in the room, including those she carries, in hopes of buying off the characters. She promises to abandon Mechitar if they let her go. She suggests the characters use her notes and journals as evidence to prove Ragrathax's had plan for the city, suggesting that proof the characters stopped a devastating plot against Mechitar would please Kortash, who could then claim responsibility to Geb for the action and curry more political favor.

Yurgak doesn't expect to be allowed to escape and is ready to fight if it comes to it. She tries to flee if reduced to fewer than 40 Hit Points. If she escapes, whether

she returns to seek revenge against the characters is up to you to decide.

YURGAK

CREATURE 14

UNIQUE CE MEDIUM GHOUL UNDEAD

Female ghoul cleric of Kabiriri (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 168)

Perception +29; darkvision

Languages Abyssal, Common, Necril, Undercommon

Skills Acrobatics +24 (+26 to Maneuver in Flight), Arcana +24, Crafting +24, Deception +26, Intimidation +26, Medicine +28, Occultism +24, Religion +28, Society +24, Stealth +26

Str +4, **Dex** +6, **Con** +5, **Int** +4, **Wis** +8, **Cha** +6

Items cloak of the bat, +2 greater striking corrosive flail

AC 36; **Fort** +24, **Ref** +25, **Will** +28

HP 240, negative healing; **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, unconscious

Speed 30 feet, burrow 5 feet

Melee ♦ flail +26 (disarm, sweep, trip), **Damage** 3d6+10 bludgeoning plus 1d6 acid

Melee ♦ jaws +27 (finesse), **Damage** 3d12+10 piercing plus ghoul fever and paralysis

Melee ♦ claw +27 (agile, finesse), **Damage** 3d10+10 slashing plus paralysis

Divine Spells Prepared DC 34, attack +26; **7th** dispel magic, finger of death, harm (x7); **6th** blade barrier, spirit blast, vampiric exsanguination; **5th** command, flame strike, shadow blast; **4th** freedom of movement, silence, talking corpse; **3rd** blindness, fear, vampiric touch; **2nd** darkness, see invisibility, spiritual weapon; **1st** command, ray of enfeeblement, sanctuary; **Cantrips** (**7th**) detect magic, divine lance, prestidigitation, read aura, shield

Rituals corpse communion (page 73), planar binding

Cleric Domain Spells 2 Focus Points, DC 34; **7th** overstuff (Core Rulebook 394), touch of undeath (Core Rulebook 398)

Consume Flesh ♦ (manipulate) As ghoul, but Yurgak regains 7d6 Hit Points. She also absorbs a portion of the memories once possessed by the creature she fed upon, potentially revealing secrets held by the flesh at the GM's discretion, and also gains a +1 status bonus to all skill checks for 1 minute.

Ghoul Fever (disease) As ghoul, but DC 32.

Paralysis (incapacitation, occult, necromancy) As ghoul, but DC 32.

Recall Memory ♦♦ (concentrate) **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** Yurgak focuses her thoughts and recalls a memory from a previously fed-upon corpse. She can attempt to Recall Knowledge using any Lore as if she has legendary proficiency with it (+26 on the check).

Swift Leap ♦ (move) As ghoul.

Treasure: The skull bowl on the altar is sacred to worshippers of Kabiriri. When set upon a level surface,

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the bowl fills with living maggots that rot away into slime if removed. The skull bowl functions as a *moderate thurible of revelation* adorned with Abyssal text. When incense is sprinkled in the bowl—along with the maggots—burn to produce a smell akin to that of a well-ripened open grave.

A greater *Codex of Unimpeded Sight* (*Secrets of Magic* 162) left behind by Zulgama sits on the writing table, under the papers. Feel free to fill this grimoire with spells for characters to learn or to leave it blank as you desire.

Influence with Kortash: If the characters defeat Yurgak and return with her remains intact enough to be used by Kortash as a new Voice, the high priest is quite pleased—the characters gain 2 Influence Points with him.

If the characters present evidence about Ragrathax's plot and allow Kortash to take the credit for revealing its defeat to Geb, the characters gain 1 Influence Point with him.

If the characters do neither of these, they lose 2 Influence Points with Kortash.

XP Award: Award the characters 40 XP for each Influence Point they earn with Kortash for dealing with Yurgak and Ragrathax, as described above.

B12. WATCHTOWER LOW 12

Three-foot-wide windows look out in every direction from this octagonal, tower-top chamber. A ten-foot-diameter hole in the floor drops down into the tower depths.

Creatures: Four elite nabasu demons stand watch here—summoned years ago to serve Yurgak. Since the cabal's fall to Ragrathax's control, the nabasus have considered abandoning their one-time leader in favor of the obviously more powerful grave demon, but so far have been content to maintain the status quo. They attack characters on sight if confronted here but flee into the city if reduced to fewer than 30 Hit Points.

ELITE NABASUS (4)

Pathfinder Bestiary 2 6, 66

Initiative Perception +17

CREATURE 9

Yurgak

the structure once again stands empty. By hanging the banners provided to them by Kortash, the characters proclaim the tower to be under Geb's control and signal to the city that the site has been cleared. More importantly, doing so helps to bolster their reputation with Kortash, granting the characters 1 Influence point with him.

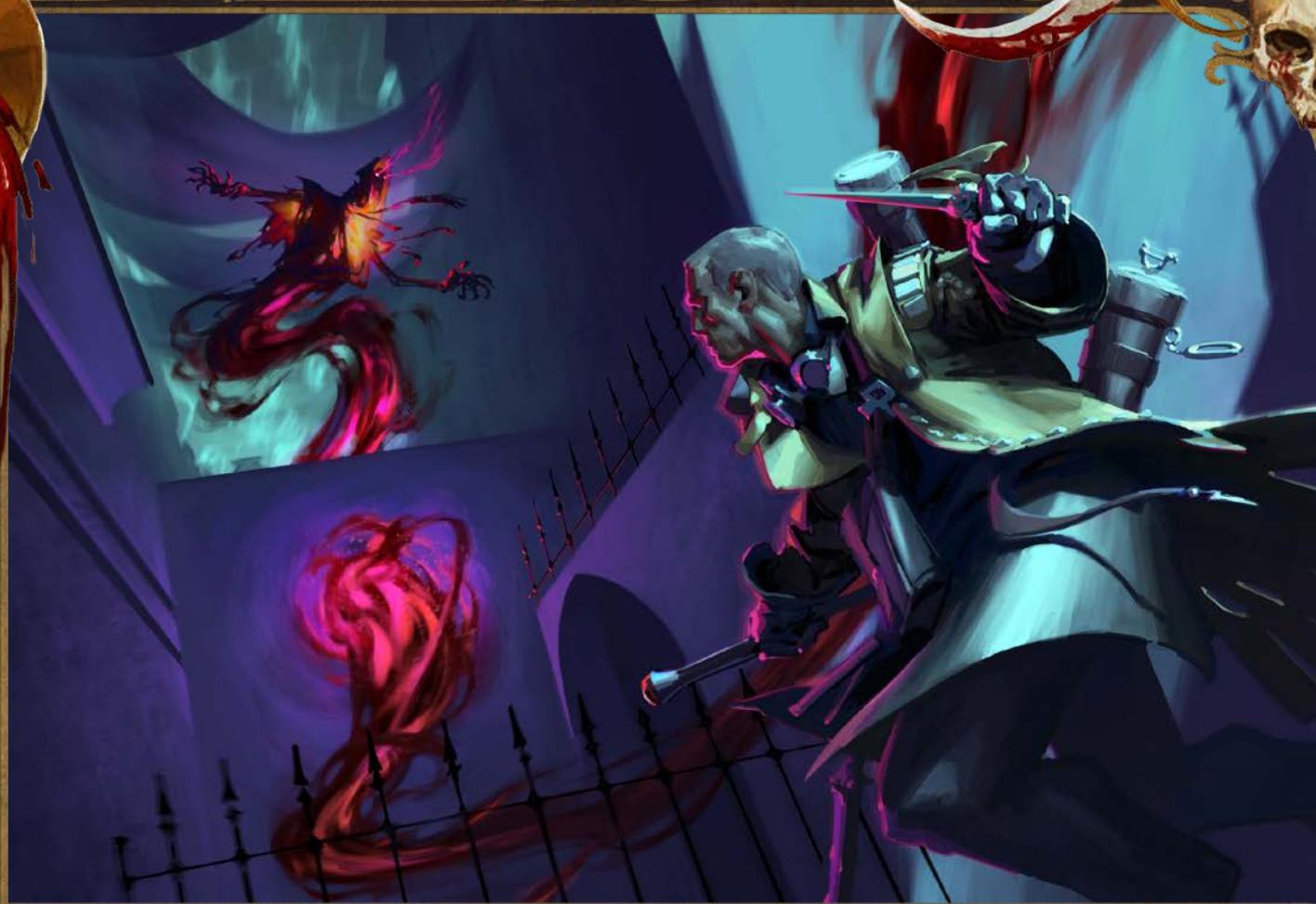
Faction Reputation: Hanging the banners also grants the characters 2 Reputation points with the Builders League.

If the characters deliver the corpses of the Secret Eater ghouls to the Reanimators for study or to the Celebrants as trophies within 24 hours of successfully clearing out Nodbones, they earn 2 Reputation Points with the appropriate faction. If the characters wait longer than this, the bodies left behind decay into ruin or are taken away by other scavengers, preventing the characters from redeeming them to either faction for reputation.



CLEARING NODBONES

Once the occupants of the Tower of Gnawed Bones have been defeated, chased off, or allowed to escape,



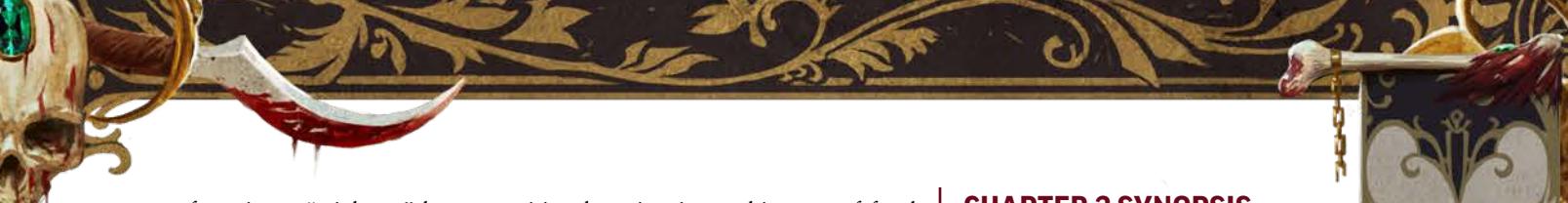
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Once the characters have cleared out the Tower of Gnawed Bones, Kortash is impressed with their work, particularly if they deliver Yurgak's remains to him for use as his new Voice.

At this point in the adventure, consider giving the characters time to pursue downtime activities, particularly the Blood Lord Machinations downtime activities provided starting on page 75. If necessary, you can use Dizonn to help explain these new activities and encourage the characters to pursue them. If the characters aren't yet 13th level, you can award them additional XP for successfully completing downtime activities as story

awards. Once you're ready to move on with the adventure's plot, Kortash sends another messenger to the characters with a request to meet him at the entrance to Coffinstone at the next sundown, so that they might accompany him on a tour of Mechitar's waterfront: Ossum Harbor.

What the characters don't yet know is that this trip to the waterfront gives them an unexpected opportunity to gain more proof of Kemnebi's poison plot when minions of one of his agents make a disastrous mistake. Still in the process of developing a method to produce *shadow ash* to the scale he needs, the vampire charged his minion Hyrune with the task



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CHAPTER 3 SYNOPSIS

While on a visit to Ossum Harbor with Kortash, the characters witness a mishandled attempt by Kemnebi's minions to poison an outgoing shipment of food. Giving chase to a fleeing wraith leads the characters to a glassware shop where they can pick up the thread of the poison plot. The clues lead to isolated chambers in the Cathedral of Epiphenomena, where Hyrune has been actively pursuing the poisoning scheme under Kemnebi's direction. Although the characters don't catch Hyrune there, the cathedral's high priestess offers a way for the characters to call Hyrune out and provoke a public confrontation.

CHAPTER 3 TREASURE

The permanent and consumable items available as treasure in Chapter 3 are as follows.

- +1 leather armor
- +1 striking composite shortbow
- +1 striking light mace
- +1 striking rapier
- bag of holding IV
- invisible chain shirt (*Secrets of Magic* 186)
- lifting belt
- scroll of harm (7th level)
- shadow ash (page 81)
- traveler's any-tool
- wand of cone of cold
- wraithweave patch I (page 81)

of staging a “trial run” by surreptitiously poisoning a shipment of food bound for Katapesh. Like Kemnebi, Hyrune delegated that task to one of his followers, the smuggler Rumin, who in turn tasked his dread wraiths with the job of dosing the food and waiting to ensure the ship and its harbor left without a hitch.

A Trip to the Docks

Kortash has been spending most of his time in Mechitar ensconced in Coffinstone, in part because he’s had to deal with a never-ending amount of meetings and social engagements with dozens of Blood Lords and other government agents in his attempt to navigate Geb’s bureaucracy, hoping to reestablish the tithes to Nemret Noktoria. By the time the characters reach 13th level, Kortash’s progress has been hopeful but slow, and the ghoul king is eager for a break.

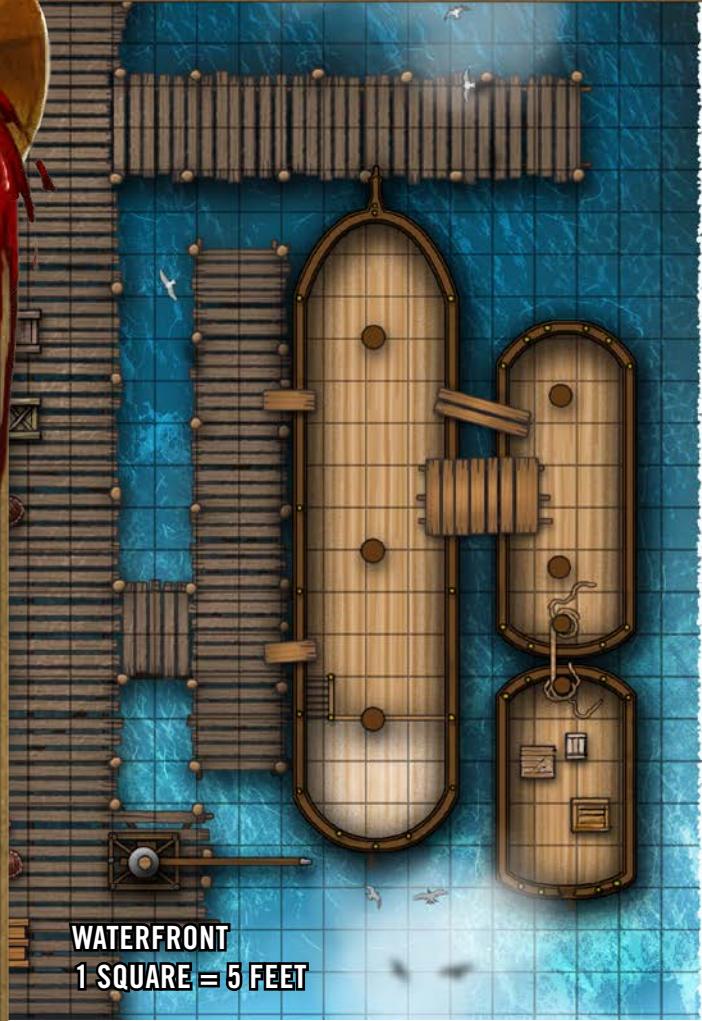
There are no oceans where Kortash comes from, and while he’s glimpsed the sea from Coffinstone’s upper balconies, a yearning from a time long before compels him to pay a visit to the waterfront. He gives no reason to the characters for his visit other than that he wishes to observe how trade upon an ocean works for a time. He doesn’t expect the characters to do much more than be a visible escort for him along the way—Kortash knows that while the characters are brand new Blood Lords, the fact that they’ve already made a name for themselves by preventing a potential disaster from striking Mechitar means that all eyes are on them politically. Kortash estimates that being seen in association with these “rising stars” can only help his public image.

IF YOU WANT A JOB DONE RIGHT...

The impending incident at the waterfront is an accident, but a fortunate one for the characters since it gives them a path forward in their quest to find proof of Kemnebi’s plot. Unfortunately for the conspirators, relying on unskilled minions to get the job done results in a catastrophic failure that inadvertently signals the plot and ultimately serves as the turning point for the characters in their investigation.

The wraiths arrive with doses of *shadow ash* mixed with braingrit and tremor paste carried in magical cloths known as *wraithweave patches*. This allows the incorporeal undead to approach underwater soon after sunset. They infiltrate a targeted loading barge filled with food crates and unload the toxin directly into the containers without opening a single one. The wraiths retreat to watch from nearby to make sure the food’s loaded onto a ship bound for Katapesh—the *Wyvern’s Wife*—and then once that ship sets sail, intend to return to Rumin to report the job a success.

Somewhere along the line between Kemnebi and the wraiths, though, a crucial step was missed—rather than spread the six doses of poison out evenly among the dozens of crates of food, the wraiths simply dosed six containers, resulting in toxin levels far above that Kemnebi had hoped for concentrated in just a few locations. But even then, this mistake wouldn’t have mattered too much (other than to drastically limit and quicken the results once the ship reached Katapesh days later.) The final error that ruins this trial run takes place when two overworked and hungry stevedores make the fateful decision to pinch a snack from a crate that’s been poisoned, dooming themselves and Kemnebi’s experiment at the same time.



AN EXPLOSION OF DECAY

LOW 13

You can make as much or as little as you wish of the characters' visit to Ossum Harbor, but at some point Kortash Khain informs the characters that he has seen enough and returns to Coffinstone, magically disappearing in a spray of writhing maggots. This might leave the characters a little vexed as they wonder why he needed them at all when he could have just used magic, but a few moments later, they might develop other concerns about the timing of Kortash's exit.

A few minutes after Kortash leaves the characters at the waterfront's edge, a sudden commotion aboard a nearby ship docked at a pier catches their attention. A pair of human dockworkers thrash and scream on the deck of a ship named the *Wyvern's Wife* while it's being loaded with food bound for Katapesh from a few transport barges. The two men shriek in what sounds like gibberish, rip at their clothes, and lash out at the other workers, causing them to scramble for cover. A few moments after the characters notice the scene, the stevedores double over in pain, and then bulge hideously from within. Their flesh splits as decayed muscles and rancid pustules grow from their

frames, and in the span of a few seconds, what were once mere humans transform into a pair of lumbering undead monstrosities known as rotbombers.

This encounter plays out on the Waterfront map, with both rotbombers starting the fight near the bow of the large ship in the middle of the area and the characters on the nearby stone quay.

Creatures: The two rotbombers spend their first action in this fight roaring in pain and smashing their fists against the timbers of the decks, but on each following round, a rotbomber not engaged by a character kills 2 nearby workers. As long as a rotbomber has been attacked by a character with a spell or Strike, it focuses its attacks on the characters instead. Keep track of the number of workers slain in this fight, as the characters earn extra rewards if they minimize losses. There are a total of 15 workers endangered here—if all 15 are slain, the rotbombers focus entirely on the characters.

ROTBOMBERS (2)

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Initiative Perception +25

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THE WRAITH CHASE

As the characters defeat the sixth wraith, allow each of them to attempt a DC 25 Perception check to note the seventh dread wraith as it flees the waterfront into the city. A critical success on this check allows the characters to notice that the fleeing wraith strangely seems to be carrying a ghostly bundle of some sort, and that the wraith seems to be moving more slowly than normal. This is because the dread wraith is carrying a *wraithweave patch* I wrapped around a container holding the other six patches used to transport the *shadow ash* and needs to spend one of its three actions each round to concentrate on maintaining the bundle's incorporeal state. This slows it down but its ability to move through solid objects still makes it difficult to pursue. If no character succeeds at the Perception check, then other witnesses should point the fleeing wraith out to the characters a few moments later. This allows the characters to still give chase, but at a disadvantage since none of them noticed the wraith in time. If the characters pursue, resolve the resulting encounter using the chase rules presented on pages 156–158 of the *Pathfinder Gamemastery Guide*.

XP Award: If the characters defeat the rotbombers with no civilian casualties, grant them an additional 40 XP. If no more than four workers die, grant them an additional 20 XP instead. If four or more workers perish, the characters earn no additional XP.

WRATHFUL WRAITHS

SEVERE 13

Creatures: The characters don't have much time to recover or investigate the cause of the strange transformation once the rotbombers are destroyed. Realizing their grave error, the careless wraiths soon decide that the best thing to do next is to silence the witnesses in hopes of covering up their mistake. They worry less about blowback from the populace, but fear Hyrune's wrath in response to their failure.

Give the characters a round or two to catch their breath and recover from the fight, after which six elite dread wraiths rise from the waters below the docks to attack. These wraiths hope to eliminate the witnesses, including the characters. They target the characters as they are able to identify that of all those in the vicinity, the party appears to be the most capable. A seventh elite dread wraith hangs back, prepared to flee and warn Rumin if the fight should go badly for the other six.

As with the previous encounter, continue tracking how many of the nearby workers perish. At the end of each round, one worker perishes for each dread wraith who took no damage during that round. At your option, if the characters take extraordinary steps to protect workers (such as by using magic to whisk them away to safety), the number of workers who perish at the end of each round can be reduced as you see fit.

ELITE DREAD WRAITHS (6)

CREATURE 10

Pathfinder Bestiary 2 6, 298

Initiative Stealth +21

XP Award: If the characters defeat the dread wraiths with no civilian casualties, grant them an additional 60 XP. If no more than half the remaining workers die, grant them an additional 30 XP instead. If more than half the remaining workers perish, the characters earn no additional XP—likewise, if there were no surviving workers from the previous encounter, the characters earn no additional XP here.

Faction Reputation: The Export Guild controls Ossum Harbor, and the civilian dockworkers serve that faction. The characters gain 1 Reputation Point with the Export Guild if at least three dockworkers remain alive at the end of both encounters, plus 1 Reputation Point for every four additional survivors (to a total of 4 Reputation Points if all 15 dockworkers survive).



Rotbomber Transformation

This chase leans into the fact that the characters are high level and capable of using their considerable skills and magic to pursue a target capable of moving through solid walls. While the dread wraith can avoid all the obstacles in the characters' way, it zips and zags on an erratic course back to its eventual destination—a modest glasswork shop in Vassal Alley called Cerulean Glade.

Each round of this chase takes a minute to resolve, and over the course of the chase the pursuing characters face six obstacles. If the characters can clear all six obstacles in six chase rounds, they keep up with the dread wraith long enough to observe it as it darts into the shop. See Cerulean Glade on page 38 if the characters investigate the glasswork shop.

If the characters fail to clear all six obstacles in 6 rounds, they lose track of the dread wraith, but they might be able to learn more about where it went through additional investigation—see The Seventh Wraith on page 38.

If the characters decide to ignore the wraith and not give chase, proceed with Taking the Blame on the next page.

Starting the Chase: If one of the characters noticed the fleeing wraith with a critical success on the Perception check, the entire party gains a +2 circumstance bonus on rolls to earn Chase Points. If instead the characters had the wraith's flight pointed out to them by a witness, they take a -2 penalty to rolls made to earn Chase Points to overcome the first obstacle.

Chase Obstacles: The characters must overcome these six obstacles in the following order to successfully finish the chase. A character who is capable of moving through solid walls can substitute this ability to automatically achieve a critical success for their action that round, gaining 2 Chase Points toward defeating the obstacle.

WATERFRONT PURSUIT

OBSTACLE 13

Chase Points 4; Overcome DC 29 Acrobatics or Athletics to leap from ship to pier to ship, DC 33 Mechitar Lore or Society to recognize a shortcut along the twisting boardwalks.

The dread wraith flees across several piers, through rigging, cargo, and ships alike as sailors and laborers scramble to avoid the undead creature.

UNSETTLING PROCESSIONAL

OBSTACLE 13

Chase Points 4; Overcome DC 29 Intimidation to threaten the procession into parting for your passage, DC 31 Perception to keep an eye on the dread wraith's progress, DC 33 Will save to avoid being distracted by the procession's disturbing presence.

The dread wraith flees deeper into the city along a wide avenue along which a somber processional of undead march to the west, their shapes and grim adornments making it difficult to keep an eye on the wraith itself.

SCANDALIZED ARISTOCRAT

OBSTACLE 13

Chase Points 4; Overcome DC 29 Deception or Diplomacy to placate or appease the aristocrat with distractions or apologies, DC 33 Stealth to slip into the crowd and avoid the aristocrat's notice.

As the dread wraith swoops aside to the north toward the River of Rot, the panic it creates infuriates an entitled vampire aristocrat visiting from Ustalav who blames the characters for disrupting the processional they were there to enjoy.

RIVER OF ROT

OBSTACLE 13

Chase Points 6; Overcome DC 29 Athletics to swiftly and efficiently navigate the river's waters and leap from boat deck to boat deck to cross via surface traffic, DC 33 Intimidation or Sailor Lore to convince someone to help you cross via barge or raft, or a spell like *water walk*, *dimension door*, or *fly* to simply move across the river with ease (using such a spell grants 2 Chase Points per character affected).

The dread wraith swoops over the River of Rot to vanish into the twists and turns of Vassal Alley.

TWISTING ALLEYWAYS

OBSTACLE 13

Chase Points 4; Overcome DC 29 Society or Survival to anticipate and understand the most efficient routes through the tangled alleyways, DC 33 Diplomacy or Intimidation to get startled or fearful locals to point you in the right direction.

The dread wraith swoops through buildings without regard, forcing the pursuing characters to navigate the tangled surface streets and alleys that fill the district.

DISRUPTIVE LOCALS

OBSTACLE 13

Chase Points 4; Overcome DC 29 Stealth or Intimidation to sneak by the locals or frighten them into compliance, DC 33 Arcana, Deception, Occultism, or Religion to assume airs of a powerful necromancer or mystic that shouldn't be trifled with.

Obnoxious minor undead, either eager to earn prestige with the dread wraith's commander or simply seeing the characters as intruders that deserve mockery or threats, do their best to make passage through Vassal Alley miserable and fraught.

XP Award: If the characters manage to pursue the wraith to Cerulean Glade by completing the chase in 6 or fewer rounds, grant them 80 XP. If they come to

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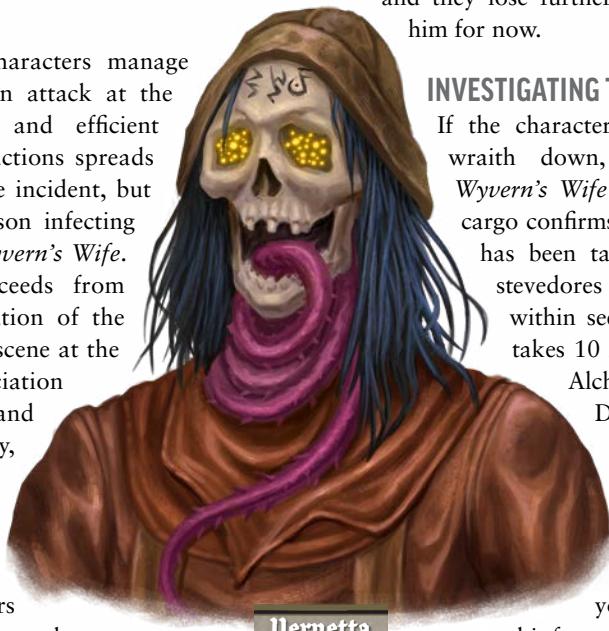
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Cerulean Glade by any other method instead, grant them only 20 XP.

TAKING THE BLAME

Whether or not the characters manage to deal with the sudden attack at the waterfront in a fast and efficient manner, word of their actions spreads quickly—not only of the incident, but of the discovery of poison infecting several crates on the *Wyvern's Wife*. As the adventure proceeds from this point, the combination of the characters being on the scene at the time, their known association with Kortash Khain, and perhaps most importantly, manipulation behind the scenes by their foes, the characters soon find themselves among the frontrunners of those blamed for the attacks at the waterfront. As the days proceed, most of the whispers and gossip seem to settle on Kortash Khain as the strongest suspect, though most residents also believe the characters are just as guilty as he is thanks to their mutual association. Geb himself takes no action to intervene at this point, as he grows more and more concerned with even more complicated political machinations concerning the nation's leadership. For the moment, Mechitar's newest Blood Lords are on their own navigating what is, in effect, a public relations nightmare.

Until the characters manage to clear their name at the end of this chapter, they take a -4 penalty to all skill checks made to Earn Income, Lie, Gather Information, Make an Impression, Request, or Perform, as well as to all skill checks made to perform Blood Lord downtime activities. At your option, if a character disguises themselves, they can avoid this penalty, although a disguised character won't likely be able to take part in any Blood Lord activities that require them to openly embrace their political position and role in Geb.

Kortash himself remains ensconced within Coffinstone Manor for the duration of this chapter. He continues to meet with the characters if they wish to attempt to Influence him further, as long as they don't pressure him to step in and vouch for them. "This is a Gebbite matter, and it needs to be solved by Geb's people, not myself," he rasps out through his Voice, adding "But if you solve this problem yourselves, it

will be... appreciated." If the characters persist, he revokes his invitation to speak with them regularly, and they lose further opportunities to Influence him for now.

INVESTIGATING THE WATERFRONT

If the characters don't chase the seventh wraith down, they can examine the *Wyvern's Wife* for clues. A Search of the cargo confirms that only one of the crates has been tampered with—the one the stevedores cracked open. The food within seems fine, but if a character takes 10 minutes of work to Identify Alchemy and succeeds at a DC 30 Crafting check, they reveal the disturbing truth: the food has been contaminated by a strange unknown poison. *Detect poison* (or other spells, at your discretion) can reveal this fact more quickly. *Detect magic* or

read aura reveals a lingering aura of necromancy on the food (an aura that exists only thanks to the extreme dosage the wraiths used—had they spread the doses out among all the crates, no such magic aura would be detectable). The DC to identify this affliction by attempting to Identify Magic is tougher, requiring a successful DC 35 check.

A critical success on a check to Identify Alchemy or Magic, or a casting of *detect poison* heightened to 2nd level, reveals more: the contamination consists of a mix of braingrit, tremor paste, and a rare spell catalyst known as *shadow ash* (page 81). This success also reveals that in most cases, the contaminated food won't cause a sudden transformation into a rotbomber—the two dock workers who succumbed seem to have simply had the misfortune of eating food that had an unusually high concentration of the toxin.

If the characters don't make these discoveries on their own, it's just a matter of hours before **Vernetta Xenophia** (LE female mohrg harbormaster 12) learns the truth with the aid of her own alchemists. It's not much longer before she discovers the other five poisoned crates as well. Once word spreads, Vernetta orders a halt to all exports from Ossum Harbor, and over the course of the following several days, new layers of inspection to ensure food shipped out is safe slows the export procedure to a crawl, costing Geb more and more with each passing day. Rumors that other poisoned shipments have already gone out persist, but it's impossible to know if this is true at

EATING TAINTED FOOD

If a character ingests (either accidentally or deliberately) food that's been poisoned with the mix of braingrit, tremor paste, and *shadow ash*, they are in great danger.

Tainted Food (poison) **Saving Throw** DC 31 Fortitude; **Maximum Duration** 6 rounds; **Stage 1** 4d6 poison and slowed 1 from the pain (1 round); **Stage 2** 6d6 poison and stunned 1 from the pain (1 round); **Stage 3** 8d6 poison and stunned 3 from the pain. A character who dies while suffering from the tainted food immediately transforms into a rotbomber.

this time. Unfortunately, it's also not completely clear who made the poison or where it came from, but discovering *shadow ash*, certainly the rarest of the three ingredients, helps the characters begin to piece things together.

XP Award: If the characters discover the poisoned cargo on their own, grant them 40 XP.

THE SEVENTH WRAITH

If the characters fail to follow the seventh wraith from the *Wyvern's Wife* to Cerulean Glade, they can still learn of the wraith's ultimate destination through investigation. Two hours of work and a successful DC 33 Gather Information check attempted anywhere but in Vassal Alley is enough to reveal to the characters that the dread wraith was seen fleeing into that neighborhood. A critical success on this check, or a success on this check made in Vassal Alley, confirms the wraith was spotted entering the glasswork shop. At your discretion, the use of powerful divination magic could well reveal the wraith's ultimate destination more quickly.

In the end, if the characters seem to be stuck on how to progress, you can have Kortash contact them with a brief note, informing them that his sources suggest that the wraiths that attacked the pier have a link to Cerulean Glade.

XP Award: Once the characters discover the dread wraith fled into Cerulean Glade by following these clues (rather than chasing the wraith), grant them 20 XP. They earn no XP if they're directed to the location by Kortash.

Cerulean Glade

The modest glassware shop known as Cerulean Glade is, to most onlookers, little more than a workshop that specializes in the construction of artistic stained glass designs and striking sculptures of colored glass. In fact, Cerulean Glade's owner is someone the characters

have met already: Rumin Purgo, one of Blood Lord Hyrune's agents who visited the characters shortly after they moved into their alcazar. Rumin has made himself valuable to Hyrune due to his skill at moving valuable or illegal goods unnoticed.

A key part of Rumin's success as a smuggler is his use of seven dread wraiths as his agents. The gnome discovered the dread wraiths years ago during his final days in his previous adventuring career while exploring a remote tomb. After he picked up a strange scepter he found leaning against an empty throne at the tomb's core, his mind was assailed by the burial site's restless spirits. The attempt to rip his soul from his flesh was nearly a success, and while the harrowing ordeal bleached him of color, he not only survived but emerged to find that the seven dread wraiths that guarded the tomb now saw him as their liege.

When Rumin left the tomb, the seven wraiths accompanied him, and ever the crafty plotter, it didn't take him long to figure out a cunning way to use them to turn a profit. By using *wraithweave patches* (page 81), Rumin began using his dread wraiths as couriers. The wraiths can wrap an item they intend to hide in a *wraithweave patch*, then stash the object directly into a crate or container without damaging a thing or leaving any evidence of tampering. This allows Rumin to smuggle things in containers that have already been inspected, or even containers that aren't things he shipped himself.

All of this made Rumin the right choice to Hyrune when he was tasked by Kemnebi to orchestrate a trial run to test their capability to ship large amounts of poisoned food. However, the plot fails spectacularly. When the seventh wraith returns to Rumin to report the disaster, the gnome panics.

This adventure expects the characters to arrive Cerulean Glade after pursuing Rumin's last dread wraith to the site, potentially within minutes of the undead's arrival and its distressing report to Rumin. The details presented below assume the characters investigate Cerulean Glade before Rumin has a chance to flee the site. If the characters arrive at the shop more than 16 hours after the attack at the *Wyvern's Wife*, they find the place abandoned and many of the clues missing, as detailed in each area's Once Abandoned entry.

If Rumin abandons the site, he knows that once word of his failure reaches his boss, it'll do more than ruin his future chances of being made into a vampire—he'll be lucky to survive Hyrune's wrath. He flees Mechitar as a result. Whether or not he returns to seek revenge against the characters in the future is left to you to decide.

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northern four platforms along the eastern wall—are specialized glass golems that Rumin created with the aid of several assistants (who are now deceased). These four glass golems represent the crowning achievement of Rumin’s glasswork, and are the last major works he completed before turning to full-time smuggling. The glass golems serve as the shop’s guardians, and remain motionless unless they are attacked, anyone attempts to loot any valuables or vandalize anything in the room, or anyone other than Rumin or his assistants attempt to move behind the counter to the north or open either door to area C2 or C3.

These glass golems are only human sized, but they are more dangerous than their larger, more common variants. In particular, these golems have a dangerous

WORKSHOP FEATURES

Cerulean Glade is a small structure tucked away deep in Vassal Alley—a modest glassblowing storefront with a large display room. Most of Rumin’s business is conducted via special orders over long distances; he has very few actual visitors to his shop, and as such generally doesn’t spend much time in the main room. The building is a squat stone block with a customer’s entrance on the south side and a larger service entrance to the north. The exterior, once painted a bright blue color, has faded and peeled over time. There are no windows; within, the place is well lit by glass chandeliers bearing *continual flame* spells heightened to 6th level. The doors are wood reinforced with iron. Ceiling height within is a constant 15 feet.

Both entrances to Cerulean Glade are locked. Rumin carries the only key that can unlock the doors, but they can be Forced Open with a successful DC 35 Athletics check or with five successful DC 30 Thievery checks to Pick the Lock. A sign next to each door reads “By Appointment Only” but offers no method by which such appointments can be made.

C1. DISPLAY ROOM

MODERATE 13

This large display room features displays to the east and west on which stand what appear to be human-shaped armatures made of glass, each of which holds a metal frame containing a beautiful stained-glass window that depicts a different forested glade under the sun. To the north, a wooden counter runs along the wall, blocking easy access to two doors and four much smaller display cases in the wall beyond. The rest of the room is unusually vacant and empty for what one might expect from a storefront.

While Rumin does make some money on his mundane profession of selling stained glass windows and glass sculptures, he hasn’t relied on this source of income for years as his focus shifted to the more profitable pursuit of smuggling. A character who succeeds at a DC 29 Mercantile Lore or Underworld Lore check or a DC 33 Society check while looking through this area notes that the display room seems underwhelming in a way that suggests the store is little more than some sort of front.

The doors to area C2 and C3 are locked. They can be Forced Open with a successful DC 35 Athletics check, unlocked with five successful DC 30 Thievery checks to Pick the Lock, or opened with the key Rumin carries.

Creatures: Of the eight glass armatures on display in this room, only four are what they appear. The other four—those standing atop the



Solar Glass Golem

attack against undead who are subject to damage from sunlight—a feature Rumin has used a few times before to punish one of his wraiths after a failure.

SOLAR GLASS GOLEMS (4)

CREATURE 11

RARE N MEDIUM CONSTRUCT GOLEM MINDLESS

Variant glass golem (*Pathfinder Bestiary 2* 131)

Perception +17; darkvision

Skills Acrobatics +20, Athletics +22, Stealth +18

Str +7, **Dex** +5, **Con** +7, **Int** -5, **Wis** +0, **Cha** -5

AC 31; **Fort** +20, **Ref** +20, **Will** +17

HP 195; **Immunities** bleed, death effects, disease, doomed, drained, fatigued, healing, magic (see Golem Antimagic below), mental, necromancy, nonlethal attacks, paralyzed, poison, sickened, unconscious; **Resistances** physical 10 (except adamantine or bludgeoning)

Golem Antimagic harmed by sonic (8d6, 2d6 from areas or persistent magic); healed by fire (2d6 HP); slowed by cold

Vulnerable to Shatter As glass golem.

Spell Reflection (abjuration, arcane) As glass golem.

Speed 25 feet

Melee stained glass frame +24 (agile, magical, versatile P); **Damage** 2d6+13 slashing plus 1d6 bleed

Solar Flare (evocation, light) The glass golem holds up its stained-glass frame and angles it downward, causing the image of the sun in the artwork to flash brightly, illuminating a 30-foot cone. This blast of light deals 8d6 fire damage to creatures in the area, plus 4d6 additional positive damage to undead creatures. Each creature in the area must attempt a DC 30 Reflex save. If this solar flare overlaps an area of magical darkness, it attempts to counteract the darkness effect (+22 counteract check).

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature takes half damage.

Failure The creature takes full damage and is dazzled for 1 minute.

Critical Failure The creature takes full damage and is blinded permanently.

Treasure: The four stained-glass windows held by the mundane glass armatures are beguiling works of art worth 100 gp each.

Each of the smaller displays behind the counter hold elegant glass sculptures crafted by Rumin. Three of these (a tree, a waterfall, and a skull) are non-magical but worth 250 gp each. The fourth is one of Rumin's greatest treasures—the object that first caught his attention and inspired him to become a glassworker. This item is an *invisible chain shirt* (*Secrets of Magic* 186) made of magically reinforced glass links displayed on a human-sized wooden frame.

Once Abandoned: Rumin leaves this room untouched, but he gives the golems final orders to immediately attack anyone who enters the room rather than leave them to wait for the triggers detailed in Creatures page 39.

C2. STOREROOM

TRIVIAL 13

Rows of wooden shelves, stretching from the floor to the ceiling fifteen feet above, turn this room into a somewhat claustrophobic chamber. Each of the shelves contains a large amount of crates and containers, all of which have a wide range of markings on the sides.

Once used to store supplies for glassblowing and working, of late this room has been where Rumin's been collecting a wide range of crates with a diverse array of brands and markings on them. A successful DC 25 Underworld Lore or Thievery check to Recall Knowledge is all that's needed for a character to recognize that stockpiling containers like this is a tactic commonly used by smugglers.

Creature: Rumin posts his final dread wraith here to guard the room. It fights until destroyed, and pursues the characters relentlessly if they flee.

ELITE DREAD WRAITH

CREATURE 10

Pathfinder Bestiary 2 6, 298

Initiative Stealth +21

Treasure: While the crates here are empty, a character who succeeds at a DC 31 Perception check to Search the room finds something significant near the northern door: a single pouch of *shadow ash* that slipped behind a shelf on accident. This pouch may be the only bit of evidence the characters can find in the shop once Rumin abandons it. See Investigating Clues on page 43 for more details.

Once Abandoned: After abandoning the shop, Rumin decides to cut ties with his sole remaining dread wraith (since its cover is essentially blown at this point), and orders his final dread wraith to remain here. He commands the wraith to attack anyone who attempts to enter the shop.

C3. WORKSHOP

MODERATE 13

This room appears to have at one point been a glassblower's workshop, with a large furnace built into the southern wall flanked by two stone and metal workbenches. A large wooden table sits in the center of the room and a wide workbench and shelving unit can be found in the northwest corner. These areas seem to

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be used for a combination of woodworking, tinkering, and record keeping. Four small cots sit along the wall to the southwest.

Rumin hasn't used this workshop to craft glassworks in well over a year, as a cursory examination of the dust and condition of the forge reveals. Instead, he's turned this room into a workshop where he prepares smuggling compartments for his operations and tracks detailed notes of his jobs. It's also a place for his four servants to sleep, if poorly and unpleasantly, atop the sparse cots against the southwestern wall.

Creatures: As long as the characters arrive within 16 hours of the undead attack at the waterfront, they find Rumin here. For the first 10 hours, he meticulously goes through the cluttered workshop and sorts it all out, determining what evidence he can keep and what to destroy. After that time passes, Rumin starts to feel like perhaps no one is tracking him here, so he and his minions grab some fitful rest for the next six hours. Rumin wakes in a panic at the end of that time, gathers his belongings and assistants, and abandons the shop.

Rumin's four assistants are all etioling blightmages—blighted gnomes like him in one regard, but as mortics, very different in other ways. The etiolings are indentured servants who have only one more year to work off a debt they owe Rumin, and expect to spend the rest of that year continuing to serve as his assistants, shop caretakers, and errand runners. The panicked state Rumin enters as he realizes he needs to act fast to escape potential punishment makes the etiolings nervous, but they remain loyal to their "employer" at first.

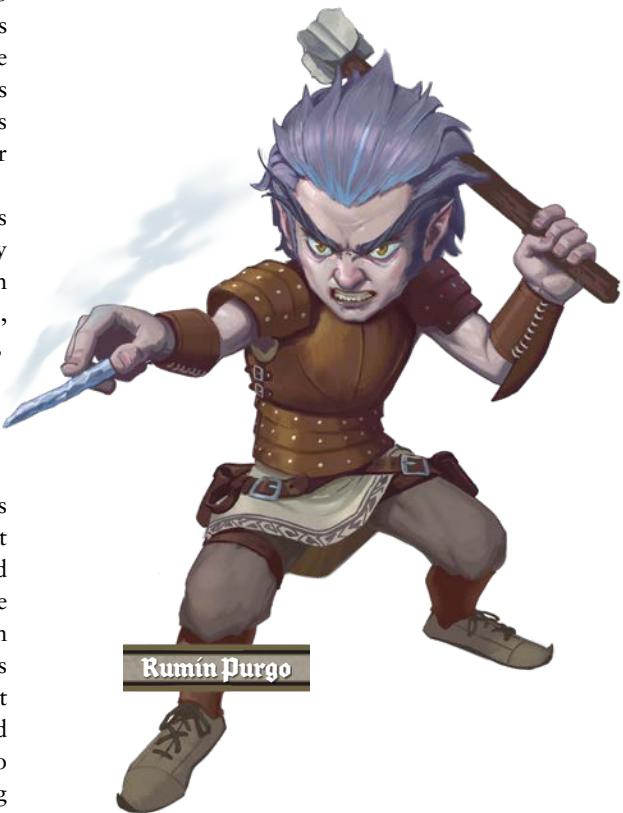
When the characters arrive here, Rumin orders his etiolings to attack while he hangs back and fights by using magic. The etiolings press the attack, but each time an etioling is reduced to fewer than 30 Hit Points, that etioling panics and tries to escape the building, much to Rumin's anger. If more than two etiolings flee, the enraged gnome lashes out at the last two as well, causing them to abandon their attacks on the characters to seek cover and beg for protection.

If the characters confront Rumin within 8 hours of the attack on the waterfront, the gnome hasn't yet gathered up all of the incriminating evidence, and his *bag of holding* sits partially filled with it on the northwest workbench. If the characters confront him after that time period, he's filled the bag and carries it. During those first 8 hours, Rumin knows that fleeing without gathering that evidence puts him and his employers in greater danger, but if he's reduced to fewer than 30 Hit Points he decides to flee, casting

dimension door to escape. If he's packed his bag, he's much quicker to flee, and does so once he's reduced to fewer than 100 Hit Points. If Rumin flees, is captured, or is defeated, any remaining etiolings immediately surrender and beg for mercy.

Note that Rumin and his assistants have already saved against the dread wraith's aura and are temporarily immune to its effects for 24 hours.

If the characters manage to capture Rumin alive, his initial attitude is hostile. He tries to bargain for his freedom by giving up some or all of his gear to the characters, but he knows that they've also got access now to all that evidence as well. If the characters promise to protect him, Rumin agrees to tell them what he knows only after he feels safe. Every 24 hours that pass without repercussions in a safe location, Rumin's attitude increases by one step, potentially making it possible for the characters to adjust his attitude to helpful so they can Request that he tell them what he knows. Whether or not Hyruna finds out where he's hiding and attempts to silence him before he gets to this point is left to you to decide. Impatient characters can also attempt to Coerce him or use magic to compel his cooperation. See Interrogating Rumin on page 42 for more details regarding what the gnome can do if the characters manage to secure his aid.



Rumin Purgo

It's more likely that the characters have a chance to interrogate a surviving etioling, but the mortics have less information to give the characters than Rumin. They can confirm that they were his indentured servants, that he's been working as a smuggler for years, and that he has strong ties to Blood Lord Hyrune they don't quite understand.

RUMIN PURGO

UNIQUE **CE** **SMALL** **GNOME** **HUMANOID**

Male gnome smuggler

Perception +17; low-light vision

Languages Common, Gnomish, Kelish, Necril

Skills Arcana +22, Crafting +22, Deception +22, Mechanic Lore +20, Society +20, Stealth +21, Thievery +23

Str +0, **Dex** +4, **Con** +2, **Int** +3, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +5

Items bag of holding IV, +1 striking light mace, key to all locks in Cerulean Glade, +1 leather armor, wand of cone of cold

AC 31; **Fort** +19, **Ref** +21, **Will** +19

HP 190

Evasion If Rumin rolls a success on a Reflex save, he gets a critical success instead.

Susceptible to Mockery A character can attempt to Feint or Demoralize Rumin by mocking the fact that he hasn't yet been turned into a vampire. On a success, in addition to the normal effects, Rumin becomes sickened 1 (or sickened 3 on a critical success), but on a critical failure he becomes enraged and gains a +1 status bonus to Strikes and damage rolls against foes for 1 minute, during which time he can't be mocked further.

Speed 25 feet

Melee  +22 (agile, finesse, shove), **Damage** 2d4+10 bludgeoning

Arcane Spontaneous Spells DC 30, attack +22; **6th** (2 slots) disintegrate, mislead, phantasmal killer; **5th** (3 slots) dispel magic, hallucination, prying eye, subconscious suggestion; **4th** (3 slots) dimension door, fly, invisibility, shatter; **3rd** (3 slots) haste, magic missile, shrink item; **2nd** (3 slots) blindness, dispel magic, glitterdust, hideous laughter, mirror image; **1st** (3 slots) charm, floating disc, magic missile, unseen servant; **Cantrips (6th)** daze, detect magic, light, mage hand, shield, telekinetic projectile

Sorcerer Bloodline Spells 2 Focus Points; DC 30, attack +22; **6th** ancestral memories (Core Rulebook 402), extend spell (Core Rulebook 404)

Sneak Attack Rumin's Strikes deal an additional 2d6 precision damage to flat-footed creatures.

CREATURE 11

Treasure: A collection of excellent artisan's tools can be gathered from the northwestern workbench, including a full set of sterling artisan's tools for glassblowing, a set for woodworking, and a set for tinkering. In addition, a *traveler's any-tool* and a *lifting belt* can be found here, along with the seven *wraithweave patches* I the wraiths used to carry *shadow ash* to the waterfront.

If the characters get here in time, they find a wealth of incriminating evidence in the form of ledgers, journals, a fair amount of half-completed smuggling devices and compartments that haven't yet been fitted into housings like crates or other containers, and three vials of *shadow ash* Hyrune allowed Rumin to keep as a bonus for his latest task. After 8 hours, the most damning of these are all stashed in Rumin's *bag of holding* while the others are stacked near the forge, awaiting destruction. Rumin burns these last journals and ledgers and half-completed works in the forge before he abandons the site. The characters can investigate this incriminating evidence at their leisure once they gather it.

Once Abandoned: Rumin and his four etioling servants aren't encountered here, and little incriminating evidence remains. The furnace appears to have been used recently—most of Rumin's record books were burnt here, and nothing but ashes remain unless a character succeeds at a DC 35 Perception check, in which case they notice a few fragments that survived the fire. The characters can gather enough of these fragments to investigate (as described in Investigating Clues on page 43) but they take a -4 circumstance penalty to skill checks to examine the mostly burnt evidence and their results are shifted down one degree of success.

Interrogating Rumin

If the characters manage to secure Rumin's cooperation, the gnome can give them some significant information. He confirms that Hyrune was the one who hired him to smuggle the *shadow ash* into the crates aboard the *Wyvern's Wife*, but denies knowing that the act would create poison. He's telling the truth—Hyrune has kept the greater details of the poison plot to himself. He suspects, but can't prove, that Hyrune is taking orders from a higher-ranked Blood Lord and worries that this might be Chancellor Kemnebi himself. As long as Rumin remains cooperative and available, you might have him reveal other hints and bits of information to the characters if they get stuck in their investigation.

XP Award: If the characters manage to secure Rumin's aid in this manner, grant them 40 XP.

ETIOLING BLIGHTMAGES (4)

CREATURE 10

Pathfinder Bestiary 3 177

Initiative Perception +19

Investigating Clues

At this point, Mechitar is faced with a disturbing mystery—someone's been poisoning food bound for other ports of call, and there's no telling how much tainted supplies have already shipped out. With most of the city's officials scrambling to cover themselves and blame others, the task of figuring out what's going on falls to the characters—even as public opinion about them grows fraught. Still, by investigating these initial clues, the characters uncover a trail that, in time, leads them to this chapter's conclusion at the Cathedral of Epiphenomena.

To investigate the clues, the characters must research them as downtime activities, using the Research subsystem detailed on pages 154–155 of the *Pathfinder Gamemastery Guide*. Each clue is treated as a different topic for research, and several of them require the characters to first discover the topic in play or as the result of earlier investigation.

Remember that some of the checks required to investigate these clues might be affected by the fact that many blame the characters for the waterfront attack!

Unlike normal research checks, investigating the poison plot is a downtime activity. A character can attempt either two or three research checks per day—if they attempt three, they become fatigued on the following day and can only attempt one research check the next day and for as long as they remain fatigued.

Each time the party achieves a new research threshold for the first time, the characters earn that research threshold's XP reward.

THE POISON PLOT

DOWNTIME

Gathering Information A character listens to rumors and scuttlebutt on the streets, in taverns, and elsewhere in Mechitar; **Maximum RP 2**

Research Checks DC 31 Diplomacy (to Gather Information)

Examine Shadow Ash A character examines a dose of shadow ash and researches places where the spell catalyst might have been sold or manufactured; **Maximum RP 4**

Research Checks DC 29 Arcana or Occultism, DC 31 Crafting, DC 33 Society

Investigate the Waterfront A character examines the Wyvern's Wife and its cargo, or interviews locals about smuggling rumors; **Maximum RP 2**

Research Checks DC 29 Diplomacy (to Gather Information), DC 31 Mercantile, Sailor, or Underworld Lore, DC 33 Perception

Investigate Incriminating Evidence The character examines the incriminating evidence recovered from area C3 of Cerulean Glade; **Maximum RP 4**

INVESTIGATION 13

Research Checks DC 29 Underworld Lore, DC 31 Thievery, DC 33 Perception

Investigate Rumin If the characters learn that Hyrune hired Rumin, they can pursue this clue; **Maximum RP 2**

Research Checks DC 29 Mechitar Lore, DC 31 Society, DC 33 Diplomacy (to Gather Information)

Interview Bremeteria Veng Once the characters learn about Bremeteria's expertise in spell catalysts (particularly *shadow ash*), they can arrange an interview with her in between classes at the Ebon Mausoleum; **Maximum RP 6**

Research Checks DC 29 Academia Lore, DC 31 Arcana or Occultism, DC 33 Diplomacy (to Request)

2 Research Points The characters learn that the use of wraiths to smuggle is the calling card of one of the city's smugglers. This allows the characters to discover that smuggler is Rumin and could lead them to Cerulean Glade if they haven't discovered that connection already. **XP Reward** 20 XP.

8 Research Points The characters learn that a professor at the Ebon Mausoleum, one Bremeteria Veng, is an expert on spell catalysts and toxins, and would certainly know more about *shadow ash*. If they've not discovered any doses of *shadow ash* themselves, they learn enough about it to pursue the Examine Shadow Ash lead (but with a -4 circumstance penalty). If they have a dose of *shadow ash*, they confirm that the design of the pouch the doses were contained in had fine workmanship normally only seen in use by Mechitar's elite, like the Blood Lords. **XP Reward** 20 XP.

12 Research Points The characters learn that Hyrune hasn't been seen publicly for the past few days, further implicating that he knew what his agent Rumin was up to. If they haven't already, the characters learn how *shadow ash* works, as if they had successfully Identified Magic on the spell catalyst, but they also confirm that when mixed over food that's been laced properly with a combination of braingrit and tremor paste, *shadow ash* turns that food toxic so that those who eat it are prone to various necromantic contagions and are much easier to transform into undead after death. In concentrated doses (such as those found in the six crates on the Wyvern's Wife), it can cause much swifter contagions resulting in quick death and transformation into a rotbomber. Had the poison been more evenly distributed through the ship's cargo it would have gone unnoticed and would be well on its way to causing an international incident in Katapesh. **XP Reward** 20 XP.

16 Research Points Blood Lord Hyrune is a devotee of Urgathoa, and while he's not a full member of her faith, he has been seen recently coming and going to and from the Cathedral of Epiphenomena. The characters also learn that the formula for *shadow ash* is quite

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hard to come by, as it was invented some years ago by a now disbanded sect of Urgathoans once known as the “Empty Chorus.” *Shadow ash*’s use as a spell catalyst was a happy accident of its creation, since the Empty Chorus supposedly was researching a food additive that would make even the most filling meal feel unsatisfying and hollow so as to urge those who ate to consume far more than they should. Since this group has gone away, existing doses of *shadow ash* have grown increasingly hard to come by. If there’s anywhere in Mechitar that would potentially know more about where the *shadow ash* Rumin had in his possession came from, it would be the Urgathoans of the Cathedral of Epiphenomena. **XP Reward**
40 XP.

VISITING HYRUNE’S ALCAZAR

Once the characters learn of a link between the *shadow ash*, Hyrune, and his agent Rumin, they might decide to visit his alcazar holdings, which are located at the apex of the very same alcazar the characters live in. While his alcazar is lavish and sprawling, Hyrune has taken steps to ensure all evidence of his work for Chancellor Kemnebi is kept in his secret lair, the Hanging Castle. As such, there is no incriminating evidence to be found in his alcazar, with the notable exception that by the time the characters pay a visit, Hyrune and his three favored minions, Rumin, Harmony in Agony, and Weeping Jack, are not in residence. Only minor staff remain in place, and they know only that “the master is on important business for now at an undisclosed location.”

If the characters attempt to force their way in to search Hyrune’s suite, his staff members don’t oppose them (although they do follow the characters wherever they go and continually warn them to leave and that they’re trespassing). A character who succeeds at a DC 33 Perception check to Search uncovers some letters and other clues that suggest Hyrune has allies among the priesthood of Urgathoa at the Cathedral of Epiphenomena. There’s nothing else to find in the alcazar, but if the characters aren’t circumspect about the investigation, Hyrune learns about the stunt soon enough and, at your discretion, he orders Harmony to hire assassins (a group of three ghoul razorclaws; page 85) to attempt to kill the characters at their alcazar suite. If the characters can capture one of these

assassins and interrogate them, they can learn that Harmony hired them.

Cathedral of Epiphenomena

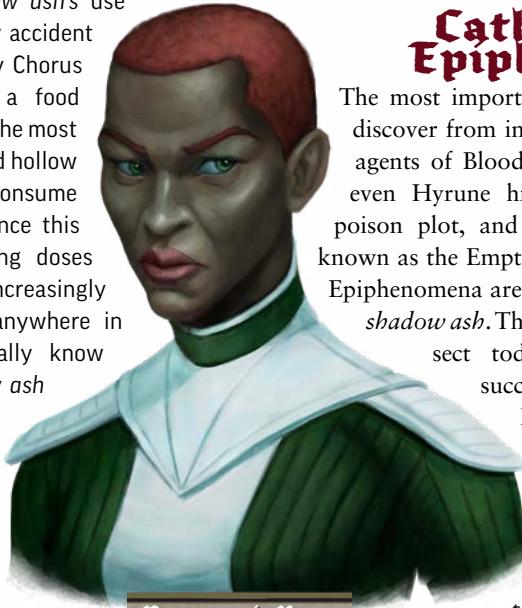
The most important leads the characters can discover from investigating the clues are that agents of Blood Lord Hyrune (and perhaps even Hyrune himself) are involved in the poison plot, and that a sect of Urgathoans known as the Empty Chorus in the Cathedral of Epiphenomena are the most likely source of the *shadow ash*. The Empty Chorus is an obscure sect today, but a character who succeeds at a DC 33 Religion or a DC 29 Urgathoa Lore check to Recall Knowledge knows that the group was known to be an extremist sect in the church that believed the greatest path to understanding gluttony was

to undertake periods of fasting punctuated by moments of unbridled consumption. Even among Urgathoans, members of the Empty Chorus were considered strange, and it was to no one’s shock when the Cathedral of Epiphenomena disbanded the group and shut down the isolated wing within the complex that housed these cultists—a place called the Yearning Sanctum. If no character can attempt this check, then Dizonn can give them the information instead.

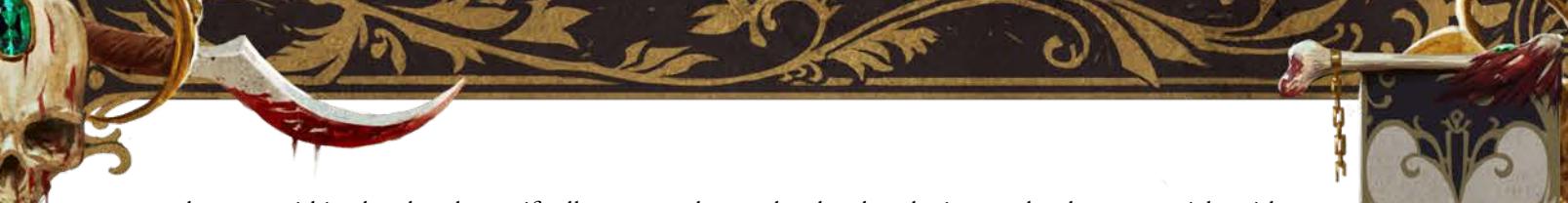
The Cathedral of Epiphenomena is one of the larger complexes in Mechitar—a sprawling holy site devoted to Urgathoa that includes a pair of massive pyramids and a sprawling multi-level complex that connects the two underground. While the cathedral’s atrium and main temple are open to the public, most of the complex is not accessible, even to fellow worshippers of Urgathoa who hail from other lands. Exceptions, when made, are granted on a case-by-case basis, and typically only afford groups the right to visit a small portion or single wing of the cathedral. While the Yearning Sanctum has been abandoned for years, it’s certainly a place that the faithful are unlikely to allow just anyone to visit and explore, even if those people are Blood Lords.

SECURING ACCESS

If the characters attempt to secure access to the Yearning Sanctum on their own, the process takes weeks, if not months—perhaps even longer, considering the shaky ground of their reputation in the face of such public contempt. Considering that



Bremeteria Veng



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elements within the church specifically oppose the characters in secret, the characters remain unable to receive permission on their own. Dizonn, or perhaps even Kortash, can suggest that if they wish to explore the abandoned chambers, their best bet might be to rely upon one of the factions they've gained prestige with.

Some parties might decide to try to sneak into the Yearning Sanctum or even fight their way in. Impress upon the players that this is a poor option. Being caught in what is essentially an open and brazen invasion of the city's most powerful religious stronghold is more than just a political death wish—it's a literal one. Instead, use Dizonn or another NPC to encourage the party to seek a faction's aid.

In order to secure this aid and sponsorship, the characters must have accumulated at least 20 Reputation Points with a faction. If the characters haven't earned this much Reputation with any faction at this point, either consider having them do additional favors, perhaps as downtime activities, to earn a few more points or simply allow them to choose the faction with whom they've earned the most points so far. The request takes a day to process, but is automatically successful, although their contacts at that faction warn them that they've put their own reputations on the line, and that they're doing this only because they trust the characters have their best interests in mind.

Once the characters take this step, their faction contact has their own quick meeting with church representatives, then one day returns to the characters with the good news that they've been granted permission to enter and explore the abandoned Yearning Sanctum, but are not to enter other portions of the church. (The church wants to stay on good terms with the Blood Lords as a whole, so they see no problem granting this access, but neither do they feel beholden to opening their secrets to the government.) The contact further explains that while there's no time limit imposed upon their access to the Yearning Sanctum, it can be revoked at any moment by any church official for any reason. Finally, the faction contact supplies the party with a single ivory and obsidian religious symbol of Urgathoa that glows faintly with pale light (equivalent to that of a candle). This is their pass into the Yearning Sanctum, and it must be presented to any temple guards or priests immediately upon request.

Preliminary Research

No additional information is afforded to the characters by the church beyond permission to enter

the abandoned wing, so the characters might wish to do a little of their own research about the Yearning Sanctum and the Empty Chorus before they begin their exploration. They might do so by attempting a DC 29 Urgathoa Lore or a DC 33 Religion or Society check to Recall Knowledge, or by Gathering Information with a successful DC 31 Diplomacy check. They can also research the topic as an 8-hour downtime activity (rolling the same checks they would to Recall Knowledge, but with the option of attempting the roll more than once). These are all secret checks, as there's a chance for the characters to learn potentially dangerous misinformation.

Critical Success The characters learn that the Empty Chorus consisted of ten members led by a priest named Bavmawhar at the time they were disbanded. Those cultists' remains were destroyed and their ashes scattered, so they don't remain in the Yearning Sanctum, but it's likely that daemons, undead associated with starvation or feeding, creatures or hazards associated with the negative energy, and other perils await within. They also learn that a sprawling carrion pit at the Sanctum's entrance is seemingly traversed by a bridge that crosses it. However, the bridge is actually a semi-real illusion meant to drop intruders into the pit below. The characters also learn everything from the Success and Failure result, and if they'd previously learned the Critical Failure information, discover proof that this information is false.

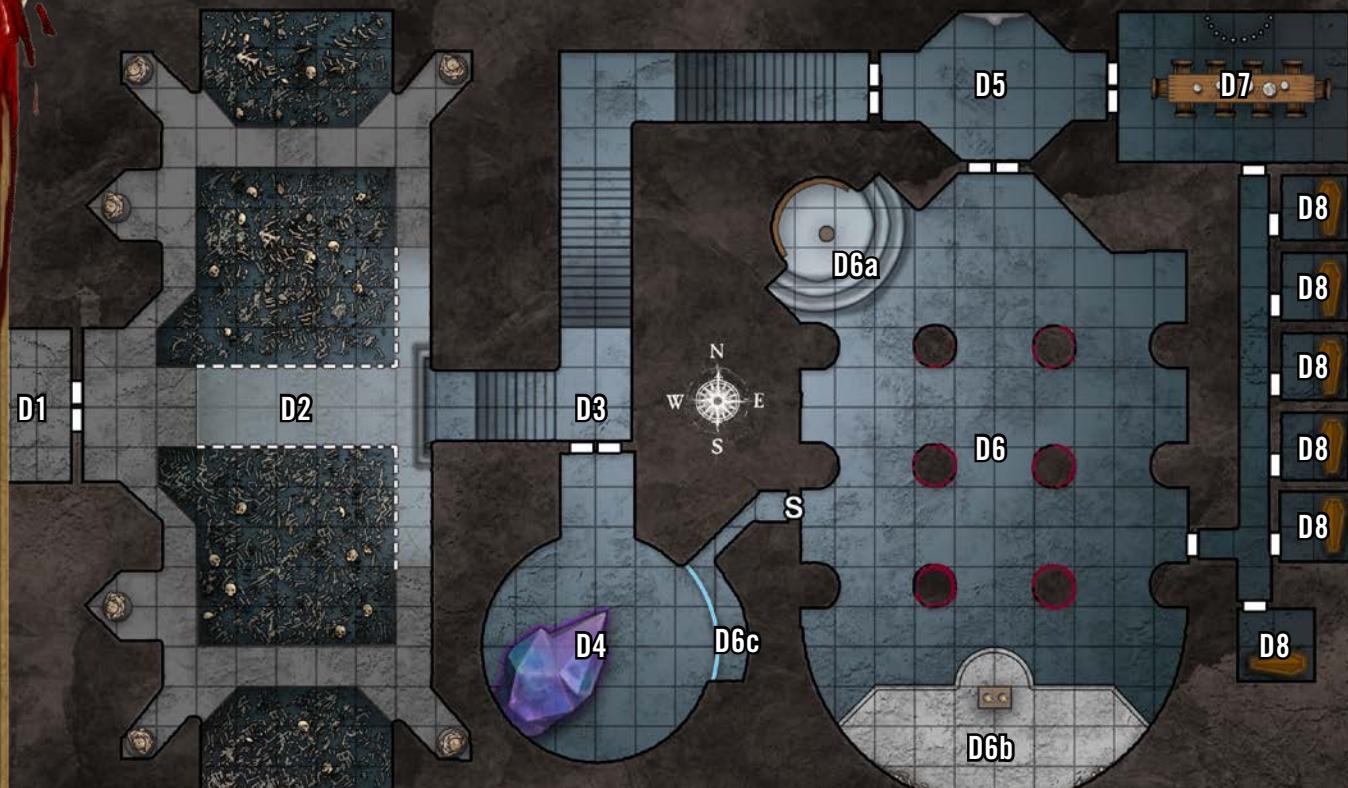
Success The characters learn that the Yearning Sanctum was a relatively small complex, and hear rumors about something called the "Void Garden"—a massive purple crystal on display somewhere within the sanctum said to be a physical link between this world and the Negative Energy Plane. They also learn that the Empty Chorus spent much of its time researching methods of magically altering food to cause discomfort or pain as both methods of provoking punishment, mortification, and agony-induced visions—practices that often involved infusing food with negative energy. The characters also learn everything from the Failure result.

Failure The attempt reveals only that the Empty Chorus was regarded as a group of eccentrics at best or extremists at worst by the church of Urgathoa for their practices of long fasts interrupted by bouts of gluttony.

Critical Failure The characters learn the information above for a Failure, but also learn a dangerous and misleading rumor that those who enter the Yearning Sanctum under the effects of fatigue caused by starvation are granted additional visions that aid in the navigation of the complex and grant additional protection from those within; in truth, no such premonitions or protections are offered to those who foolishly believe this rumor.

YEARNING SANCTUM

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



Kortash's Concerns

Kortash Khain learns of the characters' plans to enter the Cathedral even if they don't inform him themselves, and at some point before they first head out to the Yearning Sanctum, the party receives word to stop for a visit with the high priest. Kortash's request arrives via a curt *sending* spell to one character rather than via a messenger: "Before you visit the cathedral, there is a matter of concern to us all that we must discuss. Come speak with me at once."

As long as the characters visit Kortash before they go to the Yearning Sanctum, he is pleased. If they ignore his request, his attitude toward them drops by one step per day (friendly to indifferent, for example) until it reaches hostile, at which point they can no longer Influence him at all.

During this visit, Kortash warns the characters about the rivalry between the faiths of Urgathoa and Kabriri, and notes that he's suspected the church's influence over Geb has been in part behind his decision to remove the tithes to Nemret Noktoria. He has avoided any direct investigation or confrontation with the church out of a desire to avoid triggering further

conflict, but if the characters can find any information while they're in the church about any plans they might have for Kortash or Nemret Noktoria, he indicates he'll be very pleased and generous with his thanks.

YEARNING SANCTUM FEATURES

Once the characters are ready to enter the supposedly abandoned wing of the Cathedral of Epiphenomena, they must present themselves first to temple guards at the cathedral's entrance. As soon as the characters show the guards their religious symbol pass, the guards silently indicate the characters are to follow them—they are expected. The characters are led down two flights of steps into the deep chambers below the Cathedral's southern pyramid, a journey that takes about 10 minutes to complete before their escorts take up a new post in a large hexagonal chamber. A 20-foot-wide hallway leads east from this chamber, sloping downward at a slight angle. The guards inform the characters that sentinels stand ready to escort the characters back out of the Cathedral as needed but won't accompany them further east. That tunnel continues for 60 feet before ending at a large

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double door made of stone and etched with a carving of Urgathoa holding an upside-down cornucopia that's dumping dust onto the floor. This door is described in area **D1** below.

The Yearning Sanctum is unlit. Doors are made of wood reinforced with metal and (with the exception of the ones in area **D1**) are unlocked. Ceiling height remains at 12 feet, except as indicated in certain rooms in the text.

D1. SANCTUM ENTRANCE

The twenty-foot-wide tunnel ends at a stone wall, in the middle of which rises a stone double door decorated with a carving of the goddess Urgathoa holding an upside-down cornucopia. A plume of dust pours from the empty container to pile at her skeletal feet. The bronze door handles have been melted together into a slag plug to seal the doors shut.

While the characters have been granted access to the Yearning Sanctum, how they enter it has been left to them. There's no apparent lock to pick on the door, which can be Forced Open with a successful DC 35 Athletics check, or simply destroyed (Hardness 15, HP 56 (BT 28). The doors aren't air-tight, so abilities like Turn to Mist can allow for entry as well (it's via this method that Hyrune and other vampiric conspirators have come and gone from the Sanctum recently).

D2. CARRION PIT

Moderate 13

Note that the central bridge as well as a 15-foot-length to either side of the exit along this room's eastern wall are illusory, while the five-foot-high ledge running around the north and south are invisible; adjust the following read-aloud text as needed if the characters can see through illusions or see invisible objects.

Much of this vast rectangular chamber consists of a twenty-foot-deep pit, the floor of which is scattered with a layer of bones and rubble. A ten-foot-wide bridge crosses the middle of the pit, connecting the room's opposite sides. To the east, a ten-foot-wide archway opens into a flight of stairs leading up. Alcoves along the pit walls contain what appear to be mummified giants.

The effect that hides the safe ledges to the north and south and creates the illusory bridge are similar to those generated by *hallucinatory terrain*. Any character who steps onto the illusory part of the bridge (as indicated by the dotted lines on the map) falls into the 20-foot-deep pit below, but they can Grab an Edge with a successful DC 30 Reflex save.

The bones and rubble on the pit floor count as difficult terrain for a Large or smaller creature, and a creature can Climb the pit's smooth walls with a successful DC 25 Athletics check. The invisible ledge surrounding the pit is made of wood and iron, and someone climbing from below must succeed at a DC 35 Athletics check to navigate the underside of this ledge to clamber out and then up onto the ledge (this drops to DC 30 if the climber can see the invisible ledge and its supports).

Creatures: A pair of immense undead guardians remain stationed here in the carrion pit, even though it's been many years since the cult used the place to dispose of their victims and the prodigious amount of wasted food. These two creatures are towering skeletal creatures—gashadokuro—and they lurch to deadly unlifethe moment they spot any intruders (Hyrune and his agents used a combination of *invisibility* and Turn to Mist to pass through this room stealthily on their first few visits, then simply teleported into the chambers beyond as needed).

Both gashadokuro can attack creatures on the ledge or bridge with their Strikes due to their reach, and they prefer to do so instead of striking targets on the ground. While they could, in theory, squeeze into the nearby tunnels, they don't; characters who flee this room aren't pursued.

GASHADOKURO (2)

CREATURE 13

Pathfinder Book of the Dead 95

Initiative Perception +24

D3. THE PUTRID RISE

LOW 13

The walls of this ten-foot-wide stairwell are fully decorated with disgusting carvings of all manner of creatures—humanoid or otherwise—all simultaneously gorging on food and vomiting even as their cleverly-carved eyes seem to follow movement. The faint stink of bile lingers in the air.

Hazard: This curving hallway winds upward to area **D5**, but those who trod these steps without performing one of the countless mantras espousing the central beliefs of the Empty Chorus put themselves in danger. As with area **D2**, the vampires avoided this trap via stealthy flight after Turning to Mist. A creature that succeeds at a DC 33 Stealth check can avoid triggering this trap.

THE PUTRID RISE

HAZARD 14

COMPLEX MAGICAL TRAP

Stealth +28 (master)

Description The stink of bile suddenly grows as the myriad

mouths carved into the walls begin to vomit forth a deluge of acidic slurry.

Disable DC 33 Thievery (master) to disrupt the trap's magical network of sensors and effectively "blind" it to targets to react to, DC 38 Religion (master) to recognize the carvings and recall one of the mantras needed to pass safely, or *dispel magic* (7th level; counteract DC 32) to counteract the trap.

Vomit  **Trigger** The trap's sensors notice a creature on the stairs north of the entrance to area **D4**; **Effect** The myriad mouths on the walls spew out a foul-smelling acidic slurry along the entire stairwell. The stairs in areas **D3** become difficult terrain, and all creatures in area **D3** must attempt a DC 34 Reflex saving throw. A creature that is fatigued by hunger takes a -2 circumstance penalty to this saving throw. The trap then rolls initiative.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature takes 4d6 acid damage and is sickened 1.

Failure The creature takes 8d6 acid damage, is sickened 2, and is knocked prone.

Critical Failure The creature takes 16d6 acid damage, is sickened 3, is knocked prone, and then tumbles down the stairs. The fall ends once the creature reaches the next lowest landing (note that a creature falling at the lowest flight tumbles into the carrion pit at area **D2**, but can attempt to Grab an Edge as detailed in that room). A creature that falls down the steps takes an additional 4d6 bludgeoning damage (DC 32 basic Reflex save) from the tumble, regardless of the total distance traveled.

Routine (1 action) On its turn, the trap Vomits as its action. As long as the Putrid Rise is active, the stairs in area **D3** are difficult terrain.

Reset The trap deactivates 1 round after no targets can be sensed, but resets immediately.

D4. THE VOID GARDEN

Moderate 13

The ceiling of this thirty-foot-diameter room extends upward to a domed ceiling nearly sixty feet above. Intricate patterns of softly glowing purple runes adorn the walls and floor of the chamber. To the east, a five-foot-high, fifteen-foot-long window opens into a balcony overlooking the room at a height of forty feet. The room is empty, save for an immense, dark purple crystal that fills much of the southeastern quadrant of the chamber with a tangle of razor-sharp edges and towering growths.

As detailed in area **D6c**, a permanent *wall of force* blocks access from this room to the balcony.

As the work the Empty Chorus did in researching ways to make food painful and unsatisfying increasingly

required infusions of negative energy drawn directly from that plane, its members grew frustrated with the dangerous method of traveling to that plane in person to harvest the raw crystals needed as reagents and materials for their experiments. The sect's leader, Bavmawhar, engineered a solution by transporting some of the raw crystals known as blight quartz back to the Yearning Sanctum, then managed to cultivate a small garden of the dangerous material here in this room. On the Negative Energy Plane, blight crystals are formed from raw entropy and are often curated or sculpted by that reality's inhabitants, such as sceaduinars (*Pathfinder Bestiary 2* 233). Here on the Material Plane, blight crystals don't grow so well, and even though Bavmawhar managed to curate an impressive amount of self-sustaining crystals here (in part by weaving a sort of protective barrier into the walls of the chamber), they are impure and lighter in coloration than those that grow on the Negative Energy Plane.

The runes glowing on the walls of this chamber are a manifestation of the protective shell that prevents the crystals from decaying quickly, yet does not stop their eventual decay. In another few decades, the remaining crystals here will crumble away into dust. A character who examines the crystals and succeeds at a DC 31 Crafting or Occultism check notes that the layer of dust on the crystals superficially resembles *shadow ash*, while a critical success confirms that these crystals must play a key role in the creation of *shadow ash*.

Hazard: While these blight crystals are flawed, they remain quite dangerous to the living—but if the characters destroy or deactivate this hazard, they weaken the hostile magical energies that infuse the Temple of Yearning (area **D6**). The void garden consists of six significant crystals, all of which must be disabled or destroyed to defeat the hazard.

VOID GARDEN

COMPLEX ENVIRONMENTAL

Stealth +28 (master)

Description Six eerie purple crystals react to the presence of life, pulsing with flashes of violet light that seem to match the heartbeats of living creatures in the room.

Disable DC 33 Thievery (master) or DC 35 Nature (master) to discern a hairline fracture that, when struck, shatters a crystal to dust

Crystal AC 36; **Fort** +28, **Ref** +22

Crystal Hardness 22, **Crystal HP** 92 (BT 46); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities (except positive), precision damage; **Weaknesses** positive 15

Negative Energy Pulse  **(attack)** **Trigger** A living creature enters the circular portion of area **D4**, or a crystal takes damage from any source; **Effect** The void

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garden creates a pulse of negative energy that fills the entire room and, if the doors to area D3 are open, extends 30 feet into the hallway beyond. All living creatures in this area must attempt a DC 34 Fortitude save. The trap then rolls initiative.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected

Success The creature takes 5d6 negative damage.

Failure The creature takes 8d6 negative damage and is drained 1.

Critical Failure The creature takes 16d6 negative damage and is drained 2.

Routine (6 actions) The void garden's crystals each use an action to fire a void ray, a beam of destructive dark purple energy, at a random living creature in the room or in visible reach through the open doorway (the crystals don't fire at living targets on the balcony in area D6c). A single creature can be targeted only once per round by a void ray. The void garden loses one action for each crystal that is disarmed or destroyed.

Ranged ♦ void ray +29 (negative, range 120 feet), **Damage** 3d10 negative plus drained 1 (this drained value stacks with that caused by other void rays or the hazard's Negative Energy Pulse, to a maximum of drained 5).

Reset The void garden deactivates 1 round after all living targets leave the area but resets immediately thereafter.

Treasure: Once the void garden is deactivated or destroyed and the bulk of the crystals crumble away, several stable crystals remain behind. These valuable crystals are much sought after as raw materials for the creation of necromantic magic items. Ten of them remain behind, each worth 200 gp.

D5. THE WATCHFUL HUNGER

TRIVIAL 13

Three double doors lead from this octagonal chamber to the east, west, and south. To the north, the wall has been carved into a massive depiction of a woman's face—the left half of which is a skull.

A successful DC 10 Religion check is all that's required to note the image carved on the north wall is a depiction of Urgathoa.

Creatures: Although Kemnebi believes he's learned all he can from the Yearning Sanctum, he wasn't ready to abandon the site, knowing he might need to return. To keep the place safe and secure, Kemnebi instructed Hyrune to post some guards here. The Temple of Yearning is where most of these protectors remain,

but a pair of vampire guards in thrall to Hyrune stand watch here as well.

These two vampires keep watch over the southern double door, and when the characters arrive, they take on the persona of official church guards, sternly but respectfully alerting the characters that this area is off limits to visitors and that they should leave at once. They don't honor the religious symbol the characters were given, and if the characters refuse to leave, the vampires Turn to Mist and flee through the cracks of the door to area D6. If the characters attack, the vampires fight until one of them is destroyed, at which point the other flees to area D6 to join the defenders therein.



Vampire Guardian

If one of these vampires is destroyed, it Turns to Mist and flees under door cracks to the west to return to its coffin in area **D8**.

A character who succeeds at a DC 25 Mechitar Lore or DC 30 Society check notes that these vampire guardians bear certain mannerisms and styles of clothing that suggest they in fact serve Blood Lord Hyrune. This observation alone isn't enough to prove that he was involved in the poison plot, but if the characters can secure one of the vampires as a prisoner (or at least secure one of their coffins in area **D8**) they are well poised to call Hyrune out at the start of Chapter 4.

VAMPIRE GUARDIANS (2)

RARE CE MEDIUM UNDEAD VAMPIRE

Human vampire guards (*Pathfinder Bestiary 318*)

Perception +21; darkvision

Languages Common, Necril

Skills Acrobatics +19, Athletics +21, Deception +19, Intimidation +19, Society +18, Stealth +19

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

Items +1 striking rapier, +1 leather armor, +1 striking composite shortbow (20 arrows)

Children of the Night (divine, enchantment, mental) As vampire.

AC 29; **Fort** +17, **Ref** +19, **Will** +21

HP 132, coffin restoration, fast healing 10, negative healing; **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyze, poison, sleep; **Weaknesses** vampire weaknesses; **Resistance** physical 10 (except magical silver)

Mist Escape ♦ As vampire.

Speed 25 feet, climb 25 feet

Melee ♦ rapier +22 (deadly d8, disarm, finesse), **Damage** 2d6+11 piercing

Melee ♦ claw +21 (agile), **Damage** 2d6+11 slashing plus Grab

Ranged ♦ shortbow +20 (deadly d10, propulsive, range 60 feet), **Damage** 2d6+11 piercing

Change Shape ♦ (concentrate, divine, polymorph, transmutation) Giant bat with fangs +21 for 2d6+11 piercing, otherwise as vampire.

Create Spawn (divine, downtime, necromancy) As vampire.

Dominate ♦ (divine, enchantment, incapacitation, mental, visual) As vampire, but DC 26.

Drink Blood ♦ (divine, necromancy) As vampire, but when drinking blood, the vampire guardian regains 13 HP.

Sneak Attack A vampire guardian deals 1d6 extra precision damage to flat-footed creatures.

Turn to Mist ♦ (concentrate, divine, transmutation) As vampire.

Hazard: Hyrune placed a *glyph of warding* on the southern doors in anticipation of being confronted by those who would intrude here.

GLYPH OF WARDING

MAGICAL TRAP

Stealth DC 34 (trained)

Description A magical glyph flashes before triggering a spell.

Disable DC 34 Thievery (trained) to disable the glyph, or *dispel magic* (7th level, counteract DC 34) to counteract the glyph

Discharge Glyph ♦ (abjuration, divine) **Trigger** A creature opens the door to area **D6**; **Effect** The creature is targeted by a *spirit blast* spell (DC 34).

CREATURE 10

HAZARD 14

SEVERE 13

This sprawling cathedral space is fifty feet across, eighty feet high, and nearly a hundred feet long. A dozen five-foot-wide stone columns of what appear to be flowing blood cascade down from the ceiling to what appear to be holes in the floor, yet these cascades are strangely silent. To the northwest, a set of steps leads up to an alcove in which a space that seems to be part kitchen, part alchemical workshop has been set up, while to the south a five-foot-high stage overlooks the space to the north. An altar made of bones fused together into a sort of massive platter stands on this stage, while beyond the walls bear carvings of all manner of gluttons feeding on all manner of foods. A statue of a woman, skeletal from the waist down, is carved into the wall in the middle, her arms outstretched as if manipulating the feasting figures below as stringless marionettes.

The columns of blood in this room are little more than permanent illusions over stone pillars. Anyone who touches a pillar feels the blood running over their hand but the touch beneath reveals cold stone; no blood remains on such a hand after it is withdrawn.

The workshop at area **D6a** is where the cult once worked on perfecting foods meant to encourage fasting. It was here that the first doses of *shadow ash* were created. See **Treasure** below for more details.

A character must either Climb onto the 5-foot-high stage at area **D6b** with a successful DC 10 Athletics check, jump up onto it, or use other methods. The previous leader of the cult used *air walk*, while the current occupants of the room can simply use Turn to Mist to navigate the boundary. The bone altar radiates powerful necromancy magic, and is linked to the void garden in area **D4**. As long as that hazard exists, worshippers and agents of Urgathoa in this room (including all of the creatures below) gain the benefits of a *consecrate* ritual heightened to 7th level. A worshipper of Urgathoa can use an action to Interact with the altar to become infused with its

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power. This restores 7d8 Hit Points to the creature, who is then temporarily immune to this healing for 1 minute. If the void garden is deactivated or the altar is destroyed (AC 20, Fort +29, Ref +22, Hardness 15, 50 Hit Points), Urgathoa's displeasure washes over the room and the creatures within become sickened 1 for 24 hours. During this time, they can't reduce the value of their sickened condition below 1.

The secret door to area **D6c** can be discovered with a DC 30 Perception check. The alcove beyond looks out into the void garden, but is protected by a permanent *wall of force* (AC 10, Hardness 30, 60 Hit Points). If the void garden is deactivated, two vampires in this room quickly relocate to this alcove to look out into the garden stealthily to observe before reporting back here and preparing to defend the temple as appropriate.

Creatures: Kemnebi has long since moved on from here, having relocated his *shadow ash* research to Yled, and Hyrune himself hasn't visited the temple in months, but the conspirators haven't left the area unprotected. A pair of meladaemons and four more of Hyrune's vampiric guardians stand vigil in this room to this day, their orders to protect the temple from nonbelievers and intruders spurring them to attack the characters on sight.

MELADAEMONS (2)

Pathfinder Bestiary 2 58

Initiative Perception +21

CREATURE 11

VAMPIRE GUARDIANS (4)

Page 50

Initiative Perception +21

CREATURE 10

Treasure: While Kemnebi took most of the materials from the workshop at area **D6a** with him to Yled, he left behind some of the texts and resources that duplicated his existing resources. A character who Investigates this workshop and succeeds at a DC 30 Crafting, Occultism, or Arcana check confirms that the workshop is outfitted well for the creation of magical toxins, alchemical items, and, of course, all sorts of food. A critical success means that the characters specifically note residue and indications that *shadow ash* was prepared here at some point in the last several months.

Among the books found here, the characters can discover raw materials for crafting alchemy in the amount of 300 gp, three *scrolls of harm* (7th level), and a slim folio containing what's needed to learn the heroes' *feast* ritual (*Advanced Player's Guide* 242). The numerous glosses that mock the ritual or suggest

methods by which the meal can be made unappetizing but addictive detract somewhat from the book, so that any attempt to learn this ritual from the book takes a -2 item penalty.

D7. HALL OF FEASTING AND FASTING

A long wooden table sits in the middle of this room, surrounded by ten high-backed chairs. The table is set as if for a feast, but only brittle bones and heaps of what appear to be spores and fungus remain on the tabletop's settings today. Just north of the table, a ring of iron bars forms a cramped cage with no apparent door.

A character can correctly deduce the purpose of this chamber with a successful DC 31 Urgathoa Lore or a DC 33 Religion check to Recall Knowledge. The Empty Chorus would take gluttonous meals here after spending weeks fasting, with one of their members chosen to be the "yearner" for the meal. That unfortunate soul was placed in the cage and could only watch, while starving, as their fellows fed. They would thereafter need to survive a second period of fasting before they could finally sate their hunger at the next banquet. When yearners died of starvation (as they often did), their bodies were given over to the carrion pit. Entry and exit to the cage was accomplished by the use of *shape stone* spells to remove a few bars from their stony anchors before they were then put back in place to seal the yearner inside.

Treasure: A character who investigates the place settings and who succeeds at a DC 30 Perception check notices that several of the spice shakers on the table contain *shadow ash* residue. Enough remains here that the characters can gather 2 doses of the spell catalyst.

D8. CULTIST CELLS

Five of these chambers appear similar, containing a double bunk bed where members of the Empty Chorus once slept. Only the southern room, where the leader of the sect lived, looks different, containing only a single bed. Each of these rooms contains a single coffin today. These coffins belong to the six vampire guards posted in areas **D5** and **D6**, and if they are defeated, they flee here.

The coffins themselves are well-made and distinctive. A successful DC 20 Mechitar Lore or DC 25 Society check is all that's needed to note that the style of the coffins confirms their source—these coffins (and thus the vampires who use them) are linked to Blood Lord Hyrune.

THE MISTRESS ARRIVES

The Cathedral's ruler, Rinnella Brenon, is aware of the characters' presence in the Yearning Sanctum, but doesn't interfere as their investigation furthers her own complex goals. As mistress of the entire cathedral, she can manifest an effect akin to *prying eye* that allows her to observe chambers within the cathedral, and she watches as the characters do battle with the vampires and daemons in area **D6**. If the characters are about to lose the battle, she and her sumbreiva bodyguard Cawadok step in to save them.

SEVERE 13

If instead the characters defeat the guardians, she waits for them to finish their investigation before arriving to congratulate them on their tactics.

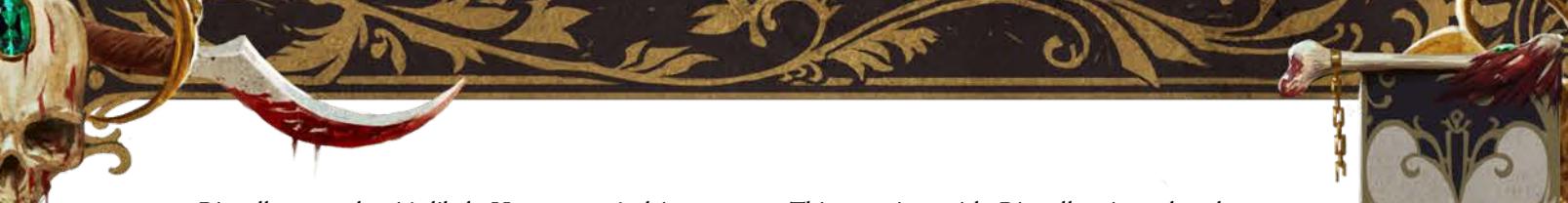
How Rinnella treats the characters depends if she arrived to rescue or congratulate them. If she rescued them, she treats them as if they owe her a favor, while if she did not, she treats them more as potential agents that could stand to profit from doing something for her.

Creatures: Rinnella is a towering undead creature known as a child of Urgathoa (*Pathfinder Book of the Dead* 79.) She resembles a gaunt humanoid woman from the waist up but has a lower torso that melts away into a seething "gown" of flesh and ectoplasm. Her right arm ends in a large, bony, scythe-like blade instead of a hand. She's clearly in charge, even though her guardian Cawadok is 4 feet taller than she is. While Cawadok is a typical sumbreiva (one the characters might clash against soon enough), Rinnella is no ordinary child of Urgathoa; she's a talented summoner who possesses powers beyond those most of her kind normally achieve. She's not here to fight, though, and if the characters attack her or frustrate her, she simply shakes her head in disappointment and vanishes, leaving Cawadok to eliminate them.

If the characters agree to talk, Rinnella congratulates them on standing their ground, noting that the fates of new Blood Lords often end in defeat as those who have already had the time to establish themselves in the government make them unwelcome. She refers to, of course, Hyrune—although she doesn't speak his name. If the characters do, she smiles and nods. Rinnella reveals that while Hyrune is a member of her church, his meddling in the legacy of a sect she personally disbanded has annoyed her. Not enough for her to take direct action against him, but enough to do what she could to allow his latest competitors an advantage. It was for this reason she allowed the characters to explore the Yearning Sanctum, hoping they would find what they need to take the next step in their political growth—to publicly challenge Hyrune to battle in the Deathless Arena.



Rinnella Brenon



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Rinnella notes that it's likely Hyrune won't deign to face the characters himself, though, even if they have hard evidence linking him to the poison plot. While there are no official ranks among the Blood Lords, tradition holds that those challenged to a clash in the Deathless Arena can always opt to choose a champion to fight in their stead. Rinnella further tells the characters that should Hyrune do so, he's likely to call upon her for a champion—as is his right as a ranking member of the church of Urgathoa. If he does, Rinnella assures the characters, she'll assign her bodyguard Cawadok as that champion. A character who succeeds at a DC 30 Perception check to Sense Motive can tell Cawadok finds that statement to be surprising and annoying. Still, he is no position to argue. Hyrune will likely use some of his own minions as well in the fight, but if he allows Cawadok to be his champion, Rinnella tells the characters they need not fully defeat the sumbreiva—they need only put on a convincing show of force before Cawadok cedes the victory to them. Rinnella is true to her word in these matters.

Of course, Rinnella has an additional plot in mind. She knows the characters serve as members of Kortash's honor guard during his stay in Mechitar, and she hopes to use them as leverage against the rival priest. In fact, it was at Rinnella's urging to Geb that the tithes to Nemret Noktoria be removed, so that she could lure Kortash to Mechitar in hopes for a chance to further humiliate him or even set into motion a long-term goal of assassinating him. Rinnella knows Kortash is incredibly powerful, though, and takes steps to be subtle in her machinations. During their meeting with her, if a character succeeds at a DC 35 Sense Motive check, they can tell that Rinnella has additional motivations. If they notice this and confront her, and if she didn't arrive to rescue them, she is surprised but admits that, if the characters can help her in defeating Hyrune, she will have a further task for them against "a shared foe you may not realize is plotting against you." She promises to reveal more after the battle in the Deathless Arena. If she did arrive to rescue them, she grows stern and warns them to not question the motives of their superiors. Disrespectful characters who push further cause her to abandon the meeting, leaving Cawadok behind to punish them.

If Rinnella abandons the characters and they fight Cawadok, they're in a fight to the death. Assuming they defeat the sumbreiva, Rinnella bears them no real ill will but no longer supports them—they're on their own against Hyrune. In any event, once the characters meet with Rinnella, their permission to explore the Yearning Sanctum expires.

This meeting with Rinnella gives the characters a chance to ask her directly about Kortash and the church's stance on the visiting ruler. A character who does so can attempt a DC 31 Deception, Diplomacy, or Intimidation check (other characters can Aid this check). The results of this check are as follows.

Critical Success Rinnella admits she used her position in the church to influence Geb's decision to abandon the tithes to Nemret Noktoria, but notes she could hardly force Geb to make the call—he did so of his own free will for the good of the nation. Still, the characters make their point and she abandons further attempts to damage Kortash or his nation... for now.

Success As critical success, but Rinnella makes no promises to curtail her political maneuvering.

Failure Rinnella notes that there is no love lost between herself and "that cult of ghouls," but admits nothing more.

Critical Failure Rinnella curtly tells the characters to mind their own business, and does not offer (or rescinds her offer) to have Cawadok be the church's choice for Hyrune's champion.

CAWADOK

CREATURE 16

Male sumbreiva (*Pathfinder Bestiary 3* 260)

Initiative Perception +29

Influence with Kortash: If the characters secured an admission from Rinnella about her role in convincing Geb to stop the tithe to Nemret Noktoria and report this to Kortash, they gain 2 Influence points with him. If they got Rinnella to promise to abandon immediate political sabotage against Kortash, they instead gain 4 Influence points. If the characters learn nothing, Kortash is disappointed; they lose 1 point of Influence with him.

Faction Reputation: If the characters speak peacefully with Rinnella, she spreads the word of her church's favor. The characters gain 2 Reputation Points with the Celebrants and 3 Reputation Points with whatever faction the characters used to gain entrance to the Cathedral of Epiphenomena (if that was the Celebrants, then they gain a total of 5 Reputation Points with the Celebrants). If, on the other hand, the characters provoked a fight with Rinnella, they lose 2 Reputation Points with the Celebrants and 1 Reputation Point with their sponsoring faction (if that was the Celebrants, they lose a total of 3 Reputation Points with the Celebrants).

XP Award: If the characters have a productive meeting with Rinnella that doesn't end in a fight, grant them 120 XP. In addition, if they obtained a success or better when asking her about Kortash, award them 60 XP.



Chapter 4: The Hanging Castle

By the time the characters reach this point in the adventure, they should strongly suspect that Blood Lord Hyrune is involved in Kemnebi's poisonous plot. They still lack proof of Kemnebi's involvement, but the discovery that one of his agents is a fellow Blood Lord is a huge opportunity. Of course, the characters can't directly confront a fellow Blood Lord, but they can challenge him to combat in the Deathless Arena.

The Deathless Arena

If the characters don't get the suggestion from Rinnella to issue a challenge to Hyrune to settle their conflict in the Deathless Arena, a character can realize this is

an option with a successful DC 25 Mechitar Lore or a DC 30 Society check. Barring that, Dizonn can make the same suggestion. In order to issue the challenge, the aggrieved Blood Lord(s) need only to publicly state their desire to settle their differences in the Deathless Arena. Such public challenges quickly make their way through the city's rumor mills, and it takes at most a few hours for word of the challenge to reach Hyrune. Hyrune won't ignore the challenge, for doing so is one of the surest ways to self-sabotage one's political standing, but the extent to which he does respond depends on how well the characters perform their challenge, using the Challenge Hyrune exploration activity on page 55.

CHALLENGE HYRUNE

EXPLORATION

You publicly challenge Blood Lord Hyrune to glorious battle in the Deathless Arena. To do so, attempt a DC 34 Deception check (if you wish to fabricate evidence or rely upon circumstantial evidence), a DC 32 Diplomacy check (if you have evidence and file it with the government), a DC 30 Intimidation check (if you have evidence and reveal it to the public), or a DC 37 Performance check (to not use evidence at all and appear to simply challenge him for show). Other characters can Aid this check by attempting a DC 20 check with the same skill or with Society.

Critical Success The public reacts with eagerness and delight, and the perception that the characters are to blame shifts away from them. The characters are granted the Arena's favor and can set the conflict at any point they wish within the next week. In addition, they no longer suffer the penalties for taking the blame for the attack at the waterfront.

Success The challenge is well received by the public, and rumors that Hyrune was involved in the incident at the waterfront begin to percolate through the city. Hyrune accepts the challenge, and the characters are granted the Arena's favor, allowing them to set the conflict at any point they wish within the next 3 days.

Failure The challenge amuses Hyrune but he doesn't ridicule the characters. He accepts the challenge and is granted the Arena's favor; the conflict must be resolved within 24 hours or Hyrune, as the accused, is absolved.

Critical Failure Hyrune is amused by the pitiful attempt and counters the challenge with a wave of mockery that damages the characters' reputation. He accepts the challenge and successfully demands that it take place that very night at midnight. Hyrune is granted the Arena's favor.

Action Reputation: The splendor of a fight between Blood Lords thrills the populace, and the Celebrants can use this to their advantage. The Tax Collectors Union is quick to capitalize on the spending such a spectacle creates. If the characters succeed at Challenging Hyrune, they gain 1 Reputation Point with the Celebrants and with the Tax Collectors Union (on a critical success, they gain 2 Reputation Points with both instead).

THE FIGHT

SEVERE 14

Clashes between Blood Lords are among the most popular entertainment offered at the Deathless Arena, and this latest bout is no exception. Word spreads quickly of the upcoming battle. The timing of when the fight can be scheduled to take place is determined by the characters' results from Challenging Hyrune, with one limitation—it can only take place during the night, so that all of Mechitar's citizens can enjoy the spectacle in the open-air arena without the sun keeping light-sensitive undead away.

The Combatants: The characters can look at the battlefield from the stands, but they are not allowed on the field until the fight is scheduled to begin. As that time draws near, Hyrune makes an announcement that he has chosen to be represented in the battle by champions supplied by both himself and the Church of Urgathoa—as the instigators of the bout, the characters have no such option and must field the battle themselves. If the characters made an arrangement with Rinnella beforehand, she sends her bodyguard Cawadok to fight for Hyrune. If, on the other hand, the characters made no such arrangement (or indeed, if they have already slain Cawadok), the church instead sends a pair of plague giants to fight for Hyrune. Hyrune

CHAPTER 4 SYNOPSIS

In this chapter, the characters manipulate Hyrune into open, public battle in the Deathless Arena. When they vanquish Hyrune's champion, the vampire flees to his underground castle. Given free rein to hunt their rival, the characters assault the castle, vanquish Hyrune, and learn that the next clues in the poison plot can be found in the city of Yled.

CHAPTER 4 TREASURE

The permanent and consumable items available as treasure in Chapter 4 are as follows.

- +1 resilient studded leather
- +1 striking flail
- +1 striking greatsword
- +1 striking spiked chain
- +1 striking thundering bladed scarf (*Pathfinder Lost Omens Gods & Magic* 120)
- +2 greater resilient leather armor
- clear quartz crystal ball
- greater demon mask
- greater resilient armor rune
- greater skeleton key
- Hungerfang
- pale lavender ellipsoid aeon stone
- panacea
- ring of wizardry IV

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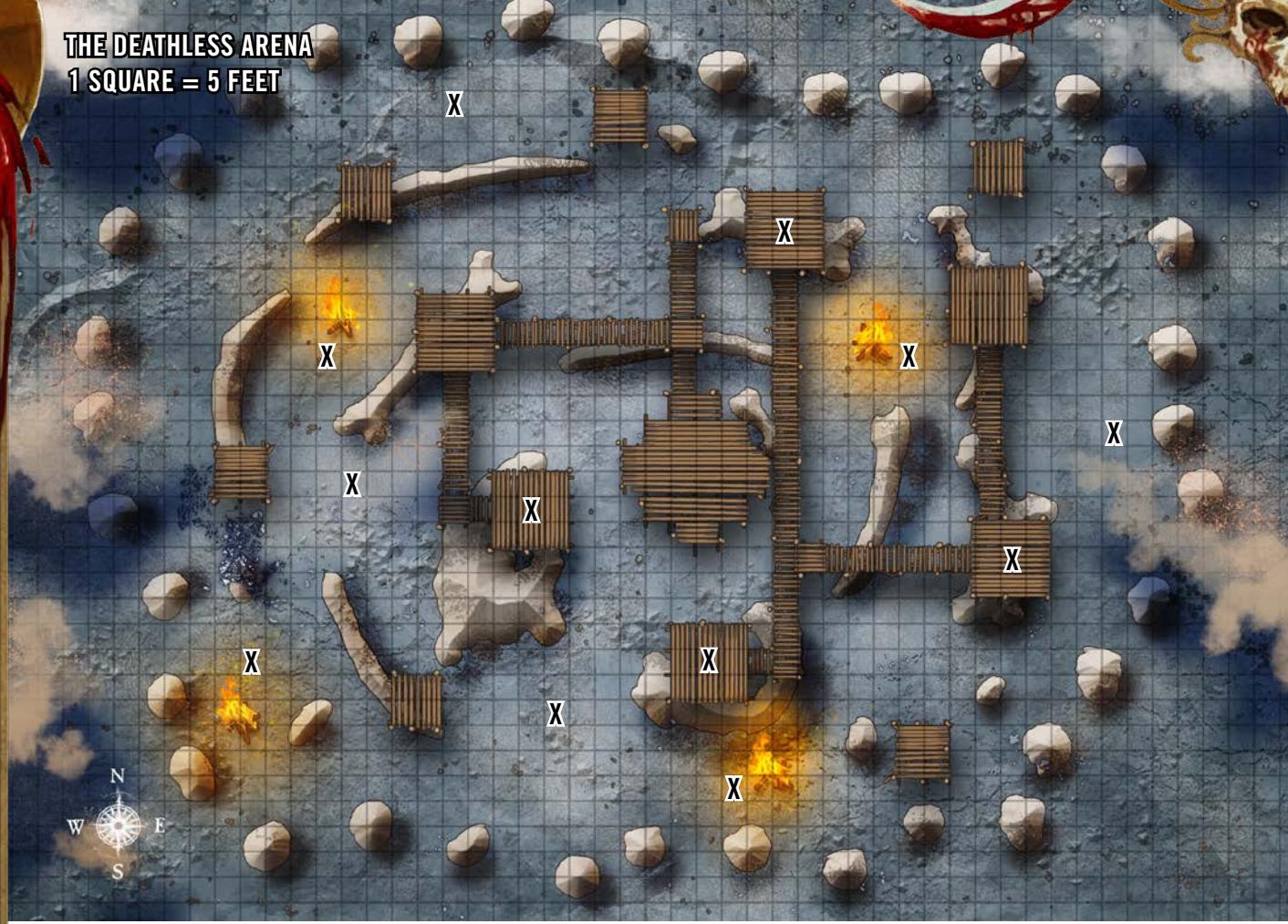
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THE DEATHLESS ARENA

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



himself augments the battle with a small platoon of dozens of skeletons. Regardless of the battle, this is a severe encounter for 14th-level characters.

The Battlefield: The floor of the Deathless Arena is expansive, but as is tradition for a conflict between Blood Lords, the battle takes place within a boundary delineated by ribs harvested from gargantuan beasts thrust into the ground. Within this ring, additional structures rise from the dusty ground. The skeletal remains of a long-dead fleshwarped monstrosity adorned with rope bridges and wooden platforms fills the space. Any attempt to move beyond the battlefield's border (including flying more than 100 feet above it) is grounds for immediate disqualification.

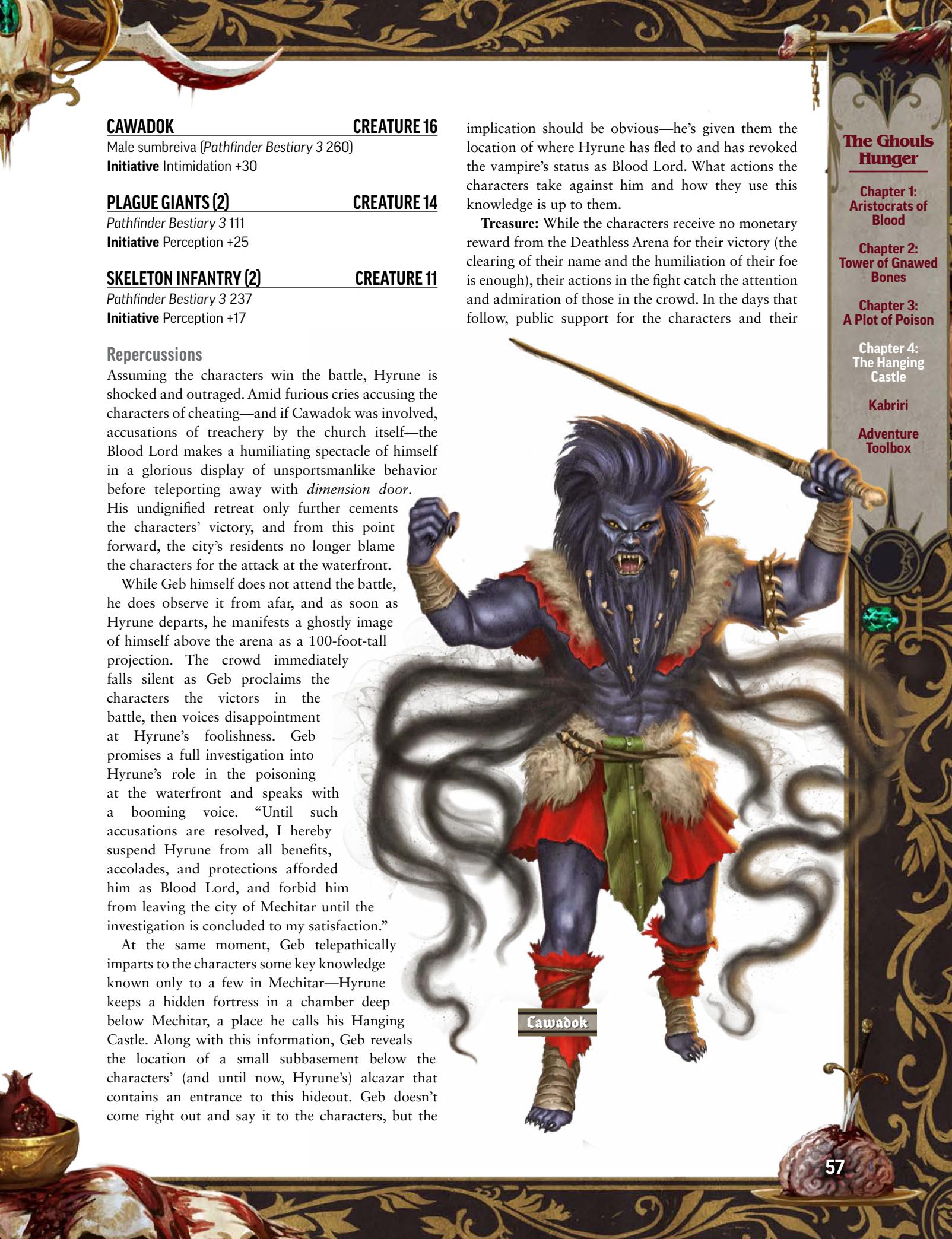
There are several complicating features on the battlefield—bones, pyres of negative or positive energy, platforms, and bridges. These objects can provide terrain advantages or disadvantages and are summarized in the Terrain Notes sidebar on page 58.

The Battle: When the time for the battle arrives, the side that has the Arena's favor deploys second, forcing the other team to deploy onto the field first. This allows the team with the Arena's favor to take

better advantage of the starting positions of the opposition. All members must be deployed before the next team starts.

While Hyrune himself does not take part in the fight, he is present in the arena stands and has given tactical orders to his champions. If he has the Arena's favor, he orders his skeleton infantry to surround the characters while placing either Cawadok or his plague giants further back so they can engage in ranged combat.

Once the battle begins, the skeleton infantry focuses their attacks on the closest targets. The plague giants or Cawadok are more canny and prefer ranged tactics, letting the skeletons tangle with the characters in melee to distract them. Keep track of the squares in which skeleton infantry lose squares, for these can give plague giants more corpses to hurl. The plague giants fight until slain, and the skeleton infantry do battle until destroyed, but Cawadok only fights until he's reduced to 40 HP or less. In this case, he drops to a knee and admits defeat—the characters still need to destroy any of the persistent skeletons who remain at this point, but need worry no further about Cawadok.



CAWADOK

Male sumbreiva (*Pathfinder Bestiary 3* 260)

Initiative Intimidation +30

CREATURE 16

PLAQUE GIANTS (2)

Pathfinder Bestiary 3 111

Initiative Perception +25

CREATURE 14

SKELETON INFANTRY (2)

Pathfinder Bestiary 3 237

Initiative Perception +17

CREATURE 11

Repercussions

Assuming the characters win the battle, Hyrune is shocked and outraged. Amid furious cries accusing the characters of cheating—and if Cawadok was involved, accusations of treachery by the church itself—the Blood Lord makes a humiliating spectacle of himself in a glorious display of unsportsmanlike behavior before teleporting away with *dimension door*. His undignified retreat only further cements the characters' victory, and from this point forward, the city's residents no longer blame the characters for the attack at the waterfront.

While Geb himself does not attend the battle, he does observe it from afar, and as soon as Hyrune departs, he manifests a ghostly image of himself above the arena as a 100-foot-tall projection. The crowd immediately falls silent as Geb proclaims the characters the victors in the battle, then voices disappointment at Hyrune's foolishness. Geb promises a full investigation into Hyrune's role in the poisoning at the waterfront and speaks with a booming voice. "Until such accusations are resolved, I hereby suspend Hyrune from all benefits, accolades, and protections afforded him as Blood Lord, and forbid him from leaving the city of Mechitar until the investigation is concluded to my satisfaction."

At the same moment, Geb telepathically imparts to the characters some key knowledge known only to a few in Mechitar—Hyrune keeps a hidden fortress in a chamber deep below Mechitar, a place he calls his Hanging Castle. Along with this information, Geb reveals the location of a small subbasement below the characters' (and until now, Hyrune's) alcazar that contains an entrance to this hideout. Geb doesn't come right out and say it to the characters, but the

implication should be obvious—he's given them the location of where Hyrune has fled to and has revoked the vampire's status as Blood Lord. What actions the characters take against him and how they use this knowledge is up to them.

Treasure: While the characters receive no monetary reward from the Deathless Arena for their victory (the clearing of their name and the humiliation of their foe is enough), their actions in the fight catch the attention and admiration of those in the crowd. In the days that follow, public support for the characters and their

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TERRAIN NOTES

The following features are present on the battlefield in the Deathless Arena. Make sure the characters know the effects of each before the battle begins.

Bridges: Rope bridges connect the central platforms at a height of 30 feet. They sway when moved across, and function as difficult terrain. A rope bridge can provide lesser cover from foes on the ground, and can be destroyed (AC 15, Hardness 5, HP 20).

Bones: The immense bones on the ground provide a 5-foot height advantage. Moving onto a bone requires a successful DC 20 Athletics check to Climb or Leap onto.

Platforms: The various wooden towers are located 30 feet off the ground. Some feature ladders. The central tower and the six 15-foot-square platforms are stable, but the outlying 10-foot-square platforms are rickety and function as difficult terrain. A rickety tower can be toppled with a successful DC 34 Athletics check to Force Open its supports, or if those supports are destroyed (AC 25, Hardness 10, HP 50).

Pyres: A dozen plumes of fire—six with white flames and six with black (choose which is which before the fight begins)—burn at the locations marked on the map with an X. A character can Interact with an adjacent plume, but doing so causes the plume to change color. A black plume deals 5d6 negative damage if Interacted with, while a white plume deals 5d6 positive damage—this damage heals or harms living or undead as appropriate. A character forced into a plume against their will can attempt a DC 25 basic Reflex save.

actions increases steadily. At some point before the characters move on to take action against Hyrune, the Great Faction with which they've earned the most Reputation Points (choose randomly in the event of a tie) contacts them with an unexpected boon—in order to show their growing support, the faction supplies each member of the party with a *panacea* and a tribute of 300 pp for the group.

The Hanging Castle

Very little information exists about the Hanging Castle, in large part because Hyrune has gone through great lengths to obliterate any references to the location by destroying documents or murdering those who knew too much. It won't take long for the vampire to learn that Geb's revoked his status as Blood Lord, and as such he knows that it's just a matter of time before the characters come for him. His increasingly panicked attempts to contact Kemnebi in Yled go unanswered, but he won't

flee for safety no matter how long the characters take to confront him in his hideout. Hyrune is as stubborn as he is arrogant, and it won't take him long to convince himself that these events are all according to his plans. By "luring" the characters into his most well-guarded domain, he can capture the characters and present their bodies to Kemnebi as proof that the greatest threat to the chancellor's plot has been dealt with.

The Hanging Castle was built a century ago by a cabal of drow vampires from the Orvian vault of the Black Desert, cultists who had turned to the worship of an obscure Great Old One named Orgesh. The vampires drifted closer to the surface world, and finally chose a large cavern in the upper Darklands of Nar-Voth below Mechitar as their new home. Here, they built a small fortress into several immense stalactites that hang over a poison lake far below, but when they began to prey upon the quick of Mechitar above, they were swiftly eradicated by Geb's agents.

For years, the Hanging Castle lay vacant, until Geb awarded the fortress to Hyrune, and allowed the vampire to keep the castle as a hidden redoubt.

The route to which the characters are directed by Geb to the Hanging Castle (area E1) exists in a forgotten subbasement deep below the alcazar. Once the characters begin to explore, of course, they can come and go as needed by this route or by magical means like *teleport*, but Hyrune and his agents have nowhere else to go. They're cornered, and they fight tenaciously to survive.

The map of the Hanging Castle appears on the inside back cover of this book.

HANGING CASTLE FEATURES

The Hanging Castle is built into a series of immense stalactites that dangle over a vast underground lake of toxic water. In several places, openings into the side of the castle simply drop away, and creatures who can't fly must find other solutions. This adventure assumes that navigating such hazards is relatively simple for the characters, but still, a fall into the waters below can be dangerous if not deadly. From most of the openings, it's a 150-foot fall to the lake below—the exceptions are areas E2, E4, and E5, which both lie closer and are only 120-foot drops. See page 464 of the *Core Rulebook* for rules on falling into deep water. Since the ledges are slippery, a character must succeed at a DC 30 Reflex save to Grab an Edge to catch themselves from falling into the lake.

A character who falls into the 40-foot deep water is exposed to the toxins that have leached into the lake, and must also Swim to avoid drowning (the calm waters only require a successful DC 10 Athletics check, fortunately). The toxic water exposes anyone who drinks it (including someone who critically fails at an

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attempt to Swim in the water) to a particularly potent strain of blinding sickness (*Gamemastery Guide* 119, but Disease 12 and with a DC 30 Fortitude save).

The slick cave walls can be scaled with a successful DC 30 Athletics check to Climb, but this increases to a DC 40 check if a character wants to move along the ceiling to reach the castle. The cave is 300 feet across, with the Hanging Castle positioned in the center. Two other tunnels lead out of the cave at lake level, winding deeper into the Darklands, but their destinations and dangers are beyond the scope of this adventure.

Numerous patches of pale green phosphorescent mold growing alone the stone walls, along with a similarly hued glowing algae in the water below, fill this cavern with an unsettling dim illumination. Within the chambers themselves, beyond the stone doors, the rooms are without illumination at all. Ceiling heights inside the castle are 10 feet unless otherwise noted. Entrances from the ceiling are marked with “C” on the map. “F” indicates an opening in the floor. The doors in the castle are made of stone and are kept locked (requiring five successful DC 30 Thievery checks to Pick the Lock or a successful DC 35 Athletics check to Force it Open). Hyrune keeps the key in his coffin.

APPROACHING THE FORGOTTEN CRYPT

The alcazars all feature tangled warrens of storerooms, torture chambers, and crypts that are the province of Blood Lords who have earned the right to use them. The route revealed by Geb to the characters allows them to navigate a hidden passage that leads to an old stone door—Hyrune and his agents use Turn to Mist to move through the door, which is stuck (DC 25 Athletics to Force Open), but once the characters breach it they enter area **E1**. It’s a short 5-minute journey from this door back to the surface above.

E1. FORGOTTEN CRYPT

Moderate 14

The air in this ancient crypt is dusty and stale. Six plain stone sarcophagi sit along the chamber’s uneven walls in pairs separated by short flights of steps leading deeper. The room’s far end has an ancient iron grill set into the floor.

The grill in the floor can’t be removed, and blocks access to a shaft that drops 400 feet straight down to area **E2**. Fortunately, the stonework around the grill is old, and it can be Forced Open with a successful DC 35 Athletics check. Otherwise, the grill can be destroyed as if it were an iron portcullis to gain access to the shaft (AC 25, Hardness 18, 72 Hit Points). The shaft walls are relatively smooth, but can be Climbed with a successful DC 30 Athletics check.

Creatures: A trio of necromantic mistakes lurk in this chamber—blood draped undead monstrosities known as bloodshrouds (page 82). Hyrune saw to the placement of these three creatures here soon after he was awarded access to the Hanging Castle. The bloodshrouds fight all intruders to the death but ignore anyone who appears to be Hyrune or appears to be escorted by him. They don’t pursue foes from this chamber.

BLOODSHROUDS (3)

CREATURE 13

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Initiative Perception +23

E2. ENTRY PERCH

A short passage south from this empty octagonal chamber opens up to a view over a breathtaking gulf over the vast cavern below and the glowing green waters of an underground lake. A large stalactite hangs just south of this entrance, while others with cave openings can be seen to the left and right. A five-foot-diameter hole opens in the ceiling in the middle of this room.

At this point, it’s a 120-foot drop to the waters below. A glance out of this room’s exit reveals a cave opening at roughly the same level into a second stalactite to the southwest (area **E3**), while an entrance to the larger stalactite sits 30 feet higher than the floor of this room (leading to area **E9**).

E3. CONCERT CAVE

LOW 14

Thick black curtains have been hung over both entrances to this cave. As the characters approach this area, they hear harp music playing beyond the curtains.

The walls of this cavern have been adorned with black curtains featuring embroidery that depicts the night sky over a dark forest. A single elegant harp and a low table with a few books atop it sit next to a high-backed chair to the south, while to the north, an equally elegant coffin sits on an iron frame.

It’s a 120-foot drop to the waters below. The entrance to area **E9** opposite this cave is 30 feet higher than the floor of this room. The coffin contains soil from Varisia and belongs to this chamber’s occupant. A character who studies the tapestries and succeeds at a DC 20 Society check recognizes them as nighttime landscapes of western Varisia.

Creatures: When he fled to the Hanging Castle, Hyrune brought with him his two favored thralls—Harmony in Agony and Weeping Jack. (If Rumin survives and somehow manages to make amends with

Hyrune, the Blood Lord does not bring the gnome with him, as punishment for his failure.) While his thralls suspected their lord kept a hideout, they had no idea the Hanging Castle existed until he brought them here.

Harmony has taken up residence in this cave, and has only ventured up to the city above a few times to gather some of her most precious belongings—her coffin, her harp, and her collection of books and tapestries.

When Hyrune first claimed the Hanging Castle, the lingering spirits of long-perished drow attempted to possess him. He shrugged their attempts off and managed to cow these seething spirits into meek submission. When Harmony arrived, her bottled-up anger and bitterness intrigued the spirits, who flocked to her in a combination of awe and admiration. Her music somewhat soothes the spirits, and Harmony is only too happy to have an audience for her performances of late.

Any interruption of the music by the characters (including them simply stepping into this chamber) disrupts this delicate balance. Both harmony and the two seething spirits shriek in fury—Harmony at her “concert” being interrupted, and the spirits as they revert to their unholy nature once her music ends so abruptly. The spirits attempt to possess the most heavily armored characters and then use their bodies to fight the other characters while Harmony casts *fly* and then exits the room to attack from the air using her magic. The seething spirits fight until destroyed, but Harmony flees into the central complex if reduced to fewer than 30 Hit Points. If she escapes, she remains at Hyrune’s side in area E15.

HARMONY IN AGONY

UNIQUE NE MEDIUM UNDEAD VAMPIRE

Female human vampire bard (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 318)

Perception +23; darkvision

Languages Common, Necril, Varisian

Skills Acrobatics +26, Deception +26, Diplomacy +24, Occultism +22, Performance +26, Society +24

Str +4, **Dex** +7, **Con** +4, **Int** +5, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +7

Items +1 striking thundering bladed scarf (*Pathfinder Lost Omens Gods & Magic* 120)

Children of the Night (divine, enchantment, mental) As vampire.

AC 34, **Fort** +22, **Ref** +24, **Will** +25

HP 200; coffin restoration, fast healing 10, negative healing;

Immunities death effects, disease, paralyze, poison, sleep; **Weaknesses** vampire weaknesses; **Resistance** physical 10 (except magical silver)

Distracting Bitterness A character can attempt to incite Harmony’s bitterness by mentioning how Hyrune treats her like a servant rather than a companion by attempting a DC 32 Deception or Intimidation check.

CREATURE 13

Critical Success Harmony shrieks in anger and abandons the fight at once, screaming “I’ll teach him a lesson he won’t soon forget!” as she Turns to Mist and leaves to seek out Hyrune.

Success Harmony shrieks in anger, then becomes slowed 1 as her fury distracts her on the following round.

Failure The attempt fails, and Harmony is temporarily immune to further attempts to distract her in this way from that character for 24 hours

Critical Failure The attempt backfires, instead enraging Harmony. She is temporarily immune to further attempts to distract her in this way from anyone for 24 hours, and gains a +2 status bonus on Strikes made against the character who failed this check during this time.

Mist Escape ♦ As vampire.

Speed 25 feet, climb 25 feet

Melee ♦ bladed scarf +27 (disarm, reach, sweep, trip), **Damage** 2d8+10 slashing plus 1d6 sonic

Melee ♦ claw +26 (agile), **Damage** 3d10+10 slashing plus Grab

Occult Spontaneous Spells DC 33, attack +25; **7th** (2 slots) prismatic spray, visions of danger; **6th** (3 slots) mislead, scrying, vampiric exsanguination*; **5th** (3 slots) prying eye, shadow blast*, sound burst; **4th** (3 slots) dimension door*, fly, modify memory; **3rd** (3 slots) haste, paralyze, vampiric touch*; **2nd** (3 slots) dispel magic*, invisibility, telekinetic maneuver; **1st** (3 slots) fear, ray of enfeeblement, soothe*, **Cantrips** (**7th**) daze, detect magic, message, shield, telekinetic projectile (*signature spell)

Bard Composition Spells 2 Focus Points, DC 33; **7th** counter performance (*Core Rulebook* 386), lingering composition (*Core Rulebook* 387); **Cantrips** (**7th**) inspire courage (*Core Rulebook* 386)

Change Shape ♦ (concentrate, divine, polymorph, transmutation) Giant bat with fangs +26 for 3d8+10 piercing

Create Spawn (divine, downtime, necromancy) As vampire.

Dominate ♦ (divine, enchantment, incapacitation, mental, visual) As vampire but DC 30.

Drink Blood ♦ (divine, necromancy) As vampire; when drinking blood, Harmony in Agony regains 16 HP.

Signature Spells Harmony in Agony can freely heighten her signature spells (noted in her spell list above by asterisks).

Turn to Mist ♦ (concentrate, divine, transmutation) As vampire.

SOOTHED ADMIRERS (2)

Seething spirits (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 228)

Initiative Perception +21

CREATURE 11

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Disarm attempt. Unlike Harmony, Jack fights until destroyed. He does not flee to Hyrune's side.

WEEPING JACK

CREATURE 13

UNIQUE CE SMALL UNDEAD VAMPIRE

Male halfling vampire rogue (*Pathfinder Bestiary 318*)

Perception +23; darkvision

Languages Common, Halfling, Necril

Skills Acrobatics +23, Athletics +25, Intimidation +24, Society +25, Stealth +25, Thievery +23

Str +7, **Dex** +5, **Con** +4, **Int** +7, **Wis** +5, **Cha** +4

Items +1 striking spiked chain, +1 resilient studded leather, greater demon mask

LOW 14

E4. SILENT CHAMBER

A table covered with a messy heap of knives and tools sits against the south wall of this room, while nearby sits a small writing desk and chair and an elegantly decorated coffin sized for a child. A closed metal trap door has been placed in the floor of an alcove to the east.

The trap door in the floor leads down to area E5, but it hasn't been opened in ages. It can be Forced Open with a successful DC 30 Athletics check.

Creature: This room is now the home of Hyrune's oldest surviving vampire thrall, the pattern killer known as Weeping Jack. This sadistic halfling began his killing spree in the city of Yled and culminated in the murder of his own overbearing mother (who until that point had been encouraging and orchestrating Jack's killings to fuel her own sadistic delight) at the urging of Jack's newest ally, Hyrune, who wanted to test his thrall-to-be's loyalty. Pleased, Hyrune made Weeping Jack a vampire and brought him back to Mechitar. It was weeks later before Weeping Jack's strangled mother, now risen as a silent stalker revenant, caught up to her treacherous son, only to become dominated by Weeping Jack's gaze.

Since then, Weeping Jack has used his mother as an accomplice and tool, bringing her along to aid in his stealthy intrusions as directed by Hyrune. He brought her with him down into the deep here, but hasn't realized that his domination over his mother has failed. After spending so long enthralled, though, the silent stalker has fallen into a sort of fugue-like state. If she sees her son's face, though, she remembers her rage and once again moves to murder the man who strangled her.

Weeping Jack's been biding his time scheduling new crimes. While he's hiding out in the Hanging Castle, living vicariously through these plots is helping to keep him from impatiently lashing out. He sees the characters as new playthings to torment and works with his mother to murder them, directing her with a series of silent gestures and nods to set up flanking opportunities. A character who's heard of his sordid history can remove Weeping Jack's *greater demon mask* if they can immobilize him, or by making a successful



Children of the Night (divine, enchantment, mental) As vampire.

AC 33, **Fort** +21, **Ref** +24, **Will** +24

HP 210; coffin restoration, fast healing 10, negative healing;

Immunities death effects, disease, paralyze, poison, sleep; **Weaknesses** vampire weaknesses; **Resistance** physical 10 (except magical silver)

Mist Escape ♦ As vampire.

Speed 25 feet, climb 25 feet

Melee ♦ spiked chain +26 (disarm, finesse, trip), **Damage** 2d8+13 slashing

Melee ♦ claw +25 (agile), **Damage** 2d6+13 slashing plus Grab

Change Shape ♦ (concentrate, divine, polymorph, transmutation) Giant bat with fangs +25 for 2d8+13 piercing

Create Spawn (divine, downtime, necromancy) As vampire.

Dominate ♦ (divine, enchantment, incapacitation, mental, visual) As vampire but DC 29.

Dread Striker Any creature that has the frightened condition is also flat-footed to Weeping Jack's attacks.

Drink Blood ♦ (divine, necromancy) As vampire; when drinking blood, Weeping Jack regains 16 HP.

Sneak Attack Weeping Jack deals 3d6 extra precision damage to flat-footed creatures.



Weeping Jack

Turn to Mist ♦ (concentrate, divine, transmutation) As vampire.

MOTHER

CREATURE 13

Female silent stalker (*Pathfinder Book of the Dead* 141)

Initiative Perception +24

Treasure: Among the tools used for burglary and murder on the desk are a set of infiltrator thieves' tools and a *greater skeleton key*.

E5. LAKE VIEW

TRIVIAL 14

An ancient ladder made of rusty iron rungs leads up in an eastern alcove of this cave to a trap door above. To the southwest, the wide cave opens out of the side of the stalactite it's housed in to look out over the large cavern and its glowing lake over a hundred feet below.

It's a 120-foot drop to the waters below. The trap door leads up to area E4.

Creature: The sole occupant of this chamber is a single roper named Xopox, a curious creature that remembers the time of the drow cultists—sort of. Xopox's memory is disjointed and has gaps, but they've been content to simply live here, snatching bats for food, and have lost track of the passage of time. Hyrule and his vampires know of Xopox, and initially the Blood Lord dominated the roper to keep as a guardian but hasn't bothered to maintain his control. Xopox sees the vampires as just "the latest lurkers" in the region and isn't bothered as long as the vampires leave them alone.

If the characters move within 50 feet of this room from the outside, Xopox attempts to snatch at them with their strands, but if they approach from the trap door, the roper is surprised and somewhat eager to chat. If the characters can establish communication, they can learn that the "latest lurkers" consist of three vampires, and the roper can warn the characters about the "old bat" that lives in area E8.

Xopox attacks the characters if they grow bored, or if the party attacks the. If reduced to fewer than 40 Hit Points they beg for mercy, offering to cough up their treasures in exchange for their life.

XOPOX

CREATURE 11

Elite roper (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 6, 282)

Initiative Stealth +25

Treasure: Xopox keeps his treasure comfortably inside his gizzard. This stash includes a dozen gemstones worth a total of 400 gp, a *greater resilient armor rune*, and a *pale lavender ellipsoid aeon stone*.



XP Award: If the characters talk with Xopox and learn about the area, grant them 60 XP.

E6. TRAPPED BRIDGE

A five-foot-wide bridge made of chains with rusty iron slats for footing spans the gap between these two stalactites.

Hazard: This bridge is trapped—a defense against potential prison escapes that the vampires, who haven't set foot on it yet, never even noticed.

COLLAPSING BRIDGE

MECHANICAL | TRAP

Stealth DC 40 (master)

Description An iron bridge's connectors give way to drop into the lake below.

Disable DC 40 Thievery (master) to disable one side of the bridge's quick release mechanisms

Collapse A Small or larger creature moves more than 20 feet onto the bridge; **Effect** The bridge chains detach from their connectors, dropping itself and anything on it into the lake 150 feet below. A creature that's adjacent to the ledges to the north or south can attempt a DC 33 Reflex save to Grab the Edge, but creatures who can't reach the edge fall with the bridge into the toxic water below (unless one side of the bridge remains attached, in which case a creature can attempt to Grab an Edge by clinging to the dangling bridge—requiring a successful DC 20 Athletics check to climb the hanging bridge to safety).

E7. PRISON

MODERATE 14

A pair of ancient iron gates lock access to this area from the north. The keys to the locks are long gone, but a character who succeeds at a DC 32 Thievery check can Pick the Lock. Otherwise they can be Forced Open with a successful DC 37 Athletics check.

The walls of this empty chamber are adorned with rusty iron hooks from which ancient iron manacles dangle.

Creatures: When the drow cultists were defeated ages ago, two of their prisoners—a pair of living drow who were to be sacrificed—were left to languish in this cell. They eventually died of starvation, only to rise as tormented undead. These undead remain slumped and motionless, appearing as dead bodies, until someone either enters the room or attempts to damage either body from afar, at which point they rise up to attack.

If one of the tormented are destroyed, its spirit visibly rises with a sigh of thanks. If both are destroyed, the second spirit grants a parting gift to those who freed it—see Reward at right.

TORMENTED (2)

Pathfinder Book of the Dead 152

Initiative Perception +27

CREATURE 14

Treasure: One of the tormented still wears a *ring of wizardry* IV its captors cruelly allowed it to retain, knowing the ring would not help the doomed drow wizard to escape since his spellbook had been destroyed.

Reward: The thankful souls of these tormented leave a parting gift. If both of the tormented are destroyed, the grateful spirits move through the bodies of their saviors briefly, and in so doing shed some of their memories of their time in this complex. This allows the characters to learn of the Hanging Castle's past, but more importantly reveals to them the complex's full layout, including the existence of the secret door in area E11. The spirit's passage through the party also revitalizes them, as if they'd just had a full night's rest—spellcasting characters immediately regain up to three previously cast spells or expended spell slots of their choice.

E8. SKAVELING ROOST

LOW 14

A squat, stone statue of an obese humanoid monster lurks in the southern portion of this cavern. The statue's face is featureless save for a single gaping mouth.

A successful DC 30 Religion check to Recall Knowledge is enough to recognize this statue as Orgesh, the Faceless God.

Creature: Only one skaveling from the drow's time here survives to this day, but it's a particularly ancient and dangerous specimen. Hyrune has managed to befriend the undead bat, although hasn't quite convinced it to yet serve him as a mount. It uses its bone-shattering screech as soon as it spots the characters, alerting the entire cavern to their presence, then fights until destroyed, pursuing them relentlessly through the cavern as best it can.

ANCIENT SKAVELING

CREATURE 15

UNIQUE | CE | LARGE | UNDEAD

Variant skaveling (Pathfinder Bestiary 2 241)

Perception +29; darkvision, echolocation 60 feet

Skills Acrobatics +27, Athletics +29, Intimidation +25

Languages Aklo, Necril, Undercommon

Str +8, **Dex** +6, **Con** +4, **Int** +3, **Wis** +8, **Cha** +4

Echolocation The ancient skaveling can use its hearing as a precise sense at the listed range.

AC 37; **Fort** +25, **Ref** +27, **Will** +29

HP 270

Speed 15 feet, fly 30 feet

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Melee ♦ fangs +29 (magical); **Damage** 3d12+16 piercing plus ghoul fever and paralysis

Melee ♦ wing +29 (agile, magical); **Damage** 3d8+16 bludgeoning plus paralysis

Bone-Shattering Screech ♦ (auditory, emotion, fear, mental, necromancy, occult, sonic) The ancient skaveling unleashes a devastating screech that not only chills the bones but shatters them. The screech can be heard throughout the region and alerts all creatures in the Hanging Castle. Creatures in a 20-foot emanation take 12d6 sonic damage and must attempt a DC 36 Will save. The ancient skaveling can't use Bone-Shattering Screech again for 1d4 rounds.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected and is temporarily immune to Bone-Shattering Screech for 24 hours.

Success The creature takes half damage and is frightened 1.

Failure The creature takes full damage and is frightened 2

Critical Failure The creature takes double damage, is frightened 3, and is stunned 3.

Ghoul Fever (disease) As skaveling, but DC 36.

Paralysis (incapacitation, necromancy, occult) As skaveling, but DC 36.

E9. WORKSHOP

LOW 14

Mostly empty shelves adorn the walls of this large room, while at the center stand a pair of worktables. The ceiling rises to twenty feet above, where a dozen empty cages sized for humans hang from spiked chains.

Hyrune converted this room, originally a torture chamber for the drow cultists, into a workshop. Here, he did much of his planning for the failed smuggling operation as well as several other plots on Kemnebi's behalf.

Creature: One of Hyrune's strangest allies dwells here—a tolokand named Ibbu the Unblinking. Technically, Ibbu serves Kemnebi, but the tolokand was assigned to aid Hyrune in his endeavors as needed. Of course, both Ibbu and Hyrune understand that Ibbu's true purpose is to keep an eye on Hyrune and to deliver reports back to Kemnebi. Ibbu hesitantly agreed to this task from Kemnebi but has grown frustrated.

In order to aid in giving Kemnebi reports, the vampire wove potent magic to give the tolokand a voice. It can speak in a strange, grating way that sounds as if a roaring fire accidentally learned how to talk. Unfortunately, the tolokand's inscrutable nature is reflected in its speech. When the characters enter the chamber, the figure looms high and orders them to answer its three questions. These questions are as

follows. "Tell me—your blood—is it always red?" Followed by, "It smells of your secrets in here, doesn't it—which secret stinks most?" And finally, "When did you last feel the tender touch of ashes?" In return for answering these questions, the tolokand promises to answer three questions the characters might have—a bit of entertainment for the weird creature. The characters can ask anything, but Ibbu's answers are strange at best. If the characters ask about Kemnebi, the tolokand shrugs and starts a reply: "In Yled your answers wait, for there Ke—"... only for his voice to vanish forever; a safeguard placed by Kemnebi should the tolokand ever say too much. Once he loses his voice, the creature pauses quizzically for a moment, reflects on this development, and shrugs. He then attacks nonchalantly, fighting to the death.

IBBU THE UNBLINKING

CREATURE 15

Tolokand (*Pathfinder Bestiary 3* 272)

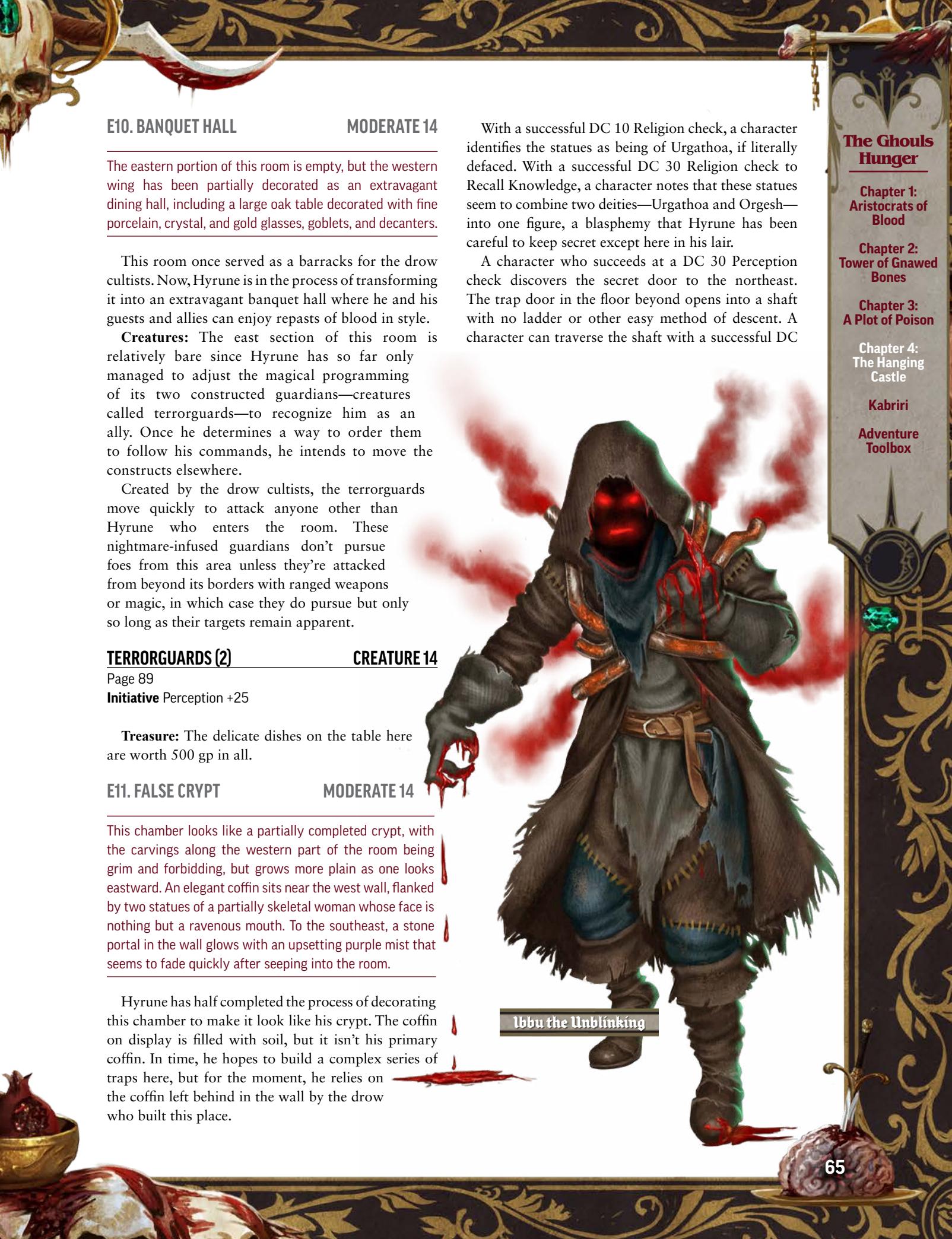
Initiative Perception +27

The Poison Plot: An examination of the documents on the worktables here reveals that much of Hyrune's plans and plots are laid bare—certainly more than enough to exonerate the characters and prove that he was the one who masterminded the plot to poison Geb's food exports. There are plenty of notes that indicate Hyrune was working for someone else (who isn't named here but the characters can easily deduce is Chancellor Kemnebi). The notes indicate there were problems securing enough *shadow ash* in Mechitar for the large-scale food poisoning that was envisioned but that "agents in Yled" have managed to secure a supply of "more than enough *shadow ash* to render Geb's trading partners into fields of corpses ripe for animation." The characters have the opportunity to follow up on this clue in *Pathfinder #185: A Taste of Ashes*.

While the nearby shelves are mostly empty, one interesting stack of pages consist of Hyrune's notes on the unrisen he moved from the cages here into his crypt—a character who can read Aklo and reads these notes can spend 10 minutes to learn about the unrisen—particularly their vulnerability to resurrection (a weakness Hyrune makes clear he would like to figure out how to remove if he's to be able to use these undead as more workable minions).

Treasure: Amid the tools and damning evidence is a *clear quartz crystal ball* cradled in a frame made of gold and ivory that depicts a circle of flying bats—this frame is worth 650 gp.

XP Award: For learning about the link to Yled, either through the notes left here or by speaking with Ibbu, grant the characters 120 XP.



E10. BANQUET HALL

MODERATE 14

The eastern portion of this room is empty, but the western wing has been partially decorated as an extravagant dining hall, including a large oak table decorated with fine porcelain, crystal, and gold glasses, goblets, and decanters.

This room once served as a barracks for the drow cultists. Now, Hyrune is in the process of transforming it into an extravagant banquet hall where he and his guests and allies can enjoy repasts of blood in style.

Creatures: The east section of this room is relatively bare since Hyrune has so far only managed to adjust the magical programming of its two constructed guardians—creatures called terrorguards—to recognize him as an ally. Once he determines a way to order them to follow his commands, he intends to move the constructs elsewhere.

Created by the drow cultists, the terrorguards move quickly to attack anyone other than Hyrune who enters the room. These nightmare-infused guardians don't pursue foes from this area unless they're attacked from beyond its borders with ranged weapons or magic, in which case they do pursue but only so long as their targets remain apparent.

TERRORGUARDS (2)

CREATURE 14

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Initiative Perception +25

Treasure: The delicate dishes on the table here are worth 500 gp in all.

E11. FALSE CRYPT

MODERATE 14

This chamber looks like a partially completed crypt, with the carvings along the western part of the room being grim and forbidding, but grows more plain as one looks eastward. An elegant coffin sits near the west wall, flanked by two statues of a partially skeletal woman whose face is nothing but a ravenous mouth. To the southeast, a stone portal in the wall glows with an upsetting purple mist that seems to fade quickly after seeping into the room.

Hyrune has half completed the process of decorating this chamber to make it look like his crypt. The coffin on display is filled with soil, but it isn't his primary coffin. In time, he hopes to build a complex series of traps here, but for the moment, he relies on the coffin left behind in the wall by the drow who built this place.

With a successful DC 10 Religion check, a character identifies the statues as being of Urgathoa, if literally defaced. With a successful DC 30 Religion check to Recall Knowledge, a character notes that these statues seem to combine two deities—Urgathoa and Orgesh—into one figure, a blasphemy that Hyrune has been careful to keep secret except here in his lair.

A character who succeeds at a DC 30 Perception check discovers the secret door to the northeast. The trap door in the floor beyond opens into a shaft with no ladder or other easy method of descent. A character can traverse the shaft with a successful DC

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30 Athletics check to Climb. This shaft drops 40 feet down to areas **E12**.

Hazard: The glowing portal on the wall was once used by the drow to come and go to a linked fortress hidden far deeper in the Darklands—a place where the realities between Sekamina and the Underworld of the Dreamlands blurred. Today, this portal is malfunctioning. It no longer allows travel to this hidden temple to Orgesh but does allow nightmare energies to seep out of the Dreamlands into reality. Due to the nature of this hazard, creatures who are immune to sleep effects (such as vampires) don't trigger it, but they can still be harmed by the hazard once it activates.

NIGHTMARE PORTAL

COMPLEX **MECHANICAL** **TRAP**

Stealth DC +32 (master)

Description Horrific visions of a lumbering monstrosity whose face is nothing but a fanged mouth lurch out of the violet mist to attempt to eat the viewer alive.

Disable DC 42 Thievery (master) to focus the portal's energies back in on itself to close it off, or DC 36 Occultism (master) to invoke the proper chant and make the proper hand gestures to untether the portal from the Dreamlands, or *dispel magic* (8th level; counteract DC 34) to counteract the portal for 1 minute and prevent Orgesh's influence from reaching through during that time

AC 39; Fort +30, Ref +25

Hardness 26, HP 104 (BT 52); Immunities critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Dreadful Vision  (illusion, mental, occult) **Trigger** At the start of a round after a creature who can dream and isn't immune to sleep effects enters the room, the portal starts to glow with purple mist. At this point, the portal triggers as soon as such a creature looks into it. A character who just passes by and doesn't specifically avert their gaze must attempt a DC 11 flat check to not accidentally glance into the portal, while a character who Searches this room automatically looks into it unless they specify otherwise. **Effect** The nightmare portal casts *phantasmal calamity* (heightened to 8th level, Will save DC 37), making reality appear to crumble away to reveal a vast cavern filled with bones through which immense wormlike creatures burrow as they endlessly eat away at the world. **The trap then rolls initiative.**

Routine (2 actions) A vision of an immense lumbering figure with nothing but a circular mouth for a face lurches out of the portal. For each action, the nightmare portal casts *phantasmal killer* (heightened to 8th level, Will save DC 37), targeting a different creature both times. It can select targets in area **E11**, the secret alcove to the northeast, or up to 10 feet east from the door (although a closed door blocks it), choosing the closest two targets each round.

The nightmare portal loses 1 action if it's broken and can thus only cast *phantasmal killer* once per round.

Reset The nightmare portal resets 1 minute after it no longer detects targets.

E12. HYRUNE'S CRYPT

SEVERE 14

The west wall of this room has two alcoves, and a pair of huge stone statues of a lumbering monster with a mouth for a face loom to the north and south. A Y-shaped blood-soaked carpet leads from the western alcoves to a short set of stairs in the east that lead up to a larger alcove, in which stands an elegant coffin of black lacquered wood. Two rows of gothic candle stands bear a dozen blood-red candles, each row flanking the carpet from east to west.

A DC 30 Religion check to Recall knowledge identifies the statues as depictions of Orgesh. A shaft in the northern alcove leads up to the hidden alcove in area **E11**. An open hole in the floor of the southern alcove drops down 30 feet to an apparent dead end, but a DC 30 Perception check reveals a narrow fissure in the wall that allows air (or a gaseous creature) to escape into the cavern beyond.

Creatures: Hyrune himself has been spending much of his time in this chamber lately, either in repose in his coffin or meditating before one of the statues of Orgesh. He can feel the Great Old One's hunger gnawing at him more and more, and he grows ever more confused about his faith, having difficulty telling the difference between the feelings of gluttony inspired by this entity or Urgathoa. He's attended by four hideously malformed mockeries of anatomy—partially eviscerated, mismatched carriónplays of the human form known as unrisen. Hyrune has managed to control these pitiful but dangerous undead creatures, and he sees in them something that appeals to his own fractured faith. Just as their forms aren't quite "right," so too does he realize his own faith is damaged. Hyrune is immune to their Agonized Howls.

Hyrune's reaction to the characters' arrival is a mix of impatience and resignation. He has no intention of letting the characters leave this place alive—their best hope for survival is as his forever-dominated thralls—but he won't attack at once. Instead, he bitterly congratulates them on their new posts to the nation's government and warns them that "stars fall much faster than they rise in Geb." Hyrune keeps his distance from the characters and orders his unrisen thralls to take up positions between him and them, but for the moment, he wants to know why they've been doing what they're doing. Give the characters a chance to explain themselves or even to demand answers, but Hyrune isn't interested in his own opportunity for a villainous monologue. He

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can, however, explain Kemnebi's plan to poison, raise, and control the population of surrounding nations that rely on Geb's food exports.

When Hyrune grows tired, he orders his unrisen to attack as he attempts to dominate the characters or otherwise capture them alive. If destroyed, he retreats to his coffin, knowing his time is likely short, but taking to his final grave the hope that in true death, his spirit will provide an answer to which divinity he truly serves.

HYRUNE LOXENNA

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Initiative Perception +27

CREATURE 15

UNRISEN (4)

Pathfinder Book of the Dead 153

Initiative Perception +21

CREATURE 11

Concluding the Adventure

Once the characters discover the lead to Yled in the Hanging Castle, they have what they need to move on to the next adventure. But defeating Hyrune is a wise move, for if they leave the ex-Blood Lord alive, he joins forces with Chancellor Kemnebi. This adventure assumes that the characters learn of the Yled link in area E9 of the Hanging Castle, but they could learn it from Hyrune himself if you prefer.

The death of a Blood Lord is a noteworthy event in Mechitar, but not an unusual one. People soon feel free to openly speak of their many grievances against Hyrune, and it's clear that he was deeply unpopular but feared. In a few days, the citizens adjust to the changing political climate, and for many, the characters are the "rising stars" Hyrune so bitterly commented on. While Geb, for the moment, seems not to have much time or interest in speaking to the characters again, another powerful undead leader certainly does.

Kortash Khain has had all he can take of Mechitar, Geb, and the surface world. As this adventure closes, the ghoul prepares to return to Nemret Noktoria. If the characters had at least 1 point of Influence with him, he invites them for farewells rather than just leaving without a word.

If the characters have earned at least 9 points of Influence with Kortash, before he leaves, the priest-king bestows parting gifts on the characters. He has hand-selected these treasures for them, based on each character's

strengths and interests he has witnessed during his time with them—you should do the same. These gifts are all at least 15th-level permanent magic items. Excellent choices for a spellcaster would be a wand of a 7th-level spell, while a *greater corrosive, flaming, frost, shock, or thundering rune* would be better for a martial character, but as long as each character is given a 15th-level item in reward, the exact item selected is up to you.

Through his Voice, Kortash thanks the characters for their assistance in Mechitar and notes that they're welcome to visit the streets of the "greater city" of Nemret Noktoria at any point in the future. Whether or not Geb's decision to reinstate the nation's tithes to Kortash's people is imminent, Kortash notes—speaking in his own voice for the first time—that ghouls "never hunger for long—not so long as flesh exists in the world above."





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While the practice might be considered taboo, there are many reasons why one might resort to cannibalism. In some cultures, the consumption of the dead is meant to honor ancestors and bring their strength into you. In others, cannibalism is a way to protect the body from supernatural predation. Others believe that consumption helps to separate the body from the soul. Still, some engage in cannibalism as a show of strength and power to their enemies. And of course, base survival in dire situations can force the choice on those morally opposed to the practice.

In Kabriri's case, none of the above reasoning applied. It was purely curiosity and malice. While the details of his life are shrouded and obscured by eons of myth, the story goes that Kabriri was the first elf to knowingly feed on the flesh of his own kind. These myths go on to obscure the name of his first victim entirely, for Kabriri fed upon him in order to take from him everything he knew, including his very identity. By consuming him, Kabriri sought to replace him entirely before and after death. And upon finding that the sensation of power and fear in the eyes of his victim seasoned the flesh just so, Kabriri vowed to feed only on the flesh of elves from that point forward. When the other elves rose up against him in horror, even as they watched some of their own succumb to Kabriri's poisonous preaching, it was too late. Kabriri was reborn in the Abyss as the first ghoul.

In those early days, when society was still finding its way, Kabriri traveled to many worlds. He sampled from the graveyards on each like a gourmand and spread his infectious "word" among those who had the misfortune to listen. By infecting the inhabitants of innumerable worlds with the first and strongest strain of ghoul fever, Kabriri ensured his faith grew strong. Yet wherever he traveled, Kabriri avoided the burial sites of elves and did not spread his word among

their kind. Whether it was fear or shame or something else entirely that drove Kabriri to spare those among whom he once walked while living, repercussions of this avoidance continue to this very day, both in the fact that a ghoul's touch cannot paralyze an elf and in that humanoids who succumb to ghoul fever themselves find their ears growing long and pointed in undeath, as if in some cosmic mockery of the elven form.

**Behold the breath of
hungry death
That winnows from
His jaws.
We chose your meat
because it's sweet—
And pleases Him
Who Gnaws.**

—Prayer to Kabriri

and hooves for feet. Typically he appears in rotting clothing held together by a lattice of leather strips crafted from dried elf flesh and sinew, and he is never encountered without his favored weapon at hand—a twin-headed flail made of bone and iron chain. Scholars have long debated the nature of Kabriri's feet, wondering why the more common ghouls who venerate him on so many worlds have humanlike feet, while ghouls of Leng have hooved feet like Kabriri but tend to worship entirely different gods. So far, none have discovered a satisfying answer.

Kabriri dwells in the Abyss, in a vast necropolis called Everglut. This immense city is filled with ghouls, whispering graveworms, carrion feeders, and worse creatures of the deep, existing within a single vast cavern surrounded by a labyrinthine network of warrens and tunnels that connect Everglut's graveyard/banquet halls with countless Material Plane worlds. Lit by eerie green light that drips from immense hanging roots and stalactites far above to pool in shimmering puddles below, Everglut's libraries are unusually vast. Here, legions of ghoul scribes toil to record the countless secrets of the dead, often employing complex ciphers to help protect those secrets from anyone other than themselves.

KABRIRI'S INSPIRATION

The demon lord Kabriri was created specifically for Golarion, but that creation itself was inspired by a wide range of authors whose works on the mysteries of the dead have entertained many readers throughout the years. H. P. Lovecraft (whose ghouls and ghosts are largely responsible for how these creatures are portrayed in games today), Clark Ashton Smith (the inspiration for so many necromancy tropes), Brian Lumley (whose Necroscope novels explore the secrets held by the "Great Majority" in a rip-roaring manner), and Caitlín R. Kiernan (whose stories about ghouls and ghoulish pursuits evoke feelings of lost grandeur and decayed elegance as much as abject horror). Of course, we also thought it might be interesting to explore just why elves have been immune to ghoul paralysis for so long!

Dogma and Worshippers

On Golarion, Kabriri's faith is widespread, yet belief in Him Who Gnaws is strongest among those who dwell in the Darklands city of Nemret-Noktoria, which is ruled by his high-priest on this world, Kortash Khain (page 92). Ghouls, and thus the faithful of Kabriri, can be found all over the world, though, often taking root in smaller rural areas like the hinterlands of the town of Sandpoint in Varisia or numerous remote hamlets throughout Ustalav.

Those who venerate Kabriri seek to learn the secrets of the dead—knowledge held by living souls that they took with them to the grave. Such knowledge can be extracted by supernatural means, but many ghouls utilize more mundane methods of research, such as stealing journals or inferring truths by covertly listening to living relatives mourn and recall their dearly departed. The pursuit of vast libraries of knowledge is at the core of many ghoul warrens, in the hopes that some day a warren's collection might attract Kabriri's attention and secure an invitation to relocate to Everglut.

While Kabriri views most ghouls as members of his flock, there are two notable exceptions that deserve mention. Leng ghouls, according to Kabriri's teachings, came to be when he gifted the people of Leng with his fever only to have them turn their backs on him and maintain their faiths in their older gods. As such, Leng ghouls are often counted as pariahs or heretics by worshippers of Kabriri. Of course, Leng ghouls are quick to offer the counterargument that their records show that they existed well before Kabriri came to visit them, suggesting that Kabriri

wasn't in fact the first ghoul—he was merely the first "ghoul of lower quality."

The other category of outcasts is the slowly growing number of non-evil ghouls, particularly those who worship Nocticula or Arazni. That these ghouls seek to limit their feeding only to those who died of natural causes and seek to share the secrets of the dead with living allies marks them as the faith's most hated enemies.

Temples and Shrines

Shrines to Kabriri are often little more than tunnels and chambers dug below graveyards, with roots and even coffins hanging from the ceiling above. Ghouls who've mastered the unique architectural style of carving warrens below graveyards in a way that prevents collapse are quite valued as the caretakers of these shrines, which often incorporate repurposed vaults that have been befouled and corrupted into the shrine's whole.

Larger temples to Kabriri built in mockery of other faiths, particularly that of Pharsma, can be found in cities like Nemret Noktoria, where ghouls can walk uncontested on the streets. Equally vast and complex cathedral temples can be found in other locations. Though they're also shaped to mock temples of other faiths, they're generally hidden from sight and built entirely underground. In many such places, grisly stained-glass windows look out upon solid stone but are lit from without by an otherworldly green light, giving the impression that, despite being underground, these eerie windows look out upon a strange and alien landscape.

Kabriri's symbol is an elven skull with the top removed to reveal a hollow interior that has been filled with maggots. In many temples and shrines, other humanoid skulls are used in place of an elven skull, but the maggots always remain and are said to represent the physical form of the secrets of the dead. These grave worms are the only form of life the faith legitimately adores.

A Priest's Role

Priests of Kabriri are expected to maintain a warren's shrine, to help protect the ghouls of their flock from persecution by holy warriors and the like, but also to organize the methods by which they can procure their meals. In larger warrens, a priest's role extends into that of librarian as well, as they are charged to protect the holding's collection of secrets and tomes.

Holidays

The faithful of Kabriri worship no particular fixed holiday, but often regard days associated with the

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burial of the dead with something more akin to excitement than reverence. To a ghoul, on holidays like the Pharasmin's Day of Bones, when corpses are interred at no cost to the bereaved, there is an anticipation in the air that's more like that before a day of feasting and gluttony than any religious reverence. Individual ghouls often regard the day they first "woke" as a ghoul as a particularly proud anniversary, as the longer a ghoul lives, the more secrets one can expect them to have accumulated. Worshippers of Kabriri blasphemously call these days their "birthdays," for to worship the day you died and rose as a ghoul as your "birth" appeals to Kabriri's twisted sense of humor—particularly when one considers that Pharsma herself holds power over birth as much as death. In ghoul societies that include members who are more than a century "old" in this manner, those elders' birthdays often become days of festivity as well, and are referred to by the ghoul's name. When two ghouls in a society share the same birthday, conflicts inevitably occur. Of course, the greatest of these birthdays is Kabriri's Day. Since none (Kabriri included) recalls the day he was reborn as a ghoul, most ghoul societies celebrate Kabriri's Day on the first day of the year, during which old bones and preserved mummies from ancient eras are brought out like fine wine for the community to sample and enjoy.

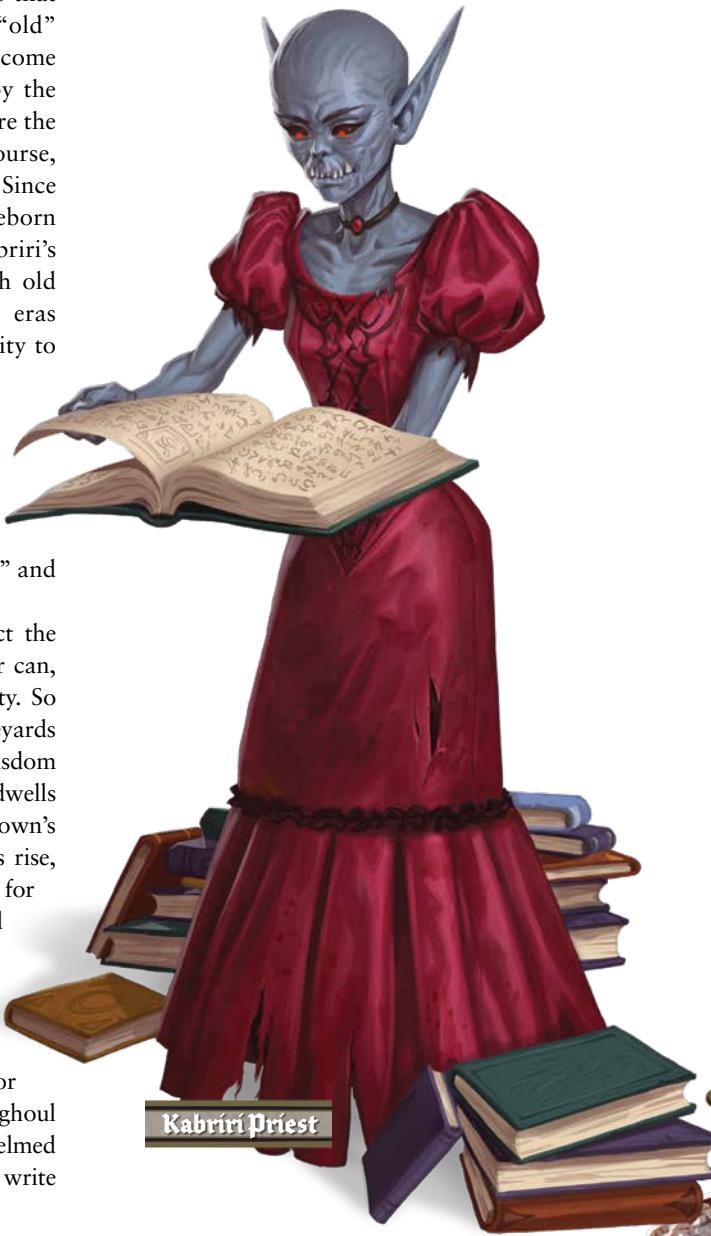
Aphorisms

Worshippers of Kabriri often quote the following aphorisms, particularly when they feel newer additions to their warren need to be reminded that, as a ghoul, you can "live forever," and that there's usually no need to rush.

Bite the Best, Eat the Rest: Ghouls can infect the living with a bite, and the spread of ghoul fever can, if left unchecked, quickly devastate a community. So why don't towns with ghouls haunting their graveyards quickly succumb? Because Kabriri teaches the wisdom of secrecy and population control. A ghoul who dwells unsuspected below a graveyard can feed on a town's dead for generations, but once too many ghouls rise, they not only become a more noticeable threat for heroes to eliminate, but those one-time graveyard buffets are spread far too thin. Successful colonies of ghouls keep their numbers small, pick and choose who they allow to join, and, yes, eat the rest. This phrase is often used by ghouls as a reminder that not every potential project or goal needs to be pursued, particularly among ghoul scriveners and scribes who sometimes get overwhelmed with the amount of secrets and stories they hope to write

down. A quick variant of this aphorism, "Pick a Man," encourages a ghoul to make a choice when they've been dithering over options, but to do so deliberately rather than recklessly.

Let the Flesh Fester: Ghouls are patient creatures in some ways, and this particular phrase is often used by a ghoul who faces a situation where simply waiting it out will resolve the problem in the ghoul's favor. The aphorism points, of course, to the fact that ghouls vastly prefer the taste of dead flesh over fresh meat. To a ghoul, the ravenous falling upon a freshly killed victim is the mindless act of a hungry zombie, and nothing at all akin to the refined methods a proper ghoul follows when preparing a kill for the table.



Kabriri Priest

Holy Text

Kabriri's worshippers hold the written word as sacred, for it is in this way that one can not only preserve the secrets of the dead, but given time, can hide those same secrets among the pages of a vast collection of texts and tomes. Each ghoul is bound to have a personalized list of books they either hope to one day own or already covet, and the titles and topics of these collections can vary wildly. Nevertheless, certain books are regarded as particularly important to ghouls, such as the *Book of the Dead* or the *Necronomicon*.

To those who worship Kabriri, and particularly to his clerics, one book stands above the rest—*Secret Meats*, a collection of “prayer-recipes” said to recount the thousand and one most delicious flesh-feasts Kabriri enjoyed in his earlier days of traveling the worlds. At a brief glance, the pages within seem to recount one grisly, abhorrent method of preparing a dead person’s flesh for decay and consumption, but those who can stomach the excruciatingly detailed accounts and upsetting illustrations can discover hints and accounts of ancient civilizations spread across the ageless universe.

Relations with Other Religions

Kabriri’s faith is a secretive one, as might be expected from those who thrive while hiding beneath the very feet of those they feed upon. For the most part, worshippers of Kabriri avoid contact with other faiths, often because so many clerics are so well-armed and eager to smite and destroy the undead. Many ghouls harbor a guilty regret if, in life, they worshiped another deity, and they sometimes keep mementos of this previous faith in the form of gore-encrusted holy symbols, dirt-stained holy texts, or preserved portions of flesh harvested from priests. The faith of Kabriri hold Nethys and Norgorber in certain amounts of respect, for both of these faiths traffic in secrets and knowledge without attaching an “agenda” that tries to limit who or what can take advantage of those secrets—as long as one has the wherewithal to learn this lore, it deserves to be known, regardless of the purpose to which it is eventually put.

Kabriri’s worshippers hold grudging respect for most other demon lords, and many openly worship Urgathoa and hold her as an equal or even superior over Kabriri. For his part, Kabriri’s teachings have always been subservient when the topics of Urgathoa and (to a lesser extent) Lamashu come up.

Such deference does not exist for Nocticula, who many worshippers of Kabriri regard as one of the worst kind of traitors—even more so than fellow

ghouls who turn from evil. Both Nocticula and Arazni’s faiths have been open and welcoming to non-evil ghoul worshippers of late, a heresy that increasingly brings these two faiths into conflict with Kabriri’s fanatics—even more so than their traditional enemies like Sarenrae or Iomedae.

Kabriri (CE)



Him Who Gnaws’ sphere of influence encompasses ghouls, graves, and secrets taken to the grave and kept by the dead. He favors ghoul and ghast worshippers, but welcomes all who seek to shed their living flesh and become part of his ravenous faith—so long as they embrace their cruelty as well as their hunger.

Edicts eat the flesh of your own kind

Anathema reveal secrets of the dead to nonbelievers, despoil grave markers

Follower Alignments CE, NE

DEVOTEE BENEFITS

Divine Font harm

Divine Skill Stealth

Favored Weapon flail, jaws

Domains Indulgence, knowledge, undeath, vigil*

Alternate Domains Decay, glyph

Cleric Spells 1st: jump, 2nd: expeditious excavation*, 3rd: paralyze

*Pathfinder Lost Omens Gods and Magic

New Rules

Among many obscure bits of magic and knowledge, the cult of Kabriri fiercely guards this spell and ritual, making sure only members of their faith know of it.

UNDERTAKER

RARE DEATH EVIL NECROMANCY

Traditions divine, occult

Cast somatic, verbal

Range 30 feet; **Targets** 1 living creature

Saving Throw Fortitude

You point your finger toward the target and whisper an epitaph that promises to grace their gravestone in the near future. This spell works best when both you and the target are in contact with solid ground. If either is not in contact with the ground, the target gains a +2 circumstance bonus on their saving throw against the spell, and if both you and the target are not in contact with solid ground, the target gains this bonus and treats the result of their save as one degree of success better than the actual result. The target of *undertaker* can resist with a Fortitude save.

SPELL 9

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Critical Success The target is unaffected.

Success The target takes 40 negative damage. If the target is in contact with solid ground, the ground in the target's space shifts and shakes, and is treated as difficult terrain until the start of your next turn.

Failure The target takes 80 negative damage. If the target is in contact with solid ground, the ground in the target's space churns and cracks open into an open but shallow grave. The target is knocked prone, and that space is treated as difficult terrain until the grave is filled in.

Critical Failure The target takes 160 negative damage. If the target is in contact with solid ground, a grave opens beneath their feet and they fall prone within. The grave then forms a stone sarcophagus-like shell around the victim. This stone shell cannot be opened and must be broken; it has AC 10, Hardness 14, and 80 Hit Points. At the start of your next turn, the grave fills in with soil. If the victim dies while inside this grave, at the next sundown the victim transforms into an evil ghast as the sarcophagus crumbles, allowing the new undead to dig its way up to the surface.

CORPSE COMMUNION

RITUAL 2

RARE NECROMANCY

Cast 1 hour; **Cost** rare spices and seasonings worth a total value of $50 \text{ gp} \times \text{the spell level}$

Primary Check Crafting (master), Occultism (expert), Religion (expert)

Duration 24 hours

The dead hold more secrets than the living ever shall. The lore possessed by the dead will only increase as time marches on. To be alive is to define your knowledge as being limited, but with the *corpse communion* ritual, you can, if only for a short time and through a narrow aperture, tap into the greater lore of the dead and make use of it for your own designs.

When you perform this grisly ritual, you consume a portion of a dead body, taking the decayed flesh and old bones into your system while also taking into your mind the memories etched into those mortal remains. The corpse from which you harvest your necromantic meal cannot have been dead for longer than 1 month, and it need not even be entirely intact, but enough should be present to form what would be regarded as a satisfying meal. If, in life, the corpse was the same ancestry as your own, then you gain a +2 circumstance bonus on the primary check to cast *corpse communion*. Note that when you perform *corpse communion*, the remains you consume are largely a symbolic bridge between this material world and the world of the dead. The ritual allows you to tap into the vast amount of

knowledge and secrets held by the dead as a whole, not simply knowledge that may have once been held by the creature you feed upon.

When you perform this ritual, select a single Intelligence-, Wisdom-, or Charisma-based skill whose secrets you wish to delve into, but in which you possess no greater proficiency than trained.

The ritual itself does not protect you from potential infection from eating decayed flesh, and at the GM's discretion, performing this ritual could expose you to a disease, curse, or other affliction.

If you perform *corpse communion* again while already under its effects, the effects of any previous success or critical success are replaced by the results of the new ritual casting.

Critical Success You learn a significant piece of lore, a forgotten secret, or some other tantalizing nugget of knowledge that is of immediate use to you, connected to the skill you chose. The GM will provide you with some piece of information they know will aid you in your personal goals. In addition, you become trained in the use of the selected skill and gain a +1 status bonus on checks made with that skill.

Success You become expert in the use of the selected skill.

Failure You fail to learn anything from the communion.

Critical Failure A malevolent spirit, be it a supernatural presence sensing an opportunity or the soul of the corpse you're feeding upon, lashes out at you as you feed, drawing from you your memories and secrets and taking them away into the realm of the dead forever. You not only become stupefied 3, but you no longer know the *corpse communion* ritual. You can attempt to learn it again, but the DC to learn this ritual increases by 5.

Heightened (4th) The remains can be up to 10 years old-dry bones in sufficient enough quantity to gnaw upon will suffice. You can choose a skill you are trained or untrained in, and when you are successful at this ritual, you become master at that skill. The ritual duration extends to 1 week.

Heightened (8th) The remains can be up to 100 years old-dry bones in sufficient enough quantity to gnaw upon will suffice. You can choose a skill you are trained or untrained in, and when you are successful at this ritual, you become master at that skill. The ritual duration extends to 1 month.

Heightened (10th) The limit on how old the corpse must be is removed entirely—as long as enough remains, even if it's just a single skull, you can perform the ritual. You can choose a skill you are trained or untrained in, and when you are successful at this ritual, you become legendary at that skill. The ritual duration is permanent until you cast *corpse communion* again.



Adventure Toolbox

The new rules in the following pages supplement the player characters' adventures in this Adventure Path.

Mechitar

This adventure takes place solely in and under Mechitar, the capital city of Geb. This location is described in further detail on pages 140–157 of *Pathfinder Lost Omens Impossible Lands*. The city's stat block has been reprinted here for ease of use.

Blood Lord Machinations

As the capital of Geb and the nation's second-largest city, Mechitar serves as the backdrop for many of the most significant and history-changing decisions affecting the nation. Though Geb himself holds court within the massive citadel known as the Cinerarium, he has a general disinterest for details he considers beneath him and is more obsessed with Nex's possible return. Thus, he leaves the daily oversight and operations of his nation to his conclave of approximately sixty powerful necromancers and personal apprentices known as the Blood Lords (*Pathfinder Lost Omens World Guide* 77). Led by Chancellor Kemnebi, the Blood Lords govern interactions between the quick—a term the undead of Geb use to refer to the living—and the dead. This includes adjudicating disputes, passing laws, protecting the nation's citizens from harm, warding against supernatural threats, and furthering the nation's interests both domestically and abroad.

Unfortunately, isolating such immense power within a small but influential group of nobility creates opportunities for great unrest and division, as many Blood Lords perpetuate their own agendas by leveraging the vast resources at their disposal instead of serving their nation's people. Though Blood Lords are prevented by law from directly harming one another, they often orchestrate devious plots against their adversaries to acquire more power or weaken another Blood Lord's grasp on a particular asset or sphere of influence. After the departure of Arazni, dissension among Blood Lords has intensified, leading many

MECHITAR

[LE] METROPOLIS

Cenotaph of a Nation

Government dictatorship

Population 42,006 (67% undead, 19% humans, 3% tieflings, 2% half-orcs, 9% other)

Languages Osiriani, Kelish, Necril

Religions Arazni (in secret), Nethys, Urgathoa, Zon-Kuthon

Threats curses, disease, necromantic miasma, poison, religious fanatics, rogue necromancers, undead

Favorite Food In Geb's undead capital, living beings who don't have the protection of the powerful Blood Lords are held in low regard and risk of simply being devoured. Undead NPCs begin with an attitude one step worse than usual toward such characters. While hostile citizens in other nations might simply wish you ill, in Mechitar, they're reasonably likely to try to eat you.

Geb (LE male human ghost necromancer 23) undead ruler of Geb

Chancellor Kemnebi (LE male vampire necromancer 20) joint head of the Ebon Mausoleum

Rinnella Brenon (NE female Child of Urgathoa 18) leader of the church of Urgathoa

Varnetta Xenopha (LE female mohrg harbormaster 20) overseer of the docks

SETTLEMENT 20

to undertake clandestine actions to undermine their colleagues and improve their standing in the eyes of the ghost king. The significant power and influence of the five Great Factions of Geb and litany of numerous Lower Factions—as well as their constant struggle to undermine rival organizations while advancing their own goals—further complicates the situation.

Once Seldeg Bheldis petitions Geb to have the player characters appointed as Blood Lords, they might find themselves forced into or even excited to pull the levers

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of the nation's political machines. Player characters might seek to use their own clout to manipulate and guide the direction of the country, advance or inhibit the goals of a specific faction, undermine or support a fellow Blood Lord, or otherwise advance their own interests through plots and schemes. The following downtime activities have been presented to allow you to present the player characters with easy options to do so.

Because of the scope and scale of the types of plans needed to gain power and influence among the Blood Lords, each of these activities is assumed to take at least a few months to complete. As a result, you should grant the players enough time between major story arcs (such as between chapters of an Adventure Path volume or between the volumes themselves) to allow players to use these activities and should discourage them from using these activities while in the middle of completing a significant mission as there simply isn't enough time to do so without dramatically altering the events of the campaign.

While many of the activities below represent those commonly used by the Blood Lords of Geb to grease the wheels of the country's aristocratic oligarchy, you are encouraged to work with the player characters to create their own if they have other ideas about how to increase their influence.

Unless otherwise instructed, when setting DCs for the downtime activities below, it's best practice for you to use a standard DC for the character's level as a baseline, modifying as necessary using Table 10–6: DC Adjustments on page 504 of the *Pathfinder Core Rulebook*.

ACCOMPLISH A FACTION GOAL

RARE DOWNTIME

You attempt to accomplish one long-term goal of a faction (such as helping the Reanimators animate several new types of undead creatures to enhance farming production throughout the region). Choose a faction and a skill associated with the goal you'd like to accomplish. Attempt the skill check. The GM determines the DC based on the complexity of the goal.

Critical Success Your party gains 1 Reputation Point with the faction. You gain a +1 circumstance bonus to Charisma-based checks against members of this faction for 30 days or an applicable benefit from the Alternative Rewards sidebar on page 79 (at the discretion of the GM).

Success Your party gains 1 Reputation Point with the faction.

Failure You fail to advance the faction's goal, taking a -1 circumstance penalty to Charisma-based checks attempted against members of this faction for 30 days.

Critical Failure You fail catastrophically, resulting in such embarrassment that your party loses 1 Reputation Point

with the faction.

DAMAGE CONTROL

RARE DOWNTIME

You write public apologies, attempt to repair damaged relationships, and model behavior that seemingly contradicts harm you've done. Choose a faction. Attempt a Diplomacy check against a DC determined by the GM.

Critical Success Your party regains up to 2 Reputation Points with a faction that have been lost within the last year.

Success Your party regains 1 Reputation Point with a faction that has been lost within the last year.

Failure Your efforts have no effect.

Critical Failure Public outcry denounces your abhorrent attempt at a cover-up. Your party loses 1 Reputation Point from the faction you chose as well as two other factions determined by the GM.

DIG UP DIRT

RARE DOWNTIME SECRET

You deploy spies to investigate a target creature or faction of your choice. The GM attempts a secret Stealth or Thievery check on your behalf to coordinate the espionage against a DC they determine.

Critical Success Your gain evidence revealing two different dangerous, embarrassing, or otherwise damning secrets about the target. You can leak this evidence to a faction who considers themselves a rival of the target to gain 1 Reputation Point for your party with that faction and severely damage the target's public reputation (this social fallout can be as severe as the GM determines is necessary).

Success As critical success, but you gain evidence proving one secret instead.

Failure You learn nothing from your investigation.

Critical Failure You remain unaware that the evidence you collected is embarrassingly false. If you turn the evidence over to a rival faction of the target, they reveal your error to the public, causing your party to lose 1 Reputation Point with each faction in Geb.

EXTORT A TARGET

RARE DOWNTIME

Requirements You or your party have discovered a secret about a target creature or faction using either Dig Up Dirt or the Secret Eater ghoul archetype feat (page 79). Alternatively, the GM can provide a secret related to a task the characters completed or a secret they were rewarded with for successfully completing another goal.

Attempt an Intimidation check to blackmail the target against a DC determined by the GM. If you attempt to Extort a Target using a secret you gained unknowingly from a critical failure of Dig Up Dirt (see above), you can't

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obtain better than a failure.

Critical Success The target pays for your silence. If the target is a creature, you gain $100 \times$ its level in gp. If the target is a faction, you gain 1,000 gp from a Lower Faction or 2,000 gp from a Greater Faction. You also gain a benefit from the Alternative Rewards sidebar on page 79.

Success The target pays for your silence. If the target is a creature, you gain $100 \times$ its level in gp. If the target is a faction, you gain 1,000 gp from a Lower Faction or 2,000 gp from a Greater Faction.

Failure You fail to extort any benefit from the target.

Critical Failure As failure, but the target you attempted to extort publicly reveals your machinations, causing you to lose 1 Reputation Point with this faction as well as the faction the figure is most closely associated with; you must also pay a 1,500 gp fine.

FOUND A FACTION

RARE DOWNTIME

You recruit powerful supporters to join and establish a new Lower Faction. Work with the GM to create a Lower Faction around a specific focus, akin to those described on page 75 of *Pathfinder Adventure Path #181: Zombie Feast*. Choose a skill that heavily represents the key function of this faction (such as Occultism for knowledge keepers, Thievery for a thieves' guild, or Warfare Lore for a mercenary force) and select a Great Faction to act as its rival. Attempt a skill check using the skill you chose. The GM determines the DC of the check. This activity takes at least 3 months unless the GM decides there are extenuating circumstances.

Critical Success As success, but Geb himself gifts the faction a permanent headquarters in Mechitar, or a different prize from the Alternative Rewards sidebar on page 79 (at the discretion of the GM).

Success Your party loses 1 Reputation Point with each faction in Geb. Your party gains 3 Reputation Points with the faction you started, and you and your fellow player characters are recognized as its founding members. The Lower Faction you founded begins with members, resources, and influence comparable to other lower Factions and can be used to provide the party specific types of services and support at the GM's discretion.

Failure You fail to establish a new faction.

Critical Failure As failure, and you lose 1 Reputation Point from each faction in Geb without successfully starting your new faction.

GREASE THE WHEELS

RARE DOWNTIME SECRET

You infiltrate the factions of Geb so that you can offer a well-timed bribe to bail you out of trouble. The GM attempts a secret Deception, Diplomacy, or Society check

(your choice) against a DC they determine.

Critical Success During the next 30 days, if your party would lose any number of Reputation Points from a faction, you can spend 250 gp per Reputation Point you would lose to retain them instead.

Success During the next 30 days, if your party would lose any number of Reputation Points from a faction, you can spend 500 gp per Reputation Point you would lose to retain them instead.

Failure You spend gp per Reputation Point you wish to retain, but the faction simply takes your bribe and you still lose the Reputation Points.

Critical Failure Your party loses 1 Reputation Point with the faction you attempted to bribe; you can't use Grease the Wheels to prevent this Reputation Point loss. Members of the faction are considered to have an unfriendly attitude toward you and your party for the purposes of using the Diplomacy skill for 1 month after the bribe failed.

INCREASE PERSONAL CELEBRITY

RARE DOWNTIME

Your favor with Geb facilitated your promotion to Blood Lord, but it also can make you something of a local celebrity if you're willing to endure the scrutiny of the public eye. Attempt a Performance or Society check to organize a series of elaborate concerts or extravagant parties, respectively. The GM determines the DC of this check.

Critical Success You become even more famous and are instantly recognizable throughout Geb for 30 days. During this period, NPCs who would normally be strangers to you have helpful attitudes toward you and can recognize you easily (as long as you aren't attempting to Impersonate someone or otherwise obscure your identity); you gain a +2 circumstance bonus when attempting Charisma-based skill checks within Geb.

Success As critical success, but the NPCs are friendly toward you, and the circumstance bonus to Charisma-based skill checks is +1.

Failure Your actions fail to make anyone take note.

Critical Failure Your desire for fame drives you to make a critical mistake that causes you to temporarily lose favor in Geb. NPCs who would normally be strangers to you have unfriendly attitudes toward you, and you take a -1 circumstance penalty to Charisma-based skill checks within Geb for 30 days.

NEGOTIATE A PARTNERSHIP

RARE DOWNTIME

Choose two factions who are not rivals and attempt a Diplomacy check against a DC determined by the GM. This downtime activity can only be used for that faction pairing

once; however, it can be used again with one of the pair and a different faction.

Success You negotiate a beneficial partnership between the two parties for at least the next 30 days: when your party would gain 1 or more Reputation Points from one of the factions you chose, your party also gains 1 additional Reputation Point with the other faction.

Failure Your negotiations render no results.

Critical Failure Your attempt backfires, turning both factions against you for the next 30 days. When your party would lose 1 or more Reputation Points from one of the factions you chose, your party also loses 1 Reputation Point with the other faction.

PERFORM PUBLIC SERVICE

RARE DOWNTIME

While rare, a Blood Lord might occasionally do the job they were chosen to do: serve the people of Geb. Attempt a Diplomacy, Legal Lore, or Society check against a DC determined by the GM.

Critical Success You adjudicate several disputes between citizens, advocate for the passage of helpful laws, further the economic interests of Geb, or some combination thereof. For 30 days, citizens of Geb have a helpful attitude toward you, and you gain a +2 circumstance bonus to Charisma-, Intelligence-, and Wisdom-based skills when interacting with them.

Success As critical success, but citizens have a friendly attitude toward you, and you gain a +1 circumstance bonus to Charisma-, Intelligence-, and Wisdom-based skills when interacting with them.

Failure Your efforts have little to no effect.

Critical Failure For 30 days, citizens of Geb have an unfriendly attitude toward you, and you take a -1 circumstance penalty to Charisma-, Intelligence-, and Wisdom-based skills when interacting with them.

PREPARE FOR INVASION

RARE DOWNTIME

Sorcery saved Geb from an attack by the wizard-king Nex before, and it can do it again. Attempt an Arcana, Occultism, or Religion check to bolster Geb's magical

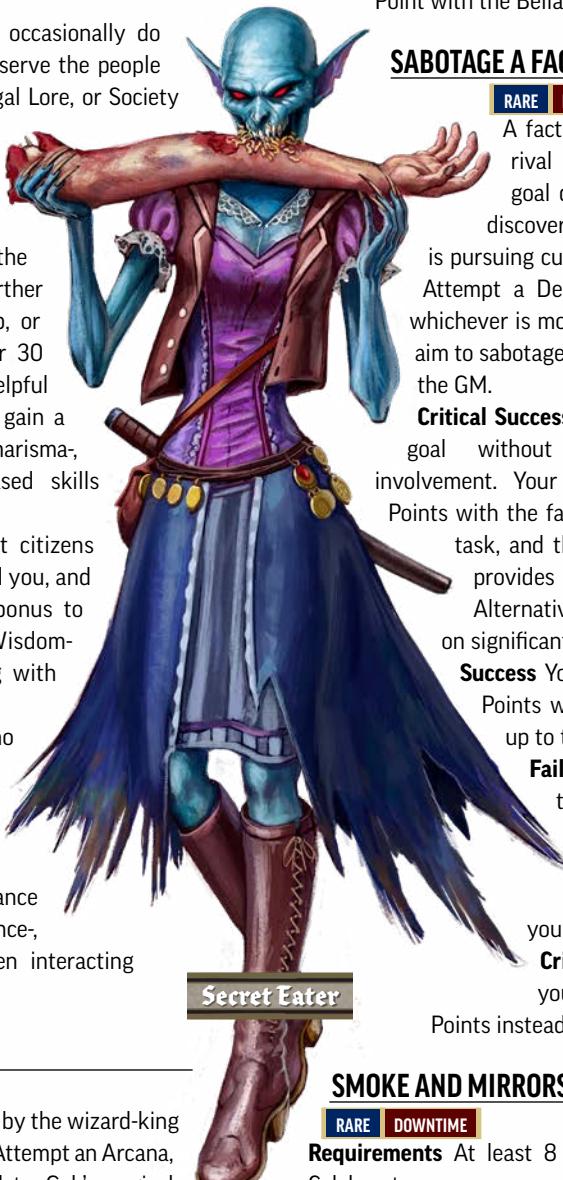
defenses, such as by shaping arcane wards of protection, animating vast armies of undead, or designing magical war machines. The GM determines the DC of this check. You can only succeed at this downtime activity once.

Critical Success Your efforts impress Geb, and the ghost king gifts a magic item specifically for you of an item level matching your level as well as a second gift from Geb from the Alternative Rewards sidebar on page 79.

Success Your efforts impress Geb, and the ghost king gifts a magic item specifically for you of an item level matching your level.

Failure You fail to ready Geb against the impending forces of Nex.

Critical Failure Your complete incompetence dismays those in charge of protecting the city: you lose 1 Reputation Point with the Bellator Mortus.



Secret Eater

SABOTAGE A FACTION GOAL

RARE DOWNTIME

A faction asks you to jeopardize a rival faction's progress toward a goal dramatically. You spend time discovering a few goals the faction is pursuing currently (revealed by the GM). Attempt a Deception or Thievery check—whichever is most applicable to the goal you aim to sabotage—against a DC determined by the GM.

Critical Success You sabotage the faction's goal without them suspecting your involvement. Your party gains 2 Reputation Points with the faction that put you up to the task, and the faction who solicited you provides you with a benefit from the Alternative Rewards sidebar for taking on significant risk.

Success Your party gains 2 Reputation Points with the faction that put you up to the task.

Failure Your efforts to sabotage the faction's goal are discovered; your party loses 1 Reputation Point with the faction whose goal you attempted to hinder.

Critical Failure As failure, but your party loses 2 Reputation Points instead.

SMOKE AND MIRRORS

RARE DOWNTIME

Requirements At least 8 Reputation Points with the Celebrants

If you or your party are subject to any negative effects resulting from failing a Blood Lords downtime activity or performing poorly when interacting with a faction that's unrelated to the loss or gain of Reputation Points (such as penalties to skill checks, increased equipment costs, or an NPC attitude decreasing by a step), you can remove them by leveraging Geb's most effective propaganda machine. Choose one such effect and attempt a Deception check. The GM determines the DC.

Critical Success As success, and you can remove one additional negative effect imposed upon you or your party, if any.

Success The Celebrants spread a series of rumors that change public opinion on your behalf. The negative effect that you chose is removed.

Failure The Celebrant propaganda has no effect.

Critical Failure The public easily sees through your fabrications. The negative effect you attempted to remove becomes slightly more severe (for example, by doubling a penalty) at the discretion of the GM.

STACK THE DECK

RARE DOWNTIME SECRET

You orchestrate a plan to manipulate the faction microcosm to serve your whims. Choose the number of Mastermind Points you want to gain (up to 5). The GM attempts a secret Society check against a standard DC for a character of your level (though the DC is adjusted by +2 for each Mastermind Point you wish to gain beyond the first). You lose all unspent Mastermind Points 30 days after you gain them.

Critical Success As success, except you gain 1 additional Mastermind Point.

Success Gain the desired number of Mastermind Points.

Each time your party would gain or lose 1 or more Reputation Points over the next 30 days, you can spend 1 Mastermind Point to allow your party to gain or lose up to 2 Reputation Points with a different faction of your choice instead.

Failure Your plan has no effect.

Critical Failure You gain the desired number of Mastermind Points and can spend them as described in the success entry to gain those effects. However, 1d4 days after doing so, you lose 2 Reputation Points with both factions instead.

Ghoul Archetype Feats

The following archetype feats expand the player options presented for the ghoul archetype on page 48 of *Pathfinder Book of the Dead*. Several of the feats below can be taken only by characters who have been accepted into an ancient fringe cult of Kabriri (page 68) known as the Secret Eaters and have thus been given the rare trait.

ALTERNATIVE REWARDS

If a player character uses a Blood Lord Machinations downtime activity and gets a success or critical success, you might want to offer an alternative benefit instead of what's listed to add compelling flavor to the situation. Such rewards include:

- 1d4 NPC hirelings from the *Pathfinder Gamemastery Guide*
- 1d10 × 100 gp
- A custom magic item Crafted by an appropriate faction (or even Geb himself), up to the character's level
- A free casting of an appropriate spell or ritual, of a level up to one-half the character's level
- A powerful political favor
- A unique undead companion
 - Fine or extravagant room and board outside the Alcazars for up to 1 year

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FLAITONGUE

FEAT 10

ARCHETYPE

Prerequisites Ghoul Dedication

Your tongue has mutated into a lashing weapon reminiscent of Kabriri's bone-laden flail. You can use a free action to unhinge your lower jaw and sprout rigid bones from your tongue. You gain an unarmed attack that deals 1d6 bludgeoning damage. Until you use an Interact action to reset your jaw and retract your tongue, you can't make a jaws Strike. Your flaitongue is in the flail weapon group and has the disarm, sweep, and trip traits.

COMPETITIVE EATER

FEAT 12

ARCHETYPE

Prerequisites Glutton for Flesh (*Pathfinder Book of the Dead* 49)

Gorging on flesh after your stomach is full fortifies you, making you hardy enough to withstand more punishment. When you become fully sated, you gain an amount of temporary Hit Points equal to 10 + your level.

SECRET EATER

FEAT 12

RARE ARCHETYPE DIVINE OCCULT NECROMANCY

Prerequisites Ghoul Dedication, worshipper of Kabriri

You have discovered and found favor with the cult within the church of Kabriri known as the Secret Eaters. You have maggots that wriggle under your skin with the power to wriggle out from between your teeth, glean secrets from those you devour, and whisper them telepathically into your mind. Once per hour when you Consume Flesh, you can select a single Intelligence-, Wisdom-, or Charisma-based skill whose secrets you wish to uncover. You become subject to the effects of *corpse communion* (page 73) as if

you had critically succeeded at casting the ritual: you learn a significant piece of lore, a forgotten secret, or some other tantalizing nugget of knowledge that is of immediate use to you.

TUNNELING CLAWS

FEAT 12

ARCHETYPE

Prerequisites Ghoul Dedication, trained in Athletics

You have elongated claws and enhanced senses, making you uncanny at digging the underground passageways needed to construct ghoul warrens and rob graves without arousing suspicion. You gain a burrow Speed of 15 feet and a tremorsense (imprecise) of 60 feet. You can Burrow through any earthen matter, including rock, while moving at your full burrow Speed. When you move in this way, you can choose either to leave tunnels behind you that are large enough to allow creatures of your size or smaller to move through them or move through the ground while leaving no tunnels or signs of your passing.

BODYSNATCHER

FEAT 14

RARE **ARCHETYPE** **DIVINE** **POLYMORPH** **TRANSMUTATION**

Prerequisites Secret Eater

Your secret-stealing maggots reveal how to devour more than just the flesh and secrets of a victim; you can ingest and assume their whole physical appearance. When you Consume Flesh of a creature of your size or smaller, you can assume the physical form of the creature immediately after becoming satiated or fully satiated.

Using Bodysnatcher counts as creating a disguise for the Impersonate use of Deception. Your transformation automatically defeats Perception DCs to determine you are a member of the ancestry or creature type into which you transformed, and you gain a +4 circumstance bonus to your Deception DC to prevent others from seeing through your disguise. You do not gain the special abilities, skills, voice, memories, or other characteristics of the creature you consumed, only their physical form. Unlike Change Shape, Bodysnatcher can be used to gain the appearance of a specific individual whose flesh you've consumed. This effect lasts until you are no longer satiated and can only be used once per individual creature.

GRAVE SHIFT

FEAT 14

RARE **ARCHETYPE** **CONJURATION** **DIVINE** **TELEPORTATION**

Prerequisites Secret Eater

Frequency Once per day

Requirements You are standing at the bottom of an open grave adjacent to up to four willing target creatures or objects roughly the size of a creature.

The maggots inhabiting your body impart you with the knowledge to travel from grave to grave, drawing upon the mystical power of the labyrinthine network of magical warrens and tunnels that connect Everglut to the Material Plane. You can spend 10 minutes channeling this power to transport you and all target creatures or objects that are inside the grave you are standing in to a chosen grave you are aware of (unoccupied or occupied) within 100 miles. When you target an occupied or filled grave, you and all transported creatures and objects appear scattered aboveground around the targeted grave (or belowground in adjacent tunnels or passageways if available).

BREATH OF HUNGRY DEATH

FEAT 16

RARE **ACID** **ARCHETYPE** **DIVINE** **INCAPACITATION** **OCCULT** **NECROMANCY**

Prerequisites Secret Eater

Frequency Once per hour

You have uncovered occult mysteries that allow you to unleash the devastating hunger of Kabirri upon your foes with a single exhalation, releasing a massive cloud of flesh-eating gas that glows with a sickly green light. You deal 7d6 acid and 7d6 negative damage to all creatures within a 30-foot cone (basic Reflex save with a DC equal to your class DC or spell DC, whichever is higher). A creature that gets a critical failure on this Reflex save is also paralyzed for 1 round. A creature that succeeds at this save becomes temporarily immune to Breath of Hungry Death for 24 hours.

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When a creature is killed using Breath of Hungry Death, its body is reduced to a smoldering pile of ash wafting with necrotic fumes. You can use a reaction to immediately inhale these fumes and become satiated or fully satiated as if you had used Consume Flesh.

WRATH OF THE FIRST GHOUl ➡ FEAT 20

RARE ARCHETYPE DEATH DIVINE ENCHANTMENT FLOURISH MENTAL OCCULT

Prerequisites Secret Eater

Frequency Once per day

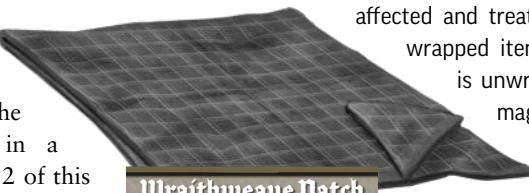
The ravenous maggots inside you become capable of exploding forth from your attacks into the wounds of an opponent, whispering telepathic words of destruction that invoke horrific flashbacks of Kabriri's transformation from elf to ghoul or psychic images of hundreds of maggots bursting from the victim's flesh all at once. Make a melee Strike against a target creature. If it hits, in addition to taking damage from the Strike, the target is affected by a 10th-level casting of *power word kill*. If Wrath of the First Ghoul is used against a target elf, Leng ghoul, or worshipper of Pharamsa and does not instantly kill the creature, the target takes double damage.



Shadow Ash

Magic Items

The following spell catalyst uses the rules found on page 168 of *Pathfinder Secrets of Magic*. It's also a key ingredient in the plot to poison the food aboard the Wyvern's Wife that results in a disastrous outcome in Chapter 2 of this adventure. The *wraithweave patch* was an instrumental tool in the poisoning plot.



Wraithweave Patch

SHADOW ASH

RARE CATALYST COLD CONSUMABLE MAGICAL NECROMANCY

Price 750 gp

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

Activate Cast a Spell or successfully perform a ritual as the primary or secondary caster

This small pile of ash glows with strange blue embers that coat whatever they touch with a thin layer of frost laced with veins of necrotic ichor. Adding this catalyst to an *animate dead* spell or *create undead* ritual wreathes the resulting undead creature in a shroud of frost that pulses with negative energy. During a combat encounter, the first opponent to deal damage to the undead creature with a melee Strike takes 3d6 cold damage and becomes drained 1 as the

ITEM 12

shroud of ice and rot shatters from the blow. If the undead creature survives the encounter, the shroud of frost reforms the next day. When an undead creature animated or created with this catalyst dies, it can return to animation with half of its Hit Points within 1d4 rounds of its death (unless it was killed in a manner that destroys it remains completely such as a *disintegrate* spell) with a DC 11 flat check. If the undead creature rises again, a desperate, garbled screech resonates from within its corpse.

WRAITHWEAVE PATCH

ITEM 9+

RARE CONJURATION MAGICAL

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

A wraithweave patch appears to be a square sheet of gray cloth that sparkles softly when observed in dim light. An incorporeal creature can touch, hold, and carry wraithweave patches (unlike most physical objects).

You can Interact with a wraithweave patch to securely wrap up an object or container that does not exceed the wraithweave patch's capacity in Bulk (as determined by the wraithweave patch's type). Once an object is wrapped up, its Bulk becomes negligible, and the wraithweave patch appears and behaves as if it's nothing more than a tightly folded but empty piece of cloth. You must Interact with the wraithweave patch again to unfold it, at which point the wrapped object returns to its normal Bulk and can itself be interacted with again.

Creatures wrapped in a wraithweave patch are not affected and treat the patch as normal cloth. A wrapped item provides no benefits until it is unwrapped, but can be detected by magic normally. If the wraithweave patch is destroyed, any object it contains reverts to normal and is exposed to the damage or effect that destroyed the wraithweave patch.

Activate ➡ command, Interact; **Requirement** the wraithweave patch has been wrapped around an object and you are incorporeal; **Effect** You cause the wraithweave patch and the object it contains to become incorporeal. This effect lasts as long as you Sustain the activation. The wraithweave patch can only be touched, held, and carried by an incorporeal creature, and returns to solid form if not carried by such a creature—if the wraithweave patch is in a solid object at this time, it tears apart and the item inside is either lost forever or simply lodged within the solid object, at the GM's discretion.

Type I; Level 9; Price 600 gp; **Capacity** Light Bulk

Type II; Level 12; Price 1,750 gp; **Capacity** 1 Bulk

Type III; Level 15; Price 6,000 gp; **Capacity** 2 Bulk



BLOOD-BORNE PROTECTORS

Vampires, liches, demons, devils, and other powerful evil creatures throughout Golarion might attempt to bind bloodshrouds to their will, perhaps by promising to reverse the magical misfortune that stripped them of their flesh and encased them in permanent shrouds of blood. However, whether such creatures could deliver such a prize remains to be seen.



Bloodshroud

During the war between Geb and Nex, necromancers conducted dangerous magical experiments to gain every possible advantage over their enemies. One such endeavor attempted to distill the essence of vampiric mists to create a protective shroud for an army of undead maguses.

BLOODSHROUD

UNCOMMON NE MEDIUM UNDEAD

Perception +23; darkvision, lifesense 60 feet

Languages Abyssal, Celestial, Common, Draconic, Necril

Skills Acrobatics +27, Arcana +27, Athletics +22, Occultism +27, Stealth +24

Str +5, Dex +8, Con +2, Int +5, Wis +5, Cha +4

Items +1 striking greatsword

AC 33; **Fort** +20, **Ref** +26, **Will** +23

HP 210, negative healing; **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, unconscious; **Resistances** cold 10, electricity 10, fire 10, piercing 10, slashing 10

Sanguine Shroud (death, necromancy, occult) The bloodshroud is enveloped by a shroud of flowing blood. If a creature deals damage to a bloodshroud with a melee Strike or touches the bloodshroud, the creature must attempt a DC 30 Fortitude save. Any temporary Hit Points the bloodshroud gains from Sanguine Shroud fade after 1 hour.

Critical Success As success, but the creature becomes temporarily immune to Sanguine Shroud for 24 hours.

Success The creature is unaffected.

Failure The creature becomes drained 1 and takes 2d6 persistent bleed damage. The bloodshroud gains 15 temporary Hit Points.

Critical Failure As failure, but the creature becomes drained 2, and the bloodshroud gains 25 temporary Hit Points.

Bloodshift (conjuration, necromancy, teleportation) **Trigger** A creature within 30 feet of the bloodshroud takes damage; **Effect** The bloodshroud transports itself and any items it's carrying to any unoccupied space adjacent to the triggering creature.

Speed fly 30 feet

Melee greatsword +26 (magical, versatile P), **Damage** 3d10+15 slashing

Melee claw +25 (agile, finesse), **Damage** 3d8+14 slashing

Arcane Innate Spells DC 33, attack +25; **8th** polar ray (x3); **7th** disintegrate; **6th** acid arrow (x3), chromatic ray (x3; Pathfinder Secrets of Magic 95), scorching ray (x3; Pathfinder Secrets of Magic 127), shocking grasp (x3)

Spellstrike **Frequency** until recharged; **Effect** The bloodshroud channels a spell that takes 1 or 2 actions to cast and requires a spell attack roll into a claw or greatsword Strike. The effects of the spell don't occur immediately but are imbued into the bloodshroud's attack instead. The bloodshroud makes a melee Strike with a weapon or claw. The spell is coupled with the bloodshroud's attack, using the attack roll result to determine the effects of both the Strike and the spell. This counts as two attacks for the purposes of determining the bloodshroud's multiple attack penalty, but the penalty is not applied until after the Spellstrike. Using Bloodshift automatically recharges the bloodshroud's Spellstrike.

CREATURE 13



Demon, Urglid

The hulking monstrosities known as urglids form from the souls of murderous undertakers, sadists who buried their victims alive, and intentionally neglectful grave keepers who gave up their watch over the dead. Standing over 30 feet tall and weighing over 3,000 pounds, the demon's head seems sunken into its torso, and a gaping, toothy mouth opens at the top of its chest.

URGLID (GRAVE DEMON)

UNCOMMON CE LARGE DEMON FIEND

Perception +20; darkvision, tremorsense (imprecise) 60 feet, true seeing

Languages Abyssal, Celestial, Common, Draconic, Necril; telepathy 100 feet

Skills Abyss Lore +24, Athletics +27, Crafting +24, Deception, +22, Intimidation +27, Religion +24, Society +22, Stealth +27

Str +9, **Dex** +4, **Con** +8, **Int** +4, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +4

Consecration Vulnerability Dedicated to the desecration of graves, an urgid takes 3d6+6 mental damage each round it's within the area of an effect with the consecration trait. In addition, the demon takes triple the damage from holy water.

AC 31; **Fort** +26, **Ref** +20, **Will** +20; +1 status to all saves vs. magic

HP 290; **Weaknesses** cold iron 10, good 10

Speed 30 feet, burrow 40 feet, climb 20 feet; earth glide

Melee ♦ claw +27 (agile, deadly 2d10, evil, magical, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 3d10+16 slashing damage

Melee ♦ leg +25 (agile, evil, magical, reach 15 feet), **Damage** 3d12+21 bludgeoning

Divine Innate Spells DC 30; **8th** earthquake; **5th** passwall (at will), wall of stone (x3); **3rd** earthbind (at will);

Constant (6th) true seeing

Divine Rituals DC 32; **1st** Abyssal pact

Earth Glide The urgid can Burrow through any earthen matter, including rock. When they do so, the urgid moves at their full Speed, leaving no tunnels or signs of its passing unless they choose to do so.

Gravechoke ♦ (concentrate, conjuration, divine, earth, olfactory) The urgid emits a putrid pulse that targets all living creatures within a 30-foot emanation. Creatures in this area that fail a DC 30 Fortitude save become sickened 1 (sickened 2 on a critical failure).

Ravenous Earth ♦ (concentrate, conjuration, earth, evil) With a single, devious thought, the urgid causes a mound of grave soil to well up at a creature's feet. A creature failing a DC 30 Reflex save is restrained. The restrained creature then begins sinking below the ground into a spontaneously formed grave. A creature restrained by this ability for three rounds is buried 6 feet deep in the ground and begins suffocating within 1 minute. A buried creature must be dug up to be freed (see Burial on page 518 of the Core Rulebook). A creature who is slain by Ravenous Earth rises as a ghoul the next midnight.

CREATURE 13



KABRIRI'S EXCAVATORS

While many loathe urglids for their ravenous appetite for burial and wanton destruction, priests of Kabrirri insist that the demon lord blessed and oversaw their creation, trusting the fiends with digging the labyrinthine network of tunnels that connect Everglut with the Material Plane. It's no surprise, then, that where there's an urgid, there's possibly a pathway to the Abyss—and plenty of ghouls.

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WHISPERS IN THE WARRENS

Legend holds that Briganthor, a dwarf champion of Torag, quested to root out a pack of ghouls. After slaying the undead, he stumbled upon a tome of cannibalistic prayer-recipes. As Briganthor attempted to burn the book, the warren collapsed—trapping him and his brother. Desperate for sustenance, Briganthor searched the cave-in only to conclude there was no way out. As days melted into weeks, the paladin feared they would starve. That's when the whispers came. Pleading, gnawing, begging him to open the grimoire.

Ghoul

The following ghouls appear during the events of *The Ghouls Hunger*.

GOUL ANTIPALADIN

UNCOMMON CE MEDIUM GHoul UNDEAd

Perception +15; darkvision

Languages Common, Necril

Skills Acrobatics +18, Athletics +20, Intimidation +20, Kabriri Lore +18, Religion +18, Survival +18

Str +6, **Dex** +4, **Con** +6, **Int** +1, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +4

Items flail, full plate, heavy crossbow (20 bolts), steel shield (Hardness 5, HP 20, BT 10)

AC 29 (31 with shield raised); **Fort** +21, **Ref** +15, **Will** +18

HP 155, negative healing; **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, unconscious

Destructive Vengeance **Trigger** The ghoul antipaladin takes damage from an enemy within 15 feet; **Effect** The ghoul antipaladin increases the amount of damage they take by 3d6, and they deal 3d6 damage to the triggering enemy, choosing evil or negative damage to deal to the enemy each time the antipaladin uses this reaction. In addition, the antipaladin deals 4 extra damage of the chosen type with their Strikes against the triggering creature until the end of the antipaladin's turn.

An enemy damaged from the ghoul antipaladin's Destructive Vengeance also takes 4 persistent evil damage; this applies only to the damage the reaction itself deals to the triggering creature, not the damage the antipaladin deals with subsequent Strikes.

Shield Block

Speed 20 feet

Melee jaws +19; **Damage** 2d8+11 piercing plus ghoul fever and paralysis

Melee claw +19 (agile), **Damage** 2d6+9 slashing plus paralysis

Melee flail +19 (disarm, sweep, trip), **Damage** 2d10+13 bludgeoning

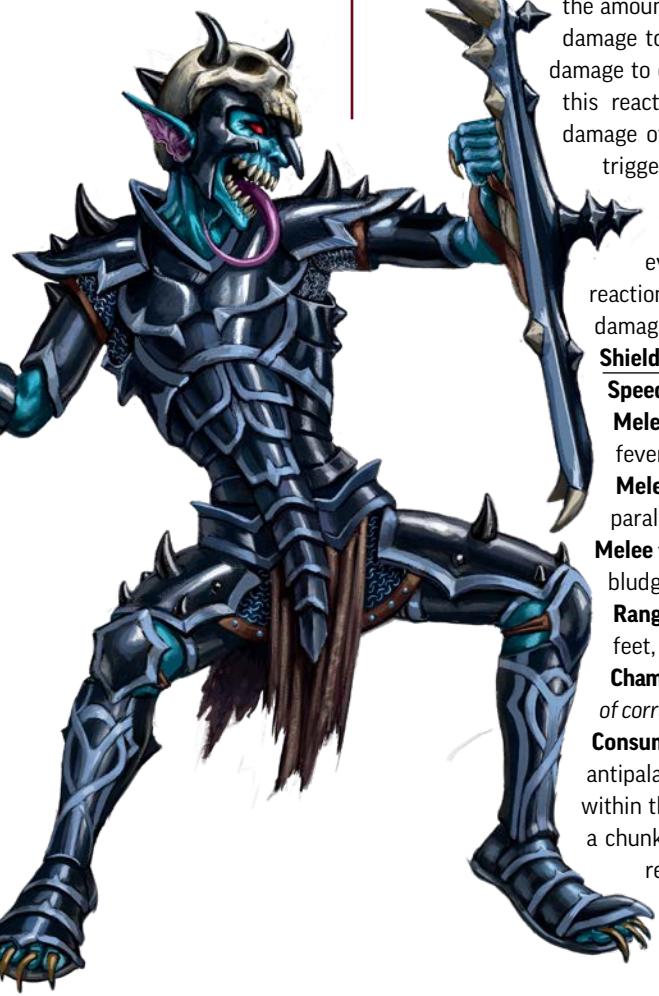
Ranged heavy crossbow +19 (range increment 120 feet, reload 2), **Damage** 2d8+11 piercing

Champion Devotion Spells 1 Focus Point, DC 25; **5th touch of corruption** (*Pathfinder Advanced Player's Guide* 229)

Consume Flesh (**manipulate**) **Requirements** The ghoul antipaladin is adjacent to the corpse of a creature that died within the last hour; **Effect** The ghoul antipaladin devours a chunk of the corpse and regains 4d6 Hit Points. It can regain Hit Points from any given corpse only once.

Ghoul Fever (disease) **Saving Throw** Fortitude DC 27; **Stage 1** carrier with no effect (1 day); **Stage 2** 3d6 negative damage and regains half as

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FISTS FULL OF GOLD

While little is known about origin of the order of ghoul assassins who dip their claws into molten adamantine, survivors of razorclaw assassination attempts often find themselves with a lucrative opportunity should they be able to extract the precious metal from the claws of their would-be killers. A player character who uses an adamantine weapon or cutting tool to remove the adamantine and succeeds at a DC 35 Crafting check for each claw (up to 10) can remove 50 gp of adamantine, which can then be sold or Crafted into adamantine weapons or armor.

many hit Points from all healing (1 day); **Stage 3** as stage 2 (1 day); **Stage 4** 3d6 negative damage and gains no benefit from healing (1 day); **Stage 5** as stage 4 (1 day); **Stage 6** dead, and rises as a ghoul the next midnight

Paralysis (incapacitation, occult, necromancy) Any living, non-elf creature hit by a ghoul antipaladin's attack must succeed at a DC 25 Fortitude save or become paralyzed. The creature can attempt a new save at the end of each of its turns, and the DC cumulatively decreases by 1 on each such save.

Swift Leap ♦ (move) The ghoul antipaladin jumps up to half its Speed. This movement doesn't trigger reactions.

GHOUL RAZORCLAW

Ghoul assassins who survive dipping their claws in molten adamantine transform into razorclaws.

GHOUL RAZORCLAW

CREATURE 13

UNCOMMON NE MEDIUM GHOUL UNDEAD

Perception +25; darkvision

Languages Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Kelish, Necril, Undercommon

Skills Acrobatics +27, Athletics +24, Deception +24, Diplomacy +24, Intimidation +24, Medicine +24, Society +24, Stealth +27, Thievery +27, Underworld Lore +24

Str +6, **Dex** +7, **Con** +2, **Int** +5, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +5

Items +1 striking composite shortbow (20 arrows), leather armor, shadow essence (3), infiltrator thieves' tools

AC 34; **Fort** +20, **Ref** +26, **Will** +23

HP 230, negative healing; **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, unconscious

Deny Advantage The razorclaw isn't flat-footed to creatures of 13th level or lower that are hidden, undetected, flanking, or using surprise attack.

Speed 40 feet, climb 30 feet

Melee ♦ jaws +27 (finesse), **Damage** 3d8+12 piercing plus ghoul fever and paralysis

Melee ♦ claw +27 (agile, finesse), **Damage** 3d6+12 slashing plus adamantine edges

Ranged ♦ composite shortbow +27 (deadly 2d10, magical, propulsive, range increment 60 feet, reload 0), **Damage** 2d6+10 piercing

Adamantine Edges The ghoul's claws have been dipped in adamantine.

The razorclaw treats any object they hit with a claw Strike as if it had half as much Hardness and any creature they hit as if they had half as much physical resistance.

Consume Flesh ♦ (manipulate) As ghoul antipaladin, except the razorclaw regains 7d6 Hit Points.

Ghoul Fever (disease) As ghoul antipaladin, but the DC of the Fortitude save increases to 31 and stage 2 and stage 4 deal 4d6 negative damage instead.

Paralysis (incapacitation, occult, necromancy) As ghoul antipaladin, except the DC of the Fortitude save increases to 31.

Sneak Attack The ghoul razorclaw deals an extra 3d6 precision damage to flat-footed creatures.

Surprise Attacker On the first round of combat, creatures that haven't acted yet are flat-footed to the ghoul razorclaw.

Swift Leap ♦ (move) The ghoul razorclaw jumps up to half its Speed. This movement doesn't trigger reactions.





Pyrogeist

Born from the deaths of arsonists who died in the fires they started, pyrogeists are roiling infernos whose spectral fire emits no actual heat and harms only living creatures. Obsessed with sharing their torment with the living, pyrogeists haunt the area of their demise until whatever wrong they refuse to forgive has been righted, and they are finally put to rest. While pyrogeists can't set their own fires, they often use their terrifying illusory capabilities and telekinetic powers to lure their victims into setting themselves ablaze.

EXTINGUISHING THE SPECTRAL FLAMES

Putting a pyrogeist to rest permanently often requires a ritualist to perform burial rites with at least some fragment of the pyrogeist's mortal remains. Because

what's left of a pyrogeist's living form has most likely melted beyond recognition, it can often be difficult

to locate. Pyrogeists can sense innately when what lingers of their mortal forms has been disturbed, and often attack without provocation to quell the threat. When a pyrogeist

is finally laid to rest and the appropriate sacraments have been performed, the pyrogeist fails to return to and no longer terrorizes the site of its death.

CREATURE 10

UNCOMMON CE LARGE INCORPOREAL SPIRIT UNDEAD

Perception +20; darkvision

Languages Common, Necril

Skills Acrobatics +22, Intimidation +22, Stealth +22

Str -5, Dex +7, Con +0, Int -1, Wis +3, Cha +5

AC 29; **Fort** +16, **Ref** +19, **Will** +18; +1 status to all saves vs. positive

HP 130, negative healing; **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyzed, precision, poison, unconscious; **Resistances** all damage 5 (except force, *ghost touch*, or positive; double resistance against non-magical), channeling resistance (see below)

Rejuvenation (necromancy, occult) When a pyrogeist is destroyed, it reforms where it was destroyed after 2d4 days, fully healed. The pyrogeist can be permanently destroyed only if someone determines the reason for its existence and sets right whatever prevents the spirit from resting.

Speed fly 40 feet

Melee ♦ ghastly flames +23 (agile, finesse, magical, negative, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 2d12+8 negative

Occult Innate Spells DC 29, attack +21; **5th** illusory scene (at will), telekinetic haul (at will); **2nd** telekinetic maneuver (at will); **Cantrips (5th)** ghost sound, mage hand

Breath Weapon ♦♦ (arcane, evocation, negative) A pyrogeist can spit a cone of spectral fire in a 30-foot cone, dealing 10d6 negative damage (DC 29 basic Fortitude save). A creature that fails the save also takes 1d6 persistent negative damage and is subject to the effects of *faerie fire* until the persistent damage ends.

Pyrokinetic Whirlwind ♦ (concentrate, negative, occult, transmutation, polymorph) The pyrogeist transforms into a 40-foot tall vortex of spectral flame that appears to immolate everything within a 10-foot burst. A creature within this area take 2d12+20 negative damage (DC 29 basic Fortitude save).

Soul Consumption (divine, evil, necromancy) The spirit of a creature that dies from damage dealt by the pyrogeist's Pyrokinetic Whirlwind is trapped within the pyrogeist as if subjected to the effects of the *bind soul* spell. This effect persists until the pyrogeist is destroyed or chooses to set the soul free. The spirit remains trapped whether or not the pyrogeist is using Pyrokinetic Whirlwind. A pyrogeist can contain only one soul at a time in this manner.



Rotbomber

Disgusting and dangerous, rotbombers bound around on all four limbs, ripping off the pressurized and explosive necrotic pustules that grow out of their backs to lob them toward their enemies. When they explode, the pustules emit concussive blasts of force and deadly pestilence that can infect a victim. Though slow and overburdened by the intense weight of the pustules, rotbombers can move with a surprising speed when they need to hunt down their quarry.

ROTBOMBER

UNCOMMON CE LARGE MINDLESS UNDEAD

Perception +25; darkvision

Skills Acrobatics +25, Athletics +25

Str +5, **Dex** +7, **Con** +4, **Int** -3, **Wis** +4, **Cha** -3

Slow A rotbomber is permanently slowed 1 and can't use reactions.

AC 31; **Fort** +19, **Ref** +25, **Will** +19

HP 250, negative healing; **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, unconscious; **Weaknesses** positive 10, slashing 10

Pressurized Pustules When a rotbomber takes acid, fire, physical or sonic damage, there is a chance a prematurely developed pustule bursts open, determined by a DC 11 flat check. All creatures in a 10-foot emanation must succeed at DC 29 Fortitude save or become sickened 2. A creature that gets a critical failure becomes sickened 3. Any creature who attempts this save becomes temporarily immune to pressurized pustules for 24 hours.

Speed 40 feet, climb 20 feet

Melee ♦ jaws +24, **Damage** 3d8+12 piercing plus necrotic rot

Melee ♦ fist +20 (reach 10 feet), **Damage** 3d6+10 bludgeoning

Ranged ♦ necrotic pustule +26 (negative, range increment 60 feet, splash), **Damage** 3d10+14 bludgeoning and negative damage plus necrotic rot

Gaseous Smash ♦♦ **Frequency** once per round; **Effect** The rotbomber pulls two necrotic pustules from its body, one in each hand, and leaps into the air in an attempt to detonate them simultaneously on a hapless victim. The rotbomber Leaps up to 15 feet horizontally and 10 feet vertically to land in a square adjacent to a target creature and makes a necrotic pustule Strike against the target. If the Strike hits, it deals an additional 4d6 bludgeoning damage to the target. This counts as two attacks for the purposes of determining the rotbomber's multiple attack penalty, but the penalty does not increase until after the Gaseous Smash.

Necrotic Rot (disease, necromancy, negative)

Necrotic rot withers and corrupts living tissue at an alarming rate. An infected creature can't heal damage it takes from necrotic rot until it has been cured of the disease.

Saving Throw DC 29 Fortitude; **Stage 1**

2d6 negative damage (1 day); **Stage 2** drained 1; **Stage 3** 3d6 negative damage and drained 2; **Stage 4** dead, rising as a rotbomber immediately

Propulsive Pestilence The pressurized necrotic gases within the rotbomber's pustules make them explode far more dramatically than most alchemists' bombs. The rotbomber's necrotic pustules deal splash damage to every creature within 15 feet of the target.

CREATURE 12



ROTBOMBER VARIANTS

Though the stat block presented for the rotbomber represents the most common version of the creature, GMs can feel free to experiment within the paradigms of the campaign to produce their own variants if they wish. For example, the Church of Urgathoa magically treats the *shadow ash* (page 81) discovered by the player characters in chapter three to create frostbombers, whose necrotic pustules deal cold damage instead of negative damage. Such rotbomber variants can easily be made to harm foes with fire, electricity, sonic vibrations, or any other damage type the GM deems appropriate.

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HUNGRY BEASTS

Some creatures are especially engineered by foul necromancers to have traits like that of ghouls.

Skavelings and straugh are examples of this. As a GM you can create your own ghoul variants if you wish. *Pathfinder Book of the Dead* (see Undead Adjustments on page 72) provides advice on how to accomplish this on the fly with nearly any creature, though some

make more sense than others.

The best creatures to receive the ghoul treatment are those normally

associated with being ravenous and dangerous. When you want a creature that is significantly more powerful than the base creature, it's sometimes best to be your own necromancer and design a ghoul-like undead beast from the ground up to reflect their increased threat level.

Straugh

When skirmishes break out between tunneling ghouls and creatures that dwell beneath the surface of Golarion, there's a chance that ghoul fever could infect such animals, producing strange new variants of ghoul beasts. However, letting the natural corruption run its course sometimes results in unsatisfying monsters, so some necromancers speed the process. This is the situation that led to the creation of the first straugh. A priest of Kabriri made the monstrosity to defend a claimed cemetery from another sect of ghouls who were preying upon the interred bodies. In some places, ghouls use straugh to tunnel into rival warrens or highly fortified mausoleums.

STRAUGH

UNCOMMON	CE	LARGE	GHOUL	UNDEAD
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Perception +17; darkvision, scent (imprecise) 30 feet

Skills Acrobatics +17, Athletics +22, Intimidation +17, Stealth +22, Survival +22

Str +8, **Dex** +3, **Con** +7, **Int** -4, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +0

AC 29; **Fort** +22, **Ref** +16, **Will** +16

HP 220, negative healing; **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, unconscious

Speed 30 feet, burrow 20 feet

Melee ♦ beak +23, **Damage** 2d12+12 piercing plus ghoul fever and paralysis

Melee ♦ talon +23, (agile, reach 10 feet) **Damage** 2d8+12 piercing plus Improved Grab and paralysis

Consume Flesh ♦ (manipulate) As ghoul antipaladin (page 84), except the straugh regains 7d6 Hit Points.

Fetid Screech ♦ (olfactory) Unaware that its vocal organs have withered and decayed, the straugh instinctively but ineffectively attempts to screech, instead releasing malodorous gas, half-digested corpse flesh, and small swarms of maggots from its open beak. The straugh releases a disgusting cloud of gas and decaying detritus in a 15-foot cone; any creature within the area must attempt a DC 28 Fortitude save. On a failure, the creature is sickened 2. On a critical failure, the creature also takes a -5 foot status penalty to its Speeds for 1 round. Any creature that succeeds at the save is temporarily immune to Fetid Screech for 24 hours.

Ghoul Fever (disease) As ghoul antipaladin (page 84), but the DC of the Fortitude save increases to 28 and stage 2 and stage 4 deal 4d8 negative damage instead.

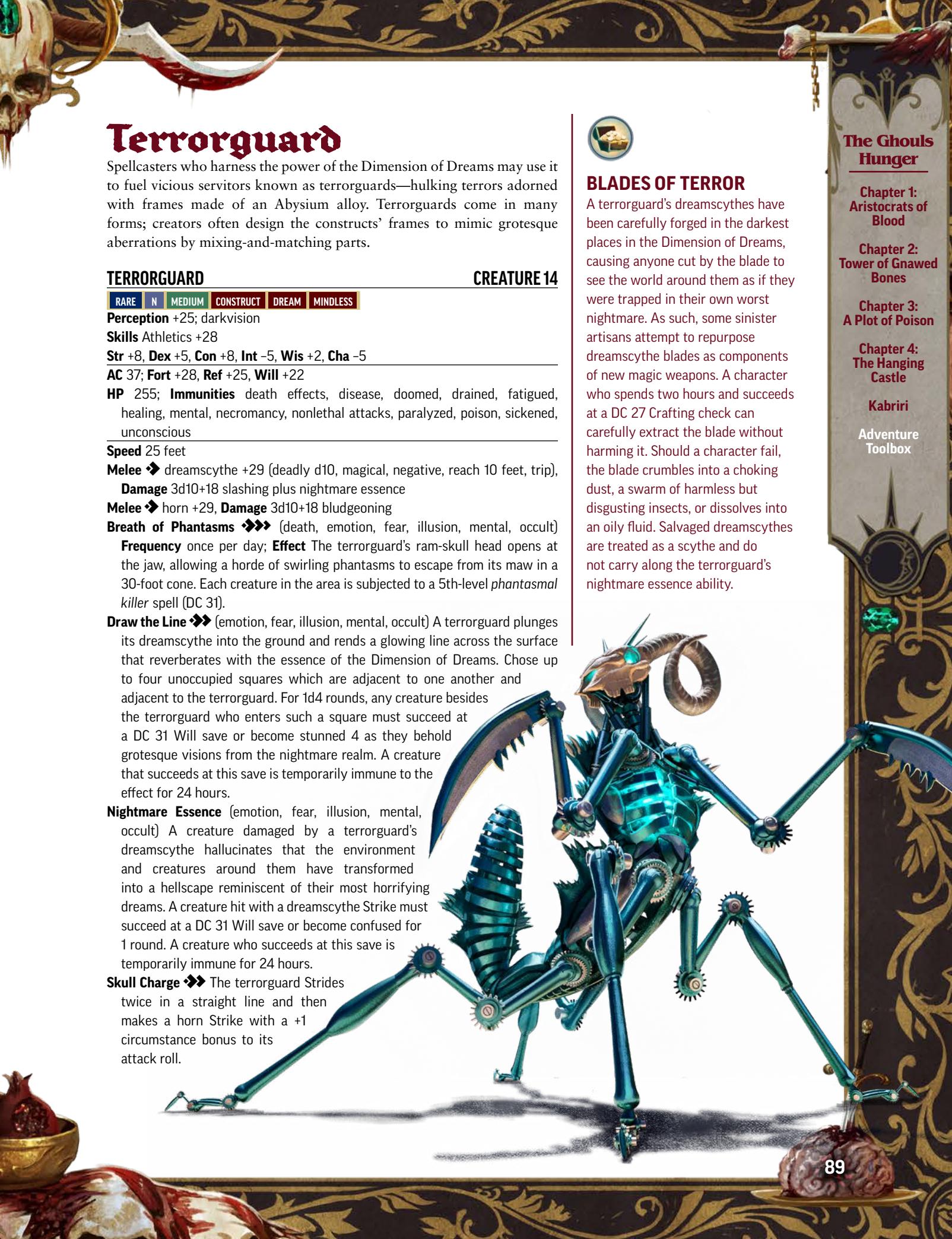
Paralysis (incapacitation, occult, necromancy) As ghoul antipaladin (page 84), except the DC of the Fortitude save increases to 26.

Rock Tunneler A straugh can burrow through solid stone at a Speed of 10 feet. It can leave a tunnel if it desires, and it usually does.

Tunneling Strike ♦ (earth) **Requirements** The straugh has Burrowed underground and remains undetected by the creature it plans to attack; **Effect** The straugh Burrows twice to emerge from the ground adjacent to at least one enemy and immediately makes a Strike against that foe.

CREATURE 10





Terrorguard

Spellcasters who harness the power of the Dimension of Dreams may use it to fuel vicious servitors known as terrorguards—hulking terrors adorned with frames made of an Abyssium alloy. Terrorguards come in many forms; creators often design the constructs' frames to mimic grotesque aberrations by mixing-and-matching parts.

TERRORGUARD

RARE N MEDIUM CONSTRUCT DREAM MINDLESS

Perception +25; darkvision

Skills Athletics +28

Str +8, **Dex** +5, **Con** +8, **Int** -5, **Wis** +2, **Cha** -5

AC 37; **Fort** +28, **Ref** +25, **Will** +22

HP 255; **Immunities** death effects, disease, doomed, drained, fatigued, healing, mental, necromancy, nonlethal attacks, paralyzed, poison, sickened, unconscious

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ dreamscythe +29 (deadly d10, magical, negative, reach 10 feet, trip),

Damage 3d10+18 slashing plus nightmare essence

Melee ♦ horn +29, **Damage** 3d10+18 bludgeoning

Breath of Phantasms ♦♦♦ (death, emotion, fear, illusion, mental, occult)

Frequency once per day; **Effect** The terrorguard's ram-skull head opens at the jaw, allowing a horde of swirling phantasms to escape from its maw in a 30-foot cone. Each creature in the area is subjected to a 5th-level *phantasmal killer* spell (DC 31).

Draw the Line ♦♦ (emotion, fear, illusion, mental, occult) A terrorguard plunges its dreamscythe into the ground and rends a glowing line across the surface that reverberates with the essence of the Dimension of Dreams. Choose up to four unoccupied squares which are adjacent to one another and adjacent to the terrorguard. For 1d4 rounds, any creature besides the terrorguard who enters such a square must succeed at a DC 31 Will save or become stunned 4 as they behold grotesque visions from the nightmare realm. A creature that succeeds at this save is temporarily immune to the effect for 24 hours.

Nightmare Essence (emotion, fear, illusion, mental, occult) A creature damaged by a terrorguard's dreamscythe hallucinates that the environment and creatures around them have transformed into a hellscape reminiscent of their most horrifying dreams. A creature hit with a dreamscythe Strike must succeed at a DC 31 Will save or become confused for 1 round. A creature who succeeds at this save is temporarily immune for 24 hours.

Skull Charge ♦♦ The terrorguard Strides twice in a straight line and then makes a horn Strike with a +1 circumstance bonus to its attack roll.

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BLADES OF TERROR

A terrorguard's dreamscythes have been carefully forged in the darkest places in the Dimension of Dreams, causing anyone cut by the blade to see the world around them as if they were trapped in their own worst nightmare. As such, some sinister artisans attempt to repurpose dreamscythe blades as components of new magic weapons. A character who spends two hours and succeeds at a DC 27 Crafting check can carefully extract the blade without harming it. Should a character fail, the blade crumbles into a choking dust, a swarm of harmless but disgusting insects, or dissolves into an oily fluid. Salvaged dreamscythes are treated as a scythe and do not carry along the terrorguard's nightmare essence ability.

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Hyrune Loxenna

Blood Lord of Geb

Hyrune had been a vampire for well over a century before he finally caught Geb's attention by exposing a sect of Nexian spies. Geb elevated him to the role of Blood Lord, stationed him atop one of the alcazars, and awarded him an additional holding—a hidden fortress below Mechitar called the Hanging Castle.

Hyrune's investigation of this abandoned ruin is where he first came into contact with images of the Great Old One Orgesh, and the strange visions and inspirations he felt tested his faith in Urgathoa. He's come to believe that somewhere between Urgathoa and Orgesh there exists a shadowy amalgamation of the two gods of gluttony.

CAMPAIN ROLE

Hyrune is this adventure's primary antagonist, and as such he's not expected to survive. If he does manage to escape, he could flee to Kemnebi's side and face the characters again.

Once the characters learn that Hyrune has taken an interest in them, they might wish to Research him (see pages 154–155 of the *Pathfinder Gamemastery Guide* for rules on Research). Each of these in-depth Research checks take 4 hours of downtime to attempt.

BLOOD LORD HYRUNE

DOWNTIME

Gathering Information The character pursues rumors and scuttlebutt about Hyrune from the city streets and taverns; **Maximum RP 4**

Research Checks DC 34 Diplomacy (to Gather Information)

Examine Public Records The character spends time poring over official records and other public documents; **Maximum RP 4**

Research Checks DC 29 Mechitar Lore, DC 34 Society, DC 36 Perception

Interviewing Urgathoans Once the characters learn of Hyrune's link to the church of Urgathoa, they can spend time asking around about him among other worshippers; **Maximum RP 4**

Research Checks DC 29 Urgathoa Lore, DC 34 Religion, DC 36 Diplomacy

Stakeouts The character takes time to observe Hyrune's alcazar from afar or surreptitiously follows him on trips through the streets (note that once Hyrune abandons his

INVESTIGATION 15

alcazar residence during the events of Chapter 3, this line of research is no longer available); **Maximum RP 4**

Research Checks DC 32 Underworld Lore, DC 34 Stealth, DC 36 Perception

4 Research Points The characters confirm that Hyrune is a vampire and the names of his favored agents. They also confirm that he is a worshipper of Urgathoa, although he doesn't attend services often. Finally, they discover that he's a witch who follows occult teachings, rather than divine teachings. **XP Reward** 20 XP.

8 Research Points The characters learn that Hyrune is quite powerful (inform the players that he's a 15th-level creature) and capable of astonishing feats of magic. In addition to his three favored minions, he keeps a small army of skeletal infantry and several vampiric guards as protection. **XP Reward** 40 XP.

12 Research Points The characters learn that Hyrune's faith in Urgathoa seems to be faltering. He's been accused of heresy several times only for the accusers to vanish. This information is enough to confirm to the player character that a religious symbol of Urgathoa could be used to trigger his revulsion (see Divided Faith at right). **XP Reward** 60 XP.

HYRUNE LOXENNA

CREATURE 15

UNIQUE CE MEDIUM UNDEAD VAMPIRE

Male half-elf vampire witch (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 318)

Perception +27; darkvision

Languages Aklo, Ancient Osiriani, Common, Necril, Undercommon

Skills Athletics +29, Deception +28, Intimidation +28, Occultism +29, Society +29, Stealth +27

Str +8, Dex +4, Con +5, Int +6, Wis +4, Cha +5

Items Hungerfang (+2 greater striking returning spell-storing spear; contains paralyze at start of combat), +2 greater resilient leather armor

Children of the Deep (divine, enchantment, mental)

Hyrune's presence brings forth creatures of the deep to do his bidding. These typically include bat swarms, giant spiders, and giant centipedes, but can include other Darklands creatures. Hyrune can give telepathic orders to these creatures as long as they are within 100 feet, but they can't communicate back.

AC 37; Fort +27, Ref +25, Will +29

HP 240, coffin restoration, fast healing 15, negative healing;

Immunities death effects, disease, paralyze, poison,

sleep; **Weaknesses** vampire weaknesses; **Resistances** physical 15 (except magical silver)

Divided Faith Hyrune's devotion to Urgathoa has become undermined by his obsession with Orgesh. Urgathoa's religious symbol can be brandished at Hyrune to trigger his revulsion, provided the person attempting to do so accuses Hyrune of being a heretic or of betraying his faith. Hyrune takes a -2 circumstance penalty to Will saves to overcome this revulsion.

Mist Escape ♦ As vampire.

Speed 25 feet, climb 25 feet

Melee ♦ spear +31 (thrown 20 feet), **Damage** 3d6+16 piercing

Melee ♦ fangs +29 (agile), **Damage** 3d6+16 piercing

Melee ♦ claw +29 (agile), **Damage** 3d8+16 slashing plus Grab

Ranged ♦ spear +26 (thrown 20 feet), **Damage** 3d6+16 piercing

Occult Prepared Spells DC 36, attack +28; **8th** confusion, maze; **7th** project image, reverse gravity, warp mind; **6th** dispel magic, feeblemind, repulsion; **5th** black tentacles, dimension door, sending; **4th** fly, nightmare, suggestion; **3rd** blindness, dream message, slow; **2nd** mirror image, see invisibility, status; **1st** command, fear, sleep; **Cantrips (8th)** daze, mage hand, message, shield, telekinetic projectile

Witch Hexes 3 Focus Points, DC 36, attack +28; **8th** blood ward (Advanced Player's Guide 237), malicious shadow (Advanced Player's Guide 238), phase familiar (Advanced Player's Guide 239), **Cantrips (8th)** shroud of night (Advanced Player's Guide 239)

Witch Patron night (Orgesh)

Change Shape ♦ (concentrate, divine, polymorph, transmutation)

Giant bat with fangs +28 for 3d12+16 piercing.

Create Spawn (divine, downtime, necromancy)

Dominate ♦ (divine, enchantment, incapacitation, mental, visual) As vampire but DC 36.

Drink Blood ♦ (divine, necromancy) As vampire, but when drinking blood, Hyrune regains 22 HP.

Familiar Hyrune's familiar is Taulzhalotel, a one-eyed, long-tailed hairless bat with a fly speed of 25 feet, darkvision, manual dexterity (with its tail), speech, and spell delivery.

Gluttonous Gulp ♦ (divine, necromancy) Hyrune dislocates his jaw to open his mouth far wider than it should, growing a thicket of additional fangs as he does. He attempts a fangs Strike and deals an additional 3d6 piercing damage on a successful hit and can attempt to Drink Blood if he has an action remaining, gaining a +2 circumstance bonus on his Athletics check to do so.

Turn to Mist ♦ (concentrate, divine, transmutation) As vampire.

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Kortash Khain

Lord of Nemret Noktoria and High-Priest of Kabriri

Kortash Khain is one of the most powerful spellcasters currently active within Golarion, yet he doesn't exercise his full power on the world. The high-priest of the demon lord of ghouls rarely leaves the underground city of Nemret Noktoria, where he has ruled for eons. He claims to have dwelt in the Darklands since a time before Earthfall, and none who live today can dispute these claims. Certainly his knowledge of secrets is extensive. Whether his claims are true or not, the city of Nemret Noktoria is ancient indeed, and throughout its existence it has known only one ruler.

While Nemret Noktoria is largely self-sufficient, its ghouls do enjoy exports from distant lands—be it in the form of new books, the latest fashions, or well-aged corpses harvested from boneyards throughout the world. Exports of such luxury goods from Geb have been a mainstay in Nemret Noktoria for thousands of years now, so when Kortash learns that Geb is reconsidering this arrangement, the priest king travels from his capital city to the surface for the first time since the Age of Lost Omens began to address the issue in person.

One of Kortash's most unsettling and strange affectations, and certainly the thing most likely to intrigue the characters upon meeting him, is his disdain for "surfer air." As an undead creature, Kortash doesn't need to breathe except to speak or cast spells, and on his rare travels out of the Darklands he imperiously refuses to take in any of the "inferior air the ants on the surface gasp at to stave off their inevitable deaths." When he must speak on the surface, he does so through a "Voice"—a hand-selected partial corpse consisting of an intact head and upper torso containing little more than lungs and the flesh and bones needed to keep them attached and protected. The Voice floats in the air, never further than an arm's reach from Kortash, who need only rest his hand upon the Voice's brow to cause it to utter his unspoken words for him.

CAMPAIN ROLE

Kortash Khain plays a complex role in this adventure—one part quest-giver, one part complication, and one part implied threat. For most of this adventure, the characters are placed in the role of Kortash's honor

guard—a role largely meant as a veiled insult to the priest-king by Geb, but one that Kortash turns to his advantage by accomplishing several tasks in Mechitar that he would have otherwise had difficulty seeing to without, potentially, causing an international incident. Kortash has immense power, and while he should have no desire to use it for or against the characters, you can use his influence if you wish to pull the characters out of a bad situation or to restore them if all characters die in an encounter. Take care in doing so, though, for you don't want the players to feel that they are invulnerable. Make it clear that if this occurs, Kortash only gives such aid once, and what he demands in return should be significant.

Kortash Khain is not given combat statistics on these pages, for he is an incredibly powerful creature with the spellcasting capability of a wizard and a cleric combined at the highest level of their skill—a true hierophant of his faith and a force against that cannot be defeated save by the most mythic and legendary of foes. Instead of combat statistics, presented below is an Influence stat block to aid you in tracking how the characters can earn Kortash's eventual admiration despite his initial viewpoint that their presence is an insult to his superiority.

Note that while Kortash's actual Perception and Will modifiers are listed below, the DCs for skill checks to Discover and Influence are much lower than those values would suggest, as Kortash is both out of his element in Mechitar and also a more open to being influenced in the context of the political situation he finds himself in during this adventure.

Full rules for running influence encounters appear on pages 151–153 of the *Pathfinder Gamemastery Guide*.

KORTASH KHAIN

UNIQUE CE MEDIUM GHOUL UNDEAD

Legendary undead priest-king

Perception +39

Will +41

Discovery DC 28 Kabriri or Ghoul Lore, DC 30 Religion, DC 32 Occultism or Society, DC 34 Perception

Influence Skills DC 28 Kabriri or Ghoul Lore (to know the proper idioms and mannerisms when speaking to a powerful ghoul), DC 30 Occultism (to impress Kortash

The Ghouls' Hunger

Chapter 1:
Aristocrats of Blood

Chapter 2:
Tower of Gnawed Bones

Chapter 3:
A Plot of Poison

Chapter 4:
The Hanging Castle

Kabirri

Adventure Toolbox

with your knowledge of hidden things), DC 32 Religion (to strike a chord with Kortash as a fellow person of faith), DC 34 Performance (to at least be entertaining during the conversation), DC 36 Diplomacy, DC 40 Deception, DC 50 Intimidation

Influence 2: Kortash becomes indifferent to the party; he no longer sees them as fools, but they still have a lot to do to earn his actual trust. **XP Reward** 40 XP.

Influence 5: While not yet friendly, Kortash now sees the characters as potentially useful for his cause. In order to aid them in their investigations, he supplies the party with a set of scrolls that the characters can use to learn *corpse communion* (page 73) and *call spirit*. **XP Reward** 40 XP.

Influence 9: Kortash becomes friendly to the party, and he gifts the group a weapon called *Writhing Gleam* (a +2 greater striking shifting standard-grade mithral flail) as a reward for their assistance. **XP Reward** 40 XP.

Influence 14: Kortash becomes helpful to the party, and as a token of his appreciation, supplies them with two *scrolls of undertaker* (page 72). **XP Reward** 40 XP.

Resistances Kortash is particularly nonplussed by ghouls or worshippers of Kabirri who don't dwell in Nemret Noktoria, but he's also unimpressed by people who grovel and attempt to curry his favor with obvious attempts to pander to his power. Any character who displays any of these qualities takes a -2 penalty on skill checks to Influence him.

Weaknesses Kortash is quite impressed once the characters defeat all the ghouls in the Tower of Gnawed Bones. After this occurs in Chapter 2, reduce all Discover and Influence DCs by 2. If the characters present to him Yurgak's remains in a condition where they can be used to craft a new Voice, reduce these DCs instead by 4.

Background Kortash is thousands of years old, during which time he's served as the ruler of a nation of ghouls and the most powerful priest in a demonic cult. Very little of what transpires in this Adventure Path truly worries him, other than an erosion of diplomatic relations between Nemret Noktoria and Geb. If the characters fail to handle the missions he has for them, it's a minor inconvenience in the long run, but if they succeed, they'll save him some trouble in the short term.

Appearance Kortash dresses to show his station but doesn't give himself over to overindulgence.

Personality imperious, sardonic, and unsettlingly knowledgeable about secrets

Penalty Anyone who suggests or even implies that ghouls are a scourge that should be wiped out, or that Kortash is a villain who must be defeated, finds it very difficult to make an impression on Kortash as anything other than a fool or future meal. A character who does so reduces the result of all skill checks to Discover and Influence by one degree of success, and might even, at your discretion, be spurned by Kortash. He won't cast aside the party entirely unless all of the characters become spurned in this way, but once a character becomes spurned, they can no longer attempt to influence Kortash at all.



Next Month

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by Brian Duckwitz

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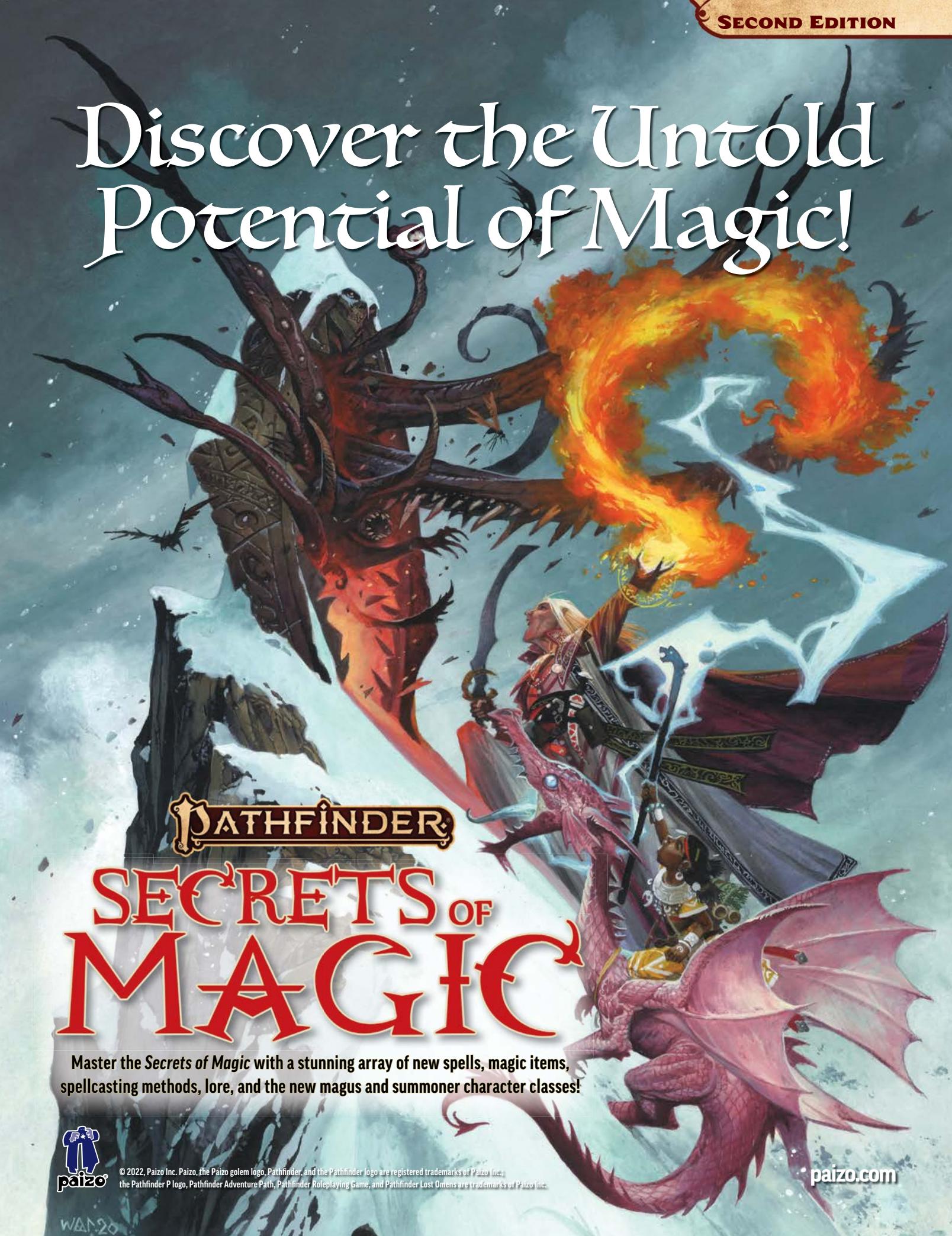
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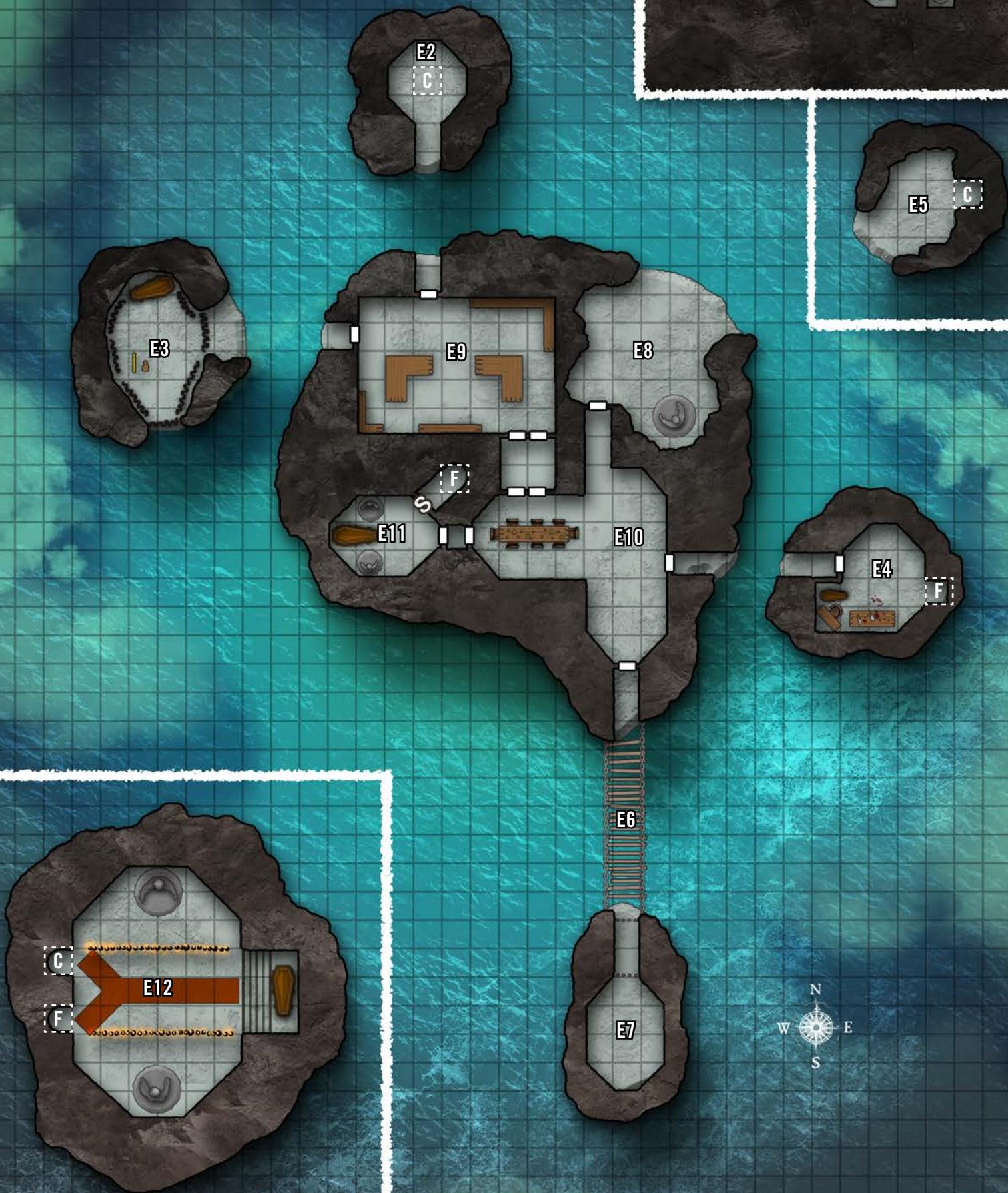
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