

The Vanishing Dead: Development Phase Quests in Absalom

Background & Overview: People and even corpses have been mysteriously disappearing in the city of Absalom, sparking fear and whispers in the streets. Local rumors in the Puddles district say "사람들과 시체가 알 수 없이 사라져" — "people and corpses are vanishing inexplicably." Unbeknownst to the public, a hidden cult of the **Outer Gods** is behind these abductions, using the dead for grisly rituals. In truth, the ancient ghoulish **Mother Jackal** (known in society as Great-Aunt Maut of House Ahnkamen) is orchestrating these crimes from the shadows ¹ ². Mother Jackal's agents are snatching bodies and freeing certain prisoners to feed her dark **Eaters of Knowledge** cult ². This series of four investigation-focused quests follows the heroes (at **Level 6**) through the **Development** phase of the campaign, as they unravel the mystery of the disappearing dead. Each quest is structured in five stages (per Pathfinder 2E quest design) with appropriate challenges, clues, skill checks, and optional combats for a 4-person party of level 6 characters. By the final quest, the party will discover that Mother Jackal is the true mastermind behind the ritual activities.

Quest 1: The Vanishing in the Puddles

- 1. Stage 1 – Hook (Mysterious Disappearances):** The adventure begins in **The Puddles**, a poor, partially flooded district of Absalom (the result of an earthquake that dropped its elevation). Locals have reported several **missing people and corpses**. A priest from the Grand Mausoleum (Absalom's temple of Pharasma, goddess of graves) privately hires the PCs to investigate why **fresh corpses** never arrive for proper burial. The priest shares that bodies of executed criminals and the homeless have **vanished without explanation**, and even a few living vagrants have gone missing off the streets. The city's authorities have done little (the district is low-priority, and some officials insist the bodies were lost to harbor currents). The hook should impress urgency and a macabre tone: **something is stealing the dead under cover of darkness**. The party can gather rumors with a **Diplomacy (Gather Information) DC 20** check – success reveals whispered fears of a "night-time Jackal creature" seen skulking around alleys, and knowledge that an organized group might be involved (multiple footprints at snatching sites).
- 2. Stage 2 – Investigation (Crime Scene & Clues):** The PCs investigate a recent **body-snatching site** in the Puddles. They find an alley behind a poorhouse where a corpse disappeared the night before. Conducting a search with **Perception (Seek) DC 21** uncovers important clues: drag marks leading to a sewer grate, strange **muddy footprints** (bare humanoid feet alongside boot prints), and an odd **sickly-sweet odor** (like decay mixed with exotic incense). A **Religion or Medicine DC 20** check on the residue finds it to be a preservative embalming fluid used by embalmers or necromancers. A **Survival (Track) DC 22** check follows the footprints to the storm sewer entrance. If the PCs interview witnesses in the area (such as a half-drunk beggar or a street urchin), **Diplomacy DC 18** or **Intimidation DC 18** can get them to talk – one urchin mentions seeing "figures carrying something" late at night toward the sewers, and a hunched figure sniffing the air like a dog. These clues establish that an **organized group** (likely including an **undead** or beastly creature) is active. The party should deduce that they must descend into the **Undercity** tunnels to find the culprits.

3. **Stage 3 – Event (Sewer Ambush):** As the heroes navigate the dank tunnels beneath the Puddles, they come across evidence of recent passage (footprints in sludge, scrape marks where something heavy was dragged). This leads to an event: an **ambush** by two **ghouls** (Level 3 undead) lurking in the darkness. These ghouls were set as lookouts for nosy intruders. Alert PCs might notice the attackers before being surprised with a **Perception DC 22** (the ghouls are hiding around a bend, using the foul sewer smell to mask their presence). If the party spots them, they can attempt a **stealthy approach or clever ruse** to avoid combat. Otherwise, the ghouls spring to attack, leading to an **optional combat**. Combat details: The ghouls are low-level minions (their paralysis and diseased bites test the party's fortitude without being overwhelming). The fight should be quick; when one ghoul is defeated, the other tries to flee deeper into the tunnels. The PCs can let it go to potentially follow it, or slay it. If a ghoul escapes, the party can **Track** it (Survival DC 17 due to an obvious blood trail) to the next area. If the ghouls are defeated outright, searching their bodies with **Occultism or Religion DC 18** reveals strange glyphs carved into their flesh – symbols associated with **Outer God** cults (a **Religion DC 22** identifies these as marks of the Outer God **Yog-Sothoth**, though the PCs might not yet know the cult's name).

4. **Stage 4 – Challenge (Smugglers' Tunnel Encounter):** Following the clues, the party discovers a hidden smuggler's tunnel that connects the sewer to an old **sea cave** on the coastline. In this chamber, they find an **illegal morgue** of sorts – a stash of 2–3 corpses wrapped in sailcloth, and one terrified living captive (a local beggar who was abducted). Here, they confront a small group of **corpse smugglers** working for the cult: specifically, **2 cult thugs** (human rogues, Creature Level 4) and a **ghast pack leader** (an advanced ghoul, Creature Level 5) overseeing the operation. This encounter can be resolved via combat or potentially a clever social approach: the cult thugs are not fanatics and might be **bluffed or intimidated**. For example, a **Deception DC 21** could trick them into thinking the city guard is about to raid the place, causing them to flee. If combat ensues, it's a **moderate difficulty fight** for level 6: the ghast uses paralytic claws and a foul stench aura, while the thugs flank with shortswords. The PCs can use the environment (crates of embalming herbs, narrow tunnels) to their advantage. After dealing with the foes, they can **rescue the captive** (who confirms he was to be **sold to "someone in a mansion"**) and investigate the scene.

5. **Stage 5 – Resolution (Clue to the Next Quest):** In the aftermath, the party finds critical evidence tying these disappearances to a larger plot. Among the documents and loot is a **shipping manifest** or ledger listing deliveries of "special cargo" (bodies) and prisoners to a **location in the Docks**. The paperwork mentions a recipient with an initial (like "M.J." or a codename "Jackal") and bears the seal of a notable organization – intriguingly, a **signet of House Ahnkamen**, one of Absalom's noble families ². The captive or a surviving thug can reveal that they were paid to collect bodies and deliver them to a **warehouse in the Docks** at night. They mention a "gaunt noblewoman with a jackal-headed brooch" who occasionally oversaw the transfers (they don't know her name). The priest who hired them rewards the PCs and confirms that House Ahnkamen is influential in Absalom's courts. The heroes likely suspect a necromantic or cult conspiracy involving this noble house. This leads directly to Quest 2, as they decide to investigate the warehouse drop point in the Docks.

Quest 2: Secrets in the Docks

1. **Stage 1 – Hook (Tracking the Corpse Ring):** Armed with clues pointing to the Docks, the party heads to **The Docks** district of Absalom, the bustling harbor ward where ships from across Golarion arrive. There, they seek the specific warehouse or drop location noted in the manifest from Quest 1. The hook begins with a **stakeout or investigation** around the busy wharves. The PCs learn that a particular old warehouse, supposedly abandoned, has had **unusual night**

activity. A helpful dockworker or City Guard patrolman mentions seeing **hooded figures unloading wagons of “fish” at odd hours**, but the place is quiet by day. The heroes likely surveil the warehouse. With a **Society (Urban Lore) DC 20** check, they recall that the warehouse is near an old embalming business or was recently purchased by an unknown buyer, raising suspicion. They might also use **Diplomacy (Gather Information) DC 19** to learn that **House Ahnkamen’s agents** have been spotted in the area (e.g. a clerk from the courts visiting the Docks in secret). Emphasize the atmosphere: creaking ships, salty air, and the sense that something covert is happening amid the everyday bustle. By the end of the hook, the PCs should decide to infiltrate or raid the warehouse that night.

2. **Stage 2 – Investigation (Warehouse Infiltration):** The party scouts the warehouse, which by outward appearances is locked and empty. They can attempt a **stealthy entry** (picking the lock with **Thievery DC 21** or finding a loose board to slip through) or confront a dozing guard at the door. Investigating around the building reveals a **secret hatch** by the water (Perception DC 20 to notice scrape marks on the pier or a concealed boat entrance). If they enter quietly, they catch a glimpse of the operation before being noticed: inside, the warehouse hides a clandestine **embalming laboratory**. There are tables with alchemical tools, a holding area with two **stolen corpses**, and a **caged prisoner** (a gaunt man who calls for help – one of the “freed” convicted wizards). The PCs can analyze the lab setup with **Crafting or Medicine DC 19** (to recognize embalming chemicals and necromantic reagents). They also find documents – e.g. a list of prison inmates with arcane talents. A **Society (Legal Lore) DC 21** check on the paperwork notes official court seals, suggesting someone in the judiciary authorized transferring these inmates (corroborating House Ahnkamen’s influence in funneling prisoners to the cult ²). This is a prime opportunity for roleplay and skill use as the heroes piece together the conspiracy: clearly a **cult is collecting knowledgeable prisoners and bodies** for some ritual purpose.
3. **Stage 3 – Confrontation (Optional Combat or Social Encounter):** The warehouse is guarded by members of the cult’s network. Soon after the PCs snoop around, **guards attack** – consisting of **2 cult enforcers** (human warriors, Level 5 fighters) and **1 cult necromancer** (a cleric or sorcerer dedicated to the cult, Level 6). This encounter can be handled as a fight or via a social bluff if the PCs prepared a disguise or cover story. If combat breaks out, it’s a **moderate challenge**: the enforcers will try to flank and use shoving tactics in the cramped warehouse aisles, and the necromancer will animate one of the corpses as a **zombie** (Level 3) mid-fight to harry the PCs. The party needs to manage multiple threats – a good tactic is to intimidate or wound one enemy enough that they flee or surrender once half their allies are down. **Optional social approach:** If a PC poses as an ally (perhaps using the signet or documents they found), a **Deception DC 22** could convince the necromancer and enforcers that the PCs are inspectors or new recruits sent by the cult’s higher-ups, potentially avoiding combat. Success allows the PCs to question the cultists briefly – they could learn that “The Eaters of Knowledge demand more brains for the Master’s ritual”, hinting that the cult literally consumes knowledge by eating brains. Eventually, either through combat or coercion, the PCs subdue the cultists and free the captive wizard.
4. **Stage 4 – Climax (Chase or Boss Fight):** At some point during the confrontation, the cult’s **cell leader** for this site attempts to escape – a scarred Osirian man named **Hakar** (Cult Agent, Level 6 Rogue). Hakar carries important information (a ledger or correspondence) that the PCs shouldn’t lose. He flees via a back exit or a waiting rowboat, triggering a **Chase scene** through the docks: the PCs must navigate around stacks of crates, leap over coils of rope, and perhaps commandeer a dinghy to pursue him. Outline 3–4 chase obstacles appropriate for level 6: e.g. scaling a piled cargo net (Athletics DC 20), jumping between two rocking boats (Acrobatics DC 22), and spotting Hakar in a crowded fish market (Perception DC 19 or Society DC 19 to ask locals quickly). If the party catches Hakar, it could lead to a short **combat**: he fights desperately with poisoned blades

(use rogue stats) but is outnumbered. If they fail to catch him via the chase, they might deduce his destination and corner him later (for example, at a safehouse). Ensure the PCs have a fair chance to catch or intercept him. The climax is either subduing Hakar or otherwise retrieving his satchel, which contains a **coded journal** and an **unusual amulet**.

5. **Stage 5 – Resolution (Decrypting the Clues):** Back in safety, the heroes and their allies (perhaps the Pharasmin priest or a friendly city guardsman) examine the evidence gathered. Hakar's journal, once decoded with **Occultism or Society DC 20**, reveals the broader scheme: references to the "Eaters of Knowledge" and that "Mother Jackal demands more wisdom for the endless hunger". This is likely the first time the party sees the name "Mother Jackal" in writing, though they may not know who or what that is yet. A **Recall Knowledge (Occultism) DC 25** about "Mother Jackal" might jog obscure lore: on a success, a PC recalls a tavern tale or old legal case about a jackal-woman connected to House Ahnkamen (hinting at the house's secret benefactor) ³. They also glean that the cult's next move is to perform a **major ritual in an underground temple** where "knowledge will be consumed." The amulet they found is carved with an alien, tentacled sigil – a symbol of **Yog-Sothoth**, an Outer God of forbidden knowledge ⁴. Cross-referencing this with lore (Religion or Occultism DC 22) confirms the cult venerates an Outer God. At this point, the PCs surmise that the enemy is a nihilistic cult performing **ritualistic cannibalization of knowledge** (literally devouring victims' brains to absorb their knowledge) to gain otherworldly power. The clues point to an upcoming ritual site in the **Undercity** beneath the city – perhaps in the **Precipice Quarter** (the ruined part of Absalom) or directly under a noble estate. The stage is set for Quest 3, as the party prepares to descend into hidden catacombs to stop the cult's ritual.

Quest 3: The Forgotten Shrine

1. **Stage 1 – Hook (Into the Undercity):** Acting on the information from Hakar's journal, the party learns of a specific time and place for the cult's next ritual. It suggests that under the cover of the upcoming new moon, the cult will gather at an old **forgotten shrine** in the **Undercity** (the labyrinth of catacombs and vaults beneath Absalom). The hook involves finding the exact entrance to this shrine. The PCs might consult an expert, such as a sage in the Wise Quarter or an informant from the Pathfinder Society Grand Lodge, to pinpoint the site. A **Society (Absalom Lore) DC 21** or **Engineering DC 19** yields knowledge of old tunnels that run beneath the **Precipice Quarter** (formerly Beldrin's Bluff, a haunted ruined district). Alternatively, a surviving cultist's notes indicate entry through a **sealed well** in an abandoned plaza. Emphasize the mood as the heroes descend: the air grows cold and stale, ancient carvings line the walls, and a sense of dread falls over the party. Before going, they may equip themselves with anti-undead tools if they suspect more ghouls. The hook ends when they find a heavy stone door leading into a buried temple chamber, marked with faded symbols of eyes and tentacles (signs of Yog-Sothoth).
2. **Stage 2 – Exploration (Ancient Temple Complex):** The PCs navigate the **forgotten shrine**, exploring quietly to get the layout. The complex might be a repurposed temple of Aroden or another deity, now defaced and converted to the cult's purposes. They find evidence of foul ceremonies: bloodstained altars, half-burned black candles, and scribbled notes in Aklo (the language of eldritch horrors). They might encounter **environmental hazards** such as a **rune of madness trap** that triggers a mental attack (Will save DC 21 or become confused for 1 round) guarding the sanctum. A careful PC could spot it with **Perception DC 22** and disable it using **Thievery or Occultism DC 22**. Additionally, scattered in side chambers are clues: for instance, a journal from a deranged alchemist (one of the freed prisoners) detailing how they "feed the Master by devouring the brain of a learned victim to absorb their knowledge". This strongly hints

at what “Eaters of Knowledge” means. The party can use **Occultism or Medicine DC 20** on piles of bones to realize the victims had their skulls opened and brains removed. By creeping further in, they can observe the cult gathering in the main chamber up ahead. This stage should build tension – the PCs have the chance to formulate a plan (sneak in to eavesdrop, strike preemptively during the ritual, or even disguise as cultists if they took robes earlier).

3. **Stage 3 – Challenge (Ritual Interruption):** The heroes come upon the cult in the middle of their **dark ritual**. In a large ceremonial cavern lit by ghostly green flames, **cultists of the Eaters of Knowledge** are enacting a rite. At least **4 cultists** (Cultists of Yog-Sothoth, Level 4 each) chant around a circular sigil on the floor, while their **cult leader** (a zealous sorcerer, Level 7) stands at an altar. Bound on the altar is a prisoner – a knowledgeable sage or perhaps the very wizard the PCs freed earlier (recaptured). The cult leader is in the final stages of a ritual to **sacrifice the victim’s knowledge to Yog-Sothoth**, which if completed could summon a horrifying extraplanar entity or grant the cult leader terrible power. The PCs have a brief opportunity to disrupt the ritual subtly: for example, a PC might **quietly sabotage** part of the glyph with **Arcana DC 21** (to nullify some of its power) or **create a distraction** (such as snuffing out candles with a gust of wind). If they succeed, they weaken the impending threat (perhaps preventing the full summoning). Eventually, the cult notices the intruders and a battle ensues. This is a major **combat encounter**: the cult leader and cultists versus the PCs, with the potential of a summoned creature. The cult leader begins the fight by invoking the partially completed ritual, tearing open a momentary **portal** – from which a slithering **aberration** emerges. Use a custom creature like a **Lesser Spawn of Yog-Sothoth** (Level 6 aberration) – for example, a tentacled, ooze-like horror with an **aura of madness** and **void tendrils** that sap knowledge. Because the PCs might have sabotaged the ritual, this creature is weaker or unstable; if they did not, consider using a stronger Level 8 version for a greater challenge. The fight should test the party’s resources: the cultists will try to mob the PCs with daggers and fear spells, the cult leader casts **occult spells** (like confusion or black tentacles), and the aberration rampages with alien fury. Clever players might turn aspects of the ritual against the cult – e.g. a **Religion DC 20** check could identify that dousing a particular brazier will sever the portal’s power, weakening the aberration. Victory is achieved when the cult leader is defeated and the aberration is banished or destroyed.

4. **Stage 4 – Climax (Boss Aftermath or Escape):** After the battle, any remaining cultists either flee or are captured. A surviving cultist might hysterically cry that “Mother Jackal will devour us all for failure!” – giving the PCs the first direct confirmation that “**Mother Jackal**” is the cult’s master. As the fight concludes, there’s a final peril: the unstable ritual causes the cavern to begin **collapsing**. The portal’s energies destabilize the structure. The heroes must **escape the shrine quickly** as stones begin to fall (treat this as a collapsing room hazard: over 3 rounds the ceiling caves in; PCs should succeed at two of three possible checks such as **Acrobatics or Athletics DC 20** to navigate debris, and **Reflex saves DC 18** each round to avoid falling rubble). This creates a tense climax where the party grabs any crucial evidence (and the rescued prisoner) and flees. If they linger too long, a **tentacle of the dying aberration** might lash out one last time (Attack +16 vs AC, moderate damage) to spur them along. They should escape just as the shrine caves in, dust billowing behind them. If any cult lieutenant escaped earlier, the PCs might catch a glimpse of them retreating through a hidden passage – perhaps heading upward toward the surface near the **Petal District** (the upscale district of the nobility).

5. **Stage 5 – Resolution (Revelation of the Mastermind):** With the cult’s ritual stopped, the PCs have a moment to piece together the final clues. Among the cult leader’s belongings, they find correspondences that **implicate House Ahnkamen’s benefactor**. For example, a letter addressed to “Great-Aunt Maut” thanks her for “providing centuries of guidance and indulgence” along with instructions about which prisoners to target. A **Society (Nobility Lore) DC 20** check recalls that

“Great-Aunt Maut” is a reclusive elder of House Ahnkamen. Coupled with the cultists’ references to Mother Jackal, the PCs can connect that **Mother Jackal and Lady Maut are the same entity** – an ancient being at the heart of House Ahnkamen ² ³. Any doubt is erased if the PCs also find a **sanctum key** bearing the Ahnkamen family crest. They likely conclude that the cult’s base of operations (and the mastermind) lies under the **Ahnkamen Estate** in the wealthy **Petal District** ⁴. The final revelation might come from the rescued prisoner or a captured cultist, who in gratitude or fear divulges what they know: that Mother Jackal is a horrific ghoul matriarch who has been pulling the strings. They describe her as a “**woman as big as an ogre with the head of a jackal**”, confirming the worst. The PCs now have the name and nature of their true enemy. This completes the Development phase – the heroes have uncovered that the **ancient Leng ghoul Mother Jackal** is behind the disappearances and rituals. They likely gain a level from these adventures. Armed with this knowledge, they can plan the next course of action: **Quest 4 will lead them into the lair of Mother Jackal** herself to confront the source of this evil.

Quest 4: Lair of the Jackal

1. **Stage 1 – Hook (Infiltrating House Ahnkamen):** Now aware that Mother Jackal resides within the noble **House Ahnkamen** in the Petal District, the PCs must infiltrate her lair. This is a delicate situation: House Ahnkamen is a respected family involved in Absalom’s government (its head, Lady **Neferpatra Ahnkamen**, is a Grand Councilwoman and First Lady of Laws) ⁵. A direct accusation could cause political turmoil, and Neferpatra herself is bound by ancient pacts from acting against Mother Jackal ³. The hook is figuring out how to gain access to the estate’s forbidden lower levels without raising alarm. The PCs have a few options: **stealthy infiltration** (perhaps via the Undercity tunnels connecting near the estate’s cellars), **political maneuvering** (obtaining a discreet warrant or permission from Neferpatra), or **deception** (posing as couriers, servants, or inspectors). A **Knowledge (Engineering or Streetwise) DC 21** check reveals old sewer blueprints showing a conduit entering the estate grounds. If they seek Neferpatra’s aid through back-channels, a **Diplomacy DC 23** or leveraging Pharasma’s clergy might persuade her to subtly allow the intrusion (as a Pharasmin cleric, Neferpatra quietly abhors the undead presence in her house, but she cannot openly act) ⁶ ³. One way or another, the heroes secure entry to the grounds. Describe the opulent estate above – manicured gardens, Osirian statues – a stark contrast to the horror that lies beneath. The hook culminates as they stand before a heavy stone door in the estate’s basement, leading to Mother Jackal’s hidden domain.
2. **Stage 2 – Exploration (The Jackal’s Sanctum):** The party delves into the secret chambers under the Ahnkamen Estate. These chambers are ancient and eerie. According to lore, Mother Jackal has over centuries turned the estate’s catacombs into her personal **temple to the Outer Gods** ⁴. The PCs traverse areas such as a **temple-cavern** with walls painted in alien constellations, a **ritual chamber** still reeking of death, and a **library of forbidden tomes**. This is a chance for atmospheric exploration and discovery. They might find a **journal** or ledger detailing Mother Jackal’s dealings – e.g. records of prisoners delivered and knowledge “harvested”. If they search carefully, a **Perception DC 20** finds notes on Yog-Sothoth and experiments with preserving brains. A **Decipher Writing (Occultism) DC 24** could reveal a weakness or insight about Mother Jackal (for instance, that she is a Leng ghoul sorcerer who considers anything less than decades fleeting) ⁷. They also see evidence of how she stayed hidden: **illusion spells and abjurations** placed on doors and walls (detectable with Detect Magic), and even living **house guards under enchantment** to ignore certain areas ⁸. Include a **hazard** to keep tension: perhaps a **warding glyph** on a threshold that triggers a blast of necrotic energy (Reflex DC 21 half, moderate damage) if not disarmed (**Thievery DC 22** or **Arcana DC 22** to dispel). This stage builds anticipation as they approach the inner sanctum where Mother Jackal herself likely waits.

3. **Stage 3 – Conflict (Unveiling Mother Jackal):** In the heart of the lair, the PCs finally come face-to-face with **Mother Jackal** – or at least her immediate servants. The central chamber is exactly as described in lore: decorated in **pre-Osirian** style, opulent yet macabre, with a menagerie of riches intermingled with bones ⁴. Here the party confronts **Mother Jackal's chosen lieutenant**, an undead sorcerer or high priest of the cult. For example, this could be a **Leng Ghoul Priest** (Level 8), perhaps one of the convicted wizards now transformed into an undead thrall. Accompanying them are **2–3 lesser guardians** – possibly bewitched house guards (human fighters level 5) or **spawn of the Outer Dark** (aberrant creatures level 5). This is a **boss encounter** that tests the PCs before they can reach Mother Jackal. During the battle, Mother Jackal herself is present but initially **disguised** as a withered human noblewoman (her alias Great-Aunt Maut). She observes from the sidelines, evaluating the PCs. The lieutenant fights fiercely: the ghoul priest hurls spells (like vampiric touch or phantasmal killer) and uses ghoul abilities (paralysis, ghoul fever), while the guardians attempt to block and flank the PCs. During this fight, Mother Jackal might subtly intervene with her own magic – e.g. an **illusion** causing a PC to see a swarm of scarabs (Will DC ~24 to disbelieve) or an **abyssal muttering** that imposes a fear effect – all to unnerve the party while they're distracted. Once the lieutenant is defeated, the path to the inner sanctum is open. At this point, Mother Jackal steps forward, **revealing her true form** at last: with a horrific transformation, the gaunt old woman stretches into a towering **Leng ghoul**, as large as a small elephant, her skin leathery and eyes glowing with ancient evil ⁹. She greets the heroes with a slow clap or a growling laugh, acknowledging their meddling.
4. **Stage 4 – Climax (Confrontation with the Jackal):** This is the climactic confrontation. However, at **Level 6**, the party cannot realistically defeat Mother Jackal (a powerful unique ghoul sorcerer of Level 14 ¹⁰) in straight combat. Instead, frame this encounter as a desperate **struggle to survive and force Mother Jackal to retreat** or otherwise end her threat for now. Mother Jackal might engage in villainous monologue, revealing her motivations (e.g. how she has guided House Ahnkamen for centuries, feeding on knowledge to please Yog-Sothoth ¹¹). The PCs can respond with bold words or clever distraction. The confrontation likely turns violent: Mother Jackal lunges with predatory speed belying her size, perhaps toying with them. Combat notes: She could have extreme defenses (e.g. high AC, regeneration in the presence of corpses) and deadly powers – a **paralyzing gaze**, **ghoul fever miasma**, and potent spells (as a sorcerer of Yog-Sothoth, perhaps casting **dimension door** or **mind blast**). The PCs' goal should be to **withstand her onslaught and find a way to escape or drive her off**. This might involve skill checks or environmental advantages rather than pure damage. For example, a PC might notice the **alien artifact** in the room that anchors her power – **Arcana DC 25** to identify it and **Athletics DC 20** to smash it, disrupting her magic. Or if they lured the Outer God guardian (the “formless, pitch-black alien thing” in her sanctum ⁴) to appear, it could attack indiscriminately, forcing Mother Jackal to focus on controlling her pet. Ultimately, consider one of two outcomes: **(A) Drive Off** – if the PCs inflict some harm or destroy her ritual focus, Mother Jackal could snarl that this is not over and **teleport or burrow away** to safety (she might retreat to Leng or a deeper sanctuary, vowing vengeance). **(B) Narrow Escape** – if the fight goes poorly, allow the PCs to find an escape route: perhaps Neferpatra (alerted by noise) activates a ward that **floods the chamber with sunlight** momentarily, stunning Mother Jackal and giving the heroes a chance to flee. Either way, the climax is intense and should feel like the heroes have **uncovered and confronted ultimate evil**, even if they do not destroy it outright. They have revealed Mother Jackal and broken her operation in Absalom.
5. **Stage 5 – Resolution (Aftermath and Future):** In the aftermath of this harrowing confrontation, the party emerges from the Ahnkamen Estate's depths, likely shaken but alive. Mother Jackal has been **revealed as the true source of the ritual activity**, and her cult in Absalom is effectively dismantled. The heroes likely possess proof of her crimes – correspondences, the testimonies of

freed prisoners, and the shattered remains of her ritual apparatus. Lady Neferpatra Ahnkamen, now fully aware of the extent of Mother Jackal's depravity within her house, takes action (albeit quietly). She cannot publicly admit a ghoul controlled her family's affairs, but she can ensure that **House Ahnkamen withdraws support from any remaining cult agents** and perhaps uses her influence to aid the PCs. The city authorities, possibly alerted by Neferpatra or the Grand Mausoleum, hush up the incident to avoid panic, but the PCs are acknowledged as heroes who stopped a great evil. They receive rewards befitting a level-up: perhaps a **Pharasmin relic** or a magic item from the city's treasury, along with the gratitude of those whose loved ones can now rest in peace. Importantly, **Mother Jackal is not permanently destroyed** – as an ancient being, she may resurface in a later arc when the PCs are stronger. The campaign's Development phase concludes with the heroes having unraveled the mystery and confronted the mastermind, setting the stage for the final showdown in the future. For now, Absalom is safer: the disappearances cease, and the dark rituals are halted. The players have learned of a far-reaching villain (an immortal Leng ghoul tied to cosmic horrors) and can prepare for the eventual climax of the campaign when they might finally put an end to Mother Jackal's evil for good.

(The full quest structure above has been saved to a text file and converted into a PDF document for ease of reference.) 2 4

1 2 4 7 8 9 10 11 Mother Jackal - PathfinderWiki

https://pathfinderwiki.com/wiki/Mother_Jackal

3 5 6 Neferpatra Ahnkamen - PathfinderWiki

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