



NOBLE LINES OF TALDOR

Foreigners love to portray us as buffoons, but they forget who we are. They forget what we did. We are the nation that dominated a continent and forged the greatest empire in Golarion's history. Our tongue is the common parlance. Our culture is the foundation other nations have built upon.

The blood of conquerors, explorers, and heroes runs through our veins. We've been forged by the greatness of our past, and while some might say we're now just ghosts of that past, I know the truth: that greatness is within us still.

They might mock the pride we take in our heritage, but it's easy to deride what you can never understand. No commoner can know us because we are so far from common. To be a Taldan noble means to be triumphant, and I see no fault in taking pride in that.

—From the letters of Duke Ambrose Xantrain VI

Nothing is as important to Taldan nobles as an impressive pedigree. In Taldor's confusing and convoluted hierarchy, careful documentation of lineage is essential for ambitious elites to establish their position and work their way up the pecking order. Proof of pedigree is paramount, as few nobles trust a stranger's claims to nobility on words alone.

A family's credentials—which include extensive genealogies, official proclamations, and title grants—are often locked away in the family's archives. These credentials are commonly overseen by a trusted steward specifically tasked with their maintenance and organization. This appointment is considered a great honor, and most stewards that serve in this capacity do so for life—in some cases, passing their expertise to their own children in a family line that parallels that of the noble house they serve. The best stewards have an encyclopedic knowledge of every piece of proof or history in the family collection, as well as the expertise to gloss over gaps (or even fabricate credentials) where the records are lacking. Many noble families spare no expense in seeing that their archives are protected with traps and guards, as destruction or theft of these materials might jeopardize ancestral claims.

In addition to these meticulously maintained archives, almost every noble estate maintains at least one hall or room dedicated to showcasing the owners' most distinguished family members. These displays are usually portraits, but might also include heirloom weapons or ornate tapestries illustrating a family tree. Unlike private archives, these treasures are exhibited for visitors and are sometimes opulently displayed. Noble families claiming blood connection to the royal line make no secret of it, and might put personal items such as marriage certificates or torrid correspondence on display to announce their pedigree.

From their childhood, noble youths are tutored in their ancestry and expected to recite lengthy, specific details about their family line. For many outsiders, these exercises in memorization and recitation seem absurd or tedious, but this information is critical to noble etiquette. Any aristocrat—even an adolescent—unable to quickly enumerate details of her heritage when prompted is an embarrassment. Further, these facts don't exist in a vacuum; they demonstrate which noble families have allegiances, grievances, or promises with others, allowing nobles to quickly ascertain their station among their peers.

Taldan noble houses each have an array of heraldic images, including coats of arms, colors, crests, and signets. Most symbolize important points in the house's history, but, in the oldest families, the origin of its earliest symbols might be conflicting or unclear. These colors and images are emblazoned on all manner of accouterments used by the family, from the stonework

to the servants' livery. The most portable symbol is a signet ring, which no proper Taldan noble would be seen without. Every noble symbol is registered in the royal archives in Oppara, but the dizzying array of symbols and their many variations means that manufacturing a symbol—or an entire noble identity—is much easier than Taldan nobility would like to believe.

Gatherings of the noble class occur regularly in the form of grand hunts, lavish ceremonies, and opulent balls. At these events, nobles don their finest and most elaborate attire with the intent of outshining one another. The Taldan drive to have the most opulent fashion sometimes leads to disaster: more than a few accounts tell of broken bones caused by falls from shoes with towering heels, drunken partygoers strangled by their own collars, and precarious wigs catching on fire. Commoners frequently quip that the only danger greater to Taldan nobles than their own backbiting peers is their love of fashion.

The *War for the Crown* Adventure Path offers the PCs a chance to interact with Taldan nobility firsthand. Below are some plot hooks you can use to further incorporate the intrigues of nobility into your game.

Long-Lost Relations: A married couple arrives at a noble's estate with the right credentials to display affiliation with the family, but no one has ever seen these distant relatives before. Worse, the archives of the estate were recently burgled and the documents that would confirm or refute the visitors' pedigree were the only items stolen. The PCs are asked to spy on the couple to determine their true motives and origin.

A Suspicious Acquaintance: A local lord is worried about his heir and requests the PCs' help. He claims his son started making regular visits to a nearby noble's estate. Although the lord is pleased his son is making the "right kind" of social connections, his maids have reported bloodstains on the young man's clothes after every visit. The lord entreats the PCs to discreetly find out what his son is doing at the estate.

Unmasking an Assassin: A noble seeks out the PCs to investigate a sensitive matter. She has heard rumors of a rival house making plans to eliminate junior members of her family. The noble asks the PCs to investigate the assassination—not to prevent it, necessarily, but to determine which rival house sent the assassin.

NOBLE FAMILIES

The following pages present eight of Taldor's oldest and most prominent noble families. In addition to information about the family, each entry includes a story feat appropriate for a PC associated with that family. The full rules for story feats can be found on page 66 of *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Campaign*. Backgrounds mentioned as prerequisites appear beginning on page 16 of *Ultimate Campaign*.

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HOUSE CORCINA

Location Tandak Prefecture

Head of House Duke Quintus

Avelliuss Corcina

Primary Industry Foreign trade

Allies House Fahlspor

Enemies House Kastner

The ambitious members of House Corcina first made their mark on Taldan history during the time of the Second Army of Exploration. Founder Phaedrus Corcina's great success in aiding the expansion of Taldor's domination gained him not only a title and land, but also a bride of royal blood. House Corcina participated in every Army of Exploration thereafter, earning a reputation as brave explorers and ruthless conquerors. Their foreign involvement expanded their holdings and influence throughout the Inner Sea. The Corcinas used this clout to establish numerous merchant guilds and trade routes. At the height of their glory, they were one of the wealthiest Taldan noble houses.

During the Even-Tongued Conquest, the house lost its primary base of operations in Galt and retreated south to the Tandak Prefecture, working hard to maintain its foreign connections. Now under the shrewd leadership of Duke Quintus Corcina, the house continues to not only grow but thrive through its foreign trade networks. Corcina trade routes stretch the length of Avistan, but the duke seeks to extend them further still, including a bold expansion into Tian Xia.

PROSPERITY AND PRIDE (STORY)

Your family has raised cities and mastered trade, and you seek to do the same.

Prerequisite: Be a member of House Corcina, or have the Craftsperson, Inheritance, Well-Connected Friend, or Worldshaker background.

Benefit: When in a settlement the size of a large city or smaller, you receive a +2 bonus on Appraise checks and Diplomacy checks. If you have 10 or more ranks in one of these skills, the bonus on that skill increases to +4.

Goal: Your actions must spur a settlement to grow to the next size category (*Pathfinder RPG Gamemastery Guide* 204); this usually involves decisively defeating a challenging foe or an appropriate number of foes preying upon or impeding the settlement's citizenry.

Completion Benefit: You teach others how to get the most out of their equipment. Three times per day as a standard action, you can increase the armor bonus provided by a suit of nonmagical armor, the circumstance bonus to a skill provided by a tool or skill kit (*Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Equipment* 76), or the shield bonus provided by a nonmagical shield by 1. This bonus lasts for 1 hour and doesn't stack with other uses of this ability.



HOUSE DARAHAN

Location Whitemarch Prefecture

Head of House Grand Duchess

Vivexis Darahan

Primary Industry Stone quarries

Allies House Kastner

Enemies House Heskillar

House Darahan enjoys a prestigious reputation as a distinguished line of knights and monster hunters. Darahan is reputed to be among the most bold and gallant houses, if sometimes reckless on the battlefield. The Darahans were founded in the early days of Taldor when the hero Soratio Darahan slew a powerful medusa. The Darahans took the medusa as their symbol and the defeat of evil monsters as their charge.

The members of House Darahan have distinguished themselves in battle against Taldor's enemies many times. Among these victories, none are so well known as their victories against the forces of the Whispering Tyrant during the Shining Crusade. The family still maintains several holdings in Lastwall and many Darahans, including Grand Duchess Vivexis Darahan, have served tours of duty in Lastwall, testing their might against the evils along the land's borders.

Darahans are formidable warriors and frequent favorites in jousts and other tournaments. Though most famous for their martial might, House Darahan's quarries and mines provide the bulk of the family's income. Granite and marble are their primary industry, though they also have a productive silver mine, which is vigilantly protected by Grand Duchess Vivexis Darahan from scheming enemies who covet it for themselves.

WE ARE THE WALL (STORY)

You embody your family's legendary monster-hunters.

Prerequisite: Be a member of House Darahan, or have the Champion of the People, Duty, or Raider background.

Benefit: Three times per day as a move action, you can declare a single dragon, magical beast, or monstrous humanoid within 50 feet and in line of sight to be your mark. You gain a +1 bonus on attack rolls and on Bluff, Knowledge, Perception, Sense Motive, and Survival checks against your mark. These bonuses last for 1 minute, until you designate a new mark, or until the mark is dead. After you have declared a creature as your mark, it can't be your mark again for another 24 hours.

Goal: Protect a settlement you have lived in for at least a year from an invading force consisting of an appropriate number of dragons, magical beasts, or monstrous humanoids.

Completion Benefit: The bonus provided by your mark becomes +1 for every 4 character levels you have, to a maximum of +5.



HOUSE DENZARNI

Location Kazuhn Prefecture
Head of House Grand Duchess Mellea Denzarni
Primary Industry Agriculture
Allies House Merrosett
Enemies House Fahlspar

House Denzarni traces its origin back to the union of Grand Prince Urios II's daughter and the heir of a tribal leader who claimed Azlanti descent. Whether the claim is fiction or truth, the Denzarni take pride in their purported heritage and teach Azlanti cultural traditions to their scions. In truth, these "traditions" are built on fragmented histories, speculation, and personal convenience. Among these inherited Azlanti teachings is a devotion to the ancient god, Scal. The destructive deity is considered dead and lost, but the Denzarnis revere Scal not out of genuine devotion but as an excuse to surrender to their debauched urges. They regularly hold clandestine gatherings with other elites under the pretext of "cleansing" their bodies and souls of wicked impulses. In reality, these meetings are little more than crazed binges of violence and lust. To ensure they don't become victims of these gatherings, the few household servants and retainers privy to the secret meetings eagerly supply sacrifices and help dispose of evidence.

Grand Duchess Mellea Denzarni focuses on these hedonistic pastimes and leaves her stewards to manage the household's bountiful orchards and lush plantations. Fortunately, these stewards are hard-working and talented; the Denzarnis are currently experiencing a surge in prosperity thanks to a gardener who has developed several hybrids of fruit varieties with particularly delicious results.

OUR BOUNTY, OUR GLORY (STORY)

You can ignore privation and channel your emotions to prepare for a later bounty.

Prerequisite: Be a member of House Denzarni, or have the Bloodthirsty, Omen, Tree Tender, or Unsuspecting Master background.

Benefit: You add 1 day to the time you can go without food or water before making Constitution checks and you add +4 to Constitution checks to stave off the effects of starvation and thirst.

Goal: You must succumb to your emotions and be victorious. Thwart an appropriate number of foes while you are subject to an effect with the emotion^{UM} descriptor, such as *rage*.

Completion Benefit: Once per day, you can use *heroes' feast* as a spell-like ability with a caster level equal to your character level, although your feast does not grant the effects of *neutralize poison* or *remove disease*.



HOUSE FAHLSPAR

Location Northern Tandak Prefecture
Head of House Grand Duchess Breateeza Fahlspar
Primary Industry Lumber
Allies House Corcina
Enemies House Denzarni

House Fahlspar is one of the earliest established noble houses and was named after its founder, the leader of a small tribe of Kellid hunters and druids. In exchange for submitting to Taldor's authority, the crown granted Comnari Fahlspar a noble title and jurisdiction of a barony. What Fahlspar's friends saw as betrayal, he saw as a pragmatic choice to ensure the survival of his people.

The Fahlspars intermarried with the Taldan people and grew and harvested trees for lumber. Yet the house's fortunes waned as they forgot old family lore. Several generations after the family's founding, Baroness Cressida Fahlspar forsook her title and lands to train with the druids of the Wildwood Lodge. When she finally re-emerged, she did so with her family's long-lost secrets of woodcraft and quickly revitalized her family's wanng fortunes. Her connections paved the way for the creation of the Treaty of the Wildwood between the druids and Grand Prince Adavarine II, and the Fahlspars were elevated to control of the Northern Tandak Prefecture. The family maintains sprawling holdings in the foothills of the Fog Peaks. Although the primeval forest that once covered their lands is mostly gone, their sustainable logging keeps the family's coffers full.

Grand Duchess Breateeza Fahlspar is the head of the family, although she prefers solitary hunts to courtly politics. She is increasingly vocal on the advantages of Andoran-styled freedoms and the vanishing Kellid lifestyle—subjects that the rest of her family wishes she would avoid as it places the family's standing in jeopardy.

STANDING TALL (STORY)

You can tap into your family's old ways to take on some of the traits of plants.

Prerequisite: Be a member of House Fahlspar, or have the Hunter, Nature, or Tree Tender background.

Benefit: Once per day as a move action, you gain a +2 bonus on saving throws against mind-affecting effects for 1 minute.

Goal: Swear to protect a natural site and defend it for at least a year, including decisively defeating an appropriate number of invaders or despoilers.

Completion Benefit: You may now use the above benefit three times per day, and the benefit also applies on saving throws against paralysis, poison, polymorph, sleep, and stunning effects.

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HOUSE HESKELLAR

Location Krearis Prefecture

Head of House Grand Duke
Borand Heskellar

Primary Industry Mining (metal)

Allies House Zespire

Enemies House Darahan

In a nation where dragon-slaying has a proud tradition—and where memories of the devastating Dragon Plague still linger—House Heskellar remains curiously insistent that one of its earliest ancestors was a great bronze dragon. Their legends tell of a dragon who challenged the Grand Prince's nephew in the guise of a wandering knight. The dragon agreed to live with the nephew if she lost, but she would earn an extensive estate if she won. The fight ended in a draw; the nephew won a bride, the dragon won her land, and together they started House Heskellar. Though most regard the story of the Dragon Bride as a fairy tale, the Heskellers tell it with passionate sincerity, and the frequency with which dragon-blooded powers appear in the family is remarkably high.

Contemporary members of the house don't rely on myths to prove their worth. From gold to iron, House Heskellar manages a staggering array of metals and works closely with Taldor's official forges as well as its mint. Grand Duke Borand Heskellar is a capable administrator, although his recent marriage to a dwarven noble strains his family's relations with Taldan traditionalists.

NEVER CONQUERED, FOREVER FEARED (STORY)

You are dauntless in battle, and your lineage echoes with awe-inspiring power.

Prerequisite: Be a member of House Heskellar, or have the Adopted by Dragons, Path of Righteous Rage, or Proud Heritage background.

Benefit: Your stern demeanor gives you a +2 bonus on Intimidate checks. If you have 10 or more ranks in Intimidate, this bonus increases to +4. You also gain a +2 bonus on saves against paralysis and sleep effects.

Goal: You must individually slay an appropriate number of significant foes in succession, without retreating or withdrawing from a fight.

Completion Benefit: You can display your imposing presence as a free action when you take an offensive action, such as an attack or a charge. Opponents within 30 feet of you must succeed at a Will save or become shaken for 3d6 rounds. The DC of this save is equal to $10 + 1/2$ your character level + your Charisma modifier. This ability does not cause opponents that are already shaken to become frightened, and opponents with more Hit Dice than your character level are immune to the effect. This is a mind-affecting fear effect.



HOUSE KASTNER

Location Opparos Prefecture

Head of House (Taldor) Lord
Remilliard Kastner

Primary Industry Artisan guilds

Allies House Darahan

Enemies House Corcina

Originally the leaders of a major network of artisan guilds, the Kastners married into the nobility and swiftly worked their way up the political ladder. When Cheliax broke from Taldor in the Even-Tongued Conquest, most of the Kastner family sided with the separatists and re-established their holdings in the west. In the midst of the discord, rumors circulated that the Kastners in Cheliax had bolstered the family's fortune through espionage and diabolism. These reports left the Taldan Kastners scrambling to salvage their tarnished reputation and distance themselves from their Chelaxian relations.

The current head of the Kastner family in Taldor, Lord Remilliard Kastner, is a devout follower of Ragathiel who is attempting to redeem his family's reputation with his piety and integrity. Not all Kastners are as devoted as Remilliard. Whispers at court speculate that devil-worship remains hidden even in the Taldan Kastners, and even that Remilliard's piety is a sham, but these rumors are founded in desires to discredit rivals rather than to expose actual diabolism.

Though nobles first and foremost, Kastners are known for their remarkable craftsmanship. All scions of the family must study at least one craft, and many become experienced in several crafts and are accomplished artisans in their own right. This expertise not only honors the family's roots but assures precise appraisals of the artisans they oversee.

FORWARD FROM BENEATH (STORY)

You have vowed to infiltrate your wicked kin and redeem your family's reputation.

Prerequisite: Be a member of House Kastner, be a good-aligned member of a family or organization whose secret evil has been publicly revealed, or have the Dishonored Family or Betrayal backgrounds.

Benefit: Your experience with infiltrating your own family or organization gives you a +2 bonus on Disguise checks. If you have 10 or more ranks in Disguise, this bonus increases to +4. If you are not evil, as a standard action you can choose to radiate a faint aura of evil for the purposes of spells such as *detect evil*. You can dismiss this ersatz aura as a standard action.

Goal: Redeem your family or organization.

Completion Benefit: You gain the benefit of *undetectable alignment* as a constant spell-like ability. You can suppress or resume this ability as a standard action.



HOUSE MERROSETT

Location Avin Prefecture

Head of House Count Cypristian Merrosett IV

Primary Industry Mining (gems)

Allies House Denzarni

Enemies House Zespire



HOUSE ZESPIRE

Location Tandak Prefecture

Head of House Duke Felinax Zespire II

Primary Industry Wineries

Allies House Heskellar

Enemies House Merrosett

According to the meticulous records of House Merrosett, the family's nobility began when a prominent wizard named Egnatia Merrosett seduced the Grand Prince's heir. The twin sons born from this affair received titles and lands to assuage their demands for validation of their birthright. Egnatia established strict practices of inbreeding to maintain their bloodline's purity. Numerous Merrosett tomes detail pairings that would make even the most insular of Taldor's nobility cringe, but the sallow-complexioned Merrosets insist that strict maintenance of their lineage has created demonstrable nobility and unparalleled arcane excellence. House Merrosett is blessed with an expansive collection of gem mines, and none outside the family truly comprehend their true wealth. The elderly patriarch Count Cypristian Merrosett uses these gem mines to fund his family's magical experiments in genetic manipulation on all manner of creatures.

VICTORY THROUGH UNITY (STORY)

You have practiced your family's genetic experimentations upon your own familiar.

Prerequisite: You must have a familiar, and you must either be a member of House Merrosett or have the Initiated or Storied Lineage background.

Benefit: When you gain this feat, choose an animal aspect granted by the hunter's animal focus class ability (*Pathfinder RPG Advanced Class Guide* 27) and apply it to your familiar. Your hunter level for this ability is 1st, and you cannot change this ability once you have selected it. If your familiar dies, it loses its aspect and you may choose a new aspect if you take a new familiar. Your familiar's form is altered by superficial changes appropriate to its aspect.

Goal: You must breed a new magical creature.

Completion Benefit: You may either choose and apply a second animal aspect to your familiar or apply an evolution from the 1-point evolutions available to a summoner's eidolon (*Pathfinder RPG Pathfinder Unchained* 35). The familiar must conform to any limitations of the evolution (such as being one size category larger than its rider to serve as a mount). Once selected, this decision cannot be changed, but if your familiar dies it loses these abilities and you may choose new abilities if you take a new familiar. If your familiar breeds with its original kind, it has the potential to pass on these extra abilities as permanent traits.

House Zespire is steeped in a strong affiliation with the Church of Abadar and the judicial workings of Taldor. From the early days of the Age of Enthronement, the Zespries were regarded as loyal, upstanding citizens with connections in the clergy and the justice system. House Zespire further produced several insightful and influential senators that argued against restrictions to the Grand Duke's authority. House Zespire's patriotic service earned the crown's attention and noble title as a reward for years of steadfast devotion.

The lands owned by House Zespire are ideal for grape cultivation, and the family operates immense vineyards. Generations ago, the Zespries developed a grape variety used to make a distinct and highly desirable wine known as Ligosi Red. Zespire lore maintains that their vineyards all originate from the family's first grape vine, a gift from the First Vault granted by a divine emissary of Abadar.

While the vineyards now provide the family's primary revenues, members of House Zespire continue to occupy careers in the Church of Abadar, the judicial system, and politics. Other members of the family—such as Count Orlundo Zespire—have distinguished military careers. Consequently, House Zespire ranks as one of the most influential families in Taldor, with the prudent and respected Duke Felinax Zespire sitting at the helm.

LIGHTING THE WAY (STORY)

You seek to lead others through your pious example.

Prerequisite: Be a member of House Zespire, or have the Devoted, Exemplar, Marked by the Gods, or Righteous Mentor background.

Benefit: Once per day as a standard action, you can give all allies within 30 feet who can hear you a +1 bonus on attack rolls and on saving throws against mind-affecting effects for 1 minute.

Goal: Establish your religion in an existing settlement where it isn't present. You can do this by having a settlement gain the Holy Site or Pious quality for devotion to your deity (*Gamemastery Guide* 207), or change its government to a theocracy based on your religion.

Completion Benefit: You can spontaneously convert any 2nd-level or higher divine spell into *enthral* and can spontaneously convert any 3rd-level or higher divine spell into *suggestion*.

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