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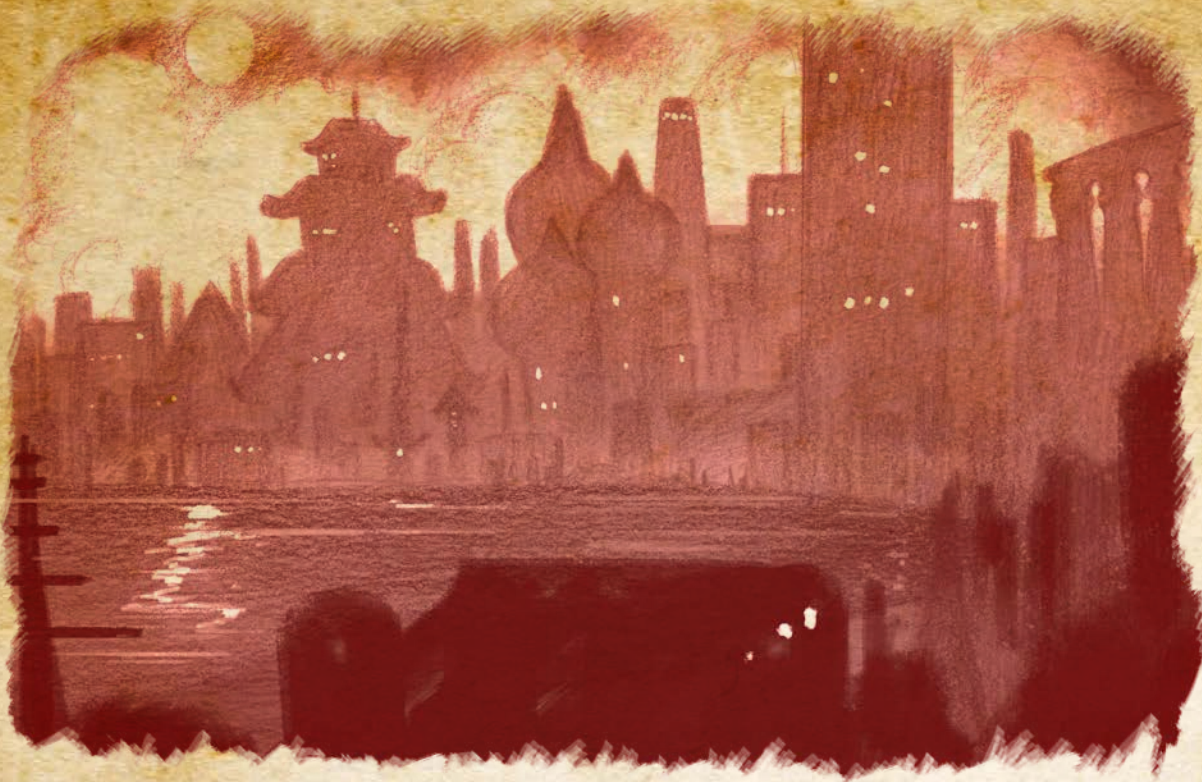
ADVENTURE PATH[™]



STRANGE AEONS

BLACK STARS BECKON

by Jim Groves



I have done it! I have finally arrived in the city that has haunted me for so long. It is a terrible glory to behold, and I can feel my brain itch with the possibilities it offers. Strange, though, that it seems to be empty of inhabitants.

DECEIVED

The buildings of Neruzavin seemed to subtly shift as Rhurtha and I walked its streets. Before I realized what was happening, we were elsewhere. "Welcome to Carcosa," my guide said as she removed the mask that was her face. "This place is now your home and you are its. You will bring others here, just as I have done with you." The horrible thing smiled, and a maggot crawled from an empty eye socket. "And when we have filled the city, the King in Yellow will walk forth onto your world and all worlds and they shall know his eternal decadence." I ran then, and behind me, the creature's laughter echoed off the ruined cobblestones.



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ON THE COVER



A black sun rises over the parasite city of Carcosa and a massive bhole winds around a familiar-looking tower as Queen Cassilda looks on in this cover art by Michal Ivan.



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REFERENCE

This book refers to several other Pathfinder Roleplaying Game products using the following abbreviations, yet these additional supplements are not required to make use of this book. Readers interested in references to Pathfinder RPG hardcovers can find the complete rules of these books available online for free at paizo.com/prd.

<i>Advanced Class Guide</i>	ACG	<i>Ultimate Combat</i>	UC
<i>Advanced Player's Guide</i>	APG	<i>Ultimate Equipment</i>	UE
<i>Bestiary 4</i>	B4	<i>Ultimate Magic</i>	UM
<i>Occult Adventures</i>	OA		



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Have you found the Yellow Sign?

GOOD TIMES AND GREAT OLD ONES

I hope that you've enjoyed reading and playing through the Strange Aeons Adventure Path, and I apologize if I was responsible for killing your characters or sent you down a maddening spiral of horror and desperation along the way. That's just how these things go.

The Strange Aeons Adventure Path ends in this volume. This also marks the last foreword I'll write for at least 6 months, because I've successfully completed start-to-finish development of my first Adventure Path. I've been brought in to help develop individual adventures in the past (specifically, developing *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #100 because James was the one who wrote that adventure, and you can't develop yourself), but this is the first one where I've developed all six adventures. It was a big job, but eventually I fell into a rhythm and powered through to the end.

Developing an entire Adventure Path is no easy task. You have to keep threads of the story together and make sure the PCs are getting enough XP to reach the proper levels throughout the campaign so they're able to take on the endgame and come out successful. You have to

do all this while telling a compelling story as well. Along the way I was thankful I had veteran Adventure Path developers Rob McCreary and James Jacobs to give me tips, advice, and insight throughout the process, so I'm putting that thanks into print:

Thanks, Rob and James! I couldn't have done this as smoothly without you.

After polishing this volume off, I get to jump into the Adventure Path that follows the immediately upcoming Ironfang Invasion—the Ruins of Azlant Adventure Path. Unlike Strange Aeons, which was outlined by James Jacobs, Ruins of Azlant was my idea, my outline, and I'll be developing all of the adventures. I'm really excited to crack into it and bring you a journey into unexplored territory, adventures into Golarion's past (unearthing Azlanti history, rather than time travel), and an ages-old conspiracy against humanity. I had a great team of writers to work on the adventures, and we all put this together in a very collaborative environment that will only help to strengthen the connections between the adventures and roll out a great story along the way. In a little over

6 months, you can get your hands on the first volume of Ruins of Azlant. Let me know if you're as excited about reading and playing through it as my team and I were creating it.

LOST CARCOSA

I'm thrilled that this adventure brings the player characters to Carcosa, but Carcosa is such a vast and mysterious place that we weren't able to dig in too deeply with the few pages we had available to address it. Since Carcosa is a patchwork of the cities that it has subsumed, you can find all types of cities there from across the universe. These individual pieces are referred to as nexuses in this adventure. The PCs start off in a nexus that is a reproduction of the forgotten city of Neruzavin from which they just came, before moving on to a nexus of an Azlanti city that got drawn into Carcosa during that empire's heyday. After this, they visit a shoggoth-haunted elder thing nexus, before ending up in a nexus created when a performance of *The King in Yellow* siphoned a part of Paris into Carcosa's dead heart. Finally, the PCs make it to a hazy reflection of Thrushmoor that is in the process of joining Carcosa. There they must face off against their former boss, not to mention the Briarstone Witch, who wants to use the absorption to hitch a ride back to Golarion, where she plans to seek revenge.

I would have loved to provide a map of the parasite city, but that way lies madness. I managed to wrangle a map of the Abyss a few years ago, and pulling that off made me think that I could pull off a map of an ever-changing patchwork of unfortunate cities drawn into Carcosa's terrible bosom. Turns out I didn't need to drive myself mad trying to justify a map of Carcosa, because we didn't have room regardless.

I've loved Robert W. Chambers's "The Repairer of Reputations" since the first time I read it, and over the course of working on this Adventure Path I've read it a few more times. Written in 1895, the story is set in a future New York City of 1920. What reads as alternate history to us today was actually a glimpse into a possible future when the story was published.

The atmosphere that the story included struck me, especially the bit about how the first "Government Lethal Chamber" was established. Mentioning a suicide booth in 1895 must have really turned some heads, and how casually it's integrated into the story as a setting instantly strikes the reader as something slightly off and soaked in dread. The whole story weaves conspiracy, delusions, betrayal, and a mysterious other world in such a way that I remained riveted the whole time I was reading it.

END OF AN ERA

This volume of Pathfinder Adventure Path marks a change going forward in what we present in these books.

This is not only the final adventure of Strange Aeons, but it is also the last Pathfinder Adventure Path volume to contain the Pathfinder's Journal. We mentioned this on the paizo.com blog a while back when canny readers noticed that the short fiction wasn't mentioned in the description of the first volume of the Ironfang Invasion, but I wanted to address it here in print.

In the office, we've talked about removing the Pathfinder's Journal a number of times, but also chose to keep it. We've even solicited opinions from our readers on the messageboards in the past, and the general feelings about it seemed split among everyone. It's always a tough call when it comes to making big changes in how we present material in our books, especially when it comes to the Adventure Paths. In fact, we had decided to remove the Pathfinder's Journal after the two interwoven stories that appeared in the Hell's Rebels and Hell's Vengeance Adventure Paths, but I went back on the plan because it just felt wrong not to include creepy fiction in a Mythos-themed Adventure Path like Strange Aeons.

I'm glad we did make the decision to present the final installment of the Pathfinder's Journal in this Adventure Path. It gave us a chance to have six different authors tell six different, weird horror stories filled with sinister cults, strange locations, and horrific creatures—and we got some great ones.

It turns out that I also had a story to tell, and thankfully Senior Editor Christopher Carey gave me the chance for my tale to appear in this volume. As someone who read the Pathfinder's Journal from the start, long before I ever worked here, I'm honored to be the author closing it out.

PREPARE FOR INVASION!

Not everything is coming to an end—some things are just beginning. Next month marks the launch of the Ironfang Invasion Adventure Path! After spending a year in Cheliax and then jaunting about on the trail of madness, we thought it might be nice to get down to some good old-fashioned wilderness adventuring. Headed up by the always-awesome Crystal Frasier, the Ironfang Invasion will bring exciting adventures full of survival, military skirmishes, sniping rangers, twisted fey, and (finally!) a place to take your animal companion without worrying about townsfolk getting mad that you brought a bear into the city.



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PART 1: WHERE DARK WINDS WHISPER 8

The PCs arrive in an alternate version of Neruzavin in Carcosa. There they learn the nature of this strange world, discover an ally in Cassilda, the Queen of Carcosa, and come face-to-face with an emissary of Hastur, the Pallid Mask.

PART 2: SUNS SET OVER AEVAN-VHOR 14

The heroes must liberate a strange, mute musician named Erich Zann from the deathless and debauched courtiers of an Azlanti city absorbed by Carcosa before the empire's destruction.

PART 3: RIOT AND RUIN IN RIME 31

To sever another of Carcosa's links to Thrushmoor, the PCs must navigate the frozen ruins of an elder thing city while being stalked by its mind-shattering horrors.

PART 4: THE BLIGHTED TOWER 42

The heroes travel to a haunted street in Paris that does not exist on any map. There they must help Erich Zann reclaim his kingdom of ghouls, and assail the Eiffel Tower to further untether Carcosa from Golarion.

PART 5: THE END OF ALL THINGS 50

The Briarstone Witch stands in opposition to the PCs, readying to escape Carcosa as the real Thrushmoor is devoured. Time is not only running out—it's unraveling as the Yellow King stirs in the depths of Lake Hali!

ADVANCEMENT TRACK

"Black Stars Beckon" is designed for four characters and uses the medium XP track.

15 The PCs should begin the adventure at 15th level.

16 The PCs become 16th level just before starting Part 3.

17 The PCs end the adventure at 17th level.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

In eons past, the Great Old One known as Hastur the Unspeakable was imprisoned on a planet in the Hyades star cluster. The original name of that planet is now lost. Stories tell that he remains confined within an immense body of water known as Lake Hali. The King in Yellow, as Hastur's manifesting form is also known, is not content to remain shackled and has plotted his release since time immemorial.

The pillars of civilization on this nameless world were two cities, Alar and Yhtill. Alar was an aggressive and militaristic culture, prone to frequent rebellions and uprisings. Yhtill was a beautiful city of aristocrats and artisans, but stagnant and decadent.

Evidence of a third metropolis existed: a large city-state that sat abandoned and unreachable even as the people of Alar and Yhtill made their first homes of mud and sticks. Called Carcosa, it was a mirage that appeared across Lake Hali when the twin black suns dipped below the horizon and seemed to fall into the waters of the immense lake. Carcosa and its mysterious immortal ruler, the King in Yellow, dominated the folklore of both the other cities. Some modern legends suggest that Carcosa was Hastur's home before his imprisonment.

Though imprisoned, the King in Yellow was able to reach beyond his cell, and he eventually deceived the people of Alar and Yhtill (see the NPC entries for Queen Cassilda and the Pallid Mask on pages 60 and 64 for more details), bending them to his terrible will. He reshaped Carcosa to become not only the instrument of his release, but also a catalyst for his apotheosis into an Outer God. Hastur mystically conjoined the three cities, drawing the other two into the abandoned husk of Carcosa. Empty Carcosa served as a skeleton and foundation for this new creation. The citizens of Alar infused the city with an aggressive spirit. Yhtill was drained of beauty and decadence to lend the new Carcosa the will to corrupt. Yet, there is some quality to Yhtill's beauty that eluded the King. A portion of the life force of each of Yhtill's citizens was channeled into Cassilda, their queen. Thus Queen Cassilda acquired a lesser form of immortality and became the first denizen of the new Carcosa.

Carcosa is not merely a collection of streets and buildings, but a living, alien, and monstrous entity. It can fashion a mystical connection to cities on distant planets and feed on them like a parasite. Its sustenance is civilization itself. When a connection is created, a destructive plague of madness spreads across the target city as Carcosa feeds upon its zeitgeist. A portion of Carcosa, meanwhile, shifts and warps as it adds a twisted replica of its target, which is referred to as a nexus. Unless the process is disrupted in time, the entire target city and its denizens are actually transported across the gulf of space and drawn wholly into Carcosa. When the parasite city reaches its apex—an unknown size—Hastur

may emerge from Lake Hali and ascend in power as an Outer God.

Sometimes these connections are forged to other worlds through the use of a complex ritual, which is often disguised within a piece of performance art, like a play. Many believe Hastur transmits this "performance" through the dreams of unwitting authors and artisans who mistake it for their own terrible and magnificent creations. Just such a ritual is encoded within the theatrical play *The King in Yellow*, which allows Carcosa to form connections where the cult of Hastur has yet to take root. Unfortunately, the ritual is so potent that many of those exposed to the play are driven mad simply reading it (or they are subject to other paranormal events, including transportation directly to Carcosa).

Carcosa is a city of monsters, with inhuman denizens that stalk its streets and are spawned in its shadows. The flying polyps that visited the primordial sites of Neruzavin and Thrushmoor came under the direct influence of Carcosa eons ago after one of their own cities was absorbed through a connection of permanent Yellow Signs. Unlike many of Carcosa's victims, the flying polyps survived this transition and became loyal servitors of Hastur. They now aid Carcosa in harvesting the energy needed for it to grow by marking potential nexus sites with the *Star Stelae*.

However, there is another way in which Carcosa can grow—an infestation of the city itself that formed when Hastur first moved through the parasite city's tangled, sunless sewers. This infestation is the Great Old One Xhamen-Dor. The *Star Stelae* attract Xhamen-Dor as it soars through space, looking for a new planet to seed with its maddening tendrils. Once upon a planet that it can fully corrupt, Xhamen-Dor siphons psychic energy and transmits it back to Carcosa. This method provides less of the fuel Carcosa needs to grow than when individual cities are marked by *Star Stelae*, but Xhamen-Dor's method gives Carcosa a means to feed on planets whose indigenous races have not yet risen to the level of culture and urbanized society required by the ritual. Likewise, this latter method is not dependent upon subtlety, nor is it prone to accidental self-sabotage as is the case with readers of *The King in Yellow* who are driven mad before that ritual can be performed.

Currently, Thrushmoor is connected to three different nexus cities that were previously devoured by Carcosa. One is a nexus of an ancient Azlanti city known as Aevan-Vhor. Another is the ruins of an elder thing (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 4 85) city named Bohlvarai, where shoggoth slaves rebelled. The third is a section of a city called Paris, snatched from a faraway planet called Earth after a botched public performance of *The King in Yellow* warped the fabric of space and time.

The nexus of Thrushmoor is haunted by the dead Xhamen-Dor, which has now almost completely subsumed

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THE KING IN YELLOW

The King in Yellow is a ritual disguised as a play, often found in written form but rarely performed. The ritual is so potent that it has a self-sabotaging effect. When the play is read, even silently, it is often activated by the time the reader has gotten to Act 2. The second act is a specific demarcation point in the ritual, a point of no return. The reader becomes the primary caster while thinking she is reading a piece of fiction. If bereft of other actors, props, and stage movement, the ritual inevitably fails and the hapless reader suffers backlash that manifests as trauma and madness. In some cases, the ritual summons monsters or causes the reader to be transported to Carcosa.

This adventure mostly concerns itself with how the *Star Stelae* are used to feed Carcosa; The King in Yellow plays a minor, tangential role. Many lone individuals spirited away from far-off worlds find themselves lost in Carcosa because of the play. The Paris nexus in this adventure exists due to a botched public performance of The King in Yellow.

the PCs' former employer, Count Lowls. Xhamen-Dor struggles to restore itself to life even as it tears the real Thrushmoor away from Golarion. The dead husk of the Great Old One is protected by the Briarstone Witch, Ariadnah, who was accidentally exiled to Carcosa by a magical ritual gone awry during the Versex Revolt in 4051 AR. Now a lich, she waits for her opportunity to return to Golarion and reclaim what was once hers.

Since Xhamen-Dor wasn't able to seed all of Golarion before its return to Carcosa, the parasitic city is now free to siphon Thrushmoor into Carcosa—something that the PCs need to stop while they are in the dead, alien city. This is hardly the worst fate that looms, however. If the ritual is not stopped in time, Hastur could arise from Lake Hali and ascend to become an Outer God. Ravenous, he may be the doom of every world he's ever touched.

LOST CARCOSA

This adventure takes place entirely in the parasitic city of Carcosa. This section deals with some of the peculiarities inherent to this strange, alien place.

Physical Properties: The unnamed planet on which Carcosa grows is roughly the same size as Golarion and does not differ significantly in terms of gravity, although nexuses sometimes retain many of the original properties of the worlds from which they were drawn. Lake Hali, the body of water that laps at Carcosa's shores, is the equivalent of a small freshwater sea. Rivers and tributaries thread through the city toward it. No two nexuses are the same shape and size. Over time, Carcosa changes its layout as it adds new cities to its bulk.

Planet versus Plane: Carcosa exists on the Material Plane, far out in the cosmos from Golarion. Carcosa is on a highly magical planet however, and hard science holds no authority there.

Twin Black Suns: Carcosa has two suns and both are black as pitch. They would be almost invisible in the sky were it not for the nimbus of pale, yellow light that outlines each. They somehow provide a modicum of light and heat to the planet's surface. One can stare directly at the suns with no damage to the eyes, but to do so risks headaches, nausea, and bad dreams—or the attention of Hastur! At sunset, the suns appear to descend into Lake Hali. The daytime sky on Carcosa is alien, as the surrounding star field remains just as visible as it is at night.

The twin black suns bring certain game-mechanic changes to adventures on Carcosa that are uniform to all of the nexuses. First, the suns never radiate bright light, and instead shed normal light (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook* 172); therefore, creatures with light blindness and light sensitivity are not adversely affected by being outdoors during the daytime. Furthermore, the black suns do not meet the prerequisite of any monster weakness that specifically requires “natural sunlight,” including a spectre's sunlight powerlessness or a vampire's weaknesses. Spells and effects that create light function normally in all ways.

Lake Hali: The lake's waters are not poisonous, but they have a mildly foul taste and smell as if there were some source of corruption, though the sheer volume of water has sufficiently diffused its potency. No fish swim near the shoreline, although inexplicable ripples disturb the surface. As night falls and the twin suns descend below the shoreline, it is not unusual for a dense mist to roll across the surface. Immense and indistinct shapes then break the surface of the water, too vague to be clearly discerned. What these horrors are or what they prey upon in order to survive is uncertain. If the mist is inhaled, it functions as insanity mist (*Core Rulebook* 560). The morning's weak light usually burns it away within a few hours.

Minor Unusual Qualities: A few minor aspects of Carcosa bear mentioning but have no explanation or game mechanics associated with them. First, to be in or look upon the image of Carcosa is to know its name, automatically and inexplicably. Secondly, towers and other tall structures in any nexus often appear to be behind the planet's moons. Finally, sections of Carcosa can, like a mirage, always be seen across or upon Lake Hali no matter the distance.

NEXUS TRAITS

The *Star Stelae* are always created in groups of three, and each one is symbolically and mystically tied to one of Hastur's three areas of concern: decadence, disorder, and nihilism. The symbolism and ritual forms of the *Star*

Stelae find their origins in the primordial cities of Yhtill, Alar, and the original Carcosa, each of which respectively exemplified one of those focuses. When a new city is devoured through the use of the *Star Stelae*, it becomes associated with one of these three themes.

The Unspeakable One's powerful, malevolent presence affects all of Carcosa and transforms his themes into traits, which are similar to planar traits but more narrowly defined. Each of the hundreds to thousands of cities that make up Carcosa's patchwork landscape is dominated by one of these three sets of traits. It is important to note that even though Carcosa is a highly magical place, it exists in the Material Plane and the city nexuses are not in any way extraplanar or pocket dimensions. These traits never overlap, but begin and end at the nexus borders.

The traits affect all creatures within the nexus (unless specified otherwise), and this adventure strives to make all exceptions clear. It is not unreasonable however, for some creatures (especially those dedicated to Hastur) to become acclimated and therefore immune to the effects of these traits.

It's not important to apply these traits in every situation. The effects are subjective in some cases. Use your judgment when determining which saving throw penalties apply to which spells in a particular nexus. Examples are given, but the list is not exhaustive.

In addition, each nexus can play on a character's mental state. The influence section of the following nexus traits gives examples of how a character's madnesses or corruptions might manifest while in a particular nexus. These are particularly helpful for you if a character suffers from hallucinations or delusions, as they provide a thematic model for how that might play out. These suggested mental states could even influence characters who don't suffer from any negative conditions by coloring their outlook on the world as Carcosa's sinister influence surrounds them.

Decadence: The King in Yellow is attracted to places when there is a cultural or moral decline due to the excessive pursuit of pleasure or luxury for its own sake. This includes societies that lapse into apathy and lassitude. Such declines are akin to the ripening of the figurative fruit upon which he and Carcosa feed.

- Creatures take a -4 penalty on saves against spells and effects of the charm subschool as well as potentially harmful effects with the emotion descriptor that do not rely upon fear or aggression (for example: *calm emotions*, *envious urge*^{UM}, *euphoric tranquility*^{APG}, *smug narcissism*^{UM}, *unadulterated loathing*^{UM}, and *unadulterated lust*^{UM}).
- Unconscious creatures are more difficult to wake up. The Perception check DC to hear a sound while asleep is increased to 20, and a full-round action is required when a character attempts to wake a sleeping creature. However, creatures awake normally after 8 hours

of rest. Creatures that don't need to sleep are immune to this effect.

- Saving throw DCs to resist the effects of and addiction to drugs and alcohol increase by 3. This does not include saves against poison.

Influence: A nexus associated with decadence fosters forms of madness that confuse one's personal and social taboos. Completely inappropriate behavior becomes intriguing, while borderline inappropriate behavior becomes exciting or arousing. Hallucinations and delusions that complement this theme manifest, and are tailored to the specific character. The monstrous may no longer look or seem out of the ordinary. Deteriorated buildings and terrain may appear luxurious and opulent. Social and physical interaction with otherwise horrifying or dangerous creatures may seem acceptable. Characters may take penalties on saving throws to resist corruptions if succumbing to them is an act of "giving in" to temptation or a repressed nature. The GM should apply penalties and afflictions where appropriate.

Disorder: Hastur's influence can be found amid misunderstandings, misperceptions, uncommunicated feelings, and those petty slights and jealousies that give rise to violence and warfare. He is the enemy of peace and the author of anarchy.

- Creatures take a -4 penalty on saving throws to resist confusion effects and potentially harmful effects with the emotion descriptor that rely on aggression but not fear (for example: *antipathy*, *eyebite*, *foster hatred*^{OA}, *terrible remorse*^{UM}, and *vengeful outrage*^{UM}).
- Creatures with the confused condition add 10 to their rolls to determine their behavior at the start of their turn.
- Characters with the rage ability must succeed at a Will save to end their rage. The DC is equal to 10 + 1/2 the character's class level in the class that grants the rage ability. Failure means they continue to rage until they succeed at their saving throws or run out of rounds of rage. A character can attempt this saving throw once per round.

Influence: A nexus associated with disorder encourages madnesses and effects that manifest in the form of paranoia and altered perception. Allies and neutral creatures seem to wish the individual harm. Delusions that manifest in confusion and memory loss are common. Characters with corruptions that bias them toward uncontrolled violence and rage may find these impulses more difficult to resist. The GM should apply penalties and afflictions where appropriate.

Nihilism: The earliest references to the original Carcosa described it as a city that had been abandoned and crumbling since before time, and this is the direction toward which all civilizations must inevitably progress. Hastur posits that everything is an illusion, especially

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the gods of humanity and their ilk. The only truth is oblivion, for existence is meaningless.

- Creatures take a –4 penalty on all saving throws against fear and illusion effects.
- Any effects that provide a morale bonus do so at a –2 penalty. Creatures immune to mind-affecting effects are not affected.
- A creature's base DC to stabilize when dying is increased to 15, and Heal checks to stabilize a dying creature increase to DC 20. A creature that receives at least 1 point of healing still becomes stable.

Influence: A nexus associated with nihilism encourages madnesses and effects that manifest with a sense of hopelessness and isolation. Hallucinations manifest in ways that evoke images of cemeteries or advanced urban decay. Reality may seem haunted, or it may seem that all living creatures have vanished without a trace, while inhuman shapes stalk in the shadows. Characters with corruptions may take penalties on saving throws to resist them if succumbing to them seems destined, inevitable, or unstoppable.

PART 1: WHERE DARK WINDS WHISPER

When the PCs arrive in Carcosa, it is within the Neruzavin nexus, the closest analog to the location from which they left Golarion. The goal of Part 1 is straightforward. The PCs must navigate through the flying polyp warrens, sandblasted out of basalt, in search of the nexuses that hold the *Star Stelae* they must deactivate to sever the connection between Thrushmoor and Carcosa. On the way, they encounter significant figures in Carcosa—Queen Cassilda and the Pallid Mask. The former provides invaluable information about their quest while the latter tries to stop them. Encounters with both provide insight into Carcosa's ancient history.

A. NERUZAVIN NEXUS

The Neruzavin nexus appears as if the entire city were miniaturized and compressed. The shrunk buildings, shaped from odd angles and pocked with incomprehensible windows, form a canyon of towers. The tall basalt structures stand nearly next to each other, but the gaps between the buildings can be traversed by Tiny or smaller creatures with no difficulty. Small and Medium creatures must squeeze if they want to travel between the buildings. Large and larger creatures can't fit between the narrow gaps. This nexus is mostly empty except for a relatively small population of flying polyps and other nightmares. It has the nexus trait of nihilism.

Strong winds blow to the west, whistling through the strange, tightly packed buildings and carrying fine sand. These winds impose a –2 penalty on ranged attacks and Perception checks. See page 439 of the *Core Rulebook* for more information on wind effects.

Nothing prevents the PCs from flying out of this nexus and into another, but if the PCs do, they should encounter a number of flying polyps before they leave the Neruzavin nexus.

Hastur the Unspeakable may be slumbering in the depths of Lake Hali, but the Great Old One senses the powerful ritual that transported the PCs across the void of space. His mind touches the consciousness of the Pallid Mask, who moves to confront them soon in area A3. Similarly, Queen Cassilda intuitively senses their arrival and also begins to intervene (see area A2).

A1. ARRIVAL POINT (CR 16)

The dark stone structures of Neruzavin press in tightly, looming overhead as an oppressive reflection of the alien city. It seems as if the city were shrunk and pressed together to form claustrophobic streets among the buildings. The ground is rough but scoured flat, and a cold, dry wind whistles through the grooves and haphazard openings in the rock.

The walls of this artificial canyon wind away to the southeast. High above, a moon shines with a pale, sickly light through a break in the clouds, and ethereal towers rise behind it. Simply to glimpse this sight is to know, beyond all reason but with utmost certainty, that one is in Carcosa.

The PCs arrive at night under a bright full moon and a cloudy sky. The moon provides dim light, but can be blocked by clouds that reduce the lighting to darkness at the GM's discretion. The illumination should not change more than once every few minutes.

Creatures: At the moment the PCs arrive, two flying polyps are drawn to the backwash of magical energy and investigate the disturbance. The monsters' roars sound like shrieks mixed with scouring wind as they rush to attack. They are merciless and fight to the death.

FLYING POLYPS (2)

CR 14

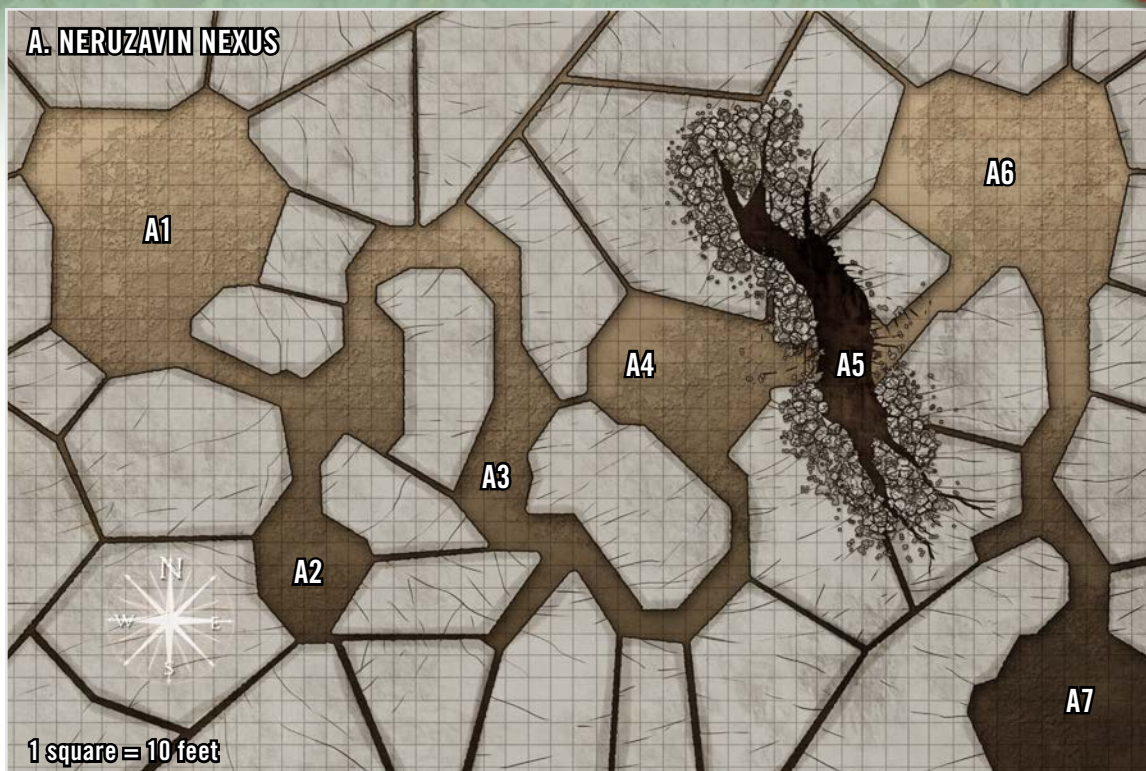
XP 38,400 each

hp 207 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 4 106)

A2. AUDIENCE WITH THE QUEEN CR 22

The artificial canyon walls narrow to the north of this clearing, and numerous crevices lead away in other directions. Drifts of sand accumulate along the passages. The wind moans as it reverberates along the rock wall. A trumpeting cacophony occasionally blasts from the fluted towers high above, trailing off into silence a few moments later.

Creature: Queen Cassilda arrives here and waits for the PCs to approach. If the PCs move past this area, Cassilda calls out to gain their attention. She quickly states that she means them no harm. She explains that she sensed their arrival and traveled here by



magic to meet them. She needs to size them up and determine their allegiances, and asks whether they have sworn their fealty to the King in Yellow or they stand apart.

This is intended to be a roleplaying encounter. In the off chance a misunderstanding occurs and the PCs attack Cassilda, she defends herself, attempting to calm the PCs and explaining that she means them no harm. If they persist in attacking, she teleports away, and you should consider another means to impart the necessary information to the PCs, such as the introduction of a less-exotic NPC.

If the PCs are willing to listen, Cassilda offers her aid to Hastur's enemies and victims alike. If the PCs are mistrustful, she answers their questions truthfully. She also offers to submit to divinations and truth-detecting magic. If the PCs ask about who she is and what role she plays in Carcosa, Cassilda is more than willing to impart her history (and that of the Pallid Mask, though only from her perspective) as described in the NPC appendix (see pages 60 and 64).

Cassilda is not omniscient, so she does not know who the PCs are or why they have come, but she knows much about Carcosa, including what the *Star Stelae* are and how they function. If the PCs mention the *Star Stelae* to her, she volunteers to help as best she can. "Carcosa is like a vampire that feeds on civilization itself and the stelae are one of its fangs. They transmit psychic energy through even the distant void of space. As Carcosa is fed, so in turn is the King in Yellow. I fear that he will

soon no longer be fettered here. You must break the connections, not only to save your city, but perhaps to save us all."

Specifically, she explains Carcosa will eventually reach a critical mass in its growth and Hastur will then ascend to become an Outer God. When that occurs, she believes (rightfully) that Hastur's ravenous hunger may spell utter doom for all life on Carcosa and beyond.

Finally, Cassilda offers to help the PCs learn the location of the three nexuses that are connected to Thrushmoor. Her *Imperial Diadem* (see page 10) has powerful divination abilities, and she offers to use its ability to cast *vision* to discover the locations of the *Star Stelae* the PCs need to activate. However, she needs to be within close proximity to a being or place of special significance to Carcosa to ensure accuracy. She offers to accompany them for a while in order to locate such a thing.

CASSILDA

CR 22

XP 614,000

hp 418 (see page 60)

Story Award: If the PCs exchanged information and stories with Queen Cassilda and accepted her help in learning the location of the significant *Star Stelae*, grant them 51,200 XP. Alternatively, the PCs can recall Cassilda and the Pallid Mask's background with a successful DC 40 Knowledge (history) or Knowledge (planes) check, but they gain no story award if they learn by that means.

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IMPERIAL DIADEM

Cassilda bears a powerful artifact that allows her to survive in Carcosa and subtly lend aid to those who oppose the King in Yellow.

IMPERIAL DIADEM

MINOR
ARTIFACT

SLOT head

CL 18th

WEIGHT 3 lbs.

AURA strong divination

Fashioned from rose gold and set with multicolored gemstones that glitter with internal illumination, the *Imperial Diadem* contains the memories and personalities of Yhtill's population. Any creature that wears the item for at least 24 hours has a portion of its soul infused within the artifact. This fusion grants a constant *death ward* effect to the wearer. As a standard action, Cassilda can teleport the *Imperial Diadem* to her hand from any distance, including across planar boundaries.

Three times per day, the *Imperial Diadem* grants the wearer the ability to use mind-affecting effects on creatures with a minimum Intelligence of 3 that are normally immune to mind-affecting effects. The *Imperial Diadem* also allows the wearer to cast *prying eyes*, *greater scrying*, and *vision* each once per day.

DESTRUCTION

The *Imperial Diadem* is destroyed if both Hastur and Cassilda die within 24 hours of each other. This releases all of those souls stored within the item to the Boneyard or permits them to be resurrected in a restored Yhtill.

knows you travelers and thus so do I. You are delivered into the hands of the Unspeakable One, but you already belong to him. Carcosa is his child, and he is Carcosa. Carcosa birthed Xhamen-Dor, who is now one with a certain Count Haserton Lowls, with whom you are well acquainted. You were marked long ago."

The Pallid Mask makes a proposition to the PCs: swear fealty to Hastur and gaze upon the Yellow Sign of their own free will. "He will grant you crowns of gold and make you lords in the new reality that waits." The Pallid Mask takes the position that the PCs are already damned because of the actions they took in service to Count Lowls and the sacrifice of their memories in the Dreamlands. "You took his coin, supped at his table, and drank from his cup. The service you gave Lowls was in service to the King, to Carcosa. Accept your fate, because you will not avoid it in death." Should the heroes argue that they had no choice or were enslaved, the Mask counters, "You always had a choice. You simply didn't like the choice you had. Saints and martyrs know better."

If the PCs refuse, the Pallid Mask shakes his head and says something cryptic before he attacks. "I do not know how you are here, alive, but this is where your quest ends. I will see to it myself!"

THE PALLID MASK

CR 16

XP 76,800

hp 250 (see page 64)

Development: Once the PCs have felled the Pallid Mask, Cassilda is able to safely provide healing for those in desperate need. If the PCs elect to seek shelter to recover their resources, you can have Cassilda volunteer to remain with them.

Most importantly, Cassilda tells them that this recent proximity to the Pallid Mask has allowed her to make use of the *Imperial Diadem*. She is now able to tell them the locations of the three *Star Stelae* the PCs seek.

The *Star Stelae* are located in the city nexuses of Aevan-Vhor, Bohlvarai, and Paris. Cassilda provides directions and a sketched map to each city and may be able to answer a few basic questions as the GM sees fit. She explains that there is no precise order in which the *Star Stelae* must be deactivated, but she advises the PCs to go in the order in which she listed them. Aevan-Vhor's stela is the least stable and Paris's is the strongest. In addition to their visit to Aevan-Vhor, she also recommends that the PCs seek out someone she refers to as "the Musician." She explains that he is a traveler known to visit other worlds who has enjoyed some success sidestepping some of Carcosa's many threats. Her visions have revealed that he was recently a guest of a Lord Eldarius of Aevan-Vhor.

When the PCs are ready to depart, Queen Cassilda bids them good luck and promises to watch out for them and

A3. PLAZA OF THE PALLID MASK (CR 17)

The oppressive basalt walls wind through the Neruzavin nexus. The rock walls are rough and uneven and riddled with peculiar protrusions and shapes.

Creature: When the PCs come within sight of the center of this area, they observe a solitary figure who stands in the moonlight as if waiting for them. This humanoid creature appears to wear a white mask and is dressed in what might be pale-yellow priestly robes. When the creature can see the party, it beckons them to come closer. This is actually a projected image, which the Pallid Mask uses to speak to them from a safer distance without breaking line of effect.

If Cassilda is with them, she whispers, "It is the Pallid Mask, the King's emissary. It is he who brought damnation down upon all of my people, including my daughter. There are unwritten rules that govern us both. I dare not oppose him directly, for the King will punish that affront. Yet the Stranger has learned his horrid master does nothing when I defend only myself. So we are at a stalemate. I may discover something of the stelae you seek, though, while he is distracted with you. So play his game. Just be wary."

If the PCs approach and do not attack, the Pallid Mask calls out to them, "I would parley. The King in Carcosa

aid them if she can. She directs them to head east. After doing so, she teleports away.

A4. CHAOS'S CALLIOPE (CR 17)

The wind-carved basalt walls part here, opening into a large, empty space. Tall, irregular towers riddled with holes like titans' flutes jab at the sky. On the northeast wall of this canyon is a sunken relief sculpture of a massive, robed humanoid, exquisitely hewn from living rock and thirty feet tall. A passage that leads to the east reveals a wide chasm and rubble where it looks like the ground split open. A cold, dry wind blows constantly.

The bas-relief is visible even at night when the pale moonlight strikes it. It depicts the robed form of Hastur, his terrible face hooded and concealed. The flying polyps carved this in exquisite detail out of reverence for their patron. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Knowledge (religion) check identifies the figure.

Creature: The Mad Trumpeter, a leader among the polyps that still reside in this almost deserted nexus, favors this area near the chasm that leads to the tunnels beneath the nexus. When the PCs enter the area, the polyp concentrates to remain fully invisible and descends to a height of 35 feet in the air above them. Before launching into combat, it announces its presence with a bloodcurdling scream that, as a free action, triggers the effect described on page 12 in the hazard section at the start of the next turn. It then tries to catch as many of the PCs as possible in its wind blast. During combat, it buffets the PCs with its various wind-related spell-like abilities to keep them from leaving the nexus. After toying with them like this for a few rounds, the Mad Trumpeter changes its approach to slaughter.

THE MAD TRUMPETER

CR 16

XP 76,800

Advanced flying polyp (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 4 288, 106)
CE Huge aberration (air)

Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +30

Aura frightful presence (90 ft., DC 27)

DEFENSE

AC 33, touch 18, flat-footed 28 (+5 deflection, +4 Dex, +1 dodge, +15 natural, -2 size)

hp 279 (20d8+180)

Fort +15, **Ref** +14, **Will** +19

Defensive Abilities amorphous, deflecting winds, partial invisibility; **DR** 10/magic, 10/slashing; **Immune** acid, cold, sonic; **SR** 25

QUEEN CASSILDA'S AID

Cassilda may serve as an ally throughout the adventure if it becomes too difficult. She dares not travel with the PCs for any great length of time, but she can appear when they need help most. Cassilda should be used sparingly. Too much involvement on her part risks Hastur's own interference. GMs who wish to underscore this fact while creating a dramatic and horrific encounter can have Hastur punish Cassilda for her intervention. Hastur uses his link to Cassilda to send a larva of the Outer Gods (see page 88) to tear her apart from within. As the PCs watch, her porcelain form starts to crack and fall away as an intense yellow light radiates from within. Cassilda recognizes what is happening and shouts an agonized warning to the heroes. Tentacles and pseudopods grasp their way out of her body as she explodes, and the larva emerges and attacks the PCs.

Cassilda may contact them again, but no sooner than 1d6 days later. She explains that the palace recreates her perpetually, but the process is slow and agonizing.

CASSILDA

Weaknesses vulnerable to electricity

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (perfect)

Melee 4 tentacles +25 (1d8+11/19-20 plus grab)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Special Attacks constrict (1d8+11), sucking wind, wind blast

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 18th; concentration +25)

At will—*alter winds*^{APG} (DC 18), *gust of wind* (DC 19),
whispering wind, *wind walk*

3/day—*control winds* (DC 22), *river of wind*^{APG} (DC 21),
wind wall

1/day—*control weather*, *whirlwind* (DC 25)

STATISTICS

Str 32, **Dex** 19, **Con** 28, **Int** 23, **Wis** 24, **Cha** 25

Base Atk +15; **CMB** +28 (+32 grapple); **CMD** 48 (can't be tripped)

Feats Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Flyby Attack, Hover, Improved Critical (tentacle), Improved Initiative, Mobility, Power Attack, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (tentacle)

Skills Fly +31, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +16, Knowledge (engineering, history, nature) +26, Knowledge (religion) +21, Perception +30, Perform (wind instruments) +22, Spellcraft +29, Stealth +19, Use Magic Device +27

Languages Aklo

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Hazard: When the Mad Trumpeter screams, other flying polyps in chambers deep underground respond to this war cry, but they do not fly up to the surface. The mass of tube-like tunnels and passages acts as a massive infernal calliope. At the start of the next round, the underground polyps begin to release large bursts of air that create a rapid series of inhuman notes in a deranged symphony. A non-polyp creature in the area must succeed at a DC 22 Will save at the start of its turn or become confused until the start of its next turn. This is a sound-based, mind-affecting effect. Deafness and silence block it, and earplugs (*Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Equipment* 63) are effective against the sounds. The polyps end the calliope once the Mad Trumpeter stops screaming (when it dies). This effect increases the Challenge Rating of this encounter by 1.

A5. CHASM

The path comes to an abrupt end here as a chasm splits this alien city. It is a twenty-foot-wide expanse that drops down into darkness, with no discernible way across. The

chasm drops to a rubble-strewn floor 70 feet below. The uneven rocks and rubble that jut from the ground deal an extra 1d6 points of damage to any creature that falls from above. The path is solid and allows for a running jump across the chasm, but otherwise there is no convenient method to cross. Depending on how much time they spend dealing with the chasm or how noisy the PCs are in getting across, the nightwing in area A6 might attack them here.

Hazard: One of the flying polyps underground detects the PCs as they near the chasm and activates its sucking wind ability. It targets up to five PCs to slow their movement and hopefully draw them into the wide crack in the ground. The sucking wind ability covers a 100-foot radius from the chasm.

A6. OBLIVION'S ROOKERY (CR 14)

Creature: A nightwing, an undead creature from the Negative Material Plane, makes its lair in this part of the Neruzavin nexus. A reckless spellcaster in another nexus called the creature and, after it turned on its would-be ally, the nightwing flew to the Neruzavin nexus. Carcosa's pervading aura of nihilism suits the creature well, and the polyps have learned to leave it alone. The nightwing keeps a careful eye on the chasm and spots the party at that location if it succeeds at a Perception check. In combat, the nightwing tries tactics such as using the Snatch feat to grab opponents and hurl them in the chasm to thin out the number of enemies it has to face at one time.

NIGHTWING

CR 14

XP 38,400

hp 195 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 203)

Treasure: The nightwing has a cache of items recovered from various creatures it has slain over the millennia. The PCs do have to seek the treasure out, however, as there is no convenient path to its lair. The nightwing resides in a 20-foot-by-45-foot opening in the walls of the nexus 40 feet above the path. Thanks to the irregularly shaped basalt, the Climb DC is 15.

Amid a tangled pile of skeletons, tarnished mundane equipment, and half-rotten packs, the PCs can discover a *luckblade* (1 wish remaining), a *cauldron of resurrection*^{UE}, a *white kineticist's diadem*^{OA}, *potions of cure serious wounds* (2), and a sealed container filled with rare and expensive material components worth 10,000 gp in total. These components can be used with the *cauldron of resurrection* or applied to any spell that requires them, like *restoration* or *stoneskin*. Additionally, the PCs discover a platinum ring worth 3,300 gp, a set of diamond earrings worth 2,290 gp, a pair of silver armbands worth 340 gp as a set, and various gemstones

NIGHT WILLOW

worth 4,900 gp. The following coins can also be salvaged: 512 pp, 7,690 gp, 34,160 sp, and 85,400 cp.

A7. THE WHISPERING TREE (CR 16)

The basalt walls widen to form an artificial gorge. A massive, twisted willow tree stands here. A strange azure moss grows in patches over and in between breaks in its ebony bark. Beyond the tree and in the distance to the south, the ravine rises and flattens out as the basalt structures give way to an entirely different landscape—as if this were some environmental demarcation point.

This is the point at which the Neruzavin nexus ends and the PCs can enter other environments stolen from countless worlds.

Creature: The night willow serves as a lonely sentinel at the nexus borders. It takes on an ethereal quality when light strikes it. The plant creature remains unmolested by the flying polyps because they feel it has been “touched” by Xhamen-Dor. Possessing an indefinite lifespan, the night willow preys upon those who would infiltrate or escape this territory.

NIGHT WILLOW CR 16

XP 76,800

Fungal advanced willow dusk (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 416, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 294, *Tome of Horrors Complete* 642)

CE Huge augmented plant

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +25

DEFENSE

AC 32, touch 8, flat-footed 32 (+24 natural, –2 size)

hp 290 (20d8+200); fast healing 5

Fort +21, **Ref** +8, **Will** +13

Defensive Abilities poisonous blood; **DR** 10/magic; **Immune** disease, plant traits; **Resist** cold 10, fire 10

OFFENSE

Speed 10 ft.

Melee 4 slams +27 (2d8+13)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Special Attacks aura of misery, create spawn, droning, poison spore cloud, swallow whole (2d6+13 bludgeoning damage, AC 22, 29 hp)

TACTICS

During Combat The night willow typically uses its reach to attempt to grapple an opponent and swallow that foe. When PCs get close enough for melee combat, the night willow uses its aura of misery, droning, and fungal spores abilities.

Morale The night willow fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 37, **Dex** 10, **Con** 29, **Int** 8, **Wis** 20, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +15; **CMB** +30 (+34 grapple, +32 trip); **CMD** 40 (42 vs. trip)

Feats Ability Focus (aura of misery), Ability Focus (droning), Improved Trip⁸, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Perception), Skill Focus (Stealth), Toughness, Weapon Focus (slam)

Skills Perception +25, Stealth +7 (+23 in forests); **Racial Modifiers** +16 Stealth in forests

Languages Sylvan

SQ fungal metabolism, rejuvenation

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Aura of Misery (Su) Once every 1d4+1 rounds as a free action, the night willow can emit a wave of negative energy that affects all living creatures within a 10-foot radius. Creatures within the area take 1d6 points of Charisma damage if they fail a DC 24 Will save. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Droning (Su) Once per round as a standard action, the night willow can emit a droning sound audible to a range of 100 feet. Creatures within the area that hear it must succeed at a DC 24 Will save or enter a state of lethargy. Affected creatures cannot move (as if held by *hold monster*) and have no desire to take any other action or engage in combat (unless attacked first, in which case the lethargy effect is broken). The effects last for a number of rounds equal to 1/2 of the willow dusk's Hit Dice. When the night willow attacks a creature affected by this ability, the night willow gains a +4 bonus on its attack roll. A creature that succeeds at its Will save is unaffected by the droning from the night willow for 24 hours. This is a mind-affecting effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Fungal Spores (Ex) Poison—inhaled; *save* Fort DC 29; *frequency* 1/round for 6 rounds; *effect* 1d2 Con damage and fatigued for 1 minute; *cure* 2 saves.

Poisonous Blood (Ex) *Fungal Blood or Flesh*: Poison—ingested; *save* Fort DC 29; *frequency* 1/minute for 6 minutes; *effect* 1 Str damage, 1 Dex damage, and nauseated for 1 minute; *cure* 2 saves.

Treasure: Tangled among the roots of the of the night willow is the corpse of a creature it apparently chose not to swallow. The body is almost entirely decayed but the skeleton does not resemble any humanoid creature the PCs have ever seen, regardless of any Knowledge check they may attempt. The body wears *warden of the woods armor*, and a *handy haversack*, and carries a *staff of healing* (7 charges). Also on the body is a platinum pendant set with blue sapphires, worth 2,500 gp altogether. Inside the pack is a *scroll of dimensional anchor* and a *scroll of locate creature*. Also inside the pack is a nonmagical white gold scepter worth 5,140 gp, as well as a cache of coins: 1,237 pp, 4,765 gp, 17,140 sp, and 19,100 cp.

TRAVEL BETWEEN THE NEXUSES

As described previously, Carcosa is an unthinkable massive patchwork city formed from thousands of stolen civilizations from across the Material Plane and over the

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passage of eons. Once the PCs know which other nexuses they need to visit, they can start exploring Carcosa in search of the *Star Stelae*. The Neruzavin nexus is near a section of lakeshore, and the Aevan-Vhor nexus is not far—just down the shore, in fact. Bohlvarai is deeper in, amid an unnatural set of mountains that jut from the earth as if pulled directly from a mountain range. A frozen river in the elder thing city thaws and becomes part of the Seine River that flows through the Paris nexus before dumping into Lake Hali near where Thrushmoor is located on another portion of the lakeshore. There are no scripted encounters while the PCs travel between the various nexuses, but the GM is free to add additional encounters to supplement as they progress.

In general, most nexuses are almost entirely empty. Their native populations have died out, or ghosts and undead thralls inhabit them (though even these creatures have begun to decline into torpor). Travel through such lonely places is dismal. The weather is often stormy and overcast. The players may find themselves stalked by shadowy horrors, unthinkable creatures, or handfuls of rats that gradually accumulate into a Gargantuan swarm.

Other nexuses, though, are quite active. Survivors and refugees lost in time and space gather in small communities. These pockets of civilization are not usually friendly places, and they are often figuratively frozen in time. In Carcosa, events, systems, and infrastructures do not change except by the actions of extraordinary creatures.

SEVERING THE CONNECTION

The PCs have to perform this ritual at three sites in Carcosa in order to stop Thrushmoor from being drawn into Carcosa's grasp. The PCs do not need to learn this ritual as they have other ones. They are considered to already know the ritual, as it is essentially a reverse of what they did in Neruzavin by attuning the *Star Stelae*. In addition to severing the connection between Thrushmoor and Carcosa, performing the ritual weakens the rapidly growing Xhamen-Dor. If the PCs go directly to the Thrushmoor nexus, they face the CR 26 Great Old One as it is represented on page 86 of *Pathfinder Adventure Path #113: What Grows Within*. Otherwise, after deactivating the three *Star Stelae*, they face the Star Seed described on page 56. Strongly discourage your players from heading to the Thrushmoor nexus immediately.

UNTETHER THE DARK CONNECTION

School abjuration; **Level** 4

Casting Time 40 minutes

Components V, S, SC (up to 4)

Skill Checks Knowledge (arcana) DC 28, 2 successes;

Knowledge (dungeoneering) DC 28, 1 success; Spellcraft

DC 28, 1 success

Range touch

Target one *Star Stela*

Duration 1 day/character level of the primary caster

Saving Throw none; **Spell Resistance** no

Backlash All casters take 3d6 points of damage and are exhausted.

Failure 1d2 larvae of the Outer Gods (see page 88) are called and attack.

EFFECT

In what is essentially the reverse of the beckon the stars occult ritual, this ritual seeks to unravel the connection between Carcosa and Thrushmoor. This ritual must be cast within 30 feet of the designated *Star Stela*, and the primary caster must remain within that range throughout the ritual. Upon performing the ritual, the PCs feel as if they were being watched—which is true as they draw the attention of Hastur and Carcosa itself. While the PCs perform the ritual, the *Star Stela* begins to hum with a low vibration that peaks to a high-pitched whine by the ritual's completion.

If this ritual fails, a great deal of cosmic dissonance is created. This has the peculiar effect of drawing the attention of larvae of the Outer Gods, which are called into existence the next round to investigate and attack.

After performing this ritual on the three *Star Stelae* that latch onto Thrushmoor, the main connection between Thrushmoor and Carcosa is severed. However, Ariadnah, the Briarstone Witch, and the monstrosity that Count Lowls has become already have established their own connection between the two cities; they must also be stopped if the PCs wish to keep these two villains from drawing Thrushmoor beyond the gulf of space into Carcosa.

PART 2: SUNS SET OVER AEVAN-VHOR

When the PCs arrive at the Aevan-Vhor nexus, they discover it is larger and more populated than the Neruzavin nexus. The city still has a deserted feel, but people are plainly seen carrying out the business of daily life. The outlying districts resemble the worst parts of Ustalavic farm country, with sick and struggling crops. The city proper is a stark contrast however, with tall, once-impressive stone structures in various states of disrepair. PCs who take a special interest discover that this city once belonged to Golarion. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Knowledge (engineering) or DC 25 Knowledge (history) check recognizes the structures, layout, and engineering as ancient Azlanti in origin. A PC who can read Azlanti may come across a sign or posting in that ancient tongue.

Aevan-Vhor has the decadence trait.

DELUDED DEAD

One cause of Aevan-Vhor's somber and uninviting nature becomes evident after the PCs meet one of the two major population groups that inhabit the nexus. A large number of Aevan-Vhor's citizens are intelligent undead

and, curiously, they are almost universally unaware of their condition. This obliviousness is the result of a powerful curse over this nexus and is more than a mere hallucination. It is a delusion, one which they return to again and again if it is temporarily shattered. When something challenges this perception, the delusion compensates. For example, ghosts attempt to consume imaginary food, see the city as it was before they died, and perceive themselves and others as normal and corporeal. Affected creatures are called out in the text as cursed, and creatures that are not affected are called out specifically in the text. The curse has no effect on unintelligent undead, though the cursed perceive them as particularly dull and unremarkable people. Specifically, the curse has the following mechanical effects.

- Most undead creatures think and behave as if they had a chaotic neutral alignment and are no more predisposed to violence or bad acts than normal people. Divinations and abilities that detect alignment or do damage to creatures with certain alignments still detect the actual alignment and function normally (unless the creature has an ability that says otherwise).
- A creature that is attacked immediately remembers who and what it is. The delusion resumes when the attacking creature has left the vicinity for 1d10 minutes. Undead who are continually provoked by the PCs may snap out of it at the mere sight of them.
- A successful DC 25 Bluff or Diplomacy check can persuade an undead creature into realizing its true nature, with all that entails. The curse resumes afterward as described above.
- The curse is lifted on one night per month, referred to as the "Bleeding Moon." It is described in Meeting Lord Eldarius below.

SEEKING THE LIVING AMONG THE DEAD

A smaller segment of Aevan-Vhor's population is actually alive. Theirs is a tense and fraught existence. Most belong to a servant class; they eke out a meager existence on small farms and pretend to share their food with the dead, who are deluded into thinking they want it. These unfortunates have learned not to test the curse for fear of triggering dead memories. An even smaller number of the living are cast in the role of upper class or nobility. The stark reality is that there are no human nobles in Aevan-Vhor, only those who the undead have latched on to and imagine to be friends or social peers. These unfortunates play the role in fear that the curse's mental obfuscation may suddenly vanish.

If the PCs seek lodging, a typical Aevan-Vhor inn is a quiet place where folks rarely speak, and sit huddled near the hearth even when it is not cold. It may smell of wet, moldy wood and is occupied by vacant-eyed patrons who dine on thin gruel and stale bread. There is little beer or ale available, but a request for wine is met with a choking

laugh and the declaration that "there is wine aplenty in Aevan-Vhor, but it is only for the sleepless."

MEETING LORD ELDARIUS (CR 15)

The PCs can learn about the curse in a number of ways. They can find out about it when they meet Lord Eldarius, who can explain the curse and its ramifications, or the PCs can meet an undead creature and learn from trial and error. Some of the living people in this nexus could also warn the PCs about its strange nature. Cassilda's directions to Eldarius's estate are relatively clear, but should the PCs stop and seek directions or lodging, clearer directions can be obtained. If the PCs meet living people, they do not mention that Eldarius is a ghost.

This once-proud estate is in ruins. A waist-high stone wall surrounds a mansion constructed primarily of stone. The landscaping is a tangled mess, and the remains of an adjoining observatory tower stand next to the main house. Sections of the roof and walls have collapsed.

Creature: It does not take long for the PCs to encounter Eldarius or one of his family. The ghosts of his wife, young adult son, and youngest daughter can be encountered as the PCs move through the ruins of their home. The cursed ghosts are found at play or as they perform pointless tasks and interact with nonexistent servants amid the rubble. If necessary, use the ghost stat block (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 144) for members of Eldarius's family.

Eldarius himself responds to any disturbance. His incorporeal form is that of a stout, middle-aged, balding man dressed in finery but with a heavy mace tucked in his belt. If the PCs have attacked his family, he roars and flies into battle; otherwise, he demands to know who they are and what business they have on his property. Unlike other undead, he is aware of his true nature.

What follows may be a roleplaying encounter, but can shift into combat if the party is aggressive or disrespectful. When the PCs ask about "the Musician," Eldarius names him as Erich Zann. Erich, Eldarius explains, is a powerful bard who governed one of the other stolen cities and has a reputation of circumventing many of Carcosa's worst degradations with his unique magical masterpieces. Eldarius invited Erich to his home to beseech the bard to restore his family and take them from Carcosa. Erich tried, but his untested masterpiece failed disastrously. Eldarius's eldest daughter was made corporeal, but the young woman was immediately cursed with vampirism. Eldarius lost his temper and arranged for Erich to be cast into the dungeons of another undead noble, Lord Avaric, whose estate and manor are in good repair.

His family's peaceful and innocent existence means everything to Eldarius. When his daughter Delmaria became corporeal, the subsequent disconnect between the family's incorporeal nature and her physical state caused her to become distraught, confused, and isolated. At the suggestion of Lord Avaric, Eldarius has allowed

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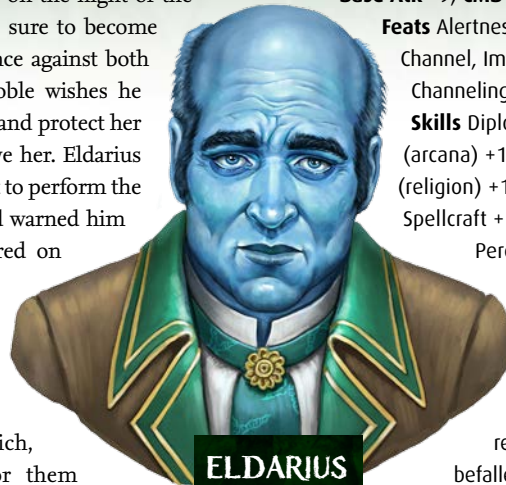
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Delmaria to “enter adult society,” which is a euphemism for “live among other vampires.” He has just learned that Lord Avaric intends to have a party on the night of the Bleeding Moon. This event is sure to become a bacchanalia ripe with violence against both body and soul. The ghost noble wishes he could draw his daughter back and protect her or find some other way to save her. Eldarius also knows Erich was reluctant to perform the masterpiece, and that the bard warned him the chance of success bordered on the impossible.

Eldarius has a starting attitude of unfriendly. A PC who succeeds at a DC 28 Diplomacy check opens him up to talks about Erich, Delmaria, and his fears for them both. Alternatively, consider forgoing the Diplomacy check if the PCs roleplay the conversation well. The information revealed here advances the story (see Development below). Note that if a dialogue opens up, the ghost explains about the curse and its general effects, and about the Bleeding Moon (see the sidebar on page 17). It is important to realize, however, that Eldarius believes that he alone is immune to it.



ELDARIUS

ELDARIUS CR 14 XP 38,400

Male human (Pureblooded Azlanti) ghost ex-cleric of
Amaznen 13 (*Pathfinder Campaign Setting: The Inner Sea
World Guide* 12, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 144)

LN Medium undead (augmented humanoid,
human, incorporeal)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +29

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 19, flat-footed 16 (+6 deflection, +2 Dex,
+1 dodge)

hp 166 (13d8+104)

Fort +14, **Ref** +6, **Will** +12

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4, incorporeal,
rejuvenation; **Immune** undead traits

OFFENSE

Speed fly 30 ft. (perfect)

Melee corrupting touch +11 touch (14d6)

Special Attacks corrupting gaze (DC 22), draining touch, staff
of order (6 rounds, 2/day), telekinesis (DC 22)

TACTICS

During Combat Eldarius begins by using telekinesis to fling
a PC away with a bull rush combat maneuver. While that
ability recharges, he uses corrupting gaze or draining touch
on any PCs who are fighting him.

Morale Defeat means little to Eldarius, who rejuvenates
quickly, although even one scene of violence in front of his
family causes him to reconsider future negotiation.

STATISTICS

Str —, **Dex** 15, **Con** —, **Int** 14, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 22

Base Atk +9; **CMB** +11; **CMD** 28

Feats Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Extra
Channel, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Selective
Channeling, Toughness

Skills Diplomacy +19, Fly +10, Knowledge
(arcana) +12, Knowledge (local) +9, Knowledge
(religion) +15, Perception +29, Sense Motive +22,
Spellcraft +15, Stealth +10; **Racial Modifiers** +8
Perception, +8 Stealth

Languages Aklo, Azlanti, Celestial,
Infernal

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Lucid (Ex) Eldarius is immune to
the Aevan-Vhor curse. He always
remembers what he is and what has
befallen him.

Rejuvenation (Su) Carcosa has affected how a
ghost's rejuvenation normally works. If destroyed,
Eldarius reforms in his manor in 2d4 hours instead of 2d4
days. Eldarius can be laid to rest permanently if his family
is restored to life and taken away from Carcosa.

Development: If the PCs agree to retrieve Delmaria
before midnight, Eldarius cooperates. He believes
that Delmaria can be persuaded to return home, but
concedes they may have to restrain her (“She’s only a
new vampire, not even blooded yet”). If the PCs argue the
possibility that they may have to slay her, Eldarius looks
horrified, but slowly agrees as the true reality sets in. He
nevertheless begs them to try a nonviolent approach.
The noble mentions that when his daughter was a child,
he would animate tiny clockwork animals for her as
playthings. She was particularly attached to a clockwork
armadillo he made her. This is a secret Delmaria has not
disclosed to other adults, and hence the PCs can use it as
proof that they were sent by her father.

It is doubtful the PCs can raise Delmaria, although a *wish*
can manage this task. If the PCs suggest such a possibility,
they command Eldarius’s attention and cooperation.

Finally, if the PCs ask about the *Star Stela*, Eldarius says
that he knows of it. He pledges to direct them where to
find it when there is some resolution with his daughter
and Erich Zann.

Eldarius gives them an invitation to the party, which
Delmaria left behind. The invitation serves to help the
PCs attract a coach and gain entrance to the party.

FINDING AVARIC MANOR (CR 15)

The range in which Eldarius can stray from the ruins
of his estate is limited, which not only prevents him
from pursuing Delmaria personally, but means he’s not
even sure where Lord Avaric lives. He does have a few
suggestions that may help.

The PCs can attempt to gather information with a DC 30 Diplomacy check. If they succeed, some of the fearful and taciturn locals eventually provide directions. This results in the PCs' arrival at Avaric Manor after nightfall at approximately 8 P.M.

The PCs can locate the manor by 6 P.M., which grants them time to scout the grounds, prepare any disguises, or simply roleplay in the manor longer, but they need a faster means to find it. Eldarius suggests they flag down a coach.

Creature: The curse does not affect every intelligent undead creature perfectly, and the death coach is one such example. This haunted coach roams Aevan-Vhor's streets the evening of a party in search of nobility and socialites in need of transport. The coach is incorporeal and it needs any passengers to be incorporeal too, so it attacks the living with the best of intentions. Eldarius advises the PCs that it will flee if they fight it off, since the spirits that make up the coach believe they are alive. When it bolts, it goes by way of Avaric Manor. The PCs need only follow it to find the manor, though the coach moves quickly.

ADVANCED DEATH COACH

CR 15

XP 38,400

hp 246 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 5 288, 67)

B. AVARIC MANOR

The manor is a three-story mansion that, unlike many structures in Carcosa, is well maintained. An expansive lawn with a half-circle drive allows coaches to arrive at the front. Behind the property is a stone patio with steps that descend to a fountain and the entrance of a hedge maze. The hedges have grown tall and wild. Ivy encroaches on the patio and fountain where it shouldn't. The southeast corner of the house is a domed ballroom. The home is clearly lit and ready for guests.

The ceilings are 15 feet high on the three main floors, and 20 feet high in the dungeon below. All doors are strong wooden doors and are unlocked, except where specifically noted. A 5-foot ledge surrounds the top floor of the mansion. The ledge lies 3 feet below the windowpanes and has four stone gargoyle statues that overlook the ordinal points of the house. The rooms on the top three floors have lamps that provide normal or dim light (minimum). There are no light sources in the dungeon.

The party attendees are a mix of vampires and humans, the former being higher in number. Differentiating between the two without magic requires a successful DC 20 (religion) check for each individual, as the cursed vampires are otherwise indistinguishable from living guests.

THE BLEEDING MOON

One of Carcosa's moons often appears to drip pale white fluid into Lake Hali. When this happens, it marks the "Night of the Bleeding Moon," when, beginning at midnight, all undead in Aevan-Vhor cease to be affected by the curse until dawn.

The curse is not just a strange occurrence devoid of purpose or intent. It's another manner in which Carcosa is cruel. To become a vampire, ghost, or other undead is to lose your humanity, part of your soul. Vampires in particular endure a painful night of horror and self-loathing intermixed with unnatural bloodlust and bestial urges. When the Bleeding Moon causes a creature to reenact this experience, that creature is personally defiled all over again. Those undead affected by the curse cannot remember it later, even if told about it secondhand. The morning after, they step over the bodies of their victims and forget, until next time.

If the PCs mention vampires or the Bleeding Moon to any human, they receive shocked looks. They may be quickly pulled aside and told, "Shut your mouth before you get everyone killed." Human guests always depart early (around 10 P.M.), except for a few unfortunates who cannot extricate themselves. Sometimes the others abandon a few humans in order to buy themselves time to run home before midnight.

The vampires that believe they're still human have the word "cursed" in their stat block titles. This doesn't denote a template but rather a specialized condition as described on page 14. These encounters should be navigable with social skills or trickery. They each have a CR and an XP value associated with them because of the potential of combat, but these exceed the totals required for the PCs to advance in levels normally. Furthermore, the vampires are unaware of their supernatural abilities unless provoked. These creatures leave to hunt for prey at midnight when they regain full self-awareness. This empties the manor out for more traditional combat encounters. If Delmaria is not extracted from the manor before midnight, she is lost in the throng and becomes a murderer before the night is over, which constitutes a failure to fulfill Eldarius's request. Understand that, until midnight, the cursed undead succumb to their true nature only if attacked directly. They can be bullied and intimidated to leave if a fight breaks out with someone else. Alternatively, they may choose to leave so as not to be involved in a "legal matter with the constabulary" or some other social scandal.

Any of the cursed vampires can describe where the *Star Stela* is located if asked, but you are encouraged to use this as a last resort only if the mission to liberate Delmaria fails.

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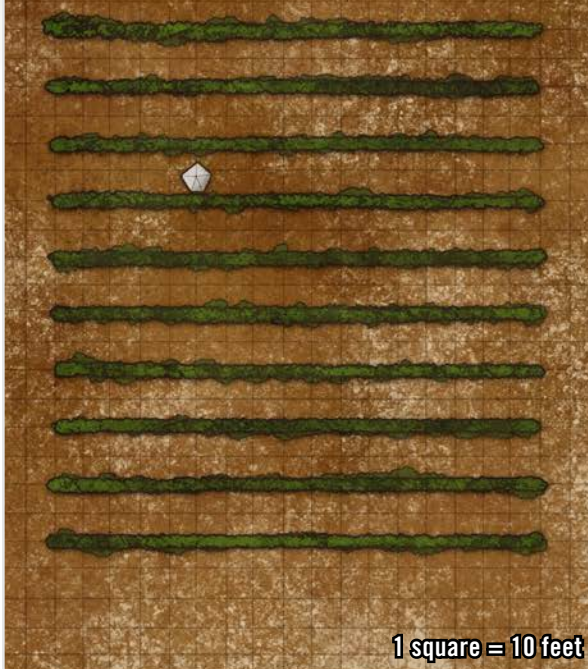
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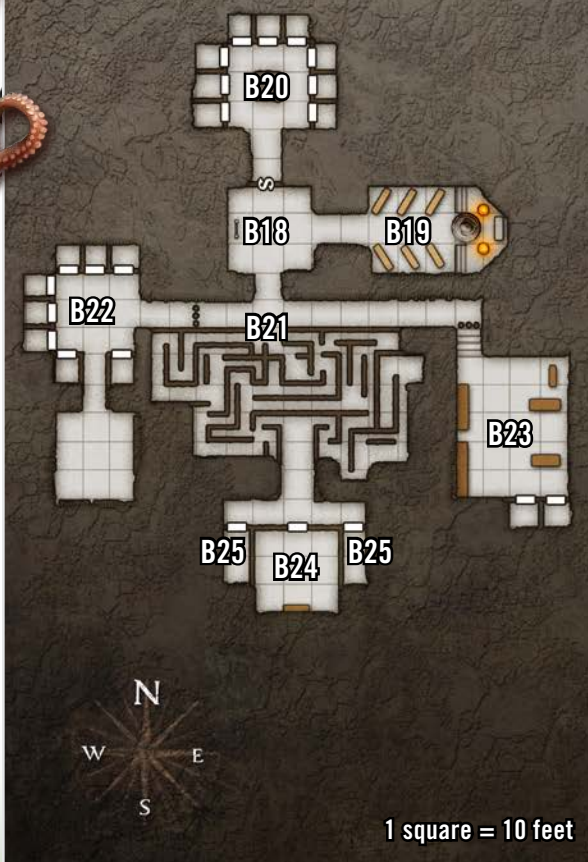
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C. AEVAN-VHOR STAR STELA



MANOR DUNGEON



B. AVARIG MANOR

THIRD FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR



RESCUING DELMARIA

The rescue of Delmaria is presented as a roleplaying challenge. The heroes must either persuade her to return home before midnight or abduct her from the manor. The easiest way to abduct her is to lure her outside where they won't be observed committing the act.

Initially, she is sequestered until 9 P.M., when she is to descend to the main floor for her social debut. She is not a prisoner, however, and can be drawn out if she wishes (see area **B16** for details).

WICKED GAME

Lord Avaric and some of his undead allies have a secret: they are not affected by the curse. They either were undead before Aevan-Vhor was subsumed or have spent their immortal existences pretending to be something they're not. Curiously, Carcosa has left them unchanged. Creatures that are not affected by the curse are noted specifically.

When Avaric meets the PCs, he knows exactly what they are—adventurers, probably from another world. Since his capture of Erich Zann is the first unusual thing to occur in a century, Avaric concludes Zann is somehow involved. Lord Avaric and his special allies decide to stay in character and find out what the PCs are up to.

The players may suspect this; you should remain disciplined and not confirm their suspicions. Avaric is prepared to let Delmaria be taken from his clutches if that lulls the PCs into a false sense of security. He and the sayona twins, Ovonda and Ultor (see area **B9**), may throw up a few social obstacles or try to distract Delmaria, but they stay in character and let the PCs succeed. This also maintains roleplaying as a valid approach to rescuing Delmaria. Lord Avaric reckons that whatever happens with the girl, his game with the PCs is far from over.

B1. FOYER (CR 11)

A semicircle of marble steps leads up to a pair of polished oak doors, left ajar. Just past the front door, another pair of doors stand to the north and south, with an alcove just beyond each. A red carpet leads east to a large hall. The floor is polished hardwood and the manor's appointments are luxurious.

The alcoves here serve as coatrooms for those guests who wish to divest themselves of their outer attire. Pegs and hooks along the wall hold an assortment of fine coats and cloaks.

Creatures: Two cursed vampire servants hired for the party check invitations here as guests arrive. They also offer to hang coats or cloaks for the PCs. PCs who attempt to enter are greeted politely and asked for their invitation. If they didn't get the invitation from Eldarius, the PCs can attempt an opposed Bluff check to claim theirs was lost (the servants have a +13 bonus on their Sense

Motive checks). Using Delmaria's invitation works more easily, as the servants note aloud that the PCs must be "the lady's guests," although some NPCs may later ask where they obtained the invitation.

Otherwise, the servants allow them to enter if they go directly to area **B4** and petition Lord Avaric to remain. Strangers are uncommon, and new and interesting acquaintances are always welcome, provided they are people of quality. PCs who are armed to the teeth receive questioning looks and a suggestion that they might feel more comfortable in proper attire, though no one insists they change and return when properly dressed.

CURSED VAMPIRES (2)

CR 9

XP 6,400 each

hp 102 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 270)

Story Award: If the PCs bypass this first hurdle peacefully, grant them 12,800 XP as if they defeated the vampire servants in combat.

B2. SANCTUARY

This enclosed chamber is empty save for a statue of a beautiful and proud-looking woman, sculpted to appear to be gazing out one of the windows. A pair of vases with flowers and a few pieces of bric-a-brac adorn the windowsills.

This room is not in use and has no light source. The use of torches or personal lanterns to illuminate this room may draw odd looks, though a simple light spell will not. The statue is of the now-dead Azlanti goddess Acavna and can be identified with a successful DC 30 Knowledge (religion) check. She is sculpted so that she stares out the window through which the rising moon can be seen. The items on the windowsills are mere decorations worth 50 gp in total. PCs who succeed at a DC 40 Perception check notice that one of Acavna's eyes has a bluish glint. Careful examination reveals the eye is a *pale blue rhomboid ioun stone*. The stone is also a key part of a mechanism that unlocks the door in area **B24**. If the PCs have seen the door of the crypt, the DC of subsequent Perception checks here to find the stone is lowered to 30.

Avaric hid the stone, one of the few keys to his private crypt, in this location in hopes that it would never be found and used. If he sees such an ioun stone floating around a PC's head, he is sure to check whether this one is missing. Such an act may cause him to escalate how aggressive he is with the PCs.

B3. SERVANTS' QUARTERS

A simple wooden table and chairs sit in the center of this chamber, which is subdivided into smaller rooms. A flight of

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stairs wraps around the west wall, and an indoor well stands in the northeast corner.

Creatures: There is little of interest in this area except for three human servants (if necessary, use the pilgrim statistics block from page 291 of the *Pathfinder RPG GameMastery Guide*). They are busily packing their things to leave for the night. They are anxious but solicitous, and ask if the PCs require assistance. If the PCs ask or talk about vampires, the blood drains from the servants' faces and their eyes widen. One signals the PCs to stop talking and points to the staircase to the second floor, whispering, "They'll hear you and then the beasts will awaken!" Another explains in false cheer, "Lord Avaric gives us the night off during the party, after the dinner is served. A wonderful man he is."

B4. MAIN HALL (CR 11 AND CR 15)

A red carpet runs down the center of this room, toward a set of grand staircases that lead upstairs. Gleaming brass candelabras are positioned in corners to provide a festive light, along with a crystal chandelier hung from the ceiling. The dark hardwoods of the floors and doors have been recently polished, and the smell of scented oils lingers lightly in the air.

Creatures: Five creatures inhabit this room. Two are cursed vampires who are engaged in light conversation with two humans. The human aristocrats do not count toward the CR value of the encounter (if necessary, use the heir apparent statistics from page 251 of *Pathfinder RPG NPC Codex*). All four are open to social interaction with the PCs and are curious as to who the PCs are.

Also present is Lord Avaric, a vampire lord and everyone's host for the evening. Avaric is a tall, dark-haired man with a neatly trimmed beard who appears hale and robust for a vampire. He is dressed (courtesy of his glamered armor) in elegant clothing, with a rapier on one side and a mask hooked on his belt on the other.

Avaric is usually encountered here initially. If the PCs take a different approach into the manor

other than the front door, he should still be encountered early in their foray through the place. He welcomes the PCs to his home and politely asks who they are. If the PCs present themselves as strangers seeking hospitality or as friends of Lord Eldarius, Avaric invites them to stay. If the PCs ask for Delmaria, Avaric acknowledges she is also a guest, but he has no idea where she is. Instead, he invites them to stroll about the manor and seek her out. He suggests they start with the ballroom (area B8). If the PCs state truthfully that they're here to send her home, Avaric doesn't quarrel. He replies, "Of course, I understand. She is an adult however, so you're welcome to persuade her won't interfere." Lord Avaric's statement, however, is untrue.

If the PCs accept his invitation, he offers them a glass of ruby artemesia, a local wine vintage that also acts as alchemical blood (see the sidebar on page 22).

Should the PCs ask after or demand Erich Zann, things take on a different tenor. Avaric tries to deny any knowledge of such a person. If the PCs are insistent, Avaric grows cool and asks them to leave. If they refuse, Avaric gives them one warning that he is prepared to make this a confrontation. "I anticipate that my servants and fellow guests will support me in the face of this discourtesy." Avaric is subtle with this threat and does not reveal himself as self-aware.



AVARIC

CURSED VAMPIRES (2) CR 9

XP 6,400 each

hp 102 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 270)

AVARIC CR 15

XP 51,200

Male human (Pureblooded Azlanti) vampire aristocrat 1/mesmerist (spirit walker) 13 (*Pathfinder Campaign Setting: The Inner Sea World Guide* 12, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 270, *Pathfinder RPG Occult Adventures* 38, 97)
LE Medium undead (augmented humanoid, human)

Init +11; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +31

DEFENSE

AC 33, touch 16, flat-footed 29 (+9 armor, +2 deflection, +3 Dex, +1 dodge, +8 natural)

hp 205 (14d8+139); fast healing 5

Fort +16, **Ref** +21, **Will** +24

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4;

DR 10/magic and silver; **Immune** undead traits; **Resist** cold 10, electricity 10

Weaknesses vampire weaknesses

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft. (20 ft. in armor)

Melee +3 *keen rapier* +20/+15 (1d6+10/15–20) or slam +11 (1d4+2 plus energy drain)

Special Attacks blood drain, bold stares (disorientation, sapped magic, susceptibility), children of the night, create spawn, dominate (DC 25), energy drain (2 levels, DC 25), hypnotic stare (–3), manifold tricks (4 tricks), mesmerist tricks 14/day (astounding avoidance, compel alacrity, gift of will, mesmeric mirror, misdirection, psychosomatic surge, vision of blood [DC 24]), painful stare (+6 or +4d6)

Mesmerist Spells Known (CL 13th; concentration +21)
5th (2/day)—*mind fog* (DC 23), *phantasmal web*^{APG} (DC 23)
4th (5/day)—*enervation*, *greater command* (DC 22), *hold monster* (DC 22), *major curse*^{UM} (DC 23)
3rd (6/day)—*glibness*, *nondetection*, *ray of exhaustion* (DC 22), *see invisibility*, *vampiric touch*
2nd (7/day)—*detect thoughts* (DC 20), *enthrall* (DC 20), *false life*, *invisibility*, *touch of idiocy*
1st (7/day)—*beguiling gift*^{APG} (DC 19), *command* (DC 19), *disguise self*, *hypnotism* (DC 19), *ray of enfeeblement* (DC 20), *unseen servant*
0 (at will)—*bleed* (DC 19), *detect magic*, *mage hand*, *open/close* (DC 18), *prestidigitation*, *read magic*

TACTICS

Before Combat At the start of the day, Avaric implants the mesmeric mirror trick in himself and the vision of blood trick in his two bodyguards in area **B14**. If given forewarning, Avaric casts *false life*, *see invisibility*, and dons his *mask of the mesmerist*^{OA} if not already wearing it. The adjustment for *false life* has not been included in this stat block.

During Combat He uses *greater command* and *hold person* to eliminate dangerous melee threats before closing in to deal with spellcasters with his rapier and his sapped magic bold stare. If outmatched, he uses *enervation* to make the fight costly for his enemies.

Morale If reduced to 50 hp, Avaric casts *invisibility* and becomes gaseous in order to get to the dungeon and area **B24** specifically. Once inside, he attempts to recover his vigor with fast healing.

STATISTICS

Str 21, **Dex** 24, **Con** —, **Int** 17, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 27

Base Atk +9; **CMB** +14; **CMD** 34

Feats Alertness, Bleeding Stare^{OA}, Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Command Undead, Dodge, Fencing Grace, Improved Feint, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Spell Focus (necromancy), Toughness, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (rapier)

Skills Acrobatics +4, Bluff +33, Diplomacy +25, Disguise +21, Knowledge (history, local, nobility) +16, Perception +31, Sense Motive +31, Spellcraft +20, Stealth +29, Use Magic Device +25; **Racial Modifiers** +8 Bluff, +8 Perception, +8 Sense Motive, +8 Stealth

Languages Azlanti, Draconic, Ghol-Gan, Giant, Infernal

SQ change shape (dire bat or wolf, beast shape II), continued animation, gaseous form, glib lie (DC 28), shadowless, spider climb, undead inception

Gear +3 *glamered breastplate*, +3 *keen rapier*, *amulet of natural armor* +2, *belt of incredible dexterity* +4, *cloak of resistance* +4, *headband of alluring charisma* +4, *mask of the mesmerist*^{OA}, *ring of protection* +2, keys to areas **B5** and **B11**, 630 gp

Development: If the PCs accept Avaric's hospitality, he lets them go and allows the charade to play out while he spies on them. Alternatively, he may warn the sayona twins Ovonda and Ultor (see area **B9**) if possible, so they can spy on the heroes on his behalf.

He may also slip into the locked area **B5** and assume gaseous form to quickly descend to area **B22** to consult with his ally, Lakronis the hyakume. He instructs Lakronis to dispatch one of his eyes to spy on the PCs and even casts *invisibility* on the eye to facilitate this espionage. If Lakronis learns something pertinent, the pair can meet up by the trap door in **B5** at a prearranged time and telepathically exchange information.

After midnight, as the cursed vampires fall into a bestial frenzy, Avaric defends his manor. One of the vampire guards from area **B14** joins Avaric at this time. The GM should consider where his confrontation with the PCs occurs and be mindful not to overlap with other major encounters.

B5. WINE STORAGE ROOM

This rectangular room is filled with wooden racks that hold an impressive wine collection. Doors exits to the south and east.

Both doors into this room are locked and require a successful DC 40 Disable Device check to open. While the locks are difficult and require a full-round action to pick, the secondary problem is that areas **B4** and **B6** are rarely unattended. If the PCs do attempt to open the locks and are noticed, the guests in **B4** try to locate Lord Avaric or challenge the PCs directly. The servants in **B6** say nothing at all initially, but they then report to Avaric or to Abraed in area **B8**. It is by no means impossible to get in the room, but the PCs should employ good timing and social skills to create distractions to pull it off unnoticed.

The PCs can discover a secret door in the east end of the north wall with a successful DC 25 Perception check. It opens up to a 5-foot-square shaft that descends to the dungeon at area **B18**. A ladder bolted to the wall provides an easy climb down.

B6. KITCHEN

A large iron stove rests against the east wall of this kitchen

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RUBY ARTEMESIA

Ruby artemesia is a vintage of wine created from the bloodfruit of a kudimmu (see page 86). It retains all the properties of the bloodfruit but is preserved indefinitely and has the taste and appearance of a red wine. Local humans know better than to drink it, but the cursed imbibe it with every meal, not realizing they don't actually consume the foodstuff they're presented along with it. A kudimmu's ability to control undead does transmit through the wine, but the range from its fields usually causes the effect to be irrelevant. As long as a kudimmu receives a victim weekly, the kudimmu it chooses to maintain a symbiotic relationship with the local vampires.

Asking about the wine is an alternative way to learn the *Star Stelae's* location. Almost any vampire can offer that the grapes are harvested from "the field with the weird-looking column in it," and provide rough directions.

space, and a long work table stands against the north wall. A variety of containers fill the pantry shelves to the south.

The exterior door to the north is locked (Disable Device DC 25 to open). The servants in the kitchen have a key. See area **B5** regarding the west door.

Creatures: Two to three human servants can be found here at any one time, preparing a feast that only some of the guests actually eat, while the others only imagine they do. If necessary, use the pilgrim stat block on page 291 of the *Pathfinder RPG GameMastery Guide* to represent these servants. None of them have a key to area **B5**, and they are instructed to say nothing, but to notify Avaric and Abraed if anyone tries to get in there. The servants are otherwise too busy to speak much, as they intend to leave by 10 P.M.

B7. DINING HALL (CR 13)

Three dark cherry dining tables run parallel to each other along the center of this long room. Against the north wall and the northeast corner, wine and other refreshments are displayed; this area also serves as a place for servants to exchange dishes. A crystal chandelier hung in the center of the hall provides illumination. A door with a glass window opens to the east and provides a view of a sloping garden and hedge maze beyond. Three wooden doors exit to the west and north.

Creatures: Four cursed vampires can be found here socializing prior to midnight, as well as a few humans. They may take an interest in the PCs and attempt to strike up a conversation. If the heroes are brusque or rude, this may draw negative attention to them, especially from the undead who are not affected by the curse. The human

nobility (if necessary, use the heir apparent stat block on page 251 of *Pathfinder RPG NPC Codex*) do not add to the CR of the encounter and become very alarmed and possibly bolt if the PCs turn confrontational.

CURSED VAMPIRES (4)

CR 9

XP 6,400 each

hp 102 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 270)

Treasure: Ruby artemesia has an odd aftertaste, even to vampires who believe it to be red wine. Cursed vampire nobles are in the custom of dissolving a sugar cube in their drink to offset the aftertaste, not unlike absinthe. Several delicately worked, white gold absinthe spoons are laid out on the table. Together they are worth 1,000 gp. PCs who take them without an opposed Sleight of Hand check (versus a +21 Perception check) or an opposed Bluff check to distract (versus a +8 Sense Motive check) are sure to be confronted by the other guests and possibly reported as ne'er-do-wells to Lord Avaric.

B8. BALLROOM (CR 17)

This large octagonal room has a domed ceiling that is twenty feet high at the center. Four marble pillars provide structural support and the floor is polished marble. Red silk ribbons are twined around the columns and tied in large bows to provide a festive appearance. Along the south wall, a wooden bandstand has been erected with a small set of steps. A set of double doors exits to the west.

Creatures: A total of eight creatures occupy the ballroom most of the time. Five are human, three of which serve as musicians while two are guests. There are also two cursed vampire guests and one ecorche.

The ecorche, Abraed, is not affected by the curse and is very self-aware. The necromantic horror poses as a party guest by wearing a human skin. He loiters in the ballroom prior to midnight, just to amuse himself and ruin the reputation of the person whose identity he's stolen. Otherwise the undead spy is a troubleshooter. Typically, it is his responsibility to single out a human guest or two to conveniently be detained on Lord Avaric's behalf when the Night of the Bleeding Moon begins. After midnight, he returns to his chambers in area **B23**.

CURSED VAMPIRES (2)

CR 9

XP 6,400 each

hp 102 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 270)

ABRAED

CR 16

XP 76,800

Male ecorche (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 109)

hp 209

Gear keys to area B23

Development: Abraed prefers not to confront the PCs here, but definitely studies them if he goes undetected. He later confers what he's observed with Lord Avaric.

B9. SECOND STORY HALLWAY (CR 17)

Creatures: Ovonda and Ultor are another pair of Avaric's allies who are not affected by the curse. They are a pair of male and female sayonas who describe themselves as fraternal twins. Both are attractive and dressed in the finery that befits a noble in their living forms.

Whether or not Avaric has warned them, they are intrigued by the PCs and adopt one of two roles. They may play at being nervous human guests who, after introductions are made, appeal to the PCs to take them away from the manor before midnight. Building upon this ruse, they may suggest they pose as the PCs' companions while the heroes navigate the manor's intrigues. If this works, they don't hinder any effort to liberate Delmaria, but do try to gain the PCs' trust. If successful, they make intimations toward romance, if only for a private kiss in some unoccupied bedroom for the daring saviors. This becomes an opportunity for them to eviscerate an unfortunate PC.

Alternatively, they play at being cursed vampires who are fairly "safe" as long it is not midnight yet, and thus appeal to PCs whose tastes in intimate companionship runs to the exotic. In that role, they meddle with efforts to liberate Delmaria, but not so much as to reveal themselves.

This primary encounter on the mansion's second floor is assigned to the hallway but need not be limited to any specific location in the manor. Alternative suggested locations are areas B12 and B13. One of these characters may even be found soaking in the bath in B10. The encounter should be staged such that the PCs cannot overlook, miss, or avoid it. This is especially true prior to midnight and as the PCs search for Delmaria.

Should the PCs ask about Delmaria, the sayonas' reply depends on their objective. If they want to garner trust, they direct the PCs to the third floor; otherwise, they feign no knowledge of her whereabouts.

If the twins must resort to violence before midnight, they try to contain it so as not to introduce chaos to the party prematurely. After midnight, they are predators with no constraint against attacking the heroes.

OVONDA AND ULTOR

CR 14

XP 38,400

Female and male sayona antipaladin 4 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 4231, *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 118)

CE Medium undead

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., lifestense; Perception +25

Aura cowardice (10 ft.)

DEFENSE

AC 28, touch 18, flat-footed 20 (+7 Dex, +1 dodge, +10 natural)
hp 249 (21 HD; 17d8+4d10+151); fast healing 5

Fort +23, **Ref** +22, **Will** +24

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4; **Immune** undead traits; **Resist** cold 30

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee bite +26 (2d6+4 plus bleed and paralysis), 2 claws +26 (2d6+4 plus bleed and paralysis) **Special Attacks** absorb blood, blood drain (1d4 Con), channel negative energy 4/day (DC 19, 2d6), fear cone (60 ft., DC 25), paralysis (1d4 rounds, DC 25), smite good 2/day (+7 attack and AC, +4 damage), staggering gaze

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 12th; concentration +19)

3/day—*command undead* (DC 19), *dominate person* (DC 22), *fog cloud*, *gaseous form*, *invisibility*

Antipaladin Spell-Like Abilities (CL 4th; concentration +11)

At will—*detect good*

Antipaladin Spells Prepared (CL 1st; concentration +8)

1st—*inflict light wounds* (DC 18), *protection from good*

TACTICS

Before Combat If they're forewarned of inevitable combat and a surprise attack opportunity is unlikely, the sayonas apply poison to their claws.

During Combat The twins choose a target to whom they apply their smite good and power attack with their claws and bite. If a grapple for blood drain is called for, they use their *tentacle cloaks*^{UE}.

Morale If reduced to 50 hit points or fewer, a twin attempts to flee. Using gaseous form to retreat to their tombs is a possibility.

STATISTICS

Str 15, **Dex** 24, **Con** —, **Int** 14, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 25

Base Atk +16; **CMB** +18; **CMD** 36

Feats Dodge, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Outflank^{APG}, Power Attack, Spring Attack, Vital Strike, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (bite), Weapon Focus (claw)

Skills Bluff +31, Diplomacy +16, Disguise +31, Knowledge (nobility) +10, Perception +25, Sense Motive +25, Stealth +27

Languages Abyssal, Azlanti, Giant, Infernal, Necril

SQ create spawn, cruelty (fatigued), living form, touch of corruption 9/day (2d6)

Combat Gear *tentacle cloak*^{UE}, black lotus extract; **Other Gear** *amulet of mighty fists* +2, *ring of mind shielding*, *sleeves of many garments*^{UE}, matching gold and emerald rings (worth 2,300 gp each)

B10. POWDER ROOM

At the center of this octagonal room are two immense, white, claw-footed tubs. Along the south wall behind them is a shelf laden with glass bottles, powders, and other toiletries. A smaller chamber fills the northeast corner, separated by a

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door, while a double door opens in the north wall. A set of steep stairs on the west side descends to the floor below.

This room is as much as it appears. The smaller room contains a privy. The north doors have no lock but may be bolted from within. There is open stair access to the servants' quarters below, as the servants are expected to bring water as required.

B11. PRIVATE PARLOR

Carpets line the floor of this octagonal room, including a ten-foot-square and three-foot-deep center area filled with silk- and satin-covered pillows. Four well-stuffed sofas sit against the corner walls and face the center of the room. To the east and west are two black iron cages, each large enough to house a human being and suspended a few feet off the floor by a heavy chain. Against the north wall is a wooden wardrobe.

This door is kept locked and requires a DC 35 Disable Device check to open. Each of the cages has a lock keyed to the same key as the door to this chamber. This room is for private entertaining and is most commonly used by the sayona twins. The wardrobes to the north contain a small variety of risqué costumes and other intimate items.

If one or both of the twins accompanies the PCs, their reaction to this room depends upon the role the undead creatures are playing. When they play innocent humans, they explain Avaric pressed the key in their hands, instructed them to meet him here at midnight, and warned them not leave. If they pretend to be cursed vampires, they simply invite a few heroes here to while away some time in lieu of boring conversations and ballroom dancing.

Alternately, the twins can be found in here by the PCs, in which case they try to lure the PCs into the room by claiming to want to show them a good time.

B12. LOUNGE (CR 11)

A billiards table occupies the center of this carpeted room, with cues standing in a rack mounted on a nearby wall. Plush, overstuffed chairs sit in the northeast and northwest corners. A sideboard with rows of glasses rests against the west wall.

The sideboard contains several bottles of liquor, which is a departure from the wine that is prevalent throughout the manor.

Creatures: Two cursed vampire guests are located in this area, enjoying a bit of sport and friendly wagering. If it is not yet midnight, they offer the PCs a casual greeting and a challenge to a friendly game. You can use opposed Sleight of Hand checks as a fast and easy means to simulate a game. The first to get two successful checks is the winner.

If the PCs ask about Delmaria, the vampires truthfully reply that they believe she is on the third floor.

"Lord Avaric offered her any dress she fancied from a collection that belongs to one of his paramours. You know, something a tad less prim and proper." If one of the sayona twins is present, they cut in and reply as described in the Development section of area B9.

CURSED VAMPIRES (2)

CR 9

XP 6,400 each

hp 102 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 270)

B13. SPARE BEDROOMS

These rooms differ in layout but are all similar in content. Each is a guest room with a bed, small table, and wardrobe. One room contains a private bath, and a pair of secret doors connects two rooms. The rooms see little use, but in this instance may be useful for either vampires or PCs to hide the bodies of the other. If the twins manage to pique the interests of a PC on a personal level, these rooms may be used for a tryst, a trap, or both.

B14. HALLWAY (CR 16)

This hallway runs east to west and divides the top floor of the manor. Two doors lead to the south, while another corridor branches to the north.

Creatures: Avaric stationed two cursed vampire guards here, even before the PCs arrived. Until the curse is lifted at midnight, they believe they are elite human retainers of a wealthy lord, nothing more. Their assignment is to protect Lord Avaric's personal quarters and the privacy of his special guest, Delmaria, who is located in area B16. They do not permit the PCs to snoop around in the rooms here, but are otherwise professional. They don't seek a confrontation but are ready and prepared to respond to one.

This represents a serious challenge to PCs who try to rescue Delmaria through roleplaying. They have to speak to her, but she's sequestered without her knowledge by these two guards. If the PCs take the tack that they have Avaric's blessing to disturb Delmaria or that they intend her no harm, they can attempt an opposed Bluff check or a DC 24 Diplomacy check. If the PCs and the guards exchange words and it gets heated enough that Delmaria can hear, she might stick her head out of her room to investigate. Other variations are possible, such as a Bluff check to convince the guards that they're needed for a situation in the ballroom. The PCs should be rewarded for creative problem-solving.

A blunt or confrontational approach is dangerous. Most cursed vampires in the manor are not predisposed to get in a fight with the PCs, but these two are an exception. If a fight breaks out, the curse on them is temporarily suspended. If a battle is not contained quickly and quietly, it could attract attention of other

party guests or Avaric, Ovonda, or Ultor. See area B16 for Delmaria's possible responses.

CURSED VAMPIRE GUARDS (2)

CR 14

XP 38,400 each

Female human (Pureblooded Azlanti) vampire fighter (tactician) 13 (*Pathfinder Campaign Setting: The Inner Sea World Guide* 12, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 270, *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Combat* 47)

LE Medium undead (augmented humanoid, human)

Init +12; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +27

DEFENSE

AC 36, touch 16, flat-footed 30 (+9 armor, +5 Dex, +1 dodge, +6 natural, +5 shield)

hp 154 each (13d10+78); fast healing 5

Fort +15, **Ref** +14, **Will** +9

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4; **DR** 10/magic, 10/silver; **Immune** undead traits; **Resist** cold 10, electricity 10

Weaknesses vampire weaknesses

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +2 *falcata* +22/+17/+12 (1d8+12/17-20/×3), +2 *heavy shield bash* +23/+18 (1d4+10) or

slam +21 (1d4+8 plus energy drain)

Special Attacks blood drain, children of the night, create spawn, dominate (DC 20), energy drain (2 levels, DC 20), tactician 2/day (9 rds), weapon trainings (heavy blades +2, bows +1)

TACTICS

Before Combat The guards remain shoulder to shoulder initially, to prevent flanking and block creatures from advancing down the hallway.

During Combat

They rely on martial abilities rather than vampiric powers at first. Both attempt to bull rush opponents with Shield Slam to break up their ranks and try to flank PCs for their teamwork feats.

Morale The guards fight until reduced to 40 hit points or fewer and then retreat with gaseous form until they can heal.

STATISTICS

Str 26, **Dex** 20, **Con** —, **Int** 12, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 18

Base Atk +13; **CMB** +21; **CMD** 37

Feats Alertness, Bashing Finish^{APG}, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Double Slice, Exotic Weapon

Proficiency (falcata), Improved Critical (falcata), Improved Initiative, Improved Shield Bash, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Lightning Reflexes, Outflank^{APG}, Power Attack, Precise Strike^{APG}, Shield Focus, Shield Master, Shield Slam, Toughness, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (falcata)

Skills Acrobatics +16, Bluff +12, Intimidate +20, Perception +27, Sense Motive +30, Stealth +24, Survival +18; **Racial Modifiers** +8 Bluff, +8 Perception, +8 Sense Motive, +8 Stealth

Languages Azlanti, Cyclops, Infernal

SQ armor training 2, change shape (dire bat or wolf, beast shape II), cooperative combatant, gaseous form, shadowless, spider climb

Gear +3 *breastplate*, +2 *heavy steel shield*, +2 *falcata*^{APG}, *cloak of resistance* +3, 962 gp

Development: If these two vampire guards survive, their role is not finished, as they do not leave the manor at midnight. They remain as possible combat threats.

Likely one patrols the top floors of the manor and the other joins Avaric.

Story Award: If the PCs get past the guards to speak to Delmaria, award them 76,800 XP.

B15. AVARIC'S STUDY

A large rug lies over the hardwood floor of this study. Across from the only exit is a large cherry wood desk with a chair tucked behind it. Two large bookcases line the south and eastern walls, their shelves packed with ancient volumes. A

painting of a strange city hangs on the western wall, and alongside it is a window that overlooks a large ledge that wraps around the exterior of the top floor. A sliver of moonlight plays across the desk.

This room is as much as it appears. PCs who require mundane stationary items such as paper, writing instruments, and ink discover those items here.

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Treasure: The painting is of Carcosa from eons ago, before it began to absorb other cities. Although it is disconcerting and created with poor artistic skill, a collector would pay 5,000 gp for the rare piece. The bookcases contain several volumes written in Azlanti; their contents would easily command 8,800 gp from museums and groups such as the Pathfinder Society—although the collection is by no means small.

B16. FITTING ROOM (CR 9)

Running along the west side of this room is a freestanding clothes rack lined with dresses and gowns, and with an assortment of shoes underneath. The pale light of the moon streams through the window just behind it. A dressing table and vanity sit along north wall, opposite a pair of dress forms. The room's only exit is in the southeast corner.

Creature: Delmaria is located in this chamber until 9 P.M., whereupon she descends to the ballroom (area B8). She is an attractive woman of shorter-than-average height, who died just when she was coming of age. Once a ghost and now a freshly made vampire, she retains the physical age she had for thousands of years. She is in this room because Avaric has offered a choice of more sophisticated evening wear, some of which has been collected by Ovonda. Between the curse and her time as a ghost, she retains the mindset of a young adult despite her great age.

If the PCs ask Delmaria to leave, for whatever reason, they need to do so privately. This locale works but largely depends on whether she wants to remain here once the PCs garner her attention. At your discretion, she may want to mingle with other guests and may ask the PCs to accompany her while they explain the situation. Other party attendees including Lord Avaric, Ovonda, and Ultor in particular, entreat her to stay if given the opportunity. Speaking to her in private is not overly difficult if the PCs are clever. For example, they could ask her to dance in the ballroom, which provides enough privacy for speaking quietly. When the suggestion to leave is made, whatever reason is given, the PC who makes the case must succeed at a DC 30 Diplomacy check to convince her to return home. Similarly, if the PCs wish to outright abduct her, they would do best to get her out of the manor first unless they want to fight their way out. A charming PC might lure her out for a moonlit stroll and an illicit kiss in the dark. Such alternatives may not require a Diplomacy check if handled well. There are many available hiding places, like the nearby hedge maze. When the PCs attack,

Delmaria reacts as a vampire and the PCs must overcome that specific challenge and subdue or kill her, depending on the consequences they choose to accept.



DELMARIA

DELMARIA

CR 9

XP 6,400

Cursed vampire (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 270)

hp 102

Init +12

Gear +1 dueling dagger

Treasure: Delmaria has a +1 *dueling dagger*, a gift from Avaric ("For your protection in adult society," he claimed), which he hopes she'll use on her first hunt after midnight. She gives it to the PCs if her final outcome is a positive one.

Story Award: If the PCs successfully rescue Delmaria (which may include her merciful death before she becomes a murderess), grant them 51,200 XP. If they kill her, that award includes the XP for defeating her in combat.

B17. MASTER BEDROOM

The center of this bedroom is filled with an enormous, square, four-poster bed with a gauzy silk canopy. A small dressing table sits in the southwest corner, and a dark wooden wardrobe occupies the corner to the east. Between them is a solitary window large enough to step through, with curtains pulled partially shut. Outside the window is a wide ledge that encircles the top floor.

This room is much as it appears—the bedroom of a wealthy lord. Avaric sleeps here most nights as he has no fear of Carcosa's suns, but he sometimes rests in his crypt in B24 when stressed or just homesick for the real Golarion.

Treasure: A painting of a handsome man with dark eyes, darker hair, and a lopsided grin adorns the wall. Entitled "Aaeondrus," it is a portrait of Avaric's favorite lover in life and is worth 5,000 gp. If a PC steals it and Avaric discovers who carries it, he gains a +1 morale bonus on attacks and damage rolls against that PC due to his anger over its theft.

The wardrobe contains a *robe of arcane heritage* that Avaric is saving for some potential future ally.

B18. DUNGEON ENTRANCE

This darkened chamber has masonry walls and flooring, and is featureless except for two corridors that lead east and south and a heavy-duty, wall-mounted ladder that ends in a small chute with a door to an upper floor.

A small lever can be found at the top of the ladder with a successful DC 15 Perception check. When pulled, a section of wall in area **B5** slides to the side and grants access to that area.

Another secret door is located on the north wall and can be located with a successful DC 25 Perception check. Succeeding at this check also reveals a small button. The button rings a small chime in area **B20** and alerts the dybbuk, Yewilt, that someone is at the door. This secret door (hardness 9, hp 60, break DC 28) is made of the same stone as the walls of the dungeon. It has no lock and the hinges are on the other side. It has no discernible means to open it from this side. The secret door is barred shut with an iron bar (DC 30 Strength) on the inside.

Neither secret passage is airtight; creatures with the gaseous form ability can pass through them.

B19. YELLOW CHAPEL (CR 10 AND CR 4)

Rows of wooden pews are angled toward the curved far end of this small chapel. Identical statues of a fanged female figure with bat wings stand to either side of a small altar. Mounted to the wall behind the altar is a wooden statue of a ghostly figure in tattered robes with its arms crossed. The craftsmanship is superb, with gold leaf applied to the statue's robe. A faint coppery odor lingers in the air, and offerings have been left on the altar to honor the robed figure. A corridor exits to the west.

Before Carcosa subsumed Aevan-Vhor, Avaric hosted a small polytheistic cult in his manor, the leader of which eventually granted him immortality as a vampire. The cult honored Hastur through the Great Old One's authority over decadence and paid deference to the Demon Lord Zura, who is depicted here by the pair of statues. Either entity can be identified in the chapel's imagery by a PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Knowledge (religion) check.

Aside from being part of a magical trap, the carved wooden statue is also a ritual object used in the creation of Oromith the nemhain (see area **B21**).

Traps: The cult's former leader created a powerful magical trap to punish those who would presume to defile the altar. When a nonevil creature touches the altar or anything on it, the statue's arms unfold, revealing a concealed section with a heightened *symbol of insanity* inscribed upon it.

There is a secondary trap that operates independent of the first. Avaric made an offering to Hastur of his previous magical weapon, a +1 *rapier of wounding*. Over the hundreds of centuries, he has had allies who have coveted it, so Avaric arranged to have *node of blasting*^{OA} cast upon it. While not a powerful trap, it may be overlooked unless someone touches the rapier.

HEIGHTENED SYMBOL OF INSANITY TRAP

CR 10

XP 38,400

Type magic; Perception DC 33; Disable Device DC 33

EFFECTS

Trigger touch; Duration 180 minutes; Reset none

Effect spell effect (heightened *symbol of pain*, -4 penalty on attack rolls, skill checks, and ability checks for 1 hour, Fortitude DC 24 negates); multiple targets (all creatures with line of sight within 60 feet)

NODE OF BLASTING TRAP

CR 4

XP 1,200

Type magic; Perception DC 28; Disable Device DC 28

EFFECTS

Trigger touch; Reset none

Effect spell effect (*node of blasting*^{OA}, 6d6 points of damage, staggered for 1 minute, Will DC 19 for half damage and negates staggered condition)

Treasure: Left on the altar as a symbolic offering to the King in Yellow are the following items: a +1 *rapier of wounding* (see Trap above); a white gold wedding ring studded with diamonds and inscribed in Azlanti with the message "To Ovonda, you will forever hold my heart," (worth 5,000 gp); a necklace made of yellow beryl gemstones (worth 2,300 gp); and a silk purse sewn with pearls (worth 350 gp) containing 100 pp.

B20. GAOL OF THE DAMNED (CR 15)

Rows of cell doors, each fit with a small barred window, ring the outer edges of this room, except to the south where a corridor leads away from the area to a door barred with a piece of iron. At the center of the chamber is a dark pit in the stone masonry floor. A thick layer of dust lies on the floor, marred by a recent set of footprints.

This small dungeon had not been used for decades until Erich Zann was brought here. The cell doors are still functional, as are their locks. Each door lock engages automatically when the door is firmly closed and requires a successful DC 30 Disable Device check to open. All but one of the cell doors is slightly ajar when the PCs enter. The keys to the cells hang on a small hook pounded into the wall near the top of the 20-foot-high ceiling. Noticing their unusual location requires a successful DC 20 Perception check.

The pit in the center is an oubliette, a dungeon cell that can be accessed only from the top. The pit is 30 feet deep with no handholds and extremely smooth walls.

Located in the locked northernmost cell on the western wall, behind the cell door, is a small blank notebook, a quill and bottle of ink, a water flask, and half a loaf of stale bread, all of which are tucked in a wooden bucket.

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Creatures: Erich Zann is held prisoner down in the oubliette. He is unable to cry out for help and has no means to signal his presence other than clapping his hands or a wordless, tortured cry. He can't be heard from outside this room. He is plainly visible if a light is shined down the hole. Worse, Erich has only patchy memories of who he is and how he got here. He retains his skills and abilities, but has little context in which to apply them. Many of Erich's memories have been stolen by the hyakume Lakronis in area **B22**. He is affected by the *charm monster* aspect of the hyakume's drain memory ability, but this has no bearing on Erich until he and the hyakume are in the same location. He is cold, frightened, and alone.

His tormentor is Yewilt. A dybbuk, Yewilt is like the other special undead allies of Avaric in that she is unaffected by the curse. As an incorporeal creature with telekinesis as an at-will ability, the dybbuk makes a perfect jailer. If the button in area **B18** is pressed, she can investigate who wants access to the room. She can open and shut doors, retrieve and use the keys, and manipulate the bar that secures the door from within. If brought supplies, she can even feed her prisoner and yank him out of the oubliette if necessary. If Yewilt's dungeon is invaded, she attacks after pausing to study the intruders. She hides in the gloom and strikes by surprise. She may slam a cell door shut on a PC or knock one down into the oubliette. You should not have Yewilt possess Erich Zann, however, as it makes it too likely that the PCs will kill him by mistake.

Unless she already possesses another creature's physical form, Yewilt breaks off combat if reduced to 75 hit points or fewer and attempts to flee, seeking a physical shell to prevent further damage to herself. There are multiple suits of armor on the three floors of the manor, and four stone gargoyle statues posted outside the top floor, all of which make fitting targets. After she has animated a suitable object, she returns to continue the fight.

YEWILT CR 15

XP 51,200

Female dybbuk (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3* 108)

hp 207

ERICH ZANN CR 15

XP 51,200

hp 75 (see page 62)

Treasure: The rest of Erich Zann's equipment—with one exception—is also found in the locked cell along with the supplies needed to keep him alive and able to communicate. The exception is his magical viol, which is in area **B24**.

The southernmost cell on the western wall is not locked and if thoroughly searched by a PC who succeeds

at a DC 30 Perception check, a vibrant purple prism ioun stone can be found wedged in a crack in the masonry along one wall. It currently contains no spells.

Development: Erich Zann is grateful for the rescue, but until the PCs can come to some accord with Lakronis (see area **B22**), he is of little help. Once given something to write with, like the quill and notebook in the cell, he can communicate. He knows some of his memories are missing but he doesn't know how or why. If asked, he affirms that he is a musician, but is unsure if he is "the Musician." Erich does recall he has powers and abilities, but requires a stringed instrument. He knows he had one once, but where it is now is a mystery. Erich Zann pleads with the PCs to help him find his instrument and get him back to his home in the Paris nexus.

If the PCs accept Erich Zann's request, they must escort the old man through another dangerous nexus before making it to the Paris nexus. Even though Erich Zann can hold his own in some cases and can help bolster the party, the PCs need to ensure his safety. This may put additional strain on the party and can affect some of their usual tactics.

B21. CATACOMBS (CR 15)

Winding and twisting five-foot-wide corridors form a maze. Skulls and small grave markers cemented into the masonry cover the walls from top to bottom. The air is particularly cold throughout the stone labyrinth.

The skulls belonged to members of the ancient cult of Hastur and Zura that Avaric was a part of back on Golarion. Esteemed members are interred here, along with some of the cult's more memorable victims. The cultists are signified with a few stone plaques written in Azlanti, while the unfortunate victims remain anonymous.

Creature: Oromith was one the cult's most devoted members in life. Just prior to Aevan-Vhor's consumption, inquisitions had begun to root out the worship of Zura and Hastur in Azlant. Oromith pledged herself to her dark King and became a nemhain in order to protect the cult's secret meeting place. Thousands of years later, Avaric has grown bored of theological matters and Oromith now merely guards the catacombs that lead to Avaric's crypt.

Oromith's favorite tactic is to terrorize creatures that wander through the maze by passing through the walls and selectively targeting her victims. When retaliation occurs, she slips away to attack again from a different vantage point. She is too canny to be drawn away from the labyrinth, and PCs who attempt to wait her out discover that she is infinitely patient, especially as this gives her more time to regenerate.

Oromith continues to harry the party while they are in front of areas **B24** and **B25**, retreating back into the

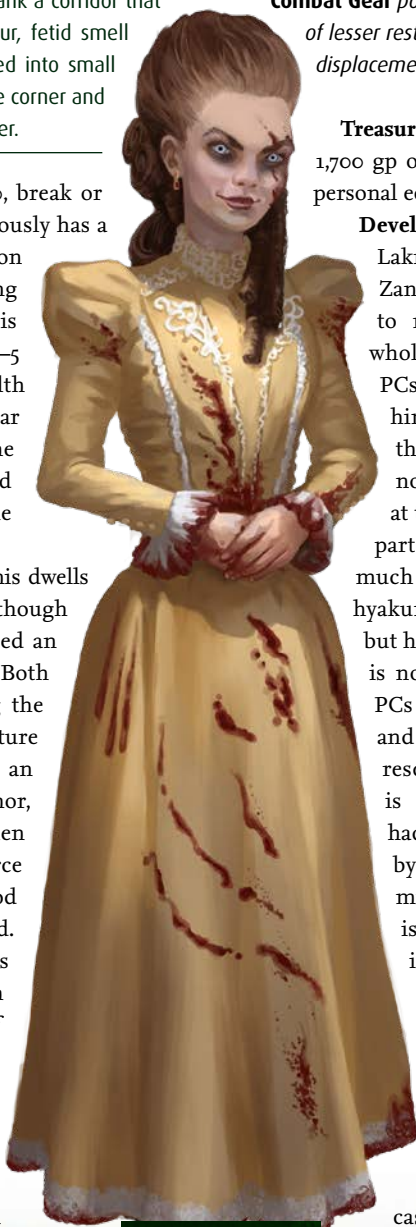
catacombs when her hit points get very low. If slain, she rejuvenates next to the statue above the altar in area **B19**.

OROMITH**CR 15****XP 51,200**Female nemhain (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 5* 182)**hp** 225**B22. PRISON OF MEMORIES (CR 15)**

An iron portcullis blocks the way in and out of the area to the east. Cell doors line the north and west walls, each set with a small barred window. Two more cells flank a corridor that heads south into another chamber. A sour, fetid smell comes from the southern room. Organized into small piles are soiled blankets and pillows in one corner and human bones and scraps of flesh in another.

The portcullis (hardness 10, **hp** 60, break or lift DC 25) is in good repair, and curiously has a winch mechanism built into the wall on the west side, as if to keep something out. An effort to quietly lift the portcullis or raise it with the winch imposes a –5 penalty on the corresponding Stealth check. The cells are empty and similar to the ones found in area **B20**. The cells lock automatically when closed and require a successful DC 30 Disable Device check to open.

Creature: A hyakume named Lakronis dwells in the southern half of this area. Although not undead, the aberration has formed an unusual partnership with Avaric. Both creatures are adept at manipulating the minds of others, but it is second nature to Lakronis. Live humans are not an inexhaustible resource in Aevan-Vhor, and there are many occasions when Avaric must both exercise and enforce restraint so that his thirst for blood doesn't thin the dwindling herd. Lakronis removes and alters memories from captured mortals, who can then be returned to the city without fear of what they've learned or discovered impacting the normal operations of the manor. Avaric, for his part, sees that Lakronis has his needs met in terms of food and entertaining memories. Lakronis is safe from the vampires' feeding, as those in the manor find the taste of the hyakume's blood disgusting.

**OROMITH**

Lakronis has stolen a large portion of Erich Zann's memories and has contemplated travel to the Paris nexus to assume his role as the ruler of that nexus. Erich Zann is under the influence of a *charm monster* spell until he regains his memories. Lakronis fights viciously to defend his lair, but not to the death. If reduced to 40 hit points or fewer, Lakronis cries out telepathically to the PCs to spare his life.

LAKRONIS**CR 15****XP 51,200**Male hyakume (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 4* 153)**hp** 218

Combat Gear *potions of cure serious wounds* (2), *potion of lesser restoration*; **Other Gear** *minor cloak of displacement*, keys to area **B22**

Treasure: Lakronis has a small sack with 1,700 gp of expense money in addition to his personal equipment.

Development: Should the PCs parley, Lakronis explains that he's stolen Zann's memories but he has the power to return them and make the man whole again. Lakronis does this if the PCs swear to spare his life and allow him to flee the manor. He assures them that they'll never see him again, nor will he speak of what transpired at the manor. Lakronis doesn't offer to part with his treasure, but doesn't argue much if the PCs insist he leave it. The hyakume is not particularly trustworthy, but he is sincere in this instance. If Erich is not rescued yet, Lakronis points the PCs to area **B20** to find the bard there and consents to wait here if they must rescue the bard first. If an agreement is reached, he explains that Avaric had a plan to keep Erich weakened by dividing Erich's mind, body, and musical instrument (the last of which is found in the vampire lord's crypt in area **B24**).

If the mission to liberate Delmaria fails, Lakronis can also tell the heroes where the *Star Stela* can be found if the PCs let him live.

If Lakronis is slain, Erich's memories can be restored by casting *break enchantment* on him, immediately followed by *heal*, or by using magic such as *limited wish*, *wish*, or *miracle*.

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B23. SKINNING ROOM (CR 16)

This large rectangular chamber emits a powerful stench of alchemical materials mixed with the coppery tang of blood and bodily fluids. Two steel worktables show signs of rust thanks to a thin layer of dried blood. A separate, smaller worktable is covered with surgical s and alchemical materials. Two wooden wardrobes rest against the west wall. At the south end of the room are two closed cell doors. Up the stairs and to the east are an iron portcullis and a winch.

This chamber is clearly used for surgical activities, and there is no shortage of gore and blood. The east cell is used for prisoners, but the west cell has been repurposed and contains a small washbasin and items used for personal hygiene. Both cells lock automatically and require a successful DC 30 Disable Device check to unlock. The wooden wardrobes contain men's and women's clothing, accessories, and shoes, in various sizes.

Creature: This is one of the two locations where the ecorche, Abraed, can be encountered. If the PCs defeat him elsewhere, then he won't be encountered here. After midnight, Abraed returns here for the rest of the night unless he is given reason to be concerned about the PCs (for example, if Avaric asks him to remain especially vigilant). Alternatively, this may be a location he retreats to if temporarily defeated in battle in the manor above. When he has spare time, the ecorche uses this chamber to carefully skin his victims and prepare his disguises. If the PCs encounter him here, he does not hesitate to attack and he fights to the death.

ABRAED CR 16

XP 76,800

Male ecorche (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 109)

hp 209

Gear keys to area B23

Treasure: The smaller worktable holds the equivalent of a full alchemist's lab and materials that can be used to restock an alchemist's material components, as well as a *boro bead* (3rd level) and a small pouch with 5,000 gp worth of diamond dust.

B24. AVARIC'S CRYPT

A section of the corridor's south wall appears to be a door with no discernible hinges or handles. Its surface has engravings that depict a battle between a demonic, bat-winged creature with monstrous, vampiric features and an armed goddess who is losing the fight.

Most vampires in the Aevan-Vhor nexus do not have personal crypts because they remember they're vampires only one night of the month. Avaric is an

exception and therefore adheres to ancient traditions and habits. A heavy stone door (hardness 8, hit points 60, break DC 28) protects his crypt. The door has no obvious handle or mechanism to open it, is magically treated to be immune to *stone shape* and *passwall*, and has a +11 Fortitude or Will save against effects such as *disintegrate*. Avaric rarely physically opens it, choosing instead to enter the crypt in gaseous form. The door does have an unusual lock that is further augmented by an *arcane lock* spell, so a PC must succeed at a DC 40 Disable Device check to open it.

Alternatively there is a small slot in the door concealed among the many engravings on the surface. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Knowledge (religion) check identifies the monstrous figure as the demon lord Zura, and if she succeeds at this check by 10 or more, she also identifies the other figure as the Azlanti goddess of the moon and battle, Acavna. A PC who succeeds at a DC 30 Perception check notices a small round slot in the eye of Acavna. If the PCs insert the *pale blue rhomboid ioun stone* in Acavna's eye (found in area B2), the door swings open. Note that the door is not airtight and a creature with gaseous form can pass through freely.

Avaric is never first encountered here. He is found here only if he has fled another battle elsewhere and retreated here to recover. He counts on Oromith and the sturdy crypt door to slow his enemies down long enough for him to regain his vigor.

Once the PCs are inside the crypt, read or summarize the following description.

A large stone sarcophagus lies against the southern end of this chamber. Bas-relief carvings of celestial creatures being slaughtered or succumbing to orgiastic acts with infernal creatures cover the walls, except to the south. There, the carving depicts a bearded man standing majestically on the backs of a man and woman, as he pulls their heads back with collars attached to chains clenched in his fists.

Treasure: Avaric's sarcophagus contains some of his personal nonmagical wealth. A small chest sits just beneath where his feet rest normally. It contains Erich's *viol of potent summoning*, a deep blue spinel worth 474 gp, three purple corundums worth 735 gp each, a darkwood statuette of a serpentfolk warrior with black opals for eyes worth 1,975 gp, a gold ring set with rubies worth 2,340 gp, and the following coinage: 618 pp, 2,387 gp, 8,575 sp, and 9,600 cp.

B25. OVONDA AND ULTOR'S CRYPTS

A stone coffin rests on a raised stone platform that runs down the center of this small burial chamber. The crypt is dusty and undecorated, save for a single name engraved on the coffin lid.

These coffins belong to the twins, Ovonda and Ultor, though they seldom come here. The coffins are kept in reserve in case they should need to retreat in gaseous form to recover. The doors to the crypts are solid stone, but unlike for Avaric's crypt, the lock is mundane (Disable Device DC 30).

C. AEVAN-VHOR STAR STELA (CR 16)

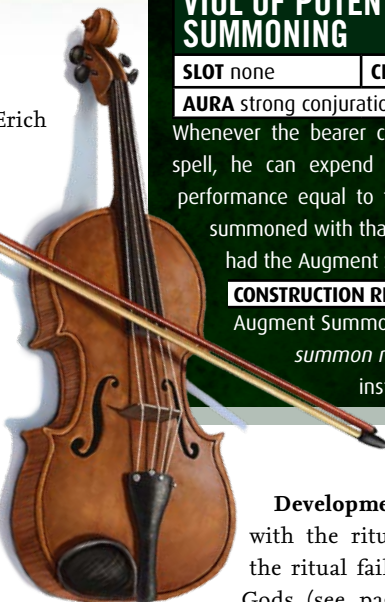
After the PCs have rescued Delmaria and Erich Zann and returned to Lord Eldarius, the ghost noble upholds his part of the bargain and tells them the location of the *Star Stela*. It has stood since time immemorial in the center of a local vineyard that is still worked by local people today. A small path runs between each of the rows, and the stela stands near the center of the vineyard. A creature can't walk north and south through the vines without using a standard action to cut through the trellis with a slashing weapon. Once a square has been cut through, other creatures can move through it normally if they are the same size as the opening or smaller. The lush vines stand 5 feet tall and provide soft cover. Creatures with reach can make melee attacks through the rows, but they take a -2 penalty on attack rolls and damage rolls.

Creature: Unfortunately, Eldarius is unaware that a strange plant monster has made the *Star Stela's* site part of its domain. The creature is called a kudimmu, a blood-drinking plant with necromantic abilities. The entire map area around the *Star Stela* is its field and once the ritual to deactivate the *Star Stela* begins, it attacks.

The kudimmu is not hindered or considered to be squeezing when one of its squares overlaps a square with a grape vine, although it cannot freely cross the rows because of the trellises. It can still burrow and use *dimension door* to get around them. As a special feature of this terrain, when the kudimmu pulls a creature with its tentacle attack across a vine square with a trellis, its victim is not stopped but rather automatically knocked prone and dragged underneath it.

The kudimmu's ability to control undead is not negated by the Bleeding Moon curse, but neither does it cause any undead to realize their true nature. The kudimmu uses this ability to ensure that its fields are harvested, that no harm comes to it, and that at least one living creature is brought to it weekly to feed its field.

KUDIMMU **CR 16**
XP 76,800
hp 252 (see page 86)



VIOL OF POTENT SUMMONING

Prized by Erich Zann, this beautifully crafted violin is enchanted with magic that bolsters summoned creatures.

VIOL OF POTENT SUMMONING

PRICE
24,400 GP

SLOT none

CL 13th

WEIGHT 1 lb.

AURA strong conjuration

Whenever the bearer casts a conjuration (summoning) spell, he can expend a number of rounds of bardic performance equal to the level of the spell. Creatures summoned with that spell are treated as if the caster had the Augment Summoning feat.

CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS **COST** 12,200 GP

Augment Summoning, Craft Wondrous Item, *summon monster III*, Perform (string instruments) 5 ranks

Development: If the kudimmu interferes with the ritual for 11 consecutive rounds, the ritual fails and 1d2 larvae of the Outer Gods (see page 88) manifest and fly over the fields to attack. Erich Zann is able to keep them at bay using his *Fugue de Rue d'Auseil* bardic masterpiece (see page 63) if circumstances become too overwhelming for the party.

Once the kudimmu is slain, the backlash of energy from the *Star Stela's* disconnection has the same effect as if the field had been salted.

PART 3: RIOT AND RUIN IN RIME

The PCs' next destination is the nexus of Bohlvarai, an ancient elder thing city. Bohlvarai is an extraordinary example of the strangeness of Carcosa. The city's original location was an arctic mountainous region; within the confines of its nexus, those same conditions exist in defiance of any so-called natural order. The PCs do not have to traverse a mountain range, since Carcosa swallows only cities, but they do have to navigate a mountain pass on the city's outskirts to get to the semi-sheltered interior.

D. ENTERING THE ELDER THING CITY

The climate in Bohlvarai is harsh. The temperature drops rapidly as the PCs cross the border and remains consistently below 0° F, except inside buildings (which are still under 40° F). Furthermore, the PCs are affected by altitude sickness as if the area were a high peak. Each PC needs a means to survive these temperatures, whether through cold weather gear or *endure elements*. GMs may wish to review the environmental rules for mountain travel and cold danger on pages 430 and 442 of the *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook*.

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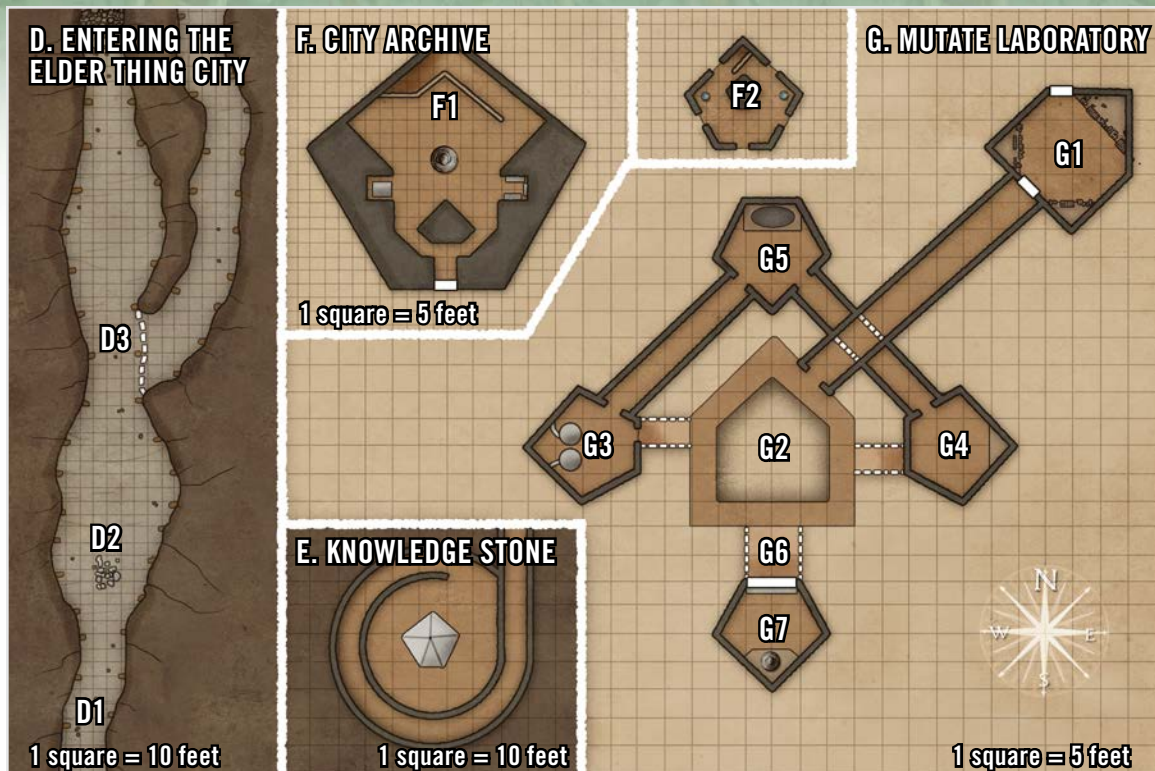
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D1. TUNNEL THOROUGHFARE

A wide path winds through what appears to be mist-shrouded mountaintops jutting from the earth. Ahead to the north, wisps of snow, blown about by gusts and eddies of wind, partially obscure a monumental tunnel that cuts right through the mountainside. The tunnel appears artificial, as gigantic support columns brace the sides and roof every twenty to forty feet.

The tunnel is 40 feet high at its tallest point. The support columns are perfectly cylindrical and rise to the ceiling. PCs who succeed at a DC 20 Knowledge (engineering) check determine that magic was probably not used to create the tunnel, as it lacks a uniform or consistent appearance, but neither does it appear to have been dug out using tools. Success by 10 or more allows a PC to determine that it must have been scooped out by Huge creatures or larger, without tools, and the support columns placed afterward. The floor is rough but does not count as difficult terrain except where noted. However, the floor is icy, and the DCs of all Acrobatics checks in the tunnel increase by 5.

D2. SENTINEL STATUE

A solid statue of an unusual creature, carved from oddly colored stone, stands on a raised dais here. The statue is approximately twenty-five feet tall, and its head has fallen off and now lies shattered at its base. The figure itself is a

monstrosity, with a barrel-shaped body, leathery wings, and five tentacles at its base. The head resembles the broken remains of a starfish with bulbous eyestalks on the end of five tentacles.

The PCs can identify the creature as an elder thing with a successful DC 20 Knowledge (dungeoneering) check. They can also attempt a DC 15 Knowledge (engineering) check. Success means they know that there has been no seismic or volcanic activity in this area, and that something must have intentionally knocked the statue's head off with one solid slam.

D3. AMBUSH (CR 17)

The northern end of the tunnel terminates with a complete cave-in that blocks further passage. The support columns on either side of the tunnel appear to have been pulled or knocked toward the center of the tunnel before they cracked and broke.

If the PCs search the eastern wall, they can attempt a DC 21 Will save to disbelieve the false wall created by *mirage arcana* (see page 33). If not, the effect ends in a few hours and reveals the secondary passage. This second passage leads through the mountain and into the city proper.

Creatures: Two Leng spiders from a neighboring nexus have come here in search of slaves or lost elder thing technology. To avoid notice by the shoggoths found within, they retreat to this position to rest. They are assumed to have noticed the PCs approach; they maintain a constant state of vigilance. They thus used

mirage arcana to create a false wall over the east passage. One spider casts *invisibility* and suspends itself from a thread to let the PCs pass underneath it. The other uses *veil* to take on the appearance of a giant, blind, albino penguin. Both use *major image* to create two more penguin illusions so that just one penguin alone does not appear suspicious. The penguins appear docile, unafraid, and nonaggressive toward the PCs, and the Leng spiders hope the PCs move to investigate them or at least continue forward. When the PCs are sandwiched between them, the invisible spider drops to the ground and attacks. The Leng spiders flee if reduced to 50 hit points or fewer.

If a little extra suspense is desired, during the fight have the PCs hear the muffled and distant cry of “Tekeli-li! Tekeli-li!” Upon hearing this, the Leng spiders very intentionally look at each other and pause for a heartbeat, which is meant to communicate to the PCs that the spiders have heard something concerning. If the PCs struggle with the fight, one or both Leng spiders may instead sacrifice a move action to make an active Perception check or even break off the fight when reduced to 70 hit points.

SPIDER EXPLORERS (2)

CR 15

XP 51,200 each

Advanced leng spiders (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 292, 176)
hp 232 each

Treasure: The spiders have gathered items over the course of their explorations, storing them in a portable treasure pouch made from webbing that is currently pasted against the wall 15 feet above the ground. Once the PCs are past the illusion, a successful DC 20 Perception check allows them to find it. Once cut down and searched, it is found to contain a +1 *axiomatic greatsword*, a *minor ring of energy resistance* (cold), a *black soul shard*^{UE}, two *potions of cure serious wounds*, a *potion of heroism*, a diamond worth 5,000 gp, and 3,870 gp. All of the coins are minted in the shape of little pentagons.

EXPLORING BOHLVARAI (CR 17)

As the PCs exit the tunnel into Bohlvarai, read or paraphrase the following.

Upon exiting the mountain tunnel, the path quickly becomes a makeshift road through a metropolis of ice-encrusted stone. Buildings fabricated by some ancient race litter the landscape. Each structure runs counter to human architecture and design. Other sections are complete rubble. Some buildings are smashed with no discernible cause or evidence of a natural geological event. There are no stairs anywhere, only ramps. The number five strongly influences many designs, from building shapes to doorframes, as if four walls ran contrary to the most basic building designs.

Architecture notwithstanding, the scope of the city suggests a once-thriving community. Immense hive-like arcologies, stadiums, universities, and marketplace plazas as far as the eye can see stand empty. The city is haunted by a whistling wind that sometimes carries strange cries. No bodies are evident anywhere, not even skeletons. Mixed with the stark loneliness is a palpable sensation of being watched, though the only suggestions of life are huge and sinister shapes frozen in sheets of ice where bridges once traversed flowing rivers—rivers that were never possible in this climate.

Finding the *Star Stela* in Bohlvarai is like finding a needle in a haystack. *Locate object* works, but the range of the spell makes using it a limited option. Effects such as *legend lore* and *vision* should direct the PCs to the Knowledge Stone (area E); otherwise, the PC should just come across it after an appropriate amount of time spent exploring this alien landscape.

Creature: Among the many horrors that haunt the city is a wendigo attracted by the calamity that befell Bohlvarai, when thousands of elder things died of starvation as they were systematically hunted and exterminated by their shoggoth slaves. This encounter can be staged anywhere outside or within open ruined buildings, and can take place as soon as the PCs enter the city or after they have done some exploration.

One tactic to utilize the wendigo’s full flavor is to use its *control weather* spell-like ability to create a storm to encourage the PCs to take shelter in a building. Then it can use *nightmare* and wendigo psychosis on the heroes while they rest to weaken them before it confronts them directly in combat.

WENDIGO

CR 17

XP 102,400

hp 279 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 281)

E. KNOWLEDGE STONE (CR 17)

A five-sided spire stands as a monument on a ten-foot-high base that is accessible via a ramp that spirals up the base’s side. The stone is approximately twenty feet in diameter and forty feet tall, and is marked by countless small runes, glyphs, and sigils. Five smaller triangular stone markers, all of which point to the center spire, surround the monument.

The ramp is not particularly steep and doesn’t require additional movement to ascend, but it is covered in ice, causing the DCs of Acrobatics checks attempted while on the ramp to increase by 5. The ramp rises 5 feet with every half turn around the spire.

The stone is basically a city directory, although it is not comprehensive enough to reveal the location of the *Star Stela*. The writing on the stone is in Aklo, but

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the way it is organized requires additional translation. PCs who can read Aklo can find a location designated as “City Archive” with 1 hour of study. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Linguistics check halves the time required, and halves it again for every 5 by which her result exceeds 20. Erich Zann can also perform or assist on this check.

If the PCs are not drawn to the archive’s location immediately, Erich can point out its placement and its abundant written text as significant compared to the engravings labeling other structures.

Creatures: Shortly after the PCs begin to study the spire, two larvae of the Outer Gods teleport to the spire and immediately attack. Their sudden appearance may be a mystery to the PCs, but Erich Zann suggests (later if necessary) that it is an act of Hastur meant to deter them.

LARVAE OF THE OUTER GODS (2)

CR 15

XP 51,200 each

hp 207 each (see page 88)

F. CITY ARCHIVE (CR 19)

At the end of a long plaza stands a modestly sized, five-sided pyramid. The pyramid was constructed or possibly carved from sandstone by some titanic force, sections of it bear rings and multicolored ripples of color on the surface. The pyramid is a little more than ninety feet in diameter. A ten-foot-wide

doorway is visible on the southern face, and windowlike openings are set into the sides approximately two-thirds the way to the top.

This is the city archive that the PCs located with the Knowledge Stone in the previous encounter. This encounter occurs as they approach it.

Creature: Thundering across the plaza behind them is heard an inhuman cry of “Tekeli-li! Tekeli-li!” When the PCs pause to look, they see what appears to be a glistening black mound of protoplasm, approximately 15 feet in diameter. The monster is sprouting all manner of eyes, mouths, and appendages while half-crawling and half-rolling toward them. The shoggoth charges to defend its territory. The shoggoth should be placed so that even if it charges, the PCs have 1 to 2 rounds to reach the pyramid’s entrance before the shoggoth is within reach to attack.

Shoggoths are dangerous creatures and this is an epic encounter. If the PCs don’t realize the danger that they are in, encourage Knowledge checks to help them out. After the PCs get to the safety of the city archive, they can formulate a plan to deal with this maddening beast.

The shoggoth chases the PCs into the city archive. While it is an ooze, it does not have the compression ability, and the adventure assumes it can’t rip apart the pyramid very quickly. If the PCs enter the pyramid, it waits outside and eventually climbs to cover the top

of the structure (where it cannot be seen) and waits for any creature to exit from the south or any window. It essentially traps them inside and taunts them.

SHOGGOTH

CR 19

XP 204,800

hp 333 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 249)

Development: Ideally, the PCs gain the cooperation of the two elder things inside the pyramid and, with Erich Zann, they collectively defeat the creature or escape. It is not necessary that the shoggoth be killed. The PCs may find a way to elude it or drive it away. If a pitched battle occurs and the PCs severely wound it, it may amble off in search of easier prey. The goal is to permit the PCs and players to encounter a rare and powerful creature and live to tell the tale.

F1. CITY ARCHIVE LOWER FLOOR

The lower level of the pyramid has a one-room, open floor plan. The only means of entrance or egress is the southern foyer. The hallway splits to wrap around a pentagonal center section, the northeast and northwest walls of which are covered with shelves of scrolls and metal plates. A stone statue of a winged barrel-shaped creature with tentacles for legs stands in the center of the floor. To the west is an alcove with a stone table covered with a diorama. Another alcove mirrors it to the east. A ramp on the north side of the room ascends to a second floor.

The diorama is a map of Bohlvarai as it once existed aboveground (there are subterranean levels that are not depicted). Due to the destruction that occurred during the shoggoth revolt, it is not completely accurate, nor does it indicate the location of the *Star Stela*. The two elder things on the second floor (see area F2) can, however, use it to pinpoint the building where the stela can be found.

The scrolls are not paper, papyrus, or vellum, but are crafted from a durable filmy material of unknown origin. It is questionable how the elder things even write on it. All the books are constructed of thin but durable metal plates etched in Aklo or the language of the elder things. The library (which includes the shelves upstairs) contains the essential history of Bohlvarai and the elder thing race, and touches on diverse topics such as the Dark Tapestry and the Outer Gods.

As noted above, the pyramid's construction is solid enough that the shoggoth may require days before it can do serious structural damage. It tries waiting first.

Treasure: PCs who can read Aklo and succeed at a DC 25 Appraise check can select a number of plates and scrolls that could be reasonably transported in something like a *handy haversack*; these would be worth 10,000 gp to museums and collectors on Golarion. PCs

who succeed at a DC 25 Perception check also find a *scroll of clone*, a *scroll of restoration*, a *scroll of skinsend*^{UM}, and a *scroll of treasure stitching*^{APG}.

Additionally, even though the elder things here in the archive are not arcane casters, there are a number of arcane spellbooks here. You can use this locale to grant new spells to casters who prepare their spells from spellbooks.

F2. CITY ARCHIVE UPPER FLOOR (CR 17)

Dim light pours through windows in this top-floor chamber. The ceiling slopes almost to a point and then merges into a solid pentagonal support column that runs from the floor to the roof. Around this center section are five racks of scrolls and books fabricated from metal plates. On both the east and west side of the room are glass cylinders with hinged hatch doors. A steep ramp descends to a lower floor in the north end of the chamber.

This room is very much like the lower floor in respect to the ramp and the library racks and their contents. The value of certain tomes listed on the lower floor includes these volumes as well.

Creatures: Two elder thing archivists named Pharlnimaar and Blaayjhan are here in a state of suspended animation. If the PCs open the cylinders (which serve only to protect them from the elements and dust) or in any way disturb them, they awaken. The adventure assumes the elder things succeed at their saving throws and become fully cognizant after 2d4 rounds. Neither attacks, but their starting attitude is unfriendly. They are somewhat alarmed at having strange creatures present as they awake from their slumber. However, they share limited information freely. Neither creature has seen a sentient humanoid before, but they overcome their shock quickly.

They can provide some basic context to Bohlvarai, specifically that it was a vibrant city until their amorphous servitor race developed greater intelligence and revolted. A fevered effort was made to locate a new planet or place on their existing world to evacuate to. Then, when the citizens of Bohlvarai did not think things could become worse, they found their city relocated to a new planet in a different galaxy. Uncertain of where another habitable planet was located, they were left with the untenable choice between fighting their slaves, exploring this new world, or launching themselves into space in hibernation with no preset destination. Countless died as a result. Pharlnimaar and Blaayjhan placed themselves in long-term hibernation, hoping that when they awoke the shoggoths would be gone and the pair could collect the remains of their culture and history, here and throughout the ruins. Their intent was to find others of their kind so the memory of their people would not succumb to oblivion.

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Both recognize the description of a *Star Stela* and are horrified to learn what role it has played in cosmic events. They attribute the *Star Stela* to a trigger event that led to the shoggoth rebellion—the advent of a creature they call the Mutate. The Mutate was an experiment with a new form of slave that they theorize was unexpectedly affected by the *Star Stela*, which they were using as a power source. The Mutate then roused the shoggoths and set them on the path of insurrection. They know where the *Star Stela* is located, but initially forbid the PCs from going anywhere near it, as it is locked in a stasis field with the Mutate. They fear (rightly) that should the Mutate be released, it could organize the shoggoths into a willing army.

The PCs must persuade the archivists to divulge the location of the research laboratory where the Mutate experimentation was performed. First and foremost, the elder things want the PCs' absolute assurance they will not allow the Mutate to escape the facility alive. If the PCs succeed at a DC 28 Diplomacy check to persuade them of

the PCs' sincerity, they also demand that the PCs help kill or drive off the shoggoth that lurks outside the archive, a task in which they will assist.

Finally, the shoggoth may be outside and on top of the pyramid, but its presence should not be forgotten. At times, a gigantic eye manifests in front of a window to peer inside, and an ominous tremor runs through the stone pyramid.

PHARLNIMAAR AND BLAAYJHAN (2)

CR 15

XP 51,200 each

Elder thing psychic 13 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 4 85,

Pathfinder RPG Occult Adventures 60)

LN Medium aberration (aquatic)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +29

DEFENSE

AC 27, touch 13, flat-footed 24 (+4 armor, +3 Dex, +10 natural)

hp 229 each (20 HD; 13d6+7d8+153)

Fort +16, **Ref** +11, **Will** +21

Defensive Abilities all-around vision; **Immune** cold; **Resist** fire 10

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 20 ft. (clumsy), swim 40 ft.

Melee 5 tentacles +14 (1d4+1 plus grab)

Special Attacks constrict (1d4+1), phrenic amplifications (intense focus^{OA}, mindtouch^{OA}, overpowering mind^{OA}, space-rending spell^{OA}), phrenic pool (10 points)

Psychic Spell-Like

Abilities (CL 13th;

concentration +22)

1/day—*detect thoughts*

(DC 16), *telepathic bond*

Psychic Spells Known (CL 13th;

concentration +22)

6th (5/day)—*enemy hammer*^{APG} (DC 25),

legend lore, *mind thrust* VI^{OA} (DC 27)

5th (8/day)—*mental barrier* IV^{OA}, *retrocognition*^{OA}, *synapse overload*^{OA} (DC 26), *teleport*

4th (8/day)—*locate creature*, *mind probe*^{OA} (DC 25),

resilient sphere (DC 23), *screaming* (DC 25), *stoneskin*

3rd (8/day)—*deep slumber* (DC 22), *dispel magic*,

heroism, *telekinetic maneuver*^{OA}, *vampiric touch*

2nd (8/day)—*false life*, *hypercognition*^{OA}, *ironskin*, *mirror image*, *resist energy*, *spider climb*

1st (9/day)—*comprehend languages*, *detect thoughts*

(DC 22), *ear-piercing scream*^{UM} (DC 20), *mage armor*,

magic missile, *vanish*^{APG} (DC 20)

0 (at will)—*daze* (DC 19), *detect magic*, *detect psychic*

significance^{OA}, *ghost sound* (DC 19), *mage hand*, *read*

magic, *resistance*, *stabilize*, *telekinetic projectile*^{OA}

Psychic Discipline lore



ELDER THING ARCHIVIST

TACTICS

Before Combat Prior to combat, the master archivists cast *heroism*, *ironskin*, and *mage armor*. These benefits are included in this stat block.

During Combat Against the shoggoth, the archivists take on a support role and cast spells on the PCs to assist them. Afterward, they spend 2 points from their phrenic pool on intense focus to help overcome the shoggoth's spell resistance.

Morale The archivists retreat if reduced to 40 hit points or fewer.

Base Statistics Without the effects of the spells mentioned in Before Combat, the elder things' statistics are **AC** 19, flat-footed 16; **Fort** +14, **Ref** +9, **Will** +19.

STATISTICS

Str 13, **Dex** 16, **Con** 23, **Int** 29, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 17

Base Atk +11; **CMB** +14 (+18 grapple); **CMD** 25 (can't be tripped)

Feats Combat Casting, Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Endurance, Great Fortitude, Greater Spell Focus (divination), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Spell Focus (divination), Toughness

Skills Acrobatics +9, Appraise +12, Bluff +9, Climb +3, Diplomacy +9, Disable Device +23, Disguise +5, Escape Artist +5, Fly +20, Heal +26, Intimidate +28, Knowledge (arcana) +34, Perception +29, Ride +5, Sense Motive +29, Spellcraft +34, Stealth +24, Survival +29, Swim +21, Use Magic Device +25

Languages Aklo, Aquan, Auran, Celestial, Elder Thing, Ignan, Mi-go, Necril, Terran, Yithian

SQ amphibious, detect thoughts, hibernation, illuminating answers (maximum 4), limited starflight, memory palace (arcana), mnemonic cache (70 pages/90 minutes), no breath, superior automatic writing, telepathic bond

Gear *prophet's pectoral*^{NE}, *scarlet and blue sphere ioun stone* (Spellcraft)

Development: The archivists show the PCs the location of the laboratory and also give them three small pentagonal stone chips cut from a pinkish translucent stone. The three chips each have one of the numbers 2, 4, and 8 engraved in Aklo. The archivists are not precisely sure what they're used for, but they know they somehow are required for a locking mechanism to the vault that holds the *Star Stela* (see area **G6**).

If no PCs have the trapfinding ability, the archivists may assist them in getting past the airlock in **G1**, as it requires no skill checks on their part. This should be done only if there is no alternative and the PCs should receive no experience for that trap.

Whatever the state of the relationship with the archivists is when the PCs leave, if the PCs later allow the Mutate to escape, Pharlnimaar and Blaayjhan hunt them down with the intent to kill them. This is retribution for the PCs' failure to keep their word and contain the Mutate. The archivists have ample divination resources to track them down.

Story Award: If the PCs successfully kill or drive away the shoggoth with the archivists' help, award the PCs 76,800 XP.

G. MUTATE LABORATORY

Two pentagonal structures connected by a long, covered walkway stand in the center of an empty plaza, surrounded by a cluster of domes and spiral towers. Both buildings are constructed from green-and-black marble etched with inhuman engravings.

The larger building is topped with a dome roof with a needlelike spike at the center. An iridescent hemisphere of energy surrounds it and expands to the southwest wall of the smaller building. There are no obvious entrances or windows save for a 5-foot-wide, completely enclosed corridor with a peaked roof that penetrates the barrier and connects to the smaller building.

The smaller building is almost identical save that it has an elongated pentagonal door on the north side. The engravings on this building are rounded and worn smooth from time and the elements.

A permanent *wall of force* effect shaped like a dome protects the larger building. Every creature inside is affected by a *temporal stasis* effect (both effects are CL 18th). This is the product of elder thing super-science and magic from a bygone era. The means to deactivate the effects are inside the laboratory airlock. Any effect that can destroy a *wall of force* shuts down this field for 1 round before it resets. Any creature that enters the *temporal stasis* field must make a successful DC 24 Fortitude save or fall victim to the effects. Creatures that remain in the field must attempt a new save once per minute until the field is deactivated. Any creatures that successfully save against the *temporal stasis* field are immune to its effects for 24 hours.

The engravings on the outside of the buildings are difficult to make out, but a PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Perception check can make out a pattern of creatures with starfish-shaped heads pouring fluids into a large vat. A PC who succeeds by 10 or more finds a similar engraving: a disembodied mouth is depicted floating in the vat, and the starfish-headed creatures are flailing their tentacles.

G1. LABORATORY AIRLOCK (CR 15)

Stone panels engraved with small sigils and runes that blink with a rainbow of colors fill three corners of this five-sided room. The outline of a five-sided door with no lock or handles is seen on the southwest wall. Another pentagon-shaped door exits to the north, this one with a handle and a strange lock. The walls and floor are constructed of a smooth green-and-black marble and the air is cold and stale, but warmer than it is outside.

The exterior north door is locked and appears to require a strange five-sided key or rod. It can be opened

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by a PC who succeeds at a DC 35 Disable Device check. PCs who succeed at a DC 25 Perception check notice that a more recent set of sigils were gouged over the existing marks, but these have been filled in with ice and snow. If cleared, the marks read in Aklo, "The death we created is now our ruin, and it waits."

Inside, if the PCs search the area with a successful DC 25 Perception check, they discover a small, pinkish, translucent, five-sided piece of stone on one of the control panels, where it blends in with all the other strange buttons and symbols. Etched on its surface in Aklo is the number 7 (see area G6 for more details).

Trap: The southwest door is locked, trapped, and interfaced with the exterior *wall of force* and *temporal stasis* effects. All three systems are interconnected, so to unlock the door is to disarm the trap and disable the magical effects on the entire laboratory. The *wall of force* effect behind the door reinforces it. There are two methods of safely opening the door.

The first method requires a PC to succeed at a DC 31 Perception check and a DC 31 Disable Device check to disarm the trap. The PC must then succeed at a DC 40 Disable Device check to manipulate the alien mechanism that opens the door. If the PC fails the check to open the door, the trap automatically resets and all checks must be performed again. The door cannot be opened until the trap is disarmed.

An alternative method requires the cooperation of four characters, all of whom must be in the room and in the trap's area of effect. A PC must stand at each of the three control panels and one must stand at the door to tap magic sigils in a specific order, directed by the PC with the trapfinding skill (who also attempts all of the relevant checks). If the character directing the other PCs on which button to push succeeds at a DC 25 Intelligence check, all Perception and Disable Device DCs are reduced by 10. In addition, when the PCs use this method, a single check counts for both disarming the trap and opening the door.

Once the door is open, the laboratory is no longer warded by the *wall of force* or *temporal stasis* effects.

STERILIZING FLAME TRAP

CR 15

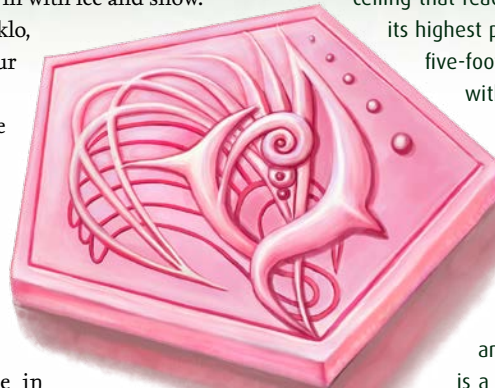
XP 51,200

Type magic; Perception DC 31; Disable Device DC 31

EFFECTS

Trigger touch; **Reset** automatic (1 round)

Effect spell effect (maximized *fireball*, 60 fire damage, Reflex DC 24 half); multiple targets (all targets in the chamber)



ELDER THING CHIP

G2. MAIN OBSERVATION CHAMBER

This large pentagonal chamber has a curved dome-like ceiling that reaches forty-five feet above the floor at its highest point. Twenty feet from the bottom, a five-foot wide ledge runs along all five walls with a corridor that branches to northeast.

There is no railing along the ledge, nor is there a ramp or staircase that extends to the lower floor.

On the floor, two ramps descend sharply down corridors to the east and west while a level hallway runs to the south. The marble walls and floor are damp and cold and there is a faint musty smell in the air, like wet animals and chemicals.

This area was used to observe the Mutate before it became hyperintelligent and gained the ability to fly. The upper gallery extends over the room, and the three lower exits open in the walls underneath it. The east and west corridors are smooth ramps that descend at a steep 45-degree angle. The ceiling height of the ramps is 10 feet. The ramps count as difficult terrain going down, but moving up requires a DC 0 Climb check and hampers movement to 1/4 of creatures' normal speed.

G3. DORMANCY CHAMBER (CR 13)

Two large glassy cylinders large enough to hold a person occupy the west side of the pentagonal shaped room. Each cylinder has a transparent door set with hinges and a door handle on both sides. A steep ramp exits the room on the east side and leads up to a higher floor. An odd five-sided corridor whose ceiling rises to a point exits to the northeast.

This room is where the laboratory researchers would go to enter a short-term hibernation cycle during their critical, long-running experiments, rather than returning to their homes. This allowed them to monitor their experiments around the clock. The height of this chamber is 15 feet.

If the PCs search the hibernation tanks and succeed at a DC 20 Perception check, they locate a small five-sided stone chip with the number 6 engraved on it in Aklo (see area G6).

Creatures: When the laboratory was put into stasis, two researchers were trapped inside with the Mutate and were converted to juju zombies. Neither fallen researcher used its natural hibernation ability, as they were trapped in area G5 by the *temporal stasis* effect. As soon as the effect ended when the PCs deactivated the laboratory's defenses, the researchers telepathically

conferred with the Mutate, prepared for battle, and split up to roam the lab. One researcher remains in this room, and if it encounters the PCs first, it cries out to the Mutate and its fellow researcher. The three creatures then converge on the heroes and use the terrain of the entire laboratory to their advantage. All three creatures should converge on the PCs from different directions. This elder thing carries a handful of five-sided number chips similar to the one described in area **G1**.

FALLEN RESEARCHER

CR 13

XP 25,600

Elder thing juju zombie alchemist (mindchemist) 10
(*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 4 85, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 291, *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 26, *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Magic* 19)

LE Medium undead (aquatic)

Init +9; **Senses** all-around vision, darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +23

DEFENSE

AC 29, touch 16, flat-footed 23 (+5 Dex, +1 dodge, +13 natural)
hp 172 (17d8+96)

Fort +17, **Ref** +16, **Will** +13

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4; **DR** 10/adamantine (100 points), 10/magic and slashing; **Immune** cold, electricity, *magic missile*, undead traits; **Resist** fire 10

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 20 ft. (clumsy), swim 40 ft.

Melee slam +14 (1d6+2), 5 tentacles +14 (1d4+2 plus grab)

Ranged bomb +19/+14/+9 (5d6+11 fire) or confusion bomb +19/+14/+9 (3d6+11 plus confusion) or shock bomb +19/+14/+9 (5d6+11 electricity)

Special Attacks bomb 23/day (5d6+11 fire, DC 26), constrict (1d4+2)

Alchemist Extracts Prepared (CL 10th; concentration +21)
4th—*freedom of movement*, *greater invisibility*, *stoneskin*
3rd—*arcane sight*, *elemental aura*^{APG} (2, DC 24), *haste*, *protection from energy*, *tongues*
2nd—*barkskin*, *blur*, *elemental touch*^{APG}, *false life*, *resist energy* (2), *see invisibility*
1st—*comprehend languages*, *heightened awareness*^{ACG}, *longshot*^{UC}, *shield* (2), *targeted bomb admixture*^{UC}, *true strike* (2)

TACTICS

Before Combat When the fallen researcher comes out of stasis, it immediately consumes its cognatogen and its *barkskin*, *false life*, and *stoneskin* extracts. These effects are reflected in its stat block. (*False life* has not been accounted for, and you must roll to determine the number of temporary hit points it receives.)

During Combat The fallen researcher prefers to use shock bombs since it and the Mutate are immune to electricity. It switches to fire bombs if the PCs appear resistant to electricity and drinks its *targeted bomb admixture* extract to increase its damage.

Morale The fallen researcher fights to the death.

Base Statistics Without the effects of its cognatogen and the extracts mentioned in Before Combat, the fallen researcher's statistics are **AC** 25, flat-footed 19 (+9 natural); **DR** 10/magic and slashing; **Melee** slam +15 (1d6+3), 5 tentacles +15 (1d4+3 plus grab); **Special Attacks** bomb 21/day; constrict (1d4+3); **Alchemist Extracts Prepared** concentration +19 (all spell DCs are 2 lower); **Str** 17, **Int** 28; **Skills** Climb +11, Knowledge (arcana, nature) +38, Knowledge (dungeoneering, planes) +35, Spellcraft +29, Swim +31.

STATISTICS

Str 15, **Dex** 20, **Con** —, **Int** 32, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 19

Base Atk +12; **CMB** +14 (+18 grapple); **CMD** 30 (can't be tripped)

Feats Brew Potion, Close-Quarters Thrower^{UC}, Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Endurance, Extra Bombs^{APG}, Great Fortitude, Hover, Improved Initiative, Throw Anything, Toughness, Weapon Focus (bomb)

Skills Climb +10, Disable Device +23, Fly +17, Heal +23, Intimidate +21, Knowledge (arcana, nature) +42, Knowledge (dungeoneering, planes) +39, Perception +23, Spellcraft +31, Survival +23, Swim +30, Use Magic Device +24; **Racial Modifiers** +8 Climb

Languages Aklo, Aquan, Auran, Elder Thing, Ignan, Infernal, Mi-go, Necril, Terran, Yithian

SQ alchemy (alchemy crafting +10), amphibious, cognatogen^{UM}, discoveries (bottled ooze^{UM}, confusion bomb^{UM}, fast bombs, shock bomb, spontaneous healing^{UM}), hibernation, limited starflight, no breath, perfect recall, swift alchemy

Combat Gear *potion of greater magic fang*, cognatogen^{UM};

Other Gear *cloak of resistance* +2, *scarlet and blue sphere ioun stone* (Intimidate), alchemist formula book, number chips (3, 5, and 10)

G4. ALCHEMY LAB (CR 13)

A small worktable covered with alchemical equipment occupies the eastern corner of this high-ceilinged, five-sided room. The bottom of a steep ramp begins at the western edge of the room, constructed from the same cold marble as the rest of the building. A five-sided corridor disappears into darkness to the northwest.

The ceiling in this chamber is 15 feet high. The materials on the worktable are the equivalent of a working alchemist's lab. PCs who search or take a quick inventory of the materials discover a strange "notebook" made of several thin, gold plates engraved in Aklo. PCs with at least 5 ranks in Craft (alchemy) or who succeed at a DC 20 Knowledge (arcana) check determine the notebook contains research into creating cognatogens that could be administered to creatures other than an alchemist. The research conclusions are illegible, however, as the final plates

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have been melted, likely through the application of some great heat source.

Creature: The other fallen researcher posted itself here after the *temporal stasis* field went down. Its tactics are similar to those of the one at **G3**; it raises a cry to alert the Mutate and its companion so all three creatures converge to attack. It also carries a pair of the stone, five-sided number chips (numbers 1 and 9).

FALLEN RESEARCHER

CR 13

XP 25,600

hp 172 (see page 39)

Treasure: Discarded by the undead alchemists are a few creations from when they were alive: an *oil of daylight* and three *potions of cure serious wounds*. Locating these vials among so many other alchemical reagents requires a DC 25 Perception check.

G5. EXPERIMENTAL SPAWNING VAT (CR 17)

A ten-foot-by-five-foot block of greenish black marble sits at the north end of this pentagon-shaped chamber. A large section of the top of the block has been cut away and lined with a strange steel alloy to form a basin or pool. A scent like a mixture of lavender and ozone lingers in the air. The walls and floor are smooth stone here as elsewhere, but also remarkably clean.

Creature: Lurking where it was originally created is a being called the Mutate. The Mutate is a shoggoth mutation accidentally created by elder thing scientists. The researchers of this facility were seeking to create a slightly more intelligent servant that was less dependent on constant supervision. At the time, the *Star Stela* in area **G7** was poorly understood and the elder things were using its ambient psychic energy as a power source, not realizing it was also contaminating their research. A wash of nihilistic societal zeitgeist poured into the creature even as its creators were trying to spark self-awareness. The procedures implemented to accelerate the Mutate's evolution spiraled out of control, unbeknownst to the creature's handlers. The Mutate quickly grasped its situation and responded by feigning low intelligence so that it could move throughout Bohlvarai under supervision of its elder thing masters. While it did so, the creature made telepathic contact with its evolutionary cousins, the shoggoths, and began to sow the seeds of rebellion. When the elder thing leadership discovered the conspiracy, they made a concerted effort to isolate anyone who knew the truth from direct contact with the creature. Its handlers were sacrificed in order to lure it back to the laboratory that spawned it, and the entire facility was placed in permanent stasis. This precaution was unfortunately

too little, too late. The shoggoths still rose in rebellion and Bohlvarai was doomed.

The Mutate has two immediate goals: to enslave the PCs so it can learn about what has transpired since its imprisonment, and to escape. It works in coordination with its former handlers. All three creatures together make for a CR 18 encounter. When reduced to 65, the Mutate attempts to withdraw and escape to one of the other rooms in the facility.

THE MUTATE

CR 17

XP 102,400

CE Medium ooze

Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 90 ft., low-light vision, scent, tremorsense 90 ft.; **Perception** +27

DEFENSE

AC 35, touch 15, flat-footed 30 (+4 Dex, +1 dodge, +20 natural)

hp 297 (22d8+198)

Fort +16, **Ref** +13, **Will** +12

Defensive Abilities all-around vision; **DR** 10/—; **Immune** blindness, cold, deafness, mind-affecting effects, ooze traits, sonic; **Resist** acid 15, electricity 15, fire 15; **SR** 28

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft., climb 30 ft., fly 50 ft. (average), swim 50 ft.

Melee 4 slams +26 (1d12+10 plus grab)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Special Attacks constrict (1d12+15), create spawn

STATISTICS

Str 30, **Dex** 19, **Con** 28, **Int** 17, **Wis** 20, **Cha** 21

Base Atk +16; **CMB** +26 (+28 bull rush, +30 disarm); **CMD** 41 (43 vs. bull rush and disarm)

Feats Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Greater Disarm, Hover, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Vital Strike

Skills Climb +19, Fly +18, Intimidate +14, Knowledge (arcana, dungeoneering) +14, Perception +27, Stealth +26, Swim +22, Use Magic Device +27

Languages Aklo, Elder Thing; telepathy 100 ft.

SQ amphibious

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Create Spawn (Su) Creatures killed by the Mutate rise as juju zombies 1d10 minutes after they die. The juju zombies raised in this way are under the control of the Mutate and share a telepathic link with it to a range of 500 feet. The juju zombies remain under control of the Mutate until it is killed. The Mutate can enslave a number of juju zombies equaling no more than double its own Hit Dice; any spawn it creates that would exceed this limit become free-willed undead instead.

Empower Ooze (Su) The Mutate can bolster creatures of the ooze type. When the Mutate is within 30 feet of an ooze, that creature gains a +2 insight bonus on attack rolls, saves, and skill checks. An ooze affected by this ability retains this

bonus for as long as it remains with 30 feet of the Mutate and for 1 minute after leaving the Mutate's presence.

Development: If the Mutate escapes the laboratory, the end goal of the adventure is not threatened. The PCs need to deactivate the *Star Stela*, not kill a monster. The Mutate's escape is a calamity for the Bohlvarai nexus and possibly its neighboring nexuses, though, for the creature begins to organize the other shoggoths into an army to conquer the ruins and then expand. Pharl'nimaar and Blaayjhan most certainly use *locate creature* and *srying* to track the PCs down to punish them for their failure to slay the Mutate or keep it contained.

G6. ACCESS DOOR

This level corridor runs south from area G2 and terminates in a dead end. Careful examination of the south wall reveals a hair-thin outline that suggests it is separate from the corridor, but there is no physical mechanism to move it. The door is a 1-foot-thick block of solid stone, but it is not impervious to magic.

Markings are precisely etched on the surface of the door. Read or paraphrase the following.

A pentagon is engraved plainly on the surface of the door with a sigil in its center. At each exterior point of the pentagon and at the middle of each straight line is a small five-sided indentation, as if designed to accept some object inserted in each of the 10 slots.

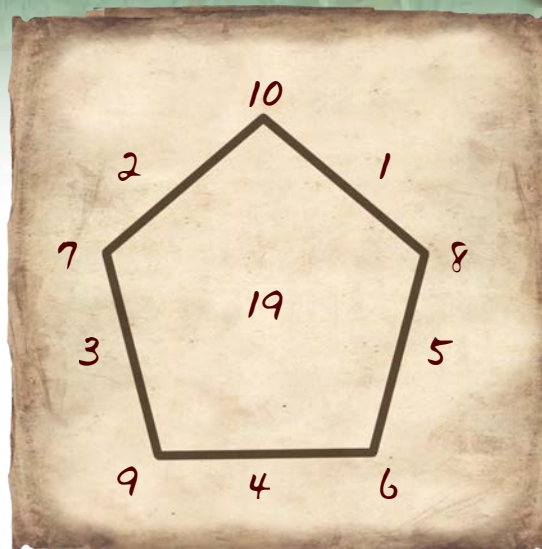
Translated from Aklo, the symbol in the pentagon's center is the number 19. This is a mathematical puzzle that emphasizes the elder things' preference for odd numbers, especially 5. The stone door slides up into the wall when all the number chips are placed in the slots such that the three numbers on every straight line equal 19. See the Handout for a solution (note that the numbers could all be rotated or reversed, provided the rule above holds).

To make this puzzle more visually appealing for your players, consider drawing out a pentagon marked with slots in the proper position and prepare some coins, poker chips, or slips of paper with the appropriate numbers and allow the players to experiment with their solutions. For a simpler approach to this puzzle, allow a PC who succeeds at a DC 18 Intelligence check to automatically figure out the solution.

Story Award: If the PCs figure out the solution without using magic or the Intelligence check, award them 51,200 XP.

G7. POWER CHAMBER (CR 16)

A familiar-looking column stands in the southern point of this room. Two metal objects stand on either side of the stela, mounted on a metal apparatus to hold them in place.



HANDOUT

The objects are long, thin, rectangular sheets of silver metal that are curved to a semicircle, resembling a tube cut lengthwise, and they cup the stela from a few feet on either side. Cables run from the objects and snake upward, disappearing into the stone wall. Blinking lights and a series of changing symbols emanate from directly inside the stone wall. A soft hum fills the room.

The silver objects are power collectors that absorb ambient psychic energy and redirect it to ancient power capacitors elsewhere in the city (though much of this collected energy suffuses back into Carcosa now). It was poor shielding on this device that allowed some backwash of foul energy to contaminate the Mutate's mind, which caused the rate at which it gained self-awareness to accelerate.

The devices pose no immediate threat to the PCs, and if left in place they add a +2 bonus to the skill checks required for the ritual to deactivate the *Star Stela* (see page 14). The PCs can determine this if they succeed at a DC 30 Knowledge (arcana) or Knowledge (engineering) check. This weird science contraption may be dismantled or destroyed (hardness 8, hp 15). Doing so causes the entire facility to vibrate steadily for 23 seconds while a siren can be heard outside (one loud enough to be heard faintly in this underground room) before both events stop abruptly. This has no other effect except that the mechanism that creates the *wall of force* and *temporal stasis* is irrevocably broken.

A pentagonal section of stone can be found on the southwest wall. It is approximately shoulder height and the size of a human palm. When pressed, it causes the southeast wall to slide away to reveal a small compartment with a strange container (see Treasure on page 42).

Creatures: Twenty-three minutes into the ritual, a dream manifestation of Xhamen-Dor's will appears and

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attempts to stop the PCs from deactivating the *Star Stela*. It may appear as a horribly disfigured version of Count Lowls or the skull of a reptilian creature atop a mound of churning hair, mold, and fungus.

DREAM OF XHAMEN-DOR

CR 16

XP 76,800

Unique animate dream (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 29)

NE Large outsider (extraplanar, incorporeal)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +25

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 19, flat-footed 15 (+6 deflection, +3 Dex, +1 dodge, -1 size)

hp 254 (20d10+100)

Fort +16, **Ref** +11, **Will** +16

Defensive Abilities incorporeal; **SR** 27

OFFENSE

Speed fly 40 ft. (perfect)

Melee incorporeal touch +22 touch (8d8 negative energy plus nightmare curse)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 12th; concentration +18)

3/day—*deep slumber* (DC 19), *dimension door*, *nightmare* (DC 21)

1/day—*confusion* (DC 20), *fear* (DC 20), *phantasmal killer* (DC 20)

TACTICS

During Combat The animate dream uses *fear* to drive a secondary caster over 100 feet away and therefore disrupt the ritual. Otherwise it uses *phantasmal killer* to slay one PC or simply tries to keep the PCs fighting for more than 10 rounds.

Morale The animate dream fights to the death or until the ritual is disrupted, whereupon it fades back to the Ethereal Plane and the ritual failure event occurs.

STATISTICS

Str —, **Dex** 16, **Con** 19, **Int** 10, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 23

Base Atk +20; **CMB** +24; **CMD** 41

Feats Blind-Fight, Combat Casting, Combat Reflexes, Dimensional Agility^{uc}, Dodge, Flyby Attack, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Toughness

Skills Bluff +29, Fly +9, Intimidate +29, Knowledge (planes) +23, Perception +25, Sense Motive +25, Stealth +22

Languages telepathy 100 ft.

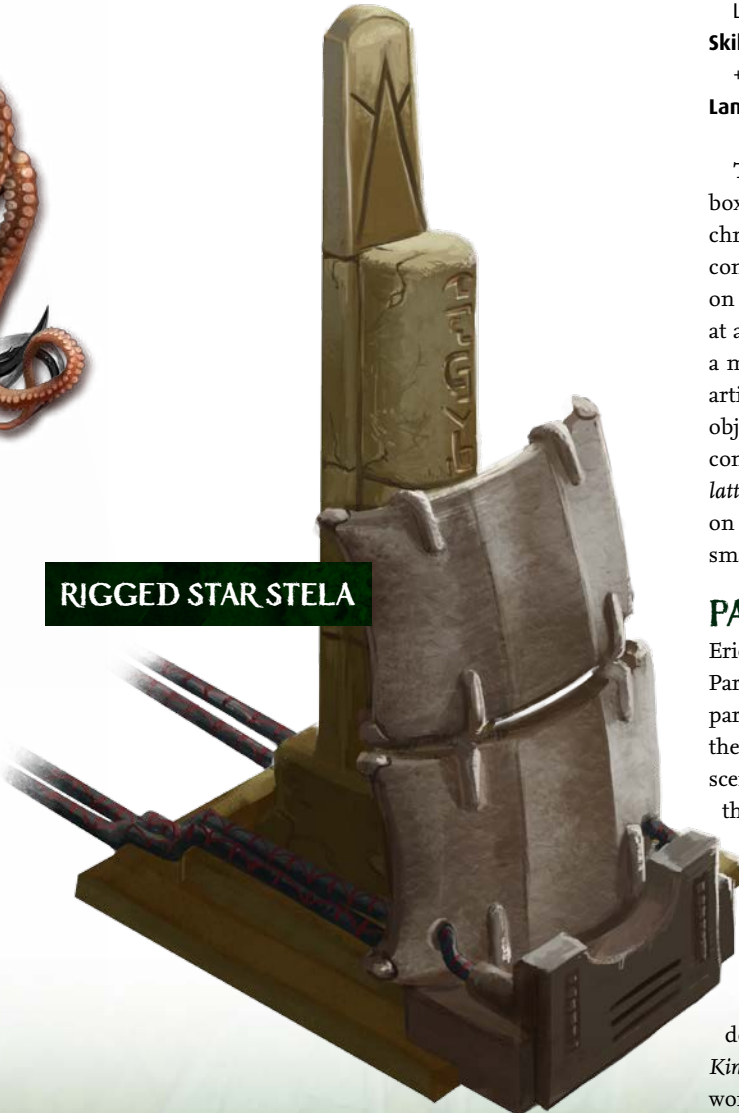
Treasure: Inside the secret chamber is a chest-sized box made of an unusual silvery metal that resembles chrome-plated steel. The locking mechanism is a combination lock with five dials with numbers written on them in the Elder Thing language. A PC who succeeds at a DC 35 Disable Device check opens the box. Inside is a metal rod with a tag that reads in Elder Thing, “Alien artifact catalog number 892. Caution with node 4.” This object is actually a *rod of lordly might*. Additionally, the box contains a *ring of spell storing* (*air walk*, *mage armor*), a *spell lattice*^{acg} (*dimension door*), a *scroll of telepathic bond* stamped on a thin sheet of copper, and 5,769 gp in the shape of small pentagons.

PART 4: THE BLIGHTED TOWER

Erich Zann guides the PCs to his home nexus, called Paris. Paris is unlike any other nexus because it is only partially formed. What exists is a mere copy and not even the entirety of the original. A section of the Seine flows by scenery that includes the Notre-Dame de Paris, the Louvre, the École Militaire, and the Eiffel Tower. Past that point, the Seine pours into Lake Hali.

This is not the Paris the players may be familiar with, but a grim and postapocalyptic shadow. At night, the mist rolls in from the lake and settles like a cloying fog upon the land. During the day, the streets are mostly empty save for a handful of deranged lunatics or unfortunate souls who read *The King in Yellow*, found themselves lost in this terrible world, and now hide behind boarded-up windows and

RIGGED STAR STELA



doors just to survive. These people pose little threat to the PCs, but if statistic blocks are desired, the NPC Gallery starting on page 254 of the *Pathfinder RPG GameMastery Guide* offers numerous possibilities for cultists, street people, and criminals.

The dominant members of what serves as a community here are Leng ghouls, erudite creatures that held Erich Zann in high esteem and accepted him as the leader of this nexus. Leng ghouls covet knowledge and lore, so Erich's wealth thereof garnered him much respect. Unfortunately, his long absence from this nexus created a power vacuum, which the PCs discover when they accompany him home.

H. RUE D'AUSEIL (CR 16)

Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs escort Erich Zann to his residence.

This cobbled street begins south of the river and crosses it twice over large bridges of black stone. The river here has a foul smell, and the light from Carcosa's black suns is particularly dim. Once past the northernmost bridge, the street becomes very narrow and precariously steep, occasionally nothing more than flights of steps with rails. Toward its end, the street becomes a patchwork of cobble, paving stones, and bare earth with struggling greenish-gray vegetation that ends at an ivy-covered wall. One house in particular stands taller than all the others, a rickety five-story building with a garret room. The attic room directly under the peaked roof has a window that faces west and overlooks the border between this nexus and the next.

This is Erich Zann's personal residence, the third to the last house on a street that has been excised from its home planet's temporal continuity. He lives in the garret room, and at his request the fifth floor is entirely unoccupied.

Creatures: Eight of Erich's Leng ghoul disciples maintain a vigil over the house in hopes of his return. At the sight of him, presumably healthy and hale, they are overjoyed. They quickly surround him defensively until they learn the PCs' role in his rescue. These particular ghouls, though still evil, hold their monstrous natures in check. They do not subscribe to the practice of murder to obtain flesh, especially since there is no shortage of corpses and those unfortunates who willingly submit to swift, merciful deaths to be spared their tragic existence in Carcosa.

Once introductions are made, the ghouls inform Erich that the nexus has been torn apart in his absence. Whereas Erich once commanded the Leng ghouls by appealing to their love of knowledge, a powerful, savage ghoul named Armel has arisen to take his place. Armel has organized many of the Leng ghouls into a semblance of a military police organization very loosely inspired by the French gendarmes. At first, it seemed this action was intended

FIREARMS

Some encounters in the Paris nexus feature creatures with firearms. The default availability for the Paris nexus is Guns Everywhere as described on page 135 of *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Combat*. Most significantly, they are treated as simple weapons. This applies to NPCs only and is mentioned to provide context on how the encounters were built and the capabilities of NPCs in this section of the adventure. Firearm availability for the PCs throughout the campaign is determined by the GM.

Gunslingers who encounter friendly NPCs may purchase or trade for ammunition for their firearms.

to maintain order, but Erich's allies report that Armel's reign has become violent and erratic. The Leng ghouls who have embraced civility, as well as the unfortunate human refugees here, suffer under his tyranny.

This is intended to be a roleplaying encounter, but should the PCs attack the ghouls, the ghouls do defend themselves, while trying to protect Erich from the heroes. Erich struggles to stop the quarrel but is limited due to his inability to speak. He eventually interposes himself between both groups if necessary.

CIVILIZED GHOULS (8)

CR 10

XP 9,600 each

Leng ghouls (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 5 120)

hp 126 each

Development: Erich makes a plea to the PCs. He asks that they rid the Paris nexus of Armel, so that he can reassert reason over the ghoul community and restore it to the small sanctuary it was before he left. As a reward or enticement, he promises the PCs three powerful magical treasures that could aid them in whatever tasks still await them. If the PCs ask about the *Star Stela*, Erich tells them he believes it is in the ruins of the Eiffel Tower, a great iron structure at the end of the river. He doesn't withhold this information to gain the PCs' help. He owes them too much to extort them for their assistance, but he does feel his treasures may help them, if not now then later.

If the PCs demand the treasures in advance, Erich explains that he hid them in the city in case his home was robbed while he was away. He can retrieve them once his friends are assured of his safety.

The Leng ghouls do not permit Erich to accompany the PCs—not because they doubt his ability, but because they (rightly) suspect Armel would stop at nothing to assassinate Erich. Instead, they insist that Erich's return remain a secret until Armel is taken out.

When the PCs ask where Armel can be found, Erich's ghoul allies explain that Armel is said to frequent a nightclub that was built to resemble one in the

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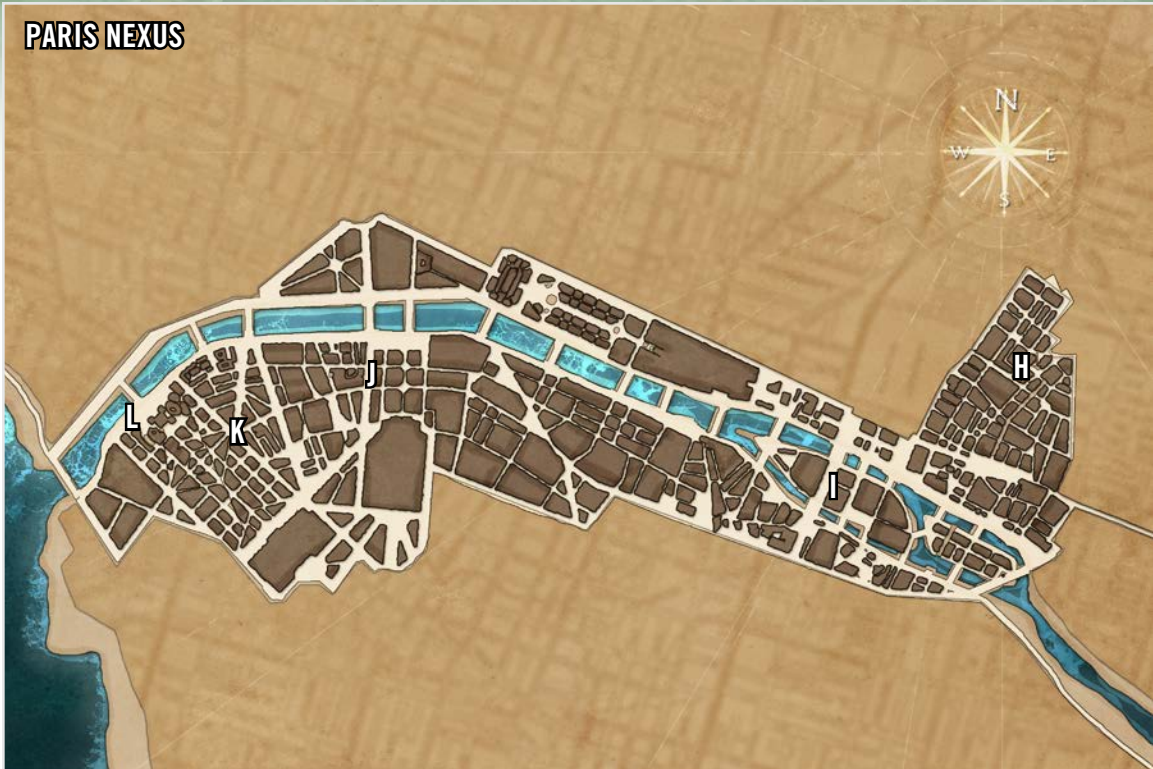
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PARIS NEXUS



Montmartre district in “the other Paris” on Earth. They do not know its exact location, but if the PCs walk through the gendarmes’ territory, they’re sure to encounter a patrol that can likely direct them. The PCs are cautioned that the gendarmes are not as civilized as this group, but parleying with them may not be without value.

Story Award: If the PCs agree to the task, grant them 76,800 XP as if they defeated the Leng ghouls in combat.

I. THE SEARCH FOR ARMEL (CR 17)

This section of the city is quieter and less chaotic. Fewer cries are heard in the distance. Many businesses still appear looted, but there is less vandalism and there are fewer burned-out buildings. Several large structures and monuments in the distance appear to be controlled by large groups of creatures in military camps. Snatches of mist and fog grow thicker around the river.

Creatures: This section of Paris is under the control of the gendarmes and their captain, the Leng ghoul Armel. The gendarmes foster a sense of order and security, but without a balanced and just leader, they are little more than a street gang—albeit one with uniforms and an air of legitimacy and entitlement.

Captain Armel can be located by interacting with one of the frightened and slightly unhinged human residents of this district. In this case, a PC who succeeds at a DC 30 Diplomacy check to gather information can locate someone who has an idea of where Captain Armel frequents. At your discretion, this check may indicate the PCs have found only someone who knows, not necessarily

someone who can communicate this information clearly. A successful skill check or magical effect that mitigates fear or madness might be required to get a clear answer.

Alternatively, any gendarme patrol can tell the PCs exactly where Armel can be found. Armel has ordered his forces to confiscate any magical items or items of high value that they come across (“to aid in the defense of the city”) as well as the occasional living human to satisfy his voracious appetite. The gendarme patrol ghouls are aggressive and currently loyal to Armel, but many of them grumble to each other that they don’t care for Armel’s style. A PC who succeeds at a DC 27 Diplomacy check opens a dialogue about how the gendarme ghouls would prefer to see order throughout the nexus without extremism or unnecessary predatory behavior toward a limited resource (humanity). They volunteer Armel’s location with the thought that either the captain will deal with the PCs or meaningful change might occur. They even suggest that Armel’s authority stems from his physical prowess (just as Erich’s influence stemmed from his mental faculties and vast knowledge). If the PCs challenge Armel, he may have to accept their challenge to retain his power.

The ghouls wear dark blue military uniforms, caps, and ponchos. They brandish revolvers and white military batons. If a fight breaks out, the gendarmes stand their ground and call for backup. If the fight turns from their favor, they bargain for their lives and offer up Captain Armel’s location if the PCs promise to spare them. Depending on how the PCs approach searching for Captain Armel, they might end up running into

multiple patrols, all of which might have different reactions to the PCs.

LENG GHOUL GENDARMES (4) CR 13

XP 25,600 each

Leng ghoulsungler 3 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 5 120, *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Combat* 9)

CE Medium undead (extraplanar)

Init +15; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +25

DEFENSE

AC 28, touch 22, flat-footed 18 (+9 Dex, +1 dodge, +8 natural)

hp 178 each (15 HD; 12d8+3d10+108)

Fort +14, **Ref** +16, **Will** +16

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4, nimble +1;

Immune cold, undead traits

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., burrow 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

Melee bite +15 (1d8+4 plus disease and paralysis),

2 claws +16 (1d6+4 plus paralysis) or

mwk club +21/+16/+11

(1d6+8)

Ranged +1 *distracting*

revolver +22/+17/+12

(1d8+10/×4)

Special Attacks deeds (deadeye,

gunslinger initiative,

gunslinger's dodge, pistol-

whip, quick clear, utility

shot), disease, grit (7),

gun training +9 (revolver),

paralysis (DC 23), rend

(2 claws, 1d6+12), sneak

attack +2d6

TACTICS

During Combat The gendarmes are leery of spellcasters and prioritize them as targets with their firearms. If disarmed or in close combat, the gendarmes revert to full attacks with their claw and bite. They use their clubs only if they wish to deal nonlethal damage.

Morale The gendarmes offer to surrender if reduced to 40 hit points or fewer.

STATISTICS

Str 26, **Dex** 28, **Con** —, **Int** 17,

Wis 24, **Cha** 25

Base Atk +12; **CMB** +20 (+22 trip);

CMD 40 (42 vs. trip)

Feats Combat Expertise, Combat

Reflexes, Deadly Aim, Gunsmithing^{uc},

Improved Feint, Improved

Initiative, Improved

Trip, Lunge, Weapon

Focus (claw)

Skills Acrobatics +24, Climb +31, Intimidate +25, Knowledge (arcana, dungeoneering, planes, religion) +12, Perception +25, Sense Motive +25, Stealth +24

Languages Aklo, Elder Thing, French, Necril

SQ erudite

Combat Gear scroll of greater invisibility, scroll of harm;

Other Gear +1 distracting revolver^{uc}, gunfighter's poncho^{ue}, mwk club

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Disease (Ex) *Leng Ghoul Fever*: Bite—injury; save Fort DC 23; onset immediate; effect 1d3 Con and 1d4 Dex damage; cure 2 consecutive saves. The Save DC is Charisma-based.

A humanoid who succumbs to Leng ghoul fever becomes a normal ghoul unless it had 12 or more Hit Dice in life, in which case it rises from death as a Leng ghoul.

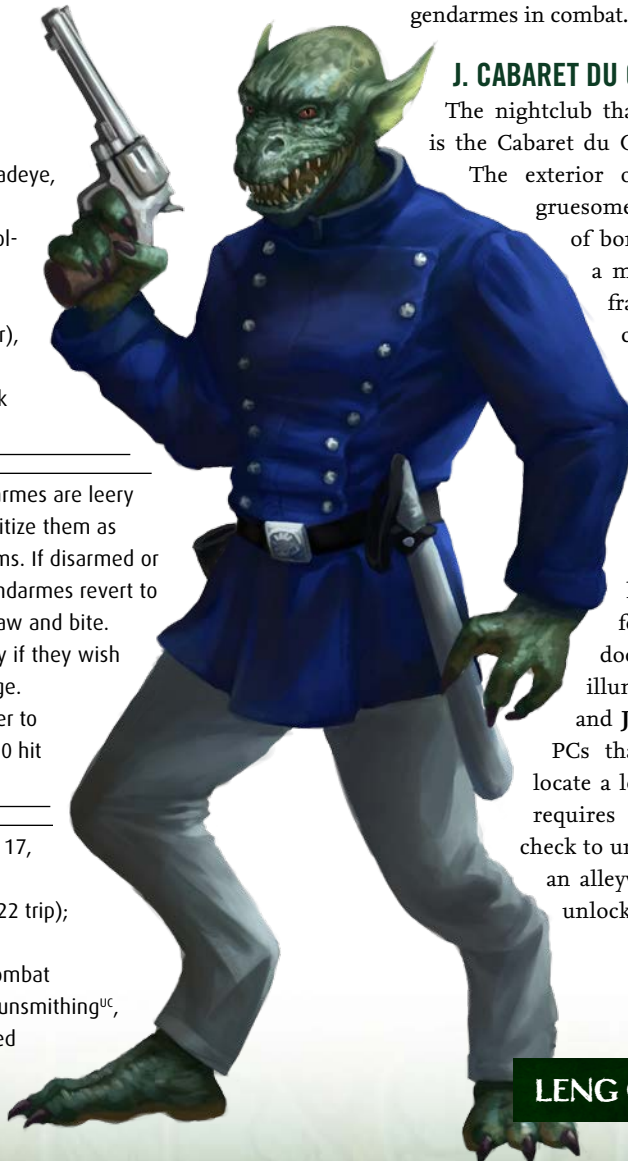
Story Award: If the PCs start a dialogue with the gendarmes and learn of Captain Armel's location without a fight, award them 102,400 XP as if they defeated the gendarmes in combat.

J. CABARET DU OUBLI

The nightclub that Captain Armel frequents is the Cabaret du Oubli (Cabaret of Oblivion).

The exterior of the establishment is a gruesome facade featuring thousands of bones and skulls surrounding a monstrous open mouth that frames the front door to the cabaret. Throughout the club, bones adorn the walls, furniture, and fixtures. It is a grim place, but the conversation within is lively and upbeat.

The ceilings of the establishment are 15 feet high, and the building features strong wooden doors. The club has little illumination except in areas **J2** and **J3**, which have dim lighting. PCs that case the nightclub can locate a locked back entrance, which requires a DC 30 Disable Device check to unlock. A second exit is down an alleyway on the east side and is unlocked.



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REAL-WORLD INSPIRATIONS

Cabaret du Oubli is modeled after a few actual cabarets that existed in the Montmartre district of Paris in the early 20th century. GMs are recommended to do an Internet search for the Cabaret du Néant (Cabaret of Nothingness) and the Cabaret de l'Enfer (Cabaret of Hell) for the inspiration for this area. Specifically, the Cabaret du Néant was within a short walking distance of the Moulin Rouge. This adventure assumes those locales exist but are not part of the Paris nexus. Cabaret du Oubli was rebuilt by Leng ghouls as they felt at home in this style of establishment.

J1. CLUB ENTRANCE (CR 13)

Creatures: A pair of Leng ghouls can be found outside the main entrance smoking cigarettes. They are not aggressive toward the party but are otherwise indifferent. If the PCs ask if Captain Armel is inside and succeed at a DC 21 Diplomacy check, the ghouls nod in the affirmative. One ghoul looks the party up and down afterward, and if the PCs carry visible weapons and armor (not concealed in disguises or illusions), she remarks, "That fat pig has a couple of his guards with him, so you take care now. I would not try to call out the captain unprepared." If the PCs question the ghouls' loyalty to Armel, they both laugh. "A body can't drink or listen to the music in peace without his loud mouth drowning everything out." If the PCs mention Erich Zann, they both nod vigorously. "The old man is alive, yes? Best damn news I heard in days."

This is intended to be a roleplaying encounter and to demonstrate the relatively urbane culture that Leng ghouls can maintain when not driven to violence and excess.

CIVILIZED GHOULS (3)

CR 10

XP 9,600 each

Leng ghouls (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 5 120)

hp 126 each

Story Award: If the PCs speak to the ghouls and get some useful information out of them, award them 28,800 XP as if they defeated the ghouls in combat. The ghouls know the basic layout of the public areas of the cabaret and can answer simple questions the PCs might have.

J2. TAVERN ROOM (CR 17 OR CR 18)

The walls and doors of this spacious room are painted black and are decorated with skeletons and skulls, horrific battle scenes, and paintings of guillotines in use. Tables are arranged throughout the room in a tavernlike setting, save that the tables are coffins that rest on wooden biers. Drinks are served in small skulls that cradle a glass inside. Dim light is provided by fat, dripping candles set in two

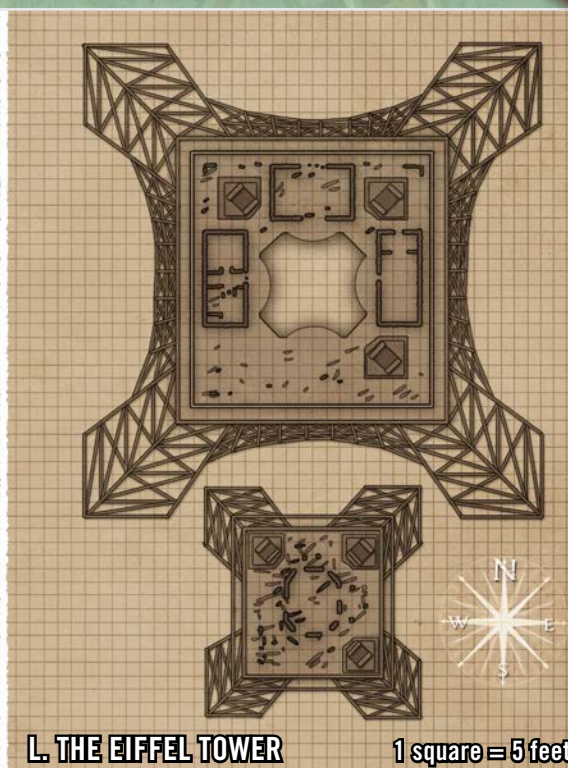
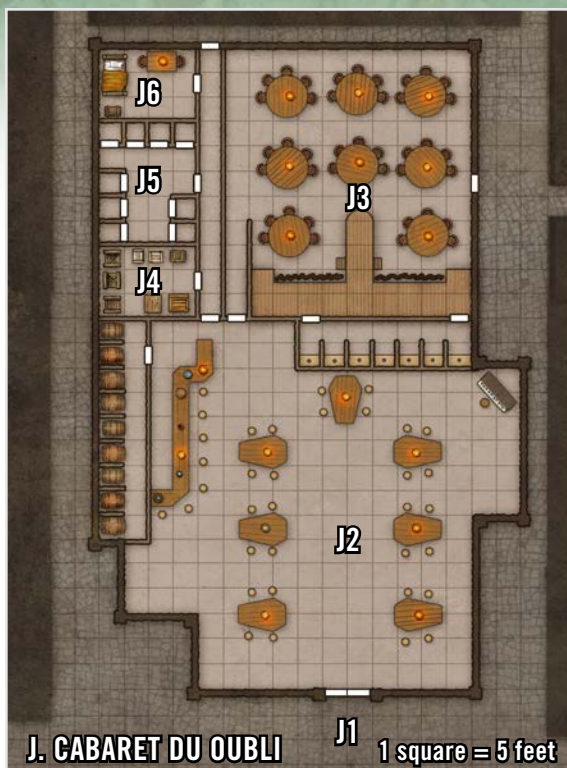
chandeliers fashioned from human bones, each topped with a skull. A black upright piano sits in the northeast corner of the establishment with a swivel piano stool before it. Festive music, laughter, and conversation fill the chamber. Opposite the piano in the northwest corner is a bar area with racks of bottles and kegs behind the counter. Two individual black doors exit to the north, a third door stands behind the bar, and a double door leads south.

The entrance doors to the south and the easternmost door to the north are unlocked. The western door on the north side is locked and requires a DC 30 Disable Device check to open. The candles in the chandeliers are lit and provide dim light. The bar is 4-1/2 feet tall and the piano is in working condition.

Creatures: Captain Armel and two of his personal lieutenants carouse at the center table against the north wall. Armel is an enormous ghoul, overweight even for his 9-foot-tall stature. He sits precariously on a wooden chair that appears almost ready to collapse beneath him. Tucked over his shoulder is an enormous greataxe with a razor-sharp edge.

A number of other Leng ghouls, and even a few humans, occupy the tavern. Waiters, most of them human, thread through the room dressed in undertaker costumes and delivering drinks on silver platters. A fearsomely jovial Leng ghoul tends the bar. The bartender has keys to all the locks in the building. The creatures enjoying themselves in the cabaret have no wish to fight the PCs or interfere in a conflict, so their presence does not contribute to the overall Challenge Rating of this encounter. If a fight breaks out, most of the ghouls and humans try to exit through the front entrance or the eastern door in the theater (area J3), though some might stay to watch the carnage. Their presence does serve a function in that Armel's reputation and pride may be challenged in front of witnesses.

The PCs can attempt to play on Armel's ego by suggesting that he demonstrate that he is the most dangerous creature in all of the Paris nexus by fighting the PCs on his own. This is not easy. Armel is no fool, so the PCs must appeal to all the witnesses, whose potential scorn is actually what drives the captain to accept the challenge. To achieve the proper amount of ridicule from the gathered revelers, the PCs must succeed at a DC 36 Diplomacy check. A Perform skill check (particularly Perform [comedy] or Perform [oratory]) can be substituted for a Diplomacy check if you feel its use is appropriate. If the PCs mention that Erich Zann is alive and has returned to the Paris nexus, a gasp is heard from the witnesses and the PCs receive a +1 circumstance bonus on their checks to influence the crowd. If the PCs are successful, Armel grudgingly motions for his allies to step back and remain out of the fight. If the check fails, his allies ready their weapons and Armel responds with



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a guttural laugh. "You think anybody will care what you said after I pick my teeth with your bones?!"

ARMEL CR 17

XP 102,400

Unique male Leng ghoul barbarian 7 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 5 120)

CE Large undead (extraplanar)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +28

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 15, flat-footed 17 (+7 Dex, +1 dodge, +10 natural, -1 size, -2 untyped penalty)

hp 315 (19 HD; 12d8+7d12+216)

Fort +22, **Ref** +15, **Will** +20

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4, improved uncanny dodge, trap sense +2; **DR** 1/—; **Immune** cold, undead traits

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., burrow 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

Melee +1 vorpal greataxe +29/+24/+19/+14 (1d12+16/19-20/x3), bite +30 (2d6+15 plus disease and paralysis) or bite +30 (2d6+15 plus disease and paralysis), 2 claws +31 (1d8+15 plus paralysis)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Special Attacks disease (DC 25), paralysis (DC 25), rage (25 rounds/day), rage powers (battle roar, intimidating glare, no escape), rend (2 claws, 1d8+22), sneak attack +2d6

TACTICS

Before Combat Captain Armel activates his rage ability immediately. This is reflected in his statistics.

During Combat Armel favors using his greataxe and bite over his claws and bite in combat. If he has no difficulty hitting his opponents, he uses his Power Attack feat.

Morale Arrogant and careless, Armel fights to the death.

Base Statistics Without the effects of rage, Armel's statistics are **AC** 27, touch 17, flat-footed 19 (+7 Dex, +1 dodge, +10 natural, -1 size); **hp** 277 (19 HD; 12d8+7d12+178); **Fort** +20, **Will** +18; **Melee** +1 vorpal greataxe +27/+22/+17/+12 (1d12+14/19-20/x3), bite +28 (2d6+13 plus paralysis and disease) or bite +28 (2d6+13 plus paralysis and disease), 2 claws +29 (1d8+13 plus paralysis); **Str** 36, **Cha** 28; **CMB** +30 (+32 trip); **CMD** 46 (48 vs. trip); **Skills** Climb +40.

STATISTICS

Str 40, **Dex** 24, **Con** —, **Int** 17, **Wis** 22, **Cha** 32

Base Atk +16; **CMB** +32 (+34 trip); **CMD** 48 (50 vs. trip)

Feats Cleave, Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Critical (greataxe), Improved Feint, Improved Trip, Lunge, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (claw)

Skills Acrobatics +29 (+33 to jump), Climb +42, Intimidate +33, Knowledge (arcana, dungeoneering, planes, religion) +13, Knowledge (local) +12, Perception +28, Sense Motive +22, Stealth +19

Languages Aklo, Elder Thing, French, Necril

SQ erudite, fast movement

Combat Gear scrolls of harm (2); **Other Gear** +1 vorpal greataxe, cloak of resistance +2

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Disease (Ex) *Leng Ghoul Fever*: Bite—injury; *save* Fortitude DC 25; *onset* immediate; *effect* 1d3 Con and 1d4

Dex damage; cure 2 consecutive saves. The save DC is Charisma-based. A humanoid who succumbs to Leng ghoul fever becomes a normal ghoul unless in life it had 12 or more Hit Dice, in which case it rises from death as a Leng ghoul.

LENG GHOUL GENDARMES (2)

CR 13

XP 25,600 each

hp 178 each (see page 45)

Development: Once Captain Armel is dead, the stunned witnesses depart the cabaret to tell everyone they know. If Erich Zann's survival was revealed, this news travels quickly, too. By the time the PCs return to Erich's house, a small crowd of Leng ghouls and humans has gathered in the street out front and meets the heroes with cheers. A spokesperson on Erich's behalf informs the community of the PCs' role in Zann's

liberation and restoration. The gendarmes then formally surrender to Erich's authority.

Erich asks the PCs to accompany him to the ruins of a shop that used to sell musical instruments. There he produces three items to assist the PCs on their quest: a *gem of seeing*, a *horn of blasting*, and an *orb of pure law*^{UE}.

Additionally, Erich orders a squadron of the gendarmes to follow the PCs up the Seine River toward the Eiffel Tower. This escort helps to clear the sky of shantaks and makes it easier for the PCs to reach the *Star Stela*.

J3. THEATRE

The walls of this chamber are decorated to look like black stone. Round tables fill the main floor and surround a catwalk that extends from a curtained stage to the south. A single door exits to the east, and on the west side of the room a corridor exits leading south.

This small theatre arrangement was used in similarly themed cabarets in the real Paris to put on small performances after guests had enjoyed some libations. The guests are led into the room by one of the staff, who is dressed as a black-robed monk. Once seated, the patrons are treated to a show that is part stage magic, part music, and a little comedy where a volunteer is placed in a coffin and is transformed into a skeleton (through stagecraft). The Leng ghouls find this incredibly quaint and amusing on several levels.

The eastern door is unlocked and is intended as an exit for patrons to depart through after the show. Behind the stage are staging areas for volunteers and performers to practice their legerdemain, as well as a row of simple dressing rooms.

The back exit provides thoughtful PCs with a means to approach Armel from two different directions. Alternatively, resourceful PCs may use illusions and disguises to persuade Armel's lieutenants to attend a performance or even be volunteers, thus separating them from their leader. GMs are encouraged to make whatever use of this area they wish to expand or alter the encounter.

Creatures: No scripted encounters are set in this area, but at your discretion this area could contain Leng ghoul tavern patrons, human staff, and human guests who have an arrangement with the gendarmes. If the PCs need additional experience points, adding a combat encounter here could help them along.

J4. STORAGE

This room is typically unlocked during business hours and is marked "Staff Only." It contains dozens of crates of wine, liquor, and beer that have been scavenged from throughout the Paris nexus since it



ARMEL

formed. Cartons of cigarettes sit stacked on a shelf near the drinks. All of the beverages are potable for the living and dead alike.

J5. BUFFET LARDER

Nine barred cells line the walls of this room. The eastern door is typically kept locked and requires a DC 30 Disable Device check to open. The bartender's key unlocks it. This room is a new feature to the establishment. Select human prisoners who have no value to the gendarmes are kept there. On Sunday afternoons, Armel insists on a "Sunday Buffet" that consists of a live prisoner served to him in a coffin table. There are currently three slightly unhinged human captives in this room.

Creatures: A few deranged human prisoners sit locked in the cells. They are harmless to the PCs and fairly incoherent. A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Diplomacy check (or who uses *calm emotions* or any magic effect that alleviates the symptoms of madness) can help the prisoners communicate somewhat clearly. They know very little that is useful, but can describe the other rooms of the cabaret and Armel's future intention for them.

Story Award: If the PCs free the captives and return them to their homes, award the PCs 12,800 XP.

J6. OWNER'S QUARTERS

A dirty and smelly pallet stands in the northwest corner of this room. Directly across from it is an iron chest. A table sits against the north wall.

This room is kept locked and requires a successful DC 30 Disable Device check to open. The iron chest is locked as well, and opening it requires a successful Disable Device check of the same DC.

Treasure: The chest contains a *ring of protection* +3, a steel scroll case that contains a *scroll of cat's grace*, a *scroll of mage's private sanctum*, and a *scroll of communal resist energy*, 2,396 gp, and several tall stacks of worthless paper currency.

K. DEADLY SKIES (CR 17+)

Creatures: Flocks of particularly hardy and predatory shantaks patrol the skies near the Eiffel Tower. These creatures are the only obstacle that bars the way to the tower by air, and they attack flying and land-bound creatures that approach the tower or follow the south bank of the Seine.

If the PCs elected not to assist Erich Zann and did not rid the Paris nexus of Captain Armel, then the gendarmes do not help clear away the shantaks. The militant ghouls never fight directly alongside the PCs, but without the ghouls' help there are three waves of shantaks. In the first round, four shantaks attack. At the start of the fourth

round of combat, two more shantaks fly in and join the battle. On the seventh round (or earlier if all the shantaks are dead), two final shantaks join whatever number of the beasts are left.

CARCOSAN SHANTAKS (4)

CR 13

XP 25,600 each

Advanced shantak (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 292, 244)

CE Huge magical beast

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +11

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 13, flat-footed 18 (+4 Dex, +1 dodge, +10 natural, -2 size)

hp 180 each (16d10+64)

Fort +14, **Ref** +14, **Will** +10

Defensive Abilities slippery; **Immune** cold, disease

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., fly 80 ft. (average)

Melee bite +22 (2d6+8), talon +22 (1d8+8 plus grab)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

STATISTICS

Str 26, **Dex** 18, **Con** 19, **Int** 8, **Wis** 17, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +16; **CMB** +26 (+28 bull rush, +30 grapple); **CMD** 41 (43 vs. bull rush, 45 vs. grapple)

Feats Awesome Blow, Dodge, Flyby Attack, Hover, Improved Bull Rush, Iron Will, Power Attack, Wingover

Skills Acrobatics +4, Escape Artist +12, Fly +14, Perception +11;

Racial Modifiers +8 Escape Artist

Languages Aklo

SQ no breath, share defenses, starflight

L. THE EIFFEL TOWER (CR 17)

The remnants of a fantastic iron tower stand here over a broken and rubble-strewn street. The tower is fashioned from a lattice of riveted iron girders. The shattered remains of an elevator system occupy the leg area along with a set of iron stairs. The height of the tower was once approximately one thousand feet, though it has since been snapped in half. The base and two floors are still somewhat intact, although wreckage and twisted metal litter the structure and surrounding area.

The first observation deck is at approximately 190 feet above the ground, and the second observation deck is 380 feet above the ground. The two decks overlap, so a PC who falls off the second deck lands on the lower deck. Scaling the tower requires a successful DC 15 Climb check, although the height to the second deck may make that impractical. One or more of the staircases are navigable but count as difficult terrain. There is no obstacle to flying.

The *Star Stela* is on the second observation deck in the center of what was once a restaurant.

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Creature: A bhole lies underground, wrapped around the tower in a state of torpor; it is responsible for the Eiffel Tower's demolished state. The great worm awakens and coils around the base of the tower to attack 1d20 + 10 minutes after the ritual to deactivate the *Star Stela* begins.

A bhole is immensely long, so special spatial considerations need to be taken into account when a grid is used for combat. The bhole's head reaches the tower's first observation deck 2 rounds after it emerges, and reaches the second observation deck in another 2 rounds. You can treat the bhole's head as its only actively dangerous part. Treat attacks directed at its immense body as irrelevant—only those directed at its head (which occupies a 30-foot space) actually reduce its hit points. The head moves in three dimensions but remains attached to the body, so it is not flying and isn't subject to falling. The base of the tower is assumed to hold the bhole's weight during the encounter as the creature wraps around the half-destroyed structure.

The bhole fights to the death, but its timing is unfortunate. If the combat lasts for 11 or more rounds, the ritual is disrupted. Likewise the primary caster must remain within close range of the stela and secondary casters must remain within 100 feet.

BHOLE

CR 17

XP 102,400

hp 290 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 4* 18)

CASSILDA RETURNS

After the PCs complete the ritual and deactivate the Paris nexus's *Star Stela*, Queen Cassilda again appears at their side. Read or paraphrase the following.

"Friends, you have deactivated the Star Stelae that bind your world to Carcosa, but I fear I bring awful tidings. The spawn of Carcosa, Xhamen-Dor, has completely subsumed a man from your world and so has returned to life, as only the Great Old Ones can! The Inmost Blot has not recovered its full power, but the connection to the man from your world lets it reach across time and space and maintain a hold on your home. Soon your home is to be pulled into Carcosa's maw. You must regain your strength, and I will transport us to where this terrible new Thrushmoor is to be born."

If the PCs are low on resources, Cassilda strongly encourages the PCs to rest and prepare themselves for the battle ahead. If time remains in the day, the heroes are welcome to make any use of it, but Cassilda warns them they have no more than 12 hours in which to tarry. She volunteers to stand watch wherever they elect to rest to ensure all the PCs have their full daily use abilities restored.

PART 5: THE END OF ALL THINGS

The final part of this adventure begins with a timer for the remainder of the adventure. It contains only a few encounters and the final climax, but the PCs have no opportunity to take an extended rest or become distracted by other things. They have time to heal and prepare spells between encounters, but they need to conserve their daily resources carefully.

When Cassilda teleports the party to the Thrushmoor nexus, they arrive near the shore of Avalon Bay. The queen immediately cries out in a startled and tortured scream and flickers out of existence. Read or paraphrase the following.

The skies above this alternate Thrushmoor are dark and stormy, but also hazy in a manner that appears to have little to do with the weather. The clouds roil and race across the two muted black suns. The wharf, nearby warehouses, and fishing boats are all indistinct, like an animated watercolor painting done with faded pigments. Despite the appearance of strong winds that lash at nearby trees and a driving rain, no wind or rain can be felt and the town is eerily quiet.

Standing just where Cassilda was before she vanished, the translucent image of the Pallid Mask flickers into existence in her place. "Hello," he says smugly, "we meet again." The PCs can see and hear him, but cannot otherwise physically interact with him; it's as if he were an illusion. Give the PCs a moment to reply or ask questions, the first of which he answers as cryptically as possible. Before they can ask another, read or paraphrase the following. If the PCs didn't kill the Pallid Mask, adjust the following dialogue to the events in your campaign.

"Something bothered me during our last encounter. You were supposed to be dead, couldn't quite reconcile how you were here. You see, I have since learned that you died in the Dreamlands. You were the victims of the one who calls himself Lowls, urged on in his actions by the Mad Poet. Yet, here you were in Carcosa and you were the death of me—a distressing paradox, one that the King has now acted to correct. Carcosa, you see, haunts the dreams of mortals throughout the universe, and the Dimension of Dreams transcends time. Simply put, everything you are and everything you have done has been naught but the dreams of dying minds, an alternate timeline where you woke up from your amnesia to fight a cosmic battle against the inevitable.

"Even now, the Briarstone Witch sends her minion, the Tatterman, through the dreams of Ulver Zandalus to put an end to you and this alternate continuity." The Pallid Mask laughs dryly. "Ironically you were also phantoms of truth, but now those phantoms are laid to rest."

The Pallid Mask turns and walks away, fading from sight as he does. If any PC replies and indicates that what

the Pallid Mask just described are the exact events that have already occurred, he turns back and looks at them one final time before he disappears. PCs who succeed at a DC 20 Sense Motive check notice that he appears startled and disconcerted at this declaration.

A moment later the PCs receive a faint telepathic message from Cassilda, though she is nowhere to be seen.

“He tells only the truth he wants to believe. I still sense you and something strange on the isle near you. Go there. Nowhere else, because you’re running out of time! Make your own truth!”

OUT OF SYNC

The PCs start this part of the adventure out of sync with reality. In terms of game mechanics, this is functionally identical to being ethereal, except the PCs are not on the Ethereal Plane and cannot interact with creatures from that plane. They are confined to a shadowy, indistinct layer of the Thrushmoor nexus. A fracture in time has occurred at the Briarstone Asylum, and only near that location can they impact the Material Plane and protect the causality that brought them this far in their quest.

When the PCs survey their surroundings, they observe a strange corona of light shimmering over the Briarstone Isle and feel a strong, intuitive urge to go there. In their current state, they can simply fly across the water with ease.

If you changed the initial opening of this Adventure Path, you will need to modify this section of the adventure to fit what you had established at the beginning of the campaign. This scene establishes that it was the PCs themselves who were responsible for waking themselves up, saving themselves from lingering in a fugue state for the remainder of their days and likely ending up as victims in the ruined asylum. Alternately, you can skip this scene if you wish and proceed to area M, the Jaundiced Tower. This is merely an interesting link to the start of the campaign and doesn’t strongly affect the overall outcome.

RETURN TO BRIARSTONE (CR 17)

Once the PCs reach the island, they feel an even stronger instinctive pull to enter the asylum and to return to the very basement location where their adventures began.

The asylum is hazy and indistinct like the rest of the nexus, but a chilling sense of familiarity grows with each room and corridor that is passed by. Objects have moved, doors that were left open are closed, and most of the remains of battle have vanished. There is an eerie sense that this is not the asylum as you left it, but as it was before you woke up.

It is recommended that you add some additional description to enhance the suspense and tension. For example, use the maps in *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #109:

In Search of Sanity and mention the creatures and NPCs in their original locations as they reenact their roles and deeds in that first adventure. Make note of locations where monsters lay in wait and where battles took place. This need not be long or drawn out, nor do you need to plot their course as they make their way back to the basement, but give the players a sense that they are going right back to the beginning.

Eventually, they arrive at the basement torture chamber and behold a handful of dead bodies, slain doppelgangers, and themselves—stupefied and unconscious in their cells.

Creatures: When the PCs arrive, they observe a tall, thin figure in the garb of a doctor. This doppelganger in human form drags and pulls one of the survivors onto the table and straps him down. The PCs are helpless to intervene as this occurs on the Material Plane, but they can overhear the doppelganger speak. “The Tatterman says you all must die. No survivors. All must die! The witch, she commands it!” The victim wakes up and screams as the horrific creature begins its ghastly vivisection. The doppelganger mutters softly to its victim, “They didn’t tell me which ones were the important ones, though. So we start with you.”

At this moment, a blinding flash occurs in the center of the chamber, superimposed over the events that are unfolding. Space seems to stretch out, and the room widens. A bythos aeon appears and the PCs immediately note it is in sync with their current state of existence. This means it can see and interact with the PCs normally and all spells and effects function normally between both parties, although neither it nor the PCs can affect the Material Plane or are hindered by physical objects there.

A flash of imagery and sounds fill the PCs mind as the aeon communicates with them. It gives them the impression that time has gone askew and the creature must destroy the PCs in order to set things right again. After this communication, it attacks and cannot be reasoned with. Note that use of *dimensional anchor* or *dimensional lock* does not shift any creature back into sync with Carcosa, but those effects do prevent creatures from moving through walls, doors, and floors.

When the bythos is reduced to 120 hit points, the tortured survivor begins to scream for the sleeping forms of the PCs to “Wake up!” When the bythos is reduced to 60 hit points, he screams again. “Wake up! Save yourselves! Wake up!” The moment the bythos is reduced to 0 hit points, the torture victim screams a final time. “Wake up! Save me! Help! Wake up, damn it!”

CHRONOLOGICAL CORRECTOR

CR 17

XP 102,400

Advanced bythos aeon (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 292, 10)

hp 243

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Development: The PCs need to wake up their past selves, or those versions are killed and the PCs will vanish from Carcosa. No skill roll is required, but the act must be intentional, such as moving to their sleeping selves and shouting or interacting with them in some way. When their past selves start to awaken and spot the keys on the belt of the doppelganger doctor within reach, the Pallid Mask flickers back into existence for a final time. The Pallid Mask staggers toward the past PC who reaches for the keys and shouts, “No! Stop! This is not possible!” In a roar and incandescent explosion of bright light, the entire scene disappears.

The PCs find themselves back in the same spot at the docks where Cassilda first teleported them to the Thrushmoor nexus. The skies are still stormy, the rain begins to soak their clothes, and waves roll across the lake. The heroes are returned to the Material Plane on Carcosa.

M. THE JAUNDICED TOWER

The PCs are back in the faded version of Thrushmoor, well aware that if they don’t sever the connection to Carcosa still held by the tenacious connection between Lowls and Xhamen-Dor, the town will be drawn into Carcosa.

This version of Thrushmoor has resided in Carcosa since Ariadnah caused the Thrushmoor Vanishing, which is when she got trapped in the parasite city. It is hazy and indistinct, as if it isn’t quite fully realized. However, all of the buildings are solid. While none of Thrushmoor’s citizens are visible in the vacant town, harrowing cries can be heard floating through the air. If needed, refer to the map of Thrushmoor on page 64 of *Pathfinder Adventure Path #110: The Thrushmoor Terror*, though it should be obvious to the PCs that the former location of Iris Hill is their destination. A squat tower of yellow stone stands in its place, emitting a beam of pale yellow light that rises into the swirling clouds above.

Ariadnah has gathered allies to the Thrushmoor nexus and has formed a cult of followers who worship Hastur, Xhamen-Dor, or Shub-Niggurath. Some of these cultists are waiting for the PCs within the tower, though others might lurk among the indistinct buildings of the slowly forming Thrushmoor nexus. If the PCs explore the town before heading to area **M1**, have them encounter a few groups of these cultists (see area **M3** for statistics) or other horrors of the Elder Mythos.

M1. TOWER GROUNDS (CR 17)

As the heroes survey their surroundings, read or paraphrase the following text.

Beyond the docks, large sections of the town appear to be missing. Empty ground exists where buildings once stood. Yet slowly the outlines of homes and business start to appear and gradually become more and more solid. The streets of this phantom town are deserted, but the cries of its panicked

populace can be heard in the distance. Those cries grow steadily louder with every passing heartbeat. To the north and in the direction of Iris Hill, storm clouds circle where the manor should stand and a beam of yellow light rises from the ground and stabs into the night.

The following sight awaits the PCs when they reach the spot where Iris Hill should be. A two-story tower of peculiar yellow stone stands where the manor once was. It is featureless and windowless save for an open, arched entranceway at the base. Spired battlements, like the tines of a crown, surround the top of the structure. A beam of pale yellow light stabs through the eye of storm clouds that swirl around the tower in a ring. Surrounding the tower is an immense hedge that parts in front of the entrance. Shadowy figures can be seen moving on the tower’s roof in the gloom.

This is a pair of illusions created by two shrike worms. A *hallucinatory terrain* effect conceals the riot of sickly grayish-green grass and weeds intermixed with moss and toadstools that surrounds the tower. The effect also conceals three curved menhirs that wrap around the tower and are hewn from the same strange yellow stone. Also hidden are three wavering stone walkways that meander toward not one but three different open entranceways that all face different directions. A *permanent image* creates the hedge that the shrike worms lurk behind.

The tower also resists all forms of *scrying*. Teleportation effects work normally in and around the tower with one exception. Due to the tremendous psychic energies that surge through the area, it is insufficient to know the tower roof’s general location and layout; a teleporting creature must see it at least once before attempting to teleport to the tower’s roof.

Finally, the very layout of the grounds is a form of trap (see Hazard below). Reveal to the players only what the PCs actually see, in respect to both the illusions and an overhead view—unless the PCs walk around the entire tower or have a high vantage point.

Creatures: Two shrike worms lurk behind the illusions, upon the command of Ariadnah. They observe the PCs approach the area and have readied actions to dismiss their illusions if any creature attempts to fly over the hedge or to the top of the tower. Dismissing the illusions exposes the walkways and menhirs and completes the *Yellow Sign*. Afterward, they rush to attack and fight to the death.

SHRIKE WORMS (2)

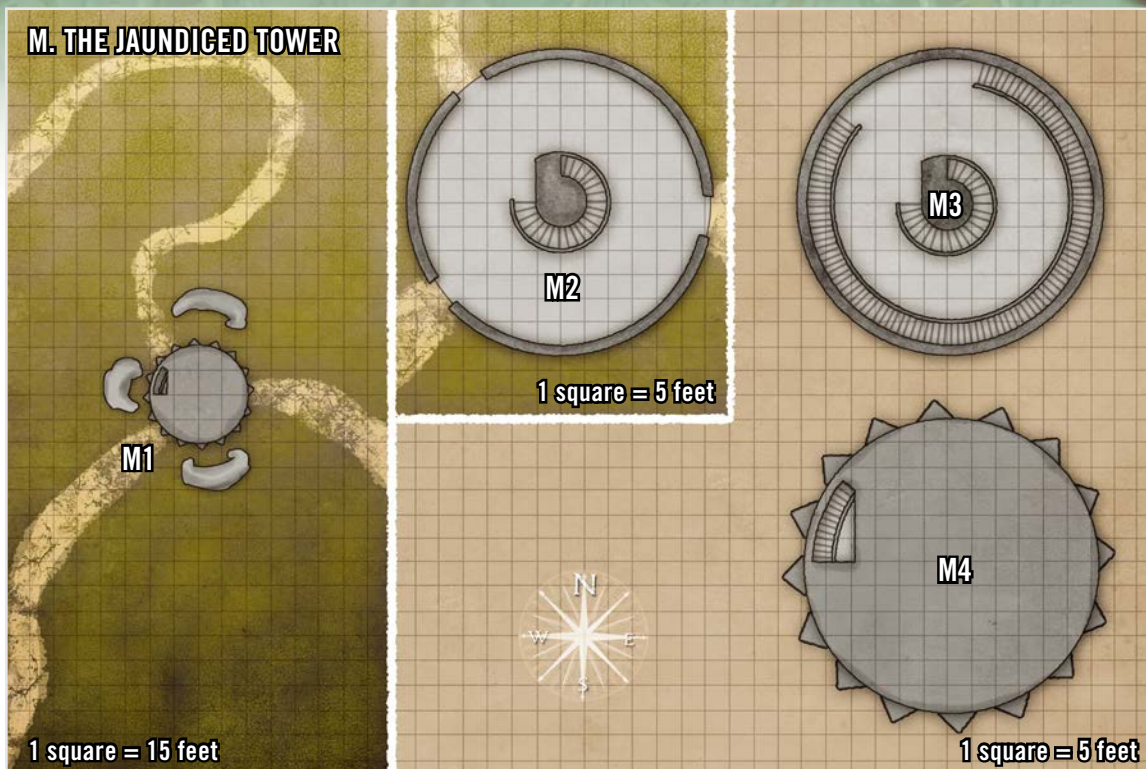
CR 15

XP 51,200 each

hp 231 each (see page 90)

Hazard: The tower and the grounds that surround it form a gigantic *Yellow Sign* once all the illusions are

M. THE JAUNDICED TOWER



removed. If a creature flies above the tower or high enough to land on the roof, it cannot help but behold the entirety of the symbol. Creatures that see it must succeed at a DC 25 Will save or suffer the effects of the *Yellow Sign* (see page 72 of *Pathfinder Adventure Path #110: The Thrushmoor Terror* for details). Those that succeed at the first saving throw must succeed at a second DC 25 Will save or be affected by *insanity* instead. Both effects are mind-affecting effects and are CL 20th. If a creature succeeds at both saving throws, it is immune to this effect for 24 hours. Creatures that enter from the bottom of the tower and reach the roof from the inside, however, never glimpse enough of the overhead perspective to be affected, as long as they do not then fly above it.

M2. GROUND FLOOR

Strange glyphs and sigils are engraved along the odd yellow stone archways that lead inside. The chamber within is stark and barren, save for a staircase that winds counterclockwise up to the next floor.

The writing above the archways is in Aklo and reads, "Praise to the Unspeakable One who will emerge from Carcosa as a god." The ceiling inside is 20 feet high.

Creature: Ariadnah's familiar, Yonah, stands on the top steps while invisible and under the effect of *see invisibility*. He serves as a lookout for the Briarstone Witch, and scrabbles to the rooftop as soon as he spots

the PCs, warning the cultists in area **M3** along the way. If the PCs don't spot Yonah and stop him (which should be very difficult), Ariadnah has enough warning to prepare herself for combat by casting the spells listed in the Before Combat line of her statistics. After warning Ariadnah, Yonah remains at her side.

YONAH

CR —

hp 93 (see page 59)

M3. CULTISTS' LAST STAND (CR 18)

This enormous circular chamber is twenty feet high and holds two sets of staircases. One set winds counterclockwise down around a central support pillar and ends at the ground floor. The second set of stairs runs clockwise along the wall up toward the roof.

The ceiling in this round chamber is 20 feet high. A pale yellow light suffuses this room from above, casting strange, flickering shadows on the stairs leading to the roof.

Creatures: Of the cultists that Ariadnah has attracted since her time in Carcosa, a half dozen currently guard the second floor of the tower to prevent the PCs from disrupting her and Lowls's plans to draw Thrushmoor into the parasitic city. Leading the group is a devout worshiper of Hastur named Hilda who only recently came to Carcosa from Golarion through some unknown means.

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All of the cultists wear *lesser talismans of life's breath*^{OA}, and thus once they die they receive 5d8+9 points of healing as the talisman crumbles to dust. They fight viciously, sacrificing themselves to stop the PCs if needed. If the PCs leave any of these cultists alive as they ascend to the roof, the cultists follow and join the fight in area M4.

HILDA

CR 13

XP 25,600

Female human cleric of Hastur (elder mythos cultist) 14
(*Pathfinder RPG Horror Adventures* 48)

CE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +5; **Senses** Perception +15

Aura aura of madness (30 ft., DC 18, 14 rounds/day)

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 12, flat-footed 19 (+9 armor, +1 Dex, +1 dodge)

hp 122 (14d8+56)

Fort +14, **Ref** +10, **Will** +18 (–2 vs. mind-affecting effects)

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft. (20 ft. in armor)

Melee mwk rapier +12/+7 (1d6–1/18–20)

Special Attacks channel negative energy 9/day (DC 25, 5d6)

Domain Spell-Like Abilities (CL 14th; concentration +20)

4/day—vision of madness (+/–7)

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 14th; concentration +20)

7th—*destruction* (DC 23), *insanity*^D (DC 23), *repulsion* (DC 23)

6th—*mass cure moderate wounds*, *greater dispel magic*, *heal*, *mass inflict moderate wounds* (DC 22), *phantasmal killer*^D (DC 22)

5th—*flame strike* (DC 21), *greater forbid action*^{UM} (DC 21), *nightmare*^D (DC 21), *slay living* (DC 21), *spell resistance*

4th—*air walk*, *confusion*^D (DC 20), *cure critical wounds* (2), *restoration*, *unholy blight* (DC 20)

3rd—*bestow curse* (DC 19), *invisibility purge*, *prayer*, *rage*^D, *searing light* (2)

2nd—*death knell* (DC 18), *hold person* (2, DC 18), sound burst (2, DC 18), *spiritual weapon*, *touch of idiocy*^D

1st—*command* (2, DC 17), *lesser confusion*^D (DC 17), *divine favor*, *doom* (DC 17), *forbid action*^{UM} (DC 17), *sanctuary* (DC 17)

0 (at will)—*bleed* (DC 16), *detect magic*, *guidance*, *light*

D domain spell; **Domain** Madness

TACTICS

Before Combat If she's warned of the PCs' presence, Hilda casts *air walk* and *spell resistance* on herself, and then positions herself near the ceiling within range of the other cultists so she can support them with her healing spells.

During Combat On the first round of combat, Hilda casts *repulsion* to keep enemies away from her. She then casts her most damaging spells that can affect multiple targets, such as *destruction*, *flame strike*, *mass inflict moderate wounds*, and *unholy blight*. She also makes good use of her channel the void ability to damage the PCs. She uses Selective Channeling to exclude the other cultists from the effect. Hilda supports the other cultists

with her *scrolls of mass cure serious wounds* and her *mass cure moderate wounds* spell.

Morale Zealous and fearful of the repercussions of failure, Hilda fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 8, **Dex** 13, **Con** 14, **Int** 10, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 22

Base Atk +10; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 21

Feats Combat Casting, Dodge, Improved Channel, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Selective Channeling, Toughness, Weapon Finesse

Skills Acrobatics –2, Knowledge (arcana, history) +7 (+9 when related to Elder Mythos), Knowledge (dungeoneering) +5 (+7 when related to Elder Mythos), Knowledge (religion) +8 (+10 when related to Elder Mythos), Perception +15, Perform (act) +10, Spellcraft +17

Languages Common

SQ channel the void, forbidden knowledge, maddening gaze, unhinged mind

Combat Gear *scrolls of mass cure serious wounds* (2); **Other Gear** +3 *breastplate*, mwk rapier, *cloak of resistance* +3, *headband of alluring charisma* +2, *lesser talisman of life's breath*^{OA}, platinum unholy symbol of Hastur^{UE}, 330 gp

HASTUR CULTIST ROGUES (5)

CR 13

XP 25,600 each

Female or male human rogue 14

CE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +9; **Senses** Perception +18

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 16, flat-footed 18 (+7 armor, +1 deflection, +4 Dex, +1 dodge)

hp 122 each (14d8+56)

Fort +8, **Ref** +16, **Will** +9

Defensive Abilities improved evasion, improved uncanny dodge, trap sense +4

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +2 rapier +18/+13 (1d6+4/15–20)

Special Attacks sneak attack +7d6 plus 2 Str damage

Rogue Spell-Like Abilities (CL 14th; concentration +13)

3/day—*acid splash*

2/day—*vanish*^{APG}

TACTICS

During Combat The cultists attempt to surround the PCs and get into flanking position so they can make the best use of their Outflank and Precise Strikes feats along with sneak attack. If in need of ranged attacks, the cultists use their *acid splash* spell-like ability, and they use their *vanish* spell-like ability in order to ensure a sneak attack on their foes the following round.

Morale Fervently dedicated to Hastur and wary of disappointing Hilda, the cultists fight to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 20, **Con** 14, **Int** 11, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +10; **CMB** +12; **CMD** 29

Feats Blind-Fight, Dodge, Improved Critical (rapier), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Outflank^{APG}, Precise Strike^{APG}, Toughness, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (rapier)

Skills Acrobatics +21, Bluff +16, Climb +18, Knowledge (arcana) +7, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +11, Knowledge (nobility, religion) +8, Perception +18, Sense Motive +18, Sleight of Hand +18, Stealth +21

Languages Common

SQ rogue talents (crippling strike, finesse rogue, improved evasion, major magic, minor magic, powerful sneak^{APG}, weapon training), trapfinding +7

Gear +3 chain shirt, +2 rapier, belt of incredible dexterity +2, cloak of resistance +2, lesser talisman of life's breath^{DA}, ring of protection +1

M4. TOWER TOP (CR 20)

Dark storm clouds roil low in the air about this hazy reflection of Thrushmoor, as a sickly yellow light emanates from the tower and pierces the churning gray sky. The tower's roof is ringed with triangular battlements, but is otherwise flat stone with only an opening on the western edge revealing stairs leading down.

Like the rest of the tower, the stone here on the roof is a pale yellow color. Though wet from the rain, the rough stone floor doesn't affect the PCs' movement. The opening to the west of the tower leads down to area M3.

Creatures: It is here that Ariadnah waits along with Carcosa's pawn—the recently transformed Count Lowls—for Carcosa to complete the transference of Thrushmoor to Carcosa.

Ariadnah was a descendant of the Lacksong clan, a Kellid tribe that occupied the area around Lake Encarthan before the founding of Ustalav. Bitter over the expulsion of her people from their native lands, Ariadnah sought to spread pain and misfortune among the land's new inhabitants. Led by the whispers of her deity, Shub-Niggurath, Ariadnah found the perfect tool to exact her vengeance—the *Star Stelae*.

Through her vile communions, Ariadnah learned that the *Star Stelae* were designed to bridge the gap between Golarion and the unknowable realms beyond, and she resolved to use the stones to summon an aspect of Shub-Niggurath to destroy her enemies.

Ariadnah used her knowledge of Kellid ruins to ingratiate herself with the local populace, who were fascinated by the eldritch standing stones. She encouraged them to worship at the ancient sites, all while slowly invading their dreams and twisting their faith to serve her own dark ends. Under Ariadnah's influence, these people grew twisted and depraved, and they ultimately turned against the church of Pharasma and the capital in open revolt.

Before the capital could quash the rebellion, Ariadnah enacted the final step in her plan for revenge. She gathered the people of Thrushmoor at the *Star Stelae* to enact a ritual to call out to Shub-Niggurath. Ariadnah did not realize, however, that the *Star Stelae* were not fully functional. The ritual succeeded in summoning a piece of that dark goddess to Golarion, which went on to slay the citizens of Thrushmoor and spawn legends of the "Watcher in the Bay" for generations to come. (For more information on the Watcher in the Bay, see page 71.) The ritual also sucked Ariadnah across the gulf of space to Carcosa, where she has remained trapped for the past 6 centuries. Mortal memory of Ariadnah has faded since then, and now the legend of the Briarstone Witch is nothing but a story told to scare children.

When the PCs arrive, she cackles. "I admire your tenacity, but you're too late. Thrushmoor is doomed,



THE STAR SEED

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and I'm going home to ensure it meets its destiny and to escape this place." She launches her attack, assured that if she dies, the PCs will have no time to locate her phylactery.

Upon seeing the PCs, the Star Seed, a hideous, fungoid merger of Count Haserton Lowls IV and a portion of the remains of Xhamen-Dor, moves to attack. The Star Seed isn't completely Count Lowls, nor is it completely Xhamen-Dor, but if allowed to survive, the Great Old One will fully consume Lowls and begin its growth again in the sewers of Carcosa until it is flung off to another planet to infest. If the Husk of Xhamen-Dor wasn't destroyed in Neruzavin, that portion of the Great Old One will continue to grow, but if it was destroyed then this new amalgam is the seed from which Xhamen-Dor will reform if left alive. However, Great Old Ones are hard to absolutely kill, and the threat of Xhamen-Dor will live on as long as creatures somewhere dream about it.

If he is present, Ariadnah's familiar Yonah, supports her in her fight against the PCs. He uses his *scrolls of harm* to heal Ariadnah, and uses his *scrolls of fireball* and *scrolls of summon monster VIII* against the PCs.

ARIADNAH **CR 18**
XP 102,400
hp 186 (see page 58)

THE STAR SEED **CR 19**
XP 204,800
NE Large plant (aquatic, evil, Great Old One)
Init +15; **Senses** blindsight 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +34
Aura unspeakable presence (300 ft., DC 28)

DEFENSE

AC 38, touch 20, flat-footed 37 (+1 Dex, +10 insight, +18 natural, -1 size)
hp 348 (24d8+240); fast healing 15
Fort +24, **Ref** +11, **Will** +17
Defensive Abilities all-around vision, amorphous; **DR** 15/slashing; **Immune** ability damage, aging, cold, death effects, disease, energy drain, mind-affecting effects, paralysis, petrification, plant traits, poison; **Resist** acid 20, fire 20; **SR** 30

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.
Melee 4 tentacles +29 (3d6+12/19-20 plus dread decay and grab)
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.
Special Attacks constrict (3d6+18), create seeded, dread decay, fungal snares, insanity (DC 28), powerful tentacles,
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 19th; concentration +25)
Constant—*air walk*
At will—*animate dead*, *dream*, *greater dispel magic*, *nightmare* (DC 21)
3/day—*control plants* (DC 24), *demand* (DC 24)
1/day—*horrid wilting* (DC 24), *symbol of insanity* (DC 24)

STATISTICS

Str 35, **Dex** 12, **Con** 30, **Int** 16, **Wis** 25, **Cha** 23
Base Atk +18; **CMB** +31; **CMD** 52

Feats Combat Reflexes, Critical Focus, Greater Vital Strike, Improved Critical (tentacle), Improved Initiative, Improved Vital Strike, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Staggering Critical, Stunning Critical, Vital Strike

Skills Climb +18, Knowledge (arcana, geography, nature) +23, Perception +34, Spellcraft +27, Swim +21

Languages Aklo, Common; telepathy 100 ft.

SQ amphibious, compression, no breath, returning Great Old One

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Create Seeded (Su) Any creatures killed by the Star Seed rise as seeded creatures in 1d10 rounds. (See page 90 of *Pathfinder Adventure Path #113: What Grows Within* for more information on seeded creatures.)

Dread Decay (Su) The Star Seed's tentacles inflict a horrible affliction that withers the flesh, digesting the victims with alarming speed. This withering begins when the tentacle deals damage and continues for 4 rounds thereafter. Each round the rot persists, the target must succeed at a DC 29 Fortitude save or take 2 points of Constitution damage and 2 points of Strength damage. If the target succeeds at two consecutive saving throws, the effect is cured. *Heal* also ends the effect.

Fungal Snares (Ex) As a standard action, the Star Seed can shoot out streams of sickly fungus that can snag targets at a range of 60 feet. The Star Seed can fire three of these each round and must make a successful ranged touch attack to hit a target. Targets struck take 3d6 points of damage and are subject to grab and dread decay.

Powerful Tentacles (Ex) The Star Seed's tentacle attacks are treated as primary natural attacks.

Returning Great Old One (Ex) The Star Seed is a merger of Xhamen-Dor and Count Lowls. Until Count Lowls is forever subsumed into the Great Old One, the Star Seed isn't a full Great Old One. However, it gains all of the benefits from the Great Old One subtype (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 4* 306) save for immortality and mythic.

Unspeakable Presence (Su) Failing a DC 28 Will save against the Star Seed's unspeakable presence causes a victim to become nauseated for 1d2 rounds and sickened for an additional 1d4 rounds. The save DC is Charisma-based.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Defeating Ariadnah and the Star Seed prevents Carcosa from drawing Thrushmoor into its patchwork form and cuts off any power that Carcosa could have absorbed from such an event. Gathering this power might have contributed to Hastur's emergence as an Outer God—but that fate could still one day come to pass!

Unless they wish to remain in Carcosa and further attract the attention of Hastur, the first thing the PCs need to do is find a way home. Thankfully, they know



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that they can use the path to the black star occult ritual to return to Neruzavin, but if they want a more direct return to Thrushmoor, they must make use of powerful magic like *interplanetary teleport* (see page 295 of *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: The Inner Sea World Guide*) or *miracle* or *wish*. If they don't personally have access to such magic, one of their allies in Carcosa—Erich Zann or Cassilda—could potentially assist them in returning home.

Upon returning to Golarion, the PCs discover that few people there are aware of the horrible dangers the heroes thwarted. There is no grand fanfare when they return and no elaborate reward. However, those who listen to the whispers of the hidden world of the occult could know that a great evil has been stopped.

If the PCs still have the *Necronomicon* and didn't hand it over to the exscinders Aumensilakos and Yrisolma from the previous adventure, they could travel to Katheer to return it to the Mysterium and receive their reward from the Stewards of the Vault.

Now that their quest is complete and their minds are restored, the PCs can return to their lives before their unfortunate encounter with Count Haserton Lowls IV. If a PC was taken from her family, she returns home to delighted loved ones. If a PC was hoodwinked into working for Lowls, she can pick up her life—now a much richer and more experienced life—and continue to follow her interests and desires. Some PCs might come back from this experience a shell of their former selves

and need strong magic or a span of quiet years to calm their turbulent minds.

After the PCs' journey, many scholars on Golarion would be thrilled to hear of their adventures in the Dreamlands, the forgotten city of Neruzavin, and lost Carcosa. If a PC details her experiences in writing, that tome could fetch a high price to those who study the esoteric and occult. If put into publication, this account would sell countless copies and would earn great prestige for the author.

Though relatively safe now, the PCs have drawn the attention of Hastur. The Unspeakable One might not immediately act against them, but unless they employ strong magic to sever this connection or redirect it, the Great Old One could get revenge on the PCs at any time. They could find their dreams plagued by unsettling nightmares or they could even find themselves the victims of his foul cult. These cultists could attempt assassination or simply smear the PCs' names in high society, making life in whatever city they settle difficult.

Another foe could return for vengeance as well. Weiralai, the denizen of Leng who suffered defeat at the hands of the PCs, reformed in Leng after her death. Much in the way she came for them in Neruzavin, Weiralai could make her way back to Golarion—having grown even more powerful—to put the PCs down once and for all.

Other possibilities for what happens after this are explored in "Continuing the Campaign" on page 66.

ARIADNAH, THE BRIARSTONE WITCH

This elderly woman moves with alarming confidence and precision. Her ghastly, milk-white eyes leave no doubt that her extraordinary vigor has an unnatural origin.

ARIADNAH

CR 18

XP 102,400

Female middle-aged human lich witch 16 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 188, *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 65)
CE Medium undead (augmented humanoid, human)
Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., *true seeing*; Perception +30
Aura fear (60 ft., DC 24)

DEFENSE

AC 28, touch 19, flat-footed 24 (+4 armor, +5 deflection, +4 Dex, +5 natural)
hp 186 (16d6+128)
Fort +15, **Ref** +15, **Will** +17
Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4, rejuvenation;
DR 15/bludgeoning and magic; **Immune** cold, electricity, polymorph, undead traits

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.
Melee +2 *quarterstaff* +10/+5 (1d6+2) or touch +8 (1d8+8 negative energy plus paralyzing touch)
Special Attacks hexes (agony^{APG}, cackle^{APG}, evil eye^{APG}, flight^{APG}, misfortune^{APG}, nightmares^{APG}, retribution^{APG}, slumber^{APG}, speak in dreams^{UM}), paralyzing touch (DC 26)
Witch Spell-Like Abilities (CL 16th; concentration +25)
At will—*feather fall* (self only), *fly* (self only)
9/day—*speak in dreams*^{UM}
1/day—*levitate* (self only)
Witch Spells Prepared (CL 16th; concentration +25)
8th—*horrid wilting* (DC 27), *greater possession*^{OA} (DC 27), *maze*
7th—*bouncing flesh to stone* (2, DC 25), *mass hold person* (DC 26), *waves of exhaustion*
6th—*cloak of dreams*^{APG} (DC 25), *greater dispel magic*, *bouncing major curse*^{UM} (DC 24), *mass fester*^{APG} (DC 25)
5th—*baleful polymorph* (DC 24), *cloudkill* (DC 24), *dominate person* (DC 24), *feeblemind* (2, DC 24), *major curse*^{UM} (DC 24)
4th—*heightened bestow curse* (DC 23), *enervation* (2), *greater false life*^{UM}, *spite*^{APG}, *wall of blindness/deafness*^{ACG} (DC 23)

3rd—*arcane sight*, *bouncing blindness/deafness* (2, DC 21), *dispel magic* (2), *tongues*
2nd—*false life*, *glitterdust* (DC 21), *see invisibility*, *vomit swarm*^{APG}, *web* (2, DC 21)
1st—*charm person* (DC 20), *ear-piercing scream*^{UM} (2, DC 20), *ill omen*^{APG} (2), *long arm*^{ACG}, *mage armor*
0 (at will)—*bleed* (DC 19), *detect magic*, *read magic*, *touch of fatigue* (DC 19)

Patron ancestors

TACTICS

Before Combat Ariadnah casts *arcane sight*, *cloak of dreams*, *greater false life*, and *mage armor* before combat. She also casts *true seeing* from a scroll. These spell effects are included in her statistics block, except for the amount of temporary hit points received from *greater false life*. You must roll to determine this.

During Combat Ariadnah first uses *maze* on obvious divine spellcasters and then, using *greater possession*, attempts to possess the nearest enemy wearing the least amount of armor. If reduced to less than half her total hit points, she spontaneously casts *harm* on herself using one of her 7th- or 8th-level spell slots.

Morale Ariadnah fights to the death, trusting that the PCs are too preoccupied with the threat of Hastur to hunt down her phylactery.

Base Statistics Without the effects of the spells cast as listed in Before Combat, Ariadnah's statistics are as follows: **AC** 24, touch 19, flat-footed 20 (+5 deflection, +4 Dex, +5 natural).

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 18, **Con** —, **Int** 28, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 23

Base Atk +8; **CMB** +8; **CMD** 27

Feats Ability Focus (paralyzing touch), Bouncing Spell^{APG}, Combat Casting, Heighten Spell, Improved Familiar, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Preferred Spell^{APG}(*harm*), Toughness

Skills Bluff +22, Intimidate +21, Knowledge (arcana, history, nature, planes, religion) +24, Perception +30, Sense Motive +26, Spellcraft +28, Stealth +31, Swim +4,

Use Magic Device +21; **Racial Modifiers** +8 Perception, +8 Sense Motive, +8 Stealth

Languages Abyssal, Aklo, Common, Draconic, Giant, Halfling, Hallit, Infernal, Kelish, Sylvan

SQ exceptional resources, witch's familiar (ratling named Yonah)

Combat Gear *scroll of true seeing*; **Other Gear**

+2 quarterstaff, belt of incredible dexterity +6, cloak of resistance +4, headband of mental prowess +6 (Int, Cha), ring of freedom of movement, ring of protection +5

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Exceptional Resources (Ex) Ariadnah has the wealth of a PC rather than an NPC. This increases her CR by 1.

YONAH

CR —

Male ratling (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 4 226)

CE Tiny magical beast

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., detect magic, low-light vision; Perception +22

DEFENSE

AC 24, touch 15, flat-footed 21 (+2 Dex, +1 dodge, +9 natural, +2 size)

hp 93 (16d10+3)

Fort +6, **Ref** +7, **Will** +10

Defensive Abilities evasion; **Immune** disease, poison; **SR** 21

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., burrow 10 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 30 ft.

Melee bite +8 (1d3–2 plus bleed)

Space 2-1/2 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

Special Attacks bleed (1), sneak attack +1d6

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6th; concentration +7)

Constant—*detect magic*, *read magic*, *speak with animals* (rodents only), *spider climb*, *tongues*
3/day—*cause fear* (DC 12), *dimension door*, *invisibility* (self only)

1/day—*summon swarm* (rat swarm only)

1/week—*commune* (6 questions)

STATISTICS

Str 6, **Dex** 15, **Con** 13, **Int** 15, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 13

Base Atk +8; **CMB** +8; **CMD** 17 (21 vs. trip)

Feats Dodge, Mobility

Skills Bluff +17, Climb +10, Intimidate +13, Knowledge (planes) +14, Perception +22, Sense Motive +12, Spellcraft +18, Stealth +32, Swim +10, Use Magic Device +13

Languages Aklo, Common, Hallit; *speak with animals* (rodents only), *tongues*

SQ improved evasion, scroll use

Combat Gear *scrolls of fireball* (2), *scrolls of harm* (2), *scrolls of see invisibility* (2), *scrolls of summon monster VIII* (3)

Ariadnah looks surprisingly healthy for a nearly 700-year-old woman. Although she long ago sacrificed her mortality to become a lich, she maintains the

appearance of a mortal, albeit aged, woman. Only her dead, milky eyes betray her undead nature. She dresses in fine black and dark-yellow robes and a smattering of jewelry she's scavenged from the alien ruins of Carcosa. Ariadnah is accompanied by a sycophantic gray ratling she calls Yonah, whom she treats more as a slave than a faithful servant.

Ariadnah has accrued much power over the centuries, and with the aid of her wicked patron, she's unlocked the secrets of lichdom—but she's never forgotten her failure in Thrushmoor. Unable to get home via her own magic, she now seeks to use Carcosa's link to Thrushmoor to return to Golarion and finish what she began so long ago.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Ariadnah is desperate to leave Carcosa, and will do anything to stop the PCs from interfering with the *Star Stelae*'s activation. If defeated, she reforms beneath the Carcosa version of Briarstone Isle in a cavern infested with bholes^{B4}, where her phylactery is currently hidden along with a *stone familiar*^{UE} containing many of her known spells.



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CASSILDA

This feminine figure would be both regal and breathtakingly beautiful were it not for her inhuman transformation into what appears to be a life-sized porcelain doll.

CASSILDA

CR 22

XP 614,400

Unique female humanoid

CN Medium humanoid

Init +10; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., see in darkness; Perception +41

DEFENSE

AC 38, touch 26, flat-footed 31 (+9 deflection, +6 Dex, +1 dodge, +12 natural)

hp 418 (31d8+279); fast healing 5

Fort +20, **Ref** +25, **Will** +19

Defensive Abilities force of will, immortal; **DR** 10/adamantine and bludgeoning; **Immune** paralysis, poison, sonic; **Resist** acid 10, electricity 10; **SR** 33

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 50 ft. (average)

Melee 2 slams +29 (1d6+6 plus 2d6 cold/19–20)

Special Attacks black star mote, breach reality's fabric

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 31st; concentration +40)

Constant—*tongues*

At will—*detect thoughts* (DC 20), *greater dispel magic*, *greater teleport* (self plus 50 lbs. of objects only)

3/day—*atonement*, *dream*, quickened *greater dispel magic*, *greater scrying* (DC 25), *mislead*

1/day—*dream council*^{OA} (DC 25)

Psychic Spells Known (CL 20th; concentration +29)

5th (8)—*etheric shards*^{OA} (DC 23), *psychic crush*^{OA} (DC 23), *retroognition*^{OA}, *wall of ectoplasm*^{OA} (DC 23)

4th (8)—*haste*, *mind probe*^{OA} (DC 22), *sending*, *thought shield*^{OA}, *thoughtsense*^{OA}

3rd (8)—*ectoplasmic snare*^{OA} (DC 21), *node of blasting*^{OA} (DC 21), *purge spirit*^{OA} (DC 21), *synaptic pulse*^{OA} (DC 21), *telekinetic maneuver*^{OA} (DC 21)

2nd (8)—*anticipate thoughts*^{OA}, *apport object*^{OA} (DC 20), *aversion*^{OA} (DC 20), *hypercognition*^{OA}, *placebo effect*^{OA}

1st (8)—*déjà vu*^{OA}, *mind link*^{OA}, *mind thrust*^{OA} (DC 19), *psychic reading*^{OA}, *telepathic projection*^{OA} (DC 19)

0 (at will)—*dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *detect psychic*

significance^{OA}, *ghost sound*, *light*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*, *resistance*, *telekinetic projectile*^{OA}

TACTICS

During Combat Cassilda cannot work directly against Hastur, but she can provide aid to the PCs in their quest. She uses her abilities to assist them where she can.

Morale Cassilda knows that, if destroyed, she will continue to reform in Carcosa until Hastur's destruction.

STATISTICS

Str 22, **Dex** 23, **Con** 27, **Int** 20, **Wis** 25, **Cha** 28

Base Atk +23; **CMB** +29; **CMD** 55

Feats Alertness, Combat Casting, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Flyby Attack, Great Fortitude, Improved Critical (slam), Improved Initiative, Intuitive Spell^{OA}, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Logical Spell^{OA}, Mobility, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*greater dispel magic*), Spell Penetration, Toughness

Skills Bluff +24, Diplomacy +24, Fly +19, Intimidate +16, Knowledge (arcana, local, nobility) +15, Knowledge (dungeoneering, planes) +10, Perception +41, Perform (act, sing) +19, Sense Motive +31, Spellcraft +25, Stealth +26, Use Magic Device +29

Languages Aklo, Mi-go, Necril, Yithian; telepathy (100 ft.)

Gear Imperial Diadem (see page 19)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Black Star Mote (Su) As a standard action that does not provoke attacks of opportunity, Cassilda flings a black hole with a corona of light shining around it at a target as a ranged touch attack. If her mote hits the target, she can do one of three things: deal 10d6 points of force and negative energy damage, affect the target with the equivalent of a violent thrust use of *telekinesis* (15 objects, +39 attack roll), or affect the target with the equivalent of *reverse gravity* (DC 33 negates). The save DC is Charisma-based.

Breach Reality's Fabric (Su) Three times per day, Cassilda may select a point within 60 feet. A black sphere with a corona of light opens like a hole in reality. The squares in a 40-foot burst around this point become difficult to move in, but only when a creature is moving away from

the point. When a creature is moving away from the point, each square of movement counts as three squares. Every round that a creature is within the area of the burst, it is drawn toward the point at the start of its turn. A DC 33 Reflex save halts this movement for 1 round; if this save fails, the creature is automatically pulled into the hole and takes 10d6 points of negative energy damage (Fortitude DC 33 half). A creature in the hole takes the same amount of damage at the start of its turn. A creature in the hole no longer occupies a square but instead occupies an extradimensional space. A successful DC 33 Reflex save allows a creature to exit the hole. Cassilda is unaffected by this ability but must maintain concentration on the effect or it ends at the start of her next turn. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Force of Will (Su) Cassilda adds her Charisma modifier as a deflection bonus to her Armor Class.

Immortal (Su) Cassilda is immune to all aging effects. Furthermore, she is difficult to destroy, even for Hastur. Upon her death, she is painfully reborn in her palace at the heart of Carcosa in 1d6 days. She can be permanently destroyed only by the destruction of her *Imperial Diadem*.

Spells (Sp) Cassilda has a limited selection of spells known, but she casts spells as a 20th-level psychic. The save DCs for her spells are Charisma-based.

The beautiful and tragic Queen of Carcosa appears as a human woman transformed into a life-sized porcelain doll. Her skin is a lustrous alabaster but a fine lattice of cracks runs like a spiderweb across her face and body. Black and gold etchings run the length of her arms in rows of symbols and runes. Here and there on her cheeks and the backs of her hands, bits of porcelain have fallen away to reveal that she is hollow. Cassilda's face is disturbingly expressionless. When her eyes open or her lips part, there's nothing inside except a yellow light. She wears an exquisite gown of white, gold, and purple. Her long blond hair floats about her face as if she were underwater.

Cassilda was once the queen of Yhtill, a city locked in a tense political stalemate with its neighbor Alar. This situation demanded that Cassilda name a successor, in case of assassination. Her daughter Camilla resisted all attempts to be named the heir, for fear of a prophecy that the Yellow Sign would be found by a successor to Cassilda's dynasty.

Once found, the Yellow Sign would then be "sent for" by the King in Yellow, the mysterious ruler of the abominable city of Carcosa.

A stranger offered a method by which Cassilda could safely name Camilla as her successor and still have the deed go unnoticed by the King in Yellow. Unfortunately, this was a ruse to lure the nobility of Cassilda's court to attend a masquerade held to commemorate the event. The entire assemblage was then tricked into looking upon the Yellow Sign, whereupon the stranger revealed his true identity as the Pallid Mask, Hastur's servant. A wave of madness swept the city and triggered a mystical chain reaction that caused Carcosa to begin its cannibalization of Yhtill.

Queen Cassilda, a powerful psychic in her own right, opened her mind to the tortured souls all around her and absorbed them into herself, preserving their essence so that her ancient, beautiful city—and its people—might one day be restored.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Cassilda is the strongest rebel in Carcosa to stand against the King in Yellow. This is no easy feat and her powers are not unlimited. The more Cassilda attempts to thwart Hastur directly, the more she draws his attention, not only to herself but to those she would aid.

Queen Cassilda provides the PCs with context for their discoveries in Carcosa. She can also serve as an emergency ally to the PCs, if any of their endeavors go awry.

If the PCs do manage to thwart Hastur, Cassilda could have quite an important role in any adventures that come after the conclusion of the present campaign.

Cassilda's *Imperial Diadem* is the key to releasing all of Yhtill's lost souls. This outcome will require not only the queen's death—a price she is willing to pay—but also the final death of the Unspeakable One himself.



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ERICH ZANN

This stooped, shabby little old man has seen better days. His cheeks are sunken in, and his simple clothes are ragged. He defensively clutches a fine viol to his chest, yet there is a merry, almost mad, twinkle in his clear blue eyes.

ERICH ZANN

CR 15

XP 51,200

Male venerable human bard (mute musician) 16 (*Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Horror Realms* 9)

CN Medium humanoid (human)

Init -1; **Senses** Perception +21

DEFENSE

AC 13, touch 13, flat-footed 13 (+4 deflection, -1 Dex)

hp 75 (16d8)

Fort +5, **Ref** +11, **Will** +12; +4 vs. bardic performance, language-dependent, and sonic

Defensive Abilities dulled horror

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 dagger +10/+5/+0 (1d4-2/19-20)

Special Attacks bardic performance 39 rounds/day (swift action; ceaseless performance, countersong, dirge of doom, distraction, fascinate [DC 23], inspire courage +3, inspire greatness, maddening harmonics, soothing performance, *suggestion* [DC 23], symphony of silence)

Bard Spells Known (CL 16th; concentration +23)

6th (1/day)—*deadly finale*^{APG} (DC 21), *irresistible dance* (DC 21)

5th (4/day)—*greater heroism*, *mislead*, *stunning finale*^{APG} (DC 20), *summon monster V*

4th (5/day)—*heroic finale*^{APG} (DC 19), *hold monster* (DC 19), *greater invisibility*, *summon monster IV*, *virtuoso performance*^{UM}

3rd (6/day)—*blink*, *crushing despair* (DC 18), *cure serious wounds*, *dispel magic*, *haste*

2nd (6/day)—*allegro*^{UM}, *cacophonous call*^{APG} (DC 17), *cure moderate wounds*, *glitterdust* (DC 17), *mirror image*, *sound burst* (DC 17)

1st (7/day)—*chord of shards*^{UM} (DC 16), *forced quiet*^{UM} (DC 16), *hideous laughter* (DC 16), *saving finale*^{APG} (DC 16), *timely inspiration*^{APG} (DC 16), *vanish*^{APG} (DC 16)

0 (at will)—*dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound* (DC 15), *lullaby* (DC 15), *message*, *summon instrument*

TACTICS

During Combat Erich Zann uses his spells and abilities to bolster the PCs and help protect them from the horrors of Carcosa.

Morale Erich is timid when personally confronted with combat. His actions are largely based on how his companions fare in the fight.

STATISTICS

Str 4, **Dex** 9, **Con** 7, **Int** 13, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 21

Base Atk +12; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 22

Feats Eschew Materials^B, Great Fortitude, Improved Dirge of Doom^{ACG}, Lightning Reflexes, Lingering Performance^{APG}, Skill Focus (Perform [string instruments]), Toughness

Skills Knowledge (dungeoneering) +22, Knowledge (local) +28, Knowledge (planes) +22, Perception +21, Perform (string instruments) +30, Sense Motive +21, Spellcraft +20, Stealth +18, Use Magic Device +20

Languages Aklo, English, French, German; can't speak

SQ eldritch caesura, lore master 2/day, masterpieces (At the Heart of It All^{UM}, Fugue de Rue d'Auseil [see page 63], Legato Piece on the Infernal Bargain^{UM}), mute

Gear +1 dagger, ring of protection +4, tunic of careful casting^{UE}, 48 gp

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Bardic Performances As a mute musician, Erich Zann gains the following bardic performances.

Ceaseless Performance (Su) Zann can continue to take a free action to maintain his bardic performance even while confused, cowering in fear, dazed, nauseated, panicked, paralyzed, petrified, silenced, staggered, stunned, or unconscious. Even if he is killed, he can continue to take a free action to maintain his performance as long as he has rounds remaining. Only the utter destruction of the Zann's body (such as via *destruction* or *disintegrate* or reducing the bard to -70 hit points) causes the performance to end.

Maddening Harmonics (Su) Zann can create a performance so baffling and discordant that it usurps all thought within a 30-foot radius with chaos and entropy.

Zann can select which creatures in this area are affected by the maddening harmonics and which are not. All targeted creatures within this area must succeed at a Will saving throw (DC 23) or be confused for as long as they can hear the performance. If a creature succeeds at its saving throw, it is immune to this ability for 24 hours. This performance relies on audible components.

Symphony of Silence (Su) Zann's music muffles all other sounds within a 30-foot radius. All creatures in the area of effect gain a +5 bonus on all saving throws against sonic attacks or language-dependent effects. Symphony of silence relies on audible components.

Dulled Horror (Ex) Zann gains a +4 bonus on saving throws against confusion, fear, insanity effects, and the supernatural abilities of aberrations.

Eldritch Caesura (Su) Zann can insert unsettling silences into his otherworldly music by spending 1 additional round of bardic performance per round. This supernatural technique impossibly blurs the line between music and light, transmitting audible performances and sonic bard spells through most barriers save lead. This allows the music and sonic spells to affect creatures across planar boundaries (including creatures on the Ethereal Plane or Shadow Plane), vacuums, and areas of magical silence.

Mute (Ex) Erich Zann is unable to speak. Language-dependent effects (including Perform [oratory]) require him to be able to use *telepathy*, nonverbal languages, or writing to communicate. He can't use Perform (sing) or speak languages, though he can still create audible bardic performances by means of a musical instrument. Zann can provide verbal and somatic components for spells he casts via his violin.

Erich Zann is an elderly man, native to the distant planet Earth, and is of German descent. Erich is mute and seldom responds to questions about his condition, whether the cause is physiological or—as some have suggested—due to some great shock early in life. Sometime in his mysterious past, Erich tapped into a form of primal magic, although he otherwise remains an ordinary man on many levels. Prior to his residence on Carcosa, he lived on a strange street in the city of Paris where he made his living performing in a local orchestra.

When a failed attempt to perform *The King in Yellow* occurred in Paris, Erich

attempted to protect himself against the ensuing havoc with his new masterpiece, the *Fugue de Rue d'Auseil*. The magic of the masterpiece mixed with the theatrical ritual and created an unexpected magical incident that transported Erich's entire street to Carcosa, while utterly removing it from Earth's temporal continuity.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Erich Zann stands with one foot in an alien and occult world that few people can imagine. His role in "Black Stars Beckon" is as someone to be rescued from misfortune and then as a guide or advisor. He has little to offer the party in regard to combat, but his magic is potent and, in some cases, unique. Furthermore, he has an expansive knowledge with lore regarding creatures and deities of the Elder Mythos.

Once restored to leadership in the Paris nexus, Erich works to redeem and redirect the Leng ghouls of that area to live in peace with the unfortunate humans who become trapped there. He can offer a harbor of relative safety to those who remain to explore the parasitic city.

BARDIC MASTERPIECE

Erich Zann created this new bardic masterpiece.

FUGUE DE RUE D'AUSEIL (STRING)

Your music provides a bastion that hedges out horrors and fiends.

Prerequisite: Perform (string instruments) 15 ranks.

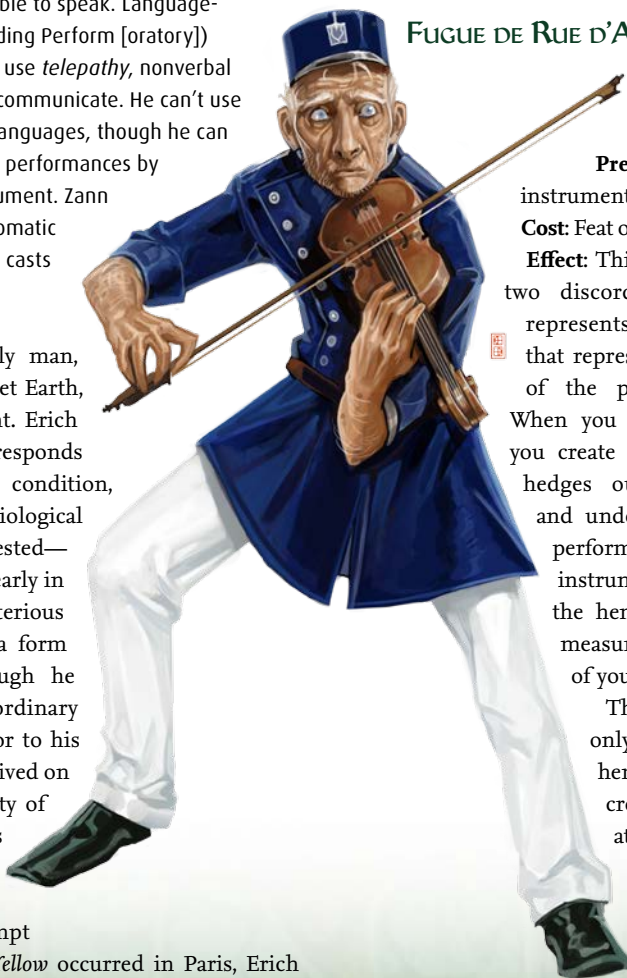
Cost: Feat or 6th-level bard spell known.

Effect: This piece of music combines two discordant melodies: one that represents humanity, and another that represents the unsettling horror of the places between the stars. When you activate this performance, you create a hemispherical field that hedges out outsiders, aberrations, and undead. When you begin this performance, roll a Perform (string instruments) check; the radius of the hemisphere may be any size, measured in feet, up to the result of your check.

This effect can be used only defensively. Forcing the hemispherical barrier against creatures that the effect keeps at bay immediately collapses the barrier.

Use: 1 bardic performance round per minute.

Action: 1 full round.



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THE PALLID MASK

This slender man stares with confidence and contempt, no small task for someone concealing his face. Only blue eyes peer out from behind a white, expressionless mask.

PALLID MASK

CR 17

XP 102,400

Unique male aberration

CE Medium aberration (chaotic, evil)

Init +9; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +31

DEFENSE

AC 30, touch 16, flat-footed 24 (+5 Dex, +1 dodge, +14 natural)

hp 275 (22d8+176)

Fort +16, **Ref** +14, **Will** +19

Defensive Abilities phantom of truth, rejuvenation; **DR** 10/lawful; **Immune** critical hits, disease, mind-affecting effects, poison; **Resist** acid 20, cold 20; **SR** 28

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +3 *quarterstaff* +24/+19/+14/+9 (1d6+10) or reality leech +21 touch (1d6 Cha drain)

Special Attacks horrific revelation (DC 28), reality leech (DC 28), sneak attack +6d6

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 17th; concentration +24)

Constant—*air walk*, *detect thoughts* (DC 19), *tongues*
At will—*confusion* (DC 21), *detect magic*, *entropic shield*,
greater teleport (self plus 50 lbs. of objects only),
hideous laughter (DC 19)

3/day—*charm monster* (DC 21), *dimension door*,
displacement, *greater dispel magic*, *hold person*
(DC 19), *mislead* (DC 23), *nondetection*

1/day—*phantasmal killer* (DC 21), *yellow sign* (DC 26,
Pathfinder Adventure Path #110 72)

STATISTICS

Str 20, **Dex** 21, **Con** 24, **Int** 23, **Wis** 22, **Cha** 25

Base Atk +16; **CMB** +21; **CMD** 37

Feats Combat Casting, Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Great Fortitude, Greater Feint, Improved Feint, Improved Initiative, Improved Lightning Reflexes, Lightning Reflexes, Toughness

Skills Acrobatics +19, Bluff +32, Diplomacy +32, Intimidate +32, Knowledge (arcana) +28, Knowledge (nobility) +31, Knowledge (planes, religion) +17, Perception +31, Sense Motive +31, Spellcraft +31, Use Magic Device +18

Languages Abyssal, Aklo, Celestial, Common, Infernal, Undercommon; telepathy 100 ft.

Gear +3 *quarterstaff*

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Herald of the Yellow King (Sp) The Pallid Mask can use his *yellow sign* spell-like ability to inscribe the Yellow Sign on his own body. He can conceal this symbol within the folds of his robe, and reveal it once again as a move action. Creatures under the effect of a charm or compulsion spell cast by the Pallid Mask take a –4 penalty on their saving throws to resist the effects of the *yellow sign*.

Horroric Revelation (Su) As a swift action, the Pallid Mask can reveal a horrific truth to a single creature within 60 feet. The target must succeed at a DC 28 Will save or become confused and babble incoherently for 1 round as its mind reels at the terrible revelation. A creature that successfully saves against this ability is immune to this effect for 24 hours. This is a mind-affecting, language-dependent effect, and the save DC is Charisma-based.

Phantom of Truth (Su) The Pallid Mask's deceptions transcend truth and reality. He is immune to alignment-based spells and any spell or effect that would force him to tell the truth. Additionally, the Pallid Mask gains Bluff, Diplomacy, and Sense Motive as class skills.

Reality Leech (Ex) The Pallid Mask's touch steals the very essence of reality from his victims. Creatures struck by the Pallid Mask's touch attack take 1d6 points of Charisma drain and become less real, appearing faintly translucent and shadowy. Attacks from such creatures deal half their normal damage, and spells cast by an affected creature that do not deal damage have a 50% chance of affecting their targets. Creatures struck by the Pallid Mask remain unreal for 2d4 rounds. A successful DC 28 Will save negates the Charisma drain and reduces the duration of this effect to 1 round.

A creature whose Charisma score is reduced to 0 by this effect dies and becomes permanently and entirely unreal. The creature functions in all ways as a *permanent image* (CL 15), and cannot be raised or resurrected until

a wish, limited wish, or miracle spell is used to return its physical form. The illusory creature can continue to move and speak, but has no memory of its former life, and cannot travel farther than 30 feet from the place it died.

Rejuvenation (Su) If killed in Carcosa, the Pallid Mask reforms in the parasitic city in 1d4 days.

The Pallid Mask is a tall, slender humanoid figure that stands just over 6 feet high. He is always garbed in a voluminous robe that is designed to let him reveal a large symbol on his body, or conceal it within the folds and show it later. His face is a genderless, featureless white mask, with slits to represent where a mouth and nose surely must exist and openings for his blue eyes to peer out. The mask itself is an illusion. It is literally his face—a hard white shell connected to softer tissue underneath.

History and lore know the Pallid Mask by other names. He is both a real entity and a character in the play *The King in Yellow*. He is first identified simply as the Stranger and then as the Phantom of Truth. His origins are unknown, though it is believed that he is from Carcosa. Whether this is true is anyone's guess, as some sources also claim he came from Alar.

As the Stranger, he appeared in Yhtill at a time of great political upheaval. The Stranger sought an audience with the queen and identified himself as the creation of the Unspeakable One's enemies, and claimed that his mask rendered him invisible to the King in Yellow. The Stranger boldly wore the Yellow Sign emblazoned on his robes (a sight Cassilda was too fearful to look upon) as proof that he was invincible against Hastur's powers. He tempted the queen with a means to name Camilla as her successor without fear of Hastur's interference. When questioned whether his promised miracle was true, the Stranger cryptically replied, "It is the shadow cast by the truth."

The Stranger's true intent was to gather the royal court of Yhtill in one place. During the masquerade, all present had occasion to stare upon the Yellow Sign and believed themselves immune to its power. When the hour struck and all in attendance removed their masks, Queen Cassilda bade the Stranger to doff his own mask, and the Pallid Mask revealed his true self. The Yellow Sign has no adverse effect upon him because he is already a loyal servant and emissary of the Great Old One, Hastur.

At that moment, Hastur called upon the Yellow Sign and drove all witnesses insane and under his control (save for Cassilda, who looked away). The Yellow Sign was carried throughout the city and the flood of psychic energy permitted Carcosa to feast upon Yhtill. Millennia later, Carcosa has multiple ways—such as Xhamen-Dor

and the *Star Stelae*—to feed upon the societies of other worlds, yet it is said that the Pallid Mask still visits cities filled with decadence and nihilism to decide whether they should join the ever-growing Carcosa.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

The Pallid Mask personifies the will of Hastur and provides a somewhat human front for the vast cosmic horror arrayed against the PCs. The Great Old One is too horrific and powerful to confront the PCs directly without raising the question of why he doesn't simply crush them. The Pallid Mask speaks on his behalf and conveys a sense that the King in Yellow is, indeed, well aware of them.

The Pallid Mask may also serve as an excellent recurring villain should the campaign continue beyond the scope of this Adventure Path. The Pallid Mask can serve as a familiar, mocking face to dog the PCs' steps as they seek to end the reign of the King in Yellow once and for all.



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Along the shore the cloud waves break,
The twin suns sink behind the lake,
The shadows lengthen
In Carcosa.

Strange is the night where black stars rise,
And strange moons circle through the skies,
But stranger still is
Lost Carcosa.

Songs that the Hyades shall sing,
Where flap the tatters of the King,
Must die unheard in
Dim Carcosa.

—Robert W. Chambers, *The King in Yellow*

The Strange Aeons Adventure Path concludes with “Black Stars Beckon.” The PCs may have saved Thrushmoor and more from a horrific fate and have recovered (perhaps even redeemed) their own minds in the process of the journey from amnesiac asylum prisoners to world-traveling heroes. But in the grand scheme of things, the machinations of the Elder Mythos continue unheeded. Stopping Thrushmoor from being absorbed into Carcosa doesn’t significantly slow the parasite city’s inexorable growth, for countless worlds are being infected, and countless more will fall to that distant metropolis’s foul influence. It is only a matter of time before Carcosa empowers Hastur to emerge one final time from the inky depths of Lake Hali as an Outer God.

When opposing the works of the Elder Mythos, mortals must fight the despair of knowing that there is little—perhaps nothing—they can do to stop the eventual transformation of reality when the stars are right and all they hold dear falls to the influence of the Great Old Ones and Outer Gods. Instead, they should look to the immediate present. What can be done in this moment to slow or disrupt the schemes of ancient cults and the creeping influence of the deities such cults worship? What living foes can be faced and defeated? Even if nothing can stop the return of the Great Old Ones and Outer Gods, mortals can certainly delay the date at which this event will occur by taking oppositional small steps along the way. And for mortals, whose existences are measured in the barest of gasps when compared to the life cycle of reality, even a delay of a few hundred or thousand years can be counted as a victory.

The powers, information, and resources the PCs gained during the course of the Strange Aeons Adventure Path have armed them well for the daunting task of confronting other horrors of the Elder Mythos. In the end, though, all they can really hope for is to hold off the inevitable end a little longer. Perhaps just long enough for another group of heroes to follow in their footsteps to push the end back a few more years, and as long as heroes perpetuate this cycle... well, is not the delay of the end good enough?

MORE MYTHOS ADVENTURES

Paizo has published several adventures that build upon Elder Mythos themes, either directly or indirectly. These adventures are generally written for lower-level characters, but if you wish, you could run some of these as prequels to Strange Aeons. Perhaps these adventures recount the experiences of the PCs before they were abducted and sold into slavery, and it’s not until the PCs manage to complete the Strange Aeons campaign that these final memories return to them. Rather than merely tell the PCs, “You recall saving the town of Carrion Hill,” tell them they’ve remembered more of their pasts, have

A LESS BLEAK OPTION

The inevitability of the end of all things and the rise of the Outer Gods is a recurring theme in Lovecraftian fiction, as well as in the Strange Aeons Adventure Path. Of course, this bleak outlook may not be appropriate for all groups and games, and some players and Game Masters might wish to have more chances for positivity at their table. In such a case, you should absolutely adjust the climax of a Lovecraft-inspired Pathfinder campaign so the PCs truly change the fate of the future. Perhaps by completing Strange Aeons, the PCs have managed to tilt Carcosa’s momentum just enough that it falls into entropy and fails in its eons-long task. Successfully completing other plots could even bring about the destruction of Great Old Ones or even Outer Gods if you wish to give your players a sense of satisfaction from saving the universe.

Generally, though, the assumption is that if you’ve embraced Lovecraftian themes in your game, such potential outcomes should be off the table. To some players, the idea that the Elder Mythos can be stopped might rob an entire campaign of its weight and compelling themes. It is best to know your players’ preferences before you make a significant alteration like any of those mentioned in the preceding paragraph—it might be best to merely move on to an entirely new campaign if your players are content with the ultimate hopelessness of Strange Aeons.

them build versions of their characters at the appropriate level, and have fun playing out the adventure!

Some of the mythos-themed adventures published by Paizo are listed below. Titles marked with an asterisk (*) contain significant elements from the Mythos, while the others merely contain Mythos themes.

Mythos-themed Pathfinder Module adventures include *Carrion Hill**, *Crucible of Chaos**, *Doom Comes to Dustpaw*, *The Dragon’s Demand*, *Feast of Ravenmoor*, and *From Shore to Sea*. Pathfinder Adventure Path volumes with Mythos elements include *Descent Into Midnight* from Second Darkness, *Into the Nightmare Rift** from Shattered Star, *Spires of Xin-Shalast** from Rise of the Runelords, *Valley of the Brain Collectors** from Iron Gods, and *Wake of the Watcher** from Carrion Crown.

THE ELDER MYTHOS ON GOLARION

In the Strange Aeons Adventure Path, the PCs face the mind-blasting horrors associated with the cults of Hastur and Xhamen-Dor, yet these are but two of the innumerable entities that make up the deities and demigods of the Elder Mythos. The 20 Great Old Ones and Outer Gods detailed in *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #109: *In Search of Sanity*’s article on the Elder Mythos are

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far from the only entities in this sprawling pantheon, but they are the ones with the most influence on Golarion.

The following are brief adventure hooks to inspire you in creating further adventures for your PCs, each associated with a specific entity of the Elder Mythos. Of course, you can also use these notes to build entirely new adventures for new characters of different levels as well, for the minions of the Great Old Ones and Outer Gods run the gamut of Challenge Ratings!

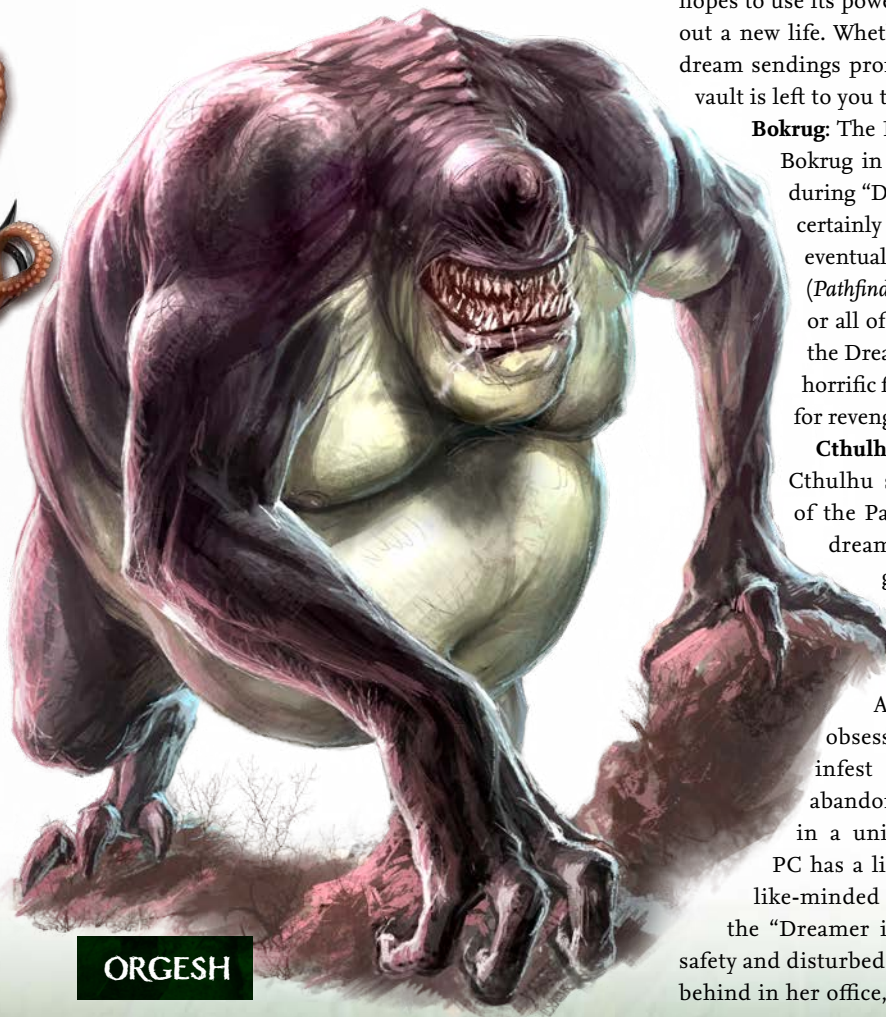
Abhoth: The Source of Uncleaness can be reached via certain remote tunnels in the Darklands. One such cavern exists in the Midnight Mountains of Orv, and a particularly powerful example of the Outer God's spawn known as the **Primal Mouth** (colossal gibbering moulder cleric of Abhoth 17) has taken up residence within this chamber, where it has been gathering a cult of gug elders to its side. This monstrous sect of oracles could have gone unseen and unguessed at by the surface for many more years if not for the Primal Mouth's curiosity about the lands above. It is driven to conduct a strange ritual that opens a portal between its cavern lair and a large city in the world above. Which city suffers this unexpected visitation is left to you to determine, but the portal

manifests as a 300-foot-diameter sinkhole that consumes numerous buildings and unleashes a horde of Darklands monsters into the surrounding neighborhood. Those who enter the sinkhole experience a twisting tunnel that brings them with surprising speed to the caverns of the Midnight Mountains, where the Primal Mouth rules its mad court. Its continued existence is the only thing that is keeping the magical sinkhole open.

Azathoth: Certain sects among the ancient Shory worshiped Azathoth, and remnants of his temples can still be found among the ruins of their flying cities. One night, a PC experiences a vivid and compelling dream that reveals to him that an artifact he has long sought exists within the vault of one such ruined Shory city—you should choose or create an item that particularly appeals to the PC in question to enhance its effects as a lure. Travel to the ruined Shory city and its exploration should be dangerous in and of itself, to say nothing of the ancient and quite insane Shory ghost that haunts the vault wherein the artifact is kept. This ghost is an ancestor of the PC in question, and this distant familial link is all that allowed the ghost to reach out and contact its descendant. The ghost is a high-level psychic, and hopes to use its powers to usurp the PC's body and live out a new life. Whether or not the artifact the ghost's dream sendings promised actually exists in the Shory vault is left to you to determine.

Bokrug: The PCs may have already encountered Bokrug in one of their dream investigations during "Dreams of the Yellow King." Bokrug certainly remembers this meeting and may eventually use his vengeful dreams ability (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 4 137) against one or all of the PCs. Only if the PCs return to the Dreamlands and offer some difficult or horrific form of apology can Bokrug's desire for revenge be sated.

Cthulhu: Even though the mighty Cthulhu slumbers deep under the waters of the Pacific Ocean on distant Earth, his dreams reach throughout the countless galaxies of the Material Plane to corrupt and madden sensitive artistic minds. One such mind belongs to the talented poet Ava Mandelara, who swiftly grows obsessed with the strange dreams that infest her mind. The high-level bard abandons her position as a lecturer in a university or school (choose one a PC has a link to) in order to build a cult of like-minded souls who have been touched by the "Dreamer in the Deep." Concerned for her safety and disturbed by the frightening poems she left behind in her office, an associate of the PC calls upon



ORGESH

the party to seek out Ava and save her from whatever fell influence has apparently driven her mad. Investigation should eventually lead the PCs to a remote seaside town now ruled by Ava, who is well into the throes of deep one corruption (*Pathfinder RPG Horror Adventures* 18) and has found a way to lure several elder deep ones (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 5 69) from the ocean depths in order to aid her in creating a portal between Golarion and the corpse-city of R'lyeh on Earth.

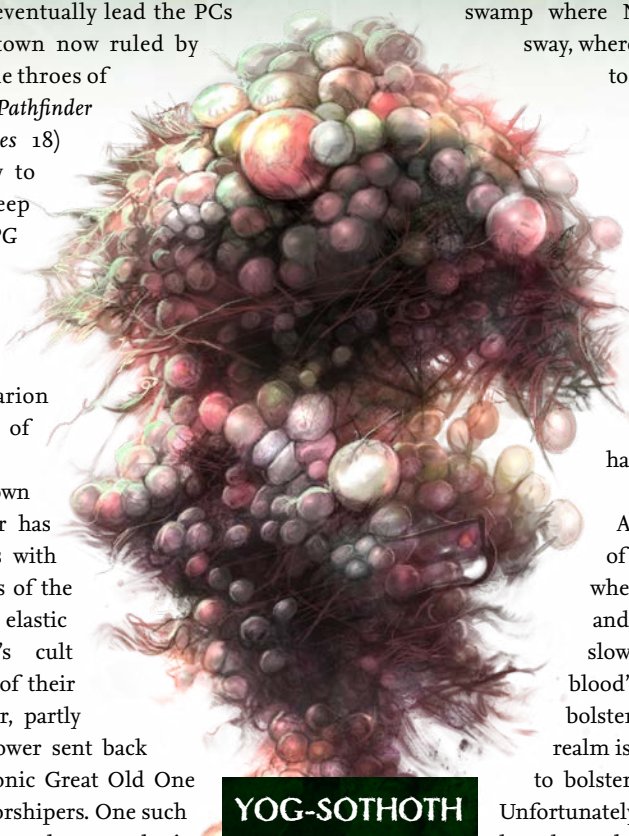
Mhar: The being known as the World Thunder has yet to be born, but as with so many of the entities of the Elder Mythos, time is elastic and mutable. Mhar's cult believes that the time of their god's birth draws near, partly due to promises of power sent back in time by the embryonic Great Old One to its most receptive worshipers. One such devotee hopes that he can hasten Mhar's birth by triggering the immense volcano Mhar Massif in the Kodar Mountains, but such an event is beyond his abilities as a mid-level conjurer. In an attempt to secure more powerful magic, the cultist seeks out the wish magic of a powerful efreeti—but Mhar's influence warps the poorly phrased wish and causes the efreeti and conjurer to conjoin in a hideous fashion. More powerful than its constituent parts of mortal and genie, the mad creature takes on the name of Twice-Born and begins gathering its own cult of Mhar worshipers. Word of the cult's hope to test out its volcano-activating magic within the city limits of somewhere important to the PCs should reach the party in time for them to have a chance to stop the experiment from devastating a region.

Nhimbaloth: Certain isolated stretches of river are the haunt of the Empty Death Nhimbaloth, as lone explorers sometimes accidentally discover during their travels. One such traveler is Aigen Belvanar, an eccentric who has powerful friends among the members of a society or faction a PC belongs to. When Aigen goes missing while on a solo trip into the Mushfens somewhere south of Wartle during Varisia's rainy season, his associates grow worried. The magical divinations used to discover his location and fate strangely produce no results, and so they turn to the PC and her allies for aid. Can the PCs retrace Aigen's supposed route into the Mushfens to

search for clues to the man's whereabouts? Following his steps should bring the PCs to a section of the swamp where Nhimbaloth's presence holds sway, where the very laws of nature begin to break down and strangely powerful will-o'-wisp oracles use eldritch magic to siphon away sanity and feed on the despair of those who become lost in the trackless swamplands. Ghosts and worse haunt this accursed fen, but the greatest danger that faces the PCs may well be the horrific thing that Aigen has become.

Orgesh: Deep below central Avistan lies the legendary Land of Black Blood, an Orvian Vault wherein a strange dark fluid seeps and churns in immense lakes and slowly draining rivers. This "black blood" has potent qualities that bolster necromancy, and as such the realm is often visited by those seeking to bolster their mastery over undeath. Unfortunately, the Land of Black Blood has long been the domain of a strange race of monsters called chardas (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 55), a society that once worshiped the mostly forgotten Great Old One Orgesh. Recently, a visit to the Land of Black Blood by a cabal of eager adherents to the Whispering Way resulted in a dangerous awakening—the restoration to life of a powerful charda cleric of Orgesh named **Silthundus** (CE female charda cleric of Orgesh 15) who had been imprisoned within the inky depths of the land's largest lake of black blood: the Caltherium. This cleric has enslaved the Whispering Way necromancers and has used them as guides to invade the surface world, where she hopes to establish a new cell of Orgesh worshipers and to infect a surface world river or lake with black blood, all in hopes of beckoning her lost god back to this reality.

Yog-Sothoth: Of all the Outer Gods, Yog-Sothoth may be the most enigmatic. Beyond morality and any interest in matters of good or evil, Yog-Sothoth is venerated as the Gate and the Key by some—as a deific personification of the concept of time and space. As such, powerful spellcasters have long been tempted to call upon Yog-Sothoth in order to learn about or even to travel to distant places or times; yet to interact with Yog-Sothoth is to risk more than just one's sanity and life. When a foolhardy investigator named **Olun Shandus** (CN male human investigator^{ACG} 11) discovered a copy



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of the *Phakotic Manuscripts* in an abandoned library in Carrion Hill, he learned of an ancient tower once sacred to the cult of Yog-Sothoth, a tower that contains the power to open portals between worlds when certain rituals are performed on the longest night of the year. Olun pinpointed the location of this site—Candlemere Tower in the Stolen Lands of the River Kingdoms—and traveled there with a small group of his adventuring companions. However, when they arrived at Candlemere and spoke the ancient words, the ritual proved faulty. The portal they opened pulled them through to a world that had long ago been devoured by bholes (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 4 18), and now these immense wormlike monstrosities are burrowing into the Stolen Lands. If the portal isn't closed, they will destroy Golarion as surely as they have their previous world-nest. That closing the portal requires an entreaty to Yog-Sothoth itself ensures that even the most powerful of adventurers may well be out of their depths!

THE MAD POET'S VENGEANCE

If the PCs recover the *Necronomicon* but choose not to destroy it, word will inevitably spread of the rare tome's existence unless the PCs take extreme measures to hide it. Any number of powerful spellcasters, secretive cabals, or sinister cults could send agents after the PCs to abscond with the infamous text, but none are so obsessed with the book's recovery as is the mad fragment of its original author.

The PCs first met Abdul Alhazred during the climax of "Dreams of the Yellow King," and regardless of how that encounter played out, the Mad Poet remembers that meeting. When the PCs recover the Necril translation of his book at the end of "What Grows Within," Alhazred's duplicate is able to sense the book through the PCs' dreams. Although bound to the Dreamlands and unable to exist outside of that realm, Alhazred remains a powerful entity, one more than capable of engineering attacks on the PCs from beyond the wall of sleep. How long it takes him to gather resources to send against the PCs and what shape they take is up to you, but the PCs should eventually realize that the cultists and monsters that have been increasingly attacking them are not only after the *Necronomicon* but also coming from the Dreamlands. In order to stop the attacks, the PCs need to confront Alhazred on the shores of his oasis, but this time he has dreamed into being an entire fortified complex of guardians and dangers for the PCs to navigate.

If Alhazred manages to regain the *Necronomicon*, the book acts as an anchor for him, lifting his restriction on being unable to leave the Dreamlands and allowing the powerful lunatic to travel once again to other planes. In such an event, revenge on the PCs for their role in keeping the book from his clutches (whether such

revenge is warranted or not) certainly brings the madman back into the heroes' lives sooner than later.

If the PCs destroy the *Necronomicon*, Alhazred's goal switches from retrieving the book to vengeance. He sends the PCs dreams of wealth and power, hoping to lure them into his stronghold to capture them and, he hopes, extract what fragments of the *Necronomicon*'s forgotten lore he can from their memories.

Statistics for Abdul Alhazred appear on page 56 of *Pathfinder Adventure Path #111: Dreams of the Yellow King*. If you wish, feel free to increase his power somewhat to provide a greater challenge, perhaps by giving him a few tiers of mythic power.

WHAT IF THE PCS FAIL?

While popular opinion often claims that in Lovecraft's stories, the heroes always fail, this is not the case. Yet it happens often enough to give the claim weight—and there is a chance the PCs could fall short in stopping Carcosa from absorbing Thrushmoor. Or perhaps more catastrophically, the PCs could come to the late-game conviction that what Hastur is doing is right, and they might flip sides once more and return to being agents of the King in Yellow, though now no longer serving him through intermediaries like Count Lowls.

While such events would wreak havoc for parts of Golarion (particularly Thrushmoor), they don't mean the end of the world, and they can set the stage for entirely new adventures.

Ariadnah Returns: If Ariadnah survives and the PCs are unsuccessful, she does not remain on Carcosa, and may use the transition of Thrushmoor to return to Golarion. In this case, she is unlikely to remain in Thrushmoor's vicinity; she gathers her phylactery and gear and relocates. Tracking the witch down could become a task for the PCs should they also return to Golarion. Once they do finally catch up with Ariadnah, she should have had more than enough time to gain a few more levels and boost her power.

Lost Thrushmoor: Once Thrushmoor is absorbed into Carcosa, the citizens of the town vanish, transported body and soul to that distant world under the light of the black sun. Yet the buildings of Thrushmoor remain. They immediately take on the appearance of structures long abandoned, partially decaying and left to crumble. Attempts to resettle the city meet in disaster, for Thrushmoor has become a cursed and haunted place. If the PCs survive their failure on Carcosa, they may wish to attempt to reclaim Thrushmoor from this curse as a sort of penance, but such a quest should test even powerful characters. Although Hastur's cult has lost interest in the region now that Carcosa is done with it, the same cannot be said of others—specifically, the cult of Shub-Niggurath. With Thrushmoor's doom, the Black Goat of the Woods with a Thousand Young manages to manifest

fully, and one of her many avatars, the legendary Watcher in the Bay, moves into the waters of Thrushmoor's harbor to make it her own. Powerful cultists of Shub-Niggurath flock to the ruins, and the town is soon inhabited by worshipers of the Black Goat and her monstrous spawn. In order to reclaim Thrushmoor, the PCs not only must defeat this cult, but must eventually face the Watcher in the Bay itself: a dangerous manifestation of Shub-Niggurath that even a party of 20th-level characters should be hard pressed to defeat. The Watcher in the Bay appears as a horrific combination of a lamprey and a five-armed squid that measures nearly 60 feet from mouth to tentacle tip.

THE WATCHER IN THE BAY

CR 24

XP 1,228,800

CE Gargantuan aberration (aquatic)

Init +20; **Senses** all-around vision, darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, see in darkness, *true seeing*; Perception +65

Aura unspeakable presence (300 ft., DC 33)

DEFENSE

AC 42, touch 26, flat-footed 32 (+10 Dex, +10 insight, +16 natural, -4 size)

hp 518 (28d8+392); fast healing 20

Fort +23, Ref +21, Will +25

Defensive Abilities amorphous, insanity; **DR** 10/epic and lawful; **Immune** ability damage, ability drain, aging, cold, death effects, disease, energy drain, mind-affecting effects, paralysis, and petrification; **Resist** acid 30, sonic 30; **SR** 35

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft., swim 80 ft., *air walk*

Melee bite +29 (4d8+12 plus grab), 5 tentacles +29 (2d6+18/19-20 plus grab)

Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 20 ft. (40 ft. with tentacles)

Special Attacks constrict (2d6+18), fast swallow, swallow whole (1d8 Cha drain, AC 18, 51 hp), transformation

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 20th; concentration +29)
Constant—*air walk*, *nondetection*

At will—*control plants* (DC 27), *control weather*, *greater dispel magic*, *hallucinatory terrain* (DC 23), *nightmare* (DC 24)

3/day—*demand* (DC 27), quickened *feblemind* (DC 24), quickened *wall of thorns*

1/day—*tsunami*^{APG}, *vortex*^{APG} (DC 26)

STATISTICS

Str 34, **Dex** 30, **Con** 39, **Int** 21, **Wis** 26, **Cha** 29

Base Atk +21; **CMB** +37 (+39 bull rush, +41 grapple); **CMD** 67 (69 vs. bull rush; can't be tripped)

Feats Awesome Blow, Combat Reflexes, Critical Focus, Greater Vital Strike, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (tentacle), Improved Vital Strike, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*feblemind*, *wall of thorns*), Skill Focus (Perception), Staggering Critical, Vital Strike

Skills Escape Artist +41, Knowledge (arcana, nature, religion) +33, Perception +65, Spellcraft +36, Stealth +29, Swim +51, Use Magic Device +37; **Racial Modifiers** +20 Perception

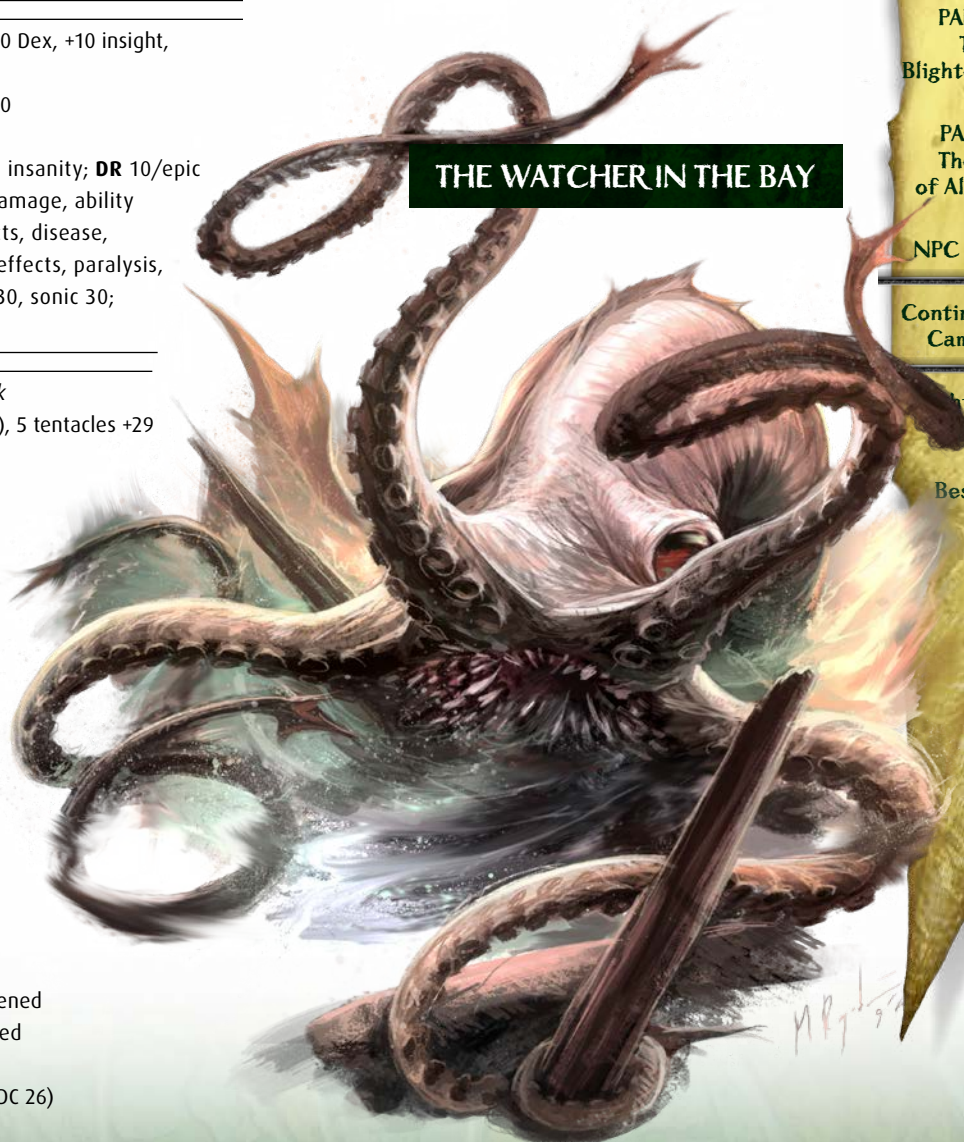
Languages Aklo, Aquan, Sylvan; telepathy 200 ft.

SQ always watching, amphibious, compression, otherworldly insight, powerful tentacles

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Always Watching (Ex) The Watcher in the Bay has extraordinary vision, granting it a +20 bonus on

THE WATCHER IN THE BAY



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Perception checks and the effects of *true seeing* at all times. This effect cannot be dispelled or suppressed. The Watcher can see into and out of water with perfect ease, and its vision is never impaired by water. It can see underwater as far as it can see on land, regardless of the water's level of obscurity. Water never provides cover from the Watcher in the Bay. As a free action, the Watcher can shift its vision to view the world through the eyes of any mutant created by its transformation ability, provided the mutant is within 10 miles of the Watcher. The Watcher in the Bay can determine the location of all mutants it has created within this 10-mile radius as if via *status*.

Insanity (Ex) Any creature that attempts to interact directly with the Watcher in the Bay's thoughts (such as via *detect thoughts* or telepathy) must succeed at a DC 33 Will save or be driven permanently insane (as per *insanity*, or the insanity rules on page 250 of the *Pathfinder RPG GameMastery Guide*, in which case this save DC is also the starting DC for the save to recover from the insanity). When the Watcher uses its telepathy to communicate with creatures, this ability doesn't activate unless the watcher focuses its mind on one opponent as a standard action. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Otherworldly Insight (Ex) The Watcher gains a +10 insight bonus on initiative checks and to its AC and CMD.

Powerful Tentacles (Ex) The Watcher's tentacles are a primary attack, and the Watcher adds 1-1/2 times its Strength bonus to damage rolls with the tentacles.

Swallow Whole (Su) A creature swallowed by the Watcher suffers Charisma drain. Each round the Watcher inflicts Charisma drain in this manner, it regains 5 hit points per point of Charisma drained. A creature drained to 0 Charisma is transformed (see Transformation).

Transformation (Su) When a swallowed creature is drained to 0 Charisma by the Watcher, it instantly transforms into a hideous, warped mockery of its previous form. The swallowed creature gains the mutant template (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 5 180), and its alignment becomes chaotic evil. When a creature gains the template, all Charisma drain inflicted on the creature by the Watcher's swallow whole attack is healed. The Watcher can regurgitate a transformed mutant as an immediate action. A mutant created in this manner is free-willed, but regards the Watcher as its mother and obeys the Watcher's commands without question when they are given. These mutants are immune to the Watcher's unspeakable presence.

Unspeakable Presence (Su) The Watcher in the Bay emanates an aura that inflicts intense mental anguish and torment on all creatures within 300 feet that can see and hear the Watcher. Any subjected creature must succeed at a DC 33 Will save or become staggered by this anguish for 1 round. A creature that successfully

saves against the Watcher's unspeakable presence in 2 consecutive rounds is immune to the Watcher's unspeakable presence for 24 hours. The save DC is Charisma-based.

HASTUR BECOMES AN OUTER GOD

Although this adventure doesn't assume that Hastur is on the precipice of becoming an Outer God—Thrushmoor is just the latest in an endless line of cities Carcosa has swallowed up in that long-term goal—you may decide upon the PCs' failure to protect the city that Thrushmoor is indeed the final piece to that puzzle. With Thrushmoor's assimilation into the parasite city, Hastur has finally gathered all of the eldritch power he needs to ascend. In this event, he casts aside the tatters worn by the King in Yellow as he emerges huge and loathsome from the black waters of Lake Hali, and the physicality of Carcosa collapses upon itself and is absorbed into Hastur's new reality. The transformation is devastating and irrevocable. Carcosa and all who dwell there (including Xhamen-Dor, if the Inmost Blot is within the city or its sewers at this time) are consumed in the making of the newest Outer God. The process is swift, but not instantaneous. Desperate PCs who remain in Carcosa can escape if they are quick, either by planar travel, teleportation, or similar effects. Depending on your mercy, physical flight (either overland or up into the skies) could be enough to get them out of Carcosa before they are absorbed.

Hastur's final form as an Outer God is left to your imagination; just as his true shape is never quite described or explored in the same way twice in the many stories that feature him as an element, his true shape in your game should be something you decide. It may be that as an Outer God Hastur does not take on a physical body at all, and instead is a being of disorder. Alternatively, he may well opt to retain his form as the robed humanoid known as the King in Yellow. Regardless of his forms, he retains the ability to send this avatar out to interact with those who dwell in the Material Plane as he sees fit. In this case, the King in Yellow's statistics are the same as those presented for Hastur on page 140 of *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 4, save that if the avatar is destroyed, Hastur can simply manifest a new one (whether he chooses to do so or not immediately upon the previous avatar's destruction is, of course, up to his unknowable and unfathomable whims).

The ascension to Outer God does little to change Hastur, other than to grant him immeasurably more power. He remains a deity of decadence, disorder, and nihilism, and his favored weapon remains the rapier. His worship grows among decadent nobility and aristocrats who have lost sight of their responsibilities to civilization as a whole. The Yellow Sign continues to serve as his symbol, and its manifestations increase

on worlds throughout the Material Plane. As an Outer God, Hastur grants access to the domains of Chaos, Evil, Nobility, Rune, and Void, and to the subdomains of Dark Tapestry*, Entropy*, Language, Leadership, Stars*, and Wards. Subdomains marked with an asterisk (*) are from *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Inner Sea Gods*.

TRAVELING TO EARTH

Perhaps the most unusual potential continuation of a Strange Aeons campaign is one that not every group would be interested in pursuing, but if you and your players enjoyed the early adventures where it seemed as if the forces opposing the player characters were too powerful to stand against, you should strongly consider trying out the Call of Cthulhu RPG published by Chaosium. This game has been in print for decades, and the number of adventures available for this system is immense. There's certainly no shortage of Hastur- and Carcosa-related adventures to continue along the themes explored in Strange Aeons!

While you could simply have your players come up with brand new characters for a Call of Cthulhu session or campaign that's not specifically connected to Golarion or the Strange Aeons Adventure Path, consider the following as a unique option to link them.

STRANGERS IN STRANGE LANDS

One oft-used literary device in the pulp era when Lovecraft was writing his stories was the physical, or perhaps purely mental, transposition of a human from earth into a fantasy realm. Such stories often included the displaced human struggling to acclimate to the new world, but in most cases the Earthling went on to become a person of note, even a hero. Edgar Rice Burroughs' John Carter stories are a classic example of just such a plotline, but he was certainly not the only author to use this interesting narrative. Lovecraft employed it himself in several stories, be they about a man from Earth traveling to the fantasy-themed Dreamlands to undertake long and complex quests (such as in *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*) or about incidents where a man's mind is swapped with that of an alien being so that the man must endure and explore a strange realm far in time and space from home (such as in *The Shadow Out of Time* or "Through the Gates of the Silver Key"). These stories have strongly influenced and inspired certain plot elements in Strange Aeons; much of "Dreams of the Yellow King" is inspired by *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*, and the actions of the yithian Kaklatath are a sort of reversal of elements from *The Shadow Out of Time*.

You can use a similar plot device in your game to allow the players to, after a fashion, continue playing their Pathfinder characters but in new incarnations on Earth. Using the rules for the Call of Cthulhu RPG, you can also

apply the following guidelines, which assume you and your players are familiar with the game.

BECOMING SPIRIT ESSENCES

If you decide that you want to continue the campaign by transitioning into a series of Call of Cthulhu RPG adventures set on Earth, the first thing you should do is ask your players if they'd actually be interested in such an unusual change of pace. If so, then during the climactic of events in Strange Aeons, instead of returning to Golarion, the PCs find themselves swept up in a magical vortex that sends their consciousnesses out into the stars, with their minds eventually coming to rest in the minds of people on Earth. The PCs have, in the cataclysmic events that wrenched Thrushmoor out of Carcosa's clutches, been subjected to the briefest glimpse of the base reality that underlies Carcosa and Hastur. They survive this devastating turn of events by being transformed into bodiless entities known as "spirit essences." In order to return to Golarion and safely manifest their bodies, they must rebuild their sense of self by bolstering their confidence and mental fortitude through experiencing the rush of success in the minds of others while simultaneously opposing the eldritch machinations of the Elder Mythos.

In short, the PCs must guide regular humans to oppose the Mythos in order to find their way back to Golarion.

As a spirit essence, a PC dwells within the subconscious mind of a single human on Earth, lurking within that person's mind as a silent observer. The spirit essence experiences everything the human experiences, and in time, can share her own knowledge with that of the human she inhabits. In a way, just as the player guides the actions of her character in a Pathfinder game, now her character guides the actions of an investigator in a Call of Cthulhu game. As the Earthling investigators work to oppose the Mythos and gain experience, so too do the spirit essences that compel them from within. This earns the PCs spirit points, and once they've accumulated enough spirit points, the spirit essences can return home!

Of course, if you and your players aren't interested in returning to play a Pathfinder campaign with these characters and instead wish to pursue an open-ended Call of Cthulhu campaign, you can dispense with the spirit point mechanic entirely.

TERMINOLOGY

In order to prevent confusion, please note that when the following guidelines refer to a "character," they're speaking to the Pathfinder character whose spirit essence now inhabits a human on Earth. In contrast, when the guidelines refer to an "investigator," they are referring to the Call of Cthulhu RPG character that a spirit essence inhabits.

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SPIRIT ESSENCE IDEALS

When a Pathfinder character transforms into a spirit essence, her player must select one of four ideals. While these four ideals do suggest certain types of Pathfinder character builds, a player can choose any ideal when her character becomes a spirit essence, regardless of the nature of the original character. Once chosen, an ideal cannot be changed. A spirit essence grants a single boon that applies to an investigator during character creation.

Ardent Ideal: An ardent spirit essence holds strong convictions. She might be intensely religious, be incredibly confident in her own convictions, or simply possess a natural mental fortitude. An investigator with an ardent spirit essence starts play with an additional 15 points of Sanity.

Martial Ideal: A martial spirit essence holds a strong influence over the investigator's physical qualities,

particularly overall health and fortitude. An investigator with a martial spirit essence gains 3 bonus hit points.

Skilled Ideal: A skilled spirit essence is adept at bolstering the investigator's ability to use her own knowledge. An investigator with a skilled spirit essence gains an additional 25 points to allocate to occupation skills during character creation.

Spellcasting Ideal: The spellcasting spirit essence is one that intrinsically understands the nature of magic and can aid the investigator in manipulating these mysterious, eldritch energies. An investigator with a spellcasting spirit essence gains 3 bonus magic points.

RUNNING A SPIRIT ESSENCE CAMPAIGN

Once your players have each chosen their characters' spirit essence ideals, you're almost ready to begin your Call of Cthulhu campaign!

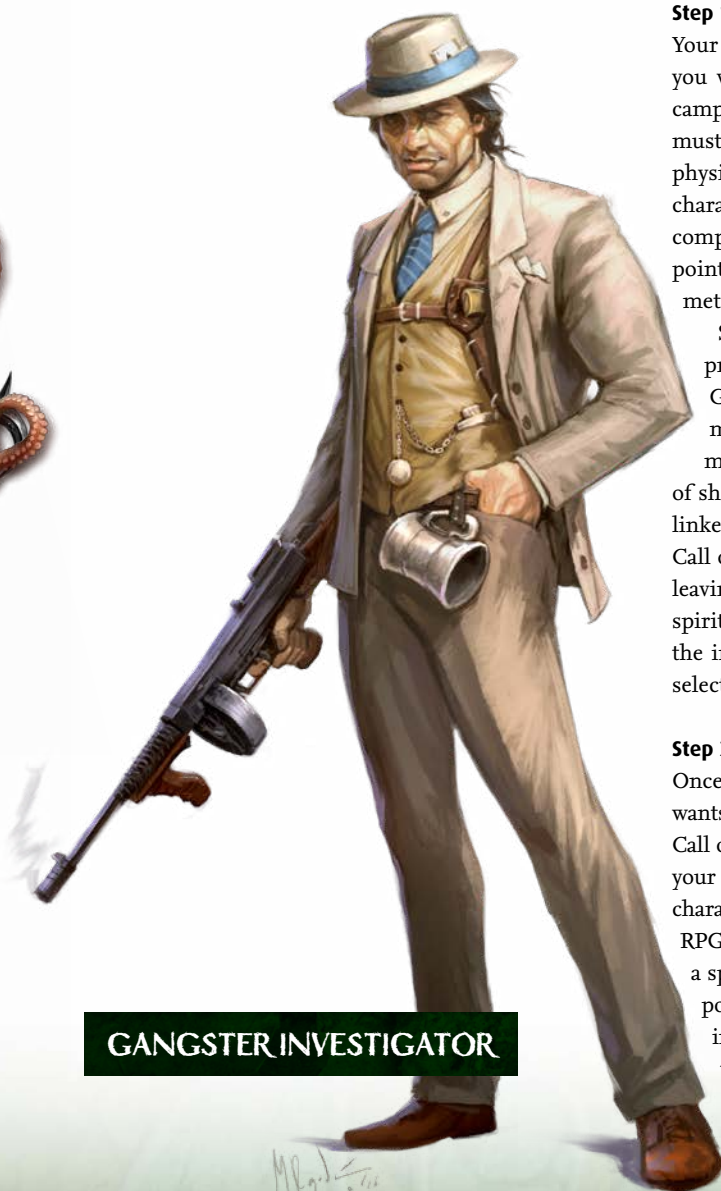
Step 1: Set Spirit Point Goal

Your first step is to decide what sort of campaign you wish to run, as the length of the Call of Cthulhu campaign sets the total number of spirit points the party must accumulate to return home to Golarion and their physical bodies. This total number of spirit points the characters need to accumulate is up to you. Since each completed adventure earns the group a number of spirit points equal to the number of players, you can use that metric to gauge how many points in total you want.

Spirit points are how players can track their progress toward their characters' eventual return to Golarion, so it is important to let them know how many points they'll need to achieve this goal. This method works best when your campaign is a series of short adventures that may or may not be thematically linked. If instead you have in mind a specific number of Call of Cthulhu adventures you wish to run, rather than leaving that more open-ended, feel free to abandon the spirit point rules entirely and simply assume that once the investigators have completed the adventures you've selected, they can return home.

Step 2: Character Creation

Once each player has chosen the spirit essence ideal she wants her character to embody, and once you know what Call of Cthulhu adventures you wish to run, it is time for your players to create their characters. Use the method of character creation you prefer from the Call of Cthulhu RPG, but each time a player creates an investigator with a spirit essence, the investigator begins play with 5 free points in the Cthulhu Mythos skill to represent the inevitable diffusion of eldritch secrets and lore from the character's spirit into the investigator's mind. At the start of this Call of Cthulhu campaign, award the party a starting total of spirit points equal to the number of players.



GANGSTER INVESTIGATOR

Step 3: Play the Adventure

Now comes the fun part—playing the Call of Cthulhu adventure! With the exception of the periodic potential for a spirit essence to bolster its investigator, this portion of the campaign plays out as a normal adventure using the Call of Cthulhu RPG rules.

Step 4: Add New Investigators as Needed

During the course of play in the typical Call of Cthulhu adventure, there will be death and madness. The goal of a Call of Cthulhu game is not advancing an investigator's power, but rather unraveling a mystery, preventing a catastrophe, and enjoying a shared horror story. Often, an investigator's death or descent into madness is the inevitable result of such storytelling, and in some scenarios death and madness are all but required.

In such an event, the player of the dead or insane investigator makes a replacement investigator and continues with the game. Traditionally, the replacement investigator is someone who had ties to the previous investigator, such as a close friend, a family relation, or even just a witness who saw the previous investigator's doom. As long as the new investigator has a reason to join the existing group, all is well.

When a spirit essence is involved, the addition of a new investigator is slightly more interesting; the influence of the spirit essence could, after all, be the driving force that compels the new investigator to join the existing team!

Enduring a trauma such as death or permanent insanity comes with a cost, though. Spirit essences should do everything they can to avoid such a fate, for too many bad ends for the investigators can forever strand a spirit essence in undeath.

Insane Investigators: Permanent insanity (not temporary insanity or other short-term bouts of madness) as a result of dropping to a Sanity score of 0 is devastating to a spirit essence. As with normal Call of Cthulhu rules, the insane investigator transitions to the GM's control and the player creates a new, replacement investigator. With the transition of the damaged spirit essence into the new investigator, reduce the group's spirit point total by 2, and reduce the new investigator's starting Sanity by 1d10—death, when the Mythos is concerned, is typically the lesser of two dreaded fates!

Slain Investigators: When an investigator dies, its spirit essence shifts into a new body (and the player creates a new investigator). Reduce the group's spirit point total by 1. The new investigator's starting Sanity is unaffected.

Running Out of Spirit Points: Once the party has no spirit points remaining, regardless of how many spirit essences may still inhabit living, sane bodies, the spirit essence campaign is over. Remaining spirit essences lose the ability to bolster their investigators and can never again return to Golarion. In time, they will be forgotten and fade away from the minds of their one-time hosts.

Such is the risk, however remote, for those who strive against the Elder Mythos!

Step 5: Award Spirit Points

At the end of a Call of Cthulhu session, award the entire group 1 spirit point. At the end of an adventure (or at the end of a significant chapter in an ongoing campaign), award the group a number of spirit points equal to the total number of players.

Step 6: Repeat

Continue playing Call of Cthulhu adventures until your group manages to reach its spirit point goal. Their characters immediately manifest on Golarion in their original bodies with all gear intact. Whether or not time has passed on Golarion and where the PCs manifest in the world are left to you to decide!



FLAPPER INVESTIGATOR

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CLOSE CONVERSATION

*I am lost in Carcosa with no hope of returning home.
In my flight, I sought refuge in a decaying townhouse.
As I sat at a rotting desk to take stock of my situation,
I spotted the following pages peeking out from a drawer.
Despite my terror, I was compelled to read them. -JW*

The whole time we talked, black silt flowed from its nose and mouth with the fluidity of soggy sand. Garbled words fell from its dead, bloated lips, punctuated at odd times with the flat gagging of a full throat. As it spoke, it didn't seem to notice or care about this condition. The only time the dirt ceased to cascade down its rubbery bottom lip, which squirmed like a grub, was when the creature was silent, patiently listening for my next question.

The muddy walls of the chamber pressed in tight, packing me into this tiny space with the thing. I continued my interrogation, surprised that the spell had lasted so long. Cramped as I was, inches away from this corpse, I never smelled its decay, even though it was horribly mutilated and its body already in the early stages of breaking down. I smelled only the pungent odor of wet earth and compost, the stench of the earth's rot.

The lack of a scent and the constant flow of black silt from the thing's mouth and nose as it slurred through its words weren't normal for a corpse affected by this sort of magic. Nor was the incantation supposed to last this long. Was the thing truly dead? If the spell worked, then it must be. I carefully noted each inconsistency for later reflection. When interrogating a subject, it's important to observe peculiarities. They can provide you with a useful point of reference if the trail of information dries up and you must rethink your approach.

We had been speaking for a number of minutes, and by the time I broke off my strange conversation, the repulsive black dirt it disgorged filled the gaps between its crossed legs. With each false breath, the filthy earth had gently toppled down from a heap gathered in its suprasternal notch beneath its battered chin. Now it piled in weird, stepped ledges along its ribs, caught in the tight, leathery skin that covered its torso.

I asked it about my brother, for details on who had lured him away from us. Having adopted a risky lifestyle instead of following the family professions, my brother

Calwin had gotten wrapped up in a dangerous cult under false pretenses. Now he was missing. I had pledged to find him.

The odd thing about the information the body conveyed was that its answers to my questions were often more accurate than I expected. Normally this type of interrogation produced questionable results. It told me things that had led me to seek its council in the first place, things I expected it to say. The affirmation was comforting, but despite its detail, the creature seemed to know little more about the cult than I did. I was, however, interested in how it seemed to know what I pursued.

I had discovered that the Cult of the Black Stars had a reputation for kidnapping, though I also found out it was selective in its targets. Rather than snatching people up at random, its members often

chose certain individuals from particular aspects of Magnimarian social circles. Apparently, my brother had certain traits that attracted their attention. I prepared my final question.

"Why did they take him? What made him special?"

"He was more important. He could get it done," the corpse mocked.

The connection went silent, severed from my mind. As my spell faded and I stopped my line of questioning, the cramped space fell silent aside from the last clumps of flowing soil that dribbled onto its lap.

Though vague in its results, this interrogation did bring me closer to my goal. I had learned the cult was more widespread than I anticipated. It not only operated in Magnimar, but also had an outpost here in the nearby swamps. The Mushfens held all kinds of secrets. The cypress trees and their thick canopies concealed a thousand petty crimes and sins against nature—but some sins are worse than others.

Exhausted from the ordeal, I rested in a fitful slumber, regaining my strength to repeat the whole process once the ritual could be performed again. The effectiveness

Normally a big brother takes care of his younger sibling, but now I was the one looking out for him. My brother Calvin had been kidnapped by a cult, and I needed to find where they had him.

of my previous spell had surprised me, and feeling superstitious about the fortune of information it had provided, I dared not leave the chamber and its dead denizen. The whole night, I rested within reach of the corpse. I kept my back against the muddy walls, just inches from its mutilated face and starved torso.

I had to admit that the corpse's final answer stung.

Growing up, I had always felt like I was in the shadow of Calvin. Even after asking that last question, I knew I shouldn't have wasted it on something so subjective and personal, so emotional.

After the shock of the answer, a feeling of dread set in. How did it know? Had it peered into my mind or did I deliver the question with an exceptional amount of doubt? I determined to prepare myself better for the next interview. When questioning a subject, you need to be aware of not only how the subject is acting but, more importantly, how you are acting. Your subject will provide signs of certain behaviors and present physical tics that indicate particular emotions and thoughts, and you must keep in mind that you do too. A careful investigator veils his emotions when trying to pry information out of a subject. Unless, that is, those emotions are keys to unlocking certain secrets in your subject you are looking to reveal. And those breaches of emotion shouldn't expose the subject to your own insecurities or weaknesses. A clever subject can exploit those openings. They can lead you astray from your line of questioning and soil the investigation.

My brother was always dear to me. There was a stretch while growing up when we were inseparable, but as we went from breeches to trousers, our interests led us separate ways. Aside from the usual tussles young boys get into with each other, we got along better than most siblings. Of course, as the older brother, he always felt like he needed to hold something over me, but any minor abuses he perpetrated always carried with them a generous dash of jocular. He was hard on me at times, but always protective. I could tell he cared about me and wanted me to become stronger. There was never any doubt about that, and it worked. His guidance and support helped shape me into the man I was today, and his influence helped drive me in my hunt for him here in the Mushfens.

As we got older and were expected to find our own way in life, he took up a different career from what we had imagined. He didn't join the church like I had when I followed in our mother's footsteps. Nor did he accept the offer to help our father run the family business. Instead, Calvin took up the life of a wanderer. We were Varisian, after all.

He earned enough coin to take care of himself, but he was always bouncing from one job to another. Aside from menial jobs and common labor, he frequently got caught up in the excitement of potential adventures, and

started to travel with the sort that wandered into a town full of bravado, those who threw silver around as a social lubricant, thinking they could salve the offenses they constantly inflicted on the working people with a few flippantly passed coins.

On these adventures, Calvin disappeared for months at a time. Once, he left with a group of foreign travelers who had wandered into town with a lead on some reputedly lucrative ruin in the Mushfens. Another time, he went off with a gaggle of brutes someone had assembled to stir up trouble with various monstrous tribes that lived up the river. Mother, father, and I worried about him, and all the while we caught nasty comments and looks askance from the rest of the townsfolk, who just wanted to be left alone and not get drawn into any trouble. We Varisians bear



This cramped space was uncomfortable, to say the least, but I was committed to staying in here with the body to learn the things it could tell me about my missing brother.

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enough scrutiny from others because of those criminals who call themselves the Sczarni.

This last venture, however, was when I first suspected that Calvin was in over his head. It upset me that it finally took the views of the community, the one that I felt was being so judgmental, to make me see that Calvin might be in real trouble. I always worried for him more than I did for anyone and I didn't share the disapproval that mother and father, and the rest of our community, harbored. I secretly took pride in him, and even more secretly, I wanted to be out there with him.

I slumbered during those days the corpse was quiet, but I never had dreams of my family and the good times with my brother. Instead, frightful visions turned my sleep restless each night that week.

In these nocturnal imaginings, I was always hunted through the swamps, singled out by wild animals. Predators, in every case. I ran for what I felt was the protection of the forest, ever just over the horizon. Tall reeds surrounded me, hiding threats at every turn. The reeds cut at my arms and face as I ran through them, trying to escape what seemed to be certain death. The violent swishing and thrashing of the reeds about me masked the growls and snarls of my pursuers, though this didn't calm my racing heart. The soft, muddy ground made my fevered steps clumsy, risky. Beasts prowled through the swamp after me, but lurked just beyond the edges of my vision. However, they seemed to have just as strong a presence as if the threat were right in my face, exhaling its hot, murderous breath before the killing blow.

In these dreams, just as the beasts closed in on me, surrounded me, knocked me to the sodden earth, and began to ravage my body, I sank into the ground to escape the fear and pain. As I descended, the fear transformed into a feeling of drowning, which was strangely comforting for a brief moment as the dream slowly went dark and I awoke.

The dreams became so intense, so vivid, that I awakened in that tiny space each morning utterly exhausted. I was nestled into a niche I had formed in what served as a wall of the chamber. Numbness had set in and there were times where I couldn't feel my limbs and had to think to move them just to get a sensation. Though exhausted and frightened awake, my breath remained light and shallow.

The tiny chamber became increasingly oppressive. The air fell upon me each day like a dreadful, depressing

force that demanded I remain inactive. I knew I needed to keep at my work, but at times I couldn't do anything but just stare at my obstinate subject. Most days I could barely conjure the energy to perform my devotionals. This pained me, and the disappointment pushed me to perform my rites. This whole endeavor was for nothing if Pharama didn't answer my prayers to speak with this corpse again.

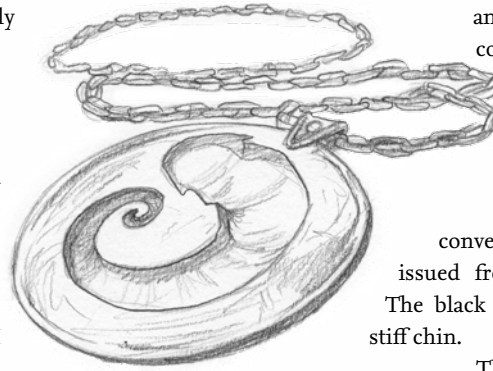
During some of those surreal and listless days, I spoke to the corpse, but it didn't stir from its slumber. I asked it things in preparation for my next line of questioning, but it never roused to answer. I held my end of the conversation, but no raspy voice issued from its deteriorating throat. The black dirt didn't cascade down its stiff chin.

Those days at least gave me time to entertain my own thoughts. They allowed me to focus my efforts on the task at hand. I needed to find out where the cultists had taken my brother. The days spent not interviewing the corpse helped me form better, more accurate, questions to ask

of my subject. However, the nights found me captive to those same dreams of being hunted.

It was always a new predator in pursuit. Sometimes there were packs of rabid dogs, barking and howling through the night. Their sounds filled my ears and seemed to echo from the safety of the forest I ran toward. They raced through the swamp after me. Globes of foamy spittle dropped from their jowls just as their white teeth latched around my throat. Other times the pursuit wasn't so frantic, but it was no less frightening. In these dreams, I was stalked for what seemed like hours by a great cat that silently padded along before leaping upon me and crushing my windpipe with savage vigor. Once, the antagonist was a massive bear, missing patchy clumps from its black fur, that loomed over me before beating and slashing at me with paws the size of my head. Each time, just before blacking out, I sank down into the comfort of the earth before waking up.

The worst nightmare of them all involved gangs of lunatics hunting me through the mire—hooting and hollering, waving sooty torches that cast a flickering light against their rusty weapons. In those dreams, I tried even harder to quiet my heaving breath and beating heart, because it seemed the mad gangs could pinpoint the weakness in me better than the animals. But inside, I knew who the real animals were.



Given to me by my mother after I completed my training in the church, this amulet had been in our family for generations. It was always cool to the touch and felt lighter than it seemed.

After this last dream, I awoke the next morning rattled by the experience. The cramped pocket nestled in the earth wasn't a welcome or comfortable place, but I needed to continue my work. The unfortunate soul interred in this unceremonious spot would at least be given proper rites once I was done here. I had to finish this. I needed to know why the cult had taken my brother and what it planned to do to him. So I put aside the strange visions that had clouded my head for the last few days, and focused on my task.

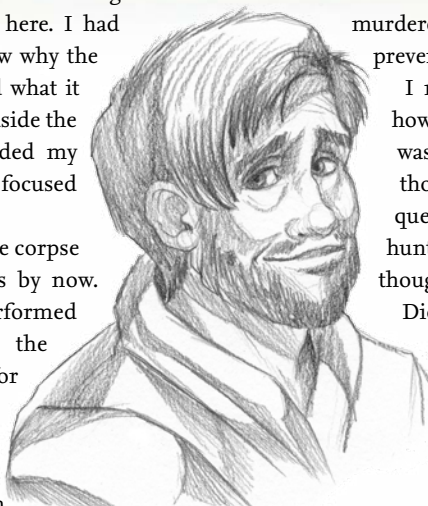
A week had passed. Surely the corpse was ready for more questions by now. Before I confronted it, I performed my devotionals, grasping the holy amulet passed down for generations in my family. The talisman felt cool and comfortable in my hands as I traced the spiral on its face. I centered myself and prepared for a tricky endeavor. Again I reached out, connecting to the empty husk and stirring whatever whispers of a soul that remained within. Holding my amulet, I prayed to the Lady of Graves and asked the corpse, "How many are there?"

By the time I resumed my questioning, pale maggots had begun to infest a laceration on the corpse's cheek. As the thing's jaw worked out the answer to my first question, the white grubs wriggled free from the wound and tumbled down its naked chest, falling quietly into its lap.

The strands of my consciousness intermingled with the remaining threads of memory and will still knotted within the corpse. It shuddered subtly. The dirt began to flow out of its nose and mouth once more. In a voice filled with release from a long-held breath, it gasped in two gouts that sent the black silt spattering into my face. "They! Are!"

It slumped for a half second, and then recovered to feebly mumble from its torn lips: "Many. More beyond the horizons you know."

This, at the time, worried me. I had always thought that the Cult of the Black Stars to be an isolated group, just a handful of nobles in the city. Now I was less sure. Had the cult spread throughout Varisia? Avistan? The whole world? I couldn't be certain. Questioning a corpse doesn't necessarily bring reliable results, however, so one must sift through the answers and take them in the proper light. This body might not know the information I sought or it could be opposed to my line of questioning



Dear Calvin. He had an infectious charm about him. When new people met him, they were always drawn to his jovial energy and caring nature. He was always up for fun and loved bringing others along for the experience.

and simply refused to give a direct answer. It could be replying in an obstinate manner for any number of reasons. Thankfully, despite the beating the corpse had taken, its mouth and jaw were mostly intact aside from the wound filled with maggots. I'd heard that some murderers tear the jaws from their victims to prevent this kind of investigation.

I needed to refine my questions. Knowing how large and widespread the cult might be wasn't going to help me find my brother. I thought I had considered the best line of questioning, but perhaps the dreams of being hunted had hindered my logic more than I'd thought. Did I fear asking the right questions?

Did I not have enough information about what I assumed I needed to know? Maybe I didn't quite realize the magnitude of what was really happening.

I asked the corpse my next question.

"I know I'm close, but where can I find my brother?"

The body mentioned a manor in a clearing a few miles into the fens. I had already heard about the manor from a previous source, and made the journey here to the swamps, only to fall short of my goal.

I may have been a city boy, but I grew up sneaking out of the city

with my friends to play around in the nearby wilds. Even though I decided to join the clergy, I always had a bit of an urge to go out and be adventurous. I supposed this could be partly why I hadn't seen Calvin was in danger before it was too late.

Magnimar is a city that attracts a wide array of religious affiliations, and its people tolerate most of those viewpoints, so it's not uncommon for cults of all sorts to gravitate there. Most were benign, some even helpful, but bloodthirsty sects and other gangs of psychopaths stalked the city, regardless. I initially believed he had fallen in with one of the many foul cults devoted to Norgorber, but the truth proved worse than a deviant murder cult.

From the corpse's answers, it seemed that the Cult of the Black Stars was a group of influential people in the city who conducted regular rites out in the Mushfens to honor a being they called the Unspeakable One. Supposedly they numbered among the nobles and well-to-do merchants in the city. While confirmation of this was reassuring, I already knew these things.

I had learned earlier about these events, these rituals. They never occurred on regular schedules. The participants would receive a letter in the night inviting them to attend—most of the recipients being those from

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high-class life. However, some of these invitations went out to other people who were marked by the cult. These were all people the cult wanted something from, some way to guarantee a needed action or results that served nefarious purposes. They used blackmail as a weapon to force all sorts of favors from people throughout Magnimar. It appeared the cult had taken my brother to convert him to their ways and then send him back to us for their own secretive, nefarious purposes.

Again, it surprised me that the incantation had lasted as long as it did. Normally, after a couple of questions—often followed by painfully incomplete answers—a corpse falls silent and can't be interacted with for days. While repulsed with what the creature told me, I couldn't wait to pose my final question. After spending so much time questioning my subject, the answers had become less cryptic and more useful. The clarity of the responses had reached such a height that I felt certain a breakthrough would occur with my next casting of the spell. This creature had obviously encountered my brother and very well might know where he—and the cult—was now.

Yet the last response about the manor sparked something. Something I had apparently forgotten. After the corpse's answer, I suddenly remembered that I had, in fact, found the secluded manor house. It all came back to me as vividly as if I were reliving it.

As I drew closer through the swamp, the estate was impossible to miss. The whole place shed light across the reed-choked wetlands, as it was the only speck of civilization in the thick swamps. As I drew closer I could see people moving about inside the house, backlit by bright lanterns. Horses and carriages sat listless near a sagging barn, and I could hear music coming from inside the house proper. They had burning torches staked out in the yard, and laughs and shouts from the house punctuated the lulls in the music. Those gathered there were certainly having a grand time. I hoped that Calvin was safe, and I could feel it in my gut that he was in there with those people.

I crept through the darkness, careful to avoid raising an alarm. I kept low and moved from tree to tree, pressing my back against the trunk and glancing around, until I got to the barn.

I stifled a shout when a horse I didn't notice snorted nearby and startled me. I frantically looked around to see if anyone had noticed. A man on the front porch smoking a pipe and talking to a well-dressed woman looked in my direction, but he turned back to his conversation almost immediately. Both clutched white, featureless masks.

Clinging to the shadows of the barn, I moved around to the side of the manor. Sounds of more people talking came from the back of the house. I eased that way, sticking to the stunted bushes and patchy reeds, moving slowly so I didn't make much noise.

As I neared the back corner of the house, I thought I spied my brother through one of the windows, but his face slipped back behind the thick velvet curtains as he laughed with what appeared to be one of the members of the city's Council of Ushers. So it *was* true that the cult incorporated some of the powerful within the city.

In a careless haste spurred on by spotting Calvin, I darted across part of the yard where light streamed from the large windows. It took only a dozen long paces, but if anyone looked out one of the windows on this side of the manor, I would certainly be seen.

I told myself I was after them because of what they had done to my brother, but I knew it was more important to me than even that. This was personal, and not in a familial way. I was doing this for me, for my guilt. I had to stop them to make up for what I should have done then, for when I should have begged him to stay home from this latest jaunt.

Making it to the house, I pressed my back against the wooden walls and crouched down beneath a window. I stilled my breath and tried to calm my racing pulse. After a few

moments, I raised myself up and peeked through the window. I moved slowly, careful that no one saw as I surveyed the room. Sure enough, Calvin was talking to Usher Malvori while a wealthy textile merchant laughed beside them. Calvin seemed to be enjoying himself. He always enjoyed when others liked him, and these gentlemen, I sensed, were playing on that. Usher Malvori clasped him on the shoulder and guffawed as Calvin told what was likely a bawdy joke. They started walking off toward the back porch.

To keep them in sight, I moved low along the wall to the corner of the manor house. I peeked around and saw a group of men and women sitting on chairs on the back porch, sipping drinks and making small talk. Just as I rounded the corner, my brother and his new friends stepped outside.

A woman, hair piled high upon her head, threaded through with a string of pearls, rose from her seat, and asked the usher to introduce her to his "strapping young friend." My heart raced. I could see how stitched into this group Calvin was becoming. They were giving him everything that he ever wanted. Prestige, luxury, importance. If I leapt from my hiding place and begged him to come home, he would only laugh at me. He'd never see how deeply they had their hooks in him. Then

I was so close to my goal. I had Calvin in my sight, but felt helpless. I couldn't just walk into the belly of this cult and drag my brother from their clutches. What was I to do?



I was lost in fear as I ran through the marsh. I struggled to get away, to get to the edge of the forest. I could hear them calling for my blood, and it seemed each time I looked back there were more of them pursuing me.

again, if I exposed myself right then, they would likely catch and kill me.

I crept around the corner, crouching and moving through the gloom to get closer to the porch. I needed to know what they were talking about. If I could get beneath the porch, I could hear what they were saying. Keeping close to the wall, I stepped into the flowerbed that ran the length of the manor's rear side. In the dark, while keeping my eyes trained on the lit back porch, I didn't see a watering can until I kicked it over onto the house's stone foundation. A clang of hammered tin cut through the ongoing conversations and revelry.

The usher shouted, "Elsor! There's someone's snoopng around out here!" With that, other calls rose through the house, and people began streaming out the doors to investigate.

That's when they chased me away. I ran through the reeds to safety, but I wasn't any closer to my goal. I needed to get my brother out of their clutches, but I also needed to be free and survive to do that. They followed me into the marsh, carrying sooty torches plucked from the yard. They hollered after me as they spread out to surround me.

I shook myself from the memory with a shudder. How could I have forgotten that? I needed to be more

focused if I was going to figure this all out. I knew I was running out of time, so I prepared my last question. I decided to take a different approach this time. I needed to ask the corpse about its possible role in my brother's disappearance.

While wondering how to phrase my query for a moment, I realized I never asked how the corpse ended up in what passed for a muddy grave. So I put aside my intended question and instead asked, "How did you come to be here?"

The creature shuddered and then responded, louder and more forceful than before. The black silt poured more freely from its mouth and nose and it choked out in a stilted cadence, "You. You got too close. And they beat you. You were... careless. Now we are here. Drowned in the earth."

It felt like the air was sucked from my lungs and the phantom of my pulse pounded in my ears. I thought I understood introspection. I thought that with all the time I had spent clambering around in my own mind seeking to find the perfect ways to act, to behave, to be, I would have realized sooner. But now I knew what I couldn't grasp before.

I had been talking to myself the whole time. And I would never find my brother.

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The earthquake that shook Absalom in 4698 did more than change the face of the city; it changed the minds of many of the people who call the City at the Center of the World home. Some said the madness came as a result of seeing Beldrin's Bluff slide from its perch into the sea. Others claimed it was the sinking of the Puddles that drove folks out of their minds. I believe it is something much more sinister, something more deadly. Something not of this world.

I have looked into similar events elsewhere in the world—at the sites of tsunamis, earthquakes, fires, floods, and plagues. In each case, a terrible madness gripped the nearby population shortly after, and every time the same name fell from the mouths of the insane: Ghatanothoa!

—Professor Illyus Redmar, *Wisdom in the Ravings*

This volume of the Strange Aeons Adventure Path places the PCs in the middle of the ancient, eldritch city of Carcosa, on a distant planet orbiting dark stars. Capturing a mere fraction of the possible horrors found within the unknowable city, this bestiary includes the Great Old One Ghatanothoa, a blood-drinking plant, a larva of the Outer Gods, and an underground horror with hallucinatory powers.

EXPLORING CARCOSA

The random encounter table presented here features dangers the PCs might face while they travel through the city of Carcosa. During the course of the adventure, the PCs have a 40% chance of a random encounter every hour they spend in Carcosa not dealing with the encounters written in the adventure. The PCs should have no more than four random encounters per day.

You should use your discretion when rolling a random encounter, and reroll when a result is inappropriate for the PCs' current location. For example, a random encounter with Leng ghouls immediately following or preceding the Parisian Leng ghouls in the adventure might lessen the impact of both encounters. If you roll a random encounter that is too repetitive, simply reroll or select a different result. Further, since this adventure spans a range of character levels, some random encounters might be too easy or too difficult for the PCs, depending on where they are in the course of the adventure. If the result rolled is outside the Challenge Rating range appropriate for the PCs, roll again on the random encounter table or choose a different encounter.

The following description corresponds to the associated entry on the Carcosa Encounters table.

Reydeloptrix: Long ago, the nightmare dragon (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 5 94) Reydeloptrix noticed an alarming number of his victims had surprisingly similar nightmares: visions of an empty city beneath dark stars, a faceless being dressed in yellow, and the symbol of the Yellow Sign. Intrigued by these similarities, Reydeloptrix followed his prey from the Dimension of Dreams to their waking world, only to find them soon whisked away with their decadent and disorderly cities to Carcosa. The dragon, now ancient in age (with the advanced simple monster template), stalks the nightmares of others drawn to Carcosa, either in body or in dream, and relishes the opportunity to hunt the PCs when they arrive.

ADJACENT NEXUSES

There are countless nexuses in Carcosa, far beyond the few that the PCs are destined to visit during the course of this volume's adventure. One of the simplest ways to expand upon the adventure is to take the PCs into a neighboring nexus, or have the inhabitants of an adjacent nexus wander into the PCs' path. The following are just two of the nexuses that the PCs may find as they explore Carcosa.

CARCOSA ENCOUNTERS

d%	Result	Avg. CR	Source
1-4	1 elder deep one	14	<i>Bestiary</i> 5 69
5-11	2d6 Leng ghouls	15	<i>Bestiary</i> 5 120
12-16	1d6+1 advanced geists	15	<i>Bestiary</i> 4 288, 124
17-23	1 gallowdead	16	<i>Bestiary</i> 4 119
24-28	1 warsworn	16	<i>Bestiary</i> 4 272
29-33	Reydeloptrix	16	See below
34-39	1 bat plague swarm	17	<i>Bestiary</i> 5 193
40-45	1d3 larvae of the Outer Gods	17	See page 88
46-51	1 wyrmwraith	17	<i>Bestiary</i> 5 280
52-57	1 immortal ichor	17	<i>Bestiary</i> 4 156
58-64	1d6 shriek worms	18	See page 90
65-71	1 taniniver	18	<i>Bestiary</i> 4 258
72-78	1 zygomind	18	<i>Bestiary</i> 5 286
79-84	1 nightcrawler	18	<i>Bestiary</i> 2 200
85-90	1 tzitzimil	19	<i>Bestiary</i> 3 276
91-96	1 shoggoth	19	<i>Bestiary</i> 249
97-100	1 star-spawn of Cthulhu	20	<i>Bestiary</i> 4 254

Drained Underwater City: With spiraling minarets reminiscent of conical seashells and walls and walkways seemingly grown from exotically colored coral, this underwater city now sits dry amid the vast expanse of Carcosa. With the city's water-breathing inhabitants long dead, its streets are now haunted by the ghosts of its former citizens. Swimming through the salt- and mildew-smelling air, the spectral forms of merfolk (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 204), locathahs (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 179), and cecaelias (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 49) are all that remain of the city's original citizens. More monstrous underwater creatures, including juju zombie ocean giants (*Bestiary* 2 291, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 4 127), advanced coral golems (*Bestiary* 4 131), and a plankta (*Bestiary* 5 195), ensure the PCs have a wide variety of opposition when traveling through this nexus.

Technologically Advanced Metropolis: The buildings in this nexus are impossibly tall structures of metal, glass, and plastic polymers. No power flows through the conduits that once illuminated countless video screens, access panels, and automatic doors and people-movers. No undead haunt this nexus, but works of ancient technology hold sway here, as do strange aliens from distant worlds. Here, PCs can encounter a variety of robots (*Bestiary* 5 205–209), gray goo (*Bestiary* 5 130), and aliens including everything from grays (*Bestiary* 5 129) to anunnaki (*Bestiary* 5 28). Additionally, members of races found in other nexuses, such as humans and Leng ghouls, can exist here, but they are equipped with technologically advanced weapons and armor (see *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Technology Guide*).

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GREAT OLD ONE, GHATANOTHOA

An insane tangle of eyes and mouths, arms and legs, tentacles and worse rises up upon itself, a mountain of madness come to life.

GHATANOTHOA

CR 29

XP 6,553,600

NE Colossal aberration (chaotic, evil, Great Old One)

Init +25; **Senses** blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft., *true seeing*; Perception +49

Aura unspeakable presence (300 ft., DC 39)

DEFENSE

AC 47, touch 24, flat-footed 35 (+11 Dex, +1 dodge, +10 insight, +23 natural, -8 size)

hp 717 (35d8+560); fast healing 25

Fort +29, **Ref** +24, **Will** +30

Defensive Abilities all-around vision, amorphous, *freedom of movement*, immortality, insanity (DC 37); **DR** 15/epic and lawful; **Immune** ability damage, ability drain, aging, cold, death effects, disease, electricity, energy drain, mind-affecting effects, negative energy, paralysis, and petrification; **Resist** fire 30; **SR** 40

OFFENSE

Speed 90 ft., swim 90 ft.; *air walk*

Melee 3 bites +40 (4d6+21/19–20 plus grab), 6 tentacles +38 (2d8+10/19–20 plus grab)

Space 30 ft.; **Reach** 30 ft. (60 ft. with tentacles)

Special Attacks apocalyptic dreams, constrict (2d8+31), create mummified creature, fast swallow, mythic power (10/day, surge +1d12), overwhelming devastation, pounce, swallow whole (10d6+31 bludgeoning plus 10d6 negative energy damage, AC 21, 71 hp)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 29th; concentration +39)

Constant—*air walk*, *freedom of movement*, *true seeing*
At will—*black tentacles*^M, *control weather*^M, *create undead* (mummies only), *dream*^M, *greater dispel magic*, *insanity* (DC 27), *nightmare*^M (DC 25), *project image* (DC 27), *sending*^M 3/day—*demand* (DC 28), *earthquake*, quickened *feeblemind* (DC 25), *vortex*^{APG} (DC 27), *weird* (DC 29)
1/day—*imprisonment* (DC 29), *storm of vengeance* (DC 29), *symbol of insanity* (DC 28), *tsunami*^{APG, M} (DC 29)

STATISTICS

Str 52, **Dex** 33, **Con** 43, **Int** 29, **Wis** 32, **Cha** 30

Base Atk +26; **CMB** +55 (+57 bull rush, +57 sunder); **CMD** 87 (89 vs. bull rush, 89 vs. sunder, can't be tripped)

Feats Ability Focus (unspeakable presence), Awesome Blow, Combat Reflexes, Critical Focus, Dodge, Great Fortitude, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (bite), Improved Critical (tentacle), Improved Initiative, Improved Sunder, Lightning Reflexes, Multiattack, Power Attack, Quickened Spell-Like Ability (*feeblemind*), Staggering Critical, Weapon Focus (bite), Weapon Focus (tentacle)

Skills Climb +59, Intimidate +48, Knowledge (arcana) +47, Knowledge (dungeoneering, geography, nature, planes, religion) +44, Perception +49, Sense Motive +46, Spellcraft +47, Swim +67, Use Magic Device +45

Languages Aklo, Aquan, Undercommon; telepathy 300 ft.

SQ compression, Great Old One traits, otherworldly insight

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary (unique)

Treasure triple

Original Source H. P. Lovecraft and Hazel Heald, "Out of the Aeons"

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Apocalyptic Dreams (Su) Ghatanothoa can affect a creature with apocalyptic dreams if it has been subjected to his unspeakable presence (even if the creature successfully saved against that effect), has been harmed by a natural disaster created by a magical effect (such as an *earthquake*, *storm of vengeance*, or *tsunami*^{APG} spell), or has ever offered a prayer to Ghatanothoa. When Ghatanothoa uses his *nightmare* spell-like ability on such a target, the victim has a vivid dream of experiencing the end of the world in a fiery, destructive apocalypse—be it from asteroid impact, devastating floods, volcanic eruption, or anything else at the GM's whim. Upon waking, the conviction that such an apocalypse is only days, if not hours, away haunts the victim. In addition to suffering the normal effects of the *nightmare*, the victim must succeed at a DC 37 Will saving throw or be staggered with hopelessness for 24 hours. This is a mind-affecting effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Create Mummified Creature (Su) Any creature slain by Ghatanothoa's swallow whole attack is immediately transformed into a mummified creature (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 4 196) under Ghatanothoa's control. As a free action, Ghatanothoa can disgorge any number of swallowed mummified creatures into adjacent squares. As a swift action, Ghatanothoa may make a touch attack against a creature that has mummified fully as a result of his unspeakable presence to transform that creature into a mummified creature under his control (no save).

Great Old One Traits Full rules for Ghatanothoa's immortality, insanity, his mythic abilities, and otherworldly insight, as well as the base rules for his unspeakable presence, can be found on page 306 of *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 4.

Immortality (Ex) If Ghatanothoa is killed, his form and all perfect images of his likeness lose their unspeakable presence ability (see page 85). Ghatanothoa's body shrivels and compresses in on itself, growing hard and leathery as it mummifies and contracts in size to a Huge object with AC 24, hardness 30, and 200 hit points. These remains are immune to cold damage, take half damage from fire and electricity, and take 150% damage from acid. An *earthquake* manifests (as per the spell at CL 29th) each round thereafter, centered on the location where Ghatanothoa was slain (his remains never take damage from the effects of these earthquakes). If Ghatanothoa's remains are not destroyed within 1 minute of his death, the remains explode in a blast of negative energy with a 600-foot radius that deals 20d6 points of negative energy damage to all creatures within that area (Reflex

DC 43 half). A creature killed by this damage is immediately transformed into a mummified creature (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 4* 196). If the remains are destroyed before this occurs, they crumble to dust without exploding. In either case, as soon as the remains are destroyed or explode, the *earthquake* effect in the region ends. Once this occurs, Ghatanothoa is reborn from one of the hidden cysts deep within his island lair. If his remains were destroyed before they could explode, he stays dormant in his lair until outside influences awake him once again (this could be a complex ritual performed by cultists, an astronomical event, or any natural disaster that strikes the region). If his remains were allowed to explode, Ghatanothoa wakes immediately and his unspeakable presence ability once again functions as detailed below. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Overwhelming Devastation (Ex) As a standard action, Ghatanothoa can assault a structure, dealing 10d6+31 points of damage to the structure in that round. This damage bypasses all hardness the structure has.

Unspeakable Presence (Su) Any creature failing a DC 39 Will save against Ghatanothoa's unspeakable presence becomes afflicted with a horrific curse. Ghatanothoa's unspeakable presence is so potent that even perfect images of the Great Old One can have this effect—a "perfect image" can either be a *projected image* created by Ghatanothoa, a perfectly rendered statue or painting (this requires an expenditure of 100,000 gp in resources, a successful DC 50 Craft [painting or sculpture] check, and a *wish* by someone who has suffered from Ghatanothoa's unspeakable presence), or any other representation at the GM's whim. Fortunately, the saving throw to resist this effect from a "perfect image" is only DC 20 (DC = 10 + Ghatanothoa's Charisma modifier).

If a creature fails to resist this curse, it immediately takes 1d10 points of Dexterity drain per round as its body begins to swiftly mummify. If the creature averts its gaze from Ghatanothoa, this drain is reduced to 1 point per round. As soon as a creature's Dexterity score is drained to 0, it transforms into a perfectly preserved and completely immobile mummy, yet the victim does not die. A creature mummified in this way no longer needs to eat, drink, or breathe, and no longer ages. It is essentially immortal, and can observe the world around it (and may even take purely mental actions, including the use of psychic magic), but can take

no other actions. No magical effect can end this condition (even if the victim's Dexterity drain is healed) save for an effect that removes the curse. This is a curse effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Ghatanothoa is a horrific monstrosity who, fortunately, is imprisoned on an island on a distant world. Yet even an image of this Great Old One has the potential to wreak havoc and destroy lives. Ghatanothoa's form is singularly repulsive—a tangle of arms, legs, eyes, mouths, and other body parts capable of shifting its composition at a whim, yet always retaining a definite and abhorrent shape.

GHATANOTHOA'S CULT

Few humans worship Ghatanothoa, but certain sects of mi-go (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 4* 193) have long revered this Great Old One. His temples are typically stone buildings on remote, desolate islands. Ghatanothoa grants access to the domains of Destruction, Evil, Madness, and Water and to the subdomains of Catastrophe, Insanity, Nightmare, and Oceans. His favored weapon is the morningstar.

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KUDIMMU

Tumorous, misshapen vines laden with dark red fruit make up the form of this lumbering humanoid creature, and its face is marked only by a pair of glowing, crimson eyes.

KUDIMMU

CR 16



XP 76,800

NE Large plant

Init +10; **Senses** low-light vision, tremorsense 30 ft.; Perception +32

DEFENSE

AC 31, touch 15, flat-footed 25 (+6 Dex, +16 natural, -1 size)

hp 252 (24d8+144); fast healing 15

Fort +20, **Ref** +14, **Will** +15

Defensive Abilities amorphous; **DR** 10/magic and slashing;

Immune death effects, energy drain, negative energy, plant traits; **Resist** cold 10, fire 10; **SR** 27

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., burrow 15 ft.

Melee 2 slam +28 (2d4+11 plus grab), 4 tentacles +27 (1d6+5 plus bleed and pull)

Ranged bombardment +23 touch (8d6 negative energy plus splash)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft. (30 ft. with tentacles)

Special Attacks bleed (1d6), blood drain (1d4 Constitution), bombardment, create spawn, pull (tentacle, 5 ft.)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 24th; concentration +27)

3/day—*wall of thorns*

1/day—*animate plants* (DC 20)

STATISTICS

Str 32, **Dex** 22, **Con** 22, **Int** 13, **Wis** 21, **Cha** 17

Base Atk +18; **CMB** +30; **CMD** 46 (48 vs. trip)

Feats Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Dimensional Agility^{UC}, Dimensional Assault^{UC}, Dimensional Dervish^{UC}, Dimensional Savant^{UC}, Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Iron Will, Multiattack, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (tentacle)

Skills Perception +32, Sense Motive +29, Stealth +29

Languages Azlanti, Sylvan (can't speak); telepathy 100 ft.

SQ bloodfruit, fieldbound

ECOLOGY

Environment any land

Organization solitary

Treasure standard

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Bloodfruit (Su) Fruit-bearing plants in a kudimmu's field produce sickly, misshapen, blood-red versions of normal fruits of the same variety. An undead creature can consume a kudimmu's bloodfruit in place of whatever bodily material it normally hungers for, whether blood, flesh, or something else. Doing so temporarily sates the undead creature's hunger, but does not provide any other benefits normally gained from consumption. Upon consuming bloodfruit, an undead creature must succeed at a DC 25 Will saving throw or fall under the kudimmu's

control, as per *control undead*. A living creature treats bloodfruit as a drug with the following statistics (see page 236 of the *Pathfinder RPG GameMastery Guide* for full rules on drugs and addiction): *type* ingested; *addiction* severe, Fortitude DC 25; *effects* 1 hour; +2 alchemical bonus on saving throws against necromancy spells and effects, *fester*^{APG} as per the spell (caster level 24th); *damage* 1d4 Con. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Bombardment (Su) A kudimmu can produce bloodfruit from its body, which are charged with negative energy and can be thrown as splash weapons. These bloodfruit deal 8d6 points of negative energy damage on a direct hit, and 8 points of damage to creatures adjacent to the targeted square. A successful DC 25 Will saving throw halves this damage. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Create Spawn (Su) A creature killed by the kudimmu's blood drain ability or by Constitution damage accrued through consuming bloodfruit rises as a vampire spawn under the kudimmu's control 1d4 days later. A kudimmu can have a number of enslaved spawn totaling at most double its own Hit Dice; any spawn it creates that would exceed this limit become free-willed undead.

Fieldbound (Ex, Sp, Su) A kudimmu can designate an area of natural vegetation up to 100 feet by 100 feet per side as its field, fusing the root systems of the area's plants into an interconnected mass. While in physical contact with the ground of its field, a kudimmu gains fast healing 15, tremorsense, and a 15-foot burrow speed. Additionally, the kudimmu can teleport to any location in its field as per *dimension door*. Spells and effects that attempt to alter the field's earth or vegetation must overcome the kudimmu's spell resistance to succeed. The kudimmu is physically dependent on its field, as the root system beneath it is in many ways an extension of the kudimmu's body. A kudimmu separated from its field for more than 24 hours instantly decays into a lump of inanimate matter. A kudimmu that is slain or destroyed reforms in the ground beneath its field in a process that takes 1d10 days to complete. To prevent a kudimmu from reviving, its field must be sown with salt or destroyed by magic (merely destroying the surface plants is not sufficient—the roots must also be entirely destroyed). A kudimmu must maintain its field with the blood of the living. The field must soak up the blood of a Medium or larger creature once per week. For each week the kudimmu fails to feed its field, it takes 2 points of Constitution damage. This damage cannot be healed until the kudimmu feeds its field. A kudimmu can designate a new field once per month in a process that takes 1 hour to complete. It can have only one active field at a time.

When a city is destroyed, it is customary for the conquering army to sow salt or thorns to render the ground forever infertile and curse those who would dare to rebuild. In most cases, this is simply a symbolic gesture. However, this

ritual has eminently practical roots. Death and devastation are potent seeds, and the blood of conquered peoples can mingle with the roots of burned fields to produce terrible creatures. These are called kudimmus, twisted weeds that corrupt the ground of vanquished cities and exact a terrible price upon invaders.

A kudimmu's body is diffused throughout its field, and it can weigh tens of thousands of pounds. Its primary fruiting body is vaguely humanoid in shape, standing 10 feet tall and weighing 4,000 pounds.

ECOLOGY

Most of the fruit a kudimmu produces is tainted by sinister magic. While this does not affect the taste or nutritional value of the fruit, it does leave them misshapen and renders any seeds inside dead. Kudimmus can, however, produce viable fruit should they choose to do so. These fruit are identical to their normal bloodfruit in every way, except that the seeds of these fruit sprout into new kudimmus if planted into unconsecrated ground. Kudimmus rarely use this ability, as more kudimmus in the world means more competition for food. However, if a kudimmu feels its life is threatened or it knows it will soon be attacked, it can send one of its undead minions to plant its seeds in a distant field to ensure the continuation of its line.

These monstrous plants require fresh sources of blood for their fields and thus prey on humanoid settlements to survive. Some kudimmus can make do with the blood of animals for a short time, but they do not find this subsistence living agreeable and almost always seek out farms or other civilized places to make their homes. Some kudimmus consume communities without care and live nomadic lives, always searching for fresh hunting grounds. Other kudimmus are more cautious and cunning, cultivating humanoid populations much as farmers tend to their crops.

HABITAT AND SOCIETY

Once a kudimmu establishes itself in a field, it uses its addictive bloodfruit to conquer nearby settlements. If the local populace seems unwilling to eat the misshapen fruit, the kudimmu may leave

its field at night to poison other fields and bring about a famine. Once one or two individuals fall under the kudimmu's control, it sends its new vampiric minions to strong-arm or convert the town's leadership.

Competition for feeding grounds keeps kudimmus from cooperating with each other. In fact, kudimmus often squabble over territory. As kudimmus are usually unwilling to leave their fields and fight powerful rivals on their own, these wars are fought through proxies, often the kudimmus' vampiric minions.

As kudimmus prey on humans, so too do the undead prey on kudimmus. Usually this is to the plants' benefit, as any undead that feed on their fruit eventually fall under their spell and strengthen their influence over the countryside. However, particularly strong-willed undead can resist the effects of kudimmus' bloodfruit and exploit the plants as an alternative to hunting humanoids.

paizo.com #15483557, Kevin Allred <drizztdn@gmail.com>, Feb 6, 2020

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LARVA OF THE OUTER GODS

This creature is a terrifying amalgamation of chitinous scales, bloated flesh, unblinking eyes, and writhing tentacles.

LARVA OF THE OUTER GODS

CR 15



XP 51,200

CN Large aberration

Init +12; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., see in darkness; Perception +17

DEFENSE

AC 32, touch 17, flat-footed 24 (+8 Dex, +15 natural, -1 size)

hp 207 (18d8+126); regeneration 10 (lawful spells and effects)

Fort +14, **Ref** +14, **Will** +18

Defensive Abilities amorphous; **DR** 10/lawful; **Immune** cold, fire, sonic; **Resist** acid 10, electricity 10; **SR** 26

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., fly 60 ft. (perfect)

Melee 8 tentacles +19 (1d6+2 plus poison)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Special Attacks liberated flesh, maddening song, poison

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 15th; concentration +21)

At will—*dimensional anchor*, *summon instrument*, *teleport* (self only)

5/day—*chaos hammer* (DC 20), *dispel magic*, *magic circle against law*

3/day—*control summoned monster*^{UM} (DC 20), *deafening song bolt*^{APG}, *song of discord* (DC 21)

1/day—*summon monster VIII*, *word of chaos* (DC 23)

STATISTICS

Str 20, **Dex** 26, **Con** 23, **Int** 11, **Wis** 20, **Cha** 23

Base Atk +13; **CMB** +19; **CMD** 37 (49 vs. trip)

Feats Combat Reflexes, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Multiattack, Skill Focus (Perform [wind]), Toughness, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (tentacle)

Skills Fly +26, Knowledge (planes) +18, Perception +17, Perform (wind instruments) +33, Spellcraft +21

Languages Aklo; telepathy 100 ft.

SQ no breath, starflight, void singer

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary, pair, or choir (4-6)

Treasure none

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Liberated Flesh (Su) A larva of the Outer Gods can use its song to free creatures from their static forms. As a standard action that does not interrupt its performance, a larva can attempt to liberate the flesh of each creature currently affected by its maddening song. Each target must succeed at a DC 25 Fortitude saving throw or be transformed into a chaos beast (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 254) under the larva's control. A *break enchantment*, *limited wish*, *miracle*, or *wish* spell can return the creature to its original form, though the chaos beast does not willingly submit to such efforts. This is a sonic polymorph effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Maddening Song (Su) A larva of the Outer Gods can play a song on its pipes that inspires madness in those who hear it. Each creature within 30 feet of the larva is compelled to dance, as per *irresistible dance*, for as long as the larva continues to play. A creature can attempt a DC 25 Will saving throw to resist the effect, becoming immune to the larva's song for 24 hours. Creatures that fail their saving throws can act normally if removed from the maddening song's area of effect, but they must attempt a new saving throw upon re-entering the song's radius. Beginning a maddening song is a standard action, but a larva can continue the performance on subsequent rounds as a free action. This is a mind-affecting sonic effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Poison (Ex) Tentacles—injury; *save* Fort DC 25; *frequency* 1/round for 6 rounds; *effect* 1d4 Dex drain and 1d4 Wis drain; *cure* 2 consecutive saves. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Starflight (Su) A larva of the Outer Gods can survive in the void of outer space. It flies through space at an incredible speed. Although exact travel times vary, a trip within a single solar system should take 3d20 hours, while a trip beyond should take 3d20 days (or more, at the GM's discretion)—provided the larva knows the way to its destination.

Void Singer (Su) The songs of a larva of the Outer Gods travel through the fabric of reality itself. Sonic spells and effects produced by the larva, including its maddening song and liberated flesh abilities, function even in the void of space, in areas of magical silence, and against deaf creatures.

At the heart of the Dark Tapestry lies Azathoth, a shapeless entity the size of a star, imbued with immense chaotic and destructive power. The members of Azathoth's court orbit it like planets, exalting in the babbling nonsense the blind idiot god issues into the void and singing songs of exquisite madness to their lord. The least of this celestial choir are the larvae of the Outer Gods, shed from Azathoth as a body sheds skin cells. They conjure instruments from the ether, such as pipes and flutes, with which to serenade their progenitor as they mature into gods of the void.

Larvae of the Outer Gods are constantly shifting in form, but average 10 feet in diameter and weigh 1,600 pounds.

ECOLOGY

Larvae of the Outer Gods are born as minuscule specks of matter sloughed off by the ever-changing bulk of Azathoth. These motes of flesh drift through space, caught in the gravitational gyrations of the idiot god, soaking up cosmic radiation and the songs of their kin. Eventually, the motes grow and coalesce into beings of chaos: larvae of the Outer Gods. Once they are large enough to move of their own volition, the larvae begin to whirl and dance in their orbits around the Primal Chaos, compelled by incomprehensible forces to join the cosmic song and dance.

It is not known where the larvae of the Outer Gods create or steal their instruments. Though strange in appearance, these pipes and flutes are utterly mundane in both function and composition. However, in the hands of the larvae, they become terrible tools of chaos.

When a larva plays an instrument, it does not merely create sounds. Instead, it warps the fabric of space, creating waves in reality. This allows the larvae to serenade their god even in the midst of an absolute vacuum. This dominion over space enables the larvae to conjure creatures from the planes, block dimensional travel, and transport themselves unfathomable distances in an instant.

Though some do eat, most larvae of the Outer Gods subsist on cosmic radiation, allowing them to travel for weeks or months across interstellar voids without dying of hunger or thirst. Over time, exposure to the cosmic winds causes them to swell and mutate, growing even more powerful. The oldest of these larvae eventually mature into colossal beings as powerful as demigods. These beings return to orbit Azathoth and refine their songs. Rumor has it that some eventually reach the next stage of their life cycle, absorbing countless other larvae to become planet-sized gods unto themselves.

HABITAT AND SOCIETY

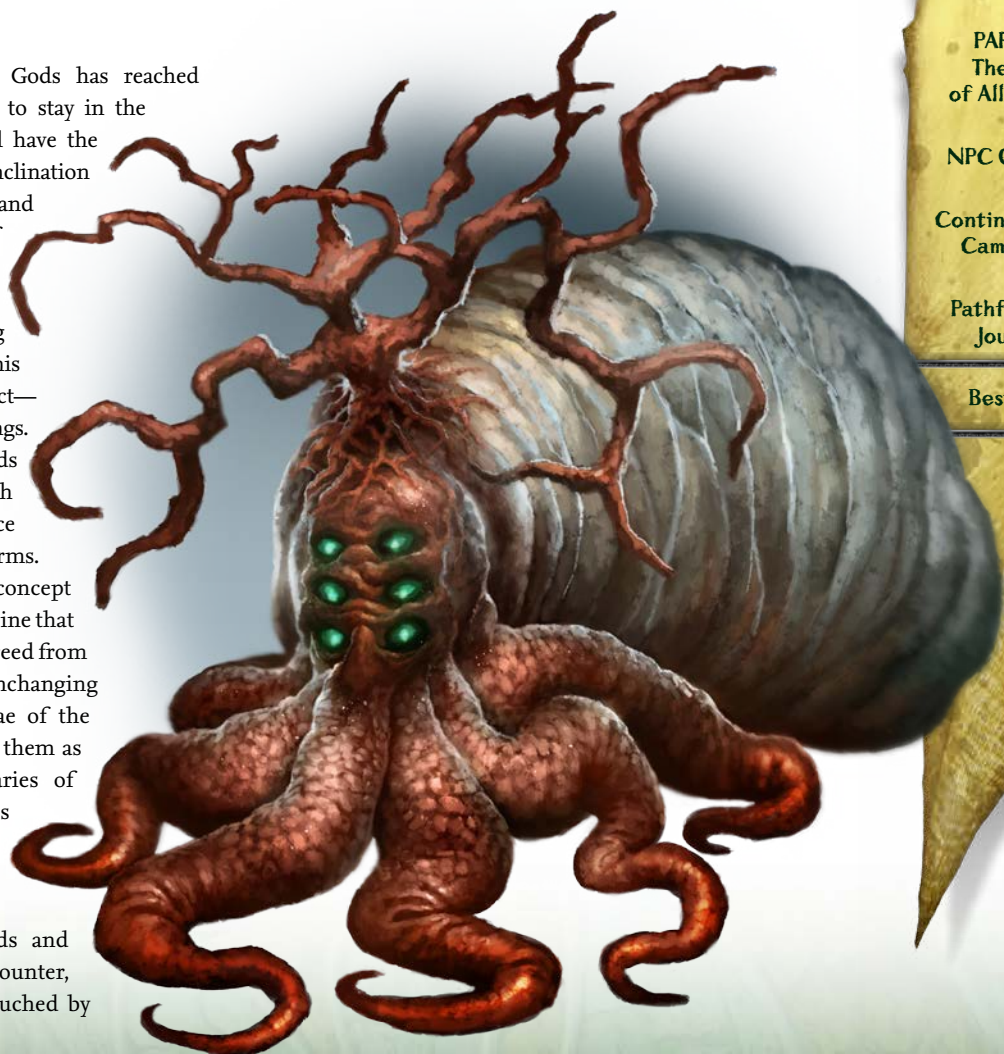
Once a larva of the Outer Gods has reached maturity, it is not compelled to stay in the court of Azathoth. Indeed, all have the ability and many have the inclination to explore the Dark Tapestry and the worlds beyond. Larvae of the Outer Gods drift among the stars on unseen currents, or fly through space following songs only they can hear. This often brings them into contact—and conflict—with mortal beings.

Larvae of the Outer Gods bear no ill will toward such creatures, but their presence is often ruinous to mortal forms. Larvae do not understand the concept of mortality, nor can they imagine that a being would not want to be freed from the confinement of a static, unchanging body. Worlds visited by larvae of the Outer Gods thus come to see them as monsters—horrific emissaries of destruction that spread chaos and fear wherever they roam.

Larvae of the Outer Gods are particularly fascinated by any talented mortal bards and musicians that they encounter, particularly those who are touched by

chaos or the Dark Tapestry. They pursue such players across time and space, much to the musicians' chagrin. These infatuations almost always end with either the larva's destruction, or with the musician succumbing to the larva's song. Some believe that larvae can even transform mortal musicians into fellow larvae of the Outer Gods, and that larvae scour distant worlds seeking to recruit new voices for Azathoth's court.

Foolish mortals sometimes call upon the larvae of the Outer Gods for aid, summoning them to the realms of men in order to strike down some mortal enemy or share the forbidden secrets of Azathoth. While larvae are not opposed to serving such mortals, they also care little for what effect their songs have on mortal flesh. Those who conjure a larva of the Outer Gods are just as likely to fall victim to its maddening song as those they hoped to smite, and those who seek the secrets of the cosmos often learn them at the cost of their corporeal forms. Even when summoners take steps to protect themselves from unwelcome transformations, they find that the larvae of the Outer Gods approach tasks with an unfocused dreaminess that makes them terrible servants.



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SHRIKE WORM

Iridescent spines cover the back of this enormous, long-legged worm. Writhing tentacles sprout from its throat, below a circular, toothy maw dripping with luminescent spittle.

SHRIKE WORM

CR 15



XP 51,200

NE Huge aberration

Init +7; **Senses** blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft.;

Perception +29

Aura impossible form (100 ft., DC 27)

DEFENSE

AC 29, touch 11, flat-footed 26 (+3 Dex, +18 natural, -2 size)

hp 231 (22d8+132)

Fort +14, **Ref** +10, **Will** +17; +6 vs. illusion

Defensive Abilities illusion sense; **DR** 10/magic; **SR** 26

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., *air walk*

Melee 2 claws +24 (1d8+9), 6 tentacles +22 (1d6+4 plus grab)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Special Attacks impale, phantasmal slime (DC 27, once every 1d4 rounds)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 15th; concentration +21)

Constant—*air walk*

3/day—*hallucinatory terrain* (DC 20), *persistent image* (DC 21)

1/day—*scintillating pattern* (DC 24)

STATISTICS

Str 28, **Dex** 16, **Con** 20, **Int** 7, **Wis** 19, **Cha** 23

Base Atk +16; **CMB** +27 (+31 grapple); **CMD** 40 (can't be tripped)

Feats Combat Reflexes, Following Step^{APG}, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Lunge, Multiattack, Step Up, Step Up and Strike^{APG}, Toughness, Weapon Focus (claw), Weapon Focus (tentacle)

Skills Perception +29, Survival +29

Languages Aklo (can't speak)

ECOLOGY

Environment any land or underground

Organization solitary, pair, or delusion (3-5)

Treasure incidental

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Illusion Sense (Ex) Shrike worms can sense illusion magic, rendering it less effective against them. A shrike worm gains a bonus on saving throws against illusion spells and effects equal to its Charisma bonus, and it does not need to examine or interact with an illusion in order to attempt a saving throw to disbelieve it.

Impale (Ex) If a shrike worm begins its turn with a creature grappled with its tentacles, it can attempt a grapple combat maneuver check as a free action to try to impale the grappled creature on one of the spines on its back. If the shrike worm succeeds, the grappled creature takes 6d6+18 points of damage and is pinned. Once a creature is impaled, it loses the grappled condition and the shrike worm can use all of its tentacles without penalty. A shrike worm can have

up to six Medium or smaller creatures impaled on its spikes at a time. An impaled creature can remove itself from a spine by succeeding at a combat maneuver or Escape Artist check as normal. A creature that is removed from a shrike worm spine (either by its own efforts, those of its allies, or magic) takes 3d6 points of bleed damage and is sickened for 1d4 rounds.

Impossible Form (Su) Any creature within 100 feet of the shrike worm that can see it must succeed at a DC 27 Will saving throw or become fascinated for as long as the creature remains within range of this ability. A creature that fails its save believes the shrike worm is a hallucination or an illusion; the shrike worm's approach does not constitute an obvious threat and does not break this fascination effect. The fascination effect ends as normal if the shrike worm attacks or interacts with the affected creature or its allies. A creature that saves against a shrike worm's impossible form aura is immune to it for 24 hours. This is a mind-affecting effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Phantasmal Slime (Sp) As a standard action that doesn't provoke attacks of opportunity, a shrike worm can spew from its mouth a 30-foot cone of scintillating color that infects the minds of those it touches. This functions as per *phantasmal web*^{APG} (DC 21), except that a creature that fails its save believes it is caught in threads of sticky, luminous slime infested with diminutive shrike worm larvae. The shrike worm can use this ability once every 1d4 rounds. A creature that realizes the slime is illusory gains a +4 bonus on saves to resist subsequent uses of this ability.

Shrike worms are insidious creatures from the edges of reality, and are able to blur the boundary between what is real and unreal in order to take their prey by surprise. Also known as hallucination worms, they are most often called shrike worms due to the method by which they kill their prey. When a shrike worm catches a creature in its tentacles, it then impales its victim on its iridescent back spines, pinning the creature in place in order to prolong its prey's suffering as much as possible.

Shrike worms grow to over 25 feet long and, despite weighing upward of 16,000 pounds, carry themselves about with surprising grace on their long legs. This lends their movements an unearthly quality, which is further enhanced by their magical abilities.

ECOLOGY

Shrike worms are superficially similar to mundane velvet worms, though they are much larger and exhibit a cruel intelligence that their mundane cousins lack. Much like velvet worms can spray sticky slime to capture prey or fend off predators, shrike worms can emit phantasmal slime, which entangles and sickens the weak minded. Shrike worms use this ability when overwhelmed or surprised, trapping potential aggressors in their own delusions until the shrike worms can either regain the upper hand or flee.

However, shrike worms' primary hunting tool is their bizarre appearance. Shrike worms are so strange looking and so suffused with illusion magic that they appear to be illusions to most creatures. The worms take advantage of this trait to keep potential prey from fleeing or attacking before the worms can move into an ideal attack position. A worm's victim realizes its error only in time to feel the worm's grasping tentacles lifting it toward the terrible spines along the creature's back.

Much like shrikes, shrike worms impale their prey because they have trouble consuming fresh corpses. Their mouths are small and poorly adapted to chewing through skin and bone, so they impale their prey on their back spines and wait for it to decompose and soften. This can take some time, particularly as creatures may not die immediately upon being impaled—but the shrike worm is capable of going without food for long stretches of time and does not mind waiting for its dinner to ripen. Even when more palatable food is available, shrike worms prefer to hunt hardier creatures, for they savor the suffering that comes with the creatures' prolonged and painful deaths.

Shrike worms do not reproduce sexually and have no gender. When a shrike worm achieves sufficient size, it splits itself, producing two identical offspring. These two spawn shrike worms are ravenous upon formation, and usually part ways so as not to compete for food as they mature. However, sibling shrike worms often seek each other out once they've reached adulthood, almost as though they feel incomplete in each other's absence.

HABITAT AND SOCIETY

Though they are often encountered alone due to their rarity, shrike worms are not overly solitary creatures. They seem to enjoy each other's company, although it isn't clear whether, or to what extent, they can communicate. Their fondness for company may be a matter of hygiene, as groups of shrike worms preen each other, picking pieces of bone and rotting flesh from the gaps in their carapaces. In this way, shrike worms display their social hierarchy, with the oldest and strongest worms being the recipients of the most attention from their peers.

Shrike worms lair in remote places, often seeking out areas exposed to powerful or long-lasting illusions. For example, permanent *hallucinatory terrain* or

large *illusory wall* effects attract shrike worms like moths to a flame. Shrike worms are also often found in areas afflicted by legacies of madness, such as abandoned insane asylums or villages destroyed by plagues of mental illness. Some believe that shrike worms are actually responsible for such bouts of insanity, claiming that repeated exposure to the sight of the impossible worms can shatter minds and drive people mad.

While shrike worms enjoy each other's company a great deal, they treat almost all other creatures as mere food. They understand Aklo and are willing to deal with wicked fey or other powerful tricksters, but they never offer their services to such creatures for free. Those who wish to employ a shrike worm's abilities must pay, usually by providing the worm a steady supply of victims.

Derros are an exception to this trend. As creatures of madness, derros attract shrike worms whenever they dwell in one place for too long or build large communities. While some shrike worms simply devour the derros en masse, cleverer worms take advantage of their ability to dominate the smaller creatures and instate themselves as false gods among the derros. These shrike worms use their illusory magic to answer their subjects' prayers and to relay their commands, and they tend to grow fat and lazy as the derros supply live sacrifices to placate their strange and impossible gods.

BLACK STARS BECKON

Foreword

PART 1: Where Dark Winds Whisper

PART 2: Suns Set over Aevan-Vhor

PART 3: Riot and Ruin in Rime

PART 4: The Blighted Tower

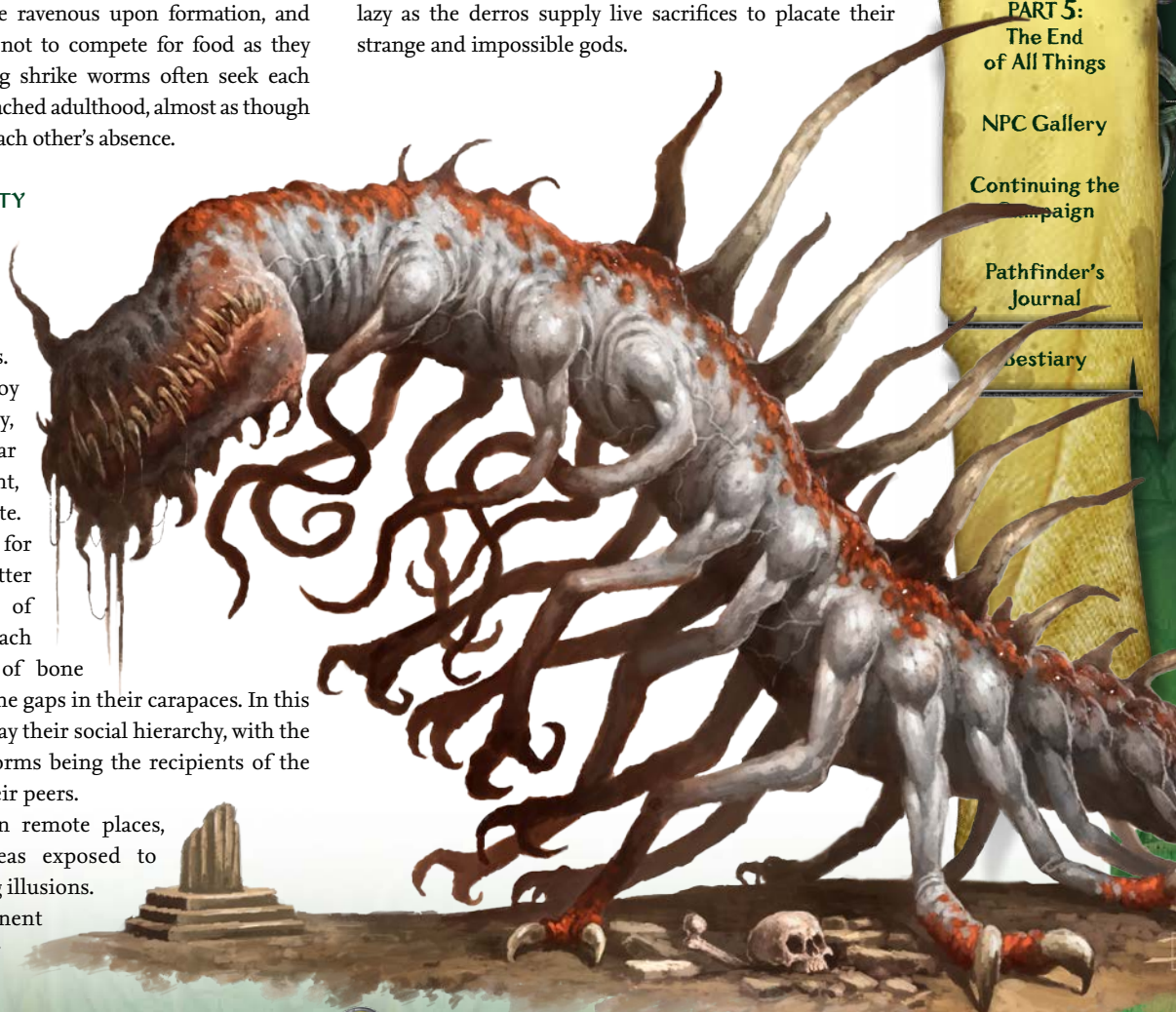
PART 5: The End of All Things

NPC Gallery

Continuing the Campaign

Pathfinder's Journal

Bestiary



NEXT MONTH

IRONFANG INVASION BEGINS!

Paizo's twentieth Adventure Path kicks off in grand style!

TRAIL OF THE HUNTED

By Amber E. Scott

In the war-torn nation of Nirmathas, far from the battlefield, the sleepy little town of Phaendar is rocked by the sudden appearance of an overwhelming foe! The heroes flee their homes, saving whatever friends and supplies they can, as the monstrous Ironfang Legion begins carving out an empire of its own. The heroes must guard their band of survivors in the wilderness, challenge a troglodyte tribe for safe haven, and face the brutal bounty hunters dispatched to end their flight to freedom!

IRONFANG LEGION TOOLBOX

By Ron Lundeen

No foe plays a larger role in this Adventure Path than the Ironfang Legion—a mercenary company composed of hobgoblins and other monstrous races. In addition to detailing the legion's history, leadership, and organizational structure, this toolbox provides new rules

to aid GMs in customizing its monstrous members, including all-new troops to challenge PCs of any level.

NESMIAN PLAINS GAZETTEER

By Crystal Frasier

While Nirmathas is known for its expansive forests, much of the battle-scarred land consists of rolling plains, rocky moors, and twisting river canyons. The southernmost portion of the nation is one such environment, collectively called the Nesmian Plains. This detailed gazetteer of the region gives GMs all the information they need to enrich their campaigns!

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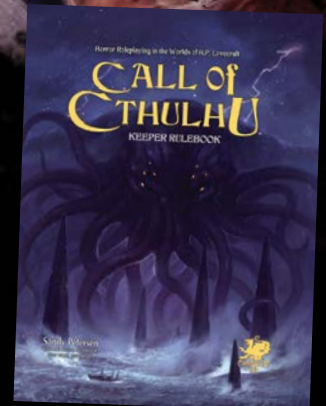
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I have caught only glimpses of this titanic worm's sickly yellow skin in the many yawning pits that dot this section of the city, but I can feel the ground tremble beneath my feet each time that it moves. It is my salvation.



THE PRECIPICE

I raced headlong through Carcosa's streets, trying to escape the monstrosity that brought me here. I came to an area pockmarked with deep holes and ruined edifices. I sheltered within one crumbling structure and wrote this last piece of what you now read. I pray that my notebooks have made it back to Golarion. If they have, I must implore you not to follow in my footsteps. DO NOT GO TO NERVZAVIN! Only madness awaits you there. For myself, I go to stand at the edge of one of these pits and offer myself to the leviathan that dwells within. Perhaps its massive jaws will finally bring me peace. At least I will be free of my nightmares.

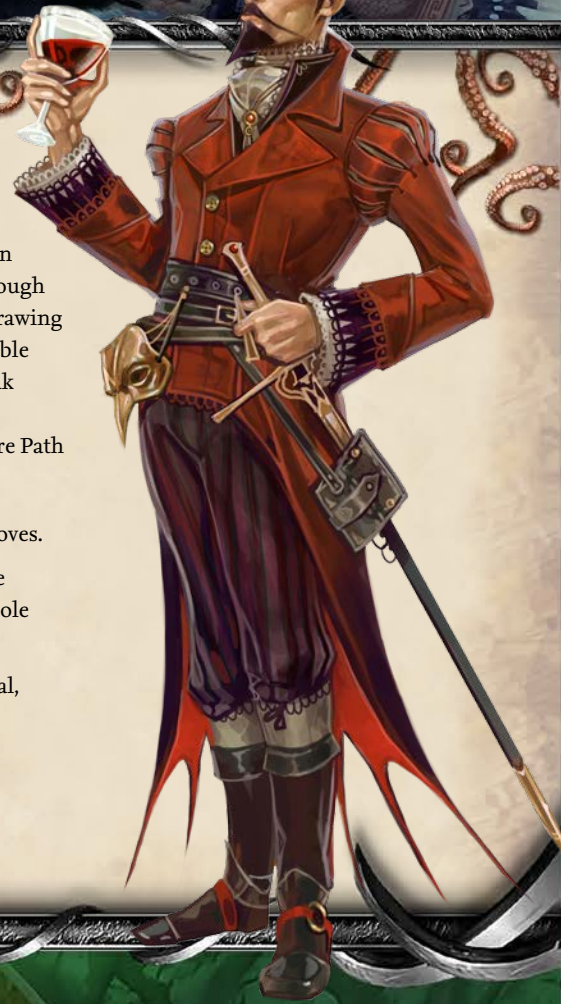


DEATH IS NOT THE END

The Strange Aeons Adventure Path draws to a stunning conclusion! Arriving in the alien metropolis of Carcosa, the adventurers must sever the links that bind it to Golarion. In wandering the parasitic city, the characters navigate frozen elder thing ruins, deal with accursed partygoers in a reflection of an Azlanti city, and encounter a mute musician who can help them find their way through the maddening and monster-infested streets. Can the heroes keep Carcosa from drawing Thrushmoor into its amalgam of stolen cities or do they risk waking the unspeakable nightmare that stirs in the depths of Lake Hali? They must do what it takes to break these links—or Golarion is doomed to greet the King in Yellow.

This volume of Pathfinder Adventure Path concludes the Strange Aeons Adventure Path and includes:

- “Black Stars Beckon,” a Pathfinder adventure for 15th-level characters, by Jim Groves.
- Advice and suggestions on how to expand your campaign beyond this Adventure Path’s conclusion, including a system to bring your Pathfinder character to a whole other world, by James Jacobs.
- An unsettling interrogation and a troubling revelation in the Pathfinder’s Journal, by Adam Daigle.
- A bestiary containing a new Great Old One and other loathsome monsters, by Benjamin Bruck, Jim Groves, and James Jacobs.



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