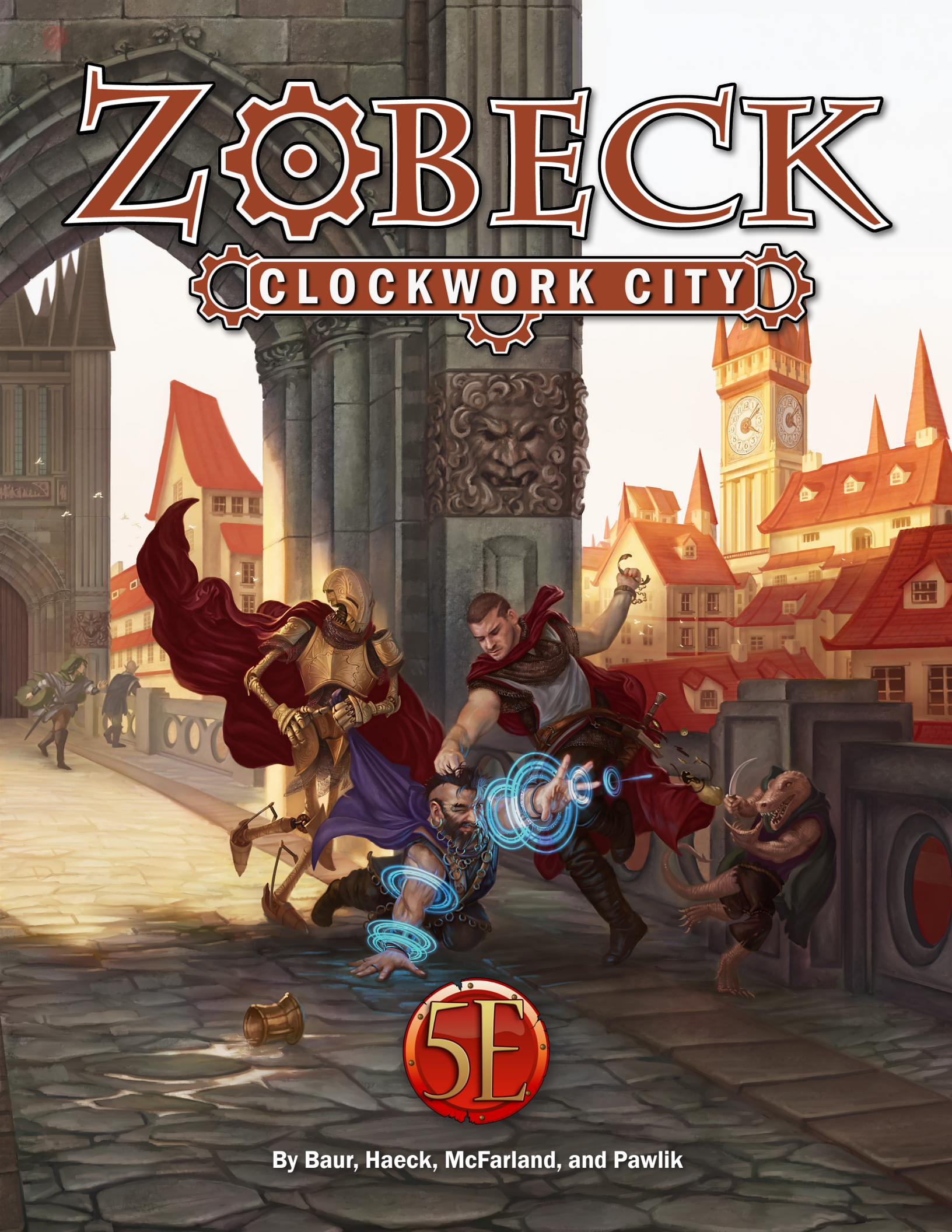
ZOBECK

CLOCKWORK CITY



5E

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ON THE COVER

Just an average day in Zobeck as the city watch apprehends someone. The dwarf and kobold might be thieves or they might be disturbing the peace—or maybe both. (Illustration by Allen Morris.)

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 6

Chapter 1: A History of Zobeck 7

Chapter 2: Overview of the Free City 12

Chapter 3: Government 27

Chapter 4: Districts & Locations 37

Chapter 5: Guilds, Gangs, and Denizens 91

Chapter 6: Gods, Cults, and Relics 123

Chapter 7: Magic 142

Chapter 8: Heroes of Zobeck 161

- New Backgrounds 162
- New Mounts 170
- New Gearforged Racial Feats 172
- New Human Racial Feats 173

Chapter 9: The Streets 175

- **Everyone Lies 176**
  - Adventure Background 176
  - Adventure Summary 176
  - Concluding the Adventure 183
- **A Book in the Bath 184**
  - Adventure Background 184
  - Adventure Summary 185
  - Entering the Bathhouse 185
  - Chase 187
  - Concluding the Adventure 189
- **Death of a Mage 190**
  - Adventure Background 190
  - Adventure Summary 190
  - Concluding the Adventure 199
- **Crimson Oubliette 200**
  - Adventure Background 200
  - Adventure Summary 200
  - The Oubliette 200
  - Concluding the Adventure 202
- **A Drinking Problem 203**
  - Adventure Background 203
  - Adventure Summary 203
  - Trouble Brewing at the Tavern 204
  - Broken Handle Tavern 205
  - Chasing the Clurichaun 207
  - Broken Handle Tavern Redux 211
  - Concluding the Adventure 212
- **Rust 213**
  - Adventure Background 213
  - Adventure Summary 213
  - Concluding the Adventure 221
- **The Fish and the Rose 222**
  - Adventure Background 222
  - Adventure Summary 222
  - Concluding the Adventure 229











A Rose by Any Other Name 230
Adventure Background 230
Adventure Summary 230
Personalities 231
The Job Site 233
Concluding the Adventure 235
The First Lab 236
Adventure Background 236
Adventure Summary 236
Concluding the Adventure 244
Song Undying.....245
Adventure Background 245
Adventure Summary 245
Attack in the Lower District 246
The Song Undying Compound.....248
Concluding the Adventure 253
Red Lenny's Famous Meat Pies 254
Adventure Background 254
Adventure Summary 254
Areas of the Tavern.....254
Concluding the Adventure 257
Rebuilding a Good Man 258
Adventure Background 258
Adventure Summary 258
Concluding the Adventure 265
Ripper 266
Adventure Background 266
Adventure Summary 266
Concluding the Adventure 272
Flesh Fails 273
Adventure Background 273
Adventure Summary 273
Concluding the Adventure 282
Appendix 283
Chase Rules..... 283
Magic Books.....286
Magic Items 286
Monsters & NPCs.....288
Index 297
Map of Zobeck.....300

INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS ZOBECK?

The Free City of Zobeck stands proud at the crossroads of the world. It is a city where adventurers, merchants, and scoundrels from all walks of life and all nations intermingle. It is a city where wondrous inventions are dreamt and great tales of glory begin—for it is the boiling cauldron in which Midgard's most potent minds, its largest personalities, and its most inflated egos are mixed together.

Yet no more than a century ago, the people of Zobeck lacked the freedom they enjoy today. In those days, they toiled and suffered to fill the coffers of House Stross, their feudal rulers. Everything changed when the people took up arms against the plutocrats of House Stross and threw off the shackles of tyranny. In the intervening decades, the few remaining aristocratic houses have fallen away, their hereditary lines replaced by merchants and elected officials. While the local aristocracy raged against the Great Revolt, the surrounding nations believed an independent Zobeck might prove a useful pawn in their political machinations. A city-state without a lord, they figured, would be too weak to prove noisome. They agreed that so long as Zobeck remained neutral in the affairs of its "betters," its neighbors would allow it to live on sufferance.

The people of Zobeck had other plans. Ignored by its haughty neighbors, the Free City rose like a phoenix from the ashes of the revolt. The flames of freedom heated its forges, and Zobeck's citizens transformed their city into a hotbed of innovation. Guided by the Free City Council, new social and political structures were born. Aided by the hand of Rava the Gear Goddess, new machines of steam and brass were forged. In a short nine decades, the citizens of Zobeck have transformed their sleepy fiefdom into a city-state with the power to affect change across Midgard.

Zobeck: The Clockwork City Collector's Edition provides all the information you need to run a campaign in the Free City at the crossroads of Midgard. Home to merchants, priests, conniving cultists, backstabbing thieves, and the occasional pure-hearted altruist, Zobeck is the trade center of the dark fantasy world of Midgard—a world thoroughly detailed in the newly updated *Midgard Worldbook* and *Midgard Heroes Handbook*. Of course, Zobeck can be easily adapted into a thriving fantasy city in your own campaign world. Whether in Midgard or your own setting, Zobeck is the perfect home base for spinning stories of intrigue and street-level fantasy.

ONWARD!

To those of you new to Zobeck, again, welcome to the Free City! Even in a world of dragons and magic, there are no greater dangers to life and livelihood than those found on the streets of the big city. Tighten your purse strings, friend, and venture into the unknown.

ALL ZOBECK

Zobeck: The Clockwork City Collector's Edition brings together the content from *Zobeck Gazetteer* and *Streets of Zobeck*, select content from *Warlock 3: Undercity* and *Warlock 30: Zobeck*, several Warlock Lairs, and other sources, plus new material, including two brand-new adventures.

You can find more information about the Crossroads region of Midgard in *Midgard Worldbook* and about the cities' various peoples in *Midgard Heroes Handbook*.

As you explore the myriad locations of Zobeck within this book, you'll notice that some have a certain symbol (§) with a number after it. This corresponds to the map of Zobeck at the end of the book.



CHAPTER 1

A HISTORY OF ZOBECK

The wise and enlightened guidance of House Stross over their various domains—including the provinces of Grisal, Zobeck, and the Smolder Hills—is demonstrated by the fact that they have made both trade with the Winter Court and a tight alliance with the Order of the Undying Sun, the twin and somewhat contradictory pillars of their rule.

Balancing the tensions between the order, where the eldest son of the Stross generally earns his spurs, and the wilder shadow magic of Sarastra and her followers, beautifully illustrates the Stross's ability to play competing interests against each other while still securing their city against outside aggression, especially from the Ironcrags and Morgau. Everywhere is evidence of the people's deep love for House Stross, and they support its rule faithfully. Indeed, I think no crown in the Crossroads is more secure than that of His Grace, Kranos Stross.

—from *Travels Down the River Argent*
(published one year before the Great Revolt)

The Free City's austere feudal history has greatly defined the current freedom-loving citizenry. After suffering under the long, harsh reign of the aristocratic Stross family, the people of Zobeck have little love for nobles or the institution of feudalism. They have vowed to never again accept a lord's yoke. Instead, commerce and the ability of every citizen to grab life's wealth with gusto rule the Zobecker spirit. Free to make their way in the world, they work to secure a living in whatever manner they see fit—though some occupations clash with the city's laws—and answer to no one but themselves.

Still, certain citizens are not as free as others. The kobolds fought alongside the rebels to emancipate Zobeck and thus gained a seat on the Free City Council, but as a whole, the kobolds remain very much second-class citizens. They do not experience the same uplifting spirit of freedom as their dwarf and human neighbors, or even that afforded the gearforged. Those formerly flesh-and-blood beings now living in

metal bodies hold more privileges than any kobold in the greater city. For all their assistance in the Great Revolt, kobolds have been relegated by others to their own little ghetto and the most menial of professions. Life remains harsh for the little dragonkin who once steered their own destiny and mined freely in service to a proud kobold king in these lands.

Here's how the present Zobeck came to be . . .

EARLY DAYS: THE FEY, THE CURSE, AND THE KOBOLDS

For thousands of years, the fey ruled the Margreve Forest and the surrounding area, including the lands upon which now sit the city of Zobeck and Castle Shadowcrag. Over 1,400 years ago, on the advice of an evil advisor named Chorvodni, the Holly King and his fey followers sacrificed a young fey woman using a sword of light and planted a black oak on Rosehaven Hill.

Chorvodni—a shadow lamassu who served Sarastra, the goddess of night, magic, and shadow—led the Holly King to believe this magical sacrifice would trick the goddess and allow him to steal much of her power. Instead, the Heartwood Pact, as the ritual became known, forever cursed the fey to the Shadow Realm, where Sarastra forced them all into servitude. Their pact also linked the hilltop, and the castle that would later rise upon it, to the Shadow Realm.

The pact ultimately granted the fey great power, and they became the goddess's willing servants. However, their time in the Shadow Realm transformed them, twisted them into the scáthesidhe, the shadow fey. Over time, their hearts grew bitter, and they longed to regain all they had left behind. But they could not act directly against the curse, which they had sworn to honor in the Heartwood Pact.

About 600 years after Sarastra stole the fey from the land (and 200 years before the Stross family came to rule Zobeck), a tribe of kobolds began mining the abandoned lands. Under King Brandorek's orders, the kobolds built Brandor's Keep, a simple square fortification, on the fey's beloved Rosehaven Hill. The structure remains intact as a part of Castle Shadowcrag (see **Chapter 4**).

Eventually, Sarastra allowed the fey to occasionally return to the place where they had struck their bad bargain. When the fey discovered the kobolds had usurped "their" lands, the Moonlit King and his followers drove the kobolds off the hill in a rage. The kobolds, under the leadership of a kobold wielding the fey's sword of light, resisted from the shelter of their mines. But the fey worked carefully to destroy the "trespassing" kobolds.

THE FEY AND THE STROSS FAMILY

The fey formed a hidden alliance with an ambitious human merchant family named Stross, and through Adrastus Stross, the fey saw the kobolds enslaved and the sword of light broken. Lord Stross brought in 20 shadow mastiffs, more than 20 grim dwarves, and a column of 200 human soldiers. He called out for Brandorek, the kobold king, and the king surrendered, offering his oath of fealty. The dwarves sundered the magical sword.

The Goddess of Night, realizing the black oak now bound the land as well as the fey, commanded the fey to defend the site. No one should have a chance to destroy the black oak. Indeed, Sarastra commanded the fey to bring the site over the planar boundary. When they failed to do so with sorcery, the fey decided to manipulate one of the Stross children. They sought to tempt a Stross scion to swear allegiance to them, to swear fealty to their king upon reaching adulthood, and eventually to grant the castle to the fey upon death. They never quite succeeded, but they did come close.

In the Black Oak Bailey, site of their great black oak, the fey struck this bargain with the Stross. In exchange for their eldest daughter and eldest son fostering in the courts of the shadow fey, the Stross gained access to shadow magic and the right to rule the Rosehaven lands, as the fey called the small walled city of Zobeck and the kobold mines all around it. The eldest of the Stross patriarchs entered the Shadow Realm when he neared death, and some believe he lives there still, his soul forfeit for the power the fey gave his descendants.

The Shadow Realm still seeps through the dark oak and tempts those near it into darkness. Merely living near the bailey does not trigger the curse. The victims must also ask for help from the Goddess of Night and Magic—and for many long decades, the Stross remained loyal to the Sun God Khors. Over time, the fey turned them more and more toward Sarastra, convincing each generation to go a little further into shadow, but the Stross were canny bastards.

While the Stross did offer some worship to the goddess, they never fully embraced her. Instead, they used the scáthesidhe's wish to corrupt them to manipulate the fey. The family taught its sons and daughters the secrets of power over the shadow fey. And indeed, their teachings kept the fey at their command until the Great Revolt (see below) brought down the family.

THE STROSS FAMILY'S RULE

The Stross ruled in the city and province of Zobeck for nearly 600 years, marrying well, fighting off invasion from the magocracies to the west, and holding their own against the advances of Morgau and Doresh to the northeast. They did it the old-fashioned way, with fistfuls of silver and a ruthless cruelty that scattered their enemies.

The Stross family's wealth flowed from river trade and deep silver mines. Their peasants worked hard, their enslaved kobold miners pulled ore from the earth day and night, and their soldiers kept the eastern Morgau undead at bay. But over time, the costs of defense and the nobility's luxurious upkeep grew very steep. The knights and landowners took more and more, and one day, the merchants, artisans, and peasants decided to stop paying. It took only a small spark.

The Stross guards dragged Halsen Hrovitz, a boy of ten, from the city's streets for denouncing the Stross as leeches and screaming that he did not want to die in their mines. Ordinary Zobeckers blocked the guards' path. News of the incident raced through the city, and citizens flocked to the boy. A mob grew. The people initially threw insults at the guards holding Halsen. As their numbers and courage grew however, their pent-up anger manifested in thrown cobblestones. They pelted the guards relentlessly and freed the boy, who lived but suffered a terrible injury to his leg that never healed.

The hard-pressed guards fought to return to the prison. Hussar reinforcements arrived and rode into the mob, trampling a half-dozen people. A silversmith named Abelard and a journeyman wizard named Marcenzo reformed the crowd and gave it direction and goals. Within hours, they led the citizens to seize the city barracks, but soldiers from Castle Stross continued to march in, as did the troops from the gatehouses on the river, the Great Southern Road, and the Griffon Gate. The battle was far from over when the sun set on the first day.

The mob looted the Stross barracks and armory throughout the night and passed out weapons to a thousand willing hands.

THE GREAT REVOLT

By mid-morning the next day, Abelard and Marcenzo led the rebels to accomplish the impossible: they chased all the hostile guards and soldiers out of the city. Clever maneuvering during the night allowed them to surprise the Stross men just before dawn at a half-dozen different places, and the guards never recovered from the shock. The soldiers regrouped near the Oros Bridge though, and the citizens along with a few adventurers gathered in Crown Square to prepare for the counterattack. The city folk swore that the revolt must not falter nor end until they had cast off House Stross completely.

All day, the rebellious citizens gathered their forces. A huge mob threatened the commandery of the Order of the Undying Sun, staunch supporters of the Stross family who supposedly held a king's ransom in gold. The threats were a ruse, however, to keep the knights from supporting the city guards who yet remained loyal. In the meantime, Abelard and Marcenzo proclaimed Zobeck the Free City and struck a bargain with the majority of the remaining guards: in exchange for supporting the rebellion, their captain would have a lifetime seat on the new Free City Council that would govern Zobeck. With the bargain struck, word went out to sack Stross warehouses, counting houses, their city palace on Crown Square, and even their ships and barges.

The rebels released prisoners and arrested nobles and tax collectors. The mob ruled the city while the watch stood aside, powerless to resist. Meanwhile, the aristocracy's forces fled to plot their revenge. They had lost the battle for the city, but the war was far from over. The knights of the Order of the Undying Sun gave their word not to return to Zobeck and so were set free. They marched out to hisses and cries: "Traitors to the people!"

One month later, the aristocratic army returned. Nobles and knights of the Undying Sun sent from other commanderies rode warhorses while footmen and other allies—including mercenary crossbowmen— followed on foot or on lighter horses. With the group also came powerful shadow fey called the Four Deaths. The Stross allies seized the Oros Bridge, dividing the castle from the city and cutting off a main trade route. They stopped barge traffic on the River Argent and slowly pushed back the Free City's patrols.

THE BATTLE OF OROS BRIDGE

On a rainy, late spring day, almost 7,000 rebels met Lord Kranos Stross and his 1,400 retainers and 2,200 allies at the Battle of Oros Bridge. The revolutionaries' numbers and bravery overcame their shortage of training and proper arms and armor. Peasant archers, kobold miners, stout mercenary pikemen hired by merchant interests, and the wizardry of Marcenzo formed the backbone of the Free City's forces. A few dwarves had worked tirelessly to make spears, shields, and armor for hundreds of the most experienced warriors, but more than half of Zobeck's army carried

little more than knives and hate. The watch, now firmly committed to the revolt, formed the remainder of the force, and the priests of Yarila the Harvest Goddess and Volund the Forge God provided support. The revolutionaries' anger gave them courage against their better-trained foes.

That first morning, the army of the Free City attempted to use that rage and courage to retake the bridge. The nobles held against repeated attempts to drive them off by magic and numbers though. Confident in their superior skill and equipment, the Stross alliance counterattacked around noon. Cavalry poured over the bridge, shattered the front ranks, and overran the Free City's supply area. Almost as soon as they reached the reserves though, they fell into a clever trap: a field of holes and mud prepared by miners ensnared the advancing horses. Kobolds, artisans, and peasants dragged almost 50 knights down into mud and death.

Both sides retreated in good order.

The second day was clear and sunny enough to see the muddy mess of the previous day's struggle. The battle continued into late afternoon with only skirmishes, feints, and small probing attacks while the Stross forces waited for the ground to dry sufficiently for another cavalry charge. That delay undid them, for the wizard Marcenzo had taken his best men across the river during the night to join a large contingent of kobold reinforcements, freed from the Stross silver mines and moving fast over the drying river bank.

Suddenly flanked, the Stross line at the bridge collapsed, and the mercenaries took flight, leaving the cavalry to struggle alone. In two days of bloody ruin, the peasants and kobolds took hundreds of noble prisoners and finally ended the reign of the Stross family. Kobold archers, owl-flying raiders, and other deadly night fighters prevented the remaining army from retreating to Strossheim, the Stross family's castle. The stragglers instead retreated east, seeking shelter at the village of Briarwood.

THE CASTLE FALLS

That night, the mob stormed Strossheim, forced the gate, and sacked the castle. They freed prisoners from the dungeons, tore down tapestries, and carted off food and gold. By dawn, more than 40 bodies hung from the battlements, arranged from youngest to eldest.

The Stross supporters fled to neighboring states, sought refuge downriver, or simply changed sides. After the looting ceased, the castle briefly served as the Free City's headquarters. One Stross child, Evander Stross, survived the massacre, though no one realized it. The quiet child was playing amidst the castle's shadows, as he usually did, when the mob struck. In the midst of the clash, he pledged his soul to the forces of shadow, and the shadows enfolded him into their protection.

The looting of the upper halls and the death of the inhabitants turned the castle into a place haunted by new ghosts. Fortunately, the fires started in the Great Hall failed to catch (or were suppressed by summoned water elementals). Many looters sought to find the "hoard of silver" the Stross family vaults contained, though they never did. Some claimed demons had



guarded it, others vanished in the search, and some were driven mad by the terrors they saw below the hill. The army sealed up the entrances to the kobold's silver mines for a few months, until the kobolds offered to work the mines in exchange for a fair share of the silver and a permanent position on the City Council. The city gratefully accepted over the objections of those who still saw kobolds as nothing more than slaves.

AFTER THE REVOLT

Five years later, the army abandoned the castle as the rising number of missing or dead sentries became unacceptable. The rumors of the castle's haunting date to that time. The dwarves of Clan Grimbold stayed, however, and remain there still. Certain wizards and cultists visit them on occasion to purchase things best not discussed. Likewise, fighters seeking weapons of starmetal or pure shadow or weapons aligned with the heavens often make their way here and pay high prices for goods not available anywhere else.

The kobold silver miners worked the castle's mines for more than 30 years. When the deep mines suffered a series of devastating collapses and explosions, even the kobolds abandoned them as haunted—or at least unlucky. The mines recently reopened with the help of clockwork pumps and new techniques for bracing the old tunnels.

THE PRESENT DAY

The Zobeck Revolt is 90 years past. Only a few dwarves and gearforged remember it firsthand. The brash, rich city found its footing as an independent mercantile state. The sons and daughters of the revolt's leaders became the city's consuls and lord mayor and formed the Free City Council, a ruling body elected by the human, dwarven, and kobold citizens of Zobeck. The kobold slaves of ages past were freed from their shackles, and after centuries of prejudice, kobolds finally began to rise to positions of power in Zobeck.

The citizens of Zobeck have largely cast aside the gods and traditions of the Stross Dynasty and now honor Rava the Gear Goddess as well as some older deities. All faiths are welcome in Zobeck, though most of its people have no love for Sarastra, the Goddess of Night and Magic. Only a handful of Sarastrans live in the city, most of them shadow fey, whom the other citizens of Zobeck have yet to accept. Even the appearance of Winter's Kiss—the shadow fey embassy—within the city has done little to ease the tension between Zobeck's older citizens and their new neighbors.

Despite years of expeditions, the dangers of Castle Shadowcrag—the haunted ruins of old Strossheim—still weigh heavily upon the minds of the Free City Council.

DANGEROUS NEIGHBORS

Zobeck shares borders with five states: the dwarven Ironcrag Cantons to the west, the undead lords of Morgau and Doresh to the north and east, the human kingdom of the Magdar to the south, and allied Perunalia, the Duchy of Perun's Daughter, far to the east at the mouth of the River Argent. Raiding bands of militant ghouls from the subterranean Ghoul Imperium sometimes harry the city's trade, though the ghouls send no ambassador to the city.

In the past decade, Zobeck's prominence on the world stage has only grown. Its tangled web of alliances has grown thicker. Most unsettlingly, the Dragon Empire's hunger for conquest has pushed draconic legions northward. In response to this Mharoti aggression, Zobeck has bound its fate to the realms of Grisel and Magdar, forming the Argentine Alliance. The alliance also stands against King Lucan, the recently ascendant vampire who also hungers for the blood of the free people of Midgard.

Almost as dangerous as those nations are the less organized groups. Bands of centaurs occasionally make their way through the Margreve Forest to raid the city's fields and outlying villages.

Close but not quite bordering Zobeck are up to 12 additional states, depending on who does the counting: the nomadic elves of the Rothenian Plain, the human lands of the Grand Duchy of Dornig, the Free City of Salzbach, the small mountain state of Verrayne, the recently conquered, undead-controlled Krakovar, and two of the Seven Cities, Melano and Triolo. All have trade relationships and alliances with Zobeck.

ADAPTING ZOBECK TO YOUR CAMPAIGN

While the Free City of Zobeck resides at the Crossroads in a world called Midgard and includes many details about Midgard's deities, clockwork technology, and neighboring territories, game masters can easily remove Zobeck from this realm and slip it into their own. This certainly requires a few adjustments, but Zobeck makes a fine trade hub in any campaign world.



2 CHAPTER

OVERVIEW OF THE FREE CITY

Mammon scratched his golden beard, sending a shower of silver ducats to the floor. Lesser devils scrambled to gather them up, but the erinyes Issiloth waited and watched her master's darkening expression. "Why, oh worthless servants of mine," he asked, "is this merchants' city not entirely within my claws?"

The servants outdid each other in avoiding their master's gaze, and the silence grew weightier. Finally, Issiloth judged the moment right, licked her lips, and stepped forward. "My lord, most of the merchants already bow to your fiendish mastery." The words almost made her gag, but she pressed on. "We have plans to secure more—"

"Most is not all!" the arch-devil thundered. "All of Zobeck must bend its knee. Or have you forgotten your sums, you lintpicking dungeater?" His gaze began with her, swept over the rest, and returned to the erinyes. The other devils edged toward the chamber's platinum doors. Issiloth bowed her head to hide her expression. She chose her next words carefully.

"Perhaps the ones who resist you serve other gods?"

"Of course they do." Mammon sounded more annoyed than angry, and Issiloth held her breath. "You give tedious council because you do not know better. Perhaps you should learn firsthand. Go, and bring their greatest heroes to my service."

Issiloth tried to look stricken. "But my lord, the heroes of Zobeck are known for their patron goddess and stout—"

"Go, little fool," Mammon said in his most quiet tone, and Issiloth shivered with real fear. "And if you fail, do not return."

Issiloth felt the pull of the link to the city forming quickly. "I am already gone, your Golden Magnificence, with a thousand pardons for my rudeness and sloth," she said and meant every word. With a twinkle of coinage, she found herself in a summoning circle, just one more newcomer looking to make her own way in Zobeck. Whether that meant seeking glory and souls for Mammon or just finding a berth out of his reach, at least she finally had her chance.

A city's people are its foundation and its soul. The city of Zobeck houses a more industrious group of citizens than most, all of them free to trade, bargain, gather, and even scheme to make themselves rich, powerful, or wise. As one of the very few Free Cities in Midgard, it answers to no king or noble lord. Instead, its Free City Council rules from secret chambers, its watch is both human and gearforged, and its people know what makes a life worthwhile: freedom, trade, and the blessings of the Gear Goddess. The city ticks and tocks, and its people keep a steady rhythm of mercantile life. Trade flows up and down the River Argent, out the Dwarven Gate to the Ironcrags, north through the Margreve, and south to Harkesh and Siwal and the distant cities of spice and silk.

Underneath all that hard work and pragmatism lies a darker city: a place built on kobolds enslaved in silver mines, a place still scarred by a harsh family's diabolical practices and autocratic rule, a place corrupted by pacts of blood, by temptations of the flesh, and by the raw power of untrammeled greed that blackens hearts. The people of Zobeck lust for power, wealth, success, and pleasure, and they bargain with anyone they believe can provide them, whether that be Kariv soothsayers, strange cults, harsh gods, or other unscrupulous schemers. This hunger draws devils like crows to a corpse.

Yet the city prospers. Its heroes avert disaster again and again. Somehow, Zobeck's heart keeps ticking, overseen by Rava, the goddess that gave it life.

DISTRICTS

The Free City encompasses 10 main districts, each briefly described below. More detailed information about each district can be found in **Chapter 4**.

CARTWAYS

What started as kobold mining and drainage tunnels were later expanded by Zobeck's vintners and greengrocers who used these underground passageways for storing wine and perishables. Noble revelers used them to travel back and forth to the Stross-sponsored Winter Festival in the underground cavern called Winter Hall. Eventually, the city's nobles claimed the Cartways as their private highways, using them for everything from business to sexual rendezvous. After the Great Revolt, the victors saw the tunnels as symbols of the rich and sealed them for good.

Entrances to the Cartways still exist, however, and Zobeck's smugglers, gangs, and undesirable residents frequently conduct business or lair therein. Travelers in the Cartways have encountered ghouls, devils, demons, otyughs, and various cults, including a cult of Marena. The Free City's watch officially prohibits exploration in the Cartways. Anyone entering them does so at their own risk.

CITADEL DISTRICT

Located in the northern part of the city, this section contains the walled Citadel and its highly skilled griffon knights, who protect Zobeck's uppermost river entrances. The King's Head Tavern and the White Rose Tavern are both located in this district. The former caters to average soldiers while paladins and priests of Khors and Perun patronize the latter.

COLLEGIUM DISTRICT

As its name suggests, this district's greatest feature is Zobeck's famous Arcane Collegium. Lada's Temple of the Celestial Dawn is its other great landmark. Scholars, scribes, mages, students, and alchemists frequent this district and often gather at the Hedgehog Tavern or peruse the shelves at the Book Fetish.

DOCK DISTRICT (THE GULLET)

Also called the Gullet—and one of the busiest areas of the Free City—the docks along the River Argent are the center of the city's trade, just slightly eclipsing the Great Northern Road. Its wharves, alleys, and thoroughfares see traffic from merchants, bargemen, and stevedores at all hours. Its taverns, gambling dens, and bordellos stand beside warehouses, dry docks, and other industries of the water trade. Brawls are common, and the watch tends to patrol the area heavily to ensure the smooth continuation of commerce.

GEAR DISTRICT

The city's dwarves dominate this district, which houses many trade guilds, like the Geargrinder's Guild, Foundryman's Guild, and Steamworker's Union. The area is awash in tin, iron, and brass creations, and the sound of dwarves striking anvils carries throughout the streets. Many gearforged frequent this district.

KOBOLD GHETTO

Zobeck's hard-working kobolds reside in this section of the city. Their many kings hold sway in this small realm, and any Bigs or Too Talls entering the ghetto have to submit to the kobold border authority, paying taxes on declared goods and often bribes just to gain admittance.

The ghetto's streets are narrow, crowded, and often trapped. Non-kobolds are walking targets for pickpockets and gangs.

LOWER ZOBECK (ASHMILL)

Ashmill is home to the Free City's poor and unskilled working classes, though a few merchants, like the Kappa family, have purchased large chunks of space here near the Moon Temple and the shrine to Charun. Lower Zobeck also houses the Wheatsheaf Tavern, a favored drinking hole for smugglers and rogues. Merchants selling foodstuffs, livestock, and spices do brisk business in this district.

MARKET DISTRICT (VINEYARD DISTRICT)

Merchants selling carpets, cloth, leather, wine, weapons, alchemical powders, poisons, goods from other lands, and even otherworldly goods from the Shadow Realm hawk their wares from tiny stalls in this district. Most anything can be found for sale here.

MERCHANT DISTRICT

Weavers, cobblers, coopers, carpenters, jewelers, armorers, and other skilled workers have shops lining this district. Some of their wares are sold in the Market District, supplementing their income, but these craftsmen generally work to order and keep quite busy. Many merchants reside in the upper levels of their shops, though the wealthier ones have residences in Upper Zobeck.

ZOBECK, THE CROSSROADS CITY



Symbol: A red and gold quartered shield with a gear on it, countercharged

Ruler: Free Mayor Constantia Olleck (CG dwarf **merchant captain**, see *Tome of Beasts 3*) and the Free City Consuls

Free City Consuls: Field Marshall of the Free Army Sir Jorun Haclav (LN human **war priest** of Perun, see *Creature Codex*); Guildmaster of the Arcane Collegium Orlando (CN human **archmage**); Halsen Hrovitz IV, master merchant of House Hrovitz (NG human **merchant captain**, see *Tome of Beasts 3*); Kekolina of the Derry Mine (NG kobold **thief lord**, see *Creature Codex*); Lady Wintesla Marack, master merchant of House Marack (LG human **apostle** of Lada, see *Tome of Beasts 3*); Melancha Vendemic (LN human **merchant captain**, see *Tome of Beasts 3*); Myzi I, the **Mouse King** (see *Creature Codex*); Ondli Firedrake, First Consul and High Priest of Rava Among the Dwarves and Volund (LG dwarf **first servant** of Rava and Volund, see *Tome of Beasts 3*); Quetelmak, Kobold King of Kings (LE **king kobold**, see *Creature Codex*); Radovar Streck, Lector of the Collegium (NE human **mage**); Selena Harbeck, Guildmistress of the Weaver's Guild (LN human **apostle** of Rava, see *Tome of Beasts 3*)

Important Personages: His Excellency Ambassador Glaninin Thelamandrine (NE **shadow fey ambassador**, see *Creature Codex*); Lena Ravovik, High Priestess of Rava Among the Humans (LN human **first servant** of Rava, see *Tome of Beasts 3*); Lady Fenyll Marack, Lord Commander of the Free Army of Zobeck and Keeper of the Blue House (LE human **thief lord**, see *Creature Codex*); Lord Volstaff Greymark, Master of Coin and prominent wool merchant (LE human **thief lord**, see *Creature Codex*); Lucca Angeli, High Priestess of Lada (NG human **first servant** of Lada, see *Tome of Beasts 3*); Master Diviner Rudwin Whitstone (N dwarf **mage**); Master Illusionist Ariella Scarpetti (N human **mage**); Master Necromancer Konrad von Eberfeld (NE human **necromancer**, see *Creature Codex*); Medlin Gorzax, High Priest of Perun (N human **first servant** of Perun, see *Tome of Beasts 3*); Sir Janush Hermass, Commander of the Order of the Undying Sun (LG human **field commander** of Khors, see *Tome of Beasts 3*); Sir Malkus Lineguard, Commander of the Order of Griffon Knights (LG **dwarven ringmage**, see *Tome of Beasts*)

Population: 16,000 (12,000 humans, 2,800 kobolds, 850 dwarves, 200 gearforged, and 150 other)

Towns: Neuraddel, population 4,320 (4,300 humans and 20 gearforged); Obersteinau, population 3,200 (2,000 kobolds and 1,200 humans); Vesslau Mines population 2,800 (all kobolds); Altbach, population 2,200 (2,000 humans and 200 dwarves)

Castles: Gelburg, Obertal, Remmauer, Shadowcrag, Stefanstor

Great Gods: Rava (patron), Holda, Lada, Perun, Svarog/Volund

TEMPLE DISTRICT

Temples to the Free City's five main deities—Lada (her largest temple is in Zobeck), Perun, Rava, Volund, and Porevit and Yarila (the Green Gods)—comprise the extent of this district. A small shrine to Holda is the newest in the district. The structures surrounding the temples house their staff or store goods and livestock to support the clerics.

UPPER ZOBECK

The Free City's government centers, including the City Archives, council hall, courthouse, and the jail (Redrock Bailey), cluster in this district. The opulent painted-brick houses of the city's richest and oldest families stand in the Crown Square portion of the district where the great Old Stross Clock tolls the hours.

LIFE IN ZOBECK

Despite commerce's importance, not everyone in Zobeck is a merchant or business owner. The average citizen makes their wage through common labor as a farmer, apprentice, launderer, miner, sailor, servant, stevedore, watchman, wait staff, or any of a myriad of other professions. Some individuals, of course, prefer illegal endeavors, such as smuggling, thieving, and narcotics dealing. For the most part, however, Zobeck is a city of hardworking people who highly value their freedom.

PEOPLE OF ZOBECK

As a thriving trade center, Zobeck draws people from across Midgard. The Free City calls to enterprising individuals desiring to make their own way in the world. It offers even the lowliest peasants the chance to forge new beginnings. Opportunities in nearly every arena abound for those who know how to grab them, and many come to the Crossroads in hopes of bettering their lot. In Rava's ticking city, people can join the hum of the seamless trade machinery and forge their own destiny.

Zobeck's population has grown slowly but steadily over the past 10 years, rising from 14,000 to 16,000. Though the change seems insignificant, Zobeck is beginning to feel growing pains. Housing is growing scarce, and the city's poorest residents are being forced underground by the cost of rent—into the dark and cavernous Old City deep beneath the stones of Zobeck. Still, the city welcomes all human visitors and many of the other races. In a city of commerce, newcomers are all viewed as walking money, and the citizens of the Free City are eager to relieve them of their coin—whether legally or not.

HUMANS

Humans comprise the city's largest population. Most hail from the Magdar Kingdom to the south, though some have immigrated from the Duchy of Perun's Daughter or from Salzbach and Grisal (the latter of which was human before the dwarves took it). A few have arrived after fleeing from the harsh masters of Morgau and Doresh. Others have trickled in from all over Midgard in search of opportunity. Even a few Kariv have made the city their permanent home.

Overall, the humans here are a varied lot, and many different hair colors and skin tones make up the city's crowds. At least a dozen languages echo through the city's streets and docks.

DWARVES

Zobeck's dwarves are, in some senses, the weakest and least martial dwarves in Midgard. For a time, their cousins in the Ironcrag Cantons considered them a strange sort of "lowland canton," but their unusual behavior has put the lie to even this. They rarely gather for war, they rarely cloister their women, and they show little interest in the Old Gods, Wotan and Perun. Instead, they devote themselves to the strange cult of Rava the Gear Maiden and to the construction of ever

A VISITOR'S GUIDE TO ZOBECK: AN EXCERPT

It's said a merchant of the Free City would sell their own mother to slavers for a couple coppers. That's untrue, of course. You'd need at least a couple gold. The coppers would only get a kobold a dance with mum.

Though Rava the Gear Goddess remains the ticking heart of the Temple District, industry and trade are the city's soul. Caravans and mule trains clatter and tromp through the city gates day and night. Barges and river-runners keep the dockhands constantly busy. Free City fortunes arise from commerce, whether built on cantonal steel and iron, the spices from distant Khandiria, or stallions of questionable pedigree.

But while steel, spices, and steeds have their charms, nothing draws the eye so much as the monthly arrival of the glass merchants. Though many caravans brave the local shadow road, none of the imitators have a patch on this Zobeck original.

—Darian Darkfyre

more sophisticated mechanisms and tools. They are master jewelers and craftsmen, excellent diviners, and even respectable bards, but they seem to lack the reaver's temperament entirely.

The dwarves of Zobeck live almost exclusively in the Gear District to be close to their work and, some say, to keep one ear open for what the kobolds might do to their forges at night. They labor long and hard, and many gain great wealth. A few maintain summer villas in the alpine reaches. Some work as factors for the great dwarven trade houses, but this is rare because of their uncharacteristic behavior. They show much less passion for the ancient ways than most dwarves. Indeed, when pressed for their clan, canton, and lineage, some merely reply that they are "children of the city and the goddess Rava." This formulation troubles the more devout visitors from Stannasgard or Winterheim. The most famous among them is Ondli Firedrake, a pantheist priest who represents Rava and Volund and is First Consul of the city.

In addition to their industrial innovations, the dwarves are also creators of the school of ring magic (see *Midgard Heroes Handbook*). As masters of the forge, they imbue magical power into the rings and sigils that safeguard their homes, workplaces, and even their personal belongings.

KOBOLDS

The Free City is home to at least 2,200 kobolds, though only a few hundred are ever present in the city at one time. They work the Vilgau silver mines north of the city and the Tromburg iron mines north and east. All that iron, silver, and lead they pull from the earth fuels Zobeck's smithies and foundries. When they do come to the city, they have money to spend and a desire to drink their wages away.

Drunken kobold miners pick fights, and they especially hate gnomes, none of whom live within the city walls for fear of assault. Why does the city tolerate such disruptive creatures? The populace suffers the kobolds because few other creatures are willing to work in the dangerous, wet, tiny mines—and certainly not for the pittance the kobolds earn. Though that's only part of the answer.

Small but strong, the kobolds of Zobeck walk the city streets in large groups every night, visiting the various establishments to spend their coin. Most are miners, but almost as many live and work in the Kobold Ghetto on the southeast side of the city. Their ghetto houses hundreds of the best metallurgists, assayers, alchemists, and clockworkers in Zobeck. The kobolds' talent for sorcery means they even have an apprentice in the Collegium. Their small, nimble fingers make them valuable in all the fine work required to build clockworks of all kinds, from toys to deadly traps and weaponry, such as the Zobeck self-winding crossbow.

GEARFORGED

The gearforged were human once. Created during the Great Revolt when the Collegium sided with the rebels, the first gearforged were little more than a desperate ploy to hold off the knights of the Order of the Undying Sun and the heavy cavalry of House Stross. Dedicated dwarves and humans worked closely with wizards from the Collegium for long hours in the guildhalls using borrowed blood and souls to put life into lifeless metal.

Constructed of steel and brass, their intricate mechanical bodies needed more life than simple animating magic could provide, and the Collegium turned to dark and shunned techniques to transfer the life force of sentient creatures into artificial forms. Disturbed but desperate, the rebels went ahead with the work.



The Steamworker's Guild and Geargrinder's Guild built the gearforged as fast as the foundries allowed, and the clockwork mages animated more than 100 powerful soldiers to counter the heavy cavalry of House Stross.

The animating spirits came from the people of the city: elderly volunteers, angry and idealistic young men, criminals seeking a reprieve, and a few seeking a new life in a whole body. Their bodies died, but their souls lived on, fought bravely, and won.

These are the gearforged—once human, now mechanical and undying. They guard against the creeping return of aristocracy and against the decay and corruption of diabolic cults. Many remember how things were, and they do not easily forgive the slaughter in the streets, still so vivid in their memories. A few individuals join these first gearforged every year. Many are wealthy merchants at the end of life while others are soldiers seeking a new edge, and a few are criminals compelled to serve the city as the price of their crimes.

In the past decade, a new breed of gearforged has emerged from the workshops of Zobeck's Gear District: automata animated by the spirits of elementals plucked from the Elemental Planes instead of taken from the bodies of living creatures. These new elemental gearforged are a controversial creation. Those gearforged with human souls are wary that these new mindless creations will cheapen the value of gearforged life. Likewise, some guild artisans worry these automata will mark the return of slavery in the Free City.

Ever since the slavery of kobolds was abolished, Zobeck's wealthiest merchants have hunted for a way to cut the costs of labor. Living workers must rest, eat, and drink, and they demand wages. Elemental gearforged—or "soulless" gearforged as they are callously known—are created without memories or souls. If instructed to work on a production line, they do so unquestioningly. If commanded to fight, they do so without hesitation.

Most damningly, it has been shown that elemental gearforged are capable of learning and developing a personality. Groups of covert activists and gearforged have rescued some of the new elemental models from mass-production lines and attempted to socialize them through human contact—with great success. Over the course of a few months or years, even the "blank slate" elemental models have begun to talk, joke, and tell stories of their past, just like the gearforged animated with human souls.

Each gearforged's iron, brass, and steel body has a distinct appearance, making it as varied as any other of Zobeck's peoples, though they always have a humanoid shape. Deep in their ticking hearts, the gearforged are much more than war machines. They are thinking creatures with souls who serve the city as watchmen for the Spyglass Guild and as soldiers. Their minds grow with time. And they remember. They remember everything. Their curse is that they never forget until they strip their gears and die. This is what separates them from mere devices, the simple servants only responsive to orders and capable of little more than limited, rote memorization.

OTHERS

Drawn to the bustling city's rich opportunities, numerous other races call Zobeck home. Many of these may not reside in the city proper, especially those with more monstrous natures or shapes. Instead, they live in the Cartways or other dark corners and do not openly walk the city's streets in daylight hours. They remain residents of a sort all the same.

Some beings known to exist (or to have existed) within the city's boundaries include darakhul, dark nagas, derro, devils, elves, ghouls, goblins, halflings, lizardfolk, ravenfolk, and shadow fey. This list is not exhaustive, and other creatures may certainly reside or pass through Zobeck at any given time.

CULTURE

Zobeckers value commerce above everything except freedom. They fiercely celebrate their hard-won freedom during the Stross's Fall celebration, and none of them forget that freedom can be tenuous—especially with neighbors like Morgau and Doresh. Still, common Zobeckers give thanks daily for the ability to run their own lives and make their own way in the world, and they teach their children the importance of this gift.

ZOBECKERS AND ZOBECKIANS

Zobeck's local inhabitants refer to themselves as Zobeckers. For ages, however, tourists have called the citizens Zobeckians, and this name has promulgated throughout Midgard. Zobeckers generally dislike being called Zobeckians, but they enjoy taking foreigners' money, so most politely ignore the inaccuracy. The names are interchangeable among the lower classes, but in polite company or after the locals have had a few drinks, visitors should remember the distinction if they want to score social points or avoid fights.

Zobeckers have a tremendous love for their patron deity Rava and her inspired gearforged creations. They also hold the Free City's other four main gods in high regard. Most of them stand ever vigilant against cultists, especially those of Marena, who seek to undermine the accepted faiths in Zobeck.

LANGUAGES

In a trade city like Zobeck, Common suffices as the principal language of the streets alongside the natives' many dialects of the Northern Tongue. Dwarven and Draconic are other popular languages. The ever-turning wheels of commerce continually bring diverse peoples to Zobeck, however, and most any language or dialect can be heard in the city on any given day.

CURRENCY

The silver piece is the basic exchange standard in Zobeck as it is in many municipalities and countries throughout Midgard. Copper, gold, and even a little platinum also circulate along with somewhat more exotic currencies. Bartering is less common in Zobeck's markets where coin is king, but certain groups, like the Kariv and the kobolds, often exchange goods and services. Bartering with Zobeck's various gangs is also feasible, if dangerous.

TRADE BY ROAD AND RIVER

The commerce of a trade city sounds glamorous and exotic: silks and spices, mithral and magic, relics and lore all change hands between locals, visitors, and sharp-eyed wanderers. Everything seems sweeter when minstrels sing about it—largely because they go easy on the sweat and donkey dung. But the Crown Square merchants have a saying: "There's no such thing as easy money."

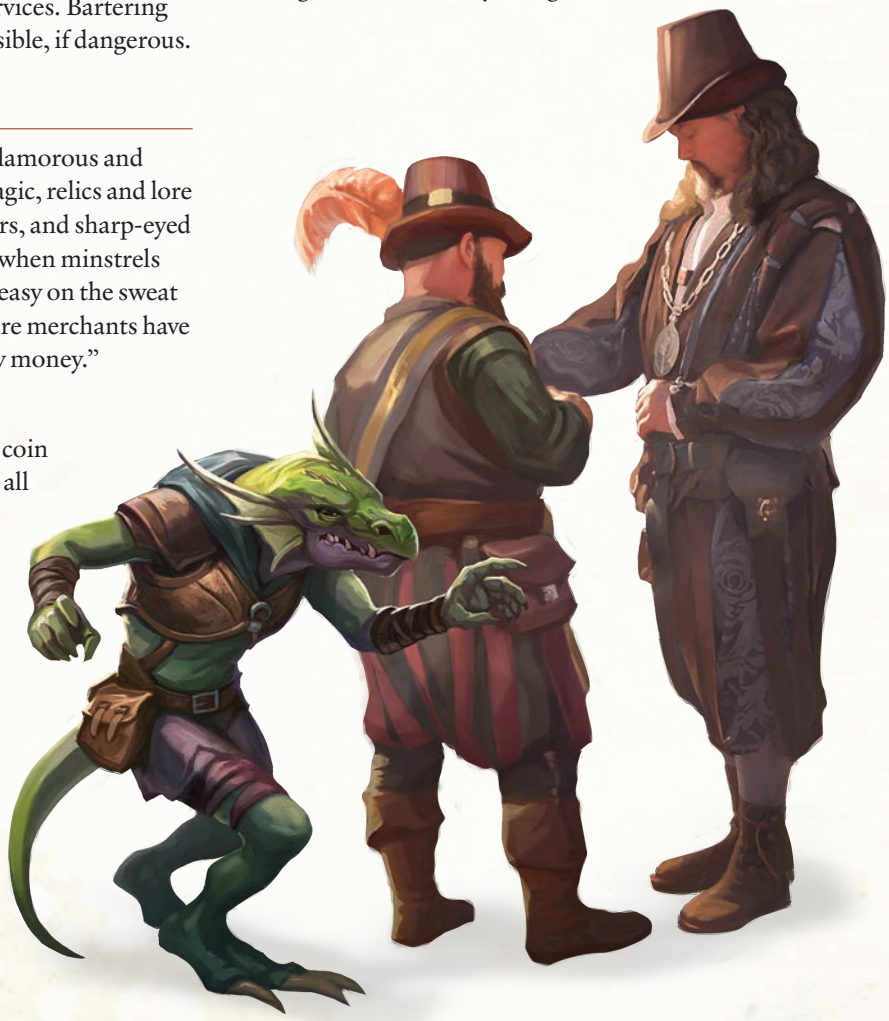
TRADERS AND CARGO

The traders and stevedores make their coin because someone has to actually move all the iron, wheat, silver, ale, wool, and timber sold in Zobeck. The traders take a (sometimes literal) whip to kobolds or humans who load and unload the city's barges, oxcarts, mule trains, and hay wagons. Once the trip begins, the costs rise: time, toil, fodder, and travel itself all drain money. All too often, blood is a price of doing business—someone has to defend the cargo against bold robbers, ravaging ogres, or grasping petty lordlings who close their bridges and demand a toll.

Still they come, more and more, and Zobeck welcomes each shipment. The Free City spurns no opportunity to gain every copper. Many merchants prize the most uneventful and short routes, often to Cronepisht or Hammerfell. Specialists—rare and spectacular—can command far greater fees and profits. The Templeforge airships down from the Ironcrags, the Flying Cities of Sikkim, charging the air with their alluring spice, even the shadow roads of the scáthesidhe, connecting the Free City to the courts of the shadow fey, can return many times an investment's cost to a bold and careful merchant. Everyone wants something and everything wants someone—meaning that there is always money to be made if you can bring the right goods to the right market.

RIVER TRAFFIC

Certainly, pulling an oar is easier than marching up a mountain, but the "easy money" of floating on a barge downriver to Sveretska or the Duchy of Perun's Daughter is not so easy that guards



are tripping over one another volunteering for it. The river gods are fickle, especially in spring, and a pack of river trolls can capsize a barge no matter how heavily laden. Worse, the songs of the lorelei can distract a pilot, and hill giants can sink a cargo with a few well-placed boulders and loot the wreck. And of course, if the cargo doesn't go through, the guards don't get paid.

A successful run south creates still more work when going back upriver. Guards are expected to pull at the oars. Forests crowd the riverbank for long miles, hiding bandits and worse. And the river itself is often filled with snags, shifting sandbars, and other bargemen whose cargo may have been stolen. Some bargemen turn to banditry, pretending friendship before revealing piracy. Say what you want about the stink of a mule train, at least you won't drown in your armor.

THE ROAD SOUTH

The Magdar Kingdom is a land of insanely ambitious and scheming barons, dukes, and bastard princes. They all spend their time vying for the kingdom's Eagle Crown, and the Magdar have at times had as many as 12 Immortal Kings within 18 months. Their politicking and scheming rely on trade flowing through their kingdom, for they spend their tariffs and tolls to import the rarest poisons and the priciest assassins.

Since the death in battle against the Dragon Empire of both the king and his heir, the Widow Queen has assumed rule of the kingdom. Zobeck, fearing for its neighbor's fall, has worked to strengthen its alliance with the Magdar even further. The flow of goods—particularly iron, wagons, armor, and weapons—to the south and east have increased substantially.

Goods reach the Magdar Kingdom in oxcarts, meaning they might travel 12 miles on a good day. Though glacially slow, this method has at least two good points to recommend it: oxen are cheap and pull well, and ox carts can be circled for protection each night. The latter's importance cannot be overstated—the White Mountain Marches are nothing but a nest of robbers, and the raiders from the Mharoti Empire are patient and vicious. A third, unspoken benefit is its reduced personnel cost and plentiful opportunities for advancement since half the guard company will likely die before reaching Harkesh.

THE ROAD NORTH

Zobeck's Order of Griffon Knights protects travel and trade along the Great Northern Road, which stretches over 200 miles from Zobeck past Castle Valach on its way north to the city of Bratislor. Though only a wagon-width wide in most places, the road seems to refuse the forest's creeping effort to totally reclaim it. The road remains a scar cut down the Margreve's face. High overhead, the branches of flanking trees reach for each other, turning the road into a long tunnel with a tall green arch. Some sun breaks through, but night falls early here even in high summer.

Due to boggy, rocky, and overgrown stretches, travelers frequently take a fortnight to traverse the road on foot. Riders typically take eight or nine days if they pull no wagons. Coaching inns, spaced one to three days apart, offer travelers a respite from beasts and weather.

Though snow and cold challenge winter travelers, the road's condition suffers most from melt waters, rains, and mud in the early spring. Coaching inns are either closed or not prepared for travelers during this time. Merchants willing to risk the Great Northern Road before the annual Road Opening festival in Zobeck can expect tough going from both the terrain and the hungry creatures emerging from the deeper hollows.

The Great Northern Road is the only passable route to the rich cities of the Red Queen and the undead princes of Morgau and Doresh. As the second source of wealth for the city of Zobeck—the first being the River Argent—the Great Northern Road sees heavy, steady use.

TRADE WITH THE SHADOW FEY

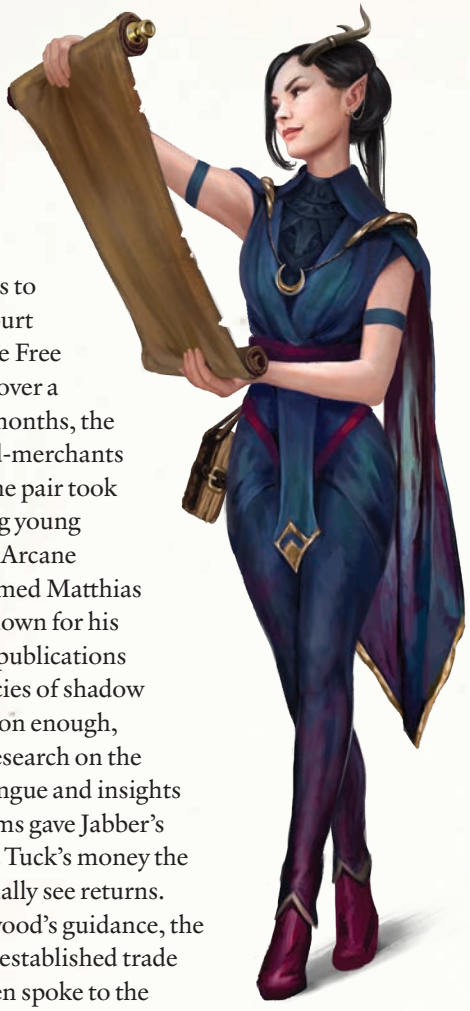
Antonidas Jabber was a young highwayman, brash enough to get rich and smart enough to never get caught. He loved knives, cheap beer, and cheaper women, traits that endeared young Jabber to the even younger—and vastly richer—Tuck Marick, the youngest son of the Marick merchant house with an allowance that beggared description.

Jabber and Tuck were fond of songs and stories, and while on a bender of heroic proportions, they decided the minstrels' tales of callous fey were all terribly one-sided. Nobody who spun straw into gold and turned frogs into princes could be all bad.

They thought there was money to be made trading with the Winter Court. Though Zobeck boasted many wonders, the city's market for myth was underexploited, and Jabber and Tuck were notoriously bullish.

Caravans of the Shadow Road. With Tuck's fortune and Jabber's daring, the pair commissioned a mule train and wagons to drive the local shadow road (also called the Niflheim Road). The wagons would travel the impossible route by way of blood and poetry gathered from the poorest and most desperate minstrels of Zobeck.

It shouldn't have worked, but it did.



Though the first emissaries to the Winter Court returned to the Free City in pieces over a period of six months, the youths-turned-merchants persevered. The pair took on a promising young linguist of the Arcane Collegium named Matthias Yronwood, known for his controversial publications on the intricacies of shadow fey speech. Soon enough, Yronwood's research on the shadow fey tongue and insights into fey customs gave Jabber's brashness and Tuck's money the chance to actually see returns.

With Yronwood's guidance, the young factors established trade routes and even spoke to the Winter Court—still ruled by the Goddess of Night and Magic—without offending the nobility in attendance. Yronwood established protocols to ensure negotiations and conversation between human and fey were conducted in moderate safety.

Before the year was out, the first glass caravans returned to Zobeck from the far-off Shadow Realm. The profit margin was enormous, given the fey's belief that haggling for gold—as opposed to the sublime intangibles of mortal memory and human degradation—was beneath them, and the simple fact that the Winter Court had little use for money.

Gold changed hands, of course . . . just not nearly as much as Jabber and Tuck feared. The alabaster fey happily took gold for the children's toys and journeymen's work the caravans seemed so interested in (such as ghostly silver lutes, goblets of spun ice, or essence of blizzard), but the rarest items were sold only for happy memories, years of the human haggler's life, or sex. Given the beauty of the Winter Court, the last was the most freely traded. When asked why such a premium is placed on congress with mortals, the fey invariably replied, "It warms us."

For the first decade, Jabber and Tuck controlled the market for Winter Court moonsteel. To this day, their original caravan—the Chartered Merchants of Scáthesidhe—conveys the most intricate wares directly from the Winter Court's capital. Other caravans now brave the shadow road each year, returning with riches and wonders never before seen, but for moonsteel and mirrors, Zobeck has the market cornered.

Appearance of the Embassy. Very recently, the shadow fey unveiled their embassy in Zobeck. Little trade goes on in the embassy itself, though His Excellency Glaninin Thelamandrine, Ambassador-in-Extraordinary of the Winter Court, did give the city a gift of gorgeous, black and silver speckled griffons from his personal collection. Instead, the embassy represents a seed of possibility—and a kernel of disaster. The shadow fey have much to give Zobeck, both in terms of material wealth and military information, and are willing to trade. Yet the Free City Council has left the fey alone for years without an official alliance. Just over half the councilors fear that diplomacy with the capricious fey could bring chaos to Zobeck, something they can ill afford with the Dragon Empire gobbling up the south.

THE FLYING TRADERS OF SIKKIM: FROM DESERT TO MOUNTAINS AND BACK AGAIN

Zobeckers are practical people, but even the dourest moneychanger on the Street of Silver Fish opens his purse once or twice in a lifetime. That day is usually when the Flying Traders of Sikkim come to town.

The flying cities of Sikkim were once the marvel of the ages, built with the aid of the djinn and allied with servants of the Mharoti Sultan. When that alliance broke, the city folk became merchants, dealers, and mercenaries, selling the magic of their flying home as just another commodity. There's a sense that Sikkim's best days are gone. They are outlaws now, for they refuse to bow to the sultanate.

The flying cities travel the world, enormous round islands up to a half-mile across, with names that resonate in every port from the desert gardens of Siwal to the icy fastness of Trollheim. Only three cities remain active from a fleet once dozens strong: fast Farokhan, stately golden Ushu, and mysterious Attimahl of the veiled women. One in particular is missed, the lost sorcerer-city of Ulduvai. Certain magical compasses are said to point always toward this city of wonders.

The Flying Cities. The cities wander the world, but when they dock at Zobeck, they are almost home. Zobeck's mastery of sorcery, divination, and steam makes it a kindred spirit for the far-flying Sikkimese

traders, and their shared respect for profitable dealing gives the two cultures a great deal in common.

Superficially, the societies are opposites. The dress of the flying cities is loud, shimmering, and colorful. Zobeckers wear drab woolens or rich lace, though never in scarlet, orange, and lime all at once. Likewise, the Sikkimese worship elemental forces, which are at odds with Zobeck's more traditional religious life.

Both groups feel a bit isolated in an unfriendly if not openly hostile world, and they each have things the other wants. Zobeck's griffons fetch a high price in any flying city while the latter's spices, salt, and information sell at a premium in the Free City. Zobeck's mastery of clockwork commands great respect from the Sikkimese.

Stories of swindling or even robbing the Sikkim traders circulate freely in Zobeck, but nobody knows anyone who has actually tried it. Given the flying cities' excellent defenses—invisible and ever-vigilant aerial spirits, wards of lightning magic and storm glyphs, and rumors of darker guardians—sneaking or breaking into the cities themselves seems less foolish than suicidal.

All three cities use huge sails and vast quantities of amber, brass, and silver to power their magic, but they can readily pay for these materials with the profits from the spice trade, their elemental engines, and the knowledge they bring from far corners of the world.

A few masters of the Collegium have traveled with the Sikkim, seeing distant lands for themselves, learning to fly carpets and bargain with djinn, efreet, and other elementals. Few make a second trip though, as life aboard the flying cities seems to sap arcane vitality in some fashion.

The Clockwork Caliph. The flying cities have a regular seasonal route: Zobeck, the Magocracy of Allain, the snows of distant Trollheim in the summer months, back south along the Rothenian plains, and to the garden city of Siwal by late autumn when the heat fades and the harvest comes in. In winter, they retreat to hidden Sikkim, a high desert plateau, for refuge.

The flying traders refer to the rulers of the lands they visit by fanciful titles. The lord mayor and city praetors of Zobeck are always called the Clockwork Caliphs, for example, while the trolls are the Odorous Effendi.

Adventurers and pilgrims seeking to visit the oracles of Siwal (or the city's dancers, said to be the most seductive in the world) pay a fare of little more than 300 gp for a pleasant four-week journey. Likewise, Mharoti gnomes seeking alchemical instruction often use the cities to reach Zobeck's Collegium to perfect their alchemical fire techniques.

EDUCATION, TECHNOLOGY, AND MAGIC

The Free City houses the Arcane Collegium, an institute of learning, specializing in the study of magic, though its staff includes experts in language, alchemy, geargrinding, and clockwork craftsmanship. Currently, about 40 students matriculate in the various schools of magic, including clockwork, necromancy, illusion, divination, and the unusual study of star and shadow magic called the illumination school—a field closely related to illusion with a touch of creation, conjuration, and necromancy mixed in. The practice of star and shadow magic, like clockwork magic, is native to Zobeck. Outside the Free City, only a few elves may actually know its associated spells.

Zobeck is known far and wide for its clockwork technology. Common clockwork devices include the clockwork scullion (see **clockwork servant** in *Creature Codex*), **clockwork watchman** (see *Tome of Beasts*), and **clockwork weaving spider** (see *Tome of Beasts*) in addition to autoscribes, bolt-throwers, climbers, fireboxes, market scales, trip-hammers, walking towers, and more. (For additional clockwork weapons and creations, see *Tome of Heroes*.)

FESTIVALS AND FAIRS

The citizens of Zobeck enjoy several celebrations throughout the year, many related to seasonal changes and the particular gods associated with the solstices and equinoxes. With trade so central to the city's life, events like the River Fair and the Road Opening Festival, held to honor the city's successful commercial endeavors, enjoy great popularity.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

- Someone has poisoned the beer shipped from a specific brewery, sickening dozens. Many suspect the cult of Marena the Red is behind it, but it might be simply a rival brewery.
- A new fighter took the brawling at the Wheatsheaf to a fine art and openly calls for bouts against all comers. The watch doesn't interfere since the man is one of their officers. The Cloven Nine and other gangsters are furious at this intrusion on their territory and threaten retaliation.
- Some say a furnace gargoyle haunts the rafters above the Grey Friar, each night bringing in one piece of machinery from the Geargrinders. What is it building?

CLOCKWORK FESTIVAL

Each year in the month of Goldflower, when other nations celebrate the Crown Festival, all Zobeck honors Rava and her great gifts by celebrating the Clockwork Festival. Zobeckers know the Clockwork City would simply not live or prosper as it does without Rava's blessings and continued interest.

On this summer day, the citizens wreath Rava's creations—the gearforged and clockwork constructs—in flowers and parade them through the streets to cheers and joyful applause. Many families carry (or hire others to carry) their revered gearforged ancestors on palanquins. Clockwork items abound throughout the markets, from tools to toys and even cakes shaped as gears and wheels, attracting many travelers to the city.

FESTIVAL OF LIGHT (MIDSUMMER FESTIVAL)

This festival celebrates the harvest of early crops and the long days of light. Lada's priestesses bless the harvests, heal the sick, and offer up prayers to provide for those who toil so that others may eat. The celebrants also honor Khors and his priests for the light that brings them bounty. The farmers make food offerings to the clerics of both gods. Lanterns, bonfires, and magical lights keep the fields bright from dusk until dawn.

MINER'S DAY

During Redleaf and following Volund's Festival, the kobolds receive a celebratory release from all mining to exalt in their own Miner's Holiday. Kobolds actually begin celebrating the night before, which has become known as "All Kobolds' Eve," when groups of drunken kobolds—some 20 or more strong—assail public houses to drink a week's wages and yip out traditional songs. Drinking, fighting, and property damage ensue. With the exception of the doubled watch patrols, most Zobeckers stay indoors or give the revelers a wide berth.

RIVER FAIR

A part of Lada's Midsummer Festival, the River Fair is a trade fair that takes place along the docks. Wanderers, bargemen, stevedores, and all the apprentices of the city join together for midsummer madness—with the Brewer's Sisterhood and various dwarven brewers providing the potables. Makeshift stalls line the docks, and merchants hawk their wares in a bustle of noisy commerce. Barges anchor up and down the river, Kariv music flows into the city proper, and dancing abounds.

ROAD OPENING FESTIVAL

Shortly after the Spring Festival, Zobeck celebrates the opening of the Great Northern Road that runs through the Margreve, marked when no snows can be seen from the Citadel. As with many festivals in the Free City, this entails a great deal of drinking and reveling. The merchants supply copious amounts of spirits for their workers and caravan leaders as both a reward for past service and a bracing for jobs yet to come.

SPRING FESTIVAL

"Attending the Spring Rite" has become a polite way of saying half the citizens of Zobeck spend a night in the month of Thunders rutting like rabbits while the other half pretend not to notice.

Torches and bonfires rule the fairgrounds and lanterns glimmer on every street. Young and old alike celebrate the rites together, making the festival as much about community building as religious observance.

The rites of Porevit and Yarila forbid payment for affection, so the courtesans and lovers for sale see the Spring Festival as a day off, a chance to celebrate love instead of simply selling it. Anyone seeking partners offers them the finest flower or bouquet they can afford, or sometimes a simple garland. Even those who live alone or are celibate often receive flowers from admirers or friends, and some describe the city as buried in petals.

Among many young people in the city, the Spring Festival commonly results in weddings at Midwinter and/or births the following spring. Even when lacking the vows, the births carry no shame. Children born in the springtime to the brides and grooms of Porevit and Yarila are considered lucky. Those born precisely on the winter solstice are always invited to join the Green Gods' priesthood and enter into the druidic mysteries at the age of 10 or 11. Though dedicated to the Green Gods, Lada also gains from this festival, for many a new love often blooms here.

SPRING TRADE FAIR

In the month of Thunders, or sometimes as late as Goldflower, Zobeck's fields host the annual Spring Trade Fair, when all the far-flung partners of Zobeck's merchant houses bring their best wares to begin the trading season. The Spring Trade Fair begins after the Road Opening and lasts throughout the spring season. Merchants set up their colorful tents around the perimeter of the city's pastures, and many visitors flock to the city to purchase the exotic items offered.

STROSS'S FALL

For the past 90 years, Zobeckers have commemorated the day that Halsen Hrovitz's courage inspired the Great Revolt. This celebration has several names, depending on the nature of the celebrant: the Free City Council and government officials call it Free City Day; the kobolds call it Miners' Day, in honor of the freeing of the miners that the Strosses had enslaved for centuries; the Ravans and gearforged call it Forge Day, to honor the gearforged and their contribution to the Great Revolt; the Ladans call it the Golden Day Festival; but most citizens call it Stross's Fall or Hrovitz's Rise.

Food and drink flow freely on this day. The watch has its hands full but never deals harsh punishments to revelers arrested on this day. For the most part, it tries to keep people from endangering themselves and others or damaging too much property too badly, but otherwise, this is a free-for-all of rejoicing.

VOLUND'S FESTIVAL

During the autumnal equinox in Redleaf, the priests of Volund offer their Fire Blessing to all weapons, armor, and metal tools (and some say to the gearforged as well) brought before them, whether at Volund's temple or at portable anvil stations set up throughout the city. This tremendously noisy event ends in a great and fiery nighttime service culminating in the Anvil Prayer. Throughout the festival, nearly every priest, smith, geargrinder, and steamworker in the city brings an anvil or a metal pan to hammer on during the chorus, creating a cacophonously beautiful salute to the forge god.

WE NO WORK DAY!

Every once in a while, the kobolds (all of them) decide to shrug their duties for drink and revelry throughout the day and evening. They claim this celebration takes place on the anniversary of their enslavement by the Stross family, and they celebrate it as a way of snubbing the upper classes. This celebration never seems to take place on the same day of the year though, and in some years, the kobolds have celebrated it more than once.



As with All Kobolds' Eve, chaos spreads throughout the Free City when the kobolds refuse to work. We No Work Day never coincides with any other holidays when workers have the day off, and it always seems to take place at the most inconvenient time. Humans have tried their best to discover dates of upcoming festivals but unsuccessfully. No official word passes through the streets or Kobold Ghetto; the kobolds just instinctively seem to know when every We No Work Day rolls around. Some scholars believe this knowledge might be transmitted by scent.

WINTER FESTIVAL OF KHORS

Roughly 200 years ago, House Stross and its aristocratic allies held the Winter Festival in the Cartways, in a cavern called the Winter Hall. The revelers traveled to the site in donkey-drawn carts filled with candles and were greeted with casks of wine large enough to dance on. Debauchery ensued.

After the Great Revolt, the festival celebration changed. Much wine remains an important part of it, but the chilly festival now consists of a parade and feasts throughout the city.

RELIGION: GODS OF THE CROSSROADS

The Crossroads region—from the Ironcrag Cantons to the Free City to the Duchy of Perun's Daughter, and from the Magdar Kingdom to the blood-soaked principalities of Morgau and Doresh—is a place of contrasts and confusion. Peoples from all points of the compass live here or wander through, and they bring their gods with them. The five greatest deities are the patrons of the five great nations. The sixth god, Khors, slowly fades in most places as Rava usurps his position. He remains strong in the Magdar Kingdom, however, and still has pious adherents elsewhere who value his power against darkness.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

- Consuls are always getting in trouble: people try to extort them, bribe them, seduce them, or otherwise gain influence over them. Thus the praetors closely watch the council. When a consul falls prey to a devilish seductress, the praetors—indirectly, of course—call in the PCs to exorcise her. The plot goes deeper than that, however, as the consul in question has given the seductress information about the city's plans for a new army.

ENTERTAINMENT

Zobeck never sleeps, both because its kobold citizenry is nocturnal and because its tavern keepers are always searching for one more coin. Most districts have establishments that cater to the common vices—drinking, gambling, whoring, and fighting—though such places abound in Lower Zobeck. Street fights on the bridge or on the docks are popular, with the loser dunked into the water.

The wealthier citizens also pay for less common entertainment, including dancing bears and musicians accomplished with the lute, recorder, drum, and trumpet. Sometimes bards sing to accompany Kariv dancers, and in summer, those with the taste and the coin for it go hunting or hawking in the forest north of the River Argent.

INNS, TAVERNS, AND ALEHOUSES

Zobeck's inns, taverns, gambling halls, and alehouses serve as the living rooms and parlors of the community, where public and private life plays out in front of free-flowing taps. The city has 16,000 hardworking souls who depend on 24 breweries and seven vintners, and everyone has a favorite drink. Dwarven brewmasters vie with the importers of Rothenian and Morgaunic wines. Even the kobolds brew up something called Dog's Breath Ale, which they prize but no one else can stomach.

The city's taverns are as unusual as its guilds and its gods. The Broken Seal, the Dancing Bear, the Grey Friar, the Hedgehog, the King's Head, the Moon and Owl, the Seven Bells, the Silk Scabbard, the Wheatsheaf, and the White Rose are the Free City's most famous establishments, and each caters to a slightly different clientele. Information on each tavern is detailed in the district in which it resides.

GAMBLING

Opportunities to gamble include traditional dice, card, and drinking games, but Zobeckers also bet on fights between both animals (usually dogs, rats, and dire weasels) and humanoids in the city's various organized pits. Favored gambling dens include the Broken Seal, the Dancing Bear, Seven Bells, the Silk Scabbard, and the Dire Weasel Kennels in the Kobold Ghetto. In the Gullet, there is also the Red Queen, the Cup and Pentacle, and the Rooster. Dice, card, and other games of chance can appear in most any tavern.

NARCOTICS

Certain narcotics can be purchased in Zobeck's back alleys, dark tavern corners, or the Cartways Black Market. Specifically, buyers can locate requiem from Kammae, poppy's draught from the south, various hallucinogenic mushrooms from the Margreve, dragon's root, and a local opiate called akori blossom.

PIT FIGHTING

For skilled and clever fighters, the city's pit fighting rings can provide a decent income, though not nearly as good as the organizers and hosting establishments make from the wagers. Moreover, successful fighters often find work as muscle in one of the gangs, as bodyguards for wealthy and worried individuals, or with people who need specific "jobs" done. The Silk Scabbard hosts the most popular fights in the city. Most fighting rings are temporary, for once the watch finds them, the dens usually decline as the bribes outweigh the profits.

INFLUENTIAL FAMILIES

Many of Zobeck's influential families are merchant houses. Members of these families often hold positions on the Free City Council, and they help ensure the city remains a commerce-friendly place. Currently, only the Greymark and Hrovitz Houses have sitting consuls.

ARMANAC

Norek Armanac and his daughter Ardora lead the Armanac House, best known as the king of shipping in Zobeck. They own a fleet of river barges and their own shipwright company. Their sailors travel the river nonstop to collect the most exotic goods from far and wide. Of course, some of what they transport isn't, strictly speaking, legal, but so far, the watch can prove nothing. The Armanacs have strong ties with the Stevedore's Brotherhood and the Bargeman's Fellowship, and they supposedly have some type of control over the Barge King, Sundran Karesh.

GREYMARK

The elderly Lord Volstaff Greymark has long been known as the gruff, bullheaded curmudgeon of the Free City Council. Over the years, Greymark has married and disposed of five wives, all gorgeous young women with jet-black hair. Just three years ago, however, Greymark abruptly withdrew from his seat on the council and married a new raven-haired beauty not six months later. Volstaff is now Zobeck's master of coin, handling all matters of tolls and taxes—but he is also privately expanding his trade network into the vampire kingdom of Morgau. The old man is obsessed with his own age, wealth, and mortality, and some whisper that his recent mercantile overtures to Morgau are merely a way to get in the vampires' good graces.

Volstaff's bastard son, a tiefling named Edmure Orillian, is said to be the offspring of a succubus. One year ago, Edmure fled the city under mysterious circumstances, and even Lord Volstaff knows not his whereabouts. Some speculate the Volstaff bastard fled to Lillefor to be closer to his kobold comrades while others say he died in the night and his "disappearance" is merely a cover-up for a greater conspiracy. In truth, Edmure failed to deliver the soul of Orlando to his master, Arch-Devil Mammon, and he is on the lam from Mammon's agents.



HROVITZ

This once down-and-out family rose to prominence after Halsen Hrovitz sparked the Great Revolt. He and his five siblings had been forced into labor to pay off the family's debts. After the Great Revolt, the new Free City Council gave the Hrovitz family the remains of the Stross estate in Crown Square. Skilled workers volunteered their time to repair it, and revolutionaries showered the family with goods and gold, some of it looted from the very house they now owned.

The priests of Rava, 15 years ago, completed a platinum gearforged body for the elderly Halsen that was unlike any built before or since and that held many magical powers. The gearforged Halsen appeared at the Gear Festival that year, but he has not been seen since. The priests of Rava do not speak of his disappearance and merely smile when his name is mentioned.

In Zobeck, to say one has "the heart of a Hrovitz" is to say that one is courageous beyond measure. Halsen's descendants remain merchants and stalwart supporters of the Free City, but few have sought the prominence of their forbearer.

Halsen Hrovitz IV is the current head of House Hrovitz and a member of the Free City Council. Under his leadership, the Hrovitz family's trade network spans Midgard, selling goods ranging from flax to raw mithral to dwarven weaponry.

KAPPA

Once a successful silk merchant, Orem Kappa has retired in good health and good fortune. The sudden and aggressive expansion of the Dragon Empire abruptly ended his lucrative silk trade with the Mharoti Sultanate, and he decided to end his career on a high note. His adult daughter Nashya left Zobeck after an unfortunate incident 10 years ago and has become an adventuring sorceress of some renown.

SLYGASS

Lord Grimaldi Slygass leads House Slygass, which trades in rare metals, including mithral and adamantine. They have strong connections to the Grimbold dwarves at Castle Shadowcrag and can acquire starmetal weapons with uncharacteristic ease.

VANDEREIK

The historic Vandereik Vineyards are tended to by the Seven Women of Wine—a common nickname for the seven Vandereik daughters who took the business over from their late mother. The eldest Vandereik sister, Rolskya, is married with children while the youngest, Tissifina, is in search of a wife.

ZEERGHAST

One of Zobeck's oldest families, the wealthy Zeerghasts helped fund the creation of the Arcane Collegium, and several of their members have served as faculty there. Former allies of the Stross, the Zeerghasts survived the Great Revolt by temporarily fleeing the city, some say to Morgau and Doresh. The Zeerghasts never assisted the Stross when the chaos broke out, and as soon as House Stross fell and the Free City settled quietly into its new government, the Zeerghasts quietly reappeared. Through all the violence, their home remained intact and untouched while the mob burned and looted others around it.

The Zeerghasts claim to hail originally from Magdar, the sitting king's distant cousins. Rumors hold that they also have familial ties to Morgau, but no one says so very loudly. For the most part, this reclusive family eschews the political dance and social machinations the higher classes seem to enjoy.

ZILAS

The Zilas family makes its money cultivating rare plants and herbs from the Margreve, mostly for spell components and alchemical ingredients. The Arcane Collegium and the Chartered Brotherhood of Alchemists are the family's main customers in Zobeck, but it trades widely beyond the city. The family has land outside the walls and has produced some interesting plant hybrids. One such, the akori blossom, has made a big splash in some circles as a hallucinogenic opiate. Very, very few know that they grow this plant themselves though.



CHAPTER 3

GOVERNMENT

Zobeck's government is a many-layered nightmare to visitors seeking to bend it to their own purposes, though familiar enough to locals who know how to get things done. For the most part, it serves the master merchants with security and safety for trade, the common people with justice and fair dealings in the markets, and the poor with work as conscripts or ditchdiggers.

THE FREE CITY COUNCIL

The Free City Council replaced the Stross-era Praetorian Council after the revolt. Once composed of hand-picked noble allies of House Stross, the Praetorian Council generally deferred to their lord's wishes in running the city and spent most of their time scheming and plotting against one another. They pilfered money from the city to fund their own projects and interests, ruinously taxed the city's bourgeoisie, restricted trade with tariffs on goods entering the city and exit fees on goods leaving the city, and used the watch as their personal enforcers to settle vendettas, illegally detain citizens, and seize private property. This flagrant corruption laid the groundwork for the violence that destroyed the old aristocracy.

After the Great Revolt, the rebels imprisoned or executed any Praetorian Council members they caught. The revolt's leaders created the Free City Council to administer the city as the Praetorian Council should have done. Its standing consuls were citizens who helped lead the revolt and who held strong interests in the city: mostly guildmasters, priests, and even kobolds. The council is charged with ensuring the welfare of the city and its citizens, protecting Zobeck from all threats to its freedom, and maintaining the flow of commerce within the Free City.

LORD MAYOR

The sitting consuls choose the lord mayor from among their peers to serve a 10-year term, though most have held the position for life. The lord mayor oversees the

administration of justice by appointing all of Zobeck's judges, establishing and provisioning the army, appointing all knight-commanders of the Citadel, and commanding the Free City's militant orders—except the paladins of the Order of the Undying Sun. This chapter of the Undying Sun predates the city's independence and only serves on the condition that their commander answer to no one "not of noble blood." In practice, the order acts as an independent military force.

CURRENT LORD MAYOR OLLECK

The newly chosen Mayor Constantia Olleck represents the growing dwarven influence in the city. She has sworn to serve a single 10-year term. She took over after the old mayor, Karillian Gluck, was asked to step aside by the shadow fey (and who did, fearing for his life). Constantia showed great courage in commissioning several efforts to drive the fey out or at least limit their influence to the Undercity and a few of the outlying districts. She speaks with the shadow fey ambassador, but the two will never be friends.



Mayor Olleck is a cheerful, smiling, and hardworking dwarf who knows every alley, every tavern, and every honest (and less honest) person of influence in Zobeck. In her prior mercantile life as a mule driver, Olleck had a way of making any donkey follow her, gentle as a lamb, over rocks and declivities and through brambles. This, as might be expected, was excellent practice for working with the Zobeck consuls and praetors (see **Chapter 3**).

As a younger dwarf, she spent 20 years making a small fortune as a muleskinner, leading mule trains up to the Obertal Freehold and through the Silbertal into the Ironcrags. Bandit attacks were rare as she marched into the Ironcrags loaded with grain, timber, and fine brass gearwork. On the way back though, bandits attacked for her mule train's silver, metalwork, and sometimes bars of gold, which she usually brought safely back to the city forges, shops, and mint. To this day, matters of trade and banditry are uppermost in her mind, though she also has forged a strong alliance with neighbors against the Mharoti after the fall of Illyria.

CONSULS

Generally descendants of the Great Revolt's leaders, the 12 consuls serve for life or until they receive a "silent office" (a retirement sinecure). Sitting consuls fill any vacancies on the council from among the city's most prominent civic leaders, typically guildmasters, merchants, or powerful members of the priesthood—but once in a while, the consuls choose an adventurous individual seeking a quieter life.

By tradition, the Free City Council always includes the guildmaster of the Arcane Collegium and the Kobold King of Kings. During the revolt, the leaders gave the city's watch commander a lifetime council seat but secretly decided that, unlike the deal they struck with the kobolds and the Arcane Collegium, this "seat for life" would only extend to that individual. Upon his death, the council did not give the position to his successor but added a second seat for a cleric of Rava. To this day, this "betrayal" remains a point of contention between the council and the watch. The watch's current captain, Horvart Edelstein, is bent on regaining his "rightful seat" on the council.

CURRENT CONSULS

Halsen Hrovitz. Halsen is the fourth of his name, and the Hrovitz family founder was once known as the "merchant to the noble House Stross" (an honor they've not mentioned in generations). Hrovitz deals in finished dwarven weapons and armor as well as unrefined copper, flax, sheep, and mining tools, and he also trades

heavily with the kobolds of Lillefor (unusual for a human merchant) for mithral, iron, and precious gems.

Kekolina of the Derry Mine. Kekolina is a long-serving kobold. Rather an oddity, she represents the mine gangs that provide silver and wealth to the city. She is honored among the mine gangs as having the ear of St. Piran, the local patron saint of miners. She keeps kobold interests always in view.

Lady Wintesla Marack. Lady Marack is beloved as a priestess of Lada for her healing of the poor and the sick. She is also a well-connected merchant, selling timber, wool, and tin from Zobeck to the dwarves, the Magdar, and especially the Perunalians. The amazons of the duchy find it more congenial to do business with a woman, so her oxcarts and barges carry much of the Zobeck trade to and from Perunalia.

Lector and Consul Radovar Streck. Radovar, the city's most famous alchemist, has been promoted to lector of the Collegium, a title usually reserved for those times when the guildmaster is otherwise engaged. And indeed, he has promulgated a number of edicts in Orlando's name when the titular guildmaster has been out of the city. In addition, he seems to be investigating the alchemical properties of shadow with help from a handsome young shadow fey apprentice named Frost, and he enjoys occasional visits from a dust goblin bringing needful items from Maillon and the Goblin Wastes.

Melancha Vendemic. Melancha is the golden-voiced consul, capable of moving rhetoric in defense of causes of law and security. Her arguments are often carried out through mocking songs in the taverns rather than confined to discussion with other consuls. She has a great ear for what discomfits or worries Zobeckers.

Myzi I. Myzi, called the Mouse King and Lord of the Undercity, is a consul and (most believe) a corrupt rogue. He has a drooping moustache and a twitchy nose, and he seems to always have the news from the docks, the smugglers, and the riverfolk. Few know that he is indeed an animal lord and lord of the rodents of Zobeck.

Ondli Firedrake. A dwarven priest of Rava (and Volund), Ondli has served as first consul, or council house chairman, for 30 years. His consul peers selected him to guide the meetings, recognizing him as the most patient and fair-minded among them.

Orlando. Guildmaster of the Arcane Collegium and consul and member of the Free City Council, Orlando has withdrawn from many of the Collegium's affairs and is spending many days of summer and fall with Aldona Silberhof, a whip-smart sorceress who serves as a captain in the Runkelstad Wands. While his enemies gossip about his lack of attention in Zobeck's affairs, his friends seem pleased that Orlando has found an equal in arcane matters.

Quetelmak. Kobold king of kings and consul to Zobeck, Quetelmak seems like a kobold king who might stick around for more than a season. He has weathered two years since his ascension to the position and consulship. This seat's consul fluctuates with the rapid rise and fall of the kings of kings in the Kobold Ghetto.

Selena Harbeck. Guildmistress Harbeck keeps the Weaver's Guild disciplined and extremely productive, building **clockwork weaving spiders** (see *Tome of Beasts*) to create cloth and tapestries at a rate no other town can match. Selena opens the guildhall each day with a prayer to Rava, and she is on excellent terms with Consul Hrovitz and Lady Marack, her principal suppliers of raw wool and flax. Guild tapestries are especially popular in Bemmea and the Seven Cities, and Consul Harbeck often visits both sites on extended business tours and as an unofficial envoy for Zobeck's interests in the south and west.

Sir Jorun Haclav. Field marshal of the Free Army, captain of the Zobeck Hussars, consul, and master of the citadel, Sir Jorun continues to expand the hussars and has sent a company of 200 human light infantry to stand with the Magdar on the border of the Dragon Empire.

THE PRAETORS

A secret council known as the Praetors serves as the lord mayor's inner cabinet. They are her eyes, ears, and hands throughout the city as well as the core of Zobeck's secret police network, indirectly controlling the city's internal and external spies, jailers, and tax collectors. The number of praetors on the council never exceeds five, and consuls sometimes also serve as praetors.

The identity of praetors typically remains secret. Many have suspected, but none have ever proven, strong ties between the Order of Griffon Knights and the Praetors. Any citizen may denounce another citizen by a charge given to the Blue House (the seat of the secret police, just outside the Citadel).

LADY FENYLL MARACK

Lady Fenyll Marack is the praetor of the Blue House and the only praetor to make her identity known to the public. She has served the city for three long decades, and her face and body have the scars to prove it. Despite her graying hair and the five long scars that cross her face, Lady Marack dresses extravagantly and uses her public office to gain access to all the city's private parties—and often shows up all the guests in the process. While Lady Marack clearly revels in her own glamor, her

profligacy serves a dual purpose: none suspect that such a conspicuous woman could be one of the subtlest and most efficient assassins in the Crossroads.

MILITARY

Zobeck's military strength consists of the Free Army, the Griffon Knights, and the Zobeck Hussars. The Free City can also count on assistance from the Order of the Undying Sun.

THE FREE ARMY

The banner of the Free City's army—bright red with a golden gear—flies high from the Citadel walls, and rarely does it march against a foe in anger. But Zobeck is surrounded by neighbors who might demand tribute, bluster with outrageous threats, or even seek to compel the city's submission and fealty. Thus the Free City retains a standing army, though a small one, and cultivates good relationships with some neighbors and some prominent mercenary companies.

Elite Forces. The city rarely commands more than 1,000 troops in the city itself, and half of those come from a levy of the citizens to man the walls when its professional soldiers go raiding. For all its wealth—and the bounteous patronage of the Gear Goddess—the Free City is smaller than the great metropolises of the Seven Cities or the Mharoti Empire. The gearforged company is still its preferred heavy infantry, and its mages from the Arcane Collegium are second to none, but both groups are relatively small and scattered, no matter their individual strength.

The city's true elites are the Order of Griffon Knights (primarily scouts, despite their name) and the Zobeck Hussars, a set of ridiculously brave (some say foolhardy) cavalry. The griffon knights ride their mounts to scout the forests and plains, and the hussars patrol roads, hills, and woods in their green jackets and gold braid. The hussars' colorful plumage hides hard steel, and they burn border villages when needed. The hussars are also inordinately fond of dueling.

Footmen and Mercenaries. Infantry is the queen of the battlefield, and Zobeck has been blessed in this regard. Its citizens willingly volunteer when needed, and its kobold and dwarven folk make excellent skirmishers and crossbow troops, respectively. The city is also notorious for its skill in conducting night raids.

However, Zobeck depends on companies of mercenaries to fill out its ranks. Most of these are Ironcrag dwarves or the pikemen of Dornig, though Rothenian centaurs occasionally serve as light cavalry, scouts, and skirmishers.

The city of Zobeck's main strength has always come from the willingness of her people to fight. Their wealth and skill make them formidable, and her neighbors approach battles with the city warily. Most find it easier to strike a deal with Zobeck than to overcome her army.

ORDER OF THE UNDYING SUN

The commandery of the Order of the Undying Sun in Zobeck is a faded place. Its knights no longer enjoy the privileges they once had when they served as the officers and generals of House Stross's private army, and they have grown somewhat bitter at their "exile" to this backwater. Most of their duties involve guarding trade caravans on the Great Northern Road, riding down ghoul infestations along the foothills of the Ironcrags, or chasing bandits. Honorable work, surely, though not exactly suffused with glory. Still, their primary service is to Khors, and so long as he is worshipped in Zobeck, the knights will maintain a presence, whatever their private feelings on the matter.

MILITARY MIGHT OF ZOBECK

Military Leaders: Lady Fenyll Marack, Praetor of the Blue House and Lord Commander of the Free Army of Zobeck (LE human **thief lord**, see *Creature Codex*); Sir Janush Hermass, Commander of the Order of the Undying Sun (LG human **field commander** of Khors, see *Tome of Beasts 3*); Sir Jorun Haclav, Field Marshall of the Free Army (LN human **war priest** of Perun, see *Creature Codex*); Sir Malkus Lineguard, Commander of the Order of Griffon Knights (LG **dwarven ringmage**, see *Tome of Beasts*)

Zobeck Orders of Battle: 1st through 5th Companies (250 human medium infantry each); City Levy (Up to 500 human, dwarven, and kobold citizen-soldiers); the Exiles, cantonal mercenaries (75 dwarven heavy infantry/pikes); Griffon Knights (20 flying cavalry); Rava's Legion (75 gearforged heavy infantry); Raven Feeders (100 kobold archers/light infantry); Volund's Hammer (50 dwarven crossbowmen); Zobeck Hussars (50 human light cavalry); Zobeck Wands (25 human wizards of the Collegium)

Recently, however, the order sent Janus Hermass, a renowned Magdar knight with a strong following, to replace the retiring Sir Fryderyk Sieboski (who now serves as an advisor). Instructed to encourage the order's growth within Zobeck's territory and accompanied by several charismatic priests of Khors, Janus's arrival has caused a stir and surge in morale among the knights in the Free City, and many within and outside the order wonder what might ultimately come of it.

Order of the Undying Sun in the Crossroads. The Order of the Undying Sun is strongest in the Magdar Kingdom and the canton of Grisal with a lesser presence in the Free City of Zobeck. Hundreds of knights serve in dozens of small and major commanderies from Wagenstein to the Ruby Sea and the borders of the Mharoti Empire. The order is widely admired, and the queen of the Magdar Kingdom would never think of excluding its Grand Marshall Lord Clarikon from her deliberations when the season of war approaches. Each of its scarred and devoted warriors fight harder than half a dozen mercenaries, and their unwavering devotion to high ideals makes them the elite backbone of Magdar's army.

Though known for its outstanding heavy cavalry, the order also raises most other troops, though rarely archers. These include companies of warrior-priests of Khors in war wagons, swift White Riders who primarily act as scouts and skirmishers, and even companies of devout pike fighters who serve a season for pay and honor (the Sunset Regiments, so-called because their service sees an end).

The Sunset Regiments obey Provost Marshall Ulrichus Valotto, and though they are not knights, these troops vastly increase the order's martial power. With weapons and basic armor provided by the order's armorers, these soldiers are uniformly of a higher quality than most levied troops. Some claim the order's infantry and horses are superior even to some vassals in the Magdar Kingdom.

The order's headquarters is at Wagenstein, though it also controls Smoltenberg, several small keeps in Grisal, and a smaller commandery named Gelburg outside of Zobeck. It is currently building the new fortification of Neusonnenstein in the south and recently lost the castle of Zamak Petros with the fall of Illyria.

Entering Knighthood. Joining the knights is a simple matter: swear allegiance to the local commander, swear to obey the priests of Khors and uphold the creed of the sun god, show your proficiency in mounted combat with lance and sword, and you are admitted. New recruits receive armor and weapons of simple quality (but not trained warhorses).

The first rank involves service as a squire to a senior or veteran knight, fetching, carrying, and polishing armor. This might last a month or a year, depending on the age and skill of the applicant. Once the senior knight considers the squire fit, the candidate receives spurs, a sword, and the title of knight-novice. Though the knight-novice now answers to the order's captains and commanders rather than the senior knight, such young warriors remain junior figures within the order.

Paladins of Khors. The elite of the order (and most of its officers) are paladins of Khors. Their white-and-yellow-plumed helmets are striking and distinctive as are their blue cloaks and the white or dappled gray horses they favor. Most speak the Magdar dialect or Common (with a Magdar accent), and they are generous to their friends and implacable against their foes. Their light truly does shine brighter than most, and their bright swords cut through the darkness.

Zobeck's council gives them little respect because the order supported the wrong (losing) side during the revolt, but everywhere else, the white plumes of Khors are a sign of righteous might and outstanding skill. They include dwarves and centaurs in their ranks, but by far, the majority is human.

THE WATCH

The city watch is composed of human warriors, clockwork watchmen, and several gearforged. Most members of the watch are looking out for the city's best interest, but there are a few who seek to use the position for their own gain. Horvart Edelstein is the current captain of the watch.

About 260 individuals serve as watchmen in the 10 main districts with most patrolling the Merchant and

ADVENTURE HOOKS

- The Free Army needs scouts to investigate shadow fey activity in the Margreve and offers a large bounty to anyone signing up for this venture.
- River bandits have repeatedly drowned patrols along the shore and on river barges. Giants, ogres, and the lorelei are all rumored to be involved, and the army is tasked with ending the problem.
- The priests of Perun the Thunderer need someone to fly a griffon into a thunderstorm to bottle a lightning elemental. Strangely, the Citadel's griffon riders have not volunteered.

DOING TIME IN THE CLOCKWORK CITY

The physical effects of Zobeck's justice merit some mention.

Hard Labor. Characters sentenced to hard labor must make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, the character contracts sewer plague or another sickness of the GM's choosing.

Imprisonment. Prisoners held in the Citadel must spend 100 gp per week to buy the amenities needed to keep themselves healthy. For each month they do not pay this fee, the character must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw at the end of each day spent unclean. On a failure, the character has disadvantage on Constitution and Charisma checks and saving throws for the next 24 hours.

Crime	Punishment
Arson	Fine and 1d4 weeks imprisonment
Assault	Fine
Blackmail	Flogging and 1 week hard labor (mines)
Blasphemy Against Rava	Fine
Breach of Contract	Flogging and 1 week imprisonment
Bribery	Flogging
Burglary	1d4 weeks imprisonment and 2 weeks hard labor
Counterfeiting	Fine and 3 months imprisonment
Cult Membership	1 year imprisonment; death for a second offense
Demon/Devil Summoning	Exile or Death
Dueling	Fine
Embezzling	6 months imprisonment
Espionage	Imprisonment or Death/Exile (depends on the spy)
Murder	2d4 years imprisonment
Murder, Mass	Death
Necromancy	Exile (fine for members of the Collegium)
Perjury	6 days of flogging and 6 months hard labor
Pickpocketing	Flogging and fine equal to twice the value of stolen goods
Rape	Flogging and 2d4 months imprisonment
Rioting	Fine and flogging
Sedition	Exile
Slander	Fine; flogging for a second offense
Slaveholding/Slave Trading	Flogging and 6 months imprisonment
Strong-Arm Robbery	Flogging and fine equal to twice the value of stolen goods
Tax Evasion	Fine and 2 months hard labor
Treason	Death
Vandalism	Fine

Market Districts in teams of three or more. Each team reports to a sergeant who in turn reports to a lieutenant. The watchmen carry *tipstaffs* (see **Chapter 7**) to more easily arrest individuals without seriously harming them. The watch's headquarters, the Redrock Bailey, is located in Upper Zobeck.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

The watch fines citizens for committing minor crimes and usually holds drunks and disorderly individuals overnight in addition to fining them. Serious crimes may result in flogging, long-term imprisonment, or hard labor. Exile or death punishes the worst crimes.

All fines are equal to the property damage caused or 50 gp for personal assaults. Flogging consists of six lashes. For additional equivalent offenses, criminals receive the offense's number times the listed punishment, meaning a second offense doubles the listed punishment while a third offense triples it and so on.

Sentences for hard labor can be fatal or merely exhausting as it usually means workdays of 12–16 hours in the silver mines, unloading barges, digging graves or sewage ditches, constructing roads, or (in the best case) harvesting crops. Those sentenced to imprisonment have a better chance of coping well and emerging unscarred but usually only if they have money or wealthy friends. Most prisoners are held in the Citadel, and those with the funds may purchase some comforts, such as furniture or better food. Without this, however, inmates have a rough time, and most prisoners emerge gaunt and sickly.

GANG MEMBERS, GUILDMASTERS, PRIESTS, AND PROFESSORS

Gang members, priests, guildmasters, and masters at the Arcane Collegium hold sway and power in different parts of the city. Several priests and guildmasters (including Guildmaster Orlando of the Arcane Collegium) also serve as consuls on the Free City Council.

Below are listed the most notable of these individuals. Information on the Arcane Collegium and each guild or temple appears in its associated district in **Chapter 4**, and details on gangs appear in **Chapter 5**.

ZOBECK'S NEIGHBORS

The River Argent flows stern and chill beneath the bridges and along the docks of the Free City. It traces the northern border of the Magdar Kingdom before snaking farther east to the Ruby Sea. Barges and ships ply this

NOTABLE ZOBECKERS

Gangsters and Smugglers: Goldbiter, kobold smuggling king (N kobold **merchant captain**, see *Tome of Beasts 3*); Izachar, or "Eyebite," leader of the Cloven Nine (CE tiefling, **first servant** of Arch-Devil Asmodeus, see *Tome of Beasts 3*, substituting for warlock spells and a Charisma spellcasting ability); Jorleele, son of Silver-Fingers, prince of the Barge Bandits (CE human **bandit lord**, see *Tome of Beasts*); **Mama Rye**, matriarch and crab diviner of the Kariv (see **Chapter 5**); the Red Mask, master of the Redcloaks (LE, other details unknown)

Guildmasters and Merchants: Ersebet Cemilla, leader of the Spyglass and Cartographer's Guild (N human **thief lord**, see *Creature Codex*); Lord Grimaldi Slygass, master merchant of House Slygass (LN human **gladiator**); Lord Volstaff Greymark, master merchant and Consul (LE human **thief lord**, see *Creature Codex*); Lady Wintesla Marack, master merchant of House Marack and Consul (LG human **apostle** of Lada, see *Tome of Beasts 3*); Philomena Flaxe, guildmistress of the Honorable Order of Weavers (LN human **merchant captain**, see *Tome of Beasts 3*); Ursli Schramm, guildmaster of the Steamworker's Guild (LN dwarf **gladiator**)

Priests and Mages: Ariella Scarpetti, Master Illusionist (N human **mage**); Konrad von Eberfeld, Master Necromancer (NE human **necromancer**, see *Creature Codex*); Lena Ravovik, High Priestess of Rava Among the Humans (LN human **first servant** of Rava, see *Tome of Beasts 3*); Lucca Angeli, High Priestess of Lada, the Golden Goddess (NG human **first servant** of Lada, see *Tome of Beasts 3*); Medlin Gorzax, High Priest of Perun (N human **first servant** of Perun, see *Tome of Beasts 3*); Ogolai Kiyat, High Priest of Porevit and Yarila, the Green Gods (CG centaur **apostle** of the Green Gods, see *Tome of Beasts 3*); Ondli Firedrake, First Consul and High Priest of Rava Among the Dwarves and Volund, (LG dwarf **first servant** of Rava and Volund, see *Tome of Beasts 3*); Orlando, Guildmaster of the Arcane Collegium (CN human **archmage**); Rudwin Whitstone, Master Diviner (N dwarf **mage**)

deep and slow waterway, connecting east to west. Its towpath provides a roadway for both farmers and oxen. Most of the time, the patrols of Zobeck's Order of the Griffon keep robbers, fey maidens, and ogres away from the riverbanks.

Zobeck survives on the trade that flows into and out of it and thus takes a great interest in those lands reached by the Argent or the great roads. Many of the lands surrounding the Free City have threatened or aided it at one time or another, and every Zobecker knows that maintaining their freedom and wealth means keeping a careful eye on their neighbors.

IRONCRAG CANTONS

Located in the Ironcrag Mountains and their foothills, the Ironcrag Cantons are centers of dwarven trade, industry, and culture. Each canton is defined by a settlement that has existed at least 100 years, contains both free and cloistered dwarves, and encompasses a set of halls. More than mines and simple shelter, proper halls must include forges or smelters, a brewery, clan homes, and at least one temple or shrine. The total population of the cantons is difficult to determine (dwarves are reticent to count their numbers or at least to share those numbers with anyone). The best guesses say the cantons hold as many as 150,000 dwarves and perhaps 25,000 slaves, mostly human.

The 14 settled cantons are Bareicks, Bundhausen (Liadmura), Grisal, Gunnacks, Hammerfell (Mazzot), Juralt, Kubourg (Friunsgorla), Nordmansch, St. Mishau, Templeforge (Favgia Baselgia), Tijino, Vursalis, and Wintersheim (Inviernusa). Some of the cantons have two or three names, one in Common, one in Dwarvish, and one in the Southern Tongue.

Other cantons besides the 14 constantly rise and fall and are not accorded equal status. Most notably, the small settlements of Roglett and Mynnasgard have been inhabited for about 60 and 90 years, respectively. While not yet established enough to merit mention among the cantons, they are certainly on their way.

The former canton of Citadel (Friundor) was abandoned for many long years until a gold rush a decade ago caused the canton to fill with prospectors. Boom towns rose around the dig sites, and merchants, entertainers, prostitutes, adventurers, bounty hunters, and countless other folks hurried to Friundor to get rich quickly. The gold in Citadel has all but evaporated, and derro and devils lurking in the subterranean caverns have driven the few remaining prospectors to madness. Treasure may still hide in Friundor, but it is the well-guarded sort that only adventurers dare reclaim. The cantons of Krongard, Sargau, Villershall, and Volund's Beard also lie abandoned for one reason or another.

The dwarven cantons are all in the Ironcrags, though varying altitudes and passes make some much more accessible than others, and a few are separated from the main cantons by lowlands and rivers inhabited by humans. The two outliers are Wintersheim to the north and the dark canton of Grisal, which stands across the River Argent, near the Morgau and Doresh border.

MAGDAR KINGDOM

The rolling hills and grasslands south of Zobeck are the provinces of the Magdar Kingdom, a place rich in traditions of chivalry and warfare, where the Widow Queen Dorytta holds tourneys every summer and hires a great many mercenaries from the Ironcrags when war threatens. Indeed, the Magdar Kingdom must fight often to defend its borders both to the east against the wild tribes of the Rothenian Plain and to the south against the akinji skirmish troops and the dragon-blooded sorcerers of the Mharoti Empire. Thanks to this constant conflict, one of the greatest weapons of the Magdar is the war wagon.

Most armies travel with a baggage train: the dwarves prefer mules, the Rothenian centaurs manage on their own, the armies of Morgau and Doresh rely on zombies, but all carry their weapons, food, tents, and other supplies somehow. The Black Army of the Magdar, however, turned this logistical requirement into a portable fortification on the open plains where it so often fights. These war wagons are easy to circle into a tall wall of iron-reinforced wood, a laager against attack almost as good as a palisade.

War wagons provide protection and cover for crossbowmen, and even ballistae can be mounted and fired through their firing slits. But this is only half of the Magdar Kingdom's strength. The rest lies in the Black Army itself. No part-time peasant force or hodgepodge of lords' guardsmen, this highly disciplined and professional corps serves the kingdom year in and out as a standing army.

THE MARGREVE

The Margreve Forest is an ancient place, already old when most of the gods were young. In time immemorial, it cradled the great spirits of nature, and its loam felt the footfalls of the old ones. As millennia passed, its roots swallowed rivers, its canopy stole the sun from vast tracts of land, and its groves crested mountains that have since weathered to hills.

In all that time, the Margreve has changed little. History seems to transpire around it, lapping at its edges like the sea does the shore, but never truly invading. Though kingdoms rise and fall beyond its borders, the Margreve remains a world apart—a place where memories and old magic linger in the rings of trees and where new ideas and ways never quite take root.

A strange realm that lives by its own rules, the Margreve harbors wonders and horrors in equal measure. Those few regions known fairly well have an evil reputation as not worth risking to gain their potential rewards. Every year, however, a few brave souls decide to ignore the old stories and cautionary tales. Most never return.

MORGAU AND DORESH (BLOOD KINGDOM)

The princes of Morgau and Doresh are exclusively ghouls, vampires, and other intelligent undead. Their cold hands control a nightmare realm where peasants suffer without hope or sanctuary. The Imperial Principality recently conquered Krakovar, its neighbor to the north, which has only escalated tensions with its other neighbors: the Rothenian Plain to the east, the Ironcrag Cantons to the southwest, and the city ofZobeck to the south.

The rulers of Morgau and Doresh rightly believe themselves surrounded by a sea of enemies. They could dispatch any one of these foes in short order, but the alliance formed against the undead nobles of the Imperial Houses means the undead hold the passes when they must and raid the lowlands with fire and sword whenever they can. Morgau and Doresh draw special hatred for their tendency to wage winter wars and to fight by night since neither condition bothers their undead soldiers very much and plays to the principality's strengths.

For the most part, the wars remain small: holding a village for a season, despoiling a graveyard for new troops, laying waste to crops, or turning a tenacious enemy's daughter into a ghoul or vampiric spawn. The principality does not wish to make friends, only to terrify its neighbors and dissuade them from denying undead sovereignty.

Equally important, raids and warfare keep its neighbors from spreading the seeds of rebellion among the living who suffer beneath the undying gentry. The peasants of Morgau, often restless and always fearful, long to shake off their masters. Despite their undeniable strength of arms, the one war the undead princes can never win is that waged for the hearts of their people.

Most right-thinking men acknowledge that extracting taxes and enforcing laws are the price of civilization, which makes any in the ruling class a "bloodsucker" in a sense. But everyone outside the principality believes the undead aristocracy's demands for its subjects' warm blood and cold corpses go beyond the pale. Some citizens think their undead masters' command of death and darkness is a glorious beginning, but most of the living folk realize Morgau is a place of suffering. They obey their masters and fight in their armies out of fear rather than patriotism, for doing anything else invites reprisals against their families or forced enlistment in the "bone company."

As a result, the army is very much led by its officers, and its success comes from undead troops and ghoulish darakhul mercenaries. The darakhul are the true ghouls who dwell in their own lands below the earth. They are both entirely evil and among the best troops the principality can field, when available. Great victories in the field, however, are actually secondary to the vampire princes' desires. They are smart and join together to field the best troops whenever a real threat appears. Everything else—the raids, the constant drumbeat of war, the slave-taking—serves merely to keep the border in flux and their neighbors off balance.

PERUNALIA, DUCHY OF PERUN'S DAUGHTER

This nation of women lies at the River Argent's mouth, several days downriver from the Free City. The Duchy of Perun's Daughter interests Zobeck for two reasons. First, it controls the River Argent's connection to so much land and so many trade venues on the shores of the Ruby Sea. Second, its matriarchy is ruled by the demigoddess Vasilka Soulay, more often called Perun's Daughter.

The god of war and thunder, Perun goes by the names Donar or Thor in the north or Mavros in the south. As a deity of destruction, chaos, and blood, he makes a fitting mate to Marena, the Red Goddess (see **Cults and Heresies of Zobeck** in **Chapter 6**). This child, however, seems to take more after her human mother, a woman named Mother Illyena. Vasilka is a woman of wisdom and learning and a goddess of courage, teaching, and stern mercy.

Ruled by a Divine Hand. Though small, the duchy is rich in the trade of the fish and oysters that come from the river mouth and in the crafts of timber, fine jewelwork, and divine magic. None of these will ever raise the land to glory, but they keep its people happy and healthy and give them time for reflection, recreation, and the pursuit of art. The duchy is, by far, the land

most given to education, literacy, scholarship, and the keeping of ancient lore. The people's learning focuses on mathematics, botany, agronomy, and architecture rather than the arcane. The vast library in the capital city, a wing of the royal palace, is open to the public one day each week.

Oddly, people here largely neglect worship and theology. Her Divine Transcendence the Duchess Vasilka grants boons and answers prayers to a small priesthood, though most of her people also revere the Green Gods and Lada. Most importantly, Vasilka's power provides a bulwark against the Rothenian centaurs, the bandits of the Ruby Despotate, the dragonborn legions of the Mharoti Empire, and the cunning cavalry of the Magdar Kingdom. Her most powerful defenders are the amazons of Perunalia.

Amazons and Guardians. Perunalia sits at a crossroads of danger. It is besieged by raiding centaurs from the east and dragon legions to the south, and the slavers of the Ruby Despotate from the sea want nothing more than to capture one of the "shameless women of Perun." Yet despite the danger, the warrior women of Perunalia—and their matron demigoddess—are entirely capable of defending their people.

The Perunalian warrior tradition is old, well respected, and primarily female. Many visitors remark on the "strangeness" of the city guard being nearly all women and fall into shocked silence when they see the duchess's horse guards pass—every one of them a woman of skill and daring. Though capable, this force is not always sufficient to put off attacks by larger neighbors, especially when led by men dismissive of the "girls on their ponies," and in times of trouble, the people of Perun have a friend in the Free City of Zobeck. Their mutual alliance dates back 90 years and remains firm.

Women who flee the Ruby Despotate or the Magdar Kingdom are welcomed into the duchy and soon find work, usually as guards, soldiers, weavers, or farmers if they know no other trades. The Perunalian generals and marshals of the Order of the White Lions—a society of paladins, all women—willingly raise levies of both men and women in times of war.

Lest it be misunderstood, the duchy is not entirely and gloriously enlightened, selfless, and wise. The merchants of Zobeck, for one, consider Perunalians especially sharp traders who happen to occasionally negotiate contracts at sword point or take goods by force to feed their troops. Certainly, the duchy is an unusual realm, and its people would have it no other way.

THE SHADOW REALM

The Shadow Realm is a place of long winters and wan summers—a home to elves as unforgiving as a blizzard. They are the twisted servants and loyal worshipers of their goddess and queen, Sarastra, the Goddess of Night and Magic.

She sits on a mirrored throne within her palace of glass and dreams, attended by 1,000 lords and ladies with alabaster skin and hearts of ice. Human tales describe the queen as a demigoddess and implacably cruel, though many details are likely exaggerations. The queen dreams of conquest, blood, and loss. She remembers too many worlds that once were hers.

The Winter Court waits trapped within a world stitched together from memories of a past that never was. Shadow ships sail seas of fog. Fey hounds lurk near crossroads and echoes of forests, hoping that something warm will find its way between the worlds. Each summer is weaker than the last.

But where before they despaired, now the shadow fey hope. The world of men remembers them and comes to trade, and for these isolated and dangerous fey, this presents the greatest opportunity in many bleak years.

Mankind comes to bargain, and the Winter Court loves nothing so much as a bargain. The humans entreat the fey to return with them to their wondrous, vibrant city to stimulate commerce, and they offer the Winter Court their desires in exchange.

The Winter Court knows much about desire. These humans talk of caravans, nursery rhymes, blood sacrifice, and ambassadors. They speak of mutual profit, normalized trade relations, and the chance to heal the breach between their world and the dark creatures of the Shadow Realm. They speak so much that they never notice the desperation of the alabaster fey or the way their mortal breath thaws the ceaseless snows.

They welcome the return of the Winter Court, and the Winter Court welcomes them. If it is ambassadors the humans want, then ambassadors they shall receive. The Shadow Realm is stirring for the first time in living memory. The shadow fey ambassador to Zobeck has been seen on the streets, and changes are certainly afoot.



CHAPTER 4

DISTRICTS & LOCATIONS

"Did you get the requiem?" Dobricar asked, forcing himself to sound disinterested. He glanced from the four grimy dwarves to the full cart behind them.

"Yes, Dobricar," the lead dwarf said tiredly. "The dara—the other darakhul were right where you said they'd be with the shipment." He glared up at Dobricar. "This better be worth it. Three of my companions died."

Dobricar waved away the dwarf's bitterness. "Cheer up, Garzot. More for the rest of you. The only things worth having are bought with blood." He led the dwarves into the great cavern ahead. A hundred or more buyers and sellers mingled under the flickering light. He grinned as he saw stolen goods, slaves, drugs, information, and rarer items changing hands for favors, coin, or more exotic currency. "All this, Garzot, was paid for in precious, delicious blood. I've seen a lot of it spilled to maintain my little bazaar. And much, much more will flow in time."

The districts of Zobeck retain their character and charm, from the huts and hovels at the confluence of the rivers where the kobolds first settled to the small hill where House Stross built its great citadel to the tangled docks and warehouses. The city's houses are stacked two and three and four floors high, but the real action is always in the streets and squares.

Here are some of the most prominent places.

CARTWAYS

Many blame the kobolds for the Cartways. As they were the first settlers at the confluence of the Derry and the Argent, the charge seems valid. In those days, according to kobold stories, nuggets of silver were everywhere, and mining revealed rich seams of metal. So mine they did. Once below the surface layers of sand and clay, they

found they could contain the problems of water seepage, and the mines soon ran in all directions.

The seams eventually ran out, but the wide passages carved for wooden-wheeled ore carts made it possible for humans to store foodstuffs and the wines of the Smolten Hills vineyards in cool temperatures. So the vintners and greengrocers expanded the passageways. That might have been enough for most people, but not for Zobeck's aristocrats.

Roughly 200 years ago, House Stross invited all the noble houses of the city to a Winter Festival in the deep cavern now called the Winter Hall. Small donkey-drawn carts brought revelers down to what seemed like the gates of the underworld where they found exquisite food, wonderful music, and wine casks large enough to dance on. Passageways connected the Winter Hall directly with Stross Manor on Crown Square and the Citadel.

The festival ended, but all the guests wanted their own grottos and their own passageways, and the golden age of the Cartways began with many brightly painted wagons and chariots going from house to house underground, carrying visitors, lovers, messages, and gifts. The Cartways stayed busy by night as well, as servants carried goods below ground so as to not trouble their betters in the streets near Crown Square.

In a few years, the mania for subterranean drinking halls and young lovers meeting secretly in the depths subsided. The carousers and courting scions moved to the theater and the park in the newly built Gear District, and over time, the passages became more and more the province of human servants, clockworker kobolds, and delivery carts. Members of the Arcane Collegium moved their necromantic studies here. The Brewer's Sisterhood and the Brotherhood of Alchemists, among others, began to dump wastewaters here. The first sewage pipes ran through Cartways tunnels from the wealthier districts to the river. The place began to smell.

The general use of the Cartways ended with the revolt. The victorious rebels sealed the passageways as decadent toys of the idle rich, and humans largely abandoned them. This began a great era for kobold rediscovery of their ancient passages. The first connection to the deepest tunnels made it clear that other creatures lived far below Zobeck. Kobolds joyously took the opportunity to found the underground city of Lillefor (or at least to loudly claim that they did) a few days' march from Zobeck. Most kobolds stuck closer to the surface and used the tunnels to smuggle goods in and out of town or across the river without paying tolls.

Recently, however, ghouls have harassed kobolds in the Cartways, and death haunts the dark tunnels. Stories tell of connections to shadowy realms filled with demons and devils, and many who venture into the depths fail to return. The watch continues to enforce the prohibition against exploration in the Cartways, for clearly there are creatures resting in the depths that mortals were not meant to wake.

The Cartways Today. The underbelly of Zobeck is a strange and wondrous mix of wet and cavernous chambers, smooth passages clearly carved by magic, alchemical runoff, river channels, and the cart tracks that give the tunnels their name. The place's kobold market serves as the hub of a great deal of shady dealing in poison, blood, stolen property, magic items, hexes, and arcane lore. The Cartways Black Market caters to still darker customers.

Many visitors refer to these as the "sewers of Zobeck," but that's only true in the sense that filth runs freely through them. They are nothing like a planned system. Most people of Zobeck still empty their chamber pots in the street in the traditional manner.

The upper levels of Zobeck's Undercity are simple tunnels for alchemical waste and tannery slop. Its depths conceal deadly things, from gangs and other criminals to devils and undead to still more twisted powers. Wise explorers tread carefully. The everyday comforts and expectations of the Free City vanish when one steps into the Cartways, and help from the watch is never available below ground level.

Most townsfolk consider the Cartways a minor set of disused tunnels—when they think of them at all. Their surprising extent and limited accessibility make them very valuable to certain kinds of people though, and exploration reveals new sections all the time. Whether the work of the Stross in their heyday, the kobolds in their prime, or even sporadic dwarven efforts, the Cartways reach to more places than anyone imagines.

Cart Tracks. Before the revolt, nobles used the Cartways as private thoroughfares to avoid the unwashed crowds or for private rendezvous. More commonly, servants used the tunnels to bring firewood, foodstuffs, and other goods to the noble houses quickly and quietly.

After the revolt, the Cartways fell into disuse except for brave souls who used them for assignations and smuggling, and the tunnels gradually declined without upkeep. A few enthusiasts continued to map them, but this grew dangerous as goblins, kobolds, and wererats took up residence. Some even say the devils once bound to service by the old nobles and young merchants slipped their bonds and now roam the tunnels to devour or enslave incautious visitors.

BLACK CHAMBER OF ANU-AKMA

Persistent rumors claim that, in the darkness beneath Zobeck, Anu-Akma—the guardian god of death and the underworld—keeps a shrine set with silver pillars and warded by ancient spirits of the city's defenders. Lies perhaps, but each year sees a few curious and foolish individuals seeking the Black Chamber. Here, some say, resurrections may be performed more easily because of the close connection to the Gate of the Dead. Souls called to the Black Chamber return more readily to the realms of the living, suffering less of the difficulty, weakness, and peril that such a journey often entails.

The priests of Anu-Akma certainly do have power in the lands of the dead and over souls of the departed, so these rumors may be true. Just as persistent, however, are more cynical whispers declaring that the Black Chamber is nothing but a maw of the god, and those seeking it become food for ghouls, demons, or worse.

BLACK MARKET

A long, vaulted gallery punctuated with enormous support columns, the Black Market is a hidden bazaar of the dark and sinister, the taboo and forbidden. Several large chandeliers festooned with magical flames cast a garish, flickering light the vendors and regular patrons no longer notice. The constant murmur of commerce is occasionally punctuated by arguments as flesh, drugs, stolen goods, and precious information change hands. The threat of violence hangs over each transaction, and when it does erupt, bystanders observe with a detachment bordering on the clinical. A single, unspoken rule governs commerce in the market: mind your own business.

The slave block, the literal and figurative centerpiece of the Black Market, is run by a group of darakhul from the subterranean city of Fretlock, commanded by a darakhul hunter named Dobricar. They bring humans, dwarves, gnomes, svirfneblin, occasionally derro or drow, and—very rarely—groups of adventurous souls for sale as slaves to those with twisted appetites and deep pockets. Far too many come here to bid for missing loved ones.

Those unfortunate enough to go on the blocks unrecognized or uncontested end up working in illegal mines, fed to the undead of Morgau and Doresh, or pressed into more unsavory forms of slavery. The darakhul have a strict "no dealers" policy, refusing to sell more than five slaves to anyone with whom they have not previously established a relationship. (Slavery is illegal and harshly punished in Zobeck, so slavers take great care in their choice of customers.)

The Black Market also includes a gambling tent called the Cut Purse, a derro-run brothel, guard platforms, Radu Underhill's home, food vendors, and a series of merchant tents connected to the loose confederation called the Merchant Consortium.

Prominent Locations

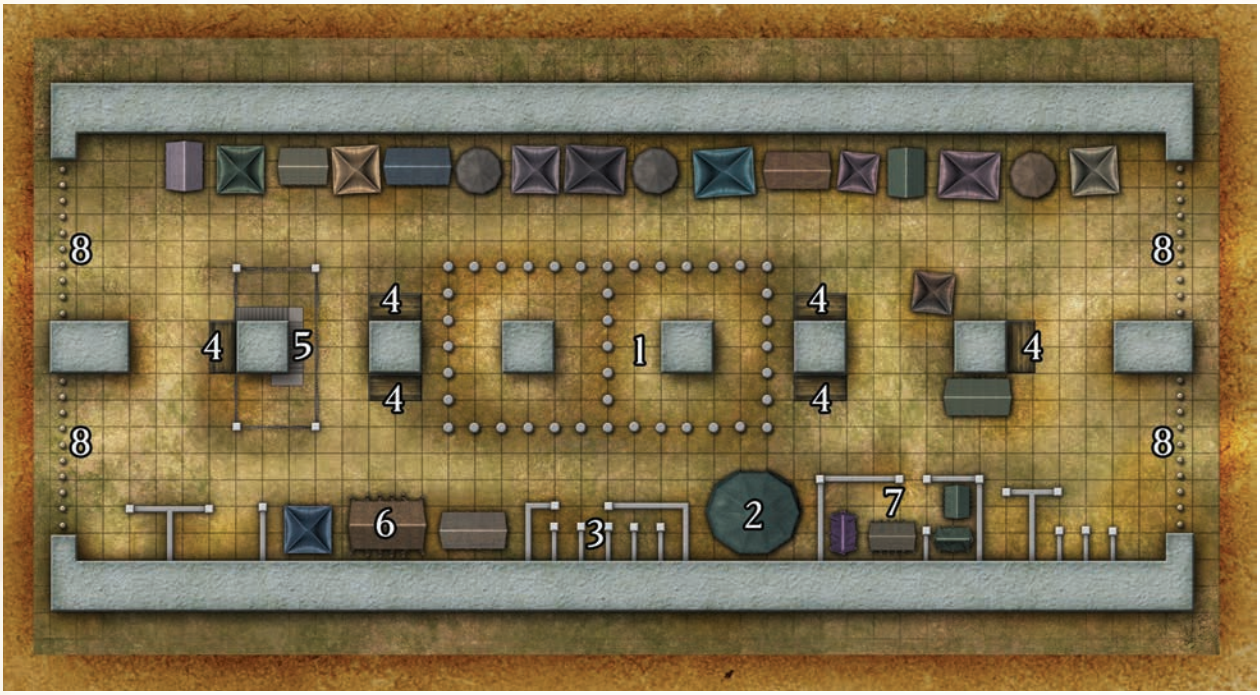
1. Imperial Slave Block and Pens. The literal and figurative centerpiece of the Black Market, the Slave Block is run by a group of darakhul from the subterranean city of Fretlock commanded by a darakhul hunter named Dobricar. They bring humans, dwarves, gnomes, svirfneblin, occasionally derro or drow, and—very rarely—captured adventuring parties for sale as slaves to those with twisted appetites and deep pockets. Far too many come here to effectively ransom missing loved ones. Those unfortunate enough to go on the blocks unrecognized or uncontested end up in mines, fed to the undead of Morgau and Doresh, or pressed into more unsavory forms of slavery. The darakhul have a strict "no dealers" policy, refusing to sell more than five slaves to anyone with whom they have not previously established a relationship.

2. The Cut Purse Gambling Tent. Run by the tiefling Vukas, the generally accepted "mayor" of the Black Market, the Cut Purse offers no-limit games of chance. Vukas has taken bets as high as 1,000 gp and paid them off honestly when he's lost. Any who fail to pay find themselves in Dobricar's slave pens, so few people skip out on their bets. Many call Vukas a scion of Mammon. A few quiet voices link him to Lord Greymark.

3. Small Brothel. The derro brothers Bjarni and Bjoris run this miserable slave brothel consisting of little more than curtained alcoves. Both of them wheeze, cackle, and jeer, generally acting disgustingly obsequious. Both have a disturbing habit of lightly drawing a knife over their forearm while speaking.

4. Guard Platforms. These small wooden platforms hold a rotating shift of guards supplied by the Cut Purse, the Imperial Slave Market, the Kobold Contingent, or the Merchant Consortium to monitor activities. Guards bring their own weapons. The ghouls apply their saliva to bolts, and the kobolds use clockwork crossbows (see *Tome of Heroes*).

5. Underhill's Perch. A rickety iron staircase winds up to the locked trapdoor opening into Radu Underhill's small structure, which clings to the column like a hungry tick. Its deceptive outward appearance hides a lavish interior. A trio of **beggar ghouls** (see *Tome of Beasts*) linger at the trapdoor and guard against the foolish and unwary. No one comes here save by invitation.



6. Food Vendors. Kobolds dominate this area, serving up stews in hollowed out, edible mushroom caps, fried bits of meat (or whole insects) on a stick, and ales that only the most adventurous epicureans might try. All of it is safe for consumption but certainly not for every palate.

7. Common Merchants. This group of tents banded together in a loose confederation known as the Merchant Consortium. Sounding more powerful than the disorganized rabble they truly are, they barely manage to regularly supply their share of guards. One can find any number of items here, from the mundane to magic items worth no more than 5,000 gp.

8. Gates. Four massive iron portcullises can seal off the Black Market if the locks holding them open are removed. A permanent guard detail from each of the factions who police the market watches a different gate, and each captain carries a large key to the lock on his gate.

Personalities

Any number of strange personalities might appear in the Black Market. It is the proverbial hive of scum and villainy that attracts individuals of all types and demeanors. These are a few of the more notable.

Dobricar. Grim and focused, Dobricar (LE **darakhul**, see *Tome of Beasts*) is an opportunist who found he could operate on the fringe of the surface world if he tempered his appetites. Now he runs the slave market in the Cartways with an iron fist, hunting escapees before they flee to Zobeck and always happy to take new meat.

Ticker Nicktailson. The pup of a lifelong member of the Redcloaks, Ticker (CN kobold **spy**) found he had a talent for clockwork and locksmithing. Wanting a better life for Ticker, his father apprenticed him to the Geargrinder's Guild. Now a senior journeyman specializing in self-repinning locks, Ticker wonders about the fate of his father Nicktail and strives to keep out of the Kobold Ghetto's gangs for his mother's sake. He comes to the Black Market for goods he can get nowhere else.

Vukas. A slight man with a wiry build and curly dark hair that does nothing to hide his horns, Vukas (LE tiefling **gladiator**) appears as an eager and gregarious satyr, an appearance that draws newcomers in the Black Market to him. He runs the Cut Purse.

Scenarios

Lost Trinkets. Some ill-gotten loot is too unique or dangerous to fence on the street. When a thief steals something they can't move through surface channels, chances are good the item will shortly appear in the Black Market. Whatever the trinket, it caught the eye of Vukas, who prominently displays it in the Cut Purse above his overstuffed chair. How do you plan a heist from a place that never closes?

Snatched From the Slave Pens. The ghouls managed to capture or purchase someone fairly important to either the PCs or to a well-known NPC. The hostage languishes in the Black Market's Imperial Slave Pens—possibly bound for a darakhul noble's larder, another

slave market, or even transformation into a darakhul to further some dark scheme. The prisoner must be rescued before they are sold and moved somewhere that rescue will be even more difficult, if not impossible.

Odd Vendors of the Black Market

The Black Market runs on both sides of a wide tunnel with the most prominent merchants, including the Imperial Slave Block, situated between the thick stone pillars running at regular intervals down the center of the tunnel. Merchants come and go. Some appear for only one night and are never seen afterward while others appear for a day or two before disappearing, only to return weeks or months later for another day or two.

In the Black Market, the susurrus of voices is occasionally broken by an argument or a scream. Newcomers flinch at each outburst while regular visitors to the market are wise to its ways and keep to themselves. Opportunistic eyes peer out from every shadow, and it is a rare week indeed when some unfortunate newcomer to the Black Market doesn't end up on the slave block or in someone's belly. Cartways vendors expect to dicker over the price of their goods with every potential buyer, and they always open by asking for the highest price they feel they could feasibly receive.

Listed here are some of the stranger merchants of the Black Market, including suggestions for how often they appear and how difficult they are to negotiate prices with.

Anton's Menagerie (Appears 1 Week Every 4 Months). To look at Anton Ladescu (LE **dhampir**, see *Creature Codex*, **mage** who can cast *animal friendship* and *charm person* at will), with his noble air and the manner of dress of a minor aristocrat, you would never think he spends the bulk of his time training animals. Like clockwork, however, Anton and a small coterie of dazed-looking assistants wheel his caged carts into the Black Market every 4 months. Primarily Anton has trained **ravens**, **rats**, **giant rats**, and **wolves** to offer for general sale, though he usually has one or two other trained beasts such as an **owl** or a **brown bear**.

Anton trains his animals hard with a mix of brutal conditioning and magical enchantment, which results in creatures that are completely loyal to their owner. Once they are purchased, Anton teaches their new master the verbal commands and visual cues that they have learned to quickly obey. Beasts are trained to a specific purpose. Those trained to attack on command are not also trained to defend their master or to retrieve items. Trained beasts only respond to the commands of Anton and a single other master, usually the being who purchased it.

In addition to trained beasts, Anton sells his services as an animal trainer for an large fee. Despite the cost, he rarely leaves the Black Market without having contracted to train one or two beasts. Those who spend the gold for such a service often have him train more exotic creatures, such as **owlbears**, **griffons**, and **death dogs**. Anton cannot train creatures that lack the raw intellect to learn beyond responding to their natural instincts. Creatures with an Intelligence of 1 cannot be trained.

Price depends both on the type of beast and the type of training it has received. Common training and examples of animals that have received it are listed here:

- ***Attack.*** As an action, the creature's master can issue a verbal command to attack a creature within range of its movement. Once the trained animal has attacked a creature on command, its master can use a bonus action to command it to continue attacking the same creature on subsequent rounds. If the trained beast has been ordered to attack, it does not defend itself even if attacked by another creature. Example attack beasts and their costs: **brown bear** 4,000 gp, **giant badger** 1,200 gp, **giant rat** 700 gp, **mastiff** 900 gp, **wolf** 1,500 gp.
- ***Defend.*** This creature's master can use their reaction to order the beast to make a melee attack against a creature that is within 5 feet of it and that has attacked its master. This creature defends itself when necessary but doesn't willingly move more than 5 feet from its master. Example defense beasts and their costs: **brown bear** 3,000 gp, **mastiff** 700 gp, **wolf** 1,100 gp.
- ***Deliver Message.*** This beast has been trained to deliver messages or goods to specific locations. Once the message has been delivered, it returns to its master's home. A beast so trained can know a number of delivery locations equal to double its Intelligence. It takes 1 week to train the beast to recognize a location. Rats and giant rats are popular choices for messenger beasts since they can get messages and contraband to difficult-to-reach locations. Example messenger beasts and their costs: **cat** 300 gp, **giant rat** 700 gp, **hawk** 1,000 gp, **rat** 300 gp.
- ***Steal Item.*** This beast has been trained to enter a location, identify the most valuable item it can carry, and take that item to its master. The creatures are trained to take jewelry and gemstones before other items. This creature has proficiency with Dexterity (Sleight of Hand and Stealth) checks. Its proficiency bonus is +2. Example robber beasts and their costs: **cat** 1,000 gp, **giant rat** 1,500 gp, **rat** 800 gp, **raven** 2,200 gp, **weasel** 1,000 gp.

Anton will train a creature for a cost of 100 gp per day. A creature with an Intelligence of 2 requires 3 weeks of training for each task Anton trains it to do. A creature with an Intelligence of 3 requires 2 weeks of training for each task. A creature with an Intelligence of 4 or higher requires 1 week of training per task.

If a character succeeds on a DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check, Anton will reduce the price of his trained animals by 10 percent. If he is requested to train a creature for more than one task, he reduces his rate to 80 gp per day.

Merry Sisters' Meat Market (Permanent Location). Hester Umbrecht (NE human **noble**) and Glynnphidea Gerhardt (CE gnome **cult fanatic**) operate this tidy, colorful tent from which they sell neatly butchered and artfully arranged cuts of humanoid meat. Their wares are arrayed on ice Glynnphidea magically creates inside a trio of small carts that have been brightly painted in primary colors. A fourth cart holds uniced cuts of meat for buyers who prefer their meat aged naturally. Tidy signs display the type of meat being offered, and the date it was butchered. Residents of Zobeck above would be disturbed at how brisk business tends to be at the sisters' macabre stall.

A tent, also bright blue, yellow, and red, has been erected behind the carts. Inside, Hester expertly butchers corpses on a long stone table. Blood and other fluids flow in runnels along the edge of the table and then drain into a wooden pail. Hester takes pride in the quality of her work and in being able to skin, gut, joint, and filet a Medium humanoid in under 10 minutes. She enjoys her job and has no qualms about slaughtering those that end up on her slab while still alive, regardless of their age, race, gender, or social status. There is little waste produced by the enterprise as organs and blood are ground, spiced, and made into sausages or pate, and bones are ground into meal.

Glynnphidea hawks her cart's wares like a sideshow huckster, extolling their quality and freshness, or lack thereof if some cuts have been lingering on display for a time. She takes care of procuring bodies to butcher and maintains cordial business relationships with surgeons, morticians, gravediggers, and the leaders of criminal gangs in the city above. She also has an arrangement with Dobricar, the captain of the Imperial Slave Blocks. When he has slaves that aren't selling, he passes them to the sisters who slaughter and butcher them, keeping 30 percent of each and passing the remainder back to the darakhul to do with as he will.

The sisters charge more for desirable, tender cuts of meat and less for tougher, gristlier ones. Additionally, the price per pound drops by about 2 cp each day it remains on display, though never below 1 cp.

If a character succeeds on a DC 15 Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion) check, Glynnphidea will reduce the price by 15 percent per pound.

A rough price range for commonly available meats is as follows: **dwarf** 1 cp to 2 sp per lb., **elf** 1 sp to 5 sp per lb., **dragonborn** 2 sp per lb., **gnome** 3 sp to 1 gp per lb., **goblin** 1 cp per lb., **halfling** 5 sp to 2 gp per lb., **human** 3 cp to 1 sp per lb., **kobold** 1 cp to 8 cp per lb., **shadow fey** 3 sp to 2 gp per lb., **troll** 1 cp per lb. (A startling number of trolls donate portions of their flesh for coin, secure in the knowledge it will regenerate.)

Petra the Mask-Maker (Appears 1 Day Each Month, on the 15th). For one day each month, an extravagant sign proclaims the presence of Petra the Mask-Maker. The sign further advises patrons to place 100 gp in the dish to gain entry. Other than the sign and a wooden bowl sitting in the air at a height of 3 feet above the ground, there is no sign of a stall, shop, or any other occupation. When a creature places 100 gp in the dish, the money disappears, and an unsupported wooden door gilded in silver and gold appears and swings open in the space before them.

A patron entering the doorway appears in a richly appointed sitting room with two comfortable chairs sitting on a thick woolen rug. A table holding a full glass of wine stands next to one of the chairs, and a card on the table exhorts the patron to sit, drink, and relax. In the winter, the wine on the table is mulled, filling the space with the scent of spices, and a fire roars in the hearth. The space can hold multiple patrons at once, but each customer arrives in their own sitting room.

After a short time, Petra, the shop's owner, appears in the sitting room, sits in the opposite chair, and explains that they can remake the customer's appearance to reflect their wishes, within reason. They will also provide documents to match the new identity for an additional fee, if so wished.

After the 100 gp to enter the establishment is paid, Petra charges an additional 1,000 gp to transform a patron's appearance. If forged documents are required, they charge an additional 300 gp, and the documents are delivered to the customer at a place of their choosing within 7 days. The forged documents are easily sufficient to pass a casual viewing. A creature that spends 1 minute examining the documents can make a DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check to detect their false nature.

Petra does not negotiate with patrons over the price of their services. Customers that refuse to cease haggling after politely being asked to stop are immediately ejected from the sitting room, back to the Black Market.

Tears to Forget (Appears on the 3 Days of the New Moon). For years, Xanarla Gloomyn (CE **derro witch queen**, see *Creature Codex*) has unrolled her tattered quilt in the Black Market for 3 days each month. On the frayed patchwork, she piles an array of waxed and stoppered phials, jars, and amphoras in a dizzying array of colors and materials. Each of the containers holds water from the River Lethe that the derro has enchanted to erase specific memories the imbiber wishes to forget. In addition, she sometimes sells other trinkets she's picked up in her travels, which run the gamut from mundane curiosity to minor bits of magic.

A less known service Xanarla offers is the procurement of specific goods from other planes. She makes a tidy sum from magic users and alchemists that desire fiendish organs and ichors, blood of celestials, jars of living shadowstuff, bark from a World Tree, or ratatosk brains.

As a result of imbibing her own draughts, Xanarla has forgotten her clan in favor of satisfying her own whims. For their part, the members of her clan have been seeking their wayward queen for years. When they find her, they will put her to death, so her soul can pass to the next witch queen, and they will no longer be without a leader-servant.

Xanarla is happy to accept trade, service, or favors in exchange for her goods. While she seems as scattered and random as other derro, she has a fine memory for faces and names, and she never lets a favor go unasked for long.

If a character succeeds on a DC 17 Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) check, Xanarla will reduce her prices by 30 percent. She finds intimidation humorous and doesn't respond to it as a form of negotiation.

Example items and their costs: *draught of forgetfulness* (phial, see also sidebar) 100 gp, *draught of forgetfulness* (jar) 500 gp, *draught of forgetfulness* (bottle) 1,250 gp, *draught of forgetfulness* (amphora) 7,500 gp, nonmagical trinkets 5 gp, magical items of uncommon rarity 250 gp.

CITADEL (§58)

Rising above the northern section of the city, the Citadel defends the river entrance from upstream threats, and it houses the Order of Griffon Knights. This group of scouts, arcanists, and daredevils fly patrols against centaurs and other bandits throughout the Margreve and serve as the city's eyes and ears in wartime. Their speckled griffons rarely number more than five or six, each lovingly cared for by a staff of grooms and trainers.

As befits his rank as field marshal of the Free Army, General Jorun Haclav lives and trains in the Citadel.

PETRA THE MASK-MAKER

Petra is a **doppelganger**, adding the following Spellcasting and Transform Humanoid actions and changing the challenge rating to 4 (1,100 XP):

Spellcasting. Petra casts one of the following spells, using Charisma as the spellcasting ability:

At will: *floating disc*

1/day: *magnificent mansion*

Transform Humanoid. As an action, Petra can transform the appearance of a humanoid. They can change the creature's height, weight, facial features, the sound of their voice, hair length and color, and any other distinguishing characteristics. These changes do not alter the target's statistics. The transformation cannot change the target's size or basic shape. Despite any racial traits the target may appear to have after the transformation, it retains its original race. The transformation is permanent once complete. An unwilling creature can make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw to prevent the transformation from occurring.



In time of war, he commands most of the city and can even dictate to the council and (most) guilds. In times of peace, the Citadel prepares for the next assault against the city's freedoms and strives to expand Zobeck's influence into the wilder territories of the north. Haclav and his officers frequently consult with all the major players of the city, masters and journeymen of the Arcane Collegium, Griffon Knights, guildmasters, and even crab diviners when called for.

Outside wartime, the Citadel answers more to the scarred but outrageously glamorous Lady Fenyll Marack. She is feared for her cutting remarks and for her powers as Praetor of the Blue House and mistress of the secret police and of any malcontents who can be convinced to serve the city's greater good.

Lady Fenyll comes from a long line of successful merchants, is profoundly wealthy, and drives a hard bargain with everyone. A widow and a survivor, she is the paranoid mind that helps keep Zobeck free. Sir Jorun's brilliance in matters of strategy and tactics protects the city when her diplomacy, sabotage, and misdirection fail.

As a military district, the Citadel is closely watched and heavily patrolled. Visitors may be asked their purpose in visiting the area if they loiter or act suspiciously.

BLUE HOUSE (§57)

The Blue House is a largely unassuming compound—though with cold-iron-barred windows and walls of striking robin's-egg blue—found just down the hill from Zobeck's mighty Citadel (in the Citadel District). Surrounded by a high wall, gated, and guarded by "plainclothes" guards, it is perhaps the most important building in Zobeck, after only the Citadel and the Arcane Collegium, for it is here that Lady Fenyll Marack, scion to one of the oldest and wealthiest families in Zobeck, holds sway as Zobeck's spymaster and head of the city's "secret service," whose operatives are respected and feared within the Free City and without.

The striking "bluewash" of the buildings is said to be part of a complicated Collegium matrix of permanent spells that protect it and its occupants from all forms of scrying and clairvoyance and prevents ingress or egress by any magical means (such as by *dimension door* or *teleport* spells or otherwise from the Astral or Ethereal Planes) without Lady Fenyll's express permission . . . and the use of her *key scepter*.

The few that have been inside the Blue House (and are able and willing to talk about it) claim that it is a luxurious manse above, as befits Lady Fenyll's status and nearly uncountable wealth, but below there is a vast catacomb of reclaimed kobold tunnels that run underneath Citadel Hill and connect to no other kobold

DRAUGHT OF FORGETFULNESS

Potion, Rare

This liquid is a pure, inky black. When exposed to air, it seems to absorb light, causing the area around it to become slightly dimmed.

At the time you willingly drink this potion, you set the memory of a time firmly in your mind. Within 10 minutes, the memory you had in mind is completely wiped away and forgotten. The amount of time you forget, in consecutive days, depends on how much of the draught you imbibed, as indicated on the table below.

An unwilling or unaware imbiber of this potion is poisoned for 1 minute and must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw, taking 7 (2d6) poison damage on a failed save or half as much on a successful one. The damage increases to 14 (4d6) if a jar is so imbibed, 21 (6d6) if a bottle is so imbibed, and 35 (10d6) if an amphora is so imbibed. An unwilling or unaware imbiber doesn't suffer any loss of memory as a result of drinking this potion.

CONTAINER SIZE	NUMBER OF DOSES	DAYS FORGOTTEN (PER DOSE OR IF FULL CONTAINER IS CONSUMED)
Phial	1	1 or 1
Jar	5	1 or 7
Bottle	25	1 or 30
Amphora	250	1 or 750

warrens underneath the Free City. The dungeons are said to contain numerous cells, "interrogation" rooms, and the magically warded vaults that contain vast magical and monetary treasures. It is said when troublesome adventurers are arrested in the city, they are often brought here, where the lady or one of her agents makes said party an "offer they can't refuse," such as spying on Morgau, as an alternative to torture and execution. Some rumors also tell of secret, magically trapped tunnels that run to secret entrances and exits in the Citadel, the Arcane Collegium, and even outside the walls of the city to the edge of the Margreve Forest—all of which are keyed to her magic scepter.

Within Zobeck. Though she does not officially sit on the Free City Council, she does have tremendous influence as a "shadow consul," especially through her sister, Consul Lady Wintesla Marack, and Consul-General Jorun Haclav, Captain of the Hussars. She respects and admires the wisdom and patience of the First Consul Ondli Firedrake, the worldly dwarven sage and priest. She often consults him for advice on dealing with the Ironcrag Cantons or for access to oracles of his goddess, Rava, Mistress of Fates.

It is said she was pivotal in the election of the current mayor, the dwarven merchant Constantia Olleck. Working behind the scenes, Lady Fenyll is a known proponent of the mayor, for they are both wise, widowed, and wealthy merchant women. They both fear and plan for the rise of banditry outside of the city walls, the expanding borders of the Greater Duchy of Morgau in the northwest, and the incursions of the Dragon Empire into the Seven Cities to the south.

The rest of the consuls, it is said, she has leaned on or bribed with gold and magical gifts to help her with her diplomacy and spying with the allies and enemies of the Free City. Guildmaster Selena Harbeck feeds her information about the productivity and mood of the city and its citizens via her guildhalls and guildmasters, so Lady Fenyll always has her finger on the pulse of the city and its citizens.

Myzi the First, the Mouse King and Lord of the Undercity, she has simply bought outright with bribes of gold and gems (and the occasional magic scroll or weapon from her vaults), so she can keep tabs on the Underbelly of the Free City and its unwholesome elements, many of whom she recruits or extorts into joining some of her more distasteful and dangerous missions abroad. She is also free with "gratuities" of gems and gold to the two kobold consuls, Kekolina and Quetelmak, to stay informed on doings in the Free City's kobold warrens and smithies. Lady Fenyll has also been known to do favors for the Bard-Consul Melancha Vendemic to make sure honeyed words are dripped into the right ears. The consul has proven effective in stressing the threat posed by the Dragon Empire to the Free City.

She distrusts Consuls Streck and Orlando from the Collegium but finds uses for some of their students in creating magic items she needs to stay informed and to keep the Free City safe. She is actively working to find a recruit among the students to elect as a replacement for the love-blinded and retiring Orlando and openly mistrusts his lover Aldona, suspecting her to be an agent of Morgau or Demon Mountain.

Her most public anger, however, is reserved for a recently retired member of the Free City Council: Lord Volstaff Greymark. Greymark's family wealth is one of the few to rival that of the Marack sisters and grows daily with his new trade with Prince Lucan of Morgau. The Marack sisters have denounced the House of Greymark's trade with Morgau, saying he is aiding and abetting a threat to the Free City. It is also possible she is playing a deeper game, that he is her double agent, using his trade with Morgau to spy on the prince and Morgau's plans for further conquest, enslaving the Free City and its strategic crossroads. Or is he a triple agent, playing both sides for his own benefit. As the reaver dwarves say, "Only time and blood will tell."

Outside the City Walls. With undead and dragon armies encroaching ever closer to the Free City's stout walls, Lady Fenyll seeks to shore up and create strong alliances of mutual aid and military might with other neighbors that are equally threatened by the agents and armies of the Vampire Prince and the Dragon Sultan.

The strongest military allies to the Free City so far are Perunalia and the Kingdom of Magdar. The three realms recently formally renewed their century-old alliance of mutual aid and military assistance in the event that any of the three realms is threatened by invasion. At a grand ceremony held in the Royal Konytari of Perunalia, the Three Free Realms signed new and broadened treaties of aid: Lady Wintesla, Lady Vendemic, and Mayor Constantia signing of behalf of Zobeck; Duchess Baretta, daughter of the Widowed Magdar Queen, signing on behalf of the Magdar Kingdom; and Her Divine Transcendence, the Demigoddess Duchess Vasilka Soulay, signing on behalf of the duchy. Some watchers reported that Lady Fenyll met quietly and privately with the duchess after the ceremonies, reportedly to seek further assurances of aid from her divine siblings in time of need, even perhaps the favor of her father, the storm god Perun. Since that covert meeting, Lady Fenyll has sent Zobeck agents to reclaim

Thunder's Seat, to see if arcane agents could do what the Order of White Lions could not: clear the undead and deadly hauntings from the strategic Perunalian fortress.

After these two primary allies, Lady Fenyll and her agents probably spend the most time treating with the fractious Free Cantons of the Ironcrags to varying degrees of success. The dwarven clans are not particularly known for taking on risky military ventures, but Lady Fenyll and her numerous envoys (with the help of Mayor Constantia and First Consul Ondli) have made a number of bilateral strategic trade deals with several of the cantons. Guaranteeing to keep the Free City well supplied with coal, wood, black powder, cannons, and ammunition in exchange for gold, trade, and clockwork artifacts, these treaties have emergency clauses to increase the level of military supplies significantly in times of war. Lady Fenyll has negotiated such treaties with Bundhausen and Lower Nordmansch (timber and coal), Kubourg (black powder weapons), Hammerfell (metal armor, cannons, and siege weapons), and St. Mishau (adamantine, black powder, and alchemical supplies). Bareicks and Juralt have agreed to send war wagons and mercenaries to join the effort, being the only two cantons bloodthirsty and greedy enough to commit actual troops to the defense of Zobeck. She has also negotiated the first order of armored airships and lift gas for Zobeck from the Templeforge of Favgia Baselgia for a display of military airpower, intended to reinforce the famed Griffon Riders of Zobeck—and perhaps eventually replace them—as the number of riders and mounts seem to dwindle every year.

Lady Fenyll and her allies do not rest their hopes of survival on their neighbors alone however. She has sent envoys (and spies) to any number of powers and potentates near and far: the Kariv, the centaur tribes, the Khazzaki and Vidim, even the Magocracy of Allain. She has sent representatives as far west as Dornig and Barsella, north to the Wolfmark, Huldramose, Björnrike, and Nordheim, and as far south as Nuria Natal and the Dominion of the Wind Lords. She has sent agents to the hut of Baba Yaga, to the fey courts, to the Shadow Realms, and even to Niemheim and the Master of Demon Mountain with notably fewer (and deadlier) results. Few of these representatives return, at least not in one piece. Hence her recruiting from "disposable" ne'er-do-wells in her dungeons under the Blue House.

She taps the same dark "wells" for spies and agent provocateurs to send into the Dragon Empire and the dark realms of Morgau. Recruiting agents for these missions is particularly difficult, given the non-human (and non-living) inhabitants of those kingdoms. She has had some success however: kobold "traders" moving about Rumela and deeper into the Empire, reporting on war preparedness (or the lack thereof); werefolk "mercenaries" that embed themselves in Morgau's dark armies and hierarchies; even a Nurian mummy theurge that has ingratiated herself into Prince Lucan's inner circle. This immortal spy keeps the Blue House well informed on Morgau troop movements and military preparations, though Lucan has recently begun to mistrust her interest in military matters over the arcane. As far as active military and sabotage missions go, she has managed to insert a tiny cadre of suicidal saboteurs into the province of Mezar in the Dragon Empire where they have had some small but surprisingly effective successes: collapsing minor keeps and dragon lairs, ambushing military convoys, and even closing a major military road through a small mountain pass by crashing a large avalanche into it. Made up of zealous minotaur saboteurs and crazed Zobecker kobold sappers, they call themselves the Dusty Dozen.



Magic Items of the Blue House

The Blue House utilizes whatever can give them an edge in their clandestine endeavors and keep them ahead of the opposition, frequently acquiring or commissioning magic items to suit particular needs. See *amulet of insight*, *percipient pearl earrings*, *ragged shroud*, *rings of embassy*, and *slippers of subtlety* in **Chapter 7**.

Spells of the Blue House

The Blue House has raised the magic of spycraft to an absolute artform.

GIFT OF THE GOLDEN TONGUE

2nd-Level Enchantment | Bard, Sorcerer, Warlock, Wizard
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Components: V, S
Duration: 1 hour

You touch a willing humanoid, and for the duration, the target has advantage on all Charisma checks. Additionally, any Charisma checks made against the target have disadvantage.

At Higher Levels. If you cast this spell using a spell slot of 3rd level or higher, you can either target one additional creature or increase the duration of the spell by 1 hour for each slot level above 2nd.

NOTHING TO SEE HERE

1st-Level Enchantment | Bard, Sorcerer, Warlock, Wizard
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Components: S
Duration: 1 hour

Creatures relying on eyesight and with a Wisdom score of 11 or less ignore the target as if they were not there—unless directly attacked or addressed by the target. Creatures relying on eyesight and with a Wisdom score of 12 or higher can make a Wisdom saving throw to pierce the illusion and see the target of the spell. Blindsight and tremorsense work normally.

At Higher Levels. If you cast this spell using a spell slot of 2nd level or higher, you can either target one additional creature or increase the duration of the spell by 1 hour for each slot level above 1st.

STEAL MEMORIES

4th-Level Enchantment | Bard, Sorcerer, Warlock, Wizard
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: 60 feet
Components: V, S
Duration: Instantaneous

You attempt to steal another creature's memories. One creature that you can see must make a Wisdom saving throw. If you are fighting the creature, it has advantage on the saving throw. On a failed save, you steal their memories. (If the target succeeds their save by 5 or more, they realize that someone tried to access their memories. If they succeed by 10 or more, they have a mental picture of the caster and are immune to further attempts for 24 hours.)

You state the type of memory you are looking to steal, such as "the murder of the arch-duke" or "the password of the day for entrance to the thieves' guild hideout." If the memory does not exist in the mind of the target, the spell fails. If the memory is there, the GM describes exactly what memory is transferred. Any memories include sensations for all senses. The memory returns to the target in 24 hours without them being any wiser.

At Higher Levels. If you cast this spell using a spell slot of 5th level or higher, you can target one additional creature or one additional memory for each slot level above 4th.

KING'S HEAD TAVERN (§61)

From the outside, this building's heavy slate roof and half-timbered walls set on a field-stone foundation makes it look like just one of the city's many taverns. The sign over the door shows a golden crown and the white-haired head of a bearded man, resembling the last Stross to rule before the revolt. The first thing that sets the King's Head apart from other such establishments is that it is notoriously difficult to get in. **Peppercorn** (see **Chapter 5**), a trollwife and the inn's bouncer, guards the door during business hours. She hates strangers and makes entry difficult.

Once inside, the place is warm and smells good. Brewmistress Hazel and Chef Jako keep an excellent beer and wine cellar and serve first-rate food (blood pudding is a specialty as is a stinky cheese made onsite). **Tymon** (see **Chapter 5**), the resident bard, is very talented but snide and easy to anger. His music is clearly magical but also haunted and even dissonant. Soldiers, especially hussars, seem to form a large part of the clientele, and the place even has a small dog-door, leading into the common room, which the staff calls "the King's Door." The King's Head serves as the Mouse King's headquarters.

WHITE ROSE TAVERN (§62)

A knightly tavern for the paladins and priests of the Sun God and the War God, the White Rose is not to everyone's tastes. Shrines and statues to the patron gods and various saints decorate the walls. Bouts of combat occur each night, and prayer services are held at dawn and noon. Candles and incense are available for a modest sum as are cantors who intone the verses of the Sun God's mass and the War God's liturgy for a

fee of 200 sp per hour. A number of merchants who are not especially devout use this service when negotiating particularly delicate or secret contracts.

COLLEGIUM DISTRICT

This powerful district houses the influential Arcane Collegium (§42) as well as Lada's popular Temple of Celestial Dawn (§47). Its most famous tavern is the Hedgehog (§44), and it is home to the Chartered Brotherhood of Alchemists (§49).

The Collegium's neighborhood is home to student quarters overflowing with impoverished scholars and scribes and those who make money from them. Stationers, sellers of quill and ink, brewers, cheap tailors, and a few tutors all do a brisk business here.

ARCANE COLLEGIUM (§42)

Composed of two small courtyards and a dozen two-story buildings (with a mix of gray and yellow stucco and red-tile rooftops) that house masters, apprentices, alchemists (near the river), and clockwork servants, the Arcane Collegium opens its doors but rarely.

The most common means of entrance are the Steam Gate that leads into Arcane Square (§50), just across from the Hedgehog Tavern, and the Water Gate at the docks, which uses a set of stairs down the embankment to a single pier. The stairs are always slippery, and guards and traps make them impassable to the unwelcome.

Even when the Steam Gate does open, those visitors admitted are most often hired help or someone seeking to offer great treasures in exchange for the Arcane Collegium's wisdom rather than townsfolk with a casual interest. The interior includes the two courtyards and buildings as well as a black tower, the large gray hall of the summoners, underground labs, and sturdy alchemical bunkers. The buildings have tarnished silver runes inscribed along the eaves, gates, and windows.

The grounds are protected by gargoyles, clockwork traps, and even undead under the control of the masters of the collegiums. Those masters are: Guildmaster Clockwork Mage Orlando, Master Necromancer Konrad von Eberfeld, Master Illusionist Ariella Scarpetti, and Master Diviner Rudwin Whitstone.

The positions of master summoner and master of stars and shadows are currently vacant and were last held by Linnea Thorn and Sariel of Morgau, respectively. Mistress Thorn was recently murdered, and Master Sariel retired to the mountains.

The Collegium itself has roughly two dozen apprentices studying under the masters, including kobolds, tieflings, dwarves, and humans. The staff numbers about 40 and includes alchemists, scribes, maids, cooks, a chamberlain, language tutors, arcane tutors, clockworkers, a priest of the Gear Goddess, a few clockwork scullions, and even a falconer from Siwal named Kaashif al-Rashid.

BOOK FETISH

Tucked in an alley corner just around the bend of a curving side street, the Book Fetish bookshop caters to a scholarly and refined crowd. The shop is surprisingly roomy—though clearly made by combining several smaller spaces—and lit by large windows. Bookshelves line the walls, and a few stand free on the floor. Tables and chairs fill the center of the room. A horseshoe-shaped counter with glass-fronted cupboards sits just to the right of the door and always has a young woman behind it. The Fetish keeps slightly irregular hours but usually opens around mid-morning and stays open far into the night. At any given hour in between, visitors can find Arcane Collegium faculty and students browsing the shelves, sampling the books, or arguing at the low tables.

The Fetish sells new and used books, common and rare volumes, and a wide range of ordinary to exotic spell components (usually kept in the back room or behind the counter and with only samples displayed). Many customers see it simply as a cozy shop that often stocks the right items but perhaps charges too much. A closer examination of the stock and the staff, however, begins to reveal the secret of the Fetish's popularity.

The side of the counter farthest from the door, tucked close to a wall, contains libido-affecting herbs, objects for heightening sexual pleasure, including through pain, and contraceptives. The polite female staff occasionally fetch special items from beyond the faded scarlet tapestry behind the counter, almost always books on proscribed sexual or religious practices. Eavesdropping among the customers reveals some careful, perhaps coded, conversations. Questioning of the staff reveals nothing, of course, unless the correct phrases are used.

The Book Fetish actually is a quality bookshop, but it also serves as a front for the Temple of Painful Pleasures. Many of the customers (though by no means most) frequent the shop for its large selection of erotic literature and treatises on sexual practices as well as to pay their 11 gp to obtain the platinum headman's coin that serves as their entry fee to the temple, located in the alley behind the shop. Most of these customers—and the watch—have no idea the Temple of Painful Pleasures isn't just a high-end brothel but actually is a real temple dedicated to Marena the Red. They don't suspect that the additional gold piece in their entrance fee goes to supporting her

proscribed cult, that their pleasurable activities serve as rites to the Red Goddess, or that the temple and bookshop staff are all her dedicated servants and priests.

CHARTERED BROTHERHOOD OF ALCHEMISTS (§49)

Second only to the Arcane Collegium in its mastery of the mystic arts, the Chartered Brotherhood of Alchemists is obsessed with fire, immortality, healing, and a thousand other things, all generated through potions, salves, and oils of various kinds. The brotherhood is very closely entwined with the city's merchants as it requires a constant supply of sulfur, quicksilver, phoenix feathers, ivory, amber, dragon's blood, and many other exotic materials. It also works closely with the city watch and the Order of Griffon Knights to create weapons, poisons, and soporifics.

The brotherhood is dominated by humans and has no kobold members. It works in a series of stone bunkers near the river, in chambers constructed with stone runnels to carry failed experiments out into the water.

HEDGEHOG TAVERN (§44)

This is the unofficial tavern of the Arcane Collegium, for it stands just outside the Collegium's grounds in Arcane Square (§50) (which is, of course, a trapezoid as any student points out with a sniff to the less geometrically inclined). Magic keeps the Hedgehog clean, and unseen servants constitute the entire waitstaff.

Its owner, a retired mage named Radomir Schlenk, seems to have been cast out of the Collegium long ago. Since that time, he has befriended many of the apprentices and even some of the masters, but his crime was diabolism, and he has not been forgiven.

TEMPLE OF CELESTIAL DAWN (DAWN TEMPLE) (§47)

Sometimes called the Moon Temple, this edifice to Lada, the Golden Goddess, is built from a pink stone that seems to glow in early morning light. This temple's priests use their healing power on any who ask, not just those who pay, making this a very popular place.

Each morning, the line of petitioners stretches along the street leading to the temple. As soon as dawn breaks, the temple doors open, and the sick and injured proceed into the heady aroma of incense and beeswax candles for cures or—at the very least—painkilling medicaments.

The temple's interior lives up to the goddess's name, for gold covers all its statues and most of its pillars. Some stories claim the statues are solid gold, but other rumors hold that most of the golden statues are illusions, made of nothing more than simple stone or wood.

The temple is a holy site in Zobeck since the goddess's avatar appeared here on several occasions in the past, and that is one of the reasons the farmers favor it.

TEMPLE OF PAINFUL PLEASURES

Officially a brothel, this secret temple of Marena lies in the alley behind the Book Fetish, and both businesses are connected to the same priestess of Marena, **Nariss Larigorn** (see **Chapter 5**).

The entrance to the temple is a set of 10-foot-wide stairs, leading down 20 feet to double doors. A blond, brawny Northman in breastplate opens a door to any knocking and holds out his hand. The entrance fee he expects is the platinum headman coin, axe facing up, available only from the right people for the right price and usually only in the Book Fetish. If he receives anything else, the guard accepts it and closes the door, not allowing entrance.

The entrance leads directly to a disrobing room and then into the sanctuary proper, where the temple's guests and acolyte whores engage in pleasurable activities while Nariss Larigorn, and often the bard Jayzel, watch from a rotating dais. Patrons may also purchase torture sessions as desired. (See also the adventure "Flesh Fails" in **Chapter 9**.)

VIGILANT BROTHERHOOD OF SCRIBES (§45)

The Vigilant Brotherhood is a place of careful thought, where every word set down must be checked and corrected. Its members serve not only as the keepers

ADVENTURE HOOKS

- The Dawn Temple contains a single statue of real gold, and it has been stolen. The PCs must recover it from the Cloven Nine.
- The Collegium infrequently requires a stout person of strength and physical prowess to pass through the Door of Knives into the Collegium Library and capture one of the rogue books that has escaped its chain. These animated objects have metal covers, fly, and are magical enough that spells alone do not return them to the shelves.
- One of the clockwork servants at the Collegium has gone missing, and they might have taken many secrets with them. The Collegium fears mages from Sikkim or Harkesh took the servant and are questioning its perfect memory for every scrap of arcane lore they have ever overheard.

of memory and history but also as the city's unofficial accountants, making the guild enormously powerful. Scribes report earnings, losses, and taxes to the lord mayor through his Praetorian Council. They copy out all reports from visiting merchants, compile information from every visitor, and notate every bill of lading and sale.

The scribes serve as part of Zobeck's secret police. They know the questionable folks to whom citizens write, what people sell to the pawnbrokers and fences in the docks, and what neighbors really think about one another. And yet they are the most modest of folks, with ink-stained fingers, simply cropped hair, and shoulders hunched from long hours at a writing desk or a standing desk.

WINTER'S KISS, EMBASSY OF THE SHADOW FEY

Winter's Kiss can currently be found at the court called Alchemist's Folly in Zobeck's Collegium District. His Excellency, the Winter Court Ambassador-in-Extraordinary of the Shadow Realm, Glaninin Thelamandrine, moved Winter's Kiss here after he grew bored with its previous location in the Temple of Volund—or more specifically, in the shrine of Ninkash. Winter's Kiss remained undetected for many long decades but is now clearly visible to the public . . . even if it occasionally drifts a few streets up or down.

The shadow fey ambassador has invited most of the gentlefolk of Zobeck (but notably, no priests of Lada or Khors) to dine and discuss matters of interest, especially as pertains to the looming succession to the west in the Grand Duchy, and also with respect to forming a wider alliance against the Dragon Empire to the southeast. So far, Zobeck's councilors and military leaders have not decided on any such alliance, but the shadow fey are known for deep and fathomless patience.

The fey recently gifted a set of black and silver speckled griffons to the city's Griffon Knights. The animals are smaller than the usual breed found in the Ironcrags, but they are swift on the wing and quick to learn battle commands and their rider's wishes.

CROWN SQUARE AND UPPER ZOBECK

Crown Square is the newest place to see and be seen. The tall houses all around the edge include the Council Hall (§31), the City Archives (§29) (wherein is lodged the tower of the Great Stross Clock), and the homes of the wealthiest and most powerful families in the city, such as the Greymarks, the Vandereik, the Armanac, the Hrovitz, and the Slygass. Their homes are brightly painted blue, yellow, or brick red, with the paint frequently refreshed.

On major holidays and state occasions, thousands gather in the square to hear the benediction of the high priestess of Rava or a declaration of war against Morgau or the death sentence of a notorious river bandit.

The city typically executes criminals here. The city jail, called the Redrock Bailey (§32), lies just down the street behind the Civic Courthouse (§30). The trip from the Redrock to the square is 200 yards along a wide road, and the executioner's cart rolls along it at least once each month. Common murderers, frauds, smugglers, and bandits stay in Redrock. The Citadel holds those convicted of diabolism, sedition, coining, treason, spying, or other high crimes.

The public enjoys the displays in Crown Square. The exercise of authority and the great temple of Rava make the place an axis of power. After the revolt, the square was briefly called the Great Folk Square, but this name never stuck, making this one of the few places that actively recalls the old feudal days.

The only things approaching a commercial interest in Crown Square are the small tavern called the Red Pig and the enormously wealthy Merchant's Bank of Yorn and Federhan. The tavern is outrageously expensive and does not admit anyone in armor or carrying weapons or wands—its clientele hires those sorts of people, and they eat in the kitchen.

Though filled with history and grandeur, most of the goings-on in this district remain behind closed doors. The great and good of Zobeck have as much desire, and perhaps more need, as anyone to keep their private business private, and they take some pains to do so. Still, the various landmarks of this district are tied to the city itself, its past, present, and future, and that importance keeps this a busy place.

GREAT STROSS CLOCK TOWER (§28)

This masterpiece of horology tracks the hours of the day, the phases of the moon, eclipses, sunsets, and sunrises. Two panels show the seasons of the year. Despite the revolt, the clock retains the Stross name, even in official language, and is a focal point in the district.

Rumors hold that the clock has much greater powers though. One hidden chamber within the clock's uppermost reaches supposedly displays omens related to the fate of the city. Some claim another secret chamber contains a gear altar where the souls of the gearforged are bound and returned to serve the city after their deaths—and might even be the seat of the Goddess Rava's visitation. Certainly, many gearforged in the city claim their flywheels and escapements move and ring in time with the Great Clock's chimes.

TEMPLE OF PAINFUL PLEASURES RULES

- You may only enter the temple clad in a robe or entirely nude. Doing otherwise dishonors Marena.
- You may not enter with weapons other than whips.
- The acolytes, denoted with the red neck ribbons, are here to fulfill your desires, but beating them or being beaten by them requires a private room at 100 gp for an hour session. An hour of pleasurable pain from High Priestess Nariss costs 1,000 gp.
- Everyone else in the sanctuary is a guest, and any activities you seek with them must be negotiated and mutually agreed upon.
- There is no fighting in the temple.
- DO NOT interfere with the other guests' pleasures.
- If you kill or attempt to kill an acolyte or guest, you will be sacrificed to Marena.

Some say the First Gear given to the city by the goddess is the prime gear within the Stross Clock. Others claim that gear turns in the Temple of Rava or the geargrinders' guildhall. What is certain is that the clock is warded by the Collegium and protected by furnace gargoyles, animated armored knights, and traps.

OLD STROSS PUBLIC BATHHOUSE

The Old Stross Public Bathhouse lies at the very heart of Zobeck. Located just south of Crown Square and facing the Founders' Statues at the tip of the Crown Spike, the baths once served only the aristocracy. After the revolt, the spring waters opened to the general population. This is one of the few places remaining in Zobeck where one can see the lost extravagance of the deposed regime, but the people appreciate it as a reminder and a monument. The bathhouse is now a shared social space dedicated to the triumph of the revolt. Generally considered both neutral ground and sanctuary, the baths permit no weapons or armor inside except those carried by the watch on official business. Given that, it's not unusual to find trade factors soaking alongside gang lords and chatting up guildmasters in a relaxed and casual environment at any hour of the day or night.

Prominent Locations

The bathhouse has two floors. The entrance as at street level while the bulk of the structure lies belowground, sprawling out beneath the wide street before it. The underground space consists of several chambers containing mineral baths, plunge pools, a massage parlor, several lounging areas, and even a gymnasium.

1. Street Level Entry Hall. This vaulted marble hall serves as the gateway to the baths and a waiting area for servants whose masters are bathing. Plush benches line the walls around a small fountain and the receptionist's station.

2. Terrace. Lined with statues by famous sculptors, this area overlooks the bath and provides a space where visitors can bask in the sun on reclining chairs.

3. Great Bath. A warm, azure-tiled pool, 30 feet deep at its center, the great bath is fed by a channel from the spring. The pool is open to the sky, covered only by the portico of the surrounding terrace above. A wide, shallow step permits patrons to relax in the water without submerging. Over the years, a few intoxicated patrons have tumbled from the terrace to this step, knocking themselves unconscious and drowning, but it doesn't happen often enough for the city to be overly concerned.

4. Grand Lounge. Dimly lit and comfortably appointed, the grand lounge serves as a meeting room and rendezvous point. A trio of musicians always plays, filling the air with background music to prevent eavesdropping—a breach of etiquette that is strongly discouraged. Management holds competitions every season to select which musicians will perform. The contest is judged by the public and is very popular, and the contract is lucrative for the performers. Many musicians have found long-lasting sponsors while performing here.

5. Gymnasium. Equipped with weights, practice bags, and other athletic equipment, several different "clubs" meet here regularly for fitness or to teach self-defense. The people using this room generally are reasonably wealthy and work in trades that don't demand much physical exertion. Teamsters, longshoremen, and others who get plenty of exercise during their daily jobs regard this room as a joke. Even so, more than a few of them still use the facilities to stay flexible or to meet and socialize with individuals outside their professions. The only "weapons" allowed inside the baths are the nonlethal sparring swords made from wicker that are stored in a locker here and which can be used with permission from an attendant.

6. Spring Pool and Overflow. A large volume of water flows up from the spring each day, enough to fill the great bath in a few hours after it's emptied for maintenance. Many city residents believe the water has medicinal properties and leave votive offerings. When necessary, the naturally-heated water can be diverted through the channel to the various pools. Once a pool is full, a gate closes the channel, shunting excess water to the overflow tunnel and out into the Argent. The tunnel has been breached in a few places, allowing those daring few who know the paths access to the Cartways.

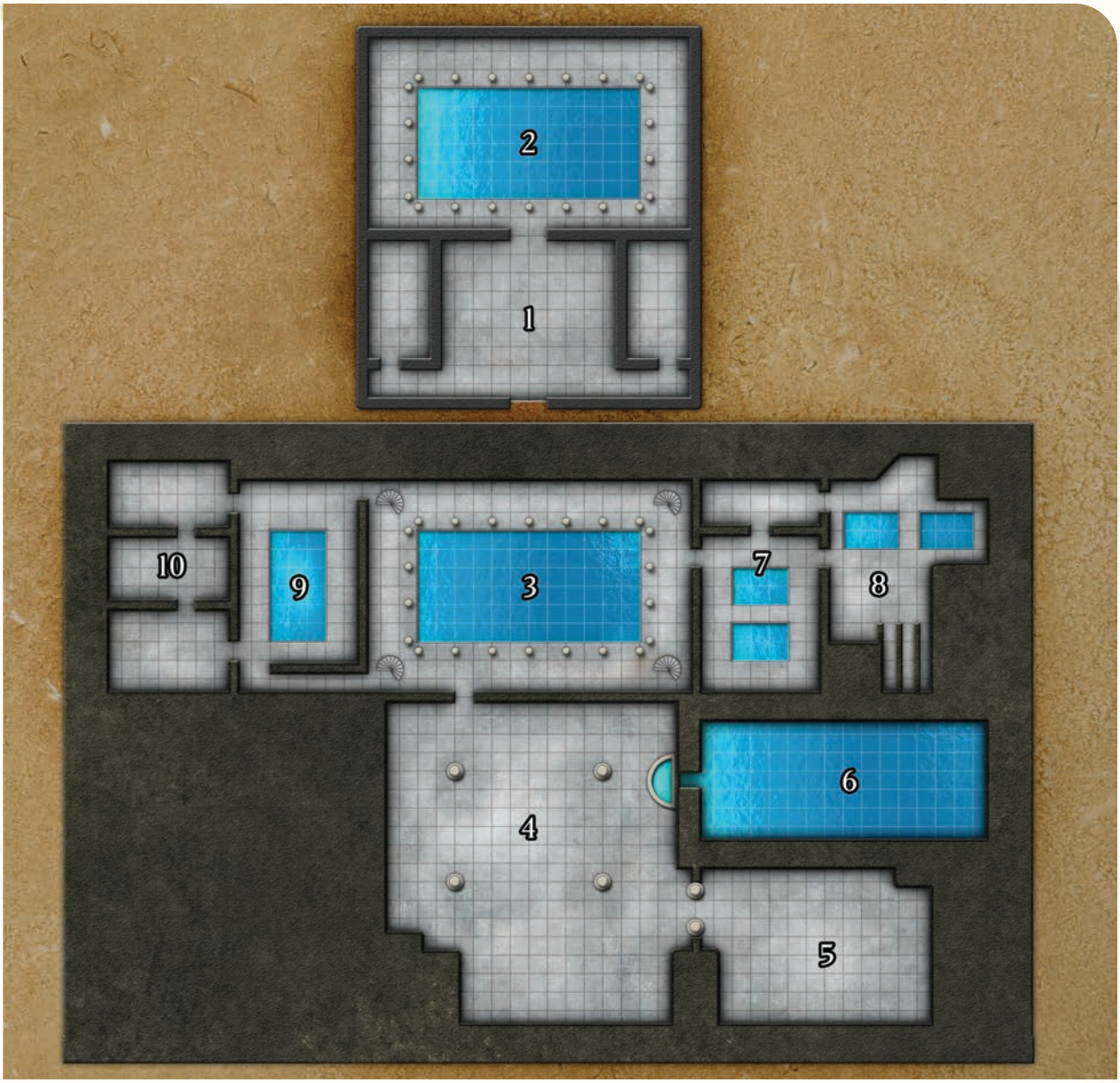
7. Heated Rooms and Plunge Pools. These two pools are regularly warmed by large stones pulled from a nearby hearth. They adjoin a softly lit room filled with reclining chairs and low tables that is pleasantly sultry and inviting year round. Citizens enjoy this room most on cool days in spring and autumn and nearly every day in winter. Summer weather drives people to other parts of the baths. The staff keeps a few games here for patrons to play. Courtesans, like Svetlana, masseurs, and masseuses regularly wander through, offering their services.

8. Changing Rooms and Saunas. These small rooms have lockers and alcoves for storing clothing while attending the bathhouse. A continuous flow of warm water from the spring fills the sauna while a series of hot metal rods supplements this heat. In a marvel of clockwork engineering, patrons can increase the temperature by baring additional rods. The rods are controlled by levers mounted on the wall.

9. Chilled Pool. Set into the raw stone and augmented by deliveries of ice from local icehouses, the construction of this room reinforces the cooler temperatures enjoyed by so many patrons in the sweltering summer weeks. Mosaics decorate the walls, floor, and pool, supposedly portraying prominent members of the courts of the shadow fey. Rumor has it that the pool itself contains an entrance to the Shadow Realm, but exactly where it is and how it works is never specified in these fanciful tales.

10. Massage Parlor. Located off the chilled pool, this service rents its space from the bathhouse and must undergo a review process similar to the musicians in the grand lounge. Run by Mikhail, a very gregarious and





engaging half-elf, it is popular with patrons for both the small stable of high-quality masseurs and masseuses and for the gossip Mikhail provides.

Personalities

The bathhouse hosts a wide range of Zobeck's citizenry. Lord Greymark himself visited last spring. With the public bathhouse's reputation, it is also a trusted place for rivals to meet and discuss delicate matters. Certain city residents can be found there nearly every day.

Mikhail. Mikhail (CN elfmarked **commoner**) is a trim, muscular elfmarked with a carefully groomed appearance and friendly demeanor. He is in love with Svetlana and is oblivious to her cutting remarks and spurning behavior toward him. Mikhail is a gregarious gadfly and makes friends easily with people from all levels of society, but once he's won their confidence, he uses any information he gains for blackmail. Despite having so many friends and acquaintances, it's hard to find anyone who'll say something nice about Mikhail. Occasionally, he even stoops to robbing from clients' clothing while they're soaking or relaxing after a massage.

Radu Underhill. Radu (NE **darakhul**, see *Tome of Beasts*) enjoys soaking in the hot pool in **Area 7** where, as he jokes, he "holds embassy court." He occasionally spends time in the grand lounge, playing a game of stones, but that's uncommon since he doesn't want people to think of him as a strategic thinker. Underhill

knows of the secret route into the Cartways through the spring overflow but rarely uses it.

Svetlana. Petite and raven-haired, Svetlana (NG human **commoner**) is very professional and refined. She speaks only in innuendos and insinuations without ever directly stating what she does. She detests Mikhail, though she sometimes uses him to make contacts she needs to feed her opium habit.

Zsolt. A middle-aged man with a paunch and almost embarrassingly wispy hair, Zsolt (LN human **commoner**) likes to gamble, aspires to wealth, and accepts bribes. He'd like the bathhouse to charge an entrance fee to restrict its clientele to "the better sort of folk," but he's one of the few people in the city who feel that way. How he managed to become the bathhouse manager is anyone's guess.

Scenarios

Cover of Fire. No matter how sacred a place may be, someone will exploit it. Two rival wine merchants have been pursuing a trade war. One of them decides that the market is the wrong place for blood and that the bathhouse would be better. Hiring several thugs, he pays them to start a fire inside the sauna and then murder his rival in the chaos. The characters might be visiting the baths or simply passing by when the screaming begins.

Nixie in the Room. Sometimes, one finds a blue-skinned man swimming in the chilled pool. He claims to be a messenger of the Shadow Realm seeking the River Court, but he took a wrong turn. Does the pool actually lead elsewhere as the rumors claim?

SEVEN BELLS TAVERN (§34)

By far the most important trade tavern in the district, the Seven Bells is more a market than an alehouse. The tavern stands just off Crown Square and employs, in addition to the wait staff, a scribe, a moneychanger, a notary, and a shipping clerk with connections to the barge trade and the caravan masters. The food and drink are both reasonably good and relatively inexpensive. Drinking to excess is frowned upon, and attempts to duel, brawl, or gamble result in summary ejection from the premises.

SILK SCABBARD

By no means a small operation, the Silk Scabbard brothel and fighting pit occupies an otherwise nondescript two-story brick structure near the junction with Upper and Lower Zobeck and the Kobold Ghetto.

Tyron, Lord Greymark's fixer, owns and runs the place with the approval and protection of the trade oligarch. This den of excess draws in patrons of all social strata. Fond of risk, Tyron runs many games and fixes only a few. The management sees the occasional brawl as a cost of doing business and keeps the furniture sturdy but comfortable. The Silk Scabbard's girls are well kept, or as a local bard advertises the brothel, "A dozen lovely ladies and two ugly ones!"

The Silk Scabbard has two floors. The street level contains the brothel, main bar, and pit-fighting areas. The upper level hosts the gambling and the auxiliary bar with a couple of overflow rooms for the brothel.

Prominent Locations

The Silk Scabbard has two floors. The street level contains the brothel, main bar, and pit fighting areas. The upper level hosts gambling and the auxiliary bar with a couple of overflow rooms for the brothel.

1. Street Level Entryway. A heavily reinforced metal door with a sliding view plate serves as the portal to the Scabbard. A clockwork mechanism allows people in **Area 3** to open this door.

2. Attendant Station. A thug behind a caged window sits in this small room to collect a cover charge from each attendee during advertised events. It remains closed otherwise.

3. Kill Station. Three thugs with heavy crossbows stand watch over the entryway from this room in case someone foolishly attempts something. Their crossbow bolts are poisoned and do an extra 7 (2d6) poison damage or half damage with a successful DC 13 Constitution saving throw.

4. Mustering Area. Thugs gather in this open space before heading to any trouble in the Scabbard.

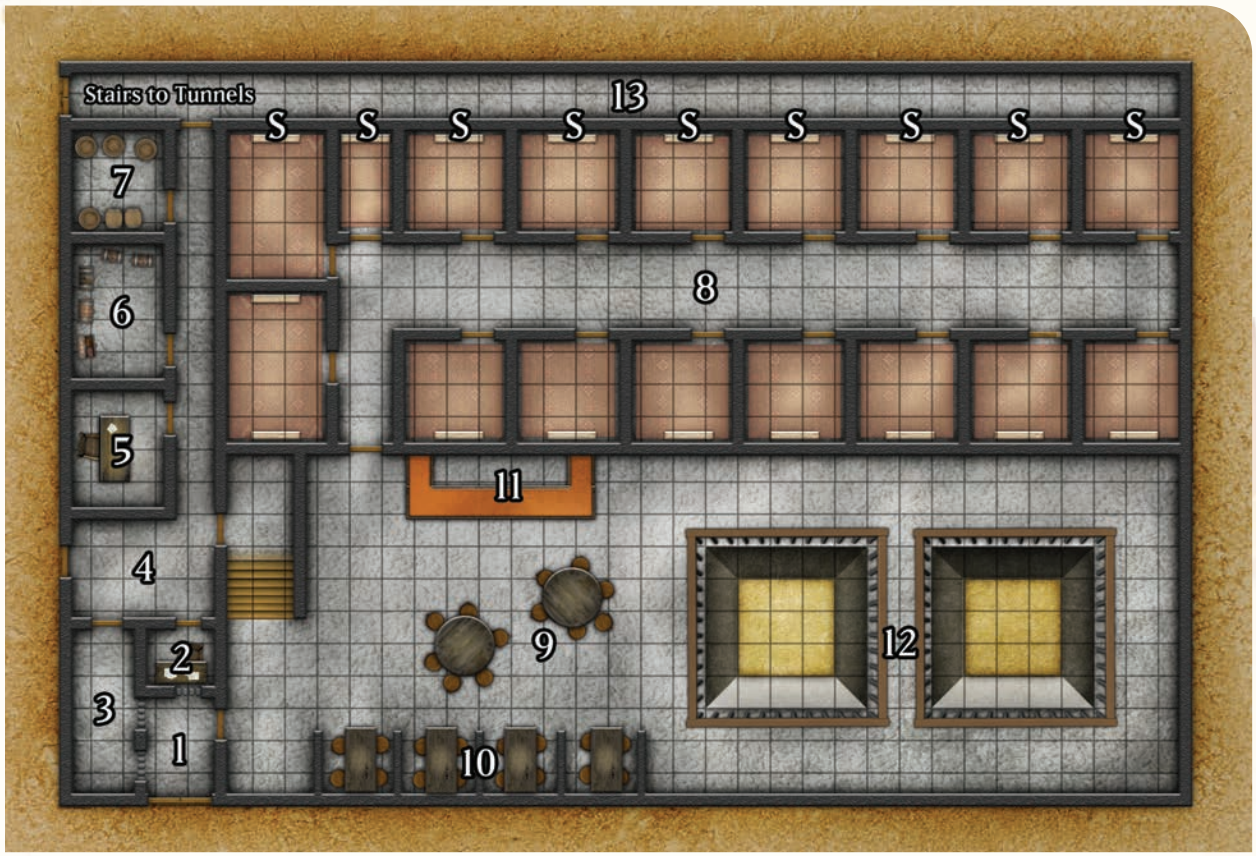
5. Office. The Silk Scabbard's ancient clerk works here, maintaining inventory and tracking cash flow. Other than Tyron, he is the highest paid member of the staff.

6. Armory and Vault. Tyron stores about two weeks' profits here in a safe—roughly 600 gp—along with 12 longswords, 10 heavy crossbows, 50 crossbow bolts, and six jars of poison for the bolts (2d6 poison damage or half damage with a successful DC 13 Constitution saving throw).

7. Storage. Casks of wine, beer, and liquor are stacked neatly here. A single thug always watches this room and the adjacent service door.

8. Comfort Rooms. These rooms offer beds that fold down from the wall, barring the door from opening when in place. Each room belongs to a specific girl, and some contain a secret door leading to the service passage.

9. Lower Gambling Tables. Tyron doesn't run the games at these tables. Anyone can play. He does demand a 1 gp sitting fee for the night though.


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Floor

10. Booths. These four simple booths each provide comfortable seating for four medium creatures, though a few additional could squeeze in. They offer reasonable privacy for conversation.

11. Lower Bar. The Silk Scabbard offers drinks at standard prices but no food other than salted nuts.

12. Fighting Pits. A sturdy metal rail encircles these 20-foot-square, 12-foot-deep pits with sand floors.

13. Service Tunnel. This passage allows thugs near the comfort rooms in case of belligerent customers and ensures discerning patrons can slip into the Cartways unnoticed.

14. Open Gaming Area. Tyron offers games of chance here. Dice, cards, and roulette are common.

15. Upper Bar. This area is identical to the bar on the first floor and has adjoining storage.

16. Comfort Rooms. These rooms are identical to the ones downstairs but have no secret doors.

17. Viewing Rail. There is ample space here for spectators to watch the bouts in the fighting pit below.

18. Office. Tyron's private workspace boasts windows overlooking the main floor. He rarely spends much time here, but it is lavishly decorated.

Personalities

Atsen. A barrel-chested bouncer (CG human **veteran**) with a thick accent and thicker forearms, he likes the girls and often loses his wages on table games.

Drajan. Drajan the bartender (LN human **commoner**) keeps his head shaved and his appearance neat and always wears sleeveless vests to display his tattoos. A teetotaler, he only drinks spring water.

Jitka. A half-Kariv who left his Margreve clan for Zobeck, Jitka the pit boss (CN human **bandit captain**) undisputedly rules the game floor.

Kajya. This raven-haired spitfire (LE human **bandit captain**) watches over the other girls like a mother bear. Offend her, and you won't see the back rooms again soon.

Timolius Druzeldorg. A tall, dark-haired aristocrat (LN human **noble**) with a potbelly and a braided beard, Timolius spends his days regaling listeners with stories of ancient kingdoms, lost treasures, and unusual monsters. He is a fount of knowledge, assuming one can steer the topic of conversation. His mouth never shuts, but interestingly, his money never runs out.

Tyron. Tyron (NE human **bandit captain**), current owner of the Silk Scabbard, wears a long coat and a narrow-brimmed felt hat. He is tall, thin, and in the later years of middle age. Befitting his role as Lord Greymark's trusted retainer, Tyron wears only the finest clothing and carries himself with dignity and calm disinterest.

Vandessian Thrikk. A prodigious man with a prodigious thirst and a love of the Scabbard's ladies, Vandessian (NG human **bandit captain**) is quick to point out his wide-traveling merchant background and heritage, claiming with a trademark guffaw, "That's Thrikk, with two *K*'s, at your service m'dear."

Scenarios

Bad Habits. Gambling debts incurred by the bouncer lead him to tipping off local thugs when wealthy clients depart the establishment. One such client's family holds the owners responsible for the fate of their injured or dead scion.

Everyone Loves Trinkets. A regular client is also a thief who gives his favorite girl a stolen, and possibly cursed, item. The understandably angry original owner sends demons, devils, or some other agents to recover the item.

Good Clean Fun. Daughters of the upper class decide it will be fun to go slumming as part-time prostitutes. It's less fun when the girls get kidnapped, and their families hold the owners responsible for the incident.

Let's Buy a Bar! Over the course of their adventures, the PCs could become the proprietors of an establishment like the Silk Scabbard. The following scenarios are examples of how this might happen:

- *Purchase the Scabbard from Tyron.* Tyron would sell the place for about two years' profits up front, a sum of 30,000 gp.
- *Inherit the Silk Scabbard.* Should the party perform a great service to Tyron, he might make them heirs. And on the streets, accidents happen all the time.
- *Become a Partner.* Tyron might feel—or the PCs might persuade him—that it's time to step back from the business. A socially inclined and morally flexible character with leadership tendencies might find themselves with an opportunity to buy into the Silk Scabbard for a reasonable price.

As for the operations and potential earnings of the establishment, below are some guidelines:

- *Earnings from Companions.* A prostitute at the Silk Scabbard can bring in 2 gp/day, or roughly 500 gp/year after subtracting for holidays and alchemical expenses such as birth control and *potions of vitality*. Assume half of that goes to the establishment.
- *Earnings from Gambling.* Gambling income from a house such as the Silk Scabbard is potentially immense but also highly variable. One possible method for determining the amount earned is to set each day's income equal to d1000 gp – 480 gp. Losses must be paid immediately, or the house's reputation

will suffer, and a string of losses could ruin the joint if it doesn't have deep pockets. Someone must also be constantly on the lookout for cheaters.

- *Earnings from Fights.* Wagering on pit bouts is handled privately around the event, so they aren't big moneymakers for the house. Mainly they bring in people who'll then partake of the Silk Scabbard's other attractions. Tyron schedules fights weekly, and impromptu grudge matches happen once or twice a week. A scheduled fight nets the Scabbard about 20 gp. Under Tyron, fights are restricted to bare-knuckle brawls to limit the need to dispose of corpses. Dogfights, cockfights, and more exotic animal matches are also held.
- *Earnings from Liquor Sales.* The bar reliably brings in 15 gp profit every week, or 780 gp/year.

Like Roaches and Rats. The Scabbard sees an infestation of another illegal business—drug dealers hiring prostitutes to push their product. The owners are threatened by clients who want more drugs and are sought by the watch or Spyglass Guild who want the drugs controlled or eliminated.

Moonlighting War. A competing gang shakes down the brothel by stealing girls through threats, bribes, and trickery. Welcome to a low-key crime war that escalates as one gang intimidates the neighborhood around the Scabbard, making it difficult to get supplies or services.

Promise Me We'll Get Robbed. The PCs find their roles reversed when a group of adventurers decides to make a play for the receipts from a particularly lucrative pit fight or holiday casino celebration. They attempt a multi-pronged heist that forces the PCs to use every option at their disposal to either foil the thieves or pursue them into the Cartways to recover their cash. The robbery might also be a cover for something more sinister.

DOCK DISTRICT

The docks along the River Argent hum with the loading and unloading of barge traffic six days a week, though with expected lulls—but rarely stoppages—primarily in the winter and in times of heightened river banditry. Attempts to alter or control the loading and unloading work have led to bruising run-ins with the Stevedore's Brotherhood (§74), and the expense involved means the greater merchant houses have stopped trying. The slips each have room for a dozen barges at a time, almost none of which stay longer than a day or two to offload or take on cargo. Time is money, after all.

The city's wealth depends on the smooth functioning of the docks, so attempts to disrupt this activity are very serious crimes indeed. Lawbreakers attacking barge captains have sometimes been charged with treason and beheaded. Even dockside brawling is frowned on. To provide an alternative, the docks provide many other vices, mostly fighting pits, whorehouses, and gambling halls. Prime among the last are the Red Queen (§37), the Cup and Pentacle, and the Rooster.

The docks take on a very different character after dark, in particular that area called the Gullet, where many gangs have their dens. By night, the watch rarely ventures down these streets, and everyone guarding the warehouses and counting houses keeps their doors, shutters, and windows tightly sealed. The gangs will not break into any building that has kept up its protection payments, but people found on the streets are fair game.

The Kariv are the only exception. They trundle along in the dark and even leave their wagons in clumps around the district without fear. They make their home here intermittently when expecting to meet friends among the barge workers, hoping for a shipment of fine horses, or for their own mysterious interests. More often though, the Kariv use the pastures across the river.

The buildings of the docks are rough and worn, built quickly and used frequently. The houses are typically wattle-and-daub construction, though the warehouses are brick and better guarded.

ALTAR OF THE LORELEI (§71)

Sailors have always been a superstitious lot, and those that work the River Argent are no different. For many locals, the lorelei—beautiful fey women who lure men into the river to drown them (see *Tome of Beasts* for more information on the lorelei)—are the river's handmaidens. The Altar of the Lorelei is a small wall fountain tucked in a quiet alleyway nearby, featuring a carving of a woman reclining on a rock and beckoning to passersby, the water pouring like a river around her and into a shell-shaped bowl beneath. Some say the lorelei are a mask of Yarila and that priestesses of the Green Gods tend the shrine. Sailors, travelers, and their loved ones toss coins or other small trinkets into its water as an offering to the fey before a journey.

Phylora Rhysen, an apparent priestess from the Temple of the Ocean Moon in Kammae, arrived some months ago. She has been preaching in the streets near the altar, calling out to the sailors and dockhands over the braying of donkeys and the lowing of cattle, exhorting passersby to put their faith where it's due—in Nethus. The sea god has never had any real footing in Zobeck however, and her impassioned harangues appear to have swayed few.

It is whispered that the shrine has a darker purpose for some. While most offerings are given to ensure a safe voyage, not all visitors to the fountain have such beneficent intentions. It is said that if a woman creates a poppet of a man who has wronged her and places it within the waters of the fountain on a night with no moon, the fey will find it and spirit it away. If the woman's anger is pure enough, her desire for vengeance strong enough, the man will meet a dark fate at the hands of a lorelei the next time he travels within earshot of a river.

Crafting a Poppet. Those who wish to call misfortune down upon their enemies can craft a poppet, a tiny doll made of rags and straw that serves as a proxy for focusing magic against a target. It is dressed and decorated to resemble the targeted individual, with hair, nail clippings, teeth, or other sympathetic items from the target either stuffed inside or adorning its exterior. Poppets are neither good nor evil but simply a tool through which intentions are channeled, but those who craft them are likely to be viewed with suspicion and fear.

BARGEMAN'S FELLOWSHIP (§72)

Occupying a cluster of buildings on the west side of the district, the Bargeman's Fellowship is a strange guild in that its members do all their best work up and down the river, at times far from Zobeck. They maintain close ties to the district's stevedores, working together in the loading and unloading of cargo. The bargeworkers are mostly sailors, rather than dockworkers, and often stay somewhat aloof.

Their guildmaster—the self-proclaimed Barge King—was recently removed and is currently serving two years in the Citadel for murder. Despite his many, many faults, rumor has it that he was framed for this, though why exactly or by whom is sheer speculation.

In the shakeup caused by the ouster of the Barge King, the city council made a surprising assertion of power and stepped in to ensure that the trade on the river wouldn't suffer, demanding a restructuring of the guild's leadership and a reevaluation of trade standards. The guild is now run by a council of three, to be elected yearly by the guild's active members, though the current trio was established by the city council itself: the human Jenna Gailey, the halfling Quinnie Wisewater, and the human Johan Greymark, distant cousin to Lord Volstaff Greymark (a fact he lets no one forget).

Any barge captain can attend the meetings and is invited to join the guild (and indeed is expected to) for a fee of 1 sp a year, and every barge captain who is a paying member gets a say in decisions concerning their trade. Meetings are held bi-monthly, or more often if a matter requires urgent attention, and a barge captain that will be absent can appoint a proxy to attend the meeting in their stead.

This has been great news for the riverfolk halflings, who had previously steered clear of the Bargeman's Fellowship as too sketchy and too dangerous to work with, and they are cautiously optimistic at the change.

Recently, the kobold captains have appeared at meetings. At first, it was only a few, but their numbers are growing as their shipping enterprise expands. Their presence is making waves as no one quite knows how to deal with them. (Some members have suggested changing the meeting time from the evening to noon to avoid the problem entirely.)

BENGTA'S RADIANCE

With a prominent location near the center of the district, Bengta's Radiance, a recent addition to the district's offerings, does brisk business with those looking for a bit more than a tankard of ale and a bar fight to pass the time. Owned and operated by a bearfolk bard simply known as Madame Petra, the venue opens every evening at dusk and features performers of all stripes. Organized in the style of a cabaret, customers can sit at tables and enjoy mead, cocktails, conversation, and light food while taking in shows that range from refined to bawdy. Poets,

ADVENTURE HOOKS

- The PCs hear infernal chanting while passing through the warehouses. If they investigate, they find a branch of the Cloven Nine conducting an augury that involves spilling a certain amount of (very fresh) human blood.
- The silver-tongued king of the barge bandits is said to visit the Red Queen gambling house (§33) each full moon with an elven courtesan on his arm. There's a large price on his head if only someone were daring enough to try to arrest him in the midst of a pack of gamblers, gangsters, and diabolists.
- Merchant families always seem to be at one another's throats. The PCs are asked to visit a warehouse and inventory the goods, returning with a particularly valuable set of alchemical fire. The only trouble is that when they arrive, the warehouse is open, the guards are dead, and the alchemical fire is missing. Unless the PCs act quickly, a nasty string of arsons occurs the next day—and the PCs are prime suspects, seen at the robbed warehouse by an eyewitness.

musicians, clowns, comedians, thespians, and dancers all grace the stage, and the crowd loudly announces their pleasure (or displeasure) with the current act with their coins, cheers, jeers, and even a tomato or two. In fact, many of the local produce vendors find it worth their effort to take a cart of the day's cast-offs past Bengta's Radiance on their way home, selling rotten fruits and vegetables to passing patrons at a discount. To earn a spot on the stage, one must simply impress Madame Petra—though what exactly that means is up to some debate among the artistic circles in Zobeck.

The upstairs of Bengta's Radiance houses Madame Petra herself in a suite of rooms that could put some of the noble courts to shame. Richly appointed with plush rugs, thickly cushioned chairs and chaises, and a four-poster bed with heavy curtains, Madame Petra's slant-ceilinged chambers are suited to more intimate gatherings, and she often entertains private guests far past sunrise. Some of the staff claim there are nights that she admits no one, but they hear several voices in conversation within her chambers into the early hours of the morning nonetheless. Who exactly comes and goes without being seen is a question only Madame Petra can answer, and none are too keen to ask, for her tongue is sharp and her teeth sharper still.

It's rumored that Madame Petra chose this location, specifically so close to the Dancing Bear tavern that she holds in unhidden contempt, as a passive aggressive bid to take all the patronage away from that place.

Fey Haunts. Several locations throughout Midgard have a particular draw for the fey, and Bengta's Radiance is one of them. It is not unusual for fey to be hidden within the crowd, disguised as Zobeckers or anonymous travelers. Someone looking to strike a deal or carouse with the fey may wish to start their search here.

BLACKENED FISH TAVERN

Unsurprisingly, given its locale, the Blackened Fish Tavern serves mostly sailors, stevedores, and other manual laborers that work the boats, docks, and nearby warehouses. The food here is questionable at best, but it's cheap, hot, and filling—and most importantly, goes perfectly with a large tankard of ale. The patrons are gruff and impatient, and the harried staff are brusque, but the place has an air of welcoming warmth nonetheless. One can easily find a raucous card game, a bar brawl, a boisterous tavern-sing, or a dark corner to skulk in here, and the other patrons respect all types—except anyone with a noble's attitude of entitlement.

A sizable establishment, the tavern sports a dining room lined with booths and filled with long tables where patrons sit elbow-to-elbow with strangers. Upstairs, ten spare rooms provide lodging. The kitchen sits at the side of the building, in a square offshoot with entrances from both the riverside to the north and Wharf Street to the south. Manned by three dwarves and a gearforged, the kitchen is cramped, busy, and hot. The dwarves are Drumdor, Belkorn, and Romir, three cousins who bicker constantly, while Bol, the gearforged, is calm and reserved.

In the kitchen, a set of stairs lead down into a low-ceilinged root cellar filled with barrels of salted fish and other foodstuffs. The space is laced with abjuration magic to keep out the waters of the River Argent. Expertly hidden on the back wall is also a secret door, and with the press of a stone, it swings inward, revealing a tunnel connecting to the Cartways. Drumdor, Belkorn, Romir, and Bol are all aware of the secret door and the tunnels beyond, though they will not speak of it, for they often host Morana's Smuggler's Market.

The three dwarves' aunt, Brunhilde, owns the tavern. She is old and doddering, and she spends most of her time puttering around her room just above the kitchen. Though she seems ignorant of any illegal activities happening in or near her tavern, every now and then a keen glint flashes in her eyes, suggesting she may know far more than she lets on.

BLUE BARBERS OF WHARF STREET

A tiny-but-immaculate storefront sits poised on the south side of Wharf Street. It is here, inside the mirror-lined tonsorium, that the Blue Barbers of Wharf Street ply their trade. The dozen blue-haired gnomes wear elaborate hairstyles and carefully coiffed beards and mustachios, each distinct from one another. They provide cuts, trims, and shaves as well as restorative hair tonics, salves, shampoos, pomades, and oils, and they love nothing more than exchanging the latest news and gossip over a hot towel and straight razor.

The Blue Barbers claim they hail from the Court of Midnight Teeth, and rumors have followed on their heels like hungry dogs. While they have many loyal customers, some Zobeckers privately accuse them of being spies or assassins working for the shadow fey while others whisper behind their hands that the Blue Barbers are exiles on the run since angering their mistress, Countess Phylomara.

The truth is somewhere between the two. While the Blue Barbers of Wharf Street have in fact angered the countess (after passing on a particularly insulting rumor about the countess herself), instead of imprisoning or executing them, she ordered them sent to Zobeck



with six of her enchanted mirrors. These mirrors now hang on the walls in their shop, each with a barber chair set before it, so the countess may eavesdrop on their conversations at her leisure or even pass through the glass and arrive in Zobeck at a moment's notice if it suits her. The Blue Barbers protect the mirrors and maintain wards over them, set against Duchess Shelessora, one of the countess's many foes (see *Book of Ebon Tides* for more information on the Court of Midnight Teeth and see *Warlock 16: Eleven Hells* for more information on Duchess Shelessora).

BROKEN SEAL

Deep in the Gullet, the section of warehouses that are a stronghold of the city's gangs by night, stands the Broken Seal, a tavern where the city's worst scum seems to settle. Headquarters of the Cloven Nine—the infernal tieflings once the city's premiere gang for extortion, gambling, and (most of all) diabolism—the Broken Seal nightly hosts the gang's lieutenants and foot soldiers, who drink cheap wine and tell whopping lies about their debaucheries and plundering of barge shipments. The gang has been busy rebuilding and fortifying their practices, and rediscovering their fires, since the murder of Akad, one of their founders, and the tavern has seen a renewed exuberance in its patrons.

The bar itself is largely below ground. A short flight of stairs leads down to a cellar well stocked with barmaids and thugs. The primary modes of entertainment are gambling and wenching with occasional dogfights for variety. The Broken Seal is also among the more arcane sites in the city, though its reputation for black magic and diabolism makes it unpopular with the masters of the Collegium. So far, nothing resembling an arcane crime can be conclusively linked to the place.

DANCING BEAR (§69)

The dockworkers and bargemen all drink here, and it's a rough place. They even serve kobold gangs, though not with any good cheer. Brawls, gambling, and whoring are part of the expected entertainment in the common room and the bunks upstairs, but the regulars keep everyone from getting too far out of hand, mostly for their own good. For all its lively distractions though, the whole place comes alive when Masha the dancing bear performs. She dances, bows, counts, and knows a dozen other tricks. Her favorites get a big bearish kiss.

The dancing bear is also the inn's bouncer. When she growls, all but the most drunken patrons remember to take their business out into the courtyard. For a dockside place, the Dancing Bear loses remarkably few tables and chairs. On the other hand, it runs up huge bills for mead and honey, and Masha is a hopeless scrounger for treats and attention.

KOBOLD SHIPPING CONSORTIUM

On the northern edge of the Dock District, dockside to the River Argent, is a narrow island, splitting the river, which was gutted years ago by fire: its warehouses were largely destroyed, and the piers have offered only nominal usage until recently. The kobolds of Zobeck saw the potential in the unused land and launched themselves into this new opportunity—the river trade business. Nearly overnight, ramshackle buildings and driftwood docks appeared, and the river began to fill with squat, flat-bottomed boats piloted by novice kobold oarsmen determined to move goods quickly from point *A* to point *B*. They have thrown many tiny wrenches into the well-oiled machine that is the Zobeck river trade industry, annoying the riverfolk halflings and others who have worked the waters for far longer.

Despite their rather chaotic business practices, the kobolds have made some headway and have picked up enough customers to encourage them to continue along their current path. The docks are now crawling with kobolds and is a maze of stacked crates, haphazard construction, storage containers, and "warehouses" built from whatever material was on hand. There is no rhyme or reason to what kobold clans are involved or who is in charge, and those that go asking will get a



different answer depending on who (or when) they ask. Currently, visitors to the island will likely get pointed to Trill Toothcut.

A kobold with a big voice and a bigger personality, Trill fancies himself a shipping magnate and dresses, to his mind, in a manner befitting his position. Wearing an oversized hat and carrying a sheaf of papers on a very important looking clipboard, Trill's ridiculous appearance hides a surprisingly keen mind. It's only under his guidance that the kobolds haven't devolved into complete chaos and infighting and have instead managed to complete several jobs successfully. Whether Trill can maintain his hold over the Kobold Shipping Consortium will have to be seen.

MOON AND OWL TAVERN (§70)

This kobold tavern, a thing very rare outside the ghetto, stands near the Puffing Bridge, close to where mine gangs enter the city when they return from the pits. Humans and dwarves are distinctly unwelcome here, as the language of the tavern is Draconic, and the menu caters only to kobold tastes. Indeed, it is open only from sundown to sunup.

Kobolds themselves sit at tables or benches by tribe or work-gang affiliation. An enormous, grizzled dire weasel serves as the Moon and Owl's mascot. Rumors claim that she can detect an elf or gnome by smell and has dragged more than one such visitor screaming into her burrow.

RAGMAN ALLEY

A narrow alley between clusters of ramshackle tenements in the poorest block in the district, Ragman Alley got its name from the junkmen, thieves, and the most destitute of Zobeckers that linger there. It is avoided by everyone except the most downtrodden and desperate, and those that accidentally stumble upon it pay for their folly in coin or blood—or both. Even the city guard refuses to enter Ragman Alley except in large numbers and absolutely never, ever after dark.

Ratfolk are most common here, living in the crumbling buildings that line the alley, followed by ravenfolk and then humans, dwarves, and elfmarked. Other creatures live here as well, skulking in abandoned apartments or hiding among the citizens huddled in doorways or beneath makeshift tents and preying on Zobeck's least fortunate, choosing their victims carefully as to avoid detection and quickly going to ground when suspicions are aroused.

SMUGGLER'S MARKET

Though not a market in the traditional sense, goods and services are nonetheless exchanged for coin at the Smuggler's Market with startling frequency. The location changes weekly, commonly sharing space in the warehouses and backrooms of legitimate business concerns—with or without the permission of those merchants. The market runs afterhours and always wraps up by dawn, always trying to stay ahead of the authorities.

(The old Smuggler's Market, under the control of the Cloven Nine, was discontinued in their disarray and paranoia after Akad's murder. Morana reestablished the market with the Nine's tenuous blessing as they refocus their efforts, understanding that they needed to walk away from that role and that Morana's control of the market would better serve their long-term needs.)

The market always has at least two employees present at any given time. It is currently operated by Morana Duskglow, a middle-aged ravenfolk woman with a striking pattern of white splashed across her deep-black feathers. Morana provides space for any and all organizations that are willing to pay her tithe, and she holds no loyalty to any one group. She brooks no violence within her walls, and indeed, the Smuggler's Market is one of the few places where members of opposing groups can be found in the same room together without blood being spilled. Those who break Morana's rules find themselves barred from the market—and may even be shunned by those criminals not willing to earn Morana's ire.

Morana has employed some of the most complex illusion magic in the city on this floating market, with magical camouflage layered upon the mundane as needed to remain hidden from the prying eyes of the city watch. The exact setup will differ, depending on the site, but a typical operation will provide a series of smaller rooms for private dealings and a larger space for storage and auctions. And multiple escape routes with easy access to the Cartways are always in place for Morana and her employees.

Odd Vendors

The following stall appears as a regular at the Smuggler's Market.

Jan's Most Expedient Carriages (Permanent Location). Jan Wonderdelver (N dwarf **mage** with *teleportation circle* prepared) only recently opened his stall, consisting of a single ornate carriage made of glossy, black-stained mahogany and gilded in silver, in the Smuggler's Market. The interior of the carriage acts as a *teleportation circle* that transports the contents of the carriage, be they goods or people, to an agreed upon destination.

He has memorized the sigil sequences for teleportation circles in the following locations: Trombei in the Seven Cities, Savoyne in Verrayne, Bemmea in the Magocracy of Allain, Bad Solitz in the Grand Duchy of Dornig, the Free City of Siwal in the Southlands, and Stannasgard in the Northlands.

Jan charges 150 gp for each person that is transported and 20 gp per pound for cargo.

He doesn't haggle over the price, but the lecherous dwarf reduces the fee per person to 100 gp if they are an attractive dwarf or gnome of any gender, though the beneficiary of his largesse has to endure his likely unwanted advances.

UNDERCITY

Zobeck's Undercity is vast and varied and ranges from natural, water-carved passages to more-purposeful conduits, such as the Cartways. These different passages comingle and intersect beneath all portions of Zobeck, though notably under the Dock District.

The area dockside of the River Argent was an ancient flood plain, similar to the now tilled pastureland that lies across the river. As Zobeck flourished and trade grew, the city built levees, though the river frequently topped the earthen works. Zobeck had to tame the sprawling Argent, so a river wall (or groyne) was constructed.

Comprised of crushed rock and clay sandwiched between wooden piles and horizontal planks, the groyne created an embarcadero that allowed vessels to dock and moor regardless of the Argent's mood. The construct stretched along the length of the river's bank, from the Greymark Warehouse to the Blackened Fish Tavern, and wrapped the small island—called the Kobold's Tail, or simply the Tail—that lies within the Argent. Behind the groyne, the land was filled and raised, keeping valuable buildings and their contents well above the Argent's flood stage.

During this expensive and extensive work, old canals were covered or filled, and structures that once stood on spindly pilings were supported, and in some cases, stone-lined basements got installed beneath them. Effluent from knacker yards, privies, and tanneries finds its way throughout. And these subterranean spaces have become the domain where many of Zobeck's roughest characters operate. Within these passages, among the carrion and rot, shenanigans and shady deals transpire. To engage in such transactions, a few moments minimum under the street level is required, but more often than not, an extended stay is demanded.

Once folks venture beneath the docks, they change forever: they are said to be "swallowed." One may be seeking back entrances to the Cartways or be searching for the fabled Black Chamber to worship or more likely pillage. Most, however, are temporarily underground to lay low and escape enforcers, nervously awaiting patrols to pass, waiting for unwelcome attention to wane. Others check-in for a longer stay, disappearing into the wet darkness, joining the slithering things that call it home.

Regardless of the time spent there, life soon turns from natural cycles (like sunrise and sunset) to an unnatural cycle punctuated only by smallish events, such as, "When I ate that rat" or "When that shadow appeared and shoved a blade in my face, demanding coin." Despite the length of time spent here, one is certain to encounter the Swallowed.

The Swallowed

Undercity dwellers are prone to thievery and brandish daggers or the like if confronted. The Swallowed are likely to know the location of concealed and secret doors and passages too and make use of them to escape, outflank, or steal. The Swallowed generally engage in one or more of the following roles.

Grubbers. Grubbers tend to congregate in the spaces nearest to street level, where they scavenge for bones, rags, and coins, any errant remains from those above. Grubbers are territorial and defend their patch of Undercity. They recognize a hierarchy though, and the Bone Grubber—the powerful and feared Gommage d'Os—lays claim to any subterranean area he so wishes.

When foraging does not produce, grubbers lurk near the streets and reach out with a grubber claw—a pole topped with a sharpened hook that can snag or cut—and empty or steal pouches or purses from passersby. To accomplish such larceny, there are primitive underground hideaways with hatches concealed at street-level by cobblestones or false puddles. Grubbers use these ambuscades to escape watchmen and other freelance guardsmen and investigators, and when grubbers and their ilk get hired to complete deadly deeds, these hideaways facilitate stealthy dispatch of targets with poison weapons like darts, daggers, needles, and other hide-penetrating missiles.

Mudlarks. The Gullet's groyne defines the river's course within the district, and the dry docks and quays it sports are prevalent on the city's map. Within the Gullet and along the river, there are small beaches and rock piles. These places are the domain of the mudlarks.

Mudlarks emerge from tunnels and water inlets to scour the muddy riverbank. They poke the soggy suck-muck of the shore to find items for barter or sale, or they strip vessels of their brass, bronze, and copper fittings, reselling them to members of the Bargeman's Fellowship or melting them down into valuable ingots. Such activity can occur at any time and regardless of the Argent's condition, though it occurs most often during moonless nights and when the river is low. On days the river is not in a giving mood, mudlarks pilfer unattended cargo, often with the cooperation of the dockers, whom ask for a kickback.

Toshers. Toshers are both scavengers and hunters. Roaming the Undercity, they take what they may and do not hesitate to kill when necessary. Feeding on rats and, in some cases, the flesh of their own kind (both human and kobold toshers have been known to engage in cannibalism), most toshers are thought to suffer from various forms of mental illness. The damp dark may drive minds this direction, or it could be the style of life beneath ground that takes them there. Regardless, no one wants to run into these Swallowed, for toshers do not negotiate or reason. When toshers are encountered, someone is going to die.

Gullet's Portals

Besides known and guarded entrances to the Cartways, there are several rumored entrances to the rest of the Undercity, such as in the buildings of the Bargeman's Fellowship or the Blackened Fish Tavern as well as beneath Puffing Bridge. Some even speak of a doorway by the Altar of the Lorelei. Regardless, only a few of Zobeck's citizens know their true locations, and fewer still know the location of them all. Often, after an interloper finds a doorway, an accident occurs with the finder's fate delivered by trap or other dark method.

GEAR DISTRICT

The Gear District lies on the city's western side, near the Dwarven Gate, and is a region of tin and brass merchants, geargrinders, and gearforged repair shops. Here one sees the greatest concentration of the city's gearforged, and the best dwarven clockwork mages and engineers create wondrous creations in iron and brass.

The entire region revolves around the Steamworker's Guildhall and the Geargrinder's Emporium, two structures built at enormous expense with ribs of cast iron. The tin toys and sharp knives sold here are very well made, but the greatest prizes are the new gearforged given life each month through the combined efforts of mages, geargrinders, clockworker kobolds, and dwarven engineers, all at phenomenal expense. Despite the cost, one new clockwork watchman emerges each month (some believe the Free City is slowly building an army of loyal gearforged soldiers), and most months, so does a privately funded gearforged. These private gearforged must pay off the cost of their creation and most do so through service to a wealthy family, temple, or guild.

From time to time, dwarven mule trains from the Ironcrags bring in shipments of iron and unusual alloys, jewels for precision gearing, and offerings for the temple of Volund. His shrine here clearly shows dwarven influence. An ever-burning altar and anvil stand before his statue, and his dwarven acolytes often call his name in Dwarvish as they tap out the rhythm of his hymns and songs of praise.

The noise of worship is often lost in the district's other racket. Recently, the city tried to silence the trip-hammers and bellows on holy days, with mixed results.

The city of Zobeck is defined by its guilds, its merchants, its trade—and its clockworks. The patronage of Rava made craft and artistry the city's pride, and the city is a vibrant hub of trade. Rava chose well when she became patroness of this crossroads town, for here the hammers ring all day and into the night.

GEARGRINDER'S EMPORIUM (§2)

Rivals and allies to the Steamworker's Union, the Geargrinder's Guild creates the many gears that run the city's clocks and devices, from the small intricate wheels and balance arms of automated birds to the enormous iron cogs that power the city gates and bridges.

Unlike the masters of the Order of Arms and Armory (who concern themselves most with attack and defense

in all its forms) or the Steamworker's Union (which concerns itself with motion and motive power), the Geargrinder's Guild concerns itself with the tiny details of memory, reaction, vision, and ethics in mechanical form. They build and repair memory gears, command plates, low-light amplifiers, and similar fragile and complex devices. These elements almost always go to the steamworkers in sealed brass cylinders, spheres, or cases to better protect their secrets.

Kobolds compose roughly a third of the guild, which values them for their vision and nimble claws. The guild's leader is the Guildmaster Krick-ok White, a pale kobold well into his advanced years with one living eye and one made of fused and enchanted glass lenses, which is said to see spirits, auras, and even the intentions of those who visit him.

GREY FRIAR TAVERN (§6)

Located near the Temple District and popular with the followers of the Gear Goddess, this tavern and restaurant attracts a scholarly clientele. It has both a scribe and a gear kobold on staff to handle communications and repairs. The owner, Abrostar, is one of the few gearforged who seem to have a deep love of learning.

Abrostar claims to remember the entire contents of every conversation she has ever had, every book she has ever read, and every face she has ever seen. The depth of detail she recalls even exceeds that of other gearforged. Many have tested her, but none have ever caught her out. Her eye for nuance means the watch often consults her in inquiries about travelers.

The Grey Friar's waitstaff consists of two gearforged and three young students. The food is terrible but cheap, and the beer is average and also cheap. The priests of Rava bless the tavern and its patrons each day at noon, and the place is always packed after services at the goddess's temple.

STEAMWORKER'S GUILDHALL (§1)

The most powerful of the mechanical guilds, the Steamworker's Union creates the everwound springs, hydraulic joints, and the boilers that give all constructs locomotion. Its members also build the gearforged workers and scullions. They are a strangely pious group, universally devoted to Rava, and they count many dwarves among their ranks.

Old rumors claim the guild originated as the Hammerfell clan, and their patriarch is still often a dwarf. The guild also has close ties to planar guardians of law who sometimes visit to assist in animating a gearforged or to offer advice on the making of stronger, faster, wiser, and more durable creations. A few members of the guild claim the worship of Rava itself came to Zobeck with these guardians from Ravatet, the Plane of Rusty Gears.

The steamworkers are one of the few guilds that accept both dwarves and kobolds as full members. Their guildhall is a workshop that rings with hammers and burns with hissing steam at all hours. Humans tend the forges during the day, kobolds by night, and dwarves at all hours.

KOBOLD GHETTO

O King, know that your people have dug deep into the earth for another week, and again we have brought forth silver, lead, and other valuables to the enrichment of all the people of the city. And we have given a portion of that wealth to the humans and the council of the city, and we have kept a small portion for our own treasuries. The people await your words to build traps, to confuse the foolish Too Talls, and to someday seize all that was ours in the days before the shadow fey came.

—Foreman Bardozeck,
a kobold miner in his weekly report

For many, living in a ghetto—dingy, crowded, and walled off from the rest of the city—might seem a miserable fate, a hard life of poverty and an early grave. For Zobeck's kobolds, this is actually an improvement.

SLAVES AND WORSE THAN SLAVES

The Kobold Ghetto, a warren of streets no more than 6 feet wide (at best), lies between the Argent and Derry Rivers. Throughout most of the ghetto, roofs meet overhead to keep out the glare of the sun for the nocturnal inhabitants.

The ghetto has only two official entrances, the Ghetto Gate and the Water Gate, each carefully watched from both sides. Multiple kobold "kings" or tribal chieftains rule the district, retaining power only as long as they keep their relatives and minions in line. One such kobold, the king of kings or the queen of queens, holds the others in check until their united strength undercuts the monarch.

Five years ago, Queen Clarhida ousted Kuromak, the 7th of that name, to claim the leading position. King Quetelmak ousted Clarhida two years later. Few kings last more than a few years. Some barely last a year.

More than 90 years ago, the kobolds were slaves to House Stross, and the ghetto was their pen. They were chattel used by the family to do the dirtiest and most dangerous jobs, so humans and dwarves could work at finer crafts and live comfortably. Kobold slaves mined silver, built clever clockworks, and worked deadly steam

boilers for the constructs and automatons that fueled Zobeck's industry. History largely ignored them, but some believe the kobolds helped invent the everwound spring, the aeolipile generator (a steam engine used in places where water or muscle power won't suit), and the reciprocating balance wheel, thus laying the foundations for Zobeck's fame. Centuries of enslavement form an indelible part of the kobolds' culture, and no kobold in Zobeck has ever forgotten the indignity.

Now, the ghetto is a place of free kobolds, the legal equal of any man or woman of the Clockwork City. They remain a people apart, however, physically, culturally, and habitually. The single biggest obstacle to full equality is their nocturnal nature. Kobolds labor all night and return home before dawn to spend the day in sleep and rest before venturing back out shortly before sunset. Their unusual entertainments include rat fights, owl races, pigeon hunts, and amateur alchemy, with occasionally disastrous and occasionally hilarious results.

GREATER AND LESSER KINGS

The kobolds are fiercely loyal to their lesser kings, who function variously as attendants to the great King Quetelmak, as his rivals, as clan leaders, and as guild masters. Only kobolds seem to understand the current incarnation of their political structure, and it continues to evolve almost as quickly as their religious practices.

Various wild stories circulate about the current king of kings: he is a secret Mharoti spy, he is actually a very small lizardfolk, he secretly wishes to destroy the Kobold Ghetto and spread kobolds throughout Zobeck. Even if any of those tales have a grain of truth to them, King Quetelmak is far too busy to enact such schemes. His uncommonly long and stable reign as king of kings requires too much bribery, ring-kissing, and assorted legwork and diplomacy for him to act on any sort of secret agenda.

Quetelmak's greatest challenge is Prince Karremark, a foul-tempered kobold known as the Prince of the Night Ghetto. Karremark was once the closest ally of Kuromak, a previous king of kings. Most kobolds believed that Prince Karremark would succeed Kuromak, but the crown passed over him not once but twice. Karremark holds a festering grudge against King Quetelmak for holding a crown that "rightfully" belongs to him. The Prince of the Night Ghetto has the ear of the Red Mask, the mysterious leader of the Redcloaks gang, and is using this network of thugs and killers to make life difficult for King Quetelmak. He will make his move in due time.

Others have not been so patient, and assassins have frequently attempted to kill a sitting king of kings. Most have failed, and the heads of would-be usurpers invariably top pikes above the entrance to the Silver Palace. The next chieftain with "foolproof plans" for regicide will likely ignore these warnings though. The 15 current lesser kings (**kobold chieftain**, see *Tome of Beasts*) include both sly long-term leaders who navigate the currents smoothly and brash newcomers who might disappear by the next new moon.

King Ardurak the Patient (LN). The Patient King is a wizened old kobold who rose to power by killing the previous king after an elaborate, months-long assassination plot. His age befits his wily mind and his willingness to play the long game.

Queen Blee'uk the Ascendant (CG). Blee'uk is a former consort and advisor of the puppet-king Illanak. After her husband was killed by a rival faction, she took his crown and continues to rule with the aid of his many former wives.

Queen Chainbreaker (NG). Queen Chainbreaker was once an idealistic outcast in her clan who returned to defeat her predecessor, and win the crown, after freeing a small army of kobolds from slavery. (Some humans still illegally own kobold slaves.)

King Gearheart (LE). The ostentatious King Gearheart is the tallest of all kobolds—thanks to his gearforged body. This king of the tinkerers is hell-bent on destroying the Free City Council by creating (or stealing) a gearforged army and putting the souls of his loyal kobolds inside, just as he was.

King Greenflower (N). The king of the Little Park has filled his tiny patch of territory with vibrant flowers. He loves them for their beauty, of course, but also because they are perfect cover for his ambushers. His airheaded, flower-child attitude is no act, but it belies a cruel streak.

Queen Harky the Trapsmith (LE). Queen Harky is a kobold with a keen mind for mechanics. She and her subjects are some of the best trapsmiths in the ghetto—no small feat in kobold society. Their wealth is largely predicated on selling their contraptions to other kobolds, with little care for the consequences.

Mine King Hrodik-Killer (CN). The former leader of the kobold mining gangs, King Hrodik, was killed in a duel by a nameless kobold from the Undercity. Now called Hrodik-Killer, the new mine king has formed a cult of personality around his mysterious past and martial prowess and is much beloved by his subjects. He has extended the kobold mining operation deeper into the ground than ever before.

King Kan-Tor the Jovial (CG). Kan-Tor is a young and surprisingly bright-eyed kobold who travels the ghetto with his troupe of kobold performers. Though he

lacks wealth and martial power, he is considered a king nonetheless, and his songs and japes are too important to the culture of the ghetto to be ignored. It is expected that Kan-Tor will be a king for years to come.

Old Queen Nemevene the Keeper (LG). One of the longest serving lesser kings, Old Queen Nemevene is a noble knight who holds some of the poorest territory in the ghetto. Unlike many petty kobold kings, she commands immense respect for standing up to the Big People, including targeting human smugglers and corrupt city guards.

King Nerborg the Stitched (NE). This king, an undead kobold **wight**, is the oldest and perhaps deadliest of all the kings. He leads Brandorek's Chosen, the bodyguards and elite troops of the king of kings. His lair brims with magical traps and endless unraveling scrolls. Some say he communicates only by writing, his voice withered away to silence.

Slurrker, the Sewer King (NE). The Cartways, Zobeck's so-called sewers, are a popular trade route but one taxed to the breaking point by the foul-mouthed, foul-faced, and foul-tempered Sewer King Slurrker. He is content to reign in the sewers, and his vast wealth is almost entirely spent on mercenaries to keep him safe from assassins and usurpers. His black-market connections also make him a common fence for thieves in Zobeck.

The Three Princes of Lillefor (NE). The triplet sons of the now-deceased King Kondak of Lillefor—named Tai'rar, Tai'brin, and Frett—are sharing the crown in order to keep from falling into chaos. Like their father before them, the three princes are spies for King Kekarrac of Lillefor and are working to extend his influence into Zobeck.

Queen Rurburakka the Newblood (CG). Just two weeks past, a halfling bard named Gilly Redburn disguised herself as a kobold in order to solve the mystery of her mother's death: she was suspected to have been killed by one of the kobold kings in a long-unsolved murder case. However, Gilly accidentally killed a lesser king while snooping and now has become a kobold king herself. She is trying to find a way out of this situation and still solve the mystery that brought her here in the first place.

King Zorb the Blasphemous (CE). The story goes that not a single kobold in the ghetto likes Zorb. Those few who follow him only do so because they fear him or wish



to find the secrets of his great power, which is rumored to be linked to the demons of the Abyss. The only reason he has not taken over the Kobold Ghetto is because the other better liked and more charismatic kings have the numbers to keep his ambition in check.

The Keeper in White (NE). The Keeper in White is an albino kobold **lich** whose real name has been lost to time. His followers are misfits who obey him with a cult-like fanaticism. The Keeper's torso is made of grafted mithral, and a clockwork heart locked away in his chest has kept him alive for over a century. He demands utter silence in his presence, save for the unsettling clicking of his mechanical heart.

The Keeper used to live in the Throne of Keys, a house littered with thousands of keys stolen from all over the city. Persistent rumors say the Keeper holds a terrible secret locked within him, one even he does not know. Whatever the truth, the Keeper obsesses over finding the one key that unlocks his chest, and his desperation has led him to commit murder throughout the city. The city watch now keeps clockwork watchmen around the

ADVENTURE HOOKS

- The PCs must visit the kobold workshops to pick up (but not open) a delivery for the Arcane Collegium. The package contains a squirming, mewling thing (a homunculus, pseudodragon, or similar) that escapes and leads the party on a merry chase through the ghetto.
- Some kobold smugglers want a little help putting together a "honeypot" shipment to draw out a group of bandits ambushing their barges by day. They need some PCs who can stand sunlight to guard the barge. Naturally, the ogres and their human master attack at noon when the kobolds are all asleep.
- A scroll found by the Vigilant Brotherhood of Scribes seems to imply a link between kobold necromancy and spies from Morgau. The Brotherhood asks the party to question Nerborg the Stitched.
- The PCs need to find an entrance into the Cartways. Their investigation leads them to Scaler's Alley, but getting through the alley is an adventure in itself. (See also the adventure "The Fish and the Rose" in **Chapter 9**.)
- A self-proclaimed "dragon-blooded" human Northlander, Grizolotoris Cairvos, is intent on becoming the next king of kings in the Kobold Ghetto. He wants to better the kobolds' lot in Zobeck and quell the infighting by unifying the kobolds under one king and one god: Nahamot, a heretical face of the dragon wind god Azuran. What happens when the kobolds unite under one strong king? Will the Keeper in White allow a human to rule them?

Throne of Keys at all hours of the day and have hunted the elusive Keeper for weeks.

THE INHABITANTS

No respectable human or dwarf visits the ghetto often, but its kobolds reflect the character of Zobeck as a whole. Mine gangs, street gangs, silver syndicates, followers of the Red Mask, and cultists all rub shoulders with perfectly respectable servants and clockworker kobolds.

Clockworker kobolds, mechanically adept craftsmen trained by the Geargrinder's Guild, serve as the stewards and protectors of the city's many gear-work doors, bridges, gates, lifts, and scullions. Kobolds also repair locks, wind-up keys, and gravity-fed devices. Unnoticed, they feed fuel to boilers in the guildhalls and wind the springs and oil the joints of the watch's automatons, though not officers or gearforged. This maintenance takes them to every corner of the city, but their dusty gray-green uniforms make them all but invisible.

The dock crews in Zobeck's small but bustling harbor also make good use of kobolds, which allows the city to maintain a working night shift. The river crews wear blue hats and work in sets of three, six, or nine to carry crates that a single human could easily lift. Most longshoremen from the day shift assume kobold dock crews are corrupted by smugglers, but this seems far more common among humans than kobolds.

BIG TROUBLE IN TINY STREETS

Kobolds hold themselves apart and are instantly suspicious of anyone who comes to visit them. While kobolds can pass unnoticed in the rest of town, no human or dwarf can visit the ghetto so discretely. The kobold kings take an interest in nearly every visitor, even if only a commercial interest. The streets are cramped, dark, and filled with traps. The residents quickly hush up any violence involving Bigs. People disappear there all the time, and when kobolds die at the hands of outsiders, well, no one wants to talk about that either. Because respectable society willfully ignores the ghetto, it is a perfect place for assassinations, gang fights, and plain old murder.

A REPTILIAN HEART

Somewhere under the streets of the ghetto are the kings' halls and queens' boudoirs where kobolds fight, scheme, and gossip among themselves. The wilder stories claim these underground halls are just as large or larger than the surface buildings.

Truthfully, humans and dwarves largely don't care what the kobolds do so long as the drudging work of mining and maintenance gets done cheaply and well. In return, the kobolds get one small patch of ground to call their own, and for now, that seems to be enough.

The narrow streets of Zobeck are filled with people walking, working, and brawling. In the even narrower streets of the ghetto—where humans must turn sideways to pass through and even a dwarf might

brush his head against the top of a doorframe—all that energy is magnified. The buildings lean toward each other, creating deep shadows, and some streets are completely roofed over, so kobolds can stroll down them untroubled by rain or sunshine.

Like the kobolds themselves, the ghetto is both an integral part of Zobeck and still distinctly separate from it. In some ways, it's as alien as the Margreve, and in other ways, almost more unsettling. It resembles the city visitors know, yet it plays by a different set of rules that no one will explain. It is a place made for kobold comfort with no thought given to others: no lanterns at night, no room to stretch, and few open spaces.

It has many sites of interest, however, and it has plenty of reasons, personal and professional, for Big Folk to visit. And traps, of course. It has lots and lots of traps.

GHETTO AUTHORITY

Sometimes getting out of the ghetto is even harder than getting in. Just after dusk and just before dawn, the Ghetto Gate clogs with official "border kobolds," who hold up exiting non-kobolds by requiring they declare their activities in the ghetto and produce any purchased clockwork items for taxation.

The ghetto authority slows exiting the ghetto by at least 20 minutes and up to an hour on the worst days. Declared items are taxed at a rate of 1 cp per gp of value. Undeclared items that are discovered are confiscated but can be redeemed for a fine of 1 sp per gp of value.

While the ghetto guards conduct their checks, the area swarms with kobold peddlers, charlatans, and children. It is almost impossible to keep everything organized. This is an ideal time for pickpocketing, card scams, begging, and general troublemaking.

KOBOLD PROFESSIONS

Zobeck's kobolds are remarkably hard-working creatures. They are members of the city's guilds and participate in many industries, though the majority of them are miners. Most kobolds don't match the stereotype of a dirty face with a miner's pick and a pocket full of silver. Some are innkeepers, stinkrunners (movers of the dead, especially during plagues), blacksmiths, leatherworkers, and quite a few are artisans or smallholders of various kinds. These include scribes in the Vigilant Brotherhood, masters in the Geargrinders, and clockworkers. And some, like the Kobold Wreckers, are professional demolitionists, destroying any structure without question if the money is right.

The clockworkers are mechanically adept in every way (equal to the dwarves, they claim). The Collegium, alchemists, and the wealthy employ them to maintain nearly all Zobeck's myriad gear-driven wonders.

Of the major kobold professions, the miners are the most clan-ridden and gang-like. Each mine gang serves a "boss" or "mine chief" and number anywhere from around 10 up to more than 40. These gangs sometimes brawl with one another over rights to a particular ore seam, alehouse, or simply right of way in the street. The scars that some miners bear with pride were most likely inflicted with a kobold mining pick.

Together with the miners (whom most kobold craftsmen consider uncouth), the clockworkers and scribes are the mainstays of legitimate life in the ghetto. All obey their guilds and their lesser kings in large matters and prey on one another and gullible humans whenever they can. It's said that a kobold will always give good work with a sour face, and it is true: their love of hard work is innate but so is their love of complaint.

STREET TRAPS

The streets and byways near the Ghetto Gate conceal a staggering number of traps in marvelous variety. The traps presented here are used exclusively to make life difficult for Bigs. The more deadly traps are usually near the main streets, the dock, and the gates since those are the areas most often disturbed by the Too Talls.

The following traps are fairly typical of what one finds on the street. All these traps can be discovered with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. The more valuable bits of property, such as the lesser kings' homes, the houses of mine bosses, or the workshops below, are all defended with rather deadlier devices.

Breaking Boards. In upper floors and on bridges between houses, the kobolds place intentionally weakened boards that have at least a foot of clearance beneath them. The boards will break under anyone weighing more than a kobold or halfling, trap the victim's foot, and deal 5 (2d4) piercing damage from the jagged edges of the broken plank. Characters running through such a trap take 11 (2d12) piercing damage instead and must make a successful DC 13 Dexterity (Acrobatics) saving throw or have their movement speed reduced to half because of a sprain or tear.

This trap requires repairs to reset and cannot be disarmed (although sturdier planks can be laid down atop the trap).

Chalybeate Beggar. Most people overlook this decoy of wood, waxed paper, and rags made to resemble a hunched kobold beggar. It hides a weakened (and thus much less expensive to cast) *glyph of warding* (explosive runes) spell with several packs of caltrops packed around



it: the triggered spell deals 3 (1d6) fire damage and 2 (1d4) piercing damage to any creature within 10 feet. Most chalybeate beggars explode when touched, but devious kobolds will set tripwires nearby. Kobold thieves sometimes set one or more as an ambush-lure or line an escape route with them to slow pursuers.

A successful DC 18 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check disarms the trap.

Chickenhead. Typically used in the narrow, claustrophobic streets of the ghetto to warn off and humiliate rather than kill, a tripwire triggers a heavy wooden beam that swings down, making a melee attack with a +5 bonus against a random target within 10 feet. A target that is hit takes 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage. In addition, a creature struck by the chickenhead must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution save or be stunned for 1 round. As the target staggers about, the trap dumps a disgusting concoction of runny glue and chicken giblets from a jar above, and the target must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned. Finally, the trap empties a box of feathers over the target, and the target must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or be blinded. The creature can repeat one of the saving throws at the end of each of its turns, ending either the poisoned or blinded condition affecting itself on a success.

This complicated trap requires several kobolds to manually reset it. A successful DC 12 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check disarms the trap.

Jolly Water. At night, adolescent kobolds on rooftops hurl stoppered porcelain vases at intruders and then scurry away. The thin vases only deal 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage on a direct hit, but they shatter and douse everything in adjacent squares in water filled with lichen that visibly glows when viewed with darkvision. Creatures with darkvision gain advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks to see creatures covered in the lichen.

Like Bees to Honey. This small clockwork mechanism triggers when someone comes within 5 feet of it. It turns toward its target and explodes when adjacent, and all creatures within 5 feet must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw. On a failure, the creature takes 2 (1d4) piercing damage and is sprayed with a pheromone that causes nearby rats to attack the marked intruders. This results in a **swarm of rats** appearing in 1d6 rounds and attacking affected creatures for 1d4 rounds or until dispersed. On a successful save, a creature takes half damage and is not sprayed.

Loose Coins. A glint of gold at the end of an alley lures the greedy or desperate. When a Medium or larger creature enters the alley, a log on chains falls off the roof. A random target within 10 feet must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, the target takes 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage and falls into a concealed 40-foot-deep pit for an additional 14 (4d6) bludgeoning damage. On a successful save, the target takes half as much damage and does not fall into the pit.

This trap requires a manual reset. A successful DC 15 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check disarms the trap. The coins are copper pieces painted gold.

Mantrap. This trapped lock allows doors to only open from one side. Whenever anything is inserted into the lock from the wrong side, two metal jaws slam shut on the lock picker's arms. The target must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or take 3 (1d6) slashing damage and be restrained. A successful DC 16 Strength (Athletics) check (which can be performed by someone else) or a DC 20 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check enables a restrained target to escape.

This trap requires a manual reset. A successful DC 16 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check disarms the trap.

Neckwire. Spiked wire is strewn at regular intervals across a narrow alley and positioned at neck height for a human. The wire is surprisingly obvious, noticeable with a successful DC 8 Wisdom (Perception) check, and not difficult to avoid by simply ducking. Unfortunately for intruders though, one of the flagstones in the alley is on

a strong spring. Creatures of 50 pounds or less do not set off the trap, but heavier beings do. The spring-loaded flagstone hurls its victim into the spiked wires above. The creature must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw, taking 7 (2d6) slashing damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one.

This trap requires a manual reset. A successful DC 15 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check disarms the trap.

Peek Poke. A wooden fence or wall conceals the source of an intriguing noise. A cacophony of whirling, buzzing, and clicking sounds sing from the other side while a hole drilled 5 feet from the ground provides a peek. Someone foolish enough to look through the hole is poked in the eye by a stick (wielded by a generally bored kobold). The target must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 3 (1d6) piercing damage and being blinded for 1d4 hours on a failed save. On a failure by 5 or more, the eye is permanently blinded. On a successful save, the creature takes no damage and is not blinded.

Pit and Post. This pit trap has a camouflaged cover. A successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check discerns an incongruity about the section of floor that forms the pit's cover. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check is necessary to confirm that the trapped section of floor is actually the cover of a pit. When a creature steps on the cover, it falls away, causing the intruder to spill into the 40-foot-deep pit, taking 14 (4d6) bludgeoning damage. The pit also has an iron bar set in the wall and a pressure plate at the bottom. When more than 50 pounds hits the bottom, the target must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage from the falling iron bar on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one.

This trap requires a manual reset. A successful DC 18 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check disarms the trap.

Skunk Box. A block ahead of the party, a large kobold approaches a smaller one, who is carrying two large wooden boxes. The large kobold grabs one of the boxes and runs off. The smaller kobold squeals, drops the second box, and runs after the first. This foolery usually draws observers in to investigate the dropped box. When a creature picks up the box, it and all creatures within 5 feet must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw as the box explodes in a shower of terrible-smelling rot. On a successful save, a creature avoids the stench entirely. On a failed save, the creature must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. If the creature fails this save, it is poisoned for 1d2 hours or until it washes the rot off. A creature poisoned in this way is marked with the stench and has disadvantage on all Charisma checks made with creatures that can smell it. Additionally, creatures with a strong sense of smell can automatically identify the victim's exact location and have advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks made to find it.

A successful DC 16 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check disarms the trap.

GHETTO LOCATIONS

Zobeck is a river town of stone, wattle, and daub, and it's wealthy enough for slate and tile roofs rather than just thatch. What lies under those roofs, though, varies quite a bit from quarter to quarter, and nowhere is stranger than the small doors and low ceilings of the Kobold Ghetto. For larger characters, the place always feels too small and too crowded. Here are the highlights.

Ghetto Gate and Water Gate

The ghetto has a rough reputation, and the kobold guards and traps surrounding the one surface gate are part of the reason why. The poison spikes on the portcullis and pit traps are widely known. Pre-aimed fiery ballista bolts and other deadly weapons also defend this portal.

Widely rumored but unconfirmed among the Big People of Zobeck are the numerous other traps in the surrounding streets, ranging from the degrading to the deadly. Among the more lethal creatures defending the site are two furnace **gargoyles**. The underground gate to Lillefor is said to be similar, though there the guards are tame **bulettes**, large and old enough to retire from mining duties. The traps surrounding the Water Gate are better disguised, as are the defenses.

Entering the ghetto is tedious and slow, making it much easier to bribe your way in, at least during nighttime (the gates are firmly shut from dawn to sunset, when kobolds sleep). The typical bribe is 5 gp for humans, 10 gp for dwarves. Elves, gnomes, and halflings are usually told (repeatedly) to go elsewhere, but they might enter for a 20-gp bribe, minimum. As the guards quickly point out, they don't have to allow anyone into "the quarter" at all.

Permission to enter doesn't mean things go easily. People trying to bluff or intimidate their way in draw the guards' suspicions, and they insist on searching troublemakers for contraband. They use kobold shackles and go through backpacks, purses, sacks, and even scroll cases with reckless disregard for property, dumping everything to the ground (fragile items, such as potions or vials, sometimes break).

The same "search and shame" procedure might be applied to people who attempt to bribe their way out of the ghetto or who fail to pay the proper bribes or who are not accompanied by a kobold of good reputation or

who simply look like they might have some extra coins weighing them down. The guards must make a living, and shakedowns are their racket. Procedures are similar around the Water Gate, but since this is primarily used for cargo, any individuals coming into the ghetto this way get a lot of extra, usually unwanted, attention.

Chain Bridges

Under Quetelmak, the kobolds have built several small bridges using linked iron chains and barrel floats to connect their territory to other districts—and even to span the Argent over to the Margreve side at night, when traffic is low. These chain bridges are a clear route for smugglers avoiding the gate taxes that fund city coffers, and they might allow passage to Mharoti spies or cultists of the dark gods. Mayor Olleck hates the chain bridges, but whenever the city watch attempts to seize them, the chains and barrels are cut loose (and later recovered). Mayor Olleck is coming around to the position that these bridges are useful to the kobolds, and she is negotiating with King of Kings Quetelmak for a way to impose a new "Bridge Tax" on smugglers. The king sees real merit in the idea of a kobold-controlled portion of the city treasury.

Dock and Ferry (§55)

The kobolds have a single dock used for fishing boats and small merchant vessels. Most people consider it a smuggling hub, perhaps because vessels load and unload there only by night and without lanterns. The Citadel turns a blind eye to this, if true, because any smuggling brings in goods that kobolds need for mining and clockworking, which likely come from hostile nations such as Morgau and Doresh or the dark Niflheim road.

The docks shelter a small fishing fleet and a single ferry, which takes kobolds across the river to mines east of the city and back roughly every 40 minutes day or night. The ferry charges 1 cp to cross and allows only Medium or smaller creatures, up to 12 at a time. Horses and other large or heavy creatures must walk the long way to the Puffing Bridge in the Dock District.

Kandrepoor II, the ferry captain, wears smoked goggles during daylight to avoid the glare of the sun on the water. Because clockwork or human watchmen don't closely watch the ferry, rumors suggest he carries many rogues, smugglers, and rascals out of the city. For a mere 5 gp, some say, Kandrepoor can forget your passage entirely. Some claim he controls several kobold smuggling gangs, or at the very least, he can find them for a small fee.

Undercity

The Undercity beneath the ghetto is a comfortable run of warrens, cellars, small passageways, and smaller doors that the kobolds find quite congenial, and many of their taverns, bedrooms, shops, and dire weasel kennels are underground. Visitors rarely enjoy these confined quarters, and all of them complain about the vaguely reptilian musk. Kobolds apparently find it homey.

The ghetto also connects to the Cartways at numerous places and to the River Derry, which flows not far from its walls. Unknown to most humans though, it connects to another, much larger city: the kobold metropolis of Lillefor. Although fully 140 miles away, a brisk trade flows between Lillefor and the ghetto, with mostly foodstuffs, wines, and wooden goods descending and metalwork, ore, and enchanted works—such as carrion beetle armor and perpetual lanterns—ascending.

This Undercity is where the kobolds' other great profession—smuggling—is practiced most openly. Wines, silks, spices, black lotus, and poppywine are all heavily taxed but not when they arrive on kobold mules, caravan beetles, or courier lizards through Lillefor. Ghetto merchants are happy to cut the taxman out of these transactions entirely, and the soldiers of the Citadel and gentlemen of the watch have (so far) declined to pursue the matter.

LILLEFOR

The kobold city of Lillefor lies near Morgau and Doresh. It has two simple defenses that protect it from the Ghoul Empire's ambitions. First, kobold merchants bring valuable goods to the empire. Second, the city's tunnels are very small, and their stone is too hard to burrow through easily. Lillefor is really a haven for the small races: dark folk bandits sell their ill-gotten gains, derro sell ore or ingots, and goblins hire themselves out as bat riders or scouts. The kobolds discourage Big Folk—and svirfneblin—from visiting.

From a central square inside all those trap-riddled tunnels rules the kobold King Kekarrac. Appropriately sized and diplomatic creatures can wrangle a short pass to visit the city for 8, 12, or 24 hours (often depending on the size of their bribe). Larger travelers can enter Lillefor but must constantly squeeze through the passages and doorways and can never escape observation or suspicion.

Pit of the Fierce Lynx. One less domestic and savory locale in the Undercity is the Lynx Pit, a gladiatorial arena where a friendly, scheming fight promoter named Yshka Bishka runs a bloody business in fighting roosters, hounds, and humans, with occasional knife fights or honor duels by kobold lovers for variety. Fights are held weekly in a round pit that is easy to sluice clean after each evening's butchery.

Winners at the Lynx are treated as kobold royalty for a day or a week, and the entire ghetto finds the fights enthralling. The setup is wildly illegal, and the mayor has made it clear she wants to shut it down. So far, she's not willing to send in the number of watch guards required to actually end the practice, but a recent proclamation offers 500 gp for anyone who brings Bishka in for "questioning or burial, for crimes against nature." The mayor would be perfectly happy if he showed up dead.

King's Square

One of the few truly open spaces in the ghetto, where the sky is allowed to peak through, is the King's Square. A tall building fronting this square includes the owl roosts, where the various kobold lordlings keep their favored flying mounts. Here kobold crowds celebrate various religious and civic events, typically at the full moon and new moon.

The main building on the square is the King of Kings' Silver Palace (§53), a marble-faced wonder of tasteless statuary and gilding that displays the king's power and wealth very clearly. Fully 50 kobold guards in heavy armor watch over the entrances to the Silver Palace, and all around it cluster the offices of mine sub-chiefs, assayers, smelting barons, and priests of the various kobold gods. The whole square is a mass of statues, status symbols, and power-hungry ambitions.

The King's Square is also a gathering place for kobold merchants, fishmongers, mine recruiters, couriers, freelance clockworkers, and smugglers for hire. During the night hours, something is always going on, from songs and acrobatics to dueling and ritual scarification.

Pentrick's Mundane Magical Items

A jumble of curios and knickknacks spills from this canvas-covered stall near the Ghetto Gate. Pentrick plies his wares among the street markets of Zobeck, always looking for a big score. While this shifty kobold already lives extravagantly (by more than just kobold standards), the cunning creature is always looking for more.

A devious and wicked entrepreneur, Pentrick owns a workhouse filled with indentured servants in the cramped warrens below the city that cranks out simple arcane trinkets. His own **clockwork beetle** (see *Tome of Beasts*) lies always within arm's reach, and he offers similar magic to fit any size purse.

In case of bothersome visitors, Pentrick has rigged his stall with a handful of traps (see above), and he has a trapdoor under his low, drapery-covered table leading directly into the nearby warrens, also liberally laced with menacing traps. Visitors whispering the secret phrase, "Little is bigger where the river winds"—rather obvious bait for forced appreciation of Pentrick and his kin—gain access to his more interesting wares.

SMALL BUT MIGHTY

Getting into, out of, and around in the Kobold Ghetto is almost an adventure in itself. Once the crowds close in, PCs who do not speak Draconic have disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks while in the ghetto as they are overwhelmed by the alien nature of the kobolds and their activities. GMs may wave or reduce this penalty for frequent visitors, but these PCs should fall under far closer scrutiny from authorities on both sides of the wall.

Kobold Shackles. When the kobold guards want to "check" individuals before entering or exiting the ghetto, two large kobolds holding small, geared manacles flank the target. Each makes an unarmed melee weapon attack against the largest or most dangerous-looking visitor. If they both succeed, the devices' springs work as expected, and the shackles latch onto the target's legs, reducing the target's movement to 5 feet. Two additional kobolds then make two more attacks to bind the target's arms. A creature with one bound arm cannot wield anything in its off-hand and has disadvantage on Strength and Dexterity checks. A creature with two bound arms also makes attack rolls with disadvantage and must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check before casting any spell with somatic components. On a failure, the spell is not cast, and its spell slot is not expended. A bound creature must succeed a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to escape its shackles. The kobold guards can quickly release the shackle locks. While the target is held, more agile kobolds frisk the character for odds and ends to tax or steal.

His magic items, popular with the well-to-do merchants cramming the Free City, provide easy solutions to mundane worries. Both visitors and residents find Pentrick's utilitarian items essential. These simple magic items bring customers of all stripes to the ghetto. (See "Magic Shops in Zobeck" in **Chapter 7** for more information on what Pentrick sells.)

Scaler's Alley

Scaler's Alley is infamous as a very dangerous part of the ghetto. **Scaler** (see **Chapter 5**), a winged lizardfolk the height of a dwarf and just as wide, has a reputation as a fighter of great skill and makes his home in the alley to which the locals have given his name. Visitors and residents alike who value their skins avoid Scaler's Alley.

Shabby, dilapidated buildings line this alley and the area around it. Kobold drunks and gang fighters hang outside the alley's entrance, which smells of burning lard and long-dead things. An occasional whistling, like steam passing through metal, emanates from it. Inside the alley, smoke drifts toward the surrounding buildings and obscures vision beyond 15 feet. The buildings appear to be a murky mishmash of scavenged materials, and their rooftops rise four stories over the dirty street. Unusually, the sky is visible down the length of the alley.

Scaler's Alley is shaped like an upside-down *L* and filled with traps. Slinger's Ambush Gang guards the rooftops. (See also the adventure "The Fish and the Rose" in **Chapter 9**.)

The Royal Workshops (§54)

The workshops are the only section of the ghetto absolutely closed to visitors. The various kings keep their weasel kennels at the entrances and flank them with guards, traps, and clockwork guardians to keep their treasures safe. These treasures include geargrinding workshops, jeweler's workshops, distilleries, trap work armories, smuggling dens, alchemical labs and traditional armories making mail so fine as to be almost elven.

STREET LIFE

More challenges than just traps await unwary visitors to the Kobold Ghetto.

Beggars. The PCs are harassed by kobold beggars. They make loud requests for coins or other items of interest (such as shiny armor or weapons). The kobolds follow the PCs for some time if they are ignored, persisting in their requests for aid. If the PCs do not gratify them with some coins or goods within a minute or two, the beggars bombard them with rotten foodstuffs.

Cutting Swarm. A dense swarm of kobold children passes the PCs. They crowd in tightly, stomping toes and scratching shins. As they pass, they claw dozens of little slits in the pants, robes, and other leg coverings of the PCs. PCs with exposed skin or light clothing suffer minor scratches but take no damage. They do, however, need to make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, they contract sewer plague.

Drunken Band. The crowded streets part as a procession of kobold musicians makes its way down the street. As they pass, the kobolds break out into a high-pitched, crooning caw—the not entirely unmelodious sound that is kobold singing. Containers of drink appear almost immediately, and the crowd quickly takes on a festive mood, cackling and hooting. The kobolds reach a fevered pitch of song and dance after about 30 minutes. If the PCs stay and watch, the kobolds eventually become rowdy, and fights break out, possibly catching the group up in a street brawl.

Mining Gang. A group of **kobolds** (two per PC), plus their mine boss (**kobold chieftain**, see *Tome of Beasts*), is out in the street after payday and looking for trouble. Armed with kobold picks, they try to swarm the weakest-looking PC. A successful DC 13 Charisma (Intimidation) check makes them scatter, as does the first kobold incapacitation or death. The ghetto guards come to investigate within 1d4 + 2 rounds, flying from the rooftops on giant owls. Unless bribed—10 gp per party member or half that with a successful DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check—the guards escort the troublemaking Too Talls out of the Ghetto.

Street Games. The PCs meet a few street kobolds running a scam with a shell game or dice. A PC interested in the game makes a Wisdom (Perception) check contested by the lead kobold's Charisma (Deception) check. The street kobolds always bet more than they have. If the PC beats the kobold's check, the kobolds claim they don't have the coins on them to cover the bet (which is true) and try to leave to "get the coins they owe" (which is a lie). PCs who try to stop the kobolds or protest too much soon find themselves surrounded by a gang of three kobolds per PC.

Alchemical. This workshop, with the tang of fuming acid always around and ventilation that can only be called "barely adequate," is where kobold poisoners, metalsmiths, tanners, and alchemists acquire their goods. If it is a mined mineral or a pickled body part, this workshop sells it by the dram, pennyweight, or ton.

Defender's Workshop. All weapons and armor herein are made to fit kobolds and similarly sized creatures and crafted to the highest kobold standards. This includes highly questionable grooving for poisoning weapons and weapons designed to kill creatures of a particular kind.

Dire Weasel Kennels. The finest fighting weasels anywhere come from these trainers, including dozens of standard breeds from the silent black nightfeet to the vicious ratting sport weasel to the showy pure-white kingsruff and everything in between. Fights occur weekly with heavy betting.

Distillery. There's nothing here that a human or dwarf wants to drink and certainly nothing an elf ever wants to smell. It's a rank, nasty brewery and distillery that seems to cook up recipes involving fermented rat and moldering potato. Best avoided by non-kobolds.

Kobold PCs can find delightful reeks and superb spirits here, starting at 10 sp/cup and extending as far as a purse will open. Wormbottom wine, tannery's lark, and roachling's get are three of the more popular drinks here, though all are banned from consumption in the rest of town.

Night Ship. This workshop is a warehouse and smuggler's paradise, with goods going to and from the river, the Great Northern Road, the mines, and the dark road to Lillefor. If a kobold wants a thing, here is the place to find it. Exotic foods, heatstones, spiced humanoid meats, poisons for traps, and even forbidden tools and lore go on sale here, often in shipping crates with somewhat illegible labels. Stock changes nightly.

Ticking Shop. Herein are produced the components of a clockworker's dream: gears, springs, valves, arbors, escapements, armatures, and even hydraulics and pneumatics for constructs, traps, or just tinkering. The shop only sells to kobolds, of course, with many tools and goods available nowhere else. Masterwork clockwork tools are available for just 400 gp.

LOWER ZOBECK (ASHMILL)

Not every district teems with wealth, power, and treachery. Lower Zobeck houses the poor and common citizens just trying to make their way. Many are servants, unskilled workers in the fields or forests, charcoal burners, and dockworkers. The district is lively with plenty of rivalries between various streets and families, but few of its troubles reach the eyes and ears of the Citadel or the consuls.

The most notable element of Lower Zobeck is the emphasis on the Green Goddess and her spheres. The Brewer's Sisterhood and numerous bakers, livery stables, and butchers all surround the district, and many consider it the city's pantry. In a place known for automatons and diabolism, this is a district of human needs and hungers. Perhaps it is no surprise cults to Marena also spring up in this district from time to time.

BLACK LOTUS

Found near the border with the Market District and the river, the Black Lotus has a plain storefront marked with a black half-timbered style. It's a two-story building with a simple wooden door next to a street-facing window on which "The Black Lotus" is printed in Common, Draconic, and the characters of the owner's native language. The alchemically reinforced window looks into the curiosity shop. People come here to buy trinkets and curios from afar—but that's not what the shop has a reputation for. Those looking for magical assistance of any kind can find it here with no questions asked, so long as they can meet the price set by the Painted Man.

Prominent Locations

1. Main Room. The main room of the curiosity shop holds goods and wares from far-off, exotic locales. These are sold at a fair markup, but the wares hardly seem to turn over, so there's rarely anything new in the shop. Shelving lines the walls, and there are several rows of tables containing goods on display.

2. Storeroom. Through a beaded curtain in the back wall lies a storeroom. Neatly stacked boxes and barrels hug the walls with smaller goods on shelves. A table near the back corner is used for paperwork and cataloguing, and a rear door leads to the alley and down to the river. A staircase goes upstairs to the Painted Man's living quarters while an illusory wall beside the stairs conceals a second stairwell down.

Second Floor

3. Sitting Room. At the top of the stairs is a sitting room with a large, wooden table, ornately carved to look like it's held up by exotic dragons. A large, plush couch sits opposite three leather chairs. Pillows embroidered with faraway script line each seat. A doorway leads off into a bedroom, and a beaded curtain leads into a kitchenette.

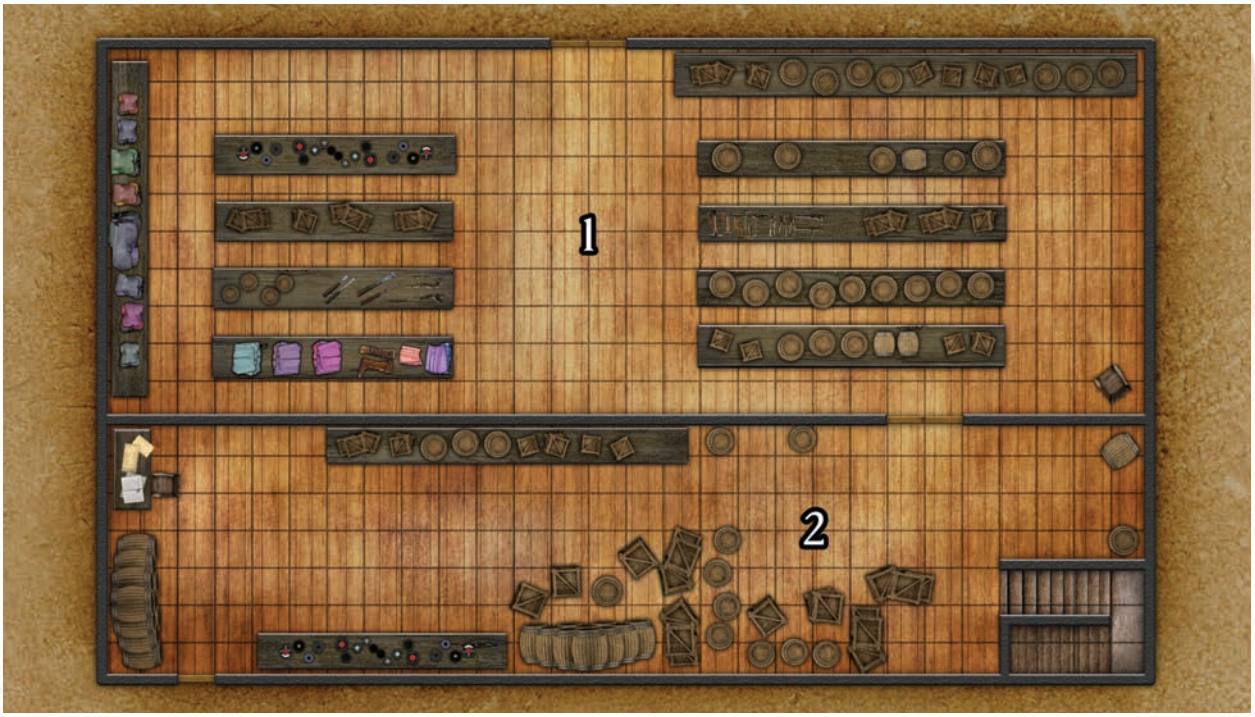
4. Bedroom. The Painted Man's bedroom features an enormous king-sized bed with silk linens. An ornate wooden chest and wardrobe hold his personal effects

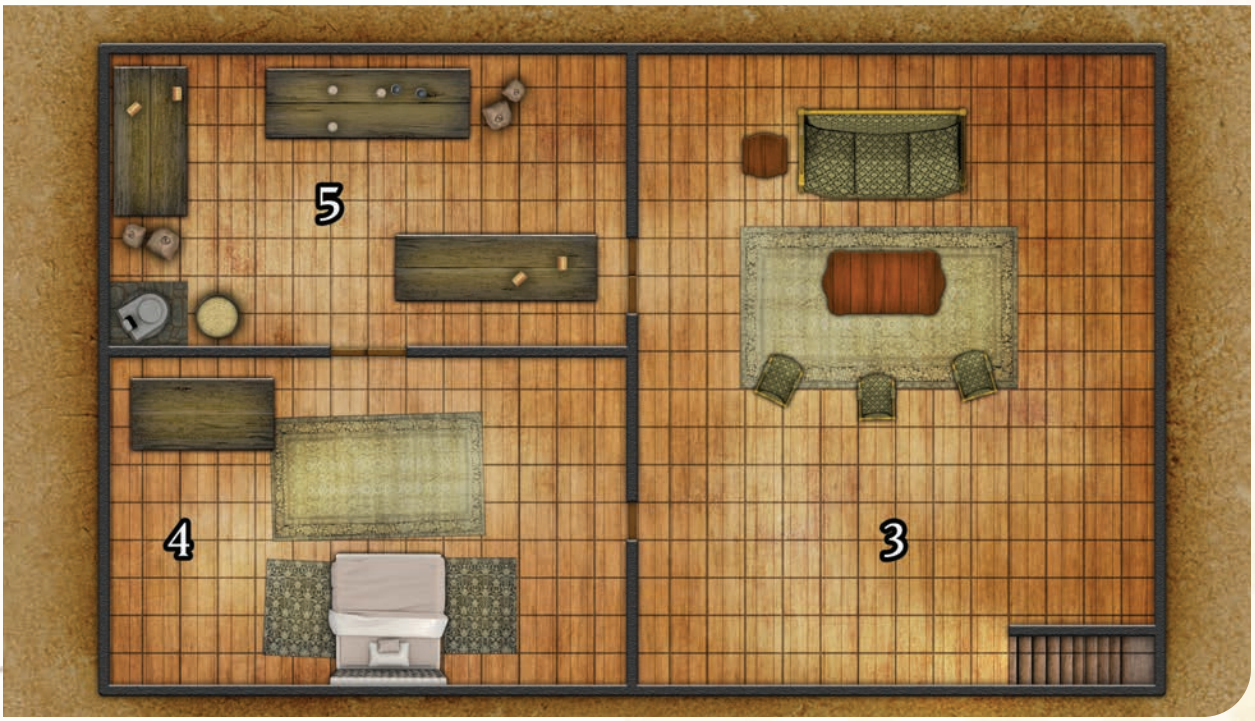
and clothes. He holds the key to both. One door leads to the sitting area, the other to the kitchen.

5. Kitchen. The kitchen has a table used for preparation, several cabinets, and a wood-burning stove. A barrel of rice sits to one side. This is supplemented by fresh fish the Painted Man has delivered daily.

Basement

6. Library. This large library contains books on topics as mundane as identifying porcelain vases and as exotic as the construction of flesh golems. A large, ornate desk sits in the middle of the room, covered in whichever books the Painted Man is currently studying. A second, plush chair sits next to a small reading table.







7. Alchemical Lab. A small storage room that doubles as an alchemical lab, jars of acids, poisons, and more mysterious components occupy a shelf near a desk with a full alchemical set. A bottled homunculus sits on the desk as well, pickled in brine. Its eyes open if anyone gets too close, and it watches them until they leave the room. Its purpose is a mystery.

8. Altar. An ornate altar upon which lie jade figurines carved to represent zodiac symbols occupies this room. Off to one end stands a pedestal supporting an enormous, annotated spellbook written in the flowing eastern script of the Painted Man's home. A quill made from a phoenix feather sits next to it.

9. Summoning Circle. This otherwise empty room is notable for the summoning circle set in the middle of the floor and the dried blood on the walls.

Personalities

The Painted Man. Tall, fat, and smelling of rare spices—that's the easiest way to physically describe the Painted Man. His true name remains a secret, and the nickname has spread through the city. He wears silk robes embroidered with strange symbols and always paints his face in a foreign style. Friendly and outgoing, if evasive, he speaks without a trace of an accent. Perpetually dissembling, he reveals little while constantly learning as much as possible.

Most claim the Painted Man has lived in Zobeck for decades. One story calls him an exiled member of a cabal of eunuch arcanists from a distant land. They once served their emperor's court but fled into exile after a failed coup attempt. Supposedly, the Painted Man is one of only eight surviving conspirators, biding his time as he peddles his powers and continues his dark studies.

It's an open secret that if you need magical assistance of any kind—from arcane to divine to the most illegal sorts of dark sorcery—you go to the Painted Man. He always helps for a price. Common magic may require money or goods, but the more potent effects demand more outlandish costs. Perhaps he requires the recovery of a pearl once lost in the Argent. Maybe he demands the delivery of a potion into a certain watchman's goblet. He could need a lich's phylactery or a living basilisk brought back to him. He may not ask for payment immediately, but he always collects. No one knows of anyone who has denied his requests.

His curio trade has passed powerful artifacts into his possession. Perhaps his secret society stays in contact,

or perhaps being a eunuch (if he is) grants him access to greater powers, or perhaps he's an astonishingly powerful wizard, keeping a low profile. Maybe he's not even human. Most who go to him for help don't care, and perhaps that desperation is the greatest expression of his power. (See also the adventures "Rebuilding a Good Man" and "Ripper" in **Chapter 9**.)

Scenarios

Heart Potion. The daughter of a city praetor has fallen deeply in love with a student of the Arcane Collegium. She previously scorned him on several occasions but now is passionately devoted to him—possessively so. The student, having apparently gotten exactly what he wanted, is now looking for help. He had gotten a love potion from the Painted Man, but it's too potent! He needs to find a cure, before she loves him to death. The Painted Man doesn't have a cure on hand, but he can mix one if the student provides a few exotic ingredients.

Returning the Favor. A friend of the party comes to them with a problem. Many years ago, his wife came down with a fatal disease. Unable to afford proper clerical services, the friend went to the Painted Man for help. The Painted Man cured her in exchange for an equal favor in the future—a time that has now arrived. Deep in the Margrave grows a rare and deadly flower that the eunuch requires, and the friend must retrieve it. The friend can't leave his business for weeks to go searching for a deadly flower and doesn't fancy traveling into the Margrave anyway. He begs the group to help. Failure could mean the Painted Man undoing whatever he did to cure his wife.

Unfortunately, one of the primary ingredients is a human heart.

Stolen Figure. Recently, a thief stole a small, wooden carving of a phoenix from the Black Lotus. In exchange for a magical service, the Painted Man asks the party to retrieve it. The thief, a member of a kobold mining gang, spends most of his time in the Cartways. He stole the carving on a dare, and after proving that he took it, he quickly sold it to a fence at the Black Market for fear of retribution. The fence in turn sold it to a member of the city watch, who gave it to his young, sickly son.

The Painted Man doesn't care who has it now. He wants it back, and he doesn't care how.

CRACKED COIN

To outward appearances, the Cracked Coin is a cozy, two-story money-lending establishment, built in the same style as many other businesses in Lower Zobeck. The inside, however, includes several secret rooms, a hidden vault, and a sub-basement in addition to the business space on the first floor and living space above.

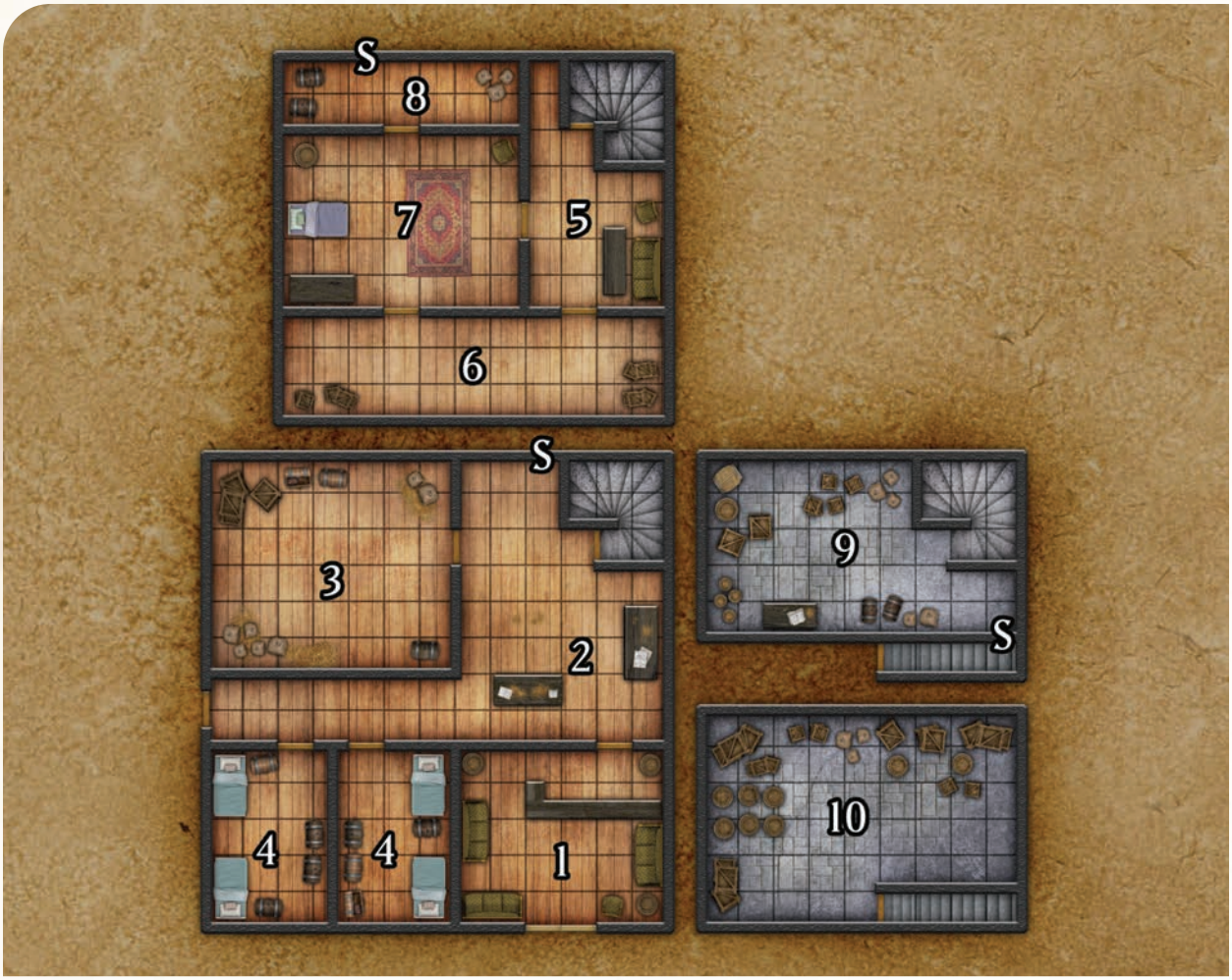


Prominent Locations

1. Lobby. The lobby of the Cracked Coin is divided roughly in half by a long wooden counter. On the entrance side of the counter, a seating area and table allow customers to wait in relative comfort. On the far side of the counter, either Ivan Kazimir (LE human **spy**) or his main representative Cassandra (CN human **spy**) waits on customers while a guard (LE human **veteran**) watches silently. A heavy, iron-banded, wooden double door opens onto the street, and a smaller version of the door leads from behind the counter into the next room.

2. Counting Room. Tables piled with ledgers, scales, and gemological equipment dominate this room. During work hours, two staff members appraise the value of coins, gems, and valuables offered as collateral for loans. A **clockwork watchman** (see *Tome of Beasts*) stands vigil by the vault door day and night, and a guard (LE human **thug**) watches the employee entrance. A secret door next to the staircase leads to the alley behind the building.

3. Vault. The Cracked Coin stores all its cash and collateral here. The vault stays open during work hours and firmly locked otherwise. Ivan typically has between



3,000 gp and 5,000 gp worth of coins and valuables in the vault. Only Ivan and Cassandra have keys.

4. Barracks. Each guards' quarters contains a pair of bunks and two trunks, each with the clothing and personal items of a guard. When not on duty, there is a 50% chance that a guard will be here or in the kitchen (**Area 9**).

Second Floor

5. Lounge. This small waiting area sits at the top of the spiral stairs outside Ivan's personal apartment.

6. Terrace. This terrace overlooks the front entrance. During the day, a guard (LE human **thug**) keeps watch from the balcony.

7. Apartment. Ivan's apartment is richly decorated. Paintings and tapestries line the walls. A canopied bed sits in the corner, and the armoire holds expensive clothing. A door to the south leads to the terrace where Ivan likes to sit when not working and the weather allows. A **clockwork myrmidon** (see *Tome of Beasts*) stands patiently in the corner of the room, awaiting Ivan's orders.

8. Private Vault. Ivan's personal vault contains 4,000 gp in gems, coins, and valuables. It also includes a secret escape route that Ivan will use if he believes invaders are likely to find him in his vault. A rope ladder allows him to descend to the alley behind the Cracked Coin.

Basement

9. Kitchen. The basement at the bottom of the spiral staircase serves as a kitchen and larder. Employees not on duty can prepare the food stored here. A secret door in the south wall leads to a narrow stair that descends to the sub-basement. A **clockwork watchman** stands in the corner with orders to make sure only authorized individuals open the secret door.

Sub-Basement

10. Black Storage. Ivan stores contraband and other materials that he keeps "off the books" in the

sub-basement. Illegal or otherwise difficult-to-dispose-of items stay here until he can move them out of the city or to the Black Market in the Cartways.

Defenses

Exterior doors are locked, requiring successful DC 20 Dexterity (thieves' tools) checks to unlock. They are protected by locking pit traps. The main entrance remains unlocked (with its trap deactivated) during office hours. All employees carry keys to unlock the doors and deactivate the exterior traps.

The vaults are each protected by a *glyph of warding* that triggers a *lightning bolt* spell. The glyphs can be spotted with a successful DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check. The trap does 8d6 lightning damage or half damage with a successful DC 16 Dexterity saving throw. Only Ivan and Cassandra have keys to unlock the vaults and deactivate the vault traps.

Ivan is not the trusting sort. A small number of people work at the Cracked Coin. Most customers only deal with Ivan or Cassandra, and they handle all business transactions. Ivan is a thin, middle-aged man who always dresses in expensive, well-tailored outfits. Cassandra is a red-headed beauty. Her job is to be charming and personable, but underneath, she is a shrewd businesswoman. In addition to four human guards, Ivan "employs" several clockwork guardians.

Personalities

Cassandra Chyorny. A beautiful, red-haired woman in her late twenties, Cassandra seems to be everything Ivan is not. Confident, sweet, and easy to get along with, she uses her looks to great advantage. This facade is, of course, her job, but this cutthroat businesswoman prefers her approach to Ivan's.

Ivan Kazimir. Shifty-eyed, oily, and self-important, Ivan Kazimir is the owner of the Cracked Coin. He is condescending and obsequious by turns, depending on the amounts involved.

Scenarios

Betrayer Within! One of the master keys that can deactivate the mechanical and magical defenses of the Cracked Coin is missing. Ivan Kazimir is convinced that one of his employees has betrayed him to one of Zobeck's large criminal organizations. He fears an imminent attack and worries that he will not have time to reset his defenses before it comes. Ivan needs adventurers to bolster his defenses, find out who is responsible, and make sure this situation never happens again.

Contraband. Deep within the bowels of the Cracked Coin lie crates of contraband provided to Ivan as collateral for loans. An anonymous note to the watch says this evidence could send the high-ranking members of several street gangs straight to the gallows. The watch wants the goods but is unable to act for reasons having to do with its own internal politics (officers being paid by Ivan Kazimir, no doubt). Whether for the good of Zobeck or for a hefty financial reward, the Spyglass Guild wants the adventurers to break into the Cracked Coin and procure the contraband. The government will, of course, never admit involvement if something goes wrong. Unbeknownst to all involved, Ivan sent the note to eliminate some troublesome street contacts.

RAMPANT ROACH

On the border of Lower Zobeck, just a few blocks away from Crown Square, stands one of the few kobold-oriented restaurants outside the Kobold Ghetto. The owner, a kobold named Skirtal, insisted on opening his restaurant outside the ghetto to spread his joy of traditional kobold cuisine to the whole city. Local kobolds working in town frequent the Rampant Roach for lunch and dinner. Unfortunately, non-reptilian clients remain a rarity, and Skirtal barely makes enough to keep up with expenses.

The doors open early in the afternoon and stay open until just before dawn, but business is light until well after dusk. The ambience is cozy and dark. Skirtal warmly welcomes anyone who enters. Food is cheap but filling and comes in generous portions, if the patron can stomach kobold meals.

Prominent Locations

1. Dining Area. Boarded-up windows keep the atmosphere dark and cave-like. Jars of fresh fire beetle glands at each table provide both dim illumination and appetizers. The half-dozen tables scattered around the room are low for Medium-size creatures. At 2 feet by 3 feet, the tables fit six kobolds comfortably or four humans uncomfortably.

2. Kitchen. This cramped cooking area can barely fit a single kobold between the stove and the cooking pot. A narrow cabinet holds bottles of various gooey liquids. Nets of vegetables hang over the worktable. A small hatch in the corner leads down to the basement.

3. Food Storage. Cages of cockroaches, rats, worms, and beetles litter the area with no apparent organization. Boxes of roots and other vegetables are stacked in a corner. A pile of what some would consider trash is actually a collection of ripening ingredients.



4. Skirtal's Room. Carved into the side of the basement is a small cave. At 3 feet high, only a kobold can stand inside comfortably. Skirtal sleeps on a pile of straw in the corner. He keeps his dearest possession—a recipe book handwritten in Draconic—in a hidden niche behind a loose stone.

Personalities

Roaches. A gang of kobold urchins hunts vermin for Skirtal. Most citizens call them "roaches" with disdain, but the young kobolds have adopted the name with pride. Their enthusiasm for collecting ingredients often takes them to parts of town kobolds usually avoid.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

- The wines of the temple of Yarila distributed for the high holy day tasted flat, and the festival failed. The farmers fear a poor harvest unless they can appease the goddess. Some call for blood sacrifice, but the centaur high priest says what's needed is a pilgrimage to a holy place deep within the Arbonesse Forest to make a long overdue offering. The road is dangerous though, and the pilgrims need protectors.
- Recently, woodsmen and charcoal burners have gone into the Margreve and not returned. The whole district worries about their fate. Are they held prisoner by dark fey, or have they been eaten by wild griffons? The patrols have found nothing, but the natives refuse to venture into the forest until the disappearances are solved.

They are chased out of upscale neighborhoods, but occasionally, an enterprising servant will employ them for pest control. Skirtal can't pay them much more than a copper a day, but he keeps them well fed, which earns him fierce loyalty. For a small fee, Skirtal will pass messages into the ghetto through the roaches—as long as he believes they'll remain out of danger.

Skirtal. Skirtal (NG kobold **commoner**) dreams of spreading his joy of traditional kobold cuisine to other humanoids. He stubbornly insisted on opening his restaurant inside the city proper instead of in a likely more prosperous location within the Kobold Ghetto. His concern for others often overshadows his business sense. Far too often he serves meals on credit and forgets to collect later. Meals come served with generous helpings, extra sides, and boisterous explanations of his latest recipe. When business is slow, Skirtal can be found at the doorway inviting passersby in for a free taste.

Scenarios

Mistaken Identity. The roaches are spotted near the scene of a crime and are wrongly accused of it. They go deep into hiding in the ghetto while waiting for things to blow over. Skirtal asks the PCs to clear their names. This may involve finding the roaches' hiding spot in order to learn what they saw.

Neighborhood Bullies. Skirtal doesn't participate in illegal activities, but sometimes the local thugs cause mischief. He may ask regular patrons to intercede on his behalf if things get troublesome.

Rare Ingredient. Skirtal has been asked to cook for an important kobold, and he wants to serve a special dish. He asks the PCs to get a rare ingredient for him: an

ochre jelly. He's heard of an abandoned Margreve mine that contains a nest.

SPYGLASS AND CARTOGRAPHER'S GUILD (§39)

This wide, two-story guildhouse has many windows on its main level to flood its high-ceilinged, open workrooms with light. The panes' outer surfaces are opaque, however, to prevent curious passersby from peering in. On the main level, 20 permanent drafting stations fill the vast central room, which has space for more if needed. No matter the hour, at least 10 diligent cartographers are hard at work copying stolen maps, drafting floor plans of observed vaults, mapping out discovered tunnel systems, drawing legitimate maps for clients, and all keeping a careful eye on the entrances.

The upper level contains lodging for those guild members who frequently travel on business for Ersebet Cemilla, the guild's leader. This level also houses guardrooms, special equipment and supply rooms, and Ersebet's private chambers, which she shares with her second-in-command, Grigory Kaldozh.

The guildhouse's warded secret basement contains a document-filled vault, a treasure room, a few very strong and magically shielded cells, and a scrying-protected meeting hall.

WHEATSHEAF TAVERN (§35)

A favorite smuggler's tavern and second home of anyone who needs a thug now and again, the Wheatsheaf nightly serves up strong beer and spicy food with a healthy side of information, especially from the Redcloaks or the Cloven Nine. The collection of rogues, sharpers, cultists, assassins, fences, and cold-eyed hard cases who drink at the Wheatsheaf is ever-changing but always dangerous, alert, and looking for an opening.

Despite its clientele and infernal connections, the Wheatsheaf remains a nonviolent place . . . most of the time. The tavern provides a secure place to conduct public and private business or just have a meal, and that ends if people are watching for a knife in the back or fear the watch will show up. When violence starts at the Wheatsheaf, it's never a simple brawl—it's a murder. The killer had best have powerful friends or excellent protection though, for the biggest gangsters in Zobeck prefer that the Wheatsheaf operate under a flag of truce, and they look askance on anyone threatening that.

MARKET DISTRICT (VINEYARD DISTRICT)

Also called the Vineyard District or the Market Ward, this quarter is filled with small shops and artisans who sell the goods everyone needs. Cloth, leather, weapons, poison, scrolls, and carpets are all for sale here—everything but foodstuffs, livestock, spices (which are sold in Lower Zobeck), and slaves (which are forbidden in the Free City). The merchants work out of tiny stalls and areas no larger than pantries, but the demand for space in the district is huge. Most merchants live above or behind their shops and have done so for generations.

Four Quarters Street in the Market District is devoted to the goods of distant lands. The street's markets offer indecipherable scrolls from Siwal and the Arbonesse, strange alchemical powders, and statues of unknown gods. More mundane goods also appear here, such as amber, Rothenian furs, exotic woods, and garments of silk, shimma, and Harkesh lace. Even some minor magic items from Bemmea turn up somewhere along the street, though nothing too fine.

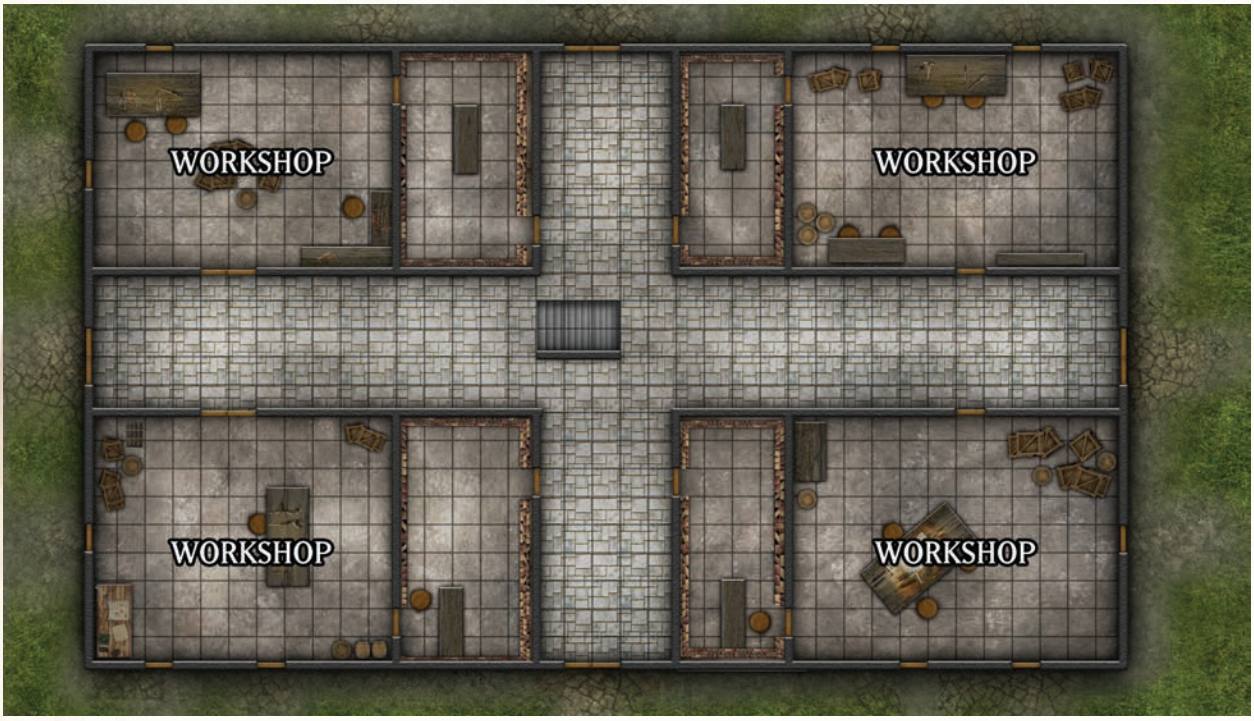
The Market District is all about trade. It is busiest from the months of Mustering to Redleaf, or spring to harvest time. In winter, the district caters only to the city's own inhabitants.

BREWER'S SISTERHOOD (§13)

The brewmistresses are beloved throughout the city for the beer and barley wine they make in their vast copper kettles. These hardworking craftswomen often compete with one another in a fierce but friendly way. Some have a contest each year during the River Fair, when the bargemen, stevedores, and all the apprentices of the city sample and vote on the quality of the copious amounts of potables the sisterhood provides.

In terms of numbers, the sisterhood has always been fairly small, rarely more than 40 members at a time with about 60 or 70 apprentices. Many young girls apprentice, starting at around age nine, and it is a popular destination for urchins and runaways. The guildmistress is Ludmeya Shenk, a crookbacked dwarven crone who is canny enough to keep the bargemen and the coopers as close allies. Zobeck's various beers, from the heavy Chimneysweep Stout to the summery Silverhops Lager, are widely distributed up and down the river and are popular among the centaurs.

The sisterhood owns no magic, and its finances, while sound, are not extravagant. It remains among the best-loved guilds in the city, and when Guildmistress Ludmeya speaks, her words carry great weight with the council. Many leaders count on her guild to quench the thirst in their quarters of the city, and no one wishes to cross her. Ludmeya has ears in every taproom and friends at every table, so they say, and this information is a great asset. She remembers the revolt, and her loyalty to the city's freedom and prosperity means that what



she learns often reaches people who can do something about it.

HOMMAL'S BOTANICAL ROOFTOP

Hommal Agic owns a five-story tenement that borders the Market District and Lower Zobeck, just on the waterfront. Atop this building lies Hommal's true passion and major source of income—a lush and overgrown botanical garden with multiple interlocking greenhouses and patios overburdened with ferns, saplings, and hanging mosses. Hommal has a small monopoly on certain fibers and extracts within Zobeck and supplies brewers, alchemists, and cooks across the city. An honest businessman for the most part, Hommal has found his garden declared a neutral and safe meeting place for a number of Zobeck's criminal organizations. For serving tea and keeping silent, Hommal avoids paying protection money to any group.

Garden Tenement

The building has four workshops on the lower level complete with store fronts. The upper three floors contain simple apartments. The most notable feature is its rooftop garden, containing greenhouses, a tall, twisted white oak that reaches over the street below, and thick vines with purple leaves, crawling down a quarter of the building. The first two levels are made of massive gray stones, but the uppermost floors are timber encased in brick.

An experimental piping system was installed to reroute the river water into fountains inside the tenement. The experiment failed, and the fountain only works when the water level is high, such as after heavy rain. This building has seen better days but still stands strong.

Prominent Locations

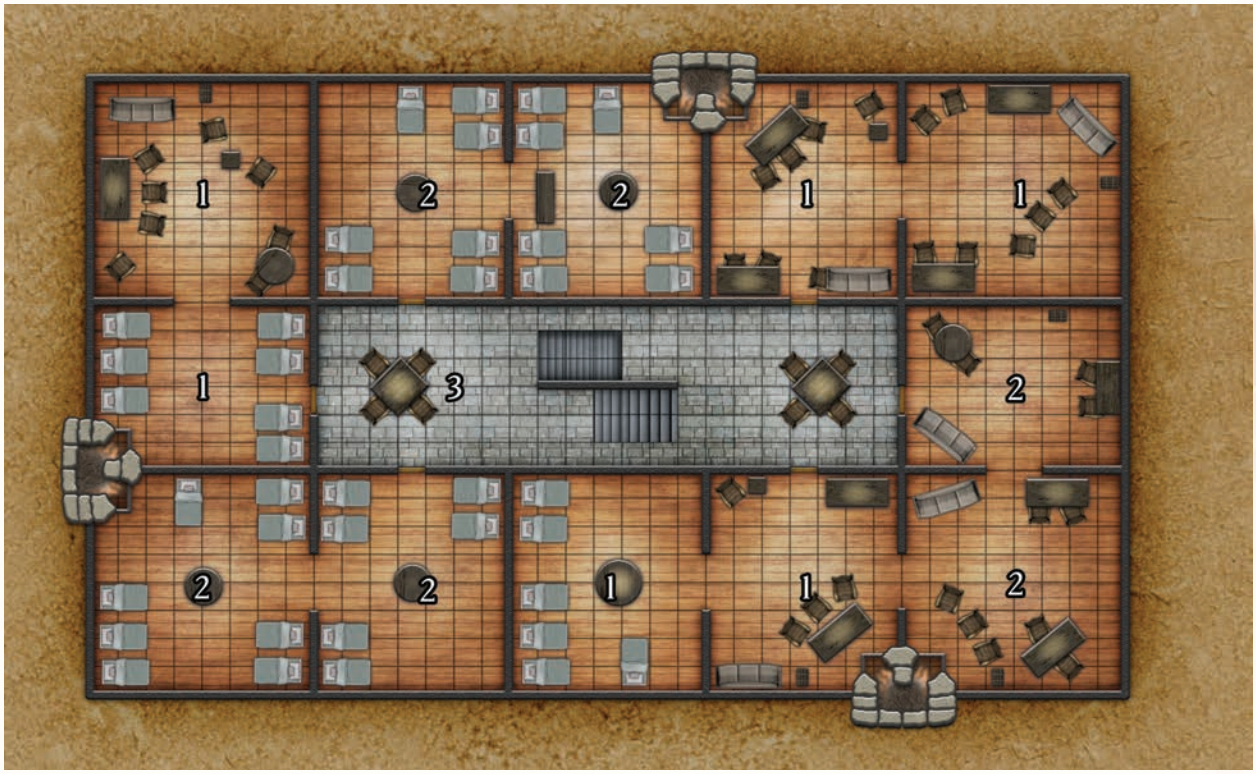
The ground level of this building contains four large workshops with small store fronts, each occupying a full corner of the building. Narrow alleys between these shops lead to the staircase at the center of the building, which connects to the tenement floors above.

1. Tenement Living Quarters. Each room has a small corner fireplace with hanging pots, pans, and utensils for cooking. Many worn chairs and a few small tables fill the room, and shelves and nets hold common belongings.

Numerous families share each flat. Though not comfortable, they are dry, warm, and safer than the street or a slum.

2. Tenement Sleeping Areas. Bunks line the walls, and there are a few small windows near the ceiling. Bedrolls cover the floor, and more rolled blankets are stashed around the walls for sleeping in other rooms when this one gets too crowded, as it inevitably does. Enough floor space is left open in the middle of the room for a small table, which is covered in candle butts. In the corner, behind a half wall, is a toilet that drops sewage to the street gutter.

3. Staircase Hall. A staircase leads to the floors above and below. To the north and south of the staircase are two floor-to-ceiling columns. Upon the columns, four stone cow heads spit water into a trough.





Rooftop

Tending the plants are a couple **alliumites** (see *Creature Codex*). They rarely ever leave the rooftop.

4. Roof Entrance. This staircase area is where one enters the roof. North and south of the staircase are column fountains crowned by statues of dancing minotaurs that spit water into overflowing buckets. Potted and hanging plants adorn these statues, lending to the illusion of paradise. Just east of the staircase grow two vines that bear ripe grapes.

5. Belladonna House. This greenhouse has a high ceiling and is roofed and walled in bubbled green and brown glass. Many multilayered benches crowd the room, making it hard to navigate and requiring a successful DC 14 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to move faster than half-speed. Potted plants of every type cover tabletops and floor space, yet one shoulder-tall plant with bell-shaped flowers and black berries seems the most prominent. It is a belladonna, a toxic plant used in making ingested poison. It can be recognized with a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Nature) check.

6. Gold Pond. This pool is 3 feet deep and blanketed in lily pads and bright-orange flowers. Hundreds of frogs with red, orange, and white spots croak and splash in the water.

7. Gardener's Den. This small room, carpeted in many rugs, contains a warm fireplace and bookshelf-style bunks on the western wall with four small beds. A hookah stands near the bed with smoke hoses hanging on hooks near each pillow.

Four kobolds who work for Hommal as gardeners can be found here most hours of the day, zoned out under their covers.

8. Storage Room. This room is full of gardening equipment, bags of seed, fertilizer, and a wheelbarrow.

9. Twisted Oak. This gnarled, twisted oak grows out at a 45-degree angle from the corner of the building. It reaches to within 15 feet of the building across the street. Multiple chairs and benches are set about this area along with potted flowers, lanterns, and game boards. Hommal entertains his noncriminal guests here and occasionally throws small parties.

10. Requiem House. This greenhouse has a high ceiling and is roofed and walled in bubbled green and brown glass. Neat rows of benches hold potted flowers, each with a brightly colored, fist-sized bulb. A small alchemist's lab stands on the eastern wall near a fireplace. Someone who examines the alchemy setup and makes a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Nature) check deduces that the drug known as requiem is concocted here.

11. Vineyard. Twisting, interlocking vines grow along multiple rows of arbors to create wide curtains of greenery. Grapes, berries, and ferns all intermingle, walling off the individual rows as a blanket of vines crawls down the eastern side of the building. The arbors conceal anyone hiding behind them. PCs can climb the vines hanging from the side of the building with a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check, but the lowest portions of the vines are 25 feet above the ground.

12. Garden's Edge. Along the edge of the southwest corner runs an earth-filled box in which hardy, flowering vines grow and hang down the building's side. This appears intentional, to add to the tenement's allure. The area is also used for storing rain barrels. PCs can climb the vines hanging from the side of the building with a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check, but the lowest portions of the vines are 25 feet above the ground.

13. Tea Kitchen. Within this room of green glass sits a dining table and kitchen area near the fireplace. Along the eastern wall grow multiple potted tea plants with leaves of various colors, sizes, and shapes.

Criminal bosses sometimes meet secretly in this room to negotiate and socialize. Hommal serves them tea and stays in the corner, trying not to be noticed, though he plays his lute when asked.

Personalities

Average Tenant. Most male tenants—and many of the women—leave the tenement for work before sunrise and don't return until nightfall. Many are porters, laborers, or domestic help. Some women stay home to tend children and housework, often sharing such duties between families. All use the **commoner** stat block.

Hommal Agic. Hommal (N human **commoner**) owns the building and relies on the income he earns from it, but he doesn't care about managing it or its tenants. He's not an evil man, but the only things he really cares about are tending to his plants and enjoying the city's exciting nightlife.

Scenarios

A Party and an Opportunity. Bullied by the criminals of Zobeck for too long, Hommal secretly asks the PCs for help. He invites them to his next "tree party"—a summit meeting of high-ranking criminals—where he plans to poison the tea. He wants the PCs to burst in and finish the job with their blades and spells once the criminals are weakened by the poison. Just talking about this scheme leaves him trembling in terror.

Poison and Potions. Recently, Hommal has been strong-armed into including addictive substances in the



many mundane ingredients he sells to certain potion shops that are secretly owned by criminals. The idea is that customers will become addicted to expensive but otherwise harmless potions and medicines, and the repeat business will generate massive profits. Hommal is quite concerned that if this becomes public, he will be blamed as much as the criminals behind the plot, and the punishment could be severe for this crime. He sees no safe and easy way out of this predicament, but he might turn to the PCs for help if he becomes desperate enough—or if he's confronted with damning evidence.

ULMAR'S RARE BOOKS

A dwarf-run bookstore is an infrequent sight. Ulmar's attitude toward customers makes them infrequent as well. Situated near Lower Zobeck, Ulmar's Rare Books doesn't seem to see enough traffic to stay in business. The assortment of books available is impressive though, and scholars searching for an obscure reference often come to Ulmar's as a last resort.

Ulmar repairs damaged books, though few know that he forges near-exact duplicates as well. He will duplicate any particularly noteworthy volume he comes across for his special collection. On occasion, wealthy merchants desiring to impress will purchase duplicated rare books at "discounted" prices.

Ulmar works for several masters and provides different services, depending on which code word customers use. With the right phrase, Ulmar will recommend a book for purchase from the Spyglass Guild. Another code word, and he brings out a book or package from the Rivermen. The service never improves though.

Prominent Locations

1. Store. The main room of the store is filled with books piled on shelves without any apparent organization. Shelves are labeled by category, but the labels are wildly inaccurate. Ulmar (NE dwarf **commoner**) usually knows where to find specific books if he can be bothered to look or to answer questions.

2. Special Collection. In contrast to the front room, the back room is very organized. All books of significant value are stored here. Nobody is allowed in. Ulmar brings out only one book at a time from his private reserve. A few special books are hollowed out to store contraband materials, usually drugs.

3. Book Workshop. This well-kept workroom houses everything required for the manufacture and repair of books. Many types of parchment and vellum allow him to create identical copies of most books.

4. Storeroom. More workshop supplies are stored here along with any contraband Ulmar is currently holding.

5. Secret Tunnel. Hidden behind a movable cupboard, this tunnel leads to an abandoned section of the Cartways with easy access to the waterfront.

Personalities

Ulmar. Aside from Ulmar's disdain for customers, he is a knowledgeable scholar and skilled bookbinder. He certainly prefers the company of books to other people though. He can usually be found behind the counter reading and ignores new customers unless they ask him specific questions. Even then, he usually makes them wait until he reaches a good stopping point in his book before answering. Only the prospect of inspecting a new book perks him up, but he quickly derides anyone who brings in something he considers rubbish.

Scenarios

Kobold Slaves. Kobold children are disappearing from the ghetto. A prominent kobold asks the characters to investigate rumors of a slave ring. The trail eventually leads to Ulmar's basement where the young kobolds are locked up, awaiting the time when they're picked up by purchasers from the Ghoul Imperium.

Secret Messages. The Spyglass Guild passes messages tucked between the pages of certain books in the store. One of the PCs, or an NPC friend, accidentally purchases a book containing a coded message. The Spyglass Guild will stop at nothing to get it back. If they believe the accidental owner is smart enough to decipher the message, they will likely want the individual silenced permanently.

Stolen Books. Sometimes a book is too valuable not to sell twice. Ulmar often tells his criminal associates—usually the Rivermen—which patrons purchase particularly expensive volumes. Armed with the knowledge of which estate to hit and what specific book to grab, an accomplice steals it back a few weeks after the purchase.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

- The PCs are approached for hire by an elderly widow of the Slygass family who lives a life of paranoia. She fears her own children seek her death, so they can claim their inheritance, and she wants the PCs to deal with the situation. As it happens, her paranoia is justified.
- The party hears of a secret oracle of the Gear Goddess who says the city is threatened by a plague of darkness. The PCs are asked to bring a powerful hermit priest of the Sun God back from his retreat deep in the Ironcrag Mountains. The hermit has little interest in returning unless the party slays a few giants for him first.

Ulmar won't sell re-stolen books in town. Instead, he sends them to contacts in other cities such as Bratislor. A wealthy collector may hire the PCs to investigate after a clumsy break-in curiously targets only her library while ignoring other valuables.

MERCHANT DISTRICT

Like the Market District, this district houses many of the guild orders, such as the Honorable Order of Weavers (§20), the Ancient Order of Jewelers (§21), the Carpenter's Brotherhood (§23), the Cooper's Union (§24), the Order of Arms and Armory (§25), the Order of Tanners and Leatherworkers (§26), and the Six Lanterns Playhouse (§27). The watch patrols more frequently here than the Market District.

The Merchant District is more concerned with trade on road and river compared to the Market District and organizes shipments in and out of Zobeck. Many master merchants live here as well, and carts and wagons often clog the streets.

HONORABLE ORDER OF WEAVERS (§20)

This guild is one of the oldest yet most modest of Zobeck's guilds. It produces an astonishing variety of patterned and simple cloth of wool, cotton, and silk, using looms threaded and tended by its members and its spidery weaving automatons. The guild sells one or two enormous tapestries, true works of art, each year, and they command huge sums. Its clockwork weaving spiders are inhumanly quick and accurate but also feared. Terrible rumors claim that they poison and destroy the weavers' enemies, and sometimes merchants who buy from the guild carry a spider to distant targets outside Zobeck as part of their payment. This seems entirely baseless and rooted in the spider's fearsome appearance. The single proven case of a weaving spider attack took place within the city walls.

The order does seem to have some touch of the magical about it. Its members are close allies with the Steamworker's Union (who provide some of their more specialized looms and counting tools) and the Vigilant Brotherhood of Scribes (who rely on the weavers for certain obscure mathematics and accounts). The order clearly uses arcane techniques to make such enormous volumes of cloth and to weave such tight sailcloth. Like most guilds though, they keep their secrets well.

The guildmistress of the weavers, a woman named Philomena Flaxe, is thin with long limbs and a quiet way about her. Her followers believe she is blessed by Rava, for Philomena has received admittance to the Clockwork Oracle not once but a dozen times. Each time, the oracle's

ADVENTURE HOOKS

- A centaur asks the PCs to help heal a disease that has struck down many herds lately. The ailment is strangely resistant to magical healing and might not be a true disease at all. Its cure requires special knowledge from the Temple of the Dawn, which leads the PCs to the Smolten Hills south of the city to recover something buried deep beneath a stone circle.
- A Kariv fortuneteller offers to tell a PC their future, in particular the fate of their friends and family and the death of one of them. If the PC pays, they witness a lot of spectacle and very little fortunetelling. If the PC refuses, the fortuneteller secretly curses them.
- The Spring Trade Fair is in full swing with items magical and mundane available to those with the gold to pay. Among the many stalls are a group of kobold pickpockets, dwarven duelists looking for a fight, and a priest of the Sun God who seeks new recruits to "root out evil everywhere." A cartographer offers to sell a map to the legendary Tomb of St. Helba, patroness of thieves, and the kobolds, dwarves, and priest alike seek to get their hands on the map.

words have helped her and her guild. A few believe she should leave the guild and join the priesthood.

SIX LANTERNS PLAYHOUSE (§27)

One of the few public places in Zobeck nodding to the arts, the Six Lanterns Playhouse seats up to 3,000 occupants, but it rarely draws a full house these days and is really in a state of decline. The Stross era, when nobles considered the Six Lanterns the place to congregate and be seen, marked the playhouse's heyday. Since the Great Revolt, the playhouse has suffered because Zobeckers associate it with the largess of nobility. Most merchants consider it a frivolity.

The building is worn with age inside and out, and owners Joran and Cyndis Zirmac cannot afford to replace the fading fabrics and threadbare seats. They seek a bard or other performer of renown to aid them in attracting patrons and returning the playhouse to its glory days. Unfortunately, said star would need to work for free for several weeks until the playhouse earned the needed funds to make repairs. So far, no one they've approached has been altruistic enough to sacrifice his or her fee. Without an infusion of coin, the playhouse will soon close.

PASTURES

This small section of lush green ground on the northern side of the River Argent is reserved for shepherds to keep their flocks, cowherds to ready cattle for slaughter, and hostlers to graze the horses of the wealthy. The fields are also the site of the annual Spring Trade Fair, where all the far-flung partners of Zobeck's merchant houses bring their best wares to begin the trading season.

Kariv horse traders and their caravans, the dark-skinned merchants of Siwal and Harkesh, the flying cities of Sikkim, dwarven clans from the Ironcrags, and the traders dealing in the pale amber and fine wood of Morgau and Doresh all gather for two weeks of often-frenzied business on the green pastureland. During the autumn and winter months, the pastures commonly host some herds of Rothenian centaurs. Their tents stay until the first blossoms appear in the spring when they return to their wanderings.

In high summer, the pasturage is used for haying and boarding the horses of the Zobeck Hussars who often perform maneuvers here. Experts with lance and sword, they patrol the roads that carry goods to the Crossroads City. Most people are quite happy to give them prime pasturage for part of the year.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

- A bottle shipment to Four Quarters Street has released an **efreeti** who demands to be brought incense, spices, jewels, and virgins. The city leaders are not amused, and even less amused is the lamp's seller, whose shop has become the efreeti's private palace, at least in an illusory way.
- A merchant of Sikkim seeks a guide to the taverns, brothels, gambling halls, and smuggling dens of Zobeck, and someone has recommended one of the PCs. Once the guide is drunk, the spy of Sikkim questions them closely.

TEMPLE DISTRICT

The Temple District is so named for the many temples it contains. Lada's largest temple stands here along with important temples to the other major gods of the Crossroads region: Rava, Volund, Perun, and Porevit and Yarila. Shrines to the various saints also dot these streets.

The temples of the district are open from dawn to dusk. After nightfall, only priests and the most devoted followers travel through its streets.

CHURCH OF PERUN (§8)

A large stone building with virtually no outer embellishments, the church of Perun might be unrecognizable at all but for his thunderstone symbol over its doors. Many still mistake it for a warrior's guild.

Inside rests a small shrine, but the majority of the building houses an armory and rooms dedicated to martial training. Behind the building lies a courtyard also used for weapon practice.

The clerics here train the lowliest of citizens in basic combat and the arts militant, and those willing to offer themselves to Perun receive a spear and dagger or a pike and short sword with the understanding that they will answer the priests' call to arms if needed. The church of Perun serves as the unofficial recruiter and officer corps for the Zobeck levies.

TEMPLE OF GOLDEN LADA (§10)

This tall, elaborate edifice of pink stone rests on a small hill, and its tallest tower peeks above the city walls to better see the first glint of dawn. As with Lada's more popular Celestial Dawn Temple in the Collegium District, petitioners line up before dawn to receive the priests' healing touch when the doors open.

Inside the temple, the statues, pillars, and pews radiate a golden sheen, quite calming to supplicants seeking Lada's blessings. No one is denied healing during daylight hours, though any receiving powerful curative magic must serve the temple for a period or perform a great task to repay the debt.

Lucca Angeli is the high priestess of Lada, a small woman with dark hair and a powerful personality. She keeps rooms in both temples and rotates between them to give her lesser priests and laypersons equal attention.

TEMPLE OF YARILA AND POREVIT (§9)

An open series of plant-entwined columns serves as the temple to the Green Gods. Behind the columns rise vast, beautiful gardens and shrubbery mazes. Many herbs and plants usually only found in the Margreve grow here. Spellcasters often make donations to the temple for allowances to take cuttings from the plants as spell components—the clerics won't sell them directly. Ogolai Kiyat, an elderly centaur from the eastern plains, is the temple's current high priest. He leads the opening of the Spring Festival's rites.

TEMPLE OF RAVA (§11)

A metallic structure with brass-bound iron doors and a green copper roof, the temple of Rava stands out. Two **steam golems** (see *Tome of Beasts*) guard its entrance to protect the valuable work that takes place within, for this is the birthplace of the gearforged.

The main temple level includes three important sections: a shrine of trade, where balances are trued and weights and measures blessed; a shrine of fate and foresight, which includes the sacred and private territory of the Clockwork Oracle; and the open Hall of the Patroness, where the arts and industry of the city are featured alongside minor paintings of Zobeck, its founding, and history. This last is where public services are held, such as contract signings, marriages, priestly investments, and funerals.

The temple's crypt is not for burials but for births. The lower halls contain a series of workshops and assembly rooms. In the Sanctuary of Gears, the clerics perform binding rituals to seal humanoid souls into metal bodies and create the children of Rava.

Ondli Firedrake, also the high priest of Volund, serves as the dwarven high priest of Rava. Lena Ravovik serves as the high priestess for the humans. This is the only temple where gearforged number among the priesthood.

TEMPLE OF VOLUND (§12)

The temple of Volund is a majestic piece of dwarven masonry on the outside. Fine statues show forges, hammers, horses, dwarves in battle array, and humans and dwarves in prayer by a forge fire. Inside, the temple is a vast forge that runs 24 hours a day, keeping Volund's fires burning and the temple interior warm and smelling of fuel and sweat. The temple walls dampen the sounds of hammering so as not to disturb the priests' neighbors, but the rhythm never ceases.

The temple maintains a stable in the town as well, with horses supposedly blessed by Volund. Certainly, the priests do a bit of a sideline in horse-trading, shoeing, and animal care. A yellow or russet blaze in some breeds of draft horses, called the "mark of Volund," is highly prized.

Ondli Firedrake serves as the temple's high priest and often works the forge himself, creating a novice's iron holy symbol or fulfilling a commission for a devout warrior or traveler.

JUST OUTSIDE THE CITY

Several areas of importance to Zobeck, and a few steeped in mysteries, lie just outside the walls of the Free City.

CASTLE REMMAUER

Remmauer is a well-garrisoned castle south and east of the city, that overlooks the last pass into the river valley and the southern vineyards, toward the Magdar Kingdom and the plains of the Rothenian centaurs. It is primarily known for its hussars, though its commander is invariably from the Order of Griffon Knights.

CASTLE SHADOWCRAG

Once the home of House Stross (and called Castle Stross at that time), this black-stone ruin is lightly inhabited by dour dwarves and a few human holdouts. The village below burned the same night Zobeck's rebels hung the men, women, and children of House Stross from the battlements. Ever since, the place has had an evil reputation. The castle sits a day's ride north of the Oros Bridge. The Free Army maintained a presence here for some years but abandoned it as unexplained casualties mounted. Most consider the ruins haunted by fey and by dark memories.

GRIFFON TOWERS & THE MARGREVE FOREST

Long the private property of House Stross, the Margreve Forest retains a certain hushed atmosphere of wild decay and noble privilege. Travelers go quietly through the deepest woods, seeking to avoid throat-slitting bandits, howling dire wolves, and even kobolds bitterly defending their secret mines.

At the same time, the untamed regions of the Margreve call to Zobeckers' lust for wealth. The forest provides the timber that builds its barges, fuels its smithies, and braces its silver mines. The noise of kobold miners, timber-cutters, and merchants rumbling along the Great Northern Road grows each year. Silence returns only in winter. The road brings goods from cities of the Red Queen, the undead princes of Morgau and Doresh, and the Bemmean Magocracy to the banks of the Argent. Acting as the connection between this route and the river makes Zobeck half its fortune as a trade center. Naturally, castles and towers defend the road.

The most famous of these are the dozen Griffon Towers. Eight of them stand on the road itself while the others guard hunting lodges, mines, or powerful wellsprings of magic. Most people assume they got their name from the griffon blazons carved in their walls, but that was merely the mark of the Stross border guards.

House Stross built the towers for its griffon riders, an elite company of couriers and shock cavalry, and each served as stables, roosts, and shelters for the griffons and their riders. The parsimonious council of the Free City does not pay to maintain these outposts any longer and keeps its own Griffon Knights closer to home.

Now the Margreve griffons run wild, and they come in both black and speckled varieties. Knowing the difference is important. The black griffons are more aggressive and very fond of horseflesh, and some claim they are fey steeds. The speckled ones are shy, tamable, and can serve as animal companions to suitable heroes.

TOWER ENCOUNTERS

- An abandoned tower contains a treasure cache. Unfortunately, centaur bandits have discovered this particular tower and claimed its goods for themselves. Their leader, Radu Voinod, is using the money to buy kegs of ale from the kobold miners near Shadowcrag to reward his followers. If the party takes some of the gold, the centaurs have excellent tracking and ambushing skills and will try to cut off their escape at several points in the forest.
- Though the forest is dangerous, a few young, rich, and stupid sons of Zobeck merchant houses always try to prove themselves by hunting Margreve deer, boar, or the fabled White Hart. They usually hire a ranger, barbarian, or druid as a guide. Once the young hunters set out, they make a mess of things and might lose a horse to a boar attack. In the worst case, shadow fey might lead the hunting party astray as they resent this poaching. The moment of truth comes when arrows shot to kill a deer are returned with interest.
- Stories tell of a hag of the greenwood who helps travelers caught in rainstorms or stuck in mires of the road's wetter sections. This help usually involves bringing them to her modest hut and feeding them a hot meal while pleading for help against the "kobold bandits" who plague her life as an herbalist. In fact, she is quite familiar with monkshood, hemlock, and other poisons and usually attempts to kill one or more of her guests during the night.

Griffons for Adventurers. With griffon eggs for the taking, adventurers often wander into the Margreve to make their fortune. These expeditions rarely end well. In the vast forest, landmarks attract attention, so the towers are always inhabited by bandits or monsters. The towers are more than 50 feet tall and half that wide. Most have no easy way up, their wooden staircases long since destroyed.

The griffons are careful about who or what may approach a tower during nesting season. Merchants who travel the Great Northern Road refuse to travel there in spring, when griffon attacks are common. Pikes are the preferred weapons to keep the creatures at bay but difficult to use in the dense confines of the forest.

OROS BRIDGE

The Oros Bridge is the main connection to the Margreve and to the north and is a required crossing for any horse or mule train going to Niemheim, the Blood Kingdom, and Trollheim. The Zobeck Hussars guard the bridge, the farthest northern garrison of the Free City, though the city claims the whole of the Margreve as its territory.

OUTLYING VILLAGES

More than a dozen villages of shepherds, dairy farmers, charcoal burners, and peasants dot the countryside around Zobeck and are counted among its lands. These include the villages of Villendorf, Riverbend, Kuburg, Ostic, and Eulendorf.

STEFANSTOR

This small keep (little more than a gatehouse on a steep mountain track) is the easternmost extent of the Free City's lands. It guards a road leading up into the Brom Plateau of Morgau and Doresh.

REAL ESTATE

Ownership	District 1	District 2	District 3	District 4
Manor	60,000+ gp	40,000+ gp	100,000+ gp	25,000 gp
Villa	40,000 gp	20,000 gp	80,000 gp	18,000 gp
Townhouse	30,000 gp	15,000 gp	60,000 gp	12,000 gp
House	20,000 gp	10,000 gp	45,000 gp	8,000 gp
Apartment Suite	8,000 gp	5,000 gp	15,000 gp	1,000 gp
Apartment	800 gp	500 gp	1,500 gp	100 gp
Building, Large	20,000 gp	10,000 gp	45,000 gp	8,000 gp
Building, Small	10,000 gp	5,000 gp	15,000 gp	4,000 gp
Tavern	12,500 gp	7,500 gp	17,500 gp	5,500 gp
Warehouse	40,000 gp	20,000 gp	80,000 gp	18,000 gp

RENT (PER MONTH)

Manor	1,000 gp	700 gp	2,000 gp	500 gp
Villa	500 gp	250 gp	1,000 gp	175 gp
Townhouse	250 gp	150 gp	750 gp	100 gp
House	200 gp	100 gp	500 gp	50 gp
Apartment Suite	100–150 gp	40–60 gp	500 gp	30 gp
Apartment	75 gp	30 gp	200 gp	10 gp
Tenement Flat	10 gp	5 gp	—	2 gp
Building, Large	1,000 gp	500 gp	1,500 gp	400 gp
Building, Small	200 gp	100 gp	500 gp	50 gp
Warehouse	500 gp	250 gp	1,000 gp	175 gp

LIVING EXPENSES

Food Costs	100%	100%	150%	100%
Transportation Costs	100%	100%	125%	75%
Goods Costs	125%	100%	150%	100%



CHAPTER 5

GUILDS, GANGS, AND DENIZENS

A man in a red mask looked out his window into the night sky. He gazed at the moon's pale face. All knew that moon, but none could hurt it. A tear rolled down his cheek, and his gloved hand instinctively reached up to whisk it away, but his fingers touched only the cold porcelain of his mask. He lowered his hand, now a clenched fist, and took a long, ragged breath.

His reverie was broken by a knock at his door. "Enter," he barked. In the entryway was a one-eyed tiefling, his lieutenant Jhoram, draped in the scarlet cloak of his gang.

"Red Mask," Jhoram said, holding a sheathed blade hilt-first to his commander, "our boys on the street found the wagon. It's moving south past the Collegium. All the portents were right. We're ready."

"Excellent," said Red Mask. He stepped forward and grabbed the offered blade by the hilt and drew it in a single flourish. "Muster the Redcloaks. Tonight, the streets will run gold with coin . . . or red with blood!"

ARTS AND CULTURE

There is a great and secret life among the upper-class citizens of Zobeck, those consuls and praetors and wealthy merchant families. It is a separate world with its own set of rules and expectations.

COURTESANS

The courtesans of Zobeck are not the whores of Harkesh or the crude slatterns of Morgau. Yes, anyone looking for an hour's diversion can find it on almost any street corner in Lower Zobeck, but these are not courtesans. The courtesans are not simply tradeswomen for hire. They are intriguers who must be won fairly with gifts, wit, and sometimes with blood.

The courtesans generally work from one of the Red Houses, establishments along the Street of Joy near the Temple of Lada and the Vineyard District, and they

operate largely by invitation. They open their homes for feasts featuring fine food and dangerous intrigue, all accompanied by the finest musicians from Friula and singing by castrati from Valera. The largest of these houses are the Red Faun and the Lusty Mermaid, though many smaller ones offer much finer pleasures at a much higher price.

The rumors in the street always speak of a courtesan's parties as events of deep debauchery and gluttony and wild excess, and that may be true of some. But a courtesan has no reason to take a drunkard or a dull man into her bed. So generally, she doesn't.

Guardians. The secret of the courtesans is twofold: the merchant families and the sons of the praetors and consuls must have something to do that has the least potential to damage them or their families. In the cold calculations of power, fighting over a few worthy companions causes fewer problems than bedding every tavern slut. Young men need prizes to win—and if their elders can guide them in learning what constitutes a worthy mistress at the same time, so much the better.

So the families of import in Zobeck encourage their male scions to find a mistress and keep her as a sign of status and their own virility. The most popular courtesans may have invitations to all the great houses and may receive callers from bitter mercantile or political rivals. Successful courtesans must juggle multiple suitors and keep them all interested, making these women quite accomplished in intrigue, in politicking, and in the act of love. Such women are worth winning, especially because doing so requires more than money. It requires courage.

Proper Dueling. A few new courtesans arrive in Zobeck each year, announcing themselves at the Winter Festival or the Green God's Spring Festival. Each year, just as many seem to retire or even marry into wealth, meaning the supply of available, educated, stunningly beautiful courtesans is always smaller than the demand from rich, ambitious, and often hotheaded young men.

So the men ply their suits with gifts of clockwork birds, scented oils, and elaborate silks from Sikkim or with enchanted and numinous pearls from the distant sea or with other such treasures. And if that does not clear the field of competition, they sometimes challenge the honor of their rival.

Proper dueling in Zobeck, where a courtesan is the subject of dispute, does not leave the woman uninvolved, as is sometimes the case elsewhere. Instead, she has the right to turn a challenger away.

A courtesan may ask her suitor to decline a duel if she is truly content (or finds the challenger unworthy), or she may ask him to accept duel after duel if she feels her lover neglects her. The man placed in such straights must constantly defend his name. Sooner or later, his luck runs out or he seeks another mistress.



Courtesans and Consuls. The work can be lucrative. Indeed, one woman of Arbonesse found it worth her while to take up a courtesan's fan and silks for more than a century, serving three generations of House Slygass and reportedly amassing enough wealth of her own to buy herself a company of Rothenian hussars and a castle in which to lodge them.

The consuls of the city are expected to keep a courtesan, and only the kobold consuls flout this tradition. (Kobold mating customs are a source of great disinterest to the rest of the city, who do not wish to know.) The consuls' choices are greatly debated on

their merits, and a poor choice or a failure to value a courtesan highly enough can reduce a consul's standing among their peers.

Female consuls are, perhaps strangely, expected to acquire a courtier (see below) or a courtesan as well, though some of these are advisors first and lovers second.

COURTIERS

Lest one fear the upper-class women of Zobeck simply sit quietly while their husbands and sons wile away the days in the company of (ahem) professional young women, be reassured. They have their own private society, one that (mostly) excludes the men of their class, and features as much ambition, intrigue, and lust as that of the menfolk.

Welcome to the salons of Zobeck.

Matrons and Husbands. The salons of Zobeck are a state of mind, a gathering of artistic individuals and their patronesses. While upper-class men spend their time gambling, dueling, and drinking in the company of beautiful women of negotiable virtue, the salons host poets, musicians and artists who strive to match in their art the beauty of the matrons and elder daughters who sponsor the gatherings.

At least, that's what the matrons and daughters tell their husbands and fathers.

On the surface, the salons exist to promote culture and the arts. Artists, musicians, and storytellers present new works or recreate popular efforts from previous seasons. A wide variety of arts go on display in the salons, including odes and lyric poetry, sagas, epic poems, paintings, sculptures, portraiture, weapon demonstrations and mock fights, magical crafts, illusions, clockwork, tableaux, speeches, and short plays. For many of the attendants though, the fine art is secondary to social connections and potential liaisons.

Many young performers, craftsman, and artists have enjoyed the sponsorship or mentoring of an older woman powerful in her guild, business, or family. Though both artist and patroness usually deny it, such arrangements come with some kind of cost, if not exactly a price tag. So while no coin changes hands, many artistic courtiers get as involved as the courtesans in a trade of favors for support.

Talent is not a requisite for admission into the cadre of courtiers, though it certainly helps. Many a matron or ambitious daughter appears at these events with one or more young bravos at her side, with a bright young magical tutor, or with a fiery young theologian who wishes to confront a traditional cleric with radical views. The fact that these young men (and the occasional young woman) inspire jealousy from the other patrons is purely coincidental.

ARTISTS AND TYPES OF SALONS

Some artists from this ever-changing roster of the talented and handsome appear for a brief season and find a patroness, gain sufficient support to establish themselves in their own craft, or disappear in a flurry of scandal. Some become fixtures in salon society by switching patronesses several times or playing rivals against each other, and they spend the seasons cattily analyzing and dissecting the latest crop of talented young things. A rare few even marry into the families that have served as patrons.

The most basic of the three types of salons is the afternoon salon, which runs from early afternoon into early evening. Guests and artists gather in the front visiting rooms of a house, either by specific invitation or as a general invite. Artists and amateurs alike provide several readings, songs, and unveilings of recent work. Herbal infusions are served on chill days and sorbets on warm ones. On larger estates, the salons spill over into garden parties, and in the more civilized rural manors south of the city, they can run late into the night and require the participants stay over. An afternoon salon at a distant manor occasionally morphs quite easily into a house party lasting days.

Aside from the moveable feasts of individual salons, select guilds or individuals host a few permanent salons. Mansions or townhouses whose former owners have passed on without issue make the best venues (the Grand Salon of Zobeck was designated in its previous owner's will for just for this purpose, along with a small endowment to maintain it). Courteous servants become familiar faces—and sometimes players—at these salons, and private chambers are available.

The third type of artistic salon is the legendary Salon of the Night, the time and location of which are supposedly set by precise astrological research, though always after midnight. The attendees always arrive masked, and patronesses are encouraged to bring their spouses. The fare is considered more daring and outré than at traditional salons, often including exotic flavors or ingredients from places like Morgau or the Margreve. The wine flows freely, secrets fly quickly, rumors run wild, and indiscretions become unavoidable. The most recent Salon of the Night proved particularly scandalous when one patroness wooed an aged, masked war hero, only to discover that it was her husband.

The salons are the places of gossip and daring and are tolerated by the lords and husbands in the same way

ladies and wives tolerate the men's activities. Attempts to end one or the other have all failed. However, the art and culture generated by these salons has helped establish Zobeck as an enlightened city, an example to communities leagues away.

FACES OF ZOBECK

"A barrel here, a few coins from the dock tax there." The young stevedore grinned and winked at the dock foreman. "These aren't for a consul or the mayor or any of their friends, so where's the harm?"

"You don't know who you're crossing," the foreman said.

"What? There's someone else with the clink to bring this stuff in? Someone else who spends his nights eating veal and aspic and farting through silk?" He glanced around and saw a dark-skinned woman sauntering down the River Road. "Whoever they are, they won't miss a barrel and a few coins."

"The council wouldn't miss it, but the master merchants here all do sums in their sleep." The foreman glanced up at the young man who was clearly not paying attention. He tapped the stevedore's shoulder. "And some keep closer count than them. Don't do anything stupid. Pay the tax, keep the watch happy, keep things moving, and don't try to steal anything from Mama Rye and the Nine."

"Mama who? Nine what? Are they new on the council?" The stevedore flexed his muscles and tried to catch the Kariv woman's eye. She paused and cast him a sly grin.

The foreman glanced from the stevedore to the Kariv and back. He worked hard not to smirk. "There are more powers in Zobeck than the fat behinds on the council. You'll learn soon enough never to cross Mama Rye. One way or the other."

What makes up a city? It's more than just walls and gates, people and places. A city has a personality of its own, a mosaic created by the collected impression of every face, every street sign, every locale. And sometimes, there is good reason to hide that face.

In the dark streets, there's often little room for a principled dandy on a moral high horse.

BLACK EYE

An affable kobold, driving a hay wagon pulled by an unexcited draft horse, slows as he approaches. He affably calls out, offering a ride, telling you excitedly that the city awaits!

Anyone trying to navigate the busy streets and cluttered alleys of Zobeck knows the difficulty of getting anywhere in a hurry. Yet wherever such challenges exists, especially in this city, someone will come along to ease the inconvenience for a price. Enter Black Eye, business-kobold, fixer, gossip, and patriot. With his specially modified hay wagon and mighty (docile) draft horse, he's prepared to take anyone anywhere in the Free City for a few coppers and some good conversation.

Born and raised in the city's Kobold Ghetto, Black Eye has spent his life learning Zobeck's twists and turns just as his forefathers once learned to navigate below ground. He came to love the rich and varied life of his home and took great pride in pointing out places of interest to visitors and natives alike. Seeing how hard it was for many to navigate he city, Black Eye decided to fill the need for transport and indulge his love of Zobeck at the same time. No one else in the city operates a business quite like Black Eye's for what to everyone except him are obvious reasons, but he somehow makes it all work.

Most people don't know what to make of Black Eye, and most of the rest can't quite bring themselves to trust the old carriage he's altered with better suspension, padded seats, lanterns, and a canopy. Still, those who take the chance always get where they need to go without trudging through the mud (and worse) of the streets and the jostling crowds. And if the cart must sometimes slow through an area where street merchants can approach and sell the passengers fine wares, well, that's just the nature of the city. And if some of those merchants sometimes slip a few coins to Black Eye, well, that's just the nature of the city too.

In his heart, Black Eye's a good soul who loves his city, loves showing it off, and just wants to make a few coins while doing so. He's developed a good sense for his customers, and when he gets ignorant or oblivious types, he'll take roundabout routes past merchants willing to kickback a silver for the chance to make a sale. PCs with a map or some familiarity with Zobeck may make a DC 15 Intelligence or Wisdom check to notice that they're being "taken for a ride."

Coachman for Hire. Black Eye can become a useful contact or ally. The kobold will happily regale passengers with stories from the city (often whether they want to hear them or not). He will pass out common information and recent gossip with virtually no prompting. A little extra cash going into the tip jar or a successful DC 13 Charisma (Persuasion) check can get him to reveal more obscure details, sensitive rumors, and theories. He rarely knows a great deal about any one thing, but he always knows a little about most things.

The kobold gladly points a group toward gambling, prostitution, pit fighting, and other less savory forms of entertainment, and he just as quickly takes them to the higher-brow establishments and cultural centers. A successful DC 15 Charisma (Deception, Intimidation, or Persuasion) check, along with a significant (10–25 gp)

tip, can convince him to take the PCs to any of several entrances he knows to the Cartways. At DC 20 and an additional 10 gp, he will show them a "private" entrance to the Kobold Ghetto.

Black Eye can be hired by the day for 5 gp. In addition, Black Eye has a network of kobold "nephews and cousins" who can carry messages, purchase items, and generally work for the party in one way or another. They are trustworthy, but only up to a point, especially where money is concerned.

Silent Protection. As a habit (learned the hard way), Black Eye does not give out personal information about his customers. Their conversation is fair game, but their addresses and destinations are not. This has saved both his skin and his reputation on multiple occasions, and he knows it. When asked to wait for a passenger or to not repeat what he hears, Black Eye smiles, spreads his hands, and says philosophically that his mouth often runs away on its own if he can't afford to put some food in it. For a gold piece, Black Eye waits and keeps his silence.

Oddly enough, if he works for the PCs long enough, Black Eye will come to consider them "his" and will take great offense at blatant attempts to cheat the party. He will make his displeasure known in a stream of profanity-laced Draconic. As Black Eye has connections to a surprising variety of people across the city, including the Redcloaks, most street thugs give him respect.

If things get serious, Black Eye keeps a dagger at his belt and a crossbow under his seat, alongside a flask of alchemist's fire. Black Eye will not die for a fare, and he can get his horse to produce a surprising turn of speed when the going gets tough.

Black Eye can act as an introduction to, or bridge between, many of the adventures in **Chapter 9**. And he can certainly point a party toward a person looking for a group of adventurers or simply take the group to the Silk Scabbard and let nature take its course.

BLACK EYE

Small Humanoid (Kobold), Neutral

Armor Class 13 (leather armor)

Hit Points 7 (2d6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
7 (−2)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)

Skills Deception +3, Perception +2, Persuasion +3

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

Pack Tactics. Black Eye has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of Black Eye's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Sneak Attack (1/Turn). Black Eye deals an extra 3 (1d6) damage when he hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of Black Eye that isn't incapacitated and Black Eye doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, Black Eye has disadvantage on attack rolls as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

ACTIONS

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

Light Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.

BONUS ACTIONS

Scamper. Black Eye takes the Dash or Disengage action.

DAME TERAGRAM

Standing roughly 6 feet tall, the gearforged is fashioned of brass and dark iron with copper highlights and a heavy helm set with a thick braid of hair the color of polished mahogany. The mechanical frame suggests a woman, and the polished greatsword leaves no doubt as to her soldierly profession.

A former matron of a well-moneyed house—rather than well-born—Teragram's military service made her the black sheep. She "married her lance" and never had more of a family beyond the nieces and nephews of her brothers. Years of service and the unjust (in her opinion) executions of two of her brothers soured her on the nobility in general and the Stross in particular. She joined the Great Revolt from the first, but her age prevented her from providing more than moral support and advice. With the creation of the first gearforged, she jumped at the chance to serve actively again. To this day, she continues to protect Zobeck and the extended family it has come to represent.

Gearforged Vanity. Teragram is strange for a gearforged in that she still maintains a vain streak regarding her appearance. She has purchased several thick braids of human hair and affixed them to her steel skull. She cares for these as if they were her original hair and tends to hold vicious grudges against any who damage the hair in any way. She's relentless in seeking out potential weaknesses in the city's defenses and finding ways to secure them. Her handpicked unit of

"tunnel rats" is absolutely loyal to her and includes Kariv, dwarves, and kobolds.

Brass Teeth. The bones of her brothers were never returned, and both had several brass teeth. Part of her underground investigations is an attempt to locate these skulls and have her siblings raised. She knows they would be excited to see the city now, and they would give Teragram someone to socialize with beyond her fellow gearforged. While she enjoys her duty, she misses the sound of children in the familial household she maintains. Someone who managed to acquire the skulls or knew their specific locations could gain considerable leverage over her.

DAME TERAGRAM

Medium Humanoid (Gearforged), Lawful Neutral

Armor Class 16 (breastplate)

Hit Points 119 (14d8 + 56)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Saving Throws Con +7, Wis+5

Skills Insight +5, Intimidation +6

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, exhaustion, poisoned

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Draconic, Dwarvish, Northern

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +3

Defensive Zone. Dame Teragram can make an opportunity attack when a creature enters her reach.

Improved Critical. Dame Teragram scores a critical hit with a weapon attack on a roll of 19 or 20.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Dame Teragram makes three Greatsword attacks.

Greatsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage.

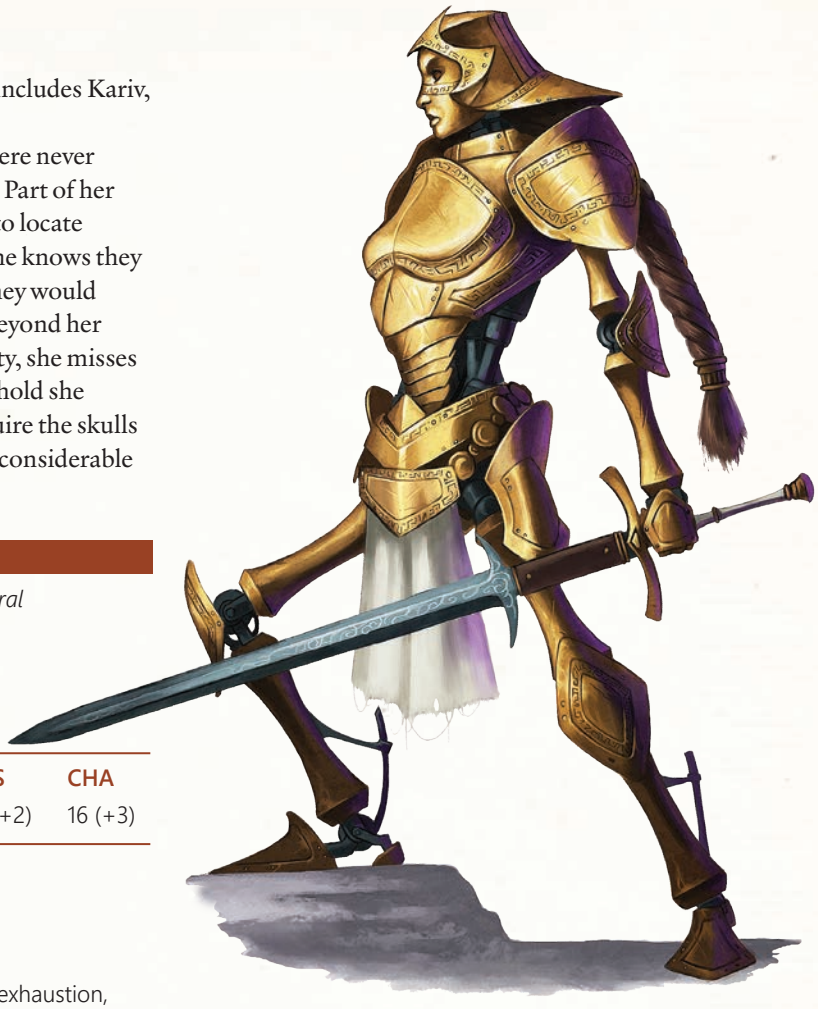
Spellcasting. Dame Teragram casts one of the following spells, using Charisma as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 14):

2/day each: *branding smite, command, cure wounds*

1/day each: *daylight, dispel magic, find steed*

BONUS ACTIONS

Onslaught. Dame Teragram makes a shove attack.



DRAGGED WOMAN

A wild-looking woman with ash-gray skin and rich but tattered clothing eyes you suspiciously. Her hair falls over her face, though her ember-like eyes pierce the veil. A frayed rope trails from one wrist. Her voice is a half-choked sob that threatens to become a wail of despair, and she leaves fading, bloody footprints wherever she walks.

When you need to find lost places in Zobeck—the hidden passages into the Cartways, the door to the shadow fey embassy, the secret tunnels into the Kobold Ghetto—you ask the Dragged Woman. The unquiet soul of a noblewoman dragged to death across the cobblestones during the revolt, brave souls can pay her to reveal magical byways that never work twice, but the only payment she accepts is memories.

The Dead's Walk. She is bound to walk the route of her death, and borrowed memories are the only solace she can claim. She considers the memories of first loves, righteous victories, and lost children the richest of all treasures, and they ease her misery. What she truly wants is to rest, and she may provide great service to those she believes can and will aid her.

Bones in the River. The Dragged Woman needs her bones pulled from the Argent and buried. She desires her journal returned from a secret place in her old home. And she wants her husband's skull back from the mass grave it occupies.

(The Dragged Woman appears in the adventure "The First Lab" in **Chapter 9**.)

DRAGGED WOMAN

Medium Undead, Neutral Evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 110 (17d8 + 34)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Saving Throws Cha +8

Skills Arcana +7, History +7, Insight +6, Stealth +5

Damage Resistances acid, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities cold, necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Common

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +3

Ethereal Sight. The Dragged Woman can see 60 feet into the Ethereal Plane when she is on the Material Plane, and vice versa.

Incorporeal Movement. The Dragged Woman can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. She takes 5 (1d10) force damage if she ends her turn inside an object.

Open the Path. By touching a creature, the Dragged Woman imparts the ability to locate a door or passage that magically delivers the creature and up to seven of its allies to a desired physical location within 5 miles of their current location. The door or passage will be within 200 yards of the spot where she triggers this ability. The connection between the indicated passage and the destination remains open for up to an hour or until it's used, and it's one-way only.

Unearthly Poise. The Dragged Woman treats all saving throws as if they're Charisma saving throws.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Dragged Woman makes two Withering Touch attacks.

Withering Touch. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 22 (5d6 + 5) necrotic damage.

Blinding Fear. The Dragged Woman can panic a creature within 30 feet with a look. The target must succeed on a DC 16 Charisma saving throw or be frightened of the Dragged Woman for 2d4 rounds. A creature that succeeds on this save is immune to the Dragged Woman's Blinding Fear ability for 24 hours.

Etherealness. The Dragged Woman enters the Ethereal Plane from the Material Plane, or vice versa. She remains visible on the Material Plane while in the Border Ethereal, and vice versa, but she can't affect or be affected by anything on the other plane.

Spellcasting. The Dragged Woman casts one of the following spells, using Charisma as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 16):

At will: *dancing lights*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*

2/day each: *blindness/deafness*, *fog cloud*, *gust of wind*, *magic missile*, *silent image*

1/day each: *confusion*, *counterspell*, *invisibility*



GOLDSCALE

Set apart from his kin by much more than the faint golden sheen of his hide, this kobold exudes an inner strength that only springs from unflagging faith.

Goldscale developed his signature golden scales while quite young. Soon after, his father sparked a bloodbath by claiming Goldscale's appearance proved draconic heritage and his family's right to ghetto leadership. Traumatized, Goldscale swore to never again allow the criminals of Zobeck's streets to trample innocents and pledged himself to Lada as a paladin.

Shining Defender. Serious about his role as a defender of the weak, Goldscale works toward improved relations between humans and kobolds. Although popular with the average citizens of Zobeck, criminal gangs detest him. However, many gang members believe his golden-hued scales do indeed indicate the blood of dragons runs in his veins and refuse to confront him.

Never Enough. Goldscale worries that he should do more to safeguard the common people. He patrols the city looking to right injustices and to protect the innocent. Goldscale recognizes no boundaries and goes where he is most needed. He feels that his patrols are insufficient though, that he must root out the causes of crime. Crime lords should stay wary, for Goldscale is a one-kobold crusade looking to improve the lot of the common citizen.

Shinespark. Goldscale's loyal steed is a celestial **giant weasel** named Shinespark. Its statistics are identical to a giant weasel with the following exceptions: its Intelligence is 6 (–2), it can speak Draconic, and Goldscale and Shinespark can communicate telepathically while within a mile of each other. When Shinespark is reduced to 0 hit points, it disappears, leaving behind no physical form. If he needs to, Goldscale prepares *find steed* in order to resummon him.

(Goldscale appears in the adventure "Ripper" in **Chapter 9**.)

GOLDSCALE

Small Humanoid (Kobold), Lawful Good

Armor Class 18 (half plate, shield)

Hit Points 67 (15d6 + 15)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Wis +4, Cha +6

Skills Athletics +5, Investigation +3, Intimidation +6, Perception +4, Persuasion +6

Condition Immunities charmed

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Common, Draconic

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

Pack Tactics. Goldscale has advantage on attack rolls against a creature if at least one of Goldscale's allies is within 5 feet of the target and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, Goldscale has disadvantage on attack rolls and on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Goldscale makes two Flail or two Light Crossbow attacks.

Flail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) bludgeoning damage, plus 13 (3d8) radiant damage. If Goldscale chooses, the target must succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw or drop an object it's



holding. Goldscale chooses the object to be dropped. The attack does not damage the object. This weapon ability can be used once per turn.

Light Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage.

Sacred Spark (1/Day). Goldscale channels power into one weapon he is holding. For 1 minute, he has advantage on one attack with that weapon per turn. It also emits bright light in a 20-foot radius and dim light 20 feet beyond that.

Spellcasting. Goldscale casts one of the following spells, using Charisma as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 15):

1/day each: *bless*, *branding smite*, *command*, *cure wounds*, *lesser restoration*, *protection from evil and good*, *sanctuary*

REACTIONS

Inspired Protection. When an ally within 5 feet of Goldscale is forced to make a saving throw, Goldscale intercedes, and the creature has advantage on the saving throw.

JAYZEL

This tall, raven-haired bard exudes a bold, sensuous, confident air that borders on arrogance. She is clearly used to getting her way, and she has a knowing, appraising look in her eyes.

The estranged daughter of a renowned scholar who still lives and works in the Collegium District, Jayzel rebelled against her strict upbringing by joining the cult of Marena in her youth. There she learned how to use music and her feminine wiles to best effect. She currently consorts with the goddess's cult, headed by priestess Nariss Larigorn, and uses the Temple of Painful Pleasure's private chambers to torture information from victims to use for blackmail.

Always Listening. A master information broker, Jayzel listens for gossip at the galas she attends and uses her wits, glib tongue, and seductive wiles to trick others into revealing secrets. Jayzel loves luxury and decadence as much as the thrill of the chase, and though she enjoys playing with fire, she will not pursue inquiries that threaten her life or lifestyle.

Torture Artist. If Jayzel's seductive approach fails, she often lures targets to the Temple of Painful Pleasures to torture information from them. She also offers this service to clients, though always under the anonymity of an intermediary. She has irons in a great many fires across Zobeck's society—high and low—but involves herself only enough to make some money and gain a little bit of leverage.



JAYZEL

Medium Humanoid (Human), Chaotic Evil

Armor Class 15 (studded leather)

Hit Points 99 (18d8 + 18)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (−1)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Dex +5, Cha +6

Skills Deception +6, Perception +2, Performance +6, Persuasion +6, Sleight of Hand +5

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Draconic, Dwarvish, Elvish

Challenge 3 (700 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

All Flesh Fails. Devotion to the cult of Marena, the Red Goddess, grants Jayzel advantage on Wisdom (Medicine) and Charisma (Persuasion) checks.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Jayzel makes three Dagger or three Whip attacks.

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage.

Whip. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) slashing damage.

Song of Submission (1/Day). Any creature that hears Jayzel's performance must make a DC 14 Charisma saving throw. On a failed save, a creature has disadvantage on Wisdom and Charisma ability checks for 1 hour. On a success, a creature is immune to this performance for 24 hours.

Spellcasting. Jayzel casts one of the following spells, using Charisma as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 14):

At will: *light*, *minor illusion*, *prestidigitation*, *vicious mockery*

2/day each: *charm person*, *cure wounds*, *disguise self*, *hideous laughter*, *silent image*

1/day each: *confusion*, *invisibility*, *major image*, *modify memory*

BONUS ACTIONS

Bardic Inspiration (4/Day). Jayzel can inspire others through stirring words or music. She can choose a creature within 60 feet of her that can hear her. That creature gains one Bardic Inspiration die, a d10. Once within the next 10 minutes, the creature can roll the die and add the number rolled to one ability check, attack roll, or saving throw it makes. The creature can wait until after it rolls the d20 before deciding to use the Bardic Inspiration die but must decide before learning whether the roll succeeds or fails. Once the Bardic Inspiration die is rolled, it is lost. A creature can have only one Bardic Inspiration die at a time.

MAMA RYE

Despite standing just over 5 feet tall with thin, iron-gray hair and a dead, clouded right eye, this craggy woman's advanced age and physical frailty fools no one. Her domineering personality instantly establishes her as a driving force in any conversation.

Mama Rye—the 62-year-old matriarch of the powerful Galati Clan and the closest thing the Kariv have to nobility—is the most renowned crab diviner in Zobeck (see also **Mama Rye and the Crab Diviners** in **Chapter 6**).

Her name comes from the elixir she frequently brews from rye infected with ergot, which produces vivid hallucinations. Under this influence, Mama Rye's consciousness travels to other planes. Her frequent use led to a stroke several years ago, and her right eye is now dead and clouded. The Kariv believe this increases her powers, giving her second sight into the world beyond.

Mama Rye bears the Cloven Nine's nine-pointed star on the back of her left hand. If asked about it, she coolly says, "In the battle between the heavens and hells, my allegiance was chosen for me." She refuses to elaborate. She has a homunculus named Aden that resembles a child's doll covered in black raven feathers.

Self-Preservation. Other than understanding on which side of good and evil she rests, Mama Rye is motivated by the money she gains from divining. She uses this, her powers, and her position to look out for her own Galati Clan and the Kariv in general, especially their place and well-being in Zobeck.

Mama Rye does not participate in scheming and plotting but simply divines answers for money, though she does provide aid to the Cloven Nine when called. Aden keeps an eye and ear out for any clients seeking readings from her and informs her of anything useful.

MAMA RYE

Medium Humanoid (Human), Neutral

Armor Class 10 (13 with *mage armor*)

Hit Points 70 (20d8 – 20)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
5 (–3)	10 (+0)	9 (–1)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Wis +6, Cha +7

Skills Arcana +6, History +6

Senses passive Perception 13



Languages Common, Draconic, Dwarvish, Gnomish, Infernal
Challenge 8 (3,900 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +3

Foresight (5/Day). When Mama Rye makes an ability check, attack roll, or saving throw, she can record the number on the die and reroll it. She must take the new result. At any point in the next 24 hours, when a creature she can see makes an ability check, attack roll, or saving throw, she can force the creature to use one of her recorded rolls instead of rolling. Rerolling or forcing a creature to use a roll both count as uses of this trait.

Metamagic. Mama Rye has 10 sorcery points. She can spend them when she casts a spell to use one of the following options:

- *Careful Spell (1 sorcery point).* When she casts a spell that forces other creatures to make a saving throw, she can protect a number of creatures up to her Charisma modifier from the spell's full force (minimum of one creature). A chosen creature automatically succeeds on its saving throw against the spell.
- *Empowered Spell (1 sorcery point).* When she rolls damage for a spell, she can reroll a number of damage dice up to her Charisma modifier (minimum of one). She must use the new rolls. She can use Empowered Spell even if she has already used a different Metamagic option during the casting of the spell.
- *Heightened Spell (3 sorcery points).* When Mama Rye casts a spell that forces a creature to make a saving throw to resist its effects, one target of the spell has disadvantage on its first saving throw made against the spell.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Mama Rye makes three Chilling Grasp attacks.

Chilling Grasp. *Melee or Ranged Spell Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 20 (3d10 + 4) necrotic damage.

Spellcasting. Mama Rye casts one of the following spells, using Charisma as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 15):

At will: *light*, *message*, *minor illusion*

2/day each: *alter self*, *charm person*, *mage armor*, *misty step*, *shield*

1/day each: *blight*, *confusion*, *counterspell*, *greater invisibility*, *hold monster*

REACTIONS

Shadow Dodge (3/Day). When Mama Rye would be hit by an attack or affected by a spell, she replaces herself with an illusory duplicate and teleports to any unoccupied space within 30 feet in sight. She isn't affected, and the illusory duplicate is destroyed.



NARISS LARIGORN

This golden-haired elven woman wears scarlet gauze and a golden, ruby necklace, neither of which cover much. She has a glint of mischief in her eyes.

A rather exotic Arbonesse exile who arrived by way of Morgau—and possibly the only elven resident of Zobeck—Nariss has been building the Red Goddess's following in the Free City for over two decades. About 10 years ago, she opened the Temple of Painful Pleasures, a brothel in the Collegium District that serves as a front for a temple to Marena. She works with Jayzel to find and torture victims for secrets, money, and pleasure.

Favored of the Red Goddess. Nariss is interested in building the Red Goddess's power in Zobeck. Over the years, other instances of Marena's cult have been stomped out, but Nariss intends to be the one priest who succeeds in growing the religion in the Clockwork City.

Eyes and Ears. Nariss keeps tabs on the wealthy and learns many of their secrets through the temple and through Jayzel. The two use this information to benefit both themselves and the cult and intend to gather enough on the consuls to protect themselves and the temple should anyone discover its true nature.

(Nariss Larigorn appears in the adventure "Flesh Fails" in **Chapter 9**.)

NARISS LARIGORN

Medium Humanoid (Elf), Lawful Evil

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 91 (14d8 + 28)

Speed 35 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	19 (+4)	20 (+5)

Saving Throws Wis +7, Cha +8

Skills Medicine +7, Perception +7, Performance +8, Religion +4

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 17

Languages Common, Draconic, Elvish

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +3

Beloved of Death. Whenever Nariss would be hurt by necrotic damage, she is instead healed for the amount of damage she would have taken.

Fey Ancestry. Nariss has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put her to sleep.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Nariss makes two Agonizing Whip attacks.

Agonizing Whip. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 4) slashing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or be stunned until the end of Nariss's next turn.

Aura of Awe (Recharge 5–6). Nariss projects a 60-foot-radius aura centered on her by speaking (affecting creatures that can hear her within the radius) or by posing (affecting creatures that can see her within the radius). This aura lasts for 10 rounds. Each creature affected by this aura must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. Any creature that cannot be charmed automatically succeeds on this save. On a failure, a creature has disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks made to perceive any creature other than Nariss until the spell ends or until the target can no longer hear (or see) her. On a success, a creature is immune to this aura for 24 hours.

This effect ends on a creature if it leaves the aura, but it does not gain immunity to this aura.

Spellcasting. Nariss casts one of the following spells, using Wisdom as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 15):

At will: *light*, *sacred flame*, *thaumaturgy*

2/day each: *blindness/deafness*, *cure wounds*, *hold person*, *shield of faith*

1/day each: *compulsion*, *dispel magic*, *dominate person*, *hold monster*, *polymorph*, *spirit guardians*

BONUS ACTIONS

Divine Eminence. Nariss can cause her melee weapon attacks to magically deal an extra 16 (3d10) necrotic damage to a target on a hit. This benefit lasts until the start of her next turn.

ORLANDO

This old man clearly takes no care for his appearance, but he has a sharp and alert look about him. He wears a long wizard's robe, a bit tattered around the hem and sleeves, with a bandolier of potions and an elegantly carved quarterstaff in one hand.

Orlando was once a simple clockmaker, the expert in gearing, hydraulics, and balances who built the Puffing Bridge and many of the early steam devices in the Free City. Most considered him a harmless crank, but he stayed gainfully employed for years while building and refining his art.

Gradually, he spent more and more time working on his gears, balance wheels, and mechanical forms of magic, learning wizardry as a way to expand his skills with machinery. More than 20 years ago, he joined the Arcane Collegium and began teaching his craft to others.

Orlando currently serves as guildmaster of the Arcane Collegium and a consul on the Free City Council. As a master of clockwork magic, he has created several interesting clockwork creatures he keeps hidden in his labs. He hopes to someday replace the need for human servants and apprentices entirely.

Clockwork Inventor. Orlando just wants to work on his clockwork experiments so is often in need of money. He seeks outside funding when possible, but he can occasionally be persuaded to create magic items for patrons for high fees. His curiosity, his thirst for knowledge, is massive, and he can never resist just one



more experiment, even when it threatens others or runs a little bit out of control. In some cases, his devices have caused significant damage to the city, but his usefulness always outweighs the risks.

Fast Enemies. Volstaff Greymark is Orlando's greatest enemy—for reasons not particularly clear to outsiders. A few say that Volstaff once refused to fund Orlando's first successful experiment, and Orlando has borne a grudge ever since. Others claim that Volstaff seduced Orlando's late wife Ikaterina, and Edmure was Volstaff's bastard child by her. This may be entirely untrue, but it is very evident in council meetings that they hate each other, and other consuls have spread this bit of gossip.

Planning Ahead. Orlando is building a steam golem body, which he intends to inhabit upon completion.

(Orlando appears in the adventure "The First Lab" in **Chapter 9**.)

ORLANDO

Medium Humanoid (Human), Chaotic Neutral

Armor Class 12 (15 with *mage armor*)

Hit Points 99 (18d8 + 18)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Int +10, Wis +7

Skills Arcana +10, History +10

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Draconic, Dwarvish, Elvish, Gnomish, Machine Speech (understands but can only speak in Golem Form)

Challenge 13 (10,000 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +5

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Orlando makes three Arcane Burst attacks.

Arcane Burst. *Melee or Ranged Spell Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 27 (4d10 + 5) force damage.

Spellcasting. Orlando casts one of the following spells, using Intelligence as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 18):

At will: *analyze device*, light, mage hand, message*

2/day each: *animate construct*, armored heart*, counterspell, dispel magic, fireball, lock armor*, shield*

1/day each: *banishment, black tentacles, feeblemind, teleport, wall of force*

* see new spells in **Chapter 7**

Staff of Striking. Each creature of Orlando's choice within 10 feet of him must make a DC 18 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes 45 (10d8) force damage and is pushed up to 15 feet away from Orlando. On a successful save, a creature takes half as much damage and isn't pushed.

BONUS ACTIONS

Golem Form (1/Day). Orlando transforms into a golem or clockwork creature of CR 15 or lower for up to 15 minutes per day. These minutes need not be consecutive, and he can end Golem Form as a bonus action. He prefers to take the form of a **stone golem** or **smaragdine golem** (see *Tome of Beasts*) for combat or that of a **clockwork beetle** (see *Tome of Beasts*) for stealth. If this form is reduced to 0 hit points before the 15 minutes are up, Orlando reverts to human form, and any extra damage spills over into his regular hit points.

PAVIC

Rail-thin, balding, and always sporting three days of stubble, Pavic doesn't exude power or confidence. Rather, he stinks of whiskey, lotus powder extract, and a hint of calculating, nervous desperation. He forever seems to be looking for both the angle in a situation and the fastest way to the door.

Pavic's gambling habit cost him first his tuition and then his appointment to the Arcane Collegium. Now disgraced and an inveterate drinker and smoker, Pavic sells his magical talents to anyone willing to pay—which simply fuels his wagers or interest payments, depending on how his luck is running. Most of the work he finds is using his spells to intimidate desperate folk who've become indebted to loan sharks and bookies. His cruel streak shows itself when Pavic senses he has the upper hand, but he's a pure coward in any situation where there's real danger. He always has one eye on the door and one hand hovering near his dagger.

Marking Cards. Currently Pavic is trying to work out a method of cheating at cards based around using *detect magic* to sense cards he's marked magically. If he can refine the method to where it's foolproof, he plans to host a high-stakes game, win a big score, get free of his debts, and finally show those snobs at the Collegium that he's every bit as smart as they are. His debts, however, are rapidly approaching the point where he might need to use this cheating method before all the kinks are fully worked out, and that could lead to big trouble.

PAVIC

Medium Humanoid (Human), Lawful Evil

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 22 (5d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)	17 (+3)	8 (–1)	12 (+1)

Skills Arcana +5, Deception +3, Persuasion +3

Senses passive Perception 9

Languages Aklo, Celestial, Common, Draconic, Elvish

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

ACTIONS

Arcane Burst. *Melee or Ranged Spell Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d10 + 3) psychic damage.

Silver Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4 + 1) piercing damage.

Spellcasting. Pavic casts one of the following spells, using Intelligence as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 13):

At will: *mending*, *minor illusion*, *prestidigitation*

2/day each: *charm person*, *comprehend languages*

1/day each: *detect thoughts*, *knock*

PEPPERCORN

A trollwife—broad in the shoulders and the hips and with skin that looks dusted with dirt or pepper—stares with a sour expression. Her hard gaze looks as if she's seen every dirty trick in the book. "The King don't like holdin' audience with strangers, and I don't recognize your faces. Give me one good reason to let you lot see 'Is Majesty."

Peppercorn worked as the bouncer at the King's Head tavern for many years, protecting the secret headquarters of the Mouse King from prying eyes and wandering drunks. Nowadays, she only pretends to be the tavern's bouncer, leaving most of her duties to her protégé, a young tiefling berserker named Sweat-and-Blood. Agents of the Mouse King know Peppercorn is actually one of Zobeck's most fearsome berserkers, and her combat prowess has earned her a spot at the left hand of the Mouse King himself.

As the Mouse King's bodyguard, Peppercorn refuses to let anyone she doesn't recognize see her liege. A character who tries to bribe her, smooth-talk her, or sneak past her earns a date with her trusty greataxe.

To Serve the King. Peppercorn's motivations are simple: she wants to keep the Mouse King safe. Moreover, she wants to keep her favorite tavern free of riffraff. Peppercorn is often involved in the Mouse King's schemes, but she pursues none of her own. She likes her job, her employers, and the staff at the King's Head.

(Peppercorn appears in the adventures "Ripper" and "The First Lab" in **Chapter 9**.)

PEPPERCORN

Large Giant (Troll), Chaotic Evil

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 144 (14d10 + 70)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	8 (–1)	20 (+5)	10 (+0)	9 (–1)	8 (–1)

Saving Throws Dex +4, Con +10, Wis +4

Skills Perception +4, Intimidation +4

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing

Condition Immunities charm, frightened

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Common, Draconic, Dwarvish, Giant, Infernal

Challenge 13 (10,000 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +5

Keen Smell. Peppercorn has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Reckless. At the start of her turn, Peppercorn can gain advantage on all melee weapon attack rolls she makes during that turn, but attack rolls against her have advantage until the start of her next turn.



Regeneration. Peppercorn regains 10 hit points at the start of her turn. If she takes acid or fire damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of her next turn. She dies only if she starts her turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Peppercorn makes four Claw or Greataxe attacks.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) slashing damage.

Greataxe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 24 (3d12 + 5) slashing damage.

Whirlwind (Recharge 5–6). Each creature within 5 feet of Peppercorn must succeed on a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw, taking 33 (5d12) slashing damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one. On a failed save, a target is also knocked prone.

RADU UNDERHILL

A broad-shouldered and athletically built darakhul, this confident and clearly intelligent creature could pass for human in the proper light.

A known fixer and common sight in the Cartways Black Market, Radu is a slaver, businessman, murderer, likely a spy, and always a gentleman. Ever polite and unusually reliable for the undead, Underhill claims to be a sort of diplomat and liaison to the Ghoul Imperium. It is a claim no one has yet been willing to test.

Black Market. Radu is a middleman in the Black Market. He connects those who want with those who want to sell, and he asks no questions. For now, he appears content to wait and watch.

Dirty Jobs. Sometimes you need things you don't want people to know you need: a body to disappear, a person to stay quiet, an item of questionable use. "When you need those things," people whisper, "you need to find Radu." Radu works to collect favors and contacts.

RADU

Medium Undead (Darakhul), Neutral Evil

Armor Class 16 (breastplate)

Hit Points 130 (20d8 + 40)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Dex +5, Cha +5

Skills Insight +4, Intimidation +5, Perception +4, Persuasion +5



Damage Resistances necrotic

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Common, Darakhul, Draconic, Dwarvish, Thieves' Cant, Undercommon

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +3

Master of Disguise. In a prepared disguise, Radu has advantage on Charisma (Deception) checks made to pass as a living creature. While using this ability, he loses his Stench.

Sneak Attack (1/Turn). Radu deals an extra 21 (6d6) damage when he hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of Radu that isn't incapacitated and Radu doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

Stench. Any creature that starts its turn within 5 feet of Radu must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned until the start of his next turn. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to Radu's Stench for the next 24 hours. Using this ability, Radu can't also benefit from Master of Disguise.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, Radu has disadvantage on attack rolls as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Turning Defiance. Radu and any ghouls within 30 feet of him have advantage on saving throws against effects that turn undead.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Radu makes three attacks: one Bite, one Claw, and one Shortsword. Alternatively, he can make four attacks with his Shortsword.

DARAKHUL FEVER

Spread mainly through bite wounds, this rare disease makes itself known within 24 hours by swiftly debilitating the infected. A creature so afflicted must make a DC 17 Constitution saving throw after each long rest. On a failed save the victim takes 14 (4d6) necrotic damage, and its hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction can't be removed until the victim recovers from darakhul fever—and even then only by *greater restoration* or similar magic. The victim recovers from the disease by making successful saving throws on two consecutive days. *Greater restoration* cures the disease; *lesser restoration* allows the victim to make the daily Constitution check with advantage.

Though primarily spread among humanoids, the disease can affect ogres, so other giants may also be susceptible.

If the infected creature dies while infected with darakhul fever, roll 1d20, add their current Constitution modifier, and find the result on the table below to determine which undead form the victim's body rises in, if any.

ADJUSTMENT TABLE

Roll	Result
1–9	None; victim is simply dead
10–16	Ghoul
17–20	Ghast
21+	Darakhul

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d8 + 3) piercing damage. If the target creature is humanoid, it must make a successful DC 13 Constitution saving throw or contract darakhul fever.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage. If the target is a creature other than an elf or undead, it must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. A paralyzed target repeats the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* + 6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

Heavy Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d10 + 2) piercing damage.

Spellcasting. Radu casts one of the following spells, using Intelligence as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 14):

At will: *mage hand, message, prestidigitation*

2/day each: *charm person, disguise self, suggestion*

1/day each: *blight, fear, invisibility*

REACTIONS

Parry. Radu adds 3 to his AC against one melee attack that would hit him. To do so, he must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

Riposte. When an opponent misses Radu with a melee attack, Radu makes a melee attack against the target at advantage.

SAM NESCLEM

With his iron-gray beard, clockwork hand, and carved ivory pipe, the man looks every bit the part of a steamship captain.

Sam Nesclem is a gruff, salt-of-the-earth man who's seen many strange things. He doesn't posture but gets straight to the point or to the business at hand. Some call him crazier than an outhouse rat—a barge and steam tug captain willing to take any job for a price. Many say the only thing quicker than his tugboat is his razor-sharp tongue.

Deal with the Fey. Few know that Sam struck a deal with the unseelie nixies of the Argent in exchange for a promise of safe passage. While other captains keep to shore or suffer from the appetites of scrags and lorelei, Sam delivers cargo and travelers where they're wanted and on time, no matter the destination. Sam's only concerns are keeping to the restrictions of his pact with the nixies and making as much money on the river as possible.

The nixie Sam bargained with was missing their hand. As part of his bargain, Sam made two concessions: first, he agreed to never turn down a potential passenger, and second, he gave his own hand to the nixie. If Sam could find the nixie's original hand—which purportedly has been mummified and enchanted to allow whoever owns it to cast *mage hand* at will—and return it to the nixie, he might get his own hand back.

SAM NESCLEM

Medium Humanoid (Human), Chaotic Good

Armor Class 14 (studded leather)

Hit Points 32 (5d8 + 10)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	8 (−1)

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

Fey Pact. Creatures of the River Argent won't harm Sam Nesclem, his ship, or his passengers as long as he never refuses a customer or reveals the terms of his fey bargain.

Sneak Attack (1/Turn). Sam deals an extra 3 (1d6) damage when he hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of Sam that isn't incapacitated and Sam doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Sam makes two Shortsword attacks.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

SCALER

This dwarf-sized lizardfolk is as tall as he is wide. A set of wings rises from his back, hinting at a draconic heritage.

Scaler has built an infamous reputation in the Kobold Ghetto. He took over the alley that now bears his name over a decade ago, which is a long time in kobold years. He has allowed Slinger's Ambush Gang, a group of goblin slingers, to make the surrounding buildings their home in exchange for rooftop security in keeping others out of his alley. His home guards an entrance to the Cartways, and treasure hunters are always seeking a way down. Many of them do not make it past the ambushers or the alley traps to confront Scaler himself. Those that do make it to Scaler rarely make it farther.

Go Away. Scaler just wants to be left alone. He wants for naught, for Slinger's Ambush Gang, a runt of a kobold runner, and his reputation see to his every need. He does keep a close eye on activity in the tunnels near his home though, and if anything unusual and big is going on in the ghetto or the Cartways below, Scaler likely knows.

(Scaler appears in the adventure "The Fish and the Rose" in **Chapter 9.**)

SCALER

Medium Humanoid (Lizardfolk), Neutral Evil

Armor Class 17 (scale mail, shield)

Hit Points 93 (11d8 + 44)

Speed 30 ft., fly 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	7 (−2)

Skills Perception +4, Stealth +4, Survival +4

Damage Resistances fire

Senses passive Perception 14

Languages Draconic

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +3

Bonebreaker. Scaler deals triple damage dice when he scores a critical hit with a melee attack.

Hold Breath. Scaler can hold his breath for 15 minutes.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Scaler makes one Bite and two Morningstar attacks.



Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d6 + 6) piercing damage.

Morningstar. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d8 + 6) piercing damage.

Javelin. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d6 + 6) piercing damage.

Fire Breath (Recharge 5–6). Scaler exhales fire in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 24 (7d6) fire damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one.

SERGEANT HENDRYK

The watchman has a slight build, unusually good clothes for his profession, and a thick but well-trimmed coal-black beard.

The illegitimate son of a barrister guildmaster, Hendryk got his position in the watch through his father's influences. His cloak and appointment were his father's final supporting gifts.

Deep Corruption. Sometimes, dealing with the watch is worse than dealing with the problem at hand—and Sergeant Hendryk darkening your door is just such a time. Irredeemably corrupt, Hendryk leads a roving patrol (of three **thugs**) in Lower Zobeck, taking food and drink from street vendors when he pleases, collecting protection bribes from business owners, and earning a healthy cut from thugs who follow up on the scores he scouts. He prevents just enough crime to avoid attention and turns enough of a blind eye to live well. He looks at the world with a mercenary eye.

Ambitious. Hendryk has no intention of spending his life as a guardsman taking shopkeepers' bribes. He plans on becoming a wealthy man (and a praetor) by any means necessary and over any number of bodies.

(Hendryk appears in the adventures "Everyone Lies" and "Ripper" in **Chapter 9**.)

SERGEANT HENDRYK

Medium Humanoid (Human), Neutral Evil

Armor Class 16 (breastplate)

Hit Points 52 (8d8 + 16)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)

Saving Throws Dex +5, Wis +4

Skills Insight +4, Intimidation +3, Perception +4

Senses passive Perception 14

Languages Common, Draconic, Thieves' Cant



Challenge 3 (700 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

Sneak Attack (1/Turn). Hendryk deals an extra 7 (2d6) damage when he hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of Hendryk that isn't incapacitated and Hendryk doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Hendryk makes two Shortsword or two Dagger attacks.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage, plus 10 (3d6) poison damage or half the poison damage with a successful DC 13 Constitution saving throw.

REACTIONS

Takedown. When an opponent misses Hendryk with a melee attack, it must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or be knocked prone.

SLINGER

This skinny goblin of average height has a distinctive tuft of spiky red hair sticking out from under his cap. A well-used sling hangs from his belt, and his pockets bulge with all manner of random things.

Slinger runs a gang of 30 ambush specialists headquartered near Scaler's Alley in the Kobold Ghetto. He is a goblin of some personality who has managed to make a home and a living deep in kobold territory.

Get the Money. Coin rules everything, though Slinger very much enjoys harassing the law, so he'll occasionally take such jobs on the cheap. Groups and individuals hire his gang to cause disruptions, to harass people, or

to outright kill targets from a distance with their slings. Slinger will not accept jobs to assassinate kobold kings though, for he prefers to let the kobolds deal with their own political issues. Everything else is fair game.

(Slinger appears in the adventure "The Fish and the Rose" in **Chapter 9**.)

SLINGER

Small Humanoid (Goblinoid), Chaotic Neutral

Armor Class 14 (leather)

Hit Points 97 (15d6 + 45)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	17 (+3)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	8 (−1)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Dex +6, Con +6

Skills Acrobatics +6, Intimidation +3, Stealth +6

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages Common, Draconic, Goblin

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

Sneak Attack (1/Turn). Slinger deals an extra 10 (3d6) damage when he hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of Slinger that isn't incapacitated and Slinger doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Slinger makes three Dagger or three Sling attacks.

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage.



Sling. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

Bank Shot. Slinger can make a Sling attack with advantage and that ignores cover.

Falling Skies (Recharge 5–6). All nearby goblins, who can hear Slinger, throw rocks or whatever's convenient at the targeted area. Each creature in a 20-foot cube originating from a spot that Slinger can see within 20 feet must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 14 (4d6) bludgeoning damage on a failed save or half as much on a successful one.

BONUS ACTIONS

Nimble Escape. Slinger takes the Disengage or Hide action.

SYSSYSALAI

Golden horns and a matching fin crown this regal naga's head. Gem-encrusted golden bands encircle her purple, serpentine body.

The vain Syssysalai lives for intrigue and power and covets artistic masterpieces. She has fled her old lair and now resides in Zobeck's Undercity. She continues to instigate trouble among the kobold kings but now chooses her subtle attacks with utmost care. She dares not reveal that she still lives.

Hail to the Queen. Syssysalai seeks to collect rare objects of art to rebuild her gallery since she was forced to abandon her original lair after a failed coup against the kobold kings. Moreover, she seeks to overthrow the kobold kings and crown herself queen of queens.

Syssysalai's plot to overthrow the kobold kings has failed, and she has since retreated into hiding. She is brewing a new scheme to bring down the kobold kings, but her latest plot may be some ways off. She watches Zobeck's human community, looking for wealth she can grab and learning how best to manipulate them when she's the kobolds' queen.

(Syssysalai appears in the adventure "The Fish and the Rose" in **Chapter 9**.)

SYSSYSALAI

Large Monstrosity, Lawful Evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 136 (16d10 + 48)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	17 (+3)	16 (+3)	19 (+4)	15 (+2)	17 (+3)

Saving Throws Dex +7, Con +7, Int +8, Cha +7

Skills Deception +7, Intimidation +7, Perception +6
Damage Resistances psychic
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities charmed, poisoned
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16
Languages Common, Draconic, Infernal; telepathy 30 ft.
Challenge 10 (5,900 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +4

Guarded Thoughts. Syssysalai is immune to any form of mind reading, such as that granted by *detect thoughts*.

Rejuvenation. If Syssysalai dies, the naga returns to life in 1d6 days with all her hit points. Only a *wish* spell can prevent this.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage, and the target takes 36 (8d8) poison damage. The target must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking the poison damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one. If Syssysalai scores a critical hit and the saving throw fails, the target also falls unconscious for 2d4 minutes or until it takes damage or another creature uses an action to shake it awake.

Coils of Captivation (Recharge 5–6). Each creature within 15 feet of Syssysalai that is conscious and can see her must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the creature becomes charmed, taking 22 (4d10) psychic damage and being restrained while so charmed. An affected creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. The effect ends if the creature takes any damage other than psychic.

Spellcasting. Syssysalai casts one of the following spells, using Intelligence as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 16):

At will: *acid splash, light, mage hand*

2/day each: *blindness/deafness, fireball, fog cloud, invisibility, see invisibility*

1/day each: *black tentacles, dimension door, disintegrate, dispel magic, passwall*

TYMON

A thin, charismatic man with a narrow, drooping moustache and mouse-brown hair, this bard is dressed in fine clothing and has a voice like velvet.

Tymon, the resident performer at the King's Head tavern, is a racist wererat in the Mouse King's court. He covets the Rat Throne and is tired of waiting for his reign to begin. For three long years, he bit his lip as former Mouse King Theodore XII entrusted secrets to human lieutenants and watered down the kingdom's blood with afflicted lycanthropes. When the Mouse Kingdom parted company with the Spyglass Guild and the underworld influence of the Rat Throne diminished further, Tymon took action.



The precise events that followed remain murky to outside observers, but the bard's plans obviously failed. Theodore XII died, but Tymon did not take his place. With his schemes derailed, if not his ambition, Tymon has gone back to keeping a low profile and waiting for the current Mouse King, Myzi the First, to slip up. He grows more and more impatient with Myzi's uncanny longevity with each passing year. In the meantime, he does Myzi's bidding, which sometimes includes casting *suggestion* spells on patrons of the King's Head to perform tasks for the Mouse King.

Impatient Plotting. Tymon seeks to kill the Mouse King to take his place and grows ever more frustrated at the constant foiling of his plots. He is beginning to turn to darker sources of power, making secret deals with the Redcloaks and even the devilish servants of their master, the Arch-Devil Mammon.

TYMON

Medium Humanoid (Human, Shapechanger), Neutral Evil

Armor Class 16 (studded leather)
Hit Points 60 (11d8 + 11)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)

Skills Perception +2, Stealth +6

Damage Immunities bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks not made with silvered weapons

Senses darkvision 60 ft. (rat form only), passive Perception 12

Languages Common (can't speak in rat form)

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

Keen Smell. Tymon has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

ACTIONS

Multiattack (Humanoid or Hybrid Form Only). Tymon makes three attacks, only one of which can be a Bite.

Bite (Rat or Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d4 + 4) piercing damage. If the target is a humanoid, it must succeed on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw or be cursed with wererat lycanthropy.

Shortsword (Humanoid or Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage.

Hand Crossbow (Humanoid or Hybrid Form Only). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage.

Change Shape. Tymon magically transforms into a rat-humanoid hybrid or into a giant rat or back into his true form, which is humanoid. His statistics, other than his size, are the same in each form. Any equipment he is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. He reverts to his true form if he dies.



Spellcasting. Tymon casts one of the following spells, using Charisma as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 13):

At will: *dancing lights, minor illusion, vicious mockery*

2/day each: *charm person, disguise self, hideous laughter*

1/day each: *fear, invisibility, suggestion*

TYRON, KING OF FIXERS

This older and well-groomed man has a warm voice and the rich clothing of a respectable business owner. The hard glint in his hazel eyes, however, suggests just how he got so successful and how far he'll go to stay that way.

Tyron, Lord Greymark's fixer, owns and runs the Silk Scabbard in Upper Zobeck with Greymark's approval and protection. Never ambitious (or as he prefers to think of it, stupid) enough to step forward and run his own operation, Tyron greatly enjoys the security of having a powerful patron and partner. He sees Greymark's orders and restrictions as just part of the price of doing business.

Taking Care of Business. Tyron seeks to make the business more lucrative. And he's willing to make a deal with a devil if necessary to ensure this happens. In his connection to Volstaff, Tyron is often involved with the Redcloaks' affairs, though he spends many of his off-duty hours taking care of messes for Greymark himself.

(Tyron appears in the adventure "Ripper" in **Chapter 9**.)

TYRON

Medium Humanoid (Human), Neutral Evil

Armor Class 15 (chain shirt)

Hit Points 52 (8d8 + 16)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)	17 (+3)

Saving Throws Dex +6, Int +4

Skills Acrobatics +6, Perception +3, Persuasion +6, Stealth +6

Damage Resistances poison

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages Common, Draconic, Darakhul, Dwarvish, Thieves' Cant

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +3

Assassinate. During his first turn, Tyron has advantage on attack rolls against any creature that hasn't taken a turn. Any hit he scores against a surprised creature is a critical.



Canny Charmer. Tyron has advantage on Wisdom (Insight) and Charisma (Persuasion) checks.

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

Sneak Attack. Once per turn, Tyron deals an extra 10 (3d6) damage when he hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of his that isn't incapacitated and he doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Tyron makes two Rapier and one Dagger attack.

Rapier. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 21 (6d6) poison damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one.

Light Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 21 (6d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

BONUS ACTIONS

Dimensional Shift (1/Day). Tyron casts *dimension door*, leaving behind a faint puff of smoke, lightly obscuring the space he left until the end of his next turn.

NPCS IN ZOBECK

NPCs can be tailored to your game. Suggestions on the details (for alignment, creature type, and class) are listed parenthetically after some NPCs—either because they're important figures in Zobeck or because they are presented as part of a potential encounter, streamlining any subsequent combat—but not for others. You should feel empowered to use any statistics for an NPC or creature that are appropriate for your game.

GANGS AND SPIES

The constant commerce of even a modest river city like Zobeck calls to certain men as irresistibly as a siren's song. All manner of thieves, rogues, smugglers, and bandits prowl the shadows of the town and prey on barge traffic, baggage trains, and the fat purses of fatter merchants. The constant quest to prosper from someone else's labor, especially in such a (literally) cutthroat environment, leads to energetic and creative thieves of all stripes. Indeed, to convert the cacophony of commerce into the clink of hard coin, a few will even barter their souls.

The underworld of Zobeck is a shifting place of mysterious masters, dubious alliances, and hidden secrets. Major players range from the mystic to the mundane to the diabolic. Little is as it appears, and everything changes rapidly.

Once, the formally recognized Spyglass Guild worked hand-in-paw with the more secretive and widespread forces of the ancient Mouse King. Recently though, a hidden rival has seized control of the Spyglass Guild and uses their new power to carve out an underground empire. A mysterious death has shaken the Cloven Nine, sending these dilettante diabolists running and breaking up their ring of thieves. And lurking behind it all, the mysterious smuggler named the Red Mask deals with anyone able to pay his exorbitant (and occasionally unorthodox) fees.

In addition to the major players, many smaller gangs, guilds, and freelancers operate in the gaps and go largely unnoticed. Each faction strives to seize control of the fluid situation and ensure that every coin that changes hands in the Free City is clipped or shaved slightly.

Welcome to the thieves' world of Zobeck. May you survive the experience.

CLOVEN NINE

The Cloven Nine are a group of tiefling warlocks who lead a thuggish cabal of old and entrenched gangsters. Most believe this small-but-powerful group to be

CLOVEN NINE

Leader Izachar, aka "Eyebite" (CE tiefling, **first servant** of arch-devil Asmodeus, see *Tome of Beasts 3*, substituting for warlock spells and a Charisma spellcasting ability), is the current leader of the coven of nine tiefling warlocks that controls the group

Members: 27 human Kariv nomads, urchins, minions

Suspected Headquarters: The Broken Seal Tavern

Activities: Slave trade, summoning, secrets, quiet killings, enchantments, curses, prostitution (in order of priority)

Symbol: Nine-pointed star

Alignment: All evil

untouchable. Long ago, the group operated as outcasts in the city, shunned even by other underworld groups, but they grew powerful enough to openly flaunt their devilish heritage. The Cloven Nine deal flesh, secrets, and pacts to those desperate enough to ignore the consequences.

To hire them, rumors claim, one need only draw a drop of blood and call their name. They always make the conditions of their agreements clear, but they rarely name a price up front or specify a time of payment. Whether the death of a loved one, a portion of the bargainer's soul (including several years off their life), information, servitude, or other, the Cloven Nine collect the fee they want when they want. They worship Asmodeus and claim direct blood ties to him, though many times removed.

As a coven of warlocks, they are hired by some to cast subtle and horrific curses. They know secrets about everyone of import in town, and their informants, enforcers, and mystique keep much of the city's petty gangs awed and respectful. They hold themselves apart from (and well above, they believe) the other criminal guilds, and they rarely sully their own hands with criminal activity. That is what lesser gangs are for. The Cloven Nine reserve for themselves magical crimes and the summoning of evil familiars and servant creatures such as **dretches** and the like.

The Cloven Nine had enjoyed an air of professional and personal invincibility, well founded on their magical prowess and ruthless cruelty. So the murder of Akad the Elder, one of their founders, deeply shook the gang at all levels. Where once the Nine had maintained regular haunts, they took to hiding. The free flow of orders and jobs to subordinates and client gangs slowed to a trickle of cutouts, magically encrypted notes, and blind drops. They suspected everyone, and large amounts of their time and resources turned to finding the culprit.

Their invincibility was always an illusion, of course. They were simply street children who banded together against a hostile world. Some took it more seriously than others, but all were reevaluating their loyalty to a gang—which they joined as a survival mechanism—that became an unsafe place to be. The murder shattered their image, and the subsequent forfeiture of their souls to Asmodeus was looming. They were enraged, having worked for years for what they had. Many had made pacts for abnormally long lives to service this earthly ambition, and they wouldn't just give it all up.

Some among them believe they grew soft and overly reliant on their control of the underworld. Many of their minions were little more than bored merchants' sons or posers with a yen to annoy their parents with tattoos, horned masks, and body paint but with little taste for real violence. They never expected anyone to walk in unannounced and just kill one of their founders, and this brash show of power had them scared. The founders are old, evil, and very dangerous though, and whatever happens, the core remains deadly.

Secrets. The most notable of the Cloven Nine is a tiefling named Izachar, nicknamed "Eyebite." Obese and covered in a fresh sheen of sweat, Izachar's corpulent frame is often found draped in a plush seat in a back room of the Broken Seal. Izachar has two white stag horns growing from his forehead, which he keeps trimmed small.

Izachar has taken to wearing a scarf of deception to avoid being easily recognized while he tries to ascertain who murdered Akad. However, the innate magic of his heritage causes the effect to sometimes flicker and shift between his disguises and his true form. He once strolled down the street looking like a pale if bloated human with his tell-tale stag horns quite visible for two or three minutes without realizing it.

Izachar is a master of divination. The past, present, and future hold few secrets for this perpetually bored tiefling. Gossips whisper his love of the poppy blossom is a result of viewing things best left unseen. They say he has even glimpsed the moment of his own death and waits it as serenely as the pipe allows. He works his magic by casting bones, blood, and intestines into a fire. Questions about a living person usually require blood while the dead naturally require bones. Seeing the future requires intestines, their source varying depending on

the client and the nature of the questions. As payment, Izachar typically requires clients to gouge out one of their own eyes. Up front.

The only one of the Nine still appearing in public, Izachar furiously wards himself in private against magical detection. He has called in every favor he has to locate and avenge himself on Akad the Elder's killer. His continued public presence might be bravado, but he has taken on the role of the Cloven Nine's public face with all the determined cunning of his youth. He has reverted to fighting for the survival of himself and his gang, as it was long ago, and he has not reached his present age and position without knowing how to survive.

New Order of the City

The Cloven Nine have since avenged Akad's death and tightened their grip on their illicit operations. The body left impaled on the spikes of the Puffing Bridge leaves no question about what happens to those who cross them. They had discovered the spy in their ranks who had collaborated with the assassin, and they ritually sacrificed him, using his soul to power a curse that withered and destroyed the left ring fingers of his immediate family.

What began as a loose circle of disaffected children from rich families is now a cabal of bloodthirsty and ambitious magic-wielders intent on carving personal empires out of the flesh of Zobeck. The Nine have consolidated their tavern hangouts into true bases of operation, securing public and private spaces where they can still dabble in gambling and extortion, but also allow them to expand into bookmaking and drug dealing. Their access to the Cartways from the Silk Scabbard means they can occasionally smuggle contraband as well as people, and a shift from revenge-based diabolic magics to purer divination means they can better track the watch and rivals, allowing them to grow their wealth and reinvest in additional security for their homes, reinforced cellars with casting spaces and Cartways entrances, and bribes for low-level officials who tip them off about raids and inspections.

Changes in the political landscape have meant changes in the gang's status among the elite. The now openly present shadow fey ambassador at Winter's Kiss appreciates the Nine's attitudes and methods. He has found them to be effective agents when he wants something done somewhere in Zobeck but doesn't wish to use his own assets. This has also drawn the attention of Lady Marack, commander of the Blue House, and by extension the mayor, who both believe the Cloven



Nine might be utilized to the greater benefit of Zobeck, acting as agents abroad in exchange for tacitly turning a blind eye to the gang's lesser activities—so long as those crimes don't affect the more respectable citizens of the Free City. The gang has only completed one such task for the praetors, and the new relationship remains probationary.

Structure of the Nine

The Cloven Nine functions as a council of gang captains led by Izachar. These captains are all sorcerers, diviners, or warlocks with devilish heritage, and each leads a crew of fellow rogues, generally assisted by a trusted lieutenant and including Kariv, local thugs, and various street urchins. They bring in random extra muscle when necessary, usually when they expect a situation to get violent, knowing new recruits are often eager to prove themselves and earn a permanent place as a trusted member and so take the greatest risks.

The assassination also caused the Nine to adjust their tactics and operations. Now, operational security is essential. Jobs and plans are never discussed in public spaces or while out drinking. Members who do so receive a single warning before losing their left ear as a

final reminder that the world is listening for a chance to spill their blood. A third violation means death or expulsion and exile from Zobeck. While a couple of slow-learning members have already been warned and one has lost an ear, the rest of the crews seem to have gotten the message and no one else has needed a lesson.

The Nine's crews use extended observation, shifting graffiti marks, and dead drops to plan and coordinate focused heists, targeting large scores of goods that can be easily sold to an outgoing smuggler or offloaded at the Cartways Black Market to one of the visiting subterranean merchants. No jobs occur randomly or without a crew leader's permission, and the Cloven Nine keep the gang's confidences. The memory of Akad's murder ensures they remain loyal to each other. Additionally, they have expanded their magical research, searching for ways to clandestinely track and identify the hideouts, safehouses, and homes of their targets and rivals. They use these new magics to mark their targets, allowing them to escape, and then surreptitiously follow the individuals, noting the destinations for whatever future unpleasantness the Cloven Nine deems necessary. The first few uses of these tactics have been quite effective, catching the Blue Barbers unaware and allowing the Nine to negotiate a detente.

Spells of the Cloven Nine

In order to gain an edge against their enemies, the Cloven Nine developed a series of spells which aid them in efforts to locate rivals and keep their own trails and safehouses hidden.

ORDER OF REVENGE

3rd-Level Enchantment | Bard, Sorcerer, Warlock, Wizard
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M (a broken knife)
Duration: 1 hour/caster level

You touch a weapon or a bundle of 30 ammunition, imbuing them with spell energy. Any creature damaged by a touched, affected weapon leaves an invisibly glowing trail of their path until the spell expires. The caster may see this trail by casting *revenge's eye* or *see invisible*. Any other caster may see the trail by casting *see invisible*. Casting *dispel magic* on an affected creature causes that creature to stop generating a trail, and the trail fades over the next hour.

At Higher Levels. When you cast the spell using a slot of 4th level or higher, you can target one additional weapon or bundle of ammunition for each slot level above 4th.

REVENGE'S EYE

2nd-Level Divination | Bard, Sorcerer, Warlock, Wizard
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M (a pinch of silver, a fragment of knife blade)
Duration: Concentration, up to 1 hour

You touch a creature's visual organs and grant them the ability to see the trail left by creatures damaged by a weapon you cast *order of revenge* upon.

The targeted creature can distinguish between multiple affected creatures without effort. If you lose a trail due to a creature's sudden shift in location, like jumping or teleporting, you may concentrate as a move action, which does not provoke opportunity attacks. This reveals the direction and distance to where the trail resumes, so long as it is on the same plane. The trail remains visible if a creature flies or swims. It only stops if the creature dies, becomes the target of *dispel magic*, leaves the plane of existence, or the duration ends.

This spell does not help the target discern illusions and does not identify magically altered, concealed creatures, or invisible creatures. It only reveals trails left by those affected by *order of revenge* also cast by the spellcaster.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 3rd level or higher, you can target +1 creature for each slot level above 2nd.

VAGRANT'S NONDESCRIPT CLOAK

2nd-Level Abjuration | Bard, Sorcerer, Warlock, Wizard
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M (a pinch of crushed obsidian)
Duration: 1 hour

You touch a creature, and that creature is warded against the effects of *faerie fire*, *hold person*, and *order of revenge* for the duration of the effect, granting them advantage on the saving throw against the effect and a saving throw each round they are affected by the spells. If the warded creature is the focus of a *locate creature* spell, the caster may determine if the affected creature is within 1,000 feet but cannot determine the direction to the target of *vagrant's nondescript cloak*. If the creature is already affected by one of the warded spells, then both the effect and *vagrant's nondescript cloak* end immediately.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of third level or higher, you can target an additional creature for each slot level above 2nd.

Scenarios

There are many ways the PCs might become entangled with the Cloven Nine in the streets and back alleyways of Zobeck.

Last Bequest. The recent death of a former member of the Collegium has resulted in a large collection of books being donated to the library and faculty. It appears that many of these tomes deal with research on abjuration, divination, and enchantment, magical schools of great interest to the Cloven Nine. Ordinarily restricted to students of the Collegium, these new acquisitions are off-limits to outsiders, even if they are the talk of the arcane bar scene. The Cloven Nine intend to infiltrate the very heart of Zobeck's greatest educational institution, evade their guardians and spelltraps, and make off with the choicest manuscripts. Depending on the party's relationship to the Nine, they might be recruited to act as inside agents, be part of the team committing the theft, or be supplemental security when a Collegium magister's divination reveals a high chance the crime might happen tonight. How will they respond when the books in question literally fall into their hands as an over-eager apprentice is killed trying to hide them and all sides suspect a double-cross?

Picture Perfect Party. A charity ball and auction is being held at the Old Stross Bathhouse, and the upper crust of Zobeck is invited for what promoters swear will be a celebration for the ages. The usual decor of the bathhouse is being supplemented with great works of art by many popular contemporary and passed artisans of the region. One of these artisan's former students desperately desires the masterwork of a deceased mentor and has hired the Cloven Nine to replace the one being displayed at the ball with a replica. Are the PCs part of the gang, bent on executing this heist? Are they part of the security, intent on thwarting the thieves? Or do they belong to another group altogether, trying to outsmart both groups and claim the artwork for themselves or their patron?

Seats Of Power. After a great deal of public unrest, the Free Council has decided to add two consuls to the board, both to be elected from the citizenry and serve for 10 years, offsetting the mayor's term. This has created quite a stir in folks as many merchants, laborers, and even kobolds seek to capture one of these offices. As sorcerers and diviners, the Cloven Nine believe they're in an excellent position either to sink an unacceptable candidate or to ensure their chosen hopeful wins. They approach the PCs, either thinking an individual might serve their needs or attempting to use them to engineer a series of events. Are the PCs eager for a chance to engage the mighty gears of politics, or do they struggle to stop the Nine from interfering with the will of the people?

MOUSE KINGDOM

Leader: Myzi the First, the **Mouse King** (see *Creature Codex*)

Lieutenant: Yiri Tepeck

Members: 32 humans, 15 wererats and ratfolk, 13 riverfolk halflings (see *Tome of Heroes* and *Warlock Grimoire 2* for more on riverfolk halflings), countless rodents

Suspected Headquarters: King's Head Tavern, Sixes and Sevens Gambling Hall

Activities: River smuggling, gambling, burglary, snatch thievery (in order of priority)

Symbol: A crown

Alignment: Neutral

MOUSE KINGDOM

The Mouse King has ruled in Zobeck as long as the city has stood. His servants include halflings, humans, and various rats, mice, and more dangerous rodents. Supposedly, every rat and mouse in the city obeys him.

Anyone refusing to give the Mouse King his due supposedly dies a death of ten thousand bites as the Mouse King's servants devour the fool. This might be purely a gruesome story meant to scare newcomers to the city's thieves' dens, but the old-timers and most of the dockworkers swear it's true. Of course, the tale becomes more graphic, and their protestations of its truth louder as their audience buys more drinks.

The Mouse King, they say, knows everything. The city's rats whisper to him all that happens in Zobeck. They even know when a river barge is about to arrive, so they can come to the wharves to meet it. This may be only rumors and rattish propaganda, but many otherwise jaded people take great precautions to avoid speaking in the presence of a rat.

Few beyond his servants have seen the Mouse King himself. Some describe him as a halfling wererat that rarely takes humanoid form. Some believe he is a ratwere who takes human form only when it suits him. Some believe him merely the figurehead for a group mind, resulting from the presence of so many escaped familiars near the Arcane Collegium.

Whatever the truth, the former Mouse King (Theodore XII) ran the city's underworld in partnership



with Ersebet Cemilla until 14 years ago. While the servants of the new king (Myzi I) still take coin purses and snatch jewels, his funds mainly come from smuggling and the gambling hall called Sixes and Sevens, between the Gullet and King's Head Tavern. However, the break with the Spyglass Guild has reduced the Mouse King's influence, and his rodent minions now swarm everywhere, seeking to regain that power.

Secrets. The truth about the Mouse King is he wants Zobeck to prosper, and he is almost as rich as the Red Mask. At the same time, they are normally very short-lived. Rare indeed is the Mouse King who lives more than five years (the lifespan of a venerable rat). Myzi has survived far longer than expected, and rumors have begun to spread that he has drawn on magic to sustain his unnatural youth. Regardless of an individual's longevity, the post itself is immortal. Each succession to the throne comes from the Council of Rats, held after the reigning king's death. The successor gains all the memories and many of the skills and powers of the previous king. For this reason, the king is essentially unkillable, and he works to keep merchants fat and to keep the city free of foreign control. No one loves him, and only a few individuals of power swear him fealty, but the Mouse King is one of Zobeck's greatest allies.

The current Mouse King is Myzi the First, and he has ash-white hair and a thick moustache and favors puffed red shirts and light weapons such as rapiers while in human form. In mouse form, he is always perfectly groomed, two feet tall, and with dark-streaked pale fur. In humanoid form, he is as short as a riverfolk halfling, though it is unclear if this is due to his youth or whether he is truly a halfling. Rumor has it the king has a brother enchanted by the Arcane Collegium and a sister who has taken service there as a familiar. Certainly, he came from a lucky litter.

When prepared for an audience, he always wears a gray frock coat with golden buttons, keeps his whiskers long and white, and wears a golden crown carved with images of nuts, grains, cheese, and a strange spiral symbol. He usually holds court in a tiny chamber that only Small creatures can move in without squeezing below the low ceiling. The king willingly hears petitioners out (though he prefers them to address him as "Your Majesty," and he uses the royal *we*) and rules generously. His followers are considerably less forgiving. The Mouse King always has numerous followers around, either gray or brown rats or (as humans) green-jacketed soldiers with exceptionally fine white or brown moustaches.

PAINFUL PLEASURES

Sometimes wealthy Zobeckers do not desire the soft hand of a genteel woman or fascinating conversation. Sometimes, they long for the crisp crack of a whip and steaming oils against bare flesh. Others just want to be bound and spanked. Very few courtesans cater to such requests, knowing how easily such things can go wrong. Consequently, such seekers must look longer and harder to satisfy their needs—but satisfy them they can.

Recently, Nariss Larigorn, a cleric of the Red Goddess, set up shop at the Temple of Painful Pleasures (see also the adventure "Flesh Fails" in **Chapter 9**) beneath the Book Fetish in the Collegium District. Her cult—a cult within a cult, really—worships Marena as the goddess of lust and torture, and her temple whores are beyond skilled in the art of torture for pain and pleasure. Their religious affiliation, however, remains a strict secret since worshipping Marena is forbidden in Zobeck. Most customers consider the reference to a "temple" to be merely a joke or a cheeky baiting of moralists.

Nariss welcomes all to experience the love of pain within the temple's confines—for a price. Her customers include scholars, merchants, and consuls. So far, the watch has not interfered with the temple, considering it just an exclusive brothel with some powerful clientele. If the religious nature of the establishment ever became public, Blue House would come down on the temple like Volund's hammer, and a lot of important people would suffer a great deal.

The Mouse King's current right-hand man is Yiri Tepeck, a human horse thief from the Rothenian plains who is known to toss entire ale kegs during a brawl. He has already seen two kings come and go and understands rattish policies and magics well enough to know he would rather serve them than join them—he has rejected several offers of "the Moon Gift," as some wererats call their lycanthropy. He is honest, as long as he is well fed, and his rolls of fat conceal a lot of muscle.

One of the Mouse King's more dangerous followers, **Tymon** (see **Chapter 5**), a wererat bard, has a sharp temper, quickly takes offense, and often spitefully casts a disguised *suggestion* within his music. Other servants merely carry poisoned daggers and can enter any house within the city with relative ease.

REDCLOAKS

Leader: The Red Mask (LE, other details unknown)

Lieutenant: Jhoram, the Money Changer

Members: 88 kobolds, 22 humans

Suspected Headquarters: The Wheatsheaf Tavern, the Greymark Warehouse

Activities: Diabolic cult, kidnapping for ransom, smuggling, drugs, counterfeiting, silver caravan ambushes (in order of priority)

Symbol: Red feather

Alignment: Lawful evil

REDCLOAKS

Perhaps the least-understood group in Zobeck are the followers of the Red Mask, known as the Redcloaks. They work primarily by night, and everyone knows they include both humans and kobolds in their ranks.

Most members of the city watch assume the Redcloaks are a kobold gang from the ghetto. Indeed, the Red Mask's lowest (and yet perversely most loyal) minions are kobolds, to whom the master has promised a much greater role in rulership someday.

Better still, he offers immediate wealth to his servants. Enough gold and silver flows from his hands that his kobolds need no longer toil in the silver mines but can build their own mansions and rule over much more than a small city ghetto.

Much less widely known is that the Redcloaks use the profits from smuggling and banditry to fuel their deeper purpose of expanding the cult of **Mammon** (see *Tome of Beasts*), the arch-devil of wealth and greed. This group of gangsters has a huge bankroll with enough money to



hire all the mercenaries, assassins, alchemists, forgers, and other specialists they require.

Some even say shapeshifters, warlocks-for-hire, and priestesses of the Red Goddess serve the Redcloaks, but this may be nothing more than bluster and rumormongering. It is certainly a topic **Jayzel** (see **Chapter 5**), the mistress of information brokering, will not delve into for any amount of money.

The Redcloak guards are crossbow-wielding kobolds, geargrinders, trapspringers, and trainers of the enormous owls beloved by kobold messengers and scouts. These kobolds work to scout out and organize likely ambushes of silver caravans from the mines in the Margreve Forest, to gather up human and centaur bandits to rob those caravans, and to deliver the plunder to the Red Mask's private storehouses. Other creatures like devils and dark priests sometimes take part in the ambushes. These creatures presumably take their orders from the Red Mask himself.

Secrets. Red Mask's bankroller is Lord Greymark Volstaff. Once Red Mask himself, the aging Lord Volstaff has retired from direct criminal activity and now supports his gang and secret cult from the shadows. Volstaff's

greed has led him to found the cult of Mammon in the city (or rather, to restore the long-dead cult once he gained enough power to ensure political protection).

The new Red Mask is a once-proud man named Minacio Tenebras, a warrior from a small noble family in the Seven Cities. His noble house was destroyed by cultists of Mammon. He lost his family, his wealth, and his beauty—his face was horribly scarred in the fire that destroyed his villa. He swore to destroy the cult of Mammon from the inside out, but as he infiltrated its ranks, he found himself seduced by their luxury and power. He was soon taken under the wing by Greymark Volstaff and was offered the leadership of the Redcloaks. Now, the disfigured and wretched Tenebras has all but completely lost sight of his quest for justice and has embraced his role as the Red Mask—blade of Mammon. Tenebras is a fallen paladin of unknown strength—but it is possible that he could be redeemed.

SPYGLASS GUILD

Leader: Ersebet Cemilla (N human **thief lord**, see *Creature Codex*)

Lieutenant: Grigory Kaldozh

Members: 21 human, 3 gearforged, 3 dwarves

Suspected Headquarters: The Cartographer's Guildhall, the Green Goat Tavern near the Market District

Activities: Spying, blackmail, forgery, tax evasion, pickpocketing (in order of priority)

Symbol: A scroll case

Alignment: Neutral evil

SPYGLASS GUILD

The men, gearforged, and dwarves of the Spyglass Guild are the city's spies. The city tolerates its quasi-legal operations because the guild reports everything it learns to the praetors who pass it on to the lord mayor and the watch. The guild remains a gray organization, however, made up of individuals of dubious backgrounds and morals whose human members have a history of corruption from outside influences—from accepting bribes to acting as double agents for various cults and even the Arcane Collegium.

The Spyglass Guild is an open secret, and its leader, the scarred and embattled Ersebet Cemilla, struggles in a web of treachery that she no longer controls. The Spyglass Guild's failings in recent years have allowed several embarrassing slips that caught the rulers of the city flat-footed, including the condition of the Moonlit King, the zealotry among the followers of the Red Goddess, and even the ghoulish stirrings within the subterranean fiefdoms loyal to Morgau and Doresh.

The city responded first by recruiting more heavily among the best-connected informers and younger sons of merchant princes, who easily gather information from well outside the city walls. They altered the patrol patterns of scouts and griffon riders along the roads and rivers, and they changed the focus of what their agents look for in the field.

The second response was to assign the Steamworker's Guild and the Arcane Collegium to build three incorruptible gearforged spies. These mechanical agents might seem entirely too obvious to gather information, but in practice, they blend in with the city's other mechanical servants. Their powerful hearing gives them perception beyond any human or dwarf: one of the apprentices who built them claims they can hear a dozen conversations at once, both through walls and several streets away. If true, this powerful eavesdropping tool gives the guild a tremendous advantage. Even if it's mere fabrication, the story itself seems to have made plotters more cautious, and thieves have curtailed their most outrageous excesses. If it is just a wild tale, perhaps Ersebet is not so overwhelmed as she appears.

Secrets. Ersebet Cemilla has fought magic, treachery, and steel with daring, cunning, and bravery for years. A few years ago, she fell under the magical domination

SWAGGER AND BLUFF

Not every encounter with a gang is a fight. The wiser gang leaders try to intimidate visitors into giving them a few coppers as a toll. Some prefer talking their way into a meal and will hint at dark connections with the Cloven Nine or at secrets the Mouse King has told them in exchange for a beer and some food.

Intelligence (Investigation) checks often result in meeting informers from among the street gangs. For many, joining a gang is a matter of survival rather than a calling. In the city's most famous case, the Order of the Undying Sun years ago took in a street urchin gang leader who became the celebrated Sir Ottracz Grivoly, one of the greatest paladins of his age. It is said he always carried a rat's poniard with him, as a reminder of where he came from and a call to humility.

of a potent enemy who trapped Cemilla within her own body. Her harsh voice still carries the note of command though, and her followers continue to respect her, but they fear that something is terribly wrong.

Her break with the Mouse King is well known within her organization. No one likes it much, but no one wants to challenge her about it just yet. Her scarred arms are the souvenirs of many knife fights in her youth, struggling among the lesser rings, and she is still a ruthless hand with a blade. She is known to use poison, which keeps her lieutenants nervous every time she proposes some new madness and asks them to drink a toast.

Ersebet's chief lieutenant and lover, Grigory Kaldozh, knows for certain that the woman sharing his bed is not herself, but he cannot figure out what is going on. He is desperate to discover the truth.

LESSER GANGS

Outside the major powers in the city, those who influence most of the underworld, freelance thieves, gamblers, whores, and thugs form their own cliques, alliances, and small-time gangs. One might even add some of the more unruly kobold mining gangs into this category.

For most honest citizens, these lesser gangs are called "rings" or even "clubs" and are to be avoided. A few claim to be affiliated with one of the larger gangs, and some actually are. Many, however, just scrape by and refuse to learn an honest trade, believing riches and fame await—just one big score away. They would rather live bright, quick lives than grind it out in the fields with peasants or at the forge with apprentices.

Their lives are certainly colorful, and only the most successful of these small rings are flashy enough to draw the eye of the larger gangs. Joining one of the big gangs means the small gang will live longer and better, and the ring's leader might become an important lieutenant in the larger gang. Minor gangs with enough of a reputation to make them worth mentioning currently include Jetty's Seven, the Wire Cutters, the Ferrydrivers, the Clocktower Divers, Slinger's Ambush Gang (see also the adventure "The Fish and the Rose" in **Chapter 9**), and the all-female Silent Banshees. Within two years, three-fourths of those groups will vanish.

Blue Barbers of Wharf Street

This group of a dozen blue-haired gnomes arrived some years ago and was met with both immediate suspicion from the praetors and bullying visits from city guards and hussars. They are, strangely enough, not Niemheim gnomes at all but claim to hail from the Court of Midnight Teeth, a shadow fey court of long standing in the Shadow Realm. Their proficiency with razors, moustache wax, and restorative hair tonics has slowly won them a loyal following among the Griffon Knights and hussars and some of the city's dwarves. Others mutter that the Blue Barbers are not merely gossips and barbers good with a quip and a tale but actually serve as smiling spies and assassins for the shadow fey.

Kariv

The dark-haired, dark-eyed Kariv people seem to come and go from Zobeck in droves. Their mustachioed men have dangerous eyes while their women wear their hair in intricate braids and dance for coins in ways that make softer men blush. The Kariv value horseflesh and horsemanship above just about everything else.

Many Kariv serve the Cloven Nine as low-level thugs, informants, and enforcers. Not all Kariv are in league with the Nine, but enough are that they have all earned a black name in Zobeck. The Kariv are commonly referred to as "wagon trash," referring to the colorful wagons they live in and convert into makeshift ghettos in Zobeck's pastures and docks.

Kariv society is matriarchal, and when the mothers of the clans issue orders, everyone hops to obey. Many of these honorific mothers made pacts with members of the Cloven Nine to gain powers of divination or to retain their beauty, and their entire clans are now beholden to them. As a result, many Kariv bear the Cloven Nine's tattoo of a nine-pointed star on their hands.

Those Kariv not so sworn consider their brethren "fallen," and much bad blood runs between the two factions. Fortunately for Zobeck, the Kariv prefer to keep their internecine warfare hidden from the eyes of dechas.

GUILDS AND MASTERS

Each of Zobeck's dozens of guilds forms its own world, filled with princes and paupers, and each organization is powerful in its narrow sphere. Most important for the city, the guilds make things, from the mundane weapons and armor of the Fraternal Order of Arms and Armory (§22) to the magical potions and scrolls of the Arcane Collegium (both a guild as well as a teaching institution).

From the lowest-ranking apprentice to the most powerful consul, the guilds define the rhythm of daily life—brewing beer, making clockwork devices, mining, weaving, and plotting against their rivals in the other great trade cities from Siwal to Trollheim.

APPRENTICES AND MASTERS

There are two types of apprenticeship in Zobeck: one easy and short, the other long, difficult, and sometimes

lethal. The easy apprenticeship is the paid, or sponsored, apprenticeship where a sum of no less than 500 gp is paid for a guildmaster to teach their trade in three years to an apprentice of any age. For some guilds (alchemy and steamwork, for example), the sum paid can easily reach 10,000 gp. The apprentice must swear to obey their master and preserve the guild's secrets from outsiders. For some guilds (notably alchemy and the Collegium), these oaths are alchemically or magically enforced.

The more difficult apprenticeship is unpaid and essentially indentured servitude. The guildmaster agrees to teach a trade to a child as young as eight or nine who shows some promise. The apprenticeship typically lasts for at least five years and sometimes longer (up to eight years in the Steamworker's Guild and the Arcane Collegium). If the apprentice is obedient and does good work, they may become a journeyman by passing a test. The form of the test depends on the guild but might involve questions, bribes, demonstrations of skill, or simply affirming an oath and paying a tithe of earnings.

A journeyman may accept guild work and commissions in the city, and their guild considers them a full member in everything but leadership. Once a journeyman has created a masterwork (a process judged by a council of existing masters), they become a master with full guild membership, including voting privileges, the right to establish a workshop of their own under guild auspices, and the right to take on apprentices.

ZOBECK'S MOST POWERFUL GUILDS

Zobeck's eight most powerful or influential guilds are the Bargeman's Fellowship in the Dock District (§61); the Geargrinder's Guild (§2) and the Steamworker's Union (§1) in the Gear District; the Vigilant Brotherhood of the Scribes (§61) and the Chartered Brotherhood of Alchemists (§43) in the Collegium District; the Brewer's Sisterhood in the Market District (§12); the Spyglass and Cartographer's Guild (§35) in Lower Zobeck; and the Honorable Order of Weavers (§18) in the Citadel District. Information on each can be found in its associated district.

Guild Names. Ancient and Honorable Order of Jewelers (§19), Bargeman's Fellowship (§61), Brewer's Sisterhood (also known as Kettle and Mash) (§12), Carpenter's Brotherhood (§20), Chartered Brotherhood of Alchemists (§43), Cooper's Union (§21), Foundryman's Guild (smelting, bars, and wire) (§3), Fraternal Order of Arms and Armory (§22), Free Fellowship of the Arcane Collegium (§42), Geargrinder's Guild (§2), Glassblower's Guild (§4), Honorable Order of Tanners and Leatherworkers (§23), Honorable Order of Weavers (§18), Lanternmaker



and Tinker's Guild (§16), Limner's Guild (§17), Miner's Brotherhood (§36), Ragpicker's Guild (§37), Ropemaker's Guild, Shipwright and Chandler's Guild (§62), Solderer and Brazier's Guild (§6), Spyglass and Cartographer's Guild (§35), Steamworker's Union (§1), Stevedore's Brotherhood (§63), Stonemason's Guild (§13), Vigilant Brotherhood of Scribes (§40), Vintner's Guild (§15), Wainwright's Guild (§14)

WINTER COURT'S AMBASSADORS

The delegation from the Free City Council sat stiffly at the banquet amid the alien splendor of Winter's Kiss. Their glass goblets brimmed with a pale-silver liquid that smelled like sorrow. A forlorn goat crouched, tied and bleating, at the center of the table.

Across from them, His Excellency Glaninin Thelamandrine, Ambassador-in-Extraordinary of the Winter Court to the Free City of Zobeck, fingered a translucent dagger. His servants, little more than shadows and moonlight, flickered just at the edge of sight.

Ondli Firedrake, High Priest of Rava and Volund, cleared his throat. "The Free City Council has concerns about the tariffs levied by Her Majesty the Queen of Night and Magic—"

The goat screamed like a child as the ambassador gutted it on the table.

"We taught your ancestors to fear the dark," the ambassador said softly, cutting bloody slabs from the still-quivering beast. "When your world was young and this city not yet a dream, your women left us offerings of milk in hopes that we would pass by. I grow weary of your complaints. Speak not of tariffs and taxes." He paused. "I trust you like your meat rare."

The Queen of Night and Magic and her Winter Court needed no convincing to open trade with the Free City, but they feigned reluctance when first petitioned by Matthias Yronwood, to maintain appearances. The Winter Court demanded their first embassy on mortal soil nearly 10 years after trade between the worlds began, and they wanted it in Zobeck.

The council, happy with the influx of trade, acquiesced. Aware of the premium the Winter Court places on protocol and decorum, the city also secured Yronwood a position at the Collegium and placed him in charge of relations with the fey.

He took to the work with vigor. Months after Gilgalline of Whisper's End, the first Ambassador-in-Extraordinary to Zobeck, arrived in the Free City, Yronwood ratified the Yronwood-Gilgalline Accord of 4021 A.S. by the fey reckoning. This accord—the first of six—codified the new understanding between humanity and Winter Court fey, delineating in absurd detail the rules governing all interactions between the races.

Gilgalline consulted with none of his kind before committing the shadow fey to the treaty. As ambassador, he spoke for the Queen of Night and Magic, and his decisions were hers. It took many meetings to impress upon him that Zobeck, by contrast, could not speak for all mankind.

Once Gilgalline understood, nothing more was said, and trade continued, but within a few years, word trickled into Zobeck that other cities were entertaining requests from the fey to establish a diplomatic presence within their walls.

There were soon as many ambassadors as major cities, from Harkesh to Bemmea.

Glaninin Thelamandrine has served as the Winter Court Ambassador-in-Extraordinary to Zobeck for the past 24 years. He eschews the traditional sort of embassy, one open to receive guests. Instead, Thelamandrine has established his household—called Winter's Kiss—in a location and manner most decorous for a fey of his station: hidden through glamour and misdirection near the Collegium District (see also **Winter's Kiss, Embassy of the Shadow Fey** in **Chapter 4**).

THE GREAT SHIP OF THE DESERT

The guilds of Zobeck have long envied the sandships of Siwal and the Flying Cities of Sikkim, both of which give those southerly lands powerful advantages in trade and war. To counteract those advantages, the steamworkers, geargrinders, scribes, cartographers, and alchemists banded together and, two years ago, launched an enormous "landship" fueled by alchemy. The vessel could travel over both land and wave and—carrying a cargo of valuable metals, constructs, glass, and a group of explorers and vigilant scribes—set sail along the Great Southern Road to explore and unlock new lands for trade or adventure.

The ship has not been heard from since. The guilds involved wonder what might have happened to it.



CHAPTER 6

GODS, CULTS, AND RELICS

The barge pilot sighed pointedly and rolled his eyes when he saw his captain pause in front of the small shrine. "Why are you wasting your time at the Altar of the Lorelei? The last three trips were just like the last three hundred. Nothing's going to happen." The captain hesitated, a few silver ducats in his rough fingers. "Nothing happened because I left candles and gear oil and silver for the gods." His hand hovered over the altar as he considered. "All the gods."

"Well, they like their gifts, true enough. I left a silver foot charm at Lada's temple, and now?" He hopped from foot to foot. "Walking with hardly a limp." He gestured to the small shrine. "But these? Not even a proper goddess."

"Never hurts to play it safe." He dropped two coins onto the altar. He still didn't feel quite right.

"Hah! You want to play it safe, hire a priest to guard this cargo. I've heard the Barge King is loose again—with giants."

"Giants?" the captain muttered. He dropped the third coin onto the altar and rose. He felt lighter, like the coins had been weighing him down. He smiled.

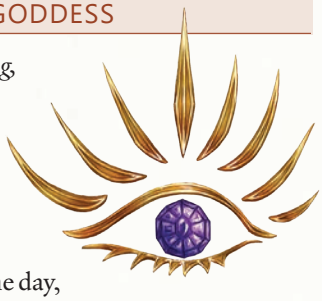
"Then get off to the temple of Perun." He chuckled at the pilot's confused look. "Tell any priest of Perun there's giants to fight, and he'll pay us for the chance to knock them into the river!" The captain laughed and walked toward the docks. The gods would watch over them. He was sure of it.

The gods of Zobeck are complicated. Not simply distant power sources for divine magic, they are present and demanding contestants in a game of influence and bragging rights that's played through the actions of important people. In Zobeck, gods do not simply listen and respond to prayers. They dabble and interfere. Frequently.

In the Crossroads, the gods of Zobeck are sometimes known by two or three names. Dwarves and humans differ in their names for the god of smiths and fire, for example, though they recognize and respect the alternate names. The gods are listed here alphabetically by their most common names, and each has only a brief description. The *Midgard Worldbook* contains more detail on each of the major deities, including domains, favored weapons, symbols, and additional masks—other names and personalities they wear throughout Midgard.

LADA, THE GOLDEN GODDESS

The Golden Goddess of Healing, Love, and Mercy



Everyone loves Lada, though few truly follow her tenets of mercy and forgiveness. A maidenly goddess of the dawn and the day, she is the tireless enemy of Marena, the Red Goddess. Most idols and images depict Lada as meek and mild, but she has a powerfully wrathful side, sometimes called the Bear Maiden, that defends children, the elderly, and the weak. She champions compassion and mercy, though her mercy can sometimes seem harsh, such as granting merciful death to suffering plague victims.

Lada always appears as a young woman with braided black hair and bright green or blue eyes. She wears flowers in every season but winter, and her altars are often fragrant and covered in rose petals.

She has many worshipers among centaurs, Rothenian elves, and humans. These followers see her take the form of their own kind, but they acknowledge that this outer seeming is simply a bridge to her worshipers. Their prayers are similar, and their rites are always held at daybreak.

Her holiest sites are on high ground, where the dawn breaks earliest. For this reason, her temples always sit on hills or mountaintops or (in places without high ground) incorporate a large steeple. The main doors always face east.

HIGH PRIESTESS

The current high priestess is Lucca Angeli, a human woman born and raised in Zobeck. She spent her youth adventuring and made her reputation during one of the many sieges of Zobeck, when her steadfastness helped the Griffon Knights repel a dark army of fey.

WHAT LADA DEMANDS

Heal all who ask. Defend lovers from all dangers and trials. Show mercy to those who ask. Lada's followers must make a pilgrimage to the healing school in the south once every seven years.

MARENA, THE RED GODDESS



The Red Goddess of Winter, Lust, Sickness, and Death; the Blood Maiden; Patron Goddess of Morgau and Doresh

Although she has no official temple in the city, Marena is the dark face of Zobeck's fears. All flesh fails, and unbridled lust and rampant plague can destroy any happy life. Her cults flourish in secret, especially in the small surrounding villages when times are hard and in cellars and sanctuaries within the Vineyard District and Lower Zobeck.

Those who see her face—reportedly both beautiful and chilling—and survive are invariably marked with white hair, wine-colored birthmarks, or haunted silver eyes. Most of her followers believe her strict worship grants them power, and her orders include anchorites, flagellants, torturers, and orgiasts. (See also **Cults and Heresies** below.)

Marena is very popular north of the River Argent in the Principality of Morgau and Doresh, and she serves as the patron goddess of whores, vampires, ghouls, and the Ghost Knights of Doresh. Indeed, she is worshiped openly both in the principality and, with somewhat less fervor, in Rothenian lands in her aspect as the Winter Maiden. Some kobolds worship her out of fear or awe, though most kobolds prefer the simple faith of Volund or St. Piran, patron of miners.

HIGH PRIESTESS

Nariss Larigorn, an elven exile from the Arbonesse who joined the cult of Marena while residing in Morgau, has set up a temple disguised as a brothel in the Collegium District. As worship of Marena is forbidden in Zobeck, her residency could quickly end once anyone realizes the Temple of Painful Pleasures is a temple of Marena. (See **Chapter 5** for more information on Nariss Larigorn. She also appears in the adventure "Flesh Fails" in **Chapter 9**.)

WHAT MARENA DEMANDS

The goddess of lust and death is stern but not unrelentingly cruel. She demands her followers kill her foes (especially followers of Lada), and she requires rites

ALTERNATE LUST DOMAIN

Nariss Larigorn leads a sub-cult within the cult of Marena, one that practices the combined arts of pleasure and torture. Her clerics use the following Lust domain.

ALTERNATE LUST DOMAIN SPELLS

Cleric Level	Spells
1st	*charm person*, *enhance ability*
3rd	*heat metal*, *suggestion*
5th	*fear*, *hypnotic pattern*
7th	*compulsion*, *polymorph*
9th	*dominate person*, *hold monster*

LUSTFUL PERFORMANCE

At 1st level, you gain proficiency in the Performance skill.

Additionally, you may use your raw sexual charisma to create fascination and lust within others. You can use this ability a number of rounds per day equal to your Wisdom modifier + your cleric level. At the start of each round, you must make a Charisma (Performance) check. Each creature of your choice within 30 feet of you that can see you must make a Wisdom saving throw contested by the result of your Charisma (Performance) check. On a failure, the creature is charmed by you for the duration of your performance.

CHANNEL DIVINITY: AURA OF AWE

Starting at 6th level, you can use your Channel Divinity to enthrall creatures with either your sheer beauty or your sultry voice. As an action, you project a 60-foot-radius aura centered on you by speaking (affecting creatures that can hear you within the radius) or by posing (affecting creatures that can see you within the radius). This aura lasts for a number of rounds equal to your cleric level. Each creature affected by this aura must make a Wisdom saving throw. Any creature that cannot be charmed automatically succeeds on this save. On a failure, a creature has disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks made to perceive any creature other than you until the spell ends or until the target can no longer appropriately perceive you. On a success, a creature is immune to this aura for 24 hours.

This effect ends on a creature if it leaves the aura, but it does not gain immunity to this aura.

of seduction, blood sacrifice, and flagellation. Although her worship is harsh and bitter, she grants strength and magical power far more often than other gods, even to non-clergy. Marena's followers must make a pilgrimage to Morgau if they reach the age of 50.

NINKASH, THE BEER GODDESS



Mother of Beer; Goddess of Merriment; Patron of Brewers and Tavern Keepers; Matron Goddess of the Cantonal Dwarves

Many humans believe all dwarves love ale and customarily consume prodigious amounts of it—at least by human standards—and become incoherent and unable to stand or stay conscious. The dwarves call this last condition "gone," short for "gone to visit Ninkash." The matron of ale and merriment was a great gift to the dwarves from the Kariv, who brought their goddess with them to the cantons and the Crossroads. Ninkash turned brewing and drinking from the rarity of Wotan's stern priests toasting the dwarven dead at midwinter to a more frequent and joyful sacrament, though still a serious one. Ninkash embraced the dwarves, and they embraced her.

The public face of Ninkash is an oversized tankard with a golden glow and a simple handle, an ever-full vessel made of steel that floats in midair. To her faithful, she appears as a jovial, buxom dwarf woman clad in simple garments as a tavern maid in ever-shifting colors. She goes barefoot with her clothes unbelted and low-cut. Ninkash always smiles. When displeased, her smile is slight, and she shakes her head, and when pleased, she beams and extends her arms to sweep all to her bosom.

Dwarves from Zobeck to the cantons to the south all revere Ninkash, as do the lower classes in Nuria-Natal and even some in the Mharoti Empire, Khandiria, and Sikkim. She is also widely popular among the Kariv who sometimes call her simply Mother Ale.

HIGH PRIEST/PRIESTESS

Ninkash has a shrine in Zobeck but no official temple, and no one person heads her worship. Her temples blanket the Ironcrag Cantons but lack a central authority even there. In Zobeck, many of the Brewer's Sisterhood serve Ninkash as clerics. Additionally, some

master brewers consider themselves the Blessed of Ninkash and carry some clout within the community. (See **Blessed of Ninkash** in **Chapter 8**.)

WHAT THE GODDESS DEMANDS

All must procure or make a tankard of their own and use it to drink ale every day. Learn to brew ale before you marry. Offerings of ale are always accepted at her altars. Her clergy must learn the craft of brewing and often alchemy as well. A dwarf is not a true dwarf unless that dwarf faces his fears, wants, and delights. The ales of Ninkash help worshippers set aside the armors of civility, reserve, and secrecy for a time, to let them see more clearly. While ordinary ale is a road to truth, the holy ale of Ninkash is the road to the Truth.

PERUN, LORD OF LIGHTNING (MAVROS PERUN)

God of Lightning and War



Superficially, Perun is perhaps the simplest of gods—a creature of destruction, strength, and war. He has a deeper, stranger side, however, of healing and rebirth. His mysteries involve not just death and glory but also resurrection and a cleansing of the soul. Most soldiers, guards, watchmen, bandits, and scouts make offerings to Perun.

Perun's role in resurrection is tied to his role as a master of the spear-maidens, angelic figures said to have once visited Zobeck in corporeal form to rule it in complete justice. Records from the period are mixed with references to flower angels, but it is clear that Perun was behind it to some degree.

The worship of Perun is most visible in spring when the campaign season begins. Many of his worshipers use a lightning bolt, a red bull, or a red circle in their heraldry. His priests are often indistinguishable from mercenary captains, and indeed, some serve as captains in the Free Companies.

The cities of Triolo and Valera call him Mavros. Worshipers in the north call him Thor or Donar, but in Zobeck, he is Perun. As the war god, he is also quite popular among centaurs. The windrunner elves of the Rothenian Plain know him as Tilla the Bull-God.

HIGH PRIEST

Medlin Gorzax, a gruff man in his sixties and a veteran of many wars, leads the church of Perun in Zobeck.

WHAT PERUN DEMANDS

Perun wants action! Worshipers must seek out battle and keep their martial skills well honed. The perfect death is on the battlefield—death of old age is abhorred. Followers of Perun must attend the mysteries at his temple (or at least overseen by a priest) before any great battle or long journey.

POREVIT AND YARILA, THE GREEN GODS

Twin Green Gods; the Goddess of Fertility, Wealth, Forests, and Wine



The most complicated of deities is Porevit, the forest god of harvest, wine, and greenery who is also the goddess Yarila during the spring planting and even the goddess Kostroma as the earth mother. The mystery of how one god carries so many forms, names, and genders is best left to the druids and field priests who prepare the many sacrifices to Porevit and Yarila.

As a deity both wild and tame, both growing and harvested, only his priests (and the peasants who rely on his blessings) seem to know when to call on Porevit and when to call on Yarila. It really surprises no one to learn that the fey brought Porevit and Yarila to Zobeck.

The rites of Porevit and Yarila almost always involve food, wine, or green wood burnt to smoke, and they often extend for six or eight hours. The spring equinox and the winter solstice are especially sacred times when symbolic human sacrifices are buried in the fields, and figures made of straw are set alight to bring back the sun, respectively.

HIGH PRIEST

The current high priest of Porevit and Yarila is Ogolai Kiyat, an elderly centaur who wandered in from the Rothenian plains one winter and has led the faith in the Vineyard temple ever since. His wisdom is profound, and being a centaur seems only to confirm the dual nature of his god to the pious followers he guides in worship.

WHAT POREVIT AND YARILA DEMAND

More than merely respect for the wild and growing things, Porevit's mysteries demand that one frequently abstain from meat, plant as often as reap, and be fruitful, drunken, and generous on high holy days. Worshipers must provide alms if asked. Male followers of Porevit must participate in the harvest while Yarila's female followers must participate in the spring planting.

RAVA, GODDESS OF GEARS



Gear Goddess; the Clockwork Oracle; Mother of Industry; Spinner of Fate; Merchant Goddess; patron of the city of Zobeck

Rava is a goddess whose beneficence has given Zobeck autoscribes, clockwork scullions, the gearforged, and many more inventions. Merchants believe she blesses their hard work, and her mark goes on many contracts and bills of lading as a surety of delivery or payment. She is the patron goddess of the city and a sponsor of magic, knowledge, and industry.

Rava's physical form resembles a six-armed woman, and she is often shown weaving or spinning. She is depicted as a maiden, as the mother of industry, and as a wise crone in different shrines and at different seasons.

The industrious, the learned, and the gearforged are Rava's closest followers, and dwarves, humans, and kobolds all have shrines to her. Most of her followers are hard-working and willing to try new things. Novelty and invention are a part of her teachings as much as tradition and crafting. Alchemists, wizards, scribes, guildmasters, weavers, and merchants all turn to Rava for wise counsel.

HIGH PRIEST/PRIESTESS

The current human high priestess of Rava is Lena Ravovik. Her surname is the traditional one for priests and priestesses of Rava who abandon their families and former lives when they enter the service of the goddess. The current dwarven high priest is Ondli Firedrake.

WHAT RAVA DEMANDS

Rava demands her followers be wise and hard-working. While learning and scholarship are prized among her followers, so too is the discovery and the making of new things. As a goddess of both novelty and fate, she demands her followers seek out new learning and steer the world's fate to peace and plenty. In Zobeck, Rava's followers must defend her patron city against any threat the Clockwork Oracle identifies.

THE CLOCKWORK ORACLE

The temple of the Gear Goddess inspires the citizens of Zobeck to great deeds of industry, to the manufacture of ever-better clockworks, and to the understanding of mechanisms and the natural philosophy of breath, blood, and steel that led to the birth of the gearforged. But the temple is also a place of mysteries, and nothing is more mysterious about the Gear Goddess than the Clockwork Oracle, a wall of silver dials, actuators, golden balance wheels, and reciprocating gears that together form a face said to be inhabited on high holy days by the goddess herself.

On those occasions when the oracle speaks, roughly every 60 days, the temple is packed with supplicants the priests must organize and whose petitions the priests weigh. Unlike crab diviners, the oracle's pronouncements are not a matter of simple yes-or-no fortunetelling.

The Clockwork Oracle tells when a person might die, who might betray a merchant's hidden dealings, and other secrets of the Free City's highest and most powerful. More than that, she speaks to the members of the Spyglass Guild, and she actively works to keep Zobeck independent. The oracle is the goddess's most powerful form of support for the city's peace and prosperity.

SUPPLICANTS TO THE ORACLE

In any particular session, the oracle may speak for hours or may refuse to speak at all. As a result, the priests of the Gear Goddess monitor access to the Clockwork Oracle very strictly indeed.

Wealth and power are important considerations when determining who might speak to her but so are arcane knowledge, piety in the faith of the city's patron goddess, and devotion to civic duty.

Only four supplicants are usually chosen, though in times of great danger, more supplicants are sometimes granted a chance to ask their questions. A donation to the temple helps one's odds, and many desperate merchants offer hundreds of gold ducats to the temple for this purpose. Many are disappointed.

Citizens are always given preference in gaining an audience with the oracle. One consul from the Free City Council and one guildmaster from the city's great guilds always receive invitations, and one hero or arcanist of note is usually invited to attend the day. The fourth is usually a petitioner from the public.

THE FACE OF THE DIVINE

The lucky few enter the sanctum beneath the temple's rotating pulpit, a place filled with the smell of metal and oil, not far from the workshop where the goddess's followers create small examples of clockwork magic in her name. The small shrine below the temple is just large enough for the supplicants and two priests. One priest is invariably Lena Ravovik and the other is often the youngest and strongest in the temple. The chosen supplicants may each ask one question. If the goddess deems the question worthy she may answer, but on many

occasions, the goddess answers no questions. Instead, she charges her listeners with a quest or task in service to the city. Those who refuse are invariably exiled or even attacked by zealous gearforged.

The supplicants who succeed in such tasks are hailed as heroes if they survive. Those who fail are said to be reborn within the forges of the Foundryman's Guild as new gearforged souls.

VOICE OF THE GODDESS

The Gear Goddess's answers are often strange and sometimes physical. A strip of paper may scroll out of the Oracle's mouth or rest on its clacking wooden tongue. This small paper is neatly marked with a map or a message written in some strange cipher the priests will solve for a small fee.

Sometimes the oracle's communication takes the form of a weaving or a clever piece of inlaid steel, but the physical prophecies of the oracle are always holy items, kept and revered by the priests of the shrine.

A few of these items are hidden away from public eyes, but many of the older ones are displayed as a manifestation of the goddess's power, her word made real. Gearforged and clockwork mechanisms that ask questions of the oracle generally understand the answer without speech. No one but the clockwork creatures seem to understand how this works. A small clockwork mechanism (usually but not invariably humanoid) may step forward to act out a scene in answer to a question. Or the many-geared face of the oracle may whir, click, and buzz, and within the overtones and harmonics of her mechanism, the faithful may hear her voice speaking, though the impious or faithless hear nothing but noise.

MASKS OF THE GODS

Midgard's gods do not steadfastly embody a certain alignment or control very specific domains. Instead, the appearance and goals of these mysterious, malleable, and unfathomable deities shift in unpredictable ways from town to town and region to region. They change names, tenets, and sometimes portfolios, and they become many different things to different peoples.

For this reason, Midgard's religious scholars say the gods wear masks, and they liken these divinities to powerful universal forces rather than superhuman individuals. The scholars say these beings' true identities can never be known or their motivations fully understood, and because of their "masks," these gods' faiths cannot ever be fully eradicated, for they manifest themselves in so many ways all across Midgard.

Though scholars claim the ultimate truth of the divine is unknowable, this doesn't stop people from guessing at the gods' alliances and enmities and which entities are simply different names for the same divine force. Some gods are open about the names they prefer in different lands, but others are secretive and actively obscure the links between their followings in various parts of the world.

VOLUND, LORD OF FIRE

God of Fire, Smiths, Marriage, and Horsemanship



Called Svarog among humans and Volund among dwarves, the god of smiths and fire is a friend and rival to the Gear Goddess Rava. Bearded and often a traveler, the work of the smith-god is part of many things, from tools to weapons, from nails to hearths. Every dwarven anvil is sacred to him and bears his mark.

Among humans, Svarog is also the god of marriage and horsemen, though dwarves consider this a corruption of the true faith. In Zobeck, Svarog's son, the Sun God Khors, is worshiped in his father's temple. The old temple was associated with the nobility and burned to the ground during the Great Revolt.

The great festival of Volund is the autumnal equinox, when the Fire Blessing is laid on weapons, armor, and metal tools (and some say on the gearforged as well) at a great and fiery nighttime service that culminates in the Anvil Prayer. The noise of it is tremendous, for nearly every priest, smith, geargrinder, and steamworker in the city brings an anvil or a metal pan to hammer on during the chorus.

HIGH PRIEST

Ondli Firedrake serves the community as the high priest of Volund (in addition to his duties as high priest of Rava for the dwarves).

WHAT VOLUND DEMANDS

Volund demands his dwarven followers master metalwork and have no fear of fire, smoke, and ashes. He demands his human followers master the horse and marry by the age of 23 or leave his priesthood. All Volund's followers must make pilgrimages to his shrines in the south and in the north once in their lives, carrying a hammer as his token. The truly devout pull an anvil on the pilgrimage for his blessing.

LESSER GODS

The shrines in Zobeck are intermingled and syncretic: some gods appear to visit other gods' temples, and some temples draw worshipers from many peoples and lands. Two gods who are not native to Zobeck but who have some following there are Sarastra and Khors. Neither has a dedicated temple or shrine within the city, though the Sun God once did, and his followers in the Order of the Undying Sun maintain a shrine to him in their commandery.

KHORS, THE SUN GOD

Son of Svarog (whom the traders of Siwal call Aten or Amon-Ra), Khors resembles one of the elemental gods of the Eastern Empire, though he is their foe. He is popular primarily among a few of the Collegium, and the knights of the Order of the Undying Sun are his followers. Though the Sun God is generally in decline in the Crossroads, Khors stands supreme within the Magdar Kingdom. He is a creature of hope, magic, and the glory that a noble cause may win. Kings and aristocrats are among his most devoted servants.

SARASTRA, GODDESS OF NIGHT AND MAGIC

Said to be a goddess among the fey and certainly popular in Triolo, Corremel, and the south, Sarastra's priests claim she is the source of all darkness and raw arcane energies. She is also the patroness of the shadow fey.

CULTS AND HERESIES

Most citizens of the Free City are hardworking, thrifty, and honest—the foundation of a prosperous polity and the envy of nations of serfs, peasants, and slaves. But there are always exceptions.

While Zobeckers are mostly honest, they also have their share of bandits and robber barons, for trade and commerce are nothing if not cutthroat enterprises. To gain an edge in that struggle, some merchants and barge captains will pledge blood and souls to dark masters.

CULT OF THE YELLOW SIGN

Little is known of this cult outside of the Arcane Collegium—though perhaps some hint exists in the records kept at the Blue House and the Spyglass Guild. The cult of the Yellow Sign is one of alien magic and power granted to those initiates to a mystery tied somehow to the wellsprings of star and shadow magic. The masters of the Collegium say little about it, though they look worried when the subject comes up.

What is known is the Cult of the Yellow Sign originates in the east. It is tied to the worship of Khors and involves the imminent return of a messiah or herald of some great power. This herald is sometimes called Hallisar or sometimes the Shining One, and he will speak directly to the minds of those who grant him obeisance and worship.

What Hallisar wants is unclear: a "great cleansing" and a "pure land" are both popular images in the repetitive, mind-numbing chants and screeds of his followers. His cultists seem to have some mastery over space and time, appearing and disappearing within the city at will. No shrine to the Yellow Sign has ever been found.

The clockwork mages are experimenting to see if they might isolate some clue to Hallisar's origins or determine any weaknesses of the cult—so far without success.

MAMMON, ARCH-DEVIL OF GREED

In a city where everyone seems to be growing rich, some can never quite get enough. Arch-Devil Mammon's worship spreads among the guilds and the merchants of Zobeck despite all efforts to destroy it, and they honor him with shrines boasting floors of hammered coins and bejeweled idols of gold and silver. The devil of wealth promises Zobeckers exactly what they want to hear. Indeed, so prevalent is the cult that any successful business owner will invariably be hounded by rumors of a pact with Mammon.

The reality is much less than the rumor in this case. Mammon preys on the wealthy, but rarely does he grant wealth. Rather, he plays on the fears of those already rich that they might lose their good fortune and in this way ensnares them into his vile service, coupling with devils and abasing themselves to win the Golden Devil's favor. Dwarves seem more than usually tempted by Mammon's offers to make their wealth safe and to make it breed.

The Redcloaks and the Sons of Mammon (also called Levelers) are worshippers of Mammon.

MARENA, THE RED GODDESS

The goddess of death and the debauched has a cult that simply cannot be stamped out, no matter how hard the watch and the Griffon Knights try. The Red Goddess's lust for flesh and sacrifice is unquenchable. Her followers snatch citizens from the streets, and children are warned the Red Bride will take them away if they do not obey their parents.

Marena's shrines are often small, little more than an innocuous stone smeared with blood that serves as an altar. She is exceedingly popular with both the very wealthy (who enjoy her debaucheries) and the very poor (who lust for revenge or at least for protection against her plagues). Her sign of a small, red-stained skull is a

common bit of beadwork or broach, though technically even this is forbidden within the city walls.

Her more devout followers use strangling sashes to murder their offerings, though her kobold followers are supposedly quite inventive in their sacrifices. Kobolds seem quite insanely fond of the Red Goddess, despite the fact she seems to offer them little in return. Rumor has it, however, that she is seen as a kobold equivalent to Yarila and Porevit and that Marena blesses all kobold eggs to hatch and grow stealthy.

RAT CULT

For long centuries, the least of all the demon cults has been in the cities, where a morsel of food laid at a half-neglected shrine of the rat cult of Chittr'k'k (pronounced CHIT-er-ek-ek) often brings some boon. Indeed, the small glint of greenish fire that indicates a sacrifice has been accepted is one of the ways that the cult itself recognizes the presence of its demonic patron, and such light is often mimicked by its adherents in their rituals and secret countersigns.

In Zobeck, the cult occasionally appears on the docks but far more often in the Cartways and crypts of the Undercity. The cult is often pursued and extinguished in one or another city along the River Argent, from Zobeck all the way to its mouth at the Ruby Sea, but as soon as it is wiped out, another brother or sister of the rat is sent to reestablish contact.

Chittr'k'k Cult Goals

The cult of Chittr'k'k has rather simple goals: eat, breed more rats, summon avatars of their lord. At the same time, its demonic master revels in fouling and destroying the goods and foodstuff of others. Indeed, the scouting of food and despoiling of grain, beans, and other nourishment is a common practice of both rats and Chittr'k'k's followers.

However, the goal of summoning more rats is an even more compelling urge, either through feeding and breeding normal rats, through magical summoning, or through the use of magical idols.

Idols of the Rat Lord. The cult carves and maintains small statues of Chittr'k'k, which it places in small niches or under eaves, as impromptu shrines to the Rat Lord. Some are even found on ships, hidden in bilgewater or a ballast hold. They are usually of carved wood, showing the bright teeth and sometimes the fiery green tail of the demon lord, and its small, clawed hands are typically open enough to hold a small object. The cult values the oldest of these statues highly, treating them as divine or saintly relics, often with particular names, like Old Buck, Nabby Tooth, or Whisker Prince. They will strive to recover any of these believed lost or taken by their foes.

As objects of veneration, believers and others seeking some small blessing leave bits of hair, meat, candles, and even bread or blood offerings at the statue, either smeared on its mouth or placed into its claws. Cat fur and cat paws are popular sacrifices. In return, Chittr'k'k sometimes dispenses a minor boon.

TABLE 6–1: BOONS OF CHITTR'K'K

d12	Result
1	No effect.
2	***Rat's Eye.*** A sense of wakeful alertness, as after a short rest.
3	***Stolen Meal.*** A sense of fullness, as after a good meal.
4	***Demonic Word.*** Adds 1d4 to one ability check within the next hour.
5	***Scathing Insult.*** An enemy of Chittr'k'k suffers disadvantage on their next roll within the next hour.
6	***Rat Gossip.*** You can pass a message to a friend of the cult within 120 feet within 1 minute.
7	***Hand of the Rat Lord.*** Adds 1d4 to the believer's next saving throw roll within 1 hour.
8	***Darkness Creeps In.*** One normal candle or lantern is extinguished.
9	***Soul Fire Touch.*** The believer loses 1 hp and adds 1d4 necrotic damage to their next damage roll within 1 hour. (The believer must still attack normally, though magical attacks are also strengthened.) This appears as a flash of green fire.
10	***Rat's Path.*** You slip beneath a door or through bars normally too small for you.
11	***Rat's Paw.*** An object you desire (less than 1 pound in weight), floats down from a high place to the floor.
12	***Glory to the Chittering Horde.*** A *bless* spell graces all the followers of Chittr'k'k within 200 feet.



These boons never involve true healing or the mending of broken objects or broken hearts, as with more benevolent godlings. Indeed, Chittr'k'k's power is very weak and diffuse in all the cities and ships where he has followers, but it is strong enough to provide at least the illusion of warmth, comfort, wakefulness, and the like. In most such cases, the boon provides no actual warmth, sleep, or nourishment, but the illusion of comfort is very distinct and pleasing in the moment.

A priest or paladin of Chittr'k'k need not roll for the effect but gains the one desired.

When an idol has granted sufficient boons, it has also acquired divine power, which the cult's priests and preachers use to summon hordes of rats, to contact Chittr'k'k himself, to summon a **rattok** (see *Creature Codex*) servant of Chittr'k'k, or (in the case of truly ancient idols, brimming with divine power) even an avatar of the demon lord (see also **Chittr'k'k** in *Creature Codex*). The details of this level of summoning are best left to the GM but typically involve a ritual sacrifice or the destruction of a trove of food or magic.

Destruction and Loss. While the cult often pretends to help individuals, its goals as a group are starvation for humanoids and the rise of ratfolk everywhere (see also *Midgard Heroes Handbook* for more on ratfolk). They are most active in cities, abandoned villages, wastelands, and other regions where rats can thrive in the absence of humanoid extermination. They are sometimes aligned with other forces of destruction, such as goblin tribes, gnolls, or dragons of the Mharoti Empire who use them as spies and saboteurs to weaken a place before they send in valuable dragonborn troops.

The table below shows a variety of targets for the rat cult to attack and typical strategies.

Cult Leaders & Followers

Priests of the rat cult are few, though followers (even relatively indifferent followers) are common enough. Farmers leave an offering to keep rats off the threshing room floor, millers sprinkle flour at a shrine to avoid rats in the meal-bins and grain sacks, and even sailors often leave bits of bread or cheese out to avoid having their mooring lines and sails gnawed and spoiled.

Those priests who do follow Chittr'k'k are often pantheist priests (see *Midgard Heroes Handbook* for more on pantheist priests). They have access to the Vermin domain (see *Southlands Player's Guide*) or the Darkness domain (see *Deep Magic*).

TABLE 6–2: RAT SABOTAGE

d12	Result
1	Puncturing barrels or wineskins to spill the contents.
2	Eating the choicest stored food and defecating on the rest.
3	Gnawing through mooring lines or ship's rigging.
4	Removing caulk and sealant from a barge or ship's hull.
5	Devouring all the fruit in an orchard overnight.
6	Digging tunnels to undermine a statue, standing stone, or waymark.
7	Stripping an aristocrat's kitchen bare overnight.
8	Opening pens full of small animals, such as chickens or rabbits.
9	Fouling an altar or holy stone circle with blood and feces.
10	Destroying a hut by chewing through one of its load-bearing beams.
11	Chewing through fine clothes, making them rags.
12	Tipping over lanterns or candles to start fires.

In addition, the rat cult is widespread among beggars, ratfolk, sewer dwellers, kobold rogues, smugglers, and others. Dock workers, stevedores, bargefolk, and sailors are all at least familiar with it, though most are wise enough to distrust its claims.

The Rabble of Rats. The best-known leader of the rat cult in recent years is a human rogue named Marienga "Mischief" Slodna (LE human **bandit lord**, see *Tome of Beasts*), a very young and extremely clever leader of ratfolk, humans, and a few rattok demons. Raven-haired Marienga often presents herself as a fortuneteller, bard, or druid, but her green eyes shine brightest when she is up to thievery and mischief. Some believe she is a devil or imp in human form, and she certainly delights in tormenting the weak and the powerful alike.

The Rabble of Rats is her nomadic and devoted crew, spreading the word of Chittr'k'k up and down rivers, along navigable coasts, and in graveyards and undercities. They spend their days thieving small valuables, spoiling harvests, cutting mooring ropes at midnight, and stealing livestock—just enough to bring to a farmer's market early in the morning, selling them to some unwitting buyer as if they were Marienga's own flock or herd.

Working with Marienga to spread the word of Chittr'k'k is Brother Peal Tkonnar (NE ratfolk **druid**) who often calls groups of rats to some place as a distraction (such as in a market) while the rest of the gang makes off with valuables elsewhere. He is usually able to scrabble down into sewers or through narrow windows to escape pursuit, and on the rare occasions when he is imprisoned, he always seems to find his way out by dawn.

RAT PROPHETS

The cult of the rat lord believes that some living rats and some statues of Chittr'k'k are endowed with the gift of prophecy, foretelling storms, harvests, deaths, and the arrival of ratcatchers and trappers. These "true-speaking rats" are beloved and coddled members of any such cult, fed the choicest treats and generally pampered in exchange for their insight. While some non-believers claim these are frauds perpetrated through ventriloquism and cantrips, the cult itself does often seem to enjoy early warning of shipwrecks, poisoned bait, enormous storms, and failed harvests.

The Chitter Sisters. Lesser followers of the cult are twin sisters, Yelash and Yelanna, both **vampire spawn** with an innate ability to cast *conjure rats* (see below) once per day. The sisters call crypts and catacombs their home and are prone to moving their resting chambers twice per year. They often travel with zombies, necromancers, or other hangers-on and seem especially fond of traveling by boat.

The sisters claim to be seeking a holy relic, the *Teeth of Old Naga-Nar* (see **Chapter 7**), which once belonged to a **wererat** saint. On his death, the saint's teeth transmuted into divinely blessed (or demonically tainted) objects of veneration, but they were given to each of his disciples, weakening their power. Some believe that Yelash and Yelanna themselves are the grandchildren or great grandchildren of Naga-Nar.

Magic Items of the Rat Cult

The cult of the rat lord tends to be destructive rather than creative, but occasionally it fashions statues of its god or makes weapons and objects of veneration. See *lotion of pure filth*, *potion of persistence*, *potion of regurgitation*, *rat's tail*, and *Teeth of Old Naga-Nar* in **Chapter 7**.

Spells of the Rat Cult

The cult of Chittr'k'k has a number of low-level spells known to its followers, which are not widely found outside those circles. These are described below.

CHITTRK'K'S SOUL FIRE

2nd-Level Illusion | Bard, Sorcerer, Warlock, Wizard

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet

Components: S, M (a stick of charcoal or a chip of moonstone worth 5 gp)

Duration: Up to 1 minute (concentration)

You summon a bit of greenish fire to the top of your head, into one hand, or at the tip of your tail. It flares brightly, and all creatures that see your soul fire must make a Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the creature becomes charmed for the duration. While charmed by this spell, the creature seeks to follow the light, even into areas of bright light or darkness or into shallow water. The spell ends for an affected creature if it takes any damage or if someone else uses an action to shake the creature out of its stupor.

CONJURE RATS

1st-Level Conjuration | Cleric, Druid
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: 60 feet
Components: V, S
Duration: Up to 1 hour (concentration)

You summon rats or ratfolk that appear in unoccupied spaces that you can see within range. Choose one of the following options for what appears:

- One mildly hostile **wererat** (CR 2), which does not obey your verbal commands but might defend itself.
- One **ratfolk rogue** (see *Tome of Beasts*) (CR 1).
- Four **swarms of rats** or four **ratfolk** (see *Tome of Beasts*) (CR 1/4).
- Eight **giant rats** (CR 1/8).
- Sixteen normal **rats** (CR 0).

Each rat disappears when it drops to 0 hit points or when the spell ends. The summoned rats are friendly to you and your companions. Roll initiative for the summoned rats as a group, which has its own turns. They obey any verbal commands that you issue to them (no action required by you), except the wererat. If you don't issue any commands, they defend themselves from hostile creatures but otherwise take no actions. (The GM has the creatures' statistics.)

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using higher-level spell slots, you can choose one of the summoning options above, and more creatures appear: one additional creature with a 2nd-level slot or three additional creatures with a 4th-level slot and any summoned wererats obey verbal commands.

GNAW

Transmutation Cantrip | Cleric, Druid
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M (a rat's tooth)
Duration: Instantaneous

You touch a piece of wood, rope, cloth, thatch, or other organic material, and a hole appears through it up to 3 inches long and 1 inch in diameter, circumscribed with tooth marks as if chewed by rodents or other vermin. You can see through this hole and use line-of-sight spell effects to the other side.

This spell can be used to cut any rope or snap any branch up to 2 inches thick. It has no effect on metal or stone objects.

RAT PLAGUE

3rd-Level Necromancy | Cleric, Druid
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Components: V, S
Duration: 3 days

Your touch inflicts disease. Make a melee spell attack against a creature within reach. On a hit, you afflict the creature with one of two possible rat plagues, described below. At the end of each of the target's turns, it must make a Constitution saving throw. After failing three of these saving throws, the disease's effects last for the duration, and the creature stops making these saves. After succeeding on three of these saving throws, the creature recovers from the disease, and the spell ends. Since this spell induces a natural disease in its target, any effect that removes a disease or otherwise ameliorates a disease's effects apply to it.

Rat Fever. A creeping horror of rats, ratfolk, wererats, and all other rat-like creatures enters the creature's mind, and it fears contact with rats and is terrified of crowds. The creature is frightened for the duration.

Rat Shakes. Violent shivers convulse the creature's limbs, its speed is halved, and it cannot use the Dash action. After making any melee or spell attack, the creature falls prone.

SPOIL FOOD AND WATER

3rd-Level Conjuration | Cleric, Druid
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: 30 feet
Components: V, S
Duration: Instantaneous

You spoil 45 pounds of food, grain, or seeds and 30 gallons of water, ale, or other potable drinks on the ground or in containers within range, normally enough to sustain up to fifteen humanoids or five steeds for 24 hours. The food becomes moldy, rotten, vermin-infested, or liquefied. The water is filthy and foul-smelling, and any creature consuming either the food or the beverage is ill for the next 24 hours, moving at half speed and with disadvantage on all ability checks and saving throws.

At Higher Levels. If cast at 4th level, you spoil up to 150 pounds of food and 100 gallons of beverage. If cast at 5th level, you spoil up to 500 pounds of food and 300 gallons of beverage.

SCÁTHESIDHE

Not all malign cults are those of demons, devils, and dark gods. The lords and ladies of the Shadow Realm are also fond of pacts and gifts with foolish mortals. Sometimes the shadow fey take children and leave changelings behind to lead stolen lives. More often, the scáthesidhe take grown men or women as lovers, many of whom do not return.

Worst of all, these humans often see the truth of the fey realms, which are so beautiful and desirable they make strong men weep and beg to return. By keeping paradise just out of reach, the fey gain devoted followers.

Kobolds and dwarves seem remarkably resistant to fey blandishments. Gnomes are, if anything, fey lackeys and thralls, serving the shadow courts as its couriers, toadies, and (sometimes) arcane enforcers.

MAMA RYE AND THE CRAB DIVINERS

"You, boy! You have the look of a lost one about you. I can speak with Mother Crab on your behalf, but her truth does not come cheaply. Will you bare your soul to Mother Crab? More importantly, boy, can you bear the weight of your destiny?"

—Mama Rye

The future is not seen in crystalline orbs, tea leaves, or paper cards. It is whispered by crabs. For ages untold, the Kariv matriarchs have passed down to their daughters the secret rites of the ancient practice of Caruth, better known as crab divining or crab soothsaying. Originally, the traveling Kariv practiced Caruth to survive, divining safe passages, the weather, and sources of food and water. Now though, the Kariv use crab readings to divine the answers to any number of topics.

During Caruth, a crab diviner or soothsayer will draw a female **garroter crab** (see *Tome of Beasts*) from the waters of the River Argent, ritually cleanse it, and use it to perform a divination. The crabs can reputedly answer yes-or-no questions and reveal portents of the future through their actions and behavior. A crab divination always ends in the death of the chosen crab, and their corpses are examined for hidden clues about what the uncertain future holds.

The Kariv and the garroter crabs reputedly have an ancient pact whereby crabs willingly divulge secret truths to the Kariv at the price of their lives. What the crabs gain in return is a mystery, and certainly the Kariv say nothing of it. If crabs are unavailable, the Kariv can substitute a **red-banded line spider** (see *Tome of Beasts*), but they dislike doing so. Spiders are known to lie and are not bound by any truth pacts with the Kariv.

People that have experienced a crab reading are often awestruck by the power of Caruth and the eerie accuracy of the reading. These readings are not cheap, however, and a river of golden coins flows into the pockets of Zobeck's more renowned crab diviners. Often, a crab diviner will demand gold or favors as payment, depending on their whims at the time.

CALLING THE CRAB

Before attempting Caruth, diviners spend long hours choosing the right crab. The crab diviner will speak to various crabs to determine which is most knowledgeable about the topic at hand, a process known as Calling the Crab. Once she finds the proper crab, the Kariv cleanses it in a solution of equal parts rock salt and powdered silver. Thereafter, the diviner must wear gloves, for the touch of flesh will contaminate the cleansed crab.

The crab diviner must then prepare her soothing vessel—a large bowl made of woven river reeds and painted with arcane symbols. Many such bowls have passed through the matriarchs of each clan for generations. Meticulously, the crab diviner sprinkles handfuls of white-gray ash into the bowl while uttering barely audible intonations. This special ash comes from the cremated remains of prior crabs that gave their bodies to Caruth.

Apprentice crab diviners receive a pinch of their mentor's ash to cultivate their own soothing bowl. In this way, modern practitioners trace their power back to the very first crab diviners. Using an ivory comb, the crab diviner grooms the bed of ash 13 times, top to bottom, then side to side, until the ash is perfectly level and even. She then reverently lowers the crab into the bowl.

The garroter crab sits listless in the bowl, slowly moving its strangling claw back and forth. When the crab diviner enchants the crab using *animal friendship*, the crab stops whipping the air and stands on its hind legs with claws outstretched in a penitent position.

Now the reading may begin, and the crab diviner pulls the tools of her trade from a black velvet sack—a ceremonial dagger of exquisite design and a polished, rune-scored finger bone.

With the finger bone placed on the left of bowl, the crab diviner takes the client's right hand and, without explanation, quickly slashes the client's palm with the dagger. She holds the bleeding palm over the right side of the bowl to guide a single drop of blood onto the ashen bed. The client's hand must bleed throughout the reading, and any attempt to stop the bleeding or bandage the hand brings a sharp warning: "Close the wound, you close my window. Hold still."

The crab diviner may ask only yes-or-no questions as she slowly circles the top of the bowl with the dagger, alternating clockwise and counter-clockwise with each question asked. To signal "yes," the crab paces to the right and touches the client's blood. To signal "no," the crab veers sharply left and touches the finger bone.

This crescendo of questioning builds until the crab diviner feels the time has come to bark a sharp command at the crab, which rolls over onto its back. The crab diviner then kills the crab with a single smooth stroke of her dagger. She removes the crab from the bowl and examines the shapes in the ash left by its wanderings and the blood spattering. Finally, she peals back the crab's shell and scrutinizes the markings on its inside to discern Mother Crab's secret truth.

PROPHET OF THE CRAB: MAMA RYE

Mama Rye (see also **Chapter 5**)—matriarch of the powerful Galati Clan and the closest thing the Kariv have to nobility—is the most renowned crab diviner in Zobeck. Despite standing just over 5 feet tall with thin, iron-gray hair, no one is fooled by Mama Rye's age and physical frailty. A domineering personality instantly establishes her as a force to be reckoned with in any social exchange.

Her prowess in Caruth is legendary, and her readings are only given to those of prestige and standing in Zobeck. Even then, her readings often cost thousands, and this price can increase dramatically, depending upon the nature of the information sought or the person seeking it.

Mama Rye is so named because of the elixir she frequently brews from rye infected with ergot, which produces vivid hallucinations. Under the influence of her concoction, Mama Rye's consciousness travels to other planes. Her frequent use of ergot led her to suffer a stroke several years ago, and as a result, her right eye is dead and clouded. The Kariv believe Mama Rye's dead eye only increases her divinatory powers.

Mama Rye also prominently bears the sign of the Cloven Nine, a nine-pointed star, on the back of her left hand. If asked about her diabolical branding, Mama Rye coolly responds, "Aye, in the battle between the heavens and hells, my allegiance was chosen for me." She refuses to elaborate.

Mama Rye's familiar, a homunculus named Aden, resembles a child's doll covered in black raven feathers. Mama Rye often carries Aden around in her belt, and he appears as nothing more than a strange fetish. Aden can often be found lying about motionless in Mama Rye's wagon, mentally recording all that he sees and hears about Mama Rye's clients while they wait for their crab divining. To those who know about Aden, he is quite animated and chirps frequently. Aden has a long prehensile tail completely hidden by his feather coat, and he can occasionally be found hanging upside down from one of his various perches in Mama Rye's wagon.

DIVINING THE SHELL

As with all divinations, the best readings during play are often vague or riddles, and the full weight of their meaning is not realized until a crucial point in time when the PCs have that sudden "Aha!" moment. You should never part with more information than you want the players to have. If used correctly, divinations can make wonderful tools for adventure and campaign advancement. If all else fails and the players are absolutely stumped and need help getting to the next point of the adventure, a crab divination is a flavorful (no pun intended) way of getting them back on track and into the game. Of course, a visit to a crab diviner is also a great way to supply the party with plot hooks, their destiny unfolding according to the ken of Mother Crab.

Mood and tone are central to a crab divination scene. The reading should be methodical and not rushed. The crab diviner's dagger scrapes the reeds as it slowly circles the soothing bowl (which you can pantomime for the players). She phrases questions as such, "Mother Crab, we must know your truth. If the vampire is truly slain, choose the blood, if not, then grasp the bone," for basic true-or-false questions.

Additionally, the spot of blood can represent life or good, whereas the bone can represent death or evil. Play up the culture of the Kariv as well. If a spider is being used instead of a crab, for example, instead of using the reverent title "Mother Crab," the crab diviner uses the term "foul witch." The Kariv believe wicked people reincarnate as spiders.

After a series of "yes" or "no" responses, a particular question that stymies Mother Crab or leads to indecision on her part could also be a powerful plot catalyst. ("Mother Crab says you are not ready for such knowledge" or "Mother Crab cannot answer that. Your acts shall decide the answer.") It is also a particularly useful way of dealing with unexpected or off-topic questions directed to the crab diviner from the players.

Less significant points should be the subject of direct "yes" or "no" questions directed to the crab while larger issues and plot points should be saved for the final vague divination of the crab's shell. As the crab diviner scrutinizes the crab's behavior, certain responses become more meaningful based on the crab's actions.

TABLE 6–3: KNOWLEDGE OF CARUTH

A creature proficient in the Arcana or History skills can learn more about the practice of Caruth. When a character makes a successful Intelligence (Arcana or History) check, reveal the following information, including the information from lower DCs. A character raised among the Kariv or who has spent at least 10 years in close company with the Kariv has advantage on this Intelligence check.

DC	Knowledge Gained
10	Many Kariv are known to practice a type of divination known as Caruth, where garroter crabs are drawn from the river and used to reveal the future during a special ceremony. The technique is passed down from mother to daughter and is never taught to dechas (or non-Kariv).
13	Only female crabs are used in Caruth. They can be called on to answer questions, and their bodies examined to reveal portents of the future. A true Caruth reading always ends in the death of the crab, which delivers the final message. If a crab survives, the reading is incomplete and is bad luck, for the crab carries that person's future away with it (disadvantage on all saving throws for a month or until *remove curse* is used)
17	Due to their semi-nomadic nature, the Kariv cannot always find crabs for their divinations. They may substitute a large spider, but they rarely do. Spiders are known to lie, whereas the crabs' pact with the Kariv ensures they always tell the truth. A crab diviner using a spider in a Caruth reading is either a fraud, intentionally trying to swindle the party, or unable to call a crab for some reason.

For example, the crab could dip its claw into the blood and taste it, signifying "yes" to a question but with a decidedly macabre undertone. An emphatic "no" response might entail Mother Crab snapping the finger bone with her claw or flinging it across the bowl. If possible, make the crab's behavior symbolic of something the PCs are likely to encounter later. This requires some planning on your part, but a little planning can go a long way when it comes to foreshadowing events.

Reading the actual markings beneath the crab's shell provides a wonderful opportunity for the GM to create a climactic and spooky moment to cap off the entire scene. Examples of possible signs include the following:

- Garroter crabs reproduce prolifically and carry hundreds of eggs beneath their shells, but this crab has no eggs. The crab's barren nature is a sign of impending death.
- An actual word or short phrase, easily read by the party but ambiguous in its meaning, appears on the underside of the shell formed out of natural convolutions in the shell's structure.
- A rudimentary map can be seen on the underside of the shell, made by the scratching of the crab diviner's blade as the crab squirmed beneath in its death throes.
- A crude picture, resembling an inkblot, formed of the crab's blood appears on the underside of the shell. This picture could be anything—a portrait of someone the PCs will later meet, a scene involving one of the PCs, or an ominous symbol.
- Peeling back the shell reveals an object that plainly should not be there, such as a lock of hair, a pearl, or a key. This is especially powerful if the party is tracking someone and something of the target's appears beneath the crab's shell.
- When the crab's shell is removed, an incomplete proto-shell is found beneath. Under the surface, things are not as they appear.
- The bottom of the crab's shell is rotten and diseased. Something evil has been fomenting for some time and threatens to consume the party.
- The crab's shell is brittle and breaks into hundreds of tiny pieces. The party's current plans may fall apart and fail.
- When the crab's shell is removed, a noticeable and strange scent escapes. This scent could be anything, and the PCs could notice it again in the future at a critical time to warn them of danger or help them find someone.
- A rough outline of a spider can be seen beneath the shell, huddled above a number of dots equal to the number of party members. This signifies that an evil force pursues the party.

RELICS AND RELIQUARIES

Hidden in darkened shrines and catacombs beneath gilded altars, the relics of Zobeck's multitude of saints linger in sacred monstrances and phylacteries as physical embodiments of the power of the faithful and the miracles of belief. Of the many saints, there is St. Gregario for alchemists and St. Piran for miners. Dwarven airship captains curse their crews in the

name of St. Kalimachus, and the taverns of the Gullet hang empty mugs to honor St. Emeric. The Kariv crab diviners invoke Mother Crab, also known as St. Caruth, who gives her name to their art. Minions of the Mouse King pay homage to the Thousand-Mouthed St. Norvegicus, to whom commoners pray to relieve toothaches. Some ironies persist as well, such as St. Agnetta, who receives homage from the courtesans of the Red Houses, though she herself was chaste.

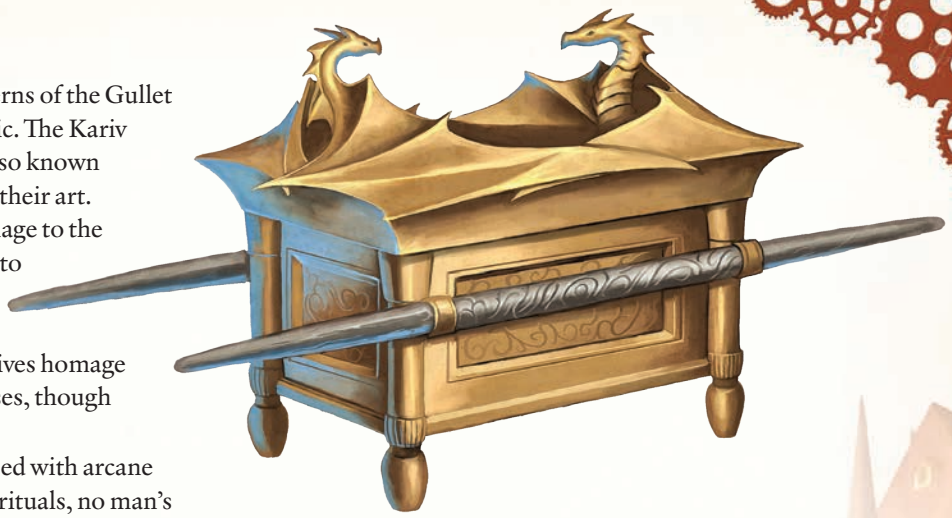
Unlike common magic items infused with arcane and divine energy through elaborate rituals, no man's hand controls the spontaneous divine spark that gives a relic its miraculous power. Faith and veneration somehow give rise to a relic's holy energy. Yet the process is unpredictable, and no one has ever witnessed the birth of a relic. For instance, a family may find that generations after their grandsire cut a souvenir finger from the corpse of St. Lodovico, martyred patron of portals, the shriveled and morbid keepsake prevents the picking of nearby locks—or the finger may simply remain a powerless curiosity of faith.

True relics—the bodies and personal items of saints—are rarely entrusted to individuals except in the direst of circumstances. They are usually held within castles or secured deep within temples. Lesser relics, such as scraps of cloth and small items of jewelry, can take on a divine spark over time. Below is but a small selection of the thousands of hallowed objects found in Zobeck and the powers these bones, ashes, and other fragments grant to those who venerate their source.

ARK OF ST. BELLANDRUS

Once a source of tremendous power for House Stross, this ark is a large, solid-gold receptacle that acts as a massive arcane battery. Now held by the Arcane Collegium, the ark contains the single remaining bone fragment of St. Bellandrus—the most powerful sorcerer to ever attend the college. A prideful and petty child, Bellandrus was disintegrated by jealous rivals, but this remnant retains a powerful spark of his arcane energy. The ark weighs 1,500 pounds and requires at least two creatures to lift it.

The influence of the relic within causes the ark to amplify arcane energies and allows for incredible modifications of spells. The jealousy of Bellandrus infests the ark though, and once a spellcaster removes their hand from the device, their remaining spells or potential spells disappear from their memory.



Previous attempts to translate the relic into a smaller, more portable reliquary failed.

Power of the Ark. A minimum combined Strength score of 30 is needed to lift and carry the *Ark of St. Bellandrus*. While in physical contact with the ark, an arcane spellcaster gains access to 10 sorcery points and the ability to use the following Metamagic abilities as a sorcerer: Careful Spell, Distant Spell, Empowered Spell, Extended Spell, Heightened Spell, Quickened Spell, and Twinned Spell. These sorcery points cannot be used to regain spent spell slots. When a caster touching the ark loses contact with it for any reason, they lose a number of spell slots equal to the number of sorcery points left in the ark, starting with their highest-level spell slots. The ark's sorcery points are replenished at dawn, and the spellcaster regains lost spell slots after a long rest.

BRANDEA OF THE PILLAR SAINTS

In protest of the despotic regime of House Stross, six hermits now revered as saints perched atop skinny, four-story pillars outside the walls of Zobeck. Preaching from that height, they made a public display of morality and rejection of the greed and corruption of the nobility. Martyred by House Stross, their deaths sparked a seed of dissent that would lead to revolution. Grateful citizens regularly honor their crypts in the Shrine of Martyrs in the Temple District.

Stored in proximity to the saints are small bone boxes containing portions of silk, known as brandea, carefully snipped from the death robes of the saints. After lying for a time in contact with the holy remains and being properly prepared, these brandea are thereafter treated as relics. They carry the martyrs' belief that unbridled pursuit of earthly ambition corrupts.

Power of the Brandea. If one of these small snippets is worn as a tied cloth ring, it becomes a *ring of feather falling*. While worn as a cloth bracelet, a *Brandea of the*

Pillar Saints allows the wearer to cast *levitate* once per day (restored at dawn) for a number of rounds equal to the wearer's character level.

CLOCKWORK MUMMY OF ST. HEVITICUS

The incorruptible body of St. Heviticus still rests where the dwarf hermit expired—hunched over a scribe's desk deep below the Temple of Rava. However, his well-preserved corpse is now almost completely hidden by a nest of complicated gears, golden levers, pulleys, and pneumatic ink pumps.

Responsible for the design and construction of the Clockwork Oracle, the dying hermit produced a final set of schematics: meticulous plans for the preparation of his own corpse that involved the incorporation of enchanted gears and blessed cylinders. Acolytes transformed the saint's body where it expired, turning his secluded alcove into a marvelous contraption to venerate the divinely inspired inventor. His humble desk became a shrine.

The grand contraption can be reset and wound but once a month, and it operates for one week. During this time, the contraption produces a single set of plans for miraculous mechanical wonders—usually clockwork familiars, advanced scullions, clockwork hounds, and steam golems—that provide the guilds of Zobeck with technology that grows more complex each year. Considered relics themselves, these meticulous technical drawings are masterpieces of clarity and innovation. Pious prayers to Rava for the bequest of some specific technology are often heard by the saint if made in his presence, though access to the chamber is granted rarely and only in times of great need.

Power of the Blueprints. A creature in possession of a technical drawing gains a +10 bonus to all ability checks made to produce the creation described.

Power of the Mummy. Instead of producing a technical diagram, the *Clockwork Mummy of St. Heviticus* can produce up to 20 spell levels of spell scrolls each day from the school of clockwork magic (see **Chapter 7** or *Midgard Heroes Handbook*).

HOLY GEARS OF RAVA

Once per decade, acolytes replace the worn gears of the *Clockwork Mummy of St. Heviticus*, sharpening and recycling the sacred components and donating them to the production of scullions and clockwork familiars, granting these gifted creations enhanced sentience. The filings and shavings from these recycled gears are meticulously collected and worked into small amulets worn by the faithful as an encolpion.

Power of the Gears. Any construct or gearforged built or repaired with some of these gears increases their Intelligence and Wisdom scores by +2 each.

MUMMIFIED MONKS OF MARENA

Scattered among dark sanctuaries and hidden cellars in lower Zobeck are roughly two dozen self-mummified monks of the Red Goddess. Typically older male followers of the goddess who have outlived their usefulness as subordinates to the priestesses of the faith, they end their own lives in a slow sacrificial suicide by eating only harsh, mildly poisonous strands of cavelight moss. This diet preserves their bodies to a remarkable degree in a foul mockery of holy incorruptibility.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

- Kobolds of the Geargrinder's Guild, fed up with Rava's monopoly on the dissemination of technology, attempt to sabotage the *Clockwork Mummy of St. Heviticus*. The PCs are hired to perform the deed or investigate the disappearance of the missing gears.
- When ground to a powder, the poisonous bark of the yam root is deceptively similar to that used to brew *Mummy-Skin Tea of the Red Goddess* and is a key ingredient in the manufacture of midnight tears. The PCs investigate a series of mysterious poisonings of the followers of the Red Goddess.
- Ghouls are stealing true relics and corrupting them in unholy rites, staging elaborate feasts of the mummified flesh in hopes of absorbing the power they believe lies within. The church of Lada requests the party's aid and loans them the powerful *Thigh Bones of St. Mauritz*.
- The Mouse King is murdered, and the PCs are caught in the power struggle. They must discover and return his body to the care of the *Thousand-Mouthed King*.
- The PCs seek to bring a companion back from the dead and wish to gain the blessings of one of Perun's relics, a *Holy Hand of the Spear Maiden*. However, there is a price.
- An army of ghouls advances on Zobeck, and spellcasters are called to repel the invaders with incredible arcane blasts from the *Ark of St. Bellandrus*.

These relics are periodically displayed as an example of loyalty to the Red Goddess, at which time her priestesses remove patches of parchment-like skin from these perfect specimens, which is a rare prize among the faithful.

Power of the Mummies. Any corpse within 30 feet of one of the *Mummified Monks of Marena* gains the benefits of the *gentle repose* spell.

MUMMY-SKIN TEA OF THE RED GODDESS

This potent concoction is brewed from a fine brown powder ground from thin strips of parchment-like skin meticulously removed from the preserved bodies of devout monks. Those imbibers with the strength to drink this tea fall into a gentle state of dulled sensation but heightened consciousness lasting several hours, which also elicits a certain recognition and grants some concessions from the undead.

Power of the Mummy-Skin Tea. The drinker of *Mummy-Skin Tea of the Red Goddess* must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the drinker takes 36 (8d8) necrotic damage and has its hit point maximum reduced by the same amount. Its hit point maximum can be restored with *greater restoration* or similar magic. On a successful save, the creature gains 2d10 temporary hit points, and the next time it would be reduced to 0 hit points, it is reduced to 1 hit point instead.

All undead recognize and respect this state, and the imbiber gains advantage on all Charisma checks made to interact with intelligent undead. Finally, the imbiber gains the ability to *speak with dead* and may ask three questions of any corpse encountered.

RESURRECTION RELICS OF PERUN

Long ago, Perun sent the spear-maidens to walk the streets of Zobeck in corporeal form and bring justice to the young city in a time of great suffering. These angelic maidens fought bravely through dismemberment and death, reborn each time to wage war on injustice, until their earthly incarnations finally failed, and they passed into true death with honor.

These spear-maidens continue to serve their god in the mortal realm via the relics venerated in Perun's temples. While their bodies lie in deep catacombs, the spear hands of several maidens rest in elaborate gilded reliquaries that depict scenes of great victories. Once per week, a *Holy Hand of the Spear Maiden* can bestow a powerful blessing on heroes who die with their quests unfulfilled.

Power of the Holy Hand. A spellcaster that uses a *Holy Hand of the Spear Maiden* as a spellcasting focus when casting *raise dead* instead casts *resurrection*, requiring no higher spell slots or more expensive material components. Additionally, if a druid uses this relic while casting *reincarnation*, they can choose which form the target is reincarnated as. A living member of the desired type of creature, who cannot have recently performed any unjust acts, must be present. This artifact has no effect on those dying of old age.

ST. NORVEGICUS, THE THOUSAND-MOUTHED KING

Unique among patrons, St. Norvegicus is not a single individual, nor even human, for that matter. Rather, St. Norvegicus is an accumulated and growing mound of relics—the desiccated remains of dozens of rats and mice intertwined and knotted at their tails. Indeed, the city's mice and rats believe this mound contains the interwoven corpses of each and every past Mouse King of Zobeck.

Kept in a golden idol shaped in the form of multiple rearing rats, ownership of the relic serves as the true badge of authority for all sitting Mouse Kings and enables them to reliably consult the collective wisdom of their predecessors three times each day. Due to the sometimes-treacherous relationship between generations of kings contained in the relic though, any consultations beyond the first three in a single day are often colored by spite and falsehoods. When jealousy and ancient rivalries rupture into argument in this way, the relic goes silent for a month or more.

In addition, the relic commands the obedience of all rodents. They pay it homage and whisper information to it from throughout the city, feeding the knowledge of the relic. It can call rats and mice to do the bidding of the sitting Mouse King, and the kings make excellent use of this power.

When a Mouse King passes, the body is recovered (if possible) and moved to the center of the relic. In this strange ritual, the relic animates in a ravenous display of gnashing teeth, consuming the spirit and knowledge of the deceased king before absorbing the body, adding another corpse to the relic's growing collection.

Power of the Thousand-Mouthed King. A creature that consults the *Thousand-Mouthed King* while making an Intelligence check gains a +10 bonus to that check as the mummified relic erupts in a chittering chorus. Any consultations past the third in a 24-hour period have a cumulative 20% chance of providing misinformation or outright falsehood. The sitting Mouse King can use the relic to call 2d6 swarms of rats in urban environments, which arrive within 1d2 rounds.

THIGH BONE OF ST. MAURITZ FRUMARCH

A giant of a man and a dedicated hunter of the undead, the paladin St. Mauritz Frumarch infamously died not at the hands of the quarry he spent his life pursuing but in the jaws of a great drake that threatened Zobeck. Though little remained of his body, adventurers later recovered both of the saint's thighbones.

Hard as iron and sporting wrapped grips of moldering shrouds, each bone displays an extraordinary power to harm undead and ward off ghouls, who well remember the sting of the paladin's holy crusades against their kind. One of the bones rests in Lada's healing school to the south of Zobeck while the church often loans the other to righteous heroes when Zobeck faces threats from the ghoul empire.

Power of the Thigh Bone. Each bone counts as a *mace of disruption*. Additionally, whenever the wielder kills a **ghoul** or a **ghast** of any sort, all undead within 30 feet must make a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the undead creature is turned for 1 minute or until it takes any damage. A turned creature must spend its rounds trying to move as far away from the wielder as it can, and it can't willingly move to a space within 30 feet of the wielder. It also can't take reactions. For its action, it can use only the Dash action or try to escape from an effect that prevents it from moving. If there's nowhere to move, the creature can use the Dodge action.

A creature that succeeds on this saving throw is immune to the thigh bone's turn effect for 24 hours, though not immune to other Turn Undead or fear effects.

SAINTS

Many are the saints who rate no temple or priests in Zobeck but nevertheless have shrines or statues marking their veneration somewhere in the city, such as the Altar of the Lorelei along the docks or the shrines of St. Piran, St. Helba, and St. Hubertus. The lorelei receives offerings from all who work the river, yet the city has never fully embraced them.

Followers of St. Hubertus are hunters and woodsmen who rarely do more in town than sell their furs and venison taken from the Margreve. The followers of St. Piran are miners, almost all of them kobolds.

Everyone concedes that these shrines, though lesser holy places, still hold a small spark of the divine. Almost any god from outside Zobeck may (and likely does) have a shrine somewhere in the city, which the people respect and do not vandalize. The size and frequency of the offerings are a sign of the god's popularity among the citizens. If no offering is left for a year, another god's followers may adopt and rededicate the shrine, so the sites of such altars sometimes are renewed.

ST. HELBA

Foolish Fortune; Rebellion's Yell; the Instigator and Investigator; the Blue Exorcist

Domains: Arcana, Knowledge, Trickery

Probably the youngest of the saints of Midgard, St. Helba Stross is credited with redeeming her family line and freeing the Crossroads through selfless action, foolish directness, and heroic faith. She is the patron of investigators, adventurers, and fighters of corruption.

St. Helba appears as she did in life: a brilliantly blue-skinned tiefling with long blue-white hair and tiny horns, wearing robes closely resembling one of Rava's faithful. She has yet to appear in any other form, though she has been known to send heralds who have occasionally been heard complaining of someone not quite understanding the situation.

FOLLOWERS

St. Helba is venerated primarily by the citizens of the Free City of Zobeck and its surrounding lands. Her followers have been spreading into other lands with limited success, focusing on regions where they perceive oppression by any sort of "higher class," and have found themselves popular with slaves desiring liberation.

SYMBOLS AND BOOKS

Flaming and broken blue shackles are the symbol of St. Helba. Shattered locks, doors off their hinges, and a halo of blue flame are common in her other iconography.

The saint's sacred words and battle cries have yet to be compiled into a single book. Flyers and broadsheets from her time supporting the citizenry before the Great Revolt are currently copied and distributed by her faithful. Her hymns were once protest chants. Correspondences to other nobles that argued against corruption both infernal and mundane are still being compiled and verified, and any aid finding more is richly rewarded.

FAMOUS SHRINES AND CLERGY

The entire city of Zobeck is considered sacred to St. Helba's church, and numerous small shrines exist throughout the city. A handful of locations within the city are considered pilgrimage sites: the Redrock jailhouse where she was supposedly imprisoned and tortured for her words, the dock where she was executed by her own infernally corrupted family, and the shrine to Rava where

she is said to have appeared in a vision to the rebellion's leaders and their first gearforged allies.

MASKS

The Investigator and Instigator is sometimes accused of being Rava or a mere mouthpiece for her and other times of being a corruption of a different kind as a mask for the Goat of the Woods.

OTHER FAITHS

St. Helba is on friendly terms with most of the gods of Zobeck, especially Rava. Few other faiths even know of her existence.

WHAT ST. HELBA DEMANDS

Defend the weak. Root out corruption wherever you find it, be it supernatural, magical, mortal, or within your mind, your blood, or your community. Explore and learn the truth.

ST. PIRAN

King of the Kobolds; Caretaker of the Cradles; the True Vein; Mammon's Bane

Domains: Light, Trickery

St. Piran is a god of caves and those who work or dwell in them. Like many of the oldest gods, he is a little bitter, very wily, protective of his own, and has amassed considerable resources. Anyone spending a serious length of time within the earth, seeking its protection or mining its treasures, lights candles and speaks devotions to St. Piran eventually, even if by a different name.

The True Vein appears most often as a humanoid of a kind appropriate to the viewer, wearing the heavy clothing, helmet, and mask of a miner and covered in such dirt, dust, and filth as to make details of his appearance impossible to determine. Other forms include a vein of light that appears in darkness and pulses with his words or a point of blinding light above a pair of stone hands veined with gold.

FOLLOWERS

Caves were and still are the first homes for countless peoples. Altars to St. Piran, whatever his local name, appear in mining town chapels, the shelters of bandits and rebels, and the dens of monsters the world over. So St. Piran is venerated in nearly every culture to some small degree. His most visible followers are kobolds, who value all his aspects and mimic many of them in his name. Dwarves, and humans to a lesser extent, venerate him as well, though both claim the right to do so to the exclusion of all others. The majority of his faithful are rumored to shy away from civilized lands, residing instead in the hidden places throughout the world.

SYMBOLS AND BOOKS

St. Piran's most common symbol is the Light in the Darkness, a still flame of copper and gold backed by a silver disc. A black bullseye lantern tattoo or brand and a square with four or more inward facing triangles inside it, the Spiked Pit, are two others. His holy texts often double as guides for mining and cave exploration in civilized lands and remain purely oral in the wilderness.

FAMOUS SHRINES AND CLERGY

The most famous Temple of St. Piran stands in Lillefor, the great kobold capital, and is said to house that city's treasury. As one gigantic building filled with so many traps that even the attendant clergy don't know all of them, it is considered an act of dedication simply to enter it to deposit a tithe. Shrines and altars found elsewhere serve in a similar fashion and are always expected to be trapped for the glory of the god. The current Tunnel-Saint of St. Piran is Goylevick Sarrli, a derro "merchant queen" who has agents throughout the underground areas around Zobeck and conducts significant trade through its passages for the enrichment of the faith.

MASKS

Mammon's Bane is sometimes accused of being that very arch-devil due to his tightfisted grip on his treasures and tricky nature. Other times, with his influence over darkness, he has been called a mask of Anu-Akma. Surprisingly, his flame symbol and focus on family, community, and their protection has even caused rumors that he is Lada, attempting to bring her holy warmth to those in the darkness.

OTHER FAITHS

An ancient figure, St. Piran gets on best with the older faiths. Sarastra, the Hunter, and even the White Goddess have known him as an ally. Newer gods, like most of the Crossroads' gods and those of the Dragon Empire, have yet to earn his trust. The devil Mammon is an old rival who always seeks St. Piran's treasure and power and has attempted to kill him on many occasions.

WHAT ST. PIRAN DEMANDS

Dig deeper. Find treasure. Protect what is yours. Confound thieves. Steal what is theirs. Punish them with pain.



7 CHAPTER

MAGIC

Azren attached the last wing to the owl and tested the gears. Both golden clockwork wings extended easily, flapped smoothly, and made a pleasing tick-tick-tick as their armatures moved. He smiled fondly, and Master Orlando nodded at the sight of a mage not so much pleased with his own power to create as awed by what he had made.

He clapped the young man on the shoulder, his own smile as wide as Azren's. "Well done, my boy. You've become quite adept over the years." His gaze roamed over the contours of the delicate machine and picked out small artistic details on the acid-etched feathers and carved into the brass joints. "And developed quite an eye. Let's do your last check."

Orlando lifted the owl but frowned when he could not find the gear panel. Azren's smile became impish, and he traced a pattern in the yielding metal feathers on the machine's back. The body split open along delicate hinges. Orlando nodded approvingly and spent several minutes examining the inner workings. He poked and tested the gears and inspected the actuators for the creature's eyes. He closed it again with gentle pressure and felt a satisfying click as it locked together.

"Excellent work. But I expected nothing less, Azren." He set down the owl and took the younger man's hand. "You make your former teacher proud. Now, let's see you finish what you've started." Azren nodded and began chanting the words that would call an animal soul to give animation to his new familiar.

Zobeckers value all forms of magic. The Arcane Collegium recognizes clockwork, divination, elementalism, enchantment, illusion, necromancy, stars and shadows, and summoning as the proper schools of arcane study. The study of alchemy is considered a lesser craft rather than a full school, as are shamanism, spirit magic, and pacts, though they acknowledge the last only grudgingly and consider it corrupt. All but one of these schools of magic are widely known throughout Midgard and can be found in the *Midgard Heroes Handbook*. That one exception school is a uniquely Zobeckian sort of magic—the magic of clockwork.

CLOCKWORK MAGES

Zobeck, the Clockwork City, is home to a unique school of magic. Clockwork spells are taught at the Collegium but not widely known outside the city. It is common among advanced dwarven, gnome, and even kobold priests, among certain societies of scholars and engineers dedicated to constructs and automatons, and among planar travelers from mechanical realms.

CLOCKWORK FAMILIARS

Clockwork mages who use the spell *find familiar* substitute the typical familiar with a small clockwork device in the form of an animal, which is worth 10 gp, matching the spell's usual material components. It must resemble one of the allowable animals listed in the spell. When the ritual is complete, the clockwork animates. It has the statistics of the chosen form but is a construct. The familiar's form can be changed by rebuilding the clockwork device in the new form and casting *find familiar* again. If the familiar is destroyed, it can be rebuilt (in the same or a new form) with the same components, if they're recovered; otherwise, 10 gp must be spent on replacement parts. The familiar is never counted when determining the number of constructs a mage can control.

WIZARD SCHOOL: CLOCKWORK

The origins of clockwork magic are nebulous at best. Those of a religious bent say that it's derived from the divine, that a follower of some god of smiths or of machines or even of time had an epiphany. Others, usually those of a less religious bent, claim that clockwork magic was the discovery of an ancient artificer who, while experimenting with gears and steam, built the first device animated by enchantments. Whatever its origin, clockwork magic involves time manipulation, constructs, and mechanical devices of all kinds.

The school of clockwork magic is a blending of technology and magic not often seen. While some would argue that all spells of this so-called school are simply applications of the more traditionally acknowledged branches of arcane magic, clockwork mages understand that there is qualitative difference in thought between casting, say, an evocation (clockwork) spell and an ordinary evocation. The school thrives alongside industry, using a small number of spells, compared to the older schools, to create a wide range of styles. Fool is he who fails to notice arcane glyphs and wands and mistakes a clockwork mage for a common gear grinder or tinkerer.

The following class abilities are available to wizards of the clockwork school.

Clockwork Savant

Beginning when you choose this school at 2nd level, the gold and time it takes to copy a clockwork spell into your spellbook is halved. You also gain proficiency with clockworker's tools (25 gp, 2 lb.).

Clockworker's Charm

Beginning at 2nd level, whenever you cast an *animate construct* spell, increase the duration by a number of minutes equal to your proficiency bonus. At 20th level, you can make the spell permanent until dispelled but cannot have more than one made permanent at a time.

Metal Shape

When you reach 6th level, you gain the ability to reshape metal with a touch. When you grasp a Small or smaller piece of metal, you can alter its form into any shape that suits your purpose. The item must be in your hands and under your control. You can't, for example, reshape a piece of armor or a weapon that's being worn or wielded by someone else. To create a specific object, such as a key or mechanical component, you must be completely familiar with it. Thus you could replicate a key that you had in your possession for an extended period of time, but you could not create a working key based on seeing the lock alone.

Objects you create can have up to two hinges and a latch, but finer mechanical details are not possible. This effect can be used to *repair metal*, as the spell (see below). When you do so, you can't do so again until you finish a short or long rest.

Golem Form

Beginning at 10th level, you can transform yourself as an action into a living construct for up to 1 minute per level. You retain your Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma and the ability to speak and cast spells. You can transform into a golem or a clockwork creature whose CR is less than or equal to your current level in this class. Otherwise, this ability functions as the druid's Wild Shape ability.

Clockwork Mastery

Starting at 14th level, you can use magic to bring constructs under your control. As an action, you can compel one construct you can see within 60 feet of you to make an Intelligence saving throw against your wizard spell save DC. This is a magical effect. If the saving throw fails, the construct becomes friendly to you and obeys your commands for 1 hour, until you use this ability again, or until it takes damage from you or

one of your allies. If the saving throw fails by 5 or more, the duration is extended to 6 hours or until one of the other conditions is fulfilled. When the effect ends, the construct is aware it was controlled by you.

MAGIC ITEMS

The following magic items can be found or, on occasion, commissioned to be made in Zobeck.

ALCHEMICAL LANTERN

Wondrous Item, Uncommon

This hooded lantern has 3 charges and regains all expended charges daily at dusk. While the lantern is lit, you can use an action to expend 1 charge to cause the lantern to spit gooey alchemical fire at a creature you can see in the lantern's bright light. The lantern makes its attack roll with a +5 bonus. On a hit, the target takes 2d6 fire damage, and it ignites. Until a creature takes an action to douse the fire, the target takes 1d6 fire damage at the start of each of its turns.

AMULET OF INSIGHT

Wondrous Item, Rare (Requires Attunement)

These large, round amulets bear the solar-disk symbol of Khors, the sun god. Most of the known amulets are platinum, hung on silver neck chains, and set with nine lapis lazuli and epidote gemstones around the edges. You gain advantage on all Wisdom (Insight) checks. Additionally, all Wisdom (Insight) checks made against you are made with disadvantage.

If nine successful Wisdom (Insight) checks are made against you between two long rests, the stones turn grey, and the amulet becomes inert and nonmagical.

BAG OF TRAPS

Wondrous Item, Rare

Anyone reaching into this apparently empty bag feels a small coin, which resembles no known currency. Removing the coin and placing or tossing it up to 20 feet creates a random mechanical trap that remains for 10 minutes or until discharged or disarmed, whereupon it disappears. The coin returns to the bag only after the trap disappears. You may draw up to 10 traps from the bag each week. The GM has the statistics for mechanical traps.



BLINDING LANTERN

Wondrous Item, Uncommon

This ornate brass lantern comes fitted with heavily inscribed plates shielding the cut crystal lens. With a flick of a lever, as an action, the plates rise and unleash a dazzling array of lights at a single target within 30 feet.

You must use two hands to direct the lights precisely into the eyes of a foe. The target must succeed on a DC 11 Wisdom saving throw or be blinded until the end of its next turn. A creature blinded by the lantern is immune to its effects for 1 minute afterward. This property can't be used in a brightly lit area.

By opening the shutter on the opposite side, the device functions as a normal bullseye lantern, yet illuminates magically, requiring no fuel and giving off no heat.

BOOTS OF SOLID FOOTING

Wondrous Item, Uncommon

A thick, rubbery sole covers the bottoms and sides of these stout leather boots. They are useful for maneuvering in cluttered alleyways, slick sewers, and the occasional patch of ice or gravel. While you wear these boots, you can use a bonus action to speak the command word. If you do, nonmagical difficult terrain doesn't cost you extra movement when you walk across it wearing



these boots. If you speak the command word again as a bonus action, you end the effect.

When the boots' property has been used for a total of 1 minute, the magic ceases to function until the next dawn.

BOOTS OF THE SWIFT STRIKER

Wondrous Item, Rare (Requires Attunement)
While you wear these boots, your walking speed increases by 10 feet. In addition, when you take the Dash action while wearing these boots, you can make a single weapon attack at the end of your movement. You can't continue moving after making this attack.

BRAWLER'S LEATHER

Wondrous Item, Common
These rawhide straps have lines of crimson runes running along their length. They require 10 minutes of bathing them in salt water before carefully wrapping them around your forearms.

Once fitted, you gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with unarmed strikes. The straps become brittle with use. After you have dealt damage with unarmed strike attacks 10 times, the straps crumble away.

BURGLAR'S LOCK AND KEY

Wondrous Item, Uncommon
This heavy iron lock bears a stout, pitted key permanently fixed in the keyhole. As an action, you can twist the key counterclockwise to instantly open one door, chest, bag, bottle, or container of your choice within 30 feet.

Any container or portal weighing more than 30 pounds or restrained in any way (latched, bolted, tied, or the like) automatically resists this effect.

CATALYST OIL

Potion, Rare
This special elemental compound draws on nearby energy sources. Catalyst oils are tailored to one specific damage type (not including bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing damage) and have one dose. Whenever a spell or effect of this type goes off within 60 feet of a dose of catalyst oil, the oil catalyzes and becomes the spell's new point of origin. If the spell affects a single target, its original point of origin becomes the new target. If the spell's area is directional (such as a cone or a cube) you determine the spell's new direction.

This redirected spell is easier to evade. Targets have advantage on saving throws against the spell, and the caster has disadvantage on the spell attack roll.

CHRONOMANCER'S POCKET CLOCK

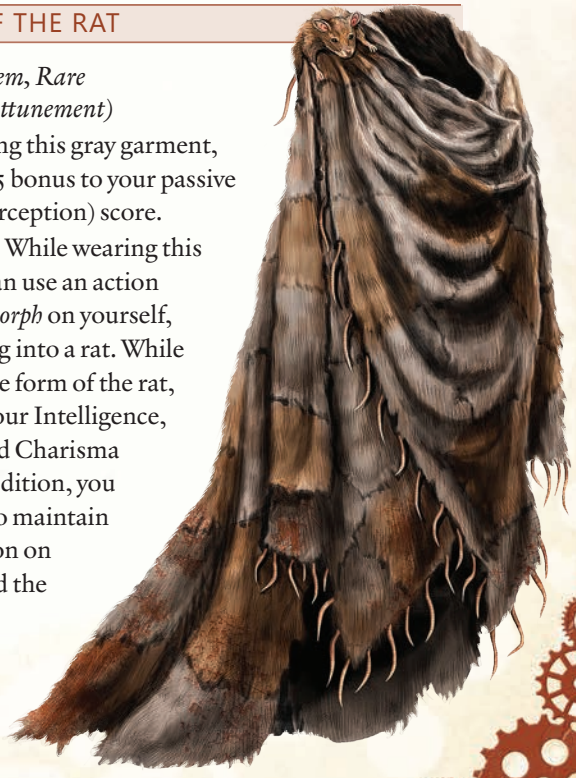
Wondrous Item, Very Rare
This golden pocket watch has 3 charges and regains 1d3 expended charges daily at midnight. While holding it, you can use an action to wind it and expend 1 charge to cast the *haste* spell from it.

If the pendant is destroyed (AC 14, 15 hit points) while it has 3 charges, the creature that broke it gains the effects of the *time stop* spell.

CLOAK OF THE INCONSPICUOUS RAKE

Wondrous Item, Uncommon (Requires Attunement)
This cloak is spun from simple gray wool and closed with a plain, triangular copper clasp. While wearing this cloak, you can use a bonus action to make yourself forgettable for 5 minutes. A creature that sees you must make a DC 15 Intelligence saving throw as soon as you leave its sight. On a failure, the witness remembers seeing a person doing whatever you did, but they don't remember details about your appearance or mannerisms and can't accurately describe you to another. Creatures with truesight aren't affected by this cloak. The cloak can't be used this way again until the next dawn.

CLOAK OF THE RAT



Wondrous Item, Rare (Requires Attunement)
While wearing this gray garment, you have a +5 bonus to your passive Wisdom (Perception) score.

Rat Form. While wearing this cloak, you can use an action to cast *polymorph* on yourself, transforming into a rat. While you are in the form of the rat, you retain your Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores. In addition, you don't need to maintain concentration on the spell, and the

transformation lasts for 1 hour, until you use a bonus action to revert to your normal form, or until you drop to 0 hit points or die. Once used, this property of the cloak can't be used again until the next dawn.

Shrink. While wearing this cloak, you can use a bonus action to shrink in size as if you gained the "reduce" effect of the *enlarge/reduce* spell until the end of your next turn. Once used, this property of the cloak can't be used again until the next dawn.

CLOCKWORK HAND

Wondrous Item, Uncommon (Requires Attunement)
A beautiful work of articulate brass, this prosthetic clockwork hand (or hands) can't be worn if you have both of your hands. While wearing this hand, you gain a +2 bonus to damage with melee weapon attacks made with this hand or weapons wielded in this hand.

CLOCKWORK PENDANT

Wondrous Item, Rare (Requires Attunement)
This pendant resembles an ornate, miniature clock and has 3 charges. While holding this pendant, you can expend 1 charge as an action to cast the *blur*, *haste*, or *slow* spell (save DC 15) from it. The spell's duration changes to 3 rounds, and it doesn't require concentration. You can have only one spell active at a time. If you cast another, the previous spell effect ends. It regains 1d3 expended charges daily at dawn.

If the pendant is destroyed (AC 14, 15 hit points) while it has 3 charges, it creates a temporal distortion for 1d4 rounds. For the duration, each creature and object that enters or starts its turn within 10 feet of the pendant has immunity to all damage, all spells, and all other physical or magical effects but is otherwise able to move and act normally. If a creature moves further than 10 feet from the pendant, these effects end for it. At the end of the duration, the pendant crumbles to dust.

FANGED MASK

Wondrous Item, Uncommon (Requires Attunement)
This tribal mask is made of wood and adorned with animal fangs. Once donned, it melds to your face and causes fangs to sprout from your mouth. While wearing this mask, your bite is a natural melee weapon, which you can use to make unarmed strikes. When you hit with it, your bite deals piercing damage equal to 1d4 + your Strength modifier, instead of the bludgeoning damage normal for an unarmed strike. If you already have a bite attack when you don and attune to this mask, your bite attack's damage dice double (e.g., 1d4 becomes 2d4).

GLIDING CLOAK

Wondrous Item, Uncommon
By grasping the ends of the cloak while falling, you can glide up to 5 feet horizontally in any direction for every 1 foot you fall. You descend 60 feet per round but take no damage from falling while gliding in this way.

A tailwind allows you to glide 10 feet per 1 foot descended, but a headwind forces you to only glide 5 feet per 2 feet descended.

HARDENING POLISH

Potion, Uncommon
This gray polish is viscous and difficult to spread. The polish can coat one metal weapon or up to 10 pieces of ammunition. Applying the polish takes 1 minute. For 1 hour, the coated item hardens and becomes stronger, and it counts as an adamantine weapon for the purpose of overcoming resistance and immunity to attacks and damage not made with adamantine weapons.

JUNGLE MESS KIT

Wondrous Item, Uncommon
This crucial piece of survival gear guarantees safe use of the most basic of consumables. The hinged metal container acts as a cook pot and opens to reveal a cup, plate, and eating utensils. This kit renders any spoiled, rotten, or even naturally poisonous food or drink safe to consume. It can purify only mundane, natural effects. It has no effect on food that is magically spoiled, rotted, or poisoned, and it can't neutralize brewed poisons, venoms, or similarly manufactured toxins.

Once it has purified 3 cubic feet of food and drink, it can't be used to do so again until the next dawn.

LIFEBLOOD GEAR

Wondrous Item, Common
As an action, you can attach this tiny bronze gear to a pile of junk or other small collection of mundane objects and create a Tiny or Small mechanical servant. This servant uses the statistics of a beast with a challenge rating of 1/4 or lower, except it has immunity to poison damage and the poisoned condition, and it can't be charmed or become exhausted.

If it participates in combat, the servant lasts for up to 5 rounds or until destroyed. If commanded to perform mundane tasks, such as fetching items, cleaning, or other

similar task, it lasts for up to 5 hours or until destroyed.

Once affixed to the servant, the gear pulsates like a beating heart. If the gear is removed, you lose control of the servant, which then attacks indiscriminately for up to 5 rounds or until destroyed. Once the duration expires or the servant is destroyed, the gear becomes a nonmagical gear.

LOTION OF PURE FILTH

Potion, Common

Frequently used by toshers (sewer-dwellers who seek discarded valuables in the Undercity), the *lotion of pure filth* covers the user in a sticky coat that resembles mud or grease. This layer prevents contact with any of the filth or debris in a sewer, swamp, or dungeon, rendering the user immune to contact poisons, disease spread by touch, and even sticky spiderwebs—all such things slide off the layer of protective filth for 4 hours or until scrubbed away with clean water.

ORB OF ENTHRALLING PATTERNS

Wondrous Item, Uncommon (Requires Attunement)

This plain, glass orb shimmers with iridescence. While holding this orb, you can use an action to speak its command word, which causes it to levitate and emit multicolored light. Each creature other than you within 10 feet of the orb must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or look at only the orb for 1 minute. For the duration, a creature looking at the orb has disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks to perceive anything that is not the orb. Creatures that failed the saving throw have no memory of what happened while they were looking at the orb. Once used, the orb can't be used again until the next dawn.

PERCIPIENT PEARL EARRINGS

Wonderous Item, Rare (Requires Attunement)

While wearing these earrings, you have advantage on all Wisdom (Perception) checks involving sound. Additionally, when within the area of effect of a *silence* spell, you can still cast spells with a verbal component and can choose to ignore the deafening effect of the spell.

Once per long rest, you can also perform each of the following magical effects:

- Listen to any conversation within 500 feet with perfect clarity and fidelity by pressing both pearls with two fingers.
- Record 1 minute of a nearby conversation by pressing the left earring with two fingers as a bonus action. The conversation can be played back for up to 24 hours by pressing the right earring with two fingers. You decide if only you can hear the recording or if it can be heard by anyone within 10 feet.

Both of these effects can be activated at the same time, if desired.

POTION OF PERSISTENCE

Potion, Rare

When you drink this potion, you gain immunity to one type of damage for 1 minute. The GM chooses the type or determines it randomly from the options below.

d10	Damage Type	d10	Damage Type
1	Acid	5	Necrotic
2	Bludgeoning	6	Piercing
3	Cold	7	Poison
4	Lightning	8	Psychic
5	Necrotic	9	Slashing
6	Piercing	10	Thunder

POTION OF REGURGITATION

Potion, Uncommon

When you drink this potion, you can use your action to devour any object you hold, weighing up to 2 pounds. This object remains within an extradimensional space until any time up to 1 hour later, when you can use a bonus action to vomit it back up. If you vomit an item back up before 1 hour has elapsed, you can use the effect again on the same object or any other item you hold of up to 2 pounds. You automatically regurgitate any swallowed item once the hour is up.

RAGGED SHROUD

Wonderous Item, Uncommon (Requires Attunement)

These ragged grey cloaks are death shrouds taken from actual tombs and enchanted to hide a living humanoid creature from the notice of the undead. All undead with a Wisdom score of 11 or lower consider you as undead and ignore you unless directly attacked or addressed by you. Any undead with a Wisdom score of 12 or higher can make a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check to see through the illusion. (If you are in sunlight, the undead rolls with advantage.)

The shroud becomes non-magical and crumbles to

dust 24 hours after it is first worn or if it is exposed to sunlight for more than an hour.

RAT'S TAIL

Weapon (Whip), Very Rare (Requires Attunement)
This magical whip resembles the fleshy tail of a full-grown rat. You gain a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. On a hit, the whip wraps itself neatly around a creature's throat. For living, breathing creatures, this immediately engages suffocation. The creature is also restrained and takes 1d8 psychic damage per round while suffocating. (Constructs, undead, plants, and creatures of size Large or greater are unaffected). On its turn, the target can make a DC 15 Strength check to cut or remove the whip, ending all effects.

RED LADY'S SCALPEL

Weapon (Dagger), Legendary (Requires Attunement)
This silver surgeon's scalpel is permanently stained with dried blood. Enchanted by the followers of Marena the Red, it now spreads pain and disease. The scalpel functions as a *sword of wounding*. Hit points lost to this weapon's damage can be regained only through a short or long rest, rather than by regeneration, magic, or any other means.

Once per turn, when you hit a creature with an attack using this magic weapon, you can wound the target. At the start of each of the wounded creature's turns, it takes 1d4 necrotic damage for each time you've wounded it, and it can then make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, ending the effect of all such wounds on itself on a success. Alternatively, the wounded creature or an ally within 5 feet of it can use an action to make a DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check, ending the effect of such wounds on it on a success.

Once per day, you can cast *contagion* (save DC 18) as a bonus action on a creature that was just wounded by the blade.

Curse. The essence of the ice devil Xazagra currently resides in the *Red Lady's Scalpel*. From there, it can possess humanoids. While attuned to the dagger, you must make a DC 15 Charisma saving throw every day while in possession of it. Each failure moves your alignment one step toward lawful evil. Once your alignment reaches lawful evil, Xazagra takes control of you immediately when you fail a third daily saving throw in a row. *Dispel evil and good* drives Xazagra back into the dagger temporarily, but the devil can repossess you again as an action. To drive Xazagra back to its home plane, *dispel evil and good* must be directed specifically at the dagger.

RING OF GIANT MINGLING

Ring, Rare (Requires Attunement by a Giant or Humanoid)
While wearing this ring, your size changes to match the size of those around you. If you are a Large creature and start your turn within 100 feet of four or more Medium creatures, this ring makes you Medium. Similarly, if you are a Medium creature and start your turn within 100 feet of four or more Large creatures, this ring makes you Large. These effects work like the effects of the *enlarge/reduce* spell, except they persist as long as you wear the ring and satisfy the conditions.

RINGS OF EMBASSY

Wondrous Item, Rare (Requires Attunement)
These rings are always found in pairs. They are pewter bands, smooth on the outer surface, and on the inside surface, the runes for *voice* and *distance* are engraved. You can use an action to cast a *sending* spell. The target is the attuned wearer of the other ring. The message can be up to fifty words and does not need to be said aloud. You can sense if there is no attuned wearer for the matching ring. There is no chance of message failure, even if the other ring wearer is on another plane. The *sending* spell can only be used once per short rest. If one of the rings is destroyed, the other becomes inert and nonmagical.

RIVERINE BLADE

Weapon (Longsword), Rare
The crossguard of this distinctive sword depicts a stylized garroter crab (see *Tome of Beasts*) with claws extended, and the pommel is set with a smooth, spherical, blue-black river rock. You gain a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. While on a boat or while standing in any depth of water, you have advantage on Dexterity checks and saving throws.

TEETH OF OLD NAGA-NAR

Wondrous Item, Artifact (Requires Attunement)
A normal rat has four incisors, the teeth used for gnawing. A normal wererat has eight incisors. Saint Naga-Nar was a completely obsessed zealot of Chittr'k'k, and the stories claim he had twelve incisors, all of which became holy items on his death. Each such tooth grants its bearer the ability to cast *gnaw* once per day. Anyone

carrying two or more teeth can also cast *conjure rats* once per day. Anyone with a necklace of four or more of his teeth can also cast *Chittr'k'k's soul fire* or *spoil food and water* once per day. (See **Spells of the Rat Cult** in **Chapter 6** for the spells used by the *Teeth of Old Naga-Nar*.)

SCARF OF DECEPTION

Wondrous Item, Rare

While wearing this scarf, you appear different to everyone who looks upon you for less than 1 minute. In addition, you smell, sound, feel, and taste different to every creature that perceives you. Creatures with truesight or blindsight can see your true form, but their other senses are still confounded.

If a creature studies you for 1 minute, it can make a DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check. On a success, it perceives your real form.

SCOUNDREL'S GAMBIT

Wondrous Item, Uncommon

This fluted silver tube, barely two inches long, bears tiny runes etched between the grooves. While holding this tube, you can use an action to cast the *magic missile* spell from it. Once used, the tube can't be used to cast *magic missile* again until 12 hours have passed.

SHADOWHOUND'S MUZZLE

Wondrous Item, Uncommon (Requires Attunement)

This black leather muzzle seems to absorb light. As an action, you can place this muzzle around the snout of a grappled, unconscious, or willing canine with an Intelligence of 3 or lower, such as a mastiff or wolf. The canine transforms into a shadowy version of itself for 1 hour. It uses the statistics of a shadow, except it retains its size. It has its own turns and acts on its own initiative. It obeys any verbal commands that you issue to it (no action required by you). If you don't issue any commands to it, it defends itself from hostile creatures, but otherwise takes no actions.

If the shadow canine is reduced to 0 hit points, the canine reverts to its original form, and the muzzle is destroyed. At the end of the duration or if you remove the muzzle (by stroking the canine's snout), the canine reverts to its original form, and the muzzle remains intact. If you become unattuned to this item while the muzzle is on a canine, its transformation becomes permanent, and the creature becomes independent with a will of its own.

Once used, the muzzle can't be used to transform a canine again until the next dawn.

SHIFTING SHIRT

Wondrous Item, Uncommon

This nondescript, smock-like garment changes its appearance on command. While wearing this shirt, you can use a bonus action to speak the shirt's command word and cause it to assume the appearance of a different set of clothing. You decide what it looks like, including color, style, and accessories—from filthy beggar's clothes to glittering court attire. The illusory appearance lasts until you use this property again or remove the shirt.

SHOES OF THE SHINGLED CANOPY

Wondrous Item, Uncommon (Requires Attunement)

These well-made, black leather shoes have brass buckles shaped like chimneys. While wearing the shoes, you have proficiency in the Acrobatics skill.

In addition, while falling, you can use a reaction to cast the *feather fall* spell by holding your nose. The shoes can't be used this way again until the next dusk.



SIGNET RING OF KARREMARK, KOBOLD PRINCE OF THE NIGHT GHETTO

Ring, Rare

This ornate signet ring bears an insignia well known to Zobeck's human guards and clockwork watchmen and often deters them from harassing its bearer, granting you advantage on Charisma checks made to interact with the watch.

The ring's real power, however, is to summon Karremark's personal giant riding owl (**giant fey owl**, see **Chapter 8**). The owl communicates with you telepathically and informs you of all it sees and hears. The owl can carry two Small creatures or one Medium creature and will fight on your behalf. If the owl dies, the ring loses its power.

SLIPPERS OF SUBTLETY

Wondrous Item, Rare (Requires Attunement)

While wearing these spider-silk slippers, you make no sound, regardless of the surface trod upon. You make Dexterity (Stealth) checks with advantage. Additionally, three uses of the following abilities, in any combination, can be made per long rest:

- Ignore difficult terrain for up to a minute.
- Cast one of the following spells: *jump*, *pass without trace*, *spider climb*.

SPICE BOX SPOON

Wondrous Item, Common

This lacquered wooden spoon carries an entire cupboard within its smooth contours. When you swirl this spoon in any edible mixture, such as a drink, stew, porridge, or other dish, it exudes a flavorful aroma and infuses the mixture. This culinary wonder mimics any imagined variation of simple seasonings, from salt and pepper to aromatic herbs and spice blends. These flavors persist for 1 hour.

SPIDER GRENADE

Wondrous Item, Uncommon

Silver runes decorate the hairy legs and plump abdomen of this fist-sized preserved spider.

You can use an action to throw the spider up to 30 feet. It explodes on impact and is destroyed. Each creature within a 20-foot radius of where the spider landed must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or be restrained by sticky webbing.

A creature restrained by the webs can use its action to make a DC 13 Strength check. If it succeeds, it is no longer restrained. In addition, the webs are flammable. Any 5-foot cube of webs exposed to fire burns away in 1 round, dealing 2d4 fire damage to any creature that starts its turn in the fire. The webs also naturally unravel after 1 hour.

TACTILE UNGUENT

Wondrous Item, Common

Cat burglars, gearworkers, locksmiths, and even street performers use this gooey substance to increase the sensitivity of their hands. When found, a container contains 1d4 + 1 doses. As an action, one dose can be applied to a creature's hands. For 1 hour, that creature has advantage on Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) checks and on tactile Wisdom (Perception) checks.

TAILOR'S CLASP

Wondrous Item, Common

This ornate brooch is shaped like a jeweled weaving spider or scarab beetle. While it is attached to a piece of fabric, it can be activated as an action. When activated, it skitters across the fabric, mending any tears, adjusting frayed hems, and reinforcing seams. This item only works on nonmagical objects made out of fibrous material (e.g., not leather), such as clothing, rope, and rugs. It continues repairing the fabric for up to 10 minutes or until the repairs are complete. Once used, it can't be used again until 1 hour has passed.

TICK STOP WATCH



Wondrous Item, Rare

While holding this silver pocket watch, you can use an action to magically stop a single clockwork device or creature within 10 feet of you. If the target is an object, it freezes in place, even mid-air, for up to 1 minute or until moved. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or be paralyzed until the end of its next turn. The pocket watch can't be used this way again until the next dawn.

The pocket watch must be wound at least once every 24 hours, just like a normal pocket watch, or its magic ceases to function. If left unwound for 24 hours, the watch loses its magic, but the power returns 24 hours after the next time it is wound.

TIPSTAFF

Weapon (Club), Rare (Requires Attunement)

To the uninitiated, this short ebony baton resembles a heavy-duty truncheon with a cord-wrapped handle and silver-capped tip. The weapon has 5 charges, and it regains 1d4 + 1 expended charges daily at dawn.

When you hit a creature with a melee attack, you can expend 1 charge to force the target to make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. If the creature took 20 damage or more from this attack, it has disadvantage on the saving throw. On a failure, the target is paralyzed for 1 minute. It can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Warrant. You can use an action to slip an officially issued warrant under the cords of the grip of this weapon. While it has a warrant in it, the weapon deals an extra 1d6 bludgeoning damage when you hit the creature listed in the warrant with this weapon. The *tipstaff* can have only one warrant in it at a time, and the warrant can name no more than three creatures.

WHISPERING POWDER

Wondrous Item, Common

A paper envelope contains enough of this fine dust for one use. You can use an action to sprinkle the dust on the ground in up to four contiguous spaces. When a Small or larger creature steps into one of these spaces, it must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw. On a failure, loud squeals, squeaks, and pops erupt with each footfall, audible out to 150 feet.

The powder's creator dictates the manner of sounds produced. The first creature to enter the affected spaces sets off the alarm, consuming the powder's magic. Otherwise, the effect lasts as long as the powder coats the area.

MAGIC SHOPS IN ZOBECK

Zobeck has no true magic shops to speak of. For the most part, the Arcane Collegium frowns on such establishments. What magic someone finds in the course of their travels, however, is none of their concern. That said, a few faculty members might, with some persuasion, create items for patrons. Most faculty members are too busy with personal studies and classes to take on commissions, but they do enjoy being asked over a free meal or two.

The Book Fetish in the Collegium District does deal in a limited selection of magic items, including those acquired through the Temple of Painful Pleasures. The shop does some buying and trading, and the priestesses also make certain potions and wands for sale. As their clients run the magical gamut, they also offer a few non-clerical items. The temple concentrates on divine and sex-related magic, but the temple's high priestess acquires many items in trade or through confiscation, and—for an additional fee—she can talk some of her Arcane Collegium patrons into creating items for her that they normally wouldn't make.



Additionally, customers may purchase more mundane magical items at Pentrick's Mundane Magical Items stall in the Kobold Ghetto. His stock constantly changes, and customers with specific desires may have to visit often.

TABLE 7–1: PENTRICK'S MUNDANE MAGICAL ITEMS

Item	Cost
Blinding lantern	900 gp
Boots of solid footing	1,100 gp
Brawler's leather	250 gp
Burglar's lock and key	1,000 gp
Hardening polish	400 gp
Jungle mess kit	500 gp
Scoundrel's gambit	50 gp
Shifting shirt	850 gp
Spicebox spoon	700 gp
Spider grenade	300 gp
Tactile gel	250 gp
Tailor's clasp	1,100 gp
Whispering powder	250 gp



SPELLS

The following spells come from the unique school of clockwork magic and are generally known only to students of the Arcane Collegium.

(Additional non-clockwork spells can be found in **Chapter 4**, for those developed by the Blue House, **Chapter 5** for those developed by the Cloven Nine, and **Chapter 6**, for those developed by the Rat Cult.)

WIZARD SPELLS

Cantrips
- *Fist of iron*
- *Tick stop*

1st Level
- *Analyze device*
- *Animate construct*
- *Armored shell*
- *Find the flaw*
- *Gear shield*
- *Machine's load*
- *Machine speech*
- *Pendulum*
- *Tireless*

2nd Level
- *Armored heart*
- *Gear barrage*
- *Heartstop*
- *Lock armor*
- *Repair metal*
- *Spin*
- *Winding key*

3rd Level
- *Overclock*
- *Thousand darts*

4th Level
- *Absolute command*
- *Gremlins*
- *Grinding gears*
- *Read memory*
- *Steam blast*
- *Write memory*

5th Level
- *Imbue spell*
- *Mass repair metal*
- *Mechanical union*

6th Level
- *Catapult*
- *Robe of shards*

7th Level
- *Hellforging*
- *Timeless engine*

8th Level
- *Machine sacrifice*
- *Move the cosmic wheel*
- *Power word restore*
- *Steam whistle*
- *Time jump*

9th Level
- *Time in a bottle*

ABSOLUTE COMMAND

4th-Level Transmutation (Clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (a pair of small gloves fitted with a conduit and worth 100 gp)

Duration: Concentration, up to 10 minutes

You can control a construct you have built with a challenge rating of 6 or less. You can manipulate objects with your construct as precisely as its construction allows, and you perceive its surroundings through its sensory inputs as if you inhabited its body.

The construct uses your proficiency bonus (modified by the construct's own Strength and Dexterity scores). You can use the manipulators of the construct to perform any number of skill-based tasks, using the construct's Strength and Dexterity modifiers when using skills based on those particular abilities.

Your body remains immobile, as if paralyzed, for the duration of the spell. The construct must remain within 100 feet of you. If it moves beyond this distance, the spell immediately ends, and your mind returns to your body.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using higher-level spell slots, you may control a construct with a CR of 2 higher for each slot level you use above 4th. The construct's range also increases by 10 feet for each slot level.

ANALYZE DEVICE

1st-Level Divination (Clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 hour
Range: Touch
Components: V, M, S (a set of clockworker's tools)
Duration: Instantaneous

You discover all mechanical properties, mechanisms, and functions of a single construct or clockwork device, including how to activate or deactivate those functions, if appropriate.

ANIMATE CONSTRUCT

1st-Level Transmutation (Clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: 30 feet
Components: V, S, M (a construct body of appropriate size)
Duration: Concentration, up to 10 minutes (see below)

This spell animates a carefully prepared Tiny construct. The object acts immediately, on your turn, and can attack your opponents to the best of its ability. You can direct it to not attack, to attack particular enemies, or to perform other actions. You choose the object to animate, and you can change that choice each time you cast the spell. The cost of the body to be animated is 10 gp × its hit points. The body can be reused any number of times, provided it isn't severely damaged or destroyed.

If no prepared construct body is available, you can animate a mass of loose metal or stone instead. Before casting, the loose objects must be arranged in a suitable shape (taking up to a minute), and the construct's hit points are halved.

An animated construct has a Constitution of 10, Intelligence and Wisdom 3, and Charisma 1. Other characteristics are determined by the construct's size as shown in the table below.

At Higher Levels. Casting this spell using higher-level spell slots allows you to increase the size of the construct animated, as shown on the table.

ARMORED HEART

1st-Level Conjuration (Clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 bonus action
Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M (5 gp worth of mithral dust sprinkled on the target's skin)
Duration: 1 round

The targeted creature gains resistance to bludgeoning, slashing, and piercing damage. This resistance can be overcome with adamantine or magical weapons.

ARMORED SHELL

1st-Level Conjuration (Clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Self
Components: V, S, M (a rivet)
Duration: Concentration, up to 1 hour

This spell creates a suit of magical studded leather armor (AC 12). It does not grant you proficiency in its

ANIMATED CONSTRUCT STATISTICS

Size	HP	AC	Attack & Damage	Str	Dex	Spell Slot
Tiny	15	12	+3, 1d4 + 4	4	16	1st
Small	25	13	+4, 1d8 + 2	6	14	2nd
Medium	40	14	+5, 2d6 + 1	10	12	3rd
Large	50	15	+6, 2d10 + 2	14	10	4th
Huge	80	16	+8, 2d12 + 4	18	8	5th
Gargantuan	100	17	+10, 4d8 + 6	20	6	6th

use. Casters without the appropriate armor proficiency suffer disadvantage on any ability check, attack roll, and saving throw that involves Strength or Dexterity and cannot cast spells.

At Higher Levels. Casting the spell using a higher-level spell slot creates stronger armor: a chain shirt (AC 13) at 2nd level, scale mail (AC 14) at 3rd level, chain mail (AC 16) at 4th level, and plate armor (AC 18) at 5th level.

CATAPULT

6th-Level Transmutation (Clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: 400 feet
Components: V, S, M (a small platinum lever and fulcrum worth 400 gp)
Duration: Instantaneous

You magically hurl an object or creature weighing 500 pounds or less 40 feet through the air in a direction of your choosing (including straight up). Objects hurled at specific targets require a spell attack roll to hit. A thrown creature takes 6d10 bludgeoning damage from the force of the throw, plus any appropriate falling damage, and lands prone. If the target of the spell is thrown against another creature, the total damage is divided evenly between them and both creatures are knocked prone.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 7th level or higher, the damage increases by 1d10, the distance thrown increases by 10 feet, and the weight thrown increases by 100 pounds for each slot level above 6th.

FIND THE FLAW

1st-Level Divination (Clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M (a broken gear)
Duration: Instantaneous

You touch one creature. The next attack roll that creature makes against a clockwork or metal construct, or any machine, is a critical hit.

FIST OF IRON

Transmutation Cantrip (Clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Self
Components: V, S
Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You transform your naked hand into iron. Your unarmed attacks deal 1d6 bludgeoning damage and are considered magical.



GEAR BARRAGE

3rd-Level Conjuration (Clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Self (60-foot cone)
Components: V, S, M (a handful of gears and sprockets worth 5 gp)
Duration: Instantaneous

You create a burst of magically propelled gears. Each creature within a 60-foot cone takes 3d8 slashing damage, or half as much damage with a successful Dexterity saving throw. Constructs have disadvantage on the saving throw.

GEAR SHIELD

1st-Level Abjuration (Clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: 60 feet
Components: V, S, M (a small handful of gears and sprockets worth 5 gp)
Duration: 10 minutes

You cause a handful of gears to orbit the target's body, which shield the target from incoming attacks, granting a +2 bonus to AC and to Dexterity and Constitution saving throws without hindering the subject's movement, vision, or attacks.

GREMLINS

4th-Level Conjuration (Clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: 60 feet
Components: V, S, M (a single gear)
Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You target a construct and summon a plague of invisible spirits to harass and disassemble it. The target must make a Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the target takes 3d8 force damage at the start of each of its turns and has disadvantage on ability checks, attack rolls, and saving throws. On a successful save, the target takes half as much damage and suffers no additional effects. The target makes another Wisdom saving throw at the end of its turn. On a successful save, the effect ends for it.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 5th or higher, the damage increases by 1d8 for each slot above 4th.

GRINDING GEARS

4th-Level Evocation (Clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: 120 feet
Components: V, S, M (a single gear)
Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

Originating in a spot you can see within range, massive gears emerge from the ground, creating difficult terrain in a 20-foot radius. Creatures that move through the area must make Dexterity saving throws after every 10-foot segment traversed or when they stand up. On a failed save, the creature falls prone and takes 1d8 bludgeoning damage.

HEARTSTOP

2nd-Level Necromancy (Clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Components: V, S
Duration: Concentration, up to 10 minutes

You slow the beating of a willing target's heart to the rate of one beat per minute. The creature's breathing almost stops. To a casual or brief observer, the subject appears dead. At the end of the spell, the creature returns to normal with no ill effects.

HELLFORGING

7th-Level Necromancy (Clockwork, Ritual)

Casting Time: 1 hour (see below)
Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M (a complete mechanical body, worth 10,000 gp, inscribed with demonic runes and containing a ready soul gem)
Duration: Instantaneous

You spend an hour calling forth a disembodied evil spirit. At the end of that time, the spirit must make a Charisma saving throw. On a failed save, the summoned spirit is transferred into the waiting soul gem and immediately animates the constructed body. The subject is now a hellforged, losing all its previous racial traits and gaining gearforged traits except as follows:

- ***Vulnerability.*** Hellforged are vulnerable to radiant damage.
- ***Evil Mind.*** Hellforged have disadvantage on saving throws against the spells and abilities of evil fiends or aberrations that affect the mind or behavior.

- ***Past Life.*** The hellforged retains only a vague sense of who it was in its former existence, but these memories are enough for it to gain proficiency in one skill.
- ***Languages.*** Hellforged speak Common, Machine Speech, and Infernal or Abyssal.

On a successful save, you take 2d10 psychic damage plus 2d10 necrotic damage from the waves of uncontrolled energy rippling out from the disembodied spirit. You can maintain the spell, forcing the subject to repeat the saving throw at the end of each of your turns with the same consequence to you for each failure. If you choose not to maintain the spell or are unable to do so, the evil spirit returns to its place of torment and cannot be recalled.

Up to four other spellcasters of at least 5th level can assist you in the ritual. Each assistant increases the DC of the Charisma saving throw by 1. In the event of a failed save, the spellcaster and each assistant take damage. An assistant who drops out of the casting can't rejoin.

IMBUE SPELL

5th-Level Transmutation (Clockwork, Ritual)

Casting Time: 1 hour
Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M (a specially designed gear worth 100 gp per spell level—see below)
Duration: Instantaneous

You imbue a spell of 1st through 3rd level that has a casting time of instantaneous onto a gear worth 100 gp per level of spell you are imbuing. At the end of the ritual, the gear is placed into a piece of clockwork that includes a timer or trigger mechanism. When the timer or trigger goes off, the spell is cast. If the range of the spell was touch, it effects only a target touching the device. If the spell had a range in feet, the spell is cast on the closest viable target within range, based on the nature of the spell. Spells with a range of self or sight can't be imbued. If the gear is placed with a timer, it activates when the time elapses regardless of whether a legitimate target is available.

At Higher Levels. You can perform this ritual as a 7th-level spell to imbue a spell of 4th or 5th level.

LOCK ARMOR

2nd-Level Transmutation (Clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: 60 feet
Components: V, S, M (a pinch of rust and metal shavings)
Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You target a metal item or construct. If the target is a construct or a creature wearing metal armor, it must make a Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the target is paralyzed. Limited movement might still be possible for armored creatures, depending on how extensive the armor is (at GM's discretion), and speech is usually not affected, but metal constructs are completely paralyzed. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself with a success.

A *grease* spell dispels *lock armor* on everything in its area of effect.

At Higher Levels. When casting this spell using a 3rd-level slot or higher, you may target 1 additional creature or item per level.

MACHINE'S LOAD

1st-Level Transmutation (Clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M (a 1-lb. weight)
Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You touch a creature and give it the capacity to carry, lift, push, or drag weight as if it were one size category larger. If you're using the encumbrance rules, the target is not subject to penalties for weight. Furthermore, the subject can carry loads that would normally be unwieldy.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot higher than 1st, you can touch one additional creature for each spell level.

MACHINE SACRIFICE

8th-Level Necromancy (Clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M (a construct with at least 3 HD, which is consumed in the casting)
Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You sacrifice a willing construct you can see to imbue a willing target with construct traits. The target gains resistance to all nonmagical damage and gains immunity to the blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, petrified, and poisoned conditions.

MACHINE SPEECH

1st-Level Transmutation (Clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 bonus action
Range: Self
Components: V, S
Duration: 1 round

Your voice, and to a lesser extent your mind, changes to communicate only in the whirring clicks of Machine Speech. Until the end of your next turn, all clockwork spells you cast have advantage on attack rolls, and their targets have disadvantage on their saving throws.

MASS REPAIR METAL

5th-Level Transmutation (Clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Self (60-foot radius)
Components: V, S
Duration: Instantaneous

As *repair metal*, but you can affect all metal within range. You repair 1d8 + 5 damage to a metal object or construct by sealing up rents and bending metal back into place.

At Higher Levels. Casting the spell as a 6th-level spell repairs 2d8 + 10 damage.

MECHANICAL UNION

5th-Level Transmutation (Clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: 60 feet
Components: V, S, M (a tiny hammer and adamantine spike worth 100 gp)
Duration: Concentration, up to 1 hour

You can take control of a construct by voice or mental commands. The construct must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw to resist the spell, and it has advantage on the saving throw if its CR equals or exceeds your level in the class used to cast this spell. Once a command is given, the construct does everything it can to complete the command. Giving a new command takes an action. Constructs will risk harm, even go into combat, on your orders but will not self-destruct, and giving such an order ends the spell.

MOVE THE COSMIC WHEEL

8th-Level Conjuration (Clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: 120 feet
Components: V, S, M (a music box, worth at least 250 gp, attuned to a particular plane of existence)
Duration: 24 hours

You wind your music box and call forth a piece of another plane of existence with which you are familiar, either through personal experience or intense study. The magic creates a bubble of space with a 30-foot radius within range of you and at a spot you designate. The portion of your plane that's inside the bubble swaps places with a corresponding portion of the plane to which your music box is attuned.

There is a 10% chance the portion of the plane you summon arrives with native creatures. Inanimate objects and non-ambulatory life (such as trees) are cut off at the edge of the bubble while living creatures that don't fit inside the bubble are shunted outside it before the swap occurs. Otherwise, creatures from both planes caught inside the bubble are sent along with their chunk of reality to the other plane for the duration of the spell. Creatures must succeed on a Charisma saving throw to choose whether to shift planes with the bubble or leap outside of it a moment before the shift occurs.

Any natural reaction between the two planes occurs normally (fire spreads, water flows, and so on) while energy (such as necrotic energy) leaks slowly across the edge of the sphere (no more than a foot or two per hour)—all at the GM's discretion. Otherwise, creatures and effects can move freely across the boundary of the sphere. For the duration of the spell, it becomes a part of its new location to the fullest extent possible, given the natures of the two planes. The two displaced bubbles shift back to their original places automatically after 24 hours.

Note that the amount of preparation involved (acquiring and attuning the music box) precludes spur-of-the-moment casting. Because of its unpredictable and potentially wide-ranging effects, it's also advisable to discuss your interest in this spell with your GM before adding it to your character's repertoire.

OVERCLOCK

3rd-Level Transmutation (Clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: 30 feet
Components: V, S, M (a clock key)
Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You cause a targeted piece of clockwork to speed up past the point of control for the duration of the spell. The targeted clockwork can't cast spells with verbal components or even communicate effectively (all its utterances sound like grinding gears). At the start of each of its turns, the target must make a Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the clockwork moves at three times its normal speed in a random direction, and its turn ends—it can't perform any other actions. On a successful save, then until the end of its turn, the clockwork's speed is doubled, and it gains an additional action, which must be Attack (one weapon attack only), Dash, Disengage, Hide, or Use an Object. When the spell ends, the clockwork takes 2d8 force damage. It also must be rewound or refueled, and it needs to have its daily maintenance performed immediately if it relies on any of those things.

PENDULUM

1st-Level Enchantment (Clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M (a small pendulum made of brass and rosewood, worth 10 gp)
Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You give the target an aspect of regularity in its motions and fortunes. The target must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw, or for the duration, it doesn't make d20 rolls, but instead, to determine the results of ability checks, attack rolls, and saving throws, it uses the following sequence: 20, 1, 19, 2, 18, 3, 17, 4, and so on.

POWER WORD RESTORE

8th-Level Evocation (Clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Components: V
Duration: Instantaneous

You speak a word of power, and energy washes over a single construct you touch. The construct regains all its lost hit points, all negative conditions on the construct end, and it can use a reaction to stand up if prone.

READ MEMORY

4th-Level Divination (Clockwork)

Casting Time: 10 minutes
Range: Self
Components: V, S, M (a memory gear from a gearforged)
Duration: Instantaneous

You copy the memories of one memory gear into your own mind. You recall these memories as if you had experienced them but without any emotional attachment or context.

REPAIR METAL

2nd-Level Transmutation (Clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Components: V, S
Duration: Instantaneous

A damaged construct or metal object regains 1d8 + 5 hit points when you cast this spell upon it.

At Higher Levels. The spell restores 2d8 + 10 hit points at 4th level, 3d8 + 15 at 6th level, and 4d8 + 20 at 8th level.

ROBE OF SHARDS

6th-Level Abjuration (Clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Self
Components: V, S, M (a metal shard)
Duration: 1 minute

You create a robe of metal shards, gears, and cogs that provides a base AC of 14 + your Dexterity modifier. As a bonus action while protected by the robe, you can command bits of metal from foes fallen since you cast the spell to be absorbed into it. Each infusion of metal increases your AC by 1 to a maximum of 18 + your Dexterity modifier. You can also use a bonus action to dispel the robe, causing it to explode in a shower of metal debris that does 8d6 slashing damage, plus 1d6 per point of AC added from fallen foes, to all creatures within 30 feet of you.

SPIN

2nd-Level Enchantment (Clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: 60 feet
Components: V, S
Duration: 1 minute

You designate a creature you can see within range and tell it to spin. The creature can resist this command with a successful Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the creature spins in place for the duration of the spell. A spinning creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. A creature that has spun for 1 round or longer becomes dizzy and has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks until 1 round after it stops spinning.

STEAM BLAST

4th-Level Evocation (Clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Self (15-foot radius)
Components: V, S, M (a tiny copper kettle or boiler)
Duration: Instantaneous

You unleash a burst of superheated steam in a 15-foot radius around you. All other creatures in the area take 5d8 fire damage, or half as much damage on a successful Dexterity saving throw. Nonmagical fires smaller than a bonfire are extinguished, and everything becomes wet.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 5th level or higher, the damage increases by 1d8 for each slot level above 4th.

STEAM WHISTLE

8th-Level Evocation (Clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Self (30-foot radius)
Components: V, S, M (a small brass whistle)
Duration: Instantaneous

You open your mouth and unleash a shattering scream. All other creatures in a 30-foot radius around you take 10d10 thunder damage and are deafened for 1d8 hours. A successful Constitution saving throw halves the damage and reduces the deafness to 1 round.



THOUSAND DARTS

3rd-Level Evocation (Clockwork)

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Self (120-foot line)
Components: V, S, M (set of mithral darts worth 25 gp)
Duration: Instantaneous

You launch thousands of needlelike darts in a 5-foot-wide line that is 120 feet long. Each creature in the line takes 6d6 piercing damage, or half as much damage if it makes a successful Dexterity saving throw. The first creature struck by the darts makes the saving throw with disadvantage.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 4th level or higher, the damage increases by 1d6 for each slot level above 3rd.

TICK STOP

Transmutation Cantrip (Clockwork)
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: 30 feet
Components: V
Duration: 1 round

You speak a word, and the target construct can take either an action or a bonus action on its next turn, but not both. The construct is immune to further tick stops from the same caster for 24 hours.

TIME IN A BOTTLE

9th-Level Transmutation (Clockwork)
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Sight
Components: V
Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

Time comes under your control in a 20-foot-radius sphere centered on a spot you can see. You can freeze time, reverse it, or move it forward by as much as 1 minute in the area as long as you maintain concentration. Nothing and no one, yourself included, can enter the field or affect what happens inside it. You can choose to end the effect as a bonus action, and events progress naturally from there.

TIME JUMP

8th-Level Transmutation (Clockwork)
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Components: V, S
Duration: Instantaneous

You throw a construct forward in time. The target must make a Constitution saving throw or disappear for 1d4 + 1 rounds, during which time it cannot act or be acted upon in any way. When the construct returns, it is unaware that any time has passed.

TIMELESS ENGINE

7th-Level Transmutation (Clockwork)
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Components: V, S
Duration: Until dispelled

You halt the normal processes of degradation and wear in a nonmagical clockwork device, making normal maintenance unnecessary and slowing fuel consumption to 1/10th that of normal. For magical devices and constructs, the spell greatly reduces wear. A magical clockwork device, machine, or creature that normally needs daily maintenance only needs care once per year. If it previously needed monthly maintenance, it now requires attention only once per decade.

TIRELESS

1st-Level Transmutation (Clockwork)
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Components: S, M (an ever-wound spring worth 50 gp)
Duration: 24 hours

You grant machinelike stamina to a creature you touch. For the duration of the spell, the target requires no food or drink or rest. It can move at three times its normal speed overland and perform three times the usual amount of labor. The target is not protected from fatigue or exhaustion caused by a magical effect.

WINDING KEY

2nd-Level Transmutation (Clockwork)
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: 60 feet
Components: V, M (an ornately carved silver key worth 50 gp)
Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You target a construct, giving it an extra action or move on each of its turns.

WRITE MEMORY

4th-Level Transmutation (Clockwork)
Casting Time: 1 hour
Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M (an empty memory gear)
Duration: Instantaneous

You copy your memories, or those learned from the spell *read memory*, onto an empty memory gear.



CHAPTER 8

HEROES OF ZOBECK

A woman on a brown and white horse rode into Zobeck through the South Gate. Her armor bore the scars of a hundred battles and was coated in the dirt of a long and arduous quest, but still it gleamed in the sunlight. Everyone around her gawked in surprise. Kobolds in the gutter sneered up at her, eying her coin purse. Regular folks in street clothes looked up at her in awe. All who looked upon her knew who she was, though her kind wasn't a common sight in the city.

She rode down the street about a mile until she arrived at the sign of the Crooked Horn where she swung herself off her horse and landed with a heavy thud on the cobblestones. The coins in her pocket rattled as much as her armor. Every thief watching from the alleys began to salivate, dreaming of the luxuries they could afford if they could pinch even a single handful of those gold pieces. They all leapt on her at once. A half-dozen kobolds, wererats, and masked darakhul threatened to bury the armored woman in a pile of rusty blades and stinking flesh.

But those cutpurses hadn't given a second's thought to how she'd gained all that gold in the first place. It weren't from mopping floors, and it weren't her daddy's money. Three punches rang out, followed by three screams and the thump of three bodies on the stones. The remaining thieves scattered, and the assembled people gazed at her again in renewed amazement. All who looked upon her knew who she was. They knew from the grime on her armor, the blood caked in her black, braided hair, the bruises on her knuckles, and the symbol of Horus on her tarnished shield.

She was a hero.

Heroes from a metropolis like Zobeck rarely share the same upbringing as adventurers in the rest of the world. Heroes born and raised in a city don't live the same lives that knights-errant, outlanders, and folk heroes do. Rather, they start their lives as table stewards in local taverns, as book-headed collegians in the lyceums, or as courtesans who accompany a powerful lord or lady.

NEW BACKGROUNDS

While the core backgrounds are all perfectly suitable for characters going on adventures in the Free City of Zobeck, the new blessed of Ninkash, collegian, courtesan, kobold king, and politician backgrounds allow players to build characters who are specialized in adventuring within a major fantasy metropolis. These backgrounds give certain characters an edge in urban exploration compared to other characters—though they are likewise less suited to epic, cross-country quests than their more adventuresome counterparts. As usual, the GM can work together with the players to customize their character backgrounds to fit the needs of a given character, region, or campaign in general.

BLESSED OF NINKASH

Ninkash, also known as the Mother of Beer and the Goddess of Merriment, is a much-beloved deity within the Crossroads. Zobeck's working class drinks ale as if it were water (indeed, dwarven beer is often cleaner than water in the city), and many dwarves from the nearby Ironcrag cantons now live in Zobeck and extol their matron goddess's tenets wherever they go. Since Ninkash has no temples in Zobeck and her priesthood lacks a central authority even in the Ironcrags, the Beer Goddess's followers instead heed the authority of master brewers known as the blessed of Ninkash.

The blessed of Ninkash have no formal priestly authority, and only a few of them command any divine magic, but they possess such a mastery of the art of brewing that the people of Zobeck agree they must possess the divine gifts of Ninkash herself. Likewise, the blessed of Ninkash are not an official guild or club. The title of blessed is often given by patrons of bars who delight in a local brewer's experimental draughts. Those who bear the title of blessed of Ninkash are rarely professional brewers, and those who do make money from their craft are not a part of any guild. The blessed are typically professional barflies who make a hobby of brewing, gambling, and playing music while keeping a paying job elsewhere in the city.

Skill Proficiencies: Nature, Persuasion.

Tool Proficiencies: Brewer's supplies, one type of gaming set.

Equipment: A set of common clothes or traveler's clothes, a set of brewer's supplies and one type of gaming set, a 4-pint cask of homebrewed ale, beer, or mead, and a belt pouch containing 5 gp.

FEATURE: BLESSINGS AT THE BAR

You feel more at home while in taverns and inns than you do at your own home, your workplace, or your school. Determine with your GM the name and location of your favorite tavern: what city is it in, and where in that city is it located? Before being thrown into your adventures, you visited that pub every day and know all the regulars. Because of your famed brews, 50 percent of all other taverns in the city also know your name.

When in a tavern that knows your identity and knows of your fame, its bartender will give you and your companions free meals and lodging as long as you spend 4 hours brewing and succeed on a DC 15 Intelligence (brewer's supplies) check to make them a barrel of your brew. Additionally, while in this tavern, you can call upon its patrons for assistance, provided the assistance you ask for does not risk their lives and you remain in good standing with the tavern's patrons.

SUGGESTED CHARACTERISTICS

The blessed of Ninkash are linked by a common trade skill, not by social station or birthplace. Nevertheless, as master brewers, they have a certain fondness for drink and the rough-and-tumble atmosphere of taverns. Wealthy bearers of Ninkash's blessing are rare, but they tend to have a talent for mixing divine cocktails in bars better suited for gatherings of high society.



d8	Personality Traits
1	I greet everyone I meet with a smile and a free drink. When my enemies come for me, I want to have friends to save my neck.
2	I stay at the bar because it's the only place that makes me feel happy.
3	I end every statement with a quick blessing to Ninkash. Everything I have is thanks to her!
4	Ha!
5	My language may be foul enough to strip paint, but I would never take the name of the Beer Goddess in vain!
6	I love a pretty face, but if they can't outdrink me, I'll have nothing to do with them!
7	Brewing's just a hobby for me, but I guess I ain't half bad at it! What're the odds?
8	Making drinks is my one true love in life. I wouldn't survive 10 days without it.

d6	Ideal
1	***Excellence.*** I will become the best brewer this city has ever seen! (Any)
2	***Secrecy.*** The key to my success is a secret recipe. If anyone discovers it, I'm ruined. (Neutral)
3	***Spite.*** I started practicing my craft because of an old grudge. Shame I'm so good at it because it's not much fun. The only thing keeping me brewing is spite. (Chaotic)
4	***Community.*** The people here are kind to me. It's only right that I share my brew with them in return. (Lawful)
5	***Divinity.*** Ninkash teaches that all the people of the world deserve to make merry. I hope everyone is able to find solace in a golden beer, even when times are hard. (Good)
6	***Treachery.*** I've spent years getting close to my so-called friends, learning how to worm secrets out them. If anyone betrays me, their next drink will contain a swift and painless death. (Evil)

d6	Bond
1	I've named my brewer's supplies. Each cup, ladle, and kettle has a name, and I love them like the family I never had.
2	I was taught to brew by a woman who passed through town when I was young. I've spent all my life trying to find her and show her how much I've learned.
3	I was raised by a priest of Ninkash, and I grew up in the temple seeing how happy her blessings made people. I vow to spread my goddess's blessings wherever I go.
4	My brewmaster was murdered before my eyes by a thief who wanted his recipe. I have spent all my life searching for the murderer's identity to no avail.
5	The people in my home tavern treat me like some sort of celebrity. I've always wanted to be famous, so I keep coming back!
6	A traveling priest of Ninkash once saved my life when I drank too much one night. I owe her my life.

d6	Flaw
1	I drink too much. It has lost me friends, family—now all I have left is my devotion to Ninkash.
2	Whenever someone tells me they don't drink, I get angry. How can they refuse my goddess's perfect drink?
3	I'm a fraud. My famous brew is actually someone else's work that I'm profiting from.
4	I'm pretty good at starting bar fights. Not so good at finishing them since I usually run away in the middle.
5	I will do anything for fame. Anything.
6	I once messed up my brew so badly that three people died after drinking it. Turns out they were crime lords, and now their goons are after me.

COLLEGIAN

The Arcane Collegium sees hundreds of students and professors walk through its hallowed halls each day. The diligent students walk with leather packs filled with textbooks and arcane tomes and scrolls in hopes of mastering the basics of wizardry. A rare few students enter the halls of higher education in hopes of gaining mastery in the ways of swordplay or bardic performance, for some of the lands' premiere swordsmen and bards settle down in the city and become teachers once their age prevents them from adventuring.

The collegian background represents a student at an institute of higher learning, including the Arcane Collegium but also the many smaller academies that dot the Collegium District. A professor of such an institution would be of the sage background, though a new and untested professor could be a collegian.

Skill Proficiencies: Two of your choice from Arcana, History, Nature, and Religion.

Languages: Two of your choice.

Equipment: A bottle of black ink and an ink pen, a leatherbound journal, a pair of reading glasses, a liquor flask, a set of fine clothes, and a belt pouch containing 10 gp.



d8	Personality Traits
1	That thing you just mentioned? I know all about it. Yes, even that. Oh, definitely that. Listen, you can be quiet now, I can take it from here.
2	Don't wake me at this hour! Don't make such a racket this early in the morning! Oh, it's lunchtime?
3	Please don't bother me. I'm trying to meditate. I read about this special technique from the jungles of Kush in the Southlands. It should open my third eye—whatever that is.
4	I'm always hungry. I can never stop thinking about the next mess hall visit.
5	Psst, new gossip! Did you hear Lady Marack's granddaughter is seeing the fellow we met at the pub yesterday?
6	Let's go sneaking around the professor's hall tonight! We'll find all sorts of cool stuff there.
7	I hate doing anything the same way twice. I need to try new things!
8	The students in Ridgecroft Hall next door are so loud! How am I expected to study with the racket they make partying every night?

d6	Ideal
1	***Power.*** Knowledge is power, and I aim to be the most powerful person in the world! (Any)
2	***Discipline.*** I can never reach my full potential if I lollygag or relax. My personal code of discipline is all that matters! (Lawful)
3	***Spontaneity.*** Let's just do something tonight! I hate getting stuck in a rut. (Chaos)
4	***Tranquility.*** Just . . . go with the flow. Whatever happens will happen. (Neutral)
5	***Misinformation.*** I need to know the truth, so I can spread lies. (Evil)
6	***Accountability.*** I never make excuses for sloppy work! I own up to errors, no matter the consequences! (Good)

d6	Bond
1	My test partner passed away in his third year. Everything I do is to honor their memory!
2	My parents sold everything they owned to help pay my tuition. I must make them proud.
3	I heard a fragmented secret of the stars in a dream. The professor of divination and astronomy has to help me make sense of this riddle!
4	Learning is the only thing that makes me happy. I need as much knowledge as I can handle!
5	My family has an ancient secret. I need to learn the history of my great-grandfather's death, and the academy is the only place with records old enough.
6	I have a favorite professor, and I attend office hours as frequently as possible. I need expert advice before I make a major decision!

d6	Flaw
1	I know I'm paying a load of gold to go here, but I can't go a night without partying or hitting the pub.
2	My studies have revealed things to me man was not meant to see.
3	My classes have overworked me to the brink. I'm a nervous wreck!
4	I must stay busy all the time. I don't want to be alone with my thoughts.
5	I hate how I just don't understand things as quickly as my friends.
6	I cheat on everything. Tests. Fights. Partners. I can't help it!

FEATURE: KNOWLEDGE OF THE AGES

As a current student or alumnus of your university, you have free access to its expansive library. While in this library, you can spend 1 hour of research to make an Intelligence (Arcana, History, Nature, or Religion) check with advantage. At your GM's discretion, if this knowledge is present within the library, you can spend 8 hours of research to learn it.

If this knowledge is beyond your university's knowledge, you can request a research grant to discover the information you seek. The university supplies your travel and lifestyle expenses (up to a modest lifestyle) for up to 2 months while researching. You cannot request a grant more than once per year.

SUGGESTED CHARACTERISTICS

Collegians are sages-in-training. Because young collegians have a greater lust for life than their older counterparts, they have yet to partake in the long, sleepless nights and years of rigorous study that sages have endured in order to obtain vast knowledge.

COURTESAN

The wealthy lords and ladies of Zobeck are often in need of companionship, and canny courtesans are able to fill their own pockets and learn valuable secrets by cozying up to a noble patron or two. Courtesans are well-respected in Zobeck, and while some may sneer at the sexual side of their profession, the fact remains that trading sex for money and favors is but one aspect of a courtesan's life. Many of these wealthy, upper-class prostitutes are also well-regarded artists, and their aristocratic benefactor enables them to create paintings, perform music, and direct acclaimed stage plays. Some use their position of privilege to enter politics, and though they face an upward battle, a few courtesans with a steely will have become powerful magistrates and lawmakers.

Skill Proficiencies: Deception, Persuasion.

Tool Proficiencies: One type of gaming set, herbalism kit.

Equipment: A set of fine clothes, a gaming set, an herbalism kit, and a coin purse containing 15 gp.

FEATURE: COURTLY INTRIGUE

Even though you are not of noble birth, you fit right in at upper-class social functions. You are treated as a person of noble standing by other highborn people and are

privy to all the latest gossip. You easily gather rumors of important and tantalizing scandals, political maneuvers, and even major criminal activity if you spend at least 1 hour gossiping with a person of power.

SUGGESTED CHARACTERISTICS

Courtesans must fight tooth and nail for their position of privilege and take pride in their newfound social power. A courtesan likely rose from poverty into great wealth predicated upon her beauty and charm.

d8	Personality Traits
1	The only armor I wear is invisible, and I never take it off. It keeps people from seeing my inner fears.
2	Let's be honest—I like sex. It's fun, and it feels good.
3	I tell so many white lies that I don't even know what my real personality is anymore.
4	Someday, I'll find that special someone. I just have to wait.
5	I hope some big noble takes me under their wing and makes me famous.
6	The palace is so pretty. I could live around beautiful things forever.
7	I wish I didn't have to meet people. I get so anxious about every little thing.
8	Life is short and painful and then you die. I might as well have a great time while I'm here!

d6	Ideal
1	***Loyalty.*** I would never betray the trust of my benefactor or my friends. (Lawful)
2	***Profit.*** I've become rich pitting these blockheaded aristocrats against one another. (Chaos)
3	***Comfort.*** When you strip away all the ego and lies, everyone's broken and looking for someone to make them feel good. I'll be that person. (Good)
4	***Truth.*** My word is my bond. Someone in this godsforsaken profession has to be honest. (Any)
5	***Theft.*** Oh, my last patron's precious jewels went missing? How careless. (Evil)
6	***Chaos.*** I spread rumors for fun. I love seeing these petty nobles run around like headless fowl. (Chaotic)

d6	Bond
1	My benefactor is a kind noble. I would not see them harmed or slandered.
2	I answer to only one person, and that person is me.
3	The mob has dirt on me and my family. They take every bit of money I earn.
4	I have a second job as a dancer at a tavern. Those people are my real family.
5	I have a kid in a village in the cantons. And they need to eat.
6	My old mother needs the money I give her each month, but she would die if she learned about my profession.

d6	Flaw
1	I learn all these secrets and bits of gossip, but my memory is so bad, I . . . uh, sorry, what was I talking about?
2	I always blurt out something stupid at the wrong time!
3	There's someone hunting me . . . someone I crossed years ago.
4	I'm worried I caught something last week. I feel queasy all the time . . . and it's only getting worse.
5	I take everything as a criticism, and I'm not good at keeping my temper in check.
6	None of the lords of court will invite me back with them, just because I don't like sex. Can't we just cuddle and drink wine while I extract state secrets from you?

KOBOLD KING

The title of kobold king sounds prestigious to the average traveler, but the citizens of Zobeck look upon them with disdain. In the eyes of most of Zobeck, a kobold king (there are kobold women in the position as well, though they still use the title kobold king) is little more than a petty tyrant, commanding a singular neighborhood in the Kobold Ghetto.

The kobolds themselves take a different view. While it's true lesser kobold kings rarely reign for more than a few weeks before being overthrown, they are a symbol of kobold independence. The mere existence of the lesser kings—let alone the great king—are a constant reminder that the frightful days of kobold slavery are behind them.

Skill Proficiencies: Stealth, Persuasion.

Tool Proficiencies: One type of artisan's tools, thieves' tools.

Equipment: A tiny scalpel, a tattered map of the Kobold Ghetto, a set of thieves' tools, a set of common clothes, a pet lizard, and a belt pouch containing 5 gp.

FEATURE: KOBOLD HIDEY-HOLES

Every kobold worth their salt knows how to hide from the law and other belligerent Tall Folk. While in a city, you can take 10 minutes to make a DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check to locate a place within a mile for you and up to five other Medium or smaller creatures to avoid detection for up to 24 hours. If you are in the wilderness, you must make this check with disadvantage. If you are in the Kobold Ghetto, you can make this check with advantage.

d8	Personality Traits
1	I am constantly looking over my shoulder for assassins and usurpers.
2	I am the greatest kobold king to ever live! I will reign for a dozen years!
3	I may not be a kobold king yet, but mark my words, I will be!
4	Hate mud. Gotta be clean . . . gotta be clean.
5	I trust no one to be a loyal friend, not after last time. . .
6	I try to be friends with everyone, even the city watch. No one wants to be friends with me though.
7	I may be ugly and smelly and rude and cowardly, but I'm good at heart!
8	I don't believe I can actually be the kobold king, but hopefully, I will become worthy if I pretend to be for long enough.

d6	Ideal
1	***Selflessness***. Every little thing I do is for the kobolds! (Good)
2	***Community.*** We stick together. We're family. (Lawful)
3	***Independence.*** Every kobold for themselves! (Chaos)
4	***Self-Preservation.*** I'm looking out for Number One! (Any)
5	***Might.*** Weak kobolds have no right to live. (Evil)
6	***Selfishness.*** The kobolds live to serve me! I am their king! (Evil)

d6	Bond
1	My little one is going to be king one day. I must protect her until she comes of age, and I must not be usurped before that day.
2	King of Kings Quetelmak can do no wrong. I would die for him!
3	I'm saving up my pieces of silver to buy something big that will change my life!
4	I am loyal only to Karremark, Prince of the Night Ghetto. Our day will soon come.
5	I have a little house. I want to keep my little house safe.
6	Generations ago, my family was owned by a human nobleman. His family will pay for the way he tortured them.

d6	Flaw
1	My paranoia makes it impossible for me to make friends. I'm always looking for ways to kill them and ways to save my own hide.
2	If any of my rivals learn my secret, I'll be ruined forever.
3	I love money! (Money's the little gray rocks on the street, right?)
4	I carry a lit candle at all times. For some reason, I can't see in the dark without it.
5	I take everything that isn't nailed down. I can't help it.
6	I'm too soft. I hate the sound of screams and violence. I will do anything to avoid killing, even if it puts my own life in danger.

This hiding spot is a sort of safe house that doesn't attract the attention of the law, thugs, or other non-supernatural threats. Creatures viewing your safe location from the street cannot see you, but being in it provides no bonus to Dexterity (Stealth) checks.

SUGGESTED CHARACTERISTICS

Kobold kings are often loath to help others if it doesn't provide some benefit to the people of the Kobold Ghetto. Kobold kings are typically kobolds, but there are stories of human children who have become kobold kings for a short time—before they grow too tall to fit in the kobold warrens, that is!

POLITICIAN

Not all public officials in Zobeck are nobles. The consuls, the lord mayor, and dozens of other local magistrates, judges, and guild lobbyists keep the bureaucracy of Zobeck afloat. Most minor politicians have very little sway in the grand scheme of things but nevertheless scrabble for power and notoriety in the hopes of gaining a seat on the Free City Council.

Skill Proficiencies: Deception, Insight.

Tool Proficiencies: Forgery kit, one type of musical instrument.

Equipment: A fancy hat, a set of fine clothes, an ink pen and a bottle of black ink, a ream of parchment paper, a gold ring indicating your office, a certificate of office.

FEATURE: GUBERNATORIAL POSITION

As a public official, you own a house in Upper Zobeck. Your income as a politician pays for the house and allows you to keep a comfortable lifestyle without requiring you to pay lifestyle expenses. Your house has enough beds for you and your family and enough food to serve you and your family for up to 1 week before having to restock.

SUGGESTED CHARACTERISTICS

Politicians are often reviled in Zobeck as duplicitous and self-serving predators, preying upon the very people they are sworn to protect.



d8	Personality Traits
1	I use simple words. My voters need to know what I'm saying.
2	Life and politics are both just big popularity contests, so I must be popular!
3	I lie a lot. It's fun to lie. I'm probably lying right now.
4	I'm very careful with what I say in public. I never want anything I've discussed to come back to haunt me later.
5	I am not afraid of some hard work. Let's roll up our sleeves and get things done.
6	I live in a bubble. Doesn't everyone think like I do and believe the same things about the world?
7	I can win anyone over, and eventually everyone likes and supports me. I'm just a friend you haven't met yet.
8	I may show a pretty face to the people of this city, but behind closed doors, my aides are treated to a deluge of rancor and profanity.

d6	Ideal
1	***Order.*** The power of the law must be used to maintain existing hierarchies and social orders. (Lawful)
2	***Faith.*** The people of Zobeck ought to have leaders they can put their faith in! (Good)
3	***Aggression.*** My electorate needs to know how terrible my political rivals are. (Any)
4	***Repayment.*** Like for like. I will repay those who service me. (Neutral)
5	***Cruelty.*** People are my playthings. I will use them and dispose of them to stay in power. (Evil)
6	***Hypocrisy.*** Laws only exist to keep the common rabble in line. As a creator of laws, I am above such petty things. (Chaotic)

d6	Bond
1	My manservant is the most important person in the world to me. Without him, I would hardly know how to get up in the morning, let alone pass legislation.
2	I've been trying to build a gearforged body for someone important to me. I think I'm getting close to finishing it.
3	I will challenge the corruption in this city.
4	My mentor was the most important person in my life. I have to honor their memory.
5	The gangs must go down. I will put Zobeck back on the righteous path.
6	I need money. I love gazing into the gilded, mirrored surface of a polished coin. My mother says I have a little dragon blood in my veins.

d6	Flaw
1	I was born under a jealous star. If someone is more successful than me, I must destroy them.
2	I don't have any original thoughts. I rely too much on my aides and advisors.
3	My enemies are growing stronger, and I'm too afraid to face them.
4	I have an office, but I want more. A title. An estate. I need more power.
5	Winning is the only thing that matters to me. The only thing.
6	I never learned the value of money. I spend recklessly, and I can't understand how anyone can suffer from poverty. Can't they just work harder?

NEW MOUNTS

The people of the Crossroads travel on more than just horses. Most notable of Zobeck's unusual mounts are the griffons, made famous by the city's Order of Griffon Knights, though other factions within Zobeck and the Crossroads region have brought their own unique steeds to the Free City.

Flying Mounts. Zobeck is in the center of a great mountain range, and the ragged terrain of the Ironcrag cantons make traditional mounts difficult to ride without special training. Adventurers that seek to move unimpeded through the bluffs can find rare flying steeds on the black market—or in the possession of wealthy patrons like the consuls. Finding a seller is a difficult task that might require an entire adventure to complete. Once found, a trained flying mount costs 1,200 gp.

Controlling a beast as powerful as a griffon or a wyvern in the air may seem an impossible challenge, but a well-trained flying mount is just as easy to ride and fight upon as a warhorse. Flying mounts require an exotic saddle (60 gp, 40 lb.) but can otherwise be armored and outfitted just like an earthbound beast.

CLOCKWORK WARHORSE

Warhorses are easily the most popular steed for adventurers in Midgard. However, the gearforged and clockwork soldiers of Zobeck find flesh-and-bone mounts to be finicky, unreliable, and temperamental, and they have spent years of effort and thousands of gold pieces to develop a mechanical steed for their own ease of use. These mechanical destriers never tire and do not eat, but their incredible bulk means they cannot move quite as quickly as their living counterparts. A mechanical warhorse requires maintenance every week, taking 1 hour of work and 10 gp worth of materials.

CLOCKWORK WARHORSE

Large Construct, Unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 30 (4d10 + 8)

Speed 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	11 (+0)	15 (+2)	3 (−4)	7 (−2)	7 (−2)

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned

Senses passive Perception 8

Languages —

Challenge 1 (200 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

Immutable Form. The clockwork warhorse is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Magic Resistance. The clockwork warhorse has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Trampling Charge. If the clockwork warhorse moves at least 20 feet straight toward a creature and then hits it with a Hooves attack on the same turn, that target must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. If the target is prone, the horse can make another Hooves attack against it as a bonus action.

ACTIONS

Hooves. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

GIANT FEY OWL

Though the shadow fey are a secretive and mysterious people, they nonetheless like to travel in style. The people of Zobeck have caught glimpses in the night sky of shadow fey riding on giant snowy owls, feathers glistening with a prismatic sheen. The hunt was on the moment the first fey owl was spotted in the sky. Trappers and hunters began stringing nets across rooftops and laying snares in hopes of trapping a fey owl. Adventurers have even delved into the Shadow Realm in hopes of bringing one back to sell to wealthy nobles.

The shadow fey are unconcerned with adventurers trapping owls from the Shadow Realm but have only icy fury for any hunter who would attack an ambassador of the Winter Court. Anyone who buys a fey owl off the black market would be well advised to learn of the owl's place of origin, lest they find themselves pursued by a murderous shadow fey in search of its stolen steed.

GIANT FEY OWL

Large Beast, Neutral

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 45 (6d10 + 12)

Speed 10 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	18 (+4)	15 (+2)	9 (−1)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Wis +6

Skills Perception +6, Stealth +6

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages Common, Elvish, Sylvan

Challenge 1 (200 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

Flyby. The fey owl doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when it flies out of an enemy's reach.

Keen Hearing and Sight. The fey owl has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or sight.

ACTIONS

Talons. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) slashing damage.

Invisibility. The fey owl turns invisible, along with any equipment or creatures it is carrying.

Mharoti contraband rarely makes it as far north as the Crossroads, but some mercenaries who have fought against the Dragon Empire in their recent wars of conquest have been able to capture war wyverns alive. Even the military commanders of Zobeck are hesitant to use these unpredictable creatures for casual riding, let alone for war. Adventurers, however, are made from more reckless stock. Their thirst for excitement has led some black-market wyvern dealers to take up shop in Zobeck's Undercity, though their price is steep: 10,000 gp for a single wyvern, plus its saddle and barding.



RIDING GRIFFON

Most griffons in Zobeck are owned by the Order of Griffon Knights. It is, in fact, illegal for anyone to own a griffon within city limits unless they are a member of that venerable order. Of course, that has not stopped a thriving black market of griffon smugglers from blossoming in the Zobeck underworld—sometimes literally. The vast caverns of Zobeck's Undercity are perfect places to give griffons a chance to stretch their wings in secret.

A griffon trained for riding has the same statistics as a typical **griffon**, though trained griffons also understand one language, typically Common.

WAR WYVERN

Wyverns are savage dragons considered untamable by the people of the Crossroads. Yet somehow, the beastmasters of the Mharoti Dragon Empire were able to train wyverns for war (see **war wyvern** in *Creature Codex*). Their mighty wyvern knights ride upon the backs of these scaled nightmares and rain terror upon the battlefield from the safety of the sky.

NEW GEARFORGED RACIAL FEATS

The gearforged are the only major race unique to the Crossroads. Whereas humans, elves, dwarves, and the other humanoid people of the world came to the Crossroads as immigrants, the gearforged are a people entirely of these immigrants' creation. As such, new types of gearforged are constantly being invented in the clockwork workshops and factories of Zobeck.

The newest type of gearforged is a being with an elemental heart. While the original gearforged were crafted by wealthy humans and dwarves as ways to survive after death, these new models are animated with the life force of elementals to serve as soldiers, butlers, and laborers. Instead of undergoing a *soulforging* ritual (see *Midgard Heroes Handbook*), elemental gearforged are created through a *spiritbinding* that reaches into the Elemental Planes.

At 4th level, a gearforged may forgo its Ability Score Increase trait to gain one of the following feats. Additionally, a traditional gearforged may augment their soul gem with an elemental core by undergoing a *spiritbinding* ritual (see below) to gain the benefits of one of these feats.

BRONZESTONE CORE

Prerequisite: Must Be Chosen by a Gearforged

A core of dwarven bronze surrounds the mountain-shaking power of your elemental heart. Whenever you take the Dodge action, a thin layer of stone covers your body, granting you resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks until the beginning of your next turn.

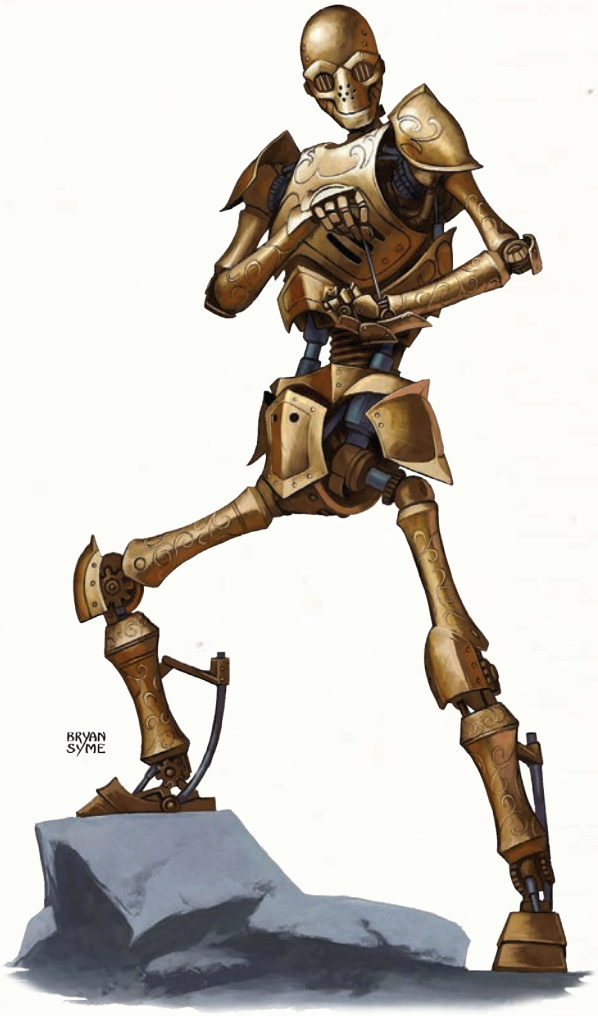
Additionally, you have advantage on Strength saving throws to resist being moved or knocked prone.

IRONFLARE CORE

Prerequisite: Must Be Chosen by a Gearforged

Within your iron heart is the burning essence of a fire elemental, and its power bursts forth whenever you are under physical duress. You gain the following benefits:

- Whenever a creature within 5 feet of you deals damage to you, you can choose to take an additional 1d6 fire damage. The attacker also takes this damage.
- When you score a critical hit with a spell attack that deals fire damage or a melee weapon attack, you deal an additional 1d6 fire damage. This damage is not doubled by the critical hit.
- You know the *produce flame* cantrip. Constitution is your spellcasting ability for this spell.



STORMCRYSTAL CORE

Prerequisite: Must Be Chosen by a Gearforged

Your elemental core is made of cloudy crystal that churns internally with black storm clouds. Whenever you fall, you may cast the *feather fall* spell on yourself as a reaction.

Additionally, you know the *shocking grasp* cantrip. Constitution is your spellcasting ability for this spell.

WAVESTEEL CORE

Prerequisite: Must Be Chosen by a Gearforged

You bear the power of elemental water in the core of your being. The ever-shifting strength of water grants you advantage on saving throws against damage-dealing spells.

Additionally, you can cast *create or destroy water* once per day.

RITUAL OF SPIRITBINDING

Similar to the *soulforging* ritual that gives life to many gearforged, elemental gearforged are imbued with life through the ritual of *spiritbinding*. A spiritbinder conjures an elemental and forces it to bond with a rune-etched core inside the construct's chest.

The spell is available to clerics and wizards but cannot be added to a wizard's spellbook as one of the two spells learned for gaining a level. Instead, it must be found in written form and copied into the spellbook. Clerics can prepare this spell only if they worship a god of the specific elemental spirit they are channeling.

SPIRITBINDING

5th-Level Conjuration (Ritual Only)

Casting Time: 1 hour

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (a complete mechanical body worth 10,000 gp)

Duration: Instantaneous

Before the incantation begins, you must create a circle inscribed with Auran, Aquan, Ignan, or Terran runes, depending on the type of elemental you intend to bind, and place an inert gearforged body in its center. You must chant an incantation in this language throughout the ritual. At the end of this period, an elemental is summoned into the circle. You must make a DC 16 Charisma saving throw to bind the elemental to the construct. If it fails, you take 2d10 psychic damage and 2d10 damage based on the type of elemental (lightning for an air elemental, cold for a water elemental, fire for a fire elemental, or thunder for an earth elemental) from the primal energy radiating from the elemental. The gearforged chassis also fails one death saving throw and is destroyed if it fails three death saving throws. If you choose not to maintain the spell or are unable to do so, the elemental is instantly killed, and you drop to 0 hit points and are dying.

If the save succeeds, the elemental is bound to the elemental core and immediately animates the constructed body. The gearforged has their own personality and retains none of the elemental's memories, but they may recall memory fragments as time passes.

If you die during a spiritbinding, the elemental is also destroyed and completely consumes the constructed body.

Up to four other spellcasters of at least 5th level can assist you in the ritual. Each assistant reduces the DC of the Charisma saving throw by 1. If you fail this save, each assistant takes the same damage you do. An assistant who drops out can't rejoin.

NEW HUMAN RACIAL FEATS

Zobeck is a melting pot of cultures in the Crossroads and is home to humans and other creatures from all parts of the world. The following feats allow the cultural differences among human denizens of Zobeck to make an impact in the way human characters interact with the world.

KARIV NOMAD

Prerequisite: Must Be Chosen at 1st Level by a Kariv

You never stop moving and have lived on wagons and horses your entire life. Even in the big city, you have found a way to involve animals in your profession, perhaps as a carriage driver or as a delivery person.

You may spend 8 hours with a horse or other riding animal or pack animal to make it your animal companion. This companion adds your proficiency bonus to its ability checks, AC, attack rolls, damage rolls, and saving throws it is proficient in. It obeys your commands and acts on your initiative, though you must use your action to command it to take the Attack, Dash, Disengage, Dodge, or Help action. If you have the Extra Attack feature, you can command it to make an attack in place of one of your own attacks.

Additionally, you have advantage on Wisdom (Animal Handling) checks made to interact with horses and other riding or pack animals.

SEPTIME WARMONGER

Prerequisite: Must Be Chosen at 1st Level by a Human of the Seven Cities

You were raised in the Seven Cities, where endless war is a way of life. Even in the relative peace of the Crossroads, the thought of battle is never far from your mind. You gain the following benefits:

You have advantage on initiative rolls.

Whenever you roll initiative, you gain temporary hit points equal to the number of creatures below you in initiative.

You have advantage on attack rolls against creatures that have not yet acted in combat.

SLEET-SCARRED TRAVELER

Prerequisite: Must Be Chosen at 1st Level by a Human of the Northlands

Before arriving in the Crossroads, you spent your life in the frigid wastes of the Northlands. Your harrowing journeys have left you frostbitten and dour but thirsty for a life beyond the snowfields.

You have advantage on death saving throws and saving throws to resist exhaustion. Additionally, whenever an effect that deals cold damage would impose another penalty (such as a reduced movement speed), you ignore this penalty.

WALKER OF SHADOWED ROADS

Prerequisite: Must Be Chosen at 1st Level by a Human of Dornig; an Elf or Elfmarked of Dornig Can Gain this Feat by Sacrificing the Fey Ancestry Trait

As a child, you learned the secrets of navigating the ancient fey roads.

Your Charisma score increases by 1 to a maximum of 20 (elves and elfmarked do not gain this ability score increase). Additionally, you can learn the distance and direction of the nearest gate to the Shadow Realm by spending 10 minutes in meditation. Also, when traveling along a shadow road, you and others traveling with you reach your destination 1 day quicker than usual, and you have advantage on Wisdom (Survival) checks made to avoid getting lost while in the Shadow Realm.

WASTELAND SURVIVOR

Prerequisite: Must Be Chosen at 1st Level by a Human of the Western Wastes

Your body and mind have been hardened through exposure to the horrors of the Western Wastes.

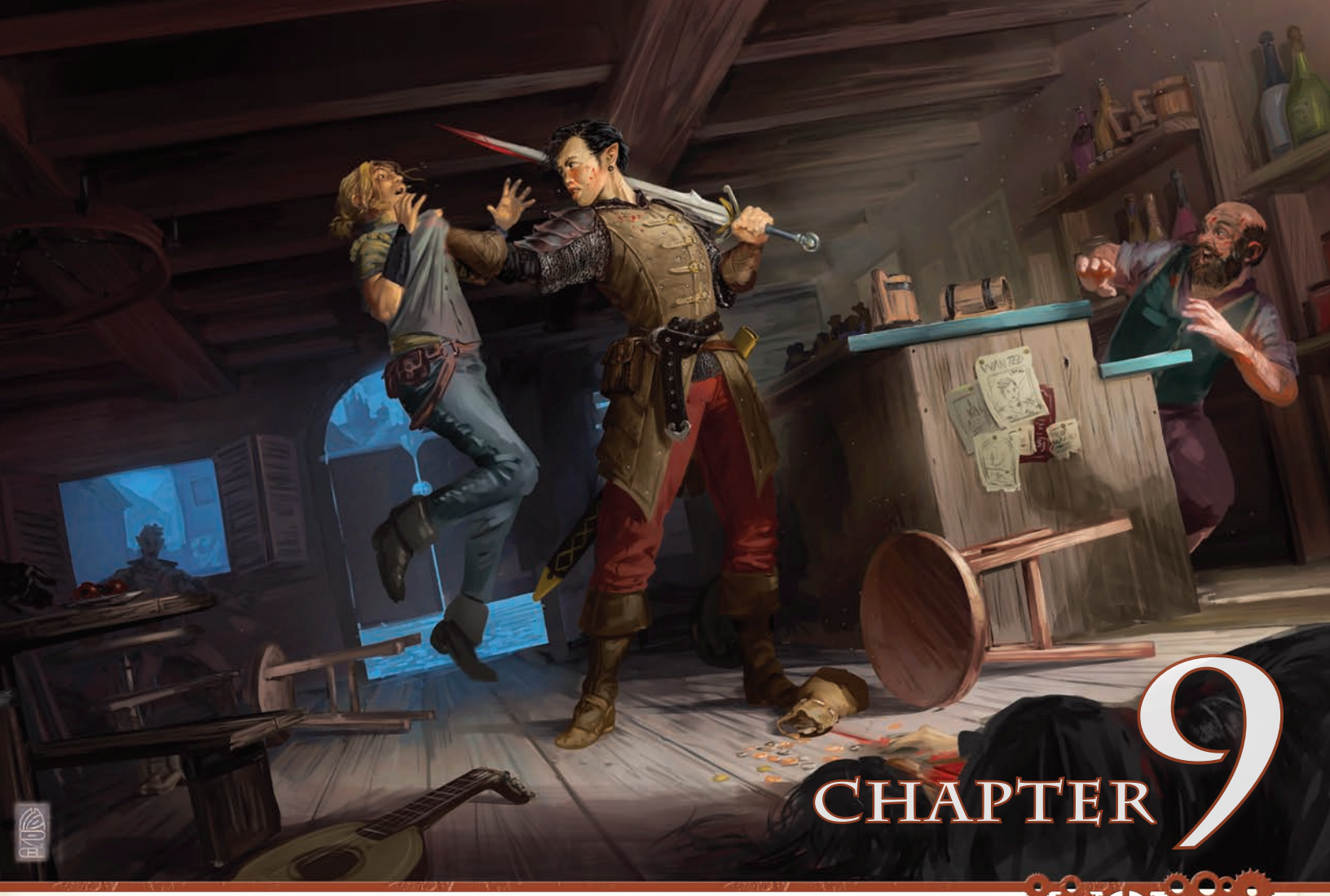
Your Wisdom score increases by 1 to a maximum of 20. You are immune to short-term madness and have advantage on saving throws against spells or effects that would charm you.

ZOBECK DILETTANTE

Prerequisite: Must Be Chosen at 1st Level by a Human of Zobeck

Humans of Zobeck must learn the ways of many different peoples. Thanks to your lifetime in the cosmopolitan Free City of Zobeck, you may multiclass into a class even if you do not meet its requirements. Additionally, whenever you multiclass into a class you have not previously taken levels in, you may increase any ability score by 1, to a maximum of 20.





CHAPTER 9

THE STREETS

Collected here are adventures that take place in and around the Free City of Zobeck. From the magic towers of the Arcane Collegium to the dark corners of the docks, even into the Undercity, you'll discover secrets that would make most quake. You'll meet heads of government and underworld bosses while trying to survive alongside those that call the city home. If you live long enough, you may just learn a thing or two about how Zobeck really works.

These are tales of rough people looking out for themselves in a rough world, those looking for the right score rather than the righteous quest. These are characters with distinctive personalities and faults, striving against the powers of the land with a sharp blade and a smug grin. They fight on either side of the law—though either way, it's most likely in order to save their own skin.

A healthy diet of heist and noir, these adventures are filled with trickery, with cunning and ruthless people. If you are very good at what you do or are just very lucky, you might end up rich. But unless you are also very smart, you might just end up dead sooner than you'd like.

You'll find much of what you expect: the tools of the trade, citizens of ill repute, and more than one dagger looking to slip between the ribs of some unfortunate soul. And much that you couldn't have guessed at as you learn the lay of the land. You'll find the dark, smoky places full of the sort of criminal element you'd never invite over for dinner but can't help but love. Most importantly, you'll get a fist full of adventure that you're certain to enjoy.

So please, pay the gate toll and find your way to the Silk Scabbard. Tell the bouncer that Nicktail sent you, take in the fights, and see what your luck looks like for the evening while you roll the bones. And when you make a run for it at the end of the night, make sure you ride that horse like you stole it. Don't disappoint us.

EVERYONE LIES

Lord Greymark's wayward daughter inadvertently pulls the party into the conflict between the Cloven Nine and the Spyglass Guild over a little black book. Can the PCs learn to navigate Zobeck's underbelly, or will everything blow up in their faces?

This adventure is suitable for four PCs of 1st level.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Ilyana Dukovich has issues with her father, Lord Greymark. He refuses to name her as his daughter, preferring to see her struggle, but the wily Ilyana plans to force her father's recognition. She has used her seductive charms and exotic beauty to find her way into the beds of influential people in both reputable and illicit circles, eventually falling in with the Lord Commander of the Free Army and Praetor of the Blue House, Lady Marack. After learning Marack kept a black book of confession, Ilyana worked out a plan to steal it. She convinced a capable second-story man named Grigori to snag it along with a substantial collection of jewelry in a deal that would benefit them both—but she never revealed her relationship with Marack.

The pair executed the heist marvelously, and Ilyana seemed close to achieving the next step toward her goal. Some of Grigori's fellow gangsters learned of the scheme, however, and decided they wanted the book. Realizing the gang's interest, Ilyana stole the book from Grigori, planted some of the jewelry on members of the Cloven Nine, and tipped off the Spyglass Guild to make it appear that Grigori had betrayed them all. The secret police captured Grigori for interrogation shortly afterward. Ilyana hoped that taking the book would safeguard Lady Marack from the Nine and that returning it to the lord commander would help her convince Marack to force Lord Greymark into publicly recognizing Ilyana. Then Grigori talked. Now the Spyglass Guild's enforcers hunt her, the Cloven Nine hunt her, and nothing seems to be working out.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

A local thief, Grigori, approaches the party. He needs help finding his girlfriend Ilyana, and he'll pay. Recently interrogated by the Blue House, he fears for her safety. If the PCs accept, Grigori sends them into Lower Zobeck.

Regardless of their acceptance, a group of gruff, hard-nosed individuals from the Spyglass Guild approach the party. They claim to know of the party's involvement, threaten them with the Blue House's dungeons unless they turn over Ilyana, and make clear that they will be watching. Ilyana's trail leads into Cloven Nine territory and the Silk Scabbard, where the gang tells the PCs to quit searching for Lord Greymark's illegitimate tiefling daughter before they end up dead.

With the underworld breathing down their necks, the law on their heels, and the threat of Lord Greymark's fury hanging over their heads, the party has nowhere left to turn until Sergeant Hendryk approaches them with the real score. If the party works with Hendryk, he'll help them out of the situation. The book is the key, and the best place to start looking is the Cartways Black Market.

In those dark tunnels where the watch dares not go, the group meets Radu Underhill, who knows where Ilyana hides and will trade the information if the PCs will cooperate. If the PCs can get the girl and get everyone to agree to a midnight exchange at Hommal's Botanical Rooftop, then the ghoul has a way for the PCs to escape with the greatest treasure they could hope for: their lives.

Radu sends the group to the Old Stross Bathhouse. There they find Ilyana who, once discovered, explains her tangled story. Unfortunately, everything's gone wrong, and the party is Ilyana's only hope of surviving the night.

Ilyana agrees to exchange the book for a hiding place. Once safely tucked away, she tells the group where she hid the book. Only with the book can the group attend the meeting with secret policemen and gangsters with any chance of survival.

Fulfilling his part of the bargain, Radu and a pack of ghouls ambush the enforcers outside Hommal's, capturing Lady Marack as the party mops up the

stragglers. With their deal consummated, the adventurers can trade the book to the waiting members of the Cloven Nine, knowing they've escaped by the skin of their teeth. They return to their safe house triumphant, only to find Ilyana gone.

PLOT HOOKS

What draws adventurers into this twisted trip down Zobeck's streets? An offer they can't refuse. At their low level, they can't afford to make enemies of either the Spyglass Guild or the Cloven Nine, yet they risk just that simply because Grigori sought them out. But why would Grigori come to the adventurers? Here are some options:

- Grigori shares an ethnic or national origin with one of the PCs and approaches a countryman he may have heard of, hoping this connection will motivate the PC to assist him.
- A rogue, bard, or other PC has a shady background or a (possibly undeserved) reputation for finding lost things or people. Grigori hopes to capitalize on this.
- Grigori has a professional connection to a PC from a previous job. He seeks out the fellow thief for a favor.
- A mutual NPC acquaintance tells Grigori that the party can likely get the job done, and no one will miss them if they blow it.

Whatever the reason, our tale begins as Grigori approaches the adventurers.

PART 1: I'LL SEE YOUR OFFER

While relaxing in a public place, the PCs receive an unexpected visit from the well-dressed, second-story thief Grigori (CN human **spy**).

ONLY HOPE

You didn't invite him, but he sits down anyway. Your uninvited guest is an unshaven man who obviously has had some rough treatment quite recently. He wears a look of desperate exhaustion that's as obvious as the fine stitching on his forest green doublet. He nods knowingly to you, trying to muster an expression of false confidence. "You may not remember me," he says. I'm Grigori."

Using whatever connection you've chosen, Grigori attempts to establish some relationship with the party. Once he has his in with the party, he gets to the heart of the matter.

He takes a swallow of his weak beer. "I need your help with something. I did a job the other night, and I think I got in over my head." He looks sideways as if watching for something. "The Spyglass Guild just got done grilling me hard for most of the afternoon. I've got to lie low for a while, but my girl Ilyana, she doesn't know. They may not be so kind to her, especially since she's wearing some of my handiwork, if you know what I mean." Grigori takes another pull from his flagon. "If you can find her first, I'll make it worth your while." He hands you a square of artist's canvas bearing the charcoal sketch of a tiefling woman.

The party may wonder if Grigori's lying or if they know of him. Someone who makes a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check realizes he's not lying, but he might be withholding information. Someone who makes a successful DC 15 Intelligence check has heard rumors connecting Grigori to the Cloven Nine in the past, so he might still be a member of the gang.

If pressed, Grigori explains Ilyana helped plan the job and might crack under interrogation. He worries she'll end up in the gibbet. He can't ask any members of the Cloven Nine for help because he knows they don't want the attention. The adventurers, as an uninvolved third party, can investigate freely whereas he would only draw more suspicion. He knows he wasn't followed here, and he took precautions to be certain.

Everyone in the group has heard of the Spyglass Guild—Zobeck's secret police, a quasi-legal organization that ultimately answers to the lord mayor and the praetors. Ersebet Cemilla is mistress of the guild, and she answers to Lady Marack, Praetor of the Blue House. Lady Marack is a flamboyant personality with rather more colleagues than friends among the city's elite, and it's not hard to believe she might use her position for personal matters if given sufficiently strong reasons. Be sure to fill the players in on this background information because it will help to make them nervous.

If the party rebuffs Grigori, he shrugs and departs, leaving the sketch with the party. The enforcers who show up next see the sketch and assume the PCs took the job.

If PCs agree to help, Grigori continues.

"My thanks," he smiles, revealing a couple missing teeth. "Take this picture," he taps the sketch, "and look in Lower Zobeck. She has friends working at the Silk Scabbard. Filipa maybe. Or Iskra. Either might know where she is. They'll probably talk to you since you're not Cloven Nine." He takes one last drink from his mug. "Tell them, 'Grigori brought them their earrings.' They'll know I sent you."

DEPARTING THE SCENE

Grigori leaves first, saying he doesn't want his presence to cause the group trouble. He plans to lie low, knowing that the authorities are watching him. He hopes (but doesn't tell the PCs) that they'll draw some heat away from him. When they turn up Ilyana, everyone should forget about him.

As soon as the PCs venture into the street, they are approached by a group of five rough, serious men. These men have no unifying dress, color scheme, or symbol to identify them as anyone official, but they are obviously more than street thugs.

"Good evening. We need to talk. What say we slip over to that quiet alley and have a chat?"

They clearly won't take no for an answer, but a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) check gives the feeling that, despite their menacing manners, they really just want to talk. A successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check spots a polished pin shaped like a griffon holding a gear in its foreclaws on one man's cloak (the spy). This man never speaks, but all of his companions take their cues from him. As long as PCs don't start a fight, the enforcers simply talk. They'll put up with a certain amount of cocky attitude and backtalk but not with physical assaults (see **Breaking the Law** for details on a possible fight). Otherwise, continue.

A wiry man with a thick, blond mustache does the talking. "You seem like smart people. Let me explain how you can continue to be smart. We know about the girl, and we know you're after her. We're after her too. If you find her, you turn her over to us, or you'll all see the bottom of Blue House." He lets this sink in for a second. "And don't bother trying to run. None of you are hard to find, and we're watching." He smiles as if he's genuinely pleased to have the unpleasant part out of the way. "If you do this quick enough, we'll even pay you the reward for her. That's a short-term offer though." He glances to one of his companions, who nods, and the group starts drifting away, some swinging silver-tipped ebony batons. The spokesman smiles again before leaving. "We need to move along. It's getting late."

Some groups of PCs might not put up with threats or coercion. If your group puts up a fight, proceed to **Breaking the Law**.

The Blue House is the headquarters for Zobeck's secret police. The blue-tipped batons are *tipstaffs* (see **Chapter 7**).

BREAKING THE LAW

The figure who does the talking is a **veteran**. The silent leader wearing the griffon pin is a **spy**. The others three are **thugs**. All five carry *tipstaffs* (see **Chapter 7**), which they can use when making a melee weapon attack.

The enforcers don't want to kill the PCs or even incapacitate them. If a fight breaks out, they rely on their *tipstaffs* to subdue the PCs. Any PCs who drop to 0 hit points stabilize automatically. When the PCs awaken a few minutes later, they're in the alley with their hands tied, and the NPCs are still waiting to talk to them. The veteran and the spy won't run from the fight under any circumstance, but the thugs flee if both of their leaders are killed.

Once their message is delivered, the enforcers leave. The best move for the PCs is to proceed to **The Silk Scabbard** below.

SILK SCABBARD

Rough people pack this establishment, looking for all manner of opportunities. It is a bar, a casino, a brothel, and a death trap, all in one convenient location.

Many activities are available to PCs visiting the Silk Scabbard. (See **Chapter 4** for maps and additional details on the Silk Scabbard.) Eventually, they should seek out Filipa or Iskra. Filipa is in the upper gaming area (see **Area 14**) with a cattle merchant, looking bored but milking him for an eventual trip to the comfort rooms. Iskra is trolling the lower bar (see **Area 11**) on the arm of a belligerent local tough looking for a fight.

Both women are greatly annoyed if the PCs interrupt their business. They are hostile if the PCs try to (or successfully) separate them from their potential customers, and they're unfriendly toward anyone asking about Ilyana's whereabouts under any circumstances. Their attitudes improve for a few gold pieces, and the woman in question pulls one or more PCs into a vacant booth (see **Area 10**) to talk. They speak without reservation once they hear Grigori's code phrase.

The woman has an anxious, concerned look as she speaks. "Ilyana didn't tell anyone where she was going. Honest. She didn't want any of us to get hurt, so she said it was better if nobody knew."

PCs trying to learn more about Ilyana by talking to Silk Scabbard patrons can make Charisma (Persuasion) checks. Results are listed in the following table.

Result	Information
10	Ilyana was a regular at the Silk Scabbard but not an employee.
12	Ilyana associated with the Cloven Nine, but she wasn't a member.
14	Ilyana had many lovers, some with great influence.
16	Ilyana's father is rumored to be the very powerful Lord Greymark.

Talking openly about Ilyana at the Silk Scabbard draws the attention of the Cloven Nine. In a scene which should seem familiar, a few members of the Cloven Nine approach as the PCs prepare to leave. They're armed but don't intend on starting trouble. They leave the adventurers with a stern warning.

Some gangsters motion for you to stop. "We know who you're looking for, and you should quit." Their spokesman cuts you off with a gesture, menacing in its simplicity. "Why? Because Lord Greymark would hate to find out she died because of you. You'd hate for him to find that out too. It's the sort of thing that gets people killed, you know? You should just enjoy the rest of the evening and then go home and forget all this nonsense."

Defiant PCs are told that speaking against the Cloven Nine usually earns a beating, to encourage minding their manners. The gang members don't start anything here unless a PC presses the issue. In that case, they clear a space, and a single PC faces a thug in one-on-one, unarmed combat. The loser is knocked unconscious.

Development. With their threat—and possible beating—delivered, the gang tells the PCs to get out. If the PCs are polite, or at least keep their mouths shut, the staff forgets about the encounter. If the PCs are combative, the gang and the staff don't forget them or the incident.

If the party starts trouble, members of the watch arrive within 4 rounds and help to subdue the PCs. The Silk Scabbard's staff and some patrons will assist. Once they're dragged outside, the PC with the highest Strength score is beaten to less than 5 hit points while the others are restrained and held at sword point. As the watch leaves, the last one looks at the PCs and says, "Don't you have a job to do?" The party don't recognize him, but he's wearing a griffon pin identical to the one worn earlier by the silent spy.

The party gets no time to heal or recover before proceeding to **Part 2**.

PART 2: THE PLOT THICKENS

After departing the Silk Scabbard, the party may feel out of options. Fortunately, **Sergeant Hendryk** (see **Chapter 5**) and three of the watch (**guards**) await them. If the party just got roughed up, this encounter takes place a moment after they've picked themselves up.

Four of the watch approach you. In a bold voice, the largest one calls out, "You there, hold in the name of the watch!" A slight man with a thick but well-trimmed black beard and a casual air of authority grins and gives you an obvious wink. "Step this way," continues the man, "and keep your hands where we can see them." The smiling sergeant nods toward the alley.

The watch doesn't draw weapons, and it should be clear they have no hostile intent. Presuming the party complies, Hendryk continues. If they run, he sighs, and they repeat the encounter an hour later, though they have weapons drawn when they track down the PCs the second time.

Once in the alley, the sergeant speaks up. "Right. I appreciate you playing along out there. You're in a bit of a tight spot, eh? Fortunately for you, Sergeant Hendryk knows what's what. You hear me out and do what I say, and I'll get you out of this jam. Can't go wrong with that, eh?"

If the party refuses, Hendryk laughs. He tells them they have guts, but that won't be enough, though it's worth something. He throws them a map and tells them to go to the Cartways Black Market and find Radu.

If they agree to hear what Hendryk has to say, he explains the situation while his fellows stand guard. Hendryk relates how Ilyana stole the lord commander's black book of confession, the log of some egregious sins, from Grigori and made the Cloven Nine think he betrayed them. Now everyone's looking for leverage over Lady Marack, and the book is the key. If the PCs talk to Radu Underhill and do as he says, Hendryk will help them out. The best place to find Radu is the Cartways Black Market, a place the watch dares not go. Hendryk gives them a small map and walks them through the directions.

Development. Hendryk's map is accurate, leading the group into the Cartways. If the PCs use an *augury* spell, it reveals both weal and woe for traveling to the Cartways.

INTO THE CARTWAYS

PCs reluctant to enter the Cartways soon find they don't have much choice. Ilyana has gone to ground, and without new information, their only other option is to wander a city of 20,000 souls, hoping to stumble onto her. Asking around the city, with or without successful Charisma checks, always points toward the Cartways as the best place to hide out and the Black Market as the best place to start looking. Travel to the Black Market is uneventful. (See **Chapter 4** for maps and additional details on the Black Market.)

Dark, clammy tunnels envelop you. Following the twisting passageways and odd landmarks on the watch's map brings you to a passage that echoes with the faint hum of conversation. A short walk and a dogleg corridor later, you find yourselves staring at a bustling hive of activity. Kobolds push carts while humans trudge past duergar and what appears to be a ghoul. This can only be the Cartways Black Market!

An inquiry with the gate guards (**kobolds**) indicates where to find Radu. Shortly after the PCs arrive, an incident occurs outside the gate, in the 40-foot-wide gallery approaching the doors to the Black Market. It has a smooth, natural stone floor and walls, and the ceiling is 35 feet high. Small tunnels lead off the gallery to unknown locations in the Cartways.

A kobold tinkerer, not paying attention to where he's pushing his cart, accidentally bumps into a pack lizard led by a duergar. The creature hisses and rears, dropping its cargo across the floor. The deep dwarf turns menacingly on the lone kobold. At the same time, a group of humans and dwarves arrives to relieve the agitated kobold guards. "Tough break, eh?" chuckles one rough-looking man. "That's the rules. We don't act beyond the gates. Shuffle off, belts!" The kobolds shoot poisoned glances at the new guards but simply watch.

The **duergar** (with their **giant lizard**) beats the **kobold** to a pulp unless the party intervenes. The kobold guards take note if the PCs act on behalf of the kobold tinkerer, and this may work to the PCs' benefit later.

MEETING RADU

The PCs find Radu's sanctuary easily (see **Area 5**). Climbing the ladder brings them to a cozy room perched on the side of the support pillar. **Radu** (see **Chapter 5**) smiles, welcoming the group.

"Good," he says, smirking. "Took your time getting here. I think I have a solution to your problem. Listen close."

Radu explains that if the party finds both the book and Ilyana and keeps her safe while offering the book to both Lady Marack and the Cloven Nine, he'll trade their lives for Lady Marack's capture. The PCs need to arrange a midnight exchange at Hommal's Botanical Rooftop with both groups, something perhaps best done by courier letter. If they get the lord commander there, Radu will ensure they can deliver the book and that the gangsters get nothing useful out of the deal. If they agree, Radu explains that Ilyana is at the Old Stross Bathhouse, attempting to hide in plain sight, but it's only a matter of time before someone finds her.

What does the darakhul hope to get out of all this? Radu just needs to talk to Lady Marack for a while. That's all he wants in payment.

As they depart, Radu offers each adventurer a *potion of greater healing*, "For emergencies."

A MESSAGE FROM THE CLOVEN NINE

As they cross the gallery to return to the surface, a **wererat** hired by the Cloven Nine arrives, a member of a murdering Cartways gang contracted to kill the party.



The assassin has run here in a desperate attempt to stop the PCs before they can leave the Cartways, so it has one level of exhaustion. If the party aided the kobold tinkerer earlier, a group of three **kobold** guards helps them, after 2 rounds of combat at initiative order 8, by firing a volley of poisoned crossbow bolts. As soon as a bolt hits the wererat, it flees from the fight.

BATHHOUSE EXPRESS

Following Radu's advice brings the adventurers to the Old Stross Bathhouse. (See **Chapter 4** for maps and additional details on the Old Stross Bathhouse.)

The clerk seated at the entry hall's front desk notes that policy prohibits weapons and armor within the bathhouse. He points to lockers along the walls and says everyone needs to stow their gear or go away. Two large warriors wearing the city's livery monitor the entrance.

The two **guards** in **Area 1** refuse entry to anyone dressed inappropriately. They search anyone carrying more than a towel. Regular visitors know this and come carrying nothing. The clerk sounds the alarm at any attack: five additional **guards** arrive within 1d6 rounds, and 10 more arrive after 10 rounds. If the PCs are not detained, 10 guards systematically search the bathhouse while five more hold the front door. Killing any of these guards is a very bad idea, for the bathhouse is enormously popular in Zobeck.

Once inside, PCs quickly find Ilyana relaxing in **Area 4**. She's poorly disguised and barely dressed. Her initial attitude is unfriendly, and she tries to maintain the bluff that she's not the woman the PCs are seeking.

Using Grigori's suggested phrase gains her confidence, and if she learns the PCs are on good terms with Iskra or Filipa, she becomes helpful. Once PCs explain the current situation to her, read the following:

Ilyana finally grasps the situation. "That idiot. He's pulled you into this. And the Spyglass Guild . . .? But she and I . . . we . . ." Grim realization sweeps across Ilyana's face. "I don't have the book with me." She looks up. "You must believe me. They're going to kill me, aren't they? Just for that book." She blinks away tears, eyes wide with fear. "This was never my plan. Never. But then they were never supposed to know I had it. Damn Grigori."

Ilyana shares the details of the plot: she gained Lady Marack's confidence and convinced Grigori to steal the book so she could blackmail Greymark into recognizing her as his daughter. She wants to survive this ordeal and will work with any plan based on Radu's suggestions.

When the PCs approached Ilyana, the bathhouse masseur Mikhail realized her identity. A greedy schemer, he tells the group of citizens, who are training in self-defense (see **Area 5**), about the reward for catching Ilyana. They move in as the adventurers try to leave with her. Any PC who's keeping watch or who has a passive Perception of 15 or higher notices the suspiciously gathering crowd.

WE'RE PROFESSIONALS

The masseur convinced these poor citizens (**commoners**) they can overwhelm the PCs and capture Ilyana. They surround the party while the PCs are talking to her and then try to intimidate the party with their number. When those tactics fail, they try to overwhelm PCs with unarmed attacks. The exact number of people in this group is up to the GM. It should be enough to make the PCs nervous but not so many that they just surrender Ilyana. More can arrive during the fight if necessary. They fight until two of them are killed or six are incapacitated.

Development. With the mob defeated, the adventurers can depart, and Ilyana asks them if they've someplace to hide. If they have no immediate answer, she mutters, "This is one lousy rescue." She recommends a room at the Dented Shield. The proprietor, a man named Benyosef, is willing to rent a secure room. Other options include the back room at a regular tavern, within a temple where a PC worships, the hideout of a small neighborhood gang, or the store of a friendly shopkeeper. Allow the players to be creative but offer Ilyana's suggestion if they're short on ideas.

She refuses to accompany them to the meeting. With a safe room established, Ilyana offers a *potion of healing* to each PC as a token of her appreciation since, "There's no way you're going to save me if you're dead."

LETTERS TO BAD PEOPLE

The adventurers need to send instructions to the Spyglass Guild and the Cloven Nine. Some may not trust a messenger to deliver their letters, but Zobeck has services that do this reliably, cheaply, and quickly. Ilyana recommends the Masters of Small Matters or the Brown Blaze Boys, both of which can be contacted rapidly from any hotel, inn, tavern, or temple. If the group writes out missives as directed by Ilyana with the details suggested by Radu, the gang and the guild follow them. Both groups want the book very badly. Ilyana suggests they meet the messenger in the tavern across the street.

The adventurers still don't have the book though, and they need it to make the hand-off to the Cloven Nine. Once in a safe room, Ilyana explains.

"I hid the book, and you're probably not going to like where." Ilyana smiles weakly. "Iskra has it, sewn into a cloak I left in her comfort room at the Silk Scabbard." She shrugs. "It seemed like a safe place at the time, and no one was going to break in there to take it." She chuckles. "Except you, it seems."

The adventurers need the book in hand. Ilyana suggests two options: the party can disguise someone to walk in the front door and hire Iskra's services, or they can sneak in through the Cartways entrance. Ilyana knows about the back hallway entrance (see **Area 13**). She sends them to its exit point in a nearby building, gives them her key to the doors, and tells them which secret door leads to Iskra's room. Then it's a matter of the party completing their own heist.

This encounter can be as involved or as quick as the players want. They need to infiltrate the Silk Scabbard and recover the black book of confession hidden within the cloak in Iskra's comfort room. (See **Chapter 4** for maps and additional details on the Silk Scabbard.)

The Scabbard is very busy with a well-advertised pit fight, meaning guards and employees in the service areas have disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks. A **guard** is always stationed at the vault (see **Area 6**), at the door to the Cartways (see **Area 13**), and in the hallway between comfort rooms (see **Area 8**). Guards won't pursue thieves into the Cartways, but a reinforced lock and three guards will be posted at the door in the future. The guards use nonlethal attacks against unarmed foes and shortswords against armed enemies. Guards immediately call for help while fighting.

Development. With the book in hand and letters delivered, all that remains is waiting until midnight. As darkness falls, Ilyana paces the floor, anxious as the PCs prepare to leave. If questioned, she says she worries about being alone as the group goes to the exchange. She promises to wait at the safe house until the PCs return. Proceed to **Part 3**.

PART 3: ROOFTOPS AND CROSSBOWS

As Radu directed, one of the shops in Hommal's building is unlocked and open when the PCs arrive, despite the hour. No one is inside. From this vantage, they can see the street through a barred window. After some time, a group approaches the tenement.

You almost don't see the enforcers arrive. People seem to break away from the thinning crowd and gather outside the tenement door at some unspoken signal. One minute there's nothing, and the next, you see an intimidating group. They have gathered around a woman who is apparently giving instructions.

Then the cobblestones erupt with violence. Snarling ghouls pile out from the shadows, knocking some enforcers to the ground where they lay as still as statues. Five well-dressed ghouls overwhelm the woman and drag her into the alley, panic evident on her frozen and scratched face. Those not immediately incapacitated bolt into the foyer of the tenement.

One voice rises over the din. "You heard the lady. The city depends on us getting that book. We go to the roof and take it."

STAIRWELL BRAWL

If the PCs attack now or any time before the group leaves the foyer, the enforcers are surprised. They catch their breath for 3 rounds and then ascend the stairwell, where they pause on the landing to load their crossbows, and one must replace their string. If the PCs decide to follow, this encounter occurs with their enemies on the landing just as the crossbow is repaired. Prior to that, their crossbows are loaded but not drawn. (See **Chapter 4** for maps and additional details on Hommal's Botanical Rooftop.)

The haggard enforcers seem shocked as you advance on them. These are not the sort to throw insults or banter. They move immediately for a fight.

The group consists of one Spyglass Guild specialist (use **acolyte**, changing Int to 12, Wis to 10, and the Spellcasting selection—at will: *mage hand*, *minor illusion*, *prestidigitation*; 1/day each: *alter self*, *mage armor*, *sleep*), one **guard**, and two **thugs**. The guard and thugs are equipped with *tipstaffs* (see **Chapter 7**).

This battle takes place on the stairwell between the first and second floors. PCs can move on the stairs without penalty.

The enforcers intend to arrest whoever has the ledger, which they believe contains city secrets. They presume this attack is a continuation of the earlier ghoul ambush and prefer to use *tipstaffs*, only using lethal force if the PCs do. Enforcers reduced to 5 hit points or less flee out the front door and take their chances evading the ghouls. The ghouls, uncertain if fleeing enforcers are the PCs, don't try to detain them.

Development. With the enforcers defeated, PCs can proceed upstairs to the roof.

THE HANDOFF

The PCs still need to deliver the black book of confession to the Cloven Nine. Hommal's is commonly known as neutral territory among most thieves and criminals. A human of average build, wearing a dark-washed chain shirt and creaking leathers, meets the group at the roof entrance and escorts them across the roof to the kitchen. He doesn't say much unless the majority of the party is badly injured, and in that case, he observes, "Gods and demons. Someone beat the hell out of you, eh?" (See **Chapter 4** for maps and additional details on Hommal's Botanical Rooftop.)

A well-dressed tiefling sits at the dining table inside this green-glass room. The air is cool and humid, as if it might rain soon. Fireflies wink between fragrant, flowering vines in large ceramic pots. Two heavily muscled and well-armed Kariv men wait outside the door with their longswords sheathed and their heavy crossbows slung over their shoulders. Your escort opens the door and ushers you inside.

The tiefling smiles. He finishes his tea before refilling his cup and pouring tea for you. He gestures for you to sit. "Good of you to come. Hopefully, we can all be reasonable. We just want the book." He sips his tea. "There's no need for anyone to die over this." He watches you closely. "I trust you have it with you?"

The tiefling's name is Andros (LE tiefling **mage**). An apprentice of one of the Nine, he has orders to collect the book but not to kill the PCs unless they betray him. He smiles and accepts the book from them, casting *dispel magic* followed by *detect magic* to authenticate it. When satisfied, he declares the matter settled, adding that the Nine bear them no ill will, but they'd be wise to forget the entire exchange. Terrible things tend to happen when people tell wild tales.

He nods to the guards and tells the adventurers they may leave. No one makes any moves against the party, but if the PCs attempt to start trouble, Andros flies away with the book, and the remaining **veteran** and two **thugs** attack. If they win, they leave the PCs unconscious and depart, and Hommal heals them to 1 hit point, asking, "What were you thinking?" Otherwise, proceed to **Concluding the Adventure**.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

The PCs are not engaged by anyone as they depart Hommal's Botanical Rooftop, and the only sign of the enforcers are a few dried pools and smears of blood. The living escaped, and someone carried away the corpses. Even the bloodstains appear fated to a short existence.

The precipitation that threatened while you were on the rooftop finally arrives, and a light rain washes the cobbles. Long crimson strokes and ruby footprints begin to fade, melting with the water and flowing into the troughs and drains. The street is eerily empty, as if anyone who might have dared to glance outside is still holding their breath.

The ghouls departed with their meals and prisoners. The PCs return to their safe house unmolested.

Ilyana's gone when you arrive. Her pack is gone, and there's no sign of a struggle. In fact, it seems she tidied up before going.

Ilyana couldn't chance the party would fail and decided to hide elsewhere. She may have taken a riverboat out of town, blended in with the rest of the everyday people of Lower Zobeck, decided to seek out aid from other gangs, or found a welcoming bed in the house of a rich patron (GM's discretion). A handwritten note sits on the windowsill.

"Thank you. I know you did this as much to help yourselves as me, but I thank you."

Depending on what reward the GM feels is appropriate, the PCs might find a key under the note, corresponding to a safe deposit box at the Cracked Coin. This box contains some portion of Lady Marack's stolen jewelry, left by Ilyana as a token of gratitude. The exact composition of the stash depends on the party and the campaign, but this is an easy lead into new adventure. Perhaps Grigori knows of the stash and watches it. Certainly, Lady Marack will look dimly on anyone fencing her jewelry, assuming she survives.

Development. The Cloven Nine and the praetors (and by extension, the city government) will not appreciate this outcome, though the PCs' clever escape protects them from immediate retribution.

The ghouls may or may not kill Lady Marack, as best suits your campaign. They may slowly interrogate her regarding Zobeck, its leaders and prominent citizens, its defenses and access points. They may transform her into a darakhul, so she can later lead plots against Zobeck. She may die during her interrogation or infection with darakhul fever. She may escape, be rescued, or cut a deal to go free. The Cloven Nine will certainly realize they've been tricked once word of Lady Marack's disappearance gets out. They will remember the incident and may try to blackmail the PCs into a job or favor later.

A BOOK IN THE BATH

A small-time fence's ambition outstretches his reach as he makes a play against the Mouse Kingdom in a race for the prize. Will the PCs choose sides, or will they simply try to minimize the fallout?

This adventure is suitable for four PCs of 2nd level.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Two major criminal organizations of Zobeck have become less friendly in recent months: the Mouse Kingdom, a group of smugglers and burglars led by the enigmatic Mouse King, and the Spyglass Guild, a quasi-recognized group of spies that operate out of the Cartographer's Guild. Each has ties to the authorities of the city. (See **Chapter 5** for more details on the Mouse Kingdom and the Spyglass Guild.)

Blingly Crocker, a fence whose ambitions exceed his abilities, recently took over a gang of promising young pickpockets called the Wharflings. Blingly recognizes the group's talents, but neither he nor they realize that they are more competent than he is. He keeps his contacts and the locations of his goods secret from them save for the small storefront he runs in Lower Zobeck.

The Wharflings recently discovered a body in Lower Zobeck and brought what they pilfered from it to Blingly, not realizing the victim was a member of the Mouse Kingdom who died while fleeing from enemies.

Blingly identified the goods for what they were: a letter book of coded criminal transactions and, more dangerously, a codebook detailing a cipher used by the Mouse Kingdom. Blingly sees these as his ticket to establishing himself as a major criminal figure. He has never been able to capture the interest of the more powerful gangs, but he believes that, if he provides the books to the Spyglass Guild, he can convince them to allow his entry to their lucrative company.

Blingly recognizes that his gambit is dangerous—the Mouse Kingdom is not going to take the murder and stolen books lightly—so to minimize danger to himself, he plans to act through the Wharflings until the last minute. He arranged a meeting with a Spyglass representative on neutral ground, the Old Stross Public Bathhouse, a Zobeck institution considered a sanctuary by most of the city.

Blingly sends two of the older Wharflings to start the discussion. Zabi acts as the face of the group. A gregarious and energetic human, she is the Wharflings' fast-talker and distractor—and Blingly's favorite. Blingly tasks her to begin the negotiation. Zabi will take the letter book to the bathhouse to prove its value. If successful, she'll bring the contact to Blingly for the "real" negotiation, which Blingly wishes to undertake himself at a secret location: his warehouse of questionable goods.

Unfortunately for Blingly, the other Wharfling heading to the Bathhouse, Slip Shiv, holds similar ambitions to Blingly's. Slip has arranged to return the books to the Mouse Kingdom in exchange for adoption into their group. Slip won't learn the second secret meeting point until the pair head to the bathhouse. Slip needs to steal the book when Zabi is in the baths and then guide his Mouse Kingdom contact to Blingly's location to retrieve the codebook.



The Mouse Kingdom knows hidden pathways under the city, including one connecting the spring pool in the bathhouse to the Cartways. They've told Slip how to escape into the Cartways to find his way to the basement of an abandoned building where their representatives will be waiting.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The Spyglass Guild indeed desires these books and wishes to evaluate the party for future work. They arrange for the city watch to hire the PCs to ensure the transaction goes smoothly.

As the deal goes south, the PCs must chase the young Slip and try to get to Blingly and the book first. The party's actions determine who gets the books and, more importantly, who survives.

PLOT HOOKS

The adventure assumes that the initial offer for employment comes from a member of the city watch. If this approach does not fit the party, some other approaches may work with minor modifications.

- If the party is reluctant to work with the watch or are friendly with the Spyglass Guild, a member of the guild will offer to employ them directly.
- If the party is friendly with the Mouse Kingdom, a representative will reach out after they are hired by the Spyglass Guild. They would like the party to retrieve the books to return to the Mouse Kingdom.

GETTING STARTED

Blingly has inadvertently arranged the meeting when the bathhouse will have a sizable crowd: the annual contest to determine the next season's standing musicians.

A representative of the city watch, gearforged Boen Liste, approaches the party in a public location. Boen is in charge of the watch contingent at the bathhouse and works with the Spyglass Guild when necessary.

Boen explains that the bathhouse watch will be busy due to the competition to determine the bathhouse's musicians for the next season, a highly contended and lucrative contest that draws interest from across the city. The watch seeks to hire a discrete group to oversee a sensitive transaction that will take place that evening: the sale of a pair of valuable books to the Cartographer's Guild. A successful DC 10 Intelligence (History) check recalls that the Cartographer's Guild is all but synonymous with the quasi-official spies of the city, the Spyglass Guild. The Pcs were recommended by Boen's superiors, and the watch would like the group to ensure that nothing unexpected occurs. They'll pay 50 gp each for "spending the evening in the baths." A successful DC 20 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals that Boen has some reservations about the assignment. If pressed, he shares that the goods are being provided by hoodlums he does not trust.

The trade is scheduled for early evening. The party can enter the bathhouse earlier to learn the layout of the area or to avail themselves of the facilities. Weapons and armor are prohibited, so Boen offers to have the guards hold on to the groups' items in the event of an emergency. The party should turn over their gear to the watch prior to arrival. The watch will have it secreted inside the bathhouse by the time the party enters, ready for retrieval when requested. If a group member requires their armor to be effective, Boen offers to have them act as a member of the watch.

Boen tells the group to meet the guild contact, Ren, in the changing rooms 15 minutes before the meeting is to take place. The transaction itself should occur at the heated pools (see **Area 7**) adjacent to the great bath (see **Area 3**).

ENTERING THE BATHHOUSE

A crowd congregates around the bathhouse entrance, eager to proceed inside. The musical competition lasts the day, so crowds are present even if the party arrives early. The watch is in full force for this event. Two of the watch (**guards**) are checking individuals for weapons and illicit goods as they enter, and an additional nine (**guards**) patrol inside the bathhouse. Each member of the watch is armed with a *tipstaff* (see **Chapter 7**). At least one member of the watch can reach any location in the bathhouse in a single round. (See Old Stross Public Bathhouse map in **Chapter 4**)

A PC can attempt to sneak in a small or light weapon. The guards expect the PCs and will not search them carefully. A successful DC 10 Dexterity (Sleight of

CLOTHING IN THE BATHS

Clothing is not allowed in the baths, which are open to all genders and ages. Zobeck does not have a strong nudity taboo. Attendees may wear a towel into the baths if they wish.

Hand) check gets the weapon past the guards. The watch confiscates the weapon on a failure.

The interior of the bathhouse is elaborately decorated with marble statuary, and the noise of the crowd and music can be heard throughout. From the upstairs terrace (see **Area 2**), PCs can see bathers congregating in the bathing area closest to the performers.

If any party members are outside or in the entry hall (see **Area 1**) a few minutes before the scheduled meeting, a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check notices Zabi (**spy**) and Slip (**spy**) enter together, which may be useful information later.

THE GRAND LOUNGE

Musical groups congregate around the western side of the grand lounge (see **Area 4**). The first time the PCs arrive, a trio of halflings is playing cheerful melodies on stringed instruments. Smaller groups congregate in the rest of the room to converse and discuss whom should win the competition.



PREPARING FOR BATHING

The Spyglass Guild representative, Ren (**acolyte**), introduces himself in the changing rooms (see **Area 8**). Ren explains that a gang from Lower Zobeck has acquired valuable books that the Cartographer's Guild wishes to acquire. If PCs seek more information about the books being traded, Ren tells them the books are from a rival guild. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check senses an incomplete truth. Ren is a servant of Rava and wears goggles into the baths, mentioning that the minerals irritate his eyes. PCs may realize that the goggles are for his contact to recognize him.

The PCs can leave their clothes and other belongings in the changing rooms. Not all PCs must enter the baths. If a PC wishes to stay clothed and wander, they may if they remain nearby. If a PC is in the changing rooms when Zabi and Slip arrive 5 minutes before the appointed time, a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check overhears Zabi tell Slip to "hold it closely and wait here." Slip avoids conversation if approached. If a PC is present a few minutes after Zabi enters the heated pools (see **Area 7**), they may see Slip leave **Area 8** (see **The Slip** below).

THE TRANSACTION IN THE POOLS

The heated pools (see **Area 7**) are unusually empty, as most have left to watch the contest. Ren sits in the farthest bath and invites a few of the PCs to sit with him, suggesting that the others keep an eye out for anything unusual. Zabi enters the baths at the appointed time.

A young woman slips quietly into the area and makes her way over to you. "Brought friends, I see?" she asks as she addresses Ren with a smirk. "That's all right. I have friends too. And we're ready to talk business." Zabi projects an air of confidence, and although she is trying to be quiet, her whispers often carry as she gets louder during certain points of the conversation. She speaks highly of "the boss" during the entire conversation, though she does not mention a name.

Those closest can hear her mention the terms *codebook* and *secret book* several times. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Insight) check spots Ren wincing at her lack of discretion. Ren attempts to be more subtle, but a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals that the transaction involves trading encoded information.

THE SLIP

Slip attempts to sneak away during the conversation and must pass through the heated pools (see **Area 7**) to reach the exit. The steam helps his efforts, and all Dexterity

(Stealth) checks have advantage in this area. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check spots him leaving. Zabi is too engrossed in her conversation to spot Slip, but PCs who recognize that he was traveling with her may mention this fact to her or to others. If she is made aware, she protests that he wouldn't leave and returns to the changing rooms (see **Area 8**) to find him. She quickly returns, confused and concerned that he and the book are missing. Ren asks the party to track him down, and Zabi joins the search. Proceed to **Chase**.

If Slip is not seen or if his action is not mentioned to Zabi, she explains that the first book is on-site. She'll give it to Ren as a show of good faith and then guide him to her boss who has the second book. Ren is amenable to this arrangement. Zabi asks him to wait a few minutes and then to join her in the changing rooms (see **Area 8**). She returns quickly, rushing to accuse Ren of taking the book and her friend. Ren calmly replies that his guild is not responsible and asks the party to find Zabi's partner. Ren further explains that while his guild is acting in good faith, they have people watching for Zabi and Slip outside. Zabi is distraught about Slip's possible betrayal but rallies quickly, grabs her clothes, and joins the hunt. Proceed to **Chase**.

CHASE

Slip's plan for a quick escape was foiled by a tour given by the bathhouse manager, Zsolt, who is taking the opportunity afforded by the musical contest to show off the bathhouse to notable citizens. Zsolt brings his high-class guests to the spring pool (see **Area 6**) during maintenance to show how the spring water overflow is directed to the Argent, which coincides with Slip's escape attempt through that room.

PCs who request their gear from the watch will have it brought to the changing rooms (see **Area 8**) the following round. Ren suggests they grab what they can and dress lightly as time is of the essence.

If the PCs start asking people if they've seen someone matching Slip's description, a successful DC 12 Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion) check finds someone that saw Slip in the grand lounge (see **Area 4**). Subsequent successful checks in **Area 4** reveal that he left through the spring pool (see **Area 6**).

Slip blends into the crowd within **Area 6**, ready to escape into the overflow tunnel when the opportunity presents itself. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) spots Slip edging along the wall. Zabi spots him just as he enters the hidden exit if the PCs do not. Slip runs if he notices the PCs.

See the **Chase Rules** in the **Appendix** for rules on how to proceed, using the following details for the chase:

- This is a short chase with three obstacles to overcome before the goal is reached.
- The tunnels leading into the Cartways are filled with puddles of water and rubble. Slip rushes for the exit where his Mouse Kingdom contacts await. Slip attempts to evade, per the chase rules, each round.
- If Slip did not notice the party in the spring pool (see **Area 6**), the chase begins at Progress 7.
- If Slip did notice and ran, or if the party took more than 3 rounds to gather their gear before pursuing Slip, the chase begins at Progress 11.

CHASE OUTCOMES

Slip Caught. If the PCs catch Slip, he quickly surrenders and confesses to his deal with the Mouse Kingdom. If Zabi is present, he attempts to explain himself, wrongly believing that she will intervene on his behalf to escape whatever punishment awaits his betrayal. He hands over the letter book without incident and if not detained slinks away when possible.

Zabi provides the book to Ren and insists that the group head to Blingly's location (see **Warehouse** below).

Slip Escapes. If Slip escapes, he successfully turns over the letter book to his Mouse Kingdom contacts and leads them to Blingly's location.

Zabi asks Ren and the party to meet her boss (see **Warehouse** below), whom she is confident will clear everything up. By the time the party arrives though, Slip is gone and Blingly has been murdered, leaving the party to face the killers.

WAREHOUSE, FIRST FLOOR

Blingly Crocker waits in the two-story wooden warehouse he owns and lives in. The Wharflings were unaware of this location prior to this event and still know little more than its location. Blingly spent the day attempting to make the area look more impressive to potential visitors from the Spyglass Guild.

The warehouse will be in a different state depending on if the party has caught Slip and Blingly is still alive or if Slip has escaped and Blingly is dead. Blingly is paranoid and cautious and has filled the warehouse with traps. If Blingly is alive, he disables the traps before the group enters, and killers from the Mouse Kingdom arrive while the party is present. If Blingly is dead, some traps are active, and members of the Mouse Kingdom are searching for the codebook.

AREA 1: MAIN FLOOR

Blingly uses the first floor to store unsorted materials that he needs to process. He spent time covering up the junk piles with tarps and left a few more interesting trinkets out for the casual observer, including a ring worth 10 gp, a fine painting worth 25 gp, and a silvered dagger. Everything else is mostly useless, but a determined group can find 1d10 gp worth of goods if they take an hour to search.

If Blingly (**bandit**) is alive when the party arrives, Zabi unlocks the front door. A **bandit** and a **thug** sent by Mouse Kingdom break through the door as the party reaches the stairs and move to attack anyone present. After 3 rounds of combat, a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check hears screaming from upstairs. Another **bandit** and a **thug** have broken through the office window, and Blingly and his pursuers rush downstairs after another round if no PC is upstairs.

If Blingly is dead when the party arrives, the front door is closed but the lock is broken. The body of a bandit lies broken in the triggered spiked pit trap on the stairs, and a **thug** searches the piles of junk for the codebook. He attacks the party when they notice his presence.

Unless the party is underpowered, Ren and Zabi run to get help when Mouse Kingdom agents are found in the building. Ren asks the party to stop the killers from escaping with the book as they go get help.

Falling Bodies. Areas where creatures might fall from the floor above are indicated by an *X* on the map of the first floor. A creature in a marked square when another creature falls through the trapdoor above it must succeed a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or take 1d6 bludgeoning damage and fall prone.

AREA 2: STAIRS

Stairs opposite the entryway lead to the rooms on the upper floor, where Blingly's living quarters and main office are located.

Spiked Pit Trap. The top section of the stairwell drops if a Medium or larger creature sets foot on those stairs. A fallen creature takes 1d6 bludgeoning damage and 1d6 piercing damage. A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check discovers the trap. The trap can be easily jammed shut if spotted. The trap is disabled if Blingly is alive.

WAREHOUSE, SECOND FLOOR

The second floor of the warehouse is in better shape than the first floor.

Pit Traps. Each area marked with an *X* on the map of the second floor falls away when stepped on by a Medium or larger creature, and that creature must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or take 1d6 bludgeoning damage and fall to the first floor, prone. A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check identifies the traps when within 5 feet of them. A lever in the office disables all pit traps on the second floor. A successful DC 12 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check disables an adjacent pit trap.

If Blingly is alive, the pit traps are disabled.

If he is dead when the PCs arrive, three **thugs** are present upstairs searching for the codebook. One is searching the office, one is searching the library, and one is searching the bedroom. They attack from their respective rooms when the PCs are in the hallway.

AREA 3: HALLWAY

A long red rug leads to the office in the rear of the building. If Blingly is dead when the PCs arrive, an obvious trail of blood leads to the office door.

AREA 4: LIBRARY

The library is largely empty, for Blingly has been selling the contents off over time. A few books are scattered across the shelves. If Blingly is dead, when the PCs arrive, a **thug** is searching the shelves for the missing codebook.

AREA 5: BEDROOM

Blingly's bedroom is crammed full of common goods he sells at his shop: stacks of correspondence, piles of clothes, and other miscellany. The codebook is hidden in a chest under the bed and is protected by a poison needle trap.

If Blingly is dead when the party arrives, a **thug** is searching the bedroom for the codebook. The thug has not yet been able to dig his way through the junk to reach underneath the bed.

Poison Needle Trap. The trap deals 1 piercing damage and 5 poison damage to anyone who attempts to open the chest, and the creature is poisoned for the next hour. A key in Blingly's office desk disables the trap and opens the chest. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) finds the poison needle trap. A successful DC 15 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check disables the trap and opens the chest.

AREA 6: OFFICE

Blingly spent the day trying to make his office look impressive. He placed scales on his desk, one side flush with coins, and a ledger lies open. The key to the chest in Blingly's bedroom is in a hidden drawer in his desk that can be found with a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check. A lever set in the eastern wall disables all floor traps in the building.

If Blingly is alive when the PCs arrive, he is sitting in the large chair behind his desk, practicing looking important, bent over as if he is about to begin correspondence. He does not hear combat start downstairs and is startled when a **bandit** and a **thug** break in through his window. He screams and rushes downstairs.

If Blingly is dead when the PCs reach the office, the room is a bloody mess. The scales are overturned. Blood peppers the papers on the table. Most gruesomely, Blingly's head sits on the large chair to serve as a warning to those who would cross the Mouse Kingdom. A **thug** is searching the room when the PCs enter the warehouse, but they have neither found the key nor determined the purpose of the lever.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Ren arrives with two **guards** from the watch after the party has cleared the building. He offers aid to anyone injured and casts *cure wounds* if needed. Zabi arrives soon afterward with four of her young Wharfling companions.

If the codebook is given to the Spyglass Guild, the guild arranges for the PCs to be paid the 50 gp per character fee. The Spyglass Guild now has a better sense of the party's abilities and may engage them for future work. If the logbook is also retrieved, each PC receives an additional 10 gp each.

If Blingly is alive, he gives the valuable items located on the first floor of the warehouse to the PCs in fawning gratitude. Ren tells the group that the silvered dagger may be particularly useful if they run across killers from the Mouse Kingdom again. He also notes that while Blingly does not seem overly impressive, he and the Wharflings may be useful contacts in the future.

If Blingly is dead, they discover he has left ownership of the store and warehouse to Zabi. Ren tells the party that the Spyglass Guild may have jobs for them in the future. Zabi lets the group know that the Wharflings' first order of business will be to hunt down the Mouse Kingdom's newest member, Slip Shiv.

If any of the Mouse Kingdom attackers escaped, the PCs are noted as enemies until they make recompense. Any Charisma (Persuasion) checks made against members of the Mouse Kingdom are made with disadvantage until such time.



DEATH OF A MAGE

A devoted clockwork mage and lecturer at the Collegium turns up dead at the hands of his own creation. Will the PCs decide this was merely an arcane mishap, or will they uncover a deeper mystery?

This adventure is suitable for four PCs of 3rd level.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Uvalius Odolin was little more than a minor, part-time lecturer in clockwork magic at the Collegium. His colleagues dismissed him as a mediocre academic, but as a devotee of clockwork magic and animated constructs, he tinkered day and night in his workshop.

Uvalius was slain a few days ago by his creations. A surge of magic caused by a geomancer manipulating a ley line node under his house caused his automata to go haywire. The geomancer—Shurnas Kradore—holds a grudge against Uvalius that dates back to their school days where Uvalius outshone Shurnas. The geomancer plotted for years to have his revenge, but it went too far: Shurnas planned only to ruin Uvalius, not slay him.

Uvalius was a regular at the Hedgehog, stopping in every evening for at least a pint and conversation, and his drinking companions miss him. They put out an advertisement for adventurers to investigate what happened to him.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The adventure begins with the PCs answering the advertisement at the Hedgehog. They receive the mission and directions to Uvalius's house. On the way, they're approached by rival wizards keen to buy magic the PCs find in the house.

At the house, the PCs subdue or destroy the haywire constructs, search the house, and find Uvalius's body—and deal with his bedroom furniture—after which they find out more about his killer from his captive consciousness. The PCs can ignore the wizard and conclude their business, or they can travel into the Margreve to the geomancer's lair, exact the dead wizard's vengeance, and find out why it all happened in the first place.

PART 1: THE HEDGEHOG TAVERN

The most prominent watering hole in the Collegium District of the Free City of Zobeck, the Hedgehog caters to the scholars and staff of the Collegium. The place is easy to find, opposite the Steam Gate that leads into Arcane Square. The food is mediocre, the ale is cheap but excellent, and the company varied.

Uvalius was a regular at the Hedgehog, appearing every day around dusk to have a flagon with his friends Ovras (a clockwork mage specializing in optics) and Friganis (a masterwork gear-grinder). Ovras and Friganis put out the notice and wait at the Hedgehog to interview investigators.

What They Know. Ovras and Friganis know the following and readily share it:

- Uvalius is a homebody.
- His house and workshop are in Broomskill Alley.
- They went round yesterday, but there was no answer to their knocking.
- Uvalius has a gift for clockwork magic, but his brilliance makes him indifferent to things like lecture schedules and meetings with fellow faculty.
- He is as likely to leave valuable things just lying around as he is to protect them with traps and secret compartments.
- Pooling their resources, Ovras and Friganis can pay the PCs 100 gp each to find out what happened.

THE VULTURES CIRCLE

Several of Uvalius's colleagues have heard about his disappearance and suspect his demise. When the PCs leave the Hedgehog, the colleagues loiter along the route to Uvalius's house, waiting for a private interview. Each offers the PCs cash and favors in exchange for interesting items from the house.

Ivy Ozanyll. A short woman with a striking blonde streak in her chestnut hair, Ivy is also a clockwork mage who lectures at the Collegium. She is cold, precise, and efficient and clearly doesn't give a toss about anything other than her ambition. As far as she cares, the PCs can loot the entire place, provided she gets what she wants.

Uvalius had mentioned in passing a specific device he invented that regulates movement in clockwork servants, making them less prone to breaking down, and Ivy is offering 500 gp for it.

Tuviyar Omanyr. A tenured lecturer in item crafting, Tuviyar was at a reception where Uvalius absentmindedly mentioned he was working on some self-regulating minor magic items. He is rather guilty and furtive. Tuviyar strongly prefers the "straight and narrow," but he's been at the Collegium long enough to figure out he's got to be a bit underhanded if he's to make his fortune.

If the PCs find anything like self-sweeping brooms, self-cleaning chamber pots, or anything like that, Tuviyar wants them. He knows he can make a fortune marketing such things to Zobeck's upper crust, and he's offering 350 gp for such devices as well as sponsorship for PC who wishes to attend the Collegium, full time or part time.

Both Ivy and Tuviyar tell the PCs they'll wait at the Hedgehog.

PART 2: UVALIUS'S HOUSE

Uvalius's house is a two-story stone tower in a quiet cul-de-sac near the Collegium, though not as near as the dwellings of full professors.

The tower has a single-story addition constructed of whitewashed brick under a red-tiled roof. The house is set a few dozen feet back from the street behind a low, iron fence. The grounds are neatly kept, but the doors are shut tight and curtains drawn across the windows. Mature trees shade the grounds.

Doors. Unless otherwise noted, doors are wooden and unlocked. A locked door can be picked with a successful DC 14 Dexterity check using thieves' tools. A door can also be broken down with a successful DC 20 Strength check.

Illumination. There are no functioning light sources inside the house.

AREA 1: STORAGE

This area was once a stable and shed for a wagon. The tiled roof is 12 feet high where it meets the rest of the house and slopes off to the west. Birds nest in the rafters. Though the smell of horses lingers, the stalls now contain shelf after shelf of spare parts for clockwork creations. Large double doors open to the street (south side) and are barred from within. A narrow, low gardener's door opens into the back garden and is locked.

Treasure. While there's nothing obviously precious, there are enough spare parts here to net a tidy sum (at least 500 gp) from a clockwork mage. The trouble is there's so *much* of it. It'll take an oxcart to remove it all.

AREA 2: WORKROOM

Whitewashed brick walls support this large room's tiled roof, which peaks 20 feet above the flagstone floor. Two long wooden tables that might once have been used for banqueting are now covered with metalworking tools and clockwork projects in various stages of completion. On the western table is a humanoid figure made of metal, springs, and gears. On the eastern table is an assortment of clockwork insects, which look like fist-sized scarabs, as well as a small but intricate device. In the southeastern corner is an enameled-metal bench, bearing alchemical gear. Along the northern wall is a small table flanked by two stools. On the table is a plate with a moldy, half-eaten sandwich. In the northeastern corner is a closed door. The double doors leading to the street are barred from within.

A short stone staircase leads from the workroom to the kitchen (see **Area 3**).

Tiny clockwork devices skitter across the floor, paying no attention to the PCs until they enter the room.

Creatures. One **clockwork beetle swarm** (see *Tome of Beasts*) and four **flying swords**. When two or more Small or larger creatures enter the room, the beetles rise in a clatter of gears and assemble themselves into a human-sized swarm. At the same time, the tools and other parts begin to fly about, zooming back and forth. They attack and fight to the death.

Developments. The door in the northeast corner leads to a storage closet that contains barrels of wine and crates of mostly rotten food. The door isn't locked.

The device Ivy Ozanyll wants is on the eastern table. It's a clockwork sphere small enough to fit into a pocket, but it weighs more than it looks like it should. It's so complex, layer upon layer of gears and wires and tiny tubes, that trying to understand it makes the eyes water and the head ache. A PC proficient with the Arcana skill knows it's clearly magical, mixing transmutation and divination magic. A PC who succeeds on a DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) check knows that a portion of the device exists on another plane of existence, which explains why parts of it are blurry, seeming to wink in and out of existence more rapidly than the eye can follow.

Treasure. The casks of wine are worth 50 gp each. A PC proficient with alchemist's supplies can assemble two complete sets of supplies from the various alchemical components. A PC proficient with tinker's

tools or thieves' tools can assemble a set from the scattered tools and parts. Mixed in with the tools are a pair of *eyes of minute seeing*.

AREA 3: KITCHEN

Inside the thick, stone walls of the keep are the kitchen and living area. A wooden wall separates the kitchen from the rest of the keep. Arrow slits look out over the front garden and into the workroom. A deep stone hearth is set into the northern wall, its fire long dead. An iron cauldron hangs over where the coals once were, and pottery pipkins are nestled in the ashes. A wide, tall shelving unit contains jars of spices, small sacks of flour, a bottle of cooking oil, bundles of onions and garlic, and a box of potatoes. Tables and stools are scattered about and overturned as though a fight took place here. A broom quietly sweeps dust and ashes into the fireplace, moving eerily on its own. Several of the small clockwork creatures skitter and scurry about.

Developments. When a living creature enters the room, the table and chairs right themselves, and the broom sweeps over to usher the creature into a chair, which positions itself invitingly near the table. If the creature doesn't sit, the broom strikes the creature, doing no damage but clearly insisting the creature sit. The broom repeats this maneuver for each living creature that enters.

When a living creature sits in a chair, the tiny clockwork creatures climb up and do things like massage the shoulders, comb the hair, untie the shoes and bring *comfy slippers*, and offer mugs of wine from the casks stored off the workroom (see **Area 2**).

There's a 50% chance the tiny creatures are broken. Rather than making visitors feel comfortable, they perform minor annoyances like pulling out clumps of hair instead of combing it and tying shoelaces together instead of offering *comfy slippers*.

If a creature sits in a chair and accepts a mug of wine, the automata ignore it thereafter.

These minor items are just what Tuviyar asked the PCs to seek.

Creatures. If a PC insists on attacking the automata, each has AC 10 and 1 hp.

Treasure. A PC proficient with cook's utensils can assemble a set from the remaining supplies. See **Appendix** for the *broom of sweeping* and *comfy slippers*. A PC deactivates the broom with a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana) check.

AREA 4: LIBRARY

Tall bookcases line the walls, and arrow slits look out over the grounds. One set of shelves groans under the weight of dozens of books, from hefty tomes to small volumes. The other is stuffed full of rolled-up scrolls and parchments. In the southeastern corner, a door is slightly ajar, revealing a stone spiral staircase leading up. The smallest set of shelves holds wooden boxes, each only a handspan on a side. Each has a brass plaque, and each bears a different name: Sebastian, Melody, Leopold, Preston, and Eufala.

Developments. Inside each box is ashes. When a living creature touches a box, a small transparent illusion springs out of its lid, showing the face of a greyhound.

Treasure. The spell scrolls containing the spells *fly*, *identify*, *magic circle*, and *resilient sphere*. Uvalius's spellbooks are also here, marked with his sigil, containing the spells from the mage stat block, plus those contained in the spell scrolls above.

Traps. The shelf holding the books is protected by a *glyph of warding*.

Glyph of Warding. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check notices the arcane symbol traced on the wood. A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals it to be a *glyph of warding* designed to freeze the immediate area. When a living creature other than Uvalius touches the shelf, each creature in the room must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 5d8 cold damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one. A *dispel magic* spell safely removes the glyph. If a PC proficient in Arcana succeeds a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check, they disrupt the magic, suppressing it for 1 hour. On a failure, the trap triggers.

AREA 5: BEDROOM

Rich maroon velvet curtains are drawn across large cathedral windows in each thick stone wall. A canopied bed fills the northwestern corner, and an ironbound wooden chest rests at its foot. There's a small table with chairs in the northeastern corner, papers and drawings scattered across it along with a plate, beer mug, and cutlery. In the southwestern corner is a wardrobe, the doors of which are slightly ajar. There's a small fireplace in the northern wall, though the ashes are cold. A human-sized clockwork figure is slumped against the northern wall next to the fireplace, and the body of a human is lying across its legs.

Creatures. The wardrobe, the bed's canopy, the table, and the cutlery on the table are all animated by the geomancer's magic. Treat the cutlery as two **flying**

swords, the wardrobe and table as two **animated armors**, and the velvet canopy as a **rug of smothering**. As soon as a PC comes within 5 feet of the body, they attack and fight to the death.

Developments. PCs examining the body find the human matches the description of Uvalius they were given. An ornate brass key hangs from a cord around his neck. A PC proficient in Medicine can see the wizard was beaten to death. Uvalius's hand rests on the clockwork servant's chest, on a small hatch that's slightly ajar. Inside the hatch is a memory gear.

Message Delivery. Clockwork mages and PCs native to Zobeck know that clockwork servants need memory gears to function. Clockwork mages know how to correctly install a memory gear, and other PCs can install it with a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) or Intelligence (tinker's tools) check. Once the memory gear is installed, the clockwork servant's head animates, and a wheezing, coughing human voice comes from within it:

"*Whoever finds this, I don't have long. The furniture, it . . . it . . . came alive somehow. My own bed . . . tried to smother me. My wardrobe . . . I think it broke my ribs. I can't . . . breathe. I know who's responsible. It has to be Shurnas, that bastard . . .*" The voice trails off into wet, hacking coughs and then silence.

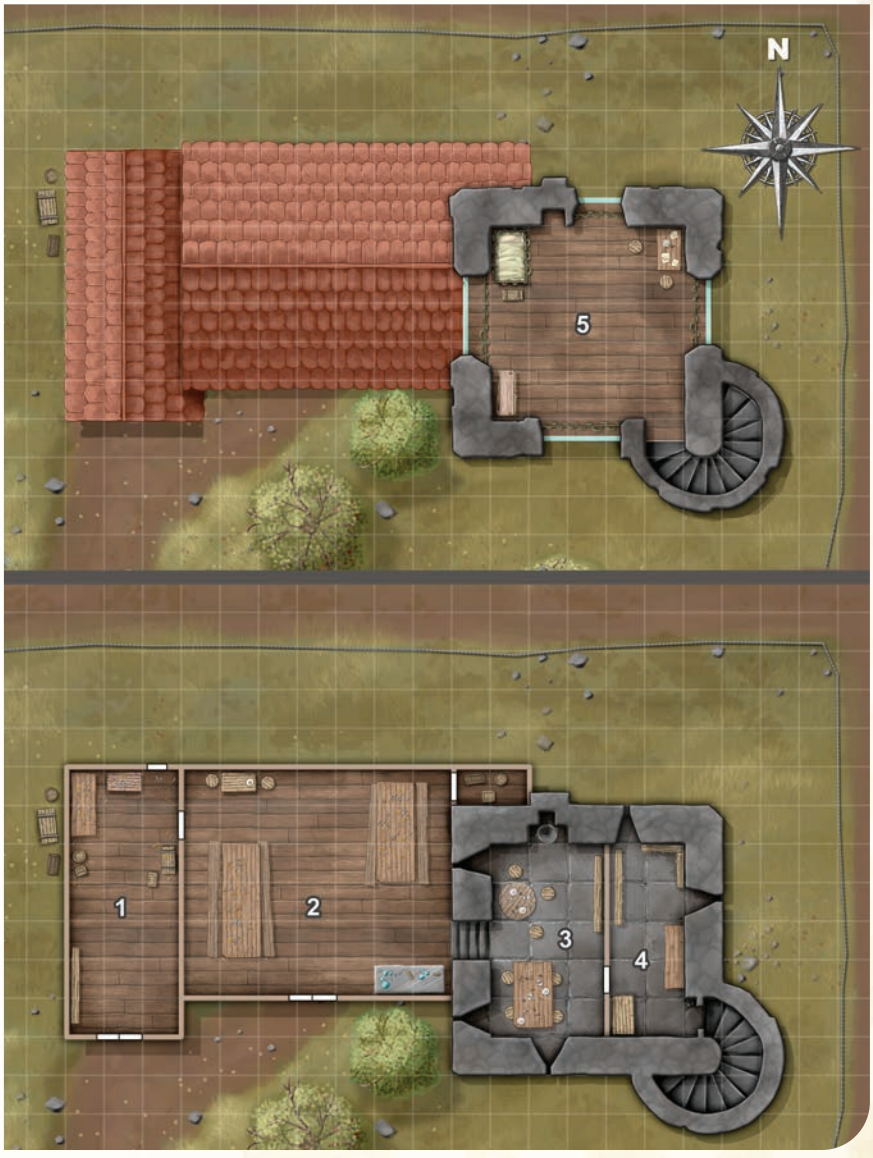
Treasure. The chest contains Uvalius's most valued item: a *staff of the artisan* (see **Appendix**). The chest is trapped with a poison needle.

Poison Needle Trap. A poisoned needle is hidden in the chest's lock. Opening it without the proper key (on Uvalius's necklace) causes the needle to spring out, delivering the poison. When the trap is triggered, the needle extends 3 inches straight out from the lock. A creature within range takes 1 piercing damage and 11 (2d10) poison damage and must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 hour. A successful DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check allows a PC to deduce the trap's presence from alterations made to the lock. A successful DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools disarms the trap, removing the needle from the lock. Unsuccessfully attempting to pick the lock triggers the trap.

BACK TO THE HEDGEHOG

The PCs likely head back to the Hedgehog to collect their reward(s) and inform Ovras and Friganis of what they found out.

If the PCs tell an NPC about what they heard, that NPC recalls hearing about a deep, abiding hatred held against Uvalius by a person named Shurnas Kradore.



Details of the Relationship. The NPC (or a combination of NPCs) relate the following details:

- Uvalius and Shurnas were at school together many years ago.
- Shurnas has hated Uvalius for decades for some slight from their school days.
- Uvalius was rather baffled by the whole thing.
- Recently things got worse.
- Anonymous letters arrived at the Collegium, accusing Uvalius of all manner of misdeeds.
- Uvalius's Collegium projects began to go wrong: a device would be fine in the evening and the next morning it'd be smashing into bits, records and notes would go missing or be burned.
- Uvalius started to fear for his future.
- Shurnas's surname is Kradore, and he's a geomancer.
- Shurnas lives in a carefully constructed magical laboratory in the Margreve Forest near a ley line node.

Ovras and Friganis become angry at the news about Shurnas, insisting that "something ought to be done about him." While they can't offer the PCs further monetary reward, they insinuate that if something should happen to the geomancer they'd not lift a finger to protest if whoever made that thing happen also made off with all the scoundrel's stuff.

Nevertheless, the PCs can refuse this further commission without repercussion. If they do, the adventure ends here.

PART 3: THE GEOMANCER'S LAIR

Traveling to Shurnas's grotto is uneventful as it's in the eaves of the Margreve Forest, not terribly far off the road. Any of the NPCs can give directions.

All the PCs need do is leave via the Puffing Bridge and head north and east along the road to Morgau and Doresh. Provided the PCs leave at dawn, after half a day's travel, they should see an old stone signpost. The post marks where an old road leads off the main thoroughfare into the woods, eventually ending at Shurnas's grotto in the early evening.

The path follows a crisp, cold stream. As the stream tumbles down over smooth stones, the path climbs into the forested hills, both eventually leading into an arched cavern mouth in a stony cliff face.

The grotto Shurnas has claimed was once a temple and stronghold dedicated to Yarila and Porevit. The complex is long deserted by the elves who built it. Its site, nearly atop a ley line, makes it ideal for his studies.

Dimensions. Unless otherwise noted, the ceilings are 10 feet high.

Doors. Unless otherwise noted, doors are closed, unlocked, and made of solid oak bound with iron hammered into leafy, twisting vines.

Light. Natural areas of the lair (see **Areas 1–4**) are not illuminated. All other areas of the cave are lit by magical braziers that light themselves when a living creature enters that area.

Worked Stone. **Areas 5–10** are carved from the granite bedrock. A PC proficient with mason's tools or mining in their history automatically knows someone was mining these caverns. If such a PC succeeds a DC 12 Intelligence check using the tools, they see traces of silver ore.

AREA 1: WAY IN

The path and stream issue from a cave opening 10 feet wide and 15 feet high. The cave mouth is carved into a stone arch, resembling trees, branches twisting and intertwined. The carving is weathered, clearly centuries old.

AREA 2: BACK WAY IN

This portal is concealed by a pile of stony rubble covered by brambles and trailing vines. A passive Nature or Perception of 14 or higher notices something odd

MAGICAL BRAZIERS

Each brazier is made of cunningly wrought black iron hammered into leafy vines supporting a shallow black iron bowl. In the bottom of each bowl is a mote of elemental radiance that flares to life when a living creature comes within 10 feet of it and remains lit until the creature leaves the room or touches the brazier and wills it to extinguish itself.

A brazier sheds bright light for 10 feet and dim light for 10 feet beyond that.

A PC can push over a brazier with a successful DC 12 Strength check, scattering its radiance in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in the cone must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw, taking 2d6 radiant damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one.

about the pile, a vague door shape. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals the mechanism to open the door—pushing one of the stones inward causes the door to swing outward with a leafy rustle.

AREA 3: STONE BRIDGE

The passage widens into a natural, irregular cavern. The stream issues from a hole in the east wall, gurgles along the northern wall, curves around the west wall, then splashes out the cave mouth to the south.

The hole in the eastern wall is too small for a creature larger than Tiny to navigate, and the stream completely fills it. A stone bridge leaps over the stream, leading into an arched doorway in the cavern's north wall. The bridge is carved in the same style as the cave's mouth, roots and branches intertwined.

Creatures. A **water elemental** lives under the bridge. It is trained to attack anyone who sets foot on the bridge or tries to cross the stream and who isn't accompanied by Arius or Shurnas. It fights to the death.

Developments. If the PCs make loud noises in this area, the apprentice in **Area 5** might hear them. If the PCs are simply heedless, making no effort to be stealthy, make a Wisdom (Perception) check for Arius (+0).

If **Arius Azafaris** (see **Appendix**) comes to investigate the sound of the PCs fighting the water elemental, he peers out from the door to his room rather than walking out. He's frightened of the elemental and wants to see which way the battle goes before revealing himself.

Magical Bell. The northern end of the bridge has an audible *alarm* spell cast on it that sounds a bell in **Area 5**.

AREA 4: BACK PASSAGE

A long, narrow tunnel leads north to south. The walls and floor are slick and damp. The passage smells of mold and wet stone.

About 20 feet north of the concealed door (see **Area 2**), the stream cuts across the tunnel, issuing from the eastern wall and disappearing to the west. The stream tunnel is too small for a creature larger than Tiny to navigate and is filled with water.

The stream's water is clear and icy cold. A PC entering the stream must succeed a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or take a level of exhaustion. The water isn't very deep. A Medium creature can wade across it without difficulty (aside from the Constitution saving throw), but a Small or smaller creature would have to swim it. A PC swimming the stream or falling into it makes the saving throw with disadvantage.

Halfway between the stream and the door leading to **Area 10**, a set of steps has been roughly cut into the stone. A yellowish slime coats everything in the area at the top of the stairs.

The slimy stairs can be treacherous. A PC traversing them must succeed a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or fall prone at the bottom of the steps. A PC running up or down them makes the save with disadvantage and on a failure not only falls prone but also takes 1d6 bludgeoning damage from the fall.

Creatures. The area north of the stairs contains two **ochre jellies**. The creatures cling to the cavern ceiling, 10 feet above a Medium creature's head. A PC discovers the jellies with a successful DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check. If the PC specifically states they're examining the ceiling, they automatically spot the jellies.

Make sure a marching order is established because when a living creature approaches the top of the stairs the jellies drop from the ceiling onto the lead PC. If the lead PC didn't spot the jellies, this is the jellies' surprise round. The jellies are famished and attack until slain.

Locked Door. The door to **Area 10** is locked and stuck. A successful DC 12 Dexterity check made with thieves' tools opens the lock, but the door remains stuck as the wood is swollen from water. A successful DC 15 Strength check opens the door, though opening the door makes a loud creaking noise audible in **Area 9** and **Area 10**.

AREA 5: APPRENTICE'S QUARTERS

The door to this chamber is ajar. Inside is a desk, chair, single bed, and a chest. Behind the chest is a magic brazier.

Once the quarters for the guards who protected the temple, now this is the room that Shurnas Kradore has assigned to his sole apprentice, a young human named **Arius Azafaris** (see **Appendix**).

Arius is short and tends toward the flabby. Rather than traditional wizarding robes, he wears a tunic and trousers made of hard-wearing wool and canvas in muted tones. He looks more like a peasant farmer than a wizard's pupil.

Development: What Arius Knows. The apprentice knows the following:

- There's a secret door in his room that leads to Shurnas's bedroom (see **Area 8**).
- There's a back way out (see **Area 4** via **Area 10**), and Shurnas says never to use it but doesn't say why.

- Shurnas is a mean old bastard who constantly insults and belittles Arius.
- The lair is built on a ley line.
- Shurnas knows the circle in the laboratory (see **Area 9**) inside and out.
- Arius is the third son of a mercantile family and has few prospects if he can't succeed as a wizard.
- "I came here to learn magic, not dust and mop. If I'd wanted to be a janitor, I'd have stayed at home!"
- A few days ago, Shurnas conducted a long ritual in the circle. When he finished, Arius heard him mutter, "That'll teach that smug Uvalius who the real wizard is."

If the PCs offer to help Arius increase his powers, he happily helps them navigate the lair and warns them about the living wicks in **Area 9**.

If the PCs promise to help Arius's powers and status at Shurnas's expense, he tells the PCs how to defeat the geomancer: "If you hit him hard and fast, he'll give up. He's a coward at heart."

Secret Door. Creatures with a passive Perception of 15 or higher spot the outline of the secret door behind Arius's trunk. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check (or asking Arius) reveals how it works: pushing on a section of wall to the right of the door causes it to swing inward. The passage beyond leads to Shurnas's quarters (see **Area 8**).

Treasure. Arius has a few treasures tucked into a sock and hidden in the bottom of his trunk: a gold locket with a picture of his mother worth 25 gp, a *wand of binding*, and 12 gp, 56 sp, and 23 cp.

AREA 6: RECEPTION AREA

Two stone columns, carved to resemble trees with outspread branches, support the vaulted ceiling of this ornately decorated room. The walls are covered in colorful tile mosaics depicting unicorns shepherded by elves. A set of wide stairs leads to the other half of the room. Bronze double doors, decorated with etchings of trees and stars, lead to the north, and a wooden door leads south.

AREA 7: GUEST QUARTERS

Two small beds are neatly made up, and wooden chests rest at the foot of each bed.

When this place was a temple, priests slept here. Now the room is kept as quarters for Shurnas's guests. Given Shurnas's demeanor, this room is seldom used.

Treasure. The eastern chest has a false bottom. Inside is a leather pouch containing six emeralds, each worth 100 gp.

AREA 8: SHURNAS'S QUARTERS

A wooden door inlaid with platinum threads, depicting a single tree, roots and branches spread wide, leads to an opulent chamber bisected by a heavy tapestry curtain. Braziers provide light and keep the chilly damp at bay. At the foot of an opulent canopied bed is a trunk, and a wardrobe is set against the southern wall.

Secret Door. Creatures with a passive Perception of 15 or higher spot the outline of the secret door in the south wall of Shurnas's bedchamber. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check (or asking either Arius or Shurnas) reveals how it works: pushing on a section of wall to the right of the door causes it to swing inward. The passage beyond leads to Arius's quarters (see **Area 5**).

Furniture. The trunk contains undergarments and socks. The wardrobe contains other clothes, from fine doublets and breeches to embroidered wizard robes.

Treasure. The wardrobe has a false back. Hidden behind it is Shurnas's special treasure: a *cloak of the bat*. A PC who knocks on the wardrobe as part of searching

ROLEPLAYING ARIUS

When Arius first meets the PCs, he holds up his hands as a sign he's no threat to them, and he asks them what they want. He is curt and proud, for some of Shurnas's arrogance has rubbed off on him. To wizards, he is fawning and obsequious. To others, he is haughty and demanding. Arius holds no love for Shurnas. The geomancer is demanding, treating his apprentice like a menial servant, and Arius thinks he should be getting more training in the arcane arts.

The apprentice has no qualms about hanging Shurnas out to dry. If the PCs tell him Shurnas is guilty, Arius believes them without hesitation.

automatically discovers the secret compartment, which is neither locked nor trapped. Otherwise, a PC must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check to notice the difference in depth between inside and outside.

AREA 9: MAGIC LABORATORY

In the center of the laboratory is a stone table, atop which is a variety of brass and silver instruments, some of which hold down the corners of a large map of the elemental planes. A bookcase covers the northern wall, and another fills the southeastern corner. Each is stuffed with books and scrolls.

This is where Shurnas conducts his magical experiments.

In the northwestern corner, a wide archway leads to a hemispherical room. On the floor of the hemisphere is etched a magic circle, and surrounding the circle are four large candles that flicker with blue flame. The candles are vaguely shaped like crouching humanoids. A leather satchel hangs from a hook on the wall beyond the magic circle.

In the center of the circle is a tall, gaunt, bald man with a nose like the prow of a warship, jutting over a magnificent moustache, pouting lips, and a carefully sculpted goatee.

Development: Shurnas's Admission. If the PCs question him, Shurnas admits to manipulating the ley line that runs through his laboratory in order to sabotage Uvalius's constructs. He denies any intent to kill the clockwork mage though. He only wanted to overload the clockwork creations, to burn them out and stop them from working.

If the PCs demand Shurnas accompany them back to the city to face the consequences for Uvalius's death, he laughs and refuses. Feel free to use some of the following lines:

- *"Who's going to believe you? A bunch of dirty peasant adventurers?"*
- *"He had it coming! I was always a better wizard than him!"*
- *"I should have been the one who got the assistant lecturer's chair!"*
- *"I suppose the Collegium sent you to ruin me. Those bastards were always jealous of my work."*

When combat begins, four **living wicks** (see *Tome of Beasts*) leap from the braziers and attack the PCs. Each living wick has been burning for 14 days, so each has only 14 hp. They fight to the death.

Shurnas Kradore (see **Appendix**) is not interested in killing the PCs. He just wants to drive them away. But if they back him into a corner, he doesn't hesitate to defend himself with deadly force. He remains inside the magic circle unless forcibly removed from it or he surrenders.



Shurnas has a habit of casting *mage armor* on himself as soon as he finishes his morning ablutions, so he always has AC 16.

When Shurnas is reduced to 20 or fewer hit points, he uses the Disengage action (if necessary) and orders the living wicks to charge into the PCs, heedless of opportunity attacks, and use their Consume Self ability. If Shurnas can't get far enough away to avoid the area of effect, he doesn't choose this option.

When Shurnas is reduced to 10 or fewer hit points, he grabs his satchel from the wall and uses his action to trigger the circle's teleportation ability, which leads to his family's estate in the city. If he can't do that, he reluctantly surrenders.

If Shurnas surrenders, he tries to bargain for his life and freedom. He offers the magic items in the laboratory first, reserving his *cloak of the bat* (found in **Area 8**) for last. In exchange, he promises to flee to a faraway city, never to trouble anyone again. If the PCs refuse to be bribed, he feigns submission and agrees to accompany them back to the city to face justice (see **Concluding the Adventure** below).

Arius refuses to participate in the battle, instead hiding under the table with his hands over his ears.

Magic Circle. A PC can make an Intelligence (Arcana) check to figure out what the magic circle is supposed to do. In order to make this check, the PC must spend at least 10 minutes studying the circle.

Even with the command words (and Shurnas won't willingly volunteer this information), a PC can only use the powers in the table on a successful Intelligence (Arcana) check, after that initial check to figure out how it all works in the first place. In other words, if a PC wants to use it to teleport somewhere, they must discover the command word for that function and make a DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana) check while speaking the command word.

If the check is failed by 2 or less, the circle functions but in an unexpected way. If a PC uses it to teleport, they end up in the wrong place.

This is how Shurnas went wrong: he failed to properly use the circle to manipulate the ley line node under Uvalius's house. Rather than simply causing the clockwork mage's creations to stop working, he sent them into overdrive.

MAGIC CIRCLE KNOWLEDGE

Check Result	Knowledge Gained
12	The circle is bisected by a ley line.
14	It can manipulate other nodes anywhere along that ley line.
16	It can teleport a creature using it to somewhere on the same plane of existence.
18	It can conjure elementals from the Planes of Fire and Earth.
20	It has a sequence of command words to activate its conjuring and teleport functions.

Treasure. Shurnas's satchel contains two *potions of healing*, a *spell scroll of invisibility*, two *spell scrolls of mage armor*, and 250 gp.

Interspersed with the books and scrolls on the bookshelves are several valuable and magical treasures:

- *99 Tricks for Counterspelling* (see **Appendix**).
- *Caring for and Breeding Owlbears* (150 gp).
- *Eviar's Book of Spellcasting* (see **Appendix**).
- *Mystical Birds of the East* (500 gp).
- *The Traveler's Guide to Magical Fungi* (50 gp).
- *Scrolls of conjure minor elemental*, *protection from evil and good*, and *hold monster*.

Plus spell components to taste, a map either leading toward or showing a new adventure location for the PCs to explore (the exact nature of this adventure hook is at GM's discretion), and Shurnas's spellbook.

Glyph of Warding. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check notices the arcane symbol traced on Shurnas's spellbook's cover. A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals it to be a *glyph of warding* designed to put living creatures in the immediate area into a magical slumber. When a living creature other than Shurnas touches the book, each creature within 10 feet of the book is targeted by a *sleep* spell capable of rendering 28 hp asleep. A *dispel magic* spell safely removes the glyph. Alternatively, if a PC proficient in Arcana succeeds a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check, they disrupt the magic, suppressing it for 1 hour. On a failure, the trap triggers.

AREA 10: KITCHEN & STOREROOM

Boxes, crates, and barrels are stacked haphazardly around the walls. There's a cast-iron cooking range in the northeastern corner, a sink against the southern wall, a wooden icebox next to the sink, and doors in the west wall and southeastern corner.

Exploited Elementals. Bound minor elementals heat the range and keep the icebox cold. Opening the door of either apparatus reveals the elemental, which laments its captivity and complains about its treatment (provided one of the PCs speaks enough Primordial to understand it, that is).

The elementals can't leave their prisons unless Shurnas is dead, and if they can leave their prisons, they're not interested in fighting the PCs. They just want to get out of the grotto.

Locked Door. The door to **Area 4** is locked and stuck. A successful DC 12 Dexterity check made with thieves' tools opens the lock, but the door remains stuck as the wood is swollen with damp. A successful DC 15 Strength check opens the door, though opening the door makes a loud creaking noise audible in **Areas 4** and **Area 9**.

Treasure. There is no monetary treasure, but there is enough fresh food in this room to cook a rather fine meal. In addition, there's enough preserved food to make 12 rations.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

There are various ways this adventure can conclude. If the PCs didn't care to pursue the adventure beyond **Part 2**, the adventure ended there.

Kill 'Em All. If the PCs just kill everyone, they of course can loot the lair to their hearts' content. When they return to the Hedgehog and Ovras and Friganis, those worthies will be disappointed that Shurnas couldn't face the majesty of the law but consider the matter settled.

Bring to Justice. If the PCs capture Shurnas, any promise he makes them is false. He has no intention of being brought to justice. The PCs may escort him to the city and turn him over to the authorities, but he soon leverages his family's connections in high places to escape custody and hole up in his family's estate. He'll never receive any kind of trial. From the estate, he'll plot the PCs' downfall, returning later to plague their every footstep.

What about Arius? If Arius survives, he leaves Shurnas's service. If a PC wizard showed skill at magic and treated the apprentice with kindness (or at least something better than sneering contempt), the lad asks to become that PC's apprentice.



ROLEPLAYING SHURNAS

Shurnas is arrogant and disdainful, convinced he's smarter than anyone around him and that everyone is working to keep him down. He and Uvalius were boyhood friends but fell out some years ago when they were studying magic. Shurnas is fascinated by ley lines and how they work, and when he's at the grotto (and awake), he is always in the laboratory, practicing his geomancy. Sometimes he even remembers to instruct his apprentice.

CRIMSON OUBLIETTE

A sunken, forgotten prison lies beneath the city. Can the PCs find a way through the ooze-filled passages, or will they simply be the next batch of dead explorers?

This adventure is suitable for four PCs of 3rd level.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Down an all-but-forgotten passage of the Undercity, behind a partially cleared rockfall, lies the arched chamber containing the Crimson Oubliette. Once known as the Depths, this wretched prison of narrow cells dotting the curving walls of a 500-foot-deep cylindrical shaft housed those who society wished to forget (including an entire tribe of scrags). Then a ground tremor collapsed the passages leading to the entrance and emptied an underground lake into the Depths. Those on the surface simply abandoned the guards, prisoners, and staff alike, and in time, the prison itself was forgotten.

Merging with the murky water flooding the dungeon, the prison's semi-sentient ooze waste disposal system fed off the imprisoned and perpetually regenerating scrags and grew to fill the entire oubliette. Tribes of underground dwellers worship the ooze as a god and throw treasure into it as offerings. Others have also used the oubliette to dispose of dangerous items, and according to legend, the *Jade Tome* rests at the very bottom of the ooze-filled oubliette, thrown there by a dying paladin convinced it was too dangerous for mortals. The Crimson Oubliette has claimed hundreds of would-be adventurers. And more continue to attempt to map the secrets of the ooze, combating the twisted denizens that make their home down there and risking death to delve to the bottom of the Crimson Oubliette.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The PCs arrive at the entrance to the Crimson Oubliette and interrupt a group of kobolds dumping an offering of silver into the opening of the pit. After dealing with the draconic worshippers, the PCs descend into the oubliette either via potions or by carrying fire to keep the ooze at bay. With glittering treasure lurking below, the PCs make their way down and soon encounter the degenerated ancestors of the original guards and traps designed to thwart prison breaks. Unfortunately, the arrival of the PCs also attracts the Deepclaws, scrags who now act as extensions of the ooze's will. At the bottom of the oubliette, the heroes must overcome a pair of constructs guarding the resting place of the *Jade Tome*.

PLOT HOOKS

There are countless ways to get adventurers into a mysterious, ill-explored portion of the city filled danger and opportunity. Here are just a few possibilities:

- The PCs are hired by noted archeologist Magister Varna, to recover the *Jade Tome* from the oubliette.
- A foe of the PCs has stolen one of their prized possessions and thrown it into the ooze.
- To join an elite adventuring guild, the PCs must descend into the ooze and bring back a prize.

THE OUBLIETTE

Entering the ooze subjects a creature to the acidic nature of the ooze's innards. An immersed creature takes 7 (2d6) acid damage at the start of each turn. Any item or effect that offers acid resistance or immunity negates this effect. Metal, stone, and items of similar hardness are not dissolved by the acid.

Additionally, the ooze is vulnerable to and afraid of fire. A simple torch forces the ooze to withdraw or pull back to a 30-foot radius. This allows would-be explorers to descend into the oubliette. Once below 30 feet, the presence of a torch creates a 30-foot-radius bubble around the source of fire. Luckily, the ooze is permeable to air so breathing within the pocket is not an issue.

The reddish liquid of the ooze acts in most respects like normal water in terms of movement. It is very dark once the PCs descend beyond 30 feet.

AREA 1: INTERRUPTED OFFERING

The entrance to the Crimson Oubliette appears to be a 100-foot-wide shaft filled to the rim with a viscous red liquid.

The PCs arrive at the Crimson Oubliette just in time to see a small group of five **kobolds** dumping two sacks of silver coins into the reddish liquid. The kobolds are distracted, so they are surprised by the PCs.

A DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check spots a lit torch, lying on its side at the rim of the oubliette. The presence of the flame has caused the ooze to pull back from it. This gives the PCs a hint about needing fire to descend. This can also be determined by a DC 15 Intelligence check.

Treasure. A half-empty sack containing 2d20 sp.

AREA 2: THE CURVING STAIRS

A 10-foot-wide, rail-less stairway curves downward along the inside wall of the oubliette with barred cell doors every 20 feet or so.

The ancient prison was well guarded against escape attempts, and the stairs are trapped.

Magic Missile Trap. When an intruder of more than 20 pounds steps on a hidden pressure plate, a *magic missile* spell is triggered. Originating from a nearby hole in the wall, each missile targets a random creature within 30 feet. The missiles function normally in water. Each creature struck takes 1d4 + 1 force damage. *Detect magic* reveals an aura of evocation around the opening (DC 13 *dispel magic* to destroy the trap). A DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check spots the pressure plate.

Every 100 feet of stairs is another *magic missile* trap (at the GM's discretion).

AREA 3: PRISON CELLS

The doorway to each 15-foot-by-10-foot chamber is blocked by a cell door of steel bars.

Most of the cell doors are either locked or simply stuck. A successful DC 15 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check picks one of the locks. A successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check unjams a stuck door.

To see what an individual cell holds, roll a d6 on the following table:

d6	Cell's Contents
1	Empty
2	***Lurking Tribesman.*** A **lesser scrag** (see *Creature Codex*).
3	***Guardians.*** 1d3 former guards, now just **animated armor**.
4	***Sad Remains.*** A skeleton chained to the wall.
5	***False Storage Locker.*** A **mimic**.
6	***Odd Pool.*** 1d2 **gray oozes**.

There is a 30% chance that a cell door is either open or unlocked. These creatures will attack on sight and fight to the death.

Treasure. At GM's discretion.

AREA 4: SCUFFLE WITH SCRAGS

This encounter can occur once or repeatedly as needed. It is best placed after the PCs have investigated one or two cells:

Suddenly, a pair of emaciated humanoids with greenish, rubbery hides, wicked looking claws, and enlarged lower jaws bursts out of the side of the air pocket.

(The description assumes the PCs are using fire to hold off the ooze. If they are exploring via a different method, adjust the text accordingly.)

Creatures. Two **lesser scrags** (see *Creature Codex*) make use of their swim speed to gain an advantageous attack on the PCs. They fight to the death.

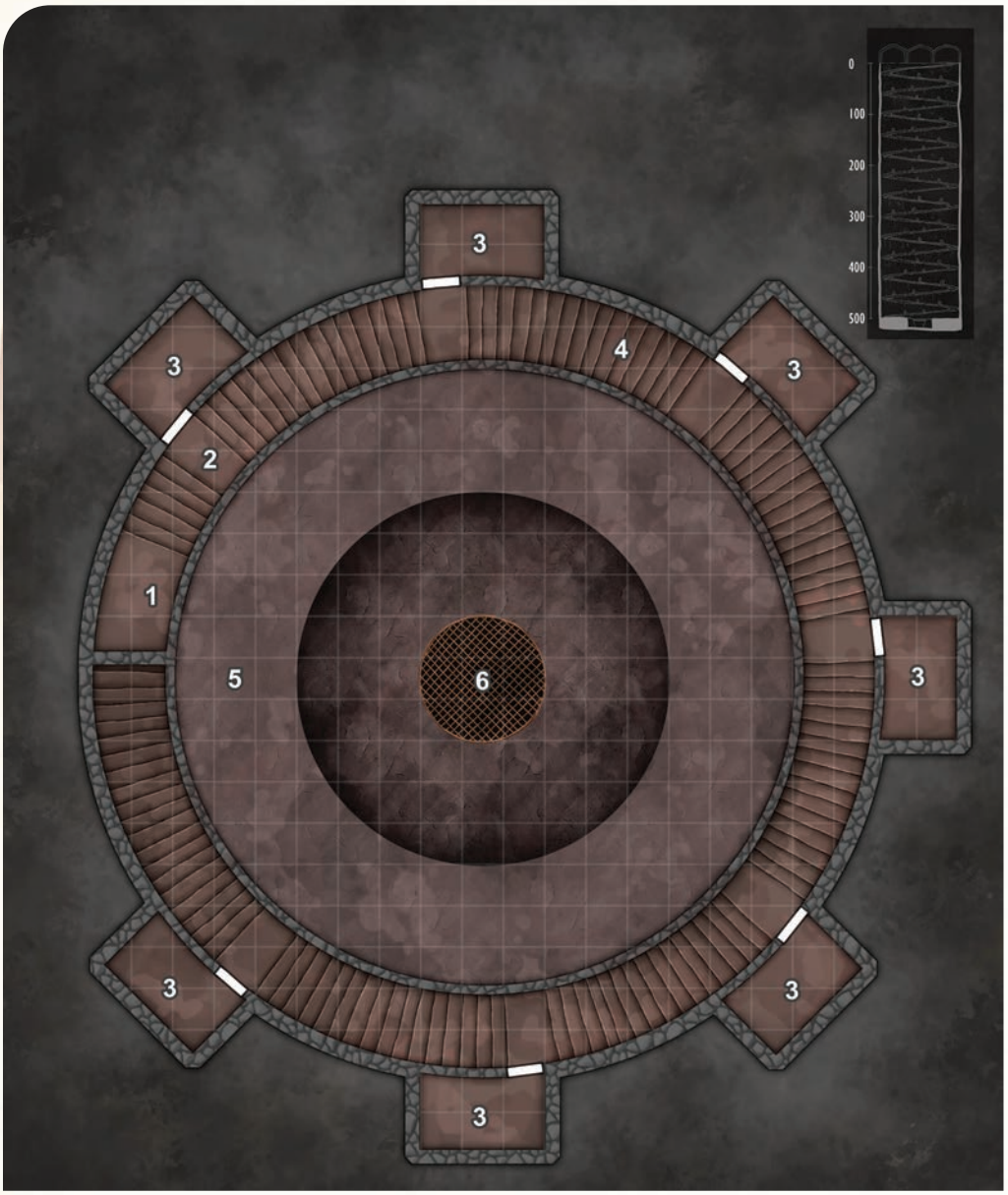
Treasure. Each scrag has 1d20 gp.

AREA 5: GUARDIANS AT THE BOTTOM

Revealed by a glowing radiance from somewhere toward the middle of the area, the stairway ends on a 15-foot-wide, level platform that hugs the wall all the way around the circumference of the oubliette. The center of the chamber slopes downward toward a massive steel grating that must have once acted as drainage.

Creatures. A pair of **clockwork huntsmen** (see *Tome of Beasts*) clad in acid pitted armor attack the party. Beneath their breastplates, gears tick and whir. Left to guard the *Jade Tome*, they will fight until destroyed.

Treasure. A DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals that the huntsmen's eyes are fire garnets (worth 50 gp each).



AREA 6: THE TREASURE OF THE OUBLIETTE

Just below the metal grate at the center of the room is a glittering pile of gold and silver. A strange glow emanates from a green book resting in the middle of the treasure hoard.

Opening the grating requires a DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check, though PCs can work together to make it easier.

Treasure. After years and years of offerings from tribesmen and the loot from fallen explorers, the hoard includes a *hat of disguise*, the *Jade Tome*, a *vicious longsword*, plus 800 gp, 10,210 sp, 25,300 cp, and 15 assorted gems (worth a total of 500 gp).

The *Jade Tome* is a thick book with pages made entirely of carved jade plates bound with mithril wire. The exact nature of the forbidden knowledge inscribed within the tome is beyond the scope of this adventure, but GMs are encouraged to use the *Jade Tome* as a launching point for further quests.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Having found the *Jade Tome*, the party has likely achieved any specific goals they had in coming down here and simply need to return to the surface. However, the Depths could hide even greater secrets for them to explore.

A DRINKING PROBLEM

A local bar has a rum gremlin infestation. Can the PCs convince a pesky clurichaun to help or will they succumb to the bottle?

This adventure is suitable for four PCs of 4th level.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The Broken Handle, a tavern in Lower Zobeck, is having continual issues with rum gremlin infestations, which is causing no end of problems for the tavernkeeper. The creatures are breaking into ale barrels, stealing food, and worst of all causing customers to become too intoxicated to buy more drinks or food. The Broken Handle's owner, Vilmos Agota, paid the local watch and even mercenaries to get rid of the gremlins, but the pests keep returning. Vilmos heard rumors that clurichauns have a pure hatred for rum gremlins, and as luck would have it, a clurichaun has recently started terrorizing a farmstead just outside of Zobeck. Vilmos believes this is just the type of guardian his tavern needs. If the rum gremlin problem persists, Vilmos fears he will have no choice but to close the tavern that has been in his family for generations.

Unbeknownst to Vilmos, a rum gremlin lord, Flix Sweetwine, has set his eyes upon the Broken Handle. The creature plans on turning the tavern into his new base of operations in Zobeck where he and his ilk can conqueror other taverns. Seeing the success of Flix and his rum gremlins in slowly taking over the Broken Handle, servants of the Demon Lord Chittr'k'k move to contact Flix about joining forces to overthrow the balance of Zobeck.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The adventure begins as the PCs arrive at the Broken Handle in Lower Zobeck, following one of the plot hooks below or just looking for a quick meal or drink while in Zobeck.

Vilmos approaches the PCs about his plight, asking for their help. Shortly after discussions end, rum gremlins break into the tavern's ale stores again. After helping Vilmos rid the tavern of the pests, the PCs head to a nearby farm to convince a clurichaun that's been terrorizing the farmers to instead move into the Broken Handle. Clurichauns are known for their aggression toward rum gremlins, and Vilmos hopes one in residence will solve his problem.

The farm is half a day's travel south of the gates of Zobeck. When the PCs arrive, the farmer is facing a similar plight as Vilmos and would be happy to be rid of the troublesome fey. The farm's owner explains the clurichaun only shows up at night and often breaks things around the farm or disturbs the sleeping animals. As night falls, the PCs encounter the clurichaun, Oban Bryne, who flees to his home in a nearby ruin. After facing the spirits that inhabit the ruins, the PCs must participate in a drinking contest to convince Oban to return to Zobeck with them.

After returning to the Broken Handle, the PCs discover things have gotten much worse, for Flix has finally made his move.

PLOT HOOKS

The PCs can stumble upon Vilmos's plight through happenstance while searching for a place to eat or drink in Zobeck, or they can seek out the Broken Handle after getting one of the following tips:

- Flyers dot building corners in Lower Zobeck, stating the Broken Handle is seeking "mercenaries who can hold their liquor."
- The PCs overhear rumors of people getting sickeningly drunk while at the Broken Handle and warning others from going to the tavern.
- The Mouse King heard of the recent rum gremlin infestations at the Broken Handle and sent his spies to investigate. They told him of Flix's growth in power and of evidence the servants of the Demon Lord Chittr'k'k might approach the rum gremlins for an alliance. The Mouse King can't let the demon lord's power grow in Zobeck and sends one of his agents to contact the PCs about ending the rum gremlin threat.

TROUBLE BREWING AT THE TAVERN

The adventure starts with the PCs arriving at the Broken Handle tavern. The stretch of road holding the tavern is close to the banks of the River Argent, but the foot traffic is light for the area. The atmosphere around the tavern has a dour feel with none of the patrons looking very happy about where they chose to grab ale.

When the PCs enter the tavern, they are greeted by a young human woman, wearing a worn work apron. She introduces herself as Teca and gestures to the many open tables while suggesting the PCs sit wherever they wish. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Insight) check notices she seems fatigued and that she winces at the light coming in through the open door behind the PCs. She is suffering a semi-permanent hangover from the regular visits by the rum gremlins and the effects of their aura. She believes she isn't feeling well because of a lack of sleep from the near-constant interruptions of the rum gremlins and says as much if asked. If the PCs ask about the flyers or about the rum gremlins, she directs them to speak with her father, Vilmos Agota.

The PCs can either ask about seeing the owner or grab a table to have a drink first, but shortly after they arrive, Teca tells her father a group of capable-looking individuals have come into the tavern. Vilmos then leaves the kitchen to talk to the PCs about his issue. He is an older human in a clean but old work apron stained from years of preparing food and brewing ale. Vilmos has similar signs of fatigue as Teca from the regular exposure to the rum gremlins and from sleepless nights worrying if his tavern will be able to stay open.

WHAT'S THE JOB?

After telling the PCs of the near-constant appearances of rum gremlins, Vilmos shares his plan to be rid of the pests. He has heard clurichauns hate rum gremlins and there are recent rumors of a clurichaun causing trouble for a farm south of Zobeck. The farm is owned by the Varga family and is known for its fine horses. Vilmos admits he has only heard stories and rumors, but if the clurichaun exists, he believes it could solve his problem. Vilmos offers the PCs 400 gp (the last of his emergency fund) to go find this clurichaun and convince it to move into the Broken Handle as its guardian against the rum gremlins. If the PCs are successful, he even promises them free food and drink anytime they are in Zobeck.



WHAT IS A CLURICHAUN?

Vilmos Agota has never met one before, but his father told him stories of the creatures when he was a child. The stories say they are mean-spirited, alcohol-loving creatures that have an infamous hatred for rum gremlins.

A PC can attempt a DC 15 Intelligence (History or Nature) check to recall one or more of the following about clurichauns:

- Clurichauns are fey that were once leprechauns, but they gave up a life of toil for one of solitary debauchery.
- They spend their nights drinking, singing off-key, and causing pranks on animals and people nearby.
- The best way to get a clurichaun to do something is to beat it at a drinking contest—the little fey can't stand losing to mortals.

RUM GREMLINS GETTING INTO THE ALE

Toward the end of the conversation with Vilmos Agota, there's a loud crash from the taproom then a scream from Teca, "Father! They're back!" Vilmos ushers the PCs to follow as he runs to the taproom (see **Area 3**).

Three **rum gremlins** (see *Tome of Beasts*) have broken the keg taps off three barrels, spilling ale throughout the room. The little fey giggle as they scoop up ale in their

hands and drink it down. They use the freshly soaked floor to slip and slide around the room, allowing each rum gremlin in the area to take the Dash action as a bonus action.

Vilmos (**bandit captain** with one level of exhaustion) asks the PCs to aid him in dispatching or driving off the rum gremlins. Having spent some time in his youth as a guard on the merchant vessels that ply the River Argent, Vilmos wades right in. His daughter (**commoner** with two levels of exhaustion) focuses on preventing the other patrons from entering the taproom.

After the rum gremlins are handled, Vilmos lets out a sigh and laments, "This will keep happening unless we can get that clurichaun to come here."

BROKEN HANDLE TAVERN

All areas inside of the tavern are brightly lit either by table lanterns at night or sunlight from the many windows during the day.

AREA 1: THE BROKEN HANDLE TAVERN ENTRANCE

A single-story building of brown wood with a double-door entrance sits near the banks of the River Argent. Through the four street-facing windows, you can see a large establishment within, many tables and bar stools. Above the door, a wooden sign depicting a mug without a handle and the words "The Broken Handle" swings gently in the breeze.

The front of the tavern faces the street of lower Zobeck, and its back faces the River Argent. A successful DC 11 Wisdom (Perception) check notices the patrons who exit seem particularly drunk.

AREA 2: BAR LOUNGE

Multiple tables with benches sit in the western half of the tavern's main area. Three kobold patrons enjoy a light meal and small mugs of ale. Dartboards hang on the eastern wall. Across from the entrance, two humans enjoy drinks at a small, square table. The smell of wood smoke and spilled ale hangs in the air.

The ale in the Broken Handle has been altered by the regular presence of the rum gremlins and their auras, making it particularly intoxicating. Vilmos is unaware of the change in his wares and believes his recent patrons have simply been drinking more than they can handle.

Patrons. The two humans at their table are midway through their second mugs and already show signs of being heavily intoxicated. PCs who have a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 10 or higher notice that both are unsteady in their chairs and their speech is greatly slurred. PCs attempting to speak with the other patrons are met with grunts or drunken giggles and barely coherent conversation.

AREA 3: TAPROOM

Two of this room's walls are lined with stacks of wooden barrels, and each stack bears labels indicating it holds a variety of local ales. A waist-high cabinet in the middle of the room holds spare linens, and taps and wooden plugs lie on top of it. The tables in the southeastern corner hold stacks of wooden mugs and brewing ingredients and supplies. Two doors lead out of this room.

Vilmos stores his tavern's ale in this room, and when not busy, he experiments with new recipes for his own ales. The unlocked eastern door leads to the back of the tavern with its two outhouses and to an impressive view of the River Argent and the terrain south of Zobeck.

Locked Door. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check notices tiny claw marks around the western door's lock, evidence of the rum gremlins' attempts to get into the room. A successful DC 15 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check picks the lock.

AREA 3B: BARREL STORAGE

This smaller room is filled with stacks of wooden barrels, each with a written label of the ale it contains.

This room holds Vilmos's most precious and expensive ales as well as a few barrels of his experimental ales. So far, the rum gremlins have been unable to break into this room.

AREA 4: BACKYARD AND OUTHOUSES

Two wooden outhouses sit behind the tavern with a beautiful view of the River Argent and the grass and trees south of Zobeck.

AREA 5: DINING AREA

Large tables with benches dominate this space. Three tables made of old barrels with stools sit around the room. The many windows offer views of the neighboring building, the two trees out back, or the street leading to the establishment's main entrance. A fireplace in the eastern wall holds a crackling fire and pot of simmering stew. Three humans, each at a different table, sit slumped over the tables, asleep and filling the room with the sounds of their snoring.

The stew in the fireplace is a communal stew for patrons of the tavern and changes daily, depending on the ingredients Vilmos has on hand. The room's current patrons have been here for a few hours and have fallen asleep from the effects of the tavern's altered ale. They are regulars of the Broken Handle, and Teca and Vilmos don't have the heart to kick them out, especially since the tavern has had such few patrons of late. The patrons awaken when the rum gremlins attack the taproom and leave through the eastern door at Teca's guidance.

AREA 6: KITCHEN

A small oven, a table covered in cooking utensils and ingredients, and a butcher block and knife dominate the northern wall. A small table between the doors holds a washing basin and a drying towel. Small boxes and sacks full of potatoes, spices, and various kinds of dried meat sit in the southwestern corner.



VARGA FARMSTEAD

The Varga family farm is 12 miles south of Zobeck. The farmstead sits just off the road south toward the Magdar Kingdom. A large wooden arch with a sign reading "Varga Horse Ranch" announces its presence to travelers. The farmstead has a single, large blue barn and a small blue farmhouse. Fenced-off areas separate the livestock, which includes more than a dozen horses.

When the PCs arrive, Gizi Varga is sitting in a rocking chair in front of the farmhouse, taking a rest. She is a thin, older human woman wearing rugged work clothes with a floppy hat to keep the sun from her eyes. She is the matriarch of the Varga family and the only one currently present at the farm as her son and grandchildren took their latest stock of horseflesh to Zobeck's markets a day ago. When the PCs approach the farmhouse, Gizi greets them and offers water to anyone that's thirsty. Gizi is hospitable but wary of strangers coming onto her farm.

If asked about the clurichaun, Gizi rolls her eyes in annoyance and gives the PCs the following information:

- His name is Oban Bryne—or at least that's what he yells out as his name in the middle of the night during his drunken singing.
- The clurichaun only shows up a night, drinking, and makes a huge ruckus.
- Gizi and her son have tried to chase him off, but they haven't been successful and can't afford to pay anyone to get rid of the troublesome fey.

If the PCs express interest in meeting or getting rid of the clurichaun, Gizi lets them stay in the barn for the night. She offers them a basket of fresh food (treat as 12 rations) if they are able to get rid of the clurichaun.

OBAN BRYNE

Oban just happened to pick the Varga farm as his new stomping grounds at random. The tavern where he lived burned down long ago, and he has wandered the Crossroads region ever since, stealing what liquor he can find. Oban's loneliness and misery make him a surly drunk, but his love of playing drunken games always shines through his grumpy demeanor.

The **clurichaun** (see *Tome of Beasts*) visits the Varga farm at night when the moon is at its highest in the sky. Any PC awake during Oban's approach can hear the tiny fey singing with a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check. Otherwise, the PCs wake up during Oban's antics.

Oban's Drunken Antics. While at the Varga farmstead, Oban wanders into the various livestock pens and causes trouble. Choose from the options below or roll a d6 to randomly determine Oban's activity on the evening of the PCs' arrival:

- Throwing dirt at a sleeping, dappled mare in the pasture while yelling, "You can't judge me, you spotted beast!"
- Leaning against a fence and having a drunken conversation with a nearby horse about how the world is being overrun by tall people.
- Climbing on top of a goat and attempting to ride it. Roll a die. On an even result, the goat grazes, ignoring Oban, which causes him to shout and kick at it. On an odd result, the goat kicks and jumps, and Oban rides it like a bucking steed, cheering and yelling the entire time.
- Serenading the sleeping chickens while wobbling along the top of the nearby fence.
- Dragging around a sack of old horseshoes that he hurls at the scarecrow that spooks him.
- Yelling down the farm's well for anyone that might be at the bottom: "Hey any spirits down there? I've got spirits of my own up here. Only carry the good stuff myself."

A PC can convince Oban to stop any of his drunken antics with a successful DC 18 Charisma (Persuasion) check. If any PC offers the clurichaun alcohol, they have advantage on the check. On a success, the clurichaun grumbles about the PCs ruining his fun and leaves, stumbling his way toward a copse of trees near the edge of the farmstead. On a failure, Oban mocks the PCs and continues his antics. If the PCs approach Oban, especially if their weapons are drawn, he immediately dashes off into the trees.

CHASING THE CLURICHAUN

If the PCs follow Oban into the trees, he quickly disappears from view, but his trail is easy to follow. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check follows his trail of broken twigs and splashes of alcohol. On a failure, PCs can find Oban's destination after 10 minutes when he starts his drunken singing. Oban makes his home in what remains of a centuries-old watchpost. A few human skeletons lie within the ruins, the remains of a bandit group that died in a battle with unknown forces several years ago. The restless spirits of the bandits inhabit the old ruin, but they ignore Oban, preferring mortal victims to the fey. Oban doesn't care about the origins of the skeletons and isn't aware of the existence of the spirits.

AREA 1: THE ENTRANCE

The aged walls of this once-great stone structure are now just ruins. Two rotted wooden doors lie on the ground, partially covered in dirt. A pillar dominates the courtyard and crumbled buildings sit around it.

Oban's tracks lead to this old ruin. A few empty bottles of wine and rum lie near the entrance, having rolled into the grass after being discarded.

AREA 2: FORGOTTEN COURTYARD

An ancient stone pillar stands in the center of the courtyard, the bas relief iconography on its faces worn illegible from centuries of exposure to the elements. A human skeleton lies propped against the pillar, a rusted, bucket helm on its head and a tattered, rusted chain shirt on its torso. A rusted battle axe lies nearby, partially covered in dirt and grass. A stone table stands in the northeastern corner.

The skeleton is the leader of the bandits who died in this ruined watchpost years ago. The skeleton holds no obvious wounds, leaving the bandit's cause of death indeterminate. The stone table sits propped up on three sets of rocks. Five aged, wooden chairs circle the table.

The stone table is Oban's preferred drinking and sleeping spot when he isn't raiding merchants on the road or terrorizing the animals at the Varga Farmstead. When the PCs arrive, he has already forgotten about them and is tucking into his latest bottle of wine at the table.

Creatures. When the PCs move within 15 feet of the pillar, the **specters** in **Areas 3**, **4**, and **5** come out to attack the PCs.

Developments. When the specters appear, Oban cries out in surprise, clutches his bottle to his chest, and hides under the table. If a PC rolls a 1 on an attack roll against a specter, Oban mocks the PC's poor aim. If a PC scores a critical hit on a specter, Oban hoots and cheers. After combat, Oban approaches the PCs, praising their combat prowess. He then asks why they are here. See **Convincing Oban** below for details on how the PCs can convince Oban to go with them to the Broken Handle.

AREA 3: LOOKOUT CHAMBER

Chipped stone stairs lead up to a chamber full of dirt and stone rubble. Its original purpose has been lost to time. Gaps in the walls show the courtyard and surrounding trees. A skeleton wearing the tattered remnants of a suit of leather armor lies amid some rubble, a broken bow across its lap.

The skeleton was one of the bandits keeping watch when the watchpost was attacked long ago. Broken arrows stick out of the sides of the skeleton's armor, revealing the cause of death. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check while searching the skeleton finds a pouch containing a small ruby worth 15 gp.

Creatures. A **specter**, the spirit of the bandit archer, resides in this area and attacks any mortal creature that enters the room.

AREA 4: CRUMPLED WATCHTOWER

Stone stairs lead to a raised platform with tall, stone walls. The chamber's northern wall collapsed long ago. A skeleton adorned in rusted chain armor lies on some of the rubble to the north. A rusted longsword sits within arm's grasp of the skeleton.

The skeleton belongs to another member of the bandits that died in this watchpost years ago. It shows evidence of being stabbed to death from different angles. A sheathed dagger hangs from the skeleton's belt by a thread frayed with time. Protected by its sheathe, the dagger shows little damage from being out in the weather.

Creatures. A **specter**, the spirit of the sword-wielding bandit, resides in this area and attacks any mortal creature that enters the tower.

AREA 5: OLD BANDIT SLEEPING QUARTERS

Chipped stone stairs lead up to a stone room that shows signs of more recent use than other parts of the ruins. Several old and dirty sleeping cots lie to one side while dusty cooking pots and utensils lie to the other. A door in one wall has been left open, revealing stairs.

This room was once used as shelter by bandits in the area, but it has remained empty since the assault that killed the other bandits in the ruins. The door in the eastern wall was once used to reach an underground smuggling tunnel to the Cartways beneath Zobeck, but the stairs go down only 15 feet before rubble from a long-ago cave-in blocks the rest of the passage.

Creatures. A **specter**, the spirit of the bandit leader, resides in this area and attacks any mortal creature that enters the room.

CONVINCING OBAN

After the fight with the specters, Oban is open to conversation with the PCs and appears more lucid than his drunken antics at the Varga farm might have suggested. If the PCs mention the Broken Handle tavern in Zobeck wants him as a resident, Oban shrugs with disinterest, but a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Insight) check notices the fey looks hopeful. If the PCs mention the rum gremlins, Oban grows angry and says he will go to the Broken Handle with the PCs to pummel those "rotten rum thieves." However, Oban wants the PCs to prove they speak the truth and that they are worthy allies by participating in a drinking contest. The clurichaun wants the PCs to participate but doesn't expect them to win—participating in the contest is all the proof he needs. He tells them if one of them beats him, he will throw in "something extra."

If the PCs decide they don't want to participate in the drinking contest and try to take Oban by force, he



defends himself to the best of his ability. He surrenders if he is reduced to half its hit points or fewer. If the PCs force him to join him in this way, Oban doesn't participate in any of the combat encounters in the Broken Handle tavern when the PCs return to Zobeck, and he doesn't give them his bell (see **Fighting the Rum Gremlins** below).

LET THE DRINKING COMMENCE!

If the PCs agree to the drinking contest, Oban leads them to the stone table in **Area 2**. The tiny fey then takes off his hat, reaches into it, and pulls out a bottle of rum and one drinking glass for himself and each of the PCs who are participating. Oban motions for each participating PC to take a seat at the table. He then places a glass in front of each of them, filling the glass with rum as he places it.

The bottle is filled with a high-quality rum the clurichaun pilfered from a merchant a few months ago. Using a mixture of herbs and his natural magic, Oban enchanted the rum to be potent enough to affect clurichauns, allowing him to become intoxicated by it in spite of his immunity to the poisoned condition. The enchantment doesn't otherwise affect the PCs or any other drinker. A spell or other effect that can sense the presence of magic, such as *detect magic*, reveals a dim aura of abjuration around the bottle. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (alchemist's supplies) check determines the nature of the rum's enchantment. The enchanted rum tastes better than any rum the PCs have ever tasted, but Oban refuses to share the secrets of his recipe.

Drinking Rules. When conducting the drinking contest, use initiative rolls to determine the drinking order. On a participant's turn, the participant must drink their entire glass of rum and succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 hour. Oban Bryne has advantage on this saving throw. On subsequent rounds, if a poisoned participant fails the saving throw, the participant has hit their limit and slides out of their chair onto the ground, unconscious and no longer part of the contest. An unconscious participant awakens if it takes damage or if someone uses an action to shake or slap them awake.

At the end of each round of drinking, Oban refills the remaining glasses with more rum. The rounds continue until only one participant remains at the table or until only one PC remains at the table with Oban. A participant who leaves the table after the drinking has started forfeits the contest.

Drinking Aftermath. If Oban Bryne passes out early in the drinking match, he wakes up if shaken or splashed with water or alcohol, at which point he giggles and pronounces the PCs "good drinking folk." If Oban makes it to the end with one other PC still drinking, he laughs and compliments the mortal's drinking willpower. If at least one PC performed as well as or better than Oban, he gladly hands over the extra prize, his hat (treat as a *handy haversack* with no side pouches), and after pulls out his nonmagical, backup

FIGHTING THE RUM GREMLINS

During combat, Oban Bryne fights the rum gremlins alongside the PCs unless the PCs forced him to join them. He prefers to assist the PCs by casting spells from range, but he grabs nearby bottles or broken chair legs to crack rum gremlin skulls if necessary. Before they enter the tavern, Oban tosses a small metal bell to the PCs and says, "The little buggers can't stand bells. Ring it if you want to get their attention but be careful—they'll be angry at whoever does the ringing."

A PC can ring the bell as a bonus action, which causes each rum gremlin within 15 feet of the PC to attack the PC on its turn. While the bell is ringing, rum gremlins within 15 feet of the creature ringing the bell have disadvantage to hit a creature that isn't the creature ringing the bell. The bell's ringing doesn't affect Flix Sweetwine. If a PC doesn't ring the bell, that PC can pass the bell to another PC within 15 feet (no action required).

The Tavern's Challenge. If the addition of Oban and the bell decreases the difficulty of the fights in the Broken Handle, you can include additional rum gremlins in the tavern who are either coming back from alcohol raids or seeking to join Flix's army. Similarly, additional ratfolk of Chittr'k'k might find their way into the tavern at the behest of their cult. Be careful when adding more enemies, however, as the poisoned condition from the rum gremlins' auras can wreak havoc on even the most prepared group of PCs and make even a small addition to the combat that much more difficult to face.

hat and a flask of rum from it. If all the PCs become drunk before Oban, he doesn't give up his hat, but he shakes the PCs awake and agrees to go with them to the Broken Handle.

When the PCs decide to leave the Varga Farmstead for Zobeck, Gizi sends them off with the food basket she promised, thanking them again for their help with the troublesome fey. She gives Oban a quick glare before the PCs leave, though the clurichaun fails to notice it while drinking from his flask.

LAST CALL: THE RETURN TO ZOBECK

When the PCs and Oban Bryne arrive back at the Broken Handle tavern, things have taken a turn for the worse. Flix Sweetwine made his move to take over the tavern as his own keep while the PCs were gone. The patrons who were in the tavern when the rum gremlins appeared were overwhelmed by the gremlins' auras and are all very sick. Flix now rules from the Broken Handle with a small army of drunken rum gremlins.

Flix's move impressed the followers of Chittr'k'k who have been watching him. They sent ratfolk agents to speak with the new tavern lord about an allegiance against the Mouse King. If left unchecked, Flix will spread his drunken agents across Zobeck in the name of the demon lord.

BROKEN HANDLE TAVERN REDUX

A lot of things have changed at the tavern since the PCs last saw it.

Lighting. The rum gremlins smeared ale and bile upon all the windows and many of the tavern's surfaces. This has reduced the light in the tavern, leaving **Area 2** and **Area 5** dimly lit.

Same but Different. The rum gremlins invading the Broken Handle changed the contents and appearance of its rooms. Use the same map but with the following new descriptions and information.

AREA 1: THE BROKEN HANDLE TAVERN ENTRANCE

A single-story building of brown wood with a double-door entrance sits near the banks of the River Argent. Four street-facing windows are smeared with grime, making it impossible to see inside. Above the door, a wooden sign has scratched out letters and now reads "The Broke Hand." Two human men sit slumped against the building with stained shirts. A dog lies on its side near one of the humans.

A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Medicine) check verifies both humans and the dog are unconscious and suffering the after-effects of major intoxication. With some rest and rehydration, they will recover. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check while standing near the door hears the familiar sounds of rum gremlin giggling coming from inside.

Rolling Barrel. A creature opening the door sees a **rum gremlin** (see *Tome of Beasts*) running on top of a rolling barrel, heading directly for the front door. Each creature within 10 feet of the double doors must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 1d10 bludgeoning damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one. As the barrel bursts against the entrance, the rum gremlin falls off, landing prone. It then laughs and attempts to run back inside to join the other gremlins.

AREA 2: BAR LOUNGE

The smell of dried bile and spilled ale fills the tavern. The tables and benches in the western half of the tavern are upside down. One rum gremlin stands on an overturned table, throwing darts at one of the dartboards just above the slumped form of a woman. Two shirtless humans lie on the floor beneath a small, square table across from the entrance. Two rum gremlins sit at the table, wearing the humans' shirts and playing cards.

Similar to those outside, the humans in this room are unconscious from an extreme intoxication caused by a mixture of the alcohol they were drinking and the power of the rum gremlins' auras.

Creatures. The three **rum gremlins** (see *Tome of Beasts*) attack the PCs when the PCs enter the tavern. The rum gremlin by the dart boards has five darts, which it throws at the PCs. It is proficient with the darts.

AREA 3: TAPROOM

Two of this room's walls are lined with stacks of broken wooden barrels with illegible labels. The floor is sticky from old spilt ale. A rum gremlin dances on the top of the cabinet in the center of the room, playing a flute. The room's wooden ale mugs lie scattered across the ale-soaked floor. An orange-furred ratfolk dances on the tables in the southeastern corner, twirling and juggling its darts in time with the music. The two doors in the southern wall are open.

After Flix took over the tavern, he cracked open the adjoining keg storage room and moved all the kegs to **Area 5**. The gremlins then tossed Vilmos and his daughter into the room.

Creatures. The **rum gremlin** (see *Tome of Beasts*) plays a jaunty tune for the amusement of the **ratfolk mercenary** (see *Creature Codex*), who is the bodyguard of the cult of Chittr'k'k emissary in **Area 6**. Knowing the effects of the rum gremlins' presence, the ratfolk drank a potion before arriving that protects them from the poisoned condition for 24 hours. If the PCs enter, both attack. The halting of the music awakens the **giant rat** in **Area 3b**, and it joins the fight on the second round of combat.

AREA 3B: BARREL STORAGE

The broken remnants of several barrels litter the floor of this mostly barren room. Two humans lie on the floor.

Most of the wooden barrels were removed from this room. The broken remains of one barrel are now a rat's nest, containing a slumbering **giant rat**.

Victims. Vilmos and his daughter lie here, forgotten by the gremlins who are drunk, literally and figuratively, on their victory. Vilmos is starting to come out of the effects of the gremlins' auras. If the PCs help him up, he offers to fight beside them, but he has two levels of exhaustion.

AREA 4: BACKYARD AND OUTHOUSES

Two wooden outhouses sit behind the tavern with a beautiful view of the River Argent and the grass and trees south of Zobeck.

A **rum gremlin** (see *Tome of Beasts*) dozes on the floor of one of the outhouses, oblivious to the events inside the tavern.

AREA 5: DINING AREA

The area is a mess of flipped over tables, and many barrels stand around the room. Some of the barrels are broken, but most are intact. A mixture of ale and bile coats the windows, blocking out almost all light from outside. The doors in the northern wall lie on the floor, and voices echo from beyond the open doorways.

Flix ordered his rum gremlins to move all the tavern's barrels into this area for easier access and gave them free reign of the remainder of the tavern.

Creatures. When the PCs enter the area, three **rum gremlins** (see *Tome of Beasts*) on guard near the barrels rush out from behind the barrels and overturned tables to attack, giggling the entire time. One wields a wooden rolling pin (treat as a greatclub). On the second round of combat, a **ratfolk warlock** (see *Creature Codex*) dressed in tattered green robes with a rat skull amulet around their neck steps out of the kitchen to join the fray. The ratfolk is an emissary from the cult of Chittr'k'k and fights to the death to protect an alliance they believe will strengthen Chittr'k'k's power in Zobeck. Knowing the effects of the rum gremlins' presence, the ratfolk drank a potion before arriving that protects it from the poisoned condition for 24 hours.

AREA 6: KITCHEN

The kitchen area has been turned into a mockery of a throne room. A hollowed-out barrel sits in the middle of the room, fashioned into a makeshift throne complete with pillow cushions. Several barrels line the walls of the room. A large rum gremlin, wielding a keg tap spigot as a scepter, sits in the throne, drinking from a bottle of wine.

The figure on the throne is Flix Sweetwine. He was holding court with the emissary of the cult of Chittr'k'k about a possible alliance against the Mouse King of Zobeck when the PCs rudely interrupted them. When the PCs enter the kitchen, the **rum gremlin lord** (see *Tome of Beasts 2*) smashes his bottle on the throne and brandishes its sharpened remains at them.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

After Flix and his minions are defeated, the lingering effects from the gremlins' auras lift, allowing the patrons to wake from their drunken comas. Thanks to the PCs, the patrons suffer no negative effects from the intoxication, minus a few hangovers. If Oban Bryne survives the battle with the rum gremlin lord, he feels invigorated and decides he really does like the Broken Handle—or at least he says he will once it's been cleaned up. He agrees to stay as the tavern's resident clurichaun, provided Vilmos promises to give him a barrel of ale each week. Vilmos happily agrees. Vilmos hands the PCs their promised reward of 400 gp and offers them free drinks for life at his tavern once the place is back in business.

The cult of Chittr'k'k isn't pleased when news spreads of the rum gremlins being defeated at the Broken Handle, and the rats of Zobeck loyal to the demon lord keep watch on the PCs. If the PCs return to the tavern later for free drinks, Oban Bryne makes an appearance to greet the PCs and challenge them to a round of drinking.

RUST

Lower Zobeck is being terrorized by a nightly menace, and the party is approached for aid. Will the PCs free the locals from their savage tormentors, or will they be the next victims of a dead man's cruel legacy?

This adventure is suitable for four PCs of 4th level.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

They say Kaple's Ward never slept.

Petty overseer Jon Kaple, a vile and hated man, ruled this tiny plot in Lower Zobeck with his iron machines, and his workhouse—a monument to toil and industry—sat at its heart. But even petty dictators have a way of coming undone, and soon Kaple found he had a short but brutal rebellion on his hands that saw mobs descend upon the workhouse, murder Kaple, and smash his machines. Afterward, Kaple's Ward became known as the Tarnish, a rusting corner of Lower Zobeck haunted by the corroded ghosts of his machinery. But Kaple's death brought no rest, for his ruined soul remained trapped in the workhouse, able only to whisper in the dark to his rusting machines. Deemed haunted, the place proved impossible to sell.

This suited Grief, a gargoyle artist who took over the ruin with the help of some dubious contacts in the Steamworker's Union. He began to sculpt and create, and as he did so, he became aware of something else in the workshop.

KAPLE'S GHOST

Kaple whispered to Grief at night. "Give me a body," he promised, "and I shall show you a great treasure hidden at the heart of my workhouse." So Grief began building an iron angel as a makeshift body for Kaple to wear and walk in once more. And in the process, the gargoyle freed other things that had lain rusting in the workhouse, and soon, twisted iron creatures came by night to plague the Tarnish. These creatures—called night-things by the locals—ventured out, seeking vengeance on those who betrayed their master.

However, the night-things, and the bragging tongue of Grief's (now deceased) manservant, also brought the attentions of those with even fewer scruples than Kaple. Mister Corpulent and Master Doldrum are local merchants, each hearing about the night-things and the whispered treasure. They are cowards, however, and are loath to go to the trouble and risk of stealing it themselves. So when a handy party of adventurers appears, each merchant seeks to gain the upper hand and win the treasure for himself.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

Approached first by Corpulent and then by Doldrum, the PCs receive an offer they find hard to refuse: with clues pointing to a local menace, each merchant separately offers a sizeable reward to remove the night-things and enter the workhouse to lay their hands on



the whispered treasure. Whichever employer the party rebuffs—woe to them if they deny both—only adds to their list of opponents.

The adventure is nonlinear, and the PCs are free to choose their allies as they enter Kaple's haunted workhouse, which is once again stirring with mechanical hatred. Whichever way they choose, a surprise awaits at the adventure's climax.

PLOT HOOKS

The PCs need only be in Lower Zobeck to trigger the events in the adventure. They could be in the region for any number of reasons. Perhaps they seek a rare clockwork component among the rusting remnants of Kaple's petty empire, maybe they are just passing through, or perhaps rumors of the night-things have drawn them here.

PART 1: MISTER CORPULENT AND MASTER DOLDRUM

The adventure commences in Lower Zobeck with Mister Corpulent approaching the PCs.

A pair of selfish, corrupt, greedy, and amoral merchants, Corpulent and Doldrum have worked the Tarnish markets for years. Their feud, begun with a tiff over a plate of pickled herring, has grown into true hatred over the years yet has never spilled into direct violence. Perfectly cordial in public, each would happily see the other skinned alive for the price of a loaf of bread. Both are as cowardly as they are selfish though, and the fear of open battle keeps the cordiality in strong supply. Each is also unaware of the other's dark secret—that Doldrum is a wererat and that Corpulent is devil-bound (having made a deal with an imp, agreeing to a tithe of his wealth each mid-winter).



Both men have their fingers in countless pies, and the activities of the night-things have piqued their greedy interest. Of the two, Corpulent has had more success. The use of *speak with dead* on one victim's remains revealed the night-things' nature, and a servant new to the region had been bragging at the Crooked Cat, a tavern in Lower Zobeck, about some great hidden treasure, the night-things, and a gargoyle artist. Said servant vanished though, and no one knew much about him, particularly where he worked. A *commune* spell confirmed for Corpulent that the night-things, the gargoyle, and the treasure are all linked.

Sadly for Corpulent, one of Master Doldrum's rat henchmen (part of a pack he sometimes refers to as his "weanlings"), who habitually spies on Corpulent, overheard the *commune* conversation and has reported back to Doldrum.

Now Corpulent and Doldrum compete to locate the night-things, get someone to dispatch said gargoyle, and then move in to take the treasure. Corpulent, the brighter of the two, has sent word to his dubious associates that he needs adventurous types to carry out a little service. Again though, the Weanlings have learned his plans, and Doldrum is following his old adversary. Corpulent decides that the PCs are ideal tools to make him rich—or at least to discover more about the treasure before they die. Doldrum is right on his tail.

AN OFFER FROM MISTER CORPULENT

Corpulent approaches the PCs in public, either offering to meet privately later or simply making his offer straightaway. He tells the PCs that the night-things are terrorizing the local population, but the authorities are doing little—indeed Lower Zobeck likely won't receive any help until many more people die. Corpulent plays the concerned local to a party of notably good-aligned PCs or the irritated businessman to any other group.

Corpulent knows that a foul gargoyle leads the night-things. He greatly desires to see them dispatched but has no idea of their location. He offers 500 gp to trace the night-things back to their lair and destroy them. He stipulates, however, that he must take part in any attack upon the gargoyle's lair. He wants to see the night-things killed firsthand, and payment of the reward depends on it. Corpulent assures the PCs that he can take care of himself. In any event, he has his "little beauties" (he doesn't elaborate) to take care of him.

THE TARNISH

While outwardly similar to any other part of the city, the signs of rusting industry litter the Tarnish. Chimneys rise from the sides of buildings, waterwheels rust in crumbling pits, and gears clutter street sides. Anyone who asks around about the place is warned to stay away after dark, lest they fall afoul of the "night-things." No one knows much about them specifically, only that they're rumored to arise from the cast-off dregs of industry and to resemble iron apes.

AN IMMEDIATE COUNTEROFFER

Within minutes of their meeting with Corpulent, Master Doldrum approaches the PCs, either where they meet Corpulent (if in public) or on the street otherwise.

Doldrum tells the PCs that in fact Corpulent is completely untrustworthy and has been responsible for several acts of skullduggery in Lower Zobeck. Why he wants the gargoyle and night-things killed is anybody's guess. Doldrum makes them a counteroffer of 600 gp to locate and kill the gargoyle and night-things (thereby ridding Lower Zobeck of an unwelcome horror). He also insists on accompanying the PCs, however, for the same reasons as Corpulent, and he accepts no alternative plan. He claims to be a very capable fighter.

DEALING WITH CORPULENT AND DOLDRUM

The PCs may start asking questions around the city or try to tail the merchants back to their homes. A successful DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) check finds their homes by asking the right questions, or a successful DC 10 Dexterity (Stealth) check follows either character to their home without being noticed. Further, a successful DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check uncovers that Doldrum runs an incense and unguent business in Lower Zobeck, and Corpulent deals in antiquities.

Mister Corpulent (**gnomish knife cultist**, see *Creature Codex*) and **Master Doldrum** (see **Appendix**) don't work together, and neither will submit to any kind of magical questioning or probing. Allow the PCs to have fun playing the characters off each other—perhaps even raising the reward—but both merchants will pay only after the work is complete. If the PCs

decide to go off and attack the night-things themselves, the two NPCs, horrified that their plans have backfired, act independently as listed in the **Friends and Enemies** sidebar.

Use these two as you wish, but let the plot and PCs lead their actions. Both Corpulent and Doldrum would sneakily follow the PCs, either at a safe distance (60 feet) or by Stealth. If the merchants ever feel the PCs have discovered them, they flee. If discovered and caught, it falls to the GM to decide how the two react, but bear in mind, each has a very active, greedy imagination, and each will do his utmost to follow the PCs to the gargoyle's lair.

If they successfully stalk the PCs, have both turn up at the final scene of this adventure as detailed in **Area 9**.

CORPULENT'S BAZAAR

This simple, single-chambered dwelling is cluttered with curious objects. A cramped bed lurks at the rear of the shop behind a mahogany counter on which rests a small cashbox. The bazaar lacks windows and remains open throughout the day. The lock on the entrance can be picked with a successful DC 13 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check. It's locked anytime Corpulent is away.

Development. When Corpulent is not here, he leaves his "little beauties" next to the bed in a small wooden magical crate, 1 foot on a side. The container was originally designed to house fighting cocks, shrinking them to allow them entry and reverting to normal on exit, for easy transportation. (Treat as a *bag of holding*, except that only Small or smaller living creatures benefit from its magic. Anything else just takes up space as if the crate weren't magical. There is no risk of suffocation within the crate.) It closes with a simple latch and has tiny air holes to allow the creatures to breathe. A PC who inspects it without opening it determines immediately that it contains birds, but only a successful DC 18 Intelligence (Nature) check recognizes them as a pair of **cockatrices**. Otherwise, the PC misidentifies them as harmless cockerels. If the box is opened, of course, the truth becomes immediately obvious.

During combat, Corpulent likes to make use of his little beauties by opening the box, turning invisible, and climbing the nearest wall for safety. He has no control over the creatures once released, and they generally rush as a pair to attack the nearest target. They flee if reduced to 8 or fewer hit points. Corpulent knows that the stench of a well-rotted fish carcass will draw them back into the crate to feast. Corpulent flees from combat if reduced to 15 or fewer hit points.

The recently exhumed coffin of Hazram Guilt lies hidden under the bed, covered in clothes. Corpulent had cast a *speak with dead* spell on the mangled corpse three days ago and intends to dispose of the body once this business is over.

Treasure. The cashbox contains 700 gp. Corpulent has a *necklace of fireballs*, a *potion of greater healing*, and a *potion of invisibility* on his person.

DOLDRUM'S SOUK

Master Doldrum runs an incense shop that doesn't do much business. The shop struggles to keep afloat because Doldrum himself is a rather unpleasant person to be around—the result of his wererat lycanthropy.

The shop sells incense and unguents. It has but a single room with a small stepladder leading to a cot on boards placed above the rafters. It's windowless, but the entire front wall is a set of sliding doors that open the whole shopfront. It stays open throughout the day. When not here, Doldrum always locks up, and a **giant rat** watches from the cot in the loft, where it sleeps most of the time. If it hears intruders breaking in, it hides and informs Doldrum later about what happened. A successful DC 12 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check picks the lock.

Master Doldrum tries to avoid combat, but if he must fight, he can summon his Weanlings (**rat swarm**) within 1d6 rounds if he's anywhere in Lower Zobeck.

FRIENDS AND ENEMIES

This adventure allows the PCs to choose their allies.

If the PCs choose either Corpulent or Doldrum, that NPC comes along and seems ready for a fight but proves curiously reluctant to enter combat (as both intend to remain fresh for when they betray and attack the party). The spurned NPC watches the PCs from a distance, invisibly if possible, and flees if discovered but returns later. He stalks the PCs into the warehouse, keeping close but not close enough to be heard or noticed, and also enters the fray at the climactic moment. Everyone is fair game at that point: PC, NPC, or any other opponent.

If the PCs reject both NPCs (an understandable choice, given how odd they both are), then both NPCs stalk the PCs. Unless they're discovered, the two turn up at the height of the battle against the night-things, 1d6 rounds apart.

He summons them before combat if possible. They are devoted to him and never flee from combat. Doldrum, on the other hand, flees when reduced to 10 or fewer hit points, but once he recovers, he goes looking for revenge.

Treasure. The incense and unguents in the shop are worth 700 gp, and 35 gp in cash is hidden under the bed in a small box. Doldrum has an *oil of sharpness*, *potion of greater healing*, *potion of invisibility*, and a mummified cat head worth 600 gp (made into a locket set with jet stones in its mouth and tiny amethyst eyes) on his person.

PART 2: TROUBLE WITH NIGHT-THINGS

The night-things comprise Kaple's workhouse chattel, five in total. They exit Kaple's Workhouse through the rusted millrace (see **Area 5**) 1d3 hours after dusk each evening and move about the gables and alleys in this small section of Lower Zobeck until they've completed their mission and return.

Roll 1d6 for every half-hour the PCs are in the area at night. They randomly encounter the night-things on a roll of 6. PCs can track the night-things by sound with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception or Survival) check. The Tarnish map shows the night-things' future attacks: they attack one location per night and don't hit the same place twice. Unless the PCs intervene, each attack results in the grisly death of 1d3 locals inside the indicated house or workshop.

Although their attacks seem random, the night-things are actually pursuing a sinister purpose. For the past three nights, Kaple's ghost has sent them to places once belonging to his senior workers to kill those who killed him. The ghost's intended victims are, of course, long dead though, so Kaple's demented, vengeance-twisted mind is ordering the constructs to kill innocent people unconnected with his death.

TRACKING THE NIGHT-THINGS THE CLEVER WAY

The victims so far—Hazram Guilt, Storla Heink, Bres Murman, and Bolvar Happ—died at the locations shown on the Tarnish map.

In each case except Happ's, the night-things broke in through windows and killed everyone they found inside. Guilt and Heink were bachelors, but Murman had a wife who also was killed. Only Happ died in the street (an unhappy coincidence). The bodies have been buried, though Corpulent secured Guilt's corpse before it could be interred and still has it in his home.

A successful DC 13 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check picks the locked door of each home. All the windows are boarded up, requiring a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check to access. The interiors of all the houses are very bloody and show clear signs of great violence. No obvious clues can be found within the houses, but each has a small, weathered metal plaque set into the lintel above the door, depicting a waterwheel turning the moon. A successful DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check notices the plaque, but anyone who examines the doorway spots it automatically. A few quick questions around town identifies the plaque as a sign used long ago by a workhouse master called Kaple who died in a riot decades ago.

PCs asking for historical records are directed to the records room in the Moon's Grace Temple. A few hours of research there leads them to the correct records and enough information to piece together the details in the **Adventure Background** section above, involving Kaple, the workers' rebellion, and the location of Kaple's workhouse.

TRACKING THE NIGHT-THINGS THE OBVIOUS WAY

The **night-things** (see **Appendix**) clamber along gables, sewers, and watercourses in Lower Zobeck, sticking to the area shown on the Tarnish map in this adventure. PCs who stake out the workhouse in the evening notice the night-things leaving and can follow them with successful DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) checks, once they know what they're looking for. PCs who patrol the area at night might also stumble onto a group of night-things randomly.

PART 3: KAPLE'S WORKHOUSE

A sick and decayed building, its windows boarded up and its main entrance barred and locked with rusty padlocks. The outer double doors bear marks of violence.

Kaple developed a way to mechanically butcher animals and ran his workhouse with a small number of animated objects and human employees. Humans brought the animals into the outer workhouse and slaughtered them. Chains brought the carcasses to the main workhouse where a flensing machine stripped their flesh, fat, and bones, all gathered in vats below and distributed to outer workshops for rendering, packaging, and sale. The tower served as Kaple's office, though its interior floors were burned in the attack.

Kaple's was the only death. His machines were attacked, generally unsuccessfully, but many were bent or broken. Kaple himself met a more terrible end, falling into his own flensing machine (see **Area 7**).

All doors in the workhouse are wooden, possessing rusted iron latches and no locks unless noted otherwise.

The very building seems alive. Above the grinding, methodical thump and grate of machinery is another noise, the noise of something passing through the very foundations of this building.

Kaple's ghost is a **ghost**, adding the following ability:

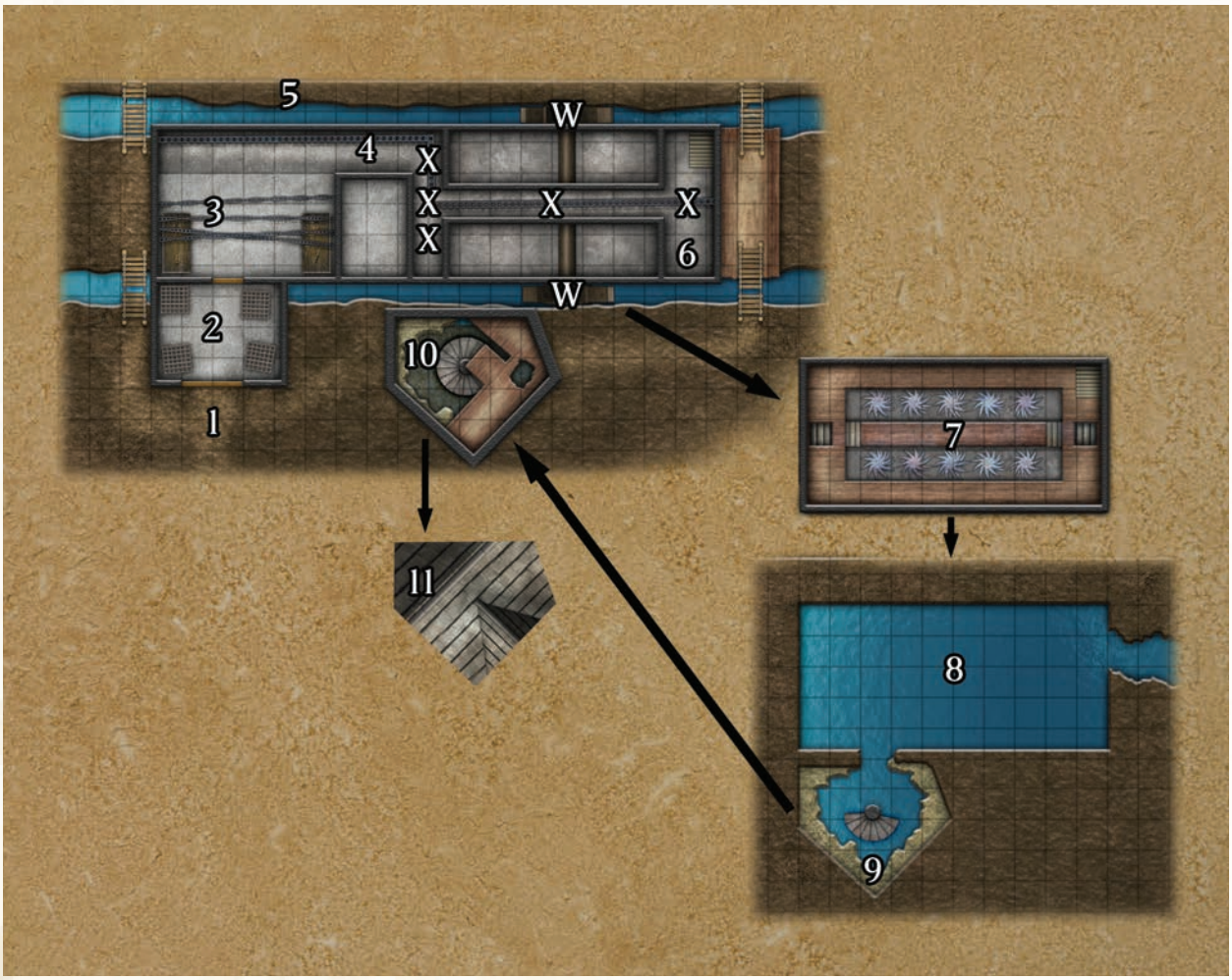
- ***Malevolence.*** Kaple has a potent bond with the workhouse. Once per round, the ghost can merge itself with an adjacent object in the workhouse. The object becomes an animated object of the appropriate size and type while Kaple remains merged with it. There may be additional effects depending on the object, as detailed in the adventure.

Descriptions within the workhouse assume that Kaple is aware of the PCs when they enter and switches on his machines. Kaple remains in a machine until it takes damage (even 1 damage is enough). When only the iron angel (see **Area 10**) remains, Kaple fights until he or the intruders are finished. Kaple's ghost is truly slain only when his bones are removed from the flensing machine (see **Area 7**) and properly buried or when the flensing machine itself is destroyed.

AREA 1: BARRED ENTRANCE

Planks of wood, clearly nailed up long ago, cover the outer doors, and rusting iron bars held in place by even rustier padlocks secure the entrance.

The padlocks are too rusty to successfully pick open, but they can be broken with a successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check. The wooden planks can be broken or torn loose with only a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check.



AREA 2: WORKROOM AND RUST

A large open space with a cobbled floor, this room is divided by a series of iron cages that probably once housed livestock. The clanking and grating of machinery can be heard from somewhere ahead.

This room was used to take delivery of stock.

AREA 3: SLAUGHTERHOUSE

This room has a high, vaulted ceiling, rising some 20 feet above you. It is clearly an old slaughterhouse. There are butcher blocks and racks of rusting knives and hooks, all coated in dust. Ahead, a conveyor chain covered in billhooks emerges through a high hole in the wall and continues into the corridor below, hanging just below the ceiling.

The conveyor chain carried meat from here to the areas beyond, but they serve another use now. PCs can easily avoid the hooks (which are about a foot long). Anyone who gets hung up on a hook is grappled (escape DC 15) and moves 10 feet per round along the chain to **Area 6**, taking 1d3 piercing damage at the start of their turn.

Grief has freed up the Caretaker, an old creation of Kaple's, to watch for intruders. The Caretaker, a **night-thing** (see **Appendix**), lurks in this chamber. Three **dust mephits** have also taken up residence, and while they aren't allied with the Caretaker or Kaple, they like the dancing hooks and would love to see someone hanging from them. The construct is like others in the workhouse, resembling an iron pig that moves clumsily on all fours but has huge arms like an ape.

During combat, the Caretaker attacks normally unless possessed by Kaple, in which case it tries to grapple opponents and hang them onto a hook. The mephits try to stay out of danger. They don't move from the dusty floor unless the PCs notice them. Once discovered, they fly up to the high roof. If attacked, they use their breath weapons. If the Caretaker is possessed by Kaple, the mephits use their breath weapons to assist his attacks, hoping to see someone get hung from a meat hook. They flee if reduced to 5 or fewer hit points.

AREA 4: LINKING CORRIDOR AND GRILL

Ahead is a short, dirty corridor with a metal grill near the ceiling, along which clanks the mechanical chain with hooks.

A 2-foot-square grill gives access to the slough beyond, and the night-things use it to leave the workhouse, climbing the wall outside.

AREA 5: MILLRACE AND SLOUGH

Next to the workhouse, a constant stream of water flows through underground, man-made channels.

Two underground streams drive the waterwheels in the workhouse. The current in the 15-foot-deep channels is strong, and PCs in the water are pushed 10 feet downstream at the start of their turn unless they make a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check. A creature drawn into a waterwheel (marked by *W* on the map) takes 3d6 bludgeoning damage at the start of its turn. It can move away from the waterwheel only with a successful DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. On a successful save, the creature must make an immediate DC 15 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to grab the edge of the millrace and haul itself out. Creatures that fail the second check are swept beyond the waterwheels and emerge 10 rounds later in the River Argent, next to a pier southwest of the Ragpicker's Guild.

The waterwheels can be destroyed: each has AC 15 and 35 hp. This effectively stops the flensing machine in **Area 7** but doesn't destroy it. (Kaple's ghost isn't laid to rest by this action.)

A 2-foot gap in the stone roof exits immediately above the grill in **Area 4**. A PC who climbs out of the mossy water channel by this route emerges in the street above.

AREA 6: FLIMSY UPPER FLOOR

This large chamber, built vertically across three levels, functioned as Kaple's main workroom. Carcasses were brought in by the hooks and workers threw them into the flensing machines on the floor below, which stripped flesh from bone.

The timber floors of this area are rotten, and only those spaces marked with an *X* on the map are solid. However, 8-inch-wide iron struts crisscross just under them. A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check spots the rotten floors, which collapse under 10 pounds or more of weight. Creatures stepping on rotten timber must make a successful DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or fall to the floor below. However, the locations of the struts can be deduced from above by the rust stains that have seeped through the rotten timber, and a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check correctly interprets the significance of the stains, thus avoiding a fall.

Machinery echoes loudly in the chamber. The first time the PCs enter while the machinery is running, they must make a successful DC 10 Constitution saving throw or be deafened for 1d2 minutes.



A broad, open space stretches ahead of you. From beneath the timber floor, the sound of grating machinery comes from a huge machine that has 12 open mouths facing upward, which clearly once accepted whatever fell in, but mercifully, the mouths lie to the side of a 5-foot-wide timber walkway, stretching ahead to a descending set of iron stairs. Next to the stairs is perched another strange iron construct. The hooks on the conveyor chain exit through a small opening, clearly designed to dislodge anything still attached.

Creatures hanging on hooks when they enter this room smash into the opening above and rip free, taking 2d6 slashing damage and falling 10 feet to the floor.

The chutes above the flensing machine (see **Area 7**) rise to floor-level here. PCs falling into a chute must make a successful DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or fall into the flensing machine.

The iron figure is a **night-thing** (see **Appendix**), set by Kaple as a guard. **Kaple's ghost** (see above) possesses the construct as soon as the PCs enter the room, but it remains motionless, hoping to lure the PCs onto the weak floor or goad them with metallic taunts that they are too cowardly to attack the great Kaple in his lair. During combat, he tries to push PCs into the chutes that feed the flensing machine, caring nothing about falling into the machine along with a victim.

AREA 7: FLENSING MOUTH AND GULLET

The floor houses two large, identical machines, each a whirring mass of blades contained in a metal sheath with funnel-like chutes that reach to the floor above.

Three **night-things** (see **Appendix**) attend the machine. One is possessed by **Kaple's ghost** (see above). They rush to attack but are careful to step only on the iron beams. The one possessed by Kaple's ghost tries to push PCs into the flensing machine, caring nothing about falling into the machine along with a victim.

Flensing Machine. The flensing machine was designed to strip flesh from bones. It consists of a mechanical conveyor that runs on chains through a machine of blades that slices the flesh from any living or dead thing that enters it, effectively de-boning the meat. Creatures falling into any of these areas must make a successful DC 15 Dexterity saving throw to avoid tumbling into the machine and taking 6d6 slashing damage before dropping via chutes into the water below.

One section of the machine is rusted shut and can be found with a successful DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check. It contains the mangled, crushed skeleton of Kaple. If the bones are removed and properly buried or the machine is destroyed, the ghost is laid to rest.

AREA 8: POOL

The bottom floor of the workhouse is concealed beneath rusty water. The top of a doorway is visible by the far wall.

The water is 5 feet deep and very dark. The doorway leads to **Area 9**.

Grief secreted his own guardians in this room, throwing the creatures the occasional rat, cat, or dog to keep them fed. Two **swarms of quippers** attack anything that falls into the water.

AREA 9: TOWER OF DERANGED ARTISTRY

Beyond the doorway is a tower, the bottom floor of which is flooded. Rusting chains swing in this open space, each ending in cruel, inhuman iron faces, one of which is much larger and has a gaping mouth. An open, spiral stair rises 90 feet into the heart of the tower until it reaches a black and ochre nest of rust and decay hanging from the roof. Platforms have been lashed beneath a metal corpse while the walls are covered in foul objects made of flesh and metal.

The lair of Grief is decorated with his work: strange sculptures made of metal with parts of bodies hung from them. The 5-foot-wide stair rises 90 feet to the upper platform (see **Area 10**).

Unless **Kaple's ghost** (see above) has already been slain, he and Grief (**gargoyle**) are in the tower along with an unusual guardian: the swinging **chain maw** (see **Appendix**) hanging among the other chains.

Treasure. Grief wears an iron band set with aquamarines (worth 600 gp). The sculptures have been stripped of anything valuable.

AREA 10: ANGEL OF RUST AND CORROSION

A crude platform near the top of the tower gives access to a hole onto the roof (see **Area 11**). A Medium or smaller creature can squeeze through the hole. This platform has a small forge burning and a large iron object hanging from the roof: a scrap-metal angel made from rusting iron flotsam of the city (**Angel of Rust and Corrosion**, see **Appendix**).

The angel doesn't move or attack unless it's possessed by Kaple. Although incomplete, the angel can clamber about the tower, but its wings are unfinished, so it can't fly. It tries to engage lone PCs, and it fights until it's destroyed.

AREA 11: ROOFTOP, THE BLACK BIRD

A steeply sloping gabled roof wreathed in ivy rises above the city streets. A small platform has been lashed just below the exit hole.

The ivy is decayed, and the gable is so steep that it requires a successful DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to move on it. At the apex of the roof, under the ivy, stands a weather vane that depicts a snake coiled around a raven. The raven is Kaple's only unfound treasure. The black coating masks its true value.

The snake, however, is a **clockwork serpent** (see **Appendix**) that Kaple set to guard his treasure. Fighting the serpent on the precipitous rooftop is very dangerous since the snake can anchor itself around the base of the weather vane and still strike. It fights until destroyed.

Treasure. Beneath the covering of grime and black enamel, the bird sculpture is covered in fine jewels. The black bird's true value is at GM's discretion but should be at least 1,000 gp and may be two or three times that much. The more valuable the bird is, however, the more that other people want it when word gets around that the PCs have it (as it's bound to do once they try to sell it). Most normal pawnbrokers refuse to buy it out of fear for its curse—which may be real or may be only legend. It could be an icon sought by a secretive and murderous cult, or it could simply be a valuable object of art that is a rich reward for the PCs' endeavors.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Assuming that Kaple's bones are recovered and properly buried or that the flensing machine was destroyed, then Kaple's ghost is laid to rest. The workhouse, without the ghost's animating force, will succumb to the elements and collapse, allowing the city to reclaim and repurpose the lot or sell it off. The citizens of the Tarnish can finally start to heal from the mark of Kaple, and depending on how visible the PCs were in dealing with the night-things and the workhouse, the effort is very much appreciated by the locals—even to the point of them marking the occasion with a yearly celebration. Many of the locals will push for reclaiming the workhouse and rebuilding it into a worker-owned operation, but without competent and inspirational leadership, this movement will be quickly buried by the city.

If they still live, Mister Corpulent and Master Doldrum are probably unhappy with the PCs, even seeking revenge, depending on how things ended—if only opportunistically since they are rather cowardly. However, they might have reached an agreement with the PCs and even seek out their assistance in the future.

If Kaple's Ghost Remains. Kaple still haunts the area, and the workhouse remains standing with Kaple's animating force. Though the murders cease, assuming the night-things were destroyed, Kaple's evil influence remains viable, simply waiting for new opportunities to seek his vengeance.

If Grief Lives. No matter the outcome with Kaple, Grief moves on, seeking only the means to continue creating his art.

THE FISH AND THE ROSE

There's a certain painting that needs liberating from Lord Greymark. Can the PCs pierce his vault and make it out in one piece with the prize?

This adventure is suitable for four PCs of 5th level.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The Fish and the Rose is a famous painting of unknown origin capable of divining the future and currently owned by Lord Greymark. The naga Syssysalai covets it for her growing art collection, but unlike the many others who desire the painting, she knows where it's located, thanks to information purchased from Jayzel. Unfortunately, the watch recently sent Syssysalai's regular acquisition experts—all but their leader Ziv—to the Blue House. Since Ziv's burglars aren't skilled enough for the mission and because Syssysalai is not pleased with their ineptitude, she has tasked Ziv with finding another group of discreet thieves to acquire the painting for her.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The PCs' reputations lead Ziv to believe them skillful and savvy enough to pull off Syssysalai's requested heist, so he approaches them with a business opportunity. If the PCs accept the job, Ziv provides them a very old and very rough map of a section of the Cartways leading to the area beneath Lord Greymark's mansion where his vault is located—and within, the painting.

As the watch has sealed off the Cartways and refuses to patrol them, the PCs will need to locate an appropriate entrance. Ziv tells them that an entrance, one that would be the most effective in getting them to Lord Greymark's vault, is believed to exist in Scaler's Alley in the Kobold Ghetto. To get there, the PCs have to survive Slinger's Ambush Gang and Scaler and his monitor lizards.

PCs must also deal with the hazards inherent to the Cartways. Currently, a barghest gang leader named Vralgor Szarn claims this section, and he and his gang hunt the area, as does an unaffiliated band of derro who recently made their way below Zobeck and encamped in an area just outside the PCs' target zone. To get to Greymark's vault, the PCs must evade or slay the mad derro and overcome a vast, man-made chasm to locate the tunnel entrance to the Greymark's estate. Once inside, they must skirt or disable the clockwork watchmen and traps protecting the vault area. After all this, the PCs must escape with the painting intact to collect their reward. Easy, easy money.

This adventure initially pits the PCs against some tough combat situations, like getting through Scaler's Alley alive. PCs can negotiate their way through some encounters, but there is certain to be combat. The adventure culminates in testing the party's skills against traps to acquire the desired treasure. In fact, acquiring the actual painting within the vault may be as easy as Ziv suggests, but first getting to it and then getting safely back to Ziv are the real issues.

(See **Chapter 5** for additional details on Jayzel, Scaler, Slinger and his Ambush Gang, and Syssysalai.)

PLOT HOOKS

The adventure assumes the PCs have a bit of a reputation as acquisition specialists. A cloaked Ziv approaches the PCs at a tavern, such as the Silk Scabbard, and says he has a job for them:

"I have this job for youse. Profitable, aye. Lucrative even. Benefactor's got coin and means, dig? And could offer youse continued work, so it'd be wise to deal. I'd do the job if'n I could, but the heat's on, dig? Nothin' I wants to chat about. But this—easy money, I says. Youse can handle it. Easy, easy money. Real easy."

He'll only disclose the details at an agreeable, discreet location—even the Scabbard has ears. The PCs know Ziv, by reputation if not personally, as a capable thief who leads a gang of cat burglars. No one knows his employer though—someone he only refers to as his "benefactor." Assuming the PCs agree to meet him (the GM or players choose where), he reveals nothing about his boss. He assures them that his benefactor is an art collector who will provide 1,000 gp for the acquisition of a certain painting, which he describes in detail

(see **The Fish and the Rose** sidebar). The painting is purported to be magical, capable of divining the future. Ziv won't reveal that fact, and PCs will only learn that if they ask other knowledgeable NPCs (such as art dealers, museum curators, or specialists in odd and obscure information) about it.

If the PCs accept the job, Ziv provides them with a rough Cartways map (for the GM to provide) and directs them to an entrance in Scaler's Alley. When they have the painting, he asks that they tell Beetle, a busboy at the Silk Scabbard, to have Ziv meet them. Ziv will only work out exchange details with them after the job.

PART 1: SCALER'S ALLEY

This adventure takes place in Zobeck's Kobold Ghetto and Cartways. The PCs' first stop should be Scaler's Alley in the Kobold Ghetto, where getting through the alley alive is a feat unto itself. From the alley, they can gain entrance to the Cartways, whereupon they can follow Ziv's map to Lord Greymark's vault to secure the painting.

Among the kobolds, Scaler's Alley is infamous as a very dangerous place. If the PCs haven't heard of it, they can easily find out about it by asking just about anyone. Most longtime residents of the city have heard of Scaler, a winged lizardfolk the height of a dwarf and likewise as wide, who has a reputation as a fighter of great skill and who makes his home in the alley—to which the locals have given his name. In short, Scaler's Alley is a place best avoided if you value your hide. Wise PCs, once they get past the slingers, will negotiate with Scaler rather than fight him, for he is quite powerful (every rumor reaffirms this).

If PCs put some effort into gathering information before approaching Scaler's Alley, they can learn any of the following points:

- Smoke covers the area, making it difficult to traverse the trap-riddled alley.
- Rumor says Slinger's Ambush Gang makes their home there.
- Scaler has some mean lizard pets.
- An old entrance to the Cartways lies at the back of the alley, supposedly hidden in Scaler's abode. It leads to the area under the mansions, where the wealthy keep their valuables in vaults.

ALLEY ENTRANCE

Shabby, dilapidated buildings mark your path through this part of the Kobold Ghetto. As you journey farther, you see several kobolds engrossed in a knife fight ahead of you. You step over a few drunken or drug-fogged kobolds as you skirt the fight and continue toward the smoky entrance to Scaler's Alley. As you near, the smell of burning lard and long-dead things assaults your senses. You also hear an occasional whistling, like that of steam passing through metal. Some of the smoke drifts toward the surrounding buildings, paragons of decay. The rising haze obscures your vision beyond 15 feet. The buildings' rooftops climb up to 40 feet above you and appear to be a murky mishmash of scavenged materials.

Scaler's Alley is shaped like an *L*. Its main stretch runs straight for 200 feet and then turns right, ending 80 feet later at Scaler's stone house. The street itself is 15 feet wide and surrounded by boarded-up, dilapidated, 40-foot-tall buildings, some of which hold squatters and wandering creatures (accessible entrances exist on the buildings' opposite faces).

You can place the alley anywhere in the Kobold Ghetto, though it should lie near the ghetto's northern wall.

If the PCs enter the alley, they encounter a few passed-out, vomit-covered kobold drunks lying outside the buildings (no farther than 20 feet into the alley). The kobolds are indeed harmless drunks and not rogues seeking to relieve the party of their money at an opportune time. Still, you can make the PCs wary by calling for Wisdom (Perception) checks as they enter the alley and advance through the fog.

THE FISH AND THE ROSE

This garish, 6-foot-by-5-foot painting depicts, of course, a fish and a rose. The fish, a silver flounder, rests in the center of a solid black velvet background, and the deep-red rose curls behind the fish. The rose's large flower rests at the paintings upper left corner. A heavy golden frame encases the painting and can't be removed.

The unsigned painting has resided in Zobeck for over a century, but no one has ever determined its creator (and people have tried). Still, it is quite famous for its ability to divine the future for its owner. The painting is so garish, however, that no owner of note has ever openly displayed it, no matter the prestige they might garner from owning it. (See also **The Fish and the Rose** in the **Appendix**.)

Slinger's Ambush Gang boarded up all the buildings' doors and windows to prevent their victims from escaping. The gang lies in ambush 60 feet in. PCs can break through a door with a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check. Should the PCs break into any buildings, you must decide what lurks within. The ambushers can get into the buildings through the windows on the backsides of the buildings, which are not boarded up.

While traveling the alley, a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check lets the PCs spot one or more pipes jutting from the alley floor in various spots. The pipes are emitting the foul haze and are the source of the whistling. While the smoke stinks and clings to the PCs, it does not have any other effect.

The greatest threats in the alley besides Slinger's Ambush Gang are its numerous traps (starting 20 feet into the alley and running the length of the main stretch). A variety of nastiness lurks hidden under the heavy, low-lying smoke and belching pipes and skeletons lying along the way, which PCs can trip over.

The best way to deal with this is for the GM to roll a d6 any time a PC moves. On a 1, roll another d6 and consult the table below to see what the PC encountered. Anytime a PC trips, roll another d6 to see if they encounter a hazard by falling. Smart PCs will put a sharp-eyed companion at the head of the line and follow in single file, to avoid such surprises. Flying PCs can, of course, bypass the traps, but they must deal with the slingers (see below) on the rooftops.

d6	Hazard	Effect
1-2	Pipe	DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check to avoid tripping and falling prone.
3	Spiked Pit Trap	DC 15 Dexterity check to avoid falling in and taking 1d6 bludgeoning damage plus 1d10 piercing damage.
4	Acid Splash Trap	4d6 acid damage or half the damage with a successful DC 14 Dexterity saving throw.
5	Skeleton	DC 15 Dexterity check to avoid tripping on an undead skeleton and "awakening" it.
6	Electricity Trap	3d10 lightning damage or half damage with a successful DC 16 Dexterity saving throw.

SLINGER'S AMBUSH GANG

The PCs stay fairly safe until they get about 60 feet into the alley. At that point, five members of Slinger's Ambush Gang (six **goblins**) attack from the rooftops with slings. They stand three on either side of the alley at 60 and 70 feet in. They have half-cover (+2 AC) from those below. The goblins don't suffer any smoke penalties when firing from above. Slinger keeps four gang members at this ambush point at all times, though the gang numbers 30 or more goblins in all. Two other goblins protect the area around Scaler's abode, should anyone make it through to test their mettle against Scaler himself. Few ever make it that far. **Slinger** (see **Chapter 5**) is not among the group protecting the alleyway unless you choose to include him—not a bad play if any of the PCs can fly.

The goblins attack relentlessly with their slings, their jobs being to keep the alley clear of riffraff. They never break morale because they know Slinger or Scaler will kill them if they fail to guard the alley.

SCALER'S ABODE

At the end of the alley's main road (200 feet), the street turns to the right and continues 80 feet where it ends in a stone structure. When the PCs look around the corner, read the following:

The air here is clear, so smoke no longer obscures your vision or clings to your legs—though the stench of it certainly does. Rocks of various sizes, trash, and bones clog this end of the alley. Rats scurry among the debris. About 80 feet ahead, you see a structure composed of uneven sections of stone. It looks shaky in places.

This part of Scaler's Alley is home to Scaler's pack of pet monitor lizards (five **giant lizards**). They help protect the alley and alert Scaler to intruders. Currently, three are hiding among the rocks. Two others reside in the stone structure with Scaler. Two goblins are also present on opposite rooftops 40 feet in.

It is possible for the lizards or the goblins to take note of the PCs entering the alley. The goblins don't alert Scaler but ready their slings. Any lizard that notices the PCs gives off a loud hiss. PCs who don't know about the lizards' association with Scaler may assume they are just warning the PCs away from their territory, but Scaler hears the alarm and responds to the intrusion, as do the slingers. If a battle breaks out, the lizards join in 1 round after **Scaler** (see **Chapter 5**).

As soon as he becomes aware of intruders in the alley, Scaler drinks a *potion of invisibility* and exits his

house. He spends one round surveying the situation to determine the most threatening enemy and then makes his way to that individual to attack.

If the PCs are losing and try to bribe him for passage, he'll stop attacking if they lay down their weapons and give him 500 gp to enter the Cartways. The PCs can try to talk down the price, but he won't go below 300 gp and an unspecified favor to be called in later.

If the fight turns against Scaler, he doesn't want to die. He really just wants to be left alone—and be feared. Before any fatal blow is delivered, he yells out to the PCs (in Draconic) that he'll help them if they let him live. He will remove the rock covering the Cartways to provide them entrance, and he may strike a deal to allow them entry through his alley in the future. He can also steer them toward alternative exits that will allow them to bring the recovered painting to the surface, should any PC think of asking about that.

Developments. The party's best bet is to negotiate with Scaler. Mainly, he just wants to keep his reputation as a badass intact. A promise from the PCs to boast about his fighting prowess, especially from a bard or similar PC, might be enough, but likely he'll want more.

INSIDE SCALER'S ABODE

If the PCs haven't yet encountered Scaler and the other two pet lizards, then they are inside Scaler's abode. The lizards usually rest on the boulders scattered within the one-room house.

An open archway leads into the stone structure. Inside is a single room, 15 feet wide and 30 feet long. A sleeping pallet consisting of various sewn-together animal pelts rests on the earthen floor. The room's side and back walls are actually the walls of adjoining buildings that this area's roof has been attached to in a somewhat haphazard manner. A massive boulder rests in the middle of the room. Additional boulders rest along the wall at each side of the room, making four in all.

The center boulder covers the Cartways entrance that the PCs are seeking. Moving the 5-foot-wide, 5-foot-tall boulder takes a successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check. Using a stout lever provides a +2 bonus on the check. If Scaler shows PCs the "trick" to shifting the boulder, they get advantage on this check.

The entrance itself is only 3 feet in diameter, so the painting won't fit through it. If players don't comment on this, anyone with passive Perception 15 or higher realizes it.

The other rocks conceal holes where Scaler hides his food and wealth. They can be shifted with successful DC 18 Strength (Athletics) checks.

Treasure. The rock along the northern wall hides a chest containing 1,500 gp; the southern one, upon which the lizards usually rest, holds a bag of 36 gems totaling 2,500 gp and two *potions of superior healing*; the western boulder hides a stash of beetle jerky, cured ham, cheap wine, and moldy bread and cheese.

PART 2: IN THE CARTWAYS

Once the PCs deal with Scaler, they gain access to the Cartways—and Lord Greymark's vault.

DUERGAR DOWNS

The PCs should follow Ziv's sketchy map for about an hour. As they near the vault, have them note the tunnel is coming to an open area. Depending on how they approach the opening and what kind of light source they have, the following text should be adjusted to suit the situation. The duergars' passive Perception is only 10, so PCs should have an easy time creeping up on them if they're being stealthy. Otherwise, the duergar automatically notice them approaching and yell a warning to their companions.

The tunnel opens into a larger section of the Cartways, an area lying just under Zobeck's richer citizens—if the map is correct. Looking out from the tunnel, you see the Cartways all right, but they are inhabited. Several dwarves with ashen gray skin and filthy white hair are moving about a campsite ahead. Behind them, you can see that a massive chasm blocks your passage.

The duergar and their leader staked out this section of the Cartways just over three days ago. So far, the barghests following Vralgor have noted them, but they haven't pushed the humanoids along or hunted them as food. That may soon change though, especially if the duergar capture more victims. They currently have a young girl (Gillian Logersmann, 13, daughter of an upper-class family from one of the nearby mansions) tied up under their cleric's bedding. The cleric found her the previous evening, exploring the Cartways with some friends, and captured her. The others escaped. The duergar plan to sell her or put her to work as a mess hall slave, but they would like at least three more captives before quitting the area. They're waiting for others to come in search of the missing girl.

If the PCs rescue the girl, she becomes a complication in their mission to retrieve the painting. Her parents will



give the PCs a 200-gp reward for her safe return though, and she can lead the PCs to another route out of the Cartways, allowing them to get the painting out.

Creatures. There are five **duergar** and a **duergar deep cleric** (see **Appendix**) in the encampment. They have no treasure except the girl.

If the duergar see the PCs coming, they use their Invisibility and move to surround them. Once in position, they Enlarge and attack. Any duergar reduced to 6 or fewer hit points flees from the fight.

CHASM CROSSING

The path ends at a chasm, spanning the passage and stretching for 200 feet. It abuts the wall leading to Lord Greymark's vault, leaving no ledge at all on the other side—just a sheer drop. The chasm does not appear on the map Ziv provided.

Lord Greymark had the chasm magically excavated to protect what he felt was a weak spot in his vault's defenses. The chasm is 60 feet deep and 35 feet wide. Its walls are sheer, requiring a successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check to climb. If someone shines light into its depths, the PCs can see that rubble, large rocks, and several skeletons (both animal and humanoid) lie below. If the PCs scan the chasm wall under the vault for its entire length, they note a crevice that may be large enough for a Medium-sized creature to squeeze through.

Two **giant scorpions** lurk in the rock-strewn basin. They sometimes climb through the crevice in the natural cavern (see **Area 1**), though they make their home in the chasm. These cliff-dwelling scorpions have a climb speed of 20 feet, in addition to the giant scorpion's normal speed.

Treasure. If PCs search the six humanoid skeletons in the crevice, they find three *+1 arrows*, a *+1 dagger*, and a total of 135 gp in mixed coins and gems. One of the skeletons is missing a finger. If they search the rubble, a successful DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check finds the finger bone still bearing a *ring of jumping*.

PART 3: LORD GREYMARK'S VAULT

The crevice in the chasm wall connects to Lord Greymark's vault, near the would-be entrance. PCs may attempt to widen the crevice to allow individuals wearing heavy armor a means to pass through it. They need to inflict 25 damage against the wall to enlarge the opening. This also makes noise, which echoes down the Cartways and has a 50% chance of attracting the clockwork hounds in the vault area (see **Area 3**).

AREA 1: NATURAL CAVERN

When PCs emerge from the crevice, read the following:

The crevice opens into a twisting, uphill natural cavern, which appears empty except for the corpse of a dwarf, lying near the top. As no stench permeates the air, the body seems fairly fresh.

The PCs must succeed DC 13 Strength (Athletics) checks each round to climb to the entrance of **Area 2**.

The corpse is that of one of the duergar slavers. Any PC with proficiency in Medicine can spot that the duergar died from deep slashing wounds, which scorpions can't inflict. (It was killed by the clockwork hounds.) The corpse has nothing of value.

AREA 2: MAN-MADE CORRIDORS

Beyond the cavern, you notice a man-made corridor stretching 20 feet to the north before turning right. Splotches of dried blood are spattered on the stone floor, and they continue around the corner.

Creatures. If they heard the PCs enlarging the opening, three **clockwork hounds** (see *Tome of Beasts*) wait around the corner to deal with any intruders. Otherwise, they are at random points in the corridor. Four additional hounds wait up ahead at the doors leading to **Area 3**. If any of their fellows sound an alarm, they join the other guards in fighting off the PCs.

AREA 3: VAULT ENTRANCE

If the four **clockwork hounds** (see *Tome of Beasts*) here did not get a chance to aid the other hounds, they wait beside the doors. Read the following:

Four clockwork hounds rest on opposite sides of double iron doors. As soon as you can clearly see them, they move to attack.

The standard 2-inch-thick iron doors have the Greymark coat of arms etched on them. A successful DC 18 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check opens the locked doors. Alternatively, they can be demolished (AC 18; 100 hp; immune to all but bludgeoning and force damage).

From this point forward, traps become the PCs' main concern.

Read the following when the doors are opened:

The doors open to a 20-foot-by-20-foot foyer lit with magical torches. Portraits, likely of the Greymark family, hang on the wall, and two plush reading chairs with side tables rest atop an expensive rug on the western side of the room. A mural of a beautiful, raven-haired woman, lying suggestively in bed with pieces of the bed's sheet strategically covering her body, rests on the eastern wall. Magical sconces illuminate her.

If the PCs are familiar with **Jayzel** (see **Chapter 5**), Zobeck's resident bard and information broker, they recognize a younger (probably 18-year-old) Jayzel in the mural with a successful DC 13 Intelligence check. Jayzel has some shared history with Lord Greymark, dating back over a decade—one reason she knew the painting's location.

If the PCs search the mural, a successful DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check discovers the outline of a secret door within the mural's sheets and a small keyhole in the woman's right eye. The door is a fake door and opens to a blank wall. It is also part of a trap, which is triggered if the secret door is opened past a 90-degree angle (perpendicular to the wall).

Gelatinous Pit Trap. A 10-foot-by-20-foot section of floor falls away to a pit that takes up the eastern half of the room. The pit appears to be filled with dark, scum-covered water 10 feet below the level of the floor. Any creature standing in the area when the pit opens must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or fall 10 feet into a **gelatinous cube**. Creatures failing the save are automatically engulfed.

If anyone falls in, nearby PCs who didn't fall notice the lack of a splash.

A successful DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check finds the secret door in the northern wall that leads to **Area 4**, behind several portraits of stoic-looking men.

AREA 4: FAKE GALLERY

The real secret door from **Area 3** opens up into this fake gallery, meaning that all the paintings are copies. Lord Greymark is an excellent forger. Read the following:

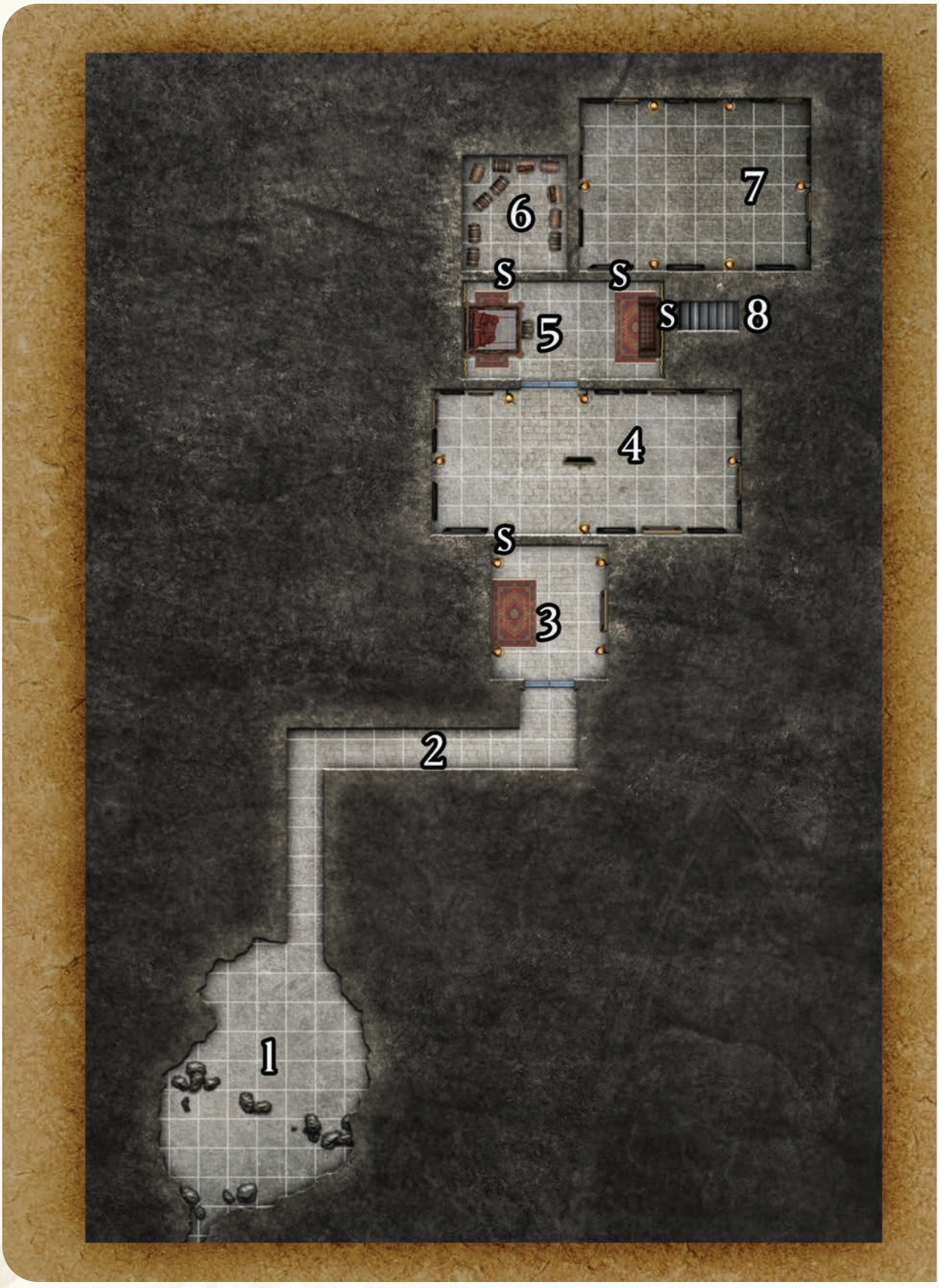
Beautiful paintings from various regions hang on the walls of this room, which is lit by magical sconces. In the center of the room rests a painting on a golden easel. The painting faces north, toward the double iron doors. No furniture is present, just painting after painting.

Even though the 20 paintings here are all copies, including the *Fish and the Rose*, which is the painting on the center stand, they still hold value, and only a DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check would identify them as fakes. Any roll below that, and the PCs believe each painting is worth at least 500 gp. If sold as forgeries, they would still fetch 100–150 gp each.

When the PCs check out the stand, use the description of the *Fish and the Rose* from the sidebar of the same name. If they decide to cast *detect magic* on the painting, it reads as magical, as Lord Greymark has *arcanist's magic aura* cast on it.

The doors leading to **Area 5** are not locked or trapped.

Glyph of Warding. The easel the painting rests on is trapped though (and what self-respecting art thief worth his salt wouldn't expect it to be)? A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check discovers the *glyph of warding*. Lifting the painting from the easel triggers an *acid arrow* spell (+6 to hit, 3rd level).


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AREA 5: SECRET BEDROOM

A four-poster of mahogany rests against the western wall, a large chest at its foot. There's a lounging couch along the eastern wall, a book atop its side table. Rich red tapestries cover the walls.

Lord Greymark sometimes brings companions to this room for privacy. The bed looks very much like the one depicted in the mural in **Area 3**.

The chest contains fine linens (worth 150 gp) and is unlocked. The book on the table, entitled *The Erotic Tales of Zobeck, Vol. 4*, by Theosis Vlod, is quite rare and would bring 200 gp from the right collector.

The tapestries conceal two secret doors along the northern wall and one on the eastern wall. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check discovers either the one to **Area 6** or the one to **Area 8**. Neither is locked or trapped. A successful DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check is required to discover the secret door leading to **Area 7** (the vault). A successful DC 25 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check unlocks the vault door. Failing the check by 5 or more triggers an audible *alarm* spell and guards from the mansion (see **Area 8**) make their way here.

AREA 6: REAL GALLERY

This gallery looks just like the fake gallery (see **Area 4**).

Glyph of Warding. The real *Fish and the Rose* painting's stand is also trapped with a *glyph of warding*. A successful DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check discovers the trap. Lifting the painting from the easel triggers an *acid arrow* spell (+8 to hit, 5th level).

AREA 7: VAULT

Greymark's treasure vault, which does indeed store his fortune, awaits here, but its contents are beyond the scope of this adventure. If PCs spot the well-hidden secret door, it should prove very difficult (if not impossible) for them to get through. The knowledge of the vault's existence should whet their appetites for a future adventure when they have a chance to succeed. Otherwise, the four **clockwork mantises** (see *Tome of Beasts 2*) will give them a hard time.

AREA 8: STAIRS TO THE GREYMARK MANSION

A set of stairs leads 30 feet up to an iron door.

An audible *alarm* spell guards this door. If it's opened, eight guards (**thugs**) rush the PCs from the guard room across the hall, and two more rush in from nearby corridors every round. The PCs' best bet is to flee. Greymark's mansion is not detailed in the adventure.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

If the PCs turn the undamaged painting over to Ziv, he eventually offers them more work. Ziv continues as Syssysalai's go-between until she comes to trust that the PCs can keep her secrets: a trust they can gain by performing four or more discreet jobs for her and keeping the details to themselves. When that day comes, Syssysalai arranges a meeting with the PCs, feeds Ziv to some of her pets, and introduces herself. She chooses a favorite from among the party as her liaison and sets them up to spearhead her art-theft operations. (She might also have some assassination work available.)

Successfully stealing the painting from Lord Greymark certainly makes him an enemy should he uncover the thieves' identities—unless he planned it all to test their mettle and to learn something of Ziv's mysterious "benefactor" or to seek competent thieves for his own plans. If the PCs managed to take anything from his vault though, he seeks their deaths without hesitation or rest.

If other gangs learn of the PCs' heist, they will be out for blood. Gangs dislike competition and the unnecessary attention such a high-profile caper generates. A cut of the profits appeases them, of course. If the PCs don't at least grease Ziv's palm, he very likely will squeal on them to the gangs just to minimize competition. He doesn't want to be replaced as Syssysalai's right-hand, after all.

It's possible the PCs may choose to keep the painting for themselves. If so, they become targets, as others seek to seize the painting for their own ends. The PCs likely don't have a vault of their own to safeguard it. Syssysalai also sends assassins after them for betraying her. And if that fails, she becomes an implacable enemy and keeps trying.

A ROSE BY ANY OTHER NAME

There's a big deal going down between the Mouse Kingdom and the Winter Court—a very rare rose is changing hands, and the party is hired to steal it. Will the PCs succeed in their daring heist or fall prey to one of the many factions after the prize?

This adventure is suitable for four PCs of 6th level.

INSPIRATION AS PREPARATION

By their nature, heist stories are supposed to move quickly. In order to keep a breezy pace, consider the following options:

- In response to a situation or complication, a player can spend a point of inspiration to introduce a flashback in which they explain how they and their crew overcame or mitigated the situation or complication during the two days they had to prepare for the job. If their explanation requires specific equipment or expenditures of coin or limited-use features, they must make the appropriate adjustments to their character sheets. For example, if an alliumite (see *Creature Codex*) makes an appearance as the PCs arrive Hommal's Botanical Rooftop, a PC could spend a point of inspiration to flash back to the previous day when they approached Hommal, and through a brief negotiation, paid him 100 gp to instruct the alliumites to ignore the PCs. The flashback-initiating PC adjusts their coin on their character sheet, and the game returns to the present as the alliumites just continue about their business.
- It is unlikely the PCs will get a chance to rest once the job is in motion. Consider allowing them to spend a point of inspiration to gain the benefits of taking a short rest.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The imbria rose, better known as Ludomir's Cerulean Rose, is fabled to be an immortal flower grown by the Moonlit King as a gift for his wife, the Queen of Night and Magic. When the Moonlit King lost his wife's favor, the location of the flower's sole rose bush was slowly lost to his reveries.

Agents of the Mouse King discovered the location of the rose on the island of Shibai where a simple peasant family living on Mount Erbai had been quietly tending to it for centuries, treating its care as a sacred duty. The agents secretly took several cuttings from the bush and managed to nurture a single one during the plant's journey of almost 4,000 miles to the Free City of Zobeck.

The Mouse King's right hand, Yiri Tepeck is soon to meet with Ganwys Fiolette, a representative of His Excellency Glaninin Thelamandrine, Ambassador-in-Extraordinary of the Winter Court, to trade the rose cutting for a favor from the Winter Court. The exchange will occur on Hommal's Botanical Rooftop two days hence.

The purpose and time of the exchange have become an open secret in Zobeck's criminal underworld, and the impending event is the subject of much interest.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The ambassador of the Winter Court is hardly the only figure in Zobeck that is interested in the rose. The PCs, as agents of one of the many other criminal organizations or power groups in the city, will procure the rose cutting for their principal by whatever means they choose.

Once the PCs have the rose in hand and are away from the botanical garden, agents of Akyishigal, disguised as agents of the PCs' employer, will attack them in order to steal the rose and leave the PCs out to hang. At or around the same time, the identities of the PCs involved in the heist will be leaked in order to turn the attention of the Mouse Kingdom and Embassy of the Winter Court in their direction and away from the true culprit behind the crime.

PLOT HOOKS

There are numerous groups that might hire the PCs to steal the rose for them. A few of them, and their reasons for doing so, follow:

- Ersebet Cemilla, leader of the Spyglass Guild, hires the PCs through her proxy, Dieter Zymuss, who claims to work for a wharf-side gang called the Red Light Razors. Like the Mouse King, she will trade the rose to the ambassador of the Winter Court for a favor.
- Jhoram the Money Changer hires the PCs on behalf of the Red Mask. The leader of the Redcloaks intends to gift the valuable bloom to Mammon in order to gain the archdevil's favor.
- Nesbit, a member of the Blue Barbers of Wharf Street, hires the PCs to steal the rose. Nesbit is an adherent of the Moonlit King and intends to find a way to return the rose directly to his patron.

Each of the principals will pay 1,000 gp per character to have the job done. A successful Charisma (Persuasion) check during the negotiations can increase the pay to 1,500 gp per character.

WHAT IS KNOWN

The PCs will likely want to find out a few things about the exchange. The person that contracts them to steal the rose lets them know the following:

- The exchange will occur at Hommal's Botanical Rooftop at high sun (noon) the day after next.
- The exchange is occurring between the Mouse Kingdom and the Winter Court's embassy.
- The imbria rose is a valuable rose with brilliant blue petals. What its magical properties are, if any, are unknown.
- The Mouse King's delegation will be led by Yiri, and Kaytha will provide magical support.
- Ganwys is leading the Winter Court's delegation.
- Astarie of the Winter Court delegation has been talking about an exchange that is soon to occur. He can be found in Lower Zobeck most nights.
- Hommal has been letting criminals use his rooftop as a neutral meeting place for years.

PERSONALITIES

The following NPCs and factions are likely to come into play during this adventure.

HOMMAL'S BOTANICAL ROOFTOP STAFF

Hommal Agic. Hommal (N human **commoner**) feels he has been bullied by Zobeck's underworld for too long. In conversation, he seems agreeable and self-effacing, but he will not allow anyone access to the rooftop without being convinced or compensated.

He can be convinced to allow the PCs access to the rooftop with a DC 15 Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion) check. The DC of the Charisma (Persuasion) check is reduced by 2 for each 50 gp he is offered per character that requires access. If a Charisma (Intimidation) check fails by 5 or more, Hommal is offended and sends a message to both the Mouse King and Winter's Kiss to inform them of the potential trouble. Regardless of its success or failure, if the PCs intimidate Hommal, he will tell all he knows about them when asked by representatives for the Mouse King or Winter Court after the rose has been stolen.

If the PCs convince Hommal they are part of the Winter Court, which can be done with a DC 10 Charisma (Deception) check, he will allow them free access to secure the rooftop. Hommal is terrified of the shadow fey and has no desire to set a foot wrong with them.

Tork, Giantsweeper, Hurdek, and Linda. These four **kobolds** are the rooftop's gardeners. When meetings and private parties are being held on the rooftop, they retreat to their lair at **Area 7** where they rest and smoke a fragrant mixture of mildly narcotic leaves and blossoms.

The kobolds are friendly but know little. If visited in their lair, they will happily share their hookah with guests, especially if the guests have food to share.

WINTER COURT DELEGATION

The delegation of shadow fey consists of its leader, Ganwys Fiolette, her guard Falwyn, and four other associates, all of whom are cloaked, hooded, and masked—Astarie, Illia, Prousd, and Zillippe.

Ganwys Fiolette. Ganwys (LE **shadow fey enchantress**, see *Tome of Beasts*) is reputed to be as cold-hearted and ruthless as she is chillingly beautiful. During the exchange, she will not negotiate with the PCs or anyone else. She exudes an aura of impatience and frustration at her task, mostly caused by the bright sunlight that she and her people are sensitive to.

Ganwys is impressed by confidence and audacity. If the heist is pulled off in a particularly loud or flashy fashion and neither she or her associates comes to any physical harm during it, she may seek out the perpetrators for future work—or to take one or more as a lover if they are both charming and intelligent.



Ganwys craves intimate contact with mortals and the warmth it brings her. She can be charmed by any humanoid with a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana, History, or Nature) or Charisma (Persuasion) check. If she then fails a Wisdom (Insight) check contested by her target's Charisma check, she will invite them to her secret apartment in the Collegium District for further interaction. At her apartment, she may willingly submit to being bound as part of a romantic congress with a DC 20 Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) check.

If violence seems imminent, she casts *greater invisibility* and orders her people to observe and only take action in defense of themselves or her.

If a PC has spent an hour or more in close contact with Ganwys and has access to her belongings at her apartment, they have advantage on Charisma (Performance) checks and Charisma (disguise kit) checks while impersonating her. If bound and gagged or otherwise subdued at her apartment, Ganwys will not appear again in this adventure, but she will seek the PCs out for ironic vengeance at a future date. If she is killed, Ambassador Glaninin Thelamandrine will spare no expense to find her killer.

Falwyn. Falwyn (NE **shadow fey guardian**, see *Tome of Beasts*) is completely devoted to Ganwys and will not willingly move more than 10 feet from her side, preferring to remain within 5 feet if possible. He follows Ganwys's orders to the letter, unless doing so is likely to see her harmed. He cannot be negotiated with.

Astarie, Illia, Prousd, and Zillippe. These four **shadow fey** (see *Tome of Beasts*) servants serve at Ganwys's whim.

Astarie and Illia enjoy drinking among the common people of Zobeck. Astarie has a weakness for dwarven mead while Illia favors strong mint liquor. On any given evening, one or both can be found at a tavern in Lower Zobeck with a DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check. If they are drinking, the following information can be learned from them with a successful DC 13 Charisma (Persuasion) check:

- The shadow fey delegation will arrive at the rooftop a few minutes before high sun.
- Except for their leader, they will all be wearing black cloaks, hoods, and masks.
- Unless one of the shadow fey is injured or threatened by the Mouse King's delegation, they are unlikely to be ordered to attack.
- The exchange on the rooftop is expected to take only a few minutes.

With a DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check, an additional piece of information can be uncovered:

- Ganwys is fascinated by humans and sometimes invites particularly charming or clever ones to visit her in her quarters. From dusk through to midnight, she can often be found in Arcane Square in the Collegium District.

Prousd and Zillippe are romantically involved. If one of them loses more than half their hit points, the other will offer to let the attacker go with no pursuit if they cease their assault.

MOUSE KING'S DELEGATION

The Mouse King's representatives in the exchange consist of Yiri, the Mouse King's right hand, his kobold collaborators, and some muscle.

Yiri Tepeck. Yiri (NE human **bandit lord**, see *Tome of Beasts* and see also **Chapter 5** for additional details on Yiri and on the Mouse Kingdom) is undyingly loyal to the Mouse King and will not negotiate or deviate from his task.

Discovering where Yiri lives requires a DC 23 Intelligence (Investigation) check. Failure by 5 or more results in Yiri becoming aware that the PCs are looking for him, and after the exchange, he will seek them out to determine what they want.

If Yiri is killed, the Mouse King will spend a month seeking out the killer before replacing him with Kaytha.

Smallhands. This **swolbold** (see *Creature Codex*) is carrying the rose. He both idolizes and is jealous of Yiri, and he follows his commands to the letter.

Kaytha. This **kobold wizard** (see *Creature Codex*) despises Yiri and covets his position as the Mouse King's right hand. She is responsible for assembling the Mouse King's delegation for the exchange.

If things turn violent and there are no witnesses other than the PCs, Kaytha will attack Yiri instead of other targets. She doesn't care what happens to the other members of her delegation.

If negotiated with, which requires a successful DC 13 Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) check that involves groveling and a promise to help her kill Yiri, Kaytha will agree to replace some of the delegation's thugs with the PCs.

Barrett, Dietrich, Sondreik, Fabok, Brunn, Tasso, and Niborg. The muscle (all NE human **thugs**) are there to look imposing and hit things, not to talk, so there is limited ability to negotiate with them. If violence erupts, they swarm the softest-appearing target and hit it until it falls over, and then they move to a different target.

THE JOB SITE

This section details the interactive aspects of each area of Hommal's Botanical Rooftop. (See **Chapter 4** for maps and additional details on Hommal's Botanical Rooftop.) The numbered areas conform to the numbering on the maps in **Chapter 4**. If a numbered area isn't included here, it is because there isn't anything immediately interactive about it, but the PCs can and should feel free to add whatever they feel they need to them to assist in their theft of the rose.

The complication section includes optional encounters to include if the PCs seem to be having an easy time.

STORE FRONTS

The workshops and storefronts occupying the bottom floor of the building don't offer much in the way of hiding space, but the PCs can pillage enough material to create any set of artisan's tools, a set of cook's utensils, or a set of thieves' tools.

Complication. The delegation from the Winter Court leaves a **shadow fey** (see *Tome of Beasts*) and one or two **hounds of the night** (see *Tome of Beasts*) outside the bottom floor of the building to watch for outside interference.

AREA 1–2: GARDEN TENEMENT

The second floor of the building is divided into living quarters and sleeping areas. These quarters have 10-foot ceilings and offer no direct access to the rooftop, though a PC can use the exterior windows to climb to the rooftop with a DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check.

Once the rose has been procured, it could be thrown from the rooftop and caught in a net wielded by a PC in one of these rooms with a DC 13 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check, but if the result is lower than 16, the plant is caught but is unpotted in the process. It takes 1 minute, a pot, and 5 pounds of soil to repot the plant, which must be done within 10 minutes of it being unpotted if it is to survive.

Complication. The room the PCs choose is occupied. The resident must be convinced with a DC 13 Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion) check, bribed with 25 gp or more, or otherwise subdued before the PCs can use the room.

AREAS 3–4: GARDEN TENEMENT

The stairs running from the alley between the workshops and storefronts all the way to the rooftop garden is narrow enough that users must travel single-file, and it serves as a potential bottleneck. On the staircase hall and the rooftop entrance, multiple PCs can deal with the creatures on the stairs one at a time while having cover against ranged attacks from the other creatures on the stairs.

AREA 5: BELLADONNA HOUSE

The thick foliage of this area grants advantage to creatures hiding inside.

Each glass panel used to wall in the greenhouse has AC 13 and 10 hp.

If one of the PCs has poisoner's kit proficiency and a kit on hand, they can pay 100 gp to purchase enough belladonna berries to make two doses of assassin's blood poison. It takes two hours to produce the poison in such a manner. They can pay the owner an additional 100 gp to allow them to add the poison to the teapot he serves the delegations' leaders from.

AREA 6: GOLD POND

A PC can lay prone in the water using a reed to breathe for an indefinite period of time. PCs hiding in the pond can't be detected unless the creature looking for them climbs into it as part of an active search.

AREA 7: GARDENER'S DEN

The kobold gardeners are smoking and resting in this room during the exchange. The smoke produced by the hookah lightly obscures the room.

If a PC that enters the area is friendly toward the kobolds, they won't raise any alarms or try to evict them.

Complication. A creature that spends 10 minutes or more in the room must make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned by the smoke for 1 hour. A creature poisoned by the smoke can make a new saving throw once it has been out of the smoke for 10 minutes, overcoming the condition on a success. If combat occurs, it can make a new saving throw at the end of each of its turns.

AREA 8: STORAGE ROOM

If the PCs need to repot the rose or want to try to fool the delegates by stealing the plant and replacing it with a fake, everything they need can be found here.

AREA 9: TWISTED OAK

If a PC succeeds on a DC 17 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check, they can run along the tree and leap across through an open window of the building across the street, assuming they have set it up for such an event. If they set up the area across the street, use the details for **Area 1** and **Area 2**.

AREA 10: REQUIEM HOUSE

A search of the fireplace in this area, along with a successful DC 17 Intelligence (Investigation) check, uncovers two doses of requiem clay (see *Midgard Worldbook*) that were hidden by Tork two weeks ago and subsequently forgotten.

AREA 11: VINEYARD

The vines are so thick and wild in this area that a PC can move among the arbors at regular speed and make Dexterity (Stealth) checks without disadvantage. Small weapons and pieces of equipment can be stashed among the vines that grow down the exterior of the building in this area.

AREA 12: GARDEN'S EDGE

The PCs can hide in the rain barrels standing in this area. If they do so, a creature seeking them must make an Intelligence (Investigation) check contested by the PC's Dexterity (Stealth) check. Entering and exiting a barrel uses a creature's movement.

Small weapons and pieces of equipment can be stashed among the vines edging this area.

A creature that uses the vines to climb down the building and chooses to fall the remaining 25 feet to the ground can make a DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check, taking half damage and landing on their feet on a success.

AREA 13: TEA KITCHEN

This area is where the exchange is intended to take place. As the exchange starts, events occur as follows:

- The delegation from the Winter Court arrives first, approximately 10 minutes before high sun (noon), and sets up on the northern side of the area.
- The Mouse King's delegation arrives at the agreed-upon time and sets up on the southern side of the area.
- The swolbold, Smallhands, places the rose on the centermost table before stepping a few feet south.
- The leaders meet in the center where they sip the tea Hommal serves them and exchange a few pleasantries. Hommal then takes up a position near the fireplace and plays his lute.
- Once Yiri finishes his wine, he stands and leaves with his retinue.
- The shadow fey wait approximately 5 minutes and then leave.

- Falwyn, Ganwys's guard, gathers the plant before heading for the stairs.
- The rose is present at the site for approximately 15 minutes.
- Once the rose leaves the site, Falwyn remains in the center of the group of shadow fey and should never be more than 5 feet away from at least one of them.

If a visible PC enters this area, roll initiative. The delegates try to evict the interloper peacefully, only attacking if attacked first.

If the rose moves seemingly of its own accord, roll initiative. Both sides of the exchange prioritize keeping the plant safe and on site over attacking each other.

Once one member of the delegations realizes the rose has been stolen, they alert all the others. The members of the Mouse King's delegation scramble to follow the thief or to find out where the plant has gone, while the shadow fey delegation is told to remain in place in the room by Ganwys. The shadow fey remain in the location for 1 hour before leaving, disgusted by the other delegation's incompetence.

Once the Mouse King's delegation discovers where the rose has gone or who took it, they will take any action necessary, up to and including killing, to retrieve it.

THE TWIST

Once the PCs have the rose in hand and are at least five blocks from the botanical garden, a team of Akyishigal cultists that has been keeping tabs on the operation attacks them, intending to steal the flower for their demon lord patron, who has a grudge against the Queen of Night and Magic. The cultists are either dressed inconspicuously or are wearing recognizable badges or uniforms of whichever organization hired the PCs to steal the plant.

Akyishigal's agents consist of the following:

- Franzen Ungerik (CE human **war priest**, see *Creature Codex*, who has already cast a 4th-level *divination* and a 3rd-level *clairvoyance*, which replaced *mass cure wounds*)
- One **spawn of Akyishigal** (*Tome of Beasts* p. 83)
- Two **cult fanatics**
- Six **cultists**

The demon lord's agents won't hesitate to kill, but their primary intent is to grab the plant, pass it to Franzen, and run interference, so he can escape with it. The battle likely occurs on the city streets, and the attackers are not concerned about collateral damage to townsfolk or buildings.

Whether or not the PCs manage to keep the rose, other agents of Akyishigal start spreading rumors that they are the parties responsible for the theft of the plant.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

If the PCs defeat Akyishigal's agents and retain the imbria rose, they pass it along to their employer and get paid the agreed upon sum. If they don't lay low for a while, preferably in a safehouse or outside Zobeck, they can expect to encounter the Mouse King's agents, possibly so they can be escorted to the Mouse King and explain the situation in person. If this occurs, the PCs will be allowed to keep their lives in exchange for a heartfelt apology and the agreement to do a job for the king at a time and place of his choosing.

For their part, the shadow fey embassy blames the Mouse King for the loss, making relations chilly between the two local powers. If the theft was stylish or audacious, Ganwys may seek out the PCs to sate her curiosity about them. If she is impressed, they may find offers of work or a personal nature are extended to them.

If they lose the rose, the PCs don't get paid, and might have to avoid agents of their employer for a month or two. If they were hired by Ersebet Cemilla, they may find themselves randomly hassled by the city watch.



THE FIRST LAB

A new threat arises to eradicate the gearforged forever, and the praetors will do anything to bury this. Can the PCs defeat this menace and keep a dark and secret history of the gearforged under wraps?

This adventure is suitable for four PCs of 7th level.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

While most people know how the geargrinders and steamworkers collaborated frantically to build the 100 powerful clockwork knights that defeated House Stross's heavy cavalry in the Great Revolt, few know of the actual origins of those gearforged. A powerful clockwork mage named Kovac, who cared nothing for either House Stross or the rebels, invented and refined the process of creating the gearforged, which the rebels stole and repurposed.

Once considered the greatest arcane mind of his generation regarding constructs, Kovac's name has vanished from nearly every record outside the private libraries of the masters of the Arcane Collegium. Artificial life fascinated Kovac, and he obsessed over it. He refused to settle for the simple clockwork constructs of his day and pursued a new form of true life. His experiments drifted further and further from the accepted practices of his time. A lack of progress combined with a perceived lack of support from other members of the Collegium frustrated Kovac.

After an apprentice of one of the other masters went to speak with Kovac and never returned, the members of the Collegium entered Kovac's laboratory. What they found horrified them. Carcasses of animals, their vital organs replaced with mechanical parts, stood next to diabolic texts with obscene illustrations and blueprints calling for vitality harvested from sentient beings to power clockwork creatures. Above it all hung the body of the apprentice. Investigation found his life force had been torn away magically.

The Collegium declared Kovac an outlaw and drove him into hiding, but the Revolt began and restricted the manpower to search for him. Accidentally, a rebel hiding in the Cartways discovered a secret pathway behind a false wall. He reported strange clockwork creatures guarding the tunnel. Sensing an opportunity, a team of rebels and mages entered the Cartways and found Kovac's secret lab. Mechanical abominations acted as sentinels, and the notes and experiments found in the lab indicated Kovac stripped souls from sentient creatures to power his creations. He even summoned infernal spirits to give his constructs greater cunning. Kovac died in the fight, but some of his clockwork creatures escaped into the Cartways.

The rebels failed to completely defeat the lab's guardians, so they grabbed what they could and sealed the secret tunnel.

However, the difficulty of the battle provided the rebels with an insight. A meeting of Collegium masters and the Geargrinder's Guild determined the survivors stole enough information to recreate some of Kovac's work. They sought volunteers to create the "first" gearforged and decided no one could learn that stolen souls infused the prototypes. A few of Kovac's creations escaped during the fight. Perhaps some of the gearforged walking the streets today are his handiwork.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The PCs receive an urgent summons to a private audience at the Collegium with Guildmaster Clockwork Mage Orlando. Orlando tasks them with recovering, at all costs, a diary stolen from his office. It details a secret, underground laboratory and the attempts of a powerful clockwork mage named Kovac to create automatons powered by living souls. Kovac forcefully stole the souls of revolutionaries, House Stross supporters, and even infernal creatures to power his experiments.

Although Kovac died when rebels raided and partially destroyed his lab, the revolutionaries found his experiments too useful to destroy. These abominations eventually resulted in the gearforged heroes of the revolution. Unfortunately, some of Kovac's creations escaped and others remain in the sealed lab. Orlando believes the thief intends to find the hidden laboratory and wants the party to stop the thief and recover the

diary before anyone reveals its secrets and destroys the public's confidence in their gearforged protectors.

Orlando possesses a series of clues the PCs can follow to catch up with the thief, though only with the help of someone from the time of the Revolt. He suggests they seek out and bargain with the Dragged Woman for passage into the long-hidden section of the Cartways which holds Kovac's lab.

Once in the Cartways, clockwork assassins ambush the PCs to keep them from following the trail to Kovac's lab. They fight to the death, and a search of the bodies identifies them as followers of Marena the Red, Goddess of Death.

When the PCs reach the lab, they find its door forced open. Inside, the remains of Kovac's heretical experiments cover the floor, but not all have been destroyed. Clockwork abominations unlike anything the PCs have seen rise to defend the laboratory.

Deeper in the lab, the adventurers must face Bogdan—the thief and a priest of the Red Goddess—and more of his followers. To succeed, the PCs must recover the diary, seal Kovac's laboratory, and make sure no word of this ever gets out.

PLOT HOOKS

At the start of the adventure, the PCs should already have a reputation in Zobeck as problem solvers, especially of the "no-questions-asked" variety. They are summoned by Guildmaster Orlando to a private meeting at the Arcane Collegium. The letter promises great reward for serving the interests of Zobeck, and declining an invitation from such a powerful individual would surely ruin their reputations in the city.

Other motivations might include the following:

- The PCs have previously performed discrete jobs for a consul or the government of Zobeck and are contacted at the behest of the Arcane Collegium.
- The PCs already have some involvement in the activities of the Arcane Collegium, and Guildmaster Orlando approaches them personally.
- One or more PCs are devout followers of Rava, and the Temple asks them to aid Guildmaster Orlando.
- The PCs have criminal records or affiliations and are looking to wipe the slate clean or for help escaping their associates.
- The PCs are members of, or have worked with, the Spyglass Guild and are chosen for this mission.

PART 1: SUMMONS

This adventure takes place in the streets and back alleys of Zobeck. The PCs begin the adventure in their homes or in a local establishment. After their summons to the Arcane Collegium, they find their way into abandoned areas of the Cartways and confront the long-buried abominations of the deranged wizard Kovac.

JUST ANOTHER DAY IN ZOBECK

If you're using a hook for the whole party, assume they have gathered in a favorite spot between jobs to relax or discuss opportunities, and read the following:

You've gathered to celebrate another day of opportunities in the Free City of Zobeck. Although currently between jobs, you have reputations on the streets of Zobeck as individuals who can get things done. Clearly, the man approaching you in the stained cloak with an official-looking crest thinks so. He walks up without hesitation, confirms your identity, and hands over a folded square of stiff, heavy parchment sealed with golden wax.

If only one or two PCs have any connection to the Collegium or the government, have the messenger approach one of them rather than the whole party:

Another day of opportunity dawns in the Free City of Zobeck. Although currently between jobs, your companions await you to discuss changing that situation. You've barely moved beyond your lodgings, however, when a man in a street-stained cloak with an official-looking crest approaches you. With a formal, businesslike air he confirms your identity and hands over a folded square of stiff, heavy parchment sealed with golden wax.

The summons bears the seal of the Arcane Collegium and promises great reward—even possible forgiveness for past crimes—by serving the interests of Zobeck. It requests the PCs proceed immediately to the Collegium and meet with Guildmaster Orlando. The summons gives no further information, and the messenger has already departed. Assuming the PCs decide to answer the summons, proceed to **Arcane Collegium**.

ARCANE COLLEGIUM

You enter the Steam Gate and can see wizards, apprentices, and clockwork servants hurrying about the impressive grounds. As large as Crown Square, the Collegium consists of two courtyards and a dozen two-story gray buildings. Guards direct you to a building on the opposite side of the first square, and stewards usher you into the office of Guildmaster Orlando.

The PCs probably have many questions for **Orlando** (see **Chapter 5**). Before he answers any though, he asks the PCs to swear to keep the conversation in confidence.

What I am about to tell you is of great importance to the City of Zobeck and not for the ears of the average citizen. I must ask you to swear you will hold whatever I tell you today in strict confidence or we can proceed no further.

Guildmaster Orlando is an excellent judge of character, and he probably sees through any dissembling by the PCs. If he feels it necessary, he requires them submit to a *geas* spell, though he would prefer not. He feels agents who voluntarily swear are more reliable in the long run. This is, however, a matter of utmost importance, and he does whatever he feels necessary to get the job done. Assuming the PCs promise to keep their mouths shut, Orlando describes the mission.

"Last night, a thief broke into my office here at the Collegium—a difficult feat I assure you. Rather than take any of the obviously valuable objects, they stole only a diary from the time of the Great Revolt. The diary contains the account of a young mage's involvement in catching a wanted criminal, a powerful wizard named Kovac. This and other information in the diary could prove very damaging. I want you to track down the thief and return the diary before anything . . . unfortunate happens."

Orlando entertains any pertinent questions. Below are some likely questions and their answers.

Why was Kovac wanted by the law?

"Kovac performed unsanctioned experiments on citizens of Zobeck in an attempt to create a new form of clockwork life. He was also in league with infernal forces."

What information in the diary is so dangerous we have to swear to keep it secret?

"The diary contains clues to the location of Kovac's hidden laboratory in the Cartways. Sealed but not destroyed during the revolt, it still contains dangerous and forbidden items and lore. The diary also contains information about the contents of Kovac's lab and the type of abominable experiments he was undertaking."

That doesn't sound so dangerous. Are you telling us everything?

"Kovac was the original creator of gearforged, but he used infernal essences and stolen souls to power his creations. Some of his handiwork may remain in the lab or even elsewhere in the city, unbeknownst to the citizens. This information would undermine the confidence of the city in its gearforged and possibly lead to a movement against them. This is unacceptable."

The summons mentioned a reward for our help?

"The city itself will provide you with a substantial reward for your aid, assuming you achieve our goals and the information remains secret. I can offer you 2,000 gp each for your services. Additionally, the praetors authorized me to offer survivors clemency for past crimes."

The thief has a 12-hour head start on us. How do we find him?

"I believe the thief intends to follow the clues in the diary in an attempt to find Kovac's lab, which will slow his progress. I know of a way for you to reach the lab first. The Dragged Woman could show you a route."

Who is the Dragged Woman, and how will she help us reach Kovac's lab?

"The members of the Arcane Collegium know of the Dragged Woman. She is the unquiet spirit of a noblewoman killed during the revolt. I will tell you how to locate her. She can show you the way to Kovac's lab . . . for a price."

What is her price?

"The price is never the same, but she has never asked for coin. It has also never been life threatening."

What can we expect to find in Kovac's lab?

"The lab was sealed after Kovac was killed because the rebels who raided it did not want to face what likely still lurked within. I cannot say for certain what you may find, but some of Kovac's twisted creations likely remain."

Before the PCs leave his office, Orlando offers a final bit of advice.

"Needless to say, you receive your reward only after you return the diary to me. If this information somehow spreads beyond this office, the Spyglass Guild will know exactly who to look for."

Development. Even if the PCs don't ask about the Dragged Woman, Orlando suggests contacting her as a means to reach Kovac's lab quickly. He says they must travel after nightfall to the place of her death near the King's Head Tavern in the Citadel District. There, they must burn a broken fragment of rope soaked in human blood. The light of the rope reveals bloody footprints leading to the Dragged Woman.

PART 2: THE DRAGGED WOMAN

After nightfall, even in the Citadel District, the streetlamps are just islands of dim light in seas of darkness. The streets have started to empty as the business of the day concludes and the business of the night has not yet begun. The air is cool but not uncomfortable, perhaps a hint of rain. As you pass the King's Head Tavern, you can already hear a raucous crowd within, and the trollwife bouncer, Peppercorn, glares at you suspiciously.

PCs who follow Orlando's directions and manage to locate or create a bloody stump of rope to use as a torch soon discover faint, smeared, bloody footprints leading into a nearby alley.

The air chills the instant you enter the alley, and you can see your breath mist in the air. Ahead, you can make out a hint of movement. After a few cautious steps, you hear a quiet sobbing followed by a wail of despair. The bloody footprints become more and more distinct as you approach. A wild-looking woman with ashen skin and rich but tattered clothing slouches toward the end of the alley. A bloody rope hangs from one wrist. When she looks up, hair falls away from her face, and you feel your blood freeze as you meet her gaze.

The **Dragged Woman** (see **Chapter 5**) can see and smell the bloody rope and knows the PCs have purposely sought her out. Those who withstand her gaze earn the right to bargain with her. She has no interest in money or material things, only in causing pain, recompense for all the pain she suffered. She exchanges information or aid for precious memories. The more precious the memory sacrificed, the more aid she provides. She considers memories of first loves, righteous victories, and lost children the most desirable of all. The Dragged Woman allows the PCs to tell her of their needs and make an offer before making her demands plain.

The Dragged Woman waives away your offer and pierces you with her gaze. "I desire neither coin nor magic, only your joy. I have none and will take the memory of yours. I will consume your memories, lost and gone forever, and the more you value the memory, the greater I shall aid you. What will you forget? A first love? Your only memory of a parent? Choose . . . or leave me!

Allow the players to pick appropriate memories and make sure they note them for future reference. Afterward, tell them their characters feel soiled by the touch of her magic and subtly lacking, though they can't remember why. The PCs suffer a level of exhaustion from the experience. The sacrifice complete, the Dragged Woman indicates a bricked-up doorway halfway down the alley . At her gesture it begins to glow a sickly green.

"Hurry. My portal leads as close to your desired location as I may bring you." With a gust of cold wind, she fades into the darkness.

The Dragged Woman is not interested in combat. Though she might subject the PCs to her blinding fear ability to test their mettle, it is only meant as a test, not an initiation of combat. If the PCs insist on turning the encounter into a battle, the Dragged Woman escapes at the first opportunity. If the PCs follow her directions, they enter the portal and find themselves in a long-abandoned section of the Cartways.

AMBUSH

The sickly green light of the portal fades, plunging the passage into almost total darkness. The only illumination comes from a faint crimson glow far down the tunnel ahead.

After passing through the Dragged Woman's portal, the party emerges inside the long-secret tunnel that leads to Kovac's hidden lab, just beyond the door. Assuming the PCs can either see in the dark or produce a light, they can investigate their surroundings. There is no sign of the Dragged Woman's portal once its light fades, just a

seemingly solid, rough stone wall. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check identifies the outline of a door. They can tell it was sealed for a long time but has recently been forced open from the other side. Although it's impossible to be sure, dwarves suspect they are near a frequently traveled section of the Cartways, though in a corridor that hasn't been used for a very long time.

Two **clockwork assassins** (see *Creature Codex*) hide farther down the passage to make sure no one follows Bogdan and the other cultists. They saw the light of the Dragged Woman's portal and are ready for the party. The assassins are fearless, but their primary purpose is to alert Bogdan to intruders. If either falls below 10 hp, it flees to warn the others (but are instead slain by the abominations guarding the Broken Portal).

PART 3: KOVAC'S LABORATORY

The crimson glow grows brighter as you proceed down the tunnel. After traveling a hundred yards or so, you see the light pouring from a large gap in the wall. Bronze doors lay on the ground, ripped from their hinges.

If either of the gearforged assassins escaped during **Part 2**, the PCs also see the following:

The metallic form of one of the assassins lies on the floor of the tunnel, perhaps 20 feet from the opening. It appears horribly mauled, as if torn apart by some great force.

AREA 1: BROKEN PORTAL

Two **clockwork abominations** (see *Tome of Beasts*) wait for anyone approaching the laboratory. They have already dealt with any gearforged assassin that escaped the previous fight. One has pushed itself into a crevice in



CLOCKWORK ABOMINATIONS

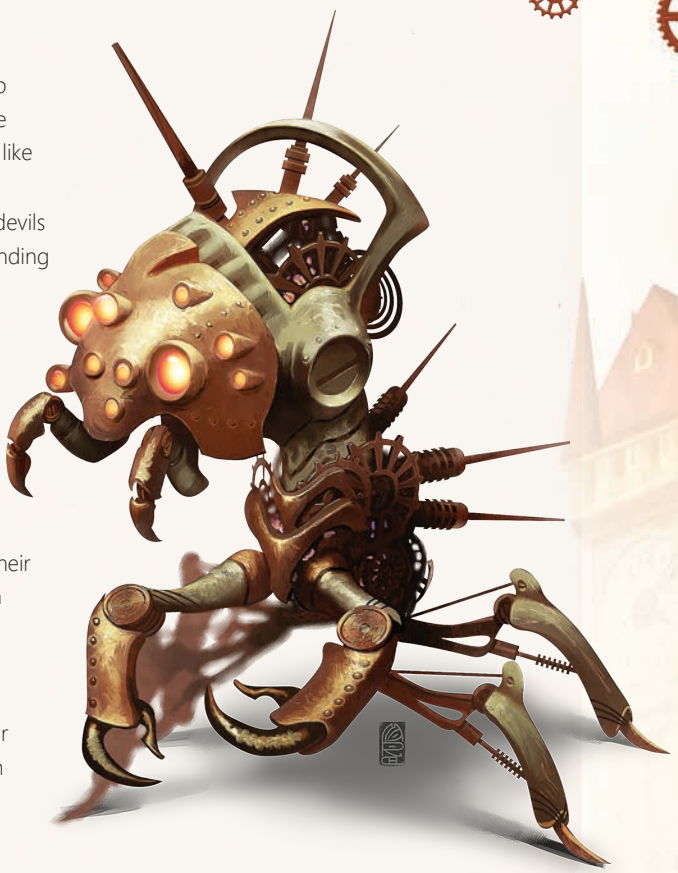
At rest, a clockwork abomination resembles a pile of debris and scrap on the ground, but in motion, it reveals an insectoid form with smoke rising from between the plates of its hide. Its multifaceted eyes shine like deep-black gemstones and reveal no hint of expression or intent.

These creatures result from ill-considered attempts to bind lesser devils into clockwork or steam-driven constructs. The disciplines of devil-binding and engineering seemingly don't mix well though, and the results of such attempts are typically disastrous. But every now and then, something goes right, and a clockwork abomination is created.

Clockwork abominations are canny enough to collect bits of old wagons, tools, or machinery as camouflage. Motionless among such objects, they can often surprise a foe.

Malevolent in the extreme, these fiendish automatons are frustrated by the limits of their new forms, and they delight in inflicting pain on others. Since they constantly seek to break free of their creators' control, attacking or guarding is the most to which they can typically be entrusted.

They know nothing of fear, only duty and programming. These particular units have been ordered to prevent anyone not wearing Kovac's symbol from entering the laboratory. They interpret this order very strictly and stop fighting once a PC enters the lab since they can no longer be prevented from entering at that point.



the wall and one clings to the ceiling. Their positioning and the dim light give them advantage on Stealth checks. They emerge from hiding and attack if they've obviously been seen or once the PCs move between their positions.

A sudden clicking of mechanisms and the scrape of metal on stones reveals a creature pushing forth from a crevice on the side of the tunnel. A second drops with a crash from the ceiling. At first glance, they look like some sort of infernal creature, but closer examination reveals the whirring gears, cogs, and cables binding their joints together. These creatures are clockwork, but as their glowing crimson eyes attest, they are like nothing you have ever seen.

AREA 2: KOVAC'S WORKSHOP

The right side of this large room is filled with intact workbenches. The left side is covered in stone and metal rubble. Piles of gears and scrap indicate large numbers of clockwork creatures have been destroyed here. Large stone basins sit in the rear corners of the room, and a grand two-level staircase rises straight ahead to a platform surmounted by four tarnished, bronze pillars. A metal statue stands at attention near the workbenches to the right.

This room was obviously the site of a great battle. Rubble and broken bits of metal cover most surfaces. Scorch marks mar several walls. Most of the room is covered in dust and appears long abandoned, but PCs standing in the entrance can discern fresh footprints in the dust leading up the staircase, and large areas of rubble appear to have been moved recently. As soon as anyone enters the room, read the following:

As soon as you cross the threshold and enter the workshop, a metallic, insectoid form rises and shakes itself free from a pile of debris to the left of the door. And the metal statue to the right reveals itself to be a gearforged, which moves toward you menacingly, eyes glowing crimson.

The **clockwork abomination** and the **fellforged** (see *Tome of Beasts* for both) immediately attack. The

fellforged, however, does not intend to remain the entire battle. Having languished in the lab for 80 years, it flees from the fight at the first opportunity after the first round of combat, hoping to escape into the Cartways and gain its freedom.

Treasure. Searching the room yields many interesting items. Because of the chaos, no single check can find more than two items. Either multiple PCs need to search or multiple checks must be made. A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check finds an item on the list below, and a result that succeeds by 5 or more finds two items:

- A rotting bag filled with clockwork caltrops on one of the workbenches (see *Midgard Heroes Handbook*).
- Sufficient quality reagents and tools to make one each of alchemist's supplies and tinker's tools.
- The skeletal remains of Kovac under a pile of rubble.
- Four flasks of alchemist's fire near the stone basin.
- A 6-inch metal rod with a gear on the end of it, near the bottom of the stairs (Kovac's key, see **Area 3**).
- An unidentifiable but nonetheless fascinating mechanical object under the remains of a destroyed clockwork abomination. It's worth 150 gp to someone who studies clockwork.
- A *wand of lightning bolts*, made from the claw of a blue dragon, at the bottom of a shallow puddle of alchemical waste in the right rear of the room.

Additionally, if the PCs defeat and collect the remains of the fellforged, they might be able to forge it into magic armor, such as **molten hellfire armor** (see *Vault of Magic*) or something more powerful.

Development. If PCs spend too much time lingering in this room, the assassins in the hallway might appear on the platform and shoot arrows at the PCs before withdrawing and shutting the door behind them.

Speak with dead doesn't work if cast on Kovac's remains, for Bogdan cast the spell on the remains just a few hours ago.



AREA 3: PILLARED PLATFORM

At the top of the stairs is a platform 25 feet long and 10 feet deep. A metal door stands closed on the wall directly ahead. Four intricate bronze pillars line the platform, extending to the ceiling 10 feet above. The pillars are decorated with a mechanical motif of gears and chains interspersed with representations of clockwork creatures.

A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals a small, irregularly shaped hole in the door. Two of the pillars are actually clockwork traps, and if the door is opened without Kovac's key, a section of each pillar begins to spin, whipping chains across the platform.

Swinging Chain Trap. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check determines that the door lock is trapped. A successful DC 17 Intelligence (Investigation) check determines that the two pillars incorporate actual mechanical devices in their clockwork motifs. The trap is triggered by trying to unlock the door without Kovac's key. When it's triggered, the pillars begin spinning, slinging chains across the entirety of the platform. Each creature on the platform must make a DC 13 Dexterity check, taking 16 (3d10) bludgeoning damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one. After the initial attack, every creature that starts its turn on the platform while not prone must repeat the saving throw with the same consequences for success and failure. The trap can't be disarmed or bypassed at the lock, but ropes tied tightly around the pillars can prevent the chains from swinging out before they're activated. Once it's triggered, the trap remains active for 1 minute before the chains reel back into the pillars and the trap resets.

AREA 4: HALLWAY

Two **clockwork assassins** (see *Creature Codex*) wait in the hallway beyond the platform. If the trap goes off, the assassins surprise the PCs as they come through the door. If they open the door without triggering the chains (which are very noisy), the assassins are automatically surprised. Either assassin flees to inform Bogdan of intruders if their hit points drop below 20.

AREA 5: PARTS/STORAGE

Rusting and abandoned tools and metal parts fill this room. Gears litter the floor, and jars filled with cloudy fluids rest precariously on several crumbling shelves.



PCs who investigate the jars find they contain the mangled, barely recognizable forms of various creatures such as rats, cats, and dogs. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) check identifies one of the creatures as a sprite. Someone dissected the corpses, replacing body parts—arms, legs, and even internal organs—with clockwork parts.

AREA 6: KOVAC'S STUDY

This room is obviously the office of a studious person. The walls are lined with bookshelves, and a large desk dominates the center of the room. It appears that no one has been here for a very long time, however, as everything is covered under decades of dust and crumbles with age. A closed door to the right provides the only other exit from the room.

Everything in the room is rotting after 80 years of neglect. The books crumble into flakes if opened, and the desk will collapse under 100 pounds of weight. The only things still functional in the room are several small wind-up toys made of mithral, shoved into the back of a desk drawer. The clockworks are intricate, beautiful, and worth 500 gp all together.

AREA 7: KOVAC'S QUARTERS

This room contains a partially collapsed, rotting bed, a dresser, and a wardrobe. What really catches your eye when you open the door, however, is the gearforged standing near the far wall. Its face is painted red, and its hollow, metallic voice cackles with insane glee.

Glyph of Warding. A successful DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check spots the *glyph of warding* (explosive runes) trap on the floor just inside the door. It is triggered by anyone stepping into the 5-foot square by the doorway inside the room. When the glyph explodes, each creature within 20 feet of the doorway must make a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw, taking 5d8 thunder damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one.

The gearforged with its face painted red is **Bogdan the Insane** (see **Appendix**). He wears a holy symbol of Marena the Red openly. The symbol is recognized by anyone with proficiency in Religion or who's seen it before. Bogdan calls out in Machine Speech for Marena to smite the party. If the trap on the pillared platform (see **Area 3**) went off or if any clockwork creature escaped from previous encounters, Bogdan has had time to cast several spells in preparation for this meeting. Any surviving cultists are also here, on the far side of the room and out of range of the trap.

Bogdan is insane and tends to talk to himself, or perhaps his goddess, during combat. He loudly proclaims any or all the following during a fight with the PCs:

- The lab and its secrets are his and his alone.
- Gearforged are an abomination and an affront to Marena. They should be dead, not living on in some metal shell.
- He wants to be destroyed, so he can join his goddess.
- He wants to destroy all gearforged, so they can join his goddess.
- Kovac's research will allow him to end the creation of gearforged forever.

Bogdan might be insane, but he is still a canny fighter. The trap was his handiwork. If he had warning of the PCs' coming or has time during the fight, he casts *shield of faith* on himself. He casts *cloudkill* wherever it can do the most harm (since he's immune to its effect). Bogdan has nowhere to run, so he fights to the death.

Treasure. Once defeated, Bogdan's flail and armor are considered a *+1 flail* and *+1 breastplate*. Kovac's diary can be found in Bogdan's pouch.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

The PCs must return the stolen diary to Orlando at the Arcane Collegium if they want their reward. Orlando pays 2,000 gp to each surviving PC and has a letter of clemency stamped by the lord mayor for anyone who requested it, forgiving them of all prior crimes and misdeeds. Of course, if the PCs don't return the diary or if the information it contains somehow spreads to the public, the PCs become wanted criminals. Either way, they know the authorities are watching them.



SONG UNDYING

There's a new cult in town, and to save a young boy, the party must place targets on their own backs. Can the PCs infiltrate the group's compound and put an end to its menace?

This adventure is suitable for four PCs of 7th level.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

When Chiara Vacarro died from illness, her son Salamondre, one of Zobeck's most famous dirgists, was distraught. Her husband's suicide followed shortly thereafter. Salamondre's performances at their funerals were talked about for weeks, and those who spoke of it wept when they recalled the mournful tones of his lyre and the pain in his voice. Then Salamondre left Zobeck. He traveled for many years, seeking solace, is what people said, assuaging his grief, yet that was not what motivated him. In all his music lay his own fear of death. He traveled far and wide, looking for a way to stop the inevitable. Salamondre wandered as far as the Southlands in his quest. He joined up with a band of adventurers, braving death even as he sought to elude it. He hoped that by delving into lost temples and abandoned crypts, he would find balm for his tortured soul. At some point, he did but not before a final adventure that ended in tragedy. All the heroes in his band were slain except for Salamondre and Giselle, a paladin of Lada.

When Salamondre finally returned to Zobeck, he was a changed man. He quietly divested himself of all his family's business holdings and property. He bought an abandoned monastery and used a portion of his fortune to restore it. Then he began his ministry. Salamondre exhorted a new religion, based around a single principle: the Song Undying. The music of the universe, an unending melody that binds all life together. Master the song, and death cannot approach you. Life, youth, and happiness, forever. Salamondre's new sanctuary quickly began to fill with devotees, carefully selected and chosen by the bard. Certain temples in the city, including that of Rava, wanted this new cult shut down. However, the mayor is an admirer of Salamondre's work as a dirgist, and certain other important personages in the city favored his new cult. The message of the Song Undying is compelling, and Salamondre's selective nature about who is allowed to join and enter his compound has the rich and powerful clamoring to gain the bard's favor. Why even seek becoming a gearforged, with its great expense, when one can remain forever whole and well in one's original body? The Song Undying has become increasingly popular in a very short time with adherents and fans among the city's poor and working-class citizens, as well as several wealthy and influential families. A forceful crackdown on the cult at this juncture would be politically unwise, so its influence continues to grow.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The PCs are in the Lower District of Zobeck at night when they stumble upon what seems to be a group of thugs, attacking a man and his young son. During the fight, they realize their opponents are deadly killers, much more skilled than common dockside thugs. The man is killed in the fight, though the boy, Marko, survives. The man protecting him was not his father, but his bodyguard, Conte. With his bodyguard dead, young Marko is vulnerable to further attacks. He knows Conte was trying to get him somewhere safe, but he doesn't know the details. A bloodied letter on Conte's body provides some clues. Strangely, it appears Conte was trying to get Marko to a local fence, one who buys goods from common pickpockets and second-story thieves. Unknown to Marko, the thugs were assassins sent by Salamondre. Marko is Salamondre's young cousin and only living relative, which makes him the only person capable of destroying the object that is the root of Salamondre's powers.

The fence is relative of a rogue who once adventured with Salamondre. When the group had returned briefly to Zobeck to consult the Clockwork Oracle, Giselle saved the fence's life. The paladin is the only other surviving member of Salamondre's adventuring company, and one of the few who knows the secret behind the Song Undying. Knowing the fence felt indebted to her, Giselle sent Conte and Marko to him with hopes the fence

could use his contacts to hide Marko until she returned. She intended to gain possession of the object that is the source of Salamondre's power, the *Thrice-Cursed Heart*, and bring it to Marko to be destroyed. Unfortunately, she has been captured by Salamondre. After being shown the letter on Conte's body, the fence implores the PCs to help Giselle by going to the monastery and stopping Salamondre.

At the old monastery where Salamondre has established his place of worship, the PCs soon discover the people supposedly cured of their ills or returned from the dead are actually undead. While the *Heart* can restore the flesh, it can't restore the spirit and instead fills people with dark energies, raising the dead into undeath or slowly converting the living. All these undead are beholden to the *Heart*—and thus to Salamondre—for it has become his phylactery. Unless the *Heart* is destroyed, Salamondre can never be slain. The PCs must defeat the undead cultists, wrest the prize from Salamondre, and return it to Zobeck to be destroyed by Marko. Only then will the Song Undying end.

ATTACK IN THE LOWER DISTRICT

The PCs are in Zobeck's Lower District at night when they hear the clash of steel and shouts from a nearby alley. This area contains several warehouses and a few shops, most of which are closed for the evening, making the sounds of combat an odd occurrence. If the PCs investigate, they see a pitched battle with five armed people attacking a single man who calls out for help when he notices them. The attackers are professional mercenaries (treat as **veterans**) hired to track down and kill Marko Vacarro, Salamondre's young cousin. He is the only living being at the moment who would be able to destroy the *Thrice-Cursed Heart*, the corrupt, egg-shaped object that serves as Salamondre's phylactery.

The lone man, Conte, is a loyal guard for house Vacarro and serves as Marko's bodyguard. Giselle, paladin and former adventuring companion of Salamondre, warned Conte of the assassination attempt and gave him a name and location in the docks of someone who could help hide Marko until she had obtained the *Heart* from Salamondre's compound. The mercenaries tracked them from the family home and caught up with them in the Lower District. While trying to lose them, Conte took a wrong turn and ended up in this blind alley. With no way out, he had Marko hide and prepared to hold them off. Unfortunately, he was struck with a pair of poisoned crossbow bolts before the mercenaries closed in to finish him off. When the PCs



arrive, he is near the end of his fight. The first round the PCs enter combat, the mercenaries strike down Conte before turning their attention to the interlopers.

Salamondre's mercenaries aren't willing to die, no matter how well paid. If more than two of them fall, they attempt a fighting retreat out of the alley, hoping to regroup and find Marko again later. If they are unable to escape, they surrender if reduced to half their hit points or fewer. Once combat is over, the PCs can make a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check. On a success, they notice Marko hiding behind a bin near the back of the alley. If they can coax him out, Marko weeps over Conte's fallen form. A successful DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) check can calm the boy enough for him to answer questions. He gives his name as Marko and tells them he is eight years old. Conte was his friend who worked for his mother and father. He doesn't know why the bad men hurt Conte or where they were going, only that Conte was "taking him somewhere safe." If asked about his mother and father, Marko says, "Mama and Papa died in an accident. Conte takes care of me now, 'til I'm grown up."

Treasure. Each mercenary carries a pouch containing 50 gp, their advance on the payment for Marko's murder. The rough clothing they wear is incongruous

with their weapons and mail, and they look as if they took extra care to disguise themselves as common laborers. They carry nothing that indicates why they were trying to kill the boy.

If the PCs search Conte's body, they find a pouch with 13 gp, 37 sp, and a key. The key is the master key to the Vacarro house in the Merchant District in Zobeck. If asked, Marko tells them it opens the doors at his house.

Development. Conte also carries a blood-stained letter. It reads as follows:

Conte, Sal [obscured by bloodstain] for the boy. You need to get him out of the house. Go to the Lower District and seek the shop under the sign of the rusty scales. Tell [another bloodstain] -ent you. Say you're call- [more blood] and give him the o- [bloodstain] -rote. He needs to find a place to hide Marko until I can find the Heart. When I return, I'll see him and [marred by bloodstains] -estroyed and this will all be over. Lada watch over you and the boy. —Giselle

If a PC searches Conte's boots specifically or succeeds on a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check while searching the body, the PC finds another letter rolled up and tucked into one. This letter is addressed to someone named Milos:

Milos, I'm calling in your debt. My friends here need help. The head of the Song Undying cult has hired killers to come after this boy. A life for a life. Use your contacts and find a place for the boy and his warden to hide. They'll need to stay there until I come to visit you at your shop. Then you'll need to bring me to them or them to us. Do this, and we are even. If a week passes and you hear nothing from me, go to the Three Singing Maids and ask if I left anything for you. There is a letter that explains everything. Please take it to the temple of Lada. Lada's blessings on you. —Giselle

If asked about the letters, Marko doesn't know anything except that the name Giselle sounds familiar. He thinks that might be the name of the lady that was talking to Conte when they were at the market a few weeks ago. He says she was tall, wore shiny armor, and had a sword. Her shield had Lada's eye on it. She and Conte talked very seriously and frowned a lot. He doesn't know anything else.

The PCs have two leads to follow at this point. The order in which they attend them matters little, though having Marko tagging along with them when he has a price on his head might put him in further danger. The pawn shop isn't far from where the PCs rescue Marko, leaving it the most convenient next step.

If the PCs manage to capture one or more of the attackers alive, they refuse to talk unless a PC succeeds on a DC 14 Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion) check. If successful, the mercenary admits to being hired by Salamondre to kill Marko Vacarro, though they do not know the reason behind the assassination. They can also tell the PCs the location of Salamondre's compound.

THE RUSTY SCALES

This pawn shop is run by Milos. He does a lot of business with sailors and dock workers, but he makes the bulk of his money as a fence for petty criminals—pickpockets, second-story workers, and similar thieves. He buys their stolen wares and makes a profit selling them off, typically to shady merchants on their way out of the city who can sell the goods in other locales.

If the PCs present Milos with the letter addressed to him, a mix of emotions crosses his face as he reads it, his eyes straying to Marko and back to the letter. He agrees to help the boy under the condition the PCs head to the inn mentioned in the letter and collect the letter she has left for him. He wants to know just how much trouble Giselle has herself in on account of the lad. If pressed, he explains Giselle saved his life once, when a loan shark decided that having him die in a fire in his shop was worth not receiving the money Milos owed him. Giselle was an unlikely visitor, but she was accompanied by one of Milos's relatives who was a member of Giselle's adventuring band. They were all fairly famous, but none of them as much as "that death bard" with them. If questioned, he recalls the bard's name was Salamondre. A successful DC 12 Intelligence (History) check reveals Salamondre was a famous dirgist who recently returned to Zobeck to preach a new song-based faith, as described in the **Adventure Background**.

THE THREE SINGING MAIDS

This modest inn is in the Market District. If the PCs inquire with the innkeeper and one of them claims to be Milos, they are given a sealed letter. The letter, from Giselle, is addressed to the high priest at the temple of Lada, Lucca Angeli.

Lucca, If this letter has reached you, I am likely dead. I once traveled with Salamondre Vacarro, the famous dirgist. I was with him when he recovered a relic known as the Thrice-Cursed Heart. It is a jeweled egg, cunningly crafted, with hinged doors and a golden center. He has spent several years studying this object, learning to tap its powers.

However, I have discovered that this relic is corrupt, and in handling it, Salamondre has also become corrupted. This new religion of his, the Song Undying, is a lie. The dead he has supposedly returned to life, the sick he claims to have healed, are all twisted by the power of the Heart. They are not alive but undead! Salamondre is one of them as well, but he is more powerful. Bonded to the cursed object as he is, he truly is undying. Only if it is destroyed will he meet his final death. I have discovered a weakness, a way to destroy it. If the Heart is trod beneath the foot of one of Salamondre's bloodline and that one is innocent, it will be crushed like a real egg.

There is a young boy of the Vacarro family, hidden and kept safe from harm. The bearer of this message knows his location. Send for the boy and send someone to the Song Undying's compound—an old dwarven monastery on the Derry River to the north—someone of power who can deal with Salamondre and his minions. They must take the Thrice-Cursed Heart and have the young Vacarro destroy it. Do not delay. Salamondre's power and control over the Heart grows with each passing day. May all the gods grant you victory where I have failed.

—Giselle Reinherz, devoted of Lada

If the PCs return to Milos and show him the letter, he becomes distraught, muttering to himself and pulling at his hair. Milos feels a direct debt to Giselle for saving his life, and he doesn't feel that hiding Marko is enough to pay the debt. Therefore, he asks the PCs to travel to the Song Undying's compound to retrieve the *Thrice-Cursed Heart* and find Giselle. Whatever her fate, he wants her returned, dead or alive. If the PCs need some sort of additional motivation, he offers them a reward upon their return, a *necklace of adaption*. It was sold to him a short while ago. He has a hedge mage acquaintance who regularly checks his incoming stock of items for magic. Though he rarely happens on such pieces, the mage found the necklace in Milos's items this week. If the PCs return with the *Heart* and Giselle, or her body, he promises them the necklace.

THE SONG UNDYING COMPOUND

Salamondre used funds from selling off various Vacarro businesses to buy an old dwarven monastery just west of Zobeck that was built into the cliffside along the



Derry River, which flows south through Zobeck. He has furnished it as the temple for his new religion, and recruits are brought in from Zobeck and the surrounding area for purification and indoctrination, which means their transformation into Salamondre's obedient undead servants. He also keeps a force of paid mercenaries as guards, at least until the numbers of undead at his command are great enough that they need not fear attack. The monastery is about half a day's travel upstream from Zobeck.

AREA 1: ENTRANCE

Off the bend in the river, a hollow worn by water has been excavated into a larger area. Iron hooks are affixed to the rock, allowing boats to be tied here. Three arrow slits pierce the wall to the west. A trio of shallow steps lead to a semicircular dais and a pair of stone double doors. Each door holds a carved metal plaque, depicting a sphere enwrapped with a scroll covered in musical notations.

The doors are barred on the inside. A successful DC 18 Strength (Athletics) check can force them open. If the PCs look like trouble (obviously bearing weapons, casting spells at the door, and so on) the guards in **Area 5** open fire on the PCs with their heavy crossbows. The guards have three-quarters cover from the arrow slits. A Small or smaller creature can squeeze through the arrow slits.

AREA 2: RECEIVING ROOM

A stone pedestal stands in the center of this room, a lyre decorated in gold and strung with brass thread atop it.

This room is normally used to receive guests and petitioners. A formal welcome ceremony is performed before the visitors are escorted across the bridge and into the temple proper.

Lyre Trap. The lyre is a magical alarm. If touched without first speaking the proper phrase, "Uplift your voice and join the Song Undying," the lyre plays a jangle of discordant notes that reverberate through the complex. If this happens, the guards in **Area 7** ready themselves and await intruders. The guards in **Area 3** and **Area 5**, if not already alerted, converge on this room while the guards in **Area 4** awaken and arm themselves, arriving in **Area 2** in 1d4 rounds. A spell or other effect that can sense the presence of magic, such as *detect magic*, reveals an aura of abjuration magic around the lyre. The trap can be thwarted by casting *silence* or wrapping the lyre in a blanket or other similar material, absorbing the vibrations of the strings and stilling them. A successful *dispel magic* (DC 13) cast on the lyre destroys the trap. The lyre itself is worth 100 gp.

AREA 3: GUARD POST

This room is simply appointed with a small, wooden table and three chairs. A small, open cask and three clay cups sit on the table. A ladle rests inside the cask, hooked to the edge.

A pair of guards (**veterans**) are on watch here. They greet authorized visitors. One waits with the visitors in the receiving room while the other goes to inform Salamondre of their arrival. When dealing with intruders, they fire heavy crossbows and then draw swords and close to engage in melee. If overwhelmed by attackers, one guard moves to the lyre in **Area 2** and uses an action to touch it and sound the alarm.

Keys. One of the guards on duty here carries a ring of keys. These unlock the door into the main complex (see **Area 7**), the cells of the Undisciplined (see **Area 13**), and Giselle's cell (see **Area 14**).

AREA 4: BARRACKS

Behind the door is a small room connected to a second room by a short, curving hallway. Each room is lined with bunk beds, footlockers, and a water barrel.

These are the sleeping quarters for off-duty guards in the compound. There are currently five unarmored guards (**veterans**) asleep or resting here. If the PCs enter or if the guards hear the alarm in **Area 2**, they grab their nearby weapons and shields and attack the intruders.

Treasure. The footlockers hold the guards' personal items, spare gear, and money. A total of 1 pp, 30 gp, 30 ep, 42 sp, and 51 cp can be found here.

AREA 5: SENTINELS' CHAMBER

This small room is empty save for three stools. Three arrow slits carved into the stone look out onto the landing at the entrance.

Three guards (**veterans**) stand watch here. They are quick to welcome unarmed pilgrims and wisdom-seekers, as per Salamondre's orders. Armed adventurers, on the other hand, are greeted with crossbow fire from the arrow slits until they are dead or retreat. If the PCs gain entry, the guards here move to **Area 2** to intercept them.

AREA 6: BRIDGE

A stone bridge exits the rock and arches over the river. At the far end, a single stone door sits in the rock face, a scroll-wrapped globe symbol carved into its surface.

The bridge arches over the Derry River as it rushes swiftly through the rocky channel here, some 20 feet below. The door at the far end is locked. The key on the guard in **Area 3** unlocks the door. Alternatively, a successful DC 15 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check picks the lock.

AREA 7: GUARD POST

The eastern wall holds an open archway to the north and a barred, iron-banded wooden door to the south. A wooden chest sits in the southwestern corner.

The barred wooden door leads to the loading dock (see **Area 10**) and is barred from this side.

Four guards (**veterans**) are on watch in this room. The guards attack anyone who forces their way in. If two of them fall, the remaining guards fall back, one heading to **Area 9** to rouse the undead there and the other to **Area 16** to alert Salamondre of intruders.

Treasure. The chest in the corner is unlocked and contains a chain shirt, a longsword, a shield emblazoned with the symbol of Lada, and a pouch containing three vials of holy water, a holy symbol of Lada, and a *potion of greater healing*. This equipment belongs to Giselle, who is imprisoned in **Area 14**.

AREA 8: GATHERING HALL

The walls of this long, vaulted room are hung with cloths of red, white, and gold. Several archways line the walls, most leading to rising stairs. To one side of the hall, two projecting shelves have been carved out of the stone and hold musical instruments and sheet music in glass cases. A half-cylinder projects from the south wall. A niche carved into this projection holds a statue of a figure in red, white, and gold robes, holding a lyre. The left side of the statue's handsome face is covered in a gold half-mask.

This hall is used for lesser ceremonies with new converts and houses such converts until they have been fully indoctrinated (turned into undead). Currently, the room is unoccupied unless the guards in **Area 7** alert the undead in **Area 9**.

Treasure. The shelves hold Salamondre's nonmagical, favored instruments, now put aside in favor of the Song Undying. The shelves also hold rare compositions and old songs the bard unearthed in his adventuring days. Collectively, these are worth 750 gp if sold to a bardic college, university, or collector interested in such items.

AREA 9: CELLS OF THE CHOIR OF ADHERENTS

This long, L-shaped corridor is lined with several solid, wooden doors on one side. On the other side, several exits lead to stairways down to a lower area.

These cells are used by those that have fully converted to the worship of the Song Undying. They have either been fully restored from death or fully corrupted from the living, and they are all devoted undead servants to Salamondre. One such adherent is found in each cell, making for a total of seven. Treat three of these undead as **reborn** (see **reborn** template in **Appendix**) and the others as **hollow ones** (see **Appendix**). The adherents are completely loyal to Salamondre and the cult and fight to the death, trusting that their master will restore them for their loyalty.

Treasure. The cells are spartan and hold only sleeping pallets and small desks. The adherents are allowed some small, personal items that help tie them to the world of the living and remember themselves, which helps them assert better control of their undead natures. The PCs can collect the following from the cells: a carved jade statuette of a horse worth 75 gp, an ebony walking stick topped with a polished sphere of rose quartz worth 50 gp, a pair of garnet earrings worth 50 gp, an embroidered silk handkerchief worth 25 gp, a set of gold dice worth 25 gp, a silver comb worth 25 gp, a wooden snuff box inlaid with mother of pearl worth 15 gp, a set of leather worker's tools, and a dulcimer.

AREA 10: LOADING DOCK

A wooden door opens into a room that abuts an underground stream. Buckets and a couple barrels sit on the floor near the water.

This area was once used by the dwarves of the monastery to unload supplies. The supplies were ferried from a nearby dwarven settlement via the underground stream that runs through the compound and empties into the Derry. Now the stream is used by the guards to draw fresh water for cooking and drinking.

AREA 11: COOL STORAGE

Racks and hooks on the walls and ceiling hold haunches of meat and strings of sausages. Crates and barrels are stacked on the floor under the meats.

This room is cooler than the rest of the complex due to its proximity to the underground stream. It holds the food supply for the guards and any still-living devotees the cult draws in at any given time. The fresher meat also feeds some of the undead members of the cult who still possess cravings for such things. The crates and barrels hold other foodstuffs: fruits, vegetables, tubers, and grains.

AREA 12: PURIFICATION CHAMBER

Red, white, and gold wall hangings decorate this round room. In the center, a large fount stands 4 feet high and holds clean, clear water.

This room is used for purification ceremonies. Salamondre anoints the chosen ones who have been deemed ready to join him in the inner sanctum where they learn the mysteries of the Song Undying and become one of the Choral Adherents. This anointing means they have been chosen to be corrupted by the *Thrice-Cursed Heart* and slowly turned into undead under Salamondre's control. The fount in the center of the room is said to contain holy water, but this is just a lie told to initiates of the cult. The water is clean and drinkable, but it has no special properties.

AREA 13: CELLS OF THE UNDISCIPLINED

Four heavy, iron-banded doors line the northern wall of this hallway. All of them are barred with planks of heavy wood. The hallway ends in a ledge overlooking a rushing, underground stream.

These cells contain **reborn** initiates (see **reborn** template in **Appendix**) of the cult who have been converted but who are not completely in control of their faculties. Though they appear humanoid, they are prone to bouts of savage violence and cannibalism without Salamondre's presence to keep them in line. If let out of their cells, they attack unless commanded by Salamondre to do otherwise. One piece of flesh is as good as another, and they are just as likely to attack one of the compound's guards as they are to assault an intruder.

Treasure. Like the quarters of the other adherents, these rooms are spartan, but the adjusting undead are allowed personal items that help them connect to their former lives. The PCs can find the following in these rooms: a chess set with pieces of carved black onyx and ivory worth 50 gp, a pair of opera glasses worth 20 gp, a pair of fur-lined boots worth 15 gp, and a framed painting of wild horses in a meadow worth 10 gp.

AREA 14: PRISON CELL

This room contains a straw pallet and a pair of buckets. A set of manacles is affixed to the wall opposite the door.

The door to this room is locked. The key on the guard in **Area 3** unlocks the door. Alternatively, a successful DC 15 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check picks the lock. **Giselle Reinherz** (see **Appendix**), a paladin of Lada and former traveling companion of Salamondre, was captured by the bard and shackled in this room to await her turn to be corrupted and transformed into an undead servant by the *Thrice-Cursed Heart*. If rescued, she takes whatever gear the PCs offer and joins them in facing Salamondre.

AREA 15: BRIDGE TO THE INNER SANCTUM

This stone bridge arches over an underground stream, bronze railings lining either side. At the far end, an iron portcullis blocks access to the room beyond.

The portcullis is heavy and forged of iron with AC 19, 27 hp, and a damage threshold of 5. A successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check lifts it, but it drops back into place immediately after being released. The lever to raise and lower the portcullis can be seen inside the hall on the other side.

AREA 16: SHRINE OF THE SONG UNDYING

This octagonal room is lit by a magnificent crystal chandelier suspended from the center of the ceiling. A bright light pours out from the center of layers of hanging crystals, painting the walls with rainbows of light. An ethereal tune fills the room, seeming to come from nowhere and everywhere at once.

The light and music come from the *Thrice-Cursed Heart* (see **Appendix**), which is nestled at the center of the chandelier. Salamondre is a **virtuoso lich** (see *Tome of Beasts 2*) and chooses music as his artistic expression each day (which makes thunder his Versatile Artist damage type). He is usually found here, working on his control of the *Heart* or restoring his form after a session

working on one of his undead minions. If Salamondre is not here, the room is quiet and unlit as the *Heart* is locked in its box in the reliquary (see **Area 17**).

If confronted here, Salamondre fights but not before attempting to convince the PCs to join him. He states they simply do not understand what he is trying to achieve. He tells them he can provide a world without death and suffering if they simply allow him to continue his work. Even if Giselle is present, he makes the effort. He implores her to allow him to work her goddess's will. It must be Lada's will, after all, if the object bears her name. Giselle refuses and doesn't back down from her mission. Once he has made his plea and is rejected, Salamondre allows no further discussion. Only total surrender stops him from attempting to utterly destroy Giselle and the PCs.

Choir. Four of Salamondre's choir (see **Area 18**) wander this room, humming and singing. Their voices seem to disappear into the melody of the *Heart*, absorbed, changed, and echoed by it. While at least two of Salamondre's choir are within 30 feet of him and he can hear them, he can use his lair action that requires nearby artistic expression (in his case, the song of the choir). If none of his choir are within 30 feet of him, he can use a lair action to call four of his choir from **Area 18**. If called while Salamondre is in **Areas 16**, **17**, or **19**, the choir members arrive on initiative count 10. If Salamondre calls them from a different part of the monastery, the four choir members arrive in 1d4 rounds.

AREA 17: RELIQUARY

Tables holding religious items and musical instruments sit on either side of this room. Tall wardrobes flank the door. A pair of iron doors stand in the western wall, and an iron box sits on a pedestal in an alcove in the wall.

The locked iron box holds the *Thrice-Cursed Heart* when not in use. Salamondre carries the only key. Alternatively, a successful DC 20 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check picks the lock. The wardrobes hold various ceremonial vestments for Salamondre and other members of the cult. The tables hold altar vestments, candles, and other temple accoutrements.

AREA 18: THE CHOIR ROOM

This wide hall holds wooden choral risers that stand against its back wall. The high walls are draped with cloth hangings, and banners with the scroll-wrapped globe symbol hang from the vaulted ceiling.



The lesser choir of the Song Undying stands in this room, humming and singing. The choir consists of 20 **hollow ones** (see **Appendix**), though some help or provide music for Salamondre in **Area 16** as he works with the *Heart*, enhancing his sound-based magic. The hollow ones are the dead that Salamondre has begun to bring back with the *Heart's* help, but their bodies are not yet complete. He has given them their lungs, tongues, and vocal cords though, so they may participate in the choir, but they have little else. Each is covered in a shell of skin that gives a human appearance but is easily torn away to reveal the undead creature beneath. They remain here unless commanded to leave, providing their song to boost Salamondre's power, and they defend themselves if attacked.

AREA 19: SALAMONDRE'S SANCTUM

This room holds several cabinets and a table covered in piled papers and scrolls. Steps lead to a raised dais at the far end of the room, which holds a divan, a wardrobe, and a small table holding a gold bowl and ewer.

Salamondre retires to this room when he wishes to be alone. The papers and scrolls on the table are portions of his research, which reference the *Thrice-Cursed Heart* as "Lada's Heart." They also cover many of the locations

that he explored during his adventuring years, including a few places he had yet to visit. If you wish to place a map or notes to direct the PCs to a specific adventure location, you can insert them among Salamondre's things.

Treasure. The golden ewer and bowl are worth a total of 500 gp.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Once Salamondre's body has been destroyed, Giselle urges the PCs to collect the *Thrice-Cursed Heart* and return with her to Zobeck with all due haste. It is possible to reach the city before Salamondre has time to rejuvenate but only if the PCs hurry. Even a short delay could result in the virtuoso lich returning before they've had a chance to destroy the *Heart* and another battle with him (though at least one without the advantages of his lair).

Once contacted by the PCs or Giselle, Milos retrieves Marko (and Conte, on the chance he still lives) and meets with them at the temple of Lada. There, the *Thrice-Cursed Heart* is laid on the floor of the temple before the altar, and Marko steps on it, crushing it to bits as if it were nothing more than a real egg. There is a blast of light and a burst of sound as three wisps of black smoke rise from the remains of the egg, and then nothing. The pieces are taken away by the priests to be burned in a forge. Giselle thanks the PCs for their aid. If Conte is there, he takes Marko home. The PCs receive a 1,000-gp reward from the Vacarro family majordomo for protecting Marko. (This increases to 2,500 gp if Conte is still alive as he gently insists the PCs are paid their due.) Giselle thanks them again then takes her leave, needing time to recuperate and to mourn a lost friend.

THE THRICE-CURSED HEART

This jeweled egg was originally created by a master goldsmith, a faithful servant of Lada, as an act of devotion. Her fervent devotion and unmatched skills put in service to her goddess brought her to the attention of Lada herself. Fascinated by the work, the goddess imbued her power within the object, intending it to be an instrument of peace, love, and healing. The goldsmith named it *Lada's Heart*. However, the goldsmith's work also gathered the attention of Lada's enemies, those her church calls the three evil sisters: Marena, Sarastra, and the White Goddess. They were furious at the thought of such a symbol of Lada's power being present in the world. They worked together to corrupt the egg, adding their own magics to twist and warp the original intent of the item, and transformed it into a subtle, corrupting evil item, veiled by beauty. Thus, it became the *Thrice-Cursed Heart* (see also **Appendix**).

Lada's priests took the corrupted item and hid it deep in the deserts of the Southlands, hoping no one would ever find it. Years ago, Salamondre's group stumbled upon its resting place while trying to find sanctuary from a sandstorm in the desert. The *Heart*, sensing the conflict in Salamondre's soul, called out to him with a melody only he could hear. He led his group deeper into the complex to where it rested. Not recognizing the ancient, magical runes surrounding it until it was too late, the group was caught unaware by the magical backlash that collapsed the complex. Salamondre escaped, the *Heart* tucked safely in his cloak, with the help of the group's only other survivor: Giselle.

When Salamondre performed the funerary dirge for their fallen companions, the *Heart* awakened and bound itself to the bard, embracing and nurturing the conflict and fear growing within Salamondre. As it awakened, it slowly and subtly changed Salamondre's form into the undying menace that leads the Song Undying cult. When its power changed his form, the *Heart's* own form changed to become his phylactery, the housing for what remained of his corrupted soul. Now, the *Heart* amplifies and feeds Salamondre's fear of death by slowly changing those near it into undead with some memories of their former lives—corrupted and lesser versions of Salamondre's new undead form. Bound to him body and soul, the *Heart* can be destroyed only by someone of his bloodline with an innocent heart. While it remains whole, Salamondre can't be truly defeated.

The egg itself is fashioned of gold and platinum, detailed with colored enamel and set with tiny jewels. Hinged doors open to reveal a gold orb suspended in the middle of the egg by chains of white gold. The orb has a hidden door that opens to reveal a gold, clockwork heart. A tiny turnkey protrudes from it. If this key is turned, the heart beats, creating music. A chain of metal beads (each containing a scrap of paper with musical notes) is wrapped about the heart within the orb, an ornamentation that appeared after the *Heart* bound itself to Salamondre.

RED LENNY'S FAMOUS MEAT PIES

There something not quite right about this place. Can the PCs save the region's travelers from a pair of fiendish predators?

This adventure is suitable for four PCs of 8th level.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Located on the road between Zobeck and Khorsburg, Red Lenny's is one of the most popular taverns of the Crossroads. It's built into a hill, like any respectable halfling establishment, and is famous for its rich beer and hearty meat pies. Savvy players may quickly guess that "Red" Lenny Choppem's famous meat pies are made from the flesh of his patrons. Less obvious is who is committing the murders. Lenny is a devilbound gnome prince that has shaved his beard and is pretending to be a halfling (he is bound to his kishi demon, rather than a devilish imp).

Kishi, Lenny's partner in crime, appears to be a bard with a stunning physique and long, black hair that cascades down his back. His hair conceals a hyena's face protruding from the back of his head. He sings rapturously in front of the tavern's grand fireplace and lures the customers that fawn over him into his room where he satiates his foul appetite.

CONTROL YOUR APPETITE!

"*Four more for you, Lenny,*" said the two-faced man, unceremoniously throwing four half-eaten halflings on the butcher block. "*They were rich, judging by the jewels on the lady and the fat on the man's bones. Good marbling too.*"

The red-faced halfling's eye twitched as he scowled. "*Kishi, you blockhead. You've stripped nearly every scrap of meat off these bones. You expect me to use the giblets? You must learn to control your appetite!*"

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

This adventure especially is best when driven by the PCs' actions. Lenny and Kishi are certainly not looking to get caught. They've been at this for a while and have gotten good at hiding their activities in plain sight, so they're not likely to easily give themselves away. But of course, their luck and skill can only carry them so far.

For added effect, this tavern could be one that the party has visited before—maybe regularly—on their travels to and from Zobeck, so when the gruesome discoveries are made, there's added emotional investment for the PCs.

PLOT HOOKS

To get the mystery of the meat started, here are a few possible ways to bring in the PCs:

- The PCs pass by Red Lenny's Tavern and Inn on the way back to Zobeck after an adventure, stopping for a hot meal, a soft bed, and a song. While there, they realize that something in the pie tastes funny . . .
- The mother of a woman killed by Kishi and butchered by Red Lenny hands the PCs a *+1 longsword* and says, "They say she was last seen along the road north of Khorsburg. Slaughter the demon that did this to my daughter." She is speaking metaphorically, but it turns out that Kishi really is a demon.
- If the PCs are regulars, perhaps there's been a string of small oddities and mishaps throughout their visits that are starting to add up, making them suspicious.

AREAS OF THE TAVERN

The tavern is warm, well-lit, and homey. Its public areas are all carpeted, but its private rooms all have smooth, easily cleaned tile floors. Red Lenny and Kishi both have a ring of keys that open all doors in the tavern.

AREA 1: MUDROOM

Two dozen or so cloaks hang on hooks lining the walls of this mudroom, each with a set of boots beneath it. The sound of music and dancing filters in from a nearby room.

One of the cloaks in this room is a **cloaker** that only attacks at Lenny or Kishi's command.

AREA 2: FRONT DINING ROOM

Three families are dining quietly in this cozy dining room.

One family, a man and woman with a small child, are **doppelgangers**. They are spies hired by Red Lenny to make sure no authorities or suspicious-looking mercenaries interfere with his murderous operation. If the PCs ask too many questions about Red Lenny or missing persons, they begin to subtly tail the PCs, switching appearances as needed.

A trapdoor beneath the northern table leads into the doppelgangers' secret residence. It has five bunks and contains all the necessities of life, plus 10d6 gp worth of coins and gold trinkets.

AREA 3: PRIVATE DINING ROOM

This dining room is separated from the rest of the tavern by a heavy oak door carved with the image of an owl. A window in the eastern wall looks out at the stable.

This room's door has no lock but can be barred with a heavy oak shaft (100 hp). A successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check force it open when barred.

The table is a **mimic** that only attacks or animates at Lenny or Kishi's command.

AREA 4: TAPROOM

Jovial patrons drink colorful beverages at the bar and dance in the hallway of this large taproom. Some have found a quiet corner to embrace amidst the revelry. The bar at its center is tended by a red-faced halfling. An animated suit of armor carries a platter with steaming pasties and places it on the bar where a gaggle of hungry guests gobble them up. In the far west of the room, a bard with flowing black hair sits in front of the grand fireplace, strumming an intense melody on his mandolin while singing bawdy lyrics over the din of the room. A group of adoring fans gather around him.

An open hallway leads into a kitchen where pies are being assembled, a closed door is marked "Lavatory," and a pink curtain blocks sight into another hallway.

The halfling tending the bar is Red Lenny (**devilbound gnomish prince**, see *Tome of Beasts*), and while the drinks he is serving are perfectly tame, the pies are made from the flesh of murdered humanoids. He has no evil schemes except to delight in the silent joy of serving humanoid flesh to his patrons. He keeps a watchful eye on the kitchen to keep any customers from entering.

The dark-haired man is Kishi (**kishi demon**, see *Tome of Beasts*). He keeps a spear and a plain, unadorned shield next to him. He is trying to discern which of his adoring fans are here alone. When he does, he casts *glibness* (or in a pinch, *dominate person*) and lures them into his room (see **Area 7b**) where he kills and devours them.




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The partiers are mostly new arrivals or have been recommended to the tavern by friends. None of the patrons know of Red Lenny and Kishi's evil actions, for they only prey upon people with no companions. Two of the patrons are **doppelgangers** that instigate partying and seek out companionless visitors to report to Kishi.

AREA 5A: PASTRY KITCHEN

Three suits of animated armor roll dough, stuff it with meat, and put the pies into the oven.

The three **animated armors** cannot speak and do not acknowledge other creatures' presence unless it interferes with their duties—in which case they attack. They continue attacking as long as the creature continues to interfere with their duties. If the creature retreats, they will not pursue it. If they reduce a creature to 0 hit points, they knock it out instead of killing it.

AREA 5B: MEAT KITCHEN

Corpses hang on meat hooks from the ceiling, dripping blood and gore onto the tile floor. Three large bowls filled with raw, diced meat sit atop the blood-soaked counters, ready to be seared on the cooking range.

This room is locked at all times, but a successful DC 20 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check picks the lock. The **animated armors** in **Area 5A** attack any creatures they see open the door, except for Lenny and Kishi.

Lenny has trapped the room with a **gnarljak** (see *Tome of Beasts*). Additionally, one of the bowls contains old meat that has fused together into a **sarcophagus slime** (see *Tome of Beasts*). The spirits of the people killed to make this meat were strong enough to create a rage-fueled composite undead sentience in an attempt to get revenge on Red Lenny. Unfortunately, it is not intelligent enough to discern one creature from another and attacks any living intruders.

AREA 5C: STORAGE

Kitchenware, alcohol, and spices are stored here.

AREA 6: LAVATORY

This lavatory is spotless.

One of the **doppelgangers** living in the tavern keeps this area tidy.

AREA 7A: GUEST QUARTERS

These rooms are simple but comfortable and clean. Each contains a bed with a straw mattress and feather-stuffed pillows, a nightstand, a table bearing toiletries and a pitcher of ale, and a chamber pot.

Each door is fitted with a shoddy lock. A successful DC 13 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check picks the lock.

AREA 7B: LENNY AND KISHI'S QUARTERS

This lavish room has two feather beds with silky sheets.

Kishi brings his prey here late at night. Lenny uses *prestidigitation* to keep the room free of blood. A treasure chest underneath Lenny's bed contains assorted coins and jewelry (1,500 gp total) taken from Kishi's victims.

This room is locked at all times. A successful DC 20 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check picks the lock.

AREA 8: LENNY'S WORKSHOP

The small workroom contains neatly stashed tools and an assortment of tomes.

Lenny uses this small room to repair his constructs and perform fiendish research. Many texts on demonology can be found here, including a *spell scroll of planar binding*.

This room is locked at all times, but its lock can be picked by making a successful DC 20 Dexterity check with thieves' tools.

Trap. If a humanoid that is not a gnome enters this room, it is caught in a 5-foot-diameter glyphic circle on the floor, which can be spotted with a successful DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check, and must make a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the creature is trapped in the circle for 1 hour, and Lenny receives a psychic alarm. The circle creates an enclosed cylindrical wall of force that is 5 feet in diameter and 10 feet tall.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

With Lenny and Kishi gone, there's a perfectly good tavern not being used. If the doppelgangers are still alive, they'd be thrilled to take over the operation as a legitimate tavern, working for the PCs if they are interested in staking a claim on the property. If the PCs are uninterested, any surviving doppelgangers will take over as the owners, perhaps impersonating relatives of Lenny's if his actions were largely kept secret.

REBUILDING A GOOD MAN

Time is critical to get a man's soul into a gearforged body before he dies. Can the PCs gather the essential parts all while preventing a thief from stealing the body?

This adventure is suitable for four PCs of 9th level.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Nyerta has come to Zobeck under orders from their master, a king from the east who wishes to place all his wives into golden clockwork bodies. Nyerta is here to steal a gearforged body as a blueprint for his golem crafters and powdermen, without Zobeck's leaders knowing of the deed. She has approached the Painted Man, whom she knows from past dealings, and leveraged old pacts to force the Master of the Black Lotus to aid her. No one makes the Painted Man a servant though, and while bound by arcane laws not to strike against her directly, the Painted Man plans to pull down his new "master" with a whisper.

Heet Nul. After a lifetime of good deeds, Heet Nul is dying. He'd started with one river barge 65 years ago and now owns a small flotilla of trading vessels along with warehouses, storefronts, and offices. His Nul Shipping Company has become well loved by the poor, for it sponsors many soup kitchens, orphanages, and job fairs. All that will end when he passes away and his black-hearted grandson Remmee Nul takes ownership. That is, unless Heet's company manager and close friend Michul Obbin can get the PCs to help him with his unorthodox plan.

The week Heet took to his bed, the Painted Man approached the heartbroken Michul. While purchasing passage to smuggle Nyerta and her men downriver after the heist, he "accidentally" let slip too much information about the theft. Cunningly, he gave the desperate Michul the idea of defeating Nyerta's men and stealing the gearforged body to house Heet's soul and made Michul think the idea was his own. The next morning, Michul calls on the PCs for help.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

After accepting Michul's proposal, the PCs acquire the gearforged body to help the poor of Zobeck by robbing the foreign thieves, confronting them as they return to the Black Lotus while Nyerta is engaged with the Painted Man. After bringing the construct to Michul at Heet's bedside though, they discover the body is incomplete, and the PCs must quickly search all over Zobeck for the materials to finish it and place Heet's soul inside before he inevitably passes away.

The PCs must go in many directions to gather what they need in a hurry: first kidnapping the drunken geargrinder Shean Dulak at the Silk Scabbard while being hounded by bully boys sent by Heet's grandson Remmee, then crashing an upscale party at Hommal's botanical rooftop and robbing him of plant oils needed by Shean, and finally to the Cartways Black Market and the alchemist shop of Joony Verasso to gather last minute items while being hunted by Nyerta. The longer the PCs take, the less chance the weakened soul will have to enter the gearforged body. During the soul transfer, Remmee Nul comes to end his grandfather's life, but he must get through the PCs first.

PLOT HOOKS

At the beginning of this adventure, Michul contacts the party for help based on any number of reasons:

- The PCs have gained a reputation for accomplishing impossible jobs.
- One of the PCs is related to Michul or the Nul family.
- The PCs have been helped by Nul Shipping Company charities earlier in their lives.
- The PCs have aided Nul Shipping Company before with delicate matters.
- Remmee Nul is a hated enemy.
- A PC owes a debt to the Painted Man and this "favor" is the payment.

PART 1: STEALING STOLEN GEARS

Michul approaches the PCs through one of Zobeck's confidential messenger companies, likely the Masters of Small Matters. A successful DC 13 Intelligence check tells them everything they want to know about Nul Shipping, including Heet's reputation among the poor. If the check succeeds by 5 or more, the PC also identifies Michul as Heet's associate and friend.

The PCs meet Michul at a small Nul company office at the docks. Michul explains that his master Heet Nul is dying from old age, and his physicians don't expect him to live out the night. He then explains his plan to the PCs—to remove Heet's soul and place it within a gearforged body, a body that is going to be stolen by a group of foreign thieves this very night. Michul does not know where the thieves are acquiring the body in the Gear District, but he knows that they are bringing it to the Black Lotus in Lower Zobeck and suggests the PCs ambush them there.

Unsure of the Painted Man's level of involvement or power, Michul stresses not making an enemy of him if possible. Michul is very upset, a combination of grief and agitation over the mission. He does not mention Remmee Nul nor his relationship to the situation unless pressed. Michul believes that swift action will get everything done before Remmee can find out.

AMBUSH AT THE BLACK LOTUS

It's just before midnight, and a cold, wet mist thickens the air. The streetlamp near the front of the Black Lotus blankets the building in a soft yellow light, but even just a few feet away, the street lies under large and heavy shadows. Some of the watch passed a few minutes ago, but no one else seems to be about, the damp and chill keeping everyone indoors.

To distract Nyerta, the Painted Man has taken her and some of her followers to the ship Michul has falsely given them to make their getaway. He times this perfectly using divination, so the PCs will not see him or Nyerta unless they go to the ship. There he seduces the devil in the captain's cabin, so she will not make it back to the Black Lotus for an hour or more.

Nyerta has entrusted the actual theft to several of her master's mortal minions. The Jade Mouth servants are slaves who follow orders without question. They speak only when spoken to by their masters, which in Zobeck is only Nyerta. They don't fear death, only the rebuke of their masters. Their traditional dress involves covering their upper faces with a porcelain mask and capping their teeth in jade.

The efreeti Lasif, indentured to the eastern king along with Nyerta, is posing as one of the Jade Mouth to ensure the mission's success. No one in the group, including Nyerta, knows Lasif's true power. **Lasif** is an **efreeti**, adding the following action:

- ***Change Shape (3/Day).*** Lasif magically transforms into a Medium or Small humanoid or back into her true form. Her statistics, other than her size, are the same in each form. Any equipment she is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. She reverts to his true form if she dies.

Lasif's indenture means she can't *plane shift* without permission. She has used her Change Shape to appear as a human and refrains from using overly destructive magic near the Black Lotus.



At the Black Lotus (see map in **Chapter 4**), one **Jade Mouth servant** (see **Appendix**) keeps watch from a window in **Area 3** for the others to return, bow in hand. (Nearby buildings and rooftops might come into play for this encounter.) For the first 3 rounds, the Jade Mouth take the following actions:

- ***Round 1.*** Two additional **Jade Mouth servants** leap to the roof of the Black Lotus from the top of a nearby building. One servant carries the arms and legs of the gearforged body on his back. The other carries the head and torso.
- ***Round 2.*** One servant climbs down to the windowsill of **Area 4** and enters the Black Lotus.
- ***Round 3.*** The second servant follows the first from the roof through the window as Lasif leaps onto the roof.

Lasif and the Jade Mouth servant standing watch try to hold off the PCs as the other two go after Nyerta, who they believe is in the basement of the Black Lotus. Upon discovering their master gone, they try to flee to the ship, and Lasif will use everything she has, including *conjure elemental* and *wall of fire*, to help the Jade Mouth escape with the gearforged parts before entering melee herself.

The sounds of combat, displays of power, and cries of the wounded cause the neighborhood people to peer out windows and doorways to see what's going on. Some will go to fetch the watch, who arrive in 10 minutes. Lasif flees if she falls below 20 hit points or if the watch arrives.

While jumping across rooftops, the cultists attack PCs with poison arrows while trying to make off with the gearforged parts. These expert thieves follow their master's orders absolutely, never fearing pain or death. Each cultist carries a *potion of invisibility*, which they'll use if it could help them to escape.

If one of the cultists gets away, the PCs find them and a number of watch dead just down the street, having killed each other. Witnesses will see the PCs loot the gearforged body parts and report them to the Spyglass Guild as "involved" in the guards' deaths, causing problems for them later. If Lasif escapes, she is not found but returns to Nyerta defeated and without the gearforged body. Any time spent chasing down the fleeing thieves wastes time that Heet does not have, adding a 4% failure chance to the soul transfer process.

Treasure. Each cultist carries five poisoned arrows, a silvered dagger, a *potion of invisibility*, 50 feet of silk rope, a grappling hook, and 11 gp in mixed coins. Their teeth are capped with jade (worth 55 gp per mouthful).

PART 2: PLACING MANY PARTS

The job seems finished after delivering the gearforged body to Michul at the dock office. Michul becomes frantic, however, when a quick inspection of the body reveals it's missing fluids and a large chest piece along with being mostly disassembled. Michul will need a geargrinder to assess the situation, and it must be someone whose reputation is already so damaged that they have nothing to lose by handling the stolen gearforged body. Michul knows of only one such engineer: Shean Dulak.

Just a few months ago, Dulak was the most promising geargrinder of the new generation. However, when a guard killed Shean's friend at the Dwarven Gate over a minor disagreement and then was released without punishment after a sham investigation of the event, the engineer vowed revenge. A short time later, every clockwork guard Shean had ever worked on attacked and killed the man. The gearforged guards had no memory of the murder, and no one could prove that Shean had a hand in it. Nevertheless, other engineers were certain he was guilty, and that was enough to destroy his reputation. Private individuals and the city's government couldn't trust Shean not to tamper with any gearforged.

He now drinks himself into a stupor nightly at the Silk Scabbard. Michul needs the PCs to fetch Shean, willingly or otherwise. Michul gives the PCs 500 gp to pay Shean for one night's work but stresses speed. Heet is running out of time.

Unfortunately, one of Michul's underlings is an informant for Jayzel. Jayzel knows all Michul's dealings and in turn has been selling that information to Remmee Nul. Remmee, who terribly wants his inheritance, is enraged by the news of the gearforged body for his grandfather and sends some highly skilled cutthroats to the Silk Scabbard to take care of the PCs and Shean Dulak.

LEAVING THE SILK SCABBARD

The thick-armed, wide-shouldered bouncer openly holds his sap with his arms crossed. The room smells of wine, sweat, and smoke, and half-clothed women lounge around the place in exotic poses. A gaggle of greasy patrons crowd the edge of the fighting pits and the viewing rail above, cheering for blood.

The midnight crowd is in full swing. Shean (**noble**) is at a small table near the fighting pits and very drunk. At first, he refuses to go with the PCs, but then he asks them to get him back in Madam Kajya's good graces. A



week ago, Shean drunkenly tripped and fell, hurting one of the Scabbard's more popular prostitutes, and Kajya cut him off from the girls. He wants the PCs to fix that. If they can get him into the back rooms, he will leave with them for 300 gp.

Shean Dulak, because he's drunk, is poisoned for the next hour.

Madam Kajya can be persuaded to let Shean in through the back entrance with a really good argument or with a successful DC 18 Charisma (Persuasion) check. Unfortunately, Shean tries drunkenly to talk to Madam Kajya along with the PCs. If they don't shut him up quickly, they have disadvantage on any Charisma checks with Kajya, for she dislikes drunks in general and Shean in particular. Letting Shean inside for a romp uses up extra time and adds a 4% failure chance to the *soulforging* ritual (see *Midgard Heroes Handbook* for more details on the *soulforging* ritual).

Taking Shean out by force is much quicker, but if the PCs make a scene, the Scabbard's bouncer (**gladiator**) bans them from the Silk Scabbard indefinitely. Drunk as he is, Shean will not fight back, but he yells and makes a loud show as the PCs drag him out unless the PCs threaten to kill him, in which case he shuts up at once.

Two of Remmee's cutthroats (**veterans**) are inside the bar near the door and two more are in the street. When the PCs and Shean appear ready to leave, the group inside signals their friends, and they all drink their *potions of invisibility*. They attack as the PCs leave, trapping them in the doorway. Once the fight moves out of the doorway, the cutthroats focus their attacks against the least-armored PC. The last cutthroat standing flees back to report to Remmee.

Development. Once Shean reaches the office, he looks over the gearforged body and gets to work, strangely excited about doing his job again. He explains as he works that the needed spells were forged into the parts and runes placed upon them. A gearforged, in its simplest definition, is a thousand tiny magic items placed together. He makes a list of what he needs to finish the body and complete the soul transfer: a clockwork heart, oil from the belladonna plant, and 10 vials of reagents.

Acquiring these things in the middle of the night seems unlikely without tipping off the Spyglass Guild that Michul and the PCs have the stolen the gearforged body, but Shean thinks he knows where the PCs can get everything.

Remembering that Heet could pass at any moment, the PCs might feel the need to split up, which speeds up the process but makes the adventure much harder. If they decide to split up to gather items, subtract 15% from the failure chance of the *soulforging* ritual.

JOONY'S POTIONS & POWDERS

Michul knows of a potion shop that would not mind opening in the middle of the night. Joony's Potions & Powders, a small establishment, has fallen on hard times since the owner's son fell ill. Everyone knows Joony has spent most of the shop's funds on healing for the boy.

Even now, in the middle of the night, a light burns behind the curtained windows of Joony's shop. The wooden sign squeaks as it slowly swings in the cold wind. Inside, Joony sits at his alchemist station behind the counter, brewing up something that smells caustic. He welcomes you with a smile and asks how he may help you this night. His son holds a ratty stuffed bear as he sleeps restlessly in a corner.

Joony Verasso will gladly tell the PCs all his troubles. Trolls killed his wife the last time he brought wares to smaller towns in the far north, and his son Carlen would have died in the attack as well if not for Joony's alchemical fire. Carlen took sick on the return trip and became bedridden. Though various priests and alchemists in Zobeck have tried healing him, Carlen always becomes sick again within days. Joony is at a loss and has gone broke from constantly caring for his son.

To help pay the bills, Joony will try to sell the PCs diluted reagents at the full price. A successful DC 13 Wisdom (Insight) check sees through his lie. If the PCs fail to detect the deception, they see only that Joony is terribly worried about his son, which is true. He will not cheat the PCs if they offer to heal his son. Once the PCs have the reagents, a little study and a successful DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals the dilution. If they pass any of these checks and call him out, Joony protests for a moment but quickly admits the falsehood, saying he wouldn't have cheated them but needs the money for his son. He then replaces the diluted reagents with full-strength versions from behind the counter.

Development. Young Carlen has troll worm caused by spores from mushrooms that grow in troll dung in the far north. The disease is practically unknown in Zobeck, so no one knows how to treat it. The spores take root in the fur of passing animals, and the pelt of such an animal was eventually used in making Carlen's toy bear, which he sleeps with every night. A careful inspection of Carlen's toys and a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Medicine) check reveals the telltale signs, if one knows what to look for, of the spores on the bear. All of Carlen's personal items (including the bear) must be burned, or no amount of treatment will prevent the disease from recurring. If PCs cure young Carlen but don't destroy the bear, he sickens again within days, and Joony accuses them of being charlatans.

If PCs leave Joony's with the diluted reagents, Shean discovers the mistake just before the *soulforging* ritual starts. Using these or fetching new reagents adds a 10% failure chance to the ritual. If the PCs return to Joony's and explain, he repents of his trickery and shamefacedly hands over the needed reagents.

PCs should get an experience bonus of 2,000 XP if they cure Carlen and burn the toy bear.

TO HAVE A HEART

Shean sold a clockwork heart to Nake Boan of the Merchant Consortium in the Cartways Black Market (see Cartways Black Market map in **Chapter 4**) when he realized he was going to be fired and directs the PCs there. The Cartways Black Market does most of its business at night since it requires torches and lanterns anyway, and the customers are usually running a business or working during the day. Shean believes Boan will still have the heart, given that only a few months have passed, and the item is terribly expensive.

Michul gives the PCs 10,000 gp for the part but lets them know this will greatly hurt the Nul Shipping Company and its community projects. Also, if they spend this money and Heet is not saved, Remmee will not only kill them (which he plans to do anyway) but will go after all those close to the PCs, looking for compensation. He insists that they should try to haggle with Nake Boan and clumsily hints that he'd give them 5% of the saved money if they outright stole the needed part. Shean gives the PCs a password for Nake's customers for the gate guard: "Paradise."

Entering the Cartways Black Market, a thousand smells hit you all at once. Spices, filth, perfumes, and kobold cooking overwhelm your nose. Pale lanterns of every color light the tents, wagons, and shanties, and the warm, thick air is a welcome change from the wet mist outside. Slaves wearing thick iron chains watch a column of porters with heavy baskets step over a body still trickling blood in the thoroughfare.

When the PCs arrive, Nake Boan (**noble**) is half asleep in his dimly lit tent (see **Area 7**) and talking to a broad-shouldered man in fine clothes and a shirt of rings, Radu Underhill. Radu will remain for the negotiations, posing as Nake's guard. Nake allows only two PCs inside the tent at a time. He offers them the clockwork heart for 15,000 gp but increases the price to 20,000 gp if the PCs reveal that they must have it tonight.

A successful DC 16 Charisma (Persuasion) check brings the price down by 3,000 gp, but only persuasive roleplaying will lower it further. Nake is willing to take magic items as part of his payment. He also offers an alternative deal: if the PCs accept the Merchant Consortium's guard duties on the watch platforms for the next two years, he'll sell the heart for 7,000 gp and will get Market "Mayor" Vukas himself to write up the blood contract.

If threats are made, Nake simply rings a small gong, and guards (four **veterans**) arrive in 3 rounds. If he's attacked and doesn't have a chance to ring for help, Nake cowers and tells the PCs to take whatever they want. If a fight lasts more than 3 rounds, the guards arrive anyway. PCs who haven't killed Nake and who don't resist the guards are just escorted out of the Black Market and warned not to come back. Otherwise, the guards attack.

RADU UNDERHILL

Radu listens in on the PCs' exchange with Nake Boan. Nake knows Radu's line of work and doesn't seem to mind. If a fight breaks out though, Radu doesn't get involved on either side. He will protect himself if he is attacked and flees with an *invisibility* spell if he drops below 28 hp. If attacked, Radu goes out of his way in the future to hound the PCs, to spy on them for their enemies, and to persuade merchants in the Black Market and Lower Zobeck to jack up their prices for the PCs by as much as 100%, if they sell to them at all.

Nyerta (**succubus**) and her remaining four **Jade Mouth servants** (see **Appendix**) are also in the Cartways Black Market, looking for clockwork parts. They spot the PCs while exiting the Merchant Consortium's tent from the other side of the guard platform. After violently questioning witnesses of the battle outside the Black Lotus, Nyerta recognizes the PCs and attacks.

Nyerta uses her Etherealness action to maneuver near and attack any obvious spellcasters in the group. One cultist climbs on something high and makes ranged attacks against the PCs with poison arrows while the other three enter melee.

If **Lasif** (see above) is still alive, she attacks whoever hurt her most during their last battle. If the PCs did not start trouble with Nake, the guards help them in this fight, focusing their ranged attacks on one cultist at a time. Otherwise, the guards only enter the fight after one side has clearly lost, when they attack the winning group. Any survivors are cast into the Cartways to fend for themselves.

CRASHING A TREE PARTY

Hommal Agic is known throughout Zobeck for two reasons. First, his beautiful botanical garden sits atop the tenement that he owns (see Hommal's Botanical Rooftop map in **Chapter 4**), with its green houses and flowers blooming all year. A tree even grows from one corner of the roof, reaching over the street. The second reason is that he uses the money earned by selling his exotic plants all around the city to throw lavish parties nearly every night. When Shean was doing well in society, he would often frequent these parties and knows that Hommal's main crop this cycle is belladonna. Shean also knows that Hommal extracts the oil from these plants and stores it somewhere on his botanical rooftop. Now the PCs must obtain a gallon of the belladonna oil to mix with Shean's other reagents.

Hommal is hosting a party tonight, as he has every night this week. No invitation is needed, but Shean lets the PCs know that Hommal fancies his parties high class affairs, and they won't get in without looking the part. Fine clothes will get the PCs in the door. The only type of armor allowed is breastplate.

Eerie music haunts the air as you enter the party. Behind a thousand clouds hangs a giant moon, full and silver above the mist and fog. Nearly 200 people crowd the rooftop, all in pearls and gold and something warm against the night's chill. Some wear jeweled masks and others tall wigs. The smell of flowers and perfume mingles with the guests. Hommal is nowhere to be seen.

Many random events can happen at this party. Feel free to have the PCs run into any NPCs from prior adventures that would be at such a function. The guests of the party, for the most part, stay around **Areas 6**, **9**, and **11**.

Here are some random events that may take place at the party.

d10	Encounter
1	Someone drunkenly falls into the fountain.
2	A PC is offered a free dose of a major drug.
3	A PC is offered sex in one of the tenement rooms downstairs.
4	Someone overturns a lantern, starting a small fire.
5	A nude couple streak across the party.
6	It begins to softly rain, but no one seems to mind.
7	A fight breaks out between two dandies.
8	The PCs are offered hors d'oeuvres from a kobold servant. They are quite tasty.
9	A masked bard sings one of the PCs' favorite songs.
10	Some PCs are pulled to the floor to dance, even if poorly.



The doors to **Areas 5**, **8**, and **10** are locked, requiring a successful DC 15 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check to open and a successful DC 15 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check to prevent anyone from seeing the act. If guests do spot the PC unlocking doors, they alert Hommal's security. The guards (four **veterans**) are indifferent to the PCs when they arrive and merely ask what they are doing. A successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check gets the men to leave but only once. If they're called back, they intend to toss the PCs out of the party. Four of them guard the locked door to **Area 13** and won't let anyone in without a successful DC 15 Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) check.

Hommal is in **Area 13** and emerges after about 15 minutes to find the three PCs that are the most famous, have the highest Charisma score, or are wearing the most expensive outfits. These he invites back to **Area 13**, but he asks the others to remain outside.

In the center of this room is a circular table with two men and a goblin sitting around it. A large fire in the fireplace causes the green and brown glass of the walls to flicker and dance. The men have cups full of bone dice in front of them along with some large piles of coins.

Hommal asks the PCs to play. The three dice players at the table are Ziv the Sly, the goblin Slinger, and Pavic. They don't offer their names, but they introduce themselves if the PCs ask.

The belladonna plant oil is in clearly labeled in 1-gallon casks near the wall. Hommal says that he has promised the plant oils to another customer, but if they play a few throws with the group, they may win a barrel.

The game requires the players to roll any number of d20s they wish, total the dice rolls, and add their Wisdom (Perception) and Charisma (Deception) modifiers to the total. The highest result that doesn't go over 100 wins.

Here is how the NPCs roll:

- Ziv the Sly: 6d20 + 8
- Slinger: 5d20
- Pavic: 7d20 + 6
- Hommal: 7d20 + 3

If a PC wants to cheat, they can adjust their total up or down by a number equal to their Dexterity modifier plus twice their Sleight of Hand proficiency modifier, but a successful DC 13 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check must also be made or one of the NPCs notices the dice manipulation. Anyone caught cheating is ejected from the party by Hommal's guards.

The winner of a round collects 20 gp from everyone else in the game.

If the PCs as a group win six games in a row, Hommal will sell them the belladonna oil for 600 gp.

If the PCs play for more than 30 rolls or leave to steal the oil after the party, add a 4% failure chance to the *soulforging* ritual.

If the PCs decide they would rather fight than gamble, none of the other players challenges them over oil that isn't theirs. Hommal alone is outraged, more embarrassed at being robbed in front of his guests than over the loss of property. He informs the PCs that the oil's rightful owner is a powerful figure in Zobeck (your choice) who won't take kindly to being robbed. If the PCs simply take the oil at sword point, award them only 1,000 XP for the group.

PART 3: BATTLE FOR BODY AND SOUL

Remmee has learned of his cutthroats' failure at the Silk Scabbard and sends men for Michul and his grandfather. He misses them though.

If the PCs stay together, Michul and Shean move everything after the party returns with the second component. If the PCs split up, Michul and Shean move their operation immediately. In the dark hours of the morning, Michul smuggles his beloved friend and his only chance for life into the Old Stross Public Bathhouse (see Old Stross Public Bathhouse map in **Chapter 4**) and

sets up in the massage parlor (see **Area 10**). Read the following when the PCs return with the final item:

You see two massage tables set side by side. One holds Heet, covered with many blankets. The other sags under the weight of the now-assembled iron and brass gearforged body. Michul lights candles as Shean chalks runes on the floor. The faint sound of moving water comes from the nearby rooms.

It takes nearly an hour for Shean to add the heart and fill the tubing with the proper fluids. Shean now discovers the diluted reagents if they haven't been replaced already. Shean asks the PCs to stand outside the room, as the ritual takes over an hour, and he needs to concentrate. Michul remains. Any PC who can cast 4th-level spells can stay to help, making the ritual 4% more likely to succeed per PC. Roughly 45 minutes into the process, **Remmee Nul** (see **Appendix**) and his followers (four **veterans**) walk into the grand lounge (see **Area 4**), having received a tip from a morning bath worker. They attack without discussion or negotiation.

Remmee attempts to avoid fighting personally and tries to reach the massage parlor where he can hear the ritual taking place.

Heet and the gearforged body are as one at the moment while Shean is adjusting the body to best accommodate Heet's soul. Shean will not fight Remmee or his men but hurries to finish the ritual. Michul fights (poorly) only to protect Shean. If Heet or Shean are attacked, increase the failure chance of the ritual by 4% for every hit. Remmee uses his *chime of opening* to open any doors the PCs close and lock between him and his grandfather. Remmee will do anything to see his grandfather dead, so he can gain his inheritance. He fights to the death.

Treasure. Remmee Nul carries a *chime of opening*, a *riverine blade* (see **Chapter 7**), a Nul Shipping Company signet ring (possibly useful for bluffing company guards), and 28 pp.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

After killing or subduing Remmee and his men, calculate the failure chance of the *soulforging* ritual based on the events up to this point and roll d100. A result higher than the failure chance succeeds, and Heet awakens in his new body with all his memories. If the ritual fails by less than 20%, the gearforged body wakes up with Heet's alignment but not his memories or personality, but the memories will return, and the personality develop, over the next few years while Michul runs the company. Failure by 21% or more means Heet passes away from old age, and the gearforged body does not awaken.

The table below lists some of the modifiers that might affect the ritual's success. The base chance for failure begins at 0%.

Chance of Failure	Ritual Modifiers
+10%	The ritual is begun with diluted reagents, or time was spent exchanging reagents.
+8%	One of the Jade Mouth cultists escaped with the gearforged parts and had to be stopped by the city watch.
+4%	The PCs gave Shean time to go into the back rooms.
+4%	The PCs played 30 or more games of dice or came back after the game to steal the oil.
+4%	For every time Remmee struck Heet or Shean during the ritual.
–4%	Per PC able to cast 4th-level spells who helped with the ritual.
–15%	The PCs split up to save time after Shean tells the party which supplies he needs to finish the body.

The total of all modifiers equals the chance for the ritual to fail.

Upon returning to his old life and with a youthful step, Heet rewards the PCs with high places in his company, if they wish, and a sailing ship for the party. He also increases their payment to 4,000 gp every six months if they defeat Remmee without killing him. He offers Shean a permanent position with Nul Shipping, which the man accepts.

If the PCs threatened Shean in the Silk Scabbard, he is indifferent toward them, but otherwise, he is friendly toward them for the rest of their time in Zobeck and will happily assist them whenever he can.

If the PCs ever venture into the Black Lotus again, they see Nyerta's head floating in a jar on the Painted Man's mantle, though he insists he doesn't recall how he got it.

RIPPER

Death stalks the streets of Zobeck, leaving mutilated bodies in its wake and a city in fear, and the watch lean on the party to solve its problems. Can the PCs find and put an end to this depraved killer?

This adventure is suitable for four PCs of 10th level.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

A cult summoned the powerful fiend Xazagra to this world 10 years ago, both to enhance their own power and to spread the influence of the hells. Xazagra proved a cunning leader. Rather than manifest physically, Xazagra allowed its infernal spirit to be housed in a magic dagger. From there, it could possess mortals and lead the cult from the safety of the dagger.

Xazagra used mortal pawns to hunt down any who attempted to avoid paying on infernal pacts they signed. As fear spread up and down the river, the smaller settlements begged Zobeck for help. After a brief reign of terror, the Spyglass Guild eventually sent agents to investigate the killings, and they discovered the truth.

The cultists fought fanatically except for a chosen few commanded to avoid battle and hide. Xazagra would call them back when the time came. The authorities inevitably defeated the small cult, a local guard captain claimed the dagger, and Zobeck's agents returned to report the evil defeated. In truth, the horror was just beginning.

The fiend did not immediately overwhelm the captain who picked up its unholy dagger. At first, the man was not even aware of the devil's presence, only what seemed to be his own thoughts running in new and disturbing directions. The voice in his head encouraged him to aggressively hunt criminals and bring them to justice. Later he found himself dealing out his own justice more often than following protocol. His appetite for killing grew, but he rationalized that evil couldn't be reformed, only destroyed. The voice continued with its suggestions, which seemed so reasonable and natural that the captain felt surprised he hadn't seen things this way before. There were so many evils to set right and so little time. He had to become more efficient in his tasks. It was then the Ripper was born.

The captain left his town to travel the River Argent. It seemed only natural to listen to the voice when it suggested he head to Zobeck. People began disappearing in the small villages along the river. Xazagra sent out the call, and the remaining cultists headed for Zobeck as well. Long before the captain neared the city, he became little more than a shell for the devil's terrible will. Xazagra now revealed itself to him fully, and they began working together.

Now, with a group of infernal cultist followers, the Ripper seeks to make Zobeck into a killing ground. There are those in Zobeck trying to renege on their infernal pacts, but the Ripper is going to make sure that the devils get their due.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

For weeks, a killer has stalked the streets of Zobeck. The deaths seem to have no connection beyond the killer's horrible signature. Each body was left where it was guaranteed to be found after being slashed and mutilated almost beyond recognition.

The killings have garnered enough attention that Zobeck's power brokers can no longer ignore them. The apprentice of a prominent master of the Arcane Collegium recently went missing, and people high and low whisper that his mangled body will soon be displayed for all to see.

While in the Dock District, the PCs get caught up in the middle of a riot. The citizenry plans to lynch a terrified foreigner. Whether or not the party intervenes to save the man, they come into conflict with the corrupt Sergeant Hendryk, who tells the party they can avoid arrest and possibly earn a reward by investigating the murders and hopefully finding the lost apprentice.

Assuming the PCs agree to investigate the murders, Hendryk suggests they start by talking with Sam Nesclem, a local ship captain. Rumors indicate a recent victim came to Zobeck on his steam tug. Nesclem remembers the victim as a rough sort who mentioned his desire to make a name as a pit fighter. Nesclem also tells the party that his ship was vandalized with strange carvings around the same time.

Further investigation could take the party to the location of a murder in the Citadel District or the Arcane Collegium or to local information sources such as Jayzel. The party could even try the Painted Man or their own divinations. Slowly, the PCs discover that all recent victims have a connection with the Silk Scabbard. The gladiator fought there, the courtesan worked there, and the apprentice gambled there. Divinations will not reveal the killer but will identify the next victim: the Silk Scabbard is awash in blood, and the owner Tyron is the next target.

During the investigation, the body of the missing apprentice turns up displayed in the party's path. Is the killer taunting them? The mutilation isn't random: infernal runes are carved into the body. If the body is investigated or disturbed, devils hidden among the crowd attack the party.

Eventually, PCs must head to the Silk Scabbard to confront the devil-possessed killer and his followers. If victorious, the party has the opportunity to find evidence for the reason behind these seemingly random killings, but they're still likely to be left asking—is the danger passed or has it just begun?



PLOT HOOKS

At the beginning of this adventure, the PCs are either residents of Zobeck or are traveling through Zobeck on their way elsewhere. While going about their business in the city, the PCs are swept up in a mob planning to lynch a foreign man blamed for gruesome serial killings. Whether or not the PCs try to save him, they come into conflict with Sergeant Hendryk. He puts the PCs in a difficult situation: they can do it for Zobeck or for themselves, but either way, they will do what he says.

Other motivations might include one of the following:

- Goldscale informs the PCs of a substantial reward offered by the city for the successful apprehension of the killer.
- One of the victims was a friend or a useful associate of the PCs, and they decide to seek their own revenge against the killer.
- The PCs have ties to the Arcane Collegium, and one of the masters asks them to search for the missing student.
- One of the temples asks a pious PC to help put an end to the killings and the fear that grips the streets.

PART 1: RIOT

The adventure begins with the PCs meandering through the Docks District:

The streets of Zobeck's Dock District are their usual chaotic mass of people and animals. Merchants and sailors shove past stevedores and travelers, all dodging carts and horses. As you arrive at an intersection, a large, screaming mob surges past, dragging a bloodied figure in torn clothes from the Mharoti Empire. Several in the mob carry nooses, and they obviously intend to lynch the man. As you watch, a rope flies over the hoist spar of a warehouse, a noose slips around the man's neck, and the mob hoists him off his feet. His legs jerk crazily, and his face quickly turns blue.

This is a precarious position for the party. The mob bursts with fear and anger over the recent murders and the uncertainty of where and when the Ripper will strike next. Mob mentality has firmly taken hold. Individual qualms about violence have vanished beneath bloodlust and a desire to protect themselves. The PCs can either try to save the man or stand by and watch him die. It is all, perhaps, none of their business. No matter what they do though, almost certainly, the man dies, and the PCs then have an uncomfortable meeting with Sergeant Hendryk.

If the PCs attempt to save the victim, they must either fight the **lynch mob** (see **Appendix**) or find some way to calm or distract the mob away from its current course of action. A successful DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check settles the mob. Only one check can be made, but multiple PCs can aid, and good roleplaying should be rewarded with a bonus or advantage on the check. Any attempt to use Intimidation against the mob or to intervene physically quickly causes the mob to turn violent and attack the PCs. Despite their efforts though, no matter what the PCs do, they are too late to save the unfortunate man unless they get him down before the end of the 2nd round. In any event, Sergeant Hendryk and his men arrive on the scene within minutes.

In the most likely event that the PCs are unable to save the man, read the following:

As you watch, the Mharoti man jerks crazily at the end of the rope. Before long, his spasms cease, and the body dangles motionless. The mob mills about angrily for a few minutes before dispersing into the nearby streets and alleys.

Before the PCs can leave the scene, Sergeant Hendryk and his men arrive.

SERGEANT HENDRYK APPLIES PRESSURE

No matter what the PCs did, **Sergeant Hendryk** (see **Chapter 5**) and his men (six **thugs**) surround them:

A group you identify as city watch emerges from a nearby alley, fanning out to surround you. The leader of the group steps in front of you and prominently brandishes his tipstaff. He sneers in a way only a man confident in his authority can sneer.

Hendryk's tactics differ depending on how the PCs dealt with the mob. Hendryk and his men don't actually have the personal power to confront the party, so he relies on the authority of his office and the threat of action by more powerful personages within the city if the PCs don't cooperate:

- If the party used Diplomacy to disperse the mob, Hendryk claims the PCs should have acted decisively to help the man. The PCs' slowness to act led to the man's death.
- If the party used force to disperse the mob, lethal or nonlethal, Hendryk claims they are vigilantes who've injured many citizens of the city.
- If the party did nothing, Hendryk claims they aided in murder by not attempting to help.

Hendryk will first put the screws to the PCs using every threat he can think of to impress upon them the seriousness of the situation. Then, after he has listened to all their arguments, he offers them a way out.

"The way I see it, you lot are criminals, plain and simple, and if I have anything to say about it, you'll spend a nice long time in some dark hole for what happened here today." Hendryk looks about as if watching for something before continuing. "Of course, if you were to do something to make up for it, I might be willing to overlook this."

If the party listens, Hendryk explains that this man was killed because the mob mistakenly thought he was responsible for the Ripper murders. Hendryk wants the PCs to find and stop the real Ripper. He also wants to be given credit for leading the investigation, to further his career. In exchange, he'll give them 60% of the 10,000-gp reward and forget about what happened here today. If they don't follow through, he'll reinstate the charges against them. At no point does he imply that he's looking for a fight here and now, but it should be obvious that Hendryk is an ambitious man with powerful and unscrupulous friends in the city. PCs could easily beat or even kill him if they choose to fight, but no such threats will frighten Hendryk. He knows the repercussions for attacking him would be more than even the PCs could deal with.

Assuming PCs agree to Hendryk's blackmail, he tells them to begin their investigation by talking with Captain Sam Nesclem, who supposedly brought a recent victim to Zobeck on his steam tug. Nesclem and his tug are at the docks on the River Argent.

If the party tells Hendryk to take a flying leap, he arrests them. After a long night in the clink, he makes his offer again. If they resist and escape, they become wanted fugitives for assaulting a watch officer, and Hendryk does his level best to turn every resource of the city against them.

CONTINUING MURDERS

At least one murder should occur during the investigation. The missing apprentice shows up in **Part 3**, and if PCs take an unusually long time to reach **Part 3**, or if they discover the location of the next attack after, then there should periodically be more victims. All information found out about these murders should eventually lead back to the Silk Scabbard.

PART 2: INVESTIGATION

Investigating the murders occupies a large part of this adventure. As residents of the city, for at least a short time, the PCs know some things already. They can learn more through roleplaying and Charisma checks. Other information must be discovered through magic.

Common Knowledge. The following information is commonly known throughout Zobeck about the recent string of murders. They PCs learn any of these details simply by talking to people in the city:

- The killings began about five weeks ago.
- At first, it was only about one victim each week, but recently, the frequency has increased.
- The Ripper is known to have killed eight people.
- All of the Ripper's victims were horribly slashed and mutilated, probably with a very sharp knife.
- The victims are left where they're certain to be found, as if they're being put on display. It seems unlikely that they were killed where they're found, but the actual murder sites haven't been identified.
- Victims have been found in every district of the city. The Ripper seems to have no home district.

Pounding the Cobblestones. PCs can dig up more information with successful Intelligence (Investigation) and Charisma (Persuasion) checks. How these checks are used is up to the GM, but players should specify who they're talking to or at least what type of informant they're looking for (dockworker, streetwalker, healer, city watch, scholar, and so on). These can be roleplayed to the extent desired, but it's best not to just gloss over this type of investigation with rapid, bland skill checks.

Not all this information is entirely accurate, and some can only come from investigating specific locations around the city. The PCs are most likely to investigate Captain Sam Nesclem, the King's Head Tavern, and the Arcane Collegium. They could also visit a local information broker, such as Jayzel. Following are some of the rumors they can pick up:

- The killer is called the Ripper because his victims are always cut and mutilated as if the killer was trying to inflict maximum pain. (True)
- Known victims have been cremated because of the unusual nature of these killings. (True.)
- The victims are all the illegitimate children of powerful people like Lord Greymark. Someone is obviously cleaning house. (False, but Lord Greymark is involved, and he owns the Silk Scabbard.)
- The Ripper must be supernatural because he kills simultaneously in multiple locations. (True and false, for the Ripper is supernatural, but multiple killings are the result of multiple killers.)
- Several victims have been killed in Zobeck. Known Ripper victims include a warrior found near the docks, a young woman found on the streets outside the King's Head Tavern in the Citadel District, and a young wizard who went missing from the Arcane Collegium. (True.)
- Infernal writing has been found at the scene of the murders. The killer is obviously some type of devil. The Collegium has deciphered the writing but is withholding its meaning from citizens because it reveals that a plague of devils is about to descend on the city. If that got out, it would start a panic. (True and false, for the Ripper is possessed by a devil, but there is no imminent attack by a diabolical army.)
- The Ripper wields an unholy weapon that consumes souls. (Technically false but helpful if it points PCs toward the Ripper's devil-inhabited dagger.)

Magical Investigation. At 10th level, the PCs might have access to powerful divination magic. If they don't, the Painted Man certainly does. Here are some examples of how to deal with the most likely spells:

- ***Augury.*** Investigation into the murders will bring "weal" if cast early in the investigation (indicating a successful investigation) and "woe" if cast as the PCs approach **Part 3** or **Part 4** (indicating the upcoming killings).
- ***Commune.*** The answers are "yes," "no," or "unclear," depending on the questions. The only information out of bounds is the exact location of the Ripper, and this answer must be "unclear" because he moves around frequently.
- ***Divination.*** Depending on the questions asked, the following are possible responses: "*The Ripper punishes the guilty*" (a reference to the Ripper's mission) or "*Blood will soak the walls where pleasure, pain, and greed are one*" (a reference to the Silk Scabbard).

CAPTAIN SAM NESCLEM

The PCs probably seek out **Sam Nesclem** (see **Chapter 5**) on the recommendation of Sergeant Hendryk. He can be found on his steam tug at a berth in the Docks District.

At the end of one of the docks along the River Argent, you find the steam tug, Margaret's Dream. The gray-bearded figure of Captain Nesclem is moving about on the deck, an ivory pipe clenched in his teeth and his metal hand glinting in the sunlight.

Sam Nesclem takes any job for the right price, and as soon as he figures out he has something the PCs want, this becomes another job for which he expects payment. If the PCs play it cool, the price stays low: 30–50 gp. The price rises to 200 gp if PCs let slip the matter's importance. Captain Nesclem knows he transported the victim found near the docks and has told authorities as much. He has not said that the man confided in Sam that he planned to make his reputation as a pit fighter.

If PCs ask to search the boat, Nesclem refuses. If PCs ask whether he found anything unusual and pay 50 gp, Nesclem says someone vandalized his boat around the time of the killing. For 500 gp, he sells the vandalized rail, which he replaced but hung onto just in case. Anyone who can read Infernal recognizes the runes as that language, but a successful DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check is needed to decipher the tangled writing as repeating the word *pay* over and over.

Any longtime resident of the city can direct PCs to numerous pit-fighting establishments. Some are regular businesses like sparring gyms, but most are clandestine.

CITADEL DISTRICT: KING'S HEAD TAVERN

The King's Head looks like a typical tavern in the Citadel District: slate roof, half-timbered walls, and a stone foundation. The sign over the door shows a golden crown and the white-haired head of a bearded man. This sense of normalcy quickly fades, however, as one sees the scowling trollwife guarding the door.

Peppercorn (see **Chapter 5**) gives everyone dirty looks and makes a few snide comments, but she allows PCs into the bar. The most important and informative person in the establishment is the bartender Seatia, a dark-haired, middle-aged woman. She vividly remembers the young lady found horribly mutilated in the gutter near their door. The victim, named Sophia, had applied for work at the King's Head the day before, but the owner told her she had the wrong reputation to work at the tavern. Seatia believes Sophia might have worked as a courtesan or more likely a prostitute in Lower Zobeck and the Kobold Ghetto. She came to the King's Head looking to improve her situation. Seatia is cagey about her answers, but she opens up more if she finds out the PCs are not working directly with the watch.

If PCs question Peppercorn, she tells them most of the same information as Seatia. Peppercorn doesn't know the woman's name, and she calls Sophia "*that devil girl*." If asked why, Peppercorn says, "*Devilry was written all over her*." Peppercorn can speak Infernal, and she sprinkles her description of Seatia with Infernal words and phrases.

ARCANE COLLEGIUM

If the PCs go to the Arcane Collegium to inquire about the missing student, they are referred to the office of Master Illusionist Ariella Scarpetti.

Ariella is tall and stately, a middle-aged woman with round features and long silver hair, but given her mastery of illusion, no one can be certain what she truly looks like. Even though you've been told that she is sitting at her desk, she appears to be sitting on a tree stump in the middle of a beautiful glade.

Ariella fears the Ripper killed her apprentice Janos, and she is clearly upset but controlling it well. She also suspected Janos was involved in something other than his studies with her. He kept odd hours and was often away. While such habits are not unusual in Collegium students, this seemed more than youthful exuberance. She checked his room after he disappeared and found betting slips and promissory notes to someone named Tyron. She also learned Janos was seen heading toward Lower Zobeck on many nights. By asking around that part of the city, PCs can learn of Tyron, who works for Lord Greymark.

JAYZEL, INFORMATION BROKER

If the PCs decide to seek out **Jayzel** (see **Chapter 5**), they learn that she's not easy to locate. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) or Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion) check is needed, coupled with interrogating three or more possible informants. Jayzel moves about continually, but she's also a well-known entertainer. Eventually PCs should track her to a popular tavern in the Citadel District.

A tall, raven-haired woman sits in the corner of the tavern's main room. She will not take the stage until after dinner, but she is already performing, in a manner of speaking, for a group of well-dressed and obviously well-to-do admirers who surround her table, vying for her attention.

When the PCs indicate they need to speak with her on business, she pouts prettily and shoos away her admirers. They leave but level dark glares at the party. More than just an entertainer, Jayzel is a shrewd information broker, and her information is never cheap. At least 100 gp must change hands before she reveals anything, but it's guaranteed to be useful. What she tells the PCs depends on what they tell her and what they already know:

- She knows the names of two of the victims. One was Sophia, a prostitute. The most recent was Janos, an apprentice illusionist with a gambling problem.

- If the PCs say they know one victim was a pit fighter, Sophia was a prostitute, and Janos was a gambler, Jayzel suggests they check the Silk Scabbard, it being the only establishment catering to all three vices.
- If PCs relate that they suspect the Ripper is supernatural, she suggests they visit the Black Lotus and speak with the Painted Man instead since supernatural isn't her area of expertise.

BLACK LOTUS AND THE PAINTED MAN

If the PCs should seek out the Painted Man—a mysterious figure from far-off lands and with access to powerful magic—they find him at the Black Lotus (see also **Chapter 4**), the curiosity shop he owns in Lower Zobeck near the border with the Market District.

The Black Lotus is a nondescript, two-story building with a simple wooden door facing the street. The shop's name is painted in Common as well as several other languages on the window facing the street.

Inside, the PCs meet the tall, fat Painted Man. He smells faintly of spices, white paint covers his fleshy face, and symbols of mysterious origin decorate his silk robe. While he may seem different, no one in Zobeck doubts his power, especially his ability to divine the future. The Painted Man will divine the location of the next attack for the PCs—but not for money. He wants a favor.

In his perfectly unaccented speech, the Painted Man says, "I see the future, and it is red with blood. I will tell you the location of the next attack, for a small service."

If the PCs agree, he requests only, "The mask of one of the killers as payment." The next attack will take place at the Silk Scabbard. He warns, "I will be sorely displeased if you fail to procure a mask for my shop." If asked why he said "killers" or what the mask looks like, he simply says, "You will understand when you arrive at the Scabbard. I won't spoil the surprise."

PART 3: HERE THERE BE DEVILS

Read the following after the PCs have investigated Sam Nesclem, ideally before they determine the Silk Scabbard as the site of the next killing, or after they have met with the Painted Man if they skip the encounter with Nesclem.

As you hurry through the streets, you hear screams and cries of alarm from ahead. When you round the corner, you see the bloody form of a naked, spread-eagle man, spiked to the clapboard siding of a shop. Several bystanders stand nearby, white with horror or vomiting in the street.

The Ripper knows he's being tracked. He expects the Spyglass Guild to hunt him again, so he laid a trap, and the PCs have walked into it. Anyone who inspects the body and makes a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check notices a pattern to the lacerations—they aren't random. Once that's known, someone who reads Infernal can make out the word *due* repeated over and over. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check determines the victim wasn't killed here. With so many deep lacerations, blood should be sprayed everywhere, but there's very little blood on the ground.

Unfortunately, a close inspection of the body also triggers an attack by the **erinyes** waiting invisibly nearby. Once she attacks, or if any PCs can see invisible creatures, read the following:

A woman appears suddenly above the body, 10 feet in the air. Enormous blue-gray feathered wings hold her aloft, and ornate armor covers her to the neck. There's a cruel turn to her mouth, and her eyes blaze with fury. The flapping of her wings almost drowns out the sound of her creaking longbow as she draws an arrow to her cheek.

The erinyes attacks anyone who investigates the body. She begins by using her *rope of entanglement* on any obvious spellcaster and then uses her bow from the air or from a nearby rooftop. She breaks off combat and retreats if anyone makes a melee attack against her. If it happens a second time, she flees but remembers and seeks revenge at a later time.

Bystanders who are questioned about the body (if any are still around after the erinyes attacks) say they saw a cloaked figure, nailing the body to the wall. He was not especially tall or imposing, but he easily held the body with one hand and pushed the spikes into the wall without a hammer. Then he vanished into thin air.

This is the first time the Ripper has been seen. A witness comments on that if PCs don't realize it on their own. They may also realize it's no coincidence that the killer displayed a body directly in the path of those who are investigating the killings.

PART 4: SILK SCABBARD

When the PCs approach the Silk Scabbard (see Silk Scabbard map in **Chapter 4**), they witness the following:

The streets outside the Silk Scabbard are pure chaos. People are running out of the front door and screaming for help. Some are obviously injured. Others are covered in blood but appear unharmed. Bystanders nearby take up the cries. The front door lies in pieces on the ground as if frozen and then shattered by some great force. The room beyond is dark, but a thin rivulet of blood leads into the interior.

Assuming the PCs follow the trail of blood into the Silk Scabbard, they arrive at the lower gambling tables (see **Area 9**)

The main room of the Silk Scabbard is empty except for corpses. Several bodies lie on the rough wooden floor. Two others have been prominently nailed to one wall. Obscene but now familiar writing is scrawled in blood between the two bodies.

The PCs can determine the symbols on the wall are Infernal and translate to "Pay devil's due." The Ripper's four devil-masked killers (**cult fanatics**) have spread out and hidden: two are in the fighting pit (see **Area 12**), one is behind the bar (see **Area 11**), and one is in the booths (see **Area 10**). A diabolist (use **void speaker** in *Creature Codex*) and a **barbed devil** lurk at the viewing rail (see **Area 17**) on the second floor. The diabolist used a *spell scroll of see invisibility* on himself 15 minutes ago.

Three of the devil-masked killers wait for the diabolist and barbed devil to begin the assault before leaping out to attack. The barbed devil uses Hurl Flame for at least 2 rounds, targeting spellcasters, before leaping down to enter the fray. The diabolist stays on the second floor, casting spells. All will fight to the death, except the diabolist, who will flee if the barbed devil is destroyed.

If the diabolist is captured, a successful DC 18 Charisma (Intimidation) check compels him to explain the purpose of the cult. As a last resort, he trades knowledge of the Ripper's dagger for his life.

Treasure. Each of the devil-masked killers carries one potion of healing.

A CONTRACT'S A CONTRACT

During the fight, the Ripper makes his way to Tyron's office (see **Area 18**). Tyron is the manager of the Silk Scabbard and Lord Greymark's personal fixer, and the Ripper intends to see that Tyron fulfills the infernal contract he signed long ago. Time this so PCs hear a terrified scream from **Area 18** just as their fight against the Ripper's minions is winding down. When PCs reach the office, they see the following:

The office of Lord Greymark's fixer has been turned upside down. Tyron is cowering behind what is left of his desk. Blood drips from the walls and furniture, and Tyron is covered in bloody cuts. An average-sized man wielding a bloody dagger turns his unnaturally blue eyes upon you as you enter. A yellow-skinned fiend stands casually behind him. Tyron is babbling, apparently pleading for his life by repeatedly claiming eternal allegiance to Arch-Devil Totivillus.

The Ripper expected his lackeys to deal with whatever opposition arrived. When confronted, he prefers to finish off victims by hand. The **Ripper** (see **Appendix**) is fearless, knowing that even if his host is killed, he can't be destroyed unless his dagger, *Red Lady's Scalpel* (see **Chapter 7**), is destroyed. A **scribe devil** (see *Tome of Beasts 2*) is also present but flees if the PCs attack.

Developments. The PCs should have heard Tyron professing allegiance to the forces of hell when they arrived at the office. If he survives the battle against the Ripper, he doesn't wish to discuss this further. A successful DC 16 Charisma (Intimidation) check persuades him to explain how he sold his soul for 25 years of prosperity and influence. His time is up, and the Ripper came to collect. This also clears up the real motivation behind the killings along the River Argent.

Tyron also knows the real evil is the possessed dagger. If he's threatened, he tries to bargain with this information to persuade the PCs to save his life or convince them not to turn him over to the authorities. A thorough search of the office (or a convincing threat to Tyron) uncovers his infernal contract.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

The defeat of the Ripper and his minions, and the discovery of the infernal infestation, brings a tense peace to the streets of Zobeck. Just because the Ripper is destroyed, however, does not mean the killing is over. If the Ripper's weapon hasn't been destroyed, there is a chance the killing could begin again.

FLESH FAILS

A fatal summoning accident at the Collegium leaves a chain of questions, and the party is asked to investigate. Can the PCs get to the bottom of the mystery, or will the city be overrun by undead?

This adventure is suitable for four PCs of 11th level.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Sometimes at the Collegium, one's colleagues are not so collegiate, especially when one is a master of necromancy with desires outside society's norms and a high penchant for secrecy and jealousy.

It is no secret that tragedy struck within the walls of Zobeck's great Arcane Collegium. One of their own, Master Summoner Linnea Thorn, fell victim to a summoning gone awry, murdered by the very creature she summoned. The Collegium covered up most of the details though, for Linnea had been dealing with the infernal, and her killer was a summoned devil. They closed her lab and decided to let the matter rest to avoid any leaks affecting the Collegium's reputation.

The real secret, however, is that her death was no accident. Master Necromancer Konrad von Eberfeld, one of Linnea's lovers and good friends, persuaded Consul Radover Streck, a practicing alchemist and the third in their lovers' triangle, to experiment with some of her material components, weakening their effect (and thereby causing them to pull in weaker summoning targets), ostensibly making summoning rituals safer for Linnea. Radover did as Konrad asked, hoping to help Linnea's work. Konrad knew Linnea planned to summon a devil, and he replaced her summoning components with the weakened ones and informed her that the "improved" components were a gift from the smitten Radover to her.

When she performed her ritual with Radover's components, the summoned devil broke free and killed her. Konrad happened to visit Linnea's lab that evening and witnessed the freed devil ripping into Linnea's body. He rousted several other colleagues and helped destroy the creature.

Because Linnea died while consorting with devils, the Arcane Collegium decided not to raise her. Instead, the administration quietly buried her in the Collegium's cemetery, and all official comments regarding her death remained sketchy, except to blame it on a summoning gone awry.

Konrad von Eberfeld promptly stole her body, however, and secured it in his warehouse lab where he intends to keep Linnea forever. All these events had been engineered by him. He needed Linnea dead because she'd discovered his plan to unleash an undead army to conquer Zobeck. And he wanted her dead because he'd tired of sharing her with Radover. His plan for her death ensured he could preserve her in undeath forever for himself. Currently, he searches for a suitable replacement for her shredded body while keeping her animated head in his personal study.

Consul Streck, knowing his complicity in Linnea's "accident," is filled with guilt. He has recurring nightmares about the devil eviscerating Linnea.

Radover's guilt finally drove him to confront Konrad at his home in the Collegium District two nights ago where he threatened to reveal everything to the authorities. Konrad tried to console Radover by taking him to the warehouse lab to show him Linnea's head and explain his plan to provide her a body, so she can live again. This too was a trap, and Konrad nonchalantly handed Radover a gem that triggered an *imprisonment* spell. Radover now resides in the gem in Konrad's secret study, observing everything that happens but unable to intervene.

Just to be safe, Konrad also cast *sequester* on Radover. Because of that, Radover can't be located with divination spells. Konrad hopes that will be enough to keep suspicion from falling on him over the disappearance.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

Hadlen Osrick noticed his master, Consul Radover Streck, had been visibly troubled over the last few months. Then two nights ago, Radover summoned Hadlen and ordered his servant to seek discreet help if Radover should disappear for any reason, explaining what money and favors to offer as payment. Hadlen watched Radover, whose eyes blazed with determination and murderous intent, slip a dagger into his coat before leaving the manor.

That was the last time Hadlen saw Radover. Hadlen waited a day to see if Consul Streck would return, but he never did. So with many issues pressing—like the party his lord is to host in two days' time—Hadlen set out to find assistance according to his master's instructions. Hadlen can promise the PCs up to 25,000 gp, political favors from people who owed Radover, and the chance to avert genuine political upheaval.

While Hadlen wants the PCs to recover his master, his first priority is the upcoming party, as guests are en route. Someone must pose as Radover for the event, which is too politically important to cancel. A PC could easily portray the reclusive Radover's quiet-but-gruff personality with magic, disguise, and coaching.

At the party, the pretender must handle delicate political matters, but the biggest problem occurs when the evening's entertainment, the renowned bard Jayzel, presses the fake Radover for her late "hush money" and threatens dire consequences if she doesn't receive it soon.

When the PCs investigate Radover's recent activities, they learn he frequented the Book Fetish in the Collegium District, a bookstore and magic shop also known as the Temple of Painful Pleasures for the activities hidden behind the shop's basement doors. PCs who infiltrate or pose as customers learn Radover usually visited the temple with two others: Linnea Thorn and Konrad von Eberfeld, masters at the Collegium.

If they are not aware of Linnea's death, they can learn this as well.

Temple exploration brings the PCs into conflict with Jayzel, the temple's brutes, the cleric Nariss, and various magical protections.

Investigating a warded area reveals kidnapped and maimed victims and exposes the storefront's nefarious operations: information gathering, torture, and sacrifice. To save their own skins, the women disclose that Radover killed the mage Linnea by sabotaging her summoning components. While the Collegium claims Linnea was murdered by the creature she summoned, the real murderer is Radover for altering her components. They don't have Radover, however, or know where he is. They know he and Konrad quarreled. Konrad has not been seen at the temple for days.

Seeking out Konrad, a powerful and politically connected necromancer, is fraught with peril. He despises intrusions, and he's likely to send conjured assassins or undead to eliminate PCs who pester or threaten him. Searching his campus office yields a cryptic note linking him to Linnea and hinting at secrets beyond their relationship. If PCs search his off-campus lab, they encounter Konrad's magical defenses and undead creations. Linnea Thorn's head sits on a pedestal in his office. Questioning her reveals that a gem secured in the pedestal holds the imprisoned Radover, who had threatened to reveal all that transpired to authorities and ruin Konrad.

By penetrating Konrad's hidden lab and defeating its guardians, the PCs can restore the extremely grateful consul to his post, thereby gaining both an ally and a necromancer enemy.

PLOT HOOKS

Ideally, Hadlen Osrick approaches the PCs, who have been recommended to him as discreet and helpful with large problems. If you want to build in some personal attachment, then have a PC be distantly related to Consul Streck or have the party in debt to the consul for some past aid. Or with some tweaking of the adventure, a PC could be related to Linnea Thorn and be seeking the truth of her death since the Collegium won't provide details. Although you'd need to restructure the adventure somewhat, that hook could be compelling, with Radover's freedom then becoming a result of the investigation into Thorn's death.

PART 1: CONSUL STRECK'S PARTY

This adventure takes the party from Upper Zobeck to the Collegium District and eventually to the Dock District. The PCs don't need to fight all the encounters. They could choose to make a deal with Jayzel and Nariss, for instance. If so inclined, they could use this adventure as a step toward a political future in Zobeck, becoming major players in the behind-the-scenes happenings in their city. Whatever their reasons for helping, Hadlen insists that the first priority is the upcoming party and requires that the PCs help him get through that before anything else happens. To succeed, they must select one of their number to impersonate Consul Streck.

BEING CONSUL STRECK

Hadlen Osrick coaches the PC selected to portray Radover. Consul Streck is a middle-aged man of average height and build with dark hair, brown eyes, and the sort of features one sees everywhere in Zobeck. He has no leader-like bearing. Except for his expensive clothes, one might not give him a second look if he passed down any street from Crown Square to the docks. No one would take him for a consul.

Hadlen spends the day before the party instructing the PC on Radover's mannerisms and on proper party etiquette. Radover kept most of his political opinions

to himself, except at consul gatherings, so Hadlen can't pass along such information. The PC must wing it with such questions or use diversion to avoid them. Hadlen advises, above all, that Radover is a private man, gruff in his dealings with others and of few public words—and those generally issued through grunts of annoyance. He is known for his problem-solving ability, not his eloquence. There are few people he can stand to be around for long periods, but some of those will be at the party. Hadlen offers the following advice to the PC:

"Just watch and nod a lot when appropriate. The master has always said very little, believing most people not worth his effort. He is fascinated with the problems of the city, however, and does like to hear about them to ponder solutions when he's alone in his study. He's an avid reader and loves searching out interesting tomes. In fact, he spends a lot of time in the Collegium, perhaps discussing the ideas therein with people he finds his equals.

"He is generally courteous and most definitely civil to everyone—except for Lady Fenyll Marack, of course. He despises her. But thank the gods, she will not be in attendance."

Allow the PC to ask Hadlen any questions desired. He responds honestly, but he has no intention of revealing any skeletons in Radover's closet unless convinced through conversation or magic that such information will help find Radover. He does know, through rumor, about Radover's interest in the Book Fetish and the Temple of Painful Pleasure in the Collegium District.

THE PARTY

Guests begin arriving at Radover's mansion at dusk. Radover is to mingle and then supper will be served. After, there'll be dancing in the ballroom. Musicians will be entertaining them throughout the evening, and drinks flow freely. The famous bard Jayzel will take the stage at some point, performing songs of Zobeck's history, and then the musicians will return for more dancing, continuing until after midnight. Local guests will retire to their homes, escorted by their house guards. Guests from afar will retire to rooms in the mansion. Radover is to greet them for breakfast before they leave for home.

Many of the guests are interested in the political happenings in Zobeck, and many are among Zobeck's rich and influential. This is a great opportunity to introduce NPCs important to the campaign. The party is a good place to drop information the PCs may want to investigate in the future, providing an opportunity for spin-off adventures.

JAYZEL'S THREAT

After Jayzel performs her last song, she bows, accepts the hardy applause for a few moments, and leaves the stage. She meanders through Radover's guests, who stop her briefly to compliment her performance and beauty, acquires a drink from a passing servant, and then heads straight for Consul Streck. If the PC playing Radover has met Jayzel and is not using magic in their disguise, there is likely some impressive acting required, but fortunately, Jayzel does not know of Radover's disappearance, so she has no reason to be wary. Keeping her head directed toward the guests, she says the following to Radover in a low whisper, all the while smiling through her teeth:

"Consul, you've been derelict in paying your dues this month. You wouldn't want your secret to reach the praetors, would you? It would be such a tragedy for a consul to be convicted and beheaded for murder, wouldn't it? I suggest you remedy the situation soon, or word will leak out."

How the PC reacts to this determines what happens beyond this point. The PCs may decide to follow Jayzel after the party. She leaves at midnight and heads to the Temple of Painful Pleasures, accessed via the Book Fetish in the Collegium District.

PART 2: BOOK FETISH AND THE TEMPLE OF PAINFUL PLEASURES

PCs may follow Jayzel here or learn of Radover's love of the Book Fetish (see also **Chapter 4**) at the party. If the PCs follow Jayzel, they see no sign of her when they enter the shop.

BOOK FETISH

Upon entering the shop, you find its walls lined with book-filled shelves. Tables and chairs fill the center of the room. Some faculty and students from the Arcane Collegium appear to be perusing the tomes at the tables, and a few academic discussions are ongoing in various corners of the store. A horseshoe-shaped counter filled with glass-fronted cupboards sits to the right of the entrance, behind which a young, dark-haired woman in a flowing scarlet robe stands watching the till. A scarlet tapestry hangs behind her.

Elindora (the woman behind the counter) and Kayla, both priestesses of Marena (**cult fanatics**), currently run the store, and two temple guards (**veterans**) stand watch behind the scarlet tapestry. From behind the counter,

Elindora welcomes the PCs to the store and asks if she might assist them. Kayla is walking about the store, helping patrons find books, and answering questions.

PCs examining the southern and eastern sides of the counter see it contains common to uncommon spell components. The northern side holds libido-affecting herbs: various objects for heightening sexual intercourse, including through pain, and contraceptives. The store also sells rare components, potions, scrolls, wands, and some wondrous items (as appropriate to the campaign). These stay locked up in a vault behind the temple guards. PCs checking the bookshelves find they contain tomes on topics related to alchemy and magic, some even written by the Arcane Collegium's faculty. There is also a large section of erotic literature and sexual practices. If the PCs bother the patrons, Elindora and Kayla allow them to do so, but they try to listen in on what the PCs ask, mainly out of boredom.

The PCs can learn quite a bit about the Temple of Painful Pleasures by questioning the bookstore's patrons or its two clerks. Plying the patrons or priestesses with money is helpful. They can reveal any of the following:

- Temple entrance is behind the Book Fetish.
- Temple is open from dusk to just before dawn.
- High priestess is Nariss Larigorn (see **Chapter 5**).
- Entry fee is 10 gp, which must be paid with a platinum "headman," a coin called that for the axe on the side opposite the city crest.
- Coin must be handed over with the axe facing up.
- Book Fetish sells headman coins (for 11 gp, the extra gold being a donation to the temple).
- No weapons in the sanctuary, except whips.
- Only allowable clothing is of see-through material. Most people enter naked.
- High priestess practices torture as a religious ritual.
- Temple rules are strictly enforced (see **Temple of Painful Pleasures Rules** sidebar).

TEMPLE OF PAINFUL PLEASURES

The entrance to the temple, a set of stairs leading down, lies in the alley behind the Book Fetish.

By going to the Temple of Painful Pleasures, the PCs can gain information about Radover and possibly Konrad, especially if they corner Jayzel or High Priestess Nariss. The two overheard a heated conversation between Radover and Konrad, know about the role of the weakened material components in Linnea Thorn's death, and have blackmailed Consul Streck ever since. They have not questioned Radover about it, however, and believe he killed her in a lover's spat, so they don't know the whole truth. The two women know Konrad and Radover have been on the outs ever since Linnea's death. Jayzel also knows Konrad's real lab lies in a warehouse in the Dock District, not at the Arcane Collegium, which she learned from Linnea before her death.

If the PCs don't force the women to bargain for their lives, they're willing to sell information for 300 gp each.

They would be willing to answer some questions about Consul Radover Streck, whom they call Raddie, or the Temple for a bit of coin.

Once inside, PCs might question guests at the sanctuary. Many of the establishment's patrons are wealthy and powerful, and they value their privacy. Questioning such individuals requires a successful DC 20 Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion) check. Members of the college, merchants, and travelers aren't as obsessed about their reputations, so they'll talk with a successful DC 15 Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion) check, but Intimidation checks against them are made with disadvantage unless the threat is

TEMPLE OF PAINFUL PLEASURES RULES

- You may not enter the temple with weapons other than whips.
- You may only enter the temple clad in a robe or entirely nude. Doing otherwise dishonors Marena.
- The acolytes, denoted with the red neck ribbons, are here to fulfill your desires, but beating them or being beaten by them requires a private room at 100 gp for an hour session. An hour of pleasurable pain from High Priestess Nariss costs 1,000 gp.
- Everyone else in the sanctuary is a guest; any activities you seek with them must be negotiated and mutually agreed upon.
- There is no fighting in the temple.
- DO NOT interfere with the other guests' pleasures.
- If you kill or attempt to kill an acolyte or guest, you will be sacrificed to Marena.

to their immediate well-being. Questioning obviously drunk patrons provides a +2 bonus on the check, but the information should be fragmented and repetitive. Elven PCs also receive a +1 bonus on all these checks because the patrons seek to please those who might be connected to the high priestess. If PCs adopt the red ribbon of the temple prostitutes, they have advantage on all their Charisma checks.

The following information should be doled out as fitting to reward successful Charisma checks:

- Konrad and Radover haven't been to the temple together since Linnea's death. The three used to be very close, participating in the temple's gatherings together.
- Radover said he felt guilty about Linnea's death.
- Linnea had been acting a little standoffish toward Konrad the last time they all came to the temple. Konrad spent the evening with another couple.
- Konrad has been renting property from some fellow near the docks.
- This person claims to be one of Radover's few close friends. Radover confided in him that he had some things to work out with Konrad. Radover hoped it would go well but feared it would not.

Nariss Larigorn (see **Chapter 5**) prefers to talk enemies down or incapacitate them rather than fight. Even in battle, she tries to avoid killing her patrons. She has no problem killing others though, especially intruders in her goddess's temple, but she prefers her temple and place of business not be destroyed. Battles are seldom good for a business built around pleasures of the flesh. If Nariss gets the upper hand, she allows the PCs to negotiate for their lives.

At any given time, there are five temple prostitutes (**cult fanatics**) and eight temple guards (**veterans**) within the temple.

AREA 1: TEMPLE STAIRS

In the alley behind the Book Fetish, a 10-foot-wide set of stone stairs leads down 20 feet to double doors.

If PCs knock on the door, one of the temple's guards (**veteran**), a brawny fellow in a breastplate, opens a door and holds out his hand. The entrance fee he expects is the platinum headman coin, axe facing up. If the PCs hand him anything else, no matter what, they are turned away. PCs can, of course, attempt to push through anyway. The following text assumes they don't and should be adjusted as appropriate.

AREA 2: TEMPLE

A large man in a scarlet tunic and breastplate opens the door. He carries both a longsword and a shortsword at his side. Another man, equally large and armed, stands beside the door. From their features, they appear to be from the north. The floor is marble, and scarlet tapestries line the walls.

If the PCs are dressed inappropriately for the sanctuary (carrying weapons and clothed/armored up), the guard says:

"Only whips are allowed in the sanctuary, no other weapons. And you are all overdressed. Follow me to the disrobing area."

The guard leads them through the tapestry to the door leading to **Area 3**. If PCs attack or run for it, he sounds a gong hidden behind a tapestry to alert others inside, half of whom answer the call while the remainder protect Nariss and Jayzel.

AREA 3: DISROBING ROOM

Two beautiful youths in their early twenties, both naked, welcome you when the guard leads you into this room. They have scarlet ribbons around their necks and whips wrapped around their hips. "They need equipment checked and robes," the guard says to them, and he shuts the door behind you.

The temple prostitutes inform newcomers of the temple's rules (see **Temple of Painful Pleasures Rules** sidebar) and assist them with removing their equipment and clothing. They place the PCs' items in large, locked chests and give each PC the key on a black ribbon that can be looped around their necks.

The two ask the PCs whether they require a robe and sandals to enter the sanctuary. The robe is made of sheer material, so it offers not much more privacy than being naked. When PCs are appropriately (un)dressed, the acolytes lead them into the inner corridor (see **Area 4**), past two more guards standing beside double doors, and through the northern entrance to the sanctuary (see **Area 5**).

AREA 4: INNER CORRIDOR

The 10-foot-wide corridor wraps around the sanctuary. Two guards stand at an archway draped in red tapestries.

Two guards (**veterans**) are always present here.

AREA 5: SANCTUARY

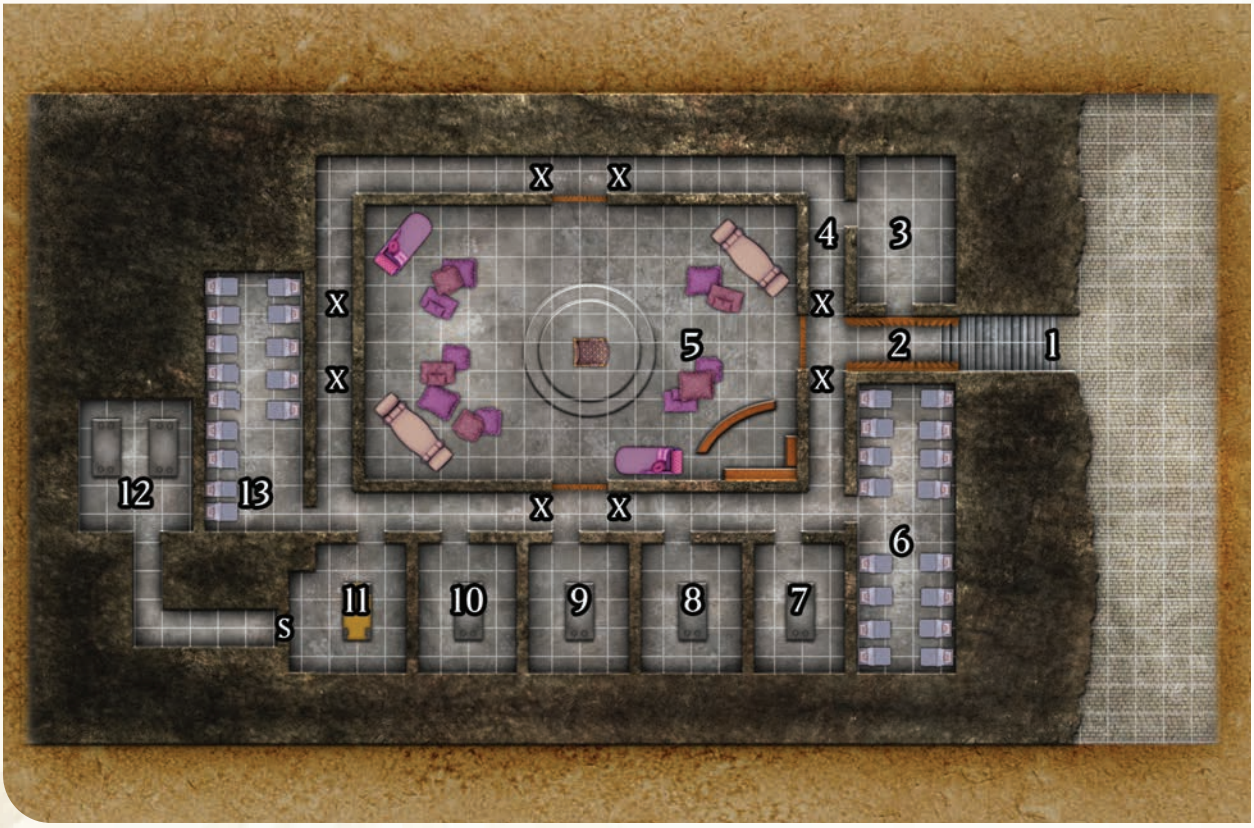
Passing between the guards and through the tapestry, you enter the massive sanctuary. Couches and pillows fill the room, many with writhing, naked bodies on them. The sounds of pleasure echo throughout the sanctuary. A bar staffed by acolytes stands along the northeast wall. In the center of the room sits a round, slowly rotating dais. A handsome couple is engaged in intercourse upon it while a beautiful elven woman in scarlet gauze and a ruby-encrusted golden necklace and matching earrings watches them and the entire room from her golden throne. A human woman sits in a chair beside her. A small gong rests at the feet of the elf. Two guards stand to either side of the chairs, just behind them.

The patrons include Zobeck's bored rich and many of the Collegium's faculty of all ranks (all people who could be blackmailed). The elven woman on the dais is the high priestess Nariss. She enjoys watching her subjects' lustful worship. Jayzel lounges by her side, likewise dressed and bejeweled.

The PCs can find groups of people who are resting and willing to talk, but they must walk through the orgiastic display to do so. Guests of all genders find the newcomers fascinating, and many entreat them for an encounter. The acolytes likewise try to engage them. Having a conversation with anyone can prove quite distracting and difficult. Many of the patrons are drunk, loosening their tongues for talk but also making them slightly less coherent than usual (see the list of information that can be gleaned from patrons above).

Successful DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) checks determine whether either Nariss or Jayzel notice the arrival of the PCs. They keep an eye on newcomers, out of amorous curiosity but also as a low-key defense against titillated onlookers and opportunistic blackmailers, both of which find their way into the temple occasionally. If the PCs appear to be interrogating people but not participating in the temple activity, Nariss sends a guard to invite them to speak with her. If Jayzel has met the PCs before and recognizes them, she informs Nariss about whatever happened in that earlier encounter.

Developments. How this encounter plays out is entirely up to the PCs' actions and reactions. If they become hostile, the guards try to eject them from the temple. If the PCs fight back, a guard strikes the gong beside Nariss, summoning more guards to the sanctuary. Acolytes try to steer the guests to safety and will join in the battle only to aid the guards with healing



or to assist Nariss and Jayzel in escaping. Jayzel and Nariss cast protective spells on themselves and then aid the others. If the intruders are winning the fight and killing people, Jayzel and Nariss flee through the secret door in **Area 11** to hide in the torture chamber. The remaining guards and acolytes cover their escape. If Nariss and Jayzel become trapped, they try to bargain with the PCs for their lives.

AREA 6: GUARDS' QUARTERS

This room contains 16 beds, each with a locked chest at its foot.

Guards rest here in the morning and afternoon. Two guards watch the store above while the others are on duty throughout the temple (in the evening). A successful DC 15 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check opens a locked chest. Each contains 1d10 × 10 gp worth of coins, clothing, and miscellaneous personal items.

AREAS 7–10: PRIVATE PLEASURE

Whipcracks and screams of pain and pleasure emanate from the room.

Anyone opening the door to one of these rooms sees either an acolyte whipping a bound patron or a patron whipping a bound acolyte. The occupants are likely engaged in intercourse as well. The room contains a table and chains and manacles attached to the wall behind it. Whips hang from pegs on the wall. The chains aren't especially sturdy and can be broken with a successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check.

AREA 11: NARISS'S PRIVATE PLEASURE ROOM

This room contains a padded leather table with leather straps. Whips, torture implements, and chains and manacles hang from the walls. Other sets of chains hang from the ceiling.

Unless a PC paid for a session with Nariss, this room is empty at the moment. A successful DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check finds the secret door in the southern wall. It's protected with a *glyph of warding* (explosive runes) trap. It is triggered by anyone failing the DC 16 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check required to open the door without knowing the proper mechanism. When the glyph explodes, each creature within 20 feet of the doorway must make a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw, taking 5d8 lightning damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one.

AREA 12: NARISS'S TORTURE CHAMBER

Two guards protect this room, which contains two racks. Both racks are occupied by bloody, half-conscious, naked men. Torture implements hang from pegs on the wall as do many chains and manacles.

Developments. Nariss and Jayzel may have fled here to make a last stand. They attempt surrender and try to negotiate a deal with murderous PCs rather than fight to the death. They have information to bargain with, and they offer it up for their lives (see the list of information that can be gleaned from patrons above). The men on the racks are Karl and Zekler von Hilpner, wealthy residents of Zobeck with ties to the Black Market. Jayzel and Nariss have been torturing them—real torture, not fetish torture—for information about their contacts and commodities. Nariss's *zone of truth* spell reveals whether the victims are speaking truth or just babbling anything to lessen the pain. Nariss has a knack for inflicting real pain, and she enjoys this work. The men might offer a reward to their rescuers if they're assured the incident will be kept quiet.

AREA 13: ACOLYTES' QUARTERS

This room contains 15 beds, each with a locked chest at its foot. Scarlet robes (not see-through) hang from pegs on the walls.

A successful DC 15 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check opens a locked chest. Each contains 4d10 x 10 gp worth of coins, gems, jewelry, and personal items.

PART 3: AT THE ARCANE COLLEGIUM

If PCs decide to go to the Arcane Collegium to search Konrad's office, they must make their own way on campus. You can decide what protections the Collegium has in place, but it certainly includes sentries and protective magic such as *guards and wards*.

No faculty or staff will discuss Linnea's death, and they will only point the way to Konrad's office if PCs don't mention Linnea first. Anyone asking about her or the murder is given the official story and asked to leave the grounds.

KONRAD'S OFFICE

Konrad's office is locked and warded by an *alarm* spell. A successful DC 18 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check opens the locked door. Once opened, Konrad is alerted silently, and he sends an *arcane eye* to find out what's happening. If the situation warrants, he sends conjured creatures or undead to deal with intruders before they can pry too far into his business.

This room contains a mahogany desk and a matching chair. On the desk sit two pen and ink sets and an untitled book but nothing else. Two chairs are in front of the desk.

The desk's unlocked drawers contain only various mundane supplies. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check uncovers a hidden compartment in the lower drawer, inside which it is a parchment on which are doodled various undead creatures. A message winds through and around the doodles, stating "Linnea forever keeps my secrets!"

The book is trapped with a *glyph of warding* (explosive runes) trap. It is triggered by anyone opening the book improperly. When the glyph explodes, each creature within 20 feet of the doorway must make a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw, taking 5d8 cold damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one.

KONRAD'S UNUSED LAB

This room contains three worktables and numerous cabinets along the northern wall. Everything in it is pristine, and appears unused.

Konrad does not use this lab as others at the university abhor his work—even though he is an accepted member of the faculty—and they've complained rather vehemently about his experiments. So he decided he'd rather do his experiments elsewhere, and rents property near the docks.

The cabinets contain jars of basic spell components. Spellcasting PCs could stock up on 100–200 gp worth of components from them. Other than that, the room holds nothing of value.

PART 4: WAREHOUSE LAB

While the PCs can figure out that Konrad has rented space in the Dock District, nothing gives away the actual location until they start asking questions in the Dock District. Let the players formulate a plan for how they want to approach this problem and then let one person in the group make a Charisma check with other PCs aiding. Subtract the result of the check from 25, and the difference is the number of hours it takes the party to track down the location of Konrad's lab (minimum of 1). If PCs specify that they're talking to people at the Owl and Moon Tavern, they have advantage on the check. Eventually they track down witnesses who have seen Konrad multiple times entering and leaving a warehouse a block from the tavern, along a narrow side street.

The warehouse is 20 feet tall, 40 feet wide along the street, and 100 feet long. It has just one door, which is blocked off from the inside (see **Area 1**), and has no windows or skylights. PCs must either force their way through the door, smash a hole through the wall, or find some magical means to get inside.

AREA 1: ENTRANCE

The warehouse's door is made of reinforced wood (AC 16; 24 hp) and is locked. A successful DC 18 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check opens the locked door, or the door can be smashed open with a successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check. An *arcane lock* on the door, however, increases both DCs to 28 unless the spell is dispelled or suppressed with a *knock* spell. There is no light beyond the entrance, so the PCs must supply their own within.

This room is entirely bare, with no doors or exits besides the one to the street, and no other contents or decorations of any kind. The dusty floor, however, shows the prints of someone wearing soft shoes and who's entered and exited many times by the door.

Konrad walled over the only door that leads into the warehouse to keep out thieves and curiosity seekers. PCs are likely to search for a secret door here. They won't find one, but anyone who makes a successful DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check as part of that search notices magical markings scribed in a circle beneath the dust on the floor. These marks are found automatically by anyone who sweeps aside the dust at the point where the footprints lead.

The marks are a low-energy teleportation portal linked to the matching portal inside the warehouse and only to that location. Konrad uses these portals to enter and leave the warehouse. They can only be activated by someone who knows the command word. It can be learned by casting *identify* while within the circle.

The only other way into the warehouse is to destroy the wall. It has AC 12, 35 hp, and is immune to necrotic, poison, and psychic damage. Alternatively, someone can smash through it with a successful DC 20 Strength check.



Konrad knows immediately when anyone enters this area because the floor is rigged with an *alarm* spell that silently alerts him. When that happens, he herds his protean zombies (see **Area 2**) into the inner portal and sends them through in groups of three to attack whoever is in this chamber. The first three zombies arrive 1 minute after the PCs do, and the rest 1 round later. After the zombies are sent, Konrad casts *invisibility* and *nondetection* on himself and waits nearby to see what happens. He remains hidden until intruders either enter his study (see **Area 5**) or somehow discover him.

AREA 2: CRATES OF THE DEAD

The warehouse is filled with variously sized crates.

Not all of Konrad's bodies are fresh from the grave. The crates contain embalmed body parts. Opening the long crates reveals arms or legs. Smaller ones have feet, hands, or even heads in them.

Six **protean zombies** (see **Appendix**) wander freely in the open section of the warehouse, but PCs may have already fought and destroyed them in **Area 1**. If the zombies are present when PCs enter this area, four are lurching about in the open while two are currently behind stacked crates in the southwest corner. They growl loudly when they see intruders to alert other zombies and the wight in **Area 4**.

Another portal, linked to the one in **Area 1**, is in this area, likewise obscured by dust.

AREA 3: ZOMBIE PENS

This room contains three barred cells with 20 zombies milling about in each.

These are normal **zombies**, not Konrad's protean zombies.

Konrad is assembling a zombie army. He is building more cages in **Area 6**, and when he runs out of space entirely, he'll rent more warehouses until he's ready to unleash his creations on Zobeck. Linnea Thorn learned of his plans, which is why she was killed.

Xavier (see **Area 4**) might release some of these zombies to attack the party if he has the opportunity (at GM's discretion).

AREA 4: WORKROOM

This room is filled with tables that are strewn with bodies—and pieces of bodies. The stench of death mingles with a chemical odor to create a strong air of repulsiveness. Cabinets line most of the southern wall.

Xavier (see **Appendix**), Konrad's assistant, works here. If the protean zombies alerted him to intruders,

he might run to **Area 3** to release more zombies. Xavier fights until destroyed, being fanatically loyal to Konrad.

The cabinets contain materials needed for Konrad's necromantic experiments and tools for cutting apart bodies and stitching them back together.

A successful DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals the secret door to **Area 5** in the southern wall. It's trapped with a *glyph of warding* (explosive runes) trap. It is triggered by anyone opening the door improperly. When the glyph explodes, each creature within 20 feet of the doorway must make a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw, taking 5d8 thunder damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one.

AREA 5: KONRAD'S STUDY

This room contains a desk with a high-backed chair and bookshelves filled with tomes. On a pedestal on the western side of the room sits a gruesome sight: the head of a young woman. She opens her eyes when you enter the room.

The door has an *alarm* spell cast on it, which silently alerts **Konrad von Eberfeld** (see **Appendix**) that his sanctuary has been disturbed. With his work and secrets threatened, he can no longer remain hidden, and he must deal with the intruders. While PCs are exploring his office, he casts *mage armor* and *fire shield*. He has big plans and big ambitions, so he doesn't fight to the death. Instead, he'll flee if reduced to half his hit points.

The head is what remains of Linnea Thorn. She can talk and answer questions, albeit slowly. Her mind is quite traumatized by the manner of her death and her continued existence.

The tomes on the bookshelves deal with necromancy. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check finds a secret compartment in the pedestal. Inside it is the fist-sized gem containing the imprisoned Consul Streck. Linnea Thorn knows Radover is trapped in the gem and that the gem is somewhere in the room behind her, but she couldn't see that its hiding place is actually in the same pedestal she's on.

Treasure. Konrad is carrying two *spell scrolls of teleport*.

AREA 6: CONSTRUCTION AREA

This area contains boards and materials to build more cages to house Konrad's ever-growing army of zombies.



CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

If the PCs kill Konrad, the Collegium may ask for an investigation into his disappearance. The GM must ultimately decide how this plays out with the law. Consul Streck, if rescued from the gem, does everything in his power to keep the PCs out of jail and informs the governing bodies about Konrad's plan to take over the city with his undead creations. He also reveals the truth about Linnea's death. Radover can be a strong ally for the PCs in the future, especially if any of them have political ambition. Additionally, if they granted mercy to Jayzel and Nariss, the two can be used as information agents to aid their rise to power.

If Konrad escapes, he's in a tight spot. Several people in the city are now able to implicate him in capital crimes, but he doesn't wait around for that to happen. He clears out his residence in the Collegium District and vanishes that night, leaving the PCs to explain everything to the Collegium. The evidence left behind in Konrad's warehouse should be enough to persuade the Collegium that the PCs are telling the truth about what happened (assuming they are!) and that Konrad was behind the recent evil deeds.

APPENDIX

New game elements in this adventure are presented here.

CHASE RULES

Chase scenes in RPGs should feel fast and thrilling and not be a speed bump that slows the game down to a crawl. The following optional rules allow you to handle chases abstractly, enhancing the excitement, rather than getting bogged in the minutiae of mechanics.

As the chase progresses, the participants move through one location each round along an unspecified route, engaging in two phases (Obstacles and Actions) in order to gain (or lose) Progress points. At the end of the chase, the overall Progress score determines success or failure.

CHASE SET-UP

When a chase begins, the GM should determine the participants involved, starting Progress, locations/length, and the goal.

Participants. A chase needs runners, those trying to escape, and pursuers, those trying to catch the runners.

Starting Progress. The GM determines how far apart the pursuers and runners are at the beginning of the chase. Pursuers always begin at 0 Progress. Runners usually begin with an initial Progress score of 11 (just out of melee range).

Locations/Length. Along the route of the chase, there are any number of obstacles, hazards, surprises, and pitfalls waiting for both runners and pursuers. When the chase begins, the GM should choose a number of locations to use and then select (or roll randomly for) an obstacle from the options listed below for each location. Every location should have one obstacle that all participants must attempt to overcome.

The number of locations in the chase determines its length. In general, a short chase has three locations, a medium chase has five, and a long chase has seven. Remember, each location functions like an encounter turn, so a short, thrilling chase is usually preferable to an endless slog.

Chase Goal. Finally, the GM should determine the goal of the chase. Though both the runners and pursuers have goals, the chase goal is determined by the runners. This can be a specific location, such as "the safehouse" or "the evil temple," but it doesn't have to be. The goal could just be to escape from the pursuers.

A few examples to consider. Let's say the PCs flee from angry cultists toward the sanctuary of a friendly noble's house. The PCs are the runners. Their goal is "get to the noble's house," so if the PCs have more Progress at the end of the last location, they succeed in reaching safety before the cultists catch them.

Or perhaps the PCs chase after the thief who just stole the relic they were guarding. The thief is the runner, and the goal is to "escape from the PCs." If the PCs have more Progress at the end of the chase, they catch the thief, but otherwise, the thief gets away.

These rules are meant to be flexible, so these aspects can change during play to create a more enjoyable experience.

PROGRESS

Instead of getting bogged down with tracking the number of feet traveled and the distance between everyone, the chase participants at each location instead "gain" or "lose" an abstract unit called Progress, depending on how they handle various obstacles. This allows GMs to quickly track how the chase is doing and the abstract positions of the participants.

DISTANCE

Since the chase is handled abstractly, it is important to understand that Progress is purposefully not an accurate reflection on the distance between the participants. However, there may be times when an approximate distance between two participants may be needed. In such cases, a runner with 20 Progress is 20 feet ahead of a pursuer with 0 Progress, but this is a vague measurement and not meant to reflect actual distance.

There are a few other considerations to keep in mind:

- A participant can make a single melee attack against another participant if the two are within 5 Progress of each other.

- Participants are limited to one attack even if they normally have multiple attacks
- Participants between 5 and 10 Progress of each other can make melee attacks against each other, but they have disadvantage on their attack rolls.
- Participants 11+ Progress apart can't make melee attacks against each other.
- Ranged attacks, abilities, or spells are considered always in range since the participants are assumed to be racing close to each other unless specific circumstances dictate otherwise.

ORDER OF PLAY

After the chase begins, the participants move through one location each round. Again, this is abstract as it would certainly take longer than a round to go from one place to another. Though the chase occurs in a cycle of rounds and turns like combat, participants do not need to roll initiative. Instead, the order is determined by Progress with the participant with the highest Progress acting first in a round.

On their turns, PCs must engage in the two phases described below in any order they wish as long as both are completed before the next participant acts.

When each participant completes one turn, the chase advances to the next location and the order of play repeats. This continues through each location until the goal is reached or the chase otherwise ends.

PHASE 1: OBSTACLES

The participant deals with any obstacles or hazards for the location by making an ability or skill check, as indicated in the individual location. Success or failure on an obstacle check determines how much, if at all, the obstacle raises or lowers the participant's Progress. Unless otherwise stated, an obstacle never stops a participant from continuing in the chase.

A participant can overcome an obstacle with varying degrees of success or failure determined by the **Obstacle Progress** table below. PCs can use skills, abilities, spells, equipment, or other factors to overcome an obstacle, though they still need to make a roll of some sort in order to determine their Progress.

OBSTACLE PROGRESS TABLE

Result	Progress Gained/Lost
–10 or more below DC	–4
–5 to –9 below DC	–3
–1 to –4 below DC	–2
Equal to DC	+2
5 to 9 over DC	+3
10+ over DC	+4

Escalating DCs. The difficulty of the obstacles should increase over the course of the chase—if only to increase dramatic tension. In general, the DCs for the first obstacle should begin at 10 and increase depending on how many locations the chase contains.

- ***Short Chase (3 locations).*** The DC for each location after the first increases by +3
- ***Medium Chase (5 locations).*** The DC for the second and third locations after the first increases by +1, and then for the third and fourth, the DC increases by +2.
- ***Long Chase (7 locations).*** The DC for each location after the first increases by +1.

Adjusting DCs. GMs should also apply conditional modifiers on the DCs of the PCs' checks, depending on what they decide to do. For example, a rogue who wants to run across a tile rooftop experiences a different DC if it is also raining. A +2 or –2 modifier is usually a good guideline.

Critical Success/Failure. A participant who rolls a 20 on their check gains an additional +4 Progress. However, one who rolls a 1 suffers –4 Progress. Some obstacles impart additional penalties, listed in the obstacle's description, when a participant fails to overcome the obstacle.

Other Consequences. The outcome of many checks during a chase are issues for individual GMs to handle, depending on the circumstances of the obstacle. A fighter who rolls badly for a leap across a gap may indeed fall and take damage, but the height of the gap is going to be different in a halfling village or in a cyclopean metropolis. GMs should adjudicate the consequences of a failed roll, keeping in mind that it is more fun for the players to take some damage and keep chasing than it is for them to just be out of the chase altogether.

PHASE 2: ACTIONS

A chase participant can take actions to interact with the surroundings or with the other participants to gain ground themselves or to impede the progress of opponents. Such actions might include but aren't limited to the following:

- ***Capture Roll.*** A pursuer with a Progress equal to the Progress of a runner can use their action phase to attempt to capture the runner. This is a Strength (Athletics) check contested by either the target's Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check, as chosen by the target. If the pursuer succeeds, the runner is grappled and the chase ends. If the runner succeeds, they leap away gaining +1 Progress.
- ***Combat Action.*** The participant takes any action they would ordinarily be able to take in combat, such as making an attack or casting a spell. If a participant casts a spell with a somatic component, the caster must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw to cast the spell. On a failure, the caster fails to cast the spell, losing the action but not the spell slot.
- ***Create an Obstruction.*** The participant chooses another participant with a lower Progress and uses their action to cut down a banner, knock over a barrel, or create some other obstruction. The target must immediately overcome an agility obstacle and succeed on a DC 12 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check, target's choice, or suffer –2 Progress.
- ***Evade.*** The participant can use their action phase to duck, dodge, and weave, gaining advantage on their ability and skill checks until the beginning of the next location.
- ***Other Actions.*** A participant can't use the Dash, Disengage, or Hide actions. If the participant uses the Help action, they can Help another participant within 15 Progress of them.
- ***Study the Route.*** The participant takes a moment to study where the chase is going. If they succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check, they gain advantage on the obstacle check in the next location.

RESOLUTION

In general, a chase ends in one of three ways:

- ***Early Capture.*** The pursuers earn enough Progress to match the Progress of the runners and succeed in the capture roll detailed above. At this point, the chase ends with the runners caught by the pursuers.

d8	Name	Examples	Suggested Resolutions
1	Distracted!	Ignore a guard's command, hush a barking dog, fast talk a merchant	Acrobatics or Athletics to push past, Animal Handling to manipulate beasts, Insight to ignore, Intimidation or Persuasion to negotiate
2	Unsteady!	Run on uneven ground, maneuver over slippery rooftop tiles, sprint over deep sand, avoid scattered marbles	Acrobatics to avoid, Perception or Survival to bypass
3	Squeezed!	Move through a crowd, navigate a cramped alley, slip through a narrow opening	Acrobatics to maneuver, Athletics to push through, Sleight of Hand or Stealth to distract in a crowd
4	Blinded!	Endure a blast of steam, push through a noxious cloud, can't see around a corner, bees!	Acrobatics to avoid, Arcana or Nature to mitigate, Perception to move; Constitution saving throw to resist
5	Blocked!	Leap over a pit or ditch, hurdle a stream, dive through a window, dodge rolling barrels	Acrobatics or Athletics to bypass, Investigation or Perception to find clear route
6	Fettered!	Dodge tripping vines, avoid a cascade of burning tar, duck under a clothesline	Acrobatics to clear, Athletics to break
7	Rerouted!	Climb a wall, duck through a shop, slide beneath a wagon, swing on a vine, fall into a hay pile	Athletics or Acrobatics to pass, History to recall alternative routes, Investigation or Perception to discern another way
8	Barred!	Throw open a closed door, scale a fence, push past a hedge wall, smash through a closed window	Acrobatics to clear, Athletics to break

- ***Confrontation.*** The goal of the chase is reached, and the pursuers have more Progress than the runners. The chase ends and drops into a normal encounter as determined by the GM.
- ***Failure.*** The goal of the chase is reached, and the runners have more Progress than the pursuers. The chase ends, and the runners escape.

In the event of a tie between pursuer and runner, the GM can add a "tie-breaker" location or end the chase with a confrontation (see above).

RANDOM OBSTACLE GENERATION

Chase rules are designed to be flexible, so GMs can drop them into ongoing campaigns. The following tables quickly determine the obstacle for a location in a chase scene, though some tailoring is needed to fit each location/obstacle into the current adventure.

Each obstacle lists the skill checks (and possibly saving throws) suggested to overcome it. There is always more than one way to resolve an obstacle. Where a fighter might bully along with Strength (Athletics), a wizard may use Intelligence (Investigation) to plot a way through. Players should be encouraged to come up with their own solutions, using the escalating DCs (described above) as guidelines.

MAGIC BOOKS

These books aren't exactly magic items, but they do have a benefit for those who read them. In order to gain the benefit, a PC must study the book every day for 10 days. This study can take place during long rests. A book's effects wear off after 2d10 days. The books can be re-read any number of times.

99 TRICKS FOR COUNTERSPELLING

Letters inscribed on sheets of beaten bronze kept within lead slabs, this book helps you counter spells cast by other people. While the book's knowledge is fresh, when you must make an ability check as part of casting counterspell, you have advantage on that check.

EVIAR'S BOOK OF SPELLCASTING

A weighty tome full of detailed notes about casting arcane spells, this book increases your knowledge of magical theory. While its knowledge is fresh, you double your proficiency bonus when you make Intelligence (Arcana) checks.



MAGIC ITEMS

These items may prove useful to resourceful adventurers.

BROOM OF SWEEPING

Wondrous Item, Common

As an action, you can speak the broom's command word and give it short instructions consisting of a few words (for example, "sweep the kitchen" or "make guests feel at home"). The broom performs those functions until you use another action to deactivate it.

COMFY SLIPPERS

Wondrous Item, Common

While wearing the slippers, your feet feel warm and comfortable, no matter what the ambient temperature.

STAFF OF THE ARTISAN

Staff, Rare (Requires Attunement)

While holding this staff, you can use an action to cast the *mending* spell. Additionally, you can use an action to expend 1 or more of its 10 charges to cast one of the following spells from it, using your spell save DC or DC 14, whichever is higher: *floating disk* (1 charge), *fabricate* (3 charges).

In addition, you can use an action to expend 2 charges to conjure an inanimate object in your hand or on the ground in an unoccupied space that you can see within 10 feet of you. This object can be no larger than 3 feet on a side and weigh no more than 10 pounds, and its form must be that of a nonmagical object that you have seen. The object is visibly magical, radiating dim light out to 5 feet. The object disappears after 1 hour, when you use this feature again, or if it takes or deals any damage.

The staff regains 1d8 + 2 charges each day at dawn and can also be used as a magic quarterstaff. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, the staff vanishes in a flash of light, lost forever.

THE FISH AND THE ROSE

Wondrous Item, Rare

This famous painting can divine the future. You can use an action to speak the painting's command word while within 5 feet of it to cast the *divination* spell from it. When the painting divines the future, the fish in the painting turns its head toward you and replies in song, music magically accompanying it.

THRICE-CURSED HEART

Wondrous Item, Artifact (Requires Attunement)

This jeweled egg is fashioned of gold and platinum, detailed with colored enamel, and set with tiny jewels. Hinged doors open to reveal a gold orb suspended in the middle of the egg by chains of white gold. The orb has a hidden door that opens to reveal a gold clockwork heart. A tiny turnkey protrudes from the heart. If this key is turned, the heart beats, creating music. A chain of metal beads (each containing a scrap of paper with musical notes) is wrapped about the heart within the orb. This chain ties the item to Salamondre (see **Song Undying** in **Chapter 9**), allowing it to function as his phylactery. If the chain is removed and destroyed, so is Salamondre. This allows someone else to attune to the artifact.

Created by a devoted servant of Lada, the goddess imbued her power within the object, intending it to be an instrument of peace, love, and healing. The artifact was named *Lada's Heart*. However, the goldsmith's work also gathered the attention of Lada's enemies, those her church calls the three evil sisters: Marena, Sarastra, and the White Goddess. They were furious at the thought of such a symbol of Lada's power being present in the world. They worked together to corrupt the egg, adding their own magics to twist and warp the original intent of the item, and transformed it into a subtle, corrupting evil item, veiled by beauty. Thus, it became the *Thrice-Cursed Heart*.

Random Properties. The *Thrice-Cursed Heart* has the following random properties:

- 2 minor beneficial properties
- 1 major beneficial property
- 2 minor detrimental properties
- 1 major detrimental property

The detrimental properties of the *Thrice-Cursed Heart* are suppressed while Salamondre is attuned to it and while it still serves as his phylactery.

Harmony of the Song. Any spell slot you expend to cast a bard or cleric spell counts as one spell slot higher.

Secrets of Creation. The music created by the *Heart* provides insight into the universe and its secrets. You gain advantage on all Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma skill checks.

Spells. The *Heart* has 8 charges. You can use an action and expend 1 or more charges to cast one of the following spells (save DC 18) from it: *bestow curse* (2 charges), *chaotic world** (2 charges), *feeblemind* (4 charges), *hard heart** (1 charge), *harry** (2 charges), *heartache** (1 charge), *mass suggestion* (3 charges), or *screaming ray** (1 charge).

(* See *Deep Magic*.)

Destroying the Heart. As long as the *Thrice-Cursed Heart* serves as Salamondre's phylactery, it can only be destroyed by being crushed underfoot by a member of Salamondre's bloodline who is an innocent. If no longer serving as Salamondre's phylactery, the *Heart* can be destroyed if a reformed former follower of one of the three evil goddesses that corrupted the *Heart* strikes it with a holy avenger. It is rumored that a high priestess of Lada once discovered a way to cleanse the *Heart*, returning it to the holy relic it was supposed to be, but she died before she was able to reveal the method to do so.

MONSTERS & NPCS

There are many foes that seek to block your progress.

Angel of Rust and Corrosion

Large Construct, Unaligned

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 105 (14d10 + 28)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	1 (−5)	10 (+0)	1 (−5)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons that aren't adamantine

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages —

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

Immutable Form. The angel of rust is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The angel of rust and corruption makes one Slam attack and one Wing Slash attack.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Wing Slash. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (3d6 + 4) slashing damage.

Arius Azafaris

Medium Humanoid (Human), Neutral Evil

Armor Class 10 (13 with *mage armor*)

Hit Points 13 (3d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	15 (+3)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Arcana +5, History +5

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Common

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

ACTIONS

Arcane Burst. *Melee or Ranged Spell Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d10 + 3) force damage.

Spellcasting. Arius casts one of the following spells, using Intelligence as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 13):

At will: *light*, *mending*, *prestidigitation*

1/day each: *mage armor*, *protection from evil and good*, *shield*

Bogdan the Insane

Medium Humanoid (Gearforged), Lawful Evil

Armor Class 16 (half plate)

Hit Points 130 (20d8 + 40)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	9 (−1)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Con +5, Wis +7, Cha +5

Skills Athletics +5, Perception +7

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 17

Languages Common, Machine Speech

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +3

Inescapable Destruction. Necrotic damage dealt by Bogdan's cleric spells and his Blackflame Flail attack ignores resistance to necrotic damage.

Unusual Nature. Bogdan doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep. Bogdan can't drink potions or gain benefits that come from drinking, eating, or inhaling vapors.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Bogdan makes two Blackflame Flail attacks.

Blackflame Flail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage, plus 7 (2d6) fire damage and 7 (2d6) necrotic damage.

Cacophonous Dirge. Two targets that Bogdan can see within 60 feet of itself must make DC 15 Wisdom saving throws, each target taking 19 (3d12) necrotic damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one.

Spellcasting. Bogdan casts one of the following spells using Wisdom as the spellcasting modifier (spell save DC 15):

At will: *mending*, *resistance*, *thaumaturgy*

3/day: *bane*, *command*, *false life*, *shield of faith*

2/day: *blindness/deafness*, *hold person*

1/day: *blight*, *cloudkill*

Chain Maw

Medium Metal Construct, Unaligned

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 52 (8d8 + 16)

Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	1 (−5)	4 (−3)	1(−5)

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 7

Languages —

Challenge 1 (200 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (3d6 + 2) piercing damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 12).

REACTIONS

Hoist. When a creature grappled by the chain maw makes an unsuccessful attempt to escape from the grapple, the chain maw can lift the grappled creature 20 feet above the floor and release the grapple. The creature falls to the floor, taking 2d6 bludgeoning damage.

Clockwork Serpent

Medium Construct, Unaligned

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 33 (6d8 + 6)

Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	2 (−4)	10 (+0)	3 (−4)

Skills Perception +2, Stealth +5

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't adamantine

Damage Immunities fire, poison, psychic

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages —

Challenge 1 (50 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

Immutable Form. The clockwork serpent is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Magic Resistance. The clockwork serpent has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) poison damage. The poison damage is halved by a successful DC 13 Constitution saving throw.

Head Bash. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6+3) bludgeoning damage, and the target must make a DC 11 Strength saving throw. On a failed save, the target is shoved 10 feet away from the serpent and has disadvantage on Dexterity checks and saves until the start of the serpent's next turn.

Duergar, Deep Cleric

Medium Humanoid (Dwarf), Lawful Evil

Armor Class 16 (scale mail, shield)

Hit Points 26 (4d8 + 8)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+11)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	15 (+2)	9 (−1)

Damage Resistances poison

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Dwarvish, Undercommon

Challenge 1 (50 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

Duergar Resilience. The deep cleric has advantage on saving throws against poison, spells, and illusions, as well as to resist being charmed or paralyzed.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the deep cleric has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on light.

ACTIONS

War Pick. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage or 11 (2d8+2) piercing damage while enlarged.

Call the Darkness. The deep cleric calls upon their dark god for aid, causing one creature they can see within 60 feet to make a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the creature takes 9 (2d8) necrotic damage. If the target is missing any of its hit points, its speed also becomes 0 until the start of the deep cleric's next turn.

Enlarge (Recharges on Short or Long Rest). For 1 minute, the deep cleric magically increases in size, along with anything they are wearing or carrying. While enlarged, the deep cleric is Large, doubles its damage dice on Strength-based weapons (included in the attacks), and makes Strength checks and Strength saving throws with

advantage. If the deep cleric lacks room to become Large, they attain the maximum size possible in the space available.

Invisibility (Recharges on Short or Long Rest). The deep cleric magical turns invisible until they attack, casts a spell, use Enlarge, or until their concentration is broken, up to 1 hour (as if concentrating on a spell). Any equipment the deep cleric wears or carriers is also invisible.

Spellcasting. The deep cleric casts one of the following spells, using Wisdom as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 12):

At will: *mending*, *resistance*, *thaumaturgy*

3/day each: *cure wounds*, *shield of faith*, *spiritual weapon*

1/day each: *bestow curse*, *dispel magic*, *meld into stone*

Giselle Reinherz

Medium Humanoid (Human), Lawful Good

Armor Class 17 (chain shirt, shield)

Hit Points 65 (10d8 + 20)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	11 (+0)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Wis +3, Cha +4

Skills Athletics +5, Insight +3

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Common

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Giselle makes two Longsword attacks.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage, or 8 (1d10 + 3) slashing damage if used with two hands, plus 10 (3d6) radiant damage.

Spellcasting. Giselle casts one of the following spells, using Charisma as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 12):

2/day each: *cure wounds*, *shield of faith*

1/day each: *find steed*, *lesser restoration*, *magic weapon*

REACTIONS

Lada's Mercy (3/Day). When an ally Giselle can see within 30 feet of her is reduced to 0 hit points, she says a quick prayer to Lada, and the ally is reduced to 1 hit point instead. In addition, the target has advantage on death saving throws for 1 minute.

Hollow One

Small or Medium Undead, Neutral Evil

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 19 (3d8 + 6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	7 (−2)	8 (−1)	7 (−2)

Damage Vulnerabilities bludgeoning

Damage Immunities poison, thunder

Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages Common, and at least one other language it knew in life

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

ACTIONS

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Sling. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

Resounding Chord (Recharge 6). As an action, the hollow one can reproduce a note from the Song Undying. All creatures within 30 feet that can hear the hollow one must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw, taking 9 (2d8) thunder damage and being deafened for 1 minute on a failed save and taking only half damage and suffering no other effects on a successful save.

Jade Mouth Servant

Medium Humanoid (Human), Lawful Evil

Armor Class 15 (unarmored defense)

Hit Points 71 (13d8 + 13)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	8 (−1)

Saving Throws Dex +5

Skills Acrobatics +7, Stealth +5

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Common

Challenge 3 (700 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The jade mouth servant makes three Jagged Knuckles or Dagger attacks.

Jagged Knuckles. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage.

Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage plus 10 (3d6) poison damage, or half poison damage with a successful DC 11 Constitution saving throw.

REACTIONS

Rolling Dodge. When the jade mouth servant is targeted by an effect that allows a Dexterity saving throw to take only half damage, they can use their reaction to move half their speed. If this moves them out of range of the triggering attack, they take no damage from it.

Konrad von Eberfeld, Collegium Necromancer

Medium Humanoid (Human), Neutral Evil

Armor Class 13 (16 with *mage armor*)

Hit Points 127 (17d8 + 51)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Saving Throws Dex +6, Wis +5, Cha +3

Skills Arcana +7, Perception +5

Senses passive Perception 15

Languages Common, Draconic, Infernal, Undercommon

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +3

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Konrad makes three Arcane Burst attacks. He can replace one of his attacks with a Necrotic Web attack.

Arcane Burst. *Melee or Ranged Spell Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 20 (3d10 + 4) necrotic damage.

Necrotic Web. Konrad targets one creature he can see within 60 feet. The target must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, the target is cocooned in dark energy strands, taking 16 (3d10) necrotic damage, and is restrained. A restrained creature, or another creature, can make a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check to tear free. The effect ends after 2 rounds, at the end of Konrad's turn, or when Konrad dies.

Spellcasting. Konrad casts one of the following spells, using Intelligence as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 15):

At will: *chill touch*, *dancing lights*, *shocking grasp*

3/day each: *counterspell*, *invisibility*, *mage armor*, *nondetection*

1/day each: *chain lightning*, *finger of death*, *fire shield*

REACTIONS

Shadow Step. Immediately after taking damage, Konrad magically teleports, along with any equipment he is wearing or carrying, up to 20 feet to an unoccupied space he can see.

Lynch Mob

Gargantuan Swarm of Medium Humanoids (Any Race), Unaligned

Armor Class 9

Hit Points 93 (7d20 + 20)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	8 (−1)	13 (+1)	6 (−2)	10 (+0)	9 (−1)

Damage Vulnerabilities bludgeoning

Damage Resistances piercing, slashing

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, stunned

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Common

Challenge 3 (700 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

Swarm. The lynch mob can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the mob can move through any opening large enough for a Medium humanoid. The mob can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

Swirling Melee. The 20-foot-radius area of the lynch mob is considered difficult terrain.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The lynch mob takes an action against each target in its space but can't use the same attack twice on the same turn.

Bottle to the Head. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 0 ft., one target in the mob's space. *Hit:* 7 (1d10 + 2) slashing damage, and the target is deafened until the start of the mob's next turn.

Leg Stab. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 0 ft., one target in the mob's space. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage, and the target's speed is halved until the start of the mob's next turn.

Wild Fist. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 0 ft., one target in the mob's space. *Hit:* 9 (3d4 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

Thrown Dung. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 0 ft., one target in the mob's space. *Hit:* 1 (1d4 + 2) bludgeoning damage, and the target is blinded until the start of the mob's next turn.

Overwhelm (Recharge 6). One target within the mob's space must succeed on a DC 12 Strength check or be knocked prone.

BONUS ACTIONS

Trample. At the start of the lynch mob's turn, it can deal 14 (4d6) bludgeoning damage to a single prone creature in its space.

Master Doldrum

Small Humanoid (Human, Shapechanger), Lawful Evil

Armor Class 13 (16 with *mage armor*)

Hit Points 91 (14d8 + 28)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+10)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	15 (+2)	15 (+2)

Skills Insight +5, Perception +8, Stealth +6

Damage Immunities bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks not made with silvered weapons

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 18

Languages Common (can't speak in rat form)

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

Keen Smell. Master Doldrum has advantage on Wisdom (Perceptions) checks that rely on smell.

ACTIONS

Multiattack (Humanoid or Hybrid Form Only). Master Doldrum makes two Shortsword attacks or two Arcane Blast attacks. He can replace one of his attacks with a Bite attack.

Shortsword (Humanoid or Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (4d6 + 3) piercing damage.

Arcane Blast (Humanoid or Hybrid Form Only). *Ranged Spell Attack:* +6 to hit, range 120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d10 + 2) force damage.

Bite (Rat or Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage. If the target is a humanoid, it must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or be cursed with wererat lycanthropy.

Change Shape. Master Doldrum magically transforms into a rat-humanoid hybrid or into a giant rat or back into his true form, which is humanoid. His statistics, other than his size, are the same in each form. Any equipment he is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. He reverts to his true form if he dies.

Spellcasting. Master Doldrum casts one of the following spells, using Charisma as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 13):

At will: *mage armor*, *mending*, *speak with animals*

1/day each: *misty step*, *spider climb*

BONUS ACTIONS

Scurry Step. Master Doldrum can move up to 20 feet without provoking opportunity attacks. Any increase or decrease to his speed changes this additional movement by the same amount.

REACTIONS

Artful Dodger. When targeted by a weapon attack from an attacker that he can see, Master Doldrum can twist aside. The attacker has disadvantage on the attack roll.

Night-Thing (Workhouse Chattel)

Medium Construct, Unaligned

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 75 (10d8 + 30)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	3 (−4)	10 (+0)	6 (−2)

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities charmed, deafened, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, stunned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages understands Common but cannot speak

Challenge 3 (700 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

Immutable Form. The night-thing is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Magic Resistance. The night-thing has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The night-thing makes two Slam attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage. If the target is Medium or smaller, it is grappled (escape DC 13) and restrained until the grapple ends.

Hammer. The night-thing slams creatures grappled by it into a solid surface. A grappled creature must make a DC 14 Strength saving throw, taking 11 (2d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage and being stunned until the end of the night-thing's next turn on a failed save or half as much damage and no additional effects on a successful one.

Protean Zombie

Medium Undead, Neutral Evil

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 90 (10d8 + 30)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	14 (+2)	19 (+4)	7 (−2)	10 (+0)	5 (−3)

Damage Immunities lightning, poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't adamantine

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages understands the language of its creator but can't speak

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

Immutable Form. The protean zombie is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Magic Resistance. The protean zombie has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Unusual Nature. Though constructed from dead parts, a protean zombie is considered an undead, not a construct.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The zombie makes two Slam attacks. It can use its Backhand attack in place of one of the Slam attacks.

Backhand. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d10 + 4) bludgeoning damage, and the target must make a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be hurled 10 feet away from the zombie and land prone.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

BONUS ACTIONS

Frenzy. If the protean zombie begins its turn with less than 50 hit points, it can use a bonus action to gain the following effects until the beginning of its next turn:

- The zombie's speed doubles
- It gains an additional action on each of its turns that can only be used to make a Slam attack or use the Dash action.

REACTIONS

Corporeal Instability. If the protean zombie successfully hits a creature with both its Slam attacks in the same turn, it can infect the target with corporeal instability (see **Corporeal Instability** sidebar).

CORPOREAL INSTABILITY

A living creature that is infected with corporeal instability immediately metamorphoses into a spongy, amorphous mass of fleshy material. Its flesh, bones, and organs melt, flow, writhe, and boil, causing the following:

- Its speed is reduced to 10 feet.
- It can't cast spells and can't use magic items, tools, or weapons. It can make unarmed melee attacks with a reach of 5 feet.
- It is blind and deaf.
- Any items it carries or wears don't transform with it but instead fall to the ground in the creature's space.
- An affected creature repeats the saving throw at the end of its turn. On a success, the corporeal instability is suppressed for 1 minute. While the instability is suppressed, the creature reverts to its normal form. Its armor, clothing, and other gear remain scattered on the ground around it. During this minute, no saving throws against corporeal instability are necessary unless the creature is hit again by both of a protean zombie's Slam attacks. After the minute of stability elapses, the affected creature must make another DC 15 Constitution saving throw at the end of its turn. On a successful save, it has another minute of stability. On a failed save, it is again reduced to a blob of flesh, and it repeats the saving throw at the end of its turn until it becomes stable again.
- The effect ends permanently (until the creature is re-infected by a protean zombie) if *greater restoration* or comparable magic is cast on the infected creature or if the creature remains stable (in their true form) for 3 minutes.
- An infected creature dies when reduced to an amorphous mass of flesh for a third time by the same corporeal instability infection. Note that it doesn't matter how many times a creature fails the saving throw while unstable. The creature dies from the infection only if it becomes stable twice and then fails the saving throw and becomes unstable a third time. A creature that dies this way from corporeal instability rises at the next dusk as a zombie.

REBORN TEMPLATE

Any humanoid or giant can become a reborn. The creature keeps its statistics, except as follows.

Challenge. If the creature's challenge rating is less than 2, increase its rating by 1. For challenge ratings of 2 or greater, no adjustment is necessary.

Senses. The reborn gains darkvision with a radius of 60 feet.

Immunities. The reborn gains immunity to poison and to the charmed, exhaustion, and poisoned conditions.

New Trait: Bloodthirsty. If a reborn can see an incapacitated creature or a creature that has taken damage, it must succeed on a DC 11 Wisdom saving throw or be compelled to move toward that creature and attack it. A reborn will choose the closest creature, attacking an incapacitated creature over others if multiple targets exist.

New Action: Invigorating Chord (Recharge 6). As an action, the reborn can reproduce a note from the Song Undying. It targets a number of creatures equal to its challenge rating (minimum 1) within 30 feet. Affected creatures gain advantage on the next ability check, attack roll, or saving throw made within the next minute, losing this advantage if a roll is not made within that time. A creature that gains advantage by means of this ability cannot receive its benefits again for another 24 hours.

New Reaction: Furious Reprisal. When a creature hits the reborn with a melee attack that inflicts 5 or more damage, it can use its reaction to attack the creature. The reborn gains advantage on this attack and a bonus to damage equal to its challenge rating.

Reborn Elfmarked Human

Medium Undead, Neutral Evil

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 27 (5d8 + 5)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)

Skills Arcana +4, Perception +3

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Common, Elvish

Challenge 1 (200 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

Bloodthirsty. If a reborn can see an incapacitated creature or one that has taken damage, it must succeed on a DC 11 Wisdom saving throw or be compelled to move toward that creature and attack it. A reborn will choose the closest creature, attacking an incapacitated creature over others if multiple targets exist.

Fey Ancestry. The reborn has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put it to sleep.

ACTIONS

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Invigorating Chord (Recharge 6). As an action, the reborn can reproduce a note from the Song Undying. It targets one creature within 30 feet. The creature gains advantage on the next ability check, attack roll, or saving throw it makes within the next minute, losing this advantage if a roll is not made within that time. A creature that gains advantage by means of this ability cannot receive its benefits again for another 24 hours.

Spellcasting. The reborn casts one of the following spells, using Intelligence as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 12):

At will: *detect magic, mage hand*

1/day: *magic missile*

BONUS ACTIONS

Magical Resonance (5/Day). The reborn gains advantage on its next weapon attack. If the attack hits, they deal an extra 4 (1d8) force damage.

REACTIONS

Furious Reprisal. When a creature hits the reborn with a melee attack that inflicts 5 or more damage, the reborn can attack the creature. This attack has advantage and a +1 bonus to damage.

Remmee Nul

Medium Humanoid (Human), Neutral Evil

Armor Class 17 (half plate, shield)

Hit Points 90 (12d8 + 36)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	8 (−1)	13 (+1)

Saving Throws Str +5, Con +5, Cha +3

Skills Athletics +5, Perception +1

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Dwarvish

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

Arrogance. Remmee has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Remmee makes two Riverine Blade attacks.

Riverine Blade. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d8 + 5) slashing damage or 10 (1d10 + 5) slashing damage if used with two hands. (See **Chapter 7** for additional details on the *riverine blade*.)

Command Minions (Recharge 5–6). Allies within 30 feet of Remmee who are able to hear his voice gain advantage on attack rolls until the start of Remmee's next turn.

BONUS ACTIONS

Inspired Strike. If Remmee is within 5 feet of a target and uses Command Minions, he can make one Riverine Blade attack.

REACTIONS

Deflection Sidestep. If a melee attack misses Remmee, he can immediately move 10 feet.

RIPPER

Medium Humanoid (Human), Lawful Evil

Armor Class 16 (breastplate)

Hit Points 153 (18d8 + 72)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	18 (+4)	15 (+2)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Dex +6, Con +8, Wis +6, Cha +8

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks not made with silvered weapons

Damage Immunities cold, fire, poison

Condition Immunities blinded, poisoned

Senses blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Infernal; telepathy 120 ft.

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

Devil's Eye. Magical darkness doesn't impede the Ripper's darkvision, and he can't be blinded.

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

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Ripper makes three Red Lady's Scalpel attacks. He can make an Infernal Touch attack in place of one Red Lady's Scalpel attack.

Red Lady's Scalpel. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d4 + 5) slashing damage. (See **Chapter 7** for additional details on the *Red Lady's scalpel*.)

Infernal Touch. The Ripper touches a creature within 5 feet with an icy hand, and the target must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the target takes 14 (4d6) cold damage and its speed drops to 0 until the start of the Ripper's next turn. On a successful save, the target takes half the damage, and its speed is not reduced.

Infernal Utterance (Recharge 5–6). The Ripper calls out foul words in some unholy language. All creatures within a 60-foot cone must make a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw, taking 13 (3d8) necrotic damage and being frightened until the start of the Ripper's next turn on a failed save or half as much damage and no other effects on a successful one.

Infernal Blades (Recharge 6). The Ripper throws magical copies of his scalpel in a spinning wave around himself. Each creature the Ripper can see within a 20-foot radius centered on himself must make a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes 22 (5d8) slashing damage that counts as one wound from the scalpel (see **Red Lady's Scalpel** in **Chapter 7**). On a successful save, the target takes half as much damage, and this does not count as a wound from the scalpel. Creatures already suffering from the wounding effects of the *Red Lady's scalpel* have disadvantage on their saving throws against this feature.

REACTIONS

Sanguine Sidestep. The Ripper can teleport to an unoccupied space 5 feet from any creature suffering from the wounding effect of the *Red Lady's scalpel*. This ends the effects of the scalpel's wounds on the target creature.

Shurnas Kradore

Medium Humanoid (Human), Lawful Evil

Armor Class 13 (16 with *mage armor*)

Hit Points 52 (8d8 + 16)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (–1)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Int +5, Wis +3

Skills Arcana +5, Deception +2, Stealth +5

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Draconic, Infernal, Primordial

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Shurnas makes three Arcane Burst Attacks.

Arcane Burst. *Melee or Ranged Spell Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d10 + 3) fire damage.

Chained Eruption (Recharge 5–6). Shurnas unleashes magical energy of a particular type: cold, fire, lightning, or thunder. The magic targets a creature within 60 feet, and that target must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 18 (4d8) damage of the chosen type on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one. With concentration and for up to 1 minute, Shurnas can continue the effect, targeting a different creature within 60 feet of the previous target and that Shurnas can see. The new target must make the same saving throw and suffers the same damage. The same creature can be targeted multiple times but not on successive rounds.

Spellcasting. Shurnas casts one of the following spells, using Intelligence as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 13):

At will: *dancing lights*, *message*, *prestidigitation*

2/day each: *fog cloud*, *magic missile*, *thunderwave*

1/day each: *counterspell*, *dispel magic*, *fireball*, *invisibility*

XAVIER

Medium Undead (Wight), Neutral Evil

Armor Class 12 (15 with *mage armor*)

Hit Points 75 (10d8 + 30)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Dex +6, Wis +5, Cha +3

Skills Arcana +7, Perception +5

Damage Resistances necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't silvered

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Common, Undercommon

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, Xavier has disadvantage on attack rolls and Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Turn Resistance. Xavier has advantage on saving throws against any effect that turns undead.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Xavier makes two Quarterstaff attacks and a Shockbolt attack. He can use Life Drain in place of one Quarterstaff attack.

Quarterstaff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage or 7 (1d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage if wielded with two hands.

Life Drain. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 5 (1d6+2) necrotic damage. The target must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw, or its hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0. A human slain by this attack rises 24 hours later as a zombie under Xavier's control unless the humanoid is restored to life or their body is destroyed. Xavier can have no more than 12 zombies under his control at one time.

Shockbolt. Xavier targets one creature he can see within 30 feet, sending a bolt of lightning at that target. Three bolts of lightning then leap from that target to as many as three other targets, each of which must be within 30 feet of the first target. A target must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 7 (5d8) lightning damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one.

Spellcasting. Xavier casts one of the following spells, using Intelligence as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 13):

At will: *chill touch*, *dancing lights*, *shocking grasp*

3/day each: *mage armor*, *see invisibility*, *spider climb*

1/day each: *phantasmal killer*, *slow*

BONUS ACTIONS

Necrotic Drain. If Xavier begins a turn within 5 feet of a zombie under his control, he can drain 25 hit points from the undead, reducing the zombie's hit point total and restoring the same amount of his own (up to his normal maximum).

INDEX

A

adventure hooks 21, 24, 31, 49, 58, 67, 80, 86, 87, 138
akori blossom 25, 26
alehouses 24
Altar of the Lorelei 57–58
Altbach 14
amazons 29, 36
ambassadors
  Winter's Kiss 122
Anvil Prayer 23, 128
Arcane Collegium 13, 14, 20, 21, 26, 28, 29, 30, 33, 38, 44, 45, 48, 49, 67, 77, 102, 103, 116, 117, 119, 120, 121, 129, 137, 142, 151, 152, 164, 236, 237, 238, 244, 266, 267, 269, 270, 273, 275, 276, 279
Arcane Square 48, 49, 190, 232
artists 2, 93
Ashmill. *See* Lower Zobeck
Asmodeus 33, 113

B

backgrounds
  Blessed of Ninkash 126, **162–163**
  Collegian 164–165
  Courtesan 165–166
  Kobold King 167–168
  Politician 168–169
bathhouse. *See* Old Stross Public Bathhouse
Bemmea 29, 62, 81, 122
Bengta's Radiance 58–59
Black Chamber 39–40
Blackened Fish Tavern 59, 62, 63
Black Lotus **74–77**, 258, 259, 260, 263, 265, 271
Black Market 25, 38, **39–43**, 77, 79, 105, 115, 176, 179, 180, 258, 262, 263, 279
  Anton's Menagerie 41–42
  Cut Purse 39
  Merry Sisters' Meat Market 42
  Petra the Mask-Maker 42
  Slave Block 39
  Tears to Forget 43
Black Oak Bailey 8
Blue Barbers 59, 60, 115, 120, 231
  of Wharf Street 59–60
Blue House 14, 29, 30, **44–47**, 114, 117, 129, 152, 176, 177, 178, 222
Book Fetish 13, **48–49**, 117, 151, 274, 275, 276, 277
Brandor's Keep 8
breweries 24
Briarwood 10
Broken Seal Tavern 60

C

Cartways 37–43
chain bridges 71
chase rules 283–286
Chittr'k'k 130, 131, 132, 148, 149, 203, 210, 211, 212. *See also* Rat Cult
Citadel 43–48
citizens of Zobeck 15–17
City Archives 15, 50
city watch 31, 49, 62, 66, 71, 77, 118, 167, 185, 235, 265, 268, 269
Civic Courthouse 50
Clan Grimbold 11
cleric domains
  Lust 125
Clockwork Caliph 21
clockwork mages 17, 63, 129, 143
Clockwork Oracle 127. *See also* gods: Rava
Cloven Nine 21, 33, 49, 58, 60, 61, 81, 100, **112–116**, 119, 120, 135, 152, 176, 177, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183
Collegium District 48–50
consuls 28. *See also* Free City Council
Council Hall 50
courtesans 22, **91–93**, 117, 137, 161, 165
courtiers 93
Court of Midnight Teeth 59, 60, 120
crab divining 134–136. *See also* Mama Rye; *See also* Kariv
Cracked Coin **77–79**, 183
crime 32, 33
Cronepisht 18
Crown Square. *See* Upper Zobeck
Cult of the Yellow Sign 129
Cup and Pentacle 25, 57

D

Dancing Bear 24, 59, 60
darakhul 17, 35, 37, 39, 40, 41, 42, 53, 105, 106, 161, 180, 183
Dawn Temple 49
Dock District 57–63
Doresh 9, 11, 15, 17, 19, 24, 26, 34, 35, 39, 71, 87, 89, 90, 119, 124, 194
Dornig 11, 30, 46, 62, 174
Dragon Empire 11, 19, 20, 26, 29, 45, 46, 50, 141, 171. *See also* Mharoti Empire
dueling 92

E

entertainment 24–25

F

families of influence 25–26
feats
  for gearforged 172–173
  for humans 173–174
festivals and fairs 21–24
fighting pit 54, 56, 272
Fire Blessing 23, 128
Flying Cities of Sikkim 18, 122
Four Deaths 9
Free Army 14, 29, 30, 31, 43, 89, 176
Free City Council 6, 7, 9, 11, 13, 20, 23, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 33, 45, 65, 102, 122, 127, 168

G

gambling 24–25
gangs 112–120
Gelburg 14, 31
Ghetto Gate 64, 68, **70–71**, 72. *See also* Kobold Ghetto
Ghoul Imperium 11, 86, 105
Goddess of Gears. *See* gods: Rava
gods
  Donar. *See* Perun
  Khors 8, 13, 14, 22, 24, 30, 31, 50, 128, 129, 144
  Lada 13, 14, 15, 22, 29, 33, 36, 48, 49, 50, 88, 91, 98, 123, 124, 138, 140, 141, 245, 247, 248, 250, 251, 252, 253, 287, 290
  Marena 13, 18, 21, 35, 48, 49, 51, 74, 99, 101, 117, 124, 125, 129, 130, 139, 148, 237, 244, 253, 275, 276, 287
  Mavros. *See* Perun
  Ninkash 50, 125, 126, 162, 163
  Perun 11, 13, 14, 15, 18, 24, 30, 31, 33, 35, 36, 45, 88, 123, 126, 138, 139
  Porevit and Yarila 15, 22, 33, 88, 126
  Rava 6, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 22, 24, 26, 28, 29, 30, 32, 33, 45, 50, 51, 63, 64, 86, 88, 122, 127, 128, 138, 140, 141, 186, 237, 245
  Sarastra 253
  St. Helba 87, 140, 141
  St. Piran 29, 124, 136, 140, 141
  Thor. *See* Perun
  Volund 10, 14, 15, 16, 22, 23, 29, 30, 33, 34, 50, 63, 88, 117, 122, 124, 128
  White Goddess 141, 253, 287
  Wotan 15, 125
Great Northern Road 13, 19, 22, 30, 74, 89, 90
Great Revolt 6, 7, 8, 13, 16, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 87, 95, 128, 140, 236, 238
Great Southern Road 9, 122
Great Stross Clock Tower 50–51
Grey Friar Tavern 21, 24, 64
Griffon Gate 9
griffons 20, 21, 41, 43, 50, 80, 89, 90, 170, 171
Grisal 7, 15, 31, 34

guilds
Ancient and Honorable Order of Jewelers 121
Bargeman's Fellowship 25, 58, 63, 121
Brewer's Sisterhood 22, 38, 74, 121, 125
Carpenter's Brotherhood 86, 121
Chartered Brotherhood of Alchemists 26, 48, 49, 121
Cooper's Union 86, 121
Foundryman's Guild 13, 121, 128
Fraternal Order of Arms and Armory 120, 121
Free Fellowship of the Arcane Collegium 121
Geargrinder's Guild 13, 17, 40, 63, 64, 67, 121, 138, 236
Glassblower's Guild 121
Honorable Order of Tanners and Leatherworkers 121
Honorable Order of Weavers 33, 86, 121
Lanternmaker and Tinker's Guild 121
Limner's Guild 122
Miner's Brotherhood 122
Ragpicker's Guild 122, 219
Ropemaker's Guild 122
Shipwright and Chandler's Guild 122
Solderer and Brazier's Guild 122
Spyglass and Cartographer's Guild 17, 33, 57, 79, 85, 86, 110, 112, 117, 119, 121, 122, 127, 129, 176, 177, 181, 182, 184, 185, 186, 187, 189, 231, 237, 239, 260, 261, 266, 271
Steamworker's Union 13, 63, 64, 86, 121, 122, 213
Stevedore's Brotherhood 25, 122
Stonemason's Guild 122
Vigilant Brotherhood of Scribes 67, 86, 122
Vintner's Guild 122
Wainwright's Guild 122
Gullet 13, 25, 57, 60, 63, 117, 137, 220. *See also* Dock District

H

Hammerfell 18, 34, 46, 64
Harkesh 13, 19, 49, 81, 87, 91, 122
Heartwood Pact 8
Hedgehog Tavern 13, 24, 48, 49, 190, 191, 193, 199
Hommal's Botanical Rooftop **82–86**, 176, 180, 182, 183, 230, 231, 233, 263
House Stross 6, 7, 9, 16, 17, 24, 26, 27, 28, 30, 37, 38, 64, 89, 137, 236

I

inns 24
Ironcrag Cantons 11, 15, 24, 34, 35, 45, 46, 125

K

Kariv 13, 15, 18, 22, 24, 33, 46, 56, 57, 87, 94, 96, 100, 113, 114, 120, 125, 134, 135, 136, 137, 173, 183
King's Head Tavern 13, 24, 47, 104, 110, 116, 117, 239, 269, 270
King's Square 72
Kobold Ghetto 16, 24, 25, 29, 40, 54, **64–74**, 80, 94, 95, 96, 107, 108, 152, 167, 168, 222, 223, 270. *See also* Kobold Kings
ferry in 71
Undercity of 71–72
Kobold Kings 65–67
Kobold Shipping Consortium 60–61
Krakovar 11, 35

L

Lillefor 25, 29, 38, 66, 70, 71, 74, 141
living expenses 90
lord mayor 11, 21, 27, 28, 29, 50, 119, 168, 177, 244
Lower Zobeck 14, 24, 54, **74–81**, 82, 85, 91, 108, 121, 124, 176, 177, 183, 184, 186, 203, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 231, 232, 259, 263, 270, 271

M

Magdar Kingdom 15, 19, 24, 31, 34, 36, 45, 89, 129, 207
magic items 136–140, 144–152, 286–287. *See also* Appendix
Ark of St. Bellandrus 137
Brandea of the Pillar Saints 137–138
Clockwork Mummy of St. Heviticus 138
Holy Gears of Rava 138
Holy Hand of the Spear Maiden 138, 139
Mummified Monks of Marena 138
Mummy-Skin Tea of the Red Goddess 138, 139
Thigh Bone of St. Mauritz Frumarch 140
Thousand-Mouthed King 138, 139
Magocracy of Allain 21, 46, 62
Mammon 12, 26, 39, 110, 118, 119, 129, 141, 231
Margreve Forest 8, 11, 34, 45, 89, 118, 194
Market District 81–86
Melano 11
Merchant District 86–87
Mharoti Empire 19, 30, 31, 34, 36, 125, 131, 267. *See also* Dragon Empire
monsters (with statblocks) 170–171, 288–296
Moon and Owl Tavern 61
Morgau 7, 9, 11, 15, 17, 19, 24, 25, 26, 34, 35, 39, 45, 46, 48, 50, 67, 71, 87, 89, 90, 91, 93, 101, 119, 124, 125, 194
mounts 170–171
Mouse King 14, 29, 45, 47, 104, 110, 112, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 137, 138, 139, 184, 203, 211, 212, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235. *See also* NPCs: Myzi I
Mouse Kingdom 110, **116–118**, 184, 185, 187, 188, 189, 230, 231, 233

N

narcotics 25
Neuraddel 14
NPCs
Abelard 9
Aden 100, 135
Akad 60, 61, 113, 114, 115
Antonidas Jabber 19
Anton Ladescu 41
Ardurak the Patient 65
Ariella Scarpetti 14, 33, 48, 270
Atsen 56
Black Eye 94–95
Blee'uk the Ascendant 65
Brandorek 8, 66
Cassandra Chyorny 79
Chainbreaker 65
Chitter Sisters 132
Constantia Olleck 14, 28, 45
Dame Teragram 95–96
Dobricar 37, 39, 40, 42
Dragged Woman **96–97**, 237, 238, 239, 240
Drajan 56
Edmure Orillian 25
Ersebet Cemilla 33, 81, 117, 119, 177, 231, 235
Fenyll Marack 14, 29, 30, 44, 275
Gearheart 65
Glaninin Thelamandrine 14, 20, 50, 122, 230, 232
Goldbiter 33
Goldscale **98–99**, 267
Goylevick Sarrli 141
Greenflower 65
Grigory Kaldozh 81, 119, 120
Grimaldi Slygass 26, 33
Halsen Hrovitz 9, 14, 23, 26, 28
Harky the Trapsmith 65
Hester Umbrecht 42
Hommal Agic 82, 84, 231, 263
Hrodik-Killer 65
Ivan Kazimir 77, 79
Izachar 33, 113, 114
Janush Hermass 14, 30
Jayzel 49, **99–100**, 101, 118, 222, 227, 260, 267, 269, 270, 271, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 282
Jitka 56
Jorleele 33
Jorun Haclav 14, 29, 30, 43, 45
Kajya 56, 260, 261
Kan-Tor the Jovial 65
Karillian Gluck 28
Karremark 65, 149, 167
Keeper in White 66, 67
Kekarrac 66, 71
Kekolina 14, 29, 45
Konrad von Eberfeld 14, 33, 48, 273, 274, 282, 291
Kuromak 64, 65
Lena Ravovik 14, 33, 88, 127
Lord Greymark. *See* NPCs: Volstaff Greymark
Lucan 11, 45, 46
Lucca Angeli 14, 33, 88, 124, 247
Malkus Lineguard 14, 30
Mama Rye 33, 94, **100–101**, 134, 135. *See also* Kariv; *See also* crab divining
Marcenzo 9, 10
Marienga "Mischief" Slodna 132
Medlin Gorzax 14, 33, 126
Melancha Vendemic 14, 29, 45

Mikhail 52, 53, 54, 181
Moonlit King 8, 119, 230, 231
Myzi I (The Mouse King) 14, 29, 117
Nariss Larigorn 49, 99, **101–102**, 117, 124, 125, 276, 277
Nemevene the Keeper 66
Nerborg the Stitched 66, 67
Ogolai Kiyat 33, 88, 126
Ondli Firedrake 14, 16, 29, 33, 45, 88, 122, 127, 128
Orlando 14, 26, 29, 33, 45, 48, **102–103**, 142, 236, 237, 238, 239, 244
Painted Man 74, 75, 76, 77, 258, 259, 265, 267, 269, 271
Pavic **103–104**, 264
Peal Tkonnar 132
Peppercorn 47, **104–105**, 239, 270
Petra the Mask-Maker 42, 43
Philomena Flaxe 33, 86
Queen of Night and Magic 122, 230, 235
Quetelmak 14, 29, 45, 64, 65, 71, 167
Rabble of Rats 132
Radovar Streck 14, 29
Radu Underhill 105–106
Red Mask 33, 65, 67, 91, 112, 117, 118, 119, 231
Roaches 80
Rudwin Whitstone 14, 33, 48
Rurburakka the Newblood 66
Sam Nesclem **106–107**, 266, 268, 269, 270, 271
Scaler 67, 73, **107–108**, 222, 223, 224, 225
Selena Harbeck 14, 29, 45
Sergeant Hendryk 108, 176, 179, 266, 267, 268, 269
Skirtal 80
Slinger 73, 107, **108–109**, 120, 222, 223, 224, 264
Slurrker 66
Sundran Karesh 25
Svetlana 52, 53, 54
Syssysalai **109–110**, 222, 229
The Three Princes of Lillefor 66
Ticker Nicktailson 40
Timolius Druzeldorg 56
Tuck Marick 19
Tymon 47, **110–111**, 118
Tyron 54, 56, 57, **111–112**, 267, 270, 272
Ulmar 86
Ursli Schramm 33
Vandessian Thrikk 56
Vasilka Soulay 35, 45
Volstaff Greymark 14, 25, 33, 39, 45, 53, 54, 56, 58, 103, 111, 118, 176, 179, 222, 223, 225, 226, 227, 229, 269, 270, 272
Vukas 39, 40, 262
Wintesla Marack 14, 29, 33, 45
Xanarla Gloomyn 43
Yshka Bishka 72
Zorb the Blasphemous 66
Zsolt 54, 187
NPCs (with statblocks) 94–112, 288–296

O

Obersteinau 14
Obertal 14, 28
Odorous Effendi 21
Old Stross Public Bathhouse **51–54**, 184, 185, 264
Order of Griffon Knights 14, 19, 29, 30, 43, 49, 89, 170, 171
Order of the Undying Sun 7, 9, 14, 16, 28, **30–31**, 119, 129
Order of the White Lions 36
Oros Bridge 9, 89, 90

P

Pastures 87
Pentrick's Mundane Magical Items **72–73**, 152
Perunalia 11, 29, 36, 45
pit fighting 25, 54, 94
Praetors 29–30

R

Ragman Alley 61
Rampant Roach 80–81
Rat Cult 130–133. *See also* Chittr'k'k
real estate 90
Redcloaks 33, 40, 65, 81, 91, 95, 110, 111, **118–119**, 129, 231
Red Houses 91, 137
Red Queen 19, 25, 57, 58, 89
Redrock Bailey 15, 33, 50
relics and reliquaries 136–140. *See also* magic items
Remmauer 14, 89
rent 90
River Argent 7, 9, 11, 13, 19, 24, 34, 35, 57, 59, 60, 62, 87, 107, 124, 130, 134, 204, 205, 211, 212, 219, 266, 268, 269, 272
royal workshops 73–74
Ruby Despotate 36

S

saints 140–141. *See also* gods: St. Helba; *See also* gods: St. Piran
salons 93–94
Salzbach 11, 15
Scaler's Alley 67, 73, 108, 222, 223, 224
scáthesidhe 8, 18, 134
schools of magic
School of Clockwork 143–144
Seven Bells Tavern 24, 54
Seven Cities 11, 29, 30, 45, 62, 119, 173
Shadowcrag 8, 11, 14, 26, 89
Shadow Realm 8, 14, 20, 36, 50, 52, 54, 120, 134, 170, 174
shadow roads 15, 19, 20, 174
Silk Scabbard 24, 25, **54–57**, 95, 111, 114, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 182, 222, 223, 258, 260, 261, 264, 265, 267, 268, 269, 271, 272
Siwal 13, 20, 21, 48, 62, 81, 87, 120, 122, 129
Six Lanterns Playhouse 86, 87
Slinger's Ambush Gang 73, 107, 120, 222, 223, 224
Smuggler's Market 59, **61–62**
Jan's Most Expedient Carriages 62
soulforging. *See* spells: soulforging
spells 47, 115, 132–133, 152–160
of the Blue House 47
of the Nine 114–115
of the Rat Cult 132–133
soulforging 172, 173, 261, 262, 264, 265
spiritbinding 172, 173
spiritbinding. *See* spells: spiritbinding
Spyglass Guild 17, 57, 79, 85, 86, 110, 112, 117, **119–120**, 127, 129, 176, 177, 181, 182, 184, 185, 186, 187, 189, 231, 237, 239, 260, 261, 266, 271. *See also* guilds: Spyglass and Cartographer's Guild
Stefanstor 14
Strossheim 10, 11

T

taverns 24
Temple District 88
Templeforge 18, 34, 46
Temple of Celestial Dawn. *See* Dawn Temple
Temple of Painful Pleasures 48
Triolo 11, 126, 129
Tromburg 16

U

Ulmar's Rare Books 85–86
Undercity 6, 28, 29, 38, 45, **62–63**, 65, 71, 72, 109, 130, 147, 171, 175, 200
Upper Zobeck 50–57

V

Verrayne 11, 62
Vesslau Mines 14
Vilgau 16
Vineyard District. *See* Market District

W

Water Gate 48, 64, **70–71**
Wheatsheaf Tavern 14, 21, 24, 81, 118
White Rose Tavern 13, 24, 47
Winter Hall 13, 24, 38
Wintersheim 34
Winter's Kiss 11, 50, 114, 122, 231

Y

Yronwood-Gilgalline Accord 122

Z

Zobeck
and commerce 18–21
and the Great Revolt 9–11
and the kobolds 8
and the present day 11
and the Stross Family 8–9
culture of 17–18
districts of 13–15
education, technology, and magic of 21
entertainment in 24–25
festival and fairs in 21–24
influential families in 25–26
life in 15–17
religions in 24


N
feet
50 200 600
0 100 400
Dwarf Gate
Gear District
Merchant District
Temple District
Upper Zobeck
Crown Square
Market District
South Gate
South to Smolten Hill & Vineyard Roads
Lower Zobeck
Kobold Ghetto
Greenmarket
Watch Barracks
Flows to the Ruby Sea
Gear District
1. Steamworker's Guildhall
2. Geargrinder's Emporium
3. Temple of Volund
4. Foundryman's Guild
5. Glassblower's Guild
6. The Grey Friar Tavern
7. Solderers' and Braziers Guild
Temple District
8. Church of Perun
9. Temple of Yarila and Porevit
10. Temple of Golden Lada
11. Temple of Rava
12. Temple of Volund
Market District
13. The Brewer's Sisterhood
14. Stonemason's Guild
15. Wainwright's Guild
16. The Vintner's Guild
17. Lanternmakers & Tinkers Guild
18. Limner's Guild
19. Shadow Fey Exchange
Merchant District (Vineyard District)
20. Honorable Order of Weavers
21. Ancient Order of Jewelers
22. Shrine of Khors & Perun
23. Carpenter's Brotherhood
24. Cooper's Union
25. Order of Arms and Armory
26. Order of Tanners & Leather Workers
27. Six Lanterns Playhouse



Upper Zobeck
28. The Great Stross Clock Tower
29. City Archives
30. Civic Courthouse
31. Council Hall
32. Redrock Bailey
33. Old Stross Public Bathhouse
34. The Seven Bells Tavern

Lower Zobeck (Ashmill)
35. The Wheatsheaf Tavern
36. Moon's Grace Temple
37. Red Queen Gambling Hall
38. Shrine of St. Charon
39. Spyglass and Cartographer's Guild
40. Miner's Brotherhood
41. Ragpicker's Guild

Collegium District
42. Arcane Collegium
43. Book Fetish
44. The Hedgehog Tavern
45. The Vigilant Scribes
46. Shadow Fey Embassy
47. Temple of Celestial Dawn
48. Fellowship of the Arcane Collegium
49. Chartered Brotherhood of Alchemists
50. Arcane Square

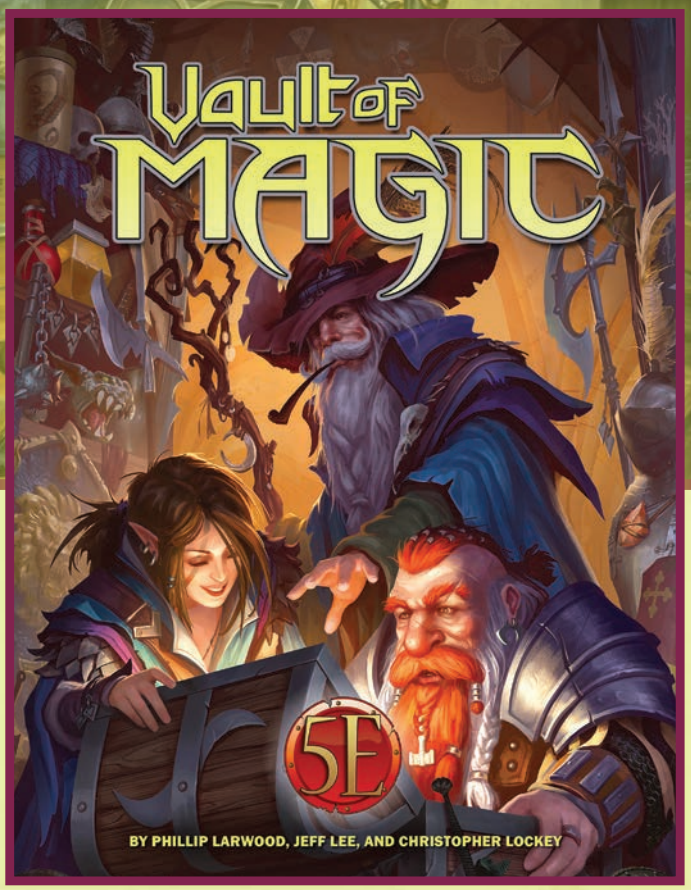
Kobold Ghetto
51. Ghetto Gate
52. Pit of the Fierce Lynx
53. King of King's Palace
54. Royal Workshops
55. Kobold Dock
56. Undercity Entrance

Citadel District
57. Blue House
58. The Citadel
59. Griffon Rider Barracks
60. Western Barbican
61. King's Head Tavern
62. The White Rose Tavern

Pastures
63. Shrine of Hubertus

Dock District
64. Smuggler's Market
65. Blackened Fish Tavern
66. Blue Barbers of Wharf Street
67. Broken Seal Tavern
68. Greymark Warehouse
69. The Dancing Bear
70. The Moon and Owl Tavern
71. Altar of the Lorelei
72. The Bargeman's Fellowship
73. Shipwright's and Chandler's Guild
74. Stevedore's Brotherhood

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