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VINDICATION

By Bob Sarvas

Vindication is a d20 fantasy adventure designed for
4-6 characters of levels 9-12

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THIRD EDITION RULES, FIRST EDITION FEEL

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Vindication

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Introduction

Chastremian the Enchanter began his career after apprenticeship, equipped with great intelligence, cunning, and scrappiness, but not great size. At one time, he had a neutral outlook on the world, but this eventually changed after observing and dealing with its denizens. Chastremian traveled far and wide, participating in many adventures, making contacts and enemies alike. Like all effective mages, he procured his share of magical spells and items along the way. His power grew with speed and surety, helped by his ability to befriend and control those he met. Eventually the Enchanter's thoughts turned to the creation of magic and later focused upon amassing wealth by any means possible. Recently his thoughts turned to the control of populace and politics. As his actions and effects created an infamous legend in the area, he took up a new mantle, calling himself Sessestophelzine (ses-es-TOF-ul-zeen). Translated from Loquatia Arcana, the name literally means "Great evil magic power in pursuit of gems and gold" and being the realist that he is, this made sense to him. Presently, others call him variously Lord Sesses, the Darkmage, Your Grace, or Master of Curses.

Lord Sesses rules and heads the Butchers, a tight-knit group comprising many different races and skills. The Butchers exist to wring every drop of coin they can from the local economy. They tend to pick venues that offer a quick, reliable, and safe means of extraction. Consider the Butchers to function as a modern corporation, but one totally bereft of morals, with Lord Sesses as the President. The Butchers' influence envelops the nearby large town of Pfefferain in multiple insidious and corrupt ways. Although His Most Exalted Authority the Mayor of Pfefferain rules that large town, the mayor is corrupt, and wrapped around one of the Darkmage's fingers.

The Butchers extort money from many guildmasters about town by threat and deed. They run many immoral operations, always looking for that extra pouch of coin. They also run legitimate operations such as a casino and a magic-crafting laboratory. Due to his experience and focus, Lord Sesses is able to craft such powerful items as a *rod of absorption* or a *robe of the archmagi (black)*. He also creates the protective devices for the entirety of the Elite Guard of Pfefferain. What initially draws the characters into his web are the special cursed items that he creates during lull times as a hobby. This hobby has garnered Lord Sesses his share of enemies, and it keeps him "on his toes" in regards to personal safety. This is a man who yearns for the knowledge to create his first *vacuous grimoire*. His curses are most wretched and generally contain a mocking epithet that sometimes is the last thing a victim hears before dying. As a bonus, he also imbues each curse effect to summon forth an imp to record the horrific event and then

pass on the information to Lord Sesses. In his own words, "Feedback from the field helps the Research and Development of new 'amusing toys'. I also enjoy a good laugh".

The party either purchases or finds one of the Darkmage's "amusing toys", and uses it to horrific effect. The Imp dutifully appears, records the event, and taunts the characters further. Eventually they learn of Lord Sessestophelzine. Curiosity and subsequent ill fate prompt the players to investigate him and his holdings. The Imp learns much, much more of the characters, however, and they forever after become targets for the Butchers' amusement. After surviving repeated torments and gaining some much needed experience, the PCs finally acquire information directing them to Pfefferain, where they have a chance to discover its secrets. With skill and luck, the PCs find the nearby Lair of Lord Sesses. Unfortunately, they also uncover multiple full-scale operations headed by a powerful Wizard, dragons friendly to the antagonist, a battalion of experienced bugbears, and perhaps worst of all, a bevy of imps and a few major devils to boot. Due to the inherent polymorphing abilities of some viceroys, the characters may not even know what half of the viceroys truly are until they are destroyed. The Keep on the Butte provides opportunity to gain at least one experience level; it is also a chance to loot the treasure room and laboratories of a high-level Wizard, and to create many friends and enemies in the populace of Pfefferain.

Module Overview

Vindication is a challenging adventure for four characters of 10th level. At first, the characters learn of the evil wizard Sessestophelzine slowly and steadily. After awhile they begin suffering from the acts of Lord Sesses and his cohorts, the Butchers. These acts rise in annoyance and lethality in proportion to the characters' growth, all with the aim of cementing palpable, unyielding hatred in the PCs towards Sessestophelzine and his minions. Eventually the tormented victims accumulate strength and experience to the point where they can finally challenge the Darkmage. Those that do so successfully have an opportunity of rising two levels during the raid upon The Keep.

The adventure begins as the PCs probe into the inner dealings of Lord Sesses regarding Pfefferain, a town that he controls behind the scenes. The characters find that the Darkmage's tendrils are firmly wrapped around many facets of society. When the PCs begin to thwart the activities of Lord Sesses, the Darkmage finally notes that they are more than mere annoyances, now standing firmly as threats to be eliminated. At this point, both sides are probably plotting against each other, and

the adventure culminates with the PCs' assault upon The Keep on the Butte.

The **Prologue**, entitled "**The Seeds of Torment**", offers many ideas for introducing Lord Sesses, his 'amusing toys', and the various members of the Butchers to the heroes. Introduce these NPCs early on in the characters' lives with the understanding that the PCs must survive to undertake the investigative phase of the adventure later in life. This starts their inexorable progression towards uncovering the secrets of the Darkmage and his associates. Once the PCs close in upon the experience suggested for this adventure, begin the PCs' march toward their tormentor. This could be either a long, winding journey or a short trip, at your discretion. Their journey lands the PCs before the Lorremach Highhills. Use the provided wilderness adventure to ensure they reach the suggested experience.

Part One, Act1, entitled "**Off to the Lorremach Highhills**", details the PCs' struggle through the perilous hilly region surrounding Pfefferain, where they find both danger and information. **Part One, Act2**, entitled "**A Township in Retrograde**", details the Town of Pfefferain, its major inhabitants, its major sights, and the effects that Lord Sesses and the Butchers bear upon it. At this point, the characters get an idea of the scope and magnitude of the Darkmage's political, criminal and personal power.

Part Two details the PCs' efforts to infiltrate the Lair of the Butchers, which is known as the Keep on the Butte. This section describes the location of the Keep and its underground laboratories. The information appears in three Acts, for the Lair is extensive and its infiltration likely runs its course over multiple play sessions. "**Assault of the Keep on the Butte**" describes the trek through the Coldwater Canyon to the Keep itself, along with the underground Temple of the Bugbears and prisoner cells. "**The Prime Plane Laboratories**" details the party's progress through the Cylindrical Treadmill, the Mold Garden Destination, and the underground labs of the Butchers. "**Denouement in Gehenna**" describes the laboratories in the Gehenna outpost where Lord Sesses makes his final stand, along with whomever else has survived.

Appendix 1, entitled "**Meet the Butchers**", details the entire crime cartel from top to bottom and provides statistics, possessions, interpersonal relationships, and strategies for each and every one of its members. **Appendix 2**, entitled "**Magic In the Lair of Lord Sesses**", details all of the magic items found within the Keep on the Butte as well as those the Darkmage constructs for himself, his associates, the Town of Pfefferain, and the beleaguered PCs.

Notes for the DM

This module is designed for those who have either played in or run role-playing campaigns before. It requires the use of the *Player's Handbook* and *DMG*. Prior to play, familiarize yourself with the entirety of the module to gain a scope of its breadth. Then focus upon **Appendix 1**, **Appendix 2** and the **Prologue** to understand the antagonists, choose a proper cursed item, and successfully bait the hooks for the characters. Spend time learning the antagonist's abilities, motivations and interpersonal relationships, for this greatly colors the experience for players and DM alike. The intricacies of the Keep on the Butte are a complex and challenging final set piece in three Acts. Literal months, if not years, of plot devices and character growth ends in the final acts.

Modifying the Adventure

This adventure is designed to adapt itself easily to any campaign setting. Pfefferain is replaceable with any large town or small city (approximately 4,000 to 6,000 people) that is relatively out of the way and has a hilly area nearby for the Keep on the Butte. The ruined village of Wennesalar may be placed anywhere nearby. Note that deities are not vital to this adventure, although they may have great effect. The temples in Pfefferain may be replaced with any like-aligned ethos, and of course the deities the PCs worship must remain in full force.

You have great latitude in using the **Prologue** ideas to hook the characters. This may start at any time in the PCs' lives. Pick and choose your favorite cursed items and disburse the effects and gathered information as you see fit. Use the **Prologue** encounters to help the PCs to their suggested experience levels. When the PCs near 10th level, give them ironclad clues to visit Pfefferain. At Pfefferain, you again have latitude to pick and choose the personalities the PCs meet, as well as which of the Butchers' operations the PCs might try to undermine. Once the characters make it to the Keep, play the module fairly straight as it is presented.

The Butchers' Chain of Command

The group Lord Sesses commands is structured similar to a modern corporation, as duties and power follow a definite chain of command represented in pyramid-style, much like the food chain.

Leader of Operations: Lord Sessestophelzine (ses-es-TOF-ul-zeen), the Darkmage

Second in Command: Jerjicus (JUR-jee-cuss), the Ogre Magi

Viceroy: Drincilla ("Doll"), the Erinyes; Kezhantak (keh-ZAN-tack), the Bugbear Captain; Rasharnor (rah-SHAHR-nore), the Bugbear High Rogue; Shentresh, the Bugbear High Priest; Gortok, the Sorcerous Doppelganger; Phytzitia ("Fizz") (fizz-TEE-hee-ya), the Imp Familiar

High Guard: Kilitus Maximus, the Blue-Headed Chimera; Elite Bugbears, Imp Sentries

Enforcers: Grunt Bugbears

Three other beings play a part in the Butchers' schemes: **Maximillion Spetarr** ("Max"), the Pit Boss Wizard at HellFire; **Opiate** ("Opie"), the evil Pseudodragon, Official Sentry of the Imps; and **Zottenheim** ("Zot"), the Sytec, Esteemed Creation of Lord Sesses.

The Butchers operate many rackets within Pfefferain and the outlying areas. Here is a listing of operations they run and which viceroy heads each racket:

Casino/Hotel Operation	Maximillion, Phytzitia
Escort Service	Drincilla
Fencing/Guild Tariffs	Gortok, Rasharnor
Garment Design/Sales	Drincilla
Gem Mining/Cutting/Sales	Jerjicus, Rasharnor
Loan sharking	Drincilla, Kezhantak
Opium Distribution/Sales	Lord Sesses
Opium Harvesting	Shentresh, Kezhentak
Magic Item Creation/Sales	Gortok, Lord Sesses, Shentresh, Zot
Political Graft	Jerjicus, Lord Sesses
Stonemasonry	Jerjicus

Note that many officers pull double duty. The Butchers feel a huge hit if any viceroy is slain, so protect them as you would treasured employees!

Conducting the Adventure

One of your tasks in *Vindication* is generating undying antipathy towards Lord Sesses. Most of the **Prologue** aids in this task. Parts of the **Prologue** and **Part One** help disseminate information about Lord Sesses and the Butchers. The first decision you must make is to figure out at which stage of the PCs' lives does the specter of the Darkmage appear. For rather new characters, Lord Sesses merely becomes a legend that brings one cursed item and then a sparse trail of annoyances. With characters that are established and already approach the experience levels suggested to inflict blows to the Butchers, then accelerate the annoyances and raise the danger posed by Lord Sesses and his minions. It is totally up to you to decide when, where, and how to disburse the items cursed by Lord Sesses. Take care, as some of the possible items may indeed slay low-level characters.

A very important part of the storyline involves the Imp summoned to record the curse effect. It performs many necessary duties for you and Lord Sesses. The Imp records the reactions of the curse victim towards the derisive message, as well as towards the effects of the curse. This feedback is desired by Lord Sesses, as it helps him create better items. The Imp must report its findings to Lord Sesses and act upon orders from the Darkmage. It usually is charged with monitoring, annoying, pilfering from and conversing with the PCs. This Imp allows you to introduce most of the encounters in the Prologue, as it gathers information vital in the setup of those encounters.

You must also decide the best time to send the PCs towards Pfefferain. The **Prologue** is written to seamlessly coordinate with other events in the character's lives. You must monitor progress in their lives, sprinkling in Butchers activity to taste, perhaps using some **Prologue** encounters to help further their experience as well as their hatred for Lord Sesses. When it seems that a few wilderness encounters offer just enough experience to attain the suggested levels, then

send the PCs to the Lorremach Highhills.

Once the suggested experience levels are attained, guide the PCs towards Pfefferain and **Part One**. From there, the adventure takes on an investigative tone, where the PCs learn more about their tormentors. With luck, they might begin to thwart Butchers operations. This is another open-ended part of the adventure, so everyone needs to be ready for anything. There are many Butchers operations to observe and disrupt, dozens of people and beings to meet in Pfefferain, and much information to gather.

Further, the PCs have choices of whether merely to observe, destroy, control, or even become a part of the Butchers. *Vindication* handles parties of any moral or ethic sets. If the party thinks they could best serve themselves by becoming **part** of the Butchers, allow such only after the party proves its skill, malevolence and measure of respect for the officers—such a situation could serve as the springboard of many adventures. Lord Sesses does not discriminate by looks or personality when selecting new associates. He only cares about skill, morals, and ethics. He asks for true skill, reliability, a malevolent edge, and an ability to follow a chain of command without question. Above all, he demands absolute loyalty and respect. Any PC who fulfills these traits could indeed become a new Butchers member, provided tests are passed. However, for aspirants that fail to impress, the battle is on without recourse to surprise. PCs who excel in tactics might be able to overthrow Lord Sesses and assume control over the remaining Butchers.

Part Two is one long shifting battle in three acts. The initial conflict is against the bugbear Butchers within the Keep. This large-scale melee could course through the entire keep and the underground passages. Eventually the action slows to guerrilla-style warfare with reinforcements coming for perhaps both sides. There are ambushes to be meted out, puzzles to figure out, and decisions to make for both sides. Role-playing possibilities also exist, but the focus from here on out is battle tactics and strategy.

Note that each and every creature in the Keep has a purpose. The PCs never encounter a wandering monster in the Prime Plane Lair. Such things usually end up as phase spider meals. Parties encounter wandering monsters only in rare circumstance while in Gehenna and those are Gehenna Imps if anything at all. Also, there are many ambushes available to the defenders. The stock defenders are stealthy cunning bugbears, backed up by organized commanders. The PCs should do their utmost to conduct reconnaissance, which may mitigate some of the ambushes.

The assault by the marauding PCs faces stiff opposition. The Butchers are a close-knit group that works well as a team. Combinations of spells and effects ex-

ist at your disposal. Some officers actively cast *detect thoughts*. Many sentries are imps who report directly to Lord Sesses. Further, the typical milling about of officers and sentries generally ensures that officers are not taken unawares.

The bugbear battle may flow from room to room, the trained bugbears attempt to keep their hit points and wits about them. They're not stupid and exist as a formidable, though beatable foe. They work especially well when reinforced by viceroys or Myron the Blue.

The time between the bugbear battle and the devilish battle can be used as puzzle-time and a breather as necessary. The initial gilded door and the Cylindrical Treadmill afford these options. It is possible the PCs could end up playing with the phase spiders, who act as bugbear whips, or could end up marching down the cylindrical corridor for a long, long time.

The *guards and wards* spell cast upon the deeper complex could shield the PCs from the Darkmage's cursory view. Still, PCs need to be quite clever should they wish to rest, as Gortok, Jerjicus, Zot and the Imp sentries actively search them out for subsequent action with conjured creatures. Do not forget that both Zot and Phytzitia serve as auxiliary eyes of the Darkmage. You are urged to keep pressing the issue. No party dithers in the Lair of Lord Sesses for long!

PCs who smartly load up with *Lord Sesses' amulets* avoid the phase spider trap, and march straight toward Jerjicus as the faux-devil, and then the waiting true devils. For DMs that love playing demons and devils, here's another opportunity. The summoned devils are very formidable, especially with Zot, Jerjicus, and perhaps some loose imps running around.

A huge event for any devil is the summoning of devilish reinforcements, and this should only be attempted after the bugbear battle shakes out. In striving for balance, consider reducing or eliminating gating success for attackers that are dwindled severely. On the other hand, for aggressors that are making a mockery of things or role-playing very well, it should be increased. At all times remember that the PCs' availability of *dismissal*, *dispel evil*, or *dispel law* spells changes the complexion of how you might wish to conduct the devils.

Once the initial summoned devil threat is dealt with, you have one last information-disbursement decision. Most of the officers flee to the trap-laden Gehenna outpost, and the PCs may follow only when they discover the means to use the teleporters. You need to lead the PCs to Gehenna or at least give them hints and allow them to conduct reconnaissance and battle once they are there. Again, gauge the party's remaining strength. With healthy groups, set up the devil in **Area 33**, perhaps with a partner. Whatever the decision, once in Gehenna the final showdown occurs. Odds are one side finally falls forever.



INTRODUCTION

Note that well role-playing PCs have an option here too. A rare occurrence for the PCs to turn the tables on the Darkmage is to somehow capture Zot or Phytzitia and hold them for ransom, or threaten them in a coercive gambit. The Darkmage is not without gambits himself. When the attackers find their way to the Gehenna complex, they most likely fail to realize that they *plane shifted* as well as *teleported*. Teleporting to assumed Prime Plane areas could transport them inside one of Gehenna's many mountainous volcanoes. Unless they spend an inordinate amount of time searching for the correct control of the teleporters, they may be stuck spellless in Gehenna for quite awhile. Bargaining could flow back and forth.

PCs that emerge successful greatly deserve recompense. Four 10th level PCs have opportunities to raise two levels each. Other rewards are found on the bodies of the Butchers and in the chests, spell books, and laboratories of Sessestophelzine. The entire place could be renovated to do the bidding of Good. The party may want to renovate The Keep to their own tastes. A clever PC might think the bugbear temple would look better dedicated to his deity. Lastly, note that Lord Sesses has placed curses on his most valuable treasures, so even if the traps and protectors are overcome, possession of the treasure is by no means assured.

Prologue: The Seeds of Torment

The **Prologue** contains the foundation of the *Vindication* adventure. As part of its set-up, you learn of the initial hook that leads to a series of mini-encounters. You are given many different varieties of initial hooks as well as twenty mini-encounters that could evolve from the hooks. *Vindication* provides great latitude to pick and choose exactly how you navigate the PCs through this adventure. Best of all, any group of characters below 10th level, regardless of alignment, may start down its trail. Plan your strategy carefully, as a horde of decisions awaits your consideration.

Ironically, a success of the players leads them to learning of the Darkmage Sessestophelzine. At least one of their treasures found from a recent exploration or one of their purchased items shows masterwork quality and detects as magic. Better ye place Pfefferain there. Place tses, it often contains latent and vile curses. This item leads the PCs towards an intermittent adventure that continually hovers nearby and waits for the PCs to reach suggested experience levels.

The Curse That Never Ends

Once the curse is triggered, two effects occur. First, the item reveals its true label, tag or rune. This displays a derisive inscription left as a parting shot from the creator, as well as the *arcane mark* of the creator. Secondly, an imp loyal to Lord Sesses invisibly arrives to observe and memorize the fateful event.

The imp's duties include overseeing the effects of the curse, noting any companions of the curse wearer, learning details of the wearer, and reporting back to Lord Sesses. Another subsidiary function of the imp is to discern the possibility of curse wearer retribution in the future. Each imp in such service carries an obsidian amulet that, if touched to the cursed item, allows the amulet-holder to *teleport* to Lord Sesses' laboratory (**Area 26b in Part Two, Act 2**) for a full report. In the typical case of a death induced by the cursed item, the imp carries the cursed item back to the Darkmage. It then reports upon the activity, takes its recording fee and disappears until called forth again by another cursed item activation.

Note: Your handling of this attendant imp is of great importance. This small devil provides the glue that holds the adventure together. It simply must follow through upon its initial duties. Initially, this imp must survive and must possess its obsidian amulet at all times.

Lord Sesses has a decision to make if the curse-wearer survives. The Darkmage wants to track surviving curse wearers and any nearby companions. If the curse wearer and companions do not seem powerful

enough to thwart or destroy the imp, the imp is sent back to the area where the curse took effect via *greater teleport*, personally cast by Lord Sesses. The imp then is charged with tracking the curse wearer and companions to learn as much about the lot of them as possible. If the curse wearer and companions approach the suggested experience to advance upon Pfefferain, other members of the Butchers conduct the surveillance.

The Darkmage, from a research angle and a maliciousness angle, wants to know all about those who end up with his cursed items. Activation results give him feedback for his curse's effectiveness and sometimes provide ideas for better curses. Most importantly, he might be able to focus the Butchers upon the curse-bearer and relieve them of their worldly possessions, now and in the future. Further, he also enjoys tormenting the same beings over and over again, and keeps tabs on all his victims. Some become contacts later in life, many become playthings for amusement. A special few become bitter enemies, which keep him in fighting shape, and give him experience with which to create more and better items. The PCs have the opportunity to become any of those three varieties.

Sessestophelzine creates his 'amusing toys' for many reasons. First and foremost he thrills at knowing that one-day someone should use the item and suffer a horrible doom. It plays to his malicious spirit greatly, adds to his infamous legacy and gives the populace at large another reason to award him the fear and respect he deserves. Once he implemented the imp-recorder functionality upon his cursed items, a whole new world of criminal possibilities opened up. It turns out that the extra cost necessary to complete cursed items to his liking is more than recompensed by the opportunity for extortion, theft, corruption and information gathering. In action, this has become another 'racket' just like fencing stolen items or the dues extortion of various guilds in the nearby region.

Sometimes a commoner, for whatever reason, gains ownership of a cursed item. The cursed item usually then leads to the death of the owner and the attendant imp reports back as normal. The cursed item is redistributed through normal channels. This is the closed-ended opportunity, a 'failure' as Lord Sesses puts it.

If the cursed item falls into the hands of a noble, a sage, a politician, a merchant, a priest, or a wizard of some repute, then a whole world opens up for the tender mercies of the Butchers! Then the attendant imp conducts surveillance and reconnaissance and learns all that can be learned. The imp could find possibilities of stolen wealth, contemplated extortion, learned information, or abducted friends used as leverage. Once the imp tenders its report of such a wealthy person, the wheels spin in motion and that item-wearer is targeted

for significant loss over time, not to mention torment and amusement for the Butcher's whims. Generally, Lord Sesses and his minions strip these folk of all they are worth over a lengthy period of time and then discard the bodies. If the Butchers implement a grand extortion plot, the victim continues to serve a purpose and may yet live as long as they can generate revenue.

The best scenario is when an attendant imp finds a budding or experienced adventurer as a curse-bearer. These special types tend to move around often and generally rise in power to collect much treasure in their travels. They are a veritable treasure trove for the Butchers. Adventurers effectively do all the dirty work of trudging to dismal places and fighting horrid things for exquisite treasures; treasures that the Butchers yearn to strip from them bit by bit. It is no wonder that Lord Sesses refers to his adventurer curse bearers as "my mobile *bags of holding*." Eventually they may even rise in power to challenge the Darkmage himself, giving Lord Sesses experience necessary for future item creation.

The treatment of these adventuring folk is more dicey and delicate. As they are possible future fonts of wealth, stripping and slaughtering them early on usually provides a poor return on effort. As Shentresh the bugbear High Priest is wont to say, "You may take tithe from a corpse only once." Therefore, adventurers are subject to the most intense information gathering by the attendant imps to study the risk reward balance of investing time and materials upon them. Those that seem merely lucky or weak are treated as commoners or at best minor merchants and are soon stripped and discarded. Those with promise, such as the PCs, find the Darkmage can be both benevolent and malevolent. These adventurers become conditioned to perform acts that the Butchers wish them to undertake. More importantly, they learn to refrain from abhorred acts, such as prying information from others about Lord Sesses, thwarting official Butchers operations or assaulting Butchers personnel. In effect they become puppets of the Butchers, one who the Butchers may sever the strings at any time, leaving the formerly useful puppets in haphazard heaps upon the ground.

A Fistful of Curses

A choice selection of malevolence appears in **Appendix 2** for your examination. Pick and choose items that in the short run would best benefit the PCs and at the same time not unbalance the game. When in doubt, choose the *Lord Sesses' faux invisible stalker bottle*. Note that in all cases the cost to create is greater than if Lord Sesses were to make the standard item. He does



not factor any excess cost into the market price however, as these are labors of love; a disturbed and warped love to be sure, but love nevertheless. All of his cursed items have these prerequisites: *arcane mark*, *bestow curse*, *summon monster IV (imp)*, and *greater teleport*. These allow the derisive message and the imp servant to appear at the activation of the curse.

When any curse activates, a message appears upon or near the item. It may be etched upon the material, woven into the fabric, spoken aloud or written in glowing letters in the air, however best it may be represented to the user at the time of curse activation. Regardless, it is a derisive epithet to the wearer and acts as a *coup de grace* to any curse induced death. This is merely another barb to hurl at the PCs to get their blood boiling and focus them upon the Darkmage and his legacy. All messages are followed by the *arcane mark* of Lord Sesses, so that the curse wearer has a chance to become aware of who is responsible for this maliciousness. The written messages evaporate after a 24-hour period. Audible messages sound only once. Sample heckling messages appear below:

"Quiver in fear, ignorant poltroon!"

"I thought you were pathetic, now I know for sure."

"Were you expecting a different effect?"

"You were expendable anyway. No one shall miss you."

"I am glad I set this curse to 'gruesome fate'. Are you glad as well?"

"I should charge others admission to watch you activate this."

"You blundering oaf! You cannot do **anything** right, can you?"

"You seem the type that would *wish* for a mug of ale."

"Well, **that** act certainly was heroic."

"You obviously did **not** read the instructions."

"No doubt your demise is a small loss."

"You're lucky I selected a lesser curse this time."

"How incompetent. You cannot use a simple magic item correctly."

"I say, can I interest you in a *ring of three wishes*?"

"I hope you have a friend nearby who conjures *resurrection*."

A Voyage of Suffering Tender Mercies

The initial curse begins the PC's descent into intermittent channeling of action, disassociation from acquaintances and wealth transference. From here through the end of **Part One**, Lord Sesses and the Butchers evoke burning hatred, fear, and paranoia in the PCs. This spurs your players on towards the emotions necessary to give the final **Part Two** its greatest impact. Do whatever is necessary that results in an investigation of the Butchers by the PCs. However, you must do this in a way that keeps a core group of the PCs alive and at the same time does not drive the *players* away. This adventure tests the prowess of the players and you as well. Allow the PCs time to breath between assaults. Provide scraps of information to spur them on. Provide chances to thwart Butcher's activity. Never forget that you are dealing with players with real emotions and feelings. While this game is supposed to be fun, it just so happens that this adventure back loads most of the fun for the players until the end. However, if they succeed it should rank among the finest moments in their playing lives.

You need to decide when *Vindication* appears in the PC's lives. Provide cursed items that leave weak PCs alive yet thoroughly annoyed. Strong PCs might be able to survive any of them, depending upon circumstance. Also, with weak PCs, you have a longer time line to inflict the Butchers upon the PCs. It must be said that years of intermittent annoyance give forth a greater payoff at the end of the adventure than weeks of intermittent annoyance. In this adventure, patience is indeed a virtue. Note that strong experienced PCs stand a chance of disrupting the duties of the all important attendant imp, so this must be taken into consideration.

In all cases the imp **must** perform its duty and report to Lord Sesses. Once that occurs, the adventure takes off.

More questions should be asked: What treasure might be siphoned off the PCs quickly? What treasure might be siphoned off them in the future without lessening their effectiveness? Which friends of the PCs might be used as hostages, information fonts for the Butchers or gruesome, bloody messages that the PCs are angering Lord Sesses? What revenue do the PCs generate that does not involve adventuring? Where do they usually gather or call home? Do they know of any information that the Butchers can use for profit? Are there groups nearby that can function as tormentors in lieu of the imps? Are there places that might yield treasure at a poor risk/reward ratio that the Butchers would urge the PCs to investigate? These contemplations should mill about in your head as you decide upon future events.

The Derision Was Only the Beginning

Once the curse activates and the curse wearer survives the effect and heckling, then the insidious aspects of the curse begin to take hold. The PCs are under constant surveillance, so you must role play what the attendant imp tries to learn. At the onset of the curse, play the imp as mere observer. Unless intuition or luck intervenes, no one has a clue that an imp monitors their actions. This imp begins its information gathering, learning all identities, professions, skills, wealth, and dreams of the curse wearer and companions. Incomplete reports meet with frightening disapproval from Lord Sesses. Detailed reports earn the imp a monetary bonus so direct the imp accordingly. Play up it's use of *polymorph* and *invisibility* as well as its sneaky and furtive aspects. The small devil is your personal deep agent who provides the link between your evil Wizard and the victim PCs. It must perform it's duties initially in an efficient way.

When adventuring curse wearers are found, the imp and Lord Sesses agree upon a "distribution point" where information and items are to be transferred and reinforcements, if any, are to first appear. This area should exist close to the PC's base of operations, but may move as actions dictate. From this point, the imp leaves messages and stolen items of the PCs and might receive directives, support items or reinforcements from the Butchers. This area should be off the beaten path and secluded, perhaps only available to those with flight or other motive means.

No beings save deities are perfect, so eventually your imp unwittingly leaves clues from it's incessant spying. A vague fluttering of wings might be heard, or a rustling of belongings or books. Perhaps a soft, inquisitive muttering escapes from the imp. The imp might

become visible for a short period as it unwittingly performs an action that ceases its *invisibility*. A gentle scent of brimstone wafts forth. Doors open and close mysteriously. Furniture compartments move by themselves. Papers and books flip over from unseen hands. Do what is necessary to evoke a paranoid aspect upon the PCs, without overly tipping your hand that an imp is about.

During lull times for the PCs, perhaps between other adventures or within them, the Butchers begin to make their presence felt. What follows is a list of possible encounters with the imp, the Butchers and the vice-roys. All listed encounters are described either as hints or as ready-to-play examples, grouped by numbers and letters. The numbered encounters provide initial means of annoyance, while the lettered encounters denote that the PCs have angered the Butchers and are then subject to retribution. The lettered encounters are generally more deadly and dramatic than the numbered encounters. Experiment and add your own unique encounters, using these as guides.

The numbered encounters:

- 1) A Thief Among Us
- 2) Meet the Butchers
- 3) It Was an Inside Job
- 4) No, *You* Don't Understand, *You* Don't *Want* to Know!
- 5) And Now a Message of Cursed Portent
- 6) All Who Know You Suffer as Well
- 7) More Field Testing is Indicated
- 8) Enter, the Darkmage
- 9) Should They Be Re-Classified as a Problem?
- 10) Lord Sesses Grants a Boon
- 11) A Small Task Compels
- 12) A Fulcrum Disguised as a Trap

Lettered encounters (denoting angry Butchers):

- A) We're Back . . . Did You Miss Us?
- B) Your Deity Is Utterly Worthless!
- C) Now You Burgle Your Friends Like Common Thieves
- D) It Used To Be Our Favorite Place
- E) Their Acquaintances Aren't Pleasant Either
- F) A Night On the Rack
- G) A Dire Message Prepared Just For You
- H) Guilty By Association

One by one, here are examples of the encounters:

1) A Thief Among Us

Lord Sesses wishes a quick return on investment from his curses, so the attendant imp is urged to steal non-vital equipment and treasure from the PCs whenever possible. Merely note a time when the PCs could be taken unaware and filch a small item or two with the imp. Such items are transported to the "distribution

point" along with an appeal for further instructions. For extra fun, since imps enjoy causing unrest and dissension, have the imp filch one PC's treasured item and secure it amongst another PC. With PCs who incorporate locked chests or warded containers, the Butchers may, at their discretion, dispatch a Butchers rogue, acolyte or Lord Sesses' apprentice to remove barriers.

Examples:

- You awake to find your (*insert item name*) is missing, removed from its resting place. A hurried search turns up nothing. Your treasure seemingly has vanished.
- Lo and behold, it seems the (*insert item name*) that you fought so hard for and thereafter campaigned for from the party treasure has turned up in the greedy grasp of the (*insert PC class/name*). How they pilfered it from your clutches you may never know, but the situation unsettles you and a 'discussion' looms.
- Your party returns from a successful and eventful trip to find that your chest has been violated, its contents totally absent save for a small note that reads, "Lord Sesses appreciates your monetary respect."

2) Meet the Butchers

Butchers bugbear squads could appear for many reasons. Perhaps a squad of the Butchers waits to plunder new treasure from the PCs. Maybe Lord Sesses wishes to test the newfound curse wearer's skills. It could be that Lord Sesses is punishing a squad of the Butchers or perhaps new weaponry or items that the Butchers own need testing. In any event, the Butchers dispatch a "hit-squad" to ambush the PCs. This should be done during lull times in the PC's lives. Balance the situation so the effective Challenge Rating of the hit squad is just a little greater than the PCs, taking into consideration their current condition as well as combined levels.

The Butchers create an ambush that the PCs wander into, and then spring it. You might focus upon Butchers of fighting, roguish, clerical or wizardly aspects, or toss a combined arms force at them. On maneuvers, they employ the *amulet of battalion stealth* to move overland without disturbance until they are ready to strike. The tone of the battle is shoot-to-wound and the major plot device used here is to give an idea of what retribution might be like if the PCs decide to ignore warnings from the Butchers.

Example: For a group of four PCs, whom average 7th-level and are slightly wounded from a recent expedition, choose **four 3rd-level fighter Butchers, two**

5th-level rogue Butchers, two 3rd-level acolyte Butchers, plus an elite Butcher such as **Utchatu the Scout** as the amulet-holding leader.

Your party continues its lonely sojourn as one of the spellcasters in the rear of the group cries out in surprise from an assault. You are alone no more as a quick spin on your heels notes four black-cloaked bugbears levitating above the ground. Each cloak displays the design of a red menacing meat cleaver, dripping blood. A pair of fighting types with morningstars blocks your passage to a loftier pair of crossbow monsters. None seem to wear any standard armor. As you turn to face them, the characters formerly in front are attacked on the opposite side by more of the insignia-laden bugbears. They chop and bash at your group with grand violence, seemingly materializing from thin air. A rough growling voice from an unseen high vantage point utters, "Lord Sesses bids you greetings and shows an inkling of his power. Remember this meeting should you ever decide to operate against his wishes."

The Butchers do their best to severely wound the PCs, but not slay them totally. The opening shots, with Acolytes casting *silence* and *hold person* on PC spellcasters as well as rogues getting Sneak Attack bonuses on hits, should give the Butchers fine chances to demolish the PCs and then regroup for escape, using their *amulet of battalion stealth*. Bash the PCs hard and then exit stage right, laughing.

3) It Was An Inside Job

One of the attendant imp's duties is to discern if the PCs have any Craft or Profession skills of note. If they exist and are noted, then the imp traces the PC's businesses. Once found, they are subject to an expert casing, a reconnaissance worthy of master thieves. Later on the businesses are subject to theft of obvious valuables. Items vital to the continued operation of the business are left alone. The Butchers merely wish to loot intermittently, not destroy the PC's business.

The attendant imp selects a victim to pose as a thieving stooge, and then plants incriminating evidence pointing to the selected stooge at the true burglary site. It is up to the PC to believe the underling stooge's alibi. Meanwhile, the imp and any other Butchers associate leaves with all the excess valuables they can transport.

Example: Has the entire world begun to go mad? Incredibly, you enter your business study to find that not only has the locked chest been tampered, but also many of the valuables formerly contained therein are missing. A button from your foreman's favorite shirt rests on the floor near your desk. You could have sworn the foreman was loyal, but now... it seems not.

4) No, *You Don't Understand, You Don't Want to Know!*

Eventually the PCs want to learn about Lord Sessestophelzine the Darkmage. Sadly, this is a **huge** no-no in the Butchers' rulebook. Although many high-ranking sages, mages and priests do indeed know a little of the legendary Lord Sesses and his Butchers, the wise ones keep firmly quiet about the subject. Fortunately for the PCs, not all are that wise. The problem is, it marks the final days of their informant and steers the PCs into the uncharted waters of "an angry Lord Sesses".

In this example, the PCs meet a researcher of curses and cursed items. He **thinks** that he has sequestered the group in a private room. The problem is, unknown to him, an invisible spider has climbed along for the ride and that spider is an attendant imp in *polymorphed* form.

Example: In their quest to learn of their tormentor, the PCs land in a magic wares establishment, known as "Ye Olde Trinket Shoppe". The proprietor hasn't much knowledge to help, but he points out a small man in the corner who just might be the tonic the PCs yearn for.

The characters meet a reclusive type at the edge of the Trinket Shoppe who overhears their inquiry about 'cursed magic items'. He has a furtive look about him. Along with his wiry frame and thin face, one might suspect he was of half-weasel extraction. His silver robe with stars, crescent moons and ringed planets denotes Spellcraft and his hands glide over the trinkets with grace and care not often seen even in master thieves. "Yes, I have studied many cursed items over the years." he quietly confides out of the side of his mouth. "I could tell you much. We should find a more... private place to talk, heh heh heh." He looks left and right, and then pulls out a silken rope from within his silver robes.

With a quick incantation the rope stands straight up, disappearing into a swirling maelstrom of dimensions not often seen. The little man holds a gnarled hand up towards the ceiling, "Shall we?" A strange flux in the maelstrom precedes his pointing up to the rope, "Consider it our own little conference room, heh heh heh. Follow me." He quickly glides up the rope and disappears through the cascading color effects. You all climb the rope and join him to sit cross-legged in a small chamber overlooking a 3-foot by 5-foot window, outlined by the silken rope, which looks down at the floor of the Trinket Shoppe. "Ah, good, none can see the opening now. The swirling fades once the rope has been pulled up."

"I can tell that you have felt the sting of a cursed item. It is etched upon your faces, yes? Well... I am a student of curses, epithets and magic that cross the boundaries between the arcane, the divine and the con-

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structed. You may call me Phosgene. I am a student of the Arts, and study passions in people. Curses intrigue me... heh heh heh ...to the core.

"There are many legendary creators of curses and cursed items. Some are of such nefariousness that they receive their own curse of fiendish outsider status once this mortal coil stiffens straight. Yes, so widespread are their effects that those who rule the lower realms see their potential and make use of them. There are others who curse for whim, and others who curse for profit. So... tell me your lamentable story."

After the characters relate their own tale of their item, Phosgene glances upward in thought.

"Ah, the marking, the taunting, the attention to detail... I would venture to say that you beheld an arcane mark of the item's creator. Such bold pronouncements can only bespeak of...Sessestophelzine. He was formerly the wizard Chastremian if my history stands correct. He is renowned for his work in rods of absorption and rods of cancellation. I've also heard he creates robes befitting the Wizard that he is. But, in whispers, he is most infamous for his cursed items. Wise folk talk neither about him, nor to his malevolent creations openly, as odd and bitter fates befall those who sometimes do. This is why I prepared us so for our council here. Many who prepare such curses are far from pleasant creatures. It is best to treat them as the demons they so mimic...or the demons they indeed exist as. Part of the excitement in researching curses and their items is the personalities that form them...and wondering what knowledge will be the last you ever behold...heh heh heh. It is said that the Darkmage Sessestophelzine has eyes and ears in the most out of way places, and even...it's said he even consorts with devils! He is one to beware, I'll tell you that.

"I have heard of some of his works, and they are most horrid and seem to strike when the wearer least may afford the trouble. One item I have heard will roast you alive after assuring you that you bask in the utmost of safety. Another will reduce you to a blithering idiot on the spot. And the **Flies!** Oh, pray to your patron deity if you should **ever** stumble upon one of the Darkmage's Ebony Fly creations. Oh, my..." The wizened little man shudders, but then blinks and brightens, "If you still have your item, I would be most pleased to pay for the honor of taking it off your hands. No doubt no one else would. I have never before held a Sessestophelzine the Darkmage cursed creation. One doesn't often...**survive** them, heh heh heh. It would rest in an area of importance in my collection, I assure you. My typical offer is

one third of the standard price of what the item purports to be, if you are indeed interested. Bring the item to my address and I shall pay for it, half at that time and half a week from now."

A smart group takes Phosgene up on his offer, considering no one agrees to even pay them the time of day for an item that wears the residue of *remove curse* upon it. In epilogue, this is the last council that Phosgene ever gives, as the *polymorphed* imp wastes little time conferring with members of the Butchers. In short order the Butchers slay the small man in a horrible manner. The PCs find him unable to fulfill his total bargain a week later, in gruesome detail.

Worse yet, this is one of the story lines that shuttles the group into their first very unfortunate meeting with the Butchers, who now treat them more harshly than before. Choose **plot device G** or pick another one of the lettered listings and make the character's lives more miserable. Whichever punishment listing you choose, don't forget to include the graphic message that the PC's investigation of Lord Sesses must be halted immediately.



5) And Now A Message of Cursed Portent

The attendant imp, once it locates either the homes or meeting places of the PCs, begins to deliver messages to the PCs, sometimes in cryptic form, sometimes brutal in its language. Usually these messages are at the behest of the Butchers, but sometimes role-playing gives different reasons. If the attendant imp wishes to implicate another, for instance, it might give hints that something is awry with its intended stool pigeon.

Examples:

- The PCs find a message painted in blood upon the desk of the leader, reading, "Investigate Lord Sesses at your own peril." There is a crude drawing of a dagger in blood next to it.

For **plot device 3**, you may foreshadow it by having this message smeared of dung upon the character's chamber pot or privy, thus alerting the PC to the soon-defamed business associate:

- "This is where your (*title and name*) is sending your revenues."

If you contemplate using **plot device 10**, foreshadow that by drawing a decent likeness in blood of the leader PC upon the wall of a chamber in one of the PC's homes. A dagger is shoved through the drawing of the neck or eye, with a golden rope attached between the dagger pommel and a small note. The note reads, "Your fate should your group not better itself as Lord Sesses wishes you to." On the reverse side of the note is a fine map necessary to fulfill **plot device 10**.

Should the PCs manage to fulfill a request of the Butchers, perhaps as per **plot device 11**, they could find a riddle speaking of where they may find their hard-won prize.

- You see that representation of the cursed item's creator, in glowing black spidery tracings and a message stating, "Past three sharp hills down quarry way, 'round edge of tree and shore of bay, ignore all what the cairns may say, left right then left your prize doth stay."

In this instance, the PCs need to trudge through a path beyond three prominent mountains and a strip mine. Then they snake their way along the edge of the forest opposing a bay. Finally, they find a burial mound with weather beaten portentous warnings and enter it. Taking a left passage, then entering a right hand chamber, a secret door on the left hand side reveals a small chamber with a normal +1 *ring of protection*. No doubt the PCs assume the ring is horribly cursed.

6) All Who Know You Suffer As Well

By this time, the attendant imp has made sweeping reconnaissance and has learned much about the PCs and some of their friends and acquaintances. Adventurers, being what they are, generally are best left adventuring, leaving the proprietorship of businesses to those best suited for the task. The Butchers wish to find those of high business acumen who deal with the PCs and ransack their businesses too. This gains high-quality treasure for the Butchers and helps foster the fear and paranoia the PCs must feel to give **Part Two** its best impact. Further, if the PC's friends begin to leave in droves that makes it easier for the Butchers to control the PCs. The Butchers later on dole out tasks that reportedly "ease the torment" as per **plot device 11** below.

Example: It seems the circle of unrest has widened to envelop associates too. Your longstanding friend (insert name), a wealthy businessman, accosts you and tells a fateful tale of theft and deceit at his business. Apparently choice acquaintances who know you are to suffer your fate as well, since this person's business and residence both have been ransacked of valuables and someone he once trusted was found to have masterminded the feigned burglary. Says he, "Indeed thou art cursed, and I'll have no dealings with thee so that whate'er maleficence be bound betwixt thou and thine, it doth pass me by. Good luck to thee, if possible, and by chance shoudst thy black cloud be dispersed I may deal with thee anon." With that he breaks contact despite all urgings or pleas.

7) More Field Testing Is Indicated

The PCs have shown themselves as being able to activate the cursed creations of Lord Sesses without immediate death. This makes them rather useful to the Butchers. The PCs are then considered field-testers, effectively guinea pigs for the Darkmage's wishes. Getting the PCs to accept new magic items is the difficult part if you have sufficiently aroused paranoia and fear to acceptable levels. So it falls to the imp and the Butcher's operatives to plant cursed items in the stock of those who purvey magic goods, or even to dispense them into places the PCs may soon venture beforehand.

Done correctly, the PCs may begin to wonder just how widespread and prolific this Darkmage's warped wares are. They may likewise wonder why Phosgene never owned a Lord Sesses special before. Also, this may arouse antipathy between the PCs and whichever magic wares vendor sells them cursed items. More disassociation between PCs and their former acquaintances is an aim of the Butchers.

Examples:

- The PCs vanquish a den of monsters in a cavern and find the hidden pile of loot in a remote recess, only betrayed by a small gilded glint.

Indeed, the vile creatures have amassed spoils. A tiny gleam of gold revealed the stash in a hidey-hole and you begin pulling out loot. Amongst the coinage rests a beautiful silk and velour cloak and a finger-sized gem-like statuette of a black fly.

It is up to the PCs whether they remember Phosgene's soliloquy. If they do, all no doubt display utmost paranoia over the fly statuette. It is up to you to cause either of the items to issue from Lord Sesses. Such becomes an issue of trying to out-think the PCs and give them what they don't expect.

- As a different angle, the PCs could be steered to consider an item that is very useful for a cut-rate price at a proprietorship that has a spotless reputation. Once the next Lord Sesses special inflicts it's doom upon the PCs, there may be a reckoning between the PCs and the shop proprietor who wishes to deflect his own shortcomings upon the PCs.

*The proprietor looks aghast at your accusations, not knowing exactly which way to bluster forth his apoplectic denial. He barely summons the control to speak coherently. After sputtering forth and squeezing his eyes open and shut repeatedly, he bellows forth, "Wha... what?! How **dare** you?! This store's reputation is beyond reproach! We have never, and I mean **ever**, unwittingly or not, allowed a cursed item to escape beyond our doors. Our methods and skill in identification are unparalleled. This brooks no debate! Aye, I have heard whispers of your current fate. It must be your reputation o'ertaking you! Indeed, your cursed existence has infiltrated the pristine boundaries of the wares we have sold you, and fouled them. Be gone then! Be gone and defile no more of our wares! Keep our **good** customers free from the arcane pestilence you drag forth! Out of my shop, lest I call the local guard or my **own** doom upon you! Out, you plague-bearer! **Out!**"*

8) Enter, the Darkmage

It's high time the PCs meet in person the man responsible for their annoyances of past, present and future. They shall meet him in a situation where it would be **very** inappropriate to strike at him. Indeed, their best recourse is to merely observe or somehow treat him with respect. Done correctly, Lord Sesses invites the PCs either to his Casino or to his local associate Gwaerthane to discuss matters further. This scene later in life is a fine way for the PCs to learn of the town of Pfefferain and thereby conducts all concerned directly to **Part One** of the adventure. Should the group merely observe, then the information about Pfefferain must be divulged by other means. Should the group dare attack Lord Sesses in a peaceful civilian setting, order up their coffins unless they flee quickly.

Example: As a break from the horrors that have befallen them, the characters note a special offer occurring at one of the finer inns in their hometown, "Sign of Cassiopeia A Five-Star Establishment" and decide to eat there. Simultaneously, **Lord Sesses** finds his way into that same establishment, with his consort **Drincilla**, the erinyes, *polymorphed* into her typical beautiful courtesan form. At first the party may not realize that Lord Sesses is sitting there. Indeed, it's better if they learn of it after the fact. However, they may guess and try to stop the impending conversation with the waitress, or worse attack the viceroys at dinner. This is not the time to contemplate such things though, merely observe and

learn. If the PCs insist upon an attack, Lord Sesses (using his *cube*) and Drincilla angrily *teleport* away, returning only when properly defended with the attitude of shoot-to-kill involving the least amount of collateral damage as possible. The PCs should know better than to separate an animal from his dinner.

*While settling down and partaking of bread, fine wine and ale provided before your main course, an interruption startles you. A short, thin, black-robed man teleports in with a comely raven-haired courtesan who is covered in a wrap-around dark silk and taffeta evening dress. Many people gasp, all revelry stops in an instant. At least one patron drops his fork, paralyzed with fear. The two oblivious newcomers brazenly seat themselves. The obvious mage roars, "**Buertes!**" The party faintly hears a muffled whimper. Within seconds a pot-bellied, balding middle-aged man rushes to the newcomers with a pair of menus.*

The manager quickly mutters, "Yes, Your Grace! Glad to see you again! How are you and your fine companion this evening? So fortunate we are to bask in your glorious presence once again. How may I be of complete service to you this night?" He smiles as if his life depends upon its pearly radiance. The thin black-robed man half smiles and half yawns, "We are quite fine, Buertes, thank you for asking. Drincilla and I would enjoy the filet mignon with the usual fireamber cordial. You are well aware of how I prefer my cutlet. Drincilla wishes hers quite rare with no salad. Off you

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go.” The wizard waves his right hand as if gently backhanding the manager then holds it up as if halting the man. “Oh Buertes, kneel and embrace.” The halting hand descends and curls its fingers down. Descending to one knee, the paunchy restaurateur dutifully gives the ruby ring on the curled hand a gingerly touched kiss. The mage smiles oily, “Very good, Buertes, salad and bread on the double.”

A young serving girl is pushed out the waitress gates with a serving tray. She keeps her balance and marches to the two obviously special patrons. Considering the short mage’s slight frame and slight annoyance, she gives him a disapproving look and calmly states, “I am your waitress Jessandra, sir, and you don’t scare me, sir.” This receives a dumbfounded, mock-horror look from the black-robed mage. He gazes deep within Drincilla’s eyes, only returning to the serving girl once the courtesan smirks, chuckles and nods her head gently. Feigning resignation, he moans, “Oh, how utterly **terrible!** I’ve failed to frighten this new young lady. Dear, dear, dear...” The wizard rises and a couple patrons ignore their food to disappear under their tables. A few wave religious gestures in the air. “Come with me, young one,” chuckles the mage, liltingly assuring Jessandra, “Fear not, no harm will befall you.” The wizard gestures to gently escort the serving girl to the front doorway. Reluctantly she marches by his side.

The PCs, if they wish, may try to intervene. If they do so, Drincilla speaks to them, in actuality making use of her *charm person* ability on the apparent leader of the group; “Gentlemen, to save your imminent splattering against the walls, I suggest you remain seated. I’m sure the other diners here would loathe seeing such

a sight during dinner, and I’m sure the help here would hate to scrub blood and viscera from the furniture. If Lord Sesses says no harm will befall her, than so it must be.” She smiles while nodding and scrunching up her face, “Just trying to be of assistance.” The target of the *charm* must make Will save (DC 19) in order to avoid its effects. If that character fails, Drincilla makes ample use of her newfound admirer to protect her.

Further, Buertes and a few of the wait staff implore and plead with the group to avoid causing a scene. “Dear Sirs, I assure you our waitress is in no danger. Lord Sesses is a regular and has bought the set of furniture you see here.” Of course, Buertes fails to note that Lord Sesses **replaced** the furniture broken in a previous battle with enemies he has created.

Upon hearing the fateful name “Lord Sesses” though, things might get ugly. If an enraged PC ignores the hints, Drincilla tries to *charm* them by gaze, and/or charm one or more commoner patrons to block intervention. If the PC persists, she unwinds her dress off of her as a standard action, using her supernatural ability to *animate rope* to speed the process. Her dress is actually a 50-foot silken rope-like wrap-around with taffeta accessories. She tries to *entangle* a troublemaker with it. Drincilla invokes no ranged penalties even up to 30 feet away. She reveals her gorgeously nude *polymorphed* human female harlot body in the process and does not mind in the least.

If Drincilla is having problems, Lord Sesses brings up a *wall of force* behind himself and Jessandra at the doorway, and leaves room between the conjured wall and the natural inn wall to allow all to hear his conversation.



*The black-robed mage and Jessandra survey the outside park facing the inn. He starts, "Very well then, Miss, do you see that tree over there? Not the deciduous one, the pine. Yes." The wizard mumbles an intonation, followed by a great rushing of air and a low roaring detonation. "Now then, do you see that **absence** of tree over there? Not the formerly deciduous one, but the burning stumps of the pine. Yes, very good. Now...that stray puppy over there, what breed is it?" A stammering whimper escapes from the serving girl, "Ummm, uh... I, I think it's a beagle-mutt, um, sir." The mage sneers, "Is it? Are you **very** sure?" Another quite different intonation followed by a wretched gasp from the girl precedes a sneering guffaw, "Why that doesn't look **anything** like a beagle to **me**. Have another look, young one." A few distant screams erupt outside and a faint commotion can be heard far away.*

*All the serving girl can do is drop to her knees in fright and repulsion, looking up at the wizard while hyperventilating with a pained, open-mouthed, horrified expression. She sees a snide grin from the thin black-robed man, "Ah, see, you learn **quickly**! I like that in a person. You know, Jessandra, you have spunk. With me, spunk insures your quick demise. Best to act with respect like your esteemed manager when in **my** presence..."*

Lord Sesses then dispels any wall of force, if necessary. Buertes retrieves the shaken and frightened serving girl with a knowing glance as well as true concern and comfort.

*The black-robed mage strolls back to his table. Drincilla shakes her head and giggles, "Oh Sess, the look on her face was **priceless**." The wizard nods, smiles at the courtesan and burbles "Thank you, Doll". He then sighs, "Commoners, you'd swear no one has ever seen an ochre jelly before..." He digs into his salad until a thought strikes him, and then asks, "Hmmm, I wonder who paper trains it now?" and chortles along with the courtesan.*

The PCs may approach Lord Sesses and Drincilla if and only if they mute their hatred of him, show the proper respect and have something of arcane import to discuss. Others in the restaurant gaze in wonder at them if they do so. If the PCs have nothing of interest to take Lord Sesses' time, he quickly concludes the discussion with, "*Sadly you have little to interest me, compared to my Doll here*", and wafts them away backhanded, but with no trace of malice.

PCs that have something of interest to Lord Sesses, such as offering him extensive loot for a magic item, one of two things may happen:

* With weak PCs, he bids them to visit his main operative in their area, Gwaerthane the Necromancer, whereupon they may discuss such things in privacy with him. The PCs deal with the person they might meet on

worse terms in letter-encounter **E**) below. The Necromancer discusses magic sales at his home base, offering real or cursed magic at your discretion.

* For strong PCs, Lord Sesses bids them in genial tones to visit either his Hellfire Casino in Pfefferain or Gwaerthane the Necromancer whereupon they may discuss such things in privacy. For this reason, you might utilize this encounter if the PCs are reaching the experience necessary to eventually take on the Butchers. This is perhaps the first clue of getting closer to Lord Sesses' operations, and eventually his Keep on the Butte.

Upon a successful temptation, Lord Sesses awards the PCs with slight respect for their showing him deference. He also appreciates their not outright fearing him like the common rabble does. Most importantly, he appreciates their offering him more of their loot.

Lord Sesses scoffs at PCs that dare attack him with his consort, at dinner, surrounded by innocents. "*Have you gone totally mad? Disrupting the dinner of many citizens? How **dare** you! I will teach you barbarians respect...*" This forebodes quite ill for the PCs, as the Darkmage and consort now are most evilly disposed to the lot of the PCs, totally nullifying any goodwill the PCs may have fostered with the Butchers. Lord Sesses knows exactly who each and every PC is, and now he prepares to defend himself and all patrons from the 'barbarians'. Mage and courtesan quickly *teleport* back to the Keep on the Butte. After they both *teleport* away, there is a mad stampede to the exits from the other patrons, and Buertes accosts the group, "*For the love of all you hold dear you idiots, **run away**! At the very least conduct your suicide elsewhere! **Flee now**!*" Buertes rounds up the wait staff and they all rush to the root cellars. At the Keep on the Butte, Lord Sesses rounds up whichever viceroys are available, and then they cure and prepare themselves. When ready, the ultimate hit squad reappears behind the Cassiopeia with vengeance on their mind. The Lord led hit squad tries to slay the group if they still linger with stealthy, brutal efficiency. The group has royally screwed up by this time even if they flee, and very soon they shall feel one or more lettered encounters from the Butchers before its rage subsides.

9) Should They Be Re-Classified As a Problem?

As time goes on, the Butchers check up upon their adventuring curse-wearers. The viceroys wish to see if the PCs have progressed and pose tougher challenges as the months go on. This is done mostly to weed out regressing adventuring curse-wearers. For this tough challenge, focus upon a viceroy or elite Butcher, like **Gortok** or **Tuvataht**, and give them an experimental item to field test against the PCs. Otherwise choose a

devil like **1 hamatula** or **osyluth** and allow it to summon **lemure** help before springing its attack. Like the first surprise attack, this keeps the PCs on their toes and helps cement their loathing for the Butchers.

Example: For a group of four PCs, those averaging 8th-level and in prime shape, moving to a new exploration, you might choose Gortok to field test two magic items the Sorcerous Doppelganger has recently found. One is a *ring of the ram*; the other is a pair of *ring gates*. Questions arose of the *rings*: Are they cursed? Are they effective in combat? Just how forceful can the *ring of the ram* be? Might the *ring gates* allow creatures and force-spells to pass through? Need one actually see the other *ring gate* and still effectively conduct combat? Lord Sesses wants to know, since the *ring of the ram* might allow his Keep defenders to knock foes off of the buttes and the magic ramp. The *ring gates* offer a whole horde of possibilities for Keep defense. Let's just say Lord Sesses is **very** interested in this field test.

So Gortok sets out and locates the PCs in a forested region. He travels with *invisibility* as an air mephitis, and keeps at an altitude of about 60-feet-high in the tree line. Once he finds the PCs, it flies past them and sets down about 40-feet-away from their intended path.

Gortok sets up an ambush. One *ring gate* receives *invisibility* and is propped up upon tree branches or tree trunks so the exit faces where the PCs pass by. Then he calculates the speed of his quarry and the time necessary to cast *glitterdust*, and two usages of *summon monster IV*. Once this timing calculation succeeds, Gortok casts *alarm (mental)* in an area that allows him to time his spells correctly. Once the mental alarm goes off, he casts *summon monster IV* to create **1d4+1 fiendish eagles** hidden nearby, and then casts *summon monster IV* to create **1d3 fiendish leopards** hidden in the tree branches alongside the path. This is timed to occur just before the PCs walk in front of the hidden *ring gate*. Gortok then casts *glitterdust* through the *ring gate* near him as a surprise action. In response, he orders the leopards to pounce and then orders the eagles to fly through his nearby ring gate. It wishes to see the victims blinded and attacked from multiple angles. From then on, Gortok tests the *ring of the ram* through the *ring gates*. It also casts *haste* on a leopard. A series of *magic missiles* fling forth from the ambushing *ring gate*, not from its direction. Once the battle rages against its creatures, Gortok casts the last *summon monster IV*, gaining **1 fiendish dire wolf** as reinforcement and then casting *haste* upon it.

When the experiment finishes, Gortok uses *invisibility* once more to gather the ambushing *ring gate* and survey the effects while taking mental notes. As Gortok is rather evil, he attempts to slay a PC if the chance with little retribution exists. Should the PCs see Gortok

and counterattack him, the sorcerer fights back with all due skill, using tree cover and anything at its disposal to ensure its safety. Once all the data has been compiled, Gortok takes his leave and returns to the 'distribution point' and then the Keep.

Different plot twists might occur dependant upon the ambush results. If the PCs suffer heavy casualties from this experiment, another hit squad is dispatched if Gortok cannot slay them all himself safely. If they manage to seriously wound Gortok, Lord Sesses ponders whether he should offer them positions within the Butchers if their alignments mesh. Lord Sesses becomes enraged if Gortok is slain, and the adventure accelerates to where the PCs learn of infiltrating the Keep on the Butte. They find vital information, including the 'distribution point' and a current map of the Lorremach Highhills on Gortok's body, along with his collection of rings and other items.

10) Lord Sesses Grants a Boon

The PCs receive messages at their gathering places, as per **plot device 5** above, offering vague hints about an adventure that could actually benefit them. These are real adventure leads that the Butchers deem not good enough in risk/reward ratio to undertake. The PCs might consider these bits "helpful information". They are lucky that Lord Sesses is helping them for once instead of harming them. Use this plot device as a springboard to introduce a favorite side encounter or even a full fledged adventure.

This plot device offers divergent results. If the PCs do not attempt the adventure at all, the Butchers grow angry and some type of lettered-encounter appears soon. If the PCs do attempt and complete it, the Butchers award them with respect. Further, this appeasement wipes clean all past "disrespect" to the Butchers, unless they have attacked Lord Sesses directly. Only a great passage of time mitigates that enmity of course.

11) A Small Task Compels

The PCs receive messages at their gathering places, as per **plot device 5** above, detailing a task demanded from the Butchers. This task offers an opportunity to appease the Butchers. The PCs are told who the target is, where to perform the task and are even given hints on what to do and what not to do. This task should be something difficult, but not impossible.

Example: The bleached skull resting in the pool of blood under your study table has an aged, gilded key in its remaining teeth. You find as you examine the skull that wedged inside the cranium are a few folded sheets of vellum. One is a listing of all the guard-patterns at the famed Stronghold Hjerrin, another is a roster of the guards and beasts which patrol. There is an exacting map of the layout of the Stronghold Hjerrin and this

contains three methods of egress, marked by Xs and daggers. A fourth egress, marked with a pentagram, is apparently an old caravan tunnel that leads under the Keep. Apparently you need to navigate past three sentries once your entry has been secured and reach a warded storeroom. There are abjorative marks near the storeroom with exclamation points beside them. It seems that all this trouble is for a silvered serving tray with three gilded runes upon it. You are given coordinates to drop off the item once you have procured it. How you get into or out of the chamber or the bottom of the deep, dark mineshaft that is the pilfered item's drop off point seems to be your problem. You are guaranteed more pleasant dealings with Lord Sesses if you complete this task competently. [Do not discuss the exact wording of that last sentence with the players.]

This plot device offers divergent results. If the PCs do not attempt the adventure at all, the Butchers grow angry and some type of lettered encounter appears soon. If the PCs do attempt and complete it, the Butchers rejoice and ambush them for the gained treasure, as per **plot device 2** or **plot device 9** above, or even **plot device A** below. This completed task either wipes clean all past "disrespect" to the Butchers or has a future effect of mitigating one sequence of Butchers anger, unless they have attacked Lord Sesses directly as noted above.

12) A Fulcrum Disguised As a Trap

In this encounter, another victim of the Butchers attacks the PCs under duress to appease one of the viceroys. This time, the victim is a mage of tough reputation named Corredrix, one whose spirit and will has been broken. This mage thought he purchased *gloves of dexterity* from the local thieves guild, but sadly received *gauntlets of fumbling* from Lord Sesses instead. The victim is of good alignment and feels that his life, and the life of his kidnapped pseudodragon Cohnqualla, is forfeit unless he acquiesces to the demands of Gortok. The viceroy, posing as Lord Sesses, has demanded that this mage slay one or more of the PCs and then escape as full appeasement. Cohnqualla would then be released back to him. It is all a thorough lie, naturally. The Butchers want to break and then corrupt Corredrix. They would never allow him to have his familiar again as it sees imps perfectly and it now works for the Butchers anyway.

In the Butchers' assault upon Corredrix's tower, the mage Corredrix was taken by surprise and cornered in part by judicious use of *dust of sneezing and choking*. The assault resulted in Cohnqualla's subdual and kidnapping. Kezhantak caught up to the pseudodragon by virtue of magic flight, subsequently enveloped it with a cursed *robe of powerlessness* and tied it up, head poking out the collar, as a docile bundle. Corredrix

learned that Lord Sesses would hold his familiar hostage until a task was asked of him and completed. Another dose of *dust* was held over Corredrix to assure complicity while the Butchers searched the tower. That night the Butchers ransacked his chests and secret compartments for quite a bit of treasure and then took their leave, sparing him only his *cloak of arachnida*, which they failed to find, and his *+1 dagger*.

The ironic detail is his pseudodragon is never in danger at all - quite the contrary. Kezhantak, who raised Kilitus Maximus the Chimera from an egg, delights in flying creatures. He has a way with evil winged things and for some reason took to Cohnqualla also. Lord Sesses asked what an unconscious good pseudodragon would want with an evil grizzled bugbear. Kezhantak quickly found inspiration in 'The Changing Helm' and excitedly told the Darkmage his plan. Later, after the *remove curse* and the *heal* spells were applied by Lord Sesses and Shentresh, Cohnqualla resumed consciousness, with his head under the Butchers' homemade emergency *helm of opposite alignment*. Strangely, blackness and cruelty seemed wonderful to it. Kezhantak abased himself before the pseudodragon. The bugbear commander promised the now evil pseudodragon gems and coinage to roll around in, backrubs, imps and a pet chimera to play with and the opportunity to play cruel tricks upon a nearby town. Lord Sesses, intrigued with the pseudodragon's ability to put foes to sleep, agreed to elevate the pseudodragon to High Guard status and bid it join the multitude of imps in their duties to pull its weight around the Keep on the Butte. The pseudodragon became the Sentry of the Sentries, as it sees imps plain as day and its color and tail eerily resembles them. So Lord Sesses found a new sentry and Kezhantak found a new winged friend, known forever after as Opiate. Corredrix, the former master, receded into irrelevance.

Example: Corredrix has heard of the PC's exploits, as the faux Lord Sesses has told him of "The Supreme Conquerors" and given him a sketchy outline of the PC's skills. Naturally, he doesn't think he can slay any character, which he is loathe to do anyway, unless he stages a trap. For a 7th-level wizard, with only a *+1 dagger* to work with as spending cash, he creates a rather sticky wicket for the PCs.

Corredrix scouts out for the PCs as they make their way through a rocky mountain pass. He then prepares with *protection from arrows* and *greater invisibility*. From the trap-point, he finds a rocky shelf some 120-feet-away and 100-feet-high up, gaining access to that outpost with his *spider climb* effect from his *cloak of arachnida*. When the group almost gets to the trap-point, he casts *lesser globe of invulnerability*. At the trap point, the group gets caught in *web* from his *cloak of arachnida*. Then he quickly casts his killer spell,

(the *acid fog* scroll he traded his +1 *dagger* for), which is held up by rocks at his side. Corredrix has heard that the horrific *web - acid fog* combination has slain its share of troll-nests, so it's probably his best shot at taking out a PC while avoiding retribution. To do so, he must pass a Caster Level check (DC 12) and gets +4 due to his Intelligence. PCs subject to both spells are doomed; as they move at best one-half foot per round through the *web* and take 2d6 points of acid damage each round in the *acid fog*. If the *acid fog* scroll fails, he then tries a *stinking cloud* and *Evar's black tentacles* combination. From there, he tries *hold person* on anyone who he sees move, and shoots *magic missiles*, *Mel's acid arrows* and anything else handy to kill. While Corredrix does this, he shouts his apologies to the PCs, even as he harms them, perhaps killing one or more PCs while he cries out about his powerlessness.

"I'm dreadfully sorry, Conquerors, but my hand is forced by someone known as Lord Sesses."

"I truly do not wish to slay you, but am compelled to do so as that fiend holds my familiar hostage."

"This is my only way of retrieving him - performing a duty to the letter."

"I regret that duty is to slay one or more of you, but I have no choice."

"Oh, the cruel fate! Slaying innocents so I may retrieve my pseudodragon! What shall my familiar think of me?"

"I am but a wretched pawn in this. Please understand."

"It pains me to kill you, but I must. It's completely necessary."

If the characters try to slay Corredrix without parlay, with heavy heart he tries to fulfill his duty to the best of his ability and then steal away by virtue of *spider climb* and *invisibility*. The PCs miss a chance to gain a rare kindred spirit NPC in this encounter.

Talented role players must assure Corredrix that their deaths are not necessary. He could not agree less, recounting the Butchers' treatment of him and his familiar. He speaks of the attendant imp that his Pseudodragon Cohnqualla saw and is sure tracks him to this day. The PCs might reason with him that Lord Sesses can't be trusted anyway or they may offer some sort of reward if he joins them. Further, they should note that especially where the Butchers are concerned, there is definite safety in numbers. If the PCs note that Lord Sesses has been tormenting them also, then Corredrix begins to soften. As they tell the dispirited mage of their treatment, he slowly ceases his spell casting, and stops the pain with a *dispel magic* upon the PCs. Eventually Corredrix breaks down and weeps, apologizing profusely and offers aid to the group. The characters gain a decent NPC; although their status with the Butchers takes a huge hit, and the lot of them suf-

fers an angry lettered-encounter in short order.

Corredrix, the Abjurer, Male Half-Elf Wiz7 (Abjuration): CR 7; SZ M; HD 7d4+14 ; hp 33; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft., climb 15 ft.; AC 16 (+2 Dex, +4 *mage armor*) touch 12, flat-footed 14; BAB/Grapple +3/+3; Atk +3 melee (1d4, knife) or +5 ranged (1d8, light crossbow, crit 19-20, range 80 ft.); SA spells; SQ low-light vision, racial abilities, summon familiar; AL CG; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +5; Str 11, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 18, Wis 10, Cha 14.

Skills: Concentration +12, Craft (alchemy) +10, Craft (gemcutter) +8, Diplomacy +3, Gather Information +3, Heal +2, Knowledge (arcana) +14, Listen +3, Search +9, Spellcraft +14, Spot +3. **Feats:** Combat Casting, Craft Wondrous Item, Enlarge Spell, Maximize Spell, Scribe Scroll.

Arcane Spells Prepared (4/5/4/3/2; base DC 14+ spell level): 0—detect magic, ray of frost (x3), resistance; 1st—mage armor, magic missile (x4); 2nd—invisibility, Mel's acid arrows (x2), web; 3rd—hold person (x2), stinking cloud; 4th—Evar's black tentacles, improved invisibility.

Specialty School Spells (Abjuration; prohibited schools: Necromancy and Transmutation): 0—resistance; 1st—shield; 2nd—protection from arrows; 3rd—dispel magic; 4th—lesser globe of invulnerability.

Languages: Common, Dwarven, Elven, Goblin, Orc, and Sylvan.

Possessions: cloak of arachnidia, arcane scroll of *acid fog*, light crossbow, 40 bolts, gemcutting knife.

If The PCs Anger The Butchers:

The PCs could suffer the worst aspects of the Butchers for many reasons. These are the retributive encounters, created to spur further hatred and fear. If the PCs have thoroughly enraged Lord Sesses, he might, for instance, order up actions detailed in **plot points A** and **B** against them in quick sequence or link up **plot points 11** then either **1** or **2**, finally followed by **C**.

A) We're Back... Did You Miss Us?

They're back and they're nastier than ever by design. Charged by Lord Sesses or another viceroy, this Butchers hit squad aims to inflict casualties in retribution to some offense the PCs caused, wittingly or not. Again, this ambush occurs during lull-times in the PC's lives. Balance the situation so that the effective challenge rating of the hit-squad is greater than the PCs, but not by a huge margin, taking into consideration their current condition as well as combined levels. Definitely make it combined-arms tactics and without doubt employ the *amulet of battalion stealth*, as well as any other horrid things the Butchers have at their disposal. Do not slay them all unless they play poorly, but if survi-

vors have ready access to *raise dead* effects, slay sufficient amounts with all due fury and bile.

Example: For a group of four PCs, whom still average 7th-level and again are slightly wounded from a recent expedition, choose **four 3rd-level fighter Butchers, two 5th-level rogue Butchers, two 5th-level acolyte Butchers**, plus a viceroy such as **Kezhantak** the Butchers commander riding **Kilitus Maximus**.

Your party continues its lonely sojourn as one of the spellcasters in the rear of the group cries out from a surprise attack. You feel an immediate sense of déjà vu as only the rear half of the group spins on their heels and notes four black cloaked bugbears levitating above the ground. Each cloak displays the familiar design of a red menacing meat cleaver, dripping blood. Once again a pair of fighting types with morningstars block your passage to a loftier pair of crossbow bearing monsters. The characters in front hold their positions and await the inevitable attacks on the opposite side by more of the insignia laden bugbears. The bugbears dutifully appear on cue and chop and bash at your group with grand violence, again seemingly materializing from thin air. A rough growling voice from an unseen high vantage point utters, "Our previous meeting failed to impress upon you the fate you now live. For daring to [describe the offense against the Butchers here], Lord Sesses bids you pain and suffering. May this day reveal your adjusted attitude, if not death."

The PCs need to use exemplary tactics and the knowledge they gained in the previous encounter to survive intact. The opening shots, with the acolytes casting *silence* and *hold person* on PC spellcasters as well as rogues getting sneak attack bonuses on hits should give the Butchers a fine chance to demolish the PCs and then regroup for escape, using their *amulet of battalion stealth*. Commander Kezhantak lives for opportunities like this. His faithful mount, Kilitus Maximus the Chimera, is ferocious in close combat. However, like all good military units, the Butchers only wish to inflict the most pain while suffering the least amount of counterattack and flee when their hit points wane. Should either Kezhantak or Kilitus Maximus fall low on life, round up the Butchers and exit stage right.

B) Your Deity Is Utterly Worthless!

Any devil worth its truename would love to raze a good-aligned temple. Even the destruction of neutral or select evil temples is enjoyed, since only the Dukes of Hell should rule all. The PCs usually have at least one cleric, or if not, they probably have visited and gained help from a temple in their travels. PCs who have survived *The Crucible of Freya* offer Shandril's Temple of Freya as a possible target, if they have no clerics for some reason. In this punitive strike, a PC-

friendly temple is assaulted with an assortment of devils and a viceroy. Cause rampant defilement, destruction, and death where possible with the least amount of risk to the skilled attackers. This scene is much more poignant when it disrupts a friendly high priest who attempts to cast *raise dead* upon one of the PCs.

Example: The last action by the PCs has angered a viceroy and said viceroy has access to unleashing the Legions of Hell. Those Legions would enjoy to the chance to gather souls from the offender's Temple of choice. Choose a time when one or more of the PCs is visiting the targeted Temple, and adjust the strength of the Infernal Marauders to slightly exceed that of the PCs gathered there as well as any attendant Priests of that Faith. In this example, the 10th-level high priest of the afflicted Temple is readying a *raise dead* spell upon a slain PC, escorted by the group's 8th-level cleric and the group leader, also of 8th-level. Four 3rd-level acolytes attend the high priest during his duties. A hit squad of **1 hamatula, 1 osyluth**, a group of **6 imps** and a viceroy such as **Drincilla** or **Phystijia** teleport in and watch the proceedings. The hit squad summons reinforcements and hides them as quickly as possible, then waiting for the ironic moment.

The high priest begins his long incantation and beseeches his deity. The acolytes waft their thuribles and intone in lovely voices the scriptures of their god. In due time, the passages finish and a nimbus envelops the fallen friend. Once the effect disperses, the eyelids flutter on the prostrate figure and life once again pulses through their veins; the petitioning was a success!

Now roll some *produce flame* damage and read on.

And then the newly revived is engulfed in flames! Horrid screams erupt from the Temple. Your friend, who only moments ago resumed this mortal coil, bakes to a char and dies yet again! There are devils overhead! Imps appear, overturning statuary and bashing religious equipment. At least two large devils cascade overhead, and you hear of more movement elsewhere. How quickly this situation has turned!

The major devils conduct the attack with gusto. Use *produce flame* or some other fire-generation method to cremate the newly raised PC and then coordinate the attack. The imps ravage the temple, burn flammable articles, push artistic works over, and write lurid messages. They desecrate and defile to the best of their ability. Any devilish reinforcements charge in at this time. The viceroy remains behind the scenes, aiding the devils and attacking when unseen or at least when the victim may not easily retaliate. The temple's acolytes should at least be slain early on, so that their high priest may have the pleasure of vaporizing them as undead after they are quickly subject to *animate dead*. Cause serious pain upon the PCs and high priest. Destroy and damn as much of the temple as time and tough-

ness allow. Then discharge the imps and allow the devils to laughingly *teleport* away, shouting this encounter's heading as they vanish. The group may again try the spell *raise dead* upon any slain members, provided the weary High Priest yet lives and has another already memorized.

C) Now You Burgle Your Friends Like Common Thieves

In this punitive encounter, the attendant imp and others from the Butchers recreate **plot device 6**, but with a special kick. More friends of the PCs are taken advantage of. The Butchers steal their friends' items and ruin personal possessions. However, this time the PCs pay dearly for the offenses. No doubt the **plot device 1** was used early on. Do so again, just before running this encounter that occurs as the PCs pass back into their hometown again. This plot device requires a recent personal memento from the player characters, something unique to them; use the imp or whatever other methods are necessary to get it. Then add a black rose petal from plants indigenous to the area near Pfefferain. Now mix these items up at a crime scene and cook up very hot water for the PCs in their hometown. The PC's reputation takes a large hit.

Note that this scene has added kick if set up with previous plot devices. Allow the Butchers to steal items from the PC's friends and plant those items as treasure for **plot device 10** or **11**. Naturally, **plot devices 1, 2, 9** or **A** give ample chance for a Butchers' member to take, by stealth or by force, a unique PC item.

Example: Your party returns from its latest adventure back to the hometown when, you all notice quite the amount of town guard milling about near the opening gates. There are even a few militia sorcerers and priests of Muir. This is quite odd. A few citizens are talking to them; some shake their heads, some look skyward, some upon seeing you turn away.

A militia leader spots you and calls out for your council on a matter of urgency. The militia gathers around so that you and they may hear. The militia spellcasters arrange themselves on the outskirts of the large group. As the militia captain begins to speak, you note that militia men-at-arms surround you and there are no commoners or townspeople within 200 feet of you anymore.

"Ah, I am glad that you have come back to our gates of your own free will. This is pleasurable, as the news I have to dispense is quite the opposite. You are to appear in front of the Justicator forthwith on matters of vital importance. Security will be exceedingly tight. We all have been commanded to escort you there. Please do not resist, as we have the means to subdue you, remove your ability to cast

spells effectively and license to slay you on the spot if you should so resist. We do not wish bloodshed on you or us, so I personally urge you to submit to our will. Sadly, this will include each of your group's right arms to be placed in a linked iron that we will chain together. Linked as such you shall be processed to the Justicator. Please, again I urge you to submit. I'm sure your case has a logical explanation and you will be given chance to hear and appeal." You hear from various militiamen phrases such as, "Please, be peaceful. I want to see my wife tonight." and "I always thought there was something wrong with the lot of them." and "Yes, commander, the true seeing is functioning perfectly."

The PCs have option to flight or fight or submit. Should they try to flee, the only option is to either slay the lot of the militiamen or use some type of magical movement for each group member. Even if attempted, the mages are charged with bringing down any attempt to flee and the clerics are to *silence* and *hold person* enemy spellcasters. Further, all the militiamen have ranged weapons and know well how to use them. Fighting the lot of the militiamen is very wrong and only results in the final death of some PCs and the execution of any subdued survivors. A wise party submits to the linked forearm irons and marches surrounded by militiamen straight to the Justicator of the town.



PROLOGUE: THE SEEDS OF TORMENT

Embarrassed, confused, and humiliated your party marches linked in single file alongside an all too well armed guard escort to the very halls of justice in the town. The Justicator is indeed there, with an elite captain as shield in front of him. There are groups of politicians, merchants, and well to do citizenry here, and it seems that a funereal air permeates the place. You march to the defendant's table, whereupon you all, except the armed guard, are requested to seat yourselves.

The Justicator, the proud and solemn man behind the elite shield speaks, "Your reputation and actions proceed you, warriors. Though you have earned quite the reputation around town, only at this time is there an alarming need for trial. I do thank you for agreeing to the will of the militia and myself, and that shall be considered in the final analysis. However, today you shall be accused of not only burglary of the fifth order of magnitude, but also of allying yourselves with an infamous and distant order of assassins." Mutterings and nodding occur in the assembled courtroom from many therein. You note a friend of yours, (insert name), who gazes at you with a mixture of resignation, wonder and confusion.

"It has come to the attention of the court that items have been stolen from an acquaintance of yours, one (insert name). Further, their home has been subject to non-trivial destruction. This occurred while (insert name) was taking vacation from work and the calculated time of offense coincides with your last known presence in this town. At least two of your members were seen in the area of the building during a time that the acts very well could have happened. We have the eyewitnesses in the courtroom today and they will now stand and reveal themselves." Indeed, a middle-aged man and younger woman stand and cast disapproving eyes at you, then they sit down. You know you have never met them in your life. They do look like rather upstanding community members though, so the Justicator no doubt would loathe casting away their testimony out of prejudice.

"Damning evidence was found at the scene by the Captain standing in front of me. I shall allow Sir Reynkind to explain." With that the Justicator seats himself, never taking his eyes off the party at large.

The captain snaps to attention, coughs, and recites the activities. "Just yesterday my office was petitioned by one (insert name) along with Sergeant Konrad and an eyewitness. Please reveal yourselves." Two burly men, one of whom is part of your escort and another is a elder man who could have been a bouncer decades ago, stand to attention and nod at you. "The eyewitness was brought along with (insert name) to Sergeant Konrad's attention to note that (insert name) never indeed re-entered his house until escorted by militia guard, Sergeant Konrad to be precise. Upon viewing

the undisturbed scene for myself, I can well tell you that it would be clear to anyone standing at the front door, save a blind man, that the house had been burgled. Further, said eyewitness is the next-door neighbor and promised (insert name) that he would watch the victimized house during said victim's vacation.

"A list of stolen items has been compiled. [At this time the Captain reads the manifest of pilfered or destroyed objects.] Further, two things of note were found that formerly had not been there by reckoning of the victim. The first is this." [The Captain then shows to all assembled the item previously stolen from the party.] "The second is this black rose petal." [At this time the Captain holds up a rose petal, which oddly enough is almost purely black.] Gasps arise from some of the assembled people. The Captain concludes, "The first item was found along the edge of a wall in the study, the rose petal was found upon the pillow in the master bedroom." More mutterings cascade around the room and knowing glances coincide with nodding of heads. The Justicator arises and bids the Captain to place the two items on the table before him. As he does, he produces a beautiful rune-etched longsword, perhaps having a mithral blade, and holds court once again.

"It has been noted that the cast away item was in your possession at one time, defendants. It is also noted that the petal is from a rare black rose only found near the town of Pfefferain, and is significant as it is the calling card of the sect known as The Black Roses, a dishonorable society of assassins and rogues. Further, odd circumstances have followed your group lately and it would not surprise this court if you indeed did conduct these despicable acts as Black Rose operatives. So, therefore, are all you charged, and if convicted each suffers the loss of the hand now in irons as well as punitive monetary recompense not to exceed five thousand nobles each. Further, you all would be banished from this fair town.

"It is now time for your defense. Before you speak, please note my blade Veracity here. Any who it touches may speak truth or lies at will, but..." The Justicator holds it in his hand and states; "The sun doth shine inky black today." All note the blade glows red, hums a deep clear tone, which disperses in short order. He continues, "I am Terthranador III, Justicator of this fair community." The sword gleams beautifully in its silvery sheen. "I have served in this capacity for eleven years and four months." to which the sword glows red again and hums, "...and eighteen days", whereupon the glow fades and the sword gleams sweetly yet again.

At this time the PCs may offer any defense they wish, and try to sway the Justicator with any skill checks they wish. Spellcasting is not tolerated. Sir Reynkind is given the sword Veracity and the PCs are told that no words issuing from them are registered in the court ledger

unless the sword lies upon their shoulder. The Captain asks each PC if the stolen item of theirs ever was theirs, as well as if the petal ever was theirs. The activities of the PCs are brought up, as well as recent events (and especially gruesome murders if any have occurred by the Butchers' hand).

Note that this scene is even more excruciating if the treasure from their most recent expedition was indeed the items stolen from the house in question. This can only occur if the Butchers stole the items and then planted them in an adventure they urged the PCs to attempt.

If the PCs allow themselves to be railroaded, they do indeed each lose their right hand and effectively all their monetary wealth. All are kicked out of the town forevermore to boot. If they put up at least a passable defense, and the magic sword verifies their stories, then they have a chance at redemption.

If the Justicator judges PCs as redeemable, he proclaims forth:

"It is the judgment of this court that your group in its entirety shall at this time be banished from this town for everyone's safety until evidence may be brought upon this court which truthfully convicts the actual perpetrators of the crime. The group may be allowed within the town limits only upon the road between the main gate and this building, and only to produce such evidence, and only while linked as displayed currently and under armed guard. Your previous benevolent actions about town and willingness to appear here under peaceful guise causes me to use leniency in dealing with you today. You are given time, under current conditions and escort, to procure any personal belongings in this town and will be escorted as such to the main gate, whereupon you will be set free, outside the gate. Such is the decision of this court, all appeals are void."

The PCs thereafter are banished from their hometown in a civil yet humiliating manner, and are subject to jeering and derision. They may take any of their belongings, including the formerly stolen item and rose petal, which they may carry with them as they are shuttled out of town, seemingly for good. Once out of the town's limits, the formerly stolen item acquires a glowing inscription. It reads, *"You are lucky to survive in one piece. That may change if your luck drains away."* At the end of the message is the *arcane mark* of Lord Sesses. This message lasts only for one day.

D) It Used To Be Our Favorite Place

In this scene, the Butchers' shapechangers employ the help of a summoned major devil, such as a **cornugon**, to stage a play involving the PC's favored public gathering place in town. This should be attempted when the PCs are not there for best results.

This production destroys that setting in plain view of nearby eyewitnesses. If you wish, unfortunate civilian casualties could arise from the staged battle, whose deaths could very well be placed at the PC's feet.

Example: Viceroy's destroy the PC's public gathering place and pin the responsibility of such destruction squarely upon the PCs. The three shapechangers, **Jerjicus**, **Gortok** and **Drincilla**, appear as spellcasting PCs, or as many as the party has plus a fighter or two, at the chosen meeting place. They are then "attacked" by an infernal beast, whose only reason for living is seemingly to set buildings afire and scare citizenry. The viceroys, who appear as the PC spellcasters, do their best to control and beat down the horrid thing, "saving" the citizenry.

Should the PCs have a real arcane spellcaster, the kicker to this scene is the viceroys deride that "incompetent local spellcaster" for "summoning such a horrid thing." The viceroy playing that PC spellcaster cries out their recriminations and apologies as they attack the devil with all due fury, in actuality causing the cornugon little if no damage. The other viceroys, for instance, might admonish the viceroy playing the spellcaster PC in easily overheard shouts, *"Double-check your protective diagrams next time, you fool!"* or *"How many times need I tell you devils are too powerful for you to summon! Use elementals or fiendish animals, idiot!"* or *"Look at all the destruction your spell hath wrought!"* To the local populace, the viceroys shout, *"Flee from the Conjured Infernal Creation!"* *"Run for your lives!"* and *"We shall try to beat the vile thing back. It's the least we can do for you."*

Meanwhile, the cornugon is having the time of its infernal life. It discharges fire willy-nilly upon the shapechanged viceroys, who have been protected with *protection from energy [fire]*, and causes immense damage to the PC's former favorite gathering place. Between *produce flame*, *lightning bolt*, *wall of fire*, and ground-zeroed *fireball*, not to mention the destructive aspects of any spell the faux-PCs try to slay the amok devil, very few buildings survive that assault. Indeed, they all have a grand, flashy time reducing the gathering place to rubble. Once they "dispatch" the devil, who merely *teleports* away laughing, the faux-PCs wearily sift through the rubble for anything that might have survived of value. Before they leave, they weave a glowing message, *"Thankfully we have vanquished what we hath wrought."* signed by the party wizard or sorcerer, and followed by the *arcane mark* of Lord Sesses. Then the viceroys exit stage right.

This scene could alter the sentiment of the local populous and high-ranking personages in other scenes. It also might bring charges against the PCs later in life if you so desire.

E) Their Acquaintances Aren't Pleasant Either

You might use this scene to introduce an adventure onto the party that she absolutely insists they must undertake. It is ready made to impose **plot device 10** or **11** upon the party and also introduces another NPC antagonist.

Example: In this scene, precipitated by PC actions against the Butchers, **Jerjicus** incapacitates a cook at a place where the PCs eat dinner. He then prepares the PC's meal and laces each and every item they eat with *cursed oil of taggit*. This enchanted poison that has no taste, and only begins dropping PCs into unconsciousness an hour after the party finishes dinner. Allow the party to eat normally as if nothing has happened, then have each of them roll Fortitude save (DC 19) and Will save (DC 21) an hour later, with Spell Penetration, for each different item eaten during the meal. Most PCs should drop like swooning maidens within seconds of each other, and those who do not are subject to an ambush as per **plot device A** above with intent of shoot-to-incapacitate.

Jerjicus tails the characters and assaults them if necessary. He then collects the PCs once they drop into unconsciousness. He employs other Butchers' operatives in the tailing, assault and the collection as necessary. He and any accomplices transport each PC to the waiting clutches of **Gwaerthane**, a thoroughly repellant Wizard who earned a task from Lord Sesses. This task is paid in full with the shiny gift-wrapped PC presents laid orderly within his dungeon.

Gwaerthane the Necromancer has a horrid yet possible to complete task in mind for the party at large. He accepts no dithering by his waylaid recruits, placing a *geas* upon the leader and upon a party spellcaster as well. His task for the PCs, which they must perform lest the two unfortunates are struck by sickness then crippling disability, entails something with tombs, graves, necromantic effects, undead or all of the above. Locating and returning to wizard Gwaerthane's secret animation chamber the fabled *mushroom of youth* (from **R2: Rappan Athuk 2—The Middle Levels** from **Necromancer Games**), or Saraceks the Fallen's enchanted sword (found in **R1: Rappan Athuk—The Upper Levels** from **Necromancer Games**) make fine *geas* tasks, although others may be chosen to suit your own purposes. Gwaerthane also notes that if the party slays him, their *geas* can never be fulfilled, as they do not yet know where the animation chamber is, which assures the two PC's dire fate. He shall tell its location once the PCs bring the specified item, giving him ample time to emplace any defenses he desires upon himself. A simple *circle of death* should deter any thoughts of attack.

"Ahhh...the sleeping beauties awaken. How pleasant," croaks an aged voice from nearby. You can't see who it is, for your eyes are blindfolded, nor may you respond as a tight and thorough gag binds each of your mouths. Further, your arms and also your legs are all hog-tied together, bound by experts. The entire PC party is trussed-up, fit for an orcish feast. Yes, the feast, your party gets the idea that your previous dinner might be partly responsible for your current predicament.

The desiccated croaking continues, "It seems Jerjicus did his job to the letter, most gratifying. I should praise Lord Sesses the next time we meet." Husks of laughter cough forward. Raspy-skinned, shaking hands release your blindfolds, to reveal a bent elder man. Dressed in dirty black cape and grimy long johns, the white-bearded half-bald man peers at you, displaying his well-lined and weathered visage. You must be kept in some type of dungeon, for the walls are rough-hewn, manacled, bare of pleasantries of life, cobwebbed and light only flickers by a single torch on a nearby wall. A single opening in one wall leads to a dimly lit corridor that immediately bends left.

"Ah, now you may see the benefactor of your recent travels. I am known as Gwaerthane, and a most powerful dabbler in death and undead am I. You are now my puppets, to do my bidding. Should you complete my will, you shall live to eat further meals. Should you disobey, two of you shall fall under horrid enspellment and cease usefulness to all. Should you dare attack me, I shall invoke a circle of death with vigor and malice, and then animate your corpses to do my bidding until your bones wither to scraps. Such is your doom this day.

"As luck would have it, your intended goal is a simple one. You are to find, gather, and bring to my secret animation chamber the fabled evil sword that, scrolls tell me, swings from the wrist of a skeletal warrior entombed in the gravesite Rappan Athuk. I have a favored guardian and wish to add the evil sword to his arsenal. Such you are charged with, and such you shall endeavor." Gwaerthane walks to a fighter in the group and slides the gag so that it covers the fighter's nose. The fighter begins to asphyxiate as the necromancer continues. "You have a minute or so to tell me who your leader is and which of you is a wizard or sorcerer. Otherwise I shall let you die, and move to the next in your group."

The victim better confess or they die slowly on the spot. Their master wishes to know a leader identity and a spellcaster identity, hopefully arcane, but Gwaerthane settles for divine if necessary. If the party is composed of nothing but fighters and rogues, he sighs and picks the two toughest. Assuming cooperation from the afflicted, Gwaerthane re-gags the PC's mouth and states, *"Very well, you may live for your information so disbursed."*

The aged necromancer focuses on the party leader and intones a frightful enchantment, culminating in the doom that he already has specified. Then the croaking man does the same for another in the party. Once completed for both, the aged man relaxes, satisfied, and croaks once more, "Two of your comrades have now been enspelled with geas to perform your duty. Fates worse than death are their reward for lax commitment to my goal. Soon a portcullis shall fall just beyond view in the corridor. Once it does, a passwall shall appear opposite the corridor, and you may use it to gain entrance to a natural cavern beyond. Once beyond the passwall, you shall find a map detailing the way to your first destination. This map is cursed to change to the map back to my Lair once you have gained the prize I have stated. Once back in my clutches with the correct prize, I shall tell of the chamber you must enter with it, thus ending your geas and servitude.

"I take my leave of you now. Use the passwall effect to start out upon your task. Should you refuse, note that I have no intention of visiting this chamber for weeks, and enspelled bars and insubstantial guardians block your typical egress. So, you worms, it is in your best interest to perform my duty." The necromancer smiles at you all and nods, then exits through the passageway. Soon, a portentous clanging reverberates through the chamber, and a whooshing whistle is heard behind and a damp draft of air is felt. Those of you who wiggle around can indeed see a hole in the rock and dim outlines of cavern features in the distance. Some of you wonder how you will burst your bonds, as they have resisted all attempts. Need you all wiggle like worms to pass through the passwall?

Such questions are answered quickly as a great rushing of air and a low roaring detonation occurs in front of the chamber. Searing hot flames envelop the entire chamber and your bonds begin to burn, adding to the pain you feel. The magical fireball does its job remarkably well.

Fortunately, Gwaerthane casts a fireball at only 5th-level of effectiveness. It merely does 5d6 points of fire damage. It also sets the bonds alight, dealing another 1d4 points of fire damage, and faithfully burns through them as well as other flammables the PCs wear. Now they may continue on.

Gwaerthane, the Necromancer, Male Human Wiz11 (Necromancy): CR 11; SZ M; HD 11d4+14 ; hp 33; Init +6 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 18 (+2 Dex, +2 cloak, +4 mage armor) touch 14, flat-footed 16; BAB/Grapple +5/+6; Atk +8 melee (1d4+2, +2 dagger) or +8 ranged (1d8+1, light crossbow, crit 19-20, range 80 ft.); SA spells; SQ summon familiar; AL LE; SV Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +9; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 17, Int 17, Wis 15, Cha 10.

Skills: Concentration +17, Craft (alchemy) +13, Craft

(embalmer) +7, Knowledge (arcana) +17, Listen +12, Search+6, Speak Language (Abyssal), Spellcraft +17, Spot +7. *Feats:* Brew Potion, Craft Wand, Craft Wondrous Item, Enlarge Spell, Improved Initiative, Point Blank Shot, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (Necromancy).

Arcane Spells Prepared (4/5/5/5/3/2/1; base DC 13 + spell level, Necromancy base DC 14 + spell level): 0—detect magic, detect poison, disrupt undead, resistance; 1st—magic missile (x2), ray of enfeeblement (x2), shield; 2nd—cat's grace, ghoul touch (x2), scare, see invisible; 3rd—dispel magic, fireball, gaseous form, displacement, vampiric touch; 4th—enervation, lesser globe of invulnerability, stoneskin; 5th—animate dead, teleport; 6th—geas.

Specialty School Spells (Necromancy; prohibited schools: Conjuration and Illusion): 0—disrupt undead; 1st—chill touch; 2nd—spectral hand; 3rd—vampiric touch; 4th—enervation; 5th—magic jar; 6th—circle of death.

Languages: Abyssal, Common, Elven, Goblin, and Orc.

Possessions: +2 ghost touch dagger, +1 light crossbow, cloak of the bat, wand of fear (9 charges, caster level 11), scroll of animate dead and spectral hand (both caster level 11), 40 bolts.

F) A Night On The Rack

Sometimes, it just pays to use that personal touch to do the job. What better way to foster hatred than abject torture? Perhaps the PCs are not taking advantage of an adventure invitation as per **plot device 10** or **11**. Perhaps the PCs have been deserving of more than one lettered encounter. Strangely enough, it could prove useful to both sides in the adventure. Each could learn a little about the other while the PCs suffer the tender mercies of the Butchers on the bad guy's home turf.

The means of PC transport is the same as **plot device E**. **Jerjicus** cooks up the same debilitating dinner with *cursed oil of taggit*, but the PCs wind up instead in the torture chamber in **Area 31** of the Gehenna outpost, deposited trussed-up just like in **plot device E**. The difference is that they now inhabit the cursed cells in the corner of the room, sharing space with **Seleneca** the gibbering rogue (Rog1; hp7; Hide +4, Move Silently +4). When one PC awakens, that person is hauled up and emplaced in the chosen device. Thereafter, any viceroy or Butchers' member strolls by and either tries to wring information, emote a soliloquy, or merely cause the PC malicious pain. The PCs might get a good reading on the disparate types of creatures in the Butchers, including the imp population in Gehenna, as well as the personality of each tormenter or observer, at least until unconsciousness mercifully intervenes. Once sufficient victims are rendered unconscious, the viceroys

deliver the PCs somewhere proper, such as at the entrance to an unfulfilled task.

Be aware of the risks this scene presents. It is not for the faint of heart DM to undertake. It is very important to monitor the **player's** reaction to this scene, so to not overly offend or disgust and thereafter drive away players from the game. Use caution, vagueness and compassion, always noting **player** reactions, and finally render the PCs unconscious when the point seems to have been made.

G) A Dire Message Prepared Just For You

The PCs have angered the Butchers to the point where the ink of the next message must be drawn from human blood, specifically that of a friend or acquaintance whom the PCs have met with regularity. Any messages the Butchers left before were 'friendly' warnings compared to what transpires now. The target should be someone they'd rather not lose. Now the PCs know that the Butchers mean business, in graphic detail.

Example: *You enjoy a drink at your favorite tavern when a horrid scream erupts from the manager's room. One of the serving wenches staggers out, wailing futile denials in blood-curdling tone and volume. You immediately leap from your chairs. One of you catches the server in your arms as she collapses and moans of loss with a body wracked with sobs. The others enter the room she fled and finally realize why your regular barkeeper had been absent. He lies sprawled on the bloody floor, horribly eviscerated. His entrails have been cut to form neatly arranged letters on the floor, reading, "You anger Lord Sesses at your peril, and his!" More patrons pile into the doorway and either gasp, gag or stare dumbfounded at the floor. One pipes up, "Who in **hell** is Lord Sesses?"*

H) Guilty By Association

In this punitive encounter, **Jerjicus** or **Gortok** make the PC's lives miserable by insinuating themselves under guise of *greater invisibility* directly within the center of the PCs as they make their way through town. In a heavily populated area, the viceroy decides either a *cone of cold* or *magic missile* spray is warranted upon the populace. This positively destroys the unfortunate commoners caught in the effect's path. Also, this im-

plicates the group in view of any surviving eyewitnesses, and the viceroy insures there are sufficient amounts of them. The viceroy exits stage right, using Lord Sesses' *carnelian cube of perfect teleportation* just for this special mission. This leaves the PCs in most serious hot water with the Justicator, much like in **plot device C** above. Although this scene is not nearly as intricate, it shows just how quickly and efficiently the Butchers can ruin a victim's life. The PC's reputation takes an enormous hit.

Example: *Your party walks through the town to their next destination, passing a marketplace. Without warning, a quick intonation is faintly heard and freezing waves of energy emanate from your group, utterly chilling passersby in one direction. You all hear a guttural guffaw and then the phrase, "Not today." One or two of you thought you might have seen a vague shimmering within your group, but you're not sure. Nor do you have time to contemplate it, as you stand surrounded by stunned onlookers. The screams and moans of loved ones and witnesses cry out over the deadly fate of those caught in the freezing blast that came from your direction. The town guard comes over to investigate, eyebrows furrowed and weapons at the ready.*

The town guards want to know exactly what happened and they tolerate no backtalk, abuse nor deception. The PCs, like in **plot device C** above have choices of flight, fight or submission to the guard's will. In this case, fight or flight seems more feasible, but only lands the PCs into even more hot water than the fabricated mass murder does. You know that the Justicator has the means to find out the truth, but the PCs may not know that at this time.

For this scene, you must prepare town guard personnel to taste, as there are too many permutations and decisions to compute here. This is the most open ended and possibly life altering of all the encounters, so use this one judiciously and with great forethought. This encounter by itself could spell doom for the PCs, especially if one of their spellcasters really can cast *cone of cold*. Use the Justicator's soliloquy and verdict as per **plot device C** above, changing the details of course, but note that the party truly doesn't have much chance to clear themselves except for a fall guy or confession from the viceroy.

Part One, Act I: Off to the Lorremach Highhills

The group heads toward the large town of Pfefferain (FEF-ur-ane), perhaps from information found in **Prologue** encounters such as 8, a failed 9, 12, or C. If the PCs wish to remove their curse once and for all, Pfefferain must be investigated for more clues. Although the location of Lord Sesses ranks high on their wish list, they might uncover dealings of the Butchers. These dealings could provide spin off adventures as well. However, the town of Pfefferain lies within a perilous, hilly wilderness. The group must first trudge through the Lorremach (LOR-eh-mock) Highhills to reach it.

Since the buttes under and near The Keep create a natural obstacle to the PCs, logic dictates that Pfefferain best resides in a hilly region. Find or create a swath of hills in a temperate out of the way corner of the realm and place Pfefferain there. Place the Keep on the Butte relatively nearby. Then populate the nearby terrain with plausible wilderness encounters, perhaps located along trails and paths within the otherwise impassable hills. The remote location is set up to discourage overland ground travel and encourage aerial travel. This increases the likelihood of the Pfefferain Carpet Mages service, with its adventure clues, coming into play. A map of the Lorremach Highhills has been provided as an example. Improvise and change it as you see fit.

The Real Adventure Begins

It falls upon the PCs to make the overland trip to Pfefferain. This might be a long and arduous journey, or short jaunt, depending upon the terrain in your realm. If the group is not exactly of requisite skill to take on the Butchers, then perhaps a slightly off course staged adventure would help them along. Somewhere on the way could be a decent time for a numbered or lettered **Prologue** encounter for the group, as the Butchers receive word that the PCs are traveling closer to them and wish to impose difficulties.

At this point you transform into an information disseminator from time to time. As the group nears Pfefferain, there's a better chance of meeting people along the way who have felt the might of the Butchers. In showing that, say for a three week journey to the Highhills near Pfefferain, allow one scrap of information to drop the first week in travel, then two the next week, and finally three the last week. These are but tempting morsels to the PCs, revealed furtively from out of the way places

and from NPCs who dearly wish to remain anonymous. Roll 1d6 and add the Charisma modifier for the petitioning character to find which scrap they find.

Sample Information Tidbits:

1) A beautiful serving wench whispers of her escape from Pfefferain and the onerous advances of one known as Lord Sesses, who tried to woo her with his charm and power. He is evil personified. She sickens thinking of him.

2) The PCs meet a pair of Wizards discussing purchases of magic *rods*, and they recount three of the best crafters. Lord Sesses is among them, yet they caution against other items from his laboratories.

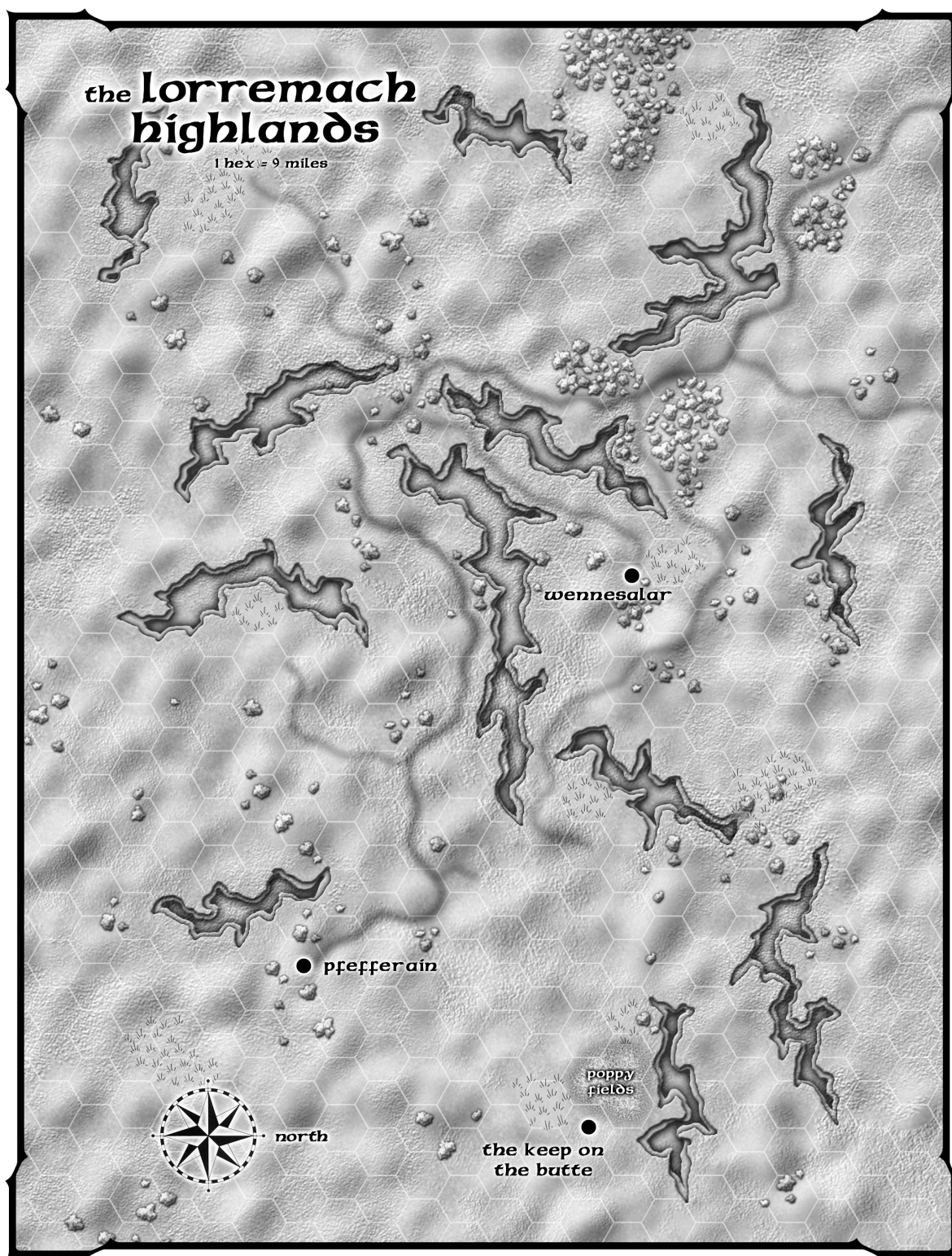
3) From a merchant: The Mayor of Pfefferain, Arellias, has retained his political seat for twenty-three straight years. Rarely is he challenged anymore. Those who do can't duplicate his campaigns, and worse, suffer ill fates afterwards.

4) From a mercenary: You do know that the entire town of Pfefferain institutes a "no armor no shield" policy, don't you? Yes, literally, you must check in your armor and shield at the main gates to enter the town. They hold your items until you leave. And you pay for the honor. One of the elite defenders of Pfefferain told me some nearby wizard named Lord Sesses personally creates all the protective devices for the elites. Sounds like a nice guy.

5) From a merchant: The Hellfire Casino and Hotel is fine entertainment. The games are run scrupulously clean - I can personally attest to that. I figured it was another scam outfit, but after observing the games for quite awhile I have found that they conform greatly to true odds. Don't personally care for the decor, but you can never find a more honest gambling house.

6) From a diplomatic attaché: cloak yourself if you are a dwarf traveling to Pfefferain. His Most Exalted Authority, the Mayor of Pfefferain is quite prejudiced against dwarves. This comes as little shock considering his half-elven heritage. Let us just say that elves shall feel more at home in that town than dwarves ever do. Further, one must have a good sense of humor to enter that town, as most of the demi-humans there are of gnomish and halfling extraction.

7) From a shady, furtive character: I've heard that the three rival thieves guilds in Pfefferain pay respect to the Darkmage, Lord Sesses, through his bugbear high rogue Rasharnor. They are the Black Roses (assassins and extortionists), the Moonlit Knights (cutpurses and thugs) and the Order of Moneychangers (burglars and



white-collar crime operatives). Rasharnor runs the Order himself.

8) From a mercenary: Near Pfefferain is the home base of the Butchers - a more efficient and nasty collection of bugbears you can not find. They wear black cloaks with the sign of a red bloody meat cleaver when officially on patrol, when they desire folk to see them at all. They seem to answer to their captain, a noted bugbear rogue, a bugbear high priest and an eye tyrant.

9) From a wandering cleric: I heard the Darkmage destroyed the entire town of Wennesalar with devilish help. He is certainly not someone to provoke.

10) A sage, very knowledgeable in the infernal, cautions the PCs against a place known as "The Keep on the Butte." It is said that swarms of imps circle it invisibly without surcease. Further, the evil dragon population is on very good terms with its denizens.

To Face the Lorremach Highhills

This high hilly region is home to indigenous gnomes, halflings and humanoid beasts like hobgoblins and ogres. Windswept hills, kettles, buttes, valleys, erosion-carved rivers, undulating chasms and striated rock formations mark the region. There is grassland and game here, but what exists is relegated to pockets of teeming life scattered amongst the high hills. Larger pockets of tillable farmland eventually become towns such as Pfefferain. The soil is sandy in this region, so swamps or mires are not uncommon and an abundance of flowers and other decorative plants thrive in this area.

In the provided, each hex is nine miles either apex to apex or side to side of mostly hilly, rocky, and rough terrain. Some directions of travel are well nigh impassable in certain spots due to rock outcroppings, ledges, and chasms. The best means of travel is flight. However, flight presents its own problems with the region's vicious winged beasts.

Problems could occur when the group steps off the beaten path, especially without food or water. Starvation or dehydration is possible within the Lorremach Highhills if one is not careful or fails multiple Wilderness Lore checks. Only Savannah and Floralgarten regions provide food and water to travelers. Smart travelers load up on rations and water skins if lengthy travel is indicated. Dire consequences may otherwise occur as fatigue and exhaustion occurs quickly with malnourished travelers. Rampaging trolls are much more fearsome when the group is exhausted.

Malnourished travelers suffer effects as follows. If either man or beast goes without water for a number of hours equal to 24 + Constitution, that person or beast must make a Constitution check (DC 10 + amount of previous checks) each hour without water intake or suffer 1d6 subdual damage. Likewise, if either man or

Flatlander Road Encounters (1d10, roll of 'r')

01-09	supplies caravan with guards
10-17	merchants caravan with guards
18-24	messenger w/guards
25-33	a band of travelers, perhaps with guards
34-40	a band of adventurers
41-49	Pfefferain Elite Patrol
50-56	gnomish quarry contingent
57-59	Black Rose assassin(s)
60-63	Moonlit Knights highway robbery gang
64-65	flying recon wizard on carpet
66-74	brown bears
75-81	trolls
82-89	ogres
90-96	hill giants
97-00	natural disaster

Trail Encounters (1d8, roll of 'r')

01-08	band of adventurers
09-18	Pfefferain Elite Patrol
19-26	gnomish quarry contingent
27-29	Black Rose assassin(s)
30-31	flying recon wizard on carpet
32-40	brown bears
41-49	worgs
50-56	griffons
57-68	a hobgoblin battalion
69-77	trolls
78-87	ogres
88-95	hill giants
96-00	natural disaster

Hills, Savannah Encounters (1d6, roll of 'r')

01-05	Pfefferain Elite Patrol
06-07	Black Rose assassin(s)
08-09	recon imp brigade
10-12	an opium transport dragon squad
13-20	a band of adventurers
21-22	flying recon wizard on carpet
23-25	hieracosphinx
26-35	brown bears
36-42	worgs
43-47	griffons
48-49	a dragon
50-57	an hobgoblin battalion
58-63	trolls
64-71	ogres
72-77	hill giants
78-81	pair of huge wyverns
82-83	"Sound of Chaos", a gargantuan yrthak
84-86	methanohydra
87-90	xorns
91-94	umber hulk
95-00	natural disaster

beast goes without food for three or more days, that person or beast must make a Constitution check (DC 10 + amount of previous checks) each hour without water intake or suffer 1d6 subdual damage. Any subdual damage from either reason brings on a fatigued state to the creature, which inflicts -2 penalties to Strength and Dexterity and disallows running or charging. Eight hours of pure rest removes the fatigued onus. Any action by a fatigued creature that could bring on a fatigued status sends said creature to exhausted status, which halves their movement rate and imposes -6 penalties to Strength and Dexterity. One hour of full rest reduces exhaustion to fatigued status. Worst of all, the subdual damage accrued by lack of food or water **cannot** be healed by magical means. Only the proper intake of the lacked substance removes that subdual damage.

Any hex that the group ends up in could give forth an encounter at night on a roll of '1' for the area's specific die roll. If so, roll 1d% and match to the Road, Trail or Hills chart. Note that the Savannah regions in a two hex radius of Pfefferain are considered Flatlander roads for encounter purposes. For them, any roll of 67 or higher is re-rolled.

Encounter Descriptions

Supplies Caravan with Guards: The town of Pfefferain needs its regular supplies, such as wood, metals, cattle, foodstuffs, paper goods, clothing, and anything else in raw material form. There are **3d4 carts and wagons** pulled by draft horses. Guard contingents generally consist of **5d4 warriors** with both melee and ranged weaponry. Important or large caravans employ 'hillbreakers' of **6 guards (Ftr2)**, **1 lieutenant (Rgr3)**, **1 commander (Ftr4)**, and **1 support weapon (Sor4)**. Each 'hillbreaker' has some type of curative potion. These guards well know what could lay in wait along the way, so any adventuring group is thoroughly questioned before leave is granted without a fight. Wise role players merely note that they wish to help control the monstrous population in the Highhills region, and that suffices to keep the guards from considering the group a threat. However, the guards keep wary eyes upon the group nevertheless.

Merchant's Caravan with Guards: Much trade occurs between Pfefferain and the surrounding lands. Merchants often travel overland plying their wares. Again, draft horses pull 3d4 carts and wagons. Considering how wizard-friendly Pfefferain is, many caravans trek over hilly outposts to conduct trade with those of scholarly, opulent or arcane tastes. The local monster population well knows this tendency too, so every merchant caravan has the requisite **5d4 warriors** and **always** employs the 'hillbreakers'. These guards react as the Supplies Caravan guards above, albeit with more

suspicion and paranoia. This encounter might result in an impromptu buying spree amongst the group, provided they still have spending cash.

Messenger with Hillbreaker Officers: Sometimes vital news must travel from Pfefferain to one of the surrounding countries or vice-versa. Cantering forth is **1 messenger (Rgr5)**, accompanied by **1 lieutenant (Rgr3)**, **1 commander (Ftr4)**, and **1 support weapon (Sor4)**. If the messenger group is hailed in a friendly manner, they hail likewise and give an executive summary of the news as they pass. The 'hillbreakers' attack if threatened, leaving the messenger galloping to the destination.

Band of Travelers: Pfefferain offers renewed life for tradesmen or explorers. Groups generally comprise a mix of commoners, experts and warriors. If tilted more towards Commoners, they employ the standard **5d4 warriors** as guards. Travelers may or may not realize how treacherous the Lorremach Highhills are, so their reactions to the group may vary greatly.

Band of Adventurers: Bands of between **1d4+4 adventuring folk** may move about the Highhills, in search of opportunities to make their mark upon the world. Some are charged with monstrous population control. Some have personal reasons to linger. If they are locals, the group is a mix of humans, gnomes, halflings, half-elves and elves, in order of probability; no other races may be considered. Each band treats the PCs with suspicion until their fears are allayed. Make these groups as weak or powerful as desired. They may even let out a scrap of information as per **Sample Information Tidbits** above.

Pfefferain Elite Patrol: Part of the Pfefferain elite militia patrols the roads and trails near Pfefferain, attempting to keep all typical egress to the large town clear and as trouble-free as possible. The Mayor does all he is able to ensure relatively safe travel and therefore bustling trade between his domain and the lands nearby. Each member has the typical tabard of griffon rampant over flame-discharged wand. Unlike the town of Pfefferain, no armor restrictions are placed upon the overland patrols so they wear the finest armor, as do their mounts. Riding atop a heavy warhorse armored in chain barding is the **commander (Ftr7)** in full plate. Beside him is his **lieutenant (Ftr5)** in banded armor atop a medium warhorse with chain barding. They control a squad of **10 elites (Ftr3)** in breastplate armor atop medium warhorses with studded barding. Also within the group is a cleric of Muir (Clr5), outlaid as an elite, who carries the Patrol's *rod of enemy detection*. Lastly, there is a **support wizard (Wiz5)** who wears the standard *harm-halting hat of Pfefferain* and *blow-blocking bracers of Pfefferain* set prevalently in the town's militia and who holds the Patrol's *rod of absorption* (16 levels potential, 6 levels available). The

Wizard sits atop a light warhorse with shimmering *mage armor* barding.

If the group approaches in a pleasant and non-threatening manner, these patrolmen give the group reconnaissance about the areas they have recently traveled, as well as protocol required about town. The Patrol wishes the group well in their endeavors. Note that the Patrol's protective items come directly from Lord Sesses himself, so these Patrols hold the Darkmage in highest respect and gratitude. If the patrol suffers indignities or tied tongues, they immediately form battle positions and parlay sternly for information from the group. PCs who attack, threaten or abuse a Patrol, incites the Patrol to attack and send forth messengers to the best of their ability.

Gnomish Quarry Contingent: Mines and quarries are prevalent in the Highhills, and the indigenous gnomes typically perform the hard labor. This group is of **10d4 gnomish miners (Exp2)** and **1d4 miners (Exp4)**, outlaid with studded leather armor, picks, spears and spades. The leader is a **miner (Exp6)** in mithral chain who disburses the small handful of *beads of force* amongst the miners he trusts the most. Normally they use the *beads* judiciously to blast through granite veins, but under duress they use them either offensively or defensively as the situation warrants. Intelligent monsters in the region know to avoid the gnomish miners and their horrible explosions. These gnomes could be fonts of information if approached pleasantly and questioned carefully. Since the Butchers control the stonemason, miner, and gem cutting guilds in Pfefferain as well as disburse the *beads*, the gnome leader might give forth information about the Butchers if you desire.

Black Rose Assassin(s): At intervals, the Black Roses dispatch their operatives about the lands. They generally stay near the Flatlander Road, but may make shortcuts to hasten their progress. They travel alone or in groups of **1d2+1**, and always are at least **6th-level Rogues** if not more in skill. Each carries the obsidian amulet signifying their membership in the Black Roses as well as choice selections of poisons, special equipment, camouflage gear and blades. Unless the Black Roses wish to attack, the group generally never gets a chance to see them. Situations may dictate otherwise.

Moonlit Knights Highway Robbery Gang: These felons strike at night, mugging and looting with reasonable chances of success and safety. They become a stern test of the group's perception ability during watch, and counterattack ability once alerted. Always roaming in studded leather armor when out of town, this group is led by a **criminal leader (Rog7)** with **2 thug-specialists (Rog5)**. The others are a mixture of **2d4 cutpurses and sapmen (Rog3)**. These fellows are cunning. When they chance upon the PCs, they regroup

to form a decent plan of attack, preferably when the group's fighters are out of their armor and the spellcasters might be quickly incapacitated. Allow any PC on watch Spot and/or Listen opposed checks, with action delays on those who need to wake. Since the Butchers control and take monetary respect from each thieves' guild, the PCs may learn more clues by interrogating these rogues.

Flying Recon Wizard on Carpet: The Pfefferain Magic Guild offers timesaving services to foreign travelers. One may either purchase maps of the area or rent true *flying carpets* to scout out the outlying area. The group sees a **wizard (Wiz9)** atop a *flying carpet*, conducting surveys. If hailed in a friendly manner, the Wizard descends cautiously and asks of the group's intentions in the area. Should the group act in a respectable manner, the wizard bids them well and invites the group to The Swirling Vortex, the home base of the Reconnaissance Carpet Mages. If the group dares attack the wizard, who is outfitted with the typical *harm-halting hat of Pfefferain* and *blow-blocking bracers of Pfefferain* set as well as a *rod of absorption* (16 levels potential, 6 levels available), the wizard defends as best able, tries to inflict damage if possible, then heads away to alert superiors. Since the Butchers control the magic item market in Pfefferain, the group may learn more clues by parlaying with the wizard, who regards Lord Sesses with fondness, awe and respect.

Recon Imp Brigade: Sometimes Lord Sesses wishes information about a local person, place or phenomena. When he does, he often dispatches a squad of **3d4 imps** to visit and record activity. They either travel in their natural form with *invisibility*, or as a flock of red-eyed ravens. For PCs that seem rather tough and experienced, the imps note the group's presence in the area for Lord Sesses but move on to their true target. If the group seems weak or fatigued or is recouping from an overland battle, the imps may decide to stealthily steal items or maliciously trick the PCs. Attempt whatever the group of imps thinks is feasible. The mere presence of imp squads should alert all that they are nearing the home base of the Darkmage.

Opium Transport Dragon Squad: This might be the first exposure the PCs find of the Butchers' rackets: large-scale opium transport. One of the Darkmage's best ideas was to utilize evil dragons in diplomatic and financial endeavors. Lord Sesses has crafted a contract with the major lawful evil dragons in the area. This secures the town of Pfefferain and its citizens against harm by dragonkind. In return, the blue and green dragons receive the chance to make fine recurring profits smuggling huge quantities of opium about the kingdoms. Each squad consists of three dragons. They range from young adult to adult in age and are of green or

blue color. All three dragons strap custom-fitted harnesses about their torsos, attached by chains to sturdy crates containing hundreds of pounds of opium each. Also, a Recon Imp Brigade rides shotgun for scouting, defense, and communicative purposes. One imp wears *Lord Sesses' robe of scintillating immolation*, does not mind the curse in the least, and another Imp has the amulet attuned to that cursed item. This allows the amulet-bearer to teleport back to Lord Sesses, just in case trouble occurs during the shipment. These transport squads fly up past the group regardless of circumstance, although cunning group members may see them more closely by magical means. Wise role players avoid antagonizing squads of three fear-inducing spell-resistant dragons surrounded by Imps with ability to summon dire reinforcements quickly.

Brown Bears: There is **1d4+2** of these hungry beasts roaming for food. Their sense of smell is great. They attack the PC's mounts or even the group itself unless deterred by flames or distracted by dropped food.

Trolls: These horrors, **1d4+2** in number, might ambush unless the PCs beat the trolls in opposed Hide/Spot checks. The trolls attack from maliciousness and hunger. If any of them have treasure, the largest troll has a gold necklace worth 175 gp or a ruby ring worth 250 gp.

Ogres/Hill Giants: The ogres of the Lorremach Highhills have learned something from their larger giant neighbors: how to shot put decent sized rocks. Both races try to ambush victims from above with longswords or rocks (20-pounders for the ogres with maximum range of 120 feet, 40-pounders for the hill giants) and then leap down to the attack with gargantuan clubs. Either **1d4+4 ogres** or **1d4+1 hill giants** attack, preferably with ambush. If the brutes carry treasure besides bones and well-aged carcasses, the treasure would be on the order of 2d20 gp and 1d3 25 gp gems per ogre, or 5d20 gp and 1d4 50 gp gems per hill giant.

Hobgoblins: A legion of hobgoblins roams around the Highhills, looking for food and treasure. Their favorite prey is a band of travelers, but they settle for any target that offers spoils with minimum effort and casualties.

The **hobgoblin chieftain (Ftr4)** wears chainmail and wields a two-handed sword. A trio of fiendish wolves obeys the chieftain's commands. A **hobgoblin witch-doctor (Clr3/Wiz3)** stands at his side under *invisibility* armed with a heavy axe. He stands ready to *silence*, *hold* and *web* enemies. The **4 hobgoblin officers (Ftr3)** wear studded leather and swing halberds and axes. There is **12 elite hobgoblin thugs (Ftr2)** wearing studded leather armor, toss spears and swing longswords. Wearing leather armor is **16 hobgoblins**, armed with longswords and longbows. Armed with glaives and short spears, wearing leather armor, located at the front

of the formation are **24 hobgoblins**, with a further **32 hobgoblins** wear leather armor and swing axes or morningstars.

Each hobgoblin carries 2d8 sp and 1d3 gp. Double those for the 2nd-level hobgoblins, quadruple that for the 3rd-level hobgoblins, and multiply by ten for the chieftain and the witch doctor. The chieftain has a *+1 two-handed sword* and a jet pendant on a silver chain worth 350 gp. The Witch Doctor also has a 50 gp statuette of the god of the hobgoblins, a scroll of *sanctuary* (scribed at 1st level) and a scroll of *haste* (scribed at 5th level).

Worgs: A pack of **1d4+4 worgs** stalks the PCs unless they beat the worgs in opposed Hide/Spot checks. Should the worgs succeed, they tail the group until the proper time and place to strike with surprise. These beasts are fairly intelligent, very cunning, hungry and malicious. They usually attempt to slay typical game or a group's mounts, but attack seemingly weak parties as well.

Griffons: A pair of mated pairs flies overhead and they cooperate with each other well, which is fortunate in the Highhills due to the nasty winged things about. These beasts drop from the skies to either grab game on the run or knock mounted riders off their mounts and then attack the mounts. Anyone who defends a mount from a griffon becomes the griffon's target.

Dragon: The dragons normally encountered in the Lorremach Highhills are usually either blue or green, but other chromatic colors have been sighted as well as friendly copper dragons. Roll 1d10 to find which color the single juvenile, young adult or adult dragon reveals. 1-3 = blue, 4-6 = green, 7 = red, 8 = black, 9-0 = copper.

The blue and green dragons most likely observe the group and note their actions, as these dragons are held by the contract with Lord Sesses. Such a dragon normally flies off to warn the Butchers that new problems have surfaced in the area, but attacks with great effect if at all threatened. The red and black dragons look upon any group as potential bribery prey, taking the monetary respect and then departing to continue their trek to other parts of the land.

The copper dragons are offered as boons to a crippled or less experienced group. One usually appears in a cavern the PCs use as shelter and offers healing, information or both. Any copper dragon in the area would know of the opium poppy fields as well as the Keep on the Butte and the winged population in the Highhills. It might also know of the Butchers if you deem thus.

Hieracosphinx: This territorial fellow is on the move looking for a gynosphinx. He assumes that wherever he flies is his territory, unless deterred by a larger winged thing. Any game or mount is considered fair game, but a large group, especially armed and armored,

gives him pause. If violence is on his mind, the hieracosphinx generally dive-bombs a victim from above then pecks and rakes savagely, unless he somehow takes alarming damage.

Wyverns: Lairing in the Highhills are **2 huge 10HD wyverns**. They have a reputation amongst the Pfefferain Elite Patrol and due to their recurring meetings they are very wary of large armored humanoid parties. Still, horses are treasured meats, so it would not be surprising if the lead wyvern knocks a mounted rider out of the saddle and the trailing dragon plucks the mount from the ground, with both disappearing into the sky with their prize.

Yrthak: “The Sound of Chaos”, a monstrous **gargantuan yrthak**, is shunned by flying and ground-dwelling creatures alike. The Yrthak of the Lorremach is one of the most intelligent and cunning of its kind, and so far has avoided death from not only the Pfefferain Elite Patrols but also from the Butchers. Most of the rockslides the group faces have been created in no small part by “The Sound of Chaos.” Any group who brings in the horn and tail of the Lorremach Yrthak to the Guard Offices of Pfefferain receives 20 platinum bars worth 500 gp each on the spot. The guards know of wounds inflicted on the legendary beast, so any fakes are spotted easily enough by sight and the perpetrators are given the bum’s rush. Any group bringing in the tongue and at least 4 claws of “The Sound of Chaos” to The Swirling Vortex receives either a 7,500 gp emerald or an in-stock +2 *weapon* of choice. Further, slaying this winged troublemaker could be a task that the Butchers present to the group.

“The Sound of Chaos,” Advanced Yrthak: CR 11; SZ G Magical Beast; HD 18d10+90; 189 hp; Init +6 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 20 ft., fly 60 ft. (average); AC 20 (-4 size, +2 Dex, +12 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 18; BAB/Grapple +18/+39; Atk +23 melee (4d6+9, bite); Full Atk +23 melee (4d6+9, bite), +21 melee (2d4+4 [x2], claw); Face/Reach 20 ft. by 40 ft./15 ft.; SA explosion (15 ft. radius explosion, 3d6 points of damage), snatch (grapple bonus +39, vs. large or smaller size, automatic claw damage), sonic lance (9d6 points of sonic damage, crit 19-20, range 90 ft.); SQ blindsight, sonic vulnerability (-2 racial save vs. sound attacks); AL N; SV Fort +16, Ref +13, Will +7; Str 28, Dex 14, Con 21, Int 7, Wis 13, Cha 11.

Skills: Listen +22*, Move Silently +13. **Feats:** Flyby Attack, Improved Critical (sonic lance), Improved Initiative, Multiattack. * receives a +4 racial bonus to Listen checks (already added).

Methanohydra: This raw umber-colored beast has a dark gray underbelly and eight heads. It is a very rare

hydra whose heads breathe a noisome cloud of black marsh gas at a target creature, which inflicts a *stinking cloud* effect in a 5-foot radius upon that victim as if the hydra were an 8th-level Sorcerer. Always ravenous, it breathes first and then attacks with vigor. Its CR is equal to that of a pyrohyra with the same number of heads.

Methanohydra: CR 9; hp 84; see the *MM*.

SA—Breath Weapon (Su): Once every 1d4 rounds, as per a *stinking cloud* from an 8th-level Sorcerer with difference of a 5 feet square area of effect, one requiring a successful Fortitude save (DC 10 + 1/2 HD + Constitution modifier) to avoid the effects.

Xorns: These strange outsiders are usually trolling for minerals or rare metals, and are major pests to the gnomish miners in the area. Normally encountered are **1d3 average xorns** in the midst of fighting a gnomish quarry contingent for the fruits of the gnome’s hard work.

Umbur Hulks: The PCs find **1d2 umbur hulks** in battle with mining gnomes. They also might find a lone hulk that stages pit traps in rocky regions of the hills to catch edible prey. A favorite tactic is to spot prey, wait for them to get a better look at the surroundings by moving to the edge of a ledge, and then bore through that ledge, breaking it off and dropping the prey far below to their death.

Natural Disasters: The surrounding Highhills are treacherous even if no beasts roam about. Depending upon the terrain, one of three natural disasters befalls the group. A group in the typical hills suffers a rockslide somewhere in the maphex. One in a grassy valley suffers a sinkhole effect, and one in a marshy region suffers a patch of quicksand.

For the rockslide, assign Listen checks (DC 15) to detect the early stages of rock splintering. A successful Listen check by any group member affords all a Reflex save (DC 15) versus the ensuing rockslide, otherwise none is given. Should the group act **immediately** to flee, they only suffer a ‘slide zone’ effect, otherwise, they are targeted as the ‘bury zone’. The ‘slide zone’ inflicts 3d6 points of damage on a failed Reflex save (DC 15) with all successes negating any harmful effects. The ‘bury zone’ metes out 6d6 points of damage, half that if a Reflex save (DC 15) is made. A failed ‘bury zone’ save also pins the victim under the rubble, who takes 1d6 subdual damage per minute while so pinned until help allows escape. Once a pinned victim becomes unconscious, they then make a Constitution check (DC 15) each minute or takes 1d6 further real damage, until help arrives to unpin them.

Treat a sinkhole as a ‘slide zone’ avalanche, except the victims land 5d8 feet below their previous footing level as the ground gives way. Creatures who succeed

VINDICATION

the check are assumed to leap out of harm's way or evade the fall.

Victims who run afoul of quicksand must succeed in both Swim and Dexterity checks (DC 12) or start to go under - one failed set of checks starts the descent, another failed set at a -2 penalty each completes it. It is assumed that group victims attempt to float on top of the quicksand. Victims whose heads are dunked under the surface level of the quicksand then make Constitu-

tion checks to hold their breath (DC 10 + 1/round immersed) each round and try another Swim and Dexterity check set at penalties of -2/round immersed. A failed Constitution check immediately drops the victim to 0 hit points and offers one last Swim and Dexterity check set. If this last check set fails, the character drowns in quicksand.



Part One, Act 2: A Township In Retrograde

After a wilderness journey, the PCs finally reach the gates of the Town of Pfefferain. Ruled by His Most Exalted Authority, the Mayor of Pfefferain for the last twenty-three years, the citizenry has enjoyed prosperity and growth as well as suffered moral stagnation during the last half of that time. Certain high-ranking citizenry can provide clues to the location of the enigmatic Lord Sesses.

Pfefferain thrives due to its strategic defensive position in the middle of a large plot of fertile savannah territory within walking distance of a stream. There are abundant natural resources nearby which could support roughly 10,000 humanoids, but Pfefferain rarely exceeds half that at peak market season. The tillable land nearby supports corn, wheat, flax, soybeans, vegetables and fruit trees. Grasslands supply grazing for herds of cattle, pigs, sheep, and horses. Poultry is plentiful, with chickens, quail and pheasants in good supply. There are no large collected bodies of water nearby, so the streams suffice as water supply as do wells. Fish occupy a small part of the typical local's diet. Due to the sandy soil, many varieties of decorative plants grow in what are known as 'floralgarten' regions. These regions are mixtures of savannah and marshland and field a wide variety of weeds, vines, salable plants and flowers. Some species grow in the Lorremach and nowhere else in the land.

Breaching the Town of Pfefferain

The founders of the town selected the site of four hills that form a rough triangle. In due time, three passages between the hills were filled in and stout gates were erected to allow controlled egress. The two southern hills were merely joined together by a massive piling up of rocks and dirt. After that, large ramparts were created of each hill facing outward from the town. Quarried stone was brought in and the hills were fitted with stonework to form a sheer cliff around the entirety of the protective hills. This protected the town well from climbing beasts such as bears, ogres, trolls and giants. Aerial attacks were still feared, with wyverns, griffons, dragons and The Sound of Chaos roaming about.

Eventually, the elite guard was formed of men-at-arms whose sole purpose is to defend and police the town. Four watchtowers were constructed and these house many of the elite guard as well as provide won-

derful views of the town and countryside. Militia Magi began posts within the watchtowers with orders to engage aerial attackers. Those first Magi helped deter the intelligent flying threats from attacking the town. Recently, Lord Sesses helped draft a pact with the evil blue and green dragons to cease from attacking the town and further to aid it when called. They would be handsomely paid for their assistance. As a secret part of the deal, they were also offered opportunities to amass great profit performing tasks for Lord Sesses.

Today, a standing force of **225 elite guardsmen** appears in the city ledgers and double that can be conscripted within an hour's time. The four main temples in town provide clerical assistance and the local Wizard populace wields considerable power. Further, there are a few local citizens who are more than able to assist in defense of the town when necessary. In dire circumstances, Lord Sesses and his viceroys join the defense of the town. Attacking beasts, hordes or the rare red dragon find resistance stiff enough to enforce retreat and a search for easier prey elsewhere.

Entry is the First Hurdle

Whichever of the three gates the party approaches, each appears as an imposing wall of deep stonework topped by wicked wrought iron. These walls seemingly fuse right into the supporting hills, forming an unbroken barricade against ground based assault. The gates are massive stone and iron constructs that locals call The Gigantigates. Each has peepholes at gnome and human level that reveal the eight-inch thickness of the stout barriers. The latches are enormous and require specially made crowbars to operate. The five hinges per door are engineered to handle loads in the hundreds of tons. Each hinge shows a bas-relief form of a roaring lion head, is well maintained and oiled with *oil of slipperiness*. The walls, hinges and doors are heavily protected by magic. The hinges are immune to fire and effects that alter or erode metal. The stonework is immune to effects that alter or erode stone.

Manning each gate in rotating shifts are **12 elite guards**. They wear tabards with the emblem of Pfefferain: a golden griffon rampant over a discharged fire-wand, both upon green fields. Elite guards also wear capes of royal blue, black leather gauntlets, knee-high black boots and either bronze griffon-winged helmets or jaunty griffon-feathered hats. Armor is conspicuously absent, but weapons are not. They are charged to pleasantly welcome visitors to Pfefferain,

impart the customs and expectancies of the populace and defend the gates with vigor, calling reinforcements when necessary. The elites at the Gigantigates usually show a smart-aleck personality and poke fun at most travelers, especially since they know most of them.

Overseeing each gate is a watchtower built upon the highest point in each of the four surrounding hills. These watchtowers swarm with elite guards and associates and also dutifully monitor the gates, as elite Magi are commanded in shifts to view the gate area with *eyes of the eagle*. Each watchtower is within long-range bowshot of its nearby gate.

Each watchtower readies a curious defense weapon known as the Aerial Attack Battery, which is an encased holder for four magic wands (usually of *fireball*, *Mel's acid arrow*, *lightning bolt* and *magic missile*, all cast at 9th level). This device allows **4 elite Magi** to hold the wands, perhaps discharging all four at once upon enemies. They are also crafted to allow a wide range of motion, so that they may be aimed anywhere in the sky and also at the gates and the outlying countryside, but **never** at the town itself.

The PCs soon learn that a mayoral edict of Pfefferain states the entire town's populace and visitors, including its guards, are forbidden to wear armor or shields within its boundaries. Any armor or shields found within its borders are immediately confiscated and the former holder pays either punitive damages equal to ten times the item's market cost as new or spends a month in jail per protective AC bonus of the item. There is neither legal recourse nor appeal in this edict.

Each visitor is expected to remove their armor and shield and offer them for inspection. Each visitor is also subject to magical detection for items such as *bags of holding* that could smuggle protective wear. Stone chambers stand outside near each set of gates and these allow travelers to remove their armor in privacy. Any visitor who refuses the will of the Edict is denied entry in as pleasant a manner as the situation allows. A visitor that complies is assigned an amulet with a cryptic inscription that denotes the locker in which their armor and shield set is kept. These amulets generally read in the manner of "QR26E" and "N30KW" for normal armors and shields, or "Nexus-2A" for magical items. Item holders are also given receipts denoting their items and the requisite amulet legends. The items are then stored in well-nigh impregnable vaults that are attended at all times by elite guards and elite Magi. The item holders pay for this storage, at 1 gp and 1 sp per amulet disbursed. After a visitor's business in Pfefferain is concluded, receipts are correlated, the amulets are exchanged for the items and the 1 gp is given back to the item holders. The item holders are wished farewell and safe travel from the elite guards.

Should one lose their amulet or their receipt, then a

town priest is summoned to cast a *zone of truth* or even a *discern lie* spell upon the alleged item-holder. The *discern lie* spell is used if the alleged item-holder detects of magic at all. Should all correlate, the item-holder then must pay the going rate for a scroll of any spell cast by the summoned priest, plus 125 gp for replacement of any lost amulet before they even look at their locked-away armor and/or shield. Should lies be detected, the culprit must pay as above, plus suffer sentencing as if they were found with their armor in town. Should a person lose both items, the elite guards treat them as common con-men and refuse to service the unfortunate until they bring in a high ranking person to vouch for them. Only when this is done are they subject to the trials of one who has lost either receipt or amulet.

Rationality Behind the Edict

Once the Darkmage felt the mayor of Pfefferain was bought lock, stock and barrel - he and other wizards urged the mayor to institute a mayoral edict banning the use of armor and shields within the borders of Pfefferain. He convinced the mayor that this was a wise move for many reasons:

1) Brawlers think twice about causing havoc without protection of armor and shield, which reduces the docket size of the Justicator.

2) Lord Sesses himself would create items for the elite guards which approximate armor, giving the elite guards a great advantage over the populace, while hindering the elite guard in no way whatsoever. Further, those items would be cursed to incapacitate any who would steal them and use them for purposes that do not further the protection of Pfefferain.

3) Mages find the scales tipped towards them. This greatly increases the probability of them traveling to Pfefferain. Once there, they might infuse money into the local economy or even join the guards.

4) An "entry fee" is charged upon those who enter Pfefferain with armor and shield for the "storage" of armor and shield, reimbursed upon departure minus an "inventory fee."

5) All armor wearing town guests may have their armor secretly enspelled to trace them if legal needs arise.

6) Armor and shield may be kept for many reasons due to circumstances which may arise, including costs of bail, investigations, collateral, etc.

7) There is less chance of dwarves cohabitating in Pfefferain, which is grand since the half-elf mayor has a prejudice against dwarves.

Of course there were other reasons for Lord Sesses to urge such:

1) He receives the prestige and gratitude of being the sole creator of the elite guard's protective items.

This guarantees the elite guard's reliance upon him. Further, he has cursed each item to *hold monster* with Enchantment Focus and Spell Penetration as well as reverse the protective qualities should any guard attack or detain him.

2) The Darkmage benefits from the eventual thief swarm descending upon Pfefferain, since many of his operations are on the shady side. Those inventory amulets the town gates dole out make fine theft targets. Further, the thieves' guilds pay the Butchers monetary respect, as do the locksmiths that prosper as the thieving increases.

3) Lord Sesses profits in goodwill from the shopkeepers whom he provides with intricate magic locks (for a future task).

4) The city becomes more mage-friendly and less warrior-friendly on the spot, clearing the way for new associates for the Wizard's Guild from which he extorts money.

5) If Lord Sesses is very lucky, he might find another magic-user to join the Butchers, perhaps even as a viceroy.

The Continuing Quest For Knowledge

Once the party passes beyond the gates of Pfefferain, they stand a chance of finding their holy grail, a lead to where Lord Sesses hides from the world. For the most part, **Part One, Act 2** details how the party might locate the eventual conclusion of this adventure. The PCs may become distracted, however, as the Butchers have so many rackets going on in Pfefferain that the party may become immersed in investigating and disrupting those operations. Also there are quite the variety of people to meet and contacts and enemies to make, so parties that stress role playing might spend many play sessions within the town walls. The party, should they eventually take down Lord Sesses, might face retribution from certain Pfefferain citizenry loyal to the Darkmage.

Citizenry in the know learn that Lord Sesses truly works behind the scenes to help the citizenry of Pfefferain. He supplies the town elite guards with their protective gear. Some know that he helped bargain a truce with many of the local dragons, saving the citizenry much potential damage. The Darkmage's gambling house, the Hellfire Casino and Hotel, is one of the talks of the town. He gives generously to local groups and orders, albeit in a self-serving manner. Some know that Lord Sesses is a mover and shaker within the burgeoning wizard population in town. Some know that he runs the Reconnaissance Carpet Mages service at The Swirling Vortex, the leading distributor of magical items and services in the town.

Citizenry truly in the know realize that Lord Sesses not only rules the ruler of the town but also holds sway over many crafts, professions and shady dealings throughout town. Through him, graft, corruption, lassitude and thievery have cemented firmly in the town's power structure. The Darkmage ensures the populace has a ready supply of opium and harlots. His leverage convinced the mayor to institute the no armor, no shield edict throughout town. Some realize that edict spurred freer operation of the local thieves guilds and also realize that Lord Sesses' controls not only the thieves guilds in town, but the guild of locksmiths as well. This one man inexorably and subtly leads the town's populace to moral decay and turpitude. For the most part they love him for it.

Lord Sesses has made the Lorremach Highhills his home for many years and exists as a reclusive behind-the-scenes legend in these parts. He lairs in the structure known as "The Keep on the Butte," which rests atop a natural butte laced with spider webs in a hilly region approximately 60 miles northeast of Pfefferain. Very few people know where he lives, what he really does, and with whom he really consorts. If most were to know, their opinion would quickly change from "the powerful, pleasant yet testy protector and provider of the populace."

Sample Information Tidbits

Here are some sample rumors that the party may come to know. You might create other rumors to add extra spice. These tidbits appear in many places, not just taverns. Guildhalls, merchant shops, Town Guard Offices, thieves hideouts, even the Justicator Hall may offer a useful scrap of information to a determined, well-played character. PCs may use Gather Information rolls or stumble upon information in their role-playing. Note that these rumors offer at least a grain of truth. It is up to you to make up the red herrings.

DC 8: I can just imagine the celebration in a couple years when Arellias conducts his 25th year of Mayoral duties. And a fine rule it has been.

DC 8: Have you seen The Sound of Chaos, the great lime-green dragon-thing that roams the hills? Oh, silly me, of course not, you wouldn't be standing here talking to me if you did. I've heard the Guard would pay thousands of gold coin to whoever slays it. I've heard it slays cattle and causes rockslides. The Elite Patrols have hurt it bad but not killed it, sadly. That thing is a menace.

DC 8: I tell you, before people weren't allowed to wear armor, there were brawls aplenty in the taverns and in the back alleys. Folk reckon it's a little more dangerous to draw steel when only cloth separates you from a nasty gash in the ribs.

DC 10: If'n you see a huge basket held by a

dis'mbodied hand, ye'd best git outta the way. Swore off the drink first time I sees one'a them. Then I hear they be transport to the underground hotel. What'll they think up next?

DC 10: Sure the mayor is prejudiced agin' dwarves. He's a bloody half-elf, he is. And then he causes all to shun their armor. Have you seen an armorsmith in town for a decade? No sir. Hellfire, self-respecting dwarves can't even get a good job mining here with all of the gnomes about. Hell-above for dwarven folk? It's right here, pal.

DC 10: The Hellfire Casino and Hotel is quite the fine establishment. The games are run scrupulously clean - I can personally attest to that. I figured it was another scam outfit, but after observing the games for quite awhile I have found that they conform greatly to true odds. Don't personally care for the decor, but you can never find a more honest gambling establishment.

DC 12: Ah, you're not from around here. You wouldn't know, for instance, that there used to be a village northwest of here until it was leveled in one night. I heard there were great balls of fire. Yep, Hell was raised for one night.

DC 12: One of the Elite Defenders told me Lord Sesses personally creates all the protective devices for the Elites.

DC 12: I saw Lord Sesses *disintegrate* a leprous beggar who accosted him for alms. The bastard actually thought he was doing the beggar a favor.

DC 14: At least four shopkeepers, after pleading their woeful theft tales, received exquisite and unfathomable door and chest locks from Lord Sesses' underlings, made by the Grand Mage himself. I'm told their agreement towards an unspecified later task for his benefit allowed immediate use of the locks. I've heard you need magic just to have a chance at breaking those locks.

DC 14: Lady Gala has just displayed her newest wrap-around frock. It's gorgeous with black silk, gilded thread and it's topped with purple and black taffeta roses. I was told it is almost 60 feet in length and takes 5 minutes just to wrap around correctly. Hubby remarked that he could get into his old suit of half-plate in less time. Not something I'd wear to a marriage, but it would look smashing at Hellfire come Saturday. Then Hubby checked the price, grabbed my arm and dragged me away! I had red marks on my arm for an hour, the brute! Believe you me; he's sleeping downstairs tonight.

DC 14: Rumor has it that Lord Sesses is the true head of the Butchers. He made his mark selling magic and cursed items, and I've heard he is a powerful Wizard. He's very charming and personable to his guests, suppliers, and customers I've been told. I've also heard in whispers that when he shows you his true personality, it's far, far too late for you.

DC 16: Nearby is the home base of the Butchers - a more efficient and nasty collection of bugbears can never be found. They wear black cloaks with the sign of a red bloody meat cleaver when officially on patrol, when they desire folk to see them at all. They seem to answer to their fighter captain, a noted bugbear rogue, a bugbear high priest, and from what I'm told, a eye tyrant.

DC 16: One time an evil mage accosted Lord Sesses in his favorite drinking establishment and seemingly slew him in an amazing spellcasting battle. Afterwards, the three highest-ranking thieves guilds vied for control of the darker town dealings, slaying the heads of two of the three houses. Minions of the Butchers subsequently wiped out the third. Unless you've lived under a rock, you'd know that Lord Sesses is all too alive - his "death" apparently was staged or a simulacrum has taken his place. I'd not bet on the simulacrum, as Lord Sesses seems to wield the same power he always had.

DC 16: Lord Sesses has been a seller of magic for many years and is quite learned and proficient in creating his wares. Smart people only buy *rods* from him. You take a chance that anything else is cursed.

DC 18: There's a cloaked will o' wisp that oftentimes travels around Coldwater Canyon in the Lorremach. It shoots electricity and lightning, and has been known to knock folk off buttes, ledges or the cliffs with invisible force. That creature is just wrong.

DC 18: Luchrestia says she knows where the huge poppy fields are and also that she stole some one night during a journey, but I think she's just been addled in the head myself. Prolly caught too much wind riding one of those flying carpets.

DC 18: I wasn't drunk, I saw Lardbelly trudge out of The Quaffing Quarry after close. He looked all around like he's up to something, and then, I swear to the Lady of the Wilds, he turned into a miniature dragon! Yeah, tail and wings and all, right before he turned invisible. I'm not kidding and I wasn't drunk. Well, maybe a little tipsy but not drunk.

DC 19: There lives a blue dragon, not an adult but then not a baby by any measure, near one of the canyons in the Lorremach. It exacts tolls from passersby who wish to visit Lord Sesses, which is one reason few visit him and rare is the person who knows where he actually lives.

DC 19: I've heard that the three rival thieves guilds pay respect to Lord Sesses, through his bugbear high-rogue Rasharnor. They are the Black Roses (assassins and burglars), the Moonlit Knights (cutpurses and thugs) and the Order of Moneychangers (extortionists and white-collar crime operatives). Rasharnor leads the Order of Moneychangers himself.

DC 19: The costume for the Pit Boss at Hellfire is

just too well made. A guest Wizard told me it even foils *true seeing*.

DC 20: I bet it was Lord Sesses himself that urged the Mayor of Pfefferain to institute the no-armor edict. I've heard they enspell certain people's armor to track them...or even slay them.

DC 20: The Butchers extort the (DM's choice of: garment/ magic item/ stonemason/ moneylending/ gemcutting) guilds. Those who take the extortion payments call the operation "just this thing of ours."

DC 20: Sessestophelzine, translated from Loquatia Arcana means "Great evil magic power in pursuit of gems and gold." He was once known as Chastremian the Enchanter, and his main hobby was finding new ways to make creatures fall asleep, either resting or for good if you know what I mean.

DC 21: It is said that Lord Sesses and his associates control the opium distribution in Pfefferain and other nearby towns. He mostly dispatches small squads of blue and green dragons to transport the product, but has been working on setting up teleportation points to rely less on the dragons.

DC 21: I heard the Darkmage destroyed the entire town of Wennesalar with devilish help. You might hear of more about this from old Skazzar the messenger. He is certainly not someone to provoke. I'll say that much.

DC 21: It is said the Mayor of Pfefferain is too scared of the Butchers to move against them. Phah! I know that he rules in lock step with Lord Sesses and receives incredible bribes, which insure his re-election, weekly doses of opium, and that harlot of the Lord's visits him regularly. Amazing, isn't it? Any opponent in elections is so horribly outspent and ends up cursed to boot, or worse.

DC 22: Old Master Thief Lynheisle once tried his luck scaling the spider-webbed butte in Coldwater Canyon, but was found crushed at the base with half of his potions turned to water. The thief who found Lynheisle's body looted it and bragged of his newfound equipment only to be slain later by Black Roses who were well disposed to Lynheisle.

DC 22: The junk appearing between the spider-webbed butte and the hill-cliff moves every so often, I swear it. There's bad magic there. It's just wrong. Now I heard that Jerrick the Lack-Wit stole some of the junk, but it disappeared after he got back home. He went and looked for it and found the same junk where he stole it. So the dunce went and stole it again, only to find his twice-pilfered junk had disappeared yet again. I tell you, the place is magically haunted and reeks of evil.

DC 23: At the spider-webbed butte in Coldwater Canyon we've seen a beholder, a bugbear-captain riding a chimera, a pair of big white spiders that appear and disappear, various evil dragons, a little red winged devil when it wasn't invisible, a white insect-devil appear

and then disappear, and other hell-spawn. A breeding ground of nefarious horror it is, rightly shunned by all.

DC 23: Funny how you never see Gala and Gwynneth at the same time, even though their shops are near each other. Yet Gwynneth has been seen with either the weird worm-sword or the glowing eye-dagger of Gala's. And Gwynneth's ladies always strut around in the Pfinest Pfrocks.

DC 24: I've seen that lady-friend of Lord Sesses sprout wings and fangs. She is to be avoided at all costs just like him. She does wear beautiful dresses though. You'd pay an arm and a leg for them too. She must know Gala at Pfrocks. She always travels in the strange seamstress' finest.

DC 24: Lord Sesses has at least three associates who change shape as desired. I bet there are real devils at Hellfire. You can count on it. And near this one spider-webbed butte northeast of here, there's so many things that change from ravens to little devils it's not funny. Wouldn't surprise me if Lord Sesses were the Arch-Devil Asmodeus himself.

If the PCs meet Skazzar, the furtive gnomish messenger, and treat him well, feed him and buy him drinks, he tells the following tale:

"Yeh, I knows uv Lord Sesses. Tell ya whut. If ye gots means uv flyin.' fly ov'r th' d'stroyed town Wennesalar north a'here. Ye'll find th' rubb'l o'cert'n buildin's dun make a patt'rn. I been told th' patt'rn draws th' arcane mark of dat, dat... dat damn'd Sessestophelzine.

*"Rumuh I dun hurd wuz th' may'r uv dat town stiff'd th' bad mage onna sale. When th' wife uv th' may'r dun dropp'd dead frum a neckliss whut throtl'd her, th' may'r mount'd an attak upon th' butte, **much** t' his sorruh. No attakuhs suhviv'd th' attak, and no one in th' town remain'd alive frum the wiz'rdly reh-tri-bushun. Man, 260 gud people dun wip'd out in **one** ev'nin' by dat wretch'd spellcast'r an' his dev'lish minyuns. Only I knows th' truth dat I knows uv.*

*"I wuz scoutin' fer bandits in th' neahby marshes an' come back in time t' witnis all, clingin' t' th' marsh edge. H'rrific bar'ly begin t' d'scribe whut happen'd. Dat Darkmage, he dun turned summa th' folk t' ooziess an' slimeses an' worse. I dun seen him point at th' capt'n uv th' guard an' den th' capt'n he... he dun jus' turn'd t' **powda**!' Man, I swear I seen mo' fya'baws dat night dan I dun seen in **alla** my utha days put tugeth'r. An' th' dev'ls, man, whut they's doin' t' th' wimminfoke... it wuz jus' **wrong**. I jus' dun stared at alla dis. Whut culd I do 'bout it? Agin' dev'ls an' th' dast'rd in black robes, I had **no** chance ya he' me? **No** chance. An' den... den one uv dem damned devils **seen** me. An' den... it's right **dere**! Right in fronta me! Oh, da claws, da flames... lef' me fer dead... It... I... I can't anymo.'..."*

(Skazzar takes a moment to compose his emotions.)
"Man, jus' tawkin' 'bout it dun gimme th' shakes. Ain't gonna speak uv dat night nor dat, dat...dast'rd anymo."

The Town of Pfefferain, The Crown of the Lorremach

Pfefferain (FEF-ur-ane), (Large Town): Conventional-Mayoral; AL N(G); 18,000 gp limit; Assets 225,000 gp; Population 4,700; Mixed/ Integrated (human 57%, gnome 16%, halfling 13%, elf 8%, half-elf 5%, dwarf 1%).

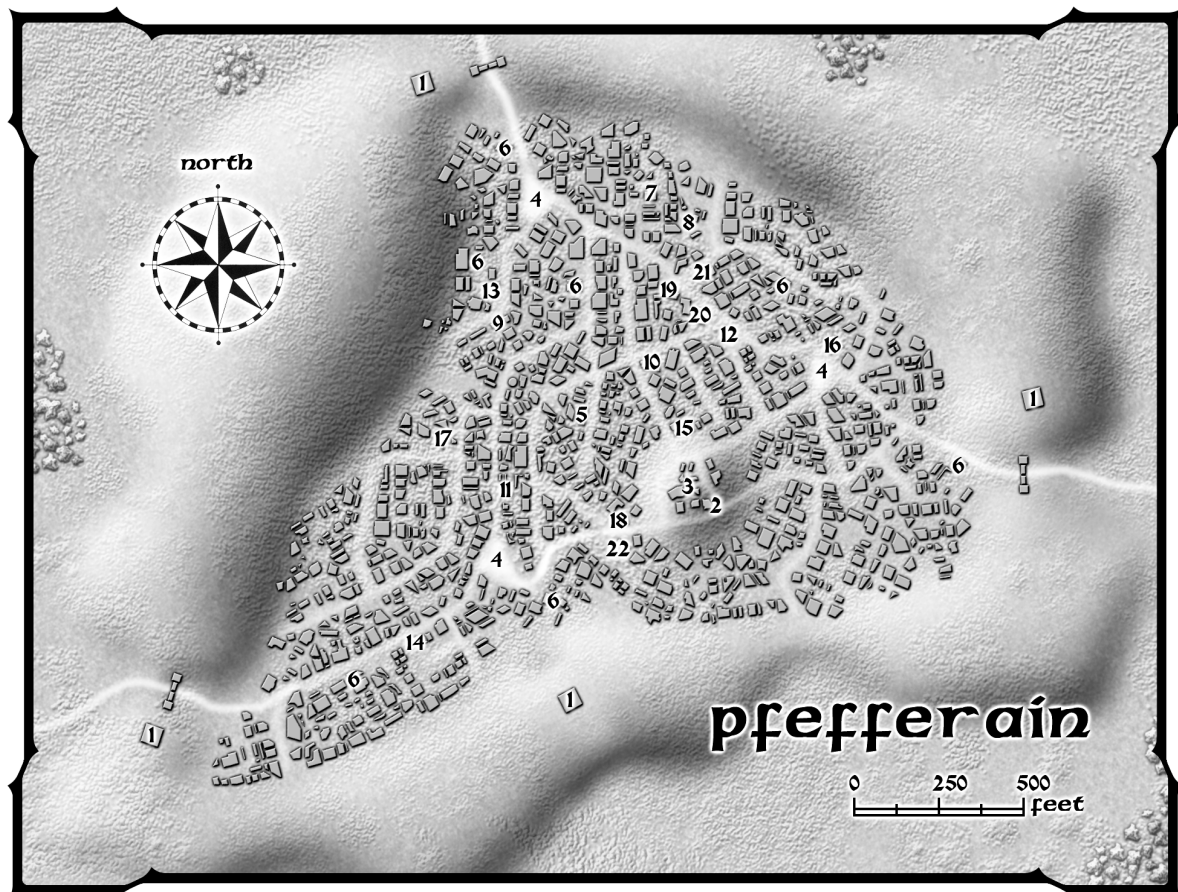
Authority Figures: Arellias auf der Henneschlieden, male half-elf, Ari6 (mayor); JoannaLynne 'JL' Hilltopper, female halfling, Clr4/Ftr4 (justicator); Symsycks the IV, male human, Ftr10 (elite guard commander).

Important Characters: Danielle Adamantite, female human/iron golem, Exp9 (iron sculptress/smith); Albert Baschemhardte, male human, Exp6 (miner/stonemason guildmaster); Larrenbel 'Lardbelly' Caskencastle, male gnome/copper dragon (tavern owner); Wairran

Enceptus, male human, Clr5 (Muir high priest); Worble Fepplenachen, male gnome, Exp6 (locksmith guildmaster); Emerral 'the Emerald' Fnored, male gnome, Clr9 (gnome high priest); 'The Groshen.' male human, Rog7 (Moonlit Knights guildmaster); Kennerast 'Canon Kenny' Hairfoot, male halfling, Clr6 (halfling high priest); Ritarra auf der Lorremach, female human, Clr7 (Lady of the Wilds high priestess); Luchrestia, female halfling, Wiz4 (carpet mage); Benefir 'Benny' Motramen, male human, Com6 (inn/tavern owner); Glimmer Ningelnopf, male gnome, Exp7 (jeweller guildmaster); Jucci 'the Black Falcon' Paregrin, female human, Asn4/Rog6 (Black Rose guildmistress); Skazzar Pfaffbapple, male gnome former ranger, Rgr1/Com3 (hermit/reclusive messenger); Oizwix Pnai Pfanglooi, female gnome, Ill11 (magic guildmistress); Ulfgar Rumnaheim, male dwarf, Com7 (shopkeeper).

Authority Figures

Arellias auf der Henneschlieden (ar-EL-ee-us owf dur HEN-eh-shleye-den): His Most Exalted Authority, the Mayor of Pfefferain is a charismatic politico. Once he wrested the title away from the previous holder, the aged Canazaro Virtin, he strengthened his ties to the community and has become a fixture in Pfefferain.



To many, he **is** Pfefferain: brash, slightly reclusive, charming, outgoing, given to excess, entertaining. Most of all he possesses a keen eye for regional profit. The Mayor has ruled for 23 years and Pfefferain has prospered, somewhat because of him, somewhat despite him. This half-elf considers himself nobility although he was born to middle-class parentage. Over the years an air of entitlement crept into his psyche, and he expects all to cater to his whim above all else. Arellias really does care for his people, but his overstuffed nobility tends to get in the way of his duties. Further, he drifts into the abyss of indulgence and excess during middle age, in no small way hastened by Lord Sesses. His decisions tend to be clouded by such activity.

Arellias is a walking paradox. At once he passionately speaks of the laws of the town and defends each one, yet his elven heritage and the knowledge that the demi-humans in town enjoy their freedom allows him to grant leniency in their interpretation. Lately, they seem to not matter when they interfere with his personal pleasure. He preaches tolerance and yet loathes dwarves from when his parents were attacked during a heated elvish/dwarvish struggle in his homelands decades ago. He loves women and romance yet refuses to be tied to any one woman. He campaigns fiercely and passionately, gleefully pressing flesh and making hundreds of new acquaintances within hours, yet would rather distance himself from humanity if given a choice. He both loves the magic prevalent within Pfefferain and fears it to the depth of his soul. This is why he gives all the mages of power, especially Lord Sesses, a wide berth of latitude in his town. He looks for every way he can increase the coffers of Pfefferain, yet freely spends his personal wealth on manly excess, flights of fancy and whimsy.

Office Politics: Only a few high-ranking people have his ear: his faithful elite guard Commander Symysycks the IVth, the town justicator JoannaLynne 'JL' Hilltopper, 'Canon Kenny' Hairfoot, the magical guildmistress Oizwix, His Holiness Emerral 'the Emerald' Fnored and Lord Sessestophelzine, the leader of the Butchers. Each tends to pull the Mayor in their particular direction and their directions tend to oppose at least one of the others. Lately it could be said that His Most Exalted Authority usually is the victim of his last conversation.

Over the years, the Darkmage increased his grip upon Arellias. At the present time he has the mayor effectively wrapped around his finger. The no armor edict passed from Lord Sesses to mayor to Law with great ease. Currently, Pfefferain's mayor expects his seemingly god-given birthright of weekly opium and harlots from Drincilla's Brothel, if not Drincilla herself appearing as Gwynneth. He has carte blanche to gamble at Hellfire and the Viceroy's to a creature are very glad

he is rather poor at the games; otherwise his action might cut into their profit. Of course, Arellias has no idea just how entrenched the Darkmage is within the walls of Pfefferain. The effects Lord Sesses and his Butchers inflict upon the merchants and guilds is only vague, easily dismissed hearsay to him.

Arellias auf der Henneschlieden, Mayor of Pfefferain, Male Half-Elf, Ari6: CR 5; SZ M; HD 6d8+6; hp 39; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 21 (+1 Dex, +2 *amulet*, +8 *bracers*), touch 11, flat-footed 20; BAB/Grapple +3/+4; Atk+6 melee (1d8+3, +2 *longsword*, crit 19-20) or +5 melee (1d4+2, +1 *dagger*, crit 19-20); AL C(G); SQ low-light vision, racial abilities; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +5; Str 13, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 18.

Skills: Appraise +6, Bluff +10, Diplomacy +18, Forgery +4, Gather Information +9, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (arcana) +4, Knowledge (literature) +4, Knowledge (politics) +13, Knowledge (religion) +6, Knowledge (war) +4, Knowledge (nature) +4, Listen +3, Read Lips +4, Ride +2, Search +3, Sense Motive +3, Sleight of Hand +3, Spot +1. **Feats:** Leadership, Skill Focus (Diplomacy), Skill Focus (Knowledge-Politics).

Languages: Common, Elven, Gnomish, and Halfling.

Possessions: +2 longsword of defending, +1 dagger, +2 amulet of natural armor, +8 blow-blocking bracers of Pfefferain (inscribed with the Mayoral seal), potion of cure serious wounds (caster level 9), signet ring, meerscham pipe, ruby birthring (12,500 gp value). He flaunts a wardrobe and jewelry collection fit for a king, but only the items described here are always upon his person.

Typical tactics: Arellias is fighting? Something is seriously wrong. He's probably more afraid of his magic weaponry than his foe is. He appreciates that Lord Sesses has given him an upgraded *bracers* set for his 20th Mayoral anniversary, but secretly wonders if they are cursed like many of the Grand Wizard's other items are rumored to be. (Of course they are, but fortunately he need not worry.) His Most Exalted Authority most likely exits stage right during any combat at first opportunity.

JoannaLynne 'JL' Hilltopper (jo-AN-na-linn (ja-el) HIL-top-er): JoannaLynne is the Justicator of the town of Pfefferain, their version of a Magistrate. Proud of her heritage and her duty, the middle-aged yet young-looking halfling blithely tromps barefoot during her solemn duties or while examining cases. Although she respects and reveres the law, she also tends to bend and interpret the law "as a demi-human would" to allow as much freedom as possible in the courtroom. This is not to say that she is either ambivalent or lax, far from it. 'JL' may change from pussycat to dire tigress in *eyebite* time. She has racked up her share of unwary Moonlit Knights and Order of Moneychanger mem-

bers, and even a few Black Roses as well. As a testament to her fairness and usual demeanor, she sometimes draws guffaws from her convicted subjects during sentencing.

Office Politics: The Justicator is now on slightly unsettled terms with Oizwix the magic guildmistress, as the mages in town tend to believe they are above the law, and they also tend to obscure trails left by the Butchers. This used to not be the case, but Oizwix has drifted from her. JoannaLynne shares rapport with Kennerast the halfling High Priest almost as much as her husband of two decades, Ewell, who is guildmaster over the butchers and meatpackers in town. In fact, the Butchers chose their nickname as a mocking insidejoke to 'JL' and her husband. JoannaLynne's other partner in crime is Larrenbel "Lardbelly" Caskencastle, the miniature copper dragon who appears as a grossly potbellied gnome barkeeper. In her daily duties, Wairran Enceptus sometimes lends her one or two priests of Muir to either investigate wrongdoings or knock heads of those caught in the act. Some of his parishioners are 'covert police force' in effect for the town, and she gives them latitude and gives Wairran extra perks for his permission in their use.

The Hilltopper clan has been a part of Pfefferain for as far back as any might remember. It's doubtful that anyone cares about the town of Pfefferain more than the hairfoot detective. It's also doubtful that anyone loathes Lord Sesses more than JoannaLynne either. She, more than anyone else, has detected and viewed a little of the wretched underbelly of the Darkmage's actions. Besides their own members, no one in town has a better read on what the Butchers do and who is part of it. Further, it seems that she is the only one who fully sees how Sessestophelzine is slowly eroding the town from within. This sight makes her glower from time to time. She loves her town and she doesn't want anyone ruining it.

The only problem is, he is just so powerful, has so many resources and contacts, and is elusive and charming in an oily way. 'JL' has been unable to show Arellias what a vermin the Darkmage is. He refuses to listen and waves away any evidence. She finds poppy fields, they turn to marshland in due time. When she finds evidence pointing to an extortion scheme, the victim quickly denies everything or disappears. She finds clues pointing to corruption in the Halls, and then they evaporate. Lord Sesses, infuriatingly, stays one step ahead of her just about at all times.

Two events stick out. The first was the infiltration of the taverner/ brewer guild and noting that a certain associate took regular weekly funds, which turned out to be extortion payments. With the help of Lardbelly's *ring of trickery*, 'JL' appeared on hand as the victimized brewer and caught the associate red-handed in

extortion attempts. The Justicator and the two deputies waiting there made the arrest. This is how the former viceroy of the Butchers, Mihailis Ecrantein, has found himself in the bowels of Gaol Under Hilltopper. He has not been jail broken as punishment for his clumsiness and to ensure JoannaLynne enjoys **some** success against the Butchers. As expected, no information has escaped from his lips, since 'JL' assumes all-too-correctly a grisly fate would befall him if he ever complied. What happens to him 3 1/2 years from now once he paroles? Who is to say?

The second was a frustrated and ultimately futile attempt to infiltrate the Keep on the Butte. Both JoannaLynne and an associate in a distant city, Vlad Kintero, knew of a band of skilled adventuring mercenaries. Her associate hired them to take a chunk out of the Butchers the hard way. Sadly, that adventuring band soon became dried, web-spun husks. Worse yet, the Justicator found her dear friend Vlad in a supposedly unused jail cell, eviscerated, with his entrails spelling, "Fear not, JL. He didn't feel a thing."

Lord Sesses considers JoannaLynne a useful tool to gauge the thieves that he extorts. If she makes the typical amount of arrests, then he knows that he need not focus on that guild. If her arrests go down, then the Darkmage needs to wonder if that thieves guild is growing more powerful. Sometimes when her arrest rate goes way up, Lord Sesses finds it advantageous to infuse money back into that particular guild to help it back onto its feet. Further, since 'JL' is not powerful enough to root him out, leaving her in charge satisfies the general populace and ensures his schemes are not usually foiled. She's just effective enough to keep his operations constantly on their toes. Considering their activities, staying on their toes isn't a bad idea. The Darkmage knows that her removal could herald the entrance of perhaps an exceedingly effective and persistent paladin. He'd rather that had no chance of happening. Lord Sesses usually chooses the devil he knows, instead of the devil he doesn't. Therefore, he always treats his known fur-footed devil with grace and respect (and sometimes means it), thankful that she is where she is, and someone else is not.

Should the PCs befriend 'JL.' they've made their best play possible. She tries her best to ensure the party succeeds, or at least survives. The party might benefit from her experience, wit, and resolve. Perhaps they might benefit from her patience too.

JoannaLynne 'JL' Hilltopper, Lady Justicator of Pfefferain, Female Halfling, Clr4/Ftr4: CR 8; SZ S; HD 4d10+8 plus 4d8+8; hp 68; Init +7 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 20 ft.; AC 19 (+1 Size, +3 Dex, +5 *bracers*), touch 14, flat-footed 16; BAB/Grapple +7/+5; Atk +12 melee (1d6+3, +1 *shortsword*, crit 19-20) or +12 ranged (1d8+1, light crossbow w/+1 *bolt*, crit

19-20, range 80 ft.); Full Atk +12/+7 melee (1d6+3, +1 *shortsword*, crit 19-20) or +11/+6 melee (1d4+3, +1 *dagger*, crit 19-20); SA spells, turn undead; SQ aura, racial abilities, spontaneous casting; AL NG; SV Fort +11, Ref +6, Will +11; Str 14, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 16, Wis 17, Cha 16.

Skills: Bluff +4, Climb +6, Concentration +8, Diplomacy +6, Gather information +4, Heal +7, Intimidate +5, Jump +6, Knowledge (arcana) +4, Knowledge (politics) +3, Knowledge (religion/hearth wisdom) +9, Listen +5, Move Silently +6, Profession (Law) +8, Ride +5, Search +3, Sense Motive +4, Spellcraft +8, Spot +3, Swim +4. **Feats:** Extend Spell, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Point Blank Shot, Scribe Scroll, Weapon Focus (shortsword).

Divine Spells Prepared (5/4/3: base DC 13 + spell level): 0—create water, detect magic, guidance x2, resistance; 1st—bless, command, divine favor, sanctuary; 2nd—augury, hold person, zone of truth.

Domain Spells (Good, Protection): 1st—protection from evil; 2nd—shield other.

Languages: Common, Elven, Dwarvish, Gnomish, and Halfling.

Possessions: +1 brilliant energy *shortsword*, +1 ghost-touch *dagger*, +5 blow-blocking *bracers* of Pfefferain, harm-halting hat of Pfefferain, lens of detection, iron bands of Bilar, *potion of cure serious wounds* (caster level 9), light crossbow, +1 bolts (x20), bolts (x20).

Typical Tactics: JoannaLynne is one to set up the best possible environment for success. She rarely fights due to her station and her ability to pick any fights with wisdom and care. She is a very honorable woman who would have made a great paladin if she weren't so freedom loving. Despite her halfling legacy, she tends to fight just like one of the (human) boys, not like a rogue.

Symsycks the IV (SIME-sikes): Symсыcks the IV commandeers the entire Pfefferain elite guard and functions as strategic and tactical lead upon any offensive or town defense. Symсыcks the IV, approving of no nicknames, is right where he wants to be. He loves the town, he loves the area, and he loves the chance to apply his brawn to any mobile problem that arises. It is also fortunate that he enjoys the Mayor's company, since during lull times he normally functions as the Mayoral Bodyguard. Both can be seen gambling at Hellfire or enjoying a drink at any tavern. The Commander doesn't mind the free comps while riding on the Mayoral coattails either. Although Symсыcks the IV would lay down his life for Arellias without question, he also would do the same for any who give Arellias council. In his heart of hearts though, he'd rather expire while grappling the tail of The Sound of Chaos, a personal nemesis of his. Just starting to gray at his temples during his late twenties, Symсыcks the

IV has already acquired a distinguished look to augment his stout frame and handsome presence.

During his youth, Symсыcks the IV waded into battle in the name of adventuring with his band, "The League of Shivers," and acquired odd quirks in that time. More often than not his band tended to gravitate towards tombs and crypts. Due to this, Symсыcks the IV has developed a dread of the undead. In battle he ensures there is a cleric within eyesight at all times, and has learned to perform last rites and consecrations for every religion represented in Pfefferain. The last thing he wants to see is a comrade re-animate, so the Commander usually employs a cleric from Wairran's temple of Muir when undertaking a mission.

Office Politics: Although a fierce warrior with an "interrogation is a waste of time" attitude, Symсыcks the IV has many pleasant traits. He gladly trains recruits and veterans alike with a scholarly attitude and demeanor. He befriends beasts to the point where some wonder if he missed his calling as a druid. When called upon, the Commander functions as tour guide, historian, searcher of lost pets or their young masters and Mayoral informant. None of the locals speak ill of Arellias in the presence of Symсыcks the IV. Few of the populace speak ill of him, and many admire him for his lineage as well as his prowess and geniality. All of the powerful persons in Pfefferain like him, in varying degrees, except those of lawbreaking attitude.

Symsycks the IV, Elite Guard Commander, Male Human, Ftr10: CR 10; SZ M; HD 10d10+30; hp 106; Init +6 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 20 (+2 Dex, +1 *ring*, +7 *bracers*), touch 13, flat-footed 18; BAB/Grapple +10/+13; Atk +16 melee (2d6+6, +2 *greatsword*, crit 17-20) or +13 ranged (1d10+1, heavy crossbow w/ +1 *bolt*, crit 19-20, range 120 ft.); Full Atk +16/+11 melee (2d6+6, +2 *greatsword*, crit 17-20), +14/+9 melee (1d4+4, +1 *dagger*, crit 19-20), or +13 ranged (1d10+1, heavy crossbow w/+1 *bolt*, crit 19-20, range 120 ft.); AL NG; SV Fort +10, Ref +5, Will +4; Str 17, Dex 15, Con 17, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 16.

Skills: Bluff +4, Climb +6, Diplomacy +4, Gather Information +4, Handle Animal +8, Intimidate, Jump +6, Knowledge (history) +2, Knowledge (religion) +3, Knowledge (war) +2, Listen +3, Ride +6, Search +2, Sense Motive +3, Spot +3, Swim +4. **Feats:** Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Expertise, Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Mobility, Power Attack, Spring Attack, Weapon Focus (greatsword), Weapon Specialization (greatsword), Whirlwind Attack.

Languages: Common, Elven, Gnomish, and Halfling.

Possessions: +2 keen *greatsword*, +1 *dagger*, +1 *ring of protection*, +7 blow-blocking *bracers* of Pfefferain (inscribed with the Mayoral seal), harm-halting *helm* of Pfefferain, *potion of cure serious*

wounds (caster level 9), heavy crossbow, +1 bolts (x20), bolts (x20);

Typical Tactics: Symsycks the IV makes sure all the guards are in position and a priest is nearby, and then swings that nasty greatsword with all of his might. Positively vicious in battle, Symsycks the IV both ensures that slain foes really are slain with vulgar coup-de-graces, and truly slain comrades receive quick last rites. He directs all guards when he feels they need such and usually punctuates commands with "Now!" The Commander always takes the best tactic available and never sends a comrade to a fate he'd not take himself. Symsycks the IV has no problems leading the charge. In fact, he rather likes it.

Important Characters

Danielle Adamantite: A stout 3-inch-thick and 5-foot-tall iron rod rests firmly in the ground outside this building, hinting at the craft of its inhabitants. The rod seems to have been twisted by incredible strength into a grooved screw. It holds an iron-bar sign that reads "Twisted Ferrousities" and is shaped like a roaring lion head. A pleasant single-story wooden building with a stout stone floor holds a shop of wrought iron implements and bizarre and wondrous twisted iron sculptures. Practically anything imaginable composed of iron can be found inside. Bolts, hinges, handles, garden implements, stout weapons, blades, chains of all varieties, weather vanes, undulating iron doors, and all sorts of smithied and hand-worked items can be found. The sculptures are beyond the pale. Some look like iron representations of twisted balloon animals a clown might create, from just one long rod of iron. Lions seem to be favored artistic subjects. Some sculptures probably weight over half a ton and others are interesting lightweight mobiles. Any who wander the sales shop have no idea how the sculptures could be created without magical assistance, but the clerk at the counter assures everyone that each is a lovingly, hand crafted wonder. **Tressenec**, a genial young male human of average looks (Com2; hp 7; Craft [metalworking] +5, Profession [sales] +3) is on hand to assist, conduct transactions and take orders.

At the hours of 8am to noon, Danielle herself is available for council. She is a large, blonde-haired ogrish-looking human woman. Despite her appearance she is quite pleasant and well mannered (Exp 9; hp 54; Craft [sculptress-iron] +12, Craft [iron smithy] +7, Profession [manager] +4). Folk about the town know that at one time she adventured but gave that up long ago to focus on her sculptures and metalworking orders. She can create just about anything man-sized or smaller at her forge and with her vices. Danielle always gives her implements the forger's twist, sometimes in multiples. Her prices for implements would be near standard, but

her sculptures are rather pricey. Depending upon materials and time, they cost from between 25 gp to upwards of 3,000 gp for her more breathtaking and extravagant works.

At the hours of 1pm to 6pm, or perhaps late into the night, Danielle is found in her workshop which is partially viewable from the sales floor. Customers who peer in see a huge, enlarged version of Danielle, clearly ten if not twelve feet tall. The large Danielle walks rather mechanically around the stout stone floor with metallic clomps and ground shudders. Her movements are slower than normal and quite other worldly steady. Some patrons can't help but stare as her huge frame bends 2-inch-thick iron rods in her bare hands to perfect specification. Danielle acknowledges no one, talks to no one and keeps to her work with supreme focus and skill, if not bizarre inspiration.

During her former adventuring career, Danielle happened upon a beautiful amulet which turned out to be a quite powerful *limited wish*-laced *amulet of spirit transference* (magic jar 1/day, only effective against non-unique creatures housing a spirit, override the creature's immunities and Spell Resistance, but not its saving throws, cast at 18th-level). She eventually found its command word and correct operation and used the item during her adventuring career. Her final battle involved a wizard tower assault, and culminated in an iron golem battle. The wizard was slain once Danielle managed to



slip past the golem's normal defenses. She cast *magic jar* upon the golem's elemental spirit and forced it into her diamond ring (2,500 gp), and then attacked the wizard with its own guardian. As party treasure she kept the golem and the amulet. Her first task was to ensure that the spirit never resisted the *amulet* effect. To do that, she enlisted the help of the foremost curse-creator in the area, Chastremian the Enchanter. Chastremian enspelled a horrid curse upon the elemental spirit that it would never resist the specific amulet that Danielle wears. Those knowledgeable in magic legends know that Chastremian later became Lord Sessestophelzine when he formed the Butchers. Danielle is on excellent working terms with Lord Sesses and provides the Darkmage with whatever he needs free of charge, grateful that he ensured her continued vocation.

In actuality, Danielle has pulled a wondrous ruse over the eyes of the populace. She is not a giantesse in disguise at all. What she has disguised is the iron golem. She inhabits the golem via *magic jar* for up to 18 hours a day. She has created a cloth and wool puppet costume for the huge iron golem, save for the eyes and the insides of the hands. With the help of Oizwix she had the worn costume enchanted with a *permanent illusion* of herself as a giantesse. So Danielle lays upon her bed in her house behind the shop, displaces the golem's doomed elemental spirit into her diamond ring, inhabits the iron golem and continues her work in solitude. Even Tressenec has no idea what's really going on. He merely thinks there exists a small Danielle, a bigger Danielle and that only one functions at any one time. He doesn't really want to know the truth either, thinking it's best to learn the trade from her and not ask questions.

Albert Baschemhardt (AL-bert BASH-um-hart): A tall and stout middle-aged human, Albert (Exp8; hp 31; Craft [Stonemason] +8, Profession [Miner]+5, Profession [manager] +3) runs the conglomerate Rockworker's Guild. This powerful guild combines the miners and stonemasons around town. Long ago Albert was an elite guard of good standing in Pfefferain. Spiritual effects from deaths of comrades curtailed that career, so he switched to mining which entailed less danger and still kept him in shape. Eventually, his fears and phobias caught up to him again, manifesting as claustrophobia, so he switched again to stonemasonry. After years of successful toil, management beckoned and he rose up in the ranks to become Guildmaster. His powerful frame, outwardly friendly demeanor, and manly charisma combined with his intimate knowledge and experience to form a man who could lord over two large contingents in Pfefferain.

The Rockworker Guildmaster is a dear friend of Glimmer, the Jeweler Guildmaster, despite their per-

sonality and racial differences. Sometimes Albert enlists Glimmer's help in negotiations. This helped Albert during their combined fight with the Butchers' extortionists. Although both eventually acquiesced, Glimmer negotiated that the workforce who built the Keep on the Butte would consist of Rockworker operatives. Not only would the PCs find interesting information about Lord Sesses and the Butchers, but they also could find glimpses into the home base layout from old plans. Albert, though, refuses to relinquish those plans; therefore, the PCs need to figure out covert means to secure them.

Larrenbel 'Lardbelly' Caskencastle (LAR-en-bell CAS-kin-cas-ul): Undoubtedly one of the strangest inhabitants of Pfefferain is 'Lardbelly,' the rotund gnome with the immense ale-gut hanging over his belt. He owns the tavern, "The Quaffing Quarry," and is a tireless worker behind its bar and at its grill. Very few people know of his true form. Only those who magically see true reality or those who catch a glimpse while Lardbelly is unaware know that Larrenbel is in actuality an indigenous copper dragon. Further, he is approximately a 14-inch-long copper dragon. At one time Larrenbel owned a *rod of wonder* that was a treasured item of his. When he used it to defend himself against a rival red dragon during a heated chase, it shrank Larrenbel down to less than an order of magnitude in size. The tiny dragon immediately was small enough to fit into a narrow crevasse of a hill that the red dragon quickly impacted with resounding force.

Larrenbel remained a very small copper dragon and soon decided to mingle with the demi-humans. He traded a few choice magic items for a *ring of trickery* (continual *alter self* to the shape of any gnome, halfling or sprite, *invisibility* 1/day, both at 11th-level). Larrenbel chose a portly gnome and set up shop in Pfefferain. He has puttered around as a tavern owner for many years, acquiring the nickname 'Lardbelly.' Although his ring allows him to look like a gnome, he's really still a dragon with all its abilities, albeit a wyrmling sized one, not his formerly adult size. Wistfully accepting his fate, Larrenbel has found that mingling openly, albeit covertly, with humanoids has been rewarding and interesting in ways he never would have fathomed. He has learned a new appreciation for gnomes and halflings and truly would never leave this area even if his life depended upon it.

The Quaffing Quarry is a sculpted stone building with wildly non-Euclidian architecture whose outside resembles more of a wide stone tornado structure than anything else. On the inside, the entire area is pure sedimentary rock shaped like a strip mine with raised shelves sculpted as benches, tables, and chairs. Suspended wrought-iron oil-lamp chandeliers provide light and blacken the rough stone ceiling. Strewn about are

old ore-carts refurbished with plush cushions as resting chairs with footstools. His prices are standard but subject to interpretation and his drink and meals are above average quality. Prices often depend upon what belly laughs one receives from the jokes one tells. Between the pricing and the trickery that usually occurs, this tavern often swarms with gnomes, halflings and humans of a mischievous bent. All of the best jokes, gags and routines seemingly germinate from within its stone interior. Pun Night is positively ghastly. Comics come from around the land to test their material here. The lesser talented ones are treated as obnoxious guests, albeit pleasantly.

Larrenbel has created running gags while at his tavern which are dependant upon his retained dragon abilities. A pepper plant grows in one of the floralgarten marshy areas near Pfefferain. If he chews that pepper, he then spits a line of acid at someone's boots or buttocks, doing at most minimal damage. A particular brand of halfling mead induces belches that affect others as a cone of *slow* gas. When candles or lamps go out in the tavern, he merely climbs the walls, even hanging upside down, blinded by his belly in his face, to relight them. New patrons are asked if they want a 'Black Scorpion.' Most, thinking it's a new drink, say "Sure." Lardbelly then pulls out a glass jug containing 10 or 12 live black scorpions, grabs one without getting stung and hands it to the patron. Seeing the patron doesn't want it, he then gleefully bites the tail off, pops the rest of it into his mouth and chews it. He quickly bugs his eyes out, gasps and gags and falls down behind the bar in spasms for a moment, then seemingly dies in a horrible manner. All patrons in the bar gasp on cue. After that all the other patrons clap and cheer like madmen and soon Larrenbel arises, holding his arms overhead, thanking them all.

Vulgar or obnoxious guests are told to quiet and behave themselves or asked to leave. If they refuse, he merely casts *stone shape* upon the Quaffing Quarry floor under them, which is real sedimentary rock. He tosses a very thick and blocky ceramic mug as the focus for the thin, neck-deep pit the targeted patron lands in and stays in until their attitude changes. For the really rowdy ones, Larrenbel tosses a flattened version of the first mug upon the floor near the pit while casting *stone shape* with *quickened-ability* as a free action immediately afterwards. This causes the targeted pit to suddenly compress against the annoying patron, sealing their fate. Other patrons then tend to reach down and slap the fool's face and tell them to "Shaddap" or use their pit as an impromptu spittoon.

PCs who wish to rob Larrenbel are in for an adventure. First, he often visits either the moneychanger or the master jeweler and trades in his profits for either platinum bars or his favored sapphire gems. After he

does this, he then turns invisible, reverts to his normal form, flies to a remote butte and enters his true lair in a sheltered cavern within the butte. The party needs to alter themselves by *reduce* or some other contrivance to gain his lair. Should they do so, they find an opulent hollow containing fine silk cloth and sumptuous pillows strewn around. A tea-brewer squats in one corner and another is home to his horde of 2,750 gp. The only flat wall-like surface is home to a tapestry depicting flying golden dragons (worth 125 gp). In a large silver coffer rests 375 pp, 23 100 gp platinum bars and 3 500 gp platinum bars. There is a gilded flip-box (worth 550 gp) that contains his sapphire collection of 5,000 gp, 3,000 gp, 1,500 gp, 1,000 gp, 750 gp (x2), 500 gp (x3), 350 gp, 250 gp (x8), and 100 gp (x29) gems. His larder contains 18 pounds of ferric ore, 5 pounds of silver ore, 8 ounces of gold ore and an ounce of lightly nibbled mithral. Also found are jugs containing crushed scorpions, black widow spiders, large centipedes and gray slugs.

Office Politics: Lardbelly is part of the inkeeper/taverners guild and was on hand when the Butcher's former Viceroy Mihailis Ecrantein unwittingly implicated himself during JoannaLynne's cunning trap. The miniature copper dragon and the short Justicator started a fast friendship that continues on to this day. She is one of the few who knows Lardbelly for what he is, besides being a horrid trickster, a fine story companion and a quality ale-slinger. Naturally for the PCs, Larrenbel knows a little about the Butchers and Lord Sesses, so the Quaffing Quarry is a fine place to overhear a tidbit or two and find further deep-agent info as well. You are urged to learn comedic material to help bring this establishment and its clientele to life.

Larrenbel 'Lardbelly' Caskencastle, Male Tiny-Sized Adult Copper Dragon (portly gnome transmutation): CR 4; SZ T Dragon (transmutes to Small Humanoid [Gnome]); HD 5d12+5; hp 37; Init +4 (Improved Initiative); Spd 40 ft., fly 100 ft., Transmutation 20 ft.; AC 16 (+2 Size, +4 natural), touch 12; BAB/Grapple +5/-3; Atk +7 melee (1d4, bite) and +3 melee (1d3 [x2], claw); SA spells, breath weapons (30 ft. by 5 ft. stream, 2d8 points of acid damage, Reflex (DC 13) for half / 15 ft. cone, *slow* gas, Fortitude (DC 13) or *slow* 1d6 rounds); SQ dragon abilities, SR (21), damage reduction (5/+1); AL CG; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +5; Str 11, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 16, Wis 17, Cha 16.

Skills: Bluff +8, Concentration +6, Diplomacy +5, Intimidate +5, Jump +5, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Listen +8, Search +8, Sense Motive +6, Sleight of Hand +2, Spellcraft +10, Spot +8. **Feats:** Flyby Attack, Hover, Improved Initiative, Quicken Spell-Like Ability, Weapon Focus (claw).

Arcane Spells Know (Cast per Day: 6/7/7/5; base DC 13 + spell level; as 7th-level sorcerer): 0—create wa-

ter, detect magic, mending, prestidigitation, purify food and drink, read magic, resistance; 1st—comprehend languages, cure light wounds, magic missile, sleep, protection from evil; 2nd—hold person, invisibility, silence; 3rd—dispel magic, protection from energy.

Languages: Common, Draconic, Gnomish, and Halfling.

Possessions: *ring of trickery* (transmutes into any halfling, gnome or sprite for 24 hours via *alter self* 1/day, also casts *invisibility* 1/day; both abilities as cast by a 11th-level sorcerer);

Wairran Enceptus (WARE-ane en-SEP-tuss): This brash, handsome and rather young high priest of Muir has the unenviable duty of raising tithe amounts in Pfefferain, a town of nature-worshippers, faithless humans, free-willed demi-humans and mages. His temple, The Righteous Billet, is the one most petitioned by the elite guard, as it is the most war-like. Further, his seems to be the only bastion in town that strictly adheres to the letter of the law, instead of descending into the morass of adjudicated leniency prevalent otherwise. Regardless, Wairran soldiers on, sometimes allowing his remaining impetuosity to reveal an exasperated sigh or beseeching plea.

His journey to Pfefferain was not his idea. It was a quest placed upon him by his mentor Aurtan who wished to put a leadership test to him. His goal is to build the temple of Muir up to the point where a splinter faction could break away and start up a new temple, much like he did six years ago. Slowly, he amasses converts and raw materials to do so. Slowly, he learns to appreciate the area and its inhabitants. When life is going well or when preaching, Wairran is rather pleasant. Over half the time, though, his stoic side appears and he contemplates exactly how he fulfills the quest. One day he might learn that the journey itself is the heart of the matter, but at this time he focuses on the destination.

Although the PCs might think the local temple of Muir would be the logical place to start looking for leads about Lord Sesses, they find at best scraps of information. This shrine is a haven for all lawful-to-a-fault humans who consider just about all demi-humans too chaotic. Therefore, they probably don't have the correct perspective to give the PCs a true read on the community. Perhaps a cleric notes the general malaise of the lower commoner populace. Perhaps another gleans the beginning of the bulk population's descent into moral decay. The best lead they would find would be to "petition the halflings in power."

Office Politics: Of all the power brokers in town, 'JL' and Symsycks the IV are the closest to him. The others tend to be too busy when he petitions them and he chalks it up to 'outsider status in a small town.' One day he shall stand as part of the inner circle, he hopes.

JoannaLynne the Justicator often gives him leads for certain members of the populace that could be conversion fodder. For this, he allows her to utilize his priests and willing followers on small missions that offer chances to enact retribution that no doubt pleases Muir. As his followers are the most war like in town, Symsycks the IV sometimes asks for a cleric or two when he undertakes a mission, or during the rare times when the town needs defending.

Wairran Enceptus, High Priest of Muir, Male Human, Clr5: CR 5; SZ M; HD 5d10+15; hp 53; Init +6 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (+2 Dex, +5 *bracers*), touch 12, flat-footed 15; BAB/Grapple +3/+7; Atk +9 melee(1d8+5, +1 *longsword*, crit 19-20) or +6 ranged (1d8+1, light crossbow w/+1 *bolt*, crit 19-20, range 80 ft.); SA spells, turn undead; SQ aura, spontaneous casting; ALLG; SV Fort +7, Ref +3, Will +7; Str 18, Dex 14, Con 17, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 13.

Skills: Concentration +10, Heal +8, Knowledge (religion) +8, Sense Motive +5, Spellcraft +8, Spot +4. *Feats:* Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword).

Divine Spells Prepared (5/4/3/2; base DC 13 + spell level): 0—detect magic, guidance x2, light, resistance; 1st—bless, command, divine favor, protection from evil; 2nd—hold person, lesser restoration, silence; 3rd—dispel magic, searing light.

Domain Spells (Good, Protection): 1st—sanctuary; 2nd—aid; 3rd—protection from energy.

Languages: Common, Gnomish, and Halfling.

Possessions: +1 lawful *longsword*, +5 *blow-blocking bracers of Pfefferain*, *harm-halting hat of Pfefferain*, *Keoghtam's ointment*, *potion of cure serious wounds* (caster level 9), light crossbow, +1 *bolts* (x20), bolts (x20).

Typical Tactics: Wairran loves a good fight. He gleefully defends his temple, troops and faithful with vehement righteousness. The High Priest can become quite the fighting powerhouse and tends to take the dangerous path, leaving the others in easier-to-defend areas. It's not a surprise that he and Symsycks the IV get along pretty well, as they are rather kindred spirits.

Worble Feppenachen: All of the locksmiths pay homage to Worble (Exp6; hp 29; Profession [locksmith] +8), the Guildmaster for the town locksmiths. This slight and aged male gnome is a peace-loving and pleasant soul. He goes out of his way to help customers and crafts custom locks to fit almost any container or barrier from his shop called "Pick Worble's Locks." He displays his latest creation on the outer front door, while still furnishing the inner front door with the most intricate magical lock from Lord Sesses, to give the local thieving populace a chance to test their mettle against him. Worble does this in hopes to lessen enmity be-

tween him and the thieves' guilds in town, as he is most timid when confronted with threats of violence. The Butchers found him easy pickings and for his lack of resistance, Lord Sesses sometimes provides either him or his guildmembers with intricate magical locks. Also, once the no-armor clause took effect in town, the increased thieving activity coerced more of the populace to purchase locks from him and his guildmates. Despite paying protection money, Worble thinks highly of Lord Sesses for indirectly increasing customer traffic and providing him and his brethren with amazing locks on occasion.

Emerral 'the Emerald' Fnored: The faith of the gnomish flock is in good hands with the Emerald. A captivating mix of wizened old age, a divinely fueled fountain of youth, a gleaming smile, a mischievous spirit, and a quarry-grounded common sense, this energetic fellow mesmerizes gnomes and other races alike. The Radiant Goldmine is the largest temple in Pfefferain in no small part due to Emerral, although the Lady of the Wilds boasts more parishioners. Sure, the opulent quality of the Temple is due solely to *permanent illusions* from Oizwix, but Emerral is grounded very much in reality, offering true spiritual guidance and hope to all who enter. Emerral could have excelled in any occupation that stresses interpersonal relations, but chose the vestments due to higher calling.

Office Politics: Emerral and Kennerast Hairfoot, the halfling High Priest, form a tight demi-human bond that assures the citizenry of Pfefferain that no matter how many humans course through the gates, the true city heritage remains solid. He also is on wonderful terms with Ritarra, the high priestess of the Lady of the Wilds. The other priests in the town are greeted with diplomatic aplomb. Oizwix the magic guildmistress is a life-long friend of his and helps the flock and the temple, as she is able. Emerral and Oizwix share the same slightly caustic warped sense of humor and are irreverent tricksters, sparing only Ariellias in their planned mayhem. To the other power brokers in town Emerral stays out of the battle lines, merely assisting all as necessary. If Arellias is the flash of Pfefferain, Emerral may be its soul.

Due to Emerral's Leadership prowess, he has a cadre of 'Glittering Zealots.' There are 35 such citizen gnomes who are fanatical followers, 3 more who are 2nd-level priests, plus a 3rd-level priest and the 4th-level Underpriest of the gnomes. These priests are special in that they often blindly follow Emerral and act as though erinyes devil-*charmed*. There are other priests that attend the Radiant Goldmine and many other parishioners, but these are the special missionaries. They literally turn weekly sermons into something like watching *Rocky Horror Picture Show* with a full improv theatre, except the intent is helpful and dramatic and far from

derisive. Cantrips are cast at ironic moments. Well-timed "Yes Sirs!" peal from throats. Fervent cries of, "the earth is with you, Emerald!" reverberate from the four corners of the temple. Some non-gnomes show up just for the theatrics of it all. Lastly, Emerral has been chosen by his deity to command a special cohort, a griffon with gilded-edged wings who otherwise is normal in all respects. The griffon is named Corona and it willingly serves Emerral as a faithful mount.

Emerral 'the Emerald' Fnored, High Priest of the Gnomes, Male Gnome, Clr9: CR 9; SZ S; HD 9d8+8; hp 68; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 16 (+1 Size, +1 Dex, +4 *amulet*), touch 12, flat-footed 15; BAB/Grapple +6/+3; Atk +9 (1d6+3, +2 *mace*) or +9 (1d8+1, light crossbow w/+1 *bolt*, crit 19-20, range 80 ft.); Full Atk +9/+4 melee (1d6+3, +2 *mace*); SA spells, turn undead; SQ aura, racial abilities and spells, spontaneous casting; AL NG; SV Fort +9, Ref +4, Will +10; Str 12, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 14, Wis 18, Cha 18.

Skills: Bluff +5, Concentration +14, Craft (alchemy) +5, Diplomacy +6, Heal +9, Knowledge (arcana) +3, Knowledge (religion/hearth wisdom) +14, Listen +6, Sense Motive +5, Spellcraft +13, Spot +4. **Feats:** Brew Potion, Leadership, Scribe Scroll, Weapon Focus (light mace).

Divine Spells Prepared (6/5/5/4/3/1;): 0—create water, detect magic, guidance x2, purify food/drink, resistance; 1st—bless, command, divine favor, endure elements, obscuring mist; 2nd—calm emotions, delay poison, hold person, lesser restoration, zone of truth; 3rd—dispel magic, magic circle against evil, remove curse, searing light; 4th—discern lies, neutralize poison, restoration; 5th—raise dead.

Domain Spells (Protection, Trickery): 1st—sanctuary; 2nd—invisibility; 3rd—protection from elements; 4th—confusion; 5th—spell resistance;

Languages: Common, Elven, Gnomish, and Halfling.

Possessions: +2 *holy light mace*, +4 *amulet of natural armor*, *staff of defense*, *potion of cure serious wounds* (caster level 9), light crossbow, +1 *bolts* (x20), bolts (x20);

Typical Tactics: He sees to the defense of all parishioners first, then aids his zealots and priests as able. He also sends Corona to beseech reinforcements from the elite guard.

'The Groshen': This clever young brute rose through the ranks by knocking the correct heads and profiting from the covert warfare when Lord Sesses staged his death. He rules The Moonlit Knights by sheer power, terror, wit and luck. Always serious and profit-minded, The Groshen has little patience for underlings who lag behind in their 'swag-snagging.' He lived as a youth within a mountainous region, so the Highhills feels perfectly at home to him. During his reign, The Moonlit Knights have emphasized their thug image, but not

at the expense of common robbery.

Office Politics: Very few of the Moonlit Knights know of Lord Sesses, as they tend to keep to themselves and operate their minor scams and jobs. Some Knights know of Rasharnor, The Butcher's High Rogue and Leader of The Order of Moneychangers, due to conflict of interests. Most know of Jucci Paregrin and are glad their respective operations rarely overlap. 'JL' is their worst enemy by far, although Wairran, the high priest of Muir, is probably a strong second place.

'The Groshen.' Guildmaster of The Moonlit Knights, Male Human, Rog7: CR 7; SZ M; HD 7d6+28; hp 58; Init +6 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 18 (+2 Dex, +2 *amulet*, +4 *armor*), touch 12, flat-footed 16; BAB/Grapple +5/+8; Atk +11 melee (1d4+3, +2 *club*) or +9 ranged (1d4+2, +1 *light crossbow* w/ +1 *bolt*, crit 19-20, range 80 ft.); SA sneak attack (+4d6); SQ evasion, racial abilities and spells, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC), trap sense (+2), trapfinding; AL NE; SV Fort +6, Ref +7, Will +3; Str 17, Dex 15, Con 18, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 14.

Skills: Appraisal +3, Balance +4, Bluff +7, Climb +9, Diplomacy +4, Disable Device +7, Disguise +6, Gather Information +5, Hide +12, Intimidate +8, Jump +5, Knowledge (streetwise) +5, Listen +7, Move Silently +12, Open Lock +10, Pick Pocket +12, Search +6, Sense Motive +3, Spot +7, Tumble +8. **Feats:** Blind Fight, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Weapon focus (club);

Languages: Common, Gnomish, and Halfling.

Possessions: +1 shadowed studded leather armor, +2 *amulet of natural armor*, +2 *club*, masterwork sap, locking garrote, +1 *light crossbow*, +1 *bolts* (x6), bolts (x20), expandable pole, 5 tanglefoot bags, 2 thunderstones;

Typical Tactics: Bludgeon the unsuspecting victim from behind. Simple and effective, this tactic reflects the demeanor of the group he runs.

Kennerast "Canon Kenny" Hairfoot: The happy-go-lucky High Priest of the halfling bids all to enter Gracious Hollow. To humans the temple looks like an exalted burial mound with a town park on the top. Within this park is Kennerast's collection of birdbaths and birdfeeders, some of which are from sculptors across the land. During the warm months the park resembles an aviary. Entering the split large round doors, one sees the clamshell-like amphitheatre descending to lamp-lit pews and a preaching pulpit. Fortunately for tall folk, the ceiling is much higher than halflings usually build.

In middle age Kennerast has lost some of his youthful energy but makes up for it in steadfastness and resolve. He is another rock that JoannaLynne often needs when duties stress her. While the gnomes enjoy a powerful seemingly possessed preacher, the halflings take

comfort in their low-key steady cleric who always has time for all and can be relied upon no matter what. Canon Kenny would rather miss a meal than disappoint a parishioner. Out of all the powerful personages in Pfefferain, the High Priest of the Halflings most readily examines the long-term view of situations. Sometimes his cogitations seem dispassionate, but Kennerast is an excruciating realist and suffers no flights of fancy from himself or his flock. Although at peace and pleasant except under siege, Kennerast gently bristles when the name Lord Sesses is uttered as he and 'JL' have had their share of discussions over that man.

Office Politics: Kennerast Hairfoot and Emerral, the gnomish High Priest, form a tight demi-human bond that assures the citizenry of Pfefferain that no matter how many humans course through the gates, the true city heritage remains solid. He also is on fine terms with Ritarra, the high priestess of the Lady of the Wilds. The other priests in the town are greeted with diplomatic aplomb. Although 'married' to his goddess, Canon Kenny considers JoannaLynne his best friend, and he was the priest who performed her marriage to Ewell the Butcher. Kennerast is friend to all power brokers in Pfefferain, and acts as peacekeeper intermediary, as sometimes Emerral does as well, when 'JL' and Oizwix do not see eye to eye.

Kennerast "Canon Kenny" Hairfoot, High Priest of the Halflings, Male Halfling, Clr6: CR 6; SZ S; HD 6d8+18; hp 53; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 16 (+1 Size, +3 Dex, +2 *shield ring*), touch 14, flat-footed 13; BAB/Grapple +4/+0; Atk +6 melee (1d6+1, +1 *shortsword*, crit 19-20) or +9 ranged (1d6+1, +1 *sling*); SA spells, turn undead; SQ aura, spontaneous casting; AL NG; SV Fort +9, Ref +6, Will +9; Str 10, Dex 17, Con 16, Int 14, Wis 17, Cha 16.

Skills: Concentration +11, Heal +9, Hide +7, Knowledge (religion/hearth wisdom) +10, Listen +6, Move Silently +6, Sense Motive +4, Spellcraft +10. **Feats:** Brew Potion, Scribe Scroll, Weapon Focus (shortsword).

Divine Spells Prepared (5/4/4/3; base DC 13 + spell level): 0—create water, detect magic, guidance x2, purify food/drink; 1st—bless, command, divine favor, obscuring mist; 2nd—delay poison, hold person, lesser restoration, zone of truth; 3rd—dispel magic, remove curse, searing light;

Domain Spells (Good, Protection): 1st—protection from evil; 2nd—shield other; 3rd—protection from elements.

Languages: Common, Elven, Gnomish, and Halfling.

Possessions: +1 *holy shortsword*, *cube of force*, *force shield ring*, *ring of invisibility*, *potion of cure serious wounds* (caster level 9), +1 *sling*, bullets (x20);

Typical Tactics: Canon Kenny operates as a prototype commoner halfling would in battle. He first sees

to it that all innocents are safely out of danger and then maneuvers to strike the foe unawares. One of his tricks is to us the 'gadgets' he has collected, mainly setting the *force ring* on, activating the *cube of force* then turning invisible and getting behind the foe bewildered by the *cube* effect.

Ritarra auf der Lorremach (ree-TAR-ah owf dur LOR-eh-mock): The Lorremach Highhills is an unforgiving area to settle. One must locate and build around the largest areas of fertile ground and then defend against the beasts that naturally roam nearby. Droughts sometime occur, as does the attendant famine. Pests do their fair share of damage, and the margin for waste is slim. The marshlands offer their diseases and other dangers. In this setting the Lady of the Wilds and her faithful are tested strenuously.

Ritarra is a time-tested and well-weathered lady. The populace of Pfefferain has found the high priestess to be an aged, no-nonsense and sometimes stern woman who has witnessed much and survived. Orphaned by drought, she was nurtured back to health by clerics of the nature goddess' faith who rescued her and a few others on a mercy mission. Grateful and saddened, she eased her mind and instilled in her life purpose by joining their faith and eventually taking up the cloth. Eventually she had the honor of performing the same merciful deeds in the town of Wennesalar. Before it was later destroyed, she had already moved on to Pfefferain to join and eventually lead the flock of followers. In her early forties and forever frail from her early brush with drought, Ritarra hopes that one day her daughter Anisette, already an initiate, might lead the clans and families of Pfefferain's future.

No person of the cloth is more involved in day-to-day issues of farming, planting, cattle herding, milking and trail repair than Ritarra. Her open-air stone-roofed temple, The Haven, resembles a large regal gazebo with master-crafted woodwork surrounding the stone buttresses. From it, she invokes the daily rites to bring much-needed peace to the fertile valleys of the Lorremach. In case of storms, massive tarps are pulled down from the roof. This turns the main hall into a large pavilion and allows services to go on. There is ample outside seating for the most popular services during decent weather, which is fortunate as her temple boasts the most regular patrons of any in Pfefferain. All of the human guildmembers whose wares have anything to do with food or drink, as well as the Mayor himself, are amongst her flock.

Office Politics: Ritarra tends to be too busy to delve into political affairs. She is pleasant to those in power, but clearly would rather ensure the continued health of the surrounding crops and full silos of meal for all. She is the High Priestess most likely to have delegated authority to a lesser priest should the PCs visit, although

the party could find her with luck or previous divinations.

Ritarra auf der Lorremach, High Priestess of the Lady of the Wilds, Female Human, Clr7: CR 7; SZ M; HD 7d8+7; hp 38; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+1 Dex, +2 ring), flat-footed 12; BAB/Grapple +5/+4; Atk +5 melee (1d6, +1 handaxe, crit x3) or +7 ranged (1d4, +1 sling); SA spells, turn undead; SQ aura, spontaneous casting; AL NG; SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +8; Str 8, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 17, Cha 14.

Skills: Concentration +10, Heal +7, Knowledge (nature) +4, Knowledge (religion) +9, Spellcraft +9, Survival +5. **Feats:** Brew Potion, Extend Spell, Scribe Scroll, Track.

Divine Spells Prepared (6/5/4/3/1; base DC 13 + spell level): 0—detect magic, guidance x2, light, mending, purify food/drink; 1st—bless, command, comprehend languages, endure elements, obscuring mist; 2nd—delay poison, hold person, lesser restoration, zone of truth; 3rd—create food and water, dispel magic, searing light; 4th—neutralize poison.

Domain Spells (Animal, Plant): 1st—entangle; 2nd—barkskin; 3rd—plant growth; 4th—repel vermin.

Languages: Common, Elven, Gnomish, and Halfling.

Possessions: +1 holy handaxe, orb of storms, decanter of endless water, +2 ring of deflection, amulet of oak's edge (barkskin 3/day, 6th-level), potion of cure serious wounds (caster level 9), +1 sling, bullets (x20);

Typical Tactics: Ritarra knows she is not built for battle, although she defends her temple to the death if necessary. What she can do is try to ensure the safety of the commonfolk. When pressed, she calls up a storm with her orb to make life difficult for flying attackers and then washes ground troops away with the decanter.

Luchrestia (loo-CRES-tee-ah): This fairly young, thin and charming halfling lady (Wiz4; hp 14; Profession [sales] +3) is an accomplished Wizard and part of the Magic Guild in Pfefferain, run by Oizwix. She is one of the clerks at The Swirling Vortex. She is also one of the mages who from time to time tends to exasperate Oizwix due to lapses in concentration and disassociations from reality. Usually the youthful lady halfling is radiantly happy and relaxed, almost preternaturally so, if not slightly addled. Oizwix is convinced that Luchrestia progresses only due to innate talent. This is exactly correct, as the poor halfling Wizard is sadly afflicted with the disease of opium dependence. She would be a true credit to her arts if broken of such.

Office Politics: This lady mage could be an invaluable lead to the PC party, as she knows where the current poppy fields are as well as the location of the Keep on the Butte. Luchrestia knows this information since she has access to the Carpet Mage's flying carpets and sometimes uses them to pilfer her direly needed vice. She reveres Oizwix and apologizes profusely when her

personality or vices interfere with her studies. She also is in awe of Lord Sesses and considers him a folk hero. There is no way that Luchrestia would ever speak ill of Lord Sesses or do anything that would harm him, never mind join a party against him. The Butchers know full well that she pilfers small quantities of their wares in-field, but Lord Sesses feels that her dependence could prove useful later on, so he allows it from her alone without thought of retribution.

Benefir ‘Benny’ Motramen: This fine charismatic elder halfling (Com6; hp 27; Profession [innkeeper/manager] +9) is the Guildmaster for the powerful taverner/innkeeper and brewer/vintner factions. His inn named “Dunwoody’s” is one of the more pleasant and sumptuous in town. Prices range from 5 sp, for overnight sleep in the common room, to 6 gp plus 5 sp for a suite-like noble’s room. His restaurant offers either typical fare at slightly higher rates, 10 percent higher than normal, all the way up to high-class meals at 250% of standard costs. His kitchen boasts an award-winning chef and he serves fine ale and wine along with the typical mead and common ale. Lord Sesses sometimes partakes of the finer fare and is treated like a wandering dignitary in this establishment, despite the fact that Benefir resents The Butcher’s trial of extortion years ago. This is another place the PCs might use to find hard leads to the Butchers.

Glimmer Ningelnopf: A tall and stout middle-aged gnome, Glimmer (Exp8; hp 31; Craft [Gemcutter] +7, Craft [Goldsmith] +9, Profession [manager] +5) runs the Jeweler’s Guild and is close friends with Albert who heads the powerful miner/stonemason guild. This rather serious and dour fellow eschews the usual tricks and gaiety of his fellows and instead displays intense focus in most things. Few in the land excel at craftsmanship and artistry as does Glimmer, working in his shop “Glimmer Gemsetter.” He usually runs a backlog, is always busy and usually dispatches an underling to deal with customers or inquiries.

Office Politics: Glimmer was a tough nut to crack for the Butchers. He has friends in the Wizard’s Guild as well as the Temple of the Gnomes, the elite guard, and even the Moonlit Knights. Butcher operatives needed to evade the gauntlet of personal attacks, divine help from the gnome priests, scrying and other aid from the Wizards and implications against Lord Sesses to Arellias. Glimmer’s shop was burned in the struggle, but he relocated and started anew as if nothing happened. Eventually he and the Butchers came to an understanding. Another protection racket finally formed, but Lord Sesses paid a price this time. The Darkmage agreed to help the miners who produce the raw materials by providing them with *beads of force* as necessary. A shipment of the *beads* is exchanged for the protection money every month. Glimmer is one of



the few townspeople Lord Sesses grudgingly admires, and slightly fears.

Jucci ‘The Black Falcon’ Paregrin (JOO-chee PAIR-grin): Coddled and spoiled as a youth by well-to-do parents, Jucci learned how to manipulate at an early age and enjoyed life unconcerned with other’s feelings. She grew up a petulant and headstrong young lady. Jucci became quite self-absorbed, learned to enjoy other’s suffering and had no qualms taking up her current trade and skills. An early birthday present of hers was a pair of *wings of flying*, which in time became her trademark after she dyed them black. Jucci often made it a point to miss time with her parents so that she could practice flight with her *wings*.

There are many beasts in the Lorremach and she learned to kill the smaller ones by emulating the falcon power dive. Jucci thrilled at the chance to slay and increased her experience steadily. Once she showed sufficient skill at her handiwork, her mentor Yzgansik initiated her into The Black Roses. To complete the initiation, she conned her own parents into funding an overland trip for her to expand her horizons. Jucci insisted upon making all arrangements for the false trip, pocketed the money and spent it on Black Rose dues, assassin equipment and debauchery. She remained in the town of Pfefferain, hidden in the shadows and forever concealed from her misguided parents.

When Lord Sesses staged his own death, the thieves’

guildmasters vied for control of the darker dealings in Pfefferain. Yzgansik overextended his reach for power and subsequently fell during the covert warfare by retaliation from The Moonlit Knights. Jucci Paregrin took control of the Black Roses in her mentor's place. One of her first acts was to call truce with Lord Sesses, accomplished by a pact with him whereupon her guild pays the Butchers monthly dues and Jucci and any other Black Roses of sufficient talent gain access to the spell knowledge of the Butchers. It turned out to be a useful, symbiotic relationship that has served both sides well. She became a close friend with Drincilla, the consort of Lord Sesses, and they often cavort together about town. Sometimes Jucci earns a little extra money performing at Celestial Bodies. The Black Falcon is one of the few who appreciates what the Butchers are doing with the town of Pfefferain and revels in the moral decay.

If the party suffered lettered **encounter C** in the Prologue, Jucci and a couple associates were the ones to ransack the PC's friend's home and implicate the PCs. She knows much of the Butchers, but would rather die than give up information implicating Drincilla or Lord Sesses.

Jucci 'The Black Falcon' Paregrin, Guildmistress of The Black Roses, Female Human, Asn4/Rog6: CR 10; SZ M; HD 10d6+20; hp 63; Init +7 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 20 (+3 Dex, +2 *ring*, +5 *chain shirt*), touch 15, flat-footed 17; BAB/Grapple +7/+8; Atk +11 melee (1d4+3, +2 *dagger*, crit 19-20) or +11 (1d4+1, masterwork hand crossbows w/+1 *bolt*, crit 19-20, range 30 ft.); Full Atk +11/+6 melee (1d4+3, +2 *dagger*, crit 19-20) or +11/+6 ranged (1d4+1 [x2], masterwork hand crossbows w/+1 *bolt*, crit 19-20, range 30 ft.); SA death attack, sneak attack (+5d6), spells; SQ evasion, poison use, +2 save vs poison, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC, can't be flanked); AL NE; SV Fort +5, Ref +12, Will +4; Str 12, Dex 17, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 15.

Skills: Appraisal +5, Balance +8, Bluff +6, Climb +3, Craft (alchemy) +3, Craft (falconry) +4, Diplomacy +4, Disable Device +8, Disguise +10, Escape Artist +7, Gather Information +6, Hide +14, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (arcana) +3, Knowledge (streetwise) +6, Listen+7, Move Silently +22, Open Lock +9, Pick Pocket +11, Read Lips +4, Search +7, Sense Motive +3, Spellcraft +3, Spot +7, Tumble +11, Use Magic Device +6, Use Rope +8. **Feats:** Exotic Weapon Proficiency (hand crossbow), Improved Initiative, Point Blank Shot, Rapid Reload (hand crossbow), Weapon Focus (dagger).

Arcane Spells Prepared (2/2): 1st—change self, obscuring mist; 2nd—pass without trace, undetectable alignment.

Languages: Common, Gnomish, Halfling.

Possessions: masterwork front-loaded hand cross-bow (x2), *gloves of storing* (2), +2 *assassin's dagger*, *wings of flying* (blackened), +1 *silent moves mithral chain shirt* (permanently illusioned as a black tunic), +2 *ring of protection*, 5 alchemist's bolts, +1 *bolts* (12), bolts (20), black-feathered dress, ceramic vial of phase spider venom (Fortitude DC 15, 2d6/2d6 temp. Constitution damage);

Typical Tactics: When focused on a target, Jucci tries to catch the mark outside and alone if possible. If successful, she approaches from a 160 to 200 foot height while flying with her *wings* and waits for the proper time to attack. When the time is right, she calls for her dual hand crossbows with her *gloves*, and dives behind her mark. Her hand crossbows are front-loaded and the bolts do not drop out while she is in flight. At the precisely correct moment, she fires a pair of phase spider-envenomed bolts into the victim with either sneak attack or death attack effectiveness and finally pulls up and veers off. Thanks to her Rapid Reload feat, it is a free action for Jucci to reload one of her hand crossbows. Due to her experience, there are no aerial combat penalties when Jucci performs this fal-con-diver attack.

Skazzar Pfaffbapple: This poor old male gnome used to be a ranger of repute in the area, but now appears to have lost all ability to function as a trailway protector. Skazzar (Rgr1/Com3; hp 17; Survival +7) looks like a slightly crazed and haunted shadow of a gnome. All semblance of the typical jaunty aire vanished long ago. He lives in a broken-down hovel on the outskirts of town in a small hilly region. To earn coinage, he travels through the hills and through Pfefferain with messages. His service may be slow, but it is quite sure. He knows many shortcuts and many dangers in the Lorremach, and is well versed in surviving outside.

If approached in a friendly and helpful manner and offered food and drink, Skazzar might tell the PCs about the true fate of the village of Wennesalar and his hatred of Lord Sesses. He was the only person to witness and survive the onslaught of that village by Lord Sesses and a cadre of devils a decade ago. His afflictions trace their roots to one particular cornugon that spotted Skazzar viewing the scene. Despite horrid burns on his back, severe lacerations that never fully healed over and a night lain prone covered with mud while left for dead, Skazzar's body refused to die. His psyche was forever changed by the experience and he exists as a furtive recluse, terrified of wizards, spirits, and fire. He used to be a follower of the gnomish diety, but no longer, not after that night.

Oizwix Pnai Pfanglooi (OY-zwicks puh-NAY FANG-loo-ee): This old brilliant gnome acts as Guildmistress of the revered Sorcerers and Wizards that

congregate in Pfefferain. She is an elder who helped found The Swirling Vortex, the magic shop/ laboratory/ guildhall that is an extra-dimensional landmark in Pfefferain. She enjoys teaching others magic as well as researching and creating items. Oizwix performs many duties at the Swirling Vortex, being a hands-on manager, and pulls political strings when situations warrant it. Despite her age she is a tireless dynamo who seems to operate constantly, always looking for another avenue of profit or knowledge.

Her gnomish heritage shines through in her caustic wit and warped sense of humor. Her tricks are legendary. Oizwix once vaporized the walls of the Great Hall of Justice so that all could see 'JL' manicure her propped up feet. Another time she subtly animated practice dummies and bullseye targets of the guards during a yearly tournament, causing a replay of most of that tourney. Oizwix is mostly renowned for her part in initiating 'The Night of Spectres' along with Hallowe'en in Pfefferain, as the gnome illusionists in town pour forth the worst from their warped and inventive minds. Other shopkeepers in town know the tricks and worse that are in store for them if they dare sell magical items without her permission in the town of Pfefferain.

Office Politics: At one time the Magic Guildmistress and JoannaLynne were close, but the appearance of Lord Sesses eventually drove a wedge between them. Both Oizwix and Lord Sesses were instrumental in helping Arellias institute the no-armor policy. At this time, Oizwix grows fonder of the Mayor, who holds the same views of Lord Sesses and provides a challenge of removing his fear of magic. At least the magic guildmistress and 'JL' agree that Emerral Fnored, the gnomish High Priest, is treasure beyond price. It was Oizwix who nicknamed him 'The Emerald' out of respect and friendship.

It was Oizwix who gave the Justicator her first leads regarding the Butchers, as their initial attempts to control the magic guild played out. Early on, the elders, including Oizwix, realized how annoying and painful the Darkmage made life and also learned the measure of aid and resources they would enjoy by acquiescing to his demands. To save inventory and gain resources instead of waste them, they chose to succumb to the Butchers' extortion. In the Pfefferain magic community, Lord Sesses operates as a Force of Nature. None of the Wizards speak against him or indeed even about him for fear of retribution. Many benefit from his vast experience and resources. The magic guild and the Butchers exist in a symbiotic form, as host and controlling parasite. As the leads from Oizwix dwindled and her reticence to implicate grew in proportion to her defense of Lord Sesses, a rift appeared between 'JL' and Oizwix, which slowly grows as the months drag on. In the magic guildmistress' opinion, so mote

it be, as the Vortex and the guild have thrived since Lord Sesses has 'latched on.'

Oizwix considers Lord Sesses an invaluable confidant and is pleased that the Darkmage has spread the word of The Swirling Vortex about the land. The extortion has literally become 'advertising fees' since a multitude of beings from all over the land now visit the Vortex's wonders. No huge undertaking to the Darkmage, he sent his Imps far and wide anyway to advertise The Hellfire Casino and Hotel and merely piggybacked advertisement of The Swirling Vortex as a 'lesser attraction.' So for slight extra effort he gets double the payback and real gratitude from the town Wizards for his 'worldly presence.'

Oizwix Pnai Pfanglooi, Magic Guildmistress of Pfefferain, Female Gnome, Ill11: CR 11; SZ S; HD 11d4+22; hp 52; Init +6 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 20 ft.; AC 15 (+1 Size, +2 Dex, +2 ring), flat-footed 13; BAB/Grapple +5/+0; Atk +6 melee (1d4+1, +2 dagger, crit 19-20); SA spells; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +7; Str 9, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 19, Wis 11, Cha 14.

Skills: Bluff +3, Concentration +16, Craft (alchemy) +20, Knowledge (arcana) +18, Knowledge (religion) +6, Knowledge (the planes) +7, Knowledge (math) +6, Listen +3, Profession (manager) +6, Scry +10, Search +5, Sense Motive +1, Spellcraft +20, Spot +1. **Feats:** Brew Potion, Craft Wand, Craft Wondrous Item, Extend Spell, Improved Initiative, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (Illusions).

Arcane Spells Prepared (4/5/5/5/4/2/1; base DC 14 + spell level, Illusions base DC 14 + spell level): 0—detect magic (x2), mage hand, prestidigitation; 1st—color spray, magic missile (x2), shield, silent image; 2nd—cat's grace, blur, invisibility, minor image (x2); 3rd—dispel magic (x2), fly, major image (x2); 4th—greater invisibility, lesser globe of invulnerability, phantasmal killer, rainbow pattern; 5th—telekinesis, wall of force; 6th—programmed image.

Specialty School Spells (Illusion; prohibited schools: Enchantment and Necromancy): 0—dancing lights; 1st—change self; 2nd—invisibility; 3rd—displacement; 4th—phantasmal killer; 5th—persistent image; 6th—project image.

Languages: Common, Elven, Gnomish, Goblin, Halfling, and Orcish.

Possessions: +2 shocking burst dagger, wand of magic missiles (caster level 9), wand of major image (caster level 11), +2 ring of protection, cloak of major displacement, potion of cure serious wounds (caster level 9), potion of detect thoughts (x2);

Typical Tactics: Someone must be attacking The Swirling Vortex, so round up the Wizards and magic items and have at them. When in doubt, use the special key that allows entrance to the central spherical room

and set up a last stand or scry with the *crystal ball* therein and coordinate the defense. She might send for aid from Lord Sesses if the situation warrants such.

Ulfgar Rumnaheim: The proprietor of “Distant Treks,” a local adventuring supply store is a grizzled and jaded middle-aged male dwarf (Com7; hp 35; Craft [weaponsmith] +8, Profession [shopkeeper] +10) who has seen the slow and sure exodus of his kinsmen drain out of Pfefferain. At one time, all was not as it is now. Time was, honest dwarves were welcome in this town and prospered. Once Arellias assumed the Mayoral duties, life started on a gradual incline downward for all dwarves. Taxes appeared for the smiths about town, and for miners whose lineage was not written in old tomes found in the Great Hall. Slowly increasing surcharges were placed on ale of dwarven make, due to its ‘strength.’ Once the no-armor edict was emplaced, that was the final straw for many dwarven clans, especially the armorsmiths. One by one, Ulfgar watched them all pass outside the gates, never to return. There are now precious few dwarves to share the limpid pail water that passes for mead in this town. Those who do remain are grateful for his keeping up of the small shrine to the dwarven gods.

He has stayed, as his shop is a thriving business and a refuge for those passing through the Lorremach. Fortunately, Ulfgar focused on the weaponry of war, not the protective items. For a dwarf, he is an average craftsman of weaponry, but his skill surpasses any gnome or

human in town. He further hopes that the next Mayor of Pfefferain might restore the balance and his brethren might return. For now though, he stoically disburses necessary items and packs away a tidy profit. The PCs may find just about any weapon or item listed under **Adventuring Gear** that they wish, even exotic types. Ulfgar refers anyone who needs locks to Worble, the locksmith guildmaster. He refers those desiring mundane construction equipment to Danielle Adamantite. He also refers anyone who wants a magic weapon to The Swirling Vortex as he wants no enmity between himself and Oizwix. Due to taxes and levies, his prices are 125% of standard book prices, but his weaponry is the best the PCs find in Pfefferain.

Notable Buildings

1) Watchtowers

Each Watchtower is a massive square stone structure complete with arrow slits, crenellated lower roof and round, open-air tower atop the middle of the lower roof. The open-air tower contains the Aerial Assault Battery. These are the large stone structures found on the highest peaks of the four hills surrounding Pfefferain. All outer doors are 2 in. thick iron doors that can be locked (Hardness 10; hp 60; Break [DC 28]; Open Lock [DC 25]). All inner ash wood doors are considered strong doors (Hardness 5; hp 20; Break [DC 23]; Open Lock [DC 20]). The first floor is the



barracks for 16 officers and the mess hall. The basement is barracks for 48 regular units. The second floor holds administrative offices and storage rooms that contain enough composite crossbows, arrows, halberds, and long swords to equip the entire barracks.

Elite guards patrol every floor and the roof when not on sentry duty elsewhere. Large horns that emit deep basso tones appear at each corner of the lower roof and are used if trouble is sighted. Each central tower on the lower roof has a teleportation rune that allows one-way access to the middle level of the Great Hall. The Watchtower near Holy Hill is the tallest by far and observers may see the entirety of the town as well as much of the countryside.

2) Great Hall of Justice

This expansive mansion contains the Mayoral grounds and living quarters, the Justicator's Chambers, offices, guardhouse and gardens. Arellias works and lives here on the third floor, with a cadre of four elite guards at his side on the premises at all times. He has decorated the entire level as if he intends to stay there for life. JoannaLynne and her lesser judges work on the first floor, both rendering verdicts in their courtrooms and reviewing cases in their offices. The middle level houses bureaucratic and accounting offices, conference rooms as well as stopping-points for various teleportation runes in the town. Security is always tight at the courtrooms and the Mayoral level. Only a Black Rose or the most foolhardy citizen would even think of causing havoc here.

3) Holy Hill

The entirety of Holy Hill encompasses the large Temple of the Gnomes, "The Radiant Goldmine," the park and underground temple of the halfling diety, "Gracious Hollow," the smaller temple to Muir, "The Righteous Billet" and at the very top of the hill, the Great Hall of Justice. On the third floor of the Mayoral mansion or the top of the gnome's temple, one may see much of the town as well as the three Gigantigates. At any one time, each temple might hold a number of parishioners equal to the level of the temple's high priest in 4-sided-dice, and a number of priests equal to one-fourth that rounded down.

4) The Triangle Markets

Near each set of Gigantigates sprawls a Triangle Market, so named as they appear as a wedge-shaped plot of land of produce farmers, goods merchants, gamesmen, service vendors, and item huskers. The nearest watchtower keeps constant vigilance over these markets as do standing elite guards, generally 2d4 in number at any one time per market. Pfefferain is a thriving merchant town, and anything that is not armor or

shield and retails for less than the town's gp limit can be found here. Some traders smuggle in rare magic items under the noses of the Wizard's Guild, heedless of the wrath of Oizwix. This is the where you allow sale of any item or service you wish to introduce to the PCs. One could find services like a ranger hiring out as a "trailbreaker." One might believe they have found the rare and wondrous *robe of useful items*, only to actually purchase the truly wretched *robe of useless items* at a must-sell-due-to-debt discount.

5) Temple of the Lady of the Wilds

Right in the center of town stands "The Haven," the large open-air gazebo that calls all of the nature faith to service. Only rarely is Ritarra at the temple during daylight hours. Normally she is at various farming communities helping as she is able, always surrounded by elite patrols. The best time for the PCs to find her would be either before or after nightly services held twice a week.

6) Lesser Religious Shrines

At various places in Pfefferain there are small temples or shrines dedicated to the lesser-followed deities. One might find followers at these temples in the range of 1d10, 1d8, 1d6, 1d4 and 1d2 respectively. There may be a number of priests equal to one-third of the followers at the same time.

7) Distant Treks

Anyone outfitting themselves for a long journey or to do battle with the beasts that roam the Lorremach usually stops in to this single-level stone building. Ulfgar Rumnaheim sells his wares, creates weapons in his on-premises smithy and lives in the same inter-connected building. After hours he often putters in the furnished basement that houses his study and excess inventory.

8) Twisted Ferrousities

Located near the dourest dwarf in the Lorremach is the strongest lady human in the land, or so tales say. The creator of the newest huge hinges of the Gigantigates, Danielle Adamantite crafts all manner of items of both the mundane and the fantastical out of iron bars and plates. Her sculptures are astounding and pricey fantasies of labyrinth twisted iron bars. Danielle and Ulfgar rarely tread on each other's markets and often politely refer patrons to the other.

9) Glimmer Gemsetter

This large two-story building not only houses the store, the goldsmithing labs and the gemcutting labs, but the second floor also holds the administrative of-

fices and meeting halls of the Jeweler's Guild. Glimmer Ningelnopf, the foremost jeweler in the area, heads all this. There usually are window-shoppers in the store, and a flurry of salesclerks, underlings, apprentices and master craftsmen filter through the doors at irregular times. Normally Glimmer can be found in the labs working on a custom piece, so a typical clerk usually waits upon customers. This is a shop that could test the town's gp limit for an item's price, as Glimmer has crafted items for royalty before.

10) Dunwoody's (tavern/inn)

This fine tavern and inn accepts all but the most downtrodden patrons, striving to be an establishment that exists as all things to all people when considering food and lodging. Separated only by stout wooden walls is a tavern with its attendant tavern fare menu and a fine 5-star restaurant. Halflings consider this entire structure a shrine to culinary perfection. Further, a patron may choose from a night's stay in the common room or a gradient of choices all the way up to stately and expensive noble suites. As an addition to the building, as if it wasn't large enough, is the massive guildhall of the taverner/innkeeper and brewer/vintner collectives. Though full of typical halfling amenities, the ceilings and spatial specifications are built with human-kind in mind. PCs could probably talk to the genial lady, the female halfling bartender **Erin** (Com2; hp 7; Profession[barkeeper] +4), but could find Benefir managing the classy restaurant.

11) Pick Worble's Locks

The sign is an invitation to patrons and thieves alike to view and try the latest creations of Worble Fepplenachen, the gnomish locksmith Guildmaster of Pfefferain. Worble custom-makes most of his locks at 125% of book value, but offers duplicates of some of his most popular or famous locks and contraptions as displays in his store for 110% of book value. The shopper sees locks for strongboxes, chests, doors, furniture, coffers, purses, wands, and other strange containers. These range from average to amazing-plus, as Worble tries to stay one step ahead of the thieves guilds in town. He thinks he is the last line of defense between the populace and stolen property. All magical locks sold at the Swirling Vortex begin their existence here. Since he tries different markets for items, Worble also sells intricate metal and wooden puzzles. Some of these are based upon old locks and some are mere mental exercises made metallic reality. These puzzles range between 10 and 75 gp themselves. Across the street is the locksmith guildhall, also owned and operated by Worble. This building usually hides an elite guard who tries to observe the thieves in town as they try out

Worble's latest creation in the heavily darkened shop-front antechamber.

12) The Quaffing Quarry (tavern)

For a great place to learn rumors and watch mischievous demi-humans in action, visit the stone tavern in the shape of a domed strip mine. Operated by Larrenbel 'Lardbelly' Caskencastle, this bustling tavern is home to great spirits and spirited patrons. Check your seriousness at the door, as these regulars know each other all too well and play multiple jokes on each other and new patrons with frightening regularity. Known as the one tavern where a budding comedic talent might test their material, non-talents (and the non-frivolous or obnoxious) just might find themselves dropped into an impromptu pit until they tell good enough jokes to extricate themselves. If the prices seem outrageous to you, tell a great joke and watch the prices fall before your very eyes. Out-pun Lardbelly and receive a drink of your choice on the house.

13) Rockworker's Hall

Albert Baschemhardte leads the powerful stonemason/miner guildhouse. The guildhouse itself is a replica of one of the Watchtowers and functions as an apprentice training ground as well as a meeting hall and administration headquarters. One may find out much of the town's building style from the information contained in its plans and ledgers. One may also find out about raw materials mined from nearby quarries and mines. For the PCs, heavy bribes need to be covertly offered for any chance of viewing design plans. Enterprising PCs might try to pilfer those plans as well, but since Albert is on very good terms with Worble, the locks that face the thief are rather difficult. Open Locks (DC 28); Blue Whinnis needle trap with Search (DC 23); Disable Device (DC 23). Some plans that the PCs could find are of the Watchtowers, the Hellfire Hotel and Casino and The Keep on the Butte.

14) Sign of the Compass

Jucci Paregrin runs this cartographer's shop as a front for Black Rose activity. Although it does sell maps of the Lorremach and other areas about the land, its main purpose is to house the knowledge of the Black Roses and function as its guildhall in the enlarged basement. If the right people are known, unusual information can be bought along with treasure maps of dubious veracity. The clerk on duty usually is **Fragnatz** (Com 2; hp 5; Knowledge [geography] +5, Profession [sales] +2), an odious male gnome wannabe-assassin whose knowledge is the only trait keeping him alive. He is known to trade services and magic for information. He also fears Jucci terribly, as he rightly should, so he tries to please her by landing the most outrageous deals possible.

15) A Cut Above

This store sells some of the finest meats, poultry and fish in the region. Prices are a little steep, but the quality is deli-proud. Ewell Hilltopper, (Com 6; hp 18; Profession [butcher] +6, Profession [manager] +4) JoannaLynne's husband, owns it. He also functions as guildmaster for the butchers/meatpackers conglomerate. He runs the typical deli as well as a packing service in the back, and next door is the guildhall and offices. Ewell's trail rations not only sell for 150% of book value, but also taste excellent and serve nutrition for two days instead of just one. PCs could learn of 'JL' and Canon Kenny through the Justicator's husband.

16) Holy Hill (tavern)

This is the haven for all commoners wishing to escape their spouses. Run by a large elder male human **Serc** (Com3; hp 12; Profession [barkeeper] +5, Profession [manager] +2), this tavern was formerly known as The Prominence as it is situated upon its own little hill. After hearing of patrons make their escape to its stools and mugs, Serc decided to change the name to better falsify his patrons' claims. Little shrines of the three deities found upon the true Holy Hill are kept in excellent condition in three corners of the barroom; the fourth corner contains one of Freya. Prices are between 75% and 100% of standard book prices with corresponding quality.

17) Bartered Privilege (tavern)

A former wine and ale merchant permanently set up shop here, tired of the long travels and brigands of the road. The middle-aged gnome Plumble Yiddinlick (Com5; hp 17; Profession [sales] +6, Profession [barkeeper] +3, Profession [manager] +4) keeps tabs on all his regulars. Many fine ales, meads, wines, beers and hard liquor are offered in this rather plush tavern, at prices between 110% and 150% of standard. Patrons seat themselves upon plush cushioned chairs or the few recliners that squat at the heads of tables. These patrons swap tales and information freely if impressed, so all Charisma bonuses are doubled in the tavern for Gather Information checks and Rumor Generation purposes. The PCs make wonderful progress if sequestered here for sufficient time.

18) Tea and Tome (tavern)

This establishment is different from a typical tavern and caters to the arcane crowd. The standard-priced refreshments are tea, cider, cocoas and wines. Strong ales or liquors are not served to the high concentration of Wizards and sages that congregate here. Mahogany shelves line the entirety of the tavern. The seats are something akin to *Tensor's floating disk*, which oper-

ate upon command by pressing gilded buttons next to the bar or the tables. Newcomers usually are amazed that all the patrons sit cross-legged while levitating. The entire building is made of treated wood and decorated with wrought iron end tables, railings and sculptures. The manager and barkeeper,

Uhlchavatay (Wiz2; hp 10; Profession [barkeeper] +2, Profession [manager] +4), is the younger brother of one of the mages that adventured with Danielle Adamantite. He was able to finagle cut-rate prices for her works.

In this tavern, all Intelligence bonuses count towards Gather Information checks and Rumor Generation. Further, if any Sorcerer or Wizard PC spends a total of 16 hours within this tavern studying the myriad of aged tomes, texts, books and compendiums found in the shelves and passes an Intelligence check (DC 14 + 1/level), their Knowledge-Arcana score rises one point on the spot. Again, this is another wonderful spot that hastens adventuring progress.

19) Celestial Bodies

Drincilla, one of the Butchers' Viceroy and consort to Lord Sesses, owns this brothel and manages it here. This ornate stone building was a former temple to Arden and suffered a dire fate early on in the history of Pfefferain. It was eventually restored and rebuilt into a brothel, with an astronomy motif. The copper enameled sun sculpture was restored and placed back within the central receiving chamber, and every room has had its ceiling painted to resemble the night sky at different months of the year.

Drincilla functions as Gwynneth, an effective guildmistress of the red lantern panderers, although there is not the official and strictly regulated administration as for other goods and services. In actuality, Drincilla 'took over' the reigns of the brothel by removing the former headmistress from the town and uses *polymorph* to change to Gwynneth's form. Drincilla therefore appears as a tall, sensual lady human in her early thirties with a full figure and a rather hard-looking visage. Imp surveillance gave Drincilla all the info she needed to make the transition smooth and none of her working girls knew. Some older regular patrons found it odd that Drincilla does not partake with them anymore but does with newer patrons. The more sensual ladies often wear Drincilla's finest custom-made evening gowns and intimate wear for advertisement purposes.

Prices tend to be in the 7 gp to 15 gp range per night stay, dependant upon the age, looks and experience of the girl. There are fine beauties of human, elven, gnomish and halfling extraction to tempt men of all races. Jucci Paregrin has been known to earn spending money here and complete contracts here as well.

20) Pfefferain's Pfines Pfrocks

One of the most window-shopped stores in town, this is Drincilla's outlet for her custom-made and imported dresses, gowns, robes and intimate wear for ladies. It serves as both display and artistic workshop for budding and experienced seamstresses and designers. The materials used and skill revealed indicate clothing that is often multiples of the standard prices elsewhere. Arellias has the ladies here work on all his official items, pro bono. Typical courtier's outfits would generally run from 75 gp for one of the lesser-known designer's creations to well into the middle thousands for one of Drincilla's personal creations. Wedding dresses, evening gowns and royal ensembles are a specialty. The Cocoon line of eveningwear is a calling card of the store that draws customers from quite far away. Each Cocoon is a silken wrap-around dress that takes the lady at least 5 minutes to don correctly so that nothing unexpected shows and the accessories appear in their correct places. No Cocoon has sold for less than 575 gp and some have fetched over 3,000 gp.

Drincilla appears as the short, pudgy, strict and bizarrely inspired human wunderkind Gala, who is fun loving and creative with the other designers. Gala, when she appears, functions as the manager of the store and the guildmistress of the clothiers and tailors of the town. In this store Gala is treated as a goddess, which is just the way Drincilla likes it. Drincilla can command a Cocoon to don or remove itself as a standard action, using her erinyes natural ability.

21) The Hellfire Casino and Hotel

Hellfire exists as a palatial stone structure that has red clay worked on top of the granite to resemble flaming stonework. The motif is false yet disquietingly faithful recreations of Hell. A man-made river Styx starts outside beside the front gates and courses through the casino level, always flaming and spewing dry ice. Mages and clientele that dress up as devils receive comps. The clientele loves the ever-present cordials and pipe tobacco available free of charge and the true-odds gambling, which is beyond question legitimate, congenial, and professional. Although the dice and roulette balls are enspelled with flaming illusions, they are not loaded nor rigged in any way. The clientele loves to view the sparring in "The Pits of Hell," where only willing contestants battle to the best of their abilities, mostly unto unconsciousness. Sometimes two folk with great enmity are allowed, after legal waivers, to fight to the death. The clientele loves the Asmoday CharOvens, whose prices range between 125% and 150% of standard book prices, and their special flaming liquors and flaming main courses.

The reservation-only coach service is a strange contrivance that has crept into the town's vocabulary. Five

carriages are arranged in the center of the Hellfire Casino, where the faux River Styx descends. Each carriage is a plushly furnished iron basket that seats four patrons in luxurious comfort and also forms a cockpit for the chauffeur. The baskets are totally covered in wicker so that they resemble woven, finely crafted works. These baskets may move up to a fast canter, held over the ground by a customized *Bigsby's grasping hand*. The *hand* grapples the basket handle, lifts the basket, patrons and the chauffeur, and glides the entirety over the ground or over the faux River Styx at a steady pace. These five carriages are seen at night shuttling between patron homes and Hellfire. Should the patrons or chauffeur be accosted while on route, the chauffeur may direct the *hand* to gently ground the basket and then operate as a *Bigsby's clenched fist* as a 16th-level Sorcerer. Coach service is free to those staying in a suite, otherwise it costs 2 gp plus the 5 sp tip usually arranged upon the pentagram insignia of the chauffeur's cockpit.

Fees per night at Hellfire's Hotel range from 3gp per person to 10 gp per person, with an extra 2 gp charge for the suite of any level. The Hotel Planes of Hellfire descend, level by level, further into the earth. Each is named after and faithfully resembles the real plane of Hell. Under the casino, patrons enjoy the finest architecture of rooms designed to resemble the various planes of Hell. The rooms, though they are very plush and comfortable to the patrons, are generally of cavern or castle creation. There are 13 rooms in each level, and the largest ranks as a suite complete with torture chamber and contain private Sulphur Springs Spas. Each level also has a common room containing five Spas. Anything available at the Asmoday CharHouse can be brought down via room service. There is an escort service, using some of the ladies from Celestial Bodies, for those of that persuasion.

The employees of Hellfire are locals who enjoy dressing up in the detailed devil costumes and playing their parts. All the croupiers are paid salary plus commission from each table's take, so they are happy and watch tables like hawks. The three best are **Knuckles**, **Rocco** and **Murgatroyd** (Com6; hp 20; Profession [gambler] +9) and they could fleece commoners in minutes if they were told to do so. All croupiers follow the Pit Boss' rules to the letter. The Pit Boss, **Maximillion Spetarr**, nicknamed Max, appears in a beyond-description pit fiend costume. The costume truly is the best thing Drincilla has ever created. **Max** (Div7; hp 29; Profession [gambler] +4, Profession [manager] +4) has some fiendish blood roiling through his veins but shows only a strange reddish complexion. He ensures that all have a nice time playing games in the correct manner. Max escorts anyone finagling the odds due to magic right out the door, with help from the bouncer devil-suits.

He usually uses spells himself in detection of any odd phenomena. Very few are as loyal to Lord Sesses as Max is. There is no way he helps the PCs in their investigations. Like the real Imps, Max wears *theatre makeup of obscured alignment* and leaves no trace of his body uncovered by costume or makeup. Skilled Wizards using Tree Seeing cannot penetrate his disguise. Real Imps, heavily costumed in red suits and *theatre makeup* to look like flying automatons, patrol the entire complex looking for thievery, incorrect play of games, vandalism, breakdowns of the spas, unauthorized movement of patrons, and other sorts of activity which interferes with the smooth running of the complex. One Imp per Hotel level and three Imps in the casino are on hand at most times.

22) The Swirling Vortex

This is a magic item shop that exists to cursory passersby as a small temple with a single antechamber inside, once you pass through the beautiful stained-glass vortex doorway. The antechamber is decorated with silken tapestries depicting magical effects and Wizards conducting tests and quests. In the middle of the chamber are a lit incense brazier, a few crucibles, and a tea dispenser. A few mages and commoners sit upon soft cushions, all the while staring at the dimensional gateway from which the shop gets its name. One mage usually leads a meditative chant and the others either repeat such or sway to the cadence. Regardless, all eyes are affixed upon the cascading, swirling maelstrom of black miasmal mists and dancing fire-motes, stretching as an oval 10 feet wide and 5 feet high upon the back wall. Patrons must walk through this vortex to enter the shop, which suffers the patron no harm whatsoever save a slight disorientation as they pass between dimensions.

The entire shop exists as a hollow sphere of light, oxygen and low gravity some 250 feet in diameter. Patrons float freely, as if by *levitate* but with movement in any direction, starting at the “bottom” of the sphere. All who enter emanate from a duplicate of the Vortex from the Prime Plane antechamber. The ‘edge’ of the shop sphere is not really an edge at all, but a 3-foot deep buffer of steadily darkening blackness which is impenetrable by sight, touch, sound, magic, light, energy or force of will. Nothing exists beyond the blackness. Ten feet above the Vortex is a glowing silvery dish, aimed to the middle of the sphere, which emits pale pleasant light and provides oxygenated air. It sucks up the carbon dioxide at its backside. At the ‘top’ of the sphere there is a twin dish, also aimed at the center. Other sources of light appear at intervals throughout the sphere, as its denizens require.

There is no flooring at The Swirling Vortex, although furniture, items and barriers form different levitating

yet locked in place ‘levels’ within the sphere. One might find groups of display shelves, inventory shelves, resting furniture, discussion chambers, a dining hall, lab equipment, testing equipment, ledger filled offices, a vast array of cubicles, a research department and a repair facility upon any floating level. The 35 foot high testing gymnasium levitates at the top of the sphere.

All of the salespeople, managers, artisans, tinkers, and researchers are of a generally genial and helpful bent, and much of what the PCs desire is found herein, at prices which average 125% of the **DMG** quotes. Items that are most treasured or popular run up to 200% of ‘stock normal.’ The Swirling Vortex gladly buys magic items, typically at 33% to 50% of **DMG** value, or up to 80% for treasured or popular items. Due to the curious no-armor edict in Pfefferain, magic items that give a bonus to AC or Dexterity typically run from 200% to 250% of the **DMG** quotes. Patrons are encouraged to try out non-charged items in the gymnasium at the top, and company policy allows patrons to practice their spells in the gymnasium as well once they have purchased 10,000 gp of items. Build this place up as a strange, mind-blowing shop of magical wonders that is pricey but contains many things that you wish to allow the PCs. They might meet Luchrestia, the addled lady halfling mage, or Oizwix herself here.

Theft is not an option as all magic items are attuned to the spherical dimension and fail to leave the spherical dimension until the attunement is severed. This severance is performed once the requisite price is paid in full. Salespeople, once a patron purchases an item, use their special nametag-key to *dimension door* into the sealed chamber at the center of the sphere. Inside this central chamber is a Wizard who removes the attunement by a secret and special incantation using crystal magic and then processes the sale. The salesperson then *dimension doors* back to the new owner who may then leave with the item.

The Reconnaissance Carpet Mages, a service run by Lord Sesses, have their home base within the sphere. They either sell fairly recent maps of the Lorremach, set out to perform recon duties from this venue, or allow patrons to purchase time upon their *flying carpets* and perform reconnaissance themselves. The rate is 200 gp per day, and local citizenry sometimes uses such as one-way trips, pleasure jaunts or even the start of their honeymoon.

The salespeople are able to set the retrieval time delay for the *flying carpets* for up to a week away at a time, instead of the typical instantaneous delay for purchasable items. They also caution the renters that the *carpet* does indeed vanish precisely at the time delay specified, so the *carpet* should be grounded well before that eventuality. Renters must sign contracts as well as injury waivers, and all must be signed and paid for

in advance before a *carpet* is produced for use. It takes either a perfectly stated *wish*, a *Morden's Disjunction*, or the proper ritualistic incantation performed with the correct attunement crystal to sever the attunement of the *carpets*, allowing their theft once that is done.

The Butchers back and secretly extort money from the elders who run The Swirling Vortex. The elders at one time resisted Lord Sesses and his minions, but found over time that it was wisest and most cost effective to merely pay their respects and thereafter earn his help with their enterprise. Lord Sesses runs the Reconnaissance Carpet Mages operation from the Sphere Dimension and gives a cut to the elders. Any map they sell **never** shows either the Keep on the Butte or the poppy fields; they are replaced with marshland and hills. Further, anyone who angers the Butchers and dares ride one of their *carpets* might find that the time delay is actually shortened by some percentage, perhaps resulting in a rather perilous fall. Well role-played investigative PCs could find a few leads to Lord Sesses and the Keep on the Butte herein.

PC Interaction With Pfefferain

PC parties that enter Pfefferain usually intend upon finding the Lair of Lord Sesses. Smart parties try to amass the most NPCs agreeable to their goal as possible. Some might be sidetracked with thoughts of dis-

rupting the many operations of the Butchers. Some might be led to take on other activities, such as hunting down The Sound of Chaos, or even to assist in defense of the city against massed attack.

As the PCs investigate and meet locals, they may attempt information gathering. This can be performed with Gather Information skills, Intimidate skills, Listening checks, Diplomacy checks, identity assumption, stealthy pilfering or devious coercion. Apply any modifications due to circumstance, station and personality of the NPC that you see fit.

The PC's actions, especially if they finally destroy the Butchers, impact the citizenry of Pfefferain in many ways. Some shops might close down entirely. Some might experience rejuvenation. Some citizenry, including the Mayor and his elite guards, might take up arms against the PCs if they are found to be the ones who vanquished Lord Sesses. Parties who remove Lord Sesses might find loyal elite guards, local Wizards, an iron golem sculptress and the Assassin Guildmistress on their flanks in short order. They might also find that JoannaLynne, certain high priests and a miniature copper dragon might fight on their side. An epilogue to this adventure could exist as another round of thieves guild skirmishes or even Pfefferain civil war, centered upon the PCs.

Thwarting the Butchers

Should the PCs examine Hellfire, they might meet the croupiers if they have any gambling blood in their veins. They might offer themselves as mercenary combatants in The Pits of Hell. Investigative PCs might conduct surveillance upon the costumed Imps or the Pit Boss Max. Drincilla, made up much like she was in numbered **encounter 8** in the **Prologue**, may make an appearance in the administration chambers, performing accounting duties. Exemplary roleplaying may offer up friendships, rumors, manifests, orders or payoff schedules that might be tracked to The Keep on the Butte. Lucky PCs might even find the secret chamber containing the *teleporter* to the Keep. Real evidence that actual devils operate Hellfire would be wonderful news to JoannaLynne. Real evidence that Lord Sesses and Drincilla are linked to the operating devils would be even better received. Suspicious local employees, Imps or even Max may track down the PCs and investigate **them**. The PCs could end up in the torture chambers of the Nessus level suite, interrogated by an evil Divining Mage using very real devices.

Drincilla opens up an entire realm of investigation. PCs could investigate Celestial Bodies and partake in the delights while conducting subtle investigations. Some patrons might speak of a definite change in Gwynneth's personality and the fact that the harlots within tend to wear the latest Cocoon before it is even



on display at Pfinest Pfrocks. The PCs might learn that Gwynneth tends to disappear from the entire building at odd times. One girl might remark upon seeing Gala's shears (bodice dagger) or ruler (schiavona sword) in Gwynneth's possession. PCs might learn at Pfinest Pfrocks that Gala tends to disappear at night and that guild business is always conducted during the day. Gala has a strange way of commanding fabrics, her ruler-sword and her shears with the glowing eyes for handles. For some reason Gala never wears a Cocoon, but always makes sure she crafts one for a human lady of thin yet well endowed form. Further, Gala and Gwynneth never appear together and in fact **never** appear simultaneously in town at the same time. The PCs also might arouse suspicion with the questions and probing, which could lead them into an entrapping Cocoon under devilish command or the waiting arms of Jucci Paregrin posing as a harlot.

Extortion makes a large percentage of the profits the Butchers gain from the town. The monetary respect is usually extracted by Rasharnor, but could also be taken by Gortok in one of its myriad forms, or by Jerjicus if extra muscle is deemed necessary. Every guild leader has their own story to tell about Lord Sesses and the Butchers, with varying degrees of truth, elaboration, and contempt. The Butchers take coinage, gems, magic items, goods, or even services as payment, so sometimes Gortok needs to change form yet again to successfully fence the items. Rasharnor has a passion for gems and a respect for Glimmer, the jeweler's guildmaster, which might be used against him. Jerjicus has a gnomish form to use against Albert the rockworker's guildmaster, but Albert notes that gnome never casts typical spells nor cracks jokes. PCs that try to set an ambush for the extorter finds that Imp sentries are dispatched for surveillance before a Viceroy moves anywhere. These operations are an excellent time to remind the PCs that just because they have reached the town of Pfefferain does **not** mean they are immune to further numerical or lettered encounters from the **Prologue**.

The opium harvesting and distribution could be the operation that raises the hackles on the back of PC necks the most. It begins in the floralgarten marshy lands near The Keep on the Butte, where the poppy fields grow. The opium is harvested by the lesser bugbears of the Butchers under guidance of Shentresh and command of Kezhantak. The poppy milk is then processed and turned into the substance that is sold within the town of Pfefferain and elsewhere in the realm. Luchrestia, the Reconnaissance Carpet Mage and salesclerk of The Swirling Vortex, could be a valuable resource in tracking down and subverting this enterprise. She is a rare being that knows the current locations of the fields and the Keep, as well as exists in such a dependant state

that she might lead the party there to satisfy her own sad needs. Don't forget about the near-adult blue and green dragons that perform the large-scale transport of the processed opium to distant cities. Tailing such a transport squad is very risky due to the might of the dragons and the Imps who could summon reinforcements. Therefore, the PCs might strike either during loading or unloading of the illegal cargo. Some players might be satisfied if even one city could be spared the influx of such a horrid vice. Within town, many members of the Order of Moneychangers as well as the Moonlit Knights sell the vile substance to the undesirable element of the town, which then distributes it further. The PCs could strike at any in the sales chain within town, with JoannaLynne's blessing. Striking at an accomplished rogue provides the best results and also is the most risky and difficult to manage correctly, so the PCs might need to make do with a second or third-hand supplier and then work backwards to the source.

Lord Sesses creates many legitimate powerful magic items, with the help of Gortok, Shentresh and Zot, his personal lab assistant. He may or may not imbue them with curses, as he desires. He has been known to create custom items for those he considers with respect. Some items he sells might be found directly at his normal supplier, The Swirling Vortex. Others may be exchanged in a transaction performed in a hotel suite at Hellfire, either in person or by a Viceroy, backed up by invisible Butchers and Imps. Lord Sesses always delivers protective magic to the elite guards in person so they may know exactly who their benefactor is. Delving in this area could be most treacherous, as the party may deal with the Darkmage himself in a clearly set-up environment. At best, they might deal with Oizwix at The Swirling Vortex, who is a staunch Lord Sesses supporter and definitely reports any curious questioning to her guild extorter/advertiser.

Kezhantak operates as the loan shark of the Butchers, offering money to locals at 33% interest compounded monthly. He can be found in any area the Order of Moneychangers or the Moonlit Knights operate, or again by word of mouth through Hellfire. The bugbear commander has enabled citizens to continue to gamble at the casino and get themselves in even deeper hot water than before. Kezhantak acts very much like his commandeering self to his behind-payment clients as he does to the underling bugbear Butchers who displease him. The ever active Drincilla helps as the accountant for the loan clients, a task Kezhantak is glad to know rests in capable hands. Further, she sometimes finds a charming way to extract money out of the behind-payment clients.

PCs with diplomatic aspirations may hunt at the Great Halls of Justice as well as the Mayoral residence above it. Here they could find their greatest ally and their great-

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est hindrance. The Lady Justicator has a wealth of information and experience, but disburses such only after the PCs prove worthy and honorable. She doles out small tasks to the PCs first, such as smoking out a thief staking out one of the Triangle Markets as territory, or conducting surveillance upon one of the Butcher's suspected territories. Should the PCs perform admirably, JoannaLynne treats the PCs as boons handed down from the halfling goddess. She then does what she is able to in order to assist them in their joined goals, as long as they remain within the and directed against Lord Sesses and the Butchers. Should the PCs emerge victorious, they might need her assistance to escape Pfefferain unscathed.

His Most Exalted Authority, the Mayor of Pfefferain, Arellias auf der Henneschlieden is a staunch supporter of Lord Sesses and regards him as vital to the contin-

ued success of Pfefferain. The powerful mage in black supplies wondrous ideas and services to the town and Arellias aids Lord Sesses, as he is able. Arellias would rather lose Symasycks the IV, and the Elite Commander is a drinking buddy of his. Lord Sesses has helped reinforce the gates around the city, raised the magic guild to new heights, defended the town as necessary, donated to the poor and to local causes, attracted more and more visitors to Pfefferain and most of all slowly helps shape the town into the type of town Arellias wants to live in. Arellias is totally in thrall to Lord Sesses' words, acts, power, opium, and consort Drincilla who assumes the guise of Gynneth the former Celestial Bodies matron. He refuses to accept that Lord Sesses is anything but a shining boon for the town and has nothing but the highest regard for him, as well as quite a bit of fear.



Part Two, Act I: Assault of the Keep on the Butte

A. Blue Moods in Coldwater Canyon

PCs that have played well up to this point eventually locate the Lorremach Highhills maphex containing The Keep on the Butte. From there, they need to traverse the terrain and find the Coldwater Canyon. The canyon runs for about a half-mile and at its widest spans 450 feet between its sheer cliff faces. This canyon contains a small stream running through the lowest depths, past the Keep on the Butte and also the Ramp to the Keep. The Ramp is a thin oval cross-sectioned granite butte with a ramp-like formation that starts at the canyon bottom and rises up to the height of the Keep's

butte. Both buttes rise up about 120 feet from the canyon floor. The edge of the Ramp's top stands 140-feet away from the Keep's butte and no part of either butte comes close to touching the other. Piles of metal scrap seem dumped haphazardly between the two buttes. The Keep lies on top of its butte 60-feet below the top surface of the canyon, so at morning and at dusk it is still drenched in shadows. The south end of the canyon has been filled with both rockslides and judiciously placed *wall of stone* spells. The spells help form a daunting slight reverse cliff face that makes any attempt at scaling foolhardy. The only sure ways to the Keep are by flight or careful trudging from the northern crack of the canyon down to the Ramp, and then somehow span the gap to the Keep.

Encounter Level Synopsis (Detailed in Appendix I)

- A. Blue Moods in Coldwater Canyon (EL 11)
- B. The Sentries of the Keep (EL 5, 1)
- 4. The Winged Mount of the Butchers (EL 7)
- 11. Gortok's Mages of the Keep (EL 7, 6)
- 12. The Thing of A Thousand Faces (EL 10)
- 13. Shentresh's Acolytes of the Bugbears (EL 7, 6)
- 14. High Priest's Chambers (EL 12)
- 15, 16a. Into the Barracks - Front-Line Grunts (EL 9, 8, 7)
- 16b. Captain's Quarters (EL 11)
- 17, 18a. Into the Barracks - Sharp Shooting Grunts (EL 9, 8, 8)
- 18b. Rogue's Den (EL 11)

Area Details

Difficulty Level: 15

Adjust downward by 1 per avoided encounter.

Adjust upward by 1 if Zot conducts a counterattack.

Adjust upward by 2 if Jerjicus conducts a counterattack.

Entrances: Through the front door and portcullis of **Area 1**, then through the elevator of **Area 9**.

Exits: Past the prisoner cells (**Area 22**).

Detections: Evil and magic in the temple of the bugbears (**Area 19**).

Continuous Effects: None.

Shielding: None.

Standard Features: Corridor is typically composed of smooth granite slabs measuring 5 ft. by 10 ft. by 9 in. and typically shows a walkway of 15 ft. wide and 15 ft. high. Whitish-blue glowing nodules appear 5 ft. from the floor every 30ft., which equal dim torchlight. Doors typically are locked, iron-reinforced wood (2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 20; Break [DC 23], Open Lock [DC 20]). All secret doors typically are made from stone (2 in. thick; Hardness 8; hp 30; Break [DC 22], Open Lock [DC 20], Search [DC 20]).

To deter unauthorized movement, one of the opium-running dragons is stationed near the north crack of the canyon. A young adult male blue dragon, Myron the Blue, makes his lair behind a *permanent image* of natural canyon sheer cliff face. This lair is nearly 300 feet from where the canyon starts its descent into the earth and the canyon has widened from 10 feet to 60 feet already at this point. Before and beyond this lair a few sinkholes exist, which might alert the PCs to danger. A large iron chest centrally rests in a 20-foot square niche opposite his lair. In the center of the far wall of the niche, near the floor, appears a bas-relief of a circular picture frame, rendered in azure blue stone. Off to the right side of the picture frame attached to the wall is inset a gilded panel with four yellowish stone buttons. This is one of Lord Sesses' teleporters, explained in **Appendix 2**. Near the right hand side edge of the niche opening rests an elaborate sign of shiny glossiron rods against a blackened steel plate that reads, "*Display your cameo high or tithe a grand total of gilded property. Ignore this demand to meet Myron the Blue.*" PCs succeed in Move Silently and Hide opposed checks versus Myron's skills successfully avoid an encounter with this villain.

Should Myron detect them by some means, then he sets up his will o' wisp ruse. He prepares himself and casts *mage armor* and then *protection from good* if there is time for it. Looking through the cliff illusion, he casts *dancing lights*, bringing a large, pale blue will o' wisp into being between himself and the chest. Myron motions the wisp in a threatening manner. He uses his innate blue dragon vocal mimicry ability as well as *ventriloquism* and repeats the first line of the message near the chest. Try to emote the most quavering, vibrato-laden ghostly voice you can muster. This faux-wisp states its name and parlays, dispelling any notion of a *programmed illusion* or such other contrivance. The wisp is adamant that any group who passes by must either show the correct cameo amulet or deposit items totaling at least 1,000 gp in the chest. The chest's lid is oiled and easily opened to facilitate the demand.

PCs that steadfastly refuse to follow these instructions receive a surprise breath weapon blast from the real Myron the Blue behind the illusory curtain, which seems to pass right under the wisp toward the PCs. They get a chance to disbelieve the false wall as this happens by making a Will save (DC 20). The wisp offers one more chance to acquiesce otherwise melee ensues. Once combat is underway, Myron breathes from behind his façade until that ruse is detected. From there, he exits his lair and takes to the air to strafe the party as desired.

Should Myron take substantial damage, he flies over to the east face of the canyon above the chest niche and slaps his front paw against a small boulder in a

recessed area. This special boulder has a *stone of alarm* attached to it. When struck, it emits a pulsed shriek which can be heard a quarter-mile away and alerts all at the Keep that Myron and the chest need attention. Reinforcements arrive as quickly as they may fly or teleport. Gauge the balance of power as the battle currently stands to calculate what reinforcements, if any, appear. Myron fights in a persistent, headstrong manner until taken down below 20% of maximum hit points, whereupon he flees from the canyon into the Highhills. His lair itself is a domed cavern some 25-feet high at the top and 40-feet wide. It sinks down about 5 feet from the opening and is a pure natural cavern complete with stalactites and stalagmites. A set of six iron longspear rest against a stonemasoned fire pit off to the left side. The middles of each longspear are charred and still contain dried blood. A couple iron shortspears are used as forks and toothpicks. A recently slain bear rests in a pit nearby which serves as a larder.

On the right side rests a carved granite throne with dragonhead armrests. A bent iron bar sculpture of a flying dragon hangs upon a pair of clawed stalactites above it. On the throne is a wooden crate on top of an iron strongbox. Battered, charred and otherwise destroyed suits of armor form a museum display next to the throne. Most of these suits show gaping holes or outright absences of limbs. Piles of broken weapons decorate the spaces between the displayed suits. It is a grisly scene of carnage lovingly arranged by its curator as a shrine to its prowess.

Office Politics: Myron is an alternate 'shipment dragon' who has always lived near the Coldwater Canyon and now functions as an alarm system and reinforcement of the Keep. This dragon was instrumental in creating the pact with Lord Sesses and the Town of Pfefferain. For his trouble, Lord Sesses has installed him as an early warning device for anyone who travels near the Keep. Myron keeps most of the tithes in the chest, giving the Butchers a small cut of the proceeds. He is friend to Lord Sesses, Drincilla, Kilitus Maximus, Shentresh, Kezhantak and Opiate. Myron treats the other Butchers with respect, as he knows they are one large grouping ruled by Lord Sesses. When any smuggling dragon is unable to make their normal flight, Myron takes their place and is paid the usual rate plus a small bonus, so he is quite happy with the current situation.

Myron the Blue, Male Young Adult Blue Dragon: CR 11; L Dragon (Earth); HD 19d12+76; hp 205; Init +0 (Dex); Spd 40 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor), burrow 20 ft.; AC 26 (+17 natural, -1 size); Atk +24 melee (2d6+7, bite); Full Atk +24 melee (2d6+7, bite), +19 melee (1d8+3 [x2], claw), +19 melee (1d6+3 [x2], wing), and +19 melee (1d8+10, tail slap); Face/Reach: 5ft. by 10 ft./10ft.; SA breath weapon (line of electricity, 5 ft. by



5ft. by 80 ft., 10d6, Ref DC 23 for half), frightful presence (Will DC 21 negates), spells; SQ blindsight (150 ft.), damage reduction (5/+1), dragon abilities, immunities (electricity, sleep, paralysis), keen sense (500 ft.), sound imitation (Will DC 21 negates), SR 19, spell-like abilities; AL LE; SV Fort +15, Ref +11, Will +13; Str 24, Dex 10, Con 19, Int 14, Wis 15, Cha 14.

Skills: Bluff +18, Concentration +21, Diplomacy +15, Escape Artist +16, Intimidate +4, Knowledge (arcana) +21, Listen +21, Search +21, Sense Motive +15, Sleight of Hand +2, Spellcraft +23, Spot +21. **Feats:** Flyby Attack, Hover, Power Attack, Improved Sunder, Wingover.

SA—Spell-like Abilities (Sp): Myron can also cast *create/despoil water* three times per day as a 5th-level Cleric. It works like the create water spell, except that Myron can decide to destroy water instead of creating it, which automatically spoils unattended liquids containing water. Magic items (such as potions) and items in a creature's possession must succeed at a Will save (DC 21) or be ruined.

SQ—Sound Imitation (Ex): Myron can mimic any voice he has heard. He sings like a bard, growls like a lion or quavers his voice like a ghost. He faithfully imitates Lord Sesses, Drincilla, Zot, Opiate, any bugbear or Imp, and even The Sound of Chaos.

Arcane Spells Known (Cast per Day: 6/6; base DC 12 + spell level): 0th—dancing lights, detect magic,

mending, prestidigitation, read magic; 1st—cure light wounds, mage armor, unseen servant.

Languages: Common, Draconic, Gnomish, and Halfling.

Tactics: Myron defends himself with spells and sets up the will o' wisp ruse. He is also well versed in using Fly By and Hover attacks. He thrills at using Sunder upon a fighter's weapons. A favored tactic of his is to fly over a victim at an altitude of 60 feet, then descend straight down onto the opponent he deems the toughest, breathing all the while. He then performs a wingover 90-degree turn and flies either up or down the canyon and climbs again. This is how some of the sinkholes have been created.

Treasure: In the back of the cavern is a wide flattened area bereft of stalagmites that contains a thin layer of small ornamental gemstones such as agate, azurite, malachite, onyx, quartz and turquoise. There are a few thousand of them, and they are between 0 to 2 gp each. They all hide the 760 pp, 3,250 gp, 6,725 sp and 11,845 cp resting in a thin pit underneath. The coppers are the first coinage found with the other coins at the bottom. The throne is chipped in places, very heavy, and holds the bulk of the most interesting treasure. The throne, which might fetch a few hundred gold pieces, provides a difficult logistics problem, as it weighs two metric tons. The dragon sculpture is a Danielle Adamantite original and fetches 1,600 gp, provided a character can

succeed at a Strength check (DC 18) and a Dexterity check (DC 15) to remove it from its wedged position without damage. None of the armor is worth anything, although a Spellcraft check (DC 12) could tell that some were magical in nature before their demise. The wooden crate is a minor parcel of cut opium product, worth about 2,000 gp if sold through the proper connections. Myron planned to use it to buy more gems. The strong-box is unlocked and not trapped. It reveals a *wand of keen edge* (12 charges), a *helm of comprehending languages*, a *rope of climbing*, a sapphire brooch (1,100 gp), a sapphire ring (750 gp), a blue quartz crystal ball (600 gp), a blue topaz pendant (350 gp), a silver thurible (150 gp), five amethyst geodes (50 gp each), 39 wavy-bladed daggers (four of which are *+1 daggers*), a broken but beautifully rune-inscribed longsword, and a gilded box in the shape of a pyramid. If the tip of the pyramid is depressed, hatches open on all three outward sides. The box contains Myron's collection of sapphires and blue topaz gemstones: 3,500 gp, 2,500 gp, 1,000 (x2), 750 gp, 500 gp (x2), 350 gp (x2), 250 gp (x3), 100 gp (x8), 50 gp (x14). Due to his size, Myron usually creates an *unseen servant* to display and pack away his gems.

B. Approaching the Keep on the Butte

The rest of the quarter mile journey down the canyon can be as eventful as you wish. Remember that very few unauthorized creatures exist in Coldwater Canyon, so only dispatch a **Recon Imp Brigade** or a small water-gathering force of **2d3 Butchers grunts**, if anything at all.

Once the PCs are able to see the Ramp to the Keep, they are spotting targets. **Six imps** are always charged with surveillance of the Keep on a rotating basis. Two man the sides closest to the Ramp to the Keep, wielding *wands of enemy detection*, one mans each side nearest the canyon walls, and one gets the 'lax-duty' of the side nearest the blockaded canyon edge. Overseeing them all is **Opiate, the evil pseudodragon**. The imps generally flit around invisibly or like red-eyed ravens in the gloom. Opiate generally sticks close to the Keep and monitors the imps who resent its *see invisible* power. "Opie" is good friends with Myron and aids him as necessary. If the evil pseudodragon notices that strangers have spotted it, he telepathically warns the strangers "It's after me! It's after me!" If he diverts attention in this way, he escapes to warn other Butchers of attack.

Once the PCs mount the Ramp to the Keep, they note a 140-foot gap exists between the two buttes. The Keep clearly dominates the view southward. There is no vis-

ible means to travel the gap and no convenient draw-bridge spans that distance.

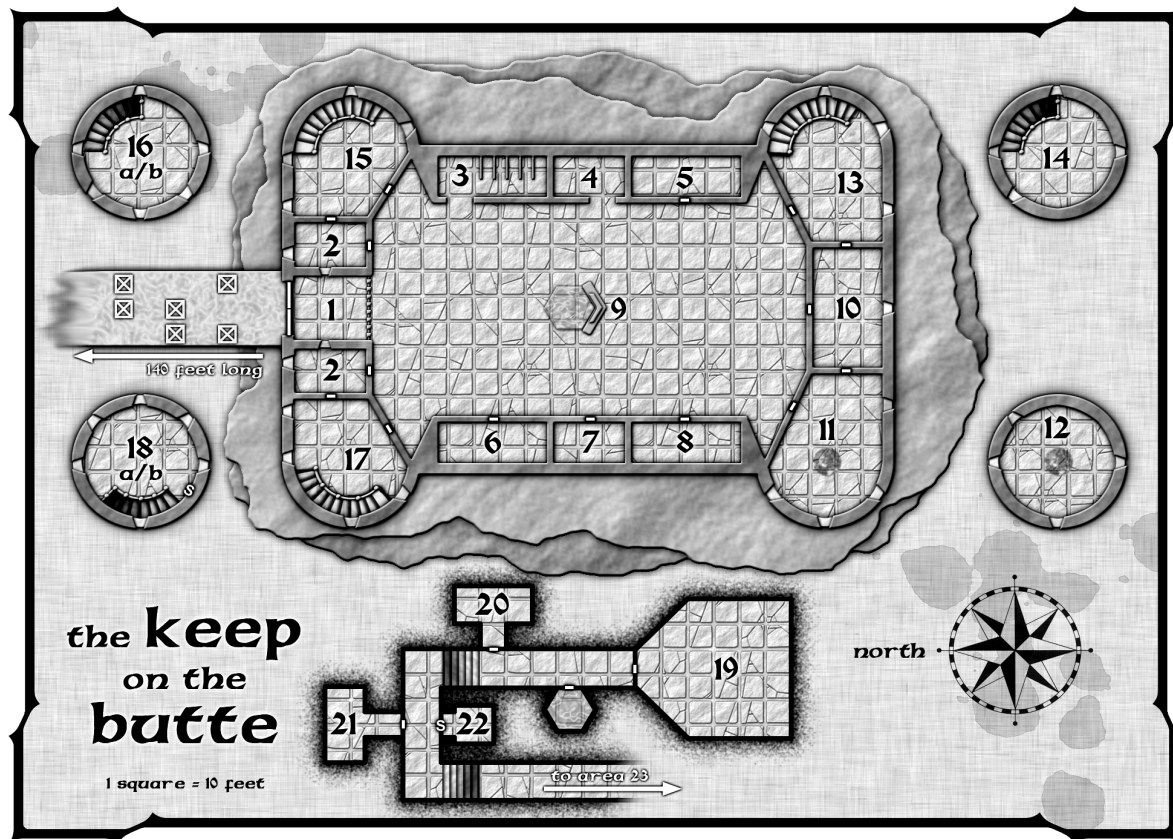
A specially programmed magical walkway exists only whenever anyone steps upon the summit of the Ramp or beyond the doorway of the Keep. This unique horizontal 30-foot wide *wall of ice* effect appears for 15 minutes then winks out of existence again. The ice appears uniformly opaque and is engineered with buttresses and arches. The *wall of ice* walkway has intermittent 10-foot square thin patches that only support 40 pounds of weight. Normally each 10-foot square supports 960 pounds. Weight above this tolerance breaks through the ice walkway and drops through to fall 120 feet upon the mounds of destroyed junk that lay between the buttes.

The 10-foot by 30-foot sections at the edges never contain thin patches, only the middle 120-feet by 30-foot area does. The position of the thin patches and attendant junk underneath magically rotates ten feet north every full moon. A representation of the thin patches appears upon the elevator (**Area 9**) inside the Keep compound for the Butchers' use. The junk is there to allow the Butchers a chance at traversing without a map, as well as offering a place to discard comfy items like old rusty swords, pit spikes, morningstar spikes, broken caltrops, smashed ceramic jars and glass beakers, rusty twisted iron ladders and old broken spring shards.

Those who the Darkmage summons by foot are given a *Lord Sesses amulet* to pass by Myron and a cryptic map showing the current correct path on the ice draw-bridge, but not told why. Generally, caravans of raw materials or items that can't fit through the *teleporters* need to trudge this gauntlet.

For protection from above, The Keep has a series of *permanent* hemispherical *walls of force* arranged 10-feet above the ceiling of the Keep. There are three rows of cup like hemispheres; two rows of five surrounding a row of six in a tightly packed honeycomb pattern. These cups of force serve many functions. First, they collect rainwater and keep the courtyard relatively dry. Secondly, they make great defense against invasion by flying critters, which tend to unwittingly slam into them, and deflect any breath weapons. In the case of The Sound of Chaos, the cups of *force* actually tend to act like parabolic reflectors for its attacks. Since the yrthak is vulnerable to sonic attacks, it tends to leave the Keep alone. During ground attacks archers lay in the cups, seemingly floating in air, and shoot over the lips of the cups with great cover advantage (75%). The archers start at the edge cups and leap from cup to cup as the battle rages on. The triangle-like spaces between the cups give access to shoot enemies inside the Keep's courtyard.

Due to the whips of the Bugbears, phase spider webs



intermittently cover the Keep's butte. From time to time both phase spiders appear upon the Keep's butte to weave webs and scan the canyon for food. There are sufficient areas where webs do not cover, and these areas allow PCs Climb checks (DC 15) to climb at half-speed each round. Checks failed by 1 to 4 points merely freeze the position for that round. Checks failed by 5 or more indicate a fall. Where the webs do not cover, climbers may run afoul of the trapped handholds interspersed around the butte. Conduct checks every 10 feet with a result of '1' on 1d6, denoting a trap that can be triggered. The imp sentries are well aware of these trapped handholds, and thrill to catch wizards who try to gain entry to the Butte via *passwall* with them.

Thin Ice Patches Trap: CR 9; magic device; location trigger; automatic reset; Reflex save (DC 20) avoids; 120 ft. deep (12d6 points, fall); junk pile spikes (Atk +6 melee, 1d4 spikes for 1d3+5 each); Intelligence check (DC 16) after finding a thin patch notices the junk piles lining up with all the thin patches.

Trapped Handholds: CR 4; magic device; touch trigger; automatic reset; spell effect (*dispel magic*; 16th-level wizard); Search (DC 22); Disable Device (DC 20).

Conducting the Assault

The Keep offers a true battle royal to those who prefer a direct confrontation without subterfuge. If the *stone of alert* is triggered near Myron or the imp sentries are alerted to enemy PC presences, many wheels are set in motion. First, at least one of the viceroys is updated to the events. That viceroy alerts his troops as well as the other factions in the Keep. Tables are overturned as barricades and archery shields. Imp firemen carry Butchers archers to the overhead force cups. The Butchers chain of command gets the bugbears and chimera set up into position, with weapons envenomed and primed for battle. Once Kezhantak knows of the event he pushes the ruby alert button that rings the chime in Lord Sesses' study. Zot in **Area 26e** alerts Jerjicus and Sessestophelzine that enemies have arrived. Jerjicus turns into a horned owl, and flies off to rest upon the Darkmage's shoulder. Gathered at **Area 26g**, both the Darkmage and Jerjicus gaze at the crystal ball and watch the proceedings with confident lassitude. Meanwhile, Zot travels via teleporter from **Area 26b** to **Area 9** to learn the situation and afterwards reports to Lord Sesses. Zot may or may not stay with the bugbears; that is your decision. Should the invasion prove effective, an angry Lord Sesses activates the *warding plaque* and summons the 2 tough devils. Jerjicus waits outside the gilded door at **Area 26a** for a

chance to drain anti-outsider spells. In extremis, the devils and Jerjicus are deployed against the PCs as soon as possible ignoring the cover of the *guards and wards*.

The Butchers know the Keep layout in exacting detail and should wisely fall back and counterattack as the situation directs. They may lead PCs in a merry chase around the courtyard and through connecting chambers, even down the elevator to the Temple of the Bugbears and the prisoner cells. Use the bugbears to wear the PCs down steadily and drain them of spells and curatives. Use the least amount of resources at one time to make the PCs fear for their lives. These bugbears are resilient if played that way, especially when using Gortok, Zot and Jerjicus in auxiliary roles. When the bugbears finally are whittled down to the viceroys and a few grunts, taunt the PCs and conduct a fighting retreat down the elevator. Counterattack from the Temple and from the prisoner cell area. Eventually lead the PCs further beyond to the devils at **Area 26a**. With skillful defense, Zot and the viceroys most likely survive past **Act 1**.

A party that earnestly does its reconnaissance homework, removes Opiate and the Imps from the equation and thereafter uses silent invisible flight to the Keep has a distinct advantage over those that treat the Keep like a slough. Covert operations avoid Myron, the ice wall walkway, the wand-wielding imp sentries, and most of the poisons that the Butchers prefer to use. Also, the higher viceroys at this point operate in the dark towards the party's intent. Even worse, none find out until a bugbear officer or scout takes damage and Jerjicus bothers to check his *ring of status*. If the minor bugbears are defeated quickly and the officers are *held* or destroyed before any alert the Darkmage, Lord Sesses has little time to reinforce the laboratories. Although the *warding plaque* takes little time to activate, the devil summoning takes ten full minutes. Lord Sesses, Zot and Jerjicus **could be attacked with surprise without devilish reinforcements!**

The Keep on the Butte

The remaining text describes the Keep, which houses the bugbear Butchers, and the connection to the laboratories of Lord Sesses. It is typically presented as descriptive passages followed by details and explanations. Read the italicized passages aloud and spice them with favored details. Plan an intelligent defense around these **Act 1 areas**.

1. Obstructions (EL 2)

You face two large wooden doors with iron reinforcing bands. They seem monolithic. Each door contains the arcane mark of Lord Sesses composed of bent

glossiron bars and inset into the wood.

Unless Butchers or authorized visitors are passing through, the front gate-doors are always closed, then barred, and the portcullis behind it is always down. The front gate-doors are strong double-thick portals. The portcullis is typical of such iron-constructed obstacle. The winch wheel is located in the eastern assault cubicle and can be seen through the arrow slits. All movable parts are oiled and well maintained.

PCs have options of destroying the doors and the bars, figuring out a way to open them or ignoring them altogether and flying into the courtyard.

Iron Reinforced Wooden Front Gate-Doors: 4 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 40; Break (DC 23).

Iron Portcullis: 6 in. thick; Hardness 10; hp 90; Break (DC 28).

2. Man the Assault Cubicles

Usually **2 Butchers**, although when limited in numbers it is limited to one, guard both cubicles and buffet attackers with bolt fire through the arrow slits. The east cubicle contains the portcullis winch wheel that raises and lowers the portcullis. If sufficient preparation time is given, a Keep Mage is assigned to each cubicle as support.

3. Courtyard Stables

This area contains the horse stables. There are well-maintained pens for 5 horses, plus a feed granary and a hay-bale storage area. Nearby is a section with anvil, hammer and nails for shoeing.

Depending upon Butcher activity, these stalls could contain horses. If they do and sufficient preparation time is given, the horses are led behind the teleporter at **Area 9**.

4. The Winged Mount of the Butchers (EL 7)

This looks to be a large hay-strewn chamber, perhaps for another horse. There is a metal meat trough to the north and a shallow pit and shovel to the south.

This area contains the hay-strewn resting-place for Kilitus Maximus the blue-headed chimera. It is the personal pet of Kezhantak the Butcher bugbear commander and allows Kezhantak or Shentresh to ride it. If sufficient preparation time is given, Shentresh mounts Kilitus and they both alight on top of the southern battlement, ready to pounce. If not, the chimera functions quite well alone.

5. Butcher Facilities

This area contains two stone tub-basins, each with a faucet that springs from a copper apparatus in the far corner. On the wall near the doorway, burlap towels rest on pegs. The southern area leads to a pair of stone commodes.

Each faucet has two push buttons. Pushing the top button causes a healthy stream of water to pour forth from the faucet. Pushing the bottom button activates the heating elements. The stone commode squares lead to a 50-foot by 10-foot by 10-foot charred pit. Zot subjects this pit to energy damage on a regular basis.

6. Storage Chamber

This chamber contains a whole host of miscellaneous junk. It would probably take ten minutes to sort through all the things here.

Doors lead to storage areas that include extra bedding, a half-made bunk, wood crafting items, planks of wood, six wooden barrels, two dozen empty crates, four tables with arrow slits in them, eight benches, four practice dummies, a crate of ceramic disks, a miniature ballista with a disk on top of it, raw iron for blades, iron pommels, leather grips wraps, a wide assortment of wooden sparring weapons, a tun of grease, four shovels, eight stacked chairs and various stuffed animal heads mounted on the walls.

7. The Butcher's Armory

This chamber contains what looks like a small armory, complete with forge and utensils.

There are workbenches, barrels of water, vinegar and sand, a coal chamber, a brick forge located on the south wall, an anvil, a bellows, a set of hammers and mallets, a couple nicked wooden chairs, and an assortment of metal items on the table. There are two dagger blades, three longswords blades, three brass pommels, two iron pommels, four sets of iron bandings for barrels, leather and chain for a horse's tack and harness, a set of broken manacles, a pair of tongs, two rasps and a set of four picks. Next to the water bucket is a crate of iron ingots.

8. The Mess Hall

Delicious meaty scents hang in the air. Your noses direct your gaze toward a niche in the north wall, where a boar roasts on a spit. Besides it is a clay oven. Many shelves and cabinets line the west wall of this room. A large preparation table rests in the middle heaped with food supplies and cutlery. Against the south wall rest two tables with four sturdy chairs under each. This area



is maintained with military precision.

This is the kitchen and lesser dining area. The coals in the spit, the many knives on the large table and the sturdy tables and chairs make this an appropriate 'last stand' for trapped guards. A multitude of food and cooking materials are kept in the shelves and cabinets on the wall and under the table. The southernmost cabinet is in actuality a magically cooled meat locker. Those who look around note that smoke from the spit seems to vanish near the ceiling.

9. Movement Nerve Center

A slightly taller than man-sized black stone sculpture appears in the courtyard. It seems as wide as it is tall and perhaps a yard thick, maybe more. It is shaped like an L with the opening facing the north. The monolith contains a deep blue disc-like cylinder that points due north. Off to the right side of the cylinder attached to the sculpture is inset a gilded panel with four yellowish buttons.

If the teleporter has been used in the last five minutes, the following description applies: the cylinder's interior glows with roiling purple vapors.

Before it lays a large hexagonal glossy surface. The surface is a translucent maroon-like hue that seems to swim of its own accord. When you approach the hexa-

gon, you note it has a series of little silver boxes that seem to float within the gloss, but near enough to the surface for a clear view. They form patterns in a definite line, encapsulated by an icy blue rectangle.

The black granite monolith contains one of the teleporters that Lord Sesses has affixed to the Keep. These teleporters are explained in **Appendix 2**. If Zot arrives from **Area 26b** to this teleporter, he allows it to deactivate after 5 minutes. The elevator shaft is 40 feet deep and a complex magical key activates the hexagonal elevator.

There are three sets of icy blue rectangles, although only two are active and viewable at any one time, and they set off multiple effects. The icy blue rectangles with silver boxes give a representation of where the thin patches exist currently in the ice walkway between the two buttes. If someone traces an unbroken line from one side of the silver boxes to the other, always staying within the icy blue rectangle as if they were correctly traversing the icy walkway, the elevator activates, icy blue rectangles appear in one place, disappear in another, and *wall of force* effects activate or deactivate as necessary. If the hexagonal elevator starts at the courtyard, tracing the correct path upon the rectangle sinks the elevator, brings forth another rectangle under the gilded panel of the *teleporter*, dispels the rectangle upon the wall near the bottom entrance, and produces a *forcecage* (20 ft. barred cube, no bottom plane) effect that surrounds the hole at Keep level. This safety mechanism keeps unwary Butchers and visitors from falling down the elevator shaft, and dissipates once the elevator resets itself at Keep level. If the hexagonal elevator starts at the bottom of the shaft, tracing the correct path upon the rectangle raises the elevator, brings forth another rectangle upon the wall near the bottom entrance, dispels the rectangle under the gilded panel of the *teleporter*, and produces a vertical *wall of force* emplaced along the east wall of the shaft's bottom. This safety mechanism keeps unwary Butchers and visitors from gruesome crushing by a descending elevator, and dissipates once the elevator resets itself at temple level.

10. Meeting Hall

This area contains stout wooden tables and benches and must function as a meeting hall or dining hall. The only things of note in the room are two black tapestries that contain a silver-threaded arcane mark of Lord Sesses.

11. Gortok's Keep Mages (EL 7, 6)

You have found a barracks for six people. There is more than ample room to move between the bunks. Two writing tables and a cabinet line the walls. Tapestries

adorn the walls, depicting magical battle and research. These barracks are maintained with military spit-and-polish. Although you know this room occupies a lower level of a tower, there is no stairwell leading upward.

This chamber contains six finely appointed bunks with soft mattresses and pillows. The chests are larger and better locked than in the other barracks of the Keep, requiring a successful Open Lock check (DC 20) to open. A pair of study tables contains scrolls and tomes. Each has a plush chair nearby.

Treasure: There is a weapon cabinet containing six daggers, four light crossbows and thirty-two extra crossbow bolts, plus a vial of phase spider venom. Each locked chest contains 4d% gp and 8d% sp plus a memento or three which could be of fine jewelry or lesser magical quality. Chests also contain component pouches, spare spell components, reams of notes, quills and ink, mortars and pestles, books and manuals pertinent to study, plus an assortment of beakers, devices and lab apparatuses.

12. The Thing of A Thousand Faces (EL 10)

This modest study contains only a comfortable leather recliner chair anchored to the east wall, a roll-top desk and a curved set of shelves. The roll-top desk contains arcane texts, many scrolls, a book or two and a miniature head of a metallic blue dragon that ejects pastel blue light. This tower has no convenient stairwell.

Normally seated in the chair in its native form is Gortok, a viceroy of the Butchers and master to the apprentice mages in The Keep. Gortok assumes the form of an air mephitis and flies straight up through the ceiling's *permanent image* to its study. Any apprentice must figure out a way to do the same; that is part of their initiation.

One may bend the neck of the dragonhead. Doing so opens and shuts the jaws to adjust the light intensity. A levitating quill teeters above a jar of magic sepia. If one touches the quill, it then writes whatever comes to mind upon any desired parchment, gathering any ink necessary automatically.

Gortok does not lock his belongings, as he believes the inaccessibility effectively guards his study. His spell texts are easily found either on his desk or in his shelving. Many texts are of engineering, known magical items and artifacts and various humanoid creature anatomies. Extra spell components are found in the roll-top slots.

Treasure: The doppelganger wears almost all of his treasure, but keeps 24pp and 348 gp in one drawer, and 12 rubies worth 500 gp, 400 gp (x2), 300 gp (x4), 200 gp (x2) and 100 gp (x3) in a false bottom of an-

other drawer, notable by a Search check (DC 20). The dragonhead lamp would fetch 1,250 gp, and the magic quill would fetch 750 gp to a merchant of magical wares.

13. Shentresh's Acolytes of the Bugbears (EL 7, 6)

You have found a barracks for six people. There is more than ample room to move between the bunks. Two writing tables and a cabinet line the walls. Tapestries adorn the walls, depicting battle and debauchery of humanoid and devilish variety alike. One particular creature looks like a huge snaggletoothed bugbear. These barracks are maintained with military spit and polish.

This chamber contains six finely appointed bunks with soft mattresses and pillows. The chests are larger and better locked than in the other barracks of the Keep, requiring a successful Open Lock check (DC 20) to open. A pair of study tables contains scrolls and tomes. Each has a plush chair nearby.

Treasure: There is a weapon cabinet containing two morningstars, twelve javelins, four light crossbows and thirty-two extra crossbow bolts, plus two vials of monstrous spider venom. Each locked chest contains 3d% gp and 6d% sp plus a memento or three which could be of fine jewelry or mundane magical quality. Chests also contain unholy mementoes of the bugbear deity, plus spare censers, incense, oil, and a few vials of unholy water.

14. High Priest's Chambers (EL 12)

Tapestries depicting some fanged furry humanoid deity line the walls of this room. Embroidered fur rugs line the floor. The scent of sandalwood and brimstone incense wafts about. Around the room are varnished oaken cabinets and drawers, an ornate vestment rack, a black-metal chest, and a plush oaken bed. A finely crafted red and black marble altar with the likeness of the fanged humanoid deity appears against the west wall. A silvered, lit candle in a silver stand rests upon the altar. A slew of knickknacks lie upon the drawers and all of the furniture. A prayer rug lies in front of the altar and a lit brazier and censer rest to either side.

This is the personal chamber of Shentresh, the high priest of the Butchers and sworn cleric of the god of the bugbears. Conferences with lesser healers and officers occur here, as well as personal prayer to his evil god. Shentresh is a pack rat and loads the tops of his furniture with near countless small idols and figurines, ornate small boxes containing incense, parchments, and vials of unholy water, candles, and vials of blood. Shelves contain meditation books, religious archives,

and spell texts of his dark religion. The metal chest contains two more black tapestries, ornate black robes, and a box of two silvered candles.

Most of the items would be worthless to any but a priest of the bugbears, but there are useful things to others, detailed under the treasure section, contained in the clutter.

When the altar is searched or destroyed, a large recess reveals an iron strongbox without a lock.

Altar: 2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 12; Break (DC 18)18; Open Lock (DC 18); Search (DC 17).

Treasure: Inside the metal chest are some additional valuable items positioned as described. Six *potions of cure light wounds* lie in a box in the drawers. A *ring of bestow curse* (CL 12, -4 to actions) rests inside a small silver box engraved "To Shentresh." The chest also contains two *candles of invocation*, and a third is lit upon the altar. Snuffing the lit candle reduces Shentresh's spell capabilities to normal. The unlocked lock box hidden in the altar holds some items of interesting, including 1,845 gp and 715 sp, a *potion of neutralize poison*, and a *divine scroll* (CL 5; *protection from good*). Further, the defiler must make a Will save (DC 19) or suffer a *bestowed curse* (cast at 7th level) of -4 to all actions until magically removed.

15, 16a, 17, 18a. Into the Barracks (EL 9, 8, 7 - 9, 8, 8)

You have found a cramped barracks for 12 people. Tapestries adorn the walls, depicting battle and debauchery. Cabinets appear between arrow slits and look long enough to contain pole arms. These barracks are maintained with military spit-and-polish.

These large rooms contain twelve bunks, each with mattresses and a locked chest underneath (Hardness 5, hp 10, Open Lock [DC 15], Break [DC 18]) and four weapons cabinets.

Treasure: The weapons cabinets containing six morningstars, thirty-two javelins, six light and two heavy crossbows, 144 extra crossbow bolts, plus three vials of monstrous spider venom and three vials of phase spider venom in various stages of emptiness. Each locked chest contains 6d10 gp, 6d20 sp, plus a 1 in 3 chance of some personal memento such as a minor piece of jewelry, a map, or a marked card deck. Six of the chests in **Areas 16a** and **18a** contain 10d10 gp and 3d% sp plus a memento or two which could be of mundane magical quality, like a set of dice that usually roll 7s.

16b. Captain's Quarters (EL 11)

You find an administrative office for a war general. A plush leather chair squats in the northwest corner of the chamber, looking at the oaken desk and silver-inlaid oaken chair in the middle. A pair of iron chests rest against the southwest wall, a mahogany set of draw-

ers rests on the south wall. Papers lie on the desk, near a blue dragonhead lamp on a tall stand. The southeast corner contains a huge oaken bed with brass railings, black pillows and bedding. Silk tapestries depict mesmerizing patterns in this large chamber. The floor is carpeted in a dark blue hue.

This is Kezhantak's room and functions as sleeping quarters, administrative post and interrogation zone. His desk contains ledgers of every one of the Butchers, including the priests and rogues. They contain information on status, duties, training progress, and personal profiles. Kezhantak keeps scripted accounts of his dealings with Jerjicus and suppliers. The chests are empty except for a vial of phase spider venom and a vial of monstrous spider venom; as he is carrying his armor and weaponry. The set of drawers contains only personal clothing and mementoes of battles he has fought. There is a fake ruby gem that is attached to a golden plate on the northwest wall. Should Kezhantak become alerted to enemy movement near the Keep, he presses this gem that activates a chime in **Area 26e**, the Darkmage's study.

Treasure: A hidden silver coffer (Hardness 5, hp 8), found only upon a successful Search check (DC 20) within his desk, contains the Commander's treasure. The coffer would fetch 750 gp by itself and contains 8 platinum bars worth 500 gp each, 31 gold bars worth 50 gp each, 55 pp, and 260 gp. A golden necklace with 3 fire opals worth 1,250 gp hides in a false top of the coffer. As Kezhantak trusts very few, his coffer is magically trapped with a chilling burst trap.

Chilling Burst Trap: CR 3; magic device; touch trigger; automatic reset; hidden switch bypass (Search DC 25); spell effect (5th-level wizard, 5d6 cold, Reflex save DC 13 for half); multiple targets (all in 10-ft.-sphere); Search (DC 22); Disable Device (DC 22).

18b. Rogue's Den (EL II)

A hemp hammock with black pillows and bedding fills the southwest corner. A plush leather chair squats in the middle of the chamber. A pair of iron chests rest against the east wall, a mahogany set of drawers rests on the south wall. Small round tables of dark ash stand near the hammock. One is empty, but another contains what looks to be a disguise kit and a closed blue dragonhead lamp. Dark tapestries abound in this chamber depicting glowing gems and spectral nightmarish sights. The floor is carpeted in a dark blue hue.

This is Rasharnor's chamber. The drawers contain clothing, extra surveillance gear, thieving equipment, plus ledgers. Amongst his equipment are items like masterwork locks, a masterwork lock pick set, trap blades and needles, silk rope, a treble grapple, plus a list of contacts/fences in various towns near the swamplands. The ledgers hold paperwork detailing the lesser

rogues of the Butchers as well as the rogues in The Order of Moneychangers, which he also leads.

The secret door is a slide-down panel, activated by pressing a nearby stud. It allows access to the 1 ft. by 18 in. chamber beyond, whose only occupant is a mithral strongbox (Hardness 15; hp 15; Break [DC 25]; Open Lock [DC 25]), trapped with a weakness gas trap.

Metal Secret Door: 1 in. thick; Hardness 10; hp 30; Break (DC 25); Open Lock (DC 22); Search (DC 20).

Weakness Gas Trap: CR 5; mechanical; touch trigger; repair reset; hidden lock bypass (Search DC 25, Open Lock DC 30); gas; never miss; onset delay (1 round); poison (vapors of shadow's poison, Fortitude DC 17 resists; 1 perm. Str/2d6 temp. Str); multiple targets (all in 15-ft.-cloud); Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 22).

Treasure: Under a pillow is a gilded +1 *stiletto* (1d3 damage, crit x3, proficiency as a dagger). The two round tables are gem-encrusted along the edges, showing oval moonstones, and fetch 350 gp each. The chests are empty, and normally contain his armor and favored stealth equipment. Under the ceiling of the set of drawers, needing a Search check (DC 22) to find, is a niche containing a velvet bag with gold thread pulls. Inside is his collection of semiprecious and opaque stones, 26 in all, each worth 1d12x10 gp. A locked ivory coffer, trapped with a weakness gas trap (same as above), rests in the bottom drawer and contains his coinage, 88 pp and 455 gp, along with a vial of phase spider venom and a vial of monstrous spider venom. The coffer itself is worth 350 gp. Inside the mithral chest is Rasharnor's prized gem collection. A teak box contains his emeralds and sapphires worth 750 gp, 500 gp, 400 gp (x2) and 300 gp (x3). A velvet sack with gold threading contains 21 amethysts, topazes, and rhodolite garnets worth 400 gp, 250 gp, 150 gp, 100 gp (x3), 75 gp (x5), and 50 gp (x10). A false top of the chest holds a wad of silk covering his prized diamond worth 1,500 gp and another wad surrounding a jeweler's loupe. His platinum jeweler's loupe is non-magical but can detect flaws in gems with 50% more accuracy. Its value is 650 gp. There are two vials of vapors of shadows, should his traps need to be reset. They each would fetch 350 gp on the open market. The chest itself would fetch 1,750 gp.

19. Temple of Stealthy Pummeling (EL 5)

This priestly chamber has a vaulted 20 foot high ceiling and a marbled floor with a flurry of extravagant tapestries upon each wall. Two carved marble idols of a hulking fanged humanoid rest along the diagonal walls. Bones of enemies rest upon stands in front of the idols. Two rows of three oaken pews line the north

and south walls. A massive marble dais and altar rest upon the far wall. In front of the dais is a lectern with an ironbound aged tome, and to either side rest an iron offertory container and a lit brazier. Upon the dais against the far wall is a tall, hulking rendition of the bugbear deity, frozen in bronze while exhorting his followers to violent evil acts.

Signs of a revel appear as clues; spilled wine, dropped food, a sweaty and musky odor, and some blood on the marble flooring. Most of the religious items are of little worth to anyone who does not follow the god of the bugbears, although the bronze statue would fetch 2,000 gp as artistic value. It does not contain bejeweled eyes, as Shentresh knows Rasharnor would merely replace such with fakes, pocketing the valuable ones. Such is his lure of gems even divine retribution cannot overcome it.

Any being that does not know the password phrase "his clawed hand guides me," and opens the door to the temple sets off the *glyph of warding* (electricity). Further, each item in the temple has a *glyph of warding* (sonic) protecting it, activating when anyone touching it is not a believer of the bugbear god.

Glyph of Warding Traps: 5-ft. area of either electricity or sonic (5d8 points of damage); Reflex save (DC 16) for half damage; Search (DC 28); Disable Device (DC 28).

20. Prisoner Cells

Three iron-bar cages line the far wall. They must function as prisoner cells as they are lockable and one



contains a glum, portly human who doesn't even stir at your entry. Shelves containing many items line the walls alongside the door.

Townfolk who are too far behind in their loan payments or anger the Butchers in other ways sometimes end up locked in these 10 foot cube metal cages. Along the west wall are shelves containing restraining ropes, whips, saps, thumbscrews, chains, paper and ink, manacles and interrogation equipment. The southern cage contains **Rohtal** (Com2, hp6, Craft (Farmer) +2) who got too far behind in his loan sharking payments after an ill-fated spree behind Hellfire's roulette tables. He is a middle-aged corn farmer who is quite glum and dour, waiting out the remaining five weeks of his "sentence."

Iron Metal Cages: 2 in. thick; Hardness 10; hp 60; Break (DC 25); Open Lock (DC 22).

21. Prisoner Cells Turned to Chicken Coops

A cacophony of clucking and screeching faintly emanates from beyond this door. This room has three more cages like the previous room, but the two side cages have been further enmeshed with lattice-like wire. An apprentice hat stands upon the middle cage. It seems that the other two cages now contain, of all things, poultry.

The Butcher's reputation precedes them to the point that few land in their prisoner cells anymore, so this group has been converted to henhouses. The two iron cells on the ends now sport thin, densely laced wire and contain a total of 32 chickens, four quails and a turkey. Eggs are taken from the hens each morning, and often times a bird is sacrificed to the bugbear god. There is a dragonhead lamp set to full emission in this chamber continuously for 11 hours each day, otherwise it is set to darkness. The central cage is reserved for Butchers who anger viceroys, and a purple apprentice hat is situated on top of the cage. The door to this chamber is heavily soundproofed and makes a snug fit against the walls. Fortunately, the chambers on this level are decently ventilated.

22. Lower Storage

This chamber contains more storage items. You see rolls of wire mesh, hammers and nails, more wood stock, many crates, and other miscellaneous items.

Given time, one uncovers a broken pew, a ripped black tapestry, crates full of laboratory glassware, crates of iron ingots, a broken anvil, and more empty crates. On a small table rest clothing that a farmer would wear. On top of the clothing rests a meerschaum pipe and a pouch of tobacco.

Part Two, Act 2: The Prime Plane Laboratories

Act 2 Notes

The PCs are getting to the heart of the matter, and now Lord Sesses is forced to play his two devilish trump cards. The devils are set up to ambush the group, who Lord Sesses does not expect to survive their attacks. No stranger to the lair of Lord Sesses, the cornugon knows the entire layout and readily relays this information to the osyluth if it wishes.

The PCs must either overcome the treadmill corridor or the phase spider trap before finding the main summoning room (**Area 26a**). This hopefully gives Lord Sesses time to cast his 10-minute-long summoning of devilish import.

The Fog of War

Once they reach the wavy dividing line on the map, PCs may become subject to the *guards and wards* spell if Lord Sesses has time to operate the *warding plaque*. If he does, the corridors and chambers become misty and soon vision and darkvision is reduced to 5 feet. Any adjacent enemy gains one-half concealment and is missed 20% of the time when thought to be struck. An enemy farther away is regarded as fully concealed, cannot be viewed nor targeted and is missed 50% of the time when thought to be struck.

There is more to the *guards and wards* spell than just mist, of course. The two standard doors to the spider lair are both *lost doors* and *arcane locked*. They appear as plain walls, and even if that is overcome, they are still *arcane locked*. The Darkmage has great

Encounter Level Synopsis

25. Frigid Venom (EL 9)

26a. We're Looking For A Few Good Souls (EL 10, 6)

26d. The Ace in the Hole's Museum of Battle (EL 13)

26e. An Electrical Sequel Ponders Its Existence (EL 8)

26f. Sleeping Chambers of the Consort (EL 9)

26g. The Darkmage's Summoning Observatory (EL 16)

Area Details

Difficulty Level: 13

If an enraged, Darkmage attacks add 3.

Entrances: Past the prisoner cells (**Area 22**).

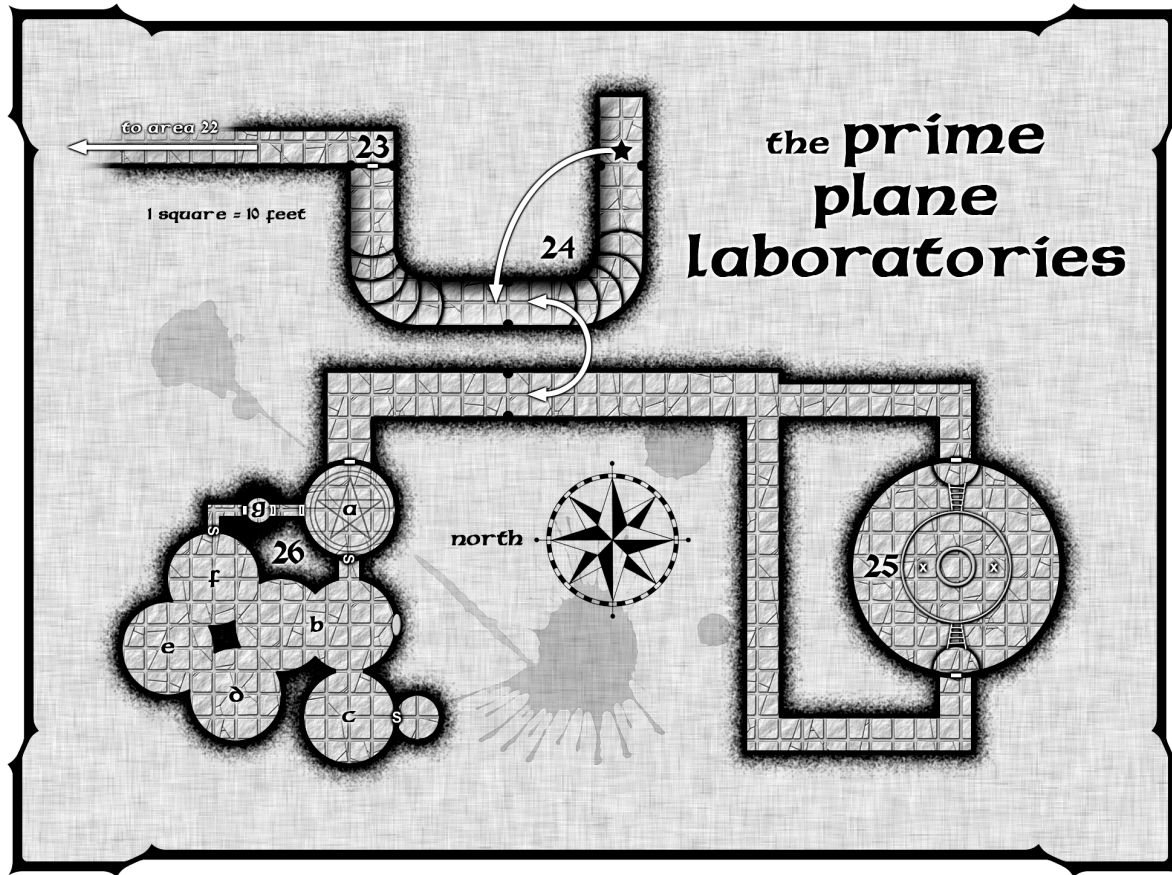
Exits: The teleporter in chamber of **Area 26b**, just south of the secret door between **Areas 26a** and **26b**.

Detections: Magic throughout the entire *guards and wards* effect. Intense magic in the cylindrical treadmill (**Area 24**) and laboratory complex (**Area 26**). Evil in the summoning chamber (**Area 26a**).

Continuous Effects: *guards and wards* in **Areas 23** through **26** only if the *warding plaque* has been operated.

Shielding: The cylindrical corridors and circular rooms are crafted from a material with great anti-magic enchantments infused into it. They negate any *passwall* attempt, are absolutely immune to *transmute* or *disintegrate* effects, and further resist any destruction attempt or effects that would change its substance or its consistency. The substance can be further enchanted though, and exists as the base for a complex illusion set. Both gilded doors have immense magical protections, and nothing affects them except a *Morden's disjunction* or an exacting *wish*.

Standard Features: Corridor near **Areas 23** and **25** is typically composed of smooth granite slabs measuring 5 ft. by 10 ft. by 9 in. and typically shows a walkway of 15 ft. wide and 15 ft. high. Whitish-blue glowing nodules appear 5 ft. from the floor every 30-ft. which equal dim torch light. Doors typically are locked, iron-reinforced wood (2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 20; Break [DC 18]; Open Lock [DC 20]). All secret doors typically are made from stone (1 in. thick; Hardness 8; hp 15; Break [DC 22]; Open Lock [DC 20]; Search [DC 20]).



experience with this spell and causes two special effects when it is cast. The first is a pair of *magic mouths*. The *magic mouths* cannot appear upon the gilded doors themselves, but appear levitating an inch in front of the ball-handles affixed to the doors. The one at **Area 23** states, when a creature gets within 5 feet of it without showing a *lord sesses amulet*, “Come into my lair, said the spider to the fly...” The one at **Area 26a** states, again when a creature comes within 5 feet of it without showing a *lord sesses amulet*, “The cost for entrance is...your soul.” The second special effect is a *suggestion* before the door at **Area 23**, again triggered by the same phenomena as the *magic mouths*, that states, “Any items the Butchers were wearing undoubtedly must be cursed.”

Still, due to the environment, some typical *guards and wards* spell effects do not work in this lair. The two gilded doors are unaffected by this spell due to their heavy anti-magical enchantments. Since **Area 24** is a series of level or sloping passageways, there are **no webs** emplaced due to this spell. There is only one intersection available, but it is too differentiating for the *confusion*-type function to have any effect upon beings with vision.

23. The Gilded Doorway to Venom or Infinity

The last 20 feet of the southern wall of the corridor is composed of a strange glistening opaque stone that is colored olive green, ultramarine blue and mauve-like violet in swirling, undulating organic patterns. One can tell the swirling stone that makes your eyes hurt has been around much longer than the granite slabs. It must be part of some original complex, surviving subsequent renovations around it.

In the middle of this nightmarish glossy landscape appears a 10 foot-diameter gilded door whose lowest edge rests almost on the floor. Its outer edge is a painstakingly crafted bas-relief of a magic circle. There are arcane and abyssal inscriptions etched around the leering sculpture of the gilded devilish visage that protrudes from the middle of the door. On the right side of the portal sticks out a 4-inch burnished gilded ball, attached by a foot-long sculpted rod to the door.

Anyone who touches the ball handle causes the door inscriptions to pulse and glow, which only subside after the door is opened and then closed. The devilish visage seems to smile wider and more evilly. The door opens easily even for someone with a wizard’s strength with a pull on the ball handle. Any who enter the door

without wearing or holding a *Lord Sesses amulet* gain a free *teleport* to **Area 25**, appearing on the floor where a red X on the map exists or as close to one as possible. Knowledge (arcana) and Spellcraft checks (DC 22) allow a player to figure out the basic function of the inscriptions.

24. The Cylindrical Treadmill

The gilded door opens into the exact center of a 20-foot-wide cylindrical corridor. The first yard of this corridor is comprised of a glossy band of night-black gemlike stone that wraps around the entire circumference of the tunnel. The entire band of stone is pitted with expertly sculpted niche-excavations of leering demonic faces and tortured victim visages of all varieties, each the size of an elf's fist. Thereafter, the cylindrical corridor is composed of the same swirling nauseatingly colored stone that appeared around the gilded door. All sound made in this corridor is damped and softened.

Although it can't be seen, tilted flooring of force angles from the bottom of the door to the lowest edge of the round tunnel. Passersby are spared the jumping or climbing otherwise necessary.

This is the Treadmill, an original part of the complex that Lord Sesses keeps in top order due to its evil beauty and usefulness. To the rank and file bugbears, it is an exercise facility that helps keep them in top shape. They are able to run unto exhaustion without leaving the Lair in an endless jaunt of downhill left turns. Despite knowing the surroundings are illusory, the bugbears find that the teleportation effects still work all too well.

Very powerful magics are infused into this rock. It negates any *passwall* attempt, is absolutely immune to *transmute* or *disintegrate* effects, and further resists any attempt to destroy it or change its substance or its consistency. Along with these powerful anti-magic enchantments is a set of complex shadow pattern illusions and teleportation effects that give the Treadmill its name.

When a being walks through the glossy black niche-band in front of the red star on the map they *teleport* back to the previous arch, as the top map arrow describes, totally oblivious that anything untoward happened. Anyone near and behind them still sees them "ahead," even though they in actuality are "behind and around the corner." Should someone just subject to a *teleport* look behind, they still see images of those that were behind them (and now are in front and to the left of them) as they walked past the teleporting arch.

Every group that trudges down this corridor creates a reference grouping that maintains the illusion correctly until one of three actions happen:

a) The leader of the group rounds the bend before

the last group member *teleports* back, or

b) An item is dropped on the ground and any member of the group thereafter sees the item upon passing between the teleporting band and destination band, or

c) A group member for some other reason, such as enduring a frustrating hour-long descent, decides to disbelieve the setup. PCs who attempt to disbelieve the illusion sequence make a Will save (DC 21). When one member of the reference grouping succeeds a disbelief saving throw, each other group member gains one also, at a +2 non-stacking circumstance bonus.

If the *guards and wards* mist were not active, the group would be subject to another separate illusion, that of continuing corridor with a typical left hand downward sloping bend beyond the true butt end.

The destination band contains a niche excavation that perfectly resembles a reverse sculpture of the *lord sesses amulet* demon face. A Search check (DC 15) notes its proportions and faint scratches long the inside edges from previous use. An *amulet* placed to fit within the niche does so perfectly and causes the fitter to *teleport* to the similar cylindrical corridor 40 feet below the treadmill, along with the amulet that ends up in an exact duplicate niche. The others in the group observe that the fitter and their amulet simply vanish. The fitter, when they look around, observes that all others have vanished, at least until the others follow suit with their *amulets*. Should others fit their *Lord Sesses amulets*





while the previous fitter has not moved either themselves or their *amulet*, the previous *amulet* is dislodged to fall to the center of the corridor and/or the fitter is pushed out of the way. Remember that sound is muffled in these cylindrical corridors, so beings in one cannot hear beings in the other.

The 3-way intersection is where the cylindrical corridor becomes the typical 15 foot wide corridor again, running east and south. The *confusion* aspect of the *guards and wards* tries to function here, but any creatures with vision are easily able to right themselves due to the difference in corridor structure.

Note: Parties that are somehow able to *teleport* to the butt-end of the treadmill, **past** the teleporting arch, are able to safely camp there to rest and regain spells. The *guards and wards* effects are in place for 32 hours after the group enters the Lair, and the mist obscures vision to 5 feet. **No** defender of the Lair would ever expect the group to encamp there and the group rests perfectly safe as long as the *guards and wards* spell remains intact. After expiration of the fog, the group may be seen as normal unless precautions have been taken.

25. Frigid Venom (EL 9)

For PC(s) teleported here by lack of a *Lord Sesses amulet* read:

You see that you have landed on the floor of a large chamber, as sound echoes here. Further, it's rather chilly in this chamber. You faintly see what looks like a very wide pillar on one side and opposite it a one-foot high ledge of stone that curves gently. Beyond the ledge the room seems covered by white sticky strands. Moving around you notice sticky strand fragments on the floor, on the ledge, on the pillar and hanging from the ceiling who knows how high up.

For PCs who search the entry area sufficiently to find a ladder, read:

You see a silken rope ladder extend from the low floor ledge up to the mist. It looks like a neat and orderly array of spider webs.

For a group that finds and breaches an arcane locked, lost door read:

You see that you have found some huge room, as you now stand upon a curved ledge that juts out 10 feet from the doorway. The walls gently slope away, giving the idea that you observe one edge of a huge cylinder. The ceiling faintly shows itself to be 10 feet above your ledge. It is quite noticeably cooler in here than elsewhere in the complex. You note white sticky strand fragments along the walls, on the ledge, and hanging from the ceiling.

For a group that searches the entry area sufficiently to find a ladder, read:

You see a silken rope ladder extend from the overhanging ledge down to the mist. It looks like a neat and orderly array of spider webs.

Once the *guards and wards* effect wears off, this trap is more tolerable to negotiate, but for now it seems like a huge web-filled room of indeterminate size. Unknown to the group, the central pillar is hollowed and ventilated, comprising a 15 foot diameter by 30 foot high chamber. The former secret door to it has been fused into the structure. There is no mechanical way into the pillar.

Inside is the home of two large phase spiders that patrol this area at the request of Sessestophelzine. Zot is given the task of doling out "food" and the occasional trinket to them. These spiders act as the whips of the bugbears, and they all fear and loathe these beasts. The spiders are asked to scare and harm, but not quite kill, any bugbear that gets thrown in here. Bugbears that manage to die due to the poison are left as special treats, their annoyance-induced loss deemed shruggable. Any creature the phase spiders do not know that shows up here is attacked with all due surprise and vigor.

The circular one-foot-high ledge of stone on the base of the room is continuously spaced 20-feet away from the edges of the 90 foot diameter wall. Spread out within this ring is a colony of **brown mold** that is completely covered by phase spider webs and is left to grow in

large clumps that look slightly dome-like. Burning these webs could be positively lethal.

Brown Mold: CR 2; as per *DMG*.

Ae-ora (â-OR-uh) and Bau-uhua (bow-OO-hwa), Advanced Phase Spider Whips of the Butchers: CR 6; SZ L Magic Beast; HD 7d10+21; hp 57; Init +7 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 40 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 15 (+3 natural, +3 Dex, -1 size), touch 12, flat-footed 12; BAB/Grapple +7/+14; Atk +9 melee (1d6+4, bite); Face 10 ft. by 10 ft.; SA poison (Fortitude DC 15; 2d6/2d6 temp. Con damage); SQ ethereal jaunt; AL N; SV Fort +8, Ref +8, Will +3; Str 17, Dex 17, Con 16, Int 7, Wis 13, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +8, Hide +4, Move Silently +8, Spot +5. **Feats:** Improved Initiative.

Phase Spider Whip Tactics:

* Both are alerted to any noise within the usually silent mold garden. Both become ethereal and appear attached to the central pillar on the outside, looking for the source of the disturbance. Zot usually appears at the ledges to provide food and company, so the spiders appear there if all else fails.

* The usual attack sequence starts with the spiders in ethereal state overhead of their victim. As a free action, the spider shifts planes and drops upon the victim, biting during the surprise round. Eventually they get into their rhythm of Ethereal-to-Prime shift as a free action, then a bite attack, then a move equivalent Prime-to-Ethereal shift. Only victim companions that hold actions have any real shot at harming these spiders.

* If the prey looks like a bugbear, they only bite once, menace the prey for a short time and then disappear to their chamber.

* Both quickly *jaunt* back to their chamber if any fool burns the webs.

Amidst the webs and drained husks of their den, should the group manage somehow to get there, are found the following: 2 onyx statuettes of the god of the bugbears worth 25 gp each, a see-through steel beaker that Lord Sesses does not yet know is lost worth 700 gp, a *wand of web* (9 charges, CL 5), a *Lord Sesses amulet*, a faulty carnelian-buttoned teleporter plate, a *potion of neutralize poison*, sapphires 250 gp (x2), and amethysts 50 gp (x3).

26. Lair of the Darkmage

These are the living quarters and laboratories of Lord Sesses, his created Sytec Zot, his right-hand monster Jerjicus, "The Ace in the Hole" and sometimes his consort, the erinyes Drincilla. The lair complex is composed of seven 40 foot diameter and 20 foot high chambers shaped like fattened tiddlywinks. Where they would meet each other, an oval opening is formed. All

edges between walls, ceiling, and floor are smoothly and uniformly rounded. The entire chamber complex is constructed with the same horribly colored swirling stone as the treadmill and has the same infused anti-magic enchantments. More of the same whitish-blue nodules ubiquitous to the passageways dimly light these chambers as well.

The Darkmage expects the fight to end within the summoning chamber, **Area 26a**, but notes that the PCs have a slight chance of victory. Should the devils take major damage, the Darkmage operates the teleporter in **Area 26b**, setting the vapors for 5 minutes, and heads to his Gehenna outpost to *summon* forth another devilish ally.

Briefed ahead of time for such an occurrence, Zot, Drincilla, and Jerjicus have been commanded to operate the secret door between **Areas 26a** and **26b** and fight a defensive retreat to join Lord Sesses, setting the vapors for continuous roiling. With the summoned reinforcements, they set up a counterattack in the trap-infested Gehenna outpost, saving his Prime Plane laboratory major damage.

Should Sessestophelzine find himself the only remaining viceroy, he *arcane locks* the secret door between **Areas 26a** and **26b** and then the secret door in **Area 26f**. He then sets the teleporter to Gehenna and 5 minutes, leaving the group on their own to figure out what the *teleport key rods* and *Lord Sesses amulets* are and how the teleporters work. He'll need time to set up defenses for one last furious stand.

26a. We're Looking For A Few Good Souls (EL 10, 6)

As the tunnel bends southward, you see another circular gilded door much like the first one, complete with outer-edge magic circle, devilish sculpture, etchings and ball handle. These runes, however, are different and some are already pulsing. Further, there is a smaller magic circle in the middle that seems to slightly choke the devilish visage.

If Jerjicus still lives, read the following:

The most notable thing you see is the 12-foot-tall alien-looking insect with horned head and spiked tail wielding a pair of falchions. It gurgles in a deep voice, "Ah-h-h, the souls Lord Sesses spoke of..." as darkness envelops itself and the group.

The supposed ice devil is in actuality Jerjicus in polymorphed form. If he still lives and has a chance to set up in front of **Area 26**, he does so in hopes of wasting the PCs' anti-outsider resources. Any such resources are totally ineffective against the ogre magi. He opens up the battle with *darkness*, using his *cone of cold* soon at the best opportunity.

Since he wears a *Lord Sesses amulet* like all other

lair denizens, Lord Sesses himself scries upon the ogre magi, making Jerjicus seem to vanish if the group tries to use spells like *banishment*, *dismissal* or *dispel evil*. The ogre-magi instead travels to **Area 25** and lands near a red X on the map as the Darkmage invokes Jerjicus' name and activates his special *Lord Sesses master amulet*. If the group loaded up liberally with such anti-outsider ordnance, have Jerjicus react in a way which shows to Lord Sesses that he has "overcome the spell with his spell resistance or saving throws," leaving him there to perhaps waste more of the PCs' anti-outsider resources.

If the group ignores such resources and battles Jerjicus normally, he tries to slice-and-dice a victim or two and then faux-teleports away (using *invisibility* and flight) to the corridors near **Area 25**. He stays behind the group as they soon deal with the real devils, ready to counterattack from behind. Finding real trouble, Jerjicus drops all pretenses and bellows in common "Sesses, get me out of here!" hoping the Darkmage uses his *Lord Sesses master amulet* on him.

Once Jerjicus has done his duty, the PCs notes another angled plane of force allows casual walking up to another gilded door. Remember to activate the second *magic mouth* effect from the *guards and wards*. The etchings read to whomever succeeds in a Knowledge-arcana check (DC 22), "laboratories of the Grand Wizard Sessestophelzine - Great Magic Power Used For Personal Gain." This gilded door has no teleportation powers, but has pulsing etchings (yet another Knowledge [arcana] check [DC 22]) enchanted to provide *dimensional anchor* to the protective diagrams inscribed inside. This keeps summoned outsiders from using *teleport* or *dimension door* and thereby escaping to the outside complex. It fulfills that task until the door is opened. Normally Lord Sesses activates the special inscriptions on the inside of the door which *arcane locks* it, as it resists normal attempts including the *guards and wards* effect, but not today.

The door opens as easily as the previous one, and you now view what seems to be a bare circular room. It has uniformly rounded corners on the floor and must be huge since the walls denote a gentle curve, perhaps 30 or more feet in diameter and who knows how high. This room is created of the same wretched eye watering stonework as the previous corridor.

This summoning room normally shows a silver-inscribed magic circle with a gold inscribed pentagram inside it on the floor, and an iron brazier hanging from the ceiling at each pentacle apex. Further, there is a beaten iron bowl of blood in the middle of the room. All of these things are illusioned by Lord Sesses to hide them, leaving apparently only a swirling-maelstrom flooring or misty air.



If the Darkmage is given time to prepare, Valazikal the osyluth and Zrizikatzke the cornugon wait within the magic circle in this room for freedom to gather souls. Lord Sesses dearly wants to lessen the cornugon's enmity towards him due to his past forcing of a task upon the devil. So, he offers the PCs as souls and stages a trap beneficial to the devils, which gladly waived their saves. The Darkmage has assured the devils that concealment is guaranteed due to the fog from the *guards and wards*.

Further, since Lord Sesses had no idea exactly **when** the group may arrive, he promised to simultaneously bind one of the cornugon's companions and bade the devil to bring some reading material. Therefore, the devils spend their time within the pentagram engrossed in perusing a *libram of nefarious conversion*. They wait for some poor fool to open the door, which breaks the *dimensional anchor* effect. They then *teleport* forth as usual and try to slay all the PCs, perhaps by making them feel the power of the *libram of nefarious conversion* itself.

The secret door is operable on both sides by finding a nearby panel that pushes in then slides over. Formerly behind the panel, a knob needs to be rotated left half-way and the panel needs to be slid back. As the panel resets itself, the door slides straight down. Reversing the knob slides it back up.

Notes:

* If the group has had a relatively easy time and is in

fine shape, allow the devils greater chances to gate in reinforcements. However, if the group is severely weakened and remembers to use the *dismissal* or *dispel* spells available, banish the thought of Valazikal and/or cause the cornugon to have deity-induced penalties on all its Will saves. Then again, severely weakened parties that ignores dismissal or dispel spells, despite the multitude of hints, deserves to be stunned and piecemeal-attacked into oblivion. Never forget that you have iron-fist control over devilish summonings.

* Valazikal is not nearly as powerful as Zrizikatzke is, so the osyluth may remove the *libram of nefarious conversion* from the cornugon and use that as its main weapon.

* Don't forget that **every** true devil is immune to any *darkness* as well as any fire. Burn the PCs in *darkness* at all times.

Zrizikatzke (zrih-zih-CATZ-kee), the Cornugon: CR 10; SZ L Outsider (Evil, Lawful); HD 11d8+33; hp 92; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 20 ft., fly 50 ft. (average); AC 25 (+15 natural, +1 Dex, -1 size), touch 10, flat-footed 24; BAB/Grapple +11/+20; Atk +15 (1d6+5, whip plus stun) or +11 melee (1d3+5, *libram of nefarious conversion* plus nefarious damage, touch); Full Atk +15/+10/+5 melee (1d6+5, whip plus stun) or +15 melee (1d4+5 [x2], claws) or +11 melee (1d3+5, *libram of nefarious conversion* plus nefarious damage, touch), and +9 melee (1d4+2, bite) and +9 melee (1d3+2, tail plus wounding); Face/Reach 10 ft. by 10 ft./15 ft.; SA spell-like abilities, fear aura (Will DC 17), whip stun (Fortitude DC 17, stunned 1d4 rounds), summon devils, wounding (tail), nefarious damage (6d6 to good, 3d6 to neutral, touch, *libram*); SQ damage reduction (20/+2), immunities (fire, poison), regeneration (5), resistance (20 - acid, cold), see in *darkness*, SR (24); AL LE; SV Fort +10, Ref +8, Will +9; Str 21, Dex 12, Con 17, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 14.

Skills: Bluff +14, Climb +16, Concentration +15, Hide +7, Listen +14, Move Silently +14, Search +14, Sense Motive +14, Spot +14. **Feats:** Cleave, Great Cleave, Multiattack, Power Attack.

Possessions: *libram of nefarious conversion* (perhaps given to, or taken by, Valazikal).

Zrizikatzke tactics:

* He waits until the scrying Lord Sesses gives the signal, then casts *magic circle against good*, *dispel good* and *dispel chaos* upon itself. He comes out firing with *major image* illusory darkness and performs hit and run *teleport* guerrilla attacks. A nice follow-up *dispel* rids the PCs of any unfair enchantments and then mass saves are enforced with *fireball* or *lightning bolt*.

* It has no qualms about ground-zeroing a *fireball*, unless a non-flame-resistant viceroy is nearby. Anytime it needs continual ranged attacks, *produce flame* does the trick.

* It could make a *major image* mummy or black pudding of itself to waste a foe's fire spells, but enjoys creating *major images* of more devilish reinforcements, preferably hamatulas or osyluths.

* Zrizikatzke is a Large devil. He uses that size and reach to advantage at every opportunity. His brute size and snaky tail should keep most creatures' implements of destruction away from him. The cornugon has many attacks that make closing with it a daunting task. Use them liberally.

* Its reading material, the *libram of nefarious conversion*, is anathema to non-evil PCs, and the devil tries to make the PCs feel its effects by two-handed attacks with both *book* and whip. Any hit with the *book*, which does about the same damage as a normal claw strike does, contacts flesh upon a critical hit when the 'handling' effect occurs, meaning an extra 5d6 points of damage on good PCs or 5d4 points of damage on neutral PCs. Then again, **any** hit with the *book* upon a player who does not wear armor, such as a wizard or monk, produces the extra 'handling' damage. The more flesh that a victim exposes, the better the chance of a hit from the *book* that deals the 'handling' damage.

* With its AC, inherent SR, concealment from the fog, and *major image* darkness up, he feels he approaches the untouchable, so feel at ease to *teleport* adjacent to spellcasters and whip them with stunning effect. This ability is his bread and butter versus most mages - use it early and often, then pound them to death with the *book*.

If the group does not use *dismissal* or *dispel* spells, the adventure could end right here with Zrizikatzke and Valazikal, especially if Jerjicus is still on hand to supply *darkness*.

Valazikal (vah-LA-zee-call), the Osyluth: CR 6; hp 37; see the *MM*.

Valazikal's tactics:

* Valazikal does as Zrizikatzke or Lord Sesses bids, depending upon situation. The cornugon uses Valazikal as a support weapon to divide opponents with *fear*, the osyluth's *walls of ice* and its own *wall of fire*. After that, mop-up is usually easy.

* Valazikal creates *major image* illusions just as well as Zrizikatzke, but it also excels at making *major images* of *walls of ice* that it may fly through later in combat. This saves the *teleport* ability for emergencies in its maze work of ice. Foes generally do not break through a *wall of ice* in one round, so it uses the time to become *invisible*, *teleport* to a new venue or set up another *major image*.

* It makes sure spellcasters don't go anywhere with *dimensional anchor*, which is easier to implement after the victim is stunned by Zrizikatzke.

* If hard-pressed, it could steal the *libram of nefarious conversion* from the cornugon and beat upon the

PCs with that. Remember to reduce his melee bonus by -4 since it has no “Weapon Proficiency” in using the book.

26b. The Prime Plane Labs of Lord Sesses

Once past the secret door, the players find another disc-shaped room liberally filled with chests, drawers, cabinets, shelves and tables, plus a dizzying array of magical laboratory equipment of all shapes and types. To the right, you notice that this chamber is actually two superimposed discs in the shape of a figure eight, with an opening in the middle about 30 feet wide where they join together. A man-sized circular picture frame bas-relief appears on the left wall just beyond the secret door.

If the Darkmage has associates with him in Gehenna, read:

Its interior glows with roiling purple vapors.

Continue reading, regardless of circumstances:

Shelving has overtaken much of the walls of the other half of this laboratory. The shelving is far from bare; there are large purifying systems of glassware, odd machines or utensils of unknown materials and usage, and various large devices. Liberally spread among the shelves are jugs, small, compartmentalized cabinets, boxes, lamps, braziers, scrolls, pots, decanters, dishes, and numerous trays on racks. Also located against a far wall is a fireplace for glassblowing and a small-scale smith's forge. There seem to be multiple projects in progress upon the tables. A plush velveteen chair levitates behind a workbench, spinning slowly to one side. At the far end, to the left and right, are more man-sized openings into further chambers beyond.

This area is where Sessestophelzine, Zot, Gortok, and sometimes Shentresh work on experiments or conduct tests. Jerjicus fixes and sometimes creates weaponry here, and also helps the experiments by creating custom glassware with his glassblowing skill. If the players allow it, expound upon the vast multitude of items here, as none of them help the group slay the denizens of the lair. Start with three chests that turn into plush chairs when opened, and continue in a similar vein until the group interrupts.

All items shelved here are bound by magic protections versus physical attacks, and all have effective resistance (fire, acid, water and cold – 20). Further, the shelving is enchanted to keep the items where they are unless an extraction phrase is spoken; otherwise no amount of grabbing, prodding or physical force can remove any item. All that occurs is the creature attempting the extraction feels resistance near the item and a red force field briefly manifests. When a shelved item is touched and “I, in the name of Sessestophelzine, re-

quire you unbound” is spoken, the creature doing so may extract the item normally.

The circular picture frame is an exact replica of the teleporter at **Area 9**, except this one is fused into the wall without the black monolithic sculpture around it.

26c. Special Effects Room

This bare chamber has only two noticeable features. A pair of mithral nodules appears on each side of the opening, and a long mithral bar rests near one of them. If the mithral bar is placed on top of both nodules spanning the opening, a shimmering wall of force plane encapsulates the entire opening just north of the bar. This is where the Darkmage and crew test out new spells and effects, saving the laboratory potential damage.

The secret door operates simply by pushing a stud and rising upward. Inside is a gorgeously carved blue granite basin with gilded faucets overhead, a hand washing basin of blue-enameled silver, and a gilded commode that disintegrates anything deposited within after 5 minutes.

26d. The Ace In the Hole's Museum of Battle (EL 13)

Obviously, this is the bedroom of some high-ranking guard. Upon the iron chest, oaken dresser, oaken drawer and two marble stands are various carvings, inlays and bas-reliefs of weapons or beings in battle. The four posts of the oaken bed are actually hardwood statues of armored knights. On the shelving and the marble stands are many statues, figurines, and likenesses of fighters and their weapons. Past the shelving is another man-sized opening. All along the large unbroken wall of this chamber are tapestries of battle and struggle, which connect in a flowing cavalcade of mayhem.

Jerjicus the ogre magi, the “Ace In the Hole” as the Darkmage calls him, makes this his resting place and museum. One of his hobbies is collecting sculptures of battle, and he has a proudly displayed collection. The chest contains his armor and weapons and other magic items that he doesn't wear to battle. The dresser and drawer contain personal mementoes denoting his former clan activities as well as formal and casual outfits for an ogre magi commander.

A false bottom of one of the drawers contains a small bag of gems and a velvet sack of coins. The false bottom is trapped, releasing deadly poisonous gas unless searched for and disarmed. The chest is trapped in a similar manner.

False Bottom Poison Gas Trap: CR 8; mechanical; touch trigger; repair reset; hidden lock bypass (Search DC 25, Open Lock DC 30); gas; never miss;

poison (iron golem fumes, Fortitude DC 17 resists; 1d4 temp. Con/death); multiple targets (all in southern half of the room); Search (DC 22); Disable Device (DC 22).

Chest Poison Gas Trap: same as False Bottom trap above.

Treasure: The chest contains a +2 *glaive of minor displacement*, a weapon that combines a *cloak of minor displacement* with the expected abilities of a +2 *glaive*, one that was his favored weapon during his time with his old clan. Also inside is a +1 *heavy flail of dispelling*, which causes the victim of a successful hit to undergo a personal-targeted *dispel magic* effect. A natural roll of one automatically affects the wielder instead. Sometimes Jerjicus wields this flail when Lord Sesses becomes too overbearing. In a plain mahogany box is his magic poker deck that shuffles itself when the deck is knocked upon. There are three vials of the iron golem fumes poison gas to recharge the traps if need be, a *flask of curses*, 5 home-built vials of *oil of slipperiness*, an adamantite glass-stoppered flask of *sovereign glue* (3 applications) and a jar of *stone salve*.

False Bottom Treasure: In the bags are 5 platinum bars (each worth 500 gp), 138 pp, 63 gold bars (each worth 50 gp), 512 gp, a 2,000 gp star sapphire, a 1,200 gp blue diamond, 500 gp (x2) blue topazes, a 350 gp iolite, a 300 gp blue topaz *peript of foul rotting* with “Torzhann” inscribed upon it, and 250 gp, 200 gp, 100 gp (x3) and 50 gp (x8) amethysts.

The museum pieces require the typical phrase “I, in the name of Sessestophelzine, require you unbound.” uttered to be removed from their resting-places. The prized ones are as follows:

1) A helm of dwarven-crafted glossiron with a dragon head at the crown and two magically suspended rubies in the eye sockets, worth 6,250 gp.

2) A gilded skeletal hand wielding a small mithral dagger with platinum runes and a pure white opal hilt, worth 2,750 gp.

3) Jade and agate wall-sculpture of a battle between elves and orcs, worth 1,800 gp.

4) Two-foot-high ceramic human in real miniature full plate armor wielding a magically flaming flamberge (used as a lamp), worth 1,500 gp.

5) An obsidian rendition of two attacking trolls, worth 750 gp.

26e. An Electrical Sequel Ponders Its Existence (EL 8)

Shelves line the walls of this chamber, flooded with books, pamphlets and scrolls. A huge mahogany desk dominates the center of the room. Many scrolls and a few manuals fill its top surface. One manual is set out for reading. Another plush velveteen chair floats be-

hind the desk. A metallic blue dragonhead rests upon a stand and is used as a lamp; a gilded wind chime dangles from its teeth. A levitating quill teeters over a flat parchment.

Many books, tomes, manuals and scrolls line the shelves, dealing with many bits of lore. Quite a few books deal with worldly crafts as the Darkmage tries to be self-sufficient. Players should see titles dealing with geography, engineering, herbalism, farming, stone working, metalworking, glass-crafts, gazetteers of surrounding lands, outlines on various cities and high-ranking personages, and all manners of things. There are works dealing with psychology, infernal beings, abyssal beings, alchemy, flora and fauna of the world and other planes. The sections dealing with magic are erudite, extensive and no doubt thrill the PC wizards.

All items require the typical phrase to loose themselves from the shelves. Those upon the desk are free from binding and may be handled normally. The *manual of sytecs* (see **Appendix 2**) rests open upon the desk. The lamp and quill are duplicates of those found in Gortok’s Tower (**Area 12**). The gilded chime is the one that moves and jangles loudly when Kezhantak presses the ruby doorbell.

Zottenheim, nicknamed Zot, the created Sytec of Sessestophelzine, has placed the *manual of sytecs* upon the desk for its own study. Zot appears as a mobile and sentient set of black gloves and slippers, covered by a black robe and kept together by roiling electrical energy. Most beings that meet Zot wonder what it is as it glides by them. Master Sesses describes a Sytec to others as an electrical elemental-golem-familiar, and leaves the explanation at that. Every Sytec with high charisma can cast spells as if it were a sorcerer of half its creator’s level, and many of its abilities and skills are a function of its creator’s level as well. Zot is the ultimate lab assistant and helps his master seemingly by precognition. It also uses this laboratory at its own whim, especially when it contemplates a new use for its favorite spell, the *floating disk*.

Zot is totally loyal to and behaves exactly as Master Sesses, except that it is the laboratory assistant, not the 16th-level wizard. At any time, Master Sesses may see through Zot’s slitted eyes or conduct telepathic conversation with it as long as not more than a mile separates them both. Master Sesses gains no special powers from owning his Sytec, nor suffers any damage or ill effects if his Sytec were to be destroyed. Nevertheless, Lord Sesses considers Zot his crowning achievement so far and treats it thus.

26f. Sleeping Chambers of The Consort (EL 9)

Tapestries that depict ancient citadels and glorious fallen empires surround this chamber. The main tapestry, opposite the two entryways, is in actuality an atlas of the area of Pfefferain. It seems to be pin cushioned with red tacks.

Around the room can be seen an iron chest between the openings, a plush brass bed, a marble stand with a velvet topping and a gorgeous metallic sculpture, a smallish bronzewood dresser and a bronzewood set of drawers.

Sessestophelzine sometimes sleeps here unless occupied elsewhere, whereupon Drincilla may rest here during a Prime Plane jaunt. If neither rests here, it may be used as a visitor's sleeping chamber.

The Darkmage had shuttled most of his prized treasure to the Gehenna outpost, but left behind the bent-iron two foot tall rendering of Drincilla upon the marble stand. The detailed sculpture is a Danielle Adamantite creation and is a near-perfect likeness of Drincilla in her natural form. It is worth 2,250 gp due to the intricate detailing and should be treated like Jerjicus' museum pieces if anyone wishes to disturb it.

The atlas-tapestry contains around a dozen red tacks, and they denote guildhalls that the Darkmage extorts as well as the Great Hall and the legitimate operations he and his cronies conduct. The location of Dunwoody's has a tack with a blackened enamel eyeball upon it.

All of the furniture contains personal mementoes and different sets of clothing including coronation outfits, stealth gear and arctic wear. Drincilla has also occupied about two-thirds of the clothing-ready space for her favorite Prime Plane dresses and operations outfits. A 50-foot silken rope with cruel barbs along the length of it is coiled in the chest, as well as a *rope of entanglement*.

The chest is trapped with a special dust trap, one releasing a deadly inhalant upon unsuspecting PCs. The secret door between the tapestries is opened by a small pressure plate and leads to a 5-foot-wide corridor to the observatory. The corridor is of the same wretched swirling stone as the rest of the complex.

Chest Dust Trap: CR 4; mechanical; touch trigger; repair reset; hidden lock bypass (Search DC 25); gas; never miss; magic item (*dust of sneezing and choking*, incessant choking and sneezing [5d4 rounds]; Fortitude DC 15 resists; 2d6/1d6 temp. Con damage). The trap releases *dust of sneezing and choking* in a 10 foot radius, effectively fogging the southern quadrant of the room.

26g. The Darkmage's Summoning Observatory (EL 16)

At the end of the narrow passageway, you see what looks like a miniature version of the circular gilded doors, half normal size. The only handiwork upon this door is a bas-relief of a magic circle of protection around the door's circumference.

This door is easily opened and beyond it you see a miniature chamber of the same stone substance, only 8-feet in diameter and 6-feet in height. On the floor is inscribed a real silvered magic circle of protection, which looks up to the gilded inscribed thaumaturgical circle on the ceiling. A small shelf forms into the south wall and contains two scrolls and jars of powder. Above it hangs a gilded plaque.

Within the circles rests a plush bronzewood chair with strange devices upon its armrests. The left armrest displays a wand-like apparatus that juts out from the chair and points toward the east wall. The right armrest has a velvet-padded gilded stand for a six-inch crystal ball. Looking forward you note a 2 foot wide by 3 foot deep cylindrical hole in the east wall, right in line with the left-arm wand. This hole allows viewing of the room where you initially met the devils.

From here, the Darkmage summons forth creatures from the outer planes in **Area 26a** and observes their actions with little fear of reprisal. The "hole" is a magical patch of the typical swirling rock that happens to





VINDICATION

be transparent at the moment. The left-arm wand moves around in an arc towards the east wall and the magical patch follows the wand movement. Onlookers would see almost the entire summoning chamber if the mists weren't present. If a small button on the wand is pressed, the magical patch becomes ethereal; sound, objects and spells may enter and exit the connected chambers. While ethereal, the patch may not move, but another touch of the wand button brings the patch back to the Prime Plane and it may then move normally.

A powerful glamor is invoked upon the wall of the summoning chamber. The magical patch on that side, regardless of where it is or whether it happens to be ethereal or not, looks like the continuous swirling stonework: totally opaque, unyielding, and unremarkable.

The *crystal ball with detect thoughts* normally rests upon the gilded stand, but the Darkmage takes the ball with him as he teleports to Gehenna and places it in the

similar stand in that complex's observatory. The gilded plaque above the shelf is the *warding plaque* that activates the *guards and wards* spell upon the laboratory complex. During this adventure, Lord Sesses operates it only if he is alerted to invasion and has time to operate it. If all has gone as planned, a scroll on the shelf is used-up and headed with "planar binding," otherwise that scroll is ready for reading and removed along with the *crystal ball*.

Resting under the chair, found with a Search check (DC 15) is a closed tome, "Parayatah's Call to Infernal Servile Malevolence." It is a prized first edition that contains material specific to the calling, dealing and psychology of devils, as well as the true names of the devils Zrizikatzke and Valazikal among others. It also includes the spells *banishment*, *dimensional anchor*, *dismissal*, *greater planar binding*, *lesser planar binding*, *planar binding*, and *trap the soul*. Any reader considers this tome a minor artifact.

Part Two, Act3:

Denouement in Gehenna

Act 3 Notes

At this point, the PCs have been goaded by the vice-roys to travel, unknowingly at first, to the Gehenna Outpost. As usual, Lord Sesses has a trap waiting for the party; he summons a new devilish associate as a last resort. It is not as nasty as the cornugon, but the party probably isn't in good shape to fight both a wizard plus another major devil along with whoever else has survived. If the PCs have replenished and come back later to travel to Gehenna, make it a cornugon with gated-in reinforcements.

The final act plays out in a small complex deep within

a volcanic mountain in Gehenna's topmost plane. Any being that sets foot in this complex knows for certain that they are not in the Lorremach anymore, but where exactly they are is difficult to discern. The fine-hewn, deep red rock walls, harder than granite, that surround them along with a strange almost-malevolent scent in the air tell them that something different has happened.

Lord Sesses has found that the magical properties of this plane are roughly equivalent to the Prime Plane, so experiments can be undertaken without undue adjustments. However, there is no organic flora and fauna that would appear in forests or even swamplands in this plane that he has seen. Further, for better or worse,

Encounter Level Synopsis

29. Sliding Into the Reception Committee (EL 8)

32. Vault of the Darkmage (EL 5)

33. Tossing One Last Barb Your Way (EL 8)

34. To Serve and Assault (EL 12)

35. The Gehenna Laboratory (EL 5)

Area Details

Difficulty Level: 14

If Zot is destroyed, subtract 1.

If Gortok is destroyed, subtract 1.

If Drincilla is destroyed or driven off, subtract 1.

If Jerjicus is destroyed, subtract 2.

If the slide trap is activated, add 1.

Entrances: The teleporter in chamber of **Area 26b**, just south of the secret door between **Areas 26a** and **26b**.

Exits: Death's embrace.

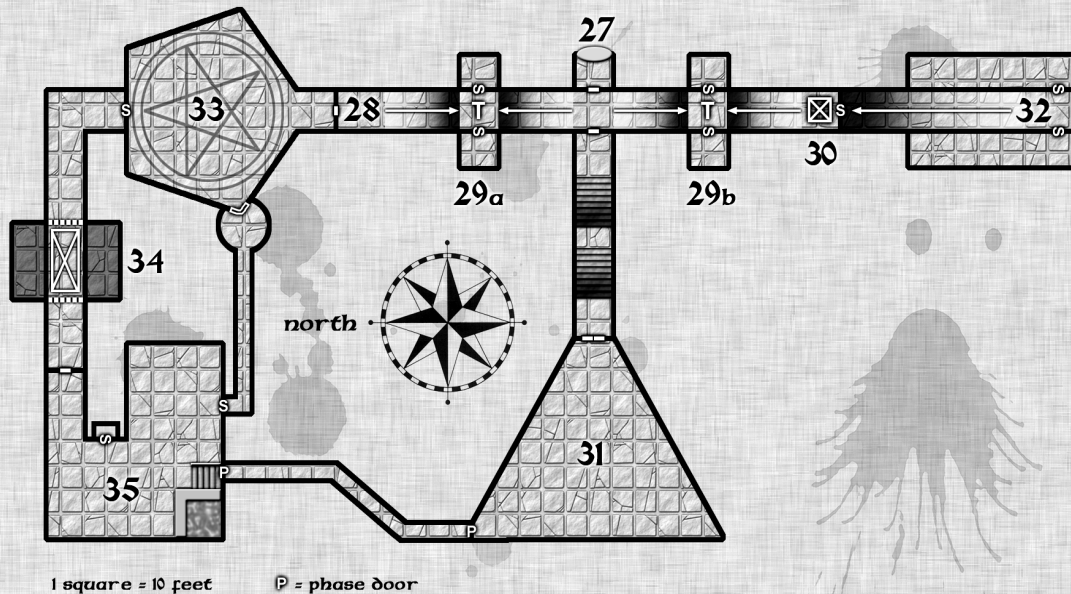
Detections: Slight evil throughout the entire complex. Intense magic in the vault **Area 32**, star chamber **Area 33** and laboratory complex **Area 35**. Pizzicato under the floor **Area 34** is incredibly magical. Slight magic everywhere else that there is not basic corridor.

Continuous Effects: Warmer temperatures and the oppressive ambiance make operating in armor slightly more difficult. Increase by one every armor check penalty. All good beings suffer -2 to checks dealing with Charisma due to the oppressive ambiance. Any Concentration checks from Prime Plane natives suffer a -1 penalty as well.

Shielding: Both gilded doors have immense magical protections, and nothing affects them except a *Morden's disjunction* or a well worded *wish*. The stonework in **Area 33** is impervious to physical harm, has resistance to all energies of 20, and cannot be affected by any spell unless cast by an artifact or 20th-level wizard or sorcerer. The stonework at **Area 32** is the same as **Areas 24** and **26**.

Standard Features: Corridor is typically composed of fine-hewn deep red granite-like rock and typically shows a walkway of 15 ft. wide and 15 ft. high. Whitish-blue glowing nodules appear 5 ft. from the floor every 30-ft. that equal dim torchlight. Doors typically are locked, iron-reinforced wood (2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 20; Break [DC 18], Open Lock [DC 20]). All secret doors typically are made from stone (1 in. thick; Hardness 8; hp 20; Break [DC 22], Open Lock [DC 20], Search [DC 20]).

denouement in gehenna



this place makes summoning devilish beings almost a snap and those that are summoned are generally stronger than are those that travel to the Prime Plane. As a corollary, celestials loathe to appear.

Clerics are quite distanced from their patron Prime Plane deities and attendants. Due to its blast furnace volcanoes that span the entire plane, and the steep mountainous cliffs that surround the volcanoes, not much natural life appears in Gehenna. There is precious little reason for any cleric who has followers in the Prime Plane to cast their gaze upon this plane. Any cleric whose deity is not approximately neutral evil finds that praying for spells higher than first level is totally futile.

27. We Seem to Have Arrived... Somewhere

Following your foes through the circular portal, you end up in a 15-foot by 15-foot room with a standard door opposite of the portal. It is dimly lit as was the previous complexes. The stonework is different, being a fine hewn deep red granite substance. The air is different here and has a slightly malevolent taint. At least there is air. You all notice there is no omnipresent mist

in this region. You also notice that the temperature is warmer here than where you were before, though fortunately it doesn't seem to be increasing. Further, divine spellcasters do not feel secure as normal, as if their angels were not watching over them anymore.

Anyone succeeding in a Search check (DC 20) locates a panel in the right-hand wall raises, and the party sees the following:

On the right-hand wall at waist height, there is a triad of symbol shape plaques. Each is nearly 4 inches in size and composed of a red glowing opaque crystal. The topmost of the three is a perfect pentagon, the leftmost is a circle, and the rightmost is a triangle.

The party has a chance to learn that these plaques control the trap beyond this room. If the shapes are pressed in the order triangle - pentagon - circle, the trap is disabled and the shapes lose their glow. No oil drains down the slides, and protective stone grid walkways appear levitating just over the trapped pressure plates. If the plaques are pressed in **any** other sequence, they reestablish their glow if it was lost and the trap again resets to functional.

The door opens easily. When the party leaves the antechamber, read:

Your party finds they are in a long corridor that trav-

els both left and right. It seems to be an unbroken near 200 foot expanse of corridor, and is dimly lit by the ubiquitous light-blue nodules. A normal door stands directly in front of you, at the far left end is a blank wall, but at the far right end is another circular gilded door.

The most notable aspects of the corridor are the ramps downward on either side of the entryway. From your initial entry square, on either side, the floor ramps downward 15 feet as it travels 30 feet out, then levels for the next 15 feet, then ramps up 15 feet as it travels 30 feet followed by a 15 foot level landing. The ceiling is an unbroken straight line over the undulating floor, continuously 15 feet high from this entryway.

If the plaques glow and therefore the trap is armed, read:

You note that the ramps continuously exude a strange green liquid that courses down the ramp, seemingly disappearing at the bottom. The green liquid has a slimy, oily consistency to it.

If the plaques have darkened and the trap is disarmed, read:

Floating grille works of stone levitate just barely over the floor of the deepest leveled areas of the corridor.

Once the party *teleports* to **Area 27**, the purple vapors vanish after 5 minutes and only a *teleport key wand* can make them reappear.

28. Symbol Plaques and a Sense of Deja Vu

You see another circular gilded door much like the one in front of the rounded rooms, complete with outer-edge magic circle, devilish sculpture, etchings and ball handle. These runes also are already pulsing. Once again, there is a smallish magic circle in the middle that seems to slightly choke the devilish visage.

On the right-hand wall at waist height, there is a triad of symbol shape plaques. Each is nearly 4 inches in size and composed of a red glowing opaque crystal. The topmost of the three is a perfect pentagon, the leftmost is a circle, and the rightmost is a triangle.

These plaques are in the exact same state of appearance, denoting the readiness of the slide trap, as the ones covered by the secret panel in **Area 27**. The Darkmage assumes his bugbears cannot get to this set, so he has not covered it with a secret panel.

29. Sliding Into the Reception Committee (EL 8)

This area is trapped with a simple slide-onto-pressure-plate affair in execution. Green liquid coursing down the slides looks like green slime but is actually a large amount of green-tinted *oil of slipperiness*. This

oil exudes through a huge multitude of pores in each slide and is collected at the base of each slide in a thin trough and then re-circulated up through the pores again. Those who plug up the troughs have no effect as the nearest trough-sized section of ramp becomes a trough in effect.

Any creature that stands on the oiled slide is subjected to the effects of the trap. Success with both of them allows the creature to skirt the stone pressure plate that is only noticeable when at the bottom edge of the slides.

Sliding Trap: CR 1; mechanical; location trigger; automatic reset; multiple targets (all targets on the slide); Reflex save (DC 10) avoids; deposits the victims prone at the bottom of the slide; Search (DC 20) to determine it is not green slime; Disable Device (DC 20); walking back up requires two successful Reflex saves (DC 20), one at the base and one at the middle.

Pressure Plate Trap: CR 2; mechanical; location trigger (50+ pounds); automatic reset; never miss; monster *teleport/planshift* trap activated; onset delay (1 round) secret doors; open flanking secret doors; Search (DC 25); Disable Device (DC 28).

Monster Teleport/Planeshift Trap: CR 8; magic device; touch (pressure plate trap); automatic reset (maximum 4 times); spell effects (*teleport/planshift* 4 creatures each time into the secret rooms); Search (DC 25); Disable Device (DC 30).

Any being that fails a save slides quickly, without appeal, down to the bottom in a prone manner. If the being weighs more than 50 pounds, they activate the pressure plate trap. If activated, secret doors open in the walls flanking the being, and 4 creatures are *teleported* and *planeshifted* into the two rooms flanking the trap victim. **Areas 29a** and **29b** are separate trapped areas and what happens in one area has no bearing on the other, except for the maximum amount of groups of creatures brought to the flanking chambers.

A **fire mephit** and a **rust monster** always appear in the north chamber. A **carrion crawler** and a **minor xorn** always appear in the south chamber. These four creatures are angry and bewildered, attacking anything they see, and stay in Gehenna for one hour, returning alive or as a corpse after that. Every time someone activates the pressure plate, be it by sliding from the ramps or stepping on it during combat, a new set of 4 creatures appears. Xorn and rust monsters weigh over 100 pounds, so they activate the trap again if combat allows. A total of four groups of creatures can be so brought to bear between the **Areas 29a** and **29b**. If they all are slain then Lord Sesses needs to find and activate more creatures.

Carrion Crawler: CR 4; hp 20; see the *MM*.

Mephit, Fire: CR 3; hp 15; see the *MM*.

Rust Monster: CR 3; hp 30; see the *MM*.

Xorn, Minor: CR 3; hp 20; see the *MM*.

30. A Seemingly Dead End (EL 9)

On the right-hand wall at waist height, there is a triad of symbol shape plaques. Each is nearly 4 inches in size and composed of a red glowing opaque crystal. The topmost of the three is a perfect pentagon, the leftmost is a circle, and the rightmost is a triangle.

These are glowing regardless of the status of the traps at **Area 29a** and **29b**. They have absolutely no effect upon that trap set, but instead disarm a different trap if operated correctly. The Darkmage assumes his bugbears cannot get to this set, so he has not covered it with a secret panel.

The dead end checks out as solid by all attempts, although *true seeing* notes the faint outline of the door. No magic or physical effort opens this secret door save correct usage of the three plaques. If pressed in the typical triangle - pentagon - circle pattern, the one that completes the pattern gains a free *teleport* to one of the three grate-covered pits in the torture chamber **Area 31**. Any other pattern pressed besides triangle - triangle - triangle has no effect.

If pressed in the pattern triangle - triangle - triangle, the triangle loses its glow and the one foot thick secret door sinks into the floor. The trap beyond activates immediately, which includes *deeper darkness* upon the corridor from beyond the initial secret door up to the far-most wall past the large slide, which now secretes green oil as well. As usual, even *darkvision* is spoiled in such darkness. The party faintly hears the same bubbling and splashing on the large slide as they heard in the previous slides.

If anyone steps upon the slide in the darkness, they release the safety catch for the pit trap lid, possibly falling the victim into a 30 foot deep pit with spikes that have large scorpion venom upon them.

If the party succeeds in dimming the triangle, they have cleared a major hurdle toward gaining the Vault. If the pentagon is then pressed three times in succession, the pentagon loses its glow, the *deeper darkness* vanishes and oil ceases its motion down the Vault slide. The pit trap in front of the slide, however, still operates if the slide is trodden upon. The two secret doors beyond the large slide stay closed. Any other operation of the plaques causes them all to glow and the nearby secret door raises slowly back up, impeded by absolutely nothing. Any being trying to push the nearby secret door back down finds their work futile. Anything caught between that door's top face and the ceiling is crushed to pulp. Once the secret door rises fully, the darkness and oil evaporates and the pit trap is safetied. The nearby secret

door may be reopened as specified.

Anyone who exists beyond the initial secret door in the slide trap area notes that the entire structure is composed of the familiar horrid swirling stone found in the cylindrical corridor **Area 24** and the laboratory **Area 26**.

After both the triangle and pentagon have lost their glow, the circle loses its glow if it is pressed three times. In addition, the safety mechanism on the pit trap in front of the slide re-replaces itself and both far secret doors to **Area 32** slide down, just like the nearby one did. Any other pressing of the plaques resets them to all glowing, the nearby secret door raises as in the previous paragraph, and the darkness and oil evaporates and the pit trap is made safe once the secret door is raised fully.

Once all three plaques have stopped glowing, anyone may enter **Area 32** without incident. At this time, pressing the plaques in any sequence except the correct one resets the entire trap area, raises all three secret doors and causes all three plaques to glow.

Poisoned Spike Pit Trap (30 ft. deep): CR 9; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; hidden lock bypass (Search [DC 30]); Open Lock [DC 30]); Reflex save (DC 20) to avoid; 30 ft. deep (3d6, fall); multiple targets (first targets abreast the hallway); pit spikes (Atk +10 melee, 1d4 spikes target for 1d4+3



plus poison each); poison (scorpion poison, Fortitude save [DC 18] resists; 1d6/1d6 temp. Str damage); Search (DC 25); Disable Device (impossible by normal means); Climbing out via the walk way requires three successful Climb checks (DC 20).

31. Time For a Bit of the Old Ultra-Violence

Merely stepping into this triangular chamber should bring nausea and loathing to the stomachs of those who profess clean morals. The flooring is either obsidian triangles or bloodstained white marble triangles. The torturing devices contained herein are well maintained and fully functional. There are two long thin iron cabinets and two plush oaken chairs arranged around the middle table.

The granite table in the middle of the chamber seems to have been thoroughly cleaned of most blood and sports a well-oiled rack. One of the blue dragon head lamps rests in the center of a thin wooden table nearby, set to dim emission.

A charred rock with manacles looms in one far corner and three pits crowd the other far corner. One seems to have an unconscious guest. Between the two far corners is a strappado with its bed of spikes underneath a belted collar. Horrid and vile gothic tapestries line the walls. All of the painful-looking metal implements have been locked up in the cabinets except for a black-pommed glossiron shortsword atop each cabinet.

The three pits are special. They are covered by iron gratings and exist as cubic holes, six feet in each direction. Captives must make a Strength check (DC 20) as if they were singly opening a door to escape. This is not easy, as the pits also neutralize the most useful ability statistic of their captives. The highest ability statistic is halved, rounding down, and in the case of a tie, all tied abilities are reduced. These are the pits that the trap in **Area 30** sends its victims.

Behind the manacled stone block and the tapestry covering it, is one end of a *permanent phase door* corridor that angles 25 feet upward to the stairway near the pool in **Area 35**. Only the Darkmage and Zot know of this corridor and only they may use it. An effect of *true seeing* must be used to even spot it, but the spotter may not use it.

If any being of good alignment sets foot upon an obsidian triangle-tile, both *+1 unholy shortswords* located atop each long thin metal cabinet fling themselves toward the violator, launched to impale the offender. They attack with a +13 ranged bonus, dealing their additional 2d6 of burning evil damage to good-aligned victims each round until pulled free from the victim, an action which requires a successful Strength check (DC 13).

The victim in the pit is **Seleneca** (Rog3; hp 16; Hide +6, Move Silently +6), a rogue of formerly tough repute who made the wretched mistake of double-crossing Rasharnor. The poor man is too far-gone to do anything but whimper and back away from any whom come near the pit. His spirit is totally broken, but not by the torturing. The Imps who travel through this Lair at their whim and the knowledge that he isn't even on his home plane anymore has sent him into total withdrawal. Good-aligned PCs who rescue him and rehabilitate him to an honest profession are in line for an XP bonus.

32. Vault of the Darkmage (EL 5)

Once the party successfully lowers all three secret doors, they note that the two far secret doors blocked egress to a pair of long chambers also covered by the familiar swirling stonework. The only things contained in this pair of chambers are four large chests of gold in the shape of a quarter-hemisphere, each set on three wheels. There is a gorgeous sculpted handle near the topmost edge of the corner, and a hinge in the middle of the circular edge. They are all trapped, of course, but there are no external means of relieving the traps. There are three ways to loot the chests without penalty:

- * The first way is to merely wheel the chest to the teleporter and through it, causing the chest to not exist in Gehenna at all.

- * The second way is to state the phrase "I, in the name of Sessestophelzine, require you unbound." which causes three muffled voices to evilly whine, "As you wish, Lord Sesses" since the programmed teleportation does not take effect that time.

- * The third way to open the chests without penalty is to wheel all four chests together and fit them against each other. This causes the four chests to fuse into one chest with five wheels. Simultaneously twelve muffled, piteous cries of rage and denial escape from the new larger chest, since the programmed teleportation is ruined forever. Now the difficult part is physically opening the chest, since it currently exists as a 15-foot-diameter hemispherical construct. Worse, the four hatches open from the top down past the edge. Multiple facings could be inoperable, depending on where the chest exists in the corridor. If the PCs manage to push the chests all the way to Area 33, a rather daunting task in itself, they may open it easily in that chamber, as there is sufficient room. In this state, the chest is impossible to transport via the teleporters, but it can be broken once again into four parts by speaking the typical phrase "I, in the name of Sessestophelzine, require you unbound."

Otherwise, if none of these three steps are taken when opening a particular chest, the three Imps duty-bound to the chest *teleport* from wherever they are in Gehenna to the chest and immediately become invisible. Thereafter they fly to the entryway at the top of the slide. Each Imp is excited to do this as they are not imprisoned within the chest during this duty and they are promised part of the contents of their guarded chest whenever they thwart a violator. The Imps have been briefed personally by the Darkmage to wait until most if not all the chests have been opened, and then attack in concert, keying on the most susceptible violator. If they think it might help, one Imp flies down and resets the trap to whichever state seems to suit them the best. The Imps then try to poison violators and push them down the slide into the pit.

Tough Imps (3): CR 3; SZ T Outsider; HD 4d8; hp 20; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 20 ft., fly 50 ft. (perfect); AC 20 (+4 natural, +4 Dex, +2 Size), touch 16, flat-footed 16; BAB/Grapple +4/-4; Atk +10 melee (1d4, poisoned sting); Face/Reach 2.5 ft. by 2.5 ft./0 ft.; SA poison (Fortitude DC 12, 1d4/2d4 temp. Dex damage), spell-like abilities; SQ damage reduction (5/silver), immunity to poison, qualities, polymorph, regeneration (2), fire resistance (20), SR (8); AL LE; SV Fort +4, Ref +8, Will +5; Str 10, Dex 18, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills: Hide +16, Listen +7, Move Silently +8, Search +6, Spellcraft +6, Spot +7. **Feats:** Dodge, Weapon Finesse (tail sting).

Tactics: Gather at the large slide; plan concerted attack, perhaps using the trap mechanism to best advantage. Poison and slay any chest violators and thereafter receive payment from Lord Sesses.

Treasure: In the southeastern chest contains 34,800 sp. The northeastern chest contains 14 platinum bars worth 500gp each, 75 gold bars worth 50gp each, 3,200 pp, 8,750 gp, 12,550 cp and a miniature mahogany wooden coffin containing a home-built *rod of cancellation*. The southwestern chest contains many expensive items and jewelry, all neatly arranged and packed around pillows. A golden coffer worth 2,500 gp contains the alexandrite collection 7,500 gp, 5,000 gp, 2,500 gp, 1,500 (x2) gp, 1,000 (x3) gp, 500 (x12) gp as well as the three emeralds 5,000 gp, 3,500 gp, 3,000 gp. The rest of the loot consists of: a platinum necklace with 13 linked sapphires worth 11,500 gp, a golden ruby ring worth 8,750 gp, a golden emerald ring worth 6,250 gp, a gilded diamond earring set worth 3,500 gp, a crystal decanter worth 3,000 gp, a golden necklace with melee diamonds and huge amethyst worth 2,200 gp, a set of 4 gold and platinum goblets worth 1,750 gp, a golden serving tray worth 1,500 gp, a carved jade forest-scene box worth 800 gp containing a tarnished silver onyx ring worth 25 gp, and a silver tea set worth

600 gp. The northwestern chest contains the following magic items: *assassin's dagger*, *chime of interruption*, home-built *immovable rod*, *Keoghtam's ointment* (x3), *pipes of pain*, *robe of useful items*, a home-built *robe of powerlessness*, plus two boxes. There is a silver and banded agate box worth 750 gp that has a home-built *amulet of inescapable location*, *amulet of the planes*, a home-built *ring of clumsiness*, *ring of mind shielding*, *ring of water walking*, *talisman of the sphere*. There is a carved fireball-sculpture fire-opal box worth 2,500 gp that has *crystal hypnosis ball*, *gem of seeing* (in secret tail chamber, Search [DC 20]), *clear ioun stone*, and *iridescent ioun stone*.

All the loot in the chests is cursed. In any event, any loot taken more than 500 feet away from a chest or to a different plane than the chest *teleports* and *planeshifts* back to the gilded wedge chest **closest** to the one that the loot formerly was in. The same loot taken in the same way from the new chest no doubt causes confusion upon the looter as the loot again *teleports* and *planeshifts* back to the gilded wedge chest **closest** to the one that the loot formerly was in. In this instance, the loot returns to the original chest. This effect may be nullified by casting both *remove curse* and then *dispel magic* on each and every desired item. A simpler nullification entails placing each item in a chest that was in the opposite side of the vault, closing and opening the lid and **then** taking the item in question.

33. Tossing One Last Barb Your Way (EL 8)

You enter a large pentagonal chamber, about 50 feet on each side and 20-feet-high. A wonder of engineering, there are no supporting pillars and the entire room is fashioned from a strange glossy black stone that conveys the image of deep space. All around the room are silver inlays set at various depths into the semi-transparent stone that help give this effect. A 20-foot-high and 10-foot-wide black tapestry adorns each wall, depicting mages in combat, conjuration, and research. On the floor is an inscribed magic circle and pentagram set of inlaid gold and carnelian.

Assuming Sessestophelzine has time, he summons the **barbazu** Uberscorch in this chamber from his nearby observatory. After he gives the devil its orders, he rolls a mithral bead through the hole in his observation area to break the magic circle containment effect. The stonework's properties are described in the shielding section of the introductory characteristics.

Anyone who enters the room and looks towards the gilded doorway sees a pattern illusion of an exact duplicate of another room corner. Disbelief or closed eyes removes this effect for those who do so. Once past the illusory corner, the gilded door may be seen normally.

There is another illusion in the corner between this room and the small observatory. It is a pattern illusion that covers the two-foot hole between the two. The secret door is operated by a small pressure plate nearby and sinks into the floor.

Uberscorch, the Tough Barbazu: CR 8; SZ M Outsider; HD 8d8+16; hp 59; Init +4 (Improved Initiative); Spd 40 ft.; AC 18 (+7 natural, +1 Dex), touch 11, flat-footed 17; BAB/Grapple +8/+11; Atk +11 (1d10+4, glaive plus wounding, crit x3); Full Atk +11/+6 melee (1d10+4, glaive plus wounding, crit x3) or +11 melee (1d4+3 [x2], claw); Reach 5 ft, 10 ft. (glaive); SA beard (1d8+2 plus disease, Fortitude DC 14, incubation 1d4 days, 1d4 Str), rage, spell-like abilities, wounding (glaive); SQ damage reduction (10/+1), SR (24), summon devils; AL LE; SV Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +6; Str 16, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 12.

Skills: Concentration +12, Hide +10, Listen +9, Move Silently +9, Search +7, Sense Motive +9, Spot +10.

Feats: Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative.

Tactics:

* Uberscorch does as Lord Sesses bids, dependent upon situation.

* It is given the secret of the plaques and may operate the slide trap if it needs reinforcements.

* Uberscorch enjoys teleporting from foe to foe, wounding or diseasing each one in turn. It then focuses attacks upon each foe one by one until all are destroyed.

* It creates *major images* just like the other devils do, but these *images* disappear when it rages, which it is wont to do.

34. To Serve And Assault (EL 12)

This trap is designed to do away with any ground-based fighting threat, leaving normal inhabitants that can fly or move by magical means unharmed. It is a simple 30-foot expanse of hinged flooring which deposits the unwary into a pit that is 30 feet long by 45 feet wide. The pit is 15 feet deep at the edges and slopes to 20-feet-deep along the middle of the width. The pit chamber's ceiling is 5 feet below the corridor floor, and the hinged flooring breaks in the middle to rest along the north and south pit walls. A rather easily found pressure plate south of the pit safeties and resets this trap, requiring a successful Search check (DC 10).

The pit is creature-less, although there is a long-dead bugbear with *butchers' bracers*, a *butchers' helm* and a morningstar off to one side of the pit. The only other thing in the pit is the gothic darkened mithral longsword named Pizzicato (see **Appendix 2**). Every being that falls in the pit must make an additional Reflex save (CR 15) to avoid tumbling into the sword. Then again, someone may pick it up willfully. If the sword is touched, chaos ensues as it attacks all nearby, espe-

cially arcane spellcasters. Once activated, arcane magic draws it closer like blood does to a shark. The only PCs it would possibly want to control would be arcane spellcasters, but only to drain them of all Wizard or Sorcerer levels, whereupon it would feel rather satisfied.

Should the sword find its way out of the pit with no beings to slay, it immediately homes in on the gilded door and begins hacking fitfully at it in seething rage. When the *air walk* subsides 3 hours later, it enters its dormant state again. Its attacks against the door only cause the faintest of scratches.

Hinged Pit Trap (15 ft. sloping to 20 ft.): CR 2; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; hidden bypass (Search [DC 20]); Reflex save (DC 15) avoids; 20 ft. slide (no damage); possible contact with longsword Pizzicato (Reflex save [DC 15] avoids); Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 20).

35. The Gehenna Laboratory (EL 5)

You now face yet another gilded, circular door. This one is totally plain and smooth save for raised runes of **Sessestophelzine** in the middle. Another ball-handle beckons you to pull.

Anyone succeeding with a Search check (DC 20) while examining the door notes the dot of the "i" seems to be a rod extended from within the door. This rod may be pushed without incident. Doing so negates the **lightning trap** located on the cloth mage on the magic tapestry in the room beyond. This bolt travels from the far wall through the doorway and over the sword-pit. The door may be opened easily regardless of if the trap safety has been set or not.

You see a 30-foot-long, 15-foot-high corridor, one that bends to the left and empties into a room. The red rock has been totally covered by a night-black fur on the floor, ceiling and walls. To your left is a tapestry showing busts of many revered ancient mages. On your right is an immense 60-foot-wide tapestry depicting a flood of mages at work in laboratories and testing spells and items. Ahead of you is a tapestry on the far wall that shows mages in battle with unusual creatures.

If the lightning trap was not safetied, read:

One embroidered mage has wisps of smoke emanating from his fingers.

Continuing on:

Rounding the bend, you see two sculptures, an iron magic circle of protection almost 20-feet in diameter on the floor, and the other in brass jutting from the near side wall, an iron pentagram set into the wall by a spike at each apex. Just beyond the floor sculpture, you see a brass bed whose posts resemble fireballs in flight. Beyond the bed rises a fur-covered wall at least 5 feet

high and 20 feet wide. On top of that wall rests an ornate brass stand with two kegs upon it and a smaller stand with inset jugs.

The room empties out even further around the bend with the pentagram sculpture. Here is another laboratory, as a few more tables crowd in the center of the chamber, two chests appear on the far wall, a huge bank of L-shaped shelves line themselves over a huge L-shaped table, and another plush chair floats nearby. Again, there are all manners of glassware, cabinets, containers, scrolls, tomes, and strange devices upon the tables and shelves. Near the wall towards the far side of the room are stairs that lead to a ledge of the wall near the bed. The entire area is covered in pure black fur and lit by a multitude of blue dragonhead lamps.

Lord Sesses prefers to conduct the final battle else if he can help it, but does so in extremis as it has a few features that may help him. Currently, the focus for this laboratory is to prepare another *rod of absorption*. There are materials and scrolls to create, with time and expertise, the following magic items: *amulet of inescapable location*, *necklace of fireballs*, *oil of slipperiness*, *ring of clumsiness*, *robe of powerlessness*, *robe of the evil archmagi* (with the help of Shentresh under the influence of a *candle of invocation*), *rod of absorption*, *rod of cancellation*. There are also unfinished journals that mark the Darkmage's progress in his quest to create his own *vacuous grimoires*.

Although the stairs provide access to the walkway around the pool, they also lead right up to one end of a *permanent phase door* corridor that ramps 25 feet downward to end at the corner of the torture chamber (**Area 31**) with the manacled stone block. Only the Darkmage and his Sytec Zot know of this corridor and only they may use it. An effect of *true seeing* must be used to even spot it, but the spotter may not use it. If Zot still lives, the Darkmage orders it into this *permanent phase door* corridor for safety. Zot only emerges if the Darkmage wishes or if Lord Sesses falls, the latter prompts Zot to attack in a berserk fashion.

The southwest area is a 15 foot cubic magical media pool surrounded by a 5 foot high and 5 foot wide retaining wall and walkway. The brass stand upon the walkway near the bed contains two kettles of dispelling powder that causes the pool media to assume it's normal pure water state if a handful is thrown into the pool. Fortunately, the walls and floor of the pool are coated with sheets of magical force, as differing reagents poured into the pool can create rather noxious and downright dangerous liquids and solvents.

There are five ceramic jugs in the small stand next to the kettle stand. Each ceramic jug contains different reagents. One has a fine orange powder, one has a thick black sludge with green specks, one has an opaque and swirling psychedelic stew, one has a dark blue chunky

powder, and the last contains translucent silver dust. Different combinations of reagents thrown into the pool create different effects in the pool, turning the media into all manners of odd things. Some possible effects produced are: long-lasting ink, oil that flames upon contact with air, liquid that dissolves wood, liquid that dissolves stone, slippery green oil, bitterly cold gelatin, moldable rubber, different poisons, various acids, hallucinogenic agents, bubbling liquid that gives off sleeping gas, and all types of spell effects in liquid form. Use your imagination to create a matrix of effects that you would enjoy using.

The iron pentagram sculpture itself comprises part of a secret door, found by making a Search check (DC 22). Rotating the bottom right holding peg, the secret door of which the sculpture is attached to opens, revealing shelves containing personal trinkets, fetishes, notes and many books, including all the spell books of the Darkmage and his prized collection of five *vacuous grimoires*. Lord Sesses never opens this small chamber for his spell books, as he has infused them with magic teleportation runes.

Amidst all the lab apparatuses, there is an iron pedestal on the L-shaped table. It has runes much like the ones adorning the spell books, and indeed these runes are attuned to the spell books. Ten small golden spheres are arrayed in a gilded box near the stand, each with a rune and a bas-relief number from 0 to 9. A sphere placed in the hemispherical hollow in the iron stand *teleports* the numbered-level spell book to the stand, and removal of the sphere *teleports* it back to the *grimoire*-trapped shelving.

The eastern secret door open to the observational chamber which is in most respects the same as **Area 26g**, except there is no movable viewing wand, nor see-through magical patch in the wall. A 2 foot wide hole peers out into the chamber **Area 33**, covered on the other side by a pattern illusion.

Lightning Bolt Trap: CR 6; magic device; proximity trigger (*alarm*); automatic reset; hidden bypass (Search [DC 25]) pushing the rod latch in the door mentioned above; spell effect (*lightning bolt*, 10th-level wizard, 10d6 electricity, Reflex save [DC 17] for half damage); Search (DC 25); Disable Device (DC 25).

The spell books of Sessetophelzine contain the following spells:

0: all 0-level spells.

1st-level: burning hands, cause fear, charm person, color spray, detect secret doors, expeditious retreat, feather fall, grease, hold portal, identify, mage armor, magic missile, protection from evil, shield, shocking grasp, sleep, summon monster I, Tensor's floating disk, unseen servant.

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2nd-level: alter self, arcane lock, bear's endurance, bull's strength, cat's grace, darkness, glitterdust, invisibility, knock, levitate, locate object, Mel's acid arrow, mirror image, protection from arrows, rope trick, see invisibility, spider climb, summon monster II, web.

3rd-level: dispel magic, fireball, fly, halt undead, haste, hold person, lightning bolt, magic circle against evil, major image, protection from energy, stinking cloud, suggestion, summon monster III, tongues, vampiric touch, water breathing.

4th-level: animate dead, bestow curse, charm monster, confusion, dimensional anchor, dimension door, ice storm, greater invisibility, lesser globe of invulnerability, polymorph, remove curse, stone shape, summon monster IV, wall of ice.

5th-level: baleful polymorph, cone of cold, dismissal, feeblemind, hold monster, lesser planar binding, permanency, summon monster V, wall of force, wall of stone, teleport.

6th-level: analyze dweomer, disintegrate, globe of invulnerability, guards and wards, legend lore, permanent image, planar binding, repulsion, summon monster VI.

7th-level: banishment, delayed blast fireball, greater teleport, phase door, plane shift, project image, spell turning, summon monster VII, teleport object.

8th-level: binding, Bigsby's clenched fist, greater planar binding, mind blank, polymorph any object, summon monster VIII, symbol of death, symbol of insanity, trap the soul.

9th-level: gate, summon monster IX, teleportation circle.

THIS ENDS THE *VINDICATION* ADVENTURE. THE AUTHOR HOPES THAT BOTH YOU AND THE PLAYERS FOUND IT FUN AND CHALLENGING.

Appendix 1: Introducing “the Butchers”

Contained herein are the stats, in one place, for the entire group known as “the Butchers.” The bugbears start the adventure at the Keep in areas **11** through **18b**. Gortok and the mages appear there as well. Emplace them, poison the foes unmercifully with them, retreat them, do it all over again. Please note the following:

- * All Butchers have a *Lord Sesses amulet* (found in **Appendix 2**).

- * At the Keep, only Shentresh and Gortok have a *teleporter key rod* (found in **Appendix 2**).

- * All bugbears allow Zot to touch them with its “menacing black sphere” (see Zot’s **Specific Tactics** in Act 2), and put up a fair bit of fake fright to humor the construct of their evil master.

- * All bugbears gain +1 to-hit and damage if using a +1 *bolt*, and gain a further +1 to hit if they have Point Blank Shot and the quarry is within 30 feet.

- * Regardless of class, all bugbears are proficient in the use of morningstars and javelins as a racial ability.

- * If time allows, all bolts are envenomed with phase spider venom (Fortitude DC 15; 2d6/2d6 temp. Con damage).

- * If time allows, the spikes on their morningstars have monstrous spider venom (Fortitude DC 14; 1d4/1d6 temp. Str damage).

Office Politics for all lesser bugbears: Follow any orders from bugbear elite personnel or officers. Doubly follow said orders if commanded by Jerjicus, Zot, or Lord Sesses himself. Grievances are best taken up with Rasharnor or, for the brave, Jerjicus. Those who take grievances up with Lord Sesses generally meet the phase spiders.

The Sentries of the Keep (EL 7, 1)

Keep Imp Sentries (6): CR 2; hp 15; see the *MM*. *Possessions:* *lord sesses amulet*, *wand of enemy detection* (only carried by the two imps north of the Keep).

Typical tactics: Monitor the area on their side of the Keep. Report trouble to Opiate and then Kezhantak or Phytzjia.

Opiate, the Evil Pseudodragon, the Sentry of the Keep Sentries: CR 1; hp 17; see the *MM*.

Possessions: *Lord Sesses amulet*.

Typical tactics: Monitor the area on their side of the Keep. Report trouble to the viceroys. Monitor the Imps’ actions and report any deviation from standard procedure to Phytzjia.

Areas 15, 16a. Front-Line Grunts (EL 9, 8, 7)

Bebitahb and Nemurghan, Elite Troops of the Butchers, Bugbear Ftr7 (2): CR 8; SZ M (Goblinoid); HD 3d8+3 plus 7d10+21; hp 86; Init +6 (Improved Initiative, Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 20 (+3 natural, +2 Dex, +5 *bracers*), touch 12, flat-footed 18; BAB/Grapple +9/+13; Atk +15 (1d8+7, +1 *morningstar*) or +11 ranged (1d6+3, javelin, range 30 ft.) or +13 (1d8+2, +1 *light crossbow w/ +1 bol*, crit 19-20, range 80 ft.); Full Atk +15/+10 melee (1d8+7, +1 *morningstar*) or +11/+6 ranged (1d6+3, javelin, range 30 ft.); SA poison; SQ darkvision (60 ft.); AL NE; SV Fort +9, Ref +7, Will +3; Str 18, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 14.

Skills: Climb +9, Hide +7, Jump +9, Listen +6, Move Silently +7, Spot +7, Swim +5, Tumble +4. *Feats:* Alertness, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (*morningstar*).

Languages: Common and Goblin.

Possessions: +2 *morningstar*, *butchers’ bracers*, *butchers’ helm*, +1 *light crossbow*, bolts (x24), +1 *bolts* (x12), javelins (x2), *potion of cure serious wounds* (caster level 9), *Lord Sesses amulet*, belt with weapon loops, quiver.

Typical Tactics: Emplaced at the sides of mouth openings of the complex, they attack with surprise and thereafter gain half-cover from the edge-corners with its +4 AC and +2 reflex save bonuses. These two often lead the counterattacks upon invaders once the Butchers regroup.

Myrmidons of the Butchers, Bugbear Ftr5 (6): CR 6; SZ M (Goblinoid); HD 3d8+3 plus 5d10+15; hp 68; Init +6 (Improved Initiative, Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 20 (+3 natural, +2 Dex, +5 *bracers*), touch 12, flat-footed 18; BAB/Grapple +7/+10; Atk +12 melee (1d8+5, +1 *morningstar*) or +9 ranged (1d6+3, javelin, range 30 ft.) or +11 ranged (1d8+2, +1 *light crossbow w/ +1 bol*, crit 19-20, range 80 ft.); Full Atk +12/+7 melee (1d8+5, +1 *morningstar*) or +9/+4 ranged (1d6+3, javelin, range 30 ft.); SA poison; SQ darkvision (60 ft.); AL NE; SV Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +2; Str 17, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 13.

Skills: Climb +7, Hide +5, Jump +7, Listen +6, Move Silently +6, Spot +6, Swim +5. *Feats:* Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (*morningstar*).

Languages: Common and Goblin.

Possessions: +1 *morningstar*, *butchers’ bracers*, *butchers’ helm*, +1 *light crossbow*, bolts (x24), +1 *bolts* (x12), javelins (x2), *potion of cure moderate wounds* (caster level 5), *Lord Sesses amulet*, belt with weapon

loops, quiver.

Typical Tactics: Emplaced at the sides of mouth openings of the complex, attack with surprise and thereafter gain half-cover from the edge-corners with its +4 AC and +2 reflex save bonuses. These fighters are the mobile shock troops. Deploy them as demoralizing reinforcements.

Veterans of the Butchers, Bugbear Ftr3 (12): CR 4; SZ M (Goblinoid); HD 3d8+3 plus 3d10+6; hp 45; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 19 (+3 natural, +1 Dex, +5 bracers), touch 11, flat-footed 18; BAB/Grapple +5/+8; Atk +9 melee (1d8+5, +1 morningstar) or +6 ranged (1d6 +3, javelin, range 30 ft.) or +8 ranged (1d8+1, +1 light crossbow w/ +1 bolt, crit 19-20, range 80 ft.); SA poison; SQ darkvision (60 ft.); AL NE; SV Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +2; Str 16, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Skills: Climb +5, Hide +4, Jump +5, Listen +5, Move Silently +5, Spot +5, Swim +4. **Feats:** Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Power Attack.

Languages: Common and Goblin.

Possessions: +1 morningstar, butchers' bracers, butchers' helm, +1 light crossbow, bolts (x24), +1 bolts (x12), javelins (x2), *potion of cure light wounds* (caster level 5), *Lord Sesses amulet*, belt with weapon loops, quiver.

Typical Tactics: These grunts are marshaled into groups of 4 that patrol the canyon around the lair of the Butchers. Otherwise, they protect the Keep. Their orders are to watch for unusual activity and beasts, and any group seeing such immediately makes for the Keep and informs an officer upon what they saw. Here are your front-line troops for initial defense.

Areas 17, 18a. Sharp Shooting Grunts (EL 9, 8, 8)

Utchatu and Tuvataht, Elite Scouts of the Butchers, Bugbear Rog7 (2): CR 8; SZ M (Goblinoid); HD 3d8+3 plus 7d6+14; hp 61; Init +6 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 60 ft., base 30 ft.; AC 20 (+3 natural, +2 Dex, +5 bracers), touch 12, flat-footed 18; BAB/Grapple +7/+9; Atk +10 melee (1d8+4, +1 morningstar) or +9 ranged (1d6+2, javelin, range 30 ft.) or +12 ranged (1d8+3, +2 light crossbow w/ +1 bolt, crit 19-20, range 80 ft.); Full Atk +10/+5 melee (1d8+4, +1 morningstar) or +9/+4 ranged (1d6+2, javelin, range 30 ft.) or +12/+7 ranged (1d8+3, +1 light crossbow w/ +1 bolt, crit 19-20, range 80 ft.); SA poison, sneak attack (+4d6); SQ darkvision (60 ft.), evasion, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC), trap sense +2, trapfinding; AL NE; SV Fort +5, Ref +10, Will +3; Str 15, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 12.

Skills: Balance +6, Climb +5, Disable Device +6, Escape Artist +6, Hide +9, Jump +13, Listen +10, Move Silently +10, Open Lock +8, Sleight of Hand +8, Search, +6, Spot +10, Survival +3, Tumble +6, Use Rope +3. **Feats:** Alertness, Improved Initiative, Point Blank Shot, Rapid Reload (light crossbow).

Languages: Common and Goblin.

Possessions: +1 morningstar, butchers' bracers, butchers' helm, +2 light crossbow, bolts (x24), +1 bolts (x12), *javelins of lightning* (x2), javelins (x2), *boots of striding and springing*, *potion of cure serious wounds* (caster level 9), *Lord Sesses amulet*, belt with weapon loops, quiver.

Tactics: Peek behind the wall of force cups; gain 75% cover with its +7 AC and +3 reflex save bonuses. Jump from cup to cup as the battle rages. Use the entire Keep layout to create as many possibilities for sneak attack damage as possible.

Veteran Burglers of the Butchers, Bugbear Rog5 (6): CR 6; SZ M (Goblinoid); HD 3d8+3 plus 5d6+5; hp 45; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 20 (+3 natural, +2 Dex, +5 bracers), touch 12, flat-footed 18; BAB/Grapple +5/+7; Atk +7 melee (1d8+4, +1 morningstar) or +7 ranged (1d6+2, javelin, range 30 ft.) or +9 ranged (1d8+2, +1 light crossbow w/ +1 bolt, crit 19-20, range 80 ft.); SA poison, sneak attack (+3d6); SQ darkvision (60 ft.), evasion, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC), trap sense +1, trapfinding; AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +9, Will +2; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Appraise +3, Balance +5, Climb +5, Disable Device +4, Escape Artist +6, Hide +7, Jump +3, Listen +8, Move Silently +10, Open Lock +5, Search, +4, Sleight Of Hand +4, Spot +10, Survival +1, Tumble +6, Use Rope +3. **Feats:** Alertness, Point Blank Shot, Track.

Languages: Common and Goblin.

Possessions: +1 morningstar, butchers' bracers, butchers' helm, +1 light crossbow, bolts (x24), +1 bolts (x12), javelins (x2), *potion of cure moderate wounds* (caster level 5), *Lord Sesses amulet*, belt with weapon loops, quiver.

Typical Tactics: Emplaced these behind the arrow-slitted tables in the courtyard. Gain 75% cover with its +7 AC and +3 reflex save bonuses. Fireman carry them by Imps up to the wall of force cups.

Veteran Crossbow Monsters of the Butchers, Bugbear Rog3 (14): CR 4; SZ M (Goblinoid); HD 3d8+3 plus 3d6+3; hp 35; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 20 (+3 natural, +2 Dex, +5 bracers), touch 12, flat-footed 18; BAB/Grapple +4/+6; Atk +6 melee (1d8+3, +1 morningstar), +6 ranged (1d6+2, javelin, range 30 ft.), +8 ranged (1d8+2, +1 light crossbow w/ +1 bolt, crit 19-20, range 80 ft.); SA poison, sneak attack (+2d6); SQ darkvision (60 ft.), evasion, trap sense

+1, trapfinding; AL NE; SV Fort +3, Ref +8, Will +2; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Appraise +1, Balance +3, Climb +3, Disable Device +1, Escape Artist +3, Hide +6, Intuit Direction +1, Jump +3, Listen +7, Move Silently +9, Open Lock +4, Search +2, Sleight Of Hand +4, Spot +7, Tumble +4, Use Rope +3. **Feats:** Alertness, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot.

Languages: Common and Goblin.

Possessions: morningstar, *butchers' bracers*, *butchers' helm*, +1 *light crossbow*, bolts (x24), +1 *bolts* (x12), javelins (x2), *Lord Sesses amulet*, belt with weapon loops, quiver.

Typical Tactics: They gain whatever cover or height advantage they may and poison the enemy with bolts.

Area 13. Shentresh's Acolytes of the Bugbear God (EL 7, 6)

Priests of the Butchers, Bugbear Clr5 (2): CR 6; SZ M (Goblinoid); HD 3d8+3 plus 5d8+10; hp 56; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 19 (+3 natural, +1 Dex, +5 *bracers*), touch 11, flat-footed 18; BAB/Grapple +5/+8; Atk: +9 melee (1d8+5, +1 *morningstar*) or +6 ranged (1d6+3, javelin, range 30 ft.) or +8 ranged (1d8+2, light crossbow bolt, crit 19-20, range 80 ft.); SA poison, rebuke undead, spells; SQ aura, darkvision (60 ft.), spontaneous casting; AL NE; SV Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +8; Str 16, Dex 12, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 12.

Skills: Concentration +5, Heal +5, Hide +3, Knowledge (religion) +3, Listen +8, Move Silently +6, Spot +8, Spellcraft +2. **Feats:** Alertness, Combat Casting, Improved Initiative.

Divine Spells Prepared (5/4/3/2; base DC 13 + spell level): 0—detect magic, cure minor wounds (x2), guidance, resistance; 1st—cure light wounds (x2), doom, endure elements; 2nd—cure moderate wounds, hold person, silence; 3rd—dispel magic, invisibility purge.

Domain Spells Prepared (Evil, War): 1—protection from good; 2—spiritual weapon; 3—magic circle against good.

Languages: Common and Goblin.

Possessions: +1 *morningstar*, *butchers' bracers*, *butchers' helm*, +1 *light crossbow*, bolts (x24), +1 *bolts* (x12), javelins (x2), *Lord Sesses amulet*, belt with weapon loops, quiver.

Typical Tactics:

* These clerics are emplaced as backups to front-line troops and backups to shock troops. They operate as wingmen to the viceroys.

* They cast *protection from good* on themselves.

Then they use *doom*, *spiritual weapon*, *hold person*, silence and *dispel magic* as opportunity presents itself.

* They dutifully heal bugbears that are deposited at their feet by Jerjicus or others.

Acolytes of the Butchers, Bugbear Clr3 (4): CR 4; SZ M (Goblinoid); HD 3d8+3 plus 3d8+6; hp 42; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 19 (+3 natural, +1 Dex, +5 *bracers*), touch 11, flat-footed 18; BAB/Grapple +4/+6; Atk +7 melee (1d8+4, +1 *morningstar*) or +5 ranged (1d6+2, javelin, range 30 ft.) or +7 ranged (1d8+2, +1 *light crossbow w/ +1 bolt*, crit 19-20, range 80 ft.); SA poison, rebuke undead, spells; SQ aura, darkvision (60 ft.); AL NE; SV Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +6; Str 15, Dex 12, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 12.

Skills: Concentration +4, Heal +3, Hide +3, Knowledge (religion) +2, Listen +8, Move Silently +6, Spot +8, Spellcraft +1. **Feats:** Alertness, Combat Casting, Improved Initiative.

Divine Spells Prepared (4/3/2; base DC 12 + spell level): 0—detect magic, cure minor wounds (x2), resistance; 1st—cure light wounds (x2), doom; 2nd—cure moderate wounds, hold person or silence.

Domain Spells Prepared (Evil, War): 1—protection from good; 2—spiritual weapon.

Languages: Common and Goblin.

Possessions: +1 *morningstar*, *butchers' bracers*, *butchers' helm*, +1 *light crossbow*, bolts (x24), +1 *bolts* (x12), javelins (x2), *Lord Sesses amulet*, belt with weapon loops, quiver.

Typical Tactics:

* These clerics are emplaced as backups to front-line troops and backups to shock troops.

* They cast *protection from good* on themselves. Then they use *doom*, *spiritual weapon*, *hold person* or *silence* as opportunity presents itself.

* They dutifully heal bugbears that are deposited at their feet by Jerjicus or others.

Area 11. Gortok's Mages of the Keep (EL 7, 6)

Magicians of the Butchers, Bugbear Sor5 (2): CR 6; SZ M (Goblinoid); HD 3d8+3 plus 5d4+5; hp 38; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 19 (+3 natural, +1 Dex, +5 *bracers*), touch 11, flat-footed 18; BAB/Grapple +4/+6; Atk +7 melee (1d8+4, +1 *morningstar*) or +5 ranged (1d6+2, javelin, range 30 ft.) or +7 ranged (1d8+2, +1 *light crossbow w/ +1 bolt*, crit 19-20, range 80 ft.); SA poison, spells; SQ darkvision (60 ft.); AL NE; SV Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +5; Str 15, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 15.

Skills: Concentration +4, Craft (alchemy) +2, Hide +2, Knowledge (arcana) +2 Listen +5, Move Silently +6, Spot +5, Spellcraft +4. **Feats:** Alertness, Combat

Casting, Enlarge Spell.

Arcane Spells Known (Cast per Day: 6/7/5; base DC 12 + spell level): 0—detect magic, mage hand, prestidigitation, ray of frost, resistance, read magic; 1st—magic missile, protection from good, sleep, shield; 2nd—invisibility, spider climb.

Languages: Common and Goblin.

Possessions: +1 morningstar, +1 light crossbow, bolts (x24), +1 bolts (x12), javelins (x2), *butchers' bracers*, *butchers' hat*, *lord sesses amulet*, belt with weapon loops, quiver.

Typical Tactics:

* These mages are emplaced as support weapons and backups to the viceroys.

* They cast *invisibility*, *protection from good*, *spider climb* and *resistance* on themselves. They use *magic missile* and *ray of frost* as opportunity presents.

* The mages head for the highest ground possible with the most cover, and then attack from a distance.

Apprentices of the Butchers, Bugbear Sor3 (4): CR 4; SZ M (Goblinoid); HD 3d8+3 plus 3d4+3; hp 30; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 19 (+3 natural, +1 Dex, +5 *bracers*), touch 11, flat-footed 18; BAB/Grapple +3/+5; Atk +6 melee (1d8+3, morningstar) or +4 ranged (1d6+2, javelin, range 30 ft.) or +5 ranged (1d8+2, +1 *light crossbow w/ +1 bolt*, crit 19-20, range 80 ft.); SA poison, spells; SQ darkvision; AL NE; SV Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +5; Str 15, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 14.

Skills: Concentration +2, Craft (alchemy) +1, Hide +2, Knowledge (arcana) +2, Listen +5, Move Silently +6, Spot +5, Spellcraft +2. *Feats*: Alertness, Combat Casting, Enlarge Spell, Summon Familiar.

Arcane Spells Known (Cast per Day: 6/6; base DC 11 + spell level): 0—detect magic, prestidigitation, ray of frost, resistance, read magic; 1st—magic missile, protection from good, sleep.

Languages: Common and Goblin.

Possessions: morningstar, +1 light crossbow, bolts (x24), +1 bolts (x12), javelins (x2), *butchers' bracers*, *butchers' hat*, *lord sesses amulet*, belt with weapon loops, quiver.

Typical Tactics:

* These mages are emplaced as support weapons and backups to the viceroys. After their first spells run out, they act much like roguish crossbow monsters.

* They cast *spider climb*, *protection from good*, and *resistance* on themselves. They use *magic missile* and *ray of frost* as opportunity presents.

* The mages head for the highest ground possible with the most cover, and then attack from a distance.

The Assembled Viceroys of the Butchers

Rasharnor, the Dark Rogue of the Butchers, Bugbear Ftr1/Rog9: CR 11; SZ M (Goblinoid); HD 3d8+3 plus 9d6+18 plus 1d10+2; hp 79; Init +7 (Improved Initiative, Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 23 (+3 natural, +3 Dex, +5 *armor*, +2 *shield*), touch 13, flat-footed 20; BAB/Grapple +9/+12; Atk +13 melee (1d8+4, +1 *wounding morningstar*) or +12 ranged (1d6+3, javelin, range 30 ft.), +14 ranged (1d10+1, +1 *heavy crossbow w/ +1 bolt*, crit 19-20, range 120 ft.); Full Atk +13/+8 melee (1d8+4, +1 *wounding morningstar*) or +12/+7 ranged (1d6+3, javelin, range 30 ft.); SA poison, sneak attack (+5d6); SQ darkvision, evasion, traps, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC, cannot be flanked); AL NE; SV Fort +8, Ref +12, Will +4; Str 16, Dex 17, Con 15, Int 12, Wis 11, Cha 14.

Skills: Appraise +3, Balance +7, Bluff +4, Climb +7, Decipher Script +2, Diplomacy +4, Disable Device +6, Escape Artist +7, Gather Information +4, Hide +21, Intimidate +4, Jump +7, Listen +7, Move Silently +16, Open Lock +8, Sleight of Hand +8, Ride +4, Search, +6, Spot +10, Swim +4, Tumble +9, Use Magic Device +6, Use Rope +5. *Feats*: Alertness, Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Point Blank Shot.

Languages: Common, Goblin, and Orc.

Possessions: +1 *wounding morningstar*, +2 *shadowed studded leather armor*, +1 *small metal shield*, +1 *heavy crossbow*, +1 *bolts* (12), 24 bolts, 2 javelins, *potion of cure moderate wounds* (caster level 5), *bag of tricks* (rust-colored), *bead of force* (2), home-built *amulet of gloom* (found in **Appendix 2**), *lord sesses amulet*, belt with weapon loops, item hooks and shield holder.

Office Politics:

* Rasharnor acts as the manager of the Butchers' bugbear contingent and petitioner to Jerjicus, who transfers such information to Lord Sesses. He is responsible for gathering the magical items and assault work from Jerjicus and Lord Sesses that the Butchers' bugbears currently enjoy.

* He operates as the Butchers' Bugbear Leader if Kezhantak is away.

* Rasharnor is instrumental in all fencing operations and collecting extortion payments. Sometimes Jerjicus helps out, such as for the Jeweler/Miner's guild.

* Rasharnor is the head of the Order of Moneychangers thieves' guild. There is no true headquarters for the Order. They escape detection by choosing a different guildhouse extorted by the Butchers for each meeting. He makes very sure that Order business does not conflict with Black Rose business, especially

since Jucci and Drincilla are close friends. He sometimes butts heads with 'The Groshen,' however any tilting of the balances there is quickly righted. At Lord Sesses' request, he sometimes hangs a lesser Order member out to dry for JoannaLynne's sake.

Specific Tactics:

* Sneak, Sneak Attack, do it again. Rasharnor has blackened his magic shield with soot and char to facilitate hiding with it similar to his armor. He delights in ambushing passersby who didn't think they'd suffer attacks of opportunity.

* The rogue maneuvers himself to cause the most flanking attacks possible. If none are possible he uses the *bag of tricks* to toss something beyond his quarry so flanking might occur.

* If allies are few, he uses the *amulet of gloom* and trusts in his Blind-Fight feat. Rasharnor enjoys fighting alongside Jerjicus who uses *darkness* often.

* Rasharnor could block a passageway with a *bead of force* burst, or save himself major pain by slamming a *bead* at his feet and hopefully taking less damage than the perceived damage source would do.

Kezhantak, the Bugbear Leader of the Butchers, Ftr9/Rog1: CR 11; SZ M (Goblinoid); HD 3d8+3 plus 9d10+27 plus 1d6+3; hp 97; Init +5 (Improved Initiative, Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 26 (+3 natural, +3 Dex, +7 armor, +3 shield), touch 12, flat-footed 23; BAB/Grapple +11/+15; Atk +17 (1d8+7, +1 *frost morningstar*) or +14 ranged (1d6+4, javelin, range 30 ft.) or +16 (1d10+2, +1 *heavy crossbow w/ +1 bolt*, crit 19-20, range 120 ft.); Full Atk +15/+10 melee (1d8+7, +1 *frost morningstar*) and +14/+9 melee (1d6+3, +2 *bashing small shield*), or +14/+9 ranged (1d6+4, javelin, range 30 ft.); SA poison, sneak attack (+1d6); SQ darkvision (60 ft.); AL NE; SV Fort +10, Ref +10, Will +4; Str 18, Dex 17, Con 17, Int 12, Wis 11, Cha 16.

Skills: Climb +9, Diplomacy +4, Gather Information +7, Handle Animal +9, Hide +4, Intimidate +7, Jump +8, Listen +5, Move Silently +7, Ride +10, Spot +5, Swim +8. Feats: Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Improved Shield Bash, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Mobility, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (morningstar), Weapon Specialization (morningstar).

Languages: Common, Goblin, and Orc.

Possessions: +1 *frost morningstar*, +2 *breastplate armor*, +2 *bashing small shield*, +1 *heavy crossbow*, +1 *bolts* (x12), bolts (x24), javelins (x2), *ring of jumping*, *potion of cure serious wounds* (caster level 5), *potion of spider climb*, *Lord Sesses amulet*, belt with weapon loops and shield holder.

Office Politics:

* Kezhantak commands the tactical emplacement of the Butchers and shouts out battle orders in goblin while

the fight continues. All of the lesser Butchers obey his commands under pain of torture. His style is summed up by the phrase, "The beatings continue until morale improves."

* Kezhantak operates as a loan shark in Pfefferain out of the Hellfire Casino or the Order of Moneychanger's floating headquarters. He usually charges 33% interest compounded monthly, but might change the rate at Drincilla's request.

* The Commander aids Shentresh in the growth and harvest of the opium in the nearby floralgarten regions. He generally issues equipment to the lesser Butchers and oversees their progress.

* He raised and taught Kilitus Maximus the chimera to become a winged mount and faithful companion. Kilitus Maximus operates as a war-mount regarding any skills or checks necessary during battle. Any riding actions or checks are performed at +3 due to a custom-fitted, blessed military saddle. He usually allows Shentresh the witch doctor to ride Kilitus Maximus during defensive postures as the priest is much more able to defend the chimera. In extremis, he orders the chimera to attack, maneuver, and retreat as necessary, regardless of who rides it.

Specific Tactics:

* Kezhantak attacks in a two-weapon fashion, normally bashing with his shield as well but, if a foe with a high AC is faced, also fights at +17/+12 with his +1 *frost morningstar* as a single-weapon fighter. Kezhantak surround his foes with allies to take advantage of his Combat Reflexes and Mobility feats.

* He gleefully shreds enemy spellcasters if a path to them is available, via *spider climb* or *jump*, but normally settles for the front-line enemy troops after the rogue and fighter Butchers have softened them up first.

Shentresh, the Bugbear Witch-Doctor of the Bugbear God, Clr7/Wiz3: CR 12; SZ M (Goblinoid); HD 3d8+3 plus 7d8+7 plus 3d4+3; hp 72; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 19 (+3 natural, +1 Dex, +5 *bracers*), touch 11, flat-footed 18; BAB/Grapple +8/+10; Atk +11 melee (1d8+4, +1 *unholy morningstar*) or +9 ranged (1d6+2, javelin); Full Atk +11/+6 melee (1d8+3, +1 *unholy morningstar*) or +9/+4 ranged (1d6+2, javelin); SA poison, spells, rebuke undead; SQ aura, darkvision; AL NE; SV Fort +9, Ref +8, Will +12; Str 15, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 16, Wis 16, Cha 14.

Skills: Concentration +10, Handle Animal +6, Heal +9, Hide +4, Knowledge (arcana) +9, Knowledge (religion) +11, Listen +10, Move Silently +6, Ride +5, Spellcraft +14, Spot +8. Feats: Alertness, Extra Turning, Point Blank Shot, Reach Spell, Scribe Scroll, Weapon Focus (ray).

Languages: Common, Goblin, and Orc.

Arcane Spells Prepared (4/3/2; base DC 13 + spell level): 0—daze x2, ray of frost (x2); 1st—hold portal,

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mage armor, shield; 2nd—invisibility, web.

Divine Spells Prepared (6/5/5/4/2/1; base DC 13 + spell level): 0—detect magic, cure minor wounds (x2), guidance (x2), resistance; 1st—bless, command, divine favor, doom, sanctuary; 2nd—hold person (x2), cure moderate wounds (x2), silence; 3rd—animate dead, cure serious wounds (x2), invisibility purge; 4th—lesser planar ally (Belker), spell immunity (magic missile, web, hold person); 5th—slay living.

Domain Spells Prepared (Evil, War): 1st—protection from good; 2nd—spiritual weapon; 3rd—magic circle against good; 4th—unholy blight; 5th—flame strike.

Possessions: +1 unholy morningstar, butchers' bracers, butchers' helm, javelins (x2), wand of cure moderate wounds (caster level 5, 23 charges), 1 full jar Keoughtam's ointment, potion of cure serious wounds (caster level 5), teleporter key rod, Lord Sesses amulet, bandolier containing spell components and curatives, belt with item loops and shield holder.

Office Politics:

* Shentresh functions as the High Priest to all of the bugbears of the Butchers. Every being in the Lair comes to him for advice, even Lord Sesses. He is the only bugbear that can openly question the Darkmage's plans and all other bugbears hold him in awe for that.

* He sometimes assists Lord Sesses in his item-crafting tasks and studies with the Darkmage as a quasi-apprentice. The high priest carries a teleporter key rod and is the only bugbear that does so.

* Shentresh, aided by Kezhantak, conducts the growing, harvesting, and laboratory distillation of the opium in the nearby floralgarten regions. It is his job to ensure that the entire operation runs smoothly, escapes detection, avoids decimation by theft, pests, or disasters, and arrives safely by whichever modes of shipment are used.

* The high priest knows that Kezhantak is able to order the flying chimera mount around, regardless of who rides it at the time.

* Due to advanced warning by Lord Sesses, Shentresh prays for spells while under the influence of a candle of invocation, and therefore has more spell slots than normal. These spell slots revert to his typical amount (6/5/4/3/1) if the candle is unused or snuffed out.

Specific Tactics:

* The high priest casts *mage armor* on Kilitus Maximus, *protection from good* on Kezhantak, *shield*, *resistance*, and *magic circle vs. good* on himself, and wades into battle riding the chimera. Kilitus Maximus operates as a war-mount regarding any skills or checks necessary during battle, performed at +3 due to a custom-fitted, blessed military saddle. He holds the spells *invisibility*, *sanctuary*, and *spell immunity* in reserve

and casts them on either himself or Kilitus Maximus as the situation dictates.

* Shentresh tends to cure wounds on himself, Kilitus Maximus, or Kezhantak, but also cures a grunt if dropped at his feet.

* Spells Shentresh would rather not drop are *spell immunity* (magic missiles, silence and holds are prevalent, and the web immunity combos well with his own web and the phase spider webs), *invisibility purge* (may be cast early if odd occurrences are noted) and, to a lesser extent, *lesser planar ally*.

* When backed towards a chamber or some door, *hold portal* buys him and his allies some time.

Kilitus Maximus, the Blue-Headed Chimera: CR 7; SZ L Magic Beast; HD 10d10+30; hp 93; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft., fly 50 ft. (poor); AC 17 (+7 natural, +1 Dex, -1 size), touch 10, flat-footed 16; BAB/Grapple +10/+18; Atk Full Atk +13 melee (1d6+4 [x2], claw, crit 19-20) +11 melee (1d8 +2, headbutt), +11 melee (1d8+2, dragonbite), and +11 melee (2d6+4, lionbite); Face 5ft. by 10ft.; SA blue dragon breath (40 ft. by 5 ft. by 5 ft. line, 3d8 lightning, Reflex DC 17 for half damage); SQ scent; AL LE; SV Fort +10, Ref +8, Will +4; Str 19, Dex 13, Con 17, Int 6, Wis 13, Cha 10.

Skills: Hide +5, Listen +10, Spot +10. *Feats*: Alertness, Multiattack, Power Attack, Improved Critical (claws).

SA—Blue dragon breath (Su): Kilitus Maximus may breathe a 5ft. by 5ft. by 40 ft. bolt of lightning dealing 3d8 points of damage with a Reflex save (DC 17) for half damage. Its breath weapon recharges in 1d4 rounds.

Possessions: Blessed military saddle, custom-fitted for a chimera and worn on the back.

Office Politics:

* Knows the whistles of 'attack,' 'breathe,' 'flank,' 'fly to me' from Kezhantak and follows those orders no matter who is on board.

* Allows the bugbear witch doctor to ride it and order its actions. It enjoys any area of effect protections and knows that if it gets into any trouble Shentresh usually slaps a cure or two upon it. Kilitus Maximus operates as a war-mount regarding any skills or checks necessary during battle. Any riding actions or checks are performed at +3 due to a custom-fitted, blessed military saddle. Its favorite starting point is atop the rear wall of the Keep. This place allows it to use its wings and swoop down upon enemies from above.

Specific Tactics:

* The chimera likes to line up enemies for softening with its breath weapon first.

* Kilitus Maximus never charges into battle as it loses multiple attacks and gets hurt easier that way.

* It focuses on its claw attacks, which have become the primary damage dealers. Lately, they induce horrid skewering as extra critical hits.

* If the chimera initially hurts an enemy with relative ease, it uses its Power Attack thereafter upon that enemy. It takes from 5-7 points off each to hit roll in a round to add to the damage of each successful hit and shreds the victim in a fit of viciousness.

* Kilitus Maximus does not know what a tank destroyer is, but it operates like one. It moves boldly right up to an enemy and rips them limb from limb and thereafter flies to the next victim. It can mete out 50-75 points of melee damage in just one round and all the lair defenders are well aware of that, especially Gortok who endeavors to place *haste* upon it.

Gortok the Sorcerous Doppelganger, Sor8: CR 10; SZ M Monstrous Humanoid (Shapeshifter); HD 4d8+4 plus 8d4+8; hp 52; Init +6 (Improved Initiative, Dex); Spd 30 ft., fly 50 ft. (good) as a mephitis; AC 17 (18 as a mephitis) (+4 natural, +2 Dex, +1 *ring of protection*, +1 size as Mephitis), touch 13 (14), flat-footed 15 (16); BAB/Grapple +7/+7 (+3); Atk +7 melee (1d6, slam) or +8 melee (1d4, slam, as a mephitis); Full Atk +7 melee (1d6 [x2], slam) or +8 melee (1d4 [x2], slam, as a mephitis); SA spells, detect thoughts; SQ disguise self, immunities; AL N(E); SV Fort +7, Ref +8, Will +9; Str 11, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 15, Cha 15.

Skills: Bluff +13*, Concentration +10, Craft (alchemy) +5, Diplomacy +7, Disguise +13*, Gather Information +4, Intimidate +4, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Listen +12, Search +5, Sense Motive +7, Sleight of Hand +4, Spellcraft +15, Spot +6. **Feats:** Alertness, Brew Potion, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Silent Spell.

* When using alter self, a doppelganger receives an additional +10 circumstance bonus to Disguise checks. If it can read an opponent's mind, it gets a further +4 circumstance bonus to Bluff and Disguise checks.

Arcane Spells Known (Cast per Day: 6/7/7/6/3; base DC 12 + spell level): 0—daze, detect magic, disrupt undead, ghost sound, mage hand, prestidigitation, ray of frost, read magic; 1st—alarm, charm person, identify, mage armor, magic missile, shield; 2nd—glitterdust, invisibility, knock, Mel's acid arrow; 3rd—dispel magic, haste; 4th—summon monster IV.

Languages: Common, Elven, Dwarven, Goblin, and Infernal.

Possessions: +1 *ring of protection*, *butchers' bracers*, *butchers' hat*, *dust of appearance* (2 packets), *ring of the ram*, *ring gates*, *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *arcane scroll of 2 spells* (caster level 11; *wall of stone* and *invisibility sphere*), *Lord Sesses amulet*, *teleporter key rod*, bandoleer containing spell components and magic items.

Office Politics:

* This Sorcerer interacts with the Darkmage as a lesser peer, and often can be seen at either of the labs of areas 26 or 35. It studies or actively helps item creation or testing. Gortok tutors the lesser mages in the

Keep with some assistance from Lord Sesses.

* On official Butchers' missions, Gortok becomes any humanoid image that is necessary. He generally keeps to himself, caring more about acquiring experience and power than friends.

* Gortok functions as an auxiliary sentry. He often emplaces *alarm* spells upon the Ramp to the Keep or the chest near Myron. He also may emplace invisible *ring gates* to get a better look of the monitored area.

Specific Tactics:

* Gortok loathes frontal melee with the PCs.

* He automatically *detects thoughts* of any who pass nearby, so he makes a great enemy detection sentinel. If any sounds are heard or thoughts are detected, he alerts any viceroy or Butcher nearby.

* Gortok acts as a utility mage for the bugbears and hampers, disrupts, and generally annoys the PCs from a distance.

* He uses *mage armor* and *haste* on himself and others he deems worthy, like the rogue Rasharmor, the bugbear commander Kezhantak, the witch doctor Shentresh, and **especially** the chimera Kilitus Maximus.

* The Sorcerer travels around as an air mephitis, a 4-foot-tall winged humanoid, but only maneuvers at good precision instead of perfect.

* He always travels invisibly if possible, and re-enables the *invisibility* after any set of offensive actions if possible. Otherwise, he likes to appear as an extra bugbear, a split-up group member or an extra image in an enemy spellcaster's *mirror image*, waiting for a chance to attack an enemy unawares.

* If he can *charm* a PC whose thoughts he has read, he likes to make that PC stand invisibly in a corner and then take their place in the group. Once again, he waits for a chance to attack another enemy unawares. Tell the PC standing in a corner to play along 'as the charmer' as if nothing happened, then 'take over' the PC when the time is right to strike, by passing notes or some other method.

* The doppelganger continually reads enemy thoughts and if enough defensive spells are cast, especially naughty things like *stoneskin*, *protection from energy* or *magic circle against evil*, it delights in casting *dispel magic* upon the enemies—this disrupts *invisibility*.

* He likes to *summon* fiendish wolverines or dire badgers behind enemies for flanking maneuvers—this does not disrupt *invisibility*.

* He likes to *summon* dire apes in the *force* cups of the Keep so they may jump down with surprise—this does not disrupt *invisibility*.

* He likes to *summon* minor xorn to rise from the floor or better yet drop teeth-first through the ceiling with surprise onto an unsuspecting enemy's head—this

does not disrupt *invisibility*.

* Gortok tries to lift an enemy's items from their holders with *mage hand*, especially ammunition and potions, or interpose small shields, books, or other such materials in front of the enemy's eyes, blocking sight to their targets—these actions do not disrupt *invisibility*.

* He tries to fly-by *Dust* invisible enemies for the bugbear's viewing pleasure—this disrupts the enemy's *invisibility*, but not its own.

* Gortok initially starts out the defense by reading the *invisibility sphere* scroll spell. Note that the sphere makes **all** beings wink out of sight to all others, which can be disconcerting to enemies when their comrades start disappearing due to Gortok's close proximity. This can also be used defensively, making injured bugbears seemingly vanish and non-targetable. Merely fire a volley of *magic missiles* to end this concealment.

* He could become a gatling gun of *magic missiles* and *Mel's acid arrows* if necessary. He could use all available slots in spell-levels 1 through 3 along with the Silent Spell metamagic feat as necessary. These spells disrupt *invisibility*.

Zottenheim ("Zot"), Sytec of Sessestophelzine: CR 9; SZ M Construct; HD 8d4+8; hp 28; Init +3 (Dex); Spd fly 50 ft. (average); AC 23 (+10 natural, +3 Dex), touch 13, flat-footed 20; BAB/Grapple +6/+6; Atk +6 melee (1d6+1, electrical touch) or +9 ranged 1d4+1, electrical bolt); Full Atk +6/+1 melee (1d6+1, electrical touch) or +9/+4 ranged 1d4+1, electrical bolt); SA spells (as per 8th-level sorcerer), energy discharge; SQ construct, melee concealment, familiar sight, resistances (40 electrical, 20 fire & cold), SR (16); AL LE; SV Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +2; Str 11, Dex 16, Con —, Int 16, Wis 11, Cha 16.

Skills: Concentration +8, Craft (alchemy) +11, Knowledge (arcana) +11, Listen +11, Search +11, Spellcraft +13, Spot +11. **Feats:** Brew Potion, Craft Wondrous Item, Dodge, Flyby Attack, Scribe Scroll.

SA—Energy Discharge (Su): The Sytec has 32 points of energy, which regenerate a rate of 1/hour, and may use these points in the following ways; At will, as a standard action—*tesla* (1 energy point), a ranged burst of energy unerringly impacts the target to produce 3 touch attacks (+8 ranged touch each), the first hit deals 1d8+1 electrical damage and ends the effect.—*repulsion* (6 energy points) as cast by a 16th-level Sorcerer—*wall of electricity* (4 energy points) like *wall of fire* as cast by an 8th-level Sorcerer—*lightning bolt* (8 energy points) deals 8d6 damage as cast by an 8th level Sorcerer.

SQ—Construct (Ex): As a construct, a Sytec is immune to poison, paralysis, stunning, critical hits, death from massive damage, disease, subdual damage, ability drain, energy drain, and *sleep*.

SQ—Familiar Sight (Su): As a full round action, the Sytec's master may gaze through the Sytec's eyes as it performs its actions. As a free action, the master may conduct telepathic conversation with the Sytec at the same time. This ability has a range of one mile.

SQ—Melee Concealment (Ex): The Sytec has magical concealment from melee and ranged weapon attacks of 100/(1 + weapon bonus) %, which confers 100% concealment vs. non-magical weapons, 50% vs. +1 weapons, 33% vs. +2 weapons, 25% vs. +3 weapons, 20% vs. +4 weapons, etc.

SQ—Resistances (Ex): The Sytec has electricity resistance 40, fire resistance 20 and cold resistance 20. Any *polymorph* or *dispel magic* effect does not affect a Sytec. They are considered artifact-class magic items against *Morden's disjunction*.

Arcane Spells Prepared (Cast per Day: 6/7/7/6/3; base DC 13 + spell level): 0—*dancing light*, *daze*, *detect magic*, *light*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*, *resistance*; 1st—*alarm*, *hold portal*, *identify*, *shield*, *Tensor's floating disk*; 2nd—*locate object*, *rope trick*, *see invisible*; 3rd—*clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *dispel magic*; 4th—*dimension door*.

Possessions: Lord Sesses amulet, teleporter key rod, wand of mirror image (6 charges, caster level 5), and any interesting items it can find in the labs.

Office Politics:

* Zot was brought into being by Master Sesses and is his utterly loyal apprentice and assistant. The Sytec is charged with keeping Master Sesses true to what and who he is. Zot exists to serve its Master Sesses and has developed an amazing near-telepathic foreknowledge of what Master Sesses wants or needs. Its personality set conforms to its Master, although of a more obsequious and humble cloth; therefore consider it an avatar of lawful evilness.

* The Darkmage allows his creation to function on its own to aid their operations, but only with some caution. Master Sesses uses the telepathic link liberally and usually remembers to keep up with whatever Zot gets into, even if it's latrine-cleaning duty.

Specific Tactics:

* Upon notification from Kezhantak, Zot alerts Master Sesses and Jerjicus that enemies have arrived and then uses its *teleporter key rod* to operate a teleporter, moves to **Area 9** and aids in the preparatory setup. Thereafter it settles itself behind the south wall of the Keep and observes using *clairvoyance*, allowing Master Sesses a vicarious view if he wishes.

* Zot is pretty capable of taking care of itself, between walls of electricity, repulsion of foes, *dimension door*, the *wand of mirror image* Master Sesses lets it use, plus *rope tricks* when times get rough. Still, despite its resistances and immunities, both it and Master Sesses feel that it could be destroyed at any time, so

Zot never acts in an arrogant or cavalier manner.

* The Sytec tends to stay near Gortok, as it may *see invisible* creatures that Gortok may later *dust* for viewing.

* It enjoys towing frightening-looking but harmless magical equipment from the labs around using a *Tensor's floating disk*. Nearly any equipment from **Area 26b** can be used as such, and to most other's reckoning the object towed looks like it may explode at any moment.

* Zot has also been known to travel with the *floating disk* filled near to the brim (2 gallons worth!) with either acid or green slime. It flies over and beyond a victim then urges the *disk* to gain altitude, thereby ending the spell, as the liquid splatters upon the victim from inertia and gravity.

* One of Zot's best tricks uses two failed experiments of Master Sesses.' It puts a foot tall, bottom-heavy iron stand upon the *floating disk*. Then upon the stand it sticks a broom-head that turns anything it touches invisible for 30 seconds and an onyx bead that has continual *darkness*, 1 ft. radius cast upon it. Zot, the gleeful actor, then "compels" his contraption to follow him and menacingly flies into things like bugbears and make them vanish, looking to all in view like a *sphere of annihilation* passed by. Remember, Zot's normal speed is 50 ft., so that can be a quick faux-*sphere*.

* Late in the battle, Zot may urge the phase spiders to join the counterattack.

* Zot notes objects that the group uses, so that it may find group members through use of *locate object* if necessary.

Phyztijia ("Fizz"), the Elite Imp Familiar of Lord Sesses: CR 4; SZ T Outsider (Evil, Lawful); HD 5d8+10; hp 42; Init +4 (Dex); Spd 20 ft., fly 60ft. (perfect); AC 25 (+2 Size, +4 Dex, +4 natural, +5 *bracers*), touch 16, flat-footed 21; BAB/Grapple +5/-2; Atk +11 melee (1d4+1, sting and poison); Face/Reach 2 1/2 ft. by 2 1/2 ft./0 ft.; SA poison, spell-like abilities; SQ damage reduction (5/silver), polymorph, regeneration (4), devilish qualities, SR (12); AL LE; SV Fort +5, Ref +8, Will +5; Str 12, Dex 18, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 12.

Skills: Hide +19, Listen +8, Move Silently +10, Search +8, Sense Motive +4, Spellcraft +8, Spot +9. *Feats:* Dodge, Mobility, Weapon Finesse (tail sting).

SA—*Poison (Ex):* A successful tail sting hit deals 1d4/2d4 temporary Dexterity damage, negated by a Fortitude save (DC 15).

SA—*Spell-Like Abilities (Sp):* At will—*detect good*, *detect magic*, *invisibility* (target self only), 1/day—*suggestion*; cast as a 6th-level sorcerer. At will—*teleport without error* (plus extra 50 pounds of objects), 1/week—*commune* (6 questions) cast as a 12th-level cleric

or sorcerer. All saves (base DC 11 + spell level).

SA—*Polymorph (Su):* At will—*polymorph* as cast by a 12th-level sorcerer. A Gehenna Imp may take the form of a raven or any size monstrous spider from Fine to Medium size.

SQ – *Select Devilish Abilities (Su):* Immune to poison and fire. May see normally in any *darkness* except that created by deities.

Possessions: Lord Sesses amulet, teleporter key rod, butchers' bracers, butchers' hat, carnelian cube of dimension door (found in **Appendix 2**).

Office Politics:

* The familiar of Lord Sesses acts as the viceroy of all Impish Keep Sentries, including Opiate the evil pseudodragon. All Sentries report to it while it remains near the Keep, otherwise Opiate is in charge. Phyztijia also helps run The Hellfire Casino and Hotel along with Max the Pit Boss. Fizz oversees the imps patrolling the hotel and casino areas and normally is found there if not at the Keep.

* Phyztijia appreciates Drincilla's charms, wit, energy and nastiness and is also on good terms with Jerjicus due to its prowess and standing in the Butchers.

* Fizz slightly resents Zot's presence, but understands that its Master enjoys creating things. At the very least, Zot lessens the need for the Familiar to function as a lab-lackey.

* The Familiar of Lord Sesses treats its Master like an Arch-Devil who is approachable. It relates to the Darkmage a mixture of awe, respect, and drinking-buddy cronyism. Phyztijia willingly communes with intermediaries of Baalzebul on Lord Sesseshelzine's behalf.

Specific Tactics:

* Phyztijia does as Lord Sesses bids, dependent upon situation. It usually sticks close to its master so both may enjoy its telepathic link, regeneration, and spell resistance. The Darkmage uses his familiar to monitor the keep while he remains in the labs of the Butte. During trouble, Fizz knows how to operate the teleporters just like any other viceroy.

* During battle, Phyztijia often appears as a fine-sized spider upon the ceiling near Lord Sesses. It performs as a mobile surveillance system for the Darkmage using its *invisibility* and *polymorph* abilities. Lord Sesses generally casts as many defenses upon it as he places upon himself.

Drincilla ("Doll"), the Erinyes Consort of Lord Sesses: CR 8; SZ M Outsider (Evil, Lawful); HD 8d8+8; hp 56; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft., fly 50ft. (average); AC 26 (+2 Dex, +9 natural, +5 *bracers*), touch 12, flat-footed 24; BAB/Grapple +8/+10; Atk +10 ranged (entangle, Cocoon dress), +11 melee (1d6+3, +1 *schivavona*, crit 18-20) or +12 melee (1d4+4, +2

APPENDIX 1: INTRODUCING 'THE BUTCHERS'

bodice dagger, crit 19-20); Full Atk +11/+6 melee (1d6+3, +1 *schivavona*, crit 18-20) or +12/+7 melee (1d4+4, +2 *bodice dagger*, crit 19-20); SA charm person, entanglement, spell-like abilities; SQ damage reduction (10/+1), devilish qualities, SR (12, 24 w/amulet), tongues; AL LE; SV Fort +7, Ref +8, Will +8; Str 14, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 20.

Skills: Concentration +9, Craft (seamstress) +6, Disguise +12, Escape Artist +8, Hide +8, Listen +8, Move Silently +8, Profession (accounting) +2, Profession (courtesan) +8, Search +10, Spot +12. **Feats:** Dodge, Mobility.

SA—Charm Person (Su): An erinyes can charm a humanoid creature with a look. This is not a gaze attack, and the target need not meet the Drincilla's eye. The ability has a range of 60 feet; an affected opponent must succeed at a Will save (DC 19) or become utterly loyal to Drincilla. The victim will do anything to protect the erinyes, even if that means slaying his or her companions or facing certain death. The ability is otherwise similar to charm person cast by an 8th level sorcerer. When Drincilla is in *polymorphed* form, she must make eye contact to enable this effect.

SA—Entanglement (Ex): Drincilla may entangle a foe with any rope of 50 feet or more in length as if she cast *animate rope* as a 16th-level Sorcerer. Drincilla may also hurl the rope 30 feet with no range penalty. The silken Cocoon wraparound dresses function well as entangling ropes.

SA—Spell-like Abilities (Sp): At will—*animate dead*, *charm monster*, *desecrate*, *invisibility* (target self only), *magic circle versus good* (target self only), *major image*, *polymorph*, *produce flame*, *see invisibility*, *suggestion*, *unholy blight* as cast by a 8th-level sorcerer (all saves at DC 15 + spell level). At will—*teleport without error* (plus extra 50 pounds of objects) as cast by a 12th-level sorcerer.

SA—Summon Devils (Sp): 1/day—lemures (2d10, 50% chance) or barbazus (1d4, 35%).

SQ—Devilish abilities (Su): Immune to poison and fire. Cold and acid resistance (20). Any devil may see normally in any *darkness* except that created by deities. Any devil except lemures may telepathically communicate with any creature that has a language. Drincilla may perform these activities while *polymorphed* at a range of 60 feet.

SQ—Tongues (Su): Erinyes automatically speak all languages as if they were 12th-level Sorcerers casting *tongues*. They reserve telepathy for other fiends. Drincilla may perform these activities while *polymorphed* at a range of 60 feet.

Possessions: +1 *schivavona* ("InchWorm," found in **Appendix 2**), +2 *bodice dagger-shears* ("EyeBite," found in **Appendix 2**), *butchers' bracers* (illusioned as skin), ring of mind *shielding*, *amulet of spell resis-*

tance (1/day, 12th-level caster), *Lord Sesses amulet*, *teleporter key rod*, black silk and taffeta Cocoon evening dress, double-wrap black belt with scabbard.

Office Politics:

* Drincilla is a most energetic, dynamic, and headstrong erinyes. She is constantly in motion, conducting multiple operations simultaneously, and rarely rests. Drincilla is the devilish consort of Lord Sesses, financial advisor to the Butchers, manager and lead designer of Pfefferain's Pfinest Pfrocks, manager of the Celestial Bodies brothel and covert advisor to Arellias, the Pfefferain Mayor. When not attending her typical duties, Drincilla cavorts with Lord Sesses, Arellias, her mundane dressmakers, or harlots, or raises some Hell with her partner-in-crime Jucci "The Black Falcon" Pargrin.

* Drincilla tempts humanoids towards grand evil aspirations. She uses any machination to do so, be it power, sensuality, reasoning, emotion, or threat. Baalzebul in the sixth plane of Hell is her true master and is pleased that she has totally and irrevocably brought Lord Sesses towards the Forces of Evil. Through her, Lord Sesses contacted his familiar Phytzija. For her continuing work in helping the descent of the Town of Pfefferain to evil, Baalzebul has allowed her the use of her supernatural powers while in *polymorphed* form, albeit in a limited fashion.

* Drincilla gets along well with all of the Butchers, for she greatly appreciates their evil and thoroughly enjoys teasing them. She gets along well with her mundane dressmakers and harlots. Unknown to the mortals, they unknowingly slide slowly down the path of evil just by existing near her. To Drincilla, it's a grand game of tilting the lot of them downward without any of them catching on to her attempt.

* Although she pleasures herself with Celestial Bodies patrons and with Arellias, she considers herself the Consort of Lord Sesses. His power and wit enraptures her. His schemes and growth of the Butchers offer her chances to cultivate great evil in the region, maybe greater than she could envision herself. She finds it thrilling to spend quality time with a being that would have a legitimate chance to *disintegrate* her. Lord Sesses is a rare mortal who accepts her total personality no questions asked and encourages the display of her artistic, sensual, avaricious, and wicked sides.

* The only members of the Butchers Drincilla fears at all are Zot, Jerjicus, and Lord Sesses. These are the three to whom she pays respect. The others are considered tools or base rabble. Due to her commitments, she rarely has time to interact with the viceroys and especially the Imps and bugbears.

* Within the town of Pfefferain, Drincilla appears at many places depending upon the time of day. She has her rigid schedule posing as Gala and Gwynneth while

at work. She could be seen in gorgeous courtesan form taking dinner with Arellias at Dunwoody's. She might be found drinking ale as Gala with her gnomish and halfling seamstresses at The Quaffing Quarry. Otherwise, she frolics with Jucci at various locations about town. Those two either entice unsuspecting townsfolk into deviance or slay them for payment, thrills, and experience.

Specific Tactics:

* Drincilla loathes melee and prefers to charm troublemakers or incapacitate foes. She'd rather emulate her consort Lord Sesses and ensnare foes, or emulate her friend Jucci and assassinate them. She definitely believes in safety in numbers, so her first action usually is a quick *teleport* to round up reinforcements. Then she and her charges go forth to ambush her former attacker.

* Drincilla is the viceroy most likely to be absent from the Keep when the PCs attack. It is up to you to decide if she joins the defense or her busy schedule intervenes.

* The erinyes prefers to charm half of the foes to attack the other half. Those who still advance upon her meet *produce flame* and *unholy blight* effects.

* Jucci has taught her some moves of an assassin. Drincilla may emplace a rope garrote around any humanoid's neck at her usual ranged attack modification. She may do this within 30 feet of the victim. Those wearing metal collars or full plate mail gain a +7 AC bonus upon the ranged touch attack that does not remove natural armor bonuses. Her rope garrotes deal 1d4 points of damage due to her will over ropes, which she controls as a free action.

* Her favorite trick is to set up a *major image* with a *charm* and *suggestion*. For example, she might first *charm* a foe, then use *suggestion* on that foe that a chasm covered with a *major image* of a refreshing pool would be a great place to bathe and that she wants their company. She hops into the 'pool,' hovers in the chasm with her bat-wings and watches her foe drop to their death.

* When in battle, she wields InchWorm if hand-to-hand combat cannot be avoided, or wields EyeBite if damage reduction in the victim prompts the change.

Jerjicus the Ogre-Magi, "The Ace In the Hole",
Ftr9: CR 13; SZ L Giant; HD 5d8+15 plus 9d10+27; hp 129; Init +7 (Improved Initiative, Dex); Spd 30 ft., fly 40 ft. (good); AC 23 (-1 size, +5 natural, +3 Dex, +6 armor), touch 12, flat-footed 20; BAB/Grapple +12/+21; Atk +19 melee (1d6+9, +2 *keen scimitar*, crit 15-20) or +16 ranged (1d8+5, masterwork composite longbow w/ +1 arrow), crit x3, range 110 ft.); Full Atk +17/+17/+12/+12/+7 melee (1d6+9, +2 *keen scimitar*, crit 15-20) or +16/+11/+6 ranged (1d8+5, masterwork composite longbow w/ +1 arrow), crit x3, range 110

ft.); Reach: 10 ft. by 10 ft./10 ft.; SA spell-like abilities; SQ flight, regeneration (2), SR (18); AL LE; SV Fort +13, Ref +7, Will +6; Str 20, Dex 17, Con 17, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 17.

Skills: Appraise +4, Concentration +10, Craft (chef) +6, Craft (glassblowing) +5, Craft (weaponsmith) +5, Intimidate +11, Listen +5, Search, +6, Spellcraft +6, Spot +8. **Feats:** Blind-Fight, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Great Cleave, Improved Initiative, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Power Attack, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (scimitar), Weapon Specialization (scimitar).

SA—Spell-like Abilities (Sp): At will: *darkness*, *invisibility*; 1/day: *charm person*, *cone of cold*, *gaseous form*, *polymorph*, *sleep* as cast by a 9th-level Sorcerer, save (base DC 13 + spell level).

SQ—Flight (Su): As a free action, resume/cease fly as cast by a 10th-level Sorcerer. Due to experience, Jerjicus can fly while in polymorphed form.

Languages: Common, Giant, Goblin, and Infernal.

Possessions: +2 *keen scimitar* (x2, "Slicer" and "Dicer"), +2 *silent moves mithral chain shirt*, *butchers' helm*, *cloak of minor displacement*, *chime of opening*, *Lord Sesses amulet*, *teleporter key rod*, *ring of status* (found in **Appendix 2**), masterwork composite longbow of +4 strength, arrows of alchemists fire (x4), +1 arrows (x12), arrows (x24), belt with weapon loops and quiver.

Office Politics:

* The "Ace in the Hole" is the Darkmage's right-hand-monster. He is the second in command and takes control of the bugbears at rare whim or when necessary. All complaints or requests are funneled from Rasharnor through him as Lord Sesses usually punishes any breach of chain of command by tossing the offending bugbear to the phase spiders.

* The ogre mage revels in stating that he taught Kezhantak everything he knows and for the most part is correct. He tries to mold the bugbear leader into the tactics general he once was, and feels a slight empathy with the monster. The "Ace in the Hole" sometime travels with Rasharnor to smooth over trouble spots in a long-range plan. Those two tactically work well together, oftentimes removing the trouble spots without retaliation.

* Jerjicus is a kindred spirit of Lord Sesses. These two have seen the wisdom of joining forces long ago and have been through multiple levels of experience together. He and the Darkmage operate upon the same wavelength incredibly well despite their physical differences. Jerjicus thoroughly enjoys the planning stage and the implementation stage of grand schemes. He is the viceroy most likely to appear as Lord Sesses when seen about town in place of the Darkmage. Arellias, for instance, generally meets Jerjicus when he believes

he is actually talking to Lord Sesses.

Specific Tactics:

* The ogre mage seeks out Rasharnor and conducts operations with him, since he also has Blind-Fight and they function as a team well in total *darkness*.

* He uses his *ring of status* to monitor the bugbear officers' welfare, as well as the elite scouts. During battle, he swoops upon fallen bugbears during battle as a marilith demon or as a large xill, under *darkness* or *invisibility*, and then deposits them at an acolyte's feet for curing.

* Against foes of very high AC, Jerjicus uses only one +2 *keen falchion* in a two-handed fashion. It then delivers 2d4+9 points of damage with to-hit bonuses of +19/+14.

* He uses his *ring of status* to monitor the bugbear officers' welfare, as well as the elite scouts. Once bugbears start dropping, Jerjicus excuses himself from Lord Sesses' observatory and heads to the teleporter. He polymorphs into a multi-armed creature and acts as an invisible medic helicopter in *darkness*.

* Once the battle eventually rages against the bugbears, the ogre mage bellows, "Lord Sesses will conduct **torture** of surviving intruders!" and the bugbears then receive a +1 morale boost to attack, damage and fear-related effects.

* Jerjicus likes to polymorph into a eye tyrant to totally demoralize enemies. He usually remembers to gouge out the large central eye. The ogre mage then uses his *charm*, *sleep* and even *cone of cold* attack that way, wiggling a different 'eyestalk' for each spell. Many foes forget that a real eye tyrant can't use *cone of cold*, but that is its most powerful ranged attack. Other times foes waste actions trying to disbelieve the eye tyrant. As a faux eye tyrant, Jerjicus rises up the elevator at area 9 and then scans the courtyard.

* His favored form for battle is a replica of a gelugon. With this form, he attacks with his falchions or casts *cone of cold* and *charm* as such. This form gives credence to his use of *invisibility* as a faux-*teleport*, whereupon he flies to his actual destination invisibly then reappears.

Jerjicus tends to choose forms that draw the nastiest damage enemies can mete out and regenerate it away, saving the bugbears some major pain.

* Sometimes he chooses forms that pressure enemies from casting certain spells. If he senses a huge *fireball* coming up from the enemies, he appears as an iron golem and wades to the middle of the bugbears, hopefully causing enemy mages to think twice before loosing such a spell.

* If he needs to squeeze through small openings, he polymorphs into a black pudding. If the bugbears need a reprieve, he polymorphs into a bodak or umber hulk, hopefully causing his foes to avert their gaze. He could

try to enforce retreat and polymorph into a cockatrice or rust monster. If disarmed, he polymorphs into a double of Kilitus Maximus.

* Keep the players on their toes and guessing as to Jerjicus' identity! He's very convincing in other forms and offers a dizzying amount of shapes and personalities.

Sessestophelzine, Lord Sesses The Darkmage, Wiz16: CR 16; SZ M; HD 16d4+32; hp 76; Init +8 (Improved Initiative, Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 22 (+5 *robe*, +4 Dex, +3 *ring of protection*), touch 17, flat-footed 18; BAB/Grapple +8/+9; Atk +11 melee (1d4+3, +2 *dagger*, crit. 19-20); Full Atk +11/+6 melee (1d4+3, +2 *dagger*, crit. 19-20); SA spells; SQ permanent spells, SR (17); AL LE; SV Fort +8, Ref +10, Will +13; Str 12, Dex 18, Con 15, Int 19, Wis 14, Cha 14.

Skills: Appraise +6, Bluff +3, Concentration +21, Craft (alchemy) +14, Craft (sculpting) +6, Craft (stonecarving) +6, Diplomacy +3, Heal +3, Intimidate +4, Knowledge (arcana) +21, Knowledge (religion) +6, Knowledge (nature) +6, Knowledge (engineering) +6, Knowledge (geography) +6, Knowledge (the planes) +12, Listen +4, Ride +5, Search +7, Sense Motive +3, Spellcraft +23, Spot +6, Swim +2. **Feats:** Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Craft Wondrous Item, Craft Rod, Extend Spell, Improved Initiative, Maximize Spell, Quicken Spell, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (enchantment), [Spell Penetration].

SQ—Permanent Spells (Sp): Sessestophelzine has these spells functional at will, *comprehend languages*, *darkvision*, *detect magic*, *read magic*, *resistance*, *see invisibility*.

Arcane Spells Prepared (4/5/5/5/5/4/3/3/2; base DC 14 + spell level): 0—daze (x2), detect magic, mage hand; 1st—mage armor, magic missile (x3), shield; 2nd—arcane lock, Mel's acid arrow (x2), mirror image, web; 3rd—dispel magic, fireball, haste, lightning bolt, major image; 4th—confusion, greater invisibility, polymorph (x2), wall of ice; 5th—cone of cold, summon monster V (1d3 hell hounds, 5d8+5 HD), teleport, wall of force; 6th—disintegrate (x2), globe of invulnerability; 7th—delayed blast fireball, project image, summon monster VII; 8th—Bigsby's clenched fist, polymorph any object.

Languages: Abyssal, Common, Dwarven, Elven, Gnome, Goblin, and Infernal.

Possessions: home-built *robe of the evil archmagi* (SR 17, Spell Penetration feat), +3 *ring of protection*, *butchers' hat*, +2 *dagger of spell storing* (vampiric touch, cast at 16th level), home-built *rod of absorption* (42 levels absorbed, 6 stored levels), home-built *carnelian cube of perfect teleportation* (found in **Appendix 2**), *arcane scroll* (cast at 16th level; *dispel magic* and *glitterdust*), *arcane scroll* (cast at 16th level; *Mel's acid arrow* with *chain metamagics*, maximized *cone*

of cold), Lord Sesses master amulet, teleporter key rod, bandoleer containing spell components and magic items.

Office Politics:

* Normally, Lord Sesses acts as a 16th-level wizard, but when Phytzjia exists nearby, he may study and act at 17th-level. Due to the normal duties of his familiar, he only does so for specific reasons, such as creating a teleporter.

* Lord Sesses is the true brains of the Butchers, and ensures that all in the group work as a team. He demands and earns respect from all those he meets. The Darkmage deals scrupulously with anyone if the situation warrants it and is usually pleasant, witty, and charming, albeit with an edge. Further, he does not wantonly perform evil deeds at the drop of a hat. In fact, he does perform self-serving acts of goodwill often. When he does ready an evil premeditative act, however, it can be the epiphany of downright horrid evil. This mage prefers to have others dirty their hands if loss of life is required, but has no qualms about incapacitating, changing form, or slaying someone who does not give him proper respect. He fairly reeks of corruption and graft. Most of his enterprises can never be considered role models for heavenly ascent.

* Lord Sesses rules these two lairs by wit, threat, and immense power. He is the Lord of the Butchers, the group dedicated to profit by any means, which he created with Jerjicus. He has been able to contemplate, organize, and execute numerous plans from these hideouts with the cast of associates assembled and is very proud of the high-ranking viceroys.

* Phytzjia is his Baalzebul-sent familiar and infernal confidant. This tough Imp directs the multitude of imps that Lord Sesses often cajoles into service. Phytzjia must be defended at all times, for its loss would reduce the Darkmage's power significantly. This Imp always travels with at least some magical defenses operating.

* Zot is his step-and-fetch creation pride and joy. It in truth is better than the Manual it was created by. The thing now knows which torture to apply to a victim before the Darkmage utters it. The labs are spotless with Zot around. It anticipates needs before they arise. It's a shame Lord Sesses can have only one. The *greater invisibility*, *arcane lock*, *mage armor* spells, and the *wand of mirror image* help ensure its safety.

* Drincilla is the devilish consort and financial advisor of Lord Sesses. His power and wit enraptures her, and her personality, skills, and various sensual forms enrapture the Darkmage. She truly could have him perform as she wished, but appreciates and enjoys his schemes that generally are better than what she could contemplate. The Darkmage enjoys her company more than any other Butcher and would sacrifice himself for

her.

* Jerjicus is a fine fell fiend, a kindred spirit and one of the few beings the Darkmage can trust in this life; excellent qualities to find in a second-in-command. He was the first associate years ago and remains the finest and most effective. Few things make Lord Sesses smile like Jerjicus' battle cry of "Julienne fries, comin' up!" The Darkmage treats the ogre mage as a treasured friend.

* Gortok and Shentresh make fine apprentices. Gortok is the viceroy of the apprentice mages, and Shentresh is the font of wisdom who finds holes in the Darkmage's plan logic. The former functions as multiple personalities and an auxiliary warning system, the latter ensures curatives are available to all Butchers. They are both valuable.

* The devil Zrizikatzke is everything the Parayatah's Call says it is: powerful, tempting, exceedingly useful, frightening, arrogant, greedy, depraved, insatiable, self-absorbed, and demanding. The Darkmage is finding out it does not pay him his due respect. Therefore, it needs to be out of the way, permanently, by someone else's hand. Lord Sesses intends to help it if it asks, but also wouldn't mind striking it unseen either.

* The phase spiders are useful threats to the bugbears, but their frequent unauthorized appearances during experiments are annoying and possibly dangerous. It's fortunate that Zot enjoys caring for them.

* The rest of the troops respect and fear him, as expected. The bugbear officers defer to him as a feudal lord and mostly let Rasharnor or Jerjicus speak to him on their behalf, acting as a more sympathetic middleman. Only the most foolish of the lesser bugbears speaks to Lord Sesses unless spoken to for fear of instant disintegration, or worse, a free trip to visit the phase spiders.

Specific Tactics:

* Sessestophelzine is intimately familiar with his two lairs and uses all their nooks and crannies to best advantage. He observes the carnage with confident lassitude until the group makes significant headway, whereupon he goes to Gehenna to summon more reinforcements and operate where less of his labs are at risk.

* The Darkmage is one accomplished Wizard, knows it and flaunts it when he feels it serves a purpose. The high level spells he packs are meant to whittle tough opponents to convenient one on one odds, or vanquish scores of weaker ones. Used as a free action, the *clenched fist* ensures +30 to hit carnage every round while other spells may be brought to bear.

* Few things make a player's eyebrows lift off their foreheads higher than hearing the phrases "*disintegrate*, targeting you," or "Reflex save for 45 damage, please." Lord Sesses is able to fully max out a *cone of cold* and you get to enjoy it. He makes his mark with his fire-

spells, but he ensures his kills with the cold-based ones. Note that *ice storm* and *wall of ice* also appear daily in his lists. Then again, the fire-based spells are well represented with *fireball* and *delayed blast fireball* too.

* Should he find multiple targets near each other, he first pulls out *confusion* and then follows up with elemental blasts.

* A favorite spell of his is *polymorph any object*. Unlucky foes that fail their saves become creatures that may harm other group members such as cockatrices, rust monsters, green slime colonies, ochre jellies or gelatinous cubes, or creatures fated to die due to asphyxiation, like octopi, squids or especially sharks. If useful, the Darkmage turns a foe into a large gelatinous cube or a small whale if it would totally block egress from other foes to him. Oozes like gelatinous cubes and ochre jellies are preferred as no spells issue from those victims, they cannot be *polymorphed* back and only *dispel magic* (with a very low chance) removes the effect. As like begets like, all whiny PCs must become a shrieker.

* The observatories offer great places to witness a *project image* acting defiant and arrogant, but in the interest of player relations refrain from killing off the lot of them with your illusory Darkmage. Players hate to be struck without options to counterattack, so use it to merely waste a player's spell or two, switch it for another *summons* or *disintegrate* spell.

* Lord Sesses starts players off with *magic missiles* and *Mel's acid arrows*, testing them before opening up with the heavy artillery. He would much rather his summonings take care of everyone, but that's not likely.

* The *dispel magic* on the personally-scribed scroll is for removing harmful continuing spells, the memorized one is specifically for counterspelling horrid incoming spells after a successful Spellcraft check notes their quality. It's a fine follow-up to absorbing the first truly scary player-cast spell. In fact, it has such great utility that you might be served well to replace a 3rd-level spell for another memorized *dispel magic*. Lord Sesses well knows that it takes only one *silence* to ruin his whole day.

* When the situation turns bleak, never forget the *carnelian cube of perfect teleportation* or the *teleport* spell. Teleportation, Walls, Polymorph and Summoning spells are meat and drink to Lord Sesses.

* The Darkmage generally makes a Spellcraft check during an incoming arcane spell and sees if the spell resistance provided by the *robe of the evil archmagi* takes effect before ordering his nearly used-up *rod of absorption* to dissipate the spell. He tries to goad a spell out of the foes for absorption first before casting a singly memorized spell.

* If it comes down to hand to hand combat, the loaded *vampiric touch* from the +2 *dagger of spell storing* is

a big help. Lord Sesses wisely keeps a *Mel's acid arrow*, a *magic missile*, or both *dazes* in reserve to re-power the dagger in those situations.

Appendix 2: Magic Items In Vindication

Glossiron: This is a specially prepared and treated iron that undergoes a process to become a more blackened, toughened and very glossy metal material. It shines as if it has multiple coats of lacquer over a pearly dark gray undercoat. Any object comprised of glossiron has a hardness of 12 and 35 hit points per inch of material. Items comprised of less than an inch of thickness generally have 150% the amount of hit points attributed to normal iron. Any item composed of glossiron is considered masterwork, generally costing the masterwork price plus a multiple of the iron price.

Baited Hooks Fit For a PC

The adventure hinges upon the player characters suffering from a nasty cursed item from the laboratories of Lord Sesses. Pick your favorite from the lists below and inflict it upon the party. All of the Darkmage's cursed items have these prerequisites: *arcane mark*, *bestow curse*, *summon monster IV (Imp)* and *greater teleport*. These allow the derisive message and the Imp-servant to appear at the activation of the curse. Here is a rundown of the 'amusing toys' Lord Sesses has created:

The 'Stock' Cursed Items

As found in the *DMG*: *bracers of defenselessness*, *dust of sneezing and choking*, *flask of curses* (-6 to best ability score, or 50% chance to nullify any victim's action), *gauntlets of fumbling*, *robe (or cloak) of powerlessness*.

The Lord of the Flies Collection: Lord Sesses' Figurine of Malevolence—Ebony Teleportation Fly

This figurine conforms to all detections and divinations as an *ebony fly figurine of wondrous power*, but once the animated form reaches a height of 66 feet, it reverts to statuette form and teleports back to where it last lifted off from the ground. Of course, the riders do not teleport along with it. They immediately feel gravity's pull and drop to the ground, perhaps reaching terminal velocity. This curse would take effect, for instance, if the riders went straight up 66 feet or were

traveling 20 feet above the ground and then passed over a deep chasm.

Caster Level: 14th; *Prerequisites:* *animate objects*, *arcane mark*, *bestow curse*, *Craft Wondrous Item*, *summon monster IV*, *greater teleport*; *Market Price:* 10,000 gp; *Weight:* —.

Lord Sesses' Figurine of Malevolence—Ebony Diving Fly

This figurine conforms to all detections and divinations as an *ebony fly figurine of wondrous power*, but once a rider mounts the animated form, the curse immediately takes effect. First, a cursed *spider climb* effect adheres the riders to the fly. Then the fly propels itself at top speed into the farthest-away unyielding surface it can detect within a 66 foot radius. Should no walls or ceiling exist within a 66 foot radius, it climbs to an altitude of 66 feet and then upends itself backwards and power dives into the ground. The curse effect tends to destroy the animated form (which reverts back to the statuette upon impact with a *feather fall* effect).

Caster Level: 14th; *Prerequisites:* *animate objects*, *arcane mark*, *bestow curse*, *Craft Wondrous Item*, *feather fall*, *spider climb*, *summon monster IV*, *greater teleport*; *Market Price:* 10,000 gp; *Weight:* —.



Lord Sesses' Figurine of Malevolence—Ebony Hostility Fly

This figurine conforms to all detections and divinations as an *ebony fly figurine of wondrous power*, but the animated form causes any avian creature of 2 hit dice or more within 330 feet to fly into a fit of rage and attack the rider, as per the *rage* spell, unless a Will save (DC 20) is successful. Note that Lord Sesses has bolstered this rage effect with Spell Focus (Enchantments) as well as Spell Penetration at no extra charge. The recording Imp is immune to the effect.

Caster Level: 14th; *Prerequisites:* *animate objects*, *arcane mark*, *bestow curse*, *Craft Wondrous Item*, *rage*, *Spell Focus* (Enchantments), *Spell Penetration*, *summon monster IV* (Imp), *greater teleport*; *Market Price:* 10,000 gp; *Weight:* —.

Other Terrible Things:

Lord Sesses' Belt of Enfeeblement

This belt conforms to all detections and divinations as a +4 *belt of giant strength*, but once the wearer strikes at a true enemy in earnest combat, the Strength bonus evaporates and the wearer must make a Will save (DC 17) or suffer a *ray of enfeeblement* effect. Success on the Will save denotes that the wearer merely loses 4 points of Strength instead. The effect lasts until a *remove curse* or some other such spell removes this belt. *Caster Level:* 14th; *Prerequisites:* *arcane mark*, *bestow curse*, *Craft Wondrous Item*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *summon monster IV*, *greater teleport*; *Market Price:* 16,000 gp; *Weight:* —.

Lord Sesses' Boots of Rapid Rigidity

These boots conform to all detections and divinations as *boots of speed*, but once faced with a true enemy in earnest combat, the wearer must make a Will save (DC 21) or suffer a *hold monster* effect. Further, the boots adhere to the floor and the feet with a cursed *spider climb* effect and are also *reduced* in size to cause such a tight, sticky fit that an incredible Strength check (DC 36) is required to pull the feet out. The entire curse stays in effect until the earnest combat finishes, for better or worse. However, *reduce* and *spider climb* effects inside the boots continue until a *remove curse* is applied.

Caster Level: 14th; *Prerequisites:* *arcane mark*, *bestow curse*, *Craft Wondrous Item*, *haste*, *hold monster*, *reduce*, *Spell Focus* (Enchantments), *Spell Penetration*, *spider climb*, *summon monster IV*, *greater teleport*; *Market Price:* 8,000 gp; *Weight:* 1 lb.

Lord Sesses' Burnt Sienna Bag of Doublecrosses

This small sack conforms to all trials, detections, and divinations as a tan *bag of tricks*. However, any fur ball tossed into battle against true foes only travels a few feet at most and turns into an evil creature of the DM's choice from the *summon monster V* table. The new evil creature immediately attacks the bag holder with surprise.

Caster Level: 14th; **Prerequisites:** *arcane mark, bestow curse*, Craft Wondrous Item, *summon monster IV*, *summon monster V*, *greater teleport*; **Market Price:** 6,300 gp; **Weight:** —.

Lord Sesses' Faux-Invisible Stalker Bottle

This item is constructed of brass with a lead stopper bearing a pentacle. More pentacles and runes of air and servitude have been inscribed on the bottle. When subject to an *identify* spell, part of the curse causes the diviner to note that a servile invisible stalker is trapped therein. The *bottle* may be opened once per day releasing three Imp Devils who gain *improved invisibility* for the duration of their 'servitude'. One Imp normally records the events as usual, one Imp normally seeks to undermine the opener's affairs, and the third endeavors to pass itself off as an imprisoned Invisible Stalker, talking in a breathy whisper and generally doing what the opener states for a period of one hour. All three Imps may combine operations if they so desire, and subtle perversions of tasks are to be expected at every turn. Anyone viewing the faux-stalker Imp with magic detection is cursed to view a cloudy fog, even if *true seeing* is used, although that special spell detects the curse upon the viewer.

Caster Level: 14th; **Prerequisites:** *arcane mark, bestow curse*, Craft Wondrous Item, *improved invisibility*, *summon monster IV*, *greater teleport*; **Market Price:** 21,000 gp; **Weight:** 1 lb.

Lord Sesses' Headband of Feeble-mindedness

This headband conforms to all detections and divinations as a +4 *headband of intellect*, but once the wearer casts a spell in the presence of a true foe, the Intelligence bonus evaporates and the wearer must make a Will save (DC 21) or suffer a *feeblemind* effect. Note that Lord Sesses has bolstered this effect with Spell Focus (Enchantments) as well as Spell Penetration at no extra charge. Success on the Will save denotes that the wearer merely loses 6 ability points of Intelligence until a *remove curse* or some other such spell removes this headband.

Caster Level: 14th; **Prerequisites:** *arcane mark, bestow curse*, Craft Wondrous Item, *feeblemind*, Spell Focus (Enchantments), Spell Penetration, *summon*

monster IV (Imp), *greater teleport*; **Market Price:** 16,000 gp; **Weight:** —.

Lord Sesses' Robe of Scintillating Immolation

This robe conforms to all detections and divinations as a *robe of scintillating colors*, but once in operation for three rounds or more, a potent multicolored *wall of fire* effect erupts from the robe, centered on the wearer and extending 3 feet in all directions from the robe itself. This effect does not harm the *robe* in the least, as it has *protection from energy (fire)* cast upon it, but the multi-colored summoned flames do 2d6 plus 15 points of fire damage to the wearer each round it is in effect. The cursed *wall of fire* effect lasts for each round beyond three that the robe is in continuous use. Further, **all** sides of the *wall* cause heat damage to others nearby. The robe may be started up for one round, used for a round and then stopped without triggering the cursed *wall of fire*.

Caster Level: 15th; **Prerequisites:** *arcane mark, bestow curse, color spray*, Craft Wondrous Item, *hypnosis*, *protection from energy*, *summon monster IV*, *greater teleport*, *wall of fire*; **Market Price:** 27,000 gp; **Weight:** 1 lb.

Magic At Pfefferain**Harm-Halting Hat/Helm of Pfefferain**

These look like bronze griffon-winged helms or jaunty griffon-feathered hats. They all have the Pfefferain coat of arms emblazoned upon them, either in bas-relief or embroidered. The *hat* or *helm* enables a *shield* effect 3/day when the wearer utters the command phrase "In Service to Pfefferain". It also enables a *protection from energy* effect 1/day when the wearer utters the command phrase "Guard me from <element type>" and speaks an appropriate elemental type, such as fire, sound, lightning or even acid. A mayoral edict states that these special *hats* or *helms* may not be sold, although they may be passed on to other Elite Guards as though originally issued. They all have a special curse upon them. Should anyone who was not issued them wear them for usage that does not involve the daily defense or maintenance of Pfefferain, they immediately reverse their protection. A *shield* effect **hinders** the wearer, giving every foe +4 to AC. At the same time, the wearer must make a Will save (DC 21) or suffer a *hold monster* effect with Spell Penetration. Also, Lord Sesses may enable the curse in any *hat* or *helm*-wearer by merely gazing at the *hat* or *helm* and uttering "Stand still, lout." Lord Sesses makes similar items for the Butchers that do **not** have the curses and are merely known as *butchers' hats/helms*.

Caster Level: 16th; **Prerequisites:** *bestow curse*, Craft

Wondrous Item, *mage armor*, *protection from elements*, Spell Focus (enchantment), Spell Penetration; *Market Price*: 2,000 gp; *Weight*: 1 lb.

Blow-Blocking Bracers of Pfefferain

These look like typical *bracers of armor*, but the ones the Elite Guards wear are brass and have the Pfefferain coat of arms emblazoned upon them in bas-relief. They usually are of +5 enchantment, but Arellias wears a +8 set and Symseys the IV wears Arellias' old +7 set. Those two special *bracers* sets include the mayoral seal as well. A mayoral edict states that these *bracers* may not be sold, although they may be passed on to other Elite Guards as though originally issued. They all have a special curse upon them. Should anyone who was not issued them wear them for usage that does not involve the daily defense or maintenance of Pfefferain, they immediately reverse their protection, becoming effectively minus-5 to minus-8 *bracers*. At the same time, the wearer must make a Will save (DC 21) or suffer a *hold monster* effect with Spell Penetration. Also, Lord Sesses may enable the curse in any *bracers*-wearer by merely gazing at the *bracers* and uttering, "Hold fast, lout." Lord Sesses makes similar items for the Butchers that do **not** have the curses and are merely known as *butchers' bracers*.

Caster Level: 16th; *Prerequisites*: *bestow curse*, Craft Wondrous Item, *mage armor*, Spell Focus (enchantment), Spell Penetration; *Market Price*: 2,000 gp; *Weight*: 1 lb.

Robe of Useless Items

This is an uncommon but infamous magic item some-

times found at the Triangle Markets in Pfefferain. It is of gnomish construction and looks to all inspection like a *robe of useful items*. Instead of the typical patches, there are felt patches in the shapes of circles, crescent moons, ringed planets and stars. Further, all who view the robe-wearer may see these patches. They appear, between 3d10+20 of them, until the wearer or a nearby magical being removes them, whereupon the patch turns into a Random Useless Item. The former shape of the patch is irrelevant to the item the patch becomes. Roll 1d% on the chart below to see what became of the patch.
Note: Lord Sesses did not make this item.

This horror usually sells for between 250 to 2,000 gp. Most likely it sells for whatever an unsuspecting PC pays for it. Use your best sales pitch, as this item has provided interesting effects for many game sessions.

Caster Level: 13th; *Prerequisites*: *animate objects*, *bestow curse*, *charm person*, Craft Wondrous Item, *confusion*, chaotic-aligned creator, *death spell*, *fog cloud*, *fly*, *keen edge*, *limited wish*, *mage armor*, *major creation*, *message*, *permanency*, *summon monster III*, *summon monster VII*; *Market Price*: 12,000 gp; *Weight*: 2 lbs.

Foe-Defender

AL NN; Int 10; Wis 11; Cha 8; Ego 7.
Primary Ability: *intuit direction* (+10); *Extraordinary Power*: *summon monster III* (1d4+1 celestial toads); *Special Purpose*: defend wielder's foe (it twists to strike with flat of blade for subdual damage unless a critical hit is rolled—then it decapitates the victim).

01-25	a dead rat
26-40	one copper piece
41-50	<i>bracers of armor</i> +0(w/ <i>magic aura</i> —bonus does not stack)
51-58	<i>dull gray ioun stone</i> (wobbles in flight like a drunken bumblebee)
59-66	<i>girdle of incontinence</i> (-2 to Charisma as victim cannot control bodily functions)
67-71	<i>potion of love</i> (emphasizes the most annoying traits in the charmer)
72-75	<i>carpet of flying</i> (1 in. by 2 in., capacity 1 lb.)
76-79	<i>figurine of wondrous power</i> (mica kobold—its name reverts it back)
80-83	<i>scroll of message</i> (regardless of sending, recipient hears "Fnord.")
84-87	<i>Quail's feather token</i> (soapstone kazoo, random notes from B-flat to C-sharp)
88-91	<i>decanter of endless flatulence</i> (<i>fog cloud</i> with <i>prestidigitation</i> gas)
92-95	<i>perfume of obsession</i> (just like the <i>incense</i>)
96-97	<i>efreeti bottle</i> (deaf efreeti, reads only Ignan and Infernal, the bottle-holder must pantomime any wish)
98-99	<i>roman candle of wonder</i> (ejects 1d4+3 <i>rod of wonder</i> effects sequentially during each usage, any usage requires roll on drawback table in the <i>DMG</i> with rolls of 96-00 stating 4d10 new robe patches appear, all <i>roman candles</i> have 3 usages)
00	-3 <i>vorpal longsword</i> , <i>foe-defender</i>

These are very cursed swords with an enchantment of minus three. However, even the curse is useless as one may rid themselves of the *-3 vorpal longsword* by merely placing it into a different sheathe, as the curse targets the owner of the sheath it rests in. Any such sword has names like “Rothschilde,” “Bernard,” “Wennington” or “Percy” and speaks common in an accent that a ghoulish British butler might employ. The *-3 vorpal sword* wishes it were an artistic magic item and loathes its ability to damage anyone and especially its *vorpal* ability. It reacts with horror and apologizes to any decapitated victim. It also tries to enforce, with its 7 ego, a compassionate attitude upon the wielder.

Sessestophelzine's Teleporters

The teleporter is a circular picture frame of stone that looks like a bas-relief on the wall. It functions to *greater teleport* any being and *vanish* all they carry to different locales. Both effects are attuned to their destinations and no ill effects nor mishaps ever occur. Each teleporter must be activated first, using a *teleporter key rod*, which causes luminescent purple vapors to roil within the circular picture frame at a depth of nearly a yard. The *teleporter key rod* enables the vapors to either roil for 5 minutes and then stop, or roil continuously.

One sets the destination by pushing one or more buttons on a small gilded panel that appears to the right of the frame. The panel contains four inlaid carnelian buttons in a square pattern. The last buttons pressed light up. When activated, the being carrying a *Lord Sesses amulet* that steps into the purple vapors *teleports without error* to whichever destination the last pushed buttons designate. Their items *vanish* with them. Any that step through without a *Lord Sesses amulet* find the destination always is the phase spider room, **Area 25**, at or near one of the areas noted on the map with an red **X**.

Pushing the upper left button sets the destination to a reception chamber behind a secret door at the third floor of The Great Hall of Justice. The upper right button sets the destination to a reception chamber behind a secret door at the casino level of Hellfire. The lower left button sends the traveler to the niche next to Myron's Lair.

The lower right button sends the traveler to the laboratory at **Area 26b**. All four buttons pushed in unison not only *teleports* but also *planeshifts* the traveler to the Gehenna Outpost at **Area 27**.

It behooves the party to take amulets from the Butchers so that all PCs may avoid the mold garden and thereafter use the teleporters in **Areas 26b** and **27** to get to and from the Gehenna outpost.

Magic Items For the Butchers

Lord Sesses' Amulet (worn by most members of the Butchers)

This construct made from a pair of onyx cameos is normally worn around the neck with a gold chain. The pair of finely-crafted onyx cameos, one of a fanged devilish visage, the other a flattering portrait of Lord Sesses the Darkmage, each measures nearly 3 inches and juts out from the center over one inch. A fine line of adhesive holds them together at their backs. Neither lettering nor runes can be seen, although the item does radiate magic.

Each cameo has its own runes inscribed on the back and filled in with diamond dust, which impart the special properties. Before creating each amulet, Sessestophelzine first learns the wearer's name and puts an *arcane mark* upon the back of the Darkmage cameo reading “To the spiders with you, <the name>” and followed by the *arcane mark* of Sessestophelzine. The cameos are fastened together with *sovereign glue* and none of the runes show. The construct by itself cannot *teleport* anyone or anything.

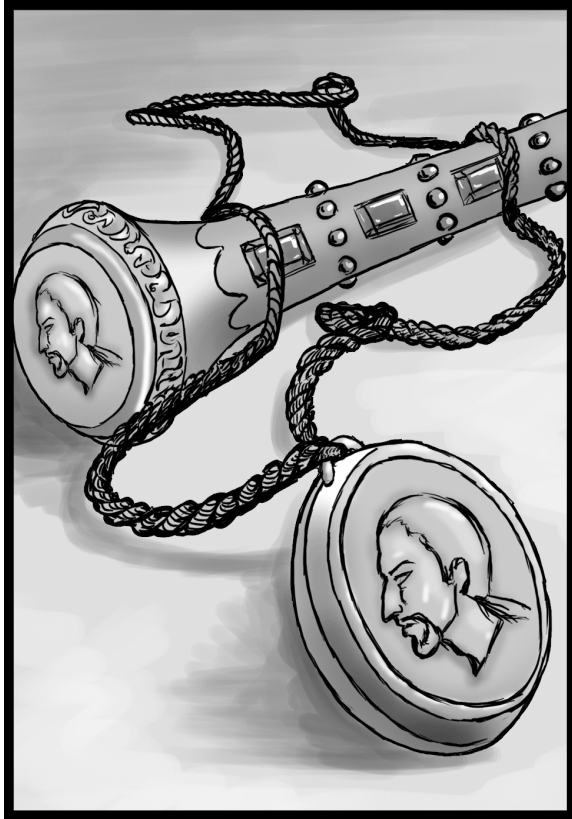
The devilish cameo provides the keying runes to allow passage between the cylindrical corridors at **Area 24**, effectively linking **Area 23** to **Area 26**, when the devilish face is inserted into the reverse-image duplicate at the proper place in the black bands wrapped around the corridor. The amulet has absolutely no effect over the Treadmill teleportation effect. It also excludes a magic signature, the *arcane mark*, that the teleporters insist upon seeing and thereby allows passage through any teleporter.

The Lord Sesses cameo causes each *Lord Sesses amulet* to become a slave to the whims of the *Lord Sesses master amulet*, which enables the Darkmage to keep the Butchers and other associates in line as well as offer Lord Sesses and favored Butchers an extra means of single-point teleportation.

Caster Level: 3rd; *Prerequisites:* *arcane mark*, Craft Wondrous Item; *Market Price:* 3,900 gp; *Weight:* —.

Lord Sesses' Master Amulet (worn only by Lord Sesses)

This construct appears in every respect like another *Lord Sesses amulet*, but it is a master to those slaves. The wearer, by speaking the phrase comprising any *arcane mark* found upon any *Lord Sesses amulet* or even its own *arcane mark*, immediately *teleports* the target amulet's wearer to **Area 25**, appearing at the floor as close to the **X** designated on the map as possible,



using the 'very familiar' familiarity. Note that any roll of 'similar area' concludes the victim *teleported* to the nearby cylindrical lair of the phase spiders, from which there is no normal egress.

Caster Level: 9th; *Prerequisites:* arcane mark, Craft Wondrous Item, *teleport*; *Market Price:* 20,100 gp; *Weight:* —.

Teleporter Key Rod (held by Lord Sesses and selected Viceroy's)

This elegant scepter of glossiron has a sardonyx version of a *Lord Sesses amulet* affixed to the top of the device, and amethysts embedded along the haft form teleportation runes. If touched to a teleporter while held by the *short-term effect runes*, it activates the teleporter for only 5 minutes. If touched to a teleporter while held by the *continuous effect runes*, it activates the teleporter until the teleporter is touched again while the *short-term effect runes* are held.

All teleporters are dysfunctional unless a *teleporter key rod* activates them, enabling the roiling purple mists to cause the *passwall* effect upon the circular teleporter frame. The construct by itself cannot *teleport* anyone or anything, nor creates a *passwall*.

Caster Level: 9rd; *Prerequisites:* Craft Rod, knowledge of *teleport*; *Market Price:* 5,000 gp; *Weight:* —.

Amulet of Battalion Stealth (held by any assault leader)

This golden banded amulet of a pair of crystal wings allows the spells *fly* to be cast as desired and *invisibility sphere* to be cast twice per day. The command phrase for the *fly* spell is "To the air, brethren," and the command phrase for the *invisibility sphere* is "Shield us from sight." **Note:** Lord Sesses did not create this item.

Caster Level: 11th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *fly*, *invisibility sphere*; *Market Price:* 59,176 gp; *Weight:* —.

Theatre Makeup of Obscured Alignment (worn by Max and imps)

Small vials of pigment accompany a small tub of cream-like paste. The vials offer the typical colors of white, black, yellow, red, blue, orange, violet, green, tan, brown, flesh, silver and gold. All of the colors may be mixed into a dab of the paste with the typical results one would expect from oil paints. Any creature that wears such *makeup* on their entire face benefits from an *undetectable alignment* effect for 24 hours or until the makeup is removed. The *makeup* itself is infused with *undetectable aura*, so the wearers of the *makeup* might pass as bereft of magic. Each tub contains 500 applications.

Caster Level: 3rd; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *Nystal's undetectable aura*, *undetectable alignment*; *Market Price:* 9,325 gp; *Weight:* —.

Amulet of Gloom (held by Rasharnor)

This construct appears as the devilish visage half of a *Lord Sesses amulet*, but has only a smooth back. The wearer may invoke a *darkness* effect, cast as a 6th-level sorcerer, 3/day. The command phrases are "I want it pitch black" to create the effect, and "Enough of this" to stop the effect before the duration elapses.

Caster Level: 12th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *darkness*; *Market Price:* 13,110 gp; *Weight:* —.

"InchWorm" (wielded by Drincilla)

AL LN; +1 *schivona*; Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 13, Ego 8; Semiempathic.

Primary Abilities: *locate object* (120-foot radius).

This weapon is a beautiful blackened iron, basket hilted sword that looks like a cross between a rapier and a single-edged cut-and-thrust sword. InchWorm has many small gilded straight-line runes that begin from the wide edge on both sides of the blade and run towards the sharp edge in various lengths. They conform to one eighth inch gradations, with those of quarter inch, half inch and full inch of increasing length.

The *schivona* is intelligent and Drincilla may tele-

pathically talk to the devil housed inside the sword. Once per day when wielded, if the command phrase “Wiggle, you worm” is uttered, InchWorm undergoes an *Evar’s black tentacle*-like transformation and becomes a writhing black insect-worm. The basket hilt becomes a bulbous head with beady eyes. Its gilded runes pop out from the middle of the blade yet stay anchored to the edge and InchWorm creeps along of its own volition like a caterpillar, sometimes bunching itself in the middle like its namesake. It crawls over any surface with a *spider climb* effect. The *tentacle* transformation lasts for 8 hours. Drincilla telepathically commands InchWorm to climb around patrons to take their measurements in style. The tentacle is able to wrap around limbs and necks gently like a tape measure. Upon command of “Stiffen,” it dutifully stiffens up and resets its gilded runes along the blade for ease of measuring. “Writhe again” allows it to wiggle as it or its master wishes once more. Of course, Drincilla may command InchWorm to attack like an *Evar’s black tentacle*. Its Ego has been cursed by Lord Sesses to never exceed Drincilla’s Ego check.

Caster Level: 8th; *Prerequisites:* bestow curse, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *Evar’s black tentacles*, *locate object*, *spider climb*; *Market Price:* 34,320 gp; *Weight:* 2 lbs.

+ 2 *Bodice Dagger-Shears* (“EyeBite,” wielded by Drincilla)

This is a special dagger that has been engineered to be a pair of dressmaker’s shears whose blades are sharp on both sides. The inner edges cut cloth and paper well. The outer edges, once the shears blades are closed together, form a dagger. EyeBite is an ornate pair of shears that gets its name from the gilded handles that continually glow a faint red hue and resemble lurid eyes with flaming eyebrows. These are illusory effects. Drincilla *polymorphs* to well-endowed women partly to provide a resting place for the bodice dagger EyeBite. The shears may be directed via mental *telekinesis* if the person who has warmed up the shears in her bosom utters the phrase “Shear by my will.” Eyebite only cuts as a shears by mental control as long as it retains some of the former warmth. It stops the effect once it cools down, but may be properly reheated as often as desired.

Caster Level: 9th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *telekinesis*; *Market Price:* 63,905 gp; *Weight:* 1 lb.

Cursed Oil of Taggit (used by Jerjicus on maneuvers)

This specially prepared oil is an enchanted poison that has no taste and only begins dropping victims into

unconsciousness an hour after digestion. It reacts differently with each foodstuff it is laced with, so victims who have eaten food laced with it must succeed both a Fortitude save (DC 19) and a Will save (DC 21 with Spell Penetration) for each different item eaten. Otherwise they then fall unconscious for 1d3 hours.

Caster Level: 16th; *Prerequisites:* bestow curse, Brew Potion, Spell Penetration; *Market Price:* 3,300 gp; *Weight:* —.

Ring of Status (held by Jerjicus)

This fine golden ring has a dweomer that allows the wearer to attune a *status* effect upon up to four target creatures. This allows the wear to monitor the target’s general health and position for 12 hours, as long as the wearer is on the same plane of existence as those monitored. The effect may only be commenced once per day. The command word to activate is “Commence,” and the phrase to add a creature to the status listing is “I shall monitor you” as the creature is touched.

Jerjicus normally touches the Butchers’ elite scouts Utchatu and Tuvataht, as well as Rasharnor and Kezhantak. The Ace in the Hole figures Drincilla, Shentresh and Gortok can well take care of themselves, and Zot and Phyztjia are always monitored by Lord Sesses, so those five generally don’t need his monitoring. The other bugbears are of lesser importance.

Caster Level: 12th; *Prerequisites:* Forge Ring, *status*; *Market Price:* 17,780 gp; *Weight:* —.

Carnelian Cube of Perfect Teleportation (held by Lord Sesses)

This one-inch gem cube of finely carved carnelian has teleportation runes etched upon it and filled in with platinum. When fully recharged, all 6 sides glow with an orange hue. The holder must hold opposing sides and speak the command phrase “Not today” as a partial action to operate it. This darkens the two opposed faces so held and enables the holder to direct a *greater teleport* effect upon them. Each set of opposing faces recharges its glow and readiness in exactly 24 hours. This item is Sessestophelzine’s calling card. It has served him quite well and he refuses to construct another exactly like it for anyone else, despite much cajoling.

Caster Level: 14th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *greater teleport*; *Market Price:* 107,840 gp; *Weight:* —.

Carnelian Cube of Dimension Door (held by Phyztjia)

This one-inch gem cube of finely carved carnelian has teleportation runes etched upon it and filled in with

gold. When fully recharged, all 6 sides glow with an orange hue. The holder must hold opposing sides and speak the command phrase "Must jaunt" as a partial action to operate it. This darkens the two opposed faces so held and enables the holder to direct a *dimension door* effect upon them. Each set of opposing faces recharges its glow and readiness in exactly 24 hours. Lord Sesses believes his familiar should have some defenses, although not exactly as good as his own.

Caster Level: 14th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *greater teleport*; *Market Price:* 62,480 gp; *Weight:* —.

"Pizzicato"

(Found in **Area 34**, owned by no one, exists as a trap)
+3 *flaming chaotic unholy longsword*/+4 *versus beings that use arcane spells or arcane spell-like abilities*.

AL CE; Int 18, Wis 15, Cha 19, Ego 28; speaks abyssal, celestial, common, infernal, uncommon.

Primary Abilities: *detect magic* at will, full action; wielder receives Great Cleave feat each round, regardless of owning any prerequisites.

Exceptional Ability: *flamestrike* (10d6, reroll all natural 1s), 1/day.

Special Purpose: Slay Arcane Spell-Users; only when in battle with them does it or its wielder gains +2 luck bonus to all saves, +2 deflection bonus to AC and SR 15.

Pizzicato is an evilly gorgeous longsword with a mithral blade and a glossiron pommel. It is encrusted with two rubies of 5,000 gp value that glow with wicked, flickering miasma. Abyssal runes filled with jet gem material coat both sides of the blade. Pizzicato is an avatar of chaotic evil, speaks many languages, and exists to deprive arcane spellcasters of their abilities, if not their lives. The weapon constantly *detects good, law, and magic* for its own purposes as well as *cure light wounds* 3/day. The *cure light wounds* apply to it alone and cannot repair its destruction.

This weapon gains combat-speed *air walk* when touched by a living creature until all beings it wants slain are slain or driven away. The sword then decides if the being that touched it is deemed unworthy of being controlled by it. It attacks all known unworthy beings in reach as a 15th-level fighter taking a partial action with no penalties.

Created by insane and powerful demonic weaponsmiths, Pizzicato has the power to give pause to any wizard, lich, celestial, devil or demon. Even the vaunted Solars must acknowledge its effectiveness. It was created to give an advantage to demons, but an interruption near the completion of the enchantments caused a vile perversion of the creator's intentions. Instead of aiding demons, it seeks to slay any being

that casts arcane spells, uses arcane spell-like abilities, or carries items that generate or mimic spells that are solely found in the arcane realm. Divine spell wielders with no arcane trace need not fear its purposeful ways, but even a creature with a lowly *potion of jump* would be ruthlessly tracked down by it.

This sword is multiply cursed, especially so against beings that have gained levels in either Wizard or Sorcerer classes. If such a wielder is controlled by its ego, it imposes a *geas* upon the wielder to immediately strive to gain one level of Fighter if they already do not possess such. Once the *geased* wielder has at least one level of Fighter, the sword then 'baptizes' the wielder by irrevocably dealing permanent negative energy levels equal to their levels of Wizard and Sorcerer. Any such levels of Wizard and Sorcerer are expunged forever in the baptized wielder, and only a *wish* or *miracle* may restore those levels. Beings with intrinsic spell-like abilities such as ogre magi or devils do not suffer such an occurrence, unless they have trained in those classes.

Should the arcane spell-using wielder withstand the ego assault, they are attacked at once and treated as a lawful good entity for the sword's ability purposes. Pizzicato, due to its craftsmanship and enchantments, sports a hardness of 15 and 35 hit points. Its temporizing defenses allow resistance to fire of 40. Its resistance to all other elemental damage, including acid, is 20.

The other curses upon it are as follows: Any controlled wielder may never cast arcane spells, nor carry or use any items that generate effects or mimic spells of solely arcane nature. Note that an item that would generate a *dispel magic*, since it is also in the divine realm, would not be loathed by Pizzicato. Further, the approved wielder may never carry nor use any other magic weapon, for this longsword is most jealous and rules its wielder with an iron pommel. The penalty for any first infraction is a severe slashing. Any other infractions enrage Pizzicato and result in an attack upon the former wielder as if they were Lawful Good.

Sessestophelzine managed to entrap the sword by causing an animated mindless skeleton to grasp it and carry it for the Darkmage, as is his standard operating procedure with all newfound weapons and armor. It alone held Pizzicato while Lord Sesses showed it to Jerjicus. The ogre magi quickly bade the Darkmage to get extra-planar help to identify its qualities as The Ace In the Hole had an intuitive inkling of its power and origin.

The Darkmage has learned of all its abilities except for the special purpose defenses, and **never** gets near it without his carnelian cube ready. He knows that most evil outsiders would merely *fly* or *teleport* over the trap, and any non-evil foe or bugbear that would find it would be slain in the pit. Drincilla, Gortok, Jerjicus and espe-

cially Zot want nothing to do with it for their own reasons. Also, a mere *teleport* to the Vault to pick up the *rod of cancellation* is an adequate defense against it. So, the mongoose allows the snake to guard his den knowing full well its power, but also that only unique circumstances cause it to be a true threat. This is fortunate, as his avarice compels him to keep this weapon that would probably fetch 140,000 gold pieces despite the attendant curses and danger.

Caster Level: 18th; *Weight:* 3 pounds.

***Manual of Sytecs* (found in Area 26e)**

Only three manuals are known to exist, and each is a conspicuously mage-befitting tome. Any being that does not possess at least one class level in either sorcerer or wizard who reads its pages must succeed on a Will save (DC 20) or suffer a *lesser geas* with no HD ceiling to actively gain a level in the Wizard class.

The *manual of sytecs* contains research information, conjuration materials manifest, incantations, and special spells required to create the reader's own Sytec. These are beings composed of electrical energy that operate under the reader's control and effectively become a personality duplicate of the creator. All Sytecs are created to become totally loyal assistants and have numerous possible sorcerous abilities that the creator specifically chooses, provided the reader is of sufficient level in ability to so endow his Sytec.

A Sytec appears as a humanoid-shaped sculpture of pure flowing and roiling electrical energy, wearing a special robe emblazoned with the arcane mark of its master as well as a set of enchanted gloves and slippers. The only markings of life in the energy are two eye slits near the top of the head. It continuously emits a low frequency hum and when it speaks the monotone buzzing sound seems to emanate from its entire body. A Sytec confers no bonuses in any way to its master's ability statistics, or saves, or any other statistics. Nor does a master suffer damage or any other magical effect, except a profound sense of loss and any other attendant emotion, upon the destruction of its Sytec.

After a short time with its master, the Sytec begins to conform exactly to the master's personality, morals and ethos, even speech patterns and pitch; effectively becoming an electrical clone of its master after two months. Once completed, the master notes a near-telepathic communion with his Sytec, as it anticipates any need, and from then on remains unswerving in its loyalty and obedience to its master.

All spells contained in the *manual* are specially enchanted and cursed. Its dweomer erases from memory any spell contained within its pages whose purpose does not further the completion of a Sytec. Further, if any

reader is so foolish as to attempt to copy contained spells into another spell book or onto a scroll, two results occur. The first result manifests after the attempt is completed, as the applied ink conforms to exactly the same color and pattern of the desired surface. This not only results in unreadable script, it also ruins any other attempt to scribe any spell on top of the initial attempt upon that surface. Afterwards, the offending reader begins to slowly undergo a polar opposite alignment change, completing after half a year, inconveniently after any conjured Sytec has assimilated the reader's former alignment.

The time necessary to complete a Sytec is the amount of weeks equal to half of the reader's total in class levels of Sorcerer and Wizard. The process must be kept up each day, at least eight hours a day, with no other activity beyond eating, sleeping and normal conversation, else the conjuration utterly fails after the final incantation. The materials outlay necessary includes a fully equipped arcane laboratory, a *cloak of resistance* of at least +3 or greater, either a *cloak of minor displacement* or a *cloak of displacement*, 2 *vibrant purple ioun stones*, a marble conjuration stand colored as the reader's alignment (light vs. dark, blue vs. red) inscribed with the reader's *arcane mark* (worth at least 750 gp), fine leather and silk gloves and slippers (worth at least 750 gp), and a favorite gemstone of the reader's (worth at least 10,000 gp). Gathering the materials alone relieves the reader of 70,000 gp.

The *manual* contains every spell that the sorcerous Sytec could emulate, plus the following that are absolutely necessary for successful conjuration: *arcane* (personality) *mark*, *fly*, *permanency*, *polymorph any object*, *repulsion*, *wall of fire* with lightning energy substitution, and *wish* (specific statement). It also contains two divine spells attuned to Hecate, which only by virtue of the *manual* may be cast by Sorcerers or Wizards. These two are *imbue with spell ability* and *spell resistance*. The manual allows a Sorcerer or Wizard to emplace each of these spells into a different *vibrant purple ioun stone* and a Will save must be made to do so (DC 14 and 15 respectively) with failure equating to the destruction of the *ioun stone* so subjected.

No assistants may help in the conjuration of a Sytec. The creator and the creator alone must perform each and every incantation and conjuration. *Lightning bolts* and *charm monster* spells must be expended upon the creation every day.

At the end of the specified amount of weeks of preparative work, expended spells and step-by-step conjuration efforts, the final incantation is performed. This mammoth incantation includes the recitation of every spell the Sytec knows and the seven mandatory arcane spells contained within the *manual*. If any mandatory

arcane spell is of higher level than the creator could normally cast, the creator must make a spell failure roll as if reading any such spell from a scroll. Any failure dooms the conjuration in total on the spot, and all must be started over again from scratch, but the materials are not lost.

Should all of the mandatory arcane spells be successfully cast, then the final statement of the incantation is uttered and a Spellcraft check (DC 25) is made. If the check fails, the conjuration fails to take hold and all materials used except the marble stand explode in an electrical inferno, forever gone. If the check succeeds, the Sytec takes form, its fused cloak, gloves, and slippers change color to match its master's marble stand, and it begins its duties as the master's assistant. Soon it shall know much of its master and begin to act just like him.

To attempt successful conjuration of a Sytec, the reader must possess all of the following traits: *Caster Level*—10th; *Prerequisites*—charm monster, Craft Wondrous Item, any Item Creation Feat of higher spellcaster level than 3rd, Knowledge-arcana of at least 10 ranks, *lightning bolt*, any metamagic feat. The *manual* does not disappear after a correct or incorrect usage.

Caster Level: 20th; *Prerequisites*: alarm, arcane eye, arcane mark, bestow curse, charm monster, clairaudience/clairvoyance, contact other plane, Craft Wondrous Item, dimension door, dispel magic, fly, hold portal, identify, imbue with spell ability, an Item Creation Feat of higher spellcaster level than 3rd, knock, Knowledge (arcana) of at least 20 ranks, lesser geas, lightning bolt, locate object, any metamagic feat, Orluke's resilient sphere, permanency, polymorph any object, protection from elements, Rarey's telepathic bond, repulsion, rope trick, see invisible, shield, spell resistance, Tensor's floating disk, tongues, wall of fire, and wish; *Market Price*: 119,700 gp; *Cost to Create*: 58,700 gp + 18,000 XP; *Weight*: 5 pounds.

Sytec (Template)

Note: the sytec template doesn't work like standard templates. It does not enhance or add to the abilities of a creature. Rather, the abilities of a sytec are calculated from those of another creature.

"Sytec" is a template that can be calculated from any creature that has at least 10 levels in arcane spellcasting class (hereafter referred to as the "summoner"). Its type is Construct. Its special abilities and ability scores are equal to those of the summoner, except as noted here.

Size: As the summoner

Hit Dice: 1/2 the summoner's total arcane class levels. Because a sytec so closely conforms to the identity of

its master, unlike other constructs it uses only d4 as its hit die type.

Initiative: Determined from sytec's Dexterity

Speed: Fly 50 ft. (average)

AC: A sytec has +10 natural bonus to armor class

Attacks: As a construct, a sytec's base attack bonus is equal to ¾ its HD. Add its Strength bonus plus its size modifier for melee attacks. Add its Dexterity bonus plus its size modifier for ranged attacks.

Damage: A sytec has an electrical touch attack. This attack inflicts 1d6+1 points of electrical damage. A sytec also has a ranged electrical bolt attack. This attack inflicts 1d4+1 points of electrical damage.

Face/Reach: As base character.

Special Attacks: A sytec has none of the special attacks of the summoner. It has the following special attacks. The save DC for its special attacks is 10 + ½ sytec's HD + sytec's Charisma modifier, unless specified otherwise.

Energy Discharge (Su): The sytec has a number of energy points equal to 4 times its HD. These energy points regenerate a rate of 1/hour. The sytec can use these points to power the following effects.

Tesla (1 energy point)—Three arcs of electricity spiral towards the target, each with a ranged touch attack bonus equal to the sytec's HD. Upon the first successful strike, the target takes 1d8+1 points of electrical damage and the attack ends. *Repulsion* (6 energy points)—As the spell cast by a sorcerer with a level equal to twice the sytec's HD. *Wall of electricity* (4 energy points)—As the *wall of fire* spell except that it deals electricity damage. This is as cast by a sorcerer with a level equal to the sytec's HD. *lightning bolt* (8 energy points)—As the spell cast by a sorcerer with a level equal to the sytec's hit dice; Reflex save (DC 13 + sytec's Charisma modifier) for half damage.

Special Qualities: A sytec has none of the special qualities of the summoner. It has the following special attacks. The save DC for its special attacks is 10 + 1/2 sytec's HD + sytec's Charisma modifier, unless specified otherwise.

Construct (Ex): A sytec is immune to poison, paralysis, stunning, critical hits, death from massive damage, disease, subdual damage, ability drain, energy drain, and sleep.

Familiar Sight (Su): As a full round action, the sytec's master may gaze through the sytec's eyes as it performs its actions. As a free action, the master may conduct telepathic conversation with the sytec at the same time. This ability has a range of one mile.

Melee Concealment (Ex): The sytec has magical concealment from melee and ranged weapon attacks of 100/ (1 + weapon bonus) %, which confers 100% concealment vs non-magical weapons, 50% vs +1 weapons, 33% vs +2 weapons, 25% vs +3 weapons, 20% vs +4

weapons, etc.

Resistances (Ex): The sytec has electricity resistance 40, fire resistance 20 and cold resistance 20. Any *polymorph* or *dispel magic* effect does not affect a sytec. They are considered artifact-class magic items against *Morden's disjunction*.

Spell Resistance: A sytec has SR equal to twice its HD.

Saves: Calculated as per normal guidelines for a construct.

Abilities: Str 11, Con —, Wis 11. The Dexterity and Intelligence of a sytec are equal to twice the sytec's HD.

Skills: The sytec has the following skills with a number of ranks equal to its HD: Concentration, Craft (alchemy), Knowledge (arcana), Search, and Spellcraft. The sytec has the following skills with a number of ranks equal to its HD + 3: Spot, and Listen.

Feats: A sytec receives the Brew Potion, Craft Wondrous Item, Dodge, Flyby Attack, and Scribe Scroll feats for free.

Climate/Terrain: As the summoner

Organization: Solitary

Challenge Rating: Equal to HD

Treasure: None

Alignment: Same as the summoner

Advancement: —

Known Spell Choices (level/ability-dependant): 0—dancing lights, daze, detect magic, flare, light, mage hand, prestidigitation, read magic, resistance; 1st—alarm, hold portal, identify, shield, Tensor's floating disk; 2nd—knock, locate object, rope trick, see invisible; 3rd—clairaudience/ clairvoyance, dispel magic, tongues; 4th — dimension door, Otluke's resilient sphere; 5th—contact other plane.

All Sytecs have three quirks, one of which manifests immediately. The first is its abhorrence of any other being calling the Sytec by the name given to it by its master. Should a Sytec hear a less powerful being utter its given name, it attempts to attack the speaker unless restrained by its master. A wise master devises a nickname for all others to call the Sytec.

The second quirk, which some masters consider a boon, manifests itself after the Sytec has adopted the personality, morals and ethics of its master. Should the master deviate from their typical pattern; the Sytec notes such to its master, firmly if necessary. Continued 'incorrect' activity or demands from the master activates a programmed response in the Sytec, whereupon the Sytec endeavors to 'repair' its master by whatever means are at hand. Such activities could include, but are not limited to: enforce its master to seek *atonement*, force a cursed item which changes alignment upon its master, transport its master to a being which could 'cure' the master.

The third quirk only manifests itself should the master try to create any other Sytecs. Upon learning of its master's intention, a Sytec endeavors to sabotage any such attempt, regardless of any demands, threats, or restraints. If the second conjuration is somehow a success, both Sytecs of the same master innately know of each other, and constantly seek out each other for destruction above all else. Such mindless destruction becomes the sole focus of both Sytecs, regardless of master's pleadings or attempts to corral or contain. A Sytec of the same master knows how to negate all defenses including Spell Resistance and Melee Concealment of any other similar Sytec. Further, their battles against each other are always at simultaneous initiatives. Such battles usually result in mutual annihilation.

Libram of Nefarious Conversion

This is a compendium of truly vicious and insinuating evil doctrines. It is of great help to clerics who wish to accentuate their evilness and often converts those to the dark cloth. Evil clerics who take a week in study with the libram gain 6,666 XP plus either the evil domain for free or double its effects if already owned. Neutral clerics who view just one page must Will save (DC 17) or replace one of their domains with Evil and seek out an Evil high priest for re-education. They lose 6,666 XP if they save. Good clerics who look at one page must Fortitude save (DC 17) or become a wraith after dying horribly. If they do save, they are affected like neutral clerics, except they are under geas to atone for all their good deeds. All good folk take 6d6 points of damage by merely touching the libram, and non-clerics must save vs Will or become geased to acquire a level of cleric under an evil priest if they read it, finally turning evil once that is accomplished. Neutral folk take 3d6 points of damage by merely touching the libram, and non-clerics must save vs Will or become geased to acquire a level of cleric under an evil priest if they read it, turning evil immediately upon the failed save.

Caster Level: 18th; **Weight:** 3 lbs.

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