



The Rogues Gallery

The Cloven Hoof Syndicate





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This book was made possible by the love and support of my wonderful wife, the encouragement of two lifelong friends who are really more like family, the trust and confidence of the fine folks at Clockwork Gnome Publishing, and a bunch of crazy people who prove that, despite our different backgrounds and beliefs, we can share a friendship based on love of life and of gaming. -Paris Crenshaw



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Chapter One

On the Trail of a Villain

The guard captain gave me one of those looks – the kind that told me he'd just as soon punch me in the face as answer my question. The wealthiest families in the city built their homes in his district. It had been a long time since anybody without a title, or at least enough money to buy one, had seriously questioned him about anything. I returned his stare, then winked. His demeanor turned icy – not that it was very warm before.

"Look," he said. "I have served this city for more than twenty years. I've had to deal with problems of every shape and size. But I will not have you skulking around town stirring up trouble for me, my troops, and everyone else with these wild, baseless stories."

I pointed again to the evidence packet on his desk.

He scoffed. "That proves nothing." Then, he tried a different tack – the patronizing tone is one of my least favorites. "Mister Lartheri, I know you mean well. But, really. The Thieves' Guild has been an annoying but stable fact of life here for years. The Guildmasters have always managed to deal with threats to their enterprises and, unless their activities cause problems in my jurisdiction, I'm inclined to let them.

"Furthermore, I have a hard time believing these 'cases' you're talking about are anything more than coincidences. People go mad, even the wealthy. It is sad, but true. Let the sanitariums deal with them and let the agents of the law focus on the real problems." He paused and took a deep breath. I knew what was coming next, but I let him say it.

"By all accounts, you are a talented investigator, Mister Lartheri. But in this case, your instincts are wrong. And my compatriots in the other districts" – he'd stumbled, there, and made a face like he'd just tasted something rotten – "have misled you. There is no coming war among the city's criminals, and there is nothing sinister behind what happened to Baron Feliponte. Please, just let the family grieve in peace."

Crime is a part of life. In the larger cities, where laws are enforced by strong governments and skilled professionals, criminals learned long ago to work together for mutual benefit. Through generations traditions arose and rules developed. Eventually those rules resulted in a hierarchy in which a thief knows his place. His protection from the law depends on following the rules and on his loyalty to his fellow thieves. It's something of a paradox, but together they form a powerful group as well-known and influential as any confederation of skilled laborers: the Thieves' Guild.

The Thieves' Guild is one of the most recognized elements of modern fantasy fiction, though its origins can be traced back as far as the 16th Century. Such Guilds have become a staple in fantasy role-playing games because they yield nearly endless possibilities for players and gamemasters alike. On one hand, they provide information, hard-to-find items, and even opportunities for employment. On the other, they can be ruthless enemies, serious competition, or simply endless sources of frustration. However they are used, traditional Thieves' Guilds are almost required fare on the menu of any great fantasy campaign setting. Because they are such a powerful and useful element, almost every setting has at least one and most roleplayers know what to expect when they arrive in a city and announce that they wish to contact the local guild.



But that old adage about familiarity and contempt applies in this situation. Much of the fun in role playing games comes from the excitement of dealing with the mysterious or unexpected. If players know what to expect from a game, then that sense of fun can be lost.

Good gamemasters are always looking for ways to surprise their players and present them with something new. With that in mind, we thought it was time to breathe new life into organized crime. So, what you will find in this *Campaign Cog* is a different kind of criminal organization – one that appears to be a typical thieves' guild, but actually hides a terrible and dangerous secret.

The Cloven Hoof Syndicate is no harmless collection of free-wheeling ne'er-do-wells simply trying to eke out a living in the rough-and-tumble streets of the city. The Syndicate is a ruthless, scheming cancer in the city's underbelly. It is led by a foul and twisted mastermind who influences the rich and powerful through a charming alter ego and well-chosen agents. While he recruits typical rogues and thugs as any gang leader would, only his most trusted lieutenants know that his ultimate goal – as ordered by masters far removed from the Material Plane – is the destruction of civilization itself.

The Rogues Gallery: The Cloven Hoof Syndicate gives GMs a ready-to-play criminal organization complete with the organization's history, goals, resources, statistics for typical members, descriptions of important non-player characters, new rules, and detailed information on the organization's headquarters.



Chapter One: On the Trail of a Villain



THE WORLD OF EORTHE

All of the place names and setting details in this product originate from Clockwork Gnome Publishing's World of Eorthe. More specifically, most of the locations and characters can be found in the lands of Mendor, a continent in the northern hemisphere of the world. Throughout the text you will find sidebars that explore specific setting details pertinent to this book. However, the book is written so that the *Cloven Hoof Syndicate* can be used in almost any fantasy campaign setting. Detailed information is provided to help GMs decide the best way to integrate the Syndicate into their existing campaign worlds.

THE WEALDLAND

Mendor is large and varied, with many nations and tribes. Of these, the Wealdland is of special importance as it is the region in which the places named in this product can be found. Located along the northern portion of Lake Morlyn, the Wealdland spreads beneath the gleaming stars like a mantle of jade, its verdant forests and rolling hills creating a patchwork of rich farmlands. Along the hem of this rich garment lies a diamond without compare: Aeraldal, City of the Viridian Prince, largest of the northern metropolises. It is here that many come from around Mendor to sample the wealth of the Wealdland and test their mettle in the ruins, vaults, and wilderness regions.

The Wealdland lies in the northern hemisphere but still far south of the frigid Northern Wastes. As such, the climate is cool but mild. Rain is common

throughout the year, which has made the land verdant and green. If nothing else, the rain is something nearly every visitor remembers about the Wealdland. Blizzards are rare but light snow is common during the middle of Winter. Crops of all kinds take well to the abundant soil and the moderate climate means life does not grind to a halt in the depths of winter. For many, the Wealdland is something of a paradise, which makes the region highly desirable to those nations that lack such abundance.

Aeraldal sits on the northern shores of Lake Morlyn, which is known for an occasional thick fog that clings to the coasts in the evening and early morning hours. When this fog mixes with the constant smoke from Aeraldal's hearths and forges, it creates an impenetrable cloud that limits vision and makes breathing difficult. This shroud of thick vapor gives Aeraldal one of its lesser known names, the City of Argent Mists.

Despite the strength of Aeraldal, much of the Wealdland is a wild place dotted with islands of civilization. It blends aspects of the civilized south and the chaotic north. Due to its ideal location and conditions, the Wealdland has seen the rise of many great empires, including the first city of humanity, Ferron-Shelaz.

Aeraldal has remained a prize for conquerors and warlords for centuries. The land is riddled with ruins, crypts, and ancient dungeons that attract the attention of adventurers from all over Mendor. While it is certain most discover only death or debilitating injury, a choice few find abundant wealth and fame, which serves to attract more explorers to these storied lands.

Aerendal, City of the Viridan Prince

Ruler: His Highness, Urien ap Cadwallon, Viridian Prince of the Wealdland, Defender of Anthys Isle, Lord of the Cindan Marches, Scourge of the Obsidian Mire, Keeper of the Hawthorn Scepter

Population: 50,000



Aerendal spreads across six rocky isles on the northern coast of Lake Morlyn. Named for each of Keledon's original apprentices (Bronwyn, Cadfael, Glenys, Idris, Mair, and Talfryn), Aerendal's islands rise out of the water as flat plateaus of stone, leaving sheer cliffs between the docks at lake level and the city 80 feet above. A thin causeway and a steep ramp unite the metropolis with the mainland while a series of bridges connect the islands to each other. Only three of the islands that support the city are natural. The other three were summoned from the depths by powerful magic. However, recent population growth has far outpaced those ancient preparations and city leaders are considering the creation of a new island to help alleviate rampant overcrowding.

Overcrowding has also driven builders to other creative ends. Five, six, or even seven story structures are not unusual in the city, while taller towers festooned with buttresses and other supports can be found in the richer districts. Moving the opposite direction, the very foundations upon which the city rests have become a popular location to build. While each of the islands is honeycombed with sewers, tunnels, and various chambers, the cliff faces are becoming filled with new homes

and businesses. The entrances to these structures are often intricately carved to mimic the fronts of more traditional buildings. The most daring solution might be the horde of buildings cropping up along the many bridges that connect the islands of Aerendal. These structures stretch across the water, in some cases spanning more than 400 feet. Maintained by magic, these engineering wonders were never intended to support the kind of weight being placed upon them by new construction. While most appear to be holding, there is a very real fear that one day a bridge will collapse and result in a substantial loss of life.

City law has required all buildings be constructed from stone to help alleviate the ever present threat of fire. While wood may be used for interior floors, the use of thatch or wooden shingles is strictly outlawed. Most builders utilize slate and clay for the task. Embellishments are popular and it is quite rare to see a building that is not festooned with a variety of gargoyles, decorative carvings, and other statuary. Foliate themes echoing the natural beauty and mystic wonder of the Wealdland are particularly popular.

Aerendal is divided into a number of wards and districts, self-contained communities based on political or socio-economic similarities. While the wards originally began as a informal way to divide the city, the government eventually gave their official approval to these districts in an attempt to better manage the expanding and diverse population. Each ward consists of multiple smaller neighborhoods, though these divisions are not officially recognized by the government.

Chapter Two

History, Goals, and Operations

I'm beginning to see what Ranulf's man warned me about. I guess sometimes an assassin's "friendly advice" really is just that. It's clear now that the Assassin's Guild hasn't been infiltrated, but it's very likely that former members are now working for the Cloven Hoof Syndicate. I managed to take care of one of them, but this investigation is getting tedious. I've been down so many rabbit holes in the past month I think my ears have started growing.

I've followed more than two dozen leads, most of them from pretty reliable sources, and I still haven't come up with a name. All I do know is that the Syndicate's operations are bigger than even the Thieves' Guild suspects. This is no small-time organization. The man in charge has got to be well-connected and really smart. And he's got a veritable army working for him.

Near as I can tell, the Syndicate's got its claws in just about every criminal activity you can think of. I'm running across more and more thugs with the gang's sign tattooed on them. Nice of them to make that easy, at least. Still, none of these guys talk very much. A few have been willing to give up the next guy in the chain, but that doesn't get me very far.

Eventually, I find the one guy who'd rather die than tell me what I need to know. Whatever those guys keep in that false tooth, it does a number on the body, especially the face. I shouldn't be surprised that they'd be smart enough to get around the best spell in an investigator's toolkit. Oh, well. I was tired of paying for that self-righteous cleric's services anyway. If I want a sermon about living clean, I'll go to church.

Clean living. That's something this city doesn't see much of. From the highborn in their estates to the wretches in the gutter, everybody's got some kind of dirt. I wonder if they know how much they really have in common, especially now that everybody's discovering vesseance. They all think it's perfectly safe, but there's got to be more to it. It didn't show up in town until the Syndicate started getting big enough to throw its weight around. How are they getting it into the city? Either no one knows, or no one's talking.

Now it's those gemstones. I wouldn't have thought that a crimelord would be interested in selling overpriced diamonds, but that jeweler is definitely a Syndicate agent. Not that I can prove it, now. It would be nice if I could get a little support from the city, but they're more interested in my mental health.

Paranoid? Hardly. Something big is happening in Aerendal. Someone is pulling strings and making a whole lot of people dance. I need to learn the steps and put a stop to it before we waltz right off a cliff.



Thanks to the scholarship of many great minds, we have learned that the Faerie Realms are not fixed locations within the multiverse. The strange forces of Faerie allow these dominions to drift lazily, and over time their positions can change greatly. Most of the time this movement is benign and has little to no impact on the creatures living there. Sometimes, however, this slow shift can have serious consequences.

At some point in the distant past, one such dominion drifted into a region in which the boundaries of the Outer Planes were very weak. Through some means that is not completely understood, the entire dominion slipped through those bounds and passed through Abaddon, comingling with the evil energies there. The results of this conjunction were horrifying, changing the nature of the dominion's Overlord and all the creatures within it.

Many fey were directly altered by exposure to the planar forces, which corrupted their essences and created new, terrifying creatures. The daemons captured many fey, consuming them so they might savor their spiritual essences. Others, they subjected to hideous tortures and experiments, changing them into debased things crippled by madness, pain and rage.

Some fey survived the initial onslaught of daemons and corrupt fey and fought for the survival of their home. But the dominion was cut off from the other Faerie Realms and the beleaguered resistance had nowhere to turn for help. In the end, the dominion was completely consumed and transformed by its exposure to Abaddon. Whatever name it once held, it came to be known as the "Hollow of Shrieking Laughter."

Abaddon

This infernal plane is home to the daemons, a race of neutral evil fiends who delight in the destruction of the soul. It is also the plane most closely associated with another brand of fiend, the div. Div seek the dissolution of those things mortals prize the most. If it is associated with the civilizations of mortals, divs will seek to despoil it.

Abaddon goes by many names throughout the multiverse, including Hades, the Rotten Wastes, the Infernal Venom, and the Bleak Oblivion.

The Hollow eventually drifted back and rejoined the other realms of Faerie, taking with it the full taint of Abaddon. For long years the dominion existed within its own nightmare, tormented, separate, and alone. But it would not remain alone forever.

By chance or by the malicious intent of its Overlord, the dominion eventually collided with another dominion, the Valley of Winter's Pause. Where the two worlds touched, doors opened, allowing the wicked creatures of Shrieking Laughter to enter the once peaceful Valley. They did so with murderous intent and unleashed their demonic hunger on the unsuspecting fey.

The War for the Valley has raged for decades. After the initial shock, the fey of the Valley mounted a capable defense and fought fiercely. They knew that the cost of failure was greater than the painful, but temporary, death that may come to fey in battle. There would be no rebirth for those who fell to the denizens of the

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Hollow. Those fey tainted by daemons carry the threat of total oblivion for the people of the Faerie Realm. Thus, the Armies of Shrieking Laughter were kept at bay and a sort of stalemate has developed.

The Overlord of Shrieking Laughter serves his daemon masters well. Those hideous creatures demand tribute in the form of souls, both mortal and fey, and command the fey ruler to extend his evil influence over the rest of the Faerie Realm. If his campaign against the Valley of Winter's Pause is successful, the army of the Hollow of Shrieking Laughter will move on to the next dominion and wage war against more of the fey. But the current impasse in the War for the Valley has become costly and the Overlord needs souls to continue gaining support from the daemons.

When resources in the Hollow began to wane, the Overlord sought another way to appease his insatiable masters. And, his wits ever quick, he devised a plan that pleased them greatly. He sent an agent into the mortal world to spread corruption and death, thus increasing the flow of souls to support the Hollow's violent campaign against their one-time kin. The agent chosen to go forth and execute this plan was a corrupt and deformed satyr, Varon the Twisted. He gladly accepted this charge and crossed the threshold of a portal to the Material Plane, anxious to prove his worth.

Taking on the guise of a human bard, the satyr spent a few years traveling the world and becoming familiar with the ways of mortals. He concentrated his efforts on learning the best ways to undermine societies and maximize their pain and suffering. Varon knew that by creating the right conditions of despair and agony the deaths of many would fuel the powers of Abaddon and bring glory to his masters in the Hollow. He learned much of pain and death in those years.

Eventually, Varon came to the great city of Aerlandal and chose the City of Argent Mists as the ultimate target of his destructive mission. In the form of Varon the bard, he entered the city and ingratiated himself to Aerlandal's elite. His talent as a performer gained him access to the most powerful and influential citizens. His charm, both natural and supernatural, encouraged those people to share information with him, including details that helped him establish roots. In Varon's vision, those roots feed the vines that will one day choke the life from the people of Aerlandal.

While he dazzled the upper crust of society, Varon also dredged up allies from its filthy underbelly to help

him enact his plans. The satyr learned that the Thieves' Guild had a strong alliance with the city's leaders. He saw the guild's operations as direct competition to his own, a situation that would slow him down and weaken his efforts in what was already going to be a difficult process. He decided that he would need to break the power of the Guild if he wanted to truly corrupt the city and bring it crashing down.

Despite its powerful position, the Thieves' Guild had no dearth of enemies in Aerlandal. Varon sought the help of ambitious freelancers and embittered ex-Guild members. Gathering them under a new banner, he worked through some of them as intermediaries to set plans in motion. He stayed within the shadows, building a mystique and a reputation for ruthless efficiency. After months of clandestine operations, he had fully established himself as the secret head of a new gang, the Cloven Hoof Syndicate.

The Syndicate has operated quietly for several years but has only recently gained enough power to actually challenge the Thieves' Guild. Although Varon prefers to eliminate the Guild by indirect means, he is no fool.

He does not intend to be caught unprepared by any violent response the Guild might choose. He has developed a veritable army of thugs and cutthroats, as well as a cadre of skilled assassins, who stand ready for the call to rise up en masse and strike against the Thieves' Guild. Until that time comes, these foot soldiers carry out the daily activities of any normal street gang. While there are occasional clashes with Guild-affiliated gangs, Syndicate members draw very little attention to themselves—mostly for fear of angering their mysterious leader.

Meanwhile, Varon continues to lead a double life as both the leader of the Syndicate and the celebrated bard whose success has enabled him to sponsor the establishment of an exclusive club, to which only the most select members of Aerlandal society are invited. Hidden in the the district known as the Verge, this semi-secret club has become the talk of the town as a place where one can indulge in activities that would never be allowed in proper society. None suspect that it is also the heart of operations for the dreaded Cloven Hoof Syndicate.

Even within his headquarters, Varon maintains a layered disguise. To Aerlandal's elite, he is only Varon the bard. To the Syndicate members who operate the club, he is merely a lieutenant — although a powerful lieutenant — to the organization's nameless leader. While it could be said that Varon does ultimately answer to the the Overlord of Shrieking Laughter, in fact he is in total control of the Syndicate's aims and operations. Only



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the warlord Kushtrios dares question his decisions and even he recognizes the danger of doing so too frequently.

Cordelia Dunmoor, Guildmaster of the Thieves' Guild, knows of the Cloven Hoof Syndicate and is well aware that they stand in direct opposition to the Guild. Her agents continue to look for clues about the identity of the Syndicate's mysterious leader while trying to counter their operations and thwarting occasional attempts on the Guildmaster's life. Her Esteemed Master Dunmoor may have her reservations about giving a relative unknown like Varon unfettered access to the city's most powerful people, but even she doesn't suspect him of being such a great threat to the city as a whole or to her in particular.

GOALS

Varon was sent to the mortal realms for the single purpose of increasing the flow of souls to Abaddon. In return for this service, that plane's daemonic rulers promised to continue their support for the war Shrieking Laughter wages against the Valley of Winter's Pause. Varon is a lusty, egomaniacal sadist, but he is also fiercely dedicated to furthering the goals of his Overlord. While he will take whatever pleasures he can from the mortal world, he never loses sight of his ultimate purpose.

In order to achieve the primary goal, Varon knows that the Syndicate must accomplish certain intermediate goals. Although it is least in importance to Varon, the funding of operations requires the majority of the organization's effort. Occasionally, operations that wreak destruction can bring in money as well. Usually, however, Varon must be satisfied with the fact that high levels of crime increase despair and frustration in Aerendal. Thus he can enhance the effectiveness of other tactics while bringing in the cash he needs to maintain himself and the Syndicate.

Aside from making money, Varon's short term goal is to eliminate the competition represented by the Thieves' Guild so that he will be completely free to move within the city's criminal environment. Meanwhile, his followers carry out operations that result in the deaths of Aerendal's citizens. These are generally smaller incidents, but even small incidents can lead to despair and hopelessness, which contribute to the overarching goal of driving the city toward total collapse.

By spreading famine, disease, and violence, Varon and his minions intend to create the conditions in which the souls of the dead can be more easily captured by daemons and taken to Abaddon. In the satyr's ultimate vision, the city will fall into ruin with every mortal soul crying out in anguish as they are dragged into the black heart of oblivion.

OPERATIONS

Varon's efforts to bring destruction and misery upon all the people of Aerendal spread like a cancer within the body of society. The

Cloven Hoof operates a number of business ventures that the satyr believes will degrade the foundations of civilization. Varon has diversified his investments to make sure that he can impact every level of society. He considers it serendipitous that these operations also bring the Syndicate money and information, both of which are critical to the success of all Varon's plans.

In Aerendal, the government allows many activities that would be outlawed in other cities of the Wealdlands. In particular, prostitution and the consumption of most drugs are perfectly legal. As one might expect, these enterprises are highly regulated and heavily taxed. The authorities do not interfere with citizens who lawfully indulge in them.

The Syndicate runs a number of profitable legitimate businesses through intermediaries, but the bulk of the Syndicate's funding comes from the illegal businesses it operates throughout the city. These places maximize profit by avoiding the heavy taxes and strict regulations that would normally dictate requirements for sanitation, treatment of "employees," and other operations.

These underground establishments offer their patrons the opportunity to buy and sell goods and services that would get them thrown in jail elsewhere. Many of these goods are moved into the city via an extensive smuggling network that Varon helped establish. Of course, the wealthy and high born have desires and needs that cannot always be met while following the law, giving Varon's agents, led by Lord Aldinus Ferroway, an opportunity to fulfill their dreams with discretion – for the right price.

MUNDANE CRIME

Varon had his Overlord's primary goal in mind from the moment he set foot in the mortal world. He immediately began doing his part to send the daemons as many souls as he could. Taking lessons he learned within his home dominion, Varon found ways to orchestrate deaths that would prime the victims' souls for passage into the hands of daemons.

Sometimes he committed acts of horrifying violence on unsuspecting travelers after chasing them through darkened forests to maximize their fear. Other times he arranged for terrible accidents to claim the life of one person, then encouraged the development of deep sorrow in that person's family, eventually driving at least one more person to take his or her own life. When he was especially successful, the suicide would follow the murder of the rest of the family.

Varon usually carried out such plans from a distance. Although he enjoyed the hunting of lonely travelers, he knew that such intimate involvement carried great risk to him and his mission. For the more intricate plots, he would occasionally take on a new disguise and infiltrate



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a household so that he could see his plan unfold, but he almost never revealed himself to his victims. He was an angel of death in all its forms, and he reveled in the power it gave him.

Varon knew, however, that those methods were far too slow. Abaddon is forever hungry for souls. Driving an entire family to kill each other takes time. The satyr needed a way to increase the scale of his activities. In Aerendal, he found both the supply of souls and the assistance he needed to open the floodgates and feed that vile hunger.

Varon began the Cloven Hoof Syndicate with only a few followers, gained mainly through the sheer force of his personality. Some he had to encourage with magic, but most came willingly, enthralled by the satyr's shadowy persona. Initially, the gang members pulled off small jobs to earn money while carrying out missions similar to those Varon started with years before. That work continues to this day.

Syndicate business appears to be nothing more than the crimes one would expect from a gang of thugs. Groups of Cloven Hoof gang members have taken control of a few blocks, forcing residents and businesses to pay protection money. Smaller groups or individuals commit robberies and pick pockets. Other agents carry out minor assassinations.

Broader schemes are always worming their way through Varon's warped mind. In his vision, anything that can be done to worsen the quality of life in Aerendal is worthy of consideration. Spoiling the food or water supply, fomenting chaos, or generally stirring unrest are favorite choices that offer the satyr a wide array of opportunities. Varon enjoys accomplishing these goals through a series of small events, which are mingled into the more ordinary crimes designed primarily to bring in money. Like a maestro, Varon orchestrates the small events, driving victims, their families, and law enforcement onward toward a crescendo of violence, while watching from within the shadows and fading away when his vile work is done.

Individual jobs are handed out to Syndicate agents through a network of messengers. Agents are never told why certain people are targeted, though many assume there is a vast, complicated plan at work. This is difficult to prove, however, because Varon and his associates each use a different method to select victims. Some are even chosen at random to confuse law enforcement. Anyone investigating a series of accidents or murders that seem to be connected in some way may find a pattern within them, but such patterns will not necessarily provide any clues about the Syndicate as a whole.

If an agent gets too creative and begins to draw attention to himself, Varon ensures that he is eliminated before the authorities are able to learn anything that might endanger the Syndicate. In some cases, he might even hire adventurers to conduct the investigation in the hope that the reckless "heroes" will eliminate the problem for him. If the adventurers learn too much in the course of the

investigation, Varon can silence them more easily than city officials. The city guard may be corrupt, but they tend to protect their own, certainly more than they would protect a band of treasure hunters.

GAMBLING

Gambling is legal and doesn't present much of a problem to most citizens of Aerendal. Although many people have heard of the father or mother who has squandered the family's resources in various gambling halls or back-room card games, these are considered to be private matters that have little to do with larger patterns of crime. The truth is, however, that gambling and crime are as closely related as sand and sea.

Large-scale gambling enterprises involve massive quantities of money, which will always draw the criminal element. The Cloven Hoof Syndicate is not immune to its lure. During his early travels through the Wealdlands, Varon was exposed to card games in taverns and became familiar enough with the concept of gambling to know that he could leverage gambling halls as a way to make a profit, convert money gained through other means into "legal" tender, and find customers for his other businesses, all in discrete, mostly-legal locations.

In Aerendal, citizens can bet on nearly anything, as long as the transactions take place in licensed betting halls and are handled in a lawful manner. Such halls not only hold the usual games of chance, but also offer the opportunity to place bets on anything from the height of the spring tide to how long a certain government official will remain in office. Betting on a person's life expectancy is forbidden, however, as are other wagers that could encourage bettors to commit crimes in order to ensure their winnings.

A major problem for gamblers in Aerendal is getting the money to pursue their "hobby." Those coming from wealthy families or who possess some source of regular income have little problem making wagers, but others are not so fortunate. Even the rich frequently find themselves in need of a boost to get them into that high-stakes game that is certain to yield a huge payout.

The city has a population of money lenders, those who make money by offering small, short-term loans to individuals, but the practice is frowned upon by polite society and such lenders tend to avoid making high-risk loans for things like gambling. It falls to even less reputable folk to lend money at incredibly high interest rates. Often, the borrower's personal freedom is the only collateral for such loans.

The Syndicate works through several loan sharks, siphoning off profits from those who manage to pay off the loans. In the event a borrower cannot pay back the loan, Syndicate thugs will make a public example of him to show what happens to defaulter. When a truly impressive display of the Syndicate's power is warranted, Varon will send Morgrith Bonebreaker, a massive minotaur, to deal with the problem. Occasionally the debtor himself is collected as payment. Those unfortunate enough to be



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taken in this manner become resources for the Syndicate's other operations.

The Syndicate runs three legal gambling houses in the city. Two of them, Pendraven Hall and Theriska's Palace, serve the lower classes. The third gambling house is The Fairview, an exquisitely ostentatious lodge that caters to the city's wealthiest and most powerful gamblers. All three are located in the Cloisters. Although these locations are fully licensed and monitored by city officials, well-placed coins make it easy for Varon's agents to carry out more illicit operations within all three establishments.

The Cloven Hoof Syndicate also operates numerous illegal gambling houses, scattered throughout the city in the back rooms of taverns and inns. These places bring no taxes to the city and offer house games with ridiculously high stakes. Only foolishly brave or desperate gamblers take on the odds of these houses, but there is no shortage of either variety. These back room enterprises are extremely profitable for the gang.

There is one final gambling house operated by the Cloven Hoof Syndicate, but it is only open to the most select guests. Located within the Syndicate's headquarters, the Halls of Abandon, this gambling establishment is not licensed and remains a secret to city officials.

DRUGS

As with gambling, the use of drugs is both allowed and heavily taxed within Aerenadal. There are many substances, from alcohol to rare stimulant powders, that induce an array of sensations in those who wish to indulge their desires. The variety of drugs available ensures that dealers have customers at every level of society. Varon the Twisted has ensured that he has dealers ready to cater to all of them.

In Aerenadal, drugs must be produced and sold under strictly regulated circumstances. These laws are designed to ensure that purity controls are in place, so that customers get what they pay for. Most regulations are aimed at ensuring fairness, quality, and legitimate production. In other words, Aerenadal authority assures the buyer that his purchase meets minimum standards and wasn't made illegally, but will not protect him from the consequences of accidental overdose or other side effects of taking the drug.

Legitimate dispensaries may only sell drugs made at licensed dens within the city. Regulations dictate these drugs must be used on the premises. Production of drugs in Aerenadal can be quite expensive: raw materials are heavily taxed upon arrival in port, and licensing fees are immense for both manufacturers and sellers. The increased cost raises the prices for legal drugs, which translates to an extensive black market for illicit drugs.

Those who wish to maximize profit by evading taxes or selling drugs produced outside the city are part of that market as are the brave few who produce drugs in Aerenadal while avoiding government licenses and regulation. While these dealers and drug dens are nowhere near as trustworthy or safe as the licensed businesses, they offer lower prices on common drugs and can even provide access to rare drugs that can't be made within Aerenadal. It is here that the Cloven Hoof Syndicate operates and is quickly gaining the lead.

Most of the Cloven Hoof's dealers operate in the vicinity of other Syndicate businesses, particularly the

gambling houses and brothels. Street dealers typically work out of shadowed alleyways. Some clever dealers may employ illusion magic to hide their business transactions, but these tricks are reserved for clients who can afford such precautions.

The Syndicate actually has very few dealers in the Cloisters, where most of the city's drug dens are located. That ward is so heavily policed and regulated that illegal drug sales are more difficult to hide. Varon does operate a few legitimate businesses through intermediate owners, but this is mainly for the purpose of offering select customers the opportunity to buy drugs that wouldn't normally be sold in the Cloisters. Once a client has been hooked on illegal substances, he can be persuaded to seek out dealers in areas that are less heavily patrolled or are patrolled by guardsmen who have been paid to look the other way.

Within the Cloisters there are four shops associated with the Syndicate: Nature's Peace, Filian's Tinctures and Medicines, the House of Inspiration, and Godsight Emporium. Each of these places sells the more common drugs: opium, pesh, scour and zerk. There are other more exotic drugs available, but they cater to specific tastes. They are also significantly more expensive. While some of these luxury drugs are made within the city and are therefore legal, the majority of them are smuggled in from strange and distant lands around the world—and sometimes from beyond.

Vessence is a newcomer to the array of mind-altering substances. As popular among the common folk as it is among the social elites, vessence is sold in small vials designed to be consumed directly or added to food and drink. The effects vary slightly from user to user, one of the reasons the drug is so popular, but in general vessence seems to induce a heightened emotional state. The variation between users is in the type of emotion the user feels, although the user always considers the emotion to be a positive one.

Vessence is relatively inexpensive for a drug that is not manufactured under the auspices of Aerenadal law. If it were smuggled in one would expect the cost to be higher. This fact leads local officials to believe the drug is being produced within the city, although they have been unable to find the lab or labs responsible for vessence production.

On the surface, vessence seems relatively

benign. The euphoric, emotionally charged state it produces rarely results in anything more serious than embarrassing or awkward situations that could just as easily be explained by excessive use of alcohol. In fact, since vessence does not leave users with a hangover, Aerenadals who can afford to use it regularly are using it in place of alcohol. Evidence of vessence's popularity can be seen in the number of small clay or wood vials collecting in alleys and gutters throughout the city. The detritus builds up despite the efforts of sanitation officials to have it removed. Law enforcement officers search in vain for the group responsible for the production and sale of vessence.

Still, the increasing use of vessence is a real problem for the city because it poses both a financial drain and a hidden risk to the population. It is an unregulated, untaxed product that draws money out of the legal economy. Additionally, it has the potential to induce mental health problems in those who use it – prob-

| Vessence | |
|---|--|
| Type ingested; Addiction moderate, Fortitude DC 16 | |
| Price 20 gp | |
| Effects 1 hour; +1d4+1 alchemical bonus on Wisdom and Charisma checks and Will saves | |
| Damage 1d4 Wis damage | |
| For an explanation of this stat block and additional rules on the use of drugs and addiction in the <i>Pathfinder Roleplaying Game</i> , see the <i>Gamemastery Guide</i> . | |



Districts of Aerland: The Cloisters

Sandwiched between Crafter's Rise and the Platinum Ward, the Cloisters is home to a variety of high-end and mid-range gambling houses, taverns, and brothels. For those used to seedier red-light districts the Cloisters seem remarkably clean, orderly, and safe. The City Watch pays careful attention to this district, insuring those who live and work here are protected and well cared for. The city's interest is understandable, for it is said the tax revenues gained from the businesses in the Cloisters rivals that of the Platinum Ward. A temple of Laurel and Tannock, the twin gods of love, has a prominent location along the Avenue of Silk.

lems that may turn simple drug users into dangerous psychopaths.

Over time, addiction to the drug can erode a user's sense of reason while simultaneously dampening his ability to feel real emotion, increasing his dependence on the drug to achieve any kind of intense feeling. Eventually, long-term users can go completely mad, utterly devoid of emotion. Many in this situation will do anything to feel something positive, and without the ability to empathize with others, they have no compunction against hurting people if doing so will stimulate an emotion.

While some city officials have noticed this trend and are quietly concerned about the long-term impact, their investigations have run into dead ends or roadblocks and diversions in the form of bureaucratic requirements. Eventually, someone will develop leads that require Varon's agents to take more direct action, but for now, his goal is to use Lord Ferroway's influence among the ruling elite to stymie any serious efforts against the vessence trade in Aerland.

City officials are unlikely to have much success in their search for the vessence production labs. Vessence is completely unlike other drugs, which are created from the alchemical treatment of plants or other natur-

al substances. Vessence is the product of an alchemical process known only to twisted and vile alchemists. This process uses treated waters of the River Styx to draw out the positive emotions of a living victim, condensing them into a liquid form. Victims of the process are left befuddled, some for days at a time. There are several alchemists hidden throughout the city who have knowledge of this terrible discovery. They are all employed by the Syndicate and all have been personally trained in the discovery by Grim Moldweb.

PROSTITUTION

In Aerland, where anything can be had for the right price, the sex trade is like Lake Morlyn. On the surface it seems placid with only a few waves and the occasional vessel to catch a viewer's interest. But if you pierce the surface and dive deep into those waters you find currents, creatures and oddities, both wondrous and horrible, that can forever alter your understanding of the world above.

Aerland's sex industry serves a wide variety of interests and the activities range from relatively mundane escort services to indulgence in the most depraved fantasies conceivable. The Cloven Hoof Syndicate both shapes and profits from every aspect of this trade in the city. Whether they are prostitutes, sex slaves, pimps, or madams, all serve the Syndicate's two-fold purpose of making money and causing misery.

Unlike the Syndicate's drug trade, for which Varon assumes direct responsibility, all of the Syndicate's operations associated with prostitution are run by the woman known as Serafina Brighteye. Although she has adopted the surname Brighteye, Serafina appears to be of Sacaen descent. Her lithe, tan skin, jet black hair, and deep green eyes draw the attention of all who see her, and she welcomes that attention, for she knows that it can give her the power to destroy them.

Despite her human appearance, Serafina is, in fact, a div—one of the outsiders from Abaddon who seek to bring about the destruction of all civilization. She is a pairaka, a div who seeks to pervert mortal love and



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Races of Mendor: The Sacaen

The human ethnicity known as the Sacaen first arrived on the continent of Mendor nearly 1,000 years ago. Within a century of their arrival, their imperialistic tendencies led to the establishment and growth of the mighty Empire of the Chimeric Overlord. While the empire has grown toothless and decadent, and much of their former holdings have slipped from their control, the core Sacaen lands are still the wealthiest nations on Mendor. Sacaens have a warm, walnut brown skin color. Their hair is nearly always deep black, like the darkest areas of the night sky. Eye color ranges from brown, vibrant green, or smoky grey. Generally Sacaens are slight of build and reach an average height of 5 feet and 8 inches. They are known for their bold choice of fabric color, with reds, golds, rich yellows, and pure white being the most popular. The most familiar piece of Sacaen clothing is the traditional toga worn by government officials and senators in the Congress of the Four Winds. These voluminous garments of folded fabric are generally white and trimmed in a color appropriate to position held by the wearer. In the modern era, the toga is only worn at formal occasions.

When they can afford it, the Sacaens tend to prefer jewelry of gold and bright gems crafted in the fashion of their homeland.

shatter the bonds that tie people together. Hatred, mistrust and sorrow lie in the wake of a pairaka's passing. When one of these divs is allowed to stay in an area, the results can be truly devastating.

Serafina had been stalking the streets of Aerendal for several years when she met Varon. In particular, they found their otherworldly natures allowed them to indulge in the most depraved perversions without fear of doing permanent damage to each other. Such pastimes do nothing to sate either creature's most sadistic urges, but they provide some amusement – especially since Serafina has the ability to assume a wide variety of humanoid forms of both genders.

Serafina also uses that ability in running the Syndicate's various prostitution rings. In her guise as Serafina, she operates "The Laughing Maid," a high-priced brothel in Aerendal's Cloisters district. She is the madam there and supervises a coterie of men and women who cater to the desires of some of Aerendal's most influential citizens. Trained and disciplined by Serafina herself, the "employees" of the Laughing Maid can serve as well-spoken escorts to an elegant ball, then fulfill even the most base fantasies for the rest of the evening, assuming the customer has sufficient funds to pay.

Since it is located in the Cloisters and has such a high profile, The Laughing Maid is actually one of the most law-abiding operations the Syndicate runs. Within the blue-and-gold trimmed white plaster walls of this four-story building, Serafina presents herself as an honest woman providing a legitimate service to her clients. She ensures that none of her customers contract a disease unless it fits the Syndicate's purposes, and has established an excellent reputation and a client base that include nobles, judges, high ranking members of the city guard, and even some of the most wealthy and reputable adventurers. As one might suspect, The Laughing Maid is not Serafina's favorite place to work. It serves a purpose but brings her no pleasure.

Serafina actually does what she considers her best work in Shankara Square, which lies in the dark shadow of the Cloisters and houses the most despicable of Aerendal's offerings. This includes the Mudwallow. Ostensibly nothing more than a common swill house

as they are known in Aerendal, the Mudwallow hosts a spectacle for those who want some entertainment to go with their overpriced drinks: naked mud wrestling. Though the place is neither creatively named nor particularly sanitary, few complain about it because the drinks are still cheap enough for a common deck hand to get drunk while enjoying the show and also because the bar's owner is a cantankerous old bastard who is both willing and able to choke the life out of naysayers.

In the Mudwallow, Serafina takes on the form of Durst Bungtoller. Although the name supposedly refers to the tapping of beer barrels, the lascivious "man" has no qualms about offering different interpretations to anyone he thinks might find them offensive. He also makes no secret of the fact that he can arrange private time with any of the Mudwallow's large stable of performers, as long as they are willing to pay for it. There are plenty of men and women who take old Durst up on his offer. Several rooms in the back of the tavern are reserved for that use.

As in The Laughing Maid, the Mudwallow's men and women are well-trained in a variety of techniques, but here they possess few social graces. This suits most of the Mudwallow's clients just fine. They aren't interested in conversation and most couldn't afford a Laughing Maid escort even if they were. The draw for those who partake of the Mudwallow's fare is the relatively low cost and the veneer of secrecy they get by not actually visiting a brothel.

The city guard who work in the area are aware of what goes on in the Mudwallow and are paid well to turn a blind eye. Occasionally, a new recruit will come in with an overdeveloped sense of honor and try to raise a flag against Durst's illegal activities, but both the Syndicate and the corrupt guards have an interest in avoiding such attention. Either the new recruit is made to see the value of keeping quiet or he meets a quick end. In Shankara Square, it is not unusual for a guardsman to find an errant blade between his ribs or to go missing altogether, and few people pay enough attention to link Durst or his cronies to the disappearances.

Employees at the Mudwallow are not protected against disease like those at The Laughing Maid. Consequently, neither are the clients. Although the Mudwallow is a significant source of sexually transmitted diseases within Aerendal, the typical client visits other prostitutes and would have a difficult time pinpointing exactly where he contracted any disease. It would require a long, detailed investigation to identify the Mudwallow as a locus for any contagion. Varon and Serafina prefer to keep it that way. If they catch wind of such an investigation, they will attempt to bring it to an immediate and unsuccessful end.

Given the pairaka div's penchant for destroying marriages, friendships, and lives, the spreading of disease through contact with prostitutes is irresistible. Serafina puts the tactic to good use. A favorite game of hers is to transmit an illness to a husband, who must then explain to his otherwise chaste wife how he obtained it. Serafina delights in conning her clients to draw out information that can help her cause irreparable damage to any relationships they might have, either through disease or by visiting them later in their dreams to torment them and urge them on to committing heinous acts on their own.

In some cases, brothel owners know stories about evil spirits who enter such places to spread corruption. Those who do will hang red lanterns within and around their businesses, for it is said these creatures despise the color red and will not enter a place where it is prominently displayed. It is true that pairaka hate red and Serafina is no exception, but the story is considered mostly su-

Chapter Two: History, Goals, and Operations

Districts of Aerendal: Shankara Square

The dark shadow of the Cloisters, Shankara Square is home to low end brothels, gambling houses, and cheap taverns colloquially known as Swill Houses. While the district shares its name with the Goddess of Luck and Fate, there is very little of either apparent in Shankara Square. As in the Labor District, the city watch stationed here are corrupt and easily manipulated by the unsavory criminals who call the ward home. Nearly every business is connected to the Thieves Guild in some capacity and it is rumored the Guild's headquarters lies somewhere within the area.

perstition in Aerendal so not all brothels or sex shops are so warded.

Fortunately for Serafina, this means that no one is bothered that red lanterns are not found in either The Laughing Maiden or the Mudwallow. Perceptive folk may note that the color red cannot not be found anywhere in either place, and that both owners will actively drive out those who prominently display or wear the color. For example, there is the story of the young noble who drew Serafina's ire when he presented her with a red rose. She slapped the man with such great force that he lost a gold crown from his tooth. She claimed he had presented the flower while also insulting her. Unfortunately, no one could confirm the story because the noble developed a fever that night and died a few days later.

Aside from these two prominent personas, Serafina has numerous other guises that she wears throughout the city. Sometimes she takes on the form of a lone prostitute. At other times she assumes the role of a pimp. Whatever her guise, she pursues the same goals she does when pretending to be the madam of The Laughing Maid or the Mudwallow's owner. She ensures that both information and money continue to flow to the Syndicate's leaders while spreading disease, corruption, and heartbreak among the population.

BLOODSPORT

For the most part, blood sport – organized fights between individuals or teams for the amusement of a crowd – is a small side business for the Syndicate. Blood sports are outlawed in Aerendal because they rely on causing physical harm, often to unwilling victims, and encourage illegal gambling. That would be only a minor problem for the Syndicate, but the fights pose unique problems that make them difficult to arrange on a regular basis.

First, these events require an arena big enough to host both the fight and its spectators. Such places are difficult to hide for long, so most organized fights are set up quickly, with news of the time and place being passed via word of mouth. Those who wish to participate in, bet on, or simply see the fight usually know who they can trust with the information. Particularly challenging or sensational fights may be announced with more advanced notice, but doing so usually requires bribing very important government officials to keep the city

guard away. Those bribes cut into profits, so the payout for such a fight has to be large enough to cover the expenses.

The only permanent location where the Cloven Hoof Syndicate holds prize fights is under the Halls of Abandon. These fights are coordinated by Kushtrios. They are a source of amusement for him, because he not only arranges the fights but actually participates. Currently he is the uncontested champion of the ring. Very few know that he is also second-in-command of the Cloven Hoof Syndicate or that he was assigned that role by the powerful denizens of Abaddon.

Outside of the Halls of Abandon, Kushtrios works through a group of middle-grade lieutenants to organize bouts in warehouses, abandoned buildings, or some of the larger chambers in the Nether City. These fights can draw fifty to two hundred spectators, each paying at least five gold pieces just for the privilege of seeing the event. Once inside, bets are handled and collected by low-ranking toughs who are very good at fending off any attempts by pick-pockets to snag an extra coin or two.

In all arenas, Kushtrios makes sure that the spectators get a good show. Frequently this is accomplished by gathering plenty of fighters who are willing to put their lives at risk for a stake in the games. The least experienced fighters enter the ring first, and more experienced men and women face off against each other as the event goes on. The final fight of the event pits the neighborhood champion or similarly well-known figure against a worthy challenger.

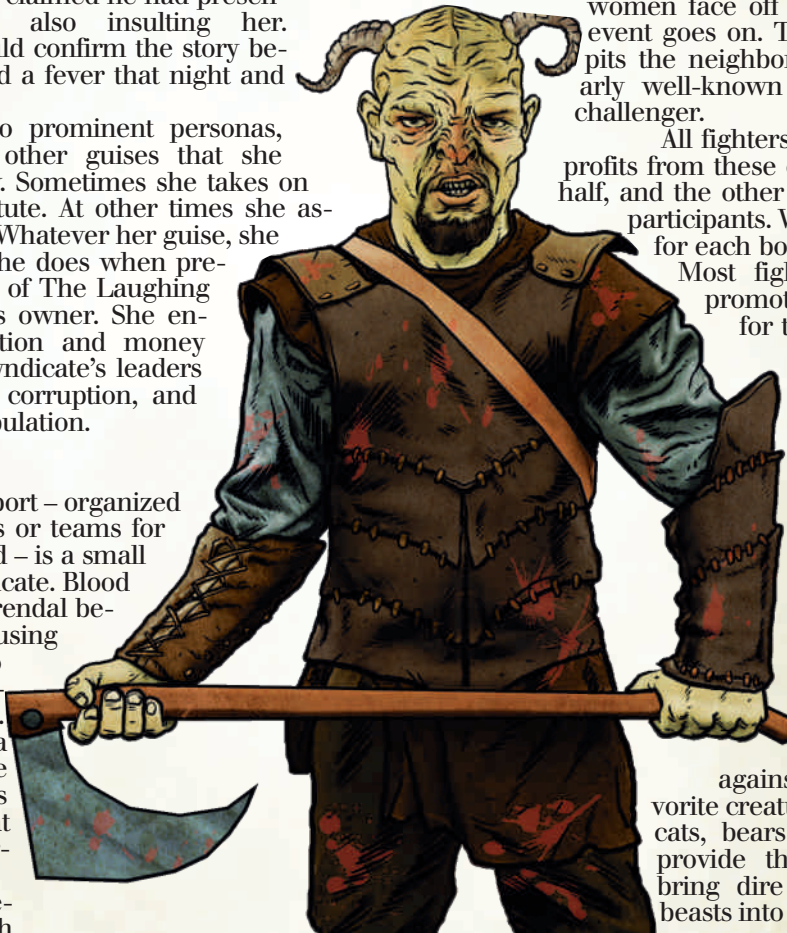
All fighters are offered a share of the profits from these events. The Syndicate gets half, and the other half is divided among the participants. Winners receive two shares for each bout, losers receive only one.

Most fighters actually work with promoters or agents, and the fee for their services comes out of the fighter's winnings. If a fighter dies during the match, he receives no share. As a result, participants understand the financial benefit of fighting to the death.

Occasionally, Kushtrios will arrange to have a monster or particularly vicious animal brought into the city to fight in special matches. Sometimes a challenge is issued to the local champion to test his mettle against an untamed beast. Favorite creatures for these fights are big cats, bears or apes. If trappers can provide them, Kushtrios will even bring dire animals or supernatural beasts into the fighting ring.

Most of the time these special fights take place in the Halls of Abandon. The arena has direct access to tunnels that lead to the undercity, making it easy to get exotic beasts into the arena without attracting the attention of the law. However, if the creature is particularly dangerous and cannot be transported into the Halls of Abandon Kushtrios is not averse to staging the fight elsewhere.

In most circumstances, the half-orc makes sure



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that the creature dies at the end of the fight so that he doesn't have to deal with transporting it out of the city. Sometimes, however, Varon decides it would be more fun to unleash the creature on the unwitting populous of Aerendal. If a bizarre creature suddenly starts terrorizing a neighborhood, it is possible that the Cloven Hoof Syndicate is responsible for bringing it into the city.

SMUGGLING

Smuggling is a way of life in Aerendal and is critical to the success of the Cloven Hoof Syndicate's other operations. Animals and slaves for the pit fights, materials for drug production, drugs made outside the city, exotic slaves for the Syndicate's pleasure houses and sex shops: all must evade the watchful eyes of the city's harbor masters if they are to bring Varon the profits he needs to carry out his plans. Additionally, wine and spirits have high import taxes and may be subject to trade embargoes, while gems, jewels, and other high-priced goods are a much better investment if the seller doesn't have to pay taxes to bring them into the city.

Skitter, Chitter, and Chatter are the names Varon has given to the three dark creeper brothers who run the

Cloven Hoof Syndicate smuggling operations. Though it is impossible to be sure, the three seem to be triplets. They are rarely seen apart, probably because their small size makes them vulnerable when they are on their own. Despite their apparent weakness, the brothers also harbor a secret that makes them even more dangerous. All three of these shadowed creatures were born as wererats. Even Varon is unsure how such a thing is possible, but it makes them especially useful to the Syndicate.

Skulking about the Nether City, the brothers have developed an array of contacts and a network of hideouts that allow them to move all manner of goods into and out of the city. The majority of the items coming into the city are trade goods and supplies for the Syndicate's various operations, including liquor and beer for dozens of taverns and swill houses and slaves destined for the less reputable brothels throughout the city.

Illegal or hard to find items make their way to Aerendal on ships from around the world. Most inbound vessels will pause outside of the harbor to offload smuggled goods before proceeding into port with their legitimate cargo. Small boats then take the contraband to sheltered beaches along the coast, where a guide and

The Nether City and the Underworld

Most of the goods smuggled into Aerendal for the Cloven Hoof Syndicate and other criminal enterprises are brought up into the city through the tunnels of the Nether City. Connected to hidden coves on the shores of Lake Morlyn and to the Underworld beneath Eorthe's surface, these tunnels wind their way up through the city's sewers and catacombs. They are a maze steeped in a darkness that is only cast aside in places by the lamps of merchants and the under-dwellers, residents who call the benighted Nether City home. The rest of the Nether City is inhabited by vile and terrible things that wish to remain hidden from the light of day. Only those familiar with the labyrinthine passages can hope to use them as trade routes for illicit goods. Fortunately, Varon's charms have won over not one canny under-dweller, but three.

The Underworld is an immense subterranean realm common to many fantasy worlds. It stretches beneath whole continents and delves deep into the world. There are subterranean seas that rival those found on the surface and caverns so massive whole cities can easily fit inside. Home to the dark elves, duergar, derro, and other races, The Underworld is filled with alien splendor. However, the environment is hostile to outsiders. Magical and divine influences shape and warp the maddening halls and sprawling cavern complexes.



Starmotes

This tiny gem has been incorporated into a lovely piece of jewelry. Its ability to gather and reflect the ambient light makes it seem almost iridescent, allowing it to stand out among the other gems in the piece.

Aura Strong transmutation (see below); **CL** 12th
Slot See Description; **Price** 1,500 gp; **Weight** —

Description

Star Motes are the condensed spirit essence of another creature. They are created through the twisted experiments of deranged alchemists. A *star mote* fills the wearer with positive feelings, making her feel more confident and granting a +1 alchemical bonus to Charisma. *Star motes* are most often clear, like diamonds, but can come in a wide variety of colors, usually matching the aura of the creature from which they were made. Though the color has no impact on the magical function of the gem, certain colors may be considered more desirable due to the whims of fashion. They can be incorporated into a piece of jewelry or can be attached directly to the skin with glue.

However a *star mote* is worn, it must occupy one of five item slots to be effective: head, headband, neck, ring or wrist. *Star motes* will not function if another magic item occupies the same slot unless the *star mote* has been crafted into that item. Although multiple *star motes* can be worn by a single character, the benefits do not stack.

If examined using spells like *detect magic*, *star motes* radiate a strong transmutation aura, but the aura seems strange and the item cannot be identified by a simple Spellcraft check. Only careful study of a *star mote* and the application of alchemical techniques can reveal its true nature. This process requires 10 minutes of work, which includes grinding the *star mote* into powder to release and examine its unique energies, followed by a DC 25 Craft (alchemy) check or a DC 30 Spellcraft check. Given the price and popularity of the gems and the fact that most people are more interested in what *star motes* do than in what they are, it would be difficult to find someone willing to let investigators destroy their *star mote* just to learn more about it. Similarly, dealers of the gems will be unwilling to sell one to a client who intends to destroy it as soon as possible.

Agents of the Cloven Hoof Syndicate present *star motes* to the unwitting public as rare gems. Their price reflects their rarity and beauty more than their minor ability to boost the Charisma of their owners. Should the public at large become aware of how *star motes* are made, their popularity and price would likely plummet.



Construction

Requirements Condense Spirit Alchemist's Discovery; **Cost** See Condense Spirit discovery description on page 26.

several carts, pack animals, or porters wait to take it up through the winding tunnels of the Nether City and into Aerendal.

The Cloven Hoof Syndicate also makes a profit by smuggling certain goods and people out of the city. If a particularly unscrupulous merchant wants to avoid paying export fees on regulated items or desires to trade in goods that the government has specifically outlawed for export, he can rely on the help of the Cloven Hoof Syndicate – for a moderate fee, of course. Slaves smuggled out of the city include those purchased through illegal Nether City markets and those unfortunate souls kidnapped from the city streets and forced into a life of servitude.

There are too many shipments moving in and out of Aerendal for the wererat brothers to be present for every one, but Chitter and Skitter and Chatter accompany many of them. Varon will sometimes appoint the dark creepers as guides for those who can pay for it – or those whose safety serves his needs. Additionally, the creatures are always on hand to receive the most important shipments coming in, especially shipments of *star motes*, which arrive by boat after being carried overland from a portal leading to the Hollow of Shrieking Laughter. The Cloven Hoof Syndicate has a complete monopoly on the import and sale of *star motes*, giving them a huge advantage against the Thieves' Guild.

STAR MOTES

Star motes are small gems that have recently become all the rage in Aerendal society. Possessing luminous qualities similar to diamonds and available in a wide variety of colors, these gems are more than just another sparkling mineral to adorn a lord or lady's brooch. The gems possess some minor magical energy that actually en-

hances the social graces of the wearer, making them more confident and charismatic. Although the wealthy and privileged of Aerendal's elite could certainly afford magic items that provide more powerful benefits, the rarity of *star motes* and their natural beauty make them prizes worth far more than their magic.

The people of Aerendal know almost nothing about the source of star motes, and most of them do not care. They are so popular in high society that some officials have actually forbidden the city guard from investigating how they arrive. Those who purchase them are happy in their belief that the gems are mined in a distant realm, perhaps in a strange Faerie dominion, and brought here for their enjoyment. As with any talespread by the Syndicate, that is partly true.

Star motes are actually the crystalline fragments of a living creature's essence; they are created through yet another diabolical alchemical process. Grim Moldweb is the only alchemist in all of Aerendal who currently possesses this knowledge and he is woefully short on subjects who can provide sufficient spiritual essence. Therefore, nearly all *star motes* still come from the Hollow of Shrieking Laughter. In that nightmarish realm, hundreds of fey captured from the Valley of Winter's Pause are turned into *star motes*, which are then sent to Aerendal to be sold as trinkets to unwitting mortals.

In short, the trend that currently marks the height of fashion in Aerendal is built upon the suffering of living creatures – specifically, the fey against whom Varon's masters wage a brutal war of annihilation. The sale of these gems gives the Cloven Hoof Syndicate more money to further its mission of bringing misery and death to Aerendal, which in turn strengthens the armies of both Abaddon and the Hollow of Shrieking Laughter.

Chapter Three

A Gallery of Rogues

I'm getting close. It took me long enough, but I finally caught a break. It turns out that the Baroness actually does know that her husband has been paying visits to The Laughing Maid. If he thought she cared, he probably would have been more careful. It's a good thing for me that he doesn't pay that much attention.

She knows the baron's been invited to the Halls of Abandon, but doesn't know any more about where it is than I do. I'm impressed with how well the Syndicate keeps that secret. These nobles love their gossip.

The price for disclosing the location must be pretty high.

The rank and file of the gang don't seem to know anything about it, either. I've spent enough time down in the dirt with them that I should have heard something. They don't let much slip. The loyalty they show is almost supernatural. But then, the Syndicate recruits the best of the worst.

I've run into plenty of their members over the past couple of months. From the lowest pick-pocket to that assassin, they've all been good—good at what they do, at least. My run-in with that brute down at the harbor confirmed my suspicions. The Syndicate's calling on more than just political powers for assistance. If I can prove that there are fiends involved, I'll have a better chance of getting the city to back me up.

There's got to be evidence in the Halls of Abandon. That shipment of wine was supposed to have been delivered there. Syndicate members wouldn't have been guarding it if the two weren't connected. Too bad that situation turned sour. I should have been able to follow those casks right to the Halls' back door.

Still, the baroness gave me the access I need to tail her husband. If I'm patient—and my luck holds—he'll lead me right to the place himself.



To the rank and file membership, the Cloven Hoof Syndicate appears very similar to any other large criminal organization. Gang members receive the benefits of mutual protection and support for their illegal enterprises in exchange for loyalty to their superiors and a cut of their take. Because of these arrangements, Varon is able to run his operation on a large scale with many of his subordinates completely unaware that they are hastening their own destruction. Those on the lowest rung will receive no special treatment when Aerlandal is devoured by the powers of Abaddon.

One thing that all Syndicate members will have in common is their brand. The brand, which can either be a tattoo, a ritualistic scar, or an actual brand, is the mark that identifies one Cloven Hoof agent to another. They are given only to members who have earned the trust of a local, neighborhood gang. As a member gains notoriety within the local gang, he may rise in the ranks and gain more authority, as well as access to some of the Syndicate's more important leaders.

Promotions that put a member in charge of a neighborhood gang or a prostitution ring larger than a few blocks must be approved by Kushtrios, Serafina or Varon. None of the Syndicate's leaders will ever offer a promotion without thoroughly screening potential candidates. This is normally accomplished well in



MARK OF THE CLOVEN HOOF SYNDICATE

advance of the need for a new leader. This serves both to keep an eye on members who show potential and to ensure a swift transition of power if the first leader is killed or fails to meet his obligations to the organization, which usually results in his death as well.

SAMPLE NPCs

The characters presented below represent typical members that an adventuring party is likely to encounter during the course of an investigation into the Syndicate's affairs. There will be plenty of variation in the personalities, equipment, and goals of the Cloven Hoof Syndicate's mem-

bers. GMs are encouraged to use other published sources for criminal NPCs or to create their own using the sample NPCs provided below as guidelines.

LOW-RANKING MEMBERS (CR 1-3)

Low level members of the Cloven Hoof Syndicate are normal humanoids who know very little of the Syndicate's true purpose. They are the basic drug dealers, prostitutes, and thugs that the PCs will encounter on a regular basis in the slums and back alleys throughout the city.

Chapter Three: A Gallery of Rogues

TOUGH

(CR 2; 600 XP)

A tough can be a small-time pimp in charge of a few prostitutes, a thug, or a gang member. Toughs rely on physical strength and intimidation to achieve their goals.

Human warrior 4

NE medium humanoid (human)

Init +1; Senses Perception +1

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 12 (+2 armor, +1 Dex)

hp 32 (4d10+8)

Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +1

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee club +7 (1d6+3/20/x2)

dagger +7 (1d4+3/19-20)

sap +7 (1d6+3)

STATISTICS

Str 16, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 14

Base Atk +4; CMB +7; CMD 18

Feats Bludgeoner[‡], Enforcer*, Skill Focus (Intimidate)

Skills Bluff +5, Diplomacy +5, Intimidate +12, Knowledge (local) +3, Perception +1, Sense Motive +1

Languages common

Combat Gear club, dagger, leather armor, sap; Other Gear wooden dice

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Bludgeoner A tough takes no penalty on attack rolls for using a lethal bludgeoning weapon to deal nonlethal damage.

Enforcer Whenever a tough deals nonlethal damage with a melee weapon, he can make an Intimidate check to demoralize his target as a free action. If he is successful, the target is shaken for a number of rounds equal to the damage dealt. If his attack was a critical hit, his target is frightened for 1 round with a successful Intimidate check, as well as being shaken for a number of rounds equal to the damage dealt.

* Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Advanced Player's Guide

‡ Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Ultimate Combat

HUSTLER

600 XP

A hustler can represent a prostitute, a drug dealer, or a pickpocket. These Syndicate members utilize quick reflexes and a sharp eye to stay one step ahead of their marks and the law.

Human expert 3/warrior 1

NE medium humanoid (human)

Init +1; Senses Perception +9

DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12 (+2 armor, +1 Dex, +1 dodge)

hp 21 (1d10+3d8)

Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +5

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee dagger +2 (1d4-1/19-20)

sap +2 (1d6-1)

STATISTICS

Str 8, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 15, Wis 14, Cha 15

Base Atk +3; CMB +2; CMD 14

Feats Deceitful, Dodge, Skill Focus (Sleight of Hand)

Skills Appraise +6, Bluff +11, Disable Device +5, Disguise +4, Escape Artist +8, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (local) +9, Perception +9, Perform (act) +9, Sense Motive +9, Sleight of Hand +11, Stealth +8

Languages common, elven, undercommon

Gear dagger, leather armor, sap, thieves' tools

Note: If the hustler is a prostitute, assign the skill focus feat to bluff. If he is a drug dealer, you can assign it to sleight of hand, stealth, or diplomacy, depending on the way in which the dealer handles his transactions.

MID-LEVEL MEMBERS (CR 4-6)

Slightly higher in responsibility and power, mid-level members need not be common humanoids, but will be mostly free of Abaddon's taint. Because they have some interaction with upper-level members they might suspect that there is more to the Syndicate than meets the eye. However, the money and protection they receive for their work are enough to keep them quiet, especially since they do not know the full story.

HEAVY

(CR 5; 1,600 XP)

A heavy can represent either a local gang leader or a champion who has gained notoriety in the local pit fights.

Human fighter 4/rogue (thug) 2*

NE medium humanoid (human)

Init +5; Senses Perception +2

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14 (+4 armor, +1 Dex, +1 dodge)

hp 44 (4d10+2d8+6)

Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +5

Defensive Abilities bravery +1, evasion

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee brass knuckles +6 (1d3+1)

club +6 (1d6+1) or

masterwork sap +7 (1d6+1/20)

masterwork shortsword +7 (1d6+1/19-20)

Ranged masterwork light crossbow +7 (1d8/19-20)

Special Attacks sneak attack +1d6

STATISTICS

Str 13, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 8, Wis 14, Cha 15

Base Atk +5; CMB +6; CMD 18

Feats Dodge, Enforcer, Improved Initiative, Improved Unarmed Strike, Intimidating Prowess, Mobility, Sap Adept, Skill Focus (Intimidate)

Skills Acrobatics +5, Appraise +5, Bluff +8, Diplomacy +8, Escape Artist +7, Intimidate +15, Knowledge (local) +8, Sense Motive +8

Languages common

SQ armor training 1, frightening*

Gear +1 studded leather; crossbow bolts (20), brass knuckles, club, masterwork light crossbow, masterwork sap, masterwork shortsword; Other Gear *potion of bear's endurance*, *potion of bull's strength*, *potion of cure light wounds* (3), wooden dice

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Enforcer* See Tough NPC above

Frightening* (Ex) Whenever a heavy successfully uses Intimidate to demoralize a creature, the duration of the shaken condition is increased by 1 round. In addition, if the target is shaken for 4 or more rounds, the thug can instead decide to make the target frightened for 1 round. This ability replaces trapfinding.

Sap Adept‡ Whenever a heavy uses a bludgeoning weapon to deal nonlethal sneak attack damage, he gains a bonus on his damage roll equal to twice the number of sneak attack damage dice he rolled.

* Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Advanced Player's Guide

‡ Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Ultimate Combat



(CR 2;

Chapter Three: A Gallery of Rogues

ORGANIZER

(CR 6; 2,400 XP)

Organizers are the go-betweens who arrange pickups for smuggled goods, set up blood sport events, or distribute vesseance and other drugs to local dealers. They usually rely on their wits and the force of their personalities to earn their keep, but are not against nabbing a fine piece of jewelry or a fat purse if the opportunity presents itself.

Human rogue (cutpurse) 7*

NE medium humanoid (human)

Init +2; **Senses** Perception +12

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 14 (+4 armor, +2 Dex, +1 dodge)

hp 45 (7d8+7)

Fort +3, **Ref** +7, **Will** +2

Defensive Abilities evasion, uncanny dodge

OFFENSE

Spd 20 ft.

Melee masterwork dagger +8 (1d4-1/19-20)

masterwork sap +8 (1d6-1)

Ranged masterwork light crossbow +8 (1d8/19-20)

Special Attacks sneak attack +4d6, stab and grab

STATISTICS

Str 8, **Dex** 14, **Con** 12, **Int** 15, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 16

Base Atk +5; **CMB** +4; **CMD** 17

Feats Alertness, Deceitful, Dodge, Skill Focus (Bluff), Skill Focus (Diplomacy), Weapon Finesse

Skills Acrobatics +9, Appraise +12, Bluff

+18, Diplomacy +13, Escape Artist +9,

Intimidate +13, Knowledge (local) +12,

Perception +12, Profession (GM's

choice) +10, Sense Motive +12, Sleight of Hand

+9, Stealth +9

Languages common, elven, undercommon

SQ measure the mark, rogue talents (fast get-away, hard to fool, honeyed words)

Gear +1 *studded leather*; masterwork light crossbow, masterwork dagger (2), masterwork sap;

Other Gear vesseance (3 doses), *potion of cure light wounds* (3), *potion of invisibility*; masterwork thieves' tools

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Fast Getaway *(Ex) After successfully making a sneak attack or Sleight of Hand check, a rogue with this talent can spend a move action to take the withdraw action. She can move no more than her speed during this movement.

Hard to Fool* (2/day) (Ex) Once per day, a rogue with this talent can roll two dice while making a Sense Motive check, and take the better result. She must choose to use this talent before making the Sense Motive check. A rogue can use this ability one additional time per day for every 5 rogue levels she possesses.

Honeyed Words* (3/day) (Ex) Once per day, the rogue can roll two dice while making a Bluff check, and take the better result. She must choose to use this talent before making the Bluff check. A rogue can use this ability one additional time per day for every five rogue levels she possesses.

Measure the Mark* (Ex) When a cutpurse makes a Sleight of Hand check to take something from a creature, the target makes its Perception check before the rogue makes her Sleight of Hand check, and the rogue knows the Perception check result. She can decide whether or not to make the check based on the results of the target's Perception check. If the rogue elects not to make the check, she can make a Bluff check, opposed by the target's Sense Motive, to prevent the target from noticing the attempt. This ability replaces trapfinding.

Stab and Grab* (Ex) At 3rd level, as a full-round action, a

cutpurse can make an attack and also make a Sleight of Hand check to steal something from the target of the attack. If the attack deals sneak attack damage, the rogue can use Sleight of Hand to take an item from the creature during combat; otherwise this ability can only be used in a surprise round before the target has acted. If the attack is successful, the target takes a -5 penalty on the Perception check to notice the theft. This ability replaces trap sense.

* *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Advanced Player's Guide*

UPPER-LEVEL MEMBERS (CR 7-10)

Members in this echelon enable the day-to-day operation of the Syndicate. They are entrusted with knowledge of the Syndicate's short-term goals, but may not be fully aware of the longer-term agenda. Although the two NPCs below are human, Varon is willing to employ monsters or harness the powers of Abaddon if the situation warrants it.

Doing so is risky. If people begin to suspect a strong link between the Syndicate and such unremitting evil, Varon's plans will be in serious jeopardy.

However, because of the benefits the leaders of the Cloven Hoof Syndicate can gain through their unholy alliances, they are more likely to bear the taint of Abaddon. Agents and monsters serving the Syndicate may possess the fiendish or half-fiend template, which can be modified to give creatures more of a daemonic feel. For example, giving them bonuses to saves versus death effects or resistance to acid instead of cold or fire can bring a creature's abilities more in line with those of true daemons.

SYNDICATE ALCHEMIST

(CR 8; 4,800 XP)

The Cloven Hoof Syndicate relies on alchemists for the production of vesseance and other drugs, potions, and alchemical items. Those who have been trained by Grim in vesseance extraction have been tainted, both by the knowledge shared and by unintentional exposure to the Stygian compounds required for the process. Grim seems strangely immune to these energies, but human alchemists in particular may take on daemonic traits as they progress through these blasphemous studies.

Fiendish human alchemist 8*

NE medium humanoid (human)

Init +2; **Senses** Darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +6

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14 (+4 armor, +2 Dex)

hp 51 (8d8+8)

Fort +7, **Ref** +8, **Will** +3

DR 5/good; **Resist** acid 10, fire 10, +6 save bonus against poison;

SR 15

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee masterwork dagger +9/+4 (1d4+2/19-20)

Ranged Bomb +9/+4 (4d6+3 fire) or

+1 *light crossbow* +9/+4 (1d8+1/19-20)

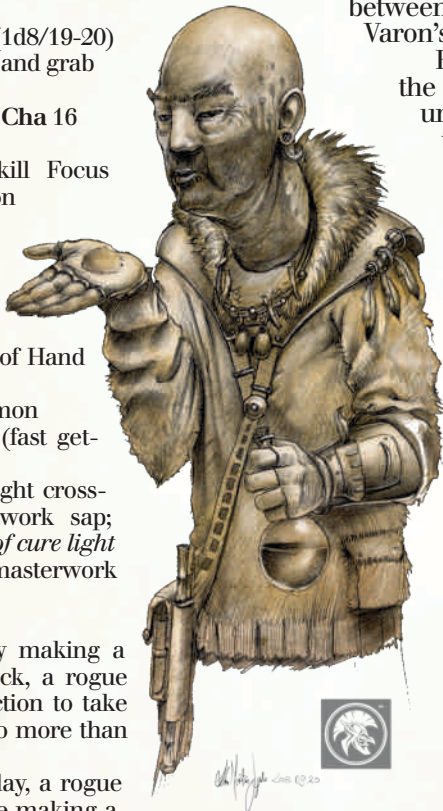
Special Attacks bomb 4d6+3 11/day (DC 17), fast bombs, smite good 1/day

Alchemist Extracts (CL 8th; concentration +11):

3rd (3/day) - *heroism* (x2), *Fly*

2nd (5/day) - *fox's cunning*, *cure moderate wounds* (x2) (DC 15), *blur* (DC 15), *cat's grace*

1st (5/day) - *shield*, *expeditious retreat*, *bomber's eye**, *longshot*, *polypurpose panacea*** (DC 14)



STATISTICS

Str 14, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 16, Wis 8, Cha 10

Base Atk +6; CMB +8; CMD 20

Feats Brew Potion, Far Shot, Iron Will, Master Alchemist*, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Throw Anything

Skills Appraise +14, Bluff +4, Craft (alchemy) +16, Diplomacy +4, Disable Device +11, Heal +6, Knowledge (arcana) +14, Knowledge (local) +7, Knowledge (nature) +14, Knowledge (planes) +7, Perception +6, Sense Motive +3, Spellcraft +14

Modifiers Alchemy +8

Languages aklo, common, daemonic, undercommon

SQ extract venance (DC 17), fast poisoning*, infuse mutagen*, infusion*, mutagen*, poison use*, swift alchemy*

Gear +1 light crossbow, +1 studded leather, masterwork dagger;

Other Gear alchemist's kit, formula book, masterwork thieves' tools, *potion of cure moderate wounds* (2), *potion of gaseous form*, *potion of invisibility*, venance (10)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Extract Venance (Su) See page 26

Fast Bombs (Su) An alchemist with this discovery can quickly create enough bombs to throw more than one in a single round. The alchemist can prepare and throw additional bombs as a full-round action if his base attack bonus is high enough to grant him additional attacks. This functions just like a full-attack with a ranged weapon. An alchemist must be at least 8th level before selecting this discovery.

Infuse Mutagen (Su) When the alchemist creates a mutagen, he can infuse it with an extra bit of his own magical power. This inflicts 2 points of Intelligence damage to the alchemist and costs 1,000 gp in rare reagents, but the mutagen created persists on its own and is not rendered inert if the alchemist creates another mutagen. This allows an alchemist to create different types of mutagens and keep them handy for emergencies. This does not allow an alchemist to gain the effects of multiple mutagens—only the most recently imbibed mutagen has any effect.

Infusion When the alchemist creates an extract, he can infuse it with an extra bit of his own magical power. The extract created now persists even after the alchemist sets it down. As long as the extract exists, it continues to occupy one of the alchemist's daily extract slots. An infused extract can be imbibed by a non-alchemist to gain its effects.

* *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Advanced Player's Guide*

** *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Ultimate Magic*

SYNDICATE ASSASSIN

(CR 9; 6,400 XP)

Varon relies on his assassins to carry out some of the longer-term operations that add to the misery and fear of the people of Aeraldal. Some of these assassins are former members of the city's Assassin's Guild who have defected from their previous posts and taken up with the Cloven Hoof Syndicate in exchange for promises of personal power. Varon will occasionally pull one of his assassins from currently assigned duties to deal with a troublesome investigator or nosy lawmaker who might be getting too close to discovering the Syndicate's secrets.

Human fighter 3/rogue 2/assassin 5

NE medium humanoid (human)

Init +4; **Senses** Perception +19

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 15, flat-footed 14 (+4 armor, +4 Dex, +1 dodge)

hp 57 (3d10+7d8)

Fort +5, **Ref** +11, **Will** +5

Defensive Abilities bravery +1, evasion, improved uncanny dodge; **Resist** +2 save bonus against poison

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee +1 *shortsword* +12/+7 (1d6+2/19-20) or masterwork dagger +12/+7 (1d4+1/19-20)



Ranged hand crossbow +11/+6 (1d4/19-20)

Special Attacks death attack (DC 16), sneak attack +4d6

STATISTICS

Str 12, Dex 19, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 8

Base Atk +7; CMB +11; CMD 23

Feats Agile Maneuvers, Alertness, Blind-Fight, Dodge, Mobility,

Quick Draw, Shadow Strike*, Spring Attack, Weapon Finesse

Skills Acrobatics +17, Bluff +7, Climb +9, Disable Device +15,

Disguise +7, Escape Artist +12, Knowledge (local) +9, Perception

+19, Sense Motive +12, Stealth +22

Languages common, undercommon

SQ armor training 1, hidden weapons +5, poison use, trapfinding +1, true death (DC 20)

Gear +1 shadow studded leather, +1 shortsword, crossbow bolts

(20), hand crossbow, masterwork dagger, medium spider venom

(3 doses); **Other Gear** masterwork thieves' tools, *potion of cat's*

grace, *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *potion of gaseous form*,

potion of haste, *potion of invisibility*

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Shadow Strike* The assassin can deal precision damage, such as sneak attack damage, against targets with concealment (but not total concealment).

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KEY SYNDICATE MEMBERS

The following characters are those who occupy the positions of true power within the organization. They alone know the reason for the Cloven Hoof Syndicate's existence and the goals that each operation conducted by agents throughout the city is meant to achieve.

VARON THE TWISTED CR 16 (76,800 XP)

Male unique half-fiend satyr bard (celebrity**) 9

NE medium outsider (fey, native)

Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; **Perception** +22

DEFENSE

AC 28, touch 18, flat-footed 25 (+4 armor, +4 Dex, +6 natural, +3 deflection, +1 dodge)

hp 124 (9d8+8d6+51)

Fort +8, **Ref** +16, **Will** +18

DR 10/magic or silver, 5/cold iron; **Immune** death and necromancy effects, disease, poison; **Resist** acid 10, cold 10, electricity 10, fire 10; **SR** 26

OFFENSE

Spd 40 ft., fly 80 ft. (good)

Melee +2 human bane dueling rapier +16/+11 (1d6+5/18-20)

vs humans +18/+15 (1d6+5 plus 2d6/18-20)

+2 returning silver dagger +16/+11 (1d4+4/19-20)

bite +9 (1d6+1)

2 claws +9 (1d4+1)

horns +9 (1d6+1)

Ranged +2 returning silver dagger +16/+11 (1d4+4/19-20)

Special Attacks bardic performance 26 rounds/day (counter-song, distraction, fascinate [DC 20], inspire competence +5, inspire greatness, suggestion [DC 20]), breath of flies 1/minute (DC 21), smite good 1/day

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 8, concentration +14)

At will—*charm person* (DC 18), *dancing lights*, *ghost sound*

(DC 16), *sleep* (DC 18), *suggestion* (DC 19),

3/day—*darkness*, *poison* (DC 18), *unholy aura*

1/day—*blasphemy* (DC 21), *contagion* (DC 20), *desecrate*,

fear (DC 20), *summon monster IX* (fiends only), *summon*

nature's ally III, *unhallow*, *unholy blight* (DC 18)

Bard Spells Known (CL 9, concentration +15)

3rd—(4/day) *charm monster* (DC 20), *glibness* (DC 19), *lesser geas* (DC 20), *scrying* (DC 19)

2nd—(6/day) *blistering invective* (DC 18), *cacophonous call**

(DC 19), *reckless infatuation*** (DC 19), *sound burst* (DC 18)

1st—(7/day) *ear-piercing scream*** (DC 17), *hideous laughter*

(DC 18), *innocence**, *unnatural lust*** (DC 18), *youthful appearance***

0—(at will) *daze* (DC 17), *detect magic*, *mage hand*,

message, *sift**, *unwitting ally** (DC 17)

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 19, **Con** 17, **Int** 16, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 23

Base Atk +10; **CMB** +15; **CMD** 31 (33 vs. disarm, 33 vs. feint)

Feats Ability Focus (pipes), Deceitful, Dodge, Iron Will, Mo-

bility, Skill Focus (Perception), Spell Focus (Enchantment),

Spell Specialization (*charm monster*)**, Weapon Finesse

Skills Acrobatics +16, Appraise +15, Bluff +28, Diplomacy

+30, Disable Device +16, Disguise +26, Escape Artist +17,

Fly +8, Handle Animal +30, Heal +9, Intimidate +21, Know-

ledge (nature) +16, Knowledge (planes) +16, Linguistics +9,

Perception +22, Perform (oratory) +28, Perform (string in-

struments) +23, Perform (wind instruments) +30, Sense

Motive +28, Sleight of Hand +12, Spellcraft +15, Stealth +20,

Survival +7, Use Magic Device +19; **Modifiers** bardic know-

ledge +4

Languages common, draconic, daemonic, elven, sacaen, sylvan, undercommon

SQ bardic knowledge +4, bardic performance (gather

crowd**), shining star**), famous (Aerendal**) +5, pipes (DC

26), versatile oratory (diplomacy, sense motive) +23, versat-

ile wind instruments (diplomacy, handle animal) +27, well versed

Combat Gear +2 human bane rapier, +2 returning silver dagger;

Other Gear amulet of proof against detection and location,

bracers of armor +4, hat of disguise, masterwork musical instru-

ment (pipes), masterwork musical instrument (lute),

masterwork thieves' tools, *pipes of sounding*, *potion of bear's en-*

durance (3), *potion of blur*, *potion of cure serious wounds* (3),

potion of haste, *potion of resist energy (sonic)* 10 (3), *ring of mind*

shielding, *ring of protection* +2, *wand of ear-piercing scream* (CL

8 [25 charges]), *wand of seek thoughts* (15 charges)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Bardic Performance (Gather Crowd)** (Ex) Varon is skilled at

drawing an audience to his performances. If he is in a settle-

ment or populated area, he can shout, sing, or otherwise make

himself noticed in order to attract an audience to his im-

promptu stage. The size of the crowd depends on the local

population, but typically is a number of people equal to 1/2 the

bard's class level × the result of Varon's Perform check. The

crowd gathers over the next 1d10 rounds. If Varon fails to en-

gage the crowd (such as by performing, kissing babies, trying

to use fascinate, and so on), it disperses over the next 1d10

rounds. This ability replaces lore master.

Bardic Performance (Shining Star)** (Ex) Varon has learned

how to focus attention on himself so thoroughly that even the

presence of danger does not distract his adoring crowd. When

using fascinate, a target making a save to break the effect be-

cause of a potential threat takes a -4 penalty on that save, and

even obvious threats require a save rather than automatically

breaking the effect. Creatures affected by Varon's fascinate

ability ignore the shaken condition. The ability replaces dirge

of doom.

Breath of Flies (Su) Granted by Varon's daemonic heritage.



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Once per minute as a standard action, Varon can unleash a cloud of corpse-bloated, biting black flies in a 20-foot cone. Those caught in the cone take 9d6 points of slashing damage. A DC 21 Reflex save halves this damage. Those who take any damage are also sickened for 1 minute. In addition, the flies linger for 1d4+1 rounds, congealing into a buzzing 20-foot-square cloud centered on the cone's original point of origin. Any creature that ends its turn in this cloud must make a DC 21 Reflex save to avoid taking 4d6 points of damage and becoming sickened for 1 minute. This cloud of flies may be dispersed by any area effect that does damage or creates wind of at least strong wind force. Daemons are immune to this effect. The save DCs are Constitution-based.

Famous (Aerendal)** +3 bonus on Diplomacy and Intimidate checks in Aerendal and to influence people from Aerendal. This ability replaces inspire courage.

Pipes (Su) Varon can focus and empower his magic by playing haunting melodies on his panpipes. When he plays, all creatures within a 60-foot radius must make a DC 18 Will save or be affected by charm person, fear, sleep, or suggestion, depending on what tune Varon chooses. A creature that successfully saves against any of the pipes' effects cannot be affected by the same set of pipes for 24 hours. Varon's use of his pipes does not count toward his uses per day of his spell-like abilities, and if separated from them he may continue to use his standard abilities. The pipes themselves are masterwork, and Varon can craft a replacement with 1 week of labor. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Note: Due to his elite status, Varon's wealth totals exceed normal guidelines. As a result, his CR has been increased by one.

* Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Advanced Player's Guide

** Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Ultimate Magic

‡ Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Ultimate Combat

"There was a time when life was simple. Days and nights were filled with the pursuit of pleasure. I knew the pleasant company of mortal and fey alike, and we reveled in the eternal twilight of our Realm. We knew nothing of the darkness that would fall over us.

Some resisted the changes, but I saw how fruitless it was to fight them. Instead, I embraced them, opened myself to them. I discovered that there were pleasures to be found there – new experiences and surprising sensations. I reveled in them; and I was rewarded for my boldness.

Alas, you will not be so fortunate. Existence holds nothing more for you. We will destroy all that your kind has built. All will fall to nothing. You won't see it, of course. We have had our fun, you and I, but my masters hunger for something more.

It's all right with me if you want to start screaming now."

Like most of the creatures of the Faerie Realms, Varon the Twisted has existed for a very long time. The satyr was born from the essence of Faerie in a dominion whose original name was lost in the midst of a great catastrophe. Now the place is known only as the Hollow of Shrieking Laughter.

Even before the dominion's passage into Abaddon, Varon was a selfish creature whose dalliances with others were not limited by species and had everything to do with taking pleasure for himself. All satyrs are lusty and self-centered, but Varon's egotism was always tinged with a hint of malice; he was convinced that his pleasure was far more important than anything else. With such a powerful focus on his own desires, the satyr was not about to allow himself to be destroyed with his fey

brothers and sisters who fought the daemonic tide that suddenly rose up to claim them.

The forces that looked into that lost dominion saw something within the satyr that they could use. Varon will tell those who ask that the sheer power of his will was too much for the daemons to resist and they were forced to accept him as one of their own. The outsiders from Abaddon who have remained in the Hollow merely snicker at this, for most of them can see through his disguises and know what horrors were wrought upon the satyr's once-perfect form.

Varon is quite well known throughout Aerendal, especially among the rich and influential members of society. To them, he is a talented musician and witty speaker whose performances leave one breathless. When among his most devoted fans, Varon frequently lets slip that his talent may come from "a bit of fey blood" in his background, but refrains from saying more.

To the general public, Varon appears as a human male, though his ethnicity is a matter of debate among even his most ardent supporters. His high cheekbones, slicked-back blonde hair, and angular beard certainly give him a fey aspect, but could also be attributed to devilish influences. In this guise, Varon wears tightly fitting doublets that accentuate his broad muscular chest and well-toned arms.

When he walks, Varon the bard moves slowly and carefully, a mannerism that makes it look like he is stalking prey as he moves through a crowd. Indeed, there are many who hope to become the quarry in such a hunt. They might feel differently if they were to learn the truth of Varon's existence. In the rare instances that he removes his magical disguise, the reason he is known as Varon the Twisted becomes undeniably clear.

In his true form Varon is still a satyr, but the forces that imbued him with the powers of Abaddon wrought such havoc on his body that some might question that fact. From the waist up he still has the near-perfect physique of his untainted fey kin, but Varon's flesh is sallow and, in the right light, seems to have a reddish tint. Small sores occasionally erupt in his flesh, especially around his armpits, and weep blood-tinged fluids almost like sweat. His horns, growing out from under wiry black hair, are cracked and dun-colored, appearing more like the fingernails of a dead man than the magnificent antlers for which satyrs are so well known.

While his upper body is at least normal in shape, the satyr's legs yield clear evidence of the daemonic influences that changed him. The hair on his goat-like legs is coarse and black, more like the bristles on a fly's back than actual hair. His right knee actually bends backward, as though the entire leg had been removed and reattached without regard for correct anatomy. This backward leg does not slow Varon down, but it does cause him to move awkwardly, even in his human disguise – a problem he hides with his modified gait. Like his horns, Varon's hooves are cracked and grey. It is almost as though his feet and horns were subjected to immense heat and never healed.

Although his leg and other deformities could easily be the reasons for his nickname, Varon is mainly called "The Twisted" because he revels in the pain, torture and destruction of the pure fey and anyone else he can get his clawed hands on. He is a sadist in the truest sense of the word.

Charged with furthering the cause of the four Horsemen and bringing the horrors of death upon the mortal world, Varon takes his duties very seriously. The fact that he can derive such perverse pleasures while carrying out his mission actually helps to keep him focused. At his

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core he is still a satyr, and such creatures cannot deny their lusty natures for very long. Unfortunately, while his untainted brethren's revelry tend to have only embarrassing results, Varon's indulgences usually have far more serious consequences for his partners. Varon rarely spends intimate time with the same person twice.

Ultimately, Varon views his mission in the city as a vast and complex game – one that he loves to play. He enjoys toying with his wealthy patrons in much the same way a cat will play with a mouse, but he does so in a way that many find absolutely charming. His charm is undeniable, even to those few minions who know what he truly is. Those who see only the rakish human bard simply cannot resist his lure and demand his attendance at their lavish parties. They have no idea that he seeks to claim their lives and give their souls over to creatures who will subject them to unimaginable tortures and eventually consume them.

As the mastermind of the Cloven Hoof Syndicate's operations, Varon avoids direct confrontation with his foes as much as possible. He prefers to manipulate others into achieving his goals for him and has honed his abilities to control the thoughts and feelings of other creatures. If he is forced to engage in combat, Varon will use his abilities to confuse foes and keep them off balance until he can gain the upper hand or get reinforcements. He is a skilled duelist, however, and puts his rapier to good use when necessary.

Although his deformed legs do not actually slow him down, they do cause him some discomfort. Therefore, he relies on his ability to fly whenever possible, even if he remains only a few feet off the ground. If he determines that his enemies are susceptible to his *blasphemy* spell-like ability, he will use it to quickly knock out as many foes as possible.

Varon is by no means too proud to flee combat. His primary goal is the degradation and ultimate destruction of Aerald's social structure, leading to as much misery and death as possible. He has no illusions that this goal can be achieved immediately and prefers to escape, regroup, and deal with his enemies at a time and place of his choosing.

KUSHTRIOS

CR 15 (51,200 XP)

Fiendish half-orc fighter (unbreakable) 14

LE medium humanoid (orc)

Init +2; Senses Darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +7

DEFENSE

AC 22, touch 12, flat-footed 20 (+10 armor, +2 Dex)

hp 116 (14d10+28)

Fort +13, Ref +8, Will +6

Defensive Abilities stalwart, unflinching +4; DR 10/good;

Resist cold 15, fire 15; SR 19

OFFENSE

Spd 40 ft.

Melee *Seasons' Sorrow* +21/+16/+11 (1d8+8/19-20/x3)

vs fey +25/+18/+13 (1d8+10 plus 2d6/19-20/x3)

+1 *cold iron dagger* +19/+14/+9 (1d4+5/19-20)

unarmed strike +19/+14/+9 (1d3+7/19-20)

Ranged +1 *cold iron dagger* +17/+12/+7 (1d4+5/19-20)

Special Attacks smite good (1/day)

STATISTICS

Str 18, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 8

Base Atk +14; CMB +18; CMD 30

Feats Catch Off-Guard, Cleave, Combat Expertise +/-4, Critical Focus, Diehard, Endurance, Furious Focus, Heroic Defiance (2/day), Heroic Recovery (3/day), Improved Critical (battleaxe), Improved Critical (unarmed strike), Improved Unarmed Strike, Power Attack -4/+8, Staggering Critical (DC 24), Weapon Focus (battleaxe), Weapon Focus (unarmed strike),

Weapon Specialization (battleaxe), Weapon Specialization (unarmed strike)

Skills Acrobatics +5, Intimidate +18, Knowledge (engineering) +14, Knowledge (geography) +6, Knowledge (local) +6, Knowledge (nature) +6, Perception +7, Sense Motive +5

Languages common, daemonic, orc

SQ armor training 2, orc ferocity (1/day), quick recovery

Gear *Seasons' Sorrow* (+2 *cold iron feybane battleaxe*), +1 *cold iron dagger*, +2 *dastard half plate**; Other Gear *amulet of mighty fists* +1, *boots of striding and springing*, *cloak of resistance* +2, *potion of cure serious wounds* (3), *potion of eagle's splendor*, *potion of haste*, *ring of forcefangs**

SPECIAL ABILITIES

+2 **Dastard Half Plate*** The dastard armor property only works for evil creatures with the challenge ability (such as cavaliers) or the smite good ability (such as antipaladins, half-fiends, and creatures with the fiendish creature template). When worn by such a creature that uses a challenge or smite ability, the wearer gains a +2 profane bonus to AC against attacks from the chosen opponent.

Furious Focus* When Kushtrios is wielding a two-handed weapon or a one-handed weapon with two hands and using the Power Attack feat, he does not suffer Power Attack's penalty on melee attack rolls on the first attack he makes each turn. He still suffers the penalty on any additional attacks, including attacks of opportunity.

Heroic Defiance‡ Once per day as an immediate action Kushtrios can delay the onset of one harmful condition or affliction (such as panicked, paralyzed, stunned, and so on), including permanent and instantaneous conditions. Activating this feat delays the onset of the condition until the end of his next turn, after which time the condition takes its normal effect. This feat has no effect on hit point damage or ability damage. In addition, he may use this feat one additional time per day for every four levels after 9th (to a maximum of 3 times per day at 19th level). This ability replaces weapon training 2.

Heroic Recovery‡ Once per day as a standard action Kushtrios may attempt a new saving throw against a harmful condition or affliction requiring a Fortitude save that is affecting him. If this save against the affliction fails, there is no additional effect, but a successful save counts toward curing an affliction such as poison or disease. Kushtrios cannot use this feat to recover from instantaneous effects, effects that do not allow a saving throw, or effects that do not require a Fortitude save. In addition, he may use this feat one additional time per day for every four levels after 5th (to a maximum of 4 times per day at 17th level). This ability replaces weapon training 1.

Quick Recovery‡ (Ex) At 11th level, an Kushtrios needs only 15 minutes of rest or to be subject to a healing spell or effect to recover from the fatigued condition. This ability replaces armor training 3.

Ring of Forcefangs* This band negates any force spell or spell-like ability targeted at the wearer. Doing so gives the ring a number of charges equal to the spell level of the incoming force effect. The ring can hold a maximum of nine charges. If an incoming force attack would charge the ring beyond this limit, the ring does not negate the attack or gain charges, and the attack affects the wearer normally. On command, the wearer can use the ring's charges to cast magic missile, unleashing one missile (1d4+1 force damage) per charge but no more than five missiles per round.

Stalwart‡ (Ex) When Kushtrios succeeds on a Fortitude or Will save against a spell or spell-like ability that has a partial effect even on a successful save, he is completely unaffected by it. This ability replaces weapon training 3.

Unflinching +4‡ (Ex) Kushtrios gains a +4 bonus on Will saves against mind-affecting effects. This ability replaces bravery.

Note: Due to his elite status, Kushtrios' wealth totals exceed normal guidelines. As a result, his CR has been increased by one.

* Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Advanced Player's Guide

** Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Ultimate Magic

‡ Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Ultimate Combat

"You are a weakling and a fool. I have ground better warriors than you into the dust beneath my feet. Fight me and die quickly, or I will feed you your own guts."

Kushtrios' origins are something of a mystery. It is likely that his blood comes from a powerful daemon – probably a minion of the Horseman of War – but it is not something his father ever explained. Kushtrios looked like an orc when he was born and his mother died like every other human slave, so it is unclear how he gained his fiendish traits.

Regardless, Kushtrios grew up quickly among his tribe, displaying great strength and a skill for utter savagery that earned him respect. His mind was as sharp and quick as his blade. He used both to great advantage, first gaining control of his own tribe, then forging one victory after another



Races of Mendor: Orcs and Half-Orcs

Orcs believe that their children are born without souls. For the first three years of their life orcs are little more than automatons, following simple commands such as eat and sleep. If a young orc survives this period he undergoes a ritual that allows a spirit of rage to inhabit his body, providing awareness and the standard orc traits of cruelty, brutality, and unrestrained evil. There are a number of legends that surround this process, but most seem to agree that sometime in the distant past orc souls were ripped from the natural cycle, forcing tribal shamans to develop a way to perpetuate the survival of the race.

Half-orcs are believed to be born with a human soul, though the essence is somehow incomplete. This means they develop spiritually and mentally like a human, though they retain the strength and fury granted by their orcish blood. The spirits that allow orcs to grow to maturity refuse to enter the body of a half-orc, which leads to a lifetime of uncertainty and a sense of isolation from the tribe.

While many half-orcs will go on to obtain positions of leadership within their tribe, the feeling of separation never really goes away. It often feeds a half-orc's ambition, pushing him to gain greater esteem within his tribe.

against other orc bands until he had amassed a great army. Then he planned to lead that army against a nearby human kingdom. But on the night upon which the campaign was set to begin, a great fog rolled over Kushtrios' camp. Convinced that witchcraft was at work, the half-orc charged out into the night. He never returned to the camp to lead his army into battle against the humans.

Kushtrios must have stumbled upon a transient portal to the Hollow of Shrieking Laughter, because he quickly found himself facing denizens of that nightmarish realm. Through sheer force of will and immense physical power, the half-orc overcame terrifying creatures and at last found himself standing before the Overlord of Shrieking Laughter, who saw great potential in the warrior. Kushtrios was given his magical battleaxe and sent against the fey within the Valley of Winter's Pause.

Kushtrios discovered that he held an innate hatred for the pure fey. He channeled that hatred and was successful in many campaigns. He spent many years helping the corrupt fey spread terror and despair in that unfortunate realm, but the Overlord of Shrieking laughter eventually recalled him for a different mission.

By this time, Varon had established the Cloven Hoof Syndicate in Aarendal. Although time has a different meaning in most Faerie dominions, the Overlord was concerned about how much time the satyr was spending in the mortal world. Kushtrios was sent to Varon as a body-guard and assistant. Varon holds no illusions, however, and is certain that Kushtrios is also his babysitter.

Varon appreciates Kushtrios' prowess, but does not fully trust him. The half-orc is part of the Cloven Hoof Syndicate by the decree of his Overlord, not by the satyr's will. Kushtrios for his part stays at Varon's side, saying little in public, but frequently questioning the glacial pace of the Syndicate's progress in private. The two dislike each other a great deal but are united in their

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loyalty to their Overlord's cause.

Kushtrios is a fearsome sight. He stands upwards of six feet in height and his body is a well-formed mass of corded muscle. His purple-tinged skin is covered in scars and tattoos that might once have been decorative, but are now damaged by the wounds of many battles. His eyes are solid red, as though filled with blood, save for the black pupils in their center. His teeth and tusks are black too, lending a horrible aspect to an already savage visage.

In combat, Kushtrios is a terror to behold. He wields his axe *Seasons' Sorrow* with masterful precision; when time permits and the situation warrants he dons his +2 *dastard full plate*, further enhancing his intimidating presence. In the arena, Kushtrios will forgo both his axe and his armor and use his body as his primary weapon.

Kushtrios' one passion is the fighting pit. Battle, destruction and death are his meat and mead. He has an impressive string of victories, but he constantly seeks a greater challenge. After spending so much time in Aerendal, Kushtrios' main weakness has become his desire to face a truly powerful foe. He is likely to forgo tactics and try to engage an opponent he sees as a worthy adversary in a one-on-one scenario. In such situations he may even ignore any orders Varon gives him. Kushtrios is not completely foolish, however, and will disengage if he sees he cannot win or if the Syndicate's greater objectives require it.

SERAFINA BRIGHTEYE CR 14 (38,400 XP)

Female pairaka div^B rogue (charlatan \ddagger) 7

NE medium outsider (div, evil, extraplanar, shapechanger)

Init +9; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., *detect good*, *detect magic*, see in darkness; **Perception** +16

DEFENSE

AC 30, touch 19, flat-footed 24 (+5 armor, +5 Dex, +8 natural, +5 deflection, +1 dodge)

hp 132 (9d10+7d8+48)

Fort +10; **Ref** +18; **Will** +14;

Defensive Abilities evasion, uncanny dodge;

DR 10/good or cold iron; **Immune** disease, fire, poison; **Resist** acid 10, electricity 10; **SR** 22

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft., fly 50 ft. (good)

Melee +1 *conductive unholy falchion* +19/+14/+9 (2d4+7 plus disease/18-20)

vs good +19/+14/+9 (2d4+7 plus 2d6 plus disease/18-20)

+1 *silver dagger* +19/+14/+9 (1d4+4/19-20)

mithral chakram +19/+14/+9 (1d8+4)

2 claws +19 (1d6+4/20/x2 plus disease)

Ranged +1 silver dagger +20/+15/+10 (1d4+4/19-20)

mithral chakram +19/+14/+9 (1d8+4)

Special Attacks lustful dreams^B (DC 25), sneak attack +4d6,

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

Constant—*detect good*, *detect magic*

At will—*charm monster* (DC 21), *dimension door* (DC 21, self

plus 50 lbs of objects only), *misdirection* (DC 19)

1/day—*insect plague*, *summon* (level 3, 1d4 dorus 50%)

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 20, **Con** 16, **Int** 14, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 24

Base Atk +13; **CMB** +17; **CMD** 35

Feats Deceitful, Dodge, Flyby Attack, Hover, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Skill Focus (Diplomacy), Weapon Finesse

Skills Acrobatics +16, Bluff +29, Diplomacy +21, Disable Device

+17, Disguise +20, Escape Artist +13, Fly +16, Intimidate +16,

Knowledge (local) +20, Knowledge (nobility) +9, Knowledge

(planes) +19, Linguistics +7, Perception +16, Perform (act) +17,

Sense Motive +21, Sleight of Hand +12, Stealth +17, Use Magic

Device +17

SQ change shape^B (any Small or Medium animal or humanoid; *polymorph*), natural born liar \ddagger , rogue talent

(canny observer^{*}, convincing lie \ddagger [10 days], rumormonger \ddagger [7/week])

Languages abyssal, celestial, common, daemonic, elven, infernal, sacaen, sylvan; telepathy 100 ft.

Combat Gear +1 *conductive falchion*, +1 *silver dagger*; mithral chakram; **Other Gear** *bracers of armor* +3, *cloak of resistance* +2, courtier's outfit, *potion of protection from acid* (CL 12) (2), *ring of protection* +3, masterwork thieves' tools, *wand of burning hands* (CL 5 [25 charges]), *wand of hold person*

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Canny Observer^{*} (Ex) When Serafina makes a Perception check to hear the details of a conversation or to find concealed or secret objects (including doors and traps), she gains a +4 bonus.

Change Shape^B (Su) A pairaka div can assume the form of any Small or Medium animal or humanoid. She can maintain this form indefinitely and can return to her normal shape as a free action.

Coax information^{*} (Ex) Serafina can use Bluff or Diplomacy in place of Intimidate to force an opponent to act friendly toward her.

+1 Conductive Falchion^{*} A conductive weapon is able to channel the energy of a spell-like or supernatural ability that relies on a melee or ranged touch attack to hit its target. When Serafina makes a successful attack with her falchion, she may choose to channel her disease ability through the weapon to the struck opponent, who must make a Fortitude save or contract either bubonic plague or the shakes (Serafina's choice).

Convincing Lie \ddagger (Ex) When Serafina lies, she creates fabrications so convincing that others treat them as truth. When she successfully uses the Bluff skill to convince someone that what she is saying is true, if that individual is questioned later about the statement or story, that person uses the Serafina's Bluff skill modifier to convince the questioner, rather than his own. If his Bluff skill modifier is better than Serafina's, the individual can use his own modifier and gain a +2 bonus on any check to convince others of the lie. This effect lasts for 10 days.

Disease^B (Su) A paraika div carries two diseases. Its claws infect targets with bubonic plague, and any willing contact with its skin (such as through caressing, grappling, or more) exposes victims to the shakes.

Bubonic Plague: claws—injury; *save* Fort DC 17; *onset* 1 day; *frequency* 1/day; *effect* 1d4 Str, 1 Cha and target is fatigued; *cure* 2 consecutive saves.

Shakes: contact; *save* Fort DC 15; *onset* 1 day; *frequency* 1/day; *effect* 1d8 Dex; *cure* 2 consecutive saves.

Lustful Dreams^B (Su) A paraika can torment sleeping creatures.

While an intelligent creature sleeps, the paraika can slip into the target's mind and twist its dreams to lusty nocturnal visions. The victim must be asleep for the paraika to use this ability and the pairaka must be within 100 feet. If the victim fails a DC 24 Will save, it experiences vivid hallucinations of a lurid nature that leave it breathless and fatigued upon waking. The victim, even a depraved soul, rarely considers the sexual nature of these dreams enjoyable, as the images exploit any number of taboos the paraika suspects its victim might harbor. The save DC is Charisma-based. Creatures that do not sleep or dream are immune to this effect.

Natural Born Liar \ddagger (Ex) When Serafina successfully deceives a creature with a Bluff, that creature takes a -2 penalty on the charlatan's Bluff checks for the next 24 hours. This ability does not stack with itself. This ability replaces trapfinding.

Rumormonger \ddagger (Ex) Serafina can attempt to spread a rumor through a small town or larger settlement by making a Bluff check. She can do so 7 times per week. The DC is based on the size of the settlement, and it takes a week for the rumor to propagate through the settlement. If the check succeeds, the rumor is accepted as fact within the community; succeeding by 5 or more over the DC decreases the time it

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takes the rumor to propagate by 1d4 days. A failed check means the rumor failed to gain traction, while failing by 5 or more causes the opposite of the rumor or some other competing theory involving the rumor's subject to take hold.

Note: Due to her elite status, Serafina's wealth totals exceed normal guidelines. As a result, her CR has been increased by one.

* *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Advanced Player's Guide*

‡ *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Ultimate Combat*

‡ *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary 3*

Well, what have we here? A war hero? A brave adventurer? Why don't you come in and embark on a new adventure with us? I think there are more than a few treasures for you to find. Take your pick. They are all here for your pleasure.

Oh... I sense that perhaps the pleasures you seek will not be found so easily. Perhaps your travels to distant lands and your... exposure... to different customs have whetted your appetite for something more exotic? Certainly those of us who have seen other cultures can understand that so many of our inhibitions are merely the shadows cast by rules that are, at best, arbitrary.

Right this way, then. Let us cast aside those shadows for as long as we may. I can assure you we are able to accommodate even our most discriminating guests."

Serafina's arrival in Aerendal significantly predates Varon and the establishment of the Cloven Hoof Syndicate, but her initial ambitions were not as grand as the satyr's. For a long time, the div satisfied herself with the typical exploits of all pairaka: the wholesale corruption of mortal love and the destruction of the bonds of friendship and family. By taking on hundreds of different forms she encouraged her victims to take part in all manner of obscene acts, spreading diseases of the body at the same time she sickened their souls.

Her alliance with Varon has given her an entirely new perspective on her role in the city and she fully embraces the satyr's vision for Aerendal. In fact, she believes that once this city is destroyed, she will be able to carry out similar operations throughout Mendor, systematically destroying mortal civilization one city at a time. For now, though, Serafina fulfills her role for the Cloven Hoof Syndicate with great skill, having learned the nuances of life in the city over the course of several years.

Serafina's true form is similar to that of most pairaka: a tall, severe female whose skin is the color one would usually associate with painful bruises – at least, in those places not covered with sores, rashes, or other

signs of corruption and disease. Serafina, who most certainly has a different, secret name, spends almost no time in this form, however, as her plans call for a much more approachable appearance.

The Serafina Brighteye known to those who frequent her brothel, The Laughing Maiden, is a tall, lithe woman of Sacaen descent. Everyone assumes her perfect skin is the result of magic or some rare alchemical substance, but the results are so pleasant to look at that few begrudge it. Regardless of the time of year or the social occasion, Serafina wears clothing that accentuate rather than hide her body and tantalize onlookers with glimpses of what lies beneath them.

The fabrics Serafina wears come in a wide variety of colors, but she has never been seen to wear any shade of red. If asked about this oddity, Serafina will laugh and simply say that it would be cliché for a woman in her profession to wear red. However, it is well known that no customer or business associate should ever present her with anything red unless they wish to incur her wrath.

Her other common guise is that of Durst, the owner of the Mudwallow. She assumed the surname Bungtoller for this alter ego and enjoys the crude play on words the name invokes. She will often taunt the Mudwallow's customers with the various meanings that might be taken from the name, but only if she thinks it will truly offend the target. Durst is a lewd, lascivious man who takes advantage of his employees in every way. It is rumored that he also takes advantage of drunks who pass out in the Mudwallow without friends to take them home. If any have personal experience that might confirm this, none have come forward to admit it.

Serafina thoroughly enjoys her role in the Cloven Hoof Syndicate and uses her talents for a variety of purposes, including information gathering. She comes into contact with many social elites at The Laughing Maid and gains intimate knowledge that the Syndicate can put to good use. Even at the Mudwallow, information flows as easily as alcohol.

Aside from her hatred of the color red, which is normal for all pairaka, Serafina harbors a strange fear of acid. Although her otherworldly nature gives her protection against the effects of acids, she still avoids the stuff. She seems to have an irrational belief that acid can permanently disfigure her in a way

that even her shapechanging abilities would not be able to overcome. No amount of reasoning on the part of Varon or anyone else has been able to convince her that she cannot be permanently harmed by acid, and she flies into a rage if anyone presses the matter with her. She requires Grim to supply her with vials of *protection from acid* potions and carries two on her person at all times.



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She will quickly consume one the moment she suspects an enemy might use acid to attack her.

As one might expect for a person in her position, Serafina does her best to avoid combat. Her skills lie much more within the realm of political intrigue and subterfuge. She would much rather manipulate a muscle-bound young lord into taking on her enemies for her than deal with them personally. However, in the event that she does find herself in combat, she will use as many of her powers as she can without fully giving away her true nature. In the presence of a large crowd, she will maintain her present disguise and might utilize only her falchion. She has some skill with the weapon and can use it to transmit either of the diseases she carries. If she has very few witnesses, she may unleash the full force of her outsider abilities, taking flight and using her spell-like abilities to weaken and divide her foes. Since she is not a summoned creature, Serafina can use her ability to summon doru, but she is loath to do so, especially if she thinks someone might see her do it.

GRIM MOLDWEB

CR 14 (38,400 XP)

Male derro alchemist* (psychonaut**) 12
NE Small Humanoid (derro)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +19

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 14, flat-footed 17 (+4 armor, +3 Dex, +1 size, +2 natural)

hp 118 (15d8+45)

Fort +16, **Ref** +14, **Will** +15;

Immune poison; **SR** 14

Weakness vulnerability to sunlight

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee +1 shortsword +16/+11/+6 (1d4/19-20)

Ranged +1 light crossbow +16/+11/+6 (1d6+1/19-20) or

bomb* +16/+11/+6 (6d4+4 fire) or

confusion bomb* +16/+11/+6 (4d4+4 fire + confusion) or

madness bomb* +16/+11/+6 (4d4+4 fire + d3 Wisdom)

Special Attacks sneak attack +1d6, bomb* 16/day (6d4+4/DC 20)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 3rd, concentration +7)

At will—*darkness*, *ghost sound* (DC 15)

1/day—*daze* (DC 15), *sound burst* (DC 15)

Alchemist Extracts (CL 12, concentration +16)

4th- *nightmare* (DC 18), *restoration* (DC 18), *cure critical wounds* (DC 18), *touch of slime*** (DC 18)

3rd- *absorb toxicity*‡ (DC 17), *cure serious wounds* (DC 17), *displacement*, *rage*, *seek thoughts** (DC 17)

2nd- *blistering invective*‡ (DC 16), *cure moderate wounds* (DC 16) x2, *eagle's splendor*, *fox's cunning*, *owl's wisdom*

1st- *comprehend languages*, *crafter's fortune**, *cure light wounds* (DC 15), *keen senses** (DC 15), *polypurpose panacea*** (DC 15), *see alignment*‡ (DC 15)

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 17, **Con** 16, **Int** 18, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 18

Base Atk +11; **CMB** +10; **CMD** 25

Feats Brew Potion, Extra Discovery*, Extra Discovery*, Go Unnoticed*, Great Fortitude, Iron Will, Master Alchemist, Master Craftsman (Craft [alchemy]), Skill Focus (craft [alchemy]), Throw Anything

Skills Craft (alchemy) +54, Disable Device +18, Heal +14, Knowledge (arcana) +22, Knowledge (local) +14, Knowledge (nature) +17, Knowledge (planes) +14, Knowledge (religion) +14, Linguistics +5, Perception +19, Sense Motive +6, Spellcraft +17, Stealth +7, Use Magic Device +12

SQ discoveries* (cognatogen [DC 20], condense spirit [DC 20], confusion bomb [12 rounds], extend potion [4/day], extract venance [DC 20], infusion, lingering spirit, madness bomb*), fast poisoning (swift action), madness, mutagen (DC 20),

poison use, swift alchemy

Languages abyssal, aklo, common, daemonic, draconic, sylvan, undercommon

Combat Gear +1 light crossbow, +1 shortsword, +2 leather armor; **Other Gear** alchemist's lab, cloak of resistance +2, headband of inspired wisdom +4, cognatogen (+4 Wis, -2 Dex, +2 natural armor), infused mutagen (+4 Str, -2 Int, +2 natural armor), *potion of cure moderate wounds* (3), *potion of fox's cunning*, *potion of owl's wisdom*, *potion of resist energy (acid)* 10, *potion of resist energy (electricity)* 10, *potion of resist energy (fire)* 10, *potion of resist energy (sonic)* 10, masterwork thieves' tools, *wand of cure moderate wounds* (25 charges), *wand of modify memory* (25 charges)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Cognatogen** Grim gains the ability to create a cognatogen, a mutagen-like mixture that heightens one mental ability score at the expense of a physical ability score. If the cognatogen enhances his Intelligence, it applies a penalty to his Strength. If it enhances his Wisdom, it applies a penalty to his Dexterity. If it enhances his Charisma, it applies a penalty to his Constitution. Otherwise, this ability works just like the mutagen ability (including the natural armor bonus). Anytime Grim would prepare a mutagen, he may instead prepare a cognatogen. All limitations of mutagens apply to cognatogens as if they were the same substance—an alchemist can only maintain one mutagen or cognatogen at a time, a cognatogen that is not in an alchemist's possession becomes inert, drinking a cognatogen makes a non-alchemist sick, and so on. When the effect of the cognatogen ends, the alchemist takes 2 points of ability damage to the ability score penalized by the cognatogen. The infuse mutagen discovery and the persistent mutagen class ability apply to cognatogens.

Condense Spirit (Su) Grim gains the ability to ensnare the essence of another creature and use it to create small crystals with magical properties, known in some circles as star motes (see page 26).

Confusion Bomb** (Su) Grim's bombs twist the target's perception of friend and foe. A creature that takes a direct hit from a confusion bomb takes damage from the bomb and is under the effect of a confusion spell for 12 rounds.

Extend Potion (Su) Grim can cause any potion he drinks that does not have an instantaneous duration to function at twice its normal duration. This does not apply to extracts. Grim may do this 4 times per day.

Extract Vessence (Su) Grim gains the ability to draw the positive emotions from a helpless victim and convert them into a drug, commonly known as venance (see page 26).

Go Unnoticed* During the first round of combat, flat-footed opponents are considered not to have noticed Grim yet for the purposes of Stealth skill checks, allowing him to make a Stealth check that round to hide from them.

Lingering Spirit** (Ex) Grim is familiar enough with the ties between his body and spirit that he lingers at death's door far longer than a normal person. He treats his Constitution as 10 points higher than normal for the purpose of determining when hit point damage kills him (so he dies at -26 hit points instead of -10). Reducing Grim to 0 Constitution or its equivalent (from ability damage, ability drain, Constitution penalties, and so on) makes him unconscious and comatose, but he is only killed after taking an additional 5 points of Constitution damage, drain, or penalty (in effect, Grim must be brought to -5 Constitution in order to be killed by these attacks).

Madness (Ex) Derros use their Charisma modifier on Will saves instead of their Wisdom modifier, and are immune to insanity and confusion effects. Only a miracle or wish can remove a derro's madness. If this occurs, the derro gains 6 points of Wisdom and loses 6 points of Charisma. Note that Grim's Wisdom is boosted by the Headband of In-

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spired Wisdom +4 given to him by Varon. This bonus makes Grim slightly more stable than a typical derro, but this does not completely remove his madness.

Madness Bomb* (Su) Grim's bombs do more than sear flesh—they sear the mind. A creature that takes a direct hit from a madness bomb takes damage from the bomb plus 1d4 points of Wisdom damage. Reduce the amount of normal damage dealt by the bomb by 2d6 (so a bomb that would normally deal 6d6+4 points of damage deals 4d6+4 points of damage instead). The amount of Wisdom damage dealt by a madness bomb is reduced by 1 for each madness bomb that hit the target in the past 24 hours, to a minimum of 1 point of Wisdom damage.

Vulnerability to Sunlight (Ex) Grim takes 1 point of Con damage after every hour he is exposed to sunlight.

* *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Advanced Player's Guide*

** *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Ultimate Magic*

‡ *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Ultimate Combat*

"The subject is not as strong as we had hoped. Its mind has broken too quickly. The serum should have enabled it to remain conscious for several more consecutive days before the breakdown began. Hallucinations akin to waking dreams presented after only 12 days – a desirable outcome. But this quickly gave way to paranoid delusions – an unfortunate but expected side-effect. The onset of raving madness came only three nights after that. We must adjust the formula and try again. We are fortunate that it has a twin."

Even Varon is unsure how Grim Moldweb came to be a devotee of the Cloven Hoof Syndicate. The mad, grey-skinned little creature found the satyr in a run-down building he used as a hideout only a few months after Varon's arrival in the city. He first claimed that the two had met previously in "the Otherwhere" and that they both served the same master. However, when Varon attempted to question the derro further, the creature's story was altered slightly. Grim consistently referred to himself as "we" but gave no indication of why he spoke of himself in the plural sense. Each time Varon questioned Grim, his story changed a bit more, leaving the satyr confused and frustrated.

Even getting the derro's name out of him was an exercise in frustration. The little beast merely looked at him and uttered three words, which seemed more like descriptions of things he saw than an actual name. "Grim. Mold. Web." Doing the best he could with the odd encounter, Varon formed the words into a name and the derro seemed to approve.

Despite the difficulties, Varon could sense that the insane figure before him possessed a great deal of forbidden knowledge and suspected that his mind had been touched by the forces of Abaddon. He agreed to bring Grim into the Syndicate and was quickly rewarded for his sagacity. Grim's talent as an alchemist was far beyond anything the satyr had expected. The derro produced high quality intoxicants as well as a variety of potions to aid Syndicate agents.

Unfortunately, the derro's insanity and penchant for performing horrifying experiments on victims he found in the darkened streets of Aerendal made him something of a risk. In an effort to curtail the worst aspects of the derro's curse, Varon procured a magical headband that elevated Grim's thought processes. Now, although he is still quite insane, he is able to focus more. His communication with Varon is better, but he still refers to himself as "we." While the improvement has been a

great boon for the Syndicate, it also made it possible for Grim to embark on even more complex and horrifying experiments.

Sometime after joining the Syndicate, Grim came into contact with a derghodaemon. Although the alchemist refuses to explain when or where the meeting took place, the creature must have appreciated Grim's work. It told him of a substance taken by hydrodaemons from the very waters of the River Styx. This substance, when used with the proper alchemical process, could extract the positive emotions from a living person, creating a liquid that could induce positive emotions in the person who ingests it.

This new drug, which Grim named "vessence," presented Varon with a fantastic opportunity: complete monopoly over a product. Finally, Varon had something the Thieves' Guild couldn't provide. Grim's worth to the



New Alchemist Discoveries

Extract Vessence (Su) The alchemist gains the ability to draw the positive emotions from a helpless victim and convert them into a drug, commonly known as vessence. The victim must have experienced an intense, positive emotion no more than one minute per alchemist's level before extraction takes place. For the purposes of this process, the emotional experience can be anything from a particularly passionate encounter with a lover to a moment of sheer elation after vanquishing a foe. Interpretation of these situations is left to the GM. Certain spells can also qualify a person for the process, including *rage*, *unnatural lust***, *reckless infatuation***, *joyful rapture***, or *waves of ecstasy***.

The extraction process takes 1 minute, during which the victim is injected with a vile substance distilled from the waters of the River Styx. This substance can only be procured by entering into bargains or alliances with hydrodaemons or other foul denizens of Abaddon. Once the reagent is within the victim's blood stream, he must make a Will save or suffer Wisdom damage equal to 1d4 plus 1 point for every 3 alchemist levels beyond 6th. The DC for the save is equal to 10 + ½ the alchemist's level + the alchemist's Intelligence modifier. If the victim fails his save, the reagent causes a variety of physical and mental tortures as it condenses his emotions into vessence, which flows out through a specially prepared set of tubes. Additionally, the reagent causes the victim to forget the events that took place after they experienced the positive emotion, especially the extraction process, and to remain befuddled and compliant for 1d4+1 minutes after the procedure. Whether or not the save succeeds, the victim is immune to extraction attempts from the same alchemist for 24 hours.

This discovery allows the alchemist to create at least one dose of vessence for each point of ability damage the victim suffers. For every three levels beyond 6th, the alchemist can create one additional dose of vessence for each point of ability damage.

An alchemist must be at least 6th level before selecting this discovery.

Condense Spirit (Su) The alchemist gains the ability to ensnare the essence of another creature and use it to create small crystals with magical properties, known in some circles as star motes. (For more information about star motes, see the sidebar on page 13.)

The process takes 1 hour and requires a helpless victim. Any creature with the fey or outsider type can be used to create star motes. Other creature types can be used as well, but they must possess a natural Charisma score of 15 or higher.

During the process, the victim is prepared with alchemical reagents that draw out his spiritual essence and gather it into a physical form. At the end of the hour, the victim must make a Will save. Failure indicates his spirit has been fully withdrawn and converted into star motes. One star mote is created for each hit die the victim possesses. The DC for the save is equal to 10 + ½ the alchemist's level + the alchemist's Intelligence modifier. Whether or not the save succeeds, the victim is immune to attempts from the same alchemist for 24 hours.

If the victim is a fey or outsider, its physical form disappears and the creature is destroyed as its essence is divided among the various star motes created from it. For other creature types, the victim's Charisma score is immediately and permanently reduced to 0. A character with a Charisma score of zero is unconscious and unable to exert himself in any way. The effects of this condition cannot be removed and the victim's Charisma score cannot be raised in any way until all the star motes created from its spirit are destroyed. No other means, short of a properly worded wish or miracle, can restore full vitality to a victim of this discovery.

An alchemist must be at least 12th level before selecting this discovery.

** Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Ultimate Magic

Syndicate suddenly became immeasurable.

Since then, Grim has spent his time extracting vessence and bottling it for sale throughout the city. When the demand became too great for him to meet on his own, he taught trusted Syndicate alchemists the discovery. The establishment of the Halls of Abandon with a secret laboratory just for Grim's work has enabled the derro to step up production on a massive scale. Each night the club is open, he can produce hundreds of doses of the drug. The success of the process has encouraged Varon to find ways for his other alchemists to set up labs near similar venues.

Not completely trusting the other alchemists, Varon and Grim work together to control production of vessence by limiting the other alchemist's access to the required Stygian compound. Only Grim has a free source of the substance, which is brought from the Hollow of Shrieking Laughter and smuggled into the city in small shipments several times a month. In dire circumstances, a derg-hodaemon living in the Hollow will serve as a courier, stepping through the portal from the Hollow, then teleporting into the Halls of Abandon with a large supply of the material. The daemon dislikes this menial task, however, and demands payment in the form of one of Grim's captive subjects, which the creature terrorizes and consumes before returning to the Hollow.

Grim has recently discovered how to produce star motes on his own. This discovery has the potential for greater profit for the Syndicate, but the lack of suitable subjects for the process is a hindrance. The derro has agents scouring the city for the few fey living in Aer-

endal, in the hopes that they can be used in the process. These creatures tend to be smaller and weaker, however, and cannot be used to produce large quantities of the gems. Although he knows he can use the discovery on mortal creatures, Varon is avoiding the temptation to do so because it could draw too much attention. For now, he has to be satisfied with the large-scale production of vessence and an occasional boost in his stock of star motes, most of which still come from the Hollow of Shrieking Laughter.

Grim bears the blue-grey skin and bulging white eyes of a typical derro. He wears a leather suit, which functions as +2 *leather armor* and has many pouches, loops, and hooks from which he can hang his extract bottles and inert bombs. Over this he wears a dirty coat, which has the same properties as a *cloak of resistance +2*.

When he isn't extracting vessence or creating star motes, Grim experiments on the psyches of whatever victims he can find. His experiments usually leave victims mentally broken. If they survive these tortures, the victims are taken deep into the city's sewers and left to stumble about in darkness until they die of starvation or are slain by the tunnels' denizens. Even if they manage to make their way back up to the city, these babbling maniacs cannot say what happened to them or where, so deep is their psychosis. Those few who have been cured of their madness by magic have recalled only dim images of pain and torture at the hands of a small grey figure before they found themselves stumbling through a nightmare of darkened passages.

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Grim seeks to avoid combat whenever possible, both due to his own self-preservation instinct and because Varon has ordered him to do so. If he can gain the initiative, he will rely on his ability to go unnoticed to make a Stealth check and escape. Otherwise, he will use his madness and confusion bombs to distract his enemies and then try to escape at the first opportunity. If necessary, he will use his cognatogen to boost his Intelligence and natural armor, sacrificing some of his Strength to increase the damage and DC of his bomb effects.

LORD ALDINUS FERROWAY CR 11 (12,800 XP)

Male human (Lamberd) aristocrat 3/rogue (spy*) 10

NE medium humanoid (human)

Init +6; **Senses** Perception +18

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 13, flat-footed 16 (+5 armor, +2 Dex, +1 deflection)

hp 81 (13d8+13)

Fort +6, **Ref** +11, **Will** +6

Defensive Abilities evasion, improved uncanny dodge

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee +1 *keen rapier* +13/+8 (1d6+1/15-20) or

masterwork dagger +12/+7 (1d4/19-20)

Ranged masterwork dagger +12/+7 (1d4/19-20)

Special Attacks sneak attack +5d6

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 15, **Con** 12, **Int** 16, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 17

Base Atk +9; **CMB** +11; **CMD** 22

Feats Agile Maneuvers, Alertness, Flanking Foil*, Improved Initiative, Persuasive, Step Up, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (Rapier)

Skills Acrobatics +15, Appraise +11, Bluff +19, Diplomacy +25, Disable Device +8, Escape Artist +15, Intimidate +20, Knowledge (History) +11, Knowledge (Local) +16, Knowledge (Nobility) +19, Perception +18, Ride +11, Sense Motive +19, Sleight of Hand +7, Stealth +15, Use Magic Device +16

Languages common, daemonic, elven, infernal

SQ poison use, rogue talents (canny observer, coax information, convincing lie [8 days], honeyed words [4/day], rumormonger [3/week])

Combat Gear +1 *keen rapier*, +2 *light fortification studded leather*, masterwork dagger; **Other Gear** bloodroot poison (3 doses), masterwork thieves' tools, *cloak of resistance* +1, *potion of barksin* +4, *potion of cure serious wounds* (2), *potion of gaseous form*, *potion of haste*, *ring of protection* +1, *star mote brooch*

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Canny Observer* (Ex) When Ferroway makes a Perception check to hear the details of a conversation or to find concealed or secret objects (including doors and traps), he gains a +4 bonus.

Coax information* (Ex) Ferroway can use Bluff or Diplomacy in place of Intimidate to force an opponent to act friendly toward him.

Convincing Lie‡ (Ex) When Ferroway lies, he creates fabrications so convincing that others treat them as truth. When he successfully uses the Bluff skill to convince someone that what he is saying is true, if that individual is questioned later about the statement or story, that person uses Ferroway's Bluff skill modifier to convince the questioner, rather than his own. If his Bluff skill modifier is better than Ferroway's, the individual can use his own modifier and gain a +2 bonus on any check to convince others of the lie. This effect lasts for 8 days.

Flanking Foil‡ Whenever Ferroway hits an adjacent opponent with a melee attack, until the start of his next turn that opponent does not gain any flanking bonus on attack rolls while it is flanking him and cannot deal sneak attack damage to him. It can still provide a flank for its allies.

Honeyed Words* (Ex) Four times per day, Ferroway can roll

two dice while making a Bluff check, and take the better result. He must choose to use this talent before making the Bluff check. He can use this ability one additional time per day for every five rogue levels he possesses. (Advanced Player's Guide)

Rumormonger ‡(Ex) Ferroway can attempt to spread a rumor through a small town or larger settlement by making a Bluff check. He can do so a number of times per week equal to his Charisma modifier (minimum 0). The DC is based on the size of the settlement, and it takes a week for the rumor to propagate through the settlement. If the check succeeds, the rumor is practically accepted as fact within the community; succeeding by 5 or more over the DC decreases the time it takes the rumor to propagate by 1d4 days. A failed check means the rumor failed to gain traction, while failing by 5 or more causes the opposite of the rumor or some other competing theory involving the rumor's subject to take hold.

Skilled Liar*(Ex) Whenever Aldinus uses Bluff to attempt to deceive someone, he gains a +5 bonus. This bonus does not apply to feint attempts or attempts to pass secret messages. This ability replaces trapfinding.

* *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Advanced Player's Guide*

‡ *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Ultimate Combat*

Come now, my lords and ladies! Are we not all worldly men and women? Who is there to gainsay us? Though my house is of humbler stature than your august ancestries, I am uniquely positioned to provide you access to realms of pleasure and experience that none other can offer.

A toast, then! To our dominion over not just the realms of men, but the realms of experience!"



Chapter Three: A Gallery of Rogues

Lord Aldinus Ferroway is an explorer into the realms of sensation, a purveyor of forbidden fruit, and a spy for the Cloven Hoof Syndicate. He is a noble, but his nobility is no more than two generations old. His grandfather was a shipping magnate (and some say a smuggler and pirate) who was raised to the level of lord as consideration for erasing certain debts incurred by the city of Aerendal.

Ferroway has wormed his way into the upper crust of Aerendal's social order by serving as a go-between for the nobles who can't risk being seen hunting for the pleasures they desire. Varon allows him a cut of the profits generated by these connections in exchange for any other tidbits of information the nobleman can get from his clients. In providing them with their desires, he earns a tidy profit while simultaneously furthering the goals of the Cloven Hoof Syndicate by advancing the decadence of Aerendal's leaders.

Lord Ferroway hides a burning hatred of Aerendal's nobility behind his bland, smiling face. Since childhood the scions of Aerendal's major houses have reminded him that his noble lineage is steeped in none of the ancient history possessed by their families. Despite being raised in all the proper schools and salons, Lord Ferroway is thought of as an upstart. He is sometimes referred to as a well-dressed cabin boy. Knowing full well what his so-called peers think of him, Ferroway's secret wish is to see Aerendal's noble class ruined and enslaved. In the Cloven Hoof Syndicate he has found the apparatus with which to make his twisted dreams come true.

Lord Ferroway is a tall man and is thinner than the standard Lamberd. He has a saturnine visage, with alabaster skin and a shock of blond hair that is receding from a sharp widow's peak. He speaks slowly, with an upper-class accent that he has taken great pains to cultivate. He wears only the most costly garments and is usually bedecked in numerous jewels and trinkets, at least one of which will always bear a star mote. He will almost always carry or wear something bearing the sigil of his house: a black sail on a blue background.

When meeting with less-respectable contacts he will dress in darker hues and eschew most of his jewelry. Yet even when trying to remain inconspicuous, the pompous lord cannot resist wearing the richest possible fabrics and wearing his house sigil somewhere visible (usually on a cloak brooch or similar item). This frustrates Varon to no end, but the satyr satisfies himself with the thought that most folk will either know the noble and his business or ignore the man altogether. Should he become a liability, however, Varon will have no qualms about dispatching him.

When at court, Lord Ferroway will often be accompanied by several of his household guard (fighters of 2nd to 5th level) who are well equipped with arms and armor. When traveling in seedier quarters, he keeps one or two escorts (4th to 6th-level rogues) with him as backup, but prefers to have them maintain a safe distance to watch for any unwanted followers or traps.

Knowing that fighting is not his strength, Lord Ferroway will attempt to bluff or lie his way out of situations that threaten violence. His significant social contacts enable him to call in certain favors. Although few of the most influential nobles would willingly stick their necks out to help him, Ferroway knows things that could prove embarrassing. Despite his nobility and apparent foppishness, when pressed into combat Lord Ferroway can make good use of his rapier, which he calls *Serpent's Tooth*.

CHATTER, CHITTER, AND SKITTER

Varon recruited these three Dark Folk because of their extensive knowledge of the tunnels beneath Aerendal

Races of Mendor: The Lamberd

Native to the kingdoms just east of the Wealdland, the Lamberd are a hardy, northern folk who are known for their determination and stubbornness. Roughly 700 years ago a group of Lamberd migrated to the eastern portion of the Wealdland, settling along the coast of Lake Morlyn. While these initial forays into the rich forests and bounteous fields of the region were met with resistance from the Prydori, the Lamberd eventually carved out a portion to call their own. Their history in the region is a long and proud one. Together with the Prydori, the Lamberdian culture has helped shape the identity of the Wealdland.

Fair-skinned with light colored hair, the Lamberd tend to have blue, green, or grey eyes. Red hair is also very common. They are generally tall and broadly built, with 6 feet being the average height for both men and women. Lamberd prefer simple yet artfully crafted clothing, with quality in fabric varying based on social standing. Patchwork patterns are common amongst all classes, though specific patterns are the purview of the nobility. Each noble house bears its own patchwork design which are commonly displayed on cloaks and surcoats in conjunction with heraldic devices. When it comes to jewelry few pieces hold as much significance for the Lamberd as a cloak brooch. These are often elaborate affairs inlaid with ivory and rare metals and encrusted with gemstones. Even a lower class individual will invest whatever wealth they can manage into a well-appointed brooch. Cloak brooches are passed down through the generations and it is not unusual for leaders to award subjects with particularly choice pieces. Indeed, generosity with wealth is a virtue and the assignment of well-crafted brooches is the most efficient way to pass that wealth to those that deserve it.

that make up what is called the Nether City. Extending downward beneath the city's cellars, beyond the catacombs and sewers, and into the black, cavernous depths of the Underworld, the Nether City is a dangerous place where only those who understand its dangers can survive.

The Twisted Satyr doesn't know or care how a family of dark creepers could have gained the curse of lycanthropy in their bloodline, but all three of these brothers were born as wererats. They use their shapechanging abilities and familiarity with the deeper shadows of Aerendal to help them survive and to benefit the Syndicate.

The brothers are tasked with managing the transfer of goods via the Nether City's passageways. They occasionally assist Grim Moldweb in kidnapping wayward folk for use in his experiments. They also run a side business, capturing unsuspecting townsfolk to press into service on foreign ships. These slaves are traded to the ships' captains in exchange for new slaves who can be sold to workhouses and brothels in the poorest parts of the city.

Chitter, Chatter, and Skitter have an extensive network of contacts among the seediest members of Aerendalian society. These contacts provide useful information about the movements of the city guard and other authorities who might cause trouble for the Syndicate's operations. This information includes news about nosy adventurers asking questions on the streets and in the swill houses, especially in the Harbor and Shankara Square districts.

In general, the brothers eschew direct combat, instead relying on surprise to bring down interlopers. Each of them possesses specific skills and has focused on developing his lycanthropic powers in different

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ways, and they use these abilities to support one another both in and out of combat. If seriously challenged they will scatter, escape, and then regroup within the labyrinthine tunnel system, which they know better than anyone. They can also marshal their rat allies to act as distractions to cover their escape or as spies to keep an eye on those who would seek them out.

CHATTER

CR 8 (4,800 XP)

Male dark creeper wererat rogue 6

NE small humanoid (dark folk, shapechanger)

Init +4; **Senses** low-light vision, scent, see in darkness;

Perception +14

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 14, flat-footed 15 (+4 armor, +2 Dex, +1 size, +1 dodge)

hp 72 (9d8+27)

Fort +6, **Ref** +10, **Will** +5

Defensive Abilities evasion, trap sense +2, uncanny dodge

Weakness light blindness

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee masterwork cold iron dagger +8/+3 (1d3/19-20)

dagger +7/+2 (1d3/19-20)

Ranged masterwork cold iron dagger +10/+5 (1d3/19-20)

dagger +9/+4 (1d3/19-20)

Special Attacks sneak attack +4d6

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 3rd, concentration +5)

At will—*darkness*, *detect magic*

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 14, **Con** 16, **Int** 12, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +6; CMB +5; CMD 18

Feats Alertness, Aspect of the Beast (Wild Instinct)*, Dodge, Magical Aptitude, Mobility

Skills Appraise +13, Bluff +7, Climb +4, Diplomacy +10, Disable Device +13, Knowledge (Dungeoneering) +7, Knowledge (Local) +13, Perception +14, Sense Motive +16, Sleight of Hand +8, Stealth +22, Survival +10, Use Magic Device +15

Languages common, dark folk

SQ change shape (human, hybrid, and dire rat; *polymorph*), death throes (DC 17), lycanthropic empathy +14, , poison use, rogue talents (coax information*, fast stealth, hard to fool [2/day]*), trapfinding +3

Combat Gear +1 studded leather; dagger (10), masterwork cold iron dagger (2); **Other Gear** black smear (3 doses), masterwork thieves' tools, *potion of cure moderate wounds* (2), *potion of gaseous form* (2), *potion of invisibility* (2), *potion of greater magic fang* +1, smoked goggles, *wand of identify*, *wand of magic missile* (CL 5)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Aspect of the Beast (Wild Instinct)* Chatter gains a +2 bonus on initiative checks and a +2 bonus on Survival skill checks.

Coax information* (Ex) Chatter can use Bluff or Diplomacy in place of Intimidate to force an opponent to act friendly toward him.

Death Throes (Su) When a dark creeper is slain, its body combusts in a flash of bright white light, leaving its gear in a heap on the ground. All creatures within a 10-foot burst must make a DC 17 Fortitude save or be blinded for 1d6 rounds. Other dark creepers within 10 feet are automatically blinded for at least 1 round, due to their light blindness. The save is Constitution-based.

Hard to Fool (Ex) Twice per day, Chatter can roll two dice while making a Sense Motive check, and take the better result. He must choose to use this talent before making the Sense Motive check.

Light Blindness (Ex) Dark creepers are blinded for 1 round if exposed to bright light, such as sunlight or the daylight spell. They are dazzled as long as they remain in areas of bright light.

Lycanthropic Empathy (Ex) In any form, natural lycanthropes can communicate and empathize with animals related to their animal form. They can use Diplomacy to alter such an animal's attitude, and when so doing gain a +4 racial bonus on the check.

Poison Use (Ex) Dark creepers are skilled in the use of poison and never risk accidentally poisoning themselves. Dark creepers favor a foul-smelling black paste distilled from certain deep-underground fungi known as black smear—injury; *save* Fort DC 15; *frequency* 1/round for 6 rounds; *effect* 1d2 Str; *cure* 1 save.

Smoked Goggles +8 save vs. visual effects, -4 sight-based Perception and you treat all opponents as having 20% concealment. (Although the description of this item in the Core Rulebook does not specifically say so, you may choose to use smoked goggles in your campaigns as a way for characters with light blindness or light sensitivity to avoid some of the debilitating effects while interacting with surface dwellers. In this case, allow smoked goggles to reduce the effects of light on such characters by one step. So, with the smoked goggles on, the dark creepers wouldn't be blinded by bright light, but would still suffer the effects of light sensitivity. They would also still be subjected to the negative impacts to Perception and treat opponents as having 20% concealment while wearing the goggles.)

When Chatter assumes his hybrid wererat form he has the following changes to his statistics:

Init +5

AC 21, touch 15, flat-footed 17 (+4 armor, +3 Dex, +1 size, +2 natural, +1 dodge)

hp 81

Fort +7, **Ref** +11, **Will** +5

DR 10/silver

Melee bite +8 (1d3+1 plus disease plus curse of lycanthropy;

DC 15)

masterwork cold iron dagger +9/+4 (1d3/19-20)

dagger +8/+3 (1d3/19-20)

Ranged masterwork cold iron dagger +11/+6 (1d3/19-20)

dagger +10/+5 (1d3/19-20)

Str 12, **Dex** 17, **Con** 18, **Int** 12, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 12

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Disease (Ex) *Filth fever*: Bite—injury; *save* Fort DC 18; onset 1d5 days; *frequency* 1/day; *effect* 1d3 Dex damage and 1d3 Con damage; *cure* 2 consecutive saves. The save DC is Constitution-based.

When he is in dire rat animal form, Chatter has the following changes to his statistics:

Init +5

AC 21, touch 15, flat-footed 17 (+4 armor, +3 Dex, +1 size, +2 natural, +1 dodge)

hp 81

Fort +7, **Ref** +11, **Will** +5

DR 10/silver

Spd 40 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.

Melee Bite +8 (1d3+1 plus disease plus curse of lycanthropy; DC 15)

Str 12, **Dex** 17, **Con** 18, **Int** 12, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 12

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Disease (Ex) *Filth fever*: Bite—injury; *save* Fort DC 18; onset 1d5 days; *frequency* 1/day; *effect* 1d3 Dex damage and 1d3 Con damage; *cure* 2 consecutive saves. The save DC is Constitution-based.

* Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Advanced Player's Guide

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where you wish to go. Please excuse those bones. We just finished our supper."

As his name implies, Chatter is the voice of the three brothers. Although the other two are not necessarily silent, Chatter does most of the talking, albeit with a pronounced, sibilant hiss. Chatter makes the deals with clients, whether they are directly related to syndicate operations or not. He also serves as the group's primary guide through the Nether City and Underworld, relying on his animal instincts to steer them around most of the tunnels' dangers.

CHITTER

CR 8 (4,800 XP)

Male dark creeper wererat rogue 6

NE small humanoid (dark folk, shapechanger)

Init +2; Senses low-light vision, scent, see in darkness;

Perception +13

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 14, flat-footed 15 (+4 armor, +2 Dex, +1 size, +1 dodge)

hp 72 (9d8+27)

Fort +7, Ref +11, Will +5

Defensive Abilities evasion, trap sense +2, uncanny dodge

Weaknesses light blindness

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee +1 *shortsword* +10/+5 (1d4+2/19-20) or dagger +9/+4 (1d3+1/19-20/x2)

Ranged dagger +9/+4 (1d3+1/19-20)

Special Attacks bleeding attack +4, sneak attack +4d6

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 3rd, concentration +3)

At will—*darkness*, *detect magic*

STATISTICS

Str 13, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 15, Wis 12, Cha 11

Base Atk +6; CMB +6; CMD 19

Feats Alertness, Aspect of the Beast (Claws of the Beast)*, Dodge, Stealthy, Weapon Finesse

Skills Appraise +13, Bluff +6, Climb +5, Diplomacy +6, Disable Device +19, Escape Artist +4, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +10, Knowledge (Local) +10, Perception +13, Sleight of Hand +14, Stealth +24, Survival +7, Use Magic Device +12

Languages common, dark folk

SQ change shape (human, hybrid, and dire rat; *polymorph*), death throes (DC 17), lycanthropic empathy +13, poison use, smoked goggles, rogue talents (bleeding attack, fast stealth, finesse rogue), trapfinding +3

Combat Gear +1 *shortsword*, +1 *studded leather*; daggers (5);

Other Gear *bag of holding I*, belt pouch, black smear (3 doses), cloak of resistance +1, masterwork thieves' tools, *potion of blur*; *potion of cure moderate wounds* (2), smoked goggles

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Aspect of the Beast (Claws of the Beast)* Chitter has a pair of claws. These claws are primary attacks that deal 1d3 points of damage.

Death Throes (Su) When a dark creeper is slain, its body combusts in a flash of bright white light, leaving its gear in a heap on the ground. All creatures within a 10-foot burst must make a DC 17 Fortitude save or be blinded for 1d6 rounds. Other dark creepers within 10 feet are automatically blinded for at least 1 round, due to their light blindness. The save is Constitution-based.

Light Blindness (Ex) Dark creepers are blinded for 1 round if exposed to bright light, such as sunlight or the daylight spell. They are dazzled as long as they remain in areas of bright light.

Lycanthropic Empathy (Ex) In any form, natural lycanthropes can communicate and empathize with animals related to their animal form. They can use Diplomacy to alter such an animal's attitude, and when so doing gain a +4 racial bonus on the check.

Poison Use (Ex) Dark creepers are skilled in the use of poison and never risk accidentally poisoning themselves. Dark creepers favor a foul-smelling black paste distilled from certain deep-underground fungi known as black smear—injury; save Fort DC 15; frequency 1/round for 6 rounds; effect 1d2 Str; cure 1 save.

Smoked Goggles +8 save vs. visual effects, -4 sight-based Perception and you treat all opponents as having 20% concealment. (Although the description of this item in the Core Rulebook does not specifically say so, you may choose to use smoked goggles in your campaigns as a way for characters with light blindness or light sensitivity to avoid some of the debilitating effects while interacting with surface dwellers. In this case, allow smoked goggles to reduce the effects of light on such characters by one step. So, with the smoked goggles on, the dark creepers wouldn't be blinded by bright light, but would still suffer the effects of light sensitivity. They would also still be subjected to the negative impacts to Perception and treat opponents as having 20% concealment while wearing the goggles.)

When Chitter assumes his hybrid wererat form he has the following changes to his statistics:

Init +5; Senses Perception +14

AC 21, touch 15, flat-footed 17 (+4 armor, +5 Dex, +1 size, +2 natural, +1 dodge)

hp 81

Fort +8, Ref +12, Will +6

DR 10/silver

Melee bite +5 (1d3+1 plus disease plus curse of lycanthropy; DC 15)

2 claws +5 (1d3+1)

+1 *shortsword* +11/+6 (1d4+3/19-20)

dagger +10/+5 (1d3+2/19-20)

Ranged dagger +10/+5 (1d3+1/19-20)

Str 15, Dex 17, Con 18, Int 13, Wis 15, Cha 11

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Disease (Ex) *Filth fever*: Bite—injury; save Fort DC 18; onset 1d3 days; frequency 1/day; effect 1d3 Dex damage and 1d3 Con damage; cure 2 consecutive saves. The save DC is Constitution-based.

When he is in dire rat animal form, Chitter has the following changes to his statistics:

Init +3; Senses Perception +14



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AC 21, touch 15, flat-footed 17 (+4 armor, +3 Dex, +1 size, +2 natural, +1 dodge)

hp 81

Fort +8, Ref +12, Will +6

DR 10/silver

Spd 40 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.

Melee bite +5 (1d3+1 plus disease plus curse of lycanthropy; DC 15)

2 claws +5 (1d5+1)

+1 *shortsword* +11/+6 (1d4+5/19-20)

dagger +10/+5 (1d3+2/19-20)

Ranged dagger +10/+5 (1d3+1/19-20)

Str 15, Dex 17, Con 18, Int 15, Wis 15, Cha 11

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Disease (Ex) *Filth fever*: Bite—injury; *save* Fort DC 18; onset 1d3 days; *frequency* 1/day; *effect* 1d3 Dex damage and 1d3 Con damage; *cure* 2 consecutive saves. The save DC is Constitution-based.

* *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Advanced Player's Guide*

"It breathes. It breathes and bleeds! I bet it also screams. Let's find out if it screams."

Chitter speaks in a high-pitched, almost squeaky, voice. He is mildly psychopathic and enjoys ripping into things with his claws. This behavior usually manifests as a nervous tic that results in shredded bits of cloth or fabric falling from his clothes or anything he has in his hands. If he is allowed to get too close to living flesh, the results can be a bit more alarming. For the most part, however, his brothers manage to keep Chitter in line. They only unleash him on their foes if it looks like they cannot escape into the sewers.

SKITTER

CR 8 (4,800 XP)

Male dark creeper wererat rogue 6

NE small humanoid (dark folk, shapechanger)

Init +3; Senses low-light vision, scent, see in darkness;

Perception +14

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 15, flat-footed 15 (+4 armor, +3 Dex, +1 size, +1 dodge)

hp 54 (9d8+9)

Fort +4, Ref +11, Will +5

Defensive Abilities evasion, trap sense +2, uncanny dodge

Weaknesses light blindness

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee masterwork dagger +11/+6 (1d5+1/19-20)

Ranged +1 light crossbow +11/+6 (1d6+1/19-20)

masterwork dagger +11/+6 (1d5+1/19-20)

Special Attacks sneak attack +4d6

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 3rd, concentration +3)

At will—*darkness*, *detect magic*

STATISTICS

Str 15, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 11

Base Atk +6; CMB +6; CMD 20

Feats Alertness, Aspect of the Beast (Predator's Leap)*, Dodge, Mobility, Stealthy, Weapon Finesse

Skills Acrobatics +12, Appraise +13, Bluff +6, Climb +5, Disable

Device +20, Escape Artist +14, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +7,

Knowledge (Local) +10, Perception +14, Sleight of Hand +15,

Stealth +25, Survival +8, Use Magic Device +6

Languages common, dark folk

SQ change shape (human, hybrid, and dire rat; *polymorph*),

death throes (DC 17), lycanthropic empathy +13, poison use,

smoked goggles, rogue talents (fast stealth, finesse rogue,

sniper's eye*), trapfinding +3

Combat Gear +1 *light crossbow*, +1 *studded leather*; 20

crossbow bolts, masterwork dagger; **Other Gear** masterwork thieves' tools, *potion of cure moderate wounds* (2), *potion of displacement*, *potion of gaseous form*, *potion of haste*, *potion of greater magic*, *fang +1*, *silversheen* smoked goggles

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Aspect of the Beast (Predator's Leap)* Skitter can make a running jump without needing to run 10 feet before you jump.

Death Throes (Su) When a dark creeper is slain, its body combusts in a flash of bright white light, leaving its gear in a heap on the ground. All creatures within a 10-foot burst must make a DC 15 Fortitude save or be blinded for 1d6 rounds. Other dark creepers within 10 feet are automatically blinded for at least 1 round, due to their light blindness. The save is Constitution-based.

Sniper's Eye (Ex) Skitter can apply his sneak attack damage on ranged attacks targeting foes within 30 feet that benefit from concealment. Foes with total concealment are still immune.

Light Blindness (Ex) Dark creepers are blinded for 1 round if exposed to bright light, such as sunlight or the daylight spell. They are dazzled as long as they remain in areas of bright light.

Lycanthropic Empathy (Ex) In any form, natural lycanthropes can communicate and empathize with animals related to their animal form. They can use Diplomacy to alter such an animal's attitude, and when so doing gain a +4 racial bonus on the check.

Poison Use (Ex) Dark creepers are skilled in the use of poison and never risk accidentally poisoning themselves. Dark creepers favor a foul-smelling black paste distilled from certain deep-underground fungi known as black smear—injury; *save* Fort DC 15; *frequency* 1/round for 6 rounds; *effect* 1d2 Str; *cure* 1 save.

Smoked Goggles +8 save vs. visual effects, -4 sight-based Perception and you treat all opponents as having 20% concealment. (Although the description of this item in the Core Rulebook does not specifically say so, you may choose to use smoked goggles in your campaigns as a way for characters with light blindness or light sensitivity to avoid some of the debilitating effects while interacting with surface dwellers. In this case, allow smoked goggles to reduce the effects of light on such characters by one step. So, with the smoked goggles on, the dark creepers wouldn't be blinded by bright light, but would still suffer the effects of light sensitivity. They would also still be subjected to the negative impacts to Perception and treat opponents as having 20% concealment while wearing the goggles.)

When Skitter assumes his hybrid wererat form he has the following changes to his statistics:

Init +3; Senses Perception +14

AC 21, touch 15, flat-footed 17 (+4 armor, +3 Dex, +1 size, +2 natural, +1 dodge)

hp 63

Fort +5, Ref +11, Will +5

DR 10/silver

Melee bite +5 (1d5+1 plus disease plus curse of lycanthropy; DC 15)

masterwork dagger +11/+6 (1d5+1/19-20)

Ranged +1 light crossbow +11/+6 (1d6+1/19-20)

masterwork dagger +11/+6 (1d5+1/19-20)

Str 15, Dex 17, Con 15, Int 15, Wis 15, Cha 11

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Disease (Ex) *Filth fever*: Bite—injury; *save* Fort DC 16; onset 1d3 days; *frequency* 1/day; *effect* 1d3 Dex damage and 1d3 Con damage; *cure* 2 consecutive saves. The save DC is Constitution-based.

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When he is in dire rat animal form, Skitter has the following statistics:

AC 21, touch 15, flat-footed 17 (+4 armor, +3 Dex, +1 size, +2 natural, +1 dodge)

hp 63

Fort +5 Ref +11, Will +5

DR 10/silver

Spd 40 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.

Melee bite +5 (1d3+1)

Str 15, Dex 17, Con 15, Int 13, Wis 15, Cha 11

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Disease (Ex) Filth fever: Bite—injury; *save* Fort DC 16; onset 1d5 days; *frequency* 1/day; *effect* 1d5 Dex damage and 1d5 Con damage; *cure* 2 consecutive saves. The save DC is Constitution-based.

* *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Advanced Player's Guide*

"Shhh! I h-h-hear s-something. L-let us hide and s-see wh-what it i-is!"

Skitter's stutter makes communication difficult at the best of times. It becomes more pronounced when he is under stress, often making it impossible to talk with him. As a result he keeps quiet most of the time, a trait that has translated into a habit of moving with great stealth. When necessary, he uses his skill at leaping about to spring from the shadows and attack.

MORGRITH BONEBREAKER

CR 9 (6,400 XP)

Male fiendish minotaur barbarian 5

CE large monstrous humanoid

Init +1; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +15

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 17 (+2 armor, +1 Dex, -1 size, +5 natural, +1 deflection)

hp 90 (5d12+6d10+22)

Fort +10; Ref +7; Will +6;

DR 10/good; Resist cold 15, fire 15; SR 14

OFFENSE

Spd 40 ft.

Melee +1 *furious* club* +15/+10/+5 (1d8+5)

when raging, +3 *furious* club* +19/+14/+9 (1d8+9)

gore +9 (1d6+2)

Special Attacks overbearing advance*,

powerful charge (gore +11, 2d6+6),

smite good (1/day)

STATISTICS

Str 19, Dex 12, Con 15, Int 8,

Wis 10, Cha 8

Base Atk +11; CMB +16 (+18

bull rush); CMD 28 (30 vs. bull rush)

Feats Enforcer*, Great Fortitude,

Improved Bull Rush, Persuasive,

Power Attack -5/+6, Self-Sufficient

Skills Diplomacy +7, Heal +2, Intimidate +17, Perception +13,

Stealth +4, Survival +22

Languages giant

SQ fast movement +10, improved uncanny dodge, natural cunning, rage (14 rounds/day), rage powers (intimidating glare, overbearing advance), trap sense +1

Combat Gear +1 *furious club*; **Other Gear** belt of incredible dexterity +2, bracers of armor +2, potion of cure moderate wounds (2), ring (nose ring) of protection +1, spell tattoo (neck) of tongues (functions as a scroll of tongues and disappears when activated)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Enforcer* Whenever Morgrith deals nonlethal damage with a melee weapon, he can make an Intimidate check to demoralize his target as a free action. If he is successful, the target is shaken for a number of rounds equal to the damage dealt. If his attack was a critical hit, the target is frightened for 1 round with a successful Intimidate check, as well as being shaken for a number of rounds equal to the damage dealt.

+1 Furious* Club A furious weapon serves as a focus for its wielder's anger. When the wielder is raging or under the effect of a rage spell, the weapon's enhancement bonus is +2 better than normal. If the wielder has a rage power that gives a skill bonus while raging (such as raging climber, raging leaper, or raging swimmer), the wielder gains an enhancement bonus to that skill whenever the weapon is wielded or held in hand, even when not raging; this bonus is equal to the enhancement bonus of the weapon (including the +2 when the wielder is raging). (*Advanced Player's Guide*)

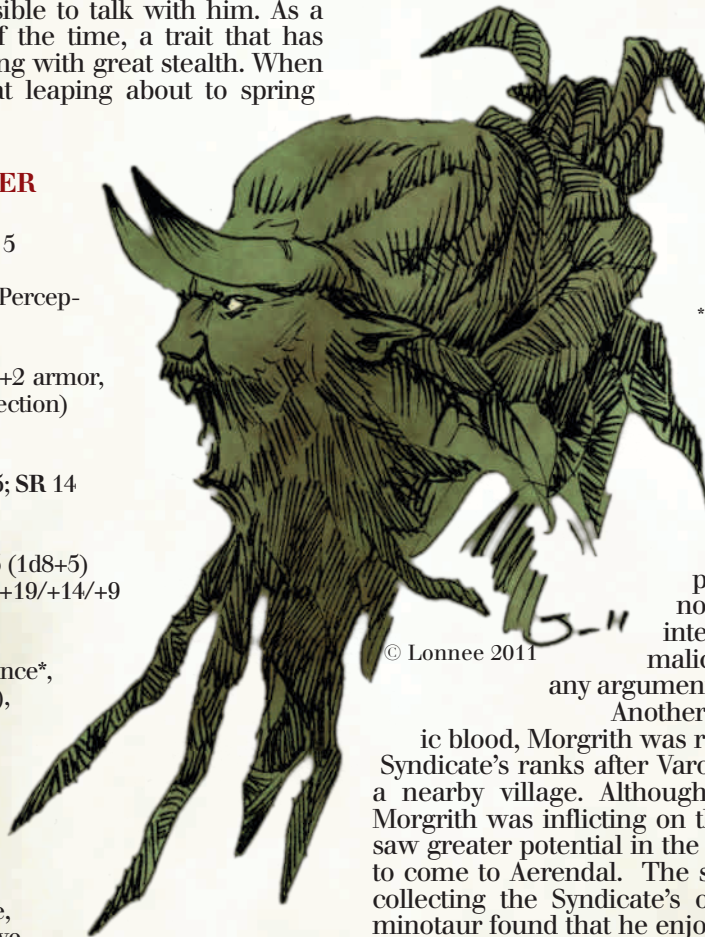
Natural Cunning (Ex) Although minotaurs are not especially intelligent, they possess innate cunning and logical ability.

This gives them immunity to maze spells and prevents them from ever becoming lost. Further, they are never caught flat-footed.

Overbearing Advance* (Ex)

While raging, Morgrith inflicts damage equal to his Strength bonus whenever he succeeds at an overrun combat maneuver.

* *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Advanced Player's Guide*



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any argument.

Another creature tainted by demonic blood, Morgrith was recruited into the Cloven Hoof Syndicate's ranks after Varon discovered him terrorizing a nearby village. Although he appreciated the horror Morgrith was inflicting on the people of the town, Varon saw greater potential in the minotaur and convinced him to come to Aerendal. The satyr placed him in charge of collecting the Syndicate's overdue loan payments. The minotaur found that he enjoyed the work and quickly became a great asset to the organization.

Morgrith is, unfortunately, not the most intelligent member of the Cloven Hoof Syndicate and has found it difficult to learn to speak Common. He is usually accompanied on his collection rounds by another agent who speaks Giant and can translate for him. This arrangement usually works well because the beast's mere presence is enough to convince a possible defaulter to make whatever payments he owes. Morgrith prefers not to talk at all, but even when he speaks through an interpreter, his words strike fear into those who risk the Syndicate's wrath.

Chapter Three: A Gallery of Rogues

On the rare occasions when Morgrith wishes to communicate directly with someone, he can activate the arcane tattoo on his neck and gain the benefit of a tongues spell. However, he will usually save the tattoo for use when communicating with Varon or another high-ranking member of the Syndicate.

In combat Morgrith uses a direct approach, entering a rage and smashing his foes with his club. He will attempt to weaken enemies with his intimidating glare rage power. If he has room to move, he will also attempt to overrun opponents to knock them down while simultaneously using his overbearing advance rage power to damage them.

AYMIELLE

CR 14 (25,600 XP)

Female human skeletal champion (magus) rogue
5/sorcerer (rakshasa**) 5
NE medium undead

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.;
Perception +19

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 14, flat-footed 16 (+3 armor, +3 Dex, +2 natural, +1 deflection)

hp 105 (7d8+5d6+48)

Fort +5, **Ref** +8, **Will** +10

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4; **DR**

5/bludgeoning; **Immune** cold, undead traits

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee +1 dagger +10/+5 (1d4+1/19-20/x2) and
2 claws +4 (1d4/20/x2)

Special Attacks sneak attack +5d6

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 5, concentration +8):

2nd—(5/day) *invisibility*; *misdirection*, see *invisibility*

1st—(7/day) *charm person* (DC 14), *disguise self*, *mage armor*,
ray of enfeeblement (DC 14), *shield*

0—(at will) *daze* (DC 13), *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *mage hand*, *open/close*, *prestidigitation*, *touch of fatigue* (DC 15)

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 16, **Con** -, **Int** 15, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 16

Base Atk +6; **CMB** +6; **CMD** 20

Feats Alertness, Arcane Strike, Deceitful, Eschew Materials, Expanded Arcana, Quick Draw, Silent Spell, Skill Focus (Bluff), Toughness, Weapon Finesse

Skills Acrobatics +11, Bluff +26, Diplomacy +13, Disable Device +15, Escape Artist +11, Knowledge (local) +15, Knowledge (nobility) +12, Perception +19, Sense Motive +19, Sleight of Hand +11, Spellcraft +10, Stealth +16, Use Magic Device +11

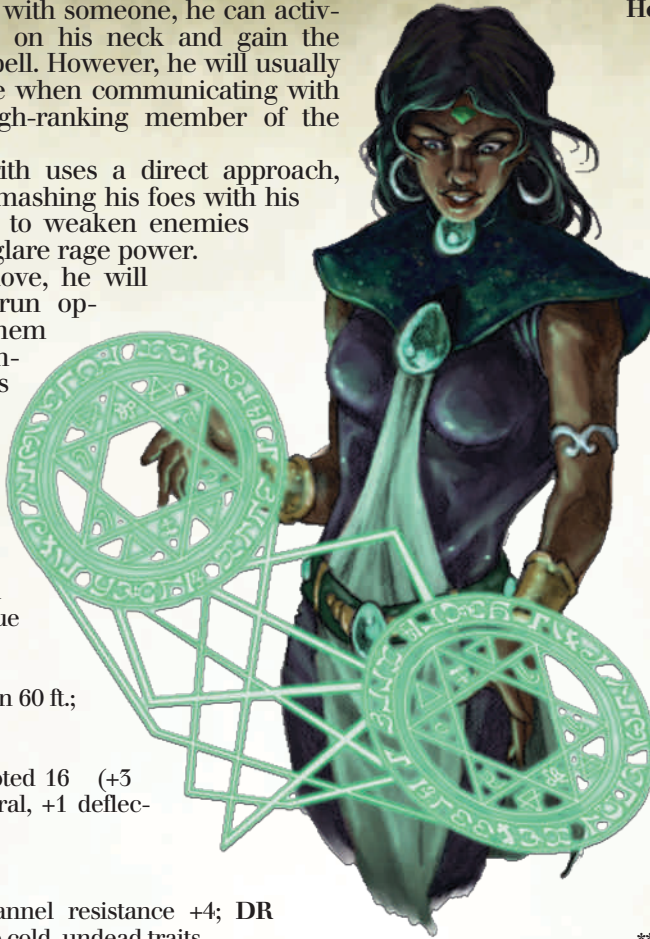
Languages common, elven, daemonic

SQ bloodline arcana**, bloodline power (mind reader** [1/day/DC 15], silver tongue** [6/day]), evasion, rogue talent (hard to fool* [2/day], honeyed words* [7/day], trapfinding +2, trapsense +1, uncanny dodge

Combat Gear +1 dagger; +1 glamered leather; **Other Gear** hat of disguise, potion of inflict serious wounds (2), ring of protection +1, masterwork thieves' tools, wand of modify memory (25 charges)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Hard to Fool* (Ex) Twice per day, Aymielle can roll two dice while making a Sense Motive check, and take the better result. She must choose to use this talent before making



the Sense Motive check.

Honeyed Words* (Ex) Three times per day, Aymielle can roll two dice while making a Bluff check, and take the better result. She must choose to use this talent before making the Bluff check.

Silver Tongue** (Su) Aymielle can draw upon her outsider heritage to spin amazingly convincing lies. Activating this ability is a swift action. She gains a +5 bonus on one Bluff check made to convince another of the truth of her words (similar to using glibness). If a magical effect is used against her that would detect her lies or force her to speak the truth, the user of the effect must succeed on a caster level check (DC 15) to succeed. Failure means the effect does not detect her lies or force her to speak only the truth. She can use this ability six times per day.

Mind Reader** (Sp) Aymielle can read minds as a spell-like ability. This ability acts like *detect thoughts*, except it lasts only 1 round, she uses it on a single target as a standard action, and if the target fails its Will save (DC 15) she gains information as if she had concentrated on it for 3 rounds. She may use this ability once per day.

Note: Due to her elite status, Aymielle's wealth totals exceed normal guidelines. As a result, her CR has been increased by one.

* Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Advanced Player's Guide

** Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Ultimate Magic

"Welcome to the Halls of Abandon, my lord! It's good to have you back with us. As usual, you can leave your cloak in the front room, just beyond that door. But I do suggest that you leave that dagger you're hiding with me. Master Talbot isn't here, this evening. And besides, it wouldn't do for you to address your grievances with him within these walls. It might jeopardize your continued membership with the club."

Aymielle is well known to all who frequent the Halls of Abandon – and they, to her – because they see her every time they visit the club. She appears to them as a beautiful half-elf woman, young-looking but mature enough to know how to handle the clientele. Her hair and dress may change color or style, but she is always there, immaculately dressed and forever cheerful.

As with most things in Varon's domain, Aymielle is not what she appears. She is constantly on watch at her desk because she is, in fact, dead. She was once a beautiful woman, a skillfully deceptive thief who used her sorcerous abilities to enhance her talents as a rogue. She joined the Cloven Hoof Syndicate shortly after Varon established himself in the city, but never fully gave her allegiance over to the gang.

When caught running side scams on Syndicate clients, the Syndicate had her tortured to death. Varon would have disposed of the body, but he quickly realized that he might still have a use for her skills. Instead he had her body preserved and later raised as a skeletal champion who now serves him with unquestioning loyalty. Retaining the rogue and sorcerer abilities she possessed in life, Aymielle stands sleepless guard over the cellar

Chapter Three: A Gallery of Rogues

and reception area night and day.

The undead creature uses her magic and rogue abilities, augmented by potions and charms provided by Syndicate agents, to hide her true form. She frequently alters the illusions that cover her so that it appears she changes her clothes or alters her hair style, but her face always looks as it did in life. So far visitors to the Halls of Abandon have not guessed how she can always be on duty. With the powers of her rakshasa bloodline, Aymielle easily deflects questions and keeps Varon's secrets even better than she did when she was alive.

Aymielle uses her mind-reading abilities to prepare for her dealings with those who enter the club and then relies on her skills in deception to handle most problems. If she thinks that someone might be approaching with dangerous intentions, she will summon guards from the room just past the reception area. If forced into combat, she will use her rogue abilities and spells to aid the guards. When combat is over, the guards will dispose of any bodies, while Aymielle utilizes her *wand of modify memory* to alter the survivors' recollection of what happened.

PERGELAEA

CR 6 (2,400 XP)

Female fiendish nixie^β bard 5

NE small fey (aquatic)

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; **Perception** +13

DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 14, flat-footed 11 (+3 Dex, +1 size)

hp 46 (5d8+2d6+14)

Fort +3, **Ref** +10, **Will** +8

DR 5/cold iron, 5/good; **Resist** acid 10, fire 10; **SR** 12

OFFENSE

Spd 20 ft., swim 50 ft.

Melee masterwork shortsword +9 (1d4-2/19-20)

Ranged +1 *shortbow* +9 (1d4-1/x3)

Special Attacks bardic performance 16 rounds/day (counter-song, distraction, fascinate [DC 16], inspire competence +2, inspire courage +2), smite good (1/day)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 12th, concentration +16)

3/day—*charm person* (DC 15)

1/day—*water breathing* (DC 15)

Bard Spells Known (CL 5, concentration +9):

2nd—(3/day) *blur*, *glitterdust*, *haunting mists*** (DC 16)

1st—(5/day) *cause fear* (DC 15), *chord of shards*** (DC 15), *disguise self* (DC 15), *memory lapse* (DC 15)

0—(at will) *daze* (DC 14), *dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound* (DC 14), *lullaby* (DC 14), *message*

STATISTICS

Str 7, **Dex** 16, **Con** 14, **Int** 12, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 18

Base Atk +4; **CMB** +1; **CMD** 14

Feats Alertness, Deceitful, Reach Spell*, Weapon Finesse

Skills Bluff +14, Craft (traps) +9, Escape Artist +13, Handle Animal +6, Intimidate +9, Knowledge (local) +9, Knowledge (nobility) +9, Linguistics +7, Perception +13, Perform (sing) +14, Sense Motive +14, Spellcraft +11, Stealth +17, Swim +12

Languages abyssal, aquan, common, daemonic, sylvan

SQ amphibious^β, bardic knowledge +2, lore master (1/day), versatile singing +14, well versed, wild empathy^β +12

Combat Gear +1 *shortbow*, arrows (20), masterwork shortsword; **Other Gear** masterwork artisan tools

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Amphibious^β (Ex) Creatures with this special quality have the aquatic subtype, but they can survive indefinitely on land.

Wild Empathy^β (Ex) This ability functions as the druid ability of the same name. Nixies receive a +6 racial bonus on wild empathy checks.

* Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Advanced Player's Guide

** Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Ultimate Magic

^β Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary 3

"Come and swim with me, mortal! I can show you things that you will not find elsewhere in this world. My splendid master has taught me well. I can promise that no one has ever complained after sampling the pleasures I have to offer."

Pergelaea is a nixie born of the corrupt energies in the Hollow of Shrieking Laughter. She had developed a fascination with Varon from her knowledge of him in their home realm. When he at last settled into the Halls of Abandon, she passed through the portal and came to Aerial to serve him. Varon had little time for the star-struck nixie, and gave her the menial task of guarding the entrance to the Halls.

The powers of Abaddon that coursed through her and altered her very being have left Pergelaea slightly mad. She does whatever she can to gain Varon's attention, emulating him by learning the ways of the bard and seeking out Serafina Brighteye to learn the art of seduction. The div finds this hilarious, and gladly shares bits of advice with the nixie, knowing full well that none of her suggestions will ever get Pergelaea what she truly desires.

Pergelaea possesses the traditional beauty of the fey, but her skin is ashen, her fingernails are black, and the fires of madness burn brightly in her large, dark eyes. She leaves her long white hair down and often dresses in revealing garb in the vain hope of attracting Varon's attention. This attire does, however, help her surprise trespassers who are lured to the water's edge for a better look at her "offerings."

Pergelaea's goals are to complete any tasks Varon sets for her. Although she seesaws between love and loathing, she never shows it, for fear of incurring Varon's wrath. She counterbalances her anger at his inattention with the intense desire to perform every task he sets before her. If she can be made to think that doing something or sharing information with someone would make Varon happy, she will do so without further thought. This is a weakness that Varon does not suspect. Fortunately for him, few who would exploit this weakness at the gates of the Halls of Abandon live long enough to do so.

In a combat situation, Pergelaea will first attempt to distract opponents with her beauty and fascinate powers. She will use her bardic spells to bolster Syndicate agents, especially Varon. Otherwise, she keeps her shortbow handy and will pepper enemies from a distance, using the pool and waterways in the conservatory to outmaneuver her foes. She may also use her charm person ability to divide a group of enemies, targeting those who appear to be fighters in the hope that they are more likely to succumb to her wiles. Though she would prefer to defend the Halls herself, Pergelaea usually maintains a message spell enhanced with the reach metamagic feat, allowing her to communicate with Aymielle in the reception area if she needs help.



Chapter Four

The Halls of Abandon

I followed him through the warrens along the waterfront for several minutes before he stopped. He took a piece of paper out of his belt pouch and peered intently at it, as though trying to read something in the weak light of the waning moon.

He finished reading and stuffed the paper back in his pocket before looking around and making for an alley a block down the road. I gave him a bit of a lead before I started after him. I stopped short when I saw him at the other end, waving what looked like a silk handkerchief. It flashed pale green in the light. The dainty cloth was out of place with his “disguise.” It didn’t matter, though. Dirty clothes and a fake beard didn’t do anything to hide his noble bearing.

After a few moments, a coach pulled up. I didn’t get a good enough look at the driver, but something about his hunched form seemed wrong. The door seemed to open by itself and the baron got inside. When the carriage bolted, I realized I was not going to be able to keep up without help. I was glad I had some of Shera’s potions with me. I threw back a potion of invisibility and one of flight, then took to the air and followed the carriage, hoping the magic would last longer than my pigeon’s cab ride.

I was in luck, for once. The carriage traveled over the bridge and into the Verge, a part of the city I had not been in before. The area looked like it had been really posh once, but the new rich had moved on to more fashionable quarters. The coach stopped at what looked like an old botanical garden. The few flowers that hadn’t died had gone wild. The tree-shadowed pathways were overgrown with rough weeds and grasping vines.

I took advantage of the flying potion and stayed a few inches above the ground while I followed the baron through the neglected park. Since I didn’t have to worry about making too much noise, I was able to look around as we moved. It was easy to see most of the watchers hiding in the shadows of hanging tree limbs or behind topiaries deformed by years of neglect. Most paid only brief attention to the man fumbling through the darkness, but others were obviously more interested.

I had to stop when we came to a run-down conservatory hidden far back from the road. I would have followed the baron inside if it hadn’t been for the two shadows lingering near the entrance. They didn’t look right, and I suspected they weren’t just well-trained thugs. Whatever they were, they might have been able to see through the magic keeping me hidden. I couldn’t risk getting caught now. I knew I’d found the entrance to the Halls of Abandon.

The only thing left to do is get inside and find out exactly what the Syndicate is really up to. If those things guarding the entrance are any indication, I’m going to need some help.



Varon and his gang have been operating covertly in the city for several years, but only recently have they been able to occupy the Cloven Hoof Syndicate’s grand headquarters. The satyr spent months moving from one safehouse to another before he stumbled upon a location that suited both the needs of the organization and his corrupt sensibilities.

Varon has dubbed the Syndicate’s headquarters the “Halls of Abandon,” because it serves as a location where a select clientele can shake off the strict limitations of polite society and engage in their most carnal desires. The name is also a subtle nod to the goals of his true masters.

The “public” entrance to the Halls of Abandon lies in an untended, desolate plot in the district known as the Verge. It was purchased over 60 years ago for development as a botanical garden and arboretum. The original owner perished during an expedition to the jungle where he had hoped to gather interesting plant species for his gardens. The uncompleted gardens were abandoned by his family. The arboretum was a personal project for him that held only painful memories for his widow, but she could never quite bring herself to sell the land. When the entire family was wiped out by the Hollow Death, the land became just one more desolate place in the ruined district.

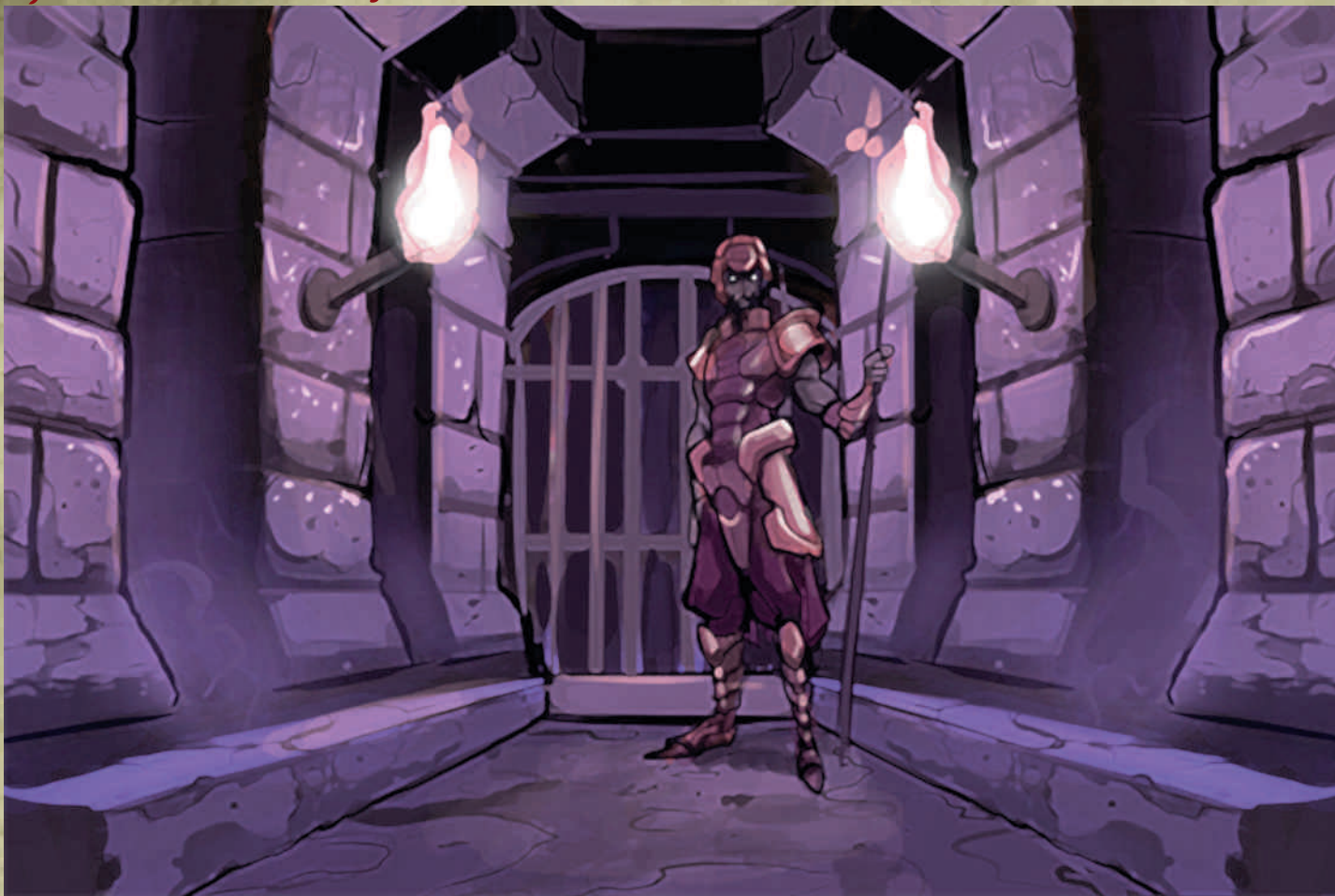
The plot remained unused for many years and the plants grew wild. Some said the place was haunted,

though no real evidence of spirit activity was brought to light. Others claimed that the eccentric botanist secretly returned from his expedition, but was changed into a hideous beast that now roams the garden preying on those who dare intrude upon his domain. In truth, the winding, overgrown pathways and hidden retreats simply gave vagrants safe places to hide. That is, until Varon discovered the land and recognized its true potential for the Syndicate’s operations.

Once he had removed the vagrants and gained control of the old arboretum, Varon secretly commissioned engineers and architects to expand the tunnels and chambers beneath it, carving out richly appointed rooms for his customers, workspaces for his minions, and connections to the Nether City. The engineers and architects that were not already part of the Syndicate were quickly eliminated after work was completed, leaving few clues to the location of Varon’s hideout.

The Halls of Abandon are the heart of the Syndicate’s empire. As such, Varon has staffed them only with those he thinks he can trust. Everyone who works there knows that visitors are used for the harvesting of vesseance. They also know the true nature of many of the Syndicate’s highest ranking members, even if the leaders maintain their less-than-fiendish disguises within the Halls. Workers may not know the Syndicate’s ultimate goals, but they know very well they are working for a

Chapter Four: The Halls of Abandon



Districts of Aerland: The Verge

Occupying the entirety of Idris Isle, the Verge is sometimes referred as the Quarter of the Forgotten. From a distance the Verge looks desolate and uninhabited, that is until you spot one of the forlorn residents shuffling along a broken street. Nearly every home in the ward is crumbling. Well-crafted stonework is falling away, piling up in the avenues that once thronged with merchants and their families. When a magically resistant and seemingly sentient plague called the Hollow Death struck the district 54 years ago, the Viridian Prince closed the bridge and waited until the disease ran its course. None of those trapped survived. Eventually the bridge was re-opened and the district was deemed safe, though only the most desperate live here now.

The Verge is home to the destitute and lost, a shattered ward for shattered lives. While many of the homes have long been looted, adventurers still roam the area seeking secret caches of wealth. Some of these parties claim undead creatures stalk the ruins, slinking from the shadows when the sun falls. Others swear they have found evidence that the plague is not gone, simply slumbering, perhaps waiting for the right fool to stumble along and spark a more devastating outbreak.

criminal organization with otherworldly ties. Employees in the Halls of Abandon are loyal because they are paid well, but perhaps also because they are fully informed of the danger they face if they even consider betraying the organization.

FINDING THE HALLS OF ABANDON

The location of the Syndicate's headquarters is a secret known to many but carefully kept from law enforcement. Due to Lord Ferroway's success in building ties with the most wealthy and influential members of city society, there is at least one member of every upper class family who knows how to find the Halls of Abandon. These ne'er-do-wells may or may not be considered miscreants within their families, but each one has a particular appetite that agents of the Cloven Hoof are all-too-eager to sate. Customers of the Halls are not aware of their connection with the Cloven Hoof Syndicate, however.

Despite the fact that many know the Halls exist, their exact location and purpose are known only to those who have been invited to partake of its offerings. Only higher ranking Syndicate members are able to grant an invitation, even if candidates are recommended by someone who already frequents the Halls.

In order to receive an invitation, a candidate must have shown herself to possess a vice that the Syndicate can indulge and must also be susceptible to pressure from the Syndicate to keep the club's existence in strict confidence. The first requirement is fairly easy for most clients to meet. The second requirement, while harder to fulfill, is crucial to maintaining secrecy and exclusivity. Varon refuses to risk his enterprises and his mission in the city by allowing the wrong people to access the Halls of Abandon. He deals harshly with any minion who fails to properly verify the trustworthiness of a prospective client. He also makes sure that the client is never able to share what she knows.

On the other hand, a customer who does pass the screening process will be given complex instructions

Chapter Four: The Halls of Abandon

to follow on her first visit to the Halls of Abandon. These instructions will not lead to the Halls themselves. They will instead lead to a pick-up location, where a hired coach operated by one of the Syndicate's agents will collect the patron and carry her to the gates of the abandoned botanical gardens. From there the client will follow a winding, shadowy path to the conservatory.

Inside the dilapidated glass and ironwork building, she will find a doorway that opens on a stairway leading down. The small cellar at the bottom is carefully crafted to look like a long-abandoned storage room. Inside this room, the client will use the directions to open a secret door leading to the Halls' reception area.

What most clients do not realize is that the passage through the gardens and the arboretum is constantly watched by Syndicate agents. Some are hidden among the beggars and thieves who call the district home. Others hide elsewhere and observe newcomers with less mundane senses, revealing the horrible truth of their existence only to those who come uninvited to the lair of their fiendish master.

THE HALLS OF ABANDON

Provided here is an overview of the Halls of Abandon and the services it offers to members.

CONSERVATORY

Looming amid the unkempt trees near the back of the gardens, the conservatory is a hulking structure of glass and wrought iron. It was obviously built at great expense but has long since fallen into disrepair and decay. The panes of glass which must have once shone like the facets of a brilliant gem are now missing or covered with a thick layer of dirt.

Two shadows, former fey so twisted by the forces of their corrupted realm that they became incorporeal spirits, linger near the entrance to the conservatory. They spy on those who approach the building, ensuring safe passage for those who approach and make the proper signs—as directed in their invitations—but attacking those who do not.

Beyond the doors, which hang loosely on rotting hinges, a winding pathway leads visitors around and over a pool of murky water that was once a beautiful lagoon fed by an extravagant waterfall. The pool is inhabited by Pergelaea, a corrupted nixie who also watches for any who approach the Halls without a proper invitation. The path continues through densely overgrown foliage, looping back around to the main entrance.

Near the back of the conservatory, tucked beneath an arcing pathway, is a wooden door that opens to reveal a stairway leading down. The stairs appear to be recently carved from the surrounding stone.



Chapter Four: The Halls of Abandon

UPPER LEVEL

The upper level of the Halls of Abandon contains gambling halls, drug dens, and chambers for more carnal pleasures.

FALSE CELLAR

At the bottom of the stairs from the conservatory lies what appears to be a disused storage cellar. Gardening tools and cracked pots have been dumped in one corner, while a table and a floor-to-ceiling shelf hold what might once have been seedlings and bulbs.

The table and shelves cleverly hide a secret door that can only be spotted with a successful DC 25 Perception check. Even those who have seen the door open will have difficulty finding it after it closes again. Fortunately, clients of the Halls of Abandon need not find the door.

As soon as guests arrive in the room, they trigger a permanent *symbol of scrying* inscribed on the floor beneath the bottom stair. The *symbol* announces their arrival to Aymielle in the next room, who then observes the cellar and opens the secret door. The door swings inward, allowing it to close again and leave almost no sign that it had ever moved.

RECEPTION HALL

This room is richly, yet gaudily, appointed and serves as an immediate clue to the hedonistic excesses one can expect to find within the Halls of Abandon. The floors are laid with expensive, imported marble and the walls are treated with a black and gold velvet flocked covering that is both sumptuous and jarring.

Opposite the secret door, the receptionist sits behind a dark mahogany desk. She appears to be an incredibly attractive human woman of average height and slight build, wearing an expensive embroidered and jeweled gown. The woman introduces herself to guests as Aymielle.

Beyond the reception hall, a single door leads to a winding narrow entrance hall. This hallway is lined with colorful murals depicting a variety of pleasurable activities, some of which are quite scandalous.

CLOAK ROOM

This room contains little more than a counter, a stool, and racks for hanging cloaks, coats, and capes. Guests are encouraged to leave their heavy outer-garments here. Two Syndicate employees work here at any one time. They are paid well and monitored closely enough to ensure that they do not steal money or other valuables from the guests unless given specific orders to do so.

GUARD ROOM

This square room is furnished with two tables and approximately eight chairs, which provide seating for a contingent of guards that helps maintain security within the Halls of Abandon. Although Varon employs forces with a more subtle approach within the Halls' interior, these guards are the "heavies." Their job is to deal with any serious fights that break out. They also provide a first line of defense in the event that the Halls are raided by the City Guard or other forces. Under these circumstances, their job is to hold off the main assault long enough for Syndicate leaders to escape or organize a defense.

There are usually only four guards on duty during the day, when there are fewer guests. This number doubles in the evening. Guards rotate regularly, ensuring that they are usually alert and ready to handle any situation. Varon does not tolerate laziness or drunkenness from guards on duty, but he does allow them to play cards or dice to keep themselves occupied.

LOUNGE

This large room is richly appointed with fine art, comfortable couches, large pillows and throw rugs arranged around small tables. The ceiling is higher here than in the entrance hall, rising to fifteen feet and giving the room an open, airy feel. Sconces on the walls cast a warm glow and a hint of incense perfumes the air, adding to the ambience.

The lounge is both a waiting area and a place for guests to socialize, both with the Halls' employees and with each other. This socializing covers a wide range of behavior, but most often involves small groups involved in conversation, light meals provided by the Halls' kitchen facilities, or the consumption of various brews, wines and spirits, which are in ample supply throughout the establishment.

Although Varon's employees do not encourage lewd behavior in the lounge, they are slow to separate patrons who share an amorous moment. If the activities become disruptive, guests are simply invited to utilize a private room.

The lounge is where most visitors will meet with contacts or friends before venturing further into the Halls to engage in one of the other activities offered. It is a lively, welcoming environment, though the smoke in the air is often tinged with scents that the incense cannot completely cover up. Those alert to such clues may detect hints of smoke from illicit substances, the tang of blood, or perhaps the bite of sulphur amidst the normal smells associated with living creatures in such close proximity.

A door off the lounge provides access to a sumptuous antechamber. The walls are covered with tapestries, the floor is carpeted, and a vase of blood red roses is always present on a table containing valuable scented oils and luxurious toiletries. Three doors each lead to a privy, which empty directly into the sewers below. A series of screens and minor wards prevent uninvited guests from using the pit to gain access to the Halls, and lower-ranking wizards employed by the Syndicate ensure the space stays as fresh as possible.

VARON'S QUARTERS

Varon's quarters are furnished in a bizarre combination of rich finery and crude roughness that reflects the conflict between his former self and his current nature. The decor includes richly detailed and expensive artistic works that depict various forms of sadistic debauchery.

The outer chamber is an office furnished primarily with an expensive wooden desk, which is carved to appear from a distance as though it is made of vines growing tightly together. Closer inspection reveals that many of the vines have blood vessels running just below the surface and actually appear to be tentacles or some other appendages with leaves sprouting from the flesh.

The desk contains two secret compartments, each of which can be found with a DC 20 Perception check. The first compartment, hidden under the middle drawer and within Varon's reach when he is seated at his desk, contains a *wand of empowered shout*. The second compartment is to the left and opens to reveal two slots, each containing a single vial: a *potion of fog cloud* and a *potion of gaseous form*. If he is threatened while in his office, he will retrieve the wand and attempt to use it against intruders. If he cannot overcome his enemies and must escape, he will first break the *potion of fog cloud*, then drink the *potion of gaseous form* and mingle with the fog to escape through the secret door next to his chair.

This door leads to the guardroom, allowing Varon an avenue of escape or a means of gathering reinforcements.

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Varon's sleeping chamber is an even greater expression of his mangled psyche than his office. The room is dominated by a massive four-poster bed. The posts and the canopy that cover them are crafted to look like trees and vines overhanging the thick mattress. Brown and green blankets are used to make up the bed. The scene would be almost idyllic were it not for the thick iron cuffs and chains attached to each of posts. Each post sports multiple manacles, enough for several people to be chained to the bed at once.

None of the Syndicate's employees, except perhaps Serafina, knows exactly what Varon does in here with those chosen for his dalliances. What his servants do know is that they are just as often directed to escort one of his guests down to Grim's lab for vesseance extraction as to dispose of one who could not withstand of the satyr's attentions.

GAMBLING HALL

The ceiling in this room reaches a height of 25-feet and this vast chamber is dotted with several support columns that break up the expanse. The whole floor is covered with a thick, red carpet. The walls are covered with smooth white plaster and accented with abstract floral patterns covered in gold.

Patrons within the gambling hall can find a wide array of games of chance, played against the house or each other, involving cards, dice, or devices like spinning wheels. At all times of the day and night, this room rings out with the cheers of winners and the groans of losers. The stakes of these games can be quite high, simply because the clients invited to the Halls of Abandon are wealthy or influential enough that they can afford to risk more money. Furthermore, great risks lead to great rewards, and great rewards are necessary to generate the positive emotions that are the source of the Syndicate's vesseance supply.

In addition to the servants delivering beverages and refreshments to the gamblers and the attentive security agents patrolling the room in search of cheaters—or at least cheaters who are not employed by the Syndicate—Varon has hired a number of diviners, who constantly patrol the hall using spells to read whatever surface thoughts they can. They use these surface thoughts to determine if a client might be a candidate for vesseance extraction.

PRIVATE GAMBLING ROOMS

These eight smaller rooms are accessed via a single hallway leading from the gambling hall. Available for reservation by high-paying clients, the rooms serve a dual purpose. First and foremost, the rooms afford those willing to pay a bit more the opportunity to engage in games with a small group of associates or to take part in higher-stake games than the ones out in the main hall.

The cost of reserving a room is largely dependent on what the client is willing and able to pay, but will never be less than 100 gold pieces. That price hires the room for approximately four hours and does not include any additional services. Food, drinks, and hired companionship cost extra. With a private staff serving food and beverages and a full compliment of "attendants", the activities in these rooms can easily cost a patron thousands of gold pieces for just a few hours, and that does not include the stakes of the game.

These rooms also provide another way to secretly move clients down to the vesseance lab where their positive emotions can be harvested. Each room has one panel that is actually a secret door. Each door can only be found with a DC 25 Perception check. The door

leads to a hidden network of passages connected by a stairway to Grim's laboratory.

DRUG DENS

Like the private gambling rooms, these rooms provide private or semi-private locations for patrons to partake of their preferred intoxicants without disturbing or being disturbed by the Halls' other customers. Tended by three or four Syndicate agents, this area is typically filled with incense to mask the smell of flayleaf, opium, and pesh, among other inhaled drugs.

Most of the rooms are simple, squarish chambers with pillows and rugs tossed haphazardly on the floor, giving the users a place to recline while they explore their altered states of consciousness or simply pass out. These rooms are separated from the hallway by thick curtains woven with beads. The curtains provide some privacy, but not much.

A few rooms have proper doors; these are reserved for clients who have paid for the privilege of indulging their addictions without coming into contact with other drug users. Like the private gambling rooms, these rooms can be rented for prices ranging from 100 to thousands of gold pieces. Additional services can be hired by those who occupy the private dens, but the prostitutes and servants who tend these clients are specifically chosen because they know how to handle themselves around drug-crazed patrons.

A single secret door connects the drug dens to the service passages. Less secrecy is required when drawing vesseance donors from this area due to the fact that most customers are too high to know what is going on around them and pay little attention to someone being taken away and brought back several minutes later.

KITCHEN

The kitchen is a large space capable of preparing hundreds of meals in a single evening and is almost always busy. Manned by a rotating staff, the kitchen can provide a wide variety of meals, from simple fare to full-scale banquets. At one end of the kitchen, a large dumbwaiter allows stores to be brought directly into the kitchen from below. In the unlikely event that an item is too big for the dumbwaiter, it can be brought up the stairs and through the gambling hall.

The usual smoke, steam, and trash associated with such a large cooking operation are managed and hidden by a complex network of pipes, ducts, and tubes, ensuring that the smoke of fires and the smell of roasting meat do not lead investigators to the Syndicate's headquarters.

BOUDOIRS

Within this dimly-lit maze of hallways and private rooms, patrons of the Halls of Abandon indulge their lustful desires in activities that are the stuff of legend throughout the city. Rumors circulate throughout the city of a place where even the most depraved fantasies can be fulfilled. Varon chose the name "Halls of Abandon" for a reason and members of the Syndicate work hard to maintain that reputation.

The boudoirs are the most popular destination for visitors to the Halls of Abandon, due to the near-perfect privacy and exclusivity of the club. Its popularity is also due in no small part to the extremes to which patrons may go to find the pleasure they seek. Individuals, couples, and groups will find no restrictions placed on them, so long as they can afford the price.

Despite her duties at the Laughing Maid, Serafina frequently oversees operations in the Halls of Abandon because it allows her to partake in some of her pre-

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ferred activities, which she cannot do in a more public establishment. When she is not in attendance, the boudoirs are operated by agents she has hand-selected for their prowess and loyalty to her.

The darkness and spiralling hallway were designed to intentionally disorient visitors to these pleasure dens. Braziers hung at intervals along the passage emit perfumed smoke, and the muffled sounds of other guests can be heard through the walls and doors. The whole experience can be confusing, especially for those who might be a little nervous about participating in the activities offered. As in the private gambling rooms, secret doors in each of the private chambers enable guests to be quickly and easily transported through the network of passages and down the secret stairs to Grim's laboratory.

HIDDEN STORES

This large store room holds a variety of items considered important to the Syndicate. At any given time, it may contain crates of vesseance, a supply of the Stygian waters Grim uses in the extraction process, or a cache of magical or mundane items taken in a recent heist. Whatever is stored here, it will be something that Varon or another high-ranking member has deemed too important to be held in the larger store room below.

The door to this room is locked with a superior lock (DC 40 Disable Device check to open). Varon keeps one key with him at all times and gives the duplicate to agents only when necessary.

LOWER LEVEL

Most of the lower level is reserved for storage and Grim's alchemy laboratory. However, the club's fighting arena does provide members with a variety of bloodsports.

STORE ROOM

Approximately 25 feet high, this space holds the dry stores, kegs of beer, wine and spirits and other materials that enable the Halls of Abandon to serve their customers night and day. The shelves are stocked with items both rare and mundane. They are cataloged and maintained by Syndicate agents who are quick to notice missing items.

This area is where the Syndicate's wererat agents or other operatives deliver the materials needed to keep their operations going. Most often that includes dry goods, stores of wine, beer, and spirits, and meat and dairy products. It sometimes also includes the spoils of a particularly successful heist that must be sequestered for a time until they can be safely sold to willing buyers.

FIGHTING ARENA

Visitors to the Halls of Abandon typically access the fighting arena through the store room via the large staircase from the lounge. Climbing a wooden staircase, they pass through a small door that leads to a stand of benches surrounding a rectangular pit. These benches can hold about 300 spectators and they frequently fill to capacity.

Men and women alike indulge their love of violence



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as they watch and bet on fights between humanoids, monsters, or whatever combatants the Halls are able to collect for a given night's show. These battles tend to be extremely bloody and result in magnificent carnage the likes of which most citizens of the city will never see. It is the perfect outlet for those who draw pleasure from scenes of blood and rage.

Similarly, those who seek to gain victory over others in combat are encouraged to indulge their own passions by becoming fighters in the pit. These patrons are taken through the large service passage into the receiving and holding area and admitted to the arena through a large gate.

When patrons are particularly successful, whether in winning wagers, defeating opponents, or simply cheering for an eventual winner, they can be taken along a similar path to the receiving and holding area. However, instead of entering the arena they will be ushered through a secret door into Grim's laboratory so he can siphon off their positive emotions.

HOLDING AREA

Cages in this room are designed to hold beasts or monsters that are often brought in to entertain spectators in the fighting arena. They can also be used to hold prisoners, if necessary. The locks on the cages are of good quality (DC 30 Disable Device check to open). The keys remain in the custody of Horace, a stubborn but capable man who most believe to be of ogrish descent. In fact he is an extremely ugly and overweight half-orc.

Horace maintains the fighting arena and works with a small stable of regular fighters who have managed to stay alive in the fights. He also assumes responsibility for the care and feeding of the monsters Varon brings in for the special fights. Horace rarely has the expertise to care properly for these creatures, but they usually don't survive long enough for it to matter.

Like the others scattered throughout the Halls, the secret door leading to Grim's laboratory can be found with a successful DC 25 Perception check.

ALCHEMY LABORATORY

This stone chamber is the lair of Grim Moldweb, the Cloven Hoof Syndicate's chief alchemist and resident lunatic. It contains a jumbled collection of jars, bottles, vials, boxes, and other containers on the shelves lining the walls. Filthy surgical implements, tangles of tubing, and various implements that can only be identified by those with profound knowledge of the arcane sciences fill crates and clutter tables. Together with the operating tables positioned in the center of the room, these details present the image of the perfect home for a mad scientist.

Within these walls, which are thick enough to prevent most sounds from escaping, Grim produces great quantities of vesse. When he has access to an uncorrupted fey or a particularly bright-spirited mortal, Grim also uses the lab to create star motes.

Since he almost never sleeps, the derro uses the rest of his time to embark on complicated experiments, seeking to expand his understanding of altered states of consciousness and the connection between the physical world and the metaphysical mind. Most of these experiments require living subjects. The need to contain the suffering of these unwilling experiments is the main reason the walls of this chamber are so thick.

EXIT PASSAGE

A wide tunnel leads away from the Halls of Abandon and descends through the Nether City to a private dock in a cave at the base of the plateau. From there, the

Syndicate can import or export all sorts of goods and bring the rarest of delicacies directly to the clients of the Halls of Abandon.

Other tunnels lead into the sewers, providing a convenient escape route for Syndicate agents and even for clients, for the right price. Simply getting access to the tunnels will cost next to nothing, but few will get where they want to go without the help of a guide. A good guide can cost quite a bit and the more dire the need, the greater the cost.



Campaign Logs

The Rogues Gallery

The Cloven Hoof Syndicate

They will destroy you completely, body and soul.

Crime is an accepted part of life in most large cities. Generally, such illicit activities are under the jurisdiction of the local Thieves Guild and they tend to punish freelancers harshly. There are those who feel the stranglehold of the guild is too much to bear, that their monopoly on the underworld must be broken. The Cloven Hoof Syndicate is an organization devoted to weakening the power of the Thieves Guild and upsetting the established order.

However, there are darker forces at work in the shadows of the Cloven Hoof Syndicate. Some claim that the Syndicate's true purpose goes well beyond a simple turf war. Rumors even speak of horrid experiments and profane rites performed in the subterranean halls of the organization's headquarters. But perhaps worst of all are the whispers which connect the Cloven Hoof Syndicate with the blasphemous daemons and their apocalyptic masters!

While designed for the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game*, this book can be effortlessly used with the 3.5 edition of the World's Oldest Roleplaying Game.

The Rogues Gallery: The Cloven Hoof Syndicate includes:

- A complete criminal organization that can be dropped into any fantasy urban setting.
- Complete statblocks for typical members of the Syndicate at every level in the hierarchy.
- Background and statblocks for the important members of the organization, including their leader, the satyr known as Varon the Twisted.
- New alchemist discoveries and other rules options that support the organization's terrible agenda.
- Maps and details on the Cloven Hoof Syndicate's headquarters, The Halls of Abandon.

